

Ormond Beach seeks residents' input on new beachfront park

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ORMOND BEACH -- Residents voted to fund a beachfront park last year; 4 acres at the edge of the sea now belong to the city.

The property at 839 S. Atlantic Ave. was dedicated as "Ormond Beach's Andy Romano Beachfront Park." The land was purchased last year for \$5.5 million and approved by voters last August.

Now it's time to design the amenities, and Ormond Beach citizens can help.

Two informal public meetings are scheduled where residents can "discover, imagine and choose" what the new park will look like, said Beth Lemke, community engagement manager for Zev Cohen & Associates, the civil engineering company managing the project.

The meetings purposely are not at City Hall, since city officials are not in charge.

The first gathering is scheduled for 6 p.m. Tuesday at The Casements, 25 Riverside Drive.

If you can't make it to that one, a second meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the Senior Center ballroom, 351 Andrews St., with the same agenda.

The city's website sets out the "Engagement Plan," which details the procedures to be followed, beginning with a mission statement. The aim is to have ample off-beach parking and maximum access and enjoyment. The intent is to maintain an ocean view and natural dunes, according to the plan.

A copy of the plan is available at the library, at the city planner and engineer's offices.

"We will show up with a notepad and take ideas," said M. Dwight Durant, Zev Cohen president. Tables with exhibits, illustrations and conceptual plans will "get juices flowing." A questionnaire is available, he said.

While certain setback rules and restrictions govern what can be put on the property, no preconceived plans are in place, he said. "Our intent isn't to answer questions or provide any pro or con. It's more like brainstorming."

Lemke gave an idea of the types of things people might have to offer. "What do you think of as a special place that will leave a lasting impression?" she asked. "Architecture, landscaping, specific little things -- like playgrounds, picnic benches. What kinds of things would you like to see?"

Armed with input and ideas, Durant said his company will put together a conceptual plan and then have a follow-up meeting. Following that, a refined plan will be brought to city leisure

services and quality-of-life boards, and the City Commission, before any work is put out for bid. All those are public meetings.

"You voted to tax yourself for it. Now give us some ideas about what you want in it. Put your mouth where your money is," Mayor Ed Kelley said. "It's the park for the people, and we want as many to offer their input as possible."