



From The Desk Of **DEAN TRANTALIS**

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

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Better planning needed to handle city growth

The summer break begins, and many of us look forward to either quieter days at the beach or perhaps a trip to some unexplored destination. No matter your choice, I wish everyone a safe and fun-filled season.

When we return, the city is going to be hit by a tailwind of economic activity, both on the barrier island and inland. Already we have seen proposals for the Bahia Cabana, Alhambra Street and the Bahia Mar complex. The proposed Bahia Mar includes a totally transformed venue for the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

The plans are mesmerizing – glass-laden spires towering above the palm trees, shapes and designs that will create a new aesthetic to the simpler paradigm of the mid-century buildings that now blanket our streets and neighborhoods. There is even a proposal to wrap the entire Galleria Mall with hundreds of new condo units, a grand hotel and a caliber of restaurants that would appeal to even the most discerning celebrity chef.

Dramatic change is in the air. The question that now comes to mind: Are we ready for it?

Many people come to our city to share in a life more quiet than what they might find elsewhere. We take pride in our lifestyle that is less frenetic, more culturally diverse and more family-oriented. But others come seeking a new vitality, a younger spirit and a place to have fun.

The building blocks of community require the stability of one ideal and the vision of the other. The challenge, of course, is how we blend the two without one snuffing out the other.

Visually, new buildings are always an inspiration. But many would rather forsake the new modernism for more

open space and unfettered breezes. They would step away from the urbanization of our coastal areas.

Noise and traffic congestion have become the new norm, all from people hoping to escape just that. And, we have yet to encounter the impact of projects already underway, let alone those still on the drawing board.

As a community, we are at a critical juncture.

We have come to enjoy the changes that new investments provided, such as better restaurants and improved attractions. Yet, we will compromise the very quality of life all of us have come to expect unless we refashion our infrastructure of roads and traffic patterns, improve our utility systems, and find ways to preserve our natural surroundings and historical heritage.

This is the new imperative. As a City Commission, it would be premature to approve another new project until we undertake a comprehensive analysis of our roads and support systems. We need to determine how we can adapt them to the demands of more investment.

This dialogue should include the developer community because they can partner with the city as we form new strategies and seeks alternative answers. They could be relied upon to participate financially in the changes that need to be made.

In the end, our city will remain our home. We just need to set the table for one more.

Sincerely,

YMCA of Broward looks to build new rec center at Holiday Park entrance

The YMCA of Broward County is in discussions with the city about building a new athletic center on vacant city-owned property on North Federal Highway. It would be located near the Parker Playhouse in Holiday Park.

The City Commission endorsed the concept and gave the Parks & Recreation Department permission to proceed with the talks.

The YMCA wants to construct a 30,000-square-foot building and would sign a long-term lease of the property with the city.

Once the building is completed, the YMCA would provide programs for all ages. There would be a wellness center, locker rooms, a child development center, a youth center, a climbing tower, a main gym, a tech hub, a room for spinning and aerobic classes, a senior zone, a gymnastics room, a spa and mind zone, and rooftop courts.

One outstanding question is the future of city programs now held in the activity center located just south of the proposed site. It may be advantageous to move the current gymnastics, aikido and yoga programs to the YMCA facility if there is funding for additional space there.



Short-term rental rules win initial OK

The City Commission gave tentative approval this month to a new set of requirements governing the operation of short-term home rentals. Commissioners expect to take a final vote in late August.

Residents across the city have complained about neighbors turning their homes into mini-hotels, renting to tourists for daily and weekly stays. The state prohibits cities from banning short-term rentals or restricting the duration and frequency of rentals, but Fort Lauderdale still has the ability to impose reasonable regulations.

The proposed ordinance requires any person operating a vacation rental to register with city. A property representative must be available around the clock to address any issue. Owners also must keep a guest

registry and post pertinent information on city ordinances on site. The properties would be subject to city inspection to ensure compliance. Repeat violators could be fined and have their license to operate suspended.

The maximum occupancy in a single-family neighborhood would be 10 people. There also must be at least one off-street parking space available for every three occupants staying at the home.

All sleeping rooms would need interconnected and hard-wired smoke and carbon monoxide detection and notification systems, and there would need to be a dry chemical fire extinguisher on each floor of the home. Any pool or hot tub also would need to comply with Florida's current pool safety law.



Commissioner Trantalis meets with new citizens after addressing a naturalization ceremony at the regional field office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.



Commissioner Trantalis joins other officials and civil rights activists at a rally at the federal courthouse after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality.



Commissioner Trantalis joins Mark and Jane Grant of Sunrise Key at the recent Salute to Leadership Gala for the Broward Partnership for the Homeless.



Commissioner Trantalis chats with residents of South Middle River during the neighborhood's recent progressive dinner fund-raising event.