

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



Regarding: Proposed Amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan Adopting the East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay, including the East Lake Tarpon Community Boundary, and Supporting Vision, Objectives and Policies.

LPA Recommendation: The LPA finds that the proposed Ordinance amending the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element to adopt the East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay is consistent with the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan and recommends that the Board adopt the proposed Ordinance. (The vote was 6-0, in favor)

LPA Report No. LPA-21-10-11

Public Hearing Date: December 8, 2011

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the LPA find that the proposed amendment to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Comprehensive Plan adding the East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay, with supporting vision, objectives and policies, is consistent with the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, based on the findings of this report.

Staff further recommends that the LPA recommend adoption of the proposed amendment.

Background and Discussion

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 **East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay**, with its supporting vision, objectives and policies. 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 (now referred to as the Community Planning Act), Chapter 163.3161, Florida Statutes, as amended.

The purpose of this amendment is to add Objective 1.22 and associated policies, and Objective 1.23 and associated policies to the Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan, and to adopt an associated Vision and Community Overlay boundary for the East Lake Tarpon community. The purpose of the amendment is to recognize, by inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan, the distinctive character of unincorporated East Lake Tarpon.

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, the *Alderman Rural Residential Community*, the *Tierra Verde Community*, and the *Ozona Community* all 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 June 22, 2011, the Pinellas County Planning Director received an email from the *Council of North County Neighborhoods (CNCN)* requesting recognition of the East Lake Tarpon community in the Comprehensive Plan by adoption of a Community Overlay. In addition to the email, *CNCN* submitted a document with the proposed vision, objectives and policies, as well as a legal description and map of the *East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay* boundary. The *CNCN* in their email described the proposed *Overlay* as spelling out the East Lake Tarpon area's vision for the community and defining their collective desires relative to quality of life and development issues. They further stated that the document submitted has been well vetted to the public for over one year through public meetings, newspaper articles and presentations to businesses, community associations, service groups, and individuals. Information was mailed out to the community and businesses, and posted on the *CNCN* website. It was indicated that the document includes input from every possible stakeholder source in the East Lake Tarpon area. County staff attended several of the meetings hosted by the *CNCN* to discuss the Community Overlay procedure and purpose.

The boundary of the area to be included in the *Overlay* is generally bounded to the north by the Pasco County line, to the east by the Brooker Creek Preserve, to the south by the City of Oldsmar, and to the west by the City of Tarpon Springs and the center line of Lake Tarpon and the Lake Tarpon Outfall Canal. This boundary, proposed for adoption as 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. Note that the Brooker Creek Preserve, the Keller water treatment facility and the recreation/open space-designated property containing public water and monitoring well facilities to the east of Keller are not included within the proposed *Overlay* boundary.

The Vision, Objectives and Policies identified in the proposed Ordinance, and proposed now for inclusion in the *Future Land Use and Quality Communities Element* are depicted below.

East Lake Tarpon Community Overlay

VISION: East Lake Tarpon is a beautiful, predominately family-oriented residential area in the unincorporated area of northern Pinellas County. It is generally bordered to the west by Lake Tarpon, to the east by the Brooker Creek Preserve, to the north by the Pasco County boundary and to the south by Tampa Road, excluding the City of Oldsmar. Small businesses and limited commercial uses serve to support the residents of the community. Lake Tarpon to the west provides recreational boating activities and the community's natural lands provide many passive resource-based recreation opportunities to the residents. This area is known for its

quiet, scenic neighborhoods of unique residential communities and limited small businesses providing a safe and fun place to grow up.

Objective 1.22: The Board of County Commissioners will utilize a community overlay to define East Lake Tarpon as a cohesive community and their decisions will support the local vision, community character and natural environment. Small businesses support the residential character of the community. Maintaining the community's quality of life, low density residential character, and expansive open spaces is to be considered before any zoning changes or increased densities are considered.

Policy 1.22.1: Land use, zoning and conditional use decisions by Pinellas County that affect properties in East Lake Tarpon should be compatible with the established residential development pattern and passive recreation areas, allow for recreational boating, fishing and water activities consistent with the character of East Lake Tarpon, and/or enhance the viability of local businesses that serve the community.

Policy 1.22.2: The quality of life and the residential character of the East Lake Tarpon community will be protected by retaining sufficient acreage on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for businesses that serve the local residents, by supporting local boating, by establishing local gathering places, and by protecting the natural environment that defines the character of the community.

Policy 1.22.3: All future development in East Lake Tarpon should be compatible with the community and fit within the community's characteristic land use types, density, height, and scale.

Policy 1.22.4: Pinellas County will consider the residential and scenic use of East Lake Tarpon when making land use, zoning and conditional use decisions in the community to preserve the green space that helps define the quality of life.

Policy 1.22.5: Pinellas County will work to enhance strong communications between the County and East Lake Tarpon businesses and residents.

Policy 1.22.6: The natural areas within East Lake Tarpon will be protected or enhanced, as they provide boating and resource-based recreation functions for the residents who choose to live near these scenic lands.

Policy 1.22.7: Land use, zoning, conditional use and project decisions by Pinellas County and other agencies will place a priority on the protection of natural land resources, lake and estuary habitats and dependant species.

Policy 1.22.8: The County will strive to maintain the scenic corridor designation of East Lake Road (County Road 611) and Keystone Road (County Road 582), and consider this residential-oriented scenic corridor designation when evaluating land use and zoning changes within the corridors or expansion of commercial zones in the East Lake Tarpon area.

Objective 1.23: Identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements necessary to maintain public safety and quality of life of East Lake Tarpon.

Policy 1.23.1: Pinellas County will identify infrastructure improvements that support the Vision for East Lake Tarpon and include them within the Capital Improvements Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan and/or in other applicable implementing plans or programs, if financially feasible.

Policy 1.23.2: In determining priorities for infrastructure improvements, Pinellas County will consider input from the community.

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 residents, 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.

East Lake Tarpon will be the fourth such community. East Lake Tarpon is one of the more recently developed unincorporated communities, with many of its neighborhoods being established during the past 30 years. It enjoys a strong connection with its natural surroundings, and has a few concentrated commercial areas that primarily serve the needs of community residents. The *CNCN* is a recently formed association that promotes communication and cooperation between member organizations in northern Pinellas County, fosters a sense of community, provides a forum for member organizations, and acts as an advocate for their community, providing a focal point for community-building activities such as this. They have examined the adoption of the three previous *Community Overlays* and now, after working with their neighbors to identify key community features and after soliciting extensive community input and support, have crafted a vision and series of objectives and policies that they believe reflects the character of East Lake Tarpon and represents the community’s intentions, or desires, with regard to those features.

By incorporating the proposed vision, objectives and policies (and the *Overlay* boundary) into the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of County Commissioners can use them as guidance when making decisions, including planning and project decisions that could affect East Lake Tarpon in the short or long term. For the community, the incorporation of the vision, objectives and policies into the Plan means that East Lake Tarpon is recognized by the County as a distinct community with defined boundaries, attributes and characteristics. County staff has been aware of and followed the progress of East Lake Tarpon’s *Community Overlay* planning initiative and believes the vision, objectives and policies (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

Staff finds that the proposed amendments are consistent with and implement the following adopted principles, objectives 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 the 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.

