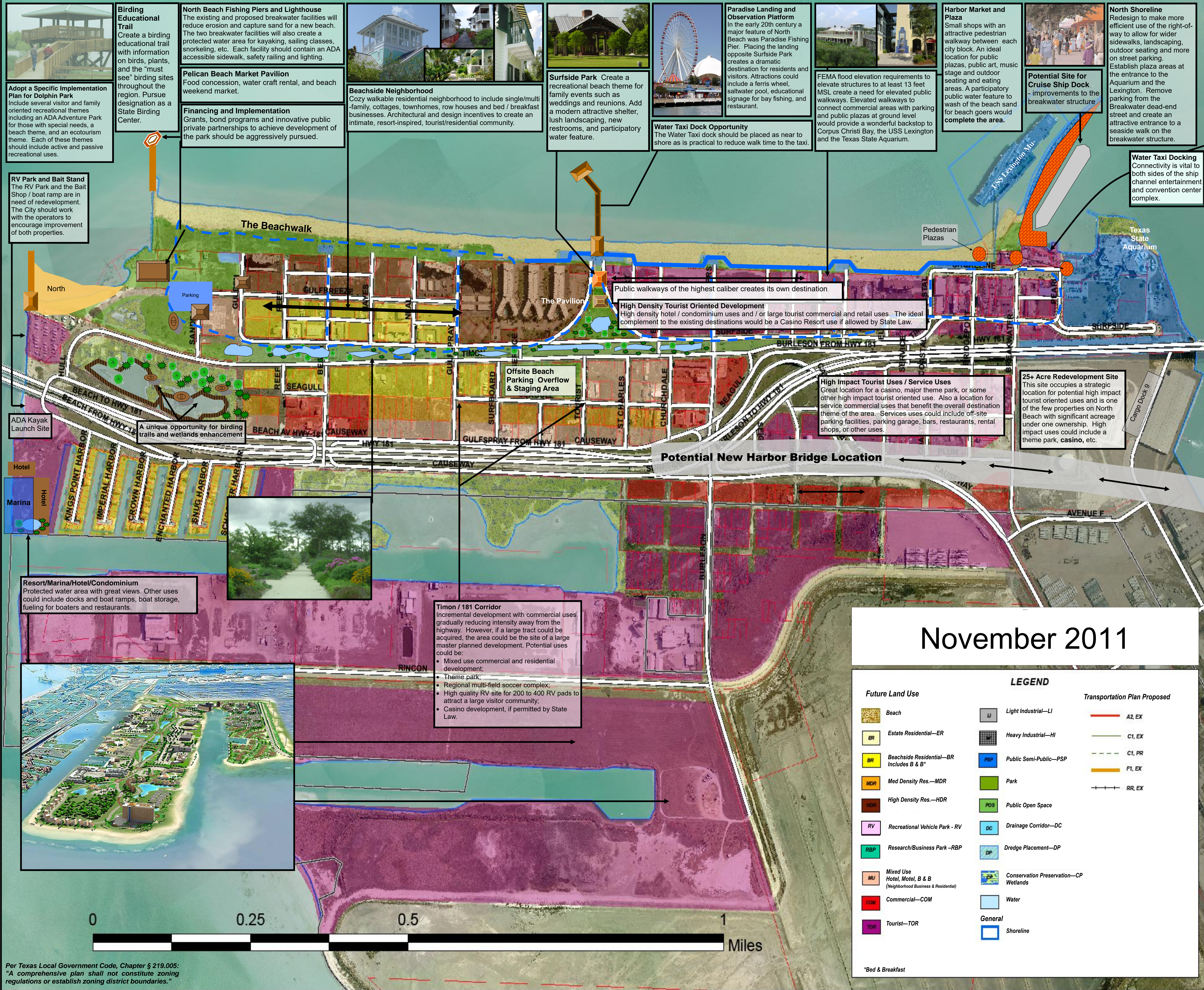


# North Beach Development Plan



November 2011

# NORTH BEACH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The North Beach Development Plan is an element of the Comprehensive Plan and a more specific supplement to the City's adopted Future Land Use Plan. This plan replaces the North Central Area Development adopted in 1990 and later amended in 1995. The purpose of the Corpus Christi Development Plan is to provide a vision for City Council decisions concerning rezoning, capital



