



# City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

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## MEETING MINUTES

**PROJECT:** Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group

**DATE/TIME:** October 7, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Tarpon Springs City Hall

**SUBJECT:** Orientation Meeting

### PRESENT:

Ted Frantzis	Cindy Comstock	Beverly Kurpinski	Randal Currelly
Cyndi Tarapani	Olga Sowchuk	Marlene Gravitz	Roger Lacy
Jody Dobies	Susan Hutton	Vasile Faklis	Robert Walker
Siobhan Nehin	Steven Lindhorst	Stephen Grimme	Diane Porter
Rodney Chatman	Sue Thomas	Joseph Pianese	David Gauchman
Tina Bucuvalas	Joe Muzio	Matt King	Scott Konger
Shannon Cartright	Peter Dalacos	Chris Alahouzos	Susan Slattery
Robin Saenger	David Archie	Renea Vincent	Cindy Wilson

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At the October 7, 2009 meeting, the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group discussed the following:

**Introductions** - City staff introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of the groups that are represented on the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group (PRDFG). The PRDFG was established to garner broad-based public input for the 5 projects and it was noted that the general public is encouraged to attend and participate.

**Setting the Context** - City staff identified the limits of the study area and the planning-related districts contained within those boundaries. The districts that were discussed included the Historic Downtown, the Sponge Docks, Central Business District, Greek Village, National Register Historic District, Pinellas Trail, Union Academy Neighborhood, Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), and the Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD). The CRA was discussed in greater detail and City staff explained that Florida law offers local governments the ability to establish a redevelopment trust fund through the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. In basic terms, the TIF is money that is set aside through property taxes that are paid by all property owners in the district. Normally, those property taxes are split between the City and Pinellas County, but in TIF districts the City gets to keep all the tax revenue above the 2001 baseline year for improvement projects within the district. TIF revenues are a great funding source but can only be used for projects within the district. Another district that was discussed in greater detail was the Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD). The MMTD encompasses the entire CRA and was created to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. The use of alternative modes will lead to

a reduction in automobile use and vehicle miles traveled. The designation of such districts recognizes the inherent, integral relationship between transportation, land use and urban design and the degree that these elements affect the other. It was further explained that MMTD's provide local governments with an additional approach in meeting concurrency requirements mandated by legislative statute. The creation of the MMTD enhances existing development and/or redevelopment efforts by providing a template for good planning for future development with the integration of transportation and land use and the incorporation of urban design techniques (SmartCode) that contribute to sustainable development.

**Current Projects** - City staff discussed the 5 projects that will the Focus Group will be involved in which include; Special Area Plans for the Sponge Docks and the CRA, SmartCode Calibration for the Sponge Docks and the CRA, Wayfinding and Signage Plan, Landscape and Roadway Design Plans for Lemon Street, and Landscape Design Plans for the North Safford Avenue corridor. The Special Area Plan (SAP) is a planning technique that allows a local government to deviate from the standard Pinellas Countywide Plan Rules. The existing future land use and zoning of the project area makes it somewhat difficult for the City to attract the right kind of development. The SmartCode may replace with land development code in the project area. It will provide much clearer direction on building form and function than what currently exists. The consultant team will calibrate the standard code to recognize the uniqueness of Tarpon Springs which will include the creation of "place types". In order for the City to meet its' obligations of the MMTD and the Pinellas Countywide Plan rules the SmartCode will serve as the regulating plan for the area. The Signage and Wayfinding Plan will be extremely beneficial to the project area because there is a lack of pedestrian and vehicular signage that tells people where things are. At the end of this effort the City will have construction plans and specifications that will be used to bid and construct the signage for the project area. The City has received a \$385,000 federal earmark for the rehabilitation of Lemon Street. The City has set aside additional dollars to complement the earmark in the redevelopment of Lemon Street. Because of the federal earmark, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will be involved in the project. The funding will be passed through FDOT to the City on a reimbursable basis. The group was presented with 3 road cross section typicals for them to modify (sidewalk widths, types of landscaping, bicycle lanes, etc.) in preparation for the formal workshop on Lemon Street and Safford Avenue on October 13<sup>th</sup>. Because of the earmark, the City has to commit to a very tight schedule with 60% plans being submitted to FDOT on December 4, 2009 and a Notice to Proceed (NTP) to the contractor for construction on June 29, 2010. The project must go to construction prior to July 1, 2010. The landscape plans for the North Safford Avenue corridor will not have any FDOT involvement and the schedule is much more relaxed. The design philosophy is to improve this underutilized asset by making it more visually attractive and pedestrian friendly. The estimated timelines for the projects are as follows: Special Area Plans - 11 months, SmartCode Calibration - 11 months, Wayfinding and Signage Plan - 5 months, Landscape and Roadway Design Plans for Lemon Street - 7 months, Landscape Plans for North Safford Avenue - 7 months.

**Consultant Team** - The City's General Planning Consultant Team for these projects are; Renaissance Planning Group (Planning) - Scott Swearingen, AICP and Whit Blanton, AICP, David Conner and Associates (Landscape Architecture) - David Conner, ASLA, CLARB, and Bayside Engineering (Civil Engineering) - Robert Fulp, P.E.

**Next Steps** - The upcoming schedule of activities were discussed and they are as follows;

- Lemon Street/Safford Avenue Workshop - October 13, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.
- Lemon Street/Safford Avenue Conceptual Plan Review and Comment - November 10, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.
- Signage and Wayfinding Workshop - November 10, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.
- Signage and Wayfinding Field Visit - November 13, 2009 @ 9:00 a.m.
- Lemon Street Conceptual Plan Presentation to the Board of Commissioners - November 17, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.
- \* All Future Meetings will be held at the Tarpon Springs Public Library unless otherwise noted

**What if...?** - City staff discussed the General Planning Consultant selection process and the ideas that were generated during the “sample problem” presentations of the short-listed firms. Graphics of two ideas were presented and discussed that included modifications to the City owned property on Dodecanese Boulevard including modifications to the docks that would create a public plaza and additional perpendicular boat slips. The “sample problem” area is outside of the CRA and the City would need to receive grants or other funding sources to complete a catalytic project in this area.

**Conclusion** - City staff answered several questions that centered around the limitations of the earmark, the TIF revenue stream, project timelines, and how all the projects fit together. The next meeting will be held on October 13, 2009 at the Tarpon Springs Public Library.