

# URBAN ENVIRONMENT LEAGUE

## Initial Strategic Retreat

February 19, 2005

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

### TRANSCRIPT

There were twelve members of the Board in attendance. The meeting took place at the Miami River Inn.

As an introduction to Vision drafting, the Facilitator, Janice Fleischer, proposed the following six (6) items as potential core values for the group to use as a basis when drafting their Vision Statement. These six items were identified by Ms. Fleischer from the UEL's Core Principles.

1. Concern for community
2. Smart growth principles
3. Dynamic neighborhoods
4. Public space and public access preservation and enhancement
5. Public review of development
6. Coordination with other organizations

Reactions to the proposal to use these as the core values were:

1. Are these really values, should we need to start from scratch to draft our own core values?
2. We spent a lot of time on drafting and accepting these principles long ago.
3. Why reduce the principles? Why not leave them with the full statement?
4. We need to ensure that we are seen as the watchdog, guardian and preserver of things we find valuable.

The group was asked if they could accept the six above items for use in vision drafting, but not as an adopted set of core values. The ranking was as follows (5 is most acceptance, 1 is least)

5	4	3	2	1
8	0	2	0	2

The group decided to just use these as a guideline, there was some concern that using these items alone would not accurately reflect what the organization does or wants to do.

The group then drafted a Vision Statement and adopted it:

### Final Vision Statement of the Urban Environment League

*The Vision of the Urban Environment League (UEL) for Miami Dade County is a safe, clean, vibrant, sustainable community guided by the public's interest and governed by a Master Plan,. We see preserved natural resources, increased density in urban areas with sufficient existing infrastructure and along mass*

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*transportation corridors within the urban development boundary. There are more greenways, water access, pedestrian friendly parks, improved historic neighborhoods and landmarks still recognizable and protected.*

*Our richly diverse community has unique neighborhoods that have South Florida-sensitive architecture with quality housing affordable to all.*

*Improved public communication is encouraging a better educated citizenry and democratic processes which has led to greater political integrity practiced by accountable politicians who enforce zoning and building codes.*

*The UEL works with others to achieve our Vision.*

Ranking to accept the Vision Statement above: “5” indicates complete support, “1” indicates no support

5	4	3	2	1
8	2	0	0	0

Subsequent to drafting the Vision, members were asked to brainstorm issues the UEL has, does or will encounter as it attempts to fulfill its Vision. After generating the issues, members worked together to put them into “affinity” groupings and proposed titles for the groupings. What follows are the categories as named and the list of issues which were grouped under that category:

**PARKS**

- Lack of trees to provide shade for pedestrians
- Protect south Florida landmarks
- Support new parks
- Lack of community gardens

**NEIGHBORHOODS/DESIGN**

- Preserve historic architecture
- Gated communities locks public out
- Greenfield development is revenue negative
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of acceptance of increased density by existing neighborhood associations
- Develop greater public input into urban design
- Develop design guidelines for Florida sensitive architecture
- Encourage development sensitive to South Florida environment

**URBAN DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARY/MASTER PLAN**

- Hold the boundary line
- Guard the development boundary
- Monitor and design urban master plan
- Develop Dade County Master Plan
- Protecting urban spaces for the public
- Discuss “capping” Miami Dade population growth

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## **TRANSIT**

- Insist on development of water access routes
- Master Plan for mass transit
- Lack of public transportation
- Lack of mass transit oversight
- Long term solutions for long term problems
- Review (healthy) incentives for developers
- Improve transit systems
- Speed up mass transportation
- Increasing bikeways

## **FUNDING**

- A stronger more mature UEL needs money

## **OUTREACH**

- Promoting local non profit coordination
- Reach out to groups with linking goals

## **EDUCATION/AWARENESS**

- Honest school system
- Develop educational modules on urban environment for schools
- Public education about the importance of South Florida's natural resources
- Public education about the uniqueness of South Florida
- Improved citizen awareness
- Higher community pride
- Finding quality local news
- Create regular televised public forums on local issues
- City image that promotes over the top extravaganza and waste
- Problem training young people in issues of built environment and planning
- Getting people out of cars and into mass transit
- General public disinterest in nature
- Uneducated public about where they get their water
- Paucity of citizen engagement
- Lack of community centers and sprawl-neighborhoods
- Stronger citizen involvement
- Neighborhood groups do not think regionally
- Form coalitions with grass roots civic organizations

## **POLITICIANS**

- Better results from government i.e. airport
- We need honest politicians
- Need better liaisons with politicians
- Monitor enforcement of building codes
- Absence of ethical practices
- Encourage election of better enlightened politicians
- Back door for builders to influence policy

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- Public interest is poorly represented
- Fair salaries for Miami Dade commissioners
- Elected officials accountable to electors not lobbyists
- Examine “accountability” for elected officials
- Developer lobbyists who finance political campaigns
- Lack of money for infrastructure
- Better government oversight of public parks

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Many of the “issue” items listed above are more “action items” and should be reviewed again as such. It is suggested that another brainstorming session on issues might prove valuable in determining what areas of concentration should be the focus of the UEL’s next year.

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