

The extrinsic concerns are very real for any waterfront community in Florida, but are, for the most part, beyond the control of the Council or the community. Water pollution, to a degree, can be addressed by the City.

To some extent, the concerns for crime and safety also reflect apprehension about ongoing growth and development.

Overall Summary of the SWOT Analysis

The City of Clearwater is blessed with a wonderful location, sitting straddling three major water bodies, as part of the Tampa Bay metro area. It has a desirable sub-tropical climate and many attractive natural features. The city includes a wide variety of recreational, cultural and leisure-time activities, although the community would like to see additional facilities created for these purposes. Chief amongst these are additional marinas for enhanced access to the water.

Residents are generally happy with the quality of city infrastructure, including both physical attributes such as roads and services such as police, fire and EMS. However, traffic congestion and scarcity of parking are crucial concerns, particularly in the two most active districts within the City: the Downtown and the Beach.

With respect to the Downtown, the residents would like to see many improvements including new development supporting new uses such as movie theaters, restaurants, cultural venues such as museums, restaurants, shops and so forth. There is some call for residential options in the Downtown, thus making it a true live-work-play environment.

With respect to the Beach, residents are somewhat more divided. Everyone feels that the Beach is critical to the City both in terms of utility to residents and overall identity. The beach, itself is of national, if not international caliber and a major draw for tourists to the area. At the same time, the nature of the tourism industry is changing, and there is increasing pressure to redevelop the beach in ways that might make it less accessible to residents and tourists alike. Traffic congestion, parking, and access to the water are critical concerns.

The City is, and has been in recent years, experiencing a redevelopment boom. Barring significant extrinsic factors, this seems likely to continue, and the face of the community will change. The increasing growth puts pressure on infrastructure within the City, and residents are keenly aware of limitations to the current facilities. There is also significant concern about planning and development related issues, in general, with particular emphasis on the Downtown and the Beach, as well as the more general topic of affordable housing. As is generally the case in markets where greenfield development options are limited, as redevelopment booms, prices generally get higher. While Clearwater remains an extremely diverse community, with a wide range of economic options and household incomes, it is clear that prices will continue to rise in all ranges.

With redevelopment, the community would like to see additional facilities. The desire for more marinas and water-related venues dominates this area, although there is considerable demand for community centers, which relate more to individual neighborhoods or districts than the city as a whole, and more cultural facilities. All of these build upon the perceived strengths of the City. As noted, the Downtown is seen as a unique opportunity to create a mixed-use live-work-play environment with a wide variety of new cultural and community options.

Increasingly, people are calling for public transportation options as well as improvements to traffic conditions. Concerns such as this are being addressed in cities across the country, so Clearwater is not unique in this respect. However, such options imply significant financial outlays as well as investments of time and energy. A full-fledged public transportation option might take years, if not decades, to materialize; short term measures such as the use of rubber-wheel trolleys and possibly water taxis should be explored in the interim.



As the city gets denser, particularly in the Downtown and on the Beach, parking will increasingly be a concern. This is an issue that works hand-in-hand with concerns over public transportation options; like public transportation, however, it is systemic in nature and will take time, energy and money to resolve successfully.

In general, people in Clearwater are satisfied with social and community conditions, although safety remains high as a concern for the future. There are concerns that the Downtown is too heavily dominated by activities associated with the Church of Scientology.

Education is an area where residents see many opportunities for improvement and expansion. While there is general satisfaction with current economic conditions with the community, there is also a sense that job creation is an important concern for the future, particularly higher-paying jobs in the so-called “creative” industries.

The dominant fears relate to on-going development and redevelopment; there is a perception that current growth is uncontrolled, or dominated by developer interests, not the community's. At the same time, as buildings get taller and the community gets denser, there is significant concern about the ability of already-burdened infrastructure to keep up with demand.