

Mayor: It's time to get involved

In the two short years since I was elected mayor of Venice, we have accomplished quite a number of very important goals.

We opened our new police station on East Venice Avenue; rebuilt and opened our new Public Works building in the old police station; and completed building Fire Station No. 1 and the improvements to City Hall.

We also witnessed the groundbreaking for and construction of the new Sarasota Memorial Hospital in Venice.

Another very worthy project for our residents was the completion of Venetian Walk II, providing affordable housing to local families.

Our city streets have been maintained; our utilities are top notch and our parks and beaches attract people from all over the county.

We continue to be responsive to the needs of our residents, as can be seen by the recent progress on a park in the northeast corridor.

We accomplished all this and more while maintaining our budget and our reserves, all in the middle of the COVID pandemic.

Our Planning Commission has been busy writing the new land development regulations (LDR) that will determine the future of our city. This is a potentially groundbreaking document that could protect our city's history, our environment and our historic downtown for decades to come.

This is our opportunity to protect historic homes and buildings so that future generations can see the beauty and function of John Nolen's original vision.

This history is, perhaps, the most valuable asset our city has, and if we don't do everything in our power to protect it, we could see it disappear before our eyes.

Our history is certainly one of the main reasons we have



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been so successful over the decades since John Nolen originally designed our city.

It's worth noting, for those who may not be aware, that much of the history of Venice isn't actually on the island.

Before Venice became a man-made island, Nolen planned for the retirement of Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers members by creating a district, now known as East Gate. Take a drive through its streets and you will see many of the original houses still occupied.

These are a part of our history and the new LDRs will determine whether or not we will, as a community, protect those historic houses.

Another great opportunity for the city of Venice involves our environmental regulations.

We have the ability to make Venice a leader on environmental issues. We can require green building standards, proper design of retention ponds and implementation of more Florida-natural and Florida-friendly plantings.

There are opportunities that will help to protect our Gulf waters from the harmful effects of fertilizers and other nutrients that feed red tide.

With all the concern about climate change, we should take this time to do everything in our power to enact environmentally sound policies for future development and future generations.

Venice can be and should be a leader on the Gulf Coast when it comes to environmental issues.

The decisions that the City Council will make over the next few months will determine the future of the city of Venice.

Will we keep our place on the Gulf as a unique and charming city, or will we become the next "big city"? Will we protect our delicate environment, or will we continue to allow developers to bulldoze our environment into oblivion?

Every resident of Venice has a stake in this. This is your city, and your voice must be heard by your elected officials.

If building heights in our historic downtown concern you, tell your City Council members. If you are concerned about the environment, tell your Council members. If you want the history of Venice to survive, tell your Council members. All this and more are at stake over the next few months.

Once the new LDR are passed, the future of Venice is going to be carved in stone for decades to come. If you love the beauty, charm and scale of our downtown, speak up before it's too late.

If you believe in preserving our unique history and the remaining homes and buildings that represent our past, it's time to get involved. If you want to see Venice as a leader on the environment and how it affects our quality of life, this is your opportunity to make a difference.

This is all about what you, the residents, want for the future of our beloved city.

Happy holidays and warm wishes to all.

Ron Feinsod was elected mayor of Venice in 2019.