

Date: February 23rd, 2016

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

From: Tanya Wilson-Séjour, AICP, Planning, Zoning and Development Director

Re: **Proposed Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District Designation**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE DESIGNATION OF THE COMMERCIAL AREAS ALONG NW 7TH AVENUE BETWEEN NW 119TH STREET TO NW 135TH STREET AS A ‘CHINATOWN CULTURAL ARTS AND INNOVATION DISTRICT’; FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER TO DO ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO CREATE A MASTER PLAN TO SERVE AS A DESIGN GUIDE TO ENSURE THE FUTURE GROWTH OF THE SUBJECT AREA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND FOR ALL OTHER PURPOSES.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Mayor and City Council pass and adopt the proposed resolution authorizing the designation of the commercial areas along the NW 7th Avenue Corridor, between NW 119th Street and NW 135th Street (the “Subject Area”), as a “Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District,” and further authorizing the Interim City Manager to create a Master Plan to serve as a design guide in the redevelopment of the subject area.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

At its February 9th, 2016 meeting, the Planning Commission (attended by Commissioners Kevin Seifried, Peggy Boule, Michael McDearmaid, Bob Pechon, Kenny Each, and Jason James) reviewed and discussed the proposed resolution to designate the subject area as a “Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District” and to further authorize the interim City Manager to create a master plan to guide the redevelopment of the subject area. Following staff’s presentation, the Planning Commission engaged in a very spirited discussion on the item. Fearing that the proposed designation with the themes and motifs it promotes may lead to the displacement of several long-standing businesses in the subject area, the Commission unanimously recommended that the word “Chinatown” be stricken from the designation. Commissioner Boule made a motion to recommend adoption of the resolution with the proposed amendment and forward it to the Mayor and City Council for final consideration. Seconded by Commissioner McDearmaid, the motion passed 6-0 by roll call vote.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

The proposed resolution sponsored by District 4 Councilman Alix Desulme seeks to designate the commercial areas along NW 7th Avenue, between NW 119th Street and NW 135th Street, as a “Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District.”

The NW 7th Avenue Corridor is unique, not just to the City of North Miami, but for the larger Miami-Dade County as well. The area is virtually entirely commercial with few residential developments. Historically, the NW 7th Avenue Corridor has provided a wide array of job opportunities and services to the residents and communities neighboring the corridor. NW 7th Avenue (or State Road 7 or US 441), is a major State arterial road maintained by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) with average annual daily vehicular trips of 30,500 motorists. According to a 2013, economic/market evaluation performed by Strategic Planning Group, Inc. the NW 7th Avenue corridor was historically a major north-south commercial thoroughfare that primarily housed automotive shops, light industrial and retail establishments. However, the construction of Interstate-95 (I-95) had a significant adverse impact on the NW 7th Avenue corridor in several ways: First, I-95 acts as a natural geographic barrier that bifurcates the modest western neighborhoods from the rest of the City since only five streets cross the Interstate within the City. Second, the northern gateway to NW 7th Avenue above NW 143 Street has been significantly hindered due to the construction of multiple interchanges, limiting its inter county connectivity and removing a significant amount of the north-south vehicular traffic that typically supports the business activities of the corridor. Thirdly, redevelopment along the NW 7th Avenue corridor is further encumbered due to lot size constraints mainly on the western portion of the corridor.

Despite the various challenges affecting the progress of NW 7th Avenue, in recent years, the City has made significant strides to foster economic growth and spur redevelopment along the corridor. As such, in 2005, the Mayor and City Council created the North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency (NMCRA), in order to identify and develop plans and activities to eliminate and prevent the spread of blight, and to develop workable programs to aid in rehabilitation, conservation, and redevelopment of the City’s physical, economic, educational and social resources throughout the City.

To lend support to the revitalization efforts along the NW 7 Avenue corridor, the CRA funded several façade loans and business assistance grants to help retain and attract new businesses. Additionally, in 2013, the City subsequently adopted the Downtown Development and Major Corridor Master Plan that includes an economic analysis and series of strategies intended to bring revitalization to the City’s Major Commercial Corridors as well as the Downtown District. In 2013, the Mayor and City Council further passed and adopted Resolution R-2013-12, allocating \$1 million to the NW 7th Avenue Commercial Façade Program. Funded by the City’s General Fund, the façade program established a maximum rehabilitation assistance of \$80,000 per property owner to improve the exterior walls, landscaping and parking lots of commercial buildings fronting along the NW 7th Avenue Corridor. The purpose of the program is to improve

the aesthetic appeal of the storefronts and in turn attract new customers that can systematically boost the marketability of the surrounding area.

