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Only a patch of dirt, surrounded by a chain-link fence and warning signs, remains of Annie's Hollywood Inn, a 66-year-old bar on Fresno's Golden State Boulevard that was demolished Monday to make way for construction of California's high-speed rail project. TIM SHEEHAN — The Fresno Bee

Demolition crews with Fresno-based J. Kroeker Inc. are pushing ahead this week with their work to knock down and clear buildings that sit in the path of California's high-speed rail line, even as lawsuits continue to cast a shadow over the future of the statewide train system.

First to fall was an old bar, [Annie's Hollywood Inn](#), on Golden State Boulevard between McKinley and Olive avenues. A large excavator made short work of the demolition on Monday, reducing the former honky-tonk to rubble and splinters within 15 minutes. The long-closed bar became the first building demolished to make way for construction of the bullet-train system.

By Wednesday, not even rubble was left on the site — only a patch of dirt amid a row of rundown motels that long ago saw their better days. The heavy equipment had moved on to nearby McKinley Avenue just east of Golden State, where three small houses were cleared. While not along the the rail line itself, they will be displaced by a new McKinley Avenue overpass that will carry traffic over the existing Union Pacific Railroad freight tracks and the high-speed rail tracks that will be where Golden State Boulevard now runs.

Still standing as of Wednesday afternoon on Belmont Avenue, east of Golden State, is the former Horn Photo building between Harrison and Farris avenues. J. Kroeker crews are due to take that building, and

the building next door, down this week.

A short distance to the south, asbestos-removal workers with Katch Environmental were doing their thing at the [former Angelo's Drive-In](#), on Olive Avenue east of Golden State. The 1950s-era burger shack became something of a *cause célèbre* last summer and fall after longtime patrons learned that their hangout would be replaced by a new Olive Avenue overpass above the freight and high-speed rail tracks.

Owners Keav "Kay" Lim and Ken Chea expressed disappointment with the value that appraisers for the [California High-Speed Rail Authority](#) offered then for their restaurant. They said they thought it would take between \$300,000 and \$500,000 to be able to relocate at a new site, but chose to accept \$160,000 for the property and the business rather than prolong what they thought was inevitable. They served their last burger in April.

On the other side of that coin are companies like J. Kroeker Inc., headed by Jill Kroeker, and Paul Katchadourian's [Katch Environmental](#).

Both businesses are subcontractors hired by [Tutor Perini/Zachry/Parsons](#), the prime contractor, for work on the rail system's first 29-mile construction segment between Madera and Fresno. Each helps the prime contractor fulfill a goal set by the state rail authority that at least 30% of work on the project be awarded to small-business subcontractors, including those owned by women, ethnic minorities and disabled veterans.

Katchadourian's company is tasked with clearing asbestos and other dangerous gunk out of buildings along the route; Kroeker's firm will be knocking 'em down once the buildings are decontaminated.

Katch Environmental is certified as a disabled-veteran owned company. Katchadourian said the contract will keep his company and its employees busy for about four years.

"About 85% to 90% of the people I hire are from CalWorks," he said. "This high-speed rail contract has allowed me to hire 25 people who didn't have a job before. Now they have a steady job to feed their families."

Katchadourian also has people working at the old Del Monte packinghouse building on G Street between Tulare and Kern streets. Part of that building was heavily damaged by a fire in May.

The rail authority said it expected demolition of the Del Monte building to begin either later this week or next week.