



COCONUT CREEK VISION 2020 ASSEMBLY

May 1 – 2, 2009

**Coconut Creek Community Center
Coconut Creek, Florida**

POLICY STATEMENT

**Coordinated by
The John Scott Daily Florida Institute of Government**



COCONUT CREEK ASSEMBLY POLICY STATEMENT

On May 1 – 2, 2009, approximately 60 citizens representing public and private sectors as well as civic groups and the public at large met at Coconut Creek Community Center for a community-wide forum on the future of the City of Coconut Creek. This forum, the Coconut Creek Assembly Vision 2020 Assembly, was funded by the City.

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



Quality of Life/City Services

- I. Coconut Creek is growing and maturing and residents want to ensure that the city sustains a high quality of life.
- A. To maintain public safety, the City can undertake a variety of preventive actions:
1. The City can increase resident education programs by using all existing and future media: television (channel 78), written publications (*Coconut Creek Life* magazine and *Township Magazine*), the schools' Parent Link, web-based communications (*Coco-Gram*), and police web-based dissemination tools.
 2. The City can also send information through email by obtaining the e-mail addresses of residents who subscribe to the *Coco-Gram* or social club newsletters or such means as may be utilized to grow the base.
 3. The City shall consider expanding city-wide the crime watch program that has started in South Creek; this emerging program could serve as a model.
 4. The City should explore the means for increased police presence in the gated communities.
 5. The City should consider how new technologies can be used by the police department so that officers can stay on patrol.
- B. Communicating the city's codes and standards is paramount:
1. The City should consider implementing an information campaign direct specifically toward residents, realtors, and homeowners' associations related to building, development, and maintenance codes.
 2. The City can explore publishing City of Coconut Creek information in other languages such as Spanish, Creole, and Portuguese.
 3. The City should look for ways to increase civic pride and personal accountability and responsibility. Existing community programs can be used to involve people, especially recreational activities that foster civic pride.
- C. Abandoned properties have a negative impact on community appearance. The lenders that have taken over many foreclosed properties contribute to this problem because many do not pay association fees.



1. The City should use volunteers to help maintain community appearance, though the legal issues of working on abandoned properties would need to be considered.
 - a. Lawn care companies could donate time to mow the yards of abandoned properties.
 - b. The City should reach out to the local high schools whose students need mandatory volunteer hours.
 - c. City workers could recruit residents to participate as volunteers (e.g., property maintenance efforts).
 - d. The “Fix It Up” program could be further developed through volunteers.

- D. Volunteerism should be one of the focuses for the City. Volunteer efforts can be used to improve public safety, community appearance, and civic pride. They can also provide a means to engage students in civic life and healthy activities (sports and coaching) and provide mentoring opportunities. Volunteerism can also add to the branding initiatives; Coconut Creek could become known as the community that volunteers. To this end, the City can be more aggressive in recruiting volunteers:
 1. Information on volunteer programs and opportunities could be put in water bills and other forms of communication (e.g., banners, websites, newsletters, etc.).
 2. Volunteer recruiters could visit the schools and other social gathering places.
 3. A database of volunteer services and products could be created for residents and be readily accessible on the City’s website.

II. Like many communities around the state of Florida, Coconut Creek is facing legislatively mandated declining revenue sources and the impacts of a turbulent state and national economy. The residents of Coconut Creek, however, desire to maintain current service levels.

- A. The City could establish a subcommittee or charge an existing committee to explore how the city can be more efficient by reducing costs, reducing waste, and pushing



sustainability to the next level. This subcommittee could involve representatives from government, businesses, and members of the public.

- B. There should be a dedicated and focused workshop by the City Commission on the issue of public transportation.
 - C. The City should consider regionalizing police and fire services and equipment while maintaining its own police force as a way to maintain quality services while improving efficiency and reducing expenditures.
 - D. The City can explore the money-saving aspects of going “green”:
 - 1. The City can determine whether it could save money by sending and receiving payment for water bills electronically.
 - 2. The same could be done for the city’s business license process (notices go out electronically, fee is paid, and license can be printed from personal computers). Such efforts might save the City supply and labor costs, and may reduce the amount of trash generated by homeowners and businesses.
 - 3. The “green” movement can be infused throughout the community culture and promoted as a community focus.
 - 4. Recognition could be given to businesses and homeowners that reduce waste and recycle and conserve resources.
 - E. In addition to reducing costs, the City can also discuss a possible increase in the number of fee-based services it provides.
- III. The proposed Seminole casino expansion has raised much discussion in Coconut Creek.
- A. The City should preserve the current contractual agreement based on square footage and gaming.
 - B. The City should also recommend to the state that all revenues collected under the compact being negotiated include a set aside for all communities affected by the expansion.
 - C. Communication is a key responsibility of the City.
 - 1. The City should be proactive and keep open discussions with the Seminole Tribe to ensure that expectations are met on all sides.



