



Legislation Text

File #: 19-2640, **Version:** 1

ITEM: STAFF UPDATE ON TOWN CENTER CONCEPT

REQUEST: Staff will provide an update on the Town Center Concept.

EXPLANATION: Over the last several months, staff has been working on various aspects of the Town Center Concept. In the course of developing concepts for additional amenities and improvements to the Town Center, staff has also conducted public meetings and other public engagement. Staff will present a summary of the Concept including some history as well as the conceptual plans evaluated to date and input received on those plans.

In the past four decades, Wellington has grown from a relatively new suburban planned unit development of just over 4,000 residents in mid-western Palm Beach County in 1980 to a great hometown and incorporated municipality of nearly 65,000 residents today. The forces that drove our development pattern for the past 40 years no longer exist. For years, local government has concentrated on making the community attractive through well-landscaped, master-planned, predominantly low-density residential areas, tight control of code compliance and amenities such as multi-use paths, best-in-class parks and superior recreation programs. Indications have cropped up showing that we may be out of step with emerging preferences. Young people are interesting in living much closer to activity. Similarly, baby boomers want to remain in Wellington but may desire other local opportunities as well. In light of shifting economic forces and lifestyle preferences, suburban communities across the state and nation are adapting. In response to changing preferences, municipalities are investing in walkable places that feature a mix of uses - a model that stands in stark opposition to the sharp separation of land uses that has defined suburbs for decades. We are looking not only at the needs of today, but at the anticipated needs of the community 10 and 20 years down the road.

In light of this changing landscape, we have looked at options for additional improvements and amenities at Town Center. Home to Village Hall, the Amphitheater, Scott's Place Playground, the Patriot Memorial, the Aquatics Complex and the Community Center, Town Center has evolved into the gathering place for many in Wellington. Accordingly, we have discussed concepts to create synergy over the entire site which includes additional green space for festivals, events and gatherings, enhanced pedestrian circulation on the property and a boardwalk along the waterfront, and mixed use development in partnership with adjacent private property owners allowing for retail, dining and office uses as well as a parking garage in order to allow for elimination of land-intensive surface parking.

Over the last several months, we engaged the public at Lakeside Events as well as public meetings and tried to gauge the interest in additional amenities at Town Center. While the responses we received were mixed, there were consistent themes that included:

- A desire for enhanced pedestrian circulation in the Town Center
- A boardwalk along Lake Wellington
- A continuation and expansion of events at Town Center
- Additional amenities on the property including a mixture of uses such as retail, dining and civic uses
- Some that attended the meetings preferred to leave the property improvements as is
- There was very specific concern for the protection of the Mayfair community and the preservation of

the businesses in the Lake Wellington Professional Centre

A common and recurring theme was that the plans did not have costs associated with them and that there was no phasing and timing plan. We heard clearly that a Town Center Plan must:

- Have specific yes/no decision points for Council
- Include the views and needs of our users and residents
- Include phasing and costs
- Consider impacts to adjacent communities
- Provide for the preservation of business

It has also been suggested that monies currently available in the Lake Wellington Professional Centre fund be made available for a public/private partnership venture that assures the preservation of existing businesses to ensure that they remain in Wellington. To that end, we are recommending the retention of a design firm to:

- Develop a Town Center Master Plan to include planning, design and component cost estimates
- Move forward with design and construction of a boardwalk along Lake Wellington, as this is an element that does not require any other site change and does not dictate the design of any other component
- Consider utilizing proceeds from leasing of the Lake Wellington Professional Centre for a public/private partnership to provide comparable alternative office space for businesses in Wellington currently housed in the Lake Wellington Professional Centre
- Initiate user group meetings with affected groups such as Mayfair residents, Aquatics facility patrons and Professional Centre tenants
- Develop phasing plans and budgets

Attached as Exhibit A are concept plans for the Town Center. Public input meeting results are attached as Exhibit B.

BUDGET AMENDMENT REQUIRED: N/A

PUBLIC HEARING: NO **QUASI-JUDICIAL:** NO

FIRST READING: **SECOND READING:**

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY: YES

FISCAL IMPACT: N/A

WELLINGTON FUNDAMENTAL: Economic Development

RECOMMENDATION: Staff will provide an update on the Town Center Concept.