



USC President Andrew Sorensen wants to build a lobby for the proposed USC inn here, at the Black House on Pendleton Street where. The historic building would have to be renovated.

PHOTO BY BRIAN RAY / THE GAMECOCK

# Sorensen, hoteliers joust over USC hotel

Sorensen wants to build a university hotel for the National Advocacy Center, but hotel owners resist.

BY BRIAN RAY  
THE GAMECOCK

In July, USC and the University Neighborhood Association reached an agreement that allows USC to build a hotel for the National Advocacy Center. If approved by the City Council and other planning commissions, USC might demolish two student parking lots and a faculty lot, totaling 300 parking spaces, to build the hotel.

"There had to be trade-offs," said USC President Andrew Sorensen. "I'm aware of the fact that we've got a horrific parking problem."

Local hotel owners met a week following the announcement to protest the inn, saying it would take away a third of their business. They also said that the uni-

versity has worked hard to exclude them from discussions about the inn, and that Sorensen told them if the inn threatens their hotels, they should work harder to improve the quality.

"He believed that USC's hotel wouldn't hurt us," said Robert Wislinski, spokesman for the Greater-Columbia Hotel and Motel Association, "but if it did, it was their market, their land, their school. They would do what they wanted."

Wislinski also said that Sorensen told hotel owners this inn could be the first of many hotels USC might build.

USC denies this claim. USC spokesman Russ McKinney said hotel owners fail to see how the inn would benefit the university. He said a hotel would be an important bargain-

ing chip for potential teachers and students who perform well in academics or sports. Dozens of colleges across the United States have hotels, McKinney said.

"If Clemson can have a hotel on its campus, then it's appropriate for us to have one," Sorensen said.

Wislinski said USC actually has planned two hotel sites, one next to the NAC and another on Senate Street. The second hotel will be used as a backup if a committee down the administrative line rejects the agreement, he said. The backup hotel is the vision of a group of private investors headed by former USC chief of staff Lyles Glenn.

He also said there's nothing to stop USC from building both hotels, so the Hospitality Association of South Carolina and the hotel owners association plan to contest the second hotel in court.

City Council member Anne Sinclair said that hotel owners lobbied the South Carolina General Assembly for a bill against the USC inn, but the bill did not make it out of committee hearings.

Sinclair, who organized negotiations between the university and the neighborhood association, said there are other benefits to the agreement. She said USC is required by the agreement to help preserve, renovate and maintain three historic but abandoned buildings on Pendleton Street.

Sinclair said that the Kirkland Apartments would be renovated to house visiting faculty for extended periods of time, the Black House will serve as a lobby for the inn and a wood frame cottage will be relocated and sold to the neighborhood as a regular house.

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