

# Finergy Trade Center



## City Drags Feet on Office Approval

By Kevin Allen

Sarasota - Finergy Land Development has plans to construct a four-story office building on Main Street, but the group must resubmit plans to the DRC before it may proceed.

Finergy Development is experiencing just how tedious it can be to build an office building in downtown Sarasota, a tediousness that city officials maintain is essential to make the development process run right.

Sarasota-based Finergy plans to build a four-story office building at 2170 Main Street, between Audubon Place and School Avenue. Construction is scheduled to begin in August and last one year for the 15,000-square-foot building, situated on less than one acre. Sarasota architect George Palermo designed the building.

Predominantly known for its work in building high-end hotels, this is Finergy's first downtown Sarasota project. Part of it will serve as Finergy's headquarters, while the rest will be rental and office condominiums.

It's a pretty tight site, said Eric Collin, Finergy's vice president of land development. It's hard on this type of site to accommodate Sarasota's zoning code and to build a project that's still feasible on a lot that's only 60 feet wide. At its April 5 meeting, the city's Development Review Committee (DRC) pointed out two minor errors and inconsistencies the group had in its site plans. The committee ultimately decided not to give Finergy's plans conditional approval despite the company's protests.

Finergy officials had hoped the DRC would sign off on the plans so they could go before the planning board May 10. But the DRC remained firm, unwilling to give a conditional sign off.

This is our third DRC meeting, Collin told the board. It's very frustrating on our end to come back for an inconsistency when our civil drawings were revised correctly.

But the DRC wouldn't budge. The position of the DRC is that there will be a re-submittal required, said Harvey Hoglund, the city's senior planner. I'm afraid that's where we are.

Finergy will go before the DRC again May 3 with the correctly revised plans. Hoglund said the DRC is working to cut down on conditional sign-offs in the development review process. It's been a process we've used off and on, as long as I've been here for the past several years, Hoglund said. We need to be clear on the DRC approval before we advance on to that next step. Therefore, we're going to curtail the use of conditional sign-offs.

Locally, Finergy built the 100-room Homewood Suites at the Fruitville site of an abandoned assisted-living facility. Finergy has also recently purchased property in Nokomis, where it plans to build a high-end hotel.

