

CITY OF TITUSVILLE

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

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Facilitated by
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Titusville has a long history of engaging and informing its citizens. As part of its ongoing strategic planning, the city invited the community to participate in a half-day workshop to gather input regarding priorities the city should address; strategies for implementation of the priorities; and budgetary impacts to consider. Almost 60 people participated in the February 6, 2010 workshop entitled Community Conversations. The Mayor and City Council as well as senior staff were also in attendance. Ms. Marilyn Crotty from the Florida Institute of Government at the University of Central Florida facilitated the workshop.

After listening to opening remarks by the Mayor and Council Members and a brief presentation by staff, the participants were divided into small groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The elected officials and staff circulated among the groups during the morning to gain a sense of the issues that were being discussed. After hearing reports from each group on the key points of discussion, Ms. Crotty led a general discussion on the creation of a new advisory committee for the city. The Mayor and City Council responded to the comments of the attendees and thanked them for participating.

While a clear consensus on the direction the city should take emerged during the workshop, the diverse group of participants generated many ideas that should be considered by Titusville as it plans for the future. This report is a compilation of the small group discussions.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The first question posed to each group was:

1. Identify the three top priorities the City of Titusville should focus on during the next fiscal year.

There was a great deal of consensus focusing on the need for economic development, tourism, and improving the appearance of the community. The listing below shows the rankings from each group with the asterisked items identified as priorities.

* Economic diversification

Job creation

Business friendly

Fix permitting!

Tax structure improvement

* Improve attractiveness

* Promote tourism

Space heritage/history

Waterfront entertainment

More marketing

Innovation (foster, encourage)

Lose federal dependency

Public transportation

Family oriented activities

* Job development

Recruitment

* Fill empty houses

Attract retirees

* Eco/local tourism

*Economic Development

*Maintain Core Services

Identify what the core services are

Plan for loss of income

Keep current tax rates and/or fee rates

Look at potential partnerships with private sector

*Curb Appeal

CRA's need progress

Maintain building codes

Plan for foreclosures

Citywide building design theme

Proactive code enforcement (residential and commercial)

*Job creation and supporting local business

*Public safety

Safe and secure neighborhoods and homes- special concern- domestic conflict

*Improve community appearance and get rid of tired, unkempt look- vacant and abandoned properties

*Economic Growth

Business friendly

Tourism friendly

Streamline permitting process (city)- not dumbed down

*Eco- tourism

*Revitalize Titusville

*Build economy/business in Titusville- business friendly environment

*Utilize existing housing and housing opportunities attracting people from Orlando

*Tourism development

*Image and identity- promote who is our market target

*Incentives for infill development

Restrict expansion of existing services, utilize existing structures, make demolition easier

Reduce inventory of derelict structures

Limit new construction

*Don't raise taxes

Maximizing grant possibilities

Job creation

Retain current level of services at a minimum

After identifying priorities, the small groups discussed strategies for implementation .

2. Develop strategies for implementing these priorities including realistic time frames, responsible partners, and anticipated outcomes.

Economic Development/Job Creation/Diversification Strategies

Focus on retention

Business ombudsman

30 day permit guarantee

Effective sales/promotion of city

Incentive for redevelopment of existing buildings

Incentivize infill development

Restrict expansion of existing services

Utilize existing structures

Make demolition easier

Reduce inventory of derelict structures

Limit new residential development

Commercial space recruitment

- Sustainable jobs/living wages
- Involve faith-based community
- Lose federal dependency
- Military business
- Encourage innovation
- More hands on elected officials
- Remove impediments to starting a business here
- Research/education/business incubation
- Local business preference in bid/contract awards
- Streamline permitting
- Find/ attract high tech manufacturing
 - Incentives
 - Tax breaks
 - Access to existing structures
 - Local hires
- Attract brick and mortar businesses
- Promote eco-tourism
- Assistance with permit fees/insurance
- Examine financial incentives
- Attracting commercial launch ventures
 - Promote skilled workforce
 - Location, location, location
- Alternative energy businesses
- Home based business support
 - Waive permit fees – 3 years
 - Defined benefit
- Identify diversity (but don't give up on space)
 - Ecotourism, tourism
- Property preservation or demo
 - Banks
- Educate/inform opportunity
- Pursue federal grants
 - Bring community service organizations together to market Titusville
 - Business friendly- to existing and new
 - Community communicating
 - Promote, protect and preserve
- Target incentives for local economy contractors, bids staying local, city purchasing materials
 - Staffing paid by user fees, outsourcing/reducing staff/city belt tightening, pay city manager based upon reduction/ % of taxes- budget
 - Space related businesses using experienced persons from layoffs
- Target larger industrial/commercial manufacturing companies to area
- Bring in better restaurants
- Eco industry
- Economical development vs. revenue/jobs created
- Economic development community to reach out to other cities
- SCDC reaching out more

