

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 8P  
From: Staff  
Date: March 20, 2015 Council Meeting  
Subject: Local Government Comprehensive Plan Review  
Draft Amendment to the City of West Palm Beach Comprehensive Plan  
Amendment No. 15-1ESR

Introduction

The Community Planning Act, Chapter 163, *Florida Statutes*, requires that the regional planning council review local government comprehensive plan amendments prior to their adoption. The regional planning council review and comments are limited to adverse effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the strategic regional policy plan (SRPP) and extrajurisdictional impacts that would be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan of any affected local government within the region. Council must provide any comments to the local government within 30 days of the receipt of the proposed amendments and must also send a copy of any comments to the state land planning agency.

The amendment package from the City of West Palm Beach contains a text change to the Downtown Master Plan Element of the comprehensive Plan. This report includes a summary of the proposed amendment and Council comments.

Summary of Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment is to revise policies 2.1.1 and 3.1.3 in the Downtown Master Plan Element of the comprehensive plan. The purpose of the amendment is to encourage the construction of Class A office space along the Quadrille Boulevard corridor to stimulate a central business district around the new All Aboard Florida train station located between Evernia Street and Datura Street west of Quadrille Boulevard. Class A office space is characterized as buildings that have excellent location and access, attract high quality tenants, and are managed professionally. The city currently has four Class A office buildings located in the downtown area comprising more than one million square feet of office space.

The amendment has been put forward in order to accommodate a proposal to build a 30-story Class A office, a full-service hotel and a residential project on a 3.45-acre property located at 550 Quadrille Boulevard. The current Downtown Master Plan does not permit a 30-story building at

that location. The proposed increase in height and development capacity require the proposed amendment.

The city staff report indicated the additional development capacity will allow the city to incentivize the creation of Class A office space in the core of the downtown. The increased height does not result in an increase of the maximum allowable commercial intensity currently permitted in the comprehensive plan, but expands the areas in which Class A office uses and full-service hotel uses may be permitted. The total development in the downtown is regulated by the Transportation Concurrency Exemption Area approvals granted through the approval of the Downtown Master Plan. The use of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program will guarantee the overall development capacity of the downtown area is maintained within the prescribed limits of the Transportation Concurrency Exemption Area.

### Regional Impacts

The regional roadway network is the main regional resource or facility that could be adversely impacted by the proposed amendment. However, the regional roadway network is not expected to be adversely impacted, because the proposed changes do not result in an overall increase in the intensity of development in the downtown area. Nonetheless, the proposed amendment could have unexpected consequences for the downtown. Council offers the following advisory comments for the city to consider in addressing planning alternatives.

- **The proposed amendment could lead to reduced predictability and negatively impact future growth in the downtown.** One of the hallmarks of the downtown's successful revitalization has been predictability. An increase in incentive-based building height from 15 to 30 stories raises concern that future development capacity will be consumed in fewer projects. The potential to get to 30 stories could have an impact on land values by generating unrealistic development expectations, exacerbated further as the supply of potential TDRs dwindles. This unpredictable development potential could inadvertently stagnate future growth as land owners wait for favorable market conditions to fill 30 stories or search for TDRs.
- **The proposed amendment could result in an imbalance in the form of the city.** Utilizing TDRs to achieve extreme changes in building scale could result in an imbalance in the form of the city. For example, tall towers could be built adjacent to smaller buildings on either sending sites or sites that have to build without TDRs. This could have the effect of undermining the intended physical predictability of the Downtown Master Plan.
- **The increase in height is not necessary to create a Class A office space.** CityPlace Tower, completed in 2008, was the first Class A office building built in downtown West Palm Beach in nearly 20 years. The building has been a success and is 18 stories. The increase in height to 30 stories is not necessary to attract Class A office space to downtown West Palm Beach.

- **The proposed amendment does not appear to be part of a broader planning direction.** As has been outlined in the city staff report, the genesis of the proposed amendment is a single development proposal to exceed the permitted building height and floor area ratio prescribed in the city's Downtown Master Plan and comprehensive plan. While the city has emphasized its desire to incent Class A office space in downtown, this amendment does not appear to be part of a broader planning direction or objective.

#### Extrajurisdictional Impacts

The proposed amendment was circulated by the Palm Beach County Intergovernmental Plan Amendment Review Committee Clearinghouse Coordinator on December 8, 2014. No extrajurisdictional impacts have been identified.

#### Conclusion

No adverse effects on regional resources or facilities and no extrajurisdictional impacts have been identified. The report contains advisory comments for the city to consider in addressing planning alternatives for the downtown.

#### Recommendation

Council should approve this report and authorize its transmittal to the City of West Palm Beach and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

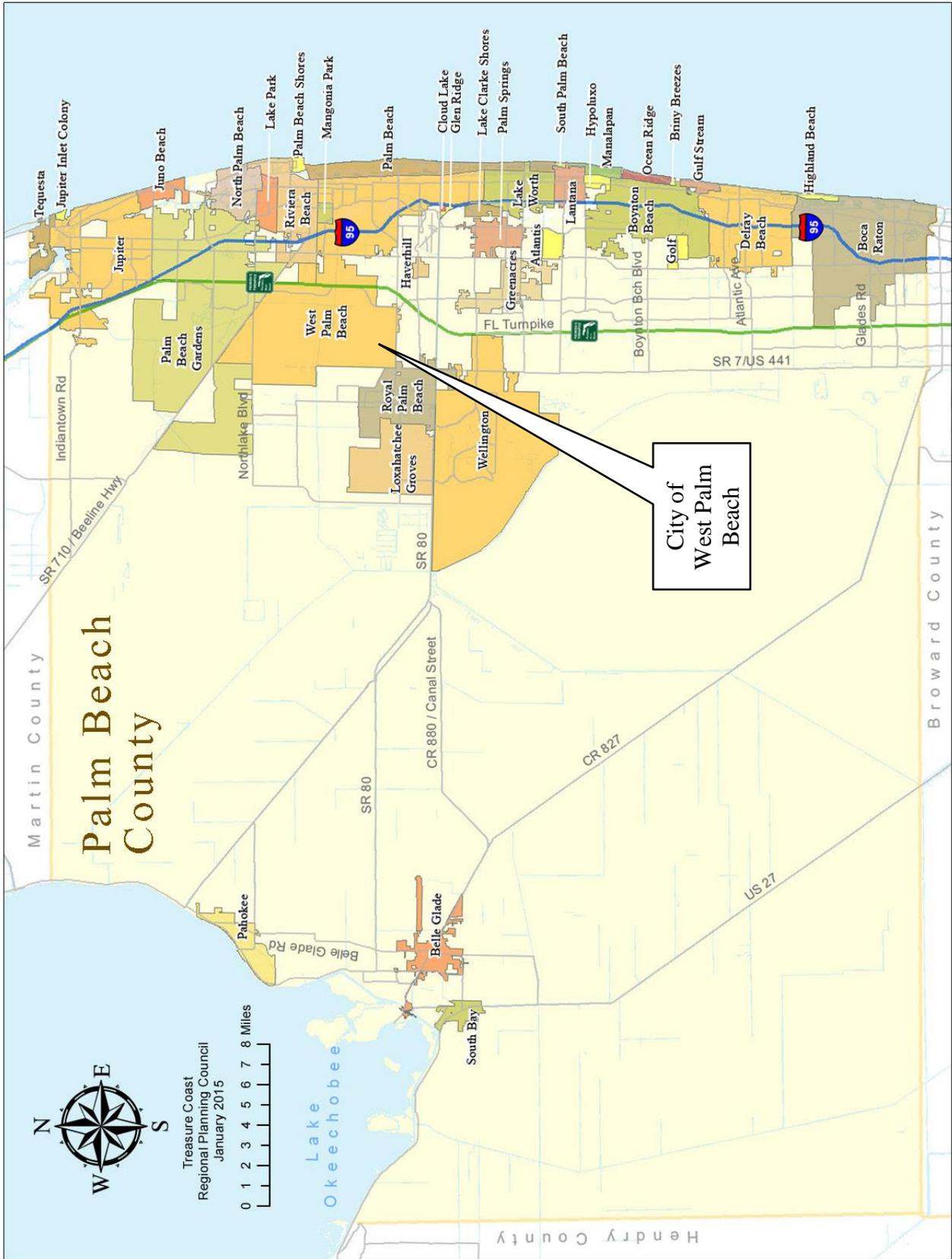
#### Attachments

## **List of Exhibits**

### **Exhibit**

- 1 General Location Map
- 2 Proposed Text Change in Underline and Strikethrough Format
- 3 Map of District Boundaries

# Exhibit 1 General Location Map



## Exhibit 2

### Proposed Text Change in Underline and Strikethrough Format

#### Future Land Use Element

Revisions are shown as ~~striketrough~~ for deletions and underline for additions.

- 1) **Objective 2.1:** The City shall promote the growth of the downtown employment base.

**Revised Policy 2.1.1:** The City shall create new or amend existing incentive programs, such as the Transfer of Development Rights, to encourage the development of a high intensity mixed-use area along Quadrille Boulevard from Okeechobee Boulevard to 5<sup>th</sup> Street ~~the Quadrille Business District (QBD). The QBD will have the most intense development in the downtown and will create a new mixed use center, linking the Clematis Street retail corridor and CityPlace.~~ The high intensity mixed-use area shall include properties within the Quadrille Business District (QBD) and the Quadrille Garden District (QGD) facing Quadrille Boulevard. The proposed high intensity mixed-use within the QBD and QGD will promote a connection between the Clematis Street retail corridor and CityPlace and create a very active urban boulevard in the central portion of the downtown.

**Policy 3.1.3:**

F. Quadrille Garden District: This district, comprised of mixed-use commercial development and residential uses, is divided into four main areas as follows:

- Lakeview corridor: south of Trinity Place, the area is defined as a mixed-use with a maximum FAR of 7.00 and a maximum height of twenty-five stories. No bonus densities are permitted in this area.

- Quadrille Boulevard corridor: This mixed-use area adjacent to Quadrille Boulevard has a base FAR of 2.75 and a base building height of ten stories. Properties within the corridor may receive additional density through incentive programs to a maximum building height of ~~fifteen stories~~ thirty stories and a maximum FAR of ~~3.75~~ 5.5. Additional height and density shall be oriented along the Quadrille Boulevard corridor, and step down towards Dixie Highway.

- District interior: The remainder of the district is mixed-use, including commercial, residential, and ground-floor retail. The maximum building height is ten stories with a maximum FAR of 2.75. For properties north of Banyan Boulevard, additional height may be achieved through special incentives to a maximum of fifteen stories and an FAR of 3.75.

- Loftin corridor: The Loftin corridor is restricted to a maximum height of five stories with an FAR of 2.75.

# Exhibit 3 Map of District Boundaries

ZONING ATLAS - FIGURE 2  
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

