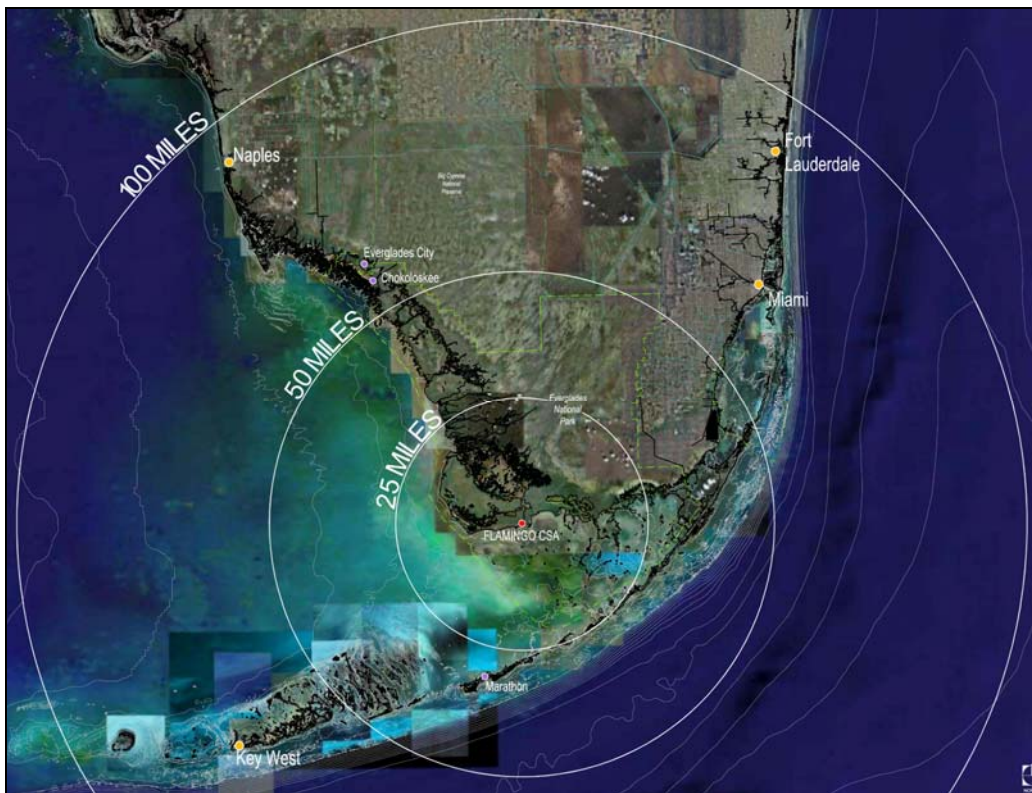


# Urban Land Institute

## Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council

### *Technical Assistance Panel for Everglades National Park Flamingo Commercial Services Plan*



August 4-5, 2008  
University of Florida/Miami Dade County Extension  
Homestead, Florida

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# Urban Land Institute

## Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council

### Technical Assistance Panels

#### *What are Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)?*

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Advisory Services Program has been assisting communities by bringing together week-long panels of seasoned real estate, planning, landscape architecture, financing, marketing, and development experts to provide unbiased pragmatic advice on complex land use and development issues. Several years ago, the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council began providing panel services of one or two days to address specific local government issues in areas such as housing, parking, redevelopment, and future land use development. The District Council has some 1,200 members spread along the east coast of Florida from Indian River County through the Florida Keys and from Puerto Rico.

#### *How Do TAPs Work?*

Sponsors request the services of a TAP with regard to a specific issue that can be addressed by a panel of experts in one or two days. The District Council assists the sponsor in refining the scope of the assignment and convenes a panel to address those specific issues. The sponsor works within ULI guidelines to provide background information to ULI panelists prior to the panel's convening. When convened, members of the TAP view the subject site, hear from public and private stakeholders, and then deliberate on the assigned issues. At the conclusion of its work, the panel presents an oral report to stakeholders; that is followed by a written report within approximately two weeks.

#### *What Do TAPs Cost?*

A fee is charged for the advisory service, but the panel members are not compensated for their time. The fee depends on the length of the actual TAP convening but is typically between \$15,000 and \$20,000, including panel expenses. Each TAP is different, and fees are negotiated individually with the client sponsoring one. Panel members donate their time and are only reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses, such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP. To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the sponsor, be working for the sponsor, or solicit work from the sponsor during the panel's assignment period.

#### *Who is ULI?*

ULI was founded in 1936 as a non-profit institute to facilitate the open exchange of ideas and information among local, national, and international real estate industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. Today it has more than 36,000 members worldwide. The ULI does not lobby or act as an advocate for any single industry. It is committed to providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities.

# Sponsors and Panel Members

## Sponsors

Everglades National Park, National Parks Conservation Association, South Florida National Parks Trust

## Everglades National Park Staff

Dan Kimball, Park Superintendent  
Everglades & Dry Tortugas National Parks

Fred Herling, Supervisory Park Planner  
Everglades & Dry Tortugas National Parks

## National Parks Conservation Association

John Adornato III, Regional Director  
Sun Coast Regional Office

Jill Horwitz, Senior Program Coordinator  
Sun Coast Regional Office

Kahlil Kettering, Biscayne Restoration Program Analyst  
Sun Coast Regional Office

## South Florida National Parks Trust

Don Finefrock, Executive Director  
South Florida National Parks Trust

## Panel Members (by discipline)

### *TAP Chair (Land Planner and Landscape Architect)*

Paul Kissinger, Principal  
EDSA

### *Land Planner and Landscape Architect*

Bill Estes, Senior Associate  
EDSA

### *Architect*

Rick Gonzalez, President  
REG Architects

### *Developers (public/private partnership expertise)*

Marc Kopelman, President  
20/20 Capital Partners

***Marina Expert***

Kirby G. Marshall, Marina Construction Specialist  
Applied Technology & Management, Inc.

***Attorney (public/private partnership specialty)***

Ken Neighbors, Of Counsel  
Greenberg Traurig

***Market Economist***

Paul Lambert, President  
Lambert Advisory Services

**ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council**

***TAP Vice Chair***

James R. Brindell, Shareholder  
Gunster Yoakley & Stewart, P.A.

***District Council Staff***

Carla Coleman, Executive Director  
Julie Medley, Coordinator  
Jean Scott, TAP Report Preparation  
Richard Tommer, Nova Southeastern Masters Student

***ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council***

2401 East Atlantic Blvd., Suite 400  
Pompano Beach, FL 33062  
Phone: 954-783-9504

# **Panel Process and Agenda**

## **Panel Process**

The Everglades National Park/Flamingo TAP process centered around the following three steps:

- Representatives from the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council, Everglades National Park, and others met to discuss issues relating to the rebuilding of the park and to the plans prepared to guide that redevelopment.
- ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council staff researched the Everglades National Park's goals for the TAP and, based on that research, selected the TAP members who had the expertise most tailored to addressing the issues raised by the Everglades National Park staff.
  - The TAP received a complete set of pre-meeting briefing materials about the goals and rebuilding plans for the Flamingo commercial services area, as articulated in the CSP.
  - The TAP met in Homestead on Monday August 4, and Tuesday, August 5, 2008, at the University of Florida/Miami Dade County Extension office. (A summary of the TAP agenda for the two-day meeting is presented below.)
- The TAP, under the leadership of the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council, prepared a report on its recommendations and conclusions.

## **Panel Agenda**

The agenda (included as Appendix A for the two-day TAP) was organized as follows.

On August 4, the panel began their orientation with a tour of the study area. The tour was followed by a public lunch meeting with representatives of the TAP sponsors (the Everglades National Park, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the South Florida National Parks Trust). Following lunch, the panel provided an opportunity for public comments. That evening, panel members met representatives of the TAP sponsor organizations in a public dinner meeting and later met informally to discuss their preliminary observations.

On August 5, the panel spent the morning working on the issues that the Everglades National Park staff had asked it to address. In the afternoon, the panel members presented their observations and recommendations to an audience of interested citizens and representatives of the sponsoring organizations. Both public sessions were well-attended by a wide variety of park users (particularly fishermen, kayakers, and cyclists) and staff members of the sponsoring organizations.

## **Background: The Flamingo Commercial Services Area**

The Everglades National Park, National Parks Conservation Association, and South Florida National Parks Trust convened the TAP to gain advice on plans to rebuild the hurricane-ravaged Flamingo area of the 1.5 million-acre Everglades National Park. With commanding views of the Florida Bay, the Flamingo commercial services area serves as a visitor's gateway to the most ecologically sensitive parts of the park and is its primary day-use and only overnight destination. The TAP was one of several initiatives to examine implementation of a new Commercial Services Plan (CSP) that was prepared to provide a new vision for the Flamingo area of the park. The TAP was asked to focus on several important issues related to implementing the CSP: sustainable development, partnerships, and funding opportunities.

### ***Its History, the Area Today and the Park It Serves***

#### **History and the Area Today**

The Flamingo commercial services area began in the late 1800s as a small coastal settlement. Residents of the settlement were relocated when the Everglades National Park was established in 1947. Located at the end of the 99-mile Ten Thousand Islands Wilderness Waterway and the southern end of the only road (running 38 miles) through the park from Florida City, the area has been a destination for anglers, boaters, birders, campers, and paddlers attracted by the visitor's center, lodge, marina, store, restaurant, cabins, and campgrounds.

