11-1963

Treaty Oak - Near Southside, Planning Study, November 1963

Jacksonville-Duval Area Planning Board

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Recommended Citation
On October 11, 1963, the City Planning Advisory Board of Jacksonville asked the Jacksonville-Duval Area Planning Board to study and recommend to it some way to develop a park "on a long range basis, to include the so-called 'Treaty Oak'". (see Addendum, Exhibit 1)

Public attention has recently been focused on this tree as a result of a local developer's request for a zoning change that would enable him to build an apartment house next to it. The Treaty Oak has been protected and cared for by the duPont estate for many years. Numerous groups have suggested it be protected in a permanent way as an historic preserve or park. (See Addendum, Exhibits 2, 3A, 3B, 4, 5)

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this study, a number of things became immediately apparent. First, the close relationship that exists between land use and circulation, the building developments proposed nearby and the Treaty Oak itself required a broadening of the scope of the study. Second, a study of access to the Treaty Oak uncovered the fact that access to the entire study area was not good. And third, the same problem cropped up with a study of the circulation in the area. Because of these and other difficulties, the boundaries of the study area include much more than the land immediately around the tree. What they actually embrace is a section of metropolitan Jacksonville that shares a number of problems. The study area is bounded roughly by the St. Johns River on three sides and the expressway on the fourth. It extends from the Fuller Warren Bridge to the Gibbs Shipyard.

This study has been restricted to the development of land use and zoning proposals which reflect present development, established trends, and foreseeable land use needs. The problem of circulation within the study area has been examined. Both proposals embody a circulation system which is deliberately generalized in order to give only a framework within which more detailed traffic engineering solutions might be worked out. It is hoped that this study, in
addition to answering the immediate problem of the Treaty Oak, will also focus attention on the traffic problems in the area.

A separate, more detailed plan of the Treaty Oak park has been suggested. Special attention has been placed on developing it as an active recreational area which would be useful to the metropolitan Jacksonville area for entirely different purposes than those intended in the nearby waterfront park.

CONCEPT

The proposals, as outlined in this report and seen in map form, suggest the possibility of a renewed Near Southside over a long period of time. One which would be more appropriate for an area lying so close to downtown Jacksonville. In these proposals, commercial and office functions would be counterbalanced by high density residence. In this way, a more effective and handsome landscape would develop with the two parks creating focal points within the district. The streets and parking areas would be designed to serve the uses in the area and the expressway corridors at the same time. The housing would serve to increase the nighttime population so necessary for supporting nighttime activities in and near the core.

The Treaty Oak Park has been considered as an active recreation park. This would best preserve the venerable old tree, long the legendary treaty-making meeting place of white and red men, as a favorite landmark for adults and a playplace for children. It would also make a now decaying area desirable for new and better things.

PRESENT LAND USE

RESIDENTIAL:

For the past decade, at least, there has been a marked decline in the number and occupancy of the residences in the Near Southside. Between 1950 and 1960 alone the number of housing units dropped from 431 to 197 which is a decline of over 50%. Of the remaining units 58 (almost 1/3) are clearly in a deteriorating condition. In 1960 the population of the study area was 420; down from almost 1,000 in 1950. It is estimated that the present residential population numbers around 400.

The area was originally built up in single-family houses very closely spaced, with small yards. This kind of use has become uneconomical in an area so close to downtown Jacksonville. As a result, many of the original houses have been torn down and replaced by commercial, industrial, and public uses or divided-up into
apartments. In a few instances they have been replaced by apartment buildings, some dating back to the 1920's.

It is certain that low density housing has no future in this area. Not only because of the higher cost of land, but because it is not economically feasible to provide expensive municipal services or to serve school-age children in the small numbers which could dwell there.

On the other hand, however, it would be sound policy to encourage the development of higher density housing. Families without children, with toddlers or grown-up children, and single persons might well find it a real advantage to live so close to the central business district. This is especially valuable when it enables a fair proportion of occupants to walk to work.

