

# Regional Master Plan

The regional master plan establishes the organization of the Punta Gorda region. It includes a hierarchy of its urbanized areas, the location of its supporting districts, the potential for the annexation of neighboring territories, the location of open space corridors and areas of environmental protection, and particular strategies for the

development of waterfront areas. Its main goal is the mapping of a predictable and defensible future where the traffic congestion, the fragmentation, and the dissatisfaction of conventional suburban sprawl are NOT necessarily the design criteria.



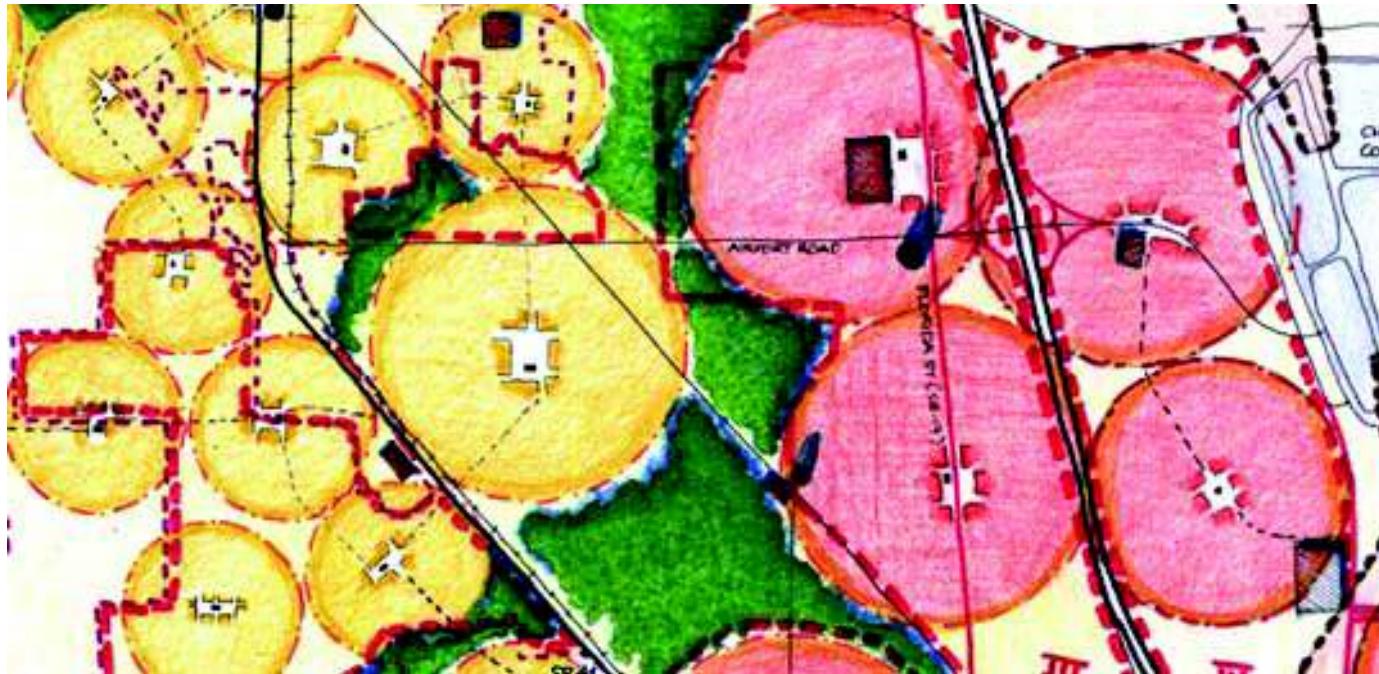
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- A. Regional Master Plan
- B. Regional Aerial
- C. Detail of Regional Master Plan

A. Typical neighbor-hood size



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#### **The Neighborhood Requirements:**

The regional master plan sets apart specific areas of the Punta Gorda territory for neighborhoods with various scales and character. The neighborhood is hereby understood as a comprehensive planning increment which varies in population and density to accommodate localized conditions. A neighborhood is limited in

size so that a majority of its population is found within a 5-minute walking distance from its center (approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile).

In theory, the needs for daily living should be available within the neighborhood proper. In practice, due to commercial demands for servicing support, it is sometimes necessary to share these areas

and locate them at the articulation of two or more neighborhoods. The elderly and the young benefit, and gain independence of movement, by bringing most of the activities of daily living into a walking distance.

