

# Carolina Beach high-rise weighed

Planning panel votes 4-2 against project; Town Council to decide fate of complex

By Sherry Jones  
Staff Writer

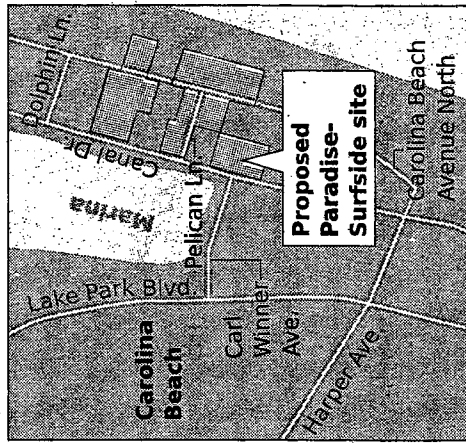
CAROLINA BEACH | Residents are divided over a proposed high-rise development that would drastically change the landscape of this small beach community.

Supporters say the project would revitalize the north end of the Boardwalk — long considered an eyesore by many. But opponents contend the development would destroy the town's blue-collar character.

Citing concerns about density, building heights and traffic, the town's Planning and Zoning Commission voted 4-2 Tuesday to deny a conditional-use permit for an 11-building complex near the Boardwalk's north end.

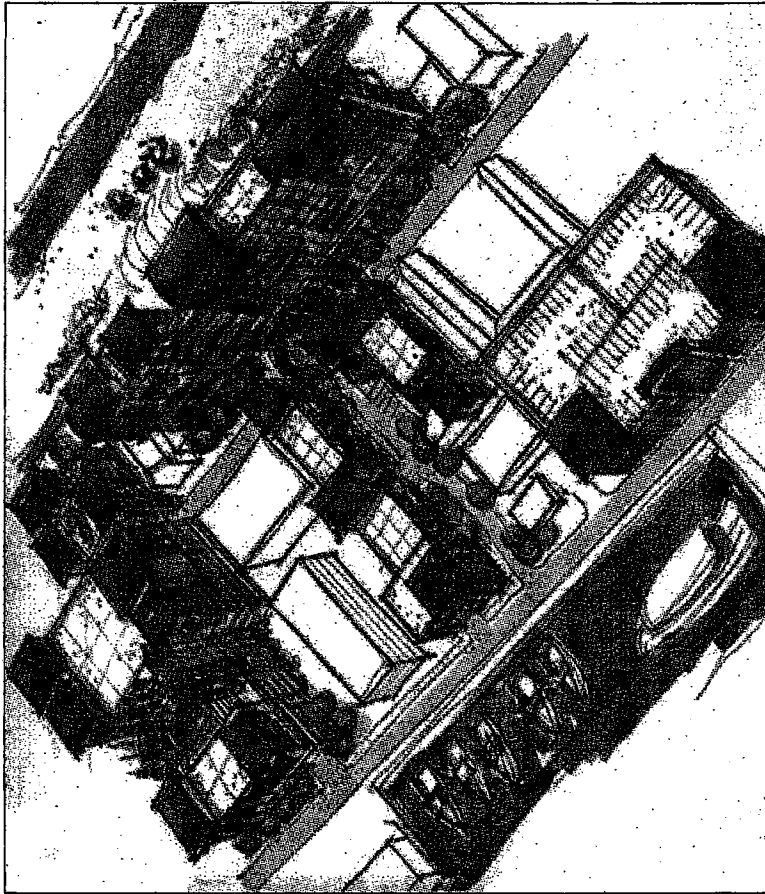
Before voting, the commission heard a 90-minute presentation from the developer. The public spoke for more than two hours.

"Our economy is growing, and the potential of the town is growing," resident Sarah Friede said. "We have one of the most undeveloped beaches on the East Coast.



Once our beachfront is full of concrete and mortar, our fate is sealed."

Ms. Friede submitted a petition signed by 500 residents who oppose the high-rise development and urged town officials to proceed with caution.



CENTREPOINT ARCHITECTURE  
This sketch shows the high-rise development proposed for an area near the north end of the Carolina Beach Boardwalk.

"Conditional-use permits should be given like medicine, not candy," she said.

