To: Council Members
From: Staff
Date: September 21, 2018 Council Meeting
Subject: Local Government Comprehensive Plan Review
Draft Amendment to the City of West Palm Beach Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 18-1ESR

Introduction

The Community Planning Act, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, requires that the regional planning council review local government comprehensive plan amendments prior to their adoption. The regional planning council review and comments are limited to adverse effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the strategic regional policy plan (SRPP) and extrajurisdictional impacts that would be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan of any affected local government within the region. Council must provide any comments to the local government within 30 days of the receipt of the proposed amendments and must also send a copy of any comments to the state land planning agency.

The amendment package from the City of West Palm Beach was received on July 5, 2018 and contains amendments to the District Map and Boundaries figure, Subdistrict Boundaries figure, and text of the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) Element of the City’s comprehensive plan. This report includes a summary of the proposed amendments and Council comments.

Summary of Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment is to create a new district designation within the DMP to be called the Okeechobee Business District (OBD) for the properties bounded by Rosemary Avenue on the west, Flagler Drive on the east, Lakeview Avenue on the north, and Okeechobee Boulevard on the south. The subject properties are currently located within one of the following: Flagler Waterfront District, Quadrille Garden District, or the City Place District (see Exhibit 2). According to the City’s staff report, the changes are intended to accomplish the following goals: 1) identify the corridor as a core office district for the City and incentivize the construction of new Class A office buildings; 2) provide a development capacity limit for the two parcels currently in the City Place District; 3) promote pedestrian activity and alternate means of transportation through the removal of minimum parking requirements, reducing the maximum number of parking spaces allowed, requiring Transportation Demand Management initiatives, and requiring an annual fee to support the operation of alternative transportation; 4) increase public open space and protection of the waterfront through a large setback from the Intracoastal...
Waterway; and 5) protect an existing historic building within the OBD through the provision of an incentive to preserve the building.

Based on the City’s 2018 Transportation Concurrency Exception Area (TCEA) report for downtown West Palm Beach, the existing TCEA limits non-residential development to a maximum of 15,073,970 square feet. As of February 28, 2018, only 10,009,494 square feet are in place. The proposed creation of the OBD does not alter the current cap. In addition, the maximum development potential of the subject properties (as expressed through a floor area ratio maximum) does not increase as a result of the creation of the OBD, based on data in the City’s staff report. As shown in the City’s staff report, the associated zoning code changes eliminate any required minimum number of parking spaces and include a series of requirements for transit operational funding, transportation demand management strategies, and retrofit provisions for parking garages if a project chooses to construct parking and the “soft maximum” number of provided parking spaces is exceeded. The soft maximum number of parking spaces is 1 space per 1,000 square feet of office. The zoning regulations will also include requirements that all new projects implement pedestrian improvements and promote alternative modes of transportation to reduce traffic congestion on the corridor.

The City’s analysis of potential impacts from the proposed change relies on its 2018 Mobility Plan to address vehicular traffic flow on Okeechobee Boulevard through the implementation of various pedestrian and transit enhancements and operational changes. The City hopes to achieve a mode shift away from automobiles through these efforts.

Regional Impacts

In analyzing the proposed new district, it appears to support a number of goals in Future of the Region section of the SRPP. Regional Goal 3.1 calls for the revitalization and maintenance of complete cities, towns, and villages and through Strategy 3.1.1 calls for the redevelopment, revitalization, and infill of existing neighborhoods and districts. The proposal will encourage development within the downtown in lieu of office development further west, helping provide a full range of residential and work opportunities to “complete” downtown West Palm Beach.

Policy 5.1.1.3 within Regional Goal 5.1 encourages development around transit stations. While it would be preferred that increased office development occur within ¼ mile of the existing Tri-Rail transit station and intermodal center on Tamarind Avenue and the new Brightline transit station on Clematis Street, the City’s proposed local transit system may serve to address this adequately.

Regional Goal 8.1 calls for public facilities which provide a high quality of life and, Policy 8.1.1.2 states that incentives should be provided to encourage development in areas where adequate facilities exist. Other than concerns discussed elsewhere regarding traffic, all other services are adequately available and efficiency maximized through the proposed infill development.

