

PALMER LAKE AREA CHARRETTE MEETING SUMMARY

*March 28, 2011 · 3:00 P.M.
Orlando Urra Allapattah Community Center
2257 N.W. North River Drive*

Steering Committee Members Present

Jose Bared, Chair, Brett Bibeau, Vice-Chair, Ismael Perera, Wendy Sager-Pomerantz, Debi Sokolow Keene, Robert Vinas

Community Members Present

Carlos Batista, Silvia Bernsten, Jim Dupre, Lenny Eterno, Rick Eyerdam, Pedro Garcia, Hans Kux, Christian Larach, Vilma Licea-Camejo, Ernie Martin, Herminio Menendez, Randy Pope, Carlos Saenz, Phil Saia, Bradley Siddall, David Yoham

Public Agency Staff Present

Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning: Eric Silva, Mark Woerner, Jess Linn, Amina Newsome, Catherine Prince, Josh Rak, Alex Zizold

Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management: Lisa Spadafina

Florida Department of Transportation: Gary Donn

City of Miami Planning Department: Rogelio Madan, Alina Mencio, David Snow

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Eric Silva began the meeting with introductions and outlined the agenda for the meeting. Mr. Silva then reviewed the previous significant events that have occurred as part of the Palmer Lake Charrette planning process.

Jess Linn then presented the draft Palmer Lake Charrette Area Plan report. Mr. Linn encouraged questions during the presentation from meeting participants.

At the start of the presentation, Rick Eyerdam, Executive Director of the Miami River Marine Group noted that the report does not address opportunities for recreational fishing, in particular fishing from the dock shown in the illustration on Page 2 of the plan report. Lisa Spadafina, Coastal Resources Manager from the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) suggested that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission be contacted to verify if there are any limitations on recreational fishing in Palmer Lake.

At the portion of the presentation where a possible location of a water taxi terminal was discussed, Ms. Spadafina mentioned that such a service could be in conflict with DERM's policies. Mr. Linn responded that a water taxi was a recommendation for the study area made by charrette participants as such should not be eliminated as a future possibility.

Following Ms. Spadafina's comments, Brett Bibeau, Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee, requested an additional alternative for the Bertram Yacht property be included that retains that property for a manufacturing or marine industrial use in addition to the two redevelopment concepts that are provided in the report.

Carlos Batista commented that he did not see any recommendations made in the plan for providing public access to the river in the study area. Mr. Linn then stated that the properties along the river were privately owned and being used by a variety of businesses and as such make it difficult to provide access to the river by the public. Mr. Batista then raised the question that if one or more properties along the river were purchased, would the new owner then be able to change the use. Mr. Linn responded that in addition to the zoning code there are various policies and objectives of the comprehensive plan, including the land use plan map designation, Urban Centers and the Port of Miami River Element that govern what uses may be permitted. Jose Bared, Chair of the Steering Committee, then requested that the plan be clarified to recommend that all properties within the study area have additional flexibility in regards to their use. Mr. Batista commented on a future water taxi service and that it should be compatible with uses and activities along the river.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Linn then encouraged anyone who has comments to submit them through the Palmer Lake project web page or directly to the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Mr. Bibeau requested that Tamiami Canal dredging and replacement of the Tamiami Canal swing bridge be included in the prioritization table in the plan report. Mr. Bibeau also requested that the recommendation to permit additional marine-related uses not already allowed be clarified to be more specific. Mr. Bared then mentioned flexibility of uses should be recommended throughout the study area and not limited to the marine or core areas. He further stated that he was concerned with the way the plan report was currently written as it does not appear to recommend an adequate amount of flexibility.

Robert Vinas commented that various marine uses in the area are in bankruptcy and there may be more viable uses for some properties. He also mentioned that setback standards should be relaxed due to the height limitations on many properties required by the airport and that uses on properties along the river should be as flexible as in the rest of the area.

Phil Saia stated that he was mainly concerned with the methods for implementation of the recommendations in the plan. Mr. Saia suggested the enterprise zone ad-valorem tax exemption was too low. Mr. Linn replied that if the committee feels that a recommendation should be made to increase the exemption amount, it may do so. Mr. Bared then suggested a broad recommendation should be made to explore any incentives that are available to encourage development in the area. Mr. Saia questioned whether a special taxing district existed in the area and if it could fund drainage improvements in the area.

