



FORWARD PINELLAS

Integrating Land Use & Transportation

2018 Annual Report

2018 BOARD

Representing Pinellas County:

Commissioner John Morroni, *Chair* (January-May)

Commissioner Dave Eggers, *Secretary*

Commissioner Ken Welch

Commissioner Charlie Justice (June-December)

Representing the City of Clearwater:

Vice Mayor Doreen Caudell, *Vice Chair/Chair*

Representing the Beach Communities:

Indian Rocks Beach Mayor Joanne “Cookie”

Kennedy, *Treasurer*

Representing the City of Largo:

Vice Mayor Michael Smith

Representing Pinellas Park:

Mayor Sandra Bradbury

Representing the City of St. Petersburg:

Councilmember Darden Rice

Councilmember Brandi Gabbard

Representing the Inland Communities:

South Pasadena Vice Mayor Lari Johnson (January-March)

South Pasadena Vice Mayor Arthur Penny (April-December)

Representing the North Pinellas Communities:

Oldsmar Mayor Doug Bevis

Representing the City of Dunedin:

Commissioner John Tornga (January-July)

Mayor Julie Ward Bujalski (September-Present)

Representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority:

Clearwater Councilmember Bill Jonson (January-March)

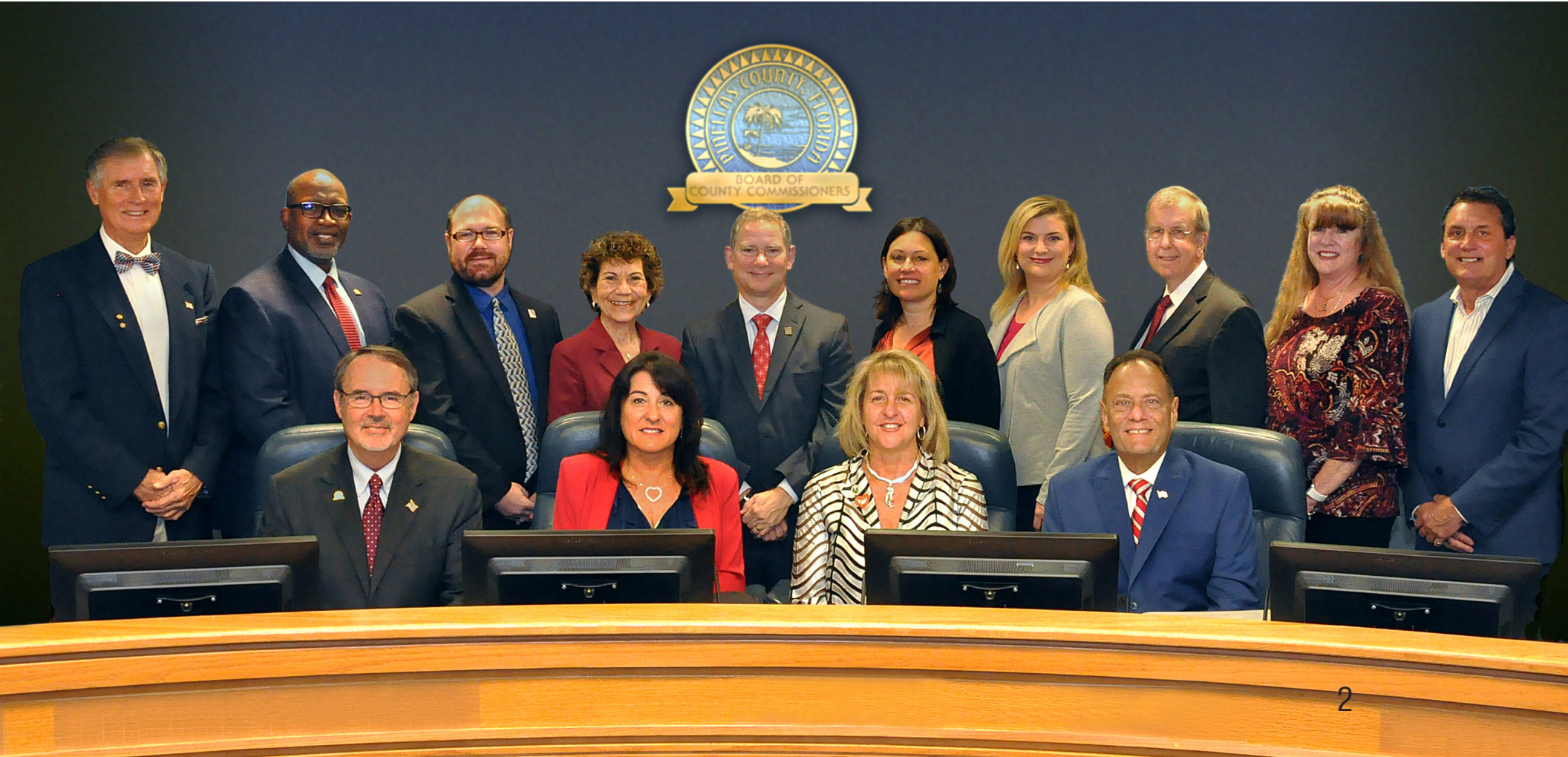
County Commissioner Janet Long (April-Present)

