

## FORWARD PINELLAS STAFF ANALYSIS



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<b>APPLICATION NO.:</b>	Case CW 24-20
<b>STAFF:</b>	Emma Wennick, Program Planner
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	City of Tarpon Springs
<b>PROPERTY SIZE:</b>	35.7 acres m.o.l.
<b>CURRENT COUNTYWIDE PLAN MAP CATEGORY:</b>	Retail & Services, Office, and Preservation
<b>PROPOSED COUNTYWIDE PLAN MAP CATEGORY:</b>	Preservation and Recreation/Open Space
<b>CURRENT LOCAL FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP CATEGORY:</b>	City of Tarpon Springs – Commercial General and Residential/Office General
<b>PROPOSED LOCAL FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP CATEGORY:</b>	City of Tarpon Springs – Preservation and Recreation/Open Space
<b>LOCATION / PARCEL ID:</b>	42501 U.S. Highway 19 North / 06-27-16-89388-000-0420

### BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the Countywide Plan Map from Retail & Services, Office, and Preservation to Recreation/Open Space and Preservation. The proposed amendment is a condition of an approved Development Agreement associated with the Anclote Harbor project. This amendment proposes converting about 14.55 acres of upland area to Recreation/Open Space, while the remaining area is designated for Preservation. The site currently includes 22.988 acres of wetlands, of which 0.91 acres of isolated non-tidal wetlands are approved for impact under the planned development and building permit. The proposal aims to enhance and restore the remaining 22.078 acres of tidal wetlands as natural wetlands, aligning with the conservation requirements of the approved Planned Development (local Resolution 2021-60).

Situated within the Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA), this amendment eliminates any future residential uses. The Countywide Plan Map amendment to Recreation/Open Space and Preservation aligns with the project's intent to provide passive recreational space for the

community and enhance environmental preservation. This amendment is consistent with the goals of integrating natural areas into the urban landscape while meeting the development and conservation needs set forth in the planned development agreement.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the amendment to the Countywide Plan Map from Retail & Services, Office, and Preservation to Recreation/Open Space and Preservation. This amendment reflects the approved development plans and supports environmental conservation efforts in the designated areas.

**PLANNERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

The Planners Advisory Committee met on November 4, 2024 and voted unanimously to recommend approval.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL/COMMISSION ACTION:**

The Tarpon Springs Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on September 3, 2024, with four members present. The Board approved the amendment, with one member dissenting.

Two members of the public provided comments during the hearing, both raising concerns about potential environmental impacts and the overall density of the project. Four additional written comments echoed similar concerns, particularly emphasizing the protection of wetlands and the need for careful consideration of future development in the area.

**CURRENT PROPERTY INFORMATION:**

<b>Property Use(s):</b>	Vacant - Anclote Harbor project
<b>Site Features:</b>	The site features a mix of upland disturbed areas and significant natural habitats, including longleaf pine/xeric oak habitat and wetlands. The property also includes tidal wetlands that will be preserved and enhanced as part of the development. Access to the site is via U.S. Highway 19 North.

**PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:**

When considering this application, the following general site conditions, planning concepts, and other facts should be noted:

1. The proposed amendment to Recreation/Open Space will support the preservation of valuable upland habitat and enhance passive recreational opportunities for residents.
2. Designating 22.078 acres of wetlands as Preservation ensures long-term protection and restoration of natural wetland ecosystems.
3. The amendment will remove potential residential density and reduce allowable building intensity, aligning with the CHHA restrictions.
4. The proposed changes will harmonize land use with surrounding residential and low-intensity commercial areas, promoting overall compatibility and environmental sustainability.

