



Other editions: [Mobile](#) | [News Feeds](#) | [E-Newsletters](#) | [Subscribe Now](#)

Find it: [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Rentals](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Classifieds](#)



SEARCH ALL [go](#)



[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [SPORTS](#) [CAPITAL](#) [FSU](#) [FAMU](#) [COMMUNITIES](#) [OPINION](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [WEATHER](#) [OBITUARIES](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) [CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)

[Comment, blog & share photos](#)
[Log in](#) | [Become a member](#)

powered by you and **TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT**

Artspace sounds like just what Gaines Street needs

GERALD ENSLEY • THE VIEW FROM HERE • MARCH 23, 2008

[Post a Comment](#) [Recommend](#) [Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#)

SHARE THIS ARTICLE: [Del.icio.us](#) [Facebook](#) [Digg](#) [Reddit](#) [Newsvine](#) [What's this?](#)

Tallahassee attorney Ken Van Assenderp, an intellectual activist on many subjects, rails about Tallahassee's schizophrenic economic development.

ADVERTISEMENT

BIDFORRVs.com

He believes our political leaders too often pursue growth for growth's sake rather than pursuing enterprises that emphasize and complement our "assets," his term for our historic industries of government and education.

He contends Tallahassee should have gone all-out to land the Torrey Pines research company, which would have drawn partnerships with our universities. He contends Tallahassee never should have let Panama City muscle past us for an international airport, which would have better served our government and universities.

"We are a brainpower town. That's our asset," Van Assenderp said. "The failure to understand who we are means we don't know what to do. Once we understand who we are, we'll know what to do (in pursuing new business)."

That's a point worth repeating April 9 when city commissioners consider the first concrete step

toward Gaines Street redevelopment: the Artspace project. The project has a chance to be a real catalyst for the long-sought dream of making Gaines Street an arts-and-entertainment district. And it would do so in a way that capitalizes on our assets of government and education. After all, bureaucrats and teachers are artists, too.

"When we say *artists*, we're talking about people who work with their brains and with their expressions," Peggy Brady said. "The character of this community is its creative class."

Brady is executive director of Tallahassee's Council on Culture & Arts, the driving force behind the Artspace project. (Disclaimer: My daughter, Amanda Thompson, is COCA's education coordinator. Even without my adoration for Amanda, I would believe Artspace is the kind of project Tallahassee ought to pursue.)

The project, aiming to begin construction by 2010, is two-pronged. One half would be an affordable-housing complex of 50 apartments built by Artspace Inc., a Minneapolis nonprofit company that has built 21 similar complexes in 13 states. The other part of the project would be an "arts incubator," operated by COCA. The arts incubator would provide rehearsal, performance and studio space for dance troupes, theater groups, painters, sculptors, etc. A survey by COCA and Artspace has found support and need for both components.

The desired site is half of a 4.5-acre city-owned parcel on Gaines, where a one-time grocery store and after-hours club were bulldozed last week. That location would provide a link to the nearby Railroad Square arts district. It would be close to both universities.

City officials have agreed it would be a great catalyst for Gaines redevelopment. The sticking point, of course, is money. The project would cost about \$33 million — and organizers are looking for \$4 million to \$5 million of that from local government, including donation of the site.

It's an investment that calls for will and faith by city leaders.

The city, like all other Florida municipalities, is facing shrinking budgets caused by the statewide reduction in tax revenues. It has been offered \$4 million for the 4-acre parcel from a developer who wants to build student apartments. It's often hard to spend for the long term when the short term looks gloomy.

The city has eagerly given money to lure manufacturers, whose benefits can be counted in products produced. It has rarely been called upon for large investments in the arts, which are less quantifiable.

RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB

- [Arts](#)
- [Theater](#)
- Powered by [Topix.net](#)

more columnists headlines

[Artspace sounds like just what Gaines Street needs](#)

latest headlines

- [Zimmerman Agency ranked one of nation's top PR agencies](#)
- [Greater Tallahassee Chamber to honor green business](#)
- [Bob Gabordi's Blog: Droopy pants have no place in school – or in the law](#)
- [Quincy man dead after boating accident](#)
- [More information to come on FAMU shooting](#) (1)

Ad Links



Kitchen-Encounters
 Cabinetry.Countertops.Flooring. Full house remodel or smaller projects.
[Visit Our Website](#)



Need a new dining experience?
 Visit the dining guide and explore all of the flavors of Tallahassee!
[Take me there!](#)



Mexican Grill and Cantina
 Our goal is to provide quality food, beverages, and warm friendly service.
[Extensive Menu!](#)



Tickets On Sale Now!
 FSU Flying High Circus April 4th - 6th, 11th -12th
[Visit Our Website](#)



Property Manager Jacobs Landing, est
 Property Manager Jacobs Landing, est.
 Tallahassee...

Experienced Dental Assistant Needed
 Experienced Dental Assistant Needed. Mon...

Call Center Representative Full-Time Come grow with us!
 Call Center Representative Full-Time Come...

Commercial door company seeking experienced installer
 Commercial door company seeking

"There's no denying the arts have economic value," said Michael Parker, the city's director of economic development. "But it's a little more amorphous to count."

Yet the same argument can be made for our government and education. Their worth is not simply in countable dollars. It's in the character they provide the community. It's a character that has made Leon County's population the most educated in the state and has kept our economy stable. It's a character that attracts new companies that seek a "brainpower" climate. It's a character that makes this an attractive place to live.

Artspace would be a great addition to our character — and a solid step toward Gaines Street redevelopment.

- Contact Senior Writer Gerald Ensley at (850) 599-2310 or gensley@tallahassee.com.

[experienced...](#)

Human Resources Assistant St
[Human Resources Assistant St. Marks Powder...](#)

FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD 155
Avenue E Apalachicola, FL 32320
FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD 155
Avenue ...

[All Top Jobs](#)

[About Top Jobs](#)

in your voice

READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit



*Sleek and shimmering styles
in plus & extended plus sizes!*
plus FREE SHIPPING!

[Shop now!](#)

CATHERINES®
PLUS SIZES
16W-34W



Partners: [Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#) [Cars: Cars.com](#) [Apartments: Apartments.com](#) [Shopping: ShopLocal.com](#)

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Capital](#) | [FSU](#) | [FAMU](#) | [Communities](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Weather](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Copyright ©2008 Tallahassee Democrat. All rights reserved.