



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

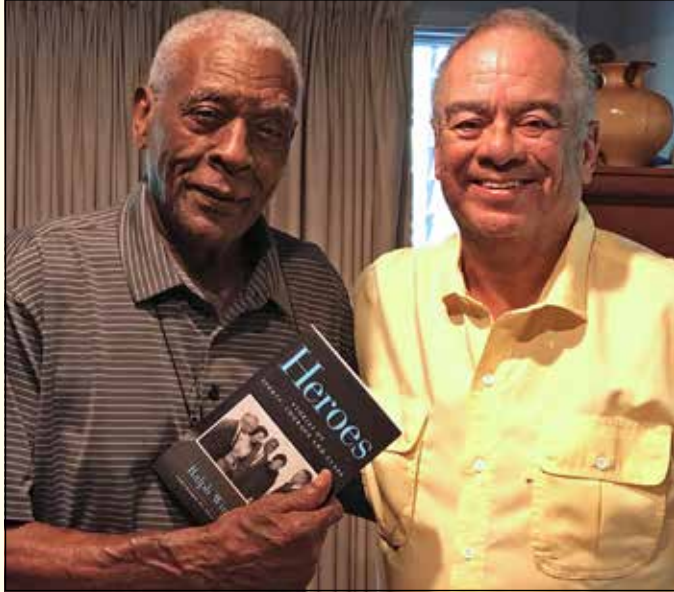
Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

St. Petersburg, FL

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Heroes, History, and St. Pete



Ralph Wimbish Jr. (right) and Bill White (left), seven-time All Star who trained in St. Pete when he was with the Cardinals. He went on to become president of the National Baseball League.

— JON KILE —

In 1961, local Black civic leaders and civil rights activists Dr. Ralph Wimbish and Dr. Robert Swain sent shockwaves through the baseball world. They refused to continue the practice of opening their homes and hotels to Black players who were not permitted to stay with their white teammates in local St. Petersburg hotels.

Their actions weren't meant to discriminate against the Black players – just the opposite. Their stand effectively ended segregation of baseball's spring training, and brought on the integration of hotels in St. Petersburg, helping set in place a decade of

tremendous change and social upheaval in the pursuit of civil rights for Black Americans.

It's interesting to note that when Dr. Wimbish and Dr. Swain bucked the status quo of segregated accommodations for Black players, the story ran in every paper nationwide. But, the papers didn't mention that because the Yankee's first Black ballplayer, Elston Howard, couldn't stay at the team hotel, he slept in young Ralph Jr.'s bedroom at the Wimbish family home instead.

Dr. Wimbish's wife, C. Bette Wimbish, was equally prominent in the local fight for civil rights. She was St. Petersburg's first Black city councilperson, once held the highest position of any Black woman in state government, and made historic runs for statewide and national office.

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Upzoning Our Neighborhoods

— WILL MICHAELS —

St. Petersburg is experiencing a building boom such as has not been seen since the 1920s and 1950s. Based on current growth rates, City planners project a need for between 1,000 and 1,500 new homes or 'dwelling units' per year. Mayor Kriseman has made recommendations for changing neighborhood zoning as part of an effort to meet this need. The proposals – a type of "upzoning" or increase in density – if approved by the City Council would be perhaps the most significant changes affecting neighborhood zoning in a decade.

There are basically two-types of neighborhoods in the city – Traditional Neighborhoods and Suburban Neighborhoods. Traditional Neighborhoods were developed generally in the 1920s and earlier, before the city had a zoning plan. These neighborhoods are characterized by narrow lots (often 45-60 x 135 feet) with front porches, sidewalks, and alleys. While predominantly single-family residential, they include accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and limited grandfathered multi-unit housing. Originally, many were supported by a trolley system precluding the need for automobiles.

Suburban Neighborhoods were developed largely post-World War II. They include larger lots (usually 75 x 100 feet or more), more extensive building setbacks, greater yard space, and frequently an attached garage. Many have no alleys and not all have sidewalks. The proposed zoning changes affect Suburban Neighborhoods more than they affect most Traditional Neighborhoods. In particular, most Traditional Neighborhoods now have accessory dwelling units (ADUs) which are not allowed



Type of Accessory Dwelling Unit

Credit: Florida Housing Coalition

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Meet Elliot

A Horse of a Different Color

— JEANNIE CARLSON —

There aren't many horses that can whinny about how they became a Bay News 9 Everyday Hero, but Elliott, a four-year old quarter horse can. Just before the pandemic took off, Elliott was recognized for ponying up contributions, love, and kisses to children all around the Tampa Bay area.

