Alton Road Neighborhood Planning Study Planning Board Workshop

February 26, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 PM Miami Beach Botanical Garden

Minutes

There were 45 attendees. They browsed through the graphic boards around the room starting at 6:00 PM. At 6:35 PM Joyce Meyers began her Power Point Presentation. Form 7:15 to 8:30 PM the participants broke out into focus groups sitting at 4 different tables where the following topics were discussed:

- Future Development Potential
- Mobility
- Parking
- Building Form/Urban Design

A Planning Department staff person sat at every table and took notes which follow.

Future Development Potential

Summary of Comments at break-out group - staff: Jorge Gomez, Tom Mooney, Debbie Tackett

Southern Area v. Middle Area v. Northern area

- Consensus among participants for the Southern End on the West Side of Alton between 5^{th} and 7^{th} Street, for Destination Retail use
- Participants, both property owners, developers and residents felt that the area on East side b/t 14th – 15th Streets adjacent to RS-4, needs a buffer zone or transition area of lower scale development
- There was a consensus among all that the area North of 15th Street has different character, more neighborhood commercial is appropriate

Area of Alton Road between 6th and 11th Street

- Strong consensus that the West Side of Alton is be more appropriate for high intensity commercial
- Strong consensus that the East Side adjacent to FP Historic District, is more compatible with Residential (Elderly housing, low/moderate income housing, etc). There was some support for low scale/neighborhood commercial by developers; however, the FPNA expressed a desire to change the zoning along the East Side from CD-2 to CD-1.

Discussion of FAR within CD-2

- The Developer participants favored introducing bonus/incentives for Commercial rather than the existing bonus for Residential
 - The general sentiment among developers was that residential is no longer feasible and will not be for the next 5 years
- Developers also favored an increase in FAR for Larger lots or lots that have been aggregated.
- FPNA favored down-zoning the area from 6th Street to 11th Street on the East Side of Alton Road from CD-2 to CD-1

Transfer of Development Rights

- General consensus that TDRs may be a helpful tool in regards to balancing the development between the East and West sides of Alton
 - There were suggestions from developers of perhaps being able to sell development rights from properties on East side properties to the Western lots, or to other areas of the city in general
 - There was a general consensus among all that this may help aid the development of the Vitri Site as a public park

Future Development Potential continued

Vitri Site

- Developers discussed the possibility of a Public/Private partnership in order to develop the site for public purpose
- Developers suggested that a deal could include private funds to purchase and improve the site might be possible in exchange for the right to sell off the Development Potential for the site to other areas within the city.
- Ideas from all participants, including both developers, and residents for the site included, Public Park, Pedestrian Bridge to Bay Walk and a Transit station

Mobility

Summary of Comments in break-out group - staff: Joyce Meyers, Christine Bettin, Tui Munday

Overview: The majority of the time was concentrated on discussions related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with some concentration on public transit, and very few comments on vehicle mobility.

Bicycle Facilities:

The discussion was headed by a young couple who were recent transplants from California. They both wanted to know if the purpose of the nights meeting was to pick preferred bicycle routes. They also had questions related to the differences between bicycle lanes, paths, and boulevards which were echoed by the entire group.

Staff showed the group the differences between to the concepts. Much discussion was made of the bicycle boulevard proposed for Lenox Ave and the idea was met with general approval. They had many questions about the mechanics of the boulevard system and wanted to know in what cities there were examples of the boulevard implemented.

One resident suggested using Michigan Ave instead of Lenox Ave, so that a connection through Flamingo Park could be more easily facilitated connecting to the other side of the park and eventually to Lincoln Road. Although, another resident of the 6th and Michigan area thought that there tended to be many accidents on that corner due to motorist speeding down 6th St. In addition, a resident suggested placing the bike paths in the alleyways and to beautify the alleys.

There were several residents of West Ave who were excited about bike lanes that have been already planned for West Ave. But there was a general concern over safety in the area. The group discussed a variety of issues related to cyclist and pedestrian safety along Alton Road and the entire corridor. There were discussions about funding for education for drivers on how to share the lane with cyclist and to prevent pedestrian injuries.

Pedestrian Facilities:

The issue of pedestrian safety and how to change the system of signals were briefly discussed. There was a general consensus in a need for safer systems, but not a consensus on how to address the problem. Some suggested a median to allow for

pedestrian to take refuge in the center or the flashing light system to indicate that a pedestrian wants to cross.

In general, there was approval for the realignment of some of the cross walks and the red brick pavers used to mark the path, as used in other parts of the city. One longtime resident wanted to know if there were any statistics on whether Alton Rd was safer for residents over the last ten years and any changes to air quality. They personally felt safer, but did not like to walk on Alton Rd. due to the air quality.

There was much discussion on the width of the sidewalks that were ideal for Alton Rd. with a wide spectrum of points of view. One resident wanted pedestrian and bicycle paths with the street furniture in the middle and different type paving to effect a separation of uses. Others wanted only pedestrian paths ranging from five feet to thirty feet.

On the other end of the study area, the group wanted to know what the CMB could do about having the Bay Walk connect to the section south of 5th St. Staff explained the environmental concerns and the difficulties of obtaining the necessary approvals from the State. A sky bridge was briefly discussed for either crossing 5th St. or crossing Alton Rd. to the Fifth and Alton shopping plaza.

