



Orange Avenue Overlay Steering Committee Minutes

July 10, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

City of Winter Park Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue | Winter Park, Florida

Call to Order:

Planning Director and Committee Lead Bronce Stephenson called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Steering Committee Members Present: Bill Segal, Sheila De Ciccio, Laura Turner, Michael Dick, Phil Kean, Jill Hamilton Buss, Sally Flynn and Ben Ellis. Absent: Bill Sullivan and Lamont Garber. Also Present: Planning Director Bronce Stephenson; Planning Intern Nicholas Lewis; and Recording Secretary/Clerk Kim Breland.

Minutes Approval for June 26th Meeting:

Motion to approve minutes made by Laura Turner, seconded by Sheila De Ciccio. The motion carried unanimously with a 9-0 vote.

Discussion Items:

A. Orange Avenue Area Resident Panel: The panelists introduced themselves in turn: Michael Spencer, Orwin Manor; Libertad Acosta-Anderson, Garden Drive; Gary Brewer, Mead Garden Condominiums; Marcus Rozbitzky, Orwin Manor.

Mr. Stephenson explained that the goal was to have residents on the panel who live in the different areas around Orange Avenue. He explained that the questions being posed in the same format as those asked to the business owners in the previous meeting, but this meeting was to have input from the residents who live in the area.

Mr. Stephenson asked the panelists what some of the biggest challenges they face being a resident in the Orange Avenue area. Mr. Rozbitzky stated that when he first moved to the area, he found that Orange Avenue was not a very inviting place to walk, he felt as though he was the only person walking, crossing Orange Avenue and Orlando Avenue was very challenging. He stated that he couldn't imagine how difficult it could be for pedestrians attempting to cross the road with a stroller or being mobile impaired, trying timing of traffic lights could be an issue, the road is geared for cars. He stated that while he doesn't have to confront the traffic in the area to go to and from work, the road does not seem safe for those who walk or bike ride.

Mr. Stephenson noted that Orwin Manor is one of the largest neighborhoods in the Orange Avenue. He requested that the panelist and board members not discuss the portion of Orange Avenue governed by DOT and just discuss the portion within the city limits.

The discussion continued with Mr. Brewer who stated that he concurred with Mr. Rozbitzky. He stated that he is an avid pedestrian who walks about 60 miles a week throughout the downtown area. He stated that one of the biggest challenges he has in the area is parking in the areas he frequents. Mr. Brewer is on The Committee of the Winter Park Playhouse and he never drives to the facility because there is no parking. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson echoed the same concerns; she and her husband enjoy biking and walking, but avoid Orange Avenue altogether preferring to take back roads to access places like Park Avenue. She stated that Orange Avenue feels very industrial and even with the tree canopies the area does not feel inviting and trying to cross four lanes of traffic is challenging. She stated that there are some good attractions like the Brewery and coffee shop give the area a community feel, which is what you get from Park Avenue unlike most of Orange Avenue, which seems like more of a "cut through". Mr. Spencer stated that he lives on Orange Avenue, which can be a challenge because of the speed of traffic going through the area. He stated that he has a young child and a dog and his family does not feel that there is a safe way to connect to restaurants and shops across the other side of the street because intersection is not very safe. Alternatively, if you decide to drive, there isn't enough parking.

There was a brief discussion regarding how the DOT will fit in to the redevelopment of Orange Avenue. Mr. Stephenson clarified which portion of Orange Avenue the DOT is responsible for and what portion the city is responsible for.

Mr. Stephenson then asked what opportunities for improvement the panelists can envision for Orange Avenue and the surrounding area. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that he would love to see a road diet through the area with bike and center turn lanes, more streetscape, density (i.e. condos or apartments) and placemaking and Denning, Minnesota and Orange Avenue. He remarked that Progress Point would be the perfect place for a park, arts/culture facility or communal space. Mr. Brewer noted that some improvements have already begun with establishments such as Foxtail and the Brewstillery, they that there is demand for that type of development in the area. He also mentioned the need for a parking garage in the area. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson mentioned widening the sidewalks as a form of traffic calming. She stated that reducing the number of lanes on the road would be welcoming to bicyclists, creating a space where people can come to hangout. Mr. Spencer stated that on the Orwin Manor side, they have done a good job of maintaining the tree canopy, but on the business side, it has not been maintained as well. He stated that improving the tree canopy and streetscaping could beautify the area and make the area friendlier to pedestrians.

