

**APPROVED**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD (EDAB)**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**JULY 9, 2008 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>1/08 – 12/08</b>	
		<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Gwen Watson, Chair	P	7	0
Ralph Riehl, Vice Chair	A	6	1
Mark Budwig	P	7	0
Cort Neimark	P	5	2
Patricia DuMont	P	3	1
Tim Schiavone	P	4	3
Kristina Hebert	A	3	4
Adam Sanders	A	4	3
Dev Motwani	P	7	0
Mark Krom	P	3	4
Rosalind Osgood	P	5	2

**Staff**

Jeff Modarelli, Economic Development Director  
 Karen Reese, Economic Development Representative  
 Patricia Smith, Economic Development Secretary III  
 Margarett H. Hayes, Housing & Community Development Manager  
 Hilda Testa, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Guests**

Elizabeth S. Wentworth, Vice President, Broward Alliance  
 Katherine S. Barry, President/CEO, H.O.M.E.S.

**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m., and a quorum was present. The members and staff in attendance introduced themselves for the record. Guests Elizabeth Wentworth, Vice President of the Broward Alliance, and Katharine Barry, President and CEO of H.O.M.E.S., introduced themselves as well.

## **II. Approval of June 11, 2008 Minutes**

**Motion** by Ms. DuMont, seconded by Mr. Budwig, to approve the June 11, 2008 minutes. In a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

## **III. Broward Film Commission Overview**

Chair Watson welcomed Ms. Wentworth, who spoke about the film industry in Broward County for the Board. Mr. Modarelli clarified that the Board was particularly interested in hearing information on how film production comes to Florida, and how the Board can actively promote the City as a vendor for production.

Ms. Wentworth drew the Board's attention to a handout listing "permitting entities," which included the Broward Alliance and the cities of Hollywood and Fort Lauderdale. Also listed was the number of permits to date issued by these entities, as well as state parks. Under Fort Lauderdale, she noted, was everything filmed in the City on public property; she pointed out that anything filmed on private property was not on the list.

Mr. Schiavone asked how Fort Lauderdale might be included more frequently in film, noting the publicity that current and past television series, such as "Burn Notice" and "Miami Vice," generated for the city of Miami. He added that the economic impact would be welcome in the current economy as well.

Mr. Schiavone also mentioned that his business, The Parrot Lounge, had appeared in a film two years ago, "Gringo Wedding." He noted that he had particularly wanted the business to appear in the film's credits, so he had not negotiated a price with the film company; however, he advised that there were other options with private property filming, such as an "interruption of business" fee if more than a set amount of time was used to film.

Ms. Wentworth referred again to the handout, which noted that in 2008, more filming had taken place in Hollywood than in Fort Lauderdale, although there was not a specific reason this had happened. Often, she said, less expensive locations or facilities might be found in another city. One suggestion for drawing more business to Fort Lauderdale, she continued, was to have more digital photos available for "lead response." The more photos available in a City's database, she stated, the better chance for exposure.

Ms. Wentworth explained that she attends trade shows in New York and other cities, inviting production companies to shoot in Fort Lauderdale. She also noted that the state of Florida has a film Liaison who operates in Los Angeles, and directs leads to appropriate cities.

Regarding a database of recent photos, Ms. Wentworth said the 350 and 450 buildings on Las Olas Boulevard were particularly film-friendly, as they were now owned and managed by a Los Angeles company. She mentioned that the television series "Burn

Notice” had filmed there last year, and had recently requested to return with a script set around a condominium in Riverhouse. The Riverhouse management company, she noted, did not plan to charge for filming, as they preferred the publicity.

Mr. Krom asked if Fort Lauderdale wants to project a particular image to the film industry. Ms. Wentworth said the Broward County cities are “in transition,” but their images are moving toward the more upscale. The City and County Commissions are attempting to move away from the “college/spring break” images of the past, although Ms. Wentworth said some shows of this nature are still filmed in Broward County.

She pointed out that film is currently a “tough market,” stating that in a year in which \$25 million was spent on film projects at the state level, 51% of this went to South Florida markets. She reiterated that this did not include private property, however, since the Broward Alliance did not always know when filming occurred in those locations and consequently could not track it.

Chair Watson asked if returning an image, or brand, to the City might need to become part of the Board’s listed goals. Ms. Wentworth assured the Board that the Broward Alliance was actively pursuing this at present. The group was, in fact, planning to change its name to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Economic Development Corporation for marketing purposes. As there were currently no funds available for marketing, she reiterated the need for more digital pictures to add to their database, including both interior and exterior shots.

