



From the desk of

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Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

FEBRUARY 2016

Bahia Mar developers told to try again

Large public turnout prompts City Commission to seek appraisal, more acceptable proposal

The recent public hearing on the proposed Bahia Mar redevelopment was the longest on record. The City Commission heard more than eight hours of testimony, and another 50 or so people wanted to speak but left when the meeting lasted almost until the sun rose over City Hall.

While one may question the propriety of what one person called "nocturnal democracy," the commission in the end still shouldered doubts at the end about the plans and few answers were forthcoming that night.

To bring you up to date, several groups of developers headed by a gentleman named Jimmy Tate have put forth a proposal to redevelop the Bahia Mar. Our city manager was assigned the task of ensuring the proposal provided a permanent, world-class home for the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, significant open and green spaces for the public, and opportunities to create an upscale resort destination.

The proposal offered by the developers stumbled from the start.

There was no agreement with the Boat Show for a long-term lease guaranteeing this major event remains in Fort Lauderdale. The centerpiece of the site plan, a multipurpose parking garage designed to house the annual event, fell short of the Boat Show promoters' expectations. The developers also wanted to exact enormous rent for the space.

In addition, if the entire proposal was approved and built, less than two acres of the 16-acre site would be set aside for plazas and green space. The rest would be roads, a concrete promenade around the site, and, yes I almost forgot, two 39-story condo towers.



Photo courtesy of Art Seitz

They would be the tallest buildings on the beach. Planned amenities included retail areas, restaurants and a remodeled Bahia Mar hotel that would still only be 3-star quality.

We were told this project would not adversely impact the already congested traffic patterns on the beach. We were told not to worry about the shade on the beach and Intracoastal or whether the towering buildings would be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. And, somewhere along the line, no one obtained an appraisal for the site even though the developers wanted to lease the property from the city for 100 years.

In the early morning hours of Feb. 3, the commission ordered the city manager to get an appraisal and told the developer to go back to the drawing board and come up with a better, more acceptable plan. We now wait to see what evolves over the next couple months.

Juvenile crime

Our Police Department has been working closely with U.S. Department of Justice over the past year regarding the area's juvenile crime problem. Federal officials have been providing technical expertise to help craft a comprehensive plan to overcome the rash of home and car break-ins by youthful offenders.

The Justice Department recently presented recommendations to the City Commission.

The agency urged that law enforcement focus on street-level analysis of where crimes occur because the city has hotspots of juvenile burglaries like South Middle River.

With such a targeted focus, we can secure better involvement of other stakeholders around these locations.

The DOJ also suggested better coordination between the city and other agencies to ensure juveniles do not commit crimes. Another point made by the DOJ is that so much time elapses between a juvenile's arrest and adjudication that the youths often repeat the crime without having had the opportunity to understand the consequences of their behavior.

The Justice Department will now work with the city to design specific youth-focused policing strategies, better mentoring programs for at-risk youth, targeted messaging campaigns and a more holistic approach to dealing with young first-time offenders.

Flakka epidemic

I'm pleased to announce that the city has made significant headway on another law enforcement front – the epidemic of the dangerous synthetic drug called flakka.

Fort Lauderdale has been the epicenter nationally in the sudden rise of flakka use over the past two years. The number of addicts has overwhelmed our fire-rescue services and emergency rooms. A couple dozen people have died in Broward County alone.

Flakka has largely been manufactured in China, so Fort Lauderdale Police joined a group of South Florida law enforcement agencies to visit that nation and lobby officials there for help. As a result of the visit, the Chinese government has banned the sale of flakka and similar synthetic drugs.

In closing, please mark your calendar for the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. It will take place downtown on March 12. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

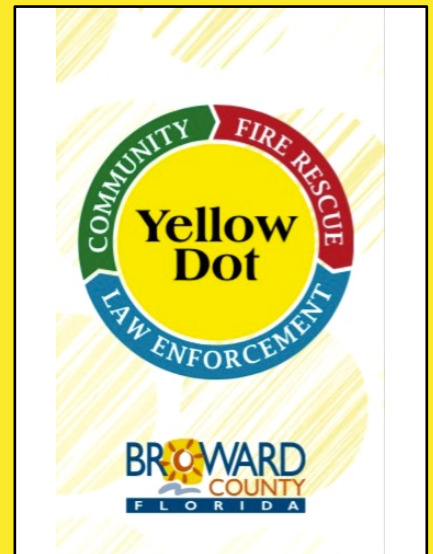


New life-saving program

The city's Fire-Rescue Department is participating in a new Broward County program, called Yellow Dot, that could save lives in car accidents. The Yellow Dot decal helps assist firefighters and paramedics in the event of a car crash or other medical emergency involving a participant's vehicle.

Displayed on a car's rear windshield, the Yellow Dot decal alerts first responders to look for a Yellow Dot pamphlet in the glove compartment. Participants can write important medical information such as drug allergies, medical conditions, medication and emergency contacts on the pamphlet. The first responder can refer to the pamphlet if the person is unable to communicate effectively.

Yellow Dot decals and pamphlets can be obtained at Fire-Rescue Station 35, 1969 E. Commercial Blvd., and online at www.broward.org/yellowdot. Limited quantities are also available at the Broward Governmental Center at 115 S. Andrews Ave., the main library and any of the county's regional libraries.



Commissioner Trantalis poses with other city commissioners and members of the Broward County School Board during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade through downtown Fort Lauderdale.



Commissioner Trantalis and Mayor Jack Seiler joins Hilton executive Andreas Iannou and Conrad developer Jose Luis Zapata for the launch of a 3D light show on the side of the beach's soon-to-open Conrad resort.



Commissioner Trantalis joins members of the Victoria Park Civic Association for their MLK Day of Service project, painting two neighborhood intersections.



Commissioner Trantalis fields questions during a neighborhood crime meeting at the Ironworkers Union Hall in Middle River Terrace.