

POLICY STATEMENT

**THE BOYNTON BEACH ASSEMBLY:
COMMITTING TO OUR FUTURE**

October 20 and 21, 2006

**Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort
Hutchinson Island, Florida**

**Sponsored by
The City of Boynton Beach**

**with financial assistance from
The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
The Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency
Compson and Associates**

**Coordinated by
The John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government
at Florida Atlantic University**

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At the close of their discussion, the participants of this assembly reviewed and adopted as a group the following statement. The statement represents general agreement. However, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to every recommendation.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This report is from the Boynton Beach Assembly: Committing to Our Future, which was held at Hutchinson Island on October 20-21, 2006. Approximately 70 people participated. The assembly's purpose was to establish a shared vision for the future of Boynton Beach and policy recommendations for moving the City toward that goal.
- B. Impetus for the assembly came from the City Commission. Financial support was provided by the City Commission, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, the Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency, and Compson and Associates.
- C. The assembly was planned by a Steering Committee of nine members with diverse backgrounds and interests. The Steering Committee identified the interests to be invited, selected the groups and individuals to represent those interests, wrote the questions to be addressed, and reviewed the assembly background paper. The assembly was facilitated by the John Scott Dailey Florida Institute of Government at Florida Atlantic University.

- D. The Steering Committee selected assembly participants to reflect many aspects of Boynton Beach, including geography, business, government, civic groups, religion, minorities, retirees, youth, the environment, education, and others. The questions addressed at the assembly included community relations and governance; economic development and neighborhood revitalization; infrastructure; education and community services; and procedures for follow-up and implementation.
- E. An earlier assembly in 1996, Boynton Vision 20/20, laid the foundation for the present discussion. Vision 20/20 led to many positive initiatives and achievements. Among other accomplishments, a Community Redevelopment Agency was established; voters adopted term limits for City Commissioners; neighborhood associations were formed or reinvigorated; more mixed-use development was encouraged; and police, fire protection, youth programs, and neighborhood services were enhanced.
- F. The Boynton Beach Assembly: Committing to Our Future reflects the ongoing efforts of Boynton's political and community leaders to maintain and enhance the City's quality of life. The citizenry is committed to sustained involvement in City politics, planning, and action.

II. COMMUNITY RELATIONS/GOVERNANCE

- A. Boynton Beach has the potential to become a true gem of Palm Beach County, but to do so the citizenry and its leaders must foster a sense of community and common purpose, unite on critical issues, and marshal their resources to take advantage of the City's strengths and address its weaknesses.

- B. The City would like to overcome any perceived divisions: geographically, economically, age-wise, and ethnically and racially.
- C. To a degree, such divisions are inevitable in a large, diverse, South Florida city, but in Boynton Beach they are exacerbated by the fact that single-member districts for City Commissioners may foster parochialism among Commissioners and citizens alike. City Commissioners try to represent the whole City, but they are inevitably focused on the districts from which they are elected. Their constituents often tend to follow suit because, for good reasons, citizens are encouraged to take their issues to the commissioner from their district.
- D. To promote a sense of community and common purpose, the Assembly participants recommend that the following be explored.
 - 1. Consider changing the system of governance. Single-member districts are important for minority representation, and they should be retained.
Commissioners need to be more responsive to all areas of the City, not only to their respective districts.
 - 2. Encourage the most qualified individuals to seek election to the Commission, and allow the Commissioners to devote the time necessary to properly carry out their duties, by raising the salaries of the Commissioners and Mayor.
 - 3. Create spaces, events, and forums for collaboration and interaction.
 - a. Boynton Beach is a “city of varied cultures.” Continue to hold and expand upon events that celebrate this diversity.

- b. Boynton Beach has competing centers scattered around the City. The City should identify and promote particular areas as the city-center, the cultural center, and so on.
 - c. Establish a booster club for Boynton Beach High School.
 - d. Hold a signature event that highlights the City's character and successes.
- 4. Take the City to the community. Encourage Commissioners and other City officials to attend community meetings to inform citizens of City goals and other news.
- 5. Promote cohesion within the City government.
 - a. Hold semi-annual goal-setting and brainstorming sessions.
 - b. Establish clear goals and objectives for advisory boards, and hold them accountable.
 - c. Establish a training program for advisory board members to give them a city-wide perspective.
- 6. Augment the City's public information activities.
 - a. Publish information about City decision-making processes.
 - b. Establish a central call center to notify citizens of upcoming meetings, openings on advisory boards, etc.
 - c. Convey information through faith-based institutions.
 - d. Publicize, translate, and broaden the distribution of the City Services Guide.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

