Introduction

The proposal to build a hotel/conference center/museums complex at a critical location in the heart of Downtown presents the City with a great opportunity to improve the area. It is imperative that the projects include features and ecological amenities that relate to the civic, environmental, arts, and economic values supported by the Berkeley General Plan.

The project site is the major transit entry to the city, and there is great potential for a pedestrian corridor leading to the UC campus, created by closing Center Street between Oxford and Shattuck to motorized vehicles. Strawberry Creek is a natural feature underground nearby, available to be opened to public view and enjoyment. With these elements and the Downtown Berkeley BART station serving approximately 10,000 people daily, there is an exciting opportunity to create a premier development that will meet the needs of the University, benefit the community, and demonstrate the integration of ecological elements.

With the University’s selection of a hotel/conference center development team (Carpenter and Company) as impetus, we encourage the major participants -- the developer, the operator, the University, the City, and community stakeholders -- to work together in a productive partnership. In that spirit, the task force has developed recommendations which we believe will, if implemented, improve the overall outcome of this important effort.

Background

In 1997, the City’s Office of Economic Development and the Convention and Visitors Bureau hired PKF Consulting to conduct an analysis to help evaluate the potential for a successful hotel development in Berkeley. PKF Consulting was hired again by the University in 2002 prior to the University’s decision to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a hotel/conference center developer.

The City of Berkeley General Plan Land Use Element (2001) addresses the need for a Downtown hotel and conference center in Policy LU-17, action E:
Convene a Planning Commission task force to evaluate the need for and appropriateness of a new Downtown hotel and conference center/ecological demonstration/mixed use project, taking into consideration:

1. Market demographics
2. Traffic and transit conditions
3. Hiring and employment policies
4. Public amenities and community accessibility
5. Urban design
6. Green building principles
7. Daylighting Strawberry Creek
8. Special development standards and mitigations

When the University of California announced in November that it had sent an RFQ to potential hotel and conference center developers, the Planning Commission activated a subcommittee for the purpose of establishing the task force called for in the General Plan. The Planning Commission subcommittee held its first meeting on December 2, 2003, when it heard a presentation about the RFQ and the proposed project from UC Project Manager Kevin Hufferd.

On December 9, the City Council approved a recommendation from Mayor Tom Bates that directs the Planning Commission to “examine the potential hotel and Conference Center in Downtown Berkeley and to report back to the Council no later than May, 2004, with preliminary recommendations.”

The subcommittee met again on January 6, 2004, and began a discussion, with substantial public input, to identify issues related to the project. On January 20, the subcommittee voted to recommend a list of task force members and a schedule of future task force meetings. On February 11, the Planning Commission approved the composition of the task force and the schedule of meetings.

The task force held eight meetings in March and April. Task force meetings featured lively discussion with active participation by interested members of the public along with task force members. The first six meetings were mostly organized around presentations by members of the task force and others with relevant knowledge. The task force approved recommendations at the final two meetings in April.

Members of the Task Force

- Wendy Alfsen, Transportation Commission, MAAGNA resident
- Deborah Badhia, Downtown Berkeley Association
- Erin Banks, planner, Livable Berkeley
- Marvin Buchanan, architect
- Zelda Bronstein, Planning Commission
- Helen Burke, Sierra Club
- Burton Edwards, Design Review Committee
- John English, planner
- Austene Hall, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, Downtown Berkeley Assoc.
- Barbara Hillman, Berkeley Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Liz Hinckle, East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy
- Bonnie Hughes, Civic Arts Commission, Downtown resident
- Charles Kahn, architect
• Juliet Lamont, environmental consultant, Urban Creeks Council
• Nathan Landau, AC Transit staff and Transportation Commission
• Kirstin Miller, EcoCity builders
• Soheyl Moddaressi, Center Street businessperson
• Gene Poschman, Planning Commission
• Claire Risley, Bicycle-Friendly Berkeley Coalition
• John Roberts, landscape architect
• Rachel Rupert, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce
• Sara Schumer, Public Works Commission
• Peter Selz, founder University Art Museum
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• Peter Selz, founder University Art Museum

Affiliations are for identification only.

The task force would like to thank the following, as well as others we could not list here, for their input and assistance:

Ruth Grimes and Allan Gatzke, who provided superb staff support.

