

2012-2013 STATE OF THE VILLAGE ADDRESS

Mayor Cindy Lerner

January 31, 2013
Pinecrest Gardens

We are about to celebrate our 17th Anniversary as a municipality, so it is important to take a moment to appreciate all that we have accomplished, know where we are, and to determine what our goals are and what we need to do to accomplish them.

Last year, at the State of the Village, we celebrated having just been named by the South Florida Business Journal as the best city for quality of life in all of South Florida. That did not come without a lot of vision and commitment to a high quality of life as the guiding star, in determining budgetary and policy priorities.

The first ten years were spent creating our governance structure, determining what capital improvements were needed to deliver public services to the Village's residents and build the infrastructure. The Pinecrest Municipal Center/Police Station was completed in 2004, the Pinecrest Community Center and library in 2008. The community center has been a tremendously popular facility, with programming for all ages, and is generating revenue to cover more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the operating expenses. We have outgrown the facility already in many respects, and the Village Council along with our Community Center Advisory Committee will be looking at the potential for long range expansion plans during this year. Most of our parks had been here for decades; those of us who grew up here, or raised families here before incorporation have fond memories of playing at Suniland and Coral Pine parks. But the acquisition of the properties that have become Flagler Grove Park and Evelyn Greer Park were strategic investments by earlier Village Councils that brought us closer to recommended acreage of park space for the population we serve. The purchase of Parrot Jungle in 2002 was a major acquisition, costing over \$12 million, some of which came from state and county funding, the rest we continue to pay debt service of \$752,000 a year. Yet it was a brilliant decision by the Village Council at the time. Ever since then, many decisions have had to be made to determine how to best maximize the use of the property and find its highest and best use. I am happy to report that this past year, we have finally received the designation we sought over the past few years, we are now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Perhaps one day again in the future, the Federal government will allocate funding for restoration of these sites and we are now eligible. Initially, the Village Council, in 2002, hired consultants to recommend programming and land use, some of which were immediately implemented such as building the community center and the library. Other recommendations were rejected and still others have taken much longer to realize. The residents of Pinecrest continue to have a \$1.6 million annual operating expense for Pinecrest Gardens, which is why this Village Council, over the past four years, has worked to find revenue generating amenities. We decided the first order of business was to create a stand alone department, which we did and hired the first director, Alana Perez. We brought in a cultural arts consultant to advise us on whether we could make the Banyan Bowl into a true cultural arts venue and with their analysis and input, we moved forward with our stage, sound system and lighting. We now boast one of the foremost jazz series, music

and theatrical, and film programs in all of South Dade. If you have not yet attended one of these programs, you don't know what you are missing. We have hosted tens of thousands of patrons, including our school students and many non-profit groups over the past three years; a majority of them from this community. As a result, the revenue generated has increased from \$214,000 a year to \$404,000, almost doubled in three years.

The botanic gardens have been lovingly nurtured by our horticulturalist, Craig Morell, and a hard working and committed staff, volunteers and significant donations from the Pinecrest Garden Club and the Community Garden Charitable Fund. The charitable fund and the garden club also donate significant sums to enhancement of the gardens and for that we say thank you. In addition, the Villagers have made significant donations to facility improvements such as at the Hammock Pavilion this year. The Pinecrest Gardens Advisory Committee, created by Village Council resolution, provides ongoing review and recommendations for how to enhance the facility, identify needs and make recommendations. They have combed through every foot of the gardens and proposed a master plan for improvements needed, which the Village Council adopted. This will guide us in budgeting for future needs and prioritizing those needs. This past year we completed our membership program, have installed all new signage for the 100 most important plants, catalogued and photographed them for a botanic booklet available to the public and just installed a self guided phone tour. Our farmers market is one of the best in all of the Miami area, and provides our residents with some of the best in organic home grown vegetables and delicious baked goods and delicacies.

One thing is still missing, that is a restaurant. As we all remember, the Cypress Hall was the restaurant first at Parrot Jungle and then at the gardens. Having a 4,500 sq. ft. space sit gutted and dormant all this time is not for want of trying. The history of the efforts is important to understand:

In 2006, the Village Council decided to seek a restaurant to come in and provide food services, and a bid was released asking for a restaurateur who would invest their own money in building out the space and then running a restaurant. No one responded to that RFP. Over the next several years an arrangement was negotiated with a local restaurant but now the financial obligation was to be on our taxpayers to build a restaurant, for more than a million dollars. This Village Council rejected that plan in 2009. In 2010, as part of our strategic planning, the survey that was conducted indicated that 70% of the respondents said that replacing the restaurant was important or very important to them. And for the past two years we have been moving cautiously ahead, first waiting for the economy to improve and then bringing in a restaurant consultant to guide us, analyze the prospects and help us develop the RFP. I am pleased to inform you that we have had a proposal submitted by a well known and popular restaurant group, which would be a perfect fit for the Village and we are now in the process of negotiating with them. For those of you who are part of the 70% who believe having a restaurant is important or very important, you should plan to attend the Council meetings to discuss the plans and you must let the council know of your continuing support, as there is a very vocal minority of neighbors who are working against the community's best interest. Be sure to attend the meetings and stay involved. We should not only hear from the naysayers while the vast

majority who want and expect us to move this item forward stay home thinking things are moving along nicely.

