

## ■ Purpose of the Plan ■

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A primary purpose of this Gateway Plan is to ensure that County-owned properties in the Gateway Area are positioned to provide maximum contribution to achieving the economic potential of the Gateway Area, and thereby maximum return, or value, to the citizens of the County. As an equally important purpose though, the Plan addresses how policy-level commitments by the Board of County Commissioners can contribute to not only achieving the economic and employment goals of the Area, but also to improving the overall character and quality of the Gateway Area.

Effective, and creative, integration of County-owned properties into an overall plan for the Gateway Area is one facet of the comprehensive planning approach needed to achieve Area-wide success. In fact, County properties in the Gateway Area should be examples of quality development, and should serve as models for sustainable planning and design, both separately and in combination with one another.

The Gateway Area is also a residential area, and the protection and enhancement of the local quality of life is also important, if not integral, to the long term success of the Area.

The final, and key, purpose of this Plan is to promote and commit to the coordination with the cities of St. Petersburg, Largo and Pinellas Park needed to move the Gateway Area into the future as the economic and employment centerpiece of the County, but in a manner that compatibly integrates with the surrounding communities and the natural environment.

### ■ ■ ***Housing Conditions***

Housing in the Gateway Area is a mix of single and multi-family structures. Single-family concentrations include the Highpoint area in the northwest portion of the Gateway Area, the Mainlands along the western boundary of the Gateway Area and U.S. Highway 19, and Feather Sound east of the Airport properties, as well as some new high-end residential construction along Gandy Boulevard. Residential land uses make up close to 14 percent of the current land uses in the Gateway Area.

The Feather Sound residential community is located in the unincorporated County and contains a mix of single-family homes, townhomes, and multi-family structures, as well as significant greenspace and a golf course. These amenities, as well as the proximity to several major transportation corridors, help to make Feather Sound a successful residential community, and make it desirable to the City of St. Petersburg who has expressed significant interest in annexing the community. The Mainlands is a large 65+ single-family retirement community in the City of Pinellas Park that also includes a golf course. The community is attractive to seniors and retirees due, most likely, to more moderate housing prices, its golf course and its sense of community. The nearby Lakes community contains housing for families with children as well as for 65+ families. The Highpoint community, located in the unincorporated area, is comprised largely of single-family homes and duplexes. It is the location of an ongoing neighborhood revitalization commitment by the County, and the City of Largo has recently expressed some interest in annexing the community.

Multi-family housing is concentrated along the north 4<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and the Gandy corridor. Multi-family construction appears to be both viable and desirable in the area, and is related to the area's connectivity to major transportation corridors allowing for easy access to local employers as well as employers in Hillsborough County across Tampa Bay.

### ■ ■ ***Facilities of Countywide Significance***

Facilities of countywide significance are, for the purposes of this Plan, properties owned or managed by the County, that contain facilities or uses providing a countywide benefit. In the Gateway Area, there are several facilities of countywide significance including the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport and associated properties under Airport ownership, the Criminal Justice and Jail Complex (which is actually located on property leased from the Airport), Solid Waste Operations, the proposed intermodal hub/county road 296 connector, and the Gateway Preserve. These facilities represent a substantial long term financial and planning commitment by the Board of County Commissioners for a countywide purpose, and they are not uses that can be re-located.

### ■ ■ ***Existing Land Uses and County Properties in the Gateway Area***

The Gateway Area is comprised of just over 12,700 acres. Approximately 34 percent of the Area is in the unincorporated County, 6 percent is in the City of Largo, 24 percent is in the City of Pinellas Park, and 36 percent is in the City of St. Petersburg. The predominant existing land use in the Gateway Area is Conservation/Preservation at 20

percent. For the most part, this is represented by the regionally significant Gateway Preserve, over 1,500 acres of pristine coastal land, recently annexed by the City of St. Petersburg, but managed by the County as a part of the Weedon Island Preserve system.

Public/Semi-Public uses represent the next largest percentage of existing land use at 18 percent. This is reflective of the major County facilities in the Area including the St. Petersburg – Clearwater International Airport, the Resource Recovery Facility and Bridgeway Acres landfill, and the Criminal Justice Complex and Jail. Other major County properties in the Area include the Airport's Airco Golf Course, and several smaller vacant properties. **Table 1** summarizes, by acreage and type, the existing land uses in the Gateway Area, by jurisdiction, including the acreage associated with County-owned land. **Figure 2** depicts existing land use information for the Gateway Area. However, the pace of annexation in the Gateway Area is such that the percentages associated with municipal versus County jurisdiction change frequently.