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Could the Rusty Skeleton, visible from the 22 freeway, finally have hope?



The partly-built structure sits near Brookhurst Street and Garden Grove Boulevard in this 2010 file photo. (KEVIN SULLIVAN, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER)

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PUBLISHED: October 18, 2017 at 11:01 a.m. | UPDATED: October 18, 2017 at 10:31 p.m.



GARDEN GROVE – There is renewed hope that the so-called Rusty Skeleton – a long undeveloped, 90-foot-tall steel structure that can be seen from the 22 freeway – could spring to life after nearly a decade of dormancy.

A developer, AMG & Associate, has proposed turning it into a mixed-use development with senior-living units on the top and retail on the bottom, City Manager Scott Stiles said.

AMG is working on environmental studies and finalizing plans before the proposal can go to the Planning Commission and eventually to the City Council.

“We’re optimistic,” said Bill Grant, the president of the Hoag Foundation, a nonprofit supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove and the property’s owner. “It’s a win for the community.”

The structure, which many residents call an eyesore, is on Garden Grove Boulevard and Brookhurst Street, a half-mile from the 22 freeway. Plans for a mixed-use development were first approved by the city in 2005, with the steel shell of a building going up shortly after.

Plans fell through and it has not been touched since 2009. Over the years, Hoag, financier and lease-holder Cathay Bank and a revolving door of developers have proposed various plans. But differing visions and legal entanglements kept those proposals from happening.

AMG bought the lease from Cathay and now controls the right to develop the land, Grant said. A lawsuit by Cathay against Hoag has been dropped.

“What’s different this time,” Stiles said, “is Hoag and AMG are on the same page.”

The project, though, is still a ways off from a return to construction, he added.

Last month, AMG held a public meeting to receive feedback from nearby residents. AMG officials pitched a plan for an eight-story building with 400 affordable-housing units for seniors and 12,938 square feet of commercial space.

There would also be parking, a rooftop patio and open spaces.

Over the years, the community discussed tearing down the structure – with a demolition order continually put on hold by the City Council. Grant did not know how much the steel is worth, though he said it is “probably worth less than it cost to put it up.”

The steel beams, despite being exposed to weather for years, are “structurally sound,” Stiles said. AMG would use the structure in its designs, both Stiles and Grant said.



Having residential units would somewhat alleviate the city’s housing crunch, Stiles and Grant said.

“Senior housing is desperately needed in Garden Grove,” Grant said.

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