



# Hutchinson Island Master Plan

Prepared for: Martin County Commissioners

Prepared by: Hutchinson Island Coalition

September 8, 2011

# Executive Summary

## **Objective**

The Hutchinson Island Coalition is a volunteer organization that consists of members from the Martin County (MC) Hutchinson Island community of homeowners, organizations, and businesses. Our mission is simply to make recommendations and provide any type of assistance to the county in making improvements, ranging from the aesthetic in nature to safety type issues. We want Hutchinson Island to be the most beautiful island in Florida and one that tourists and visitors want to make as their vacation destination.

## **Goals**

The goal of this proposal is to provide the MC Commissioners with a list of priority items to be incorporated in a Master Plan for the Island.

## **Solution**

We would very much like to work with the MC Commissioners and other groups, such as the Tourism Development Council in defining these items in a more actionable plan as well as help determine funding solutions.

The following is the initial Phase I priority list developed by the Coalition in conjunction with the Martin County Engineering department.

1. **Pedestrian Crossings.** This project requires that a visible indicator (e.g., pavers) across A1A be installed from condominiums (e.g., Hutchinson House), developments (e.g., Joe's Point) or public facilities (e.g., beach parking at Stokes beach) on the west side of A1A to the east side. This is seen as a safety issue. It will not only slow traffic down on A1A (which people typically are driving over the speed limit), but provides a safe place for people to cross a busy roadway. The design phase of this project is high priority and needs to be completed as soon as possible because we have projects that are in progress and require crossings.

Action Plan:

- MC Engineering and members of the Coalition will determine the materials and look for all crossings.
  - MC Engineering and Coalition to determine where we should place the crossings and prioritize the projects.
  - Any crossings across A1A would probably need the approval of DOT; MC Engineering would need to prepare permitting process.
  - Once a "look" is finalized, we would probably need to **immediately** talk to DOT regarding the Stuart Beach/Florida Oceanographic/Publix crossing since traffic signal is due to be installed sometime this year - which has already been approved and ready to go, but does not meet the crossing requirements of the Coalition.
  - Meeting with the new owners of the old Holiday Inn team would also need to be included in talks because they will have a pedestrian crossing for their "extra" parking requirements on the west side of A1A.
- 
2. **Signage to the Island.** This signage would be more of monument type of signs that would welcome visitors to the Island and be a visible recognition of the island. The preferable placement of the signs would be in a landscaped median. There may be several county-owned properties that might be suitable for signage that would include something a little larger and more elaborate (e.g., a sign with a waterfall). We also need

to consider lighting for the signage. Signage should be placed for the best entry and exit visibility.

Action Plan:

- MC Engineer to determine whether there could be placement of signs in a median. If there is not a place in a median, then determine the location on the side of A1A that could accommodate a sign at each end of the island.
- Coalition and MC Engineering, depending on the location, get artist rendering of options that would be acceptable and the cost of signage.
- Find funding. Perhaps through Public Arts dollars, Visitors and Tourism Bureau, grants, MSTU tax increase or a combination.

3. **Landscaping along A1A.** There are several places along the stretch of A1A that is in need of landscaping. In particular we would like to see the areas on both sides of A1A from MacArthur Boulevard to the Elliott museum and the area before the old Holiday Inn to Jensen Beach landscaped. A master template of the types of landscaping would need to be developed. When we have a master landscaping plan, than when businesses, organizations, and condo associations consider landscaping along A1A, they would have a template to use that would bring consistency to the island. This would especially be important to have with those projects we currently have in development such as old Holiday Inn, Elliott and Galleon on the River.

Action Plan:

- Greg Nolte (MC Engineering department) and Gene Barnes (Landscaping Architect) to make a master “theme” landscape plan for the Island. Approval by the MC Commissioners and Coalition.
- Meet with the Elliott Museum and Holiday Inn team to discuss landscape plans to determine if they have changes to the master plan and can implement with their development plans.
- Greg Nolte and Coalition to determine where on the island we would like landscaping improvements. Greg will need to determine if there are any DOT requirements, such as easements or set backs that we will need to consider.
- Get cost estimates for each project.

