

Palm Springs takes on development and demolition

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The Desert Sun

Amid towering cranes in downtown Palm Springs helping to build some of the most new development the city has seen in decades, other longtime

structures may be heading toward demolition.

The Palm Springs Building Code Appeals Board will consider a demolition permit for Tahquitz Plaza on Tuesday. Tahquitz Plaza is a collection of four office buildings, designed by Hugh Kaptur and built in the

mid-1970s. It is now owned by Nexus Development, which would like to demolish at least part of the site to make way for new development. The demolition permit has been appealed by the Palm Springs Modern Committee and Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, two

preservationist groups.

Meanwhile, a construction fence has gone up around a commercial and retail building on South Indian Canyon Drive near Ramon Road. The 1965 building was designed by Donald Wexler. The fence was placed to keep the building safe and free

of trespassers, say city officials.

Less than a mile down the street, the Rock Garden Restaurant sits empty and bereft, awaiting demolition.

The Woodbridge Pacific

Please see DEMOLITION, 5A

Demolition

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Group plans a partially gated housing and commercial development on about 12 acres of South Palm Canyon Drive land, which includes the Rock Garden property — one of two major magnets for homeless people in the area.

Woodbridge president Todd Cunningham has also offered to help the city demolish the adjacent Mac Magruder car dealership.

"It's an eyesore. It's a problem. We'd like it to go away," Cunningham told the city's Architectural Advisory Committee on Monday.

A quarter of his 80-unit development would include living spaces above commercial property. Cunningham doesn't anticipate restaurants on the site, but speculated the commercial tenants could include nail studios, salons and art galleries.

City staff noted that Cunningham's plans for vehicular gates into the development don't fit the city's master plan. But those gates would help keep homeless people out of the empty tribal land west of the proposed housing project, he said.

"It's a large open area that has hosted transients in the past and I suspect it'll host transients in the future," he said.

Any proposals for the project still has to go through multiple levels of approval before it

moves forward.

Meanwhile, in downtown, cranes have been brought in to aid in the development of a new six-story, 155-room Kimpton hotel and a three-story retail and commercial building to house a West Elm department store.

The Kimpton hotel's grand opening is set for October 2016, said Michael Braun, senior vice president for Wessman Development, the firm leading the redevelopment of downtown.

"The actual concrete structure is scheduled to stand by early November 2015," Braun added.

While the West Elm building, which is the steel structure going up next door to the Hyatt Palm Springs on Palm Canyon Drive, is set open in February

2016.

Workers can be seen on the north and south ends of town constructing the Arrive Hotel and redeveloping what was the Curve Palm Springs hotel, set to open in about six months after a multimillion dollar renovation of the 1960 motel.

The Palm Springs Planning Commission will consider a hotel proposal this week known as the 750 Lofts. The three-story, 39-room hotel and restaurant development would demolish a 1980s-era Bank of America Building on Palm Canyon Drive across the street from Trio restaurant.

While on the other side of downtown, perhaps one of the largest looming questions is whether the Magruder Chevro-

let dealership on South Palm Canyon Drive is coming down any time soon. A murder victim's body was found on the property in February.

The long-empty dealership sits on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians reservation and is controlled by the heirs of Leonard Saubel, Sr. They've been unwilling to pay to tear it down, and many have called on the city to do so in their place.

Bids came into the city last month ranging from about \$335,000 to \$716,000 to demolish the Magruder building, remove its foundations and install a 6-foot-high fence. Cunningham said he's willing to chip in half the cost of the low bid — and that he'd like to develop the Magruder site at some point.