

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of participants in the Vision 2020 Charrette as they relate to strengthening, improving and protecting the unique character and quality of St. Petersburg's neighborhoods.

- Protect and reinforce the unique character of each neighborhood, develop rules and regulations which allow infill and redevelopment that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood context.
- Neighborhoods should be consistently and adequately buffered from commercial intrusions. The property adjacent to a commercial corridor should have equal value and quality of life as properties located further within the neighborhood.
- Housing that is stable, safe and varied; allowing choice for people to live within a neighborhood at different stages of life. Neighborhoods with lower income residents should still be afforded the dignity of safe, quality, attractive housing that they can afford. Housing should be protected from unimproved, dilapidated properties or incompatible, non-residential uses which threaten the viability of the neighborhood.
- Streets should be livable public open space, designed for pedestrians first, and with the timeless beauty and function of street trees, sidewalks and on-street parking. They should be easily negotiated by children and cyclists, have slow-moving traffic, and provide a connection to transit service that is within close proximity. They should provide a positive setting for the type of spontaneous activity created by an ice cream truck.
- Neighborhood Commercial providing basic needs such as groceries and sundries, hardware, dining, or laundry within reasonable proximity of their neighborhoods. Locally owned

neighborhood businesses should be celebrated and invigorated. These centers should be designed to fit seamlessly within their surroundings with a special sensitivity to neighborhood dynamics such as culture, style, foot traffic in lieu of auto parking, or the need for live-work/mixed-use structures for the proprietors.

- Schools and other public buildings should reclaim their places as centers of civic life. Their assets of classrooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, libraries, and park facilities should be resources and gathering places for the community as well as safe, high quality educational environments for children. They should be centers of lifelong community learning, service and activity and their design should reflect the highest ideals of the City.
- Parks that are accessible within a short walk of all residents, and joined by an interconnected system of sidewalks, bikeways, trails and greenways. A citywide parks master plan will provide accessibility to a full range of active and passive recreation based on neighborhood need and desire. Like schools, parks should be designed with beauty, quality and art to reflect the ideals of the community and their timeless role as neighborhood gathering places.
- Healthy Environment based on the successful application of best practices such as restored tree canopy and micro-climate, water quality and conservation, bio-absorption, energy conservation and recycling. Although neighborhoods are essentially urban, their support of habitat for plants, animals, fish and birds is clearly an indicator of their health for humans and the legacy left for future generations.

Refer to Appendix 1 for additional specific Citizen Suggested Action Items regarding preserved and enhanced neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Traditional Neighborhood context must be reinforced with traditional codes



Housing choices are provided through renovated buildings



Highly distressed neighborhoods need revitalization



Buffer neighborhoods from commercial intrusion



Suburban neighborhoods context must be reinforced with suburban codes



Parks scaled to neighborhoods with short walking distances

ST. PETERSBURG'S CENTERS

The citizens who participated in Vision 2020 believe that St. Petersburg's Centers are areas of great potential. From the "small-scale hometown feel" of downtown to the vibrant high-tech facilities within the Carillon area, St Petersburg's Centers provides places within our community to bring citizens together for social, civic and cultural experiences.

Traditional City Center, Downtown

The Downtown was the City's original city center. Since the beginning, the downtown was a dynamic 24-hour activity center. The downtown offered all aspects of living. Housing was a large component of the downtown with numerous tourist oriented hotels and apartment buildings.

The downtown consists of a gridded roadway network with wide streets, on-street parking, wide sidewalks and substantial commercial style buildings which created a pleasant pedestrian environment. Alleys allow utilitarian functions to take place separately from the public realm. Street cars assisted with public transportation and connected outward to the City's surrounding neighborhoods. Throughout the downtown there was a generous sprinkling of parks and civic buildings.



Baywalk replicates pedestrian friendly design, typical of traditional downtown development

Shortly after the financial boom of the late 1960's the downtown began to decline. Retail, restaurants and entertainment uses favored suburban locations. National solutions to redevelopment such as the creation of business centers, major sporting venues and upscale retail and entertainment complexes were utilized. By the 1990's, the downtown was starting to re-awake. Today the downtown offers many amenities, a unique traditional setting with large scale, mixed use commercial buildings, renovated historic buildings, and an active street life.

1960's Suburban City Center, Tyrone

Westward expansion of the City created an enclave of retail and entertainment near the crossroads of Tyrone Boulevard and 66th Street. The development of the Tyrone Square mall in 1972 ratified this area as the second city center. Development activities at this time favored stand-alone, single-use buildings with ample on site parking. The vehicle was seen as the primary mode of transportation and limited attention was placed on pedestrian, bicycle or alternative travel modes.



A wide expanse of parking separates the mall from the public sidewalk

1960 Suburban City Center (Continued)

The Tyrone area features many of the land uses of a typical city center, (shopping, restaurants, office space, schools post etc). Residential uses surround the commercial. However, there are distinct differences between the Tyrone area and the downtown center. Most notable is the scale of development parcels. Large, single-use tracts of land create disconnections between retail spaces, office uses and the residential. There is even segregation within the residential areas between apartment buildings and single family houses. Pedestrian travel within the district is impractical. Sidewalks are available, however they directly abut high-speed arterials without the benefit of a tree line to separate traffic from the pedestrian. The lack of shade, unattractive appearance and uncomfortable environment create an undesirable pedestrian experience. From the public sidewalk, pedestrian walkways do not connect to the buildings. A pedestrian's only option is to walk through the drive lanes of the parking lots.

