



Fort Myers Beach Joint Town Council Session with Local Planning Agency

**Bay Oaks Recreation Center
2731 Oak Street
Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931**

Minutes

**Thursday, June 26, 2025
ORDER OF BUSINESS**

9:00 AM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Town Council members present: Chair Allers, Vice Chair Atterholt, Council Member King, Council Member Safford and Council Member Woodson.

LPA members present: Chair Cereceda (virtually), LPA Member Boan, LPA Member Dunlap, LPA Member Eckmann, LPA Member McLean, LPA Member Plummer and LPA Member Sudduth (virtually).

Town Manager McKannay and Town Attorney Stuparich (virtually) were also present.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Update and Land Development Code Discussion **Comprehensive Plan Update and Land Development Code Discussion**

Jason Green, planner, reviewed the reason for the update. Eddie Ng from the Corradino Group started the presentation with a General Overview, In-Person Results, Interactive Elements, Resident Comments, Survey Results, Visioning, Visioning - Thematic Findings, Thematic Aspects, Comprehensive Plan and Next Steps.

LPA Member Boan asked whether deviations regarding height and public benefits would be addressed in the Comp Plan or the LDC. Mr. Ng replied that it could be addressed in both. He noted that a point system should be avoided in the Comp Plan because flexibility could be created in the LDC. Mr. Green described the difference between the Comp Plan and LDC. LPA Member Plummer asked for directions on following the rules when approving projects. Mr. Green responded that today's goal was to approve or modify the vision statement. He indicated that the town council was ultimately responsible for decisions made. LPA Member Boan asked whether

development agreements would be addressed. Mr. Green replied that it was up to the council to revise and it was not in the Comp Plan. LPA Member Safford asked what they could do to activate growth on small lots. Mayor Allers stated that there was nothing that was preventing small lots from developing. Mr. Ng thought it came down to economic development and whether there were barriers. He provided examples of different approaches to fill the space.

LPA Member Safford brought up approving a business with a FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 2.0, with parking below. After the wave mitigation wall was built, it dropped from a VE zone to a Coastal A zone; however, he still could not activate the downstairs area because of the FAR. He asked how they would write that so the downstairs could be activated after the mitigation wall was built. Mr. Green replied that they could increase the maximum and establish standards for reaching it. Mr. Ng noted they could approach it by area or add a blanket statement in the Comp Plan, such as the ground floor will not count against the FAR if specific conditions are met.

Mr. Ng summarized that they wanted to have a balanced framework that provides the ability for the land development regulation to tackle specific nuances on a flexible basis, including items like how to deal with the ground floor. Chair Cereceda asked whether there was an opportunity for single-family residences to take advantage of the wave mitigation wall and utilize their ground floor, which could increase their ability to create a rental. Mr.

Green did not think the blanket statement would allow for that because the living space had to be above base flood. Mayor Allers asked whether the statement in the Comp Plan would allow for residential above and commercial below. Mr. Green thought this could be an opportunity if it were in the appropriate place around the nodes. He cautioned they would have to be careful of commercial encroachment in a residential neighborhood.

Chair Cereceda felt that the first paragraph of the vision was static. She suggested changing it to, "where we welcome visitors and where residents, new and old, can grow with our families and friends..." LPA and council members agreed. Mr. Ng will incorporate the change. LPA Member McLean noted that it did not address the island's natural resources. LPA Member Safford thought they needed to add a water component. Mr. Green pointed out that improving water quality could mean higher standards for stormwater, which would be a challenge for the island. LPA Member Safford responded that it was a must. LPA Member McLean thought the Comp Plan was pretty solid, but it did not immediately deal with the realities of no longer being able to work on the bottom floor. He thought the example of activating the bottom floor under certain circumstances was brilliant because they had been struggling with that. He was concerned about becoming too restrictive and creating unintended consequences. Mr. Green did not think the language created a problem. Mayor Allers asked for the definition of scenic views and considered access to be more important. Mr. Green thought the last sentence of the second paragraph was important because it specifically directed them to those uses. Mr. Ng discussed the human scale,

emphasizing eye-level views and walking and bicycling over driving a car. He added that they could tweak the wording. LPA Member Plummer felt that air movement was important as opposed to wall-to-wall concrete buildings.

Chair Cereceda said the view from the bridge was the first thing people noticed and had to be protected.

