



## 2014 Central Beach Master Plan Implementation Project

### North Beach Village Community Focus Meeting

Summary Report – November 2013

City of Fort Lauderdale, Florida



## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the City, initiated the Central Beach Master Plan project which brought the community together in an effort to set the course for future development patterns and public improvements that would foster a dynamic, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly urban beach destination. Through the plan development process it was recognized that many of the City's existing development regulations are no longer relevant to the changing characteristics of the area.

Following a series of public input meetings, public realm improvement opportunities were identified and design principles for guiding private development were established. The principles set the goals for the foundation of how to best develop building and streetscape design guidelines and implement zoning code changes to guide private and public development in a more predictable manner. The Master Plan was completed in 2009 and many of the public improvement projects have been initiated. The emphasis moving forward is to improve the remaining portions of the Central Beach.

Recently, the City re-initiated a follow up effort to gain consensus on the primary elements of the Master Plan, starting with the North Beach Village Area of the Central Beach. The intent is to finalize the Plan's Design Guidelines and incorporate them together with the streetscape standards into the City's code to promote new development in accordance with the Central Beach Master Plan's goals. The focus of the plan remains on creating a more comfortable, pedestrian-oriented beach environment, framed with appropriately-scaled, mixed use buildings that help create a vibrant, active resort and residential community.

In order to integrate community input, the Department of Sustainable Development organized a Community Meeting on November 16, 2013 held at the Hilton Hotel on Fort Lauderdale Beach. The goal of the workshop was to involve the community in helping to identify improvements in the area and recommendations for future changes.

The session was intended to provide opportunities to discuss improving predictability of the development process through appropriate building design and streetscape standards, and other improvements that promote public interaction and an attractive, vibrant and sustainable beach resort and residential environment. The forum was an opportunity for residents to express the changes they would like to see in the North Beach Village in the context of the overall Central Beach and its connectivity to the other areas.

This report summarizes the results of the North Beach Village Community Focus Meeting.



*Dean J. Trantalis, District II  
Commissioner*

## II. Meeting Overview

The workshop experienced large attendance, with over 130 residents, business owners, and local officials who shared their ideas to help drafting design guidelines for the Central Beach Area.

A brief project overview emphasized the importance of implementing the community based vision for the future of the area, in moving forward and creating a more engaging and connected beach environment, framed with appropriately-scaled buildings that enhance this resort and residential community.

The District Commissioner, Dean J. Trantalis was present and Steve Glassman, a long standing community member helped to facilitate the meeting. A brief project overview and project history as well as a presentation regarding building and streetscape design standards was presented by staff.



## III. Roundtable Discussions

Following the presentation, participants broke up into roundtable discussion groups. During the roundtable discussions the participants were asked to identify key issues corresponding to the following topics: land use, building design, street design, parking, and the possibility of introducing a Form Based Code.

The discussions were facilitated by staff members who provided a series of questions. The participants discussed the assigned topics with the help of handout materials and maps. Each table chose a “scribe” to compile the main ideas and a “reporter” to share their discussion with the entire workshop group. The participants also had an opportunity to express their opinions for improved Design Guidelines through a Survey provided to them at the workshop.



After the discussion period, the attendees reported a summary of the issues and recommendations they discussed. The presentations provided an opportunity to hear all the points discussed and to see the interconnectedness of issues facing the future of the Central Beach Area and more specifically the North Beach Village Area.

### Land Use

Participants discussed preferred land uses for the Beach, as well as those uses that may have a negative impact in the area. In general the participants agreed upon encouraging local businesses such as: specialty markets for beach residents, boutique retail, sidewalk cafes, art galleries, etc. Neighborhood parks were also considered, with green connections to the water.



More specific suggestions were made for providing a Visitor Center, as well as public restroom facilities. Most participants expressed concerns with regards to the proliferation of certain undesirable uses, such as: tattoo parlors, t-shirt shops, liquor store, night clubs and loud entertainment. A summary of all uses expressed follows:

#### Encouraged Land Use

- Boutique restaurants and neighborhood restaurants
- Sidewalk cafés
- Specialty, grocery markets for beach residents
- Pocket parks with connection to the water
- Art galleries/Artist workshops
- Recreational and entertaining uses
- High-end shops / Boutique retail
- Jazz café / Light music /Piano bars
- Free-standing uses: i.e. bakery (no need for principal use)
- Year round residential use to support commercial uses
- Live-work units
- Pop-up venues
- Farmer markets for local residents
- Visitor center
- Public restrooms



#### Discouraged Land Use

- Bars, night clubs, loud entertainment
- Tattoo parlors, t-shirt shops
- Liquor store (except specialty-wine)
- Chain-type businesses
- “Coney Island”



#### Other Recommendations

- Commercial / retail on the ground floor of public parking
- Shops and stores along Breakers Avenue
- Expend Birch opening on south to incorporate greenway
- Breakers Ave. to Birch developed as a transition between resort hotels and village
- Lincoln Road type retail
- Incubator – use as flex space
- Street performers
- Public Art
- Density needs to increase to support business clusters
- Make use of code enforcement to keep a viable business

