

# Town & Country Center a vital bridge to future downtown

The redevelopment of Palm Springs' downtown core is on the front burner again. Several more buildings are taking shape along Palm Canyon Drive and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians has announced a master plan for development across Indian Canyon Drive.

The look and feel of the area will be affected by these developments for years to come.

Sitting in the crosshairs of the two projects is the woefully forgotten A. Quincy Jones and Paul R. Williams 1940s Town & Country Center. The demolition of the center to make way for a new street connecting the two projects was a certainty until historic designation of the property in 2016 ended this idea. The historic center, however, can still connect the two projects.

Regardless of how you feel about the two mega projects, they come with a silver lining – a new tourist attraction in the form of “old town” Palm Springs. The stretch of real estate south of Tahquitz Canyon Way just hit the jackpot. The area is a pedestrian friendly streetscape of authentic 1920s Spanish architecture coupled with the city's best examples of commercial monuments from the midcentury period.

Drawn to Palm Springs by its mystique, the tourist and local alike can enjoy the environment that an old town offers: a non-corporate, local experience in human scale.

In a town that appreciates its architects, old town is packed with four E. Stewart Williams' buildings, a William Cody, a Don Wexler and a Lloyd Wright. Sidewalk cafes and specialty shopping give the area heart and soul and the Palm Springs Art Museum's Architecture and Design Center adds cachet to this “new” old town. A restored Plaza Theatre will once again bring 600 people to the area's sidewalks five times a week.

The old town appellation isn't well used today, but give it a few years.

There's a second silver lining, here, too: The Uptown Design District north of Ale-



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jo. This area also has blocks of human-scale shops and restaurants and like old town has the same mix of early Spanish architecture along with marvels of midcentury design.

Many of the shops and restaurants are mom and pop operations, owned by neighbors we see at the grocery store and at City Council meetings. These are active members of our community. Heart and soul is palpable here, too.

The chic clothiers Wil Stiles and Trina Turk operate in the historic 1947 Clark & Frey Office Building; Workshop Kitchen + Bar commands the courtyard at El Paseo, a repurposed 1926 Spanish building; and Albert Frey's 1934 Kocher-Samson Building and the 1936 Pacific Building house specialty retailers.

Vibrant and alive, the area celebrates its vintage architecture while creating a unique shopping and dining experience. There isn't a national brand or corporate logo to be seen and no one seems to mind.

These two distinct areas of Palm Springs are perfectly positioned and ready to receive the thousands of future Kimpton, Virgin and tribal project hotel guests. Patrons of these new hotels will be seeking the authentic Palm Springs. This area's preservation and restoration of our architectural buildings maintains that authenticity.

A restored Town & Country Center will connect the downtown and the tribe's burgeoning projects; not with a street, but with heart and soul.

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