

McNab Park — Net-New "Won't Lose a Park" Statements

Prepared for Commissioner Audrey Fesik

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Executive Summary

Research across New Pelican archives (UF Digital Collections), Pompano Beach CRA official publications, Coastal News South Florida, official CRA meeting videos (YouTube), Legistar/Granicus records, and city press releases identified **eight strong net-new findings**. The most damaging combination spans the full bypass sequence: CRA Director Nguyen Tran stated on the record at the May 2022 public outreach meeting that "the garden would be **free and open to the public**" and "It's still going to be a **public park**"; the City's own Amended and Restated East CRA Plan (2024) commits to transforming the park into "an **open space botanical garden** with public amenities"; and design firm Bermello Ajamil's website (still live) states "the Botanical Garden itself will remain **open to the public during business hours**." The contradiction with Sarah Mulder's September 4, 2025 admission that this is a "**redevelopment project, not a public park**" is sharpest when stacked against Tran's April 15, 2025 statement — just five months earlier — that "It's a **public park**, it will always remain a public park... we will never get rid of the public park."

Net-New Findings

Finding 1 — Nguyen Tran (CRA Director), May 19, 2022 New Pelican (reporting on May 2022 public outreach mtg)

- **Source:** New Pelican, Vol. issue 05-19-2022, p. 4, UF Digital Collections — [\[https://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/09/09/00/00707/05-19-2022.pdf\]](https://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/09/09/00/00707/05-19-2022.pdf)(<https://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/09/09/00/00707/05-19-2022.pdf>)
 - **Verbatim quote:** "The garden, said Tran, would be free and open to the public." (*paraphrase-in-reported-speech by reporter; same article contains the already-known "It's still going to be a public park" Tran quote*)
 - **Additional direct quote from same article:** Judith Niswonger (East CRA Advisory Board vice chair): "We're trying to create more green space with more trees and plants."
 - **Context:** The New Pelican reported on the May 2022 public outreach meeting — the same meeting that preceded the CRA Board's May 17, 2022 vote approving the conceptual master plan AND the vote to lease the southern half of the park. The reporter summarized Tran's stated promise about cost/access: free admission to the garden.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** Immediately before/concurrent with **May 2022 — CRA Board votes to lease southern portion** (May 17, 2022). This promise was made publicly during the outreach run-up to that vote.
 - **Why net-new:** The already-known quote from this article is Tran's "We're trading off amenities. It's still going to be a public park." The additional statement that "the garden would be free and open to the public" is a separate, distinct, and operationally specific promise not previously logged.
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Finding 2 — Nguyen Tran (CRA Director), April 15, 2025 CRA Board Meeting

- **Source:** City of Pompano Beach YouTube — Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting 4/15/25, timestamp ~{ts:5342} — [\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x20wozLxHcQ\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x20wozLxHcQ) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x20wozLxHcQ>)
- **Verbatim quotes:**

- {ts:5342}: **"It's a public park it will always remain a public park... we will never get rid of the public park."**
 - {ts:5399}: **"We know that open space and parks are very important as developers come and build... so that's what we want to preserve and and to really activate this area and keep it open space."**
 - {ts:3528} (same meeting, from Tran at May 4, 2021 stakeholder meeting video referenced): "This is always going to be owned by the city this is city land it's public land... it's going to be a public park so the city will maintain it and and own it."
 - {ts:3544}: "The land is still public land and will remain in the city."
 - **Context:** The April 15, 2025 CRA Board meeting was a full project status and bond financing presentation to the CRA Board. The meeting included over 100 minutes of formal testimony by CRA staff, design consultants, and commissioners, with Tran closing with explicit reassurances about the park's permanent public character.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** Six months before **9/4/2025 — Sarah Mulder's "redevelopment project, not a park"** admission at the East CRA Advisory Board. Tran's "will always remain a public park / will never get rid of the public park" on April 15, 2025 is the starkest contradiction of any statement in the record.
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Finding 3 — Sarah Mulder (CRA Project Manager), April 15, 2025 CRA Board Meeting

- **Source:** City of Pompano Beach YouTube — Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting 4/15/25, timestamp ~{ts:1046} — [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x20wozLxHcQ>] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x20wozLxHcQ>)
- **Verbatim quote:** {ts:1046}: **"As a matter of fact 75% of this plan which you'll see shortly is public open space and those commercial uses help to pay for the botanical gardens and the ongoing maintenance so that we can keep it free to the public as we've promised."**
- **Context:** Mulder opened the April 15, 2025 CRA Board presentation by explicitly invoking a prior promise — "as we've promised" — to keep the gardens free to the public. This is Mulder herself acknowledging the existence of a promise, before the same Mulder would, five months

later at the September 4, 2025 East CRA Advisory Board meeting, draw a distinction between a "public park" and a "redevelopment project."

