

Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee



Case Report: **Victory Place**
 DIR-2018-7402-SPP
 21201 Victory Blvd.
 Canoga Park, 91303

PLUM Hearings: March 13, 2019 (Initial presentation)
 October 7, 2021 (New design/configuration)
 December 2, 2021-Design Modifications

Site Location: 21201 Victory Blvd. (Uptown District)
 Warner Center
 Woodland Hills, CA 91303

Project: Application for a Project Permit Compliance for the demolition of an existing 2-story office suites complex and the construction of a 7-story, 99-foot high, 215,268 SF commercial office and residential apartment structure. The proposal is for 44,479 SF of commercial space (with

only 16,510 SF of that as pure office space) and with 221 residential units (including 59 Live/Work units with 20,897 SF of commercial space) on 1.5 acres in the Uptown District of Warner Center. There are 200 parking spaces including 5 handicapped spaces and 61 EV charging spaces. There are 134 bicycle spaces. The Publicly Accessible Open Space (PAOS) is 9,356 SF on a site totaling 62,372 SF.

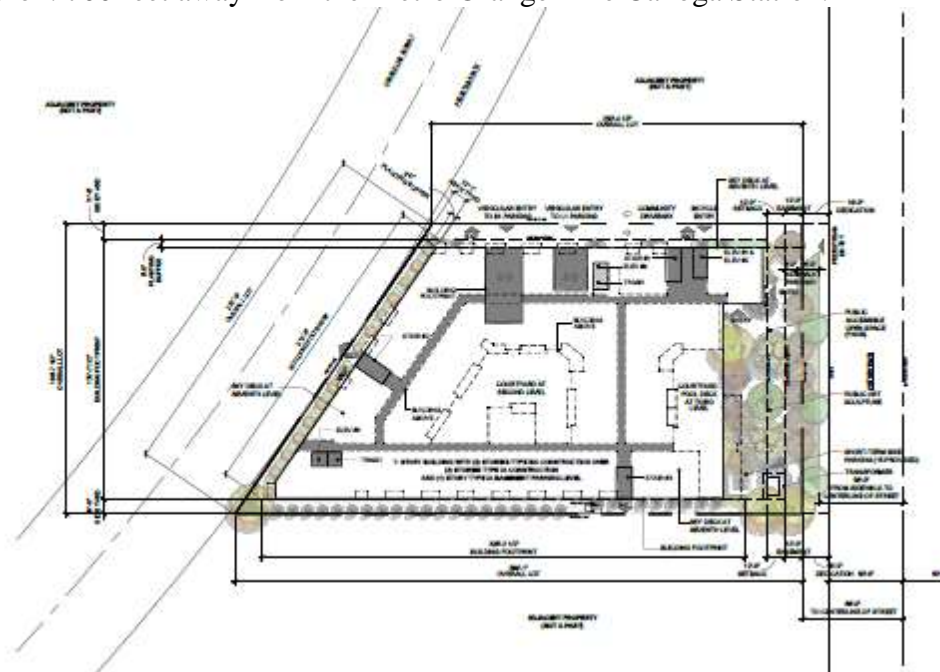
Applicant: Mark Schwartz-Levine Family Properties, LLC,
(mjschwartz65@gmail.com)

Representatives: Brad Rosenheim--Rosenheim & Associates, Inc.
(brad@raa-inc.com)
Jessica Pakdaman—Rosenheim & Associates, Inc.
(Jessica@raa-inc.com)

Case Leader: Marty Lipkin--PLUM Committee

Overview of Site and Project:

The proposed building site is in the Uptown District of the 2035 Plan and fronts on Victory Blvd., west of Canoga Ave. and south of the Orange Line busway that begins its curve north to Vanowen. The site is currently occupied by a 32,960 SF two-story commercial office suites building with surface parking in front (along Victory), along the east side (adjacent to the access driveway), and in the back (an irregular area abutting the Orange Line). There is mechanical and landscaping along the west side of the property, and one (1) shared curb cut driveway and rear access on the eastern property border. The site is adjacent to a two-story restaurant/retail/office building to the east and the back of a large retail shopping center is along the western border. The site is approx. 700 feet away from the Metro Orange Line Canoga Station.



