



**TOWN OF LAUDERDALE-BY-THE-SEA
TOWN COMMISSION
TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP
MINUTES
Jarvis Hall
4505 Ocean Drive
Tuesday, May 16, 2022
6:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Edmund Malkoon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Also present were Commissioner Alfred “Buz” Oldaker, Commissioner Theo Pouloupoulos, Commissioner Randy Strauss, Town Attorney Susan Trevarthen, Town Manager Linda Connors, Development Services Director Jhanelle Campbell, Deputy Town Manager/Public Works Director Ken Rubach, Special Events and Marketing Manager Debbie Hime, and Town Clerk Katrina Adler. (Mayor Chris Vincent joined the meeting in progress.)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

At this time Vice Mayor Malkoon opened public comment.

Barbara Cole, resident, pointed out that it has not yet been 10 years since the original revitalization of this area and did not feel there was a reason to redesign the area. She was in favor of retaining the existing width of the space and creating a safety barrier and space to walk among the outdoor tables.

Ann Marchetti, resident, also spoke in favor of simplicity, stating that pavers should be extended to increase the sidewalk space and create permanent seating for outdoor dining, with a walkway close to the street and permanent barriers to ensure public safety. She was also in favor of continued restaurant seating in the Plaza.

With no other individuals wishing to speak at this time, Vice Mayor Malkoon closed public comment.

3. DISCUSSION ITEM

- **East Commercial Revitalization Project**

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Town Manager Linda Connors recalled that there have been two previous meetings with Town businesses and members of the public regarding the Downtown area. Hugh Johnson, consultant, described the first public meeting as an information-gathering event, followed by a second meeting to summarize the findings of the first. Tonight's meeting will review the previous two meetings and put together potential concepts and schematics that are in line with the Commission's and the public's wishes.

Mr. Johnson reviewed existing conditions and areas of concern on Commercial Boulevard, A1A, and El Mar Drive. Previously discussed changes included improving the outdoor dining experience in these areas, enhancing pedestrian lighting, providing paving more compatible with outdoor dining, removing parallel parking spaces on Commercial Boulevard, and removal of backout parking spaces on A1A.

At the previous meetings, there had been discussion of how to improve pedestrian circulation through the area. One option had been to retain the sidewalk in its current configuration, while another had been to move the main pedestrian circulation away from the outdoor dining area to reduce any conflicts. The public response had been in favor of moving pedestrian circulation to the edge of the roadway. Most of the images to which attendees responded favorably at the first meeting showed different ways to segregate pedestrian paths from outdoor dining.

At the second meeting, there was additional discussion of what had been learned, with greater detail. This included relocating the main pedestrian walkway to the edge of Commercial Boulevard, removing parallel parking on this roadway and backout parking on A1A. Respondents had also been in favor of investigating shade structures, as well as lighting and signage options and some landscaping. One parallel parking space would be removed from El Mar Drive in order to create a better corner at El Mar Drive and Commercial Boulevard.

These findings were further broken down into specific segments:

- Trees and landscaping
- Shade structures
- Different paving material
- Different lighting options

Pros and cons of options in these categories were discussed. Mr. Johnson pointed out that use of native trees would require County mitigation, which can be very expensive. Some shade structure options, such as sails, would require lengthy downtimes during hurricane season and could be time-consuming to put back up. They also decrease

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visibility and have significant maintenance costs. With regard to paving, Mr. Johnson noted that the current pavers are light in color and must be cleaned and power-washed often. There is a need for pavers that are more suitable for outdoor dining and heavier pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Johnson also reviewed landscape options, including buttonwoods and other types of trees suitable for an oceanfront environment, such as coconut palms. Shrub material must be salt- and drought-tolerant as well as “traffic-proof.”

Proposed shade structures include a retractable option called a Roman shade, as well as a trellis system with a retractable shade. While shade sail structures were considered, they would be difficult to use in limited spaces.

