

# 5 *Governing Principles to Guide Decisions on Buildout*

As Pinellas County matures as an urban county, some of the issues of the past will metamorphose in ways that will require new or modified directions in public policy. It is also true that buildout is giving rise to new challenges that must also be accounted for when establishing public policy directed toward creating a quality urban environment that is sustainable over time. It is important, therefore, that public policy be adaptable and responsive to the needs of Pinellas County as the focus shifts from rapid growth to infill development and redevelopment. The following **Governing Principles** will serve as a guide for public policy and program decisions by the Board of County Commissioners in anticipating and responding to issues associated with buildout. These principles will also guide urban planning, design, and development.

## **The Ethic of Sustainability is Fundamental to Every County Policy, Decision and Plan**

**Principle 1:** Sustainability is fundamental to every County policy, plan and decision, to ensure that our actions today do not compromise the quality of our future.

**Principle 2:** Pinellas County is committed to meeting its existing needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**Principle 3:** The long-term impacts of each policy decision will be evaluated to ensure that it does not compromise a sustainable future.

## **Work Together at the Local, Regional and Global Level for a Sustainable Future**

**Principle 1:** Pinellas County will work cooperatively with other governments, agencies, and community stakeholders to promote the social, environmental and economic conditions necessary to achieve a sustainable community

**Principle 2:** As the urban boundaries of the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metro Area continue to expand outward from the historic focus on Tampa Bay, Pinellas County will remain active at the regional level to ensure that the County remains a dynamic participant in decisions on the region's future.

**Principle 3:** Pinellas County will ensure that there are open channels of communication between County government and citizens so that community concerns and interests are heard and taken into consideration when decisions are made that impact residents and businesses of Pinellas County.

**Principle 4:** Pinellas County and its municipalities must seriously consider the impact of their decisions on regional resources such as potable water supplies and the Tampa Bay estuary in order not to compromise the elaborate multi-jurisdictional agreements that have been established to manage these resources.

**Principle 5:** With the recognition that competition in the global economy is increasingly being conducted at the regional level, Pinellas County will promote and support public policy and economic strategies that enhance the Tampa Bay region's competitiveness in the marketplace.

**Principle 6:** Pinellas County and its municipalities must work together to support the tourism industry in Pinellas County. Redevelopment and infill development associated with build out conditions provide opportunities to enhance Pinellas County's image as a tourist destination by improving or replacing outdated and blighted retail strip centers, tourist accommodations, and commercial areas.

**Principle 7:** The County will lead by example and encourage other community stakeholders to use sustainability principles to guide their decisions and actions.

#### **Exercise Fiscal Responsibility and Develop Financially Feasible Plans**

**Principle 1:** For capital projects and for programs and policy decisions, Pinellas County will require *full cost accounting* that considers short-term, tangible costs as well as consideration of long-term environmental, economic and social implications. Decisions will be based on comprehensive and best available information.

**Principle 2:** The financial and human resources which are available to Pinellas County are limited and require that priorities, projects, programs and policies be reviewed regularly to ensure that the best possible investments in the future are being made. The evaluation of a program's cost-effectiveness will be based on a complete analysis of the associated costs and benefits, including environmental and social costs and benefits.

#### **Sustain a Quality Urban Community and Promote Strong Neighborhoods and Diverse Housing Opportunities**

**Principle 1:** As Pinellas County achieves build out and the focus shifts to infill development within existing urban areas and redevelopment, no community should be left behind economically and socially, and no neighborhood should be allowed to deteriorate.

**Principle 2:** A distinguishing characteristic of Pinellas County is the presence of a diverse mix of cities, small towns and suburban communities on a small peninsula. This variety of urban environments provides people with a choice of lifestyles, and retaining and enhancing these distinctive community characteristics will ensure that they remain vital and successful communities.

**Principle 3:** To improve Pinellas County's appeal as a place to live and work, it will be necessary for the public and private sectors to focus more resources on improving the quality

of the urban experience and the natural environment. Therefore, public policy should emphasize the importance of protecting and promoting community character, supporting economic development, and enhancing the lives of all segments of the County's population.

