

Envision downtown Vero at public charrette today

When the visioning process began in early 2004, a significant number of Vero Beach citizens and "stakeholders" engaged in community town hall meetings, interviews, focus groups and a community-wide survey that elicited opinions regarding key problems, issues, opportunities, goals, priorities and visions for the community.



Jones

The City Council appointed a diverse 15-member "Vision Team" to work with the staff and consultants to develop a cohesive vision statement and report that was consistent with public input.

The priorities that emerged included preservation of the community's character, the maintenance of vibrant commercial centers, architectural and site design considerations, community and economic development issues, and implementation strategies.

Of downtown Vero Beach, the Vision Plan stated: "Downtown should be reinforced as a mixed-use office and governmental center, as well as a unique cultural, arts, entertainment, and residential enclave, with shopping and dining opportunities that support the district and its surrounding neighborhoods. Addressing the Twin Pairs arterials that bisect downtown is a key strategy to enhance the pedestrian nature of the district."

The Vision Plan executive summary

PETER W. JONES
GUEST COLUMNIST

ry closes with: "The Vero Beach Vision Plan sets forth a future direction for Vero Beach. This future direction, or vision, was developed with public involvement and adopted by the City Council, giving the community ownership of the Vision Plan.

"Success of this endeavor will be accomplished through the proper implementation of the Vision Plan's strategies and key concepts. Perseverance and the recognition that implementation is not the culmination of the planning process, but rather another step in the process is crucial to the plan's success.

"Likewise, a partnership involving city officials, citizens, public entities, and the private sector is paramount to Vero Beach's future. In unison, Vero Beach now moves forward, soon to discover its crown jewel."

In its presentation to the Vero Beach City Council on June 6, Main Street Vero Beach and the Downtown Merchants Association offered the following:

Main Street Vero Beach proposes to self-fund a public charrette to be conducted by Ramon Trias and Associates. This charrette will be professionally staffed and facilitated and will reach out to the residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown in recognition of the fact that their future sustainability is linked to the futures of a vibrant, attractive and sustainable downtown.

Main Street Vero Beach recognizes the importance of the history of downtown, the places and structures that represent that history and the need to preserve and protect the heritage of the city's downtown. Main Street Vero Beach recognizes the importance of closely partnering with the city of Vero Beach to ensure that vision and plan become a practical and sustainable reality.

On Thursday, Main Street Vero Beach, in "partnership" with the city and in concert with the vision report, initiated a self-funded, four-day downtown charrette providing for a day-long public session. That session begins at 9 a.m. today at the Vero Beach Community Center. Public discussion will be encouraged at 10:30 a.m.

The planning process will take into account the issues and follow the recommended strategies outlined in the Vision Plan.

Main Street Vero Beach has elected to "put its money where its mouth is" in the best interest of our downtown, surrounding neighborhoods our city and our future. We look forward to working with *all* of you. We'll see you downtown!

Jones, president of Main Street Vero Beach, has more than 25 years of public- and private-sector planning and architecture experience. He was Sebastian's first city planner and is director architectural services for Neel Schaffer Inc.

Opinion Article, Press Journal, September 9, 2006: Peter Jones, president of Vero Beach Main Street describes the downtown charrette and invites the community to participate.