

TO: Ben Sorensen, City of Fort Lauderdale Commissioner District 4
FROM: Tarpon River Civic Association Board of Directors
DATE: May 19, 2019
RE: Whiddon Property – Opportunity for Additional Park Space

As you already know, the Whiddon Family is currently in the process of attempting to rezone their property located at the intersection of 9th avenue and Davie Boulevard (at the SW entrance to the Tarpon River community; herein referred to as the “Property”) from RS-8 single family to a combination of RM15 and RMH-25 with a large scale multi-family development of over 170 units. You have stated previously that you would not support the Whiddon’s Land Use Plan Amendment nor the re-zoning that they seek for this property. The majority of the Tarpon River Board also does not support this proposal.

However, in light of i) the successful passage of the Parks Bond and ii) the City’s need for additional park space within City of Fort Lauderdale as per the Parks Master Plan and the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the Tarpon River Civic Association (TRCA) requests that the City consider purchasing the Property for use as a public park. **At a recent presentation to the TRCA Board, the Whiddons, represented by their attorney Steve Wherry, expressed an interest in selling the property should the City wish to purchase it.**

The Board of Directors discussed various ideas and concerns regarding the property and best use for the Tarpon River community and greater Fort Lauderdale. **The TRCA Board of Directors wholeheartedly supports a City purchase the property currently for sale with available monies from the approved Parks Bond and create additional dedicated green space within Fort Lauderdale.**

The Board of Directors came to this decision on behalf of the community with the following critical reasons identified for the city to purchase this land:

- Fort Lauderdale’s Master Plan and 2035 VISION: Both are inclusive of a focus on efforts to increase access to our waterways for boating, fishing and viewing; the location of this land directly on the New River speaks to achieving the goals of both the Master Plan and 2035 VISION.
- Increased green space: As our city and community continues to expand with increased high-density building and commercial space encompassing Fort Lauderdale, more green space is needed to maintain/increase the level of service for public parks in the city, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Protect natural ecosystems: With the continued high-density growth of Fort Lauderdale, many animals and their natural habitats are threatened within city limits. The purchase of the property will provide an opportunity for Fort Lauderdale to commit to native species and the environment.
- Current land-use: The land is currently unimproved (i.e. no existing structures), affording a natural transition to park space should the City acquire the Property.

Additionally, green spaces are a “fundamental component of any urban ecosystem” as identified by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO emphasizes that urban green spaces, such as the aforementioned land, play a critical role in cooling cities, provide oxygen and help filter out air pollution and moderate temperatures. The continued high-density growth of Fort Lauderdale must be balanced out with green space and sustainability throughout the city.

The Property is one of the last large vacant parcels of land within the City large enough to accommodate a public park with water access. We ask you to commit to this opportunity early and, with your help, let us know what we need to do next to secure this new park for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Tarpon River Civic Association Board of Directors