

# Bozeman Commission to review proposal for Lark Hotel expansion

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Writer

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Thinktank design group

A five-story expansion (back) proposed on the site of the existing Lark Hotel in downtown Bozeman (front).

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A five-story building project expanding the Lark Hotel in downtown Bozeman will be reviewed Monday at the Bozeman City Commission meeting.

strong around Bozeman

Downtown Lark Hotel plans expansion, intends to add 28 rooms

The project, which would add 28 additional rooms for the hotel and ground-floor commercial space on the corner of Main Street and Grand Avenue, has attracted controversy because its modern styling would contrast the brick aesthetic more typical for Main Street.

“Breaking with the established urban street front I think is dangerous for our downtown character,” wrote Charles Franklin, an architect on the city’s design review board, in an email to the board’s members.

Franklin also said he was concerned about the exterior materials proposed for the building, writing that, “I urge the applicant to evaluate the longevity of such choices in a vibrant downtown that is historic in its use of materials.”

Jeff Welch of MercuryCSC, a marketing firm that occupies a building next door to the Lark, wrote to several commissioners in support of the project.

“I believe there needs to be room for more diverse and contemporary design — such as that proposed by the Lark — in city design standards,” wrote Welch, saying he worries that existing standards encourage “false historicism” and “vanilla” buildings.

For their part, city planners appear to give the project’s aesthetics a lukewarm review, writing in a staff report that “the visual integration of the project may be challenging for some,” while acknowledging that “others may find the unique style welcome.”

Ultimately, city staff members recommend that commissioners approve the project.



“The scale and character of the historic core should be protected, but other downtown districts should be able to accommodate contemporary development of greater height and density,” they wrote.

The project location sits just outside the formal downtown historic district, which runs along Main Street from the midpoint of the block between Grand and Willson avenues east to Rouse Avenue.

In the planning application, Lark owner Bangtail Partners says the addition is necessary to meet demand for the hotel space beyond its existing 38 rooms, which the company says had 98 percent occupancy through most of 2015.

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