#### Building Design

The discussion related to appropriate architectural elements had the most variation. A considerable number of participants supported continuing a type of architecture specific to the Mid-Century Modern era and with regards to preserving the existing historic fabric on the

Beach, while other participants were in favor of flexibility and creative solutions to promote flexibility with opportunities for innovative architecture and iconic buildings. A summary of thoughts expressed regarding building design elements follows:

- Preservation of midcentury architecture
- Compatible new construction
- Design incentives to provide iconic projects/sense of place; i.e. allow for taller buildings if they are LEED certified, preserve existing structure for more density
- High buildings - stepback
- Discourage high-rise development
- Encourage eclectic style that enhances the character of the area
- Promote a “whimsical” style, not the historic styles
- Encourage compatible development
- Low scale structures closer to the street
- Add stepbacks to create a human scale



### **Streetscape Standards**

In addition, the participants were also asked to provide input regarding appropriate streetscape and site design. Suggestions were made for reduced building setbacks to encourage a more friendly pedestrian experience. Also discussed was the concept of stepbacks for higher buildings to create a more defined human scale.

In addition elements such as increased tree canopy to provide more shade for pedestrians, as well as improved sidewalks and lighting were also expressed. The overall pedestrian and bicycle experience was also considered in the context of connectivity and the need for a more engaging public realm in the area. Many participants expressed the need to reduce the width and number of traffic lanes in the area, providing space for outdoor seating, creating wider and improved sidewalks, and designated bicycle lanes.

A summary of thoughts expressed regarding streetscape standards follows:

- Encourage pedestrian activity
- Decorative paver sidewalk
- Wider and improved sidewalks
- Streetscape improvements
- Provide lighting
- Underground utilities
- Seating
- Traffic calming such as: narrowing lanes, roundabouts, medians
- Bike lanes
- Increased tree canopy, shade trees
- Eliminate impediments in the sidewalks

- Reduced setbacks to encourage pedestrian experience
- Zero lot lines with lower building heights
- Sustainable practices (i.e. engineering solutions for bio-swales, etc.)
- Character of N Birch Rd different from A1A

### **Parking**

Relative to parking issues, the participants expressed their desire for reduced surface parking, concealed from public view, with a preference for structured parking, with commercial uses at the ground floor and well-designed facades. Main concerns expressed focused on existing back-out parking throughout the area and along Breakers Avenue in particular.

A summary of thoughts expressed regarding parking follows:

- Parking garages to replace surface parking
- On-street parking
- Remove back-out parking and the island parking
- City owned garage similar to Lincoln Road (Miami Beach)
- Parking garages with active uses and attractive design (green treatment of the facades – Collins Ave.)
- Rear parking only, away from the public view
- Intuitive/ intelligent parking systems in garages (e.g. electric message boards to tell drivers what spaces are available)
- Discourage current parking layout to reduce the conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles
- Centralized parking locations (particularly for commercial properties)

### **Form-Based Code**

The possibility of introducing a Form Based Code was generally supported by the public. The participants welcomed the opportunity for a more visual and diagram-based code, that emphasizes the urban form, with better and clearly defined concepts and regulations. Some expressed the desire for allowing creative solutions and innovative design.

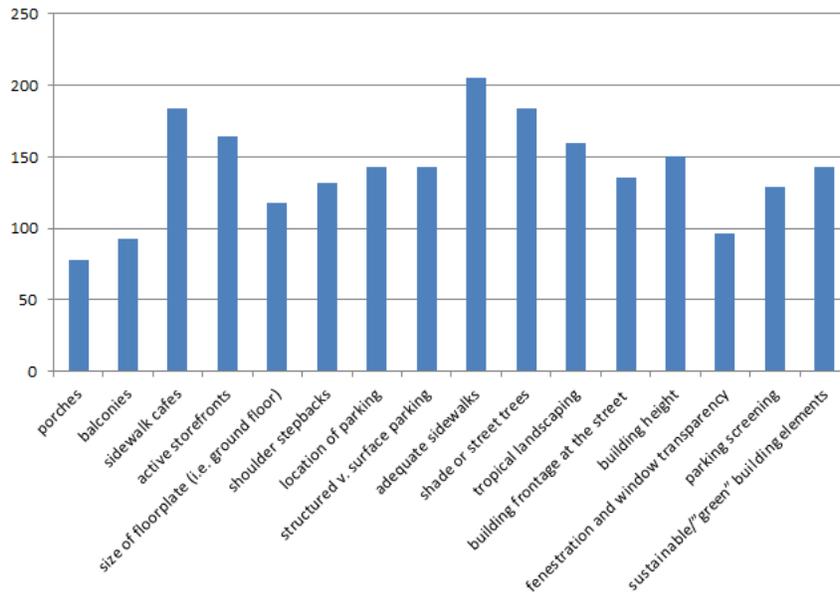
A summary of thoughts expressed regarding incorporating a more form-based code follows:

- More flexibility of regulations for individual projects
- Remove gray area , promote subjectivity
- Better definitions
- The need diagrams and visuals
- Allow creativity of the designer

