

Enhancing the Gateway to Our City

The US 98 corridor, as it runs through Port St. Joe, is the Gateway to our Historic District. However, this section of road has long been a source of concern (comments from various groups appears below) and has historically detracted from the beauty, economics and public safety of Port St. Joe. FDOT is currently planning improvements for [US 98] from south of Ninth Street to the south end of the Intercoastal Waterway Bridge in Gulf County to “resurface the roadway, repair selected areas of sidewalk, modify curb ramps and improve drainage.” With the support of local and regional government and agencies, the PSJRA is working with FDOT to ensure the modifications are made to functionally and aesthetically improve the road to enhance rather than detract from our city, our history, our business district, and our culture.

The 1989 Redevelopment Plan: “US 98, the major north-south corridor, is dangerous to pedestrians attempting to cross or to walk along the edge of the road. Redevelopment can improve the situation for pedestrians and motorists. Appropriate planning, access control, and signage should be planned in conjunction with the redevelopment of the area. Special attention is to be directed toward the safety of moving pedestrian and bicycle traffic adjacent to and across US 98 and SR 71.”

1996 Port St. Joe City Wide Vision Plan: “The main gateway to the City of Port St. Joe is US 98. The visual impression one receives when passing through the City is that of a depressed economy and shabby construction not to mention a total lack of aesthetic quality. The City needs to prepare landscape plans for this stretch of the road as well as require appropriate landscaping guidelines for adjacent uses. ..A coordinated effort is needed to upgrade this front door to the community. The [2nd] highest accident location is US 98 and 5th Street. The most amount of accidents occur at the intersection of side streets and major arterial roads. Highest among these are the intersections with Highway 98.”

Citizens’ Advisory Task Force: “Designate Highway 98 as a scenic corridor to ensure it ‘develops at the highest quality level...The result will be an attractive environment which appeals to both residents and visitors, who in turn, will find this a more desirable area in which to live, work, shop, and visit.”

Gulf County Strategic Economic Development Plan 2006-2008: “Without infrastructure enhancement, tourism will be stagnant.”

Small-City Expert Robert Gibbs: “The existing signage and features at the edges of the business district to not act as a beacon for shoppers or sight-seers. ..Port St. Joe currently has neither a distinctive identity nor a visual impact to create a particular interest in entering the business district.”

PSJRA Redevelopment Plan – 2008: “The location of US Highway 98...presents a physical barrier between the downtown and the bay. This barrier presents an elevated physical risk to pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to cross the road to access the waterfront, park and marina facilities. This barrier effect will become more significant, and potentially dangerous.”

It is important to our community and to our future to enhance this section of road. We will continue to address these issues with FDOT and rely on a broad support base of our agencies, municipalities, residents and businesses. Next week, we will begin the discussion of specific improvements that will enhance our city and encourage visitors to explore and shop in our Historic District.