The neighborhood streets shall be laid out in a knitted network, so that there are



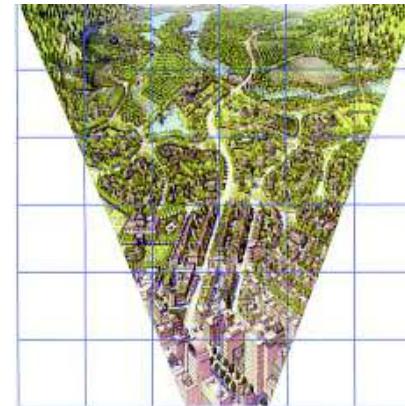
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multiple alternate routes to every potential destination. Therefore, the neighborhood streets can afford to be smaller, with slower traffic, on-street parking, trees, sidewalks, and building frontages defining urban/suburban public rooms. By reducing the number and length of automobile trips, the expenses of road construction and traffic congestion are minimized.

Neighborhoods shall contain one center and

a variety of open spaces for the location of civic buildings (schools, meeting halls, pool houses, condo-clubs, museums, churches, libraries, etc.). By providing streets and open spaces of comfortable scale, the residents can come to know each other, may get encouraged to develop democratic initiatives, and may watch over their collective security.

Neighborhoods provide a wide collection

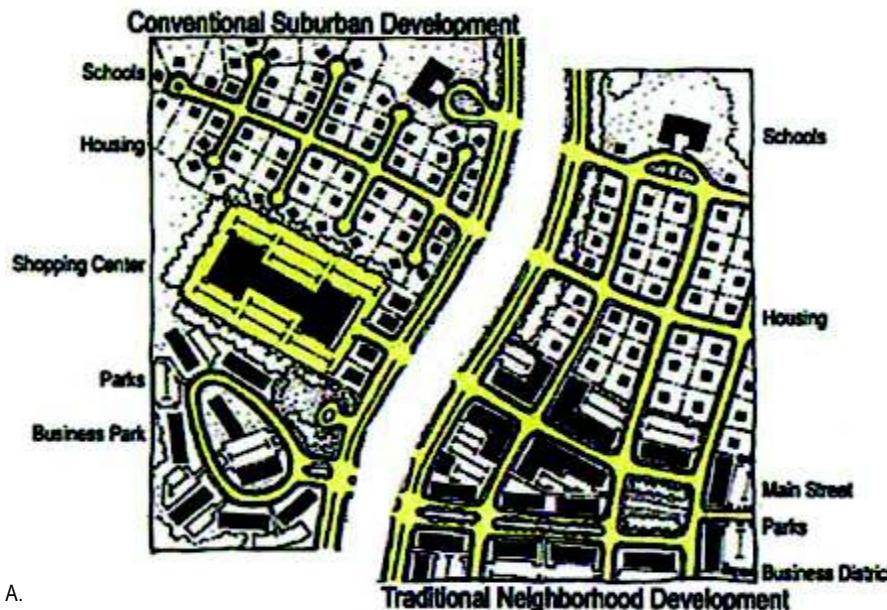


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of building types. A full range of housing types, work places, age and income distributions, and economic classes should be integrated to form authentic communities. Nevertheless, there shall be a gradient of neighborhoods -going from the more urban to the more rural. The more central the neighborhood is, the greater its density should be. To achieve economies of scale and concentration of services, rural neighborhoods may afford an increase of up to 40% the size of a regular neighborhood.

- B. Typical neighborhood center
- C. Rural to Urban Transect diagram

A. Comparison of suburbs to traditional Neighborhoods



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**A neighborhood is NOT** composed of sprawling areas, pods, gated communities, office parks, residential clusters, large housing projects with segregated areas, units of similar cost, 50 M.P.H. retail, cul-de-sacs or looping streets, parking lots dominating the public space, highly articulated buildings, buildings placed randomly in and out on the lots, civic buildings located on residual spaces, buffers, "berms", or other ill-defined spaces or buildings.

#### The District Requirements:

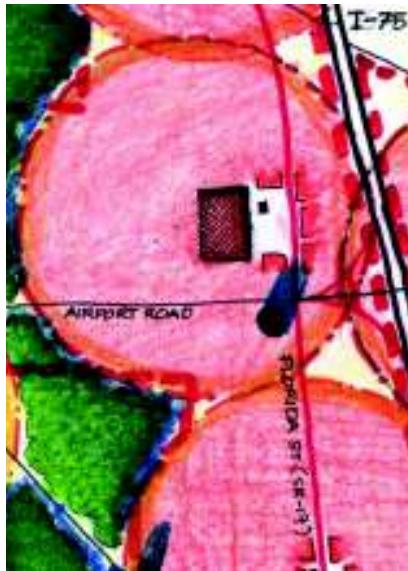
A district is a specialized section within the region. Districts are typically occupied by land uses which, by their function, are incompatible with other pedestrian oriented areas within the region. Nevertheless, the design of districts should be held up to the same standards of the neighborhood unit.

Whenever possible, a district should have a mix of land uses conducive to the creation of life on a twenty-four hour basis. To resolve the contradiction of land use incompatibility and pedestrian activities, districts shall use Live/Work units – a type of housing unit which, by definition, requires a combination of living facilities (typically of a lofty type) and work areas (typically for no more than 3-4 employees/unit bay).

The configuration of Live/Work units comes in three types:

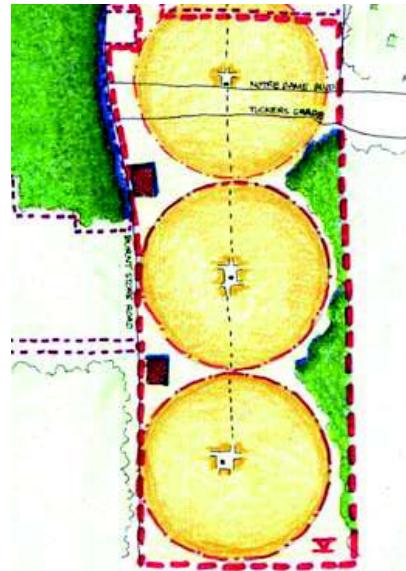
1. Work on the ground floor and living facilities on the upper floors,
2. Work in the front of the lot and living facilities in the rear, and
3. Living facilities in the front of the lot and working area in the rear.

Districts are typically used to supply the demands of the new economy. Typical



B.

districts include areas with gigantic distribution and warehouse centers (storage areas for large corporate Big Boxes i.e.: Walmart, Publix, Target, etc.), a collection of Big/Boxes (also known as a Power Center), or for premises available for the creation, assemblage, and repair of artifacts including their retail sales i.e.: art districts, factory districts, fashion districts, etc.



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The Punta Gorda Region is composed of various neighborhoods and districts:

#### **Burnt Store Rural Neighborhoods:**

The Punta Gorda regional master plan assumes a neighborhood composition with a rural to urban gradient. The most rural neighborhoods would be located in the

south –further away from the center, with a variety of lots in excess of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre; the most urban neighborhoods, in the center of the urbanized areas, with a minimum lot width of approximately 20 ft. –a lot appropriate for a typical small live/work unit or a row house.

- B. Typical district size
- C. Burnt Store Rd. rural Neighborhoods

The most rural neighborhoods are located south of Jones Loop Road between Burnt Store Road and State Road 41. The preservation of their rural character, by means of density controls, is important to the overall health of the region. These rural neighborhoods should occupy a territorial area not to exceed 40% the normal area of a typical neighborhood. Club houses, common facilities, or central parks shall be located at their approximate geographic center. Daily living activity centers shall occur at the intersection of the neighborhoods, and preferably along Burnt Store Road; these facilities may include: convenience stores, convenience retail (barber shop, bakery, etc.) schools, clinics,

- A. Typical rural neighborhood center
- B. Solutions to truck problem on US 41



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medical offices, police or fire sub-stations, gyms, library branches, churches, social clubs, etc. As a rural area, the roads may be smaller and/or curvilinear, the buildings may be set back at irregular intervals, the landscape may be planted in a more informal manner, an abundance of picket fences should be highly encouraged, and sidewalks may be understood as an option.

These neighborhoods are highly threatened by truck drivers attempting to avoid

the Interstate Road 75 weight station located between Tuckers Grade and Jones Loop Road. As a consequence, Burnt Store Road and State Road 41 carry the greatest truck traffic impact. One or a combination of several of the following three solutions were suggested as potential answers to the current problem:

1. Encourage a greater police presence and enforcement at the Interstate Road 75 exits on Tuckers Grade and Jones Loop

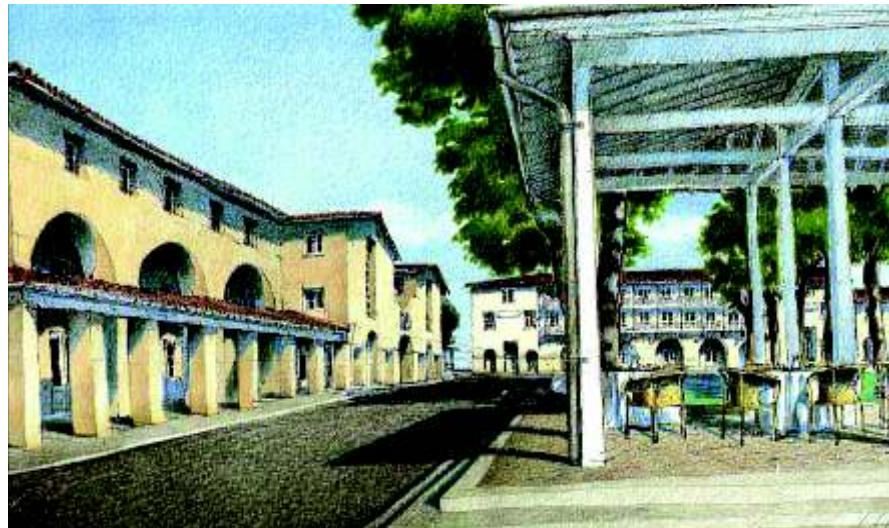


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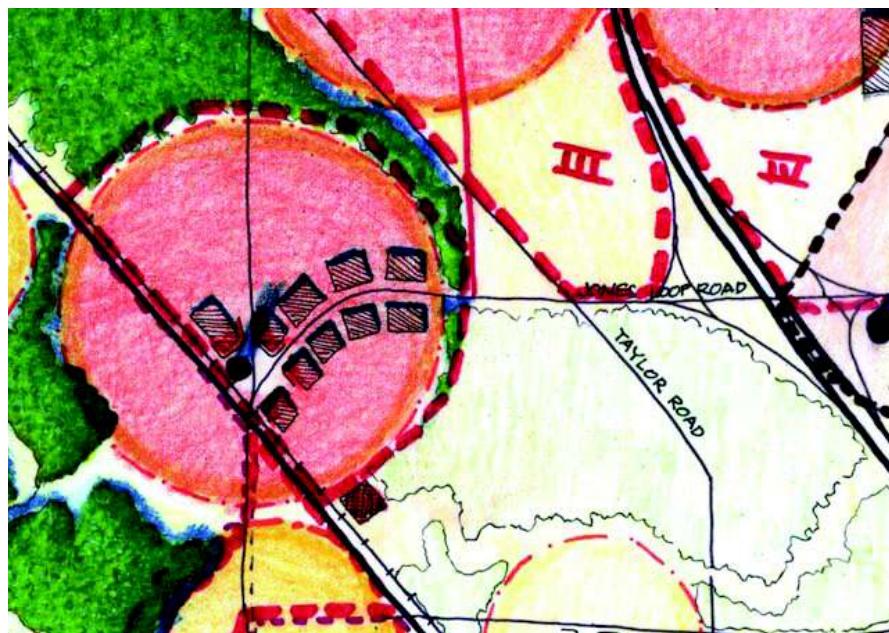
Road. These two exits could even afford small police sub-stations.

2. Dedicate one lane of traffic on Tuckers Grade, State Road 41, Burnt Store Road, and Jones Loop Road to exclusive truck traffic and, on these exclusive lanes, reduce the speed limit to 25 M.P.H..

3. Reduce the width of traffic lanes on Tuckers Grade, State Road 41, Burnt Store Road, and Jones Loop Road. In theory, smaller traffic lanes may assure decreasing traffic speeds.



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**Jones Loop Road Power Center District:**

- C. View of a potential Power Center
- D. Jones Loop Rd. Power Center

The undeniable intensity of this new district is completely overwhelming. The presence of some of the most important Big Box "Category Killers" is imminent within its boundaries. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the strength of this new development trend and to realize that it is better to conglomerate these land uses together than to let them grow without control.

The proposed regional plan welcomes the location of a new Power Center along Jones Loop Road but, it also recognizes the necessity of stricter zoning and land development regulations. It is important to understand that the addition of Live/Work units and defined public spaces may add life, capture trips, and produce spaces of pride and opportunity.

A. Airport industrial districts

### Airport Industrial Districts

The location of the new Distribution Center on the west side of the airport provides a perfect opportunity for the development of a chain of servicing and light-industry districts on both sides of Interstate Road 75; A regional Life-Style Center is proposed on Jones Loop Road –east of Interstate Road 75. This small district could contain a program with one or several of the

following activities: welcoming center, gym, bowling alley, museum, open-air theater, drive-in restaurant, movie theater complex, designer retail, etc.

