

Council approves La Bahia Hotel 5-1

Hotels and Boundary House

4-15-09

Madrigal lone vote against project; hotel plans to be reviewed by Coastal Commission for final OK

'I'm really excited about the La Bahia project in front of us. I feel like there's kind of a new renaissance opportunity.'

By **GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER**

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SANTA CRUZ — City leaders voted 5-1 Tuesday night to approve plans for a new luxury hotel on the site of the current La

Bahia apartments on Beach Street across from Main Beach.

"This is part of a long-term strategy to make Santa Cruz economically viable," said Councilman Ryan Coonerty.

Other city leaders said the hotel was the

right design for one of the most visible lots in town.

"I'm really excited about the La Bahia project in front of us," Councilwoman Lynn

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LYNN ROBINSON, councilwoman

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

LA BAHIA

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Robinson said. "I feel like there's kind of a new renaissance opportunity."

Councilman Tony Madrigal voted against the project. Councilwoman Katherine Beiers was absent to attend a family funeral.

Unions fiercely fought the La Bahia plans in hopes of forcing developer Barry Swenson Builder to guarantee more union jobs. Madrigal, who works

as a union organizer, said the other council members caved to the promise of future revenue during tough economic times and said the project is not right for the community.

"My vote is going to be for the people now and the generations to come," Madrigal said.

The plans approved were the third set submitted since 2007, when Barry Swenson Builder of San Jose first overhauled original plans that were approved in 2003.

The current plan calls for 125 hotel rooms on the site of the historic but

crumbling La Bahia apartments, with parts of the new building standing four stories high over a parking garage.

Once built, the project is expected to inject \$750,000 each year into city coffers. In recent months, Santa Cruz has laid off staff and cut services to grapple with a \$8 million deficit.

The project now must go before the California Coastal Commission, which regulates development along the coast and holds the final vote on whether the project will be built. That hearing has yet to be scheduled.