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## At Home

# Developer Unveils Luxury Homes at Site of Former Ambassador College

By GENE JOHNSON

Published: Thursday, October 10, 2013 | 7:53 PM

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City Ventures will unveil a luxury development called Ambassador Gardens located at the former site of the Ambassador College at a private dedication ceremony next week and a public grand opening on Saturday, October 19.

The Ambassador Gardens, which took 15 years of planning and development, will include 150 townhouses and flats along South Orange Grove, just one block from Old Pasadena, a City Ventures spokesman said. The company released a statement that the townhomes and flats are priced from the low \$1 millions.



The dedication ceremony

will mark the debut of the first enclave at The Ambassador Gardens. Called The Bungalows, it is designed to look and live similarly to the arts and crafts-style homes in the iconic Pasadena neighborhood.

The Bungalows will include 10 townhouses and flats with architecture inspired by historic Pasadena designs in Craftsman and English Arts and Crafts styles. The residences are designed by William Hezmalhalch Architects and will include living spaces that range from 1,884 to 3,352 square feet.

The restored Merritt Mansion, one of Pasadena's cherished pieces of history, will also be unveiled and will serve as The Ambassador Gardens sales and design center.

The private opening will also include a performance by the Pasadena Symphony, the spokesman said. City officials, including Mayor Bill Bogaard, are expected to attend the private viewing.

Also expected to attend the private viewing are Barclay Butera, world-renowned interior designer for The Ambassador Gardens; Elaine Adams, director of the American Legacy Fine Arts in Pasadena; and officials from Insignia by City Ventures.

Kevin Johnson, a project manager in the city's Planning and Community Development Department, said "the neighbors have been watching close on how that's (Ambassador

Gardens) been developed.”

“There are basically three townhome projects and a fourth (project) will (also) be a townhomes. But that (fourth project) still has to go through the City Planning process,” Johnson said.



The Ambassador

Gardens is located where classrooms and administrative space for Ambassador College, operated by the Worldwide Church of God, once stood. The majority of the site was assembled in the 1960s and it was landscaped with lush greenery and trees, Craftsman and Japanese-garden elements such as lantern-lit walkways, cascading waterfalls and fountains, which still exist today.

City Ventures bought the property on the site of the old Ambassador College on New Year’s Day 2010 from New York hedge fund Fortress Investment Group, which had been foreclosed on the previous owners in 2008.

The company eventually razed two modern honey comb college buildings to set off the first phase of 160 planned luxury townhomes and flats. Once those are sold, Fox 11 reported, the City Ventures will restore and sell the three historic mansions that remain on the campus.

Moreover, officials said, more than 60 percent of the entire Ambassador Gardens site has been preserved as open space, including the 2.1-acre Great Lawn. Ambassador

Gardens include lavender blossomed jacaranda trees, beautiful roses, a one-hundred-year-old banyan tree and Mediterrean cypress trees that stand porter at the entry to the residential garden paradise.

Prior to being bought by City Ventures, the Ambassador Gardens site was a part of an ambitious development project called Ambassador West, a plan to add hundreds of housing units and thousands of square feet of commercial space on and around the former campus.

That current plan won support from some homeowner groups and preservationists because they said it maintained the historic campus feel, The Times reported. Backers said it provided needed housing near the bustling Colorado Boulevard shopping district and Gold Line light-rail line.

But critics said the project would worsen traffic in an area that has seen an explosion of mixed-use residential development in recent years.

Ambassador College, from 1947 to 1997, was a four-year liberal arts college established by radio evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong, leader of what was then the Radio Church of God, later renamed the Worldwide Church of God. The college was approved by the State of California to grant degrees .

In 1960 a second campus was opened at Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire, England, and in 1964 a third campus open in Big Sandy, Texas. At the time Ambassador closed for financial reasons in May 1997 it had operated for 50 years.

The Ambassador Gardens is located at 380 West Green Street.



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