Regional Goal 9.1 calls for decreasing vulnerability to fuel price increases and supply disruptions by, in Policy 9.1.1.1, encouraging patterns of development which reduce dependency on
automobiles and encourage public transit. By encouraging development within the existing street grid in close proximity to other uses and transit systems, the proposal supports this goal.

While the requirements are not within the Comprehensive Plan change itself, the associated zoning district changes support Regional Goal 10.1 concerning providing incentives to proposed development which will maximize pedestrian and bicycle traffic and transit ridership.

No adverse effects on regional resources or facilities have been identified due to the creation of the new OBD, however specific development approvals within the OBD and some of the proposed Mobility Plan projects may negatively impact the regional transportation network including transit and Transit Oriented Development areas proximate to the Tri-Rail station.

**Extrajurisdictional Impacts**

The proposed amendments were circulated by the Palm Beach County Intergovernmental Plan Amendment Review Committee Clearinghouse Coordinator on May 5, 2018. A letter of objection has been submitted to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO) by the Town of Palm Beach (see Exhibit 3) citing concerns with the amount of traffic that will be created in a concentrated congested area proximate to one of the bridges to the Town, concepts in the City of West Palm Beach’s Mobility Plan which will reduce traffic capacity on Okeechobee Boulevard, and impacts to hurricane evacuation and emergency response for the Town of Palm Beach. The Town states in their objection that these concerns will jeopardize their ability to comply with policies in their Comprehensive Plan. It is expected that an objection will also be submitted to FDEO by Palm Beach County though such objection has not yet been received as of the drafting of this memorandum.

Okeechobee Boulevard and Lakeview Avenue serve vehicles coming and going from West Palm Beach; moving around within West Palm Beach; and coming and going from Palm Beach. It is therefore critical that the analysis of development approvals within the OBD as well as implementation of the Mobility Plan consider destination, local, and through trips along these roads when evaluating the impacts of new development and Mobility Plan measures.

**Conclusion**

The proposed creation of the OBD is seen by the City as a way to incentivize the construction of additional Class A office space, in support of the City’s economic development goals and the vibrancy of downtown. While the concepts appear to support goals in the SRPP concerning focusing development activity into transit-served, functional downtown areas, there are concerns that should be addressed in order to fully realize the vision and mitigate impacts on adjacent jurisdictions. It is very important that the analysis of development approvals within the OBD as well as implementation of the Mobility Plan consider destination, local, and through trips along significant roadways such as Okeechobee Boulevard and Lakeview Avenue when evaluating the impacts of new development and Mobility Plan interventions. The City will also need to commit to implementation and constancy of effort on local transit improvements in order to effectively tie the OBD to regional transit resources. Council asks that West Palm Beach carefully coordinate with FDOT, the Town of Palm Beach, and Palm Beach County on these issues.
In addition, due to the reliance in the City’s analysis on features of the proposed associated zoning district (transportation demand management strategy and transit operating funding requirements for example), these should be incorporated into the comprehensive plan text in a manner which gives assurance that they will carry forward into the land development regulations.

**Recommendation**

Council should approve this report and authorize its transmittal to the City of West Palm Beach and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

Attachments
List of Exhibits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Location Map</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Proposed Revisions to the Downtown Master Plan Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Objection from the Town of Palm Beach</td>
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</table>
Exhibit 1
General Location Map
Exhibit 2
Proposed Revisions to the Downtown Master Plan Element

ORDINANCE NO. 4783-18

EXHIBIT A
Downtown Master Plan Element
Revisions are shown as struck through for deletions and underline for additions.

* * * * *

Policy 1.1.1: The City shall implement regulations that meet the intent and character of each of the Downtown Districts described as follows and depicted in the Downtown District Map in figure 1.

* * * * Omitted for brevity * * * *

N. Okeechobee Business District: The Okeechobee corridor is the traditional business district of downtown, around which office buildings have historically located. The focus of the Okeechobee business district should be towards attracting high intensity office uses to consolidate the area as an economic center of downtown, with innovative high-rise buildings and an active pedestrian environment. The district shall function as a connection between the north and south portions of the City, with enhanced pedestrian crossings, and a large percentage of public open spaces.

