

April 22, 2014

What a great opportunity for Venice. I have moved out on your direction to determine the level of community support for a Community Resource Redevelopment Area or CRA in Venice. So far I can report genuine and wide enthusiasm for this unique opportunity. I have been working with Bob Cushing and Jeff Matthews to more fully develop the concept and engage knowledgeable people and groups in the community. They have done a great job and they have reached out to the community using our Think Tank Sessions to explore the prospects of this idea.

What have we found out so far? To begin my initial thought as to the importance of maintaining a vibrant Downtown remains a top priority. Venice Downtown is clearly the heart of Venice and addressing the many issues we see such as infrastructure, parking, and fire protection to name several is where we need to focus. Downtown is a core asset to our city. There may be other areas that would benefit by a CRA but addressing our top priority, Venice downtown, the core of our city, makes County approval much more likely and focusing our management efforts will make success readily apparent and make the approval of future CRAs much more likely.

Our initial assessment of where we need to go also showed that we must continue to develop a broader understanding of the advantages but also the challenges of a CRA as an investment vehicle for Downtown Venice. I recommend we schedule a Workshop with Carol Westmoreland, Associate Director of Florida League of Cities. Carol can acquaint us with the best practices ideas that would benefit Venice but equally pitfalls to avoid. An informative and productive workshop will also help to more fully acquaint the broader community and make council work as we move forward more informed and productive and keep us on track.

So we are clearly on the right track and I would request that Council ask our city manager to schedule a Workshop to explore a CRA for the downtown area of Venice and invite Carol Westmoreland to participate.

And after the workshop, address these issues:

- 1- Map of proposed area
- 2- Economic value & funding mechanism
- 3- Projects
- 4- Pictures of “now”
- 5- Artist rendering of “after”

Emilio Carlesimo

**City of Venice
Strategic Planning - Think Tank Summary
February 10, 2014**

The Venice City Council began its 2014 strategic planning with a day-long think tank session held on February 10th at Village on the Isle. Individuals and groups throughout the city were asked to present their views on the City of Venice. Leaders representing businesses, civic and volunteer groups, cultural organizations, schools, churches, recreational clubs, and neighborhood associations shared their impressions, concerns, and aspirations for the city. Citizens were also encouraged to express their thoughts during the public comment session or in writing.

Summary Table

The table below provides a summary of the individual presentations. Forty-nine (49) speakers addressed City Council; forty-five (45) represented stakeholder groups and four (4) spoke during the public comment session. The subject matter, frequency of mention, and comments are outlined in the table below:

Subject Matter	Number of Times Mentioned	Comments
Beautiful beaches, downtown, jetties, pier, parks, and green space	20	Great assets; improve, maintain and protect; nicest downtown on the west coast; keep them all inviting and free; Venice MainStreet keeps the "everyone's hometown" feel; small gulf-front town with big dreams; add an outdoor performance venue; Wellfield park needs a plan
Embrace/attract young residents	17	Employment and housing for young adults; activities and recreation for teens and children; Need young, vibrant workforce; continue to take care of seniors
Plan strategically for growth	9	Plan for controlled growth to enhance the city; be cautious of growing too big and too fast; too much growth could create serious traffic congestion
Parking, traffic and transportation	12	Free parking is appreciated; more parking is needed; add parking in a way that adds to our historic fabric; need parking garage; problem during festivals; must get off island to use the bus; taxi service isn't great
Increase biking, walking and golf carting	7	Link parks and green space with trails; connect the pocket parks; make city walkable as designed; more, wider trails for bikes and golf carts
Attract diverse businesses and expand employment opportunities	7	Be more attractive to business; good paying jobs for younger workforce; increase opportunities beyond service sector jobs

March 25, 2014

Memorandum for Members of Council

Last year, Mayor Holic talked about a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) for the Seaboard district of the city. There was interest in the idea but we did not pursue the concept. CRAs have been around for some time and have been proposed in the past for Venice. On January 8 of this year Mayor Holic, Council Members Gates, Sherman, City Manager Lavallee, and I attended the Florida League of Cities seminar on CRAs; primarily presented by Carol Westmoreland. Following the Mayor's earlier discussion of a CRA I had also taken a look at the program to learn more about how CRAs worked as well as the initiation process.

Coincidentally with the continuing interest in CRAs, the heart of Venice and in many people's view the life blood of the city, Venice Main Street has been much on my mind. Thinking strategically, as a member of council, and a firefighter, I wondered what would happen if we had a catastrophic event downtown such as a fire? On March 17 I discussed my concerns with City Manager Lavallee, Jeff Shrum, Director of Development Services and Vince LaPorta, Building Director. Following Jeff and Vince's suggestion, on March 18 I talked with Jeff Matthews a local architect and planner with recent experience working with property on Venice Avenue.

