

SUMMARY OF MEETING
Palm Beach County's Glades Technical Advisory Committee
Belle Glade City Hall May 21, 1999

Participants:

Gwendolyn Asia-Williams (West Area School District), Barbara Bell Spence (Glades Community Development Corporation), Anne Cronyn (Palm Beach County Housing & Community Development), Vivian Hunter (City of Belle Glade), Michael Jackson (South Bay City Manager), Sandra Joice (National Development Council), Art Kirstein (PBC Agricultural Enhancement Council), Gini Martin (Glades Community Development Corporation), Al Milligan (Union Fidelity Development Corporation), State Representative Rick Minton, Angela Morlok (PBC Metropolitan Planning Organization), Pam Nolan (PBC Economic Development Office), John Perrault (State Senator Tom Rossin's Office), George Stapf (National Development Council), Deborah Thatcher (Western Communities Tourism Alliance), Alice Thompson (Pahokee Chamber of Commerce), Kenny Throop (City of Belle Glade), Jamie Udell (County Commissioner Tony Masilotti's Office), Mary Jo Walker (City of Belle Glade), Bill Wilkins (Assistant County Administrator), Linda Wirtz (Equestrian community), Candace Wright (State Representative Rick Minton's Office)

Staff:

Vicki Silver, Chair (Sr. Planner, PBC Planning Division)

WESTERN COMMUNITIES TOURISM ALLIANCE

Ms. Thatcher reported that many promising activities are underway, including a possible Millennium New Year's Eve concert and houseboats to be located at Pahokee Marina from December to April.

The County Sports Commission arranged for a national kayaking group to visit the western county, and the group is very interested in organizing a competitive recreational event near Lake Okeechobee. A conversion study is ongoing by the Tourist Development Council; it will measure trade show attendees and other clients of the WCTA. The County's equestrian community is also being recognized by the County Commission through a newly forming organization. Finally, Deborah mentioned the Memorial Day weekend fundraiser that she helped organize to help generate a cash match for a state grant to rehab Pahokee's Old High School.

UNION FIDELITY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Mr. Milligan explained the structure of Union Fidelity, which has a regional advisory board representing the Glades area and a Board of Directors specific to the Pahokee area chaired by Patricia Wallace. Their mission includes eliminating slum and blight and creating net worth. They are engaged in developing a 157-unit subdivision with 3 types of units: condominiums, townhouses, and single family homes, and the City is processing a land use amendment for this project, which is scheduled to break ground by November. Union Fidelity is also working with Rockwood Lumber, a recycled plastic products company, to locate a plant in South Bay and Pahokee. A print shop employing 22 persons is planning to locate at the Farmers Market; funding for infrastructure and equipment has been identified, and they will move to a temporary site by September 1. The New Hope Foundation has donated land for a regional YMCA recreation/community center between Belle Glade and Pahokee, next to the pending Santa Maria

Villas subdivision. Within the next 4 weeks, planning charrettes will be held to obtain public input on this project; orientations, employee training, and pre-membership sessions will also be held. Other ongoing activities include acquiring and renovating the Florida Bar site in a depressed area of Pahokee and collaborating with Palm Beach Community College to train parents as substitute teachers for 3 Headstart centers. Ms. Asia-Williams noted that trained substitutes will also help meet the demand within the School District; she also mentioned that the new Lakeshore Middle School is scheduled for completion by August 2000.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Ms. Morlok explained that the Reverse Commute federal grant proposed for the Glades was not funded, although Jacksonville and Broward County received funding. She noted that the concept of facilitating transport of trained Glades residents to coastal employers such as hotels and hospitals in need of employees is still worth pursuing. Mr. Udell mentioned that Commissioner Masilotti has been working on a similar project, and Mr. Wilkins stated that some major employers lack 200-300 employees, so a GTAC task force was recommended to address these opportunities. Ms. Morlok also described a pending program that will use senior volunteers to develop 1-stop centers. These centers will encourage people to use public transit to get to work or needed social services, by teaching them to ride the bus and, if necessary, driving them to their destination. Another pending development is the transfer of authority for the disadvantaged transportation program from the MPO to the County. Given the declining ridership and limited resources, she urged the community to be creative in meeting the needs of the elderly, disabled, and at-risk in a way that serves these populations while creating business opportunities. Mr. Milligan invited Ms. Morlok to the June 3 meeting of the YMCA committee to ensure that transportation issues are considered; Ms. Martin recommended inviting a School District representative to ensure that aftercare transportation would be included in the planning effort. Ms. Silver also suggested inviting staff members of Florida Department of Transportation to address the need for bicycle and pedestrian access via the state road system, which accesses the YMCA site.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE RICK MINTON

Representative Minton reported that he worked with the County's legislative delegation to support funding of several projects in the Glades, including the Belle Glade Business Park and Street Beat. Committee members thanked him for his help and for attending our meeting.

