

CHAPTER 1

CITY OF NORTH PORT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The City Commission has established the following *Mission Statement* which states:

The City of North Port will provide the health, safety and welfare services to our residents which would not be otherwise provided or could not be provided efficiently or equally without the intervention of government at the local level.

The City will provide said services in a professional and financially responsible manner, and by listening, engaging, and serving our residents.

The Planning Framework, developed as part of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan updated as part of the 2005 EAR visioning process, and further modified as part of the 2016 Evaluation and Appraisal Review, contains the basic building-blocks of the citizens' vision for the City at build-out. The Planning Framework is an instrument created for use by City citizens, City officials, and the public to help guide in the revision of the state mandated Comprehensive Plan. While not required by statute, the Citizen Advisory Committees and staff developed the Planning Framework through public input to provide a synopsis which formally establishes the focus of the newly amended Comprehensive Plan. The Goals, Objectives and Policies that are found in each element of the Comprehensive Plan have been designed to implement or better define one or more vision statements in the Planning Framework.

Article I.Planning Vision

Planning begins with vision. This vision focuses on what a desirable future would include. When looking at the development and past planning for the City, the vision includes availability of jobs and business opportunities; the strength of existing and future neighborhoods; urban design; the provision of adequate utilities including potable water, sewer and solid waste disposal; the condition of streets; the quality of the Myakkahatchee Creek; the quality of open space and City parks; the availability of affordable living homes and diversified housing opportunities; and the accessibility and adequacy of health care, social services, employment, libraries, schools and protective services. In summary, the City should be a place where citizens can live, work, shop, learn, and recreate within the corporate limits of the City. These are some basic elements that contribute to the quality of life acceptable to the citizens of North Port.

Concepts are a result of vision. Concepts provide the framework and direction which will enable the City to best achieve its desired goals. The planning concepts for the City of North Port are as follows:

1. Projected Growth

The City recognizes that its population will increase with time. The City will plan accordingly to ensure that future community needs and vision are realized, based on the projected population growth. To accomplish this, the City shall utilize the master planning approach for infrastructure needs. This approach shall implement the Goals, Objective and Policies and shall identify the needs at build-out and program the needs over time, within the financial capability of the City.

2. Neighborhoods

This concept involves ensuring that existing and future residential areas are designed and developed in a way that creates viable and stable neighborhoods. The City was originally conceived with a basis on a neighborhood concept that would include small commercial and park areas in each neighborhood. The City recognizes that stable neighborhoods are major assets to the community. The original design concept remains valid. For existing neighborhoods, the neighborhood's character needs should be defined so that necessary improvements are built and policies are developed to support the neighborhood's character. For future neighborhoods, the City's Comprehensive Plan, Unified Land Development Code, and Pattern Books should guide development to create aesthetically pleasing and safe neighborhoods, and ensure the provision of the necessary infrastructure which will enhance the neighborhoods overall character. Neighborhoods should be externally connected to other neighborhoods, activity centers, and town centers. Connectivity includes vehicular and/or pedestrian bridges, fitness trails, sidewalks, golf cart paths that would also serve as access for emergency vehicles, and mass transit facilities.

3. Activity Centers and Town Centers

Several Activity Centers and Town Centers exist within the City, each having its own potentially unique characteristics and functions. The City has developed design guidelines which will guide development and define the individual character of each Activity Center and for Town and Village Centers. The Activity Centers and Town/Village Centers should provide for a mix of land uses that implement the goals desired for each area. For example, an Activity Center's design can provide for diverse housing types, affordable living, employment areas, a variety of recreational opportunities and community spaces, internal and external connectivity, etc. Each Activity Center and Town Centers defines the area by allowing a mixture of uses at varying intensities and densities such as employment, medium/high density residential, hospitals and/or mixed use developments.

3a. The US 41 corridor, containing the City's existing shopping area, is an activity center characterized by long established retail, office and service uses and a more recently developed larger scale commercial area at the eastern end of the corridor. This activity center should continue to be developed, with a Mediterranean design theme.

3b. The area around the Sumter/Price intersection is a town center that serves as a key component of the Heron Creek Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This activity center

will contain a mix of uses including government, multifamily, office professional, retail and medical facilities. This area should be designed to be pedestrian oriented.

- 3c.** The I-75 interchange with Sumter Boulevard is another activity center. This activity center will be characterized by highway uses, medical/hospital (on and adjacent to properties owned by Sarasota Memorial Hospital), and retail at lower intensities than those at the I-75/Toledo Blade activity center. The proximity of this activity center to the City's primary potable water supply source will restrict the types of uses and intensity of development.
- 3d.** The area around the I-75 and Toledo Blade interchange is an activity center defined by highway commercial uses near the interchange, office, and retail. The Panacea DRI, which contains a range of land uses from retail and office to light industrial and multifamily, will be included in this activity center. This activity center will also serve as the home to the North Port campus of Suncoast Technical College. This activity center will provide the highest allowable intensity due to the available land area, surrounding land uses, and accessibility to the road network.
- 3e.** The Price/Toledo Blade intersection is an activity center characterized by commercial/retail uses, multifamily, office and industrial uses, and motels. This will be a multi-modal activity center.
- 3f.** The area around I-75 and Yorkshire Street has been designated as Activity Center 6. The designation of this area was determined through data and analysis contained within the City's *Activity Center Report* and through public input which, also determined that this location was the best site for an interchange to serve an Activity Center area in the eastern section of the City. As part of the Master Plan called for in Policy 2.6.2 of the Future Land Use Element, the City shall coordinate with FDOT to identify this location as a future interchange and will also coordinate with FDOT, the Sarasota-Manatee MPO, and any other applicable public or private agencies to identify funding sources and potential phasing for development of this interchange. The character of this Activity Center is to provide areas of high quality employment.
- 3g.** Warm Mineral Springs shall be developed to take advantage of the unique geographic feature of the spring, while serving to protect the natural function of the spring.
- 3h.** River Road Office Park shall be designed as a mixed-use development including employment, residential, public and commercial uses.
- 3i.** West Villages Town Center is a high density/intensity area designed to be a more urban/regional commercial, employment, residential area than the suburban development pattern present in the remainder of North Port.

4. Gateways

A gateway is an area around a point that is an entrance into the City. The City's primary gateways are the I-75 interchanges, U.S. 41 at the eastern and western City limits, North and South River Road at the City limits; West Villages Parkway, Winchester Blvd., and Yorkshire Street at the Charlotte County line; the intersection of Hillsborough and Toledo Blade Boulevards, and a future interchange at I-75 and Yorkshire Street. The purpose of the gateways is to provide a sense of entry into the City.

To accomplish this, design standards are appropriate. These standards can range from architectural features/themes and special landscaping requirements to City-sponsored streetscaping projects that would encompass a gateway or corridor.

5. Infrastructure Systems

These systems include roads, parks, utilities, schools, drainage, fire/police, open space, and the environment. These systems help define the quality of life within the community. As a general concept, these systems should be designed so that they implement several goals. Examples are as follows: road system improvements should be designed to implement the gateway and park/open space concepts; schools should be designed to promote/provide a neighborhood focal point as well as recreational opportunities, trail or bike/pedestrian bridges should be designed to also serve emergency and rescue vehicles, drainage systems should be aesthetically designed to include park/open space opportunities and, if possible, to provide a source of potable water. Also, infrastructure systems such as water/sewer, roads, and fire/police need to be phased to guide development, and should be used to accomplish other goals such as economic development, and be financed by creative methods to achieve the goals of the City.

6. Financial Feasibility

Any changes to the Comprehensive Plan should be financially feasible. Changes to the Comprehensive Plan that improve the tax base should be favorably considered, whereas changes that negatively affect the City's financial health should be considered with caution. Any improvements called for must be financially feasible to implement and to maintain. An accompanying funding concept is that growth should pay its own way provided the growth supports the Comprehensive Plan. This concept does not preclude the use of public funds to accomplish a public purpose such as economic development.

To test the financial feasibility of the Comprehensive Plan, a planning tool was developed to compare the projected capital funds that will be available to the estimated cost of the capital projects necessary to maintain the existing levels of service. Due to the long-range nature of this planning tool, the numbers should not be used to analyze yearly budgets or five-year master plans.

