



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

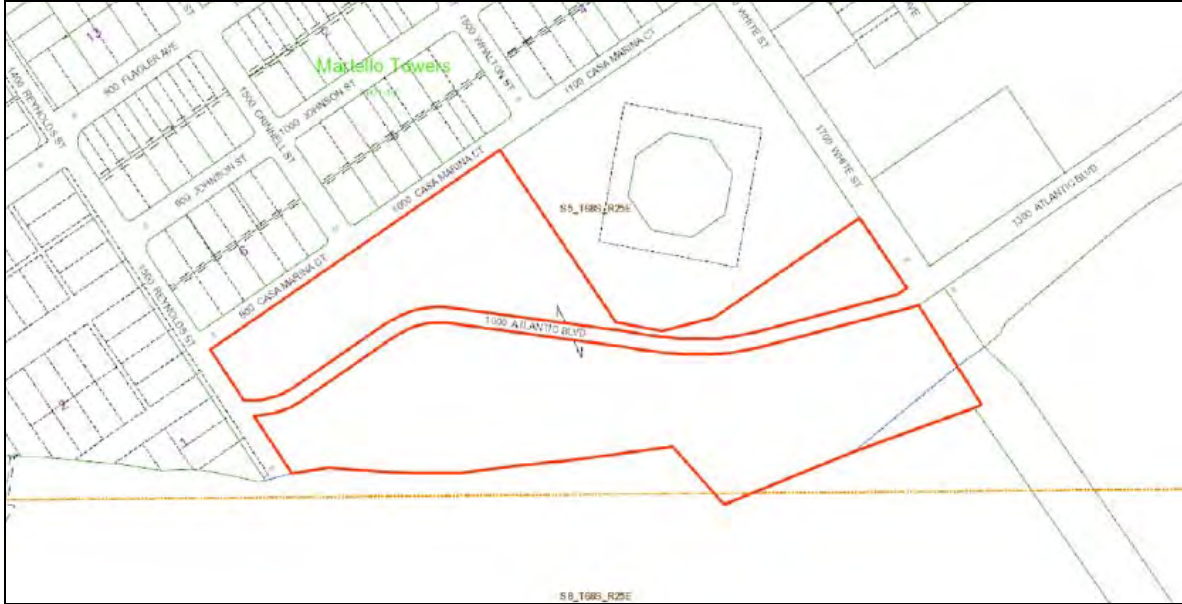
To: Jim Scholl, City Manager
Through: Donald Leland Craig, AICP, Planning Director
From: Nicole Malo, Planner II
Date: May 1, 2012
RE: **Major Development Plan – 1000 Atlantic Boulevard, Higgs Beach Park (RE# 00058800-000000, 00058790-000100, 00058790-000000) - A** Major Development Plan request for the redevelopment of Higgs Beach Park located in the Public Service and Semipublic Service (PS) zoning district pursuant to Section 108-91(B.)(2.)c. of the Land Development Regulations of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Key West, Florida

Action Statement:

Request: A request to consider the approval of a Master Plan to redevelop Higgs Beach Park, located on County Property within the municipal boundaries of the City of Key West. The Development Plan is supported by a proposed Development Agreement that establishes development phases that will be considered at this meeting separately from the Development Plan request.

Location: 1000 Atlantic Boulevard, Higgs Beach Park
RE# 00058800-000000, 00058790-000100, 00058790-000000

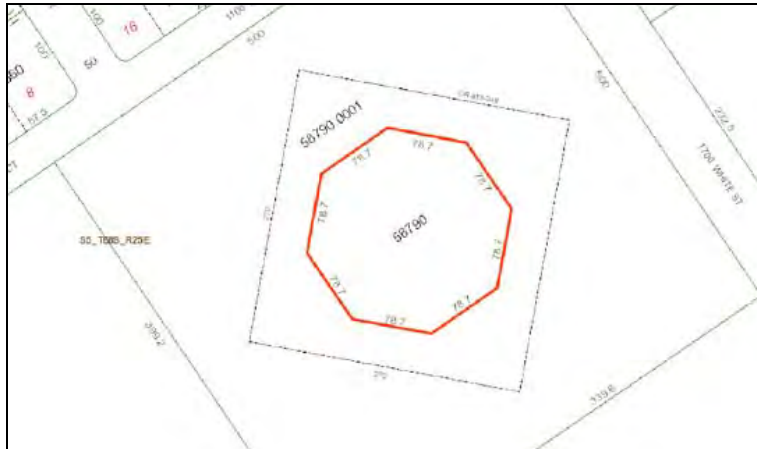
Zoning: Public Service and Semi Public Service Zoning District



