



# From The Desk Of DEAN TRANTALIS

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

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## Holiday lessons. Our work continues.

The recent debate over the Vintro hotel project on the beach brought to mind a conversation I once had with the late Art Stone, a man of humble beginnings who was everyone's friend.

During my first term, a newspaper article accused me of not obtaining a building permit for work in my co-op apartment. The truth was that the permit had been applied for and I was waiting for the city to issue it.

When I told Art how upsetting it was to see the way that some people make great sport out of denigrating the reputations of public officials, Art simply said, "Son, don't let these bastards get you down. You need to be a fighter because they don't like who you are or what you represent.

When the City Commission took up the Vintro project for discussion, attorney William Scherer staged an ambush attack against me. Everyone in the commission chambers was stunned. He assumed that victory was assured by knocking out my vote.

It was no coincidence that earlier in the evening, the city gave Art's widow, Shirley Stone, a wonderful award for her community service. I had sat with her before the meeting and we talked about Art and the lessons he taught me. Art was there for me once again.

My hope since being elected has been to start a dialogue on issues that people have been begging to discuss such as pension reform, homeless problems, neighborhood infrastructure improvements and development.

My efforts have not been welcomed by everyone.

In fact, just discussing them in a new way seems to have threatened those who are quite comfortable with the status quo. I have received threatening letters, and I have no doubt that Scherer is simply the latest hired gun to try to demean my status in order to weaken my impact on important decisions that we must face.

Well, it's not going to happen. I have gained even more resolve to continue my fight for what the people are demanding.

In that regard, here are some important updates of work underway in District 2.

The city hosted two significant meetings last month – one about traffic along **Las Olas Boulevard** and the other about future development in the **North Beach Village** area.

At the Las Olas meeting, traffic consultants offered suggestions to improve the route that residents of the beach and Las Olas Isles must take between home and downtown. They also addressed managing speeds on Las Olas, enhancing the street for pedestrians and bicyclists, and reducing cut-through traffic on side streets.

The dialogue will continue until we find the best solution.

The North Beach workshop drew a tremendous crowd of more than 150 residents, stakeholders, and business owners to build consensus on how to create a vibrant community. City staff will soon bring ideas to the commission on how to reflect the neighborhood's desires in design guidelines, streetscape standards and land-use ordinances.

We also received good news about the passenger rail service planned for the Florida East Coast railroad tracks. **All Aboard Florida** announced it will locate its downtown station in the Progresso Village-Flagler Village area just north of Broward Boulevard.

All Aboard selected the location to provide convenient connections to other transit. They expect it to spur



Photo: Courtesy of Art Seitz

economic development throughout that area of town.

Work continues as well on a major public works project to install new sidewalks and pedestrian lights in **Progresso Village**. The City Commission recently committed an additional \$300,000 to supplement \$600,000 previously earmarked.

The extra money ensures the sidewalks will be wider, more lights added and drainage and landscaping improvements undertaken.

We're all concerned about crime, and the city has formed a first-of-its-kind partnership with IBM to develop **crime prevention** tactics using advanced data analysis.

As the National League of Cities noted in a report about the partnership, the plan is to "create a holistic crime prevention strategy incorporating a variety of complex sources of big data including 911 call records, crime records, public transportation routes, code enforcement and building permit activity."

In closing, I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season. I wish all a health and prosperous 2014.

Sincerely,

Dean

# City ranks high in national surveys

Fort Lauderdale has been making national headlines lately as a great place to live and visit.

The city was named one of the Top 100 Best Places to Live by Livability.com, a national website that ranks quality of life amenities of America's small and mid-sized cities. Fort Lauderdale ranked number 24 on the list nationwide and number 3 in the state.

Livability.com partnered with the Martin Prosperity Institute, a think tank on the role of location and city-regions in global prosperity. They conducted a study of more than 1,700 U.S. cities and the factors that make them the best places to live and work.

Meanwhile, Good Morning America reported that Fort Lauderdale has been named one of the top 10 cities for families to visit.

According to the morning show, Family Vacation Critic, an online family travel planning guide, ranked Fort Lauderdale alongside such places as New York and San Francisco as good urban destinations based on a survey of its readers.

The study looked at attractions, hotel and restaurant choices, public transportation and affordability.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation recently released their annual evaluation of cities looking at their positions regarding the gay and lesbian community. Fort Lauderdale received a score of 77 out of 100 possible points, ranking in the top third of cities in Florida.

That's a significant improvement over last year, a gain of almost 25 percent. The progress illustrates the city's commitment to being a diverse and inclusive community.

Still, the city has room for improvement as neighboring cities such as Wilton Manors and Oakland Park scored better.

Fort Lauderdale also ranked among the top 10 cities in a report entitled Best Place for Veterans. Low unemployment rates for veterans, job growth, and access to health care contributed to the conclusion.

Finally, the city was recently named "Most Outstanding Green Government" by the South Florida chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.

The award recognizes a local government that implements progressive initiatives and demonstrates an overall commitment to sustainability. Initiatives highlighted in Fort Lauderdale's entry reflected the city's community-wide effort to identify and apply practices to create a sustainable place to live.



Commissioner Trantalis joins in the presentation of a community appearance WOW award to Michael and Marjorie Wilson of 501 Seven Isles Drive for the beautification of their property.



Photo: Courtesy of Chima's

Commissioner Trantalis joins Mayor Jack Seiler in honoring the 10th anniversary of Chima Brazilian Steakhouse on Las Olas Boulevard.



Commissioner Trantalis joins staff from the city's Information Tech Services Department to recognize Geographic Information System "GIS" Day.