2. The City should also keep residents updated on the results of discussions with the Seminole Tribe.
- D. The impact of the casino on city traffic is a concern, though this may be mitigated by the off-ramp construction. The expansion should not override the priority of the downtown improvements.
- E. In future negotiations with the Seminole Tribe, the City should ensure that all socio-economic issues impacting the City of Coconut Creek are addressed, including all city services as well as increased housing and schooling needs.
- IV. Coconut Creek wants to encourage greater participation of residents in city issues and problems.
- A. To reach out to residents:
1. The City should utilize all methods of communication available (television, print, lighted message boards, web-based tools, and personal interactions).
 2. The City could offer incentives to website visitors.
 3. The City Commission should also meet with Homeowners' Association officers and use them to disseminate information.
 4. The City should reach out to younger people through existing and future social networking tools.
 5. The City Commission could also work with the Student Government Associations at the schools in order to educate youth on community issues.
- B. In addition to reaching out to residents, the City should make information easily understandable:
1. Information should be written in layperson's terms.
 2. Information should be made relevant to the residents.
- C. Beyond just communicating with the public, the City needs to seek ways to motivate its residents to become involved in civic life; lack of community participation is a recognized issue.
1. Residents should be encouraged to attend city meetings.
 2. Contests and incentives, with prizes offered by the business community, could be used to get people involved.



3. The City can consider using text messages and emails to send notices and reminders.
4. The City could hold more town hall-style meetings for the general public.
5. The City could establish a focus group to explore ways to increase resident participation in elections and city-wide issues.
6. The City needs to consider evaluating the off-year, off-month elections. As most people see November as the month for elections, it may help increase voter participation and may be more cost effective to hold municipal elections at the same time as state or national elections.



Economic Development/Environmental Preservation

- I. The types of business, industry, and employment opportunities the City should attempt to attract and retain are those that are forward thinking and who match the City’s identity as a “green” city.
 - A. The City should evaluate where it is currently and determine what is needed; then it can decide what it wants to do to attract businesses that appeal to all residents..
 - B. The Chamber of Commerce should be a partner in business recruitment and retention efforts. The City should encourage all businesses to be members of the Chamber.
 - C. The City should be clear about the types of businesses that it does not want to attract.
 - D. The City should initially incentivize developers who match the city’s concept (e.g., lower impact fees for water saving measures).
 - E. The City should explore what other communities are doing to see what business recruitment efforts have been successful.
 - F. The City can also provide relief from permitting fees and an accelerated planning review and inspection process.
 - G. The City should seek the All American City designation.
 - H. The City should explore using casino revenue for business recruitment.
 - I. The City could develop educational programs on the benefits of “green planning.”
 - J. The City could relax codes to allow different uses, such as allowing an empty retail store to be put to use by a cultural organization or day care facility.
 - K. The City should recruit businesses that are environmentally friendly.
 - L. In conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, the City should encourage partnerships between businesses, schools, and non-profit organizations.
 - M. The City should ask businesses to provide more opportunities for high school students to get on-the-job training and “real world” experience.
 - N. The City could create a business incubator program to assist startup businesses in being successful.
 - O. The City should offer to deliver and redistribute the City’s welcome packets and utilize web-based methods.



