

# Sun-Sentinel

BROWARD METRO

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## Welcome center planned

### Developer hopes for May 1 opening

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Staff Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE — Visitors will be able to eat, drink and be informed when they arrive at the beach this spring.

The city on Tuesday night voted 4-1 to allow a developer to turn an old filling station into a restaurant, bar and visitors' welcome center at Seabreeze Boulevard and State Road A1A.

The center, expected to open May 1, will be staffed by members of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce.

Under terms of the 20-year contract, developer John Amodeo will lease the property from the city for \$141,293 for the first 10 years. He will have two five-year options on the property after that, which will bring the city \$212,000 over the first five-year option period.

In addition, the city would get 2 percent of the profits if the restaurant's revenues exceed \$1.5 million a year.

The city has wanted a visitors center on the beach for years, but the proposal by Amodeo was the first that would allow the city to have such a center without having to spend money.

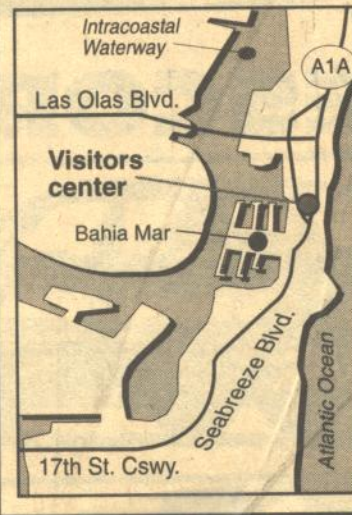
The property is the site of the defunct Voyager sightseeing tram.

Most of the city commissioners spoke highly of the project, but Commissioner Carlton Moore said Amodeo was getting "a sweetheart deal."

"I don't believe we're getting enough of a welcome from your welcome center," Moore said.

## Visitor's center

A new center will feature a restaurant and provide information for tourists. The building will face Seabreeze Boulevard on one side and the beach on the other.



Staff graphic/THERESA ALBRECHT

## WARM WELCOME

The Fort Lauderdale Welcome and Visitors Center is expected to open May 1. Besides a restaurant and bar, the center will feature:

- Brochures and other information about family-oriented attractions in South Florida, hotels and restaurants.
- Bulletin boards for special events, and area maps.
- An information desk with multilingual staff.
- A courtesy phone service to hotels and other attractions.
- An interactive computer system to provide printout information on at least 40 hotels and tourist attractions. The information on the hotels will include the number of rooms, the location, directions and cost.
- An activity telephone line with information in many languages.

## Lauderdale votes for visitors center and restaurant, bar

Amodeo is getting a tax break by not owning the property, a break on the required amount of parking spaces and Amodeo is not investing much money, Moore said.

The renovations, which include adding a second story, patios, a rooftop deck, restrooms, landscaping, and the space and equipment for the visitors' center, will cost at least \$560,000, said Amodeo, one of the developers of RJ's Landing, which is across the street.

Though only seven parking spaces will be provided on the site, the developer said he has arranged to lease spaces from a lot across the street.

Moore also objected to having a bar adjacent to the welcome center, but Amodeo said he needs the bar and restaurant to generate money and keep the visitors center going.

The developer also promised to surround the building with a wall similar to the one the city added to its renovated beach.

"This has taken me a year. It has been a long, tedious process," Amodeo said. "I promise I'm going to build a visitors center the city will be thrilled with."