



# City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

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## MEETING MINUTES

**PROJECT:** Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group

**DATE/TIME:** November 10, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Multi-purpose Room, Tarpon Springs Public Library

**SUBJECT:** Lemon Street Conceptual Plan  
Signage & Wayfinding

### PRESENT:

Ted Frantzis	Beverly Kurpinski	Randal Currelly	Francis King
Cyndi Tarapani	Roger Lacy	Marlene Gravitz	Joseph Pianese
Siobhan Nehin	Rodney Chatman	Robin Saenger	Renea Vincent
David Banther	Tod Eckhouse	Robert Walker	Rob Fulp
Gerald Goen	Steve Lindhorst	David Conner	Scott Swearingen
David Nelson			

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At the November 10, 2009 meeting, the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group (PRDFG) discussed the following:

**Lemon Street Conceptual Design** - The group discussed the process by which decisions are to be made. Some members felt that a roll call vote should be required to document the support of a particular concept or idea. David Conner explained the practical issues associated with the design. The goals for the project are to calm the traffic through reducing vehicular speed, improve the appearance of the corridor, create the proper setting for redevelopment, and providing bicycle access consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. David Conner then explained the constraints associated with the lack of drainage structures and existing overhead and underground utilities. The 2 alternative concepts, traditional and garden arts, were reviewed and expanded upon. The traditional concept maximized on-street parking and the garden arts concept provided more landscaping. He felt that the direction he received was to maximize parking along the corridor and merge the traditional concept with the garden arts concept. David Conner explained that the conceptual design has four different character areas. The four areas are the Neighborhood Connection, the Urban Redevelopment, the Garden Arts/Arts Foundry, and the Live/Work Residential area. The Neighborhood Connection area is from Banana Street to Pinellas Avenue and would keep the existing pavement because it was recently resurfaced. The curbs would be brought in to create more area for wider sidewalks and landscaping. David Conner stated that the on-street parking that occurs at the northwest corner of Pinellas Avenue and Lemon Street would be eliminated because it is dangerous to park so close to an intersection. The Urban Redevelopment area is from Pinellas Avenue to Safford Avenue. The group was told that the westbound approach to the Lemon Street/Pinellas Avenue intersection will have 3 travel lanes (east

bound, west bound, and left-turn). The major design features of this section will be to narrow the travel lanes to 11', the provision for 57 on-street parking spaces, continuous 6'-10' wide sidewalks, shared vehicle/bicycle lanes, street trees, and sustainable drainage solutions. Particular attention was given to the selection of plant materials that are low maintenance, drought tolerant, and provide color. The project does not include and pedestrian lighting, overhead to underground utility conversion, storm infrastructure. David Conner then explained the other areas and how visibility triangles affected the placement of on-street parking and landscaping. Access to all buildings and properties are being preserved with this design approach. David Conner then explained the cross-section for this area that includes sidewalks, planting areas, on-street parking, vehicular travel lanes, and sharrows. The crosswalk in front of the library will also serve as a speed table. The group further discussed parallel parking spaces vs. angled parking spaces and its impact upon providing safe bicycle facilities, wide sidewalks, and wide landscape areas. David Conner further explained that the radius on the curb-outs have a better designed radius that will make entry and exit of parking much easier than is experienced on Pinellas Avenue and Tarpon Avenue. The group also discussed Lemon Street being a truck route and if that designation was going to remain or be changed as well as the need to narrow the lanes to 12' instead of 11'. David Conner explained that he is trying to design a complete street and if you widen the travel lane it will reduce the width of the planting areas which will reduce the size of trees that can be planted along the roadway. The group suggested that David consider replacing the Yellow Tabebuia with Silver Buttonwood and replacing the Perennial Peanut with New Gold Lantana. The stormwater runnel was provided to redirect water from the street into the lower planted areas. The water in the runnels will not be standing, it will percolate. David explained that he would like to reuse the granite curb at the backside of the runnel and as a walkway between the road and the sidewalk. The block from Grosse Avenue to Levis Avenue continues the same theme with on-street parking and landscaping and supports the existing residences along the corridor. The group also asked about the section from Levis Avenue to Disston Avenue and was told that staff is evaluating this section and it could be accomplished as the second phase of this project. Unfortunately, the addition of another area to the current project does not seamlessly fit into the current timeline. At the conclusion of David's presentation, the group took a 5 minute break.