The vehicular traffic pattern is based on the collection method. Traffic must flow through one or two key points. This congestion has increased significantly as St. Petersburg and the surrounding communities have expanded. This creates tension within the immediate single family neighborhoods.

1990's Suburban Center, Gateway

The Carillon-Gateway Center became the third City Center. This area has seen intensive development primarily of office space. Residential, retail and entertainment uses have been introduced into the mix of uses as well. While there is still a strong vehicular orientation to the center and large development parcels, a subtle mixing of needed services and better integration of residential is occurring. Many of the negative appearance attributes of the suburban centers have been overcome because of stronger development regulations and the increased level of sensitivity by developers. Buildings are multi story and often contain small retail functions, lunch rooms and daycare centers as a convenience to employees. Parking garages have been constructed reducing the amount of land devoted to surface parking.



Taller buildings and parking garages allow for additional green space

Enclaves of mixed use residential, smaller retail and entertainment uses are becoming common, within Post Suburban Centers. This practice has been labeled “new urbanism” and has become a popular development trend. It allows for the mixing of housing types, and as seen within Carillon, townhomes, single family homes and apartment building have been incorporated into the development.

City Framework Today, Downtown is beginning an exciting period of rediscovery and renewal that provides a Vision for 2020. With the functional completion of greenfield residential development on the peninsula, there is new activity in downtown housing. This is a result of several factors including available land, frustration with extensive auto commutes, desire for proximity to employment, and renewed interest in the vitality of urban living.

This practice of decreasing the physical distance between home, work, shopping and schooling is a highly sustainable practice that leads to innumerable benefits to the City. Resulting reinvestment into downtowns historic structures and neighborhoods is being coupled with new infill development in traditional urban formats such as townhomes and mixed use apartment buildings that have not been offered for decades. Refurbishment of the Vinoy Hotel, the recently constructed Baywalk shopping center, and an anticipated grocery bring new activity to downtown as evidence of the rebirth. As in the decades before, commercial activities are following housing growth and the result is the renewal of the public realm: Downtown.

Consistent with Citizen Themes and Values, Downtown is envisioned as an urban village, led by an active mix of uses based on the denominator of healthy residential in many forms. Streets should be livable and active with pedestrian life, suitable for both retailing and residential. This requires improved streetscapes, calm traffic, on-street parking, proximate transit access and two-way road relationships. The streets should link to enhanced civic parks, celebrated public buildings and a waterfront with increased public access. Downtown areas with extensive vacant land require a specific plan for economic development and physical placemaking. Areas such as the Dome District and University Park must be made too valuable by 2020 to continue practices of extensive surface parking blocks, 'land banking' or other low density development. These types of

downtown properties not only have commercial potential such as niche high-tech employment sites, but could in fact be the premier urban villages providing varied housing alternatives for nearby office, hospital, university, cultural, retailing and marina activities.

The renewal and densification of aging suburban centers, as with Development Corridors and the Downtown Center, second generation growth will bring mall owners mounting pressure to find new opportunities and the key is to break from previous practices of low density, single use developments in favor of higher density, mixed use places.

It is a natural evolution that sites such as the Tyrone Mall be transformed into Mixed Use Centers complete with all six land uses, arranged in a more urban form and designed in a higher value way. The single use "shopping center" has proved nationally to be highly susceptible to changes in the market as housing shifts, or a bigger, more attractive center opens up in another part of town. Other centers often suffer under their own success as their antiquated buildings and rigid site plans do not easily allow them to evolve to keep up with their own demand for growth. But perhaps that biggest factor is simply that in "built-out" markets such as St. Petersburg, these low density mall properties are simply too valuable as infill redevelopment venues to continue as sprawling landscapes of surface parking and blank building facades.

One answer is to re-integrate the mall property into a more traditional urban pattern, as articulated in Downtown. This means first and foremost, a pattern of blocks and streets that are flexible to change uses over time and become more dense as in a traditional Downtown. Once an urban pattern is created, then the opportunity of housing such as apartments, townhomes and condominiums to support additional commercial comes into play.

CENTERS



Downtown buildings allow retail on the first floor and residential office or other uses such as artist studios above



Mall parking lots disconnect the buildings from the pedestrian street edge



Development which allows cars to block the public sidewalk should not be allowed



New development in winter park redevelops a former shopping mall in a traditional town center pattern



Tracts of land utilized for temporary parking are prime for redevelopment within the downtown



Suburban areas such as Carillon still lacks pedestrian connectivity

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Recommendations

- Protect and enhance the unique character of the downtown including the waterfront parks system, and wide pedestrian oriented streets.
- Encourage mixed use projects which provide appropriate densities, buildings with continuous street edges and share amenities such as parking
- Streets should be lively, active, pedestrian oriented, safe and clean
- There should be a variety of transit opportunities including pedestrians, trolleys, taxis, bikes and vehicles
- Surface parking lots should be encouraged to be redeveloped with urban style buildings. Encourage shared parking in well designed structures featuring retail and other pedestrian activities on the first floor
- Civic uses should be reinforced, protected and expanded and should be available to all members of the community
- Preserve noteworthy buildings through renovation and adaptive reuse
- Where existing buildings are replaced, quality redevelopment shall occur which is consistent with the context of St. Petersburg. Architecture which is generic or utilitarian should be discouraged
- Evaluate existing redevelopment plans to reflect desired community form and development potential.



These new town homes add much needed housing to the downtown



Much of downtown vacated or underutilized due to suburban expansion and "CBD" planning and zoning concepts



Streets allow for cars, people and pets



Baywalk develops using traditional city pattern