**RELEVANT COUNTYWIDE CONSIDERATIONS:**

The proposed amendment to the Countywide Plan Map is a legislative decision. The standards for the current and proposed Countywide Plan Map categories are summarized below:

	<b>Current Countywide Plan Map Category:</b> Retail & Services, Office, and Preservation	<b>Proposed Countywide Plan Map Category:</b> Preservation and Recreation/Open Space
<b>Purpose:</b>	<p><b>Retail &amp; Services:</b> Intended to depict areas developed with, or appropriate to be developed with, a mix of businesses that provide for the shopping and personal service needs of the community or region, provide for employment opportunities, and may include residential uses as part of the mix of uses.</p> <p><b>Office:</b> Intended for areas where office and related uses are the primary land uses, often supporting commercial, retail, or residential development.</p> <p><b>Preservation:</b> Intended to protect natural resources, including wetlands, floodplains, and other sensitive ecological areas, and to maintain the ecological integrity of these areas.</p>	<p><b>Preservation:</b> Intended to protect natural resources and maintain the ecological integrity of sensitive ecological areas.</p> <p><b>Recreation/Open Space:</b> Intended to provide areas for passive and active recreation, public parks, and open spaces for community use and environmental protection.</p>
<b>Permitted Uses:</b>	<p><b>Retail &amp; Services:</b> Office; Personal Service/Office Support; Retail Commercial; Commercial/Business Service; Commercial Recreation; Residential; Residential Equivalent; Vacation Rental; Recreational Vehicle Park; Temporary Lodging; Research/Development-Light; Storage/Warehouse/Distribution-Light; Manufacturing-Light; Recreation/Open Space; Community Garden; Agricultural-Light.</p> <p><b>Office:</b> Office; Personal Service; Related Support Services.</p> <p><b>Preservation:</b> Natural Resource Protection; Limited Access and Use Facilities.</p>	<p><b>Preservation:</b> Natural Resource Protection; Limited Access and Use Facilities.</p> <p><b>Recreation/Open Space:</b> Parks; Recreational Facilities; Open Space; Community Gardens; Conservation Areas.</p>

<b>Max. Density:</b>	<b>Retail &amp; Services:</b> 24 units per acre <b>Office:</b> 15 units per acre <b>Preservation:</b> Not applicable	<b>Preservation:</b> Not applicable <b>Recreation/Open Space:</b> Not applicable
<b>Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR):</b>	<b>Retail &amp; Services:</b> 0.55 <b>Office:</b> 0.50 <b>Preservation:</b> 0.10	<b>Preservation:</b> 0.20 <b>Recreation/Open Space:</b> 0.25
<b>Max. Impervious Surface Ratio (ISR):</b>	<b>Retail &amp; Services:</b> 0.90 <b>Office:</b> 0.75 <b>Preservation:</b> 0.10	<b>Preservation:</b> 0.20 <b>Recreation/Open Space:</b> 0.25

Section 6.5.3. of the Countywide Rules provides the review criteria for amendments to the Countywide Plan Map. An analysis of these criteria are provided below:

**1. The manner in, and extent to, which the amendment is consistent with the Countywide Rules and with the Countywide Plan Strategies as implemented through the Countywide Rules.**

*Staff Analysis:* The Countywide Rules specify that the Recreation/Open Space category is “intended to provide areas for passive and active recreation, public parks, and open spaces for community use and environmental protection.” This category is generally suited for lands that are designated for public enjoyment and environmental stewardship, reflecting the community’s need for recreational and open space resources.

The Preservation category is designated “to protect natural resources and maintain the ecological integrity of sensitive ecological areas.” This category is essential for conserving areas with significant environmental value, including wetlands and floodplains, and ensuring that these areas are preserved for their ecological benefits.

The proposed amendment to the Countywide Plan Map aligns with these definitions by designating the site as Preservation and Recreation/Open Space. The site currently includes wetland areas and is located in the CHHA. Designating these areas as Preservation supports the goal of protecting natural resources, while the Recreation/Open Space designation ensures that the site can serve as a community resource for passive recreation and environmental education.

The previously approved Development Agreement establishes parameters for the site, including restrictions on land use and conservation requirements. This legal instrument impacts the requested action by guiding the allowable uses and ensuring that the proposed amendments align with the planned development's conservation and open space commitments.

