

## **Cortez Coalition Closing Speech to Manatee County Commissioners**

Good afternoon. I am Michael Albert, the President of Mariners Cove, a 78-unit condominium property located at end of the 129<sup>th</sup> Street Peninsula in Cortez (on the north end of the proposed development). On behalf of our coalition, I thank you for your time and for listening to the voices of our community. The presentations preceding mine have underscored the importance of thoughtful, balanced growth in Manatee County, and we appreciate your commitment to engaging with residents.

Given our passion on this topic, we have reignited the 2005 Coalition—once again coming together to address the redevelopment of the Seafood Shack property and its potential impact on our neighborhoods. Our collective experience and history with this site have shown that the core challenges, especially safety, traffic congestion and infrastructure limitations—have only grown more severe over the years.

As you heard the overwhelming consensus—96% of our residents—firmly oppose the inclusion of boat ramps in the redevelopment plan. This is not a stance against progress; however, it is a call for SMART, sustainable growth that benefits all county residents and visitors without compromising the safety and quality of life in Cortez.

We have shared examples that show our residential streets are not equipped to handle the increased traffic that boat ramps would bring. Many roads lack sidewalks and are frequented by active residents, of all ages, walking, running, and biking. The addition of large vehicles towing boats would create unsafe conditions and further strain the already overburdened infrastructure. Attempts to isolate ramp access from residential roads have not materialized, and these risks to our community remain unaddressed. Additionally, emergency vehicle access and response times to addresses north of the site will likely be impeded by this development unless specific attention is directed to solve these aspects.

We want to be clear: the Coalition is not anti-development. We strongly support improvements that provide amenities and services valued by our residents—such as waterfront dining, bait and tackle shops, parks, and marinas. These are the features our community overwhelmingly favor. Our vision is for redevelopment that enhances Cortez and Manatee County for both residents and visitors.

If the county's justification for additional boat ramps is based on the number of registered boaters, we urge a more accurate reporting of actual usage. to guide any future ramp capacity. Available technology allows for real-time capacity utilization analysis. Such data could validate true demand and guide future decisions—without the need for new infrastructure that would disrupt our neighborhoods.

Commissioner Kruse, your recent remarks in the Bradenton Times captured the spirit of SMART development—solutions where everyone wins and no one loses. The Coalition stands behind this principle. We support growth, but not at the expense of our community's safety, environment, or heritage. We respectfully ask you and your fellow commissioners to remove public boat ramps from the redevelopment for this 126<sup>th</sup> Street West property in Cortez, just as your predecessors did in 2005.

Let us work together to create a vibrant, historic Cortez that thrives on SMART growth and shared values. Thank you for your leadership and for considering the collective voice of our community.