



## **COMMUNITY OVERLAYS...**

### **As a Way to Recognize and Protect Local Community Character**

With the exception of one community in north Pinellas, the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan does not distinguish among communities in the goals, objectives and policies that guide development decisions and County programs in the unincorporated area. Over the past few years, however, discussions between County staff and unincorporated residents increasingly evidenced that policies applied uniformly throughout the County may not always recognize the diversity evident throughout the various communities and neighborhoods in the County.

At a Board workshop in 2006, the Board of County Commissioners discussed the idea of establishing the ability to identify specific unincorporated communities on the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Board supported the idea of working with communities to identify complementary principles, policies, strategies or other appropriate provisions for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose was to enable unincorporated communities to better participate in planning for their future, by identifying a specific community boundary, by developing a local vision, and by establishing policies that the Board would use in decision-making and planning that affects their community's future. To date, one community in Pinellas County has taken advantage of the Overlay process as a means to protect their low density rural character (the Alderman Rural Residential Community Overlay).

Essentially, an Overlay is intended to become what the community makes of it. There is no set requirement for what must be in an Overlay, or what it should address, other than a geographic boundary must be defined as a starting place, or focal area.

The **COMMUNITY OVERLAY PLANNING PROCESS** is intended to:

- Geographically define a specific unincorporated community in the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan (and on the Future Land Use Map).
- Provide an area of focus for a community-based vision and goals.
- Provide for an inclusive planning process that enables community stakeholders to work together on identifying, protecting or enhancing, special features, characteristics, and attributes that are unique to the community or important to its residents.
- Allow for change and improvement that further a community's vision and goals.
- Represent, upon its inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan, the Board's policy with regard to decisions and commitments that will have both short and long term effects on the community.
- Ultimately, provide for the incorporation of community-based policies into the overall long-range comprehensive planning program of the County so that County decision-making better recognizes and considers local community desires and local characteristics.