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Ybor City Hotel Project Gets Council's OK

By Kathy Steele

A five-story boutique hotel project in Ybor City received initial approval from the Tampa City Council and soon will go back to the Barrio Latino Commission to work out design details.

The vacant site is at 1315 E. Fifth Ave., between Nuccio Parkway and 14th Street in the Ybor City Historic District.

The council will take a final vote within two weeks.

The commission in January gave its initial OK but with a list of conditions, including an objection to an outside ramp for a two-story enclosed parking garage. The hotel needs to meet historic design guidelines to receive the commission's final approval.

The ramp also concerned the council at Thursday's public hearing.

"This is a foreign element to the historic district," said Ron Vila, a historic preservation specialist with the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

Councilwoman Linda Saul-Sena said the garage exterior should "look like a building not a parking garage."

But Mark Bentley, an attorney for developer Ybor City Homes, noted Hampton Inn on Seventh Avenue has a ramp.

"It's not foreign," he said, adding that the garage design will provide screening that mirrors the hotel's exterior.

"You're not even going to see a car," Bentley said.

The project will have a third-story landscaped terrace and hotel rooms will be on the top two floors.

The property owners rezoned the site for office or mixed-use office and residential in 2006. The hotel's approval adds a third option for developers.

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