Other City of Berkeley staff: Ted Burton, Cisco De Vries, Dan Marks, Mary Ann Merker, Mark Rhoades, Rahul Young

Kevin Hufferd, UC Berkeley

Mayor Tom Bates and Councilmember Dona Spring

The drafting committee: Wendy Alfsen, Helen Burke, John English, and Alan Tobey


Chronology of Task Force Meetings

February 18, 2004. The task force held a public meeting to present information about the project and to receive initial citizen input. City staff notified all property owners, business owners, and residents in the immediate area. Presentations were made about the daylighting of Strawberry Creek, the possibilities for an “ecological demonstration project,” and the creating of pedestrian open space involving the closure of Center Street to cars and buses.

March 2, 2004. The task force heard and discussed a presentation on design issues.

• Marvin Buchanan, architect
• Burton Edwards, architect and member of Design Review Committee
• John English, planner
• Charles Kahn, architect
• John Roberts, landscape architect
• Peter Selz, founder, University Art Museum
March 9, 2004. Mayor Bates introduced the CEO and other staff of Carpenter and Company, chosen by the University as the developer of the hotel and conference center. In addition, the task force heard and discussed presentations on preservation issues and the daylighting of Strawberry Creek.

- Burton Edwards, Design Review Committee
- John English and Austene Hall, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
- Juliet Lamont and Carol Schemmerling, Urban Creeks Council
- Drew Goetting, Waterways Restoration Institute
- Kirstin Miller, EcoCity Builders

March 23, 2004. The task force heard and discussed presentations on green building principles; employment, community benefits, and taxes; and transit and bicycle issues.

- Rahul Young, City of Berkeley Green Building Coordinator
- Wendy Alfsen, Labor Commission
- Liz Hinckle, East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy
- Nathan Landau, AC Transit and the Transportation Commission
- Claire Risley, Bicycle-Friendly Berkeley Coalition

March 31, 2004. The task force held an evening meeting for the purpose of gathering further public input. Those in attendance raised issues concerning taxes, street closure, and other topics.

April 6, 2004. The task force heard and discussed presentations on Downtown business context and issues, including the visitor industry; potential revenues from the project; Downtown demographics and business mix; Berkeley’s arts-led economy; and the results of observations and pedestrian counts on Center Street.

- Barbara Hillman, Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Ted Burton, City of Berkeley Office of Economic Development
- Derick Miller, Downtown Berkeley Association
- David Snippen, Civic Arts Commission
- Rob Wrenn, Task force chair

April 13, 2004. Task force members voted on proposed recommendations and established a committee to compile approved recommendations and provide narrative context.

April 27, 2004. Task force members finalized the recommendations and unanimously approved the task force report for submission to the Planning Commission.
Recommendations

1. Create a public pedestrian-oriented open space or plaza on Center Street between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street.

The proposed hotel/conference center/museums complex offers the City an exciting opportunity to create a wonderful new pedestrian open space that both connects the UC campus with the Downtown BART station and revitalizes the area.

The path from the center of campus that runs along Strawberry Creek currently feeds UC students, staff, and visitors onto the sidewalk of the south side of Center Street, which leads directly to the main entrance of the BART station and to stops for numerous AC Transit bus routes.

This street is the major pedestrian link between the campus and Downtown; today more than 10,000 walking trips per day – more than 1500 per hour at peak periods -- are made on the block between Oxford and Shattuck. In contrast, there is relatively little automobile traffic here. This block’s dimensions are as follows: Length is 460'; curb-to-curb width is 42'; total right-of-way is about 80'; width of sidewalk on the south side of the street is about 22'; and width of sidewalk on the north side is 16'. This provides enough area for creative development, especially if integrated with the proposed hotel and museum sites immediately to the north.

Center Street is ideally suited to become a public open space closed to motor vehicle traffic. Reinforcing the pedestrian character of this block of Center Street will encourage even more people to walk to and from campus, bus, and BART as well as other Downtown destinations. Trees could be planted to provide shade and additional landscaping could be added to the open space. A pedestrian Center Street plaza could create a strong and attractive entrance to the hotel/convention center, could generate additional business in Downtown, could improve the natural environment, and could encourage more people to walk to work, school, and stores.

