

Fruitville Road Park Proposal

Submitted by:

June 2, 2015

Joyce Burnham	105 Amherst Ave.
Norman Dumaine	3847 Calliandra Dr.
Renee Gluvna	3836 Calliandra Dr.
Edie Kaplan	3609 Glen Oaks Manor Dr.
Millie Small	1208 Belleflower St.

Subject: Fruitville Road Park Improvements

Location: Fruitville Road Park is located on the northeast corner of Fruitville and Beneva Roads. This proposal deals specifically with the triangular area bordered on the east by Fairway Oaks, on the west by the MURT trail known as Circus Trail, and on the south by Fruitville Road. The park property extends beyond these boundaries; however, that extended property has structures which prohibit use by the general public (retention ponds, helipad, and fire-science academy).

Background: There has been increased interest in the park following the City Commission's decision to deny a change in the Comprehensive Plan that would have allowed the construction of a shopping center on the site. Generally speaking, very few people knew that this greenspace was actually a public park. However, the pending sale of this parcel brought attention to the property as a city park. People now know that this tree-filled area is a park and want to make it better.

Purpose: To keep Fruitville Road Park a passive park in a natural state, and provide simple enhancements and improvements to accessibility. As part of a "greenway" that extends from Circus Hammock (south of 17th St), this park is an important environmental area. It is part of the federally endangered Wood Stork's foraging area and home to many species of wildlife. Our goals are:

- 1) To protect the park's habitat for birds and other wildlife to enjoy, and at the same time remove hazards to keep it safe for visitors.
- 2) To diminish pollution of the land and water
- 3) To remove invasive plant and tree species
- 4) To give this park a distinct identity
- 5) To make the park more accessible
- 6) To enhance the park to make it more enjoyable for visitors

In order to achieve these goals, we are prepared to partner with the City of Sarasota and apply for grants from the City and County, as well as other sources.

Proposals for achieving the above stated goals:

- 1) *Protect the park's habitat for birds and other wildlife to enjoy, and at the same time remove hazards to keep it safe for visitors.*
 - a) Proposed: Keep the park as a passive park, adding Florida-native plants and trees that are especially appealing to birds.

- b) Proposed: Removal of those dead trees that could pose a danger to citizens. Retain those that are not dangerous and that could provide a home for birds that nest in dead trees.
- 2) ***Diminish pollution of the land and water***
- a) Proposed: Installation of a trash receptacle near the proposed parking area to reduce the amount of trash left in the park or thrown into the canal.
- b) Proposed: Hold a volunteer clean-up day at least once a year in the park. On March 21, 2015 – the Great American Cleanup Day, a group of 19 volunteers spent two hours gathering tree-debris and trash in the park.
- 3) ***Remove invasive plant and tree species***
- a) Proposed: Remove the young carrotwood trees growing along the chain link fence beside the Circus Trail.
- b) Proposed: Clear underbrush and Brazilian pepper trees from the wooded area just north of the chain link fence of the Fire Science Academy, along the west side of the Circus Trail.
- 4) ***Give this park a distinct identity***
- a) Proposed: Change the name.
A name change would be appropriate to provide a unique name that will not be confused with Fruitville Park (a county park 2 ½ miles away on Honore Avenue). Possible name to consider: Circus Community Park. Circus trains passed through the park, serving the former Winter Quarters of the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus (now the Glen Oaks neighborhood). Circus Trail passes through the park and runs parallel to Circus Boulevard on the North.
- b) Proposed: Installation of sign and entranceway.
Fruitville Road Park has no sign or entrance to indicate to passers-by that it is a public park. These two items would give the park an identity as a public park and an invitation for people to use it.
- 5) ***Make this park more accessible***
- a) Proposed: Provision of a designated parking area and a bicycle rack.
The park would be accessible to more people if there were a few spaces to park. A likely place would be the grassy area to the east of Circus Boulevard by the Circus Trail.
- b) Proposed: Installation of a bridge made of sustainable materials to span the canal, connecting the Circus Trail with the park.
The canal “Main B” separates Circus Trail from the park. Currently, anyone approaching from Circus Boulevard must walk down Circus Trail to Fruitville Road, then go east on the sidewalk to enter the park. A bridge would connect Circus Trail with the park, eliminating exposure to Fruitville Road traffic and significantly shortening the travel distance to the park.

6) *Enhance the park to make it more enjoyable for visitors*

- a) Proposed: Installation of durable seating at two or three places.
The park currently has only one bench that is in an extreme state of deterioration. Two short benches placed in close proximity at a couple of places would provide opportunity for people to rest and converse.
- b) Proposed: Provision of a simple oak-chip walking trail.
A trail would be a lead-in, an invitation to explore the park and provide a firmer walking surface.
- c) Proposed: Planting of Florida-native plants at the entrance and in the area that was formerly a trash pit, recently cleaned out and filled with soil.
(Consultation with a local nursery is being planned.)
- d) Proposed: Provision of small ID labels on Florida-native plants and trees and a plaque descriptive of the birds and other wildlife that inhabit the park.
These would be educational for visitors to the park.
- e) Proposed: Installation of a small group of exercise stations.
These stations would provide an opportunity for park visitors to stretch and exercise (encouraging physical fitness).

This Proposal includes many items, some of which would be relatively inexpensive to accomplish, others being more costly. From our point of view, it would seem logical to work in phases – focusing first on the least expensive, while funding is sought for the remainder. In summary, we would like to see the park be the best it can be in environmental terms, and at the same time provide an easily-accessible “oasis of calm” amidst the concrete and stucco of the surrounding environment.

-- A place to walk or sit, and enjoy the tranquility of nature --