

PINELLAS COUNTY FINAL REPORT

Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan

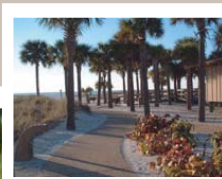


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Acknowledgements

Individuals and groups who contributed to the development of this Parks System Master Plan include:

Pinellas County

Glenn Bailey Program Planner, Planning Department
Lisa Baltus Senior Environmental Specialist, Environmental Management
Gordon R. Beardslee General Planning Administrator, Planning Department
Vernon R. Bryant Horticulture Manager, Florida Botanical Gardens
Sandra Burton Park and Recreation Finance Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
Joan Chamo Executive Administrative Secretary to Elithia Stanfield & Jake Stowers, Assistant County Administrators
Paul Cozzie Park & Recreation Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Will Davis Director, Environmental Management
Nicole Elko Coastal Management Coordinator
Ivan J. Fernandez P.E., Division Engineer, Civil/Site Engineering
Lyle Fowler Park & Recreation Operations Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
Elizabeth S. Freeman Planning Section Manager, Planning Department
Brent Hall Project Manager, Public Works Engineering Specialist II, Public Works
Leah Hoffman Park & Recreation Operations Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
Nan Jensen Interim Director County Extension
Carol J. Legal Lead Programmer Analyst Supervisor, BCCIS
Joe Lupardus Park and Recreation Operations Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
Jan Luth Director, Heritage Village
Laura P. McKenzie Administrative Secretary to CEL Director
Jill Pongetti Planner, Planning Department
Judith Powers-Jones Director, Pinellas County Arts Council
Jorge M. Quintas P.E., Director of Engineering
H. Bruce Rinker Ph.D., Division Director, Environmental Lands Division, Environmental Management
Rebecca Robidoux Planning Intern, Planning Department
Ken Rollins Executive Director, Gulf Coast Museum of Art
Robert Rothman Information Systems Coordinator
Samantha Shorr-Zigante Program Planner, Planning Department
Ray Smenner Assistant Director, Pinellas County Arts Council
Jake Stowers Assistant County Administrator
Kathy Swain Park & Recreation Operations Manager, Parks and Recreation Department
Elizabeth Warren Culture, Education and Leisure Director
Denise Welch GIS Technician, Planning Department
Pete Yauch Director of Transportation, Public Works

Individuals and groups who participated in the Parks System Master Plan Workshops:

Beach Access

Nicole Elko
Zaneta Hubbard
Connie Jessup
John Coffey
Scott Graubard
Andy Cummings
Phil Flood
Terri Finch
Glenn Bailey
Leah Hoffman
Brent Hall
Sonny Naar
Joe Lupardus

Boat Ramps and Water Access

Joe Lupardus
Kevin Dunbar
Bill Morris
Harry Gross
James O'Reilly
Joan Byrne
Greg Brown
Lynn Rives
Rick Burton
Matthew Spoor
James Sheets
Gary Anderson
Sharon Smith
Lee Metzger
Juan Cruz
Scott Siebel
Scott Robinson
Nancy O'Connell
Oliver Kugler
Thomas Doehleman
Darryl Ogden
Gene Quinn
Brent Hall
Elizabeth Freeman
Samantha Shorr-Zignate
Jill Pongetti
Glenn Bailey
Rebecca Robidoux

Community Centers

Kathy Swain
Joan Byrne
Sandy Clayton
Peg Cummings
Sherry McBee
Rick Burton
Scott Goyer
Doug Linder
Carl Lavender Jr.

Cultural Facilities

Judith Powers-Jones
Evelyn Craft
Robert Freedman
Bob Devin Jones
Kathy Monahan
Mark Spano
Margo Walbolt
Lynn Whitelaw
Ann Wykell
Jan Luth
Joe Lupardus
Robert Freeman
Craig Dreeszen
Ray Smenner
Elizabeth Freeman

Educational Facilities

Judy Yates
Tom Stanton
James Olliver
Browning Spence
Bruce Rinker
Jim McGinty
Kathy Swain
Liz Warren
Don Bitting
Charles (Charlie) S. Vavrina
Dave Bracciano
Claudia Lewis
Jan Luth
Tracy Spikes
Jake Stowers
Brent Hall
Greg Charles

Linda McBride
Beth Bartos
Phyllis Kolianos
Paul Cozzie
Bruce McManus
Will Davis, Director
Joe Lupardus
Vernon Bryant
Pam Brown
John Alleyne
Jim McGiuity

Greenways, Trails and Bikeways

Elizabeth Freeman
Carol Stricklin
Mike Siebel
David Bullis
Jerry Cumings
Cliff Still
Joyce King
Will Davis
Mike Nahat
John Osborn
Jason Mickel
Bruce Rinker
Holly Greening
Scott Daniels
Darry Jackson
Kathy Barile
Samantha Shorr-Zigante
Rebecca Robidoux
Joe Lupardus
Brent Hall

Neighborhood Parks

Leah Hoffman
Rick Burton
Lee Metzger
Margaret (Peg) Creed
James O'Reilly
James Miller
John Lash
John Maricome

Preserves and Conservation Lands

Will Davis
Joyce King
Dick Eckenrod
Joe Lupardus
Bruce Rinker
Karen Hill
Linda Seufert
Brent Hall
Michael Miller
Clifford Still
Elizabeth Freeman
Pamela Leasure
Jan Allyn
Scott Robinson
Holly Greening
Michael Nahat
Jacob Stowers
Lisa Baltus
Samantha Shorr-Zigante
Linda Taylor

Public Art

Judith Powers-Jones
Maria Castagliola
Greg Fisher
Ron Mason
Lenn Neff
Sallie Parks
Robert Stackhouse
Carol Mickett
Margo Walbolt
Lisa Wannemacher
Liz Warren
Ann Wykell
Ray Smenner
Michele Tuegel
Mark Flickinger

Regional Parks

Paul Cozzie
Bruce Turley
Holly Greening
Ellen Pfau
Bruce Ackerman
Paul Thomas
Joan Byrne
Rick Burton
Kevin Dunbar
Jim Sheets
Lee Metzger
Juan Cruz

Sports Complexes and Special Use Facilities

Liz Warren
Kathy Swain
John Gianantonio
Kevin Smith
Harry Gross
Kevin Dunbar

Transportation

Joe Kubicki
Bob Bray
Mike Siebel
Bud Bradley
Felicia Leonard
Carol Stricklin
Al Bartolotta
Gerald Paradise
Mike Quinlivan
Michael Frederick
Tom Ferraro
Joe Lupardus
Elizabeth Freeman
Samantha Shorr-Zigante
Rebecca Robidoux
Rob Meador

Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin
Lopez Rinehart, Inc.
Consulting Planners/Landscape
Architects
David Barth
Mike Sobczak
Sarah Wilkinson

1. Introduction

Pinellas County is Florida's most densely populated County. Located along the west coast of Florida on a peninsula separating Tampa Bay from the Gulf of Mexico, in land area, the County is small – only 280 square miles – yet its population of approximately 945,000 permanent residents makes it the fifth most populous County in Florida, and 41st in the nation. The County's small size, coupled with the speed of urban growth over the past 125 years places the County in the position of becoming the first County in the state of Florida – and one of only a few in the nation - to reach "build-out". At the time of this publication, only 6% of the County remains in vacant, developable land.

In response to this anticipated build-out, the County is developing new strategies to accommodate the continued growth in population, and transitioning from a suburban to an urban form and character. A key guiding concept for growth management – "Planning to Stay" - was identified at a Board of County Commissioners Workshop in 1997:

"Pinellas County should be the kind of place where families and businesses will want to stay, and where children will want to remain or return once they become adults. This idea of people and businesses planning to stay in Pinellas County because they desire to live and work nowhere else is foundational to an overall vision for the future of Pinellas County".

A key component of "Planning to Stay" is the County's Recreation, Open Space and Culture System. Studies throughout the United States have consistently shown that businesses and residents place a high value on "quality of life" when choosing a place to live or work, including the quality of the community's parks and preserves, trails, arts and cultural facilities, schools and other elements of "the public realm". As Chris Leinberger states in "The Practice of Sustainable Development":

"Eventually, communities will arrive at the conclusion that investing in education, parks and pedestrian-oriented places is a far better economic development decision than subsidizing sprawl, and the relocation of companies. No one provides subsidies to attract new companies to Seattle, Portland, Austin or the Silicon Valley".

The purpose of this Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan (the Plan) is to develop a long range (15 year) vision for this component of Pinellas County's Public Realm, as well a realistic Funding and Implementation Strategy.



Public Workshop



Public Workshop

The Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan was developed from November 2003 to June 2005, by County Culture, Education and Leisure (CEL), Planning, Environmental Management and Public Works staff; the Pinellas County Arts Council; and the Community Planning firm of Glatting Jackson. The three (3) primary phases of the project included:

- **Phase One** - Visioning Workshop, which established the general direction for the Plan, and helped refine the planning process.
- **Phase Two** - Individual Park Master Plans, which established visions for three (3) of the County's Regional Parks and one (1) Preserve: Lake Seminole Park, Wall Springs Park/McMullen Property, the McKay Creek Greenway, and the Mills Property at Brooker Creek Preserve.
- **Phase Three** - Master Plan, which included a Needs and Priorities Assessment involving workshops, meetings and surveys; the development of twelve (12) "Subsystem Plans" to establish separate visions for the different elements or "layers" of the Plan; and an Implementation Strategy that includes estimated costs and funding sources for proposed improvements and initiatives.

2. Major Initiatives

Consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan Element concept of "Planning to Stay," seven (7) major initiatives emerged from the Plan to make Pinellas County a more livable and sustainable place to live, work and raise a family:

1. Promote a "Planning to Stay" Ethic in Pinellas County

Residents, County staff and elected officials are extremely concerned about the three components of sustainability – economic development, social equity and environmental protection. The County needs to establish a set of indicators or measurable objectives to gauge adherence to the quality of life and livability principles adopted in the "Planning to Stay" Element of the Comprehensive Plan. As stated by Timothy Beatley in *The Ecology of Place*,

"Creating sustainable communities is not simply a matter of avoiding a few wetlands, or saving a few acres of open space, or putting in place a few non-point best management practices. Rather, it is a matter of considering ecological limits and environmental impacts at every aspect of community design, from the energy efficiency of buildings to the regional transportation system to how the industrial and commerce sectors go about business."

Sustainability principles, practices and indicators need to be brought to the forefront of policy debate and decision-making in Pinellas County, so that every policy, decision, action and project leads to a more sustainable community.



Aerial view of Pinellas County

2. Strengthen Connections to the Water

Pinellas County residents are surrounded by water, including the Gulf of Mexico, Tampa Bay, Boca Ciega Bay, inland lakes and streams; “the water” is the reason many people come and stay in Pinellas. Residents and visitors flock to the County’s beaches and waterfronts to relax, play, swim, fish, boat, study nature, canoe and kayak. The County needs to continue as the leader in waterfront/resource protection, including the role of facilitator/coordinator with federal, state and municipal agencies. At the same time the County needs to expand recreational access to the water, including new beach accesses, on and off-beach parking, boat ramps, canoe and kayak launches, and peak-season beach shuttles.



Lake Seminole Park

3. Continue the Development of First Class County-wide Systems

The County should continue doing “what it does best” - leading the development of first – class County-wide systems such as preserves, historical and cultural sites, passive regional parks, greenways, blue-ways, trails, beach access, transit and roadways. Design standards and concepts need to be updated, however, to reflect the urbanizing character of the County. County roadways, for example, should be designed – and redesigned – for pedestrian/bicycle safety and comfort with curbs, wide sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees and cross walks. A County-wide way-finding/sign system should be designed and installed to identify the locations of major facilities. And a series of both web-based and printed guides should be developed to promote the County’s systems, to make them more “user-friendly”, and to inform residents and visitors about the specific details of each system and site location.



Pinellas Trail at Wall Springs Park
Photo courtesy of Pinellas County Communications Dept.

4. Provide an “Urban Level” of Active Recreation Facilities for Citizens in Unincorporated Areas

In addition to its role as the leader in County-wide Systems, the County is also responsible for meeting the recreation needs of residents in unincorporated areas. The County currently meets this responsibility through partnerships with municipalities and non-profit organizations, as well as through the establishment of a Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU) which funds approximately \$2,000,000/year in grants to municipalities and reimbursement of non-resident fees to unincorporated County residents. However the County will need to expand its efforts in the coming years in order to keep up with demand, particularly with regard to active recreation facilities such as community centers, community parks, and sports complexes. Initiatives to be considered include the development of two (2) regional sports complexes to serve the entire County; the identification of new sources of funding for operations and maintenance costs; and the dedication of full-time County staff to partner proactively with municipalities, the School Board, and non-profit agencies.



Community Parks can be developed with both active and passive recreation facilities to meet community needs.

5. Increase Protection for Regional Parks and Preserves

A common theme throughout the planning process was the need for increased protection for the County's incredible system of Preserves and passive Regional Parks. As the County urbanizes; as vacant land becomes scarce; and as the demand for active recreation facilities increases, the Preserves and Regional Parks are coming under increasing pressure for recreational development. The County needs to resist this pressure in order to protect these priceless resources for future generations, and find other ways to meet residents' active recreation needs. Resource protection tools that need to be developed for each Preserve and Regional Park include a Suitability Assessment Model to define compatible uses and limits of development; pro-active Management Plans for each site to guide their development and management; and management zones around each site to minimize negative off-site influences, encourage best management practices (BMPs) and promote community involvement.



Wall Springs Park

Pinellas County received the 2005 County Leadership in Conservation Award from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the National Association of Counties.

6. *Inject Life, Color and Energy into the Regional Parks and Preserves*

The County's Regional Parks System includes some of the finest examples of classic, traditional passive parks anywhere in the Southeastern United States. The parks are known and treasured for their solitude; sweeping views of grass, trees and water; timeless design; and impeccable maintenance. However many of the parks have become "one-dimensional" over time, offering limited activities and/or areas of interest to hold visitors' attention. Without compromising the parks' integrity, the County could do more to energize the parks, and build a broader base of support for their continued protection and maintenance. Several simple additions could inject more life and color into the parks as well as the County's natural preserves, including outdoor classrooms and pavilions; environmental/historical/cultural exhibits and kiosks; intimate cafes and patios; canoe and kayak launches and rentals; public art and sculpture; and regularly scheduled local festivals, concerts and special events.



Regional Parks become a convenient venue for small group gatherings, family get-togethers, and community events.

The County's Regional Parks System includes some of the finest examples of classic, traditional passive parks anywhere in the Southeastern United States. However the Parks could be energized with activities such as kayak festivals, as shown at right.



7. Develop the Arts, Heritage and Cultural Resources

Another common theme heard during the planning process, which is directly related to the concept of sustainability, is the need to raise County-wide awareness and support for the existing Pinellas County system of non-profit arts, culture and historical preservation facilities and programs. In a recent survey conducted by Leisure Vision for the Pinellas County Arts Council, 97% of County residents either strongly agree or agree with the statement that “arts, cultural and heritage programs improve the quality of life in Pinellas County”. Yet the County’s financial support for these programs has not kept pace with costs, and additional funding is needed for operations, expansion, programming and marketing. In addition to raising the general level of support, other high priority initiatives include the development of a County-wide Historic Preservation Plan, and the publication of a coordinated, inter-agency Pinellas County Arts and Culture Guide and Program Calendar.



Heritage Village



Florida Botanical Gardens

3. Visioning Workshop

The first phase of the Recreation Open Space and Culture System Master Plan involved visiting and analyzing the existing Recreation, Open Space and Culture System, and then brainstorming with County staff to develop a preliminary vision for the future System.

Pinellas County has an amazing system of passive Regional Parks, Preserves, Trails and cultural facilities. The Regional Parks System, for example, is comprised of classic traditional, passive parks - primarily comprised of trees, lawns, water, natural areas and small park buildings - which offer residents an escape into a bygone era, far away from the surrounding noise, pavement and congestion. The Parks and Preserves are well-maintained, and much care has been taken to preserve their natural character. The County has steadfastly protected these sites from over use and over-development, and they represent an asset that residents will cherish for generations to come.



Visioning Workshop with County staff

The Visioning Workshop was instrumental in identifying issues facing the County's existing Recreation, Open Space and Culture System, as well as establishing a common nomenclature for elements within the System. The chart on the facing page shows the Proposed Nomenclature/System elements identified in the workshop.

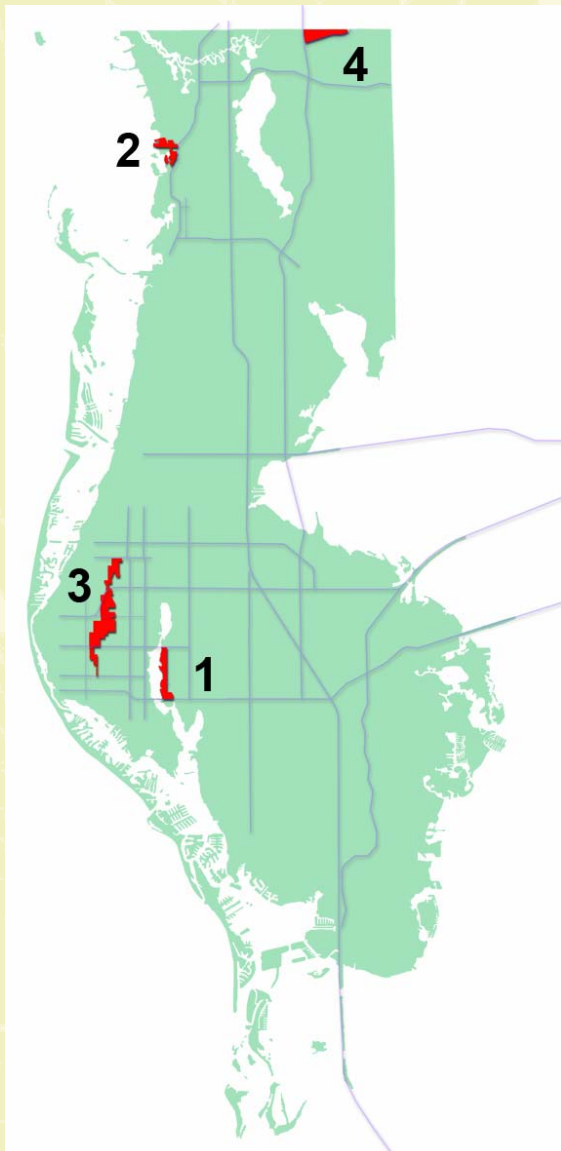
Proposed Nomenclature/ System Elements

<i>Park Type</i>	<i>Typical Size</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>% Open Space</i>	<i>Typical Facilities</i>
Neighborhood Parks	2-5 ac	½ m	90%	Playground, Restrooms, Picnic Shelter, Basketball, Open Play Area, Limited Parking
Community Parks	10-50 ac	5 m	40-50%	Dog Park, Playground, Meeting Rooms, Recreation Programs, Ballfields, Courts, Community Center, Pool, Skate Park, Large Shelters
Regional Passive Parks	100+ac	5-20 m	70-80%	Camping, Boat ramp, Conservation
Beach Access	Varies	County-wide	5%	Showers, Restrooms, Cabanas, Parking
Specific Use Facility	Varies	County-wide	5%	Cultural, Extreme Sports, Equestrian, Equestrian Centers, BMX Sites
Preserve	Varies	Varies	99%	Limited Parking, Ecological Management, Education, Water Access, Hiking, Fishing, Primitive Camping, Canoes / Kayaks
Visual/Urban Open Space	Varies	Varies	Varies	Tree-lined Streets, Boulevards, Promenades
Boat Ramps	Varies	County-wide	Varies	Boat Parking, Bait House, Parking, Docks, Restrooms
Sports Complexes	40 ac	NCS/ County-wide/ 20 m	5%	Organized Sports Tournaments, Parking, Concessions, Restrooms
Trails				
Greenways	Varies	1 m	Varies	Connection to All Park Systems, Eco/ Wildlife Corridors, Alternative Transportation
Blueways		20 m		
Cultural and Educational Facilities		County-wide		Museums, Education Centers, Art Parks

4. Individual Park Master Plans

Based on input from residents and the County staff, Glatting Jackson developed conceptual master plans to renew and enhance three (3) of the County's Regional Parks and **one (1) Preserve:**

1. Lake Seminole Park
2. Wall Springs Park/McMullen Property
3. McKay Creek Greenway
4. Mills Property at Brooker Creek Preserve



The master planning process was the same for each site, including:

- Inventory and Analysis Tasks
 - Site Visits
 - Meetings with County Staff
 - Site Base Map Preparation
 - Site Opportunities and Constraints Memoranda
- Schematic Site Planning
 - Preliminary Concept Alternatives
 - Refined Concept Alternatives
- Master Planning/Public Workshop
- Site Development Program/Workshop Summary
- Draft Master Plan
- Pinellas County Staff Review
- Final Master Plan with Summary of Recommendations and Illustrative Sketches

Following is a summary of each master plan.

Lake Seminole Park

The park is a long, thin shaped parcel of land adjacent to Lake Seminole, with one vehicle access point at the southern end of the facility off Park Boulevard. In general, the more active and public uses are located in the southern end of the park, with the northern end almost exclusively devoted to nature paths. The County also owns the land northward to 102nd Avenue, and is currently leasing these parcels for equestrian trails and a Little League baseball facility, but are not considered part of the park. For the purposes of this Master Plan, these areas were studied to determine the best way for the County to utilize their properties.

One of the older parks in the County park system, Lake Seminole offers visitors a variety of recreation experiences including picnicking, playgrounds, nature walks, informal baseball, volleyball and a canoe/kayak launch and motor boat launch to the lake. As a mature facility, Lake Seminole Park has had several additions over the years to satisfy the increasing demand for recreational activities, the result is older portions of the park are somewhat congested, and the juncture between older areas and recent additions, specifically the main park road, are sometimes awkward connections.

The objective of this Master Plan is to increase the utilization of the park by improving access for pedestrians and vehicles, and introducing new activities where appropriate.

The main features of the Master Plan include:

- Reconfigure the road alignment at the south end of the park to provide easier access to the canal and park facilities on the southeastern side of the site. This configuration also results in more space for picnicking and trails around the southernmost pond.
- Add a dog park to the thin parcel of land along the southeastern corner of the park.
- Extend the popular multi-purpose trail that encircles the northern half of the site, around the south half of the park, virtually doubling the length of the existing trails.
- Reconfigure the existing parking and road access to the boat ramps, to improve the circulation and aesthetics of the area.
- Add a Park Concession building near the existing canoe/kayak launch with a terrace and other spaces for picnicking and a setting for events with dramatic western views across the lake.



Lake Seminole Park



Conceptual Master Plan

... a balanced
Countywide System of
resource & activity-
based recreational &
Open Space
Opportunities.

Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan:
Recreation & Open Space Element



scale in feet
0 600 1200

Park road and boat ramp parking area are reconfigured to increase the parking in front of the Park Concession building, and to simplify and improve the appearance of the road network at this intersection.



Park Concession and Boat Launch Area

The Park Concession building is a new facility containing bicycle and canoe rentals, exhibits, and space for other educational and recreation-oriented services for visitors to the park. A concession stand serving light snacks and refreshments is proposed, with an outdoor terrace with seating and tables.



Enhanced Canoe / Kayak Access

The existing Canoe / Kayak launch on Lake Seminole is incorporated into the new Park Concession, and a new launch is proposed on the canal to encourage and accommodate special events in these areas.



scale in feet
0 300 600

NOTES:
Proposed features and modifications to existing park shown with yellow text.
Existing park features are shown with white text.



September 6, 2005



Pinellas County Recreation, Open Space and Culture System
MASTER PLAN

Lake Seminole Park

Wall Springs Park/McMullen Property

Wall Springs Park is an existing facility named for the freshwater spring that occurs in the southern half of the site. The park provides picnicking and walking trails, and is adjacent to the Pinellas Trail which runs along the eastern edge of the park. Currently, the park is undergoing an expansion to provide more picnicking and paved walking trails.