Potential paver solutions include the pavers used on the western portion of Commercial Boulevard, which have held up well over time and have a color mixture. Other possibilities include shellstone pavers, granite lock pavers, and pavers that can be used near tree grate areas, which are more resistant to buckling from the growth of roots.

Lighting options include more contemporary LED lights, which can be amber in order to accommodate turtle season. These would provide improved technology over existing fixtures. The team also considered signage, emphasizing a more modern and whimsical branding theme.

Mr. Johnson concluded that he is bringing forward two major concept plans for tonight’s meeting. The first brings the paving from West Commercial Boulevard to the east, using the same color palette and wave pattern, and moves the pedestrian sidewalk to the edge of Commercial Boulevard on both sides of the roadway. This scheme would also have a landscape buffer of three to five feet, retain existing trees, and provide an outdoor dining area between 15 ft. and 18 ft.

Another rendering shows the removal of backout parking on A1A and the wrapping of the existing design around the corner. This illustration showed an 8 ft. sidewalk on A1A, with the Commercial Boulevard sidewalk at a width of 10 ft. to 11 ft. At the previous meeting, there was interest in making this public sidewalk as wide as possible. This proposed width takes into consideration the trunks of existing trees.

The 8 ft. sidewalk along A1A would also feature a 3 ft. to 5 ft. landscape buffer, with a restaurant area as wide as 20 ft. to 21 ft. On Commercial Boulevard, the 10 ft. to 11 ft.

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sidewalk would be accompanied by a 3 ft. to 5 ft. landscaped area and a 15 ft. to 17 ft. wide outdoor dining area.

Mr. Johnson recalled that there was some concern that moving the main sidewalk from the faces of businesses would affect non-restaurant businesses by moving the pedestrian route away from their stores. To address this, breaks would be created in the landscape buffer between the sidewalk on Commercial Boulevard and the outdoor dining area at these specific locations, providing access to these businesses. This design also presents an opportunity for signage, as businesses could provide menu boards or other smaller signs. The corners of these areas could serve as larger information signage kiosks directing pedestrians to various businesses.

Another design option would be based on the sidewalk pattern from Commercial Boulevard, using the same multicolored paving materials without the wave pattern in a more Mid-century Modern design. This could enhance the character of the area while realigning the sidewalk, providing a cleaner, more straightforward approach. The dining area would have a different color tone and layout to distinguish it from the pedestrian thoroughfare.

It was asked if any space would be taken from the roadway lanes. Mr. Johnson advised that this has not been suggested, as the team estimates the current dimension of the roadway at roughly 33 ft. with a 2 ft. curb and gutter; however, a survey is underway to determine the accuracy of this estimate. It may be possible to reduce the roadway lanes to 10 ft. in width and reclaim another 3 to 4 ft. This would allow for the retention of one lane coming into the subject area and two lanes going out.

It was asked if street protection would involve the type of bollards used on A1A. Mr. Johnson advised that while bollards are included at the corners, the sidewalks may be sufficiently wide and the traffic slow on sections of Commercial Boulevard to provide safe conditions with the sidewalk adjacent to the street.

With regard to shade structures and lighting, it was suggested that the design remain appropriate for a small town and the Mid-century Modern style. Mr. Johnson explained that the team was asked to look at shade options as part of the process. Most feedback thus far has not suggested that these options be pursued, and most residents appear to be satisfied with the umbrellas and existing structures.

It was noted that the south corner of the subject area, which is the busiest intersection in Broward County, does not have a large landing pad for crossing pedestrians as its

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opposite north corner. Mr. Johnson agreed, noting the presence of traffic signals and a transformer at this location. One possible solution to this may be creation of an angled crosswalk, which would change the landing space for crossing pedestrians. This would require a permit from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Town Manager Linda Connors suggested that the removal of backout parking at this location could provide greater flexibility for restaurants in the area, which could result in adjusting tables farther away from the landing pad of the crosswalk.

