

"George Town's Future"

SUMMARY

REPORT OF THE GEORGE TOWN

DISTRICT SUBCOMMITTEE

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George Towns "Draft" Vision for 2011

List of GT District Subcommittee Members

Public Meeting

hosted by

George Town District Subcommittee

Thursday 12th July 2001

6:00 p.m., George Town Town Hall

GEORGE TOWN'S VISION FOR 2011

George Town will master the principle of sustainable development which means striking a balance between a healthy natural and built environment which is essential for social, economic, and political well-being and prosperity. We seek to set our course by the traditional Caymanian culture, not short-term expediencies; to waste less in the present and provide more in the future; and, to leave a legacy which keeps the faith of our fore fathers who entrusted us to protect our community for future generations. By 2011 George Town will have strengthened its embrace of religious and cultural diversity while maintaining its Caymanian heritage, culture and Christian values. George Town's future is founded on the principles of morality, family values, equality, equity, and good governance. The results will include a healthy, caring, educated, entrepreneurial, and hard-working population with one of the highest standards of living worldwide, thereby making George Town one of the most attractive and safest places in the world to live, visit and work.

TARGET AREAS

In order of priority, the George Town District Subcommittee developed specific visions for the following target areas:

1. Community Values
2. Economic Development
3. Population Changes
4. Community Goals
5. Natural Environment
6. Housing
7. Social Issues
8. Public Safety
9. Trends Affecting George Town's Future
10. Transportation
11. Recreation Facilities
12. Civic Buildings & Services
13. Cultural Amenities & Historic Sites
14. Other Types of Development
15. Foreign Investment

Community Values

George Town is a community whose welfare is based on the principle that “all people are created equal” and that each of us has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the community. George Town promotes peace, religious and cultural diversity, morality, equality, family and Christian values, such that there is no polarization, no segregation, and no discrimination. The following key objectives are essential to achieving this vision:

- a life-long education system at all levels and comprised of a well-balanced mix of educational opportunities
- a high standard of labour and a well-trained, motivated workforce
- a balance between ex-patriates and Caymanians, with enabling and supporting legislation

Economic Development

George Town balances the need for economic development, the goals of Vision 2008 and Development Plan issues, in order to achieve the following key objectives:

- to encourage low interest rates to enable all scales of development, including affordable single family houses
- to ensure that revised Development and Planning Laws adopt a more common-sense approach to suit economic development
- to promote economic development, in 2011 the downtown area of George Town will continue to be the Business and Government centre of the Island, except on a larger scale and including the following land uses:
 - banks, law firms, offshore company offices, accounting firms
 - Government offices
 - high quality jewelry & other stores catering to cruise ship & stay-over visitors, as well as residents
 - a few small stores or kiosks selling “Made in Cayman” souvenirs
 - restaurants

Population Changes

Although hopeful that such growth could be slower than pre-2001 trends, George Town’s vision for 2011 (which complements the Growth Management Strategy X of Vision 2008) has accommodated potential population growth, in

particular in planning for community services (eg. infrastructure such as roads, sewer systems and utilities), but stresses the importance of achieving the following key objectives, in order to properly plan for the impacts of population change:

- completion of a valid demographic study to investigate how many people Cayman can really accommodate and plan ahead (eg. infrastructure, desired immigration levels)
- strike a balance between Government intervention to correct growth and the ability of free market forces to self-regulate growth; however, we must be careful not to put in place Laws or Regulations that over-correct
- an aging population and the need to plan and provide services

Community Goals

George Town's future is dependent on its community goals of creating a well-planned and vibrant community, fostering a healthy population and providing honest Government, as follows:

- a safe, visually and environmentally beautiful community that is the hub of a high quality, high priced resort destination (Grand Cayman) and an innovative centre for the use of technology in public and private sectors, while balancing the needs for:
 - port services & facilities
 - tourism
 - retail
 - Government
 - business
 - housing
 - entertainment
 - education
 - recreation & sports
- fostering a healthy population by,
 - low incidence of disease
 - low infant mortality rate
 - low drug, cigarette/cigar & alcohol use
 - provision of local access to health care
 - provision of health care education for all children and would-be parents
 - promotion of relationships with distant specialists
 - emphasis on prevention and preparedness (eg. diet, exercise), as well as treatment

- providing honest government that is efficient, competitive, accountable and open, as follows:
 - public financial returns from MLAs & Permanent Secretaries
 - removal of implied threats (“name withheld” is a 3rd world dictatorship environment, not a 1st world open one)
 - maximum number of Civil Service employees to be 20% of entire workforce
 - control of internal Government costs (set a standard and measure against it)
 - measurement of satisfaction levels of all branches of Government to achieve at least a 3.9 on a 5 scale
 - use the initiative process fostered by the Internet
 - use the Internet for all communications with Government
 - publish RFQ/RFPs, bids & contracts

Natural Environment

George Town respects its natural environment and values the need for sustainable, responsible and sensible development, in order to achieve the following key objectives:

- protection of beaches as follows:
 - prohibit any alteration of the shoreline such as seawalls and walls going into the sea
 - where seaside parcels are narrow, encourage development of the inland side of road only and prescribing Scenic Coastline as undeveloped
- protection of mangroves as follows:
 - prohibit removal (with exception of limited access channels) of any mangroves lying within the intertidal zone and in the open waters of the district (and the Island)
 - increase the width of Mangrove Buffer zones to 1000 feet where possible (north of airport runway to GT Barcadere to Caymarl site dock and up to the Hyatt)
 - protect the South Sound and Red Bay coastal mangroves
 - mitigation and protection of Central Mangrove Wetlands
- provision of environmentally-friendly parks as follows:
 - develop swamps into parks, as Eco Tourism attractions
 - set aside some areas of mature indigenous vegetation as parks

Housing

George Town offers a range of housing types are provided in friendly, healthy and liveable communities, as follows:

- affordable housing is available and distributed throughout the district by means of a viable and non-political affordable housing program (eg. Statutory Board, proper financing, low-interest/long-term loans, and pride-of-ownership through architectural design)
- narrower lots in High Density Zones (50 ft.); lower minimum lot size for single family houses (5500 sq. ft.); apartment lot widths to remain at 100 ft.; site coverage and setbacks to remain the same
- illegal, unsafe and unsanitary housing is eliminated

Social Issues

George Town is committed to reinforcing the importance of the family unit and high moral standards which promote citizenship, integrity, righteousness, loyalty and honesty, in order to achieve the following key objectives:

- more safe, supervised after-school activities for children/youth
- “zero tolerance” drug policy and gang prevention programs
- provision of a Social Contract or Bill of Rights

Public Safety

George Town’s desirability as a high quality community in which to live and work is based on principles of public safety which include policing, public health and marine/road safety, as follows:

- proper community policing and crime prevention (eg. drug abuse, Neighbourhood Watch) resulting in a more proactive police visibility in the district
- effective public health measures as follows:
 - designation of “safe areas” for fuel storage
 - reduction in incidence of cancer by monitoring chemicals, pesticides etc. (eg. MRCU)
- vigilant marine/road safety programs and laws that will, among other things, achieve the following:

- properly constructed and designated walking and bicycle paths
- marine safety regulations for boats (eg. minimum ages for use, mandatory safe-use training)
- limitation on passengers-per-dive boat
- properly identified and safe cross-walks including public education campaign on proper-use

Trends Affecting George Town's Future

George Town's overall vision for 2011 is based on an understanding of the following trends and the need to mitigate them in order to achieve that vision:

- Tourism trends:
 - opening of Cuba
 - re-emergence of Haiti & Jamaica as destinations
 - Cayman Islands is expensive & medium quality & therefore may decrease in popularity
 - tourism mix changing
 - decrease in diving as reefs are over-dived and over-fished (becoming unattractive)
- trends affecting George Town's physical attractiveness:
 - George Town is ugly
 - hodge-podge of development
 - signage is gaudy
 - above-ground utilities detract from visual appeal
- trends affecting George Town's attractiveness as a commercial centre:
 - costing of doing business in George Town is too expensive
 - increasing energy costs
 - attitude that banking/finance will necessarily stay is false
 - war for talent
 - business is increasingly mobile (eg. the internet does for financial business what containerization did for physical goods), so that business is no longer geographically limited; it can move fast

Transportation

George Town's high-quality transportation system will be well-planned, efficient, safe and offer diverse transportation options, as evident by the following key objectives:

- provision of properly planned road corridors, as follows:

