



PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 28, 2013

ITEM NUMBER: NB 2

SUBJECT: COSTA MESA EXTENDED OCCUPANCY MOTELS
DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2013
FROM: PLANNING DEPARTMENT/DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information on extended occupancy motels in Costa Mesa and to provide a basis for forthcoming matters the Planning Commission will be considering regarding extended occupancy motels.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Motels were first commonly developed starting in the 1950s in Costa Mesa to serve as temporary lodging for families and automobile tourists that were visiting nearby beaches and other area attractions. As the freeway system was developed in the area, same-day roundtrips to local attractions became a viable option for tourists, and as such, the traditional tourist-based motels started to become an increasingly less feasible business option for motel owners.

As a result of lower room occupancy and room rates, deferred maintenance and reduced managerial support/supervision started to manifest as time progressed. To keep the motel properties viable, some motel operators started renting rooms to less transient/tourist-oriented guests and shifted towards longer tenured guests who would rent the motel rooms at reduced rates for an extended period of time often eclipsing multiple-week stays. As longer tenured guests started to fill the reduced-rate rooms, public nuisances and crime started to follow in and around many motel properties. Based on Police Department records, nuisance and criminal activities such as panhandling, loitering, prostitution and drug dealing have historically been identified as common problems related to many long-tenured motel guests.

Many of the aforementioned maintenance, public nuisance, and criminal problems have been identified by the City as issues for nearly two decades starting with the Newport Boulevard Specific Plan which was published in 1996. Specifically, the Newport Boulevard Specific Plan noted the following with regard to motels:

...lower occupancy and room rates have resulted in deferred maintenance and reduced managerial support/supervision. The combination of these factors have created an environment that attracts "undesirable" clientele who create adverse impacts on neighboring commercial uses and adjacent residential area. Typical problems range from nuisances such as panhandling and loitering to more serious offenses such as prostitution and drug dealing.

Recently, the City has started to take a more proactive approach in terms of enforcement and policing at many problematic motel sites within the City. Twelve motel sites throughout the City have been identified for continuing enforcement and police inspections by the Neighborhood Improvement Task Force ("Task Force"), which is a multi-agency collective who, as one of their responsibilities, is to identify problematic motels for further scrutiny. The below section outlines issues that have been encountered at the sites since increased inspections commenced by the City and the Task Force.

Crime, Public Safety and Enforcement

Calls for Police and Fire Department service at the twelve Task Force-identified motel sites greatly varies. Attachment 1 contains a graph, which depicts the total calls for service at each motel site for time a period of January 2012 to September 2013. Calls for service at the motel sites ranged from 55 to 994 during the 20-month reporting period, while the average call per room per year at the motels ranged from 0.22 to 7.88. The most common calls for service were in response to drugs, vice, domestic disputes, unconscious guests, intoxication and arrest warrants.

Thousands of enforcement and health and safety violations have been observed by the Task Force during motel inspections. For example, an August inspection at a motel resulted in 490 cited health-and-safety violations, as well as more than \$40,000.00 in fines. Examples of common violations at the sample August inspection, and in general, have included hoarding, defective or missing smoke alarms, missing exit signs, mold, and rodent infestations. Photos depicting common violations from the August inspection can be found in the below photos.



Future Motel-Related Action Items for Planning Commission Consideration

Per direction from City Council, Planning Division staff will be bringing two motel-related items to the Planning Commission for consideration in the upcoming months.

- *Zoning Code Amendment*

In response to the outlined issues surrounding extended occupancy motels, an ordinance will be proposed that will reduce the total number of motel rooms that may be dedicated to extended occupancy rooms at any one motel site from 25% to 10%. The City will also explore options to make reasonable accommodations for any potentially displaced extended occupancy guests as a result of the ordinance.

An extended occupancy room is defined as a room with a guest whose occupancy exceeds 28 consecutive days or 28 days in any 60 consecutive day period. The Zoning Code currently allows a motel operator to seek a Conditional Use Permit to exceed the aforementioned threshold. The Conditional Use Permit proviso is not anticipated to be amended under the proposed ordinance regarding extended occupancy rooms; however, the final decision rests with the City Council based, in part of the Planning Commission's recommendation.

- *Review of Conditional Use Permits for Existing Extended Stay Motels*

Additionally, the Planning Commission will be considering two previously approved Conditional Use Permits that allowed two separate motel properties to dedicate more than 25% of their respective rooms to extended occupancy guests:

- 1967 Newport Boulevard (the Sandpiper Inn); and
- 2277 Harbor Boulevard (the Costa Mesa Motor Inn).

Specifically, the Planning Commission will be examining whether the respective businesses have historically operated in a fashion that is consistent with the conditions of approval set forth in each Conditional Use Permit. Planning Division staff is anticipating that the aforementioned Conditional Use Permit hearings will occur on the November 12, 2013 Planning Commission agenda.



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Attachment: 1. Calls for Service Graph

Total Calls for Service

