



City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

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RENEA VINCENT, AICP
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MEETING MINUTES

PROJECT: Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group

DATE/TIME: February 9, 2010 @ 6:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Multi-purpose Room, Tarpon Springs Public Library

SUBJECT: Lemon Street Roadway Improvements
Special Area Plan (SAP) for the Sponge Docks
Special Area Plan (SAP) for the Community Redevelopment Area
Signage & Wayfinding

PRESENT:

Roger Lacy	Joe Pianese	Ted Frantzis	Cyndi Tarapani
Steve Lindhorst	Randall Currelly	Joyce Pappas	Peter Dalacos

At the February 9, 2010 meeting, the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group (PRDFG) and other attendees discussed the following:

Lemon Street Roadway Improvements - The meeting started with Robert Fulp, P.E. discussing the changes in the plans since the 60% submittal to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). He explained that the major change in the plans was in the area just east of the Pinellas Avenue / Lemon Street intersection. In this area, a curb-out had to be eliminated because it impeded thru traffic. He then went on to present two alternatives for the left-turn lane in this area:

1. A raised landscape median island
2. A striped median without landscaping

After several minutes of discussion on these options, it was the consensus of the group to recommend that the area only have a striped median without landscaping. Mr. Fulp then went on to discuss the number of cars that can queue in the westbound-to-southbound left-turn lane. The group liked the vehicular storage that was provided by such a long turn lane however, it was felt that large trucks traveling north on Pinellas Avenue would have a difficult time making a right-turn onto Lemon Street. Mr. Fulp agreed to re-evaluate this turning movement and would move the stop bar further back if warranted. The group also suggested that FDOT be contacted to perform a signal timing study for the Lemon Street / Pinellas Avenue intersection because it was felt that there is a long delay for side street vehicles wanting to cross Pinellas Avenue or make a left-turn onto Pinellas Avenue. David Conner then discussed the changes to the landscape plans. He started by reviewing the results of a presentation to the City maintenance and landscape staff that was held on January 26, 2010. He then moved on to the plant selection and use guidelines and explained that all landscaping was selected because it met hardiness zone requirements, minimized utility interference, met safety criteria, and was low maintenance. He then went on to show examples of

large, medium, and small shade trees, palm trees, ground covers, native/ornamental grasses, and upland planting species. Mr. Conner showed color sheets of the plans and explained the plant selection for each area of Lemon Street. A medium shade tree that Mr. Conner emphasized as a “theme” tree for the project is the Olive Tree. Mr. Joe Pianese added that he recently purchased the same type of olive tree for his property and is quite pleased with its shape and hardiness. The group asked about the lack of landscaping along the western section of project between Banana Street and Pinellas Avenue. Mr. Conner explained that this area was recently re-surfaced and the character is primarily a well-maintained residential neighborhood that did not warrant additional plantings. The City staff suggested contacting the individual property owners to gauge their desire to have a small shade tree planted on their property. Mr. Conner went on to explain the types of grasses and groundcover to be planted in the area east of Ring Avenue. The group suggested that date palms be planted at the intersection of Lemon Street and Safford Avenue to serve as an identifier of the Pinellas Trail. Mr. Conner explained that this would not be possible because of the visibility requirements that must be maintained at all intersections. He further explained that this type of tree planting was chosen in front of the library because it is at mid-block, not at an intersection. Mr. Conner suggested that smaller diameter trees be planted in low planters at each corner of the intersection to mark the location of the Pinellas Trail. At the conclusion of the discussion, the focus group members endorsed the plan and recommended that the Board of Commissioners approve the 100% plan submittal to FDOT.

Special Area Plan for the Sponge Docks Area - Mr. Clarence Eng began the discussion of the Special Area Plans (SAP) for the Community Redevelopment Area and for the Sponge Docks. He went on to explain the key ideas that were put forth toward a Future Vision for the Sponge Docks. Mr. Eng then introduced Mr. Scott Swearingen to further explain the data that was gathered from the previous workshops. Based on the data, the five key ideas for the Sponge Docks were as follows:

Rank	Key Idea	Total Score
No. 1	Tourist-Orientation	57
No. 2	Working Waterfront	64
No. 3	Waterfront Promenade	72
No. 4	Hope-Athens Greek Community (a “Greek Village”)	83
No. 5	Connecting Sponge Docks and CRA	103

Additional ‘key ideas’ expressed by participants included:

- Reface existing downtown
- Hotel in Sponge Docks area (3)
- Local draws/activity, attract local nightlife traffic, more sidewalk activity (4)
- Develop north side of river
- Multi-modal transportation options
- Improving on what’s already there
- Make area more upscale
- More water-related recreational uses

The implementation strategies were ranked by the community stakeholder group in order of importance as follows:

Rank	Implementation Strategy	Total Score
No. 1	Sense of Place	55
No. 2	Amenities	75
No. 3	Retail Development	90
No. 4	Street Network	105
No. 5	Building Orientation	112
No. 6	Mix of Land Uses	118
No. 7	Development Scale	120
No. 8	Parking	123
No. 9	Public Space	125
No. 10	Housing Mix	149

