

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
October 11, 2006– 5:30 PM
OED Training Room – Second Floor – City Hall – 5:30 PM
112 South Osceola Avenue, Clearwater, Florida
Special Meeting to Hear Downtown Marketing and Implementation Plan
by
Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc.

Members Present:	David Allbritton	Chairman
	Bob Fernandez	Vice-Chairman
	Beth Coleman	Member
	Geri Aranjo	Member
	Josee Goudreault	Member
	Dean Nichols	Member

Also Present:	John Doran	Councilmember
	Geraldine Campos	Director, ED & Housing
	Anne Fogarty	Main Street Coordinator
	Linda Byars	Board Administrator

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM at City Hall.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

ITEM #2 – Citizen Comments – Items Not on the Agenda

Thomas Zelhorst, 1050 S. Myrtle Avenue, Clearwater, came forward to advise the Board that he faced the same experiences as those on Cleveland Street when Myrtle Avenue was under construction. As a businessman he is concerned about the rise in property taxes, which have caused many a business to “sell-out”. He asked if the DDB or anyone is worried or concerned about increased taxation. He also expressed his concern regarding the time and expense involved in obtaining a permit. “Six to eight weeks is too long to wait for a permit”, he complained.

Chairman Allbritton stated that he did not know the solution to taxation and thanked Mr. Zelhorst for his input.

Lisa Mansell, representing the Clearwater Downtown Partnership (CDP), invited the DDB members to join with the partnership in visiting the city of Sarasota during the last week of November. Several months ago Ms. Mansell had accompanied the CDP Advisory Board to a retail conference in Sarasota where she met with Sarasota officials who provided an interesting perceptive of what has worked in Sarasota. That meeting prompted an invitation for the CDP to learn more about the retail successes in that community.

Both **Chairman Allbritton** and **Member Goudreault** accepted Ms. Mansell’s invitation.

ITEM #3 – Adopt August 2006 Financial Statement

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adopt the August 2006 Financial Statement; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM # 4 – Approve the Minutes from the September 6, 2006 Regular Monthly meeting

Member Coleman moved to approve the minutes from the September 2, 2006 regular monthly meeting; Member Arango seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM # 5 – Downtown Marketing and Implementation Plan – Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. – Steve Wedeen and Michael Berne

Steve Wedeen outlined the progress of the marketing study over the past six (6) months, from the initial public meeting on May 31, 2006 through the interviews with staff, business and property owners and conference calls with DDB members. He found it interesting that some of the businesses on Cleveland Street are doing as well as they are, including Tony's Pizza and Constant Cravings. While having pizza at Tony's, Steve asked the waitress if "they were always this busy" and she said that they were, proving that whatever challenges or obstacles are in the way, a business can operate and thrive through adversity. Some restaurants are not doing as well as others because they may be less inviting. Tony's, for example, has awnings and outside tables, as does Constant Cravings, which offers an invitation to come inside. Something as basic as "sparkling clean windows" can reflect where the activity is and where it is not. Generally, Steve found that Cleveland Street facades are not attractive. Even if the interiors are nice, the façades are not welcoming and the windows are glaring with no engaging window displays.

Sometimes "it" all just comes down to basics: *passion, pride and good products.*

Michael Berne noted that he had noticed some business entrances were decorated with flowerpots that softened and obscure the construction. Eyes are focused on the flowers rather than construction; an example of how a simple potted plant creates a garden atmosphere and offers a buffer. He added that some businesses might fare better than others because of their location next to the office buildings.

Mr. Wedeen added that, from a design standpoint, soft awnings and umbrellas are a great product. Continuing, he stated that the city's investment in revitalizing downtown demonstrates confidence; something the public should never forget. Large developers are aware and influenced because the city has put money into the infrastructure, leveraging outside and inside investors. This is very important and shouldn't be taken for granted. An enormous amount of money has been invested in the Cleveland Streetscape. "The city has a lot to be proud of and the property owners have a lot to be grateful for", he said.

The loss of curbside parking and the obstruction caused by construction seem to be of the most concern to business owners. In the opinion of Mr. Wedeen that issue is "not that big of a deal" and is not keeping people away. People should understand that the city is building an urban center, which is timely and "the thing to do", and embrace the fact that an urban downtown is based on a walking environment. People are still hanging on to "suburban

adjustment parking” when they should embrace the fact that it’s a downtown. Centralized parking should be beautified, which is the trend all over the country. Even parking garages are colorful with graphic design and can be a “big decoration” for downtowns. People should be made to feel safe in garages and the corridors leading to and from the parking facilities. The Municipal Parking Garage on Garden Avenue should be updated and its corridors decorated to lead people onto Cleveland Street and into downtown.

Mr. Berne pointed out that the two hour parking signs and posters are a new addition since his trip in June and are great for pedestrians. He noticed that there are no signs on the garage booths that indicate “free two hour parking”.

