

Ryan Mauch

From: Shayna Keller
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 2:13 PM
To: Commissioner Christian Whitehurst; Commissioner Sarah Arnold; Commissioner Clay Murphy; Commissioner Krista Joseph; Commissioner Ann Taylor
Cc: Ryan Mauch
Subject: FW: Magic Beach

Good afternoon,

Do not reply all

Please see email below that was sent to our general inbox.

Thank you!



*Thank you,
Shayna Keller*

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Compassionate-Trustworthy-Innovative*



From: Kai Long <klong824@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 1:08 PM
To: Megan Wright <mwright@sjcfl.us>; BOCC Office <boccoffice@sjcfl.us>
Cc: Kai Long <klong824@gmail.com>
Subject: Magic Beach

Vilano Beach was platted during the 1920s Florida Land Boom. A1A in Vilano Beach, also known as Coastal Highway, was constructed in 1928. The majority of the land remained vacant until after World War II. Beginning in the late 1940s and continuing in the 1950s, small motels and "motor courts" emerged along Vilano Road identifying Vilano as quaint and beautiful old Florida.

Vilano Beach lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Tolomato River. When Henry Flagler attracted northern tourists to his hotels in St. Augustine, the seaside community of Vilano Beach was their oceanfront playground. Ferries and horse drawn trolleys brought visitors to the beaches. Locals in the 50's and until now have beach front cottages where they spend summers.

Magic Beach Motel was originally built in 1951 as Vilano Beach Motel. It's a classic. Our Mission: Preserve, maintain and improve the Historic Vilano Beach community while protecting the small-town beach vibe, which the town of St. Augustine seems to be losing.

Don't let this happen here by allowing this little gem to be destroyed...

Kai Long
Go Gators!
Hotty Toddy, Go Ole Miss!

75 RESPONSES TO NEXT DOOR POSTS re DEMOLITION OF MAGIC BEACH MOTEL

Owners of Magic Beach Motel in Vilano Beach, a Significant Cultural Resource, have made application to approve demolition of this property. The decision meeting is scheduled for Monday * April 14 at 1:390pm. County Permit Center, 4040 Lewis Speedway off of Sebastian View.

Responses to message : “Demolition because it’s a neglected, structurally crumbling motel “ to NextDoor on April 2, 2025

****4/4 SALLIE O’HARA, O.G.C. –** Grants are available at National, State, and Local levels to save historic properties if the owner is so inclined. Tax credits are even available through the county process. The objective of retaining historic areas rest with the passion of the community. Do you want South Beach Miami commercial development or eclectic small-town ambiance reminiscent of old Florida? Historic properties are often converted to adaptive re-use facilities all over the country. Make an artist enclave of incubator studios of the existing 24 units. Generate income for property owners for regular rental income and benefit small businesses striving to become known.

****4/3 CARLOS CONDE, Old Sebastian Point –** Growth and Change are good, but ruining a landmark that has defined the Vilano area for decades shows a lack of awareness from our County Board. I understand people have the right to buy and sell the things they own. Just a bit let down that things that once defined St. Augustine and Vilano are slowly disappearing by people for the most part do not live here. Don’t worry. I’m sure they will be tearing down the Castillo soon to build more condos. Growth and change are good, but ruining a landmark that has defined the Vilano area for decades shows a lack of awareness from our County Board. right to buy and sell the things that they own. Just a bit let down things that once defined St. Augustine and Vilano are slowly disappearing

****4/3 THOM LUCARELLI, Porpoise Point –** Of course this property is viable. I have family stay there often. It’s about putting a higher occupancy building on the same small footprint and making even more money. Current owners vowed to maintain it but were only looking for turning it over for more money after the first round of protest quieted down. It’s about losing the quaint character of a town going from residential to commercial with already not enough beach parking and infrastructure to support the new plan.

4/3 PATTI MERRILL, The Shores -- The Magic Beach Motel should be preserved. It’s the only part of the historic Vilano Beach that’s left.

