



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The former Dream Inn will once again be called by it's old name.

# Dream Inns do come true

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The name Dream Inn never really left the landmark West Cliff Drive hotel.

Despite a handful of new names, new signs and new owners, the old moniker had remained fixed in the consciousness of the Santa Cruz community, which has come to embrace the old, if not ugly, 10-story waterfront building as another quirk in the city's colorful landscape.

And so, after hundreds of requests poured in from residents urging the return of the hotel's former name, the new management company announced Thursday that, indeed, the property will be called the Santa Cruz Dream Inn.

"You told us this is what you wanted," said Chip Conley, founder and CEO of the hotel's management company Joie de Vivre. "It's a name that works ... that's woven into the context of the community."

Conley's announcement came before a crowd of several dozen who gathered at the property Thursday

evening to be first to hear news of the name and catch sight of the new retro logo which was temporarily mounted on the hotel sign.

The San-Francisco management company began a naming contest shortly after being hired last year to revitalize and manage the mid-century hotel. Company designers contended that a new, more fitting name was essential to create a refreshed look and feel for the property. The former title Coast Santa Cruz Hotel, and before that West Coast Santa Cruz Hotel, simply did not work, they said.

One rule of the naming contest, which was ultimately tossed aside, was that the hotel could not be called the Dream Inn. The reason was that the rights to the name had been lost to a New York-based hotel operator.

But as Conley explained Thursday, because of the sheer volume of requests for the old name, his company was prompted to negotiate with the owner of the Dream Inn trademark and secure permission for its onetime use.

The naming contest drew more than 800 submissions. More than half either outright suggested the

name Dream Inn or included a footnote saying the new idea was second best to Dream Inn. The company will still award prizes based on monthly drawings to people who entered ideas.

"This name resonates with the people in a very deep way," said City Councilwoman Lynn Robinson, who attended the event.

The Dream Inn was built in the early 1960s out of cinder blocks and in a rather, unremarkable big-box style. The 10-story tower was added in the early '70s and remains the tallest structure on the Santa Cruz beachfront. The tower is where the blue Dream Inn sign hung until it was quietly removed a decade ago.

"People may laugh at it as the ugliest building in Santa Cruz," Robinson said, "but they recognize that it needs to move into the future and they'll support the hotel in doing that."

Judith Kitchens, 61, who worked as a bartender at the hotel for 32 years until she retired in 2006, said it's only fitting that the property reunite with its old name.

"We had customers here for decades," she said. "All of my

older ones liked the name, and they would complain after it was changed."

Thursday's official name change comes alongside an interior remodel of the 163-room hotel. The property remains closed and fenced off, until June 2, as the guest rooms, public areas and restaurant and bar are upgraded.

The building's facade, however, will not be altered. Previous owners have seen proposals to change and even raze the structure undermined by community opposition. The new owner, Ensemble Hotel Partners LLC., has not gone that course.

"People live and breathe what's going on inside," Conley said, noting that that's where his efforts will go and acknowledging the constraints to changing the outside.

He did, however, say that he'd met earlier in the day with his staff to discuss giving the exterior a fresh coat of paint.

For information on the hotel, visit [www.keepdreaminn.com](http://www.keepdreaminn.com).

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