Additionally, beyond the City's local efforts, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners understand how vital this corridor is to the economy and sustainability of the County, and has therefore taken various actions to spur the economic redevelopment of the Corridor. In March of 2004, the NW 7th Avenue Community Redevelopment Area was adopted and included approximately 112 acres generally bounded on the North by NW 119th Street, on the South by the municipal boundary of the City of Miami (approximately 175 feet north of NW 79th Street), on the East by I-95 and the West by the properties bordering on NW 7th Avenue in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. On April 4, 2011, the original boundary of that Community Redevelopment Area expanded to include another 134 acres within the Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA). The City of Miami Gardens generally bound the expansion area on the north, the City of North Miami on the south, on the west by the westernmost property lines of the parcels that abut the westerly right-of-way along NW 7th Avenue and on the east by Interstate 95.

PURPOSE OF THE DESIGNATION

Goal 9 of the City's Comprehensive Plan (Economic Element) requires that the City create conditions that will enhance the economic prosperity of local businesses and attract new business while improving the quality of life for all of its citizens. Given the foregoing, the City desires to stimulate economic growth and development within its commercial districts with particular interest in reviving the stagnant commercial district along the NW 7th Avenue Corridor, by expanding opportunities for existing businesses while attracting new investment. To aid in this effort the City recognizes that as an emerging market, China serves as an important trading partner for the United States, dominating the global market in the manufacture of goods and commodities. However, throughout the region there is currently no notable enclave or designated area that serves as a focal point that fosters Chinese culture, heritage, or investment. In order to position itself as a desirable gateway, the City seeks to establish an area along NW 7th Avenue to serve as a regional anchor to promote Chinese culture, commerce and innovation. NW 7th Avenue is the northern commercial and transportation gateway to the County.

In addition to developing a master plan to attract foreign investment to the Corridor, one purpose of the Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District is to capitalize on the interest and momentum created by these County-led efforts to establish an anchor focused on Chinese culture and business investment. Specifically efforts have been made through the NW 7th Avenue expanded CRA, to transform the segment of that Corridor, which lies within the City limits (from NW 119th Street to NW 143rd Street, excluding the areas west of the avenue, north of NW 135th Street) into a walkable, human-scaled, aesthetically pleasing, transit-oriented destination. Lastly, the district seeks to synergize the creative and cultural arts industries by recognizing the area as one that celebrates both "culture" and "innovation," and developing a master plan with outlined strategies that support this initiative. With support from the American Da Tang Group,

known for real estate brokerage and development, the proposed request will allow the city to transform the corridor into a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use destination that can serve as a regional anchor for global economic and trading power (see attached letter).

RATIONALE FOR INNOVATION

According to scholars from the Brookings Institute, innovation districts are geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators, and accelerators. They are also physically compact, transit-accessible, and technically savvy and offer a mixed of complementary uses. In essence, they can be seen as the manifestation of mega-trends altering the location preferences of people and firms and, in the process, increase the supply of new jobs, and in the long run raise the average household income of an area.

Led by an eclectic group of institutions and leaders these districts are emerging in dozens of cities and metropolitan areas in the United States and overseas and already reflect distinctive typologies and levels of formal planning. Indeed, in several cities across the nation, these districts are either emerging near anchor institutions, developing where underutilized areas (particularly older industrial areas) are being re-imagined and remade.

Innovation districts are being explored by more urbanized communities with limited vacant land and abundant opportunities for re-envisioning and transforming underutilized commercial spaces into sustainable creative enclaves, one that represents a radical departure from traditional economic development. Indeed, unlike customary urban revitalization efforts that have emphasized the commercial aspects of development (e.g., housing, retail, sports stadiums), innovation districts help a city and metropolis move up the value chain of global competitiveness by growing the niche firms, networks, and traded sectors that drive broad-based prosperity. Instead of maintaining old outdated commercial strips, innovation districts focus extensively on creating a dynamic mixed-use center that promotes research, technology and sustainability. Rather than focus on discrete industries, innovation districts represent an intentional effort to create new products, technologies and market unique sectors and specializations.

CONCLUSION

As the 5th largest City in the County with two major tertiary level institutions (Johnson & Wales University and Florida International University) within its City limits and a strategic “middle of the market” location between Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, the City of North Miami is ideally suited to establish a trade hub for future Chinese investment. In fact, North Miami is home to a significant population of Chinese students who attend Florida International University (FIU) through a joint agreement with the Chinese government. It is important to note that the Florida International University Tianjin Center is an overseas campus of Florida-based FIU located in Tianjin, in the People's Republic of China, from which a branch of the FIU School of Hospitality

& Tourism Management operates. The center was constructed as a cooperative venture with the City of Tianjin and FIU.

China is and will remain for a long time an important trading partner for the United States, as it dominates the global market in the manufacture of goods and commodities. Major cities like Washington D.C., Seattle, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, which have historically served as first entry points for Chinese immigrants, have all created their Chinatown districts to preserve the authenticity of Chinese American culture. These cities are keen to capitalize on the rise of China as a global economic and trading power, and further strengthen their roles as gateways to usher in billions of dollars of foreign direct investment. If approved the City intends to assemble a steering committee in order to develop a Chinatown Master Plan & Design Guidelines to serve as a blueprint to aid in the future integration of Chinese motifs and cultural elements in the streetscape and the building façade of the proposed district. Staff requests that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed resolution and forward to City Council for final approval.

