

CITY OF ORANGE CITY
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

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Facilitated by
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INTRODUCTION

As part of its strategic planning process, the City of Orange City invited the community to participate in a workshop to gather input regarding community treasures; needs and opportunities; priorities the city should address; strategies for implementation of the priorities; and budgetary impacts to consider. More than 65 people participated in the April 29, 2010 workshop entitled Community Conversations. The Mayor and City Council as well as senior staff were also in attendance. Ms. Marilyn Crotty from the Florida Institute of Government at the University of Central Florida facilitated the workshop.

Mayor Harley Strickland welcomed everyone and introduced the new City Manager, Ms. Jamie Croteau. The participants were then divided into small groups and asked to respond to a series of questions. The elected officials and staff circulated among the groups during the workshop to gain a sense of the issues that were being discussed. After hearing reports from each group on the key points of discussion, Ms. Crotty provided some information on local government finance and budgeting. At the conclusion of the workshop, the Vice Mayor thanked the attendees for participating.

While a clear consensus on several directions the city should take emerged during the workshop, the diverse group of participants also generated many ideas that should be considered by Orange City as it plans for the future. This report is a compilation of the small group discussions.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The first question posed to each group was:

1. *What are the treasures of Orange City....the things (whether physical places or intangibles like community character) you love about the city and want to see continued, protected or improved? What would you want to ensure is preserved as Orange City plans for the future?*

There were eight small groups and every one of them listed **preservation of historical Orange City**. The following comments regarding this treasure came from the groups:

- Save historical part of Orange City
- Preservation of historical Orange City (residential, commercial)
- Improve existing historical properties
- Historical architecture
- Historical buildings - Harriet French Boyd House, City Hall, Orange City Library, Albertus Cottage
- Maintain historic town
- Historical buildings
- Historic district-patchwork of architecture
- Historic buildings, homes
- Historical district
- General impression of Orange City- cultural heritage

Five of the groups identified **Natural Resources** in the city as an important treasure and listed the following:

- Blue Springs State Park
- The importance of Blue Springs
- Mills Lake
- St. Johns River

A common theme for five of the groups was **City Parks, Recreation, Trees, and Landscaping**.

- Old oak trees with Spanish moss

Four of the groups love the **Small Town Atmosphere** of the city and identified the following treasures:

- Small town
- Charming ambiance/atmosphere
- Eclectic mix of architecture
- Small town feel, values, and safety
- The community feeling the people generate
- Small community – close knit
- Quiet

- Friendly
- Low traffic
- Small town atmosphere

Four groups also listed the **Citizens** of Orange City as a treasure:

- Non-transient – familiar faces and families
- Good personalities of citizens
- Citizens
- Children
- Parents and grandparents share childhood memories and stories

Three of the eight groups identified the **Business Community** as important to them:

- Keep business separate from homes
- Keep encouraging business, but separate from homes
- Support business on 17-92
- Health care system
- Continue to encourage medical facilities
- Small business
- Commercial district

There was also agreement by three of the groups that **City Government and Services** are a treasure for the community:

- Fire Department, EMTs, Police Department
- The way we handle growth, city development
- Community activities – Halloween, music in the park
- Library

In addition, the following were also identified:

- Walking Tour
- Walking (in general) on E. Graves and 17-92

The small groups then discussed the second question posed:

- 2. Needs – Something not now in place that would improve the general quality of life in Orange City or the business environment.*

Opportunities – Conditions or features that have potential to contribute to a better quality of life or business environment if used wisely.

While no real consensus emerged from these discussions, a variety of ideas were generated that should be considered by the elected officials:

Historic Properties

- Historical district (official)
- Better maintenance of historical areas
- Defined historic heritage walking district
- Show off community historic tours and take ownership- ex. Blue Spring and manatees

Business Community

- Support local small businesses so they can remain viable
- Chamber of commerce
- Make buildings more uniform on 17-92
- 17-92 becomes more of a city center with shopping, etc.- slow the traffic

Transportation Issues

- Decrease speed on 17-92 and local roads
- Speeding on 17-92 and Graves
- 2- Lane pedestrian friendly 17-92
- More paved roads
- Western beltway
- Light rail
- Finish widening East Minnesota
- More safety signs- Men at work, safety for city workers
- Sidewalk connectivity
- Connectivity to Spring-Spring Trail
- Bike trails/lanes

Parks and Recreation

- Preserve parks and green space
- Improve park facilities for children (playgrounds, etc.)
- Take advantage of shuffleboard court-pass onto youth
- More recreation, parks- Valentine Park has only one basketball court, tennis court- more city funding

Community Events

- Community center to enhance and bring revenue
- Local events, festivals, etc.
- Visitors center

Youth

- Programs to support schools, especially high schools
- Youth center within walking/biking distance
- Varied jobs for our younger citizens

- Mentoring programs
- Community service projects for our young to earn, learn, get involved
- Opportunities for youth and volunteers

Miscellaneous Issues

- What do we have for our veterans returning to our community?
- Water conservation
- Re-address development standards
- Tree ordinance for existing homes
- Increase code enforcement
- Government willing to work with the people now!

