

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 5, 2013

TO: Planning and Zoning Board

THROUGH: Alaina Ray, AICP  
Planning, Zoning and Building Director

FROM: Steve Schield, ASLA, AICP, CFM  
Town Planner

SUBJECT: Longboat Key Hilton Hotel Site Plan Amendment

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PROPERTY OWNER: OpRock Longboat FEE, LLC

APPLICANT/AGENT: Ken Metcalf, AICP

ENGINEER: Mark Adler, George F. Young, Inc.

ARCHITECT: James Wurst, AIA, Nichols, Brosch, Wurst, Wolfe

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Larry Washmuth, RLA, Stewart-Washmuth & Co., Inc.

SITE LOCATION: 4711 Gulf of Mexico Drive

EXISTING ZONING: T-6 High Density Tourist Resort/Commercial District

EXISTING USE: Tourism

REQUEST: Request of OpRock Longboat FEE, LLC, to amend the Site Plan to redevelop the hotel and increase the number of tourism units by 85 units for a total of 187 tourism units on the site, with a 150 seat restaurant, 3,000 square feet of meeting space, lobby area, administrative areas, service areas, and swimming pool, with off-street parking

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### **BACKGROUND**

The Longboat Key Hilton Hotel was completed in 1972. The site contained a five (5) story tower with 102 hotel rooms, restaurant building, meeting rooms, lobby building, service areas, swimming pool and off-street parking.

The registered voters of Longboat Key passed a referendum on March 18, 2008, establishing a pool of 250 tourism units to be available for development within existing tourism areas, including T-6 zoning districts. The Town Commission adopted Ordinance 2008-34 on April 4, 2009, creating Section 158.180 of the Town Code to implement the procedure and criteria for granting of the 250 tourism units. Section 158.180 was amended on March 4, 2013, by Ordinance 2013-07, to allow T-6 zoned properties to obtain development approval for the additional units through the site plan review process. Ordinance 2013-07 also allowed certain flexible development standards pertaining to setbacks, building separation and other regulatory standards for the purpose of encouraging the redevelopment of existing T-6 properties. The Town Commission also adopted Ordinance 2013-19 on June 17, 2013, to amend the Comprehensive Plan to allow approval of five (5) story tourist buildings in the TRC-6 land use district by site plan approval.

The Longboat Key Hilton Hotel Site Plan Amendment would be the first project to request the utilization of any of the 250 tourism units. This property is considered a preferred tourism location for the utilization of these units, as it is an established tourism resort and is surrounded by other tourism uses.

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The subject property is located in the T-6 High Density Tourist Resort/Commercial District. The property, located at 4711 Gulf of Mexico Drive, is approximately 4.76 acres in size. As part of the Site Plan Amendment request (Resolution 2014-02), the applicant is requesting 85 additional tourism units allowed under Section 158.180, and to redevelop the existing site by renovating the existing 102 room tower and reconstructing the amenities on the site. The applicant is utilizing a number of the flexible development standards, as allowed in Section 158.180, to meet all zoning requirements for the site plan. No departures are being requested as part of the proposed amendment.

The applicant proposes to remove all of the existing accessory buildings and replace them with a new 150 seat restaurant, 3,000 square feet of meeting space, lobby area, administrative areas, service areas, and swimming pool. The applicant is proposing 215 parking spaces to be located on the site.

### **General Analysis**

**Proposed Tourism Units:** The intent of Section 158.180 is to provide for the allocation of the 250 tourism units, authorized by the referendum election held on March 18, 2008. It is also the intent of this section that the quality and location of such units benefit the public interest of Longboat Key, while being compatible with and not detrimental to the

character of the area. The Hilton Hotel, located at 4711 Gulf of Mexico Drive, has been a destination beach resort since the 1970's. It is located in the center of numerous north end tourism properties and for many years, along with the nearby former Holiday Inn, served as one of the largest tourism areas on the island. It was the intent of Section 158.180 to restore the 250 tourism units lost over the last decade, which includes the nearby former Holiday Inn.

