

Economic Development Work Plan Activities

The Economic Development Division strives to create a healthy and friendly business and cultural environment that encourages business retention and expansion, promotes tourism, and improves the quality of life for residents.

Ongoing Activities

Meetings

1. **Corridor Studies of US 19, Alt. 19, and Alt. 19 Cultural Corridor.** These are three separate studies coordinated by Pinellas County, Forward Pinellas, and FDOT to develop long-range plans for growth of the transportation corridors. Meetings are held bi-monthly with additional public workshops. Ongoing.
2. **PCED Partners** (Pinellas County Economic Development) Quarterly meetings of economic development staff and more frequent small group meetings.
3. **City TDC and Pinellas County TDC.** Monthly meetings of Tourist Development Councils.
4. **Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce.** Monthly meetings include Coffee with Class, Networking Mixers, Sponsor Luncheons, and various additional topic-based meetings.

Small Business Assistance

SBDC at St. Pete College provides counseling and identifies programs for start-up businesses. ED assists with referrals, occasional workshops, and presentations/speaking opportunities.

Business Attraction

Ongoing meetings, phone calls, workshops, conferences, mailings, in promoting available sites for new businesses. Identification of underutilized and vacant properties that are developable for new investors/buyers.

Business Retention

Visitation program with existing businesses, in-person and by phone, to learn about a business' needs and gain feedback on overall satisfaction with doing business in the City. Visitations allow for getting to know the business, monitoring them, and being aware of a business at risk to offer assistance.

Business Incubator

An incubator is where a local government, ED organization, or private business provides a setting to enable business start-ups to be nurtured until their business sustains itself. These are typically buildings with low rent and shared office equipment and administrative support. There are incubators in Pinellas County at the Young-Rainey Star Center and in Largo. Our goal is to establish an incubator in Tarpon Springs for North County to support and encourage small business start-ups that could eventually open a business in the City.

Incentives

Ongoing marketing and coordination of local and state incentive programs for existing and prospective businesses:

- **Façade and Restaurant Grant Programs in CRA.**
Updating the applications for both programs to include a timeframe for reimbursement, more clear instructions, and more. Recruited 12 new establishments with these grants since 2016. Have awarded \$400,000 in grant funds since inception (2012) with private investment totaling more than \$3.1 million. Examples of additional grant impact includes expansion of Olive the World Bistro and expansion and relocation of Anytime Fitness.
- **Researching Additional Grant Programs within CRA and outside CRA**
- **Qualified Opportunity Zone Designation** – Tax Credit and Jobs Act Congress Dec. 2017
- Tax incentives for long-term investment in low-income areas (west of US 19 to Alt. 19, Klosterman to Tarpon Ave.) Defers or eliminates capital gains taxes on investments made in the Opportunity Zones. Dept. of Treasury creating the guidelines for the funds. Ongoing meetings with state and county officials to follow/learn program guidelines as they are being developed. Develop marketing plan for communicating to area developers.
- **State Incentives:**
 1. **Job Creation Tax Rebates:** Capital Investment Tax Credit, High Impact Performance Incentive Grant, Job Creation Incentive Grant, Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program
 2. **Sales Tax Exemptions:** Aviation, Electricity and Steam, Machinery and Equipment, Semiconductor, Defense, and Space Technology, Space Industry.
 3. **Training Grants:** Incumbent Worker Training Program, FloridaFlex/Quick Response Training Grant

Grant Applications

- **DEO Grant** – Applied for but did not receive a \$40,000 grant to connect economic development with Comp Plan and SAP, including market analysis for the area showing demographics, real estate and market demand “best and highest use”. Re-applying in 2019.
- **Pinellas County Grant – PPM (Planning & Placemaking)** – Applied in October 2017 but did not receive (awarded to St. Petersburg and Pinellas County (2 grants of \$25,000 each)). Our application was for professional market analysis; recruitment/retention strategy and best & highest use redevelopment scenarios for two locations (former Pappas and Lemon Street vacant parcels.) Applying again in 2018.
- **State Division of Historical Resources Small Matching Grant**– \$50,000 grant to update the historic guidelines was approved and dollars will be received in October 2018.
- **State Division of Historical Resources Small Matching Grant** – Applying in 2019 for funding of historical building markers in the Downtown.

Tourism Marketing

- **Marketing Plan** – Develop an overall plan in conjunction with Cultural Services, Merchant’s Association, and Chamber of Commerce. Expanding tourism efforts and advertising to promote city. Increased communication with media outlets.
- **Historic Building Plaques** – Writing a grant to provide for plaques on historic buildings Downtown. Plaques will give history of the building, make for a better visitor experience, and enhance the Walkability Plan.
- **Tarpon Springs Community Garden** – Point of contact for ongoing garden development and events.
- **Wayfinding Signage and Lighting** – Held meetings and discussions with area business and property owners regarding color schemes and ideas for updating the wayfinding signs and types of decorative lighting. Includes updating business directories Downtown and Sponge Docks. Ongoing coordination with Public Works for placement, fabrication, and installation.
- **Special Events** – Liaison with Tarpon Springs Merchant’s Association regarding special events, new and existing.
- **Monthly Business eNewsletter** – Produce a monthly mass email highlighting development activities in the City.