improvement projects, legislative goals, and funding strategies. The plan is intended to send a clear message to residents, property owners, potential property owners, the Port of Corpus Christi, the County and any other agencies with an interest in North Beach regarding the City's high priority for development of North Beach. The land uses displayed in the plan are adopted as required by the City's Charter. The inset pictures, text explanations and map annotations on the Future Land Use Plan Map are provided as examples or concepts of potential development and to assist in communicating a desirable "vision" for the future.

## STATE ENABLING AUTHORITY

Chapter §219 of the Texas Local Government Code authorizes a municipality to create a Comprehensive Plan "... for the purpose of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety, and welfare." Chapter §219 authorizes a municipality, without limitation, to address future land, transportation, public facilities or other topics in the Comprehensive Plan. Before the governing body of a municipality may adopt a Comprehensive Plan, the City Planning Commission must conduct at least one public hearing, provide comments and a recommendation to City Council. The City Council must also conduct at least one public hearing for citizen comments before adopting the plan.

## HISTORY

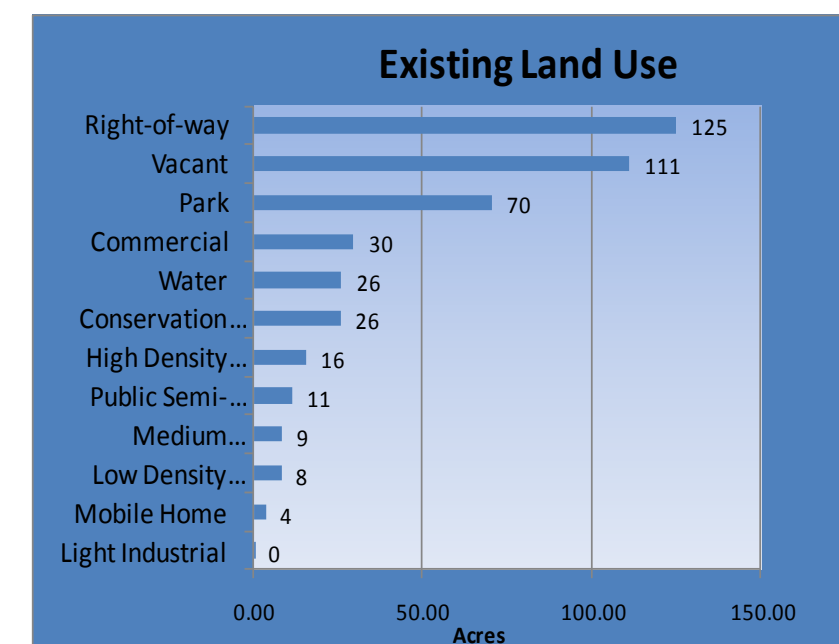
North Beach has had a colorful history from the mid-1800s during the Mexican-American War to modern day as a key destination for visitors to Corpus Christi. On August 1, 1845, Zachary Taylor set up camp for 4,000 soldiers, half of the US Army at the time, on North Beach. After the war, North Beach became a point of departure for Forty-niners headed for the California gold rush. During the early 1900s North Beach was connected to the downtown by a small street car line. In 1913, the North Beach Hotel was purchased by the government for use as a convalescent hospital for World War I soldiers. The hospital survived the 1919 hurricane and was later sold in 1927 and once again became a hotel, this time named "The Breakers". In 1939, the City was chosen as the site of a new naval air station and many of the transient workers for constructing the naval base set up camp on North Beach. From the 1900s through the end of WWII North Beach had become a thriving tourist destination complete with Paradise Pier, a roller coaster and a ferris wheel. However, repeated hurricane impacts, especially the hurricanes of 1919 and a series of hurricanes from 1961 to 1970 (Carla, 1961; Beulah, 1967 and Celia, 1970) either destroyed the tourist facilities or put them in a severe state of decline. In the 1980s the City took action to stem the decline by establishing North Beach as the site for the Texas State Aquarium. In 1990, the Texas State Aquarium opened with over 400,000 visitors in its first year. Two years later the USS Lexington opened with over 350,000 visitors. The Beach, The Aquarium and the USS Lexington continue to be three of the premier destinations for visitors to the area.

