



Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA)

Frequently Asked Questions

BACKGROUND

To reduce loss of life and property caused by natural disasters, the State of Florida requires local governments to identify a Coastal High Hazard Area (“CHHA”) in which public expenditures and population growth are limited. The CHHA is defined as “the area below the elevation of the Category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model.” While the CHHA has existed since 1985, the definition and applicable standards have changed several times, starting in 2006, 2010, and most recently 2016. Figure 1 CHHA map shows the 2010 area in yellow and the 2016 area in red. The CHHA land area more than doubled from 7,705 acres in 2010 to 16,328 acres in 2016, an increase of approximately 112-percent now constituting 41-percent of the City’s total land area. Many of our economic centers that initially developed outside of the CHHA, are now included as a result of the 2016 changes, thereby limiting redevelopment opportunities.

Areas included in the CHHA are governed by state law, Pinellas County regulations as well as City of St. Pete policies adopted in our comprehensive plan. The City of St. Petersburg’s Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) is the regulatory document which outlines the community vision through numerous goals, objectives, and policies. Generally, the Plan establishes the maximum number of residential dwelling units allowed to be built on private property through the assignment of map categories and provides guidelines and procedures for property owners to seek map amendments. The current policy prohibits approval of any map amendment resulting in an increase to the maximum number of residential dwelling units allowed within the CHHA. Pinellas County rules are more flexible and allow map amendment request to be considered using a set of balancing criteria. The proposed text amendments, if approved, will allow City Council to consider map amendment requests, subject to five (5) mandatory review criteria and a balancing of seven (7) additional criteria.

In concert with this proposed comprehensive plan policy change, additional code requirements are recommended for all multi-family and hotel developments within the CHHA regardless of whether a map amendment is included or not. Specifically, proposed amendments to the City’s Land Development Regulations (“LDRs”) and Building Code will require Hurricane Evacuation and Re-entry Plans for all new multi-family and hotel developments. The proposed amendments will require stricter building design and construction standards for multi-family developments. These design standards are intended to result in structures that are more resilient to storm surge, wind and sea level rise, mitigate for service and infrastructure needs throughout a major storm event, and enable safe re-occupation as quickly as possible following an evacuation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. What is the goal of these amendments?

- Increase safety by establishing stronger building design standards throughout the CHHA, for those areas at highest risk in our City, which will result in buildings that are safer by increasing the height and strength, encouraging replacement of vulnerable structures and by requiring Hurricane Evacuation and Re-entry Plans for all new multi-family and hotel developments
- Allow targeted increases in development in 30% of the CHHA while continuing to prohibit any changes in the remaining 70%
- Create a more equitable and sustainable development field, expanding redevelopment opportunities and reducing redevelopment pressure in the remaining 60% of the City
- Promote sustainability and resiliency goals by mandating use of existing infrastructure and previously developed land, requiring elevated design standards for all new projects and supporting multi-modal transit goals
- Remove conflicts with other City goals and initiatives such as replacement of obsolescent commercial buildings along our multi-modal corridors

2. Does the proposed amendment increase density in the CHHA?

No. The proposed text amendments do not by themselves immediately increase allowable density within the CHHA. Rather, the proposed text amendments would allow the oversight commission and council to consider a future map amendment request within the CHHA that increases the maximum allowable residential density. The map amendment process is a lengthy multi-stage process with multiple public hearings and includes a rigorous analysis by staff, the Community Planning and Preservation Commission, and City Council to determine whether the request is appropriate and in compliance with the proposed review criteria. This would not create an automatic approval of increased or allowable density.

3. How do these amendments address public safety concerns related to people living in the CHHA?

All new multi-family and hotel projects in the CHHA will be required to provide a Hurricane Evacuation and Re-entry Plan requiring mandatory evacuation in accordance with Emergency Management directives. All new multi-family projects will be required to follow stricter building design and construction standards in excess of the minimum requirements to reduce risk of flooding and to withstand higher winds. Because the proposed amendments would allow applications for redevelopment that increase the number of allowable residential dwelling units to be rebuilt on a property, the amendments may encourage removal of substandard structures, such as mobile homes. Assisted Living Facilities will now be prohibited in the CHHA.