In 2005, most of Flamingo's already aged facilities (built in the 1950s and 1960s) were severely damaged or destroyed by storm surges of up to nine feet during hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. The damaged facilities included the visitor's center, well-known Flamingo Lodge, restaurant, and cabins, as well as much of the employee housing. Although the marina and store have reopened, they are limited to daytime activity only, and visitor services remain reduced. In 2006, the National Parks Service (NPS) approved funding to examine how to best rebuild the Flamingo area and restore a full range of visitor uses, including overnight accommodations. The resulting plan, called the Commercial Services Plan, and related Environmental Assessment, were approved in July 2008. The TAP convened almost immediately after that approval.



*The Flamingo commercial services area (shown in the image above) has served as the gateway to the water- and land-based resources of the Everglades National Park for over 60 years. In 2005, the services area's facilities were destroyed by two back-to-back hurricanes, leading to a new redevelopment plan for the area.*





### **The Everglades National Park It Serves**

The 1.5-plus million-acre Everglades National Park preserves one of the world's truly unique systems. Located just 50 miles from Miami on the extreme southern section of the Florida peninsula, it is the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States and third largest national park in the contiguous 48 states. The park's designation as a Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance underscores the global importance of its biological resources. Those resources consist of sawgrass marshes, hardwood hammocks, mangrove swamps, lakes, the Florida Bay, and diverse animal life that includes alligators and the largest concentration of wading birds on the American continent. Residents from the area (and well beyond) view the park (especially the Flamingo area as a gateway to the Florida Bay) as special places to visit and return to year after year. They would like the facilities in the commercial services area to be rebuilt as quickly as possible.

### ***Planning Framework: A Green Vision for the Future***

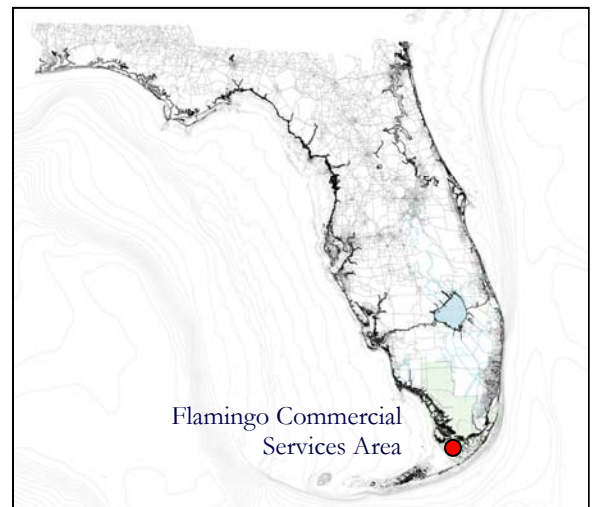
The Flamingo CSP provides an opportunity to rethink and redesign the area. The new green, sustainable vision for focuses on creating a sense of place through establishing connections to the fragile natural environment of the park, the history and culture of the park, the region, and the surrounding communities.

### **Plan Goals**

The CSP calls for reducing the commercial services area's development footprint. Its current suburban-style residential uses (lodging) are separated from commercial activity by distances best traveled by a bike or car, leading to large expanses of asphalt and concrete. In the new vision, development is concentrated into a much smaller area where cars are not necessary and visitors can easily walk from their room or tent to the boat ramp or restaurant.

Consistent with a set of guiding principles for sustainable redevelopment (outlined in Appendix B), the goals of the green, more sustainable, design are to:

- produce a considerably smaller footprint than currently exists on the land, thereby making the site a more walkable, less vehicle-dependent place with more services in a smaller area and creating opportunities to restore and protect the natural habitat.



*The Everglades National Park is located at the southernmost tip of the Florida peninsula. It offers visitors a glimpse into the largest tropical wilderness in the U.S. and a complex ecosystem designated as a worldwide resource.*



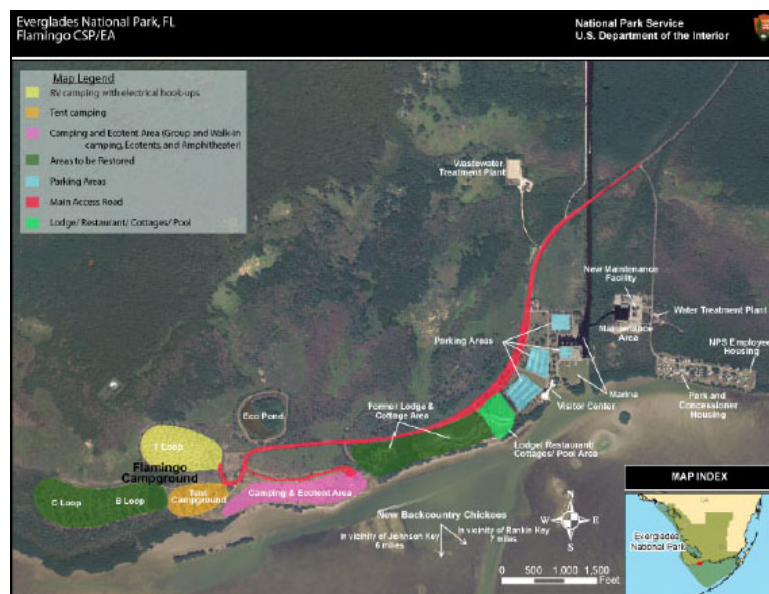
- practice green design and architecture that maximize passive cooling and wind- and storm surge-resistant design and materials, using Flamingo's world class natural setting to showcase new green technologies and emphasize use of recycled materials.
- provide a wider variety of visitor services and experiences (for example, children's activities, storytelling, and campfires in addition to activities offered in the past such as canoeing, birding, hiking, biking, and walking).
- create a sense of place that reflects the history and culture of the area and the region (for example, using architectural styles, landscape designs, and services that capture a sense of the old Florida unique to south Miami-Dade County).
- establish stronger connections with the park's gateway communities of Homestead and Florida City.



*When implemented, the vision for the Flamingo commercial services area will improve the visitor's experience through green site design and building technologies that create a South Florida ambience and restore natural habitat.*

## The Plan

The plan for the Flamingo Commercial Services Area (depicted in the image below and enlarged in Appendix E) is designed to enhance its role as a premier eco-tourism destination. Its eco-friendly, sustainable design takes into account the fragile natural environment, unique market, and high hazard flood zone location (keeping in mind that location will be impacted by the effects of future storm surges from hurricanes and potential sea level rise due to global warming). Described in more detail on the following page, the plan calls for a mix of commercial land- and water-based accommodations and educational and recreational activities that connect visitors to the Everglades' unique natural environment, culture, and history.



As highlighted below, features of the vision plan will allow the commercial services area to function more efficiently for visitors, concessionaires, and the park, and enhance walking and biking opportunities throughout the area with new trails and pathways. The plan calls for:

- demolition of what remains of the current lodge building and cottages, replacing them with an elevated 30-room lodge and restaurant located close to the east end of the old lodge and to 24 elevated cottage units.
- improvements to the marina area (the fueling station, marina basin, marina store, the docks, and boat lift) and marina services, including a new restaurant and other food and beverage services.
- restoration of the estimated 50 acres of natural areas no longer needed for park facilities.
- reconstruction of the amphitheater.
- provision of a variety of camping opportunities, including 130 tent camping sites (55 drive-in) located on Loop A where they are now, 72 walk-in camp sites located close to the existing ones, three group sites located close to the current group sites, and 40 eco-tents located along the shoreline and within walking distance of the walk-in and group camping areas). Forty RV sites with electric hook-ups are also planned in the same T-loop location where they were before the storms; two backcountry chickees will be located in Florida Bay in close proximity to Johnson and Ranklin Keys.
- replacement of the area's maintenance office/shop, employee housing, and boat repair shop.
- provision of a seasonal circular vehicle shuttle to transport visitors and a "Yellow Bike" system to provide them with an alternative form of transportation.

### ***Issues for the TAP***

The TAP was asked to focus on a number of key issues related to implementing the Flamingo CSP (the questions for the TAP are included as Appendix C). Those issues include how to best:

- achieve, through site design and building materials, a new Flamingo that is more sustainable, energy efficient, and hurricane resistant, thereby increasing the insurability of the area.
- reduce the development footprint and increase the green footprint (through the restoration and protection of natural resources) while still meeting visitor and operational needs.
- use the rebuilding of Flamingo as a teaching model to tell the story of the past and provide a laboratory that demonstrates innovative, climate-friendly, and sustainable site and building designs.
- establish a successful business model that enables what will likely be a phased approach to development and takes into account the need to attract public, corporate and private sector interest, support, and funding for rebuilding Flamingo.
- make the lodge, amenities, and services financially feasible for the park and concessionaires.

## Panel Response to the Everglades National Park's Strategic Questions

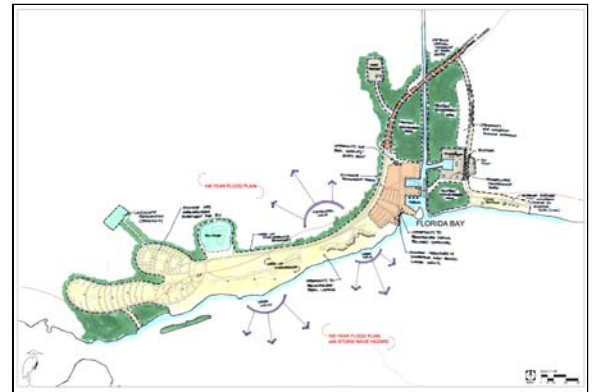
To respond to the issues raised by the Everglades National Park, the TAP divided its comments into two primary areas: Creating a Sustainable, Insurable Concept Plan and Developing a Successful Business Model and Financial Plan. (Note: The plan drawings depicted in the following TAP recommendations can be viewed in a larger size in Appendix E.)

