

Downtown Mercedes-Benz dealership gets OK from panel

By Edward Gately
The Republic | azcentral.com

A proposed Mercedes-Benz dealership in downtown Scottsdale won a favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission on Wednesday despite opposition from some nearby residents and property owners.

Commission Chairman Michael D'Andrea, however, opposed recommending approval to the City Council, saying the proposal doesn't "in any way" meet the criteria for the conditional-use permit needed to open a dealership.

Phoenix Motor Co., is relocating from Phoenix. It wants to open the dealership on a 4.8-acre parcel at 4725 N. Scottsdale Road, near Highland Avenue.

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

Commissioners Matthew Cody, David Brantner and Erik Filsinger voted to recommend City Council approval. Two

commissioners, Jay Petkunas and Michael Edwards, did not vote because of potential conflicts.

Petkunas recused himself because he sold the property to the applicant, while Edwards did so because his employer, Tempe-based Davis architectural and design firm, is involved with the project.

Commission Vice Chairman Ed Grant was absent.

The property now includes a three-story office building and parking garage, which would be retained and incorporated into the dealership.

John Berry, a zoning attorney representing Phoenix Motor Co., said his client is proposing a \$25 million investment in south Scottsdale with \$3 million in anticipated annual tax revenue to the city and about 150 new jobs.

Some residents of Sarkis Manor, an adjacent townhouse community, said the dealership would have a detrimental effect on their neighborhood. Tom Roth said property values will be hurt because "who would want to live near a car dealership?"

Liz Dawn, who owns a unit at Sarkis

Manor and lives nearby, said all one has to do is look at the McDowell Road corridor, where auto dealerships created a "huge blight to the community" and then abandoned the area.

"Just because you can, doesn't make it right," said Patty Badenoch, another neighbor. "There are many other sites better suited. Who wants to live next to an industrial site?"

Many other residents spoke in support. Brian Amster said the dealership would be a much-needed revenue generator that would "add to the luxury label of Scottsdale."

Also in support were Rick Kidder, president and CEO of the Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce, Optima Camelview Village developer David Hovey Jr., and Bill Crawford, president of the Association to Preserve Downtown Scottsdale's Quality of Life.

Berry said Phoenix Motor Co., looked at more than 40 sites before deciding this location was the best.

The applicant meets the permit requirement that no damage or nuisance arise from noise, smoke, odor, dust, vi-

bration or illumination, he said. Vehicle service and repairs would be in a fully enclosed area, there would be no outdoor speakers, and there would be limited hours of operation and limited vehicle delivery, he said.

Any odors would be eliminated through "state-of-the-art" air-quality technology, and there would be no dust or vibration, Berry said. Outdoor lighting would be less than the property's current office use, he said.

In addition, a taller, landscaped wall would provide an additional buffer between the dealership and residences, he said.

D'Andrea disputed Berry's claims that there would be no additional dust or noise generated by the dealership. It would create an "unusual volume" of traffic from car-carrier trucks, deliveries and others working with the dealership, as well as test drives, he said.

D'Andrea also questioned the validity of the applicant's revenue projection and said the dealership is not "what needs to happen at that location."