

A Pedestrian-oriented Downtown.

Linda Rock & Richard Levak | June 11, 2009

Del Mar's Community Plan calls for an economically viable, pedestrian-oriented downtown. It is increasingly challenging, however, for businesses to be viable amid the current economic downturn and growing competition from neighboring communities. Our arduous planning process has resulted in lovely outcomes, like the Plaza and the L'Auberge, but also lost opportunities like the Gardens Project, which was ultimately buried under the weight of our laborious, uncertain planning process. We may not be aware of opportunities that have been missed by virtue of the reputation we have acquired among developers who no longer seek opportunities in our city. As a result, other cities have prospered and developed into vibrant, attractive downtowns, while we continue to decline, with little new investment and growth. Our reputation as a difficult place to do business will be aggravated if the sidewalk expansion is halted due to a small group of protestors after the process was publically discussed and approved.

Portraying efforts to revitalize as "fear-mongering" and "uglifying" [sic] as was done in a recent Sandpiper article is unfair and inflammatory. The city planning staff and DMVA worked hard to determine small, concrete steps to help business and came up with the notion of expanded sidewalk cafes. They are hardly a group of reckless developers, nor are they fear-mongers. Now that construction is in progress, let's see the results and not be negative and divisive. The expanded outdoor patios are the first real change to downtown that has taken place over the last twenty years. Let's take a page from our new president and entertain the possibility that change can be good.

We encourage the community to stay the course, allow this project to be completed and not be intimidated by those calling for Del Mar residents to "be very fearful indeed" for their community.