

# Clovis condemns winery to prepare for demolition, renovation

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The Clovis winery, long abandoned and starting to collapse, has been condemned by city officials who plan to demolish it and dream of sports fields and new businesses rising in its footprint.

The city owns the land, about 16 acres, and will consider approving [environmental documents](#) Monday that will allow for demolition beginning as early as next month.

The [city demolition notice](#) posted Thursday contained pictures of collapsing ceilings and roofs exposing indoor areas to the elements, buckling walls, cracked and busted wooden girders and broken staircases.

The city bought the land nearly 10 years ago and had entertained similar plans for sports fields before the recession and building slump.

Today, graffiti artists have left their mark on the winery walls. The property's other primary residents are pigeons and Mexican bats in the warmer summer months, said Steve White, city engineer. The birds, too, have left their mark on the winery building floors.

With council support, the city can begin demolishing four buildings – one of which has no roof. Among the buildings that will remain is the city's recreation center on the southwest corner of the property near Clovis and Dakota avenues, and the tower building on the northwest portion of the site.

1912

The year the winery was built in Clovis

The demolition is expected to cost about \$500,000, but the city expects "aggressive bids," White said. Cement, which is 14 inches thick in many of the buildings, and cement wine vats offer recyclable material for road projects that the demolition companies can sell.

Four of the buildings house 144 large cement wine vats ranging in size from 28,000 to 66,000 gallons. Steel also can be recycled from the demolition work, he said.

"This one site will be able to create miles and miles of roadway and parking lots," he said.

Clearing the property will allow a developer to buy the land for the project without liability or demolition costs.

It's expected that demolition will take six months, White said.

The winery is on the southern edge of the city's Old Town Trail and within walking distance of downtown Clovis. It's also near Fresno Yosemite International Airport and on Clovis Avenue, the city's main north-south arterial. With Highway 180 nearby, the winery area is easily reached from other parts of the Valley and could be a site for large sports tournaments, City Manager Robert Woolley said.

The 80-foot tower with large window-sized openings gives the building an attractive architectural feature to house businesses. He also said it could be a good site for a hotel or sports-related enterprises.

But, for now, Woolley said, the buildings are more of "an attractive nuisance," and the city needs to stop people from getting inside.

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Nathan Magsig, Clovis Mayor

Mayor Nathan Magsig said he envisions some combination of a sports complex with soccer and baseball fields that will create "a destination point."

"Clovis has a lot of young, very active families with kids who play multiple sports," he said. "Clovis and Clovis Unified's facilities are always being utilized, and there's a huge demand for more fields."

There also is a housing component planned nearby. An upscale 144-unit apartment/condominium complex was approved last year for Regal Development on 19 acres east of the winery property. Construction is not yet underway.

The Clovis winery, which has operated under different names, opened in 1912 when the Tarpey family owned 1,360 acres of grapevines nearby. The winery was one of the largest in California at the time. The Tarpey family purchased about 600 acres around 1880, according to documents written by Tarpey family members and held by the Clovis-Big Dry Creek Historical Society.

Tarpey Winery later changed hands several times. Its owners included Italian Swiss Colony and United Vintners. In 1948, the first Tarpey Village homes were built, and five years later the land was split up among the family's heirs and subdivided for homes. At one time, the Tarpey train depot, which was renovated and moved to downtown Clovis, was used as an office for La Paloma Winery.

One of the more recent uses for the buildings was a fish farm. The buildings also were used for B-grade movies.

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