

**PUBLIC FORUM  
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT**

**Wednesday, November 20, 1991 - 7:30 p.m.  
Sunset Terrace Room - Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club  
851 Gulf Shore Boulevard, North  
Naples, Florida**

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**Present:** Kim Anderson, Mayor  
John M. Passidomo, Vice Mayor  
R. Joseph Herms, Council Member  
Alan R. Korest, Council Member  
Fred L. Sullivan, Council Member  
Paul W. Muenzer, Council Member  
Dr. Richard L. Woodruff, City Manager  
Tara Norman, Public Information Officer  
Paul Reble, Police Chief  
Ann (Missy) McKim, Community Development Director  
John Cole, Chief Planner  
Kevin Rambosk, Interim Community Services Director  
Jon Staiger, Ph.D., Natural Resources Manager  
Steve Uman, Building Official  
Bill Harrison, Finance Director  
David Lykins, Interim Enterprise/Operations Super.  
Nick Long, Dockmaster  
Marilyn McCord, Recording Secretary

**Also Present:** Max Hasse, Collier County Commissioner  
Debbie Cook, Collier County School Board Member  
Jorge Camejo, City of Boca Raton Planning Staff  
Deborah Gestner, City of Sarasota Planning Staff

Other interested citizens and visitors.

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**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS  
Mayor Kim Anderson**

Mayor Anderson thanked everyone for attending the forum and

offered special thanks to Michael Watkins of the Naples Beach Hotel. The Mayor introduced those Council Members and City staff members in attendance and acknowledged County Commissioner Max Hasse and Collier County School Board Member Debbie Cook.

When she was elected to City Council in 1986, said Mayor Anderson, there were three gasoline stations on U.S. 41 and "they looked good." The retail businesses and restaurants looked good as well, and setbacks were properly maintained. Now, she noted, there are boarded-up doors and windows and overgrown grass. Mayor Anderson said, "We have become adept as a Council and continue in every department to make improvements. It is time to address declining property values. We must revitalize this important corridor." In undertaking such an aggressive program, said the Mayor, it must be determined what stimulus is necessary. In addition, redeveloping the U.S. 41 corridor could have a spillover positive effect on affordable housing. She said that a redevelopment program should involve the community as well as City Council and City staff and hoped that tonight's program would challenge those present.

Public Information Officer Tara Norman introduced Mr. Jorge Camejo from the City of Boca Raton, Ms. Deborah Gestner from the City of Sarasota and Attorney Stephen E. Thompson.

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**VIDEO**  
**"Wonderful Naples-on-the-Gulf"**

City Manager Richard Woodruff narrated a short video which exhibited different areas in Naples. Dr. Woodruff thanked the Fire Department for their assistance in producing the video. He pointed out that although Naples was blessed with beautiful areas, there were sections of Naples, including the U.S. 41 corridor, where boarded-up buildings and deserted streets were very evident.

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**THE BOCA RATON COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE**  
**Jorge Camejo, City of Boca Raton**

Mr. Camejo told the audience that Boca Raton was a city of approximately 27,000 people and was a very seasonal area between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale, covering an area of 27 square miles. The need for redevelopment was realized in the late

1970's. A Tax Increment District was established, whereby, according to State statute, a certain area was defined and the tax base frozen with monies reverting back to the CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) for redevelopment. The redevelopment agency consisted of civic leaders and the Chamber of Commerce.

When Avida Corporation announced plans for a regional mall in western Boca Raton in 1978, it was realized that there would be a significant impact to the retail core of the City, so incentive zoning was established involving developers and property owners through private investments and implemented through a series of incentives.

Through the use of visual aides, Mr. Camejo described conditions in Boca Raton in 1982, including inadequate traffic flow. Some lots were platted as 50-foot lots and had diverse owners which the State identified as an element of blight to be determined by the local body of government. The infrastructure, primarily water, sewer and drainage were very antiquated.

Mr. Camejo described the Barber Project, which consisted of seven acres and approximately 1,000,000 square feet of developed space.

The Barber family had agreed not only to develop the land but to provide a good deal of the infrastructure, not only for that development but for much of the downtown area. It was necessary to come up with a different type of strategy because the project was defeated in an overwhelming vote in 1985 through a referendum petitioned by conservationists. A beautiful plan which the entire community could "rally round" that included a cultural center was devised. A developmental regulation impact study was also done in order to seek approval of the entire downtown area and to illustrate how the plan would be accommodated. The Misner Park Plan resulted.

Financing the project was the first problem to be overcome, said Mr. Camejo, and the Misner Park Feasibility Study was done to find available financing options. One option was to take the entire site and convert almost 100% into cultural usage; for this option taxes would have to be raised. The CRA endorsed that plan but the governing officials did not. Another option was to seek public and private funding which would not require such a significant tax. The final option was to do nothing and simply turn the existing mall into a discount retail center. That option was not a consideration at all, said Mr. Camejo.

Through a number of public hearings, the redevelopment agency entered into an agreement and between March, 1988 and January, 1991 the Misner Park Plan became a reality. At the present time, the Park includes 136 residential units, a cinema, retail and office space and several restaurants. Mr. Camejo told the audience that this is the first time in history that restaurants existed in the downtown Boca Raton area.

