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Moore Haven Technical Assistance: Architecture and Planning

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Executive Summary

It is of primary importance for the City of Moore Haven to expand the City Marina and, if possible, to secure the east side of the inlet that serves the City Marina for marina use. This may be achieved by a certified survey that defines ownership of the shoreline; the purchase of the Abrams Tract; or by cutting a deal with the Abrams Tract or a third party for the necessary land in exchange for a first class marina. This last option may involve some boat slips reserved for future Abrams Tract development.

With respect to the Downtown Historic District, rehabilitation of existing historic structures should be encouraged following the Secretary of Interior's guidelines. Agape House, a non-conforming use at the corner of J Street and Riverside Drive, should be relocated to a renovated or new structure that is appropriately zoned for their use. The Moore Haven Hotel owner should be encouraged to use his frontage along Riverside Drive for one or more small structures in keeping with the architectural character of the Hotel.

With respect to pedestrians, a seamless first class Greenway should extend from the expanded marina to the Lone Cypress on Riverside Drive.

Finally, having granted the CRA/Main Street initiative the tax increment financing (TIP) starting with the year 2005, the City and County agreed to a split (50/50) of the TIP leaving the Main Street program with a further split (50/50) with the CRA. This, in turn, will be a token amount (several hundred dollars) if the City continues to lower the millage rate as the taxable property goes up. The City should back the Main Street program by freezing the millage rate.

Current Status

Moore Haven has established a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and has been designated a Main Street community by the State of Florida .. The CRA district and the Main Street boundary are the same and they both have the same staff, the Economic Development Director for the County. Further, a Downtown Historic District has been approved by the City Council that includes the buildings in

the 1-99 block of Avenue J and the Moore Haven Bank Building at 100 First Street.

The future growth of Moore Haven is predicated on enhancing the town as a tourist destination. At present, the commercial is highway convenience stores with little or no sense of a pedestrian environment. Efforts are underway to revitalize the Downtown Historic District with a focus on creating a tourist destination.

It is premature to judge the effectiveness of the Main Street revitalization effort since Committees are yet to meet on a regular basis. The future holds intriguing possibilities.

Tom Perry Memorial Park

The development of along the edge of Tom Perry Memorial Park depends on the creation of a unique destination with a cluster of uses that reinforce each other. The type of destination that seems possible is an arts, antiques, and collectibles cluster with cafes and restaurants added to the mix. This is beginning to happen with the reopening of the Lundy Building as an antiques mall.

Several of these properties along the north side of Tom Perry Memorial Park -- the 1-99 block of J St. -- have been purchased speculatively for future development. Agape House has the corner property next to the Lone Cypress along the riverfront. As a halfway house, it operates a Saturday flea market out of the ground level store. However, it is a non-conforming use.

The Lundy Building, the Parkinson Building, and the Moore Haven Bank Building have recently been purchased by Roger Taylor, owner of AU Seasons Landscape Nursery based in Canal Point. Mr. Taylor has no long term plans for the buildings, but in the interim, intends to use the second floors for residential with the floors for short term commercial. Roxanne Angelica from Miami recently has purchased The Arcade Building with plans for renovation but no tenants as of yet.

This entrepreneurial spirit that brings people from other places to a Main Street community is to be commended. They may change their plans a number of times; they may go with interim uses. But they are the private sector pioneers with a vision.

The Downtown Historic District --- Avenue J across from the Park and the Moore Haven Bank Building at J and 1st St. --- has about 54,000 sq.ft. or about \$4-7 million in renovation costs (first class renovation using the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines by bonded contractors). Currently, the house is about 28% occupied and those occupancies (doctor's office, Agape House) are not in uses that form a cluster.

New infill development should take the form of two story buildings with the option of going to 35 feet with a 15 foot setback from the face of the building along Avenue J.

The Destination Restaurant Project

The property that has been selected for the destination restaurant is located at the entry to the Marina at the end of Riverside Drive. Approximately 2 acres in size, it is under contract to the Banana Bay Tour Company for a destination restaurant and entertainment venue featuring a 4-6 concert band organs or calliopes. Tourists will be bussed in and have the option of returning by river boat. Parking will be provided for both cars and buses ..

For those arriving by bus, it is too far to expect many of the patrons to visit the buildings fronting Tom Perry Park. However, the success of the proposed Greenway along the riverfront from the expanded Marina to the Lone Cypress will have a lot to do with getting people over to Tom Perry Park. With an aging population of retirees, the Greenway can be a destination it itself for those who want to get some brisk exercise. Those who walk the Greenway will first come to Agape House as they head west under the bridge and along the waterfront. For those who drive, Tom Perry Park and the shops on a renovated A venue J are an even more real possibility.