We identified some significant infrastructure concerns and two among them were; water pressure and fire hydrant availability. Apart from those kinds of issues we also talked about how improved fire protection for structures would impact long term insurance rates, and how to address the downtown parking requirements. The question of the Post Office was discussed. What would be the best multi-use of that property, perhaps a parking garage along with other uses? Where is our Northern Gateway with the Marker 4 Property headed? It is certainly not inviting today. What could we do with a CRA to address these and the many other issues that impact the heart of the city, Venice downtown, Venice Main Street? How would a CRA work in this area?

Jeff Mathews and I invited Tom Trammell, current President of Mainstreet's Board of Directors, to join us in a conference call with Carol Westmoreland in Tallahassee to explore our ideas further. Based on that conference call and what we have learned previously we know that if a CRA concept for Venice Downtown is viable we need **community involvement and support**. Tom Trammell is going to put this proposal on Mainstreet's agenda for the next meeting. If they like the concept they would then take it to the Chamber of Commerce for consideration prior to any formal proposal to City Council.

This is the perfect time to consider a CRA for the heart of the city. Business is improving; we are addressing our infrastructure by upgrading our water mains. We are hiring an Economic Development person. A CRA for the business district would demonstrate to residents, the business community and future investors a Council commitment to preserving the fundamental character of our City. Other benefits would include increased property values and likely increased investment by property owners would follow. Yes we must proceed cautiously and with full due diligence before any decisions are made. But today I want to inform you what is underway and ask for Council's support to explore this concept.

Emilio Carlesimo

Councilmembers,

On Monday, April 1st, 2014 a joint meeting was held at 1600 Ringling Blvd. between the City of Sarasota Commissioners and the Sarasota County Board of Commissioners.

There were two items on the agenda of this Special Meeting: Homelessness and the submission of a committee's report regarding their recommendation for renewal of the City's 30 year CRA, expiring in 2015.

The CRA portion was especially informative and I am forwarding the link to the power point presentation, provided by County Administrator Thomas Harmer's office, requested through our city manager, Mr. Lavallee.

The report was accepted by both Commissions, with no action taken at that time.

Emilio

To:

Emilio Canales

...

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Brenda Canales

Community Redevelopment Area (Agency) for Downtown

Bob Cushing

Sat 3/29/2014 10:47 AM

To: Emilio Carlesimo <ECarlesimo@Venicegov.com>;

Hi Emilio,

After reviewing the CRA document you shared at City Council meeting on 3/25/14, here are some thoughts to consider:

This will be a good investment for the City, as it reinvests in one of the Core Assets of the City. Parts of the City are worn and dated, and this provides a Plan for reinvesting and a structure for financing it.

One of the platforms within Economic Development is to help current businesses improve their capabilities to compete in a global economy. The Historic Venice MainStreet is one of the key reasons visitors come to this region to shop, eat at our local restaurants, enjoy the Theatre and other events, and visit the beaches within walking distance of Downtown. What better way to invest in Venice by developing a plan to improve our infrastructure, the facades, the landscaping, and resolve parking capacity issues. This will make our community more desirable for visitors and future residents, and build the long term sustainability of the Venice economy.

I think it is a good idea, I look forward to helping work this into a plan and eventual implementation.

Sincerely,

Bob Cushing
9419283645

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such a manner that the conditions and evils enumerated may be eliminated, remedied, or prevented; and that salvageable slum and blighted areas can be conserved and rehabilitated through appropriate public action as herein authorized and the cooperation and voluntary action of the owners and tenants of property in such areas.

- (3) It is further found and declared that the powers conferred by this part are for public uses and purposes for which public money may be expended and police power exercised, and the necessity in the public interest for the provisions herein enacted is declared as a matter of legislative determination.
- (4) It is further found that coastal resort and tourist areas or portions thereof which are deteriorating and economically distressed due to building density patterns, inadequate transportation and parking facilities, faulty lot layout, or inadequate street layout, could, through the means provided in this part, be revitalized and redeveloped in a manner that will vastly improve the economic and social conditions of the community.
- (5) It is further found and declared that the preservation or enhancement of the tax base from which a taxing authority realizes tax revenues is essential to its existence and financial health; that the preservation and enhancement of such tax base is implicit in the purposes for which a taxing authority is established; that tax increment financing is an effective method of achieving such preservation and enhancement in areas in which such tax base is declining; that community redevelopment in such areas, when complete, will enhance such tax base and provide increased tax revenues to all affected taxing authorities, increasing their ability to accomplish their other respective purposes; and that the preservation and enhancement of the tax base in such areas through tax increment financing and the levying of taxes by such taxing authorities therefor and the appropriation of funds to a redevelopment trust fund bears a substantial relation to the purposes of such taxing authorities and is for their respective purposes and concerns. This subsection does not apply in any jurisdiction where the community redevelopment agency validated bonds as of April 30, 1984.
- (6) It is further found and declared that there exists in counties and municipalities of the state a severe shortage of housing affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly; that the existence of such condition affects the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of such counties and municipalities and retards their growth and economic and social development; and that the elimination or improvement of such condition is a proper matter of state policy and state concern and is for a valid and desirable public purpose.
- (7) It is further found and declared that the prevention or elimination of a slum area or blighted area as defined in this part and the preservation or enhancement of the tax base are not public uses or purposes for which private property may be taken by eminent domain and do not satisfy the public purpose requirement of s. 6(a), Art. X of the State Constitution.

