



January 17, 2014

Mayor Gary H. Katica
Deputy Mayor Stephen R. Fowler
Commissioner Tom Shelly
Commissioner Michael Wilkinson
Commissioner Kevin Piccarreto

Dear Town of Belleair Commission Members:

The Trustees of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation authorized this letter, urging your careful consideration not only of the pending request for rezoning of the historic Belleview Biltmore Hotel, but any actions impacting the hotel and the adjacent golf course.

The Florida Trust recognizes that elected bodies must respond to properly filed land use requests such as the one you are considering on Tuesday, January 21. The Florida Trust and all those interested in the preservation of the Belleview Biltmore expect that the City Commission, when considering this and any other matter, would keep the following in the forefront of its consideration:

- Goal 1 of the Future Land Use element of the adopted comprehensive plan reads *Ensure that the park-like, residential/family character of the Town of Belleair is maintained and protected while supporting the continued economic viability of local resorts and the preservation of the Belleview Biltmore Resort Hotel* (see page Comp.Plan-1, Future Land Use).
- This same language is restated on page 1-17 of the Future Land Use Element.
- Any change in zoning should be evaluated in light of and in compliance with the Town's Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- The Belleview Biltmore is a viable property that can be restored and utilized as a resort hotel. The University of Florida Centers for Governmental Responsibility and Urban Policy Research have published findings over the entire past decade demonstrating the economic benefits of historic preservation in Florida. The research demonstrates that monies spent in rehabilitation of existing residential and non-residential property in Florida creates jobs, contributes to state/local and federal tax collections, creates in-state wealth, generates heritage tourism and revitalizes areas, thus bringing citizens, visitors and dollars back to the heart of communities.
- The Belleview Biltmore Golf Course is integral to the hotel and pivotal to its future success. Any action to sever the golf course from the property, either by sale or by long-term leasehold, diminishes the very high probability that a successful restoration can occur.

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- The Belleview Hotel was built by Henry Plant in 1897 to boost tourism along Florida's west coast. How prescient Mr. Plant was, given that heritage tourism is now a significant driver in the upturn in Florida tourism statewide. Curious adult travelers are seeking authentic heritage experiences, preferring heritage travel to the cookie cutter experience of chain hotels.

The Florida Trust has long been interested in and concerned about the future of the Belleview Biltmore, noted for its outstanding architectural features, with its unique multiple gables of different sizes, green sloped roof, exterior white siding, and extensive hand crafted woodwork. The Florida Trust recognized the Belleview Biltmore on its 11 Most Endangered list for 2012 and 2013, primarily based upon the threat of demolition of a viable historic property in an improving economy.

The Town of Belleair has the opportunity to build an environment where the Belleview Biltmore and other historic properties can be protected. Communities that have an inventory of historic properties enjoy not only a rich visual experience, but also a healthy economic boost.

The Florida Trust will continue to monitor actions that impact the Belleview Biltmore and strongly urges that your actions ensure the protection of the Belleview Biltmore and other historic properties in your community.

Sincerely,



Anne Peery
Executive Director

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