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Wingspread: An \$80 million dream

By BOB SMITH

Building on their success over the last decade with Pajaro Dunes as a year-around conference center, the Palo Alto-based firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley formally unveiled its plans Tuesday afternoon for Wingspread.

If finally approved, Wingspread will consist of a 497-unit resort hotel and condominium complex on the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property next to New Brighton Beach State Park. Also included will be an elaborate performing arts complex, commercial theater district and 133 low and moderate income apartments for employees of the theater district and hotel-condominium complex and local artists.

When completed in a few years, Ryland Kelley told reporters at a meeting in Soquel Tuesday afternoon, the project will cost upwards of \$80 million.

Permit applications will be filed this week with the county planning department for the project, Kelley said, but he acknowledged that its approval and the construction timetable may ultimately depend on the water moratorium now being discussed in the Soquel Creek County Water District.

The Performing Arts Center, as now conceived by Kelley and his partners in Conference Associates, will be composed of a 1,000-seat proscenium theater, a 500-seat thrust stage theater, an open air Greek amphitheater and underground parking. The theaters, shown on architectural renderings as large mounds, may be constructed with a new air bag technique, in which large air bags are manufactured to the outline of the final building and then inflated. Foam insulation is then sprayed on the plastic bag, followed a day later by sprayed-on concrete. The result, said Kelley, is a very strong, free-form structure that can be erected at prices substantially cheaper than with conventional construction techniques.

The theater district will consist of shops and restaurants, two 100-seat mini-theaters, to be used by local groups, and 133 rental apartments that will be owned and managed by the Wingspread Foundation, a private, non-profit organization that will also con-

trol the Performing Arts Center.

The theatrical complex will be built between the railroad tracks and the freeway.

The retreat area, consisting of a 100-room resort hotel and 397 separately-owned condominiums, plus recreational facilities, will be located on the seaward side of the tracks.

The Lodge, to be built on the bluffs overlooking Monterey Bay next to the Pot Belly Beach property, will consist of 170 condominium-type studio, one-bedroom suites with fireplaces.

Wingspread Clusters, planned for the edge of Borregas Gulch, will contain 200 units with an average of 3 bedrooms each, complete with underground parking. The clusters are unique in this part of the country, Kelley said, in that they have sod roofs and from the meadow area will appear invisible.

Twenty-seven clustered Courtyard Homes will be built between the Clusters and the railroad tracks, adjacent to tennis courts and a swimming pool.

On the west side of the property, the conference center will contain 100 conventional hotel rooms, conference rooms, food services, and a reception center. Nearby will be the "tree house," a small satellite complex house for groups desiring privacy.

The large open meadow now existing between the railroad tracks and the wooded ocean bluffs will be kept in its present condition, Kelley promised.

"The philosophy of the project," Kelley said, "the idea underlying the project is

the physical design — an attempt to manage the impact of people on open space as a central design statement."

The performing arts center, theater district and the resort hotel-condominiums will be financially interlocking operations.

The 397 condominium units will be sold as investments to individuals, with tight controls on the amount of time the owners can use the units each year. Kelley said the county now limits owner-occupancy for the use he proposed to no more than 45-days a year, but the actual use permitted at Wingspread will be somewhere between 15 and 45 days. The remainder of the time, the units will be available for rental to guests attending conferences or just staying at the resort.

The only living units that will be occupied year-round by the same individuals, Kelley said, will be the 133 low and moderate income apartments adjacent to the theater district. Because of this, he said, he expects the project to be exempt from the restrictions of Measure J growth limitation ordinance, and also points out that the use is the third highest priority specified in the Coastal Act, thus giving it a good chance of speedy approval by the Regional Coastal Commission.

An internal "use tax" charged on the rooms rented in the resort will be turned over by the resort operators to the foundation to subsidize the performing arts center.

"There are performing halls all over the county that live hand-to-mouth, and each year go to the taxpayers to balance

their budgets," Kelley said.

"Here, we are dealing with an opportunity for the foundation trustees to be free of that burden," Kelley said.

The performing arts center will be turned over to the Wingspread Foundation debt-free, Kelley said, along with the commercial theater district that will carry a mortgage the foundation can pay off with the rents it receives from lessees in the commercial area.

Kelley said the interlocking financial plan is so imaginative that the National Endowment for the Arts is now looking at it as a model for similar centers throughout the country. "They see it as unique and something that can be implemented in other parts of the country," Kelley said.

Asked about the possibility that his project would be delayed because of the possible water moratorium in the water district, Kelley tried to divorce his proposal from the politics surrounding the 490-unit proposal for the O'Neill Ranch a mile-and-a-half away in Soquel.

"We are concerned about being caught in the middle of a pro-anti development issue on the O'Neill Ranch," Kelley said. "We are not the O'Neill Ranch. We should be viewed independently. We are confident that the adverse impacts of the O'Neill Ranch do not apply here."

"The water question on the

O'Neill property does not apply to us on an apple-to-apple basis. Our resort hotel will have far less water consumption than a single-family dwelling. We expect to use the most sophisticated water-saving devices and we are prepared to prove that our development will use the equivalent of 75 to 100 homes in the Aptos area."

Kelley also questioned the motives behind the pending water moratorium. "If there is a water shortage that can't be solved, then our project will have to be delayed," he said. "But if it (moratorium) is being raised to prevent development, that is another story."

Kelley also dismissed the potential opposition from the city of Capitola over the traffic impacts the city says his project will create along MacGregor Drive frontage road and at its intersection with Park Avenue. Kelley pointed to the city's environmental impact report prepared on the abortive attempt to annex the Porter-Sesnon property this spring and said that the report showed no significant traffic impact, even with far greater use than his proposal would generate.

The developers have also applied to the state Department of Transportation for permission to build an off-ramp from the freeway directly into Wingspread.

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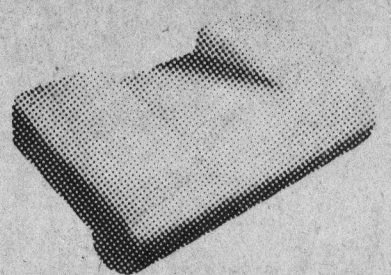
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