History.--s. 2, ch. 69-305; ss. 1, 22, ch. 84-356; s. 1, ch. 98-201; s. 6, ch. 2006-11.

163.336 Coastal resort area redevelopment pilot project.--

(1) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

- (a) The Legislature recognizes that some coastal resort and tourist areas are deteriorating and declining as recreation and tourist centers. It is appropriate to undertake a pilot project to determine the feasibility of encouraging redevelopment of economically distressed coastal properties to allow full utilization of existing urban infrastructure such as roads and utility lines. Such activities can have a beneficial impact on local and state economies and provide job opportunities and revitalization of urban areas.
- (b) The Department of Environmental Protection shall administer a pilot project for redevelopment of economically distressed coastal resort and tourist areas. Such a pilot project shall be administered in the coastal areas of Florida's Atlantic Coast between the St. Johns River entrance and Ponce de Leon Inlet.

(2) PILOT PROJECT ADMINISTRATION.--

- (a) To be eligible to participate in this pilot project, all or a portion of the area must be within:
 1. The coastal building zone as defined in s. 161.54; and
 2. A community redevelopment area, enterprise zone, brownfield area, empowerment zone, or other such economically deprived areas as designated by the county or municipality with jurisdiction over the area.
- (b) Local governments are encouraged to use the full range of economic and tax incentives available to facilitate and promote redevelopment and revitalization within the pilot project areas.
- (c) The Office of the Governor, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Community Affairs are directed to provide technical assistance to expedite permitting for redevelopment projects and

- (j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area; or
- (n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.

However, the term "blighted area" also means any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (n) are present and all taxing authorities subject to s. 163.387(2)(a) agree, either by interlocal agreement or agreements with the agency or by resolution, that the area is blighted. Such agreement or resolution shall only determine that the area is blighted. For purposes of qualifying for the tax credits authorized in chapter 220, "blighted area" means an area as defined in this subsection.

- (9) "Community redevelopment" or "redevelopment" means undertakings, activities, or projects of a county, municipality, or community redevelopment agency in a community redevelopment area for the elimination and prevention of the development or spread of slums and blight, or for the reduction or prevention of crime, or for the provision of affordable housing, whether for rent or for sale, to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly, and may include slum clearance and redevelopment in a community redevelopment area or rehabilitation and revitalization of coastal resort and tourist areas that are deteriorating and economically distressed, or rehabilitation or conservation in a community redevelopment area, or any combination or part thereof, in accordance with a community redevelopment plan and may include the preparation of such a plan.
- (10) "Community redevelopment area" means a slum area, a blighted area, or an area in which there is a shortage of housing that is affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly, or a coastal and tourist area that is deteriorating and economically distressed due to outdated building density patterns, inadequate transportation and parking facilities, faulty lot layout or inadequate street layout, or a combination thereof which the governing body designates as appropriate for community redevelopment. For community redevelopment agencies created after July 1, 2006, a community redevelopment area may not consist of more than 80 percent of a municipality.
- (11) "Community redevelopment plan" means a plan, as it exists from time to time, for a community redevelopment area.
- (12) "Related activities" means:
 - (a) Planning work for the preparation of a general neighborhood redevelopment plan or for the preparation or completion of a communitywide plan or program pursuant to s. 163.365.
 - (b) The functions related to the acquisition and disposal of real property pursuant to s. 163.370(4).
 - (c) The development of affordable housing for residents of the area.
 - (d) The development of community policing innovations.
- (13) "Real property" means all lands, including improvements and fixtures thereon, and property of any nature appurtenant thereto or used in connection therewith and every estate, interest, right, and use, legal or equitable, therein, including but not limited to terms and liens by way of judgment, mortgage, or otherwise.
- (14) "Bonds" means any bonds (including refunding bonds), notes, interim certificates, certificates of indebtedness, debentures, or other obligations.
- (15) "Obligee" means and includes any bondholder, agents or trustees for any bondholders, or lessor demising to the county or municipality property used in connection with community redevelopment, or any assignee or assignees of such lessor's interest or any part thereof, and the Federal Government when it is a party to any contract with the county or municipality.
- (16) "Person" means any individual, firm, partnership, corporation, company, association, joint stock association, or body politic and includes any trustee, receiver, assignee, or other person acting in a similar representative capacity.

