

# SCOTTSDALE REPUBLIC

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## Hospital's plans should be easy to approve

Scottsdale's Planning Commission was doing its job, even if it wasn't really necessary.

Officials from Scottsdale Healthcare briefed commissioners about their plans to ask for a rezoning of the Osborn Medical Center. They'll bring a formal proposal to the board later this month.

**OUR VIEW**

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Center. They'll bring a formal proposal to the board later this month.

The plan needs to be pedestrian friendly, commissioners said. The architecture should be first rate. It should protect the Western character of Old Town.

"It's really important to pay attention to the architecture and let this be a stellar part of downtown," Planning Commissioner Michael Schmitt said.

And on every point, hospital officials politely answered with a version of "well, yes, that is our plan."

Since preliminary plans were presented last year, the hospital has been sensitive to its surroundings. It proposed closing some streets to encourage greater pedestrian use. Its request to go higher, up to 120 feet for one of two patient towers, is focused on the interior of the site. The northern campus, closest to Old Town, would have shorter buildings and be set back to blend in with the area's character.

Scottsdale Healthcare's redevelopment plans for its Osborn campus include a taller patient tower in the interior of the site, with shorter buildings in the northern campus.



PETER CORBETT/THE REPUBLIC

It's a commitment in tune with Scottsdale Healthcare's history.

In downtown's darkest days, when the place was on the verge of becoming a ghost town, the hospital chose to stay put. Its employees and volunteers provided a solid customer base for downtown shops and restaurants. Scottsdale Healthcare kept downtown's heart beating.

Smart City Council decisions followed that spurred downtown revitalization, but they would have been hol-

low gestures if the hospital had left. It was the first anchor.

That shouldn't be forgotten as the rezoning case moves through the Planning Commission and City Council. Scottsdale Healthcare made a long-term commitment to downtown. It won't ask for any zoning change that would harm the area it has long supported.

The preliminary sketches are reasonable. The hospital wants to raise its patient towers because it is more efficient

to move patients vertically than horizontally. The tallest tower would still be considerably shorter than the Waterfront Towers.

The plan also improves traffic circulation on the campus, which is long overdue. It can be a confusing place to get in and out of. Creating gateways, streamlining traffic patterns and encouraging more pedestrian uses would fix that. There's also consideration of building a pedestrian overpass over Osborn Road, another welcome improvement.

The rezoning request confirms that Scottsdale Healthcare is committed to remaining downtown. It has no timeline for building anything, but the rezoning would give it the flexibility to grow over the next two decades.

Signing the San Francisco Giants to a 20-year contract was important to ensuring downtown's economic future. Approving a rezoning request that guarantees the Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn campus will stay put for at least that long is just as important.

The Planning Commission and City Council should ask questions. They should study the plan. But when every question has already been anticipated and dealt with, this decision should be an easy approval.