



# Chapter 3 Land Use

## **Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan**

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is to achieve a preferred and sustainable future for South Padre Island. The plan identifies goals and policies that will enhance South Padre Island's quality of life, respect its unique natural environs, preserve its beautiful setting, and support complementary economic growth & development.

### **Premise**

Four interacting and inseparable themes are fundamental to sustainable and appropriate Land Use policies and goals:

1. Preserving and enhancing the Quality of Life.
2. Advancing economic growth and development.
3. Creating and preserving a Sense of Place.
4. Preserving our natural assets.

Land use and development of South Padre Island must balance these themes in all its applications.

### **The Quality of Life**

South Padre Island values a welcoming, open, eclectic, tolerant, and relaxing feeling where residents and visitors enjoy an entertaining, interesting, physically active, safe, orderly, and simple life style.

### **Economic Development**

Tourism, real estate development, construction, restaurants, retail trade, and the service industry are key components of a strong economy. A sound, sustainable community relies on strong economic growth to provide jobs, products, services, and a steady revenue source for funding government services and community enhancement.

## A Sense of Place

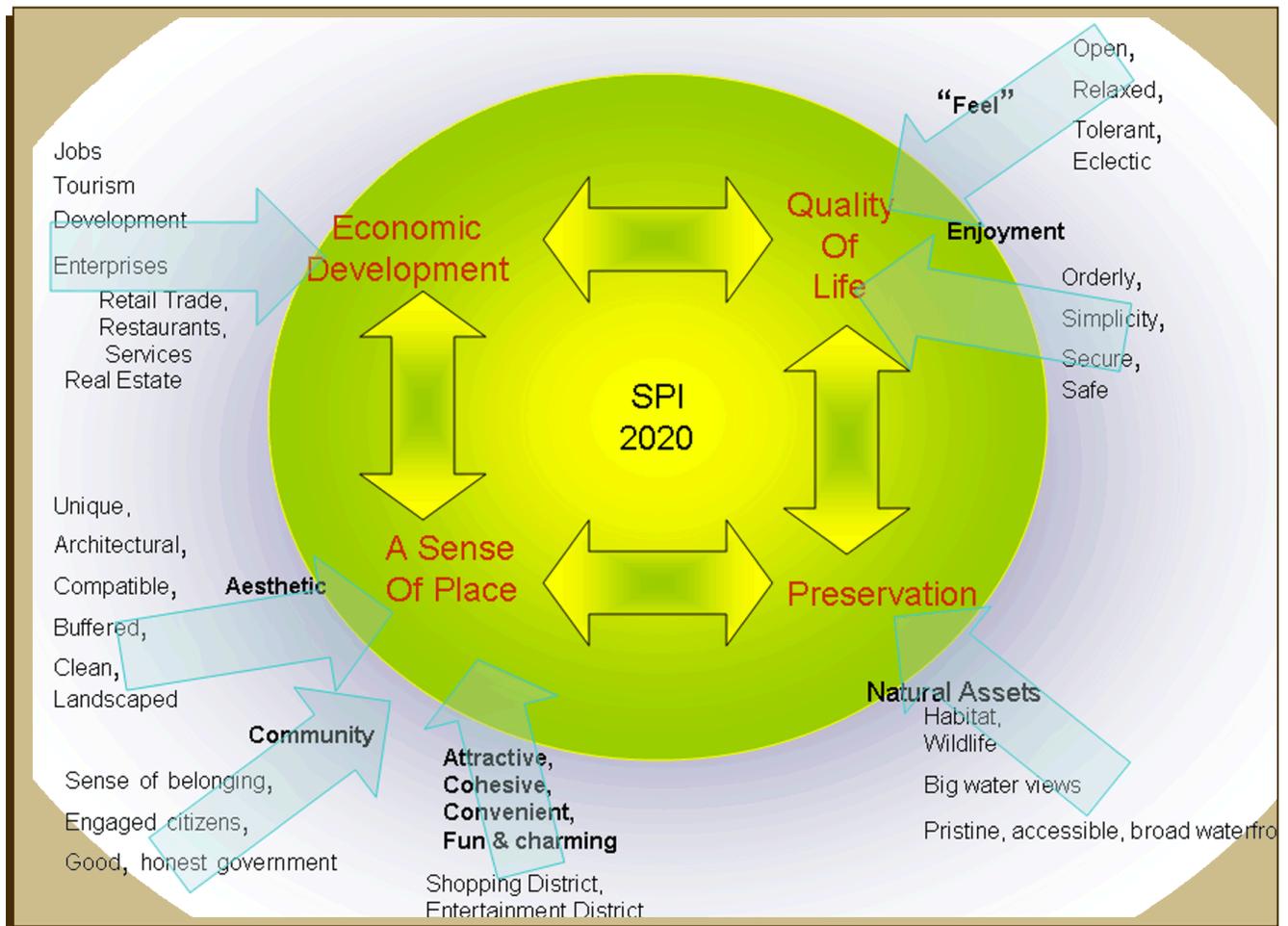
South Padre Island is a unique, naturally beautiful, clean, and cohesive town. It is architecturally interesting with visually attractive environs. Residents are engaged in their community and government and enjoy a sense of belonging. Visitors are drawn to its destination resort qualities and its fun shopping and entertainment districts.

