

THE REPORT
OF
THE SPECIAL TOURISM ISSUES COMMITTEE

The Civic League Special Tourism Issues Committee would first like to thank those who worked on this report, both Civic League members and others who worked so diligently in investigating these issues. Without their contribution none of this would be possible.

Over the past few months, the committee interviewed and discussed these issues in a confidential manner with government leaders and officers, tourism industry representatives, investors, and folks specializing in redevelopment.

The initial discussions centered on the questions that were raised in prompting the creation of the committee and included the following:

- 1. The effectiveness of and interaction and cooperation among the Daytona Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Southeast Volusia Advertising Authority, and West Volusia Advertising Authority:**

Answer and recommendation: After thorough deliberation and review of evidence, and the clear determination that the agencies are working together more effectively at the insistence of the County Council, the committee recommends that the ad authorities remain separate. However, the committee believes the agencies should develop a base strategic plan that requires continuing cooperation and helps provide a consistent theme of coordination, especially on issues and events that may include parts of the County outside of their district. The County has a tremendous number of attractive assets and the authorities should market that diversity in addition to the attributes of their individual market.

- 2. The effectiveness of and interaction and cooperation between the Ocean Center convention operation and the Halifax Area Advertising Authority (HAAA):**

Answer and recommendation: The Ocean Center is a vital part of the redevelopment of the tourism industry in Volusia County. A key component for the success of the Ocean Center is the development of the convention business, which will require increased hotel availability for serving the convention business. As to the cooperation between the Ocean Center and HAAA, it appears that in the past there was a need for additional cooperation and coordination between the Ocean Center administrators and HAAA. Since our initial review, it appears that cooperation has significantly improved and has become a clear benefit for each entity. There also appears to be a clear division of labor. This cooperation and coordination is key to ensure that all aspects of tourism convention visits are addressed. There may be more areas for potential opportunity; but for now, the committee applauds the entities for the spirit of cooperation demonstrated.

- 3. The deterioration of the tourism image of Daytona Beach/Volusia County area and whether the product that the area offers can be enhanced by government and/or private actions:**

Answer and recommendation: The committee determined that this was a major issue and that the product offered to our visitors badly needed improvement and re-direction of focus. To capitalize on the name recognition, we need to minimize the negative images and problems for "Daytona Beach."

The issues discussed include the following:

- 1) **BRAND:** Out-of-area and potential visitors see the entire area as Daytona Beach, not another city or Volusia County. Similarly, the name recognition and history of Daytona Beach across the world is incredibly valuable in branding and can potentially enhance our tourism image if we have a better product to sell. Therefore, it is recognized and recommended that we emphasize the marketing and use of the name “Daytona Beach” as an umbrella for the area.
- 2) **SAFETY:** Tourists and residents expect safety in areas where they work and play. Blighted, unoccupied commercial areas have increased concerns regarding safety and opportunities for growth. The following recommendations may assist in the image of a safe vacation area:
 - A. **NEW AND REMODELED HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS:** Regular upgrades of existing businesses and buildings; including remodeling of hotels and restaurants; and encouragement of the construction of new hotels and restaurants, and alternative venues. This may be assisted by CRA incentives and public-private cooperation that enhances the opportunities for beachside business to invest in their buildings.
 - B. **HOMELESS POPULATION:** There are pervasive areas of homelessness on the beachside and downtown Daytona Beach. Tourists avoid areas with heavy concentrations of homeless population, and are concerned, whether rightly or wrongly with safety. This is a very difficult issue that will require the cooperation of both city and county governments, as well as private and non-profit input. The cities should examine the development of alternative indigent housing opportunities to alleviate this issue. However, the committee is not prepared to make any other recommendation at this time, except that this is an issue that affects the future growth of our tourist economy and will continue to need input from the Civic League. The League should monitor studies being conducted by local governments to determine whether other options are available.
 - C. **LIGHTING:** The construction of additional and enhanced lighting will promote a safer atmosphere within the Daytona Beach Core, especially around convention and hotel areas. Well-lit areas encourage pedestrian traffic and activities and discourage crime. Conversely, dark areas discourage pedestrian traffic and evening activities, thus, discouraging tourist activities and subsequent visits.
- 3) **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
 - A. **EXISTING NON-CONFORMING STRUCTURES AND BUSINESSES:** The City should be active in code enforcement and assisting in the upgrading of non-conforming structures and businesses, rather than relying upon complaint-based enforcement. Land use and incentives are effective tools to encourage redevelopment, and to support tourism and every day quality of life.
 - B. **ENCOURAGE ACTIVITIES OTHER THAN BEACH:** The area should encourage broad-based activities, such as restaurants and nightly entertainment, both on beachside and downtown area, to provide visitors with activities after dark and increase their length of stay and desire to return. This encouragement may include government re-zoning and/or financial incentives as well as regularly planned art and music festivals, shows, and live entertainment activities. Active and popular areas decrease potential criminal attractions.

- C. A1A BEACHSIDE PARKING: There is a need for additional beachside parking. The City and County should work together to ensure sufficient beachside parking and park areas. Possible funding sources may include ECHO, the Port Authority, and public-private funding. This will spur economic growth near such parking areas and encourage investment in daytime activities.
 - D. BEACH DRIVING: The committee did not, as part of this study, review the potential impact of the removal of beach driving or parking on these issues but recognizes it is an issue that needs to be addressed and finalized in the near future.
- 4) INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY BOULEVARD: The gateway to the Daytona Beach beachside is International Speedway Boulevard (ISB), formally known as Broadway.
- A. INTERSTATE 95 GATEWAY: The main entrance into Daytona Beach is at Interstate 95. Our initial concerns are the interchange redesign and input as to the new entrance into Daytona Beach. The City and County should work with the Florida Department of Transportation, the business community and the public to provide an aesthetically pleasing entrance into Daytona Beach. The goal should be to create consistent and well-designed way-finding signage.
 - B. BEACHSIDE: The ISB corridor has been greatly improved to a point where the new bridge lands on the beachside. From this point, the CRA has determined this area is blighted and needs the community to work together to help redevelop this area.

Specifically, the City and County need to work together to expand the width of the road right-of-way, provide gateway and decorative landscaping, bicycle walks and sidewalks, lighting and underground utilities as a means of increasing the value of the beachside, encourage new restaurants and shops, and welcoming guests to the beach. Policies should be reviewed to encourage redevelopment of more pedestrian friendly nodes at various locations along the corridor. Emphasis should also be placed on the integration of the areas along the corridor with a seamless transit system that includes intermodal links with the airport and rail services. Support of the ISB Coalition will be vital in effecting these changes.

CONCLUSION:

There is a need for leadership in government and the private sector to assist in accomplishing our common goals of the revitalization of the tourism industry and our quality of life for the area. Therefore, the Civic League must take an active role on these issues, especially working with the City and County in the redevelopment of the ISB gateway. The committee recommends that monitoring and continuing to address these issues be assigned to one of the existing committees of the Civic League.

CIVIC LEAGUE SPECIAL TOURISM ISSUES COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Glenn Ritchey
- Frank Bruno
- Joie Alexander
- Ken Bohannon
- Mark Watts
- George Mirabal
- Blaine Lansberry
- Jack White
- Nick Conte
- Glenn Storch
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