



**PLAN PUNTA GORDA**  
MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
DECEMBER 3 2019





Figure 1.1: Public process schedule

# PUBLIC PROCESS

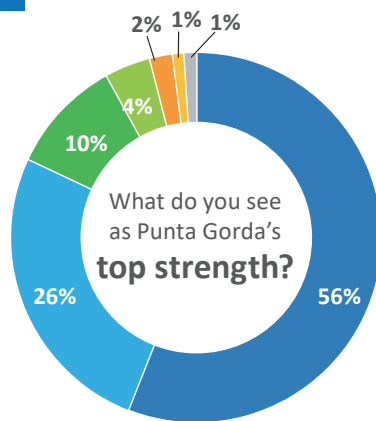
## SITE VISIT AND PROJECT KICKOFF

The Punta Gorda Citywide Master Plan process kicked-off in December 2018 with a conference call between city staff and the consultant team. The team followed up that meeting with a 3-day site visit in late January 2019, where they met with city departments, planning staff, council members, and local stakeholders and community groups to begin assessing the key challenges and opportunities that are addressed in this master plan.

## PUBLIC CHARRETTE: CREATING A COMMON VISION

From Monday, March 11, 2019 through Friday, March 15, 2019, members of the Dover-Kohl team went to Punta Gorda to engage the community in a public design charrette. The planning team was led by Dover, Kohl and Partners and included Partners for Economic Solutions, and Hall Planning and Engineering. During the week, the team presented initial findings, gathered feedback, and worked on potential design and policy solutions for Punta Gorda. The goal during this time was to identify key priorities and to build consensus on a vision and direction for the future of Punta Gorda. The week culminated in a “Work-in-Progress” meeting on Friday, March 15, 2019 to summarize the week’s events, possible solutions, and confirm the path for the master plan. Over the course of the charrette, the planning team heard from over 500 participants during the hands-on sessions, 200 visitors during the Gilchrist Park open house, held 30 interviews and technical meetings, met over 120 visitors during the open design studio, and had over 1,000 hands-on touch points on printouts and maps.

Figure 1.2: Poll results



- Quality of place / sense of community (festivals, community groups, public spaces, historic character)
- Charlotte Harbor and boating
- Access to nature trails and active recreation (biking, golf, pickle ball, etc.)
- Shops, dining, and entertainment
- Optimally-sized community
- Family-friendly atmosphere
- Great school system





## KEY FINDINGS

### KEY HOUSING ISSUES

- Dominance of single-family canal housing
- Retiree demand drives higher housing prices
- High prices are unattainable for young people and families
- Workers can't afford to live in town, only 9 percent of local workers live in town
- 22 percent of workers commute 25+ miles
- Hard to attract and retain young workers

### CITY BUDGET ISSUES

- Budget reserves are too low
- New development offers the best potentials for higher city revenues
- Revenues are too dependent on residential property tax
- City employee salaries are not competitive
- Capital improvements have been constrained by lack of funding
- The tight budget constrains new initiatives

### FISCAL IMPACTS

- Land use limits reduce potential revenues
- More efficient use of land increases city revenues
- Annexations would generate higher revenues but also higher costs

### MASTER PLAN IMPLICATIONS

#### Housing

- Develop a greater variety of housing
- Increase the amount and density of multi-family development
- Build more housing in and near downtown

#### Placemaking

- Use urban design and place-making to generate more activity and attract more businesses to the downtown and historic district

#### Regulatory

- Revise the land development regulations and development approval process

# 1 Make Downtown a vibrant and attractive place

*Central Idea: Fill in the missing gaps downtown to attract more residents and visitors and invest in street and public space improvements that increase safety and comfort for people of all ages and abilities walking, biking, and driving.*