**Principle 4:** Pinellas County will continue to support efforts to create, or recreate, lively and dynamic areas of mixed-use. Revitalization efforts have so far focused primarily on historic downtowns, neighborhood commercial centers, and older commercial corridors. These revitalized mixed-use areas provide vibrant places where urban life can be experienced first-hand on foot. They also create a conducive environment for the type of residential development where services and amenities are often within walking distance.

**Principle 5:** Pinellas County recognizes that successful neighborhoods are central to the quality of life in Pinellas County. Therefore, redevelopment and urban infill should not compromise the integrity and viability of existing residential neighborhoods.

**Principle 6:** Neighborhood enhancement and rejuvenation will be accomplished in a manner compatible with community character, local traditions and heritage, infrastructure capacities, the natural environment, and the overall vision for the community.

**Principle 7:** As Pinellas County moves toward build out, conflicts between land uses have the potential to increase as development activity shifts to redevelopment and infill urban development. To minimize the potential for conflicts, Pinellas County should ensure that its revitalization and redevelopment plans, codes and public participation procedures provide effective guidance for change in a highly urbanized county.

**Principle 8:** Pinellas County will work with communities to create, reestablish, or expand public spaces in neighborhoods – whether they be linear recreational trails, parks, public open spaces, shoreline access, revitalized “main street” commercial centers, or even sidewalks. These shared public spaces can link neighborhoods together and provide a common area where people can feel they are part of a larger community.

**Principle 9:** One challenge facing Pinellas County and its municipalities is ensuring that as the post-World War II subdivisions, condominiums, mobile home communities, and apartment complexes age that they are able to adapt successfully to the changing needs of the homebuyer and renter. Pinellas County must be sensitive to these changing needs and be a facilitator in helping change to occur in a manner that is compatible with a community's character and vision for the future.

**Principle 10:** The roadway network encompasses a substantial portion of the County's land area; as such, roads and their adjacent land uses have a large impact in how people perceive Pinellas County. Therefore, the County's scenic/non-commercial corridor program will continue to be supported and implemented. The application of this program will be applied even at the neighborhood level where there are important local characteristics (e.g., extensive tree cover or a rural character) within the corridor that the community desires to preserve.

**Principle 11:** Pinellas County should promote revitalization of those land use corridors along the County's roadways that suffer from inefficient road access conditions, obsolete land development patterns, changes in demographics, and inadequate building maintenance.

**Principle 12:** A broad range of housing affordable to all income groups will be made available so that households of various incomes are able to reside throughout Pinellas County to support the local economy.

**Principle 13:** Pinellas County must take into account the housing needs of those who are susceptible to displacement by redevelopment. This includes those living in modestly priced homes on valuable real estate that will be under pressure to be converted to other uses due to market forces. In some situations, it may be necessary to preserve such dwellings in order to ensure that housing remains affordable to all income groups.

**Principle 14:** The transportation system must fit into and support the overall goals of the community, whether they are historic and/or community preservation, the revitalization of downtown, providing a safe, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, or preserving the natural environment. The movement of people and goods as quickly and efficiently as possible will not be the sole criterion for planning and designing transportation projects.

**Principle 15:** Pinellas County will continue to support opportunities throughout the County where jobs are located in proximity to housing so that residents are able to work close to home.

**Principle 16:** In achieving a healthy environment, Pinellas County must ensure that inequitable burdens are not placed on any one geographic or socioeconomic sector of the population and that the benefits of a sustainable community are accessible to all members of the community.

### **Provide Realistic Mobility and Transportation Choices**

**Principle 1:** Viable transportation alternatives will reduce dependence upon the automobile for moving people about the county and region. These transportation alternatives include transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems and will be effectively integrated into the overall transportation network to maximize access and use by residents and visitors for all types of trips.

**Principle 2:** To maximize the potential of the pedestrian/bicycle trails throughout the County, planning and design for development and redevelopment will be encouraged to recognize the trail system as an additional transportation network within the County.

**Principle 3:** Greenways, sidewalks, and multi-use trails will connect neighborhoods and communities with employment, retail, educational, cultural and recreational centers and with other neighborhoods.

**Principle 4:** Transportation improvements will support pedestrian enhancements and alternative modes of travel such as bicycle use. Streets should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian and bicyclist.

