

Oakland Park hopes purchase will jumpstart new investment

BY OSCAR PEDRO MUSIBAY

Plans to purchase the former Oakland Park Pro Golf Shop site in Oakland Park for \$675,000 will allow the city to control the entry point to its proposed main street and may help jumpstart new investment.



The site, at 3148 N.E. 12th Ave., combined with the adjacent parking lot, is part of an overall push by the city to make the area along the thoroughfare from Oakland Park Boulevard to Northeast 37th Street more attractive to investors.

Several buildings fronting Northeast 12th Avenue, many which stand empty, have been targeted for redevelopment.

The city has already spent millions of dollars to landscape, light and upgrade the infrastructure along Northeast 12th Avenue. It will review the purchase of the golf shop for the first time on Aug. 31 and again in September.

It also master-planned the area 2.5 years ago, relaxing parking requirements and changing zoning and signage to encourage development.

Oakland Park hopes to eventually spark the kind of investment along Northeast 12th Avenue that's happening in Miami's Wynwood neighborhood, which has become a buzz-generating area populated by restaurants, artists and galleries. Its growing popularity is buttressed by a huge influx of investment from real estate visionaries like Tony Goldman and, more recently, Moishe Mana, both of whom are working to draw retail, restaurants and other investment to the area. Wynwood has become a favorite of Art Basel organizers and participants, who hold parties every year in the neighborhood. It has also become a hot spot for Miami's food trucks, a culinary phenomenon that is exposing its groupies to new neighborhoods, driving food traffic into the area.

GROWING ORGANICALLY IS A PRIORITY

Siegi Constantine, executive director of nonprofit Oakland Park Main Street, which works with the city and its redevelopment agency to promote investment, said the overall goal is to grow the area organically, building on events like the Oktoberfest at Jaco Pastorius Park, which draws 10,000 people to the neighborhood each year.

Gary Lanham, of Lanham and Associates at 3242 N.E. 12th Ave., is hoping to help one of his clients locate a site along the avenue for a gymnasium that would include a café. The 25,000-square-foot project was originally slated for Wilton Manors, but did not come to fruition.

He said his biggest challenge is finding enough parking. The gym, which would feed foot traffic into the area, needs about 120 parking spots.

He said the proposed main street strip is attractive because rent in Wilton Manors is high. Getting in before the economy improves significantly is the key to future in-

vestment.

He said the strip should thrive like gay-friendly Wilton Manors because Oakland Park has a larger gay population.

"Despite this crazy economy, we are poised to get some traction when things turn around and banks start giving money," Lanham said of the potential for the neighborhood. "Then we can go after private development money."

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Siegi Constantine, executive director of Oakland Park Main Street, shows the building to be torn down in favor of new development.

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