

**CONA
PIER & Waterfront Master Plan Committee**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
THE DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN**

“Downtown is everybody’s neighborhood.”

(Approved by Executive Committee, September 2013)

Introduction

One of St. Petersburg’s greatest assets is its Downtown Waterfront Parks. They define St. Petersburg as a city that celebrates, values, and enjoys its parks and green space as well as its adjacent subtropical tropical waters. The downtown waterfront parks stretch from Poynter Park adjacent to the former Dali Museum building on the south to Coffee Pot Park on the north. They cover about four linear miles and encompass more than one hundred acres. Included within this area are now fifteen parks and the Pier. These parks are not reserved solely for the pleasure of our visitors and tourists, or solely for our downtown residents. They are for the enjoyment of all the city’s residents. “Downtown is everybody’s neighborhood.”

At the urging of our downtown neighborhoods and many other associated organizations a referendum was held in 2011 calling for the creation of a Downtown Waterfront Master Plan (DWMP) by July 2015. The DWMP is intended to provide the first integrated vision for the city’s entire downtown waterfront and its many uses by establishing a master plan and policy framework of guiding principles for future decision making. It will be used as an umbrella policy document and concept plan.

The City has contracted with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to prepare a draft plan. ULI will utilize an Advisory Services Panel of national experts to meet with community persons to obtain their ideas, concerns, and recommendations. The Panel will visit St. Petersburg between September 29 and October 4th, and will meet with a variety of “stakeholders” including downtown residents, neighborhood associations, downtown institutions such as USF St. Petersburg, the city arts organizations, sports leaders, downtown businesses and corporations.

The designated waterfront parks enjoy special protections under the City Charter. No waterfront property or park owned by the City may be sold or donated without specific authorization by a majority vote in a City-wide referendum. A lease of up to three years for residentially zoned city-owned waterfront property and up to five years for commercially zoned waterfront property owned by the city may be let upon an affirmative vote of at least six members of the City Council. Leases of greater terms must be approved through a referendum. (Albert Whitted Airport may be leased for up to 25 years, and the Ships Store in Demens Landing Park, part of the Pier/approach, and the Port area may be leased for up to ten years.)

CONA RECOMMENDATIONS

The following goals and objectives are based on the Downtown Neighborhood Association “Downtown Waterfront Vision Statement,” first adopted in October, 2010, and subsequently endorsed by the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA), with amendment. The CONA Pier Review

Committee includes Will Michaels, Bahama Shores, Chair; Paul Bourdreux, Historic Old Northeast; Kurt Donley, Grand Central; Mike Gulley, Coquina Key; Jim Shattman, Crossroads & Azalea; Kai Warren, Historic Roser Park; Judy Landon, Harris Park; Robbie Thompson, Westminster Heights; Marilyn Olsen, Downtown Neighborhood Association; and others.

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT

Our vision is for a scenic Downtown Waterfront that offers outstanding parkland and other amenities for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. Our waterfront parks shall be well integrated with the greater downtown, and waterfront public lands shall be maintained in perpetuity as a high-quality public resource.

GOALS

1. PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT: As the most significant collection of public spaces within the city, the downtown waterfront parks shall be continually preserved, improved, and where appropriate, expanded.

- The city shall develop a comprehensive Downtown Waterfront Master Plan by 2015 and such plan shall be significantly updated every 7 years.
- By 2025, downtown St. Petersburg shall be recognized nationally and internationally as a premier urban waterfront destination with the goal of doubling the number of annual visitors, both residents and tourists, to the waterfront parks and facilities.
- Proposed major changes to waterfront park properties, facilities and infrastructure shall require a public participatory process
- No portion of the waterfront park property shall be sold or leased for private use without approval by the citizens of St. Petersburg through referendum, as provided in the City Charter; the Charter should be amended to extend the requirement of ratification to the construction of major structures on waterfront parkland.
- . Designate Pelican Parking area as DC-P (Downtown Core-Park). This valuable piece of waterfront property is now zoned DC-3, permitting development of residential, offices, hotels, specialty realty, and mixed uses. It is the last major parcel of undeveloped land on the waterfront not included in the waterfront parks. Alternatively, establish a special designation permitting structures specifically related to programming associated with a new Pier (family entertainment, restaurants, amphitheater, marina support, and limited retail).
- . City restore park upkeep budget to at least 2000 level by 2017.

