

City approves McDonald's bid for more seating

By KAYLOIS HENRY
Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — City officials Thursday served up McDonald's request for a side order of seats and parking to go.

By a 3-2 vote, members of the city's Development Code Adjustment Board allowed the McDonald's at 409 Mandalay Ave. to install seats on its outdoor patio. The decision also gives the restaurant a variance to provide three additional parking spaces in a shopping center on a nearby street.

The burger giant is renting the three parking spaces on the northeast section of Poinsetta Avenue. In addition, the restaurant will rent one of the vacant storefronts, said Todd Pressman, a consultant for McDonald's.

"McDonald's is going beyond what the city wants," Pressman told board members Thursday. "This is a real attempt at real parking along city guidelines."

The variance is not without conditions. McDonald's

Please see **McDONALD'S** Page 6

McDonald's

from Page 1

can never enclose the seats. If it loses the three parking spaces for any reason, the seats have to go. McDonald's also must lease the parking spaces for at least five years.

Board member Otto Gans said he remembered a promise by McDonald's not to ask for seating. Gans, who voted against the variance, wanted to know what happened to that commitment.

That promise was never explicitly made, Pressman said.

"There was never a promise of no seating," Pressman said. "I heard the tape (of the meeting) four or five times."

Last year, McDonald's told a state hearing officer that the courtyard would not be used for seating and that only a takeout facility would be operated there.

Having the seating wouldn't create any additional problems, said board member Jim Graham.

"I felt that there is an abundance of parking on the beach and

(the seating) would have no effect" on traffic, he said.

Former board member Peter S. Caffentzis said the restaurant didn't prove not having seats was a hardship. By granting the variance, the board was violating its own rules, he said.

"This board has no right to grant a variance unless there is a hardship," he said. "It's an inconvenience for them, which is different."

Caffentzis said he is 'seriously considering' appealing the board's decision to a state hearing officer.

Seating battle

McDonald's takes request for change back to City Hall

By CURTIS KRUEGER
Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — McDonald's scored a coup in 1987, when it won a battle with the city to open a fast-food restaurant on a busy street on Clearwater Beach.

The key to victory was McDonald's decision not to install seating.

But today, the burger giant will be back in front of the city's Development Code Adjustment Board, asking for permission to install outdoor seating at the restaurant at 409 Mandalay Ave.

It is the second time McDonald's has asked for permission to make the change since opening a little more than two years ago. The last time, members of the Development Code Adjustment Board voted unanimously against the plan, with one board member calling the idea "ludicrous."

McDonald's consultant Todd Pressman said the new request is different.

This time, McDonald's plans to provide three new parking spaces for the restaurant on a nearby street.

"This is the first time we've come to the city and said 'We've got exactly what's required,'" Pressman said.

McDonald's has gone back and forth with the city over parking, a

Please see **SEATING** Page 10