



# Crescent Heights

## *Neighborhood Plan*

Crescent Heights Neighborhood Plan, City of St. Petersburg, Florida, January 2000

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# CRESCENT HEIGHTS

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For:

Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association  
St. Petersburg, Florida  
February, 2000

This neighborhood plan was initiated by the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association with additional funding provided by the City of St. Petersburg and Mercantile Bank.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

*A consultant team retained by the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association prepared the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Plan. This team worked in conjunction with the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association's Planning Committee. Technical assistance was provided by the City of St. Petersburg's Neighborhood Services Administration. In 1999, based on public input from meetings and surveys, the Neighborhood Planning Committee defined five elements that would structure the body of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan. They are Character & Identity, Infrastructure, Commercial Properties, Residential Properties, and Safety. Funding for this project was made possible through the City of St. Petersburg's Neighborhood Partnership Program, as well as sponsorship by Mercantile Bank.*

### **Crescent Heights Neighborhood**

The Crescent Heights Neighborhood planning area encompasses a 160 tract located one and one-half north of St. Petersburg's central business district. It is bounded by Fourth Street North on the east, Ninth Street North (Dr. M. L. King) on the west, by 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to the north, and by 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North to the south. The neighborhood consists of several subdivisions mostly platted in the 1920's. Consistent with the standards of the time, the subdivisions largely continued the city's grid system through the neighborhood. However there are minor variations in lot sizes, street widths and alley configurations depending on the particular developer's preferences.

Despite the fact that Crescent Heights was built-out over a 40-year period, which provides a pleasant variety in the architectural styles, there is a consistent overall character and scale to the neighborhood. Enhancing this architectural character is the mature landscaping throughout the neighborhood. Major commercial roads to the east and west border the neighborhood. Fourth Street became a major automobile arterial after the completion of the Gandy Bridge to Tampa in the 1920's. Dr. M.L. King Street has always been more of a neighborhood commercial street due to its history as a streetcar line from the 1910's to the 1940's. The neighborhood is bordered at its southern edge by the 48 acre Crescent Lake Park featuring Crescent Lake, from which the neighborhood derives its name. Although officially outside Crescent Heights Neighborhood's boundaries, the park is heavily used by neighborhood residents.

In 1998, the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association applied for and was awarded a Neighborhood Improvement Grant to fund a Neighborhood Improvement Plan process. There were essentially three phases to this neighborhood planning process – Data Gathering, Design Synthesis and Plan Production.

#### Data Gathering

During the first phase, Data Gathering, all current relevant information was sought, cataloged and interpreted. One important element of this phase was a visual property survey with which each property in the community was identified and described. The visual survey process required walking from property to property recording information with written data sheets and photographs for all properties. This work was almost completely performed by resident volunteers from the Neighborhood Planning Committee. The results of the visual survey gave residents, consultant architects and city planners an opportunity to see what the current condition of the neighborhood is and, if unstable, in what direction it was transitioning. It also allows for the characterizing of the neighborhood in terms of scale, land use, architectural style, and building condition. A sample survey sheet and tabulated data for the visual survey may be found in the appendix of this document.

This visual survey highlighted several important characteristics of the neighborhood. Slightly more than three-fourths of the residential properties are single family homes, however garage apartments, duplexes, and small apartment buildings are all found within the neighborhood and account for approximately 42% of the total dwelling units. As previously noted, the diversity of architectural styles reflects the 40-year build-out of the neighborhood. Dominant styles are 1920's Craftsman with 27% of all structures, 1930's Minimal Traditional with 26%, and 1950's Postwar with 18%. Minor styles include 1950's and 1960's



Ranch with 7% of all structures, 1930's Tudor with 5%, and 1920's Dutch Colonial with 4%. Over 70% of the buildings in the neighborhood are one-story high. With only a couple of exceptions, all of the remaining structures are two stories. Overall the neighborhood's structures are well maintained with 8% in excellent condition and 82% in good condition. Ten percent of the structures are in deteriorated condition and only one was found to be dilapidated. About 70% of the properties have sidewalks along their street frontage with almost one-fourth of those made of hex-block and the remaining cast-in-place concrete. Finally, two-thirds of the properties access their off-street parking from the rear alley with only one-third utilizing the street.

In addition to the visual survey, a written property owner survey was mailed out to supplement input generated at past Neighborhood Association meetings. The committee compiled the results of the 176 surveys that were completed and returned. These responses gave consultants hired to assist with the plan and the Neighborhood Association Committee a better idea of what the neighborhood constituency, at large, desired for their neighborhood. These data also facilitated the process of establishing the priority for specific neighborhood improvements. Members of the Neighborhood Planning Committee tabulated this information. Representations of this survey response data may be found in the Appendix.

The respondents to the survey were almost equally split between those who had lived in the neighborhood less than three years, from three to ten years, and more than ten years. Slightly more than 95 percent of the respondents owned their place of residence with the remaining renting. Thirty responses were from people who worked in the neighborhood and 20 responses were from business owners in the neighborhood.