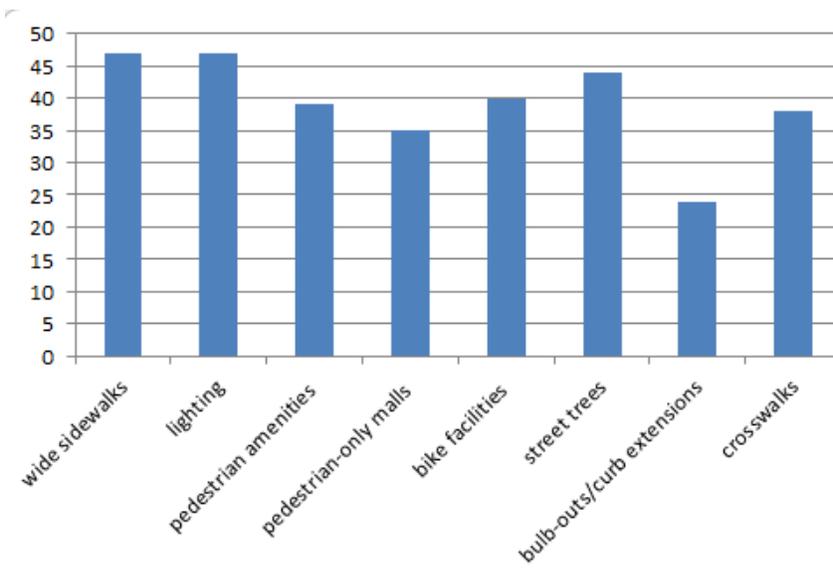


#### IV. Survey Results

Based on the survey results, there was general consensus regarding design elements necessary to achieve a more connected and interesting experience in the area as well as a safe pedestrian and bicycle environment. The Surveys indicate the participants placed the highest importance on elements such as adequate sidewalks and lighting, appropriate shade canopy, and incorporation of uses that engage a more active environment such as sidewalk cafes. The lowest rank was attributed to elements related to the façade treatment of buildings.



*Survey results indicating preferred design elements that are intended to create a unique neighborhood feeling that promotes interaction amongst people, provides for neighborhood pride and ultimately helps to define your beach area as a collection of diverse neighborhoods.*



*Survey results indicating preferred streetscape standards that should be considered to help encourage bicycle and pedestrian connections to beaches, parks, restaurants and other community amenities*

## V. SUMMARY

The Commission has listed the Central Beach Master Plan as a CAAP deliverable for 2014. In an effort to obtain input from as many stakeholders as possible staff has initiated public outreach efforts and anticipates implementing the final document within 1 year. As part of the public outreach efforts, the workshop was successful in attracting an engaged group of residents who were eager to discuss a range of issues.



While participants were asked a set of questions on different topics, the table presentations at the end of the workshop demonstrated that the main discussion areas (land use, building, site and street design) are interconnected and require a holistic approach in setting the course for future development patterns and public improvements that would foster a dynamic, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly urban beach destination.

## VI. NEXT STEPS

In the months following this workshop, City staff will meet with stakeholders to further refine the public's vision and prepare draft Beach design guidelines and streetscape standards based on the community's input. Follow-up meetings and/or presentations will be scheduled throughout 2014 to present recommendations before proceeding to City Commission for approval and adoption.

City staff will concurrently analyze means to address short-term improvements in the North Beach Village in order to reflect comments received from the public. This work will include identifying and prioritizing potential capital improvements that align with the design and streetscape improvements proposed as part of the Central Beach Master Plan, and as further refined to address public input provided at the workshop.

The following specific tasks have been identified under each effort. Please note some of this work will require coordination with a consultant depending on potential scope of work.

### Codify the Central Beach Master Plan Design Guidelines

- Preparation of graphics & renderings to depict building design guidelines;
- Prepare streetscape cross sections;
- Develop graphic comparisons of building typologies in terms of scale and massing proposed in the Central Beach Master Plan Design Guidelines with the existing allowable Zoning regulations in each character area. The comparisons will include existing

context in terms of massing, size of lots, setbacks, stepbacks, density, etc.

#### North Beach Village

- Prepare ULDR text changes to reflect changes to permitted uses and design criteria compatible with community goals and the vision for the North Beach Area;
- Evaluate Interim Use Ordinance permitted uses and provide recommendations for revisions to incorporate appropriate new uses, design criteria, and parking requirements;
- Examine potential funding sources such as grant opportunities to create an exemplary project along a portion of Breaker's Avenue. As unified ownership of parcels along a stretch of this right-of-way provides an opportunity to complete an entire segment, coordinated improvements can be accomplished by removing back-out parking, and creating a more inviting pedestrian-friendly environment;
- Data Collection and Public Realm Survey: Survey the neighborhood's existing conditions, specifically several key locations within the study area to use for reference to develop graphic comparisons, and identify potential capital improvements, such as streetscape, parking and other improvements to implement. Identify and locate impediments to streetscape improvements, such as utility conflicts, sidewalks in disrepair, other right-of-way conflicts, etc.