



# From The Desk Of **DEAN TRANTALIS**

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

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## **Redevelopment poses quality of life issues**

### Residents need to speak up about city future as projects like a revamped Bahia Mar advance

With the year coming to an end, generosity and good cheer abound, all a reflection of a very robust and economically successful year. Tourism is way up, along with room rates. The Boat Show was an unbridled success, and job creation is at an all-time high. People feel good, and we even see more smiles, from the grocer to the folks at the 7-Eleven.

There also seems to be a stampede of investors eyeing Fort Lauderdale as the new promised land for development. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being poured into our city, from the downtown to the beach. In fact, in the central city, the county just approved the building of 5,000 more units. That's intended to create a so-called "critical mass" of people who would sustain the urban amenities we so often experience in other cities.

"The New Urbanism" is a phrase we hear time and again. It is a concept intended to find ways to beckon people back into the downtowns and once-neglected areas. Yet, no growth is good when it is unbridled and tramples over our quality of life.

Our city has had a fresh openness that too often we take for granted. Certain aspects of our lifestyle cannot be compromised, and that includes having sufficient spaces where people may gather and interact. We also must keep our green, natural surroundings.

This is also true for our beach areas.

In addition to projects already approved along State Road A1A such as the Paramount and the Four Seasons, major developments are being proposed for the Bahia Mar and the Bahia Cabana areas.

And when I say major, I speak without exaggeration. At the Bahia Mar, two towers are proposed. Each is almost half the height of the Empire State Building.

In the renderings, the towers are shimmering in glass and steel. It's easy to be taken in by the portrayal. They brand our city as a glamorous, international tourist destination and would bring to the barrier

island the density that planners say is necessary to encourage more public transportation and more shops and restaurants.

As the city begins the review process for the Bahia Mar, we must consider what might we be asking to compromise to achieve such goals.

Will more people bring trolleys and bus caravans or just more cars and snarled traffic? Will those buildings, some of which are as wide as they are tall, consume the green areas we have left and obscure the sightlines we now enjoy? Will our beaches be shaded, or will we be left only to repeat the sad errors we suffer along the Galt Ocean Mile?

We have a choice as a community, but your voices must be heard. The City Commission is waiting to hear from you.

#### Now, for some other news. **The Aquatic Center**

Plans to build a new aquatic center on Seabreeze Boulevard have been scrapped, and the city will instead explore a more modest renovation of the existing facility. My colleagues on the City Commission agreed with my assessment that the project cost was spiraling out of control.

According to the contractor, the new swimming complex would cost \$39 million rather than the \$33.6 million they promised when the city hired them to build it. Our staff believed the cost would be even higher because their designs left out key elements such as elevated dive bleachers and screening around the parking garage.

The increasing price tag threatened to derail other important beach improvement projects. The commission would have needed to cancel or scale back such plans as upgrades



to the A1A streetscape and the redevelopment of the Oceanside Parking Lot into a public plaza.

The commission now intends to put out for bid a simplified proposal that includes refurbishing the pools and dive well and rebuilding the bleachers.

#### **Beach renourishment**

I'm pleased to announce that the long-awaited renourishment of Fort Lauderdale's beaches is beginning. All the required permits from the state and federal governments have been obtained after years of hard work by numerous local officials, and the city and county have signed the final agreement to proceed.

Sand for the project will be obtained from mines in central Florida and trucked here to place on the beach. About 550,000 cubic yards of sand will be used to widen eroded sections of Fort Lauderdale's beach between the northern city limits with Lauderdale-by-the-Sea and Terramar Street.

In closing, let me wish everyone a happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year.

Sincerely,



# Help ring in the New Year

The city's annual Downtown Countdown will get underway at 4:30 p.m. Dec. 31 on Southwest 2nd Street between Southwest 2nd and 5th avenues.

Watch the Orange Bowl beginning at 4 p.m. outside the Tarpon Bend restaurant at the railroad tracks.

There will be family activities beginning at 4:30 p.m. in Esplanade Park, and the Kids Countdown will take place at 7 p.m. on the Main Stage.

Live entertainment featuring country music sensation Amber Leigh begins at 8 p.m.



Commissioner Trantalis poses with other hosts at the recent annual breakfast fund-raiser for the Broward Partnership for the Homeless.



Commissioner Trantalis and the rest of the City Commission turn on the holiday lights along State Road A1A during the Light Up the Beach event.



Commissioner Trantalis joins Mayor Jack Seiler in honoring Tim Schiavone at the 45th anniversary celebration of the Parrot Lounge off Sunrise Lane.



Commissioner Trantalis and Mayor Jack Seiler help dedicate the new Loggerhead Park in Fort Lauderdale's Lauderdale Beach neighborhood.