To update you on our progress in meeting the goals we established in our five year Strategic Plan which we undertook in 2009 and finalized in April 2010, it will be reviewed this year after we seek further input from our residents with new surveys. It has served as our guidepost for planning, budgeting and enhancing our infrastructure and will continue to serve as a tool for decision making going forward.

Financial stability was a top priority, and has improved as the economy does. Over this past year, we implemented many of the goals we established in the 2010 plan to diversify our revenue streams by creating several new impact fees, and because the need to finalize the water connection to the county water system remains a high priority, we created a fund for expanding infrastructure of our water mains by an annual investment in that capital project of \$75,000 to enable more residents to connect to the county water system. We continue to apply for grants to support the planning and improvements to transportation, parks, community center, and Pinecrest Gardens.

We welcomed our new Police Chief, Samuel Ceballos, Jr., who we are so proud to have risen from the ranks, shown leadership over the past ten years he served in Pinecrest and built a much more cohesive department, that has attained the highest standards and who work so beautifully with our residents to assure safety and security throughout the community. Some of his new initiatives include:

A Crime Suppression Team - During the month of July, in response to an increase in residential burglaries, the Police Department created a new unit called the Crime Suppression Team (CST). This unit consists of three officers whose primary function is proactive patrol of targeted locations throughout the Village, to identify and investigate suspicious and criminal activity, apprehend offenders, deter criminals and educate the public on crime prevention measures. The unit is comprised of uniformed officers who work closely with the Detective Bureau personnel. Detectives conduct a crime pattern analysis and share the results of their findings with CST members. Some crime trends are best combated using covert tactics. Thus when certain trends emerge, the CST team is deployed in an undercover capacity, driving unmarked vehicles and dressed in civilian clothes. This unit augments the Operations Division uniformed patrol officers assigned to daily patrols.

Crime Prevention Outreach Program - One of the many functions of the Detective Bureau is to conduct an analysis on crime occurring in the Village. The goal of this analysis is to determine if there is a trend and attempt to predict where and when the next incidents may occur and deploy the necessary resources. A study of one particular crime—vehicle burglaries—revealed that 73% of all vehicle burglaries reported to the Police Department are committed to vehicles that were left unlocked. Citizens can reduce the chance of becoming a victim by locking car doors and keeping valuable items out of plain view. The Police Department recently started a new program that involves officers and community service aides distributing crime prevention flyers to the public. These informational flyers give residents valuable crime prevention tips, to reduce their chances of becoming a victim of residential or vehicle burglary. This initiative provides a good opportunity for the Police

Department to interact with the public while also educating them. Since the beginning of August, officers have conducted 1,500 such contacts. The Police Explorers have also been involved in the initiative. They have been going door-to-door to all residential properties in the Village on the weekend and passing out flyers throughout the neighborhood. Such activities help the Police Explorers earn community service hours while also developing their understanding of community policing. The Police Department is anticipating reaching every residence in person. Our Crime Prevention Officer is involved in an ongoing effort to expand our Neighborhood Crime Watch program and will soon be coordinating monthly block parties that will be moved throughout different neighborhoods in the Village to promote the crime watch program and the other crime prevention initiatives of the Police Department. The block parties will allow the Police Department to set up an information center right in each neighborhood and collect contact information for residents, give crime tips and increase awareness.

The Police Department recently implement a real-time messaging service (NIXLE) to provide residents who subscribe to this free service with news and information that is proximate and personally relevant. Residents without access to a computer, or those without smart phones, will be able to receive information via this messaging service on their cell phones. This is the most effective channel for community outreach, public relations and emergency mitigation, since over 85% of the public can be reached on their mobile phone by text message. The Police Department is also developing a web based crime mapping software application that will allow residents to see all crimes on a map, filter by crime type and date, etc.... to focus on patterns that may be of particular interest to them. This service allows residents to receive free crime alerts via e-mail. Thank you Chief and the entire Police Department.

