

Lido House Hotel project wins Planning Commission approvals

By Emily Foxhall
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The site of Newport Beach's former City Hall, where a council gavel was last pounded in November 2012, is one step closer to becoming a 130-room hotel.

Likened by designers to "the quintessential beach house," plans for the Lido House Hotel received approvals Monday from the city Planning Commission. The project now goes to the City Council for consideration.

The commission voted 5 to 0 to amend the city's general plan, coastal land-use plan and zoning code to allow for a hotel on the property. It also found the project's environmental impact report to be adequate.



Vice Chairman Kory Kramer was absent and Commissioner Bradley Hillgren abstained.

"I don't understand why this project is taking so long," resident Judy Rosener told commissioners after several other residents also declared their support for the concept.

"The boutique hotel is the will of the people," said Lido Isle resident Linda Klein, describing it as an "urgently needed revitalization" for the area.

Almost all Lido Isle community members who responded to a survey about the project were supportive of it, and many are eager to see it up and running, said Fred Barnes of the Lido Island Community Assn.

Savoy Bellavia, who lives near the site at 3300 Newport Blvd., expressed concern that the planned 148 parking spots might not be enough for visitors and employees.

"Other than that, we think it's a great project," he said. "We're all anxious to see it happen."

With roots in Cape Cod design, the hotel would be "Newport nautical," according to a presentation by the developer, R.D. Olson, and designer, WATG. The 4.25-acre site would include a pool, a restaurant, meeting rooms, a bar and a spa, providing an experience that is "Southern California beach casual with a yacht club sophistication," according to the presentation.

The site's two ficus trees would be maintained, as would the row of palm trees, though some would be adjusted.

"We see it as the gateway to the Newport peninsula," said R.D. Olson Chief Executive Bob Olson, who lives on Balboa Island.

Because the project was initially accepted by the council through a request-for-proposal process last year, the Planning Commission was looking for "reasonableness" rather than "nitpicking," Chairman Larry Tucker said.

Still, tension arose over an alleyway currently used by delivery trucks for Lido Plaza businesses. The proposal calls for it to be part of the hotel development.

The city is seeking a "judicial determination" in the matter, Assistant City Attorney Leonie Mulvihill said.

"We believe that this is simply bad planning," said Gordon Hart, who noted that trucks have been making deliveries down the alley for 65 years.

Katherine Johansen, who lives at an adjacent apartment building, was concerned about noise from rerouted traffic if use of the alley is taken away.

The council is tentatively scheduled to discuss the hotel plan at its meeting Sept. 9. The California Coastal Commission also will need to review and approve the final project.

Developers hope to begin construction in 2016, with an opening in summer 2017.



(R.D. Olson Development, Daily Pilot / August 12, 2014)

The Newport Beach planning commission discussed the draft environmental impact report and possible zoning changes for the Lido House hotel project Monday night.