

Central City CRA Advisory Board Chair's Summary Report to the CRA Board

June 11, 2015

Randall Klett, Chair

At the May 6th meeting of the Central City CRA Advisory Board the chair was tasked with preparing a summary report in preparation for the joint workshop with the City Commission now scheduled for June 30, 2015.

First, the Central City CRA Advisory Board would like to thank the City Commission for their unequivocal support for the rehabilitation of the Central City CRA. At the last joint workshop, the advisory board came to the Commission with a modest request for current funding and a plan for repayment of the initial "startup costs" for the CRA. The City Commission quite clearly directed staff and the members of the advisory board to think more boldly and strategically to take advantage of the current business cycle. Further, the Commission was more concerned with setting the stage for redevelopment than immediate repayment of any prior advances by the city to the Central City CRA.

The advisory board has previously developed a series of short term and long term goals, a copy of which is attached to this report. The board remains committed to the previously promulgated goals; however, there are several important additional issues to bring to the Fort Lauderdale City Commission:

1. The board is somewhat disappointed with the progress of the 13th Street Complete Streets Project. This project was approved in concept by the County Commission in November of 2013. While there was a lengthy delay by the county in executing the final interlocal agreement, there is little evidence that City Staff devoted any significant resources to the execution of the project itself during that delay. With the timeline of 3 years from execution of the contract with the county in June of 2014 to project completion, the lack of visible progress and the most recent timeline advanced by Transportation and Mobility, we request that the City Commission direct staff to devote the necessary resources to advance the timeline and get this project moving.
2. The advisory board wishes to thank the City Manager and the Commission for their action on March 17, 2015, where they committed to a budget allocation in the 2016 Fiscal year for both additional staff and consultants to initiate the rezoning in the commercial areas of the Central City CRA. However, the time frame proposed along with the funding puts the actual initiation of the project approximately one year into the future. We request that the Commission direct city staff to initiate this project immediately. If an amendment to the 2015 Fiscal Year budget is necessary to expedite this project we request that an amendment to the current year budget be adopted as quickly as it can be placed on the Commission Agenda.
3. As part of or contemporaneously to the rezoning process the advisory board strongly recommends that all currently unused alleys in the CRA be vacated. Most of the Progresso Plat was designed with alleys to provide rear access to the properties. The

alleys are largely ignored by the property owners. Alleys are an artifact of a bygone era. The type of redevelopment being envisioned for the Central City CRA involves new construction and larger buildings than can be accommodated on lots separated by alleys. The process of project by project vacation of alleys is time consuming and not without significant cost.

4. We would like to bring to the attention of the City Commission that Warsaw Coffee has opened on 13th Street. This one new business has already transformed the eastern end of the Central City CRA by bringing people and traffic to an area. The street level narcotics activity that was a fixture of this area seems to have disappeared east of Dixie Hwy just because of this one thriving new business. And, this one new business is already suffering from lack of parking. The 13th Street revitalization project is mission critical to the continuing long term success of this venture. The additional parking it will bring to 13th street is the key to attracting more business activity to the corridor and the revitalization of the area which is the stated goal of the Central City CRA.
5. Similarly, although not without controversy, Le Boy, a neighborhood bar/night club has also recently opened at the far eastern edge of the CRA along 13th Street at the FEC railroad tracks. Again, this business has brought business activity, automobile and pedestrian traffic along with privately hired outdoor security guards and parking attendants (in the evening hours) to the Central City CRA. Similar to Warsaw Coffee the business activity and success of this business appears to have brought about a reduction in narcotics activity in the evening hours. Again this business could use additional parking.
6. The Advisory Board would also recommend that city staff should be directed to research and apply for grant funding for security cameras in all commercial areas of the CRA with particular attention to the 13th Street and 4th Avenue Corridors both of which are slated for major redevelopment over the next few years, 13th Street with County Redevelopment funding and 4th Avenue with FDOT funding. The piece of mind and crime fighting assets security camera would bring to the area would provide additional encouragement for new and expanding businesses in the area.
7. The Advisory Board would like the Commission to explore the possibility of charging businesses and property owners for excessive calls for police service. This would be similar to the charges for excessive false alarms for emergency service. This would need to be carefully crafted to avoid penalizing businesses with high traffic volume such as Home Depot.
8. The South Middle River Civic Association representative on the advisory board and the current neighborhood president have both requested that the improvements being planned for the eastern end of 13th Street in the CRA be extended from 4th Avenue west to Powerline.
9. Code enforcement, which was highlighted in the CRA Redevelopment Plan, remains in need of improvement. Especially problematic are several absentee property owners who do not maintain their properties except under pressure from code enforcement which appears to not have the necessary resources to end this particular blight. These same landlords also do not vet their tenants well leading to gambling houses, prostitution, and narcotics activity in residences in the CRA.

Central City CRA Advisory Board

Short and Long Term Goals

SHORT TERM GOALS	LONG TERM GOALS
Increase Lighting	Rezone for Redevelopment
Repair Sidewalks	On-street Parking
Litter Control	Incentives for New Businesses and Business Expansions
Code Enforcement	Increase Depth of Commercial Properties along Main arteries
Increase Policing	Get Transit Stop on 13 th Street
Façade Program	Boundaries Expansion
Clean-up Medians	Exercise Eminent Domain to get rid of “direlect” properties
Landscape	Bring in big name stores
13 th Street – Streetscape	Winn Dixie Plaza (9 th Ave and Sunrise Blvd)
More Art on our street	NW 15 th Avenue & Sunrise (NE side of 15 th)
Greenspace Beautification	Sunrise from 9 th Avenue to 15 th Avenue
Event Sponsorships	Infrastructure