

Elizabeth Abernethy, AICP

Education

Master of Arts: Urban & Regional Planning, University of Florida
Bachelor of Arts: Public Affairs/Environmental Policy, Cum Laude
State University of New York at Albany

Experience

2014-2025

Director, Planning & Development Services: City of St. Petersburg (June 2018-May 2025)
Chief Zoning Official/Development Review Services Manager (September 2014-May 2018)

Direct development, redevelopment, and urban design in a high growth city of over 265,000. Oversee 100+ staff within three divisions: Construction Services & Permitting (Building), Development Review Services (Zoning) and Urban Planning & Historic Preservation, with a budget of over \$20 million.

- Advise Mayor, Administration, City Council and outside agencies on planning, building, floodplain management, zoning and land use issues
- Present to City council, commissions, business (Chamber of Commerce) and neighborhood associations on a variety of planning, building and zoning issues and topics
- Prioritize and direct activities of the department including selection, placement, promotion, training, development, and appraisal of management and key personnel
- Analyze state legislation for local impacts to advise administration, lobby for local concerns regarding pending legislation and update of local regulations in response to adopted bills
- Represent City as expert witness in land use litigation including depositions and judicial hearings
- Investigate and resolve citizen and customer concerns and complaints
- Administer City's land use and historic preservation hearing boards
- Provide annual updates to Emergency Management Department Operating Procedures and individual event response to several Tropical Storms, Hurricanes and the Covid pandemic, successfully converting all public services to electronic options, managing a temporary outdoor seating program to assist local businesses and updating software, procedures and staff positions
- Led and completed award winning citywide long range visioning effort "StPete2050" - 2021
- Led innovative updates to the Land Development Regulations and local Building Code including:
 - Updates to address Affordable Housing including bonuses, in-lieu fees, establishing and rezoning for new Missing Middle zoning category, Accessory Dwelling Unit expansion citywide (ADUs), parking, design standards, procedures, sewer connection fee waiver – 2019-2023
 - Update to Downtown Waterfront Master Plan and Residential Lighting standards – 2022
 - Established a process for approval of affordable housing projects under HB1339 – 2021/2022
 - Update to Urban Agriculture to expand Community Gardens & Flood Plain Management – 2021
 - Coastal High Hazard Area regulations addressing Sea Level Rise & storm vulnerability – 2020
 - Storefront Conservation Corridor Overlay addressing space for small business and corridor character; Noise establishing new requirement for Noise mitigation and monitoring plans; Signs to comply with Reed v. Town of Gilbert; Innovation District; Public Participation updates – 2019
 - Residential design standards with innovative FAR approach addressing compatible infill -2017
 - Tree & Landscape code update introducing protection for Grand and Signature Trees - 2015
- Administer the City's Floodplain management program including the Community Rating System program currently providing a 25% discount for all FEMA Flood Insurance policies citywide and participation in FEMA Grant programs for homeowners to mitigate repetitive loss structures
- Implemented numerous customer service improvements including expansion and reorganization of the building division, software updates for queuing and permitting systems, established cross-training matrix and implemented quality assurance and consistency procedures

2013-2014

Site Development Project Manager: Bloomin' Brands, Inc

(Outback Steakhouse, Bonefish Grill, Carrabba's Italian Grill, Flemings Prime Steakhouse)

Managed all aspects of national restaurant development process with multi-disciplinary teams to develop and implement project plans, schedules, plan approvals and permitting.

- Delivered seventeen new restaurants for 2014 openings for a capital investment of over \$60 million and established the 2015 and 2016 pipeline
- Analyzed properties to ensure viability including use, zoning, parking, alcohol regulations, design standards, utilities availability, physical features, costs, and fees and presented projects to Senior Real Estate Team with recommendations
- Managed consultants and reviewed inspection related items, assisted in developing job cost estimates, maintaining budgets, negotiating leases, preparing lease exhibits, maintaining lease compliance through landlord and third-party plan approvals and monitoring of critical dates
- Served as project lead to local governmental officials and at regulatory meetings

2004-2013	<p>Senior Project Manager, Associate: WilsonMiller/Stantec</p> <p>Managed a variety of private-sector real estate land development projects including processing of Development of Regional Impact (DRI) applications, rezoning applications and comprehensive plan amendment applications throughout the Tampa Bay region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrote proposals, RFPs and RFQs; monitored contracts, budgets, billing and invoicing; established and maintained schedules and sub-contract management• Managed multi-disciplinary, multi-organizational project teams including real estate attorneys, architects, civil and geotechnical engineers, and environmental and transportation consultants• Developed and delivered multi-media presentations to public/private groups and executive/judicial boards• Performed project analysis and processed land development approvals for compliance with federal, state, regional and local land development and environmental rules and regulations• Supervised and mentored junior professional staff
1993-2004	<p>Urban Planner II: City of Tampa, Department of Business & Housing Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed commercial construction plans for compliance with zoning and land development regulations and served as staff coordinator for Board of Adjustment• Interpreted and communicated complex land development requirements, rules and regulations to the general public, architects, engineers, design professionals and attorneys• Prepared Neighborhood Element for Tampa Comprehensive Plan• Updated Concurrency Management Manual and prepared Annual Capacity Statements
1991-1993	<p>Graduate Assistantships: University of Florida</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performed data collection & analysis for a study on economic effects of the Growth Management Act and data conversion & analysis for a growth projection model using ARC/INFO• Developed a database of sponsors for a conference on pedestrianism for FDOT• Researched, surveyed and analyzed data for a paper on implementation of concurrency• Teaching assistant for AutoCAD component of an urban design class
1989-1991	<p>Assistant Planner: City of Fort Myers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepared neighborhood plans and served as intergovernmental liaison• Prepared planning maps and graphics utilizing AutoCAD
Certifications & Activities	<p>American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), 2004</p> <p>City of St. Petersburg Economic Impact Award – May 2025</p> <p>American Planning Association, Chapter Planning Leadership Award – Outstanding Local Public Official, September 2024</p> <p>ULI, Tampa Bay Executive Board, 2021- 2023</p> <p>American Planning Association, Florida chapter – Award of Excellence “StPete2050: A Vision for St. Petersburg”, Fall 2021</p> <p>Florida League of Cities – 2020 Home Rule Hero Award</p> <p>University of Florida Urban & Regional Planning Professional Advisory Council, 2013-2018</p> <p>Guest lecturer – University of South Florida, Urban Planning Program, 02/2017; 02/2018</p> <p>Guest lecturer – St. Petersburg College, Urban Planning class, 2025, 2025</p> <p>Panelist- APA Sun Coast Event “Serving as an Expert Witness” 02/23/18</p> <p>Take Stock In Children Mentor, 2014 – 2020 (St. Petersburg High School)</p> <p>APA MAP’s Mentor, 2016</p> <p>St. Petersburg High School IB Booster Board, President, 2011-2014</p> <p>City of Tampa Economic Competitiveness Committee, 08/2011-01/2012</p> <p>Pasco County Land Development Code Rewrite Stakeholders Committee, 09/ 2008-08/2011</p> <p>WilsonMiller Emerging Leaders Class and Project Management Class</p> <p>American Planning Association, SunCoast Section Executive Committee, Treasurer 2005-2007</p> <p>Peter Kanovos, Sr. Memorial Award – Overall Excellence of a Graduating Planning Student, 1993</p>
Publications	<p>“When the public benefit can justify a bypass to planning and zoning laws” Florida Planning, Fall 2021</p> <p>“Breaking Down the Big Box House: How the City of St. Petersburg adopted and implemented zoning regulations to address compatible residential infill” Florida Planning, Fall 2017</p>