Adopted DMP Figure 1- District Map & Boundaries

![District Map & Boundaries Image]
Policy 3.1.3: The City shall establish zoning designations which are compatible with the intent and defined character of each district, following the maximum densities and intensities established for each district and further illustrated within Table DMP-1, Figure DMP-2 and Figure DMP-3. The intensities and densities indicated below are not intended to be a guarantee of capacity, and the actual capacity of individual properties may vary based upon site-specific design factors, such as lot size and configuration, parking, setback, etc.

* * * * * Omitted for brevity * * * * *
### Table DMP-1
Maximum development capacity

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ORDINANCE NO. 4783-18

Adopted Figure DMP-2 - Subdistrict Boundaries

Proposed Figure DMP-2 - Subdistrict Boundaries
ORDINANCE NO. 4783-18

Adopted DMP Figure 3- Incentive Areas

Proposed DMP Figure 3- Incentive Areas
July 24, 2018

Mr. Ray Eubanks, Plan Processing Administrator
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
State Land Planning Agency
Caldwell Building
107 East Madison – MSC 160
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: City of West Palm Beach Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the Okeechobee Business District (WPB Amendment 18-1)

Dear Mr. Eubanks:

In accordance with Chapter 163.3184 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Town of Palm Beach, as an affected party, is submitting to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) its objection to the City of West Palm Beach’s Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the Okeechobee Business District (WPB Amendment 18-1).

The Town concerns are relative to the increased traffic and reduction of service levels associated with a more intense development plan in this business district. The proposed changes will substantially increase the intensity of development along the eastern portion of the downtown Okeechobee corridor by significantly increasing the allowable floor area, height and number of stories allowed along the downtown Okeechobee Boulevard/Lakeview Avenue corridor.

It’s important to note that the new development potential of the proposed business district, coupled with the other approved developments on track for construction in the immediate area in the near future, will substantially impact the ability to move traffic east and west bound in that already overcapacity corridor. To exacerbate the situation, the Mobility Plan the City is also undertaking will actually reduce capacity within this corridor.

The proposed City of West Palm Beach comprehensive plan amendment will jeopardize the Town’s ability to comply with several sections of its own comprehensive plan. Specifically, Policy 3.3 in the Town’s Public Safety Element, which states that the Town will “coordinate with adjacent municipalities, Palm Beach County, the Florida Department of Transportation and other...
responsible agencies, to ensure that the regional transportation network provides for the safe and timely evacuation of residents in a hurricane or other emergency event is not degraded as a result of Transportation Concurrency Exemption Areas (TCEA).” Furthermore, Objective 4 in the Town’s Transportation Element requires that the Town will coordinate with other jurisdictions and agencies to “minimize traffic impacts to SR 80 and other regionally significant roads leading to the Town.” Also Policy 11.3 in the Town’s Coastal Management/Conservation Element requires that the Town “ensure traffic impacts of proposed development in adjacent municipalities within concurrency exemption zones address all factors including, but not limited to: a. Increased development, b. Bridge crossing and times, c. Increased passenger rail traffic, d. Increased freight rail, and e. Hurricane sheltering.” The Town does not feel that these considerations were accurately taken into account in the proposed Okeechobee Business District comprehensive plan amendment.

The Town also realizes that the Palm Beach County Facilities Development & Operations Department has brought up similar concerns about the traffic impacts of the proposed comprehensive plan amendment going back more than a year ago (see attachments). It appears that these concerns and comments have gone unaddressed by the City of West Palm Beach. One of the issues raised by the County is that a traffic analysis has not been performed that accounts for all of the approved development in the area and the proposed comprehensive plan amendment. Furthermore, this section of Okeechobee Boulevard is part of the Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) State Highway System, and FDOT approval would be required before implementation of the comprehensive plan amendment be considered. FDOT recently notified the Town if its concerns of the Okeechobee Boulevard Corridor component of the mobility plan that the City of West Palm Beach is also undertaking (see attached letter dated May 25, 2018). In this letter, FDOT states, “Many of the elements, which potentially reduce capacity, were noted as needing additional study to determine their feasibility.” FDOT also stated, “The Department is currently conducting an assessment of existing and future traffic conditions on Okeechobee Boulevard to ensure traffic impact scenarios can be independently validated.”