- . Fully Support the new Downtown Waterfront Park Foundation in its mission of partnering with the city to preserve and enhance our historic downtown waterfront parks. Encourage similar stewardship of other city parks.
- . Add Lassing Park in nearby Bayboro to the Downtown Waterfront Park system.
- . Develop plans to address projected three foot rise in sea level by 2100.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: The downtown waterfront shall be where St. Petersburg makes most manifest its commitment to the environment through best practices for building construction and

operations, water conservation, appropriate landscaping, marina operations, and marine habitat restoration.

- All new buildings shall be LEED Platinum certified or better. Any major renovation of an existing city-owned building shall trigger an upgrade to LEED Silver or better; and all city-owned buildings shall be upgraded by 2020 at the latest.
- The use of renewable energy sources shall be encouraged within the waterfront park properties and by 2020 the use of fossil fuel energy sources within the waterfront park properties shall be 50 percent of 2010 levels.
- All new plumbing fixtures and irrigation systems shall comply with WaterSense specifications. By 2016, all existing city-owned plumbing fixtures and irrigation systems shall comply with WaterSense specifications.
- All landscaping shall be native or adapted and taken together shall express St. Petersburg's unique ecology.
- The highest standards of marina management – including fuel, trash, and wastewater – shall be implemented.
- There shall be no additional loss to marine life ecosystems and efforts shall be undertaken to restore marine life.
- As existing seawalls deteriorate, they shall be replaced with natural shoreline where appropriate, or with new seawalls designed to support marine life and allow pedestrian access to water.

3. PEDESTRIAN FIRST: Within the waterfront parks, priority shall be given to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit, in that order, with significant reductions in automobile traffic and parking.

- The transportation system within the waterfront parks shall be designed to give clear priority to pedestrians.
- By 2020 a continuous pedestrian-only waterfront promenade at least 12 feet wide and using premium materials shall be constructed from 5th Avenue South to 5th Avenue North. The full or partial closure of Bayshore Drive to automobile traffic shall be considered as one alternative to achieve this goal.
- Wherever practical, designated bicycle lanes shall be installed on public streets within and adjacent to the waterfront parks. By 2020, a primary bike trail shall be completed, extending from Poynter Park to Vinoy Park, separate from automobile and pedestrian traffic.
- An inventory of parking spaces within the waterfront parks, including both parking lots on the Pier Upland, shall be conducted and the number of parking spaces shall be reduced by no less than 25 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030.

4. BALANCED USES: The waterfront district shall be a balance of active and passive places such that both residents and visitors are frequently drawn to it for a variety of uses and activities.

- An analysis shall be undertaken to determine the amount of publicly accessible green space within the waterfront parks and this amount shall be increased by no less than 10 percent by 2020 and 20 percent by 2030. This can be achieved by either decreasing the current amount of impervious surfaces within the existing parks or adding to the park system.
- The waterfront district shall contain a diversity of active and passive elements including striking natural settings, recreational activities, artistic expressions, historic acknowledgements, community gathering places, and educational resources.
- The variety of places, facilities and activities shall promote frequent participation by all segments of the community and be a powerful magnet for both residents and visitors.
- The Pier and Pier Approach shall be improved in a way that celebrates St. Petersburg's unique geography, history, and sense of place as a waterfront city such that it becomes the visual and functional focal point of the downtown waterfront.

