

**LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA) RECOMMENDATION to the
Board of County Commissioners**



Regarding: Proposed Amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) Adopting the Crystal Beach Community Overlay (the Overlay), including the Crystal Beach Overlay Boundary, and Supporting Vision, Objective and Policies.

LPA Recommendation: The LPA finds that the proposed amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element (the Plan) Adopting the Crystal Beach Community Overlay, including the Crystal Beach Overlay Boundary, and Supporting Vision Objective and Policies is consistent with the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan and recommends that the agreement be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners with the amendment to Policy 1.24.4. as follows:

1.24.4 Policy: A coastal shoreline path, comprised of the paved and unpaved public right-of-way along St. Joseph's Sound from Ohio Avenue to Georgia Avenue, has existed as a public amenity since Crystal Beach was originally platted and represents an integral and defining public feature of the Community, providing public access to the scenic waterfront. County staff will work with the County's Historic Preservation Board and the Crystal Beach Community and the owners of the private property along the coastal shoreline path to explore preservation of the path as a landmark site as allowed under the County's historic preservation ordinance in recognition of its significance to the Community and the County. It is not the intent of this policy to impact private property rights.

LPA Report No. CP-20-7-16

LPA Public Hearing Date: July 14, 2016

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the LPA find that the proposed amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Plan adding the Crystal Beach Community Overlay (the Overlay), with its supporting vision, objective and policies, consistent with the Plan, based on the findings of this report.

Staff further recommends that the LPA recommend adoption of the proposed amendment.

SUMMARY:

This is a staff review and recommendation to the LPA on a proposal to amend the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Plan by adopting the Overlay. Specifically, this amendment would add the Crystal Beach Community Vision, Objective 1.24 and associated Policies 1.24.1, 1.24.2, 1.24.3, 1.24.4, 1.24.5, 1.24.6, and 1.24.7 to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Plan. The proposed amendment has also been reviewed for consistency with the Plan, pursuant to the Local Government Planning and Land Development Regulation Act (Growth Management Act), Chapter 163.3161, Florida Statutes, as amended.

BACKGROUND/EXPLANATION:

In 2008 the Plan was amended to provide for the development and application of Community Overlays as a means of recognizing distinct communities in Pinellas County. The Board supported the purpose and need for Community Overlays as a means of allowing citizens to better participate in planning for their future, as well as enabling the Board to understand and better plan for a community by recognizing and understanding its existing and desired characteristics and features. Subsequently, the Alderman, Tierra Verde, Ozona and East Lake Tarpon Communities requested and have gone through the process of having Community Overlays adopted into the Plan.

In March of 2015 staff was invited to make a presentation at the Crystal Beach Community Hall on the purpose and process of adopting Community Overlays to a group of approximately 50 Crystal Beach residents who had indicated a desire in creating an overlay for their community. With staff guidance, a core group of residents who attended that meeting have subsequently drafted the proposed Community Vision, Objective and Policies, and the boundary for which they would apply, for consideration to be adopted into the Plan. Staff reviewed and commented on these materials and is of the opinion they are consistent with the Plan's objectives for establishing Community Overlays.

Between May 16 and June 13 of 2016, staff conducted a vote to determine the level of support Crystal Beach property owners had for the Overlay. Property owners within the boundary were sent an informational packet that included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the mailing, a one-page 'Fast Facts' document explaining what community

overlays are and their intended purpose, a copy of the proposed Crystal Beach Community Overlay vision, objective and policies, a boundary map for which they would apply, and a pre-addressed, postage-paid voting card to be sent back to the Planning Department.

Nearly 500 property owners voted, with approximately 90% voting in favor and 10% opposed. The voting packets mailed out by the County to property owners stated that if at least 60% of returned votes were in favor of the initiative, staff would support bringing the proposed Overlay to the Board for a final decision on whether it will be adopted into the Plan. Given this threshold was exceeded by 30%, and roughly 50% of eligible property owners participated in the vote, staff is supportive of adoption. (It should be noted that residents of the Crystal Bay Mobile Home Club, which is adjacent to the Crystal Beach Community Overlay Boundary, were inadvertently mailed voting packets, but their votes were not included in the final results.)

