

Council endorses proposed downtown Mercedes dealership

By Beth Duckett

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The Scottsdale City Council endorsed a proposed Mercedes-Benz dealership for downtown Scottsdale Tuesday after many business owners and residents spoke in favor of the project.

Council members unanimously approved a conditional-use permit to open the dealership near Highland Avenue and Scottsdale Road, just east of Scottsdale Fashion Square.

The highly publicized project has the potential to create some 150 jobs and generate close to \$1 million in sales tax a year for Scottsdale, according to estimates.

"We're counting on and anticipating a very good neighbor and welcome addition to downtown Scottsdale," Mayor Jim Lane said.

The proposal drew opposition during a Planning Commission meeting from some nearby residents and property owners, who have raised concerns about potential noise, lighting and other nega-

tive impacts to the area.

But several residents and a representative for the applicant said many concerns were alleviated during discussions. Phoenix Motor Co., which is relocating from a Phoenix location, plans to open the dealership at 4725 N. Scottsdale Road.

"They met with us, worked with us on a couple issues," said Larry Kush, a resident in the nearby Safari Drive complex. "I was very pleased about their lighting plan, pleased about their agreement to handle the sound issue."

Previous estimates projected a potential sales-tax generation of nearly \$3 million a year.

But City Treasurer David Smith, in an e-mail to council members, disputed that figure, saying the correct amount is closer to \$1 million a year.

The 4.8-acre parcel already is zoned commercial. A conditional-use permit for vehicle leasing, rental or sales with indoor or outdoor vehicle display and storage is required to operate the dealership.

To address concerns from neighbors, John Berry, a zoning attorney representing Phoenix Motor Co., said the dealership will enclose its vehicle service and repair, prohibit outdoor speakers, install sound-insulated doors and limit the hours of operation and vehicle delivery.

Currently the parcel has a three-story office building and parking garage, which will be incorporated into the dealership.

In other action Tuesday:

The council adopted a major General Plan amendment, rezoning and permit to allow a realignment of Grayhawk's Raptor Golf Course to make room for a resort northwest of Pima Road and Thompson Peak Parkway.

The plans passed 6-1, with Councilman Bob Littlefield dissenting.

The proposal reconfigures land uses to relocate two golf-course holes, reduces the amount of developed open space in the General Plan by 8 acres, and provides a larger buffer of open space between the resort and existing neighborhoods, according to a city presenta-

tion.

The council narrowly defeated Littlefield's request to consider revoking a conditional-use permit at Downside Risk, a restaurant and bar in the Shops at Gainey Village.

The council in May awarded the permit for live entertainment despite concerns from neighbors about noise.

The request failed 4-3, with council members Lisa Borowsky, Suzanne Klapp, Linda Milhaven and Vice Mayor Dennis Robbins dissenting.

It would have placed on a future council agenda a discussion on whether to pursue a hearing on the issue.

Robbins said there was "no evidence" supporting a revocation.

But Littlefield said there is evidence that the business has violated terms of the permit.

Code enforcement has not reported any code complaint or violations at the location, said Raun Keagy, Scottsdale neighborhood resources director.

Edward Gately contributed to this article.