REMEMBERING COMMISSIONER JOHN MORRONI

Along with the rest of Pinellas County, our agency was deeply saddened by the passing of our chair, County Commissioner John Morroni, after a battle with cancer. We are grateful to have been a part of his legacy of service to Pinellas County, a career that spanned over two decades and early on included membership on our Citizens Advisory Committee.

In their remembrances, board members spoke of Commissioner Morroni as someone who always put the needs of residents first, above any ideology or party. We hope to always continue in that spirit.

(Front row, from left to right: Commissioner Eggers, Vice Mayor Caudell, Mayor Kennedy, Commissioner Morroni. Back row, from left to right: Commissioner Tornga, Commissioner Welch, Vice Mayor Smith, Vice Mayor Johnson, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton, Councilmember Rice, Councilmember Gabbard, Councilmember Jonson, Mayor Bradbury, Mayor Bevis.)



ADVANTAGE PINELLAS

Advantage Pinellas is the first Long Range Transportation Plan for Forward Pinellas. Integrating land use and transportation, Advantage Pinellas is a strategic plan for how transportation can best support land use, redevelopment and economic opportunity.

Along with PSTA's Community Bus Plan, which is also under the Advantage Pinellas umbrella, these plans look ahead from tomorrow to 2045 and create a comprehensive outlook for Pinellas County's future.



Advantage PINELLAS

ENGAGE. ADAPT. CONNECT.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

Tampa Bay is a connected region, and the MPOs of Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties are working together to address pressing issues of how our residents can best travel between and within this area. Whether it's recommending regional priorities through the Tampa Bay TMA Leadership Group, coordinating regional multi-use trails with the TBARTA MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee, or one of the many projects that staff partner on, we are working in partnership to address regional transportation issues. A Tampa Bay Regional Transit Forum, held in July and pictured below, brought elected and business leaders from across the region together to define a vision for regional transit solutions. A comprehensive study, which concluded at the end of the year, also examined ways for the region's MPOs to strengthen these coordination efforts.

Part of that regional coordination is a jointly developed regional element of each MPO's long range transportation plan. This summer, It's TIME Tampa Bay asked residents of all three counties to respond to a survey rating three very different scenarios for growth and investment. By the time the survey ended in September, 9,575 people had responded, a new US record for MetroQuest surveys. Those responses will guide development of the shared regional plan element.



ADVANTAGE PINELLAS SURVEY

This spring, Forward Pinellas mailed a five-page survey to Pinellas County residents asking them about their attitudes on transportation and land use. The goal response rate was 800 responses, and 844 people from a random sample completed the survey. A group of 15 of these respondents made up the first Advantage Pinellas focus group in November, which will meet twice more to discuss the plan.

