

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT

Residential Use

Existing Residential Conditions

As stated in Chapter 2, Existing Conditions, there are 540 acres of land in Downtown Clearwater. Of this acreage, approximately 28 percent or 148.8 acres are devoted to residential land uses. Thirteen percent of this area is devoted to multi-family use; five percent to two-family or duplex use and over nine percent is occupied by single-family dwellings. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are a total of 2,801 housing units in Downtown. Forty percent of these units were constructed before 1960. Between 1990 and 2000, there has been an almost seven percent decrease in housing units but conversely a population increase of almost seven percent from 4,825 people in 1990 to 5,160 persons in 2000. Renters primarily occupy housing in Downtown. In 2000, almost 75 percent of the total housing units were renter-occupied whereas the rental rate for the city as a whole was only 38 percent. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Downtown is \$86,919, which is significantly lower than the City's median of \$113,416. For a better understanding of the location and types of housing located in Downtown, a detailed review of each character district follows.

Downtown Core District

In the Downtown Core there are no single-family dwellings or duplexes. There are several large multi-family developments and one smaller one. Eighty-two percent of these units were constructed between 1970 and 1979. The large multi-family projects are either located on Clearwater Harbor or directly across the street from it. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 33 percent of these units are owner-occupied. The median value of the owner occupied units is \$350,000, which is more than four times greater than the Downtown Plan area's median value and more than three times greater than the City's overall median housing value.

Old Bay District

Approximately 25 percent of the land area in the Old Bay District is used for residential purposes. The majority of these properties are located west of Osceola Avenue and between Garden Avenue and Blanche B. Littlejohn Trail. Old Bay is characterized by a variety of housing types ranging from small older single-family homes to newer multi-family housing located along Clearwater Harbor. Old Bay has a significant percentage of older home construction. Thirty percent of the housing units were constructed before 1940 and another 35 percent were constructed between 1940 - 1959. Home ownership rates are much higher in Old Bay (41 percent) than in the Downtown as a whole (25 percent). Housing values are also higher with the median value of owner-occupied housing at \$97,500 compared to \$86,919 in the entire Downtown.

South Gateway District

There are very few housing units (17) remaining in South Gateway and they occupy only four percent of the District's land area. Over the years some of the District's housing stock, mainly along Turner Street, has been converted to office uses. Also, the City has demolished several unsafe dwellings in recent years because the property owners refused

to make the necessary repairs to render them safe. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 8.7 percent of the housing in South Gateway is owner-occupied and has a median value of \$99,265.

Town Lake Residential District

Most of the residential uses located in the Town Lake Residential District are located in the vicinity of Drew and Grove Streets. Single-family and two-family dwellings comprise the majority of housing in this District and almost 90 percent is renter-occupied. The median value of owner-occupied units is \$87,500, which is consistent with the median value of the Downtown Plan area. Almost 45 percent of the housing in this District was constructed before 1950 with 23 percent being constructed prior to 1939. Several townhouse projects are currently under construction, which represents the first new housing construction to occur in this area in quite some time. It should be noted that the southeast section of the Town Lake Residential District is located in the expanded CRA.

Town Lake Business Park District

Only eight percent of the land located in the Town Lake Business Park District is occupied by residential uses. Single-family and two-family dwellings are scattered throughout the area between Court and Pierce Streets, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Madison Avenues and 71 percent was constructed prior to 1950. Eleven percent of these units are owner-occupied and the median value is \$87,500. This District is located in the expanded CRA and also has a very high rate of renter-occupancy approaching 89 percent.

East Gateway District

The majority of land (53 percent) in the East Gateway District is devoted to residential uses. Twenty-two percent of the area is occupied by multi-family uses, two-family dwellings occupy almost 12 percent and single-family dwellings occupy over 19 percent. These uses are located north and south of Cleveland Street and Gulf to Bay Boulevard. The housing in East Gateway is newer than that found in other character districts. Almost 70% was constructed between 1950 and 1980. Like the majority of Downtown, East Gateway has a high percentage of rental units approaching 77 percent of the total. The median value of owner-occupied housing is \$80,556 which is almost \$6,000 less than the median for the Downtown Plan area. The entire East Gateway is located in the expanded CRA.

Existing Income Conditions

In addition to the high renter-occupancy rate and an aging housing stock, an important factor affecting housing in Downtown are low income levels. The median household income in Downtown is \$32,254, which represents an 80% increase since 1990. Even though this increase in income is very positive, the median value remains less than the median for the City as a whole (\$40,480). Large concentrations of low-moderate income persons are found in all character districts, with the exception of the Downtown Core. In fact, all but two Census block groups located in Downtown have been classified by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as low/moderate income. This means that at least 51% of the household incomes are less than 80% of the median income for the City. Following is a breakdown of median income by each character district.

