



# History in the Making:

## A Brief Review of the Organization of the North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency and the Implementation of the Redevelopment Plan

### INTRODUCTION

On June 7, 2005 the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners approved the City of North Miami Redevelopment Plan (RES. 610-05), and the North Miami City Council began the implementation process to get the new Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) operational.

On August 1, 2005, the North Miami City Council, formally sitting as the North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency Board (Board) hired Frank Schnidman to serve as the Consulting Executive Director, and charged him with the responsibility of organizing the CRA.

The ensuing nine months have been a busy period of establishing the base of the CRA, dealing with administrative issues; operations; community relations and outreach; physical and human development issues; Biscayne Landing; affordable housing; and economic development.

### ADMINISTRATION

*Budget Approval.* One of the first critical issues facing the CRA was the preparation and approval by the Board, City Council and Board of County Commissioners of the initial budget. A consultant-prepared budget had been approved by the Board and Council, but was rejected by the County Tax Increment Finance Committee on November 17, 2005. This initial more than \$21 million dollar budget had as its cornerstone a \$16 million bond issue. The County, however, was unwilling to support the CRA issuance of bonds in its first year. In response, CRA staff prepared for review and approval by the Board and Council a revised budget that conformed with the directives of the Tax Increment Finance Committee after an assurance from the County staff that the CRA could return to the Committee at any time during the coming year to amend the budget to request permission for a line of credit or to borrow or bond to implement specific redevelopment projects. It was also important to get the budget approved in a timely fashion so that the CRA could legally spend money once the tax increment funds were received from the County in January 2006. One week after the initial CRA budget was rejected by the County TIF Committee, CRA staff presented a revised budget to the CRA Board and



Frank Schnidman became the Consulting Executive Director for the North Miami CRA on August 1, 2005.

City Council (October 25) of \$4.2 million that was in conformance with County directives, and the budget was approved by the Board and the Council, and then was approved by the TIF Committee on November 7, 2005, the Community Empowerment and Economic Revitalization Committee (CEERC) on December 13, and the Board of County Commissioners January 24, 2006. This more than 3 month budget approval proves was the first indication of how long dealing with the County would take for any required CRA/County interactions.

*Office Administration and Staffing.* Through the courtesy of the City, the CRA was allowed to use a single office in the Purchasing Department in City Hall. That room was to serve as the CRA office until November 9, 2005. A comprehensive search for office space that was both adequate for the needs of the CRA and fiscally responsible was undertaken. After consideration of a number of sites, and serious negotiation over a free-standing building that after due diligence turned out to have significant problems and significant costs if the CRA were to lease the space, interim office space was selected at 615 NE 124th Street. This selection has served the CRA staff well, and even has shared conference room space that accommodates meetings of the CRA Advisory Committee.



The current CRA's offices include a shared conference room, used for the CRA Advisory Committee and other meetings.

During the first months of operation two full time staff were hired, an Assistant Director and a Special Projects Manager. A CRA Attorney, Bond Counsel and Financial Advisor were hired by the Board, and selected consultants were retained to assist in specific tasks to get the CRA programs and operations underway. It is important to note that for more than two months not only did the Executive Director and two CRA staff share one small office, but also no compensation was paid because of problems of accounting and allocation of funds. The CRA basically would have to borrow any monies from the City until both the County TIF funds were received and the CRA budget was finally approved by the County.

## OPERATIONS

**CRA Board.** The primary task of the staff was to organize the process and procedure for Board meetings. Bylaws were prepared and approved and a calendar of meetings established. Board meeting packet format was established, and an official CRA web site was created that would serve as a vital link among the CRA, elected and appointed officials and the public in general. This web site form and substance was the result of research into more than 50 CRAs and how they handled information distribution, and the NMCRA web site is a combination of the best features of many of those sites.