## PLAN AREA DESCRIPTION

Approximately 453 acres of land and water bounded on the north by the Corpus Christi City limits/ Nueces Bay, on the east by Corpus Christi Bay, on the south by the north side of Corpus Christi Ship Channel, and on the west by the Port of Corpus Christi Herbie A. Maurer Material Placement Area and the existing city limits.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS



	CC Beach	Corpus Christi
Census 2000 Population	440	277,454
Housing	392	107,831
Households	253	98,791
Household Size	1.74	2.75
Owner Occupied Housing	38.7%	59.6%
Median Age	48.1	35.2
Median Household Income	32,045	36,414
Households with individuals under 18	9.9	41.4
Households with individuals 65 years and over	25.3	22.3

Corpus Christi Beach is located in Census Tract 1

## EXISTING LAND USE

With a total area of 436 acres, the North Beach area is the smallest by far of all of the City's planning areas. The amount of right-of-way at 29% of all the land is not so much different than most fully developed areas where right-of-way is usually about 25% of the total. Still, the amount of right-of-way, suggests that the City should be receptive to requests for right-of-way closure on a case by case basis, especially where a closure may allow for economic or park development and where there is not a significant impact on beach access. Closure of any of the roadways the direct traffic to the City's on beach parking should be construed as having a significant impact on beach access.

Very little industrial uses such as warehousing and manufacturing exist on North Beach and wherever possible industrial uses should be discouraged or prohibited. The City's Zoning Ordinance defines outdoor amusements as industrial uses but such uses should not be prohibited from North Beach and, except for the City's Zoning Ordinance, are generally not considered "industrial uses".

## ZONING

The North Beach Area zoning is primarily intended to promote tourist oriented development with some permanent residential uses. The zoning districts in the area include: CG-2 General Commercial District; CR-1 Resort Commercial District; CR-2 Resort Commercial District; CR-3 Resort Commercial District; RM-AT Multifamily AT; and CN-1 Neighborhood Commercial District. The vast majority of property on North Beach is zoned a CR-1, CR-3, or RM-AT District. Several of these districts have a tourist or visitor orientation with higher amenities and higher density than most districts used throughout the city. In general, the Resort Commercial Districts are used in the area south of Burleson Avenue. The Resort Commercial Districts allows a wide range of tourist oriented uses with a required 20 foot landscape strip along street frontages. The Resort Commercial Districts provide a selection of tourist retail oriented uses and a provision for providing parking off-site within 2,000 feet of the use. Given the limited space available near the Aquarium, the intent is to allow parking to be provided off-site to assure the highest possible retail space density and to prevent the area from turning into a parking lot.

As an aid to redevelopment and to promote pedestrian oriented development, the Resort Commercial District allowance for parking to be placed within 2,000 feet should be considered for other areas near the beach located east of Surfside Boulevard. In addition, consideration should be given to creation of an architectural overlay district to promote the beach / waterfront theme in the area.

## PLATTING

The City Charter requires a property be platted before a building permit can be issued and essentially the entire North Beach area is platted. The entire area was part of the Brooklyn Subdivision recorded in Nueces County Court House on November 8, 1890. The plat contained two piers, including "Paradise Pier", Mimir Hotel site (the Aquarium site) and a proposed County Fair Grounds between Causeway Boulevard and Surfside Boulevard and south of Surfside Park. A number of replats have occurred since the initial Brooklyn Subdivision, such as the Texas State Aquarium Subdivision, recorded on April 15, 1988 and the North Beach Park Subdivision (22.361 acres of city land at the north end of North Beach), recorded February 18, 1988.

