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ROBERT AND ELIZABETH LESLIE

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PLANNING DIVISION

January 12, 2009

City of Santa Barbara
Planning Division
P.O. Box 1990
Santa Barbara, Calif. 93102

Attn: Kathleen Kennedy

Re: Opposition of Intent to
Draft Mitigated Negative
Declaration - MST 2007-00140
For reasons of :

1. Loss of Historic Character of Northwest Corner of Mission Ridge and Alvarado to the neighborhood due to the exchange of 3 historic houses and botanical gardens to a parking lot and Utility Distribution Plant.
2. Increased noise from Utility Distribution Plant (Power Plant) and 47 to 50 space parking lot. Historically there was no power plant on this corner and only 12 to 17 parking spaces completely hidden by green shrubs.
3. With the above power plant and parking lot on this corner, noise becomes amplified as it travels uphill to neighboring properties much as an amphitheater or coliseum.

Dear Ms. Kennedy and Members of
Santa Barbara Planning Commission,

We are responding to the Intent to Adopt Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration on property 1900 Lasuen Road. El Encanto Hotel.

We are concerned neighbors with a property at 1970 Mission Ridge which is directly across the street from proposed location of new parking lot and Utility Distribution Plant. Our property is less than 70 feet from the above proposed items by the Developer of our much loved and charming El Encanto Hotel.

As stated above we are extremely concerned that the Charming almost 100 year Old El Encanto Hotel will no longer exist. We feel it is a tremendous loss to the neighborhood due to the impact of loosing 3 original old historical houses surrounded by botanical gardens on this corner of Mission Ridge and Alvarado to a concrete wall enclosing a parking lot and

ROBERT AND ELIZABETH LESLIE

Utility Distribution Plant. The lack of sensitivity by the developers to the neighborhood could not be more in evidence with these proposed plans. In addition, they ask to encroach their parking lot and power plant into the set back on this property, bringing it even closer to neighboring properties.

1. NOISE

The issue of noise from the Utility Distribution Plant has been measured by the sound engineer hired by the developers. We are definitely not sound engineers that can measure the intensity of noise from a new Power Plant, however, it is not difficult to figure that there will be noise 24/7 as we understand that this Plant will be the source of power for the entire property which now contains a much larger main building and many more hotel rooms and cottages which originally had their own individual power supply. Also, we understand that it will contain an electric room, boilers, water heaters, storage tanks and cooling towers with acoustical silencers for noise reduction. We understand it will also contain facilities for a laundry and dry cleaning plant for the entire property. It will not take a sound engineer to ascertain that there will be significantly more noise from the new Power Plant than there was from 3 small cottages and surrounding botanical gardens. It would also be assumed that there would be substantial heat and toxic fumes generated by this proposed "Utility Distribution Plant".

The noise factor from a 47 to 50 space parking lot with valet parking will also be a major source of noise from car doors slamming, engines being started and stopped, car alarms going off and valets talking and yelling for the cars they need. When the hotel has special events and weddings as it always has this noise will certainly be magnified and intensified and cars will probably have to be parked on the street when there are large events.

Originally the hotel had 12 to 17 parking spaces much closer to the front entry of the hotel and Alvarado St. which does not have residential properties on it.

Another major issue with the noise from these two proposed new uses of the corner of Mission Ridge and Alvarado is that the noise from the El Encanto has always traveled uphill much the same as an amphitheater or coliseum. When the old El Encanto had events, we could hear noise from these events as though they were next to our house. A further example of noise that travels upwards is that we can hear noise from the football field at the high school at the bottom of the valley which is approximately two miles from our home.

2. AESTHETICS AND LOSS OF HISTORICAL CHARACTER TO NEIGHBORHOOD

As mentioned above the Character, Charm and Ambiance of this old hotel has been significantly impacted and reduced to the public who both live, walk and drive by the El Encanto (The Enchanted Place) on Mission Ridge and Alvarado. We are very saddened by the removal of 3 original old cottages #17-18 and 19 which were on this corner with their surrounding botanical gardens. We had been coming to the El Encanto for 15 to 20 years and have stayed several times in one of the cottages on this corner. We loved the El Encanto because of its quiet, residential location and magical feeling. The special ambiance of the El Encanto and its setting made us feel like we were going back in time. We bought our house so we could live across from it at 1970 Mission Ridge.

When we bought our house in 2002, our house was 50 to 60 feet from Mission Ridge Rd. We regularly walked to the front of our property and crossed an 18 foot street to the

ROBERT AND ELIZABETH LESLIE

on the other side of the street we were on the hotel property and walked past the 3 old cottages with their surrounding gardens that obviously been planned and planted by a professional landscape architect years ago. Many plants in these gardens were identified by landscaper name tags and you felt you were in a botanical garden. We then walked through a wonderful trellised covered arbor with very old and gnarled vines and plants that made the whole place feel very magical. Then we passed the beautiful lily pond which was surrounded by grass and trellis and arbors and was used quite often for weddings.

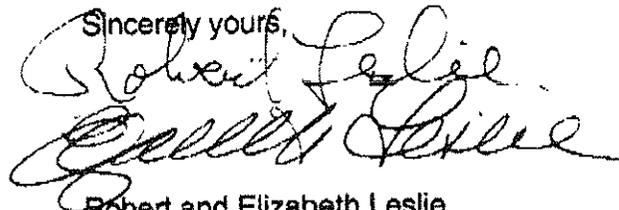
A further negative impact on our neighborhood is the view from Mission Ridge and Alvarado which will be negatively impacted by having to look at a stucco 5 foot fence around the parking lot and housing for the Central Utility Power Plant versus the historical 3 lovely old cottages and a botanical garden setting. In addition the original main building of the El Encanto was substantially smaller and lower than the new main building that is presently under construction. We could see a steeple over the original building in the city. When the structural steel frame (3rd floor) is filled in over the new main building we will no longer be able to see the church steeple. This certainly is a tremendous loss of view for us and the neighborhood.

As we have said in the past, we ran away from Los Angeles because we were always being inundated with developers that with very little opposition could take lovely smaller properties and build huge structures in their place, all in the name of the bottom line. We thought Santa Barbara with its seemingly strict development laws and protection of its historical structures was different.

HOW COULD THE CITY OF SANTA BARBARA PERMIT THE ABOVE TO HAPPEN WHEN THE EL ENCANTO PROPERTY IS ZONED RH (Which is supposed to protect surrounding properties from commercialization) AND BE DESIGNATED A HISTORICAL PROPERTY AND BE ALLOWED TO BE CHANGED TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT HAS???????

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns as stated above. We want you to know that we want the El Encanto Hotel to be finished and in operation as soon as possible. We hope that the present plans can be changed to the extent that all the residents of the area will be happy with this development.

Sincerely yours,



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