Mr. Wedeen stated that there is no shortage of signs. He suggested that the parking signs be placed in a higher position and banners be considered across the streets. More directional signs might enhance getting people into the downtown.

The vision of Clearwater having a center, a heart and a new urban downtown should be the focus that draws people to a central spot, not just the streetscape. Downtown has assets in place that are unique, yet no one has claimed that spot. Beach folks want something else to do, restaurants and shopping. It’s hard to visualize shops and clubs on Cleveland Street right now.

Mr. Berne replied that since St. Petersburg is not convenient to Clearwater, where does one go to shop and to recreate? Of course, that depends on how and when Clearwater Beach changes. With the amenities coming with Beach Walk and new residential closer, shops and restaurants may open in the future.

Mr. Wedeen recognizes that downtown Clearwater is a canvass. How could it become a regional generator? You are all ambassadors. Reach out to the real estate community. Sell downtown in terms of investing and bringing in commercial business that is really viable. Create a presentation knowing that this will be the happening place in 2, 3 or 4 years. Get places filled with retail that is a draw. Retailers have to be passionate.

The recommendation is to build a brand. The “way finding” initiative is a good effort and a move in the right direction. Shift the focus from branding downtown into branding Cleveland Street in small manageable stretches that will spill off. Create a destination; fill up spaces with retail and market. Execute and implement in a broad way. Use banners and environmental marketing and create a brand new product; like Station Square or any other destination that one might be selling.

Bring everyone to Cleveland Street. Branding, marketing and promoting through other media to bring people down. Use banners and decoration; an overall branding program and make downtown look 100% better. Create momentum; a grass roots effort, both public and private.

Embrace Cleveland Street and the urban environment; look at it as if you were a shareholder. Banding together, to pool resources and parallel efforts and initiatives, will get more done and quicker.

Start marketing now and create a reason for hope. There are ways to draw people downtown. It is impossible to ignore the real reward in the redevelopment and what is going to be in downtown three years from now.

Member Goudreault stated that there is room for business in downtown, which doesn't have anything to do with the streetscape.

Mr. Wedeen asked, "If construction wasn't there, would it be any different"? It doesn't have any affect. Those that are selling are promoting themselves.

Mr. Berne stated that there is traffic in downtown. People are working here or here for the church. It is not necessary to draw from three (3) miles away.

Mr. Wedeen recommended buying the portal: downtownclearwater.com or Cleveland Street. Com. Buy that real estate now, even if you use the city's links; provide retail profiles and interesting content, stretch it. Branding is other's perception; what people think; create the perception that downtown Clearwater is the next "hot spot" with more exposure and consistency.

Geraldine Campos asked if creating expectations when there really isn't much here to see would cost credibility?

Mr. Wedeen provided an example: Station Square Condominiums, which is now nothing more than a niche marketing office selling "coastal urban living", which is nothing more than a whole in the ground with nothing to demonstrate. But, they are marketing it. After spending time with Connie Supper, the sales manager, **Mr. Wedeen** was excited about what was going on there. If he were susceptible to it he would have bought into it.

Mr. Berne added that the Station Square billboard depicts an attractive, trendy 30 something woman, which is an appealing sales tool. Even if "it" is not here yet, it will be and people will want to be a part of "it". People understand "it" could happen here as an emerging "hot spot". People want to tap into that. There is an increasing cultural knowledge of this phenomenon.

Mr. Wedeen said, "Selling the story is easy", and recommended new rendering of the streetscape. The vision of what we want it to look like is important. The current renderings illustrate the same two signs (Travel and Cruise and Clearwater Realty), exactly they way they are; a little more greenery but everything else will remain the same. Have an ideal vision. Illustrate what it could look like; define the vision; develop the story and picture the story. There is a lot to get people excited about. The "Tool Kit" is great. It helps the merchants out. Someone from the Downtown Development Board or fellow merchants should work with the businesses. Give them counseling and marketing idea to help the "fledgling" businesses.

Member Coleman explained that the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce offers a Business Assistance Program.

Mr. Wedeen suggested getting the realtors involved. The right marketing package can make the difference. Don't let obstacles get in the way. Something as little as clean windows,

open doors, reflections and curb appeal make a difference. Get people to smile. Remember that the streetscape and other efforts are to beautify the storefront environment. Think about the end game; promote and embrace the architectural assets in the community and spruce-up.

Mr. Berne believes that the merchants think they are mutually exclusive and look at things from an analytical standpoint. Shoppers will view them the same.

Chairman Allbritton asked if branding something other than Cleveland Street would be a possibility.