4. Do the proposed amendments incentivize development in the CHHA?

No. Other than allowing property owners to request and be considered for a map amendment within the CHHA, no incentives or rewards are being offered for redevelopment within the CHHA. Moreover, stricter building design and construction standards within the CHHA, regardless of whether a map amendment is requested, will add 7-11% to the cost of construction for all new multi-family projects and will require a Hurricane Evacuation and Recovery plan. Increasing costs and development requirements would not typically be considered as an incentive to development.

5. Can multi-family projects be built in the CHHA now?

Yes. Multi-family projects can be developed on parcels at a maximum allowable density designated by the existing Future Land Use Map category. Allowable densities generally range from 7.5 to 15 dwelling units per acre, with certain exceptions when located along Corridors and within existing Activity Centers. Lower densities are making it increasingly difficult to recruit new investment through the private sector or secure federal grants for public transportation improvements within the City's Corridors and Centers, both of which increasingly look for a minimum allowable density of 30 dwelling units per acre.

6. Will the new, stricter building design and construction standards apply to all new multi-family projects?

Yes. As currently proposed, these stricter building design and construction standards will apply to all new residential multi-family development within the CHHA, regardless of whether or not an increase in density was requested through a map amendment. Please note that should an increase in density be requested through a map amendment, stricter building design and construction standards greater than those proposed for development not requesting a map amendment will be required.

7. Where do we encourage growth in our City?

The City of St. Petersburg's Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework of Neighborhoods, Corridors, and Centers. Generally, Corridors (for e.g. Central Avenue, 34th Street) and Centers (e.g. Downtown Center, Gateway District, and Skyway Marina District) are identified for the most intensive development due to the location of public transportation, existing utilities, and other supportive infrastructure.

8. Why is this being considered now and how was stakeholder feedback incorporated?

Following updates to the CHHA boundary in 2016, consideration of these proposed amendments began immediately afterwards with presentations to City Council in early 2018. Originally proposed to mirror existing language in the Countywide Plan Rules, early feedback from City Council elevated expectations, resulted in nearly two (2) years of stakeholder engagement and feedback, and this final recommendation which includes five (5) mandatory review

criteria and seven (7) additional review criteria. The recommendations evolved over the multi-year review to reflect feedback provided by City Council, stakeholders as well as the ULI Technical Advisory Committee.

9. What are the review criteria for applications to change density?

The criteria are listed in the table below. Five (5) criteria are mandatory and must be met for any application to change density in the CHHA. The seven other review criteria must be taken into consideration and balanced on a case-by-case basis for each application requesting a change. The proposed text amendments include three (3) additional criteria that are not included in the Countywide Plan Rules, which have been included because of their unique importance to the City of St. Petersburg. The State of Florida has only one statutory requirement that applies to changes in density for all jurisdictions in the State.

Criteria	City Criteria	Countywide Criteria	Statewide Criteria
Access to Emergency Shelter Space & Evacuation Routes	M		M
Utilization of Existing and Planned Infrastructure	M	B	
Utilization of Existing Disturbed Areas	M	B	
Location within an Activity Center, Target Employment Center, Special Area Plan or Multi-modal Corridor	M		
Implements the Goals and Policies of the Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP), Complete Streets and Health in All Policies (HIAP)	M		
Maintenance of Scenic Qualities and Improvement of Public Access to Water	B	B	
Water Dependent Use	B	B	
Part of Community Redevelopment Area	B	B	
Overall Reduction of Density or Intensity	B	B	
Clustering of Uses	B	B	
Integral Part of Comprehensive Planning Process	B	B	
Reduction of Storm Vulnerable Structures	B		

Key: M = Mandatory Criteria; B = Balancing Criteria (considered and weighted on a case-by-case basis)

