

Baldwin Park/NTC Main Base: A Brief History



Aerial of NTC Main Base

From World War II until the 1990's, the area now known as Baldwin Park was used for military purposes. When the Orlando Army Air Station was established in 1942, it actually included an area much larger than what we now know as the Naval Training Center (NTC) Main Base. The Air Station also included areas now developed as the Audubon Park neighborhood, the Fashion Square Mall, Koger Office Center and other surrounding properties, in addition to what is now Orlando Executive Airport.

After World War II the Orlando Executive Airport property was returned to the City of Orlando, and the Audubon Park, Fashion Square Mall, Koger Center and other properties were sold as the Air Station gradually reduced its operations. In the early 1960's the Air Station closed its doors, and the remaining property was turned over to the Navy for use as the country's third Naval Training Center. Over the next three decades NTC Orlando served as the training site of over 650,000 Navy Recruits. The Main Base property was home to three major commands: the Recruit Training Command, the Service School Command, and the Nuclear Power School.

NTC Closure & Reuse

The Federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) identified NTC closure in July 1993. Upon notice of the final decision of the BRAC, the City of Orlando initiated the development of a Base Reuse Plan to guide transition of base property and facilities to other uses in support of local goals for economic and community development.

The base closure and redevelopment planning process was a community based, proactive planning approach that established direction for redevelopment and reuse of the NTC facilities and properties. The effort consisted of four stages: 1) Base Reuse Plan; 2) Business and Development Plan; 3) Urban Design Vision Plan, and; 4) Selection of a development team.

Base Reuse Plan

Following the Pentagon's decision to close the NTC, Mayor Glenda Hood appointed a Base Reuse Commission, made up of Central Florida business and government leaders, to identify alternative uses for the base. With financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) the City established and staffed an NTC Base Reuse Office, and hired a consulting team headed by BRW, Inc., to assist in preparing a Base Reuse Plan.



Original Base Reuse Plan

It took approximately eleven months to develop the Base Reuse Plan. A thorough inventory of the physical, environmental, and economic conditions of the NTC property and the surrounding neighborhoods had to be performed. This assessment led to the identification of the site's opportunities and constraints and the development of goals and objectives for the Base's reuse. Several land use plans that would achieve the established goals and objectives were evaluated. The approved Base Reuse Plan was used by the Department of the Navy as the basis in preparing their Environmental Impact Statement. Throughout the entire process, public comments were solicited and incorporated into the plan. Local residents were kept informed through public forums, newsletters, committee meetings, newspaper articles and television news broadcasts.

Urban Design Vision Plan

The design phase of the redevelopment process began in early 1997, approximately two years after the Base Reuse Plan had been approved. A consultant team headed by A. Nelessen Associates was hired by the City to prepare a detailed Urban Design and Transportation Plan using the approved Base Reuse Plan as a guide. A second consultant team led by Post Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan (PBS&J) and WBQ Inc. was hired to design a supportive Infrastructure Plan.

Citizen input was a valued component of the design process. A Visual Preference Survey was conducted to determine the type of development area residents desired for the NTC property. At three different meetings, citizens viewed and rated 240 slides depicting single-family homes, multifamily homes, pedestrian areas, transit possibilities, commercial land uses, offices, streets, parking, signs and civic buildings. The Survey results were presented at an all-day workshop where residents rolled up their sleeves, grabbed markers and put their ideas down on paper to convey how they would like to see the area developed. At the end of the day, several themes stood out - linking the site with surrounding neighborhoods, providing public access to lakes, using open space to form a network of green throughout the project, creating a vibrant main street, and dispersing automobile traffic through a gridded street network. Using these themes, the Nelessen team created an Urban Design Plan implementing these ideas through the use of Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles (TND).



Urban Design Vision Plan

The Vision Plan presented a complete development concept. The Plan provided for balanced long-term growth with approximately 3,000 residential units and over 2,700,000 square feet of office/commercial use at buildout.

A pedestrian oriented village center, that included retail, office, and high density residential uses, surrounded by high density residential areas was the focus. The two lakes on the site were cited as public space and an open space corridor linked the lakes with parks and other open space areas, thereby connecting it with wildlife corridors in the surrounding areas.

This process not only produced a clear concept of community expectations, but also resulted in a set of design guidelines that could be implemented. The stage was set, the community set the bar and challenged the development sector to come forward and improve on our vision.

Selecting a Development Team for the NTC

With a clear vision in mind, the City now sought a development team that would understand and implement that vision. Four nationally recognized development teams were short-listed for simultaneous negotiations. The four teams included such national developers as Post Properties, Pulte Home Corp., Haile Plantation Group, The Arvida Company, The Rouse Company, WCI Communities and Cali Realty Corp.

