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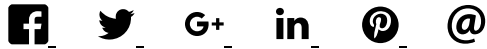
FEATURED

Micro-hotel gets Beverly board's blessing

By Paul Leighton Staff Writer Feb 5, 2019



Courtesy/Thad Siemasko This artist's rendering shows the proposed micro-hotel on Cabot Street.



BEVERLY — Plans for a micro-hotel in downtown Beverly received major support at a public hearing Tuesday night at City Hall.

The Planning Board voted unanimously in favor and members of the public added their endorsement for a proposal to turn the former Brown's Bike Shop on Cabot Street into a hotel with 13 rooms.

"I think it's about time we had something like this in downtown Beverly," said Casey Soward, executive director of The Cabot theater. "This is not the Beverly I walked into three years ago. A micro hotel powered by solar? How cool."

The plan calls for converting the bottom floor of the building at 278 Cabot St. into a micro hotel with 13 small rooms on the first floor. Part of the building would be set aside for retail space, and seven apartments on the top floors would remain.

Residents and business owners who spoke at the hearing expressed strong support for the project. Soward said The Cabot attracts nearly 90,000 people per year and many of them are coming from more than 50 miles.

"We're constantly fielding phone calls, 'Where can we stay?,'" he said. "We have to send them to Salem. I think it's a wonderful project."

Peter Lutz, who owns nearby buildings on Cabot Street, said the hotel will provide a boost for small businesses in the downtown.

"A hotel like this will bring people into the area who will spend money," he said. "I support it 100 percent."

The biggest question regarding the creation of the hotel involved parking. Attorney Miranda Gooding, representing owner Benjamin Carlson, said hotel customers would use the nearby public parking lots.

Karen Wojick, who lives nearby on Pond Street, said parking is already difficult downtown. "I'd be competing with you for spaces," she said.

Planning Board Chairwoman Ellen Hutchinson also expressed concern about parking. But Gooding pointed out that the building could be used for offices or a restaurant, which would require even more parking.

"We've all been downtown on weekends, and it's a great thing for the city, but it's so hard to find parking," Hutchinson said. "It's a sign of a successful city."

Thad Siemasko, the architect for the project, said the outside of the building, built in 1890, would be improved with new windows and awnings, but that its "bones" are in good shape. Each of the 13 rooms would be about 150 square feet and would be located on the Pond Street side of the building.

Siemasko said the rooms would have a bed, TV, shower, toilet and sink. "It's spare," he said. "Not unlike a Manhattan hotel."

The cost of a room would range from about \$99 to \$150 per night, Gooding said.

Caroline Mason, who serves on the city's Historic District Commission, said she was "delighted" that the historic building will be preserved.

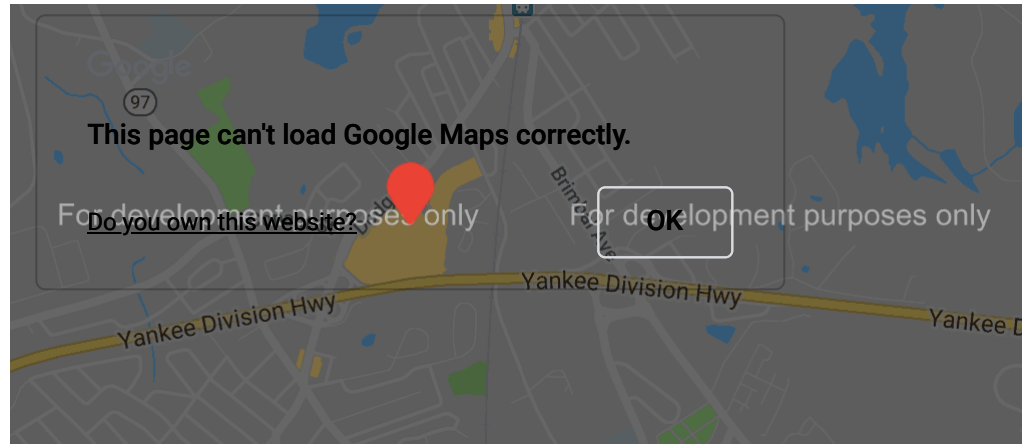
"It's terrific that we're keeping a building of aesthetic quality in the downtown," she said.

Paul Trefry, a member of Beverly Main Streets, said the hotel is "exactly what we need" to support the downtown, including two theaters, The Cabot and The Larcom.

"The board (of Main Streets) is really excited about this," he said.

The Planning Board's granting of a special permit was the only approval needed by the city for the hotel. Carlson said he hopes to start construction soon and open the hotel by late summer or early fall.

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~ Casey Soward

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