

Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan

Background Report

Introduction

Purpose

This supporting document provides a summary of the previous community planning efforts and expanded background for the updated Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan, captures specific desires of the community, and provides additional context for potential future actions to implement the plan.

Context

The Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan (previously The Greater Palm River Area Community Plan) was first adopted in 2008. In 2022, the Board of County Commissioners requested the Community's Plan be updated.

Between 2022 and 2050, the Palm River-Progress Village Community population is projected to increase by roughly 15,000. Over the same period, employment is projected to grow by over 12,000 jobs and the area will have over 5,000 new housing units. The Community is geographically well positioned with respect to markets and labor; however, the residents of the Palm River-Progress Village Community describe the area as lacking sufficient suburban-level services even though the area is in the County's Urban Service Area, and that rapid unbalanced growth may threaten the character of the area.

Through the 2022-2024 Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan Update efforts, the Community's conversation was continued and captured. The community's updated vision and goals were established through this process, as summarized in this document. Also identified were specific aspirational actions and improvements that could not be executed within the scope of a community plan, adopted into the Comprehensive Plan, but are still important to the successful implementation of the Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan. As such, those actionable items are documented herein.

History of the Community

The Palm River-Progress Village Community is comprised of various neighborhoods, with rich histories. The area was first settled over 100 hundred years ago as an agricultural area providing a wide variety of perishable produce to the City of Tampa and beyond. In the late 1940's and early '50's Palm River was a rural area consisting of small family farms, cattle operations, approximately 12 major dairy farms and lots of open spaces. The access to the Palm River community was US 41 (50th Street) and Causeway Boulevard which ended at Highway 301. Palm River Road cut through the community and crossed Highway 301 to what is now Highway 60. Today some of the footprints of these small farms can still be seen as industrial development supporting Port Tampa Bay, housing developments, or vacant, agriculturally zoned land.

Retirement and working-class neighborhoods began to develop in the area after World War II. In the mid-1950's a South Tampa developer, Mel Larsen, purchased the Lane Dairy and acquired the land from about 70th Street to Highway 301. He intended to build more affordable housing, so the idea was to pre-fabricate components in a factory on Highway 301 and move them to the project site to be assembled. The houses ranged in price from \$9,500 to \$12,000. This development became known as **Clair Mel City** and drastically changed the area. Larsen later sold off large areas west of 78th Street which was developed by another

developer and became known as **Winston Park**. Around this time, the **Adamo Acres** neighborhood, located along Palm River west of 78th Street, was also being developed. In the 1970's the **Green Ridge Estates** and **Sanson Park** neighborhoods developed adjacent to the established Clair-Mel City.

[Placeholder for Vision Concept Map]

Figure 1: Adopted Vision Concept Map

Progress Village was also founded in the 1950s as a planned community by a group of African American businessmen led by C. Blythe Andrews Sr. The goal was to create a self-sufficient, middle-class community for Black residents during a time of racial segregation. It was one of the first suburban developments for African Americans in the region. The residents of the neighborhood also played a role in the desegregation of public facilities and schools in the Tampa area. Over the years, Progress Village continued to evolve, welcoming residents from diverse backgrounds, and has maintained its commitment to education, civic engagement, and cultural preservation.

Community Planning Context and Engagement

In this section, we will summarize the 2022-2024 community planning efforts [i.e., demographics/context, engagement opportunities provided, SWOT summary]

The Palm River-Progress Village Community's Aspirations

The following statements are written in the Community's voice as potential action strategies to further implement the stated Palm River-Progress Village Community Plan goals. This list is not all-inclusive; other opportunities may present themselves over time, and this list shall be updated during future Community Plan iterations as the community conversation continues.

In support of Goal 1- Balanced Growth of the Built Environment:

- The timely expansion of public utilities services such as water and sewer lines and reclaimed water, and enhanced storm-water management for all neighborhoods in the community, especially those in flood risk areas.
- Redevelopment of older commercial centers using best practice ideals which promotes sound local business growth to support local economic and employment opportunities.
- Improvements to the appearance and the safety of the primary and commercial roadways based on the Complete Streets Guide, i.e., Palm River Road, 78th Street, US 41/50th Street, Causeway Boulevard, US 301, and Progress Boulevard/Madison Avenue and Maydell Drive, including but not limited to: connected sidewalks and bike lanes/shared paths.
- Reduced traffic congestion and increased public transportation alternatives.
- Provide new transit services are concurrent with new development and increased densities.
- Increase frequency on existing local bus routes to downtown Tampa and Brandon.

- Evaluation of the need to add express bus service to downtown Tampa/Marion Transit Center by routing a new or existing route to 78th Street on its way to the Selmon Crosstown Expressway.
- Identification and development of park- and- ride facilities including consideration of:
 - Addition of a park- and- ride at the new location of the Progress Village Sports Complex and a park- and- ride/small transfer center at 78th Street and Palm River Road.
- Bus stops that include shelters, lighting, adequate pavement, waste receptacles, appropriate street furniture and other enhancements and amenities.
- Future commuter rail or other rail transit to serve the Palm River community.
- Expansion of broadband internet services.

In support of Goal 2- Safe and Secure Community:

- Reduction of criminal activity through establishment of neighborhood watches and increased police patrol within neighborhoods of concern.
- Community partnership with Code Enforcement.

In support of Goal 3- Foster Community Character and Identity:

- Gateways at the following locations using landscape features, public art, and/or signage:
 - Palm River Bridge and US 41/50th Street
 - Palm River Bridge and Maydell Drive
 - Selmon Expressway and 78th Street
 - Causeway Boulevard and City of Tampa city limits
 - US 301 and Causeway Boulevard
 - US 41/50th Street and Riverview community boundary
 - Progress Boulevard
- Establish community gathering places in which citizens socialize and celebrate local events.
 - Improve the intersection of Maydell Drive and Palm River Road, and surrounding area, to 58th Street to reflect the importance of this community gathering place by including:
 - Street treatments and signage along Palm River Road, 58th Street, and Maydell Drive
 - An interconnected pedestrian walking system that connects the existing River Park, softball fields and Palm River Elementary School
 - A bus pull- off and shelter at 58th Street and Palm River Road
 - Location of a community center near the softball fields.

In support of Goal 4- Diverse Economic Growth:

- Access to more quality public and private healthcare and social services, such as, but not limited to: Senior residential facilities, Urgent Care facilities, Nursing Homes, Senior Daycares, Animal Clinics, Military Veterans Services, shelters for the unhoused, and childcare facilities.
- Access to multiple quality grocery stores within the community.
- Maintenance and redevelopment of industrial properties that have ensured a clean and safe environment.

In support of Goal 5-Protection and Maintenance of Natural and Recreational Spaces:

- Enhanced and expanded adult programs at the Progress Village Community Center.
- Develop a community center at Rubin Padgett Sports Complex.

- Establish a working relationship with the City of Tampa to increase the likelihood of realizing our strategies and vision for Palm River. This may include developing an agreement with the City, defining the development and uses of lands adjacent to the Palm River and McKay Bay.

Closing

In this section, we'll reiterate the importance of community planning and the consideration of the Community's aspirations.

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