An existing beachfront resort with T-6 zoning is one of the best locations to consider for the allocation of additional tourism units. It will restore some of the tourism units lost in this area and would be in the best interest of the town and its citizens. Because of its location, adjacent to other tourism properties and across Gulf of Mexico Drive from a large residential open space area, the granting of the tourism units will not adversely impact or affect the public interest. The proposed site plan also meets all applicable zoning requirements. Rebuilding and enlarging the Hilton Hotel will greatly enhance and protect this major tourism property for many years to come. The intensification of the existing tourism density of the site, along with the granting of the additional 85 tourism units and use of the flexible regulatory standards as allowed by Section 158.180, would also restrict the future use of the site to a tourism-only use.

**Proposed Site Conditions:** The applicant is proposing to increase the site density from 21.42 tourism units per acre to 39.29 tourism units per acre, as allowed by Section 158.180 of the Town Code. The total proposed lot coverage will be 53,525 square feet or 26 percent. The T-6 zoning district allows a maximum of 40 percent lot coverage. The proposed open space coverage is 104,381 square feet, with a minimum of 103,750 square feet being required. The front setback is 110.8 feet; side setbacks are 84.8 feet on the north and 30 feet on the south; and 151.4 feet on the gulf side.

**Proposed Buildings - Height:** The maximum height of the new hotel tower will be 59.4 feet above finished grade. The existing tower is 49.8 feet above finished grade. The height of the new hotel tower will be 49.4 feet above the required base flood elevation. A maximum of 50 feet is allowed by site plan approval and 65 feet by the Outline Development Process (currently not available). The guest amenity building (restaurant, meeting rooms, service) will be 36 feet above finished grade and the lobby building will be 16.8 feet above finished grade.

**Proposed Buildings – Architecture Style and Treatments:** The existing hotel was designed by Architect John Nichols and completed in 1972. The applicant has hired Mr. Nichols' firm to redesign the resort and transform the aging hotel into a first class, destination beach resort for Longboat Key. The new south tower will be designed to complement the existing north tower. The restaurant building will be located to have a view between the two (2) tower buildings and over the pool area. This will concentrate the hotel activities between the buildings to buffer any noise from the neighboring sites. The new lobby building will be in the same location as the existing lobby, with a new pond feature to enhance the tropical feeling of the site.

**Landscaping:** The proposed buffering of the site along Gulf of Mexico Drive would be an increased from the existing buffer. The applicant plans to preserve the mature native trees located in the existing buffer areas and will plant additional vegetation that does not currently exist in the lower canopy. The landscape plan incorporates a mix of drought tolerant, salt tolerant, native vegetation with extensive ground cover. The applicant also proposes to provide substantial landscaping along the side property lines, although this is not required by the code. Most of the existing trees will be preserved or relocated on the site.

**Traffic Circulation and Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan:** One of staff's concerns regarding the proposed redevelopment plan, from a life/safety perspective, has been the internal pedestrian and vehicular traffic circulation design and plan. The applicant provided a traffic impact analysis by Grimail Crawford, Inc., indicating that the existing roadways and intersections will meet the adopted level of service standards under the total traffic conditions of the project. The new hotel utilizes the existing ingress and egress point along Gulf of Mexico Drive to access the site. The site has an existing left turn lane for northbound traffic. Staff recommends that consideration be given to a southbound deceleration lane at the Gulf of Mexico Drive entrance, which would help mitigate the impact of additional vehicular turns generated from the additional 85 tourism units. The deceleration lane is not recommended by the applicant's traffic study.

A pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan has been designed for the project that creates a new walkway connection from the existing transit stop on Gulf of Mexico Drive. The traffic stop at this location is consistently a high-usage stop by visitors. As such, staff has recommended a condition to Resolution 2014-02 for the enhancement of this transit stop to include a shelter conforming to any design standards that may be adopted by the Town.

The applicant also proposes to enhance the public beach access, located along the southern property line, which would be stabilized to also serve as an emergency access lane. This will ensure that the public access remains open and free from obstructions in the future.

Staff also placed a condition in Resolution 2014-02, in accordance with recommendations identified as part of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) study, and if agreed to by the Town Commission, that sidewalks shall be installed along the west side of Gulf of Mexico Drive. The proposed condition specifies that the applicant would be required to construct an eight-foot wide sidewalk for pedestrian safety along the full frontage of the property along Gulf of Mexico Drive for the subject property, within the Gulf of Mexico Drive right-of-way.

