

2 *Pinellas County - A Regional Perspective*

Pinellas County is part of the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metropolitan area, which encompasses several cities and the counties of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando. That there are three cities included in the name of the metro area is evidence that no one city serves as the nucleus for the region. In fact, even the combined population of these three cities – about 660,500 residents - represents only a fraction of the metro area’s 2.40 million. And this fraction continues to get smaller as much of the population growth occurs in the smaller municipalities and unincorporated areas; only about 13 percent of the population growth in the metro area between 1990 and 2000 occurred in the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater.ⁱ Consequently, the metropolitan area replicates the situation found within Pinellas County in which there is no main central city or cities that dominates. In this respect the metro region centered on Tampa Bay is similar to most metro areas of the United States in which there is not one but several centers.

In 1949, the U.S. Census Bureau adopted the term metropolitan area “in order to recognize that urbanization had outstripped traditional city limits and that a new classification was needed”.ⁱⁱ In the United States, a metropolitan area is defined as a large population nucleus – for Tampa Bay three cities (Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater) represent the nucleus – and the adjacent communities with which the cities in the nucleus have a high degree of social and economic integration. Fifty-one years ago when the concept of metropolitan areas was developed, the central city – or cities in Tampa Bay’s case – were usually the economic and population centers for the metro area. Since then, however, more and more people are choosing to live outside the central cities; and this phenomenon now also includes employment as more and more businesses locate outside the older downtowns. In the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metro area, Joel Garreau, the author of Edge City, Life on the New Frontier, identified three major employment centers outside the older downtown areas of Tampa and St. Petersburg. One of these “edge cities” he considered to be established in the West Shore-Airport area, while two were emerging in the Gateway area of Pinellas County and along Interstate 75 in Hillsborough County.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, in 1999, the Gateway area contained roughly twice the amount of office space as downtown St. Petersburg. No doubt, additional major employment centers will become established in the metro area in the coming years, providing further evidence that the Tampa Bay region is a large urban area with several centers.

Pinellas County’s 280 square miles represent only 11 percent of the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metropolitan area; however, as discussed earlier in this element, the peninsula’s desirability as a location for homes and businesses contributed to phenomenal population growth after World War II. As a result, **Figure 6** reveals that in spite of its small geographic size, Pinellas, in 1970, contributed 47 percent of the metro area’s total population of 1.1 million residents.^{iv} During that year, the County’s share of metro area employment totaled 41 percent. In fact, so rapid was this growth that the population of Pinellas overtook that of Hillsborough County – a county more than three and a half times as large – in the 1960s. It was only

recently – in the mid-1990s – that Hillsborough County reclaimed first place in the metro area, probably to remain unchallenged due to the County’s large area and location centered on Tampa Bay. With little undeveloped land remaining for development, Pinellas is experiencing a leveling off of its population, which is expected to reach around one million in 2025. With the metro area expanding outward from its historic focus on Tampa Bay and the Pinellas peninsula, Pinellas County accounted for approximately 38 percent of the metro area’s population in the Year 2000, and is expected to drop to about 29 percent by the Year 2025. A similar decrease is expected for employment.

In 2005, total personal income in Pinellas County amounted to \$35.3 billion, representing approximately 40 percent of the figure for the entire metro area (\$88 billion). During that same year, the per capita personal income (PCPI) in Pinellas County was \$38,085, which was ranked 9th in the State. This figure exceeded the metro area’s PCPI by \$4,835 and was 21 percent greater than the State average, \$34,001, and 9 percent greater than the national average, \$34,471 (**Table 5**). Pinellas County’s average annual growth rate of PCPI over the ten years from 1989 to 2005 was 3.4 percent. The average annual growth rates for the State and for the nation were also 3.4 percent.^v Although growth in total personal income may slow down as population growth tapers off due to space limitations for additional residential development, growth in per capita personal income does not have to be restricted by buildout. In fact, if decisions are made that enhance the livability and economic conditions in Pinellas County, growth in PCPI can remain above the rates for the region, and State, and can reach and exceed the rate for the nation. This will in large measure be based on the types of jobs created in the County and lured here from other counties and regions.

TABLE 5 Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) in 2005		
Jurisdiction	PCPI in 2005	Average Annual Growth Rate (1989 – 2005)
Pinellas County	\$38,085	3.4 percent
Tampa – St. Petersburg – Clearwater Metro Area	\$33,250	3.4 percent
Florida	\$34,001	3.4 percent
United States	\$34,471	3.4 percent

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CA1-3 Per Capita Personal Income, 2005.

The breakdown of employment in Pinellas County and the metro area in 2005 is shown on **Figure 7**. The three largest employment sectors in Pinellas County are services (52.6 percent), retail trade (12.3 percent), and manufacturing (8.7 percent). In the metro area, the three largest sectors are services, retail trade, and finance, insurance and real estate enterprises. When comparing the 2005 Pinellas County data with employment figures for 1960, it is clear that while the three largest employment sectors have not changed (services, retail trade and manufacturing were the three largest sectors in both 1960 and 2005)^{vi}, there

has been a substantial increase in the percentage of the workforce employed in the service sector while there has been a reduction in the percentages engaged in retail trade and manufacturing. In 1960, 26.7 percent of employment occurred in the services sector of the economy, but by 2005 this percentage had increased to 52.6 percent. This substantial increase was offset by decreases in the agricultural services, construction, manufacturing, transportation and public utilities, and retail trade sectors of the local economy.

Personal income derived from earnings from employment is another barometer that can be used to measure change in the economic climate of an area. For example, in Pinellas County, the total earnings derived from the services sector of the economy increased by 62 percent between 1993 and 2005. Within the services sector itself, total earnings from business services in Pinellas County more than doubled during this 12-year period so that business services represents the second largest component of the services sector right behind health services. It is clear that the services sector has increased its lead as the largest sector of the local and regional economy. This trend is also occurring at both the State and national levels.