The Marina Project

A Visioning Workshop was held on December 12, 2005, moderated by David Kelly of Florida Gulf Coast University, in which a variety of projects were discussed and prioritized. The top priority was a fun service marina with transient dockage. Main Street received a medium priority with specific mention made of improving the sidewalks and replacing damaged or aged oak trees.

The Capital Project Financing Authority is the one time funding source for these projects.

The Authority will have approximately \$1.2 million available and may have considerably more once a law suit is settled. It remains to be determined what percentage of the money will go to this high priority project Obviously, the full amount could be spent on the marina expansion to ensure its success.

Kelly, speaking from personal experience as a Board member of a successful marina in Ft Myers, stated that a pump out station and gas-to-go were essentials in any marina that wanted to be economically viable. That point was echoed by the Council members. To be feasible as a market rate facility, a full service marina that was built today should accommodate at least a 120 boats. This would be designed to accommodate a maximum of 40-60 boats, many of which would be transient slips.

The present City Marina was damaged by Hurricane Wilma and only accommodates 8 - 10 boats. A fun service marina with a pump out station and gas is what the City Council gave its highest priority. The east side of the inlet that serves the City Marina ideally would be broadened and dredged out thereby creating the larger, full service marina. The existing west side may have its shed restored, dredging carried out, more boat slips installed and a lattice work fence added to the entire frontage. With an attractive fence in place, the Marina project would not be dependent on getting 19 of 36 owners in the Fisherman's Village trailer park to agree to sell their space. My alternative suggestion for Fisherman's Village is to leave it there. Having an old, small trailer park adjacent to a new marina will create market forces which may lead to renovation of trailers or the purchase of the property by developers. But boaters don't really care what's beyond the fence. It adds to the charm.

The east side of the inlet is technically part of the Abrams Trust property. A certified survey should be done of the property to establish whether the boundary comes to the water or is in the water. In any case, the City of Moore Haven should focus on acquiring a strip of that property for the fun service marina. At the least, the City can bulkhead that east side and create linear dockage for the 400-500 feet of frontage.

The management of the marina facility is another question. A full service marina with electric hook-ups, a pump out station, and gas is a daunting task for the City to mllnage. It would have to be successful or it would become a financial drain on City. An alternative might be to arrange a joint venture with a third party (one who may purchase the Abrams Trust property). The City would be a limited partner (limiting its loss to what it contributed), while the operational entity would be the general partner and actively manage the .Marina.

Funding

A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District has been created that has 2005 as its base year.

The TIF District encompasses the CRA/Main St. District. Originally, the Main Street organization was granted 95% of the TIF funds. Subsequently, the TIF funds were split evenly between the City and County, and the CRA! Main Street organization. This leaves CRA/Main Street with 42.5% of the TIF funds. The CRA and Main Street theoretically further split the funds so that Main St. receives 22.25% of the TIF funds.

The destination restaurant project should add \$2M to the TIF amount by 2007 which may be matched by local property increases. This should generate \$4M in TIF money or about \$13,600 for the budget year 2007. The Main Street organization, in turn, will get about \$3,000. If the Abrams Trust sells its property to a developer who develops it to the maximum allowed by existing zoning, that would put an estimated 60 units on the property. With some units having Marina dockage, the project would have total sales of at least \$25

million. Let's assume that the project generated TIP funds in 2008 (25M x .0034 x .225) or \$19,000 for Main Street.

But, unfortunately, the City has reduced the millage to match roughly the increase in appraised taxable property. In 2004, the City millage was 4.03, while in 2005 the City millage went down to 3.40. This policy of keeping the revenues to the City roughly constant may be left over from a time when Moore Haven wasn't growing. But now is the time to change this policy by freezing the millage rate at the current level of 3.40.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Here follows recommendations for moving the revitalization process forward:

1. Pursue the Marina expansion as a partnership with a private marina management firm, possibly in connection with the development of the Abrams Trust property.
2. Use the priorities set in the visioning process to move ahead with the City Marina expansion and Main Street sidewalk and tree improvements.
3. Work to make the Marina expansion the start of a seamless Greenway Destination Restaurant frontage along the inlet and the Channel, down under the bridge and as far as the Lone Cypress.
4. Promote the sale of tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic structures following the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines, but be aware that the private sector may do interim improvements.
5. Contract with a grant writer to go after specific funds as part of the marina expansion, the Greenway, and other items.
6. Monitor the design of the Trepper project, particularly with respect to landscaping.
7. Seek plaques for the historic properties that are in the Downtown Historic District.
8. Organize a walking tour and/or map of the historic buildings and sites along the riverfront.
9. Encourage the Moore Haven Hotel owner to design and building one or more small structures (1,000 sq. ft. max.) at the east end of Riverside Drive frontage.
10. Find a way to move the Agape House out of their current building and into a renovated or new structure off the Square.
11. Add the Rice Motel to the Downtown Historic District.
12. Use Code Enforcement as a technique to get quick action on Historic properties.