Table 6
Median Household Income

<u>Character District*</u>	<u>Median Value</u>
Downtown Core	\$67,130
Old Bay	\$29,231
South Gateway	\$19,000
Town Lake Residential	\$21,850
Town Lake Business	\$22,857
East Gateway	\$33,102
City of Clearwater	\$40,480

*Not all character district boundaries coincide with Census Block boundaries.

Existing Housing Programs

The City of Clearwater Economic Development and Housing Department provides a variety of housing programs to assist very low- to moderate-income property owners. These programs are funded by two federal and one state program: from the federal government, the City receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) funds. From the state, The City receives State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funds. These programs are made available to Clearwater property owners directly from the City or through community non-profit partners, to which the City provides funds for specific projects. Loans are provided to homeowners for rehabilitation, down payments and closing costs, land acquisition, and replacement housing. Grants are available for emergency repairs and to social service agencies that provide services to the homeless.

Homeless Issues

Like many downtowns and especially those located in warmer climates, the City of Clearwater faces an ongoing challenge with homeless persons in Downtown. There are several thousand homeless persons in Pinellas County but it is difficult to know the number located in Clearwater. Agencies providing temporary shelter for this population, however, indicate there are not enough beds to accommodate the need. It is evident that as funding from federal and state programs continues to be reduced, the City's responsibilities for the homeless will continue to grow.

There are several components of the homeless population. There are those homeless persons seeking to improve their status and seek assistance. These persons work everyday but still need a place to live. There are also those homeless persons who elect not to seek assistance and live on the street. This group may include the mentally ill, addicted individuals or those who prefer no structured environment or assistance at all. It is this latter group of homeless that is particularly visible in Downtown and creates problems for those working, living and patronizing the area. Issues associated with this homeless group include intimidation, panhandling, crime, use of outdoor spaces for personal hygiene, etc. This homeless group is attracted to Downtown for many reasons including the location of the PSTA bus terminal, the Post Office, a blood plasma center, access to social services, day labor establishments, bars and inexpensive motels. There are a number of agencies located in Downtown that provide assistance to the homeless including the Salvation Army, Pinellas County Social Services, Calvary Baptist Church, St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen and the Clearwater Homeless Intervention Project (CHIP).

The City of Clearwater, through the lead of the Police Department, has developed innovative programs to assist homeless persons and to manage the problems related to homelessness. In 1998, the CHIP facility opened for service and was developed to operate in cooperation with the St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen. CHIP operates a 24-hour, seven days per week residential emergency shelter and provides counseling of all types for those homeless persons seeking assistance. The CHIP outreach programs assist approximately 100 persons a day. Currently, the CHIP program is seeking approval for a "mid-term", transitional housing for those who have successfully completed the short-term program and are seeking to re-enter mainstream society through employment and full-time shelter.

In an attempt to address the homeless issue in a comprehensive manner, the City of Clearwater formed a Homeless Task Force in 2002 made up of representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The Task Force is charged with identifying homeless issues and potential short and long-term solutions. Long-range objectives under consideration include the expansion of the CHIP facilities, the need for an inebriate/emergency shelter family care center in north Pinellas County, construction of additional transitional housing, permanent housing options and increased homeless funding opportunities.

Housing Policies

As described above, Downtown does not lack land devoted to residential purposes nor does the area have a housing shortage for existing residents. However, there are issues affecting Downtown's desirability as a place to live including significantly high rental occupancies, absentee landlords, overcrowding in certain areas, a relatively old housing stock, deferred housing maintenance, and a disproportionate number of low-moderate income residents. Left in its current state, it is likely that the existing housing in Downtown will only continue to attract those who do not have other housing choices.

An important aspect of the People Goal established for Downtown (page 48) is to make Downtown a place that attracts people for living. In order to reach this goal, Objectives 1G and 1I (page 49) support encouraging residential uses with a variety of densities, housing types, costs and making available incentives to gain more residential uses Downtown. Due to its location as the employment and government center, its base of potential redevelopment infill parcels, its views of Clearwater Harbor and its close proximity to Clearwater Beach, and lack of significant crime, Downtown is an excellent location for new and rehabilitated housing. In fact, this Plan anticipates a maximum build-out of 9,000 housing units and it is anticipated that an additional 600 – 1000 units could be supported in the Downtown Core in the near future.

The following policies support improving the condition of the existing Downtown housing stock, construction of new housing and strategies for improving the situation for the homeless.