In April of last year we embarked upon a process to create a vision and build community consensus for the future development and re-development, beautification and enhancement of the US 1 Corridor. It included recommendations on updating our parking codes, landscaping, zoning codes, beautification, and connectivity. This was one of the goals established in the five year plan. This six month process provides us with a roadmap which we will begin implementing this next year. Our US 1 Corridor was, like many of our homes, built over 50 years ago, and mainly consists of a series of strip shopping centers coming to the end of their useful lives and desperately in need of updating. When owners decide to redevelop, or to sell to a new owner who will redevelop, it should have our stamp of community standards, and in fact will provide opportunities to improve our commercial sector and enhance the economic viability. We have more demands for landscaping and beautification, and improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation as well as economic incentives to build sustainably. Thanks to the dozens residential and commercial owners and others who participated in this process and helped us build the plan.

And no discussion of the US 1 corridor is complete without mention of the proposed FPL monstrosity transmission lines, a battle which we will continue to fight. One of the strategic plan's goals is to continue to uphold the resolution we passed in 2010 urging the Department of Environmental Protection to suspend FPL site certification application for transmission lines along US 1. The hearing is finally scheduled to take place on July 8th

here in Miami, and we continue that fight in coalition with South Miami, Coral Gables and Miami.

Our Transportation Advisory Committee has worked hard to analyze the issues, seeking resident input on sidewalk planning, and adding criteria to our planning process. They are reviewing the Safe Routes to School analysis and recommendations from our consultants. We received a grant to implement Phase 1 and will then determine next steps and set a schedule to implement those recommendations. They have recommended traffic calming measures, speed limit reductions, bicycle paths and lanes, transit and other transportation options both in the interior and state and county roads that border our Village. Thank you to our committee for their service.

I am most proud of our Pinecrest People Mover, and they said it couldn't be done!!! It is our free transit system which began as a pilot project in January 2012 and has steadily grown in ridership and popularity over the year, and now boasts two routes each for the middle school and high school, transporting students to and from school, reducing congestion around the schools during rush hour and reducing carbon emissions for cars which no longer have to make those trips to school and back, providing trips after school dismissal and then later in the afternoon to accommodate those involved in afterschool activities - ridership has grown to a daily average of 30-40 students a day per route.

In our strategic planning process, 56% wanted more sidewalks and 54% wanted more bikeways. More lighting was the first priority that residents identified as needing most improvement in the survey. In fact, 66% of residents want more street lights, yet we have not moved that forward, so I will be asking the Village Council to make that a priority this year.

Our strategic plan includes as a priority environmental sustainability, specifically the goal is to minimize our community's impact on the environment with increased energy efficiency and growth management policies. As you know, one of my very first acts upon becoming mayor in 2008 was to sign the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, committing to strive to meet or beat the Kyoto protocol targets in our community. We then set about to determine where we as a community were, we created a Green task force, developed a Green Action Plan, initiated a recycling program throughout our parks and municipal buildings. In January 2010, we held a Going Green workshop, *Barriers and Best Practices*, co-hosted by the Florida City and County Managers Association, the Florida League of Cities and the Florida Institute of Government. We also began our yearly celebration of Earth Day with the annual festival in Pinecrest Gardens. Last year, we kicked it up a notch by closely analyzing all of our operations, evaluated our criteria, and created new standards and, in May 2012, were awarded the designation by Florida Green Building Coalition as a *Certified Florida Green Local Government* for 2012-2017.

Our second major accomplishment was to partner with Caroline Lewis, founder of Fairchild Challenge and now the Cleo Institute, to inform and engage our community to understand their part in reducing our impact on the environment, *The Lorax*, and *Over the Hedge* and *Carbon Nation*, which we will be showing again in April for elected officials with a special panel discussion. And we continue to host many other presentations and

panel discussions including one on sea level rise and a workshop on solar electric design by Solar Energy International, to educate our community on the design, installation and use of solar energy. We entered a float in the Junior Orange Bowl Parade to showcase solar energy and are instituting an environmental education program at the gardens.

We purchased our first electric vehicle, a Nissan Leaf and installed a charging station, saving in fuel consumption. The Ford Focus used \$760 in fuel charges last year and the 2012 Nissan Leaf will use \$184.00 based upon the same mileage, saving us \$576 per year, over the life of the car, more than \$5,000 on that one vehicle and, more importantly, reducing our carbon emissions and meeting those sustainability goals. We continue to lead by example, showing our community the state of art in solar, hosting training programs, and exhibiting solar demonstration projects in our five local schools to educate our student population and their families about renewable energy.

In this coming year, our next step is to conduct a community greenhouse gas emissions inventory and forecast that will allow us to benchmark community sustainability performance, measure progress and plan effectively for the future. Our schools are also keeping logs of their energy and emissions.

Our Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program is now operational, after several years of planning. It allows property owners to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects for their homes and for commercial buildings. It is an entirely VOLUNTARY program; you must opt in to participate. The financing is repaid through an assessment on your property taxes for up to twenty years. This spreads the cost of energy improvements over the expected life of the improvement and allows the repayment obligation to transfer automatically to the next property owner if the building is sold. Our website has a lot more information about the program and I encourage you to explore it.