At present, there are about 400 people living in the study area as opposed to 4500 employed there. This means that the nighttime population is less than one-tenth the daytime population. When the Gulf Life complex is completed, it is estimated that 7500 persons will be employed in the study area. This will further decrease the ratio of nighttime to daytime population to as low as one-twentieth. If the Baptist Memorial Hospital expansion proposal is realized as planned, an additional 400 or more new employees will be added. These figures all support the arguments against low density housing in the area and lend support to the possibility of high density housing.

COMMERCIAL:

Commercial uses of one sort or another are the principal occupants of the study area. The largest employers are in relatively self-contained building complexes with off-street parking and loading. The small office and service establishments are in converted residences or business buildings (many of which are fairly new) without adequate off-street parking and loading facilities. The needs of these establishments are poorly met at best, yet many of them must remain close to downtown in order to prosper.

INDUSTRIAL:

The largest industry is Gibbs Shipyards. They employ about 20% of those now working in the study area and about 13% of the projected total. Only a small scattering of other industrial activities are present elsewhere in the area.

Not enough land at low enough prices for economic operation of new
industrial uses is likely to be assembled in the Near Southside. Many of the present small industrial activities and commercial uses are inadequately housed or sited or both.

RECREATIONAL:

The Dallas Thomas waterfront park is well on its way to completion. Its intended uses are for both passive and active recreation. Floating piers, a ramp, and dockmaster facilities are provided in the marine portion for the launching and mooring of pleasure craft. The principal feature of the park is the fountain and pool. The fountain, capable of throwing jets of water a hundred feet in the air and lighting the water in changing colors, is destined to become a major landmark in Jacksonville. Sculptured earth mounds will offer a vantage point from which to view the St. Johns River and the Jacksonville skyline.

The undeveloped Treaty Oak property already serves a recreational purpose in a limited way. The tree is a great play-space for children and has been for years. With its rope swings it is already actively used and many Jacksonville residents have fond memories of playing in the tree as children (See Addendum Exhibit 2). The space around the tree is inadequate for it to be properly seen and used. This is the crux of the problem both of preserving it and of enhancing the enjoyment and appreciation of it.

EMPLOYMENT:

When Gulf Life Insurance Company completes its complex, approximately half of the persons employed in the study area will work in the Gulf Life and Prudential buildings. Nearly 8,000 people will be employed in the study area when presently announced building plans are completed. Of these, 70% will be employed in professional, managerial, clerical, and other related functions. Another 20% will be employed in business supply and services and industrial employment will make up the balance.

CIRCULATION:

The southwestern sector of the study area (between the Fuller Warren and Acosta bridges) is occupied by the Prudential Building, Baptist Hospital, and the Marshall Taylor Doctors' Building which together employ about 3,200 persons. There is the prospect of considerable hospital expansion to add to the traffic-generating ability of this sector.
The northwestern sector (between the Acosta and Main Street bridges) containing the Southside Park has no really major traffic generator. The predominant activity is the Expressway Authority Building which accounts for about half of the small total employment of under 200.

In the eastern sector (east of the Main Street bridge) more than 1,300 now work. Gibbs Shipyard accounts for 1,000 of these. When the Gulf Life complex is fully operating this number may easily reach or exceed 4,000. It can readily be seen that the already strained highway network will be tremendously overloaded unless the construction of additional traffic lanes in and out of the area is given consideration.

The old gridiron pattern of streets within each sector is inadequate to provide good ground level circulation and space for off-street parking and loading. The land is in too many parcels each too small to be properly developed. The blocks are small, street intersections frequent, and the relationship of local streets to the expressway system is confusing. The streets are also entirely insufficient for present peak hour traffic volumes. It is not easy to move from sector to sector even now before the impact of pending new development.

The problem of exchanging traffic from ground level to expressway level is not properly solved at-present and much engineering work remains to be done. These difficulties will become rapidly exaggerated as new construction (Baptist Memorial Hospital and Gulf Life Insurance Company) is completed.

