

# Advocates seek to preserve building

By Blake Herzog  
The Desert Sun

**PALM DESERT** — Historic preservation advocates are hoping the City Council will overturn a commission's approval of changes to the facade of one of the city's oldest buildings today.

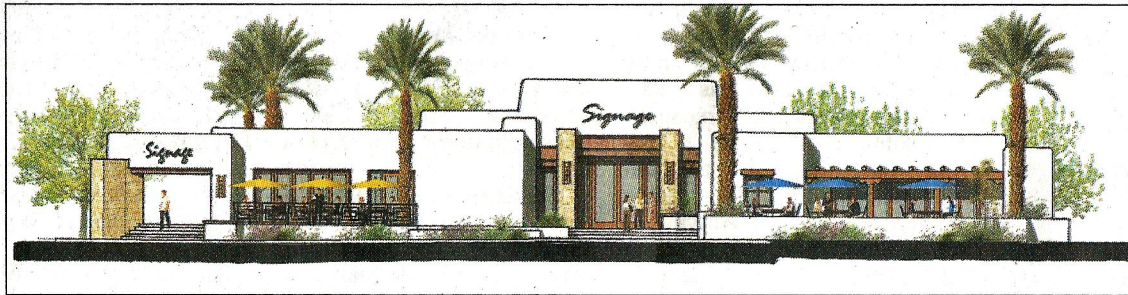
Known as the Desert Magazine building, the adobe-styled structure at 74-225 Highway 111 was built by one of Palm Desert's pair of founding brothers in 1948, and most recently housed LG's Prime Steakhouse, which closed last summer after 20 years.

Mayor Pro Tem Bill Kroonen called for a council review of the Architectural Review Commission's July 10 decision in favor of the changes, though he said he personally "didn't have a problem with it."

He and Councilwoman Jan Harnik met Wednesday with the owner and architect, as well as members of the city's Cultural Resources Preservation Committee, to "exchange ideas," Kroonen said.

Don Graybill, who's also president of the Historical Society of Palm Desert, appealed to owner Sam Rasmussen to preserve what's left of the building's Pueblo Revival architecture.

"The building is probably the most important historical building in our town," he said. "Any modifications we approve now that take it further away from the way it was built will really detract from the original purpose



A rendering shows planned changes to the former Desert Magazine building, most recently home of LG's Prime Steakhouse, which will be considered by the Palm Desert City Council when it meets today. COURTESY OF JOHN VUKSIC

and appearance."

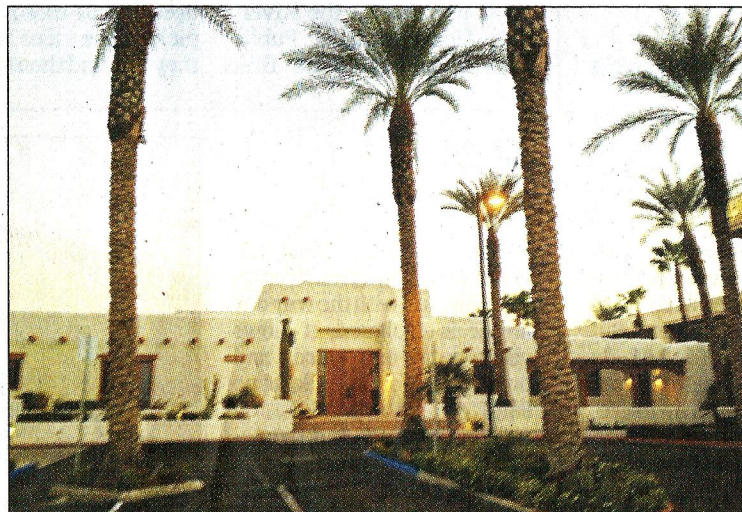
Rasmussen said he's trying to find tenants for the building, which also housed a Kaiser Grill restaurant until about five years ago.

"We're never going to get back the Desert Magazine. We're never going to have a Desert Magazine plaque out front. It's a restaurant building now," Rasmussen said.

Rasmussen wants to add a second patio dining area, stone-clad columns and stairs, and handrails to the front and east entrances, as well as add some windows and replace the wooden front doors with glass. The design also removes the dark wood posts, or vegas, adorning the front of the building.

Architect John Vuksic, who is on the Architectural Review Commission and abstained from the 8-0 vote, said the renovations will allow more light into the building and make it more marketable.

"The owner has two letters of interest from two restaurants, and both of them require us to imple-



The former Desert Magazine building in Palm Desert was built in 1948. The City Council will review proposed changes to the facade of the structure, which were approved by the city's Architectural Review Commission. BLAKE HERZOG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ment the re-imagining," he said.

Graybill said adding so much glass and other features would run counter to the Native American ar-

chitecture that inspired the structure.

"An adobe building wasn't meant to be open to the desert, it was pro-

tecting you from the desert."

According to a city staff report and one prepared for the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation by local architect Patrick McGrew and submitted to the city, this was one of the first major structures to be completed in Palm Desert.

Kroonen said he can remember seeing that happen.

"On my first trip to Palm Desert when I was about 10 years old, my brother-in-law was a mason working on that building," he said. "He told me he personally laid the first brick and he laid the last brick."

Randall Henderson moved the printing press and main offices of his Desert Magazine there from El Centro, opening with them an art gallery, gift shop and gem shop.

The building also housed Palm Desert's first bank and post office, according to the foundation's report.

Rasmussen bought it 14 years ago and built the two office buildings that now flank it, which opened in 2001.

Wednesday's meeting ended with Rasmussen sticking by his original plan and Kroonen indicating he would still support it.

Graybill left the meeting saying he was "very discouraged, very discouraged."

The council will meet at 4 p.m. today in the council chambers at City Hall, 73-510 Fred Waring Drive.

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