

City Commission Strategic Planning Workshop

June 18, 2025

4:30 p.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Adrian Petrilu, Mayor

Karen Marriott, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, District 1

Lisa Robinson, Commissioner, District 2

Betty Rzewnicki, Commissioner, District 3

Joe Moholland, Commissioner, District 4

STAFF PRESENT:

Frances Robustelli, City Manager

Ralf Brookes, City Attorney

Renee Rose, City Clerk

Marc Portugal, Communications Manager

Jim Kilpatrick, Fire Chief

Laura Canary, Community Development Director

Devon Schmidt, Finance Director

Camden Mills, Public Services Director

Candyce Galloway, Chief Technology & Innovation Officer

Mandy Edmunds, Interim Recreation Director

Cathleen Bowley, Interim Library Director

Adam Poirrier, Asst. City Manager

Mayor Petrilu called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

1. PRESENTATION: STRATEGIC PLANNING

City Manager Robustelli opened with an ice breaker before moving on the 2025-2027 strategic roadmap. The presentation is included as part of the meeting record. This included the city's mission and vision and proposed 5 Strategic Initiatives. She requested the Commission provide feedback as she goes through each one, keeping two questions in mind: 'what keeps you up at night?' and 'what does community excellence look like?'. Additionally, each of the 5 strategic initiatives have 3-5 goals attached, and she asked the Commission to provide any changes they may have.

Manager Robustelli started with Operational Excellence, which was formerly Internal Services. The Commission's primary concerns centered around disaster preparedness, the limits of legislative power, and the city's operational inefficiencies. Residents turn to them for solutions they can't directly deliver; implementation depends on staff. Financial stability and the city's ability to recover from crises are also a concern. There was frustration with outdated systems and infrequent reviews, slow permitting processes, and excessive red tape that delay recovery and development. The lack of proactive systems before recent storms led to a reactive approach, highlighting the need for adaptable policies, like modifying codes to fit real-time needs. There's a gap in public understanding of permitting, which fuels confusion. The Commission agreed the city needs to become more responsive and efficient. Operational excellence comes from staff who think critically and take the initiative to bring change forward. Manager Robustelli moved to the Operational Excellence goals. Suggestions were made to add "and short term" to goal 2 – "Identify and pursue long term sustainable revenue sources...", add a legislative tracking/pursuit component to goal 2, and add monitoring of CUPs and enforcement provisions to goal 4. There was discussion on the fee study with regard to revenue sources.

Manager Robustelli continued with Recovery, Resilience and Sustainability, formerly Resiliency and Recovery. Commissioners discussed issues including the challenge of balancing property rights with disaster resilience. There have been too many temporary infrastructure fixes. They keep doing the same things that haven't worked in the past. The barrier islands have a very aged infrastructure and there's insufficient funding to fully rebuild or mitigate risks. There isn't a real solution to sea level rise. Becoming a model city requires embracing new ideas, establishing sustainable revenue sources, like a CRA and TIF while values are low. County collaboration is essential to long-term success and resilience. Goal review included striking "top-rated destinations" from goal 1 and add developing partnerships like Elevate Florida, UF, and other schools to goal 5.

Manager Robustelli moved on to Community Prosperity, formerly Community and Neighborhoods. Discussion

included concerns about corporations buying residential properties in neighborhoods. There was conversation about what defines a neighborhood atmosphere and how different areas, while unique, can still align under shared values of respect, cooperation, and a small-town feel. Even with differences between neighborhood pockets, the goal is to remain neighborly and enhance each area's identity without imposing too many rules that stifle community spirit. Prosperity and excellence within the community are seen as a combination of happy, engaged residents and thriving local businesses. A prosperous community is one with active storefronts, accessible recreational opportunities, and clean, well-maintained public spaces, including not just beachfront access but also public access to bay waters and other outdoor amenities. Community excellence means providing premier outdoor experiences, supporting local commerce, and ensuring businesses contribute fairly. Goal review resulted in striking the words “and neighborhood” from Goal 1.

Manager Robustelli called for a break at 6:05pm; the meeting resumed at 6:09pm.

Manager Robustelli continued with Reliable Infrastructure, formerly Transportation and Infrastructure. Issues discussed included concerns about the City's aging infrastructure, including insufficient funding and limited time to fully address the issues. There were fears of eventual system collapse, similar to scenarios described in *The Light Pirate*. There was confusion among residents about backflow prevention, with many incorrectly assuming it's the City's responsibility. Community excellence was defined as having a reliable stormwater system, fully functional infrastructure with minimal failure points, and sustainable parking solutions. This includes making parking a revenue source, requiring new development to manage its own parking needs, and creating public parking through private development opportunities. Excellence also involves proactive measures like taller seawalls and the pursuit of innovative, yet-to-be-developed solutions. Goal review suggestions included adding “and stormwater” to Goal 4 and add “collaboration with partner agencies” to Goal 1.

Manager Robustelli moved on to Economic Development and Smart Growth, formerly Economic Development. The discussion focused on economic and redevelopment challenges facing the city. A major concern is the disengagement of commercial landowners and the difficulty small and medium-sized business owners face in maintaining operations, leading many to leave. There is a fear from residents that no close amenities are left post-storm. With the city largely built out, there's uncertainty about whether growth is wanted. There's frustration over a lack of diversity in business types, with small boutique hotels unable to expand and landowners holding unrealistic expectations of property value, leading to stalled sales and unmotivated buyers. The slow pace of economic reset and persistent vacancies, empty buildings, which are viewed as more problematic than vacant lots, are key issues. Community excellence would mean a shift toward economic strategy that prioritizes local needs over tourism alone. It calls for investor due diligence, better alignment with the Chamber of Commerce, proactive outreach to property owners by economic development staff, and activation of underutilized spaces, especially within the CRA. The city's reputation extends beyond residents, and there's a need to balance sustainable tourism with strong localism. The consensus is that businesses must begin serving full-time residents, not just visitors, in order to succeed long term. There was agreement that the city's role is not to make businesses thrive, but to create the conditions where they can, by removing barriers, maintaining operational excellence, and supporting smart growth. Building a resilient local economy is essential. The path forward may require a catalyst development project that sparks broader investment and redevelopment, helping restore walkability, accessibility, and the neighborhood feel many residents miss. Goal review included revising “promote tourism” to “encourage sustainable tourism” in Goal 1. The beach is a resource people want to visit, not everyone can live here. Promote residential development to enhance city's appeal. Change the word “ensure” to “support” in Goal 2, affordable housing is a challenge. Maximize revenue from tourists through parking and impact fees.

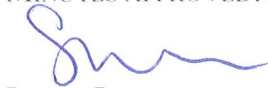
Staff follow-up items include preparing for the possibility that the city may need to manage the 2026 hurricane season independently. Additional follow-ups involve reviewing the parking sticker program, getting results from

the Gulf Boulevard traffic study conducted by Forward Pinellas, advancing neighborhood plans and vision development, and assessing the impact of increased impervious surfaces contributing to more rainwater runoff and flooding. Staff will also follow up on vacancy assessments to better understand and address commercial property vacancies.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: JULY 8, 2025



RENEE ROSE
CITY CLERK



KAREN MARRIOTT
VICE MAYOR