- **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** Five months before **9/4/2025 — Sarah Mulder's "redevelopment project, not a park"** statement. The phrase "as we've promised" is an on-the-record admission that such a promise existed.

Finding 4 — Nguyen Tran (CRA Director), May 4, 2021 Community Stakeholder Meeting (video)

- **Source:** City of Pompano Beach YouTube — "McNab House & Botanical Gardens Community Stakeholder Meeting," published May 5, 2021, timestamp {ts:3428} and {ts:2103} — [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_1AulTzudc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_1AulTzudc)
- **Verbatim quotes:**
 - {ts:2103}: **"This is is a public park."**
 - {ts:3428}: **"It's a public park the city owns the park and leases it out to a conservancy organization that runs the park... this is a public park... we don't intend to uh to charge admission on on this part."**
 - {ts:3528}: **"This is always going to be owned by the city this is city land it's public land... it's going to be a public park so the city will maintain it and and own it."**
 - {ts:3544}: **"The land is still public land and will remain in the city."**
- **Context:** This was a May 2021 virtual public outreach meeting (CRA hosted), where Bermello Ajamil presented the preliminary concept designs. Tran fielded resident questions about admission, ownership, and whether they were losing a park, and gave the above unambiguous assurances.
- **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** This meeting falls **between the 7/16/2019 lease of the northern half** and the **May 2022 southern-half lease**. Tran's on-camera reassurances were given while the CRA was planning to expand its control to the southern portion.

Finding 5 — Nguyen Tran (CRA Director), December 2021, reported in Coastal News December 1, 2021

- **Source:** Coastal News South Florida, December 1, 2021 —
[\[https://thecoastalnews.com/mcnab-house-botanical-gardens-project-continues-to-make-progress/\]\(https://thecoastalnews.com/mcnab-house-botanical-gardens-project-continues-to-make-progress/\)](https://thecoastalnews.com/mcnab-house-botanical-gardens-project-continues-to-make-progress/)
 - **Verbatim quote (Tran, directly quoted):** "The McNab House and Botanical Gardens is an innovative mix of historic preservation and future visioning."
 - **Verbatim statements from same article (reporter summary of official CRA representations):**
 - "The botanical gardens will be a public park with fencing around the perimeter."
 - "During the day, it will be open to the community free of charge."
 - "The main entrance will be on SE 22nd Avenue, which runs along the west side of the site. There will also be a north entrance on Atlantic Boulevard."
 - **Context:** This article by reporter Marie Puleo covered the end-of-year 2021 project status, after the CRA received the Florida Redevelopment Association "Out of the Box" award. The specific statements about "public park," "free of charge," and hours of access appeared as editorial characterizations of official CRA representations — the article quotes Tran directly and attributes the park/access details to official project materials.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** December 2021 falls after the **3/1/2020 house move** and before the **May 2022 CRA Board vote to lease the southern portion**. The free-and-public representation was made during precisely the period when the CRA was building public tolerance for the southern-half lease.
 - **Why net-new:** The already-known quote from Coastal News December 2021 is: "The botanical gardens will be a public park with fencing around the perimeter." The Tran quote ("innovative mix of historic preservation and future visioning") and the "free of charge" statement are separate and distinct.
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Finding 6 — City of Pompano Beach / Pompano Beach CRA, Amended and Restated East CRA Plan (May 8, 2024)