The results of the analysis clearly show that the Local Government Infrastructure Surtax (1 cent sales tax) must continue, and the City must review the existing impact fees and analyze the benefits/impacts of establishing other impact fees. The Infrastructure Surtax is critical to financing the capital projects. Therefore, if this funding source is discontinued, the City must review this Comprehensive Plan and amend it where appropriate. Other funding sources such as proportionate

fair share, grants, City TIF, real estate transfer tax, vehicle license fee, public/private partnerships may be used to accomplish capital improvements. The City may support initiatives to modify state legislation that establishes new funding sources.

7. Annexation Areas

Since the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, the City has annexed the two areas that were identified at that time as potential annexation areas. The only area identified in 1997 that has not been completely annexed is the area along US-41 from the City's western boundary to the River Road/US-41 intersection, and the SCF campus. In addition, the Citizen Advisory Committees for the EAR showed that the citizens do not want the City to become larger unless an annexation results in an increase in employment opportunities. Since the development of the 2008 EAR, the City has also annexed several tracts within the West Villages that were once owned by other agencies (Pine Street and the tract owned by Sarasota Memorial Hospital.) Also, the Housing Report concludes that with the 2000 annexations, there is ample land area to diversify the housing stock. The Activity Center Report concludes that the land area for tax base diversification is nearly balanced with residential land area. Since the time of the 2008 EAR, Mattamy Homes has purchased the entire undeveloped West Villages area, including the parcel to the south of the North Port City Limits. Mattamy could, at a future date, consider the annexation of the southern portion of the West Villages into the City. With the land under one owner and with sewer and water provided by the West Villages Improvement District, it would be sensible for all of Mattamy's holdings to be included within the City Limits. Therefore, no further annexation shall be approved other than the US-41 corridor, the SCF campus, and the southern portion of the Thomas Ranch, as shown on the Community Concept Map unless the annexation clearly benefits the City by diversifying the tax base.

Any future annexation shall meet the requirements of the appropriate state laws; in particular Chapter 171, Florida Statutes. In addition to the requirements of state laws, the extension of City services shall be economically and financially feasible to ensure the cost of extending services does not burden the existing rate payers and property owners within the City limits prior to the annexation.

8. Joint Planning Opportunities

Several joint planning opportunities extend beyond the corporate limits of the City. Drainage, traffic circulation, hurricane evacuation, potable water, affordable housing, regional trail and transportation systems, conservation lands (eco-tourism), regional scaled recreational or special use facilities, and schools are examples of the general areas that require intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to resolve problems and to take advantage of opportunities. Therefore, the City accepts its responsibility in order to meet regional needs. The City will cooperate with other jurisdictions to seek regionally acceptable solutions to regional problems and to take advantage of opportunities that may arise without degrading the unique character of the City, the City's quality of life, or lengthening the bureaucratic processes.

The City shall annually review and analyze the previous actions and events to determine if any changes are needed to the Comprehensive Plan.

9. Community Concept Map

The purpose of the Community Concept Map (Map 1-1) is to identify the general geographic limits of the City, existing and future neighborhoods, major civic centers, activity centers, community parks and major conservation areas. The Community Concept Map is intended to graphically depict the general development pattern of the City at build-out. Consequently, a planning period date is not appropriate.

These concepts form the basis for the proposals found in the EAR and accompanying Comprehensive Plan amendments. The goals, objectives, and policies further refine, define and implement the concepts.

10. Intergovernmental Relationships

In order to build positive intergovernmental relationships the City shall strive to cooperate with other governmental jurisdictions on matters of mutual interest and advantage such as mechanisms for identifying and implementing joint planning techniques and methods to implement the plans; directing development to those areas which have in place the land and water resources, fiscal abilities and service capacities to accommodate growth in an environmentally acceptable manner; respect the standards and values of the other jurisdiction; continued economic sustainability that strengthens the social and economic environment; addressing issues such as commuting patterns, cost of living, water resources, implementing the City of North Port's design standards and infrastructure and facility needs.