- . A sculpture walk along Bayshore and other park areas should also include murals/reliefs reflecting city's history, including Native American history.ⁱ
- . Increase recreational and play opportunities for children and youth in the vicinity of the Pier upland.
 - The new downtown waterfront master plan shall include recommendations to significantly increase the public use of the Al Lang Field property and adjacent parking lot, including continued potential use as a baseball venue.ⁱⁱ
 - Facilitate public access to public waterfront events and activities; assure activities are affordable for persons of all income levels; emphasize pedestrian-friendly measures, including access to water's edge.
- . Facilitate additional dockage at the Port for pleasure boats of all types. Develop a port/basin for transient boating, with support facilities.
- . A permanent home for the Saturday Morning Market should be established within the waterfront park district, including a viable plan for access to include parking.
- . Coordinate and integrate city and private waterfront facility plans and institutions with the new Downtown Waterfront Master Plan.
- . Integrate any future pending New Pier planning with CONA recommendations for the master plan; consult with CONA, St. Petersburg Preservation, and Downtown Neighborhood Association regarding new Pier planning.
- . Implement a Marine Discovery Center either as a part of the pending Pier program or as a part of Bayboro Port planning.ⁱⁱⁱ
- . Emphasize opportunities for fishing along the waterfront that do not conflict with other activities. Use lower level boardwalks and street end docks and overlooks to accomplish this.
- . Emphasize noise regulations in the downtown waterfront area that respect the needs of downtown residents.
- . Strengthen relationship/integration with Bayboro Coast Guard facilities/auxiliaries.
- . Relocate the central bus connecting center away from Williams Park as part of integrated transportation plan.

5. DOWNTOWN CONNECTIONS: The waterfront parks shall be integrated with downtown both physically and visually through such means as pedestrian connections, view corridors, transit routes, and appropriate edges.

- From 5th Avenue South to 5th Avenue North, including alleys, all existing east-west view corridors shall be preserved as far west as 4th Street. View corridors that have been obstructed shall be reopened wherever possible.
- From 5th Avenue South to 5th Avenue North, all existing east-west pedestrian routes from downtown to the waterfront, including alleys, shall be preserved.
- Pedestrian routes that have been obstructed shall be re-established wherever possible.
- Extensive transit service that is attractive to both residents and visitors shall be implemented between the downtown core and the waterfront district in order to reduce the use of automobiles and improve the pedestrian character and quality of the waterfront experience.
- . Develop a long-term plan significantly reducing parking on the waterfront by providing alternative access through mass transit and other modalities. Any additional parking facilities should be located west of Beach Drive.
- . Develop integrated traffic management plan that gives priority to pedestrians.
- Emphasize use of Bayshore Drive rather than extend Beach Drive further south using waterfront park land. Bayshore Drive provides for a continuous walkway from the Vinoy to the Dali Museum, and links to Beach Drive at several intersections.

- . Establish promenade along 2nd Ave. N. to connect the waterfront parks with Mirror Lake, and an esplanade and sculpture walk along Bayshore from the Vinoy Hotel (5th Ave. North) to the Dali Museum (4th Avenue South).
- . Explore opportunities for pedestrian bridges between the four main waterfront parks (Vinoy, Spa, Demens Landing, and Albert Whitted).
 - The quality and character of the downtown waterfront district south of Central Avenue shall be improved to match the quality and character north of Central Avenue. The city shall implement a combination of zoning regulations, public property improvements, and private sector incentives to achieve this goal.
- . Expand transient marina slips on the waterfront, **including** implementing additional transient marina slips south of the Pelican Parking area on the approach to the Pier.
- . Further explore need for and feasibility of increasing marina slips in the North Yacht Basin, taking into consideration a possible pedestrian bridge at the mouth of the basin.
- . Provide for future water taxi between St. Petersburg and Tampa.
- . Connect Historic Booker Creek bike/pedestrian trail to Waterfront Parks.

Notes

¹ Parks upkeep budget has dropped from \$907,000 in 2000 to \$291,000 in 2011.

² Possible simulated Indian Temple Mound on the upland to the Pier as observation point and opportunity to honor our pre-Columbian history.

³ In this regard the one hundred year history and tradition of baseball presence in some form on the waterfront is noted, and its continuation in some form is advocated. Alternative baseball uses for the Al Lang site should be considered including spring training, international baseball, and minor league. This becomes of even greater concern should the Tampa Bay Rays relocate from St. Petersburg at some future date.

⁴ A Marine Discovery Center is an educational and entertainment facility designed to present the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary, and to highlight the work of the marine research and protective programs operating at the Bayboro Marine Science District and other city locations. Such a facility would partner with the local marine science community (SRI, Marine Technology Research Center, NOAA, State Fisheries Service, and USF College of Marine Science) and both public and private schools and colleges. The Center should be oriented particularly towards children and youth. (A Marine Discovery Center may include aspects of an aquarium, but marine education is the primary focus.)


