

Hotel plan goes before panel

Planning Commission to review downtown project

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A 120-room, 55,000-square-foot hotel proposed for downtown Ann Arbor will go before the city Planning Commission tonight.

Ann Arbor Hotel, formerly the site of Metro 202, is expected to be acted upon at 7 p.m. at the second floor of the city hall, 100 N. Fifth St. The original Metro 202 design called for 44 apartments and retail on the first floor.

The developer, McKinley, projects that 20 to 40 new jobs will be created with the nine-story hotel, one of two new hotels planned for downtown Ann Arbor.

The Ann Arbor Hotel site is at the southwest corner of Division and Washington streets, across from the McKinley Towne Centre.

The project was on the Planning Commission's agenda last month, but the planners ran out of time at a lengthy meeting before they could get to it.

The project is facing some opposition.

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network; a law firm representing the Bell Tower Hotel, located on Thayer Street between Washington Street and North University Avenue; and Robb Burroughs and Kristen Schleck of Hobbs & Black Associates Inc., an architectural firm, sent letters to the city in opposition to the project. All three letters said the project was too big for that site.

But Planning Commission member Jean Carlberg said the mass of the project shouldn't be an issue to the commission because a similar sized project, Metro 202, was approved for the site in January 2006.

"It doesn't make any sense now to say no (due to mass of building)," Carlberg said.

Once acted upon by the Planning Commission, it would go to the City Council.

Mayor John Hieftje, who voted against Metro 202, said he has no objections to the Ann Arbor Hotel at first glance.

"I don't anticipate having a problem with it," Hieftje said.

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An artist's rendering of the proposed Ann Arbor Hotel, at Division and Washington streets across from McKinley Town Centre.