**CRA Advisory Committee.** Once the CRA Board was running smoothly and the CRA Advisory Committee members were appointed, staff prepared and the Board approved Advisory Committee Operating Rules, and a calendar was prepared that had the Advisory Board meeting once a month in the beginning of the month with the Board changing its twice a month schedule to once a month once the Advisory Committee was active. (In fact, once the Advisory Committee began meeting, the Board determined that for an initial period, they would continue to meet twice a month—creating a situation of three meetings a month and three agenda packets a month.) The Advisory Committee now meets the first Thursday of each month at the CRA

offices and the Board meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month in the City Council Chambers.

**Public Notice.** It is important to note that once the agenda packets are distributed to either of these bodies prior to a scheduled meeting, the complete agenda packet is posted on the CRA web site and a notice of the posting is published to the CRA contact list along with a link to the web site.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

**Web Site.** A critical requirement for CRA success is understanding and acceptance of the goals and objectives of the CRA programs by the community. In order to foster better understanding of CRA planned and on-going activities, and to better educate the public about redevelopment, affordable housing and economic development issues, the CRA provides substantial information on its web site. In addition to agenda packets and related information, newspaper articles, a calendar of current events, and links to important information resources, many other resources are available and updated weekly.

**Publications.** In addition to the materials published on the web site, the CRA has printed an informational brochure, “North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency: Helping Build North Miami’s Tomorrow!” in English, Spanish and Creole.

**Outreach.** In addition, the CRA has hired a Community Relations Advisor that serves as a CRA contact in the Haitian community and provides in-house Creole-English/English-Creole translation. Among her responsibilities are community education about the CRA, staffing the CRA Advisory Committee and working with identified organizations to assist in the human resource issues within the CRA.



Our website, [www.NorthMiamiCRA.org](http://www.NorthMiamiCRA.org), is also a resource for the community, where you can see what your CRA is doing and get in-depth information on various redevelopment issues.

## PHYSICAL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

*Comprehensive Plan Review.* CRA staff had been involved with the on-going efforts of the City to prepare the revised Comprehensive Plan, including participation on a City staff committee reviewing and commenting on draft materials and appearing at numerous public meetings dealing with the Plan.

*Land Development Regulations.* The Executive Director served on the selection committee to identify and retain the consultant to prepare the Land Development Regulations. CRA staff will be deeply involved in the review and comment activity as draft materials are produced, as well as numerous planned public workshops and hearings.

*Charter Review Board.* The Executive Director has testified before the Charter Review Board and has met with and talked with the City Attorney and City Charter consultant about issues relating to the proposed Charter amendments. The CRA will continue to stay involved in the process as issues dealing with Charter changes impact the potential development options within the Community Redevelopment Area.

*Redevelopment Plan Update.* CRA staff has begun the process of providing specific projects to the County to implement the Redevelopment Plan. The CRA Board has identified a list of desired projects, and the staff has taken those projects to both the County staff and the CRA Advisory Committee for review and comment. It is the intention of staff to propose a series of projects to the County that fit within the language of the current Redevelopment Plan, and will seek to amend the Plan in the short term only if there is difficulty with the County review process allowing identified projects approved by the City to be included within the context of the current Redevelopment Plan.

## BISCAYNE LANDING

Biscayne Landing is the major project within the CRA, and serves as the economic engine that will fund much of the planned redevelopment of the Community Redevelopment Area. CRA staff monitors the development and regularly meets with staff to better understand the progress of the project and the timeline for completed structures to be added to the tax rolls for TIF purposes.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*North Miami Federal and State Housing Programs.* CRA staff participate with City staff in the review and organization of existing and potential Federal and State housing programs, and helped fashion documentation required under those programs.

*Residential Rehabilitation Pilot Program.* The Residential Rehabilitation Pilot Program was approved by the Board and the City and then approved by the County as part of the Revised CRA budget. This is an effort to identify homes in need of critical rehabilitation, and will give the CRA the opportunity to



Biscayne Landing is our economic engine, and we monitor its progress - Tower 1 is at the 21st Floor.

organize the way it will approach the large-scale rehabilitation responsibilities it has agreed to assist the City fulfill pursuant to the Munisport Agreement. CRA staff, working with the City's Code Enforcement staff have identified 39 single family homes that are candidates for consideration for participation in the Residential Rehabilitation Pilot Program.