**Off-Street Parking:** The applicant is proposing to provide 215 parking spaces on the site, with 187 spaces reserved for valet and/or staff parking. The Code requires 214

spaces to be provided. The valet parking proposed under the new south tower will utilize stacked valet parking.

**Construction Schedule:** The applicant plans to close the existing hotel in the spring of 2014, with demolition and construction/renovations occurring immediately thereafter. Construction is expected to be completed and the new resort reopened in the fall of 2015.

### **Comprehensive Plan Consistency**

The 2007 *Town of Longboat Key Comprehensive Plan*, adopted on December 3, 2007, as amended, includes key elements, goals, objectives, and policies that relate directly to the proposed Site Plan Amendment. In addition to the following specific examples of consistency with the town's Comprehensive Plan, staff did not find the proposed amendment to be inconsistent with any other elements of the town's Comprehensive Plan and their goals, objectives, and policies.

It is staff's opinion that, as currently proposed, the existing plan is consistent with the intent of Goal 1 of the Future Land Use Element, which is:

*To preserve and enhance the character of the Town of Longboat Key by the following: 1) ensuring that the location, density, intensity and character of land uses are responsive to the social and economic needs of the community and are consistent with the support capabilities of the natural and manmade systems; and, 2) maintaining an environment that is conducive to the health, safety, welfare, and property values of the community.*

It is also the opinion of staff that the proposed tourism site is consistent with Policy 1.1.11, which states:

*Historically, tourism has been an important element of the Town's economy. The Town will maintain land development regulations that implement the Town referendum vote of March 16, 2008, that permits a limited increase of no more than a total additional 250 tourism units island wide to help restore the historic balance between residential and tourism uses. Development of the 250 tourism units, which are additional to allowed under the Comprehensive Plan at the time of the referendum, will be limited to parcels within the Medium Density Tourist Resort/Commercial (TRC-3), High Density Tourist Resort/Commercial (TRC-6), Limited Commercial (CL), General Commercial (CG), Highway-Oriented Commercial (CH), Office-Institutional (OI), and Marina Commercial Service (MCS) future land use categories and parcels in*

*residential future land use categories that contain an existing legal tourism use. Tourism units on Longboat Key shall provide transient lodging accommodations of less than 30 consecutive calendar days or one entire calendar month, whichever is less, and are not to be used as dwelling units for permanent occupancy. The standard maximum lot coverage and height of the future land use category in which the tourism units are located shall apply, except that up to an additional 10% of lot coverage and an additional story as shown in Table 1 may be approved through the Outline Development Plan (ODP) process of the land development regulations. In the residential land use categories, the standard maximum lot coverage and height of the zoning district in which the tourism units are located shall apply, except that up to an additional 10% of lot coverage may be approved through the ODP process of the land development regulations. The town must find by competent substantial evidence that the project incorporating the tourism units is in the best interest of the town and its citizens and does not adversely impact or affect the public interest.  
\*\* This additional story for TRC-6 properties may also be approved through the final site plan approval process for properties that are granted additional tourism units through Section 158.180 of the land development regulations.*

It is also the opinion of staff that the proposed tourism site is consistent with Table 1, *Land Use Densities and Intensities in the Town of Longboat Key*, including the following footnote \*\*:

*\*\*This additional story for TRC-6 properties may also be approved through the final site plan approval process for properties that are granted additional tourism units through Section 158.180 of the land development regulations.*

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Based upon an assessment of the site plan amendment application, as outlined in this report, staff recommends that Resolution 2014-02 be **approved** for a hotel at 4711 Gulf of Mexico Drive, with the conditions listed in Resolution 2014-02, *Exhibit "A": Conditions Requisite for Approval*. The analysis that leads to the recommendation is based on the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the Town's Zoning Code, and the established policies of the Town. Staff has also determined by competent substantial evidence that the Hilton project, incorporating an additional 85 tourism units per Section 158.180, is in the best interest of the town and its citizens and does not adversely impact or affect the public interest.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attached, please find a copy of the location map, correspondence from applicant requesting the amendment, and support documentation upon which the staff assessment has been based. If you should have any questions, or desire any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the Planning, Zoning & Building Department.