



1/20/2014

CRAAB and WAG
c.o. Kelly Gibson
City of Fernandina Beach
204 Ash Street
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

Good Afternoon CRAAB and WAG members,

The City of Fernandina Beach City Commission has asked that we, the "Partnership for the Amelia River Park" present to you A Modified Phase One waterfront plan: ***The Amelia River Park***. This plan was presented to the City Commission during a workshop last year, after which the FBCC referred the plan to your joint committees for comment regarding infrastructure and parking. Manager Gerrity has set a meeting for this Thursday, January 23rd at 3:00pm, in City Hall Chambers for this discussion. Your thoughtful involvement may lead the commission to authorize our park implementation team to do just that: raise funds, procure grants and execute a park for the city along its waterfront at Bretts, in what is known as the A and B lots, and in the "E" lot (the lot due west of city hall).

INTRODUCTION.

Know that as we begin this discussion, our group is cognizant of the multitude of meetings and efforts that have gone into the park planning to date. Our mission is not to usurp these plans, but to actualize a "today" plan that captures the spirit of these past efforts in a smaller space with less expense.

So to this end, we have provided a simple park installation that is flexible, parking neutral, privately funded, and centrally located.

Our group is making the following assumptions as it pursues this plan:

- a. **The FB City Commission (FBCC) is supportive of the Waterfront Park in concept.**
(evidence: By the Commission authorizing staff time and asking you to consider specific questions regarding parking and infrastructure would seem to indicate their interest)
- b. **The FBCC is supportive of a Park that is privately funded, where they have not been supportive of one using local revenues.** (Please see item a, and FBCC vote from early

2013 where the commission approved the library monies but no other FF projects including the next steps toward the park)

- c. **There will be future developments along the waterfront that we cannot anticipate today**, either a furtherance of the 2012 FBCC approved plan, a move toward the ATM plan, the relocation or expansion of the Marina, the relocation or elimination of the city boat ramp, the relocation or re-building of the Atlantic Seafood Building, the addition of more public waterfront lands and that the proposed plan must maintain flexibility for any or all of these events to occur. (evidence: the past history of the district has been influenced by diverse political views, resulting in shifting CRA district policies. While this may not continue, it is highly likely that it will)
- d. **Providing a park today, with minor inconvenience to the existing city workings, will provide a huge jumpstart for recreating a working waterfront and a vibrant CRA district as a whole**. (evidence: the current work along the river has netted the city several new events, including an international Petanque tournament)
- e. **The park and its venues will begin to re-establish the Historic Downtown as a cultural center for the county**. (evidence: the trend is for other venues to be established that are vying for local tourist and resident dollars. The growth along SR 200, local resorts, and River City all point to other choices for people's disposable income. Creating a one of a kind venue along the river, with attractions that will bring people downtown, can maintain and increase market share for Downtown businesses in the face of rising competition.)

CONSIDERATIONS.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE:

- Front Street remains as is
- War Memorial remains as is
- No fence or landscaping at railroad
- No significant grade reconfiguration
- Elimination of the C and D lot park plans
- Move the Eight flags feature to a smaller scaled down plaza in lot B

FLEXIBLE VENUES:

- **Porch on the North side of the MWC (B Lot)**

This feature would be a 12x30 porch which would double as a multi-use leaseable space that the city market to prospective users. Uses would include receptions in the park, small concerts, family reunions and the like. The day to day use would be as a "rocking" porch with lots of chairs and shade overlooking the marina. This program change to the MWC will help draw people to this underutilized building, provide needed covered rest areas near the water without building a whole new

building, and providing the city with a permanent stage venue that could be used for "Sounds on Centre" and similar events (as an aside, other communities use these kinds of spaces and get a "gross" on the seat ticket sales to cover maintenance, utilities and security. For instance a 300 seat event would gross about 50-100k in seat sales. The City would then receive say 10% or 5-10 k for the event).

- **400 person Lawn Seating (B Lot)**

The Lawn is about 4000 s.f., allowing 400 persons at 10sf per person for lawn seating during a concert. At other times the lawn could be used for festivals along the river that would not disturb day to day traffic patterns. The typical use of this area would be for recreation and reflection. On the rare occasion where a large event would take place, seating can be placed on the lawn, parking areas can be replaced with west facing bleachers, seats can be added on the boardwalks and plaza spaces, moving the seating capacity to over 1000 persons.

- **Eight Flags Patrons' Plaza (B Lot)**

The Eight Flags Plaza has tremendous opportunity as a "photo op", a meeting space, a place to find shade and cooling, a place for a bit of education about our town, and a place to acknowledge major contributors to the park implementation fund.

There would be eight fountains around the plaza, each containing a misting fountain in a brick and coquina stone lyrical compass point. Each compass point holds one of the eight flags with the area under the misting fountain containing a story about the history of that flag.

Coincidentally each point of the compass coincides with one of the major industries or draws of our community.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Northwest: | Marina with sports fishing, cruises and water recreation, |
| North: | Port of Fernandina , a historic deep water commercial port |
| Northeast: | Centre Street commercial district |
| East: | CSX Railroad , |
| Southeast: | Hampton Inn, symbolic of the Tourism industry, |
| South: | Marine Welcome Center/ Shrimper's museum, |
| Southwest: | Rayonier Paper Mill , |
| West: | Sunsets over the river |

In this plaza the flag masts can be programmed for specific events, with flexibility in flying flags, or instead, festival banners. In the summer months the poles could support a tensile shade structure.

