



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To: Jim Scholl, City Manager
Through: Donald Leland Craig, AICP, Planning Director
From: Nicole Malo, Planner II
Date: May 1, 2012
RE: **Major Development Plan – Nelson English and Willie Ward Parks - 306 Catherine Street (RE# 00026460-000000), 304 Catherine Street (RE# 00026470-000000,00026480-000000), 300 Louisa Street (RE# 00026500-000000), 307 Louisa Street (RE# 00026490-000000, 00026510-000000, 00026520-000000), 250 Amelia Street (RE# 00026610-000000, 00026610-000100)** - An application for the redevelopment of Nelson English and Willie Ward Parks in the HHDR and HMDR zoning districts per Section 108-91(A.)(2)(c) of the Land Development Regulations of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Key West.

Action Statement

Request: A request to consider the approval of a phased Master Plan to redevelop Nelson English and Willie Ward Park, located on City property and on portions of property owned by the Monroe County Land Authority and leased by the City. Funding for the Development Plan is supported by the Tax Increment Financing Fund appropriated by the Community Redevelopment Agency that is available at this time to complete most of the proposed plan.

Location: Nelson English Park and Willie Ward Park - 306 Catherine Street (RE#00026460-000000), 304 Catherine Street (RE#00026470-000000, 00026480-000000), 300 Louisa Street (RE#00026500-000000), 307 Louisa Street (RE#00026490-000000, 00026510-000000, 00026520-000000), 250 Amelia Street (RE#00026610-000000, 00026610-000100)

Zoning: Historic High Density Residential (HHDR)
Historic Medium Density Residential (HMDR)



Area 'A' - Nelson English Park

Area 'B' - Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center and Pool

Area 'C' - Willie Ward Park

Area C1 - Monroe County Land Authority parcel RE#00026460- 000000

Area C2 - Monroe County Land Authority parcel RE#00026490-000000

Previous City Actions

Community Meetings:

July 28, 2011

August 18, 2011

District VI Meetings

February 9, 2012

April 12, 2012

Tree Commission Meeting:

October 19, 2012

HARC Meeting:

October 26, 2011

Development Review Committee Meeting:

October 27, 2011

BVRAC Meeting:

December 1, 2011

CRA Meetings:

January 18, 2012

Planning Board Meeting:

February 16, 2012

City Commission Meeting:

March 20, 2012 – Postponed

April 3, 2012 – Postponed

May 1, 2012

Updated Background Information

The Master Plan approval for the proposed Major Development Plan has undergone significant community and staff review, including approval from the Tree Commission, HARC and the BVRAC beginning June 2011 as identified above. Most recently the development was approved by the Planning Board on February 16, 2012 with six conditions of approval through Resolution 2012-07 (see below). One of which (condition

#5) regulates the redirection of traffic on the streets in the front of the park. That condition reads as follows:

Directional traffic patterns on Thomas Street and Catherine Street through the park shall be one-way, entering at Thomas Street and exiting onto Catherine Street. Catherine Street, from Whitehead Street until the park shall be a two-way street.

However, the City Commission on March 20, 2012 voted to postpone the Development Plan request in order to reconsider the proposed direction of traffic on the street in front of the park. At the direction of the district commissioner the site plan has been amended to provide one-way traffic flow entering the park from Catherine Street and exiting onto Thomas Street. Because the redirection of traffic is proposed the design requires that passenger drop off occurs onto a five foot wide median between the parking area and the roadway with crosswalks that provide safe pedestrian crossing to the park. The proposed changes have been reviewed by city staff for compliance with engineering, roadway design, fire, ADA and safety standards and have been found to be compliant. Because the proposed redesign of the right-of-way does not materially affect the Development Plan and because the Planning Board decision is advisory to the City Commission the revised plan does not need to return to the Planning Board for review prior to City Commission review (Code Section 108-196 and 122-198); however, at the discretion of the City Commission condition number five of Resolution 2012-07 that was recommended by the Planning Board must be revised in order to be consistent with the revised site plan. If the City Commission chooses to accept the revised site plans Planning staff recommends the following amended condition in addition to the recommended conditions:

Directional traffic patterns on Thomas Street and Catherine Street through the park shall be one-way, entering on Catherine Street and exiting onto Thomas Street. Catherine Street shall continue to be a one-way Street westerly into the park.

Background

The proposed redevelopment project is for a public park located within the Bahama Village Community Redevelopment Area. The community park is surrounded by residential uses including the Truman Annex Naval property. The area is divided into three main areas specifically the Nelson English Park, the Willie Ward Park and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Community Center and Pool as depicted in the map above. In 2011 the city funded and completed improvements to the community center and pool and no additional improvements are proposed as part of this plan; although, the area in front of the pool that links the two parks is included for improvements.

