



**FORWARD  
PINELLAS**  
Integrating Land Use & Transportation

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR IN REVIEW

PREPARED BY  
DANA L. SANTOS

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Forward Pinellas plays a unique role in the realm of Pinellas County governance. Our agency is charged with planning for the future of the entire county, from small towns to big cities, and our suburban and natural areas in between. We plan for a better future with an understanding of history, a data-driven focus on countywide issues, and an appreciation of the big picture as well as local community context.

Forward Pinellas plans transportation investments to achieve and sustain long-term goals of equitable economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, and fiscal accountability. Public investments are deliberative by nature and require informed partnerships. Forward Pinellas is the forum for cultivating and putting those partnerships in action to make countywide decisions about land use, growth, redevelopment, housing, and transportation.

Successful transportation projects take creativity, collaboration, and commitment. Long-term projects, like the SunRunner, can take decades of planning and consensus-building at all levels of government. Simple quick-build safety improvements, like the 1st Avenue and 2nd Street intersection in St. Petersburg or the Pinellas Trail and Skinner Blvd. crossing in Dunedin, require less time.

Delivering good transportation solutions takes time, but we do so as efficiently as we can, with purpose. We engage the public to solicit ideas, give feedback, and identify priorities that reflect their values. This means hearing different perspectives and balancing sometimes competing wants with expected costs and benefits. Furthermore, taking projects from concept to reality often spans a term of an elected official's time in office or one's tenure on an advisory board. This could mean a decade or more of community meetings, affirming priorities, allocating funding, and ongoing advocacy to get to construction. The process requires perseverance and consistency.

In 2023, we adopted a [Strategic Business Plan](#) to guide our efforts. Along with the commitment of our local, state, and federal partners, we strive to create plans and advance projects that respect our shared values to build a bright future full of opportunity for Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region.

**WHIT BLANTON, FAICP**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Chairing the Forward Pinellas Board is an honor that carries great responsibility. Transportation solutions are, have been, and continue to be, my number one priority. This place we call home is truly paradise, from our white-sandy beaches, parks, vibrant downtowns, and hard-working residents, Pinellas County is a dream destination to live in, work, and play. With all the growth and national interest this area has experienced in recent years, the secret is clearly 'out.' Prioritizing regional solutions through processes and being able to think 'big' is more critical now than ever before.

This past year, a project that I am particularly proud of was the passing of the Advantage Pinellas

Housing Action Plan. With partners, you get more done. The Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact is a long-term partnership that includes Forward Pinellas, Pinellas County, and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. The action plan is comprehensive and aims to create more affordable housing options for people of all income levels in our County, which is of great need.

Looking forward, a primary focus for next year will be the regional MPO. I believe that this will be the key to successful long-term regional planning, by promoting smarter growth and attracting more federal dollars to our region. Let's all pledge to work tirelessly to push the process along with a sense of urgency. We - as a region - need to recognize the need for continuous innovation and bring creative solutions to the table. We will continue to work with our partners in the Tampa Bay region toward that end. The board will be expanding next year, and hopefully, more voices will bring new ideas and fresh outlooks.

We have an enormous responsibility and important decisions to make. I have every confidence we can and will rise to the issues ahead. I am very thankful to work alongside Forward Pinellas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet C. Long".

**JANET C. LONG**

FORWARD PINELLAS CHAIR  
PINELLAS BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS, AT-LARGE DISTRICT 1

## 2023 PROGRESS

- Completion of the Target Employment & Industrial Lands Study (TEILS) Update
- Adoption of the Multimodal Accessibility Index (MAX Index)
- Approval of the Countywide Plan amendment package to incorporate the new TEILS Update recommendations and MAX Index
- Waterborne Transportation Committee work resulted in an Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Service Development Grant Award
- Completion of the Advantage Alt. 19 plan
- Adoption of the Housing Compact & Action Plan
- Kick off of the Advantage Pinellas: The 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Safe Streets for All planning grant was awarded to Pinellas County and five local cities
- Development of the Live Local Affordable Housing Tracker
- Adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding for a regional metropolitan planning organization (MPO)

## NEXT STEPS

- Adoption of the 2050 LRTP
- Development of the Multimodal Impact Fee Ordinance Update in 2025
- Development of the Affordable Housing Toolkit
- Adoption of the Advantage Alt. 19 Land Development Regulations & Comprehensive Plan amendments in the City of Largo
- Reapportionment of the Forward Pinellas Board
- Expansion of the trail count program
- Development of foundational elements for a regional MPO

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# SPOTLIGHT AREAS

Forward Pinellas adopted its Strategic Planning and Operations Topics, or SPOTlight emphasis areas, in 2015. These topics have coordinated land use and transportation components to support planned redevelopment and transportation access to destinations.

