

Doubletree neighbors like resort

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They wanted the community's comments, and now they're hearing it loud and clear.

During the first of three workshops, representatives of Doubletree's owners presented several potential changes for the Rancho Penasquitos golf resort.

However, attendees expressed the most interest in leaving the golf course and hotel untouched.

About 70 people turned out for the Oct. 11 meeting.

Ken Ryan, a representative of the urban development firm EDAW, led the workshop, which tested responses to redeveloping the land.

Options presented included using the land for commercial and residential developments. Housing options included low-income apartments, senior housing, single-family homes and mixed-use developments. Other ideas presented included using part of the land for a community center or open space.

Residents said they were most concerned about traffic near the course, especially considering the Cresta Bella development has proposed building over 600 units across the street from the Doubletree.

Both parcels are at the southern end of Penasquitos Drive, where traffic has bottlenecked in recent years. Residents said the street, which is the only way into and out of their community, has congestion problems each morning, and dry brush in nearby hills makes it a potential firetrap.

Many residents expressed enthusiasm for development that would involve the resort more directly with the community. Despite mixed approval for a variety of open space ideas, a sea of raised hands showed overwhelming support for leaving the resort as is.

Doubletree's representatives have emphasized that's still an option, but did not directly address it until attendees pressed them to. Ryan said the reason for this was to keep a focus on the community's preferences in the case changes do occur at the resort. "We don't want people to say, 'None of the above,' and then you don't get any feedback," Ryan said. "The real purpose of these questions is not to give this perfect, scientific answer. It's to facilitate the discussion."

So far, that discussion has been calm as well as candid. Joe Pierzina, one of the attendees, expressed concern that as open as the debate appeared, the Doubletree already had an agenda.

"They came back in the middle of the meeting saying anything is open, but obviously they're looking at change, or we wouldn't be here today," Pierzina said.

He added that the community wouldn't be happy with gaining amenities like open space in exchange for less appealing development. There was tension at moments throughout the two-hour workshop when the crowd's skepticism was obvious; Ryan said it will take time to win the trust of the community, and he expected questioning that would "keep us on our toes."

"That's earned," Ryan said. "You get that over sharing information and reacting in a way that shows what those shared goals might be."

When asked whether the audience of the second workshop, held Wednesday in the Sandpiper Room, would be asked whether they wanted to leave the Doubletree unchanged, Ryan said, "We'll probably add that."

The third and final workshop will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Nov. 9 in the Sandpiper Room. Residents living west/southwest of Penasquitos Drive and north of Ted Williams Parkway are encouraged to attend.

For more information or comments, call the community hotline at (866) 744-8077.

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