

Dream up new name for former Dream Inn

Hotel owner seeks
input from public

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SANTA CRUZ — A decade has passed since Santa Cruz's landmark oceanfront hotel bore the neon sign that famously knighted it the Dream Inn. But despite attempts to name it something else, residents still know the 10-story hotel that casts its shadow on Cowell Beach by its original moniker.

"Everyone still refers to it as the Dream Inn," concedes Kirsten Maynard, a spokeswoman for the hotel's management company, San Francisco-based Joie de Vivre Hospitality.

So, because the current name, the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel — and before that the West Coast Santa Cruz Hotel — is not resonating with the public, managers have decided to call the hotel something new. And they're turning to the community for ideas.

But the first rule is that the name Dream Inn is out of the running — not because the hotel has dashed the hopes and dreams of a generation of city leaders who tried but failed to turn the aging hotel into a first-rate destination; not because its current owners don't want to embrace the inn's retro title; but simply because somebody else now owns the rights to the name.

"It would have been a great name. But there's a trademark issue," Maynard said. "We pursued it for a while but came to a dead end."

Maynard's company, which

Dream Inn

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has been managing the hotel for Ensemble Hotel Partners LLC since April, says while Dream Inn won't be posted on the new signs it will be there in spirit.

Joie de Vivre Hospitality, which calls itself the state's biggest boutique hotel company and prides itself on bringing out the "personality of its properties," says "dreamy" is one of five concepts it expects the new name to convey.

The other concepts are "young at heart," "worldly," "eclectic," and "organic."

A final name will be selected at the end of 2008, hotel managers say, and that name will be preceded by a remodel of its 163 guest rooms, restaurant, pool and other public areas.

Though remodel plans haven't

Got a name?

Hotel managers at Joie de Vivre Hospitality are asking for ideas for the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel's new name.

Submissions can be made at www.jdvhotels.com/namingcontest. Deadline is Dec. 15. The person whose name is chosen will get a weekend stay, complimentary breakfast and dinner for four at the hotel.

You also can on vote for your favorites at www.santacruzsentinel.com.

been drawn up, the hotel company said, in keeping with its goal of creating a mood and imploring metaphor, interior changes would be made in the spirit of Surfer and Domino magazines.

Managers expect the fixes to

earn the hotel a four-star rating.

The changes are a longtime coming, say both city leaders and visitors.

As one person put it on travel Web site TripAdvisor.com, "Great location but this hotel is really worn." Another visitor who paid \$350 to stay there was less complimentary: "The hotel is pretty ugly overall."

It was built in the early 1960s in its unremarkable, big-box style. The 10-story tower was added in the early '70s.

Two years ago, former owner Western Hotel Properties put forth a \$130 million plan to raze the building and replace it with a 270-room hotel, fitted with a 23,000-foot conference center and six-level parking garage. The proposal, which city leaders hailed as a magnet for tourists and business travelers, was eventually dropped amid intense community opposition.

Almost two decades earlier, a plan to build 240 rooms across the street from the hotel with a conference center and parking garage similarly failed. There was even talk of building a performing arts center or convention center at the time.

Santa Cruz Councilman Mike Rotkin, who supported the 2005 plan to rebuild the hotel, had an idea for its new name.

"The Lost Opportunity," he said Tuesday.

Residents had other ideas. One offered up, "La Cinder Block Inn." But most harkened back to the name on the neon sign that was quietly removed in 1997.

"Inn Ur Dreams," suggested one person.

"Dreamier Than Before," said another.

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