10. What are the five mandatory review criteria?

- **Access to Emergency Shelter Space & Evacuation Routes** – This criterion is a requirement of the State of Florida, based on Florida Statutes 163.3178 which requires that appropriate mitigation be provided for shelter space and transportation facilities when maximum hurricane evacuation times and minimum shelter space cannot be provided in a County. Pinellas County does not currently meet the statewide requirements, and any applications for changes in density must demonstrate how mitigation for their impacts will be provided.
- **Utilization of Existing and Planned infrastructure** – This criterion will require utilization of existing infrastructure, as opposed to requiring the expenditure of public funds for the construction of new, unplanned infrastructure with the potential to be damaged by coastal storms.
- **Utilization of Existing Disturbed Areas** – This criterion will require utilization of existing disturbed areas as opposed to natural areas that buffer existing development from coastal storms.
- **Location within an Activity Center, Target Employment Center, Special Area Plan or Multi-modal Corridor** – This criterion will require location within an existing or proposed Activity Center, Target Employment Center, Special Area Plan or within a Multi-modal Corridor or within one quarter mile of the corridor as designated on the Countywide Plan Map. These areas are targeted for higher density and intensity development based on other goals and policies such as creating employment centers and supporting multi-modal transit.
- **Implements the Goals and Policies of the Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP), Complete Streets and Health in All Policies (HIAP)** – This criterion requires that design elements and programs which further the sustainability and resiliency goals and policies of the ISAP, Complete Streets and HIAP be included in future development. The proposed companion amendment to the Land Development Regulations adding the CHHA design standards implements this policy, requiring that any project containing dwelling units resulting from a density increase must provide additional items, one for every 50 additional units.

11. When will a Hurricane Evacuation and Re-entry Plan be required?

All new multi-family and hotel projects will be required to prepare a Hurricane Evacuation and Re-entry Plan for review and approval by City Emergency Management staff. The plan must require mandatory evacuation in accordance with Emergency Management Directives and include operating procedures for how the project will handle loss of off-site or grid power, transition to a backup source of power (if available), and transition back to normal operation. Requirements must be incorporated into a legally binding document such as lease documents, condominium rules, homeowner rules.

12. Will all areas of the CHHA qualify?

No. Requests for map amendments that increase the maximum allowable residential density are to only those locations that are within an Activity Center, Target Employment Center, Special Area Plan, or Multi-Modal Corridor; together, these areas constitute approximately 30-percent of the overall CHHA. Qualified properties are identified on Figure 2 of the attached.

13. Was Sea Level Rise considered?

Yes, the 2-foot increase in structure elevation is intended to address NOAA's mid-range projected sea level rise for 50-years in the future, which projects approximately 2-feet of additional elevation.

14. How does this relate to the City's Sustainability and Resiliency goals and policies?

All new multi-family construction within the CHHA is required to comply with stricter building design and construction standards. The new standards are based on the City of St. Petersburg's Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP).

15. How will this affect single-family properties and neighborhoods?

The proposed amendments generally do not apply to new single-family houses and do not affect single-family neighborhoods. Most properties inside established neighborhoods will not meet the mandatory locational requirements to qualify for any map amendment that increases the maximum allowable density. Qualified properties are identified on Figure 2 of the attached.

16. How will this affect redevelopment outside the CHHA?

StPete2050 projections show a need for the creation over 1,000 new units per year over the next 50 years to accommodate St. Petersburg's projected growth. If approved, the proposed amendments do not regulate or constrain redevelopment opportunities outside of the CHHA. If denied, redevelopment pressure will be consolidated into the non-CHHA areas of the City. This increased pressure might have inflationary effects on land and construction costs, rent rates, and fee-simple sale prices. Further, there may be negative social impacts including gentrification resulting from redevelopment within established neighborhoods surrounding the downtown center and within close proximity to the pending Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit line.

Alternatively, the requirement for stricter building design and construction standards within the CHHA, regardless of whether a map amendment is requested, will increase construction costs within the CHHA and may influence multi-family developments to locate elsewhere. Since demand will continue to exceed the redevelopment capacity of qualified properties within the CHHA, non-CHHA areas will continue to benefit from new investments.

17. How does this affect affordability?

Increasing the areas where housing can be built will increase housing availability, and in turn decrease pressure on in-land areas to accommodate the projected growth. The increase in building costs may result in less affordable units in the CHHA, while encouraging redevelopment of more affordable units in areas targeted for growth outside of the CHHA.

