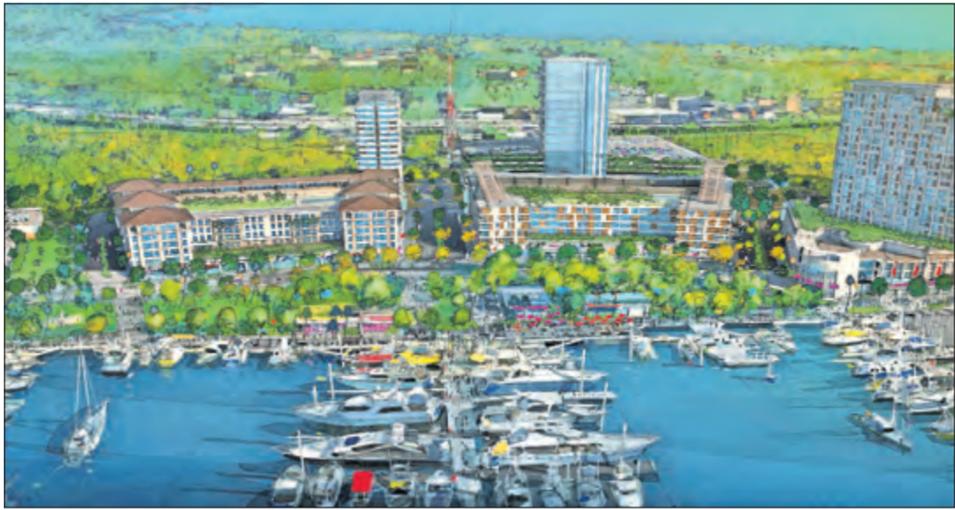


## ANOTHER VIEW



The District on the Southbank, the former site of JEA's Southside Generating Station, will include 125 slips for its marina. This game changer for Downtown has taken years of work. [PROVIDED BY MICHAEL MUNZ]

## Downtown enters a new era

By Jim Bailey

Downtown Jacksonville is in the process of something many have wanted for decades, real implementation of a plan.

This plan was developed with a cross-section of community leaders from 2012 to 2014 during 43 public meetings and was debated and adopted by the Jacksonville City Council in February 2015.

That would be the activation of the Downtown Investment Authority's Northbank and Southbank Community Redevelopment Area Plan.

In the Central Business District of Downtown, the DIAs supporting several key projects outlined in the plan. These include the Laura Street Trio and Barnett Building, supporting market rate and affordable housing around the Brooklyn/LaVilla neighborhoods as well as the recent opening of Florida State College at Jacksonville's culinary institute and restaurant Downtown.

The adaptive reuse of the former Bostwick Building into the Cowford Chophouse is another shining star in the implementation of the plan. The emergence of Bellwether restaurant onto the Downtown restaurant landscape has been positive.

Add college students with Jacksonville University and University of North Florida establishing Downtown campuses, and you can begin to see a new

**The adaptive reuse of the former Bostwick Building into the Cowford Chophouse is another shining star in the implementation of the plan.**

Downtown emerging.

Now, as we turn our sights to the Southbank, we are working closely with the developers of The District project in order to create a public private partnership that also activates a key part of the plan.

Projects such as The District are both catalytic and complicated. That is why in 2014, the DIA set out to define criteria for this site to attain.

The Community Redevelopment Area project was developed in the hopes that a private sector developer would step up to bring Jacksonville something that was well-thought out and creative to transform this site, something community-oriented that combines restaurants, a hotel, office and retail and residential opportunities. The waterfront will provide benefits for all of Jacksonville.

The financial incentive framework that is supported unanimously by the DIA Board does just that. Now it moves on to ultimately seek approval from the Jacksonville City Council.

By using money from the Southbank Community Redevelopment Area combined with a commonly used program whereby the developer is responsible to generate new property

taxes to support the project is the right mix of ingredients to move Jacksonville forward while looking out for the taxpayers of Jacksonville.

For those who have questioned why we support this project or why it has taken so long to get here, they should consider some important points. This site, offered by the JEA to prospective bidders at the time, required a laundry list of due diligence items including environmental issues, land use and zoning issues, master plan approvals from the city, marina permitting allowances from city, state and federal government as well as other regulatory approvals.

This is customary for any large mixed-use development transaction and takes a great deal of time to complete prior to closing land acquisition and beginning development.

To achieve the approvals that this developer has achieved in the amount of time they have is a recognition of their expertise and ability to deal with complicated projects that first start with a vision.

For the DIA to step up and participate in a public private partnership is the right thing to do.

*Jim Bailey is chairman of the Downtown Investment Authority board.*

## OUR VIEW: DOWNTOWN THUMBS



Laura Street already is welcoming for pedestrians. The city has plans to make it safer for bicyclists, too. [BOB MACK/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION]

By Times-Union Editorial Board

**Thumbs up** to Mayor Lenny Curry's administration for putting together an intriguing proposal to construct bicycle lanes on Hogan and Laura streets



that would effectively lead to a continuous bike path from the Northbank Riverwalk to the Hogans Creek Greenway.

The plan wouldn't dramatically affect the existing parking at all on Laura and Hogan streets — and yet it would create protected bicycle paths that would include two-way lanes and various safety features.