The Arcadia Group wants to construct a mixed-use development between Canal Drive and Carolina Beach Avenue North and flanking Pelican Lane. It would include residential and commercial spaces, with the tallest buildings reaching 130 feet. A conditional-use permit is needed because many of the buildings would exceed the town's 50-foot height limit.

The Paradise-Surfside project would redevelop the existing Paradise Hotel, Surfside Motor Lodge and several other properties in the town's central business district.

Resident Michael White said he likes the plan because it would improve the town's image.

"A community is like a living organism," he said. "If you're not growing, you're dying. The central business district has gone downhill. The Boardwalk is dying a slow death. This project will keep the community going."

Jonathan Wolk, with Centrepoint Architecture, which is designing the project, said the development would improve on what's already there. It offers new landscaping, pedestrian amenities, sidewalks, improved beach access, expansion of the Boardwalk, stormwater containment and better parking. If the project is approved, construction is scheduled to begin next spring.

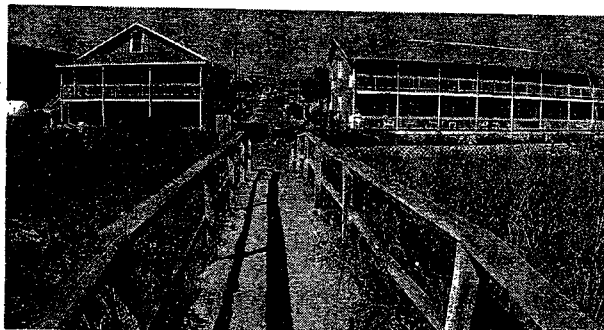
Tuesday night's public hearing drew more than 100 residents. Although opponents came with signs that read "NO MORE HIGH RISES," the more than two dozen speakers were fairly evenly split on the issue.

Some opponents have formed a group called "Preservation and Accountability for our Coastal Environment", and set up a Web site, [www.cbpace.org](http://www.cbpace.org).

Charles Carter, owner of the Guy Johnson Motel, said the tall buildings in this project would cast shadows over his business.

"The project will effectively block out the sun and vastly impact the value of my property," he said. "People won't be able to sit by my pool and get sun unless it's high noon."

Because of the two-year construction time - during which construction traffic would force delays and temporary road closings - Mr. Carter said he feels he would be out of business "for a pretty good period of time."



STAFF PHOTO | JEFFREY S. OTTO

A view from the ocean of the Surfside Motor Lodge at Pelican Lane and Carolina Beach Avenue North in Carolina Beach. It would be among properties redeveloped under a proposal by The Arcadia Group.

ter boat out of the Carolina Beach marina, also worries about his business. For years, he's recommended the Surfside Motor Lodge and Paradise Motel because they are reasonably priced.

"If they're replaced by high-dollar condos, where are my customers going to stay?" he asked.

Katherine Komis said her biggest concern is traffic, which is already a problem.

"The scale of this project is so out of proportion to the island and the infrastructure," she said.

But supporter Jess Yates, owner of the Hula Grille, said the project would be an economic boon for the town's struggling business district.

"The current economic condition in the central business district is tragic," he said, estimating that a third of the buildings there are empty. "This project is scary in some ways, but in other ways it's exactly what we need in the central business district."

Patricia King, another property owner and soon-to-be full-time resident, said she knew little about the project before attending an open house last week where she gained a favorable impression of the people involved with the project.

She said they seemed like the kind of people who'd be willing to work with the town to make the project successful. She also said she liked the look of the project.

"It seems like it would make for a pleasant environment," Ms. King said.

Likewise, Joanne Campbell said the project would bring more business to Pleasure Island and provide more jobs for residents.

"It seems well thought out," she said.

Planning commission mem-

## WHY IT MATTERS

Some Carolina Beach residents are opposed to a proposed mixed-use development along the strand because they fear the town is turning into a smaller version of Myrtle Beach. Supporters of the 111-building project, which would include residential and commercial spaces, say it would maintain the small-town atmosphere while revitalizing an area near the boardwalk.

