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September 1, 2009

OK sought for 160-foot building in Chandler

By Ari Cohn
Tribune



An artist's rendering of a proposed hotel, conference center and office park near Loop 101 in Chandler.

The New York-based Rockefeller Group Development Corp., developers of Manhattan's Rockefeller Center, is asking Chandler's permission to build a hotel, conference center and office park on Loop 101 more than 100 feet taller than what's currently allowed.

The city's Planning & Zoning Commission Wednesday is slated to consider rezoning the 22-acre "Chandler 101" site, on the southeast corner of Chandler Boulevard and Loop 101, to allow Rockefeller to build up to a maximum of 160 feet in height. The current maximum height there is only 45 feet, according to Bill Dermody, a senior city planner.



Dermody said the complex would sit in a commercial area, adjacent to the Chandler Fashion Center. So far, officials haven't received any objections to the proposal.

"It certainly will be a very tall building. It helps that there aren't residences nearby," Dermody said.

The Rockefeller group has proposed two options for the land. The first would include an 11-story, 300-bedroom hotel; a 65,000-square-foot conference center; 725,000 square feet of office space; and 24,400 square feet of restaurant and retail. The maximum building height would be 160 feet.

The second option involves eliminating the hotel and conference center idea and replacing it with an additional nine-story, 820,000-square-foot office building, with a maximum building height of 148 feet.

Nicholas Wood, the Rockefeller Group's lawyer from the Phoenix firm Snell & Wilmer, said the company has asked the planning commission to approve both options. The company will decide which one to pursue based

on demand, Wood said.

"They're both equal options. Whichever one makes sense to the marketplace the soonest will be the one that goes forward," he said. "The market will actually dictate when construction will begin."

Dermody said city planning staff have thrown their endorsement behind the proposal. If planning commissioners recommend approval, the City Council could consider the rezoning request on Sept. 24.

The now-vacant site formerly housed Gould Electronics' headquarters and factory that manufactured copper foil used in making printed circuit boards. Gould pulled out in 2006, eliminating nearly 200 jobs.

Dermody said Rockefeller's Chandler 101 project could bring a significant number of jobs back to the area.

"It's definitely a positive to us to have a major employment use in the midst of all that retail," he said.

Both development options call for office buildings of up to 10 stories in the northwest and northeast portions of the site and a garage up to five stories that would house about 3,200 parking spaces, according to Dermody. Plans call for extending Coronado Street southward to serve the complex, as well. The road now terminates at Chandler Boulevard.

Chandler 101 is one of a handful of projects Rockefeller has proposed in the East Valley. The firm also has announced plans to pursue the 24-acre Chandler Corporate Center office park, at McClintock Drive and Desert Breeze Boulevard; the 76-acre Chandler Crossroads business park, at Gilbert and Queen Creek roads; the 45-acre Gilbert Crossroads office park, at Germann and Mustang roads; and the 150-acre Gateway at Morrison Ranch mixed use development, at Warner and Recker roads in Gilbert.

The company is owned by Japan-based Mitsubishi Estate Co., one of the world's largest real estate firms.



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