During this period, City staff actually became a part of each of the four development teams; allowing City staff to work with each team, improving the quality of the submissions and explaining the communities objectives. This kept the competition keen and resulted in four very strong redevelopment proposals; any of which, when developed, would achieve the community's redevelopment objectives.

After six weeks of studying the competing development proposals, listening to their presentations and visiting other projects the developers have undertaken, the City chose Orlando NTC Partners (aka Baldwin Park Development Co.) in May 1998. Consistency with the Vision Plan, the experience of the development team and the integration with the natural environment were major factors in selecting this team. The team included Mesirow Stein Real Estate, Inc., Carter & Associates, Atlantic Gulf Communities Corp., David Weekley Homes and Morrison Homes as developers supported by a design team consisting of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, Cooper Carry and Miller-Sellen & Associates, Inc.

Conveyance

With a development team in place, the City of Orlando intensified efforts to acquire the Naval Training Center property from the Navy.

On October 27, 1999, six years after the Navy announced the closure, the City Council voted unanimously to purchase the property from the Navy and moments later voted to sell the property to Orlando NTC Partners. Under the terms of the agreement, the City would pay the Navy \$1.2 million plus 75 percent of the price paid by Orlando NTC Partners. In addition, the developer was required to make a one-time payment of \$3.5 million to a local Homeless Provider Trust Fund.

By selling the property to one developer, the City could eliminate blighted conditions and create a tremendous amount of taxable value. In addition, the redevelopment would create 200 acres of parks and open 250 acres of lakes to the public. Another 90 acres would remain as out-parcels for various federal operations, leaving only about 550 acres of developable property for new streets, parcels and lots.



Building Demolition

The sale to one developer also reflected the complexities of redeveloping a former military base. Before any new construction could begin, the developer first had to clear the site of 256 buildings (4.5 million square feet), excavate 25 miles of substandard roads and 200 miles of underground utilities, and remove contaminated soil discovered on the greens of the base golf course – at a cost of about \$40 million.

Concrete and masonry materials from demolished buildings were crushed on-site and recycled in a massive underground stormwater filtration system and as road base for new public streets. Reusing 750,000 tons of recycled concrete on-site eliminated the 40,000 truck trips it would have taken to transport waste materials to a landfill.

A pair of federal lawsuits filed by a local resident further complicated redevelopment of the NTC property. The resident claimed that the Navy did not follow the proper procedures when it offered the land and buildings to other federal agencies. The first lawsuit died when the appellant missed a deadline for filing a petition in U.S. Supreme Court. An appeals court dismissed the second lawsuit.

Planned Development Ordinance

All development within Baldwin Park is regulated under a Planned Development Ordinance (PD) that was adopted by the Orlando City Council on July 27, 1998. The PD includes a Land Use Program, a Land Use Plan, a Regulatory Plan, open space, transportation and landscape standards, and architectural guidelines that together define the density, intensity, type and character of development allowed within the PD.

The Land Use Program, Land Use Plan and Regulatory Plan were all based on the Conceptual Development Plan submitted by the developer during the development team selection process. The PD Ordinance indicates that these documents would need to be modified when detailed plans were submitted for review during the development approval process. Several non-substantial amendments to each document have been approved over the years.

The Land Use Program in Chapter 3 of the PD illustrates the anticipated type and amount of development that will be allowed at build-out. Actual development may exceed the anticipated Land Use Program if consistent with the entitlements provided in Growth Management Plan (GMP) Future Land Use Element Subarea Policy 16.4. The Subarea Policy includes office to residential conversion factors that can be used to convert office entitlements into an equivalent number of residential dwelling units. The Land Use Program has been amended six times since adoption in 1998. The current program generally allows the following development:

- Village Center Commercial - 310,000 SF
- Village Center Office- 250,000 SF
- Other Office - 614,798 SF
- Civic - 244,362 SF
- Residential DUs - 4,400 (plus 178 dwelling units in Building 310 at 4500 Lower Park Rd)



Land Use Plan

Land Use Plan - The Land Use Plan divides the PD into broad land use categories, including mixed use, office/mixed use, swing, attached housing, detached housing, civic, and open space. Development within the PD must be consistent with the uses shown on the Land Use Plan.

Regulatory Plan - The Regulatory Plan further divides the PD into character districts, including Village Center Core, Village Center General, Neighborhood Center, and Neighborhood General. Each district has specific development standards, architectural standards, permitted uses and prohibited uses. Additional standards are also provided for civic uses and for development within a Campus Overlay Zone and a Park Edge Overlay Zone. Development within the PD must be consistent with the development standards provided for the applicable character district.

