

Specht gains contract for Hillsboro Civic Center

The city now will take two months to negotiate a development agreement for the City Hall-library-commercial project

By **DAVID R. ANDERSON**
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HILLSBORO—The City Council unanimously selected Specht Development of Beaverton to build the new Civic Center, but only after an hour of questioning by one council member Tuesday night.

Councilor Karen McKinney said she wasn't convinced that Specht was appreciably better than Gerding/Edlen Development.

"I would not have any hesitation in voting for either of the top two," she said.

McKinney's questions included concerns about whether Specht could guarantee a price, why the company had not provided detailed drawings for its housing proposal and whether a 78-foot-tall City Hall was appropriate.

But Councilor Joe Keizur said there were plenty of chances for council members to voice their concerns before Tuesday night.

"I take exception to the suggestion that



Courtesy of LRS Architects

The Specht Development plan for Hillsboro's Civic center includes a five-story City Hall above parking (center) and a second-story library at South First Avenue and East main Street (right).

we haven't had enough opportunity to ask questions through this long process," he said.

Marion Hemphill, city capital planning and development director, said many of McKinney's concerns will be addressed as the city negotiates a development agreement with Specht in the next two months.

"At this point, we have to trust city staff to do a good job," said Jerry Willey, chairman of the selection committee. "I

want to give you some degree of comfort that these issues have been addressed."

The committee, comprising two city staff members, two council members and three citizen members, gave Specht 176½ points to 168½ for Gerding/Edlen and 75 to Trammell Crow. Four committee members favored Specht, two favored Gerding/Edlen, and one said the two developers were tied.

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Representatives of Gerding/Edlen, who objected to the committee's decision at a meeting two weeks ago, did not attend Tuesday's council meeting.

The city is hoping to revitalize downtown with the center of nearly six acres, which will be centered on the block across East Main Street from the Washington County Courthouse.

Specht has proposed a five-story City Hall on top of a ground floor of parking. That pedestal, covered with stairs, will help create an amphitheater effect in the

public plaza on East Main Street, which will be nearly a half acre. The 20,000-square-foot library will be on the second floor of a building at the corner of South First Avenue and East Main Street. A full-service restaurant and a coffee shop will be on the ground floor.

Specht has guaranteed the city a price of nearly \$35.4 million. However, city officials have said they will try to reduce the cost, perhaps by reducing the height of City Hall by one floor.

Hemphill assured the council that the city can negotiate a price it can afford. "It's a win-win for the city in terms of cost," he said.

A development agreement between the city and Specht won't be completed until June, after the city finds out whether voters approve a May 21 bond measure that will include about \$5.9 million for the branch library at the Civic Center.

If the city is unable to reach an agreement with Specht, it will negotiate with Gerding/Edlen.

Demolition of existing buildings is scheduled to start in February, with City Hall ready to be occupied in July 2004.