II. Coconut Creek’s MainStreet is an innovative planning vision (of which the Promenade is an example) that embraces the City’s desire for sustainability with adopted design standards that will create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community center with environmentally sensitive development of buildings and open space. Actions that can be taken to promote Coconut Creek’s MainStreet as a recognizable sustainable “downtown” destination for residents, nearby communities, and tourists include:

- A. Develop a pamphlet in conjunction with the county’s and state’s offices of tourism to place at rest stops, airports, and other central locations and cards to place on retail counters.
- B. Advertise on city vehicles as appropriate.
- C. Coordinate City marketing efforts with the county’s and state’s offices of tourism.
- D. Co-market with the casino to capitalize on its existing advertising.
- E. Display a scale model, rendering, or web-based presentation of the possible finished product as they are available and create partnerships with developers to inform residents of project progress.
- F. Focus City events and programs on the MainStreet area such as a bandshell/amphitheatre that would bring in attractions and entertainment.
- G. Encourage residents to shop at local businesses and assist businesses with disseminating information including incentives such as shoppers’ clubs or frequent shopping programs.
- H. Future plans for Coconut Creek’s MainStreet should be advertised in a multi-faceted way that reaches people through the different media and emphasizes the MainStreet vision.
- I. The City should consider working with developers to share the cost of required infrastructure, including mass transit, and increase the usage of those structures.
- J. The butterfly logo should be incorporated into the MainStreet branding.

III. Coconut Creek’s longstanding commitment to environmental preservation and promoting green and sustainable development is widely recognized, and there are many actions the City and



its residents can undertake to further enhance the City's commitment to environmental and resource protection.

- A. To promote use of alternative energy sources and energy conservation, the City can:
 - 1. Impose penalties for overuse of water and garbage collection services.
 - 2. Provide incentives for homeowners to install high-efficiency or alternative energy appliances.
 - 3. Provide incentives to City employees for developing and implementing energy-saving measures.
 - 4. Educate residents on how to take advantage of existing state and federal tax credits and encourage them to do so.
 - 5. Explore whether the existing natural gas company would expand their lines so that more residents can use natural gas.
 - 6. Promote the City's use of biodiesel in its vehicles.
 - 7. When the landfill closes, explore options the best environmentally friendly use of the land such as windfarms or other sources of energy generation and habitat restoration.
 - 8. Continue with the current plan to reclaim water in the city.
- B. To encourage alternative modes of transportation, the City can:
 - 1. Build more bike lanes where they are needed and connect any new lanes to existing lanes.
 - 2. Build more bus shelters.
 - 3. Evaluate the use and placement of sidewalks in relation to bus stops.
 - 4. Post bus route maps on bus shelters.
 - 5. Promote the City shuttle service.
 - 6. Redesign the shuttle route.
 - 7. Encourage carpooling, and perhaps begin a carpooling program.
 - 8. Consider the alternative modes of transportation as a system connected, where the smaller feeder systems (or capillaries), feed into the larger systems (county-wide and regional).



9. Support plans for regional transportation systems and increase awareness/education of existing transportation programs in Coconut Creek.
- C. To promote the spirit of recycling, the City can:
1. Install, when practical, water fountains where people exercise to reduce the need for water bottles and provide a means to refill those carried.
 2. Put recycling cans in public areas and areas where people exercise.
 3. Implement a single stream recycling program.
- D. To educate residents, planners, and developers on environmental issues, the City can:
1. Provide educational programs for residents, especially for Homeowners' Association and Condominium Association officers, on energy use and conservation, alternative energy sources, and recycling.
 2. Put more educational information on the website related to energy use and conservation, alternative energy sources, and recycling.
- E. The City can also enact policies or regulations or refine existing ones to:
1. Encourage companies that contract with the City (like waste management companies) to maintain their vehicles.
- F. New technologies can also help the City in its environmental efforts:
1. The City should explore voice over Internet (VOIP) technology.
 2. The City should explore cloud computing.
- IV. Coconut Creek is “The Butterfly Capital of the World” and also strives to be known as a “green” city.
- A. The butterfly can be used as part of the City’s branding and the phrase “The Butterfly Capital of the World” or the butterfly logo can be used in a variety of ways to promote the City.
1. The butterfly logo can be put on street signs.
 2. The butterfly logo can be put into the Promenade branding.
 3. Explore whether the butterfly branding can be incorporated into the casino design (e.g., the sections of the casino parking garage can be named after different types of butterflies).