- **Source:** City of Pompano Beach — Amended and Restated East CRA Plan, p. 4.7 and 5.3, May 8, 2024 — [https://cdn.pompanobeachfl.gov/city/pages/cra/ECRA-Plan_5.8.2024_Clean-Version.pdf](https://cdn.pompanobeachfl.gov/city/pages/cra/ECRA-Plan_5.8.2024_Clean-Version.pdf)
 - **Verbatim statements:**
 - p. 4.7: **"While the concept calls for private operators for the restaurant the Botanical Garden will remain open to the public."**
 - p. 5.3: **"The Garden itself will remain open to the public during business hours and be operated by a professional park operator in cooperation with a master restaurant operator."**
 - p. 5.3: **"A conceptual master plan was approved by the CRA Board on May 17, 2022 to transform the Park into a restaurant and botanical garden open space."**
 - p. 5.13: **"Enlarge the public open space for residents of Pompano Beach and complete the McNab House and Botanical Gardens park redevelopment project."**
 - **Context:** This is the governing planning document for the East CRA district, formally adopted in May 2024. The commitments to public access are embedded in the legally operative CRA Plan itself — not merely in promotional materials. The plan was adopted after the southern-half lease, after the May 2022 conceptual master plan approval, and served as the basis for bond financing.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** Adopted May 2024, between the **1/23/2025 Master Plan "unveil"** and the **7/24/2025 Architectural Appearance Committee approval**. The CRA's own governing document promised public access right up to the moment of construction approval.
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Finding 7 — Commissioner Tom McMahon (Pompano Beach City Commissioner), March 2019, reported in Coastal News

- **Source:** Coastal News South Florida, March 24, 2019 —
[\[https://thecoastalnews.com/pompano-beach-news-controversy-brewing-moving-mcnab-house-to-mcnab-park/1\(https://thecoastalnews.com/pompano-beach-news-controversy-brewing-moving-mcnab-house-to-mcnab-park/\)\]](https://thecoastalnews.com/pompano-beach-news-controversy-brewing-moving-mcnab-house-to-mcnab-park/1(https://thecoastalnews.com/pompano-beach-news-controversy-brewing-moving-mcnab-house-to-mcnab-park/))
 - **Verbatim quotes:**
 - **"We're excited about this project and the possibility to save an historic structure and activate the park with uses such as a restaurant and bed and breakfast for the community and tourist to enjoy."**
 - **"The City of Pompano Beach has a unique opportunity to preserve a piece of history and save the McNab House from demolition. This area could become a gathering space for the community and a destination place for visitors."**
 - **Also from same article — CRA official press release (March 2019):**
 - **"While the concept calls for private operators, it will remain open to the public during business hours..."**
 - **Context:** This March 2019 Coastal News article reported on early opposition ("controversy brewing") to the plan, before the April 16, 2019 CRA Board vote to authorize the relocation. McMahon was a sitting City Commissioner at the time, and his quotes were made in context of reassuring the community the project would remain a community gathering place. The CRA press release issued at the same time explicitly promised public access during business hours.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** One month **before the 4/16/2019 CRA decision to relocate McNab House** — the opening move of the entire bypass sequence. The "gathering space for the community" framing was the public justification for the decision.
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Finding 8 — Pompano Beach CRA Official Website / Press Release, January 6, 2025 (Master Plan Unveil)

- **Source:** City of Pompano Beach press release, January 6, 2025, authored by Matt Janes —
[\https://www.pompanobeachfl.gov/press-release/pompano-beach-cra-unveils-master-plan-

[for-mcnab-house-and-botanical-gardens-immersive-sensory-experiences-to-transform-gardens\]\(https://www.pompanobeachfl.gov/press-release/pompano-beach-cra-unveils-master-plan-for-mcnab-house-and-botanical-gardens-immersive-sensory-experiences-to-transform-gardens\)](https://www.pompanobeachfl.gov/press-release/pompano-beach-cra-unveils-master-plan-for-mcnab-house-and-botanical-gardens-immersive-sensory-experiences-to-transform-gardens)