Additional ‘implementation strategies’ expressed by participants included:

- Buses from downtown to Sponge Docks and public parking
- Neighborhood-supporting retail
- Public restrooms (2)
- Hotel
- Better promotion of area

Mr. Swarengen went on to lead an in-depth discussion of each implementation strategy. Based on the data and feedback from the group, a vision statement was created. The vision statement for the Sponge Docks was as follows:

The Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs have a definite sense of place that is derived from its past as a hub for the Greek sponging community. This sense of place is represented to some extent in the physical environment but is manifested largely in the community that lives and works in the Sponge Docks area. The Sponge Docks in Tarpon Spring is a regional tourist destination in the Tampa Bay area. It is also home to a vibrant Greek community as well as other residents attracted by the village like scale and charm of the place. The Sponge Docks waterfront serves as a working waterfront for local businesses but also as a recreational open space attraction for the tourists and local residents. Maintaining and enhancing this diversity of uses and users is essential to sustainable future growth and change in the Sponge Docks area. One critical strategy to achieve this larger goal is to balance the needs of tourists with the needs of the local community. Dodecanese Boulevard and the waterfront are both physical places where this dichotomy is reflected. Another critical factor is the Sponge Dock’s connectedness to Tarpon Springs Downtown.

Mr. Swarengen then discussed how the stakeholder workshop provided valuable information to help inform the SAP objectives. General, overall area objectives and direct place-based objectives were as follows:

- **PLAN OBJECTIVES - GENERAL**

- A. Form-Based Guidelines/SmartCode

- Coordinate areas/subareas with SmartCode transect zone definitions.
- Provide form-based development and design standards.
- Coordinate requirements for SAPs with Historic District, Multimodal Transportation District,

and Central Business District.

B. Complete Streets

- Organize the road network based on their primary role as transit-oriented, vehicle-oriented, pedestrian-oriented, and local or service-oriented streets.
- Prepare streetscape guidelines to improve vehicular and pedestrian accessibility and mobility.

C. Market Study

- Conduct a market study to assess the current area economic strengths and weaknesses, as well as the market feasibility of future uses, densities and intensities.

D. Parking Study

- Prepare a consolidated parking strategy including parking management, shared parking, and structured parking.

• **PLAN OBJECTIVES – PLACE-BASED**

E. Tourist Destination

- Encourage tourist-oriented business and retail opportunities along Dodecanese Boulevard.
- Provide services and amenities for visitors such as restrooms and water fountains.
- Provide tourist accommodation options such as hotels, motels, inns, and other short stay lodging within walking distance of the tourist destination in the Sponge Docks.

F. Waterfront

- Maintain and integrate the working waterfront into a predominantly tourist oriented district.
- Create a public open space for festival markets and other events supporting the primary function of the waterfront.
- Extend existing waterfront promenade from Pinellas Avenue to Roosevelt Boulevard.

G. Greek Village (Hope-Athens Greek Community)

- Preserve and enhance “Greek Village” character through development pattern, scale and use.
- Reinforce Dodecanese Boulevard as the ‘Village Center’ for the resident community with local retail and services.
- Create more live-work opportunities by encouraging vertical residential mix along Dodecanese Boulevard, Athens Street, and Roosevelt Boulevard while maintaining the existing scale and development pattern.
- Consider infill/redevelopment opportunities within residential areas for higher density residential typologies such as townhomes and garden apartments.

H. Connecting Sponge Docks and Downtown

- Create ‘architectural’ gateway at Pinellas Avenue and Dodecanese Boulevard.
- Create minor gateway to the Sponge Docks at Pinellas Avenue and Athens Street.
- Enhance Athens Street as a pedestrian and/or bike connection to the Sponge Docks.
- Connect the Sponge Docks and Downtown core with a feeder bus loop.
- Plan coordinated annual and monthly events that engage local residents and visitors in the Sponge Docks and Downtown areas alike.

Special Area Plan for the Community Redevelopment Area - Mr. Swearingen moved on to explain the data that was gathered from the previous workshops. Based on the data, the five key ideas for the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) were as follows:

Rank	Key Idea	Total Score
No. 1	Redevelopment Focus	43
No. 2	Tarpon Avenue (i.e. Main Street)	46
No. 3	Connection to Sponge Docks	62
No. 4	Diverse Housing/Lodging Opportunities	70
No. 5	Lemon Street Art/Design District	73

Additional ‘key ideas’ expressed by participants included:

- Make better use of the Pinellas Trail (2)
- Attract new businesses Downtown
- Lodging in Pinellas/Safford corridor
- Parking garage
- Parking (general)
- Improvements in the Spring Bayou
- Provide adequate parking (redevelopment/events)
- Advertising
- Improved streetscape environment including sidewalks
- Multi-model transportation options

The implementation strategies were ranked by the community stakeholder group in order of importance as follows:

Rank	Implementation Strategy	Total Score
No. 1	Sense of Place	55
No. 2	Development Scale and Use	75
No. 3	Street Network	90
No. 4	Amenities	105
No. 5	Parking	112
No. 6	Building Orientation	118
No. 7	Retail and Housing Development	120

