

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
INDIAN RIVER - MARTIN - PALM BEACH - ST. LUCIE

December 14, 2009

Ms. Ruth C. Jones, City Manager
City of Riviera Beach
P. O. Drawer 10682
Riviera Beach, FL 33419

Subject: Bicentennial Park

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with City staff on the recent renovation of Bicentennial Park. It is a remarkable improvement to the Park's existing condition and the efforts of those involved should be positively recognized. At the same time, the design and execution of recent improvements to Bicentennial Park depart significantly from the principles in the Charrette Report and Citizens' Master Plan:

- landscaped berms block views and access into the park from the street and adjacent properties, decreasing natural surveillance and safety;
- properties surrounding the park are no longer afforded "first story" views of the park and water, which would provide a major benefit for future development; and
- within the park, landscape berms and undulations limit the use of the space.

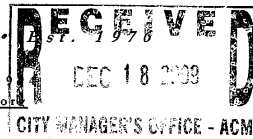
The Charrette Report stresses the importance of providing natural surveillance and access opportunities for Bicentennial Park to increase the safety and use of the space. The images in the report and presentations to the citizens always depict an elegant, very accessible urban waterfront park, maintaining clear views into the park from adjacent streets, sidewalks, parking areas and buildings (see attached).

Even before this current phase of work is completed, there are some actions that can be taken to move the Park closer to the principles outlined in the Citizens' Master Plan:

- given the design of the Park, public safety would be enhanced if it was tastefully fenced;
- a noticeable park entryway feature and gate should be placed where 15th Street terminates into the Park; and
- if playground equipment is desired by the City, it should be placed in the northeast quadrant of the Park in plain site of the shaded pavilion, boatyard and existing offices.

"Regionalism One Neighborhood At A Time"

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As redevelopment plans for the properties around the Park are realized, future improvements can be carried out to achieve all principles and plans for Bicentennial Park as outlined in the Citizens' Master Plan.

For this to happen however, and perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from all of this; is the Citizens' Master Plan needs to become the "culture of operation" or playbook within all City departments. The Citizens' Master Plan is relatively new and cultural change within a large organization will take time. But whether its parks, utilities, engineering, community development, police and fire, purchasing, finance, building or the CRA, every department within the City should be consulting the Master Plan for consistency and direction on all decisions affecting the greater downtown area. This is something that can be instructed by the City Council and fostered by all those in leadership positions on staff. Beyond that, the City Council must also be willing to set the example through all its actions and in its desire to see the Citizens' Master Plan carried out.

Since 2007, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council has enjoyed working with the City of Riviera Beach and the Community Redevelopment Agency to establish and implement a master plan for the revitalization of the downtown area. The regulatory framework needed to ensure future development is consistent with the Citizens' Master Plan and Charrette Report is progressing through the public process. The redevelopment of Bicentennial Park is included as a future capital improvement project in the revised draft CRA plan. Various public improvements are in the planning phase, with discussion clearly demonstrating the City's intention of carrying out the vision established during the charrette process.

Everyone recognizes the "vision" contained in the Citizens' Master Plan will not be built overnight. It will take patient piecemeal growth, designed in such a way that every planning decision sanctioned by the City is consistent with the master plan. This should, slowly and surely over the years, result in the City envisioned in the Citizens' Master Plan.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Busha, AICP
Executive Director

MJB:lg

Attachment

cc: Paul White
Mary McKinney
Jerrell Harris
Scott Evans

Lal Samadi
Benjamin Guy
John L. Williams
Clarence Williams, III

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