

From Sue Miller, Lower Matecumbe Key

My first reaction to buying the Walgreens property was: I am absolutely opposed to having taxpayers fund a parking lot for businesses that are, by code, required to provide adequate parking for their customers.

But then after reading the staff report for the Special Call meeting about the property purchase, I got to thinking. Greg Oravec is right! What a fantastic opportunity to enhance our Village and create a true sense of community.

Let's buy this property and create a walkable downtown Islamorada. This is just an idea....

Start at the historic district and build a walkway from there past the Hurricane Monument, along the Old Highway, past the historic Methodist Church (just placed on the National Registry of Historic Places) with those tall magnificent stained glass windows designed and made by church members. Wind back to the Overseas Highway through the lush entrance to Cheeca and follow the new walkway past the Shrimp Shack and retail shops to the new "Islamorada Station," once home to Irene and George's and more recently Island Silver and Spice. The Station will be a resting point, with the Matecumbe Historical Trust Caboose as the centerpiece, a tiny history museum to tell the fascinating story of the people, places and events that have made Islamorada the incredible place we all love.

Besides the Caboose, the Islamorada Station can have a couple food trucks and a small band stand with park benches for very small scale entertainment (amateur comedy hour, lessons on the guitar by Dave Feder, art demonstrations, and occasional music by local musicians for kids of all ages to dance by). Open air carts can be used by local artists and craftsmen, to sell their treasures along with a stand for fresh produce from Homestead and perhaps a tiny antique shop or bakery. And let's save a little space for parking (that parking that I opposed). Have bikes from the Backcountry Cowboy available for those not anxious to walk on hot summer days.

From the Islamorada Station, we walk past more little boutiques and the lovely entrance to the Islander, with information signs along the way with directions to businesses not easily seen from the walkway. And some fun signs explaining unique features of our area and our environment. More shops, Burger King, and then again some boutiques and an ice cream shop until we reach Southwind Park which can be enhanced with another food truck or two, perhaps a playground, picnic area and butterfly garden.

And lo and behold, with some help from our local landscapers to enhance the pathway, we have a downtown Islamorada that we can all be ever so proud to call our own. But wait - let's ask TDC to pay for improvements. The tourists owe it to us!

The finances are not all that difficult to figure out, as Manager Oravec found the money. Just check his staff report!

Nothing needs to happen overnight. This can be a community project that brings all of Islamorada together with shared ideas to make our Village even better. Let's do it!

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