## TARGET EMPLOYMENT & JOB ACCESS

This SPOTlight area focuses on linking jobs, homes, and transit innovations. This year, the Forward Pinellas Board approved the final Target Employment & Industrial Lands Study Update (TEILS) report. The report's major recommendations change existing restrictions to incorporate target employment and industrial land use categories to further incentivize redevelopment, jobs access, affordable housing, mixed-use development, and walkable, transit-accessible places. The recommendations were subsequently approved and adopted with a package of amendments to the Countywide Plan. Forward Pinellas began working with local governments to implement the plan for specific target employment districts.

## ENHANCING BEACH COMMUNITY ACCESS

In May, the Forward Pinellas Waterborne Transportation Committee recommended submittal of a grant application to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a service development grant to fund water ferry service operations in Clearwater and Dunedin. Forward Pinellas received notification from FDOT of the award totaling \$655,000, to be spent within a three-year timeframe. Funds will go to the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) and the work will be coordinated through the Forward Pinellas Waterborne Committee. The committee has also begun implementing amendments to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to set the foundation for future waterborne services.



# US 19

Forward Pinellas has been working with FDOT and local governments, such as Clearwater and Pinellas Park, to advance a series of improvements to the US 19 corridor, one of the County’s busiest roadways.



## Harn Blvd. Overpass

When US 19 was reconstructed between SR 686 and SR 60, the roadway became a barrier to people who wanted to walk or bike across. Harn Blvd. was identified as a prime location for an elevated pedestrian crossing, which will allow residents to quickly and safely cross US 19 to reach destinations and connect with the Pinellas Trail Loop.

## Park Blvd. Dual Left Turn Improvements

This project is designed to provide congestion relief through the addition of a southbound turn lane along US 19 at Park Blvd. A sub-standard bicycle lane was eliminated and median width reduced to allow for the construction of an additional turn lane that will allow for a larger volume of traffic to turn and clear the intersection, thus reducing traffic delays.




## New Interchanges and Roadway Improvements

Construction began to convert US 19 from north of SR 580 through the Curlew Rd. intersection to a partially controlled access expressway with frontage roads. The project goal is to include pedestrian crossings every half-mile across US 19. An interchange at Curlew Road and overpasses at Republic Drive and Northside Drive will be built. By separating local traffic from vehicles driving through the area, the project seeks to improve regional mobility, local accessibility, and reduce crashes.

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# PARTNERSHIPS

**Forward Pinellas strives to serve as facilitator and liaison** to engage and inform the public while helping government agencies and the private sector collaborate at both regional and local scales.



Forward Pinellas continues close coordination with transit operator **Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)**. We will continue with technical evaluation of the SunRunner and future transit corridors as part of planning for Advantage Pinellas 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan. Since its launch last year, more than 1 million riders have used the SunRunner. This demonstrates strong local support for the rapid transit line which we expect to grow over time through Transit Oriented Development around stations.

**The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)**, a major funding and construction partner, are highly responsive to our defined priorities, policy direction, and technical input. For instance: a series of safety and traffic flow improvements to the US 19 corridor, Gulf Boulevard in the municipalities of Indian Shores, Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach, and Skinner Blvd./SR 580 in Dunedin, to name a few. FDOT has also recognized our need for more flexible funding by expanding how certain funding programs may be used.

Forward Pinellas's grant programs for transportation, such as Complete Streets, requires local governments to apply for funding that we make available to them. Our planning projects and technical assistance often address shared issues affecting our **25 local governments**. We also work with local governments to update their comprehensive plans, as needed.

Forward Pinellas's agenda of regional collaboration extends to our work with the **Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA)**. Consideration is underway to merge the region's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) of Hillsborough, Pinellas, & Pasco Counties into a single Tampa Bay MPO. The three MPOs have adopted a Memorandum of Understanding to guide the effort, conducted a public survey with 1,732 responses, and developed a report to the Governor and Florida Legislature.



# PROJECT TIMELINE

Even the least complex projects can take up to five or 10 years from inception to completion. For a project to endure, it must have credible data, clear, documented public support, and ongoing partnerships between local and regional agencies. The two case examples below of projects in St. Petersburg, completed in the same year, demonstrate how a project's complexity can result in vastly different timelines.