- A. The City must continue to attract a mix of high-value industrial, commercial, and residential development that will strengthen the tax base and generate good jobs for residents without adversely affecting the City's neighborhoods and community character.
- B. Based on former successes, the City should continue to
 - 1. Focus on distinct geographical areas and community assets;
 - 2. Be persistent; and
 - 3. Coordinate or partner with private developers.
- C. Economic development activities within the City administration should be elevated and reorganized, as follows:
 - 1. Hire an Economic Development Director and staff and develop an economic development program.
 - 2. Consider seeking cost-sharing for this office from outside entities.
 - 3. Assign this office responsibility for:
 - a. Identifying the types of businesses and industries that Boynton should try to attract.
 - b. Breaking the City into zones or quadrants, and tailoring economic development strategies to each zone.
 - c. Working with the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County, the CRA, and others to identify and/or develop incentives for businesses to locate in Boynton Beach.

- d. Developing incentives and support services to help businesses stay in Boynton Beach.
 - e. Encouraging the development of and serving as liaison with multiple merchant associations throughout the City.
- D. The City's political and administrative leadership should identify and take advantage of key land uses and other assets. Consideration should be given to:
- 1. Preserving and marketing the industrial land in the Boynton Beach.
 - 2. Leveraging the value of the 600 feet of waterfront property to include revenue-generating boat slips in Intracoastal Park.
 - 3. Creating an attraction to draw consumers to the downtown.
- E. While focusing on particular assets and targets of opportunity, the City should take steps to improve the community's overall appearance and safety.
- 1. To promote safety,
 - a. Improve infrastructure and expand street lighting to all intersections, hazardous locations, and to high crime areas identified by the Police Department.
 - b. Encourage community involvement in neighborhood refurbishment to promote community pride.
 - c. Develop a tactical plan to focus and coordinate police and code enforcement on locations and businesses that attract or contribute to crime. These crime nodes might include liquor stores, abandoned properties, etc.

2. To improve appearance,

- a. Improve and maintain the City's streetscapes. Lobby the County to assume responsibility for funding streetscaping of all of the county roads in the City.
- b. Encourage outside agencies and corporations (FPL, Bell South, Palm Tran, etc.) to complete repairs and clean up their debris.
- c. Improve bus stops.
- d. Provide more trash containers.
- e. Continue providing grants for homeowners to improve their property.
- f. Enforce cleanup of construction sites.

F. Affordable housing is important to economic development, but the high cost of housing is a nationwide problem. While recognizing that there are limits to what Boynton Beach can do to reduce housing costs locally, the City should:

1. Develop and present available options to increase the availability of affordable housing in Boynton Beach;
2. Offer incentives to developers for building affordable housing; and
3. Coordinate with state and county affordable-housing agencies.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Boynton Beach, like many other older municipalities in South Florida, faces a dual challenge: repairing or replacing aging infrastructure that is decaying, outdated, or inadequate to keep up with the demands of a growing population and providing services and facilities for new residential and commercial development. Planning

efforts, funding, and human resources must be carefully balanced if the City is to succeed on both fronts. Inform the public that the City's infrastructure is aging and significant investments will soon be needed.

B. Water. In general, Boynton Beach is doing a very good job in dealing with water issues. The City is addressing potable water demands to assure that the City has adequate supplies through 2025. However, the City does face two issues involving wastewater treatment and disposal that must eventually be resolved.

1. Boynton Beach will eventually be prohibited from pumping wastewater offshore at the present location. Boynton Beach and Delray Beach must work together to find alternatives to ocean outfall from the communities' wastewater treatment plant. The two cities' wastewater will either have to be pumped further out from shore, injected into deep wells, reused, or a combination thereof. All options will be expensive.
2. The South Florida Water Management District, as part of the City's water consumptive use permit, is calling on Boynton Beach to increase wastewater reuse for irrigation. This requirement is not unique to Boynton Beach. The main expense here is for the pipes to distribute the recycled water and to provide storage facilities for the recycled water until it can be used for non-potable purposes.