From the time Elliott was a foal, he has been overflowing with personality, so much so that he never ceases to entertain. He creatively uses his nose and hooves to play with a beach ball, and enjoys galloping about with his dog friend, Sammie, a Doberman. When he is in the corral, he will kick over his water bucket just to run around with it on his head as a hat. These are the types of shenanigans he does in the real world that demonstrate his equine sense of humor.

Horse kisses are a unique experience, and Elliott's smooches are the best. Pucker up and lean in for a surprisingly gentle, fuzzy, tickly, rubbery-feeling, and sometimes wet canoodle. Elliott's breath is not bad considering all the healthy snacks he loves to eat, including apples, carrots, watermelon, and even peppermint. Getting groomed with a nice brushing also makes his day.

Elliott can attribute his celebrity to Sue Greenberg and Old Northeast resident Lisa Bohart. Sue is the pet parent of Elliott and the author of a series of books about him and his antics. Lisa, a professional artist, illustrated the books.

The first book, *Elliott's Tails: The Adventures of a Baby Horse* came out in 2018 and the second volume, *Elliott's Tails: Saddle Up for New Adventures* made it to print in 2019. A third book that was due out a year later has been on hold until the Covid outbreak subsides.

Both published *Elliott's Tails* books have won the Mom's Choice Awards for their educational benefits to children. But the books are an even bigger winner when it comes to being donated to sick kids at local hospitals like All Children's and Tampa General. Not only are the two books a favorite due to Elliott's escapades, but also because an 18" plush toy in Elliott's image is also given to the patients in the children's wards.

Elliott's Tails books are a clever combination of actual photos of Elliott incorporated in fictional illustrations with rhyming narratives of the imaginary tales. The stories in the first book depict Elliott learning how to do the typical things that toddlers and preschoolers get to know like teeth brushing, playing at the beach, napping, and eating healthy snacks. Then the stories in the second book include Elliott acquiring more knowledge that kindergarteners and early-elementary-school children would relate to such as helping mom cook, playing baseball, painting, and celebrating birthdays.

The creative mind behind the horse tales belongs to Sue. Born in Rochester, NY, Sue has lived in Tampa Bay since she



Sue Greenberg with a young Elliott

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UPZONING *Continued from page 1*

in most Suburban Neighborhoods. These ADUs often provide rental income for home owners. The two types of neighborhoods have very different character and offer a distinct choice of life style.

The proposed zoning changes include options for newly allowed multi-unit housing along major streets, and likely up to a half-mile into adjacent neighborhoods; expansion of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) into neighborhoods which do not presently allow them; expansion of dense Economic Activity Centers into adjacent neighborhoods; and extension of the existing Residential High (RH) Zoning Category to transit corridors throughout the city.

In addition to increasing the supply of housing generally, the stated rationale for these changes includes increasing the walkability of neighborhoods as the new housing may be adjacent to public transit; augmenting the variety of housing available; and possibly increasing use of public transit. Some concerns regarding the proposals include compatibility with neighborhood character; adequacy of parking; lack of infrastructure to support increased density ('Complete Neighborhoods'); and risk of flood in low-lying areas.

Much of the discussion to date regarding these proposals anticipates that they would increase affordable housing, but that is unlikely and not the stated expectation of the Mayor. The cost of building the new recommended housing likely would not result in sale or rentals that would be affordable to low-income individuals or families.