Mr. Schiavone concurred that the City needs a particular image, perhaps one that lets film companies know Fort Lauderdale “has it all,” from beaches and intracoastal waterways to mansions and state parks.

Ms. Wentworth said the Broward Alliance has a new CEO Council, in which each of its members provides \$50,000 to go strictly to an economic development specialist to speak to site selectors for film. When asked what their perceptions of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County were, they did not have a specific image in mind for the area, referring to it instead as “New York south,” where many different kinds of locations were available.

Mr. Modarelli suggested that, if Fort Lauderdale’s diversity was a selling point, photos to include in the database might play to this strength and show the City’s many diverse assets. He also recommended highlighting the City’s diversity on the website. Mr. Modarelli noted that Fort Lauderdale is one of only two cities in Broward County’s 33 cities that has its own film commissioner, which shows its commitment to working with the film industry.

Ms. Reese stated a feature film, “G.E.D.”, would begin shooting on Sistrunk Boulevard as soon as next week, adding that this was a brand-new project that just came in days ago. Filming is planned from July 12 through July 30.

Chair Watson asked Ms. Wentworth if the Broward Alliance had photos of every Board member's business in the database. When Ms. Wentworth said she did not, Chair Watson suggested that each Board member provide Ms. Wentworth's and Ms. Reese's offices with photos for this purpose. This gave the Board the chance to act as ambassadors to the film companies from the community.

Mr. Modarelli said the City and County should work as a partnership on this issue, pointing out that if Ms. Reese had this information, the County would have access to it as well. He felt the Board should play an active role in "selling our City" rather than relying on the County to fulfill this need.

Mr. Motwani asked if digital photos or other information on properties should be emailed directly to the appropriate association, or if it could be directly uploaded to a website. Ms. Wentworth said there had been a site specifically for uploading, but this was no longer available on the new website. Her website was [www.filmbroward.com](http://www.filmbroward.com), from which interested persons could access "Film Commission" and then "Photo Gallery."

Ms. Reese said in addition to filming, companies would need to know where they might stay, eat, hire local carpenters, or fill other needs.

Chair Watson encouraged the Board to send information to both Ms. Wentworth and Ms. Reese, advising that if one group might not be able to access all the information provided, the other would have it available.

Ms. Wentworth pointed out that Ms. Reese was unable to work on film recruitment full-time, as she had other economic development responsibilities; she noted that the responses to film production companies often needed to be "instantaneous." She also noted that her office adds to its photo database daily.

Mr. Modarelli emphasized that Ms. Reese's office, as well as Ms. Wentworth's, should be able to have all resources available to production companies, including digital photos. He also noted that a point in Fort Lauderdale's favor with production companies is the quick "turnaround time" from Ms. Reese's office in issuing permits.

Chair Watson felt the Board should communicate what was discussed to other businesses in Fort Lauderdale, informing other business owners about the need to contribute photos to the database. She stressed the need to make this process as "seamless and simple" as possible.

Ms. Wentworth said photos could be accessed through the EDAB website, if necessary.

Ms. DuMont asked if the photos submitted needed to be professionally taken. Ms. Wentworth responded that this wasn't the case, as most filmmakers can look at even an amateur photo and "see the possibilities."

Ms. DuMont asked if film companies look for particular categories to shoot, or, conversely, if some categories present a particular weakness for Fort Lauderdale. Ms. Wentworth pointed these out in her information packet, and noted that they may also be found on her website. She stated that photos from Parks & Recreation were particularly needed, and that these photos might already exist on a Parks & Recreation website, but were not currently available to her.

She added that sites are needed “from the lowest income to the highest income.”

Ms. DuMont stated that this created an opportunity for the Chamber of Councils to ensure that their neighborhoods are adequately represented to the film industry, and that this created opportunities for neighborhood organizations as well.

Ms. Wentworth said unfortunately the Fort Lauderdale Film Festival did not provide a good business opportunity for the Broward Alliance; in 17 years, she said, only one project had developed with producers and/or directors involved in this Festival. She continued, however, that her organization was putting together brunches for 30 to 40 people in the film industry who will be in town for these festivals. She described this as more about “building relationships” than recruiting business, although they are planning to shoot scenes of Broward County filmed from a blimp, which will run on a reel during these brunches. Another such reel, which will run in the Hospitality Room of the Festival, will show clips from various movies shot in Fort Lauderdale over the years.

How the Board could best help, Ms. Wentworth concluded, was to build the photo database with as many pictures as possible. She added that her office also has a database of “film-friendly” hotels, bars, and other businesses that were willing to work with the crews brought to town by the film industry; she advised that these did not have to be high-end facilities.

