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Cc: John Uhrin <john@vbhotels.com>
Subject: You are invited to a meeting about Atlantic Avenue and opportunities to make it better

All:

You are receiving this invitation for two reasons: because you are one of many who have indicated recently or over many years that you want to help make Atlantic Avenue better, or you may be noticing a drop in pedestrian traffic there. No data at the moment proves this, but it seems obvious to many who work there. We will be getting together to discuss whether this observation is accurate, why it is happening, and what we can do about it. The meeting is Tuesday, August 8th at TowneBank, 984 First Colonial Road, 2nd Floor Board Room at 3pm. Please RSVP if you will be able to attend.

Assuming it's true that pedestrian traffic along Atlantic Avenue is down, then why? Could it be fewer locals? Several significant factors would seem to be taking their collective tolls: years of more and more restricted parking, the perception by locals that it's unsafe, a BeachStreet USA budget that hasn't increased in almost 20 yrs, sub-par retail offerings, outdated storefronts, and a plethora of highly publicized and marketed trendy Hampton Roads options that have recently opened (The Main, Waterside, The Outlets, 30+ breweries, and new hotel properties with hundreds of new Boardwalk restaurant and bar seats). This should matter to all of us. We're talking about a significant area: roughly 3 miles of retail along the west side of Atlantic Avenue and side-streets between Atlantic and Pacific Avenues.

City planners deserve a lot of credit that the longstanding mantra of "heads in beds" is working. Tourism seems to be booming for hotels, and that's great, but what about "feet on the street?" Let's face it - most of Atlantic Ave seems stuck a mid-90s time warp. In addition, there seems to be pervasive local cynicism and dismissiveness about anything related to Atlantic Avenue or

trying make it better. But can you really blame people for feeling this way? As stakeholders and taxpayers, are we to let Atlantic Ave be largely ignored and scorned by locals forever? There will always be the haters of anything to do with Atlantic Ave, but do we all throw our hands up and do next to nothing to upgrade the place?

Three things to consider if we're being honest with ourselves: The retail mix along Atlantic Ave is not compelling to locals; generally, if you are a local parent or teen, young people don't grow up seeing a reason to come down (besides during ECSC), nor do parents suggest it (in fact, local youth are discouraged on almost every level). Maybe we should ask ourselves a few questions. How would we describe Atlantic Avenue? What distinguishes it? What specific features and attributes about it might attract people?

Everyone - hoteliers, landlords, tourists, locals and merchants - benefits from an up-to-date, vibrant, attractive, exciting Atlantic Avenue area. Don't you think it's time we got together - maybe past time - to discuss topics pertinent to the future of Atlantic Avenue for everyone.

One new idea would improve quality of life, represent our area's diversity, and show Virginia Beach's dedication to the arts to the world. A recent study was done in an effort to establish an art vision plan for the City - Virginia Beach Arts Plan 2030 (see link below). Virginia Beach Arts Plan 2030 was the culmination of a year-long process of listening to our community, assessing our cultural strengths and weaknesses, and analyzing forces, trends and models to provide a blueprint for Virginia Beach's cultural development over the next 15 years. Over six months, hundreds of individuals contributed to the plan through meetings, interviews, events and surveys through the City's website. City Council approved the Virginia Beach Arts Plan 2030 on December 8, 2015.

Arts Plan 2030 Virginia Beach ...https://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/cultural-affairs/Documents/ArtsPlan_Appendices_.pdf

Could Atlantic Avenue and adjacent side streets be prime for public art and programming? Wouldn't it be a huge upgrade to feature this prominently in our City's resort marketing packages?

More than twenty years ago a group of concerned Atlantic Avenue stakeholders and resort business people, known as the Resort Leadership Council, convened to present a unified voice for the VB Resort Area to the City. A helluva lot has improved since then, largely because of what this group started, along with a lot of long, hard work by many citizens at all levels in Virginia Beach. One of the programs which arose out of this group was BeachStreet USA. I believe I'm correct to say that what we know as the Resort Advisory Commission (RAC) was born from RLC, too.

If you think it's time to get together to refocus our vision on today's issues pertaining Atlantic Avenue, respond to this email and let us know if you will attend this meeting.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Hope to see you there!

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