

Your Voice

Include Town & Country Center in talks



Your Turn

Gary Johns
Guest columnist

For years, local preservationists have worked diligently and passionately for the rehabilitation of the much-neglected Town & Country Center, a true architectural gem (1948, Paul R. Williams & A. Quincy Jones).

The preservationist's advocacy has been textbook-worthy. Intelligent and clever, it has included petitions, newspaper opinion pieces, letter-writing and email campaigns, scholarly historic assessments, an expert sustainability study, and recently even a four-minute

movie!

At every turn, this advocacy has been stymied by a stubborn owner (Grit Development), whose unwitting ally has been a series of city councils, all seemingly powerless to cure a malignancy in the heart of their downtown.

Hence, one can sympathize with the preservationist's palpable excitement over the possibility that the Town & Country Center might be in the mix of the city's ongoing California Code Section 1090 negotiations with that owner.

Like the *deus ex machina* of some ancient Greek play transported to today's sunny Southern California, the 1090 negotiations might very well solve the seemingly intractable problem of the beloved center.

As Grit Development throws around properties (e.g., The Boulders and Crescendo) like Monopoly game deeds during the 1090 negotiations with the city, the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation asked in a recent letter to Palm Springs officials: "Why isn't the T&CC in the mix? Why isn't the city demanding it be in the mix?"

The T&CC is a far more desirable property to the community, it's a critical connector to the tribe's new development, and it's a property the city formally designated as historic in 2016.

Fortunately, at a recent City Council meeting on the topic, Council member J.R. Roberts did have the insight to ask that question.

It's a good question that more city of-

ficials need to be asking.

Today, we are quite fortunate to have in place the most pro-preservation City Council ever elected. If the conundrum of the T&CC is ever to be solved, it will be on this council's watch.

The stage is set, the *deus ex machina* of the 1090 negotiations has been unveiled. It is time to end the drama of the Town & Country Center.

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