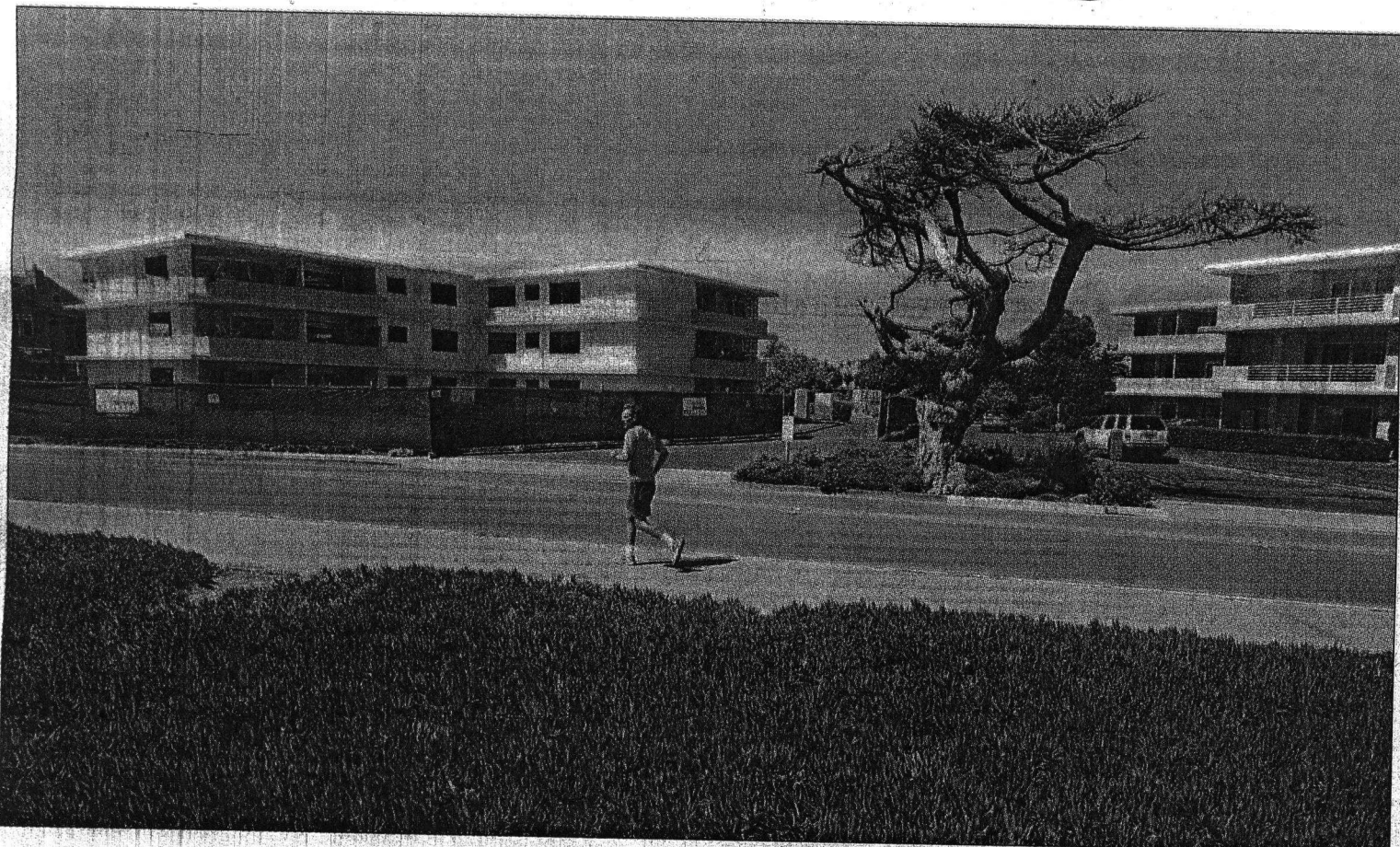


Condo complex coming down



The final phase of demolition is set to begin Monday on the Monterey Tower, one of the oldest condominiums in Santa Cruz. It was built in the 1960s. DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Condemned oceanfront building expected to be rebuilt

By J.M. BROWN

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SANTA CRUZ — The final phase of demolition is expected to begin next week on an oceanfront condominium building condemned by the city last year.

