

= Kona Lanes =

Kona Lanes was a bowling center in Costa Mesa , California , from 1958 to 2003 . Known for its " Space Age " design , it featured 40 wood @-@ floor bowling lanes , a game room , a lounge , and a coffee shop (later the Island Grill and finally a Mexican diner) . Built during the heyday of Googie architecture , its Polynesian Tiki styling extended from the massive roadside neon sign to the building 's " flamboyant neon lights and ostentatious rooflines meant to attract motorists like moths . "

Kona Lanes was one of the last remaining examples of the Googie style in the region ; when it was demolished , only Java Lanes in Long Beach remained until it was razed in 2004 . Following a sale of much of the equipment , the building housing Kona Lanes was leveled while the distinctive sign was saved and sent to Cincinnati , Ohio , for inclusion in the American Sign Museum .

During public hearings on the future of the site , members of Costa Mesa 's planning commission originally approved a proposal to build a department store . Following public outcry , those plans were scrapped in favor of senior apartments and commercial development .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

Kona Lanes opened in 1958 , featuring the Tiki @-@ inspired signage and architecture that became popular following World War II . The building on Harbor Boulevard near Adams Avenue was one of three designed and built around the same time by Powers , Daly , & DeRosa featuring the Googie style ; Kona Lanes and its sister center , Java Lanes , used names that suggested South Pacific island locales . They were " expensive and attractive buildings that screamed , ' Have fun here ' " , and Kona retained much of that old @-@ time feel over the years . Its original neon @-@ lit street sign remained for the life of the building , and Kona was the only bowling establishment in the area to eschew automatic scoring equipment throughout its existence .

Kona Lanes hosted the Southern California PBA Open twice , in 1964 (won by Billy Hardwick) and 1965 (won by Jerry Hale) . Longtime general manager Dick Stoeffler , known at the time as the host of TV Bowling Tournament on KTLA , finished third during the televised finals in his own building in 1964 , behind Hardwick and Bud Horn . When Stoeffler rolled back @-@ to @-@ back 300 games in one league session at Kona in 1968 , he was one of only four men in the country to have managed the feat .

= = = Peak years = = =

Numerous champions bowled at Kona Lanes during its 45 @-@ year history , including John Haveles , the one @-@ time Orange County Bowling Hall of Fame inductee who began a stint as Kona 's manager in 1974 ; two @-@ time female Bowling Writers Association of America Bowler of the Year Aleta Sill ; future Michigan Women 's Bowling Association Hall @-@ of @-@ Famer Cora Fiebig ; and Barry Asher , the multiple @-@ Professional Bowlers Association tour champion and Hall of Fame inductee who as of 2014 was running the pro shop at Fountain Bowl in nearby Fountain Valley . Kona Lanes and Tustin Lanes hosted nearly 10 @, @ 000 teams of five players each taking part in the United States Bowling Congress Women 's Championships in 1986 .

Under Dick Stoeffler 's " innovative " management , Kona Lanes kept busy 24 hours a day , making him one of the most successful proprietors in the country . Stoeffler met his future wife there , and similar reminiscences were printed in local newspapers . Kona was often so busy that customers would have to make reservations to get a lane during " open " (non @-@ league) bowling hours . At its peak , Kona Lanes " was the busiest place in Orange County , averaging more than 80 lines " on each of its 40 lanes . A flier posted in the building in 1993 to promote its 35th anniversary called Kona " ' the place to be ' in Costa Mesa . "

Bowling as a participation sport flourished starting in the early 1960s , but its popularity would be diluted due to overbuilding ? the number of bowling alleys sanctioned by the then @-@ American Bowling Congress peaked at about 11 @,@ 000 by mid @-@ decade , and Kona was one of more than 30 in southern California alone ? and to a decline in league bowling starting in the 1980s . One AMF Bowling official argued that the customer base remained steady because an increase in open bowling made up for fewer league bowlers .

Jack Mann bought Kona Lanes in 1980 ; he began a renovation that tamed some of the building 's colors and features , and re @-@ branded it New Kona Lanes the following year . Mann 's family owned several bowling centers in the region ; he was behind the creation of Fountain Bowl in 1973 and the short @-@ lived Regal Lanes in Orange in 1974 . He also owned Tustin Lanes before selling it to his youngest son , Alex . Mann bought Kona not because he loved bowling , but because it would continue to pay dividends " even if I were incapacitated . " Mann would later sell Kona to his son Jack Jr .