Multi-Unit Housing

Presently, multi-unit housing is not permitted in neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes. The City proposals call for increasing density by permitting multi-unit housing – sometimes referred to as “missing



Multi-Unit Dwelling next to a single-family residence. Pending zoning change proposals have not yet established criteria for determining the compatibility of proposed multi-unit housing and accessory dwelling units with neighborhood character.

middle housing” – along high-frequency transit routes and/or future major streets in order to increase the supply of affordable and middle-income housing. These are streets used by public buses among other vehicles. Many such streets are two-lanes at this time, but it is anticipated they will be widened into four-lanes or greater at some future date. Specifically under consideration are duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, and town houses with up to four units

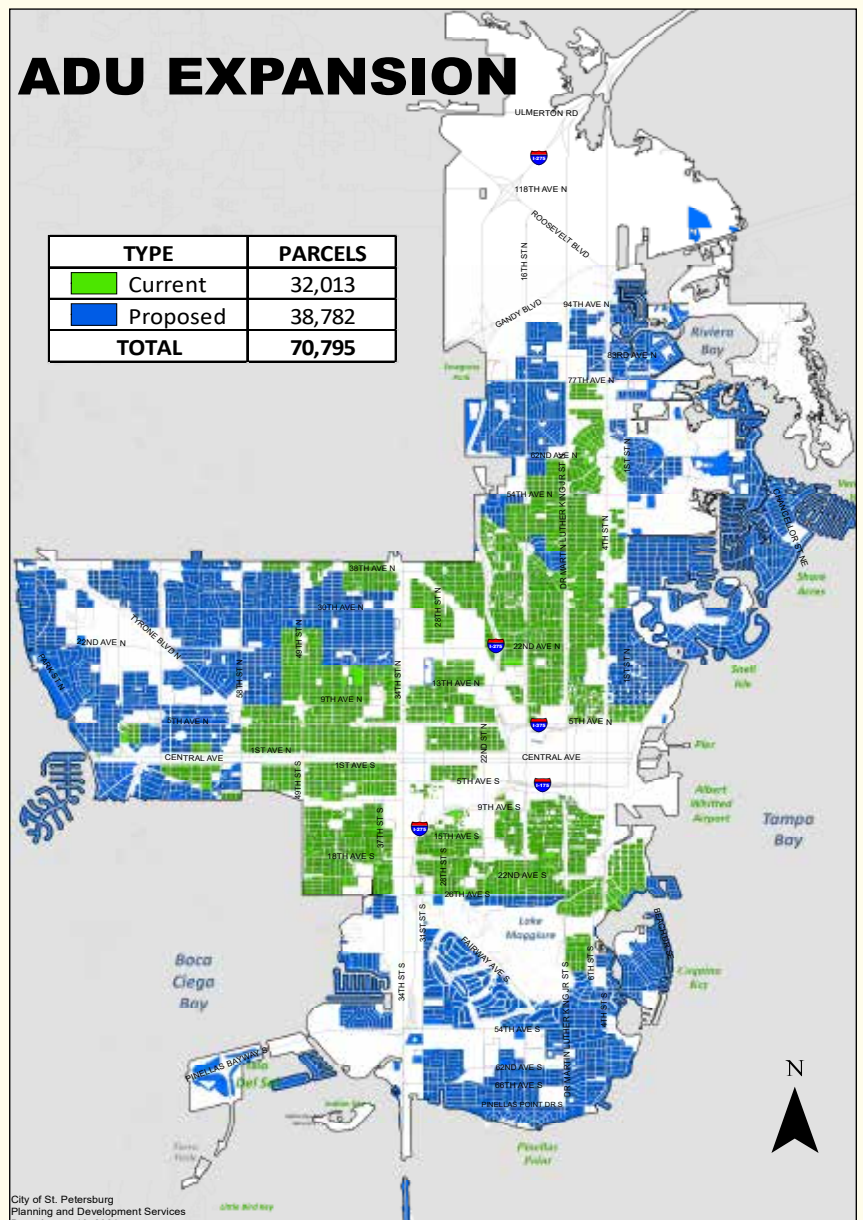
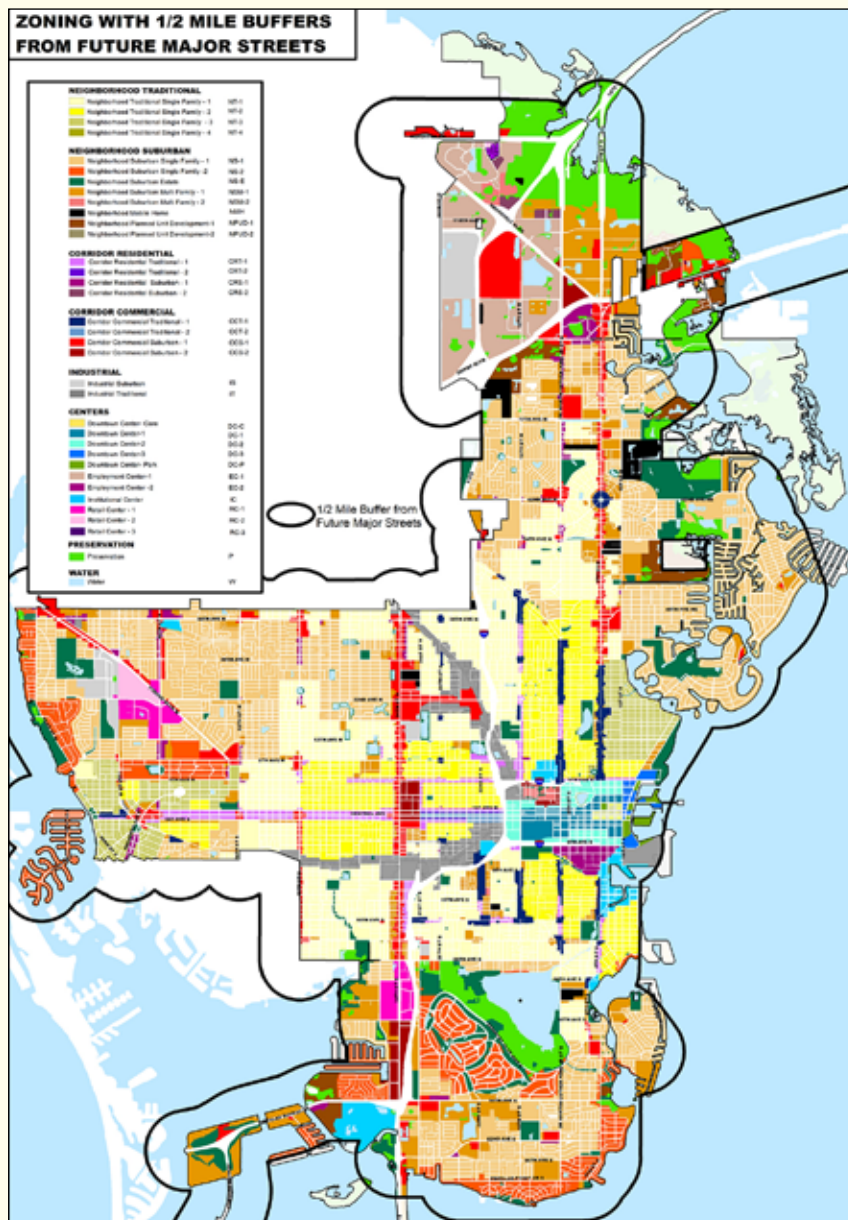
(maximum of 30 units an acre compared with the present limit of 2-7 units per acre in Suburban Neighborhoods). These structures when built would replace the existing single-family housing on a lot.