Ernie Martin, a member of the Miami River Commission and Chair of its Greenways Committee, complimented staff and charrette participants on the quality of the plan report and its recommendations. Mr. Martin stated his belief that a CRA [Community Re-

development Agency] should be implemented to fund infrastructure investments in the study area. Mr. Martin further stated that he did not expect that dollars from the county's general fund would be dedicated to the improvements necessary in the area and that a CRA is the most likely way to fund this. Mr. Martin continued by suggesting that the committee and property owners advocate to the Board of County Commissioners for the creation of a CRA and that if the committee does in fact recommend a CRA, he would suggest to the River Commission that they recommend the same to the county commission.

Mr. Eyerdam questioned whether the intention of the charrette was to achieve a consensus or merely to present a range of alternatives. Mr. Linn responded that a consensus has been achieved through the charrette process and was illustrated by the citizens' plans that were developed on the day of the charrette workshop. Mr. Linn continued by noting that while a consensus is unlikely in every specific detail of the plan, there is agreement in terms of the overall vision presented by the plan and recommendations. Mr. Eyerdam replied that it was unclear to him how the plan adds value for property owners and directed a question to the chair if he feels that the plan creates value. Mr. Bared responded by stating that he sees value in having flexibility for future development on properties in the area that allows existing uses to continue and new uses in the future.

Mr. Bibeau stated that the existing industrial zoning allows various uses such as hotels, motels, hospitals, and office buildings without needing to change zoning or land use designations. Mr. Bared responded that he was not requesting to have a recommendation for changes, but that the existing flexibility available should be made more clear in the plan report and that this flexibility exists throughout the study area. Mr. Bibeau continued by requesting that that a complete list of uses permitted by existing zoning be provided in an appendix in the plan report; he also requested that all segments of the Miami River Greenway be included in the table of recommendations.

Mr. Bibeau questioned the need for the new bridge across the Miami River as recommended in the plan since there is an existing bridge crossing the river two blocks to the west. Mr. Linn replied that roadway access to the west is limited by the at-grade railroad crossings and the congestion that exists at the intersection of NW 36th Street and South River Drive; a new bridge in the location recommended would avoid those obstructions resulting in better connections to both sides of the river. Mr. Bibeau then requested that any changes made to the plan report be shown in strikethrough and underlined format.

Mr. Batista commented that a great deal of progress has been made since the study began a year ago and the most relevant subjects discussed during this meeting was the possibility of implementing a CRA to fund infrastructure improvements and that the uses on the Miami River are changing. Mr. Martin agreed and emphasized the need for implementation strategies since simply permitting flexibility in uses alone will not add value, public investment in infrastructure is needed and the most viable way to fund this investment is a CRA.

Mr. Saia expressed a concern that the CRA would not be able to fund any improvements in the near term as little money would be available above the base year for a very long time. Mr. Martin suggested that the Miami Intermodal Center is creating value now

and that hotels are seeking to locate in the area to take advantage of this facility, such development will cause property values to increase and make a CRA feasible. Mr. Saia then questioned how many years it would take to have an adequate amount of funds available for the CRA and further suggested that a special taxing district and a CRA could be implemented in combination and be more effective in the short term. Mr. Linn responded that a CRA can bond future anticipated revenue above the base year to have funds available in the near term. Mr. Bared then requested that county budget staff be consulted to provide the steering committee information how funds could be made available for investment in the study area.

Mr. Linn then described how a CRA was implemented to fund many of the recommendations made in the Perrine charrette planning area. Mr. Bared again requested that county budget staff present to the committee all options for funding improvements and that making improvements is particularly important as the Palmer Lake area is the front door for visitors to Miami. Mr. Bared suggested that whatever funding options are available be incorporated into the plan's recommendations and a possible timeline for implementation be included. Mr. Silva then stated that budget office staff will be requested to attend the next meeting and that they would be able to provide greater detail on the implementation of a CRA and other potential funding sources. Mr. Martin again agreed that these are necessary steps but cautioned that the implementation of a CRA will impact the county's general fund and that there may be opposition this type of funding source.

Mr. Batista then questioned the status of the current industrial uses along the river regarding external factors such as the expansion of the Panama Canal. Mr. Eyerdam replied with an overview of the current operations on the river. He emphasized the importance of the river to the smaller ports in the Caribbean that are not able to be served by larger ships. Mr. Eyerdam noted that if the situation in Cuba changes there are many small ports there that could serve destinations now served by the Miami River.

Mr. Linn thanked everyone for their comments and again requested that if anyone had additional comments to provide them in writing by email or on the web; all the comments received will be compiled in a list format for review by the steering committee at the following meeting. Mr. Bibeau requested that comments be linked to specific pages in the plan report and any suggested revisions be shown struck through or underlined. A brief discussion followed regarding the next meeting date.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Next meeting:

*May 25, 2011 · 3:00 P.M.
Orlando Urra Allapattah Community Center
2257 N.W. North River Drive*