The only areas not platted are those lands on both sides of Rincon Channels A and B. There are also some properties that have replatted only a portion of an original lot, thereby leaving a remainder portion that is not now part of a whole platted lot.

## BUILDING

There are three FEMA Velocity Zone designations on North Beach which have had and will continue to have a dramatic effect on the nature of construction in the area. The Velocity Zone requires to have a finished floor elevation of 15, 13 or 12 feet depending on the North Beach location. These designations require that the first habitable floor of any structure be protected by building up, which results in single family stiff structures and commercial structures with parking located underneath the structure.

## BEACH MANAGEMENT

North Beach is approximately one-mile long with a sandy area of about 30 acres making it the area's single most important asset. The entire beach is open to the public with numerous points with public parking. Several of the access points have restrooms, outdoor showers and covered picnicking areas. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the beach and a 10 foot wide concrete promenade runs the entire length of the beach from the Texas State Aquarium to the terminal groin structure at the north end of the beach. North Beach has smaller waves and very little undertow which minimizes hazards to swimmers, especially children.

The one major concern with the beach is erosion. Since General Zachary camped on the beach in the 1840s, "the beach" has been known to be an eroding beach. It has been estimated that the beach, in the 1800s extended beyond where the USS Lexington is located. Currently the city has a shoreline monitoring program to monitor erosion as periodic beach re-nourishment will be needed. The terminal groin, constructed in the 1970s as part of a major beach re-nourishment project by the City and the State, does successfully trap some of the sand for redistribution. The last beach redistribution of sand / beach re-nourishment occurred in the early 2000s.



## DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

- Lack of multiple destinations
- Lack of a large permanent residential community - A small vocal residential population does exist but a larger permanent residential population would support a greater range of commercial businesses and add vitality to the area during the workweek and off-season time periods.
- Lack of a detailed City Master Site Plan for Surfside and Dolphin Parks
- Lack of agreement between the City and the Port of Corpus Christi—An agreement is needed to assure the land in the industrial district next to Rincon Channel A is developed in a manner compatible with the vision for North Beach. Heavy industrial uses and the associated noise, light, dust, and visual effects could have a negative impact on the area
- Beach renourishment—A plan is needed for continued maintenance and restoration.
- A continuous Police presence on North Beach is beneficial and essential to continued investment in the area.
- Quality of life crimes such as littering and graffiti are on going problems on Corpus Beach.
- Flooding of streets and park areas after heavy rains
- Dead-end water lines - Where elimination of dead-end water lines is not feasible, consideration should be given to flushing the lines by using the water for irrigation or potentially a water feature on the beach or at on the parks.
- Lack of water / wastewater infrastructure to support proposed development
- Protection of public visual access to the bay along streets accessing public parking areas
- Excess street right-of-way
- Eroding city land north of the terminal groin
- Protection and enhancement of existing wetlands at the north end of North Beach.
- Fragmented land ownership — Poses a challenge to redevelopment and destination projects. There are only three sites either on North Beach or immediately abutting the area which contain 20 or more acres of contiguously owned property by a single entity.

## DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Create a uniquely attractive atmosphere for small and large scale visitor destination attractions
- Promote birding, ecotourism and ADA accessibility
- Design public spaces to create destinations with uniquely attractive public facilities. Target the southern half of North Beach as a location for "high impact" destinations with the north half of North Beach as a destination for "low impact" destinations. High impact destinations may have visual and noise impacts, such as a Ferris wheels, roller coaster, etc.
- Generate community pride by creating public destinations available to the citizens of Corpus Christi.
- Create a detailed master plan for Surfside and Dolphin Parks. These two potential assets could be the catalyst for renewed growth on North Beach.
- City commitment to maintaining the North Beach to the highest standard of cleanliness for public beaches.
- City commitment to target the area for redevelopment.

## PLAN POLICIES

### ENVIRONMENTAL

**Policy Statement 1: Prepare for beach renourishment.** For the last 200 years, North Beach has and will continue to be an eroding beach area. The City should anticipate the future need for beach renourishment, either by gradual erosion or following a storm surge. In order to prepare for North Beach renourishment, annual beach erosion monitoring should take place. Additionally, a beach fund should be created to match state or federal grants.

### LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Policy Statement 2: Promote and develop a host of community and tourist destinations for North Beach.** Currently, North Beach has three major destinations including the beach, the Texas State Aquarium and the USS Lexington. Three destinations are not adequate for tourism and economic development. Proposed destinations could include:
- Water features
  - Public plazas
  - Exhibitions of public art
  - Development:
    - New Pier
    - "Birding Base Camp" Pavilion/Tourist Information Center
    - Casino Style Gambling
    - Soccer Tournament Center
    - Grand Beach Pavilion
    - Beachwalk Expansion
    - Upscale City Recreational Vehicle Park
- Each of these can be found on the proposed plan map.



**Policy Statement 3: Develop a master site plans for Dolphin and Surfside Parks consistent with the recommendations of this Area Plan.** A birding/ecotourism theme should be a primary theme for Dolphin Park, while Surfside Park should be themed for beach-bound social events and water sport theme activities. A secondary theme for both parks could be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant destinations.

**Policy Statement 4: The City should pursue State designation as a "Texas State Birding and Ecotourism Center."** The State designation should be for the City park at the north end of the beach. The City should then consider development of a headquarters for ecotourism activities, especially birding.

**Policy Statement 5: The City should rezone the North Beach area consistent with the plan, remove barriers to development and to create a tourist oriented theme.** The zoning district or overlay should require new development to follow common coastal architectural themes and remove barriers to development. Residential and commercial requirements should include architectural features such as the inclusion of at least one coastal architectural element. These elements could include balconies, cupolas, or widow's walks, etc. Commercial requirements should provide incentives for creation of plazas, outdoor seating areas, fountains, public art, shade structures or other features that build on the coastal design theme. Pedestrian oriented uses should be emphasized. Parking requirements should be altered to encourage development of buildings / destinations on beachfront property.

### TRANSPORTATION

**Policy Statement 6: TRANSIT: The City and Regional Transit Authority (RTA) should provide a seamless transit system between the north and south sides of the ship channel.** Fundamental objectives are to provide transit services between the American Bank Center and North Beach to the citizens of Corpus Christi and visitors to the community. The RTA should provide the operational infrastructure for transit while the City or its public and private partners should encourage transit development by allowing development of RTA funded infrastructure were city land is available. Enhanced transit services should consist of high quality boarding and drop off facilities and include a combination of land and water transit choices.

**Policy Statement 7: The City should consider alternative street designs for the North Beach area. In coastal locations, standard curb and gutter designs for public streets may not be feasible due to drainage and high water table issues.** However, ADA compliant sidewalks on all public streets on North Beach should continue to be one of the City's highest priorities.



### INFRASTRUCTURE / PUBLIC SERVICES

**Policy Statement 8: RECREATION: Establish the highest possible standard of public beach maintenance.** North Beach is a destination for visitors to the community. Therefore, maintenance services should be held to a higher standard than maintenance services for other areas of the City. In this area, Parks and Recreation services have the potential to add to "economic development." Until the City can afford to implement a higher standard of maintenance, volunteer support in the form of park clean-ups should be integral or even an essential aspect of providing the service. Enhanced clean-up should be conducted prior to, during and following peak tourist holidays and vacation season.

