

Traffic study planned for Cliff House expansion

By Jeanne Davant

What difference would 64 more cars make on the streets of Manitou Springs?

That is the question the owners of the Cliff House have posed to a Colorado-based transportation consulting firm as plans move forward for the venerable hotel's 74-room expansion on Park Avenue in the city's downtown commercial district.

"We've already established the positive economic impact of Cliff House West," said Dan Dick, vice president of Colorado Landmark Hotels, which owns and operates the Cliff House. "This study will help determine its impact on traffic during peak summer season. A traffic study was part of the original plan approved by City Council in January, but Council asked for a study based on summertime traffic before issuing a building permit."

Dick said the company has hired LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc., which specializes in traffic engineering and transportation planning and has been preparing traffic impact studies in the Pikes Peak region since

An architect's drawing of the planned Cliff House West's south elevation in Manit the 1980s.

LSC is outlining the scope of the study and plans to confirm those with City and hotel staff. They also will review citizen input from recent public hearings, as well as any comments from the public that have been made to the Manitou Springs Planning Department.

The traffic study will begin with traffic counts to establish current "baseline" conditions, according to Jeffrey C. Hodsdon, P.E., a certified Professional Traffic Operations Engineer and principal with LSC who has nearly 18 years of experience in preparing traffic impact studies.

Hodsdon said estimates of new traffic generated by the hotel will be added to the baseline data, and intersections within the study area will be analyzed to determine if any changes are necessary.

"We use data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers to estimate how many vehicle trips a hotel of a given size will generate in any given hour," Hodsdon said. "Based on those calculations, we estimate there will only be about 64 additional cars in town during the peak hour on Saturdays, even when all of the new rooms at Cliff House West are full. The car count could even be lower, because many guests will walk to nearby shops and restaurants."

Dick said even with that minimal number of cars, the hotel company wants the traffic plan to work for the benefit of Manitou Springs residents, businesses and hotel guests.

"We will be good neighbors in the community, and we want our guests to have pleasant experiences as well."

Dick said the \$15 million Cliff House West project will make a positive contribution to Manitou Springs and create an asset that will be a source of civic pride.

"We've worked to accommodate the neighborhood and its historic environment, committed to underwriting the cost of infrastructure enhancements and the renovation of the City's Wheeler Spring Pocket Park. The expansion will add hundreds of thousands of dollars in City revenue from real estate taxes and over half a million dollars in sales taxes, and will create 70 to 85 new jobs - all without requesting any tax abatements or other concessions from the city."

"City staff, the Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission and City Council have all been remarkably professional and thorough at every step along the way," Dick said.

"They have given every aspect of the improvements a complete evaluation, and this traffic study is one more phase that will ensure its ultimate success."

Colorado Landmark Hotels has owned and operated the Cliff House since 2006, and has been planning the Cliff House West improvements on the site of the old Wheeler House for four years. The new guest rooms will complement the 54-room Cliff House, which has been acclaimed one of the top 100 hotels in the world by Travel + Leisure Magazine.

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