Mr. Stephenson asked the Committee members if any of them had an opportunity to drive down Orange Avenue in the past week and if so, what they saw after the last steering committee meeting. He noted that since the last meeting, the City's Urban Forestry department has addressed the tree canopy and signage issues expressed by the panelist during the small business owner discussion. One of The Committee members noted that when they took the drive down Orange Avenue, they noticed how narrow the sidewalks are. There was a brief discussion about the tree canopies and ways to help the trees in the area grow to further that effort.

Mr. Stephenson asked the panelists why they thought redevelopment of major properties has not occurred especially given the demand and high value of land in Winter Park. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that perhaps parking was an issue and people who might prefer to walk to establishments in the area cannot get to those destinations easily. Mr. Brewer stated that he thought it was a combination of a parking, being the biggest issue for businesses in the area and the mixed-use developments in the area. He explained that there should be a transition to more restaurants and retail from the office/industrial businesses currently in the area, which he felt would be a boost in property value. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson stated that restaurants that she finds attractive are ones that have a more open layout or outside seating similar to the ones on Park Avenue where you find people everywhere, the restaurants on Orange Avenue feel more closed off. She concurred with Mr. Brewer regarding the office/industrial feel of the area. Mr. Spencer stated that there are parking considerations and pedestrian connectivity improvements needed for the residential areas. He remarked that there are some newly developed businesses such as Foxtail, Ravenous Pig and the Brewstillery as examples of the area not being completely stagnant. He stated that he feels that some things need improvement to help people connect to those places. Mr. Brewer remarked that the Orange Avenue Corridor could be a very good entertainment area, noting that businesses such as the Winter Park Playhouse and the Enzian would be excellent anchor tenants that would generate traffic for the area.

Mr. Stephenson asked the panel what is currently missing in the Orange Avenue area. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that ground level retail/businesses should be developed in the Progress Point location with condominiums or apartments above it. Mr. Stephenson asked if the Mr. Rozbitsky if he felt that the area was busy with people or sparse of people when driving through the area at night. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that the area had gained some foot traffic with the addition of Foxtail and the Brewstillery. He stated that sometimes the restaurants appear to be busy and other nights they appear empty, but he does not see many people walking the area in the evening. Mr. Brewer stated that the property to the south where Lombardi's used to be has a lot of potential. He stated that having a connection between that property and the area where Foxtail and the Brewstillery are located would open up the corridor and create huge redevelopment opportunities. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson remarked that places where you can bring a sense of community, such as the Enzian would be good for the area. Mr. Spencer reiterated that pedestrian connectivity is a big piece of what is missing. He stated that there are opportunities to develop properties (Progress Point, the old Lombardi's building) along the corridor. He stated that properties (like Lombard's) with higher setbacks could work in the area. He noted that he is not in favor of an apartment complex because of potential traffic impacts, but a reasonably sized hotel could bring energy to the area. He mentioned the need for caution during the development process when deciding how close properties would be built in proximity to the street. There was a brief discussion amongst the panelist about what type and size of hotel, if any, would be the right fit for the Corridor and discussed potential traffic issues. Mr. Brewer remarked that a mixed-use business/apartment style building might work better in the area as well as a SunRail station between downtown Winter Park and Florida Hospital would be a great addition to the Corridor, it would increase foot traffic and reduce parking needs.

The Committee asked the panelists if at any time of day would they consider walking across 17-92. Mr. Spencer stated that his family has not attempted it because of the traffic issues and safety concerns. Mr. Rozbitsky

remarked that automated traffic crossing signals would help with crossing the street. He stated that without the automated signals, cars do not yield and trying to wait for the traffic lights to cycle is time consuming. The Committee then asked the panelists what else makes it difficult to cross 17-92. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson stated that she and her husband have experienced trying to cross the streets and encountered vehicles trying to make right turns and not yielding or seeing the pedestrians trying to cross the street. She suggested that a traffic signal that does not allow a right turn when it switches for pedestrian crossing could help. The discussion went on regarding the size of the streets and talk of adding roundabouts for traffic calming.