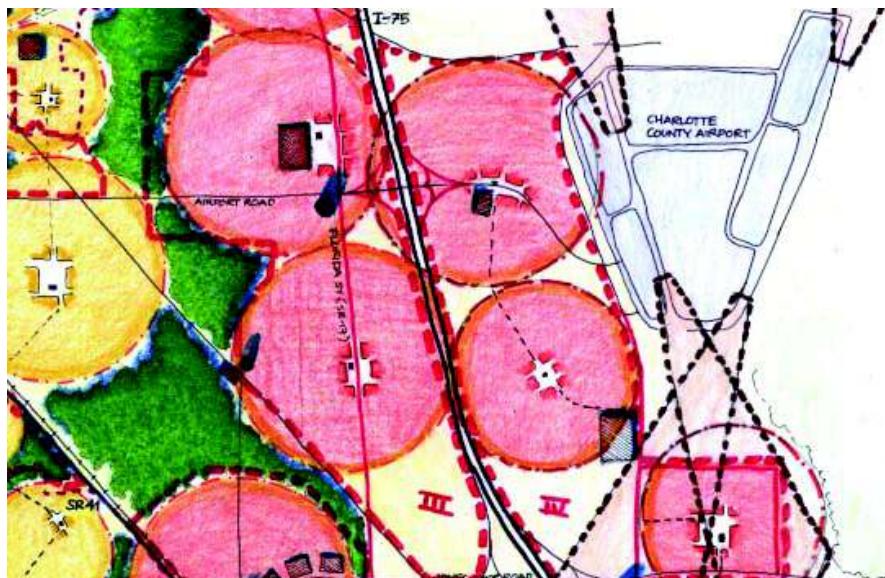
For the sake of land use diversity, urban richness, and security, it is important to introduce a minimum amount of Live/Work or housing units within these separate districts. A district should never be monolithic; it should contain a variety of

land uses working in unison at various times of the day.

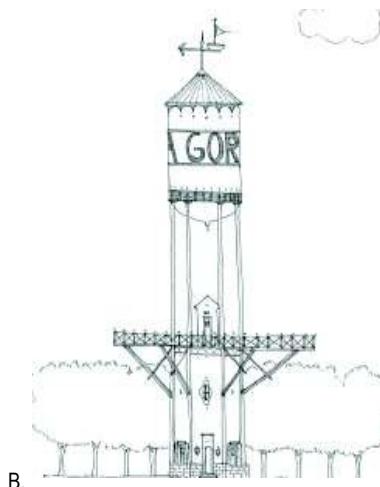
### The Gateway at State Road 17:

The Punta Gorda Regional Plan identifies the setting and location of unique gateways and landmarks announcing regional territorial boundaries and thresholds. These gateways and landmarks must be understood as economic, efficient, and beautiful pieces of architecture, land art, or sculpture which carry a high content of symbolism.

The charrette team proposed, as a mere example, one of these pieces on State Road 17 at the exit of Interstate Road 75. This piece was designed in memory of the water towers and sight-seeing belvederes that characterized the historic urbanscape of the old City of Punta Gorda and its



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neighboring towns –particularly Arcadia. The proposed piece is a hybrid building composed of a traditional water tank, a central viewing terrace, and a welcoming center on its ground floor. The drawing also suggests a greater degree of ornamentation –including the name “Punta Gorda” in big letters, a weather vane in the shape of a small boat, and a diversity of façade materials inspired by those one may find in the existing historic district.

#### Annexation Proposals:

The cost-benefit analysis of any annexation proposal should always be based on issues ranging from urban economics to the establishment of potential political controls on unincorporated areas. In the case of the Punta Gorda Region, the annexation of five (5) areas was prioritized as follows:

##### **1. Neighborhoods Along State Road 17:**

although these neighborhoods are not incorporated in the territorial base of the City of Punta Gorda, they form part of the first visual impression of any visitor arriving to the City via Interstate Road 75. Nevertheless, their importance in the overall plan is not visual or economic but purely strategic. The incorporation of these neighborhoods would have immense traffic repercussions for the local downtown area –bringing control of State Road 17 back to the City of Punta Gorda. In this case, the City of Punta Gorda could decide future detours and more appropriate connections between SR-41 and SR-17; plus, it would



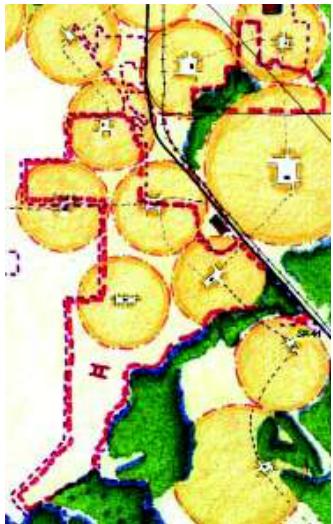
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have the power to change the character of the two downtown pairs to local roads –with great implications for the downtown area, where Marion and Olympia could be reconstructed with their original character as two-way retail streets.

