

**LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA) RECOMMENDATION to the  
Board of County Commissioners**



**Regarding: Proposed Amendment to the Future Land Use Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan Adopting the Ozona Community Overlay, including the Ozona Community Boundary and Supporting Objective and Policy**

**LPA Recommendation:** Approval of Planning Staff Recommendation. (The Vote was 5-0, in favor).

**LPA Report No. 11-05-10**

**LPA Public Hearing Date: May 13, 2010**

**PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** That the proposed amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Comprehensive Plan adding the Ozona Community Overlay, with a supporting objective and policy, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and that the Board of County Commissioners should adopt the Ordinance amending the Comprehensive Plan, following required public hearings and agency reviews.

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**Background**

This is a staff review and recommendation to the Local Planning Agency on a proposal to amend the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element* of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan by adopting the **Ozona Community Overlay**, with a supporting objective and policy. The proposed amendment has also been reviewed for consistency with the adopted Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, pursuant to the Local Government Planning and Land Development Regulation Act (Growth Management Act), Chapter 163.3161, Florida Statutes, as amended.

**Staff Discussion and Analysis**

The purpose of this amendment is to add Objective 1.21 and associated Policy 1.21.1 to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, and to adopt an associated *Community Overlay* boundary for the Ozona community. The purpose of the amendment is to recognize, by inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan, the distinctive character and history of unincorporated Ozona.

In 2008 the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan was amended to provide for the development and application of *Community Overlays* as a means of recognizing distinct communities in Pinellas County. The Board of County Commissioners supported the purpose and need for *Community Overlays* as a means of allowing citizens to better participate in planning for their future, as well as enabling the Board to understand and better plan for a community by recognizing and understanding its existing and desired characteristics and features. Subsequently, both the *Alderman Rural Residential Community* and the *Tierra Verde Community* requested a *Community Overlay*, and the Board adopted respective *Overlays* and supporting policies through the necessary amendments to the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element* of the Comprehensive Plan (and the associated Future Land Use Map Series).

On April 15, 2010, the Pinellas County Planning Director received a letter from the *Ozona Village Improvement Society (OVIS)* requesting recognition of the Ozona community in the Comprehensive Plan by adoption of a *Community Overlay*. Attached to the letter were five key community features they wished to be recognized in the Comprehensive Plan, each along with a statement reflecting the community's intent, or desire, regarding each feature. The letter indicates that a special committee had been convened to work on the list of features, with a draft ultimately sent out to the community in a special edition of their community newsletter, along with a discussion of the proposal for its inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan, and a request for feedback. OVIS indicates they received only positive feedback regarding the proposal.

In the letter of April 15, OVIS describes the boundary of the area to be included in the *Overlay* as: west of Alternate U.S. Highway 19, north to Georgia Avenue and south to the City of Dunedin at the Pinellas Trail Overpass. This boundary, proposed for adoption as a part of the Future Land Use Map Series of the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element* of the Comprehensive Plan is reflected in the Figure attached to the proposed Ordinance.

The Objective and Policy identified in the proposed Ordinance, and proposed now for inclusion in the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element*, are depicted below. The "bullets" identified under Policy 1.21.1 were prepared by OVIS to represent the five "key features" they wish to be recognized:

### **Ozona Community Overlay**

Objective 1.21: The Board of County Commissioners will utilize a Community Overlay to define and recognize Ozona as a distinct Pinellas County community.

Policy 1.21.1: The following statements define the distinct characteristics and features of the Ozona Community that have been identified by the Community and are recognized by the Board:

- Ozona has a history that dates back to the 1880s. Ozona was one of the original communities in Pinellas County. Evidence of this remains with not only a number of buildings, structures, and features in the community but also with many artifacts that have been preserved or discovered over the years. This heritage is valued not just because the singular value of each feature but also due to their composite and

cumulative value as the origin and heritage of the community. It is the intent that these historic features be preserved, enhanced and, where possible, replicated.

