

# TEAM Punta Gorda

*Volunteers For A Better Community*

*From the City Manager's recent column in the Daily SUN*

## **Punta Gorda's Comprehensive Plan Wins Statewide Award**

Last week, a delegation of city staff members attended the Florida Planning and Zoning Association's Annual Conference at Sunseeker Resort. Staff members learned about a variety of best practices for planning. Some of the key topics included: policy tools for placemaking, resiliency planning and implementation, building resilient communities, green infrastructure and low-impact development and transforming communities through collaboration. The event culminated with an awards luncheon.

The city of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan 2045 was honored with the prestigious Outstanding Plan Award by the FPZA during the 2024 Annual Conference. This accolade underscores the years of dedicated community engagement, meticulous integration of community values, adoption of best planning practices, and innovative solutions to citywide challenges that have been meticulously woven into the fabric of the plan's update.

The Comprehensive Plan 2045 represents a monumental effort, encompassing nearly a complete overhaul of crucial elements such as Future Land Use, Coastal Management, Transportation, Housing, and Historic Preservation. These revisions were meticulously crafted to align with the

aspirations outlined in the 2019 citywide Master Plan, which underscores the community's commitment to resilience, environmental preservation, downtown revitalization, retention of its small-town urban character, historic conservation, promotion of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, fostering economic growth and embracing sustainability initiatives. *(Pictured: City staff including Urban Design Manager Mitchell Austin, Mayor Lynne Matthews (center), Kim Koch from TEAM Punta Gorda I.), and Kessie Estil (r.) from Dover, Kohl, and Partners accepted the award on the city's behalf).*



This groundbreaking plan is the culmination of a comprehensive five-year planning endeavor undertaken by the city, incorporating insights from pivotal studies including the 2019 citywide Master Plan, the 2019 Climate Adaptation Plan Update, the 2019 Budgetary and Fiscal Analysis, and the 2019 Transportation Buildout Study.

The public engagement for just the Master Plan included hearing 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. These diverse perspectives and recommendations have been meticulously synthesized into the Comprehensive Plan 2045, serving as a blueprint to inform future decisions and guide the city towards a prosperous and sustainable future.

At the heart of this update was the overarching objective to address critical issues such as budgetary constraints, sustainable development, resilience to climate change, and housing affordability. To this end, the Comprehensive Plan 2045 advocates for the adoption of a form-based code alongside other Smart Growth policies, paving the way for a more cohesive and resilient urban landscape.

The recognition bestowed upon the city of Punta Gorda's Comprehensive Plan 2045 by the FPZA is a testament to its exemplary standards and innovative approaches in urban planning. This prestigious award not only honors the diligent efforts of the community, elected officials, staff, and consultants involved in its creation but also positions the plan as a beacon of excellence for municipalities across Florida embarking on similar comprehensive planning endeavors. The city of Punta Gorda is deeply honored by this distinction and remains committed to upholding the highest standards of urban planning excellence in the years to come.

We are fortunate to have many people, organizations and leaders committed to preserve and enhance Punta Gorda's identity as a vibrant waterfront community, unique in character and history, and as a desirable place to live, work and visit.

***Greg Murray***  
***Punta Gorda City Manager***  
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