



Find your place

Leadership Group Meeting Minutes

01/22/15

Leadership Group Meeting, Thursday, January 22, 2015, Customer Service Center Training Room, 2nd Floor.

Co-Chair Ken Ausley called the meeting to order at 11:44 am. In attendance were Mr. Ausley, Robert DuMond, Gilberto Martinez, Ruth Reed, Ed Plaster, Kevin Sheilly, Summer Gill, Fred Roberts, Jr., and. Staff present included Tye Chighizola, Mike Daniels, Jane Pope, and Lisa Walsh. Guests were John Bosio of Merje and Jerry Bokowski of Baker.

I. Gibbs Downtown Retail Study

Ms. Jane Pope reviewed the results of the 2013 Gibbs downtown retail study, co-sponsored by the Downtown Business Alliance and the City. She explained how Mr. Gibbs had visited each retail business (over 15), spending about 30 minutes with each. On the third day of the study, he provided some training for staff and recommendations. Staff is utilizing those recommendations to guide their work plans. These recommendations and suggestions include partnering with developers for projects on vacant properties and collectively buying properties and redeveloping them, partnering with Board of Realtors for marketing purposes, acting as a recruiter for businesses by attending trade shows, working with a retail marketing firm, working with Kevin Sheilly on inventory to see what is available, take pictures and do virtual and in-person tours.

Mr. John Zabler, Peter Lee and Jane Pope recently attended a workshop at Seaside on what types of redevelopment works, having a public market, and pop-up retail on vacant lots.

II. Recap of CRA Downtown Stakeholders Meeting on January 13th

Ms. Pope described a meeting that Mr. John Zabler hosted, seeking stakeholder input and priorities on the use of CRA funds for the McBride and parking garage projects. It was stated that the cheapest way to build a garage would be to use city-owned lots; either Concord Square lot or Sprint lot. The downtown stakeholders' major priority is to have larger grant and loan programs in place for use in projects such as filling vacant spaces, fire walls, sprinkler systems, repairing the elevator in the Starbucks building, and constructing residential structures. These projects are in the \$30-50,000 range and are not currently covered in the existing facade grant program.

Stakeholders overwhelmingly prefer individual assistance for revitalization. Mr. Clark Yandle, a member of the Leadership Group, was present. More on the process will be

unfolding over the next month. Council approved approximately \$859,000 for the McBride project. The balance of funds in the CRA have been accumulated only over the last 15 years.

Mr. Roberts asked about the facade of the proposed garage. Would it have any liner stores, or be minimalistic? Ms. Pope said it would be minimalistic, with the option to add liner stores, but would still be aesthetically pleasing. The garage would have about 400 spaces. Mr. Chighizola mentioned some garage designs that we wouldn't want, such as ones in Orlando that don't have correct turning radii. Mr. Roberts expressed concern about having a structure that looked like an airport with the amount of money the CRA was willing to spend. More information is being gathered.

A survey is being created to collect additional information on priorities.

III. West Ocala CRA

Mr. Chighizola explained that last Tuesday, City Council approved forwarding the West Ocala CRA project to the Planning and Zoning board, then the taxing authorities, then back to Council for final approval. Mr. Daniels presented some renderings that had been completed for various intersections and catalytic sites. He said a DOT grant has been secured for design of the SR40/MLK intersection. The design will take about one year, with securing another grant for construction necessary before the design could be implemented. Mr. Chighizola explained that some improvements have already been done on MLK and NW 4th Street, such as brick stampings for pedestrian crossings, and decorative lights. Some power lines have also been taken underground. Other intersection improvements will include mast arm stoplights, and putting other overhead lines underground. The building on the SW corner has been demolished.

Once the West Ocala CRA is completed, a CRA for East Ocala will be initiated. The focus in these areas is the corridors so that more money can be generated. Regardless of the area delineation, it will take time for funds to accumulate.

Mr. Daniels presented the rendering for the I-75 intersections. Mr. DuMond stated that Washingtonian palms were a problem because they get so tall so fast that it becomes difficult to prune them.

IV. Wayfinding Plan

Mr. Chighizola passed around a schedule of installation of signs and explained where signs had already been placed. He introduced John Bosio of Merje, and showed examples of signs for various places, such as gateways, parks, historic districts and other vehicle-scale signs. The sign on the Square is now digital.

Mr. Martinez stated he liked the delineation of areas of Ocala with the signs, such as West Ocala, Downtown. He asked if we had any ability to make such improvements on

the overpass on SW 42nd Street. Mr. Chighizola said we would have to work with the state DOT, especially with maintenance.

Mr. Sheilly asked about more gateway signs, and Mr. Chighizola said they could be programmed next. We've looked at which gateways to tackle first, and includes the interstates and perhaps on east SR40. Mr. Plaster explained that first impressions are very important and a deciding factor on whether people will return. Mr. Bosio stated much must be considered, such as lighting, landscaping and public art to create a sense of place. Future renderings should include these items.

Mr. Chighizola said we have some money for landscaping, and the landscaping would be coordinated with Merje projects. Removal of the billboards on the S curve was discussed. Council is considering an agreement to replace the 5 static billboards with one digital sign.

Ms. Reed asked about adding the circular component of the logo to rectangular signs, and Mr. Bosio explained that parts of the logo can be added, pointing out the curved bottom of the signs and the circular piece at the top.

Mr. Chighizola stated that many comments on the wayfinding signage already in place have been received. Most of the comments are people saying they cannot read the signs as they are driving by. The signs in place are meant for pedestrian traffic, and not intended to be read by drivers. Vehicular signage is part of the upcoming schedule handed out.

V. Upcoming Meetings

Mr. Daniels said the Ocala Historic District Improvement Plan meeting was this afternoon at 5pm in this room. The Trinity Lane project items for the January 20th Council meeting were tabled until the February 17th meeting. The items included ordinances for the land use, zoning and developer's agreements. The next Leadership Group meeting will be March 26, 2015, at 11:30am in the Training Room.

The WRS Ocala East project is a proposed grocery store development located at the intersection of Maricamp and SE 25th Avenue, next to Woodland Villages. This will be going to the Planning commission next month, with the West Ocala CRA plan. Another project is the Gehl property Planned Development, located on SR40 and NW 60th Avenue. This project consists of an industrial/commercial park development, and should be going to the Planning Commission in March. There is also a new subdivision proposed. Eco Crossing, located near Vanguard High School on NW 35th Street, and is approximately 20 units. Alderbrook has been rezoned to R1-A, so it can be replatted to accommodate smaller lots to achieve additional units.

VI. Approval of 10/23/14 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Fred Roberts moved to approve, and Ms. Summer Gill seconded. The October meeting minutes were approved unanimously without changes.

VII. Questions/Comments

Mr. Roberts said he would send out a reminder notice to everyone about the WRS Ocala East item when it goes to the Planning Commission, and Trinity Lane for the February Council meeting. Mr. Lee stated we would also send notices regarding downtown meetings and issues, and it would be a good idea to send the Planning Commission agenda for the February meeting to the Leadership Group.

The meeting adjourned at 12:41pm. The next scheduled meeting will be March 26, 2015.