4/3 DAVID CASH, Old Sebastian Point – It’s too bad. Our history and culture being demolished for apartment buildings and strip malls.

4/3 JERI W, Araquay -- I hope there is something that can be done. The sign at the very least must be preserved. I hope there is something to be done,

4/4 ATHENA R, World Golf Village – Wow. Being a historical town, you would think they would wanna keep it. Why don’t they just sell the hotel to someone who plans on keeping it?

4/3 SUZANNE S, World Golf Village – I understand progress, but I find the sign so enchanting. Wonder if somehow the sign could somehow be preserved.

4/2 RICHARD SCHNELL, Porpoise Point – If the motel is no longer viable financially, then ([aving the sign and other art deco elements] is a good option. It would be great to save it, but how? Do you think the hotel is viable? I stayed there once and the room was very small and outdated. Hard to find someone who wants to operate something that loses money. I know people will want to save it but how? Forcing the owner to operate at a loss isn’t sustainable unless the county or someone with deep pockets is willing to buy it, and likely lose money, it will eventually be demolished.

4/3 ROBIN S, South Ponte Vedra Beach – It is understandable that the current owners wish to sell because they cannot afford the upkeep with the property. The issue is that Vilano’s Coastal Charm and “Vibe” is being replaced with stale looking condominiums and hotels. I agree it needs to be sold. That is the owner’s right and the upkeep or renovation is too expensive for them. I just do not like the new Vilano look like the other hotels and condominiums that have inundated the area.

4/3 JAMIE WARSKI, South Ponte Vedra Beach – A suggestion: the SJC Historical Society buys property. Keep the office maybe as a room as a museum/historical site. Turn the rest of the property into additional beach parking.

4/3 LINDA BUDAI, North City – This is such a cute motel. I always wanted to stay there, but never had the opportunity. I live in St. Augustine. It’s a shame it could not remain open. Vilano Beach was such a small and quaint area.

4/2 NANCY FLAVIN, Hidden Lakes -- So very sad, but the agenda in this town is ALWAYS more development and nothing seems to get stopped...

4/2 LOUISE STARMANN, Palencia – Please save this landmark. It sets the tone of the area as beach fun.

4/2 SUZANNE H, Marsh Creek – Need to slap a Preservation Order on this iconic structure.

4/2 LINDA ARNOLD, Vilano Beach – Magic Beach Motel signage should become bar signage somewhere it can get approval.

4/4 POLLY P, Willow Cove – I doubt anything built in the same spot will be “affordable” housing, just by virtue of where it is located. As most things today, this is about money. I hope whoever buys it will realize it may be more valuable some day if it is left where it is.

4/4 PAMELA PENN, Magnolia – I love seeing that sign daily. Such a unique spot in Vilano Beach. If it is demolished, it will look like a hundred other beach towns.

Posts to NextDoor February 19 Following story by First Coast News on February 18, 2025

TREY ASNER, Lighthouse Park – The Magic Beach Hotel is a very significant cultural resource and I wish this was a long time coming and county staff have been anticipating a demolition permit for the last few years. At the very least, I hope that significant features on the structure such as the flamingo reliefs and interior hand painted murals will be saved as well as unique sign. I know the sign is only about 35 years old, but it has become a well loved feature of Vilano Beach and is now part of that community's sense of place.

JAMES BAIRD, Island Villas, 1-10 Oak Rd – Please save the Magic Beach Motel in Vilano Beach. It's a unique piece of architecture that preserves the old Florida charm along highway A1A. Anybody who has visited the site knows it's a special place. Old Vilano and greater St. Augustine structures are disappearing at an alarming rate. Please protect the Magic Beach Hotel before it is gone forever.