Survey of existing buildings in Historic District

Photo 1 The Agape House

Address: J Street & Riverside Drive

Zoning: Commercial; Non-conforming use as a halfway house.

Condition: Good condition, worthy of renovation. The second level is organized for up to eight residents with bedrooms around a higher social space with clearstory light. The first level is an office and storage for the yard sale.

Recommendations: The front elevation is a classic composition of 3 large square voids created by the four columns cemented to 4 1/2 feet, supporting a screened porch in which each bay has, in turn, 3 square screens. The roof has a shallow ridge line that is perpendicular to the street with rain shed to either side. It seems to have been designed and built as a free standing building.

The lattice work at the base of the building suggests it is a wood structure resting on piers. The building seems to be structurally sound. I recommend that the central high space on the second floor be rehabilitated and the clearstory lighting restored. The bedrooms flanking the central high space are of lesser importance and will require modification to meet future needs.

The first floor is not organized to meet the street as a commercial building. The two entries are residential and raised from the sidewalk 20 - 24". The building appears to have been built and used as a boarding house, prior to its recent history as Agape House.

Photo 2 The Lundy Building

Address: The first block of J Street, ..

Zoning: Commercial; Vacant.

Condition: Very good condition, worthy of renovation. The first floor interior has a row of columns down the middle with the structure spanning from the bearing walls along the side to the midpoint beams .. The tin ceiling should definitely be restored. The open floor plate lends itself to a variety of uses. The second floor has 12' ceiling heights and duplicates the first floor's structure with columns down the middle of the space. However, it is currently divided up with non-bearing partitions.

Recommendations: This building is in the best shape of the currently vacant historic buildings in the Downtown Historic District The interior has the largely intact tin ceiling and a logical structural plan that allows for an open floor plate. It lends itself as an interim use to an antiques mall with a number of vendors sharing a space. There should be nothing that damages the tin ceiling as it is minimally renovated for the vendors.

The exterior of the building features three bays, covered with plywood on the ground floor, painted over on the second floor. Two canopies provide shade on the second floor and protection from the rain on the bottom floor. When the plywood comes off during the renovation, the two choices will be to rehab the existing sash in those three ground floor openings, or to replace them with new sash. If the replacement option is chosen, I recommend powder coating the steel or aluminum frames with paint that fits the color scheme chosen for the building. Hopefully, photos exist of the historic colors which can be followed in the new color scheme.

Photo 3 The Parkinson Building

Address: The first block of J St.

Zoning: Commercial, vacant.

Condition: Fairly good condition. The five concrete block porch columns are unfinished. It lacks the simplicity of the Lundy Building with the second floor divided into apartments clustered around a naturally lit-from-above corridor. The first floor has a row of columns down the center.

Recommendations: The exterior needs an application of stucco on the columns and a simple connection to the deck above. Rather than a decorative capital, I think a flush handling of the column/deck would be more keeping with that spare, storefront appearance of the building.

The building features two big bays, each with two smaller bays within it. The facade itself is symmetrical at the second floor level, but is not symmetrical on the first floor. I don't know whether this was intentional or a later renovation. The second floor has two symmetrical doors with flanking windows opening out onto the deck. On the first floor, there is a commercial set of double doors that appear to have original hardware on them.

8.

Photo 4 Riverside Glades Medical Center

Photo 5 Barbershop Building

Photo 6 Vacant Lot

Photo 7 The Hardstedt Building

Address: The first block of J St.

Zoning: Commercial, vacant.

Condition: Fair condition. Unable to get into the building. The exterior has had its deck ripped off at the second floor line. The framing of the painted portion of the second floor appears to have not been original. The first floor appears to have been modified for residential living with two doors recessed as is typically done in storefronts and two doors out in the front plane of the building. All four doors appear to be later additions.

Recommendations: Hard to say. Check historic photographs of the building to see what was original. The first floor should be restored to a commercial use following the guidance of the photographs. It appears that the door on the second level was added later. One strategy would be to infill the door and hang a canopy between the first and second floors.

Photo 8 The Arcade Building

99 Avenue J

Condition: Uneven -- fair to poor. The floor has been removed in the rear of the Arcade Building in an effort to repair the foundation. The front portion of the Arcade is in rough shape but could be put back in service. The exterior along Avenue J has damage to the stucco and no windows or doors in place.

