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Revitalizing S.A.'s Deco District

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Efforts to revitalize San Antonio's Deco District started almost 20 years ago.

The district, which stretches along Fredericksburg Road from Interstate 10 to Vance Jackson Road, started declining in the late 1960s.

The area is known for the Woodlawn Theater, which hosted the world premiere of John Wayne's "The Alamo" movie in 1960.

The Jefferson Woodlawn Lake Community Development Corp. formed in 1994 with aims to improve the Deco District. Businesses in the area can qualify for tax breaks and reimbursement up to \$15,000 for renovations to building exteriors.

The Woodlawn Theater is having a renaissance under the leadership of Amphisphere Productions, which is rehabbing the theater and producing successful musical theater shows.

Projects aimed at bringing office and retail tenants to the district are in the works. Here's a look at a few of them.

1923 Fredericksburg Road

David Komet of Komet Asset Management bought the building at Fredericksburg Road and North Elmendorf Street, which used to house the Forbes Deli, with plans to renovate it and to move his business there. But engineers found that the building is too far gone for rehabilitation.

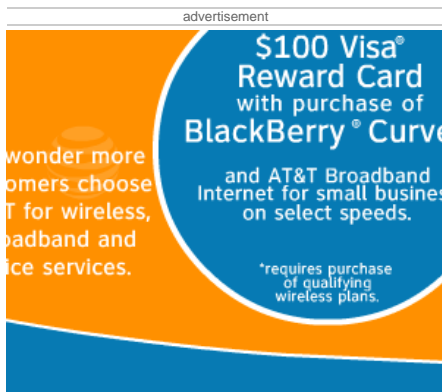
Komet is seeking approval from the Historic Design and Review Commission to demolish the structure and to put up a new office building that would match the Deco District's style.

"I don't want to put something up that's ugly or that's an irritant," Komet said. "I want it to be something that will make people say, 'Oh, this is the Deco District.'"

Vogue College of Cosmetology, 1836 Fredericksburg Road

Vogue founder and owner Charles Oman repainted the building, which he has owned since 1978, and added black tiles to the facade. Workers finished the job last week. A new Art Deco-inspired sign is expected to go up soon. School administrator Jovahna Gonzalez said she and the school's staff work to keep the grounds clean and free of graffiti.

"We're kind of going all out to get that Art Deco look," Austin-based Oman said. "That part of town needs all the help it can get. But I can tell the difference, when I come to town from time to time, that it's improving."



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Alamo Pizza, Fredericksburg Road and North Zarzamora Street

Co-owner David Garcia is renegotiating his lease for the building, which expires in February. He has plans to add a 480-square-foot outdoor dining area and also wants to expand the indoor seating. A license to sell beer and wine is in the works. If everything falls into place, Garcia envisions screening old movies on the side of the building.

"You could bring your own lawn chair, and we'd run specials," he said. "We're really trying here in this little area. It's a good neighborhood."

1726 Fredericksburg Road

A San Antonio partnership bought this 9,000-square-foot retail strip in 2005. Since then, the owners have replaced the storefronts, the roof and plumbing, and the electrical, heating and air-conditioning systems.

"It was a major restoration," said Hugo Lamprea, a real estate broker and 10 percent owner.

The building, which is divided into six spaces ranging from 1,200 to 2,200 square feet, is set for completion next month. It is leasing monthly for \$1 per square foot.

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