Strawberry Creek below the campus now runs in a deteriorating culvert, but it could be daylighted as an ecological demonstration project to provide a natural amenity to the public open space.

Berkeley's General Plan calls for the City to explore partial or complete closure of appropriate streets to promote pedestrian and commercial vitality. Center Street is suitable for closure because it has few driveways and because it is already heavily used by pedestrians.

1.1. Close Center Street to cars, trucks, and buses in a way that does not degrade transit service quality.

1.2. Design Center Street so as to maximize the usefulness, ambience, and amenities of the new public open space for pedestrians and those with mobility impairments.

1.3. Include a variety of pedestrian amenities such as benches, trees and plantings, and public art in order to make the public space an attractive place to walk, sit, and linger.
1.4. Provide for pockets of activity in the public open space such as dining, shopping, and people-watching.

1.5. Daylight Strawberry Creek as part of the public open space, if doing so is found to be a desirable enhancement via a study that includes 1) a detailed technical analysis and urban design in sufficient detail to compare with other alternatives for Center Street, 2) an environmental assessment, 3) site-specific cost determinations, and 4) a thorough long-term safety and maintenance plan.

1.6. Plan the hotel, conference center, and public open space as a single integrated project, even if multiple development, approval, and funding processes are involved.

1.7. To enable the successful creation of this integrated project, require the hotel developer and the City, as an early priority, to jointly study and beneficially resolve, if possible, the impacts of street closure and the hotel and conference center on area automobile traffic, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle uses, and local businesses.

2. **Create an overall master plan for the two-block area bordered by University Avenue, Oxford Street, Center Street, and Shattuck Avenue.**

Within this two-block area, components such as the hotel/conference center and the museums would depend for their development on different funding sources, would likely be built at different times, and might have quite different designers. This creates the danger of piecemeal development, without adequate forethought on interrelationships and the best arrangement, and mix, of structures and uses within the area as a whole.

Similarly, task force members have expressed concerns about how projects in this area would relate to the broader Downtown area, to the Arts District, to other nearby development projects, and to broad issues such as creek daylighting.

What is needed is a really good master plan – one that would ensure that the project’s components fit together as efficiently, attractively, and productively as possible. A comprehensive vision is needed to manage the coming changes in ways that turn potential conflicts into opportunities and integrate them all into a coherent whole.

Well-thought-out and realistic schematic alternatives for the public environment for each of the projects will be required to fully understand the implications and trade-offs of the various developments with regard to each other and to the whole. Cost analyses and implementation plans for each alternative will also be required. This effort can parallel or precede design work on the hotel/conference center and Bus Rapid Transit.

By also considering the wider Downtown, such a planning process could increase synergy between the project and its surroundings, and optimize benefits for developers, operators, and Berkeley as a whole.

2.1. Via a master planning process, plan and design the entire range of proposed and potential new uses in this area, such as the hotel and conference center, museums, parking, restaurants, other retail/commercial, and housing, including their potential effects on adjacent areas. Involve the City, the University, local transit agencies, and the hotel developer in this master planning process, along with appropriate public input.
2.2. In order to optimize the arrangement of uses within the two-block project area, consider land swaps or creative property adjustments that would benefit the overall master plan.

2.3. Initiate a comprehensive urban design study of the core Downtown area that addresses all known potential projects and achieves a community vision for the overall urban design.

2.4. Consider including housing as part of the overall project.

3. **Maintain the highest standards of design for the entire project and its surroundings.**

The two-block project area between BART and the UC campus represents a sizable, and presently underused, part of Downtown Berkeley. Especially because of this strategic and prominent location, and its heavy pedestrian use, the site poses vital design challenges.

What is needed is an excellent design that thoughtfully accommodates diverse uses and their interactions – and that works with (and reinforces) Downtown’s prized character while also being distinctive in itself. If the design looks good and functions well and the architecture is a draw, there will be major benefits both civic and economic.

The University’s RFQ includes an illustration showing a twelve-story building extending to the sidewalks at Center Street and Shattuck Avenue. The task force strongly feels that such a building is not necessarily appropriate, and recommends instead the investigation of multiple design alternatives, employing the principles enumerated in this report.

3.1. Use the Downtown Berkeley Design Guidelines as the basis of design for any new buildings.

3.2. Follow sustainable design best practices in all projects and buildings.

3.3. Design building facades to avoid a monolithic appearance, and to continue the rhythm established by the existing buildings of Downtown.

