

# The Anna Maria Island SUN

## Pine Avenue project pitched to community



Developer Michael Coleman explains the Pine Avenue Restoration project to real estate professionals. SUN PHOTO/TOM VAUGHT

By Tom Vaught | sun staff writer

ANNA MARIA – The Pine Avenue Restoration Project has been in the news for the past year, but the movers and shakers have not had the opportunity to tell their story to the people who would be instrumental in selling it – the real estate professionals on the Island.

That's why they invited those professionals to a party on Thursday, Nov. 25, at one of the buildings that serves as an office for Island Real Estate, the main agency handling the development.

Plans call for a number of two-story structures boasting "uniquely Anna Maria" style with residential space atop commercial.

Island Real Estate agents David Teitelbaum and Alan Galletto are handling the sales of the units, and Teitelbaum spoke of the design.

"The residential areas measure 2,000 square feet and the commercial areas are 2,500 square feet," he said, "The economics of making this work called for such an arrangement and the ideal client would be someone who can live over their store or office."

Sandbar restaurant owner Ed Chiles, who gathered together the people who set the wheels in motion on the project, talked about the philosophy of it.

"The most important fabric of a community is its commercial area," he said. "Without that, you become a suburb, a bedroom community."

Chiles said that the project takes the commercial area of Anna Maria and improves on it.

"We don't want to make any more commercial property," he said. "We just don't want to lose what we have."

Chiles compared the project with the early days of Anna Maria.

"When the Anna Maria Development Company tried to market the Island to tourists, they all came by ship and landed at the Anna Maria Pier," he said "The pier became this city's front door and they all promenaded down Pine Avenue."

Chiles said their goal is to have this project finished and sold by 2011, the 100th anniversary of the development company. He also talked about the scale of what they have planned.

"There's nothing big box here," he said. "It's a mix of mom and pops, a mix of professionals and boutiques."

Chiles said they could have put two stories of residential over the commercial, but it would have made the buildings too large for the look they wanted. He said it was absolutely the right thing to do. He said they got Island architect Gene Aubrey to design the buildings, because he seemed to know what they wanted.

"He showed us a rendering for one of the properties and said, 'that's got a Sears and Roebuck catalogue house on it,'" Chiles said. "When he said that, we said, 'That's it; he's got it.'"

Chiles said he and the group of backers are passionate about the project because it is the future of the city's business district. Then he talked about the lifestyle in the city.

"The thing I love about Anna Maria is the same thing I hated about it when I was 15," he said, "It's slow. It's easy going."

Project manager Mike Coleman credited his wife, Jane, for seeing the need for the project. He said he didn't have the kind of money to finance it, but that somehow Ed Chiles got wind of it.

"Ed had a meeting with us and found the people to back it," he said. "It has really been a labor of love. It needs to be done right because it's a legacy project."

Coleman showed off a Styrofoam form that will serve as a mould for concrete walls that will make up the structures. He said they also offer special windows and ceilings to make each home a "thermos bottle that will be able to withstand any storm that comes to the Island."

Chiles introduced Ted LaRoche, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., who has gathered the financial backing for the project.

"I come from an area of historic communities," LaRoche said. "Our courthouse was built in 1857 and it still has musket holes and cannon holes in it from the Civil War."

He compared Murfreesboro to Franklin, a similar sized town nearby.

"We got a grant, bought up our historic district and restored it and Franklin didn't," he said. "Today, people come to our town to revisit the past and Franklin is just a suburb of Nashville."