

# Wingspread hits 2-8-87 new roadblocks

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SANTA CRUZ — Palo Alto developer Ryland Kelley's proposed Wingspread Beach project, now nearly seven years old and still mired in the county planning process, appears to have run into another procedural roadblock.

County Planning Director Kris Schenk is recommending that the hotel/conference center-performing arts complex, proposed for the 66-acre Porter-Sesnon property and an adjoining six-acre parcel in Aptos, be subjected to a new traffic study and, possibly, a new environmental review.

According to a report signed by Schenk and forwarded to the Board of Supervisors Friday, a new traffic study will be needed whether or not the board sticks to its previous insistence on direct freeway access to and from the Wingspread site — and even though a board-mandated 20-percent reduction in the project's size will likely result in less traffic than originally anticipated.

And, Schenk's report indicates, changes in the project's design — made at the board's demand — may require further, time-consuming environmental analysis.

At a minimum, the planning director suggests, it's likely to be another year before the development proposal, which was approved "in concept" by supervisors 11 months ago, receives a final hearing before the board.

And, his report implies, if supervisors continue to make the freeway link a prerequisite for the project —

in the face of Caltrans' apparent reluctance to go along with the idea — it could be four to six years before Ryland Kelley ever turns a spade of earth at Porter-Sesnon.

After a hiatus of many months, the Wingspread project will be considered anew by the board Tuesday. It had been expected that supervisors would decide this week whether direct freeway access should continue to be a precondition for approval of Kelley's ambitious development.

But Schenk has cautioned the board that a decision on that question now would be "premature."

He wants a new traffic study conducted first.

The freeway-access requirement was one of numerous conditions imposed on the project by Aptos Supervisor Robley Levy when she cast the decisive, swing vote on the proposal before a standing-room-only crowd at the Aptos High School auditorium last March.

Since then, Kelley has met virtually all of the conditions laid down by the board majority at the Second District supervisor's insistence, including a 20-percent reduction in the number of condominium units, from 590 to about 470. Kelley's revised plans for Wingspread also call for a reduction of more than 20 percent in the project's "footprint" — the amount of land actually covered by structures or paving. About 85 percent of the development site will remain in open space under Kelley's revised plans.

But while he has complied with

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most of the other conditions, Kelley has sought at least a partial release from the freeway-access proviso. Last July, he offered the county two revised proposals: one with freeway access, and one without.

The developer said then that he was willing to build the freeway ramps but said he wanted the ramp requirement "detached from the rest of the development because that's something that could take years to get approval."

Last month, Caltrans District Director Burch Bachtold indicated in a letter to Schenk that the state might never approve a freeway link for Wingspread. Bachtold said that neither a full, cloverleaf interchange, nor a half-interchange suggested by Kelley — with on and off-ramps tied to the freeway's south-bound lanes — was advisable.

He said that the connection was probably not needed because the Wingspread project would not generate enough traffic to justify it, and because traffic signals and stop signs, which Kelley has agreed to install, would probably alleviate traffic problems caused by the development. Bachtold based his conclusions on a traffic study ordered by the county and paid for by Kelley.

Bachtold also indicated that under a federal highway policy requiring that freeway interchanges be at least a mile apart, it was unlikely that the ramps would be allowed. The Park Avenue and State Park Drive interchanges are both less than a mile from the Porter-Sesnon property.

In his report to supervisors, Schenk questioned whether the one-mile restriction should apply to Wingspread, since, he said, "The proposed facilities are regional in nature and would attract vehicles from throughout the state." He said the federal policy had not previously been applied to privately financed freeway interchanges.

Schenk told the board that in view of the position taken by Caltrans, the "apparent" solution to the freeway-access question "would be to eliminate the interchange and ... accommodate Wingspread traffic on the existing local system of streets and intersections" with street and traffic signal improvements called for in the original Wingspread traffic study.

But Schenk recommended against that step because, he indicated, the conclusions of the traffic study — long ago accepted by the board — may no longer be valid.

The planning director suggested that a new traffic study may be needed because of design changes in the Wingspread project and because the original study's "underlying assumptions" about how the facility will operate may prove wrong.

Noting that Kelley's reduced and redesigned project now has two entrances, Schenk said: "The traffic effects of this modified design, along with the reduction in hotel units and other use changes, upon local streets and intersections have not been defined."

Schenk said that while the "overall number of trips" to and from Wingspread "presumably ... will be less," traffic distribution and its impact on various intersections would be altered.

"Without further analysis," he said, "it cannot be concluded that

the traffic mitigation measures in the (original traffic study) fully address the consequences of the redesigned project."

Schenk additionally stated that further traffic analysis was required because:

- A fourth athletics field, which supervisors said must be added to the development, had not been considered in the original environmental and traffic studies of the project.

- Parking plans had been "considerably" altered in the course of the project's redesign.

- "Feasible alternatives to direct freeway access, including additional capacity" at the Park Avenue and State Park Drive interchanges, will have to be considered if a direct freeway link to Wingspread cannot be built.

The planning director further stated that more study of the traffic situation was needed because operating restrictions, aimed at limiting performing arts facility and conference center traffic to off-peak highway travel periods, would probably not hold up.

Schenk said that "such limitations on the use of a public facility may not be practical when the facility becomes popular and is in great demand."

On the issue of further environmental review of the Wingspread project, Schenk said supervisors have two choices: He said the board could order either an "addendum" or a "supplement" to the existing environmental report.

Schenk said an addendum, which would not have to go through a lengthy public review process, would be "appropriate only where minor technical changes or additions ... are necessary."

The planning director strongly suggested that a supplemental report, which could prove as time-consuming as the original environmental study, would be more appropriate.

Schenk noted that under the California Environmental Quality Act, supplemental environmental studies are "mandated" when project changes involve "significant new ... impacts that were not previously considered." The proposed freeway link and the added athletics field, he went on to say, "were not evaluated at all" at the time of the original environmental study.

Schenk said a supplemental study would be needed to assess the environmental impacts of those changes in the Wingspread project.

Even without those changes, he said, "there are several instances where the redesigned plan differs from the proposal discussed in the existing (environmental report)." Warned Schenk: "Failure to re-examine these changes fully and completely would appear to violate the (environmental report) guidelines."

From start to finish, Schenk indicated in his report, the Planning Department and Planning Commission will need at least 262 working days — slightly more than a year — to carry out the new studies and conduct the required public hearings if the board orders an additional traffic analysis and a supplemental environmental report.

Schenk estimated that it could take as long as six years to secure state approval for a freeway connection at Porter-Sesnon.