

# 17 *Funding Land Acquisition and Facility Development*

## **A TRADITION OF LAND ACQUISITION**

As noted throughout this Element, Pinellas County has long recognized the importance of protecting environmentally sensitive and important preservation and conservation lands. One of the best methods for protecting these lands is to acquire them and place them under County management. The current land acquisition program traces its roots back to 1972 when Pinellas County began the Red Flag Charette and the process to identify and target specific environmentally sensitive/important preservation and conservation lands throughout the County for acquisition. A twenty-member team of architects, planners, scientists and representatives of environmental groups convened and arrived ultimately at a document that provided guidance to, and a policy foundation for, the County's environmental lands acquisition program.

Following the identification of significant environmental lands, the next step was to attempt to identify dedicated funding for a land acquisition program. In addition to the ability to use ad valorem funds, in 1972, the Parkland Acquisition Fund was approved through voter referendum with 67 percent voter approval. In all, 438 acres of resource-based parkland were acquired under this program, which lasted from 1974 to 1985.

In 1984 and 1986, the citizens of Pinellas County passed referenda to establish an Endangered Lands Fund, with 62 percent and 76 percent voter approval, respectively, committing additional millage for the acquisition of parkland, open space and environmentally sensitive lands. Over 2,216 acres of environmental lands were acquired using these funds, with 1,680 acres being acquired through the first fund, and 536 acres being acquired through the second fund.

During this same time, the Pinellas County Water System was systematically buying large contiguous tracts of land in the northeast, or East Lake, area of the County. While the primary purpose of the acquisition was protection of the recharge area to the County's regional potable water supply wellfield, the additional priority of natural resource protection was soon established. To date, the Pinellas County Water System has acquired over 3,600 acres of land, which have been incorporated into, and are managed as a part of, the Brooker Creek Preserve.

In 1989, Pinellas County adopted its Comprehensive Plan under the State's revised Growth Management Act. This new Plan contained extensive commitments by the Board of County Commissioners to both land acquisition and management. These commitments were reflected in the original *Conservation Element* (now referred to as the *Natural Resources Conservation and Management Element*), the *Recreation and Open Space Element* (now the *Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Element*), the *Future Land Use Element* and the *Capital Improvements Element*. While the *Conservation* and *Recreation and Open Space Elements* defined the County's commitment to acquisition and management, the *Future Land Use*

*Element* described how the land use planning process - and application of the preservation land use category - was used to set aside additional environmentally sensitive lands for conservation purposes. The *Capital Improvements Element* identified the funding sources and priorities for acquisition.

Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Pinellas County citizens approved, through referendum and a 51 percent vote, a one-cent infrastructure sales tax, to be assessed for ten years, to provide funds for implementing significant components of the Plan. A portion of those dollars was earmarked for the acquisition of environmental lands identified in the Comprehensive Plan. This sales tax, called the "Penny for Pinellas," was instrumental in the success of the County's land acquisition program in the 1990s and resulted in the purchase of at least 2,013 acres of environmental lands.

In July 1996, Pinellas County completed a major evaluation of its adopted Comprehensive Plan. This process, which included involvement by the public, input from review agencies and the establishment of an environmental [citizen] workgroup, identified both needs and desires for additional capital projects and programs, including environmental and parkland acquisitions necessary to meet Comprehensive Plan natural resource and resource-based recreation goals and objectives.

In 1997, with the infrastructure sales tax destined to expire in 2000 and following the completion of the evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of County Commissioners went again to the public with information specifying the additional capital improvements and investments needed to continue implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, including the investments needed to continue the extensive program of environmental and parkland acquisition. Again, the public approved, by referendum, a ten-year extension to the "Penny for Pinellas." The extension was approved by a 65 percent vote, most likely due to the County's record of being able to successfully implement the original plan of improvements and acquisitions identified under the first "Penny." At a minimum, 2,500 acres of land are estimated to be purchased by the time the extension expires. The "Penny" extension will run until 2009.

On November 1, 2005, Pinellas County completed a second major evaluation of its Comprehensive Plan, once again utilizing public involvement and input from review agencies and the environmental workgroup. Around that same time, the County adopted the *Recreation, Open Space and Cultural System Master Plan*. Both the evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan and the new Master Plan re-emphasized the importance of environmental and parkland acquisition, this time with a focus on 'filling in the gaps' in an around individual parks and environmental lands, as well as establishing better connectivity between managed lands. There is also a new emphasis on building facility-based recreation ventures and expanding culture-based venues.

On March 13, 2007, Pinellas County voters approved a second extension of the Penny for Pinellas one-cent sales tax that will be in effect through the Year 2020. The renewal of the Penny means continued funding for parks and recreation-related projects, particularly community parks, cultural facility improvements and acquisitions that strengthen our connections to the water.

Please see **Table 20** for a list of conservation/endangered lands and resource-based parkland acquired between 1972 and October 2006. **Table 21** summarizes the history of funding sources and the corresponding amount of lands purchased since 1972, and **Table 22** provides a listing of property acquired through the Penny for Pinellas program between March 1990 and May 2006.