The Jacksonville-Duval County Transportation Study, Volume Two, prepared by the Florida State Road Dept., projects a 1980 need for doubling the number of lanes crossing the St. Johns in the vicinity of the Alsop bridge (Main Street). The need for an additional lane over the Acosta Bridge (for a total of four lanes) will mean even greater complexity of traffic circulation through the study area as well as to and from it.

ZONING:

The entire study area is divided into only two zones, Business B and Industrial A. The Existing Land Use map illustrates these zones.
RESIDENTIAL:

In metropolitan areas across the nation the logic of providing high-density residence close to the city core is proving to be a sound means of reducing the journey-to-work. It has the added benefit of giving more life to the downtown cultural and recreational facilities. While there is no marked resurgence of population toward central areas, there is a growing market for near-downtown apartments and town houses. The Near Southside is ideally located for this kind of development. It fits in well with its increasing office and professional service character. A larger proportion of the few families who now live in the area walk to work, and there is every reason to believe that this number could be increased. The controversial proposal for an apartment in the area is proof of a market. However, for such housing to be workable, high standards of off-street parking (or garaging) and open space must be established.

The two alternate schemes for the area's development include medium-high to high density residential development for the eastern sector of the study area which abuts the proposed Treaty Oak Park.

Proposal "A" entails consolidation of the two blocks between Belmonte, Louisa, Kipp and the Miami Road, (about 9 3/4 acres) which would be developed in hi-rise apartments and town houses. Off-street parking would be accessible from Belmonte and Kipp. The present streets which are not shown on the plan would be closed to prevent through traffic. The two blocks bounded by Flagler, Mary, Kipp, and Miami (about 2 1/2 acres) make up the second super-block intended for hi-rise apartments only. This site would have the advantage of overlooking the Treaty Oak Park without being so close as to dwarf the Treaty Oak in scale or block its visibility. The consolidation of these blocks would permit off-street parking (or garaging) on the site.

Proposal "B" includes all of the residential areas suggested in Proposal "A". In addition, the block between Mary and June would be added to the second super-block mentioned above, bringing it up to 3 1/4 acres. Another consolidated super-block of 7 1/4 acres bounded by Kipp, Miami, Hendricks, and Louisa (an area with a fair amount of residential use now) is shown in Proposal "B". This block would be developed with about half hi-rise apartments and half town houses depending on the size of the market created.
COMMERCIAL:

The southwestern sector is almost fully developed with the Baptist Memorial Hospital, Prudential and the medical office building as its principal functions. There seems little likelihood of any expansion of commercial activity in this sector.

The northwestern sector is viewed in both proposals as being developed in various commercial service uses. This would involve the extension and continuation of present uses such as restaurants, motels, warehousing, and photo services.

The eastern sector is the largest and contains a mixture of uses. Here both proposals emphasize the office functions of the area with the creation of an office-park character similar to that of Boulevard Center. A consolidation of blocks having internal off-street parking and loading areas would greatly alleviate traffic problems. Proposal "A" would put more emphasis on offices as against near-in residences. It includes a small local shopping center in the block bounded by Flagler, Mary, Kipp, and Alvarez in support of both commercial and residential uses. In Proposal "B", the local shopping center is located on Miami Road between Kipp, Alvarez, and Hendricks. It is also larger and more closely oriented to the residential uses. Both of these locations would make walking to shop feasible for both the residential and commercial inhabitants in the sector.

INDUSTRIAL:

It is proposed, in both alternatives, that industrial uses in the study area be confined entirely to Gibbs Shipyards. The area is not suited to industrial functions which could serve and be better served elsewhere in the metropolitan area.

RECREATIONAL:

The Dallas Thomas Park on the waterfront has specific planned functions which justify it entirely. Neither proposal suggests altering this development or its functions. It is a much-needed facility. It would be well, however, if a restaurant facility of the character of the former "Lobster House" could be rebuilt on the adjacent site as a private adjunct to the park. Such an establishment would be of use to park visitors as well as being a facility with a memorable view of the city's skyline.
A study of the Treaty Oak area has resulted in both proposals embodying the tree in a block-wide, recreation space stretching from Miami Road to the Gulf Life complex. Both proposals show the development of the park to occur in three general phases. Flagler Avenue would be closed to through traffic and turned into a parking facility for the Treaty Oak Park bordered by continuous pedestrian promenades. The swings in the oak would remain and be supplemented by play sculpture and play equipment of various kinds. How more fittingly could this object of both child and adult adulation be actively memorialized? The detailed site plan and photographs shown is intended to be suggestive of the type of development this park could have. The functions proposed are carefully chosen so that they are in no way in conflict with or a duplication of those of the Southside Park. The Treaty Oak Park would serve the functions of preserving the historic tree and at the same time enhancing the use of the space by both children and parents.

