UniversityCity Public Meeting  
FIU Campus, Room PG-5-155  
October 25, 2013 (5:30 pm – 8:30 pm)  
Public Comments

In preparation for the 5:30 pm Public Workshop, the doors to classroom PG-5-155 were open at 4:30 pm. Additionally, a sign-in table was set up and an FIU employee staffed the table.

After providing time for attendees to sign in, review displays, and be seated, a PowerPoint presentation of the project began at 6 pm. Introductory comments and welcome were made by FIU Senior Vice President/CFO Kenneth Jessell and City of Sweetwater Mayor Jose Diaz. They each gave an overview of the project from their perspective and indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to allow public input as to the 2013 TIGER/UniversityCity proposal components and alternatives and to provide the public with a better understanding of the 2013 TIGER/UniversityCity intent, goals, and objectives.

Mayor Diaz introduced Mr. Francisco Alonso from TYLIN who then proceeded to give a presentation of the project alternatives and concepts.

SEE ATTACHED TYLIN POWER POINT PRESENTATION FOR CONTENT

Mr. Alonso then introduced Mr. Colin Henderson who gave a presentation on the NEPA process.

SEE ATTACHED TYLIN POWER POINT PRESENTATION FOR CONTENT

Mr. Alonso then introduced FIU Professor Dr. Naphtali Rishe who gave a presentation on the Informed Traveler Program and Applications (ITPA) component of the 2013 TIGER/UniversityCity proposal.

SEE ATTACHED ITPA POWER POINT PRESENTATION FOR CONTENT

Vice President Jessell introduced Stephen Sauls, FIU Vice President for Governmental Relations, who talked about the importance of FIU and the City of Sweetwater joining as a UniversityCity community and the importance of the 2013 TIGER/UniversityCity project to this community. He talked about the opportunities for collaboration with Miami-Dade Expressway, Miami-Dade Transit, Florida Department of Transportation, and other entities to improve community safety, access to public transportation, and economic development in the community and throughout SE Florida. With all of the partners working together, there is a vision, there is a plan, there is an opportunity and there is an ability to bring this project to fruition.
Members of the public were provided the website showing the 2013 UniversityCity TIGER Proposal and Award Documents at http://cake.fiu.edu/TIGER2013.

Comments from the Public

Speaker #1: Kenneth Basulto, Sweetwater resident – Concerned about time to cross SW 8th Street at SW 109th Avenue. We have traffic issues at SW 109th Avenue and SW 8th Street—how will this help?  
(RESPONSE: The pedestrian-oriented shared-use bridge, pedestrian improvements, housing and Parking Garage-6 with smart parking and Advanced Intermodal and Multimodal Station will encourage more pedestrian traffic and less vehicular traffic.)

Speaker #2: Phillip Stoddard – Mayor of South Miami, FIU Professor of Biology - Praised project for allowing Sweetwater residents to have access to FIU amenities. We have come a long way in 21 years; connectivity between FIU and the community is an essential element of university life; we want walkable communities; let’s make this happen!

Speaker #3: Adrian Gorlic, FIU Honors College - Expressed gratitude for project.

Speaker #4: Eduardo Suarez, Sweetwater resident and Planning Board Member - He has been a resident of the City of Sweetwater for 40 years and is a member of the Planning and Zoning Board; FIU is his second home; he learned a lot about the project tonight. Wanted to know:

  o What will happen to the historic wooded pedestrian bridge (RESPONSE: The bridge is being restored for pedestrian and bicycle use by the developer of the student housing complex)
  o Will the bridge have handicapped access? (RESPONSE: Yes)
  o Will there be increased traffic due to the project? (RESPONSE: We believe the project will reduce traffic congestion)
  o There will be a need for a transit bridge on SW 112th Avenue; will this happen? (RESPONSE: This is currently being discussed.)

Speaker #5: Alexandro Bolanoi, 109 Tower, construction manager for new tower in Sweetwater - Discussed student parking on campus. Native to this project and an alumnus of FIU; very happy to be a part of the project

Speaker #6: Napoleon Somoza, Miami-Dade County Planning Department - Asked about additional bike lanes around campus and if they would connect to existing Greenways. The bike lanes should also be incorporated into the county bike lane plans. (RESPONSE: Agreed. Additionally, we will be doing a SAMS (Sub Area Mobility Study) to identify additional future needs and direction.)
Speaker #7: Ryan Dugar, FIU Student – Asked where pedestrian bridge would be located relative to PG6 (Response: PG6 will be located west of the “Red” garage.) Do you have an estimate of how many students work in Sweetwater? (Response: According to a survey taken in 2006 approximately 1100 students worked in Sweetwater.) Will there be bridge lighting and landscaping? (Response: Yes to both).

