

City of Coral Gables

Planning Department Staff Report

To: Honorable Members of the Economic Development Board, Historic Preservation Board and Planning and Zoning Board

From: Planning Department

Date: January 22, 2003

Subject: TriBoard workshop to review and discuss the design, policies and management of the future development of the North Ponce de Leon District.

Background

The City Commission has requested a comprehensive review and evaluation of existing and proposed policies and development provisions for the North Ponce de Leon District. The Commission's expressed a desire to solicit input at their November 12th meeting.

The North Ponce de Leon District has been the subject of study in recent years, with specific findings and recommendations provided in three previous studies. Those studies, which have been included with this report for the workshop board members review and reference, are as follows:

1. 1994 - Findings and Recommendations of the Douglas Apartment District Task Force (Attachment A).
2. 1998 – Draft North Ponce District Zoning Review (Attachment B).
3. 2002 – Coral Gables Charrette Report (North Ponce District excerpts and recommendations – Attachment C).

The Charrette recommendations which address the North Ponce de Leon District should be considered when discussing this neighborhood's future development. Those recommendations have been highlighted in Attachment C for the convenience of the workshop board members.

Study Area

For the purpose of this workshop, the boundaries of the North Ponce de Leon District study area are assumed to be the same as those used during the Charrette, as follows:

North: S.W. 8th Street
South: Navarre Avenue
East: Douglas Road
West: LeJeune Road

Pre-Charrette Introduction

An outline of existing conditions and issues regarding the North Ponce de Leon District was presented by City Staff at the PreCharrette meetings in 2002. Nine (9) categories, each with summary “bullet” statements, provide a description of the physical and regulatory elements which compromise and influence the development of the North Ponce de Leon District. These categories and the issues cited for each provide a basis upon which to begin the workshop discussion.

Overview

- Coral Gables Apartment District considered relatively affordable.
- Commercial corridor is attracting new retail, restaurants and entertainment.
- Development trends points towards:
 - a. High-rise mixed-use development along Ponce de Leon Boulevard
 - b. Multi-family residential development adjoining the commercial corridor

Land Uses

- Mixed commercial uses along Ponce de Leon Boulevard
- Small scale multi-family housing
- High interest for development

Zoning

- Existing: Low to mid-rise commercial uses along Ponce de Leon Boulevard.
- Existing: Low to Mid-rise multi family uses to the east and west of Ponce.
- Allowed: Commercial high-rise development up to 16 stories permitted along Ponce corridor.
- Allowed: Apartment development up to 50 units per acre and height up to 8 stories (97’).

Urban Character

- Existing housing is virtually all multi family, most housing stock is 50 years old.
- Development trends could result in the demolition of multi family complexes to make way for larger-scale buildings.
- Ponce de Leon Boulevard, the City’s primary north-south commercial corridor, could benefit from streetscale improvements.
- Small historic districts may help preserve the half-century old structures, and provide affordable/moderate rents to residents.
- Long term goals: ensure commercial and residential developments are complementary to each other.

Transportation and Traffic

- Future trolley service linking CBD, the Village of Merrick Park and MetroRail will circulate through the North Ponce de Leon District.
- Current street configuration is not pedestrian friendly.

Parking

- Existing apartment buildings have little or no off street parking.
- Parking for businesses spills over into residential streets.

Architecture

- Styles include Mediterranean, post World War II and contemporary.
- Need to preserve historic buildings, tax incentives are available.
- Pedestrian friendly character will be enhanced with new development.

Streetscape

- Ponce de Leon Boulevard has variety of façade types and rooflines.
- Development rights need to be balanced with the need to preserve the low to mid-rise character of the area.
- Maintain and enhance street tree program.

Infrastructure

- Water and sewer capacity may be an issue for redevelopment with increased intensity/density.
- Priority should be given to maintaining and improving urban amenities.

Timeline

This is only a discussion item at this time, and no recommendation is required. City Staff is seeking guidance and direction from the TriBoard members in order to draft specific proposals for future recommendations and possible changes to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Code.

Those proposals will be presented to each board represented at the workshop for review and recommendation, which will then be forwarded to the City Commission for their consideration. Public notification of proposal resulting from this workshop will be provided to assure public comment is included in the review process.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Riel, Jr.
Planning Director

Attachments:

- A. Findings and Recommendations of the Douglas Apartment District Task Force
- B. Draft North Ponce District Zoning Review
- C. Coral Gables Charrette Report (North Ponce District excerpts and recommendations)