

**Your Turn**

Steven Keylon

Guest columnist

Plan sacrifices too much of Town & Country Center of Palm Springs

It was recently announced that on Monday, Oct. 22, at 3 p.m., a community meeting will be held at Palm Springs City Hall where Grit Development will present a master plan for the "rehabilitation" of the Town & Country Center, developed by the architectural firm of Marmol Radziner.

After a long preservation battle, and after years of demolition by neglect, the City Council voted in 2016 to designate the Town & Country Center as a Class 1 Historic Site, recognizing the entire site as a masterpiece of environmental design, by master architects A. Quincy Jones and Paul R. Williams. Master Architects Donald Wexler, John Porter Clark and Albert Frey are also included in the designation.

Grit Development recently invited members of Palm Springs Preservation Foundation to a meeting at its offices where Marmol Radziner presented a preview of what will be presented to the public on Monday. At our preview meeting, we learned that the "rehabilitation" master plan proposes to demolish an astonishing 50 percent to 60 percent of the historic fabric of this architectural jewel.

That is not a responsible "rehabilitation" plan. Instead, it is the unnecessary destruction of historic resources, qualified for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as local Class 1 historic designation.

Last weekend, The Desert Sun published a Valley Voice column by Grit Development President Michael Braun. In it, he claims to have had recent epiphanies about the value of historic preservation, saying "history must be preserved for future generations." He also wrote that "City leaders and the community need to be sensitive and smart about planning any kind of revitalization that capitalizes on the opportunity for success and in turn robs us of our history." The "rehabilitation" master plan that PSPF previewed does the opposite.

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation strongly urges Grit Development to hire a qualified preservation architect, as outlined by the Secretary of the Interior's standards, to help guide it through the master planning process. Having seen the proposed plan, PSPF believes strongly that all of Grit's objectives for the revitalization of the Town & Country Center can be met with preservation alternatives.

You don't need to look any further than Kaptur Plaza (formerly Tahquitz Plaza), which was once also threatened with demolition, and which is now a thriving community gathering space. It is nearly rented to capacity, and just try to find a free table at Koffi on a weekend.

That kind of success story is possible at the Town & Country Center, too, with thoughtful, responsible planning, guided by a qualified preservation architect.

Email Steven Keylon, vice president of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, at Srk1941@gmail.com.