



## Demolition of mid-century modern home postponed

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THE DESERT SUN

Demolition of an Alexander Construction Company-built mid-century modern home has been postponed by a Palm Springs commission following complaints by neighbors and residents who said destroying the home could ruin the character of the neighborhood.

The Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board on Tuesday stayed a request to knock down and rebuild a home at 252 N. Sunset Way. Property owner Kevin Vanderzanden had filed an application to demolish the home, which as a class three historic site has to be reviewed by the preservation body.

About a dozen neighbors, residents and Palm Springs architecture aficionados spoke at the meeting, the majority of whom asked the board not to allow the demolition to move forward. Multiple people said they were worried allowing the owners to knock down the home would create a dangerous precedent and that mid-century homes like the one in question were part of what makes Palm Springs what it is.

The five board members present unanimously voted to grant a 120-day pause on the demolition. The four month postponement will give those concerned citizens time to study the neighborhood and attempt to achieve enhanced historic preservation status for the area.

Contractor and resident



ZOE MEYERS/THE DESERT SUN

The Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board temporarily postponed the demolition of a mid-century modern home in Palm Springs, seen here on Wednesday.

Sean Gaines represented the owners who live in Seattle. He said the Vanderzandens planned to retire at the house on Sunset at the end of this year or beginning of the next.

“They picked that neighborhood specifically because of the architecture,” he said. “They are enthusiastic about mid-century modern aesthetics. However, this particular house has so many internal

problems with it that the cost benefit of major renovation and addition was more expensive than tearing it down and beginning anew.”

Gaines said there were significant issues with the foundation, plumbing and electrical systems. A city staff report put the home in “fair” condition. He added the proposed new home had been carefully designed to match the rest of the

neighborhood and the about 600 square feet of added living space would not be seen from the street.

Palm Springs Preservation Foundation president Erik Rosenow implored the board to halt the demolition. He attributed the design of the home to famed architect William Krisel.

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"The city of Palm Springs in the past few years has designated two similar architect designed tract homes as class one historic sites," he said, adding the homes met multiple criteria for the designation. "We believe 252 North Sunset would likewise meet those criteria."

Rosenow said other homes in the area had successfully undergone extensive renovations and updating and many homes that are demolished and rebuilt lose their original character.

"In short, the replacement is never as good as the original," he said.

Lee Wilson Jr. said he owns a home nearby that looks extremely similar to the one being torn down.

"You own your own property and you have the right to do with your own stuff, but an Alexander, Krisel type house is something special," he said. "As a resident of Sunrise Park I'm just opposed to it."

Rick Berg, who lives in the Sunmor neighborhood, said he opposed the demolition and believed the neighborhood as a whole should be preserved.

"This is a significant mid-century home in a concentration of mid-century homes that is one of the largest tracts of such buildings in Palm Springs," Berg said. "I strongly believe that this concentration of mid-century homes should be organized and recognized as a historic district. In fact, I obtained an application yesterday morning to initiate that project after learning of this demolition application."

According to a city staff report, the

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**RICK BERG**

Sunmore neighborhood resident

home was constructed in 1958 by the Alexander Construction Company.

The report said the home was not a historic resource and was not located in a historic district, though a 2015 survey said the home could be a "contributor" to

an area which could be eligible for historic district designation.

The report recommended the board take no action on the matter and allow the demolition to proceed, noting, "if 252 Sunset Way were to be demolished, a significant concentration of contributing structures would remain and the Sunmor/Enchanted Homes tract would still appear to be potentially eligible as a historic district."

Some changes have been made to the home since it's original construction, including the addition of a swimming pool and back patio and electrical upgrades. The original carport has also been enclosed into a garage.

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