Ms. DuMont suggested asking Kathy Koch, the Chair of Broward Alliance’s CEO Council, to a future meeting to discuss further outreach to the film industry. It was also pointed out that the CEO Council should be made aware of the EDAB in the event the two groups could work together.

## **VI. New Business**

At the request of Chair Watson, Item VI was taken out of order on the agenda to allow for a presentation by Katharine Barry of H.O.M.E.S.

Ms. Barry stated her nonprofit organization’s mission was to provide affordable housing and encourage community revitalization. The organization had purchased 2.5 acres on Northeast 13<sup>th</sup> Street to provide housing, but discovered that what the neighborhood truly needed was regrowth and revitalization; this became their primary focus.

Ms. Barry advised there were four neighborhood associations who have property along 13<sup>th</sup> Street, including Middle River Terrace, South Middle River, Lake Ridge, and Poinsettia Heights. Her organization began working with Florida Atlantic University's (FAU's) C.U.R.E. Center (Center for Urban Redevelopment and Education) to begin a process of "neighborhood vision," helping the community decide what kind of neighborhood it wanted to have and then take steps to develop it.

Ms. Barry noted that years ago, a 13<sup>th</sup> Street business association had become very active within the City and had sidewalks repaved, streets widened, and trees planted in medians. Once these gains were achieved, however, little more was done; she described the area now as having businesses boarded up and buildings in foreclosure. The neighborhood associations cited above, she said, were very active and wanted to improve their area once again.

Beginning June 7, 2008, Ms. Barry said, the neighborhood associations had come together to decide what improvements and revitalizations they wanted to see in their community, with assistance from the City. Approximately 60 people from City government had attended this meeting, including City and County Commissioners, a mayoral candidate, and members of the Economic Development and Planning & Zoning Departments.

Ms. Barry said the response to the meeting was enthusiastic, and many who attended had very good ideas they shared about what could be achieved. There seemed to be some consensus behind turning 13<sup>th</sup> Street into an arts district. She noted properties for sale along the street, including a 4- to 6-acre area along the railroad tracks that could serve as a hub for the WAVE rail system currently in development. Other proposed projects include planting trees, improving street lighting, and creating a landscaped traffic circle. An art warehouse on 13<sup>th</sup> Street is willing to donate art for placement in the street's medians. Ms. Barry noted that H.O.M.E.S.'s part of the revitalization project is related to the arts as well as to housing.

The overall project was still in its planning stages, she said. The four neighborhood associations, in conjunction with H.O.M.E.S. and any other businesses who wanted to participate, intended to incorporate and start a new 13<sup>th</sup> Street Coalition. Members of the old business coalition would be invited to join as well, and Ms. Barry stated they planned to apply for business and neighborhood improvement grants.

Ms. Barry summed up by informing the Board that she would keep them apprised of progress, and she was excited to be part of a neighborhood with such enthusiasm about improving itself. She noted that redevelopment was not a quick process, and estimated that it would be some five years or so in the making. She offered to mail attachments to any Board members who were interested in further information.

#### **IV. Director's Report**

Mr. Modarelli introduced Margarett Hayes, Housing & Community Development Manager, who he stated was doing a great amount of proactive work on the foreclosure situation in Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Hayes said the City receives approximately \$11 million annually in state and federal funding to assist persons with low income, one method of assistance being foreclosure prevention strategies. She recalled that four years ago the state of Florida reached a critical point in property taxes and insurance, and many of the City's elderly residents were facing difficulty making their payments. For those with low (\$5000-\$10,000) balances remaining on properties they had been paying on for several years, the issue became that they were on fixed incomes. The City developed an elderly tax assistance program for persons 62 and older so they could keep their homes and stabilize the housing market in Fort Lauderdale.

At this same time, Ms. Hayes noted, the sub-prime lending market was worsening. The Housing & Community Development department went to the City Commission and asked for their approval to start a foreclosure prevention strategy, open to all City residents with a maximum assistance level of \$10,000. Each person must have at least one month's payment to help with the situation and must prove a true hardship, such as unemployment, a jump in their adjustable-rate mortgage, or medical crisis. Currently this strategy is funded under the S.H.I.P. Program (State Housing Initiative Partnership); Ms. Hayes informed the Board that they are going before the City Commission for permission to fund the strategy from a federal source as well.

The program covers attorneys' fees, taxes, insurance, and any other costs associated with foreclosure, Ms. Hayes said. It is only able to assist persons who are 80% below the area's median income – for example, a family of four living on less than \$57,000.