### ***Creating a Sustainable, Insurable Concept Plan***

#### **Observations and Analysis: General Plan Concepts**

The TAP began its presentation with a set of seven general concepts to which a plan for the Flamingo commercial services area should adhere. Outlined below, the concepts were based on the TAP's observations and analysis of the area (illustrated in the image to the right).

- Maintain the current undisturbed areas and do not allow new interventions to occur in areas beyond those already disturbed by previous development activities.
- Redesign the disturbed areas to bring the Everglades back into the site and maximize views of the Florida Bay, thus enhancing the user experience.
- Create a better sense of arrival (more than a big parking lot) and create a gateway entry point.
- Enhance the marina area to provide more opportunities and greater ease of use for boaters, currently a primary user group.
- Provide a variety of lodging experiences for visitors to the park.
- Concentrate the intensity of land use close to the marina and visitor's center areas, thereby decreasing the intensity further into the site.
- Reorganize vehicular circulation and eliminate redundancies in the road network.



The TAP used its observations and analysis of the area (depicted in the image above) to develop a recommended plan for the Flamingo commercial services area (depicted in the image below).



The TAP's recommended plan for the Flamingo commercial services area is structured to follow a drive through the site, beginning with the arrival point, continuing through the marina area where fishing- and water-related functions are clustered, and concluding at the lodging areas (starting with the more intense residential uses and ending with the least intense ones).

## Plan Highlights

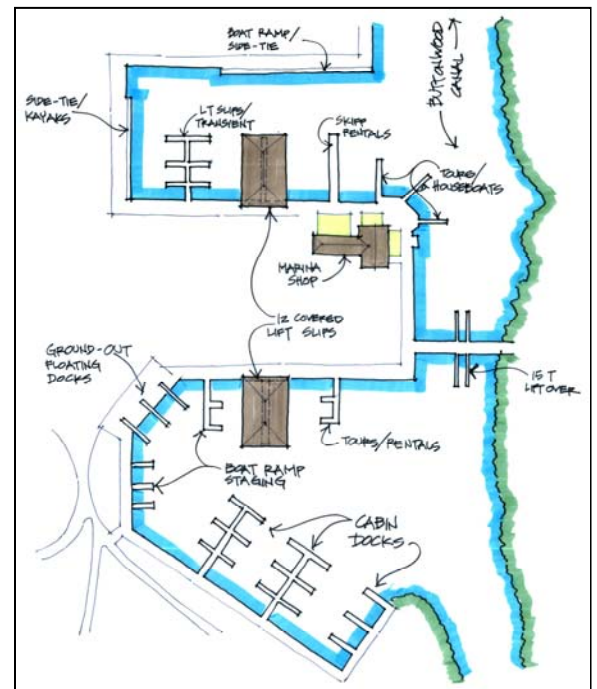
To respond to those general concepts, the TAP's recommended plan for the Flamingo commercial services area (depicted in the image to the right) focuses on making the area greener through green building and design practices that both protect the natural resources and reconnect people visiting the park to them. "Currently," the TAP observed, "the Flamingo commercial services area is like a man-made island in the park, which creates a disconnect between the services area and its natural surroundings. To correct the problem, the Everglades, which is the essence of what people come to see and love, needs to come back into the site." To reconnect the commercial services area to its green reason for being and to better serve all park users (e.g., families on a fishing trip, eco-tourists, birders, hikers, retirees in an RV, and boaters, kayakers, and canoers), the plan calls for:

- creating a more memorable arrival point (the sense of having arrived at an important destination)
- clustering marine and other common area uses in order to create a lively central activity center (and reduce the development footprint)
- maintaining and restoring natural areas (replacing the current suburban turf with native grasses and plants)
- offering a wide range of lodging opportunities, ranging from a lodge to primitive camping areas
- raising lodging to avoid damage from flooding, help reduce the development footprint by putting parking under the buildings and reducing surface lots, and maximize views of the Everglades and the water
- simplifying the spine road and reducing paved surfaces

Using a nature-based transect approach, the more intense commercial services area uses would be located closer to the marina and retail activity center, where the land is already disturbed and the existing infrastructure is located, and with the less intense uses in the form of camping further away, closer to the fragile natural areas. "The Everglades National Park," the TAP emphasized, "is a subtle park that requires careful planning."



*Shown above, the TAP plan's recommendations call for concentrating marine, retail, and National Parks Service administrative functions and employee housing in a compact marine and retail activity center that provides an easy walk between destinations.*



*The marina plan maintains the current bulkhead formation and configures the layout for boat slips and side-ties.*



### *Memorable Arrival Point*

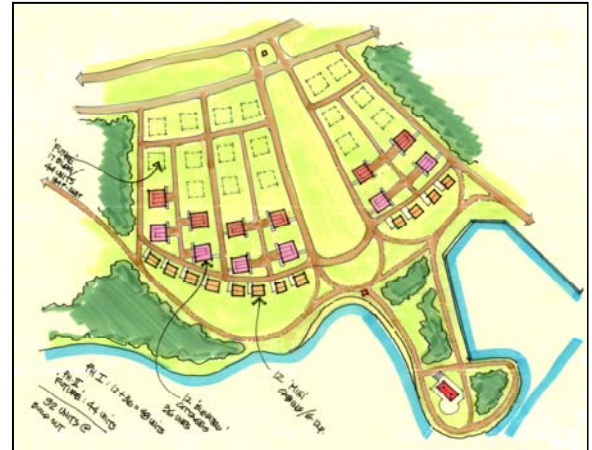
After a 38-mile drive through the Everglades to reach the Flamingo commercial services area, park visitors would first come upon the old Mission 66 gas station that would be renovated as an entry feature and possibly used as an Adventure Center (a place to rent recreational equipment and pick up park maps). The drive along the developed areas into the site would be planted to create a tree-lined natural corridor.

### *Marina Services and Retail Activity Center*

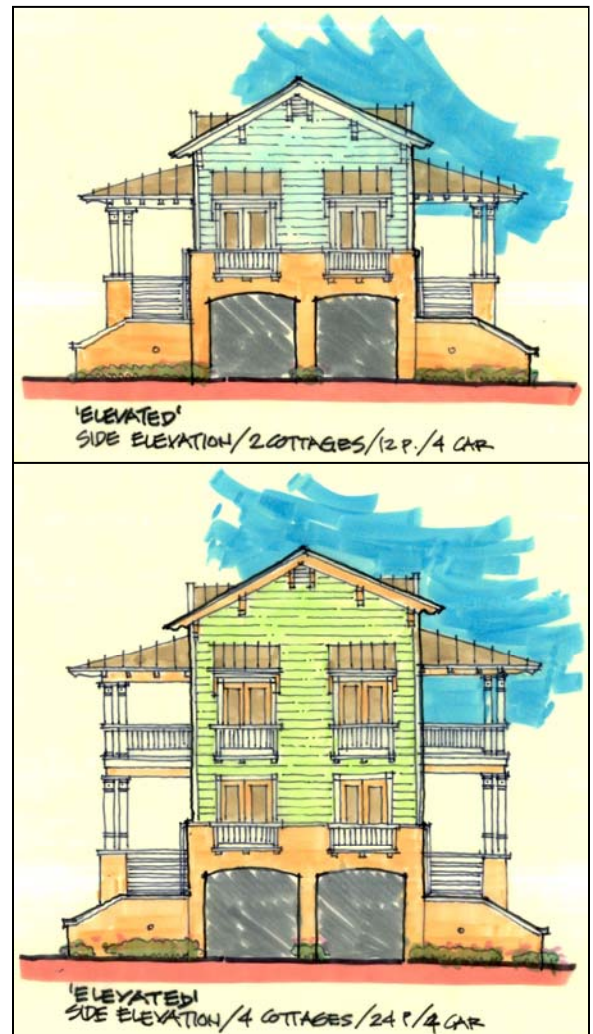
The first stop after arriving in Flamingo would be an improved and expanded marina services and retail activity center that would serve as the hub for the commercial services area. The center would contain space for a general store, restaurant, and marine services. Access to the marina would be directly off the primary circulation spine to ease unloading and loading of boats. Special paving would be used at the boat launching area to create a plaza and a sense of arrival. The existing parking, especially for boat trailers, would be reorganized but not reduced. In the revised parking arrangement, vehicles and trailers would be located adjacent to the freshwater marina and the Buttonwood Canal. A tree-lined boardwalk would connect the marina and retail services area to both the fresh and saltwater parts of the marina (described in the paragraph below) and continue on to the visitor's center.

The marina would remain split into two areas: (1) the fresh/brackish water side connecting to the Buttonwood Canal and (2) the saltwater side connecting to the Florida Bay. Both sides would maintain their current bulkhead configurations; the existing bulkheads, however, should be inspected for structural integrity and ability to support upland redevelopment.

On the freshwater side, the dock layout would be reconfigured to allow safe boat, kayak, and canoe launching areas as well as slips for houseboats, rental skiffs, tour boats, and transient berthing. Additionally, a number of covered boat slips with boat lifts could be offered on a long-term lease arrangement for frequent park users.



