

February 17, 2019

To the Department of Planning and Community Development:

I am writing to express strong objections to the Winslow Hotel development planned for 241 and 253 Winslow Way West. I live in the Corner House condominiums directly next door to the west. While I support the idea of development and density downtown and I have no objection to a hotel going in on that site, I believe that this project, as designed, is unsuitable for this location. Here are my reasons:

1. **Outdoor amphitheater:** the hotel is designed as a destination location for weddings, and the business plan seems to require a large number of them. Central to this plan is an outdoor amphitheater. The developer says that only unamplified music and events will occur in the amphitheater, but
 - a. that seems unlikely: street noise on Winslow Way means that any outside event will require some level of amplification
 - b. the amphitheater will be used in the summer when all the neighbors have their windows open, so even unamplified music (there's a piano in the architect's drawings) will penetrate our homes.

The architect says that the hotel's walls will block the sound from reaching our houses. Given that we can very clearly hear the 4th of July parade and the summer concerts at Winslow Green, I seriously doubt that.

This outdoor amphitheater is a major quality of life issue for those of us who live in the hundreds of condos, apartments, houses, and senior apartments surrounding the hotel. It is incompatible with a neighborhood that contains hundreds of residential units within earshot.

2. **Amplified music from indoor weddings:** The developers say that amplified music for weddings will be performed in an indoor space (a designated music hall). But since much of the wedding activity is designed to take place outdoors in the amphitheater, I would expect that the doors to the music hall will be left open so that outdoor guests can enjoy the music. Along with all the neighbors.

The developers say they will adhere to city noise ordinances. When the 122 Bar was on that same site several years ago, neighbors called the police *frequently* to complain about noise violations. The complaints didn't produce any ongoing reduction in noise.

The use of this hotel as a destination wedding venue is incompatible with a neighborhood that contains hundreds of residential units within earshot.

3. **Parking:** The developers' parking study says the hotel will need 120 spaces during ordinary use, and 179 spaces during maximum use. They recommend designing for ordinary use. However, the design includes only 90 spaces; 30 spaces too few. The developers expect to

fill that gap with on-street parking and long-term leases of parking spaces from Winslow Green, St. Cecilia's, and other locations. This seems like an inadequate solution.

- a. Downtown already has a shortage of parking spaces, which creates a challenge to our downtown retailers. This will make an already bad situation worse.
- b. The developers have yet to negotiate and contract for the long-term parking leases. What if they don't materialize?
- c. There is no guarantee that, if found, those leased spaces will remain available for the life of the hotel (or even the life of a car-dependent society which the developers project to be rather optimistically short).

I applaud their intention to use shuttle buses from the ferry and to have Zipcars and electric bikes available for hotel guests. But I believe their thinking—which assumes a large percentage of guests arriving on foot via ferry—is flawed. It does not take into account the fact that guests would need to find parking for their cars on the Seattle side which is expensive and difficult, women don't generally want to walk long distances in high heels, and guests will want their cars here in order to travel west off the island for vacations post-wedding.

Parking in downtown Winslow is already a major challenge. Adding a destination wedding venue exacerbates that problem.

4. **Traffic:** On their SEPA application, the developers say that "Daily trips, categorizing the project as a "hotel", are 627/day. Peak trips (4-6:00PM) are anticipated to be about 75 trips/hour/peak. *This is a reduction from 108 trips/hour/peak when the BBQ and bar were operating.*" (Italics mine.) This statement seems highly unlikely given that the hotel will have its own restaurant and bar, in addition to 75 guest rooms and weddings. In other words, it will have at least as many trips as the previous BBQ and bar had just for its own restaurant and bar, plus many more for its other uses.

In an area of narrow streets that are already heavily trafficked, I think this project will have considerably more impact than anticipated.

5. **Inaccessible courtyard:** The city's Design Review Board Guidelines and the Mixed Use Town Center Core District Checklist are quite clear that new developments should include open public spaces to provide enhanced pedestrian experience. (DRB guidelines intent #2: "New development should provide facilities near or visible from the sidewalk for outdoor public use. Examples of such facilities include seating areas, courtyards and small plaza spaces. . . it is desirable to locate these spaces where they can receive sun and where they can easily be connected to adjacent concentrations of land use." Mixed Use checklist #5: Public spaces: . . . Buildings should incorporate forecourts, gardens or plazas that welcome the public."

The developers have, indeed, designed a courtyard in the hotel footprint. However, the courtyard is not accessible to the public. It is "viewable" by the public through the glass-

walled lobby and atrium of the hotel. In effect, the hotel is thumbing its nose at the public by saying “see this lovely courtyard that you can’t access.” While this may fit the letter of the city’s guidelines, I do not believe it fits the intent of those guidelines which is to provide accessible open spaces that, in the words of the guidelines, welcome the public.