TWS/nl

Attachments:

1. Proposed Resolution
2. American Da Tang Group – Letter of Support

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE DESIGNATION OF THE COMMERCIAL AREAS ALONG NW 7TH AVENUE BETWEEN NW 119TH STREET TO NW 135TH STREET AS A ‘CHINATOWN CULTURAL ARTS AND INNOVATION DISTRICT’; FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER TO DO ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO CREATE A MASTER PLAN TO SERVE AS A DESIGN GUIDE TO ENSURE THE FUTURE GROWTH OF THE SUBJECT AREA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND FOR ALL OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, Goal 9 of the City of North Miami (“City”) adopted Comprehensive Plan requires that the City create conditions which will enhance the economic prosperity of local businesses and attract new business while improving the quality of life for all of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to stimulate economic growth and development within its commercial districts with particular interest in reviving the stagnant NW 7th Avenue Corridor, by expanding opportunities for existing businesses while attracting new investment; and

WHEREAS, it is further recognized that as an emerging market, China serves as an important trading partner for the United States, dominating the global market in the manufacture of goods and commodities; and

WHEREAS, major destinations in the United States, such as Washington D.C., Seattle, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco all have Chinatowns that serve as strategic portals for tourism and significant gateways to usher in billions of dollars of foreign investment; and

WHEREAS, in order to position itself as a desirable gateway for Chinese investment and commerce, the City seeks to establish an area along NW 7th Avenue to serve as a regional anchor to promote Chinese culture, commerce and innovation; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to designate the commercially zoned areas along NW 7th Avenue between NW 119th Street to NW 135th Street as *Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District* and will work with a seven (7) member steering committee comprised of CRA and City Staff as well as regional partners and experts in Chinese culture, business and investment; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to develop a Chinatown Master Plan & Design Guidelines to

serve as a blueprint to aid in the future integration of Chinese motifs and cultural elements in the streetscape and the building façade of the proposed district; and

WHEREAS, on February 9, 2016, the Planning Commission conducted its review at a duly noticed public meeting and found the proposed Chinatown Master Plan & Design Guidelines to be consistent with applicable policies and goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and thereby unanimously recommended approval to the Mayor and City Council with the condition that the reference of “*Chinatown*” be removed to allow instead a ‘*Cultural Arts and Innovation District*’, and thereby broadening the proposed designation; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami have determined that the resolution as originally proposed (i.e., *Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District*), is in the best interest of the City, promotes economic development and positively enhances the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of North Miami.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA:

Section 1. **Creation of the District.** The Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami, Florida, hereby designate the C-1 zoned areas along NW 7th Avenue between NW 119th Street to NW 125th Street as a *Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District*.

Section 2. **Authorization to Create Master Plan and Steering Committee.** The Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami, Florida, hereby authorize the Interim City Manager to do all things necessary to effectuate the creation of a seven (7) member Steering Committee to begin working on a ‘Chinatown Master Plan & Design Guidelines’ to serve as a design guide to ensure the future growth of the subject area.

Section 3. **Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by a _____ vote of the Mayor and City Council of the City of North Miami, Florida, this ____ day of _____, 2016.

DR. SMITH JOSEPH
MAYOR

ATTEST:

MICHAEL A. ETIENNE, ESQ.
CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM
AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

ROLAND C. GALDOS, ESQ.
INTERIM CITY ATTORNEY

SPONSORED BY: VICE MAYOR ALIX DESULME

Moved by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Vote:

Mayor Smith Joseph, D.O., Pharm. D.
Vice Mayor Alix Desulme
Councilman Scott Galvin
Councilwoman Carol Keys, Esq.
Councilman Philippe Bien-Aime

_____ (Yes) _____ (No)
_____ (Yes) _____ (No)
_____ (Yes) _____ (No)
_____ (Yes) _____ (No)
_____ (Yes) _____ (No)



American Da Tang Group
美国大唐集团

February 1, 2016

Council Member Alix Desulme
776 NE 125 Street, 2nd Floor
North Miami, FL 33151

Re: Chinatown Cultural Arts and Innovation District

Dear Councilman Desulme,

Dear Alix,

This letter follows a meeting in December 2015 at the office of the Chair of the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, Mr. Jean Monestime, regarding the need for a Chinese Cultural Arts & Innovation District within South Florida, with a particular interest in the NW 7th Avenue Corridor. I applaud the City for proposing legislation to create the region's first cultural arts and innovation district highlighting Chinese culture and enterprise.

We believe the proposed designation would help transform the corridor, which has been plagued by decades of financial disinvestment, urban blight and lacking a notably identify. With proper planning and financial backing through both private and public funding sources it is our hope that the corridor will be transformed into regional anchor to serve as a vibrant district showcasing Chinese culture, arts, commerce and innovation.

The American Da Tang Group is known for real estate brokerage and development, as such, we offer our assistance in your future planning endeavors and will participate in any future steering committee in order to make this District, not just a reality, but also a success.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shan Jie Li
CEO & Chief Economist

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