

Annual Report to the Citizens of Coral Gables
Mayor Don Slesnick
Delivered at the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce
September 2008

Declining retail sales... Stock Market decline... Rising fuel prices... Threat of hurricanes... Foreclosures... Global Warming... Terrorist activities...

Let's throw up our hands and proclaim that the sky is falling and bury our heads in the sand.

Well, not this Mayor, and I would suppose, not this Chamber.

Your City has even more specific challenges to face: Declining ability to fund municipal services, an aging infrastructure, a far too expensive employee pension system, a Country Club that sits idle, increasing traffic congestion, conflict between residential neighborhoods and commercial development. Let's admit to ourselves that this is all just too much and call it quits.

Not this Mayor, and I would suppose, not this Chamber.

Yesterday, I spoke to a group of senior citizens at the University of Miami's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. After my remarks the discussion focused on their pride to be part of this community, their confidence in the quality and reliability of our services which protect their lives and properties, and their belief that this is the best hometown in Florida.

Later, I helped greet the Mayor of Tallahassee and the leadership of that City's Chamber of Commerce who had traveled to South Florida to reach out to the local diplomatic Consular Corps in order to seek critical contacts for International Trade and Tourism. They told us that they had come here to seek guidance and assistance from people recognized throughout the state as experts in international relationships.

That is this City and that is this Chamber.

Last night, I attended the open house celebrating the start of the academic year at Coral Gables High's Adult Education Center. An older woman thanked me for making it possible for her to attend night classes in a safe, secure environment.

We have come a long way in the last seven years rebuilding our reserves, creating a successful trolley system, installing traffic calming devices throughout the City, supporting cultural activities, preserving and restoring our historic buildings, monuments and fountains, expanding our parks system, energizing our downtown commercial areas with the introduction of Mediterranean-styled residential and mixed use development. Taking steps to make our city "greener" and environmentally friendly, developing new ways to communicate through the internet, television and radio, opening a web portal to the City's permit system and enforcing our zoning codes to help keep the City beautiful.

Yes, we've had some bumps in the road – there have been some policy-making and administrative missteps. So, what should we do? Do we spend our energy casting blame and allegations, trying to find someone to potentially humiliate?

Not this Mayor, and I would suppose, not this Chamber.

The future is calling and we need to respond with a positive "can do" attitude: A solid plan, a commitment to integrity and forthrightness, a willingness to face adversity and move on.

That is what this Mayor and that is what this Chamber are all about.