

THE STUDY AREA

The City of Delray Beach Osceola Park Study Area, (shown in Figure 2), is located immediately south of the Central Business District. It is bordered by SE 5th Avenue (Federal Highway southbound) on the east; Swinton Avenue on the west; SE 2nd Street on the north; and SE 10th Street on the south. The FEC Railway bisects the area, running diagonally from northeast to southwest. Three-quarters of the area is located east of the railway and is represented by the Osceola Park Neighborhood Association. There are no formal neighborhood associations for the portion of the study area located west of the railroad.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE AREA

As the central part of Delray was developing in the 1900s, an early subdivision known as Osceola Park was established south of town between the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks and the Florida East Coast Canal. George G. Currie and F. J. Lewis, of the Currie Investment and Title Guaranty Company, recorded the plat for Osceola Park in January of 1913. Designed in a grid pattern, the lots were primarily 50.5 feet wide and 132.5 feet deep. At that time, subdivisions platted in a grid pattern were omnipresent in Florida. In fact, many early subdivisions planned by speculators throughout the country were platted in this configuration. Because speculative real estate development in Delray was evolving into a lucrative business geared to a quick and maximum return on investment, the grid pattern was practical. It simplified surveying, minimized legal disputes, maximized number of lots and houses on the land, and facilitated the rapid buying, selling, and improvement of real estate. The streets in Osceola Park were named after local pioneers such as Sundy, Ingraham, and Blackmer (today the streets and avenues are numbered). The subdivision was very progressive with cement sidewalks, paved roads, a central sewerage system, and electrical access. In addition, two parks, Currie Common and a ball field, were set aside in the development, and shade and palm trees were systematically planted on the neighborhood's main streets (Tropical Sun, January 2, 1913).



Figure 2. The Study Area is the neighborhood immediately south of the Central Business District, between Swinton Avenue and Federal Highway.



Figure 1. Early Twentieth Century View of Delray From Water Tower in Osceola Park. Photo Courtesy of Delray Beach Historical Society.

George Currie actively promoted Osceola Park in both the Palm Beach Post and Tropical Sun with articles and advertisements featuring the “high-class” residential area of Delray (Palm Beach Post 4 December 1913; Tropical Sun 2 January 1913). As one of Delray’s first planned neighborhoods, Osceola Park was very successful and lots were quickly sold. By 1914, thirty houses were already located in the subdivision and many more were planned for construction.

To fill up the subdivisions and satisfy the housing shortage in the City, the Delray Realty Board initiated a “Build A Home” program in 1925. In order to shape Delray into “a metropolis of the first order,” the townspeople were asked to build at least one house to sell on a speculative basis or rent to seasonal visitors (The Delray News, August 8, 1925). At this time, subdivisions such as Osceola Park and Dell Park remained appealing locations for new construction. In 1925, twenty “moderately-priced homes” were built in Osceola Park for sale or rental (Palm Beach Post, July 26, 1925). Like the commercial buildings and hotels being constructed at this time, many of the residences exhibited Mediterranean Revival or Mission style architecture. However, the Bungalow house type was also prevalent in the 1920s.



Figure 3. 1925 Mission Style House Located at 823 SE 4th Avenue



Figure 4. 1925 Bungalow Style House Located at 131 SE 7th Avenue

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

In preparing its vision for the future in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Delray Beach realized that build-out was rapidly approaching. It was also evident that future increases in ad-valorem tax revenues would become more and more dependent upon the value of existing properties and less dependent on new development. This fact and a growing realization of the importance of neighborhood stability led the City to refocus its attention toward the redevelopment and revitalization of the older sections of Delray Beach. Recognizing that several of these older areas were becoming increasingly blighted and that property values were declining, the City adopted a pro-active approach to stop the decline.

The Future Land Use Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan identifies several older areas of the City that, due to substandard infrastructure, obsolete or inappropriate uses of land, vacant and dilapidated structures, and other similarly blighting conditions, are in need of special attention in the form of a “Redevelopment Plan.” Goal Area “C” of the Future Land Use Element represents the starting block upon which its implementation strategy has been built. It is stated as follows:

BLIGHTED AREAS OF THE CITY SHALL BE REDEVELOPED AND RENEWED AND SHALL BE THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING AREAS TO THE RENAISSANCE OF DELRAY BEACH.

A major part of the implementation strategy is for the City to prepare and adopt “Redevelopment Plans” for declining areas of the City. These areas are depicted on the Future Land Use Map as Redevelopment Areas #1 through #6. This designation effectively acts as a holding zone on each area, where Future Land Uses designations will not be assigned until a Redevelopment Plan has been completed and adopted.

