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NEWS • News

LA panel approves stadium proposed for Warner Center

The City Planning Commission unanimously approved the Promenade 2035 project with a 7,500-seat sports and entertainment venue with a partial roof or an enclosed 10,000-seat arena.



Rendering with streetscape view of Westfield Promenade 2035. (Courtesy: Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield).

By **OLGA GRIGORYANTS** | ogrigoryants@scng.com | Los Angeles

Daily News

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As stadiums and entertainment venues sit idle across Los Angeles amid the global pandemic, French developer Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield has moved closer to bringing a sports center to Warner Center.

The City Planning Commission unanimously approved on Thursday, May 28, the Promenade 2035 project, featuring a 7,500-seat sports and entertainment venue with a partial roof or an enclosed 10,000-seat arena.

The approval came with some conditions, including that the developer would need to come back if it decides to modify the proposed plan.

The \$1.5 billion project would spread across a 34-acre site. It calls for the construction of an urban district with nearly 1,400 residential units, 280,000 square feet of shops and restaurants, 731,500 square feet of office space and 572 hotel rooms.

During a virtual meeting hosted by the City Planning Commission hearing on the Promenade 2035 mega-development, hundreds of participants dialed in to wave on the controversial development.

The hearing comes months after city planners recommended a fully enclosed 7,500-seat arena as part of the massive development proposed for Woodland Hills that was half the capacity of the originally proposed 15,000-seat stadium. The proposal triggered several appeals regarding the lack of affordable housing, the size of the stadium and air quality.

Developers said the project represents over \$1 billion in long-term investment in Warner Center, creating more than 10,800 construction jobs and over 9,700 permanent jobs upon completion.



Rendering with streetscape view of Westfield Promenade 2035. (Courtesy: Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield).

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield agreed to modify their proposal, offering a smaller sports and entertainment center along with rent-restricted affordable housing.

The stadium, the developer said, will be a catalyst for economic growth, attracting further investment in the Warner Center area. It will include a dedicated space for cultural programming and also provide a gathering place for community events such as high school and college graduations and various cultural events.

“We’re tired of transporting over the hill” to see events,” said Larry Green, executive vice president-development at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield.

In response to community feedback, the developer agreed to redesign the project, reducing its square footage from 320,000 square feet to 181,550 square feet and its height from 155 feet to approximately 85 feet. The venue will be encircled with landscaping, trees, open space and pedestrian paths.

But opponents fear the venue will attract rowdy crowds and fill up the 101 Freeway with cars.

West Hills resident Christine Rowe said she was “absolutely” opposed to the stadium.

“I’m disgusted with the new arena,” she said.

Supporters said they approved the 10,000-people facility, smaller than downtown’s Staples Center, that they hope will bring construction jobs and attract entertainment events in years ahead.

The updated plan includes a commitment for a total of 15% of the project’s initial residential units to be affordable, workforce and stakeholder housing divided into:

- 5% for very low-income households—those whose income is 50% of the median income.
- 5% for a voluntary workforce housing program, targeting rents affordable to workers such as
- teachers and firefighters;
- 5% for a voluntary local stakeholder incentive program for local workers.

Gina K. Thornburg, executive director of Coalition for Valley Neighborhoods criticized the plan for not proposing to build more affordable units, demanding that the developer build 7.5% of the 1,009 units, to be preserved in perpetuity for the very low-income residents.

Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization president John Walker said his office supported the modified project.

“We’re encouraged that they’re making some major modifications that increase the benefits to the community and mitigating the negative impacts on them, especially with the downsize of the arena,” Walker said.

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Olga Grigoryants | Reporter

Olga Grigoryants is a multimedia reporter focusing on urban development, business and culture. She also supports the paper in its watchdog role to hold San Fernando Valley power players accountable and loves digging for public records. After studying writing in Moscow, she moved to Los Angeles in 2007 and has called it home ever since. She earned her master’s degree from the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, and has published articles with Reuters, Bloomberg, the Los Angeles Business Journal and LA Weekly. Along the way, she picked up awards from the Los Angeles Press Club and Society of Professional Journalists. If you want to get on her bright side, she loves a perfect cup of matcha latte.

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