- Policy 1: Support increased home ownership and improved housing maintenance by targeting Downtown for the use of CDBG, HOME and SHIP programs.
- Policy 2: Continue and expand housing rehabilitation programs for very low- to moderate-income persons with relaxed underwriting guidelines to facilitate a comprehensive impact.
- Policy 3: Increase down payment and closing cost assistance for very low- to moderate-income persons to encourage potential homeowners to purchase in Downtown.
- Policy 4: Provide assistance for the acquisition, development and rehabilitation of affordable and mixed-income multi-family properties.
- Policy 5: Target the East Gateway and Old Bay Districts for housing rehabilitation and new infill construction that will attract income-qualified property owners providing a mix of incomes.
- Policy 6: Provide funds to for-profit and non-profit housing developers and to income eligible households to acquire vacant lots and/or construct single-family dwellings in the Old Bay and East Gateway Districts.
- Policy 7: Target the existing single-family and two-family areas in the Town Lake Residential District for housing rehabilitation and increased home ownership.
- Policy 8: Target the Downtown Core, South Gateway and Town Lake Residential District for new multi-family owner and renter-occupied development.
- Policy 9: Encourage additional non-profit agencies to work in Downtown to provide additional housing.

Policy 10: Support non-profit agencies that assist the Hispanic population, especially in the East Gateway character district.

Policy 11: Support neighborhood outreach activities that teach property owners about housing maintenance skills.

Policy 12: Expand the Paint Your Heart Out program to include properties in the Downtown.

Policy 13: Continue to work with Pinellas County and other coordinating organizations to address the problem with the inebriate, addicted and chronic homeless population.

Policy 14: Continue the public/private Homeless Task Force to identify and implement short and long term solutions to the homeless issues.

Policy 15: Increase lobbying efforts to obtain more appropriations for housing programs and to secure new sources of funding.

Housing Strategies

In order to implement the above policies, the following strategies should be pursued.

Strategy 1: Consider offering the required “local contribution” to developers who are applying for housing tax credits and/or state or local multi-family bonds for projects in Downtown.

Lead: Economic Development and Housing Department

Strategy 2: Evaluate the feasibility of assisting potential low-moderate income homebuyers to purchase two-family dwellings so that they can occupy one unit and rent the other to assist in the mortgage payment.

Lead: Economic Development and Housing Department

Neighborhood Impact Assessment

According to Florida’s Community Redevelopment Act, Florida Statutes Chapter 163, Part III, a neighborhood impact assessment is required for a Redevelopment Plan if the Redevelopment Area contains low and moderate-income housing. Clearwater’s original Community Redevelopment Area and Plan were approved in 1981; the statutory regulations at the time required a “neighborhood impact element” only if a project (emphasis added) of the redevelopment plan contained and would affect low or moderate-income housing. Amendments to the Community Redevelopment Act in 1983 and again in 1984 revised the neighborhood impact element to be required if a redevelopment area (emphasis added) contained low- or moderate-income housing and if the redevelopment would affect the residents in the redevelopment area.

The eastern expansion of the Redevelopment Area does contain very low- to moderate-income housing; therefore, the neighborhood impact assessment has been conducted for this expansion area only. The statute establishes six elements that should be reviewed as part of the neighborhood impact assessment:

- Relocation
- Traffic Circulation
- Environmental Quality
- Availability of Community Facilities and Services
- Effect on School Population
- Other matters affecting the physical and social quality of the neighborhood.

Relocation

In the event that relocation of existing residents is proposed to implement this Plan, the City of Clearwater Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) will comply with the Tenant Relocation Plan provisions of Pinellas County Code (Sec. 38 - 81 through 38 - 86, as amended). In accordance with Pinellas County regulations, the CRA will provide relocation assistance if the CRA sponsors or assists redevelopment involving the acquisition of land. The City's Economic Development and Housing Department, acting as the CRA Staff, will ensure consistence with the relocation and compensation program. At a minimum, the relocation assistance will include advance written notice to tenants, advisory services to assist tenants in finding appropriate replacement housing, and payment of relocation expenses.

Although not contemplated by the Plan, should relocation of existing residents be proposed using federal funds, the project shall comply with the federal Uniform Relocation Act of 1970, (Public Law 91 - 646).

Traffic Circulation

There is only one planned change in the traffic circulation pattern within the Downtown. The City and Florida Department of Transportation are constructing a new fixed span bridge to replace the drawbridge that connects the mainland with the beach. As part of the bridge replacement, access to and from the bridge will be revised such that Court and Chestnut Streets will form a one-way pair for entrance and exit to the bridge. As a direct result of that new access, the new entry to Downtown from the eastern sections of the City will be changed to Gulf to Bay Boulevard and Cleveland Street at their intersection with Highland Street. The Florida Department of Transportation and the City currently have an agreement to designate the Court/Chestnut pair as State Road 60 as revised from the existing Gulf to Bay Boulevard and Cleveland Street designation. Therefore, Gulf to Bay Boulevard from Highland Street to Cleveland Street and the entire length of Cleveland Street will be reclaimed as local streets.

