

# 23-Story ‘Multi-Use Development’ Planned in Southampton

By K a t e B o l e n

Maryland Manor Apartments at 1717 Bissonnet will be torn down in order to make way for a 23-story “multi-use” apartment building in Southampton Place, if developers planning the project have their way.

But neighbors - and even the city council member who lives only blocks away - think the choice of location is a bad one.

Evalyn Krudy, manager of the Southampton Civic Club, says club representatives met with developers Matthew Morgan and Kevin Kirton Friday morning. Their conclusion: the project is “completely out of scale and character” with the community.

“I hope the developers would reconsider and do something more compatible with the community,” Krudy said. “It’s contrary to all we hold dear about our neighborhood.”

The Southampton Civic Club is scheduling an emergency board meeting to discuss the matter, Krudy said.

Morgan and Kirton own Buckhead Investment Partners, which plans to construct the high-rise at the southeast corner of Bissonnet and Ashby. It will contain both apartment residences and commercial businesses. Construction is slated to begin in Spring, 2008. They expect the project to be fully occupied by 2010.

Kirton and Morgan say they grew up in the Southampton area and frequented the site as children.

“We have sentimental memories of this site. Kevin and I are fond of this neighborhood and are very much aware that this is a special site. As developers, we believe it deserves a special project,” Morgan said.

Specialty retail stores, a gourmet market and a neighborhood-oriented restaurant are planned for the street level with a plaza off of Bissonnet. Part of the plaza will be dedicated to restaurant seating.

“It will be an inviting pedestrian plaza. We want to make this a place for residents to congregate,” Kirton said.

There will be five levels of parking and the sixth floor will contain a spa as well as executive office space. Apartments will occupy the top 17 floors.



Maryland Manor at 1717 Bissonnet will be replaced by a 23-story apartment building under plans proposed by developers.

The primary parking garage entrance will be on Bissonnet; traffic will exit on Ashby. Developers say the project is expected to generate 2,029 vehicular trips each weekday.

As for current Maryland Manor Apartments residents, Kirton says they plan to honor all outstanding lease terms and will aid them in finding other places of residence.



Councilwoman Anne Clutterbuck, who has met with Morgan and Kirton, said, “I told them, as a neighbor and councilmember, it doesn’t seem compatible with the existing neighborhood. However, because the city has no zoning laws, they have the ability to do as they please.”

Despite the lack of zoning laws, the city still has some control over the matter. The city has the ability to regulate various issues, such as the setback, landscaping and parking, and building code issues, including utility capacity.

Councilman Peter Brown says he has mixed feelings about the development.

“It’s a great project but I would like to see it in another part of town that suits one of such high density,” said Brown.

Brown says he blames neither the developers nor the community. Instead, he believes the city is at fault for not adopting a plan to designate areas for projects such as this.

Developers point out, however, that there have never been deed restrictions on the property nor was the site platted until two weeks ago, when they took that step.

Buckhead Investments has several Houston-area apartment projects currently operating, including The Enclave at Quail Crossing in Friendswood, The Ravinia, The Enclave at Cornerstone Village, The Enclave at Copperfield, The Enclave at Woodbridge in Ft. Bend County, and The Reserve by the Lake.