Development Approvals

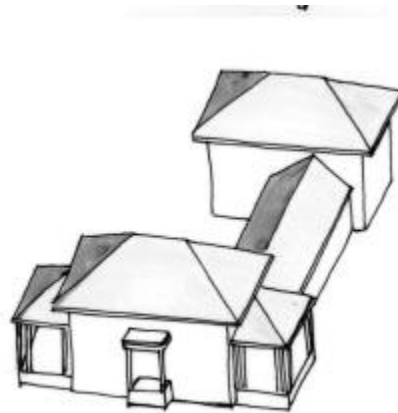
The Baldwin Park Town Design Review Committee (TDRC) reviews proposed development for compliance with the PD. All development is first reviewed and approved as a Neighborhood Plan and then as a Subdivision Plat. Individual site plans for multifamily and non-residential development must go through additional review as a Specific Parcel Master Plan. The following is a summary of each step:

(1) Neighborhood Master Plan - The PD is generally divided into seven Neighborhood Master Plan areas: 1) the Westside Neighborhoods Package One, 2) the Westside Neighborhoods Package Two, 3) the Westside Neighborhoods Package Three, 4) the Eastside Neighborhoods, 5) the Village Center Neighborhood, 6) the Neighborhood Business District, and 7) the Lake Susannah Neighborhoods. Each Neighborhood Master Plan Area may be platted as one or more units and may include multifamily or non-residential parcels that are subject to further review as a Specific Parcel Master Plan.

(2) Subdivision Plats - Subdivision Plats are reviewed for consistency with the approved Neighborhood Plan. Individual lots and parcels may be sold and purchased once the Final Subdivision Plat is approved, signed and recorded in accordance with state law.

(3) Specific Parcel Master Plans - Multifamily, office, retail and civic uses are approved individually as Specific Parcel Master Plans. Individual buildings must conform to the standards of the underlying character district depicted on the Regulatory Plan.

Residential Design Guidelines - The Baldwin Park PD does not require any specific architectural style. However, Residential Design Guidelines have been adopted for each neighborhood. These guidelines provide specific standards for six architectural styles to ensure that the details of each building are consistent with the architectural style selected. The guidelines also include 'anti-monotony' regulations that require a seven-lot separation between homes that have the same body massing. The guidelines are intended to "create a harmonious neighborhood environment without becoming sterile or monotonous."



Example of Massing Guidelines Graphic

Parks

Parks and open space in Baldwin Park are generally divided into three categories: (1) Public Parks owned by the City, (2) Public Parks owned by the Urban Orlando Community Development District (CDD), and (3) Private Parks owned by the Property Owners' Association. The Public Parks owned by the City generally include Blue Jacket Park, the open space extending from Blue Jacket Park to Lake Baldwin, the lakeshore around Lake Baldwin, the lakeshore along Lake Susannah, and the Village Center Harbor. Public Parks owned by the CDD generally include properties that are designed to accommodate stormwater retention. CDD parks include the "S" park on New Broad Street, the open space along the southeast side of Fox Street, the open space connection between the two lakes and the water features that front Lake Baldwin Lane in Units 9A and 10. Private Parks owned by the Property Owners Association generally include the three Neighborhood Centers and several small neighborhood greens intended to provide neighborhood identity, open space relief and convenient gathering places for residents of the PD. Orange County Public Schools also owns park space adjacent to the Elementary School on Common Way Road.

On November 15, 2004, the City Council clarified park ownership and maintenance responsibilities by approving an Interlocal Agreement Regarding Certain Parks. The Agreement specifically identified 47 acres of resource-based parks that would be developed by the Urban Orlando Community Development District (CDD) but remain open

to the public.

On January 9, 2006, the City Council approved a City Parks Development and Reimbursement Agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, the developer was allowed to contract for the design and construction of City parks within the PD. The purpose of the agreement was to speed the design and construction of park improvements and reduce costs by utilizing contractors already under contract or actively engaged in construction activities at Baldwin Park.

PD Amendments

Proposed amendments to the PD are classified as Substantial Amendments, Presumed-Non-Substantial Amendments or Minor Modifications. Each type of amendment is defined in Exhibit 12-B of the PD. Substantial amendments must be reviewed by the Municipal Planning Board and City Council through the public hearing process provided in Chapter 65 of the City's Land Development Code. Presumed Non-Substantial amendments are reviewed by the Baldwin Park Town Design Review Committee (TDRC). If the TDRC determines that an amendment is Non-Substantial and recommends approval, the minutes and actions of the TDRC are sent to City Council for final action. Minor Modifications may be approved by the Planning Official on a site by site basis. Such changes may not exceed 20% of the numerical standards provided in the Neighborhood Master Plan or Residential Design Guidelines.