ROBERT BAILEY, Menendez Park – I grew up in Wildwood, New Jersey where the Doo Wop hotel/motel was everything. Now a lot of these have been torn down only to be replaced by condos and hotels with zero character and obviously no historic value. Giving up on the value of our history is not going to work out well. My wife and I have a company where we make mid-century modern lighting. We moved here permanently last August. We're hoping to chat with the owners of the hotel to work with them for lighting on their property, since we are a perfect fit. Wanting to invest in our community at the same time. It's just sad that unless it's a designated national landmark anything goes.

CINDY THOMPSON, Old Pagoda – This hotel is not only special for Vilano but for all of Florida. This architectural style has all but disappeared. It is the coolest thing about Vilano.

PATTI MERRILL, the Shores – Save the Magic Beach Motel. The only site remaining of the original Vilano Beach.

KATE STOREY, Las Palmas – Soon every piece of history outside of a historic district will be gone. The things that make St. Augustine special will be destroyed by developers.

JEFFREY PEPPER, uptown – We certainly would not want to have any shred of Florida Culture or History left behind. So let's tear down everything and build tacky row houses and more hideous hotels instead. Stop this nonsense. Preserve what is a perfect piece of Florida Culture before none is left. Somehow St. Augustine managed not to tear down many of its historic buildings and the benefit is obvious. Sadly surrounding towns have failed to preserve and Vilano is down to its last significant period piece. It will be just another town on the coast that floods.

JERI WOODWARD, Araquey – Very sad, the area is losing all the architecture from the era that gives it such an interesting vibe. It's going to be a Florida "anywhere" soon – nothing significant or original about it.

DENISE STAMPS, Wildwood Pines – So sad that St. Augustine, the oldest city, will be left without a shred of history if the developers have anything to do with it.

JAMES BAIRD, Island Villas, 1-10 Oak Rd – Please save the Magic Beach Motel in Vilano Beach. It's a unique piece of architecture that preserves the old Florida charm along highway A1A. Anybody who has visited the site knows it's a special place. Old Vilano and greater St. Augustine structures are disappearing at an alarming rate. Please protect the Magic Beach Hotel before it is gone forever.

JOANNE C., North Beach – Please email the Board of County Commissioners listed in Mattie's post. The culture and history of Magic Beach needs to be preserved.

Comments Under Separate post with photo of Magic Beach by Trey Asner, Lighthouse Park, 2/19+

****TREY ASNER, Lighthouse Park [new post]** – I am very saddened to see that a demolition permit has been filed for the Magic Beach Hotel on Vilano Beach. This motel is a wonderful example of the small motor lodges that popped up all over Florida in the postwar era. The county has ordered a Cultural Resource Management Plan to mitigate the loss of the structure. This will likely entail the removal of significant features such as the flamingo reliefs along the front elevation and of course the neon sign. Though the sign is only about 26 years old and was constructed for the movie Safe Harbor which starred Rue McClennahan, it has become a recognized feature of Vilano and deserves to be preserved.

****VICTORIA S., Stonegate** – That old motel has been there a long time. Why are we destroying all our uniqueness? The flamingos, the painted scenes on the walls, the colors. Destroying this is wiping away our history, our culture. Not everything has to be big, gaudy and packed with people. You would think we could save one jewel in the middle of a sea of "like everywhere else". It is what makes us special, unique and stand out from the rest. Maybe keep it as it is and incorporate it in the future as small shops? Oceanfront land is disappearing. Anything on or near the ocean is uber valuable. I'm sure that is the impetus to sell. The owners could retire nicely on the sale of that property. It goes by the way of farmland, forests, orange groves, wildlife, all for the sake of the almighty \$\$\$\$. No thought for culture, history, uniqueness. We are becoming not special anymore but just like everywhere else. Too bad we don't have a funded historical society that could save it and still give the owner a reasonable price.

