


The Green Issue


'WAV' of future building to rise in Ventura

BY RAY ESTRADA

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By 2009, a derelict lot in downtown Ventura will turn green, becoming the home of new solar-powered apartments and studios for artists.

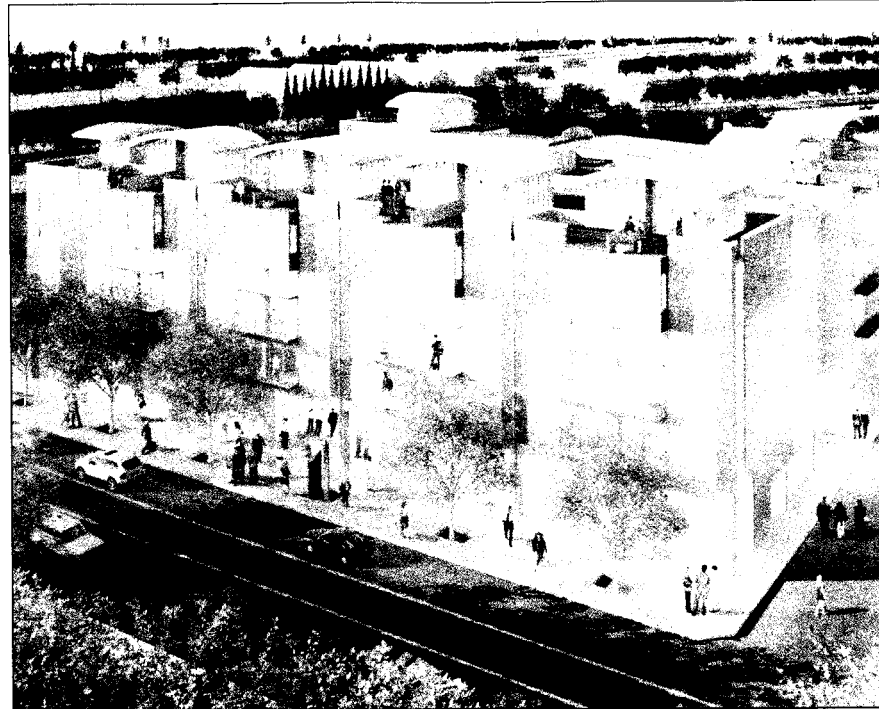
Once completed, the 82-unit, 130,000-square-foot structure planned at the corner of Thompson Boulevard and Ventura Street will be "green certified" and the first of its kind, said Chris Velasco, president of Minneapolis-based Projects Linking Art, Community and Environment, or PLACE, which is a national nonprofit organization.

In 2006, Velasco said, his group signed a contract with the city, branding Ventura as "California's New Art City." "We are trying to provide plenty of affordable living and working spaces for artists," Velasco said.

Velasco's group broke ground in January on the \$57 million complex – known as "WAV" or Working Artists Ventura – which will include a theater and interior green-space areas. The developer has worked on similar projects in Minneapolis and Reno, but the Ventura building has more eco-friendly elements, he said.

"We don't believe it is responsible to construct buildings that are not environmentally conscious," Velasco said.

For example, he said, solar arrays and energy-efficient appliances in the new complex will let residents use 60 percent



This artist's rendering shows how the WAV building will look when completed near the corner of Thompson Boulevard and Ventura Avenue. Excavation is under way.

less electricity than they would in a comparable building. However, more importantly, Velasco said, is that the building will use 40 percent less water, thanks to an Australian company that donated "dual-flush" toilets, which are more efficient than standard commodes.

Velasco said much of the building will

be made from recycled materials taken from Ventura County sites.

Elena Brokaw, Ventura director of community services, approached Velasco's group several years ago, drawn by buildings it had designed in other parts of the country.

"We consider ourselves very lucky to

have this project," Brokaw said. She said Ventura had tried to set up an artist community since 1989. In 2003, the city's redevelopment agency obtained state and federal grants to fund the project, including one from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Brokaw said the bulk of the grants, \$22 million, came from a federal low-rent housing program. That means prospective renters will pay as low as \$400 a month for an 800-square-foot unit and as high as \$1,000 a month for an 1,800-square-foot apartment.

At a planned May 10 meeting, potential tenants will discuss artists' qualifications for living in the new complex, Brokaw said. Already, some 500 artists have applied. The developer included 54 units designed to meet artists' needs, spaces guaranteed to remain affordable for at least 55 years.

The construction project, managed by S.L. Leonard & Associates, will create "hundreds of prevailing wage, union jobs, and the project will support dozens of small businesses," PLACE officials said. They estimate a more than \$100 million economic impact on the community. San Francisco-based Santos Prescott and Associates designed the building, with Santa Monica-based Carde Ten Architects serving as executive architects. The John Stewart Co., based in San Francisco, will manage the property.

PHOTO COURTESY PROJECTS LINKING ART, COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT