

KeyOpinion

Avenue of the Flowers: The Wilted Side of Paradise

Longboat Key's Avenue of the Flowers is certainly not blossoming. In a series of feisty admonishments, resident Madelyn Josey Spoll is imploring change: she wants to see something done and wants to see it done in her lifetime.

Over the last decade, Avenue of the Flowers has had no more than two mainstays: Nosh-A-Rye in the rear and Publix in the front. Between these two pillars, there's been a procession of shops that have come and gone — clothiers, travel agencies, liquor stores, video stores, copy shops and Chinese restaurants. One could always sense that many of these shops were well run. They catered to residents and tourists alike. They provided a compelling option to traveling to the mainland.

One also senses there is something intrinsically wrong with the plaza — a fault line in its design that discourages visitors to walk past Publix. There is a gloomy, ghostlike feeling when one walks in the Avenue of the Flowers, and owners Dead River Properties are finally taking a turn to fix the situation.

It's as if Spoll woke the Dead River. At first, the company replied defensively. The owners pointed out that they had marketed the properties in local papers, mailed brochures to prospective business owners and then blamed the Town for the intractability of its sign code. They did everything but say, "Maybe we haven't done the best job that we could."

But longtime Longboater and eminently successful RE/MAX Broker Andrew Vac added the most useful observation to date: It's hard to be an absentee landlord.

Stalking Success

In short, the success of another Longboat Plaza, the Centre Shops, is due almost entirely to the effort of owner and manager Don (Riddy) Roberts. When the Aveda Salon closed down one year ago, Riddy literally stalked area businesses to secure the most synergistic compliment to the plaza. His appraisal worked, and he brought in the little salon.

And Riddy does not just show up on rent days to

By Steve Reid
Editor & Publisher

secure a pile of deposits, he makes sure the landscaping, fountains and piped-in music conspire to add a relaxed, yet vibrant atmosphere.

Take Andrew Hlywa and Dawn di Lorenzo, owners of Whitney Beach Plaza. No one can claim to have logged more hours or put in more effort in perfecting their property. The liquor store and lounge have undergone an extremem makeover. The Market, which naysayers ordained an unlikely pipe dream, is one of the most exciting developments on the North-Key in years.

So Vac's verdict is correct. If Dead River wants to resurrect the tired out and sleepy sidewalks of Avenue of the Flowers, it best find someone willing to pace the property and work smartly day in and day out. It needs far more than a few mailings and a little more signage, it needs a new property manager.



of the more telling moments was when Commissioner Joan Webster said let's use the Delft 3D study, the \$57,000 piece of evidence bought from Holland, to bolster the Town's position. She literally referred to it as an insurance policy against Klauber's allegations. And for anyone who was around during the Reserve lawsuit, when Klauber successfully sued the Town for a different

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defiant and arrogant attitude, there is an air of déjà vu.

The Delft 3D study will be discussed on Monday at 10 a.m. in Town Hall. But the time would be better spent if the Town's engineers and staff listen openly to all the ideas and struggle for a solution that transcends the plan of the Town and the plan of Klauber.

After all, if the Town refuses to resolve the issue at the front side of this exercise, it will be resolved in the end at a far greater cost. Residents will some day point their fingers with angry bewilderment when their tax dollars are eroded in a legal hurricane. But that's right, the angry residents will have no one to point their fingers at since the commissioners who make this decision will have likely moved on.

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The Defiant Groin

Is the Town hell bent, defiant, reckless and perhaps a tad dangerous in its steadfast and unyielding support of solid groins in front of the Islander?

Do we believe the Town's science? Should we believe that the conclusions of the Town's engineers are superior to those of the Colony Chairman Murf Klauber and the engineers he is listening to?

Will Klauber sue the Town?

It appears to be more than a fait accompli. In fact, one

Can the Loony Left Save the Republicans?

Tom Burgum
Contributing Columnist

The Republican party now faces a bona fide threat of losing control of at least one, possibly both, houses of Congress this November. Republican members of Congress are facing an election that the Democrats hope to turn into a referendum on Republican governance for the last six years. Larry Sabato, of the University of Virginia Political Center, refers to this as "the dreaded sixth year election itch." Republicans survived the off term election in 2002 mainly because of President Bush's popularity. This year it is different. Bush's popularity ratings have dipped below 40% with a record marred by an unpopular war in Iraq, the ports issue, gas prices, and a seemingly unsolvable immigration problem. A Ronald Reagan, John Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt or Winston Churchill might well have marshaled the English language and enlisted it in their cause. No one can reasonably expect President Bush to emulate their example because it seems he cannot consistently speak in complete sentences. One voter compared listening to one of his speeches to watching someone walk a high wire 100 feet off the ground. "It's exciting and you are pulling for him but you find yourself holding your breath the entire time."

The Republican campaign strategists and consultants have a common concern about the level of motivation in the Republican base. Can it equal levels obtained in 2002 and 2004? Charlie Cook, a former Republican operative and now independent analyst, wrote in a recent "Cook Report," "Historically, when parties have suffered unusually large losses in midterm election, it has been when their voters were either complacent or disillusioned, and the other party was either hungry or angry. That turns tight races into tough losses and races that shouldn't



be particularly close into nail-biters." As to the current level of motivation, Cook cited a poll from Democratic pollster Peter Hart and Republican pollster Bill McInturff that found that "...as of now, Democrats have a pronounced intensity advantage and enough of one to probably outweigh the GOP organizational edge."

Party identification also is an important indicator of election results. Cook, again citing McInturff, stated there has been a significant shift in identification between 2004 and now. Cook cited another Republican pollster, who wished to remain anonymous, who found that in 2001 and 2002 there was rough parity between the parties, but it had slipped to a Republican deficit of two points by Election Day 2004. Currently, the deficit is about four points. Cook concluded that Republicans have a motivation problem. "If it persists, it could result in a very ugly midterm election."

The March 13th edition of the Washington Post reported, "A liberal Democrat and potential White House contender is proposing that the Senate censure President Bush for authorizing domestic eavesdropping, saying the White House misled Americans about its legality. 'The President has broken the law and, in some way, he must be held accountable,' Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.) said." Feingold said he was motivated by constituent demands to bring the President to justice. As if this were not enough, the Post also reported, "In the House, Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (Mich.), top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, is pushing legislation that would call on Congress to determine whether there are grounds for impeachment."

The Post story signaled the "loony left" is now, like the cavalry in a John Ford and John Wayne western, riding to the rescue of the Republicans. Senator Feingold has started a process destined, above all else, to energize the Republican base. And, if that were not enough to energize the Republicans, John Conyers threatens to start impeachment proceedings if the Democrats regain control of the House of Representatives. As Charlie Cook reported, "Voter turnout among independents is far lower in midterm elections than in presidential years,

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