*Shown in the images above, the TAP plan recommends creating a fishing village adjacent to the marina. Depicted in the two images below, the village would consist of one- and two-story cottages that have parking below and are designed in the style of an old Florida fishing village.*



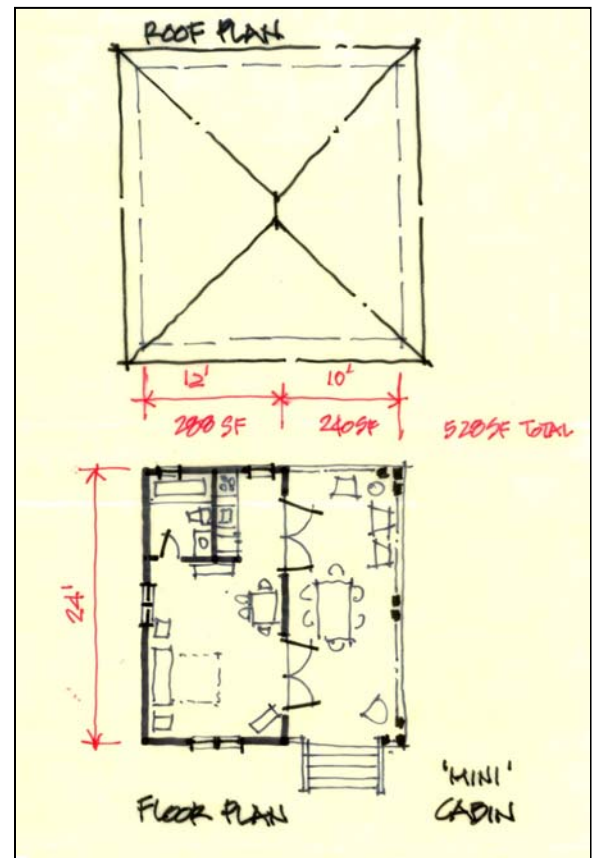
The layout for the saltwater marina would also be reconfigured. It would contain ground-out floating docks at the boat ramp to facilitate safe boat launching, an appropriate amount of boat ramp staging, and docks for tour and rental boats. A number of dedicated docks would also be provided to service the fishing village, as would six covered lift slips (similar to what is shown in the Buttonwood Canal basin). Between the two marinas would be a 15-ton marine travel lift that would replace the existing, non-functional lift over system. That lift would allow boaters arriving from the Keys and the saltwater side access to the freshwater side. An iconic observation tower would welcome visitors arriving by boat.

### *Fishing Village*

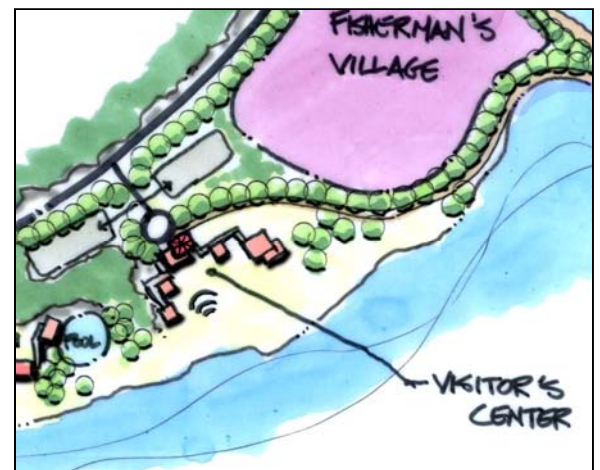
Just beyond the observation tower and adjacent to the marina would be a fishing village consisting of a combination of two-unit (one story) and four-unit (two stories) structures. The fishing cottages (pictured to the right) would be designed in the Florida vernacular architecture style of an old Key West or Caribbean fishing village, adding to the sense of place and calling attention to Flamingo's history.

Consistent with the principles of designing with nature and building green, the cottages would be designed to be more climate resistant and resilient. They would be elevated (by approximately nine feet) with parking below (reducing the amount of paved surfaced) and constructed with native materials that work better in a subtropical coastal climate (for example, to ease washing down after flooding, using hardi-plank instead of drywall and floor tile instead of carpeting).

Each cottage would offer 800 total square feet of sleeping quarters, small kitchens, bathroom facilities, and large screened-in porches that allow natural cooling and provide views of the surrounding landscape and water. Additional mini-cottages of 528 square feet each would offer the basic necessities for those who just need to clean up and spend the night indoors. The cottages would be separated by 20 foot wide alleys constructed of pervious pavement. Common areas would contain grills and picnic tables to encourage gatherings. The site is designed to allow a future expansion from the 20-to-24 units anticipated in the first stage of up to 92 units later on.



*The cottages for the fishing village follow a simple design and floor plan that take full advantage of breezes from the water and views of sunrises and sunsets.*



*Continuing from the fishing village, a visitor would first reach a new visitor's center (image above) and beyond it a series of residential uses (shown in the images on the next page).*



### *Visitor's Center*

Continuing into the site from the fishing village, a visitor would arrive at a new visitor's center. Illustrated to the right, the center would be configured not as one central building, but rather as a series of modules flanking a central iconic observation tower, similar to the tower at the marina. Each module would be connected by covered walkways. Green features would include pervious parking areas and the use of rain barrels to collect rainwater.

The visitor's center would contain spaces for educational opportunities, park administrative offices, a gift shop, and a formal restaurant, all overlooking the Florida Bay (a view enhanced by the raised building elevation). The site around the visitor's center would have a formal amphitheater, and the remainder would be restored using native grasses and plantings of the Everglades. A swimming pool would be located between the visitor's center and new lodging buildings, creating an additional core area of activity.

### *Lodging*

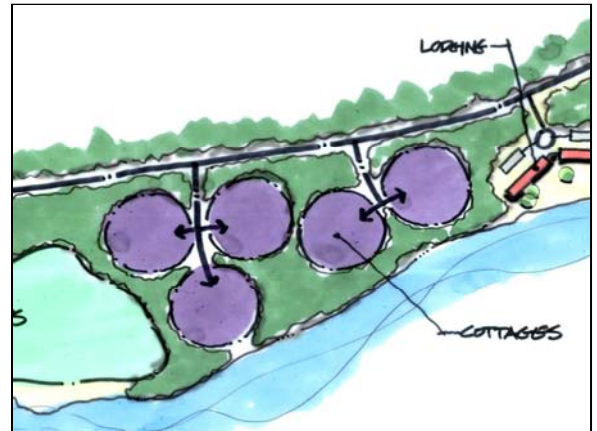
Illustrated in the images to the right, the residential areas of the commercial services area begin with two lodges placed immediately beyond the pool, thereby locating the most intense of the residential uses close to the more intense marine and retail activity centers. The two-story lodge buildings would contain hotel-like units designed as through-units to allow each unit to have water views while at the same time minimizing the footprint. The lodges would be elevated to allow parking below and protect the buildings from floodwaters that might impact the site during a storm event.

Continuing on from the lodges would be the less intense residential uses, beginning with an area for cottages. Approximately 25 cottages would be clustered in groups of five and raised to allow parking underneath, reducing the amount of pavement and avoiding damage from flooding. Illustrated on the following page, the cottages would be designed similar to those at the fishing village, but adapted as needed to accommodate families. To bring the Everglades into the area, each cluster would be surrounded by reconstructed habitat areas using native grasses and plants.

Beyond the cottages (ending the walk through the Flamingo commercial services area and located after passing through a naturalized corridor) are the camping areas (illustrated on page 16). Along the water would be an area for eco-tents that offer a camping experience with some of the



*Residential uses would range from two more intense lodges adjacent to the visitor's center (image above) to small cottages grouped in pods of five (image below) and then to less intense camping areas.*

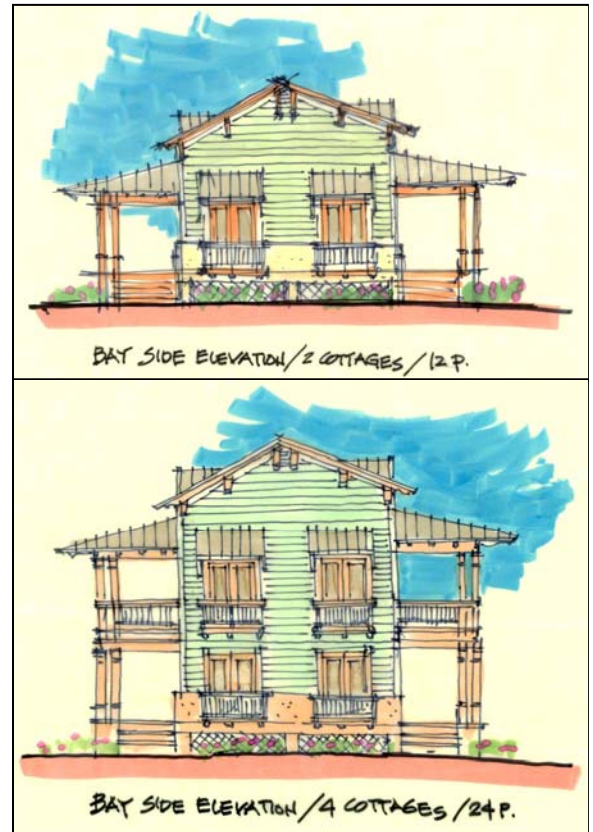




conveniences of more structured lodging (for example, private toilets, showers, solar energy, and kitchen, dining, and sleeping areas). The RV camping area would be located on its current, more inland location, and the walk-in camping would be situated at the farthest end of the site. The RV camping areas would be positioned to take advantage of previous infrastructure investments. It is also envisioned that the camping areas will be more naturalized than they are today to allow the Everglades back into the site and provide campers with an authentic Everglades experience.