To summarize, it is simply counterintuitive to reduce traffic capacity on Okeechobee Boulevard, while at the same time substantially increase roadway demand by increasing the amount of development permitted within the area. Vehicular traffic should not be reduced to such a level that fire and police cannot adequately respond in emergency situations, and residents have difficulty evacuating during natural disasters such as hurricanes.

The Town respectively requests that the State first put this proposed comprehensive plan amendment on hold until after FDOT has had an opportunity to complete its traffic impact analysis. After the FDOT analysis is completed, we then ask that the FDEO take into account the analysis and the objections and concerns raised by Palm Beach County and the Town of Palm Beach, and disallow the proposed comprehensive plan amendment from becoming effective.
Should you require additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Town's Planning Administrator, John Lindgren at jlindgren@townofpalmbeach.com or 561.227-6414.

Sincerely,

Kirk Blouin
Town Manager
360 South County Road
Palm Beach, FL 33480

cc: Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager
Paul Castro, AICP, Acting Planning, Zoning & Building Director
John Lindgren, AICP, Planning Administrator
Richard Greene, AICP, City of West Palm Beach
Ana Maria Aponte, AICP, City of West Palm Beach
Lorenzo Aghemo, AICP, Palm Beach County
R. Eric McClellan, Palm Beach County
Gerry O'Reilly, Florida Department of Transportation, District 4
Michael L. Busha, AICP, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
Nick Uhren, PE, Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency
Anna Yeskey, AICP, Palm Beach County IPARC
The Honorable Gail L. Coniglio, Mayor
Town of Palm Beach
P.O. Box 2029
360 South County Road
Palm Beach, FL 33480

Dear Mayor Coniglio:

RE: City of West Palm Beach Downtown Mobility Plan

This letter is in response to your May 15, 2018 correspondence regarding the City of West Palm Beach Downtown Mobility Plan (Plan) and the Town of Palm Beach’s noted opposition to any Plan actions that could reduce the capacity of Okeechobee Boulevard.

The Department recently reviewed a draft of the Okeechobee Boulevard Corridor component of the Plan and provided comments to the City. Many of the elements, which potentially reduce capacity, were noted as needing additional study to determine their feasibility. The Department concurs and continues to stress to the City that adequate capacity needs to be maintained on Okeechobee Boulevard and other key components of the local roadway network in order to effectively accommodate current and future traffic.

The Department is currently conducting an assessment of existing and future traffic conditions on Okeechobee Boulevard to ensure traffic impact scenarios can be independently validated. In June 2018, we will initiate coordination for this effort with the City of West Palm Beach, Town of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, and the Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency at the technical and policy levels.

We recognize the City’s interest in managing future development and its associated traffic to increase transit use and make the downtown area more conducive to pedestrians and bicyclists. This objective must also reflect the needs of vehicular traffic. Any proposal stemming from the Plan or its components that impact operation of the State Highway System will need Department approval before implementation is considered.

Thank you for coordinating with the Department on this issue. If you have additional concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Mayur Patel, District Planning & Environmental Administrator, at 954-777-4459 or via email at mayur.patel@dot.state.fl.us.

Sincerely,

Garry O'Reilly, PE
District Four Secretary

cc: Stacy L. Miller, P.E., Director of Transportation Development – FDOT District Four
Mayur Patel, District Planning & Environmental Administrator – FDOT District Four
Nick Uhren, Executive Director – Palm Beach TPA
Palm Beach Town Council
Kirk Blouin, Town Manager – Town of Palm Beach
Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager – Town of Palm Beach
H. Paul Brazil, P.E., Director of Public Works – Town of Palm Beach
Verdenia Baker, County Administrator – Palm Beach County

www.fdot.gov

EXHIBIT A
VIA E-MAIL

June 18, 2018

Rick Greene, Director, Development Services
City of West Palm Beach
401 Clematis Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Proposed Okeechobee Business District (OBD) and Downtown Master Plan

Dear Rick,

Late last week we discovered that the City’s latest OBD initiative is now proceeding to the City Commission for consideration. As you have heard the County comment before the Planning Board and Downtown Action Committee, the County continues to remain concerned with several fundamental aspects of the initiative, as follows.