By shifting the Countywide Plan Map categories to Preservation and Recreation/Open Space, the city’s proposal is consistent with the Countywide Rules and Plan Strategies. This change reflects the need to safeguard valuable natural resources while providing public access to open space and recreational opportunities, thereby enhancing the

compatibility of land use with surrounding environmental and community needs.

- 2. Forward Forward Pinellas has developed the Multimodal Accessibility (MAX) index. Proposed amendments increasing density and/or intensity must maintain a MAX score equal to or better than the Countywide Average MAX score. The current Countywide Average MAX score is 9.7; if that score is not reached, balancing criteria will be required. An amendment adopting or amending the Activity Center (AC), Multimodal Corridor (MMC) and Planned Redevelopment District (PRD) categories and affecting fewer than 10 acres shall be subject to the Multimodal Accessibility Index (MAX Index).**

*Staff Analysis:* Since the proposed amendment affects more than 10 acres and decreases both density and intensity, the Multimodal Accessibility Index (MAX) does not apply as it would for amendments increasing density or intensity. Reducing density and intensity should inherently support or maintain the existing MAX score. Therefore, the requirement to meet or exceed the Countywide Average MAX score of 9.7 does not apply, and balancing criteria are not necessary for this case.

- 3. If located within a Scenic/Noncommercial Corridor, the manner in, and extent to, which the amendment conforms to the criteria and standards contained in Section 6.5.4.1 of these Countywide Rules.**

*Staff Analysis:* The amendment area is not located on a Scenic/Noncommercial Corridor; therefore, those policies are not applicable.

- 4. If located within a Coastal High Hazard Area, the manner in, and extent to, which the amendment conforms to the terms set forth in Section 4.2.7.**

*Staff Analysis:* The subject property lies within a CHHA, which necessitates adherence to specific regulations aimed at managing flood risks and ensuring appropriate land use. According to Section 4.2.7 of the Countywide Rules, amendments in these areas must focus on flood resilience and limit residential density to reduce vulnerability to storm surge and flooding. The proposed amendment to designate the property as Preservation and Recreation/Open Space aligns with these regulations by minimizing the impact of high-density development. The Recreation/Open Space category supports the creation of natural buffers and passive recreational areas, which help mitigate flood risks compared to more intensive land uses.

Additionally, the proposed amendment reduces the potential density from 24 units per acre under the Retail & Services category and 15 units per acre in the Office category, to effectively zero units per acre in both the Preservation and Recreation/Open Space categories. This significant reduction in density conforms to Section 4.2.7 requirements by prioritizing natural resource preservation and minimizing risks associated with high-density development in a CHHA.

- 5. If the amendment involves the creation, expansion, contraction of, or substantive change to the Activity Center, Multimodal Corridor, or Planned Redevelopment**

**District category, the manner in, and extent to, which the amendment conforms to the purpose and requirements of the applicable category, and addresses the relevant Planning and Urban Design Principles described in Section 6.2.6 and Land Use Goal 16.0 of the Countywide Plan Strategies.**

*Staff Analysis:* The amendment area does not involve the creation, expansion, contraction of, or substantive change to the Activity Center, Multimodal Corridor, or Planned Redevelopment District category.

**6. The manner in, and extent to, which the amendment significantly impacts a public educational facility or an adjoining jurisdiction.**

*Staff Analysis:* The proposed amendment is not adjacent to a public educational facility or adjoining jurisdiction; therefore, those policies are not applicable.

**7. If the amendment involves the conversion from the Employment (E), Industrial (I), or Target Employment Center (TEC) category, the extent to which the amendment area can continue to provide for target employment opportunities as evaluated and set forth in Section 6.5.4.5.**

*Staff Analysis:* The amendment area does not involve the conversion of Employment, Industrial, or Target Employment Center designated land; therefore, those policies are not applicable.

**PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE**

The proposed Countywide Plan Map amendment was publicly advertised as required by Section 7.8.4. of the Countywide Rules. No public correspondence has been received to date.

**CONCLUSION**

Staff finds the proposed amendment is consistent with the Relevant Countywide Considerations found in Section 6.5.3.1 of the Countywide Rules.