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PHOTO COURTESY KERRY MORMANN & ASSOCIATES

A developer wants to build Carpinteria's first resort on this 21-acre bluff-top property.

## Buyer puts Carpinteria bluffs property in play for future resort

A 21-acre portion of pristine Carpinteria coastline that has been eyed by hotel developers for years is in escrow. This time, the buyer thinks it can finally build what may well be the city's one and only resort.

The bluff-top property — located on the ocean side of Highway 101 at the Ojai off-ramp — is zoned in city planning documents for resort development.

"This is a gateway property for Carpinteria," said Kerry Mormann, a real estate broker with Santa Barbara-based Kerry Mormann & Associates who has the property listed for \$8.5 million.

Mormann said he couldn't reveal who the buyer in the pending deal is because the property is still in escrow, and that no formal applications have been made to the city.

The property is owned by Burton Hancock of San Jose, according to Santa Barbara County property records.

Mormann said the buyer has been in numerous unofficial talks with city planners and the City Council about what the developer would like to do there, and that officials are receptive. "They very much want to see a good, visitor-serving hotel with meeting rooms, a conference center and possibly some shops."

As one of the last untouched coastline properties in Santa Barbara County, the project has had other developers interested in building there, especially because Carpinteria's general plan expressly calls for only one hotel project in the area known as Bluffs III. Before the real estate market meltdown, San Luis Obispo-based hotelier John King, who owns 25 acres next to this project, proposed a to build a resort complex that would have included a hotel, condos, an R.V. park, restaurants and a culinary school. His plans never came to fruition.

Mormann said the bluffs property he represents was in escrow again a year ago, but that the deal fell through when the out-of-state buyer came to realize how difficult it is to develop in coastal California.

This time, the buyer is an experienced ho-

telier familiar with the area, he said. And city officials seem receptive.

Steve Goggia, a senior planner with the city of Carpinteria, said officials have had talks with the buyer but can't say much beyond that. "The city is interested," he said. "We do anticipate a resort project out there."

Without its own resort, sleepy little Carpinteria's hospitality market has thus far lingered in the shadow of nearby tourist mecca Santa Barbara, which has oceanfront properties such as the ritzy sprawling Four Seasons Biltmore and Fess Parkers' DoubleTree Resort to its credit. Carpinteria, just 13 miles down the coast, does not have a single resort and only a handful of small and mid-sized hotels.

City planning documents allow for a bluff-top resort with a maximum of 225 rooms, plus restaurants, meeting facilities, a banquet hall, spa and retail shops. Total building area for such a resort should be under 259,180 square feet, according to the city's general plan.

"This is going to be a scaled down project, nothing grandiose," Mormann said.

The property has easy access to Highway 101, and would be one of the first signs visitors traveling north from Ventura or Los Angeles to Carpinteria would see, Mormann said. The next step for the would-be developer will be to discuss the possible project with the California Coastal Commission, the stringent state-level agency that oversees development along the coast.



**MARLIZE VAN ROMBURGH**  
Commercial real estate

### DEAL OF THE WEEK

- A 10-year lease deal with Rabobank to open a branch there brings the Paradise Victoria Shopping Center in Ventura to 100 percent occupancy.

Rob Devericks and Linda Hagelis of Hagelis Group represented the landlord of the Victoria Avenue mall. Leamy Realty Group represented the bank.

• Contact Marlice van Romburgh at [mvr@pacbiztimes.com](mailto:mvr@pacbiztimes.com).

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