

**Revised Triumph Pre-Application
To
Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.
Triumph Pre-Application No. 118**

**A Request for Assistance to Aid in the Recovery
Of
The City of Port St. Joe, Florida**

Summary

The Port St. Joe Redevelopment Agency and the Port Theater Art and Cultural Center will form a Public/Private Partnership to Restore and Renovate the Historic Port Theater to Stimulate and Enhance Cultural Tourism in Port St. Joe

April, 2019

Contacts

Bill Kennedy, Executive Director, Port St. Joe Redevelopment Agency (DRA), 850 227 4405, www.PSJRA.com

Kaye Haddock, Board of Directors, Port Theater Art and Cultural Center, Inc. (PTACC), Port St. Joe, Florida, www.historicporttheater.com, [Kaye@beachproperties.realtor.](mailto:Kaye@beachproperties.realtor) 850 227 6600

Purpose of the Application to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.

Port St. Joe was devastated by Hurricane Michael which hit the Florida Panhandle on October 10, 2018. The damage was immense and catastrophic.

In order to assist the recovery effort, the Port St. Joe Redevelopment Agency and the Board of Directors of the Historic Port Theater have teamed together to form a public/private partnership to restore the theater and return it to a place of prominence in the community. The theater will act as a major driver in the recovery and the expansion of commerce in the Port St. Joe downtown redevelopment area. The theater is located in the middle of downtown Port St. Joe on Reid Avenue. In addition the theater will become the cultural hub for the community.

The Partners/Applicants

The Downtown Redevelopment Agency (DRA) is governed by a Community Redevelopment 5-7 member CRA “Board” created by the local government officials and other individuals appointed by local government.

The Port Theater Art and Cultural Center Inc. is a 501 c 3 not-for-profit organization formed in 2011 by a group of local citizens for the purpose of organizing a renovation effort to save this historical structure. The group was able to raise \$350,000 to buy the building which it presently owns.

The two partners will work together on restoration, planning events, financial management, scheduling, and efforts to insure self-sustaining policies.

The Theater

The Port Theater was built in 1938 but has sat idle since 1964. In 2003 it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Hurricane Kate blew the roof off in 1985, Hurricane Opal flooded the building in 1995, and Hurricane Michael once again blew the roof off in 2018.

The US Department of Interior noted its uniqueness by stating “The Art Deco style treatment of the façade is largely intact and still maintains a distinct and significant presence on the main commercial thoroughfare of Port St. Joe.”

A notable asset is the front entry with a recessed entry on the first floor and an extended metal marquee with a neon Port Theater sign above the entry. The original neon lights have been restored and are in working order.

It has amazing acoustics and can seat approximately 400 individuals based on the arrangement of the chairs. Over the years it has been a movie theater, a department store, and an auction house.

Economic Benefits

The non-profit art and culture industry has a large impact on local economies. The Americans for the Arts study by the Arts and Economic Prosperity IV found that this industry generated \$135.2 billion in economic activity on a yearly basis in the US. Audiences spent \$74.1 billion a year supporting 4.13 million full time jobs. The industry also contributed \$22.3 billion in local, state, and federal taxes.

A fully functioning Art and Cultural Center at the Port Theater will draw people to the town of Port St. Joe who want to experience the performing arts in a charming and historically significant venue. The tourism in the Port St. Joe has traditionally focused on fishing, boating, scalloping, and other outdoor recreational activities, but the Theater would open up a new market built around people coming to town for a culturally enchanting experience.

Even though the theater has been in disrepair and in dire need of renovation, it has been used for concerts over the past three years. An example of its impact on cultural tourism would be the album debut of a local, all female group named the Krickets. According to a screenshot of attendee map, over 350 people came to the performance representing 41 cities and 9 states.

The Plein Air Southern Convention came to Port St. Joe in May of 2018. Persons from outside the county who came and stayed in Port St. Joe stayed in hotels (28), condominiums (25), houses (26), Bread and Breakfast (1), and campgrounds (6).

Activities at the theater will draw tourists to the local area who will be engaged in AUDIENCE SPENDING. This would be beneficial to the retail businesses located in the downtown area of Port St. Joe. Tourism is now a primary source of local economic activity in Gulf County. The impact of out-of-state visitors is significant to the economy of the local area.

Non-local audiences spend twice as much as local audiences for additional non-admission items, i.e., \$40 per non-local person vs. \$20 per local person.

