

Bermudiana Beach Resort: new life for unoccupied development

BEST is pleased to see that the resurrection of the development formerly known as Grand Atlantic is taking shape. Our view, one that is shared with area residents, is a satisfaction that at long last something positive is emerging from this unoccupied project. Originally we were promised a five-star hotel and luxury suites, villas and condominiums — a grand tourism development that was offered to justify the lifting of protective zonings via an SDO. Instead, we got an unattractive and unwanted scar that residents and passers-by had to face every day, and which was unmarketable even at bargain basement prices.



The latest plans for the project, renamed Bermudiana Beach Resort, appears to us set to transform the boxy, gray, stone buildings into pastel-hued and livable tourist residences. The novel tourism model being posed by the current developers remains to be proven but the thorough planning that has gone into the project is encouraging.

Upgrades include elevators for all buildings, a swimming pool, funicular (cable-car) as well as stairs from the buildings to the beach, extensive plantings and pastel painting.

Also important to us is the process being followed by the current developers in contrast to the original development. We, along with area residents, have felt more included as this project has taken shape. Notable are the following differences between how this project was handled then and now:

Consultation/Collaboration with BEST, neighbours and Southlands

BEST was given a presentation at an early stage on this new project and have been kept abreast of changes in the scheme. Our input was sought and taken on board. In turn, we have involved area residents. The developers are looking to assist in the resurrection of Southlands, south of the roadway, which will benefit the parkland and the neighbourhood.

Aesthetic attention (landscaping, plantings and colour)

Some of the adjectives used to describe the existing buildings are not repeatable. The gray monotone and blocky construction coupled with a site completely denuded of vegetation was eminently unattractive. Even brochure images were unimaginative. The refit seeks to soften the harsh lines of the structures using alternative materials, extensive multi-height plantings and pastel exterior painting.

Coastal attention

The sea-wall built to curb erosion of the cliff face at beach level looked mechanistic and out of place, and addressed a single erosive force — wave action. The current project includes remedial cliff-face excavation and reinforcement, removal of problem plant growth and remedial plantings, and a novel combination of stairs and a funicular to move guests between the buildings and the beach. We are awaiting our consultant's assessment before passing final judgment on this phase of the development.

Sharing of studies and other information

We have had easy access to studies and relevant information that previously was treated as secret. The openness has enabled us to be more fully informed and resort less to speculation or suspicion.

Green globe

The current developers have said they will be seeking “Green Globe” certification, a process that reinforces and rewards environmentally-sound planning, construction and operation.

Overall, the project is an encouraging reversal from being a drain on the economy to offering the promise of a revenue-generating addition to our tourism product.