Paid by performance, not paid by business taxes but paid by membership

Curb Appeal/Improve Attractiveness Strategies

Titusville Beach (align more with beach)

Volunteer clean ups

Public transportation

Revitalize adopt-a-road

Improve linkage with neighboring counties

Remove obstructive vegetation from riverview

Wider sidewalks, bike paths

Golf cart friendly city

Seek input from seniors

Encourage share-a-ride (cars, bikes)

Take care of blighted properties (ie. Miracle City Mall)

Study and understand subject properties

Consider historical value in determining direction, then choose to restore or rebuild

Curb appeal of public property

Increase attractiveness/volunteerism

City appearance- landscaping, painting buildings

Promote tourism/eco-tourism strategies

Easier transportation for tourists

Space tourism

Increase eco-tourism

Facilitate discussions on creating downtown tourism/entertainment district

More marketing

Have DOT post signs advertising Titusville Beach

Promote reds fishing

More Audubon Events (birding)

Titusville Beach

Protect natural resources

Promote, protect and preserve

Use SEDC, EDC, and TDC to promote

Clean up Indian River along US 1

Grand entrance to Titusville statement from interstate

Reconsider vacation rentals

People's attitude towards tourism needs to change to reflect positive, welcoming essence

Bringing community together

Community involvement functions

Ages/income together

Personal responsibility

Promote image and identity by marketing to employers, permanent residents, and tourists

Other Strategies for implementing priorities

Attract retirees

- Preserve natural history
- Cap taxes
- Stabilize home insurance
- Attract Orlando residents
- Place ad (bio) in retirement/senior periodicals
- Refuse fired electric/utility plant
- Green/eco manufacturing
- Target \$ from permits, illegal building
- Vacant buildings- bring in entertainment facilities, multiplex
- Reduce city staffing, ie. Layoffs
- Vacant buildings
 - Tax credit use as training facility for police/fire- take down/refurbish
- Housing and jobs to stay in area, less travel outside city
- Housing low income/distressed properties to maintain appearance
 - City to purchase housing to provide- federal \$
- Outsource/contract services of city except fire/health/safety
- Local incentive to keep business/income here/any purchasing
- Bonds
- Promote Titusville
 - Send mayor to Orlando Health Services Community to promote Titusville
 - Market to employers, permanent residents, and tourists by professional marketing company funded through grants
 - Encourage chamber to run private financed campaigns
 - Actively seek models of other cities that have succeeded in promotion

Each group then shared ideas on what effect the above strategies might have on the city's budget and how to address these impacts.

3. Discuss the impacts of these activities on the city's budget.

- 4 day 9 hour workweek
- Delay non-essential capital improvements
- Cross-training of city personnel
- Look at "sacred cows"- provide services that actually reflect demand
- Better enforcement of laws/codes (fine structure)
- Increase transparency of expenditures- more citizen involvement
- Business development increases municipal revenues in the long run
- Budget must reflect goals
- Encourage growth
- Extend impact fee moratorium
- Larger investment in marketing
- Remove duplication of services between city/county
- Transition away from defined benefit plans
- Flow down mandates- push back through representatives
- Suspend home-based business fees- \$211- (\$125 city) for 3 years
- Independent organization to analyze budget opportunities

Don't raise taxes- maintain current level of services by maximizing grant possibilities and alternative funding

Maximize grant writing

Impacts to budget - our strategies are basically budget neutral

Encourage and assist volunteer groups and civic organizations to clean up, fix, and promote

