

# DoubleTree owners exploring new uses for property

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Owners of the DoubleTree Resort are contemplating the aging hotel's future and are talking to neighbors about what they would like to see happen to the hotel property.

During several closed-door interviews with select focus groups last week, participants were reportedly asked about various scenarios, including renovating the current buildings, tearing down the hotel to build a senior-living resort, a community center or a retail plaza, according to Diane Gaynor of Windstar Communities.

Gaynor said that her company was hired by the DoubleTree's landowners to determine whether the hotel property is meeting the current needs of the community. Windstar arranged for Lawrence Research to meet with a series of focus groups, composed of local residents and community leaders.

Those who live closest to the hotel exhibited pride in their community, showed support for their neighborhood schools and appreciated the "unique quality of life" in PQ, according to Gaynor.

"The DoubleTree property is an aging asset that requires regular maintenance and cost enhancements," said Darrell Gray, president of Windstar.

He noted that instead of creating a land-use plan, then seeking community feedback, Windstar decided to reverse the process and hear from residents first before moving forward with any plans.

The fate of the hotel, which has a 127-acre prime location at 14455 Penasquitos Drive, has raised speculation and public interest to such feverish levels that Joost Bende, chairman of the Rancho Penasquitos Planning Board, can't recall any other issue matching such strong reactions.

Bende said that the hotel landowners have not appeared before the planning board, which typically happens when an applicant wants to seek approval for a land-use project. That's why any speculation about DoubleTree's future has come as a complete surprise to the planning board.

"They were definitely doing their homework, but conducting the sessions behind closed doors really added to the speculation and rumors," Bende said.

Bende said he was unaware of the Doubletree's plans until he was approached by community members.

Word of the DoubleTree's hazy future comes at the same time as two large apartment complexes are being planned for the immediate vicinity – a 300-unit project next to Albertsons on Carmel Mountain Road and a 600-unit apartment complex directly across from the Doubletree.

Residents who contacted Bende this week pinpointed their major concerns about "all this housing coming to one area," Bende said. But worries about more traffic, impacts on local schools and other issues were also raised by residents, he noted.

Penasquitos resident Jeanine Politte loves living in her "peaceful, quiet" northern PQ neighborhood. Her qualms are that the neighborhood can't handle the number of new residents that new apartments would attract because Penasquitos Boulevard has only one way in and one way out.

“They’re going to open us up to allow more traffic,” Politte said.

Cresta Bella, which currently is called California Properties Leisure Life, is now a 248-unit complex that after 30 years of wear is definitely showing it’s age, according to attorney Ken Lounsbery, who represents the owners.

Leisure Life has been under HUD guidelines with about half the residents qualified for affordable housing rates. Because that contract expires early next year, the new apartments would be a mix of affordable prices for low-income tenants, but 70 percent will be at market-rate-prices, Lounsbery said.

That project has already received preliminary approval by the PQ Planning Board and the applicant will return with drawings as developers progress.

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