Speaker #8: Arianna Aguilar, FIU Student and Sweetwater resident – Concern about increased vehicular traffic around dormitory (would Sweetwater become a ‘college town’?) Residents of Sweetwater sometimes have a hard time getting to and from work; also, will this project be harmful in terms of re-gentrification and pricing out residents? (RESPONSE: The enhanced transportation, including the trollies, shuttles and express buses, will help the residents commute to work. Intersection improvements will be added to more safely cross US 41 and SW 109th Avenue (crossing stripes immediately east and west of the SW 109th Avenue and pedestrian activated traffic signals). Additionally, the new housing projects add to the inventory of housing and are being built on under- and un-utilized land (the first housing project was built on the abandoned Ohio Bar site). Additionally, there will be improvements in the transportation APPS for community transit and express buses to reduce traffic congestion and improve access to parking.

Speaker #9: Gordon Kingston, FIU Student and Sweetwater resident – Complaint about campus trolley delays. (Response: The plan is to have a Trolley every 5 minutes. Through the ITPA there will be an App that will allow the user to track the Trolley system).

Speaker #10: Jaime Lapides, Sweetwater resident – Concerned about vehicular traffic congestion on SW 8th Street during construction. Expressed concern about possibility of Eminent Domain being exercised to complete project, and about possibility of increased flooding within Sweetwater due to project and historical flooding issues? (RESPONSE: Construction will take place in ways that minimize the impact to traffic flows. While not completely avoidable, the timing of any needed closures will be done to minimize the impact and we will work with FDOT on staging; no housing will be eliminated for the plazas; the City’s flooding issues have been resolved for now and there have been no incidents of flooding since the draining improvements were installed). Will there be bridge lighting and cover from the rain? (RESPONSE: There will be lighting and plans still need to be finalized before determining how the bridge would provide protection from the weather.)

Speaker #11: Husson Hadi, FIU Student – Expressed desire for existing and future businesses in area to remain open longer to accommodate students. (RESPONSE: Over time the market and
mixed-use zoning will hopefully attract business that creates a more active downtown and more urban environment with businesses that open into the evening.)

Speaker #12: Gavin Stewart, FIU Student/Mayor’s Executive Internship Program – Asked about the TIGER Grant and if any future awards might create a transit hub at FIU linking to West Kendall area. How will this improve access to Bus Rapid Transit and crate opportunities for additional research? (RESPONSE: UniversityCity improvements are proposed to enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access to express buses operating from the PG6 Advanced Intermodal and Multimodal Station (AIMS), feeder metropolitan buses operating on SW 107th Avenue and US 41, and community transit operating on SW 109th Avenue and beyond. Research is not a part of the 2013 TIGER/UniversityCity Prosperity Project, but study of the impacts that arise from these improvements might lead to research opportunities in the future.)

Speaker #13: Jacqueline Nicole Delila, Sweetwater resident – Will the pedestrian Bridge have lighting? (RESPONSE: Yes.) She wants some type of covering on the bridge for protection from the weather. How people will actually use the bridge on a daily basis? (RESPONSE: There are 400 beds in the new tower on 109th and 8th street and all residents of that building will be required to park on the FIU side of 8th Street. There will be at a minimum 400 people that will cross the bridge twice a day).

Speaker #14: Unidentified FIU Student – Suggested the use of landscaping in area of pedestrian bridge to create natural cover. Will there be shade trees? (RESPONSE: Yes.)

Speaker #15: Josh Caleb Mayorga, Tech for Kids America Foundation – Asked about possible Zoning changes to create a more business friendly environment in Sweetwater. (Response: The City of Sweetwater has established mixed use zoning to enable new construction to incorporate both commercial and residential usage. FIU/Sweetwater representatives are researching how young professionals can obtain low cost retail space to launch new businesses).

Speaker #16 Unidentified Sweetwater resident - This is a good thing for the economy. Will it encourage new start up businesses to locate in Sweetwater? (RESPONSE: The mixed-use zoning, express bus transit access, and pedestrian-oriented streetscape ought to support such economic opportunities.)

With no additional questions, the hearing was adjourned at 8:30 pm.