

# EDITORIAL OPINION

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## Preservation program can work for Naples



**COMMENTARY**  
**ELAINE L. REED**

Charming. Nostalgic. Quaint. Historic.

Many beliefs about preservation are deeply rooted in the perception that it means we keep

things almost exactly as they once were. And who doesn't appreciate something that is charming, nostalgic, quaint, or historic?

Consider the Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee. Although 2017 is almost here, the Smallwood Store looks exactly like it did in 1925 (it was built in 1906). It's a time capsule! That kind of preservation commitment is remarkable and should be applauded, especially in Naples today.

The melancholy for days gone by still is felt by many in and around Naples, even for those of us who have lived here for less than half a lifetime. That sentiment certainly is justified, too.

Given our romanticism for people, places, things and even houses of the past, why is it such a challenge to address preservation in Naples, specifically in the Naples Historic District, an area that is less than one-tenth of one square mile?

We believe this challenge is primarily due to five factors:

- » growth;
- » market economics;
- » construction and maintenance;
- » geography;
- » misinterpretations and unintended consequences.

The first two are reasonable assumptions. Collier County and Naples are being tested for their stewardship and plans for land use and growth. By now, every one of us has heard about skyrocketing countywide population projections for 2040 or 2050.

Many understand that new residents will move to areas in eastern Collier County. But there is only one downtown Naples, only one Naples Pier and only one Naples Historic District.

Because of the growth we ultimately face, consider the basic market economics of demand and supply. An increase in demand for limited or highly sought-after real estate will result in higher prices. We can argue on principle for \$10,000, but how does one pledge for preservation when his or her land value likely will pull in several million dollars?

Other wealthy coastal Florida enclaves have had preservation interwoven in the community's institutional and

social fabric for the past 20-plus years. This is not the case in Naples.

The adoption of a lasting preservation guide would be new in Naples, and so we have taken that into consideration in our project proposal. It won't work otherwise.

This means the Naples Historical Society is not peddling a strict preservation program created elsewhere. We have an opportunity to craft a program tailored for Naples. The National Trust for Historic Preservation expects local leadership.

Before anyone cries foul about property rights, hear this: The Society's proposal will not infringe upon property rights in any way. If you doubt this pledge, then you have an obligation to learn more by exploring our website, calling the Society's office or attending public meetings.

The third and fourth factors affecting preservation concern professional feedback about many houses in Naples and in the district itself. Not every house built in, say, 1936, was built with the same ability to withstand the elements: hurricanes and termites. Sadly, some historical houses have succumbed. Of those that remain with us, some might be pleading for good maintenance and TLC

or perhaps have been rehabilitated already.

With regard to the last preservation challenge factor, misinterpretations and unintended consequences, this is where it gets convoluted and requires more space than permitted here. The devil is in the details, indeed, and my next two guest commentaries will speak to this challenge.

To bypass that analysis for now, let's jump to the question at hand: Can we create a preservation program that does not affect property rights or Naples' Community Rating System level of 5, an impressive report card mark recently bestowed by FEMA?

Yes, we believe the Society's Naples Historic District Initiative has the answer!

The Naples Historic District Symposium from 1 to 4 p.m. Jan. 12 at the River Park Community Center will feature a panel discussion with professionals and representatives of institutions. It will be open to the public, but seating will be limited to 200.

Parts 2 and 3 of this commentary will follow on these pages in the coming weeks. For more information, see [www.NaplesHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.NaplesHistoricalSociety.org) or call 239-261-8164.

### Today in history

Today is Sunday, Nov. 27, the 332nd day of 2016.

### Then & Now



### Letters

#### Speech on rights brilliant

On Nov. 16, noted lecturer, attorney and author KrisAnne Hall gave a presentation,