



## AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### *Planning Department*

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City Council  
Meeting Date: July 21, 2026

**To:** City Council  
**From:** Paula McMichael, AICP, Planning Director  
**Date:** July 6, 2026

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**SUBJECT: Town Center Concept**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

At the regular meetings of City Council held on October 7, 2025, and March 3, 2026, there was consensus among members of the Council to further discuss town center history, districts, and the creation of a town center concept. To aid in this discussion, staff conducted research and provides the following summary of information related to the town center concept.

#### **CIVIC CORE:**

Formal discussion by City Council related to the Civic Core appears to have begun in 2013 due to the additional space and parking needs expressed by several non-profits on the Island, and efforts to engage a consultant began the same year. Woodroffe Corporation Architects was subsequently selected as consultant for development of a Civic Core Redevelopment Master Plan. The scope of work would also include an initial drainage analysis and an initial traffic review.

In 2015, a conceptual Master Plan for the first and second phases of the Civic Core was presented to Council. The concept included a central plaza, several open and green space areas including a "Community Green," various City facilities, the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village, the Sanibel Library, and additional parking facilities – all connected by means of a network of shared-use paths. Lands contained within the Civic Core would include City-owned property surrounding City Hall and across Periwinkle Way, and a few contiguous parcels surrounding City-owned properties. Public comment expressed at various meetings appeared to include concerns relating to impacts to environmentally sensitive lands, impacts to the Periwinkle Pines neighborhood, special events in the community, traffic along Periwinkle Way, and other matters. Subsequent to several Council discussions and after receiving input from the community at several meetings, Council moved forward with placing two referenda on the ballot for the following: (1) for removal of 13.5 acres from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Conservation District (Resolution no. 16-085), and (2) to authorize an \$8,000,000 general obligation bond to

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finance a portion of the improvements contained within the Civic and Cultural Core Master Plan (Resolution no. 16-086). However, after being unable to secure funding for part of the project from Lee County, Council repealed both resolutions in early 2017, and the referendum questions were ultimately not placed on the ballot.

## **SANIBEL PLAN**

The Sanibel Plan directs the consideration of the development of a plan to create a focal point for the City for community activity, special events, and informal assembly. The language from the Plan is as follows:

### **Sanibel Plan Section 3.6.2 (pg. 222) –**

#### **Provisions of the Plan for Preservation and Community Design**

***2. Consider development of a specific plan that will include strategies to improve and integrate City Hall and the surrounding civic, cultural and recreational uses to serve as a focal point for community activity, special events and informal assembly.***

## **LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE**

The original Town Center district – named the Town Center Limited Commercial Retail and Service zoning district – was created in 1985 with the original adoption of the City’s Land Development Code. In 1986, the Land Development Code was amended to adopt the two Town Center districts as presently distinguished in the current Land Development Code – Town Center General Commercial and Town Center Limited Commercial. The lands that are assigned the Town Center districts lie in proximity to Palm Ridge Road, Tarpon Bay Road, and Periwinkle Way and are near the governmental, civic, and cultural uses surrounding City Hall.

The two Town Center districts are intended to provide for commercial and mixed-use development in the geographical center of the City. These districts allow higher floor area ratios than the Commercial General district to facilitate the establishment of a variety of retail, office, and service uses in keeping with the Sanibel Plan along with integration of various residential uses.

## **RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT (R2P2)**

In 2024, a “Town Center” was identified as a community goal that could benefit from technical assistance from the Coastal Florida Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Project. The study specifically describes this goal as the creation of “a more complete community center that carries out Sanibel’s vision to allow development only if it is sensitive to its natural setting while making this area safer and better connected for pedestrians and cyclists.”

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Based on community input, the study recommended incorporation of the following elements in the Town Center:

- Add street trees and planted medians in some areas
- Increase shared use paths to 10 feet wide
- Increase the distance between shared use paths and vehicular travel lanes (and add plantings to those areas)
- Increase safety by reducing the crossing distance for pedestrians at key intersections
- Use some publicly-owned land for new below-market-rate housing
- Consider reducing front setbacks in some areas to increase pedestrian/bike accessibility
- Consider allowing front porches to intrude into front setbacks in some areas (see [Ordinance 25-012](#) adopted June 3, 2025)
- Add angled or parallel on-street parking in some areas

Various renderings illustrative of potential options to achieve the elements listed above were included in the study.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** None.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** None.