Five factors rated highest as important to the respondents living and/or working in the neighborhood. In order these were low crime rate, home resale value, neighborhood charm, quality of the housing stock, and convenient location. As regards the condition of the neighborhood, four categories were rated as most below average: alley pavement conditions, sidewalk condition, alley lighting, and rental property condition. In order the five most important improvement issues were neighborhood infrastructure, safety, beautification, housing quality, and sense of community. The overall quality of the neighborhood was rated as excellent by 21 percent of the respondents, good by 73 percent, and fair by 6 percent. No respondents rated the neighborhood as poor.

Other aspects of this Data Gathering phase included the acquisition and analysis of area zoning, land use, and aerial mapping, referencing of relevant documentation of other currently adopted area neighborhood plans, and review of 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Street corridor planning activities. The consultant team also investigated current City neighborhood improvement programs in terms of funding and procedures as well as general demographic and real estate trends occurring in the Crescent Heights Neighborhood.

This phase of the process culminated in a general meeting of the Neighborhood Association at which the consultant team introduced itself and the plan process. Preliminary results of the Data Gathering phase tabulations were also presented and the Neighborhood Design Workshop was formally announced. This Design Workshop was the culmination of the preliminary planning process and launched the second phase of the process, Design Synthesis.

#### Design Synthesis

After completion of the Data Gathering phase of the process, the Neighborhood Planning Committee hosted a Neighborhood Design Workshop where any concerned party could voice ideas and issues they wished to be dealt with in the Neighborhood Improvement Plan. This Workshop, held on Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to 1 pm, heralded the next phase of the planning process - Design Synthesis.

The Design Synthesis phase, particularly the Neighborhood Design Workshop, allowed citizens to make the necessary transition from opinions and attitudes about how to improve their neighborhood into a defined set of priorities – ideas into a plan of action. The Workshop was led by the consultant team members hired to assist in the development of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan along with additional volunteer design professionals.



As the workshop progressed, the consultant team moved from presenting key issues concerning overall Neighborhood Improvement to leading design focus groups. These design focus groups centered on four of the five elements defined by the Neighborhood Planning Committee as areas of concern to citizens. They were Character & Identity, Infrastructure, Commercial Properties, and Residential Properties. The focus groups consisted of at least one design professional, a Neighborhood Association Committee member, and a varying number of local citizens in attendance.

For the Workshop the issue of Safety was perceived as being an issue that naturally overrides other priorities. Indeed, from survey data, issues of safety were a leading priority for the neighborhood. Additionally, many safety issues, such as criminal activity, are intrinsically more socially oriented than physically oriented. For these reasons, issues of safety were dealt with in all of the focus groups so as not to isolate this important element of the Plan. In other phases of the process issues and recommendations concerning safety were highlighted as an additional element to insure that they received the amount of attention they deserved.

When these focus areas were fully investigated, the resulting issues were presented by each design focus group for review by all attendees of the Workshop. These focus area issues were then synthesized into an overall draft design plan created during the Workshop to illustrate the issues and opportunities present in the neighborhood on a two-dimensional rendered plan of Crescent Heights. This draft represented the core ideas of the Workshop, which were refined by the consultant team in the remainder of the Design Synthesis Phase of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan process.

After the Neighborhood Design Workshop, the draft design plan was distilled into a discreet list of implementable projects or policies. With the assistance of the Neighborhood Design Committee and public input obtained in the Data Gathering phase of the process, this list was prioritized and more clearly defined in the last phase of the process, Plan Production.

#### Plan Production

This portion of the Neighborhood Planning process involved the creation of this plan document in order to outline and describe the elements of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan. All background information concerning the Plan as well as Neighborhood Association policy recommendations was included in this plan document. General information concerning the design and cost of the physical improvements to the neighborhood were also included as a guide to establishing the character of the desired improvements. The design drawings of the physical improvements featured in this plan are only representations of a conceptual design. They engender an intentional degree of indeterminance in order to allow reinterpretation and refinement as each improvement undergoes detailed design and institution. The recommendations were also broadly categorized into three priority levels in order to form a sufficiently flexible implementation timetable.

It is intended that this document be reviewed and accepted by the general membership of the Crescent Heights Neighborhood Association, the Neighborhood Planning Committee, and the Neighborhood Association Board of Directors. Concurrent with this internal review and revision process, drafts of this document will be submitted for review to all relevant departments of the City of St. Petersburg. Finally, the plan will be to the Planning Commission and City Council for formal approval.

#### **Neighborhood Planning Issues**

Before any recommendations were generated for this plan, a series of issues was formulated for each of the elements defined by the Neighborhood Planning Committee. These issues were generated based on statistical data generated from the public input surveys and analysis of the general conditions in the neighborhood. These issues establish a set of concerns and potential opportunities deserving the most attention by the Neighborhood Planning Committee and the consultant team. Though not intended to be exhaustive, the issues cited in each element of the plan provided for focused energy to be applied in the development of recommendations which would address several issues as integrated solutions as opposed to