- **Centre Street Vista (A Lot)**

This space envisions an alle' of palms at the base of Centre Street, west of Front Street. Opening this vista has a strong appeal as a way to visually connect the town with the water. While most of the time this space would remain open, it could also be programmed to provide overflow parking for marina events to allow those with limited mobility access to the docks during busy times.

- **Festival Plaza (A Lot)**

Currently a parking area, this space would remain parking except in the occasion of a major festival. At that point the plaza is seamless with the adjacent vista and together they provide a large event plaza during the appropriate occasion. Again the idea is to keep the programming for the A lot as flexible as possible, with 100% parking, or 70% parking on a typical configuration, or at ShrimpFest and the like, no parking.

PARKING NEUTRAL:

The Amelia River Park Plan leaves most of the parking along the affected waterfront. The PowerPoint details the numbers of spaces in each lot and how they are located.

Our presentation Thursday will show different parking demands in downtown today, and the likely impact that the park will have on the parking downtown. We will show how the downtown is typically under inhabited and will propose strategies to increase the number of people downtown ON AVERAGE while not adversely interfering with business on the 30 or so peak demand times.

The presentation will explore parking solution options for

- **Amelia River Cruises**
- **Fishing Charters**
- **Evening Dinner Crowd, Peak Season**
- **Park Parking**
- **Park Festival Parking Small Event**
- **Park Festival Parking Medium Event**
- **Park Festival Parking Large Event**
- **CRA Parking Opportunities**

PRIVATE FUNDING:

The primary objection of this commission has been using taxpayer dollars to provide for non-essential functions such as the Park. We propose a funding plan that will take the burden of the financing out of the City Budget.

We have a goal of raising \$400,000 privately and supplementing this funding with grants. Cheryl Nichols with the COFB has provided several grants opportunities ranging from \$20,000 to \$700,000.

- St Johns River Water Management District
- Florida Inland Navigation District
- NOAA
- Florida Park
- Historic Preservation
- USDA
- Economic Development
- Florida Small Cities
- CDBG
- FDOT
- 108 Loan

In addition, we would seek private foundation grants as well. Obviously before we spend any more private effort, we would like a commitment from the City to actualize the proposed plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY.

The 2012 plan shows significant infrastructure improvements along Front Street. These improvements are not part of the modified plan. We intend to work with SJRWD and provide cost effective installs for drainage, retention, and irrigation that would work with the long term City plans with the District as well as short term needs for better stewardship of the river today. **We would come back to the City with an engineered plan once the plan has a go ahead that would consider both the City's long term plan and what SJRWD grants require today.** We would anticipate that this plan would go through TRC for final approval.

The park would be designed so that future transformations could be achieved with modest disruption to the first phase. We recognize there will be some revisiting of the construction once the CRA or other funds are available. We trust that in spite of some minor rework, the City will be far ahead of where they would have been if they choose to do nothing.

THE QUESTIONS.

The Commission had an opportunity to clarify the questions it had about the park during the city commission meeting the day after the workshop in November of 2013.

1. Is there sufficient parking for the park, as a day to day venue?
2. Is there sufficient parking for the park during a festival?
3. What long term parking options are there for the CRA (possible parking deck)?
4. How does the install of the park today affect future infrastructure projects as the 2012 plan is funded?

SUMMARY.

We are a results driven volunteer group working to establish a great park in the near future at minimal cost to the tax payers.

The Park will both be a significant revenue driver for the City and its businesses as well as a place that can enhance the cultural vitality of the community.

Park Revenue Potential:

a. Possible Direct Revenue

Performance use fees,
Performance percent of gate,
Festival use fees,
Festival hook-up fees,
Party venue rental,
Valet Vender, and

b. Indirect Revenue

CRA momentum,
Property Values increase in downtown,
Increased tourism at non peak times for more stable business climate,
Increased Marina Traffic,

- Better look from the water,
- Events to market "Boating to Blues" for instance,

Increased Airport usage,

A "thicker" downtown where more parts of the HD are populated with people and shops verses about 50% today.

The Park will further the Historic District as a cultural landmark for the county:

- a. A place to explore our colorful history and economy,
- b. A place for music and festivals,
Theatre in the park; chamber music;concerts during the car show; jazz festival;
Winter festival all December; arts festival; wine festival; big band concerts; summer

fireworks; "sounds in the park"; kingfish tournament; boat show; wanderlust yoga event; Texas Roadhouse charity event (too late for this one that will be on 2nd street); road/bike race start and end points.

But most importantly we see the park as a place of unsurpassed beauty.

We trust that this presentation clarifies our vision and addresses the historic challenges associated with the waterfront. We remain hopeful that this effort with your support will provide a venue that will signal a new era for Fernandina's CRA District.

Thanks to you all again for your interest, expertise, and time.

Respectfully,

Miriam Sowinski,
Chris Hill,
Randy Rice

Presentation Committee for the Partnership for the Amelia River Park