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**ORANGE AVENUE REPORT**

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## ORANGE AVENUE REPORT

The Orange Avenue corridor historically was a bustling part of Fort Pierce. Shops, salons and markets generated an abundance of activity from residents who lived in the immediate vicinity and beyond, however for some time now, the Orange Avenue Corridor between U.S. Hwy 1 and 10<sup>th</sup> street has been desolate. Some buildings along this avenue have been sitting vacant for over a decade, and while properties are being purchased by developers, a minimal amount of improvements have been



made. These improvements weren't enough to entice business owners to set up shop in the area.

Beyond the storefronts along Orange Avenue is St. Anastasia's Catholic School. Built in 1914, this structure served as the school house for the St.

Anastasia's Catholic Church that was located on the same block. It suffered a lot of damage from the Francis and Jean hurricanes in 2014. Since then, the City has replaced the roof as well as installed new windows and interior doors during the schools centennial. Though these improvements have been made, the interior remains to be in disrepair. These first steps in its rejuvenation were hopefully stepping stones for new investors to take hold of the project, but with little to no legitimate inquiries the building continues to remain vacant.

The City of Fort Pierce Planning department paid attention to these issues, noting that the Orange Avenue corridor had become a blighted area. It was clear that something needed to be done, however *what* needed to be done was still unknown. In a new effort to build a better relationship with the Fort Pierce community and to serve the surrounding neighborhood, the City planned a community meeting with

the goal of getting feedback on what people would love to see and what their wishes as stakeholders are in this area.

The meeting was held in a vacant store front at 601 Orange Avenue, a building that has seen some activity, but has never been without space to lease. A total of three boards were set up, each with a different theme and question. These conversation stations allowed the participants to write their thoughts and general input. One

board posed the question “What is the most important issue we should look at?” and “What is a *deal breaker* – what things do you not want to see?” The other turned its attention to the redevelopment of St. Anastasia’s School House and asked “What do you think



the City should do with St. Anastasia’s to turn it back into a functional (non-vacant) property?” The third board was interactive, prompting residents to use three stickers and place them next to the item or activity that was most important to them such as street scaping, arts, music and culture, grocery stores, retail, etc. and give immediate visual feedback.

The responses were overflowing. While a number of suggestions were made from additional lighting and beautifying the area to redeveloping St. Anastasia’s into a high-end homeless shelter, the overwhelming response was in the category of the arts. Each board showed an abundance of suggestions on the topic. So much so that the interactive board literally had stickers reaching off the sheet in support of the subject. One participant spoke about transitioning the school into low cost artist housing, creating a live/work environment. For the area around it, outdoor events such as concerts and pop-up markets. The community also wanted to see more identity in the corridors culture. Museums, cultural arts centers and performing arts centers were proposed.

Another topic of discussion was an effort to spruce up the corridor. One participant wrote “Clean up this area and make it look nicer” followed by the comment “Lighting and street scape to enhance neighborhood.” One person was even quoted saying “The area needs a facelift.” This was supported by many notating Code

Enforcement as an item that was very important to them.

Arts – Museums, Music & Culture	19%
Street Scaping additional landscaping, lighting and/or benches	10%
Historic Preservation	10%
Job Creation	9%
Restaurants	8%
Safety	4%
Single Family Housing	4%
Grocery Store	4%
Neighborhood Identity	3%
Bars	3%
Increased Police Presence	3%
Parks – Neighborhood Pocket Parks	2%
All other items (Parking, Basketball Court, Offices, Childcare, etc.)	2% or less

Security of the area was expressed in many forms. “Safety” and “Police Presence” was continually selected when asked “What is most important to you?” Surveillances cameras were also suggested. Arguably, these concerns could correlate with the suggestion of lighting which was notated several times throughout each board.

While the participants were able to voice what they would love in the area, they also were able to say what they

absolutely did not want. “Dollar Stores”, discount retail and the like were strongly opposed. One resident wrote “Please, God. No more!” and “No more Dollar Stores Please” next to the notion. Also opposed were lawyer offices and bail bond establishments. While these were written, items that received no votes on the “What is most important to you?” board were auto part stores, gas stations, bus routes and salons/barber shops.