3.4. Articulate the facades of new buildings with a level of detailing (not a replication of specific details) similar to that of existing buildings.

3.5. Design each of the project’s new buildings to present uses and/or features of special interest to pedestrians.

3.6. Design the streetwall portions immediately facing Shattuck Avenue and Center Street so that their height is sensitive to the scale of those streetscapes.

3.7. Locate parking far enough underground to avoid creating a garage wall along the north side of Center Street.

3.8. Partly to maximize solar gain, locate any building portion higher than five stories as far to the northeast as possible.

3.9. Limit the width of any single building portion higher than four stories.
3.10. When designing new structures, consider impacts on adjacent buildings and their occupants.

3.11. Design new buildings to allow for reasonable access to sunlight for the apartments immediately north of the current Bank of America property.

3.12. Seriously consider including ground-level open space, with southern exposure directly facing Center Street, within the adjacent project block itself.

3.13. Also consider the potential for upper-level open space facing Center Street, such as rooftop gardens.

3.14. Protect the ambience and retail character of University Avenue by substantially setting back from the street any adjoining new above-ground parking structures.

3.15. Engage project architects and other designers of the highest caliber and creative competence.

3.16. Select architects by means of a competitive evaluation process including public input, but not by a juried “competition” as such.

3.17. Within the constraints above, produce bold and distinctive architecture as an attraction that creates an economic benefit from increased visitors.

4. **Provide public amenities and community access.**

   The new buildings and spaces created by the hotel, conference center, and public open space, as well as by the museums that follow, will constitute a new focus for Berkeley – a highly salient and well-used “heart of Downtown.” Planning should consistently keep this potential in mind, maximizing pedestrian benefits as well as interior functions.

4.1. Consider creating north-south gallerias or other mid-block passageways to connect Center Street, Addison Street, University Avenue, and Walnut Street.

4.2. Improve access between the Downtown Berkeley BART station and the hotel site. Explore a direct link from the BART station to Center Street near the front of the hotel, such as via a tunnel or multimodal underground link.

4.3. Ensure that all street-facing facades are active and full of interesting things for pedestrians and those with mobility impairments, and that public open spaces are active and visible from the street.

4.4. Ensure that use of the building and circulation for the conference center flow easily from the street. The way people arrive at and use the facility should spill people into Downtown and get people onto the street.

4.5. Include ground-level and second-story cafes, restaurants and retail developed in conjunction with the hotel/conference center/museums on the Center Street side of the site, preferably with outdoor seating.
4.6. To facilitate the successful development of the public open space, include a landscape architect on the hotel development team.

4.7. Require as part of the selection process that the architect(s)/engineer(s)/contractor(s) responsible for designing and installing any public improvement retain an artist as a functioning member of the development team to design or direct the design of any public art element(s) concurrently with the design of the public improvement.

4.8. Include in the hotel/conference center budget at least a 1.5% contribution to public art, including art placed in spaces accessible to the public.

4.9. Consider allowing non-profit organizations and community groups to pay a lower “community rate” to rent any available meeting rooms in the conference center.

4.10. Consider all aspects of access needs for the block as a whole, and for surrounding blocks, including vendor deliveries to the hotel and neighboring businesses, public transit, new transit service demands, airport shuttle buses, etc.

4.11. Utilize universal accessibility design principles in pedestrian public spaces (including design of tables, benches, seating, any creek daylighting, and plaza surfaces) and address universal accessibility needs at every level of project planning and design with smooth transitions. Maximize safety and access throughout.

5. **Conserve, adaptively re-use, and respect the area’s historic resources.**

Preservation involves not just individual buildings but also historic streetscapes, view corridors, and the general urban fabric. Downtown Berkeley is a rare example of a Downtown of this size that still retains its basic early-20th-century feel.

Two recognized historic buildings are located within the project site itself, and many more are nearby. For instance, the Bank of America site is virtually surrounded by historic structures.

Decisions about this project should respect and reinforce Downtown’s special character. Doing so could significantly help attract shoppers, diners, theater-goers, and “heritage tourists.” Furthermore, conserving existing buildings where possible is a basic “green” principle.

