

Donna C. Peterman July 4, 2024

(1) What is your vision for development in the City of Punta Gorda?

Since 2016, it took three City Councils, years of public input, professional consultants and thousands of City staff hours to develop an award-winning Comprehensive Plan, including realistic Land Development Regulations (LDRs), that address the challenge of revitalizing our downtown core. With this 5-0 decision in 2023, the Council broadly communicated to the world that Punta Gorda is open for business and now has a road map that provides certainty to those seeking to bring creative building projects to our City Center. The ability to ignite a 12-month economy in keeping with our brand as a charming, waterfront, historic area is central to assuring Punta Gorda's future as a great place to live, work, raise a family and yes — retire — affordably. I believe that framework has now been established and I am excited at the prospect of working collaboratively with those business people wishing to join the community.

(2) What is the City of Punta Gorda's greatest need and how do you plan to address this?

There are four major imperatives for the City moving forward: First, continue to focus on diversifying our tax base which is now 89% residential and 11% commercial (The ideal ratio is 75% residential and 25% commercial). With the passage of the new Comprehensive Plan, including the LDRs regulating building standards in City Center, the City has communicated an attractive, economically feasible vision for the future while respecting its past. Second, seriously address downtown flooding — both a financial and geographic challenge. At my insistence, the 2025 FY budget includes funds for a study which will provide options, including level of investment needed — probably large — and potential sources for funding. Third, preserve our important historic structures — most importantly our City Hall — which are central to Punta Gorda's brand. Fourth, the City needs to keep implementing its five-year strategic financial direction which has delivered the strongest results in years with 16.7% reserves while making much needed investments in personnel — primarily public safety (police and fire) — whose ranks had been depleted over a number of years.

(3) Why are you the right choice for City Council?

Proven leadership and experience: Currently serving on City Council in which time the Council has made consequential decisions on the new Comprehensive Plan, including realistic LDRs, as well as other important matters that directly relate to the community's quality of life and financial well being. Since moving to Punta Gorda's Historic District full time in 2016, I have been immersed in the community serving in a number of leadership

roles: president of the Visual Arts Center for three years and now president of its Endowment Trust; founder and initial president of the Historic Punta Gorda Civic Association; former chair of the Punta Gorda Planning Commission and former chair of the Punta Gorda Historic Preservation Advisory Board. I have also served on the boards of the YMCA Community Board, the Punta Gorda Historical Society Board, the Punta Gorda Symphony, the Police Chief's Advisory Citizens Advisory Council and the 2022 Charter Review bodies for both Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. Currently I am a member of the History Center board and represent the City on the Charlotte County Tourism Commission and the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership Policy Committee.

As a volunteer in the Punta Gorda City Manager's office from 2016-2019, I headed the branding initiative that produced "Florida's Harborside Hometown" tagline and visual treatment based on focus group input drawn from residents and business owners across the City; chaired the 2019 Downtown Tree Lighting celebration, chaired the City Council-appointed committee which produced a compromise for Pickleball play in Gilchrist Park and was a member of the steering committee that produced the highly acclaimed "Journey to the Future" event that kicked off the citizen input process that ultimately produced the new Comprehensive Plan. On the personnel front, I was the key advisor on the selection of a new City communications director, and served on the citizens committee that participated in the selection of the current City Manager.

I retired as the executive vice president and chief communications officer of the PNC Financial Services Group after holding executive management positions in Chicago and New York. I have a BJ in Journalism from the University of Missouri at Columbia and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

Bottom line: I have the background and experience, including the ability to work collaboratively with citizens, business owners, non-profits, City staff and my fellow council members, to keep delivering results for Punta Gorda. I believe we as a City have a bright future and I intend to be part of it.