- Ozona has many environmental features which include coastal waters and indigenous marine life, remnants of a natural shoreline with its associated vegetation and wildlife, inland wetlands and uplands with their associated vegetation and wildlife, and a large bird population. These features are woven into the development fabric of Ozona as an intrinsic part of the community. It is the intent that these environmental features be preserved and enhanced not only for the benefit of the residential community but also to support environmental diversity now and for the future.
- Ozona has a strong sense of community identity reflected in the general atmosphere and neighborly connectedness. There are many activities in the community that assist and further a sense of community. Since the community is composed of the people within it, it is important to provide opportunities for people to maintain their sense of community and to maintain their relationships. Community features such as activity centers and points of interest further these relationships. It is the intent to ensure that community features such as the post office, the Village Hall, Pinellas Trail, the elementary school, neighborhood gathering points, friendly developed areas, safe walking roadways, and vantage points to appreciate the environment are fostered and supported.
- Ozona in recent years has become well established as a livable community. This was initially the result of the County Commission passing a resolution establishing Ozona as a golf cart community. That resolution established guidelines that not only permitted golf carts but defined a related set of safety procedures that the community has embraced. This form of transportation is very compatible with the pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment that also exists within the community thereby making Ozona a livable community. It would be the intent to continue to support these livable community aspects within Ozona.
- Ozona demonstrates a unique character of development where there is a diverse mix of residential and commercial activities and land-use, that has evolved in a compatible way. The businesses in their recognized areas are considered community assets which benefits and provides commercial opportunities to people without the need to leave the community. Marinas provide an ambience that is consistent with the waterfront heritage of Ozona. Residential development has developed in a low intensive character that is accepted in the community as the preferred development pattern. It is the intent to continue these compatible relationships between residential, commercial, and various land use types within Ozona.

## **Staff Analysis and Summary**

Each of the communities recognized in the Comprehensive Plan by a *Community Overlay* is very different, but with one constant – a desire to recognize and protect their character and distinctiveness. In each community, it might be a desire to protect the unique features and community attributes that first attracted a resident, or it might be the interest of residents concerned over changes in, or around, their community wishing to preserve the character of their neighborhood in the face of a changing landscape. Each of the communities has approached the *Overlay* process very differently, but towards a common goal of recognition and distinction. Each engaged their neighbors in the *Overlay* process, assessing if there was support for inclusion in the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

Ozona will be the third such community. Ozona is a well-established unincorporated community dating back to the late 1800s. It has a strong connection to the water and was originally a small fishing village. It has a small downtown and several community gathering places (the Village Hall, the elementary school, the post office, etc.), as well as ready access to the Pinellas Trail. Uniquely, not too many years ago the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution allowing for golf carts to be used on the local roads, reflecting a community layout and pace that did not require an automobile. OVIS is a strong community association with a long history of advocating for their community, providing a focal point for community-building activities such as this. They have watched the adoption of the two previous *Community Overlays* and now, after working with their neighbors to identify key community features and after soliciting necessary community input and support, have crafted a series of statements that they believe reflects the character of Ozona and represent the community’s intentions, or desires, with regard to those features.

By incorporating the proposed objective and policy (and the *Overlay* boundary) into the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of County Commissioners can use the policy, with its five “bullets,” as guidance when making decisions, including planning and project decisions, that could affect Ozona in the short or long term. For the community, the incorporation of the objective and policy into the Plan means that Ozona is recognized by the County as a distinct community with defined attributes and characteristics. County staff has been aware of, and followed the progress of, Ozona’s *Community Overlay* planning initiative and believes the objective and policy (and boundary) capture the intent of the community and are consistent with the reasons for creating the *Overlay* process.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PINELLAS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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Staff finds that the proposed amendments are consistent with, and implement, the following principles, objective and policies of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan:

### **PLANNING TO STAY ELEMENT:**

## ***Sustain a Quality Urban Community and Promote Strong Neighborhoods and Diverse Housing Opportunities***

**Principle 2:** A distinguishing characteristic of Pinellas County is the presence of a diverse mix of cities, small towns and suburban communities on a small peninsula. This variety of urban environments provides people with a choice of lifestyles, and retaining and enhancing these distinctive community characteristics will ensure that they remain vital and successful communities.

**Principle 6:** Neighborhood enhancement and rejuvenation will be accomplished in a manner compatible with community character, local traditions and heritage, infrastructure capacities, the natural environment, and the overall vision for the community.

### **FUTURE LAND USE AND QUALITY COMMUNITIES ELEMENT**

1.17 Objective: Pinellas County shall preserve and seek to enhance established community values, a community's unique identity, and their social support structure, and will make decisions that are in concert with a community's established vision for their future.

1.17.3 Policy: Pinellas County may amend the Future Land Use Map Series to identify a local community with a Community Overlay, and include in the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element complementary guiding principles, policies, strategies or other appropriate provisions that are specific to that community and that further the achievement of Objective 1.17 within that community. The complementary principles, policies, strategies, or other provisions shall not conflict with or modify the characteristics, standards, criteria, and definitions contained in the Future Land Use Category Descriptions and Rules of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, shall be developed so that the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan remains internally consistent, and shall be initiated through a process approved by the Local Planning Agency.