- The City Staff report continues to give no consideration whatsoever to the Convention Center. A future expansion that will nearly double the size of the existing facility has been has been planned since the Convention Center Interlocal Agreement was executed by the City and County in 2000. Yet no traffic analysis has been performed that specifically accounts for that expansion in combination with the development capacity that would be provided by the OBD (and other downtown initiatives). Accessibility and roadway operations being key to the success of any convention center, the OBD presents significant risk to the past and future public investment in the facility.

- The OBD would severely limit the delivery of parking to serve new development. There is no back-up plan should mode shift, transportation demand management or emerging services and technologies fail to fully deliver the envisioned future, in which case unplanned pressure on external parking facilities and area roadways would adversely affect local operating conditions.

- The OBD inherently relies upon the pending Mobility Plan to bring about improved circulation along the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor. For instance, the Mobility Plan anticipates a new east-west roadway connection servicing the downtown (requiring a new crossing of the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC)) and diverting approximately 25 percent of vehicle trips from Okeechobee Boulevard. As the South Florida Regional Transit Authority (SFRTA) has operational and maintenance responsibility over the SFRC, and SFRTA does not support the proposed SFRC crossing, this critical element to the success of the Mobility Plan overall and relief to Okeechobee Boulevard in particular is shrouded in uncertainty. With the Mobility Plan yet to be implemented and thus
no material improvement or benefit having been realized or verified, we view the OBD initiative as being premature, if not contrary, to the intended outcome of the Mobility Plan.

- The City Staff report undermines the significance of the more than 300,000 square feet of Class A office space already approved as part of the Transit Village project in characterizing the desire to introduce Class A office into the downtown. That project has been a joint initiative of the City and County for many years, and the OBD seemingly creates direct competition for the success of that approved project and the larger Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) that it is intended to stimulate.

The County looks forward to the approaching opportunity to present its entire concerns with the pending downtown planning initiatives to the City Commission on June 25. In the interim, I respectfully request that this letter be made a part of the record for the June 18, 2018 City Commission meeting.

Respectfully,

R. Eric McClellan, Director FD&O Strategic Planning
Facilities Development & Operations

Cc: Jeri Muoio, Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
    Jeff Green, City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Scott D. Kelly, Assistant City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Ana Maria Aponte, City Urban Designer, City of West Palm Beach
    Verdenia Baker, County Administrator
    Audrey Wolf, Director, FD&O
    Ross Hering, Director, FD&O/PREM

Rick Greene
June 18, 2018
Page 2 of 2
VIA E-MAIL

June 12, 2018

Rick Greene, Director, Development Services
City of West Palm Beach
401 Clematis Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Proposed Okeechobee Business District (OBD) and Downtown Master Plan

Dear Rick,

It has come to my attention that the City’s latest OBD initiative is now scheduled for review by the Downtown Action Committee (DAC). This office continues to remain concerned with several fundamental aspects of the initiative, as follows:

- The City Staff report continues to give no consideration whatsoever to the Convention Center. A future expansion that will nearly double the size of the existing facility has been and has been planned since the Convention Center Interlocal Agreement was executed by the City and County in 2000. Yet no traffic analysis has been performed that specifically accounts for that expansion in combination with the development capacity that would be provided by the OBD (and other downtown initiatives). Accessibility and roadway operations being key to the success of any convention center, the OBD presents significant risk to the past and future public investment in the facility.

- The OBD would severely limit the delivery of parking to serve new development. There is no back-up plan should mode shift, transportation demand management or emerging services and technologies fail to fully deliver the envisioned future, in which case unplanned pressure on external parking facilities and area roadways would adversely affect local operating conditions.

- The OBD inherently relies upon the pending Mobility Plan to bring about improved circulation along the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor. For instance, the Mobility Plan anticipates a new east-west roadway connection servicing the downtown (requiring a new crossing of the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC)) and diverting approximately 25 percent of vehicle trips from Okeechobee Boulevard. As the South Florida Regional Transit Authority (SFRTA) has operational and maintenance responsibility over the SFRC, and SFRTA does not support the proposed SFRC crossing, this critical element to the success of the Mobility Plan overall and relief to Okeechobee Boulevard in particular is shrouded in uncertainty. With the Mobility Plan yet to be implemented and thus no material improvement or benefit having been realized or
verified, we view the OBD initiative as being premature if not contrary to the intended outcome of the Mobility Plan.

