

More Main Street Moore Haven highlights

From June 2007 EDC newsletter

Consultant says Moore Haven's future is bright

Consultant to do economic analysis for Main Street Moore Haven

Saying Moore Haven is uniquely situated to re-position itself as a destination for tourists, boaters, bikers and RVers, Main Street consultant Frank DiMarchi told those attending Main Street Moore Haven's annual membership meeting at the Marina RV Resort May 17, "Moore Haven is ready for a level of success that just may surprise everyone."

Uniquely situated in the center of the state along US 27, nearly equidistant between Fort Myers on the west coast and West Palm Beach on the east and within two hours north of Miami and south of Orlando, and built to front on the Caloosahatchee River, the intercoastal waterway connecting the Atlantic with the Gulf Coast, DeMarchi said the city is uniquely situated between travelers en route to other destinations.

DeMarchi, former Executive Director of the Daytona Beach Partnership Association, now a private business development consultant, will assist Main Street Moore Haven with a technical assistance project funded by Florida Main to determine the kinds of businesses which would attract area residents and tourists to shop, lodge and dine here. While with the Daytona Beach Partnership DeMarchi was instrumental in devising a new business cluster in an 8-block district along the banks of the Halifax River, refocusing the river as part of the local economy as recommended in the redevelopment plan.

The consultant said among his tasks in devising a feasibility and marketing study for the city, will be to identify physical improvements and potential businesses along U.S. 27 which could encourage travelers to stop and stay a while.

"Luring tourists, boaters, bikers and RVers with services and attractions could identify Moore Haven as a "must see" stop before continuing on to other destinations," Mr. DeMarchi said.

DeMarchi will also conduct an economic analysis, researching and identifying what goods and services will have the greatest likelihood of success if added to the Main Street district. Main Street directors and members would then need to establish committees that will implement a work plan based on the findings of the analysis.

Using area zip codes and statistics compiled by the Department of Labor and others, Mr. DeMarchi will determine who Moore Haven businesses should target as customers, what sorts of goods and services should be available, down to how much sales revenue of a certain kind should be generated per square foot, what rentals should be, how customers spend their money and what businesses will be successful. He will also determine what the city's "leakage" is—that is, what goods or services that are being purchased elsewhere that residents would purchase here if it were available.

Once the analysis is done he will work with Main Street directors and members to determine how that new vision can be implemented in a successful promotions and marketing plan.

After spending the afternoon in the city, and reviewing information provided by Main Street, DeMarchi noted that revitalizing the city's business district will revolve around

two different kinds of business: those situated in the center of downtown along the waterfront, which should be more pedestrian friendly, and the typical drive through or drive in businesses along US 27.

“The center of your downtown is the area around city hall and the library. It’s already a focal point of families with children,” DeMarchi said, with the existing playground, the planned splash park and the proposed daycare scheduled to open in the old Post Office, along with the Riverside Glades Medical Center.

“You want to treat that as your ground zero and work to bring guests downtown, to the waterfront,” DiMarchi said. “Therefore, the events and economic investment should focus on the downtown.”

Then, he said, it would be a matter of signage, marketing and advertising to build the customer base, noting that the typical customer will drive at least 25 minutes for a new shopping or dining experience or event.

As to the potential market, Main Street members consensus was that motorcyclists, snowbirds and boaters should be targeted, in addition to local residents.

Boaters, the group agreed, are most interested in fuel, food and a nice dining place. DeMarchi noted that Daytona has one of the largest marinas on the east coast, and with only 60,000 residents attracts 10 million visitors a year, more than visit Washington D.C. They have the beach, bike week and the Daytona 500, creating that market. For Moore Haven, a signature event, like a motorcycle rally, fishing tournament or other festival, coupled with a good restaurant and hotel, might be the catalyst for redefining Moore Haven as a destination.

‘People can only go so far in one day,’ DeMarchi noted, whether they’re traveling by highway or water. “You have to get the reputation that ‘you must stop here.’”

The consultant noted that in the historic district alone there is sufficient space, once buildings are rehabbed and new infill construction occurs, to site 20 new businesses, including a hotel or two, or a hotel and bed and breakfast, two-three new restaurants and other commercial and residential properties.

The long term vision for the revitalized downtown would include an assortment of eateries and shops and residential projects north and south of US 27, with the space under the bridge becoming additional parking, with paver bricks creating a pedestrian pass through linking the historic commercial district with the marina district.

DiMarchi said it was very likely that many of the shops downtown would be hybrids where several different goods and services, like the pharmacy/gift shop and soda fountain proposed for half of the Lundy Building, would be offered in the same location.

Among other future uses, might be a fueling station for boats docking downtown and a ships store.

One question the consultant will research is how many boats dock here now, versus how many would stop here if there were businesses on the riverfront to serve them.

DeMarchi is expected to return to Moore Haven for the July 19 Main Street Moore Haven board meeting, at 5:30 p.m. at the Glades County Public Library, Riverside Drive, Moore Haven.

Rain dampens third annual River Rally

Nestor "Tito" Ramos talks with Dennis Lester as they wait for the start of the second annual Poker Run to benefit the Glades County Volunteer Fire Department during the third annual River Rally Saturday, June 2. Seven motorcycle enthusiasts braved the forecasted rain to run around the edge of Lake Okeechobee.

River Rally barbecue chefs Glades County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Dave Hardin and volunteer firefighter David Cline joined poker run participants in admiring Steve Sargent's new scooter while waiting for the poker run to get under way. Steve, owner of Sargent's Towing, came for the third annual event sporting a t-shirt from the first River Rally.

Everglades Realty broker Jeffrey Davis and wife Debra led the pack at the start of the Poker Run during the third annual River Rally. Everglades Realty donated the \$500 for the best hand, in addition to donating \$200 each at the end of the day to the Glades County Volunteer Fire Department and Main Street Moore Haven.

Glades County Volunteer Fire Department Chief John Biggs and wife Mary Lois presented poker run winner Duane Watson with the \$500 first prize in the poker run donated by Everglades Realty. Duane donated \$200 back to the VFD. Karen Simmons, winner of the \$200 second best hand prize, compliments of Ogletree Enterprises donated \$50 back to the VFD. Worst hand winner was Jeffrey Davis, who won \$100 courtesy of Sargent's Towing, and donated it back to the Glades County VFD.

Main Street Moore Haven part time program manager Tracy Whirls and volunteer Penny Lester manned the Budweiser booth at the River Rally, after Main Street received a one day special permit to sell beer as a fundraiser for the 501c3 nonprofit. When turnout and sales were low, Everglades Realty broker Jeffrey Davis bought the keg. Main Street is also selling commemorative Moore Haven River Rally 2007, featuring embroidered artwork depicting a motorcyclist, the riverfront, bridge and Lone Cypress Tree for \$5 each. Email twhirls@gladescountydc.com to order your patch!

From August 2007 EDC newsletter

Consultant unveils marketing study for Main Street Moore Haven
Consultant Frank DeMarchi, former Executive Director of the Daytona Beach Partnership Association, now a private business development consultant, returned to Main Street Moore Haven July 19 with the results of a marketing study, aimed at assessing the potential customer base for new commercial businesses which would attract area residents and tourists to shop, lodge and dine here.

While with the Daytona Beach Partnership DeMarchi was instrumental in devising a new business cluster in an 8-block district along the banks of the Halifax River, refocusing the river as part of the local economy as recommended in the redevelopment plan.

From an analysis based on zip codes, including Glades County residents who have Clewiston, LaBelle or Okeechobee mailing addresses, and statistics collected by the Department of Labor, the consultant concluded that the primary market for Main Street Moore Haven includes 9,412 households, comprised of adult residents age 24 to 64 with annual household incomes from \$29,000 - \$99,000 living within a 30 minute drive from downtown.

A further 20,000 households comprise a larger "customer circle" to include all households in LaBelle, Clewiston, Belle Glade, Felda (east of Lehigh), Okeechobee and Lake Placid, although those statistics were included at a discounted 25 percent of capacity to prevent overstating the local market potential.

Initial marketing and business development plans should target "residents" with an age range of 24 to 64 and annual household incomes from \$29,000 to \$99,000. The district will serve as a traditional walking southern downtown for this population offering everyday goods and services for "locals" with an entertainment slant toward eateries. A second, substantial market, would be visitors, temporary residents, eco-tourists, boaters and winter residents.

For zip code 33471, research shows residents average 26.6 minutes to drive to work. The consultant represents a philosophy that "driving times to work" becomes a benchmark for people when determining a reasonable time commitment for transportation to activities such as shopping, dining and entertainment.

Information gathered by the Department of Labor was used to demonstrate how many goods and services of a particular kind each of those 9,412 target households will buy annually.

"For example, if every one of the 9,412 target households purchased furniture at one store its annual gross sales would be approximately \$4.2 million," the consultant explained.

"Obviously the area offers more than one furniture store and the retail landscape is competitive. As such, the Urban Land Institute suggests downtowns target ten percent of the "potential gross" as a realistic sales goal.

"This means, that a furniture store which opened on Main Street Moore Haven has the potential to attract \$420,000 in furniture sales. A drug store could collect \$300,000 in potential sales, more if the product line included medical supplies (\$110,000) or other items," Part time program manager Tracy Whirls notes.

Restaurant sales potential, including all food eaten away from home, was estimated at \$2.18 million, while ten percent of all clothing sales for the area were projected at nearly \$2 million.

Using Urban Land Institute sales per square foot data for existing viable businesses in similar communities (size, region, profile) the consultant estimated that the 9000-plus primary target customers in Main Street Moore Haven's area could support 14,218 square feet of restaurant space, a 1400 square foot drug store, and 3,100 feet of furniture sales, not including appliances and electronics.

Main Street Moore Haven's location makes in an attractive stop for both vehicular and boat traffic, and the abundance of "snow birds," long-term campground facilities and eco-tourists, in the area demonstrate that "visitors" are beneficial to the economy.

"The district offers enough capacity by targeting its top profile - residents - so as to consider "visitors" economic "icing on the cake," DeMarchi said, pointing out that experts suggest that 9,000 residents are enough to support a viable downtown, but that Main Street should develop the visitor market, noting that at least 21 campgrounds exist in the target area comprised of more than 1,000 sites."

A vision for Moore Haven's future

The consultant noted that the Main Street Moore Haven program offers a current vision for the core historic commercial district that includes establishing a "town center" surrounding the park/playground square, with some 25 rehabilitated and infill commercial spaces envisioned.

On the opposite side of the bridge, the vision is to develop a new construction project that may encompass a hotel, eatery, waterfront bar, marina, marine fueling station, bait/outdoor shop and park area.

"It is essential that both the proposed "hotel" project and the Town Square project are physically linked, using "textured" sidewalks linking the two sides under the bridge approach and between future in-fill buildings on Town Square," De Marchi said. "Not only will these "connectors" link the two sides physically but also link them economically.

"Also, with the remaining retention area lands under the bridge approach, additional parking as well as truck with trailer parking can be established either by encapsulating the retention areas or moving the retention areas "upstream" to areas identified by the regional water management entity.

DeMarchi said, due to the height of the bridge, it should be treated as a focal point for the community and district. As such, an "icon" element should be considered for the bridge including creative night-time lighting.

Finally the consultant said, since the commercial strip along US 27 has developed as drive-up commercial district, downtown should embrace the corridor as a "gateway" and encourage its continued development as such.

"With the high number of vehicles using the corridor, creative design features, including gateway landscaping and signage, could be incorporated to calm traffic and direct motorists to the Town Center and new "hotel" areas of downtown.

To hear what the consultant recommends that Main Street Moore Haven do next, now that the marketing study is completed, residents are encouraged to attend the Main Street meeting at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 16 at the Glades County Public Library, Riverside

Drive, in Moore Haven. For more information, call (863) 946-0300 or email twhirls@gladescountyedc.com.

Grant sought to bring hope to Main Street

Main Street Moore Haven, in conjunction with the Glades County SHIP program, announced plans in July to apply for a \$1 million HOPE VI grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI Main Street grant for \$1 million.

The grant, which targets towns with a population of 50,000 or less; that are not served by a public housing agency (PHA) that administers more than 100 public housing units is intended to assist small communities in the rejuvenation of historic or traditional central business district or “MainStreet” area by replacing unused commercial space in buildings with affordable housing units.

According to Main Street Moore Haven part time program manager Tracy Whirls, unlike other grants Main Street has applied for, the nonprofit does not have to own the buildings when they apply for the grant.

“It is our intent to contract with Roger Taylor to purchase the Lundy Bldg., and the former Moore Haven Bank Building, subject to negotiation,” Ms. Whirls said. “The remaining funds would be invested in the buildings to rehabilitate them to prepare for affordable housing rental units on the second floor and commercial leasing on the ground.”

Under the terms of the grant program, the 12 one-bedroom efficiency apartment units Main Street hopes to rehab using this grant must be made available to low income families, including very low income families during the initial occupancy period funded by the grant.

“Our intent would be to make those units available as affordable workforce housing units after the first year, on a year to year basis. The idea is to use the rental units as a housing incubator, allowing tenants to rent the apartments at below market rate, while escrowing a portion of their rent toward down payment assistance. At the end of their rental agreement, we would refer those tenants to SHIP for site built housing assistance,” Ms. Whirls said, adding that the rental program would be designed to keep teachers, law enforcement officers, nurses and other workforce professionals, and the money they earn working in Glades County, in Glades County.

Because the grant funds can be used to rehab the buildings themselves, it might be the only economically viable way to save what remains of Moore Haven’s historic commercial district.

“Because donations to Main Street Moore Haven are tax deductible, we hope to inspire area businesses and individuals to join us in our efforts to preserve Moore Haven’s past, while providing opportunities for new economic development in the future,” the EDC director said, pointing out that once the rehab is completed, it would be the intent of Main Street to create a commercial business incubator on Avenue J, encouraging would be entrepreneurs to open new businesses in exchange for below market lease rates.”

Donations to the project may take the form of letters of support, pledging donations of materials, supplies, in-kind services or funding, contingent on receipt of the grant funds. For more information on Main Street Moore Haven, or to join, phone (863) 946-0300 or email twhirls@gladescountyedc.com.

Main Street Moore Haven says thanks for your support

Renewing members since the June/July newsletter include: Seacoast National Bank, Mike Pressley, Rhoda and Stanley Planty, and Roger Taylor.

Memberships and donations to Main Street Moore Haven, Inc. are tax deductible.

Founding memberships for Main Street Moore Haven are \$3,000. Partners, \$1500, Supporting members, \$500; Building members, small businesses and organizations, \$50 and individual/friend memberships, \$25. For more information on Main Street Moore Haven, or to join, phone (863) 946-0300 or email twhirls@gladescountyedc.com.

From the September 2007 EDC newsletter

Creating a common vision for Main Street Moore Haven

At the Main Street Moore Haven Board of Directors meeting Aug. 16, consultant Frank DeMarchi asked directors and 14 or so members attending the meeting to look at a map of the city's waterfront and agree on a common vision for what it should look like and steps to undertake to redevelop it.

Depending upon the success of securing grant funds to preserve them, the shared vision is to keep and renovate the remaining historic buildings south of US 27 and encourage appropriate infill construction on vacant lots in the district. This, the consultant said, would make space available for 24 commercial businesses, at build out. Some buildings might be mixed use, with commercial storefronts or offices on the ground, apartments or condos above, while a combination of a hotel, restaurant and bed n breakfast or townhouse apartments might occupy some lots.

The second element of the vision would include the types of pavers, sidewalks, street furniture (such as lighting, benches etc.) and landscaping would be desired. Based on conceptual designs by Ron Rollins of Miller Legg, the idea would be to install rock inlaid in cement sidewalks along Avenue J, and later to use the same materials to create a walkway connecting Avenue J to the marina district under the bridge and back around, with paved walkways planned between new buildings constructed as infill development on Avenue J.

"Each business would then need both a front and rear exit," DeMarchi said.

The area underneath the bridge would serve as overflow parking and festival space. Ultimately it might be possible to work with South Florida Water Management District and Florida Department of Transportation to allow retention areas under the bridge to be capped with porous material and other retention areas created elsewhere, to maximize available parking on the waterfront.

"Otherwise, if someone were to try to build a hotel on the waterfront, the first thing you might hear is that you need this huge retention pond, and there goes your capacity for your hotel," DeMarchi said.

New docks, pump out stations, a concession area with restaurants, a ship's store and fueling for both boats and cars could be constructed on city property under the bridge.

City's CRA tax fund could finance projects

Main Street consultant Frank DiMarchi gave those attending the Aug. 16 Main Street meeting a report on how tax increment financing can be used to finance redevelopment projects.

In 1997, the City of Moore Haven adopted an ordinance designating a certain area of Moore Haven, along the riverfront from CR 721 (Tobias Avenue) to Avenue L, extending up US 27 to City Limits Road a community redevelopment area, with the goal of promoting redevelopment. In 2005, the city council filed the enabling ordinance with the county tax collectors office and property appraiser's office to establish the baseline year. The council then approved a resolution reducing the amount of taxes set aside in the TIF fund from the statutory 95 percent to 50 percent, allowing the city and county to continue to receive the difference.

Whatever taxes were collected by the city and county on properties in the CRA in 2005 were in effect frozen, and beginning in 2006, 50 percent of any increase in taxes paid by property owners in the CRA, would go into a special fund, called a tax increment financing fund.

The set aside funds, in 2006, estimated at \$46,000, are then set aside and each year will grow, not only by the addition of a second \$46,000 in 2007, but augmented by the expected 20 percent increase in value in subsequent years, so that by 2008, the fund would generate an additional \$55,200, for a total of \$101,200. In 2009 if no money from the TIF fund were allocated for projects or programs, the fund would grow to at least \$167,440, and so on, for the 30 years the tax increment fund is in place.

As new properties are built in the district however, 50 percent of the entire taxable value of the new construction, minus the tax value of the vacant land, which the county and city are already receiving, goes into the TIF fund.

Money from the TIF fund can be used to fund projects and programs only in the community redevelopment area.

As Main Street Consultant Frank DeMarchi explained to the Main Street Moore Haven Board of Directors at their regular meeting Aug. 16, if a vacant property, valued at \$100,000 a year, generated \$10,000 a year in taxes, the city and the county would continue to receive that revenue. But if a new \$1 million building is built on that property, and it generates \$100,000 in taxes, 50 percent of that increase, or \$50,000 more goes into the TIF fund.

Not only can those funds quickly add up, as new buildings are constructed on vacant lots, but more importantly, the consultant said, they can be used to pay the debt service on bond issues, revolving loan funds and other financing mechanisms to pay for capital construction projects.

In that way, if a developer were to come to Moore Haven and acquire a piece of property on the riverfront upon which to build a hotel, if he were \$500,000 short in having enough funding to build the project, the CRA board, or Moore Haven City Council, could bond out that \$500,000, specify that it be used for sidewalks or landscaping and repay the bond debt by pledging funds from the TIF fund.

In that way, projects, like a hotel and restaurant in Moore Haven, which traditional lenders might consider risky, can be funded, then work as a catalyst to bring new investment.

Before beginning recruitment of a hotelier, however, Mr. DeMarchi strongly advised the Main Street Board of Directors to work with City Council to devise a set of guidelines for how those funds could and should be used.

Main Street renewals

Main Street Moore Haven is a 501 c 3, which means memberships and donations to the program will be tax deductible. Donations to Main Street Moore Haven will be used to fund facade improvement and similar projects, signage and streetscaping projects, and promotion of the city and attractions as they come on line. Founding memberships for Main Street Moore Haven are \$3,000. Partners, \$1500, Supporting members, \$500; Building members, small businesses and organizations, \$50 and individual/friend memberships, \$25.

Main Street Moore Haven renewing members this month include Commissioner Paul Beck, Mike Wallis, Austin and Terri Moorhouse and County Manager Wendell Taylor.

From the November 2007 EDC newsletter

Main Street Moore Haven receives national accreditation

The efforts of Main Street Moore Haven over the past year has earned it recognition for commercial district revitalization by meeting standards for performance set by the National Trust Main Street Center. Main Street Moore Haven joins 650 other Main Street revitalization programs nationally recognized as 2007 Accredited National Main Street Programs.

“The national accreditation means the local Main Street program is meeting our national standards of performance for what a Main Street program should be doing,” said Doug Loescher, director of the National Trust Main Street Center, “The organizations we name each year as National Main Street Programs are those that have demonstrated the skills and comprehensive perspective needed to succeed in Main Street revitalization.”

Established in 1980, the National Trust Main Street Center helps communities of all sizes revitalize their traditional historic commercial districts. The Main Street Center leads the preservation-based community revitalization movement and has proven that historic preservation and community-driven economic development effects lasting change.

Currently active in more than 1,150 downtowns and neighborhood business districts, Main Street programs have generated more than \$41.6 billion in new investment since 1980. Participating communities have created 349,148 net new jobs, 77,799 net new businesses, and rehabilitated more than 186,820 buildings, leveraging an average of \$25.76 in new investment for every dollar spent on Main Street initiatives.

The annual accreditation process evaluates commercial district revitalization programs based on criteria ranging from having an active board of directors and paid professional manager to tracking economic progress and preserving historic Main Street buildings.

“Rebuilding a district’s economic health and maintaining that success requires broad-based community involvement, active support from both the public and private sectors, and sound management,” said Loescher. “Having a solid organization at the foundation of that revitalization effort is so important to long term success.”

