

**City Commission Strategic Planning Workshop**  
**December 14, 2023**  
**Video [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)**

Commissioners Lisa Martin, Jason McGuirk, Randy Hartman, Vice Mayor Valli Perrine and Mayor Fred Cleveland were present.

**Public Participation:** Twelve residents and/or business owners spoke in favor of the planned publicly/privately funded project, Flagler Commons, which would help with parking and traffic flow on Flagler, bring housing and commercial space, and beautify the area while keeping its charm. The last resident who spoke also recommended that the Commission revisit our LDRs and ordinances regarding Flagler Ave. as the area was designed for MU, but what is in place hinders future development that would benefit the city, especially our “growth of value”.

City Manager (CM) Kahlid Resheidat opened the workshop by stating it will center around four segments: the Strategic Action Plan Update, the Capital Improvements Update, two projects (Innovation Park and Flagler Commons) that are in the concept stage but have connections with our economic growth and parking issues, and an LDR discussion.

**Strategic Plan Update (Timestamp 30:30):**

Grant Coordinator Chad Gibson presented an [update](#) on four of the five components of the Strategic Plan (Environment and Resiliency was not covered). A summary follows:

**Communication and Trust (CT in PPT)**

- Specific Commission workshops are done quarterly. (CT1- ongoing)
- Staff has been in contact with Pastor Pete from the Westside and is waiting for the determination of when to do the survey. (CT4-ongoing)
- Workshops by Commissioner Hartman and our CM have facilitated public involvement regarding west I-95 development. (CT5- ongoing)
- Staff continues to promote community events and diversity participation i.e. 2023 Senior Holiday Luncheon.

**Quality of Life Measures (QM in PPT)**

- Measures to identify our quality of life have been put on hold. (QM2)
- A strategic working group/partnership to address homeless issues has been established via an agreement with First Step Shelter where 10 people have been placed to date. The Police Chief and CM will be meeting with Advent Health in Jan. (QM3- monitoring)
- Developing long range plans for conservation is continuing to be successful. The City continues to research and obtain critical properties. (QM6-in progress)

**Growth Management (GM in PPT)**

- Staff will develop an outline for the SR 44 Corridor Plan to manage western growth as their work with a consultant has been completed; a cost estimate for his proposal will be made in Jan. (GM1- in progress)
- Staff working to update the land development/zoning code (LDC), PUDs, and Ordinances. Had various engineering studies done to help with Comprehensive Plan and had a Chap. 50 workshop in Dec. Will continue with stormwater/ landscaping and Public Meetings. (GM2-in progress)

- Collaborating with Habitat for Humanity and The Housing Authority. The CRA has reviewed several city-owned properties that could be donated to them for affordable housing. (GM3-in progress)

#### **Transportation & Circulation (TC in PPT)**

- Staff partnered with TPO, the County, and FDOT to align bike and pedestrian trails. The west route of the Suntrail was chosen in Nov. with the grant due by Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>. Staff will continue working next year with the River to the Sea TPO. (TC1.1-in progress)
- Designated loading zones for the historic main street retail areas were completed by Maintenance Operation and had positive reactions. (TC2.2-completed but will be monitored and reassessed in 2024)
- A consultant hired to study transportation issues will present an Action Plan using Parking Force recommendations on Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> (TC2.3-in progress). The consultant is also looking at the viability of a shuttle to alleviate parking issues. (TC3.2-in progress)

#### **Comment:**

- Commissioner Martin stated there had been an analysis done regarding a trolley, showing that it really wasn't wanted. The CM responded there wasn't an analysis, but the Commission did not apply for an FDOT grant based on cost estimates.

#### **Capital Projects Update (Timestamp 45:42):**

CIP Manager Jesse Kobe presented the Capital Improvements update from The Strategic Plan, stating that all the projects will not be shown as some are just beginning. He shared 28 that are in various stages which can be found [here](#). The projects below were explained in depth by Chief Engineer Kyle Fegley with added comments by CM Resheidat:

