

## Council should reject Desert Palisades plan

Frank Tysen • Special to The Desert Sun • January 1, 2011

On Wednesday, the Palm Springs City Council is scheduled to make another important decision for the future of our city. The issue is whether to approve 110 luxury homes south of Tramway Road in Chino Canyon above Tuscany Heights.

The 117-acre project is called Desert Palisades. Approval involves a departure from the zoning ordinance, which allows only one home per 40 acres. The applicants submitted a specific plan, which essentially is a variance procedure allowing approval of more density.

Applicants argue this project would add more rooftops to the city and provide more shoppers. This argument is fallacious because homes in that price range throughout the valley tend to be second and third homes and infrequently occupied. Take the Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood developments of the Villas at Old Palm Springs and the St. Baristo — the latter never finished. They have a few units more than proposed Desert Palisades project, yet they only added a dozen permanent residents with little impact on downtown.

Furthermore, does it make sense at this time to add more housing stock to the glut of half-finished projects and those that never even got off the ground? It certainly would not help owners desperately trying to sell their homes. The recent bank foreclosure auction of Crescendo and Boulders developments could not even find buyers to pay a few million dollars for these already-entitled projects.

Were this a creative low-density design of a dozen homes built out of native rocks harmonizing with the rocky landscape, there might be a reason for approval. Unfortunately, the proposed layout resembles a major

traditional subdivision.

## Project won't harmonize

The basic problem is that there simply is not any way to harmonize this development with the magnificent boulder-strewn landscape. The concern here is another scarred hillside destroying our magnificent scenic entry, which our citizens already have already twice voted overwhelmingly to protect in a referendum. With rapidly expanding ecotourism in Palm Springs, the overriding public interest is to preserve its natural beauty.

There is an even greater significant concern as the sprawl of Los Angeles keeps getting closer. Sen. Dianne Feinstein's proposed Sand to Snow National Monument along with the existing Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument provide an incredible opportunity to create a natural buffer zone for our desert hideaway. Linking the hillsides from the Chino Canyon to Snow Creek would complete this incomparable nature preserve.

The development proposal lacks sufficient benefits to the community to qualify in satisfying the public interest criteria. It should be denied.

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