

State agencies block Cape high-rises

Cite concerns about Four Mile Cove Preserve

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Towers may rise in Cape Coral's downtown, but two state agencies don't want them near Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve.

A proposal to build high-rise condominiums at Paradise Preserve, overlooking the Caloosahatchee River on about 10 acres of a 193-acre project at the end of Four Mile Cove Parkway, got a kick to the teeth when the Department of Community Affairs refused to accept it.

A change to the city's building rules had been adopted by the Cape Coral City Council in December. Council members Jim Jeffers and Dolores Bertolini opposed it. According to state statutes, it had to be approved by the Department of Community Affairs.

The South Florida Water Management District staff also will recommend against the development as the plan stands, said Rhonda Haage, the interim director for Southwest Florida.

"The reasons are all environmental," said the community agency's principal planner, Bernard Piawah. "We have determined that that portion of the amendment is not in compliance with state law."

The requested change from single to multifamily zoning would oppose the state's efforts at wetland conservation and flood plain protection, a department letter of intent stated.

Appeals must be filed by Feb. 23, said James Lettiere, acting Cape planning division manager.

IN OTHER BUSINESS

The state Department of Community Affairs also accepted other changes to zoning rules that would allow more homes in Cape Coral's Community Redevelopment Area along with three commercial activity centers.

The approval means the Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Area could raise the number of homes allowed on the 278 acres of dry land in its 432 acres. The number of homes allowed would increase from 2,027 to more than 11,000.

The redevelopment area stretches along Cape Coral Parkway from Tudor Drive to the Cape Coral Bridge. Another part of the area extends north on Del Prado from the Parkway to Southeast 44th Street. The state agency also approved the city establishing three Commercial Activity Centers, where commercial development is allowed adjacent to homes.

The approved commercial centers sit in three areas of the city. The areas are:

- The intersection of Beach Parkway and Agualinda Boulevard
- The intersection of Tropicana Parkway and Nelson Road
- North of Pine Island Road to the east of Chiquita Boulevard

All the Department of Community Affairs decisions can be appealed by Feb. 23.

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"We are looking into our options," said William Nolan, a consultant for the project.

Nolan would say no more. The plans for the project called for 158 luxury condominiums in three high-rises.

There would also be 257 canal-front homes on the rest of the property. Dredging would be required for the canals.

The project included docks, a yacht basin and improvements to Four Mile Cove Parkway.

City Council could direct staff to defend the zoning change at a Department of Management Services hearing, said city planner Roger Daltry. If that happened, staff members would find themselves defending an amendment they recommended against.

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