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Residents of downtown West Palm Beach protesting three-tower fire development next door

Larry Keller Reporter, The Post
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Sending images of a future calamity like that of the Surfside condo collapse as well as frail elderly people forced to endure noise and dust, lawyers representing a group of residents of the Palm Beach Towing Site have begun efforts by city to prevent a similar fate at all.

The "commercial development will unquestionably interfere with the physical and emotional suffering of these elderly assisted living residents, which could cause severe emotional distress, pain, suffering and even death," attorney Michael Pfau instructed the Downtown Action Committee in a six-page letter.

The committee is an independent advisory board that makes suggestions that city officials typically follow when considering zoning changes and development proposals. Its five members, Pfau's letter, the committee unanimously approved the site for the proposed development.

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Pfau represents Assist Housing Management Provider, the owner of Colonial Assisted Living at West Palm Beach. The four-story building at 44 Clematis St. was built in 1924 and was expanded in 1929. It was third-from-the-Breakfast-nation

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19-story hotel in the plans

The proposed development between the Colonial and the train station is for a 19-story hotel with 200 rooms, 20 of which would be for residential units, plus one-story parking garage with site spaces and a restaurant.

The "ground shading and constant banging and noise that comes from a construction project of this magnitude" will be intolerable to the Colonial's residents, Pfau said in his letter. And, he added, vibrations from heavy-duty machinery "will cause cracks, fissures, losses and excavation could damage the aging Colonial itself."

Photo by Larry Keller
Colonial Assisted Living at West Palm Beach, which is adjacent to the proposed site for a three-tower development

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The Colonial has a 42-foot centennial that would be a buffer between it and the proposed hotel, Pfau said. The hotel would be a "dramatic departure" from the Colonial's low-rise, Mediterranean Revival architecture, which includes Corinthian columns, terra cotta ornamentation and a tile roof.

"It lends that an image will soon grace that the Parthenon, a world-class, larger project, much closer — if not from that building, as opposed to just a — I believe was substantially constructed without any damage to their facility," Pfau said.

The Colonial is 'somewhat fragile'

The Tessera Motor site is a difficult one to develop, Clyde-Gold committee members, who have visited the site, said. The Colonial and "a people singing off a tenor at the nearby Brightline station.

"Your welcome mat will be permanently stained if the appropriate protection and safeguards are not taken into consideration," Pfau said in his letter.

Pfau said in an interview that the Colonial will use the city's construction mitigation ordinance to protect its building, noting numbered on the site's well-dated and tenuous, and the potential impact to the Colonial from vibration.

The Colonial is "somewhat fragile," Pfau said in an interview with Mediation, said the committee.

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Pfau said he has concerns that we're hearing the same from some nearby living facility owner negotiated with city officials and will be prepared to as well to protect residents from the impacts of the project. The project has been in the works for 18 months for longer, but Colonial's owner only expressed concerns earlier this month, he added.

Photo by Michael Pfau
Attorney Michael Pfau represents the Colonial Assisted Living Facility

Mathews acknowledged into that there were talks of selling, but said he's that city said would have sold if the deal included relocating all the residents to proper assisted care facilities.

A few of those residents spoke against the proposed neighboring development at the Downtown Action Committee meeting.

"I love that place. We love the staff. I don't want to lose my place," said one resident, Mathews said, adding that she's 90 years old.

The developer will buy out other apartments, including for the actual construction itself. That won't begin for another six to nine months, Gore said. He said the developer will consider apparent concerns.

"We will meet with them," he said. "We will work with them. We will visit us have to have building."

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