

Smart Growth for West Park Educational Program

Summary Report

Prepared for:

City of West Park

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Introduction

With a population of more than 13,000 residents, West Park is located in Broward County between the cities of Miramar and Pembroke Pines. When incorporated in 2005, West Park like any new city began to face a variety of issues such as dealing with land use, transportation systems, economic development and the desire of becoming a sustainable city for the first time. Some of these issues were discussed and recorded previously during the Miramar/West Park charrette held in February 2005, which focused mainly on the SR 7/441 business corridor.

Broward Smart Growth Partnership (BSGP), a collaborative of diverse professionals and organizations under the leadership of Gloria Katz, president of the Board of Directors, created to provide leadership, education, and to promote livable and sustainable communities in Broward County, recognized West Park's needs; thus a decision to assist the community was taken. Through an educational program developed by Florida Atlantic University's Center for Urban Redevelopment and Education (FAU-CURE) under the leadership of Ralph B. Johnson, CURE director and BSGP board member, and funded by the Sun-Sentinel Diversity Venture Fund and the Community Foundation of Broward, BSGP was able to introduce Smart Growth concepts and to help citizens of West Park make better choices about their city.

Project Summary

BSGP and FAU-CURE's worked closely together in order to achieve their goals including: (1) educating and empowering the citizens and the elected officials of the new city of West Park; (2) helping citizens and officials better understand their needs in a Smart Growth context; and (3) assisting West Park in becoming an independent and sustainable community that demands changes of its elected officials.

To facilitate the introduction of Smart Growth principles to as many West Park residents as possible, an active 10-member Citizens Steering Committee was created to help promote a Town Hall meeting within the community. Members of this committee were appointed by City Commissioners. Through the Citizens Steering Committee, the City Commission, and strategic marketing such as radio, Comcast Cable, and letters mailed to each household, BSGP engaged in effective citywide recruitment of the 13,417 residents.

Initially, several meetings were held to educate the members of the Steering Committee so they could explain Smart Growth concepts, in layman's terms, to community residents. These meetings were held on November 9th, 2006, December 1st, 2006, December 13th, 2006, January 10th, 2007, and January 25th, 2007. The

Citizens Steering Committee meetings were a major accomplishment because they involved the more active community members from the outset, provided tools to enhance leadership and education on promoting livable/sustainable communities, and later ensured a good resident turnout for the Town Hall meeting.

After months of meetings with the West Park Citizens Steering Committee, BSGP held the Town Hall meeting on Saturday, February 10, 2007. The meeting had a turnout of over 100 participants, including the Mayor, all of the City Commissioners, the City Administrator and staff. It began with a welcome from the Mayor Eric H. Jones, and renowned South Florida radio host and community activist, Rodney Baltimore, followed by a video presentation and presentation exploring effective Smart Growth principles. The highlight of the event was an interactive Charrette process, facilitated by students at Florida Atlantic University, School of Architecture (see examples of students' proposals). It consisted of ten (10) groups of community residents who demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of Smart Growth principles by making critical recommendations for city officials.

The Town Hall meeting helped citizens better understand their needs in a Smart Growth context. The video presentation and panel discussions helped to provide an overview of the subject matter, as well as examples of Smart Growth developments around the country. Also, the hands-on charrette-like activities, helped residents to demonstrate their understanding of how Smart Growth principles can be applied in their community.



Town Hall Meeting: residents discuss strategies and concerns



Town Hall Meeting: residents present their ideas of a better community

The Town Hall meeting was an overwhelming success. It gave the citizens the tools to request change from City and County officials. Through an overview of Smart Growth concepts (including best practices) as well as information on how zoning affects community growth, residents were able to make concrete recommendations for a sustainable West Park. The residents felt they were more equipped to demand changes of their elected officials.

Following the Town Hall meeting, the BSGP and FAU-CURE conducted two more events for the residents of West Park. First, a zoning workshop facilitated by Louis Orosz, BSGP board member and zoning consultant, was held on May 12, 2007. This zoning workshop reinstated the mission of Smart Growth principles and focused on the topic of mixed use zoning. Residents learned that by applying Smart Growth in the zoning process and particularly mixed use zoning, the city could ensure a better community economically, improve the city's look and create a sense of place particularly along the 441 corridor.

The second event was a bus tour on June 2, 2007 which the Smart Growth Partners hosted for city commissioners and city staff. The tour included visit to Smart Growth developments in Lauderdale Lakes and Fort Lauderdale. City commissioners were hosted by Lauderdale Lakes commissioner Hazel Rogers and Gary Rogers, Lauderdale Lakes' executive director of Community Redevelopment and a member of the BSGP board of directors who conducted the tour and explained the development process as well as answered questions. The other venue was the Avenue Lofts in Fort Lauderdale. The West Park Commissioners were very impressed with this mixed use development and felt it better conformed to their vision.



Town Hall Meeting and Zoning Workshop

BSGP and FAU-CURE are positive that Smart Growth for West Park was a successful educational program. Because of the knowledge that citizens and commissioners of West Park obtained at the February 10th Town Hall meeting, the zoning workshop, and the bus tour, they are optimistic about their future and feel empowered to make their community a great place to work, live, and play. Knowledge of Citizen Participatory Process, Zoning, Community Growth, and Smart Growth principles have put residents in a better position to hold their elected officials accountable for changes they know will help their community grow smartly.

