

TO: Mayor Danielle Moore and Town Council Members
Planning and Zoning Commission Members, Gail Coniglio, Chair
Wayne Bergman, Director of Planning, Zoning & Building
James Murphy, Deputy Director of Planning, Zoning & Building
Jennifer Hofmeister, Planner III

FROM: Sean Suder, ZoneCo, Project Manager
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DATE: April 2, 2024

RE: Town of Palm Beach Zoning Code Review – South End Zoning Study

In furtherance of our review and study of the Palm Beach Zoning Code, we are pleased to provide you with a review of the current zoning and prevailing development patterns of the Town's South End. As with the North End and Mid-Town areas, to more fully understand the South End of today and tomorrow, it is necessary to review the historical progression of the South End's zoning to better understand how development patterns emerged and evolved. This study will assist Town leaders in determining whether and to what extent existing zoning standards should be amended to more closely align with the Town's planning.

South End Snapshot

The South End is generally defined as the area of Palm Beach between Sloan's Curve and Lake Worth Road and then again from south of the Lake Worth Casino to the boundary of the Town of South Palm Beach. This approximately 3.20 mile stretch of Palm Beach is served by one two-lane, north-south roadway – Florida A1A (South Ocean Boulevard).

The prevailing South End development pattern is a mix of condominium buildings, single-family residences (primarily on Ibis Island and at Sloan's Curve), hotels and resorts, and public recreation and safety facilities, including Phipps Ocean Park, the Palm Beach Par-3 Golf Course, and Palm Beach Fire Rescue Station No. 3. The relocated historic Little Red Schoolhouse is situated in Phipps Ocean Park.

At its widest, the South End (excluding beach area) is approximately 0.20 miles wide. The entire land area of the South End, including Ibis Island, is approximately 350 acres (excluding beach area), of which approximately 65 acres is public recreation land (not including beach area and not including land within the Town of Lake Worth). There are 53 tennis courts on approximately 6.70 acres and approximately 100 private swimming pools in the South End.

The South End includes approximately 86 condominium buildings containing approximately 2,000 units, or 60% of all of the Town's total inventory of condominium units. Most of the condominium developments are on parcels between 5 and 10 acres. Condominium buildings are between three and eight stories, with most between five and seven stories. Two-thirds of all development in the South End was completed before 1980, with many buildings having been developed in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

South End Zoning

The 1974 Palm Beach Zoning Code was in large part a response to concerns about the development of high-rise condominium towers in the South End akin to those on nearby Singer Island. Allowing this development pattern could result in the swelling of the Town's seasonal population from approximately 30,000 to over 100,000 people.

The zoning in the South End is primarily comprised of R-D(1) and R-D(2) districts, with R-B and R-C zoning mostly mapped on and around Ibis Island. South End zoning is approximately one-third R-D(1), one-third R-D(2), and one-third a combination of R-B and R-C zoning. There is an approximately 25-acre planned unit development stretching from Sloan's curve to the northern end of Ibis Island, and an approximately five-acre planned unit development on Old S. Ocean Blvd.

The hallmarks of the South End's current zoning are density and height controls, which makes sense considering the initial purpose of avoiding overcrowding. The primary difference between R-D(1) and R-D(2) is residential dwelling unit density; 10 dwelling units/acre and 13 dwelling units/acre, respectively. In both districts, two-story buildings are allowed to be a maximum of 25 feet high and three-story buildings may be 35 feet high (up to five stories by special exception). Permitted uses in the South End are limited to residential uses (in addition to essential services). The only commercial uses are allowed as a special permit in the R-D(2) district. For instance, hotels are permitted in the R-D(2) district but not the R-D(1) district.

In addition to residential uses, the South End currently has four hotels: three on the Atlantic Ocean and one on Lake Worth. Services are limited. The South End is closer to services such as grocery stores and pharmacies in neighboring communities such as the Town of South Palm Beach and the City of Lake Worth Beach than those in the Town of Palm Beach or West Palm Beach. South End restaurants are located only within condominiums, hotels, or public parks.

Future Development Patterns

It is expected that the South End will see significant redevelopment in the coming decades due to aging buildings, high maintenance and repair costs, and economic realities favoring redevelopment. New buildings will likely favor taller ceiling heights than existing buildings and their finished floor elevations raised per new FEMA standards.

The Designing Our Palm Beach charrette that took place in March 2023 studied South End development patterns. The charrette summary report recommends creating a public space network, lift parcels with fill and parking, redesign Florida A1A to work better for Palm Beach, and preserve views through the introduction of a height plane. Design concepts rely less on rectangular form of existing condominiums and call for varied heights and features more like those found in Mizner's historic development patterns. Maximum height limits will need to be re-examined to account for development on structured parking podiums.

If the Town desires to keep current height limits and avoid new construction of rectangular mid-rise buildings, then consider a development pattern favoring two-to-three story clustered townhomes. If the Town wishes to allow for mid-rise buildings, then clustered developments of varied roof heights with decorative towers and robust articulation could shift the development pattern away from rectangular block designs.

Uses in the South End should be further examined to determine whether the Town wishes to keep the almost entirely residential land use. Redeveloped and new hotels and resorts are likely to have interest in the South End. Ensuring that these public-facing uses complement private residential uses will be of paramount importance. Building placement and layout will play a large role as will view protection.

We look forward to robust Town-wide engagement and discussion of this study. The next step is to provide the Town with a study draft of South End zoning districts.

(The following slides are from the Designing Our Palm Beach Charrette Summary Report).

THEMES FROM THE WEEK

SOUTH END IS LIKELY TO CHANGE



Over the life of the next zoning code, the South End is likely to see change that is driven, in part, by:

- » Aging buildings will need to be renovated or replaced
- » Traffic that getting worse and more dangerous
- » Rising sea levels



DESIGNING OUR PALM BEACH

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CREATE A PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK



DESIGNING OUR PALM BEACH

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LIFT PARCELS WITH FILL AND PARKING



MAKE A1A DESIGN WORK FOR PALM BEACH



PRESERVE VIEWS WITH A HEIGHT PLANE

