

# Project's troubled history

Sept. 1995

by Marsha Trent  
Sonoma West Staff Writer

**SEBASTOPOL** — It has been a 13-year battle over development on the property east of Palm Avenue and south of Walker Avenue now known as Palm Terrace. Whether that turns out to be a lucky number for the project's outcome depends on which side of the issue you are on.

Councilman Ken Foley called the Palm Terrace project "probably the most examined project in the history of Sebastopol."

Developer Charles Evans, of The Evans Company, has more than once said the property has "one of the longest and most complicated histories regarding proposed development of any similarly sized property in Sonoma County." (Please see *History* page A11)

## History . . . (Continued from front page)

oma County."

A brief outline of the history of the project includes:

- Denial of a proposed 80-unit development, called "The Palms," on 4.3 acres of the site in 1981.

- Application for annexation and zone change filed in 1982, after the adoption of a new general plan, to allow a 50-unit development called "Laguna Vista Acres," on 4.3 acres of the site, denied in 1983.

- Later in 1983, a new application for 38 units on 4.3 acres called "Laguna Vista Garden Homes" was approved by the

City Council. The property was annexed to the city, but the project was not constructed and the use permit lapsed in 1986.

At the same time there were other development proposals, for the remaining 4.8 acres, which together now make up the approximately 8-acre Palm Terrace site, which included:

- An application in 1982 for a 23-unit residential and office development that eventually died due to the potential for conflict with the then proposed highway development.

- Following removal of the potential highway from the general plan in 1985, a new application was made for a 28-unit condominium project, called "Suffolk Meadows," on the site.

The project was approved, but not constructed and the use permit lapsed in 1986.

- Palm Terrace was first proposed as a 35-unit single family development on slightly more than 8 acres in July of 1987.

In March, 1988 a revised proposal was submitted for 29 units and one office parcel.

- On Aug. 8, 1988 a group called Laguna Today and Tomorrow filed a lawsuit against the city and the applicant stating that a new Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was required for the revised project.

Superior Court Judge Laurence K. Sawyer granted that request in October, 1988. The city set aside approval of that project in December.

In July of 1989 the property owner notified the city that he was planning to develop an adjacent 30-acre parcel called "Saddleburr" and the determination was made that Saddleburr and Palm Terrace could be assessed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as phases of a single project. The Saddleburr proposal included 36 residential units on 12.4 acres with a proposed open space dedication of 19.2 acres to the city.

Once the EIR for the now enlarged project was prepared, the public hearing and certification process took from March 1990

to August of 1990.

- On June 11, 1991, the Planning Commission recommended denial of the project to the City Council.

- In August of 1992, the property owner submitted a revised development plan, eliminating the Saddleburr parcel and the office project and reducing the number of residential lots proposed for the Palm Terrace site from 29 to 21.

After Planning Commission and Design Review Board scrutiny, the property owners made a formal re-submittal of the revised development plan once again, reducing the number of

lots to 19, and adding six "granny units," thereby increasing the number of residences to 25, on Sept. 8, 1993.

- On April 5, 1994, the Council denied the project after further public hearings and review by the Planning Commission and other city staff and consultants.

- Following that denial, the property owners sued the city on May 27, 1994 claiming \$2 million in damages because the city's "improper" denial of the proposed development plan in effect denied them "all viable economic use of the Palm Terrace site."