In addition to the boards, a short survey was given to each participant. While the boards focused on the future, the survey focused on the present, asking about the things they currently liked and disliked about the area. The traffic flow for pedestrians as well as cars was written. The peacefulness of the area and small town atmosphere was appreciated. Again, the vacant store fronts, the current shape of the buildings and lack of culture were prominent throughout the surveys when asked what was disliked. The surveys also helped to gather feedback on the historic post office and perhaps a new name for the corridor. Besides basic retail, many wanted to see the post office turned into a Fort Pierce memorabilia shop or information stop. Youth centers and a fun spot for teens were written several times.

Ideas for a corridor name ranged from Pineapple Causeway, Unity District, Sunrise District to Arts District, Peacock District (Peacock Arts District), and Cultural District.

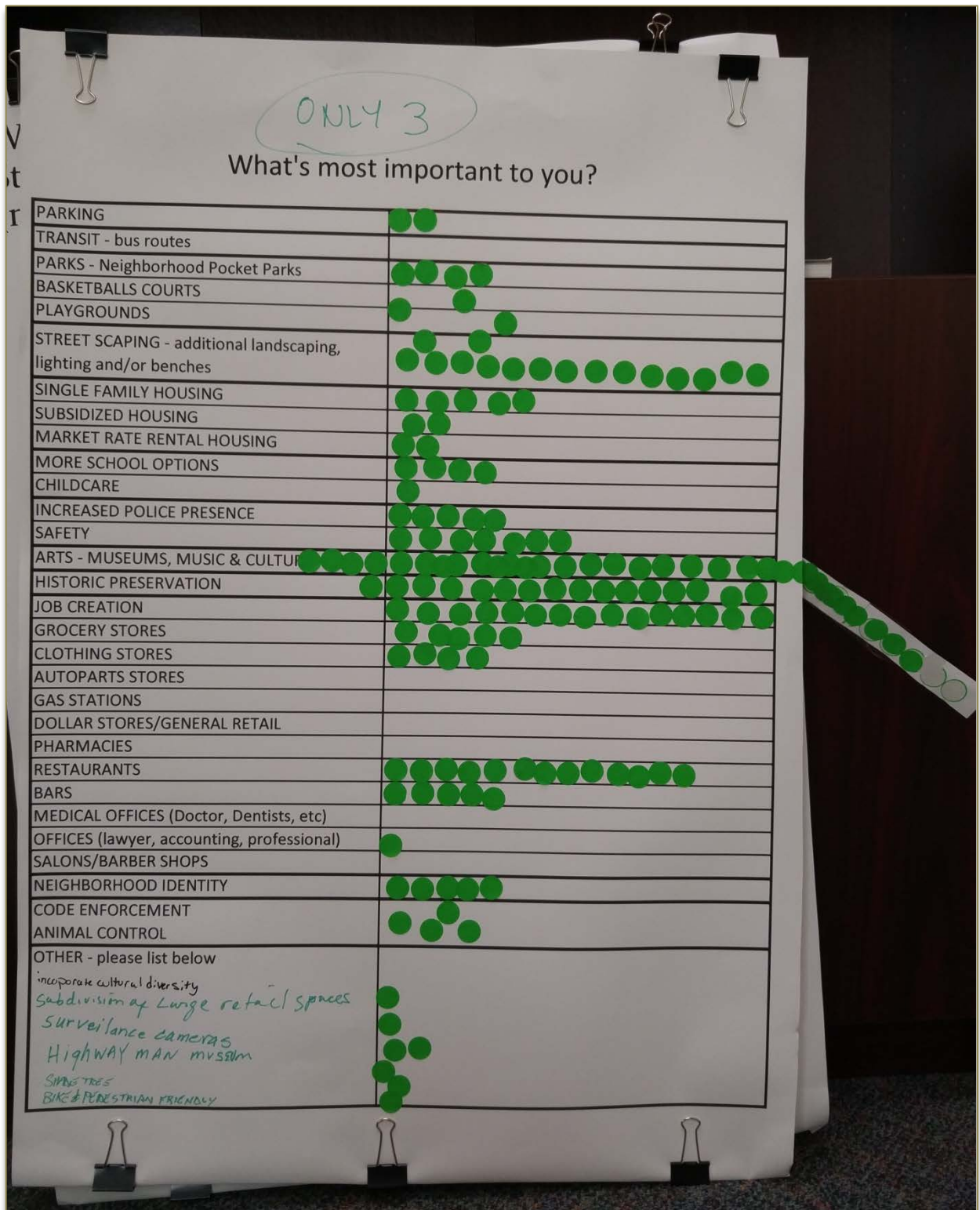
So, what's next? The Planning department intends to embark on the five most important issues that were noted in the meeting: Arts (Museum, Music & Culture), Street Scaping, Historic Preservation, Job Creation and Restaurants. For each item, short term as well as long term goals will be developed to execute each task.