The area has been utilized as neighborhood center since the late 1950's and user groups vary from civic organizations at the community center, to school children learning to swim, family cookouts, community events and neighborhood visitors who typically arrive by foot or bicycle. Due to its history and importance to the neighborhood, in 2010 the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) appropriated \$170,000 in Tax Increment

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20120501 Rev Executive Summary.doc

Financing Funds (TIFF) for the completion of a master plan and construction drawings including required community meetings and city approvals and a Request for Qualifications for the Master Plan was awarded. To date, the design team has provided the proposed master plan and held two publicly noticed meetings on site on July 28 and August 18, of 2011 (see attached Community Meeting Information). On February 22, 2012 the CRA appropriated \$189,000 of TIF funds needed to complete the majority of the construction of the proposed plans. Other city funds will be utilized to complete the remainder of the project, such as the ADA bathrooms. If the master plan is approved, construction of the project should begin sometime this year.

Since 1992, the city has leased parcels RE#00026460-000000 and RE#00026490-000000 located at the main entrance to Willie Ward Park (see areas C-1 and C-2 on map above) from the Monroe County Land Authority (MCLA) through Resolution 92-168 (see attached). The land lease requires the MCLA approval of any alterations, additions and improvements to the site. The request to authorize the improvements to the site was submitted to the Land Authority and is required as a condition of approval prior to building permit issuance. The Land authority responded verbally prior to the Planning Board meeting to inform the department that when the development plan becomes final, and if the proposed minor modifications to the properties proposed to remain as passive recreational space, a letter will be forthcoming.

The three main areas proposed for redevelopment, the Nelson English Park, the Willie Ward Park, and the open gathering area in front of the building's entry, currently provide active and passive recreational uses such as a basketball courts, multiuse open spaces and shaded picnic areas. Numerous utilities are also located on the site mostly associated with the pool; however, a large sanitary sewer pump station enclosed by a chain-link fence dominates the Thomas Street entrance to the park. Bathroom facilities are currently located within the community center and are available during hours of operation. Many park and pool users arrive by foot or bicycle, however users that arrive by car currently rely on the thirteen (13) non-conforming parking spaces located on the right-of-way along Catherine Street and Thomas Street requiring users to back into oncoming traffic.

Existing conditions of the site are shown on the attached survey and demolition plans.

Request

The Master Plan proposal is a three phased project, of which construction phases will be completed in a manner as to minimize disturbances to user groups during high traffic periods. The proposed changes to the Nelson English and Willie Ward Parks improve safety, maintenance and recreational components of the community park. The plan will bring the site into compliance with city stormwater drainage requirements, ADA bathroom facilities and access, parking design and traffic safety standards. Urban design improvements include passive recreational areas designed to cater to different age groups, traffic calming roadway design, landscape and shade improvements. The design proposes minimal changes to the existing features to minimize cost.

Nelson English Park

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Improvements proposed to the Nelson English Park include landscaping, pump station buffering, new playground equipment, sidewalk circulation patterns, open space areas, significant stormwater retention swales, and a parking lot. Buffering and landscaping improvements are proposed along the outer perimeter of the park. Significant shade and foliage is also proposed along the perimeter of the playground area and to buffer the pump station from public view. New playground equipment is proposed for young users and exercise equipment is proposed for more mature users while new multi-color flexi-pave areas beneath the playground and concrete side-walks move users through the park. Existing open space is proposed to be replaced by flexi-pave and concrete within the park. To control the stormwater runoff the swales along the perimeter of the park and a swale in the open space play area in the front of the park are proposed. One additional picnic shelter is also proposed adjacent to the basketball courts.

Willie Ward Park

Minimal improvements are proposed to Willie Ward Park. Currently the site is fenced for safety reasons and locked at night and consists mostly of open passive recreational area. An existing concrete walkway is proposed for removal and the fence will be relocated further back from Catherine Street. Drainage retention swales and additional landscaping are proposed along the rear fence and to buffer the existing pool equipment, ADA lift, and the proposed ADA bathrooms that are located along the side of the community center. The Louisa Street ingress will remain accessible.

Community Building Gathering Area

Currently, the MLK Community Center experiences flooding from minor rain events. Flood prevention design is proposed for the area including a minor reconfiguration of the ingress, a wall at the base of Thomas Street and additional drainage facilities at the buildings entry. An ADA ramp for access to and from the community center is also proposed. In order to improve the pedestrian connectivity between the two parks, the area in front of the community center currently used for parking is proposed to be redesigned to connect to the sidewalks for safe pedestrian usage.

Parking

Currently the parks and community center are supported by thirteen (13) standard parking spaces and two ADA parking spaces on the right-of-way. The proposed plan eliminates the unsafe and non-conforming configuration by reconfiguring the on-street parking into four (4) standard and two (2) ADA compliant parallel parking spaces. The four (4) parking spaces proposed to be removed from the street will be accommodated within the proposed parking lot with nine (9) vehicular parking spaces located along Amelia Street adjacent to the pump station area. The proposed lot meets circulation, drainage and dimensional requirements. A total of eighty-four (84) bicycle parking spaces are proposed along the parking lot and sidewalk areas throughout the park, along with ten (10) scooter spaces on the right of way.

Right-of-way Improvements

As part of the commitment to improve the safety of the park, the Master Plan includes the proposal to create one-way traffic circulation on the roadway through the park. In order

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20120501 Rev Executive Summary.doc

to provide safe ADA accessible parallel parking and to reduce and slow the traffic on the roadway that connects the Nelson English and Willie Ward Parks the direction of traffic on Thomas and Catherine Streets is proposed as a one-way road, entering on Catherine Street and exiting onto Thomas Street. Catherine Street will continue to be a one-way street heading west into the park.

In addition, traffic calming roadway design elements are proposed. On the southern corners of Amelia and Thomas Street the sidewalks are designed to be bumped out, a crosswalk and additional landscaping are proposed in order to immediately narrow the road to slow traffic and create a sense of arrival to the park. To further restrict the use of the roadway as a vehicular thoroughfare and provide a safe drop-off and pickup zone and parking area, a landscape island is proposed along Thomas Street. The landscaped island will be visible from the Thomas Street corridor; it will have the effect of creating a green anchor at the end of the street; additionally, it will be used as a visitor drop-off area for groups coming to the park who will then follow a cross walk over to the park.

Planning Staff Analysis

Section 108-91 A(1)b of the City of Key West Land Development Regulations requires that a plan within the historic district proposed for outdoor activity and recreation greater than 2,500 square feet require a Major Development Plan. Section 108-196(a) of the Land Development Regulations states that “after reviewing a Major Development Plan for a property and staff recommendations, the Planning Board shall act by resolution to approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove it based on specific development review criteria contained in the Land Development Regulations and the intent of the Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan.” On February 16, 2012, the Planning Board recommended for approval the proposed development plan through Resolution 2012-07 with the following conditions:

General Conditions:

1. The applicant is responsible for designing and submitting a Signage Plan that is compatible with Section 108-285 of the Code to the Planning Department for approval before implementation.
2. New lighting shall be designed to “Dark Sky” lighting standards and shall meet energy efficiency standards established by an accepted third party environmental standard consistent with F.S Chapter 255.2575(2). All new lighting must be approved by HARC.
3. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
4. The restrooms are required to be built to FEMA flood standards.
5. Directional traffic patterns on Thomas Street and Catherine Street through the park shall be one-way, entering at Thomas Street and exiting on to Catherine Street. Catherine Street, from Whitehead Street until the park shall be a two-way Street.

Prior to Building Permit Issuance:

6. In accordance with Resolution 92-168 the Monroe County Land Authority shall issue a written approval for improvements to parcels RE#00026460-000000 and RE#00026490-000000.

As previously stated, due to the proposed redirection of traffic flow condition number five must be amended as recommended below.

Options / Advantages / Disadvantages:

Option 1. To approve the proposed Minor Development Plan with the attached plans stamped January 27, 2012 with the following conditions as amended:

General Conditions:

1. The applicant is responsible for designing and submitting a Signage Plan that is compatible with Section 108-285 of the Code to the Planning Department for approval before implementation.
2. New lighting shall be designed to “Dark Sky” lighting standards and shall meet energy efficiency standards established by an accepted third party environmental standard consistent with F.S Chapter 255.2575(2). All new lighting must be approved by HARC.
3. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
4. The restrooms are required to be built to FEMA flood standards.
5. Directional traffic patterns on Thomas Street and Catherine Street through the park shall be one-way, entering on Catherine Street and exiting onto Thomas Street. Catherine Street shall continue to be a one-way Street westerly into the park.

Prior to Building Permit Issuance:

6. In accordance with Resolution 92-168 the Monroe County Land Authority shall issue a written approval for improvements to parcels RE#00026460-000000 and RE#00026490-000000.

1. **Consistency with the City’s Strategic Plan, Vision and Mission:**
The approval of the development plan is consistent with the City’s Strategic Plan, Vision and Mission to promote community enhancement projects, economic development and infrastructure.
2. **Financial Impact:** Improvements to city property and public space increases the value of the adjacent properties and neighborhood as a whole

Option 2. To deny the proposed Major Development Plan

1. **Consistency with the City’s Strategic Plan, Vision and Mission:**
Denying the request is inconsistent with the Strategic Plan, Vision

and Mission to promote community enhancement projects, economic development and infrastructure.

2. **Financial Impact:** The city will lose the opportunity to raise the property value of the park adjacent properties and neighborhood as a whole.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the approval of **Option 1**, for the proposed Minor Development Plan with the attached plans stamped January 27, 2012 with the following conditions:

General Conditions:

1. The applicant is responsible for designing and submitting a Signage Plan that is compatible with Section 108-285 of the Code to the Planning Department for approval before implementation.
2. New lighting shall be designed to “Dark Sky” lighting standards and shall meet energy efficiency standards established by an accepted third party environmental standard consistent with F.S Chapter 255.2575(2). All new lighting must be approved by HARC.
3. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
4. The restrooms are required to be built to FEMA flood standards.
5. Directional traffic patterns on Thomas Street and Catherine Street through the park shall be one-way, entering on Catherine Street and exiting onto Thomas Street. Catherine Street shall continue to be a one-way Street westerly into the park.

Prior to Building Permit Issuance:

6. In accordance with Resolution 92-168 the Monroe County Land Authority shall issue a written approval for improvements to parcels RE#00026460-000000 and RE#00026490-000000.