= = = Music = = =

The center 's lounge , known as the Outrigger Room , hosted numerous local artists over the years . Jazz quintet The Redd Foxx Bbq released four songs recorded there , while Roscoe Holland recorded a set of eight live performances for his album Beyond the Reef .

In later years , large portions of the bowlers ' area would be taped off for rock concerts and weekend promotions like Club Crush , which proved popular among teen @-@ agers and also led to album recordings . The idea failed at least once : Kona Lanes was hit with some negative publicity when a planned event featuring a local punk rock group was shut down by the Costa Mesa Police Department .

= = = Decline and demolition = = =

The waning " nostalgic appeal " took its toll on Kona Lanes over time , despite efforts to maintain relevance and to appeal to a more diverse customer base by hosting local music acts , supporting a Polynesian @-@ themed restaurant called Kona Korral , and promoting gimmicks like " nude bowling " . Eventually , the property became more valuable than the business . The landowners , C.J. Segerstrom & Sons , gave Jack Mann Jr. a choice : spend US \$ 10 ? 20 million to update the center , or give it up . Mann chose the latter rather than spend such a sum on a site without a long @-@ term lease .

Plans to build a Kohl 's department store on the site occupied by Kona Lanes and the already @-@ demolished Edwards Cinema Center and Ice Capades Chalet were approved by the city 's planning commissioners but met with resistance by neighbors who didn 't think it fit in . Then @-@ mayor Karen Robinson complained that Costa Mesa 's policy @-@ makers had " completely lost sight of play for the quality of life " of city residents , and appealed the commissioners ' decision in February 2003 . By April , the city council had rejected the proposal . Meantime , efforts to save Kona Lanes failed ; it closed for good in May 2003 and was leveled soon thereafter .

= = = Rezoning and new use = = =

The 7 @.@ 5 acre parcel was rezoned in 2010 for senior housing that was expected to provide a new customer base for the restaurants and retailers already in the area and for commercial developments still to come . By October 2013 , after the lot had sat empty behind a chain @-@ link fence for a decade , construction on the 215 @-@ unit complex was under way ; Azulón at Mesa Verde opened in 2014 . Several dozen palm and eucalyptus trees were saved and replanted on the site .

= = Legacy = =

The loss of Kona Lanes was a repeated topic at political events . One Costa Mesa city council candidate said he made a commitment to public service when the building was torn down , because he " didn 't hear local officials kicking and screaming . " Another would @-@ be council member agreed that " they should have never torn down the bowling alley ! "

Kona did see an increase in activity in its final days , due to the nostalgic value of potential keepsakes . Manager Juanita Johnson said people were asking to buy furniture , office equipment , and more . " Some of that is older than I am . " The more substantial items , including the " legendary " original wood lanes , had been sold off prior to demolition , while dumpster divers hit the parking lot each day , looking for anything of interest . The occasional knickknack was still being offered for sale more than ten years later .

Nine years after its only remaining bowling center was leveled , Costa Mesa looked to the future : plans to upgrade the retail space known as The Triangle ? bordered by Harbor Boulevard , Newport Boulevard and West 19th Street , two miles south of the Kona Lanes site ? included a 10 @-@ lane bowling alley that opened in 2014 , answering a long @-@ standing " outcry for an upscale bowling alley in town . "

= = = Historic roadside sign = = =

The huge , neon @-@ lit KONA LANES BOWL sign was featured in such publications as The Book of Tiki and Tiki Road Trip . It inspired professional paintings , an unofficial T @-@ shirt , and an effort led by then @-@ Costa Mesa Planning Commissioner Katrina Foley to save it from the scrap heap .

Thanks in part to a private donation , the marquee was trucked 2 @,@ 500 miles to Cincinnati , one of the first 20 signs accepted by the American Sign Museum . The KONA LANES portion was refurbished and is now on display ; the larger BOWL section buckled and tore during the unloading process and could not be saved .