A portion of the Study Area is designated as Redevelopment Area #5 (See Figure 4, Page 3). The following language, excerpted from Future Land Use Element Policy C-2.6 in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, gives a description of the program:

Policy C-2.6 *The following pertains to the area bounded by S.E. 2nd Street, Federal Highway, S.E. 5th Street, and Swinton Avenue (Osceola Park area):*

This area has industrial uses with inadequate parking to the west, commercial uses to the east, and a mixed residential area which has turned mainly into renter-occupied units. It is also encompassed by wellfield protection zones. The primary focus of this redevelopment plan shall be to arrest deterioration, provide adequate parking and services for the existing industrial and commercial areas, and accommodate housing which is compatible with the other uses.

The issues relating to industrial uses within this area were addressed within



Figure 5. Redevelopment Area # 5 is located in the northern portion of the Study Area

the new CBD-RC zoning district, created on May 16, 1995. Therefore, the redevelopment plan for this area will focus on the residential neighborhood.

The plan will, at a minimum address the following issues:

- Appropriateness of the existing RM zoning district within the area.
- Use of traffic-calming measures to reduce speed and volume of traffic on the residential streets within the area.
- Potential for creation of a historic district within the area.
- Landscape beautification.
- Improvement of existing housing stock.

This redevelopment plan shall be prepared in FY 98/99 and shall be adopted through a comprehensive plan amendment.

In preparation of the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhoods throughout the City were evaluated and a “Residential Neighborhood Categorization Map” was created. This map delineates areas according to the prevailing condition of private property. The main objective of the categorization is to identify the level of need in each neighborhood, which in turn will determine the strategies to be taken in meeting that need. The Osceola Park Neighborhood is currently categorized as follows:

Redevelopment - Lack of basic infrastructure; incompatible mix of land uses; numerous substandard structures and vacant lots.

and

Revitalization - Evidence of decline in condition of structures and yards; increase in crime; property values stagnant or declining

For the portion of the Study Area categorized as needing “redevelopment” (Figure 5), Objective A-7 of the Housing Element calls for the City to identify appropriate measures to accomplish redevelopment of the area. Additionally, as stated in the following policies, a Redevelopment Plan shall be prepared for all areas so categorized.

Policy A-7.1 Each of these areas shall be provided assistance through the preparation of a “Redevelopment Plan” that will focus on the assignment of appropriate land use and zoning designations, a plan for the provision of infrastructure, and a program to accomplish other physical improvements to the areas. The specific direction each plan will take is described in Objective C-2 of the Future Land Use Element. The plans are to be prepared and adopted as a formal amendment to the Future Land Use Element and Map prior to embarking upon any specific redevelopment activity.

Policy A-7.2 The priority for the preparation of plans for those Redevelopment Areas which include a significant number of residential units is as follows:

1. Osceola Park (area between S.E. 2nd and S.E. 5th Streets, from Federal Highway to Swinton Avenue)

2. *Wallace Drive Industrial Area*

At least one plan shall be completed each fiscal year.

The remainder of the study area has a categorization of Revitalization. Objective A-5 of the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element calls for areas with this categorization to have a greater priority in terms of targeting of code enforcement and law enforcement operations; and to have a greater priority in the scheduling of capital improvements (infrastructure) which will assist in arresting visual signs of deterioration.

Additionally, "Policy A-5.5" states that neighborhood plans are to be prepared:

Policy A-5.5 *These areas shall be provided assistance through the development of a "neighborhood plan" which is directed toward the arresting of deterioration through physical improvements such as street lighting, street trees, landscaping, street repair, drainage improvements, sidewalks, parks and parking areas, installation or upgrading water and sewer facilities, all of which may be provided through funding and/or assessment districts. The plans shall also address the appropriateness of existing land use and zoning classifications, traffic circulation patterns, abatement of inappropriate uses, and targeting of code enforcement programs. The plans shall be prepared by the Planning and Zoning Department, with assistance from the Community Improvement Department, and the Community Redevelopment Agency if located within the CRA district. At least one neighborhood plan shall be prepared each fiscal year. The priority of these plans is as follows:*

- *Allen/Eastview/Lake Avenues (to be addressed in the North Federal Plan)*
- *Osceola Park*
- *Delray Shores*

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Following a series of neighborhood visits and collection of land use and environmental data, staff attended a series of neighborhood association meetings to ascertain the priorities of residents and property owners in the study area. The property owners who attended the meetings were enthusiastic and supportive of the idea of neighborhood stabilization through development of a neighborhood plan. The residents identified their concerns and priorities for the neighborhood. Staff incorporated many of those ideas into this plan. A draft of this plan was presented to the Community Redevelopment Agency and the Planning and Zoning Board for recommendation to the City Commission in November, 2004. The Plan was adopted by the City Commission on December 6, 2004.