

ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Rehab for a former starlet

Latest Playboy Mansion owner has agreed to restore the cultural icon.

BY SONALI KOHLI

Hugh Hefner may have died, but the Gothic-Tudor facade of his famous Playboy Mansion will live on, thanks to a recent agreement between its new owner and the city of Los Angeles.

According to the agreement, which one official described as a permanent protection covenant, mansion owner Daren Metropoulos has informed officials that he has no plans to demolish the 14,000-square-foot main residence and will restore the house and facade to "its original grandeur." Metropoulos signed the agreement with 5th District Councilman Paul Koretz.

Metropoulos bought the Holmby Hills property in 2016 for \$100 million with plans to connect the estate with one he already owns next door. Both structures were designed by architect Arthur R. Kelly. The Playboy Mansion now requires "substantial renovations and repairs following a long period of deferred maintenance," the agreement said.

The covenant is permanently attached to the Charing Cross Road property, according to Koretz, and all future owners must abide by it as well. The agreement says that even though the owner has no plans to level the main residence, he will notify the dis-



Playboy Enterprises International

FOR MORE THAN 40 years, the estate was the West Coast home and work space of Hugh Hefner, shown with Barbi Benton in 1970.



GABRIEL BOUYS AFP/Getty Images

DAREN METROPOULOS, who bought the 1927 house in 2016 for \$100 million, agreed to return it to "its original grandeur."

trict's council member if he ever applies for a demolition permit.

Koretz proposed last year that the city designate the home a historic cultural monument.

That would have protected the architecture, but it would also have meant it could take a very long time to address basic issues such as mold or leaks, said Alison Simard, spokeswoman for Koretz's office. The agreement protects the estate but allows Metropoulos to make the renovations and modernizations he needs, she said.

"I'm extremely passionate about its architecture and look forward to this momentous opportunity to transform one of the finest estates in the country," Metropoulos said in a statement.

"As Mr. Hefner was aware, I plan to meticulously refurbish the proper-

ty with the highest quality and standards in mind."

Hefner wasn't the mansion's first owner, and Koretz's office insists there is historic importance to the estate as a "cornerstone" of the Holmby Hills neighborhood.

Although the estate was known for more than 40 years as the Playboy owner's West Coast home and work space, it was originally built in 1927 for Arthur Letts Jr., the son of a department store magnate.

"The significance of the property to Los Angeles' history actually starts with the Letts family and shouldn't be forgotten," Koretz said in a statement.

Hefner continued to live in the Playboy Mansion as a tenant for \$1 million a year until his death last year.

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