Transit:

Many commented that the proposed FDOT improvements seemed to address auto mobility only. Also the concept of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was not familiar to the participants. And some asked when Baylink would be implemented. There was also much lament about having a safe and easy way to reach the airport for South Beach. Most were very happy with the existing Local route for travel within South Beach. Others would like the alignment changed to Alton Rd so it would be more accessible to residents from the east side of Alton Road.

The FDOT proposal to eliminate a left hand turn on the northbound lanes at 6th St. and Alton Rd. brought up the issue of how the Local and residents were going to navigate around the shopping plaza proposed 5th and Alton. Also, residents wanted to know if the stop for the Local will be out of the traffic lane. Most resident were concerned about the merging of bicycles, pedestrians, transit, and vehicles at this gateway to Miami Beach.

Vehicle Mobility:

Again, there was general concern about the flow of traffic coming off the MacArthur Causeway and navigating the 5ht and Alton project successively. Also, one resident of the area would like to see four way stop signs installed at 6th and Michigan for the

safety of motorist. Other comments were made about parking issues, but those same concerns have been recorded with the parking break out session.

One resident asked if there was any progress made in negotiations the owners of the West Ave parcel and the CMB that is needed for the proposed cross over bridge to Dade Blvd. Many expressed the desire to have <u>at a minimum</u> a pedestrian crossing at West Ave to connect with the Sunset Harbour area. The reduction of the congestion, confusion, and danger for all parties that collide at the intersection of Dade Blvd. and 17^{th} was seen as a great concern.

PARKING

Summary of Comments in break-out group - staff: Richard Lorber, James Seiberling

Alton Road

- To increase foot traffic Alton Road must become more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- Residents said:
 - Alton Road is not currently pleasant to walk along.
 - They don't want bulky commercial parking garages on Alton.
 - Nearby residents are supportive of the concept of reducing commercial intensity (by restricting them to neighborhood serving commercial uses) and then reducing the required parking for these less intense neighborhood uses.
 - More sidewalk cafes would attract people.

West Avenue

Residents are generally happy with the 900 block garage.

Lenox Avenue

- Owner at 1610 Lenox Avenue is concerned with a private parking lot located across the street.
- Residents are concerned about excess noise, car alarms going off, increased congestion on Lenox and an overall decrease in quality of life.
- They would be more inclined to accept a car sharing lot on the site but not a private (gate with attendant) or public parking lot.

Residential Parking

Most residents believed that a ratio of 1 space per apartment unit would be sufficient in this area because of the options for walking and transit (they referred to the Planning Department's map indicating areas with one car or less as justification).

Commercial Parking

- Most residents want to promote Alton Road as a neighborhood services corridor and to encourage more pedestrian and bicycle traffic instead of locals driving.
- Parking requirement could be reduced if business was a neighborhood service.
- One Mid-Beach resident with two small children said they would prefer to park on site but would be willing to park one or two blocks away on street or in a garage (resident would primarily be using citywide services).

On Street Parking

More than one resident suggested getting rid of all parallel parking along Alton Road and using side streets and garages.

Transit

- Most residents believed that the bus system is working well in Miami Beach
- However, it is not well publicized
- The City/County needs to glamorize public transit, through better marketing; to make it "cool" to ride transit.
- An electronic system which would show the time of arrival of the next buses would be most welcome.

5th and Alton Project

- One local resident was concerned that 5th Street will become backed up when coming from Miami people get off of work and want to go to Publix on the way home.
- How will vehicular circulation work in to and out of the site?
- On street parking in the area of 5th and Alton may become scarce as the stores open
- How will garage work (validation process, cost)?

Urban Design and Building Form

Summary of Comments in break-out group - staff: William Cary & James Murphy

Height and Setback

- Strictest requirements for properties adjacent to historic district because greatest burden of scale difference as well as cost to historic property owners exists there
- Special height and setback formulas should be codified
- Guidelines could also be developed for the HPB's use (for new construction/additions)
- Flamingo Park Neighborhood Assoc (FPNA) proposed to change all CD-2 to CD-1, thus reducing allowable height from 5 to 4 stories max
- Alternatively, keep CD-2 and reduce height limit from 5 to 4 stories
- Rear setbacks should be increased on east side of Alton Road only. may be further 'stepped' back above first or second floor level.

Affordable Housing

 FPNA suggests 0.25 FAR bonus for minimum of 20% affordable housing usage only

Land Use Restrictions

- Prohibit any form of outdoor entertainment.
- FPNA wants Conditional Use approval required for <u>any</u> food or beverage service, indoor <u>or</u> outdoor. There is not consensus on this issue.
- Prohibit all rooftop restaurants
- Allow properties with alley access to Lennox Court to have broader range of commercial uses (restaurants, etc) than those properties without an alley

Frontage Zone

- Limited support for "frontage zone", but some concern that it would leave owner too little development potential because rear setbacks will be increased.
- Also, "frontage zone" could encourage sidewalk cafes which may result in unwanted noise (FPNA issue, particularly) – no evident consensus on this

Parking

 General support to reduce parking requirements if it would result in reduced height and bulk.

General Note

 Virtually all discussion related to the east side of Alton Road in the Flamingo Park Historic District