Ms. Hayes continued that she has recently participated with the Broward County Foreclosure Prevention Blue Ribbon Panel as a representative of Fort Lauderdale; there, she learned that the key to preventing foreclosure was education, which can prevent people from taking advantage of opportunities to help their situation. She added that while a small percentage of those in foreclosure are at very low income levels, the majority of foreclosures in Broward County, and Fort Lauderdale in particular, are of moderate incomes.

Ms. Hayes informed the Board that assistance for people in foreclosure can come through the Fannie Mae Foundation, federally funded foreclosure counseling, and the Urban League, as well as through local agencies such as New Visions Community Development Corporation, which was also awarded funds for assistance. Ms. Hayes reiterated the need for people to come to these organizations even though it is difficult to ask for help in such a sensitive area.

The Blue Ribbon Panel Committee, she continued, was assembled at the recommendation of the Florida League of Cities and designated by the Broward County Commission. Short- and long-term goals were discussed, as well as ways to help people through more immediate crises. Crisis counseling was available at a 211 number, she said, and the Committee wanted to do its part to help as many people as possible.

Chair Watson asked if the Committee had considered ways to go to the people affected by the crisis, as there was difficulty getting people to come to various organizations for help. Ms. Hayes responded that several forums and workshops are taking place throughout the community. One recommendation from the Blue Ribbon Panel was to use the Broward County Family Self-Sufficiency Program, where people already go for services; a foreclosure counselor is located on-site. She also mentioned that churches are providing counseling and workshops as well.

Ms. Hayes added that credit counseling is mandatory for everyone seeking assistance through this program, and every participant must develop and follow a plan of action to help themselves in their situation; otherwise, she said, the program would simply be "throwing good money after bad."

She stated that any of the \$11 million in funds not used by the City rolls over into the next year, rather than reverting to the federal government. This money, she said, comes from the combination of four federal grants and one state grant.

Ms. Hayes also said the Blue Ribbon Panel is attempting to set up a working relationship with one or more lending institutions, some of which have FHA counselors that can work with families in foreclosure. She pointed out that FHA guarantees their refinancing.

She reiterated that persons seeking help with foreclosure can call 211, which is a national referral source; an alternative for Fort Lauderdale residents would be to call the Housing & Community Development Office at (954) 828-4527. She noted that most of these sources can be of more help if an individual calls them when they are at risk of foreclosure, as the process becomes much more difficult when they have gone into foreclosure and sale of the property is imminent.

Ms. Hayes added that Fort Lauderdale is one of the five highest municipalities in Broward County in foreclosures, although most other municipalities are impacted. Each city or town, she said, has its own program to deal with the problem, and not all of them participated in the Blue Ribbon Panel. Because the County Commission was pleased with the Panel's report, they will be working with Broward County directors to continue to seek ways to resolve the issues.

Mr. Modarelli said it was fortunate the City was attempting to be as proactive as possible regarding the foreclosure situation. While the Board's main focus might be to



bring business to Fort Lauderdale, he said, they should also try to “reach out” during difficult economic times.

Ms. Hayes stated the information on the Blue Ribbon Panel and the City resources were not available on her City website, although she plans to meet with the webmaster to have this added.

Chair Watson asked if the Board can help disseminate information on how people can be helped as well. Ms. Osgood stressed that Ms. Hayes’s office does an excellent job getting the word out and serving this as well as other community needs.

Ms. DuMont felt that simply sharing the information about the services available would help; while the Board members themselves might not have this particular need, she said, they might have employees or friends who need to hear about the services.

Ms. Hayes said her email address is [mhayes@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:mhayes@fortlauderdale.gov) if anyone on the Board needs to direct someone to her offices.

Ms. DuMont suggested that Mr. Modarelli or Ms. Hayes could send an email to the Board with a brief description of what her office does; it could then be forwarded to organizations that could ask Ms. Hayes to address them as a group.

Mr. Schiavone asked if the funding used to assist persons could also be used to publicize the program, perhaps by putting up fliers or other print advertising. Ms. Hayes stated the funds were restricted to an extent, due to their funding sources.

She continued, however, that while her organization is limited to very low-income persons, other groups, such as Bank Atlantic or FHA, can provide assistance for anyone regardless of income. Bank Atlantic in particular provides government-backed refinancing for persons affected by sub-prime lending.

Due to time constraints, Item V, EDAB Discussion of Goals, was tabled until the next meeting.

**VII. Save the Dates**

- **July 24, 2008 – Hurricane Disaster at Chamber of Commerce**
- **August 13, 2008 – Bonnet House Tour**
- **August 18, 2008 – Better Meetings Academy**

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.