

NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER
PAUL KORETZ
FIFTH DISTRICT



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Historic Century Plaza Hotel to be saved

An agreement has been reached to save the famed Century Plaza Hotel from demolition.

In 2009, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the hotel as one of America's 11-Most Endangered Historic Places, after a project was proposed that would have torn down the hotel and replaced it with a massive, dual tower mixed use development.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz – who took office in July 2009 and represents the 5th Council District that includes the Century City community where the Century Plaza Hotel is located – declared that the hotel would be demolished “over my dead body” and strongly urged that discussions take place to figure out a way to save the hotel. Those taking part in the discussions leading to the agreement include hotel property developers Next Century Associates, the Los Angeles Conservancy and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Councilmember Koretz says, “I am thrilled that this extraordinarily important building will be preserved and not demolished. For far too long, the City of Los Angeles has had a sad history of losing many of its key landmarks and institutions. Whether we’re talking about such icons as the Brown Derby, the Red Car or more recently the Ambassador Hotel, these are places and things that have shaped Los Angeles and that have been precious to the people and communities of this city. Unfortunately, too many were taken from us despite being incredibly vital and integral to Los Angeles life. The demolition of the Century Plaza Hotel would have been an incalculable loss to the entire Los Angeles region but especially to Century City and all of our City’s Westside, and we certainly don’t need a massive development in its place. That’s why I did everything in my power to have parties come together and work out an agreement saving the Century Plaza Hotel.”

The Councilmember noted that, “This agreement accomplishes some invaluable goals: we’re preserving a hugely significant community and cultural asset, and we’re protecting a sizable number of jobs that would be lost if the building was demolished and all the employees there were put out of work.” Koretz also stated that, “The work of preservationists concerning the Century Plaza Hotel will continue, step-by-step throughout the process, as the project evolves towards construction and then in any building might occur. I’ve made sure of that, by calling for the creation of a Preservation Advisory Group that will include representatives of the L.A. Conservancy and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.”

The Century Plaza Hotel, located at 2025 Avenue of the Stars, opened in 1966 as the centerpiece of Century City, a community that rose on the former back lot of 20th Century-Fox Studios. The 19-story curved hotel has been a prominent Los Angeles landmark and world-class destination for more than four decades. The existing 726-room hotel with its unique sweeping curved facade has been a gathering place for celebrities, politicians and world dignitaries, serving as a “West Coast White House” and important site for key events such as a presidential

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-- Page Two --

celebration for Apollo 11 astronauts. The hotel was designed by renowned architect and engineer Minoru Yamasaki, who would later design New York's World Trade Center twin towers.

The revised development project will preserve the existing hotel building while providing a mix of residential, office and retail uses on the property. The owners have the right to propose structures to the rear and/or the sides – any such proposal will require all necessary public review and permitting procedures before any approval may be granted. Whatever else may or may not be proposed for eventual consideration, the hotel building will continue to be the centerpiece of the property along Avenue of the Stars. New open space will be easily accessible to pedestrians. The preservation project will provide much additional required parking for all existing and proposed additional uses. The new project will have to comply with the Century City North Specific Plan.

“We are very pleased to have reached agreement on a plan that preserves the Century Plaza Hotel as a vital asset and cultural touchstone for Los Angeles,” says Linda Dishman, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Conservancy. “We’re extremely grateful to Councilmember Koretz for his leadership in bringing us all to the table, and to his staff for their dedication in finding a preservation solution.”

Councilmember Koretz thanked those who have shaped the agreement: “I truly appreciate the continuing collaborative efforts of Michael Rosenfeld and Next Century Associates, the Los Angeles Conservancy and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in saving the hotel.”

On February 12, a motion by City Councilmember Koretz will formally request the City's Cultural Heritage Commission to review the preservation project and maintain its eligibility as a City Historic-Cultural Monument. The project will undergo normal City review and approval processes including a full environmental impact report (EIR) which will be prepared later this year – a Draft EIR should be available for public review around mid-summer. The projected schedule includes approximately 18 months for environmental review and entitlement approval, and if such approval is granted, 3½ years for construction.

The agreement includes very detailed protocol for the sake of achieving significant, meaningful preservation – indeed, the agreement goes beyond preservation to include restoration of features to the hotel's original luster, wherever possible: for example, aluminum panels will be carefully cleaned and given protective coating to reinvigorate the hotel's signature exterior.

The existing hotel has 726 rooms. In the preservation project, the hotel building will be reconfigured to include some condominium residences and approximately 400 hotel rooms. A few other aspects of the Hotel will change, including some which have already changed many times over the years, such as the ballroom, which will be replaced by a new ballroom. The sunken plaza will be significantly filled in, but in a manner that will celebrate its shape and footprint. All such changes have been determined to be acceptable by the preservation experts studying the proposal, and will be further reviewed by the City's Cultural Heritage Commission.

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