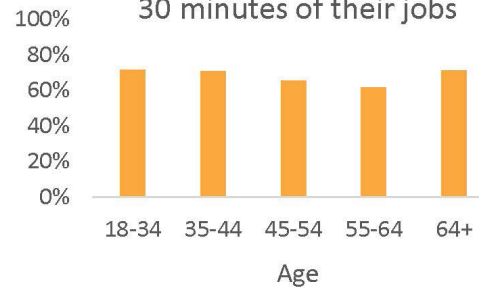
Survey respondents showed strong support for technology and maintenance, support for transit service (although split on increased funding to make it happen), support for a mix of uses near neighborhoods, and uncertainty about automated vehicles.

Three overall themes were evident: Pinellas County residents want a safe, efficient transportation system; people want easy access from their neighborhoods to their destinations; and the biggest barriers to transit are reliability, frequency, and efficiency. The results from the survey will help staff develop the project list for the Advantage Pinellas Long Range Transportation Plan.

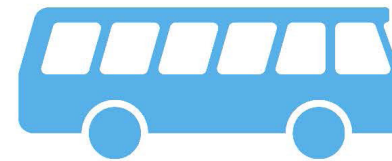


People want easy access from their neighborhoods to their destinations

Most people said it was **“very important”** to live within 20-30 minutes of their jobs



69% of people said having shops and destinations nearby is the most important factor in their ideal neighborhood



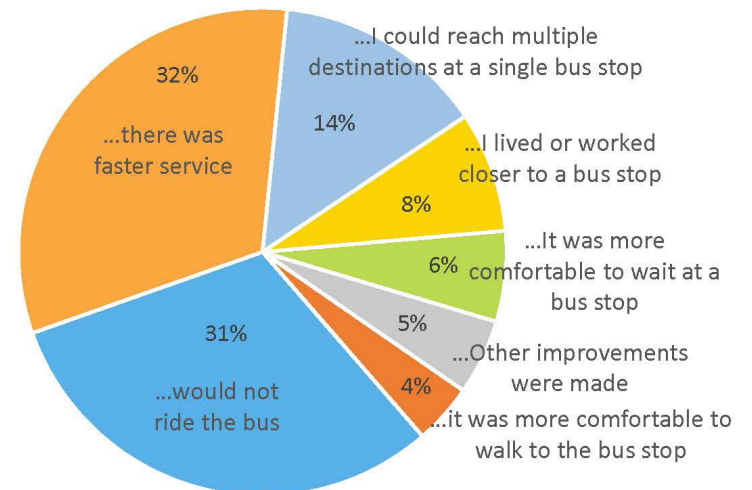
85% believe that frequent, reliable transit improves the area’s economic value



The biggest barriers to transit are reliability, frequency and efficiency

I would be more willing to take public transportation if...

Most people said they would be more willing to take public transportation if the service was better





OUTREACH

As part of the Advantage Pinellas plan development, Forward Pinellas staff has attended various public events to gather public input on the plan so far.

One of the outreach activities, pictured to the left, asks participants to drop four balls — representing four quarters in a dollar — into cannisters representing various modes of travel. A photo is taken at each outreach event to record how the public wants us to invest its tax dollars in transportation.

With Advantage Pinellas, Forward Pinellas is working to pay special attention to traditionally underserved communities in the outreach process, ensuring that the transportation solutions in the plan provide equal opportunity to Pinellas County residents. As a member of the UNITE Pinellas Collective, Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton is working with leaders of other organizations to create equitable policy outcomes.

As we move ahead and have more details about the plan and what projects may be included, Forward Pinellas will continue to seek residents' opinions on what our future should look like — both regionally and countywide.

SPOTLIGHT

Our SPOTlight — Strategic Planning & Operations Topics — Emphasis Areas continue to be a focus for the agency three years after their adoption in December 2015. The Gateway Master Plan is in full swing, and we continue to develop a vision for US 19 and to work on enhancing beach community access.



GATEWAY AREA MASTER PLAN

The Gateway Area Master Plan effort kicked off in March, and is entering its final phases as it seeks to build on the strengths of the area that already serves as an economic engine for the county. This effort is an unprecedented \$1 million partnership between Forward Pinellas, four local governments, and the Florida Department of Transportation. The Gateway Master Plan will identify opportunities for more efficient, resilient and economy-boosting land use patterns. These land uses will also provide housing options that put people closer to their destinations, reduce congestion, enable investments in transit, and provide safe bicycle and pedestrian connections.

In 2018, the consultant team led by WRT conducted a robust effort to reach Gateway stakeholders, holding four public open houses, three charettes with the study management team, five one-on-one meetings with partners and stakeholders, and 27 interviews with Gateway employers, organizations and institutions. Moving forward, the team will continue to engage the public and the local governments to develop final recommendations and will be making these available for review in June 2019. The public can view the progress of the plan at gatewaymasterplan.org.



ENHANCING BEACH COMMUNITY ACCESS

With another record year for tourism in Pinellas County and the ever-present need to balance the needs of residents with travel demands of a multi-billion dollar industry, Enhancing Beach Community Access remains a focus of this agency.

Forward Pinellas continued to support PSTA's Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project, pictured in a concept rendering below, as a countywide and regional priority. This project is in the design phase and is the furthest any Tampa Bay project has gone in the federal funding process. Forward Pinellas continued to work with FDOT and the City of South Pasadena on the Pasadena Avenue Corridor Study to balance safety, access and mobility along a critical evacuation corridor with significant redevelopment potential. Other activities included working with PSTA, FDOT and the City of Clearwater on a busway design for the Memorial Causeway Bridge to improve transit travel time and reliability, assisting in the planning of an expanded waterborne transit network as a viable transportation alternative, and working with local governments and FDOT along Gulf Boulevard to address safety, mobility and drainage challenges in that constrained corridor. Further north, Forward Pinellas began working with the City of Dunedin to address traffic congestion and safety concerns along the Dunedin Causeway that connects to Honeymoon Island.



A VISION FOR US 19

From south St. Pete to Tarpon Springs, Forward Pinellas continued to develop a vision for the US 19 corridor.

Forward Pinellas and FDOT held a public workshop and a business roundtable mid-year to discuss planned elevated interchanges in North Pinellas County. In response to community input, FDOT is evaluating alternative designs for the Klosterman, Alderman and Tarpon interchanges. Current plans include accommodations for bikes and pedestrians, such as crossings as depicted at left.

To the south, Forward Pinellas partnered with the City of St. Petersburg and FDOT on plans for Complete Streets on 34th Street in the Skyway Marina District, which would be implemented with an FDOT resurfacing project planned for 2022.

Forward Pinellas completed land use and economic analyses in Tarpon Springs and Largo, identifying what future development might be successful in the corridor. Another study identified preferred route concepts for express transit: one from Pasco County to the Gateway area and two south route concepts running on 34th Street and on 4th Street.



SIGNATURE PROJECTS

Joining the Pinellas Planning Council and Metropolitan Planning Agency under the Forward Pinellas umbrella created an opportunity for this agency to meet a variety of needs in our community. From funding safer streets and better places to ensuring the county can be resilient to rising waters or creating a cultural corridor on Alternate US 19 (workshop photo at right), Forward Pinellas has developed signature programs to find solutions countywide.

