

UPDATED ANALYSIS OF WILSON/MILLER FINAL REPORT

September 2, 2010

This is a short synopsis and current status of the final report by WilsonMiller consulting firm of Naples.

1. Traffic. The following four premises will solve many problems without new costly and troublesome designs:

A. No brick pavers on public roads, at crosswalks, or other heavy traffic areas. This kind of surface is expensive, requires frequent cleaning and is more difficult to maintain than asphalt or concrete. Use high visibility thermoplastic paint striping where needed at stop signs and crosswalks. STATUS: GENERALLY NOT PLANNED, EXCEPT FOR PAVERS AT SOME CROSSWALKS.

B. No roundabouts. These road designs are dangerous in mixed traffic and are banned in some states and cities. Roundabout approaches and center islands require more space than simple 3 or 4-way intersections with stop signs. STATUS: NONE PLANNED.

C. No bike lanes. The four-lane roads (Pelican Bay Blvd and Gulf Park Drive) cannot be widened from the present 24 ft (12+12) in each direction without costly rework affecting the trees and landscaping in the medians and along the street sides. Every few years the issue of adding a bike lane (4 ft or more) is raised. About 15 years ago some sections of the collector roads had been striped to accommodate a bike lane (10+10+4) on a test basis. This effort was soon abandoned as unsafe due to the false sense of security by the bikers. Our community is served daily by heavy trucks approaching 10 ft in width (trash collection, ambulances, fire trucks, construction vehicles, landscape services, furniture deliveries, auto transporters, etc). The national road vehicle width limit for trucks and buses is 8.5 ft with an added allowance of 0.5 ft on each side for mirrors and other safety devices; a 10 ft lane for large cars, trucks, trailers and buses is marginal at best. On this issue the flawed Kimley-Horn report of June 2007 and the current proposal by W/M are unacceptable. STATUS: NONE PLANNED.

D. No traffic light signals inside the Pelican Bay boundaries (other than at the existing five controlled entry points). STATUS: NONE PLANNED.

Crosswalks. Some changes and additions are justified but not necessarily at the locations and of the type indicated in the report. The monstrosity erected across the Boulevard at the North Tram Station consisting of a dozen ugly yellow signs (with some positioned in the traffic lanes!) should be dismantled and never duplicated elsewhere. Remove the "state law" signs, including those on Daniels Blvd. Consistency is important but excessive signage must be avoided. Plans for fourteen crosswalks are shown. Do not create more crosswalks near any existing or proposed crossings (do not add #4, #5 and #9). Upgrade crosswalks only where there is a known volume of pedestrian traffic to the tram stations or community facilities (leave as is #3, #7, #8, #12 and #13). No pedestrian crossing signs are needed in places where vehicle stop signs exist (only striped walk lanes at #2, #6, and #14). Stop signs on the Boulevard at Ridgewood (#1) should be considered. Crossings #10 and #11 are needed but without redundant signs and stop bars. The entire upgrade plan as suggested, including minor repair of pathway ramps at crosswalks, could be done for under \$100,000 if brick pavers are not used. STATUS: CROSSINGS 4, 5, 9 ARE FUNDED INCLUDING BRICK PAVERS.

2. Pathways. The following four basic guidelines apply as in the preceding Traffic section:

A. Choose asphaltic surfaces whenever practical for workability and general consistency. This material is almost universal throughout the Pelican Bay pathways. Do not rely on any solid “pervious” paving materials. Install tree root barriers as needed when resurfacing or widening pathways.

B. No light bollards on main roads. Sufficient illumination exists at night if the maturing trees are properly pruned so there should be no need for enhanced lighting. Use these devices along the isolated pathways off the named streets.

C. Be judicious when widening paths to avoid disrupting underground utilities. When selecting segments to be upgraded consider the multitude of electric, telephone, cable, gas, water, irrigation, sewage and private conduits usually buried in these strips.

D. Dispense with gimmicks, such as direction signs, mile markers, named jogging loops, overlook stations, and covered benches. We already have too many vacant benches along the Boulevard.

