

A Look Ahead for the PSJRA

September is the month we close-out our fiscal year and complete the overall plan for the next. The board of directors will participate in a retreat on September 6 to review the goals for the upcoming year. At the next meeting, the board will elect new officers. We will begin to generate our annual report, which will contain an overview of the preceding year, income and expenditures, and the annual audit results. This report is open to the public, and a copy is filed with the Department of Community Affairs.

The FY 2007-2008 budget has been approved by the board of directors, and the majority of the funding is allotted to two areas: civic improvements (\$263,000) and façade improvement grants for businesses within the redevelopment area (\$150,000). We have been telling you that the planning phase is over—we look forward to seeing improvements!

On the Williams Avenue grant, Preble-Rish is working on a revision to include comments and recommendations we have received to date. Our goals are to provide safe pedestrian access, landscape beautification, and improved drainage to stop the flooding. We thank the owners who have stepped forward to discuss their particular needs, and we are working to accommodate them. The result should be as functional as it is attractive. A workshop will be scheduled after Labor Day.

After two years of reviewing comments of landscape architects, urban planners and surveys of business, we are ready to revamp the landscaping on Reid Avenue. Again, functionality is the first priority. While the existing plants are wonderfully reflective of our local culture, they have grown so large that they present a danger and a liability—some are as tall as an automobile. The maintenance (weeding and pine straw) are also costly. Experts have also told us that shade is essential to the overall success of Reid Avenue. To that end, we are rehabbing the existing sprinkler system and converting it to a drip system (no more broken sprinkler heads). We are relocating many of the palm trees in groups in various beds and at the 71 entrance to Reid Avenue. We will relocate the shrubs and replace with low-growing and hearty ground cover. There will be some annual color as well. The crepe myrtles will remain in place. Look for this work to commence late September. We will attempt to minimize the inconvenience...and you can anticipate a little surprise the night of the downtown Halloween celebration.

We are preparing to commission new art for a new banner series. Working with GALA, we will select a local artist and discuss a theme. If you have any suggestions, please consider joining our committee. Another graphics project to help local business is a business-district map. This will be very artistic and will be placed in rental properties and around town.

The Dr. Joe Memorial Parking Lot will move into phase II, with installation of a very unique shade structure, commissioned from Alex Henderson. He is also creating a bronze statue of Dr. Joe's dog, Gator. These should be installed within the next couple of weeks.

Please join me in welcoming a new, part-time staff to the PSJRA: Lorinda Gingell. We are delighted to bring her in to help with special projects and overflow work. She will be a valuable asset to the PSJRA.

We will shortly publish the grant application for the façade improvements. Be thinking about how you would like to beautify the front of your business, and we look forward to helping you financially.

So, here we go...finally. As always, call with comments: 229-6899. Thanks.