Recommendation:

The following table corresponds to West Park residents' desires according to information gathered at Town Hall meeting group presentations:

Focus groups/charette Results:

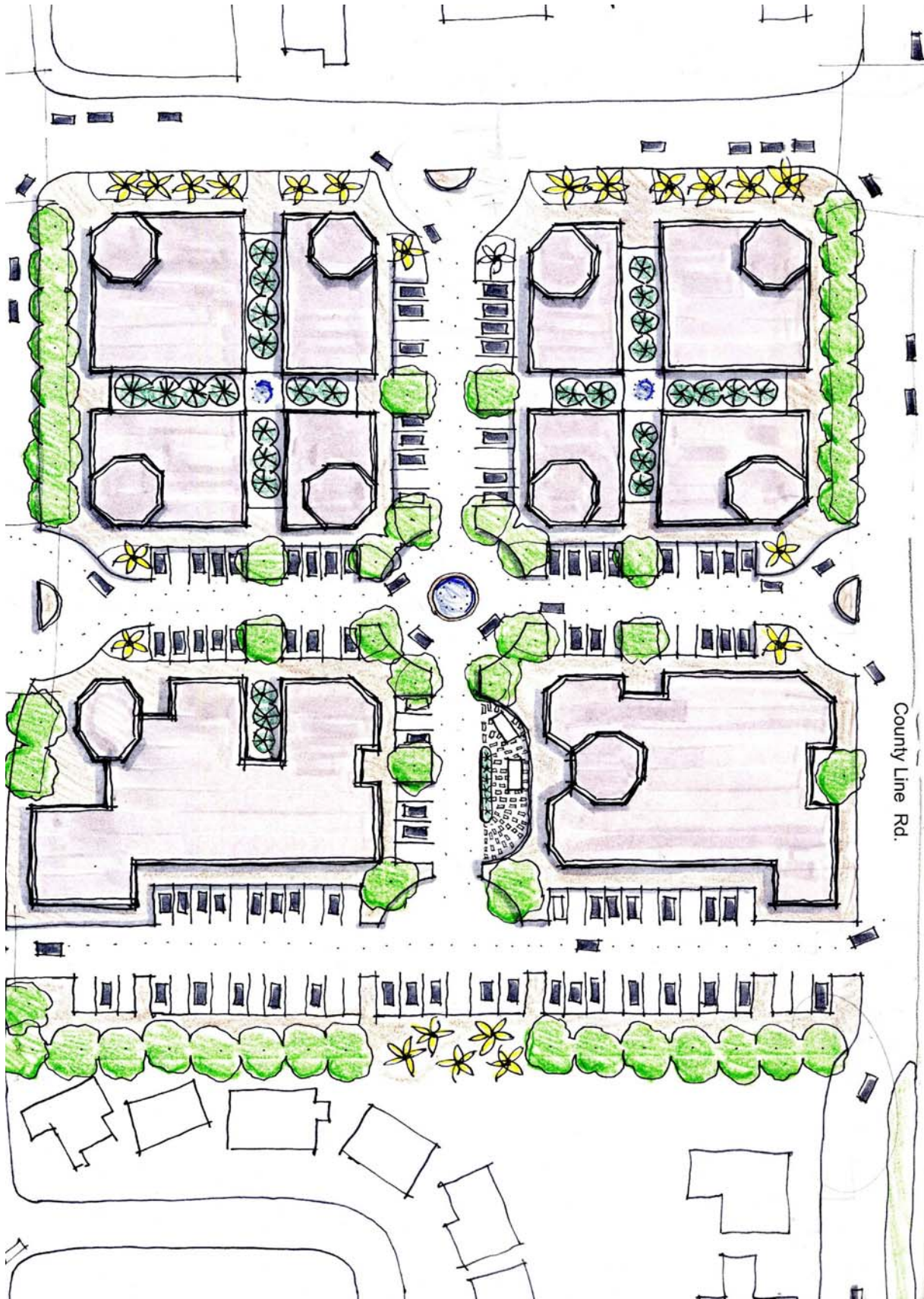
	Amenities and Services	Number of times mentioned/requested by residents
1.	Shopping - Winn-Dixie/Publix at: 441 and/or County line Rd and SW 40 th Ave.	8
2.	Parks on abandoned lots Green spaces, shades, picnics	6
3.	Upgrade social services Child Care / Elderly Services at Pembroke Rd.	6
4.	Development/ Business/ Hotel at: County line Rd and SW 40 th Ave.	5
5.	Mixed-Use at: 441 and County Line Rd.	5
6.	Post office at: County line Rd.	4
7.	Transit/Shuttle local bus intercity	4
8.	Bank	3
9.	City Entrance Signage	2
10.	Higher density in FDOT donated land (by water area)	2
11.	Police/ Fire Station	2
12.	Pedestrian Crossings over: Hallandale Rd and Pembroke Rd	2
13.	Medical/clinics	1
14.	Restaurants	1
15.	City Hall	1
16.	Schools	1
17.	Traffic lights	1

Below are some examples of proposed mixed-use development including residential, retail and hotel based on residents' requests and prepared by the Florida Atlantic University School of Architecture students:

Proposal One:



Proposal Two:



Proposal Three:

