

PART I. PLAN PREFACE

A countywide comprehensive plan means materials in such descriptive form, written or graphic, as may be appropriate to the prescription of principles, guidelines, and standards for the orderly and balanced future economic, social, physical, environmental, and fiscal development of Pinellas County.

Chapter 88-464, Laws of Florida

CHAPTER 1.

PLAN BACKGROUND AND STATUTORY AUTHORITY

In 1988, a special act of the Florida Legislature was signed into law (Chapter 88-464, Laws of Florida) that established the modern Pinellas County Planning Council (PPC) and Countywide Planning Authority (CPA). In creating the Council, the Legislature recognized that decisions made by individual units of local government impacted neighboring jurisdictions. It further recognized the common interest of the Pinellas County citizenry in the county's future development. As such, the Legislature stated as its purpose in creating the Council, "to provide a means for...the formulation and execution by the council of the objectives and policies necessary for the orderly growth, development and environmental protection of Pinellas County as a whole." The special act prescribes additional duties of the Council to include coordination of countywide growth management issues and procedures.

Section (7)(a) of the special act states that one of the powers and duties of the PPC is "To develop a countywide future land use plan with a countywide managed growth perspective and [*sic*] compatible with the other elements of the comprehensive plan."

A countywide plan containing goals, objectives, policies, and elements has existed in its current form since its adoption in early 1989 by the Board of County Commissioners, in its role as the CPA. Since that time, the *Countywide Comprehensive Plan for Pinellas County* (Countywide Plan) has been updated through adoption of amendments to the *Rules Concerning the Administration of the Countywide Plan, As Amended* (Countywide Rules), amendment of the *Countywide*

Future Land Use Plan (FLUP), and in 1995, incorporation of the *Scenic/Non-Commercial Corridor Plan Element*. In summary, the existing plan consists of several original elements similar to those required by Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the updated FLUP, the Countywide Rules, and the *Scenic/Non-Commercial Corridor Plan Element*.

So that the Countywide Plan would not duplicate local government plans with regard to the individual plan elements required under Chapter 163, F.S., the PPC and CPA passed a joint resolution in 1993 (Res. No. 93-34) directing that the plan focus on two principal areas—land use and intergovernmental coordination. The supplement to the Countywide Plan adheres to the spirit of the special act for the plan “to coordinate countywide growth management issues and procedures consistent with this act” [Section (9)] and the position taken in 1993 by the PPC and CPA through the joint resolution.

The authority and duty of the Council to adopt and implement a countywide plan is bolstered by Chapter 189, F.S., which sets forth the current procedure for creating special districts. There, the legislature recognized that “growth and development issues transcend the boundaries and responsibilities of individual governmental units, and often no single unit can plan or implement policies to deal with these issues without affecting other units of government.” The law further states that “the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life of the people of this state may require the creation of multicounty and multijurisdictional districts.” Thus, the Countywide Plan and its supplement contained herein as an amendment to the plan fulfill the purposes of countywide land use and intergovernmental coordination set forth in Chapter 189, F.S., and the special act that reconstituted the Council.

In order for a countywide plan to be relevant, it must address issues that are of a truly countywide nature. The special act provides considerable flexibility in how the plan can be organized, i.e., it can address issues that are not normally addressed in the plans of the twenty-five local government jurisdictions. It can tackle those issues that all people in Pinellas County face in common, but which few, if any of the local comprehensive plans, can address because the issues are by definition not “local.” In addition, the countywide plan is free of the restrictions imposed on local governments by Sections 163.3177 and 163.3178, F.S., although it cannot conflict with state law.

There is a relationship between the Countywide Plan and local government plans. However, subsequent to adoption of this supplement to the Countywide Plan, there will be no review of existing local government comprehensive plans directed at their being revised to be consistent with the contents of the Countywide Plan, as amended. The requirement for consistency as set forth in the Countywide Rules is that the local government future land use plans and land development regulations are consistent with the criteria and standards in the Rules. No further consistency requirement will

be imposed based on the amendment of the Countywide Plan comprised of this Plan Preface and Plan Strategies supplement, absent specific amendment of the Countywide Rules to establish such requirements, pursuant to applicable procedures.

CHAPTER 2.

PLAN ORGANIZATION AND TERMS

There are two main components to this Countywide Plan supplement—one addressing land use and the other one intergovernmental coordination and cooperation. The background text, which provides the supporting data and analysis for the supplement, is located in the Appendix. It is organized by themes in which relevant countywide issues are identified and discussed.

The background text of the Land Use Component addresses the following themes:

- The Established Development Pattern
- The Transportation/Land Use Relationship
- The Natural Environment
- Economic Sustainability

The background text of the Intergovernmental Coordination Component is organized under these themes:

- The Redevelopment and Regulatory Challenge
- The Governance and Service Delivery Challenge
- Opportunities for Enhanced Intergovernmental Relations

The supporting text in the Appendix is similar to the data and analysis contained in elements of local comprehensive plans, and provides the factual foundation upon which the Countywide Plan position statements and strategies are based. In response to the issues, countywide position statements are presented and in turn, implementation strategies are included that provide the means by which the position statements may be implemented. For purposes of clarification, issues, position statements, and strategies are defined below:

- “Issues” identify land use or intergovernmental topics or matters of countywide significance. Issues provide the foundation upon which are constructed the position statements and the implementation strategies of the Countywide Plan.
- “Position Statements” identify perspectives or points of view regarding the countywide issues. They state what should or should not be done to address the issues. A unique characteristic of the position statements is that in some cases, countywide implementation authority or power is limited. Nevertheless, that fact should not preclude the Countywide Plan from adopting a position on or recommending approaches to issues of countywide significance.
- “Strategies” identify actions necessary to implement position statements. Because of limited countywide authority and powers, strategy adoption and implementation will require local initiatives and multi-jurisdictional actions to support the position statements.

