



# FORWARD PINELLAS

Integrating Land Use & Transportation

## STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

Adopted 10.1.2023

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Forward Pinellas Strategic Business Plan provides a guiding framework for our work. This plan includes key strategic goals and objectives for how we aim to achieve identified goals. Forward Pinellas uses the Strategic Business Plan to prepare its annual budget, set work priorities, and as a basis for staff performance evaluations.

# FORWARD PINELLAS

Forward Pinellas is a land use and transportation planning agency. The agency is charged with addressing countywide land use and transportation concerns, as both the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) and Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The PPC is a dependent special district of the Board of County Commissioners and has existed in some form since 1965. It was reconstituted in its current form in 1988 by a special act of the State Legislature (Chapter 88-464, Laws of Florida), and approved by countywide referendum as an amendment to the Pinellas County Charter. In September 2014, the PPC unified its membership with the MPO, as stipulated by Chapter 2012-245, Laws of Florida. The agency re-branded itself as Forward Pinellas shortly thereafter while both the PPC and MPO continue to exist as separate legal entities.

The work we do is not always immediately visible to the public eye. We do not build roads, buildings, or parks or deal with day-to-day operations such as operating buses and railways. Rather, Forward Pinellas creates plans for Pinellas County's future; plans that may take years to come to fruition. To advance those plans with predictability, Forward Pinellas builds partnerships and sets priorities for spending federal and state funds to meet Pinellas County's land use and transportation needs.

Throughout the creation of these plans, Forward Pinellas provides a forum of regional coordination for countywide decision-making on transportation and land use issues amongst Pinellas County's 24 local governments and unincorporated Pinellas County. We also provide technical expertise and support, policy advice, and guidance.



**Forward Pinellas**

*The Convener  
and  
Keeper of Vision*

Below is a breakdown of the responsibilities of Forward Pinellas as the PPC and the MPO. While each arm of Forward Pinellas is mandated to certain responsibilities, as both the PPC and MPO we are uniquely positioned to guide an integrated approach to transportation and land use solutions.

## Pinellas Planning Council

Provide policy advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners per the special act of the State Legislature (Chapter 2012-245, Laws of Florida).

Manage the Countywide Plan which guides land use planning.

Support local governments, per the Interlocal Agreement, on an “as-needed” basis. Examples include:

- Mapping
- GIS / Data analytics
- Comprehensive Plans
- Land Development Regulations
- Pilot Programs (grants)
- Planner-in-Residence
- Housing Action Plan

Manage and facilitate discussion amongst various committees, such as the Planners Advisory Committee and Legislative Committee.



## Metropolitan Planning Organization

Develop project priority lists for state and federal funding.

Address the mobility needs of people and freight in accordance with Federal Law (23 USC 134 and 135) and Chapter 339.175 of the Florida Statutes.

Develop plans, policies, and priorities that guide local decision-making on transportation issues.

Principal responsibilities include the development of:

- 20-year Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Two-year Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and related transportation planning studies and projects

Manage and facilitate discussion amongst committees, such as the Citizen Advisory Committee, Technical Coordinating Committee and Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee.



# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA: PLANNING ANALYTICS

At Forward Pinellas, we are data oriented. We strive to use hard data, as well as qualitative insights, for informed decision making and the selection of project priorities and guide outcomes of plans and projects. We will build on current and emerging tools and data sources to undertake analysis that aids in public understanding, including development of robust measures of effectiveness to evaluate the equitable outcomes of plans and projects from a perspective of equity, effectiveness, and efficiency. We will utilize this data to help staff, elected officials, and the public understand important conditions, trends, and outcomes that affect the entire Pinellas community.

**Goal: Conduct a performance-based, outcome-driven planning process.**

## **Objectives:**

- Monitor travel patterns using big data and other tools to assess conditions, trends, and impacts.
- Commit to before and after studies for new roadway improvement, complete streets, safety, and transit projects.
- Continue participating in the Regional Data Working Group.
- Use story maps to help the public and officials understand issues, trends, and outcomes.
- Continue to use GIS tools to develop and maintain dashboards to track the implementation of land use plans.
- Monitor trends in economic activity, housing supply/affordability, and redevelopment activities across the county.



# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA: PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Forward Pinellas will set priorities for sound public investment to meet the transportation and land use goals of Pinellas County. Leading with attention to equity, we will strive for wise investments that connect local networks in accessible ways and build public wealth. We will serve the role as the guiding entity for implementing actions on more affordable housing and multimodal transportation projects.

