



Old vacant apartment in the Riviera Beach Redevelopment Area

Politics and Policy: How Eminent Domain Practices can Shape or Destroy a Desired Future

A Case Study of Impact and (Non) Effect of Displacement and Redevelopment in Riviera Beach and Boynton Beach

BY ANNETTA JENKINS

BACKGROUND

Riviera Beach has a motto and vision of being “the Best Waterfront City in Which to Live, Work and Play.” Truly a bold statement for a city that has a poverty rate of 23.3%, with a population of 29,985 and median income of \$31,118, 48% of the Palm Beach County median of \$64,400. More than 66% or 20,323 are African American. (US Census 2000)



Back in 2001, Riviera Beach, under the leadership of Mayor Michael Brown, adopted an ambitious redevelopment plan

for its waterfront area of town, dubbed “Harbor Village.” The redevelopment area is 858 acres total including a portion of Singer Island and 188 acres of the Port of Palm Beach. Included in this area originally were 5,100 (plus or minus) residents; 2,262 households (includes 373 vacant units and 258 households to remain) of which only 1,631 households were occupied; and 317 existing registered businesses. Back in 2001, the projected assessed value of the real property was \$900,000,000. Included in this plan were detailed guidelines for the real

HARBOR VILLAGE MASTER PLAN		
Proposed Development Program	3,460	Resident Units
	900	Hotel/Timeshare/condo-Hotel Units
	220,000	Community Retail Square Footage
	350,000	Retail/Restaurant/Entertainment Square Footage
	270,000	Multi-Tenant Office Square Footage
	1,038,000	Office/Service/Technical Park Square Footage
	486,000	Marine Commercial & Working Waterfront Sq. Ft.
	550	Dry Boat Storage (New & Replacement)
	49 Acres	Open Space/Park/Recreation
	19 Acres	Beaches
Harbor Village	33 Acres	(Mixed Use Waterfront – Retail/Entertainment, Shops, Office, Hotel, Aquarium, Marina, Housing)
Town Center	25 Acres	(Community Retail Shopping Center)
Working Waterfront	30 Acres	(Boat Storage, Yacht Sales, Marine Repair/Shipyard)
Marine Commercial	24 Acres	(Marine Sales/Service/Display)
Singer Island	41 Acres	(Condos/Hotel/Restaurant/Shops)
Residential Neighborhoods	160 Acres	(Single/Multi-family sale & rental)
Commercial Office/Technical Park	29 Acres	(Technical Office/Education Space)

NEIGHBORHOOD PERSPECTIVE

In the past year, Viking has started the assembly process, paying several times over appraised value for a number of lots – a result of Palm Beach County’s hot real estate market and a protracted process moving forward in spits and spats. Other investors and developers have jumped in providing a challenge to assemblage or an opportunity to joint venture, depending on your perspective.

Riviera Beach intends to use eminent domain proceedings on a number of parcels not yet acquired, but necessary to implement the master plan. Whether they will ultimately be able to do this remains to be seen and tested in light of the new legislation.

A GRASSROOTS RESPONSE

Northwest Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Corporation (NRBCRC) a community development corporation or CDC was formed in 1991, working primarily in the northwest, non CRA area of the city. In the past eight years it has developed and sold more than 125 single family, infill homes to buyers primarily below 80% of the Palm Beach median income (currently at \$64,400, according to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and US HUD as of May 2006).

Approximately two and a half years ago, NRBCRC, with the technical and financial assistance of South Florida Local Initiatives Support Corporation (SoFla LISC), formed a development team to provide a response to the looming question of where displaced residents in the CRA would find affordable housing. The City would form a housing delivery system called the Renaissance Program which adopted NRBCRC’s efforts. However, NRBCRC’s program in two phases: the Brooks Subdivision and the “S” Avenue Model

estate acquisition process for negotiated “friendly” sales and through condemnation. These detailed guidelines – part of a resident information packet – repeatedly refers to rights and responsibilities under Chapter 73, Florida Statutes (CRA Redevelopment Master Plan, found at www.rbcra.org).

TODAY

Flash forward five years: the estimated value of Riviera Beach’s redevelopment is \$2.4 billion. The City has selected a master developer – Viking Inlet Harbor Properties through an RFP process and, on May 10, 2006, signed a development agreement (City Commissioner sit as the CRA). The problem is that in this past legislative session, an eminent domain law was passed restricting a local municipality’s ability to take private property for economic development purposes. Governor Jeb Bush signed the bill into law on May 11th, a day after the action taken by the City of Riviera Beach.



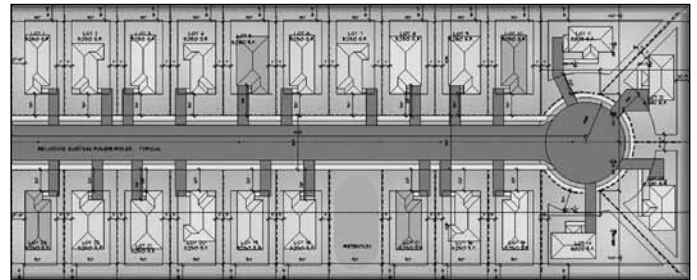
Rendering of Solange Michel's future home.



Solange Michel, will become a homeowner with the help of Northwest Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Corporation and LISC.



Low income apartment in the redevelopment Area, Riviera Beach.



Site plan of upcoming affordable single family house. A project of the Northwest Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Corporation.

Blocks, will deliver more affordable homes than any other development project underway, planned or constructed within the city.

When completed, there will be almost two hundred single family homes and townhouses with price points ranging from \$150,000 to \$225,000, affordable to families, below 80% of the median income. The development will complement new infill homes on surrounding blocks completed by NRBCRC in its mini-subdivision by the City and by another non-profit, Jay's Ministries. The attractive homes will be within walking distance of the aquatic center, schools, the Davis Community Center and a day care center. NRBCRC plans to break ground on the Brooks Subdivision this summer with homeowners moving into the sold-out phase by year's end. Special outreach efforts are being made to residents in the CRA area and to clients engaged in NRBCRC's Homeownership Counseling Program.

THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Northwest Riviera Beach CRC:

Schiller Ambrose, Project Manager

Local Initiatives Support Corporation:

Lynda Charles, Senior Program Officer

Architect:

Elizabeth Colome, Colome & Associates

Attorney:

J. Michael Haygood, Esquire

City of Riviera Beach:

John Green, Community Development Coordinator,
Riviera Beach CRA



ANNETTA JENKINS is a Senior Program Director for Local Initiatives Support Corporation. LISC is the nation's largest community development support organization, with more than \$8 billion invested in urban and rural neighborhoods across the country. Annetta, a Florida housing Coalition board member, has her office in West Palm Beach. She can be reached at ajenkins@liscnet.org.