Joe Quigg, president of the homeowners association board for Monterey Tower, said he expects crews will begin tearing down the shell of the 18-unit, three-story building on West Cliff Drive on Monday. Work to clear out the interior

has been going on since the city issued a demolition permit in April.

Quigg said demolition could be finished by the end of August, and he hopes work on a new building, one with a similar footprint and design, could begin in October if the city issues a building permit after construction plans are submitted.

The years-long process of deciding whether to perform perpetual repairs on the 51-year-old structure or rebuild it has been costly and stressful for the owners.

"It's been difficult to get 18 people to agree on things," said Quigg, a local developer. "But it's happening."

In fact, Quigg's one-bedroom unit was scheduled to be auctioned off at the county building by his mortgage company Aug. 18 because he was in default. Quigg, who said he has worked out an arrangement to keep the property, said costs associated with demolition had caused him to fall behind.

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DEMOLITION

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Quigg said the demolition is expected to cost \$350,000, and construction of a new building is estimated at \$4.6 million — costs entirely borne by owners at rates determined by the square footage of their units. All owners have to secure financing before the rebuild can occur, Quigg said.

The new building is designed to have the same number of units, though it is proposed to be about 10 percent larger, Quigg said. It will contain one- and two-bedroom units, ranging from nearly 900 square feet to nearly 1,500 square feet.

Eight full-time residents and tenants were displaced after the city red-tagged the building in March 2010, citing a sagging roof and exposure of other structural elements. Other post-tension concrete buildings from the 1960s have a similar history of disrepair.

The condos, used as vacation homes and rentals by some owners, suffered under the salty ocean air and were determined by multiple engineering studies to be unsound. The majority of owners agreed to rebuild, though there were some who wanted to continue making fixes.

Mary Ann Sorensen, a Santa Rosa widow who bought a Monterey Tower condo for \$285,000 in 2000, voted against rebuilding in the hopes that further repairs would make the building viable. Unable to



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Workers are dismantling the Monterey Tower at 890 W. Cliff Drive next to Lighthouse Field.

afford the mortgage without a renter, Sorensen said she is now in foreclosure and paid \$7,500 in relocation expenses for a tenant.

"I don't know if we exhausted every avenue for it to be saved," she said.

But Rob Claassen, a lawyer in Palo Alto who moved over the hill after being displaced from his condo, said, "It was basically beyond repair. We have to do the responsible thing."

Claassen, whose father also owns a unit in the building, added, "The owners would have liked there to be a magic solution. But it was the nature of the construction."

UC Santa Cruz Chancellor

George Blumenthal is also one of the owners, but it wasn't known Monday how he had voted. Quigg said the vote to rebuild was anonymous, so the homeowners association board doesn't know who preferred to do repairs rather than rebuild.

As a renter, Bob Imlay wasn't afforded a vote about saving the second-floor condo where he and wife Betty lived for 3½ years with a 180-degree view of Monterey Bay. But he agreed the demolition should go forward and hopes for a shot at moving into the new building.

"I think it comes down to the soundness of the building," said Imlay, who has moved to

an apartment complex on Western Drive. "We would prefer to be there and not to have left. It's kind of sad."

The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control Board monitored the removal of 30,000 square feet of asbestos during the initial stages of demolition and found no problems, the agency reported. Quigg said nearly all of the building's materials will be recycled.

Construction is allowed by city ordinance from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., but Quigg said the demolition work will likely be completed by 5 p.m. each day. He said he didn't know whether work would continue on weekends.