The Master Streetscape Plan, a component of this plan, envisions improving the transition of Gulf to Bay Boulevard, Highland Avenue and Court Street as well as the length of Cleveland Street through Downtown. These improvements are intended to recognize the importance of the new eastern gateway into Downtown. In addition, Gulf to Bay

Boulevard and Cleveland Street will serve as local streets for the adjacent residential neighborhoods of the expansion area as well as the neighborhood commercial focus for those neighborhoods. No changes in the secondary street pattern are planned and those streets will continue to serve as local streets for the expansion area.

The planned traffic circulation changes described above will not negatively impact the expansion area.

Environmental Quality

This impact assessment evaluated three areas of environmental quality: potable water, wastewater and stormwater management. With regard to potable water, the entirety of the expansion area has access to the City of Clearwater potable water system. Regarding wastewater service, the entire expansion area is also served by City of Clearwater wastewater system. No major improvements to either of these utilities are needed to better serve the expansion area since capacity is available to meet the anticipated redevelopment needs. Therefore, there is no expected negative impact to the expansion area with regard to potable water and wastewater services.

With regard to the stormwater management, the City has embarked on a major regional stormwater management solution within Downtown. The City has constructed a regional stormwater management retention area known as “Prospect Lake Park” which is located in the Town Lake Residential Character District south of Cleveland Street and between Prospect and Ewing Avenues. For development within selected stormwater basins, stormwater is directed to the Prospect Lake Park and chemically treated. New development within the service area has the option of discharging their stormwater into this system rather than installing an on-site stormwater retention pond. This regional stormwater pond is intended to improve the water quality system-wide as well as reducing the number of unsightly and poorly maintained individual stormwater facilities. Map 14, page 169, identifies the Town Lake Regional Stormwater District and the Town Pond location.

Availability of Community Facilities and Services

Within the greater Downtown, there are a variety of community facilities and services available to residents. Existing community facilities include a variety of parks and recreational facilities, governmental offices, social service agencies, churches and community clubs. The Plan recognizes the importance of these facilities in the life of residents and the Plan supports the retention of these facilities in the area.

Effect on School Population

There are no public schools located in the expansion area. However, there are several elementary schools in close proximity to the expansion area to serve the existing and new school age children. St. Cecilia School is located on Court Street at Hillcrest Avenue and is the sole private, parochial school in the expansion area drawing students from throughout the City. The redevelopment plan will not have a detrimental effect on providing school facilities to the anticipated new students in the area.

Other Matters Affecting the Physical and Social Quality of the Neighborhood

The proposed redevelopment activities are intended to provide stability to both the residential area as well as the commercial uses within the expansion area. The planned infrastructure projects will enhance the image of the neighborhood and serve to attract new businesses including retail and office development. The improved maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and landscaping as well as housing rehabilitation will improve the quality of the neighborhood. Overall, the proposed redevelopment strategies will serve to increase the quality of life for all expansion area residents.

In summary, the proposed strategies in this Redevelopment Plan are not expected to negatively impact the expanded Community Redevelopment Area.

MASTER STREETScape AND WAYFINDING PLAN

The Downtown Clearwater Master Streetscape and Wayfinding Plan, prepared by Bellomo-Herbert and Shaughnessy Hart, provides conceptual streetscape design plans for prototypical Downtown streets, as well as public signage within the Downtown. The public investment associated with this Plan is evidence of the City's confidence in the future of Downtown Clearwater. It also sets a high standard for improvements in the public realm, which will dictate the same level of quality in the private realm.

The streetscape plan is intended to accomplish the objectives listed below:

- Improve the pedestrian and vehicular environments within Downtown;
- Create opportunities for an active street life e.g. sidewalk cafes, special events, etc.;
- Better define the Downtown area;
- Improve aesthetics of Downtown; and
- Create a sense of identity for the Downtown.

The Master Streetscape Plan establishes a hierarchy of four street types within Downtown, excluding Old Bay. In addition to the streetscape treatments listed below and illustrated on the following pages, gateways into Downtown will have a specialized treatment that includes a historic pillar that is rooted in similar pillars once located on Cleveland Street just west of Osceola Avenue. Additionally, gateways will include enhanced levels of landscaping and identification signage.

- *Downtown Corridor.* This corridor is comprised of Cleveland Street west of South Myrtle Avenue, South Fort Harrison Avenue and North Osceola Avenue. The Plan specifies a significantly high level of streetscape treatment for these streets because of their function as the major pedestrian streets within the Downtown. Improvements include a variety of paving materials, medians, palm and oak trees, decorative lighting fixtures that can support banners and hanging plants, a fountain plaza and wrought iron-style street furnishings. The Plan also