Recommendations: The Arcade Building has a front facade that is strongly symmetrical, except for having 3 windows on one side and 2 on the other, thereby throwing the entry off center. This is actually gives the design a unique character and this facade is certainly worth preserving. The interior ideally would keep the common circulation space with uses off both sides. It might make an antiques and collectibles mall, if financially feasible.

Photo 9 The Swindle Building

Address: The Corner of Avenue J and 1st St.

Zoning: Commercial; vacant.

Condition: The first floor of the corner building (Swindle) has minimal damage and

has been cleared out. All surfaces (floor, walls, ceiling) need to be repaired or replaced. The second floor had a small fire that did some structural damage to the floor, ceiling and the stairs.

Recommendations: The corner building (Swindle) is less important, architecturally, than the Arcade Building. Its historical significance is tied to its role as an early gas station. With its lightly rusticated corner, window surrounds, and columns, the building lacks a strong and coherent organization. The facade facing 1st Street is a good example of that lack of organization with its symmetrical roof line, but with its unsymmetrical first and second floors. The best use of the building may be as a small cafe with some seating outside.

Photo 10 The Moore Haven Bank Building

Address: The SW Corner of Avenue J and 1st Street

Zoning: Commercial. First floor: vacant; Second floor: two apartments

Condition: The building was fully occupied by an antiques store on the first floor and four apartments on the second floor. Hurricane Wilma did significant damage to the roof and unknown damage to foundations. The owner has been working to renovate the second floor of the building into two apartments and to do a partial renovation of the first floor for commercial use.

Recommendations: The building has a wide, permanent canopy along 1st Street turning the corner and stopping 8' down Avenue J. The frontage on 1st Str. and Avenue J has a front facade with a cornice running and parapet running continuously on both elevations. Entries occur on Avenue J and under the canopy on 1st Street.

The Former Bank Building is a wood frame structure that shows some settlement in the line of upper windows and the parapet wall itself. This suggests that careful attention during the renovation be given to the foundation so that it doesn't settle further.

Ideally, the windows and exterior doors should be replaced and the building primed and painted. The exterior canopy is not original and doesn't create a porch, but rather has columns meeting the ground. To make the commercial more attractive, consider pouring a concrete sidewalk that comes out to the columns or beyond. Then, the commercial can let some items spill outside or, if it's a coffee shop, have outside seating under the canopy.

Photo 11 The Moore Haven Hotel

Address: The block bounded by Avenue K, Avenue L, First Street, and Riverside Drive
Zoning: Commercial being renovated as four 2-3 bedroom apartments, with an Owner's unit.

Condition: Sustained minor damage from Hurricane Wilma. Damage repaired. Build out of apartment units nearing completion and will be rented at market rates.

Recommendations: The location on a full city block facing the Three Mile Canal makes this property a prime piece of real estate. The building has historic fabric but it has changed significantly since it opened for business in the early 1900's. Originally, the front facade was longer with a central two story entry similar to the current one. This central element was flanked by two identical cupolas at the third story level. The story is told that the Hurricane of 1926 severely damaged the building, breaking it into several sections, and destroying the cupolas. In the reconstruction, the Hotel

was rebuilt with shorter wings and no cupolas .

Other than a postcard view of the original Hotel, no drawings have surfaced of the original hotel. One can argue that the severe damage done by hurricane is an historic event and that the rebuilding of the Hotel was also historic. But that argument is somewhat academic in light of the continuing modifications being made to the Hotel and its current reincarnation as market rate apartments.

Mention should also be made of what's not on the site. The original Hotel was oriented to First Street, as is the present Hotel. Over the years, the waterfront has gone from being merely the utilitarian Canal, to being quite valuable frontage for recreation and boating. The Hotel privately owns 400' of dockage, as well as frontage across Riverside Drive. The Hotel, now apartments, can develop that frontage as a cafe with a tiki bar and, because of the Hotel's setback from Riverside Drive, still have a path of access to Riverside Drive.

Photo 12 The Rice Motel

Address: NE Corner of First street and Under Rte. 27

Zoning: Commercial; in use.

Condition: Very good. The exterior has the original windows throughout -- small panels of fixed glass or glass block framing larger operable casement windows. Set in the white walls with no trim, the windows establish an ordered rhythm to the facade. The entry is rounded and is canted to the corner with horizontal masonry. The thin eyelid projection over the windows wraps completely around the entry. It's designed to look like masonry but it hovers weightlessly over the windows. A complex, low hip roof completes the design.

Recommendations: The advent of the high bridge meant that the Motel, which formerly was on the main strip, was now looking out at a quite different prospect -- the massive supports for the high bridge 50 feet above. I assume that the Motel is still in operation but I assume it isn't market driven. Quite possibly, it may serve as a Bed and Breakfast if the expanded Marina project is undertaken.

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