- more access roads to interior lands to offer development opportunities there
 - improve the gazettement process to assist with future roads planning and to keep gazetted roads development-free (eg. gazette roads ASAP after the planning process and institute staged compensation payments); all departments (except Lands & Survey) seem to be helpful with this
 - immediate construction of the by-pass road to alleviate the George Town traffic problem
 - where possible, connector roads should be built in the area around Down Town (per steps set out in Vision 2008 Strategy #9 Action Plan #9 regarding improved traffic circulation in the Central Business District)
- increased availability of parking in George Town, pursuant to Vision 2008 Strategy #9 Action Plans, #17 & #18
 - provision of alternatives to ease traffic congestion and provide transportation, as follows:
 - construct one (1) high school in eastern districts
 - providing walking & bicycle paths
 - improve the public transportation system per Vision 2008 Strategy #9 Action Plans #19 & #20

Recreation Facilities

George Town's recreation facilities will complement the community's needs for healthy lifestyles and respect for the natural environment, as follows:

- the urgent and immediate preservation of the Sound Sound scenic drive (from Launching Ramp & Red Bay to Prospect Point) by designating it as Public Open Space
- protection of coastal and off-shore recreational facilities, as follows:
 - monitoring and protection of the Sand Bar and String Ray City
 - vegetation or tree line to be "boundary" for High Water Mark & Prescription Law access – enforce this
 - acquire more public beaches & parking for public beach accesses
- provision of a variety of parks, as follows:
 - passive-use park with a number of shade trees
 - another park similar to the airport park
 - public area on the George Town waterfront in order to sit and enjoy views to the sea

- large central park (perhaps a public/private partnership) with jogging, walking & cycling paths, picnic areas, playgrounds, gardens & large trees, natural areas

Civic Buildings & Services

George Town’s desirability as a community in which to live and work can be achieved with the provision of civic buildings and services as follows:

- increase in youth services & programs, especially after-hours, managed with properly trained staff (Island wide)
- hold off on current George Town government expansion plans, which is crisis management, in favour of a proper long-term plan (eg. a planned development Government centre not too far from George Town where services can be consolidated and ample parking is provided)
- downsize Government

Cultural Amenities & Historic Sites

George Town will foster “champions of history” who care about preserving and promoting its rich history, traditional skills and vibrant culture, as follows:

- preservation and presentation to the public of the Caymanian way of life as “it’s the best part of Cayman”, needs to be bigger scale (ie. not one little house) in the form of a Heritage Park, which would be an expensive but viable “living museum” including live demonstrations and relocations and/or replicas of significant historical places such as Merren’s branch store, Mr. Arthur’s House, 7-11 & Print Shop; market this to Americans as they love history and form the largest tourism segment in Cayman; the following activities, among others, should be included because “they’re part of our heritage”:
 - antique building
 - wattle & daub
 - rope making
 - boat building
 - transportation (“horse & buggy”)
 - food & bush medicine
- preservation of the following as Historic Sites:
 - Town Hall
 - Post Office
 - Elmslie Memorial Church
 - Court House
 - Museum

- Library

Other Types of Development

George Town's mastery of balancing the need for economic development, respect for the natural environment, will be evident by the other types of development, as follows:

- more streetscaping in Town which will include landscaping, street lamps, benches and sidewalks
- improving elements of the planning process as follows:
 - all easements to be shown on Land Registers
 - simplification and shortening of the rezone process (eg. leave the responsibility with Planning, not Executive Council)
 - encourage development in less-developed areas, perhaps with incentives (eg. lower fees, duties)
 - encourage Master Plans to avoid piece meal development and enforce phased developments so that an overall plan is approved in principle, phases are enforced to avoid partially finished projects (eg. sell-off phases before continuing) but that fees can be paid phase-by-phase to make this system attractive for developers
- large conference centre/shelter

Foreign Investment

George Town values the importance of foreign investment and investors' need to know all the rules and procedures "up-front", so that by 2011, this island-wide responsibility will see the following key objectives achieved:

- a high level of co-operation among and between the public (eg. Lands & Survey, Planning, Government Information Services) and private sectors (eg. realtors, builders, lawyers, banks) to ensure foreign investors remain attracted to Cayman
- that a basic pamphlet or "Rule Book" is available to prospective investors including welcoming information on a variety of topics as follows:
 - employment/immigration
 - Planning
 - purchasing land
 - importing materials/equipment
 - due diligence

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