

# DESOTO ACRES

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

SUMMARY | MAY, 2020

Neighborhood Plans engage residents in 1) defining the neighborhood's character and 2) identifying opportunities to preserve and enhance that character. Through conversations with the community, stakeholders explore and prioritize their aspirations for the future.

### NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Neighborhood Services staff facilitated conversations among residents to discover the neighborhood's aspirations. Generally, residents expressed their desires to live in a community that:

- Retains its rural character,
- Protects wildlife and other environmental features, and
- Encourages time outdoors.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Preserving character in the wake of surrounding development – The Comprehensive Plan, zoning districts and the Unified Development Code were discussed with residents over concerns about future development and the widening of Tuttle Avenue. Residents also inquired whether a Critical Area Plan (CAP) could be created for DeSoto Acres. Resident concerns about local traffic, preserving land use designations, future development encroachment and incompatible uses were noted and may be used for a Pre-CAP analysis of the area.

*Recommendation(s):* equipped with an understanding of the County's guiding land development documents, residents should continue to participate in conversations about proposals for future change in the area.

Protecting natural assets – Residents were interested in learning more about obtaining a conservation designation or creating an environmental overlay district.

*Recommendation(s):* Sarasota County's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection and Neighborhood Parkland Acquisition Programs accept land nominations for acquisition by the county. Nominated properties must have a willing seller; nominations are reviewed and ranked by citizen advisory committees. DeSoto Acres residents (and any member of the public) are invited to submit nomination forms.

Enhancing outdoor activities - Concerns were voiced to staff about water pooling on properties, poorly functioning drainage swales, and the potential impacts of future development on stormwater facilities. Residents are also concerned about speeding on neighborhood roads and its impact on pedestrians and other travelers. These concerns deter residents from spending time outside their homes. Topics discussed ranged from current road conditions and design standards to the future thoroughfare plan, including intergovernmental coordination and amenities for alternative transportation.

Several improvements addressing those concerns have been completed or are anticipated for future budgets.

- Public Works cleared brush and vegetation to improve the line of sight at the DeSoto Road and Shade Avenue intersection and mounted "CROSS TRAFFIC DOES NOT STOP" plaques on the northbound and southbound stop signs at that intersection.
- Based on the condition index for roads in DeSoto Acres, pavement resurfacing, restriping, and re-marking (STOP bars, crosswalks, etc.) is likely to occur in the next five years. In the meantime, residents can report worn pavement markings to request re-marking.
- Public Works staff has budgeted for the installation of sidewalks along Tuttle Avenue and DeSoto Road in 2023, per CIP #95703. Design of the sidewalk project is slated to begin in Fiscal Year 2021.
- Tuttle Avenue is identified in the Comprehensive Plan for widening. When the improvement occurs, additional pedestrian/bicycle amenities could be incorporated.

*Recommendation(s):*

- Neighborhoods in Sarasota County may request a special stormwater assessment to fund improvements.
- Neighborhood Services is recommending residents of DeSoto Acres host/promote educational programming related to transportation safety.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Neighborhood plans result in a) CIPs or b) land use guidelines for properties within the neighborhood. Recommendations for DeSoto Acres did not fall within either category. Upon acceptance of the DeSoto Acres Neighborhood Plan, Neighborhood Services staff will continue to serve as a liaison between the DeSoto Acres neighborhood and other county departments.

**Next Meeting:** Board of County Commissioners meeting June 3, 2020.

*NOTE: Consistent with the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Executive Orders of the Governor of the State of Florida to limit public interactions, Sarasota County is providing alternatives to in-person attendance at public meetings. Most Advisory Council meetings have been suspended through May; the Planning Commission will meet remotely, and the Board of County Commissioners will meet in person.*

*Written comments submitted in advance will be included in the official meeting record. For public hearings, the public may register to provide remote testimony via phone or internet. Visit [www.scgov.net/publicinput](http://www.scgov.net/publicinput) for more information and to access the Online Public Comment and Registration forms. Forms will be available from noon on Friday through noon the day prior to each meeting. If you do not have internet access, please call (941) 861-5000 during this time period for assistance completing the registration form.*

*To protect the health and safety of our staff and the general public, health screening procedures are in effect for visitors to County facilities, including public meeting attendees. The community is urged to take advantage of the County's phone-based and online services whenever possible, and in-person services require an appointment.*



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