

ARROYO BUNGALOW REHAB



Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

STEFANOS POLYZOIDES is the architect and developer of a project to restore eight of the former Hotel Vista Del Arroyo bungalows and build upscale housing on the eastern slope of the Arroyo Seco.

Dilapidated structures getting new life

By **Sonya Gels**
CORRESPONDENT

PASADENA — Eight historic bungalows have long stood quietly decaying in a grove of pine and eucalyptus trees on the eastern Arroyo Seco hillside.

Vandals and arsonists have helped with their destruction by scrawling graffiti and setting fires. Transients have camped in the empty rooms. Otherwise, the buildings are decomposing peacefully.

Now, the area immediately south of the Colorado Street Bridge is teeming with bulldozers. A group of developers is restoring the neglected bungalows and adding new luxury housing there in a \$25 million project expected to last 17 more months.

"This is almost a case study of what would happen to a wood building if you let it rot for 35 years," Stefanos Polyzoides, architect and developer of the project, said, gesturing at one of the tumble-down structures. "They're very close to coming apart."

"I think it's a great relief and cause

for celebration that the project is under way," said Susan Mossman, executive director of Pasadena Heritage.

"We despaired every time it would rain. We thought of them as being buildings at risk."

Polyzoides and his wife and business partner, Elizabeth Moule, combined resources with developer and general contractor Lefevre Corp. to overhaul the buildings and add new ones.

In some cases the houses, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are so dilapidated that only

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17 courtyard-style units to be added

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the window and door frames can be retained. The architects plan to replicate the details they cannot save.

The site was long-neglected in part because of tensions between developers and preservationists, said Tim Lefevre of Lefevre Corp. Most developers wanted to raze all the buildings, sparking a fight with heritage-minded residents.

"We looked at it differently" from the tear-down advocates, Lefevre said. "We saw the buildings as a total positive."

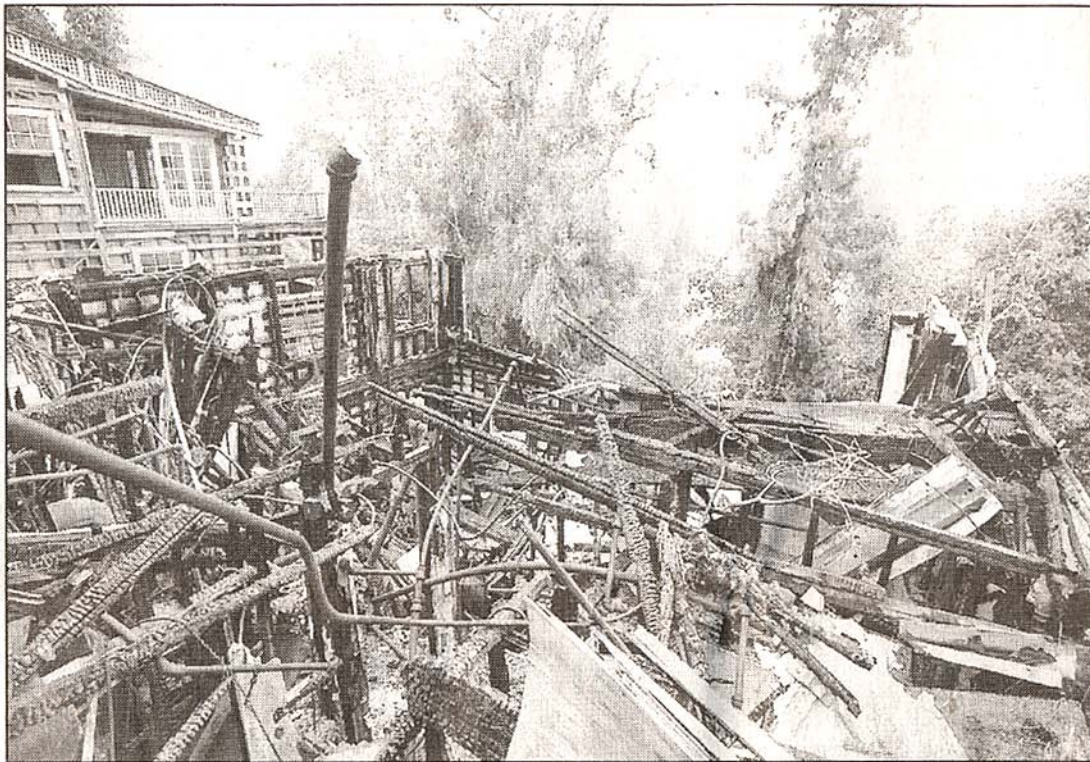
"Everyone's heart has been in the right place on this," Mossman said.

The 3-acre plot of land was once part of the grounds of the Hotel Vista Del Arroyo, which now houses the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Between 1920 and 1938, well-known Pasadena architects Myron Hunt (designer of the Rose Bowl), Sylvanus Marston, Garrett Van Pelt and Edgar Maybury designed 24 bungalows to sit next to the hotel.

The houses were rented to vacationing Midwesterners.

During World War II, the entire site was taken over and used as a military hospital. Later, the federal government kept it for an intelligence center.



Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

A FIRE DESTROYED this bungalow, one of eight that will be restored to create new housing in a \$25 million project expected to last 17 more months.

The military left its mark on the houses. Sprinkler systems hang clumsily from some ceilings; cheap plywood cabinets lean against a living room wall; utilitarian metal railings mar a winding staircase.

There was no spirit of preservation at the time, Polyzoides said.

"In the '50s, people thought that this stuff was crap," he said. It was not until the mid-1970s that preservationists and city leaders recognized the cultural value of the old buildings, he said.

In the meantime, half the bungalows had been torn down. Of the 12 that remain, four have already been restored and house nonprofit organizations, including the Western Justice Center. The rest were left to the elements.

Now, plans call for a total of 30 housing units along Grand Avenue, between the hotel and the Colorado Street Bridge. Thirteen will be in the historic bungalows.

Seventeen will be in new courtyard-style buildings to be constructed at the bottom of

the hill. An underground garage at the top of the hill will provide parking.

The units will range from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet, with one to three bedrooms.

Lefevre noted construction plans include building kitchens in the bungalows because they were built for Hotel Vista Del Arroyo guests who took their meals at the hotel.

Units are expected to sell for an average of just over \$1 million each. None of the units will be marked for affordable housing, Lefevre said.