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## The Great Doctor Debate

By Abbey Hood

Walk down Bedford Drive and it's hard to miss the dozens of doctor offices aligning the street. It's also hard to miss the paparazzi swarming the front doors of the offices as celebrities are always buzzing in and out.

Beverly Hills is known by celebrity types and A-Listers for its for the City's world class medical services.

"We have had patients come from every state and 33 countries," said Dr. Robert Kotler, who has been in Beverly Hills for more than 20 years.

Doctors or medical offices take up almost 21 percent of the City's Class A Office Space.

"Anything a patient wants is within way of a walking distance," said Kotler. "The medical world is complex and complicated. It is so much easier to be a block or two away from world class practitioners, it allows for good patient service."

"We like the fact that Beverly Hills is considered a medical campus and a resource for the population."

But not everyone agrees.

The Beverly Hills City Council is worried that medical offices will overwhelm the City.

"Our cachet in Beverly Hills is glamour," said City Councilman John Mirisch at a recent council meeting. "It's 'come to Beverly Hills and see a star,' not 'come to Beverly Hills and see a sick person.'"

In July 2009, the council asked the Planning Commission to study medical land use policies and recommend an ordinance to limit future medical uses. Establishing a cap is one tool to implement that direction.

The City states that medical uses generate greater traffic and parking demand than other offices.

City Treasurer Eliot Finkel points out medical offices also generate less revenue than retail and other types of commercial business because medical offices pay less business taxes.

Doctors, like attorneys in Beverly Hills, pay taxes based on headcount not a percentage of their business like other commercial businesses.

"(Recent surveys)" have found the City should be trying to attract entertainment companies back to Beverly Hills," said Finkel.

People in the industry spend money, their clients spend money and people come to Beverly Hills to see those clients, he said.

Doctors claim their patients also spend money.

"We create jobs and employment," said Kotler. "We support commerce. Patients park in City lots and dine in City restaurants; our international patients stay in Beverly Hills' hotels."

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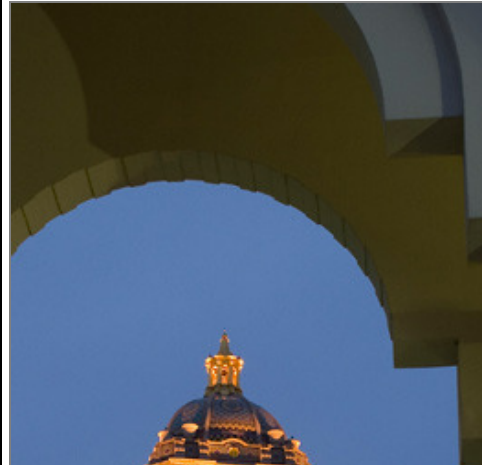
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And unlike other types of industry, medical is not as affected by the recession.

"Illness knows no recession," said Kotler. "If you are sick you have to go to the doctor."

An informal survey conducted by the City's Chamber of Commerce in April found that of the 70 businesses surveyed, the majority stated medical positively impacts their businesses.

Forty percent did not think Beverly Hills should place any limitations on new medical offices.

The majority reported they are not opposed to medical on Wilshire Blvd. or other commercial areas (excluding the business triangle).

Developers seem to agree with the Chamber of Commerce. Typically medical offices pay higher rent, according to Finkel.

And, there is currently an abundance of vacant office space in Beverly Hills.

#### TOO MUCH VACANT SPACE?

In the first quarter of 2010, Beverly Hills reported a total vacancy rate of 15.7 percent for Class A commercial office space, slightly higher than the vacancy rate in West Los Angeles, according to the City of Beverly Hills' Economic Indicators.

The increase in office vacancy rates is a current trend throughout Los Angeles, according Director of Regional Research for Beacon Economics Brad Kemp.

"Some areas, near LAX, are experiencing significant vacancy rates, up to almost 50 percent," said Kemp.

In this market, medical office space is doing significantly better than retail or office space, said Kemp.

"We believe medical office space will maintain its current strength and maintain in the future," he said.

The future does not look as bright for office, retail space, as Kemp predicts the market for Commercial A Office space will not start to improve until 2012 or 2013.

"In 2011, we are going to see another slow down in the office market," he states. "There is going to be a drop in payroll taxes come the end of December, so people will have smaller paychecks. This will result in a slowdown in spending as people realize their paycheck is down."

However, if the City allows doctors to take up the vacant space it might not be in their best long-term interest, according to Finkel.

Recent studies have shown entertainment companies are the highest revenue generators for Beverly Hills, according to Finkel.

People in the industry spend money, their clients spend money and other people come to see people in the industry, it is a triple combination, he continued.

Entertainment giants like Creative Artists Association and ICM moved their headquarters out of Beverly Hills to Century City, when they needed more space.

"Beverly Hills has such limited space," said Finkel. "I would hate to see it taken up by medical when there is potential for better use."

#### WHAT'S ON THE TABLE

The Beverly Hills Planning Commission is considering a proposed ordinance that would limit new or expanded medical uses in the City after the City Council directed the commissioners to develop an ordinance regulating medical uses in the city in July 2009.

Since November, the commission has studied the history of office regulation, summary of past City Council discussions and impacts of medical use in the City. They have indicated they too, are align with the council, and support a limit on medical use. The commission is in the process of debating staff recommendations at meetings that should last through July.

At the commission's June 10 meeting, Beverly Hills City Planners recommended the commission establish a Conditional Use Permit(CUP) for new medical projects.



