

Williams Avenue—Here We Come

Just over a year ago, a nationally renowned, small-city planner, Robert Gibbs, spent several hours walking around Port St. Joe with a small group of locals. During that time, he put a great deal of focus on the potential of Williams Avenue. He loved the warehouse element and envisioned transforming Williams into a hip, retail/artist warehouse-chic, SoHo-type business district.

The existing Williams Avenue features wonderful boutique business, including fitness classes and apparel, full-service spa, hair and nails, automotive and St. Joe Hardware. The artistic edge is also moving in, with Leslie Wentzell's pottery studio. And don't forget the fabulous food at Provisions and Mr. B's barbecue (a new favorite on my must-taste list).

It is time...it is past time...to bring improvement to Williams to attract and sustain business on this wonderful street. The PSJRA, in conjunction with the City of Port St. Joe and the capable assistance of Charlotte Pierce, is applying for a USDA grant to fund the much-needed improvements.

Concurrently, the celebrated initiative by JOE Company and the City to connect Williams Avenue to Martin Luther King Boulevard in the near future promises a long overdue linkage and flow between the communities of North Port St. Joe and the downtown area. A revitalization of the Avenue A ballpark could significantly add to the synergy and affirmation of PSJ, both culturally and economically.

Preble-Rish has completed the comprehensive survey for the existing conditions on Williams Avenue, as well as a conceptual layout to add pedestrian access, green space and additional parking. CRA Board Member Erin Searcy is working on the beautification with landscaping recommendations. This process will also address layers of complexity: storm water retention and drainage, traffic flow, ADA parking and access and landscape irrigation. We are very excited about this project and will keep you informed.

We have exciting, recent additions to our business districts. Help us welcome and support new and expanding businesses:

- Persnickety is a collection of "mini" stores in one location: "Paper Girl" invitations and unique paper goods, "The Nature of Things" life-balancing garden items (we can all use a little Zen in our lives), "Monogrammed" custom monogramming, "Tatoe Tot" children's wear and gifts and "Fetish" ladies clothing.
- "The Fuss" will open soon, offering ladies' apparel.
- Two interior design studios have recently opened: Lemon Grass and Trask Design.
- Philly's Finest sandwich/pizza shop has added indoor seating.
- Half-Shells seafood restaurant, a favorite from Mexico Beach, has relocated to Reid Avenue.
- In North Port St. Joe, drop by the Paradise Café in the Korner Stop & Go for a fantastic soul-food lunch or dinner (or catering for your events).

If we missed any new-or-improved businesses in the redevelopment area, please give me a call at 850-229-6899 and let me know your plans to bring business our way, and we will help you all we can.

Remember, Walter Miller and his team (WIM Associates) will be hosting a public meeting on Thursday, May 24, 7 PM, at the PSJ Fire Station. We have invited agency leaders and North Port St. Joe pastors to attend this meeting to share information and add this important element to the consensus-building required for successful master planning for NPSJ (and beyond – given the Williams/MLK linkage). If you have missed any meetings or want to add your opinions, we have survey forms and comment forms you can submit at any time.

Workshops by Land Design Innovations, focusing on the Design Guidelines and Urban Planning for the entire redevelopment area, are being scheduled for June and July; dates will be available next week.