Council Member Woodson noted that only 3% of the population responded to the online survey. She felt they needed to take a broader view and asked where the economic development was in everything. Mr. Green replied that adding better tools for different types of development would be helpful. LPA Member Dunlap brought up taxes, vacant lots, a cap on taxable value and extended homestead exemptions, which were economically unviable in their current state. He asked how they could add something to ensure accountability for the economic viability of the decisions they were making.

Mayor Allers said that they were not talking enough about residential and residential was sustainability, while commercial was viability. He noted that they needed both, but would not see the developments for 10 years, and if they could not sustain for 10 years, the developments would be building for nothing. Mr. Ng explained that they recommended the nodes to have flexibility to drive the investment back to have the minimum critical mass. He reminded them that they had talked about the population trend not coinciding with their housing trend at the beginning of the process. Mayor Allers said the focus had been on densities and how to make the commercial aspects work on a residential island, despite the diminishing residential population.

He asked how to manipulate the market to entice people to live there as residents while supporting commercial businesses. He added that if they keep going the way they were, it would become a tourist island. Mr. Ng responded that the balance was from having specific areas that did not intrude on residential areas. Mr. Green discussed the challenge of the investor using the build-back provisions just like a property owner would. He said people who sold their lots for a million did not care who bought them.

Mr. Ng indicated they had to specifically delineate commercial uses in residential areas. Mr. Green talked about regulating and enforcing Airbnb. Mr. Ng discussed looking at vacant lot policies. Mr. Green encouraged them to continue enforcing short-term rental regulations. Mr. Ng asked if they wanted to consider limiting the category for which they would grant a variance in the LDC. For example, they would only grant a variance if xyz was met.

Vice Mayor Atterholt asked about the deadline for the LDC. Mr. Green hoped they could adopt an updated LDC by next spring. Vice Mayor Atterholt asked whether SB180 was affecting their Comp Plan discussion. Mr. Green replied affirmatively and added that it also affected the LDC.

Council Member King suggested changing the second paragraph of the vision statement to, "This is our slice of paradise and we share it in balanced ways that contribute positively towards our overall quality of life." Mr. Ng changed it.

LPA Member Plummer noted that when they started the process, there were no vacant lots on the island. She said they needed to take action to ensure property owners took care of their property. She raised concerns about public safety issues related to the rats and pools without fences. They were becoming parking lots and were loaded with trash. Mr. Ng responded that maintenance standards and enforcement were the way to address those issues and were not included in the Comp Plan. Mayor Allers noted that mechanisms were in place and it came down to resources and finances.

Town Manager McKannay indicated they were working through a list of properties and more resources would be helpful.

LPA Member Eckmann saw a wish list and aspirations and asked whether they were achievable with the economics. He wondered if there was a conflict between the vision statement and the economic reality. For example, they wanted to see one story over flood, but those developments were not coming because they were not financially viable. He asked whether they could steer development to their goals with compromises to develop the property in a nice way. He listed businesses that closed before Ian and a more transient population. He had not heard anything about schools or religious institutions being important to a community. He noticed a lot of superficial stuff with public input. LPA Member Plummer discussed the difficulty of starting and sustaining a small business. LPA Member Dunlap noted that the survey did not represent the 40-and-under crowd. Mr. Ng replied that they worked with what they had. LPA Member Dunlap thought they should remove Ian and add something about having an aspiration to be structurally, culturally and economically resilient, so there was a purposeful commitment to pay attention to sustaining themselves. Mr. Ng will remove Ian and will add economic and social resiliency.

LPA Member Sudduth felt that it was not the Fort Myers Beach of the future, but a Fort Myers Beach that was safe. He noted they wanted to attract investors, residents and visitors. He thought it was a multigenerational community where residents and visitors could grow older. He agreed with building resiliency in the community and brought up incentivizing growth and rebuilding.

Chair Cereceda agreed with all the comments.

Mayor Allers said they could include anything they wanted in the Comp Plan, but if they did not abide by it, it did not mean anything. A discussion was held regarding incentives for people to build. Mr. Green will provide the list of ideas from their discussions three years ago.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member King moved to adjourn, seconded by LPA Member Dunlap. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Minutes adopted as presented, August 4, 2025. Motion by Council Member King and seconded by Council Member Safford. Passed 5-0.



Amy Baker, Town Clerk