#### *Areas for Employee Housing and Maintenance Facilities*

The portions of the commercial services area dedicated to employee housing and maintenance facilities (now near the marina) would remain in their current location, but designed to visually separate them from the portions of the services area dedicated to visitors. That separation would give employees the feeling of a home life separate from their park life. The staff housing would be reconfigured (as illustrated in the image on the next page) to include dormitory buildings (with common kitchen, dining, and living areas) for seasonal concessionaire staff; cottages and cabins for park staff; and recreational areas. The area adjacent to the access road for the maintenance facilities and staff housing could be used for potential future expansion of the concessionaire housing. (The maintenance facilities for the marina, the reverse osmosis (RO) plant, and waste water treatment areas would remain in their current locations, although some rebuilding, reorganization, and buffering would be required.)

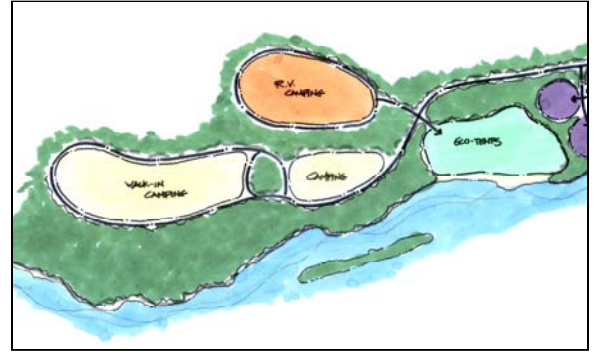


*Shown in the image above, the cottages are designed to provide views of the Bay from porches that also allow ventilation.*

#### **Sustainability and Insurability**

Sustainability and insurability are one of the primary concerns for the park. The park is currently located in a prime hurricane zone and storm surge flood area and that situation could be exacerbated by the effects of global warming and rising sea levels. To avoid problems like those encountered in the past when facilities were severely damaged by multiple hurricanes, a fundamental concept for the new Flamingo commercial services area is that all buildings be designed to meet Florida building codes, using materials well-suited to a flood-prone subtropical climate. In addition, all new structures would be elevated to allow flood waters to rise and recede below the buildings.

All buildings for park projects are also to meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Green Building Rating System™ silver certification through the U.S. Green Building Council. Achieving that certification would significantly reduce the impact of the commercial services area on the environment and also decrease energy costs. For example, the buildings would be designed to collect and reuse water; they would also use potential alternative energy sources, including solar orientation, to minimize reliance on the power grid and RO plant. Throughout the site, the reduced roads and paving would reduce runoff and diminish the heat island effect (where hard surfaces such as roads generate higher temperatures than parks, open lands, and water bodies). To further reduce temperatures and capture water, all new or replaced paved surfaces would be constructed of permeable, light-colored paving or as boardwalks. Efforts would also be made to comply with Florida's Clean Marina program and to design marine structures which would ensure site-specific environmental friendliness and long-term performance. In addition, habitat areas would be rehabilitated to reduce the amount of maintained landscape and eradicate invasive species.



*As depicted in the image above, the camping area ranges from the more intense eco-tents to more primitive walk-in camping areas. Likewise, the areas for employee housing (illustrated below) would offer a variety of living opportunities ranging from small cottages to the higher density dorms.*



### ***Developing a Successful, Sustainable Business Model and Financial Plan***

With regard to developing a successful business model and financial plan, the TAP focused its comments on two related questions posed by the TAP sponsors:

1. What are some strategies for implementation that might be appropriate to this kind of project, especially considering that the project may have to be done in phases, depending on the timing of funding? What business models or success stories can we use to guide us in our efforts to attract public, corporate, and private sector interest, support, and funding for rebuilding Flamingo?
2. Are there ways to build on the Commercial Services Plan's financial analysis so that the ULI TAP results in more refined knowledge on how to make the lodge, amenities, and services at Flamingo financially feasible for the park and concessionaire to run?

## Legal Considerations: Opportunities and Constraints

The TAP's remarks began with a review of the legal constraints and opportunities regarding funding sources. The four general sources of funding are:

- Special use permits
- Lease revenue
- Concession contract revenue
- Foundational support (for example, the South Florida National Parks Trust, the National Park Foundation, and the National Park Centennial Capital Fund)

The TAP ruled out two potential sources for the reasons highlighted below:

- The special use permit fees are not anticipated to significantly increase.
- Based on the National Park Service's mission statement (quoted below from the NPS Organic Act of 1916), leases (as well as timeshare-ownership options) are not appropriate for the Everglades National Park, and timeshares (and similar ownership models) are not consistent with the NPS mission.

*"...The fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations..."*

*"...No natural curiosities, wonders, or objects of interest shall be leased, rented, or granted to anyone on such terms as to interfere with free access to them by the public..."*

With the elimination of those sources, the TAP concluded, the two primary sources of funding are concession contract revenue (usually executed for 20-year periods) and foundation support through public-private partnerships. A survey of national parks projects underscores the importance of the public-private partnership model: of the 79 projects recently surveyed, 63 use some type of public-private partnerships to finance capital improvement projects. When looking at funding of the proposed redevelopment of the Flamingo commercial services area, the TAP's research indicated that the viability (e.g., the projects' scope and scale) and funding feasibility of the proposed project will be subject to a rigorous analysis by the NPS and review by Congress. The TAP's research also indicated that some redevelopment plans presented by other national parks were scaled back based on the review process's focus on viability and feasibility of funding sources.

Other avenues for funding projects could come from:

- park lodging areas (for example, the RV areas, eco-tents, cottages, and new lodges)
- the potential to work with local governmental authorities on a mechanism for leveraging the hotel/motel tax imposed in the counties in which the park is located (made possible by the park's connections with the nearby communities that greatly benefit from the some one million visitors who visit the park each year)

## **Creating a Successful Financing Plan**

The Flamingo commercial services area offers unique opportunities and constraints when it comes developing a successful financial plan. Opportunities include the:

- approximately 5.7 million residents who live within 100 miles of the park and the over 12 million (2007) visitors who come to Miami-Dade County each year. In addition, more people may choose to vacation closer to home over the next several years because of increases in gas prices.
- commercial services area's unique location (overlooking the Florida Bay and one of the world's most famous protected ecosystems)
- ability to provide all ages and income groups with a full spectrum of land- and water-based experiences
- capacity to add a variety of overnight options and a new visitor's center that would enhance a visit to see the natural resources of the Everglades and provide a reason to stay longer

Also important to the planning and staffing elements are the:

- park's seasonality (lowest months of attendance are June and July, with March being the highest), which has impacts on operational and financial planning
- recognition that long-term success will require careful, compressed phasing of key projects, using early projects as the "low hanging fruit" that will result in early successes (for example, fitting up the RV area and installing the first cluster of eco-tents)
- need to have a contingency fund as backup when, for example, construction costs increase

An additional factor is the differences between the NPS's recently approved plan for the commercial services area and the plan ideas recommended by the TAP. For example, the TAP would increase the number of boat slips and the number of residential opportunities (i.e., almost double the number of lodge units). Other factors are the need to rehabilitate the visitor's center, upgrade or replace the marina seawall that is at the end of its useful life, replace the freshwater dock, provide pedestrian linkages and interpretative signage, and rehabilitate the historic gas station.

(The TAP also prepared a revised estimate of capital costs and an estimated return-on-investment, included in Appendix D.)

## **Conclusions: Core Planning and Financing Concepts**

The preparation of a long-term vision plan for a more sustainable Flamingo commercial services area is well-timed, the TAP concluded. It responds to the National Park Service's Centennial Challenge: to prepare the country's national parks for another century of conservation. Getting ready for the next century is just what the Flamingo Commercial Service Area Plan entails: green design practices that increase the greenprint by reducing the hardscape footprint and restoring (and minimizing impacts to) the park's natural resources and better connecting visitors to those resources. The TAP's specific steps for achieving that are outlined below.

*Memorable Entry Point:* Use the entry to the Flamingo commercial services area (including the Mission 66 gas station) to emphasize what the area is all about (a unique water- and land-based ecosystem) and create a sense of arriving at an important destination.

*Flamingo Marine "Main Street" on the Bay:* Enhance and expand the marina area to provide more opportunities for boaters and park visitors and create a "main street" where more intense activities are concentrated (including marine and retail services, a Key West-style fishing village, and a new visitor's center designed as a series of modules containing spaces for educational opportunities, park offices, gift shop, formal restaurant, and formal amphitheater), all overlooking the Florida Bay.

*Nature-Placed Lodging:* Sequence the placement of residential opportunities to create a transition from the more intense "main street" marine/retail center area to the park's more fragile natural areas. Locate the park's lodge next to the visitor's center, then reduce the intensity with a step down to small cottages, and then to a variety of camping experiences, starting with the more intense (eco-tents and RV camping) and ending with the more primitive walk-in camp sites.

