From: Amy Scalia
To: jbclarkson@cityofno.com; Fieklow, Arnie Council Member-At-Large; Midura, Shelley Councilmember Dist A; Head, Stacy Councilmember Dist B; Carter, James Councilmember Dist C; Hedge-Morrell, Cynthia Councilmember Dist D; MVN Environmental;
Subject: "What are our assets?"
Date: Thursday, May 21, 2009 9:47:13 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am a consultant working on an urban revitalization project in Costa Rica right now. We have found that asking the question, "What are the assets of this community?" has helped us to strategize the solution. By building on the community's strengths, we have helped the people to leverage what they already have while they work to make the city better. The benefits of this approach are immeasurable, and the things that have been done as a result are remarkable. I encourage you to ask that question as you move this city forward. Do not ignore the problems, but as you work to find solutions, focus on what is great about New Orleans, and build solutions from there.*

If you ask yourself this question about the Lakeview area of New Orleans, you will undoubtedly include Coconut Beach as an asset. Saving this city is dependent on retaining its people. Coconut Beach has helped people to fall in love with New Orleans, stay in New Orleans, and return to New Orleans. It is a fixture that touches lives and brings lives together. I am a prime example of the "brain drain" from New Orleans. I grew up there, moved after high school to university in Virginia, worked for 6 years in Washington, DC, and went to graduate school in California. I am spending some time in New Orleans in between consulting projects, considering whether I might move back permanently. Coconut Beach is one of the places that has made me seriously consider staying. As an athlete, I have struggled to find many active social activities like the ones in DC and California. It would be devastating if we lost this one.

I know these problems are complex, but I have to believe that with the right approach, we can work together to help everyone win.

Sincerely,
Amy Scalia

*This is built off of a process called "Appreciative Inquiry." It has turned countless struggling businesses into industry leaders, and it can work here!