**TABLE 20**  
**PROPERTIES ACQUIRED UNDER PINELLAS COUNTY'S**  
**ENDANGERED LANDS PROGRAM**  
**1972 – OCTOBER 2006**

PROJECT	ACRES
Allen's Creek	19.64
Alligator Lake	95.10
Anclote River	204.30
Anderson Park	29.44
Belleair Tract (Eagle Lake Park)	163.11
Boca Ciega	184.50
Brooker Creek	1,819.43
Brooker/Anclote Corridor	47.01
Brooker Lake Property	189.89
Coopers Point	136.00
Cow Branch	99.30
Dolly Bay	3.00
Gateway Tract	699.00
Howard Park	48.60
Indian Rock Beach Access	2.42
Joe's Creek Nature Preserve	307.50
John Chesnut Sr. Park	255.30
Lake Seminole Park Addition	20.00
Largo Narrows	33.10
Live Oak Park	1.15
Madeira Beach Access	1.50
Mariner's Point	64.95
Master Bayou	39.70
Mobbly Bay	114.36
Ozona Preserve	8.30
Palm Harbor Historical Parcel	1.10
Palm Harbor Trailside	8.70
Panama Key	5.20
Pinellas Trails	3.56
Redington Shores Beach Access	3.40
Sand Key Park	90.00

**TABLE 20** continued  
**PROPERTIES ACQUIRED UNDER PINELLAS COUNTY  
 ENDANGERED LANDS PROGRAM  
 1972 – OCTOBER 2006**

<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
Shell Key	39.51
Snug Harbor	0.23
South Pasadena	11.40
St. Petersburg Beach Access	5.30
Sutherland Bayou	16.11
Tiki Gardens	9.60
Travatine Island	38.60
Treasure Island Beach Access	0.50
Wall Springs	200.98
Walsingham	67.10
Weedon Island	81.40
Woodfield	57.30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,226.58</b>

Source: Pinellas County Real Estate, 2006



*Wall Springs Park is one example of the many properties acquired under the Endangered Lands Program*

**TABLE 21****SUMMARY OF PINELLAS COUNTY'S PARK AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM**

FUND NAME	REFERENDUM DATE	FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT	PROGRAM DATES	ACRES PURCHASED
Parkland Acquisition Fund	Nov. 7, 1972 67.8% Approval	Ad Valorem 1 Mil for 2 years (1973-1974)	\$15.9 Million	1974-1985	437.9
1st Endangered Lands Fund	Nov. 4, 1980 61.5% Approval	Ad Valorem 3 Mills for 2 years (1981-1982)	\$7.9 Million	1984-1988	1,679.8
2nd Endangered Lands Fund	Nov. 5, 1986 75.6% Approval	Ad Valorem 2 Mills for 2 years (1987-1988)	\$24 Million	1987-1990	536.5
Penny for Pinellas	Nov. 8, 1989 51% Approval	14 Local Option Sales Tax (1990-1999)	\$35.2 Million	1990-1999	2,012.7
Penny for Pinellas Extension	March 25, 1997 64.5% Approval	14 Local Option Sales Tax (2000-2009)	Estimated \$1.36 Billion	2000-2009	Estimated 2,500
<b>Subtotal through (12/06)</b>			<b>\$1.443 Billion</b>		<b>4,667</b>
Second Penny for Pinellas Extension	March 13, 2007 57.14% Approval	14 Local Option Sales Tax (2010-2019)	Estimated \$1.9 Billion	2010-2019	TBD: \$21 Million reserved for acquisition
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>\$3.343 Billion</b>		

Source: Pinellas County Real Estate, 2006

**TABLE 22**

**PROPERTY ACQUIRED THROUGH THE PENNY FOR PINELLAS  
March 1990 – May 2006**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Closing Date</b>
Brooker Creek Preserve	57.34	03/27/1990
Wall Springs Park	10.69	03/28/1990
Mobbly Bay	21.46	04/20/1990
Tiki Gardens	9.59	04/30/1990
Wall Springs Park	0.16	08/28/1990
Boca Ciega Park	0.43	10/30/1990
Boca Ciega Park	8.00	10/30/1990
Brooker Creek Preserve	19.15	10/30/1990
Cow Branch	86.29	01/09/1991
Weedon Island	53.72	02/15/1991
Brooker Creek Preserve	19.54	07/15/1991
Wall Springs Park	20.28	10/01/1991
Brooker Creek Preserve	38.25	10/30/1991
Pinellas Trail	1.22	03/16/1992
Dolly Bay	3.00	04/23/1992
Mobbly Bay	11.00	07/02/1992
Mobbly Bay	0.88	07/14/1992
Brooker Creek Preserve	241.72	08/19/1992
Feather Sound Community Service District	9.86	12/30/1992
Brooker Creek Preserve	304.45	01/29/1993
Cow Branch	7.18	02/17/1993
Alligator Lake	95.11	02/18/1993
Cow Branch	5.87	03/26/1993
Mobbly Bay	42.19	04/19/1993
Brooker Creek Preserve	159.61	05/01/1993
Wall Springs Park	1.72	06/09/1993
Weedon Island	39.73	06/29/1993
Boca Ciega Park	5.03	12/28/1993
Lake Seminole	15.00	02/10/1994
King Islands	25.66	04/05/1994
Wall Springs Park	6.67	04/26/1994
Yat Kitischee	14.40	04/29/1994
Mobbly Bay	14.54	06/16/1994
Boca Ciega Park	0.94	09/23/1994
Brooker Creek Preserve	103.76	10/26/1994
Pinellas Trail	2.34	08/22/1994
Brooker Creek Preserve	20.21	09/13/1995
Brooker Creek Preserve	2.49	09/13/1995
Brooker Creek Preserve	23.31	09/18/1995
Brooker Creek Preserve	4.97	09/18/1995

