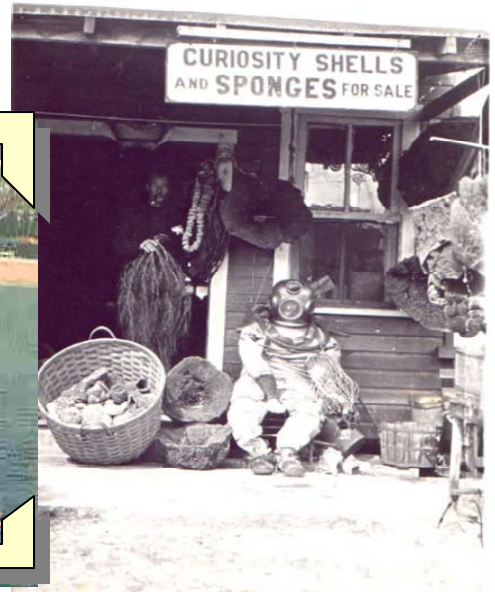


# PINELLAS COUNTY



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE



## FINAL REPORT

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## ***PINELLAS COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE (HPTF)***

**Prepared By**

**THE PINELLAS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**For the**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**February 19, 2008**

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**FINAL REPORT**

***Pinellas County  
Historic Preservation Task Force  
(HPTF)***

## **FINAL REPORT**

### ***PINELLAS COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE (HPTF)***

#### **Recognizing the Necessity to Preserve the Past**

Pinellas County is unique in that twenty four separate municipalities exist within a densely populated, urban area of 280 square miles. Each of these jurisdictions and the unincorporated area enjoy their own historical and cultural heritage, which taken together form a varied and rich past for all of Pinellas County.

Because of widespread growth and redevelopment in recent years, it has become imperative to preserve treasures of the past such as buildings, structures, public facilities, neighborhoods, and districts on a countywide basis. A prime example was the proposed redevelopment of the Belleview Biltmore Hotel, which rapidly captured the concern of the general public. The struggle to preserve this landmark also highlighted the fact that Pinellas County did not have a countywide policy to address historical protection and redevelopment issues among local communities.

In June 2005, the Board of County Commissioners took the initiative and adopted Resolution No. 05-135, which established the Historic Preservation Task Force (HPTF). (Appendix A-1) The purpose of the Task Force was to research and develop a plan for preservation in Pinellas County. Basic to such a plan was intergovernmental cooperation and mutual support between the county and municipalities, particularly those jurisdictions without preservation programs in place.

The Historic Preservation Task Force was originally chaired by Pinellas County Commissioner Ronnie Duncan; and since 2007, it has been chaired by Pinellas County Commissioner Karen Seel. From the beginning, Task Force members have consisted of historic preservation specialists and citizens with a working knowledge of that subject. These included planners, archaeologists, museum directors, architects, and representatives from historical societies, community advocates, and other interested citizens. (Appendix A-3, Appendix A-5) Meetings generally have been conducted on a monthly basis throughout the life of the Task Force. (Appendix B-1)

#### **Stepping Forward to Preserve the Past**

In its first step towards forming a countywide approach to historic preservation, the Task Force explored what action had been previously taken in this area. As it turned out, the county and various municipal governments had performed an inventory of historic structures. However, this data was approximately ten years old because the inventory had been conducted as part of implementing the Comprehensive Plan mandated by the State of Florida.

In light of this, the Task Force wanted to determine current historic preservation activity. Task Force Chairman and County Commissioner Ronnie Duncan sent a letter to all the cities inquiring what historic preservation measures they presently had in place, as well as soliciting their cooperation for an updated inventory. Three-fourths of the cities responded positively. Indeed, certain jurisdictions already had established plans, most notably St. Petersburg and Dunedin. Other municipalities responded with copies of their ordinances and statutes; several cities without plans sent letters of support. The Pinellas County Planning Department then developed a matrix documenting what each jurisdiction had in place with respect to historic preservation provisions. (Appendix C-1)

In reviewing these plans, ordinances, and statutes, the importance of developing countywide guidelines became readily apparent to the Historic Preservation Task Force. Guidelines were crucial in order to determine how landmarks, sites, and communities would be designated as protected historic resources. In updating the inventory, such criteria would protect resources already listed, as well as those potentially eligible to be placed in the inventory. In order to determine the criteria, it was first necessary to examine guidelines on a federal, state, and local level. (Appendixes C-3, C-10, and C-13)

The Task Force formed a subcommittee to draft guidelines for review by the entire Task Force. The listing of criteria was divided into two sections: general and local. The general criteria were based on those of the National Register of Historic Places. Local guidelines were drawn from an overview of Pinellas County history involving the following themes: coastal living, tourism, agriculture, transportation, wars, the Florida boom era, community life, and pre-history/archaeology. The Task Force then approved the criteria developed by that subcommittee. (Appendix B-20, Appendix B-23 and Appendix C-15, Appendix C-18) In order to disseminate this information, a public workshop was held to present the proposed historic resource criteria. This workshop was held in combination with the regular Task Force meeting on May 8, 2006, at Heritage Village. (Appendix B-19) Attendees included representatives from local municipalities, community associations, historic preservation boards, museums, historical societies, and other interested citizens.