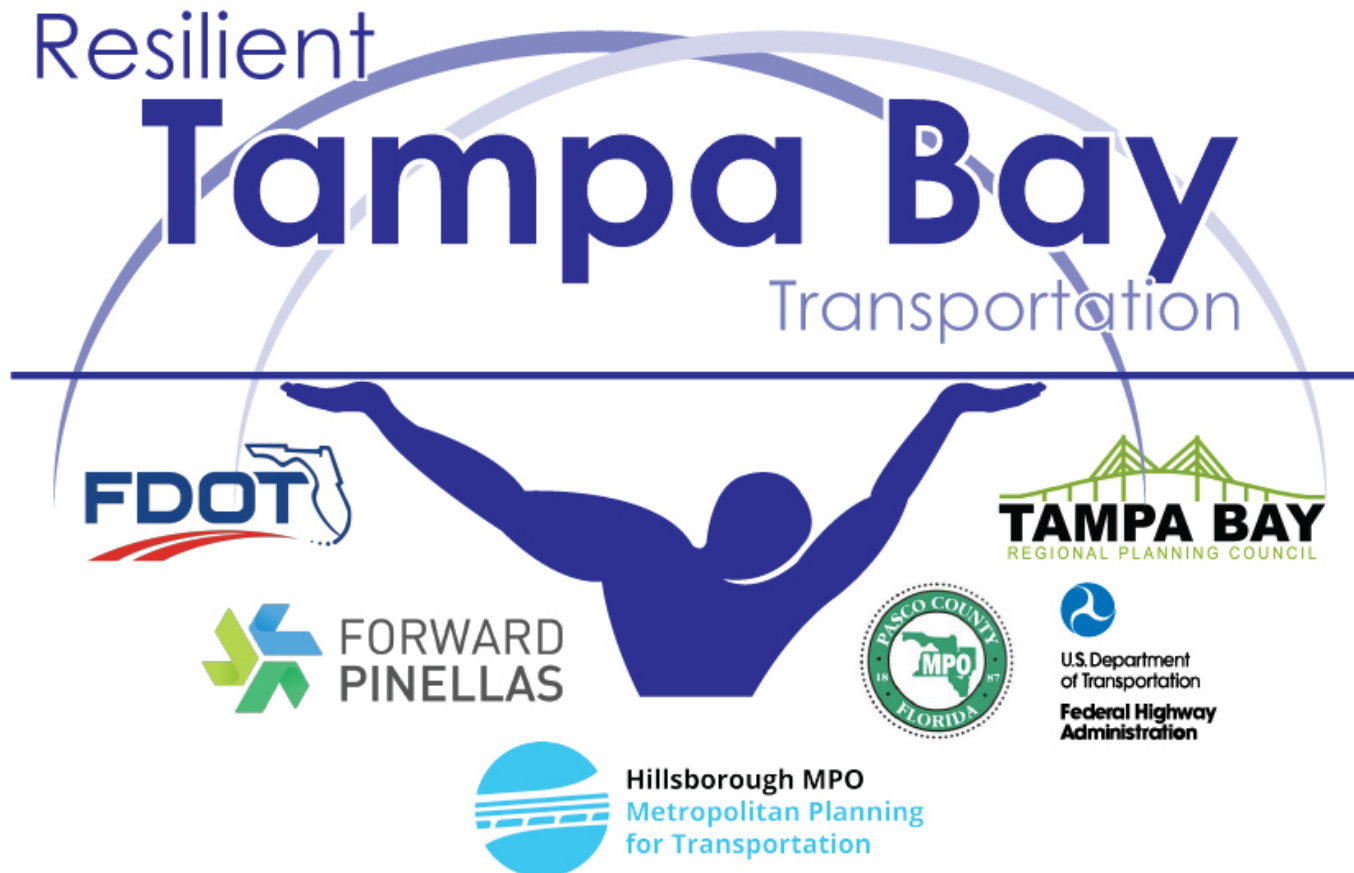


RESILIENCY

The Tampa Bay region is one of the most vulnerable areas to sea level rise in the country, experiencing frequent storm events and persistent flooding. Forward Pinellas, the Hillsborough MPO, Pasco MPO, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, and FDOT District 7 have been awarded a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Resilience and Durability to Extreme Weather grant. This is one of only 11 such grants awarded throughout the country.

Following a comprehensive evaluation, each county selected two representative corridors to analyze for vulnerability; Pinellas County's two corridors are Gulf Boulevard from Bath Club Circle to 125th Avenue & Tom Stuart Causeway Bridge and Roosevelt Boulevard/SR 686 from Ulmerton Road/SR 688 to Gandy Boulevard. In order to select these critical projects, 11 factors were analyzed, including evacuation route, projected traffic volume, proximity to activity centers, and projected population density.

The program addresses federal requirements for long-range planning, including improving the resilience and reliability of the transportation system. The final findings will be incorporated into the each county's long range plan, with a final report being issued in 2019.