4. City welcome signs should say “Welcome to Coconut Creek, the Butterfly Capital of the World.”
 5. Educational information on butterflies could be placed at bus stops.
 6. Seek to make the butterfly brand more meaningful, capturing the symbolism of the butterfly.
 7. Educate residents on the presence of butterfly gardens in City parks.
 8. The environmental advisory board should advertise the certification of the butterfly gardens and other wildlife habitats.
- B. The City should evaluate the older communities for improvement and redevelopment opportunities.
- C. The City should brand and promote the education corridor to encourage businesses such as those coming to Scripps.
- D. The City should plan a 50th anniversary and establish a benchmark of where it wants to be then.
- E. Public art and special events are also ways to promote the City and the butterfly branding. Specific ideas include:
1. February should be designated as butterfly month.
 2. The City should consider seeking a major corporate sponsor for its annual Butterfly Run.
 3. Butterfly topiaries can be placed at city entrances.
 4. The City can host butterfly-inspired contests for students.
 5. The City can develop butterfly art and sensory gardens for the community on shared use properties; these facilities would be open to everyone.
 6. The City can issue an RFP for butterfly art (similar to Chicago’s cows) to be placed in public locations. Local businesses could sponsor this program.
 7. The City could design bumper stickers.
 8. The Garden Club should be reconvened.



Educational, Recreational, and Cultural Resources

I. High quality public schools are essential for maintaining and attracting new residents and businesses. The present public schools facilities and programs located within the City are not adequately equipped to meet the current and future needs of students at all levels (PreK-12). Steps can be taken in order to enhance the educational opportunities for the residents of Coconut Creek.

- A. The City can help to promote involvement in the school system by:
 - 1. Educating and encouraging residents, and especially parents of school-age children, to participate in school decisions (such as boundary changes).
 - 2. Expanding on the partnerships that exist between the school district and the City and working to change the North Creek/South Creek mentality and by supporting all schools within the city boundaries and supporting students who attend schools outside city boundaries.
 - 3. Exploring options and mechanisms to communicate throughout the community (to the residents and the City government) all activities (positive) occurring within the schools. For example, a dedicated volunteer or journalism intern could be responsible for this action.
 - 4. Exploring ways the City and the schools can share resources.
 - 5. Helping volunteers find opportunities to mentor, tutor, share life experiences, or other resources in the schools.
 - 6. Identify opportunities for the business community to work with the schools, and educate students about opportunities with businesses (such as Junior Achievement of South Florida).
 - 7. Increase communication between the City and the schools concerning funding opportunities and grants.
 - 8. Promote the use of community facilities and provide advertising for school events in order to connect schools to the community.
- B. Formation of a corporate-sponsored educational foundation could assist with funding enhanced educational programs and opportunities in the city.



- C. In conjunction with the school board, The City should undertake a public relations campaign to promote the positive image of Coconut Creek High School.
 - D. Volunteerism and civic education can help promote civic pride in younger children, provide a means to involve high school students in elementary and middle school PTA meetings and in the community at large.
 - E. Children with disabilities need better access to educational opportunities.
 - F. The arts should be given higher priority in the educational system.
 - G. A need exists for political action in order to complete the following:
 - 1. Recommend to the state that the school system be broken into smaller districts.
 - 2. Advocate restructuring of school boundaries to retain the maximum percentage of Coconut Creek students at Coconut Creek schools.
 - 3. There should be an effort to have residents communicate in writing their thoughts to state legislators regarding the educational funding needs in Coconut Creek.
 - 4. Increased funding and support for education should come from the state.
- II. Current recreational and cultural facilities and programs can be improved to better meet the needs of residents.
- A. The City should expand promotion of existing parks, facilities, programs and activities so that residents better understand what is available to them.
 - B. The City should evaluate the development of more athletic facilities.
 - C. The City should evaluate the recreation center hours, which are closed Friday evenings and Sundays. There could be a fee to support the expanded hours.
 - D. The City should evaluate the development of an aquatic center or pools.
 - E. The City should explore access to private golf courses for Coconut Creek residents located in the City.
 - F. The City should consider hosting tournaments for all age groups year round to raise money for recreational facilities contingent on field and facility availability.
 - G. The City should consider creating an eco-park, which could bring visitors to the city and complement “green” efforts.



- K. The City, in conjunction with the Seminole Tribe, could promote Native American culture as one of the City's unique characteristics.
- L. The City should explore an art or eco-museum, maybe a Coconut Creek branch of the Ft. Lauderdale museum.
- M. The sustainability theme should be present in all recreational and cultural events and activities.
- N. The City should work with the Chamber of Commerce to host an annual festival in the summer or fall with a coconut theme.