Property of Monroe County
RE# 00058800-000000



Property of Monroe County
RE# 00058790-000100



Property of US Government
RE Number 00058790-000000

Previous City Actions:

Development Review Committee Meetings

July 28, 2011

August 26, 2011

Tree Commission Meeting

October 19, 2011

Planning Board Meeting

October 20, 2011

City Commission Meeting

May 1, 2011

Background:

On October 20, 2011 the Planning Board approved the Master Plan for the redevelopment of the Higgs Beach Park with nine conditions of approval (Resolution 2011-049). Since that time the applicant has been working with City staff on the associated Development Agreement that establishes timeframes for phasing in order to bring the associated requests forward together for City Commission review. Additionally, the county has budgeted for and relocated the Astro-City Playground equipment from the north side of Atlantic Boulevard to the beach as part of a separate request. A letter was administered by the Planning Department on May 10, 2011 recognizing the request as separate from the development plan approval phase (see attached Letter).

The proposed development plan includes three parcels of which two are owned by Monroe County and the third, as shown above, is part of a current negotiation effort between the County and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Although Higgs Beach Park lands are not owned by the City of Key West, the property falls within the jurisdictional boundaries of the city and is therefore subject to municipal review and regulation.

Since 1999 Higgs Beach Park has been the focus of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), neighbors and city interest groups such as the Friends of Higgs Beach for redevelopment. At that time community concerns included: security and vagrancy issues, signage and lighting, safe parking design and traffic, and beach cleanliness. As a result of the combined efforts, in 2001 a Master Plan was approved but never funded, although some improvements were implemented based on the plan. More recently, in 2009 the County Mayor in conjunction with the Friends of Higgs Beach and the Garden Club began a series of actions to make feasible the much needed Beach Park improvements. Later that year as a result of BOCC established Advisory Committee recommendations, Architect William P. Horn was chosen to establish a qualified design team and complete a Master Plan for the park to improve existing facilities and address the numerous dysfunctional park aspects including lack of stormwater management, dilapidated facilities, non-conforming site design and connectivity issues that perpetuate life safety concerns and vagrancy issues; in addition to implementing the community "Wish List" for improvements that remain similar to the list of concerns that existed twelve years ago. The proposed Master Plan is the product of two years of approvals from the BOCC, assistance from County Staff to plan for funding and grant acquisitions and the relocation of the FAA tower, three design charrettes and numerous neighborhood meetings with concerned stakeholders that resulted in the modification of several design proposals to meet the needs of the neighbors. On January 19, 2011 the BOCC approved the proposed

Master Plan. For more information regarding the BOCC approvals, Community Meetings and design proposals please see the attached Master Plan Report dated January 19, 2011 and the attached BOCC Approvals. Further, please find all intergovernmental coordination and grant funding efforts and letters attached for reference.

Higgs Beach Park is both an archeologically significant place and an important public recreation center. It is currently the most accessible recreational beach and park on the island that provides a place for local families, dog owners, beach goers and active and passive recreation users. Further, Higgs Beach Park is the terminus of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail and the National Scenic Highway that attracts thousands of visitors annually (see attached Traffic Impact Report). Uses and landmarks adjacent to Higgs Beach Park include single family residential, transient residential (Casa Marina), and recreational uses that include Rest Beach, the AIDS Memorial, White Street Pier, Indigenous Park and the Bocce Courts. Higgs Beach Park includes a number of existing active and passive recreational uses, cultural uses and commercial uses as follows:

Active and Passive Recreation facilities

- Children's playground
- Tennis courts (6), half basketball court, beach volleyball (2) and handball courts (2)
- Dog parks (2)
- Recreational walkways
- Whistling Duck Pond wetland area
- Multiuse open space
- Public beach
- Shaded picnic and barbecue areas
- Reynolds Street Pier

Cultural Uses

- African memorial gravesite
- Historic West Martello Fort Museum and Key West Garden Club

Commercial and Institutional Uses

- Salute restaurant
- Recreational equipment and beach rental
- Enclosed FAA tower and associated cement equipment structure
- Associated parking lots

Existing conditions of the site are shown on the attached survey, site plans, drainage plan and landscape plan.

