

Mission Ridge Trust  
1940 Mission Ridge Road  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103  
(805) 965-7613

April 22, 2009

Madam Mayor and Council Members  
Santa Barbara City Council  
City of Santa Barbara  
C/o City Clerk  
PO Box 1990  
Santa Barbara, CA 93102 - 1990

Re: El Encanto Hotel Revised Master Plan –1900 Lasuen Road  
MST 2007-00140

Madam Mayor and Council Members:

This letter is to provide support for the proposed Revised Master Plan for the El Encanto Hotel. We urge you to deny the appeal and permit the El Encanto project to move forward under the terms of the Revised Master Plan.

We are neighbors of the hotel, residing directly across Mission Ridge Road from the Northeastern corner of the El Encanto property. A site plan of the project with our property identified with an "X" is attached as Appendix A. We have been supportive of the renovation work, and look forward to enjoying many aspects of the hotel once it re-opens.

### **Our Property**

Our home was built in 1921. It was designed in 1920 by Santa Barbara's most renowned architect, George Washington Smith in the Spanish Colonial style. Our home is designed and oriented to take advantage of the views of the City of Santa Barbara, Stearns Wharf and the harbor. These views will look directly out over the planned "Mission Village" cottages which are part of the Revised Master Plan.

The location of our home just across the street would not be approved today as portions of it encroach on the front yard setback from Mission Ridge Road. These features in fact increase the home's interaction with Mission Ridge Road and those who use it. We are often exchanging greetings with our neighbors and visitors from our balconies.

### **Mission Village Cottages**

As part of Phase II of the Revised Master Plan, the El Encanto proposes to replace Court Cottages 22, 23 and 24 with Mission Village Cottages of roughly the same area. The Mission Village Cottages will be constructed over a podium style valet parking structure. The Mission Village Cottages proposal is accompanied by a request for a modification to allow the Mission Village Cottages to encroach into the front yard setback along Mission Ridge Road, directly across from our home.

### **Front Yard Setback Encroachment Should be Allowed**

We support the proposed encroachment in the front yard setback along Mission Ridge Road. The existing Court Cottages are lined up in a straight line an even distance from Mission Ridge Road. They represent a substantial encroachment into the front yard setback. The backs of the buildings are flat, contain no articulation and express no architectural or visual interest. They represent a poor example of 1960's or 1970's architecture that do nothing interesting for the street or the neighbors. The previously approved facade remodel for these buildings will do little if anything to improve on this.

The Mission Village Cottages proposed will be below the street level. Setting these buildings on a diagonal to the street as proposed would lead to a vastly improved aesthetic when compared to the linear location of the existing Court Cottages. Designing these in the Spanish Colonial Revival style as shown on the elevations will not only enhances the El Encanto site, it will also enhance the experience of the numerous walkers, joggers, cyclists and drivers along Mission Ridge Road. Appropriate landscaping between the cottages and Mission Ridge Road will further enhance the look and feel of these new cottages.

The well thought out and well designed Mission Village Cottages of the El Encanto would be a vast improvement over the existing situation, notwithstanding that a modification of the setback may be requirement. The existing buildings are poor visually and are sited poorly. They are located well within the front yard setback from Mission Ridge Road. This is a situation where the granting of a modification of the front yard setback to allow the proposed minor encroachments is not only warranted, but also should be encouraged because it will enable a dramatic improvement over the existing situation.

### **Appeal Issues**

The El Encanto project is a wonderful restoration project of what will doubtless be one of Santa Barbara's brightest jewels. It has already been under construction for about two and one half years. The work being done is beautiful. We are, as are many of our neighbors, looking forward to seeing the finished product.

These are not easy times for the hotel business world wide. The El Encanto has not wavered from achieving its "world class" vision for the project. The City needs this project to be finished so that it may attract the number and caliber of visitors likely to come to such a wonderful hotel. They will bring both economic and cultural benefits to the City. Santa Barbara is fortunate to have a company with the vision and resources of Orient Express Hotels, Trains & Cruises to make the enormous commitment to our City expressed in its plans and vision for the El Encanto.

We have attended several Planning Commission meetings to support this project. At a few of them we have heard opposition to the project provided by some of our neighbors and their lawyer. Although we would like to be as agreeable as neighbors generally should, we do not agree with the grounds for the opposition, which constitute the grounds for the appeal. Briefly, our thoughts are as follows:

- The requirement of an EIR is not in the best interest of our neighborhood or Santa Barbara.
  - I have reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), the comments and the response to comments. It appears that all potential environmental impacts have been adequately addressed in the MND.
  - If the appeal is granted and the Project delayed, there will be substantial additional negative environmental impacts to the neighborhood, both in terms of the presence of a stalled construction project, and in terms of the environmental impacts of enduring the effects of continued construction for additional months or years.
  
- I have read the Acoustic Study with substantial interest.
  - My house is very close to the project and, like my neighbors, I am concerned about noise.
  - Based on the study, it appears that any noise generated by the project will be well within the limits set by the City. As a resident of the City, those limits are acceptable to me.
  
- The City should encourage an efficient use of the surface of the property. The El Encanto's request for underground "back of house" facilities simply makes sense. There is no reason to consume valuable Riveria hotel grounds with structures devoted to services that are best hidden from view. The grounds should be preserved for gardens, walkways and cottages. The same rationale leads me to support moving some of the surface parking previously approved for the corner of Mission Ridge Road and Alvarado to partially underground parking directly across from our house.
  
- The El Encanto's reduction of the parking lot at the corner of Mission Ridge Road and Alvarado from 52 spaces on the surface to 43 spaces set down several feet and shielded by buildings will be at least a 17% reduction in whatever noise it may generate over the existing approved plan. This substantial reduction in impacts at that corner will benefit all the neighbors.
  
- I have watched the story poles with great interest. As the El Encanto is going to build the Mission Village cottages, they will not affect any public or private views adversely. The Mission Ridge Road aesthetics will be substantially improved. As mentioned above, we support the requested modifications for the Mission Village encroachments that are right across the street from our home.

### **Conclusion**

Our home is located directly across from the El Encanto's proposed Mission Village Cottages. The proposed design of the Mission Village Cottages reflects this in a manner that will be a vast improvement over the existing structures. Allowing the Cottages to encroach on the setback as proposed would vastly improve on an existing encroaching situation and would enhance the street presence of the El Encanto along Mission Ridge Road and the experience of the users of that road.

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The El Encanto Hotel is part of the fiber and character of Santa Barbara and the Riviera neighborhood. The City Council should deny this appeal, approve the Project and permit the owner to have it completed and opened as soon as possible. The City has an opportunity to work with the owner to address all environmental concerns adequately through the MND and allow for the restoration of a wonderful piece of Santa Barbara's history. Every effort should be made to facilitate the improvements. We do not want the El Encanto Hotel project to be forced to become another blight on our City under the guise of environmental protection, similar to projects like the Carrillo Hotel, Las Entradas, Fess Parker's planned hotel and the Miramar. As City leaders you need to find a way to support and facilitate projects which are beneficial to the City and its residents. The Revised El Encanto Hotel Master Plan is just such a project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gregory Parker".

Gregory Parker

For the Mission Ridge Trust

Enclosures

Cc: Kathleen Kennedy