Sunset Pavilion at Wall Springs Park



Wall Springs Park

With the aid of Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant funding, Wall Springs Park is expanded northward more than doubling the size of the facility. This park expansion preserves the sand hill pine, mangrove and wetland habitats, adding accessible conservation land for nature walks. The major features of the Master Plan include:

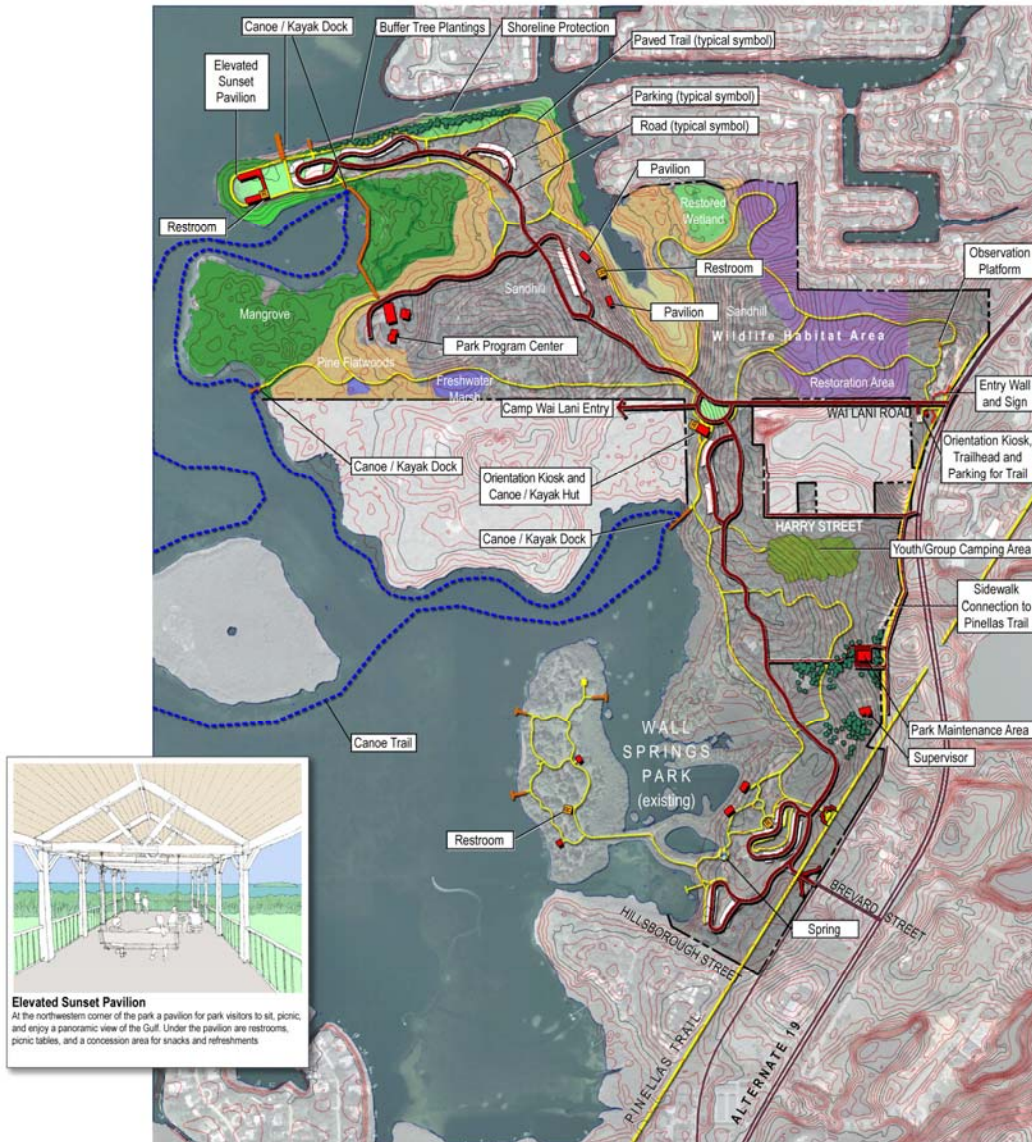
- New park entrance at State Road Alternate 19 and Wai Lani Road and arrival gate to Camp Wai Lani, the existing Girl Scout facility adjacent to the Park.
- A sinuous, narrow road connects the existing Wall Springs Park to the south half with the new facilities to the north. This road alignment follows the route outlined in the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant application, an alignment that minimizes disruption to the existing flora and fauna. An Orientation Kiosk with restrooms and a Canoe/Kayak hut with equipment rentals and basic provisions are added near the entrance to Camp Wai Lani and this new road.
- Two Canoe/Kayak launches are proposed, one in the northern tip of the park, and one in the small inlet on the Gulf side near the middle of the park.
- At the northern-most tip of the park is a "Sunset Pavilion" offering views of the Gulf, and picnicking facilities for families and small groups. This area is part of a canoe/kayak launch facility with a fishing dock, hiking trails and boardwalks making this area a destination for bicyclists, hikers, and picnickers.
- A Youth Camping area is recommended in the middle of the park.
- Park maintenance facilities are relocated from the existing McMullen house compound, closer to the existing Park Supervisor's residence, near Alt 19. The McMullen compound will be adapted to accommodate park programs.



Conceptual Master Plan

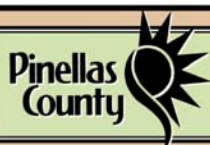
... a balanced
countywide system of
resource & activity-
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open space
opportunities.

Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan
Recreation & Open Space Element



September 6, 2005

scale in feet
0 240 480



Recreation, Open Space and Culture System
MASTER PLAN

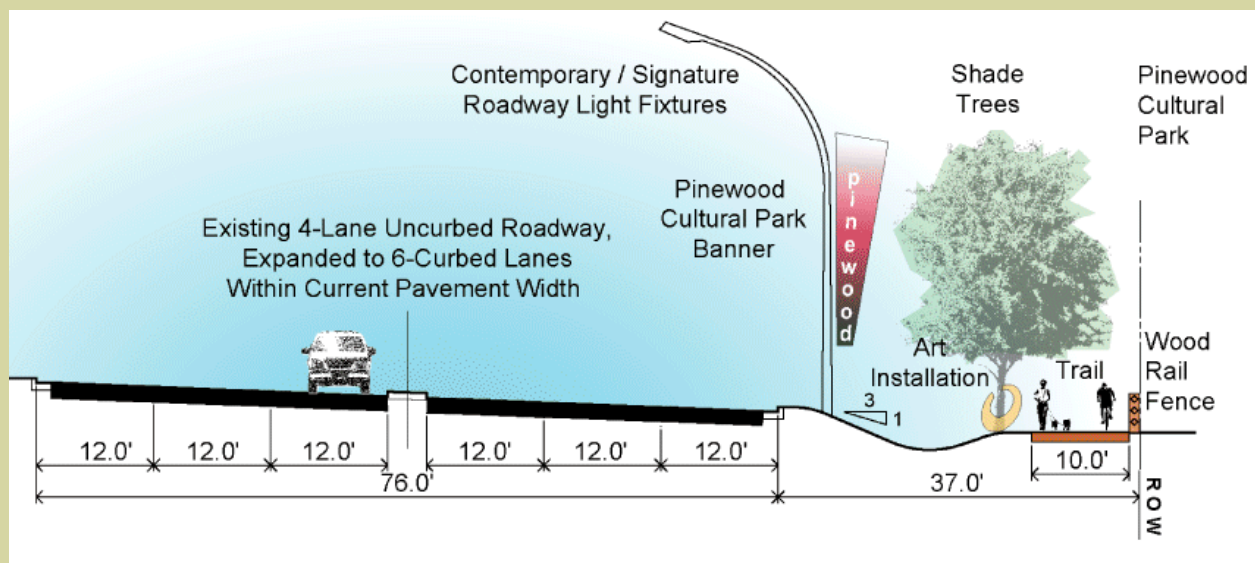
Wall Springs Park

McKay Creek Greenway

This is a new facility for uniting several existing parks, and generally follows the course of McKay Creek as it flows northward to Taylor Lake. The proposed greenway route courses over four miles along new and existing trails off of existing streets, stream or canal rights-of-way, and County land from 85th Avenue to the south, through Walsingham Park, Pinewood Cultural Park, Ridgecrest Park and Taylor Park. By providing a clearly defined walking and bicycle route, and enhancing key intersections to accommodate pedestrian crossings, the new greenway will make it easier and safer for visitors to travel between these facilities and the Pinellas Trail.

The objective of the proposed trail route is to provide a unifying image for the individual facilities that the greenway connects to, and to identify the strategic locations for connecting existing facilities with this new pedestrian network.

The proposed McKay Creek Greenway will provide visitors with a safe and convenient connection to four parks and the Pinellas Trail. Shown below are recommendations for Ulmerton Road adjacent to Pinewood Cultural Park.



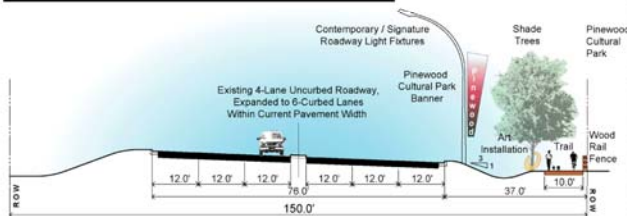


Greenway Master Plan

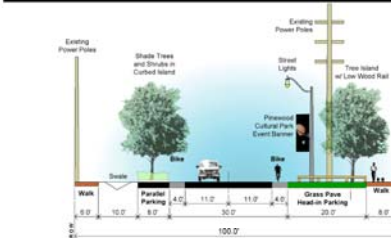
A Trail Plan for Enhancing the Recreational Trail Linkages between Taylor Park, Ridgecrest Park, Pinewood Cultural Park, Walsingham Park and the Seminole Vocational Education Center, and to Enhance Access from these Facilities to the Pinellas Trail.
In the Process of Connecting to these Trails, Parking and Facility Identity Enhancements are Recommended for Pinewood Cultural Park.

... a balanced Countywide System of resource & activity-based recreational & open space Opportunities.
Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan: Recreation & Open Space Element

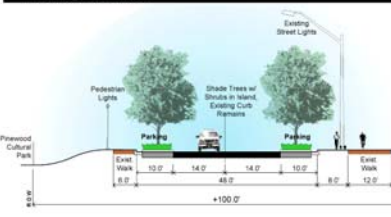
Ulmerton Road



125th Street



Walsingham Road



Walsingham Road / 125th Street Intersection



New Multi-Purpose Trail (typical)

Street Trees, Multi-purpose Trail, and Art Installations Along Ulmerton Road

New On-site Parking
Extend Frontage Road
Bicycle Racks at Edge of Pedestrian-Only Trails (typical)

New Parking and Main Entrance
Landscape for Pinewood Cultural Park

Walsingham Road and 125th Street Enhancements:
Parking, Plantings, Banners
Observation Platform

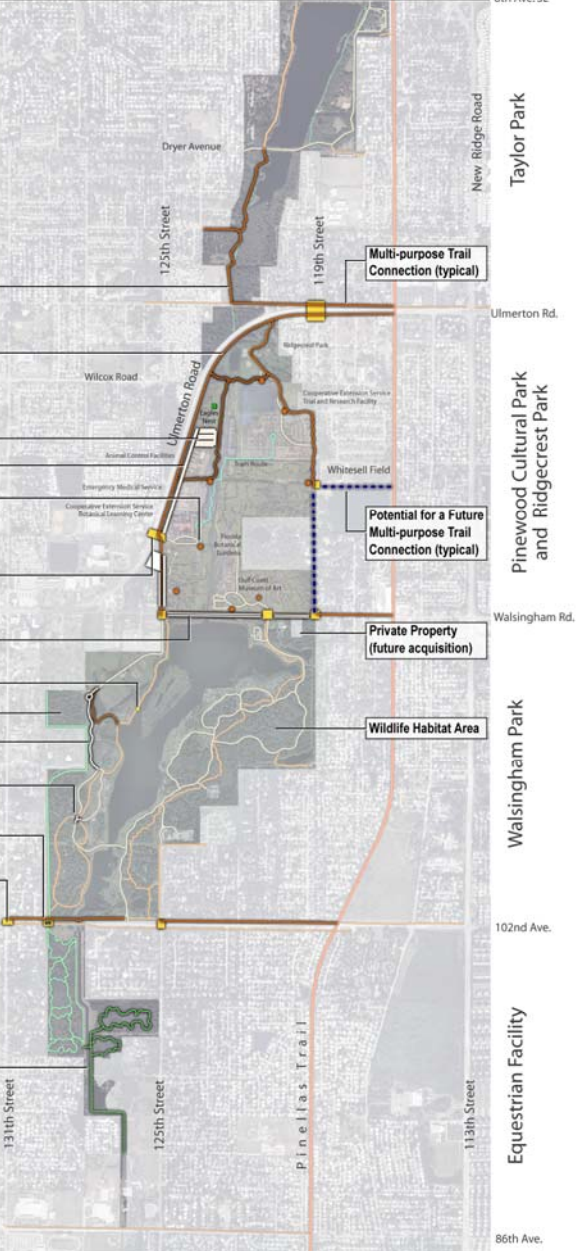
Youth Group Camping Area
Connect Existing Roads

Modify Park Road
Intersection Alignment

Equestrian Trail Crossing

Enhancements for Pedestrians at Intersections, including Crosswalks, Facility Directory or Identification Signage, Fixtures and Plantings, and Flashing Crossing Signal or Full Signal (typical)

Master Plan



Pinellas County



Recreation, Open Space and Culture System
MASTER PLAN

McKay Creek Greenway

September 13, 2005

Master Plan
scale in feet
0 700 1400



Four Lakes Hammock at Brooker Creek Preserve

Four Lakes Hammock at Brooker Creek Preserve is approximately 270 acres of cypress swamp and oak hammock. An existing path bisects the land from east to west offering varied and attractive views of the different habitats, and provides a convenient hiking linkage between the larger portion of Brooker Creek Preserve to the southeast, and the Brooker-Anclote Trail to the west. Minimal improvements are proposed along the path for the purpose of providing visitor access to the Preserve.

This Preserve serves as a hiking, canoeing/kayaking, and freshwater fishing area easily accessible to residents. A portion of the Oak Hammock is reserved for a primitive family/group camping site, restricted to small organized groups, available by reservation only.



Four Lakes Hammock at Brooker Creek Preserve





Facility Master Plan

A New Facility to Expand and Enhance the Recreational Opportunities at the Brooker Creek Preserve, Offering Hiking, Fishing, Canoeing, and a Limited Access Primitive Camping Site

... a balanced
countywide system of
resource & activity-
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open space
opportunities.

Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan:
Recreation & Open Space Element

Master Plan



scale in feet
0 300 600

Symbol Legend

Features Included in Each Area

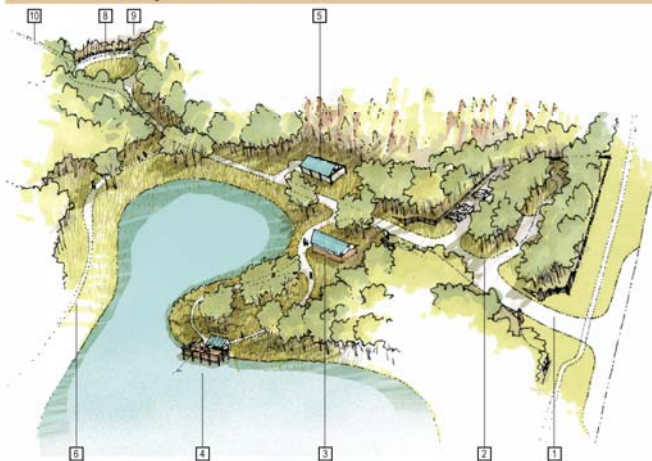
1 Entrance	Turn Lanes on East Lake Road, Masonry Entry Posts with Gates, Wood Fence with Raised Letter Facility Name Sign, Split Rail Fence in Front of Parking Area
2 Arrival / Parking Area	Sign / Rules Board and Gate for Pedestrians and Vehicles, Wood Perimeter Fence, Paved Parking Aisle and Accessible Parking Space, Reinforced Turf Parking Spaces between Preserved Existing Trees
3 Restrooms	M&F Restrooms and Outdoor Shower Area, Outdoor Sinks and Clean-up Area, Drinking Fountain
4 Fishing Dock	Dock with Angled Arm Support Top Rail, Bench and Shade Structure
5 Covered Pavilion	Picnic Tables, Wash up Area
6 Fitness Trail	Accessible Cleared Path with Walking Distance Markers / Signage
7 Vehicular Drive	Asphalt Paved Drive
8 Drop-off	Water Spigot, Backless Benches in Waiting Area at Trail entrances, Signage for Camping, Fishing and Trail, Informational Signage Regarding Environment or Site / Regional History
9 Primitive Camp Site	Fire Pit, Water Spigot, Cleared Trail
10 Hiking Trail	Cleared Path Following Existing Trail with Low Areas Filled as Needed for Soil Stability
11 Canoe / Kayak Launch	Grass Paved Ramp into Lake
12 Buffer Planting	Native Plantings
13 Boardwalk	At-Grade and Elevated Wood Boardwalks Depending on Water Level
14 Trail Connection	Pavement, Signage Crosswalk and Pedestrian Operated Signal

Facility Overview

Four Lakes Hammock at Brooker Creek Preserve is approximately 270 acres of cypress swamp and oak hammock. An existing path bisects the land from east to west offering varied and attractive views of the different habitats, and provides a convenient hiking linkage between the larger portion of Brooker Creek Preserve to the southeast, and the Brooker-Ancote Trail to the west. Minimal improvements are proposed along the path for the purpose of providing visitor access to the Preserve.

This Preserve serves as a hiking, canoeing/kayaking, and freshwater fishing area easily accessible to residents. A portion of the Oak Hammock is reserved for a primitive family/group camping site, restricted to small organized groups, available by reservation only.

Overall View of Major Features

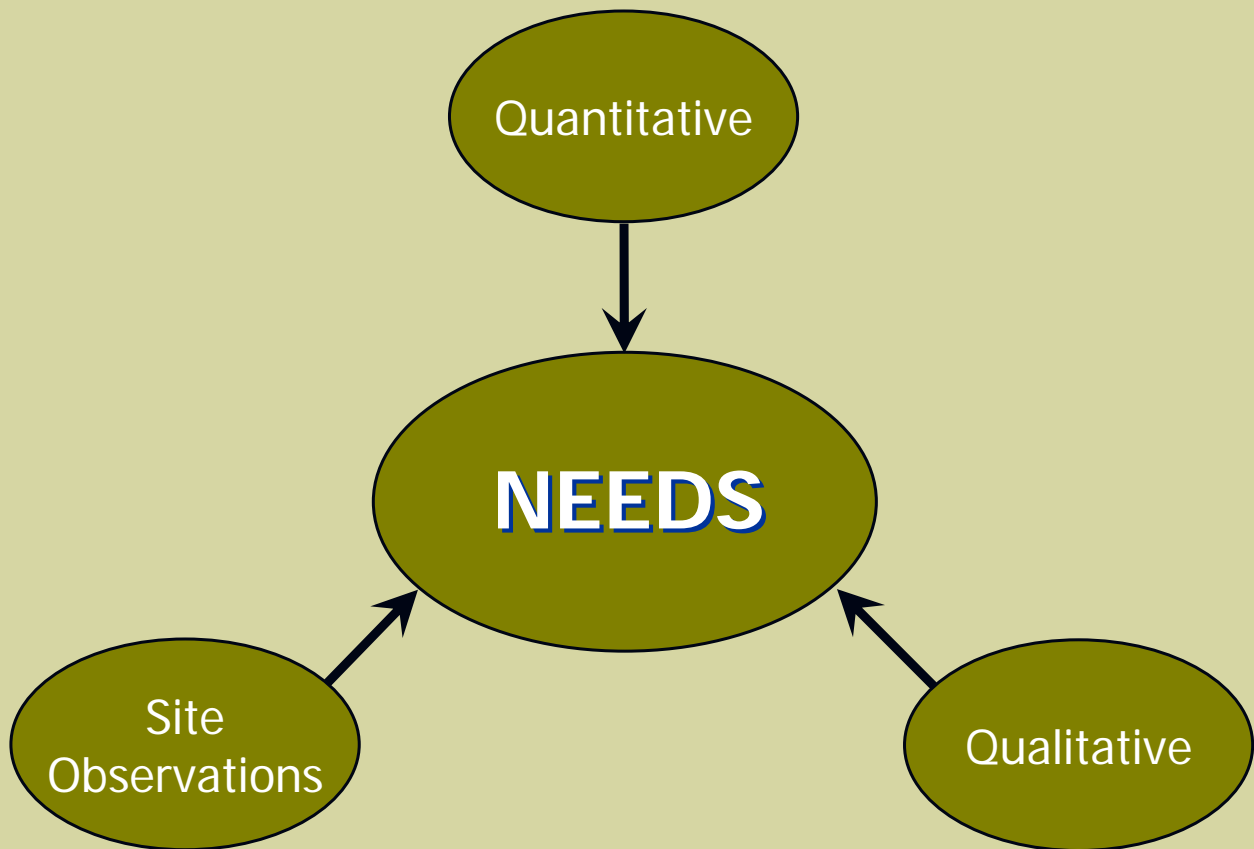


View of Fishing Dock from Trail



September 5, 2005

Needs and Priorities Assessment Techniques



The practice of triangulation helps insure a more accurate assessment of community needs.

5. Needs and Priorities Assessment

General Overview

Needs Assessments are used to determine community needs or “gaps” between existing and ideal conditions, including parks, cultural and/or recreation facilities, programs, operations and maintenance. There is no standard methodology or single, authoritative source regarding how to properly conduct a Parks, Recreation, Cultural and Open Space Needs Assessment, and most of the related research has been in the fields of Social Science and Organizational Management. In “Needs Assessment, A Creative and Practical Guide for Social Scientists,” for example, the authors define a Needs Assessment as “a systematic and on-going process of providing useable and useful information about the needs of the target population – to those who can and will use it to make judgments about policies and programs.”

Inherent in this definition is the importance of using the results of the Needs Assessment to implement some type of change. Needs Assessments are not ends unto themselves, but are conducted to form the basis for decisions regarding the location and size of needed parks and open spaces; the types of recreation and cultural facilities and programs that should be provided; phasing priorities; and funding/implementation strategies.

Types of Techniques

A variety of techniques are commonly used in Parks, Recreation, Cultural and Open Space Needs Assessments. When selecting the technique(s) that are most appropriate for a given situation, one concept that’s particularly useful is the idea of “Triangulation”, or approaching needs from at least three different vantage points. An assessment conducted solely from the vantage point of organized sports leagues, for example, may indicate that additional sports fields are the highest priority in a community. Yet the reality may be (and often is) that safe bikeways and quiet sitting areas are more important than sports fields to most residents.

The three (3) most common types of assessment techniques are anecdotal, qualitative and quantitative techniques. Anecdotal techniques are sometimes the most valid assessment tools, but probably the least scientific. Site visits and photographs, phone calls and/or conversations with facility and/or program participants, personal observations, discussions with parks and recreation staff and other types of similar discussions and observations can form the “first tier” of a needs assessment if properly recorded and documented.

Qualitative techniques involve talking with a wide cross section of community residents and stakeholders in order to identify common themes, needs and interests. While not as scientific and objective as quantitative techniques, qualitative techniques can provide some real insights into community issues, “hidden agendas” and emotions.

