

## Sun Sentinel ~ By Andy Reid ~ September 10, 2014

Adding a Japanese-style hotel and more festival areas are among the changes Palm Beach County commissioners endorsed Tuesday for Morikami Park.



The commission approved an updated long-term plan for the popular park near Delray Beach that features a Japanese museum and gardens.

Getting the commission's support for the proposed park plan that has been decades in the making was the first **step** toward the zoning changes and other approvals needed for the hotel redevelopment to proceed.

"It is a jewel," County Commissioner Mary Lou Berger said about the unique park, located off Jog Road west of Delray. "We are very excited."

The park was donated to the county in the 1970s by George Sukeji Morikami to honor his fellow Japanese **farmers**, who immigrated in the early 1900s and started the Yamato farming colony.

The changes call for partnering with a hotel developer to build a Japanese-style inn and restaurant on 11 acres at the northwest corner of the park property.

"It will be part of the park and it will blend right in," said Randal Baker, president of the Morikami's board of trustees.

Other planned park changes include adding a new artisan village, with craft booths, artist exhibits and other displays. Also, the bonsai exhibit would be expanded and the park entryway improved.

While commissioners approved the park redesign plan, they have not yet agreed to pay for the project. How much it could cost is expected to be determined after hiring a consultant to provide more specifics about the park design, according to the parks department.