Mr. Camejo said that there had been multiple purposes behind this project. Market studies had shown that the perception of the downtown area needed to be changed, creating an incentive for people to invest. In other words, he said, it was necessary to "turn the neighborhood around." There are approximately ten acres of public land available for development and cultural uses and currently under construction is the International Museum of Cartoon Art. On the north end of the Park is an outdoor amphitheater which was funded through the use of land dedication dollars. A total of 272 residential units are anticipated when the Park is completed with impact fees going directly into Misner Park. Mr. Camejo showed the audience a slide taken at one of the outdoor concerts and said that between 4,000 and 6,000 people regularly attend the free concerts. Mr. Camejo displayed a conceptual design of the finished Park which includes a number of museums.

A development order was approved by the Boca Raton City Commission and, because of the infrastructure, that order was created to include all regulations for improvement in the document itself. It was necessary to devise a plan to develop all the necessary infrastructure, addressing how future growth would be accommodated. This resulted in the Vision 90 Plan.

Mr. Camejo assured the audience that if such an ambitious plan is worked in a comprehensive fashion, it can be achieved through working with such agencies as the D.O.T. (Department of Transportation).

Next Mr. Camejo described some of the newer projects and pointed out that almost 75% of the developed space is already occupied and most of that had been pre-leased. Through the efforts of the CRA, said Mr. Camejo, the community has a very fine future and a number of other projects are in the planning stages. Avida Corporation has indicated that it will invest in downtown Boca Raton because of the Misner Park project.

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## THE SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

Deborah Gestner, City of Sarasota

Ms. Gestner told the audience that Sarasota had experienced many successes and many failures throughout its redevelopment process. Using visual aides, Ms. Gestner showed several examples of redeveloped areas in Sarasota. She explained that a CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) was formed and consisted of the City Commission, which she strongly advised. A corporation was formed to "go out and tell the story." In 1986 a plan was formulated for the future of downtown Sarasota, including funding for infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Gestner said that the next step involved funding. The City has had four bond issues, she said, and those funds were invested.

The Storefront Assistance Project has been the most successful area in the redevelopment project. Should a downtown merchant choose, a City staff member will design a new storefront and the City will reimburse the owner one half of the cost of his efforts.

Of those properties involved in this project to date, those polled have experienced an average 67% increase in total assessed valuation. Since business has increased, said Ms. Gestner, "our merchants are sold."

Next Ms. Gestner described the redeveloped area of the community which is approximately 25% of the City and includes residential and commercial areas. Sarasota did not borrow enough money initially, said Ms. Gestner, and cautioned Naples against making the same mistake.

The core area of the redevelopment will be along Bay Front and will include most of the theater and arts establishments. Main Street has always been a one-way street, explained Ms. Gestner, but soon, will be a two-way street. The Planning and Engineering Departments of Sarasota formed a redevelopment team including project coordinators for traffic. The team consists of an engineer, a planner and a police officer.

Ms. Gestner stressed the important role played by the police officer on this redevelopment team and said that a program existed called "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design." She said that in the future, the State of Florida will probably require, within two or three years from now, a section in Comprehensive Plans entitled "Crime Prevention."

Several of the slides displayed by Ms. Gestner showed the same view spanning the course of 100 years, from 1907 to the present. Ms. Gestner said that the redevelopment team has made efforts to accent the varying roof heights.

She noted that the many antique dealers and museums are some of the City's best assets and a new zoning district has been created, the "Theater and Arts District." The triangle area, in the center of the arts district, includes the renovated Opera House and is used for cultural events. There are seven galleries within a two-block area with art shows held in the evenings.

Ms. Gestner told the audience that the old John Ringling Towers Building has been one of the City's "failures" in that it is directly on U.S. 41 and the City has been unable to do anything to change it.

Full grown Royal palms are required landscaping as part of the Street Tree Program, said Ms. Gestner.

Ms. Gestner suggested that Naples approach Florida Power & Light and discuss grants, as Sarasota had done.

Next described was Sarasota Quay on Third Street which now boasts 70% occupancy and houses five successful nightclubs.

Ms. Gestner listed four elements of a successful redevelopment program: 1) Good design policies and concepts; 2) Economics; 3) Organization; and 4) Promotion. Referring to promotion, Ms. Gestner emphasized the importance of educating the public. Priorities, or "target spots," must be identified.

The biggest project taking place now involves store backs, said Ms. Gestner, who displayed pictures of several successful store back redevelopments. In several instances, murals have been painted on the store backs facing parking areas. She also showed pictures of a restaurant and a parking lot both of which had been

abandoned gas stations. Other pictures included a renovated office building and the Goodwill Building.

Ms. Gestner talked about the various methods of funding Sarasota had made available, including 2% buy down (up to \$7,500), the sign design assessment fee (\$500 maximum) and architectural assistance fee (\$3,000 maximum). The CRA, she emphasized, gives the City some identity, although it was necessary to declare certain areas as being "slum and blight" in order to form the CRA. Consequently, there had been concerns about property values, but those values have gone up rather than down. Ms. Gestner said that the CRA is much like a self-help program and she added that cities are eligible for grant monies.