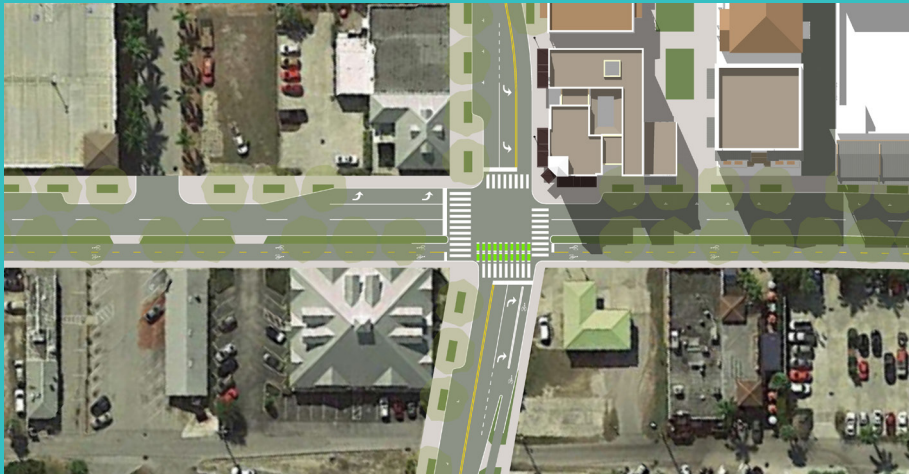
BIG CHALLENGES	KEY CITY INVESTMENTS & POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of housing and people living Downtown</li> <li>• Insufficient leasable commercial space to achieve a critical mass of restaurants, experiential retail, and office</li> <li>• Business owners struggling to attract and retain quality employees</li> <li>• Business owners struggling to keep up sales during low season</li> <li>• Large empty parcels, sitting vacant for years</li> <li>• Safety and comfort of people walking and biking downtown, particularly when crossing US 41</li> <li>• Loss of historic assets, threatening its national register designation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively encourage the development of large opportunity sites downtown</li> <li>• Revise zoning and land-use regulations to allow enough intensity and predictability to get realistic developments built and attract more residents</li> <li>• Consider the adoption of a development bonus program which grants additional development potential in exchange for community benefits</li> <li>• Reduce the number of lanes on US 41 Downtown to slow down vehicles and accommodate a two-way cycle track northbound, connecting to the harborwalk</li> <li>• Restore Marion and Olympia Ave to two-way traffic to improve traffic flow and reduce traffic speed</li> <li>• Transform Taylor St from Marion Ave to Harborside Ave into a shared festival street</li> <li>• Adopt a local register of historic properties and new local historic districts to prevent the loss of historic structures</li> <li>• Study and adopt parking strategies to manage and maximize parking options</li> </ul>

## RE-IMAGINED TAYLOR ST AND NEW DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SQUARE



At the heart of downtown is the City Market Place site. The vision for this area centers around a new Town Square. This public space is made possible by an incentive program which provides additional permitted homes per acre and/or building height in exchange for community benefits. Pedestrian-oriented retail, dining, and mixed-use buildings surround the square and adjacent blocks, maintaining lower building heights on Marion St to preserve it's historic nature.

## US 41 NORTHBOUND LANE DROP AND BIKE FACILITIES – PLAN DRAWING



US41 Northbound as it goes through Downtown Punta Gorda is one of the key locations where different modes of transportation come together and must address the basic needs of users, such as safety, convenience, and comfort. The street is redesigned to accommodate two lanes of traffic, eliminating the left-turn only lane at Retta Esplanade and making space for a two-way cycle track, on street parking, and shade trees.

## U-SAVE SITE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE



Similar to City Market Place, this development site is re-imagined with pedestrian oriented retail and commercial uses on the ground floors and apartments above. It also features 2 to 3-story townhouses, leasable office space, mid-block parking tucked away from view of the surrounding streets, and public greenspace in the form of a small urban park on the corner of US 41 and Olympia Ave.