The organization’s performance was evaluated by Florida Main Street, which is the coordinating organization for Main Street programs in Florida.

“It was kind of ironic that the same week that we found out we weren’t funded for the \$1 million HOPE VI Main Street grant that we received notification that we are a nationally accredited Main Street and received the certification letter from the IRS certifying that Main Street Moore Haven is a bonafide 501 c 3, making memberships and other donations to Main Street Moore Haven, Inc. tax deductible,” Main Street Moore Haven part time program manager Tracy Whirls said.

In the past year, Main Street Moore Haven has sought \$1.3 million in grant funding aimed at acquiring and rehabilitating some of the seven historic commercial buildings along Avenue J in Moore Haven’s riverfront historic district. It was an effort endorsed by the Glades County Historical Society and personages ranging from the Glades County Property Appraiser and County Manager, as well as State Representative Denise Grimsley, State Senator Dave Aronberg and Congressman Tim Mahoney.

In endorsing the Main Street Moore Haven project, Historical Society treasurer Al Schauseil noted that for more than a dozen years following the completion of the historic properties survey commissioned by the Moore Haven City Council in 1995, the

Historical Society tried valiantly to convince the citizens of Glades County of the importance of preserving 41 historic residential structures in the city.

“Too many owners neglected them completely, letting them rundown only to be razed by the city. These were period Cracker and Craftsman homes throughout Moore Haven,” Mr. Schauseil wrote, noting that several homes, including the former Glades County Women’s Club building, were saved and restored, several by Ft. Lauderdale residents who purchased the homes as vacation retreats from the city.

Mr. Schauseil said now is the time to save the historic Mediterranean commercial structures which too have been neglected, “but because of their hardier construction can and should be restored.”

The veteran historian noted that the City of Moore Haven, founded in 1915 by James Moore, who named it, “Moore’s Haven,” was an important port at one time, historically larger at one time than its neighbor Clewiston.

“Moore Haven’s claim will be lost altogether with the destruction of the Arcade and nearby structures,” Mr. Schauseil said.

Glades County Property Appraiser and local historian in his own right, Larry Luckey noted that the seven historic commercial buildings that exist have survived the 1926 and 1928 fire as well as the 1921 fire that destroyed most of downtown Moore Haven.

“If we are unable to save these seven historic commercial buildings, the downtown historic district will cease to exist,” Mr. Luckey wrote. “I am saddened at the thought that we may well become the only city/county with no history, at least to the extent that there are no historic buildings to remind us of our heritage.”

Mr. Luckey noted that if Main Street is unable to raise funds to purchase and renovate the buildings, and no investors can be found to acquire them, the City Council has determined to raze them.

“I cannot blame them. They do not have the money to restore them,” the property appraiser said, noting that the city only collects \$188,000 in ad valorem taxes and is dependent on selling electricity, water and sewer service to fund public programs.

“It is impossible to fault the councilmen when there is absolutely no money in their meager budget for a project like this. Likewise, they are resolved to make the downtown presentable.”

In commending the Main Street program manager for her efforts in seeking funds to acquire and rehab the buildings, Mr. Luckey said, “If you fail, then we have all failed.”

In expressing his support for the Main Street revitalization project, County Manager Wendell Taylor spoke of his efforts to save the Russ House, now home of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce in Marianna. A visit to the Chamber during the Tourism and Economic Development summit held in Mariana in May gave Hendry County Economic Development Director Janice Groves and Glades EDC director Whirls an opportunity to compare the restored building with “before” photos, showing significant damage to the frame vernacular building’s roof, flooring and interior. Renovation of the Russ House was overseen by architect Bill Rutherford of Clemmons, Rutherford and Associates, the architect of record for both West Glades Elementary School and the Glades County Detention Center.

“Having been behind the purchase and restoration of the Russ House in Marianna, I can assure you of the community pride that goes into redoing old landmarks in a proud

community. That was a great project in a grateful community,” Mr. Taylor wrote. “I would like to see it again in this proud community of Moore Haven.”

