



Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times
MINE SHAFTS in Randsburg in Kern County, where gold was discovered in 1895. Today it's called a "living ghost town."

A MOJAVE GOLD RUSH SPURS A LAND BOOM

As the price of the metal hits record highs, prospectors are buying up claims in the desert. But it's real estate agents who have the sure bet.

By Jack Flemming

It's a brisk day in Johannesburg, a tiny mining town tucked among the Rand Mountains in the Mojave Desert.

The landscape is vast and rugged, a mishmash of rock, dirt and creosote bushes, swaths of gray and brown under a deep blue sky. The terrain appears completely untouched by man, but a closer look reveals dozens of cavities pocked across the rolling hills. They look like monster snake holes.

Those curious holes are abandoned mines, and they're driving a real-estate boomlet in a place that hasn't had one in more than a century. As the price of gold climbs, the



ENTREPRENEUR Sean Tucker founded a gold-mining operation a mile from Randsburg.

demand for Randsburg's craggy land has been reawakened.

"The market is heating up," said David Treadwell, a real estate agent based in Hemet. "I get two, three leads per month on buyers looking for patented mine claims. If you can get the gold out of the ground, there's money to be made."

Treadwell has carved out a niche for himself in the desert, selling multiple gold-mining properties over the last few years. He helped his uncle sell a 47-acre property in 2017, buying ad space in a local mining journal to spread the word.

"From there, people would call [See Gold, A8]



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times
WORK begins on a \$24-million apartment and retail building at Crenshaw Boulevard and 54th Street.

Old gives way to new but stays in the family

Black siblings choose to develop site of their mother's shops instead of selling it.

By Roger Vincent

The corner lot at Crenshaw Boulevard and 54th Street looks like any other construction site. Inside the chain-link fence encircling the property, an excavator last week was moving a pile of rubble — the last remains of an old building that had

been demolished to make room for something new.

But the mundane scene belied an unusual story in Los Angeles real estate: Instead of selling it, a Black family with deep roots in South L.A. chose to hold on to a property they've owned for decades and develop it themselves into a \$24-million apartment and retail building.

They marked their progress with a formal groundbreaking ceremony Thursday, a rare instance of a minority property owner par-

[See Crenshaw, A7]

Some health officials raise concern over Trump picks

Vaccine skeptics may soon be shaping federal policy

By Rong-Gong Lin II

President Trump once celebrated the COVID-19 vaccines released at the end of his first term as "one of the greatest achievements of mankind," echoing the sentiments of mainstream medical officials who praised their rapid development as

pivotal in combating the then-raging pandemic.

But as his second administration takes shape, some are sounding the alarm regarding Trump's picks to lead major public health agencies, concerned that the nominees' skepticism, if not hostility, toward vaccines could jeopardize the nation's ability to respond to

infectious threats.

There's Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Trump's pick to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who has called the COVID-19 vaccine the "deadliest vaccine ever made" and said that "there's no vaccine that is, you know, safe and effective."

[See Public health, A9]

"FDA cannot ensure the safety of our food supply if it does not know what is in our food," said Thomas Galligan, principal scientist for food additives and supplements at the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

When the agency does learn about a new compound, it evaluates the company's safety report to see whether it agrees. If FDA scientists see problems and request additional information, the company doesn't have to provide it. It can simply withdraw its GRAS notice and use the ingredi-

[See FDA, A10]

Butler prepares to exit Senate

Black LGBTQ+ Democrat will be succeeded by Schiff amid the heated debate over identity politics. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Galaxy capture sixth MLS Cup

Star forwards Paintsil and Joveljic score goals in the first half in a 2-1 win over the New York Red Bulls. **SPORTS, D1**

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The essence of dining in L.A.

Our annual dining guide is included in today's newspaper for print subscribers. It is also available for purchase at latimes.com/store.

Weather

Not as warm.
L.A. Basin: 70/50. **B8**
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