

Imagine Clearwater Timeline and Understandings

June 2014 – ULI (Urban Land Institute) (Hired by City early 2014 Cost \$125,000) presents their findings – Need to create a master plan for the downtown waterfront
City issues RFP (Request for Proposal) for consulting services to prepare Master Plan for downtown waterfront/bluff area

Early 2015 – Clearwater Charter Review Committee (CCRC) meets to present recommendations

Oct 14, 2015 CCRC presents recommendations to City Council

Ordinance No. 8809-15

April/May 2015 City Council contracts with Urban Land Institute (ULI) to evaluate city's vision and strategies for the DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOWNTOWN.

Council desires to encourage increased use of the waterfront and boat slips as recommended by ULI
Make the library an "Attractor Element" ("maker space" "entrepreneurial ecosystem")

- This [Coachman Park Area] shall be developed or maintained as open space and public utilities together with associated appurtenances (Wow! This word! Means real property, that is immovable or fixed to the land – in-ground pool; fence; shed) (except in case of public health/safety/welfare of citizens and approval at referendum)
- EXCEPT that a city owned **bandshell** and associated facilities including removable seating may be constructed and maintained. City-owned tennis courts and associated appurtenances may be constructed and maintained
- Information on Clearwater Marina – Seminole Boat Slips
- Information on ability to remove Harborview Center – and portions of downtown library may be leased and used for a care or restaurant, special events, maker space, etc...

Dec. 3, 2015.

On second reading – Council approves language to put on March 15, 2016 referendum –

- Downtown waterfront boat-slips
- Downtown waterfront relocated **bandshell (the construction and maintenance of a city owned bandshell and associated facilities including removable seating)**
- Additional use of downtown main library

April 2016 – Council awards a contract to hire HR&A Advisors (\$430,000) to construct the Master Plan Imagine Clearwater (IC)

- ✓ Over the course of six months (Summer/Fall 2016) city engaged hundreds of Clearwater residents/business owners, stakeholders who shared visions, details, design and programming ideas for their future waterfront – over 40 interviews with local stakeholders, including developers, real estate brokers, small business owners and downtown property owners
- ✓ City hosted 7 interactive community workshops in various neighborhoods – about IC

- ✓ Covered – design, vision for waterfront and bluff; character of the area; recreations; parks and open space; economic development
- ✓ City engaged 18 Clearwater “Resident Leaders” to help with engagement and outreach during this process
- ✓ Materials posted on website – citizens encourage to engage – Facebook, call, email, etc... to offer feedback
- ✓ **GOAL OF THE PLAN: draw residents and visitors to the downtown waterfront; catalyze greater downtown activity; attract investment; connect waterfront to rest of Clearwater**
- ✓ **FOUR KEY STRATEGIES for IC:**
 - ✓ **Waterfront must be anchored by a dynamic new open space**
 - ✓ **Coachman Park needs an active edge**
 - ✓ **Improved Osceola should complement Cleveland St.**
 - ✓ **Access to the site should incorporate all modes**

The ACTION PLAN – provides a series of strategic implementation recommendations to serve as a starting point

Feb. 21 2017 - City Council Special Meeting on IC
Council unanimously voted to adopt IC by resolution. THIS IS WHAT VOTERS WANT – APPROVED

HOWEVER: The City Charter prohibits the development or maintenance for other than as open space and public utilities the IC property – without a referendum – SO...
 To allow IC to move forward – A referendum was held on Nov. 7 2017

NOV. 7, 2017

Improvements to and use of Downtown Clearwater Waterfront
 “A city-owned bandshell and associated facilities including removable seating... tennis courts, playground, splash pad, water features, artwork etc... public restrooms and park storage...licensing of events, temporary booths for vending and mobile concessions may be permitted”

Language on Ballot: Improvements to and use of Downtown Clearwater Waterfront
 Shall City Charter be amended: **“To allow construction and maintenance of certain improvements including playgrounds, water features, artwork a boathouse, Marina office, restrooms, surface parking, roadways, plazas, sidewalks, trails, elevated walkways, boardwalks, benches, picnic tables, water fountains, litter receptacles and similar amenities, to support active and passive uses of the city owned downtown waterfront”**

Second referendum means in addition to March 16 referendum -

REFERENDUM PASSED: 75.8% of voters

Date: Spring 2019: **Coachman Park Pavilion Presentation by REH** “Supporters of the Plan”. DDB; Clearwater Merchants Association; Clearwater Beach Chamber; CL Marine Aquarium; Florida Orchestra (? I’ve heard they were pressured); Ferry, Chivas (Bay Star Restaurants); Dan Shouplin (ClearSky Restaurants); Ken Hamilton (Palm Pavilion). And many more... Have Glossy Handout

So...

We're these people (REH) involved in the extensive meetings held with HR&A over 6 months – did they offer input in the variety of ways it was solicited? Reported that Mr. Buffman Chair of Ruth Eckerd Hall (REH) came to one City led input meeting- (Planning Dept.) talked up the idea of an amphitheater – minutes/notes of this meeting are missing or not available.

