

Opinion

Marti Daltry CRCA Representative

December 20, 2006

At last night's Ft. Myers City Council Meeting, I spoke on behalf of CRCA in opposition to the Vue. CRCA shares the concerns that others from the Friends of the Riverfront Coalition spoke about; namely that the Vue's negative impact on the already congested city traffic, city infrastructure that can't handle the current sewage usage, and the fact that the 27 story structure is much higher than the Duany plan.

I specifically expressed my concerns on how the Vue would impact Centennial Park usage. Currently we have several large festivals held at the Park which draw hundreds of visitors. People who have invested megabucks on a high rise adjacent to a park will not want the noise and traffic that a festival would generate and in turn, would generate enough complaints to the city to prohibit such festivals in the future. I also felt that public access to the park would be in jeopardy due to the Vue.

CRCA was involved last year with the Save Centennial Park issue, distributing cards for people to sign and send to the National Park Service in an effort to prohibit a land swap of the park to developers.

Centennial Park is a gem in the heart of downtown Fort Myers. High-rises do not belong adjacent to a park and in a vulnerable flood zone too! We don't want the experiences of the East Coast mirrored here in Southwest Florida. In densely built waterfront areas in the East Coast of Florida, the public has to access the beach by walking through hotels and other commercial buildings. We want easy public access to the waterfront, unimpeded by buildings.

Dave A. Urich, President Responsible Growth Management Coalition, Inc.

December 21, 2006

I have attached a letter from Mike Flanders with attachments, which was postmarked the 14th. At the meeting on the 19th he asked me if I had received it, and I had not been to RGMC POB for a few days. Apparently he felt it would answer all my Duany questions, but not so! The plan actually calls for the closing of Carson Street to add a

Parking Garage off Henley Place! It is also clear that "Urban Center" designation was possibly to be replaced with "Urban Core" Transect due to developer interest. It also says that the "shrimp dock" property has been obtained by the City "in order to extend the park to its natural western waterfront" which I only wish were true! A couple of "picture" pages are also included from a 12 page document that one would assume went to NPS as part of a City response to them.

More importantly, where do we go from here while the City Council is "squestered" from more public & developer input before the meeting on Jan. 11th? It would seem that NPS and Duany are "fair game" for us to contact. Note that Councilperson Henderson said that he heard Duany on the radio and he was apparently talking about Sarasota rather than Fort Myers! He might be affordable for a considered opinion of both Plan A (original) and Plan B (new-coexist proposal) if he were told of that comment! The new editorial in today's paper is more fuel for our fire. Is there some kind of injunction that can be issued by or for NPS requiring a "real" environmental statement about the impact of 27 stories at the foot of the Centennial Park, even if not built directly on it? This type of action would stop the meeting on the 11th!

Andrew Dickman

Post subject: Scrap original Vue Plan Reply with quote

Posted: Thu Dec 21, 2006 1:02 pm
news-press.net

"Throgmartin won the right to build this high-rise on his land..." is wrong. According to the facts as I know them, the developer "won" the right to purchase city property - the parcel where the sailing center is located - largely because he already owned the adjacent land - the abbott parcel. The Vue PUD (now referred to as "Option A") is predicated on the use of Centennial Park land, bonuses, and variances. The National Park Service has the final say whether the park land can be used or given to the developer. Two 1/2 years later, NPS has not granted approval. The bonuses and variances are not entitlements to increase profits but planning tools used to achieve a valid public purpose. Throgmartin has the right to request a PUD on lands he legally owns up to the maximum allowable intensity and density under the zoning code (18 stories on the abbott parcel). Even so, however, he is not "entitled" that maximum because he also has to comply with other standards to ensure compatibility, scale, consistency with the city's long range comprehensive plan. The Vue Option A is a nullity because it is predicated on the illegal "swap" of park lands. If Throgmartin now wants approval of The Vue Option B, that PUD should be considered a completely new proposal, on only the land he legally owns, and under the current zoning standards.

Saying he is "amending" the Option A PUD with Option B in order to be vested under the old zoning code is cheating not winning, and confuses what is supposed to be a transparent democratic public process. The Vue belongs "upland" out of the coastal high hazard zone. The city and county should work together to add the abbott parcel to Centennial Park because it is a regional asset for everyone, especially those who don't have direct access to the riverfront.