*Ruck's Park.* In January 2006 the City gave the CRA the ownership of the Ruck's Park site and the direction to replan it to provide a more effective and efficient use of the land. Working with the City, the CRA has had the site cleared and fenced, and will be dealing with options to inhibit dust and runoff as well as the demolition of the structures on the site.



Before and After: Clearing the Ruck's Park site for development.

And, working with North Miami Housing, Inc., the CRA is moving forward with development planning and the fostering of an accurate timeline that can be used as a roadmap to the development approval and construction process.

In addition, the CRA has met with County staff and financial institutions regarding the establishment of a line of credit to fund both the mortgage assistance program and the payment to North Miami Housing of the fee for the construction of Ruck's Park

*Purchase of Rental Apartment Buildings.* Under the direction of the Board to acquire rental properties for conversion to condominiums or for upgrading as interim rental housing, and under the advise of the CRA Advisory Board to acquire as many residential units as the CRA could afford, staff began the negotiation process with the landlord of the first targeted building, a landlord that owned a significant number of rental buildings within the Redevelopment Area. Opinions of value were sought from expert appraisers, and the CRA Financial Advisor was brought in to determine options for financing the purchase of selected properties. A draft purchase and sale agreement was prepared that gave the CRA the ability to select among the identified buildings. Once an oral report was presented by the appraiser relating to value the parties were unable to agree about the value of the buildings and the amount that the CRA would pay for them. Negotiations are at a stand still and staff may at a later time return to discuss the acquisition of specific properties.

In the interim, other options for purchase will be explored by the CRA, all in recognition of its responsibilities for the relocation of tenants in the event buildings are purchased that will be rehabilitated or converted.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*State Enterprise Zone Designation.* CRA staff worked with City staff on the expansion of the County Enterprise Zone to include portions of North Miami. The CRA has participated in meetings and conversations with the County and others regarding the implementation of the Program, and will be promoting the use of Enterprise Zone incentives on its web site and in its printed materials.

*"Get to NoMi."* CRA staff has regularly met with the City Business Development Board and has met with the NoMi Mer-



The CRA is working with the Business Development Board, the NoMi Merchants Association and MOCA Staff to foster the development of the Downtown Arts District.

chants' Association and the MOCA staff and Board to discuss issues and options for improvements within the Downtown core, as well as expansion plans to MOCA and the desires of the Museum to serve as the focal point for redevelopment of the surrounding area. Discussions with the Urban Land Institute about their assistance with a Technical Advisory Panel to help identify appropriate development patterns and options for the area have begun with the desire to bring a proposal for an on-site evaluation to the CRA Board shortly.

*"Just One More."* Rather than only focusing on attracting new business to North Miami to improve employment opportunities for residents, the CRA will be proposing a pilot program to the Chamber of Commerce at its May luncheon to work with business organizations to identify existing businesses to get them to hire "just one more" employee. The CRA will coordinate existing programs and work to provide additional incentives to implement this program.

## CONCLUSION

This brief review can not be comprehensive because if it were, it would not be "brief." Many activities of the CRA over the past months have not been discussed, however, details of each item discussed and so much more can be found on the CRA web site.

With a very small staff and a dedicated group of consultants, much has been accomplished, but the work has only just begun. The CRA truly looks forward to the opportunity to be involved in "Helping Build North Miami's Tomorrow!"



[www.NorthMiamiCRA.org](http://www.NorthMiamiCRA.org)

The North Miami Community  
Redevelopment Agency

PO Box 610655  
North Miami, FL 33261-0655  
Phone: 305.899.0272  
Fax: 305.899.9376