

Nokomis Hotel

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Petitions Going in for Albee Road Projects

By Gerald Rogovin

Revitalization of the Albee Road gateway to Nokomis' beaches takes another step forward within the next several days with submission of petitions to rezone the northwest and southwest corners of the road at U.S. 41.

Finergy Development, LLC, which plans to develop the 4.2-acre southwest corner, and Henry Rodriguez, the developer of the 4.9 acres across Albee Road, have been discussing their separate and possibly joint plans for the corner.

The properties have been occupied by two closed and dilapidated gasoline stations. Both groups have been working with the Nokomis Center Revitalization Advisory Committee to meet the criteria the latter has established.

The committee expressed its wish for an architectural theme for commercial development along U.S. 41 in Nokomis. Both Finergy and Rodriguez plan to observe the standard, the Key West style, in the architecture of their buildings.

Finergy's rezone petition calls for a four-story condominium hotel with about 75 rooms and 22 condominium units. It would be operated by the Hilton Hotels organization, according to Steve Pileggi of Finergy's real estate department.

A retail plaza fronting on U.S. 41 would contain sandwich shops, a restaurant and stores selling beach clothing and other beach-oriented products, Pileggi said. The retail area would total 14,000 square feet.

Symbiosis

Rodriguez's plan includes a 100-room hotel and 41 condominiums. Stores, offices and a "name-brand" restaurant would occupy about 50,000 square feet of commercial space, he said.

"Our plans and those of Finergy suggest a symbiotic relationship,"

Rodriguez said. "We hope that, when completed, the two developments will have the appearance of one."

Not only will the parcels look similar, there is a possibility they will be connected. Rodriguez disclosed that the two developers have been exploring a pedestrian bridge over Albee Road at a third-story level.

"We don't know yet if this is feasible," said Rodriguez. "But it would be a wonderful way to create the appearance of the two properties as one. It would establish the corner of Albee Road and the highway as a substantial shopping, dining and hotel destination," he added.

With appropriate signs, Rodriguez suggested, the pedestrian bridge would direct visitors to the Nokomis beaches.

Community reaction to the two proposals was overwhelmingly favorable in neighborhood workshops the developers have held.

Pileggi estimated that it will take "at least 16 months before construction can begin." Reviews by Sarasota County departments, the county planning commission and the board of county commissioners must be done before any soil is turned, he said.

Other plans

Revitalization of Nokomis' commercial corridor along U.S. 41 has been sparked in recent months by the announcement of several developments. Matthews-Currie Ford revealed plans to erect a new showroom on the east side of the highway. The Nokomis Inn & Suites, just about opposite, on the west side, plans to double its size and add commercial space.

Widening of the highway from the Venice bypass north to Laurel Road, under way since November, and construction of water lines in two neighborhoods have "given the community a considerable lift," according to John Ask, president of the Nokomis Area Civic Association.

"These latest proposals are leading the way to the revitalization of

Nokomis," he said. "I hope that the efforts and leadership of Finergy and Henry Rodriguez will provide the synergy for additional quality projects here."