

REAL ESTATE FOCUS

MGA Campus Could Redesign Chatsworth

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Staff Reporter

From a civic center to corporate offices to an upcoming live/work campus in Van Nuys, **Linespace** has exerted a game-changing impact on Valley architecture.

The Los Angeles design studio, forged by partners **Nick Groh**, **Clint Woensner** and **Max Beach**, is currently working on the new **MGA Entertainment** headquarters project, which they hope will transform Chatsworth into a high-tech hub.

MGA Chief Executive **Isaac Larian** has relocated the world's largest privately-owned toy company from its Van Nuys digs to a new headquarters at an in-progress campus being developed by **Jason Larian**, the chief executive's son.

Branded 24, the ambitious project at 20000 Prairie St., bound by Winnetka Avenue to the west and Prairie Street to the north and currently in phase two of three of its construction schedule, is keeping Linespace's core team busy as they create all kinds of elements for the office park, including a 15-foot-high, aluminum-forged contemporary sculpture which, depending on which angle it is viewed, either resembles the number "24" or abstract art. They are also conceiving the site wayfinding totems, a combination of metal and acrylic.

Signage

At the development, designed by **KFA Architects** of Santa Monica, Phase I involved refurbishing the existing headquarters building; Phase II has buildings C and D, which are the yet-to-be-leased apartments and retail spaces, currently under construction; and Phase III will tackle buildings A and B, to consist of more residential units and parking stalls. The grounds will also include open space, such as exercise trails and a lawn for outdoor movie nights.

Linespace partners Groh and Woensner said Jason Larian, who with **Ryan Hekmat** heads Van Nuys-headquartered **Uncommon Developers**, has been very open-minded to ideas that will advance the design for his father's company campus into avant-garde territory.

"He's looking for a combination of timeless with current and progressive," Groh said.

The Larians hope to see the office park become a template and a catalyst to sparking a tech and entertainment corridor in Chatsworth.

"This is kind of transforming that area," Groh said.

Phase II will be ready in 2020 while Phase III, to be started right after, has yet to secure a completion date.

Rendering: MGA Entertainment's headquarters campus in Chatsworth.



In addition to the MGA project, Linespace has designed some of the most recognized images in the Valley — namely, the signs visitors see as they search for parking at office and government facilities.

The firm worked on the signage for the Calabasas Civic Center, designed by architect **Robert A.M. Stern Architects**, a decade ago.

"We used solid bronze lettering because they're supposed to last 100 years," Groh explained.

In Woodland Hills, **Thrifty Oil Co.** purchased the Warner Gateway property, at 21820 and 21860 Burbank Blvd., six years ago. The property consists of two office buildings with 132,422 and 123,442 square feet. After another design firm's work did not work out, Thrifty and landscape design firm **Withee Malcolm Architects** of Torrance hired Linespace for an "exterior refresh" of the corporate campus.

Linespace's challenge here was to devise seven sign types, including the main entry monument, parking monuments and way-finding signage, on a limited budget. The firm, which sometimes collects \$150,000 to \$180,000 in design fees from large clients,

worked with under \$100,000 for this project. Linespace was charged with doing signs that included placards above the building's four main entrances, where they designed lights to shine down and not only illuminate but indicate the ingresses to campus visitors, especially useful in the winter time when daylight fades early.

Although comprised of two buildings, the Linespace partners said that the layout at this office campus, which has nearly 50 tenants including **Burns and Wilcox Insurance**, **Los Angeles Daily News** and **Pacific Southwest Finance**, felt more like four buildings because each edifice had a north and a south component.

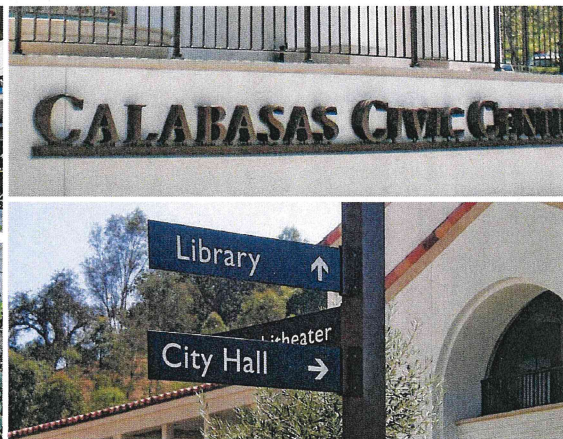
The creative process proved a lengthy one. The Linespace partners explained that while Thrifty Oil originally wanted something with contemporary flair, "maybe something Apple or Google would do," as Groh put it, when Linespace presented its renderings, the client retreated to a more traditional corporate style with Gotham font. Woensner said he and the team decided on a leaf motif for the signage, echoing the Sycamore trees populating the

Warner Gateway campus.

After a year of work, the firm wrapped up the project in December 2017. However, it took another year for Chatsworth-based sign fabricator **Sign Group/Karmen** to complete the aluminum signs, with everything falling into place by December 2018.

Another Linespace project recently unfolded in Burbank at Johnny Carson Park, located across the street from the old NBC studios where the television comedian used to tape "The Tonight Show." In fact, the long-running late-night talk show's old logo, with its Google-style flourishes, became the inspiration for the shape and details of the signage Linespace designed for the public space.

In 2014, the city of Burbank contracted L.A.-based **AHBE Landscape Architects** to re-do the aging recreational area, and AHBE in turn subcontracted Linespace for the assignment. New bridges now abound over a Los Angeles River-fingerling creek which runs through the reworked 18-acre park at 400 Bob Hope Drive, while other additions include new benches and picnic stations, an exercise pathway and kids' play area.



Directions: Left, Linespace display at Johnny Carson Park in Burbank; center, new sign at Warner Gateway in Woodland Hills; right, Calabasas Civic Center enhancements.