

Downtown/Hotel Forum
May 18, 2005

Summary of Public Comments

1. Debra Rosen- On behalf of the Downtown Business Association, Ms. Rosen spoke in support of the project but expressed concerns with the amount of parking provided and mass and scale of the parking structure/condominium component. The DBA wants to ensure that an interim parking solution is developed and that free, public parking remains available in the long run.
2. Jim Crone- Mr. Crone spoke in support of the hotel providing enough convenient parking is provided. He felt the project is under-parked since each component (restaurant, office, retail, and residential) does not stand on its own with respect to code requirements. He also had a concern with the use of tandem parking. He noted that the City parking lot is often full which indicates we currently need more parking. He felt the City should plan for future users and residents since parking availability will be a limiting factor. He also expressed concern about interim parking shortages during construction. However, he was most concerned about the long-term, parking shortages. In summary, he supports the project if the negative issues are addressed. He called for it to be revised to ensure it reinforces and supports the downtown.
3. Mike Peters- Mr. Peters spoke in support of the hotel but expressed concerns with the mass and scale of the Parking Structure and Condominium component.
4. Tom D'Agosta- Mr. D'Agosta reminded the City's parking consultant, Walker and Associates, that their past reports had concluded that concerns would exist upon development of the theatre complex and increased utilization of buildings. He said an adequate amount of parking is essential and felt that, currently, there is a problem.
5. Susan McLaughlin- Ms. McLaughlin expressed concern with the mass and scale of the parking structure/condominium project. She felt it would be out of context and would create a wall that would divide the downtown. She was concerned that the single entrance on to Maple would concentrate too much traffic. She was also concerned that the design fails to create a pedestrian paseo on Maple. She felt the project should be scaled down and that an additional entrance on Valley Parkway should be explored.
6. Elizabeth Gabrych- Ms. Grbich supports a vibrant hotel as well as smart growth. However, she did not feel that a nine-story structure is not a good idea. She felt it is way too large. She noted that she has heard others express the same concern. She feels the two components of the project should be evaluated separately. She felt there is a need for a good hotel. However, she did not feel the architectural design is in the same class as the existing City Hall and CCAE designs.
7. Mary Deutch- Ms. Deutch said she likes Escondido enough to commute 35 miles a day. She said she supports a hotel and downtown growth in general provided they are done right. She expressed concern with height of parking structure on Lot 1. She came to Escondido to avoid similar high density projects. She reiterated

that the project is out of scale and asked the developer to explore alternatives that address the scale issue.

8. Mary Gracen- She stated that, in the past, she rarely visited the Downtown. However, she stated that there now several things that cause her to visit the downtown. She said she was thrilled with concept of a hotel and wants to live downtown.
9. Michelle Arlen- Ms. Arlen was concerned about the parking structure's impact on her customer accessibility...
10. Tom Knight- Mr. Knight questioned the developer as to whether the hotel relies on the condominiums. Mr. Clark responded that the difficulty factor increases without them but stopped short of saying no. Mr. Clark said it is a tough site to begin with due to its small size and constraint. However, he said it benefits from the presence of the CCAE conference facility. He said he would return with a project that addresses the concerns expressed at the meeting. Mr. Knight continued and expressed concern that in spite of the number of condominium projects in the process, there are no local examples of developed projects that would help confirm the assumptions regarding incomes and types of buyers.
11. Jack Reddick- Mr. Reddick's concerns centered on the financial costs to the City. He wanted to know details of the project total project cost and the amount funded by taxpayers and the developer. Jack Anderson, Assistant City Manager, responded that financial consultants have reviewed the request and that he would be happy to meet with Mr. Reddick to explain the details. Mr. Reddick was concerned that the seismic requirements for underground parking might unduly increase construction costs. He wanted to know whether the City's lots would be sold or leased to the developer. He said he likes the downtown environment. He expressed concerns about Marriott potentially usurping naming rights of the CCAE. He asked for details on how the City's return on investment would be calculated. He also expressed that the parking structure was tall enough to potentially affect flight safety so he encouraged the City to contact the FAA.
12. John Williamson- Mr. Williamson was surprised when he learned of the proposed nine-story structure and expressed concerns with its mass and scale. He also expressed concern with the number of hotel spaces located across Valley Parkway. He expressed concerns about potential vehicle conflicts at the intersection of Maple and Valley and felt that the proposed traffic signal should address vehicle turning movements in addition to the pedestrian crossing. He also expressed the need for an interim parking solution. Mr. Williamson also presented an alternative design that called for the relocation of parking and/or condominiums on the southeast corner of Escondido Boulevard and Woodward. He felt this was a viable solution that would minimize the building mass.
13. Mary Johnson Reynolds- Ms. Johnson owns H. Johnson Furniture and explained that they experience a high number of unauthorized parking in their lot. She felt it is a common problem that indicates the need for additional parking. She described several problems with an existing business due to the unusually high number of employees. She did not want this type of use to be repeated. She asked that the project be well thought out and well planned.