CIRCULATION:

Both proposals envision the construction of a wide spine road making a loop from San Marco to Miami Road, east on Miami Road to Hendricks, and south on Hendricks Road to the expressway. Proposal "B" has in addition a loop extended along San Marco and Hendricks to June Street. Proposal "A" symbolizes with circles the need for interchanges between expressway and ground traffic at three places. Proposal "B" on the other hand tentatively suggests how part of this might be accomplished by carrying four lanes of Main Street Expressway traffic at an elevated level over June Street. This allows for better access to and from the northwestern and eastern sectors of the study area. A few other tentative links are suggested in both proposals for connecting the various sectors of the site to the expressway system. These are meant to indicate needs rather than firm plans.

All ground-level traffic in the study area would be fed into and out of the spine roads by way of secondary (local) streets. The exact form of the spine roads and secondary streets will take more intensive engineering study.

RECOMMENDED ZONING CHANGES

In order to implement the alternate proposals certain changes in the zoning toward more restrictive uses is recommended. The areas proposed for multi-family (apartments and town houses) residence
should be rezoned for Residence "C". The local shopping center blocks should be rezoned Business "AA". And those blocks proposed for commercial services and offices which are now zoned Industrial "A" should be rezoned to Business "B".
Addendum: Exhibit 1

COPY

CITY PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

October 11, 1963

Mr. W. K. Jackson, Chairman,
Jacksonville-Duval Area Planning Board,
Lynch Building,
Jacksonville 2, Florida.

Dear Sir:

The City Planning Advisory Board would like to request the
Jacksonville - Duval Area Planning Board to provide it with
a study of the area on the South side of the river to the
East of South Main Street, and North of Miami Road, as a
possible site for a park on a long range basis, to include
the so-called "Treaty Oak".

We will appreciate a recommendation from your Director to
the Planning Board at the earliest possible time.

Yours very truly,

O. E. Harrell, M.D.,
President.

TMN/bj
October 28, 1963

Mr. Craig W. Lindelow,
Executive Director of the Board,
Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board,
Lynch Building,
Jacksonville, Florida

Dear Mr. Lindelow:

As Americanism Chairman of the Jacksonville Chapter No. 2, American War Mothers, I am writing you to thank you for your effort in trying to create a suitable area in preserving our beautiful "Treaty Oak".

This tree is particularly dear to me. As a child it was my great pleasure to play in its shade and to run up and down its limbs - which then laid partly on the ground. All of this was long before there even was a bridge over the St. Johns and South Jacksonville was just a small settlement across the river from Jacksonville.

It has been the first place to take visitors to our city, and during World War II a number of these were service people. It was a real joy to see their faces and listen to their awesome comments as they looked up into its huge covering.

I am sure my entire Chapter concurs in expressing hope that you and your aggressive colleagues will be successful in having a lovely park surround this outdoor cathedral.

If you Chapter can aid you, in addition to the above endorsement, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Kathrym McMillan, Chairman,
Americanism Committee,
Jacksonville No. 2,
American War Mothers,
220 East Monroe Street
Jacksonville, Florida

CC: Mr. W. T. Jackson,
Planning Board Chairman
Addendum: Exhibit 3-A

COPY

GARDEN CLUB OF JACKSONVILLE
1005 Riverside Avenue
Jacksonville, Florida 32204

November 8, 1963

Mr. William K. Jackson, Chairman
Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board
4248 Ortega Place
Jacksonville, Florida 32210

Dear Mr. Jackson:

Learning that the Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board is considering plans to preserve the Treaty Oak by creation of a park around it, we send our Treaty Oak Resolution that you may know of our interest in a park around the tree.