Quantitative techniques often have the greatest credibility, because most people have faith in numbers and formulas. However numbers can be manipulated to support various positions, so quantitative techniques should never be used alone to determine community needs and priorities. Most quantitative techniques are comparison exercises, designed to reveal any gaps between existing and ideal circumstances. Of all of the quantitative techniques, the telephone survey is the most accurate and reliable.

Another common quantitative technique is the use of standards. However, while it is sometimes tempting to rely on state or federal standards or guidelines to determine community needs in order to save both time and money, it is unrealistic to expect standards to apply equally to all communities. Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), for example, contains population guidelines for various types of active and passive recreation facilities, but states that these guidelines "are intended for broad, statewide application, and make no allowances for localized differences in communities or in specific outdoor recreation environments. Local jurisdictions particularly are encouraged to develop their own guidelines to more adequately reflect local conditions in determining recreation needs".

Similarly, the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines provides a framework for park system planning, and an approach to developing a Level of Service (LOS) Standard for local communities, but advises that "no single type of resource and facility guideline can adequately meet all outdoor recreation planning needs simultaneously. Each outdoor recreation provider should, therefore, select the guidelines that best serve its specific planning needs".

Specific Pinellas County Techniques

The specific techniques used to determine Recreation, Open Space and Culture Needs in Pinellas County included:

Qualitative Techniques

1. Site Visits/Existing Conditions Analysis
2. County Staff Visioning Workshop
3. Interviews with County Commissioners and the County Administrator
4. Recreation Providers' Workshops
5. Neighborhood/Community Workshops, including Evaluation and Appraisal Workshops
6. Focus Group Workshops
7. Cultural Master Plan
8. Subsystem Workshops

Quantitative Techniques

9. Acreage Level of Service
10. Facilities Level of Service
11. Access Level of Service
12. Mail/Telephone Survey

Following is a summary of our findings:

Qualitative Techniques:

1. Site Visits and Existing Conditions Analysis

Glatting Jackson visited the County's existing parks with the Culture, Education and Leisure (CEL) Department staff, and recorded the following observations:

Pros:

- Incredible system of classic, passive parks.
- The Preserves maintain community natural resources.
- Very well maintained; use of quality, low maintenance, materials such as stone, concrete and aggregates.
- Sense of pride evident throughout.
- Organizational culture that "design matters"; no visual pollution.
- Classic design of park details creates continuity and a sense of place, identity.
- Parks serve as neighborhood parks to local communities.
- Parks are well distributed throughout the County.

Cons:

- Need to consider a wider variety of programs, activities and amenities to reflect current interests and lifestyles.
- Poor access from adjacent neighborhoods.
- Need more civic gathering spaces, transitional uses.
- Poor connectivity between parks; unattractive roads.
- Need better way-finding signs/graphics, both inside and outside of parks.
- Need to "brand" and market Pinellas County Parks "story", build widespread community recognition and support for highly valuable passive parks and preserves system.

Findings: The County has an incredible system of classic, passive parks and preserves, which need to be protected from over-development. At the same time, there appears to be a real shortage of active recreational facilities such athletic fields, especially in the unincorporated areas.

2. County Staff Visioning Workshop

Glatting Jackson facilitated workshops with County staff on January 7th and 8th 2004. One exercise used at both workshops asked participants to review a list of parks and recreation facilities, and indicate whether there was an "Extreme Need" or a "Moderate Need" for each facility type. Top priorities listed by the group at the workshop included (parentheses indicate the percentage of participants who felt the facility was a top priority):

- Boat Ramps (77%)
- Beach Access (68%)
- Canoe/Kayak Launches/Trails (68%)
- Hiking Trails (68%)
- Skateboard Parks (68%)
- Paved Bicycle Paths (63%)
- Unpaved Bicycle paths (63%)
- Camp Sites (63%)
- Soccer Fields (63%)
- Therapeutic Recreational Facilities (63%)

Findings: County staff believes that there is great need for connections and access to the water; continued expansion of the County's trails system; camping; active recreation facilities; and therapeutic recreation facilities.

3. Interviews with County Commissioners and County Administrator

Interviews were conducted with each of the County Commissioners and the County Administrator on June 28th and 29th, 2004 to discuss the Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan, and to ask about priority needs. Priority needs identified by Commissioners include (parentheses indicate the number of times the need was mentioned):

- Active Recreation/Sports/Lacrosse/Multi-purpose Fields (5)
- Protect Natural Resources, Preserves, Regional Parks (4)
- Bicycle Paths/Trails (2)
- Public Transportation, Transportation (2)
- Eco Tours (2)
- Equestrian Facilities (2)
- Canoe/Kayak Rentals (2)
- Programs, e.g. Adult Leagues, Interpretative, Youth, Festivals (2)
- Therapeutic Recreation (2)
- Summer Camps (2)

Findings: Commissioners' top priorities include the development of active recreation facilities and the protection of existing parks and preserves.



Needs Assessment Workshop with recreation and culture system program providers.

4. Recreation Providers Workshop

Glatting Jackson facilitated a workshop with municipal, private/non-profit and County recreation providers on July 21st, 2004. Top priorities listed by the group at the workshop included (parentheses indicate the percentage of participants who felt the facility was a top priority):

- Soccer Fields (47%)
- Boat Ramps (35%)
- Bicycle Trails (23%)
- Skateboard Parks (23%)
- Therapeutic Recreational Facilities (23%)
- Recreation/Community Centers (18%)
- Water Access/Interactive Water Play (18%)
- Beach Access (12%)
- Boat Docks (12%)
- Canoe/Kayak Trails (12%)

Findings: The recreation providers' priorities were consistent with those of County staff, although less than 50% of the group felt that any single facility type was a top priority.

5. Neighborhood/ Community Workshops

In May and June of 2004, Glatting Jackson conducted four neighborhood/community workshops for the Lake Seminole, McKay Creek, Mills Property/ Four Lakes Hammock at Brooker Creek Preserve, and Wall Springs/ McMullen Property Park Master Plans. Additionally, public workshops were conducted at the Eagle Lake Park area and as a part of the County's Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal (EAR) process. During these workshops, participants were asked to fill out a written survey regarding their highest priority recreation and cultural needs in the County.

A total of four hundred and nine (409) people participated in these workshops. Top priorities included (parentheses indicate the percentage of participants who felt the facility was a top priority):

- Nature Trails (31%)
- Walking Trails (30%)
- Beach Access (29%)
- Hiking Trails (29%)
- Nature Centers (26%)
- Bicycle Paths/Trails (24%)
- Canoe/Kayak Launches/Trails (22%)
- Environmental Education Centers (22%)
- Picnic Areas (19%)

Findings: The preponderance of residents who attended these workshops were interested in the protection of natural resources, and the development of passive recreation facilities such as trails and water access. With the exception of the active recreation facilities, this is consistent with the findings from the other needs assessment techniques.



Public Workshop court reporter documents citizen comments



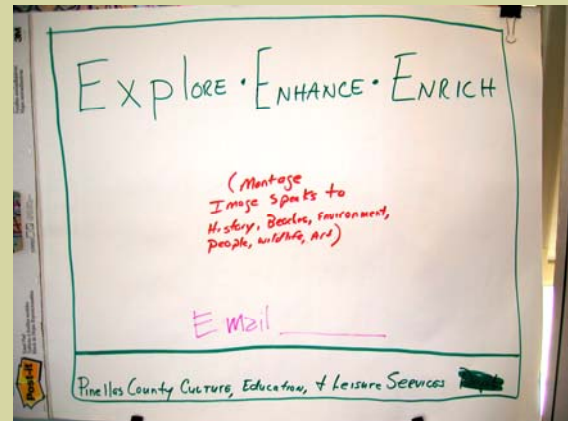
Public Workshop Question and Answer session

6. Focus Group Workshops

Glattig Jackson facilitated four (4) workshops with stakeholder groups on October 7th and 8th, 2004, including:

- Cultural, Educational and Public Art
- Passive Parks, Preserves and Conservation Lands
- Sports and Recreation
- Greenways, Bikeways and Trails

Following is a summary of top needs and priorities identified from each workshop:



"Brainstorming" session from focus group workshop

Cultural, Educational and Public Art

- Coordination, collaboration of art, environmental education programs
- Expansion of programs, including experiential education
- More paid staff
- Assistance with maintenance of facilities, planning for public events
- Interpretive signs and exhibits in parks
- Archeological surveys for public lands
- Protection and stabilization of archeological sites
- Promotion of art museum, better transportation

Passive Parks, Preserves, and Conservation Lands

- Exotic plant removal; restoration of native plants
- Better access & programs for disadvantaged youth groups
- Acquisition of remaining preserve lands
- Better resource management of existing lands (14,000 ac), including additional staff & enforcement
- Political support for resource management
- Coordination of environmental education/outreach programs between agencies
- Coordination with the municipalities
- More freshwater fishing programs
- Wildlife viewing areas at beach parks
- Better utilization of existing environmental education centers to maximize available space
- Management plans for all Preserves
- Canoe and kayak trails
- Better marketing of existing parks
- Protection of Preserves from active recreation
- Coordination/assistance with marketing, promotion and insurance for special events
- More boat ramps in North County
- More canoe/kayak launches
- Increased fees for parks, boat ramps to generate more income/concession fees
- Connect ecological corridor from Brooker Creek to Starkey site
- "Adopt a Preserve" program
- Volunteer coordinators for preserves.

Recreation and Sports

- Site with covered rink for "Horses for Handicapped" Program (e.g. Hillsborough County, approx. 4-5 acres)
- Covered BMX facility (e.g. Dalton, Albuquerque) at existing facility (200'x300')
- Expansion of East Lake Youth Sports Complex
- Recreational Sailing Facilities in North, Central, and South locations
- Indoor-family recreation spaces
- After-school recreation programs throughout the County
- Overnight camp sites
- Track & field facilities
- Better coordination of swimming pool use to maximize the use of available facilities
- Additional multipurpose football/soccer fields with track
- Better coordination of school sports fields
- Additional youth baseball, adult baseball fields including facilities for disabled
- Upgrade existing facilities; parking, aquatics, sports fields, etc.
- Handicapped accessibility for boating throughout County
- Transportation to/from water
- Facilities for non-traditional sports, e.g. skate parks, etc.
- Neighborhood Parks

Greenways, Trails and Bikeways

- Urban walking trails
- Scenic walking trail
- Bike lanes, sidewalks and amenities
- Parking and trailheads
- Park benches and water fountains along trails
- Connected open space in every block
- Identification and trail markings
- Interconnectivity
- Coordinated signage
- Common logos
- Safety education and promotion of system
- Solutions for restricted R.O.W.s, sidewalks
- Multi-modal recreation "hubs" for bicycling, walking, kayaking.
- Canoe/kayak launches for public access
- Mapping of bikeways, trails
- Access to preserves (Greenways)
- Water taxis
- Corridor standards throughout the County
- Funding for ongoing maintenance
- Internet linkage to community web site for municipalities and County

Findings: The stakeholders identified a wide variety of recreational and cultural needs, most of which were consistent with the other needs assessment techniques. Common themes were the need for upgraded/expanded facilities with better amenities; coordination of scheduling, marketing and promotion; and the need for funding for operations and maintenance.

7. Cultural Master Plan

The Pinellas County Arts Council was in the process of developing a Cultural Master Plan for the County during the Needs Assessment process. Their interim findings regarding cultural and education needs included:

- Increased funding for existing cultural institutions
- Collaborative marketing of cultural organizations
- Coordinate cultural calendars
- Creative solutions for artists live/work spaces and affordable housing
- Increased arts and cultural education facility opportunities
- Better public transportation to provide access to cultural events

Findings: The cultural community's greatest needs are for better coordination and collaboration, additional funding support and better transportation.

8. Subsystem Workshops

In order to develop a long range “vision” for the County’s Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan, Glatting Jackson and the County staff created twelve “Sub-Systems” including:

- Public Transportation and Trails
- Beach Access
- Bikeways and Greenways
- Boat Ramps and Water Access
- Educational Facilities
- Cultural Facilities
- Public Art Sites
- Community Centers
- Neighborhood Parks
- Sports Complexes and Special Use Facilities
- Preserves and Conservation Areas
- Regional Passive Parks

Glatting Jackson and the Culture, Education and Leisure (CEL) staff facilitated a workshop for each Sub-System from December 2004 to March 2005 involving approximately 10 – 20 different stakeholders (invited by CEL staff) in each workshop. The typical workshop agenda included a review of background information and issues, including priority needs, the development of planning criteria, and the creation of a long range Sub-System vision.

Findings: Key, common findings from the workshops include:

- *The County and its partners are already doing many of the things necessary (capital improvements, programs, other initiatives) to create a more sustainable and livable community*
- *Many of the greatest needs are for better coordination, collaboration, marketing and promotion*
- *Each Sub-System has some type of planning criteria which forms the basis for a long range vision*
- *The County is transitioning from a suburban to an urban environment, and many of the Sub-System needs relate to the accommodation of an increasing number of residents and visitors in a built-out environment*

Quantitative Techniques:

Currently Pinellas County utilizes Level of Service (LOS) calculations in the Recreation and Open Space Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan to establish minimum acceptable standard only for passive parkland and accessible preserve lands. There is no mandated LOS requirement for active recreation.

In addition to serving as a regulating tool, Level of Service (LOS) can also be helpful in determining community needs. Glatting Jackson used three (3) methods of calculating LOS to estimate parks and/or recreation facility needs:

- Acreage LOS, typically expressed as the number of park acres/1,000 population (e.g. 2 acres/1,000)
- Facilities LOS, typically expressed as the number of people served by one facility (e.g. 1 tennis court/2,000 people)
- Access LOS, also known as "Service Areas", typically expressed as the distance served by a particular type of facility (e.g. a ½ mile service area radius for a Neighborhood Park)

Following is a discussion of each.

9. Acreage Level of Service (LOS)

There is no widely accepted standard for Level of Service (LOS) for acreage; many communities simply divide their current acreage by current population to calculate LOS. Some communities count only "developed" park acreage; some include all open space; and some include schools and lands owned by other local, state and federal agencies. For these reasons, Acreage Level of Service can be an indicator of *possible* needs in a community, but should not be the sole measurement.

The only adopted Level of Service in the Recreation and Open Space Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan is for passive parkland and accessible preserve lands. As described in the Element, "the traditional policy of the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners has been to concentrate on providing regional parks, beach access, boat ramp facilities, and multi-use trails"; active recreation facilities such as athletic fields,

community centers and playgrounds have traditionally been provided by the municipalities.

The adopted Level of Service mandates that the County provide nine (9) acres of passive parkland and accessible open space for every one thousand (1,000) residents. There are presently 12,866 acres of land in this classification and a present population of approximately 944,773 residents. This yields a "13.6 acres per 1,000 population" Level of Service for Pinellas County, well above the mandated amount.

The County has no established Level of Services for active recreation. The Florida Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) suggests four (4) acres of developed neighborhood and community park land per every one thousand (1,000) residents, which equates to approximately 3,745 acres in Pinellas County. Based on a 2004/2005 survey conducted by the Pinellas County Planning Department, there are approximately 4,000 +/- acres of active recreation parks and sites in Pinellas County, including municipal neighborhood parks, community parks, special use facilities, sports complexes and community centers. This equates to approximately 4.2 acres/1,000 residents, slightly above the recommended LOS.

While this total acreage of developed parkland meets the *minimum* suggested Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Level of Service, there is not an equitable distribution of facilities between incorporated and unincorporated areas. While the suggested Level of Service (LOS) would require 1,136 acres of developed parkland in the unincorporated areas (population 284,306), there are currently only approximately 130 acres of active recreation lands in the unincorporated areas, leased and/or maintained by non-profit organizations such as the Cross-Bayou Little League, the YMCA, Palm Harbor Community Service Agency and the Tierra Verde Little League. This yields a LOS of only 0.46 acre/1,000 population, far below the desired 4.0 acres/1,000.

Findings: While the County exceeds its adopted Level of Services (LOS) for passive recreation park lands and preserves, there is a need for additional active recreation parkland, particularly in the unincorporated areas.

10. Facilities Level of Service (LOS)

No national standards exist for Facilities LOS, but the Florida Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) establishes a range of the number of people typically served by each type of facility. These standards were established in 1994, based on typical communities around the state, so are only relevant in terms of comparing the County to other communities. They do not take local preferences or trends into consideration; for example, there are no standards for skateboard parks or dog parks, both of which have gained in popularity in recent years. For these reasons, Facilities LOS can be an indicator of *possible* needs in a community, but should not be the sole measurement.

Figures 1- 3, Level of Service – Facilities, compares State median standards to the County's current inventory of recreation facilities, including both County and municipal facilities. Based on these standards, Pinellas County is currently deficient in the following types of facilities:

- Soccer/Football fields
- Softball fields
- Baseball fields
- Aquatics centers/pools
- Boat Ramps

There is some variation between the “deficiencies” in the incorporated and unincorporated areas, as shown on the following charts. There is a shortage of playgrounds in the unincorporated areas, for example, while the incorporated areas appear to be adequately served. Conversely, there appear to be adequate boat ramps in the unincorporated areas, while the incorporated areas are underserved.

Findings: With the exception of picnic areas, there appears to be a need for almost every type of recreation facility somewhere in Pinellas County.

Existing Level of Service – Total Public Facilities 2004 Countywide Population = 943,640*

	Population Served**	County, Municipal Facilities	Needs**	Surplus/ (Deficiency)
Football/ Soccer fields	6,000	60	157	-97
Softball Fields	5,000	65	188	-123
Baseball	5,000	73	188	-115
Picnic Areas (Shelters)	6,000	322	157	165
Playground / Tot lots	10,000	129	94	35
Aquatic Center /Pool	25,000	21	38	-17
Golf Courses	50,000	21	19	2
Boat Ramps (lanes)	5,000	102	188	-86

* Source: Pinellas County Planning Department

** Source: Level of Service Guidelines - State of Florida Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2000

Figure 1

Existing Level of Service – Unincorporated Public Facilities
2004 Unincorporated Population = 284,306*

	Population Served**	County Facilities	Needs**	Surplus/ (Deficiency)
Football/ Soccer fields	6,000	12	47	-35
Softball Fields	5,000	6	57	-51
Baseball	5,000	0	57	-57
Picnic Areas (Shelters)	6,000	101	47	54
Playground / Tot lots	10,000	12	28	-16
Aquatic Center /Pool	25,000	0	11	-11
Golf Courses	50,000	1	6	-5
Boat Ramps (lanes)	5,000	73	57	16

* Source: Pinellas County Planning Department; unincorporated population only

** Source: Level of Service Guidelines - State of Florida Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2000

Figure 2

Existing Level of Service – Municipal Public Facilities
2004 Incorporated Population = 659,334*

	Population Served**	Municipal Facilities	Needs**	Surplus/ (Deficiency)
Football/ Soccer fields	6,000	48	110	-62
Softball Fields	5,000	59	132	-73
Baseball	5,000	73	132	-59
Picnic Areas (Shelters)	6,000	221	110	111
Playground / Tot lots	10,000	117	66	51
Aquatic Center /Pool	25,000	21	26	-5
Golf Courses	50,000	20	13	7
Boat Ramps (lanes)	5,000	29	132	-103

* Source: Pinellas County Planning Department; incorporated population only

** Source: Level of Service Guidelines - State of Florida Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2000

Figure 3

11. Access Level of Service

Access LOS (also known as a Service Area) is one of the most useful and meaningful methods of calculating Level of Service (LOS). While there is no nationally accepted standard for service areas, County staff has established a desired LOS of a 3 mile radius for Community Centers and Parks, and a County-wide Service Area for Regional Parks.

Map 1 (Community Centers) and Map 2 (Community Parks) show voids in the service areas in the following areas:

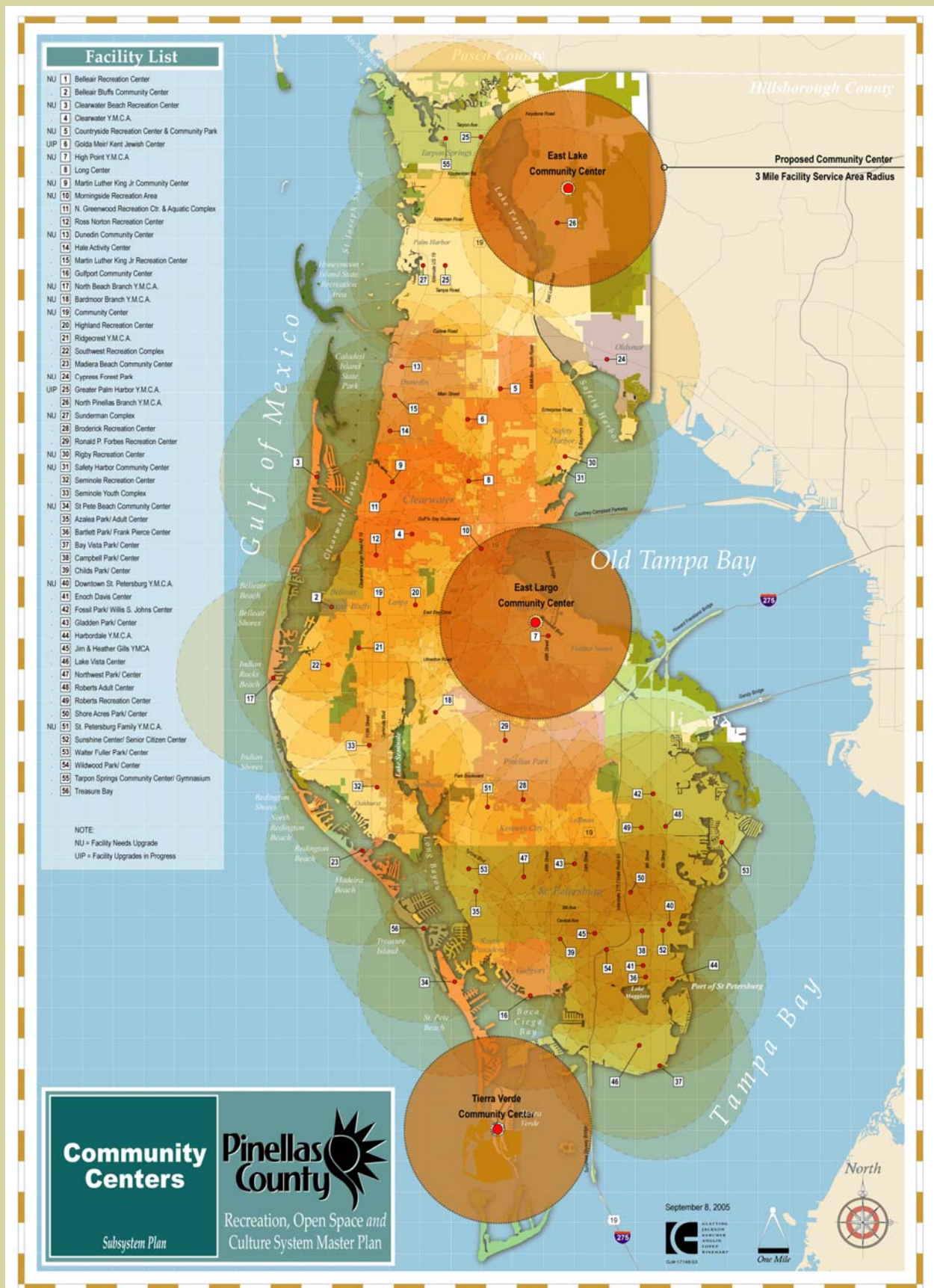
1. Three (3) Community Center Buildings/Complexes:
 - Tierra Verde
 - Highpoint
 - East Lake

Additionally, a Community Center may be needed in the Lealman-Kenneth City area to provide better service to area residents.

