



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Put history in the past? Not here

First came the county tourism consultant's suggestion that, "we do not believe it is advisable to develop a positioning that is based solely upon history. (It) should only serve as a backdrop for a brand experience."

Then came the state Chamber of Commerce president's recent assertion that, "the state's economy is evolving from one centered on tourism, construction and agriculture to one driven by science and engineering."

Dana Ste. Claire, director of our city's Heritage Department and of the 450th Commemoration, has a response to suggestions of dethroning our economic engine.

"Diversifying the county's offerings is important, but marketing away from the strength of the market is economically dangerous," Dana says. "St. Augustine, with its rich history-based visitor programs and venues, will never be a 'backdrop' for a countywide brand experience."

For Ste. Claire, St. Augustine is the principal brand as a major heritage tourism destination. "It may not be the more easily understood conventional industry, but it's the largest here, attracting more than four million visitors annually, and measured in billions of dollars.

"The rest of the state may see a shift to new industry, but St. Augustine will always be a major tourism destination - there is only one Nation's Oldest City," he said. "We should make every effort to strengthen St. Augustine's unique brand, rather than shift the model to something that has no real application locally.

"St. Augustine is clearly the exception and not the rule."

Public meetings for 450th

Today, 9 a.m. - City Commission workshop, Alcazar Room, City Hall

Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. - Steering Committee, Ringhaver Center, Flagler College

November 2, 5:30 p.m. - General Assembly, Flagler College Auditorium



City heritage experience will become interactive

Authentic Spanish cuisine, an interactive public archaeology program, traditional Spanish crafts, a comprehensive St. Augustine history museum, and evening historical programs. Key visitor interests outlined this morning by our city's Heritage Director

Dana Ste. Claire as he introduced in a City Commission workshop a new, interactive heritage tourism program tailored to today's visitors.

"They're no longer interested in the traditional museum experience," Ste. Claire said. "Frankly, they're tired of looking at dead birds in glass cases."

Ste. Claire outlined a new program stretching from visitor orientation at our Visitor Center through a variety of events and programs in and around our Colonial Spanish Quarter.

The workshop also included an overview of the strategic plan for our 450th anniversary - The First America - which will be detailed tomorrow

Ghosts beware!

Ghostbusters are alive and well and living in Palm Coast, and they're headed here this weekend to put a dent in our ghost tours.

The Palm Coast Ghostbusters, dedicated fans of the 1984 Dan Aykroyd/Bill Murray/Harold Ramis sci-fi/comedy film, will be arriving in their ECTO-1B vehicle and bringing their "movie quality" proton packs, PKE meters, and ghost traps to Ripley's Believe It Or Not! for the Family Fright Nights events Halloween weekend.

More about our neighbor Ghostbusters [here](#), and about the Friday/Saturday events [here](#).

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Join Bridge's '27 Club

You can be among the first to step across our restored Bridge of Lions - but you've got to act quickly.

Our city is accepting applications until December 4 to form *The '27 Club*, an elite group reminding us of the bridge's original construction in 1927.

the opportunity is free and open to ages five-plus; include your name, address, phone number and email address (if available). Just one name per entry. Details at www.the27club.info.

The reopening is expected early next year, although the Florida Department of Transportation will be continuing entry landscaping and removal of the temporary bridge for another 18 months.



Early photo from Florida Photographic Archives

Our region an 'opportunity epicenter'

Family-owned Science First, a manufacturer of educational products used to teach the natural sciences in schools, moved from chilly - and expensive - Buffalo NY to Nassau County for its "good, business-friendly climate," says Aaron Bell, company vice president and grandson of its founder. "There are good incentives for moving down to Florida and bringing your jobs with you."

Bell's enthusiasm is quoted in a [Florida Trend](#) article pegging our region an "opportunity epicenter."

From the report: **Jacksonville** - epicenter of economic activity largely due to its winning combination of a business friendly environment and affordable big city living. **Nassau** - zoning changes to accommodate growing commercial activity for increased traffic at the Port of Jacksonville. **Baker** - two planned industrial parks with access to Interstate 10, the region's primary east-west artery. **Clay** - a regional hub for a First Coast Outer Beltway connecting Interstates 10 and 95, with a second perimeter ring around Clay, St. Johns and Duval counties. **Flagler** - incentives packages that saved 1,000 jobs and will bring another 250 with National Direct Response Corporation's relocation.

to our regional steering committee in a public session at 2:30 in Flagler College's Ringhaver Center.

Commission OKs 12-foot wall

City Commissioners Monday night approved construction of a 12-foot sound abatement wall at Hamilton Upchurch Park's skateboard area.

The approval followed pleas from both skateboard opponents and proponents, including skateboarders as young as six years old, and lengthy commission debate summed up by Mayor Joe Boles: "There's no other way but to build the wall."

The commission approved \$81,900 for the project, and reaffirmed removal of noise-generating metal rails and an opening time of 10 a.m. Closing time was left undetermined, but City Attorney Ron Brown suggested to commissioners that dusk might be more acceptable to speakers arguing later afternoon is a better fit for skateboarding after school.

St. Johns County is cited for its "thriving defense sector," with Northrop Grumman, the county's largest employer, filling a \$432-million contract for up to 70 E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft on its 208-acre site.

And CNNMoney.com put St. Johns County in the No. 12 spot on its 2009 list of hottest job growth markets in the U.S., according to the report. "Between 2000 and 2008, the number of jobs in St. Johns grew by 56%. CNNMoney.com cites the county's business-friendly fee structure and top-rated school district as reasons for the growth."

The St. Augustine Report is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at gardner@aug.com

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