It was also noted that even with wider sidewalks on Commercial Boulevard, pedestrians may be more likely to jaywalk as well as to stray off the sidewalk and in front of cars, which could necessitate the use of planters or other barriers between pedestrians and the roadway. Mayor Vincent noted that this occurs on A1A, where traffic may be moving at a speed of up to 35 miles per hour, as well as on East Commercial Boulevard where traffic calming measures have been implemented and traffic is moving at a much slower pace.

Mayor Vincent asked if the original 2013 design for the Downtown area included a shorter walkway from the building line to the curb on the south side of the roadway. Mr. Johnson replied that it was difficult to tell at this point. Mayor Vincent estimated that a 1-2 ft. differential exists on the two sides of the street. He added that he would prefer not to extend the paver design from the west into the Plazas in order to maintain the difference between the east and west sides.

Commissioner Pouloupoulos advised that while pedestrians have a responsibility to behave safely while walking on sidewalks, he was still concerned with traffic heading eastbound on Commercial Boulevard as it passes the traffic light. Cars that try to beat the traffic light at A1A and Commercial Boulevard are coming into the Downtown area at 30 to 35 miles per hour. He was in favor of using bollards on corners, and recommended similar safety measures along the edge of the sidewalk as well.

Commissioner Pouloupoulos continued that he hoped there would be a significant presence from Town residents, including the business community, to discuss this issue further at the next Commission meeting. He emphasized the importance of having many voices heard on a decision of this magnitude, and encouraged residents to reach out to be heard on this topic.

Mr. Johnson noted that when parallel parking is removed along Commercial Drive, the curved area of the roadway will need to be rebuilt. This provides an opportunity to

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reduce lanes to 10 ft. in width, as previously discussed, which can serve to slow traffic. He pointed out that the lanes on the western portion of Commercial Boulevard are 10 ft. lanes, which slows traffic in that area.

It was asked how the sidewalk will be “divided from” the restaurants. Mr. Johnson replied that this would be done with planting and landscaping. The intent is to have pedestrians who are not going to a restaurant to walk further away from the businesses while maintaining entrances to the restaurants and other stores.

Commissioner Oldaker asked how the north/south entry to dining areas would be separate from the sidewalk. Mr. Johnson explained that directional movement would be encouraged from the corner into a 7 ft. wide opening away from the thoroughfare.

Commissioner Oldaker also addressed an area on the west side of A1A where drivers must travel at a diagonal in order to match up with the rest of Commercial Boulevard. He also requested a rendering that does not include trees along the walkway, and Commissioner Strauss requested a three-dimensional view. Mr. Johnson replied that this would be provided at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the sidewalk widths on portions of Commercial Boulevard, which are 8 ft. and 10 to 11 ft. in different places. There is also a 3 ft. to 5 ft. landscape buffer and a 15 ft. to 17 ft. dining area. He confirmed that perspective renderings will be provided at future presentations.

Commissioner Oldaker also agreed with Mayor Vincent that the pavers with wave markings should not be extended from the west side.

Mayor Vincent added that the proposed changes would bring tables closer to the businesses and move the pedestrian flow to the outside. He felt the second plan shown tonight would help eliminate congregation on public sidewalks in front of restaurants between tables. He noted that trees would also serve as a buffer to separate pedestrians from the dining area.

It was noted that while most participants at earlier meetings had been in agreement regarding the shift in outdoor dining and pedestrian space to improve safety, some interaction between these spaces should be maintained. There was also concern with the potential 3 to 5 ft. landscaping barrier, and a suggestion that this be minimized in order to improve pedestrian flow.

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Mr. Johnson pointed out that when trees are part of the barrier, it must be accompanied by a certain amount of pervious area. He clarified that the proposed landscaping would not be more than 24 in. to 30 in. high.

Mr. Johnson also clarified that there would be angled corner entries in front of some restaurants so pedestrians can access them with ease. There was a concern with ensuring that people would not be blocked from going into restaurants by outdoor tables or bars. Mayor Vincent pointed out that this right-of-way can be completely blocked by congregating pedestrians in its current configuration.

