

MEETING SUMMARY

June 16, 2016

The work session was called to order by Mike Rich at 6:00 PM. Mike noted that for the next two to three months, it would be likely that the committee would conduct its regular meeting on the first Thursday of the month and have a work session at mid-month as it considered the various issues related to vision and goals.

For this work session, Joe Antao and Tanya Glazebrook started the visioning process by conducting a whiteboard exercise. Joe noted that we're going to start with a SWOT analysis and values discussion and set the stage for further discussions at subsequent meetings.

Master Plan identifies issues that need to be addressed by the city, is a guide for the specific actions the city council takes to implement the plan and blueprints the roadmap for the city's growth. For the SWOT discussion he emphasized that importance of using the information gleaned from the surveys and interviews

VALUES

As a community, we value:

- Our environment and natural resources
- Our Civility and Southern hospitality
- Our commitment to care, help and volunteer
- Our commitment to the quality education of our youth
- The importance of diversity of people and neighborhoods
- The importance of family
- The importance of patriotism and community involvement
- The importance of preserving our small town feel
- Inclusiveness
- Ease of mobility
- Uniqueness
- The importance of the city's relationship with Navy

STRENGTHS

- Waterfront and the marshes
- Excellent K-12 School system
- Proximity to I95
- Road and rail access for potential new business
- Small town quality of life
- Safe city with limited crime
- Navy Base as an economic driver
- Cumberland Island as a unique national park
- Local hospital with easy access to top specialty medical care in JAX
- Educated and experienced populace

Close to other places (Savannah, JAX, airport, JAX attractions)
Fire, Police & EMT service
Climate

WEAKNESSES

Not perceived as business friendly (city procedures are complex, expensive and time consuming)
Too few middle class jobs and too many minimum wage jobs
Inadequate public transportation
Limited post-secondary education
Insufficient commercial base to support local or small businesses
No entertainment for tourists, residents, kids and millennials
High rents and the need for affordable single family detached housing
Distance from Atlanta results in lack of attention from State government
Tax base not diversified
Blight
Inconsistent code enforcement
Confusing informational and directional signage

OPPORTUNITIES

Waterfront development including Gateway property, available land and marina potential
Mill site and airport now available for economic development
Improve food and beverage services, parking and traffic flow to make events more appealing
Enhance the historic aspects of downtown
Annexation of various areas into the city to increase tax base
Make better use of our history to leverage it as a tourist draw (not just buildings)
Zoning changes to accommodate new ideas, ie. tourist cottages downtown
Revitalize Mid-town development
Consider the increase in aging population and seek out health care business, like a memory care unit and satellite services to supplement medical care
Be prepared for potential of spaceport
Well educated retiree base
Eco-tourism and Eco-industry
Youth center
Adult activities
RV parks with or without associated uses like bike and golf cart rentals
Streamline government

THREATS

Possibility of losing exclusive rights to Cumberland Island 00ferry transport
Potential of hurricane, flooding or natural disaster
Failing infrastructure

Drug and related crime issues encroaching from north and south
Competing with Jacksonville & Brunswick for new business
Dependency on residential tax base
Lack of funding, cooperation and creativity within the social service and church
community will lead to further erosion of help for those in need
Changes in federal and state funding means fewer dollars for local projects
Lack of funding will increase bike and pedestrian safety issues
Failure to correct blight will discourage other businesses from coming to town

It was agreed that the items listed above would be emailed to the committee for each member to prioritize and return to Joe and Tanya. It was also agreed that Mike, Tanya, Joe and Elaine with Jeff Adams would act as a coordinating committee to handle any issues that came up between meetings and to work with Jeff and EPG to make sure that the committee's process over the next several months would track the work being done by EPG.

The work session was adjourned at 7:53 PM.