

Some people have suggested I do a blog....and I like the name uniblogger (I live in a garage), but I bet the name is already taken, and at age 71 using my computer can be frustrating. I feel qualified to speak because I read a lot and am usually paraphrasing or quoting those I admire. Besides, a lot of people speak out, regardless of their knowledge, although not all people running for office fall into this category. I never outgrew my hippie love for peace although I do enjoy small scale wars where nobody gets permanently maimed or disfigured. I do think outside the bus. When I was in my twenties I was invited to be on a planning board in New Hampshire. Yes I am a Yankee..... which discredits me in the eyes of some. I accepted the position because I enjoyed sociology.....as well as the power. Way back then I became a member of U.L.I. and similar organizations. I continued interest while using my architectural training under the GI bill to design septic systems. I have always thought of myself as "well rounded" even after losing ten pounds, and when talk of revitalization of downtown Jax came up, I became hooked and started offering unsolicited opinions as they rolled off my ball point. It is all out of my head and some would say "imagination on steroids", but I also realized it was based upon a lifetime of casual interest and reading. Last week I climbed the ladder into my loft reference library and counted more than forty books I had accumulated over the years on planning and sociology. I have read at least that many library books. Before I left the north I had bought, converted, and rented out much real estate. I was now aware of the source of my caustic diatribe. DIA-tribe, by the way, is my cute nickname for the folks forming the Downtown Improvement Authority and DIAPER is a cute acronym for its mission; Downtown Improvement Authority Preventing Embarrassing Results. I read a book review of "Triumph of the City"....nothing to do with the Donald, and knew I had to have a copy. Even though this 2011 publication was written by a Harvard Economics Professor, I was not disappointed. The book exonerated many of my thoughts and destroyed some of my detractors' urban myths...although it never mentioned alligators in the sewers of New York...or Jacksonville, it did give me "cover your ass" credibility. To paraphrase a famous lawyer; If the glove fits, we must acquit...and let Dick Jackson off the hooks because of his books. Jacksonville lacks identity unless you are looking at the map while driving south on I-95....its "where Florida begins". Its downtown lacks residents, which is why it lacks vitality in the core. A vibrant city has an economic mix of housing. Jax lacks the affordable, higher density units that appeal to talented, young, single folks....who should be our target market. Our median age is young and we should relinquish the reins to this demographic we have already screwed. These folks are attracted to an urban setting especially if there is a downtown campus with courses geared to our diverse economic base. This "workforce" becomes the bait for other employers we may want to attract. The law of gravity dictates that employers flow south to the quality of life that we offer. Twenty by 2020 (twenty thousand residents downtown in nine years), Somewhere along the way we may want to tempt a few conventioners and tourists. The residents will create the vitality and cause the commerce to commence because capitalism dictates that the vacuum will be filled and sustained. All we ask of these young folks is that they perform community service, mentor to our young and sign documents that they will not become lawyers, union members, or work for the government. Find the money to "green retrofit" some of our elevated vacant space into affordable units...(Sandowski trust?). Infill is in...and always should have been. Real estate, travel and relocation are extinct for the time being. Grab the only segment of the population which is in debt, underemployed, own bicycles, and is MOBILE. I need to be surrounded by smart people so some of it will rub off and maybe I can learn to operate my computer. Please, no more studies, extend the invitation NOW. Thanks, Dick (904)655-9903