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Condos drop Key West look to mesh with Summerhouse

By [Harold Bubil](#)

SIESTA KEY — Score one for contemporary architecture.

The developers of Summer Cove, a condominium that will share its site with the acclaimed Summerhouse restaurant building, have dumped their plans for Key West-style buildings in favor of reflecting Sarasota's modernist heritage.

While Snavelly Development Co. is remodeling the Carl Abbott-designed Summerhouse building for use as a clubhouse with limited public access, the company also will build three structures housing 45 luxury condominium units.

The new buildings will have the curved corners and elegant structural details that architects are including on contemporary high-rises across the country. But such design features also are reminiscent of "Sarasota school of architecture" buildings of the mid-20th century.

"We are sharing the site with the Summerhouse, which is a contemporary building," said Bryan Nichols, director of Florida development for Snavelly. "So the architecture on the other buildings had to tie in.

"Also, as you get to that high-rise style of building, we didn't feel like the Key West, West Indies-type of thing really tied in with that type of structure."

John Hesseler and Matt Clear of HKS Inc., an architecture firm with offices in Orlando and Dallas, designed the new buildings.

"Both recognized the importance of having the architecture be congruous across the site," Nichols said.

Snavelly unveiled the architectural renderings at a reception at the Summerhouse on Tuesday evening.

HKS' design principal in the 1980s was Victor Lundy, one of the most influential practitioners of modern architecture in Sarasota during the 1950s and '60s.

Hessler and Clear worked with Lundy, Nichols said.

"When we first sat down with Carl (Abbott), they got into conversations about Mr. Lundy, and it was kind of a small world."

Nichols said there are reservations on 40 of the 45 units, which start at about \$1 million and are being marketed by Michael Saunders & Co. Construction is expected to begin this summer and take about two years.

In the meantime, the Summerhouse needs to be repaired and adapted for use as a clubhouse for condominium residents.

Abbott will be involved in the renovation. "He will be instrumental in the first phase as to what the design is and how we're going to use the space," Nichols said.

Nichols said the building needs a new roof and new exterior cladding. Additions at the rear of the building

will be removed.

The developer's original plans called for the Summerhouse building to be demolished. But pressure from the architecture community, including a petition with 5,000 signatures, persuaded the developers to rework their plan and save the 30-year-old structure if they could get rezoning to allow a taller condominium building. The original plans were four-story buildings over parking.

After Snavelly promised to save the Summerhouse building and allow access to it 17 times a year for public functions, the County Commission approved its rezoning request in a 5-0 vote.

"We have to get the logistics worked out," said Nichols, "but I think that will work well."
