



Indian River Boulevard & 17th Street Intersection Task Force Recommendations

The Indian River County Chamber of Commerce created a diverse task force in October 2015 to address the properties at the intersection of Indian River Boulevard and 17th Street in the City of Vero Beach. The task force first convened on November 5, 2015. Meetings were facilitated by Penny Chandler, Chamber President

The task force was represented as follows:

Bob Anderson representing Bridgewater Condo Association
Derek Arden, Vero Commercial Management
Beth Casano, representing Rockridge Homeowners Association
Helene Caseltine, Chamber Economic Development Director
Duncan Clements, VB Hotel & Spa
Linda Gonzalez, Coldwell Banker
Cooke Gravlee, Valley National Bank
Ken Grudens, IR Land Trust
Keith Kite, Hampton Inn
Jay Kramer, City Mayor
Allison McNeal, Chamber Tourism Director
Noah Powers, IR Neighborhood Association
Jeff Schlitt, alternating with Bob Schlitt Schlitt Services
Joey Stawara, Fairlane Harbor
Michael Walther, Coastal Technology GEC

The Task Force met 5 times to discuss the possibilities and considerations for the southeast, northeast and southwest corners of Indian River Boulevard and 17th Street. It was agreed that this intersection is important as a gateway to both the island and mainland, and it was agreed that the City and the public should go into this process with their eyes wide open. There should be a master plan created for all three corners. A patient, and community inclusive approach for the long-term should be considered for the sake of our residents, taxpayers and visitors

The task force believes our community taxpayers and stakeholders should be included in a professionally led master planning process. The task force makes the following recommendation for a master plan, and also provides further considerations for its development.

Chamber Task Force Recommendation

1. Engage an outside professional planning entity to conduct community meetings and develop consensus with the result being a master plan for these properties.
2. Within the first 6 months, the planning process should determine whether use of the postal annex property can or cannot be viably tied to the use of the two riverfront properties. If not, the City should sell or lease the postal annex property ASAP, and limit the balance of the planning process to the two riverfront properties.

Overall Considerations on Three Parcels

There are certain issues that should be considered for the three properties, as follows:

Potential Future Uses

- The City should patiently take a long term approach to create a functional and attractive site that will benefit City residents, taxpayers, and draw visitors for decades to come.
- The two riverfront parcels should be used together.
- Consider a park and green space for public use of the power plant and wastewater plant properties with connected river-related and water-dependent uses.
- Incorporate adjacent biking and pedestrian paths on riverfront properties leading to river vistas.
- Consider the cost of all ongoing maintenance of any public space and that, even if there is private investment, a developer may require the City to offer mitigation on these properties.
- Remove the power plant and wastewater plant before considering offering any riverfront parcel for private investment uses of all/or limited portions of these properties. Note: The value of each of the riverfront properties is diminished by the plants remaining on the properties.
- The annex property may end up being an appropriate location for a future substation, or viably used in concert with future uses of the riverfront properties.
- Gas stations should not be allowed on any of the three properties.
- The Bridgewater Association, Inc. (1515-1575 IR Blvd.) is against the relocation of the substation to the postal annex property and they believe it will reduce their property values.

Planning Considerations

- A time frame should be placed on any planning process.
- Use the funds that the City has already budgeted to dismantle the power plant. That should begin ASAP.
- An environmental study will be needed to assess the full range of potential uses on either of the utility properties. Some developers will likely shy away from the parcels without the study and completion of any required remediation.
- Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council should be asked to participate in development of a plan.
- Ask Indian River County to participate in plan formulation.
- It may be desirable to keep the properties in City ownership with leases for private uses as may become warranted. This could support long term options for the City.
- Existing intersection congestion must be addressed.
- Dismantling the current water treatment facility and constructing a new facility at the airport will be very costly (\$30+ million) and may likely be decades away.
- Any RFP that may be developed by the City for the postal annex property should include zoning controls regarding potential uses, possibly including mixed uses such as retail and office.
- Consider outright sale or long term lease of the postal annex property if a connected use to the riverfront properties is deemed not viable.
- The annex property should not be sold or leased until that determination is made through at least a preliminary master plan developed for the properties and intersection.
- As far as leasing any properties, the City should consider creating long-term leases to make the properties a viable investment. At only 4 acres, the postal annex property would suffer from return on investment on any short-term lease.
- Provide for continued use by the IR Youth Sailing Foundation currently using the property south of the water treatment facility.