Request:

The request is for the approval of a Major Development Plan (Master Plan) for Higgs Beach Park as proposed by the BOCC and recommended by the Planning Board for approval. The proposed Development Agreement, as approved jointly by the City and

County Attorneys, that will provide the framework for the timeline of development phases of the Master Plan, will be reviewed by the Commission at this same meeting. If approved, the Master Plan in concert with the Development Agreement will be presented to the BOCC for their review and adoption as part of the implementation program for the park.

The Master Plan proposal is a phased project, of which phases will be completed upon the acquisition of funds from various sources including Monroe County Public Works Project Funding, grants donations and other sources. The proposed changes to Higgs Beach Park address long-standing functionality and safety issues. The proposed plan will bring the site into compliance with city stormwater drainage requirements, Floodplain Ordinance and Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) standards, and parking design and traffic safety standards. Urban design improvements include safe pedestrian and bicycle ways, traffic calming roadway design, landscape and shade improvements and improved connectivity between park uses and adjacent land uses such as Indigenous Park and Bocce Courts. Additionally, community needs have been met that include the relocation of the playground, playground improvements and urban design elements that address safety and vagrancy concerns. Further, the design contemplates minimal changes to many of the existing features and uses within the park to reduce impacts and minimize cost. According to the applicant the demolition and relocation of Atlantic Boulevard and associated utility improvements and archaeological resource protections will be the most significant phase of the proposed project due to its impact on the remaining park facilities; such as the dog parks and parking lots.

The proposed relocation of Atlantic Boulevard is a critical design element of the Master Plan. Currently traffic at the intersection of Atlantic Boulevard and White Street conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians accessing the Overseas Heritage Trail, Higgs Beach Park, the White Street Pier, and the AIDS Memorial. The area is congested and poorly designed creating life safety concerns. The proposed plan shifts the intersection of Atlantic Boulevard and White Street to the north creating a larger pedestrian corridor and safe pedestrian access to these important facilities while creating a buffer for the AIDS memorial. The proposed design of the intersection promotes pedestrian safety through the use of traffic calming features. The relocation of the road also provides a safety and access buffer for the historic Martello Fort that is currently located just five feet from the road.

In response to neighborhood concerns regarding vagrancy issues the plan proposes demolition of the existing covered picnic tables located at the beach, the dog-park and Astro-city (2,548 s.f) in addition to the FAA maintenance building. The existing FAA tower is proposed for off-site relocation and negotiations between the County and the FAA are ongoing. However, the area is proposed as passive recreational open space and the site plan design is not affected by the existing tower if it were to remain. Newly proposed structures consist of a 3,000 square foot LEED certified Visitor Nature Center and two maintenance and equipment storage sheds (total 1,500 s.f), in addition to three recreational equipment rental kiosks and two small shade structures for the tennis and pickleball courts (total 5,857 s.f new).

The proposed plan includes the following changes to the existing plan and facilities listed as existing above:

Active and Passive Recreational Uses

- Relocation of playground for safer access to bathrooms and installation of new playground equipment
- Interactive water feature
- Replacement of one tennis court with two pickleball courts. Removal of handball and basketball courts. Relocation of one beach volleyball court
- Addition of recreational path with workout stations
- Shifting of dog park locations
- Rehabilitation of Whistling Duck Pond wetlands and incorporation of a bio-swale for the stormwater drainage plan
- Addition of multiuse open space area associated with removal of FAA tower
- Removal and relocation of shaded picnic and grilling areas

Infrastructural Improvements

- Relocation of Atlantic Boulevard and associated utility improvements

Connectivity

- Addition of two way bicycle paths along either side of Atlantic Boulevard
- Addition of safe pedestrian corridors crossing Atlantic Boulevard within the Park
- Addition of sidewalks and safe pedestrian corridors within parking lots
- Addition of safe pedestrian corridors from Higgs Beach Park to Indigenous Park and Bocce Courts and supplemental parking areas across White Street
- Multimodal drop-off and pick-up areas to safely accommodate school busses, trolleys, taxis etc.

