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## Mayflower renovation warmly received

By **Bobby Gates**/ [RGATES@CNC.COM](mailto:RGATES@CNC.COM)

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**A** makeover could be coming to the Mayflower Motel.

Its new owners, the Beverly Affordable Housing Coalition, publicly unveiled plans to level the older portion of the motel and replace it with a three-story, 32-unit, single- room apartment building for low-income residents.

The two buildings to the right, one that includes other single-room units and the other that has commercial storefronts, will remain but be renovated.

Each unit would rent from \$375 to \$625 a month, depending on the tenant's income, be between 250 to 400 square feet in size and be restricted to one resident.

The plan first began to take shape back in May and has been reviewed and reworked during several subsequent meetings with neighbors.

The coalition presented the entire plan to the Zoning Board of Adjustment this week, where the housing group was seeking five zoning variances that included waiving requirements for the number of parking spaces, building height and unit density, among other things.

The plan also needs to go before the city's Planning Board on Dec. 19 and Design Review Board next week.

Already, the project has been through a "fairly extensive community outreach process," said Philip Posner, a local attorney who is working on the project.

A majority of the zoning board seemed warm to the proposal, but members said it deserved further review. A decision was put off until at least its next meeting on Dec. 26.

"There is a great deal of support from the board for this project," said chairman Scott Houseman after hearing more than two hours of presentations on the project and opinions from neighbors. "It's a big enough project that I think everyone wants it done the right way."

The Beverly Affordable Housing Coalition bought the property for \$2.29 million in May. After the purchase, the coalition determined it was best to replace the older section of the motel with a new building.

"The current Mayflower building is obsolete," Posner said.

The neighbors' chief concern was that the building would not have an on-site manager around the clock.

Currently, neighbors said they deal with yelling, banging doors and groups gathering in the parking lot at all hours of the day. Things have improved somewhat since the housing coalition bought the property, neighbors said.

"You are going to turn this beautiful project into what it is now, only bigger" if it does not have a 24- hour on site manager, said Pierce Avenue neighbor Linda Hering.

Mickey Northcutt, executive director of the Beverly Affordable Housing Coalition, said the group's funding might not allow it to pay such a manager.

"It's not something we can commit to," Northcutt said, adding that they planned to have a professional management company that specializes in affordable housing manage the property. The company would have a 24-hour maintenance staff, he

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said.

If the housing group were able to find the funding to pay an onsite manager they would have one, Northcutt said.

Otherwise, Hering and other neighbors said they supported the proposed project, which they said would improve the view from their backyard as well as from Cabot Street.

Sally Parisella has lived behind the motel property for 30 years.

"I've seen all the comings and goings and all the noise," she said. "I'm here to tell you these guys are trying. They've included us in everything, which is more than has ever been done."

Architect Joe Luna said the new building would fill a "missing tooth" along Cabot Street, where a large parking lot is open to the street now, and will spruce up an entryway to the downtown.

"I recognize this is a gateway entrance to the city," said Luna, a Beverly resident who drives through the intersection each night on the way home from work.



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