# Celebrate Charlotte Harbor & Welcome More Boating

***Central Idea:** Partner with waterfront property owners, yacht clubs, and local boating advocates, to increase amenities for visiting and local boaters, protect the unique marine habitat of the harbor, and uphold Punta Gorda’s reputation as a world class sailing, boating, and fishing destination.*

BIG CHALLENGES	KEY CITY INVESTMENTS & POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of upland facilities, boat slips, and day docks to accommodate the demand from local and visiting boaters</li> <li>• East mooring ball field is inaccessible to boats of a certain size due to the height restrictions of the US 41 bridges</li> <li>• Derelict and abandoned boats left along the harbor with insufficient enforcement of existing regulations from police</li> <li>• Dinghy docks at Gilchrist Park</li> <li>• Insufficient public funds and capacity to expand and operate additional public marinas and boating facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with Fishermen’s Village, the PG Waterfront Hotel, and the Sheraton Four Points to expand their marinas and provide upland facilities and additional day docks for visiting boaters</li> <li>• Invest in a western mooring ball field and adopt and enforce strict regulations for boaters using these mooring balls</li> <li>• With the addition of a new mooring field, consider relocating the dinghy docks at Gilchrist Park to the Charlotte Harbor Event Center, Fishermen’s Village, and the PG Waterfront Hotel.</li> <li>• Construct new kayak launches</li> <li>• Invest in new artistic lighting for the Gilchrist and Barron Collier bridges that can be programmed for special events only or for certain hours of the night</li> </ul>

## NEW MARINA & FLOATING TIKI BAR: SHERATON FOUR POINTS PHASE 2



There are existing entitlements for the expansion of the Sheraton Four Points that were considered in the future vision of this key waterfront area. This vision includes a new marina that provides water related activities and boat slips, apartments that help attract residents to downtown, a new parking garage with an amenity deck, and a new Tiki Bar projected out over the water serving as an attraction for locals and visitors alike.

## GILCHRIST BRIDGE LIT UP WITH LED LIGHTING FOR A SPECIAL EVENT



As an enhancement to the city for locals and visitors alike, the US 41 bridge can incorporate decorative lighting that can be used on occasion, either for certain hours of the night or for special celebrations. Lighting options will be temporary and can be controlled for time and intensity, minimizing any potential effects on the marine life and the natural ecosystem.

## FISHERMEN'S VILLAGE CENTER



Fishermen's Village is one of Punta Gorda's most popular attractions. A great deal of the property is currently used for low-yield surface parking. This valuable land could be utilized more creatively to diversify the site's offerings, while still providing adequate parking. The continued development of the Fishermen's Village should also include an expansion of the existing marina and boating amenities in general to help meet the projected demand of visiting boaters.

# 3 Diversify Housing Types

*Central Idea: New multi-family and compact residential development fills in the missing teeth around Punta Gorda, attracting young families and a wide variety of service workers and professionals all while promoting walkability and Bikeability.*

BIG CHALLENGES	KEY CITY INVESTMENTS & POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little to no housing, particularly annual rentals, are being built in the downtown core</li><li>• Lack of diverse and affordable housing options, including small rental apartments, cottages, townhomes, duplexes subsidized housing, and assisted and independent living developments</li><li>• Retiree demand has long been driving up housing prices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively encourage the development of large opportunity sites downtown</li><li>• Revise zoning and land-use regulations to allow for enough intensity and predictability to get realistic developments built and attract more residents</li><li>• Ensure that residential density controls are calibrated to allow for missing middle housing types including townhouses, duplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and small apartment buildings</li><li>• Consider the adoption of a development bonus program which grants additional development potential in exchange for community benefits, like affordable housing units</li><li>• Support the creation of a community land trust to encourage affordable infill development</li></ul>



**MULTI-GENERATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD AT FISHERMEN’S VILLAGE**



The vision for the area around Henry St and W Olympia Ave is one of a diverse and walkable neighborhood that caters to families, retirees, and older residents who may require special housing needs. Olympia Ave is shifted to form a T-intersection with Henry St, allowing for more street oriented buildings and better traffic flow. Multi-generational neighborhoods give existing community members the ability to age in place by providing more flexible and supportive housing types.