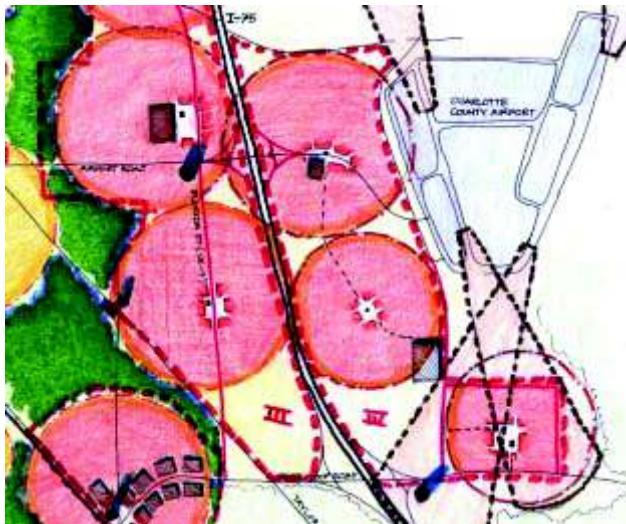
##### **2. Neighborhoods East of Punta Gorda Isles:**

these settlements have become some sort of unincorporated island in the midst of the urban territory. What at one point used to be rural land is, nowadays, an important part of the suburban territory of the City of Punta Gorda. If the existing lack of land development controls persists,

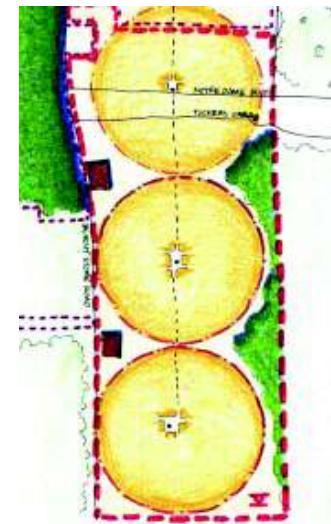
- A. Second annexation phase
- B. Third & fourth annexation phases
- C. Fifth annexation phase



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these neighborhoods shall become the paradigm of regional sprawl and unbridled sub-urbanism in Charlotte County. In order to recuperate the unity of character deserved by the City of Punta Gorda, these neighborhoods must be annexed in second degree of priority.

**3. Districts West of Interstate Road 75:** similar traffic calming strategies are a rationale for the annexation of these districts. Once the City of Punta Gorda establishes control over the future of State

Road 17, it could reroute its traffic content along Florida Street and directly to Jones Loop Road. This strategic move would be beneficial to the economic health of the districts, the airport, and the proposed Power Center District on Jones Loop Road.

**4. Districts East of Interstate Road 75:** the undeniable economic benefit created by the location of the new distribution center and the proposed Life-style Center, in the vicinity of the airport, places these districts in fourth place.

**5. Burnt Store Rural Neighborhoods:** future annexations may include the incorporation of these rural neighborhoods. At this point, however, it is an unlikely possibility. Currently, an objective cost/benefit analysis results in an increased tax base for the City of Punta Gorda but a lack of immediate benefits for its residents – most of these areas work on septic tanks, have small infrastructural requirements, and do not lack overall County services.



**Greenbelt Conservation:**

The conservation of the natural landscape is important to the common ecological performance and survival of the Punta Gorda region. The maintenance and

protection of wild areas is essential to its overall health. It is within the purpose of this plan to designate and safeguard such areas.

A greenbelt network, composed of a series of open spaces separating urbanized areas, is proposed between the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor. This open space network shall contain environmental and agricultural preserves, golf courses, parks, playing fields, trails, and bicycle paths. This trajectory leads through rural and urban areas –adjacent to neighborhoods and districts.

The proposed network of conservation shall have a landscape appropriate to its location. The landscape patterns shall vary; naturalistic within the countryside, and formal within the neighborhoods and districts.

The 2005 Citizens Master Plan pays particular attention to animal migratory patterns, nesting requirements, vegetable and animal endangered species, as well as local watersheds. The preservation of the local ecological transect is as important as the reconstitution of the physical spaces within the region.

**D. Greenbelt Conservation**

## The Citizens' Master Plan 2005

- A. Punta Gorda Isles c.1967
- B. Punta Gorda Isles Master Plan
- C. Existing Bal Harbor Plaza
- D. Proposed Bal Harbor Plaza

### Punta Gorda Isles:

Punta Gorda Isles may have great water efficiency but it still lacks wholeness, life, and beauty. As a typical post-war zoning plat, this planned unit development lacks pedestrian and automobile connectivity, a vibrant center, and architectural standards insuring the predictability, beauty, and character of its buildings.

The Regional Master Plan proposes the location of three new centers at the intersection of Aqui Esta Drive and Bal Harbor Boulevard, Coronado Drive and Marion Avenue, and Bal Harbor Boulevard and Suzi Street. Although these three centers would not be a permanent solution to the current suburban maladies, they would partially improve the lack of commodity and will supply a good variety of daily services at a more or less reasonable distance.



