

MANSFIELD NEWS-MIRROR

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Hotels looking for room in Mansfield

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Mansfield's lack of guestrooms and meeting space hasn't gone unnoticed by national hotel chains.

City officials have received five offers from developers wanting to build hotels along U.S. 287 with one already taking steps to start building.

The hotel is proposed south of U.S. 287 Animal Hospital and north of Mansfield Physical Therapy, said city planner Art Wright. Screening would buffer the

hotel from Montvale Drive, a neighborhood street that ends in a cul-de-sac, he said.

Amidst all the hotel buzz, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval Monday for guidelines that would govern the look and operation of the city's future hotels. The amendments would only allow exterior access to hotel rooms that face an interior courtyard while prohibiting drive-up motel rooms.

The new guidelines also prohibit guests from taking up permanent resi-

dence at the hotel, limiting their stay to 30 days.

Amenities such as swimming pools, sports courts and playgrounds would have to be screened by fencing and landscaping. The guidelines prohibit the amenities from being built in the front of the hotel.

The City Council will consider the amendments at a future meeting.

The Mansfield Economic Development Corp has been meeting with hotel developers emphasizing the need for available rooms and meeting space.

"There's a tremendous pent up demand here for hotels," said Melissa Woodall, MEDC director.

Mansfield's two existing hotels are commonly filled to 80 percent capacity while many banquets and other special events often have to be held in Arlington or Midlothian because of the lack of rental space in town, Woodall said.

Mansfield's sprawling industrial parks bring salesman to town who need a place to stay as well, Woodall said.

Other sites being considered for

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hotels are along U.S. 287 near the Wal-Mart Supercenter on the southbound service road, another near Taco Bueno on the northbound service road, another on the northbound service road near Starbucks on FM 157 and a fifth off Calendar Road.

The Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, scheduled to open in December at the intersection of East Broad Street and Matlock Road, and the controversial Big League Dreams project, scheduled to open in spring 2007 at the intersection of South Miller Road and Texas 360, have created further demand for hotels in southeast Mansfield, Woodall said.

The MEDC could offer tax abatements—with City Council approval—if a hotel offers a capital investment of \$5 million or more, Woodall said.

In other business, the commission recommended approval for a new 30-lot subdivision in northwest Mansfield.

The developer, Steve Grider Custom Homes, is seeking a planned development zoning change for the 10.37-acre site located between North Main Street

and Gertie Barrett Road.

The neighborhood would have a minimum 10,010-square foot lot with houses starting at 2,000 square feet. The developer created a planned development because the lot size didn't match the city's residential zoning classifications, Wright said.

The developer proposed using 100 percent masonry construction on the first floor and a masonry-based material on the upper floors. However, commissioners changed the plan to require 80 percent masonry on the entire house, fearing other materials, such as hardy wood siding would stick out like a sore thumb, especially on the rear facades that face major thoroughfares.

The developer, Steve Grider, said he wasn't opposed to using 80 percent masonry, which is the city's regular requirement for single-family homes.

Commissioners also encouraged Grider to provide pictures of other homes that use non-masonry materials before the project heads to the City Council for consideration.