

Press and Media, Articles

Project Ellago Marina

By: JENNIFER THOMAS, Citizen Staff 04/06/2005

Garson Silvers, owner of the El Lago Marina, is hopeful that if Pasadena approves a proposed high-rise for Clear Lake, El Lago may be more receptive to his plans to build a luxury high rise within its city limits.

"I'm very happy [developer Robin Parsley] is doing it," Silvers told The Citizen. "I'd rather have another pioneer in front of me catching arrows than me. Parsley has proposed a 26-story luxury high-rise condominium on Clear Lake that is within Pasadena's city limits. He is waiting for approval from that city before construction can begin. Silvers revealed plans for a high-rise project last summer that would consist of three towers of varying heights, with the tallest at 275 feet, or 19 stories. His plans include 144 luxury condominiums, a 44-room boutique hotel, 10,000 square feet of retail space, as well as a marina.

El Lago residents against the project voiced concerns at a public hearing in September of 2004. Concerns raised included the possible affect the development would have on the small town character of the city, and the strain it would put on the city's infrastructure and services.

In December of 2004, the El Lago City Council opted to form a long-range planning committee to develop a plan for all of El Lago's commercial areas, rather than addressing Silver's project by itself. A report from the committee is expected in July. "If they don't give me the height [variance] I need, [the project] won't be economically possible," Silvers said. So in the meantime, he's in limbo. "I've been offered a lot more than I paid for [the land] from apartment developers, but I'm trying to hold off. It's not my vision," Silvers told The Citizen. He said he has looked at other options for the property, including bringing in national retail or restaurant chains, but no one is interested because of the demographics along that section of NASA Parkway. He said one option that would make sense for him would be to upgrade the existing marina by adding covered boat slips with lifts, which would cater to power boats. "Not the most environmentally friendly," he said. "It's a dilemma. Do I go after what will make the marina successful, or sell it to an apartment developer? Those are my choices if I don't get my zoning," he said. Silvers said he doesn't worry that Parsley's project might be built as much as two years ahead of his. "He'll basically test the market for me," he said. Silvers said he was also confident the market for luxury high-rise condos was enough to fill two high-rise projects. "I think the demand to be by the water in nice luxury units is immense. I think you'll see a lot of people come down here," he said. He's hoping the El Lago City Council will soon see things the same way he does. "I'm trying to stay true to what my original plan is and not be swayed by fast money. It's difficult," Silvers said.