COMPLETE STREETS

Forward Pinellas demonstrated its continued commitment to complete streets, both through its own funding program and through partnerships. By working with FDOT, the agency has been able to encourage complete street treatments on state road projects, including a retrofit analysis on US 19 frontage roads, and safety, drainage and utility undergrounding on Gulf Boulevard in Indian Shores, Indian Rocks Beach and St. Pete Beach.

The Forward Pinellas Complete Streets Program provides funding for both the planning and construction of complete streets projects countywide, with \$1 million available for construction projects through the FDOT work program and \$100,000 available for development of concept plans. Forward Pinellas solicits competitive applications from communities throughout the county each year: below is a rendering from the Drew Street concept plan, which was made possible through the first round of program funding in 2017. In its second round of funding, the 2017-18 Complete Streets Program awarded three projects: A concept plan for Skinner Boulevard in Dunedin, a construction project along St. Petersburg Drive in Oldsmar, and a construction project along Rosery Road in Largo. In the third year of the program, Forward Pinellas considered two applications for construction and two for concept planning. Funding will be awarded in March 2019.





PLANNING & PLACE-MAKING

Spurred by the success of the Complete Streets Program, Forward Pinellas implemented a similar funding program to foster a strong sense of place. The 2018 Planning & Place-Making Grant Pilot Program made \$50,000 available to assist local governments in their work to maintain and strengthen the character of Pinellas County’s many distinct communities.

The program received four applications from Pinellas County, St. Petersburg, St. Pete Beach, and Tarpon Springs. Two communities received awards, with \$25,000 going to the City of St. Petersburg to conduct an analysis of lending practices and financing “missing middle” housing, and \$25,000 to Pinellas County to develop an Alternative Regulating Plan for downtown Palm Harbor (seen at left).

In 2019, Forward Pinellas is doubling the award to \$100,000, and has received four applications from Largo, Oldsmar, St. Petersburg, and Tarpon Springs. Funding will be awarded in March.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SERIES

The Knowledge Exchange Series provides technical assistance relevant to the unique challenges of planning within a redeveloping Pinellas County, with the latest installment examining urban agriculture. This topic followed previous examinations of the economic impact of microbreweries and finding the “Missing Middle” of housing.

Building on pioneering efforts by the City of St. Petersburg, Forward Pinellas partnered with the city to create a resource for other communities looking to encourage urban agriculture. Drawing from the experience of local governments, farm owners, educators and others, Forward Pinellas staff provided an introduction to the spectrum of agricultural activities in the urban environment and provided successful examples from communities across Florida and the U.S.

Next steps include working with the Planners Advisory Committee on proposed amendments to the Countywide Plan to make it easier to allow urban agricultural uses in appropriate places.



OUR PEOPLE

As difficult as it was to say goodbye to longtime Planning Division Manager Sarah Ward as she retired in May, we were glad to celebrate her 32 years of service to Pinellas County and the institutional knowledge she brought to the MPO and Forward Pinellas. After graduating law school in 1985, Sarah saw a newspaper ad for a transportation planner, and she found she enjoyed the work and decided to stay. The past three decades of planning bears her fingerprints, including the Pinellas County trail system and the transportation disadvantaged program.