Mr. Johnson emphasized the importance of retaining sufficient space for pedestrian traffic, pointing out that restaurants would suffer without this space and movement. He concluded that the top priority is to ensure that pedestrian traffic flows easily and safely throughout the Downtown.

Commissioner Pouloupoulos commented that his preference was for the simplest option, and pointed out that when parking is removed, that space will need to be filled with something that will blend with the existing design. He also agreed that traffic will need to be calmed in the area, perhaps by the reduction in lane width or through another measure.

Mayor Vincent observed that the Commission should indicate consensus on the design they prefer, which can be further developed by the design team. Town Manager Connors stated that she had heard the Commission express some preference for the more simplified design, and requested that they provide direction to Mr. Johnson and Town Staff.

Mayor Vincent stated that while the Town should not proceed with a design that pushes all pedestrians away from the restaurants, they also should take care to lessen crowd congestion that may move between tables. Town Manager Connors advised that the option in question provides a more comfortable experience for pedestrians walking outside the dining area, but they still have the option to walking on the inside as well.

Commissioner Oldaker asked if it would be possible to raise the A1A/Commercial Boulevard crosswalk so it resembles a speed bump. Mr. Johnson replied that he felt this could be done, as it is not within FDOT's right-of-way.

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Ms. Marchetti, resident, suggested that “downsizing” the proposed landscaping could provide greater ingress/egress to access businesses and restaurants. Another option could be widening the openings that provide access.

There were concerns that raising the A1A/Commercial Boulevard intersection could serve to back up traffic and contribute to congestion there. Mr. Johnson suggested that a rendering of this raised crosswalk be provided for the next meeting so the public has a visual of the proposal.

Vice Mayor Malkoon pointed out that there are no additional access points along the A1A side where backout parking would be removed. Mr. Johnson noted that on one side, there is only one restaurant, while on the opposite side there are multiple businesses. He agreed that this should be looked into further. Vice Mayor Malkoon also suggested that removable bollards be used, so they could be removed for Town events. He concluded that the street could use different pavement in this area.

Ms. Cole, resident, advocated for simplicity in the prospective design.

Town Manager Connors advised that the designs presented at tonight’s workshop were based on recommendations made at previous meetings. She noted that shade structures have not yet been addressed, and recalled that some businesses had asked the Town to consider permanent structures such as sails. She added that she and Mr. Johnson have discussed the functionality of permanent structures, although they can be difficult to deal with during hurricane season. If these are provided by the Town, the businesses feel the Town should be responsible for purchasing and maintaining them.

Town Manager Connors continued that her recommendation would be to continue using umbrellas, as they are part of the Town’s marketing; however, she requested additional direction from the Commission regarding shade structures.

Commissioner Strauss observed that while shade structures are appropriate in some settings, he preferred the umbrellas, which continue to work well for the Town. Commissioner Oldaker agreed, noting that larger shade structures would require significant maintenance from Public Works. Mayor Vincent agreed as well.

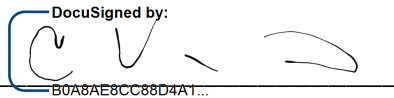
It was suggested that any landscaping should be minimized in order to allow for the greatest flow. Mr. Johnson agreed that the landscaping is intended to serve a purpose, and would consist mostly of freestanding planters rather than barricades. This will be included in subsequent streetscape renderings.

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Ms. Marchetti, resident, requested clarification of the cost of the project and whether or not it has been budgeted. Town Manager Connors replied there is \$350,000 for this purpose in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The Town also has savings from the American Rescue Plan Act, some of which was left over from the Codrington Drive project. She concluded that this will be discussed further at the Commission meeting on June 14, 2022.

4. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to come before the Commission at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

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Mayor Chris Vincent

ATTEST:

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Katrina Adler
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Town Clerk

6/23/2022

Date