COMMISSIONER MASILOTTI'S OFFICE

Mr. Udell emphasized that Commissioner Masilotti wants to see things happen in the Glades and therefore appreciates the opportunities provided by this committee. He added that the Commissioner needs specific details on projects for which support is requested.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Ms. Nolan invited everyone to invite businesses to attend the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit workshop scheduled for 5/26 at 9:00 am at Palm Beach Community College in the Glades; various types of tax incentives will be discussed. The Developing Regions grant applications have a submittal deadline of June 4 at 5 pm. Community Development Economic Development grant applications are due July 1.

Ms. Nolan introduced representatives of the National Development Council. Mr. Stapf described the \$1.5-million Grow Palm Beach Fund, a project of the Grow America Fund begun in January 1999 with an investment by an anonymous local benefactor to provide low interest loans for business development and to cover administrative costs of the Grow America Fund (GAF). He noted that the Council has a track record of \$25 billion in loans for economic development during the past 30 years, ranging from \$5,000 to \$1 million, and they have also certified local officials in financing. The GAF works with the Business Loan Fund in addition to Nations Bank and First Union Bank, which are the top 2 lenders in this field. Two projects are underway—in Lake Worth and Lake Park redevelopment areas; GAF's phone # is 800-664-9117. Mr. Stapf closed by encouraging businesses in the Glades to take advantage of the resources provided by the Grow Palm Beach Fund, noting that opportunities abound including the re-use of surplus federal lands.

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Cronyn reported that they finished their draft annual Consolidated Plan. This year, 50 applicants requested funding from the regular program and another 20 requested assistance for emergency shelter. A 5/25 meeting is scheduled for comments on the Plan and applications received; County Commissioners will review the Plan 6/8, with a final plan hearing set for 7/27. As Ms. Nolan mentioned, \$664,100 (10% of the County's CDBG funds) were set aside again this year for Economic Development projects with a July deadline; Fair Housing applications are also being solicited regarding education and training programs.

GLADES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ms. Martin noted that GCDC is refocusing its capacity building efforts on implementation, so providing technical assistance through meeting facilitation is a top priority. More money has been obtained for the Glades Youth Council, and they've graduated their first class—operated through Glades Positive Alternative Partnership. Feeding programs are also underway, including a food bank that will train people for food service and teach them marketable skills in warehouse management. Acting on the Vision now involves 350 people, and a new Director is about to be hired; one more year of funding has been obtained from the Kellogg Foundation. Ms. Bell-Spence announced that two upcoming events are planned as part of the "Stand for Children" program: a 6/2 concert at the Dolly Hand Center and a 6/5 fair at Pioneer Park with food, rides, and games. Ms. Martin also noted that the Palm Beach County Cultural Council is considering a \$13,500 grant request for Potluck in the Muck, and GCDC is still planning a \$3 million Heritage Center.

CITY OF SOUTH BAY

Mr. Jackson reported that a storage module company has located next to the Park of Commerce site, and that a temporary tenant, American Structural Systems, a maker of concrete slabs, has been found for the Park, to occupy 3 acres immediately and eventually 6 acres when more infrastructure becomes available. They will create about 20 jobs. Another company which is engaged in Third World assistance is considering locating in the Park of Commerce. The City will select a design consultant for their waterfront park at the 6/1 City Commission meeting. A Project Manager is being hired through a partnership with Fannie Mae to build the Bay Villages subdivision; Pulte Homes may commit to be the developer. A consortium of bankers based in

Broward and Miami-Dade Counties is helping develop the commercial outparcel for this subdivision near the Park of Commerce. Within the next few months, 10 housing units will be ready for occupancy at the Villa Lago subdivision. Mr. Jackson and Mayor Anthony recently explored international trade and Sister City possibilities for the Park of Commerce on a trip to Guana.

ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR WILKINS

Mr. Wilkins encouraged Glades residents to obtain technical assistance in financing and business development from June Howard, who was recently hired by the County's Office of Small Business Development to work with a maximum of ten clients. Ms. Martin offered to provide office space for Ms. Howard at the GCDC offices. Ms. Howard will host a workshop with the Business Loan Fund on the Rural Relending Intermediary Program, which may lend for as low as 1% interest rate with a 1-year turn-around, and she will coordinate services, help market businesses, and fit clients to agencies. The recently formed Ecotourism Association has not been doing as well as expected, so a meeting will be scheduled within a week or two to figure out how to get back on track. The Cultural Council is being asked to fund \$275,000 next year, up from \$175,000; this would provide an opportunity for emerging organizations. Mr. Wilkins emphasized that, as valuable as the informal reporting function is to GTAC, additional structure is important to inform all involved, via minutes and a periodic newsletter with a list of projects, contact persons and 1-sentence descriptions. We need to better market our projects so people recognize what's being achieved. Ideally, a Development Resource Center is needed to catalog what's been done and what's underway so new participants don't reinvent the wheel; siting this at the old Lakeshore Middle School when renovated as a community center was discussed, but chambers of commerce may need to be the interim repositories.

CITY OF BELLE GLADE

Ms. Hunter described progress made in funding site development/infrastructure for the Belle Glade Business Park.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15, with the next meeting scheduled for 6/25/99.