Next Ms. Gestner described some of the streetscape design, sidewalks and light fixtures used in the downtown area, noting that "a little bit of design work can make a big difference." Another feature of note is the fact that all storefronts are angled in, which has proven very successful. Many positive comments have been received about the City's signage as well.

Ms. Gestner told the audience that the design group wanted to create an outdoor eating area for the public's use. The City did in fact accomplish that, by building the eating area and selling it to a proprietor. That project was so successful that it will be repeated in other areas of the City.

The Tree Legacy Program is also in place in Sarasota. A tree can be dedicated and the City installs a plaque.

In closing, Ms. Gestner reviewed several aspects of Sarasota's development which she believes are very important, including the use of streetscapes and storefront improvements, making parking lots aesthetically pleasing, utilizing tax incentive funds and investigating all partnership possibilities.

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#### **FLORIDA STATE LAW**

**Stephen E. Thompson, Frost & Jacobs**

Attorney Thompson informed the audience that the State Statutes give municipalities a number of tools to deal with redevelopment, including the formation, by Special Act, of a Downtown

Redevelopment Authority known as the Main Street Program (a grant program); enterprise zones with incentives to businesses, tax and otherwise; the Safe Neighborhoods Act; the Commercial Redevelopment Act; and the Florida Block Investment Program.

For a community to be chosen for assistance through the Safe Neighborhoods Act, it must be a high crime area with an established crime rate.

The most valuable tool, said Attorney Thompson, is the Community Redevelopment Agency which begins by a finding of necessity by the City Council and defining the area to be included. He noted that people do not like to say they are in a slum or blighted area, however, it does not have to be a terribly bad area to qualify. City Council can then create a separate body - itself or an independent board. Attorney Thompson pointed out that those that work the best seem to have maintained control in the political body. Necessary next would be a plan review by the PAB (Planning Advisory Board) after which the Agency would adopt the plan. City Council then would hold its public hearings. Council can implement a trust fund or a tax incentive fund. The CRA can be organized in a number of ways and would be assisted by City staff.

Attorney Thompson displayed a typical CRA structure plan and said that the "field is wide open" with a number of different statutory encouragements that would benefit Naples.

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#### **WHAT IS AHEAD FOR NAPLES?**

##### **Mayor Kim Anderson**

Mayor Anderson said that there are a number of options available although a redevelopment project is quite complex. The Mayor thanked the speakers, the members of the news media present and asked all staff members to stand so that she could publicly thank them for using their own time to attend the meeting.

Public Information Officer Norman distributed interest cards to the audience for those who may be interested in getting involved in the community redevelopment project. City Council will appoint a committee and sub-committees and within four to six months recommendations can be brought back to Council. In the meantime,



the City will work on community maintenance continuing to make aesthetics an important part of the community. Mayor Anderson emphasized that everyone's participation was invaluable.

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## AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

### Questions/Answers

A citizen asked Mr. Camejo whether there had been any reluctance in people buying residential units in Misner Park and Mr. Camejo replied that 80% of those units were pre-leased before completion.

Another 136 units will be available within the year. In all, he said, the project had been extraordinarily successful.

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In answer to another citizen's question, Mr. Camejo said that a reason had to be created to bring people into downtown Boca Raton.

Misner Park's main attraction is its entertainment aspect, he said, therefore, it is not competing with the regional mall.

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From the audience, Mr. Jack Conroy told the group that the RUDAT study involved community involvement and cost the City nothing. A downtown parking district group had been formed, but the group's recommendations were defeated by Council when it asked for an increased taxing district. As a result, said Mr. Conroy, "nothing happened." He asked Mr. Camejo how Boca Raton had handled its differences with its political leaders.

Mr. Camejo explained that Boca Raton had initially started its CRA as a separate body, appointed by Council. However, in 1991 the CRA was turned over to Council by referendum, so at the present time, the City Council is the CRA Board in Boca Raton.

Ms. Gestner informed the audience that the merchants and

individual citizens demanded, on a referendum, a CRA in Sarasota because there had been such a split at City Commission meetings.

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Member of the audience, Mr. Scott Salley asked if Sarasota worked in tangent with affordable housing and Ms. Gestner replied that every municipality is presently trying to deal with that issue, including Sarasota. The Affordable Housing Task Force in Sarasota provides low-interest loans and Habitat for Humanity is established there as well.

A gentleman in the audience pointed out that the section of Naples being discussed was approximately only 15 blocks in area and was already dominated and controlled basically by Naples Community Hospital which is a spreading influence of medical professionals. He noted that abandoned buildings will continue to be purchased for medically-related purposes and asked if there were any similar situations in Sarasota. Ms. Gestner replied that Sarasota's hospital is located in the center of one of the highest priced real estate districts in the area, so that problem did not apply.

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Mayor Anderson thanked everyone once again and expressed the hope that an educational overview had been provided.

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ADJOURN: 9:15 p.m.

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KIM ANDERSON, MAYOR

JANET CASON  
City Clerk

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Marilyn McCord  
Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved on \_\_\_\_\_.