All the suggestions were very valid and justified, and these concerns were prominent enough that over 50 to 60 people showed to give their opinion. It is very safe to say that the conclusion from the data, as well as the conversations had with all participants that the Arts is a subject that is deeply desired. The support for something that will bring music, culture and artist to this area was overwhelming. While this is something that the City can put effort into to bring the idea to fruition, many of these items discussed can create what City Planners call "The Domino Effect". One achievement in a neighborhood can trigger multiple actions. Something as minimal as street scaping can beautify an area and make a business owner take notice and begin to think of the possibilities of expanding in this neighborhood. One cultural or music event around the St. Anastasia School can spark many, making artists and viewers walk the area and become familiar with it. The success of these events may inspire an artist to open a gallery. Higher traffic could spark the demand for restaurants and retail. The desire to live close to these activities may prompt a residential demand. The knowledge of what the community wants for this area helps the City seek grants that are very specific to its needs. Public Works can provide more landscaping and maintain it to beauty the area. Code Enforcement can pay close attention to areas that may need additional consideration. The City can work with Fort Pierce Utilities Authority can develop a plan to provide additional lighting along the corridor and side streets. All of these things and more can be monumental in transforming Orange Avenue from a blighted, desolate area to an attractive, vibrant corridor.

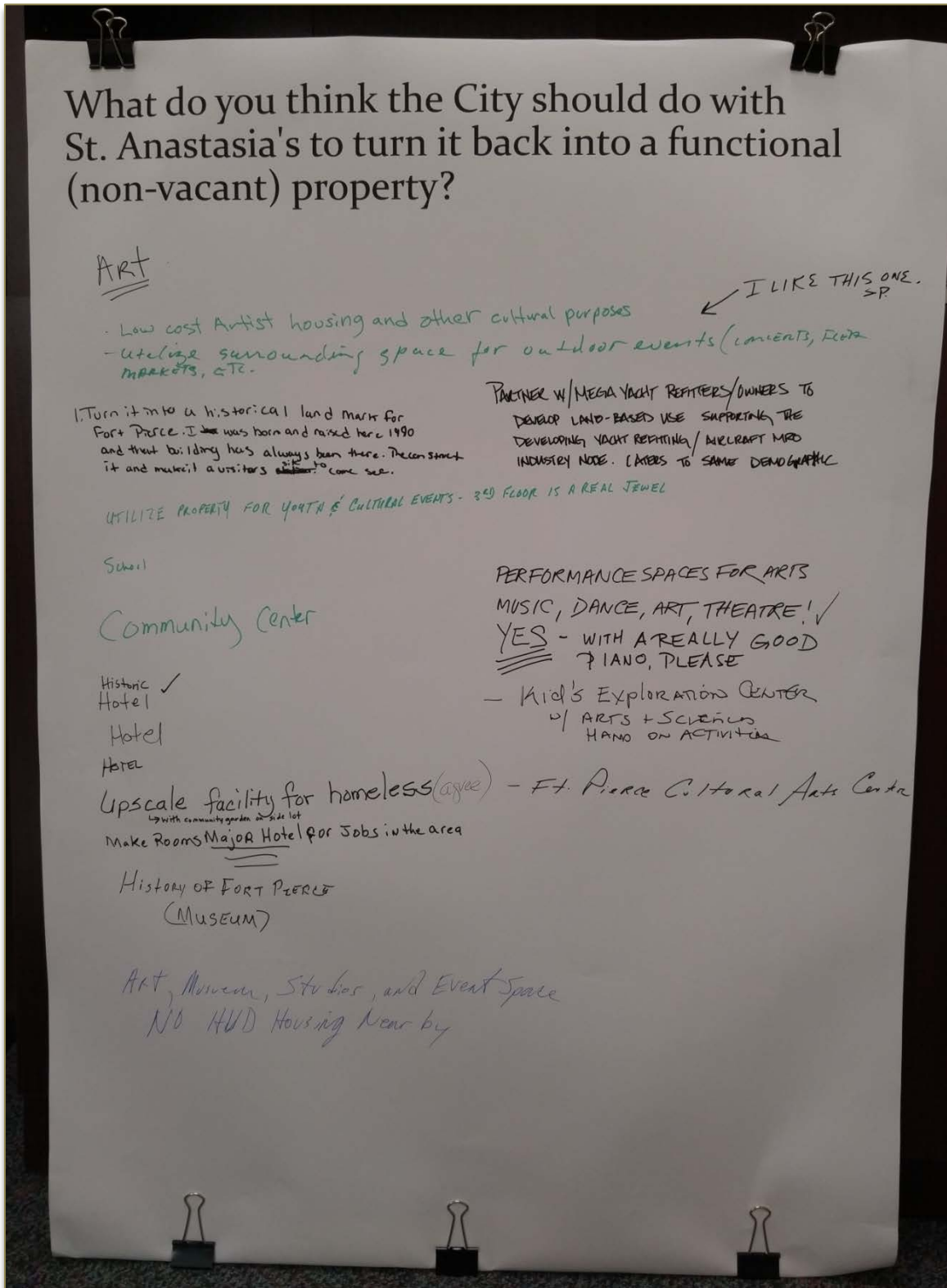
## **Appendix**

1. “What is most important to you?” conversation board
2. “What do you think the City should do with St. Anastasia’s to turn it back into a functional (non-vacant) property?” conversation board
3. “What is the most important issue we should look at?” and “What is a ‘dealbreaker’ – what things do you not want to see?” conversation board

1.



2.



3.

**What is the most important issue we should look at?**

**Code** A SAFE & CONFORTABLE & ACCESSIBLE WAY TO CROSS US 1 @ DOWNTOWN - NO MID BLOCK CROSSING = GOOD PEACOCK

CREATING & STREET SCAPES TO ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD

Protect the Peacocks, w/ signs and make a speed bump or 2

Create a 'receiving area' bounded by Orange, Delaware, US1 & the fir density/intensity for a Historic Preservation TDE. Create the quality/population you want for the area immediately west of US1

The look of the area to Downtown Roads the landscape needs a facelift

1. Cleaning up this area and making it look nicer. Reach out to the creole/Spanish community because we are the main ones who came to this part of town. Make sure the city cleans the area well.

- **SUSTAIN CULTURE**  
add cafes, music, arts

CAFES & COMMERCIAL DISTRICT, small mom & pop type operations

PRESERVE & PROMOTE HISTORIC CHARACTER

DOG PARK

Code enforcement

Clean up vacant buildings

Attract businesses

time lights (traffic)

**FILL OR SELL EMPTY BLDGS. CREATE BEAUTY**

Parenting class and daycare

SOLAR LIGHTING for NEIGHBORHOODS (WEST OF US1) - promote safe places for people to exercise paths running/walking track

MORE site light for Businesses (such as Christmas ~~and~~ white lights)

More landscaping

Doel center

need to spruce up vacant ~~store~~ store fronts

HISTORIC PRESERVATION - STOP THE DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES!

MAKE THE PEACOCKS A VISITORS' FOCAL POINT INCLUDING ORAIN RESIDENCE + HABITAT - MAKE SPEED BUMPS + ERECT SIGNS "PEACOCK CROSSING?"

Parking JOB CREATION

SAFETY IN THE LINCOLN PARK AREA - IT REFLECTS TO ALL OF THE TOWN.

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**What is a "dealbreaker" - what things do you not want to see?**

more dollar stores + parts AMEN! YES, AMEN! HOWEVER, PLEASE MAKE SURE THERE'S MORE PLEASE PLEASE GOD NO MORE

Drug dealers

People with dogs that are tied up 7/24

No more bars

create more small businesses with affordable rent

stop catering to the snowbirds!!

DESTRUCTION OF HISTORIC CHARACTER. ITS WHAT MAKES THIS PLACE SPECIAL - VALUABLE → KEEP FORT PIERCE FUNNY.

**NO MORE CRAVY CARS & RAILS BOUND!!** AMEN!

help the area to get a new face lift help the building restore the Historic Area. Cater some to the area connecting to downtown

Stop opening businesses that the community won't use but something that is useful.

"PORT Activity!"

Cruise ships

- Commercial - Big box stores

SHADE TREE PARK, BIKE & PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY