



From The Desk Of DEAN TRANTALIS

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

JANUARY 2015

City presses school case for Victoria Park

I hope everyone has had a great start to 2015. On New Year's Eve, I helped ring in the year at Fort Lauderdale's annual Downtown Countdown in Himmarshee Village.

It was quite an event -- with something for people of all ages. I'd like to see the city make it next year bigger and better with improved fireworks and a signature ball-drop that befits our themes as a city. Since we're the Venice of America, how about an anchor?

One of my first missions of the year as your city commissioner has been to help the young families of Victoria Park in their quest to send their children to a neighborhood school. Broward County's school superintendent, Robert Runcie, attended the January meeting of the Victoria Park Civic Association at my urging to hear these concerns first hand.

I think we made progress. Mr. Runcie and the area's school board member, Heather Brinkworth, seemed open-minded. I ended the discussion by suggesting they work with city staff to better understand development patterns downtown and how that growth will continue to affect school boundaries.

Although Virginia Shuman Young Elementary is located in the heart of Victoria Park, the school operates as a special Montessori program open to students from across the entire county. As a result, only a few children who live nearby attend the school. Most trek miles west to Walker Elementary. Unfortunately, Walker is one of Broward's most underperforming schools.

Before the holidays, the City Commission voted to ask the School District to devote more seats at Virginia Shuman Young for Victoria Park and surrounding neighborhoods. Victoria Park has since offered a second suggestion: that its children be assigned to Harbordale Elementary south of downtown.

I urge concerned residents to express their feelings about these

options to Mr. Runcie, Ms. Brinkworth and the rest of the School Board. I also recommend they speak at public hearings that the School Board will hold on Feb. 25 and March 11. Each meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. at the Plantation High School Auditorium. It's located at 6901 NW 16th St. in the city of Plantation.

Here are some updates on other projects around District 2:

City Manager Lee Feldman reports that we're in the process of hiring a designer and completing a traffic study for the 13th Street redevelopment. Once the designer drafts some preliminary plans of what can be done, the city will meet with residents. Construction should start in the second quarter of 2015.

The city manager also says that the Dixie Highway improvement project is in the preliminary stages of design. Once the preliminary plans are developed, there will be more public outreach. Construction is scheduled for October 2016. We will fulfill our commitment to rebuild Dixie as a neighborhood street.

In both instances, these projects are keeping to the original schedules that were detailed when the City Commission approved them in 2013.

I will attend Middle River Terrace's next neighborhood meeting to provide further updates on these projects with city Transportation & Mobility Director Diana Alarcon. That meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at the 13th Street police substation.

The City Commission recently intervened to ensure plans to bury



overhead utility lines in the Idlewyld, Riviera Isles, Las Olas Isles and Seven Isles neighborhoods remain on track.

Concern arose in recent months that a lack of communication between FPL and city public works staff had stalled engineering work. We've been assured that those issues have been corrected and that we are moving forward to finalize the engineering. These documents are needed before the city holds a series of votes in which residents will decide if they want to pay for construction.

Also, on Jan. 24, we will host a town hall meeting for Sailboat Bend to discuss how best to strike a balance between historic preservation and desires in the neighborhood for redevelopment. Some believe the current preservation standards are too rigid, while others see such rules as helping maintain a little bit of what remains of Old Florida charm.

The vision that residents develop in the town hall will be presented to the City Commission. The Jan. 24 meeting will take place from 10 a.m. to noon at the Dr. Kennedy Homes' community center, 1004 W. Broward Blvd.

Sincerely,

Fort Lauderdale expands offerings along downtown Riverwalk

Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale recently launched a new way to promote the walkways along the New River downtown. On Jan. 5, Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale joined the city to announce the opening of Riverwalk Gourmet Delights and Riverwalk Recreation.

Riverwalk Gourmet Delights includes three food kiosks situated along the Riverwalk near the Huizenga Plaza/Bubier Park. The kiosks – Wholly Crepe, Espresso, and Nacho Bizness – will serve a variety of flavors and styles.

Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale touts the kiosks as an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Riverwalk while tasting exciting new flavors. Menu items will include sweet and savory crepes, varieties of grilled cheese and Asian–Mexican fusion.

Riverwalk Recreation is the other new initiative.

It will offer a broad range of activities to encourage locals and visitors to spend time along Riverwalk while getting healthy. Located in the Riverfront Plaza at 300 SW 1st Ave. #111, this space is dedicated to providing a one-stop shop for activities on the river.

Such activities include guided bicycle, quadracycle, and Segway tours, paddleboard and kayak rental, yoga classes, workout meet-ups, photography classes and dog-training classes.



Commissioner Trantalis cheers in 2015 on New Year's Eve as part of the city's annual Downtown Countdown held in Himmarshee Village.



Commissioner Trantalis speaks during a recent Mack Power Lunch business-networking event held at Grille 401 Las Olas.