

Standing Room Crowd Hears Lake Wales Envisioned Kickoff

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Planning Experts and Developers Share Methods for Creating Lasting Value Neighborhoods

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Victor Dover of Dover Kohl & Partners introduced the first of a number of planning principles that have created high-value traditional neighborhoods and enhanced the quality of life in other cities across the southeast. More than 100 guests were packed into the theatre at Bok Tower Gardens for the presentation.

afternoon."

Dover is a principal of the planning firm of Dover Kohl & Partners who led the [Lake Wales Connected](#) planning. That project is now under construction.

Developers Offered Success Stories

Attendees heard from a series of professionals, including developers who have used the "new urbanism" concepts to create attractive traditional neighborhoods in areas ranging from Martin County, Florida to Savannah, Georgia.

Vince Graham, a developer from Charleston, South Carolina and president of the I'On Group, shared how he constructed a "traditional neighborhood" in Savannah that now holds the highest per-acre property values among the residential areas of the city.

The community of I'On features two and three-story homes with rear access garages and narrow front yards, front porches, sidewalks and street trees. The neighborhood looks much like those built 150 years ago in many American cities, before cars began to dominate designs.

Dover referred to the results of that change, which feature prominent garages, as "snouthouses," describing that outcome as a failure to create a true "neighborhood." Dover used photos of sprawling new developments in neighboring Haines City to illustrate the results, which he described as "a lost cause."

Lake Wales City Manager James Slaton called the meetings "an overwhelming success, we're definitely on the right course." Slaton added that "like the [Lake Wales Connected](#) plan, [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) has the ability to bring everyone together" on an agreed set of standards to achieve shared goals.

Former Main Street president Rusty Ingley was among those impressed by the presentations, saying it "not only exceeded my expectations, but expanded thoughts on what can be achieved with great planning and design."

Dover and other speakers advocated neighborhoods that included a mix of housing types, including "mansion apartments" that look like high-end single-family homes, but are actually small apartment buildings. Other housing types mentioned that should be utilized in such neighborhoods include single-family homes with "granny apartments" in the rear or downstairs, as well as cottages and bungalows. Front porches within speaking distance of shady sidewalks helps to connect neighbors in the concepts.

Guidelines to direct developers to create such attractive neighborhoods are the desired outcome of the [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) effort. All five current members of the [Lake Wales](#) City Commission were on hand during the presentation.

The three-hour afternoon Best Practices Symposium was followed by a "kick-off" evening session that invited residents to respond to a series of questions using electronic voting devices, sharing opinions with the entire room.

Much More to Come

The [Envisioned](#) process will continue next week when noted economist Joe Minicozzi will host a webinar that will focus on the economics of growth. Minicozzi, according to the [Lake Wales Envisioned](#) website, will "demonstrate how communities can utilize local data and simple math to gain a powerful understanding of their fiscal health, and plan for a healthy economic future."

The process has drawn state-wide interest and support from a variety of institutions including 1000 Friends of Florida, Rollins College, The University of Miami, as well as local civic groups, businesses and organizations.

The planning effort will ramp up in next month when an April 14 evening event under a tent downtown will initiate a week of hands-on planning charettes and an "open studio" that will encourage citizen input and involvement in each step of the plan development.

Implementation of the final results will require the adoption of numerous new zoning and land use rules that will govern future development.

LakeWalesNews.net will continue to cover this significant effort and bring updates at each step of the process. [Subscribe to our free news mail to be kept informed.](#)

A packed house greeted a team of planners, traffic engineers and developers Monday afternoon to hear presentations that may help shape the future of [Lake Wales](#).

Experts shared the keys to creating a superior community to begin the process of [Lake Wales Envisioned](#). The months-long effort to deal with an anticipated wave of growth was initiated by the [City of Lake Wales](#) with the support of a host of co-sponsors.

Interested citizens filled the theatre at [Bok Tower Gardens](#) for the 2:00 start of the "Best Practices" session, a standing-room-only turn-out that team leader Victor Dover called "remarkable, given it's a workday



Courtesy Lake Wales Envisioned

Noted Economist Joe Minicozzi will present a webinar on August 29 intended to share the "Dollars and Sense" of good planning before a wave of growth changes Lake Wales forever. Registration for the webinar is available to all by clicking the photo.