Many other organizations share this interest in creating a park around the Treaty Oak.

We urge a way be found to preserve the tree before it is too late to save it.

Yours truly,

Mrs. John N. Hellmuth
President

cc: Henry W. Dew
Morrison L. Taylor
B. F. Thompson
T. Jeff Davis
Bob Harris
Louis H. Ritter
Craig W. Lindelow
Addendum: Exhibit 2-3

COPY

THE GARDEN CLUB OF JACKSONVILLE
1005 Riverside Avenue
Jacksonville 4, Florida

TREATY OAK RESOLUTION

Informed that the Treaty Oak was standing before the coming of the French to build Fort Caroline in 1564 (the Quadricentennial of which is being observed);

Recalling that the DuPont family purchased the Treaty Oak to save it from the ax more than thirty years ago, and the DuPont Foundation maintains it for the public;

Being aware that this Live Oak (Quercus virginiana), located in the block bounded by South Main, Alvarco, and Flagler Streets and Miami Road, with a total height of 66 feet, a circumference of 216.1 inches 4.5 feet above the ground, and an average limb spread of 133 feet, is a beautiful natural attraction, may have historic significance, and is beloved by many of our citizens, so that it should be preserved in a city park;

Apprehending that any chance for a park would be ruined if lots on Flagler Street near the tree were rezoned for erection of a nine-story apartment building;

Remembering that the old skating rink building near the tree has been condemned, and feeling that it should be removed, as it is an eyesore and potential fire hazard;

The Governing Board of the Garden Club of Jacksonville, meeting September 16, 1963;

Requests the City Commission and the City Council to budget funds to create a park around the Treaty Oak, condemning land for this purpose if necessary, tearing down and removing the condemned skating rink building;

Urges the City Planning Advisory Board to deny rezoning that would destroy the possibility of creating a park around the Treaty Oak;

Instructs that copies of this resolution be sent to the City Commission, City Council, City Planning Advisory Board, Garden Clubs, Womens Clubs, and other community groups, and to the Florida Times-Union.
Believing that the Treaty Oak, located in the block bounded by South Main, Alvarez and Flagler Streets and Miami Road, should be preserved and that a city park should be created around it;

Approving the Treaty Oak Resolution adopted by the Governing Board of the Garden Club of Jacksonville on September 16, 1963, seeking to preserve the tree, create a park around it, have the condemned skating rink building torn down and removed, and to deny any rezoning that would ruin the chance of establishing a park;

THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF JACKSONVILLE in General Meeting on October 30, 1963;

Requests the City Commission and the City Council to create a park around the Treaty Oak by condemnation of land if necessary, and to tear down and remove the condemned skating rink building;

Urges the City Planning Advisory Board to deny any rezoning that would destroy the possibility of creating a park around the Treaty Oak;

Instructs that copies of this resolution be sent to the City Commission, City Council, City Planning Advisory Board, Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board, Garden Club of Jacksonville, and to the Florida Times-Union and Jacksonville Journal.

With the above resolution adopted at the first General Meeting of the 1963-64 club year, the membership approved action taken by the Executive Board on September 25, 1963.

Mrs. Chester F. Cluxton
President
Aroused Opinion Will Save "Treaty Oak"

The Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board, at its next meeting in November, will take under study several alternate proposals which have been advanced recently to insure preservation of the city's famed Treaty Oak by creation of a park area around it.

Craig W. Lindelow, executive director of the board, has been instructed to study all the suggestions which have been made and report to the board as a basis for making further studies and recommendations.

Interest in preserving the famous landmark was aroused recently by building proposals which were feared would endanger the tree. The oak, located on the Southside between Alvarez Street and Miami Road, has been protected for many years by the duPont estate, and several civic organizations have advanced suggestions for its perpetual protection through the establishment of a park.