Traffic Patterns and Parking

- Demolition, relocation and reconfiguration of existing lots to meet code and safety standards
- Consolidation of multiple parking lots
- Drop-off area associated with Nature/visitor Center
- Drop off area associated with restaurant and beach
- Traffic calming devices
- Redesign of intersection at White Street and Atlantic Boulevard away from pedestrian areas with safe pedestrian crossing
- Improvements to intersection of Reynolds Street and Atlantic Boulevard to separate pedestrian areas from traffic and create clear line of sight at corner

As part of the original Master Plan submitted for workshop review, community interest groups recommended the construction of separate bathrooms and a small shade structure adjacent to and specifically for the children's playground. This component has been eliminated from the present proposal, due to vagrancy concerns from the neighbors on

Casa Marina Court. This project component is will require the input of the City Commission for resolution.

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 October 20, 2012, the Planning Board recommended for approval the proposed development plan through Resolution 2012-049 with the following conditions:

General Conditions:

1. City Commission approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement
2. Staff approval of a composting facility is required by the City’s Planning and Engineering Departments. Operations maintenance of the composting center shall be provided by the County and will remain in its adjacent location as proposed on the site plans.
3. The recycling center shall be screened from view by a fence and vegetation approved by the City’s Urban Forester.
4. 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.
5. Construction on the site including the development of Nature Visitors Center is required to be consistent with Chapter 255.2575(2). Florida Statutes which requires compliance with an accepted third party environmental standard (see Attachment for the full language of the relevant section of the statute).
6. 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).
7. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
8. The wetland areas of the Whistling Duck Pond and the F.A.A Tower are required to be noted on the Landscape Plan. An upland/wetland jurisdictional line needs to be set for the area and work within the area requires environmental permitting and possible mitigation.
9. Revise design of scooter and bicycle parking areas to separate uses and add additional bollards or bicycle friendly parking areas throughout the park.

Options / Advantages / Disadvantages:

- Option 1.** To approve the proposed Major Development Plan with the attached plans stamped August 30, 2011 with the following conditions:

General Conditions:

1. City Commission approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement/Development Agreement.
2. Staff approval of a composting facility is required by the City's Planning and Engineering Departments. Operations maintenance of the composting center shall be provided by the County and will remain in its adjacent location as proposed on the site plans.
3. The recycling center shall be screened from view by a fence and vegetation approved by the City's Urban Forester.
4. 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.
5. Construction on the site including the development of Nature Visitors Center is required to be consistent with Chapter 255.2575(2). Florida Statutes which requires compliance with an accepted third party environmental standard (see Attachment for the full language of the relevant section of the statute).
6. 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).
7. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
8. The wetland areas of the Whistling Duck Pond and the F.A.A Tower are required to be noted on the Landscape Plan. An upland/wetland jurisdictional line needs to be set for the area and work within the area requires environmental permitting and possible mitigation.
9. Revise design of scooter and bicycle parking areas to separate uses and add additional bollards or bicycle friendly parking areas throughout the park.

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 Major Development Plan with the attached plans stamped August 30, 2011 with the following conditions:

General Conditions:

1. City Commission approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement/Development Agreement.
2. Staff approval of a composting facility is required by the City's Planning and Engineering Departments. Operations maintenance of the composting center shall be provided by the County and will remain in its adjacent location as proposed on the site plans.
3. The recycling center shall be screened from view by a fence and vegetation approved by the City's Urban Forester.
4. 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.
5. Construction on the site including the development of Nature Visitors Center is required to be consistent with Chapter 255.2575(2). Florida Statutes which requires compliance with an accepted third party environmental standard (see Attachment for the full language of the relevant section of the statute).
6. 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).
7. Tree Commission approval is required for each phase of the removal/relocation and replacement of the Landscape Plan.
8. The wetland areas of the Whistling Duck Pond and the F.A.A Tower are required to be noted on the Landscape Plan. An upland/wetland jurisdictional line needs to be set for the area and work within the area requires environmental permitting and possible mitigation.
9. Revise design of scooter and bicycle parking areas to separate uses and add additional bollards or bicycle friendly parking areas throughout the park.