14. Paul Jeffers- Mr. Jeffers felt the hotel site is too narrow and expressed concern with potential congestion, particularly in combination with Cruising Grand. He did not feel the project would help the CCAE. He felt that alternative sites should be evaluated for the project.
15. John McKelley- Mr. McKelley felt that site constraints increase cost and make alternative sites more viable.
16. June Evans- Ms. Evans felt the Marriott would be a desirable user but was concerned about esthetics and its timing. She felt condos might be premature and that the proposed units are too small. She had concerns with the placement of the project and felt the large scale was out of context. She agreed that parking is a concern but not insurmountable if there are strong enough draws.
17. Allen Miller- Mr. Miller is an appraiser asked about the estimated sales price of the condos. Mr. Clark responded that the project costs are preliminary since plans are schematic not all the costs have been estimated. He noted that type 1 construction is expensive though. Mr. Miller had concerns about the likely mix of owner vs. non-owner occupancy. He felt the high construction costs will preclude a profit on rentals.
18. Kim Taylor- Ms. Taylor sought clarification as to where the project was in the CEQA process. Jon Brindle, Assistant Planning Director, explained that the project description has not been finalized but that a number of technical reports were under way. Once the review process is completed, the environmental document will be sent out for public review. It would then be evaluated by the Planning Commission and City Council as part of the public hearing process. Charles Grimm, Director of Community Development, estimated that the hearings would occur this summer.
19. Robert Wright- Mr. Wright stated he likes the character of Escondido and agrees with the need for hotel. However, he would only welcome it in another location, possibly in Grape Day Park. He was concerned with the duration and extent of the construction impacts. He encouraged the study of new parking structures on existing lots rather than concentrating so many spaces on Lot 1. He felt the 9 story structure would impact views and the affect air flow.
20. Stephanie Greenwald- Ms. Greenwald is the owner of 150 Grand. She supported the addition of more people and restaurants but felt the parking structure would be a barrier and conflict with the area's historical character. She felt the parking structure/condominium component would generate esthetic issues and adversely affect on their business. She it would be appropriate to reduce the number of condominiums.
21. Craig Clark- Mr. Clark responded that the sales prices of the condominiums would be about \$400 per SF. He said there would be a variety of purchasers. He generally hears that higher end residential helps businesses. He said condominiums were added out of concern regarding that the early years of the hotel might not be profitable.
22. Un-named speaker- She expressed concern about the possibility of two families moving into the units. Mr. Clark did not feel this would be an issue an would try and address this issue in the CC&R's.

23. Jane Alshen- Ms. Alshen is an owner of new office space on Grand Avenue and had concern about size of project. Questioned the duration of Marriott's commitment. Mr. Clark clarified there would be a 20 year contract with both SAGE and Marriott.
24. Jim Lund- Mr. Lund is an attorney in the downtown area and felt consideration should be given to the long term vision of Escondido. He feels that heights in the downtown should be carefully evaluated; particularly when existing height limits are removed. He called for a comprehensive plan as opposed to spot zoning. He questioned whether there was a boundary that eliminated further extensions into Grape Day Park. Mr. Grimm responded that there is a restriction but noted it might be possible for subterranean development to extend beyond that line. Mr. Lund felt that clarification should be given as to whether there would be a charge for parking. He also asked whether this project might function as a timeshare.
25. Jim Crone- Mr. Crone noted that many of 700 spaces on the Woodward side are not restricted in the same manner as Grape Day Park. Therefore, a parking structure could be built near Woodward. He felt it would be accessible and avoid the costs and ongoing maintenance associated with underground parking such as pumping water.
26. Elizabeth Gabrych- Ms. Grbich questioned the project's visual impact in relation to the low profile city hall and had particular concern with the mass of the parking structure/condo project.
27. Melissa Ralston- Ms. Ralston felt there are really 4 projects under consideration (hotel, parking, interim parking, and parking/condos). She said each component warrants detailed discussion.
28. Cami Mattson- Ms. Mattson questioned whether there would be a joint booking arrangement between the hotel and the CCAE. Mr. Clark responded that a team is now investigating a comprehensive booking approach. Ms. Mattson said she supports the prospect of a hotel.