Ribbon Cuttings

Coordinate ribbon cuttings for new businesses. Have held more than 30 ribbon cuttings in the past two years.

Presentations

Attend meetings and make presentations at various functions. Within the past year, speaking engagements include Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce, Pinellas County Economic Development Meetings, St. Pete College Workshops and Rotaract Meetings, Forward Pinellas, Florida Redevelopment Association conferences and workshops, and various local organizations.

Ongoing Development Projects

- **US 19 Corridor Study and Alt. 19 Corridor Study** – Ongoing meetings, study expected to be complete December 2018. Findings will provide basis for planning code amendments, increased building and code enforcement actions, additional incentive proposals, formulating strategies for vacant and derelict buildings, safety and beautification, and business recruitment and retention strategies.
- **Office Depot/Tarpon Plaza** – 16,000 sq ft multi-tenant – Firehouse Subs, SportsClips, Aspen Dental. Free standing Burger King. IHOP proposed for former Bubble Bee Car Wash. Tenant attraction efforts.
- **Former Exotic Motorcars Property** – marketing site.
- **Lake Tarpon Church of Christ** – Ongoing discussions with church; relocation and attraction.
- **Holiday Inn Express & Suites** – Development Agreement negotiations. Location is adjacent to Hampton Inn & Suites. Approximate 75-bed hotel. Anticipated opening 1st quarter 2020.

- **Downtown Residential Living** - Attraction of residential living Downtown - Pine Street Apartments – 6 units in 2 buildings on Safford and Pine. Orange Street across from Tarpon Tavern, two new single family homes. Former EcoVillage plan undergoing modifications.
- **Safford and Center Streets** – Point of contact, ongoing meetings, and tenant attraction for redevelopment at 201 E. Center St. Potential tenants – artisan furniture maker, wine shop, brewery. Part of Downtown-Docks connection.
- **Safford Avenue Arts District/Residential** – South Safford on the Trail between MLK and Lime. Land owned by Tarpon Springs and Pinellas County Housing Authorities, and City. Federal tax credits – affordable/market rate housing.
- **SE Corner Alt & Meres** (Regions Bank) rezoned to NB and for sale. Attraction.
- **Meres Town Center and Meres Extension**– 276 market rate apts. – Under construction
- **NW Corner Alt. 19 and Meres** – marketing and attraction
- **SW Corner Alt. 19 and Meres** – marketing and attraction
- **Manatee Plaza** – Purchased in fall 2017 by a Texas Asset Management Group. Currently working to amend the LDC to allow for greater residential density. Requires Pinellas County approval. Goal is for entitlements to allow for mixed use of residential, retail, and office. Meeting with and marketing the process to developers for interest in purchase when ready.
- **Tarpon Gardens Professional Center** - 1200 S Pinellas – Renovation of center and tenant attraction.
- **Vacant US 19 Wal Mart Land**– Continue fielding calls and discussions with broker. Currently under contract for a potential upscale apartment community.
- **Hotel in Tourist District** – Working to attract hotel near Sponge Docks. Met with several hoteliers – identified multiple viable sites suitable for hotel development. Ongoing communication and meetings regarding former Pappas restaurant. Economic Impact Study provides valuable information for potential investors. Consider feasibility study.
- **Bayou Property** – Discussions with current property owner and adjacent Tarpon Inn owner. Developing potential uses. Meetings with developers and investors.
- **Downtown Parking** – Identification of sites for potential future parking garage.
- **Renovation/Reuse of Former Sponge Warehouses** – Identifying challenges and opportunities to bring former warehouses into use. **Papou's Distillery** – Point of contact and coordination with new craft distillery at 605 N. Pinellas Ave. First sponge warehouse to be renovated.
- **Infill/Adaptive Reuse** – Identifying vacant properties for re-use. Discussions with property owners. Successful projects include Family Dollar/Anytime Fitness, Kataras Sponge Warehouse and Saint Somewhere Brewery.
- **North Anclote Planning Group** – land use/zoning, County upgrades, Stauffer, roadway linking Anclote Blvd to Anclote Rd. Stauffer 130 acres, 44 acres capped. Restrictive covenants, area infrastructure pose great challenges.
- **Brighter Days Brewery** – Point of contact and coordination with new brewery at 311 N. Safford Ave.
- **Silverking Brewery** - Completed sale of the property in August.
- **144 E. Tarpon Ave. Ground Lease/Option to Purchase.** Negotiating ground lease/option to purchase with Crossfit after CRA Board awarded it as the winning development proposal. Liaison on property development.

Joint Planning Projects

Code and SAP amendments. P&Z is budgeted for re-write of the LDC.

Examples: Simplify submission requirements for Site Plans. Allow site plans for permitted uses by right to be approved only by BOC.

Streamline permitting process