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A draft environmental impact report on the proposed remodeling of the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel raises concerns about the new building's aesthetics as well as traffic.

# Coast Hotel EIR points out potential problems

*Hotels + Boarding Houses*  
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SANTA CRUZ — While city officials hope that demolishing the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel and replacing it with a larger, more grandiose hotel and conference center will bring in more tourist dollars, the \$100 million plan would also create an added burden on traffic, water use and aesthetics, according to a recently released draft environmental impact report.

Concerns identified in the report

include potential traffic jams at the intersection of Bay and Mission streets, an inadequate water supply in the event of a drought and the building's visual appeal — an issue some consider a matter of taste.

"Some say big isn't an environmental impact," said Juliana Rebagliati of the city's Planning Department. "But we wanted to be conservative in our analysis."

According to the report, traffic could be lessened by making modifications to the intersection of Bay and Mission, but the water and aes-

thetic issues are considered "unmitigatable."

The hotel is privately owned by Northwest Hospitality Group, though the city has agreed to contribute to the cost of building a sleeker, more eye-catching structure. Details of the partnership are being negotiated.

A new Coast Hotel, which would be twice the size of the current building and offer amenities such as a parking garage, conference center,

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skywalk and beach access, is expected to draw a year-round crowd to Santa Cruz.

The project has been "a long term goal of the city," said Ceil Cirillo of the city's Redevelopment Agency, since it became part of a general plan known as the Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan, approved in 1998.

"The most logical place for (a new hotel) is at this location because of its access to Mission off Bay Street," she said. "That does not conflict with summer traffic to the Boardwalk."

Besides improving the Bay/Mission intersection, the report also recommends a traffic light at the intersection of West Cliff Drive and Bay Street.

"Traffic can be mitigated in the long term," Cirillo said. "It's a matter of dollars and implementing a long-term plan."

Charles Canfield, owner of the Sea & Sand Inn, a 20-room hotel next to the Coast Hotel, looks forward to a more modern structure. Any impact on the Sea & Sand Motel, he said, would be negligible, he said.

"This town needs something first class," said Canfield, also head of the Seaside Co., which owns the Boardwalk. "This is a good opportunity for the town to get something more up-to-date."

Another project supporter, architect Matt Thompson — whose firm designed nearby condominiums on the corner of Bay Street and West Cliff Drive — said the hotel and conference center would be a "handsome addition" to the area.

"It's a landmark site, and it's important for us to have a new hotel that deserves to earn the name of landmark," Thompson said.

The subject of several Santa Cruz Neighbors meetings and public meetings sponsored by the city, the hotel project has generated little criticism so far from residents.

"People are hopeful about this project," said Lynn Robinson of Santa Cruz Neighbors. "Most people seem to accept the fact that there will be a big change there."

Massive upgrades and additions would change the face of the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel, which has been a prominent landmark in the city as one of the few beach-



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A family looks toward the Monterey Bay from a balcony at the Coast Santa Cruz Hotel recently. Plans are in the works to raze the hotel and rebuild it to house 100 more rooms and a conference center.

front hotels.

The new building, planned to be about 200,000 square feet, would be farther from the beach with about 100 more rooms. The hotel would be four levels high instead of 10, and the public would have easy access to Cowell Beach.

A tram similar to the one at the Shad-owbrook Restaurant in Capitola would be installed to take people between the beach and hotel.

Parking to accommodate 650 vehicles would be located in a multi-level structure across the street from the hotel, where the conference center and hotel lobby would

also sit. A glass skywalk over West Cliff Drive would connect the hotel with the conference center and parking structure.

According to estimates by Northwest Hospitality Group, the new establishment would generate an additional \$1 million in sales and other taxes for the city each year, above the current \$700,000 generated.

City officials are working with a consultant to get an independent analysis of the project's financial projections, which will include a detailed look at "room rates, occupancy rates and how realistic they are along with operating costs," Cirillo said.

If the plan receives the appropriate

approvals by City Council and the Redevelopment Agency, groundbreaking could take place in two years.

Comments can be made on the environmental impact report to the Planning Department until Sept. 23. The Planning Department will address each comment before submitting a final environmental impact report to the City Council in October. To submit a comment, contact the Planning Department, 809 Center St., Room 206, Santa Cruz, or call 420-5101.

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