

Higgs Beach Park Redevelopment

June 13, 2018

Prepared by Commissioner Heather Carruthers, Monroe
County Florida

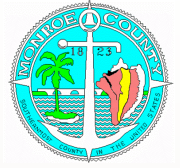
Higgs Beach Park: Background



- Recreational area for over 100 years
- Named after County Commissioner Clarence S. Higgs
 - Advocate for park
 - Served in 1950's and 1960's
- County property entirely surrounded by City of Key West



Background: 1800's



- African Refugee Graveyard
 - Slave ship intercepted by U.S. Navy in 1860
 - Many slaves returned to Liberia
 - 300 passed away on journey
- West Martello Fort construction began in 1862
 - Fortification of City for the Civil War
 - Never completed



Background: 1862 - 1945



- Property acquired by the United States of America from Edward S. Gato in 1898
- Reynolds Street Pier constructed at some point
- WWII projects
 - Barracks constructed
 - Radio tower erected
 - Gun turrets built (now functioning as pavilions and bandstands)



Background: 1945 - 1959



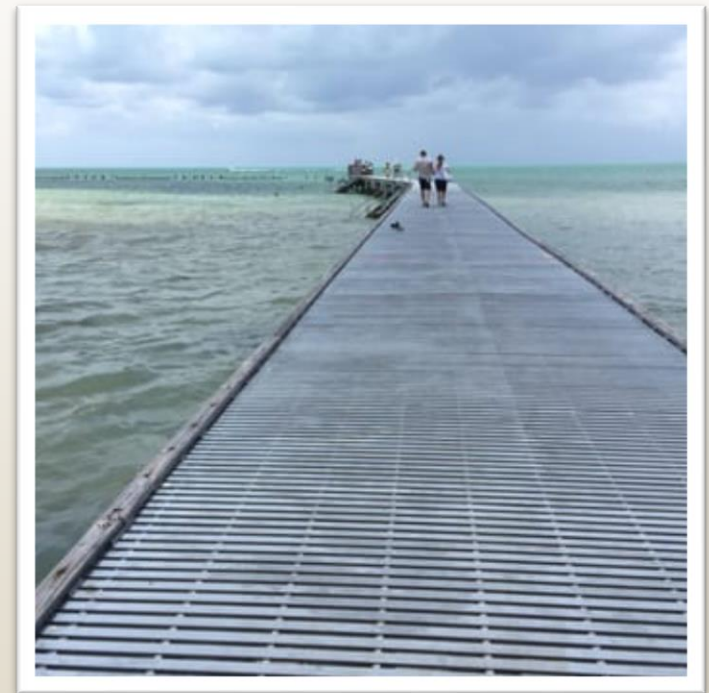
- County accepts park from War Assets Administrator in 1947
- Reynolds Street Pier repaired
- Bathrooms constructed
- Sand added
- Seawall added
- Beach enlarged to White Street Pier
- Fort dedicated as the Joe Allen Garden Center and home to Key West Garden Club



Background: 1980's



- Friends of the Pier founded
- West Martello designated on National Register of Historic Places
- Restaurant added
- With help from Land & Water Conservation Grant, County added
 - Tennis courts
 - Parking
 - Landscaping
- Reynolds Street Pier repaired and reopened



Background: LWCF Grant



- Grant covered 50% of project cost = \$110,233.56
- ✓ Area must remain recreational
- ✓ Area must be operated by County for at least 25 years
- Roadway clearly identified as access to park and parking

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Florida Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
LIST OF PROJECT ELEMENTS

The Clarence Higgs Beach & Park Expansion consisted of the construction or renovation of the following project elements:

