

# Wingspread won't sell land to state

By DENISE SIEBENTHAL

Sentinel Staff Writer

APTOS — Developers of Wingspread Beach have dropped plans to sell part of the 72-acre beachfront site to the state for a park.

The development firm of Conference Associates of Palo Alto believes the state won't be financially capable of buying the land because of its budget problems, according to Conference Associates spokesman Tim Welch.

The state Parks and Recreation Commission last year appropriated \$4 million for the purchase, an amount Conference Associates has said is inadequate.

Instead of selling land to the state, the firm is planning to donate seven acres to some nonprofit organization for use as sports fields, Welch said.

Conference Associates holds a 99-year lease from the University of California on the undeveloped site across Highway 1 from Cabrillo College.

Letters have gone out to various soccer, softball and youth baseball groups to see if there's interest in the land, Welch said.

But there's a catch to giving up seven acres of valuable property to playing fields.

Conference Associates has two proposals for the site before the county — a 197-unit conference center that would be allowed under the general plan and a 295-unit conference center and performing arts facility that would need general plan and local coastal program amendments to be allowed.

Welch said the seven acres would be donated to a nonprofit organization only if the county approves the larger of the two development proposals.

He admitted the developers are proposing a trade-off — higher density for recreational land.

Part of the trade-off also involves the massive performing arts facility proposed. If the county allows the larger development, then Conference Associates will build the performing arts center and turn it over to a nonprofit foundation.

But if the county opts for the 197-unit conference center, then the community will lose out on recreational fields and a performing arts center.

Part of the firm's strategy is to rally support from the cultural arts and recreation groups in the area.

"Like a candidate, we're trying to put together different bases of support," Welch said.

Postcards have been sent to members of various recreation groups asking them to indicate their support for the sports fields. These postcards will be presented to county officials when the 295-unit proposal is being considered, Welch said.

The county has told Conference Associates that its original application for 200 units is complete, but that the proposal must be reduced to 197 units to meet county policy. The next step will be for this proposal to go before the Planning Commission.