

# greater FORT LAUDERDALE meet sunny

**November 6-8, 2016 Meeting Minutes  
Fort Lauderdale Customer Advisory Board  
The Diplomat Beach Resort**

*Confidential*



Meeting moderated and  
report written by  
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## Customer Advisory Board

Linda Adams	Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association
Jackie Beaulieu	BlueHive Strategic Environments
Sarah Bookwalter	Smith Bucklin
Tim Bruins	Maritz Travel Company
Dwayne Crawford	National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
Mike Friello	AAU Taekwondo
Pam Hoffman	American Association of Orthodontists
Desiree Knight	AREMA
Dwayne Leslie	General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists
Ross Mirmelstein	National Sheriff's Association
Tom Pingel	USA Volleyball
Helen Pollard	American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
Marty Rotblatt	Association Resources
Sandy Stevens	Kellen Company

## Greater Fort Lauderdale Hosts, Gallery & Speakers

Stacy Ritter	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Christine Roberts	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Michele Bemis	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Kim Butler	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Marina Castro	Starmark
Alan Cohen	Office of the Broward County Administrator
Stacy Copeland	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Jim Curtis	The Diplomat Beach Resort
Saskia Fisher	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Rosa Mendoza Friedheim	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Mark Gatley	Greater Fort Lauderdale /Broward County Convention Center
Lisa Hoffman	Starmark
Sherene Irani	Starmark
Peter Miller	Strategic Database Research
Carlos Molinet	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Virginia Sheridan	Finn Partners
Morris Silver	Finn Partners
Steve Silverman	The Diplomat Beach Resort
Albert Tucker	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Gilbert Villard	Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau
Twee Vuong	Greater Fort Lauderdale & Broward County Convention Center

## Meeting Facilitator

David Kliman

The Kliman Group



### Topics of Discussion:

- Attendees
- Welcome and Introductions
- 2016 Updates
- Convention Center District Enhancement
- New Convention Center Headquarters Hotel
- SMG/Savor Contract
- CAB Feedback
- Industry Trends
- Recommendations and Action Items

## Monday, November 6, 2016

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The Board was asked to speak honestly and openly on behalf of the meetings and convention industry as well as their respective organizations. Fort Lauderdale will listen and learn from the Board and appropriate action will be taken on its recommendations. The Diplomat Beach Resort was thanked for their hospitality and generosity in hosting the meeting.

New members Sarah Bookwalter, Tim Bruins, Dwayne Crawford and Helen Pollard were welcomed.

Advisory Board members, Fort Lauderdale hosts and gallery attendees made introductions.



### **Greater Fort Lauderdale Destination Updates**

Christine provided an update regarding key Fort Lauderdale issues; her PowerPoint presentation is posted on the CAB microsite. The following summarizes her comments:



#### **2016 Updates:**

- September occupancy was up 2.8% - Tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the state
- Miami 68.4%; Fort Lauderdale and Orlando 67.9%
- Slightly lower than USA 68.8% average and higher than Florida 63.5%
- September ADR was up 3.2%
- September occupancy 67.9%; up 2.8% over 2015
- September ADR \$105.28; up 3.2% over 2015
- September RevPAR - \$71.51; up 6.1% over 2015
- Highest September Occupancy & ADR in History
- 2016 YTD occupancy down 1.4% vs. YTD 2015
  - ADR up 3.7% over YTD 2015
  - RevPAR up 2.3% over YTD 2015

#### **Action Items**

- The "One Hand" image in marketing materials has been removed based on the CAB's feedback
- 30 second video photo shoot taking place highlighting new images focused on meetings will launch in January 2017

## Convention Center District Enhancement – Alan Cohen

[alcohen@broward.org](mailto:alcohen@broward.org)

<http://www.broward.org/ccexpansion>



Alan outlined key issues related to the expansion project; the following summarizes his comments and the CAB's feedback is found at the end of this report:

The Portside Building has been purchased by the County and will be demolished; this expands the available building site and offers more entitlements for the project (development credits). The plan is to build the new hotel as a fully integrated project connected to the Convention Center primarily on the former Portside Building site.

