

Owner of Monarch Cove Inn proposes 41-room upscale hotel

Hotels & Boarding Houses

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The owner of Monarch Cove, formerly known as the El Salto Resort on Depot Hill in Capitola, wants to build two more buildings adding 32 rooms to the present nine rooms.

DAN COYRO/
SENTINEL



\$9 million investment planned; neighbors worry about traffic

By JONDI GUMZ

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CAPITOLA — The longtime owner of the 11-room Monarch Cove Inn bed-and-breakfast on Depot Hill is proposing a \$9 million makeover involving restoration, demolition and new construction to create a 41-room upscale oceanview hotel.

The site atop coastal bluffs at the end of El Salto Drive was developed in 1895 as a private estate but since 1946 was operated as a summer

resort when Joseph Tabacchini, who later became mayor, bought the property with his wife. After two changes of ownership, the city declared the cottages unsafe in 1989 and the current owner, Robert Blodgett, undertook renovations and reopened the resort in 1991.

Blodgett hired Santa Cruz architect Matthew Thompson to design the development and land-use consultant Hamilton Swift & Associates to shepherd the project through regulatory review.

Neighbors are anxious to learn more, especially about traffic generated by tripling the number of rooms.

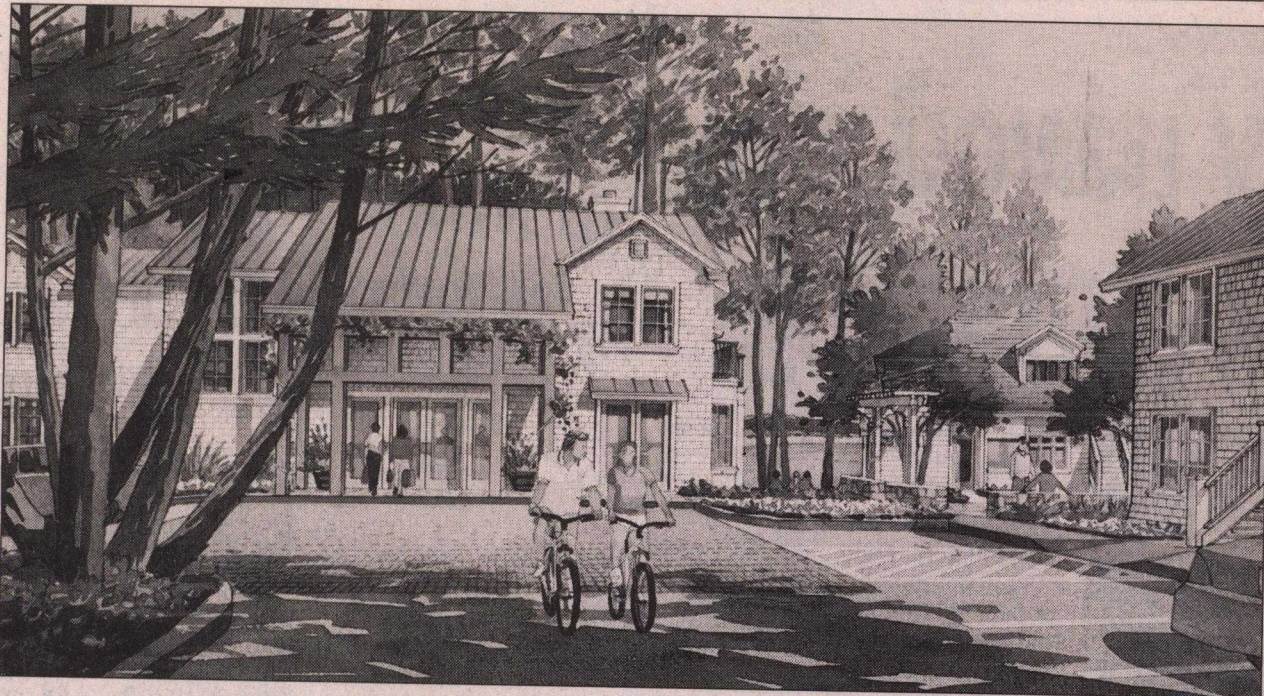
PROJECT PLANS

Plans call for lifting up the 4,500-square-foot Victorian inn with nine guest rooms onto a new foundation for seismic safety and tearing down two smaller cottages. Crews would build a 16,700-square-foot, two-story hotel with 22 rooms above a two-level

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EXTRA



This rendering by architect Matthew Thompson shows new 16,700-square-foot main building for the 11-room Monarch Cove Inn in Capitola, part of \$9 million project by owner Robert Blodgett to create a 41-room retreat.

CONTRIBUTED

MONARCH

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underground parking garage and replace the outdoor deck with a 5,900-square-foot, two-story building with 10 rooms.

The new buildings would have a "cottage-style design," with dormers and balconies, according to the plans.

"This is a beautiful site," said Charlie Eadie of Hamilton Swift, noting buildings would cover less than 27 percent of the 62,000-square-foot property. New landscaping would appeal to wintering monarch butterflies and a pathway would comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and offer ocean overlooks.

The new hotel would include a 1,460-square-foot meeting room, which Eadie said would be big enough to seat 75 for dinner. There would be no restaurant, bar, pool or beach access, but there would be views of the Monterey Bay.

"This is for clientele looking for a quiet retreat setting," Eadie said.

The plans call for two parking entrances, one on El Salto Drive to 26 spaces on the upper level and another on Escalona Drive to 30 spaces on the lower level plus four



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

The owner of Monarch Cove Inn, overlooking the bay and formerly known as the El Salto Resort on Depot Hill in Capitola, wants to build two more buildings adding 32 rooms to the present 11 rooms. The construction will demolish two cottages and the addition would bring the inn to a total of 41 rooms.

uncovered spaces.

"It's a nice solution; you don't see the cars," Eadie said.

Benefits for the city would include an estimated \$2.5 million in hotel room taxes over 10 years, assuming occupancy of 60-68 percent and \$1.5 million in guest spending for meals and shopping, based on \$146 per room average from the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council. There would be eight jobs in hospitality and others in construction.

NEXT STEPS

"Neighbors will definitely

be impacted by traffic," said village homeowner Molly Ording, who researched the project for the Capitola Village Residents Association.

"The access to Escalona (Drive) at Monterey (Avenue) will be an issue, she said. "That's the only way to get to Monarch Cove. Monterey backs up consistently now."

She expects Fanmar Way and Park Avenue to be affected as well.

"It's a beautiful piece of property," she said. "We all understand why they would want to develop it. But putting it in a strictly

AT A GLANCE

WHAT: Monarch Cove Inn, 11 rooms, 620 El Salto Drive, Capitola

OWNER: Robert Blodgett

DEVELOPMENT: 41 rooms with restoration of Victorian inn, demolition of two cottages and new construction

NEW BUILDINGS: 16,700 square feet and 5,900 square feet

PARKING: 60 spaces, 56 underground on two levels with access on Escalona Drive and El Salto Drive, and four uncovered spaces

residential neighborhood, it will be challenge to find solutions."

The developer will have to pay more for water with the Soquel Creek Water District planning to double water demand offset fees for commercial customers.

Preliminary plans are available at City Hall, but a hearing date before the Planning Commission will not be set until the environmental impact report is complete. The city hired Rincon Consultants for up to \$142,295 to do that report, which will analyze traffic.

Follow Sentinel reporter Jondi Gumz at Twitter.com/jondigumz