6. **Height restrictions within 200’ of shoreline.** According to the developers’ application, this project sits within 200’ of the shoreline. As I read the Shoreline Master Program, buildings within 200’ of the shoreline have a height limitation of 30’. The Winslow Hotel is designed to be 45’ tall at least on the Winslow Way side.

The building slopes to the south. Perhaps the back (south) side of the building is the only part within 200’ of the shore? Perhaps that south portion is just 30’ tall? Perhaps that is the only portion that is technically required to meet shoreline requirements? If that is the case, I submit that this building fits the letter of the guidelines but not the intent. I hope the planning department will look into this matter and determine if the hotel is exceeding the intended height limitations of a building within 200’ of a shoreline.

7. **Garbage collection.** A hotel/restaurant/bar/wedding venue will generate a tremendous amount of garbage. The developers have received a letter from Bainbridge Disposal stating that garbage pick-up will occur during the middle of the day so as not to disturb neighbors. We appreciate this very much. But how will this be enforced? Neighbors would like to see this as an *explicit, written condition of the use permit* that travels with the property regardless of future ownership. Otherwise, this promise is meaningless.
8. **Water/Well.** The developers say they want the hotel to be a Living Building Challenge building, which I applaud. As part of their LBC elements, they plan to collect rainwater for much of the hotel’s use. They also acknowledge that they may not be able to meet all their water needs with collected water and are planning to drill a well. Given that it seems unlikely that collected rainwater will meet the heavy demands of a hotel (laundry, restaurant, showers, irrigation, etc.), how much water might that well draw from the city aquifer? What impact will it have on our aquifer? Water is already a development concern on Bainbridge. This project must be reviewed with that in mind.
 - a. I am a little perplexed by their answer to the Ground Water/Well question in their SEPA application. Question: “Ground Water: Will groundwater be withdrawn from a well for drinking water or other purposes? If so, give a general description of the well, proposed uses and approximate quantities withdrawn from the well. Will water be discharged to groundwater? Give general description, purpose, and approximate quantities if known.” Their answer: “No. Stormwater will be allowed to first infiltrate, with any excess sent to the City’s stormwater system.” It seems to me that they are saying they do not plan to drill a well. But that is not what they said at the public meeting held Nov 26, 2018.
9. **Onsite sewage treatment.** The developers say they plan to treat their own effluent onsite with a Living Machine like the one at Islandwood. (This is not in their application to the city.)

While I applaud the idea of treating their own sewage, apparently the Living Machines at Islandwood and elsewhere are known to release unpleasant sewage odors. I think that is a quality of life issue for the many hundreds of residents in neighboring homes.

In the event that the Living Machine fails to materialize, or fails, does the city sewage system have capacity to handle the large amount of waste that a project of this size will generate?

10. **Kitchen odors.** Winslow Way has many restaurants, all of which I believe are vented to the rear away from pedestrians. The restaurant vent at Winslow Hotel is right on Winslow Way. They say they are shielding neighbors from odors by having the vent stack surrounded by adjacent roofs. Is that adequate to keep odors away from neighbors and from our main street?
11. **Infrastructure demand.** According to the city's Conditional Use Decision Criteria, "The conditional use will be served by adequate public facilities including roads, water, fire protection, sewage disposal facilities and storm drainage facilities." The developers' answer: "The hotel is pursuing "living building challenge status" and if achieved, reduced use of water and electricity, as well as sewage treatment, will occur." But achieving Living Building Challenge status is very difficult, and frankly unlikely for a project of this scope. What if they don't achieve LBC status? What will the impacts be on public facilities? The project has not been designed for that eventuality. Before approving this project, the city needs to take a hard look at those questions.

Possible Mitigations

The developers could turn this project into one that I, and I suspect many of my neighbors, would embrace if they were willing to make some changes:

- Eliminate the outdoor amphitheater entirely
- Guarantee in writing, in documents that travel with the property for the life of the property, that all amplified music will be indoors only, and that it will not exceed night-time decibel levels even during the day
- Flip the design so that the courtyard is open to the street and becomes an amenity that serves all of Bainbridge, as the code intends and as they claim to want
- By flipping the design, move the back-of-house elements to the east side of the property so they are adjacent to the commercial space next door rather than the residences on the west side
- Plan for the impacts the development will have on city infrastructure if it does not meet the Living Building Challenge requirements
- Formalize their agreement with Bainbridge Disposal, in a document that travels with the property for the life of the property, that garbage pickup will occur during the middle of the day
- Add 30 parking spaces so they meet their own need on site
- Reduce the overall height to 30' in compliance with the Shoreline Master Program.

The developers say they want the Winslow Hotel to be a city amenity. With design changes they can achieve that.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robin Simons
343 Winslow Way West, #202
robin.a.simons@gmail.com
206-601-7179