Staff has consistently advised the residents who drafted the overlay that they will need to be able to demonstrate extensive community outreach was conducted on the initiative, so they can document that there was community-wide engagement. Staff is also of the opinion that the residents have been sufficiently engaged in the process. A summary of the community's outreach efforts includes:

- four community meetings held by the Crystal Beach Community Association where presentations were given on the concept and/or status of the Overlay;
- an information table at the annual Crystal Beach chili cook-off (a well-attended annual community fundraiser);
- a children's essay writing contest that was designed to spur conversation about the Overlay;
- information tables at the community post office during the voting process (The majority of Crystal Beach residents receive their mail from PO boxes at the post office. Tables were set up for approximately 24-36 hours during the voting timeframe and an estimated 300 residents were engaged on the topic.);
- written communications including an article in *The Scoop*, a community newsletter, and seven community eBlasts, which reaches 632 resident email addresses; and
- informational signage posted including at the post office and throughout the community, providing information on who to contact in the community or at the County if they had questions concerning the Overlay, or if they lost their voting packet or did not receive one at all and wanted to request one.

The Vision, Objective and Policies identified in the proposed Ordinance, and proposed now for inclusion in the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element* are depicted below.

Crystal Beach Community Overlay

VISION: Crystal Beach is a distinct Pinellas County Community. The following characteristics help define its history, character and natural environment, demonstrating that the Community is unique and worthy of special recognition and consideration by the Board of County Commissioners:

- Crystal Beach is a small, largely residential, unincorporated area in northern Pinellas County. The Crystal Beach Community Overlay Boundary is generally bordered to the west by St. Joseph's Sound, to the east by U.S. Alternate 19 North, the Pinellas Trail, Avery Bayou and Sutherland Bayou, to the north by Oceanview Avenue and to the south by Sutherland Bayou and St. Joseph's Sound. (For a map depicting the Crystal Beach Community Overlay Boundary, refer to Exhibit A of Ordinance No. 16-____.)
- Crystal Beach is one of the original communities in Pinellas County with homesteading beginning in the 1850's. In 1912, A.D. Powers and J.D. Hanby platted a traditional grid street layout, which included a main boulevard and alleyways that promote connectivity, along with abundant natural features such as Live Oak Park and a public waterfront path along St. Joseph's Sound. This original layout contributes to Crystal Beach being a pedestrian, bicycle and golf cart-friendly Community with an "Old Florida" feel that lives on to this day.
- Foundational to the character of Crystal Beach is the long-established, paved and shell pathway and public area along St. Joseph's Sound, bordered by mangroves. This path (referred to as Gulf Shore Park by Powers and Hanby) allows the public - both residents of and visitors to Crystal Beach—to enjoy peaceful walks along the water.
- The area's many environmental features include coastal waters, indigenous marine life, Chautaugua Lake fed by natural springs, and a largely unsullied natural shoreline along St. Joseph's Sound and into Sutherland and Avery Bayou. It contains wetlands and uplands and their associated vegetation and wildlife, as well as a large population of native birds and waterfowl. Mangroves border the unpaved portion of the public path that runs along the Sound.
- There is a strong sense of community in Crystal Beach. Powers and Hanby's original vision of a quiet place where people could relax, fish, walk, and "enjoy life and talk to neighbors" is a reality today.

- 1.24 Objective: The Board of County Commissioners will utilize a Community Overlay to define and recognize Crystal Beach as a cohesive community and as a means to identify and support the local vision, community character and natural environment.
- 1.24.1 Policy: Land use, zoning, and conditional use decisions that affect properties located within the Crystal Beach Community Overlay should be compatible with the Community’s primarily low density residential development pattern.
- 1.24.2 Policy: Pinellas County will consider the historical and functional integrity of the Revised Plat of Crystal Beach (which resulted in largely low-density residential development in a traditional grid pattern layout with a main boulevard and alleyways that promote connectivity) when making land use, zoning, conditional use and site plan decisions for properties located within the boundaries of the Revised Plat of Crystal Beach. The boundaries of the Revised Plat of Crystal Beach are defined as Georgia Avenue to the south, Alternate U.S. Highway 19 to the east, lots on the north side of Avery and Ohio Avenues to the north, and Gulf Drive to the west. (The Revised Plat of Crystal Beach shall be considered a subset of the Crystal Beach Community Overlay, and Policy 1.24.2 shall only be applicable to properties located within the boundary of the Revised Plat of Crystal Beach as described herein. The Crystal Beach Community Overlay Boundary as described in the Vision and as depicted in Exhibit A of Ordinance No. 16-___ is applicable to Policies 1.24.1, 1.24.3, 1.24.4, 1.24.5, 1.24.6 and 1.24.7.)
- 1.24.3 Policy: Decisions by Pinellas County and other agencies that affect the use and development of land located within the Crystal Beach Community Overlay will place a priority on the protection of the recreational spaces and assets, natural and historic resources, and the natural environment, including mangrove and other estuary habitats and the dependent species associated with them.
- 1.24.4 Policy: A coastal shoreline path, comprised of the paved and unpaved public right-of-way along St. Joseph’s Sound from