Next Steps for CRA concept

Bob Cushing

Mon 4/14/2014 9:32 PM

To: Emilio Carlesimo <ECarlesimo@Venicegov.com>;

Cc: Bob Cushing <bcushing@Venicegov.com>;

Based upon support from the groups in Venice to continue the evaluation of the CRA concept, and from the Think Tank findings on strategic priorities, here are some near-term steps.

Why consider a CRA for Downtown Venice?

- From the Think Tank sessions, maintaining a vibrant Downtown is one of the top priorities.
- The town infrastructure is old and needs to be updated, probably starting with fire protection.
- We have a traffic congestion and parking capacity issue during the High Season with Tourists.
- A healthy, vibrant downtown extends to a healthy and vibrant City of Venice and the surrounding communities.
- The Historic Downtown district is one of the Core Assets of the community. It is one of the reasons people come to Venice. The other feedback is don't mess it up.
- Venice has always been a resort/retirement community. If the Downtown suffers, so will the overall community.
- Aging baby boomers will continue to choose Venice and SW Florida. We need to manage the growth and not just react to it crisis by crisis.
- We need a funding mechanism to invest in Venice's future tied to a specific development plan.

Situation Assessment

Develop a broad understanding of the pros and cons associated with a CRA as an investment vehicle for Downtown Venice.

- Workshop with Carol Westmoreland, Executive Director of Florida Cities.
- Evaluate the CRA Fiscal impact presentation from Florida Redevelopment Association for Best Practice ideas that impact Venice.
- Contact 3-5 Florida tourism oriented cities that have gone through a CRA process to help develop their downtown. What other problems did they solve? What can Venice learn from these experiences?
- Incorporate findings into near term next steps.
- Status report with Council to make sure idea is on track.

Introduction

1.0

2.0

Based on the findings from the study, it is recommended that the following actions be taken to improve the quality of the data collected from the study.

Recommendations

- 1. The study should be repeated with a larger sample size to ensure that the results are statistically significant.
- 2. The study should be repeated with a different set of variables to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 3. The study should be repeated with a different set of participants to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 4. The study should be repeated with a different set of methods to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 5. The study should be repeated with a different set of results to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 6. The study should be repeated with a different set of conclusions to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 7. The study should be repeated with a different set of recommendations to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 8. The study should be repeated with a different set of actions to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 9. The study should be repeated with a different set of findings to ensure that the results are not biased.
- 10. The study should be repeated with a different set of conclusions to ensure that the results are not biased.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, it is recommended that the following actions be taken to improve the quality of the data collected from the study.

- 1. The study should be repeated with a larger sample size to ensure that the results are statistically significant.
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- 10. The study should be repeated with a different set of conclusions to ensure that the results are not biased.

Define the goals and objectives for the CRA

- Workshop format to address the following:
 - What is the problem we are trying to solve? From the Think Tank sessions, the #1 priority of the community is to maintain a vibrant Downtown.
 - What is the Vision for the solution?
 - What do we want Downtown Venice to look like in 20 years?
 - Lay out the area affected by the CRA on a map.
 - Measure the property values affected by the potential district, the historical valuations over a 3-5 year period, and start developing economic projections for the potential CRA.

This project starts with an idea and a Vision, but eventually the area will have to be defined, and the economic impact will have to be quantified.

Please let me know if you need further information to begin the analysis.

Sincerely,

Bob Cushing

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Dear Bob,

On Friday, March 28th, Jeff Mathews and I addressed the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development, Governmental Issues, and Transportation advisory board (EDGIT). The Board totally supported gathering additional CRA information.

We presented the same memo and supporting document that the Venice City Council viewed when they unanimously supported continuing to measure public support for a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) for downtown Venice.

As you are aware, MainStreet's next scheduled meeting is 8 AM, Tuesday April 8th. I'm told it will be on their agenda and I hope to also receive their endorsement.

The next step would be a presentation before the Venice Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) but their next meeting isn't until May 21st. I intend to approach their Vice-Chair and suggest a Special Meeting to consider the CRA issue. I'd like to get it before Council ASAP.

Bob, I very much appreciate your assessment, and offer of assistance. From now on, you are on the "team".

Council showed unanimous support for this initiative so their awareness and feedback on the path forward is essential. I am copying them on this and request that we continue to do so in the future. This is a win-win for Venice that together, we can all be proud to accomplish.

Again, Thank You Bob.

Sincerely,

Emilio