An option discussed but not recommended was to limit housing expansion to Complete Neighborhoods (neighborhoods that are within walking distance of public transit, healthy food stores, and other commercial services, bicycle facilities, parks, and schools).

The Mayor recommends permitting multi-family housing adjacent to major streets, and that such housing not be extended into adjacent neighborhoods in order to maintain neighborhood character. However, the City Council Housing Committee, composed of five council members, recently recommended that multi-unit housing (up to 4 units per lot) be allowed along future major streets and that building of such structures be allowed to extend one-half mile into adjacent neighborhoods. This virtually covers the entire city. Also, whether this would include the Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) is unclear, although the Mayor has recommended that the CHHA be excluded, except for Accessory Dwelling Units.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are small self-contained living units that have their own kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom space. They include guest houses and garage apartments up to a maximum of 750 square feet, and can be attached to the principal residence or free-standing. ADUs are now permitted in most Traditional Neighborhoods, but not in most Suburban Neighborhoods. The Mayor proposes to expand permitting of ADUs into additional Traditional Neighborhoods (“NT-3” zoning) and the Suburban Neighborhoods. For Suburban





Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are now largely limited to Traditional Neighborhoods, most of which have alleys. Many ADUs are garage apartments which are rented.

Neighborhoods, the Mayor recommends location on lots with alleys, or a minimum lot size of 7,500 square feet with a minimum width of 75 feet (NS-2 and NSE Zoning); increasing the maximum square footage (up to 900 square feet has been discussed); and reducing or eliminating parking requirements when the ADUs are located in proximity to public transit.

The number of stories of an ADU would not exceed the number of stories of the principal residence except on an alley. In Traditional Neighborhoods, two ADUs would be allowed on a lot in addition to the principal home where the home is 50 years of age or older. The expansion of ADUs would be permitted in the Coastal High Hazard Areas. The rationale for allowing ADUs in the CHHA but not multi-unit buildings is unknown.

Should the City Housing Committee recommendation allowing up to four units on any lot receive approval by the full Council, the Mayor's proposals for expansion of ADUs would not go forward since that option would be allowed as part

of the four-unit maximum proposal. Under this arrangement, a triplex would be allowed one accessory dwelling unit. A lot with a single-family home would be allowed up to three accessory units. This would apply to both Traditional and Suburban Neighborhoods.

Compatibility with Neighborhood Character

It is stated by the City that provision would be made for these structures to be compatible with existing neighborhood character. However there is presently no definition of what constitutes neighborhood character, and what specific criteria would be used to determine that (such as architectural style, density/number of units per acre, minimum lot size, lot width, setbacks, height, mass and scale of buildings, parking requirements, and shared green space). There also have been recommendations made that a Neighborhoods or Community Character Master Plan be implemented, but no action has been taken yet by the City to do that.

Expansion of Activity Centers

There are seven special Economic Activity Centers now in the city: the Gateway, Downtown/Intown, Innovation District, Central Plaza, Central Avenue Corridor, Skyway Marina, and Tyrone. These Activity Centers generally permit higher densities and different uses than in the surrounding neighborhoods. Consideration is being given to expansion of some Activity Centers as yet unspecified into surrounding neighborhoods.

The City Council Housing Committee Meeting considering neighborhood upzoning may be accessed at www.stpete.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=14&clip_id=5410.



Contrary to many Suburban Neighborhoods, most Traditional Neighborhoods have alleys with adjacent Accessory Dwelling Units.

Residential High (RH) Zoning

Presently there is a 'Residential High' (high density) category permitting 30 units per acre in or abutting dense 'Economic Activity' zones (Gateway, Tyrone, Innovation District, etc.). While not part of the multi-unit and ADU discussion, the Mayor proposes to extend this type of zoning to 'Multimodal Corridors or Future Transit Corridors' which are also adjacent to many neighborhoods. There is no limit on the extent to which this zoning would reach into an adjacent neighborhood. A developer would apply to the City to upzone the existing lower density residential zoning to the Residential High (RH) zoning. The City Council is scheduled to hold public hearings on this change in the near future. Also, the Council recently approved by-passing neighborhood zoning requirements in the case of developments on one-acre or more in the case of proposed developments limited to persons earning up to 120% of Area Median Income (\$89,000 for a family of four).

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UPZONING *Continued from page 31*

What other proposals might be considered to accommodate expected population growth yet preserve neighborhood character? One approach would be to extend the current Corridor Residential Traditional Zoning to adjacent major roadways. This zoning encourages development of townhomes, condominiums, apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings that are appropriately scaled to the context of the corridor and to facilitate conversion of remaining single-family homes to offices or limited retail uses. These uses can provide affordable workforce housing units and buffer the adjacent interior single-family neighborhoods from the high volumes of traffic on present major streets. Another would be to increase density along Central Avenue and adjacent 1st Avenues South and North. A third would offer City-owned vacant land to developers at no cost or below market to reduce

development cost.

Exactly when the City Council will act on the pending proposals is unknown. Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) President Tom Lally recently sent a letter to the Mayor and City Council asking that action be deferred until CONA has had time to inform its member associations. He also recommended the City make presentations to each neighborhood on how the proposals would affect them specifically. He noted that a particular concern is how the introduction of multi-unit housing and accessory dwelling units into some neighborhoods would affect the neighborhood character.

A previous zoning change limited to Traditional Neighborhoods was enacted in 2019 allowing multi-unit housing along major streets, but never implemented. Lally suggested this ordinance should be tried first before extending the concept to the entire city. ●

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