**EAST DOWNTOWN – INFILL HOUSING & NEW STREET ALONG MILUS ST**



With several vacant lots, small blocks, and a convenient location, East Downtown is the perfect place for diverse residential infill projects. This rendering illustrates a new street between Marion and Olympia Ave along Milus St with townhomes and small garden apartments. The development features elements like balconies, ground floor windows, wide walkways, and on street parking, which improve safety and provide an indoor-outdoor connection.

**MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING - POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS**

Larger Building Footprint	Medium Building Footprint	Smaller Building Footprint
<p><b>House Types:</b> Small apartment, Townhouses</p> <p><b>Total Units:</b> 16</p> <p><b>Density:</b> 26 homes/acre</p> 	<p><b>House Types:</b> Duplex with ADU, Live-work, Small apartments</p> <p><b>Total Units:</b> 14</p> <p><b>Density:</b> 23 homes/acre</p> 	<p><b>House Types:</b> Cottage court</p> <p><b>Total Units:</b> 12</p> <p><b>Density:</b> 20 homes/acre</p> 

# 4 Fully Embrace Walking and Biking

*Central Idea: Investments in expanded and upgraded transportation facilities that make walking and biking safe, convenient, and attractive, while also spurring private investment in key growth areas.*

BIG CHALLENGES	KEY CITY INVESTMENTS & POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with little or no experience who perceive biking as a dangerous activity</li> <li>• Gaps in the trail network means that people riding bikes must sometimes take less safe routes on high speed thoroughfares to connect</li> <li>• High vehicle speeds on US 41 north and south bound, and the lack of high visibility crosswalks make it less comfortable to walk and bike downtown</li> <li>• Lack of shade trees, particularly in suburban and highway commercial areas, make it less comfortable to walk and bike in Punta Gorda</li> <li>• Narrow suburban streets without paved shoulders and with drainage swales on either side make it difficult to construct new bike facilities along them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise regulations to enact the Complete Streets Resolution adopted in 2013 to guide street design in the future</li> <li>• Approve and construct a low-stress minimum grid network of trails and bicycle facilities and study the long-term construction of a complete bicycle vision network as recommended in this section of the master plan</li> <li>• Work with FDOT to adopt the City’s recommended Context Classification Map (Figure 5.8)</li> <li>• Reduce car speeds Downtown and improve circulation by restoring Marion &amp; Olympia Ave to two-way traffic and by implementing road diets for US 41 Downtown and Marion &amp; Olympia between US 41 N and Cooper St</li> </ul>

## PEOPLE BIKING IN THE LAISHLEY PARK MARINA



With high car speeds and no means to cross, the existing intersection of Retta Esplanade and US 41 Northbound is a safety hazard for all users. It has been reimagined with a traffic light, high visibility crosswalk, separated two-way bicycle track along US41, and clear pavement markings and color differentiation. The mixed-use development of City Market Place gives the area a pleasant environment with storefronts that draw people to the streets. The intersection is signalized and timed to work in parallel with the Marion St traffic light, avoiding unnecessary delays.

## SEPARATED BICYCLE TRACK ON A REDUCED, TWO-WAY MARION AVE



This image illustrates a new one-way separated bicycle track along Marion Ave, which has also been converted to two-way traffic. This west-bound bicycle facility would be paired with an east-bound track along Olympia Ave and would serve to safely connect the residents of East Downtown and those working at Bayfront Health to Downtown Punta Gorda.

## SAMPLE OF RECOMMENDED BICYCLE FACILITIES



Shared Lane Markings



Bike Lanes



Buffered Bike Lanes

# 5 Encourage Strategic Commercial Development

***Central Idea:** Commercial development incentives and revised zoning and land-use regulations, as well as marketing and economic development efforts, attract new businesses to come to Punta Gorda, helping to balance the City’s tax base and diversify its residents.*