**Signage & Wayfinding** - David Nelson gave an overview of what wayfinding is and what it can do for Tarpon Springs. The objectives are to design and easily understood and user-friendly navigational system, promote the local tourist market and cultural destinations, and develop an identity for the CRA and the Sponge Docks. The components of a wayfinding program include; gateways, vehicular trailblazer signs, destination signs, parking and identification signs, pedestrian signs, kiosks, and banners. Branding should be incorporated into each of the components to help reinforce community elements within the wayfinding system. David Nelson then discussed the destinations within the City of Tarpon Springs and went over the observations they have made during several site visits to the area which include;

- There are no gateway elements along Tarpon Avenue or Pinellas Avenue within the CRA and sponge docks area that identify arrival into the area. There are signs along each route indicating general location outside of the area, with Tarpon Avenue having the most information, but there is no specific element that shows a visitor they have arrived in a special area. By default, intersections seem to serve as gateway identification for the City.
- Tarpon Avenue seems to be the primary route into the CRA and sponge docks area and the best choice for a definitive gateway element. The street has a nice tree canopy, a variety of well-kept homes, on-street parking, and wide sidewalks on each side of the street.
- Pinellas Avenue (U.S. Alt. 19) has high volumes of vehicular traffic throughout most of the CRA and sponge docks area, especially the area between downtown and the sponge docks.
- Safford Avenue appears to have potential to develop as a main street because of its good north-south connection and visibility from the Pinellas Trail.
- There is no apparent physical linkage or connection between downtown and the sponge docks area.
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- There is little departure wayfinding signage. Current wayfinding signage does not fully support users who need to find their way back to major thoroughfares or adjoining municipalities.
- Transit stops are marked and often include a bench, but there is no indication of an overall bus route and/or schedule.
- Some parking identification is located mid-block or within a parking area, which is more difficult for the driver of the vehicle to notice as it moves along the street. The public parking at Tarpon Avenue and Pinellas Avenue, for example, is very visible from the street, but the actual signs for the lot are not well located or hidden within landscaped areas.
- No information is given in public parking areas regarding any permitted time and/or cost restrictions, leading to the assumption there are none.
- Parking in the sponge docks area is confusing. There are several parking areas near Pinellas Avenue, but each seems to have different signage and requirements for parking and payment. As a result, many vehicles continue west along Dodecanese Boulevard looking for parking, reach the traffic circle near the Konger Aquarium, then resort to finding any available spot along a side street in that area to park.
- With the exception of the sponge dock and downtown areas, there is little identification of districts or areas of interest. There is a large residential component between the two areas, with individual points of interest, but no delineation of district or neighborhood.
- There are many older period homes, but no indication of any architectural significance or historic district designation.
- Many destinations have signage, but only at the destination itself. There is no advance wayfinding, so if the destination is not visible to the visitor, it likely is not located.
- Signage often seems cluttered, especially around intersections. Much of the clutter is a result of individual signs, often with one or two lines of text, occupying an individual mounting post. There are also areas with duplicate signage within a relatively small proximity.
- There are several areas where private advertising is located very close to wayfinding signage, making it look at a glance like the two are connected. It likely causes confusion for a visitor, especially while driving.
- There is a lack of standardization among wayfinding signage. The current signage seems haphazardly designed and placed and does not promote visual recognition to visitors. For instance, there are at least three different types of signage indicating public or municipal parking areas.
- Wayfinding signage often lacks a standard hierarchy for information and the ability to expand and adapt to changing wayfinding needs.
- Some wayfinding signage directs the visitor to a general area, but never announces when arrival has occurred. The visitor is left to explore or turn back. For example, there is signage in the Spring Bayou area directing visitors to the Greek Village area, but that destination is never announced to the visitor. They are left to wonder where they are, and lacking appropriate direction, usually end up back on Pinellas Avenue.
- There are no maps or other devices to orient pedestrians once they have left their vehicles, with the exception of handheld maps available in some of the commercial establishments and attractions.
- There are very few signs that mark historic events or architecturally significant buildings.
- There is no signage on the Pinellas Trail to orient trail users to destinations in Tarpon Springs, especially the downtown area where restaurants and services such as bicycle repair are available.
- There are no markers/maps along the Pinellas Trail to indicate distance and route choices/destinations from Tarpon Springs. According to trail guide books, there are supposed to be station numbers placed at 500-foot intervals along the trail, but none were observed.
- The downtown is a National Registered Historic District, but that significance is not evident unless you stop by some of the downtown buildings or museums and read their documents. The sign at the intersection of Pinellas Avenue and Court Street does not convey the significance of the historic nature of the downtown.
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- Orange Street, west of Pinellas Avenue, contains a series of well-kept larger homes that look important and have markers on front fences, but there is no explanation of either the homes or the markers.
- There is no identification for the Greek Village.
- There is no unifying city identity within any of the wayfinding elements. While certain signage sets, such as the Florida Heritage signs, have consistent visual images and/or colors, there is nothing common between any of sets which indicate they are part of a larger coordinated Tarpon Springs program.
- Some of the signage looks temporary or handmade, likely causing some visitors to disregard the information contained on the sign.