- Convention Center will take over management of the cruise parking garage currently shared between the center and the cruiseport
- New 2,000 space garage will be built inside the cruise security zone to service Terminal 2 & 4 needs
- New 1,200 to 1,700 space garage will be built for the Convention Center attendee's use and a new automated payment system will be installed to ensure seamless flow, eliminating the current stop and pay toll
- Current garage is 2,400 spaces used by Convention Center attendees and cruise ship passengers (800 spots)
- Shuttle route will drop at bus pull out areas which will be expanded
- The new hotel will have an additional 650 space garage
- Small scale intermodal transportation center is being designed to accommodate east/west traffic including the proposed Wave Streetcar <http://wavestreetcar.com/>
- The DMO's office will move to the Convention Center District and include a street level visitors center
- Balconies will likely be constructed on the north side of the new hotel; Homeland Security policies restrict balconies facing the port or in closer proximity to ships
- Temporary staging area for freight will be constructed west of the site and new staging area will be developed on the new project site
- New exhibition space is not contiguous. Phase 2 could add almost 200,000 square feet of exhibition space at some point in the future to the west side of the building where docks, exhibitor parking and storage area currently exists
- Unanimous support from County Commissioners for the project

## Expansion Statistics

- Convention Center currently offers 600,000 square feet gross
- Planning a 400,000 square foot gross expansion including 75,000 square foot of exhibition space, 65,000 square foot ballroom and 70,000 square foot of new meeting rooms
- The new hotel will offer a minimum of 800 rooms with the potential for expansion of a second tower on nearby separate site on existing surface level parking lot
- Guestrooms will start on level 6 (130 feet) allowing for ocean views
- Hotel ballroom will be approximately 30,000 square feet
- Site is 9 feet above sea level to accommodate potential sea level rise
- Convention Center contract with HQ hotel and meeting space will offer seamless “one stop shopping”
- New amphitheater is limited in size and will accommodate a few hundred people
- Strong momentum to move forward with the project which is universally supported by the hotel community and County Commissioners
- Google Streetview of the current site:  
<https://www.instantstreetview.com/@26.100325,-80.122925,133.51h,-11.17p,1z>

## Project Schedule

- Now in conception and design phase
- Architectural phase starts 1Q2017 for one year
- Construction drawings during 2018
- Construction will start during Summer 2018
- Expect opening in 2021

## Total committable rooms in the Convention Center District

- 800 “upper upscale” rooms are available for group blocks in peak season (January to early May) plus the Holiday Inn Express offers an additional 185 rooms and the Embassy Suite offers 225 more rooms 4 blocks away

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## **New Convention Center Headquarters Hotel**

Expect management flag will be named 1Q17 and signed contract by 2Q2017; Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt and Omni are under consideration as hotel management companies. The CAB noted dominance of Marriott and Hilton properties in the area.

**The CAB was asked to provide feedback regarding the pros and cons of each company; the following summarizes their comments:**

### **Marriott**

- **Pros**
  - Represents high end hotel image for planner and attendees
  - Excellent and consistent on site meeting planning support, Red Coast app is great
  - Some CAB members have positive Marriott relationships
  - Marriott Rewards loyalty program attracts attendees
- **Cons**
  - Sales relationship between planners and Marriott are generally very one sided in favor of Marriott. "Sales Force One is terrible"; there's no personalized sales force"
  - Lack of partnership between planners and Marriott sales and corporate
  - The destination needs more diversity of hotel brands
  - Important that convention center has seamless partner with HQ hotel management firm and Marriott won't offer that

### **Hilton**

- **Pros**
  - Staff is very educated regarding healthcare compliance for meetings and provides policy compliant menus
  - Easy to do business with
  - Seamless contacts
  - Wide range of Hilton properties (price and service levels)
- **Cons**
  - Has too much local inventory; they operate across the street, at Embassy Suites and at The Diplomat

### **Hyatt**

- **Pros**
  - Consistently easy to do business with Hyatt; offers excellent service
  - Great sales relationships and customer service at national and property level
  - Strong General Manager network; more than other companies
  - Strong culture and respect for diversity within Hyatt
  - Strong marketing capability to fill the hotel when conventions aren't in house (much stronger than Omni)
  - Gold Passport loyalty program very attractive to attendees and planners
- **Cons**
  - None cited for Hyatt