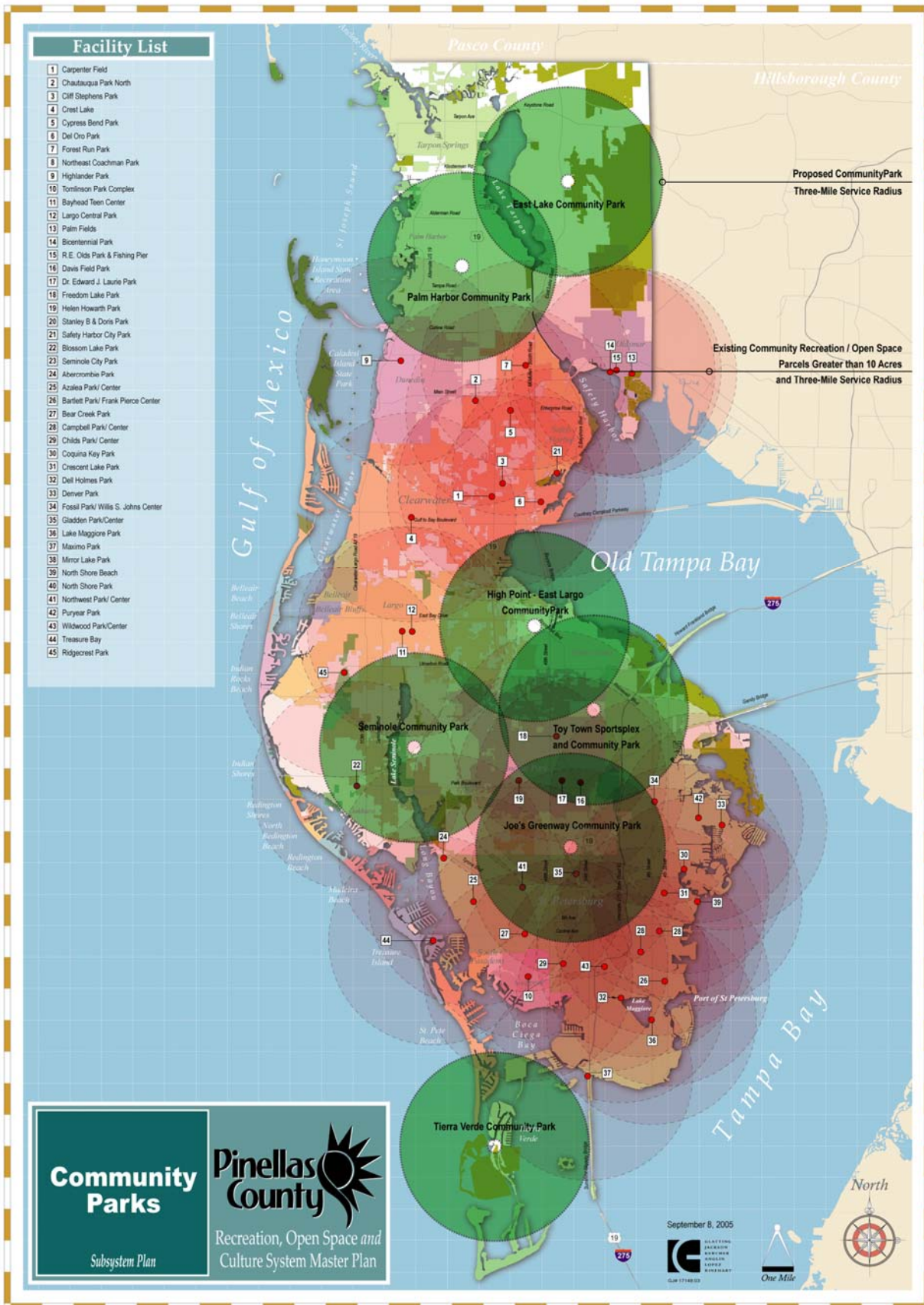
2. Seven (7) Community Parks:
 - Tierra Verde
 - Joe's Creek Greenway
 - Seminole
 - Toy Town
 - High Point/East Largo
 - Palm Harbor
 - East Lake

This is consistent with findings from the Acreage Level of Service analysis outlined previously. While there may be an adequate number of parks available for active recreation throughout the County, they may not be easily accessible to residents in the unincorporated areas.

Findings: There is a need for additional Community Centers and Community Parks, primarily in the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County.



Map 1 – Community Center Service Areas



Map 2 – Community Park Service Areas

12. Mail/Telephone Survey

Telephone and mail surveys are the most scientific method for assessing needs in that they are specifically designed to be statistically valid and strive to eliminate bias. Glatting Jackson contracted with Leisure Vision, Inc to conduct a Community Attitude and Interest Survey from August through October of 2004 to help establish priorities for the future of parks, recreation, and cultural facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Pinellas County. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Pinellas County officials, as well as members of the Glatting Jackson project team in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system. In particular, questions on the survey focused on the ability to answer the following eight (8) strategic issue areas:

- What outdoor and indoor parks, cultural, and recreation facilities are needed in Pinellas County?
- How well do existing outdoor and indoor parks, cultural, and recreation facilities meet the needs of Pinellas County residents and what are the primary barriers to meeting needs?
- Which outdoor and indoor parks, cultural, and recreation facilities would residents use more often if they met their needs?
- What programs and activities do residents of Pinellas County currently participate in and which programs and activities would they participate in more often if more programming was available?
- How much emphasis should be placed on the development of small neighborhood parks as compared to larger community parks throughout Pinellas County?
- What is the level of support for implementing or increasing user fees for recreational and cultural facilities, parks, programs and services that residents use?
- How should \$100 in new revenues be allocated to various parks, recreation, and cultural facilities?
- How much support is there to extend the Penny for Pinellas Sales Tax beyond 2010 to help fund parks, trails, cultural and recreational projects that are most important to Pinellas County residents?

The goal was to obtain at least 1,200 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with 1,227 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 1,227 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 2.8%. A full examination of the numbers and methodologies can be reviewed in the full "Community Attitude and Interest Citizen Survey" document in the Appendices; however, in summary, the surveys identified the following top priority needs:

- Outdoor swimming pools and water parks are the top priority active outdoor recreation need, followed by boat ramps and open play areas
- Beach access parks are the top priority passive recreation need, followed by outdoor amphitheaters, nature trails and historic sites
- Fitness and exercise facilities (e.g. community/recreation centers) are the top priority indoor recreation facility needs, followed by history museums and performing art/theaters and auditoriums
- Proposed allocation of \$100 of revenues for parks, cultural and recreation facilities includes:
 - \$33 - Improvements/maintenance of existing facilities
 - \$16 – Development of new indoor and outdoor cultural facilities
 - \$14 – Development of new indoor and outdoor recreation facilities
 - \$13 – Development of new passive outdoor recreation facilities
 - \$12 – Development of new beach access areas
 - \$8 – Development of boat ramps
 - \$4 - Other

The survey also queried residents regarding preferred funding mechanisms. A large majority of respondents (63% in favor, 14% might be in favor) indicated their support for the extension of the "Penny for Pinellas" Sales Tax beyond the year 2010, while 57% respondents were supportive or very supportive of increased user fees. Only 46% of respondents were supportive or very supportive of charging entrance fees instead of raising taxes.

Findings: It appears that residents' top priorities are to improve and maintain existing parks and facilities, followed by a fairly balanced need for new cultural facilities, recreation facilities, passive recreation facilities and beach access areas.

It is interesting to note two (2) anomalies:

- 1) *Boat ramps are ranked as a fairly high unmet need, yet only received \$8 of the \$100 revenue allocation*
- 2) *Active recreation facilities (sports fields, etc.) are not considered a top priority need by residents, as indicated in many of the other needs assessment techniques. This is a fairly common occurrence in recreation needs assessments, as recreation providers and stakeholders perceive a much higher need for these facilities than does the general public.*

Needs Assessment Summary:

Chart 1 graphically displays the needs identified by the various needs assessment techniques. Consistent with the trends in urbanizing communities, residents appear to have a need for a wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreation and cultural facilities. Top priorities for funding, as indicated by the purple bands in the chart, include (in alphabetical order):

- Active recreation, soccer and multi-purpose fields
- Aquatics centers and water parks
- Arts, cultural facilities and programs
- Beach access
- Bicycle paths and trails
- Boat ramps and docks
- Canoe, kayak launches and rentals
- Nature, hiking, walking, bicycle paths and trails
- Protection of natural and historic resources and preserves

	BCC	Administrator	County Staff	Recreation Providers	Workshop Participants	Cultural Providers	Telephone Surveys	LOS Analysis	Subsystem
Parks, Facilities, & Programs									
Auditorium / Performing Area							●	●	
Active Recreation / Soccer / Multi-Purpose Fields	●	●	●			●	●	●	
Arts / Cultural Education Centers / Facilities / Funding / Promotion		●			●	●		●	
Artist / Financial Support / Affordable Live / Work Spaces					●			●	
Aquatic Center / Water Park			●			●	●	●	
Beach Access		●	●	●		●		●	
Bicycle Paths / Trails	●	●	●	●		●		●	
Boat Ramps / Docks	●	●	●			●		●	
Camp Sites		●							
Canoe / Kayak Launches / Rentals	●	●	●	●				●	
Coordinated Cultural Calendar					●			●	
Community Centers / Community Parks			●				●	●	
Environmental Education Centers / Eco Tours	●			●				●	
Equestrian Facilities	●		●						
Fishing Piers/ Docks						●	●	●	
Fitness Exercise Facilities						●			
Golf Courses						●			
Nature / Walking / Hiking Trails / Multi-Purpose Trails		●	●	●		●	●	●	
Picnic Areas				●					
Public Transportation	●				●			●	
Programs e.g. Adult Leagues, Interpretative, Youth, Festivals	●							●	
Skateboard Parks		●	●						
Summer Camps	●								
Therapeutic Recreational Facilities	●	●	●						
Protect Natural Resources / Preserves	●	●	●	●				●	

Chart 1 – Needs Assessment Summary

6. Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Vision

Glatting Jackson, County staff and the Arts Council facilitated workshops with key stakeholders for twelve (12) "subsystems" of the Plan, including:

Sites and Facilities:

1. Neighborhood and Community Parks
2. Community Centers
3. Regional Parks
4. Preserves
5. Sports Complexes/Special Use Facilities
6. Boat Ramps
7. Cultural Facilities
8. Beach Access

Linear Systems:

9. Greenways, Blueways and Trails
10. Streets, Bike Lanes and Transit

Programs:

11. Environmental/Sustainability Education
12. Public Art

Following is a summary of each:



McKenney Neighborhood Park, St. Pete Beach

1. Neighborhood and Community Parks

The Pinellas County "Neighborhood and Community Park Subsystem" strives to provide meaningful green spaces within walking and bicycling distance of all Pinellas County residents, providing opportunities for both passive and active recreation. While the County plays a leadership role in the development and management of regional systems such as trails, preserves, regional parks, boat ramps, and beach access, the County plays a "facilitator" role in the development of local systems such as Neighborhood and Community Parks.

Neighborhood Parks

Every resident within Pinellas County should have access to a Neighborhood Park, green space or playground within ½ mile of their home. The purpose of Neighborhood Parks and Playgrounds is to provide close-to-home social and recreational opportunities within walking or bicycling distance of residents' homes. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) refers to the Neighborhood Park as "the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood", with the optimal size being between 5 – 10 acres, and the "focus on informal active and passive recreation".

Neighborhood Parks in Pinellas County are typically provided by municipalities, but private recreation facilities in planned communities often function as neighborhood parks for surrounding residents as well. These are usually comprised of a swimming pool, one or two tennis courts, a playground, a basketball court and some open grass areas. Often they also include a clubhouse or recreation room for indoor programs, activities, games and receptions. A large percentage of suburban residents receive their primary recreation services through such facilities, and they must be considered as important elements of the Neighborhood Parks System.

Community Parks

Community Parks are where Pinellas County residents go to socialize and recreate with the larger community, whether it's to play ball, have a picnic, take a class, swim in the pool or enjoy a concert or art show. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) states that a community park serves a "broader purpose" than a neighborhood park, and its "focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces". A Community Park can serve several neighborhoods, and should be located on a collector road in between neighborhoods to maximize access and to minimize disruption from lights, noise and traffic. Ideally every resident in Pinellas County will have access to a 10+ acre (ideally 20+) Community Park within 3 miles of their home, with facilities such as ball fields.

Traditionally Community Parks have been provided by municipalities, while the unincorporated areas relied on the County's passive Regional Parks for recreation. As Pinellas County has urbanized, however, many municipal Community Parks are reaching capacity (from use by both city and County residents), and the residents of unincorporated areas are requesting the same Levels of Service as the incorporated areas.

Seven (7) new Community Parks are envisioned in the unincorporated areas to meet this growing need, including:

- Tierra Verde Community Park
- Joe's Creek Greenway Community Park
- Seminole Community Park
- Toy Town Sportsplex and Community Park
- High Point/East Largo Community Park
- Palm Harbor Community Park
- East Lake Community Park

To ensure that the parks are not over-developed, at least 50% of each Community Park's area should be maintained as passive, multi-purpose open space comprised of the basic elements of trees, grass and water.

The County will use a variety of techniques to assist in the development of these new Community Parks, including:

- County Capital Improvements Program (CIP)
- Matching grants for municipalities and non-profit organizations
- Creation of new Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU) in unincorporated areas
- Partnerships and inter-local/interagency agreement opportunities

The County will also develop agreements with municipalities, schools, YMCAs and other agencies to operate, manage, maintain and program the new facilities.



Bicentennial Community Park, Oldsmar

Neighborhood and Community Park Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

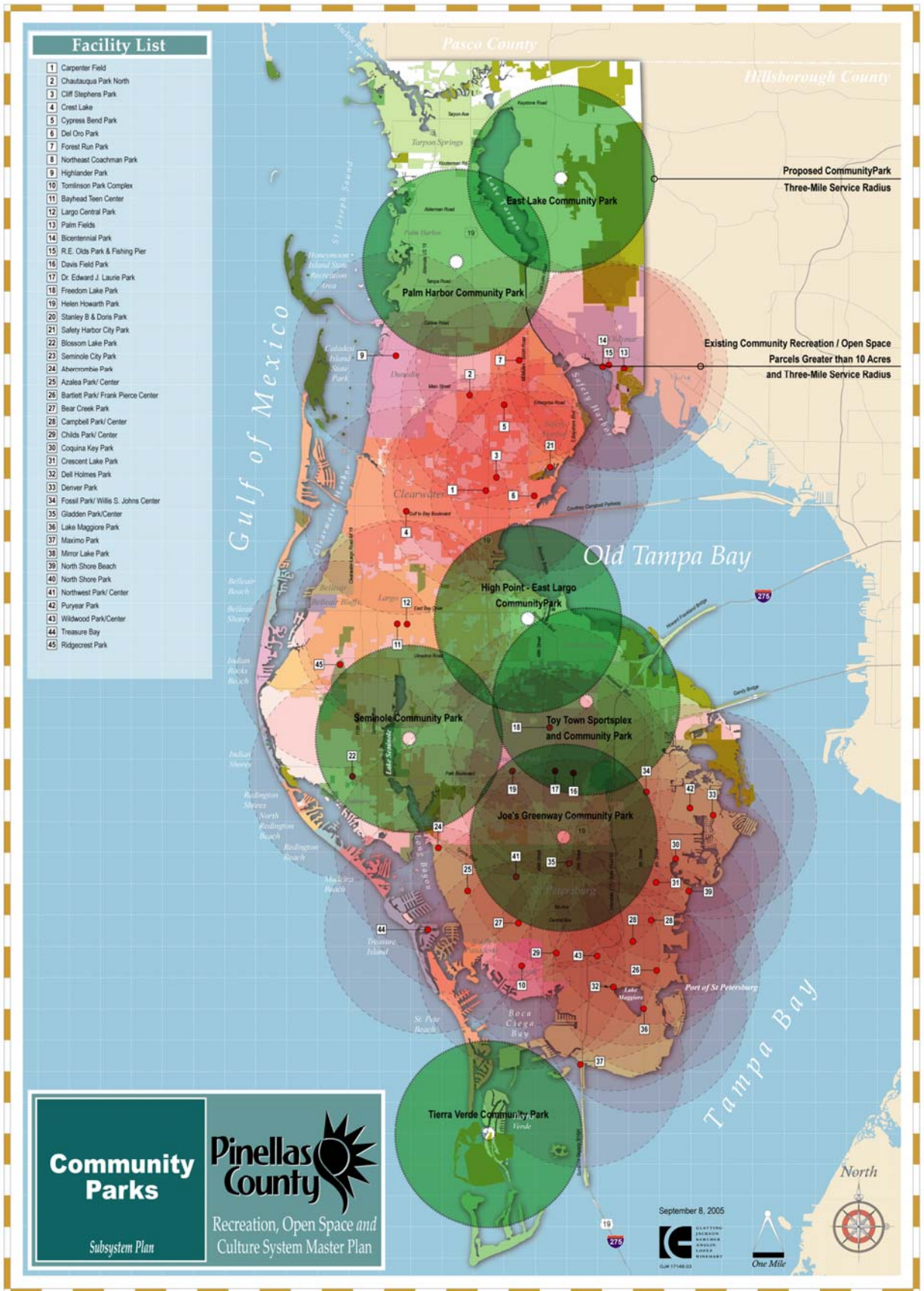
- Acquire and develop seven (7) new Community Park sites in unincorporated areas; partner with municipal and/or non-profit agencies for operations, maintenance and programming

Programs:

- Dedicate a full-time staff person with responsibility for pro-active facilitation, partnering with municipalities, school board, non-profits
- Identify potential sites and partnerships for new Community Parks; consider Progress Energy corridor
- Enter into a new dialog with the School Board re: current initiatives, successes and proposed new initiatives
- Investigate new funding sources for Operations & Maintenance (O & M), particularly in unincorporated areas; consider contracting for services
- Investigate opportunities for permanent, dedicated funding sources for unincorporated resident facilities
- Investigate grant/funding distribution requirements; develop formula to define equity
- Annually review the School Board's 5 year plan for joint planning opportunities
- Meet regularly with municipal/non-profit recreation providers to coordinate capital improvements, programs, funding, etc.

Policies:

- Revise Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, Impact Fees to align with Vision re: service areas (½ mile, 3 mile) facilities, size of parks, etc.; encourage municipalities to adopt same policies
- Consider transitioning to a Subsidy Program to compensate municipalities for use of Community Parks by unincorporated residents
- Consider increasing revenues or decreasing expectations regarding Levels of Service (facilities, maintenance, programs, etc.) in unincorporated areas
- Investigate the possibility of using a percentage of "Penny" revenue for Operations & Maintenance
- Clarify County mission, standards of excellence for Community Parks



Community Centers are the focal points for social and recreation activities in many Pinellas County communities



Azalea Park Adult Center, St. Petersburg



Ronald P Forbes Recreation Center, Pinellas Park



Northwest Center, St. Petersburg



Morningside Recreation Complex, Clearwater.
Photo from www.myclearwater.com

2. Community Centers

The Pinellas County “Community Center Subsystem” strives to meet the social, wellness, fitness and recreation needs of all residents of Pinellas County. The County’s role in meeting these needs is as a “facilitator”, continuing to help fund the development of recreation/community centers where needed, and contracting with other agencies to operate, maintain and program the facilities.

Community Centers are generally defined as “public and/or non-profit buildings that meet the social and recreational needs of community/regional residents”. Providers typically include the County, municipalities, non-profit organizations such as the YMCA and the Jewish Community Center (JCC), and sometimes churches. Schools could also potentially function as Community Centers. Each Community Center should be designed to meet the needs of its constituency, but a typical desirable “Model” includes:

- Primarily serves residents within a three mile radius, or a 10 – 15 minute drive time
- Minimum 10,000 square feet
- Includes a lobby/reception area, fitness center, meeting rooms, outdoor performance area, multi-purpose room/gymnasium, catering/concession kitchen, lockers, offices, storage, outdoor open green space, sports fields and courts

Approximately 40% of the existing Community Centers throughout the County need to be upgraded or expanded to meet the “Model” criteria outlined above, and four new Community Centers are needed in unincorporated areas to meet the service area/drive time criteria:

- Tierra Verde Community Center
- Lealman- Kenneth City Community Center
- High Point/East Largo Community Center
- East Lake Community Center

The County will use a variety of techniques to fund these new facilities and to help upgrade existing Community Centers, including:

- Grants for municipalities
- Reimbursement of differential fees to unincorporated County residents
- Creation of Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU) in unincorporated areas to fund recreation facilities
- Other partnerships

The County will also partner with other agencies to manage new facilities in unincorporated areas, such as Tierra Verde Recreation Inc, the YMCA, the City of Largo and the East Lake Youth Sports Association.

The YMCA is also considering building several new Centers throughout the County, including Oldsmar, Tarpon Springs, Pinellas Park and St. Petersburg. The County will continue to coordinate with the YMCA and the municipalities to meet residents’ needs.