**Goal: Incorporate housing policies across Forward Pinellas plans and projects with an emphasis on delivering more housing for all income levels.**

## **Objectives:**

- Continue to raise awareness and solicit local government support for the Countywide Housing Compact.
- Continue to serve as the forum for coordination and communication of the implementation activities of the Housing Action Plan.
- Continue to work with our partners to identify best practices to eliminate regulatory barriers to housing that is affordable.

**Goal: Provide travel choices and economic opportunities for all.**

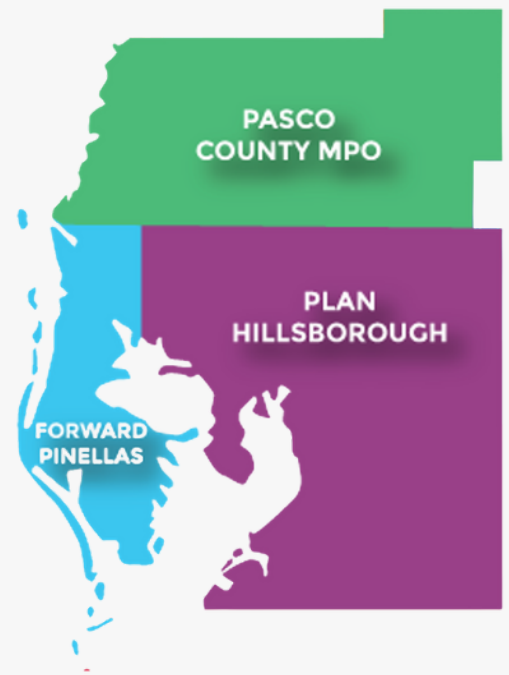
## **Objectives:**

- Prioritize projects that help improve safety and decrease the number of serious and incapacitating crashes.
- Ensure that all projects included in the TIP include safe accommodations along and through the corridor for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Continue to educate legislative delegation on the need for cross-county Transportation Disadvantaged trips.
- Continue to educate the legislative delegation on the need for greater funding flexibility on state transportation funding resources.
- Continue to allocate 100% of federal flexible funds to projects that prioritize transportation improvements beyond increasing the physical capacity of the roadway network.

# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA: PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

To build a rich and resilient Pinellas County and Tampa Bay region we will work cooperatively with our partners throughout Pinellas County and across Tampa Bay. Forging effective partnerships among public agencies, citizens, the business community, non-profits, and other key stakeholders is essential for better outcomes in our planning process and project outcomes for our residents. We will also cultivate strong and effective partnerships with state and local governments and regional partners, such as Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance and Transportation Management Area Leadership Group.

Major land use and transportation planning projects often stretch across city and county lines, such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, and thus, are of countywide significance. In the spring of 2023, the Florida Legislature passed a law requiring the three MPOs of Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco to submit a report of the benefits, costs, and process of merging into a single MPO. Amidst such policy changes, we will strive to strengthen our commitment to regional planning. We can serve as facilitator and liaison to help governments and agencies collaborate at both regional and local scales. Our role will be to build trust for collaboration and promote the positive implications of such collaboration both regionally and countywide. We strive to strengthen a culture of trust, transparency, and innovation for transportation plans and projects serving the Tampa Bay region.



## **Goal: Provide local assistance in land use and transportation planning decisions.**

### **Objectives:**

- At request, provide data on trends and conditions to help guide project decisions.
- Monitor bills filed in the Florida Legislature and communicate implications to local communities and partners.
- Devote up to 25% of our staff capacity toward special projects that support the goals of local partners. The remaining percent is devoted to Forward Pinellas program management.
- Continue to serve as a countywide convener and facilitator to assist our partners in problem solving and addressing issues and concerns.
- Work with our legislative delegation at the state and federal levels to increase awareness of the impact policies and laws have on our communities and region.

## **Goal: Cultivate and sustain regional partnerships.**

### **Objectives:**

- Work with partners throughout the region to share insights gained through our work on major policy plans, such as the Target Employment and Industrial Land Study (TEILS) Update and SunRunner Rising Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study.
- Conduct show and tell “field trips” for officials, citizen representatives, and other stakeholders to observe projects and project outcomes of other cities and areas in the region as an opportunity to learn from one another.
- Continue the Fellowship Program with the University of South Florida’s Masters in Urban and Regional Planning Program.
- Increase coordination with transportation operators, including the Florida Department of Transportation and the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority.
- Convene regional planning agencies to discuss the prospective merger of MPOs.



# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engaging the public is an elemental piece of our work at Forward Pinellas. We aim to strengthen our connection with the public for the purposes of raising understanding and gathering input to develop, advance, and implement long-term plans and activities. This best ensures the projects we plan are meaningful to the public. Our communications strategy will promote an increase in public awareness of Forward Pinellas's work and mission and help us acquire knowledge of preferences and concerns and diverse public input for project designs, plans, and priorities. Our communication approach includes traditional and non-traditional means and will have flexibility to experiment with new approaches. We will work to tailor our engagement per different audiences.

**Goal: Increase public awareness and understanding of priority projects.**

## **Objectives:**

- Provide public input opportunities at the start of project design and at key milestones in the design phase.
- Provide progress updates to the public throughout the programming process, design phase, and throughout construction, and elicit feedback, to keep people informed and shape the final product.
- Meet the public where they are already gathering in their communities.
- Continue to use a broad array of public engagement techniques such as advisory committees, focus groups, community meetings, public workshops, charrettes, online surveys, project websites, etc. to increase awareness and solicit feedback from the public.
- The Forward Pinellas Communications and Outreach Specialist will help translate complex planning ideas to public friendly language.
- Work with local government communications and engagement staff to better reach neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, and advocacy groups.

**Goal: Reach diverse communities to guide land use and transportation decision making.**

**Objectives:**

- Investigate new ways to solicit input and keep people from economically and ethnically diverse backgrounds engaged in planning activities.
- Cultivate committee members as ambassadors for outreach to local communities they represent (e.g., Citizen Advisory Committee).
- Broaden reach, range, and strength of our partnerships to engage younger populations, Spanish-speaking populations, and those who are underserved.
- Incorporate more Spanish language materials in project descriptions and outreach materials.

**Goal: Implement ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of outreach efforts.**

**Objectives:**

- Track metrics of social media engagement on a quarterly basis.
- Track newsletter opens and clicks on a quarterly basis.
- Track website traffic on a quarterly basis.
- The Public Participation Plan will be evaluated after each LRTP update.
- Evaluate outreach efforts after each project completion.
- Prepare a communications and outreach report for presentation to the board on a bi-yearly basis.



# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Forward Pinellas is focused on sustaining and supporting our existing quality staff by encouraging professional growth and providing the resources and flexibility needed to make career advancements. These efforts are intended to help staff feel fulfilled in their work and better equipped to serve in their respective roles. We believe this is a key part of retaining and recruiting great employees.

**Goal: Support staff to develop additional expertise and a more diversified skill set.**

## **Objectives:**

- Create awareness of further certifications and skill training opportunities at regular staff meetings.
- Each staff member has an annual professional development budget to be used at their discretion, with approval of their supervisor. The budget for professional development varies by job classification.
- Staff have the flexibility to pursue professional development opportunities during normal work hours so long as their regular duties are not negatively impacted, up to four hours every two weeks.
- Work with human resources to create more opportunities for career progression within certain position classifications.
- Create opportunities for staff to gain meaningful experience managing projects, programs, and/or people.



## **Goal: Provide ongoing feedback on staff performance.**

### **Objectives:**

- Conduct bi-annual conversations on professional growth which will provide the opportunity to assess staff performance relative to strategic objectives and a structured space for feedback and guidance.
- Recognize staff achievements during regularly scheduled meetings and through communication channels, such as social media, website, and newsletters.
- Support efforts to develop a merit-pay system in collaboration with other Appointing Authorities.

## **Goal: Cultivate a flexible work environment.**

### **Objectives:**

- Continue to maintain the flexible remote work policy that allows staff opportunities to work from home when their schedules permit.
- Designate days for all staff to report to the office, such as the day of the monthly board meeting and All Staff Meeting.
- Continue to equip staff with the technology needed to maintain a high level of productivity while working remotely.

## **Goal: Promote team building.**

### **Objectives:**

- Allot one day a year for a staff “retreat.”
- Occasionally incorporate a learning activity into team potlucks and holiday gatherings.
- Encourage staff to participate in agency or countywide social activities, at least twice a year.



## CONTACT

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