



**Florida Redevelopment Association's 2009 Annual Conference
Turning Rocks into Gems
October 29, 2009**



Caryn Miller, CRA Director for the City of Flagler Beach opens workshop by introducing guest speakers: Eleanor Mathews, Marjorie Ferrer, Dustin Benedict, Peggy Heiser, and intern for the City of Flagler Beach, Jaffy Lee. Caryn proceeds further and surprises panel and guests with a video presentation of a movie titled, "Transformations" which focuses on the improvements, community involvement, and beautification of the City of Flagler Beach during the past 3 years..

Using your local agencies and historical societies to help make changes in your community

Eleanor Mathews: In a small Northeast Georgia town, the local Historical Society rallies to save and reuse the Rock Gym. Ownership of the building was given to the board of education and the Historical Society raised 1.45 million dollars of grant money to restore the building. A feasibility study was done and a redevelopment strategy was set into place, along with an architectural concept plan. Bidding and construction started shortly after the research phase and a facility director was hired. The last stage of the campaign involved an aggressive marketing plan. Further information can be obtained by contacting Eleanor Mathews at www.marketekinc.com or by calling 404-522-2243.

Partnering with Chambers of Commerce, the City and others is a great way to share costs and make a difference. Must leave "egos" out the door and have a common single focus and plan.

Marjorie Ferrer from Delray Beach: 4 different entities have come together in support of a marketing strategy for the downtown area of Delray. These four entities are: The Chamber of Commerce, the CRA, the DDA, and the City of Delray government. The key to being successful as a unit is to leave egos at the door. All four groups pool money together and use the same person for marketing. Change does not happen over night. The groups developed a 20 year plan. The goal was to convince residents that it was o.k. to come back downtown. Bringing back special events was the first plan set into action to convince residents that downtown was safe. The second step was promoting and recruiting 4 and 5 star restaurants into the downtown area. The next was recruiting retail into the downtown area. Next was housing. It is important to offer affordable and safe housing in order to encourage regular and steady business to the area. The image of downtown being a safe place to live, work, and play is vital. And finally, retail always should be what follows everything else. The goal was to organize, manage programs and events. The job description was to bring people into the downtown area, not make money for the businesses. Businesses need to use the opportunity of having more people in the downtown area to their advantage by promoting their businesses in a way that would draw the customers to the business. The events downtown were and are free. The events promote the downtown businesses. No funding was available for these events and any and all funding had to come from the businesses in the area. The groups had to go to the community for sponsorship. Examples of events are: Chiwawa races, gift bag distribution, longest dinner table in the state, Christmas tree lighting, Art and Jazz night, 4th of July, wine tastings, and Cinco de Mayo celebration. A lot of these events took constant contact with community and involvement with nonprofit groups in the area. The bottom line is "If you don't advertise, nothing will happen".

Many times we focus on what we want to be instead of what we already are. Take stock of all your attributes and the things you want to change to reach your goal. Focus on the things you can change and leave the rest behind. Too often we forget that simple is easiest and best. Do not try to reinvent the wheel, focus and the good and maximize on it.

Dustin Benedict: The branding of our City helps to control the City's message and how it is delivered. The history of the City can influence the branding of the City. Radical changes are not necessary, usually fine tuning is all that is needed. It's important to do a "self check" when deciding what the City brand should be. Looking at the existing structure of the City is important. With what you have, what can be accomplished? Branding is developing a framework, a consistency to your City. The brand has to be alive. Capture and put this movement into action, use the leadership. The CRA of the City can be the champion of this concept. Refer to handout.

Partner with your local Tourism liaison with the State or County. Avoid "member driven" participation by focusing on broad audiences and partners. Get everyone involved and working on one vision.

Peggy Heiser: Create an experience in your City. Collaborate with different businesses and organizations. Invite everyone to the table and give everyone a chance to share their vision. Invite guest speakers, invite the chamber of commerce, and nonprofit groups to sit together and brainstorm. Educate the local businesses that the tourism group is there to help. Tourism is not member driven and is open and available to all businesses in the area. Analyze the City's and a businesses' needs and ask if volunteers or interns are available. Partnering for events is very important.

Other best practices based on table discussions:

- Façade grants are a great way to promote revitalization and partnership with the community you serve. They create a ripple effect and pride in the community.
- Twitter and Social media use: Many local governments are turning to the social media to promote their cities and towns. More businesses are using Blogs to promote business and keep information up to date. This is a great way to bring the next generation into the fold. However, caution was made that the Attorney General has an opinion that would likely stop all governments in Florida from using social media, because of Sunshine Law and records retention laws. Go to Attorney General's website to view opinion. <http://myfloridalegal.com/>
- City brochures are important for new businesses. The business list should be a separate piece because of constant changes. Brochure should include what is in the downtown area, names of businesses on separate sheet, with phone numbers, addresses, hours of operations, and websites included. Maps should also be part of the brochure. All of this information should be online as well. It is much easier to keep information up to date online, than it is in print. Some cities use interactive maps as well that are available for online use.
- Interns are important tools that all businesses and City's should use and inquire about. The best thing is that they are FREE. Use them to make your brochures, create a marketing strategy, do studies and surveys for your CRA, etc.
- For help with gathering market and database info, go to <http://www.artsusa.org/> and use the calculator. More businesses are using Blogs to promote business and keep information up to date.
- Posting properties on the CRA website is a good way of keeping potential incomers and investors informed with what businesses are moving into and out of the CRA. Forming relationships with Commercial Realtors is very important. Having a direct link to Commercial Real Estate sites on CRA website is also a very good way to develop relations with local realtors.