**WANT TO GO?** A public hearing on a conditional-use permit for the project will be held during the town council's 7:30 p.m. meeting Tuesday at Town Hall, 1121 N. Lake Park Blvd., Carolina Beach.

same sentiments as residents on both sides of the issue.

Commissioner Dan Wilcox said he came into Tuesday night's meeting with an open mind. After hearing the pros and cons, he said he feels the project would anchor the north end of the central business district.

"It will revitalize the Boardwalk overnight, getting for this town what many people have been pushing for for years and years," he said.

Nonetheless, Mr. Wilcox noted concerns about the building heights and would like them reduced if the project proceeds.

Despite his concerns, Mr. Wilcox voted in favor of the conditional-use permit.

Commissioner Jerry Johnson also said the height issue bothers him. He voted against the project. And he objected to the density, traffic and loss of hotel rooms.

## PARADISE-SURFSIDE PROPOSAL

### THE PROJECT

**A mixed-use** development that includes residential and commercial spaces  
**11 buildings**, 821,357 square feet  
**278 residential** units  
**56,811 square feet** of commercial/retail space  
**Two parking** decks  
**Total of 1,005** parking spaces, including some on-street parking  
**Extension of** the Boardwalk

### WHY THE DEVELOPER SAYS IT'S GOOD FOR THE TOWN

**Uses traditional** town planning  
**Offers a community** setting  
**Bicycle- and pedestrian-oriented**  
**Provides additional** public parking  
**Environmentally** friendly  
**Improves public safety** because of more lighting and improved traffic patterns  
**Will have a** positive economic impact for the town

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

The developer has submitted the following economic impact information.

For the construction phase: \$18,582 million

**Expansion of Boardwalk** \$125,000  
**Estimated local labor cost and food/lodging benefits** \$280,000  
**Improvements to roadways** \$400,000  
**Estimated impact and building fees** \$1,378,000  
**Purchase materials locally** \$16,399,000

For the 10-year post construction phase: \$68.953 million

**Present value of estimated sales tax for new retail/restaurants** \$967,000  
**Estimated furniture and improvements for new residents** \$2,653,000  
**Present value of additional visitors' daily spending patterns** \$2,630,000  
**Present value of property and occupancy taxes** \$8,716,000  
**Present value of labor supplied from new retail and restaurants** \$16,090,000  
**Present value of new residents' daily spending patterns** \$37,897,000

### ISSUES

#### Water and sewer

Questions have been raised about whether the town's water and sewer systems can handle a project of this magnitude.

Steve Pagley, the town's operations director, said he had no concerns about this project. He reported that the town can supply 1.5 million gallons of water per month. At its highest point - July 2003 - the system had to supply 1.27 million gallons.

"We have capacity for this project as it stands now," Mr. Pagley said.

With redeveloped well sites, the town's water capacity will increase to 2.4 million gallons.

As for sewer, the town can treat 3 million gallons a day. During the peak season, it is treating between 1.8 million gallons and 2.1 million gallons a day.

#### Height

One of the main objections to the project is the height of three of the buildings. They would be 130 feet tall, which is well above the town's normal 50-foot height limit.

The town has granted special permission for taller buildings, such as the Courtyard by Marriott and the recently approved Park Place, in the past. But the concern is that too many high rises would detract from the town's character.

Another issue raised by some residents is whether the town's fire department is equipped to handle a high-rise fire.

Chief Brian Roberts said he would not anticipate the town needing to buy any additional equipment. And he said he doesn't foresee any water pressure problems should there be a fire.

#### Traffic

The amount of traffic that a project of this nature would generate also is an issue.

Terry Brothers with Wilbur Smith Associates said he conducted a traffic impact analysis on a weekday afternoon and a Saturday afternoon during the peak tourist season and determined the project would not significantly impact area traffic.

In particular, the project would produce more traffic at the intersection of Carl Winner Avenue and U.S. 421, but the increased levels would be acceptable, according to Mr. Brothers' report. The only street where traffic would increase dramatically would be Dolphin Lane, where traffic would double.

But some members of the town's Planning and Zoning Commission weren't convinced.

"I'm my own traffic study," said Mike Newkirk, who lives on Carolina Beach Avenue North. "I'm one of those guys caught in the traffic."