*More Green, Less Gray:* Maintain and expand the undisturbed, natural areas, bringing those areas into the developed areas through the use of natural grasses and plants (not suburban turf), and reduce, not expand, the development footprint. That should include fewer areas in surface parking lots; using raised structures to allow parking underneath and maximize views of the Bay and the Everglades and reduce damage from flooding; and simplifying and narrowing the spine road (giving some paved areas back to nature and using them to knit together the natural and built "rooms" of the commercial services area).

*Green, Safe, Insurable Facilities:* Design all facilities to meet Florida building codes, using materials well-suited to a flood-prone subtropical climate and elevating structures to mitigate potential flooding problems. Reduce energy costs and the commercial services area's impacts on the environment by designing all park buildings to meet the LEED® Green Building silver certification through the U.S. Green Building Council.

*Eco-Based Marketing and Business Planning:* Develop a marketing and business plan that capitalizes on the Flamingo commercial services area's unique location between the Florida Bay and one of the world's most famous ecosystems and its sustainable, green design.

In closing, the TAP observed, it is only fitting that the blank slate created by the 2005 hurricanes provide an opportunity to plan the Flamingo commercial services area for the next century: a premier eco-tourism destination that serves as a gateway to and learning laboratory for the very resources and green design and building practices that visitors and area residents want to experience. Making the plan a reality will require the type of strong public-partnerships similar to those that led to the convening of the TAP.

# APPENDIX A: TAP AGENDA

## *ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)*

### Everglades National Park Flamingo Services Area

August 4 & 5, 2008

#### Monday, August 4, 2008

- 9:00 – 9:30** Panel arrives for short orientation meeting  
*Meet at Holiday Inn Express at 35200 South Dixie Highway in Florida City*
- 9:30 – 1:30** Tour of Flamingo Services Area  
*Panelists leave cars at hotel; van and tour guide provided by  
Everglades National Park personnel, Box lunch at Flamingo.*
- 2:00 – 3:30** Panel interviews of community representatives, neighbors, etc., and other  
interested parties. This meeting is open to the public.  
*Venue: Campbell Center Auditorium at the Univ. of Florida/IFAS*
- 3:30 – 4:00** Break
- 4:00 – 5:00** Panel work session (closed to the public)  
*Venue: Campbell Center Auditorium in Homestead*
- 5:00 – 6:00** Hotel check-in and break  
*Holiday Inn Express in Florida City*
- 6:00 – 9:00** Dinner with NPCA & Park Staff (**closed to the public**)  
*The Capri Restaurant, 935 N. Krome Ave.*

#### Tuesday, August 5, 2008

- 7:30 – 8:30** Breakfast  
*Venue: Cracker Barrel, 155 N. Krome Avenue, Florida City*
- 8:30 – Noon** Panel work session (closed to public)  
*Venue: Campbell Center Auditorium in Homestead*
- 12:00 – 1:00** Working lunch (closed to the public)

<b>1:00 – 2:45</b>	Panel Preparation of Preliminary Findings (closed to public)
<b>2:45 – 3:00</b>	Break
<b>3:00 – 4:00</b>	Presentation of Preliminary Findings with Q&A This meeting is open to the public <i>Venue: Campbell Center Auditorium in Homestead</i>
<b>4:00</b>	Adjourn



## APPENDIX B: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### *Everglades National Park Flamingo Commercial Services Plan*

#### **Everglades National Park Flamingo Commercial Services Plan: Guiding Principle for Sustainable Redevelopment**

- ✓ *A reduced footprint:* The new Flamingo should produce a considerably smaller footprint on the land than currently exists. We believe that if the site planning process focuses on a “walkable” development, increased services and opportunities for visitor experience could be provided in a much smaller area.
- ✓ *Restoration and protection of natural habitat:* The redevelopment process must include elements of restoring natural habitat and protecting the habitats that could be impacted by visitors. There may also be opportunities for achieving some protection from storm surge by restoring mangrove habitats as a buffer between Florida Bay and the developed part of Flamingo.
- ✓ *“Green” design and architecture:* Everglades National Park should take advantage of the considerable thought, imagination, and progress currently being made in the area of green architecture. Structure design should maximize passive cooling and resistance to wind and storm surge and utilize recycled materials. There may be opportunities for new technologies to be showcased at the new Flamingo.
- ✓ *A variety of visitor experiences:* Flamingo is most famous for fishing, and fishing will likely always be a centerpiece of visitor services offered at Flamingo. The potential for a wider variety of experiences, however, including canoeing, birding, hiking, biking, and walking is tremendous. The old Flamingo offered all of those opportunities; however, the design of the place made them less than optimal. Other services, such as storytelling, campfires, and children’s activities could also enhance Flamingo’s appeal as a destination for families.
- ✓ *Creating a “sense of place”:* The new Flamingo should reflect the history and culture of the area and the region. Part of the mission of the National Park Service is to preserve cultural and historic resources. This mission has not been particularly emphasized at Everglades National Park in the past, but could be at Flamingo. Choices of architecture, landscape design, and services could capture a sense of “old Florida,” which would be unique in the south Dade region.
- ✓ *Connect with Gateway Communities:* Everglades National Park should explore opportunities to form connections between Flamingo and the surrounding gateway communities of Homestead and Florida City.

# APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE SOUTHEAST FLORIDA/CARIBBEAN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL

## *Creating A New Vision for Flamingo*

### (Sustainable Design / Increased Insurability)

1. What site planning principles, designs, and materials should be used to create a new Flamingo that is more sustainable, energy efficient and hurricane resistant than the previous one? What are the factors we need to consider for investors, insurers, etc. related to design, materials, function, and mitigation?

### (Resource Conservation and Restoration, with Enhanced Visitor Experiences)

2. What is the best strategy for accomplishing a reduced footprint that meets visitor and operational needs while effectively accomplishing restoration and protection of natural resources? This includes solutions to make Flamingo more walking and bicycling friendly, the ability to offer a wider range of visitor uses (including family friendly opportunities), while also increasing natural areas and decreasing unnecessarily impacted areas like onsite parking.

### (Flamingo as a Teaching Model: Stories of the Past, Vision for the Future)

3. While the rebuilding of Flamingo is an opportunity to create a model for the future in climate friendly building and design, we want to make sure that stories of the past are still told and that Flamingo's "sense of place" is retained. How do we stay consistent with the historical and cultural uses of the area while incorporating innovative and sustainable design solutions?
4. How do we use the re-building of Flamingo as an educational opportunity to teach visitors about the changes taking place at Flamingo? We should showcase the current re-building of Flamingo as a working example of sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century development, especially considering it's location in south Florida, in a coastal environment, and in a national park. This could be a great tool to teach the public about climate change, ecosystem restoration, sustainable development, and how it affects their everyday lives. How do we best explain or demonstrate these connections for visitors, so that we are also sharing a new vision at Flamingo.

### (Successful Business Model /Best Strategies for Implementation)

5. What are some strategies for implementation that might be appropriate to this kind of project, especially considering that the project may have to be done in phases, depending on the timing of funding? What business models or success stories can we use to guide us in our efforts to attract public, corporate and private sector interest, support, and funding for rebuilding Flamingo?

### (Refining Alternate D/Creating a Financially Strong Plan)

6. Are there ways to build on the Commercial Services Plan's financial analysis so that the ULI TAP results in more refined knowledge on how to make the lodge, amenities and services at Flamingo financially feasible for the park and concessionaire to run?

