

First, I want to extend my thanks to the commission for participating in joint meetings, in an effort to resolve contentiousness around this effort. The diligence, creativity and commitment of elected officials, attorneys, and staff has resulted in a product about which we can all be proud.

The facility in which the Broward Addiction Recovery Center is currently housed is woefully inadequate. We, as county and city commissioners, have a responsibility and obligation to protect and serve the public—all of the public, including those who are vulnerable and in greatest need, throughout our community.

When we serve those experiencing the disease of addiction in a facility that is functionally obsolete—we send a powerful message as leaders: those seeking to recover and those delivering behavioral health services are—not-- valued. That is why I have been fighting—*along with the many dedicated, passionate advocates in this community, on the Substance Abuse Advisory Board and BBHC*--against unfounded fears and stereotypes about persons experiencing addiction and behavioral health issues. Addiction is not a crime—persons seeking treatment deserve *dignity*, not dilapidated facilities—they are members of our community—brothers, sisters, wives, fathers, children. . . . Business leaders, construction workers, therapists, lawyers, athletes, educators, judges—probably someone your actually know.

Over the *seventeen years* that we have been attempting to relocate BARC from the Sailboat Bend site, which was once a church and has been cobbled together to address demands that exceed our capacity--- we have heard *a lot* of “not-in-my-back-yard” commentary.

Let me do my best to set the record straight about what you can expect when this facility is built—

Our design team-- led by Saltz Michelson Architects-- has developed a site plan that is lushly landscaped with a beautiful new building, targeted to meet LEED Gold Certified Sustainability Standards.

This building will improve the overall character of the neighborhood and *will not*, as we have heard speculated, increase crime or decrease property values. BARC Central is presently housed in a converted community building at 1000 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and if sold at market value, would likely return nearly **\$2M to the tax rolls**.

The City of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County have a shared mission to represent the public interest, and we can assure you that the relocation of the BARC facility will enhance the quality of life for the residents of the City of Ft. Lauderdale as well as Broward County.

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