## Omni

- **Pros**
  - Omni Loyalty Rewards offers instant entry level benefits (free internet and coffee)
  - Global Hotel Alliance connection with Omni rewards
  - Strong customer service performance of several new hotels connection to Convention Centers
  - Easy to do business with Omni with the exception of Fort Worth
- **Cons**
  - Limited guest loyalty program
  - Limited leisure appeal to non-convention guests

### **Convention Center Food and Beverage Feedback**

- Quality food & beverage is important component at Convention Centers; freshness, locally sourced, farm to table; rooftop beehives etc. are all welcome
- Planners respond well to F&B education via webinars
- Don't nickel and dime planners for F&B

### **General Comments**

- The CAB recommended Hyatt or Omni as brand / management companies for the new hotel
  - Hyatt offers "great F&B" and "strong brand diversity"; it can provide a robust leisure business pipeline (stronger than Omni) when conventions aren't in town
  - Final decision regarding hotel partner should be based on creating business relationship that is profitable for the destination and offers high quality customer service and strong guest loyalty program
- Attendees seek new headquarter hotels that offer convenient location attached to the Convention Center and fair prices
- AMCs want wide diversity of product to ensure wide range of price options to attendees; also very important that hotels cooperate well with the DMO, Convention Center and meeting professionals.





## **SAVOR...Fort Lauderdale** at Broward County Convention Center

### **SMG /Savor Contract**

The SMG/Savor's <http://savorftlauderdalecc.com/> management contract for the Food and Beverage operations at the Convention Center will be re-negotiated; the CAB provided the following feedback regarding what's most important to them regarding a Convention Center F&B operator:

- No consensus regarding whether F&B is managed in house or by an adjacent hotel
- Planners want consistency for menus and pricing and it must be easy to do business with the company
- F&B can make or break a convention center relationship
- Quality F&B is critical
- Review Hyatt Regency McCormack Place; cited as excellent working model

### **Technology**

The CAB cited the following issues related to Convention Center technology:

- Need Center to stay current with a constantly changing technology landscape
- Need to have the appropriate infrastructure for scalable capacity
- Cyber security is critical
- Vancouver Center was cited for excellence in technology, F&B and environmental sustainability
- JW Marriott San Antonio was cited as offering great technology
- See an increased use of video and streaming at meetings and events
- Technology augments, but will not replace face-to-face participation at meetings and trade shows
- Technology has to be scalable and flexible
- Simultaneous translation capabilities could help open up new international markets
- Important to have a great technology partner affiliated with the Center

### **Convention Center Flooring**

Carpeted floors are best acoustically and for comfort, especially for women in high heels; also can't move freight over marble.

### **Construction Phases:**

The project team understands the need for continuity of seamless operations during the project. Construction will be shut down during group operations where necessary. Strong commitment to ongoing communication with clients to ensure they're proactively aware of construction impact.

## Convention Center District Expansion PR and Marketing Communications Tools

### Crisis Communication - Virginia Sheridan – Finn Partner

Virginia's presentation has been posted to the CAB microsite



- The following links show some of what the DMO is working against when it comes to Zika and perception for visitors and groups.
- The first link is really scary relating to the babies and the second one talks about travel to the Southern half of the country and poses questions for people considering coming to South Florida

[What's being done to fight the Zika virus? CBS News](#)

[Is Zika coming soon to a mosquito near you? - CBS News](#)

### CAB Feedback

- Zika and Hurricane Matthew updates are well received and appropriate and well packaged
- Some need information translated into other languages



### Destination and Convention Center Communication - Lisa Hoffman - Starmark

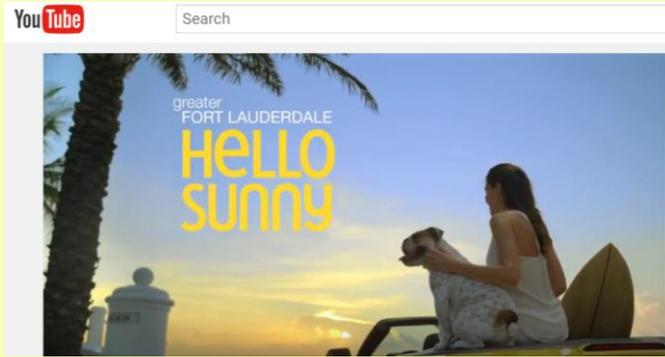
The new video campaign was shared; it communicates Fort Lauderdale's brand essence; it was noted that the video is not yet public

