

Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce
October 15, 2009 meeting
Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables

Introduction by Chamber of Commerce Chair Sarah Nesbitt Artecona

Pat Salerno served as the City Manager of the City of Sunrise in Broward County for 17 years and is credited with the success of attracting premier projects to the City, including the BankAtlantic Center, which established the City as a major entertainment-corporate-retail destination in Florida.

Pat was named to a list of "The 50 Most Powerful People in Broward County" published by *Gold Coast Magazine*. This survey considered an individual's "ability to influence political, social, charitable, educational and business decisions as they shape Broward County." Pat was the only City Manager out of 26 in the county named to the list.

Pat was also the recipient in 2000 of the Sunrise Chamber of Commerce's first ever "Man of the Decade" Award for achievements improving the City's quality of life.

Pat was recognized by the Sunrise City Commission in 1998 for making the BankAtlantic Center a reality by naming a major roadway that connects the Sawgrass Expressway to the arena "Pat Salerno Drive."

Wayne Huizenga, the only person to have built three Fortune 500 companies: Waste Management, Blockbuster Entertainment and AutoNation, and is a five-time recipient of *Financial World Magazine's* "CEO of the Year" and the 2005 Ernst & Young "World Entrepreneur of the Year" has called Mr. Salerno the best City Manager he has ever worked with.

He came to the City Beautiful six months ago and we are thrilled that he is with us today. Please welcome our City Manager, Patrick Salerno.

Remarks by Coral Gables City Manager Patrick Salerno

Good morning everyone.

Being a new Manager in town can be both exhilarating and exhausting with many surprises.

That is not to say that what I have been doing for several months has been totally unpredictable.

However, an image that seems to capture the true picture would be that of someone running on a log in the middle of a flowing river, simultaneously trying to juggle five balls with one hand while cheerily waving to folks on the shore with the other hand.

I have arrived at a time when the City faces many varied and significant challenges.

As an organization in transition, each challenge, each open door, should build on the best of what went before.

Let me share with you my vision for the City.

First, there are no instruction manuals for creating a truly world-class City with a world-class image. In my experience, a community's vision should evolve from a free-flowing exchange of ideas based on an understanding of the City's natural amenities, its heritage, its accessibility and its potential for growth.

A community's vision should evolve through a collaborative effort that takes advantage of the experience and perspectives of our Mayor and Commissioners, residents, staff and other community stakeholders to establish a real direction.

Implementing a meaningful vision comes from the soul; it should represent the values, goals and aspirations of the community.

What is clear is that Coral Gables has the amenities of a growing cosmopolitan City and the heart and soul of a small town. However, Coral Gables, in the years ahead, faces many challenges that will affect its ability to realize its vision.

From my initial observations, implementing Coral Gables' vision, in abbreviated form, should include:

Branding the City of Coral Gables as a great and distinctive place. "Place Branding" is more than a slogan; it is a means of competing with every other place for visitors, business investment and events, by making the world aware of what it aspires to be and do and the activities it performs which best exemplify what kind of place it is.

"The City Beautiful" perhaps could use a tag line – Progressive ~ International ~ Historic – highlighting some of the City's most marketable aspects.

We need to build on the City's unique assets, strengths and address its needs to enable it to become the premier City in the state and a nationwide leader in providing a superb lifestyle for its residents.

Protecting and enhancing Coral Gables' historic resources.

Strengthening the "heart" of Coral Gables and making the "downtown" a place that attracts, delights, excites and comforts residents as well as visitors.

Winston Churchill said: “We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us.” A great city is often defined by its creation of great places.

Nurturing the City’s downtown –its buildings and public places- should help shape the community by becoming a place where residents can exalt in the human spirit, celebrate both the unity and diversity of the City and simply relax and enjoy their surroundings.

Creating communities that are active, healthy, tolerant, fair, inclusive, sustainable and safe.

Protecting and respecting its natural areas and open space as places for recreation, renewal, and reflection.

Developing one of the City’s most important resources –its employees.

Recognizing individuals’ rights and responsibilities.

Promoting cultural diversity and equality of opportunity.

Encouraging residents to feel that they will have a stake in their government, that they are connected to their neighborhoods, and that they can influence their local government and its actions.

Recognizing cultural facilities and events as opportunities to improve the quality of life for citizens and their sense of community.

Promoting economic development and a flourishing, diverse economy, by supporting existing employers and actively seeking new wealth-creating businesses through public-private partnerships and other tools.

My experience has shown me that retention and expansion of local businesses is as important as the recruitment of new businesses and that the same level of effort is required to assist existing employers as is needed to recruit new ones.

My experience has also shown me you are only as strong as your weakest link, which is why I view the Miracle Mile Streetscape project of the utmost importance.

Capitalizing on the use of information and communication technology for the benefit of the community.

Developing a well-run organization – that is responsive, accountable, and customer-service oriented. Simply put – give customers reasons to smile.

Finally, it should include:

Creating choices: Coral Gables should be a City of choices for its residents. Choices for employment, for recreation, for housing, for culture, and for education.

But, more than just framing a vision as your Manager, I must be a facilitator for making the Mayor and Commissioners' vision a reality. If approached with determination, persistence and flexibility, that vision will become contagious and self-perpetuating based on the volunteerism of citizens who share loyalty, love and dedication to this City.

Living a vision unites people and connects them to the values of their community. As your Manager, I must also be a vigilant "vision cop" who is constantly on the lookout for "vision killers" – tradition, fear of ridicule, stereotypes, complacency, short-term thinking and naysayers are all potential threats that must be protected against.

Let me conclude my remarks by taking the Athenian oath – a timeless code of civic responsibility recited by the citizens of Athens over 2,000 years ago: "I pledge to transmit this City not only, not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."