CHAPTER 3.

PLAN RATIONALE AND SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of the Countywide Plan, as amended consistent with the legislative directives cited above, is to identify an overarching set of policies that can address those common issues faced by Pinellas Planning Council member local governments in order to create a consistent framework to guide the individual planning initiatives throughout the county. The amended plan provides a basis for working toward a common vision for Pinellas County by serving as an overarching expression of countywide land use and intergovernmental coordination policy.

It is the intent that the identified issues, position statements, and strategies add to and augment rather than replace the existing Countywide Plan by providing a more up-to-date approach to and vision for countywide planning. The plan is used to guide the work program and efforts of the PPC and staff, in collaboration with the CPA, to achieve the objectives of the plan. It provides policy guidance on issues of countywide significance and serves as an instrument by which evolving countywide issues can be identified and addressed. Furthermore, it is used to administer the *Countywide Future Land Use Plan* (FLUP) and Countywide Rules consistent with their specific provisions.

The Countywide Plan policies and strategies cannot, and should not, be expected to be achieved or implemented through the countywide planning process alone. In many cases, state and federal agencies and funding will bear on the ability to achieve the recommended position statements or utilize the identified strategies. Similarly, local actions and initiatives will be the essential means by which to accomplish the plan objectives. These local initiatives will necessarily be dependent on the desires and needs of each local government as expressed in local plans and policy documents.

Any planning process as ambitious as one that proposes to modernize a countywide plan is influenced by the environment in which it is produced. For that reason, this section presents a listing of relevant observations made during development of the plan supplement.

Land Use

1. Within twenty years, unless a natural or man-made event occurs that would alter the progression, Pinellas County will continue to grow resulting in a level of urbanization that will include higher densities and intensities in some, but not all, areas of the county.
2. Redevelopment and infill development will be the focus of virtually all construction projects from this time forward. Aging residential and nonresidential structures will require redevelopment. Therefore, local plans and regulations should be amended to better deal with the realities and challenges of redevelopment now and in the future.
3. Collaboration on issues of countywide importance is inherently more beneficial to all parties than parochialism. At the same time, local jurisdictions can retain their uniqueness and independence while making real efforts to find countywide solutions to countywide problems.
4. While jurisdictional uniqueness is recognized and respected, there are more commonalities associated with land use issues than dissimilarities. For example, consistent land use policies should be implemented and coordinated in coastal high hazard areas that are located in the majority of county jurisdictions.
5. Aging tourist infrastructure can potentially limit future sustainability in that segment of the economy unless redevelopment and modernization are aggressively pursued.

6. The county is becoming less attractive to retirees, and more attractive to businesses and younger workers. Therefore, in order to sustain economic growth, the county must encourage the creation and retention of high-wage jobs and focus on those issues of importance to the work force.
7. With the low percentage of land designated for business use and continuing job generation, it will be important to protect those areas now designated for business uses from conversion to other uses.
8. Mobile home/RV park conversions to other uses will continue (especially for single-owner parks) as land values escalate. Those uses have reduced economic viability given their age and potential for alternative uses.
9. As costs increase, housing opportunities for low and middle income residents are increasingly limited in the Pinellas County market. Lack of affordable housing impacts the beach tourism industry especially hard relative to housing options available for workers serving that industry.
10. Given the existing development pattern, road building alone will not provide significant traffic congestion relief. While future mass transit systems may reduce the rate of congestion increase, overall congestion will remain unless land use and transportation policies combine to change the dominant mode of transportation and travel patterns.

Intergovernmental Coordination

1. Formal mechanisms for intergovernmental coordination exist. The problem is not a lack of mechanisms, but, rather, the lack of a systematic and consistent approach to their use in an environment without clear lines of authority.
2. As costs of services increase over time, those that could be provided more efficiently and effectively on a countywide basis will be examined for potential functional consolidation.
3. The most difficult task is to adopt approaches to countywide issues while retaining an acceptable degree of local autonomy.
4. There is no single countywide organization that brings together the efforts of multiple agencies, councils, committees, etc. in an integrated fashion.

5. State planning law requires, and there is a natural tendency for, governments to concentrate on local issues while enhanced intergovernmental relations requires governments to employ a broader perspective.
6. While agencies, committees, commissions, and councils exist to address the multiple issues of the county, seldom is there a combined meeting of those entities. And, because of their infrequency, such meetings are seen as special occasions rather than as normal occurrences.

The issues, position statements, and strategies, which follow in Part II. of the *Countywide Plan for Pinellas County*, are designed to address the unique land use and intergovernmental challenges and opportunities in Pinellas County in the decades ahead.

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