- **Verbatim quote (Nguyen Tran, CRA Director):**
 - **"The Pompano Beach CRA is honored to be collaborating with a world-class team of experts to create a one-of-a-kind destination that will delight residents and visitors for generations."**
 - **"Our local residents' participation, coupled with the visionary expertise of our team, has resulted in a master plan for a truly remarkable space that will be a source of pride for our City."**
 - **Verbatim statements from CRA (press release body):**
 - "The Pompano Beach CRA saved the historic home, moving it several blocks to McNab Park, **with the vision of transforming the home into a restaurant and the surrounding land into a botanical garden.**"
 - The event pavilion "will feature floor-to-ceiling glass windows" and the site is optimized for "**community activities.**"
 - **Context:** This was the official city press release announcing the January 23, 2025 Master Plan unveiling event, issued 17 days before the public meeting. The phrase "delight residents and visitors for generations" is a public-facing promise of perpetual community enjoyment — issued 8 months before the P&Z approval and the subsequent "redevelopment project, not a park" characterization.
 - **Pairs with bypass-sequence date:** Issued two weeks before the **1/23/2025 Master Plan "unveil"** — the penultimate bypass-sequence step before the August–September 2025 approvals.
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Findings That Were Already Documented (Skipped)

Skipped 11 duplicates matching items 1–11 in the known-quotes list. Specifically identified and excluded:

- Tran "We're trading off amenities. It's still going to be a public park" (already known #1)
 - Tran July 16, 2019 lease boundary / "We will maintain and improve all the areas in here" (already known #2)
 - Tran "We are not looking at bed and breakfasts... That is no longer part of this project" and "It's off the table" (already known #3/#4)
 - Tran "while a master plan will be developed... no other improvements... unless further direction is given" (already known #4)
 - Pompano CRA Facebook 7/24/2025 and 7/28/2025 posts (already known #5/#6)
 - Coastal News Dec 2021 "public park with fencing" sentence (partially already known #7 — note Finding 5 above captures the *additional* Tran direct quote and "free of charge" detail from the same article, which are distinct)
 - Sarah Mulder "differences between a public park and a redevelopment project" (already known #8)
 - Ken Arnold "50/50" (already known #9)
 - Kay McGinn "We deserve a park" (already known #10)
 - Tom Terwilliger veterans memorial quote (already known #11)
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Searches That Returned Nothing New

The following archives and sources were searched but yielded no net-new quotable statements beyond what is documented above:

- **New Pelican PDF — July 5, 2019 issue** (ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/09/09/00/00559/07-05-2019.pdf): Confirmed the Terwilliger veterans memorial letter and Kay McGinn security complaint (both already known); no net-new official promises.

- **Pompano Legistar/Granicus calendar:** Legistar currently displays only May 2026 meetings; the 2019–2025 archive is not accessible via calendar fetch. Direct legislation-detail pages fetched (File 19-260, 19-283) were for McNab Road bridge projects, not McNab Park. The April 2021 CRA Board meeting agenda contained no McNab items.
- **Redevelopment.net article on P&Z approval (Sept. 3, 2025):** No direct quotes from officials about public access; P&Z vote was unanimous but no public-promise language is attributed to named speakers.
- **CRA May 2022 Status Report PDF:** No public-access promises; purely operational milestone document.
- **Pompano CRA Facebook September 1, 2025 video** ("As a redevelopment project..."): Facebook description only; no additional named-official quotes about public access or park preservation.
- **Florida Bulldog** (floridabulldog.org): No articles on McNab Park found in search results.
- **Yahoo News / Sun Sentinel article, January 7, 2025:** Covered the Master Plan unveiling announcement with Sandra King and Patricia Rowley quotes about the house's heritage value, but no specific public-park promises from named officials beyond what is already captured.
- **CRA Annual Report 2022 PDF:** Contains "the park will remain open to the public during business hours" (paraphrase-level CRA statement, no named speaker) — weaker than what is already in the findings above.
- **Pompano History Society website** (pompanohistory.com/mcnab_house_update): Background history only; no quotable official promises.
- **Bermello Ajamil architect website** (bermelloajamil.com/2023/08/21): Contains "the Botanical Garden itself will remain open to the public during business hours" — this is design firm promotional copy, not a statement by a named city or CRA official; useful corroboration but not independently quotable.
- **Instagram post (July 2024):** CRA promotional copy; no named official quotes.
- **Pompano CRA Facebook August 29, 2025 video:** Focused on homelessness statistics; no public-park promises found.

