

Historical Nudge Doesn't Budge HB Purse Strings

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By Maresa Archer

Huntington Beach city fathers refused to earmark funds to save the historic tin buildings across from City Hall.

The City Council, acting as the Redevelopment Agency, would not allocate any money to restore or relocate the three buildings on the corner of Yorktown Avenue and Lake Street, which were erected by a Sam R. Bowen, a prominent Huntington Beach resident during the 1920s.

The Agency's 5-2 vote against spending redevelopment money does prevent the same group, acting as City Council, from establishing a restoration fund.

But comments made by council members Monday night does not indicate there is sweeping support for the structures.

"I'm all in favor of saving historic buildings, but I am not in support of spending taxpayers' money to save these tin buildings," said Councilman Jim Silva.

Council members Grace Winchell and Peter Green were the only officials in favor of saving the Bowen buildings.

Pacific Coast Homes, owner of the buildings, is requesting the city allow the structures to be destroyed in favor of building six houses on the site.

The houses would become a part of the firm's 80-unit development project under construction adjacent to the tin structures.

On the other hand, the city's

Historic Resources Board has requested that the buildings be restored as a museum, or renovated into retail shops and restaurants patterned after a successful project in Irvine in which tin buildings were renovated.

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History...

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The Bowen buildings were built in 1921 and used as manufacturing plants for oil well tools.

Instead of drilling for oil during the boom of the 1920s, Bowen sought his fortune in businesses that serviced the industry, according to Barbara Milkovich, chair of the Historic Resources Board.

Bowen became a prominent figure in Huntington Beach and served as mayor in 1928.

The future of the tin buildings will be decided by the Planning Commission at the first meeting in June.