Additional ‘implementation strategies’ expressed by participants included:

- Multi-modal transportation options (2)
- Include north Pinellas Avenue
- Outdoor events
- Use ‘water’ as a strategy
- Provide various development assistance programs

Mr. Swearingen went on to lead an in-depth discussion of each implementation strategy. Based on the data and feedback from the group, a vision statement was created. The vision statement for the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) was as follows:

Tarpon Avenue is the historical main street for Tarpon Springs and continues to be the heart of Downtown Tarpon Springs. Unlike the Sponge Docks area, Downtown is not an area driven by tourism. An essential goal of the Downtown Special Area Plan is to orient Downtown to the needs of local residents while creating opportunities in Downtown to capture some benefit from the tourist draw in the Sponge Docks. Downtown is not limited to Tarpon Avenue and includes several other districts with residential, commercial and civic functions. Another goal of the Downtown Special Area Plan is to redefine Downtown as the sum total of all these districts with diverse uses and users. Considering the limited number of vacant parcels in Pinellas County,

growth in Downtown will depend on redevelopment and infill opportunities. Redevelopment as the driver of future growth in Downtown is another critical consideration.

Mr. Swearingen then discussed how the stakeholder workshop provided valuable information to help inform the SAP Objectives. General, overall area objectives and direct place-based objectives were as follows:

PLAN OBJECTIVES - GENERAL

A. Form-Based Guidelines/SmartCode

- Coordinate areas/subareas with SmartCode transect zone definitions.
- Provide form-based development and design standards.
- Coordinate requirements for SAPs with Historic District, Multimodal Transportation District, and Central Business District.

B. Complete Streets

- Organize the road network based on their primary role as transit-oriented, vehicle-oriented, pedestrian-oriented, and local or service-oriented streets.
- Prepare streetscape guidelines to improve vehicular and pedestrian accessibility and mobility.

C. Market Study

- Conduct a market study to assess the current area economic strengths and weaknesses, as well as the market feasibility of future uses, densities and intensities.

D. Parking Study

- Prepare a consolidated parking strategy including parking management, shared parking, and structured parking.

PLAN OBJECTIVES – PLACE-BASED

E. Redevelopment/Infill

- Identify key development/redevelopment sites along Pinellas Avenue for higher density mixed use (residential/retail/office) development.
- Consider infill/redevelopment opportunities within residential areas for other residential development opportunities while maintaining the existing scale and character of these neighborhoods.
- Create recreational open spaces (parks at the intersection of Pinellas Avenue and Meres Boulevard, and at the intersection of Safford Avenue/Pinellas Trail and Live Oak Street) within the CRA.
- Create 'architectural' gateway at Pinellas Avenue and Meres Boulevard.

F. Tarpon Avenue as a 'Main Street'

- Encourage local businesses and retail opportunities along Tarpon Avenue.
- Infill Tarpon Avenue between Pinellas Avenue and Safford Avenue with special consideration to the existing scale and character of Tarpon Avenue.
- Create a public open space along Tarpon Avenue for festival markets, farmer's markets and other events. For example, the parking area at the intersection of Pinellas Avenue and Tarpon Avenue.
- Create an 'architectural' gateway at Tarpon Avenue and Grosse Avenue.
- Encourage more tourist accommodations such as B&Bs and Inns along Tarpon Avenue and Orange Avenue west of Pinellas Avenue.

G. Lemon Street District

- Consider residential infill/redevelopment opportunities along Lemon Street for higher density residential typologies such as townhomes and garden apartments.

- Allow live work uses along Lemon Street for artists studios/residences and small art related businesses.
- Create a public open space along Lemon Street for festival markets, farmer's markets and other events.

H. Connecting Downtown and Sponge Docks

- Create 'architectural' gateway at Pinellas Avenue and Tarpon Avenue.
- Utilize Pinellas Trail/Stafford Avenue as a pedestrian and/or bike connection to the Sponge Docks and Downtown.
- Connect the Downtown and the Sponge Docks areas with a feeder bus loop.
- Plan coordinated annual and monthly events that engage local residents and visitors in Downtown and the Sponge Docks alike.

The group discussed the content of the information and suggested changes/clarification in terms of increase in density, the tourist-draw of the downtown, and what types of businesses are appropriate for the area.

Signage & Wayfinding - Mr. David Nelson led a discussion of the Signage & Wayfinding message schedule and schematic alternatives. He walked through the different sign options and logos that would be applied to "themed" banners. The group wanted to differentiate between a sponge boat and a shrimp boat. The group also wanted a logo that represented the downtown (i.e train depot, old City Hall, etc) and one that represents the Sponge Docks area.

The meeting concluded at 9:05 p.m. The next meeting will be held on March 23, 2010 @ 6:30 p.m. at the Tarpon Springs Public Library. The subject of the meeting will be an update on the Safford Avenue streetscape plans and a discussion of the signage and wayfinding message schedule, and schematic alternatives.