David Nelson went on to explain that their analysis concluded that the following ideas warrant further discussion;

- The current wayfinding signage does not fully support visitors in finding their way both into the Tarpon Springs area and back out again. A coordinated routing and sequencing of wayfinding measures is needed to guide visitors.
- A primary gateway is needed along Tarpon Avenue and secondary gateways are needed along Pinellas Avenue to announce arrival into the CRA and sponge docks area. There needs to be coordination with the City to either remove or relocate existing signage that may conflict with the new gateway elements.
- Since Pinellas Avenue operates at a high traffic volume, there may be an opportunity to promote development and vehicular routing along a parallel roadway to divert some of the traffic.
- Safford Avenue is undergoing improvements as part of a City-sponsored streetscape project. This will help develop the roadway as a “front door” and engage the Pinellas Trail. At this preliminary level of analysis, Safford Avenue appears to be a good choice as a parallel “main street” roadway to Pinellas Avenue.
- Another potential way to increase traffic efficiency along Pinellas Avenue would be to widen the road to four lanes. However, this would likely result in higher vehicular speeds, which would not only reduce the pedestrian friendly nature along the road, but would affect how the roadway signage is developed.
- Parking is available within the CRA and sponge docks area, but it is often invisible to visitors due to lack of appropriately located signage and communication. Coordinated visual wayfinding signage along the primary roadways should effectively lead visitors to parking near destinations.
- Improved wayfinding signage will also help spread out parking among the different lots, especially in the downtown area.
- Existing on-street parking needs to be evaluated on Pinellas Avenue to see if there is room for additional on-street parking spaces, especially adjacent to the downtown shopping district.
- In some areas, especially the sponge docks, privately owned parking facilities are the primary venue for public parking. While consensus may be challenging, private parking owners would likely see value to incorporating a standard visual component into their private identification signage. The signage would present a uniform parking message to visitors while being consistent with other elements of the City’s proposed Wayfinding Project.
- Signage is the key component for improving wayfinding in the CRA and sponge docks area. Improved vehicular guide signage, pedestrian signage, mapping, parking, and destination identification are integral to a complete wayfinding system that will help visitors as they find their way within the city.
- Wayfinding signage is a utility to aid visitors; it should not be muddled by adding marketing messages. Drivers navigating a new area must be given only the information most relevant to guiding them to their final destination. Advertising messages associated with destinations distract visitors from this task and create further confusion. Private messaging needs to be separated from wayfinding signage.
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- While not direct marketing, there needs to be discussion as to whether or not generic messages/symbology for items such as “lodging” or “food” are appropriate for this Wayfinding Project to direct visitors to general locations.
- Vehicular signage should be provided along a limited number of major streets: streets that lead from gateways, streets that extend the entire length or width of the CRA area, or streets that lead to a number of public destinations or parking for them.
- Kiosk locations should promote walking routes. Walking tours should be developed along these routes.
- Pedestrian level wayfinding needs to be incorporated for people arriving to the CRA and sponge docks area by water.
- One of the primary results of a coordinated wayfinding program is that it reduces clutter, by presenting a consistent design and organized information. The program will reduce the need for multiple signs at congested decision points. One sign can hold multiple messages, instead of multiple signs arbitrarily mounted to a post.
- Coordination with the City and FDOT is needed regarding any existing signage that can be removed as improved wayfinding is implemented.
- Wayfinding signage should be designed for easy updating and expanding as information changes.
- Wayfinding signage will need to accommodate a limited amount of temporary and/or changing messaging related to events that occur at or near destinations. The annual Epiphany celebration, manatee viewing, art shows, and concerts are examples of this. One option to accomplish this would be to incorporate electronic signage into gateway elements that could provide changing messages.
- The two areas recognized and visited most often in Tarpon Springs are the sponge docks and the historic downtown. These two areas create the largest traffic volume and need to be prominently identified within the wayfinding program.
- The other area that could be considered for inclusion as a district may be the Greek Village. There are several potential destinations within this area, as well as architecturally significant homes.
- While the wayfinding concepts on this project will help to establish options for branding for the City, many other marketing initiatives will be required to develop and promote the chosen brand. The City needs to recognize the importance of a branding effort and the role that the choice of a logo, colors, and type face will serve. These decisions will be important as the recommended wayfinding concepts are developed further.