Revenue- new

- Annex the space center and wildlife refuge

- Take over any abandoned government land

- Sell city maps and promotional items at large events

- Sell Titusville license plates

- Tax billboards

- Survey other cities for service fees that may be appropriate

- Install solar panels on public buildings and sell overage to power companies

Expense cutting

- Eliminate consultant fees when you can go to resource city for same information

- Have economic development department come to every council meeting for status report with other agencies and progress

- Examine fixed assets- 2 vacuum tracks

- Use prison helpers for cleanup efforts

City budget tightening

- Help soften blow to out of work

- Focus on core services

- Tax incentives, reduced fees, time for businesses creating jobs

- More grants

Part II Small group discussions continued

1. What specific efforts should be made to improve the economic health of the City of Titusville? What role should the city play in these efforts? What other organizations should be involved?

Efforts to Improve Economic Health

Listen to business leaders to make improvements

Involve more citizens in the process- provide greater transparency so citizens can easily be informed

Create innovation incentive

City should be a conduit for collaboration and community development

Create a volunteer program

Create a community council to encourage dialogue across economic and social sectors

Greater empowerment of city staff at all levels

More proactive actions by city

- Be aggressive

- Public-private collaboration

Shop Titusville

- Promote local businesses

- Titusville website

Redevelop Miracle City Mall - incentivize

Promote commercial launching in Brevard
Solicit federal elected officials for Brevard County
R&D launching in Brevard
Spend/ more efficiency in all departments
 Permitting, job tasks, better attitudes, evaluation forms from customers
 Community organizations, civic groups, churches, faith based
Maintain tax incentives for new and expanding businesses
Streamline permitting- one stop shop
Making city more attractive
Curb appeal
Unified building plan
Fill up the buildings
Identifiable city center- character
Economic diversity

Other Organizations to Involve

 SEDC
 Brevard County EDC
 Chamber of Commerce
 KSC/exploration park
 SLSL
City has to be aggressive
 State of FL
 Citizens
 Federal government
 Universities and UCF
 High tech corridor
Maintain residence base
Get input from existing businesses
All civic organization and citizens should be involved

2. How can the city of Titusville be of greater assistance to the business community?

Business Friendly

 Streamline the process
 Business ombudsman/single POC
 Process should match goal
 More customer friendly/customer service
 Don't get so focused on the trees that you forget to see the forest
 30 day permit guarantee (only exception would be life safety issues)
 City council should pick their battles
Responsible attitude, incentive for local vendors/contractors to stay here
 Helping/assisting attitude, educate and inform more readily
 Communication between departments and inner government
Survey businesses as to needs

The final small group discussion topic of the day was to identify things the participants would like to change about Titusville.

3. If there was one thing you could change about the city, what would it be?

Look at each shuttle end as an opportunity and not a tragedy
Aggressive economic development
Better vision and follow through
Reconsider leadership structure and empowerment of leaders
Don't be afraid to make decision because someone might disagree- use common sense
Let everyone do their own job- expertise without interference, don't micromanage
Allowing the minority to lead or decide the future for the majority
Should be a full community effort- one community.
Pride of community, ownership
Appearance
Resources (buy Titusville, gas)
Curb appeal
Review ordinances as they pertain to business
Improve image
 More quality of life services

The final activity of the workshop was a group discussion about the potential for creating a new advisory committee. The following comments, issues, and concerns were raised regarding this:

Citizen Advisory Committee

General support
Question the need - what would it do? How much money would it cost?
Could existing boards and committees fill this role?
There may be a need for more than one citizen advisory committee in the short term that could review the information generated from this workshop and make specific recommendations to council within a specific timeframe
Make it an economic development committee with a 60 day timeframe
Council needs to take action now- no more meeting/talking
Use existing community organizations
 Need central communication channel for groups to work together
Challenge to council: Reasons a business should locate in Titusville
Use citizens for "new" ideas, sunset group quickly

Ms. Crotty advised the participants that all of the information generated at the workshop would be compiled into a report which will be available from the city. This information will be used by the elected officials and staff when they meet on February 27, 2010 for the annual strategic plan/goal setting update.

