Broker has big vision for Stuart’s downtown

By Ana X. Casas

Stuart — As a commercial real estate broker, Jim Morgan must try to predict the future, try to figure out the next hot spot for change and development.

And over the past 18 months, the Texas native has drafted a script for the city to follow in coming years.

So it is, the riverfront City Hall is gone, replaced by a luxury condominiums hotel. Sailfish Park’s baseball fields are moved to a former landfill off Midnight Road, and an expanded Stuart Middle School stands not far from a larger, landscaped City Hall.

Morgan said he put the plan together on his own initiative as a way to solve complaints of overcrowding in city and county offices, and the lack of affordable housing.

Stuart City Commissioner Jeff Krasnoff has persuaded the proposers and called Morgan a “champion” for some possible changes in the city.

“I think it’s time we talk about this, all of it. It all fits together,” said Krasnoff, a longtime proponent of moving City Hall.

Morgan — a man who wears monogrammed shirts and who, at 38, has been around the world — says he’s established a name for himself in the community he has called home for more than 10 years.

MAJOR AND MAKER

Real estate “facilitator” has been handling deals in Stuart for 17 years. PAGE 10B

Morgan’s proposal

Commercial property broker Jim Morgan wants the city to consider a new site for City Hall, new county offices, parking and housing around the proposed complex.

DOWNTOWN

still praises his first pair of cowboy boots, now burned in his office — said he’s simply stepping in where others have left off.

“Stuart has 11,000 people in the city, and of course, it’s a tourist destination. We’re going to try to make it a better place to live,” Morgan said.

Sitting in a conference room at Stuart Community Commercial Real Estate Inc., he outlined the pitch he’ll make to the Council at 7 p.m. today.

Spread before him on the dark wood tables was a half-dozen sheets of rolled plans, some of which showed half-dozen aerial photographs of the city.

Like a tour of dominoes waiting to fall, Morgan’s proposals are a series of redevelopments that go like this:

City Hall would ultimately move to Sailfish Park, with a temporary stop on the First National Bank campus on U.S. 1.

Under the plan, City Hall’s riverfront site would either be sold or leased and redeveloped as a “condo hotel,” where units would be individually owned but rented to the public.

Morgan said he knows two groups interested in the project, one of which prefers to buy the site rather than lease it.

In February, he said The Bananas on Sommer Street, a 13-unit apartment complex he developed with his cousin, was for sale.

He developed Willoughby Crossroads on 48-acre site in Stuart with another partner. It’s 12 acres on Indian Street with 41 condos and three commercial buildings.