

Downtown Truckee hotel plan changes shape



A computer-generated rendering of the proposed Hotel Avery on South River Street in Truckee.

Project endorsed by town's historic preservation group

By Greyson Howard
Sierra Sun

A new hotel planned for downtown Truckee has won its first approval, and if all goes according to plan could be open as soon as 2010.

Named Hotel Avery, the project is being proposed by JMA Ventures, owners of Homewood and Alpine ski resorts on the now-vacant lot at the corner of Bridge Street and South River Street in downtown Truckee.

"On May 21 we received the endorsement from the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission," said David Tirman, vice president of JMA Ventures.

In a six-to-one vote, the commission decided that recent changes have made the proposed hotel compatible with historic design guidelines, said Town Manager Tony Lashbrook.

Tirman said he hopes the project would then go before the planning

commission for final approval this summer or fall, allowing construction to begin around this time next year.

"It's probably an 18- to 20-month project, so we could be open by the end of 2010 or the beginning of 2011," Tirman said.

Recently the project was scaled back from about 39,000 square feet to more than 33,000 square feet in response to public and town comments on the hotel's size, Tirman said.

"Previous versions of the hotel went beyond their property lines and into the town right of way and into the flood plain," Lashbrook said.

This has also reduced the number of hotel rooms from 39 to 35, according to the report, which would be sold as condominiums and operated as hotel rooms when the tenants aren't using them.

The Historic Preservation Advisory Commission vetted the hotel project over the course of two recent meetings on May 14 and 21, considering historic compatibility and character of the proposed project.

Having the hotel could be of benefit to downtown Truckee, said Lynn

Saunders, president and chief executive officer of the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce.

"I think it could be very good, it would go with the walkability important for a small downtown, and the potential to utilize the river is great," Saunders said.

She said Hotel Avery, along with others proposed as part of the Railyard project to the east, and the Marriot above downtown, could create additional competition, but working to grow tourism would help make sure both existing and new hotels don't lose business.

"It's like when the Hampton and the Cedar House came online — we've got to make sure we grow the pie rather than take business from one another," Saunders said.

Nearby neighbor to the proposed hotel Breeze Cross said he believes the project will be a boon to downtown Truckee, and is only concerned about traffic on South River Street.

"South River Street is difficult at best to get in and out of, but I'm not as concerned about Hotel Avery as the Bright Property [property further to the west with development potential]," Cross said.