

APOLLO BEACH COMMUNITY PLAN

Comprehensive Plan Amendment

I. Introduction

Apollo Beach is a thriving Hillsborough County community located approximately 12 miles southeast of Tampa between Gibsonton and Ruskin and is one of the SouthShore communities directly on Tampa Bay. Compared to its neighbors, the core of Apollo Beach is new, receiving development approval in 1979. The original development plan called for close to 18,000 residential units distributed over 5,000 acres. While greatly reduced in density and intensity from its original scheme, single-family homes constitute the predominant use today.

A variety of land uses are found in Apollo Beach, including agricultural, commercial, light industrial, office and residential. Large tracts of natural preserves protect a diversity of ecosystems where endemic species thrive. Most commercial activity flanks US Highway 41 where suburban shopping strips and franchise establishments vie with traditional vegetable and fruit stands. East of US Highway 41, mostly vacant land can be found at various stages of planning and development.

The Apollo Beach Community Plan Area (approximately 24 square miles including natural preserves) can be broken down into two major geographic areas running east and west of US Highway 41. Older development took place west of US Highway 41, mostly tract housing north and south of Apollo Beach Boulevard interrupted by some retail and office development. The area east of US Highway 41, consists of several very large parcels of vacant land, with most currently dedicated to farming. A large portion of the acreage east of US Highway 41 is classified as Suburban Mixed Use (SMU-6) on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which allows for the consideration of internally integrated office, commercial, light industrial and residential uses.

The 2000 Census found 3,404 dwellings and 7,444 people in Apollo Beach (Census Tract 141.01). When the area's approved projects are considered, some 14,000 residential units could be developed, accounting for an additional 41,000 residents. Given the amount of undeveloped property, the future population of the plan area could exceed 66,000 residents at build-out. While the older neighborhoods of Apollo Beach are not expecting major growth, the area east of US Highway 41 has the capacity to accommodate projected growth well into the century.

Several community-serving facilities and nature preserves are located in the area, including Apollo Beach Elementary School located on Apollo Beach Boulevard, a fire station situated on Golf and Sea Boulevard and a Community Post Office - a contract station providing service in small communities - is located off US Highway 41. The area's nature preserves were purchased through the Environmental Lands Acquisition & Preservation Program (ELAPP). These include Bullfrog Creek Scrub, Wolf Branch, Noonan Branch and Apollo Beach Nature Park.

US Highway 41, US Highway 301 and Interstate 75 connect the Apollo Beach area with communities to the north and south. Big Bend Road and 19th Avenue NE are the only major east west connectors. Apollo Beach Boulevard is the main link between US Highway 41 and points west. In the Southshore Areawide Systems Plan, a north/south arterial connecting Big Bend

Road with College Avenue in Ruskin is proposed, as is an arterial between US Highway 41 and Interstate 75. An Apollo Beach Boulevard extension is projected to link the roadway with County Road 672 and possibly provide an interchange at Interstate 75. The SouthShore Plan also foresees an extension of Leisey Road eastwards past the proposed north-south arterial and southward to 19th Avenue.

II. Community Plan Boundaries

The Apollo Beach Community Plan is generally bounded by Big Bend Road on the north, 19th Avenue NE on the south, U.S. Highway 301 On the east and Tampa Bay on the west. See attached Map A.

III. 2025 Vision Statement

Over the past two decades Apollo Beach has experienced rapid change but is now a more stable and diverse community satisfying the spectrum of suburban desires. We are pleased that through our foresight and tenacity, the goals of our 2005 community plan have been realized.

The upside of population growth has been many new housing, retail and employment opportunities. Large commercial and office complexes needed to serve the area are on our perimeter near Interstate 75 interchanges. In addition to our local merchants providing for our day-to-day needs, the areas on the perimeter contain regional retailers and entertainment offerings that are a welcome convenience when a change of pace from more local neighborhood centers is sought. Our community boasts office and corporate centers with a vibrant mix of employees, high school and college students, and cultural arts patrons. The area's regional entertainment offerings rival those of larger venues and highlight our community's appreciation for the arts in many forms and many locations. More casual community events are provided at the entertainment facilities in our beautiful parks.

Through the years of population growth and change, Apollo Beach has maintained a "small town" feel, as distinct village areas have evolved in response to varied location and development patterns. The oldest residential and commercial neighborhoods have enjoyed a rebirth through comprehensive rehabilitation programs and requirements for enhanced design and landscaping standards. Our collector roadways connect our neighborhoods to one another and to the community's commercial and office complexes, providing more efficient access for vehicles and pedestrians. The community's roadways are also more visually appealing as a result of the enhanced design and landscaping standards. Our waterfront identity has been enhanced through increased access to our waterways and the bay, and our focus on boating, fishing and other recreational activities. The community's identity is further enhanced by the complimentary greenway system that links our community parks, nature preserve trails and beaches to one another and the area's greenway network. Our waters and air are also healthier and natural shorelines abound, invoking the tranquility of old Florida despite a population now quadrupled.

Apollo Beach now boasts its own community library, community center, and finally . . . its own post office! All of these facilities have helped foster a sense of civic pride throughout the area. Apollo Beach is no longer characterized as simply a small town but has instead evolved into a vibrant, well-balanced community where we all really live!