In expressing her support for the Main Street project, Representative Denise Grimsley and others cited the history of the buildings in the commercial district. The Arcade housed the city’s first post office, served as a doctor’s office and drug store and was home to the original office of Glades Electric Cooperative. The Swindle Building, which abuts it on one side, was home to the Ahern family’s original store, while the Mitchell Davis Building on the Southside housed Glades County’s hospital. The Moore Haven Bank Building, constructed by First Bank of Clewiston CEO Miller Couse’s forebears, still has its original vault and was the original site of Glades County Abstract, long the only title company in the area. The city’s original IGA grocery store at one time occupied one side of the building commonly referred to as the Lundy Building, before it was acquired and operated for many years as Lundy’s Hardware.

While some argue that the buildings historic significance is sufficient argument to save them, others note that adaptive reuse of historic buildings is a crucial component of “smart growth.”

In his letter endorsing the Main Street project State Senator Dave Aronberg said renovating the historic buildings would bring much needed economic activity to Moore Haven, by turning downtown Moore Haven's historical buildings into mixed-used developments.

“As Glades County continues to grow, adequate affordable housing must exist for the working families that will run the community,” Senator Aronberg wrote. “By providing affordable housing units in the city's central business district Moore Haven is also implementing a smart growth strategy that will help maintain the community's small-town nature while accommodating future growth.”

The county manager was particularly impressed by the possibility of using the ground floor space in the commercial buildings to start and build small businesses and create an incubator for small entrepreneurs.

“This location is ideal, the opportunity is ideal and the thought of having a thriving historic district is an idea whose time has come,” Mr. Taylor wrote.

In assessing the cost projections for rehabbing the Lundy Building and the Moore Haven Bank Building and plans to rent the 12 efficiency apartments on the second floor and roughly six commercial spaces on the ground at \$500 to \$1,000 a month respectively, Southern Land Investments and Real Estate broker Sherri Denning reviewed the leasing and occupancy numbers for the proposed three phase project and found them “completely feasible.”

“Further, I foresee these lower commercial and residential rates will be the incentive needed to entice retail and service businesses to relocate or establish branch offices or stores in Moore Haven, which currently has very limited commercial and/or residential properties,” Ms. Denning wrote in her support letter. “Further, it is my opinion that these numbers are not only totally realistic but will help facilitate Moore Haven in particular and Glades County in general, as they jointly struggle in difficult circumstances to jump start one of the State of Florida’s most needy rural areas of economic concern, if not the most needy of its counties. This is a county and a town in need of businesses, both retail and service, employment and affordable housing.

“Moore Haven has been struggling mightily to rejuvenate their downtown area. This renovation would provide both hope and incentive to all of Glades County. Businesses that other communities take for granted—like a drugstore, are not available to Glades County residents without going out of their county.”

The Main Street project’s potential for bringing new businesses to the county was the chief reason behind Ortona Community Association president Hugo Geistman’s expression of support for the grant application.

“Ortona is located approximately half-way between the cities of Moore Haven and LaBelle,” Mr. Geistman noted. “It is a source of frustration that the limited business, recreation and dining offerings in Moore Haven leave us little choice but to shop and seek services in another county. Developing the historic district in Moore Haven would greatly enhance its attractiveness and hopefully attract additional business and generate tax revenues from Glades County citizens.”

In expressing his support for the Main Street project, Congressman Tim Mahoney noted both the economic impacts of the project and the housing opportunities in an area where few options for rental housing presently exist.

“It will also save buildings built circa 1915 from code enforcement and potential demolition, breathing new life into a largely vacant riverfront commercial district,” the freshman Congressman noted. “Ultimately, these buildings will become home to new businesses in downtown Moore Haven, creating entrepreneurial and employment opportunities for the city.”

Undaunted by the so far unsuccessful quest for funding, Ms. Whirls said she continues to seek investors interested in purchasing and renovating the buildings, while gearing up to launch a fundraising campaign for Main Street.

“We just returned from an economic development conference in Oregon, and one of the key messages that was emphasized was how important it is to create an attractive and unique ‘sense of place,’ if you want to attract companies who want to attract talented young professionals to work for them,” the EDC director said. “High tech companies can go anywhere and increasingly they are going where the talent wants to go, and the talent wants to go to mixed use, pedestrian friendly, waterfront communities, where they can live and work and shop and play close to home. We have hiking trails and biking trails and canoeing trails, no crime, no congestion and a good school system. We even have businesses looking for places to set up shop here and business people who would love to live above the shop they own. All we need are the buildings to house them.”

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To find out more about Main Street Moore Haven, phone (863) 946-0300.

