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Lincoln Crossing debated

Altadena redevelopment project has its critics

By Elise Kleeman Staff Writer

ALTADENA - With parts of the Lincoln Crossing shopping center - the first major retail development here in many years - only weeks from completion, debate continues about whether the project's developer has carried out his promises to the community.

Following almost two decades of discussion, local residents selected architect Eric Lloyd Wright, grandson of the renowned Frank Lloyd Wright, to design a redevelopment project on a blighted stretch of Lincoln Avenue. Its first phase is between Woodbury Road and Crosby Street.

But some say that changes made under the leadership of developer Dorn Platz have tarnished Wright's original design.

"These guys from Dorn Platz promised us the world, and they've been trying to dismantle it since then. They pretty much almost have," said Town Council member Steve Lamb, himself an architectural designer.

Under particular debate are two buildings in the interior of the complex that will house several small businesses, some locally owned.

For many residents of the west Altadena area, though, even in their altered form the buildings are a welcome improvement from the rundown liquor store and empty lots that used to be on the block.

"Personally, I think it looks great up there," said Bobby Thompson, a member of the development's Project Area Committee and Town Council.

"Anything is better than nothing, and I think it looks beautiful," he said. "People in west Altadena, my constituents, they love this project, they want to see it completed."

Even relatively high rent rates, which in some cases will top those on more developed Lake Avenue, haven't deterred Thompson from setting up a small business in the complex.

Advertisement Some who support the Eric Lloyd Wright design don't think those high costs will be recuperated without the added attraction of the architect's name and style.

"From an economic standpoint, it's important to have a really good project," said Wright design associate Hannah Wear. "The community is not on the beaten path, and if they want to attract people from other parts of Las Angeles, they have to have something that's not a strip mall."

At Dorn Platz, the sentiment is quite different. "When is the last time you drove somewhere in Southern California just because of the architect?" asked Greg Galletly. "Ninety percent of the people that are going to go to this project live within a mile of it. They don't care who the architect is, they care if it's convenient."

The debate will doubtless continue at the PAC's next meeting - which is open to the public - on March 27 at the Business Technology Center, 2400 N. Lincoln Ave.

Meanwhile construction speeds onward, with at least one business scheduled to open by the end of the month.

"The people in this area, they can't wait," said Thompson. "One guy was saying to me the other day, 'I don't want to walk to the mall - I want to jump to the mall!'"

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