The new 215,268 SF project is slated to contain 221 residential units (41 Studio; 153 One-Bedroom; 23 2-Bedroom; and four 3-Bedroom). The Applicant is proposing 20% of the project (50,550 SF) for use as non-residential space, including 16,510 SF of commercial office space on the ground and second floor, 20,897 SF of the Live/Work areas, and building Common Areas totaling 7,072 SF.

Specific Plan Conformance:

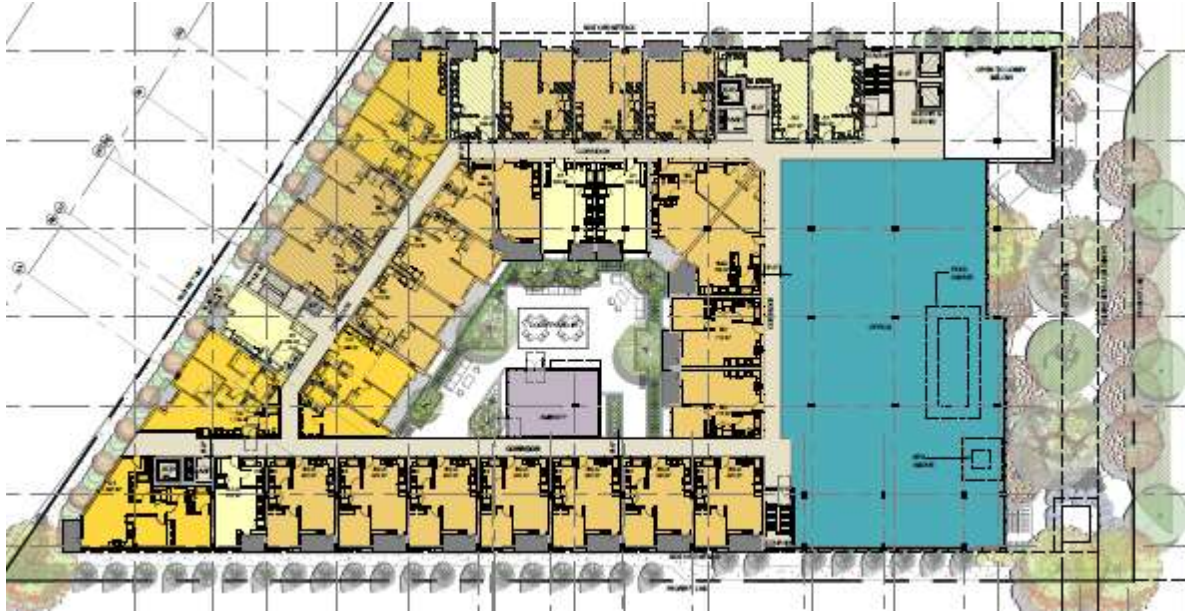
The Uptown District has a required front setback of 12 (min) - 25 (max) feet, with 30% of the front setbacks landscaped. The project plans call for a large landscaped area in front of the main non-residential entry facing Victory. The Applicant is also counting landscaping in a central courtyard and on 4 different decks (different floors) of the plan.

The Applicant has stated that the project meets the Publicly Accessible Open Space requirements of the 2035 Plan of 15% of net site area which is 9,356 SF. However, connectivity to adjacent properties or to the Orange Line is not directly spelled out in the submitted materials. The project is within ½ mile of a major transit stop.

Additionally, while the original plans contained significantly more space designated for satisfying the commercial space requirements of the Specific Plan, this new/revised submission has eliminated much of the “real” commercial space that the Plan intended to bring jobs and potential customers into Warner Center to balance the residential additions to the area, and instead is using a “loop-hole” approach to satisfy the 2035 Specific Plan by relying on the allowed “Common areas” and 50% of the Live/Work units to make up more than half of the space the Specific Plan envisioned for “real” commercial ventures.



First floor layout with “full” commercial office space indicated in blue and some of the common space area in red.



Second floor layout with remaining “full” commercial space shown in blue.

Of the total 44,479 SF of non-residential space, the Common Areas (lobby, elevators, etc.) constitute 7,072SF (15.9%) and Live/Work constitutes 20,897 SF (46.98%--almost half the required commercial floor area). The flaw in this is that Live/Work units in WC are *not* attracting the commercial entities the vast majority of the units were envisioned to attract and are instead just serving as totally residential apartments which undermines the overall “balance of residential/ commercial intentions of the Specific Plan. In this case, Warner Center will be losing a building that is currently wholly devoted to serving office/commercial endeavors and replacing it with a larger structure with a reduced amount of “real” commercial space on a site located on Victory Blvd.--one of the most heavily traveled thoroughfares in Warner Center.

