2005 CITIZENS MASTER PLAN

TEAM Punta Gorda

Spring 2005

JAIME COBREA AND ASSOCIATES

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A.

Introduction

A. Downtown aerial (Pre-Hurricane Charley)

Hurricane Charley tore into the Charlotte Harbor area on Friday, the 13th of August of 2004. In a few hours, this powerful storm shattered the City of Punta Gorda's visual identity, its sense of security, and its peace of mind. The devastation included some of the most beloved city spaces, waterfront areas, and buildings. For the citizens of Punta Gorda, the tragedy might have removed some of its most important physical landmarks but, it did not erase its "hometown" feeling or its community harmony –two characteristics which have turned it into one of the most livable waterfront cities in the United States.

A non-profit organization, with a communal sense of spirited determination, was put in place by a group business people, home owners, investors, and residents. TEAM Punta Gorda, the result of this meeting of the minds, was determined to rebuild and get back what was lost. In a continuous search for the voice of the entire community, TEAM Punta Gorda came to the powerful realization that a tragedy of these proportions could only mean great and unprecedented development opportunities for their beloved environment.

In the first quarter of 2005, TEAM Punta Gorda charged **JAIME CORREA AND ASSOCIATES**, a Miami-based town and architectural design firm, with leading one of the most important planning initiatives in the history of the City of Punta Gorda: *the creation of a Citizens Master Plan for the reconstitution of a region devastated by a natural disaster*. The design firm began a community process to facilitate the creation of a master plan to guide future development and provide the greatest amount of benefits for the entire region of Punta Gorda.

This book culminates the efforts of the town designer to bringing consensus and accommodating the goals and objectives of citizens, stakeholders, and public officials. It also summarizes the results of meetings with community leaders, three public presentations, one hands-on public workshop, and a design *charrette* on the grounds of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

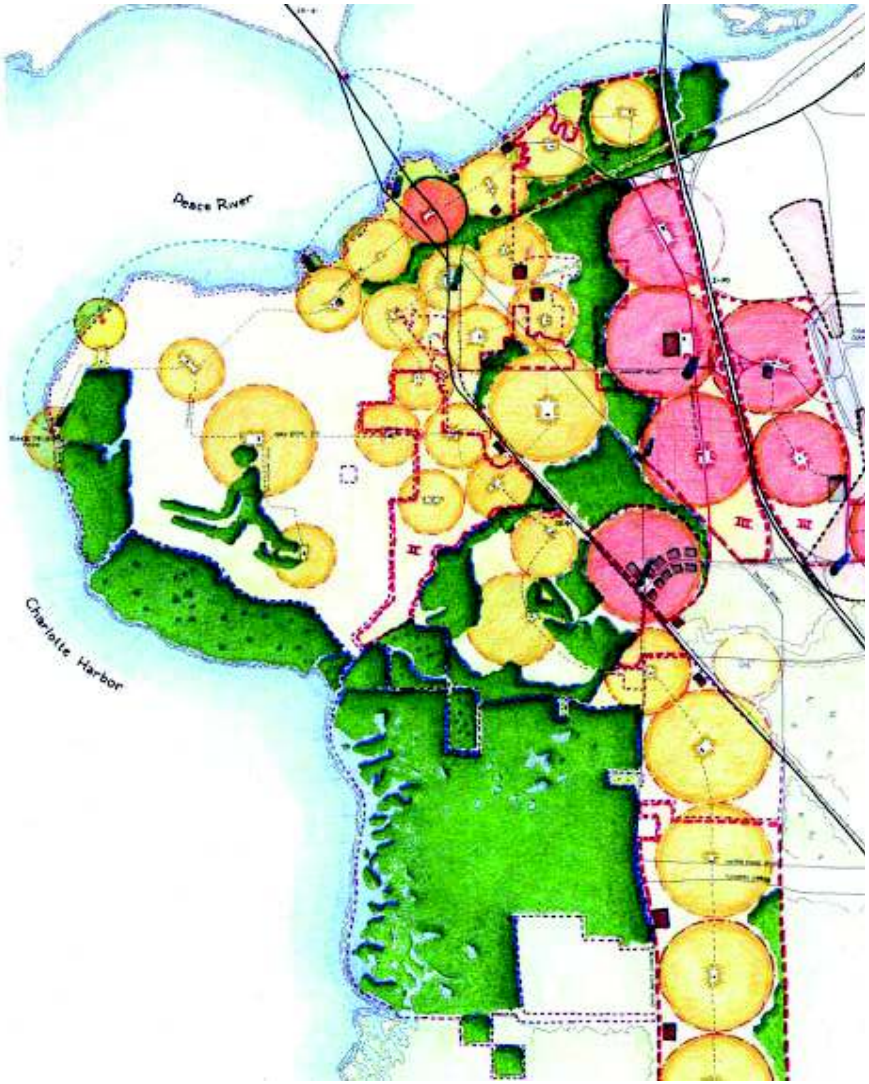
While there is more community process to come, the discussion must now shift from planning to the implementation of specific projects. At this point, it should be clarified that a master plan is purely illustrative and its compliance is voluntary. In effect, its illustrations are formulated as simple guidelines to help public officials, stakeholders, and citizens determine the

A. Regional Master Plan

overall value of any future proposals. The citizens must understand that without an enforceable set of instructions, the implementation of the community desires is NOT guaranteed.

Therefore, a new set of Land Development Regulations (LDR's) is imperative for the implementation of this master plan. The citizens should acknowledge the tremendous effort made by the City Staff to come up with reasonable amendments to its existing LDR's. But, they should also realize that the production of codes and/ or regulations without a viable master plan may become too abstract or self-defeating.

The City Staff and its public officials should take this opportunity to gain citizens' support for the implementation of new regulating plans, urban standards, thoroughfare specifications, architectural guidelines, and landscape regulations. For instance, a new zoning map with the location of open spaces and the type and



A.

B. Images of Punta Gorda

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trajectory of the various thoroughfares is of the essence; as is the revision of those aspects of buildings which affect the public realm including, but not limited to, building setbacks, frontages, building height, encroachments, parking requirements, etc.; a matrix specifying dimensions for vehicular and pedestrian activities shall be assigned to the regulating plan; the permitted configurations and materials of walls, roofs, and openings must be delineated in order to avoid the lack of harmony characterizing suburban environments; and, finally, a list of plant species (with instructions regarding their location and planting pattern) must be correlated to various locations in the urban to rural gradient of the region.

The truthful and uncompromised implementation of this plan shall allow you to reconstitute, not only what was taken by Hurricane Charley in August of 2004 but, the "Institutional Memory" of its citizenry, and the hope for a better and more productive future.

It would be impossible to arrive at this day without the dedication and commitment of many individuals and organizations. We at JAIME CORREA AND ASSOCIATES look forward to continuing our partnerships as we share with you the scope, joy, and hope of this historic job.

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