

The Art of Making Choices

We have spent over a year in creating the framework for redevelopment. We have held a total of 26 workshops that involved at least 585 participants. We have hired two top-notch consulting teams at a total cost of \$190,000 (\$50,000 of which was paid through the Florida Coastal Management Grant). We have a comprehensive redevelopment plan, and we are progressing toward implementation through design guidelines and master planning. We have integrated previous and intensive “visioning” plans: “The Friends of North Port St. Joe Strategic Plan,” the economic redevelopment council “Gulf County Strategic Plan,” and the “Waterfront’s Strategic Plan,” This is all to say, we are getting ready to see changes take place. The strategy is in place...we now need to make it “real,” and this will require decision-making. The decisions will create real change and progress.

This is very exciting. Over the years, we will build on the plans we implement starting now. Instead of the mental pictures, sharing of concepts and artist’s renderings, we will see the changes in the form of construction, new paint, new signage, new landscaping, new parking lots, new economic strategies and business plans, new business in town and overall changes that will benefit the entire community. We will see the 98 corridor as an attractive area and something that beckons travelers to investigate this intriguing community. We will see people strolling through our business district, a district with a theme and a calling.

Please note the word “art” in the title of this column. Making choices is an art and is not a science. While we can all agree that two plus two equals four, the options for redevelopment will head in a variety of directions. How can we make the best choices and how can we avoid pitfalls in decision-making.

This week, let’s take a look at some of the common pitfalls of decision-making.

- Expecting one-hundred-percent consensus
- Ending personal involvement because we think the process is complete
- Thinking that change is inherently negative
- Begin bullied into any decision
- Relying more on “feelings” than on “thinking”
- Lack of balance between what you think and what you do
- Confusing personal predisposition with the good of the community into the future
- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of integrity in the process
- Interjecting misdirected statements and misleading facts into the process
- Not disclosing personal agendas and corrupting an open process to personal gain
- Relying more on feelings than facts

Change is difficult and challenging, even under the best circumstances. Avoiding change also translates to lost opportunities (which equal lost dollars in revenue). At the end of the day, you have to spend money to make money (and you have to make change to increase opportunity). Careful decision-making can minimize the risk.

