

FREDERICKSBURG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
FREDERICKSBURG CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC PLANNING REVIEW  
MAY 14, 2012 EDA MEETING

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

On April 9, 2012, members of the Fredericksburg Economic Development Authority met with sixteen members of the Fredericksburg Citizens Advisory Committee at the Courtyard by Marriott to review the progress to date on the EDA Strategic Plan, which was adopted on January 10, 2011, and to get input and suggestions on the plan of work for fiscal year 2013 beginning July 1, 2012. An on-line survey of the committee members was conducted in advance of the April 9 meeting. Sixteen of the people surveyed responded.

Many members of the Advisory Committee participated in the initial development of the Strategic Plan and were willing to continue to work with the EDA in implementation and updating of the plan.

Present for the April 9 discussion were individuals from retail, commercial real estate, tourism, healthcare, service, banking and the arts.

After reviewing progress to date on the plan, discussion was opened on several initiatives: Main Street, Grants Programs/New Initiatives, Sophia Street/Riverfront and Tourism. The findings and recommendations are summarized below. More detailed information on the discussion can be found in the April 9 Meeting Notes attached hereto.

#### MAIN STREET

Although the Main Street program is widely accepted as beneficial to the community as a whole and the downtown specifically, lack of identification of a broad based sustainable funding source is cause for concern. This may be due, in part, to a lack of understanding of the many benefits from the program. However, if the funding issue is not resolved, the long term success of the initiative is questionable.

The initial members of the Main Street Board of Directors are soon to be announced. The EDA has a key role to play working with this new board in facilitating the implementation of Main Street. The EDA should focus on development of a three year funding plan and a Memorandum of Understanding between the Main Street Board of Directors, the Fredericksburg City Council and the EDA, to include a plan of work and deliverables.

Note: Based on the work of the EDA's Main Street Exploratory Committee, the EDA and City funding combined over the initial three- year period should not exceed fifty percent of the total funds needed. It was recommended that the balance come from the business sectors to be served by the program.

#### Action Steps:

- Facilitate the implementation of Main Street.
- Explore potential funding mechanisms.
- Working with Main Street Board, develop a three-year funding plan and a Memorandum of Understanding.

#### GRANT PROGRAMS/NEW INITIATIVES

The grant programs, especially the façade improvement program, are generally well received. There was discussion about reviewing the existing programs to determine if expected outcomes are being met. There was also discussion about possibly expanding the programs to include matching grants to businesses for marketing, grants to new businesses to offset the impact of initial BPOL tax and grants to aid in the set up of new businesses.

The concept of a revolving loan program, in partnership with local banks, generated good conversation but it was decided that more information is needed before a course of action can be determined.

Almost all agreed that it was important to expand the technology zones incentive program citywide and to communicate the importance of these economic development incentives to the community.

It was noted that the EDA should undertake a top-to-bottom evaluation of the grant programs to assure that they are meeting measurable goals consistent with the Strategic Plan.

Note: The review should take into consideration Strategic Plan goals for downtown beautification, business attraction, expansion and retention, capital investment in the revitalization and development of commercial and industrial properties and corridors, stabilization and expansion of the tax base, increased employment of city residents, expanded tourism marketing and product development, development of a "new" signature event, development of the riverfront, and strengthening of the city's arts businesses.

#### Action Steps:

1. Evaluate all grant programs and restructure if needed.
2. Recommend to City Council that the technology zones be expanded citywide.

#### SOPHIA STREET/RIVERFRONT

There was agreement about the importance to downtown and the city as a whole of Sophia Street/Riverfront development. Unfortunately, there is no current vision around which to focus efforts for the development and revitalization of this key corridor. It was noted that the visioning process should include the city's Riverfront Park Taskforce, private property owners, prospective developers and the arts community.

The EDA should conduct an update of the JumpStart! vision for the Sophia Street corridor from Amelia Street to the railroad, closely coordinating its work with the Taskforce focused on the riverfront park design.

#### Action Step:

- Develop a vision and a implementation strategy for Sophia Street/Riverfront.

#### TOURISM

Tourism is recognized as an important economic engine for the City, investment in which produces strong returns. It was also noted that more funding is needed for tourism development. The role of the EDA in this endeavor is to help develop a comprehensive and far reaching vision for tourism development citywide and to support tourism related initiatives, such as Main Street and the Children's Museum.

By developing a new vision that is exciting and far reaching, the EDA has the opportunity to engage the private sector in the development of products and programs to enhance existing tourism offerings.

#### Action Step:

- Develop new tourism vision