IV. Goals

This Comprehensive Plan document furthers the vision and values of the citizens of Apollo Beach. The citizens of the Apollo Beach community recognize the inevitability of future growth in the area and have reconciled growth within the scope of maintaining the feel, charm and convenience of waterfront-oriented small town living. In line with these assumptions, the citizens formulated the following goals listed in order of priority:

1. Enhance Community Character
2. Ensure Quality Land Use and Design
3. Maintain Canal System
4. Improve Transportation
5. Establish/Improve Sidewalk, Bicycle Lane and Trail Connectivity
6. Improve and Expand Public Use Facilities
7. Support Economic Development
8. Strengthen Community Associations
9. Encourage Renovation and Retrofitting of Residences

V. Strategies

The citizens of Apollo Beach developed the following strategies to achieve their vision and guide future growth and development in the Apollo Beach community.

1. Enhance Community Character
 - Improve sidewalks, landscaping, curbs and gutters along Apollo Beach Boulevard and bury electrical lines.
 - Provide gateways or markers at recommended locations on U.S. Highway 41, Big Bend Road and the Apollo Beach Boulevard extension
 - Develop sign regulations that include architectural standards encouraging ground signs and prohibiting pole signs.
 - Promote beautification and landscaping of existing and proposed thoroughfares, paying particular attention to Big Bend Road, U.S. Highway 41, Miller Mac Road and all new collectors and arterials.
 - Strengthen code enforcement efforts.
 - Support continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands by the County's Environmental Lands Acquisition Program.
2. Ensure Quality Land Use and Design
 - Encourage mixed use town centers at Apollo Beach Boulevard and U.S. Highway 41, and between U.S. Highway 41 and Interstate 75 in close proximity to the Apollo Beach Boulevard extension, as well as at other appropriate locations.
 - Incorporate a range of housing choices including multi-family and live-work units in and around town centers.
 - Create a special district for the commercial node at Apollo Beach Boulevard west of U.S. Highway 41 that requires new construction to meet design guidelines that further the town center concept.

- Create a special district containing design guidelines for the Apollo Beach Boulevard corridor west of the commercial node at U.S. Highway 41.
 - Discourage development of over 50 feet in height in residentially zoned areas.
3. Maintain Canal System
- Establish stormwater management facilities that will protect the canals from silt occurring from development runoff.
 - Dredge and maintain canals.
 - Investigate funding opportunities to dredge and maintain canals.
4. Improve Transportation
- Improve drainage, landscape, and sidewalks and provide bicycle lanes on Miller Mac Road.
 - Support and implement the SouthShore Corridor Plan.
 - Support an Interstate 75 interchange at or near the Apollo Beach Boulevard extension.
 - Require connectivity within new developments and require new developments to connect to one another.
 - Provide a traffic signal at Miller Mac Road and U.S. Highway 41, conduct warrant studies at Central Avenue/Apollo Beach Boulevard and Fairway Drive/Apollo Beach Boulevard, and require new developments to provide traffic signals where necessary (warrant studies will be required).
 - Improve stormwater drainage on roads throughout the plan area.
 - Support multi-modal mass transit opportunities that include buses, light rail, and water shuttles.
 - Require future development between the CSX rail line and U.S. Highway 41 to reserve areas for commuter rail access.
 - Improve and employ traffic calming measures where necessary.
 - Identify and provide additional hurricane evacuation routes.
5. Establish/Improve Sidewalk, Bicycle Lane and Trail Connectivity
- Connect existing and future publicly owned land to form a greenway system.
 - Provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect recreational, community and cultural uses.
 - Investigate the potential for providing a golf cart path on Apollo Beach Boulevard from Golf and Sea Boulevard to U.S. Highway 41.
 - Continue to implement the goals and objectives of the Greenways Master Plan.
 - Annually review the Hillsborough County Master Sidewalk Plan to ensure an interconnected system of sidewalks.
6. Improve and Expand Public Use Facilities
- Establish a regional sports center and community fitness complex.
 - Identify opportunities for co-location of recreational, school and community and cultural uses.

- Provide public waterfront improvements, public boat ramps, and a community beach with walkways, restrooms and other amenities.
 - Establish a community dog park.
 - Require school sites to be reserved concurrent with rezoning of property.
 - Require applicants of rezonings containing 50 or more residential units to consult with the Hillsborough County School District regarding potential school sites.
 - Explore opportunities to provide library locations and access to library resources.
 - Establish a full-service post office within a Town Center.
7. Support Economic Development
- Preserve areas with a future land use designation of Light Industrial near Big Bend Road and U.S. Highway 41.
 - Collaborate with public and private entities to ensure professional and well-paying employment is available in the area.
 - Balance agricultural and agricultural-related uses' need for protection from incompatible uses while acknowledging the market conditions affecting their continued viability.
8. Strengthen Community Associations
- Strengthen existing associations.
 - Encourage creation of new associations where appropriate.
 - Encourage homeowner associations to educate residents on residential development regulations.
 - Form an Apollo Beach Community Plan Advisory Committee.
 - Promote an alliance of associations to provide a unified voice advocating the needs of Apollo Beach.
9. Encourage Renovation and Retrofitting of Residences
- Permit encroachments into existing front yard setbacks, subject to design guidelines.
 - Pursue funding sources such as low interest loans for housing renovation and retrofitting.