From the March 2008 EDC newsletter

Mahoney Saves Rural Housing Program

On Jan. 17, 2008 Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) passed an amendment to H.R. 3524, the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act, which saved the Main Street Grant program. Without Congressman Mahoney's Amendment, small rural communities would have been excluded from critical funding to revitalize main streets in small rural communities with mixed-use affordable housing and commercial development projects. H.R. 3524 re-authorizes the HOPE VI program, which provides assistance to public housing agencies to improve the living environment of severely distressed public housing projects.

The purpose of the HOPE VI Main Street program is to provide grants to small communities to assist in the rehabilitation and new construction of affordable housing in conjunction with an existing program to revitalize a historic or traditional central business district or Main Street Area. "The Main Street Grant program is crucial to rural communities with small populations because it ensures they will get their fair share of funding to revitalize their downtown areas with mixed-use housing and commercial development. By revitalizing main street America, we ensure that our rural communities stay vibrant" said Congressman Tim Mahoney. "Saving small town America is an American value."

"On behalf of Moore Haven, one of the smallest and poorest Main Streets in Florida, I commend Congressman Tim Mahoney for leading the charge to ensure that the Main Street HOPE VI grant program will continue. The opportunity for rural communities like Moore Haven to get grants of up to \$1 million dollars is huge for struggling rural communities trying to promote affordable housing and economic development. The HOPE VI Main Street grant literally brings hope to small communities nationwide," said Tracy Whirls, the Executive Director of the Glades County Economic Development Council.

The HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Act will:

- *Reauthorize the HOPE VI program through 2015 and authorizes \$800 million for the program in each fiscal year.

- *Prohibit the Secretary from awarding HOPE VI grants for the demolition of public housing units without the replacement of units through revitalization.

- *Expand upon the types of activities that the grant can be used for to include costs associated with:

 - *Green developments

 - *Temporary and permanent relocation of residents

 - *Monitoring and tracking of displaced residents

In offering his amendment to H.R. 3524 on the House Floor Congressman Tim Mahoney expressed hope that his amendment would preserve the HOPE VI Main Street Grant program.

"This program, important to rural communities with very small populations, was created with the passage of the American Dream Act in 2003. Since its inception, the program has helped a small number of rural communities develop affordable housing units in conjunction with larger revitalization efforts. "The creation of the HOPE VI Main Street Grant program in 2003 was important to rural communities, because it allows rural

communities to compete with larger urban areas for a small percentage of HOPE VI dollars. Mr. Chairman, for those not familiar with the program, the HOPE VI Main Street grants are funded through a 5 percent set-aside in the HOPE VI annual appropriations, and each award is capped at \$1 million.

”As I noted, this program is extremely important to rural communities, such as Moore Haven, Florida. Located on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in Glades County, in one of the most rural areas of South Florida, Moore Haven is one of the oldest cities in South Florida. This beautiful old sleepy Florida town is home to one doctor, Dr. Geake, and one restaurant. It is one of the few places left in Florida where the families have lived there for generations and everyone knows their neighbor. Unfortunately, it is also one of the poorest areas in the State. The population of the City is approximately 1,900 and the annual tax revenue for all of Glades County is \$6 million. The people of Moore Haven have the desire to revitalize their historic downtown area, but, they lack the financial resources. Guided by the vision and leadership of Tracy Whirls, the Executive Director of the Glades County Economic Development Council, Moore Haven applied for a HOPE VI Main Street grant last year. The city had hoped to use the money to purchase three historic- but dilapidated and vacant – buildings with the intention of attracting businesses to the first floors and 12 affordable housing units on the upper levels. Plans for the first floors included opening Moore Haven’s only pharmacy and furniture store. ”I regret, Mr. Speaker, that Moore Haven was not successful in its attempt to secure the grant. The good news is that they are game and they’re going to apply for it again this year, but I believe that it is imperative that we continue to give Moore Haven and small rural cities like Moore Haven across this great nation this opportunity.

”Mr. Chairman, in closing I would like to leave you with the words of Larry Luckey, the Glades County Property Appraiser: “If we are unable to save these historic commercial building, the downtown historic district will cease to exist. I am saddened at the thought that we may well become a city with no history.” ”I would ask for the support of my colleagues to preserve the HOPE VI Main Street Grant Program, and the economy and history of small towns throughout America, including Moore Haven. In addition, with the passage of my amendment, we will ensure that rural communities continue to have access to the affordable housing benefits provided by the HOPE VI program.”