1. Three (3) new tennis courts were constructed adjacent to the already existing three (3) tennis courts, thus doubling the recreation facilities in this area of the park.
2. One (1) new handball/racquetball was constructed in the area of the radio tower.
3. Several segments of fencing were removed and the area graded and leveled to receive crushed limerock fill. Approximately 4,030 cubic yards of fill material was spread and rolled in this section and then covered with 1,160 cubic yards of sand. This greatly enlarged the area of sandy beach at the Higgs Beach Park as can be seen by the as-built site plans.
4. In this newly expanded section, the Public Works Department constructed eight (8) tiki huts for use as picnic shelters. Eight (8) picnic benches were also constructed with one (1) placed at each tiki. In addition, the Public Works Department purchased eight (8) new barbecue grills, one (1) for each shelter.
5. The existing roadway in the park area had to be re-routed to accommodate the expansion of the beach area and a new roadway with an alternate routing was constructed. This new roadway consists of a crushed limerock base with a double-surface treatment of oil and rock, this construction method is identical to the one used by Monroe County in construction of all of our secondary roads. Future plans call for the extension of this road throughout the park area to provide access to the proposed parking lot addition.
6. The Public Works Department has planted the restoration area with many different species of indigenous trees and shrubs. Disease-resistant coconut palms line the new road and aralia shrubs have been planted along the fence fronting Casa Marina Ct. Gumbo Limbo trees, mahogany trees, tropical almond trees and various palms have been placed throughout the park area in addition to seagrape, buttonwood and croton plantings.
7. Other landscaping that has already been completed includes the placing of large natural coral boulders between the palms along the roadway.

Background: 1999 Interest



- Friends of Higgs Beach formed
- Dog park constructed
- African Memorial constructed
- Landscaping upgraded



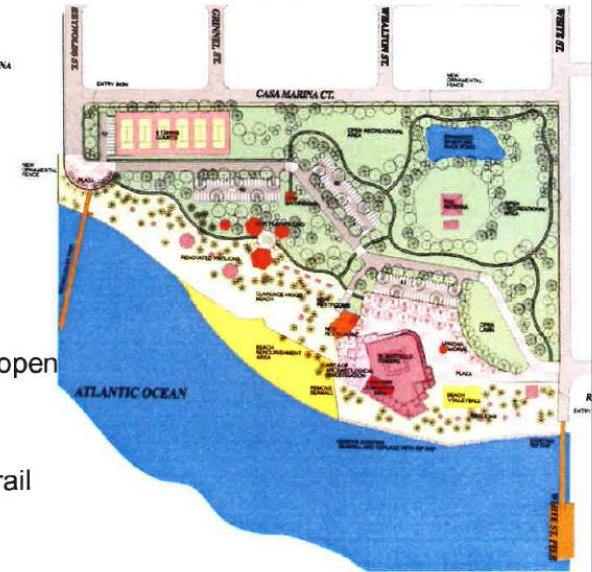
Background: An Earlier Plan



- New plan for development proposed but shelved
 - Never funded
 - Roadway concern
 - Change in leadership

Proposed Site Plan for Higgs Beach

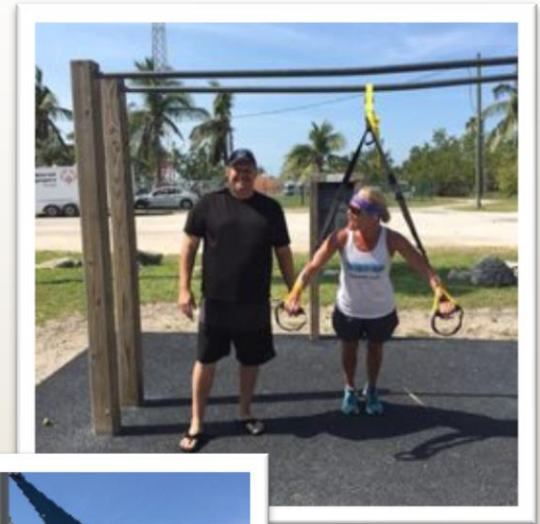
- Pier extension
- Replace perimeter fence & add pedestrian entrances
- Create a family oriented park
- Create gateways to the park
- Install security lighting
- Retain existing tennis courts
- Design the park as a destination
- Increase vegetation density with open green spaces
- Remove all exotic plants
- Identify the Overseas Heritage Trail Path connection



Background: This Century



- “Special Higgs Beach Fund” rediscovered in 2009
- Friends of Higgs Beach reinvigorated and incorporated as 501 (c)3
- Park security improved
- New playground on beach constructed
- Fitness trail installed
- Beach volleyball courts improved



Higgs Beach Master Plan



- Developed over two years
- 46 public input meetings
 - General
 - Special user groups
 - Sport groups
 - Kids and parents
 - Neighbors
- Funding set aside with infrastructure sales tax dollars
- Additional funding with TDC money

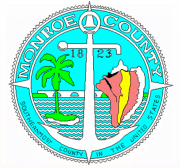
Higgs Beach Master Plan



Higgs Beach Park Redevelopment – Monroe County, Florida

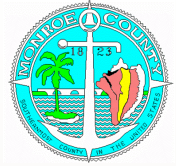
June 13, 2018

Roadway Realignment Rationale

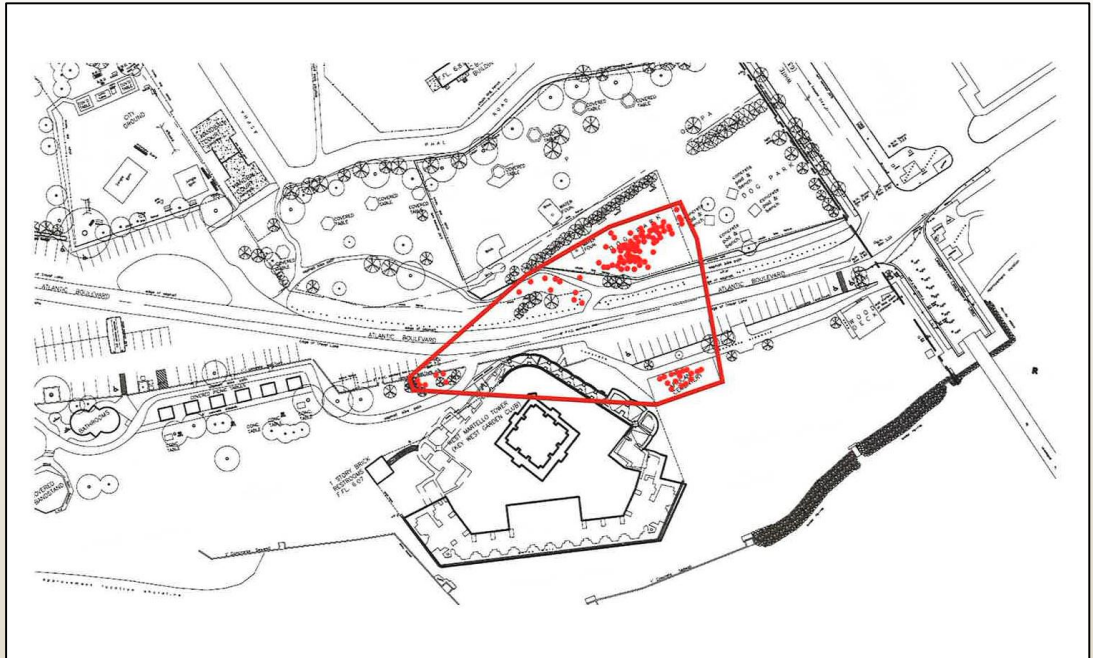


1. Remove pavement from above African gravesites to provide respectful green space and memorial
2. Eliminate dangerous parking conditions with cars backing directly into roadway
3. Keep playgrounds and restrooms on the same side of the road
4. Move traffic away from the historical asset that is the West Martello
5. Create contiguous bike and pedestrian pathway alongside road
6. Increase recreational options on “sand side” of road to allow greater use of TDC funding

1. African Gravesites



- Red dots indicate graves identified by ground penetrating radar
- Red polygon outlines total area where graves are presumed to lie, including under the existing road



2. Dangerous Parking Areas



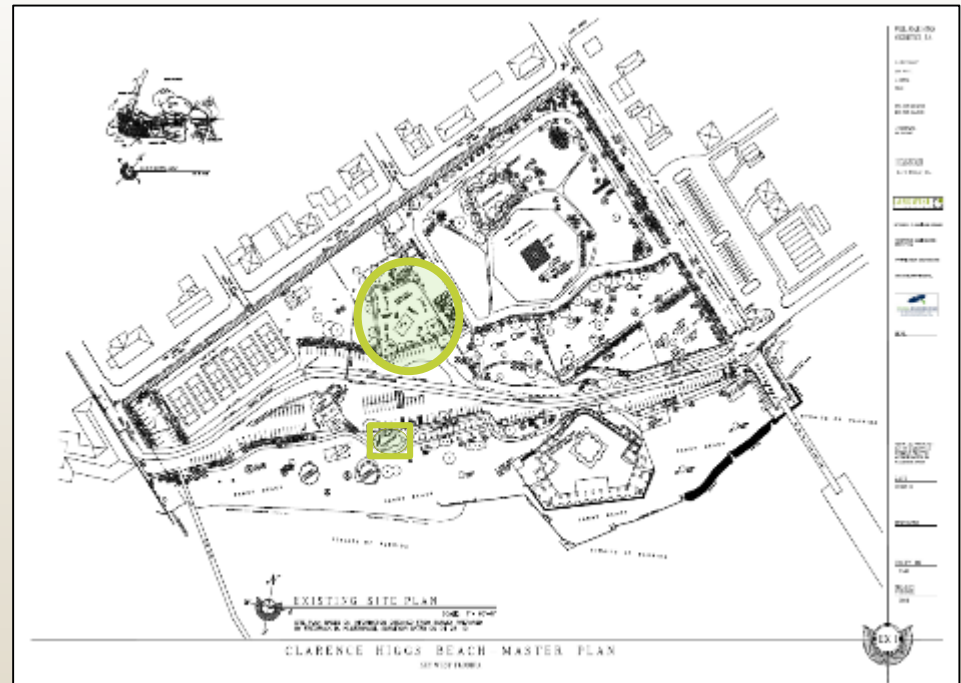
- Cars pull directly into roadway from existing parking areas



3. Playground & Restrooms on Opposite Sides of Roadway



- Insufficient space near restroom to move the playground unless roadway moves



4. Vehicles too close to Martello



- There are just 5 feet between the active roadway and the façade of the historic West Martello.



5. Confusing bike path



- Cyclists criss-cross the roadway to stay on the same path



6. Use of TDC Funds



- ▶ TDC statutes assert that bed tax revenues can be used for “beach park facilities.”
- ▶ Legal opinions assert that bed tax revenues CANNOT be used for the section of the park on the far side of the roadway (north of the yellow line here), thus limiting revenue sources.

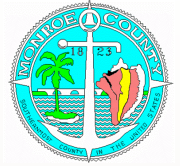


Approved Master Plan



Higgs Beach Park Redevelopment – Monroe County, Florida

Recreational Improvements



- More than .39 acre **increase** in **green space**
- More than .64 acre **increase** in **beach area**
- .12-acre **decrease** in existing **building structures**
- .10-acre **increase** in **amenities** (pickleball courts, etc.)
- **Decrease** of more than 1 acre of “**paving**” (road, parking, sidewalks)



Roadway Facts



- Unlike adjacent Atlantic Boulevard, it is NOT maintained by the City of Key West or by FDOT.
- Acknowledged as part of Park amenities in 1984 LWCF grant agreement
- Inaccurately called “Atlantic Boulevard” because it had no unique name
- Entrance to park clearly identified
- Reduced speed within Park boundaries
- Often closed entirely for special events (4th of July Fireworks, frequent running events, triathlons, etc.)

Roadway at White Street



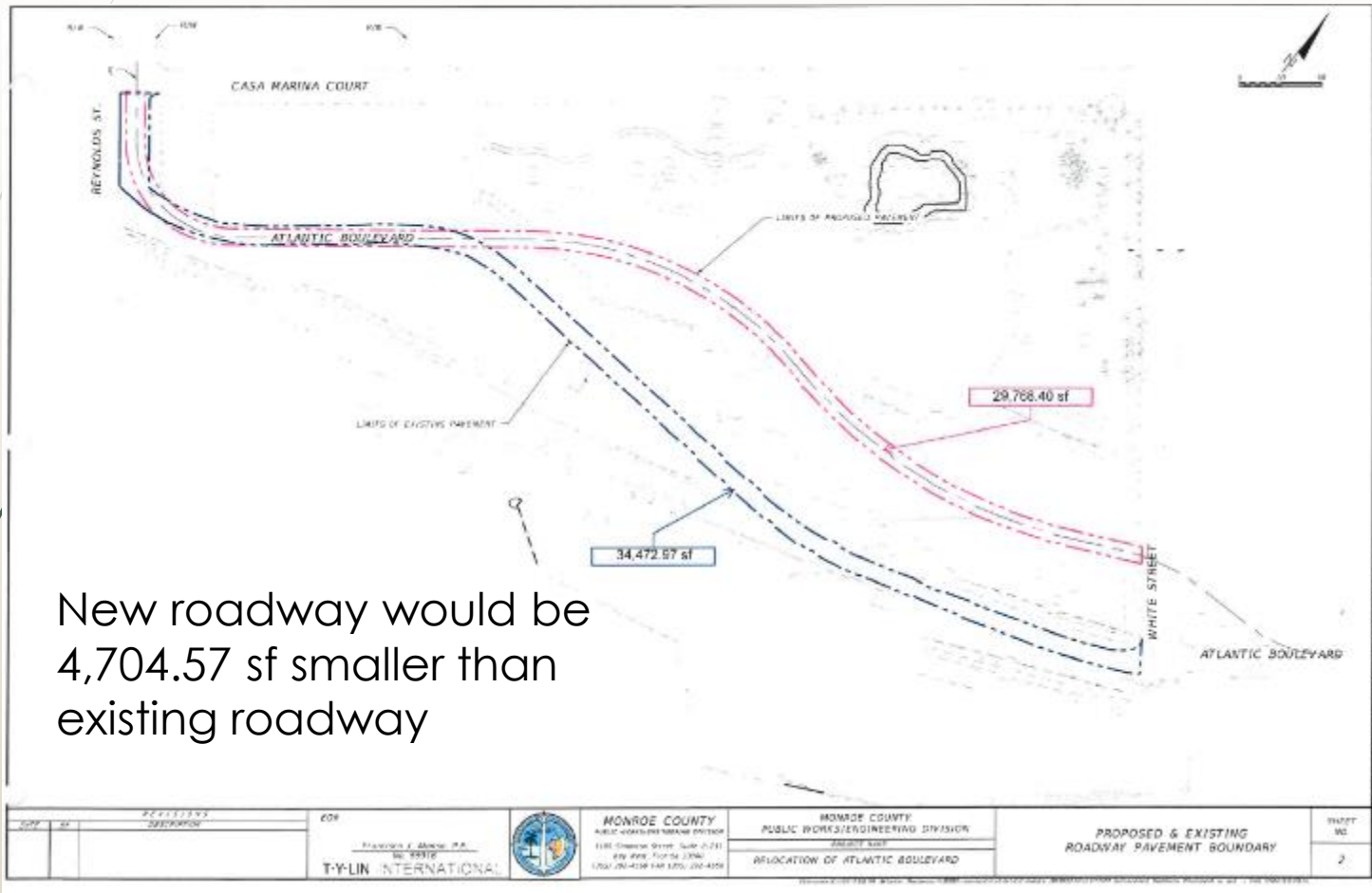
Roadway at Reynolds Street



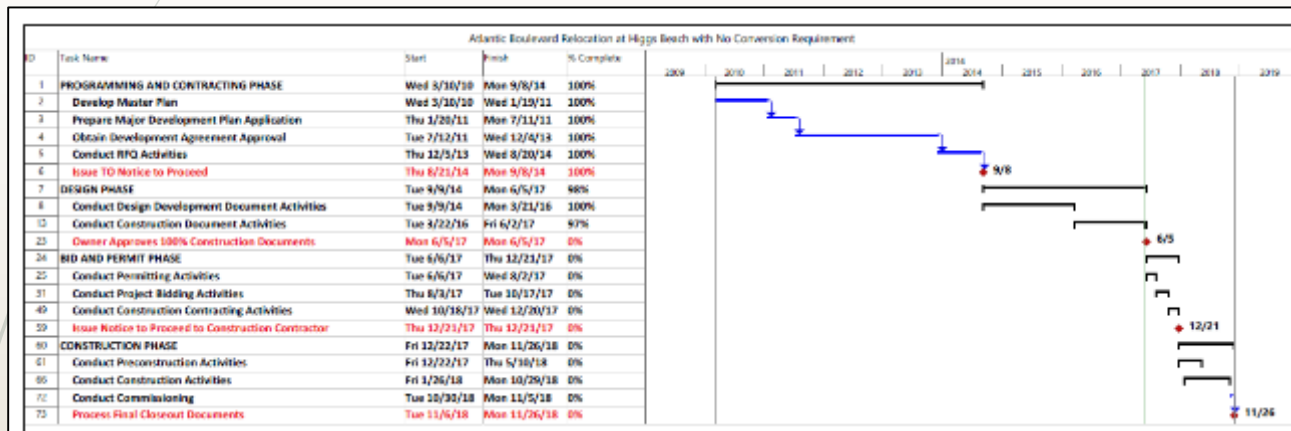
Road closed for Special Events



Roadway Comparison

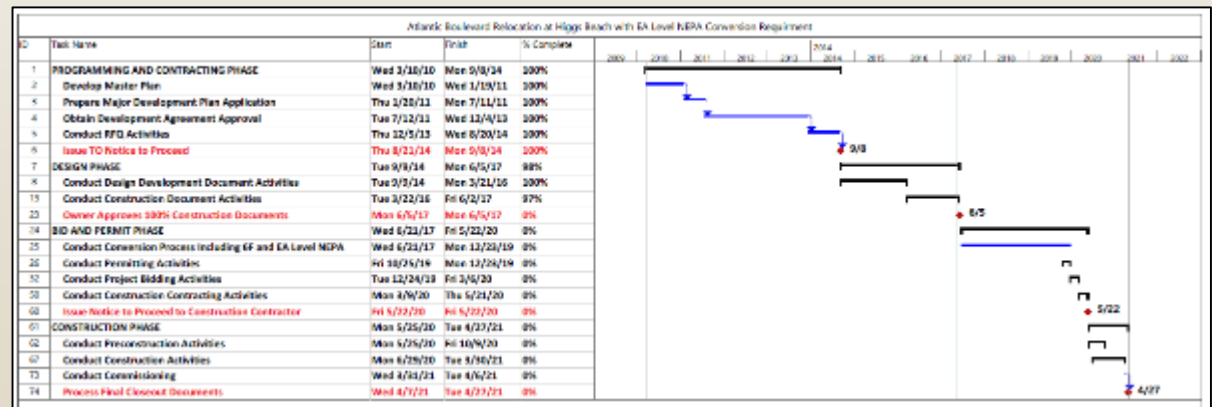


Impact of Conversion Decision

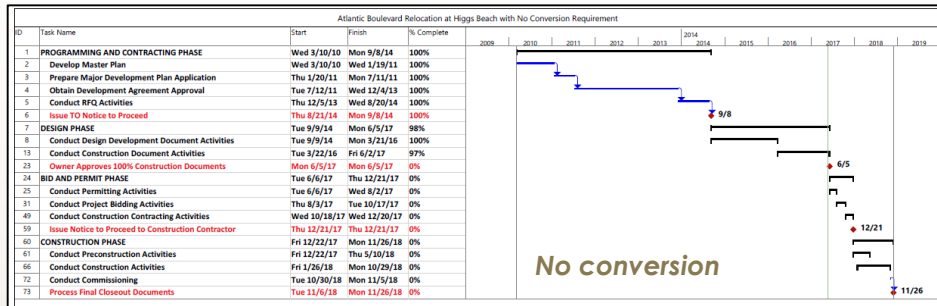


The Master Plan was approved in January **2012**.

If this project is deemed a conversion, it could **add 3 years** to the development timeline.

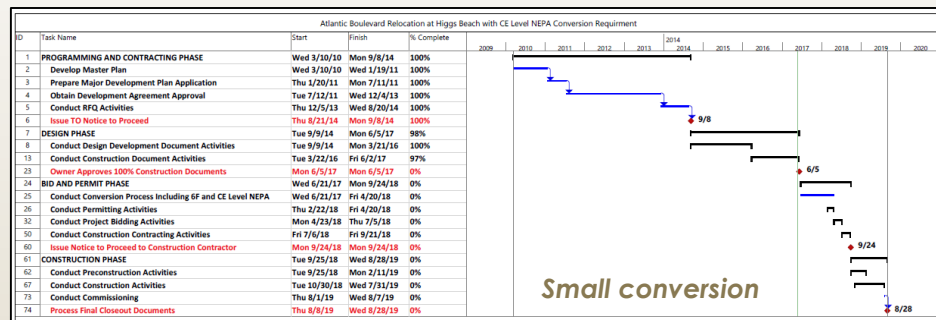


Impact of Conversion Decision

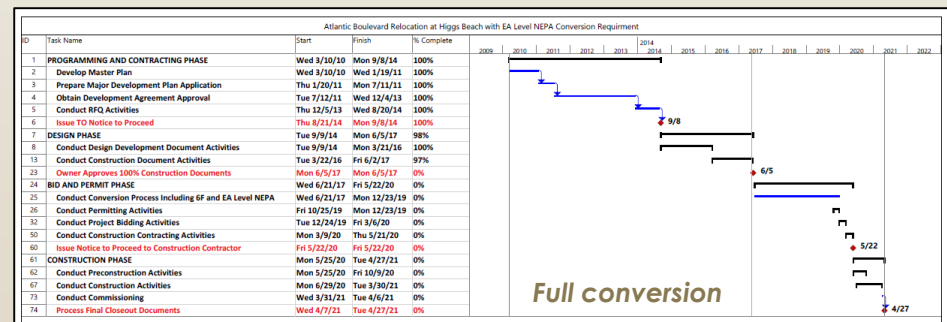


The Master Plan was approved in **January 2012**.

Discovery of the grant restrictions has **already delayed** the project by **1 year**.



If this project is deemed a conversion, it could **add another 1 to 3 years** to the development timeline.



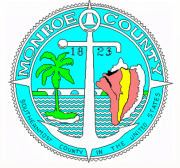
Summary



- This is **not a conversion** – neither full nor small.
- It is a “swap” of existing paved roadway for a safer, smaller roadway.
- Recreational use is maintained and enhanced.
- The Master Plan has been thoroughly vetted and developed with considerable citizen input.

Please approve this project. Thank you.