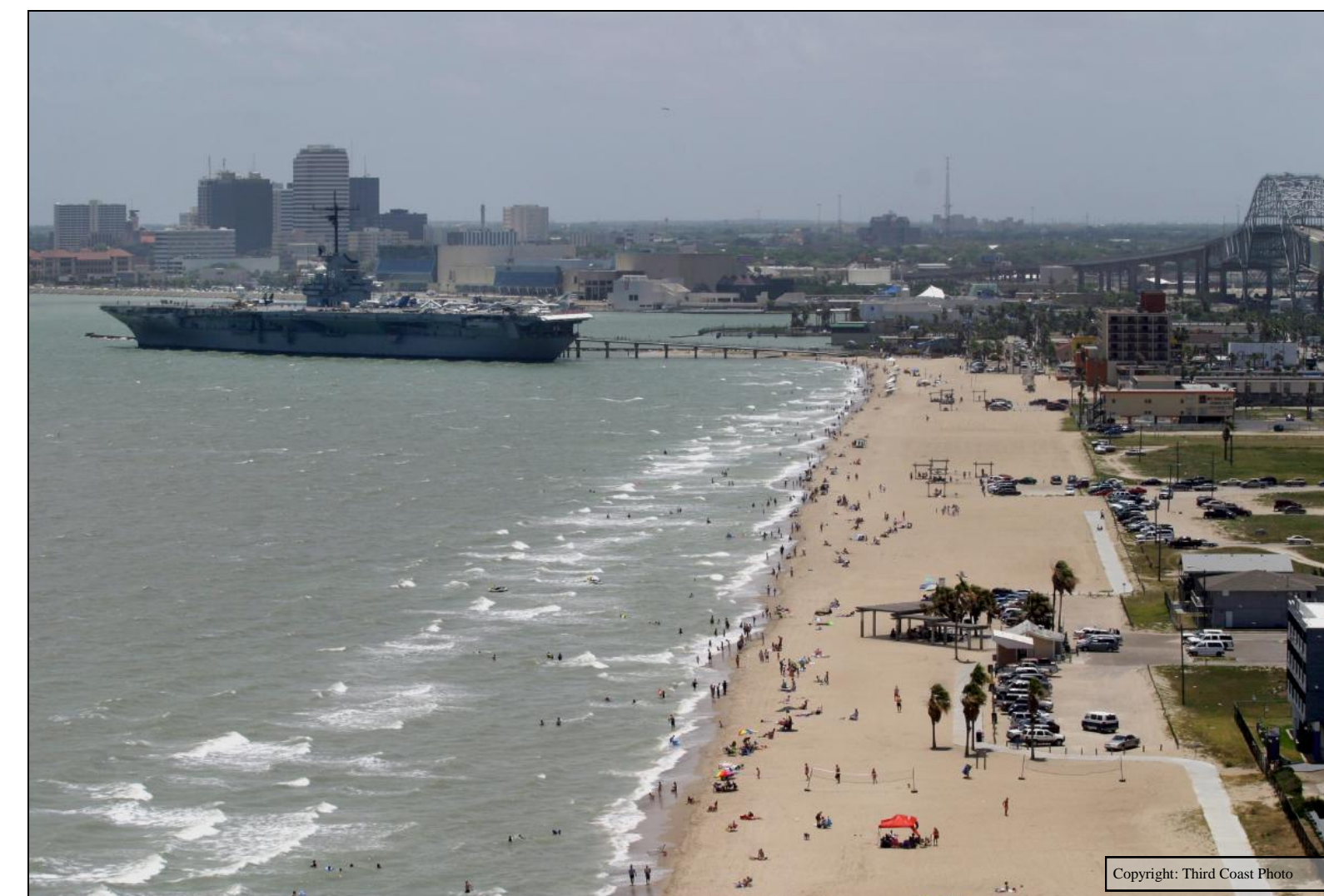
**Policy Statement 9: PUBLIC EDUCATION: Initiate a public education program focusing on community pride including the elimination of quality of life crimes such as littering and graffiti.** A "Crime Stoppers" style program should be implemented encouraging citizens to report littering violations. The installation of video cameras should also be considered as a littering deterrent method and public signage should indicate the penalties for littering. The City should continue to aggressively prosecute these crimes.

**Policy Statement 10: POLICE / SECURITY: Continue the neighborhood patrol program for North Beach.** Police service in the North Beach area is integral to the economic success of the area. Without enhances police protection services, destinations in any community cannot thrive. Coordination between the Police, private security and the City's Parks and Recreation Department on litter control and enforcement of vagrancy laws is critical to the success of the North Beach destination.