## 1ST AVENUE S./2ND STREET S. PROTECTED INTERSECTION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT



Concept developed through Safe Streets Pinellas Action Plan

Plan finalized and construction begins

Project completed



## SUNRUNNER BUS RAPID TRANSIT

- 2003** — Corridor identified through Downtown St. Petersburg East-West Transit System Study
- 2006** — Central Avenue BRT Final Concept Planning Study
- 2007** — Additional outreach conducted
- 2009** — Adopted into the 2035 LRTP  
City of St. Petersburg awarded funding
- 2015** — Submitted request to enter project development
- 2016** — Identified alignment and station areas  
Conducted analysis and outreach
- 2017** — Project submitted for Project Evaluation and Rating through the Small Starts Program  
Secured support from municipalities
- 2018** — Plan included in MPO's LRTP Cost Feasible Plan
- 2019** —
- 2020** — Construction begins
- 2021** —
- 2022** — Project completed



# 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Planning has begun for the Advantage Pinellas 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Last adopted in 2019, the LRTP is revisited every five years to account for changing socioeconomic data, travel patterns, and local priorities. The new plan will use the most recent demographic data from the decennial Census, most recent project cost estimates, and consider post-pandemic shifts in travel and employment trends.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

Forward Pinellas conducted a statistically valid community transportation survey in Spring 2023. This survey solicited and summarized public preferences and priorities related to transportation improvements.

For more detailed feedback, three focus groups will be conducted with Pinellas County residents. Forward Pinellas is also using various print publication, social media pushes, and public outreach at community events, such as local festivals and markets.



**Advantage**  
**PINELLAS**



LRTP Kick-Off Press Event



Focus Group #1



Outreach in Gulfport

## ADVANTAGE PINELLAS PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE!

Forward Pinellas developed an interactive website for people to share their desires for future transportation projects. Registered participants earn tickets to win prizes!

Visit [advantagepinellas2050.org](https://www.advantagepinellas2050.org)

# ADVANTAGE PINELLAS HOUSING COMPACT

Forward Pinellas continued to work in partnership with Pinellas County to implement the Advantage Pinellas Housing Compact, uniting the County and municipalities in a common approach to address the critical need for affordable housing, coordinated with planning for jobs, job training, and transportation. In April, the partnership held a countywide Housing Summit hosted by the City of Largo, and launched the Advantage Pinellas Housing Action Plan, which sets forth a range of implementation actions over 1, 3, and 10-year timeframes.

The goal of the compact is to unite the County and municipalities in a common and coordinated approach to increase and preserve affordable housing.



[Watch the 2023 Homes for Pinellas Housing Summit](#)



# ADVANTAGE ALT. 19: INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND PLACES ALONG THE ALTERNATE US 19 CORRIDOR

The Advantage Alt. 19 plan includes a comprehensive redevelopment and transit vision for the Alternate US 19 Corridor from Clearwater to St. Petersburg, a priority investment corridor within Advantage Pinellas. The redevelopment and economic opportunity strategy developed in this plan will encourage the incorporation of enhanced transit service and other multimodal transportation options to link jobs, job training, and attainable housing.



A set of 12 station areas are identified as part of the redevelopment vision. Each station area is assigned a place type to characterize the type of development and redevelopment envisioned for that station area. A set of recommendations were created to reflect the evolution of areas over time as the corridor redevelops and becomes more transit supportive. The final plan document is currently in review by local partners and will be presented to the Forward Pinellas board in 2024.

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# TRANSPORTATION BEFORE & AFTER PROJECTS

Forward Pinellas is committed to before and after studies for new roadway improvement, Complete Streets, safety, and other transit projects, with an aim to capture the transportation and land use impacts of these investments.

## Park Boulevard

Forward Pinellas completed a pilot study on Park Blvd. in Pinellas Park to better understand how travel behavior changes with focused efforts on increased safety messaging and enforcement activity. The corridor, from west of 71st St. to east of US 19, is part of the county's High Injury Network. The pilot placed a geofence around a portion of the road to send targeted safety messages. Driving speed and sudden braking behavior were also tracked separately to gauge progress.

Results identified a segment of the road, around 44th St. N, where people were more likely to speed. Results also showed that education and enforcement activities reduced driver speeds and unsafe behaviors during the duration of the project, but once those activities ceased, drivers reverted to earlier behaviors.



It takes a consistent, coordinated effort between education, engineering, and traffic safety enforcement to make noticeable improvement in driver behavior.

