

Executive Summary

Envision Venice: 2007 Venice Comprehensive Plan



Envision a more livable community that provides ample housing, employment and entertainment opportunities. Envision a welcoming, small-town community that is safe, clean and secure. Envision a charming picturesque downtown with Mediterranean inspired buildings, palm-lined streets, active parks and public beaches. Envision a pedestrian-friendly community that provides walking and bicycling connectivity from residential neighborhoods to shopping, civic and recreational destinations. Envision natural communities, a tropical oasis of blue waterways and green open spaces from the Gulf of Mexico to the Myakka River. Envision an enhanced Venice.



The comprehensive plan anticipates the future needs of the community and establishes how Venice will grow and develop over the next 25 years. In 2005, the City embarked upon an ambitious program to prepare a comprehensive plan that included a community design and development strategy for managing change, limiting impacts from new growth, and providing essential public services.

Acting under State growth management requirements, the City prepared a series of land use, environmental and infrastructure elements as part of the community's long-range growth plan. This program came to be known as "Envision Venice" because it established a vision-based planning process that reflects the hopes, opportunities, and challenges for managing changes to Venice's built and natural environment.

The State's growth management laws require the adoption of three planning documents by the City:

- Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) of the 1999 Comprehensive Plan,
- EAR-based updated Comprehensive Plan, and
- Design-based Land Development Regulations to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

The EAR provided an opportunity for residents and policy leaders to critique the City's previous long-range planning efforts. The document provides an outline for preparing critical updates to the Comprehensive Plan. The EAR public vision process was conducted over the course of a year and included input from approximately 275 unique participants held during 25 public assemblies. These EAR community workshops provided a forum for the appraisal of municipal services and quality of life indicators. The assembly concluded with a stronger understanding and shared agreement of critical issues included in the Plan update. In 2006, the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized the City of Venice for establishing an exceptional public visioning process.

The 2007 Venice Comprehensive Plan reflects the community's expectations for more predictable development patterns and includes new land use, compatibility, massing and design standards to help manage change. The Planning Commission's goal was to develop a guide to direct growth that most reasonable people could understand and support. The Plan incorporates four planning and regulatory influences throughout the document:

- Public vision statement set through the 2005 Evaluation and Appraisal Report,
- Priorities and initiatives adopted by City Council in the 2007 Venice Strategic Plan,
- Livable Communities principles supported by the Planning Commission, and
- Growth management requirements adopted by the State of Florida.

The Comprehensive Plan has been divided into five distinct, yet interrelated chapters. Planning areas for land use, environmental, transportation, infrastructure and capital budgeting are included in the Plan. Components of the Plan were developed in a 14 month process and included 32 workshops and hearings open to the public. The Planning Commission also posted draft documents available for public inspection on the City's website. All total, the City conducted 57 public input meetings. The extensive review process permitted beneficial public input provided by residents and business owners.

The Venice community comprises an area approximately 16 square miles and has a population of 22,000 residents. Venice has enjoyed a stable and modest rate of growth averaging about 3.3 percent annually over the past decade. Annexations have been a large contributor to the population increases. The City's growth rate is appreciably lower than the rate of growth for the City of North Port and other unincorporated communities of South Venice, Osprey and Nokomis within Sarasota County during the same time period. City leaders recognize nearby development is often perceived by residents as being Venice's growth despite being outside Venice's municipal boundary. The Plan provides several strategies to address these Venice-area challenges.

State and local population estimates project an annual average growth rate of about 1.6 percent through 2030. Nearby communities in Sarasota County are expected to develop at a much higher rate and more than double in size during this same period. Through the support of State and Regional planning authorities, the City seeks to direct new residential growth through infill development, redevelopment and annexation initiatives.

The City and Sarasota County entered into a Joint Planning and Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement to help address land use, services and infrastructure, and compatibility issues for development peripheral to the City's border. The joint agreement assumes a 25-year planning horizon and helps the City manage and limit growth in areas surrounding the City limits. The agreement also defines City and County infrastructure sharing. If all areas targeted to receive city services are developed consistent with the agreement, the City anticipates an average annual growth rate of approximately 2 percent over the next 25 years. To mitigate the expected impacts of projected growth, policies from the joint agreement regulating land use, infrastructure and compatibility are included in the Envision Venice Plan update.

At the heart of the City's planning effort are the Future Land Use and Capital Improvement chapters of the Plan. These two elements set a financially sustainable regulatory framework for implementing community development goals. The Plan establishes a 5-year capital improvement schedule to coordinate the inter-relatedness of the many city functions and services by identifying projected revenues and expenditures. The schedule permits efficient master planning for land use, essential services, infrastructure and design considerations to better manage new development.

The City supports the State legal requirements designed to impede urban sprawl. This includes Livable Communities principles calling for compact, pedestrian oriented mixed-use development. Modest density increases for affordable, work-force housing and accessory dwelling units for lower income workers and seniors are also supported in the Plan. Land use and compatibility standards are required for new projects to provide a sense of place, use land more efficiently without compromising livability, and incorporate site and development plan, open space, landscape, massing and architectural design requirements.

In addition to serving future development with Sarasota County through the Joint Planning Agreement, Venice is expected to grow and change through infill and redevelopment initiatives within the existing urban core. As older building structures and land use functions succumb to the elements and changing market conditions, property owners will seek to redevelop. These initiatives can have a major impact on the urban landscape of Venice. The Comprehensive Plan contains policies for guiding change within recognizable activity centers through the use of “Village” or small-area planning. The City recognizes that a mix of renovation, selective demolition, commercial and mixed-use development and public-private infrastructure investment may be appropriate to preserve the character of Venice and to revitalize urban villages. Included in the village planning framework are regulations to set density and height requirements, architectural design standards, landscaping, hardscaping and signage controls. These base-level land use regulations are intended to provide interim controls to guide redevelopment prior to establishment of a formal design-based zoning code.

Venice acknowledges its regional responsibilities and seeks to continue building strong partnerships with federal, state and regional planning and regulatory agencies. The Plan sets forth areas of shared agreement through the Intergovernmental Element. The City will continue to coordinate with other local governmental agencies to take advantage of mutual benefiting improvements to public facilities and buildings, including disaster planning and response, transportation, education, performing arts, beach renourishment and recreational uses. The City supports rebuilding Venice High School at its present campus location.

The updated Comprehensive Plan includes new transportation initiatives which support area-wide capacity, connectivity and emphasizes bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The Plan supports the following major roadway improvements:

- Travel and turn lane improvements to US 41 Bypass,
- Honore Avenue/Pinebrook extension to provide a new north-south regional connector,
- Jacaranda Boulevard extension from I-75 to Laurel Road,
- Four-laning of Laurel Road from the intersection of Laurel Road and Knights Trail Road to Jacaranda Boulevard,
- Three new collector roads providing connectivity between Laurel Road and Border Road,
- Intersection safety and capacity improvements at Laurel Road and Pinebrook Road, and
- Intersection safety and capacity improvements at Laurel Road and Knights Trail Road.

The Plan also includes additional pedestrian amenities, sidewalk, greenway and landscape design standards for more attractive travel corridors. Access management strategies to limit and consolidate access along major roadways to ensure area roads function safely and efficiently have been established.

For more information on Envision Venice, visit the City’s website at www.venicegov.com.