

Amelia Park Commercial District Committee (ad hoc)
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2015

Committee Members Present: Bob Combs, Lu Woodward, Wayne Munson, Mickey Baity, Marlene Schang, Donna Paz Kaufman

Purpose of the committee & task - The ad hoc committee was formed by the APNA board to gather information that would assist the board in responding to the Wells Fargo Bank request to rezone the four parcels currently zoned commercial (at the 14th Street or west entrance to Amelia Park). The current zoning, C-2 General Commercial, includes use of the property for, “offices, commercial retail, personal services, restaurants, transient accommodations; uses that provide sales and services for several neighborhoods, repair shops, retail sales and services; and other similar commercial uses.”)

Robert Gibbs Planning, Retail Market Analysis - In February, the APNA board approved up to \$3,000 for a retail analysis from Robert Gibbs Planning to help us gauge the viability of developing the parcels for commercial use. While full studies range \$20,000 and more for developing commercial properties, Bob Gibbs offered to run a limited analysis (typically priced at \$7,500) for us at his cost of \$2,400.

Bob Gibbs was available by speakerphone during the meeting to answer questions about the retail analysis he conducted to identify our market area and quantify “supported” retail uses. Key points from the discussion include comments about trends in retail development and specifics about the scope of the data for Amelia Park’s use:

- Demand for retail space is growing now that the economy has improved. Florida is one of the top 3 states with the highest demand for retail space.
- Today, 6 out of 10 town centers in Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) are failing. Reasons: over-priced real estate, lack of one common owner to develop a cohesive center
- Comp for Amelia Park would be l’on, the TND in Charleston, SC which has a tavern, deli, inn, and a few retail shops.
- Bob described his description of our trade or market area is conservative and that other scenarios showed much more potential growth. (The boundaries stretched from Center Street to the Fernandina Beach Airport and from the ocean to just off the bridge, including Little Piney Island communities.) The assessment of the underserved sectors does not factor in any patronage further off island or to the resorts at the south end of Amelia Island.
- The identified sectors were defined as: where available square footage of retail space is LESS than what our population, average income (twice the national average), and tourism volume would support using retail industry models. The sectors that indicated market opportunity include: restaurant/cafe, specialty food, pharmacy, shoes, jewelry, home goods/furnishings, hardware, florist, electronics/appliances, and general merchandise.
- It is important to note that the analysis does NOT factor in currently vacant retail space; it specifies only the difference between the numbers representing the levels of

“supportable” retail and the amount of retail space currently operating to serve the market area.

- Options for the Amelia Park commercial properties would include relocation of existing island businesses or attracting appropriate start-ups.
- Bob recommended that one company or individual purchase all of the parcels and develop with a planned mix that would be designed to capitalize on the underserved sectors and meet the needs of the neighborhood. He recommended finding a regional developer who has created projects on a similar scale and in a similar setting.

Resident Survey - The committee reviewed each of the questions in the draft survey and identified edits. Another draft will be circulated to the committee and a link will be included in the letter that is mailed to homeowners.

Resident Workshop - The board has scheduled a resident workshop for Wednesday, April 15. The committee discussed the line-up of speakers and recommends that Mack McCuller, attorney representing Wells Fargo Bank, be placed first on the agenda to provide background on the rezoning request.

The committee agreed to invite Amelia Park developer Joel Embry to provide background on the original design of Amelia Park and the vision for the commercial district. Mickey will arrange with Joel.

The committee’s presentation will also include an overview of the survey results.

Next Steps - The April 15 workshop presentation completes the committee’s task of gathering information to respond to the re-zoning request. The committee requests that the APNA board communicate any further needs.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Paz Kaufman
April 2, 2015