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### Bal-Harbor Plaza:

The charrette team explored the design and development possibilities for one of the potential centers in Punta Gorda Isles. The retrofitting, reconfiguration, and

reconstitution of the Bal-Harbor Plaza Shopping Center is shown as a paradigm for similar projects within the Punta Gorda region.

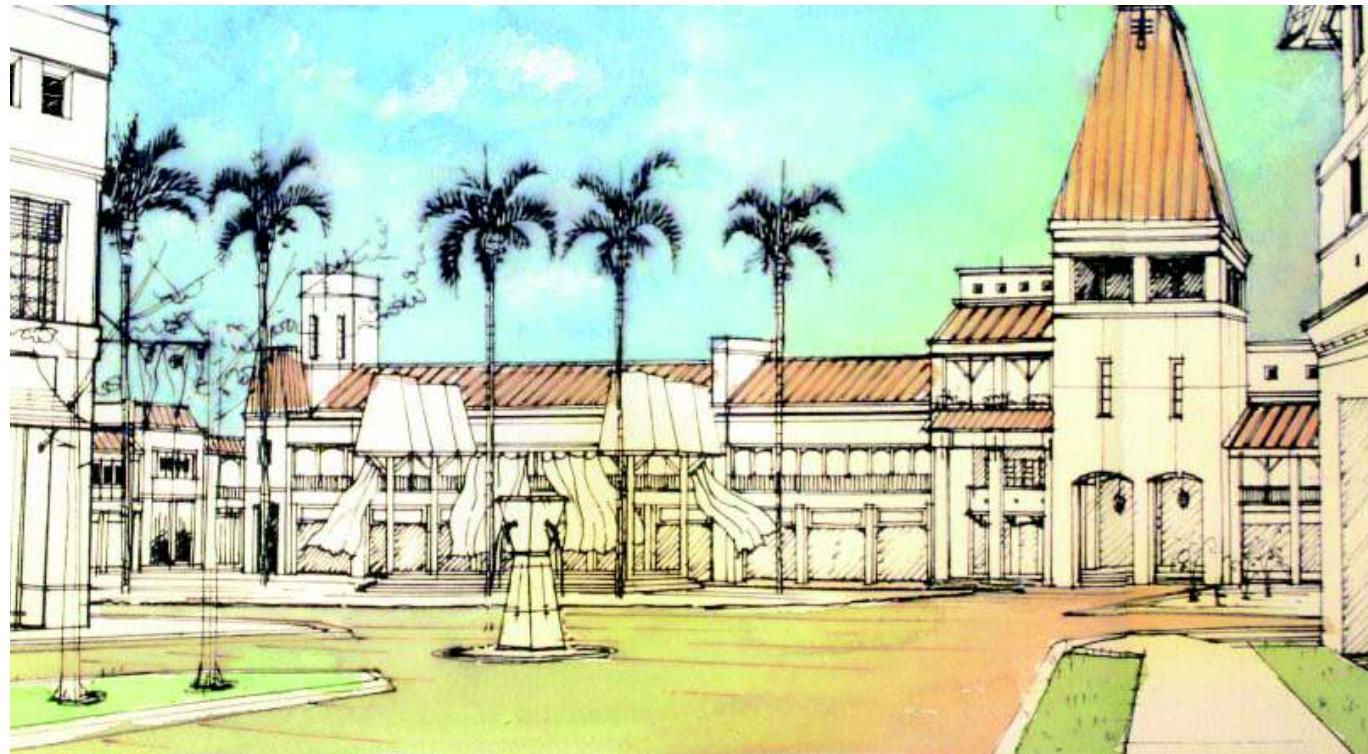
In its current state, the Bal-Harbor Plaza

presents the configuration of a typical suburban shopping center. A "head & tail" liner building, with a larger commercial space at one end and a series of smaller commercial spaces on its tail, is surrounded by a sea of asphalt. Two or three out-parcels, designed to supply the needs of

drive-in banks and fast-food restaurants, complete the overall development program. The counter-proposal assumes the presence of the "head & tail" liner as a given but, it proposes the almost surgical reconfiguration of the parking areas with defined public spaces, a system of complete blocks, and

infill buildings. The blocks have complete frontages composed of courtyard buildings with retail uses on the ground floor and small apartment units or offices on the upper levels; the open spaces have public amenities including a band stand with flying curtains, a fountain, and a landscape

