

## Sans Souci gains traction

### Project now goes before Cape council

By Brian Liberatore • bliberatore@news-press.com • April 8, 2010

**1:10 A.M.** — A proposal for a \$384 million condominium complex in northwest Cape Coral is building momentum after a major victory Wednesday.

But the developer's biggest political hurdle is yet to come.

The Planning and Zoning Commission voted 4-3 to endorse the 14-story Sans Souci Bay, but the project must go before the City Council, which rejected an earlier — albeit larger — version of Sans Souci Bay in 2008. Only Eric Grill, who is no longer on the council, supported the project. The current council could vote within a couple of weeks.

The council has changed since 2008, with four new members and a new mayor at the dais. But that may not be enough to sway the council in favor of the project.

"At this point, I'm leaning against it," said Mayor John Sullivan. "But I haven't heard all the information."

The project has had consistent opposition from neighbors who say it does not fit in the sparsely populated area. They say the project would damage the environment, the roadways and property values.

"Sans Souci would be among the tallest buildings in the city," said Rich O'Donnell, with the Northwest Neighborhood Association. "It would tower over

neighborhoods where virtually all residents are opposed to it."

Others see Sans Souci as a boon to the economy and a welcome departure from the single-family houses clogging Cape Coral. Christopher Spiro, who represented the developer, said the project would employ between 100 and 600 people every day for eight to nine years and offer jobs to about 150 people once built. Selling the units would generate about \$23 million in Realtor commissions.

The project will include about 600 units, some of which could sell for less than \$200,000, Spiro said.

The developer, Michael Kerner of IAK Builders, scaled down the project by shaving six floors from the initial 20-floor plan he brought forward in 2006. He also agreed to open up the amenities, which include a park and nature trails, to the public.

O'Donnell says the city's willingness to set aside height and density restrictions will spur haphazard development in a city that already lacks cohesive planning. But Spiro pointed out that the high-density, vertical development is a necessary departure from the city's unchanging suburban sprawl.

"We, as a city, need to evolve or die," Spiro said. "This is a huge step in that evolution."

Realtors and contractors have thrown support behind the project. The Cape Coral Construction Industry Association and the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce sent representatives to endorse Sans Souci on Wednesday.

"In my professional opinion, the Sans Souci project is a perfect fit for the north Cape Coral submarket," said Gary Tasman, a local commercial real estate broker. "Now is the time to prepare for the next

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