When Amy Ingles, the city's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, gave a presentation on the proposed urban core bike project during Downtown Vision Inc.'s recent meeting of city center stakeholders, it drew rave reviews.

And deservedly so.

Given that most successful downtowns in our country have extensive bicycle-friendly areas, the city's urban core bike plan would add vibrancy and energy to Downtown.

**Thumbs up** to Jaguars management for changing the team's uniforms to a design much cleaner and simpler than the old version.



The more classic and minimalist uniform scheme — which totally scraps the old two-tone helmet and puts more emphasis on teal, white and black colors — makes the Jaguars look unique without trying too hard to do so.

According to ESPN.com's Paul Lukas, who writes the "Uni Watch" column for the sports website, the Jaguars' uniform redesign makes them "look like a football team again, not like comic book characters." Given the fact that the Jaguars — one of our Downtown jewels — were just five minutes from playing in the Super Bowl a few months ago, there should be no doubt that they are a football team, anyway (and a dang good one). The new uniforms will just ensure that the Jags are a sharp-looking football team.

**Thumbs up** to Wolfson Children's Hospital in Downtown Jacksonville for being one of less than 20

hospitals across the country to institute a "hit free zone"



policy to discourage parents from spanking, whipping or otherwise physically disciplining their

children inside its facility.

Wolfson's move to implement the "no-hit" policy inside its hospital has been publicly supported by several local children and family agencies. According to Jessica Winberry, a public health educator at Wolfson, the policy is simply designed to raise awareness among parents that there are appropriate, non-physical ways to discipline children without possibly injuring them — which is particularly a huge risk when physically disciplining small kids.

Sounds like a totally reasonable and proactive approach to us.

An exhaustive 2016 study by researchers at the University of Texas and University of Michigan — who examined data from over a five-decade period involving more than 160,000 children — found that the more youths were spanked, the more likely they were to later develop increased anti-social behavior, aggression, mental health problems and cognitive difficulties.

Given such data, and the fact that child abuse rates in both Jacksonville and Florida are still far too high, what is wrong with trying to create a culture that encourages more local parents to not physically discipline — and let's face it, openly demean — their kids in a public setting?

**Thumbs down** to the news that work to demolish the parking deck behind the old county courthouse and rebuild Coastline Drive and



Liberty Street could cost \$1 million more than planned — and take months longer to complete than first

thought.

That's a tough pill to swallow.

But let's just do what needs to be done and get on with the work, which is a key piece of the overall efforts to transform and revitalize our Downtown.

We can't allow the Northbank to remain the Central Eyesore District of Downtown.

## Imagine traveling 700 mph in vacuum tube

By Mary Wisniewski  
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO — Suppose you want to go to Cleveland from Chicago — how fast can you get there?

A car ride takes around five hours.

A plane trip takes an hour and 20 minutes.

Hyperloop technology could get you there in 30 minutes.

But first someone has to build it, and there are plenty of challenges for this form of transportation. A smaller version is being considered for an express train between O'Hare International Airport and downtown Chicago.

A California company called Hyperloop Transportation Technologies is talking with Ohio authorities about building the Chicago-to-Cleveland route, but still needs to figure out big issues like government regulations and land acquisition.

"It will actually produce more energy than it consumes, so it will put electricity back into the grid," said Grace Gallucci, a former Regional Transportation Authority official who is now executive director of the Northeast



SpaceX CEO Elon Musk congratulated teams last year competing on the Hyperloop Pod Competition II in Hawthorne, Calif. Musk wants to dig a tunnel to test a novel underground transportation system. [AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES, FILE]

Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for northeast Ohio.

Hyperloop technology involves a system composed of a vacuum and magnets to propel vehicle pods through a tube at nearly the speed of sound.

Using vacuum tubes for transport is not new

— a pneumatic subway briefly operated in Manhattan in the late 1800s. Such tubes used to be employed by businesses for document delivery, and are still used at many bank drive-throughs.

The idea of using vacuum technology commercially for transportation was revived in recent years by inventor and entrepreneur Elon Musk.

Hyperloop consists of

a passenger pod traveling through a metal tube maintained at a partial vacuum. Magnets cause the pod to move and levitate over the track once it picks up enough speed, explained Dirk Ahlborn, CEO and founder of HyperloopTT. It helps to imagine the way a puck floats above an air hockey table.

Removing air from the tube eliminates wind resistance,

allowing the train to move much faster while using less energy, Ahlborn explained. Gallucci said the trains could eventually go as fast as 700 mph.

Ahlborn said the company plans to use alternative energy, which could be solar, wind or geothermal, depending on the route. He said the tubes could be above or under the ground. He said the advantage is that hyperloop can be profitable in a short time because it has such low operational costs.

One reason Cleveland to Chicago is an attractive route is there is already a toll road, and robust air and rail travel between the two cities, showing people are willing to pay to go back and forth, Gallucci said.

However, a hyperloop train has not been tested on long distances or with actual people yet, and that will take time.

One question is how to evacuate passengers if something goes wrong. There have to be exits in the tubes, and passengers need a way to breathe on their way out, since the tubes are nearly airless. Another issue could be the nausea caused by gravitational forces.