

Town Master Plan Review
How LBTS will become the “Prettiest Small Town in America”

This letter is summary of the various improvements listed on the Master Plan as well as from observations of activities on El Mar Drive, A1A, and Commercial Blvd. Beautification (improvements) is what everyone wants for this small town.

The Master Plan is a well prepared professional document and we should make an effort to start implementing it. We should make recommendations and discuss adjustments if necessary. This Master Plan was created with the assistance of the previous Master Plan Steering Committee and the input of a Public Gathering Session. We don't have to re-invent the wheel, just get it rolling.

LBTS is a resort town. As the town continues to grow into the 21st century, certain changes appear to be necessary in order for tourists to continue coming here. The year 2010 is not the same as the year 1950 - there is a new mentality and different demands today which should not be ignored.

Driving cars to the motel room door is no longer necessary. We need better quality hotels, more outdoor dining, enhanced shopping, fewer cars, and beach improvements that include rentals of chairs and umbrellas, life guards, restrooms and controlled food concessions.

LBTS is unique in the sense that we are the only stretch between Fort Lauderdale Beach and Pompano Beach where a person can see the water and not feel isolated by high-rise buildings. We have a beautiful beach, a one mile long road by the water (El Mar), a short length of Commercial Blvd, and the necessary evil called A1A. With a few exceptions, we don't have buildings of great architectural value, or an “art deco” downtown area to renovate. Until we start replacing old buildings with new ones on a larger scale, we need to improve the three main arteries. If we don't, and if we don't establish architectural standards, we will see more condominiums along the beach as the motels will sell out to developers and LBTS will become a bedroom community.

In order to facilitate the improvements, we may want to divide them into groups based on the following suggested priorities:

Group A

1. El Mar Drive Streetscape.

The proposed solution (one traffic lane + one multi-purpose lane) as suggested at the meeting of July 20, 2010 was accepted by the MPSC.

2. Public Restrooms

We should seriously consider providing public restrooms to serve the beachgoers at these locations: Washingtonia Portal (plenty of space available), El Prado (Pre-fab unit), and Commercial Blvd. beach access between the Aruba building and the hotel garage at the end of the public alley (Explanatory sketch for this location was sent to MPSC members).

3. Town Center/ Pedestrian Mall

We need a Waterfront Center at the foot of Commercial Blvd. Outdoor restaurant and café seating should be expanded and encouraged, as well as quality shops. It should be professionally designed to become the Town's biggest attraction.

(See Master Plan pages 11 & 25, also attachment SK-MP-1)

4. Beachfront Promenade

Unless we connect the portals with a multi-purpose promenade, we have no full use of the beach. This walkway will serve walkers, joggers and strollers.

(See Master Plan pages 32 & 63, also attachment SK-MP-1)

5. A1A Improvements (Downtown area only)

We cannot improve El Mar and ignore the stretch of A1A between Pine Avenue and Palm Avenue. We should consider replacing the turning lane with a landscaped island. This will end the unlimited turning at any point of this length of A1A and will also eliminate the illegal use of this lane as a passing lane. Changing direction (U-turns) will be made possible at Washingtonia and Datura or Hibiscus by providing a small rotary at El Mar Dr.

(See sketches SK-11 and SK-8A).

Group B

1. Parking Garage(s)

LBTs will be a special town only if we offer something different, something special. We should reduce car traffic to the minimum and make this town the most “green” and pedestrian friendly. The town administration must encourage and facilitate replacement of the 50’s motels with small hotels with parking under the building. Back-out parking should not be permitted after (TBD) years regardless if the motel is renovated or not. We should commission the services of professional architects to recommend guidelines of architectural styles for various types of buildings.

To achieve these goals, we should commence discussions for the possibility of adding three more parking levels on the municipal lot on A1A. This will create an additional 150 plus parking spaces to the existing 67 on ground level. A garage of this size will be sufficient to accommodate all cars that are now parked in front of all motels on El Mar drive north of Commercial Blvd.

Two additional smaller parking garages might be required - one near Pine Avenue (North end) and one near Palm Avenue (South end). A traffic study will be necessary to finalize such decisions.

Group C

1. Commercial Blvd Improvements

The stretch of Commercial Blvd between A1A and the bridge should be converted to the main shopping area of the town. In order to do achieve this, we should follow the recommendations of the Master Plan. We should proceed with the creation of a strong pedestrian circulation system and a pedestrian promenade from the bridge to the ocean. It would be nice to include restaurants with sidewalk dining, specialty stores, cafés and galleries.

(See Master Plan pages 42 & 43).

Note: A good example will be Atlantic Avenue in Delray Beach.

2. Basin Drive Center

Basin Drive is an abandoned area in extreme need of rehabilitation. This might be the only place where the town can provide good access to the Intracoastal water way. A further study of the existing properties in that area will be necessary.

(See Master Plan page 67).

Note: It might be possible to provide access to a water taxi dock at the bridge next to the medical building on the NW corner of Commercial and W. Tradewinds Avenue.

Group D

1. El Prado Parking lot

The present lot, to the best of my knowledge, was designed and constructed by the Minto development under agreement with the previous Town Administration. Even though it was well designed, the purpose for this was to serve the interest of the developer (sell condominiums) and not in the interest of the town. Ideally, it would have have two levels of parking (ground level & upper level – approx.150 plus parking spaces) and the roof to be suitable for use by residents including flower beds, pergolas, benches, etc. It will also be possible to collect the rainwater and store it in a cistern for irrigation use.

2. Town Hall

A new Town Hall building will complement all of the Town's improvements. With parking under the building and two levels of offices, it will rise above the El Prado garage with an unobstructed view of the ocean.

John Panitsas
8/31/2010