- The City Staff report undermines the significance of the more than 300,000 square feet of Class A office space already approved as part of the Transit Village project in characterizing the desire to introduce Class A office into the downtown. That project has been a joint initiative of the City and County for many years, and the OBD seemingly creates direct competition for the success of that approved project and the larger Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) that it is intended to stimulate.

The County looks forward to the approaching opportunity to present its entire concerns with the pending downtown planning initiatives to the City Commission. In the interim, I respectfully request that this letter be made a part of the record for the June 12, 2018 DAC meeting.

Respectfully,

R. Eric McClellan, Director FD&O Strategic Planning
Facilities Development & Operations

Cc: Jeri Muoio, Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
    Jeff Green, City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Scott D. Kelly, Assistant City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Ana Maria Aponte, City Urban Designer, City of West Palm Beach
    Verdenia Baker, County Administrator
    Audrey Wolf, Director, FD&O
    Ross Hering, Director, FD&O/PREM
VIA E-MAIL

May 15, 2018

Rick Greene, Director, Development Services
City of West Palm Beach
401 Clematis Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Proposed Okeechobee Business District (OBD) and Downtown Master Plan

Dear Rick,

Thank you for informing me of the City’s renewed efforts to implement the proposed OBD. As with last year’s original OBD proposal, this office remains concerned with several fundamental aspects of the initiative:

- The City Staff report continues to give no consideration whatsoever to the Convention Center. A future expansion that will nearly double the size of the existing facility has been planned since the Convention Center Interlocal Agreement was executed by the City and County in 2000. Yet no traffic analysis has been performed that specifically accounts for that expansion in combination with the development capacity that would be provided by the OBD (and other downtown initiatives). Accessibility and roadway operations being key to the success of any convention center, the OBD presents significant risk to the past and future public investment in the facility.

- The OBD would severely limit the delivery of parking to serve new development. There is no back-up plan should mode shift, transportation demand management or emerging services and technologies fail to fully deliver the envisioned future, in which case unplanned pressure on external parking facilities and area roadways would adversely affect local operating conditions.

- The OBD inherently relies upon the pending Mobility Plan to bring about improved circulation along the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor. For instance, the Mobility Plan anticipates a new east-west roadway connection servicing the downtown (requiring a new crossing of the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC)) and diverting approximately 25 percent of vehicle trips from Okeechobee Boulevard. As the South Florida Regional Transit Authority (SFRTA) has operational and maintenance responsibility over the SFRC, and SFRTA does not support the proposed SFRC crossing, this critical element to the success of the Mobility Plan overall and relief to Okeechobee Boulevard in particular is shrouded in uncertainty. With the Mobility Plan yet to be implemented and thus no material improvement or benefit having been realized or
verified, we view the OBD initiative as being premature if not contrary to the intended outcome of the Mobility Plan.

- The City Staff report undermines the significance of the more than 300,000 square feet of Class A office space already approved as part of the Transit Village project in characterizing the desire to introduce Class A office into the downtown. That project has been a joint initiative of the City and County for many years, and the OBD seemingly creates direct competition for the success of that approved project and the larger Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) that it is intended to stimulate.

The County looks forward to the approaching opportunity to present its entire concerns with the pending downtown planning initiatives to the City Commission. In the interim, I respectfully request that this letter be made a part of the record for the May 15, 2018 Planning Board meeting.

Respectfully,

R. Eric McClellan, Director FD&O Strategic Planning
Facilities Development & Operations

Attachment

Cc: Jeri Muolo, Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
    Jeff Green, City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Scott D. Kelly, Assistant City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
    Ana Maria Aponte, City Urban Designer, City of West Palm Beach
    Verdenia Baker, County Administrator
    Audrey Wolf, Director, FD&O
    Ross Hering, Director, FD&O/PREM
VIA E-MAIL

July 31, 2017

Rick Greene, Director, Development Services
City of West Palm Beach
401 Clematis Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Proposed Okeechobee Business District (OBD) and Downtown Master Plan

Dear Mr. Greene,

This letter follows my public comments on these matters at Wednesday evening’s Planning Board meeting. While we do understand and appreciate the City’s interest in new Class A office facilities locating in the downtown, we take great concern with the specifics and approach to this proposal in certain respects.