Ohio Avenue to Georgia Avenue, has existed as a public amenity since Crystal Beach was originally platted and represents an integral and defining public feature of the Community, providing public access to the scenic waterfront. County staff will work with the County's Historic Preservation Board and the Crystal Beach Community to explore preservation of the path as a landmark site as allowed under the County's historic preservation ordinance in recognition of its significance to the Community and the County.

1.24.5 Policy: Live Oak Park, as depicted on Exhibit A of Ordinance 16-____, was set aside in the early 1960s to serve as an important gathering place for the Community and will be protected for its historic, environmental and community value. Pinellas County and other agencies will consider these factors when making any decisions affecting Live Oak Park.

1.24.6 Policy: The County is supportive of the Community's desire to preserve its coastal character through the use of native landscaping and will partner with the Community where practical and feasible on identifying ideas and locations for beautification of public right-of-way, particularly along Crystal Beach Avenue.

1.24.7 Policy: Commercial land uses within Crystal Beach along Alternate U.S. Highway 19 are appropriate and compatible with the residential areas of Crystal Beach. Commercial businesses along this state highway are an asset to Crystal Beach residents, and it is the intent to retain this pattern of residential and commercial development in the Community.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PINELLAS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Staff finds that the proposed amendments are consistent with, and implement, the following principles, objective and policies of the Plan:

PLANNING TO STAY ELEMENT:

Sustain a Quality Urban Community and Promote Strong Neighborhoods and Diverse Housing Opportunities

Principle 2: A distinguishing characteristic of Pinellas County is the presence of a diverse mix of cities, small towns and suburban communities on a small peninsula. This variety of urban environments provides people with a choice of lifestyles, and retaining and enhancing these distinctive community characteristics will ensure that they remain vital and successful communities.

Principle 6: Neighborhood enhancement and rejuvenation will be accomplished in a manner compatible with community character, local traditions and heritage, infrastructure capacities, the natural environment, and the overall vision for the community.

FUTURE LAND USE AND QUALITY COMMUNITIES ELEMENT:

1.17 Objective:

Pinellas County shall preserve and seek to enhance established community values, a community's unique identity, and their social support structure, and will make decisions that are in concert with a community's established vision for their future.

1.17.3 Policy:

Pinellas County may amend the Future Land Use Map Series to identify a local community with a Community Overlay, and include in the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element complementary guiding principles, policies, strategies or other appropriate provisions that are specific to that community and that further the achievement of Objective 1.17 within that community.

The complementary principles, policies, strategies, or other provisions shall not conflict with or modify the characteristics, standards, criteria, and definitions contained in the Future Land Use Category Descriptions and Rules of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan shall be developed so that the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan remains internally consistent, and shall be initiated through a process approved by the Local Planning Agency.

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Ordinance
 - a. Exhibit A: Boundary Map for Proposed Overlay
2. Sample Property Owner Voting Packet:
 - a. Cover Letter
 - b. Community Overlay 'Fast Facts'
 - c. Crystal Beach Community Overlay Document
 - d. Boundary Map for Proposed Community Overlay
 - e. Sample Voting Ballot
3. Supporting Historical Documents:
 - a. "A History of Crystal Beach"
 - b. "Crystal Beach, Florida: A Better Place to Live"

*Please note that the attachment included in the sample mailing packet titled "Crystal Beach Overlay Document" (2. c., above) provides additional background information that will be included in the data and analysis portion of the Plan, if the Overlay is adopted. The supporting historical documents referenced on page 1 of 2. c. are provided as well.