



Building *on the* Past

The former City Market of Los Angeles finds new life as a Fashion District destination

WRITTEN BY WENDY BOWMAN

When the owners of The City Market of Los Angeles were looking to do something new with the 10 acres of land that served as a wholesale produce market from 1909 through 2009, they invited developers Mark Levy and Kevin Napoli of LENA Group to examine their master plan for a new mixed-use development. The pair inquired about the property's eight existing buildings on the southern end of the property, and then went to work to create a vision for the industrial-era concrete structures that would eventually be reborn as City Market South, a 2.5-acre open and walkable hub of restaurants, bars, creative office space, event areas and more at the intersection of Downtown L.A.'s Fashion and Wholesale districts.

"There weren't a lot of frills to the buildings architecturally, but they were very interesting, and just as important, if not more important, is how they were laid out; they were designed around pre-automobile days," says Levy, president of City Market South and a partner in LENA Group, which is developing the project with Peter Fleming, CEO

of The City Market of Los Angeles. "The buildings lent themselves to a naturally formed plaza in the center of the development, and we saw that as an opportunity to create something you typically see in Latin American, European and East Coast cities designed around the pedestrian experience."

Fast-forward to today, and LENA Group already has opened a portion of the 2.5-acre City Market South development between San Julian and San Pedro streets, south of 11th Street. The project serves as phase one of the greater City Market of Los Angeles' 1.7 million square foot renewal projected to take place in phases during the next 20 years, complete with a university campus, corporate campus, hotel, multifamily residential housing and retail.

Within City Market South, expect a 75,000-square-foot center highlighted by pepper tree-lined paths, al fresco dining areas, repurposed brick warehouses and concrete buildings boasting vaulted, bow-truss ceilings. Other features include a bocce ball court, valet parking, and the capabilities to host about 30 annual events. Some businesses—

including Steve Samson's Rossoblu restaurant, Yeekai Lim's Cognoscenti Coffee and a showroom from the clothing brand Lovestitch—are open now, with the remainder set to debut throughout 2017 and early next year. Coming up: chef Charles Phan's The Slanted Door, and an indoor-outdoor cocktail bar and food concept by Steve Livigni and Pablo Moix, along with movie studio offices and the City Market Social House event and production venue.

"When the Arts District started, there were a lot of empty buildings," says Levy. "Here, you have an active engine during the day with the garment wholesale business and built-in foot traffic. We're at the forefront of, 'What do you do after 5 or 6 o'clock after the stores close?'"—adding that nighttime element and bringing in more diverse users like creative office tenants to complement what's already there."

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