BIG CHALLENGES	KEY CITY INVESTMENTS & POLICIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited supply of Class A office space</li><li>• Limited availability of leasable commercial space means prospective small business owners and large employers must build their spaces from scratch or look somewhere else</li><li>• Low rents make commercial development projects more difficult to pencil</li><li>• Highly seasonal nature of Punta Gorda makes it difficult for businesses to thrive and grow</li><li>• Small amount of city revenues coming from limited commercial properties means residents must carry the tax burden themselves</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively encourage the development of large opportunity sites downtown</li><li>• Revise zoning and land-use regulations to allow for enough intensity and predictability to get realistic developments built and attract more residents</li><li>• Incentivize the construction of commercial projects by providing additional development potential and expedited review for developments that adhere to the master plan’s principles</li><li>• Work closely with Charlotte County Economic Development to attract more small and mid-sized PDR (Production, Distribution, &amp; Repairs) and health-related businesses</li></ul>

## NEW PUNTA GORDA ISLES NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



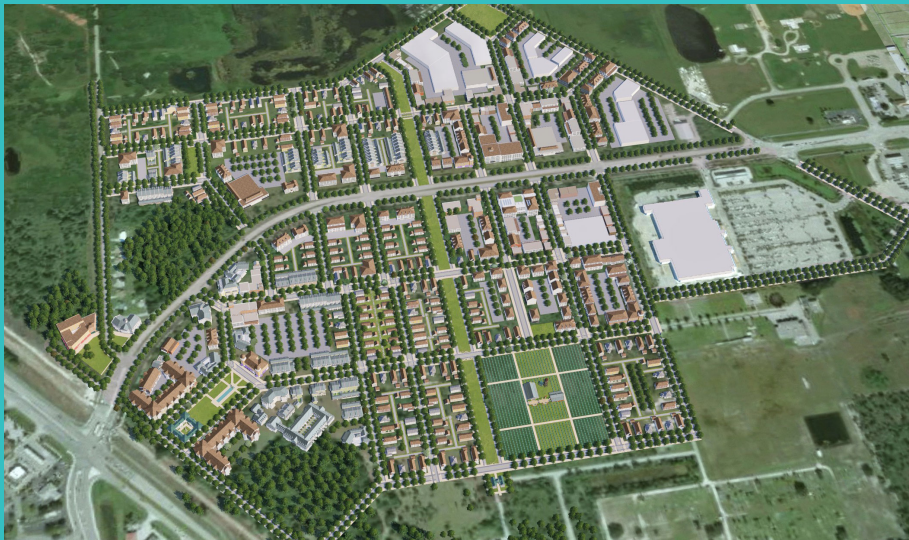
The redevelopment of PGI's existing commercial node into a truly walkable neighborhood center will help achieve several community-wide goals. This area is envisioned with a new public lake front promenade, mixed-use and retail infill development facing Aquí Esta Dr, and a new pocket park on the corner of Aquí Esta and Messina Dr, all of which will bring more neighborhood serving businesses and increase foot and bicycle traffic around the streets in this area.

## SOUTH DOWNTOWN - GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT & MAKER DISTRICT



The South Downtown area has the opportunity for a gateway development at the intersection of US 41 and Taylor Rd, featuring mixed-use commercial buildings with active ground floors and a large signature public park. A new Maker District is also possible in the area between Virginia Ave and the railroad west of Tamiami Trail due to the variety of existing buildings of light industrial nature like warehouses and storage facilities.

## JONES LOOP ROAD AREA



Its importance to the regional transportation network makes the Jones Loop Rd area a powerful attractor for new development. The existing street network should be augmented with new streets to form a fine-grained and walkable grid. Diverse uses and housing types, along with a vibrant office and commercial district between MacFarnum St and Taylor Rd, should guide development. Sustainability could be enhanced with the inclusion of small scale suburban farms.

The Implementation & Ongoing Engagement chapter of the Citywide Master plan provides over 100 comprehensive action items to help the City of Punta Gorda and its partners reach its goals and objectives. The items listed below represent a summary of the action items that we believe will provide the most lasting and far-reaching impacts for Punta Gorda.

