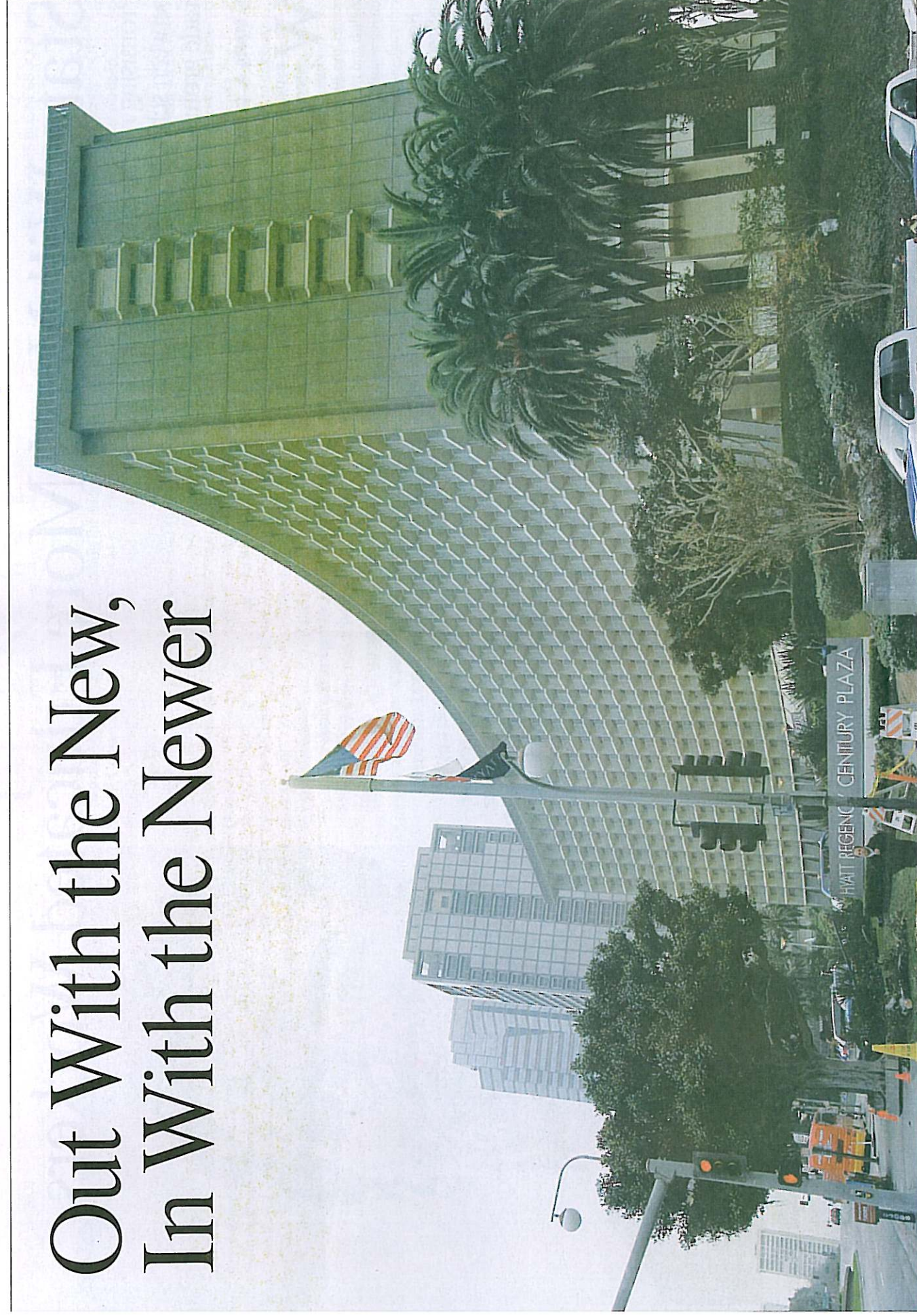
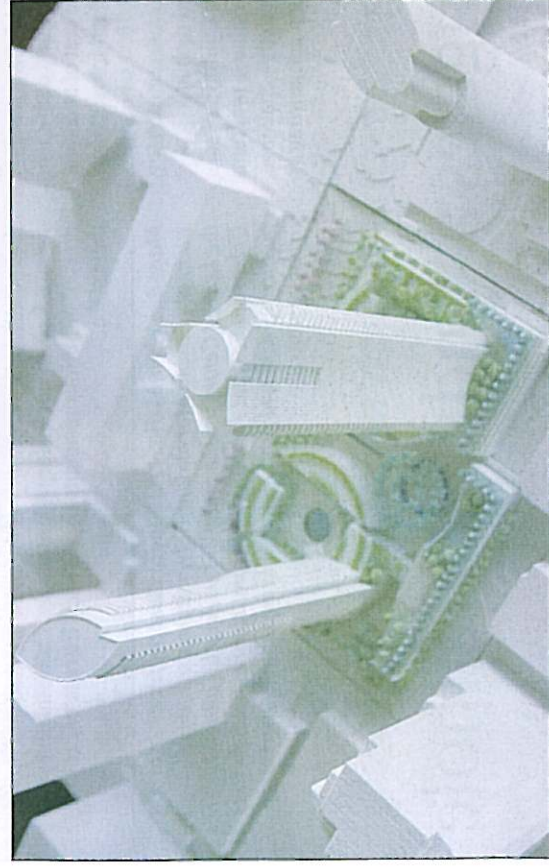