Mr. Wedeen answered that naming possibilities are endless and a definite possibility. If Vaughn Wedeen Creative were involved with the process, the company would take a look at naming possibilities, which could be a private/public event. People could vote on a name. Radio media could be used to promote renaming the downtown area. Renaming is something to consider and could open up other possibilities. "I would endorse that", he said. Public exposure is important in embracing an urban model and an opportunity to create a real authentic downtown with historic references.

Mr. Berne stated that Vaughn Wedeen was asked to look at the immediate 18 month. "It's larger than that", he said. Strategic thinking should begin now, especially with retail. New developments should remain on or close to Cleveland Street. The Harborview redevelopment area and the new city hall should bring traffic close to Cleveland Street. The central parking supply should be visibility lighted and lead onto Cleveland Street.

Mr. Wedeen suggested having a retail study done to develop the market.

Ms. Campos stated that a master lease program has been discussed as a possibility to bring owners together so they don't compete.

Mr. Berne has found master leases work for malls. However, they are a "tall order" for downtowns. Branding Cleveland Street should be "pitched" to the owners who may consider putting together a leasing brochure rather than a master lease program.

Chairman Allbritton acknowledged that a website could attack both.

Mr. Wedeen stated that if he could chose one media it would be a website because you can sell "sizzle" directly to the local, national and international retail market.

Conversation ensued regarding "selling naming rights" to downtown, which is "creeping" into acceptability especially for stadiums and sports facilities, however, not for municipalities.

Chairman Allbritton thanked Mr. Wedeen and Mr. Berne for coming. "We need to get started right away", he said.

ITEM #6 – Cleveland Street Construction Project Update – Geraldine Campos

Ms. Campos reported that construction on Cleveland Street is moving along. Utilities installation on the south side of the street is complete and the contractor is well on his way

with storm water work from Osceola Avenue to the bay front. The city is communicating with Gibbs and Register and OPUS to make sure that they are well secured and clean for the Jazz Holiday and that pedestrian traffic will move easily. Utility work on the north side of Cleveland Street is close to completion. The actual streetscape will move block-by-block east on Osceola and Cleveland in about a month and a half. The city is working with the merchants and the contractor in an effort to maintain pedestrian traffic as construction progresses. Once work is completed on the north side the contractor will move to the south.

The next Hard Hat meeting will take place on Thursday, October 26, 2006 at the Cleveland Street Café located at 615 Cleveland Street. The meeting, once scheduled monthly at the Main Library, is being moved to different locations on Cleveland Street. Good questions and comments were addressed at the last meeting held at Constant Cravings. Staff will be available to answer questions and provide a summary of what is covered in the monthly newsletter.

Chairman Allbritton asked if the arrangement for free parking has been working out in the garages.

Ms. Campos answered that a report is generated from parking management. Approximately 1500 different vehicles came into the Garden Street garage last month. Some of which may be employees. The average number is between 600 and 700.

Vice Chairman Fernandez stated that he watches everyday and knows how the businesses are doing. Last month he asked if code enforcement could allow the use of balloons and banners and if a banner could be placed across Cleveland Street at Myrtle to let people know that “we are still around”.

Ms. Campos responded that the issue of banners across Cleveland Street was brought up at the Streetscape Hard Hat meeting and that she had discussed the possibility with the city’s planning director. The possibility of a public purpose sign or banner could be approved by the city manager. The design, location and the funding source would have to be determined and defined. Sandwich board signs are already allowed. It may be possible to use existing construction equipment or barricades, which may be consolidated into sandwich board signs. The city is putting things together to see what can be done. Balloons, however, may be a more difficult issue.

Vice Chairman Fernandez asked if funding support from the DDB would be needed.

Ms. Campos stated that she would e-mail the Board with more details.

ITEM #8 – Main Street Report – Anne Fogarty

Ms. Fogarty requested consideration of two (2) Alternate Entrance Grant applications from the Christian Science Reading Room for landscaping that would enhance the entire Colony Building and jointly from the Cajun Grill, the Rabbit Hole and Helen’s Tailoring.

The Cajun Grill, the Rabbit Hole and Helen’s Tailoring are requesting reimbursement for their investment in plants, plant stands and soil in the amount of \$229.17. The applicants are requesting a 50% match or \$114.59 from the DDB.

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to approve reimbursement for alternate entrance improvements at the Colony Building jointly to the Cajun Grill, the Rabbit Hole and Helen's Tailoring. Total cost of plants, plant stands and soil is \$229.17 of which the Downtown Development Board will reimburse 50% or \$114.59; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The Christian Science Reading Room is investing \$600.00 for improved landscaping in the back entrance including Jasmine and Indian Hawthorne and is requesting a reimbursement of 50% or \$300.00.

