

Coalition Issue Statements

1. **Comprehensive Study of Collective Impact of Four Hotels.** Now that four hotels have submitted development applications, we advocate that County Planners should initiate an integrated study on how transient accommodations will collectively impact Siesta Key, rather than review each application separately. The studies should incorporate the impact of the already-approved hotel and condominiums at The Promenade, and address many of the issues discussed below.

2. **Standards for Special Exceptions.** Commercial General zoning does not allow hotel use, or excess height beyond 35 ft plus FEMA elevation “by-right”. To change these limits requires Special Exceptions. Special Exceptions were drafted in the code for “special” circumstances and were not intended to be an automatic right of zoning. There are many “standards” required of the Commissioners to grant a Special Exception, and it requires that all the standards must be met. Examples of those standards are: That the project will have no adverse impact on traffic flow. The development must be “compatible” with neighborhood. And “will not by size, position, scale have adverse impact on neighboring properties” These hotels clearly do not meet many of the Special Exception standards.

3. **Comprehensive Plan Amendment** – Recently, in a surprising overreach of their role, County Planning Staff decided to allow the developers to withdraw their requirement to seek an amendment to the Future Land Use Policy 2.9.1 that protects our barrier island from increased density and intensity. For over a year, all parties understood this to be a requirement of the developers, including County Staff witnessed by their written comments to developers, County Counsel statements and even County Commissioners, that voting to allow out-of-cycle Comprehensive Plan amendments for these hotel applications. The developers themselves all filed the amendments in their applications. Yet two weeks ago, one of the developer’s attorneys made an argument that in fact they don’t need to amend. County Staff, rather than allow this legislative policy position be considered at the appropriate County Commissioner level, decided to consent with that position and prejudice the due process. Conveniently, developers would no longer need a super-majority to approve their plans and the County no longer is burdened with having community-wide input and workshops. This is not a code for Staff to interpret, but a legislated policy enacted countywide.

4. **Residential Setbacks** – The proposed Calle Miramar/Beach proposed shares its entire Calle Miramar to Beach Rd with 4-story condo residences. Yet, the plan has a sheer wall, 8-stories tall only 20 feet off their property line looming over private balconies and pool areas. The Code clearly states that when a commercial use abuts residential there is a 20-foot minimum setback requirement, and if the developer requests excess height above the by-right height (35 ft above FEMA), then they must add one foot to the setback for every four feet of excess height. The Calle Miramar/Beach Rd should therefore be 31.25 feet setback from the residential. Yet, after making this comment to another hotel developer’s plan, the County

Administrator told the developers they only now need the minimum 20 ft. This is illogical and unfair to the residential owners that relied on the County to ensure the codes in place when they purchased residences. There are similar set-back issues with the other three hotels proposed.

- 5. Process for Amending the Comprehensive Plan.** Changing our Comprehensive Plan codes (SKOD/UDC) and FLU policies without seeking Community Input is unwelcome. Zoom workshops and 5-minute speeches at hearings are insufficient Community Input. To change policies put in place by years of interaction between Community and County planning and leadership, a similar dialog is merited.
- 6. Precedents Set for 30+ Acres Zoned Commercial General.** There are 30 acres of commercially zoned land on SK. The proposed Calle Miramar hotel would be built on less than one acre, yet approval of its excessive height (8-stories), density (222,000 square feet!), and high room count (6.5 times greater than current code), will set legal precedents for the other 30 acres. Commercial land will be assembled by other developers, and we lose our character and become like Ft. Myers, Clearwater Beach, or Miami Beach. There are similar issues with the other three hotels.
- 7. Access from the Mainland.** Sarasota County tax-payers resident on the mainland should have concerns about limited access to the Key in peak season being further exacerbated by high-density hotels. They will find traffic deadlock and over-crowded beaches.
- 8. Beach Access.** None of these developers own direct access to the beach. How will their guests access beach when nearby public access lead to private beach areas above the Mean High Water Mark, and the parking-constrained Public Beach is over a mile away? Existing conflicts between private property owners and visitors will only get worse.
- 9. Traffic Congestion.** Access routes from the mainland via the two bridges, and several other on-island roads are always busy but are grid-locked in Season and Spring Break. Traffic jams stretching back beyond the Tamiami Trail are not uncommon. Another 500 private cars, staff transportation and delivery vehicles will only make the situation worse. Emergency vehicle response times and hurricane evacuation will all be impacted for the worse. A bridge-to-bridge traffic study should be undertaken, with proposed road changes to address these problems.
- 10. Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety.** Several of the proposed hotels are at the greatest traffic pinch points and crossings are already unsafe and busy. Adding 560 rooms, and over 1,000 more guests will heighten safety concerns, and further delay congestion of traffic at crossings. A bicyclist was killed recently on Siesta Key.
- 11. Reduced Property Values.** A recent informal survey of a group of successful real-estate professionals revealed that they anticipate that the proposed hotels will have a negative impact on residential property values. They see values dropping

due to the increase in traffic congestion, noise, and transient visitors. In the workshop the developer representative claimed neighboring residences were all “short-term vacation rentals”. Of the six largest and closest condominium communities to this site, less than 10% of the owners actively rent. These are our homes.

12. Environmental/Construction Issues. Stormwater and runoff issues need to be addressed. What volume of water will be generated, where it goes, and how will it be treated and affect current street flooding? Considering what happened in Surfside, partially due to nearby high-rise construction, what could the driving of deep pilings required for 80-to-83-foot buildings near the beach. The Calle Miramar/Beach Hotel is only 200 yards from the 50-year-old Beach Terrace Tower. The Old Stickney Point Hotel, would be adjacent to a mid-rise residential tower, Marina del Sol. The Old Stickney Point Hotel plans to fill in wetlands, without a study of the adverse impact on these wetlands, wildlife, birds, fish, and mangroves on Sabal Lake, as required by law? What precedents will be set on property, environmental and flood protection?

13. Quality of Life for Existing Homeowners. The addition of tall hotels, 560 new rooms and over 1,000 visitors will negatively affect the existing residents of the Key. Loss of privacy, excessive noise from bar and restaurant music, traffic congestion, and obstructed views of beaches and sunsets.

14. Obstruction of Old Stickney Point Road. ** There are 74 households with more than 170 residents living “downstream” of the proposed hotel and parking garage whose only vehicular ingress and egress is by means of the dead-end Old Stickney Point Road. Any blockage of this narrow two-lane road, for example by frequent deliveries to the hotel, traffic entering and exiting the parking garage, back up of traffic waiting for hotel registration, pedestrian and bicycle beach traffic, as well as blockages due to year-long construction activities would lead to incalculable hardship upon those 150 residents. Plans to keep this road open to freely flowing traffic (including emergency vehicles) always must be an important part of any community review regarding the hotel and parking garage plans.

** This issue is only applicable to the Old Stickney Point Hotel.