Other studies in the lineup include 34th Street South, which is currently under construction, and Complete Streets projects such as Drew Street/SR 590, Skinner/SR 580, Rosery Road, and St. Petersburg Drive.

# MORE PROGRESS



## PINELLAS TRAIL USER SURVEY

The Pinellas Trail User Survey is administered every four to five years to help track trends in trail use over time and inform decision making on future land use and transportation projects. A total of 2,391 responses were collected from March-April, 2023.

# SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL

In February, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) awarded Forward Pinellas, a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Grant. Grant funds totaling \$559,074.00 will be allocated to Forward Pinellas's Safe Streets Pinellas Action Plan and includes six partners - Pinellas County and the cities of Dunedin, Gulfport, Largo, Oldsmar, and St. Petersburg.



# BIKE YOUR CITY

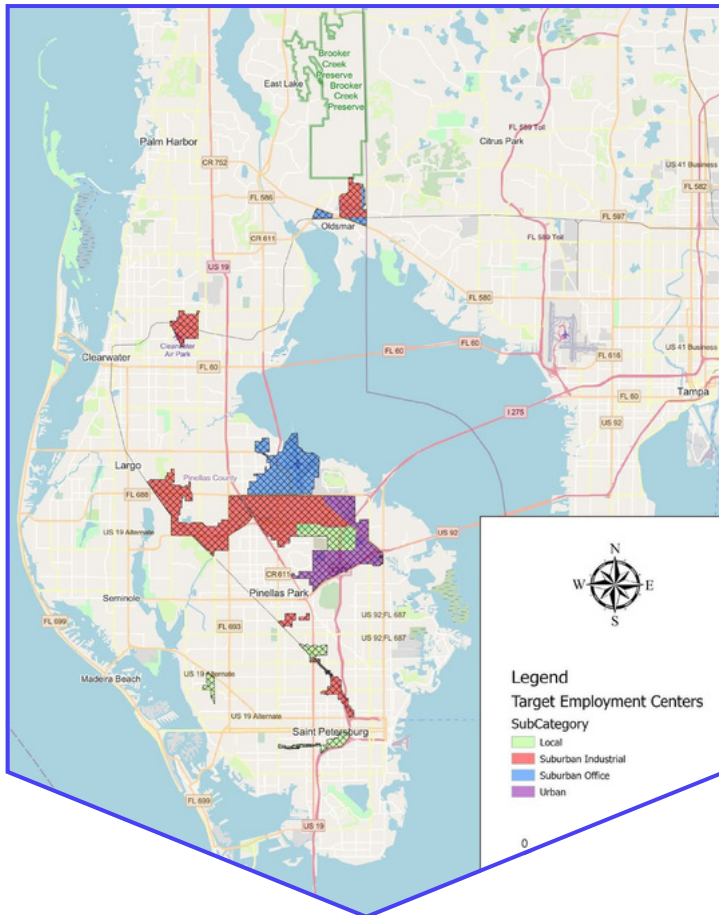
Over 100 people from across the county gathered for the seventh annual Bike Your City event on March 10, in Oldsmar, FL.



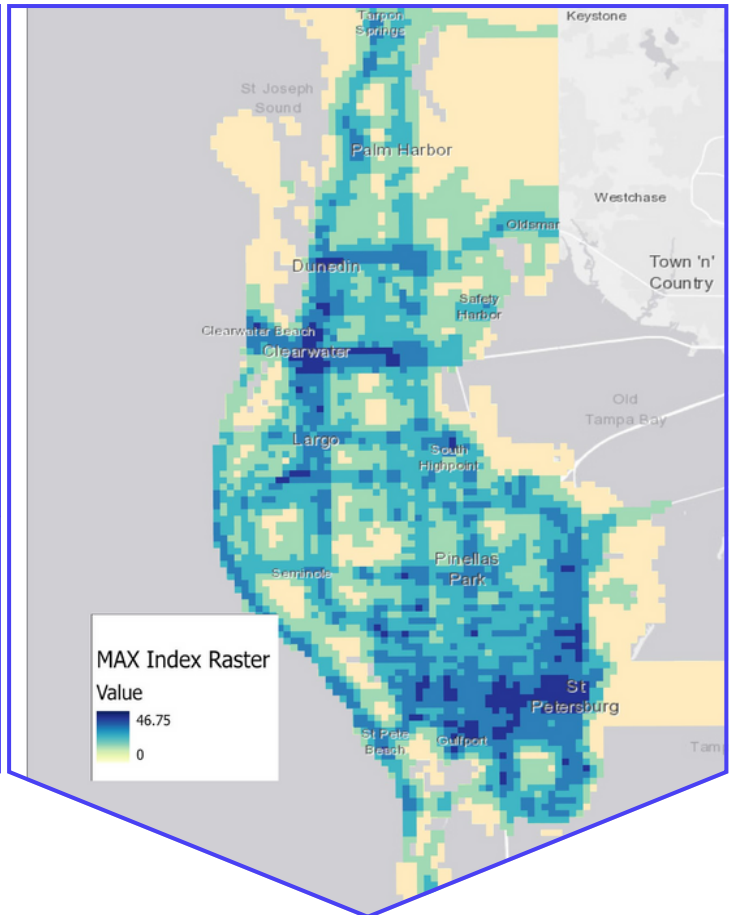
# COUNTYWIDE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The following were approved by the Forward Pinellas Board and the Countywide Planning Authority to be incorporated into the Countywide Plan.

