

Conference Center Plans Are Unveiled

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Plans for the long-awaited 630-unit, \$80 million Wingspread Beach development for the Porter-Sesnon property in Mid-County have been unveiled and will be presented to the county Planning Department Friday.

Hare, Brewer and Kelley, current lessee's of the University of California-owned 66-acre parcel across Highway 1 from Cabrillo College, are proposing a performing arts, lodging and conference center.

Featured will be two domed performance halls, which will house 1,000 and 500 seats, respectively. A theatre district of restaurants, shops, galleries, as well as three mini-theatres of about 100 seats each, are proposed adjacent to the main commercial area.

Expected to carry the costs of the performing arts complex are the 630 housing units, according to Ryland Kelley, a principal of the real estate and property management company proposing Wingspread Beach.

These units are proposed to include 200 units in condominium clusters, a 170-unit hotel/lodge, 27 exclusive courtyard homes and a 100-unit hotel/conference center. In addition, a 133-unit, low-cost apartment complex will accommodate the development's employees and artists in residence.

In a rather complex plan, the condominiums, hotel/lodge and courtyard homes will all be condominium ownership in form. This means they will be organized as a resort hotel, explained Kelley, with units sold to individuals as investments, and the units being committed to mandatory short-term public rentals.

"The sale of these units and subsequent rentals sets up the entire system," added Kelley. "The limitations of the owners will be very severe with probably the most the owner being allowed to use their units being 15 to 45 days a year."

The fact the development is set up as a hotel and not a residential subdivision, added Tim Welch, who is working with Kelley, should exempt it from the growth limitations of Measure J, as well as speed up the building permit process and hopefully get priority processing from the county.

While processing of the application is expected to begin Friday, Kelley hopes the county Planning Commission will hear the Wingspread Beach proposal by January or February of next year. The project must also get Central Coastal Commission approval.

Kelley termed it "the most exciting development I've ever been involved in." Admitting the risks were enormous, he maintained confidence there was a market for conference business for small groups in the 20- to 200-person range.

The Porter-Sesnon property itself, added Kelley, dictates the design. He pointed out the large central meadow will be kept in open space, with only 8 percent building coverage of the land and 16

percent over-all including the buildings, roads and walkways.

Major concerns of the development involve water and traffic. Wingspread Beach falls within the Soquel Creek County Water District. The district is in an underground water overdraft situation and is threatened with mandatory water rationing and a building moratorium.

Kelley expressed concern that the water shortage could "greatly delay our project." However, he was even more concerned of being "lumped into the pro and anti-development issue involving the O'Neill Ranch."

He explained there is no comparison between the 490-unit O'Neill development in Soquel. "A resort hotel uses significantly less water than single-family homes. We are prepared to prove our development will be equivalent to 75 to 100 homes in the Aptos area.

"If there is a water shortage that can't be cured, then obviously our project will be delayed," he admitted. "But, if water is simply being used to hold development, that's a different story.

Traffic concerns are expected from the city of Capitola, as well as residents in the Pine Tree Lane area. Despite the fact Kelley admitted the McGregor Drive-Park Avenue intersection (off of Highway 1) is the worst designed intersection he has ever seen, he still maintains his development will be a "non-traffic" problem.

He termed it as being the "softest" on traffic impacts, considering the major portion of traffic will occur at non-commute times in the evening when concerts are held at the performance halls. He also noted that Capitola essentially had said there are no traffic problems in its EIR when it applied to LAFD last year to annex the property.

The developers have applied for a new off-ramp to be built from the freeway. This is, however, made for "attention access" to the development rather than to improve traffic circulation.

In order to operate the performance halls, a Wingspread Foundation will be organized, explained Kelley. Rents collected from the 133 apartments and businesses in the theater district will be fed back to the foundation for operation costs.

"There are performance halls all across the country which are in (financial) trouble," said Kelley. "Here, we're dealing with an opportunity for foundation trustees to be free of that panic situation."

The two main performance halls, Kelley pointed out, will rather unique in that the domes will be made out of a balloon form that is first sprayed with polyurethane foam and then concrete.

The 170-unit hotel/lodge will primarily be one-bedroom units, with the 200 condominiums averaging three bedrooms each. The latter will have a "hidden impact" by having sod roofs with the units being built on, or within, the slopes. The majority of the parking would be underground.

Plans show a Greek amphitheater, 1,000-seat performance house and 500-seat performance hall.

