

## “Brevard 2025” - Op Ed Contribution By Stephen Long, Florida Today Editorial Review Board Member

Steven Covey’s book, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” says “Begin with the End in Mind.” Now is an appropriate time for “We the People” of Brevard to instruct our political and civic leaders as to what we want our future to be. Only by openly and clearly thinking now about what we want our future to be will we have appropriate plans and actions in place, in time to make our dreams for the future come true.

Many of us are transplants – we came from other places because of what’s here – a natural environment that could be defined as paradise if we learn how to better protect it; an affordable cost of living; many good jobs; and a vibrant arts and high technology community. We are the Aero-Space Coast, and in many respects we are the high technology nexus of Florida. North Brevard gave birth to and still supports America’s exploration of space. Central and South Brevard are the homes of some of the highest technology companies in the world. We have good schools and ready-access to the finest higher education. We have a wealth of quality medical services. Tourism is the mainstay of many of our beach communities. Small businesses service all of these customers. But we need more than what we have already built – we must do our part to enable Brevard to “be all it can be” for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, and the future residents that will come to share and grow paradise with us.

Progress does not happen accidentally. Futurist Ray Kurzweil has written, “Our intuition about the future is linear. But the reality of information technology is exponential, and that makes a profound difference. If I take 30 steps linearly, I get to 30. If I take 30 steps exponentially, I get to a billion.” We live in exponential times – driven by Moore’s Law and information technology. Are we acting like it? Planning for it? Florida Today has initiated efforts to gather information on what “Brevard 2025” could and should look like. As a new member of their Editorial Advisory Board, I drafted this Op Ed to help launch this discussion, and in future installments I hope to provide thoughtful inputs as to what our future could and should be. Some recommendations include:

- 1) As the Aero-Space Coast we must foster and advance technologies that define the very future. If humankind is ever to expand beyond the confines of Earth orbit, we should research, build and launch those capabilities here. To remain a free people, we need to research, design and build unmatched capabilities to Defend Freedom.
- 2) We must invest and install high bandwidth fiber optic communications to every corner of Brevard. Our businesses, our healthcare, our schools, our very way of life in the future will depend on unfettered access to the global Internet. If we want to keep the high tech industries we already have; and enable hundreds if not thousands of new, high technology companies to be born, live and thrive here; then we must have an information technology infrastructure that is second to none.
- 3) We live in the Sunshine State. We should have solar panels on every rooftop; providing clean, renewable electric power. We should research, build and deploy such systems in Brevard. Return on investment times for solar systems are now ten years or less. What if we had a goal of 50% of all Brevard roofs having solar power by 2025? If overcast Germany can do it, we can do it!
- 4) We should leverage our strong health care community and enable these caregivers to provide more affordable and advanced care in the future. Leveraging our technology base, we should become a center for health information exchange capabilities.

Together we can and must build the “Brevard 2025” that we need – not just what we will settle for. I look forward to our future discussions.