Community Center Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

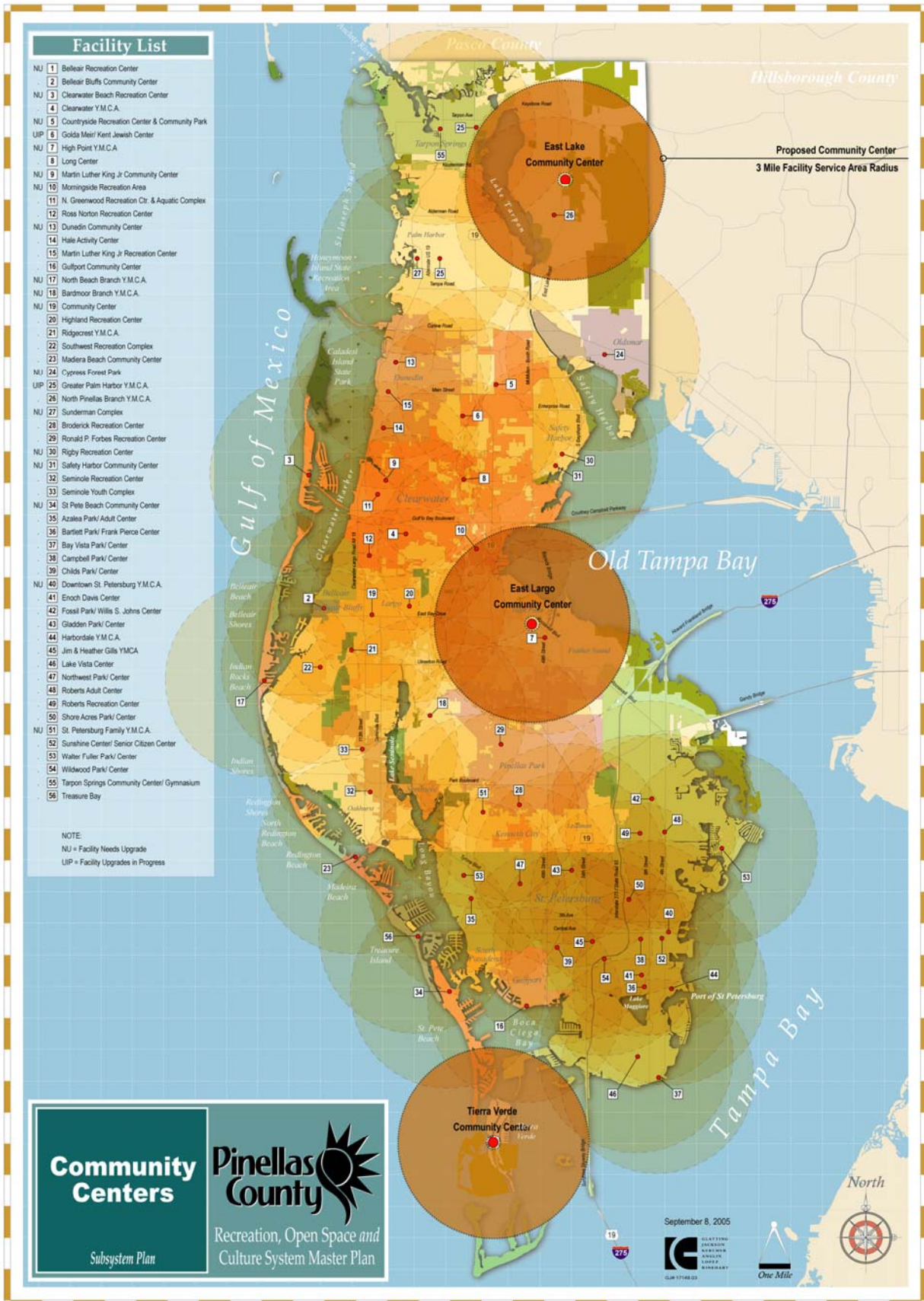
1. Build four (4) new Community Centers in unincorporated areas
2. Help municipalities (through grants, "Penny," etc.) upgrade, expand existing Centers
3. Increase funding for partnerships, in addition to the \$2M grants/reimbursement programs from Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU)

Programs:

1. Develop Memorandum(s) of Understanding with municipalities and non-profits regarding operations, maintenance and programming of proposed new Community Centers
2. Strengthen the relationship with the School Board for joint planning, development, operations and maintenance
3. Educate unincorporated residents about the Reimbursement Program
4. Collect data regarding the use of municipal facilities by unincorporated residents as a basis for future decisions regarding subsidies or reimbursements
5. Investigate new funding sources to pay for increasing operations and maintenance costs, including increased user fees
6. Evaluate vacant/under-utilized commercial space as possible Community Center locations
7. Evaluate locations for therapeutic recreation facilities in County

Policies:

1. Determine if any policies need to be established or revised to codify the County's role as "facilitator" of Community Centers
2. Work with each municipality to establish a fair system of "non-resident" user fees
3. Evaluate the Reimbursement Program to determine how to make the "up-front" costs affordable for low-income residents; consider transitioning to a Subsidy Program
4. Explore potential changes to the "Penny" funding to allow a percentage to be used for operations and maintenance costs



3. Regional Parks

The Pinellas County “Regional Passive Parks Subsystem” is the backbone of the County’s parks system, providing a “green oasis” for millions of residents and visitors each year for nature study, canoeing and hiking, walking, picnicking, swimming, fishing, camping, beach access and other predominantly passive recreation activities. In addition to protecting the County’s natural resources and providing opportunities for passive recreation, the Regional Parks should be “energized” with special facilities and events that enhance the visitor experience, including:

- Outdoor concerts, festivals and special events
- Cafes and concessions
- Canoe and kayak rentals
- Permanent and traveling art and sculpture exhibits
- Historical and archaeological sites and interpretation (both exhibits and “living history”)
- Environmental education exhibits and programs

It is important to note that these facilities and events should not exceed the carrying capacity of each park. Therefore the County will develop several management tools to 1) maintain a careful balance between visitor use and resource protection in order to preserve the integrity of the Regional Parks, and 2) promote the use of the Parks. These include:

- A “Baseline Survey” of existing natural habitat, species, etc. as a basis for management decisions
- A Management Plan for each Regional Park, including permitted uses; development limits; and special event capacity
- A Special “Signature Events” Program that features a different park each month
- A “Suitability Analysis Tool” to assess the appropriateness of proposed new uses in Regional Parks
- A self-guided Environmental/Historical/Archaeological Education Curriculum that can be used by Schools and/or park visitors



This kayak festival at Okeeheelee Park in Palm Beach County is an example of the type of activity that can add "color" to the Regional Parks.



Cafes and outdoor seating areas, such as these at Jordon Pond in Maine's Acadia National Park, can enhance the Regional Park "experience" for visitors.

The County will continue to protect its nationally recognized Passive Regional Parks System from over-development, while striving to meet the social and recreation needs of County residents.

A Management Plan should be developed for each Regional Park, and should include this information:

Total Acres

Existing Uses/Facilities

Existing Land Use (Acres/Percentage)

- Preserve/Natural Area
- Maintained Open Space
- Developed Areas

Proposed Land Use (Acres/Percentage)

- Preserve/Natural Area
- Maintained Open Space
- Developed Areas (max. allowable)

Permitted Uses within Each Land Use

- Preserve/Natural Area
- Maintained Open Space
- Developed Areas

Special Event Capacity

- Number of Participants
- Parking
- Hours/Time of Day
- Lighting/Noise/Environmental Impacts
- Other Capacity Criteria

Regional Park Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

- Develop bicycle/pedestrian access to each Regional Park
- Develop Environmental/Historical/Archaeological Education exhibits, kiosks, etc. to support the education curriculum
- Incorporate public art in the design of future facilities, such as pavilions and exhibits, as well as through commissioned sculpture and outdoor art throughout the parks
- Construct park improvements in accordance with Management Plans and Master Plans, such as new cafe/patio areas, concession areas, canoe/kayak launches, etc.

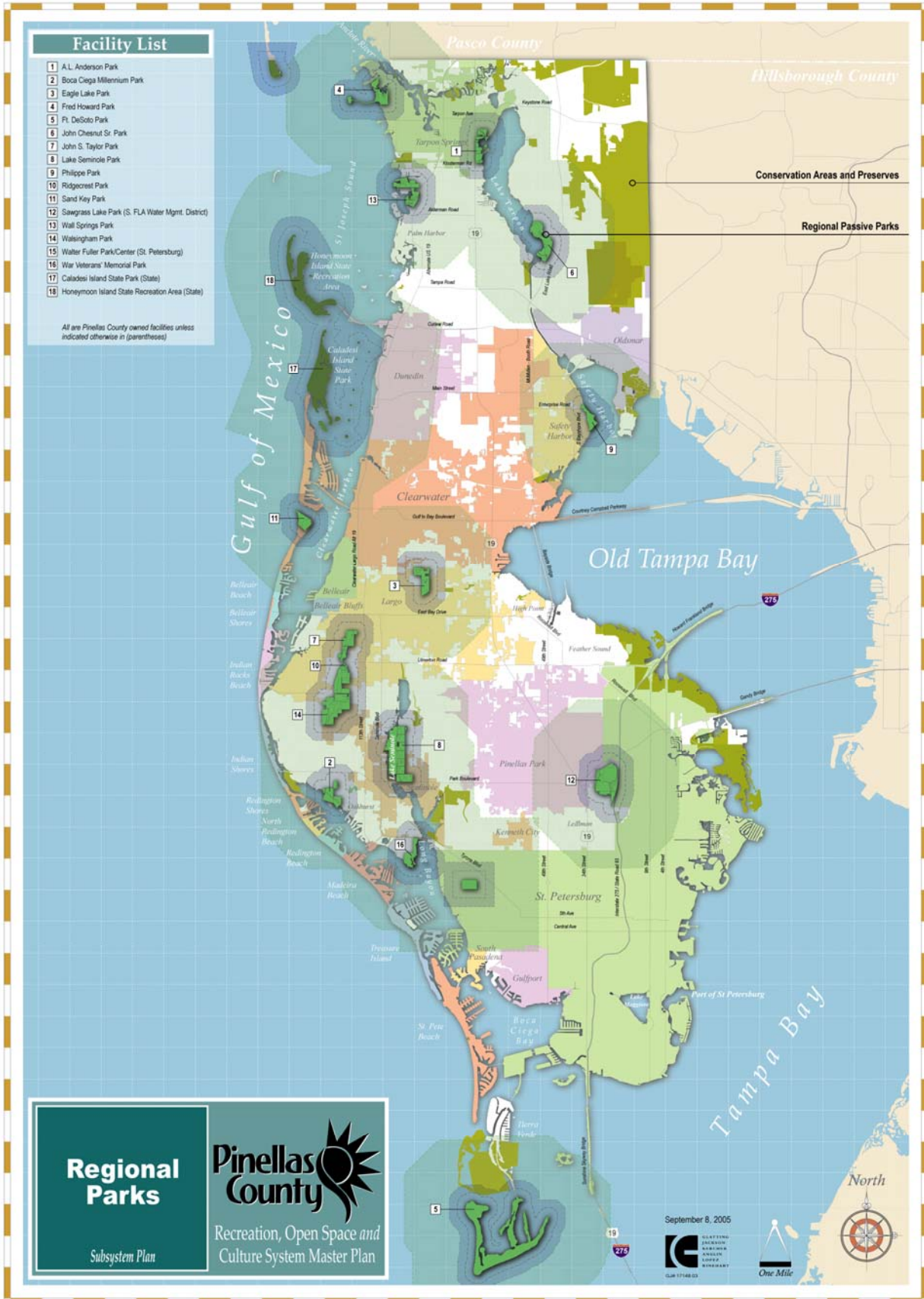
Programs, Initiatives:

- Clarify goals/objectives for Regional Parks
- Develop baseline data re: ecological systems in Regional Parks; also management strategies for systems, public education
- Develop a Management Plan for each Regional Park, including Objectives; Strategies and Policies; a Suitability Assessment Tool (see below) and Monitoring/Mitigation procedures. Include strategies for resource management, such as exotic/invasive/annoyance species control (e.g. raccoons, birds, plants, fish, etc.)
- Create a "Suitability Analysis Tool" to assess compatibility, impacts of proposed uses in Regional Parks; integrate into Management Plans
- The Management Plans should include a table showing the percentage of land to be used for:
 - Conservation/Preserve
 - Open Space
 - Developed Space

- Develop a matrix for each park showing the development restrictions, permitted uses within each land use
- Determine the capacity of each park to accommodate special events (number of people, parking, infrastructure, etc.)
- Identify desired "Visitor Experiences" at each park, including activity, duration, available food and beverages, etc. to determine needs/opportunities for concessions, transportation, promotion, etc.
- Develop twelve (12) Festivals or Events – one/month at a different venue (one per park/year) – that highlight the natural features of the park, and are consistent with the Regional Park objectives (ideas include Kayak Festival, Art-in-the-Park, Everglades Day, etc.)
- Define revenue objectives for Regional Parks, e.g. % of Operations & Maintenance costs; establish revenue goals, uses
- Educate adjacent property owners re: stewardship responsibilities (e.g. Florida Yards Program, Hillsborough Wildlife Fellowship)
- Formalize Friends Groups at each park
- Develop in-house training in design, role of public art, stewardship of Regional Parks
- Develop standard environmental education curriculum for each park; actively market to schools; incorporate FCAT curriculum; partner with Extension Service
- Partner with colleges for internships in ecological data collection, marketing, other initiatives outlined above

Policies:

- Change purchasing policies to simplify partnerships, sponsorships



Photos courtesy of Pinellas County Communications Dept.



Weeden Island Preserve



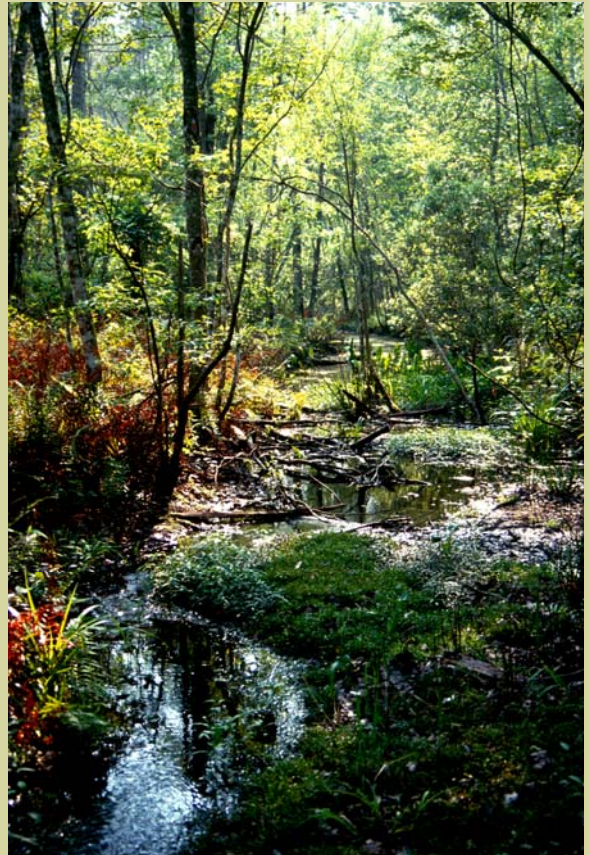
Brooker Creek Preserve



Shell Key Preserve



Weeden Island Preserve



Brooker Creek Preserve

4. Preserves

Pinellas County Preserves and Management Areas are designated wild areas that are managed for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of natural and cultural resources while allowing for sustainable passive public recreational uses that are compatible with approved management plans and applicable ordinances and laws.

It is desirable to acquire and preserve such lands for their unique natural resources, their diversity of native flora and fauna, their ecological, hydrological, and open space significance to the County, their scenic beauty and the opportunity to educate citizens and visitors.

The mission of the Environmental Lands Division of the Department of Environmental Management, the managing agency for these lands, is to provide sound stewardship to the County's wild lands and opportunities for the appreciation of their intrinsic value.

Currently, the Division is responsible for the stewardship of 4 Preserves and 11 Management Areas. Preserves generally are ecologically diverse properties with well-defined public-use opportunities. Each has a management plan that has been reviewed and approved by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners. Management Areas generally do not have an approved management plan and limited or nonexistent public-use features. It is expected that several Management Areas will eventually become Preserves as management plans for them are developed and approved.

To date the County has completed the acquisition of its primary list of endangered lands and is entering into a "new era" of Preserve enhancement. Key initiatives include:

- Development of a Strategic Management Plan for the Preserve System that establishes objectives, policies and strategies for the use and protection of Preserves and Management Areas
- Development of a "Suitability Assessment Model" and "Success Indicators" to guide management and decision-making
- Establishment of Special Management Areas and buffers around existing Preserves to limit negative impacts and to encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Initiation of a Public Outreach Program to engage and educate residents about best management practices around the Preserves
- Enhancement of existing Preserve sites to provide passive, public recreation/education facilities, including the incorporation of public art in the design of exhibits and facilities
- Identification and acquisition of in-fill or expansion sites to further ecological protection goals

Preserve Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements

- Acquire in-fill or expansion sites that further objectives
- Develop an "all species" survey to measure ecological health, promote Preserves (estimated cost \$500k to \$1mil, plus 5 year updates)
- Establish Special Management Areas or Buffer Zones around Preserves based on sound ecological principles
- Develop a signage and wayfinding system that identifies Preserve sites as well as Special Management Areas
- Identify critical capital improvement needs for "Penny" funding
- Develop trails, outdoor classroom areas, exhibits and other facilities needed to enhance visitor experiences (in accordance with management plans)

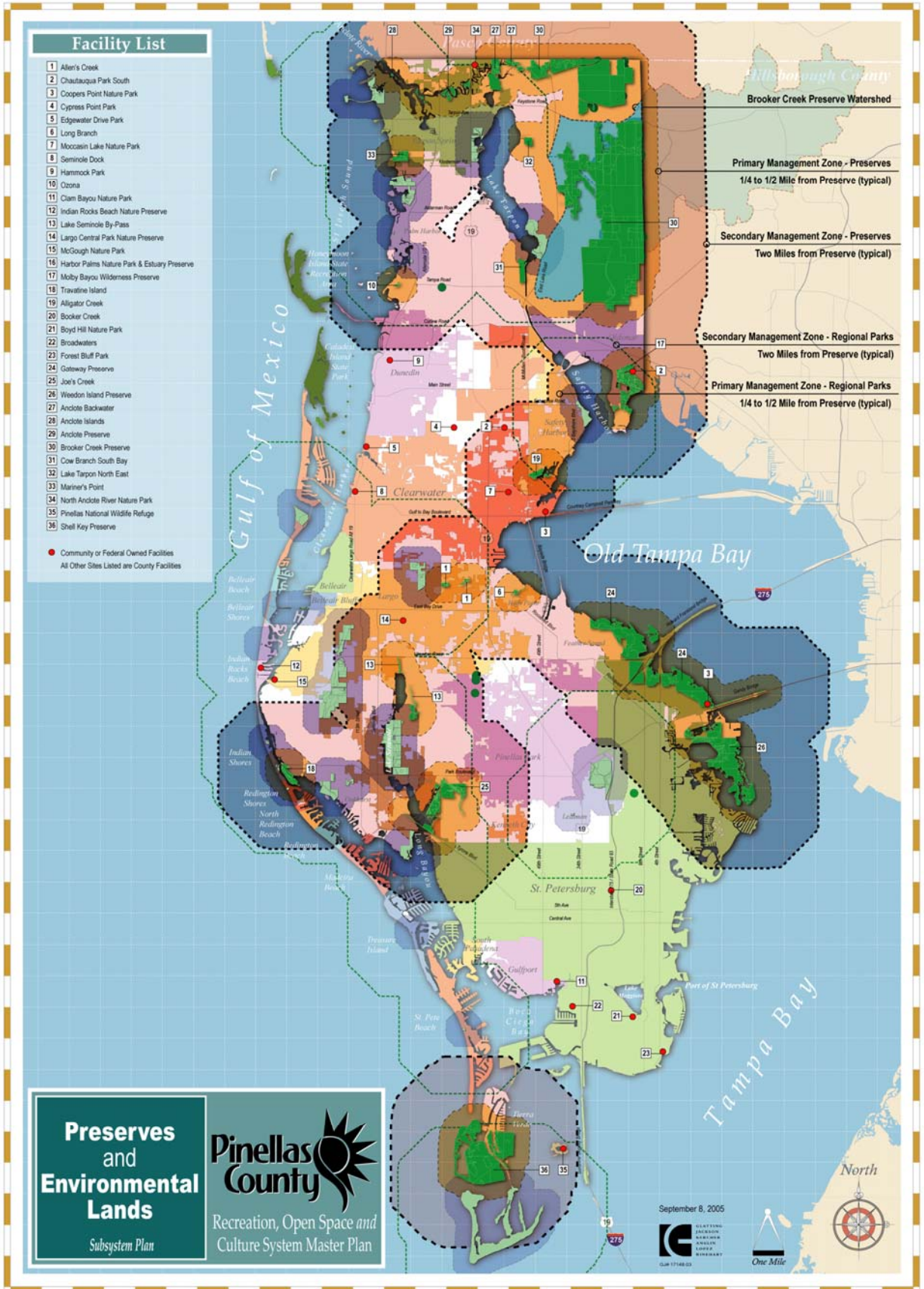
Programs, Initiatives

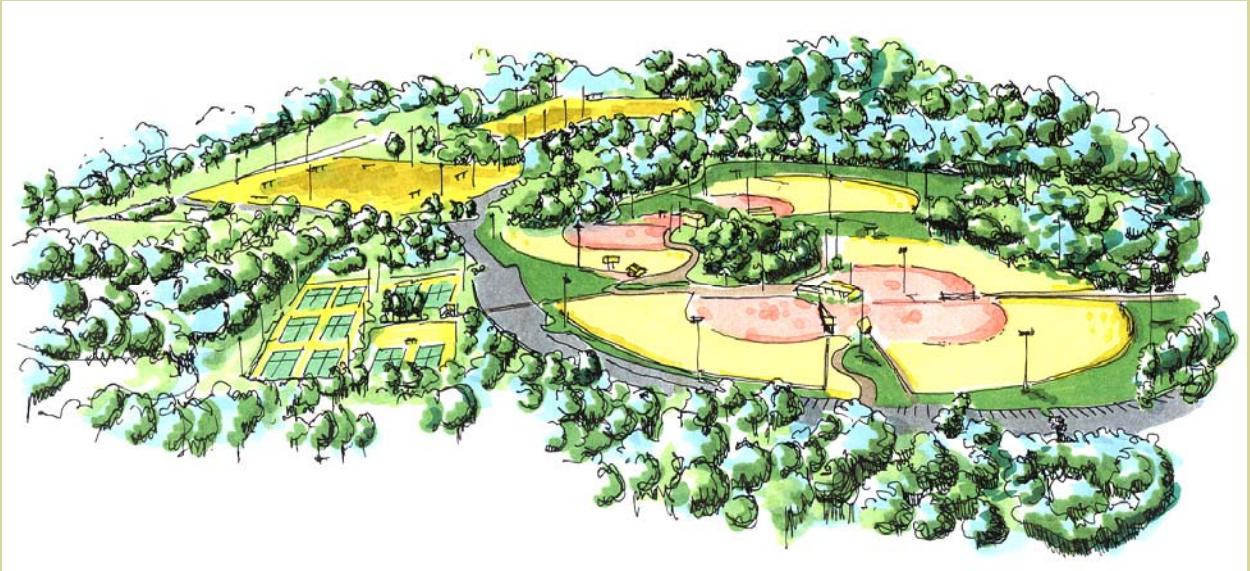
- Establish "Special Management Areas" around Preserve sites, including primary and secondary zones. Develop restrictions, best management practices re: fertilizers, nutrients, etc. Develop educational brochures
- Ask Neighborhood Associations bordering on Preserves to incorporate/adopt new standards, practices
- Establish an "Outreach" position for homeowner education, collaboration, etc.
- Explore possible tools to transfer conservation easements/development rights to a non-County "third party" to protect lands for perpetuity
- Initiate a 3 – step program for the long term acquisition and protection of Preserves and Management Areas, including:
 1. Identification/Acquisition, including surplus and enhancement lands
 2. Long Term Protection, including land use designation, transfer of conservation easements
 3. Management of Impacts, including management plans, assessment model, land management indicators, carrying capacity model

- Create "Friends Groups" for all Preserves
- Identify process for evaluating County surplus lands for acquisition when they become available
- Investigate the creation of a "Pinellas Land Trust" to secure smaller parcels, conservation easements, etc.
- Strengthen partnerships with the media, municipalities for promotion of Preserves
- Increase inter-departmental coordination with Planning, Arts Council, Utilities
- Establish a basis for staff/management costs, such as benchmarking against other counties, water management districts, e.g. \$/acre or staff/acre; request additional management funding, if appropriate, based on analysis
- Develop a "Suitability Assessment"/evaluation model to determine the appropriateness of proposed uses, e.g. the Suwannee Model
- Develop success criteria, e.g. Suwannee Excellence in Land Management (ELM)
- Conduct a workshop with the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to discuss management issues, principles, "new era" of acquisition and management
- Investigate the use of "Penny" funding for management
- Develop a Strategic Preserve Plan that incorporates many of the initiatives outlined above, including a model of urban ecology (including people, natural resources, history, carrying capacity)

Policies

- Include "Potential Impacts to Preserves" in the review of proposed land use/zoning changes, site plan review
- Review "permitted uses" in Preserve Land Use category to determine if any changes are necessary





Proposed Sports Complex

5. Sports Complexes/Special Use Facilities

The Pinellas County “Sports Complex and Special Use Facilities Subsystem” strives to meet the specialized recreation/competition needs of Pinellas County residents. The System includes facilities such as:

- Baseball and/or softball complexes
- Multi-use and/or soccer complexes
- Aquatics facilities, including interactive family water parks
- Gymnasiums and regional recreation centers
- Extreme sports parks including BMX, skateboard, etc.
- Paintball complexes
- Outdoor adventure centers
- Volleyball complexes
- Sports training academies
- Combination Sportsplexes

Most of these facilities are developed and maintained by municipalities, commercial operators and/or non-profit groups. For example three (3) competition swimming pools currently serve residents County-wide, including the Long Center in Clearwater; the Southwest pool in Largo; and the Northshore pool in St. Pete.

In addition to supporting municipal and non-profit initiatives, the County’s role in the Sports Complex and Special Use Subsystem is to provide large regional facilities that serve residents and tourists Countywide. Two proposed regional facilities are the:

- South County Sportsplex (approximately 100 acres at the Toy Town site)
- North County Sportsplex (approximately 50 acres at a site to be determined)

Typical facilities at each Sportsplex could include:

- Ten (10) multi-use soccer fields
- Ten (10) baseball fields
- Five (5) softball fields
- Water park
- Extreme sports facilities
- Parking
- Natural areas and open space
- Other facilities as needed

The County will lead the acquisition and development of the proposed Sportsplexes, in partnership with other agencies, and will contract with other agencies to operate, maintain and program the facilities.