The huge oak, a major attraction for sightseers, was the scene, according to legend, of meetings between white men and Indians for the discussion of treaty terms. However legendary these stories, the massive oak is a breathtaking sight in its own right, stretching its giant limbs over a vast area. It has been estimated that 4,000 persons could stand in its shade at high noon.

Planning Board Chairman W. T. Jackson, noting the widespread public interest aroused by the possibility of the oak being endangered, said it took action because board members felt "we are the logical body to coordinate efforts to preserve it."

With public concern thus reflected by the independent action of many groups, and their actions coordinated by the Planning Board as the appropriate agency for bringing this public interest to fruition, it may be anticipated that a workable plan insuring the famed tree's preservation will be developed. Such is the effectiveness of aroused public opinion.

Planning Unit to Study Ways to Save Big Oak

The board directed Lindelow to draft ways and means by which the goals could be carried out by the commissioners and present them next month.

In other action, the board adopted a resolution endorsing the northern route of the interstate 295 bridge south of Jacksonville Naval Air Station.

The Jacksonville-Duval County Area Planning Board yesterday voted to study several alternate plans toward preserving Jacksonville's Treaty Oak by creation of a park area around the mammoth tree.

Board Chairman W. T. Jackson said the tree has become a matter of great interest to the community "and we are a logical body to coordinate efforts to preserve it."

The tree, located between Alvarez Street and Miami Road, has been protected for a number of years by the duPont estate, but several civic organizations now are urging its perpetual protection through a park arrangement.

The board's executive director, Craig W. Lindelow, was asked to study several alternatives regarding the tree and report to the board at its November meeting.

Lindelow also offered several goals which the board might recommend to the Board of County Commissioners relating to beach utilization. The goals — broken down into immediate, intermediate and long-range goals — were prepared from a month-long study of the beaches by the board's advisory committee.
**Addendum: Table One**

**TREATY OAK - NEAR SOUTHSIDE PLANNING STUDY: BLOCK STATISTICS**

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(a) 0-10% living in group quarters such as rooming houses, nursing homes, institutions, etc.
Addendum: Table One cont.

(b) Over 10% living in group quarters such as rooming houses, nursing homes, institutions, etc.

(c) An estimate of the Gulf Life complex employment is given. This project will fall in enumeration districts 6, 9, & 10.

(d) Employment in establishments with estimated employment over ten persons.

(e) Including estimated expansion of the Baptist Hospital.

Sources: U.S. Census & local survey.
Addendum: Table Two

**Statistics for Study Area**

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To: City Planning Advisory Board, Jacksonville, Florida  
From: Jacksonville-Duval Area Planning Board  
Re: Treaty Oak Park  
Date: December 16, 1963

The Area Planning Board, at its meetings of November 20 and December 11, 1963, adopted the following recommendations for the development of a Treaty Oak Park and the surrounding area.

1. The general concept as shown in "Proposal B" to be developed over a long time period in three stages.

2. As rezoning occurs, it is recommended that the following serve as a guide to implement "Proposal B":

   A) The land shown for multi-family residences (apartments and town houses) should be rezoned only to Residence C.

   B) The land shown for this shopping center should be rezoned only to Business AA.

   C) The land shown for commercial services and offices which is now in the Industrial A district should be rezoned only to Business B.

3. The city of Jacksonville should budget enough funds from its property acquisition account to complete the purchase of all the property from Miami Road to Alvarez Street and from South Main Street (Expressway) to Flagler Avenue. This will complete phase one as shown on "Proposal B" and should be done in 1964.

4. Each year thereafter, until completion of the park, the city of Jacksonville should authorize a set amount to acquire additional property or options to buy such property between Miami Road and June Street and South Main Street and Flagler Avenue.

During the public presentation of these plans which took place on November 20th and December 4th, these additional comments were received but not incorporated in the recommendation:

1. A public subscription to obtain money to purchase land for the Treaty Oak Park should be sponsored by the garden clubs, women's clubs or other organizations.

2. A minimal admission charge to the children's playground should be considered to make it self-sustaining.

3. The City Planning Advisory Board should consider developing minimum standards for parking and loading for high-rise apartments and town houses.