Architectural Design and Materials:

The Applicant is proposing a single 7-story building (Levels 1 and 2: R-1 construction; levels; levels 3-7: R-3 frame construction) with one level of a subterranean parking and a second parking level at grade. The proposed building has an internal courtyard and four decks—three with landscaped areas and seating and a fourth large front deck on the 3rd floor with a pool and spa feature.

The two bottom levels facing Victory are designated for office space. The pool deck on level 3 faces Victory, and the rest of the facades are presented in the current architectural style with angled, squared-off sections. The entry to the ground-level parking (and subterranean level) is on the east side of the structure.

Architecturally, the overall design is somewhat “boxy” with several areas highlighted by smooth stuccoed “frames” and either cantilevered or slightly tilted to break up the massiveness of the front façade. The architectural enhancements echo many of the previously approved designs for

Warner Center and are quickly becoming a design cliché for many architectural submissions in Los Angeles.



Front (south) and west facades showing architectural approach.



The rear (north) façade of the proposed structure breaks the architectural monotony through variations of cladding materials and an angled western section. One portion of the back of the structure is lowered by one floor and topped with a roof deck/garden on that section of the structure.

The rear elevation of the proposed structure overlooks the curve in the

Orange Line viaduct and will not be seen by many people. There will also be a high, landscaped fence or wall that shields the lower portion of the building from view. The illustration at left shows the architect’s effort to break up the massing of that façade by attempting to “segment” various portions with different colorations and materials.

The materials chosen by the developer include cement plaster in Sand, Dark Grey, White and in some areas Blue. The stucco is augmented by corrugated metal panels with both horizontal and vertical corrugations. Additional materials suggested are metals louvers, and perforated metal mesh for some of the balconies. Most of the balcony railings/fences will be glass with metal handrails, horizontal metal guardrails, and some white stucco balcony walls and railings.



Rear (North) elevation of new design and prior design

The roof materials are SR-1 (or better) to deflect some heat. There are no solar panels indicated, although the roofs must be outfitted to accept future solar use.



Aerial perspective of proposed structure and adjacent buildings.



New design of East façade and previous design.

Landscaping:

The Applicant has provided a landscape palette in his submitted packet and includes the following native trees compatible with the Rio section of Warner Center: Shoestring Acacia (4), Eastern Redbud (4), California Sycamore (4) and Coastal Live Oak (2). The Redbuds and Sycamores will be in 48” boxes, the Live Oaks in 30” boxes and the Acacias in 24” boxes. The existing 14 trees on the site will be removed and replaced, and there are no protected trees on the site.

Drought-resistant shrubs are indicated the rest of the planted areas. There are also “low water / water-wise” trees that will also be used including Strawberry Trees, Crepe Myrtle, Sweet Gum Yew Pine and Tipu Trees in 24” boxes and 15-gal. containers.

One focal point / public art piece is indicated for the forecourt of the building and no determination has been made if it is to be a large sculpture, a large water feature or some other type of art form.

Previous design:

This up-dated submission replaces the original design and site plan previously presented to PLUM and the public on March 19, 2019. The new proposed structure is slightly smaller than the original proposal, and has a slightly different footprint, although the height remains the same.



Original proposed structure had two 6-story “wings opening to Victory and a larger commercial office section. The rest of the building rose 7 stories.

One of the main architectural features was the green window-box frames around staggered windows, while the two south façade “wings” created a deep central elevated courtyard. The two “wings” were 6-stories high while the rest of the structure rose to 7-stories. The original proposal called for 244 residential units and the majority of the first and second levels were projected for 16,825 SF of office space that was set off by full-story windows. The total overall appearance of the design created a structure that building appeared bulky and insignificant to the PLUM Committee. One of the major features of the original design was the inclusion of mechanized parking to increase efficiency and room, which has been eliminated in the current design.