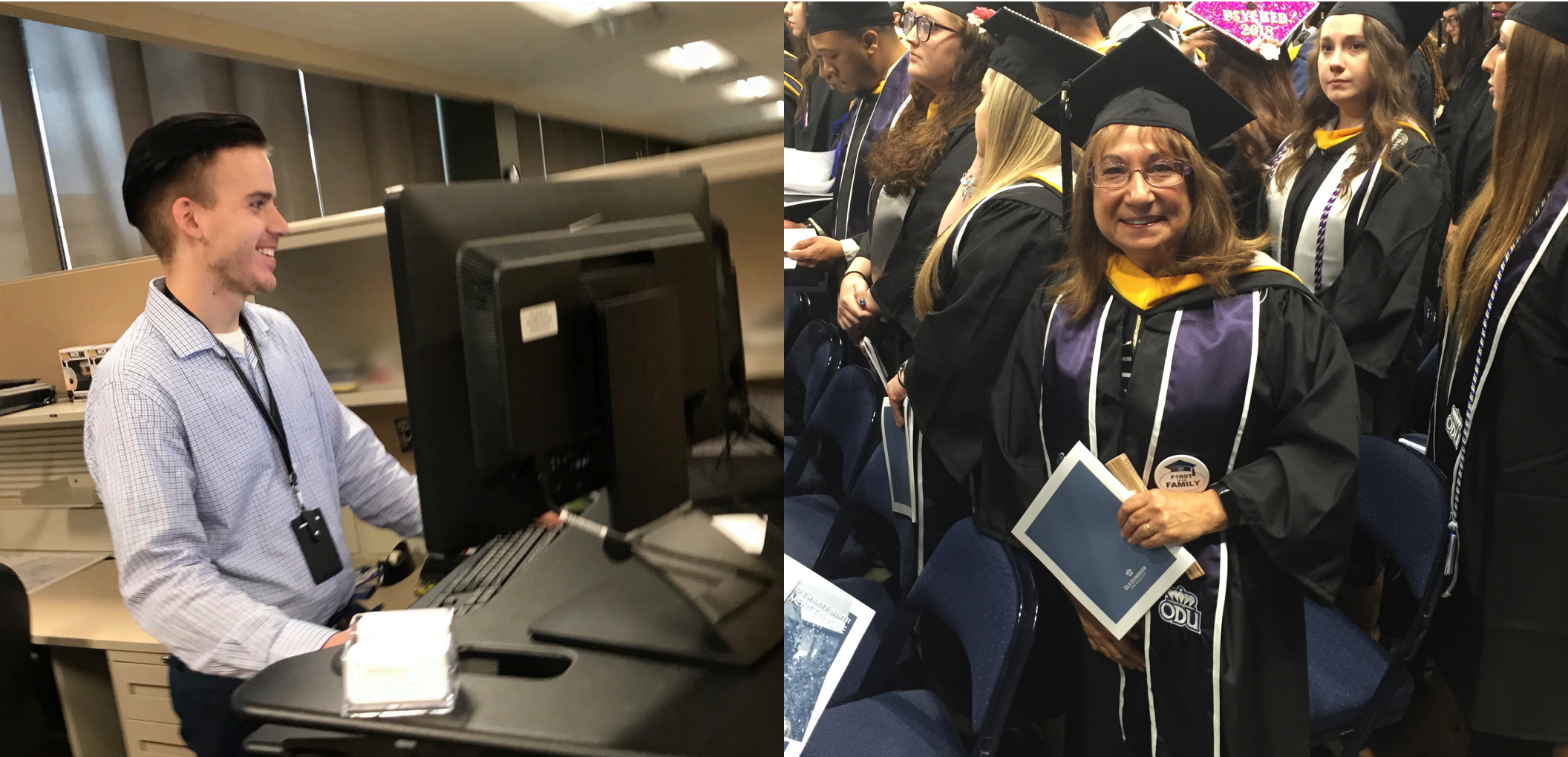
One message that was echoed often at her retirement party, which was attended by colleagues from throughout the years, was that Sarah always put the citizens first in her work, including in her four years as interim director of the MPO. We know that her gardens, volunteer organizations and travel companions are reaping the rewards of her attention now that this agency benefited from for so long.



STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In June, Forward Pinellas welcomed Jared Austin to the staff as a planner. Jared, who had previously worked for the agency as an intern, came to Forward Pinellas after graduating from USF, where he received a master's degree in geography. He works with both the land use and transportation planning teams at Forward Pinellas doing planning analysis and visualization. One notable project, which he presented to the board in May as an intern, was a story map analysis for the City of Dunedin's activity center.

We also applauded Secretary Maria Kelly's graduation with her bachelor's degree in psychology from Old Dominion University. Maria had been getting her degree while working full-time, and the ceremony was the culmination of years of hard work and a lifelong dream. She is known around the office and to all of our committee members as someone with a can-do attitude and efficient work style who is always willing to step in and help, no matter the request.



Our Mission

Forward Pinellas will provide leadership to align resources and plans that help to achieve a compelling vision for Pinellas County, our individual communities and our region.

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