

Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee Meeting  
November 19, 2012

**Quarterly Reports Regarding Washington Avenue.**

*Commission Item C4H, October 19, 2011*

*(Requested by Commissioner Góngora)*

Maria Poncel, Redevelopment Coordinator

Kevin Crowder, Economic Development Division Director

**ITEM #4**



## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Neighborhood and Community Affairs Committee

FROM: Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE: November 19, 2012

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON WASHINGTON AVENUE ENHANCEMENTS**

### **Background**

At their July 30, 2012 meeting, the Neighborhoods and Community Affairs Committee (NCAC) discussed the Washington Avenue Enhancement Plan, which includes initiatives that enhance safety and cleanliness, provide for marketing and promotion, and identify short-term and long-term enhancements. The Committee also discussed the funding enhancements identified in the plan, which are 1) \$470,000 for additional police shifts on Washington Avenue, and 2) \$114,421 to improve the pressure washing cycle from two weeks to one week.

The Committee directed the Administration to continue to develop the plan, and to return to the NCAC with benchmark recommendations to measure the plan's effectiveness. The NCAC further recommended that the FCWPC support the funding enhancements for police and pressure washing identified in the plan. These budget enhancements were reviewed at the FCWPC on July 25 and August 22, and were approved as part of the 2012/2013 budget.

Additionally, the Planning Board held a one-hour workshop on Washington Avenue. Planning Department staff presented the Enhancement Plan that was given to the NCAC and FCWPC in July. The discussion that followed focused on land use and zoning issues, particularly on regulation of uses such as tattoo parlors, head shops, bars, nightclubs and stores that sell single cans of beer. One board member suggested incentives to attract residential development to the corridor to place more "eyes on the street." The board asked staff to come back at a later date with a plan for additional public input, ideas for zoning incentives, priorities and a long range vision.

### **Update on Washington Avenue Initiatives**

- The Mayor and City Commission approved an increase police coverage which will add two additional walking shifts (2 officers 2 p.m. until midnight and 4 officers 10 p.m. until 8 a.m.) for Washington Avenue. The hiring process for these positions is well underway, and once hired the officers must go through orientation and the Field Training Program. Field Training will take four (4) months and orientation an additional six (6) weeks.
- The City has ordered replacement fixtures that will allow for an increase in lighting intensity for a test program in the 1100 and 1200 blocks, which are anticipated to be installed late November 2012. Additionally, Washington Avenue Neighborhood

Association (WANA) has requested brighter Acorn lights. Public Works is researching if the Acorns on Washington Avenue can be retrofitted with LED fixtures and, if so, will conduct a test for WANA;

- Hiring of additional staff for the overnight/weekend shift of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) is almost complete. This HOT is working closely with the Police Department and its SOP for Homeless Assistance, and is assisting with training and of MBPD personnel ;
- The FY 2012/2013 budget includes funding to increase the frequency of sidewalk cleaning from every two weeks to at least once per week by adding an additional crew. This enhancement will begin once the additional pressure washer has been purchased, which is anticipated to be in the second quarter of FY 2012/2013;
- The Parks Department is will begin installing the bound aggregate tree pits at the end of the high season, and be finished before the end of the fiscal year. This enhancement was funded as part of the FY 2011/2012 budget;
- The Administration has been working with WANA and the Cultural Institutions on Washington Avenue to create a monthly Night Out event on Washington Avenue in 2013. At this time, WANA is working with the area businesses to determine which businesses will participate and the manner of participation. The current concept includes a monthly event that promoted a discount program for restaurants, bars and retailers that will be marketed as part of a broader Washington Avenue destination marketing program in partnership with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Collins Park neighborhood has also identified the possibility of including the Bass Museum as part of the event to create some synergies between the two neighborhoods.
- The Mayor and City Commission approved assistance for the Wolfsonian-FIU's master plan process, to facilitate the \$10 million investment for their expansion. While the master plan process is for their facilities, it will also help ensure that the project is compatible with the Avenue and consistent with the goals of the revitalization effort;
- As part of their fall semester curriculum, the FIU School of Architecture is working on identifying innovative plans for enhancements to Washington Avenue.
- Empty Storefront Window Program: As you may recall, on May 9, 2012 the City Commission adopted Ordinance No. 2012-3767, which amended the Land Development Regulations of the City Code to permit vacant storefronts to be wrapped with attractive signage while not contravening the City's long-standing prohibition on general advertising. The Ordinance permits full storefront window wraps on vacant ground floor commercial spaces, but does not mandate window wraps for vacant storefronts. This is a voluntary program.

The City had been developing designs for a pre-printed free of charge non-commercial window graphic program. Staff has finalized design and is obtaining bids for printing. Economic Development, Planning and Zoning, Code Compliance and the Communications Office will all work together to educate the business community on the availability of this free window graphic.

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- In an effort to enhance lighting, the architecture and create a sense of place along Washington Avenue, the City has begun to draft a grant to ArtPlace for submission in late 2013. ArtPlace grants funds to organizations that develop initiatives involving arts organizations, artists and designers working in partnership with local and national partners to produce a transformative impact on community vibrancy.

### **Benchmarks**

Additionally, the NCAC requested a list of potential benchmarks that the City could begin tracking to monitor the progress of the initiatives on Washington Avenue. The following is a list of potential benchmarks:

1. Cleanliness Index
2. Crime Statistics
3. Resort Tax Receipts (Food, Alcohol, Hotel Room sales revenues)
4. Parking Revenue and Turnover
5. Business Types / Uses / Tenure
6. Vacancies
7. Code Violation Types
8. Building Permits
9. Public Appearance Index which is currently under development and should be in place by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of FY 2012/2013.

### **Additional Items**

Additional items have been identified as initiatives for Washington Avenue, and the Administration is seeking guidance on which items the NCAC believes should be the next group of projects.

Items that may need funding to be requested in the FY 2013/2014 budget:

- Install new matching trash bins and recycling bins, first in the blocks near Lincoln Road, and eventually throughout the entire street as part of the citywide replacement and installation program if the program is funded and implemented
- Clean and/or replace all signage in public right-of-way (city and county departments);
- Improve and enhance landscaping, plantings;
- Install a bicycle corral in front of Crunch Gym;
- Identify long term public improvements such as contrasting color paver crosswalks, corner bumpouts, special streetscape nodes, and renovation of outdoor spaces;

Items that do not need funding but need development of a timeline for completion:

- Develop a process to identify high volume areas for targeted attention for servicing of the trashcans;
- Increase code enforcement on graffiti, paint, illegal signs and vacant stores;
- Improve parking availability and turnover through rate adjustments;
- Work with WANA and the Parking Department to expand parking validation program usage on Washington Avenue.
- Differentiate special places and activity zones along the corridor with changes in pavement, landscape, signage, banners, etc. Espanola Way Plaza, Convention Center, Lincoln Road intersection, Post Office, Old City Hall, Wolfsonian-FIU, Pennsylvania Plaza, Jewish Museum.
- Identify long term private improvements and business owner actions such as awnings, quality store signage, appropriate window treatment, lighting and enhancing the quality of window displays.
- Identify any potential zoning incentives for property owners, as identified during the Planning Board discussion;

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