Sports Complex/Special Use Facility Implementation Strategies

Capital Improvements:

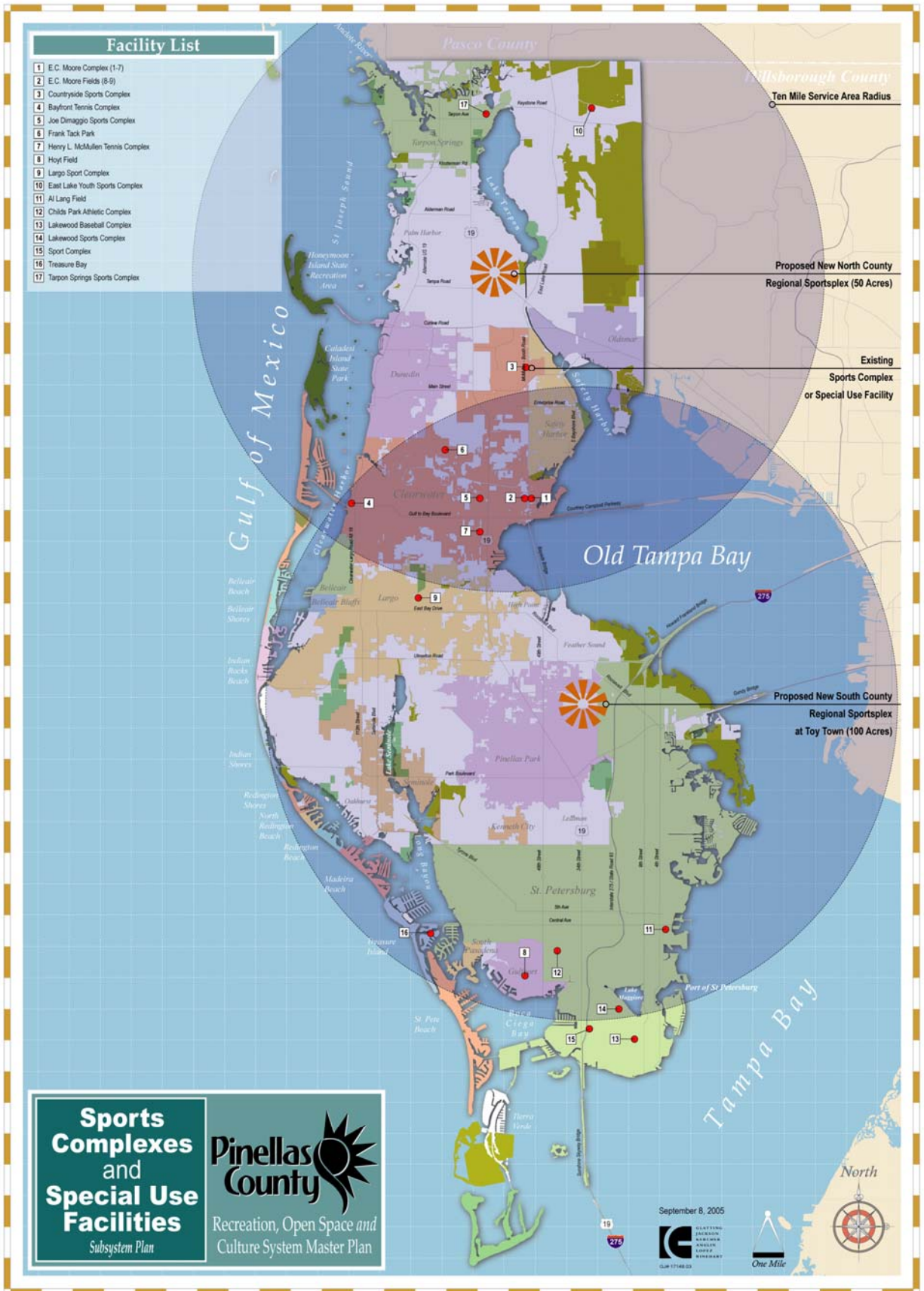
- Develop the Toy Town site as the South County Sportsplex, as outlined above
- Acquire and develop a +/- 50 acre site in the Countryside area (N. Clearwater/Palm Harbor) to serve as the North County Sportsplex

Programs/Initiatives:

- Initiate discussions with potential commercial, municipal and/or non-profit agency partners to manage the proposed Sportsplexes
- Identify dedicated funding sources for Sportsplex development
- Develop a Conceptual Master Plan and Cost Estimate for the development of the Toy Town site as a basis for funding, grants, etc.
- Investigate opportunities for sponsorships
- Market and promote sports complexes for tournaments, recreation
- Explore opportunities for integrating retail/commercial development into Sportsplexes, including beer/wine sales

Policies:

- Investigate the possibility of using a percentage of Penny revenues for operations and maintenance
- Add regional/special use facilities to County role, e.g. BMX, Sports Complexes





Boat ramp capacity throughout the County may be increased through the expansion of existing municipal or County ramps; the use of "Ramp Rangers" at peak hours to increase efficiency; and the possible use of off-ramp parking, valet and shuttle services.



Aerial view of Fort DeSoto Park boat ramps.

6. Boat Ramps

The Pinellas County "Boat Ramp Subsystem" provides the greatest possible access to the Gulf of Mexico, Boca Ciega Bay, Tampa Bay and Old Tampa Bay for both recreational and commercial boaters, while still protecting the integrity of the County's natural resources, and enhancing the County's reputation as the preeminent boating/diving/fishing center of Florida.

The Boat Ramp Subsystem is comprised of a hierarchy of boat access facilities throughout the County, including along major causeways, including (from least to most extensive):

- Canoe/Kayak Launches
- Shallow Water Ramps (< 12" Draft at Low Tide)
- Deep Water Ramps (> 24" with Maintained Channel)

Because land for boat ramps is scarce, and demand for additional ramps will continue to grow along with population densities, the Vision for boat ramps/access includes facilities and programs to maximize efficiency, including:

- Maintenance and enhancement of existing facilities
- Expansion of existing public (County, municipal) and private ramps wherever possible
- Deep water ramps in north (Anclote River), south (Ft. DeSoto), and central (Clearwater/Dunedin) Pinellas County
- Remote parking and shuttle service, including future "boat valets" at ramps
- Increased management and enforcement, especially on weekends
- Public/private partnerships for storage and ramp use
- Incentives for off-peak use
- Boat rental concessions at County/municipal facilities
- Public education regarding boat ramp use, etiquette

The System includes every possible service and facility to create a quality user experience, including directional signs, parking, shuttles, marina/bait and tackle/food concessions, rest rooms, etc. Some services shall be provided by public agencies, while others will be provided by the private sector.

Boat Ramp Implementation Strategy:

Capital Improvements:

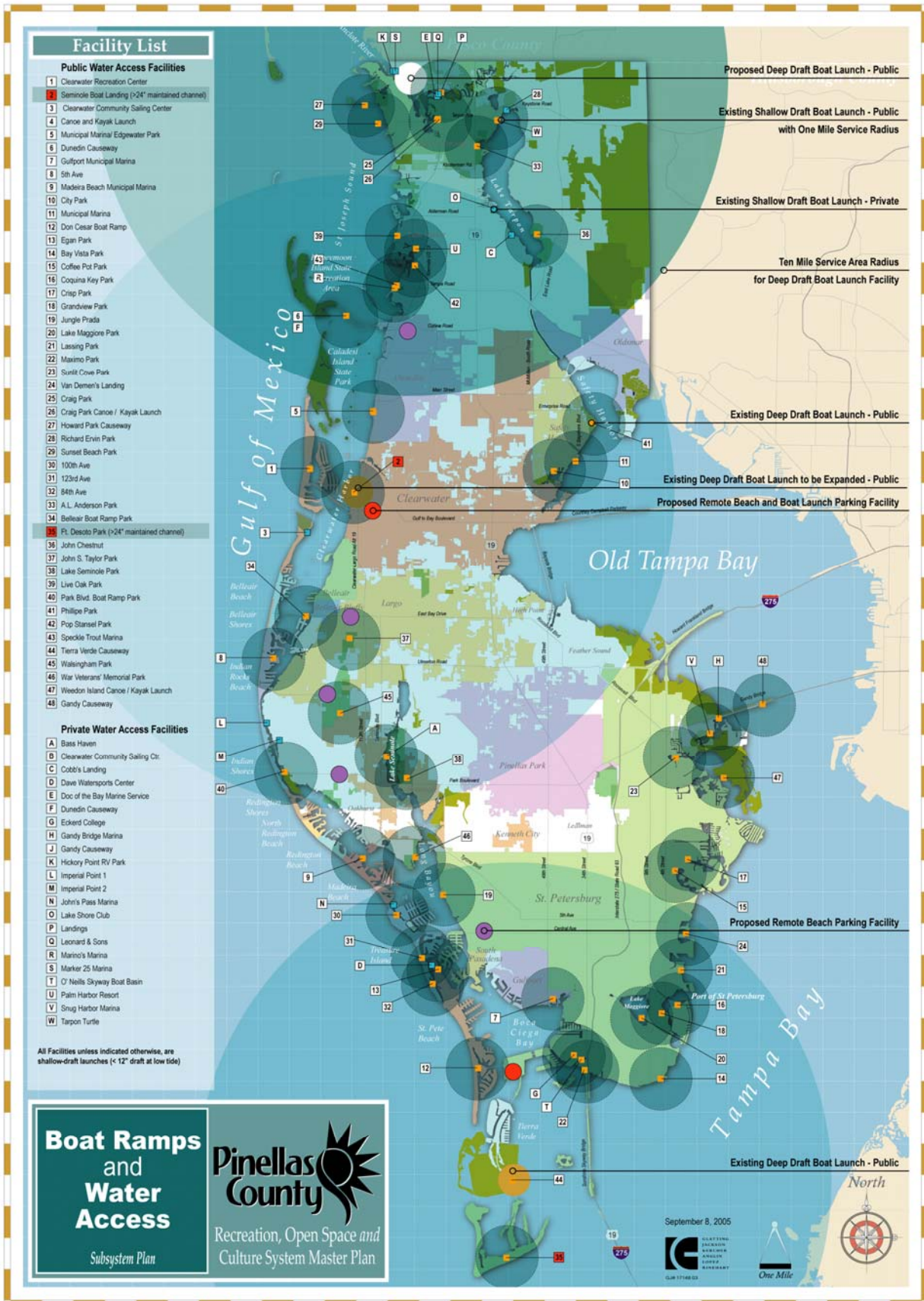
- Acquire land for new/expanded ramps wherever possible, especially for a deep water ramp in North County; strive to duplicate the Ft. DeSoto ramp in north, central County
- Provide financial assistance to expand the existing deep water ramp, located on Seminole Street in Clearwater, and/or other Municipal or private ramps
- Build additional docks and mooring areas where possible
- Install signs/graphics re: boat ramp use, etiquette
- Install exhibits re: historical/environmental features; incorporate public art wherever possible
- Acquire sites for future remote parking, boat storage

Programs:

- Survey existing State, County, Municipal and private ramps to determine opportunities for enhancements, expansion
- Establish a funding mechanism to assist non-County agencies to expand or upgrade their facilities
- Involve blueways groups such as Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Tamp Bay Watch, Ocean Conservancy, Keep Pinellas Beautiful to develop data regarding blueways, boat ramps, etc.
- Develop a Boat Ramp Guide to Pinellas County, showing the type of access (Canoe/Kayak, Shallow Water, Deep Water), locations, amenities, hours of operations, etc.
- Increase enforcement, monitoring, speed restrictions, etc.
- Survey ramp users to determine top priorities and needs; consider publishing survey in Boating Magazine, which reaches 15,000 Pinellas County boaters
- Provide incentives to private owners to maintain boat public access through tax breaks, grants, financing, etc.
- Encourage time share/boat clubs to reduce ramp demand
- Explore opportunities for off-ramp parking, shuttles, "boat valet" service
- Provide more "Minimum Speed/No Wake" zones around launch locations

Policies:

- Maintain current ratio of ramp lanes and parking spaces to registered Pinellas County boaters; maintain ratio of different types of ramps



7. Cultural Facilities

The Pinellas County “Cultural and Historical Facilities Subsystem” strives to enrich the quality of life of Pinellas County residents; to educate the public regarding the value of the arts, history and culture; to preserve and protect cultural and historical resources; and to reflect cultural, historical and community identities. These objectives are accomplished through the coordinated efforts, facilities and programs of over fifty (50) public and private cultural, arts and historical agencies in Pinellas County.

The components of the System include:

- Cultural and Historical facilities (include facilities on National Register)
- Festivals
- Agencies, Councils and Service Organizations
- Government Cultural Affairs and Preservation Offices
- Museums, Art Galleries Centers, Theaters and Performing Art Venues



Sculpture Garden Courtyard, Gulf Coast Museum of Art, Largo



Heritage Village, Largo



David L. Mason Children's Art Museum, Dunedin

In a recent survey, 97% of County residents either strongly agree or agree with the statement that “arts, cultural and heritage programs improve the quality of life in Pinellas County.”

The System involves a wide variety of formats, including:

- Dance
- Ballet
- Modern
- Ethnic

Theater

- Musical Theater
- Professional Theater
- Community Theater
- Classical Theater/Shakespeare
- Puppetry
- Plays

Music

- Pop
- Classical
- Symphonic
- Chamber
- Jazz
- Hip Hop

Art

- Contemporary
- Classical
- Collection/Presentation
- Studio
- Community

Historical/Scientific

- Museums (including Children's Museums)
- Historic House Museums
- Archaeological/Historical Sites
- Archaeological Mounds
- Aquariums
- Historic Villages

Critical to the Vision is coordination between agencies. Coordinated planning efforts, led by the Pinellas County Arts Council, include publications, events calendars, marketing, advertising, transportation, public education, grants and funding, and planning.



Palladium Theater, St. Petersburg

Cultural Facilities Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

- Establish grants/funding assistance for the upkeep, renovation and expansion of not-for-profit and municipal cultural facilities, including both land acquisition and facility improvements
- Design and construct a cultural/historical/parks/preserves way-finding system with colorful graphics to direct people to facilities; promote the system; and minimize visual clutter by condensing existing signs
- Design and construct a County-wide historical preservation/marker program, possibly in conjunction with the way-finding system
- Develop outdoor amphitheater(s), performing arts venues in selected Regional Parks; use temporary facilities wherever appropriate

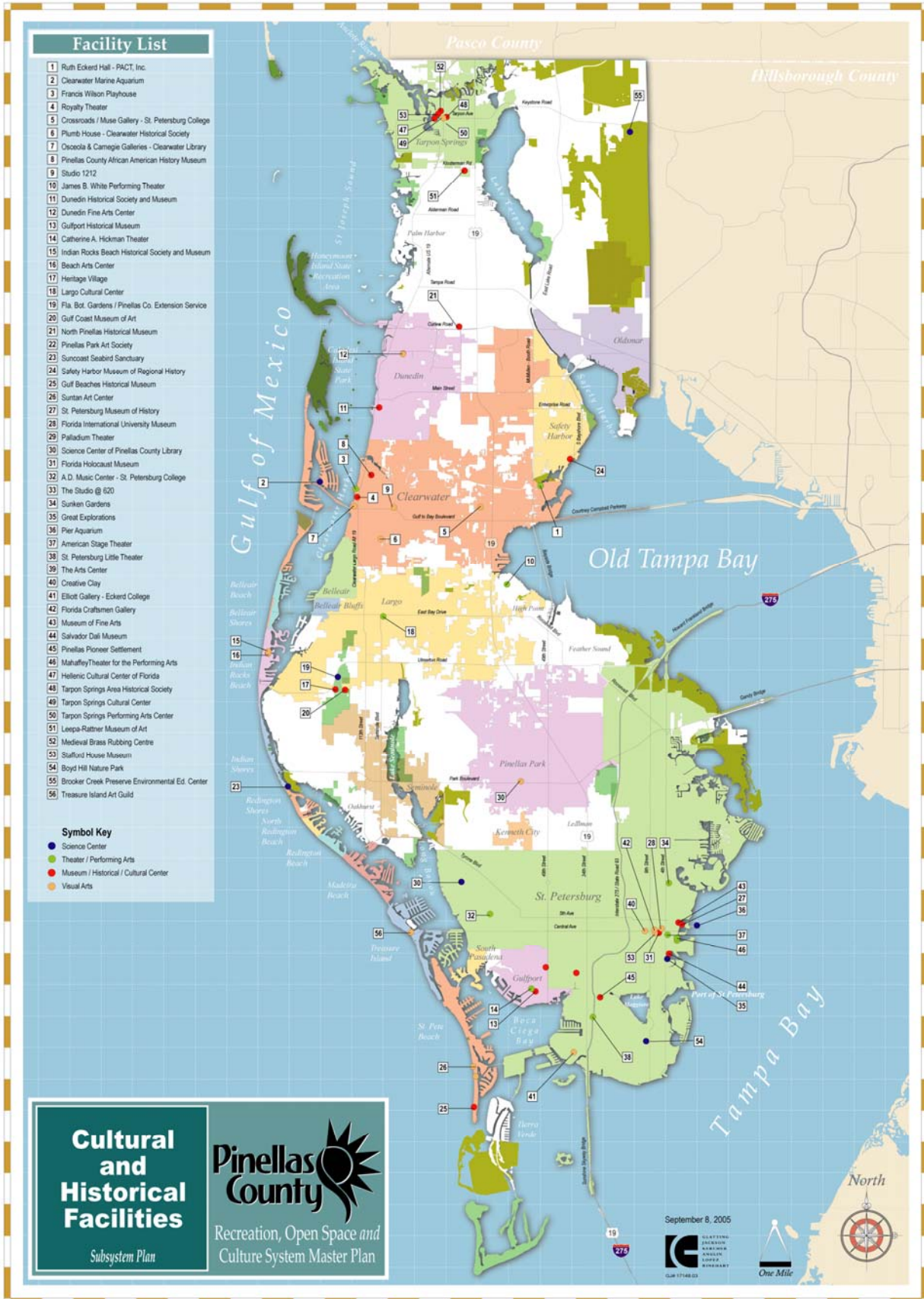
Programs:

- Establish a guide/tour to the architecturally/historically significant cultural facilities in Pinellas County, e.g. "Pinellas Jewels", which tells the historical/cultural "story" of the facilities, the County and its residents
- Determine if some communities in Pinellas County are under-served by Cultural Facilities, and determine if new facilities, programs and/or transportation initiatives are appropriate
- Partner with local transportation agencies to coordinate "field trips" from one venue to another for special events, exhibitions, etc. (e.g. from Tarpons Springs Museum to St. Petersburg Museum of History)
- Publish a Pinellas County guide to Arts, History and Culture
- Publish an annual, coordinated arts, cultural and historical programs/events calendar; consider featuring a different venue each week, e.g. a "Progressive Calendar"

- Establish a "Culture Kids" Program, in conjunction with the Pinellas County Schools, to engage kids in cultural/historical events, activities and facilities; integrate FCAT requirements, needs into Cultural curriculum
- Coordinate a multi-agency marketing and advertising program that reaches out to minorities, tourists, kids, other under-served populations; and emphasizes the role of Cultural/Historical facilities and programs in economic development. Coordinate with the Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Facilitate periodic planning/coordinating conferences
- Coordinate special arts and cultural event transportation services, e.g. theater shuttles

Policies:

- Change building codes to allow and encourage artist live/work spaces, incubator spaces
- Consider establishing cultural overlay districts
- Direct cultural facilities to in-fill development sites to create cultural activity centers
- Formalize the County's role as a Cultural/Historical facilitator, analogous to the County's role in active recreation



8. Beach Access

The Pinellas County “Beach Access Subsystem” is comprised of over 170 beach access sites, ranging in size from three foot wide pedestrian paths to 29,000 linear feet of beach access at Fort DeSoto Park. Beach access is defined as “an entry zone adjacent to a sandy beach under public ownership or control which is identified and specifically used for providing access to the beach for the general public. The access must be signed, maintained and clearly visible from the adjacent roadway”. In addition to the Gulf beaches, the Vision includes the Bayside and Causeway beaches that meet this definition as well.

A critical component of the Beach Access Subsystem Vision is parking. At least 100 public parking spaces are provided per mile of beach, in accordance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) beach management funding requirements, and additional parking is provided through off-beach parking lots or structures, and public/private shuttles carrying beach-goers back and forth.

The Beach Access Subsystem provides a wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities for both residents and visitors, including walking, swimming, sunbathing, fishing, water sports, nature study and other activities. The System includes every possible service and facility to create a quality user experience. Some services shall be provided by public agencies, while others will be provided by the private sector.



*A Typical Pinellas County Beach
Photo courtesy of Pinellas County Communications Dept.*

The Beach Access Subsystem shall also protect and enhance coastal resources, incorporating “best management practices (BMPs)” wherever possible. Enhancement activities may include, but not be limited to, beach nourishment, dune vegetation (sea oats, beach grass, etc.), dune and shoreline restoration; construction of dune walkovers; installation of turtle-friendly lighting; and monitoring for negative impacts.

Specifically, the vision includes the following components:

- Directional Signs
- ADA-Accessible Access and Dune Walkovers
- Restrooms and Showers (one restroom/mile of beach)
- On-beach and Off-beach Parking and Shuttles
- Surf and Pier Fishing
- Connections from Pinellas Trail, Public Transit
- Bicycle Parking
- Food and Rental Concessions – Cabanas, Water Toys, Boats, Jet Skis, etc.
- Special Event Areas (by permit)
- Picnic Areas
- Bird Watching/Wildlife Viewing Areas
- Sand Volleyball Courts
- Playgrounds
- Utilities
- Boat Access
- Designated/Protected Swimming Areas
- Lifeguards
- Information Kiosks
- Environmental Education Exhibits and Kiosks
- Surfing Areas
- Resource Protection, Habitat Enhancement
- Public Art (incorporated into the other elements wherever possible)
- Vehicular Access/Construction Equipment Access/Staging Areas (US Army Corps of Engineers recommendation, one per mile of beach)



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Park in Pinellas coasts to top of expert's list of finest beaches

Best beaches

The best beaches for 2005, according to rankings compiled by Stephen Leatherman, a top coastal expert and a professor at Florida International University in Miami, known by the nickname "Dr. Beach."

1. **Fort De Soto Park — North Beach, St. Petersburg**
2. Ocracoke Island, Outer Banks, N.C.
3. Hanalei Bay, Kauai, Hawaii
4. **Caladesi Island State Park, Clearwater**
5. Fleming Beach, Maui, Hawaii
6. Coast Guard Beach, Cape Cod, Mass.
7. Coronado Beach, San Diego, Calif.
8. **Cape Florida State Park, Key Biscayne**
9. Main Beach, East Hampton, N.Y.
10. Hamoa Beach, Maui, Hawaii

Fort De Soto Park was named North America's "Best Beach" for 2005.



Off-beach parking areas, located at key intersections of the Pinellas Trail and major beach routes, can serve as multi-modal transportation hubs for bicycle, pedestrian, vehicular and transit access to the beaches.

