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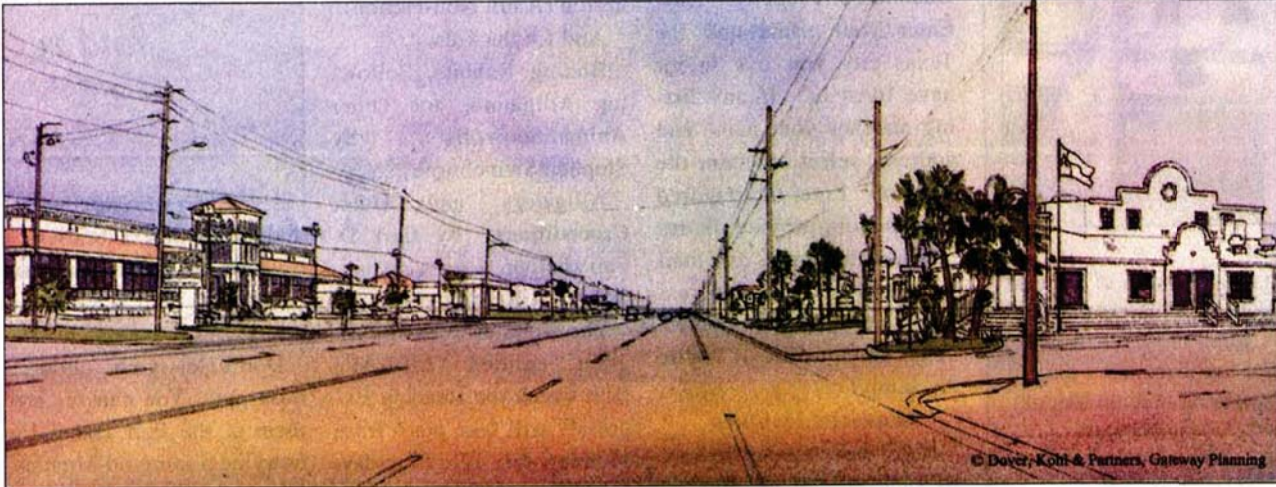
Plans to transform SPI move into high gear

By ANTONIO VINDELL
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The mega project to convert two of South Padre Island's main thoroughfares - Padre and Laguna Boulevards - moved up another notch. Scott Polikov, president of Gateway Planning Group Inc., the consulting firm working on the project, gave a presentation during Wednesday's meeting of the City Council. "We are not making any recommendations at this point," he said, "or identifying the funding sources. Tonight marks the beginning of the feedback part of this project." If implemented, parts of SPI would be transformed into a place that would rival other destinations like California or Florida's Miami Beach and Key West. It includes pedestrian friendly sidewalks, angle parking, plenty of shaded areas and better landscaping among other things along Padre Boulevard.

On Laguna Boulevard, the proposed project calls for building a boardwalk stretching from Jim Pier's to Louie's Backyard, more parking areas, shops and high rise buildings on the south end of the boulevard.

"We are working with a lot of history here so we had to cover a lot of territory," Polikov said. "Our main mission is to work on the redevelopment of Padre Boulevard and



Transformation project

Above, sketch shows how Padre Boulevard currently looks as seen from Esperanza Street; Below, shows the proposed improvements, such as angled parking, new sidewalks and more landscaping along the street. (Photo courtesy of Gateway Planning Group, Inc.)



the Entertainment District." He said he believes there are a lot of underutilized private properties on the Island that could become part of the project.

He said the success of the

master plan can be accomplished if the city works together with the private and public sectors, including the Texas Department of Transportation. Polikov said he could not put a dollar figure on the work they

have prepared. Their work, however, came at a price tag of

about \$500,000 plus expenses for the teams of three differ-

ent companies working on the plan.

"We don't believe there is going to be competition for this project," he said. "This is a unique project in a unique place." Tom Grant, an architect with Kimley-Horn and Associates, out of Irving, said their plan calls for having sidewalks away from the main street and angle parking, something he said has been done in places like New York City and Seattle.

"It feels a little odd for some people to park in an angle space," he said, "but it's rather easy." Polikov said the next phase of the project is to set up a working session and to get the community involved. "We hope you will provide some input in writing," he said, referring to the sheets of paper placed on some chairs before the meeting. "Our goal is how to reinvent the heart of SPI." SPI resident Art Holand thanked the consultants for their hard work.

"I love your concept and everything in it," he said, "but if you allow somebody to build a high rise (building) on one end of the street, why should the rest be penalized?" Interviewed after the meeting, Holand said he just did not want to be left out of the project to transform SPI.

SPI resident offers his property as model for transformation project

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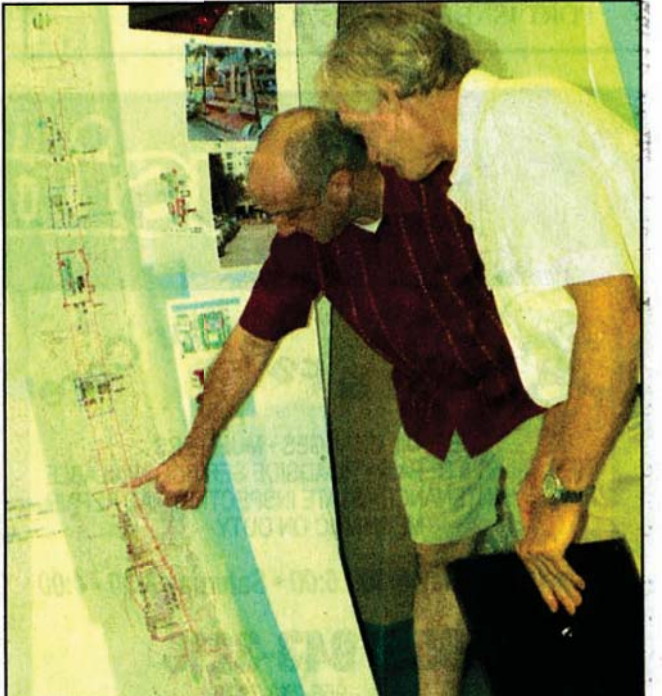
South Padre Island resident Jason Yetter has a plan for the area in front his property which he said could be used as an example of what the city could do with the project to transform the Island into a better place for everyone.

He said the area in front of his property should have a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk as well as adequate parking.

"I own the building at 2700 Padre Boulevard," he said. "I would like to have angle parking and a wider sidewalk for people to use."

He said motorists drive over the sidewalks because there are no places for them to park.

"The Transform Padre project is proposing to build eight feet wide sidewalks but they should be 10 feet



Making plans

Jason Yetter, right and Scott Polikov with Gateway Planning Group look at a sketch of the Padre Boulevard project. (Staff photo by Antonio Vindell)

wide," Yetter said. "Wider sidewalks are more pedestrian friendly." Yetter, who is from Colorado, said he came to SPI

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Father's Day Special

Matt Theiss, right, and his daughter Melody enjoy some good family time together. Matt Theiss got the special Palm Street Pier Bar & Grill will be serving on Father's Day this coming Sunday. The special is a French diamond cut rib eye state, a baked potato and a salad for just under \$20. (Staff photo by Antonio Vindell)