**** ALLISON B., Surfside** – I wonder how this affects what the owners will get for the property. They put all this time and work into a place and would like to sell it and cannot because of historical restrictions? As someone who loves Vilano Beach I don't want to see another huge structure coming in without any parking or regard to flooding of neighboring properties, but I also want the neighbors who I believe are locals to be able to comfortably retire after selling. The travesty is the huge dirt pit next to the Hyatt. [Contract to purchase if demolition permit OK will be for \$4.7 million Purchased hotel at \$3.8 million in 2022.]

JOE WINTERS, Holmes Blvd -- We stayed at the Magic Beach a year ago and felt it was very dirty and run down and full of roaches. So much so we packed up and checked out as quickly as we could first thing in the morning. Obviously the owners had been doing little to maintain the iconic design of the place. Interesting that the same owners are the ones who submitted for a demolition permit. Interesting also that the construction manager listed for the demolition is the same construction manager for the for the Colonia Condos next door to the Magic Beach.

DEWITT, Cypress Lakes – I thought they just had an extensive renovation done not too long ago. This was featured in a few documentaries of interesting places to vacation.

GEORGE DE LA FLOR, US Hwy 1 South – Oh no ! I love that place.

CINDY CAMPBELL-TAYLOR, Vilano Beach – It's not too late. Please email your commissioners.

PATTI MERRILL, the Shores – Oh NO !!!! This was the best landmark place left of the Old Vilano Beach. I always enjoyed staying there. What? Just like all the forests. Rip them down!!!. The Magic Beach Motel has so much history.

SHARON DELERUYELLE, North Beach – Killing the Vilano Vibe. Killing this who county.

MICHAEL MANN, Fullerwood – the Magic Beach should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the property. The Hyatt Place has an art deco vibe. Keep that historical architecture.

MARY MICKLER, PDH SR 16th-17th – Don't people care about these places anymore? Not everyone wants these huge hotels. All I can say is that St. Augustine is going to crap. Oo much new stuff being developed. They don't care about the old mom and pop places.

LINDA URETA, Araquey – I agree Mary. There will be nothing left.

DANA CLARK, Porpoise Point – This makes me so sad. Vilano needs this landmark.

RITA OLI, St. Augustine South – [Reposted the First Coast News transcript]

LARRY DIAZ, Lincolnville – [used a G-r-r-r emoji.]

KATHY SHEDDAN, Royal St. Augustine – I love that place. I worked on the show Safe Harbor. It was renovated after that. It should be saved! Why a demolition? I bet a corporation came with a large amount of \$\$\$\$. Sad.

GEORGE DE LA FLOR, US Hwy1 south – “They paved paradise and put up a parking lot”

TAYLOR BURT, Osceola Heights – Anyone know what it was before? Was it old Newt's hotel?

MARY MICKLER, PDH – No, Newt's was down the road. That was where people went to get married by a Justice of the Peace, and where the “Bluebird of Happiness” now on the pier was located for a time. “Go over the bridge. We are the first bird on the right!”

DENNIS MILLER, North Beach – So sad to see this historic structure go.

DAVID & ELAINE HOPKINS – How can we stop it? Wasn't it just saved in the last two years?

MICHAEL PARRISH, North Beach -- I thought it had historical status put on it even though the couple that owned it did not apply for it that would delayed or stop a sale. With historical landmark status, I thought that protected it. That was part of the problem for the couple selling the property.

DEBBIT BURTON, Watson Wood – Keep it !!!

NANETTE NGUYEN, St. Aug Shores – Progress is not only a good thing. There goes another piece of history.

WENDEY PEELE, South Ponte Vedra Beach – Absolutely just save.

DENNIS HOPPER, North Davis Shores – So did the owners not sell, or what's the reason for wanting to bulldoze?

LINDA URIETA, Araquey – This is getting ridiculous. What else is going to be taken down. It's such a cute place. Perfect on the beach. Leave Vilano and St. Augustine alone.

VICTORIA S., Stonegate – The original nam4e was the Vilano Beach Motel, prior to the TV series Safe Harbor.

KITTY PARLIN, North Beach – You are right! This is going to the dumps! What is wrong with the Commissioners?! Where is the old ambiance? This city is fast losing its charm!