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to approve reimbursement for alternate entrance improvements at the rear entrance of the Christian Science Reading Room. Total cost for landscaping is \$600.00 of which the Downtown Development Board will reimburse 50% or \$300.00; Member Arango seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Fogarty announced that the annual Main Street Conference would be held in Ft. Pierce, Florida beginning October 31st through November 3, 2006. The Clearwater Main Street program will accept four awards at the conference. Because the awards are the product of hard work by the Main Street committees Ms. Fogarty requested that the DDB fund the attendance for two (2) committee co-chairs and one (1) committee member who has been active in the promotion of the Main Street program. Each committee member will provide for his or her own meals.

Member Coleman moved to approve funding the attendance of three (3) Main Street committee member's attendance at the Florida Annual Main Street Conference in Ft. Pierce, Florida, beginning November 1, 2006, in an amount not to exceed \$1,200.00; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman Fernandez requested the Board approve his attendance at the conference.

Member Coleman moved to approve funding the attendance of Vice Chairman Fernandez' attendance at the Florida Annual Main Street Conference in Ft. Pierce, Florida, beginning November 1, 2006; Member Nichols seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Fogarty announce that the new and improved Shopping and Dining Guide will be handed out at the Jazz Holiday Festival, November 19 through the 22nd. In the past DDB members have manned the DDB booth at the festival. She asked for volunteers for this years event.

Member Nichols agreed to serve and asked where he should sign-up.

Ms Fogarty announced the annual Coastal Clean-up will take place on Saturday, September 21, 2006, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and advised that promotional materials listing up coming events had been distributed including, the Art Stoll on November 18, 2006 and other events from October through December 8, 2006 when the Holiday parade is scheduled.

The Employee Spooktacular, an event to promote downtown restaurants, provides for “buy-one-get-one-free” coupons in the amount of \$6.00 that can be redeemed at eleven (11) restaurants on Cleveland Street. The Promotion Committee members and the BEATeam will distribute the coupons to the downtown office workers beginning on Friday, October 15, 2006.

Chairman Allbritton asked if Chang Mai (restaurant) had provided the necessary information requested to allow for funding their Alternate Entrance Improvement Grant application.

Ms. Fogarty indicated that Chang Mai has had no luck getting the sign company to provide the requested drawings.

ITEM # 9 – Downtown Development Board Election Results – Chairman Allbritton

Chairman Allbritton welcomed the incumbent members back on board and announced that the ballot count at the October 10, 2006 election resulted in a tie between Member Coleman and Member Nichols. Therefore, a decision has to be made as to which of the two (2) would fill the two (2) and three (3) years seats. He asked each of the members present to cast a secret ballot indicating their choice.

The result of the secret vote was that Member Coleman would fill the three (3) seat and Member Nichols would fill the two (2) year seat.

ITEM #15 – Final Comments

Chairman Allbritton requested that the Board meet before the next televised meeting on November 8, 2006 to discuss the next steps necessary in implementing the marketing plan for downtown.

ITEM #16 – Adjournment

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adjourn the October 11, 2006 regular meeting of the Downtown Development Board at 7:30 p.m.; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
October 11, 2006– 5:30 PM
OED Training Room – Second Floor – City Hall – 5:30 PM
112 South Osceola Avenue, Clearwater, Florida
Special Meeting to Hear Downtown marketing and Implementation Plan
by
Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc.

Members Present:	David Allbritton	Chairman
	Bob Fernandez	Vice-Chairman
	Beth Coleman	Member
	Geri Aranjó	Member
	Josee Goudreault	Member
	Dean Nichols	Member

Also Present:	John Doran	Councilmember
	Geraldine Campos	Director, ED & Housing
	Anne Fogarty	Main Street Coordinator
	Linda Byars	Board Administrator

10.11.06.01

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adopt the August 2006 Financial Statement; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.02

Member Coleman moved to approve the minutes from the September 2, 2006 regular monthly meeting; Member Aranjó seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.03

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to approve reimbursement for alternate entrance improvements at the Colony Building jointly to the Cajun Grill, the Rabbit Hole and Helen's Tailoring. Total cost of plants, plant stands and soil is \$229.17 of which the Downtown Development Board will reimburse 50% or \$114.59; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.04

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to approve reimbursement for alternate entrance improvements at the rear entrance of the Christian Science Reading Room. Total cost for landscaping is \$600.00 of which the Downtown Development Board will reimburse 50% or \$300.00; Member Aranjó seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.05

Member Coleman moved to approve funding the attendance of three (3) Main Street committee member's attendance at the Florida Annual Main Street Conference in Ft. Pierce, Florida, beginning November 1, 2006 in an amount not to exceed \$1,200.00; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.06

Member Coleman moved to approve funding the attendance of Vice Chairman Fernandez' attendance at the Florida Annual Main Street Conference in Ft. Pierce, Florida beginning November 1, 2006; Member Nichols seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10.11.06.06

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adjourn the October 11, 2006 regular meeting of the Downtown Development Board at 7:30 p.m.; Member Coleman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.