David Nelson concluded that based on the result of their observations and analysis, as well as input from City staff, several opportunities emerged that should be pursued as the wayfinding program is developed. The ideas to explore further are as follows:

#### Gateways

- Design gateway features to announce arrival into the CRA and sponge docks area, both along Tarpon Avenue and Pinellas Avenue. These features should incorporate elements of the wayfinding signage, so visitors can make an association as they encounter other wayfinding devices. Consideration should also be given to designing features at points outside of the CRA and sponge docks area at major thoroughfare intersections.
- Evaluate the possibility of incorporating electronic signage into one or more of the gateway elements. Electronic signage has high resolution text and graphic capabilities and is viewable from several hundred feet during both the day and night. LED technology is also more energy efficient than traditional lighting.

#### Signs (General)

- Create visual identification components so that wayfinding signage can be easily recognized.
- Consider different configurations and shapes, as well as color combinations.

- Establish a hierarchy of wayfinding elements, including such items as type size, font, and number of text lines per sign.
- Consider the presentation of elements. On vehicular directional signage, destinations should be grouped by direction and presented in the following order: left, then right, then straight ahead. Use the same conformity in pedestrian signage for a consistent presentation. Within each directional grouping, destinations should be listed alphabetically. Determine the maximum number of elements that should be presented on a sign.
- Consider whether multiple icons or colors should be used to identify different districts or areas within the CRA and sponge docks area.
- The Florida climate can take a toll on outdoor materials and construction. Environmental conditions should be considered, such as wind loads, ultra-violet rays, and corrosion, in the development of signage.

#### Vehicular Trailblazer Signs

- Create identification for the downtown area that will either complement the existing “Historic District/Florida Heritage” signs or incorporate their concept into a new coordinated format to emphasize the historic significance of the area.
- Create identification for the sponge docks area. This area is the largest visitor generator and should be easy to find, navigate within, and exit.

#### Destination Signs

- Create additional signage so that chosen destinations can be located from any of the gateways into the city.
- Organize destinations into three classes: primary destinations (generate greatest amount of traffic), secondary destinations (generate less traffic, but are predominantly visitor oriented; signage mainly within applicable districts), and local destinations (depicted on pedestrian maps only).

#### Parking and Identification Signs

- Create an iconic and easily recognizable “P” symbol component (or similar equivalent) on parking signs so they can be readily recognized. Parking facilities should be clearly identified as “public parking”.
- Consider consolidation of regulatory signage to ease clutter, keeping in mind recognized traffic protocols for location. Work with FDOT to understand their requirements.
- Pedestrian Signs
- Consider additional informational signs along pedestrian routes to enhance historic and educational opportunities.
- Evaluate markers (dates or symbols) to identify architecturally significant buildings.
- Create signage along the Pinellas Trail, either conforming to existing signage from other locations along the trail or working within the context of the Tarpon Springs Wayfinding Project, to guide trail users to destinations in the City convenient to the trail and to orient a user within the Pinellas Trail itself.

#### Kiosks

- Evaluate different sign and structure combinations that will contain orientation maps and destination lists.
- Consider whether commercial enterprises will be included on maps.
- Consider adding walking routes/tours to the information available in the kiosk.
- Explore potential locations - kiosks should be located at major transit stops, at pedestrian exits from public parking areas, and at other high pedestrian traffic locations.
- Determine the most likely places where water vessels dock and evaluate kiosk locations to facilitate the transition from boaters to pedestrians.

### Banners

- Evaluate design considerations such as wind loads and structural elements for bracket-mounted supports that would allow banners to be changed frequently. The bracket design should match those used on vehicular guide and street signs.
- Investigate options for cobra wrap/sleeve supports that will allow pedestrian-scale lighting and amenities, as well as the opportunity to place informational material, on light poles.

### Branding

- Create visual images that define the essence of Tarpon Springs. Explore which images create recognition for visitors and how these images could be incorporated into wayfinding signage and other informational devices by the city.
- Explore whether multiple visual devices to identify prominent districts or a single visual device used City wide is preferable for marketing purposes.

David Nelson then broke the participants into 3 groups and conducted a table top exercise. Each group was tasked with identifying the most direct and most scenic routes to and from popular destinations around the City. Each group had to complete this exercise from the perspective of a pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist. The meeting concluded at the end of the exercise.

The next meeting will be held on December 8, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m. at the Tarpon Springs Public Library. The subject of the meeting will be the Special Area Plan for the Sponge Docks.