**Principle 5:** Pinellas County must remain effectively integrated into the regional transportation network so that people, goods and services can easily access the region's top-notch airports and highway system.

**Principle 6:** The road network in Pinellas County should present a safe and attractive landscape to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. Whenever appropriate, roadway landscaping should promote community identity and encourage pedestrian activity.

## Protect and Enhance our Natural and Cultural Heritage

**Principle 1:** Pinellas County will continue its program, in cooperation with other local governments, agencies, and interested citizens, to establish an interconnected system of greenways and blueways throughout the County that includes public parks, natural systems, waterways, river and creek corridors, waterfront and shoreline properties, pedestrian/bicycle trails, and other open space areas. Making these open space and natural areas accessible to the public enables residents and visitors to experience nature within the urban environment.

**Principle 2:** The natural surroundings are important in defining a community's character. Development and redevelopment should respect these natural surroundings, and when at all possible, enhance and restore the area's natural resources. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners will continue to take a lead role in managing the larger natural areas in the County, such as the Brooker Creek Preserve and the Weedon Island Preserve. Public access to natural areas will be managed so that it does not adversely impact the environmental integrity of these natural systems.

**Principle 3:** Pinellas County's appeal as a place to live, work and visit is in part dependent upon the variety and quality of the region's cultural resources (e.g., libraries, museums, performing arts centers, cultural heritage events). The community, therefore, must continue to invest in, and support, these cultural resources and events.

**Principle 4:** Pinellas County's rich natural heritage is part of the foundation for the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors, while the area's natural amenities and peninsular location have played a central role in defining the County's image. Pinellas County will therefore continue to naturalize the urban environment through programs to acquire and manage open space and environmental lands, to restore degraded natural habitats, to landscape road corridors, to establish new parkland, to protect natural areas from inappropriate development activity, and to provide greenways that tie together natural systems and neighborhoods.

**Principle 5:** Historically, Pinellas County has largely developed on the strength of its attractive natural amenities. An awareness of these features and their protection, restoration, and management should remain at the forefront of all planning efforts aimed at enhancing the County's quality of life. Toward this end, Pinellas County will continue its commitment to wise stewardship of the peninsula's natural amenities through the development of environmental education centers and programs that will further public understanding of, and appreciation for, the area's natural environment.

**Principle 6:** The 35 miles of sandy beaches on the Gulf coast represent the County's most recognized natural and recreational resource, and the basis for a multi-billion dollar tourism industry. Pinellas County will continue to take a lead role in protecting and restoring the natural

resource systems associated with sandy beaches and ensuring that there is adequate public access to the County's beaches and shoreline.

### **Maintain a Competitive Edge by Promoting a Sustainable Economy**

**Principle 1:** Economic development should support the overall aspirations of the community. Economic development is not an end in itself, but a means to help achieve a sustainable community and the quality of life desired by the County's citizens.

**Principle 2:** Achieving a sustainable community and the quality of life desired by the County's citizens is dependent upon continued growth in both the size and quality of the local economy. In order to attain this level of economic growth, Pinellas County will take steps to retain and recruit clean and green industries and businesses that provide high-wage jobs that bring money into the local economy from outside the County.

**Principle 3:** In order for Pinellas County to remain competitive in the regional and global economy, the County must educate, attract, and retain a well-trained workforce. This requires a commitment to provide the following: an excellent K-12 educational system available to all students, quality post-secondary educational institutions, and job-training programs to supplement these secondary and post-secondary educational programs.

**Principle 4:** A healthy environment supports healthy citizens and is integral to the long-term sustainability of the local economy.

### **Prepare for Disasters and Plan for Change**

**Principle 1:** Planning for development must respect the restrictions imposed by the County's susceptibility to natural disasters, and should anticipate potential alterations to the urban and natural environment induced by long-term changes in the climate.

### **Match Development and Redevelopment Opportunities with Resource and Infrastructure Constraints.**

**Principle 1:** Plans for redevelopment and infill development should be cognizant of, and compatible with, the limitations imposed by urban infrastructure systems, the County's susceptibility to natural disasters, and the region's natural resources, such as potable water supplies.

**Principle 2:** Development on a site should be compatible with restrictions imposed by the natural environment and the characteristics of the local community.