The next part of the workshop focused on priorities, strategies for implementation and budget impacts. The groups responded to the following requests:

1. *Identify the three top priorities the City of Orange City should focus on during the next fiscal year.*
2. *Develop strategies for implementing these priorities*
3. *Discuss the impacts of these activities on the city's budget.*

Each group approached this task a little differently, so the ideas from each group are listed below:

Group 1

Priorities:

1. Modifications of 17-92 and Historic District zoning and ordinances
Budget impact – zero cost vs minimal cost
2. Don't raise ad valorem taxes
Strategies – operate city hall one hour less; no personal use of city vehicles; no raises in City Hall, police, or fire
Budget impact – going to save money
3. Marketing of Orange City amenities –media mix
Strategies - Businesses support Orange City guidebook and distribution; citizen involvement
Budget impact - Citizen and business involvement- zero to low cost

Group 2

Priorities:

1. Water system/sewer upgrade
Strategies - Secure land to develop and build for future and expand
2. Transit upgrade- growth increasing in 3-5/years
Strategies - Sun Rail? Bypass roads and sidewalks; ½ cent tax to help start programs instead of waiting for funding
Budget impact - Increased transit = more money
3. Development of small businesses
Strategies – support; changes to improve relations

All of the above will create city growth within city limits

Budgetary impacts to consider:

City will have a major impact with growth

Business

Young adults

Schools

Hospitals

Recreation

What about seniors?

How to keep “small town?”

Con: budget has to increase or split funds to cover areas

Group 3

Priorities:

1. Avoid tax increase
Strategies - explore grants; partnerships with local universities- interns; contracting other services to nearby cities
2. Decrease garbage and water rates/fees
Strategies - re-negotiate contract- compare to local cities (West Volusia Water suppliers)
3. Readdress development standards and enforcement
Strategies - staff research, planning and zoning workshops

All of the above priorities will have a positive impact on the budget

Group 4

Priorities:

1. Business Development/Enhancement
Strategies - focus on 17-92- current business; encourage new business; fix prohibitive regulations
Budget impacts - encourage new revenue sources- be creative
look to the private/public sector
2. Enhance the “historic town”
Strategies – conservationist type programs; keep working at “historical town” while incorporating modern technology ie. solar lights etc.
Budget impacts - Historical Society/board work together

Grant money is available- find it! Call Jeff

3. Cultural/youth programs
Strategies - develop a volunteer committee
Budget impacts - grant opportunities
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Group 5

Priorities

1. Citizen Safety
Strategies - community education programs- first response, disaster prep (hurricane, tornado); reduce speeding; more road signs; sidewalk conditions
Budget impact – minimal impact for education program due to use of volunteers
 2. Community outreach
Strategies - community recreation center (new high school); teen volunteer programs (clean up, community service); historical preservation
Budget impact - research dollars available, grant money, federal government
 3. Manage growth
Strategies – utilities; water conservation; sewer; traffic patterns; drainage; traffic lights; zoning and planning
Budget impact – growth pays for itself-taxes from businesses (big businesses more so); funding needed for utilities, traffic lights
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Group 6

Priorities

1. Community relations manager
Strategies - public information officer - redefine current position; tell Orange City's story; open visitor center
Budget impact - use volunteers; minor impact
 2. Revitalization of 17-92 corridor- business recruitment
Strategies - define corridor; develop and implement new redevelopment code
Budget impact - positive budget impact
 3. Develop sustainable water plan
Strategies - participate with WV Water Alliance; explore grant opportunities agreement with landholders for water storage
Budget impact - minimal impact
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Group 7

All of this group's priorities dealt with fiscal issues

Priorities:

1. Workshops- citizen, budget
Strategies – determine what the city should do, could do, must do; cut budget
 2. Trade-offs - Possible taxes (gas); out of town visitors/state- share
Amendment 4 partnerships (unknown impact)
 3. Ask taxpayer for help- events/revenue
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Group 8

Priorities:

1. Infrastructure maintenance/upgrades
Strategies - road upkeep; drainage; widening; landscape and narrow 17-92; more public involvement
Budget impact - timely maintenance can save resources
2. Local festivals and events- art shows, car shows, bicycles, motorcycles, etc.
Strategies - parking, lodging, walking/bicycle access and public transportation
Budget impact - festivals can produce income; research grants for transportation, historical district
3. Emphasize local natural resources- springs, river
Strategies - advertising- local, statewide or national, international

SUMMARY

There appears to be consensus on the need to focus on the 17-92 corridor with enhancements that assist current businesses and draw new businesses to the city. Along with this goes the necessary infrastructure upgrades and maintenance throughout the city. There is much interest in increased marketing efforts that highlight the historic and natural resources of Orange City to draw people to the city. At the same time, many of the citizens present at the workshop were opposed to increases in taxes and suggested ways the city might reduce its budget. The challenge this presents to the Mayor and City Council should be addressed as the elected officials plan for the next fiscal year.