TEILS Target Employment Centers Map



Multimodal Accessibility (MAX) Index Scores Map



## TEILS UPDATE

The Target Employment & Industrial Lands Study Update (TEILS) recommendations were accepted for use by local governments and the private sector. Amongst the recommendations includes the creation of four new subcategories of the Target Employment Center (TEC) Overlay with associated standards and incentives and modification of the review criteria for Countywide Plan Map amendments of employment-related categories.

## MAX INDEX

The Multimodal Accessibility (MAX) Index is a new index to evaluate transportation impacts of proposed Countywide Plan Map amendments across various modes of transportation, rather than only automobile level of service.

The image above shows a snapshot of the countywide MAX Index values. Darker blue shading indicates a greater level of multimodal accessibility.

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# LOCAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATES

Forward Pinellas, in its role as the Pinellas Planning Council, helped five local governments update their comprehensive plans: Belleair Beach, Belleair Shore, Belleair Bluffs, Indian Shores, and Redington Beach. Forward Pinellas guides local governments through all aspects of the comprehensive plan update: preparing maps and data analysis, evaluating adopted policies, collecting community input, and leading public hearings.

## LIVE LOCAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRACKER

Following the enactment of the Live Local Act in 2023, Pinellas County and local cities identified the need to systematically track new projects that emerge due to this legislation. Forward Pinellas staff have begun development of an interactive and publicly accessible dashboard to monitor such projects. This tool will assist municipalities, elected officials, and the public in evaluating the overall impact of the legislation on expanding the county's affordable housing supply, while also assessing its effects on industrial and commercial lands.

## GULF BOULEVARD SAFETY STUDIES

Forward Pinellas is working with the cities of Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach to identify a set of concept alternatives featuring safety improvements for Gulf Blvd. to slow speeds and increase access. Shorter term improvements include additional mid-block crossings, intersection improvements, sidewalk improvements, and access management improvements. Longer-term conceptual alternatives involve a potential redesign of the roadway and include elements such as wider, buffered bike lanes or a separated bike facility, wider sidewalks, and landscaping. These plans are being finalized with input from the cities, FDOT, and other partners.





# WHAT IS NEXT



## LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The 2050 LRTP will be adopted in 2024. Forward Pinellas will begin identification of funding sources and match revenue sources with identified project priorities and continue public outreach.

## MULTIMODAL IMPACT FEE ORDINANCE UPDATE

Forward Pinellas, with funding from a collaboration of Pinellas County, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Largo, has contributed funds in FY24 to update the countywide multimodal impact fee ordinance. This ordinance aims to ensure that new developments contribute proportionally to the capital expenditures required to address the county's mobility needs.



## US 19 NORTH IMPROVEMENTS

Forward Pinellas will be working with FDOT, Pinellas County, municipalities, and the public and business community to identify what types of projects should be undertaken along northern US 19 to accommodate regional growth. Options include construction of partially controlled access segments with interchanges and frontage roads or the construction of a viaduct-type roadway, treatments for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders, and investigation into express transit options.



## ADVANTAGE ALT. 19 LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS & COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

Forward Pinellas is planning to provide support to the City of Largo to implement recommendations from the Advantage Alt. 19 project, which identified a series of policy, infrastructure, and funding recommendations. These projects will focus on addressing action items for several City of Largo station areas, such as Downtown Largo and Largo Mall station areas.

## EXPANDING TRAIL COUNT PROGRAM

Forward Pinellas manages one of the longest continually running trail count programs in Florida. In 2024, we plan to make the most significant capital investment in new equipment since the program launched in 2017 by conducting studies to ensure existing counters are still performing as intended, upgrading existing locations as needed to ensure data accuracy, and expanding to new locations as funding allows.