**Policy Statement 11: STORM DRAINAGE: Develop a specific Drainage Master Plan for North Beach.** Evaluation of the existing system is needed to identify problem areas for drainage and recommendations for solutions. However, the only practical solutions may be to reduce or mitigate drainage problems

### FINANCING

**Policy Statement 12: BOND PROGRAMS: Obtain bond project monies for the North Beach area.** The City is currently on a four year bond program cycle and scheduled for bond programs in 2012, 2016, and 2020. The North Beach Association, the Texas State Aquarium and the USS Lexington should present a united front to obtain these monies.



**Policy Statement 13: The City should create a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ).** After commitment from a major development, ranging from \$25 to \$50 million, the TIRZ should be created. The revenues should be used for funding public improvements.

**Policy Statement 14: The City should consider creating a Public Improvement District (PID) or a Municipal Management District (MMD).** A PID or MMD should be formed for upgrading substandard or non-existent public improvements. A Districts provide a city with an avenue to pay for public improvements. If 50% of the property owners serviced agree to an increase in city property taxes, the revenues can pay for public improvements. While the increase in taxes is not usually popular, typically the property owner pays only a portion of the total cost of the project with the city covering the remaining portion of the project.

**Policy Statement 15: The City should aggressively pursue grant funding for North Beach projects.**

## Plan Project Priorities

- Develop Paradise Landing and Observation Platform. Paradise Pier was once a major attraction on North Beach and a new landing and observation platform would provide an enhancement to existing beach activities and a potential new destination.
- Reduce street flooding by cleaning out clogged underground drainage lines. Determine what additional drainage improvements are needed.
- Improve streets with sidewalks next to existing high density residential developments, next to Surfside Park and to beach access parking lots. Eliminate dead-end water lines serving existing high density residential development.
- Adopt a specific implementation site plan for Surfside Park and Dolphin Parks. Consider participatory water features, pavilions and public art as potential destinations.
- Replace the public bathrooms at Surfside and Dolphin Parks in a location consistent with a specific park master plan.
  - Develop a public pedestrian plaza at the entrance to the Breakwater Structure between the Lexington and the Aquarium, enhance the Breakwater Structure with safety railing, lighting and a wider sidewalk and widen sidewalks and add on street parking on North Shoreline Boulevard between Pearl Street and Coastal Avenue.
  - Develop an ADA accessible sidewalk with lighting and a fishing platform on top of the Terminal Groin next to Dolphin Park.
  - Construct a new groin at the north end of North Beach to reduce erosion, capture sand and to create a new beach with a protected water sports area.
  - Create a regional Birding and Ecotourism headquarters at Dolphin Park.
    - Enhance the three major wetlands at Dolphin Park
    - Create trails and looks outs for birding
    - Seek designation as the Texas State Birding Center
- Create large, attractive shelter areas at Dolphin and Surfside Parks.
- Encourage private mobile vendors for beach necessities, food, surfboard rentals, etc. along the beach walk and in Dolphin Park.
- Pursue state law changes to permit Las Vegas style gambling on North Beach.
- Once a major development (25 to 50 million) commits to development, create a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone to "capture" the increase tax value (the tax increment) for funding public improvements.
- Update the CR-3 Resort Commercial District and then rezone the area south of Surfside Park to the CR-3 District. Create an architectural zoning overlay district to promote a consistent coastal architectural theme for commercial and residential properties.
- Preserve physical and visual access to the beach along streets which terminate in public beach parking areas. All other streets not on the City's Transportation Plan may be considered for closure on a case by case basis at the request of the abutting property owners.

Adopted by City Council Ordinance #029272 on November 8, 2011. H.U.D. Community Development Block Grant monies were used to partially fund preparation of this plan. For more detailed map information refer to www.cctexas.com under the heading of Planning / Area Development Plans. On July 17, 2012, City Council adopted Ordinance #029564 which changed the name of Corpus Christi Beach to North Beach.

# NORTH BEACH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

November 2011



Photographs Donated: by Third Coast Photo & The Texas State Aquarium

A special thanks to the members of the **North Beach Task force** for their hard work and dedication in development of this plan.

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