The most densely populated area of the community from the Commons to the North Tram Station would likely benefit from widening the pathway to about 7-8 ft on the west side of the Boulevard. Reworking this pathway segment would require grading and leveling some sections in conformance to the ADA rules. Be cautious when embarking on this project because the bureaucrats may make it impossible or, at best, very expensive. This disruptive undertaking would require much manual labor.

Upgrading St. Raphael Beachwalk path is desirable but the estimated total cost of \$200,000 seems high. The estimate for Boulevard crossing #10 is reasonable at \$23,000 but the balance to complete this plan is not realistic. The asphalt path (10 ft wide x 700 ft long) already exists and only requires refurbishment by milling and overlay. Some adjoining trees need to be removed or trimmed. This overgrown path is invisible from the street and a small sign would help. Do not plant any more trees along this path or erect benches. The entire package, including the street crossing, resurfacing and lights, should cost no more than \$90,000.

Pathway repair and overlay should be the first option wherever possible to avoid ADA issues and disturbing the underground utilities. Survey the neighborhoods where there are no sidewalks whether there is a genuine desire by the home owners to accept this imposition near their property. Avoid fixing some private entrance/exit cases which may not be optimum but often exist for reasons not evident to the consultants.

STATUS: BEACHWALK PATH IS FUNDED BUT COST SEEMS HIGH. NO OTHER PATHWAYS WORK PLANNED.

3. Lighting. The report shows a large number of “major conflicts with tree canopies”. Too many trees had been planted during the initial planning phase over 30 years ago and many more had been added as the development progressed. Pelican Bay needs judicious thinning of all types of mature greenery including the removal of some canopy trees and palms. Mother Nature will solve it in a more drastic way if we do not address this problem with sensible planning. Many lighting issues on the main roads would benefit from professional trimming or removal of overgrown trees and perhaps by relocating a few street lights.

Undoubtedly LED lamps are more efficient and last longer than existing MH/HID types. However, there is no economic basis to spend more than a million dollars now for new LED fixtures and bracket arms to be mounted on old concrete poles and then retrofit them a few years hence on new better looking poles. Establish the remaining useful life of the concrete poles (7-8 years?), budget an appropriate annual reserve amount for the replacement project and then implement it complete with all the bells, whistles and LEDs. STATUS: BEACHWALK LIGHTING IS FUNDED. OTHER PROJECTS NOT CONSIDERED.

4. Landscape. Removal and replacement of some aging palms and canopy trees is needed as part of normal maintenance. Avoid overplanting and use better quality (such as royal vs. sabal palms). Do not replace sod in median nosings, or anywhere, with “low drought tolerant ground covers”. We already see some ugly examples of these plantings in a few areas. Do not plant 125 new trees shown in the report. No littoral type plantings along the berm and be selective about applying them at the edge of lakes and canals. STATUS: NO MAJOR LANDSCAPE CHANGES FUNDED.

5. US-41 Berm. Traffic noise in the area near U.S. Route 41 is unavoidable and cannot be realistically suppressed. The report does not recognize that it was and remains a major link through SW Florida. Even 40 years ago US-41 carried much traffic and had its share of congestion and accidents.

Spending \$2 million dollars for tearing out the present landscaping and any existing walls, building up the earth berm by 2-3 ft and erecting a 6-8 ft wall on top of it would be wasteful. Traffic noise is not attenuated by such minimal barriers except in the very small areas immediately behind the wall. There is no assurance for any perceptible benefit at the residences beyond 200 ft from the road. The low frequency sound tends to carry over minor obstacles. Installing water fountains in the adjacent ponds would just create more noise in their immediate vicinity thus presumably “masking” the more variable sound of traffic. These comments on noise abatement also apply to the 12 ft wall suggested between Naples Grande and Serendipity. No great results should be expected from the disruption of existing hedge and \$62,700 expenditure. STATUS: NO PLANS TO FUND THESE OPTIONS.

6. Community Berm. Strong opposition by the residents was seen in 2002-2003 when a small section of the berm had been “beautified” at the North Station. Do not plant anything on the berm. Plantings and trees will obscure the natural life along the berm. Additional costly irrigation and upkeep will be needed. Birds and animals will no longer be visible. Movement of fish, turtles, alligators and wading birds is not predictable and varies with seasons and tides. Swamps may not be pretty but they are part of the coastal environment.

