

Historic buildings to make way for parking structure in Huntington

By Ann Pepper *O.C. Register*
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HUNTINGTON BEACH — Despite pleas from several members of the city Historic Resources Board, the Planning Commission on Tuesday night voted to demolish several of Main Street's most historic buildings to make way for a new parking structure. City staff members and several commissioners said the 817-space building is key to getting downtown redevelopment under way.

The 4-3 vote, which can be appealed to the City Council, approved razing the 68-year-old Clark Hotel at the corner of Main Street and Olive Avenue. The hotel, along with several other 1920s-era buildings, are of potential national historic significance, several board members told the commission.

"Historic preservation and rede-

velopment can go hand in hand," said Guy Guzzardo, a member of the board. "We have the opportunity to have a National Register historic district downtown. Bring the old buildings up to code rather than demolish them," he told the commissioners.

Guzzardo said he considered the staff recommendation to demolish the buildings and replace them with a Mediterranean-style five-level parking structure "a slap in the face" to the volunteers who have worked for years with city staff on shaping the downtown redevelopment project.

But Commissioner Roger Slates, who was out of the room for much of the discussion, set the tone for the vote shortly after the close of public comment on the issue.

"I've lived here for 25 years and we are closer today than any other time during those years to doing

something downtown," Slates said. "We absolutely need the parking structure to move ahead downtown and it is absolutely inconceivable to me that (the commission) would throw up any roadblocks to going ahead with it."

Commissioners Tom Livengood, Victor Leipzig and Geri Ortega had asked to postpone the vote until after a consultant's report commissioned by the City Council was complete. The report would include discussion of the historical aspects of the downtown redevelopment area.

But Commissioners Jim Silva, Frank Higgins and Ken Bourguignon joined Slates in his opinion that the parking structure should proceed according to the staff recommendation.

The vote can be appealed to the City Council within the next 10 days.

