

Downtown's Red Lobster is no more

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Fans of downtown Scottsdale's Red Lobster restaurant will now have to "sea food" elsewhere.

The restaurant, 3360 N. Scottsdale Road, quietly closed on July 26 and will be razed to make way for a multistory residential complex that could be either apartments or condos. The restaurant opened more than 30 years ago.

Darlene Petersen, a long-time Scottsdale resident, said she and others will miss the Red Lobster because it was the "only place to get a lot of seafood and so many of our family restaurants have closed."

"The people who are doing this are doing a disservice to the community by not putting in another family restaurant," she said.

As of Tuesday, residents could still be seen pulling into the parking lot, only to drive away in disappointment.

The property is being purchased by JLB Partners, a national developer,

builder and manager of multifamily complexes. The restaurant was not part of the recent acquisition of Red Lobster from Darden Restaurants to Golden Gate Capital.

"The decision to close has absolutely nothing to do with the performance of the restaurant," said Erica Ettori, Red Lobster spokeswoman. "The decision to close was driven by market demand and the attractive offer that Darden received for the real-estate asset."

Darden still owns Olive Garden, and that restaurant's downtown Scottsdale location, just north of the Red Lobster, remains open, said Rich Jeffers, a Darden spokesman.

JLB Partners is assembling 8.85 acres, including the Red Lobster parcel, south to Angus Drive and behind the U.S. Egg restaurant, for the project. Much of the acreage is vacant, while the area behind the U.S. Egg houses light industrial uses, including auto-repair shops.

JLB Partners also is developing Portales Residential, a 369-unit apartment complex near Scottsdale and Chaparral roads. Its proposal for the complex drew

opposition from nearby homeowners.

The 80-unit first phase of Portales should be ready for occupancy in November.

"We just love the dynamic of downtown Scottsdale, the livability and walkability, so much energy and excitement," said Kevin Ransil, JLB Partners' development partner for Arizona. "This is an area we feel really strongly about, and there will be demand from a large segment ... of people interested in an urban lifestyle."

Texas-based Transwestern was interested in purchasing the Red Lobster property and had submitted a rezoning request for Agave Residential, a five-story multifamily complex with more than 400 units. The complex was designed to create an active street front along Scottsdale Road, with live-work units, a leasing office, a lounge-type pool area, club room lodge and business center, and outdoor lounge areas.

JLB Partners has taken over the application, said **John Berry**, a zoning attorney working with the firm.

"There may be some changes, but it is

an active application on file," he said. "They've acquired the property and are looking at the opportunity."

Ransil said JLB Partners hasn't yet been decided if it wants to build either apartments or condominiums on the acreage.

"We can do anything, apartments or condos," he said. "We're still kind of in the planning stages. Roughly, it will continue to be five stories with a unit range of roughly 350 or more units. For the last few months, we've been hard at work redesigning the plan and making changes that fit our building profile and feel appropriate for that section of Old Town."

Despite the growing proliferation of apartment and condominium projects in the downtown, Ransil said his firm isn't concerned about oversaturation.

"The downtown lifestyle appeals to so many different types of people, and the downtown area is so vibrant, I think a lot of people are choosing to live in that environment and are embracing it wholeheartedly," he said