

Fragrance tames skyscraper plans

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PUBLIC outcry has forced the Fragrance Group to back off on its Davey St skyscraper development and scale back the height of its Collins St hotel proposal, but the developers are still being labelled “unreasonable”.

In May last year, the Singapore developer lodged development applications with Hobart City Council for a 120m, 400-room hotel in Davey St and a 75m, 495-room hotel in Collins St — worth a combined \$230 million.

The proposals, the tallest buildings ever earmarked for Tasmania’s capital, provoked significant opposition and community group Hobart not Highrise was established.

Fragrance announced yesterday it had downsized its Collins St hotel to 50m in response to feedback from the city’s residents.

The developer also put its much-higher Davey St hotel on hold and indicated it could re-look at the height of that proposal if the revised Collins St project — and another new development planned for Elizabeth St — were well received by authorities and the public.

However, Hobart not Highrise president Brian Corr said Fragrance had not done enough.

“They are still being unreasonable. Residents will not settle for a 50m commercial building in a 15m residential zone,” Mr Corr said.

“The Collins St site is in Sullivan’s Cove and should not be compared with any buildings in the CBD area. They are different areas with different desired outcomes. The hospital has its own planning rules and



NEW PROPOSAL: An artist's impression of the scaled-back proposal for Collins St.

should not be used when comparing.”

Premier Will Hodgman said many Tasmanians, and the government, had concerns about the nature of some recent development proposals being tabled with the council.

“It is important to preserve what’s special about Tasmania. This decision reflects the fact that Fragrance respects that,” Mr Hodgman said.

Fragrance says its new proposal is “more in keeping with the neighbourhood”.

“The revised height is similar to a number of other existing and approved buildings within the vicinity of the city and will be notably lower than the nearby Royal Hobart Hospital towers currently under construction,” Fragrance principal James Koh said.

The hotel now comprises 256 rooms along with the 800-seat conference room outlined in the original design. The facade has also been redesigned.

Online, reactions to the news was divided almost

equally between those pleased the idea of skyscrapers had mellowed and others who said the city needed such developments to move forward.

Fragrance has also lodged a new development application with council for a four-star hotel and apartment complex in Elizabeth St. The \$80 million proposal comprises 214 hotel suites over 13 storeys along with 91 apartments in a 12-storey residential building standing 45m high.

It is also building the 63m Hyatt Centric Hotel on the old Westpac site in the bus mall.

This has resulted in part of the bus mall being relocated to Macquarie St outside the former Mercury building.

Tonight, a Hobart City Infrastructure Committee meeting will hear that Fragrance had to pay just \$4 per square metre weekly for the construction activity, hoarding and scaffolding permits at the worksite, and \$23 per metered parking space lost per day.

Council staff calculated this

at \$35,000 that the council will receive for nearly 20 months’ construction work.

Alderman Anna Reynolds said council needed to be adequately paid for the disruption.

“These organisations are well resourced, they can afford to pay fair fees,” she said. “I really think that we have been a little bit too generous closing an entire side of the road, it just seems that it’s out of balance.”

The new Elizabeth St project and the amended Collins St proposal will be advertised for public comment.

Mr Koh said he hoped the proposals would be supported so construction could start.

“The Fragrance Group remains strongly committed to Tasmania and has additional property interests in Hobart and Launceston,” Mr Koh said.

“The proposed hotel developments will create important construction activity and new employment in Tasmania and, when completed, help meet the growing need for visitor accommodation.”