5.1. Design new buildings so as to respect and complement nearby historic buildings and the historic character of Downtown in general.

5.2. Consider preserving for adaptive re-use (perhaps as museum space) the historic UC Press Building, especially its three-story portion and entrance lobby.

5.3. Consider preserving the street façade, and general retail usage, of 2154-2160 University Avenue.

6. **Design, construct, and operate the projects according to green building principles.**
Green building principles minimize initial and ongoing impacts on City infrastructure, and on the overall environment. Such principles should apply to all project development.

A green hotel would not only be something eco-positive Berkeley can be proud of, it would also make financial sense. Given current conditions in the hotel market, it would allow the hotel to stand out from other hotels in the Bay Area and to attract unique interest – for example, from eco-minded tourists and conferences.

6.1. Adopt the goal of building the “greenest” hotel in the United States. Construct the hotel following LEED green building guidelines, so that the hotel is certified as LEED silver or higher.

6.2. As recommended by the Public Works Commission, as part of the hotel’s LEED adherence, and in order to minimize public infrastructure impacts, qualify the completed hotel for the specific LEED credits for:

- rate and quantity of stormwater runoff
- treatment systems to reduce suspended solids
- reducing or treating the amount of potable water for building sewage

6.3. Utilize throughout the project sustainable and green design principles, such as solar access and solar energy.

6.4. Make familiarity and experience with green building and LEED standards a criterion for the selection of architects.

7. **Emphasize alternative and public transit instead of automobile access, and provide only limited on-site parking.**

The rationale for locating the hotel/conference center/museum project on this Center and Shattuck site is to create transit-oriented facilities that take advantage of the most significant transit transfer point in Berkeley.

A 200-room hotel and conference center, along with museums nearby, would generate a significant number of new trips by hotel guests, conference-goers, museum visitors, and employees. If incremental traffic is mostly delivered by automobile, then congestion, noise, and traffic volumes in Downtown will worsen and detract from the project's success. If the project must be planned for mostly automobile travel, it can be more advantageously located elsewhere.

A project transportation plan can reduce traffic impacts. Center Street is one of Berkeley’s busiest pedestrian thoroughfares. The project can strongly encourage use of transit and alternative modes to minimize traffic and air pollution impacts. The project offers important transportation enhancement and coordination opportunities. BART would connect both airports and Amtrak to the hotel/convention center’s front door. The project’s transit-friendly siting and promotion can add profitability to the project.

7.1. Do not preserve or install any surface parking. Locate current bank and Center Street parking spaces under the hotel/conference center and museum sites.
7.2. Create shared-use public parking. Pedestrian exits from underground parking can lead directly to the Bank of America, the hotel/conference center/museums, and Center Street.

7.3. On the overall site’s northern block, locate all off-street parking either (a) underground or (b) with a minimum setback depth of 20 feet, behind meaningful retail, commercial, or other uses that border the sidewalk.

7.4. On the overall site’s southern block, provide all access to parking from streets other than Center Street and Shattuck Avenue.

7.5. Price parking to encourage short-term rather than all-day use.

7.6. Require a Transportation Plan as a condition of the hotel and conference center receiving a use permit. This Transportation Plan should include, among others, the following policies and practices:

7.6.1. Require a separate parking charge for hotel guests, and make it expensive.

7.6.2. Do not provide free parking for employees of the hotel.

7.6.3. Limit dedicated hotel-guest parking, if any, to no more than 25 spaces per 100 rooms.

7.6.4. Include transit information in marketing materials. In the hotel/conference center’s brochures and website, emphasize use of public transit and airport shuttles and provide detailed travel information. De-emphasize access by car, and directions for drivers; instead, emphasize the cost advantages of transit and the hotel’s close proximity to BART.

7.6.5. Display maps of public transportation systems routes, including local shuttles, in the lobbies (or other visible public locations) of the hotel, conference center, and museums. Make information on public transit use readily available.

7.6.6. Encourage conference-goers to use transit and provide them with detailed information about how to get to the conference center by public transit and airport shuttles. Consistently provide this information, and information on the scarcity and expense of parking, in conference brochures and on conference Web pages.

7.6.7. Consider providing hotel guests who request it with one day’s free transit by means of a BART excursion ticket or other pass. Doing so as a policy may contribute to LEED certification.