18. Where can I learn more about the research the City has done on the Coastal High Hazard Area?

Visit: http://www.stpete.org/planning_zoning/current_planning_projects.php

Contact: Urban Planning & Historic Preservation Division: 727-551-3542; Britton.Wilson@stpete.org

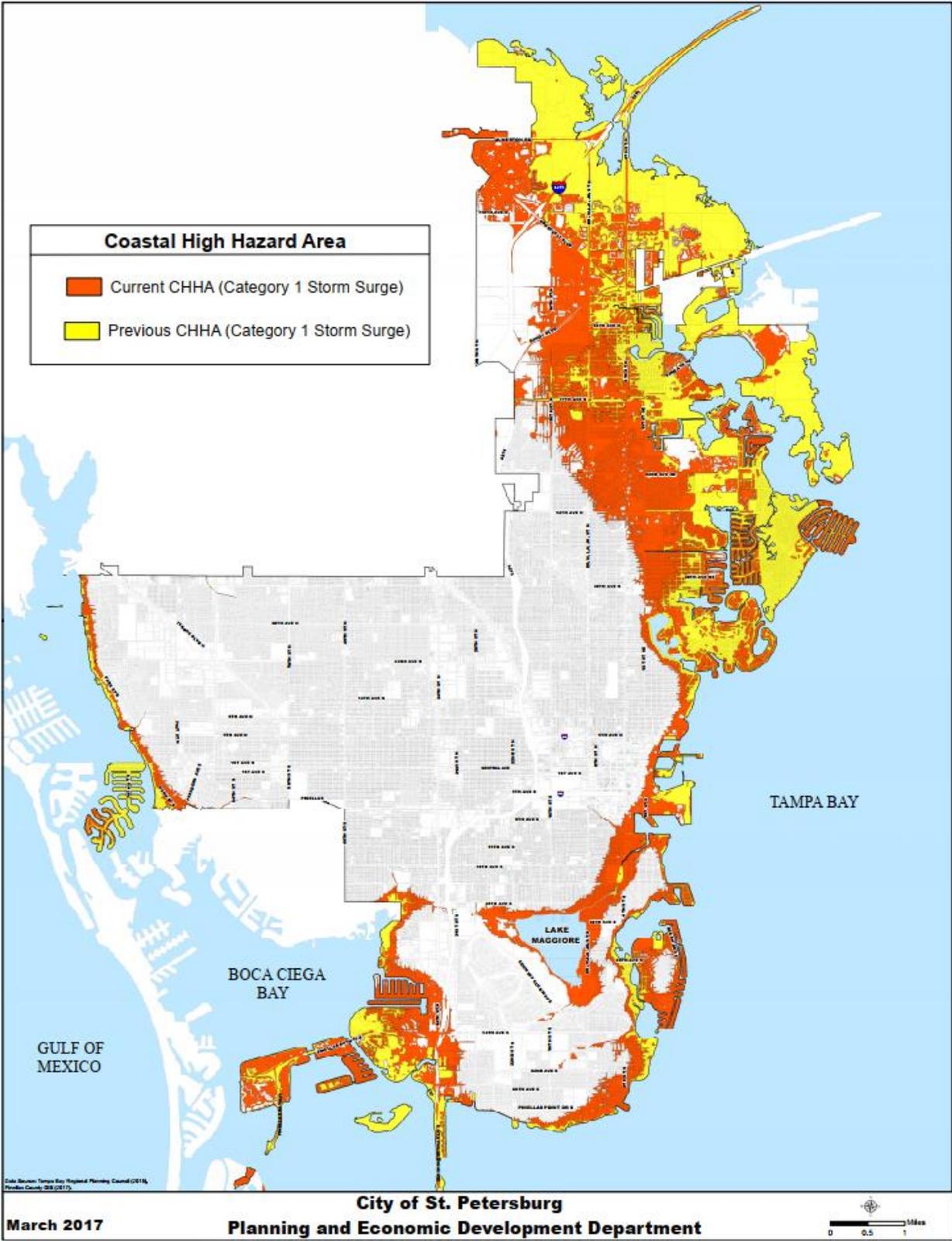


Figure 1. Coastal High Hazard Areas - 2010 and 2016

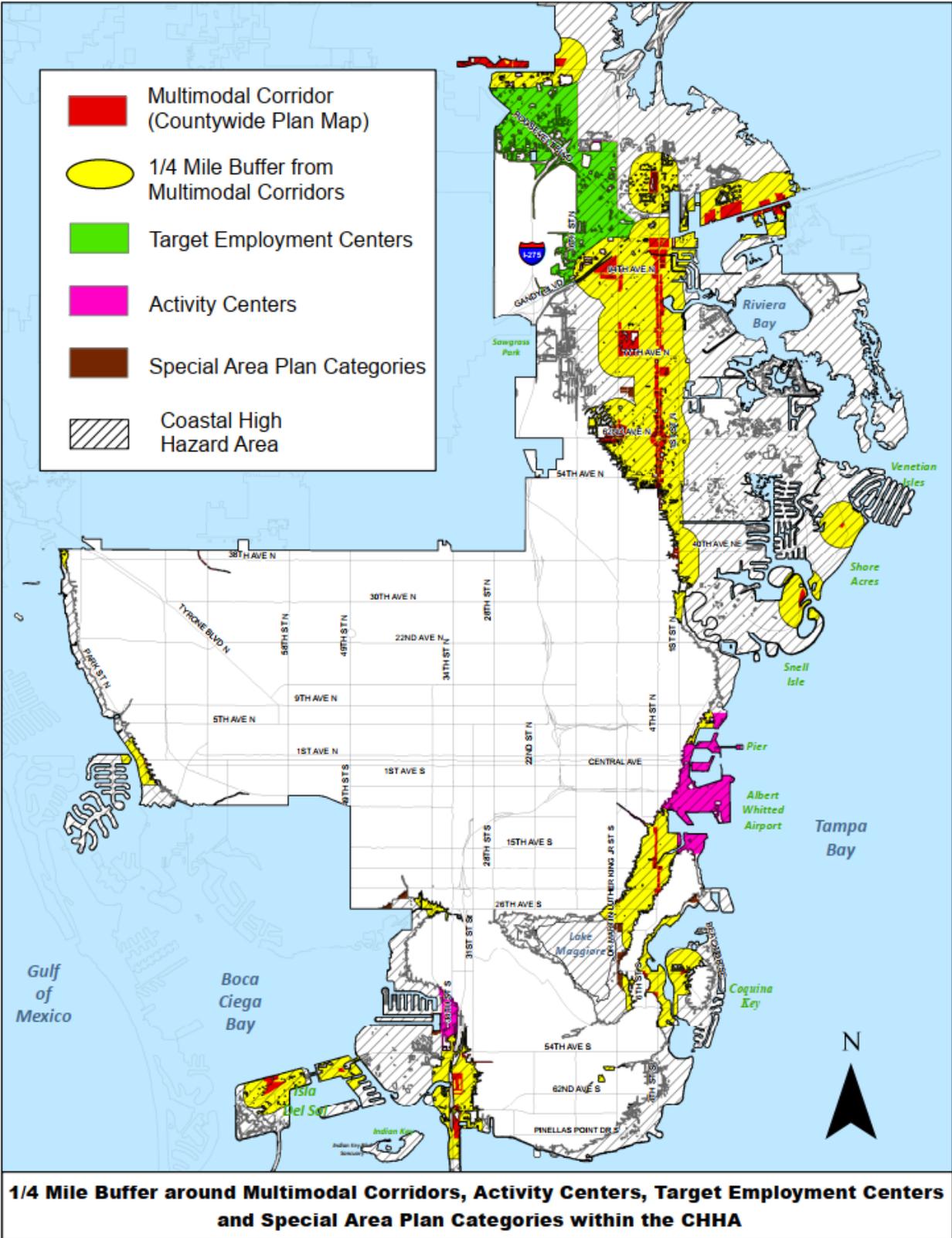


Figure 2. Qualifying Areas within the Coastal High Hazard Areas