

A “Cents of Place”

Professionals in the fields of economic development and urban planning agree that creating a sense of place is vital to our economic future and quality of life in Tampa Bay. We must work to identify and build those characteristics and concepts that will improve our regional quality of life.

The traditional lines of economic development and community development have blurred in recent years. Florida’s sunny weather and relatively inexpensive cost of living are not enough to assure continued population growth and economic prosperity. Now talented young workers, often called the creative class, can choose from a number of places nationally and globally where they can best “live, work and play.” The Tampa Bay region must create places that engage, mobilize and entertain the “creative class” or we will lose our economic competitive edge. Thus, place-making and economic development is inextricably woven.

How can we best invest in Florida’s future? We must build communities and regions with a “cents of place.” A “cents of place” is best composed of open space preservation; green building and sustainable development; multi-modal transit systems; transit oriented development; an appreciation of the arts, culture and historic preservation as unique contributors to a community’s identity; and, an understanding of the celebration of the rich diversity of Florida’s people.

The forum, “A Cents of Place,” we will focus on a discussion of the crucial role mass transit will play in Florida’s economic future. Communities that invest in transit have seen tremendous returns on their investment. Charlotte’s Lynx Blue Line, a component of the centers and corridors growth strategy, pro-actively promotes sustainable development and strategic infrastructure investment to reduce sprawl. The Lynx Blue Line provides access to jobs, housing entertainment and recreational activities. Lynx and it’s related infrastructure also serves as an important stimulus to the local economy. Private investment in the

Lynx Blue Line is estimated at over 1.86 billion dollars. Property values in the corridor have grown by 52 percent since the year 2000. Private investment development adjacent to the Lynx Blue Line have increased property tax receipts from 260,000 dollars per year to over 6 million dollars per year and are projected to reach receipts of 24 million dollars per year by the year 2011.

Charlotte is demonstrating in one corridor what many other highly regarded cities such as San Francisco, Soho (New York City), Buckhead, Portland, Toronto and Washington, D.C. have created with a multi-corridor infrastructure.

What brings people to Soho, Buckhead, Fisherman's Wharf and Dupont Circle? People want to be in high quality of life communities that provide easy and affordable mass transit access to their live, work and play destinations.

In the past, innovation and economic investment, both public and private, have made Florida a mega-trend place in which to live. As an example, the advent of affordable air conditioning played a pivotal role in the explosive growth in Florida's population. Individuals and industry invested in air conditioning to improve our quality of life. In the past, people patronized movie theaters and shopping malls that offered their attendees air conditioned comfort. Today, people patronize communities and regions that offer accessible, affordable mass transit. Investment from both the public and private sector will fuel this endeavor.

We live in a region that was shaped by the decisions of Tampa Bay's leadership in the 1950's and the 1960's. Now, the current leadership and Tampa Bay's residents must make the choices that will affect how people live, work and play into the 2050's and 2060's. Often, these decisions are not easy and transit decisions are never cheap. On October 31, the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and the Tampa Bay Partnership will present a forum entitled a "Cents of Place." This forum will educate our leaders and community planners on the importance of mass transit as a crucial component of our quality of life. The

forum will explore the linkage between place-making and our economic future. Nationally known speakers, Robert Puentes, a Fellow of the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. and Scott Polikov, AICP, CNU, of the Gateway Planning Group in Austin, Texas will present their philosophy and expertise in mass transit place-making. The registration is nominal and AICP education credits are available. For more information, please visit www.tbrpc.org or call the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council at 727/570-5151 ext.10.

Please join us as we create a “Cents of Place” for Tampa Bay.

Deborah Kynes, Chair
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