

**Welcome remarks by Chamber President Barry Bodden at the Chamber Luncheon on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at the Wharf Restaurant.**

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Chamber luncheon.

A special welcome to the Hon. Kurt Tibbetts, Minister for Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Tristan Hydes, Deputy Chief Officer in the Ministry and Kenneth Ebanks, the lead consultant for the George Town revitalization project.

Today's event is sold out and demonstrates the membership's keen interest in this project and what it could mean for the future development of Cayman's historic hub of commercial activity. The Chamber has advocated and supported revitalization efforts for many years. Beautification projects, crosswalk and sidewalk installations and the nighttime unloading and delivery of cargo containers at the Port to better accommodate the arrival of cruise ship passengers have been introduced in recent years. These upgrades, while necessary and supported by the Chamber, are band-aids to a much greater challenge. Taking some liberty with

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the title of a famous Hans Christian Andersen story, ***“George Town needs new clothes.”***

For many years we have watched as countless businesses and residents have made the decision to move away from the city centre, leaving George Town with an abundance of empty office spaces and virtually deserted after dark. It is time to rethink how we live and conduct business in George Town and determine a new vision that will excite developers, land owners and residents to work in partnership to change the landscape of our historic capital.

Improved traffic flow, new parking facilities, the introduction of mixed use business and residential accommodations, convention centre facilities, the development of pedestrian friendly and green areas and parks, are among the recommendations that our members' have submitted for consideration in recent years.

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Following a membership survey and consultation last year, we shared your views with the Ministry as they worked behind the scenes to develop a revitalization plan for George Town. We connected our members with Ministry officials to discuss proposed projects and we supported and promoted projects that would enhance the harbour drive area including the construction of a board walk along the waterfront.

Like most major redevelopment projects of this scale we all must appreciate that in order for George Town to be fitted with new clothes there will be cost implications. The revitalization of George Town will come at a hefty price and will require all of us; businesses, residents, landowners and developers to work together to achieve success. Let's discontinue the practice of investing in band aid solutions and work together to agree on a future vision for George Town.

Minister Tibbetts, the Chamber acknowledges and applauds your Ministry's leadership on this important project. We look forward to

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receiving details about the proposed plan to revitalize George Town. We thank you for deciding to share the plan with our membership and seeking our views. Following your presentation, we recommend the establishment of a district committee to oversee the project and we would be willing to appoint a Chamber representative to serve on it.

With those brief welcome remarks, I will introduce our guest speaker, the Hon. Kurt Tibbetts. Minister Tibbetts is the first elected member for the district of George Town and is serving his fifth consecutive term. He has held various leadership positions in Government including Leader of Government Business. His current ministerial responsibilities include Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure. Please give Minister Tibbetts a warm Chamber welcome.