

## Meeting Report: October 30, 2008

### St. Augustine Historic District Strategic Plan Steering Committee and Public Forum

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

The St. Augustine Record, The Center Conference Room  
One News Place, St. Augustine, FL 32086

#### Attendance:

Members present: Gordon Wilson Glenn Hastings Ed Poppell  
Michael Gannon John Regan Tracy Upchurch  
Kathy Deagan

Members absent: Chris Silver Roy Hunt Roy Graham

#### Others present:

Linda Dixon	Dr. M. McCarthy	Jess Childre	Carol Walker
Bill Tilson	George Gardner	Martin Gold	Dwight Hines
Susan Parker	Sharon Langford	Carla Wright	Hildegardo Pacetti
Maury Keiser	Phyllis Keiser	Margie Rahne	Ed Shaffer
Cheryl Robitzsch	Toni Wallace	Kathy Fleming	Robert Hall
Hal Holton	Bill Adams	Eric Johnson	William Rosenthal
Irene Arrioco	Margo Pope	Michelle Vijgen	Mark Constant
Luke Kramer	Peter Rumpel	Randy Lewis	Jill Ziebell
B. J. Kalaidi	Clay Seay	Nancy Sikes-Kline	Nell Toensmann
Henning Toensmann	Maruo Chiaverini	Sandra Parks	Dave Sweeney
Steve Tocknell	Varun Kalhan	Beth Leister	Ken Smith
Bill Pressley	Gretchen Coss	Cybelle Jones	Jeremy Marquis

I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Vice President Ed Poppell welcomed attendees. Committee and audience members introduced themselves.

II. **Review Meeting Report of October 6, 2008** – Linda Dixon reported that copies of the meeting report were available at the sign-in table.

#### III. **Strategic Plan Update**

Vice President Poppell provided opening remarks and background on the project. In 2007, the state legislature acted to provide for the University of Florida to assume management responsibilities for the

34 state-owned historic properties located in St. Augustine. Mr. Poppell expressed that his personal goals for the strategic plan and its implementation are to:

- Make a true difference in the community
- Have a positive economic impact
- Meet 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary deadline
- Issue a final draft of the Strategic Plan to the State legislature by February 1, 2009

Following the opening remarks, a presentation was made by Dave Sweeney of RS&H, Gretchen Coss and Cybelle Jones of Gallagher & Associates. The presentation summarized work-do-date on the Strategic Plan following the outline of:

- a. Mission and Vision – summarize the mission and vision presented at earlier meetings
- b. Exhibit and Educational Plan – describe the visitor experience framework developed for the St. Augustine Historic Area Strategic Plan
- c. Physical Plan – describe the components of the physical plan that will be presented at the next meeting and included in the Strategic Plan
- d. Marketing Plan - describe the components of the marketing plan that will be presented at the next meeting and included in the Strategic Plan
- e. Implementation Plan - describe the components of the implementation plan that will be presented at the next meeting and included in the Strategic Plan
- f. Next Steps – outlined the schedule and deliverables for the next planning phase and public meeting

Following the presentation the public voiced their comments and concerns. Specific comments were:

George Gardner— questioned the role of the existing VIC and how it fits in this visitor strategy with the proposed new Interpretive Center.

Carla Wright—commented that the Government House should not be neglected and that it should be identified by several layers.

Glen Hastings—expressed concern about applying the layers of history to state assets. He questioned how the layers would mesh with private sector facilities, and whether the project was too focused on state assets while neglecting others. His concerns related to private sector buy-in and how the strategy promoted local interests (e.g. buy local programs for restaurants, local hand-crafts in St. George Street retail). He was interested in understanding what the VCB could do and when, with regard to the proposed strategy.

Sandra Parks—commented that layers of history, orientation center and interpretive materials should all be housed in the existing VIC or another existing facility. Then, a second center could focus on Spanish interpretation and the state-owned assets. She suggested the Ribera House could be used for interpretive purposes. The City, VCB and University need to work with the educational consultants on this multi-layer strategy.

Ed Poppell – recognized that there is underutilized space in the VIC, but that there is a unique opportunity to partner with the National Park Service at this time for a new interpretive center. The University and strategic plan will also seek collaboration with the City of St. Augustine.

Gordon Wilson (NPS)—commented that he liked the layers of history concept. He expressed his and the NPS’s enthusiasm for the joint effort interpretive center and the idea of exploring the relationship between the military and colonial life, but made a point to mention that several of the layers, in addition to the Colonial / Territorial Layer, are appropriate to the interpretation of the Fort. The center could be sensitive to other layers. He felt that the Gettysburg model, as described by Gallagher & Assoc, is a good model for St. Augustine and the Fort.

Robert Hall – commented that he was excited to see a strategy based on interpretation and education.

Cathy Fleming – expressed her support for the layers of history approach, and suggested that maritime history could be an additional layer or woven into the layers framework.

Susan Parker—expressed approval of the layers of history approach and that the general course of the project was heading in a positive direction. She also noted that the strategy of “layers” raises the approach to a community level not just the individual state-owned buildings.

Glenn Hastings – voiced his approval of the “consensus item” relating to the Criteria for Prioritization of Assets in Developing an Implementation Plan.

George Gardner - expressed concern that layer two, the colonial period, was a huge chunk of the city’s history in one layer and suggested that two layers may be more suitable. Cybelle Jones, of Gallagher & Assoc, explained that the detail will be there for the visitor, but initially the layers need to be broadly defined to assist with wayfinding and organizing the visitor experience.

Margaret Pope—commented that a distinction needed to be made between the Mary Peck property, the potential site for the interpretive center, and the Dr. Peck property. She said people tend to confuse the two.

Jill Ziebell —suggested that the story of native plants can be woven into the scheme of historic layers.

Jess Childre – questioned how many visitors per day is the maximum that can be accommodated comfortably, and particularly with regard to the swell of visitors that may be expected with the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Gretchen Coss, of Gallagher & Assoc, responded that Jamestown organizers understood the number of visitors will go down after the initial celebration events so venues should not be overbuilt.

The general consensus was that the Strategic Plan is on the right track. The members of the public in attendance supported the “layers of history” concept and did not identify anything troubling for the project to continue moving forward on its current course.

- IV. **Other Business** – Ed Poppell stated that the next Steering Committee meeting and public forum will be held in December.
- V. **Closing Comments and Adjourn** – Vice President Poppell closed the meeting by thanking the participants.