

Riviera Beach Heights in Bloom

Community Dissolved to Community Involved



by Annetta Jenkins



by Toccarra Nicole Thomas

The 2001 CRA Redevelopment Plan-- Inlet Harbor Plan-- was an aggressive and unsustainable plan that relied on eminent domain and existing market conditions for success. With the demise of eminent domain in Florida for redevelopment/private purposes and the bursting of the housing market bubble, it was clear that the Inlet Harbor Plan had to be recast. This led to a successful and well attended (over 200 residents) Public Charrette process in 2007. This week long charrette, facilitated by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, resulted in the City of Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Plan, adopted July 20, 2011. This plan calls for a holistic and focused redevelopment process, while remaining accountable to the resident's wishes and vision expressed during the charrette. The redevelopment plan examines the 858 acres of the redevelopment area not as one monolithic swath, but more appropriately, in redevelopment priority areas.

With each area having its own unique redevelopment needs, this allows for much more focused efforts and

the ability to accomplish more with fewer resources. In 2010, the Riviera Beach Heights neighborhood, as the largest neighborhood in the CRA, was designated as a redevelopment priority area. The Riviera Beach CRA is comprised of 858 acres. The redevelopment of waterfront properties at the Atlantic Ocean (Ocean Mall) and Intracoastal Waterway (Municipal Marina) have long been our focus. The residents in the CRA have complained that the Agency lacks a neighborhood development strategy at the same level of priority it has planned for waterfront development. The Riviera Beach Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Study changes this outlook. In response, the CRA facilitated several community meetings as well as engaged consultants— Song + Associates and Land Developers Consortium— to lead the creation of a RBH Implementation Plan.

This bold plan was supported by several key actions taken by the CRA:

1. Adoption of the plan and its immediate and future strategies for redevelopment;
2. Creation of a CHDO-eligible, community development corporation; and
3. Allocation of more than \$3 million in cash and in kind support for the new nonprofit.

The Planning Study recognized that Riviera Beach Heights is a hodgepodge of disconnected parts in an



The CRA holds a planning meeting with community residents to work on Riviera Beach Heights neighborhood solutions.

area that drives significant regional economic benefit to the County except for this adjacent neighborhood. These benefits have not sparked any economic vitality in Riviera Beach Heights where residents have long felt ignored. The neighborhood is one of the poorest areas in the City evidenced by high rates of unemployment and residents living below poverty rates. Yet, this same community is surrounded by 5,000 jobs at the Port of Palm Beach and the nearby industrial park area. The adverse impact of foreclosures and high rates of rental properties have made the neighborhood undesirable in key blocks and these factors serve to destabilize the neighborhood.

The Quilt – Site Plan Conceptual Design



Impact on the Community

The Plan is designed to have an immediate and measurable impact to the community:

- 1. Empower Residents:** By forming the CDC to meet community accountability guidelines under HUD, residents have been empowered to manage change and hold the CRA and their neighbors accountable.
- 2. Create Beautiful Transitions into the Neighborhood:** The Port and FEC railroad, which borders the neighborhood, gives the community a rust-belt appearance. By working together, the CRA and Port will create a beautiful transition from the Port into the neighborhood. We plan to extend a Tri-Rail stop (commuter rail between Palm Beach,

- Broward and Dade counties) in this neighborhood with plans for a transit oriented development.
- 3. Create a Dramatic Neighborhood Design:** Working with FDOT, the CRA will leverage the multi-million dollar SR 710 expansion with infrastructure investments for streets, sidewalks and other amenities. In working with the County, the CRA will embark upon an aggressive neighborhood revitalization and stabilization program to attract homeowners and eliminate blighted conditions. Riviera Beach is not an “entitlement city” and thus redevelopment funds from HUD must come through the county.
- 4. Create and Sustain a Vital Neighborhood Business District:** A welcoming environment will attract thousands of cars along Old Dixie Hwy to stop & shop to support businesses in this neighborhood. The CRA proposes to invest into a micro-loan fund to attract new businesses and help bolster existing businesses. **HNN**



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