## Preservation

The abundance of natural beauty defines the Island: its easily accessible pristine and protected beaches and bayfront, grand vistas, diverse wildlife, marine life, and marine and wetland habitats.

## Inseparably Connected

The diagram below demonstrates the reliance of each theme upon all the others to complete a sustainable future plan for South Padre Island. Natural asset preservation contributes to the sense of a unique and beautiful place, which adds greatly to the quality of life and, all taken together, provides the basis for the “value proposition” for investment and economic development. A strong economy is fundamental to the



quality of life, funds preservation efforts, and draws people to the community where they create a sense of place. The intermix of forces is inseparable.

## Goals

This policy framework intends to serve as a decision-making guide for the Board of Aldermen, Town staff, and the Planning and Zoning Commission as they implement the Comprehensive Plan. Actions and policies should coincide with the four fundamental themes for a sustainable, preferred future for South Padre Island and consider economic, environmental, and social impacts.

- 3.A. Land uses should harmonize so as not to detract from the enjoyment and value of surrounding properties.
- 3.B. Land uses should concentrate similar uses and densities. Where mixed uses are the intended use, the physical appearance should be cohesive and coordinated.
- 3.C. Commercial and residential development should encourage a walking and bicycling convenience and experience.
- 3.D. Development zoning patterns should provide for suitable transitions and buffering between land uses and densities.
- 3.E. To preserve views and enhance values, in the northern extraterritorial areas of the Town, development should favor more dense, high-rise buildings on the inland center of the island and mid-rise and low-rise structures toward the Bay and Gulf shores.
- 3.F. Development or redevelopment of "infill" lots, within a zone, should consider similar scale and density of surrounding properties.
- 3.G. High-density housing development should be concentrated where roadway and utility infrastructure and off-street parking can support it.
- 3.H. Development should favor districts over strip centers.
- 3.I. Small-scale neighborhood retail and service facilities should be located at the edge of neighborhoods at busy intersections.
- 3.J. Development should preserve and enhance the physical environment and natural features of the Island. Nature reserve areas, greenbelts, and open areas should be set aside for preservation and recreation and to be used as buffering areas.

## GOALS

- 3.K. Public beaches and bayfront shores, dunes, views, access, and ecological health should be proactively preserved and protected.
- 3.L. Zoning should be flexible enough to allow for building alternatives that provide open space and views.

## Recommended Actions

### Standards of Land Use

- 3.1. Preserve the conformity and integrity of the existing development
- 3.2. Provide for increased buffering between zoning districts
- 3.3. Allow increased flexibility while also establishing improved minimum standards
- 3.4. Streamline the review and permitting process
- 3.5. Collaborate with neighbors and property owners prior to altering present land uses in a zoning district

### Appearance & Redevelopment of Existing Structures and Properties

- 3.6. Develop and implement a "Main Street" enhancement program
- 3.7. Enhance the standards and appearance of public rights-of-way and properties
- 3.8. Provide for reuse and redevelopment of older and under-utilized structures
- 3.9. Establish and enforce landscaping requirements

### Development and Preservation

- 3.10. Improve the quality and appearance of new development
- 3.11. Protect sensitive lands and conserve natural resources
- 3.12. Use incentives and bonuses to encourage enhancements, preservation, and open space
- 3.13. Encourage imaginative and "unique" subdivision designs.
- 3.14. Accumulate land throughout the Town to facilitate the building of additional public tourist attractions such as: parks, bay front access, facilities with educational exhibits, an amphitheater, performing arts theater, historical museum and public boat ramps.

- 3.15. Encourage "Green" development and enhancement (energy, waste handling, renewable resources)

## THE IDEAL

The four themes, the policies recommended, and the goals targeted intend to define and encourage development and land use on South Padre Island that by 2020 would have the following ideal characteristics:

1. An attractive, close together, walk-able shopping districts
2. A community commons area: gathering, market, recreation, nature
3. Grand vistas of Gulf and Bay
4. Attractive, interesting architecture and layouts
5. Attractive, charming, aesthetic main street
6. Wildlife (bird, marine, other) preserved and increased
7. Wide, clean, accessible waterfront, beaches
8. Broad use of renewable energy, conservation
9. More permanent residents
10. A greener island, lush native vegetation
11. Integration of SPI into RGV and border life; inclusiveness
12. Full, year round employment
13. Strong year round economy, tourism
14. Family owned/original local character businesses
15. Clear and equally applied rules and regulations
16. Open spaces and public parks
17. Entertainment district
18. Recreation venues
19. Pedestrian-, cyclist-friendly paths and roads
20. Uncongested roads
21. Fun mass transit
22. Events, festivals, concerts, more arts, culture
23. Increased basic services, including medical
24. Transparent, effective, responsive, democratic, ethical, government
25. Safe, peaceful
26. Involved, engaged citizens
27. Small Town feeling
28. Open, eclectic, inviting, embracing community