Our streets, trees, signage, and drainage are maintained by the hard working Public Works Department that receive high praise from our residents and go far beyond, to work with our Youth Council to help them build an award winning float for the Junior Orange Bowl Parade, work closely with our schools and have forged a real partnership with the community . Thank you Dan Moretti and your staff.

The strategic plan's goal of Residential Character and Community Enhancements recognizes that the high quality public schools are one of the most significant factors contributing to property values, and that our ongoing commitment to partnering with the school district will continue to assure we provide resources to our schools. Toward that end, the Educational Advisory Council is an amazing resource. Meeting monthly are the five principals, all five PTAs, school district representatives, and our wonderful school board member, Dr. Larry Feldman, as well as community advocates. This year we have seen several new and noteworthy initiatives. We have brought in the *No Place for Hate/Community of Respect Program* for bullying prevention, which in addition to the training component and programming that goes on in each of our five schools this year, we are reaching out to the community to raise awareness, by hosting community-wide events. In September, we hosted the International Day of Peace here in the gardens, and on February 11th we have proclaimed it *One Million Acts of Kindness Week* in Pinecrest, which will be emphasized in all five schools, culminating on Sunday February 17th when

we will be hosting a free screening of the film *Bully*, the first feature documentary film to show how we have all been affected by bullying, whether as victims, perpetrators or stood as silent witnesses. Also this past year, we raised \$50,000 through the SmARTy Dog program to bring new technology to our public schools. Right now, we are working hard on our newest fundraiser for the schools, *Fashion in the Gardens*, on March 1st which I encourage you all to attend. It will be a fabulous event, with an amazing silent auction, and marketplace, a live auction of our next generation of SmARTy dogs, and cats, called Teachers Pets - which will be a live auction, a fashion show and then a beautiful luncheon in the meadow. Tickets are on sale online on our website or by asking any of our five school PTAs.

Our senior activities program run by Janice Drawing has blossomed into a full fledged multi-faceted program including lecture series, exercise and wellness programs, social events, weekly game days, and, of course, the twice a year Pinecrest Pioneer luncheon. The Senior Focus newsletter is always available at the community center and a link is also included in the monthly E-News - have you subscribed?

The 21st century bond program was another opportunity to work collaboratively with the school district and the pressure is now on to demand that our high school have some of the buildings replaced. We made sure the district heard directly from the principals and the PTAs about what they saw the needs to rehabilitation and enhancements. I am pleased to be Dr. Feldman's designee on the bond oversight board. As a Proud Palmetto Alumni, class of '70, I am very happy to tell you we finally have an alumni association, the bylaws and articles of incorporation have been filed, the founding board recruited, they are meeting next week and we are off and running.

Our Youth Advisory Council is in its fourth year, with fifteen middle and high school students to whom we provide leadership and civic opportunities. Each month there is a presentation by one of our department directors about their position and responsibility. For example, they recently had a tour of the Police Department by Chief Ceballos. They worked on a float for Junior Orange Bowl and twice won the award for best earth friendly design. They become ambassadors for the Village to their peers. Applications open in June each year, and close in August.

As we expand our infrastructure and programming, we are also expanding our formal relationships. We will sign a twinning agreement next Friday, February 15th with our first sister city when the Mayor of the city of Cognac France, along with members of his delegation will visit and sign agreement, which will provide opportunities for cultural, educational, business, and tourism exchange programs for our students and our families. *Sister Cities International*, founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, serves as the national membership organization for individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States. This network unites tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers in programs in 136 countries on six continents. It helps advance peace and prosperity through cultural, educational, humanitarian, and economic development efforts, and serves as a hub for institutional knowledge and best practices to benefit citizen diplomats. *Sister Cities International* empowers individual citizens to become diplomats and represent their community and their country in new and meaningful ways.

Pinecrest's Citizen Academy, a once a year opportunity will begin on March 12th, so sign up now. And we have ongoing advisory committees that meet to receive resident input and make recommendations to the Village Council.

I see civic responsibility as having different levels for one to attain: beginners, intermediate and advanced. Beginners level is registering to vote, informing yourself about candidates and issues and being an informed voter. Intermediate level is involving yourself in helping a candidate that you admire, or working on an issue campaign you believe in. Advanced is actually running for office to make a difference in your community. I hope you will consider your civic involvement and take the next step to become more involved in the Village.

Thanks to our Village Council, our advisory boards and committees and to our wonderful committed staff, our Manager, Village Clerk and Village Attorney, for helping to make Pinecrest a perfect place to live and raise a family.