## APPENDIX D: REVISED CAPITAL COST AND ESTIMATED RETURN ON INVESTMENT

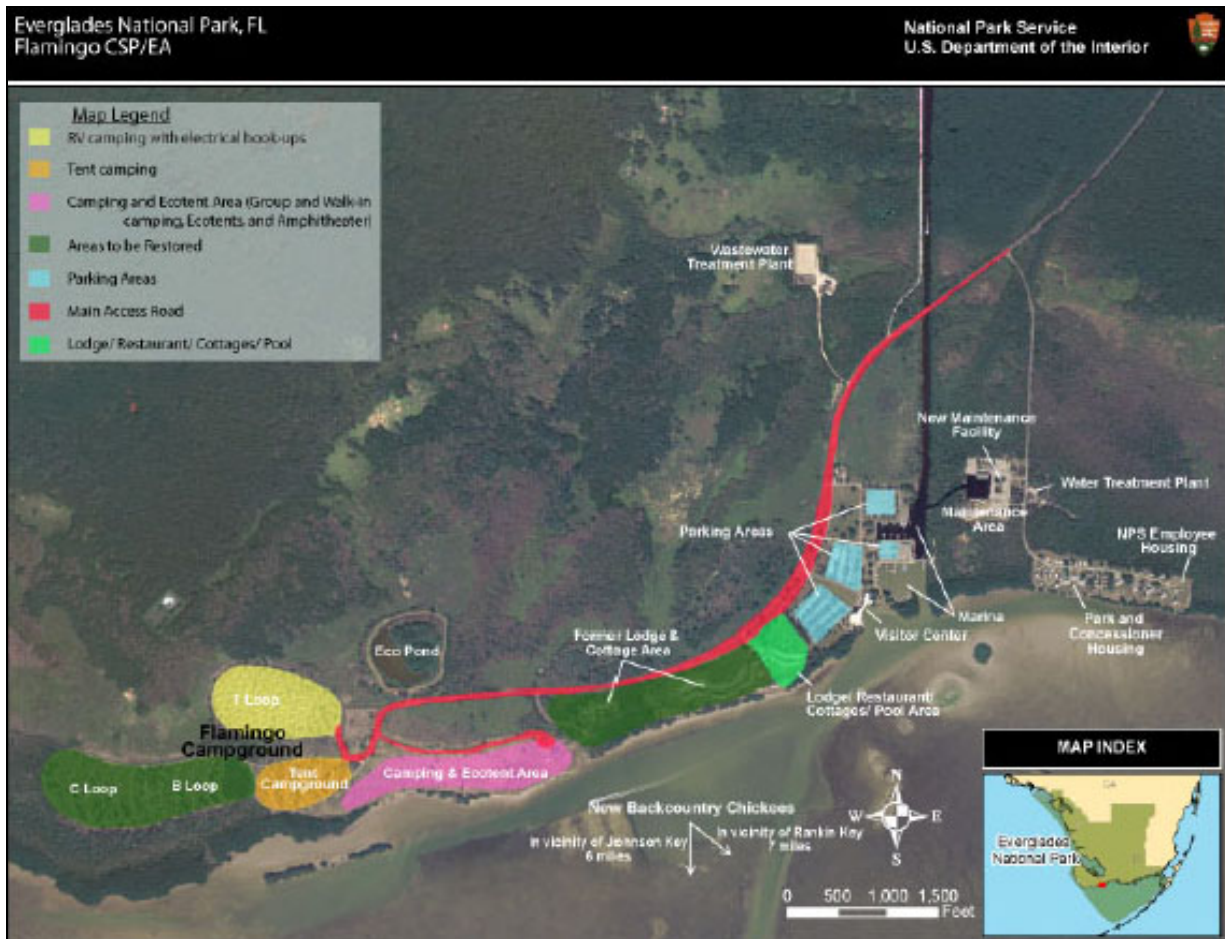
### Revised Capital Cost

<u>Element</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Tours	\$ 563,000
Lodging	\$ 24,256,000
Camping	\$ 850,000
Food & Beverage	\$ 1,800,000
Retail	\$ 100,000
Marina	\$ 5,020,000
Projectwide	\$ 14,040,000
Total Capital Cost Net Contingency	\$ 41,609,000
Contingency (20%)	\$ 8,321,800
Total Capital Cost with Contingency	\$ 49,930,800

### Estimated Return-on-Investments

	<u>Stabilized Year</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 14,369,501
Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$ 838,999
Total Expenses	\$ 6,948,659
Net Operating Income	\$ 6,581,843
Indirect Operating Expenses	\$ 1,000,000
EBITDA	\$ 5,581,843
Capital Investment	\$ 49,930,800
Return-on-Investment	11.18%

## APPENDIX E: ENLARGED PLAN DRAWINGS

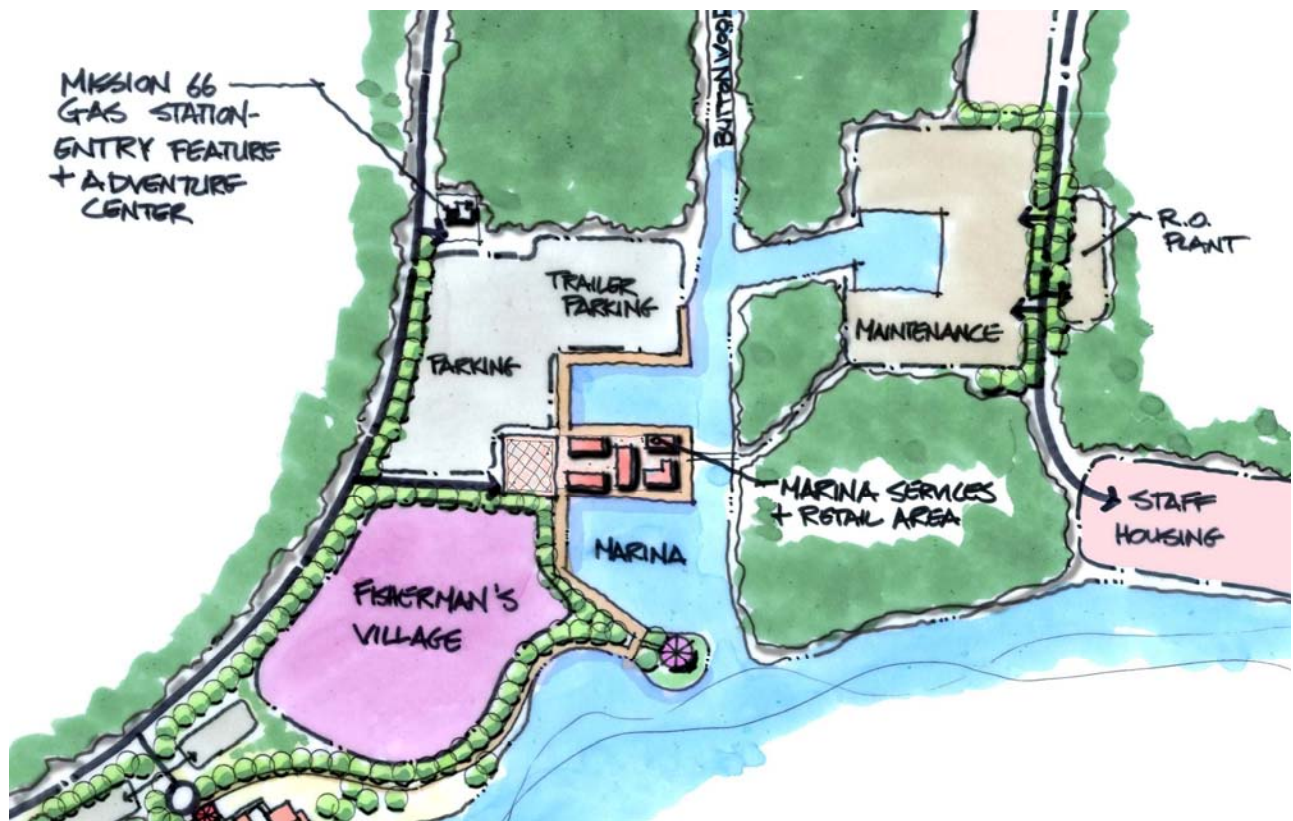


Flamingo Commercial Services Area Plan (page 8)