Beach Access Implementation Strategies

Capital Improvements, Operations & Maintenance (O & M)

- Maintain and enhance existing beach access sites
- Design and implement a standardized sign/way-finding system for directional signs, beach access, etc., possibly tied into the new mile marker system. Incorporate public art wherever possible
- Identify and construct new vehicular accesses for resource management, emergency access, etc. County to identify criteria and locations
- Construct on-beach parking areas and restrooms to comply with the State funding mandate of 100 public parking spaces and one restroom/mile of sandy beaches
- Construct one pedestrian access per ½ mile (minimum) of sandy beach
- Acquire sites near major causeways for future off-beach parking lots/structures
- Construct storm shelters for beach users, particularly in areas where parking is remote
- Encourage construction of a continuous beachfront pedestrian promenade (such as Clearwater's Beach Walk) along all beaches
- Construct bicycle parking facilities at beach accesses
- Acquire, preserve and redevelop "old style" beach cottages wherever possible to preserve beach character. Use as concessions, museums, and/or other adaptive uses
- Acquire and preserve as much natural beach land as possible
- Encourage construction of traffic control/pedestrian crossings on Gulf Boulevard

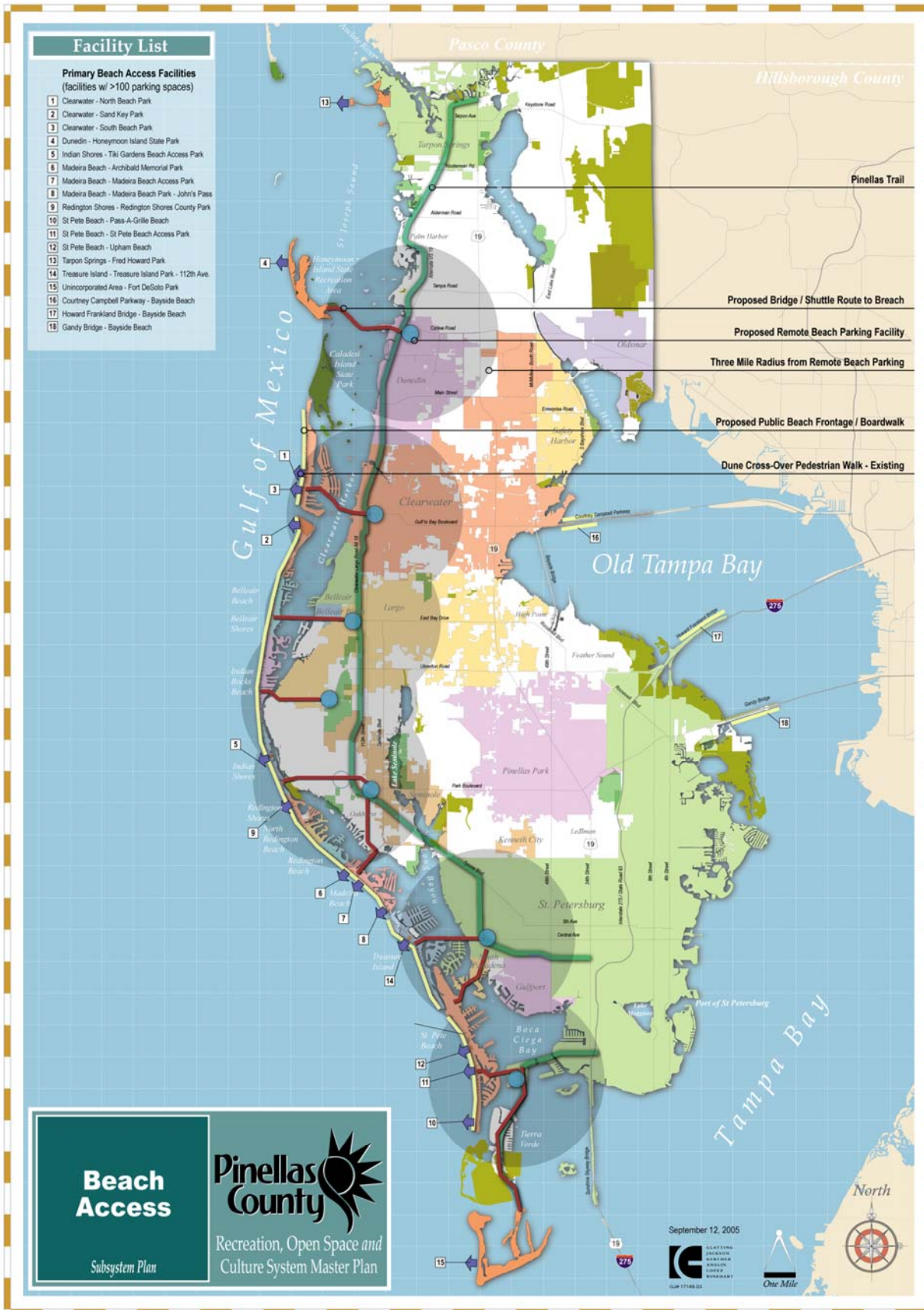
Programs

- Establish a process for identifying and prioritizing coastal properties within the County for acquisition, consistent with the State's land acquisition program

- Establish a regular process, e.g. quarterly meetings of the "Beach Access Committee", to coordinate between managing agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Pinellas County and municipalities
- Create a model dune/beach management plan that can be used to establish County-wide principles, objectives, best management practices, etc.
- Initiate a free trial shuttle services to major beaches during peak weekend hours during the summer of 2006. Use an existing civic or private parking lot and public buses. Survey users regarding their willingness to pay fees, satisfaction with services, etc.; conduct a post-trail evaluation to determine if future off-site parking is viable
- Update the 1997 Pinellas County Beach Access Guide showing the different types of facilities or amenities available at different beach accesses. Distribute to web site, civic buildings, hotels, etc.
- Create land development regulations/incentives for new beach access/easements
- Identify and establish a system of "Primary" Beach Accesses that provide the most comprehensive services and amenities
- Survey potential sites for joint-use off-beach parking, such as City Hall sites, other civic sites, office buildings, etc.

Policies

- Establish "maintenance of views to the water from public roadways" as a criterion for site plan review of proposed development projects
- Change State's formula to allow parking spaces further than ¼ mile from beach to "count" in criteria of 100 spaces/mile, i.e. to provide "credits" for public transportation, off-beach parking
- Develop "Best Management Practices" for coastal management





Pinellas Trail

Photo courtesy of Pinellas County Communications Dept.



Pedestrian Trail in Pinewood Cultural Park, Largo

The Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail is the backbone of the County's Trail System, connecting residents and visitors to a variety of active and passive leisure, recreation, cultural and natural resource destinations and activities, as well as employment and education centers.

9. Greenways, Blueways and Trails

The Pinellas County Greenways, Blueways and Trails Subsystem provides a diversity of quality recreational and nature-based experiences, offering people an escape from the stresses of urban life and linking them with a wide range of destinations and activities. The Subsystem is an interconnected network of green spaces, natural corridors and waterways, creating functional wildlife corridors, but it is also a system of sidewalks and multi-purpose trails that provides Pinellas County residents and visitors with comfortable and affordable access to outdoor leisure and recreation, with the trail and sidewalk network serving to connect people to a variety of active and passive leisure, recreation, cultural and natural resource destinations and activities. The trail system also provides an effective alternative to motorized travel and is planned in a manner that connects employment and educational centers to the residential surroundings.

Specifically, the Greenways, Blueways and Trails Vision includes:

- Use of redevelopment as a tool to accomplish greenway segments; a second opportunity to reconnect through redevelopment
- Diversity of experiences: blueways, trails, greenways, wildlife corridors
- Quality experiences and facilities
- Community support
- Promotion and education
- Close proximity to all residents and visitors; ability to get to anywhere quickly
- Major trails with linkages to major urban corridors
- Good maintenance
- Stewardship ethic
- Bold open space initiatives, e.g. Seattle waterfront, San Antonio Riverwalk, Chicago public lakefront, emerald necklace, NYC waterfront
- Identification and restoration of brownfield sites
- Sustainable use
- Low-impact use

Greenways, Blueways and Trails Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements, Operations & Maintenance (O & M):

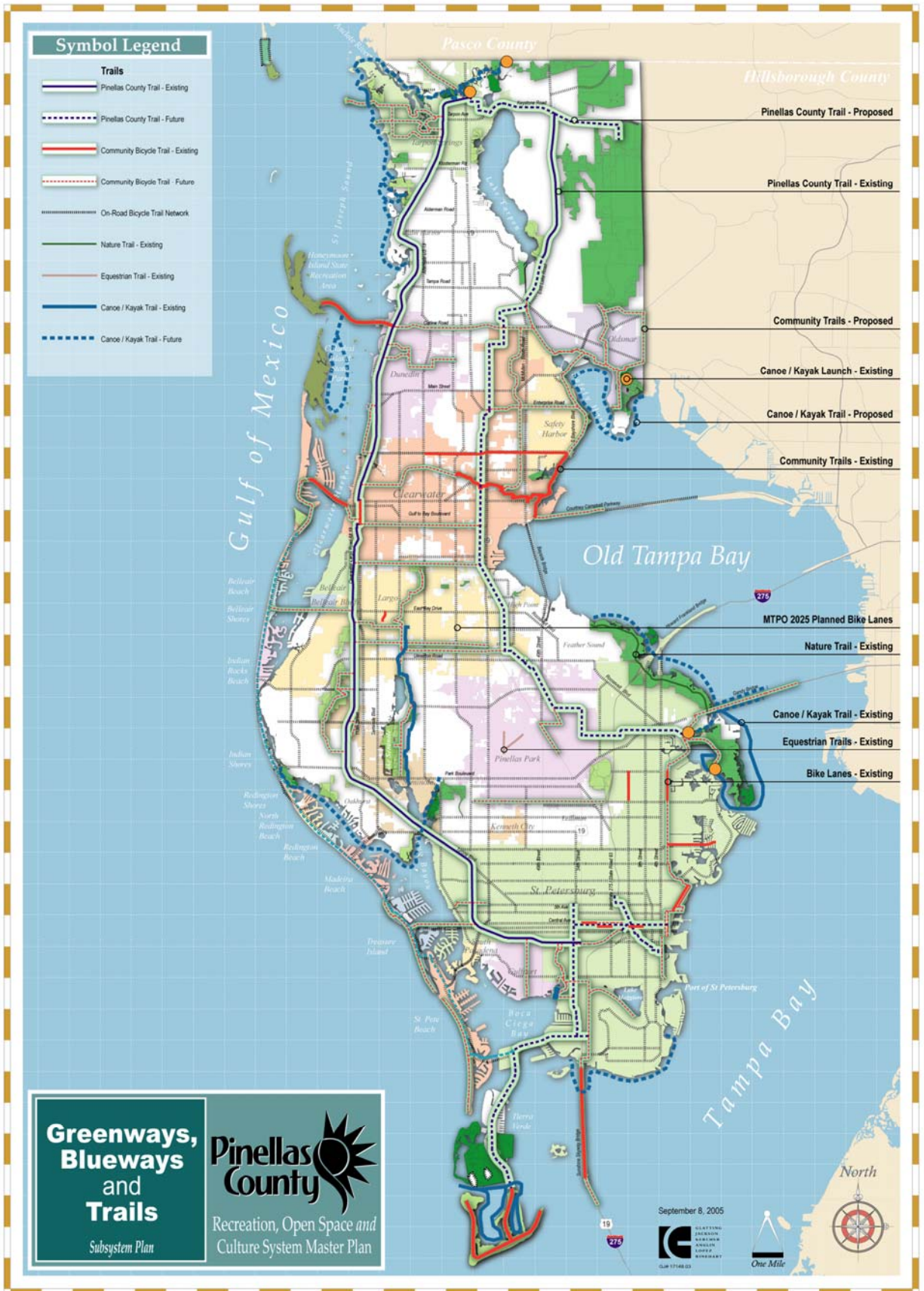
- Implement the County-wide Sidewalk Plan
- Implement the Trails and Greenways Plan (funded through Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Penny for Pinellas)
- Continue Implement Bike Lanes on Major Roads (Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Plan for Collectors, Arterials)
- Re-establish native habitat along existing greenway and blueway corridors, using volunteer groups wherever possible

Programs:

- Develop a long range, detailed Greenways and Blueways Plan that identifies existing and proposed corridors, and catalogs the various types of “experiences” available for users, using volunteer groups wherever possible
- Prioritize corridors and develop Implementation Strategies including construction, Operations & Maintenance, land acquisition, etc.
- Develop a detailed greenways and blueways map showing locations, facilities, amenities, experience type, etc.
- Provide incentives for public access to greenways and blueways on private property
- Develop a promotional campaign including a web site, friends organizations, concessions to promote the blueways and greenways system, etc.
- Establish a mechanism to review proposed public/private capital improvement projects to make sure that they’re consistent with the County-wide Vision, such as the bi-monthly Department Head meetings and/or the Development Review Committee meetings
- Inventory support facilities, concessions, businesses, providers, etc. to determine voids in available services
- Identify/map potential expansions, linkages, view sheds, accesses, etc. for acquisition
- Continue to Promote Florida Yards, other greenway enhancement programs

Policies:

- Update Land Development Codes and Development Review Process to require and/or identify opportunities for public access to the blueways and greenways system



10. Streets, Bike Lanes and Transit

The Pinellas County “Streets, Bike Lanes and Transit Subsystem” takes advantage of the County’s multi-modal network of sidewalks, cross walks, multi-purpose trails and bicycle facilities, and transit operations, and considers how physical, operational and programmatic enhancements to the system will maximize safe and affordable access for County residents and visitors alike to and from the myriad of passive and active leisure, recreation, culture and natural resource amenities available throughout the County.

Specifically, the vision includes the following components:

- Crosswalks - across all major roadways
- Sidewalks - along both sides of all arterial and collector roads, major local streets; buffered from vehicles by on-street parking and/or tree lawns, landscape buffers
- Bicycle Facilities - (lanes, side paths, sharrows) – on arterials, collectors and/or parallel facilities, connecting major destinations throughout the County; well-signed; providing a Level of Service (LOS) of “D” or better, in accordance with the Florida Department of Transport (FDOT) Quality Handbook
- Trails – Providing access to key destinations throughout the County, connecting to the network of Bicycle Facilities
- Transit (Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority - PSTA) – Access throughout County, connecting origins and destinations, including “bikes on buses”
- Bus Rapid Transit – Ultimately providing higher speed access throughout the County; currently planned for Central Avenue (34th to downtown); Ulmerton/Starkey to Tampa; and McMullen Booth from SR 60 to the Pasco County line.



Current



Proposed

This computer image of Highland Avenue in Largo illustrates the transformation of a street into a pedestrian and bicycle friendly “linear park.”

Streets, Bike Lanes and Transit Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

- Implement the County-wide Sidewalk Plan
- Continue to coordinate with the municipalities on implementation of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Trailways Plan, and implement the County's bikeways and trails system
- Continue to accommodate wheelchairs and bicycles on Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) vehicles as well as at PSTA stops

Programs:

- Work with the municipalities to establish County-wide transportation design standards, such as crosswalk designs
- Provide incentives to encourage Transit-Oriented Design (TOD)
- Build County-wide consensus regarding transportation objectives, policies and planning/design principles
- Initiate programs to enhance existing roadways through pedestrian crossings, shelters, street trees, signage, etc.

Policies:

- Eliminate code provisions that discourage or prohibit Transit-Oriented Design (TOD)
- Identify and focus development towards Activity Centers/Redevelopment Nodes

11. Environmental Education

The Pinellas County "Environmental Education Subsystem" strives to educate the public regarding horticulture, environmental and sustainability principles and practices while also advancing the educational level of Pinellas County residents. The System is comprised of three "layers" of educational outreach, including:

An Active Delivery System at Pinellas County Schools, St. Pete College, Pinellas Vo-Tech, Pinellas County Extension Service at Pinewood Cultural Park, State and Regional Parks and Preserves, libraries, 4H programs and other indoor/outdoor venues for classes, lectures and tours. The Active Delivery System offers a variety of certificate and non-certificate programs in life-skills, commercial and homeowner horticulture, sustainability and environmental studies, including advanced degrees in horticulture, environmental studies, parks and recreation and related subject areas.

A Passive Delivery System of self-guided learning opportunities including signs, exhibits, brochures, and kiosks at parks, preserves, boat ramps, trails, civic buildings, libraries and other public locations throughout the County, integrating public art wherever possible.

A Mobile/Virtual Delivery System that provides hands-on experiences through a County "Eco-Bus" Program delivering environmental education programs and activities to parks, schools and festivals, and on "Eco On-Line" web site listing horticultural and environmental learning opportunities for all ages of Pinellas County residents, including both degree and non-degree programs and experiences.

Curricula taught through all three delivery systems include:

- Environmental Education
- Horticulture
- Ecology
- Historic Preservation
- Cultural History
- Archaeology
- Visual and Performing Art

Critical to the success of the System is close coordination between the various education agencies. The Pinellas County Cultural, Education and Leisure Service (CEL) Department provides a leadership role in coordination, including:

- Initiatives to create a more sustainable Pinellas County;
- A collaborative system of integrated programs, facilities and resources
- Coordinated communications, marketing, and promotional initiatives

A recent addition to the Vision is a proposed University of Florida professorship in Urban Environmental Sustainability at the Extension Center to develop and implement research and educational programs demonstrating Urban Environmental Sustainability, and to create, provide and enhance ongoing education programs that focus on economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Elements of the professorship include:

- Replace existing Extension Services building with a new Pinewood Cultural Park building.
- A minimum of four programs per year to train the construction and allied construction industry personnel in construction techniques designed for urban sustainability and capable of withstanding severe Florida wind and weather.
- An education, demonstration, and hands-on learning center for children to learn about the wise use of energy, water, and other natural resources conservation.
- A demonstration center for the general public to provide information and education in the holistic approach to energy savings, water and natural resource conservation, and disaster mitigation practices for home and business owners.



Pinellas County Extension Service, Largo



*Educational opportunities help young people learn about conservation and land stewardship.
Photo courtesy of Pinellas County Communications Dept.*

Education Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

1. Construct multi-use pavilions (open and enclosed) and outdoor classrooms for sustainability/environmental education at public sites such as beaches, parks, and preserves; incorporate public art into design wherever possible
2. Construct signs, exhibits, brochures, and kiosks at parks, preserves, boat ramps, trails, civic buildings, libraries and other public locations throughout the County, integrating public art wherever possible. Include pre-history signs and exhibits.
3. Provide financial/staff assistance for facility expansion and maintenance
4. Include educational facilities in County-wide way-finding system (see Cultural Facilities Subsystem)

Programs:

1. Inventory community environmental education assets, including natural areas, educational venues, programs, providers, etc.
2. Establish a series of coordination meetings with government, non-profit and other agencies to collect data, discuss common agendas and curricula, identify and share resources, etc.
3. Establish a County-wide Calendar of Environmental Education Programs and Activities
4. Establish a County-wide Guide to Environmental Education Facilities and Programs, available both on-line and in publications
5. Meet with the Pinellas County Schools to establish a coordinated environmental education curriculum and program; integrate FCAT requirements into environmental/sustainability programs wherever possible
6. Coordinate marketing with the Convention and Visitors Bureau
7. Establish a County-wide "Sustainability Task Force" of community leaders to determine goals, implementation strategies for sustainability (e.g. Sarasota Science and Environmental Council)
8. Survey public lands for archeological sites
9. Protect, stabilize archaeological sites
10. Establish a marketing/promotional/funding campaign to raise awareness of existing facilities and programs; to raise funds for capital improvements, programs and maintenance; and to attract minorities and other under-served participants
11. Use interns to assist with programs, maintenance
12. Create the Urban Environmental Sustainability program to:
 - "Collaborate with a variety of County, public and private institutions and agencies across many disciplines (e.g. energy, water, wildlife, forestry, and horticulture) to develop local and state-wide policies promoting environmental/economic/social sustainability in urban environments in and around Pinellas County, Florida
 - Provide a state-of-the-art public education program engaging the general citizenry of Pinellas in understanding the necessity of sustainability
 - Work with agencies/policymakers/regulators/organizations to acquire grants, assist or lead cooperative/interdisciplinary projects, provide service to schools, write non-technical people-friendly publications, participate in professional societies and develop in-service trainings for Pinellas County employees
 - Provide a facility locally to be used as the model of 21st century sustainable construction in Pinellas County. Sustainable construction in Pinellas County as well as other locations in Florida can provide the necessary training to increase a reduction in damage to our homes because of hurricanes and other hostile weather and man-made emergency events
 - Establish an Urban Environmental Sustainability Center to further the County initiative in sustainability that can be utilized by all County departments and educational facilities"

Policies:

- Promote "Sustainability" as a guiding principle for County decision-making

12. Public Art and Design

The Pinellas County "Public Art and Design" Subsystem strives to integrate visual art into the physical "fabric" of Pinellas County to improve the aesthetic quality of the environment; to enhance public spaces; to reflect cultural, historical and community identities; to promote the public interest in public/community art; and to create visual focal points in the environment. While the Public Art and Design Program is a catalyst for encouraging and funding public art, the Subsystem Vision is the integration of public art into every aspect of community life in Pinellas County, including:

- Neighborhoods
- Commercial Centers
- Parks, Boat Ramps, Beach Accesses and/or other public realm facilities
- Trails, Greenways and Blueways
- Streets and Bikeways
- Roadways
- Preserves and Conservation Lands



Brooker Creek Preserve, permanent installation by artist Tim Upham

Generally the System includes two (2) types of public art: Permanent and Temporary. The components of the System include:

The "Hardware" - Art, Facilities, Locations, etc.

- Corporate art (privately funded)
- Temporary art
- Integration of art into physical environment
- Site-specific art (designed for that place), often built on site
- Delivered art (autonomous)
- Events
- Architectural/structural/civil/landscape elements
- Performances: music, art, literary
- Art institutions, museums
- Public infrastructure/public works
- Sculpture park
- Pedestrian - oriented art/activity centers

The "Software" - Programs, Administration, Staff, Education, Marketing, etc.

- System of inter-local agreements that promote resource sharing
- Artist in-residence program at civic sites/departments
- Public Art & Design programs in all municipalities in addition to the County, St. Petersburg
- Education programs regarding "how to work" with a public artist
- Private development programs/ordinances
- Artist relocation program (e.g. Paducah, Kentucky)

Ultimately, the Vision includes a new community ethic, one that sees art not as an "add-on" or after-thought, but as an integral part of every development/redevelopment/renovation and/or physical design project in the community.

Public Art and Design Implementation Strategies:

Capital Improvements:

- Identify public/private projects that could incorporate Public Art

Programs:

- Maintain and expand current programs, including Pinellas County Public Art and Design Program, City of St. Petersburg Art in Public Places Program, City of Clearwater Art in Public Places Program (pending)
- Establish a Pro-active Public Art Master Plan that identifies opportunities for Public Art and establishes an implementation/funding strategy and schedule
- Contact leading community businesses to determine willingness to fund private art initiatives
- Establish a Public Art campaign, brochure, educational materials, etc. to build widespread community support for art in public places
- Establish a process of identifying opportunities for Public Art in all public capital improvement projects, including neighborhood redevelopment and/or infrastructure projects such as streetscapes, parks, roadways, utilities, etc.
- Develop a Guide to Working with a Public artist, explaining how to integrate Public Art into both public and private projects
- Explore opportunities to make Public Art more relevant to current sustainability issues, such as the use of solar energy, recycled materials, etc.
- Meet with FDOT to explore opportunities to incorporate Public Art into context - sensitive design projects
- Develop a Pinellas Public Art Guide, illustrating a walking, driving (and virtual) tour of significant Public Art projects throughout the County
- Fund additional full-time staff to promote and coordinate Public Art

- Visit other communities with successful Public Art programs to “compare notes”, such as Miami-Dade County, Indianapolis, Seattle, Chicago, Phoenix, Minneapolis and Kansas City

Policies:

- Revise Building and Land Development Codes to require art to be integrated into project designs
- Involve the Arts Council or other Public Art representative in the County Development Review process
- Consider implementing a Public Art Impact Fee
- Eliminate any “barriers” in the Pinellas County Public Art and Design Program that limit geographical boundaries



Pinellas Trail installation by artist Mark Fuller



This bridge in Phoenix, which captures the jagged skyline of the mountains, shows how the integration of public art into the community's infrastructure can improve the aesthetic quality of the environment.

