

# TITUSVILLE

## THE GAME ISN'T OVER

HALF TIME  
IN NORTH  
BREVARD'S  
REAWAKENING

(BY GEORGE WHITE)

There are signs of new life as Titusville emerges in the post Space Shuttle era.

Bleak forecasts all of which focused on the layoffs at Kennedy Space Center have given way to, at worst, a reluctant acceptance of change or at best, new energy toward a diverse economy, ecotourism and an exciting arts-based future.

"I relate the Shuttle layoffs to a storm," said District 1 County Commissioner Robin Fisher. "We were gearing up for a CAT 5 and I think it was about a CAT 3."

While officially about 8,000 contractor and NASA workers lost jobs, the local population has not suffered the expected domino effect. Space workers have stayed in the area in retirement, found new ways to make a living via the internet, or are living on their severance pay and still looking for work, officials said.

**New reasons for optimism include:**

- Establishment of the Greater Titusville Renaissance program highlighted by the quest to attract international arts as a draw to the area.
- Progress toward redevelopment of Miracle City Mall, still the most visible sign of economic stagnation for the city.
- Completion of the Max Brewer Causeway making Titusville a better gateway to the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Canaveral National Seashore along with beautification plans for the city's major transportation corridors.
- Creation of the North Brevard Economic Zone, gathering money from increased property values on new construction in unincorporated areas. That money can be used to pay for incentives for prospective employers.

**BRIDGING CHANGE**

Completion of the Max Brewer Bridge, now a visual symbol on the Greater Titusville Renaissance logo, is huge for the goal of marketing Titusville's ecotourism, said Laurilee Thompson, owner of Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant, who serves on the Brevard County Tourism Development Council.

The high-rise bridge replaces an aging swing span that would cut off access to the refuge and seashore when closed for repairs. "One of the things that everybody keeps pointing to as a partial solution is to do a better job of promoting ecotourism. Finally! For me it was vindication," Thompson said.

Thompson was one of five local leaders to attend a training session on balancing nature and progress held at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. "The things that I've been saying for 15 years, ever since we started the birding festival, now I've heard those things from nationally known experts. We came back with the attitude that we really can get Titusville turned around," she added.

**THE ART OF ATTRACTION**

Meanwhile, it might be art – internationally important art – that creates an unexpected new draw for North Brevard, according to Neil Levine, executive director of the Brevard Cultural Alliance.



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■ **NEIL LEVINE**, executive director of the Brevard Cultural Alliance

Like Sydney, Australia's Opera House, a major art-based facility in North Brevard could attract major works into the area and subsequently other business activity. "They built the opera house and created this huge cultural destination and cultural tourists stay longer and spend more," he explained.

Titusville could become the center for "new media" or arts in the digital domain through events like a hologram festival involving entertainment icon David Bowie, Levine believes. "Titusville

is our pathfinder – a pilot project to show how arts and culture can help the county. We're talking about huge initiatives here that are so important that people will come here to see it. "It's about well-educated people who have a science-tech mindset. You've heard the phrase, 'You don't have to be a rocket scientist.' Titusville is full of rocket scientists," he said.

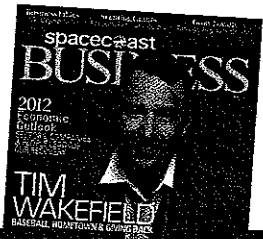
"As for jobs, more non-space related industries are a key element to a positive future for what has been thought of as a 'company town' due to its dependence on space," explained Lynda Weatherman, president and CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast.

**THE SPACE BEYOND**

"We're going to have diversification of the industrial base, which is going to make us stronger. I don't say it's going to be easy, but this is a time of opportunity. We'll be stronger and more diversified down the road because of this. We're not going to allow ourselves to just be a launch site anymore," Weatherman said.

And it's that feeling of new opportunity that radiates from Kennedy Space Center these days as it transforms into a 21st century space launch complex to accommodate a robust commercial space program, observed Spaceport Development Manager Jim Bail.

The transition to life without the shuttle has not been without hardship for many families but, rather than the end, this era may go down as a historic start and leave Titusville residents looking forward with hope. "We've been hit; the eye has passed through, and we're rebuilding and we have some exciting stuff going on," Fisher said.



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