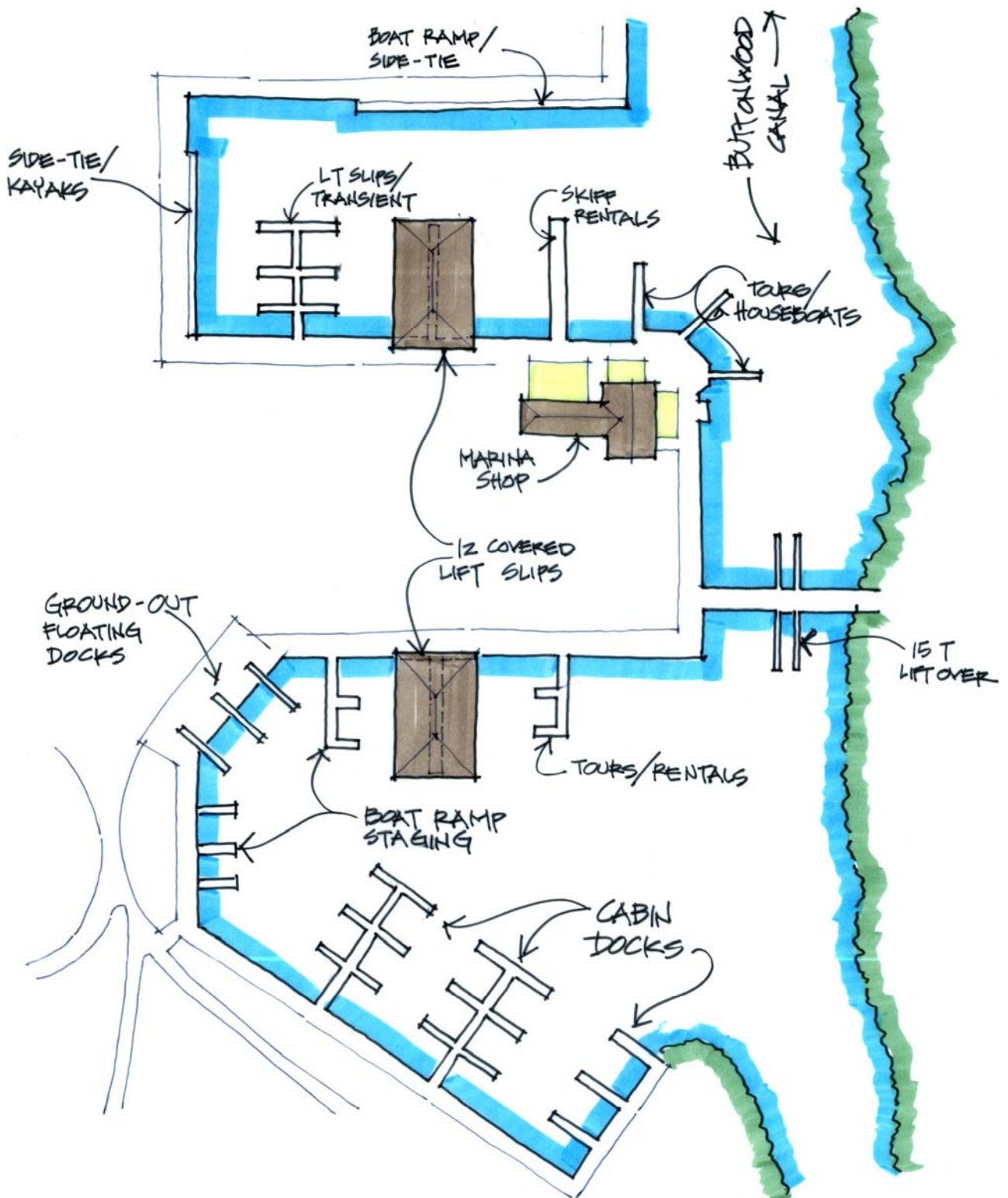




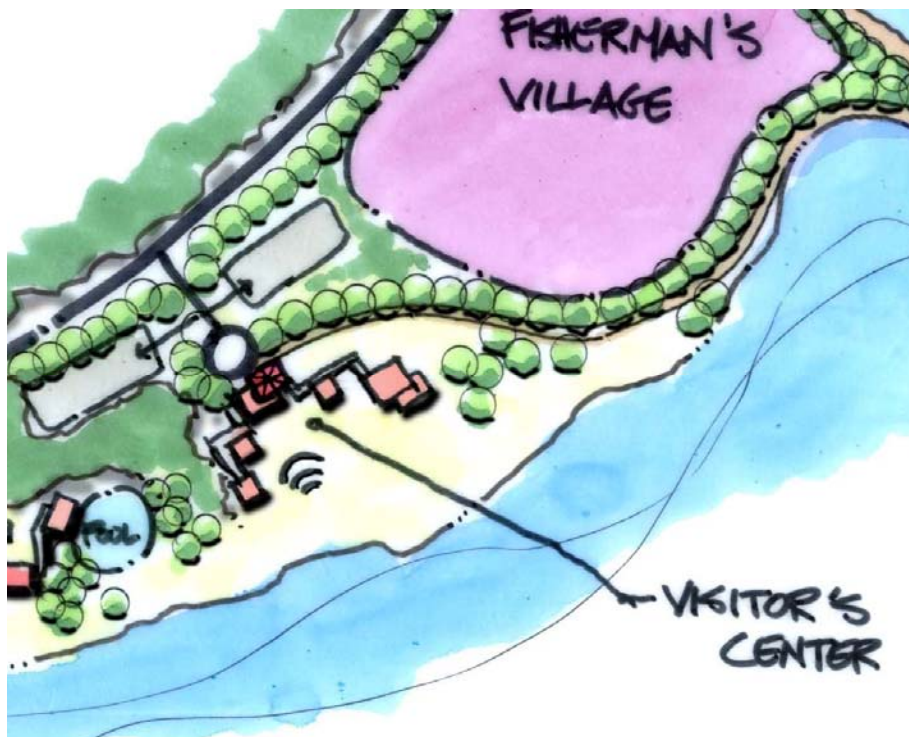


Concentrating Services and Employee Housing (page 11)

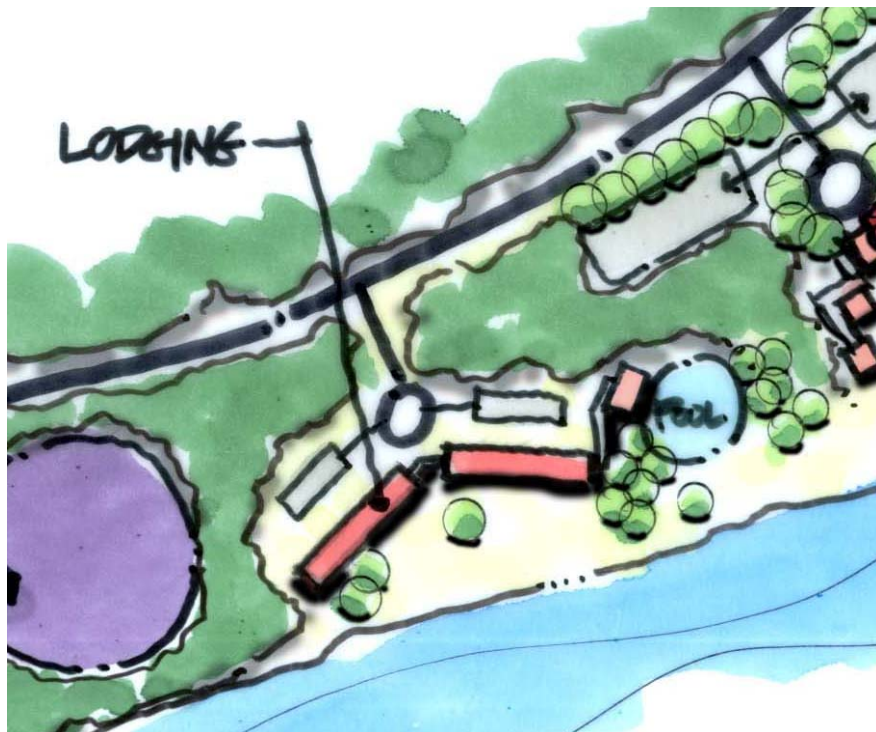




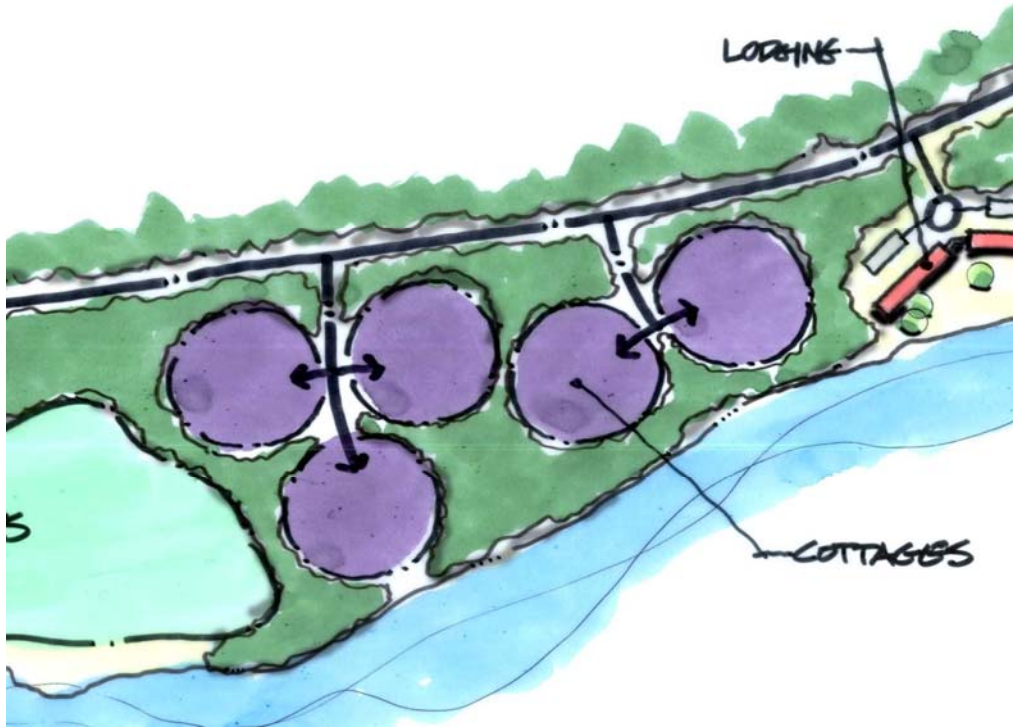
Marine Plan (page 11)



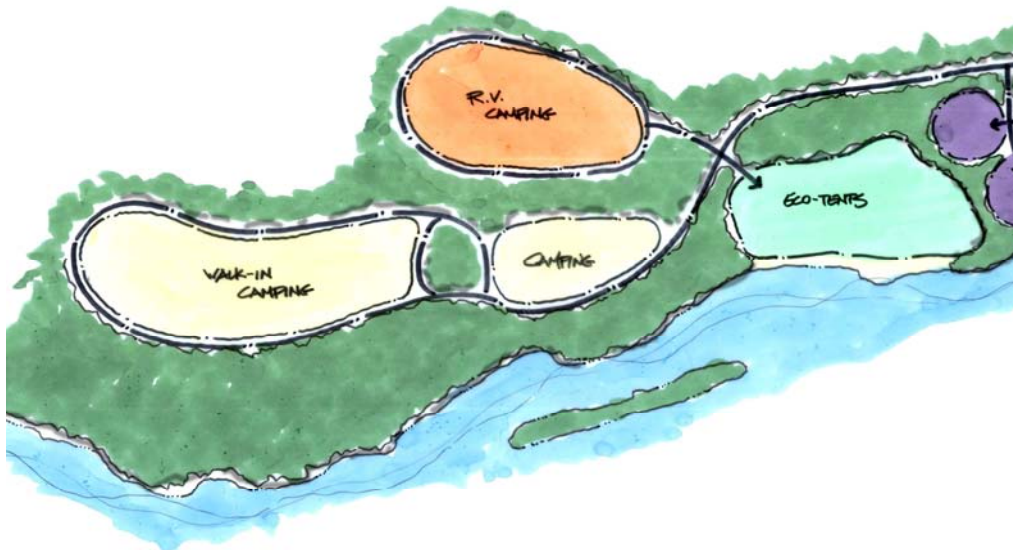
Fishing Village (page 13)



Lodges (page 14)



Cottage Pods (page 14)



Camping Area (page 16)





Employee Housing (page 16)