7. Implementation Program

Implementation of the County-wide Recreation, Culture and Open Space Vision is estimated at approximately \$339 million dollars over the next 15 years (2005 – 2020), which is consistent with the County's current level of funding. Once the Vision is implemented, additional operations, maintenance and programming costs are estimated at approximately \$6 - 7 million dollars annually. The "Order of Magnitude Opinion of Probable Costs", included at the end of this section, shows the estimated capital and operations/maintenance costs for the key recommended improvements in the Plan

Anticipated sources of public funding include current, approved Capital Improvements Program (CIP) funding for "Phase 1" projects in FY 2005 – 2010; anticipated "Penny 3" funding for "Phase 2" projects in FY 2010 – 2020; and "enhanced revenues" such as grants, naming rights, user fees, sponsorships and partnerships. It is also anticipated that many projects will be implemented through private or public/private partnerships.

Top priority "flagship" projects for the next fifteen years include (in alphabetical order):

- *Active Recreation* – New Community Parks and Regional Sportsplexes can help meet the increasing demand for Active Recreational Facilities
- *Arts and Cultural Facilities, Programs* – Additional funding for Operations, Expansion, Programming and Marketing
- *Aquatic Centers and Water Parks* – County Regional Sportsplexes, Municipal and Not-for-Profit Water Parks
- *Beach Access* – Acquisition and Development of Additional Beach Access, On/Off-Beach Parking Areas
- *Boat Ramps and Docks* – Acquisition and Development of North County Deep Water Boat Ramp; War Veterans Park, Park Blvd. Boat Ramp Improvements, Municipal Ramp Expansions

- *Canoe/Kayak Launches and Rentals* – Completion of Countywide Greenways and Blueways Plan, Construction of New Trailheads and Launches
- *Nature/Hiking/Walking/Bicycling Paths and Trails* – Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail Extension/Enhancement Projects, Sidewalk/Intersection/Roadway Enhancements throughout the County
- *Protection of Natural Resources and Preserves* – Wildlife/Historical/Archaeological Surveys, Managements Plans, Habitat Restoration/Enhancement Projects, Infill Lands Acquisitions, and Renewal and Replacement Projects in Existing Parks

Other potential sources of park development funding include:

- General Obligation/Revenue Bonds
- Special Assessment Districts
- Business Improvement Districts (BID)
- Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU)
- Impact Fees
- Development Extractions
- Donations/Contributions
- Land Swaps
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Other Implementation Strategies

In addition to the funding mechanisms outlined, other key recommendations for implementation of the Vision include:

1. Codify the Vision in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the County's Goals, Objectives and Policies should reflect:
 - The County-wide Vision for each of the Subsystems outlined in the Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan, including proposed land acquisition and facility development
 - The Service Area and Open Space Criteria established in the Master Plan, including unincorporated areas of the County
 - The County-wide priorities established through the Needs Assessment
2. Revise the County's Land Development Regulations to require that developers in unincorporated Pinellas County help to fund the land acquisition and facility development required to meet the needs of new residents through:
 - Dedication of land; and/or
 - Development of facilities; and/or
 - Payment of fees
3. Review and possibly revise current Parks Impact Fees to:
 - Include all of the subsystem elements included in the Recreation, Open Space and Cultural System Master Plan
 - Maintain the current level of per capita investment in Recreation, Open Space and Cultural System lands and facilities
4. Revise the County's Roadway Design Standards to require street trees, bike lanes, cross-walks and/or wide, multi-use bicycle/pedestrian paths on all new/improved roadways, where feasible
6. Continue to coordinate with the School Board, municipalities and non-profit agencies to provide for joint planning of Neighborhood and Community Parks, Sports Complexes, Trails and other elements of the Recreation, Open Space and Cultural System Master Plan, as well as after-hours use of school parks, playgrounds, gymnasiums, YMCAs and other facilities

Summary

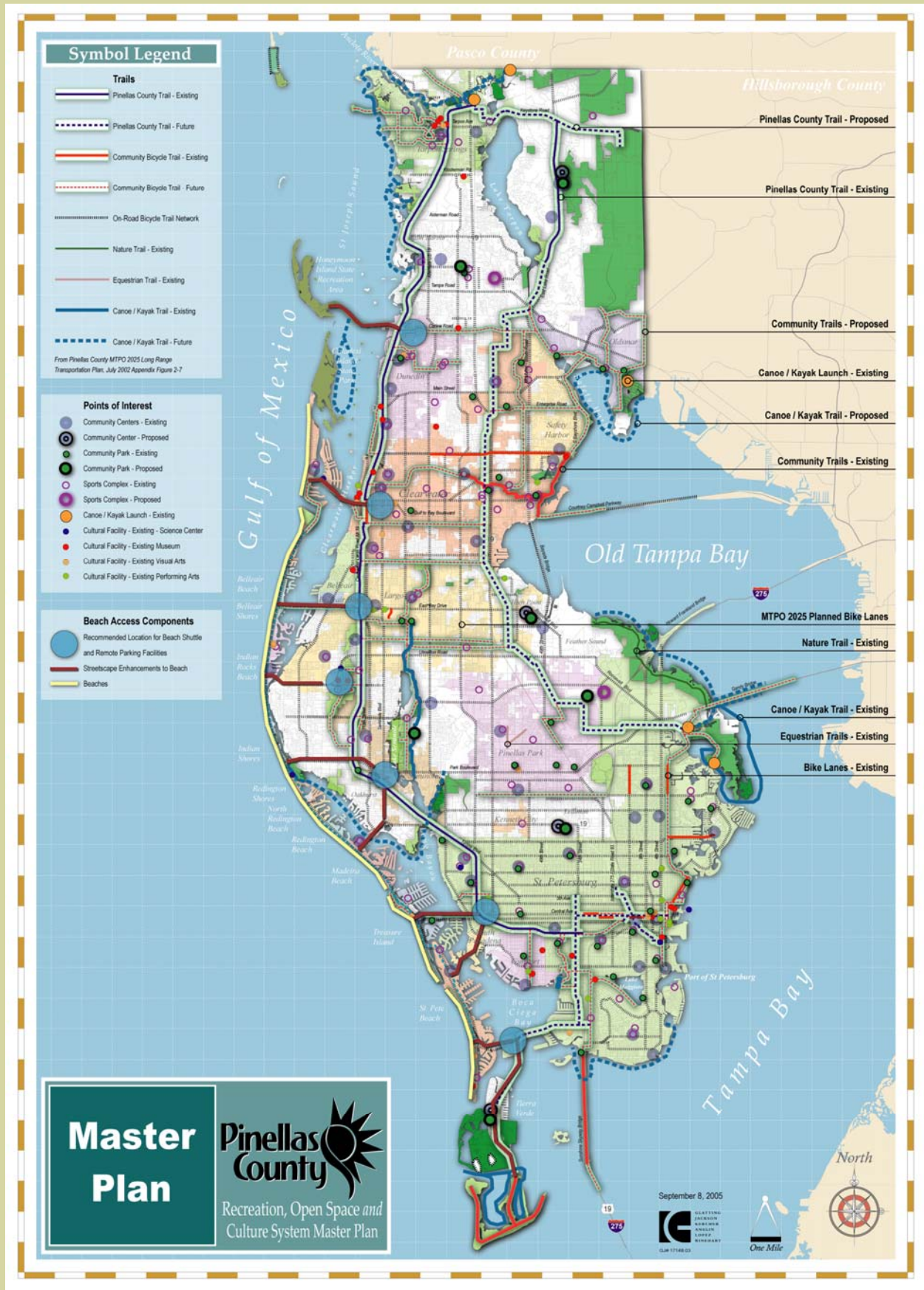
The Pinellas County Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan represents a long range (15 year) vision - based on the input of close to 2,000 residents, staff and community leaders – and designed to create *“the kind of place where families and businesses will want to stay, and where children will want to remain or return once they become adults.”* Implementation of the Plan does not require any extraordinary funding or tax initiative, or any major shifts in County policy. It requires that the County:

- Integrates the Plan (the Vision) into the County's Comprehensive Plan, and aligns County codes, ordinances, and the Capital Improvements Plan to make sure that every action, both public and private, will lead to the realization of a sustainable community
- Establishes objectives, benchmarks and measurable indicators to monitor the County's progress towards the Vision
- Closely coordinates with other departments and agencies to maximize the benefits of every proposed public or private project or initiative, and to minimize conflicts between proposed projects or initiatives
- Regularly monitors the implementation of the Plan, to ensure that projects and actions move forward, each contributing to keeping the Vision “alive”
- Commits to champion and use the concepts of “Planning to Stay” as guiding principles for every decision regarding the future of Pinellas County

Fifteen years from now, it is hoped that the 2005 Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan is regarded as a key component of the *Planning to Stay* initiative, which led to Pinellas County being considered one of the most livable and sustainable communities in the nation.



Aerial view of Pinellas County



Following is a chart prepared by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Division of Recreation and Parks, which lists "potential funding sources that may be available to local governments to assist in the development of park facilities, environmental education programs, or natural resource protection and enhancement projects." This list is available at the FDEP website: www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/bdrs.

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program

www.fl-dof.com/Help/index.html

Rural Development Program

www.fl-dof.com/Help/index.html

319 Grant Program

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/nonpoint/319h.htm>

Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP)

www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/bdrs

Land and Water Conservation Fund

www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/bdrs

Florida Communities Trust

www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fct

Transportation Enhancement Program

Local Program Administrator

(850) 487-3985

605 Suwannee Street, MS 37

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450

State Historic Preservation Grants-In-Aid Program

www.flheritage.com

Historical Museums Grants-In-Aid Program

www.flheritage.com

Waterways Development Program

Mr. Charles Listowski (941) 485-8394

Post Office Box 1845

Venice, Florida 34284-1845

(* if pursued)

Florida Boating Improvement Program

myfwc.com/boating/grants/fbip.htm

Derelict Vessel Grant Program

myfwc.com/boating/grants/derelict.htm

Marine Artificial Reef Development Program

myfwc.com/marine/ar/index.asp

Pinellas County Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan

Order of Magnitude Opinion of Probable Cost

6/6/05

INITIAL COSTS

Acquire Land	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A. New/Expanded Public Beach Access, Beach Drive Over Structures	1	EA	\$7,520,460	\$7,520,460	\$7,520,460		2.5 Acres at \$2,500,000/Acre
B. Off Beach Parking Lots	7	EA	\$750,000	\$5,250,000		\$5,250,000	3 acres each at \$250,000/ acre
C. North County Boat Ramp	1	EA	\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000		\$1,750,000	5 acres at \$350,000/ acre
D. Boat Storage	1	EA	\$750,000	\$750,000		\$750,000	5 acres at \$150,000/ acre
E. Community Centers	4	EA	\$750,000	\$3,000,000		\$3,000,000	5 acres each at \$150,000/ acre
F. Community Parks	7	EA	\$3,000,000	\$21,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$18,000,000	20 acres each at \$150,000/ acre
G. Park/ Preserve Infill	1	LS	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$2,913,900	\$7,086,100	100 acres at \$100,000/ acre
H. North County Sportsplex	1	EA	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000		\$7,500,000	50 acres at \$150,000/ acre
I. Trail Right Of Way	1	LS	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000		\$15,000,000	100 acres at \$150,000/ acre
Land Acquisition Total				\$71,770,460	\$13,434,360	\$58,336,100	

Build New Facilities	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A. New Signage/ Wayfinding system - County Wide	1	LS	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	Allowance
B. Educational/ Historical/ Archeological Exhibits and Kiosks	1	LS	\$5,191,090	\$5,191,090	\$5,191,090	\$0	Allowance
C. New Beach Drive-Over, Parking Areas, Shelter, Restrooms	1	LS	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$1,770,000	\$730,000	Allowance
D. New Community Centers	4	EA	\$2,000,000	\$8,000,000		\$8,000,000	10,000 s.f at \$200/ s.f.
E. New Community Parks	7	EA	\$3,500,000	\$24,500,000	\$2,347,500	\$22,152,500	20 acre site with 10 acres developed
F. New Sportsplexes	2	EA	\$15,000,000	\$30,000,000		\$30,000,000	10 baseball, 10 soccer, 5 softball, parking, etc
G. New Deep Water Boat Ramp	1	EA	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000	4 launch lanes and 120 car/trailer parking
H. Expand Deep Water Boat Ramp	1	LS	\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	\$0	Allowance
I. Expand Existing County/ Municipal Facilities	1	LS	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$919,220	\$2,080,780	Allowance
J. Multi-use Pavilions ,Amphitheaters, Outdoor Classrooms	20	EA	\$50,000	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	20 sites
K. Completion of Trails System	150	MI	\$200,000	\$30,000,000	\$6,196,620	\$23,803,380	trails and amenities
L. Livable Roadway Enhancements	75	MI	\$350,000	\$26,250,000		\$26,250,000	Bike lanes, sidewalks, crossings
M. Canoe/ Kayak Launches and Trailheads	50	EA	\$100,000	\$5,000,000		\$5,000,000	Launches, unpaved parking, signage
N. Experimental Shuttle System	1	LS	\$100,000	\$100,000		\$100,000	Allowance
O. Regional Park	5	EA	\$6,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$16,000,000	\$14,000,000	Allowance
Build New Facilities Total				\$175,841,090	\$37,724,430	\$138,116,660	

Renewal and Replacement	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A. Countywide Park Infrastructure: roads, sidewalks, roof, boardwalks				\$29,142,220	\$6,542,220	\$22,600,000	
B. Countywide Boat Dock Upgrades				\$4,374,120	\$874,120	\$3,500,000	
C. Countywide Restroom Replacement				\$1,310,000	\$710,000	\$600,000	
D. Countywide Playground Replacement				\$3,885,980	\$1,385,980	\$2,500,000	
E. Trail and Overpass Improvements				\$16,667,080	\$3,637,080	\$13,030,000	
F. Countywide Park Exotic Plant Removal				\$300,000	\$300,000	\$0	
G. Neighborhood Park Improvements				\$1,384,750	\$1,384,750	\$0	
H. Regional Park Improvements				\$19,609,410	\$8,434,410	\$11,175,000	
I. Educational/Historical Site Improvements				\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	Allowance
J. Florida Botanical Gardens				\$6,710,300	\$1,710,300	\$5,000,000	MP impl-add gardens, preserve impr, etc.
K. Heritage Village				\$3,462,690	\$2,162,690	\$1,300,000	MP impl-library, archive, offices, restoration
Renewal and Replacement Total				\$87,846,550	\$27,641,550	\$60,205,000	

Conduct Research	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A. All-Species Base Line Survey for Regional Parks	1	LS	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	Allowance
B. Historical/ Archeological Sites Survey	1	LS	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$125,000	\$375,000	Allowance
C. Municipal Boat Ramp Survey	1	LS	\$250,000	\$250,000		\$250,000	Allowance
Conduct Research Total				\$1,750,000	\$125,000	\$1,625,000	

Initiate Programs and Policies	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A. Identify New/Dedicated Source of O&M funding	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
B. Develop More Detailed Plans for Greenways and Blueways, Boat Ramp Expansion, Public Art System, Toy Town, New Community Parks/ Centers	1	LS	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000		Allowance
C. Develop a Suitability Assessment Model to Defend Preserves, Regional Parks from Over Development/ Incompatible Uses	1	LS	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000		Allowance
D. Develop Pro-Active Strategic Management Plans for Each Regional Park and Preserve	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		1 FTE
E. Develop Coastal Best Management Practices	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
F. Change Funding Formulas to Allow Off Beach Parking	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
G. Develop Equitable Funding/ Subsidy/ Reimbursement Formulas with Municipalities; Re-evaluate the Reimbursement Program	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		1 FTE

Pinellas County Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan

Initiate Programs and Policies (contd.)		Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
H.	Evaluate the Possible Use of Pennies Funding for O&M	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
I.	Develop a Comp Plan Policy to Maintain Current Ratio of Ramp Lanes and Parking/ Registered Boaters	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
J.	Change Codes to Allow Live/ Work Spaces	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
K.	Establish a Cultural Overlay District	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
L.	Codify Sustainability/ Quality of Life Goals, Indicators in Comprehensive Plan	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		1 FTE
M.	Update LDR's and the Development Review Process to Require/ Identify Opportunities for Public Access to Blueways and Greenways	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		1 FTE
N.	Revise Codes to Require the Integration of Public Art into Project Designs	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
O.	Establish Primary and Secondary Management Areas Around Preserves	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
P.	Explore Opportunities to Transfer Preserve Development Rights to a Third Party	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
Q.	Eliminate Code Provisions that Discourage or Prohibit TOD's	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		.5 FTE
R.	Update the Comprehensive Plan to Align with Recreation, Open Space and Culture Vision	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		1 FTE
Initiate Programs and Policies Total					\$1,705,000	\$1,705,000		
Initial Cost Total					\$338,913,100	\$80,630,340	\$258,282,760	

RECURRING COSTS

Recurring Program Costs (Annual)		Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A.	Assist Non-Profits and Private Agencies in the Renovation and Expansion of Cultural and Recreation Facilities	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
B.	Establish Coordinating Committees and Processes	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
C.	Develop a Project Review/Coordination Process	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
D.	Involve Public Artists in Capital Improvement Projects	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
E.	Dedicate Staff to Pro-actively Work with Municipalities, School Board, Non-Profits to Negotiate Agreements	1	EA	\$60,000	\$60,000			1 FTE
F.	Dedicate Staff to Other Initiatives Such as Conservation Land Management Outreach, Public Art Coordination and Historic Preservation	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
G.	Publish Marketing/ Informational Guides	1	LS	\$120,000	\$120,000			1 FTE + Printing budget
H.	Publish Coordinated Calendars	1	LS	\$70,000	\$70,000			.5 FTE + Printing budget
I.	Initiate the Pinellas County "Festivals" Program Including Regional Parks and Preserves	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
J.	Establish Friends Groups, Foundations, or Support Groups for Regional Parks, Preserves and Other County Facilities	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
K.	Integrate FCAT Requirements into Environmental Education, Regional Park, Preserve Programs and Activities	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
L.	Focus Commercial Development Towards Activity Centers/ Redevelopment Nodes	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
M.	Establish a County-Wide Historic Preservation Program	1	EA	\$30,000	\$30,000			.5 FTE
Recurring Programs and Policies Total					\$550,000	\$0	\$0	
Recurring Operation and Maintenance Costs		Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Total Price	Phase I (2005-10)	Phase II (2010-20)	Description
A.	Community Parks	7	EA	\$270,000	\$1,890,000			4 FTE per park
B.	Sports Complex	2	EA	\$680,000	\$1,360,000			8 FTE per park
C.	Trail System Expansion	150	MI	\$10,000	\$1,500,000			12 FTE
D.	Park Expansion and Improvements	1	LOT	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000			14 FTE
Recurring Operations and Maintenance Total					\$5,950,000	\$0	\$0	
Recurring Cost Total					\$6,500,000	\$0	\$0	



Boca Ciega Millennium County Park, dedicated in 2001

Symbol Legend

Trails

-  Pinellas County Trail - Existing
-  Pinellas County Trail - Future
-  Community Bicycle Trail - Existing
-  Community Bicycle Trail - Future
-  On-Road Bicycle Trail Network
-  Nature Trail - Existing
-  Equestrian Trail - Existing
-  Canoe / Kayak Trail - Existing
-  Canoe / Kayak Trail - Future

From Pinellas County MTP 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan, July 2002 Appendix Figure 2-7

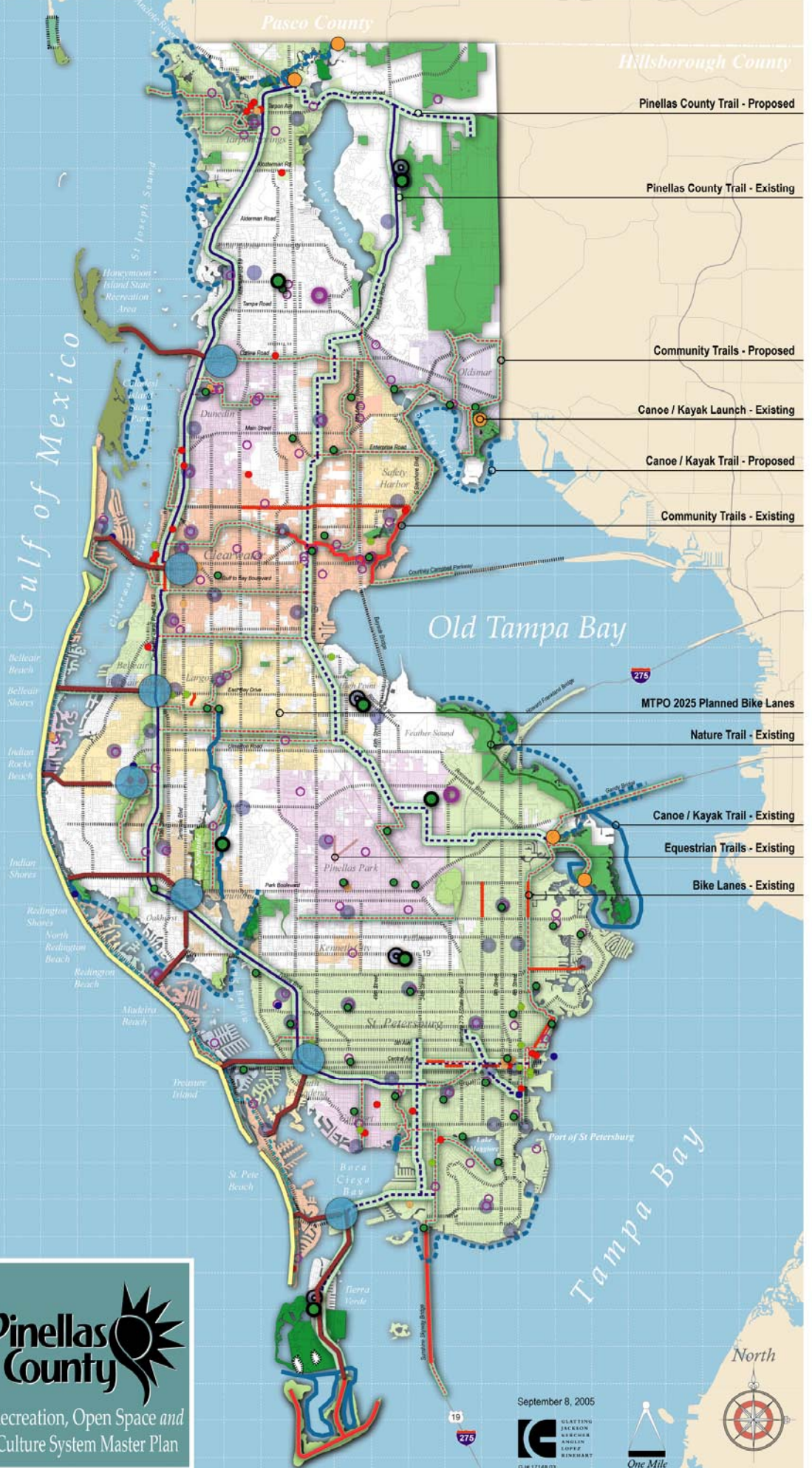
Points of Interest

-  Community Centers - Existing
-  Community Center - Proposed
-  Community Park - Existing
-  Community Park - Proposed
-  Sports Complex - Existing
-  Sports Complex - Proposed
-  Canoe / Kayak Launch - Existing
-  Cultural Facility - Existing - Science Center
-  Cultural Facility - Existing - Museum
-  Cultural Facility - Existing - Visual Arts
-  Cultural Facility - Existing - Performing Arts

Beach Access Components

-  Recommended Location for Beach Shuttle and Remote Parking Facilities
-  Streetscape Enhancements to Beach
-  Beaches

Gulf of Mexico



Master Plan



Recreation, Open Space and Culture System Master Plan

September 8, 2005





For additional information, please contact

Elizabeth A. Warren, CPRP, Director

Pinellas County Department of Culture, Education and Leisure . 631 Chestnut Street . Clearwater, FL 33758-5165