Save \$160,000 by not planting any trees, palms or shrubs on the berm and by not erecting useless overlook platforms cantilevered off the berm or seating areas on it. Widening of the 10 ft berm road is not necessary but resurfacing at a cost of \$406,000 is needed. This work should be done in planned stages during the summer to minimize its impact on the residents. The engineering survey indicates that the berm structure is generally sound with the exception of a few areas where some settlement is evident. These areas would have to be addressed by excavating, filling and compacting before application of the asphaltic pavement. There is no reason to dredge the swale on the west side of the berm as long as the water drainage is not impeded. Avoid any work on the preserve side, other than trimming of encroaching growth, which would require permits from the State or Federal authorities. Do not under any circumstances install night lighting on the berm. Require property owners to clean up areas along the east side of the berm. STATUS: REPAIR OF BERM STRUCTURE AND ROAD TO BE FUNDED FROM THE FOUNDATION’S RESERVE FUND.

7. Tram Stations. Identify stations by the physical location to assist the riders: 1-South End, 2-St Maarten, 3-South Beach, 4-Commons, 5-Sandpiper, 6-St Raphael, 7-North Beach, 8-North Station. Carefully evaluate the \$900,000 revamping of the entire Commons complex which includes Tram Station No.4 (this work should be coordinated with the need to shift some of the administrative functions to other locations in Pelican Bay to alleviate congestion and parking problems). The North Station has been recently updated and does not require another \$180,000 update. The parking lot has been poorly constructed with inadequate pitch for drainage. The Sand Piper station needs an overhaul, including a new roof, but none of the plantings on the adjoining berm. Do not install tables, electronic bulletin screens or tram tracking. Tram users are interested in transport to the beaches, bars and restaurants and not about lounging at the stations to socialize. STATUS: FUNDING PROVIDED FOR OVERHAUL OF COMMONS PLAZA AND SANDPIPER STATION.

8. Signage. We have too many signs in and around the community. Remove the old wooden sign at North Pointe/Vanderbilt Beach and do not replace it. Do not add signs listed at secondary entries and within the community. Total savings will add up to over \$200,000. Replace three wooden signs at key locations along the Boulevard (Commons, Sandpiper and North Station) with signs to match the design of entry to our new Community Center. Refurbish but do not replace the current three main entry signs on Tamiami Trail. The NE and SE corner signs at US-41 need cleanup and removal of obstructing palms, especially at Seagate Drive. STATUS: NO ACTION, OTHER THAN MAINTENANCE, PLANNED AT THIS TIME.

9. Parks. Ridgewood and Oakmont parks are very lightly used and poorly maintained. Many residents outside of the immediate vicinity do not even know these amenities exist. Ridgewood has five gravel parking spaces and Oakmont is basically only a narrow track around one of the lakes with access only by foot or bicycle. Undoubtedly some improvements could be implemented and the upkeep of overgrown pathways and vegetation is a must. However, it is unlikely that these areas can become some sort of a social center even after expending several hundred thousand dollars as suggested in the report. STATUS: NO ACTION OTHER THAN REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND ADDING SOME NEW EXERCISE FACILITIES.

10. New Technologies. This is a somewhat nebulous section because the cost effectiveness and capability of new devices is changing rapidly. Some suggested innovations are already covered in previous chapters while others fall in the category of “don’t implement even if it is feasible”. Solar LED lights have been proven useful in a few remote applications but large scale solar sources are unreliable and costly in providing bulk power. Given the almost continuous presence of people at key locations and the ubiquitous use of cell phones there is no need of disguised towers with “code blue” emergency call stations and video camera surveillance. Pelican Bay is well equipped with private guard services, cameras and security systems. Review of County Sheriff’s records over the past two years shows minimal criminal activity and traffic violations spread pretty evenly throughout the community. There is no indication that the areas near US-41 are more prone to burglary or personal attack. A well planned network of a few card swiping stations may help to keep out unauthorized persons and provide statistics of attendance. The idea of installing a gate with a card reader at the entry to Ridgewood Park’s five car parking lot is not practical. STATUS: NO ACTION PROPOSED AT THIS TIME.

11. Public Art. The idea about limiting this program to voluntary private contributions has merit. STATUS: NO ACTION AT THIS TIME.

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