



SARASOTA TOMORROW

The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce



For Immediate Release

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The Greater Sarasota Chamber has launched a five-year business and community development action plan – *Sarasota Tomorrow*

Sarasota, FL (December 5, 2007)— The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce has announced the launch of *Sarasota Tomorrow*, a five-year program to improve the business climate, address critical infrastructure issues, form action-centered inter-organization partnerships, and provide enhanced services to businesses. At a reception to kick-off the \$2 million fundraising campaign held at the Hyatt Sarasota on December 4, Chamber board members and members of the Campaign Leadership Cabinet announced that over \$1.1 million of the goal has already been pledged.

"Sarasota Tomorrow seeks to build new partnerships, unite and coordinate the various initiatives already in existence to improve the environment in which we all live and work, and suggest some new directions for concerted efforts to revitalize the economic and civic health of our community," said Pamela G. Truitt, chair of The Chamber's board of directors and president of Truitt Consulting, Inc.

"For the past nearly two years, The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce has been discussing and trying to grapple with the nature of our business environment in the post-real estate boom economy," said Bob Messick, chair of campaign operations and partner at Icard, Merrill, Cullis, Timm, Furen & Ginsberg.

Sarasota Tomorrow is key to securing a more prosperous future for our community. We have high real estate costs, in relation to the incomes of our needed workforce, transportation and transit problems, workforce gaps and skyrocketing insurance premiums. It's time to take some coordinated action that will benefit our entire community. Certainly, the business community expects it. The situation demands it. And our mission authorizes it," Messick added.

Chamber President Steve Queior outlined the four major objectives comprising ten action initiatives. According to Queior, "Early this year, after nearly a year of information-gathering, The Chamber board drafted a list of eight perceived problems with the recent local economy. To get a sense of the magnitude and shape of our economic situation, The Greater Sarasota Chamber brought in regional experts and consulted local leaders. In the process, more than 100 of Sarasota's top business leaders and economic development experts took part in a comprehensive series of interviews and panel discussions to identify the most significant challenges to greater Sarasota's future economic well-being and to design and refine a program to address, correct and overcome them. The result of this effort is *Sarasota Tomorrow*."

Rex Jensen, general campaign co-chair and president of Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, Inc. sees the program as a win-win for residents, business and seasonal visitors. *"Sarasota Tomorrow* presents an effective, comprehensive and cooperative solution to the challenges that are hampering business. A rising tide lifts all boats, and the ten initiatives that make up this program will benefit our community from Bradenton to Venice and all the Keys along the coast."

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At the close of the presentation, Tom Dabney, general campaign co-chair and president of Gulf Coast Property Services, announced that the campaign has already raised over \$1.1 million or 55% of the \$2 million goal.

Early investors in the five year program include:

Platinum level (\$75,000+)

ABC 7 - WWSB
Comcast
Gold Coast Eagle Distributing
Landmark Bank
Schroeder-Manatee Ranch
SRQ Media Group
SunTrust Bank

Gold level (\$25,000-74,999)

Abel Band, Chartered
Benderson Development Company
Herald-Tribune Media Group
Icard, Merrill, Cullis, Timm, Furen & Ginsberg
Intershow
Kerkering, Barberio & Co. P.A. CPAs
Kirk Pinkerton, PA
Neal Communities
Sarasota Bradenton International Airport
The Observer Group
Vanessa Fine Jewelry
Williams, Parker, Harrison, Dietz & Getzen

Silver Level (\$5,000-24,999)

Gateway Bank of Southwest Florida
George Mazzarantani, Attorney
Gulf Coast Property Services, Inc.
Sabal Palm Bank
Truitt Consulting, Inc.

In addition to **Dabney, Jensen, Messick, Queior** and **Truitt**, the campaign leadership includes:

- 1) **John Saputo**, President, Gold Coast Eagle Distributing – General Campaign Co-Chair
- 2) **Margaret Callihan**, President, SunTrust Bank—Bankers' Division Co-Chair
- 3) **Tom Quale**, President, Landmark Bank—Bankers' Division Co-Chair
- 4) **Lisl Liang**, President, SRQ Media Group—Media Division Chair
- 5) **Larry Fineberg**, Vice President, Benderson Development Company—Developers'/Builders' Division Co-Chair
- 6) **Lee Wetherington**, Lee Wetherington Companies—Developers'/Builders' Division Co-Chair
- 7) **Vanessa Baugh**, Vanessa Fine Jewelry—Hospitality/Tourism/Retail Division Co-Chair
- 8) **Charles E. Githler III**, Chairman, Intershow—Hospitality/Tourism/Retail Division Co-Chair
- 9) **Vance Dickinson**, General Manager, Sunset Automotive Group—Hospitality/Tourism/Retail Division Co-Chair
- 10) **George Mazzarantani**, Attorney at Law—Professionals'/Services Division Co-Chair

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