The City represented that extensive outreach had been conducted before bringing its proposal before the Planning Board. This office was entirely unaware of the proposal prior to July 17, at which time we received the City’s standard mailing for the Planning Board meeting. There was no mention whatsoever at the May 22 traffic forum, June mobility study charrette, or as part of recent contact with this office. We value the opportunity for timely coordination, communication and preparation as much as the next, and simply ask for the same courtesies and treatment as any other key stakeholder on downtown initiatives.

Also of concern is that the Convention Center has since 2000 been planned for expansion to double its current size as provided in our Convention Center Interlocal Agreement with the City. How future impacts of that planned expansion are today being accounted for, protected and publicly represented as the City undertakes and advances new planning initiatives for the downtown that will compound current conditions on the corridor is of great interest to this office, and likely the general public that we mutually serve and represent.

As you heard me mention, the proposed OBD would not exist in isolation. Any failed parking assumptions (i.e. two spaces/1,000 sq. ft., reliance on parking infrastructure delivered by others, heightened utilization of trolley service, etc.) would adversely impact established operations and investments on the fringes of the OBD and possibly throughout the entire downtown given the importance of the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor. Each project should continue to plan for its own success, and until the mobility study is completed and implemented, we think it premature to require anything less.
We find it particularly troublesome that the City continuously gives immediate attention to private development in the downtown without the same attention, care and treatment to existing and planned future County facilities. We have long attempted to reconcile the building height conflicts and shortcomings of existing regulations as it pertains to the blocks defined by the County’s Robert Weisman Governmental Center, Main Courthouse and Block D property. That effort precedes letters dating to 2006 between the City and County and includes our meeting of October 21, 2015. You will recall that we had gone as far for that meeting as to identify the issues and prepare draft City Ordinances that could deliver a solution.

Further to that point, it was represented Wednesday night by City Staff that: 1) the downtown TCEA is established to facilitate the downtown as the governmental and judicial center of Palm Beach County, 2) the City has no objection to building height in the downtown, and 3) height increases with no corresponding increase in FAR generate no traffic impact. The County’s longstanding request to assign responsive building heights to the aforementioned County campus is then the exact same scenario as the City-initiated OBD. We have no hidden agenda or ulterior motives and our longstanding request is nothing but genuine. We simply wish for our existing and future public facilities in this concentrated downtown location to become officially recognized, publicly represented and be a meaningful part of the comprehensive long-term view for and fabric of the downtown. To do otherwise is contrary to good planning practice and timely/appropriate public disclosure of future downtown conditions. Again, we respectfully request the same treatment that the City is affording the OBD and others in terms of regulatory policy, process, respect and representation.

We can point to Government Hill as a prime example of failed intergovernmental planning and coordination. After years of collaboration between this office, the City and State agencies in order to maximize the potential for collocated public facilities in that location, the new Fourth District Court of Appeals facility now under construction eliminates that potential. Specifically, the envelope and footprint of that facility leaves substantial development potential untapped while at the same time leaving a sizeable parking shortfall for not only State employees and patrons of the Dimick Block but all customary government operations once envisioned for future placement in the TOD. Thus, the County may need to look toward strategic land holdings located outside of downtown to accommodate its general government growth into the future.

Once again, we hope our comments and communication will renew attention to our longstanding interest and long-term land use intentions in the downtown before any further comprehensive planning opportunities are lost. We remain committed to this cause and lending technical support to the City in bringing this planning and policy matter to a mutually satisfactory and publically beneficial conclusion.

Sincerely,

R. Eric McClellan, Director FD&O Strategic Planning
Facilities Development & Operations

Cc: Jeri Muoio, Mayor, City of West Palm Beach
    Jeff Green, City Administrator, City of West Palm Beach
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July 31, 2017
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VIA E-MAIL

July 31, 2017

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