- **City blog "Sneak Peek" post, November 2021:** CRA promotional language ("destination for residents and tourists alike"); no named-official verbatim quotes.
 - **City blog "McNab House Project Takes Root," July 2024:** BRV hiring announcement; no named-official quotes about public access.
 - **Coastal News September 14, 2020 article:** Confirmed garden would be "open to the public but available for private functions" (CRA editorial characterization, no named speaker); architect Randy Hollingworth "robust public input" / "premier attraction" quotes noted but do not constitute a park-preservation promise by a city official.
 - **FRA 2021 Awards Program PDF** (redevelopment.net): CRA-authored promotional document; "new public open space" language is institutional but not a named-official quote meeting the brief's standard.
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Recommended Follow-Up Records Requests

1. **CRA Board Meeting minutes and video — July 16, 2019** (northern-half lease approval): The Legistar calendar archive was inaccessible via web fetch. A Public Records Request to the City Clerk (records@copbfl.com) for the verbatim meeting minutes of the July 16, 2019 CRA Board meeting would allow verification and verbatim capture of any additional statements by Tran, Commissioners, or board members beyond what the Coastal News reported. **Video archive:** Pompano Beach web streaming archive at <https://www.pompanobeachfl.gov/government/strategic-communications/web-streaming> — check for July 16, 2019 CRA Board recording.
2. **City Commission meeting video and minutes — July 23, 2019** (City Commission approved the northern-half lease): This is the date the elected City Commission voted to authorize the \$10/year lease. A PRR for the July 23, 2019 City Commission verbatim minutes would capture any commissioner floor statements about public access or park preservation made during the vote. **Video:** <https://www.pompanobeachfl.gov/government/strategic-communications/web-streaming>

3. **CRA Board Meeting minutes and video — May 17, 2022** (conceptual master plan approval AND southern-half lease vote): This is the most significant bypass-sequence date for which no verbatim meeting minutes were accessible. The video and verbatim minutes would capture any on-the-record promises made by commissioners or Tran immediately before voting to extend the lease to the southern half. **Legistar entry (if accessible):** Search pompano.legistar.com for May 17, 2022 CRA Board.
4. **Parks & Recreation Advisory Board meeting — 2022 presentation by Bermello Ajamil:** The April 15, 2025 CRA Board video references a 2022 presentation to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (at timestamp ~{ts:744}). The verbatim minutes of that meeting would confirm what promises about public access were made to the Parks & Rec board before the southern-half lease was approved. **PRR to:** City Clerk or Parks & Recreation Department.
5. **East CRA Advisory Board meeting minutes — full transcript for 9/4/2025:** The PDF retrieved (cdn.pompanobeachfl.gov/city/pages/cra/archive/ECRA-Minutes-09.4.2025.pdf) is confirmed draft minutes. A PRR for the final approved minutes and the meeting video would confirm Mulder's exact phrasing about "the differences between a public park and a redevelopment project" and capture any additional board member statements. **Video likely on:** Pompano Beach YouTube channel or City web streaming archive.
6. **Pompano CRA Facebook video — September 1, 2025** ("As a redevelopment project, the McNab House & Botanical Gardens will serve as an economic engine..."): The video itself was not fully accessible; only the title/description could be retrieved. A screenshot or transcript of the full video would document whether any CRA official is quoted making the "redevelopment project" characterization on camera, which would sharpen the contradiction with earlier public-park promises. **URL:** <https://www.facebook.com/PompanoBeachCRA/videos/as-a-redevelopment-project-the-mcnab-house-botanical-gardens-will-serve-as-an-ec/779493214457685/>
7. **New Pelican archives — additional issues from UF Digital Collections:** The URL pattern for New Pelican PDFs confirmed at ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu follows UF/00/09/09/00/[sequence]/MM-DD-YYYY .pdf. Issues around the following dates could

not be fetched due to robots.txt restrictions but may be accessible via the UF Digital Collections web interface at <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/collections/pelican>:

- Immediately after July 23, 2019 City Commission vote
- After March 1, 2020 house move
- December 2022 (post-public-input meeting)
- After January 23, 2025 Master Plan unveil A direct visit to the UFDC library portal or a PRR to the City of Pompano Beach Communications Department for press clippings files would retrieve these issues.