

# Supervisors change minds, open door for Wingspread

The Wingspread project proposed for the Porter-Sesnon property in Aptos was brought back to life in the final version of the Local Coastal Program (LCP) approved by the Board of Supervisors Friday.

Wingspread is the name given to an elaborate plan that would result in a unique development on the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property between the freeway and the beach. Included would be a performing arts center, theaters, shops and restaurants and various types of residential units. The plan was developed by Conference Associates, an arm of the Palo Alto development firm of Hare, Brewer and Kelley, which holds a 99-year lease on the Porter-Sesnon property.

Strong resistance to the Wingspread proposal sprang up from residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and from adherents of environmentalism in the county. Most of the foes of Wingspread urged

the development of Porter-Sesnon as a parks and recreation resource — either as an adjunct of neighboring New Brighton State Beach or as a regional park.

Supervisor Robley Levy, who represents the area, concluded that the Wingspread proposal would be far too intensive a use for the property — although she saluted it as “an imaginative and ingenious” proposal — and led the movement last week that saw the board tentatively place a parks and recreation designation on the property. That designation was restrictive enough that it in effect would have killed any chance for a Wingspread-type development had it been finally confirmed.

But County Counsel Clair Carlson told the board Friday that to foreclose private development on the privately-owned parcel — as the tentative designation would effectively do — would leave the county “vulnerable” to legal action. Clearly

implicit in Carlson's remarks was his belief that Hare, Brewer and Kelley, which had already indicated it was prepared to sue, would have a good chance of winning an “inverse condemnation” lawsuit against the county.

Faced with that prospect, Supervisor Levy led the way in inserting an “alternative use” to the parks and recreation “preferred use” designation on Porter-Sesnon. That alternative use would have the effect of allowing at least a scaled-down version of Wingspread on the property.

Mrs. Levy said she believed such action was “proper and responsible” on the board's part. But she made it clear that her original desire to head off any use as intensive as that proposed by Wingspread was one she believed reflected the wishes of the community.

“There's been an overwhelming outpouring of support for the action we took last week,” she said. She conceded that support for Wingspread was also evident, particularly from those who believe a performing arts center is needed here.

“What has concerned me from the start,” Mrs. Levy said, “is the impact (of Wingspread) on the surrounding neighborhood.” She made those concerns evident when she attached stiff conditions to her proposed alternative use designation which would allow development only to the extent that it could be accommodated by resources and services available, such as water, road systems, sewage facilities, etc. Board Chairman Gary Patton got the board to accept a limitation on the number of units that can be developed on the property to 115-130, the same range allowed to campground units in the “preferred use” designation of the property as a park and recreation site.

The upshot, then, is that the LCP gives a parks and recreation use on the Porter-Sesnon property a first priority, but allows alternative uses that would allow considerable private development, always provided that resources are available to accommodate such development.

This new designation won the approval of all the supervisors except for Dan Forbus, the Soquel-Live Oak representative on the board, who voted against it without comment. Reluctantly approving the new designation were Patton and San Lorenzo Valley Supervisor Joe Cucchiara, both of whom would have preferred to see the parcel remain in the strict parks and recreation category.

Pajaro Valley Supervisor E. Wayne Moore, Jr., the board's most vocal advocate of the rights of private property owners, said the new designation is “far from what I would have proposed, but at least it's a crack in the door...it's better than before.”