

1. What led to the adoption of the 2005 Manasota & Sandpiper Key Overlay Zoning District?

Manasota and Sandpiper Key evolved as a casual fishing, residential and vacation community. The small platted lots date back to the 1930's. Residential subdivisions in the 1950's and 1960's were followed by residential condos in the 1970's. Other developments came along, but were low-density and fit in with the low-key beach lifestyle of the barrier islands.

Charlotte County first adopted county-wide planning and zoning regulations in the 1960's. These regulations determined type of uses allowed (residential, commercial), how many units could be built on the lots (density), and other building standards (height, setbacks, minimum lot sizes, etc.). The County code provides an overall framework for regulating varied land uses—industrial and urban; agriculture, mining, and farming; residential; commercial fishing; and tourist areas -- across the extensive and varied landscape that is Charlotte County. On our barrier island, it became clear that regulations more tailored to physical characteristics of our islands and our unique development issues were needed.

With the building boom of the 1980's and 1990's, county residents became concerned about high-rise buildings along the waterfront that were totally changing the character of the waterfront areas. In 2002, the Waterfront Code was adopted to preserve the aesthetic qualities of the County's waterfront property and limit visual impacts and impacts to access to light and air of construction on such waterfront properties. It affects all properties in Charlotte County located within 1200 feet of the Gulf of Mexico –including Manasota and Sandpiper key-- and several other flood-prone bodies of water. Here new buildings are generally required to be raised above the ground and stepped-setback to maintain light, air and visual access. It became clear that the Waterfront Code was not sufficient to address the unique issues of development on Manasota and Sandpiper Keys, especially the replacement of single-family homes with condos and resultant crowding; and the desire by developers to build taller and bigger structures. Plans by one developer in particular, to build four large condos that would have dwarfed adjacent structures, provided a catalyst for residents to take action.

A citizens' committee worked with Charlotte County staff to develop a *Manasota Community Plan* (adopted 2004) to address future growth on the island that recommended reduced building density, mandatory setbacks and green space, parking, signage and architectural standards to maintain the residential atmosphere to avoid structures that overwhelm the neighborhood in which they are placed. In 2005, not long after hurricane Charley hit Punta Gorda, the Charlotte County Commission unanimously adopted the *Manasota and Sandpiper Key Overlay Code*. This additional layer of code addresses the unique needs the barrier island community. It covers Sandpiper Key and the Charlotte County portion of Manasota Key. It caps the height of buildings, individualizes the zoning districts, and puts in place a few other local regulations to avoid crowding and to preserve the nature of our area and protect the environment on the land and in the waters that surround us.