Out With the New, In With the Newer



RINGO H.W. CHIU/LAEB



Transformation:
The Hyatt Regency Century Plaza, above, would be torn down under current development plans. A model and a rendering, left, show what a new mixed-use project would look like.

The demolition of the Century Plaza would erase another one of Century City's original landmarks.

BY HAROLD L. KATZ

IF I were a building in Century City I would fear for my life. The cornerstone of Century City's original development almost 50 years ago — the Century Plaza Hotel — may be torn down. I know it is now officially named the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza hotel, but for me it will always be the Century Plaza Hotel.

For some reason, I can't adjust to the loss of this edifice. I have so many fond memories relating to the hotel. Besides, they just spent a fortune remodeling it.

There appears to be a new definition for development in Los Angeles. Developers no longer look for underdeveloped property or vacant property. They look for prime buildings, and like 4-year-olds they take great delight in knocking them down.

First we lost the ABC Entertainment Center, which was about 27 years old. I understood why it had to come down, and

its replacement (the 2000 Avenue of the Stars building) is a thing of beauty. But I do miss the Shubert Theater and the original Plitt Movie House with its large rocking chairs that made it seem like you were sitting at home watching a movie.

I also miss Harry's Bar & American Grill, the Avenue Saloon, Harpers Restaurant, Jade West, and the Playboy Club. Of course, the Playboy Club closed many years before the building came down.

The reason the ABC building had to come down was that it ended up with no parking spaces. The history: Everyone was amazed at what was at the time the world's largest excavation for a parking garage with 6,000 parking places under the ABC Center and what is now the twin Century Plaza Towers to the east. (I helped then-Mayor Tom Bradley lay the cornerstone for that garage.) That seemed like plenty of parking, but regretfully, ABC hadn't reserved any of it. When the twin towers were built later with a total of 2 million square feet of space, 3,000 parking spaces for each thousand feet were required, or three parking spaces. Obviously, once the towers were built there were no spaces left for the tenants of the ABC Center.

Next to come down was the St. Regis Hotel, which was about the same vintage as the ABC Center. It was built next to the Century Plaza Hotel, and at the time of its construction was an extension of the original hotel: They were connected under-

ground. It was going to be converted to high value condos, but its ceilings were too low. So down it came.

Call them 'towers'

Now we have the Century Plaza. Presidents used to occupy the Presidential Suite, and it was especially designed to accommodate the Secret Service. It's coming down to make way for mixed-use development costing \$2 billion, to include a new hotel, a new plaza and two 50 story buildings — excuse me — they call them "towers."

I assume the developers are familiar with the Century City Specific Plan, as amended, which controls development by traffic trips generated, and that they have studied the impact of the surrounding neighborhood groups on development, such as they had on Westfield's Shopping Center, which had to cut 10 floors off its high-rise building at 1801 Avenue of the Stars.

This is going to be an interesting project to watch as it goes through the system that all developments must go through.

Still, as I said, if I were a building in Century City, I would be concerned about my future.

Harold L. Katz is a partner in a CPA firm in Los Angeles and a citizen activist. He considers himself an unofficial historian of Century City.