

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT:

A quarterly report featuring more than 90 project updates and a special Residential Living section.

7-23



■ **AROUND TOWN:** *Downtown fashion show to move to Culver City.*

2

■ **OPINION:** *The spirit of the Downtown Strategic Plan lives on, a decade later.*

4

BUSINESS • POLITICS • ARTS • CULTURE

Street Smarts

BY SAM HALL KAPLAN

It is hard to imagine North Spring Street in Chinatown as a grand boulevard in the European tradition, a wide, welcoming avenue accommodating pedestrians, bicyclists and traffic, edged by a leafy park and a parade of apartment buildings.

But that's what is envisioned by Councilman Ed Reyes, his planning-savvy staff and a consortium of concerned citizens. They have convinced the city's Department of Transportation (DOT) that the street has the potential to mend rather than rend the north Chinatown community.

Several years ago the department proposed doubling the width of North Spring Street, primarily to accommodate an expected increase in truck traffic in and out of the adjoining Cornfield. The prime 32-acre site had been earmarked for a 1 million-square-foot warehouse project blessed by former Mayor Richard Riordan. As an incentive, the developer, Majestic Realty, promised to foot the an-

see Dreams, page 3

INSIDE THIS WEEK

CALENDAR

■ L.A. Opera's 'Madama'

Arrested Development

Imprisoned in Time, Downtown's Hall of Justice Still Awaits Its Verdict



The 1925 Hall of Justice, which is slated for a \$127 million renovation, has hosted the likes of Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson.

BY MICHAEL IMLAY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

If walls could talk, imagine the stories these corridors might tell.

In the 1930s, legendary "trunk murderer" Winnie Ruth Judd found herself escorted through Downtown's

THEN AND NOW

Hall of Justice for extradition to Arizona. Even more spectacular was the bomb trial of police lieutenant Earle Kynette, which helped expose the depth of Los Angeles Mayor Frank Shaw's corruption and send him packing.

Railroaded zoot suiters, Red Scare detainees and real thugs like Bugsy Siegel were forced to stroll these halls in the 1940s, as were neo-Nazi motorcyclists, Watts rioters, actor Robert Mitchum and many other Hollywood icons throughout the years.

As almost everyone will tell you, in the basement below, Marilyn Monroe finally met Thomas Noguchi, famous "Coroner to the Stars," while notorious

see Hall of Justice, page 6

SCI-Arc Strain

Sale of Land Could Push School Out of Downtown

BY JASON MANDELL
STAFF WRITER

The recent sale of a roughly 15-acre plot next to the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in the Arts District has upped the possibility that the school, which has helped revive its gritty industrial neighborhood, could move

ARTS DISTRICT

out of Downtown. Furthermore, possible plans by the new landowners to build two massive residential towers have outraged some residents and community leaders.

Developers Richard Meruelo and Daniel Villanueva last month purchased three contiguous parcels adjacent to SCI-Arc — which occupies a renovated 1907 railroad depot on Santa Fe Street — from owner Dynamic Builders. Ken Jackson, sales director at Dynamic, said the sale was more than the reported \$12.5 million, but would not disclose the exact amount.

The three parcels, plus a fourth plot where SCI-Arc sits, have been the subject of negotiations between Meruelo, SCI-Arc officials and Dynamic for the past few years. The school, which moved Downtown from Marina del Rey in 1999, had hoped to purchase the land that it currently leases, plus another plot, for \$15

see SCI-Arc, page 32

Hall of Justice

Continued from page 1

killers such as Sirhan Sirhan and Charles Manson protested their innocence on the upper floors.

These are mere slices of the remarkable history of the County building which opened in 1925. Designed by the prominent Allied Architects firm, the 14-floor, Italianate-Beaux Art edifice fronting Broadway, Temple and Spring streets was the nation's first consolidated judicial facility, originally housing the sheriff, L.A. police chief, district attorney and superior and municipal courts. The sparkling-white, \$6 million edifice boasted a 520-cell jail on its top four floors.

The Northridge quake brought a hush to the facility in 1994. Served with a red tag, abandoned and chained tight, the once-proud landmark has languished for almost a decade while county officials and preservationists have pondered its chances for rehabilitation.

"The Hall of Justice is clearly one of the most significant historic structures in the Los Angeles Civic Center," said Ken Bernstein, director of preservation issues for the L.A. Conservancy. "It has an imposing stature and solidity that was meant to convey a sense of justice and public importance."

Bernstein said the Hall also presents "quite a stunning interior," with an ornate, barrel-vaulted entry foyer that runs the entire length of the structure. Gold-marble walls and large Ionic columns support an

exquisitely gilded ceiling.

Grime and Punishment

Only a privileged few have been able to glimpse the shuttered hall in recent years. They describe the interior in less inspiring terms.

"Certain parts of the building have suffered from neglect and look like they're in bad shape, while other parts of the building just look like they've been unused for 10 years," says John Edmisten, county division chief for capital projects, and one of the officials charged with fixing up the Hall of Justice.

