

Alliance votes in favor of Bahia Mar project

DON CRINKLAW
Forum Publishing Group
May 28, 2009

After what seemed like an endless series of presentations, Fort Lauderdale's Central Beach Alliance approved a plan by LXR Luxury Resorts and Hotels to mount an ambitious building project in an area close to Fort Lauderdale Beach known as Bahia Mar.

The 108-to-53 vote came after a year of presentations by LXR. The firm was seeking to persuade the neighborhood group that its project — which will cost \$500 million and include a luxury hotel, two condo buildings and an underground parking garage — would bring revenue to the neighborhood and enhance Fort Lauderdale's reputation as a major destination.

Presentation plans were redrawn with slimmer buildings and more space between the structures and the water's edge. Because the site is at the center of Alliance territory, LXR was eager to win the group's blessing as part of the overall approval process.

"I am excited and grateful to obtain a 67 percent positive vote in support of this important beach redevelopment project," said LXR vice president Peter Henn.

But the vote last week did not come immediately.

Alliance member Chris Beck asked that approval of the plan be delayed until the association receives a detailed explanation of the financial plan LXR will work out with the city.

Board member Mike Miller moved to approve the plan as presented while reserving the ability to study the financial agreement as it develops and be able to address the commission if the Alliance finds anything in the agreement that affects the site plan.

"If the lease plan changes anything, we'll throw it off the table," Alliance president Steve Glassman said.

CBA vice president Fred Carlson was pleased that "there was clearly evident a desire to be more involved at looking at the financial rewards to the city."

Resident Chuck Hansen opposed the project from the beginning because the proposed buildings will mar the view from his condo.

"I thought the motion was made prematurely," he said. "Not everybody had spoken, and the momentum was shifting toward us naysayers."

But Miller said the approval process is more resident-friendly than it used to be.

"You can say 'no' to development, but that's not going to stop it," he said. "We've made enough progress that developers now spend hundreds of thousands of dollars coming to us, listening to us. Time was, they didn't have to come to us for any kind of approval."