

Revitalization/One Clean-up Pilot Program which will provide financial support for the County's watershed management and land revitalization goals. Additionally, the EPA recently awarded the County an environmental assessment grant complementing the Cross Bayou designation. This designation goes hand-in-hand with the County's brownfield initiative, and the program components of both can be applied throughout the watershed to achieve watershed improvement and County redevelopment goals.

The Gateway Area is also home to significant cultural resources and was the site of a major archaeological excavation, the Yat Kitischee site, in the 1990s in the proximity of the Airport. Protection of the Yat Kitischee site and its resources as a reflection of Pinellas County's past remains important to the County. The Yat Kitischee site is currently protected, but it is likely that archaeological resources are located on other properties in the vicinity. The Airport completed an archaeological assessment of the area in 2005 and additional protection measures might be worthwhile and appropriate.

Incorporating Environmental Protection into the Planning Process

Protection of the natural resources in the Gateway Area should be a priority as the County has invested significant time and dollars towards the creation, development and management of the diverse and dynamic coastal preserve system represented by the Gateway Preserve, and Weedon Island to the south. The Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan recognizes, and commits to, the value of using environmental lands for education and public enjoyment in a manner that instills environmental stewardship. The wise integration and enhancement of the environment into the planning for Gateway, and representing the preserve lands as an integral feature of the Area, is key to ensuring stewardship for the surrounding natural environment. Planning for public access to the natural lands, therefore, is essential, even if access is largely by kayak or canoe.

Road planning, redevelopment planning and site planning present the opportunity for incremental environmental improvement. For example, exploring creative regulatory and funding strategies and priorities for beautification, habitat restoration and landscaping will contribute positively to the character and environmental value of the Area. Planning for road improvements can offer, for example, the opportunity to enhance the aesthetics and environment along the roadway corridor.

The Gateway Area is situated predominantly in the Cross Bayou and Roosevelt drainage basins. Consequently, long range planning for the Gateway Area needs to recognize specific watershed issues and must contribute to watershed improvement. For example, multi-jurisdictional watershed planning for improvements in the Cross Bayou Basin is underway (as previously described) between the County, the cities of Largo and Pinellas Park, and SWFWMD. In both watersheds, the issues to be addressed include compliance with the water quality improvement aspects of the County's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and importantly, compliance with new surface water quality standards regarding maximum allowable pollutant loads (i.e., total maximum daily loads, or TMDLs). The Roosevelt Basin in particular drains to Tampa Bay, a National Estuary, which is a priority waterbody for

improvement both locally and nationally. As a member of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP), and playing a key role in the development of TBEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Tampa Bay, the County has made a significant technical, scientific and financial commitment to improving conditions in Tampa Bay. Tampa Bay will soon be subject to new water quality and watershed restoration requirements associated with Clean Water Act compliance, which should have an impact on how development activities are evaluated and regulated in the Roosevelt Watershed.

All of the property controlled by Solid Waste Operations is currently subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements, which is one reason why the location of Tampa Bay Water's brackish wells and water treatment facility are a concern. The withdrawals have the potential to affect the ground water level gradient required to maintain the integrity and function of the slurry wall around the Solid Waste properties, which is required by State regulations.

Clearly, planning for the Gateway Area must be consistent with, and help to implement, regulatory directives, but planning and redevelopment in the Gateway Area also presents the opportunity for the County to be a model for sustainable environmental planning and low impact site design (i.e., environmentally-friendly site planning techniques that conserve natural resources and hydrologic functions). In particular, this is possible with the projects under direct County control and in the development/redevelopment of County-owned properties. In turn, the County's planning and actions should be a model for other local governments and the private sector in sustainable and quality redevelopment.

The Residential Community

An additional consideration in long range planning for the Gateway Area is the evaluation of opportunities to provide new and better integration of residential land uses into the Gateway mix. That is, by providing housing closer to employment, the potential to decrease the number of trips on the overall roadway system exists. For example, the ability to coordinate local transit with the location of housing and employment so that employees can get easily from home to work and back without a car is a desirable goal. To be effective, this is likely to require the introduction of new housing options directly into the mix of business and employment related land uses. Consequently, land use changes to support mixed use development may be appropriate in certain areas. In addition, there may be sites that offer redevelopment potential by conversion to a residential use.

Existing neighborhoods must also be considered in the long range planning for the Gateway Area. The unincorporated residents of Feather Sound, for example, have already expressed concern over the build-out of the Airport properties and the potential impact on their quality of life. Ongoing communication between the County and residents is critical.

The residents of Highpoint have more immediate concerns over neighborhood revitalization, including access to active recreational opportunities. In regard to the