In the meantime, the Pinellas County Planning Department updated the Geographical Information System (GIS) file of historic properties. Staff also reviewed the database, collected information from both the unincorporated areas and the cities, and inventoried historic properties.

The Task Force also explored promoting historic preservation through positive financial and tax incentives. Present Florida law outlines various financing, valuation, property assessment, and ad valorem tax exemptions as these relate to historic properties. (Appendix C-24) Urban planner Sam Casella explored the feasibility of such economic measures as tax abatement, adjustment of assessed valuations by the property appraiser, transfer of development rights (TDRs), tax-increment financing, and industrial revenue bonds. (Appendix C-21)

The Task Force had obtained input from local municipalities; updated the historic resources inventory; compiled criteria guidelines for designating future properties of historic significance; explored various economic means to save, restore, and maintain historic assets; and confirmed positive economic results from historic preservation.

In addition, the educational component of its overall plan continued to be defined as a critical part of the Task Force's work.

The focus of the Task Force turned towards getting the word out to the "citizen on the street," regarding the development of a countywide program for historic preservation. Public workshops were deemed the best venue for this purpose. Accordingly, these meetings were held on February 5, February 7, and February 13, 2007, in St. Petersburg, Tarpon Springs, and at Heritage Village respectively. (Appendix B-26) The PowerPoint presentation reviewed such topics as: outreach towards and input from local municipalities, the historic resources inventory update, development of suggested criteria for designating historic resources, and exploration of various economic and legal measures to encourage historical preservation. (Appendix B-27) Comments and recommendations from the attendees were incorporated into the Task Force's work.

As part of the work in progress, the Task Force then drafted a countywide ordinance for historic preservation as stated public policy, inclusive of all jurisdictions. The draft ordinance (Appendix B-60) was presented at two community workshops that were held on August 22, 2007, in Dunedin and August 29, 2007, in Pinellas Park. (Appendix B-50) The Task Force integrated comments and recommendations received at the workshops into the proposed ordinance.

In addition to the workshops, Task Force Chair Karen Seel visited individual municipalities with a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix B-51) and provided the latest version of the draft ordinance at council and commission meetings for their review and recommendations. The Task Force has refined the ordinance based on that feedback.

### **Preserving the Past in the Future**

The ordinance, as it is now drafted, contains the following elements of a historic preservation plan (Appendix D-1):

- establish a registry of historic resources both for the County and its municipalities
- develop and promote preservation regulations and programs supporting historic preservation
- provide education programs and technical assistance
- research, develop, and promote financial and tax incentives to encourage historic preservation
- preserve historic resources owned by Pinellas County
- place policies in the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan concerning historic preservation
- identify how modifications can be made in the procedures of projects under review to avoid negative impact on historic resources
- update and amend the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan and land development regulations
- evaluate a method to place proposals on hold that would threaten historic resources while alternatives to demolition are explored
- establish an ongoing program directed by a historic preservation board

As part of a historic preservation plan, certain features have been or are currently being addressed.

The Pinellas County Planning Department, under the direction of the Task Force, contracted with a professional historic preservation consulting firm. The firm conducted field surveys to identify and confirm possible historic resources. It also has reviewed, fine tuned, and updated the established GIS database. (Appendix C-35)

The County Planning Department has also applied for a state grant on behalf of the Task Force to develop a “Tool Box Kit” for historic preservation. A study commissioned by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources has substantiated a clear link between positive economic impact and historical preservation statewide. These positive impacts include addition of new jobs, increase in tourism, creation of a sense of place, and maintenance of property values, and so forth. (Appendix C-45) Such economic benefits serve as a strong incentive to protect historic resources, and the Tool Box will help promote these efforts. The Tool Box will consist of a book with each section being able to double as an individual flyer on specific topics, covering the A to Zs of historic preservation. Target audience for the “how to” project includes among others: special interest groups, regulatory offices, developers, and individual citizens. The Tool Box will also be available on the Pinellas County website.

Yet another option in encouraging historic preservation in the economic area is the possible future participation of county and local governments in the State of Florida’s Certified Local Government Program established in 1986. (Appendix C-81) On a federal level, the Certified Local Government (CLG) program was enacted as part of the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980. The program links three levels of government – federal, state, and local – into a preservation partnership. Certified Local Governments (CLGs) can apply for special matching grants from the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation to assist with their programs. CLGs receive priority on grant submissions and could apply for grants “on their behalf” for smaller municipalities.

With the adoption of the proposed Historic Preservation Ordinance (Appendix D-1), the Task Force has fulfilled its purpose in establishing a historic preservation program for the county and local municipalities. Most importantly, the ongoing elements for developing the impetus and future means of protecting irreplaceable historic resources have been provided. Preserved historic resources serve as reminders of the countywide history and heritage, lifestyles, and cultural diversity that can be appreciated and enjoyed by generations to come.