PLUM Comments from Oct. 7, 2021 presentation :

In the PLUM Committee’s review of the revised design for the Victory Place project, the following were among the key observations and requests:

- Lack of Affordable housing was highly questioned.
- Feeling that the project is still very “boxy” and that the roofline needs more roofline articulation to break up the flat, linear profile from the East and West views.
- Architectural detailing appears very “me too” with use of window “frames: that are now the architectural highlight for at least 5 other WC projects.
- So many studios and 1 bedroom units that do not attract long-term tenants.
- Not sure there is a need for more Live/Work units and belief most will only serve as apartments and not commercial space. Live/Work are not particularly conducive for

commercial needs. Uptown District should be job/commercial oriented. Building not “artistic” enough to attract creative talent that would actually use the “Work” space—like architects, art directors, etc. Does not embody what the Uptown District is intended to be.

- Concerns about ingress/egress from driveway—especially to access east-bound lanes. Suggest a signal light or some other traffic feature to prevent accidents.
- Access gate from rear of property to Orange Line needed for bicycle access.
- Both eastern and western facades look very plain/unattractive.
- Glass railing around pool is unattractive and activity distracting to Victory drivers.
- Landscaping received favorable comments from majority of Committee.
- Garbage service and truck access for loading/unloading furnishings came under question.

Analysis and Assessment:

This new submission by the Applicant shows an attempt to make the structure look less massive and bulky, and to enhance its visual impact on Victory Blvd. However, the architecture on both the east and west facing elevations continues to look massive and undistinguished, which is critical since the project towers over the abutting buildings to both the east and west and those elevations are highly visible to motorists driving in both directions on Victory. The roofline on both East and West need greater articulation to break the visual monotony of the area.

The project would be considered a step forward for the site if it wasn't for three critical issues. First, is the lack—and possible reduction—of “real” office space contained in the project. The amount of “true” office space of the new building is remarkably reduced from the amount of commercial office space now offered in the existing structure on the site. The “Live/Work” model is proving to be an oxymoron in that those units are not serving as real commercial sites that are supposed to provide multiple job opportunities for residents of Warner Center, and are quietly being offered as residential sites only for developers who have failed to make the Live/Work attractive enough or functional enough to attract businesses that actually help balance the residential/commercial requirements envisioned for the 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan. Additionally, there is no signage plan to identify the proposed Live/Work units as “commercial businesses” for anyone driving past on Victory Blvd.

The second issue compounding residential availability is the fact that none of the residential units are earmarked to be offered as Affordable units meeting the State specified rental rate for Affordable housing. And the third issue centers on the need for family residential. While the Applicant is offering four 3-bedroom units, they will probably fail to attract younger families because there are no facilities or play areas for children.

It should also be noted that the landscaping plans supplied to PLUM show no pet relief areas or pet “run” areas. Both are critical due to the increasing numbers of apartment renters with dogs and the building location being so close to high traffic areas like Victory Blvd as well as the parking area for the restaurants next door. That means if there are dog owners, they will most probably use the entry forecourt or the driveway as dog relief areas.

The inclusion of a major art or water feature at the front of the building is a positive required addition provided that the size of the feature isn't minimized because of cost or made "vanilla" because of too many opinions. Also, including several trees in 48" boxes and 30" boxes is a beneficial inclusion because they should be at a size to begin producing much needed shade. However, the Applicant might think about increasing the sizes of some of the smaller trees because of the years it will take them to become meaningful specimens.

Heat generation, retention, and reflection are areas of concern. There is no indication that the walkways and court areas are using Cool-Crete technology or that steps have been taken to reduce any heat island impacts. As mentioned before, the addition of solar panels to the roof would also be a step forward in reducing energy impacts to the area power grid.

Considerations for the WHWCNC PLUM Committee:

1. Can any Affordable housing units still be added or converted?
2. With over 300+ new Live/Work units already either being constructed or already approved for construction in Warner Center, are any more L/W units needed? Are they economically viable? Will they actually bring businesses and new employment opportunities into WC? Or, will they be "Work" in name only and further imbalance the commercial/residential balance happening in Warner Center?
3. How will the businesses in L/W units advertise their location/services to vehicles/pedestrians using Victory? Current signage must be removed, and the WC signage rules won't allow anything like it to attract customers or identify the structure as anything more than just another apartment building.
4. What traffic patterns can be worked out with DOT for vehicles crossing Victory Blvd. lanes for ingress/egress? Will there be conflicts and problems with cross-traffic from the two retail centers on either side? Safety issues? Traffic limitations?
5. Materials and heavy equipment storage during construction need to be determined. Will Victory Blvd. have to give up a lane of traffic for storage or heavy equipment parking? Will sidewalks remain passable between the two shopping areas while construction is in progress? Will construction and/or equipment cause potentially dangerous viewsight problems for drivers exiting/entering the two retail centers and possibly cause accidents?
6. Can the building rooflines on the east and west facades be made more articulated and visually more distinctive, rather than maintaining their flat and linear silhouette?
7. Where will dog runs/pet relief areas be located? How many?
8. Can the sizes of more trees be increased to relieve the heat generation impacts of the walkways and roof areas?
9. There does not appear to any consideration to families or single parents living with children. Are there any areas that are specifically child-friendly?
10. How can you prevent any temporary parking in the eastern driveway section that could negatively impact the retail stores in the adjacent center to the east or possible cause entry/egress problems with your parking entrances?
11. How does the project add to the overall needs of the Warner Center Community, and what changes can help it become more useable space for both the community and the City?

PLUM Motion:

As pertaining to Case DIR-2018-7402-SPP (Victory Place) at 21201 Victory Blvd., Woodland Hills, CA 91303, after having held three (3) live or virtual electronic public meetings for the application filed by Mark Schwartz-Levine Family Properties, LLC, for demolition of an existing 2-story office suites complex and the construction of a 7-story, 99-foot high, 215,268 SF commercial office and residential apartment structure. The proposal is for 44,479 SF of commercial space (with 16,510 SF of that as pure office space) and with 221 residential units (including 59 Live/Work units with 20,897 SF of commercial space) on 1.5 acres in the Uptown District of Warner Center. The WHWCNC Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee hereby finds that:

WHEREAS, the proposed plan and structure adheres to all of the requirements of the Uptown District of the 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan without requesting variances or exemptions; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed project incorporates the required percentages of both commercial and residential space; and commercial space and residential space; and,

WHEREAS, the development provides for 9,356 SF of *usable* Publicly Available Open Space (PAOS) on a site totaling 63,372 SF of space; and,

WHEREAS, a total of 200 parking spaces including 5 handicapped spaces and 61 EV charging spaces are being provided; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed landscaping will include shade trees and drought-resistant plantings to replace the current front asphalt parking area; and,

WHEREAS, the owner/developer has agreed to work with representatives of the WHWCNC and the Council District-3 office on choice and placement of the major art design element or feature proposed for the front PAOS of the property,

Therefore, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Planning Land Use and Mobility Committee, for the findings and conditions stated herein, finds that application and plans submitted by Mark Schwartz-Levine Family Properties, LLC, its affiliated architects, and land use representatives receive the support of the Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council (WHWCNC) for their requested actions contingent upon the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The developer and owner work with the City Department of Traffic (DOT) to resolve potential traffic dangers from cars entering and exiting from the property's shared driveway.
2. The developer/owner present a signage proposal to the WHWCNC Board that meets the WC 2035 Specific Plan requirements, and assists the commercial and L/W tenants of the building.
3. Submit a lighting plan for the property to the WHWCNC Board before approval of this property.
4. Provide the WHWCNC Board with the plan for storing materials and large equipment at the site before the WHWCNC Board approves this motion.
5. Meet with Metro, or CalTrans and City officials about adding a gate/passageway from the property to the Orange Line bikeway.
6. Consider adding architectural elements to the east and west rooflines to break the linear line and add visible height articulation to the project.
7. Consider adding solar panels to the roof of this structure.

8. Consider making the proposed shade trees in the landscape plan larger so that shade can be an immediate benefit to new residents/businesses.
9. Consider using non-transparent materials to replace the glass fencing around the pool on the south façade.
10. Consider making several residential units comply with the State’s Affordable housing requirements
11. Consider adding several dog rest areas to the project plan.

The Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee recommends that the Board of the Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council advise the City of Los Angeles Planning Department and Council District 3 Councilmember Bob Blumenfield of its findings and subsequent recommendations to APPROVE this motion presented on December 2, 2021

Motion: Marty Lipkin

Second:

Vote: **Aye:** **Nay:** **Abstain: 0**