Do we have records of any community feedback for support of a 4000+ seat covered amphitheater? Any calls, Facebook posts? Any emails? Michael Delk reports not really.

When did we switch from “bandshell” to amphitheater? April 2019

Note that the Nov. 2017 referendum explanation/description language refers to the bandshell – as a bandshell – no amphitheater language. (Although legally no real distinction – but in “common understanding” bandshell would most likely be interpreted as something smaller than an amphitheater.

Concerns:

- Not what people discussed, envisioned or voted on
- We are not following recommendations of experts – ULI (\$125,000.
- We are not following recommendations of HR&A Advisors – (\$378,000) Confirm this. [Note: HR&A did not make concrete/detailed recommendation about bandshell because they ‘could not agree’]. Need more detail here – I am reaching out to HR&A
- City hired Stantec to design park (IC) \$5-6 million total price tag. Feb. 2018
- In April of 2018 Stantec gives a presentation to Council about IC – (15% design) includes a moderate bandshell – what residents/voters/stakeholders/experts weighed in on
- City got pressure from REH to replace bandshell with 4000+ covered seat amphitheater
- In response to REH pressure – {And their purported financials} City then hired Webb (Cost? \$40-50,000? Confirm this) **to respond to the pressure from REH to build a major amphitheater** [NOTE: Original HR&A Stakeholders/Advisory Group members are **not consulted**/invited for input]
- Webb came back with recommendation of no more than (financial/aesthetic concerns) a 2,100-2,400 seat amphitheater (April 2019)
- REH not happy – needs a “sweet spot” of at least 4000 covered seat venue to complement their 750 seat Capitol Theater and their 2180 seat REH.
- **Now we have financial concerns: The city hired Webb Management (Cost of \$5,775) to do a financial analysis of the 400+ seat venue. Duncan Webb did the analysis for his firm. Results say the venue would cost the city at least \$2.1 million per year to operate. This is \$1.6 million more than the city currently spends every year on events at Coachman Park.**
- The annual expense would include financing on the \$14 million or more it's going to take to build the amphitheater.
- There are concerns about the City's ability to book concerts when we are not able to ban guns at our venue. In 2011 the Florida State Legislature passed an expansive measure which prohibited local governments from regulating the possession of guns. More and more artists requiring the banning of firearms as part of their contract.
- We do not have adequate parking in the Coachman Park area to support a large amphitheater

- Because of poor recording/auditing of Parks and Rec. costs/revenues- the City does not have a firm handle on whether or not city-hosted concerts and festivals in Coachman Park cost the city money – or bring in money

Questions

- ❖ How can we expect residents/voters to vote to develop Bluff property if we do not honor their wishes when they gave extensive public input – and when they voted for a bandshell and a family park?
- ❖ Seems that the HR&A work was integral to getting the Nov. 2017 Referendum passed – I see it as very problematic if we don't honor that work – what we paid for: their expertise – and what residents/businesses/stakeholders thoughtfully weighed in on
- ❖ The City knows that it will need to go back to voters to complete the entire project – how can we expect voters to have confidence in us – to trust that we will listen to them?
- ❖ Seems that Bobbi Rossi and REH are pushing hard for the 4000+ seat amphitheater – it's highly likely they can market and sell tickets – They are successful at what they do. But...
 - Is this what our residents want?
 - REH might have expertise in concert booking/promotion – but they are not experts in urban design
 - Will this revitalize our downtown? (Of course no guarantee – but look at findings of ULI report)
 - Do our residents want to see our downtown with every weekend packed with cars/traffic and noise?
 - Will this venue serve our residents – or will it better serve outsiders? Currently 17% of our population lives at or below the poverty level. Nearly 50% of our residents are less than \$400 away from a housing crisis (Pre-COVID19) numbers.
- HR&A Vision Statement focused on two elements – attract people to the park and waterfront everyday -the other is to have an active edge along Bluff – those were the driving elements to make downtown successful and the park successful. Are we doing that?

The citizen supported Referendum was based on one idea/concept/design- what the past council has directed is NOT in line with what our citizens want.

Finally, in light of the economic devastation of COVID19 – might we do better to scale back current plans for IC, reduce costs and build the park/bandshell that residents voted for?

Biggest obstacle – we need the confidence to move forward with something for the sole benefit of the residents. We need to emphasize that this should be a great public space. **This is truly the only waterfront our residents have left.** Yes, we have the beach, but MANY residents do not feel the beach is for them. Too much traffic, not enough parking, expensive parking.

The IC/Coachman Park was voted on to be a 365 days a year world class park – but we seem to have exchanged that idea for a world class venue for the rich. And there is no empirical evidence that a

4000+ covered seat amphitheater will be a “magic bullet” for downtown revitalization. We’re giving up the focus of the waterfront as a public space. We are taking on the cost of constructing a venue for a outside entity.