

Towns look at beach club rules

By Shannan Bowen
Staff Writer

OCEAN ISLE BEACH | Developers know that a relaxing chair and a parking spot at the beach are amenities that appeal to many home buyers.

But the trend of creating private beach facilities for inland subdivisions and other groups has some beach towns rethinking their policies.

A moratorium on beach clubs in Ocean Isle Beach is winding down, and commissioners will vote Tuesday on new regulations that govern the location and rules of such facilities.

The six-month moratorium was enacted after town officials noticed a trend of developers

promising their residents that they would have a private clubhouse at the beach for parking and recreation.

The town has two beach clubs, but its ordinances didn't have specific regulations for such clubs, Planning Director Justin Whiteside said.

"We just kind of wanted to tighten up some things and set forth some guidelines," he said.

The proposed standards would prohibit beach clubs in the island's residential district and set rules for parking, signs and buffers.

At Sunset Beach, the town council is expected to vote next month on beach club regulations, Mayor Ron Klein said.

Although Sunset Beach has

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Ron Klein
Sunset Beach mayor

only one beach club, the town wanted to clarify the language and definitions in its ordinances in light of the trends other communities are seeing, he said.

"The planning board is not against having clubhouses if they are regulated," Klein said.

He said officials just want to

make sure that beach clubs in residential areas are supported by the residents there and aren't used for commercial purposes.

Holden Beach had a 90-day moratorium on beach club permits last year after a beach club was illegally placed in a residential district, Town Manager Steve Wheeler said.

SeaScape at Holden Plantation, Rivers Edge and Winding River Plantation are the only communities that have private beach clubs on the island, and one owned by Coastal Communities is under construction, Wheeler said.

Beach clubs are now allowed only in Holden Beach's commercial districts.

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The issue with the clubs, Wheeler said, was whether there should be adequate parking and facilities to meet the needs of those using them.

The new Brunswick Forest subdivision in Leland plans to build a club at 59th Street in Oak Island, said Tobin Spirer, of Spirer Communications of Hilton Head, S.C., the lead mar-

keting agency for Brunswick Forest.

Oak Island Town Manager Jerry Walters said beach clubs are treated as conditional uses and scrutinized on a case-by-case basis. They haven't been much of an issue for the town, he said.

The only beach club on Oak Island right now is one owned by St. James Plantation.

Spirer said the Brunswick Forest club has been approved and received permits, and build-

ing should begin in about three months. The development is following the beach club trend because buyers are looking for amenity-rich communities that are more affordable than buying beachfront property, he said.

"The trend is people just love the beach," Spirer said.

Shannan Bowen: 755-6307
shannan.bowen@starnewsonline.com

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