

Converting a Movie House

Workers prepare former Mann Theater as a place of worship.

2/15/2005

Brian Franks, Signal Business Editor

A demolition crew has begun transforming a former 17,031-square-foot Valencia multiplex into a church. Sylmar-based Vision Builders Group began demolishing the interior of the former Mann Theater on Cinema Drive on Feb. 3, to prepare it as the future site of Church On The Way.

The demolition process is expected to take four weeks, said VBG co-owner Dario Pascarelli. VBG is a commercial design company that specializes in the construction of churches.

Once the interior demolition is complete, renovations to the church are scheduled to begin once VBG receives approval from the city of Santa Clarita.

Pascarelli said he is hopeful that the church, which is designed to seat more than 1,000, will be complete within 10 to 12 months.

"It is going to be a great location in that area, so people don't have to drive to the (San Fernando Valley)," Pascarelli said. "It is great thing for the city of Santa Clarita."

Plans to turn Mann Theater into a church were approved in June, when the city of Santa Clarita granted a permit for the Church on the Way to open a campus on the site. The approval changed the use of the property from the theater to a place of worship.

For the exterior of the building at 23415 Cinema Drive, the church isn't planning for extensive renovations, Pascarelli said.

The Mann Theater was the first multiplex in the Santa Clarita Valley. It was renovated and expanded in 1983, but closed a few years ago.

The Church on the Way, also known as the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, has two major campuses on Sherman Way in Van Nuys, as well as a seminary. It sponsors a television program and 24-hour radio broadcasts on stations in Lancaster, La Crescenta, Ventura County and Los Angeles.