

LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA) RECOMMENDATION to the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Regarding: A proposed Ordinance adopting a new Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan to be known as PLANPinellas; providing for the update and replacement of each Element as per State Statute requirements.

LPA Recommendation: The LPA finds that the proposed Ordinance is consistent with State Statute requirements and recommends the update and replacement of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan be adopted by the Board of County commissioners. (The vote was 7-0, in favor)

LPA Report No. CP-21-03

LPA Public Hearing Date: December 9, 2021

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Staff recommends that the LPA find the proposed Ordinance amending the Comprehensive Plan in COMPLIANCE with the statutory requirements of Florida State Statutes to update the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, based on this report.
- Staff further recommends that the LPA recommend APPROVAL of the proposed Ordinance to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners.

OVERVIEW

The County completed its last major update of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan in 2008. That Plan, currently in use (as amended) is largely a result of Florida's Growth Management regulations that were in place at that time of adoption, known as Florida Administrative Code Rule 9J.5. That Rule established requirements for a community to have a comprehensive plan in place that allowed for limited local flexibility, as overseen by the State's Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The State has since reorganized the DCA and established a new Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), which now oversees local government comprehensive planning. Rule 9J.5 was repealed by the State in 2011 and replaced by amended Chapter 163 F.S. Intergovernmental Programs; and specifically, §163.3177 required and optional elements of comprehensive plan; studies and surveys. While this section continues to outline specific element (or chapter) topics that must be included in a comprehensive plan, the local government is afforded more control over the creation and evaluation of their community's comprehensive plan.

The 2008 Plan includes 47 Governing Principles and comprises over 1,100 policies and associated goals and objectives. It addresses many of the challenges that the County faces, however, the document is overly lengthy and does not clearly highlight the relationship between policies that exist across the different Elements.

As Pinellas faces new challenges, the Plan must respond to those changing needs. The County is primarily built-out and has shifted to a redevelopment community, and the existing Comprehensive Plan policies do not necessarily reflect that new focus. The Plan's policies should support shifting demographic trends, and sufficiently address key challenges and County initiatives, such as housing needs and sea level rise resiliency.

The Comprehensive Plan update, known as PLANPinellas (Plan), is focused around eight Guiding Principles that set the foundation of the community vision and with which the policies must align. These Principles include:

- Consider long-term impacts and evaluate policy decisions to ensure that they support a **SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**.
- Create and enhance safe, **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES** that attract and retain a socially and culturally diverse population.
- Facilitate a **STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY** that supports sustainable, healthy communities and enhances employment opportunities and the quality-of-life for its citizens.
- Provide a range of **HOUSING OPTIONS** to meet the needs of a diverse and intergenerational community.
- Provide an interconnected, resilient **MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION** network that safely, efficiently and equitably addresses the mobility needs of all citizens, visitors and businesses, while simultaneously minimizing opportunities for traffic-related fatalities and injuries.
- **PROTECT** the diverse ecosystem that makes up the county's **NATURAL RESOURCES**, and contributes to the county's public health, quality-of-life, and local economy.
- Promote advancing **BEST PRACTICES** and technologies that benefit the economy; healthy communities; and the public health, safety and welfare.
- Recognize opportunities for **RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM** and promote intercoordination with the county's municipalities, community organizations and regional entities.

These Principles were coordinated with each of the County's departments, presented to the Board of County Commissioners, and shared with the community at-large; and each of these stakeholder groups have expressed their support. With this guiding foundation established, an in-depth review of the County's existing goals, objectives and policies was led were coordinated across the County's implementation new policies that will support future County programs and activities.

When asked through a 2018 survey if they agree that each Guiding Principle should help guide the County's future, survey participants (365 in total) responded as follows:

- SUSTAINABLE FUTURE (89.5%)
- HEALTHY COMMUNITIES (77.8%)
- STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY (83.7%)
- HOUSING OPTIONS (65.4%)
- MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION (74.9%)
- PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES (88.6%)
- BEST PRACTICES (81.5%)
- RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM (71.2%)

As part of that same survey, when asked to share thoughts about what they like most about living in or visiting Pinellas County, responses included such things as: natural resources,

beauty, engaging, coordination amongst other governments, good infrastructure, unique towns, beaches, good schools, Penny for Pinellas, park system, low taxes, diversity, biking options, golf, access to multiple cities and the region.

When asked to share thoughts about what could be improved to better their experience living in or visiting Pinellas County, responses included such things as: traffic, overbuilding, not enough open space, flooding issues, lack of public transportation, more transparency, and concern about nature (animals and vulnerable habitat).

As the Plan's review and update moved forward, these issues and concerns were considered. The Housing and Community Development Department's Planning Division led this effort with significant coordination and input with each of the County's implementing departments.

The result of the in-depth evaluation is a more focused message with an emphasis towards equitable redevelopment, addressing the County's changing needs, presented in a more user-friendly format. The Elements emphasize the interconnection across policy topics (e.g., housing locations are tied to the transportation system and location of employment opportunities.)

PLANPinellas continues to pursue much of the intent of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan but focuses the language and updates some of the policies and strategies to achieve the goals. (See Attachment 2: Summary of Key Changes.)

In August 2021, the final draft of PLANPinellas was made available to the public through a unique website dedicated to the Comprehensive Plan. This website, <https://plan.pinellas.gov/>, has a feature to collect public comments. The County hosted two public webinars (recordings of which have been posted on the PLANPinellas website and YouTube) to introduce the update and provide the opportunity for questions and answers. Through early November 2021, the County has received 73 comments for which responses have been provided. (See Attachment 3: Public Comment/Response Summary.)

The Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed this application on November 8, 2021.

The review and update of the Comprehensive Plan was completed in accordance with Section 163.3177 Florida Statutes and was coordinated across the County's implementing departments to ensure the updated goals, objectives, policies, and strategies meet the County's current and future needs. Upon adoption, PLANPinellas will replace the existing 2008 Comprehensive Plan, as amended.

SUMMARY: Staff finds that the proposed amendments effectively implement the requirements of Florida State Statutes to update the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan.

PERSONS APPEARING AT THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY HEARING: One person appeared on-line in favor with concerns.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Ordinance with Attachment
 - Exhibit A – PLANPinellas
[LPA 120921 ComprehensivePlan PlanPinellas](#)
2. PLANPinellas Summary of Key Changes

3. Comprehensive Plan Policy Comparison
4. State Statute Alignment
5. Public Comment/Response Summary
6. Strikethrough/Underline Revisions
7. Supplemental information by chapter

[\(Click on LPA link above to view file\)](#)