The relatively recent phenomenon in which Pinellas County finds itself outpaced in population growth by the other counties in the metro area does not mean that Pinellas has reached the apogee of its influence in the region. After all, unlimited growth is not the policy being pursued in Pinellas County. Retaining, and enhancing, the County's high quality of life will be instrumental in ensuring that Pinellas remains a desirable place to live and work. Consequently, wise management of the human, natural, financial, and manmade resources available to Pinellas will continue to have perhaps the most significant influence on the future of the County. Within a regional context, some of the resources that require responsible management are the transportation system, our water resources, our communications network, our natural and historical heritage, and our educational and cultural institutions. In each of these areas, it is important that, as the metro area expands in extent and in population, Pinellas County remain closely integrated with the rest of the region. For example, good accessibility is essential for a metro area and for an urban county. Consequently, the regional transportation network is of primary importance to the future of Pinellas County, which finds itself relatively isolated on a peninsula on the western edge of the metro area. As discussed in the Appendix to this element, inadequate transportation facilities hampered early development of the peninsula, and the inattention of remote decision-makers to the peninsula's transportation problems was one of the primary motivations leading to creation of Pinellas County in 1912. The accessibility of Pinellas County is dependent upon roadways that pass through other urban counties of the metro area, as seen in **Figure 8**. No matter how much Pinellas invests in its internal transportation system, accessibility to other markets within and outside the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metro area relies upon roads over which Pinellas has little control or responsibility. For this reason, regional cooperation on transportation issues is perhaps more critical to Pinellas than to its neighboring counties.

FIGURE 6
Population Growth in Pinellas County and Tampa – St Petersburg –
Clearwater Metro Area

FIGURE 7
Employment in Pinellas County and the Tampa – St. Petersburg –
Clearwater Metro Area in 1997

FIGURE 8
Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities
In the Tampa Bay Region

A major transportation nucleus for urban areas at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century is the region's airport. In many metro areas, these critically important facilities are located on the urban fringe. In Tampa Bay, however, the two major airports are located in the center of the expanding metro area. The locations of Tampa International Airport and St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (see **Figure 8**) put them in an excellent position to serve the needs of Pinellas County's residents and businesses. This central location is a powerful stimulus for the continued vitality of the urban core of the metro area. It is not too difficult to imagine the implications on the local economy if Tampa International Airport had been located on the other side of Hillsborough County.

In the Twenty-first Century, the regional economy will be increasingly dependent upon the quality of the communications network that links the metro area with the rest of the world. The investments made in communication infrastructure will be as important to the future of Pinellas County and the region as the investments made in such areas as transportation, education, social services and housing. For example, the availability of high speed internet access is an important criterion for an increasing number of firms in deciding on a location for their business. Those counties and metro areas that offer superior communications services and facilities will have an advantage in the global marketplace. Currently, in Pinellas County, Time Warner Communications and Verizon provide the lines, cable and other facilities for internet service.

The variety and quality of options afforded both residents and visitors for spending their leisure time can have a distinct impact on how people and businesses evaluate a community. No one would deny the benefits that museums, professional sports teams, performing arts centers, zoological parks, and libraries bring to a neighborhood, county, and region. Within the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater metro area there is a great variety of leisure time and cultural options available, with the greatest concentration located within the cities of Tampa and St. Petersburg. In fact, contained within a few blocks in downtown St. Petersburg are several museums (Salvador Dali, Florida International Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg Museum of History, Florida Holocaust Museum), two performing arts venues (Bayfront Center and Mahaffey Theater), and two stadiums (Tropicana Field and Al Lang Stadium). While there are other well-established and successful facilities located throughout Pinellas County, the large concentration in downtown St. Petersburg has made that area a focal point for arts, culture, and sports within Tampa Bay – a drawing card for both residents and visitors. The quality of life in Pinellas County and the metro area is in no small way measured by the community's investment in, and support for, the arts, culture, and leisure time activities.

Within a metro area that includes four counties, Pinellas County's geography sets it apart. The three geographic features that have had the most impact on the County and its residents are its peninsular location, Tampa Bay, and the chain of barrier islands off the Gulf coast. The resulting long coastline and nearly 35 miles of sandy beaches combined with the subtropical climate contribute substantially to the quality of life not only in Pinellas County, but also for the entire region. Here is an area where access to the beaches and to marine and estuarine waters is never far away, whether for boating, swimming, scenic vistas, fishing, or other water-related pursuits. Several lakes such as Lake Tarpon and Lake Seminole provide additional recreational opportunities. Of critical importance to the quality of life in Pinellas County and the region, however, is that the area's waters, beaches, and remaining open spaces remain available to the public and of sufficient quality to make public access worthwhile. The public must be vigilant to maintain adequate public access to the beaches and open waters, and

there must be sufficient recreation facilities and open space in Pinellas County to meet the needs of residents and visitors. At the same time, informed decisions and actions by residents, businesses, and public bodies must continue to support ongoing efforts to preserve and restore the area's natural environment that in many peoples' minds symbolizes what is special about Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay Area. One such ongoing effort is the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, which has resulted in the adoption of a Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) for restoring Tampa Bay. The CCMP seeks to improve the natural environment of Tampa Bay within a rapidly expanding urban area through integrating the objectives of the CCMP into the day-to-day decision-making of local governments, public agencies, businesses, and citizens.

ⁱ Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000.

ⁱⁱ Witold Rybczynski, *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 225.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joel Garreau, *Edge City* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 435, 437.

^{iv} Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1970.

^v *Survey of Current Business, 2008*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

^{vi} *Bureau of the Census*, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1960.