

Craig Ewing

From: Roos, Marv [MROos@msaconsultinginc.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 03, 2009 6:59 PM
To: Craig Ewing
Subject: HSPB--Town and Country Center

To: Craig Ewing
 Historic Site Preservation Commission
 City Council

I have not weighed in on the Town and Country Center (nee Colburn Center) preservation debate but would like to offer some observations based on 38+ years of experience working in Palm Springs, 20 of which working in the Planning Department. I do not believe that the building is worthy of a Class 1 designation and its current condition is so far removed from the original Quincy Jones/Paul Williams collaboration that it is for all intents and purposes is a different building.

I first became aware of the Center in 1971 as a young planning staff member. Over the 20 years that I worked for the City, the Center frequently demonstrated the results of one of the serious dysfunctions that plagued much of Palm Canyon Drive—linearity. It also shared in the two tiered commercial system that elevated Palm Canyon Drive above Indian Avenue. The Center ignored the possibility of Indian (Canyon Drive) by orienting to Palm Canyon (Drive) and yet even then did nothing to insure a stream of pedestrians into the interior courtyard and this serious design miscalculation led to the lack of commercial viability of all but the shops facing Palm Canyon. The remarkable 30 year+ success of Zeldaz has little to do with its architectural pedigree and likely does not draw any unsuspecting patrons through the narrow walkway that is the last vestige of the original circulation system into the courtyard from Palm Canyon.

The planning department fielded many requests over the years to help various courtyard projects located off of Palm Canyon Drive in capturing the pedestrian traffic that never seemed interested in exploring anything but the stores right on the street. In spite of the allowance for arcade signs and other visual devices, the pedestrian traffic proved hard to turn off Palm Canyon. In the case of the Town and Country Center, at one point 20+ years ago, the owner (Tackett?) received approval to close off the northerly walkway into the courtyard and create another shop facing Palm Canyon Drive at the cost of several storefronts that formerly led pedestrians into the courtyard. What owners and architects would not give up in order to open these courtyards to pedestrians was the valuable Palm Canyon frontage. The loss of the walkway further reduced the likelihood of inducing pedestrian traffic into the courtyard area.

So what would we be saving and why? The architecture at one time was at least photogenic, primarily from the courtyard area looking toward the Town and Country or TJ's Rickshaw restaurants. The main publically viewed elevation on Indian, while relatively unchanged, was blah and never the subject of architectural interest. The dysfunctional site plan made the same mistake as many of the courtyard commercial centers along Palm Canyon by failing to "connect" the interior of the development to the multitude of passing pedestrians that encountered no reason to "look inside." Even reverting the design faithfully to the original would not solve that problem and the courtyard shops will continue to suffer.

The Town and Country Center, with one interesting elevation (unseen from any street), does not present a compelling argument for preservation.

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From: scottpalmsprings@aol.com [mailto:scottpalmsprings@aol.com]

Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2009 9:17 AM

To: Ken Lyon

Subject: Town and Country Center ("T&C") - a historic significant center - but should it be saved forever?

There is a premium on things that cannot be replicated. The T&C does not carry such a premium!

The T&C is unable to compete with other investment opportunities and that will not change in the next 30-50 years due to its design flaws to serve today's consumer.

Why would an investor put additional money into an asset that will produce sub par returns, especially if that asset has a history of producing negative returns.

Only governments can justify such investments for the greater good of the public, which is the reason taxpayers and not private investors fund such ventures.

Certain buildings should be saved with taxpayers money as they serve a public purpose and must be preserved due to their historic significance. The T&C has never been and will never belong in this category.

One should wonder also why a historic designation is being brought forward today and not in the last 30 or 40 years when the center was still in its original state?

A historic classification will maintain T&C's current status quo as no developer, city, charity or other organization can justify investing millions of \$ to restore a design that is unable to provide a consumer experience in the courtyard of the T&C that would attract tenants of any significance.


Everyone's resources are limited, especially in today's economic environment; developers, investors, and cities all should use them wisely.

An investment of at least \$5 million - \$10 million would be required to bring the T&C to its original state (which never was successful). The final dollar amount will depend on certain requirements like seismic retrofitting, asbestos abatement, lead base paint abatement, ADA requirements as well as building code upgrade requirements.

Current or future rents cannot justify such an investment.

Palm Springs should focus its energy, time and money on saving important restorable structures, which will help the revitalization of downtown Palm Springs, and not focus on assets that are unable to fulfill this important requirement.

Some in the community seek to preserve the Town & Country Center because of Identity of its original architect, the city has several other structures by the same architects, Which are better representations of their original work.

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