Contact Information



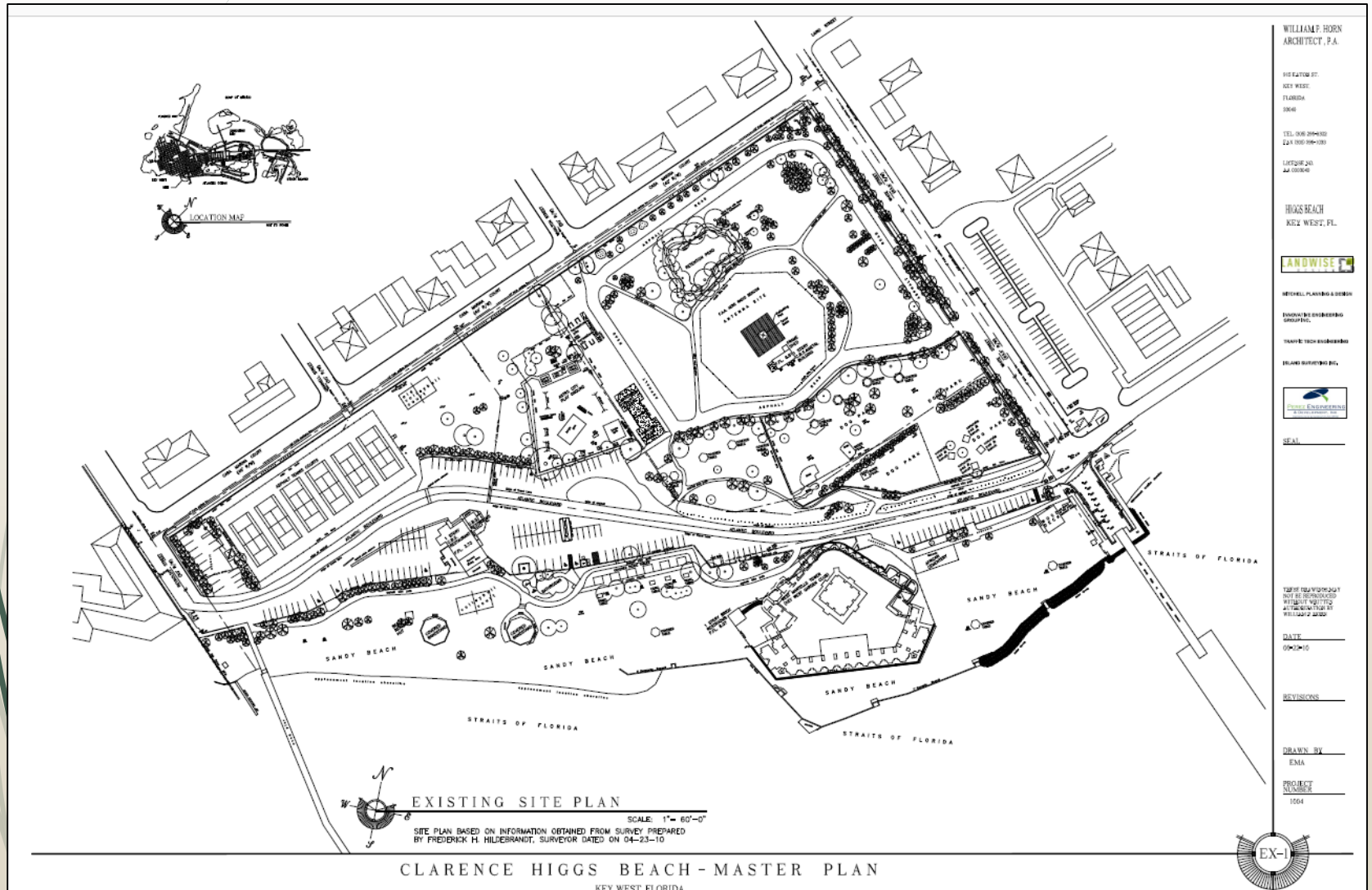
Heather Carruthers

Monroe County Commissioner, District 3

500 Whitehead Street, Key West, FL 33040

305-292-3430 ~ boccdis3@monroecounty-fl.gov

Appendix: Existing Site Plan



WILLIAM F. HORN
ARCHITECT, P.A.

110 EASTON ST.
KEY WEST,
FLORIDA
33040
TEL: 305-294-4100
234 300-196-100
LUTHER JEN
AA 10/20/10

HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, FL.



MITCHELL PLANNING & DESIGN
ENGINEERING GROUP, INC.
THAYER TECH ENGINEERING
ISLAND SURVEYING, INC.



SEAL

TITLE: EXISTING SITE PLAN
DATE: 09/20/10

DATE: 09/20/10

REVISIONS

DRAWN BY: EMA

PROJECT NUMBER: 1004



EXISTING SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 60'-0"

SITE PLAN BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM SURVEY PREPARED BY FREDERICK H. HILDEBRANDT, SURVEYOR DATED ON 04-23-10

CLARENCE HIGGS BEACH - MASTER PLAN
KEY WEST, FLORIDA



Appendix: Approved Master Plan



Appendix: New vs. Existing Site Plan



Red lines delineate existing park layout.



WILLIAM P. MORR
ARCHITECT, P.A.

305 E. 15th St.
KEY WEST,
FLORIDA
33040
TEL: (305) 296-1800
FAX: (305) 296-1825
LIC# 06160
A.A. 000046

HIGGS BEACH
KEY WEST, FL.



MITCHELL PLANNING & DESIGN

SCOTT W. WOODWARD

TRAFIC TECH ENGINEERING

ISLAND SURVIVING INC.



SCALE

THIS DRAWING MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT EXPRESS AUTHORIZATION BY WILLIAM P. MORR

DATE
08-22-10

REVISIONS
12-20-10
01-08-11

DRAWN BY
SHA

PROJECT NUMBER
1004

ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS POSSIBLE WITH RELOCATING ROAD NORTHWARD

- * CREATES MORE AREAS BEACHSIDE
- * PLAYGROUND MOVES TO BEACHSIDE
- * VISITOR/NATURE CENTER GOES TO PARK SIDE OF ROAD AND SUPPORTS SPORTS USES AND MULTIPURPOSE FIELD EVENTS
- * ROAD MOVES AWAY FROM FORT AND GRAVES SITES
- * ALLOWS POSSIBLE REDESIGN OF END OF WHITE STREET AND ENTRY TO PARK

PROPOSED SITE PLAN - OPTION F
SCALE 1" = 60'-0"

SITE PLAN BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM SURVEY PREPARED BY FREDERICK H. HILDEBRANDT, SURVEYOR DATED ON 04-23-10