- The Turnbull Canal Dredging project: There are two separate sections. The first is south of SR44 to Old Mission Rd. Since this area doesn't have any easements, individual permits were needed. Work should commence in early 2024 by a contractor to dredge to the sediment line. The second section (off Jungle near the Turnbull Observation Deck) is trickier as the canal is considered navigable and will take about six months to obtain all the permits. Mayor Cleveland asked if this could be expedited since we are in a low-lying area to which Mr. Fegley responded that they are being aggressive in calling them and sending documents/emails showing the necessity of expediting. It usually takes a year. Commissioner McGuirk asked about purchasing a Spider next year and how much help that would be, to which CM Resheidat responded it would clear only canals/ditches, not creeks. McGuirk still felt that purchasing one next year should be prioritized as then maintenance would be in our control.
- Corbin Park Installation of Drainage System: A Public meeting was held on 12/13 and once input/concerns are wrapped up, the design plans will be finalized. The City is coordinating with the County on permits. 80% of the right-of-ways are in the County, and we need permission to put in infrastructure. We are also coordinating with St. Johns Water Management as we must maintain their water quality standards. Bids will go out in early 2024. Plans will be brought to the Commission in the late spring/early summer and construction can then begin. Mr. Fegley added that he began working with Corbin Park in 2020 on this issue, so he was glad it was finally being resolved.
- Historic Westside has some design changes. The perimeter of the plan increased at residents' requests following a Public Meeting. The City will submit a Cost Share request through Water Management for this project and Corbin Park which will pay around 25% and put both bids together to save money.

- Washington Streetscape Improvements: This project is between US 1 and Riverside Drive and involves the reconstruction of the street including all utilities. The vertical curve at the Riverside intersection must be softened and moved a bit. Then the plan had to be amended to ensure safe passage for pedestrians and bicyclists as it's a main corridor to the North Causeway. The irrigation, hardscape and landscape designs are being finalized. Putting electric underground will be a big endeavor as customers can't lose their electricity for long periods. The City is working with the UC to do this as well as getting the easements for it. Replacing the water mains is 90% complete. We have asked for a Grant extension as bids will be going out in mid-2024.

#### **A Few Comments/Questions:**

- Commissioner Hartman asked about the status of the new building that was bought for the Skate Park with the response that we purchased it and will begin soon.
- VM Perrine asked about the UC building on Canal and what will be done with it if the UC relocates to which the response was there is a joint meeting in January, and it's on the agenda.
- Mayor Cleveland wondered if Mr. Kobe wanted to keep or change the CIP model that is currently in use. Ideally, one or two more Project Managers are needed. CM Resheidat concurred, adding he has been requesting an additional PM for the past few years and hopes it will be considered as our project load is growing.

#### **Deering Park Innovation Center (Timestamp 1:33)**

For many years, City Commissions and administrators have all recognized the need for additional economic development to help reduce the city's reliance on residents for its tax base which is currently over 83% versus 11% commercial. However, since NSB was short of space and not too welcoming for businesses due to regulations and permitting issues, CM Khalid Resheidat supports the plan for a "pad ready" industrial park center.

The target property for this is west of I-95 and north of Edgewater, adjacent to the planned extension of Williamson Blvd south to SR 442. The owner has been working with city staff for the last six months to create the Deering Park Innovation Center on his property. Specific uses of this property would include light industrial such as aerospace, biomedical, pharmaceutical and technological research, manufacturing and distribution as well as corporate headquarters, municipal uses and residential (2,150 units). This project would require a PUD and a Comprehensive Plan update which would include a new land use designation. The property is currently zoned agricultural and has been used mostly for timber and cattle.

The proposed development is approximately 1,667 acres, and the land was annexed by the City several years ago. A mixed-use village would also be created that would include commercial, entertainment, recreation (including a new mini-sports complex) and medical facilities to complement residential use west of I-95 and the proposed hospital at the interchange. Specific uses will include retail, restaurants, medical offices, hotels, entertainment, some multifamily units, a community center, and a police substation. Some benefits to the city include extensive conservation areas to include bicycle, pedestrian and electric vehicle trails as well as large areas of open space and natural vegetation that will be maintained in perpetuity at no cost to the city. The City and the developer will craft language in the final agreement to require a balanced schedule of development as related to residential and non-residential components of the project.

This is a long-term project that could take 10-20 years to complete. For more detailed information, refer to the Power Point presentation found [here](#).

**Comments:**

The Commissioners all shared concern about the compatibility of industrial and residential areas as well as the timing of how these projects would be undertaken. They don't want the residential properties to be developed without the commercial projects. Otherwise, they support this concept and told the City Manager to proceed with the planning process.

**Proposed Flagler Avenue Private Development with Parking** (Video begins approximately 10 Minutes into Part 2) [Power Point](#)

The owners of the property at the corner of Cooper Street and Flagler Avenue, presented their plan to develop the property and the city-owned parking lot adjacent to it off Jessamine Avenue by either purchasing or leasing it from the City. The project will expand the overall parking capacity of the two combined properties. His multi-use project called Flagler Commons will be built in four stages with the first phase completed this summer (adds 76 parking spaces and includes both lots). Proposed is a single, one-way entrance, with two exits off Cooper and one exit off Jessamine that will carry over when a two-level gated parking garage is completed in 2026. The first level of the parking garage will be 5' underground and 7' high. The second level would be 8+ feet high, allowing for larger vehicles. The current City lot has 28 parking spaces. The plan is to designate 56 spaces as city public parking spaces and keep 70+. It was stressed that the garage's first floor would have to be closed during major storms. Nine high-end condos will be built over the garage in 2027 and retail/office space and food kiosks in 2028.

