

# TOWN OF PALM BEACH

Information for Town Council Meeting on: June 25, 2024

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To: Mayor and Town Council

Via: Kirk Blouin, Town Manager

From: Wayne Bergman, Director of Planning, Zoning & Building 

Re: Staff Review General Comments Based Upon the Revised Town of Palm Beach Traffic Analyses and Commercial Area Parking Study (“Traffic and Parking Study”) Prepared by the Corradino Group (June 2024 Update)

Date: June 20, 2024

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## **STAFF REQUEST & RECOMMENDATION**

Staff has reviewed the revised Traffic and Parking Study prepared by the Corradino Group. The revised document was delivered on June 11, 2024. It contains 122 pages of text narrative and Figures, along with 871 pages of Appendices. The original study was presented to the Town in late January of 2024 and reviewed by the Town Council at their meetings of February 13, 2024, and March 13, 2024. The Corradino Group was asked to revise the study to include eleven items that included new work and a fresh review of existing material. Eric Czerniejewski provided a memorandum (attached) covering the eleven items and how they were addressed in the revised study on June 13, 2024. To staff, it appears that the eleven items were addressed in the revised documents.

Staff recommends that the Town Council review the Traffic and Parking Study, and if found complete, accept the Study.

This memorandum will provide general staff comments from a review standpoint and will focus on the continuing traffic congestion found within the Town of Palm Beach.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Area Growth and Traffic Congestion**

Staff reviewed the “daily peak season traffic counts” for the 14 roadway segments that are contained within the existing and proposed Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element. Traffic on these 14 roadway segments is counted each year for the number of vehicle trips. Since the 2017 Comprehensive Plan EAR, the daily peak season traffic counts have increased by 21.7% on these select 14 segments. Over the past year, these same roadway segments have seen a traffic count increase of 6.3%.

Looking at the roadway segment on N. County Road north of Royal Poinciana Way, the daily peak season traffic counts have increased by 28.2% since 2017; by 10.4% since 2023; and should increase by 10.5% by 2034.

Many of the increased traffic counts come directly from the non-stop development of Downtown West Palm Beach. Staff attended recent meetings with the City's Planning Department. Downtown West Palm Beach currently has 4,962 new dwelling units approved and/or under construction. Starting in 2021, new Class "A" office towers approved and/or under construction will provide 3.2 million square feet of commercial space. Newly approved hotels will provide another 2,006 rooms.

The Downtown population has grown substantially over the past twenty years. The year-round Downtown population in 2000 was 4,569; in 2010 it was 7,144; and in 2020 it was 10,654. This is a 134% increase over the past two decades.

It is worth noting that Downtown West Palm Beach also has an area designated as a Transportation Concurrency Exemption Area (TCEA) which means that new development is not required to meet traffic and parking requirements of the City. A new high-rise development that adversely reduces the recognized Level of Service on the adjacent street is not required to help mitigate the traffic or parking problems that it creates. The City is basically saying to developers – "Don't worry about traffic congestion, we will ignore it - just come and build." This TCEA does negatively affect traffic both in West Palm Beach and the Town of Palm Beach.

### **Levels of Service**

The current Comprehensive Plan and the Proposed Comprehensive Plan EAR show the existing and projected Levels of Service at select roadway segments and intersections. Most of these identified roads and intersections are now, and have been for many years, Level of Service "D" or worse. This is a reality. The only real ways to improve the Levels of Service are to reduce the traffic volume or widen the roads.

The question going forward is does the Town find the existing Levels of Service "acceptable"? Should strategies be determined to attempt to improve the Levels of Service wherever possible, such as from a Level of Service "D" to a "C"?

### **Sources of the Traffic**

To list a few of the sources of daily traffic:

- The record level of construction and renovation of homes and condos means numerous contractors using and parking on virtually every roadway in Town.
- Undergrounding project equipment and workers.
- Never-ending landscapers with trucks and trailers.
- Visitors (golfers, shoppers, beach goers).
- Workers in the commercial areas.
- Household staff.

- Deliveries.

The Corradino Group has identified 38,400 Annual Average Daily Traffic trips onto the Island, and then leaving the Island.

### **Comprehensive Plan Guidance**

The Comprehensive Plan has identified the following strategies to deal with the traffic congestion and parking problems:

- Discourage the amount and type of region-serving commercial development while encouraging Town-serving ones.
- Control the pace, type, and intensity of redevelopment activity in older areas of Town.
- Encourage development and redevelopment at lower density levels than existing zoning allows, except for redevelopment where maintaining previous densities and/or intensities are allowed after unintentional damage or destruction, such as by fire or other casualty, act of terrorism, war or act of God or nature (and with approval from FDEP if building east of the CCCL).

It is imperative that region-serving, high traffic generating, commercial uses be prevented from further proliferating and be reduced wherever possible.

Attachments: June 13, 2024 Memorandum from the Corradino Group