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## **The Murdock Plats Thicken The home teams make final pitches**

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Staff Writer **Date:** April 15, 2006 **Section:**

In baseball, the home team always gets last licks. Apparently, the same holds true for developers pitching to build **Murdock** Village.

At least it felt that way Friday as the last two bid candidates offered their plans for the 870-acre project to a committee of county officials.

During the morning session, Syd Kitson of Kitson & Partners led a three-hour presentation in the same commission chambers in which he's been a fixture since his firm revealed it would develop part of Babcock Ranch last July.

In the afternoon, land-use attorney Geri Waksler -- who attends more commission meetings than some commissioners -- spearheaded Stock Development's proposal.

Thursday, Falcon Land Development, of Boca Raton, and Ohio-based Forest City Land Group each outlined their **Murdock** Village plans before the Professional Services Committee.

The committee will forward its recommendations to commissioners, who will select the project's developer during a 2 p.m. public hearing on April 25.

If there was any doubt Kitson could handle the **Murdock** Village project, which could cost up to \$1 billion to build, as well as the 19,500-unit, 17,890-acre Babcock proposal, Morgan Stanley Real Estate Funds' Micheal Quinn dispelled that right away.

Quinn said Morgan Stanley, a global financier, is a "50-50 partner" with Kitson's team in the **Murdock** bid, noting this is the fourth joint venture together.

"We not only have the capacity financially," Kitson said, "but from an organizational perspective, we have the resources."

In addition, Kitson's team will include the Charlotte County Contractors Collaborative, a group of 10 local builders.

And if Kitson wins the nod, the local builders will have an opportunity to create homes in neighborhoods that differ from the local norm.

Kitson's theme will be "New urbanism through traditional neighborhood design," said Kitson Vice President Bob Frein.

Stock Development, which built the upscale Vivante at Punta Gorda subdivision and several notable developments in Collier and Lee counties, also promises to build the downtown Charlotte County doesn't have.

"Stock's vision for **Murdock** Village is Charlotte County's vision for **Murdock** Village," Waksler said.

Both plans offered signature features. Kitson's proposal includes a 47-acre Florida Gulf Coast University campus; Stock's features a lakefront town center along State Road 776.

Like Falcon and Forest City Thursday, both also varied greatly. Here is an outline of those differences:

\* TOWN CENTER: Kitson's Town Center will be in the eastern side of the development. A "main street promenade" will be anchored on both ends by fountains.

The Town Center and four neighborhood village areas will offer a combined 800,000 square feet of retail, 250,000 square feet of office space and 150,000 feet for government administration.

There would be 1,000 residential units in Kitson's Town Center.

The retail-residential mix "truly creates a functioning live, work and play environment," he said, noting the Town Center will also be "a destination" for people beyond **Murdock**.

Stock Development's 80-acre Town Center's stores and upstairs residential

units arcs around a ellipital-shaped lake along S.R. 776 between Toledo Blade and Flamingo.

It will be anchored by a 17-acre band shell and a town hall site, which Stock will build for \$4 million and donate.

Overall, Stock proposes to build 119 acres and 1.722 million square feet of commercial space.

Commercial space will be dispersed throughout the project in four "amenity centers."

Stock also wants to put 222,250 square feet of light business development along the project's eastern boundary, which may require a comprehensive plan amendment to allow.

Kitson and Stock have similar plans for dealing with commercial properties outside the project along U.S. 41.

Kitson has \$7 million tabbed to buy some of the parcels and wants the county to establish a zoning overlay district along U.S. 41.

Stock has set aside \$10 million for "outparcels," but woud be content to purchase only the parcels at the Toledo Blade and Flamingo "gateways" along U.S. 41.

**HOUSING:** Kitson is proposing to build 3,520 residential units with 10 percent qualifying as "affordable housing."

The mix will include 575 rental apartments -- 135 affordable housing units -- and 1,589 condos, including 165 affordable units.

Also planned are 377 townhouses, 717 "traditional neighborhood design" single-family homes and 267 "conventional" single-family homes ranging up to \$500,000.

Committee members noted Kitson's three single-family home subdivisions were isolated from the rest of the project by the regional park.

Stock's plan includes 17 housing areas and 2,869 units, including 10 percent that qualify as "affordable housing."

**OPEN SPACE:** Kitson's plan drew fire because it rechannels Como and Flamingo waterways into a series of lakes.

Committee members expressed doubt that the Southwest Florida Water District

would ever permit the diversion.

Kitson engineer John Broderick said the plan outlines

"culverting on a conceptual basis" and could be changed.

Stock's plan calls for enlarging North Charlotte Regional Park by 260 acres and creating a linked system of waterways -- including an island chain -- that makes the whole project accessible by canoe or kayak.

Also, 100-foot-wide linear parks will frame Toledo Blade and Flamingo; 50-foot-wide buffers along collector roads, and tree-lined strips along neighborhood roads.

Stock's plan calls for pedestrian underpasses under many roads.

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