

## Meeting Report: July 14, 2008

### St. Augustine Historic District Strategic Plan Steering Committee

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

St. Paul AME Church, 85 Martin Luther King Avenue, St. Augustine

#### Attendance:

Members present:	Glen Hastings	John Regan	Roy Hunt
	Michael Gannon	Roy Graham	Ed Poppell
Members absent:	Tracy Upchurch	Gordon Wilson	Kathy Deagan
	Chris Silver		
Others present:	Linda Dixon	Carol Walker	Claude Armstrong
Eric Johnson	Tom Caswell	Dwight Hines	Pete Roman
Jill Ziebell	Nancy Sikes-Kline	Jess Childre	John Johnson
Dan Sullivan	Gale Burnick	Robert M. Hall	Gudrum G. Hall
Toni Wallace	Matthew Kear	Dalonja Duncan	Leslee Keys
Hal Holton	Steven Martin	Harold Barrand	

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Vice President Ed Poppell welcomed attendees. Committee and audience members introduced themselves.
- II. **Review Meeting Report, June 24, 2008** – The meeting report was distributed for review.
- III. **Project Status Report** –
  - a. **Consultant Selection.** Linda Dixon announced that the Consultant Selection Committee completed the interview phase of the selection process earlier in the day. Their recommendation will now go to Vice President Ed Poppell for approval. The Consultant Selection Committee selected RS&H from Jacksonville as the top ranked firm. The second-ranked firm was John Cullinane and Associates from Annapolis, MD; followed by Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas Company from Tampa; IBI Group Inc. from Maitland; and PBS&J from Atlanta, GA.

b. **Scope of Work.** Committee members were asked to discuss their expectations for the consultant's Scope of Work.

**Purpose and Outcome.** Specifically, they were asked to comment on their perceived purpose and successful outcomes of the Strategic Plan. Roy Hunt suggested that the Strategic Plan should be a broad mandate providing a framework for decision-making. Ed Poppell expects the Plan to be objective, neutral and visionary. The Plan should take information and deliver it in a focused framework describing a vision for a destination City and the "home run" action that will help bring about this vision. John Regan hopes that the Plan will bring community cohesiveness around the vision. Glenn Hastings would like the Plan to provide a legacy framework for making St. Augustine an international destination site. Mike Gannon reminded members that the educational component is the key to the vision.

**UF Engagement.** Members also elaborated on how best to engage the UF community. Roy Graham suggested that there need to be more meetings with stakeholders in Gainesville and that the UF Technical Work Group needs to be expanded to include additional disciplines. Glenn Hastings noted that there is already collaboration in tourism research and with the School of Drama to produce a theater festival in St. Augustine. Roy Hunt suggested that the Deans should be provided with an update on the St. Augustine collaboration and a request for program ideas. Ed Poppell reminded members that the limited time and resources should focus on defining the vision, then work out the details of tactical implementation later.

**Performance Indicators.** When asked about performance indicators and benchmarks, John Regan noted that there are good statistics on visitor numbers and tourist-related sales. Glenn Hastings said that the economic models exist and one of the measures is reinvestment. Roy Graham offered that benchmarks should include increased opportunities for students, increased enrollment in related programs, potentially joint programs or degrees with Flagler College, conferences held in St. Augustine, and Student Contact Hours in St. Augustine. Legislative funding was also seen by the committee as an important performance indicator.

**Public Involvement and Education.** A question about ongoing public involvement prompted the following responses.

- The 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was cited as an opportunity to raise awareness and get the legislature interested. Ed Poppell noted that it is up to each agency's lobbyists to keep this issue in front of the legislature.
- Document the process for public educational purposes. Even in building renovations, salvage all pieces as the restoration is taking place.
- Consider doing a press release once the consultant contract is executed. Ed Poppell agreed to contact Margo Pope at that time.
- Provide training for the interpreters who work in the various historic venues. Bill Adams noted that there is a tour guide licensing process and manual provided by the City through its Finance Department. Committee members agreed that they would like to see these materials.
- Outreach and education for the people of the City is important.
- One member asked about the distinction between the Strategic Plan and the Heritage Tourism Study done by the National Historic Trust. This prompted a discussion of the state-owned buildings and the need for them to be self-sustaining.

IV. **Visioning for Historic St. Augustine** – Committee members reviewed the Meeting Report and Visioning Summary from June 24, 2008.

**Signature Facilities.** Linda Dixon asked members to elaborate on their ideas regarding signature facilities. Roy Hunt said that Government House is vital along with other contributing structures. Ed Poppell stated the Fort is the most visited facility. Roy Graham noted that signature facility identification is an important part of the consultant's work.

**Visitor Profile.** Members were also asked to clarify their thoughts on targeted changes to the visitor profile. Glenn Hastings stated that the focus should be on visitor yield, not just the number of visitors. The visitor profile should be less seasonal and more year-round. He noted that the City has a limited carrying capacity, and that if the area is too crowded, the experience will be less enjoyable. As the community grows, new development could go higher and denser, but that is not likely. Therefore, the visitor yield must change, and the community needs to understand the implications of this strategy. For example, discussions of increasing international tourism often focus on pride in Spanish heritage; however the City has only one Spanish restaurant. There

should be more focus on visitor accommodation, for example, keeping restaurants and retail open later.

V. **Next Steps** – Members discussed their next meeting date and agreed to check calendars for dates in the last three weeks of August. Linda Dixon will email draft consensus statements for the committee to review prior to that meeting. Committee members stated they are generally pleased with the direction the project is taking and look forward to this fresh, new approach.

VI. **Other Business** –

**Statewide Tourist Development Plan.** Glenn Hastings reported that a statewide tourist development plan is underway in preparation of a 2013 statewide celebration. The report is due in September 2008 from the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development.

**St. Augustine 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.** Members also discussed the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary effort and how that coordinates with the Strategic Plan. Glenn Hastings suggested that the Strategic Plan effort should be cognizant of the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary effort and deadline, but should not make this a major component of the Plan. He said the Destination Master Plan will address the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a heritage tourism subset. Mike Gannon noted the 2013 Anniversary of Ponce de Leon's voyage as another important milestone. Ed Poppell suggested that these commemorations should be used as leverage to persuade decision-makers and direct funding to St. Augustine.

**Public Comment** - Ed Poppell opened the meeting to public comment, and received the following responses.

- One member of the audience wanted to know what the benefit will be for the general public (e.g. increased employment, increased property values).
- Several citizens were concerned about the condition of the state-owned buildings. The consultant effort should focus on the building restoration and balance the amount of effort spent on the state-owned buildings v. tourism.
- The educational goals are important, but the buildings need to be addressed.
- Heritage tourism is primarily the responsibility of the City. Is UF going into the heritage tourism business, and what are the implications of this for the City's

budget allocation? The City has a budget for heritage tourism, but this does not generate revenue to address the restoration needs of the state-owned buildings.

- There was a concern that the tour guide licensing is inadequate.
- The study should address landscapes, native plants and the plants that would have been brought to America by early settlers.
- The community has not really been educated about the historic building resources.
- Tourists do not get adequate information about the area, and many of them make short trips rather than staying overnight and visiting more attractions. On I-95 from the north, there are three places that announce they are “the” place to go for the St. Augustine visitor center. From the south, I-95 travelers do not get much information about St. Augustine.

VII. **Closing Comments and Adjourn** – Vice President Ed Poppell closed the meeting by thanking the participants.