The existing building on his property was built in 1909 (former Wicker Basket) and the plan is to preserve it and elevate it to the second level. The buildings would be designed in a Victorian style similar to the Riverview Hotel using all concrete block construction with a Hardie Board facade that will preserve the visual character of the area. Using his lot alone, he could build five condominiums, the commercial portion of the project, and have 45 parking spaces which wouldn't provide for any additional public parking and would curtail any future expansion of the city lot.

**Some Comments/Questions:**

- Vice Mayor Perrine asked whether the historic home on the property had been evaluated by an engineering firm to see if it could be preserved and relocated. The owner has confirmation of both and an estimate.
- Commissioner Hartman stated that it is an opportune time for enhancing the city lot. The only decision for the city is if and how they wish to include their property in the project. The owner can already proceed developing his lot.
- Commissioner Martin inquired whether he had verified insurance availability including liability for the underground parking and whether the impact of the project on adjacent properties had been evaluated. The owner responded that insurance is available but expensive. The City Manager stated that structural engineers will study the impacts on adjacent properties.
- Mayor Cleveland expressed his appreciation for the consideration they have given to the project and thinks it's exciting. He recommends working with Mr. Pendergast, chair of the Parking Task Force.

- The City Manager needs the Commission's approval to move forward and prepare options for either selling or leasing the property.
- The City Attorney stated that the first step would be for the owner to present a formal proposal to the City, so they can begin to work through what could be a lengthy process of evaluating the legalities and economic feasibility of the project.

### **LDR Discussion (Timestamp Second Video 1:42)**

Commissioner Martin brought up five items for discussion: infill issues, size of new beachside homes, commercial abutting residential, a ramp surtax for beachside maintenance, and parking behind businesses on SR44. The three most discussed were:

- Infill issues regarding new homes being built are concerning as their height is causing their neighbors' properties to flood during heavy rains. Builders need to adhere to both City (18" above road) and FEMA elevation regulations with the latter unchangeable. Development Services is working on a review of city LDRs
- The size of new Beachside homes has become an issue with longtime residents. New construction must abide by city regulations of 60% impervious coverage and maximum height. This is another LDR issue that is being reviewed by Staff.
- The possibility of levying a surtax to beach access fees was discussed. The tax collected would be apportioned to coastal cities based upon the number of cars using their ramps. It was agreed that we should get funding to help with maintenance since we do have more visitors in a more concentrated area compared to other coastal cities. CM Resheidat will bring it up to the County Commission at the January meeting.

Commissioner Hartman brought up the application process for special events as he sees a disconnect between the application and the event itself, especially when businesses close their parking lots for an event. He feels that when the CC is asked to give Consent, they sometimes don't have all the information required to make an informed decision. Most concurred. The mayor added there needs to be one place where ALL events can be seen and the application should require firm due dates (that aren't the day before the event).

Leisure Services Director Rob Salazar was called upon and agreed that the application process needs to be revised to be more specific on some items. He also preferred having a submission due date but thought it would be hard to enforce especially for events that have been here for decades. The mayor stated if we advertise this change ahead of time, they should then be held accountable as it's not fair to Mr. Salazar or the CC otherwise. Regarding having an "event czar" that would keep track of everything and post events, Mr. Salazar stated the Visitor's Bureau maintains a Master Calendar of events that his department can promote. He will meet with them to see how they can work together.

Also discussed was the Canal St. Car Show and problems that had arisen but hopefully have been resolved.

### **City Commission Open Discussion (Timestamp Second Video 2:05)**

- There was discussion regarding the creation of a Transportation/Mobility Department as recommended by the Parking Task Force. The City Manager explained that the cost of this department would be paid by the parking fund, and it is being considered.

- Commissioner Martin expressed interest in researching the use of auxiliary dwelling units (ADU's) throughout the city, where appropriate and allowed by the land development regulations and zoning. Since there is an increased need for affordable housing in the city, this could be something that would be one solution to this problem.
- The best use of the Coronado Civic Center/shuffleboard courts/parking area on Flagler Avenue was discussed. There are differing points of view about how many people use these facilities, whether they are financially self-supporting and how much historical value they have. It was also pointed out that a better use of the property could be an expanded parking lot. Commissioners agreed that this could be explored in the future.