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DAWN MEGLITHUNA/Acorn Newspapers

GRADING—Earth-moving machinery navigates the property at 1710 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., former home of Lupe's Mexican Restaurant.

Work gets going at Lupe's

■ Hillside carved to make way for retail, apartments

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Developing Martha Zuniga's old multi-acre sprawl next to Thousand Oaks Boulevard is proving to be more difficult than expected.

The founder of Lupe's Mexican Restaurant died in 1997, but the land she purchased in the 1940s adjacent to what would become Jungland remains in the spotlight today due to plans

approved in early 2017 to build the city's first mixed-use development there.

The latest logistical challenge for the builder, who has already designed around a 50-year-old storm drain that bisects the property and navigated scores of protected trees: a barely accessible power line.

Project partner California Commercial Investment Group Inc. filed a request with the city at the start of summer to allow crews to prune four oak trees standing in the way of a utility trench and manufactured slope in the northwest corner of the property.

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RICHARD GILLIARD/Acorn Newspapers

EARTH MOVED—A photo taken July 31 from Thousand Oaks Boulevard shows the work being done at the former home of Lupe's Mexican Restaurant. The city's 25th anniversary oak, seen at left, is being closely protected during construction, as are several other trees at the site.

Lupe's

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"They have to relocate the Edison line," said senior planner Stephen Kearns of the city's community development department. "Before they can disconnect the lines, they need to reroute it so Vintage Garden (the property's neighbor) is not without electricity."

The trees stand in the area near where Lupe's patio used to sit. The landmark restaurant at 1710 E. T.O. Blvd. closed in 2016 after nearly 70 years in business and Zuniga's children sold the site to investors, setting the stage for the new development.

CCIG needs permission from the city to work within the protected zone of the trees, which, by law, extends 5 feet beyond the

city's tree expert will then make visits to the site to ensure no damage is being done to the tree.

Of particular concern to some Thousand Oaks residents is the city's 25th anniversary tree, an estimated 400-year-old valley oak that stands in what was the east side of Lupe's parking lot.

Developers designed around the tree and are planning to build a deck around it where the public can lounge. The anniversary tree, Kearns said, is doing just fine.

The work as approved by the planning commission in February 2017 allows for the removal of 16 coast live oak trees, four that will be cut down and 12 that will be transplanted elsewhere. Four landmark trees, protected due to their species and size, have already been removed.

Any oaks that can't be transplanted will be replaced at the city's standard 3-1 ratio. The de-

said, noting that the grading at the rear of the project, nearest the freeway, is ahead of schedule because crews didn't run into any anticipated bedrock.

The mixed-use development is the first of its kind approved on Thousand Oaks Boulevard. Another, proposed down the street at 299 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., is scheduled to go to the City Council this month.

Plans for the Lupe's site involve the construction of 36 market-rate apartments and 4,980 square feet of commercial space, which city leaders hope will attract both a restaurant and a cafe/bistro. The buildings will stand three stories high.

Of the 36 apartments, 25 will have two bedrooms, nine will be one-bedroom and two will have three bedrooms, according to current plans. Four of the units will be live-work apartments with a