Currently, medical use applications do not require discretionary approval from the City. If a CUP were established, it would subject all medical use applications to a review by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission would determine that the use would not be "detrimental to adjacent properties." If the application did not meet a list of criteria set forth by the Planning Commission, it would have the authority to deny the application.

Such criterion could include:

- Preventing adverse traffic
- Promoting City's image
- Promoting retail/pedestrian activity

Another option the Commission is considering, a relatively new idea, is implementing a "Floating Overlay Zone," that would prohibit medical use in commercial properties, according to Planner Jonathan Lait.

Commercial property owners could seek to amend the City's zoning code to allow medical overlay through the "Floating Overlay Zone." The applicant would have to receive approval by the City Council to amend the zone change, according to Lait.

The Planning Commission is also considering to put a cap on new medical in the City.

The commission is weighing three different options for a cap:

1. Current Floor Area Level-The amount of medical use would be capped at the current level of medical space already existing in Beverly Hills (1,350,000 square feet). New medical space would only be allowed when the existing medical use inventory is reduced below the cap and the addition would not exceed the current level.
2. Consistent Percent Level- The maximum amount of medical office space allowed would be represented as a percentage of total commercial floor area in the City; currently medical use is estimated at 21 percent of the commercial area. Commissioners discussed setting a maximum level for medical office use slight above the 21 percent to allow for a small amount of new medical office space. As the total amount of commercial floor area in the City increases through new commercial construction, additional medical floor area would be allowed so long as it does not exceed the maximum percentage of total commercial space established in the cap.
3. Annual Increase-This method would use the current level of medical office space as a baseline and allow an annual increase in medical office area.

Both the Planning Commission and City council have asked that any new restrictions on medical use include a provision that would allow new medical uses to be permitted within an existing building that meets the City's current parking requirements for medical uses. New building area up to 2,500 square feet may also be added to an existing building under the proposed exemption.

Lait stated to The Courier he is not aware of another City that places a cap on medical use.

The commission has yet to vote on the adoption of the ordinance. It will continue the matter to its July meeting.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Rosalind Zane (center) was installed as president of the Center Theatre Group Associates, the key CTG fundraising group that supports the theatre's youth programs, at a installation luncheon at Il Cielo on Burton Way.

BUSINESS



Director of Sales and Marketing Michael Mettler

FASHION



The partnership between Emporio Armani and (PRODUCT) RED continues with the launch of a new style of sunglasses both for men and women and a new watch

HEALTH



Dodger catcher Russell Martin, right, greets the Brisenno family upon their return to Dodger Stadium Wednesday.

LOCAL NEWS



SPORTS



Beverly Hills Tennis Satellite team came in first place at the Westside Tennis League Championship at Brentwood Country Club last Sunday

LOCAL NEWS

- Murders Up, But Violent Crime Down in Los Angeles,

REAL ESTATE

- Kennedy Wilson Completes Acquisition, Sells Condos

FASHION

- The Emporio Armani (Product) Red Collection For

ASTROLOGY

- HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS (070910)

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

- New CTC President

LOOK GREAT FEEL GREAT

- Kalogrie Is One-Stop Spa

says LA police chief and mayor

- Memorial Services Sunday For Former Mayor Maxwell Salter
- Irene Stern To Return To Beverly Vista As Principal?
- Nessah Synagogue Plans To Open K-8 Academy

- Courier Honors 'Beverly Hills Best Real Estate Agent 2009' Contest Winners at Montage BH Residences Reception
- Late BH Architect's Artwork On Display In Pasadena Museum
- A Most Successful Brand—And Her Name Is Deena

Summer 2010

- Lux Lash Celebrates One Year
- Locks Of Love Event On Rodeo
- Accessories for Success

- HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS (070210)
- HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS (061810)
- HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS (061110)

- MPAA Hosts Reception At French Consul General's BH Residence
- Council To Honor Producer, Centenarian Arthur Gardner
- The A Team—Action-Packed But Puzzling

For All Skin-Care Needs

- Moving Past Chronic Pain
- Beverly Hills Male Medical Center—For The Discerning Man Who Demands The Best
- Ways To Promote Better Brain Health

#### LUXURY LIVING

- Style Meets Substance At Belmont Village Senior Living On Wilshire Boulevard
- Acupuncturist Specializes In Treating Foot Pain
- Monogrammit Keeps Beverly Hills In Stitches
- Marcelle — A Specialist in Skin-Care Problems

#### THE COURIER'S DESERT

- Let The Games—And Tennis Madness —Begin
- Celebrities, Fans Return For Frank's 'Little Party'
- Big Bidding Expected For 'Day In The Garden' Fundraiser
- The Long and Winding Road to Indian Wells

#### ACTIVE RETIREMENT

- Area Senior Housing Comes Of Age
- Estacion Expands Foundation To Serve Deserving Students
- Enjoy The Services, Amenities And Intimacy At BridgePoint
- Starts Education Foundation. Abla Estacion — At 75, Lives A Life With No Limits

#### MOTHER'S DAY

- BridgePoint Celebrates Mother's Day!
- Brighton Way Association Hosts Special Mother's Day Shopping Event
- Help Mom Plan For A Financially Sound Future And Retirement

#### SUMMER CAMPS & EDUCATION

- More Than A School, TEADS Is a Learning Community
- Summer Fun At UCLA, Pepperdine And Other Prestigious Universities
- Harvard-Westlake Summer Programs Offer Spectrum of Arts

#### WORLD NEWS

- Israelis sue Al-Jazeera over Lebanon war reporting
- Anna Chapman's citizenship, passport revoked
- Israeli navy challenges Gaza-bound Libyan ship
- 12th person detained following Russia spy swap

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