C. Roads. The majority of roads leading into and within the limits of Boynton Beach fall under the jurisdiction of the State of Florida and Palm Beach County. The City's Division of Roads and Streets is responsible for asphalt and concrete restoration,

street sweeping, bridge restoration and guardrails, filling potholes, repairing road edges, and replacing street signs.

1. The City should hire an urban planner with expertise in transportation, parking, intermodal transfers, and the like. A person with these skills is needed to study and document transportation issues in Boynton Beach, and to negotiate with state agencies, the County, and other municipalities.
2. The City's plans should assure adequate capital funding for maintenance of pavements, sidewalks, streetlights, and landscaping. The streetscape program needs to be expanded to support the economic-development requirements discussed above.
3. When City-maintained roads are reconstructed, community involvement should be solicited so that the work considers community needs and preferences.
4. Collector roads should be the priority.
5. The City should work with Palm Beach County to optimize traffic signal timing coordination.

D. Public Transportation. Palm Tran, Tri-Rail, and other public transportation services are a valuable resource for those seeking an alternative to driving or who do not have access to an automobile.

1. The City should encourage Palm Tran to consider adding an east-west connection on Boynton Beach Boulevard from State Road 7 to the beaches. It could be partially self-supporting through fees from riders.

2. Consideration should be given to expanding the trolley system, which is currently supported by the CRA. The City should explore the possibility of partnering with the CRA to expand the service.
3. Expand the Shopper Hopper and publicize its connections.
4. Establish a municipal parking authority and create parking facilities that satisfy local parking demand and function as transportation hubs.
5. Support a dedicated funding source for regional transit.

E. Parks and Recreation. Well-maintained and conveniently located parks and recreational facilities make a significant contribution to the quality of life within a city.

1. The City does a very good job of maintaining its existing parks and recreational facilities. The current advisory board is functioning well, and the staff are competent and proactive.
2. Community involvement can be encouraged by holding functions and public meetings in Boynton Beach parks.
3. The City should study the feasibility of a beach and parks assessment.
4. Expand the greenway system and its connectivity.

V. Education and Community Services

A. The quality of local schools and other educational facilities and services is an important consideration in where people choose to work and live. This means that schools have a major impact on economic development.

1. Communication between the City and the school district needs to be improved. The City Commission should meet with the School Board of Palm

Beach County on a regular basis and make it a priority to work on improving the reputation, quality, and facilities of public schools in Boynton Beach.

Consideration should also be given to establishing a City position to serve as a liaison between the City Commission and the School Board of Palm Beach County.

2. All sectors of the community should re-evaluate their level of support of and commitment to the schools within the City.
 3. The disparity between the enrollments of Boynton Beach High School and Park Vista High School will be addressed next year by adjusting school boundaries. The Boynton Beach community needs to start speaking out now about its interest in this decision.
 4. The quality of translation services for children who speak English as a second language needs to be addressed.
 5. Encourage the Greater Boynton Beach Chamber of Commerce increase its involvement in all grade levels in the City's schools.
- B. Informed involvement by parents and other stakeholders can spur improvements in school performance and student achievement. Moreover, the City, through its Office of Public Affairs, should include information about Boynton Beach schools in its community newsletter and other public communications.
- C. The City should increase recreational programs for children by:
1. Creating a Youth Center to draw children from the streets and involve them in constructive activities;
 2. Trying to attract a Boys and Girls Club to Boynton Beach; and

3. Seeking funding for before- and after-school care, camp programs, and programs for the handicapped.
4. The City Commission should create a task force with representation including but not limited to the City Commission, Police Department, Recreation and Parks, Youth and Education Advisory Board, the School Board of Palm Beach County, a teacher, and the head of the Boynton Beach High School Student Government to study, evaluate, and implement procedures to reduce drop-out rates, crime, and delinquency.

VI. FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION

- A. Progress in implementing the recommendations from this assembly should be monitored, and the findings should be reported to the participants at regular intervals.
- B. Within 60 days, the City Commission should draft an implementation plan that breaks out action steps, assigns responsibilities to appropriate parties (including the appropriate advisory boards), and establishes reporting requirements and timeframes.
- C. The City Commission should establish an advisory committee to oversee the plan's implementation and prepare reports for distribution to the Commission and the assembly participants.

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October 20 and 21, 2006

Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort
Hutchinson Island, Florida

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Boynton Beach Building Board of Adjustment and Appeals

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