The Committee asked the panelists how many stories they would consider for a building height, while still keeping a sense of place. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that he's lived in a number of cities in the country and his opinion would be 3-5 stories would be a good amount. Mr. Brewer stated 2-3 stories. There was discussion that building heights would be a large part of the redevelopment of Orange Avenue. Shrinking of streets and wider sidewalks was also part of the discussion. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson remarked that she did not think you can measure a sense of place by the height of a building. She stated that a sense of place comes more from the community, which Orange Avenue already has. Mr. Spencer stated that he felt the sense of place depended on the property, he stated that buildings of 2-3 stories was probably the answer, but if it were possible to have a parking garage that could be set back, hidden behind the buildings and slightly taller could be ideal. Mr. Spence also mentioned that a building with the right setbacks (like Lombardi's) could potentially go up to 5-6 stories without issue. Further discussion ensued regarding architecture, setbacks and building heights. Some examples given of great placemaking where buildings are 5-6 stories but have the right setbacks and scale were the brownstones in New York City. The Committee and panelists also discussed drainage and stormwater concerns as the area develops.

Mr. Stephenson then asked what improvements to the Orange Avenue area would help increase the quality of life for the neighborhoods. The consensus of the panelists was walkability, which includes connectivity to side streets, parking improvements, architectural design guidelines for the Corridor, speed reduction, widening of sidewalks, streetscapes and more businesses that would create pedestrian traffic would be welcome improvements. Discussion ensued with regard to traffic and road diet solutions. In addition, Winter Park - Park Avenue and Downtown Winter Garden were mentioned as examples of good traffic calming, streetscape and landscaping.

Mr. Stephenson asked the panelists how the city could incorporate Mead Gardens, the great "backyard" of this area, into being a part of the fabric of Orange Avenue. Mr. Brewer stated that the sidewalk from the intersection at the railroad tracks down to Mead Garden and connect it with bike path activity, as well as parking improvements. Mrs. Acosta - Anderson stated that continuing the Denning Drive improvement down to Mead Gardens would be a great contribution to the area. The panelists discussed some of the parking issues near the railroad tracks. There was discussion regarding the five-point intersection near Progress Point and possible solutions such as improved street lighting and signage in the area. Mr. Stephen asked the panelists if they felt the wayfinding signage to Mead Garden needed improvement. The Committee and panelist stated that current signage could be improved. It was stated that it is hard to see the signs until you are very close to the Garden. In addition, it was noted that the signage along 17-92 for the Garden comes from City of Orlando. Discussion ensued regarding the signage for Mead Gardens and the surrounding area.

Lastly, Mr. Stephenson asked the panelists what their vision is for Orange Avenue. Mr. Rozbitsky stated that he would like to see a road diet from Ivanhoe to Orange Avenue with one lane in each direction with a turn lane in the center and bike lanes as well as wider sidewalks, mixed use buildings, more density and open space. Mr. Brewer would like to see the Corridor become an arts and entertainment district, which would complement Park Avenue. Mrs. Acosta-Anderson would like to see the area mimic the look and feel of Park Avenue. Mr. Spencer stated that he would like to see the area become more pedestrian friendly with speed reduction, more streetscape and landscaping and parking improvements. He emphasized the need for architectural design guidelines as well.

Mr. Stephenson opened up questions from the Committee members. The Committee asked the panelists if they have received any input from their neighbors regarding Orange Avenue. The consensus of the panelists was that their neighbors have shared the same traffic and parking concerns, but also stated that if the redevelopment was done correctly, it would be a great improvement to Orange Avenue. The Committee also noted that one of the small business owners from the previous panel had stated that Orange Avenue should be come designer's row and asked the resident panelists if they thought that was the direction and lastly should Fairbanks Avenue be included as part of the Overlay redevelopment. Mr. Stephenson showed the Committee and panelists map views of the Orange Avenue and Fairbanks Avenue areas included in the redevelopment. The consensus of the panelists was that the redevelopment areas of the map should include the commercial areas of Fairbanks that meet at 17-92. An in-depth discussion began regarding architectural control and design guidelines for the corridor, mixed-use residential options for the area, parking issues and solutions. No one from the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

No one else wished to speak. The public hearing was closed.

Mr. Stephenson thanked the panelists and Committee members for their input at the meeting. He stated that the learning portion of the meetings had concluded and starting with the next meeting, the committee would start to work on solutions as related to the redevelopment effort.

Mr. Stephenson opened the floor for Committee comments:

Committee member Michael Dick asked Mr. Stephenson about the committee goals that were part of the June 26th meeting and asked when the committee would be discussing those goals.

Mr. Stephenson remarked that the committee goals would be discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

The next Orange Avenue Overlay Steering Committee will be held, Wednesday, July 24, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Lewis, Planning Intern