

Building move paves way for SR12/26 work

By Nick Baptista

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Another step in the downtown State Route 12/26 intersection project is taking place.



A moving crew makes some final preparations Wednesday afternoon before trying to shift the Century 21 Tri-Dam Realty building from its old location near the State Route 12/26 intersection to a new pad where the Bobcat is located.

The Century 21 Tri-Dam Realty Inc. building on the southeast corner of the busy intersection is being moved deeper into the lot to accommodate a right turn lane from northbound SR26 to eastbound SR12/26.

Calaveras County reached an agreement to move the building instead of tearing it down, said LaQuita DeMarco of Century 21 Tri-Dam Realty.

“We’re attached to this historic building and we’re attached to the location,” DeMarco said Wednesday afternoon as she watched movers make preparations before shifting the building to its new site.

Moving the building is more costly than tearing it down and Century 21 is paying a portion of the additional expense.

But the county didn’t want the entire lot, DeMarco said, so it made better sense for the county to buy just the land it needed for the road improvement, preserve the building and just move it back from the intersection.

Once the building is moved and some renovations done, the Tri-Dam crew currently residing at 153 Highway 12 (across from MarVal) will return to the corner, DeMarco said.

It was nearly 18 months ago the first phase of the project took place on the north side of the intersection when George Reed Inc. General Engineering Contractors completed sidewalk, curb and pedestrian ramp work.

Since then, the county has been busy with right-of-way acquisition and final design work.

After several years of public input regarding whether to put traffic signals or a roundabout at the downtown Valley Springs bottleneck, then-District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli, in discussion with engineers, brought forth the extended right-turn lane suggestion, which the county Board of Supervisors agreed to pursue.

The turn-lane was determined to be the least costly and least intrusive on downtown buildings and parking spaces of all three alternatives.

In addition to a free right turn lane from northbound 26, there will be a left turn lane from west-bound SR12 to SR26.

Once completed, a study says the intersection improvement project is expected to alleviate much of the morning and evening rush-hour back up for about an eight-year period.

Sal Manna, founder and president of the Society for the Preservation of West Calaveras History Inc. prepared the following history on the Century 21 building.

The Century 21 building at the intersection of Highway 12 and Highway 26 in Valley Springs has stood there at least since 1896, when it was a saloon – a business not surprising given the central location across from what was at the time the Southern Pacific train depot and near the Valley Springs Hotel.

The land upon which it was situated was patented in 1881 by George Late, who built the nearby two-story Late House around 1862. Two decades later, Late sold a portion of his property to Frederick Birdsall, financier of the San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada Railroad (which the Southern Pacific would purchase). Birdsall then created the Valley Springs townsite. The saloon was situated just outside the border of the townsite.

Originally called the Hub Saloon, by 1920 the business and property were owned by Mrs. Conrad F. Kaiser. By 1930, the business had added a pair of gasoline pumps. In the mid-30's, the saloon was purchased by twentysomething Missouri native Russell James Herbert Sr. aka Herb. Renamed Herb's Corner, the business soon expanded its wares to include fishing equipment and bait, and then added a café' operated by Herb's wife Bernice. Herb ran the business for more than 30 years, until his retirement in the 1970s.