- Prioritize the different projects.
- Find funding. Perhaps this could be funded with an increase in the MSTU tax in combination with some funding from the County or grants.

4. **Enhancements to the Roundabout at Jensen Beach.** This project entails widening A1A at Jensen Beach to allow a turning lane coming from St. Lucie County turning right to go off the Island and a turning lane coming from the causeway to turn right onto A1A. It would also be beneficial to work with Holiday Inn to determine if they could help with funding to make a second lane to turn right into Jensen Beach.

Action Plan:

- Currently the engineering department has almost completed it's design plan for this project. Once they are finished, they will send it to Michael Walwerk, who is the "expert" on roundabouts, to review. Once Michael gives his approval, then the engineering department will meet with the Coalition on finalizing the plan. Timing for final review is November. Funding has already been approved for the project.

5. **Sprucing up the public entrances to the beach accesses.** The entrances to the beach accesses need some type of consistent identifier landscaping and possibly interesting pavers (or design) for the entrances. There is one entrance in St. Lucie County that has a paver entrance with a turtle design in the pavers. Perhaps we could do something similar with our Sailfish emblem.

Action Plan:

- With Greg Nolte, members of the Coalition, Parks department and possibly the Visitors and Tourism Bureau, design a "template" for an attractive look to the entrances.
- Present and get approval for the design from the Coalition. Present to the MC Commissioners.
- Find funding. Possibly from an MSTU tax increase, Tourism bureau, grants or a combination of one or more of these options.

6. **Sidewalks on MacArthur Boulevard to Sailfish Point.** This project includes sidewalk from A1A to Bathtub Beach. Since biking and walking is a big safety issue

once you make the turn parallel to the ocean, we might want to consider wider sidewalks in this area to accommodate both bikers and walkers. The sidewalks have already been installed from A1A to the tennis courts. We need to continue this project to Sailfish Point.

Action Plan:

- Currently we can probably continue this project to about the House of Refuge. South of the House of Refuge, we will need to get homeowners to donate some of their property to an easement so that sidewalks can be installed. Perhaps we can put a project plan and cost analysis together for Phase 2 of this project to the House of Refuge.
- Get a plan together to present to the homeowners south of House of Refuge for Phase 3 of the project. Once approval is received from homeowners, proceed with a project plan/cost analysis for this phase.

7. **Traffic signals at Elliott/Florida Oceanographic/Publix.** This is a project that requires a traffic signal at this intersection. It is a dangerous intersection because there are so many organizations and businesses in this area on both sides of the street and because we have a lot of pedestrians crossing A1A to and from the beach to Florida Oceanographics and Publix and vice-versa. This is a current project that is underway and funded. Thanks to Mark Perry for his contribution of pushing this project forward. See also project #1 regarding pedestrian crossings.
8. **Beach Renourishment.** The project is currently being funded and scheduled for the 2011-2012 season. The Coalition, Commissioners and the community needs to continue to support the effort with communications to necessary governmental officials as necessary.
9. **St. Lucie Inlet.** This project includes the dredging of the Inlet so that we can have safe navigation through the channel.

Action Plan:

- Contact any U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators that we know that could possibly help us with getting the necessary funding (8 million dollars from the Corps) for the Inlet project.

10. **Underground Utilities.** This is a project that requires all the utilities to be buried underground. With the barrier island vulnerable to high winds and hurricanes, this is a critical issue. Although the Coalition understands this is a very long-term goal, we would like the MC Commissioners to recognize that this is a project that should be considered in the future and to put it into a Master Plan for consideration over the next 10-15 years. Especially when development projects come up like the Elliott Museum and the old Holiday Inn, it may be an option to put underground utilities in as development on the island occurs.