## TOP 10 PRIORITIES:

- 1.** Update and revise the city's comprehensive plan and land development regulations in order to encourage infill development and allow more diverse and affordable housing types.  
*Goal 1: Actions 1.1, 1.3, 1.5; Goal 3, Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4; Goal 5, Actions 1.1, 1.2*
- 2.** Consider the adoption of a form-based code and updated architectural guidelines for key areas in Punta Gorda that will ensure future development corresponds closely with the qualities and intent of the Future Character Areas detailed in Chapter 2 of this Master Plan.  
*Goal 1, Actions 1.2, 6.1, 6.2*
- 3.** Study and adopt an intensity bonus program which grants additional development potential, in the form of height, FAR, or density, in exchange for pre-defined community benefits including affordable housing, cultural and arts-related uses, and public open space.  
*Goal 1, Action 1.6; Goal 5, Action 1.3*
- 4.** Improve the safety for all people walking, riding bikes, and driving Downtown by reducing the number of lanes on US 41 as it passes through Downtown Punta Gorda, implementing intersection improvements at Retta Esplanade and US 41, and having FDOT adopt the City's proposed Context Classification Map (Figure 5.8).  
*Goal 1, Action 2.2, 2.3, Goal 4, Actions 1.4, 1.5, 1.6*
- 5.** Create a new Community Affairs Division within the City of Punta Gorda, with one or two new full-time positions to help manage recreational, arts, and cultural programming for the city and to conduct public outreach.  
*Goal 1, Action 3.1*
- 6.** Preserve Punta Gorda's historic assets by adopting a local register of historic properties, as well as creating two new local historic districts and replacing the Bethel-St. Mark Historic District with a new local conservation district.  
*Goal 1, Actions 6.4, 6.5*
- 7.** Attract more visiting boaters to Punta Gorda by studying the creation of a new western mooring ball field in Charlotte Harbor and by partnering with the City's waterfront hotels to expand existing and construct new marinas and upland facilities.  
*Goal 2, Actions 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4*
- 8.** Improve walkability by re-writing the city's street standards in accordance with the Complete Streets Resolution of 2014, filling in any gaps in the existing sidewalk network, and establishing a Street Tree Program to provide much needed shade along sidewalks.  
*Goal 4, Actions 1.1, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9*
- 9.** Approve and construct a low-stress minimum grid network of trails and bicycle facilities, as defined in the Recommended Bicycle Network Map (Figure 5.10) of this Master Plan.  
*Goal 4, Action 3.1*
- 10.** Encourage more commercial development by establishing a Business Improvement District (BID), supporting the creation of Community Development Corporations (CDCs), and adopting tiered impact fees and a property tax rebate program for commercial infill projects.  
*Goal 5, Actions 1.5, 1.6, 1.7*



### PROJECT TEAM

#### **DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS**

*Town Planning*

Victor Dover, FAICP, LEED-AP, CNU-A,  
Principal

Luiza Leite, Assoc. AIA

#### **HALL PLANNING & ENGINEERING**

*Transportation & Mobility*

Richard Hall, P.E., Principal

#### **PARTNERS FOR ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS**

*Economic & Budget Analysis*

Anita Morrison, Founding Principal

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

#### **City of Punta Gorda**

City Council

City Communication Manager

City Manager

Finance Department

Police & Fire Department

Public Works Department

Urban Design Department

Utilities Department

#### **Community Partners & Stakeholders**

Blanchard House Museum

Charlotte County Economic  
Development Partnership

Charlotte County Chamber

Downtown Historic HOA

Fishermen's Village

Florida Department of Transportation  
District 1 Staff

Gulf Coast Partnership

Harborside Center for the Arts

Learn-to-Sail

Local Cycling Shops and Groups

Local Developers & Property Owners

Local Real-Estate Professionals

PGI Civic Association

Punta Gorda Boat Club

Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance

Punta Gorda Chamber and Downtown  
Merchants Association

Punta Gorda Historical Society

Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society

Smart Growth Punta Gorda

South Charlotte County Coalition

TEAM Punta Gorda

Visual Arts Center



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