"Some offices look like someone just got up and left," he adds, explaining that after the earthquake, building inspectors allowed occupants little time to evacuate anything but important documents and furnishings.

Computers and phones sit lifeless on desks. Papers litter the offices. A few years ago vandals managed to break in and steal piping, causing water damage to some portions of the structure. Grime and cobwebs have tarnished the once-radiant period fixtures.

According to Edmisten, several attempts were made in the late 1990s to find a developer who could renovate the property. Finally, in 2001 a pre-development deal was struck with Urban Partners to form the Hall of Justice Associates. County officials hoped the shuttered landmark would re-open by 2005, but disputes led to the contract's termination last July.

"At that point we were faced with whether to drop the project or pursue it on a county-performed basis, and that's what we're doing right now," says Edmisten. He cautions that

Tarts and Misdemeanors

When officials broke ground for the Hall of Justice in 1925, moral crusaders must have felt a sense of triumph. Their gleaming new edifice would do more than inspire respect for the law; it would close a tawdry chapter in city history by erasing any last traces of the infamous Pearl Morton.

Though the city outlawed prostitution in 1874, it remained a very public affair well after the turn of the century. In fact, Morton and cross-town rival Cora Philips took the world's oldest profession to dazzling new heights in the 1890s, stirring sensations among the Angeleno elite with their opulent, upscale brothels.

As successful as Madam Philips was with her Golden Lion on Alameda

Street, however, she was no match for her counterpart, who clearly understood that the first rule of business is location. In August 1891, Madam Morton guaranteed her place in history by choosing the site of the present Hall for what would become the city's grandest parlor.

Today it seems like a brazen move, considering that a courthouse and other municipal buildings stood on the adjacent blocks, but accounts of the time show that many civic leaders welcomed her to the neighborhood with open arms.

Morton's business flourished until temperance and purity movements finally prevailed on officials to crack down on vice in 1909.

—Michael Imlay

several hurdles remain, including a favorable environmental impact report, abatement of hazardous materials and demolition of unnecessary building components, before any renovation can be done.

In addition, each step toward rectification must be approved by a County Board of Supervisors feeling the pinch of California's budget crisis.

Debt to Society

The current plan calls for a \$127 million renovation, to be funded by a mix of county capital, bonds and FEMA grants. Over time, these costs should be recovered as county offices presently leasing space elsewhere return to the building.

"It's going to be a mixed-tenant administrative office headquarters," says property development manager Cheryl Fuerth, who is assisting Edmisten with the project. "The sheriff will be headquartered there; Parks and Recreation will be moved and headquartered there, and then we will have staff from the District Attorney, some from the Chief Administrative Office [and possibly] the Public Defender."

If it ever happens, it will almost be a full circle for a building that saw a gradual exo-

dus even before the Northridge quake. As their offices grew too large for the 400,000-square-foot Hall of Justice, the L.A. police chief, courts, coroner, district attorney and public defender all sought grander accommodations elsewhere.

"Over time, as the other departments left the building, the sheriff took over the space," says Edmisten, adding that at one point the jail cells became so overcrowded that prisoners were forced to sleep in the halls and on the roof.

By 1991, even the late sheriff Sherman Block wanted out. He moved his offices to the department's more modern Monterey Park facility.

After the Northridge quake, preservationists worried the Hall of Justice might be consigned to its own death row — until Sheriff Lee Baca announced he wanted to return to the building to be closer to the county seat.

Still, like justice, sometimes the wheels of preservation grind slowly. The timetable for a grand reopening has now been pushed to 2007, and that's only if all goes right. Until then, the Hall of Justice remains a prisoner of time.

sophisticated.

1 Bdrm Specials
Ask Now!

Studio, 1, & 2 bedroom
apartment homes
Fully-equipped kitchens w/
dishwasher and microwave
Private balconies
Pool, spa, & sauna
24-Hour Fitness Center
Recreation room
Putting green
Lavishly landscaped terrace
Private key card access
Subterranean parking
Concierge Services
24-Hour doorman



Sophisticated, elegant, contemporary
downtown living. The Met is the embodiment of
everything you have worked so hard to attain.
From the welcoming doorman who greets you
and your guests to the distinctive marble lobby
with handsome furnishings, The Met is a stylish
landmark in downtown living.



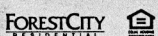
Close to Staples Center, USC, FIDM,
shopping, restaurants, transportation,
the 110, 10, & 101 Freeways



studios from \$1,215
one bedrooms from \$1,465
two bedrooms from \$2,020

THE METROPOLITAN
LUXURY APARTMENT HOMES

visit us at www.metapartments.com



Call today for your personal tour!
888.642.5374

950 South Flower Street
Downtown L.A. 90015

Downtown's Largest Office Furniture Superstore

Specialized in
Used Office
Furniture

GREAT PRICES
DIRECT FROM
THE FACTORY

OPEN
TO THE
PUBLIC