7.6.8. Provide hotel employees with Eco Pass. Provide those who use BART with access to Commuter Check until such time, if ever, that BART is involved with Eco Pass.

7.6.9. Consider diverting a portion of parking fees collected to a special Downtown transportation fund.

7.6.10. Consider charging a transportation fee as part of the hotel room rate, which fee could be waived for guests who arrive by public transportation.

7.8 Close Center Street to delivery vehicles, except possibly for smaller trucks in early
morning or other limited delivery periods.

7.9 If at all possible, avoid having any vehicular curb cuts on Center Street or Shattuck Avenue (even if some vehicular traffic is still permitted on Center).

7.10. Provide entry for emergency vehicles on Center via an obstacle-free area and removable barriers.

7.11. Create delivery spaces on Oxford Street to compensate for any removal of current delivery zones on Center Street.

8. **Assure labor peace and equity.**

Close collaboration between hotel/conference center/museum developers and operators and employees or their union representatives is recommended. In the event of labor disputes which escalate, the City has a history of supporting boycotts. If they occur during either construction or operation, such disputes or boycotts would be both expensive and reduce tourist revenues, and they would jeopardize the profitability of the project and tax revenues to the City.

It would make little sense for the City to face the possibility of strongly supporting a project which it then boycotts due to labor disputes. The project can be more successful if this possibility is eliminated in advance by the University, the developer, and the operator implementing these recommendations:

8.1. By conditions of approval or in other ways, and without regard to legal requirements to do so, enter into the following agreements that commit the developer and/or the operator of the hotel to:

8.1.1. a project labor agreement to assure labor peace throughout the construction of the project. As part of that agreement, also give first preference to East Bay contractors and subcontractors.

8.1.2. a card check labor neutrality agreement to assure labor peace throughout the operation of the project.

8.1.3. an agreement to comply with the requirements of the City’s prevailing wage, equal rights benefits, living-wage and First Source hiring requirement ordinances, to provide adequate health care benefits to employees and their families, and to contribute a negotiated sum to the City’s job training program.

8.1.4. an agreement to pay the City’s childcare and housing development linkage or mitigation fees in order to ensure an adequate supply of affordable workforce housing and affordable childcare services, as well as any new fees, such as transportation, as may be adopted, even if effective after the date the project application is deemed complete.

9. **Maximize net economic benefits for the City and for neighboring businesses.**

The proposed new hotel and conference center and the relocation of the UC museums could give a significant boost to the Downtown economy and add nearly $1 million per year to direct City revenues. “World class” green buildings, an attractive pedestrian space, and other
public amenities could significantly increase the positive economic impacts by attracting more visitors to the area. Local businesses would benefit from these additional visitors.

At the same time, new development can create additional costs for the City, though infill development creates fewer additional costs than development in a previously undeveloped area. University acquisition of additional property in the area would decrease City revenues if UC does not pay the equivalent of property and related taxes, assessments, and fees.

The City Council should closely consider the impacts and costs of these projects, as well as potential associated revenue sources, in order to maximize their net economic benefits.

9.1 Require that the project pay all applicable taxes, fees, and assessments, or pay an in-lieu amount equal to these. In granting approvals, do not waive any potential revenue sources.

9.2 Remind the City Manager to annually request from the County Assessor copies of each governmental entity's annual real property usage reports required by Revenue and Taxation Code Section 480.6, in order to actively discover taxable possessory interests.

9.3 Allocate a portion of new City revenues generated by the project, in the initial years following construction of the hotel and conference center, toward any costs associated with improvements to Center Street undertaken in conjunction with the project, including street furniture, landscaping and public art.

9.4 If the optimal design of the project is determined to require buildings taller than what is permitted under current C-2 zoning, include in any negotiation about changes to the zoning the topic of significant public benefits to be provided by the developer in exchange for a zoning change. Carefully evaluate what level of public benefits are feasible, and seek to maximize the public benefits achieved.

9.5 Consistent with the design principles elaborated in section 3, and to more fully meet the need for modern hotel space in Downtown, consider building a number of hotel rooms toward the high end of the presumed range of 175-225.

9.6 In order to meet the need to accommodate public and private meetings and events of different sizes in Downtown, ensure that the conference center includes a significantly large, dividable “ballroom,” as well as plentiful smaller meeting rooms.