

# Fresno burger joint Angelo's Drive In makes way for high-speed rail

By Bethany Clough

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The vintage neon sign comes down and is placed on a flatbed trailer at Angelo's Drive In. Angelo's last day was April 24, 2014. MARK CROSSE — Fresno Bee Staff Photo [Buy Photo](#)

After 60 years in business, Angelo's Drive In served its last burger Thursday.

The burger joint on Olive Avenue is closed and does not plan to reopen, its property sitting on the edge of what is slated to eventually become the path of California's high-speed rail line.

Customers came out to say good-bye and order their final burgers and chili fries at lunchtime. By afternoon, the iconic sign was already removed and a man on a ladder was taking down the red Angelo's letters.

Customer Rachel Ortega was shocked to learn the restaurant was closing.

"I've been coming here since I was 6 years old," she said.

She didn't mind driving from Selma for a hamburger on a French roll and fries with Thousand Island sauce.

"We'd come here all the time just to eat -- that's how good it is."

When she wasn't looking, her "honey," Jim Mayfield, bought her the Pepsi clock off the wall as a souvenir of the restaurant.

Angelo's building and several others sit where an overpass is planned to carry drivers across high-speed rail tracks and existing freight train tracks.

Angelo's owners Keav "Kay" Lim and Ken Chea bought the business 10 years ago. They told The Bee last fall that they signed paperwork agreeing to take \$160,000 from the rail authority for their property.

They estimated it would cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000 to re-establish the restaurant elsewhere and said they didn't have money to hire an attorney to help them deal with the situation.

Lim was frustrated Thursday. "What can we do?" she said.

The news irked customer Kevin Garcia, who stood in the parking lot with a box full of chili dogs and other take-out food.

"These people are as sweet as can be," he said. "What they offered for this land and this building was a joke."

California High-Speed Rail Authority spokeswoman Lisa Alley said that additional money is available to help relocate the business, but Angelo's owners declined it.

Various relocation services -- including money and loans, and a speeded-up permit process -- are available through the Economic Development Corporation Serving Fresno County.

"The only thing I can tell you about Angelo's is that we did reach out to them to provide our services and they denied our help," said William E. McComas, the EDC's director of business services.

Lim said she knows more money is available, but said it wasn't enough.

"You cannot afford to buy a new building, especially when you want to restart" a restaurant, she said.

The agency is working with other businesses interested in relocating, with 100 to 130 in Fresno expected to use the services, said Alley.

Sonora Barber Shop will likely be among the first to move because of the high-speed rail plans. Owner Rudy Solis is preparing to move from the space he has rented for 23 years on Tulare Street near G Street to a new home this summer a few blocks away on Kern Street.

Relocation assistance will pay for \$7,900 of upgrades of the new building's sinks, plumbing, electrical and a new floor, says owner. He will also be reimbursed for the cost of moving the business.

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