E. View of proposed Bal Harbor Plaza

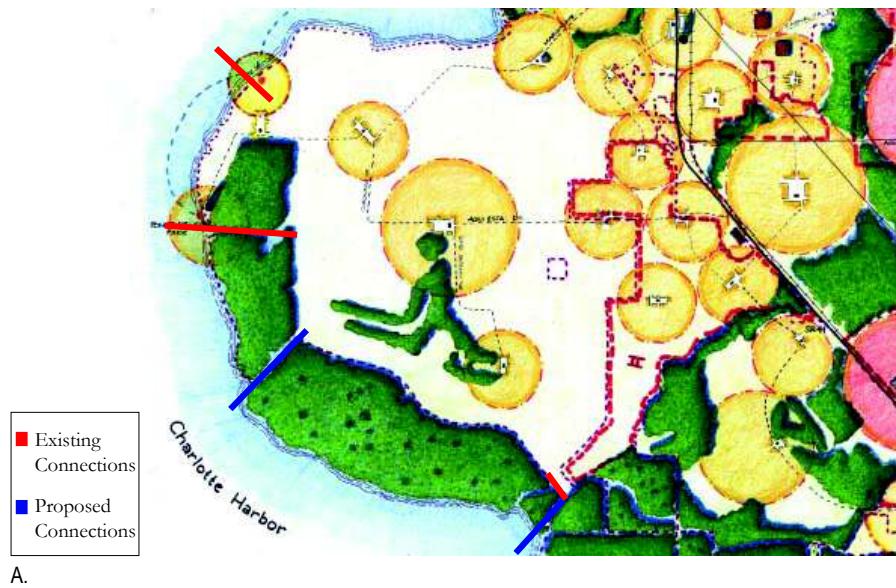


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A. Punta Gorda  
Isles waterfront  
connections

scheme appropriate for areas where heat and visibility might turn into important design issues (palm trees and shaded colonnades); new infill pieces are designed to create analogies with the best architectural pieces in historic Punta Gorda.

A Park-Once system (a.k.a.: Park and Walk) is proposed behind one of the infill pieces. This parking garage accommodates the required parking for the new housing units and takes care, within the confines of a shared parking method, of the excess vehicular traffic. On-street parking (diagonal or parallel), along the proposed network of streets, shall generate sufficient spaces to supply the overall parking requirements.



**Punta Gorda Isles Waterfront**

**Connections:**

The success of the Punta Gorda Isles project resides in its accessibility to the Charlotte Harbor waterfront. In fact, the desirability of these properties is the result of a network of canals facing the rear of every lot in the project. At this point, however, the security of the water access is being threatened by the number of connections to Charlotte Harbor and by the

width and depth of the same.

Residents of Punta Gorda Isles indicated that, during weekends, it may take between one and two hours to reach the Ponce de Leon Park connection to Charlotte Harbor. Moreover, they expressed their concerns regarding the possibility of a boat accident with the potential to close off the only exit to the Harbor. And finally, in collaboration with the Charrette Waterfront Consultant, they came up with alternative



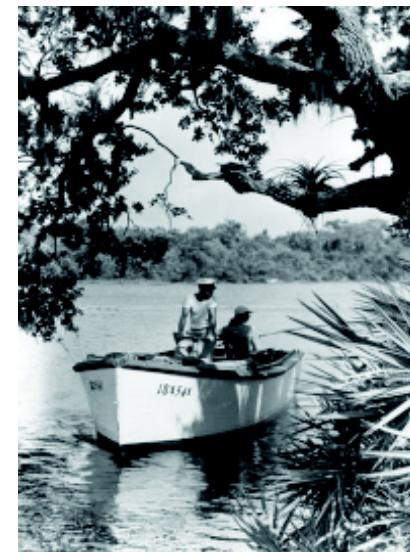
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connections and ideas to increase the width of the existing Ponce De Leon Park connection.

The drawing on page 30 shows three new connections and two possibilities for widening the existing canals. The new connections would alleviate the existing boat traffic and would decrease the time spent by boat owners to reach the Charlotte Harbor area—particularly the southernmost connection.

#### Water Taxi:

A proposal for a water taxi was put forward by the citizens. Amongst its immediate advantages, a water taxi would be beneficial for the elderly population, would create a network of connections on the two sides of the Peace River, would augment the traffic potential of particular projects within the City of Punta Gorda, would promote the preservation and conservation of the existing ecology, would allow citizens and



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visitors to admire the historic landscape, and would add an extra sight-seeing mechanism to enhance various tourism programs within the City of Punta Gorda.

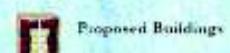
As proposed, the water taxi would have seven strategic stations: Ponce De Leon Park, North Punta Gorda Isles, Fisherman's Village, Downtown Auditorium, County's Redevelopment Area, Hospital, and Conservation Park.

- B. Map of water taxi destinations
- C. Historic view of the Peace River area

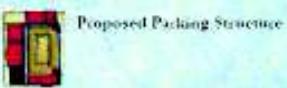
Downtown Master Plan Key



Existing Buildings



Proposed Buildings



Proposed Parking Structure