ANN FEIN, Lincolnville – This is so sad. What a fantastic place.

KAY ENGLE, Grand Cay – Just sad.

Comments under Separate post and Facebook with photos 2/19/25

**** CINDY CAMPBELL-TAYLOR, Vilano Beach – St. Augustine/North Shores/Vilano Residents:** It's time yet again to take a stand and protect the vibe of Vilano Beach! And not let Rick Johnston with Colonia add onto his "high rise" condo plan and the 5,000 SF, three story building he wants to build in this space. For sure, the hotel is in disrepair – not because it was built in the 1950s but because the owners have not invested in renovation. Haley's Court is a perfect example of how investment and renovation can clean up our community while supporting and sustaining our beautiful Vilano Beach. Get involved and reach out to the Commissioners! Ask for a compromise and ask them to help protect the culturally significant landmark that represents Vilano Beach.

****CARLOS C., Old Sebastian Point** – As much as change and progress are a part of life this one is different. Magic Beach Hotel is iconic. For decades the neon lights have illuminated Vilano in the most inviting and unique way. As kids we loved going there at night. It is the heart and soul of Vilano. Would love to see it saved as a local landmark. If there is anything we can do to save it, please share.

**** RICHARD SCHNELL, Porpoise Point – What is the 5,000 SF replacement building supposed to be? Retail? [two buildings: 8 retail units of 400 to 750 on first floor and 20 “residences” on second & third floors above, which probably will not be allowed by zoning was presented by the developer on March 19]. Anyone stay there recently or refer out of town guests to stay there? Does anyone know what the plan is for the additional land? Assume it expands on the Colonia project behind Magic Beach but I wonder what exactly. [Developer would not show site plan at presentation.]**

JEFF KLAPATCH, Entrada – It was also in the Netflix series 3 Body Problem just last year.

BRIAN ROACH, Deerfield Preserve -- Since the dawn of man it's always been out with the old and in with the new. So to narrow it down, the Magic Beach is now deemed a relic decayed and absolute: no big fat American tourist likes a squinchy bathroom where you can't open or close the door when you're seated on the throne or a desktop TV when the one at home is pushing six feet, and well you've got this developer who will turn this pigsty into a Picasso that anyone who can meet the absurdly stiffer price will enjoy “build it and they will come.” Said about right?

JENNIFER ZINN, the Shores – I'm sure Patel is in bed with the Commissioners. Ya get what you voted for. Some Commissioners are only in it for their personal interests and that's it.

NIKKI BRUBAKER, Porpoise Point – Thank you for the info, Cindy. I had not heard about this.

JOHN MITCHELL, North Beach – I support fighting this.

ANGELA BOWYER, Vilano Beach – Everything that made Vilano such a cool place to live is disappearing. I guess the locals will be next.

PATTI MERRILL, the Shores – Magic Beach Motel is the only building left of the old historic Vilano. Save the motel!

NANCY WILSON, St. Aug South – Having grown up in South Florida and spending 26 years here, I hate seeing “old Florida” being torn down.

BETH WILSON, Pelican Reef – So sad to see an iconic structure destroyed. Florida is known for destroying woods, wildlife and ofor the ld structures for progress and modernization. I have lived in Florida for over 50 years and NO matter what “Progress can't stop”.

JOANNE C, North Beach – It is sad. This landmark is much like the Blue Bird that was saved.

SANDRA BATES, Lofts at Sebastian Cove – It's the circle of life – out with the old and in with the new to make room for the new.

TREY ASNER, Lighthouse Park, 02-25-25 – I had the wonderful opportunity to talk about our local historic resources with Liz Ryan on Flagler Radio, including Magic Beach and the St. Johns County jail which are both threatened by demolition. If people know about the important historic sites here in St. Johns County the more likely they will preserved and protected. [with a link to Flagler Podcasts/Radio.]