The VISIT FLORIDA report on Gulf County in 2016 showed that direct spending by these visitors amounted to \$66.8 million. Tourism generated \$100 million in total business sales, 817 jobs, \$22.7 million in income, and \$11.8 million in state and local tax revenues.

Visitor spending in Gulf County was largely in the areas of Lodging, Retail Sales, and Food.

In small towns like Port St. Joe with a population of about 4,000 people, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. It highlights the uniqueness and quaintness of the area, and that is important in attracting new businesses critical to economic recovery. In Florida in 2008, the return on investment in arts and culture was 7:1 related to economic activity, job support, and revenues to local and state government.

Art and cultural centers improve COMMUNITY STATUS AND IMAGE which is a factor in attracting residents and businesses who may be considering RELOCATION DECISIONS. More and more snowbirds are coming to Gulf County along with more senior citizens moving to Florida from the colder northern states.

Access to art and culture attracts people to an area. More new residents translate into MORE CONSTRUCTION of new houses for these new residents. This adds to jobs in the construction industry. New residents and new houses contribute to more taxes for the city and county.

Corporations and new businesses are also attracted to an area by the art and culture of an area. This would increase the NUMBER OF JOBS in the area.

The doors of the building will be open each week when the operation gets in full gear. Local people and tourists from out of town will make the theater come alive once again.

Cultural Hub of the Community

Some activities of the theater will focus on local topics, some will entertain, some will educate, and some will enlighten and enrich lives.

There will be many activities at the PTACC that will be free and open to the public. In order to be self-sustaining there will also be a charge for some events in order to raise funds for continued operation and upkeep of the facility. The Port Theater has been functioning over the past two years, and is fully capable of sustaining itself through charges for some events, donations, and grants.

For example, local community presentations could be dance recitals, VFW meetings, Coastal Conservation lectures, Safe boating seminars by US Coast Guard, lectures on healthy living styles by doctors from local hospital (Sacred Heart), special lectures on cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure, screen for diseases, special meetings on the health of senior citizens, techniques for fishing in the St. Joe Bay, form a little theater acting troupe, host a movie night, show

old classic movies, work with Tourist Development Council, Community Development Council, and Tyndall Air Force Base to highlight specific needs of these groups.

We can partner with local Scallop Festival for special lecture on the life of a scallop, bring a Two Day Film Festival to the PTACC, host a high school symphonic Band Festival, host a One Day Light House History Lesson, become a wedding venue, partner with the Song Writer's Festival and host concerts, partner with the Plein Air Paint Out and host an exhibit for the 20 artists from all over the world, host a Wildlife Festival, provide an in-service venue for realtors, coaches, insurance salespersons, law enforcement, and host Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Artificial Reef Summits both locally and regional

There is also the attraction of concerts, plays, and dance performances by local artists including children and youth of the local schools.

Support Groups

Gulf County Chamber of Commerce

Mexico Beach Community Development Council

Gulf County Tourist Development Council

Tapper Foundation

Superintendent of the Gulf County School System

Needs Statement

Port St. Joe is in dire economic need. It was long noted as a "mill town," but the St. Joe Paper Mill was closed and demolished in November of 2002. The paper mill and associated industries like Arizona Chemical Plant closed as well.

Over 800 jobs were lost in this small town of 4,000 people. New industries have not come to Port St. Joe to replace this significant loss of economic activity.

The State of Florida declared Gulf County “A Rural Area of Critical Concern.”

Hurricane Michael in October of 2018 was another significant economic loss to the local economy as well.

The Port Theater will draw tourists from surrounding states who will come to attend concerts, plays, and other events involving the performing arts.

Increasing the number of tourists on a monthly basis will contribute to helping the area recover and expanding commerce in the downtown area.

Request for Funding

The architectural firm of Quina Grundhoefer of Pensacola specializes in historic preservation and their analysis and review concluded a renovation cost figure of \$1,214,000 for the ground floor renovation.

The request for funding from Triumph Gulf Coast for this restoration is \$500,000.

The plan is to secure other funding from sources like the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation. We have an application with them that is being considered at this time.

The partnership with the DRA resulted in a request from the DRA for a public restroom facility in downtown Port St. Joe which will accommodate large crowds in the downtown area and be an overflow access for huge events at the Theater. The estimate for the restroom facility on Reid Avenue that would be 35 feet from the front of the Port Theater is \$75,000. This will help shoppers in the downtown area who need to use a restroom and be used by the theater with large crowds in attendance.

The request for funding from Triumph Gulf Coast for this bathroom facility is \$75,000.

Total Amount of request would be \$575,000.

