

Hotel foes turn in signatures

VOTE SOUGHT ON SANTA CRUZ PROJECT

Hotels & Boarding Houses
By Ken McLaughlin
Mercury News

Opponents of a beachfront hotel and conference center in Santa Cruz turned in signatures from more than 8,000 people Wednesday to try to stop the project, the city's largest since the University of California-Santa Cruz was built four decades ago.

The signatures, delivered a day before they were due, should be enough to force a vote on the \$100 million project. Signatures from only 3,892 city residents — or 10 percent of those who voted in November's election — are required.

"The more people know about this project, the more they come to the conclusion that it was approved too fast," said former Mayor Christopher Krohn. "People are not in favor of all this massive building at that site."

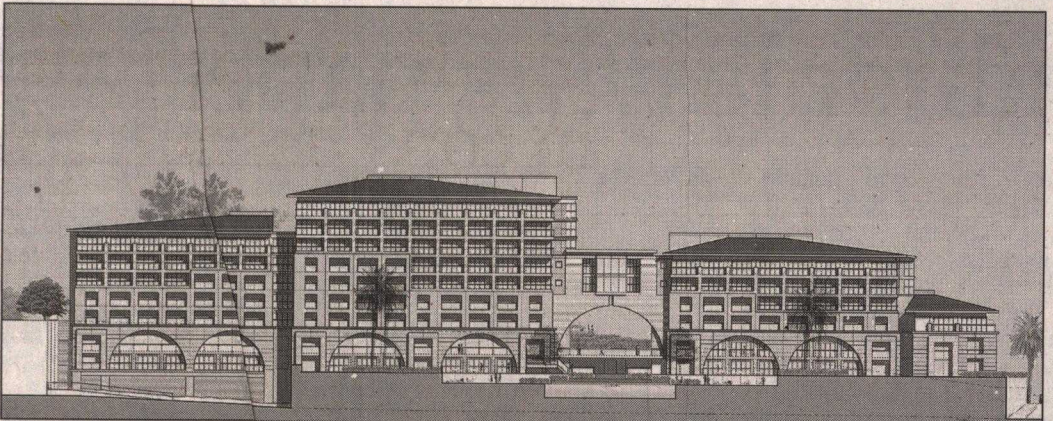
The new hotel on Cowell Beach would replace the

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THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2005 SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS



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Rendering shows the new hotel on Cowell Beach. Some 270 rooms are planned, but the council told the developer to cut back the size.

HOTEL | Project's opponents hope to put measure to vote

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163-room Coast Santa Cruz Hotel, better known as the Dream Inn, its former name. Current plans call for a 270-room hotel, but the council in January told the architect to reduce its size by 7.5 percent.

The city would issue \$30 million in redevelopment bonds to build a six-level parking garage and 23,000-square-foot conference center. The city then would lease them back to the hotel owners, the Northwest Hospitality Group of Idaho.

Technically, the council — which last month approved the project on a 4-3 vote — could withdraw its support and not have an election. But that scenario is highly unlikely.

Instead, the council is expected to begin a series of pro-

cedural steps that will put the measure on the ballot.

The earliest the vote could take place is mid-summer, City Clerk Leslie Cook said.

The signatures will be sent today to the Santa Cruz County Elections Department for verification, Cook said.

Don Lane, treasurer of the Community Coalition for the Hotel Conference Center, said his group wasn't surprised that the issue appears headed for the ballot. "We've already started planning the election campaign," he said.

The looming battle is expected to be the bloodiest since environmentalists and others in Santa Cruz's "progressive community" crushed an attempt to build a hotel and convention center on Lighthouse Field in 1974.

This time around, however,

the city's progressives are deeply divided.

Led by Mayor Mike Rotkin, one faction believes that the city needs economic development to keep it from falling over a fiscal cliff. The city, Rotkin and others point out, has had to eliminate 70 jobs in the past 2½ years, close the Harvey West community pool part of the year, eliminate most park rangers patrolling the city's greenbelt and reduce hours at the teen center and Loudon Nelson Community Center.

But hotel opponents say the hotel is too massive, "un-Santa Cruzan" and would cast double-wide shadows on the nearby Clear View Court mobile home park.

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