

Will a New Hotel Destroy Sunset Junction and All Else That Is Cool?

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By [Hillel Aron](#)



Artwork by Chuck Chugumlung; courtesy Save Sunset Junction

The hippest street corner in America's hippest neighborhood may be under threat.

[A group of concerned Silver Lake-ians](#) fear that a proposed hotel at the junction of Sunset and Santa Monica boulevards, across the street from Intelligentsia Coffee, the famous "Sunset Junction" sign and all that is holy, will spell the end of the beloved neighborhood.

The newly proposed hotel is part of a [three-part project dubbed "Junction Gateway,"](#) to be built by the developer Frost/Chaddock. The proposal originally consisted of three mixed-use buildings (the mullets of development — businesses on the ground floor, apartments on top), one at the [now-closed-and-painted-white Bates Motel](#), one at the site of the 4100 Bar and the other at 4000 Sunset Blvd., at the intersection of Sunset, Sanborn and Santa Monica.

The first two of those projects have drawn little objection from the community, but the third has always been controversial, drawing the usual set of objections — too much traffic, not enough parking, too high, too ugly and so on. For a brief period of time, [there was hope that the Silverlake Music Conservancy would buy the property off of Frost/Chaddock](#), but that deal fell through.

Now, the developers say they have a compromise that should satisfy the naysayers — instead of a five-story mixed-use building at 4000 Sunset, they're proposing a four-story, 94-room hotel.



Artist rendering of the hotel

Courtesy Frost/Chaddock

"We've tried as hard as we can to be responsive to the community, and have made many, many changes to the project," says Frost/Chaddock spokesman Glenn Gritzner. "While we know that no development will make everyone happy, we feel like with evolution of 4000 Sunset into a hotel, we feel that more people are looking forward to this project than ever."

But the opposition isn't mollified. In fact, it's as pissed as ever.

That opposition is being led by Christine Kantner, a woman who, along with husband Gareth, owns the property across the street from that would-be hotel, a property that now houses Intelligentsia, the Cheese Store of Silver Lake, the Sunset Junction sign and the Kantners' own Cafe Stella.

"If the hotel was three stories with no balconies and mindful of the residents, then there'd be no problem," Kantner says. "Right now, we have a cruise ship parking at Sunset Junction."

She takes particular exception to the rooftop pools and balconies: "I don't think the residential neighbors need balconies and pools on roofs, balconies looking down on people like they're in a zoo."

The group has made a brilliantly apocalyptic poster, [depicting the "cultural annihilation" they say the project will bring](#):



Artwork by Chuck Chugumlung; courtesy Save Sunset Junction

Kantner paid a call on the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council on Wednesday night, urging the 21-member body to formally come out against the hotel. This being a Silver Lake Neighborhood Council Meeting, this led to shouting and name-calling.

A few members of the audience are supportive of the hotel proposal. One of them, Dan Martin, got up to speak.

"I just moved into the neighborhood," Martin said. "I'm actually in favor of this development."

"Of course!" another audience member shouted derisively.

"I guess I'm the only one here that cares about money and property values," Martin retorted. This earned some scattered applause. Martin went on to say that the council wasn't qualified to talk about the proposal's zoning variances.

"How much did they pay you to say that?!" Kantner shouted at Martin.

A man in the audience shouted at Kantner: "Tear down the wall!" This referred [to a concrete wall the Kantners put up in 2012](#), shielding Cafe Stella's outdoor patio from the street. "Tear down the wall, and then you can talk."

After some more shouting back and forth, Martin said: "You guys don't have to act like animals. I mean, we are adults."

Anyway. The neighborhood council avoided taking a stance by referring the whole matter to a committee, although many of the council members are quite clearly opposed to the hotel, as, indeed, are many other nearby residents, who fear that the Frost/Chaddock buildings will lead to another construction boom.

"Sunset Junction, it's the heart of the neighborhood," says environmental attorney David Bell, who lives in East Hollywood. "Developers are eyeing that whole thing."

The project is going through its legally mandated environmental review process. It may face a bumpy road to approval. At a recent town hall meeting about the hotel proposal, the much-feared environmental attorney Robert Silverstein — [the man famous for suing to stop numerous developments in the city](#) — sat in the audience taking copious notes.