### CAB feedback

- Great music, shows great diversity of people and ages

### Logo Update

- Crisp, clean, maintains brand imaging
- *Hello Sunny.*
  - The "period" after "sunny" compromises the design for some; most don't like it. "What's with the period?"
- Those who like the period because it calls attention to the phrase
- "Greater Fort Lauderdale" confused many people because they aren't familiar with the geographic limits



### Hello Sunny TV on YouTube

- Inaugural December 3, 2016, shared via email and social media
- Can be used for news and informational sharing including Zika updates

### Content Marketing

When asked what marketing content is needed; the following feedback was provided:

- Restaurants and other food venues
- Anything new
- Airport and transportation updates
- Things to Do
- Special deals
- Getting around
- Social media feeds – but needs business style content and casual communication too
- Social media icons
- Weather
- Convention Center Updates

### Merchandise

- Not a money maker, 10% of proceeds will go to local charity
- Need to clarify what Underground Fort Lauderdale is to planners
  - Planner would buy these products for groups at a reasonable cost
  - Need co-branding options
  - Incentive market has use merchandise during upfront marketing campaigns
  - Need a beach towel
  - Solar charger and other electronics are welcome items



## Convention Center and DMO Funding

The following outlines the DMO and Convention Center funding:

- \$1 billion cost for the new hotel and Convention Center expansion
- 1.5% of the 5% hotel bed tax funds the expansion, 1.5% goes to DMO and 2.0% funds the BB&T Arena
- Another 1% bed tax is allowable, but has not been enacted though likely to fund expansion project
- Total bed tax generates in excess of \$60 million annually
- Local sales tax is 6%,
  - A referendum was on the November 2016 ballot to fund infrastructure development over next 30 years with an additional half cent sales tax – note: it didn't pass
  - Broward County has 33,000 hotel rooms of which 22,000 are reported on in Smith Travel Research <https://www.str.com/>
- Convention Center debt is fully paid off, accruing funds toward expansion
- Potential new bed tax on AirBnB bookings is in negotiation

## Communications Protocol regarding Expansion and Development

Examples of the Orlando renovation were cited:

- E-newsletter with timelines and photos, easy to forward
- When construction related issues may impact a show, it's critical that a Convention Center expert with in depth knowledge of the issue contacts the client directly

## Drone Technology

- Ability to open an email with access to visual aerial
- E-Updates can get lost in the avalanche of emails, must stand out

## The Expansion Announcement

First launch will be a series of activations

- Live events, trade magazines, existing customers and social media platforms
- Activation at industry meetings with a series of events
- Create an experience inside the Center for customers and attendees during the expansion; it could be called "Watch Us Grow"
- The Diplomat's front desk screens were cited as good example of impressive technology and could be used inside the Center to track the expansion
- Consider use of interactive touch screens
- Include Virtual Reality experiences
- Create a customer event around the implosion of the Portside building in late 2017 or early 2018

**Tuesday, November 8, 2016**

### **Industry Trends**

The CAB commented on major industry trends; the following summarizes their feedback:

- Many groups that were booked in 2009 – 2010 down market are now taking place in hard market which offers very little flexibility
- Sports markets are negatively impacted by rising airfares and this could result in decreased participation
- Cost of meeting room internet is inconsistent, “it’s all over the map” and is very frustrating to planners
- Some won’t sign contracts without internet concession
  - “PSAV is taking over the world”
  - Many planners rely on AV companies for education
  - Only some planner request post meeting bandwidth reports
  - Some hotel inconsistently charge AV service fees when customers use outside vendors
- DMOs and Centers have the opportunity to be subject matter experts and offer competitively priced turnkey solution; Fort Lauderdale could position this as competitive advantage; “stop the insanity”
- Lack of transparency regarding AV transactions is among THE most frustrating marketplace issues confronting planners
- Parking is generally expensive at hotels and Convention Center, but Fort Lauderdale’s \$15 daily fee at the Center was cited as very competitive
- Service charges are increasing; now seeing more transparency regarding fact that 100% doesn’t go to staff working an event
- Resort fees are increasing
- Food and beverage prices are increasing and planners seeing inconsistent ability to negotiate; some providing vouchers for breakfast and/or coffee redeemable at “grab and go” outlets vs. serving group breakfast and coffee breaks
- Healthcare industry requires meal price limits and that drives the need for “compliant” menus, more training taking place in the marketplace <http://www.mpiweb.org/MPI-Academy/hmcc>
- Hotels and Centers charging for room reset; some planners deem this as “nickel and diming”. Planners consider one complimentary reset per day per room reasonable
- Some hotels demanding broad based cancellation terms; the market is so hard that hotel “can do whatever they want”

## Complimentary rental and incentives providing by the DMO

The CAB was asked about documents used when a DMO offers financial incentives; the following summarizes their comments:

- Written document is signed as part of the overall Letter of Agreement or Letter of Intent with no penalty or terms for non-performance; the letter of agreement or letter of intent outlines expectations and countersigned by both parties; it lists all concessions. It's printed on DMO letterhead, it's not notarized and has no audit clauses, "it's a good faith agreement"
- When a DMO collects rebates; the agreement outlines the rebate agreement and is signed by both parties; there are no performance clauses and it's not notarized
- Performance is documented by a post event audit
- Some DMOs use an online form after the headquarter hotel contract is signed to document concessions and financial incentives

## Risk & Security Management

Safety and security was noted as a new reality for meetings and events.

- Active Shooter training is a new reality; planners need to ask the right questions and have a plan, planners need to be more proactive regarding understanding all issues
- Event insurance is used by many planners to cover potential financial liabilities
- Building security teams are involved with planners in developing, communicating and documenting contingency plans
- Reaching out to local police authorities is part of the process
- Uniformed presence is imperative for many group events
- Planners need site plans from the building
- Many planners now have daily safety briefings to review emergency preparedness plan from the city and the center
- It was noted that not all hotel and Convention Center house phones actually work, imperative to check their operation
- Some planners bring satellite phones to programs for emergency communications back up <http://www.cellhire.com/>
- David Kliman shared Anti Sex Traffic sites <http://www.ecpatusa.org/> and <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/traffickcam/id1067713017?mt=8>
- The Convention Center has comprehensive and well tested crisis plan in cooperation with law enforcement
- Ongoing concern to provide appropriate security coverage at a affordable cost
- Incumbent on the planner and the building to develop an appropriate security plan
- Ongoing training exercises are highly recommended
- The Center has internal full time security teams that continually test and measure plans
- Potential use of TSA style magnetometers at entrances to the Convention Center was received with mixed feedback; "depends on the show"

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### **The Diplomat CAB Feedback**

- Blackout shades in guest rooms are very hard to reach (behind furniture) and are difficult to operate
- Front desk is very attractive
- Banquet staff is exceptional; there was no disruptions during coffee refresh, staff very friendly
- Some had great check in experience, they were "excited to see me"; but other experienced wait times in excess of 15 minutes and unfriendly service
- Personal text message upon arrival was very welcoming, but not all guests received it
- There is no low fat salad dressing in restaurants and outlets; it should be made available

CAB microsite is found at [www.Sunny.org/cab](http://www.Sunny.org/cab)

### **Closing Comments**

The Advisory Board was thanked for their commitment of time and feedback.

## **Fort Lauderdale Customer Advisory Board Recommendations and Action Items – November 2016**

### **Hello Sunny TV**

- Share Hello Sunny TV use policy and guidelines with planners
- Share branding opportunities for planners
- Ensure video can be made private
- Add testimonials from customers and local thought leaders

### **Convention Center District Enhancement Project**

- Develop in house technology and internet subject matter experts, offer competitively priced turnkey solutions; position as a competitive advantage

### **General Recommendations**

- Share Broward County proposed financial incentive agreement draft with CAB for their feedback
- Share Convention Center security summary with the CAB