Old Deerfield could be transformed as “Pioneer Grove” say planners

By Judy Wilson

Deerfield Beach
Planning experts were in town last week and they put their microscopic views of land use to a 10-block area around city hall, just east of the Florida East Coast Railroad.

Using the working name, Pioneer Grove, they studied what’s there now, what could be there, what should be there, and how to make the changes that would allow “old Deerfield” to become a vibrant retail, restaurant and governmental center.

Pete Pointner, a consultant from Illinois who headed up the team, said there are 70 acres of vacant land in the study area from the Hillsboro Canal south to SE 5 Ct. The vacant land is largely controlled by several people Pointner said, and the team met with them and two dozen other “stakeholders” to discuss their visions for the city’s oldest neighborhood.

One site of particular interest is Deerfield Builders’ Supply. The 60-year-old company at Hillsboro Blvd and SE 2 Ave. closed several years ago and a purchase is pending that would place storage units there. Looking at a higher use of the parcel, the planners determined that there is room for other businesses such as a brewery and a “footprint” was presented to the buyer.

“The brewery can be done without constraining the economics of the storage units,” Pointner said,” and in fact, would enhance the economic value of the parcel.” Another area of interest make this everyone’s neighborhood,“ Pointner said.
The planners were mindful that Tri-Rail has designated

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Grove

Continued from page 9 was land along the FEC tracks which lends itself to becoming an artisan, craft center.

The planners were mindful that Tri-Rail has designated Deerfield Beach for a train station, that public spaces are needed in the area, that a circulation system for bikes, cars, pedestrian and transit stops should be considered, that streetscapes need improvement and that schools and churches, the beach and neighborhoods west of Dixie Highway are part of the regional context.

Some of this is already underway Pointner said, referring to the state’s plan to modernize Hillsboro Blvd. with its Complete Streets concept. Traffic signal lights will be synchronization along Hillsboro, he added.

The planners are all volunteers from the American Planning Association who brought along only one paid staffer, Ryan Scherzinger, who estimated had the city paid for these services the bill could well have approached $80,000.

Each volunteer went home with an assignment and will report back to Pointner and Scherzinger. Their evaluations should be forthcoming within three months, Pointner said.

The APA concentrates its pro bono assistance on small towns or neighborhoods within metropolitan areas Scherzinger said. Some other locales where they have worked are Pine Hills in Orlando, Franklin, TN., La Feria, TX and Seven Ranches in Maricopa, AZ.