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING REGULATORY TOOLKIT

With the adoption of the Advantage Pinellas Housing Action Plan, staff have begun working on the first wave of implementation projects, including a comprehensive housing affordability and cost burden analysis, data tools to help with public policy decision-making, and a media strategy to promote the benefits of greater housing affordability.

## REAPPORTIONMENT

The Forward Pinellas Board will take on a new look in 2024 based on the newly adopted reapportionment plan. Subject to approval by the governor, the new board composition will expand from 13 to 19 total members.



# FORWARD PINELLAS STAFF

**Jared Austin, AICP**, Principal Planner  
**Whit Blanton, FAICP**, Executive Director  
**Valerie Brookens**, Principal Planner  
**Rodney Chatman, AICP**, Planning Division Manager  
**Chelsea Favero, AICP**, Planning Manager  
**Robert Feigel, MPA, JD**, Program Planner  
**Linda Fisher, AICP**, Principal Planner  
**Margie Green**, Accounting Services Coordinator  
**Tina Jablon**, Executive Administrative Secretary  
**Maria Kelly**, Secretary  
**Ariane Martins**, Transportation Planner  
**Christina Mendoza, AICP**, Principal Planner  
**Kaitlyn Neiman, BS**, Planner  
**Dana Santos, MPH/MA**, Communications & Outreach Specialist  
**Kyle Simpson, AICP**, Active Transportation Planner  
**Cris Smith**, Accounting Services Coordinator  
**Rebecca Stysly**, Accounting and Finance Manager  
**Emma Wennick, BS**, Program Planner

**Intern: Alexis Hall**, University of South Florida Masters of Urban & Regional Planning





Pictured in back row, left to right: Councilmember Richie Floyd, Commissioner Dave Eggers, Commissioner Brian Scott, Councilor Chris Scott, Councilmember Jarrod Buchman. Front row, left to right: Forward Pinellas Executive Director Whit Blanton, Councilmember Gina Driscoll, Commissioner Janet Long, Councilmember David Allbritton, Mayor Julie Bujalski, Councilmember John Muhammad, Commissioner Michael Smith, Mayor Alan Johnson. Not pictured: Commissioner Eric Gerard, Vice Mayor Patti Reed, Mayor David Will

## FORWARD PINELLAS BOARD

**Commissioner Janet Long, Chair, Pinellas County**

**Mayor Julie Ward Bujalski, Vice Chair, City of Dunedin**

**Councilmember David Allbritton, Treasurer, City of Clearwater**

**Councilmember Gina Driscoll, Secretary, City of St. Petersburg, Representing Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority**

**Councilmember Jarrod Buchman, City of Oldsmar, Representing Safety Harbor and Tarpon Springs**

**Councilor Chris Burke, City of Seminole, Representing the Inland Communities**

**Commissioner Dave Eggers, Pinellas County**

**Councilmember Richie Floyd, City of St. Petersburg**

**Commissioner Eric Gerard, City of Largo (partial year)**

**Mayor Alan Johnson, City of St. Pete Beach (partial year)**

**Councilmember John Muhammad, City of St. Petersburg**

**Vice Mayor Patti Reed, City of Pinellas Park**

**Commissioner Brian Scott, Pinellas County**

**Commissioner Michael Smith, City of Largo (partial year)**

**Mayor David Will, City of Redington Beach, Representing the Beach Communities (partial year)**

# COMMITTEES

Our advisory committees meet on a regularly scheduled basis and help shape the plans, programs and policies of Forward Pinellas.

**Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee**

**Citizens Advisory Committee**

**Local Coordinating Board**

**Pinellas Trail Security Task Force**

**Planners Advisory Committee**

**School Transportation Safety Committee**

**Technical Coordinating Committee**

**Legislative Committee**

**Waterborne Transportation Committee**

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# AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

**Whit Blanton, FAICP**, Elected as President of the American Planning Association (APA) Florida Chapter for 2023-2024


**Commissioner Janet Long**, *Herman W. Goldner Award for Regional Leadership*, Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Leadership Summit


**Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority**, named 2023's Outstanding Public Transportation System, by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA)


**Jared Austin, AICP**, Pinellas County 5-Year Service Award


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# CONTACT US

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     @ForwardPinellas



# FORWARD PINELLAS

Integrating Land Use & Transportation



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The Forward Pinellas 2023 Annual Report is provided as a requirement of the Pinellas Planning Council Special Act.