**TABLE 22 continued**  
**PROPERTY ACQUIRED THROUGH THE PENNY FOR PINELLAS**  
**March 1990 – May 2006**

Project	Acreage	Closing Date
Brooker Creek Preserve	12.91	12/18/1995
Brooker Creek Preserve	31.94	12/29/1995
Brooker Creek Preserve	25.00	04/08/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	10.02	05/08/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	15.00	05/08/2006
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	45.40	09/18/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	20.80	09/19/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	5.00	09/25/1996
Joe's Creek	91.76	10/29/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	0.15	11/21/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	3.60	12/17/1996
Brooker Creek Preserve	10.10	01/06/1997
Brooker Creek Preserve	40.53	07/10/1997
Walsingham Park	2.30	08/28/1997
Brooker Creek Preserve	31.16	12/01/1997
Brooker Creek Preserve	3.25	12/01/1997
Brooker Creek Preserve	126.80	12/01/1997
Weedon Island	27.69	01/21/1998
Brooker Creek Preserve	0.15	02/03/1998
Lancaster Preserve	19.50	02/24/1998
Ozona Preserve	1.30	09/18/1998
Brooker Creek Preserve	2.49	09/19/1998
Shell Key	18.35	09/29/1998
Joe's Creek	33.78	10/29/1998
Brooker Creek Preserve	6.11	12/01/1998
Eagle Lake Park	156.51	12/16/1998
Shell Key	21.16	09/16/1999
Brooker Creek Preserve	1.08	02/22/2000
Ozona Preserve	1.70	06/28/2000
Brooker Creek Preserve	2.49	08/08/2000
Anclote River Islands West	3.10	09/29/2000
Live Oak Park	1.15	09/29/2000
Snug Harbor	0.23	09/29/2000
Mariner's Point	64.95	11/27/2000
Allen's Creek Marsh	19.64	12/01/2000
Brooker Creek Preserve	3.80	12/13/2000
Anclote River Islands West	25.95	12/18/2000
Mobbly Bay-With City of Oldsmar	12.37	04/18/2001
Mobbly Bay	7.29	05/03/2001
Sutherland Bayou Wetlands	16.11	05/24/2001

**TABLE 22 continued**  
**PROPERTY ACQUIRED THROUGH THE PENNY FOR PINELLAS**  
**March 1990 – May 2006**

Project	Acreage	Closing Date
Wall Springs Park	29.50	05/30/2001
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	27.20	06/11/2001
Wall Springs Park	5.16	10/04/2001
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	76.08	11/16/2001
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	23.14	12/21/2001
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	3.25	12/21/2001
Brooker Creek Preserve	10.39	03/22/2002
Brooker Lake Property	189.89	03/22/2002
Brooker Anclote Corridor	2.50	04/30/2002
Brooker Anclote Corridor	15.71	06/06/2002
Brooker Creek Preserve	4.98	06/27/2002
Anderson Park	1.14	07/22/2002
Wall Springs Park	88.58	07/24/2002
Brooker Anclote Corridor	15.50	01/09/2003
Brooker Anclote Corridor	13.00	03/19/2003
Brooker Creek Preserve	2.49	06/06/2003
Brooker Creek Preserve	27.00	06/30/2003
Anclote River Backwater Marshes	0.18	03/24/2004
Brooker Anclote Corridor	0.30	08/06/2004
Wall Springs Park	5.74	12/17/2004
Mobbly Bayou -with City of Oldsmar	4.60	02/23/2005
Eagle Lake Park-Historic Addition	6.60	04/21/2006
Indian Rocks Beach Parking	0.49	05/24/2006
Indian Rocks Beach Parking	0.33	05/24/2006
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,984.12</b>	

Source: Pinellas County Real Estate, 2006

### **PARTNERING IN LAND ACQUISITION**

Seeking to optimize the funds available for land acquisition, the County has frequently collaborated with other agencies when land acquisition goals were complementary. For example, Pinellas County has received several Preservation 2000 awards from the Florida Communities Trust (FCT). Most of the land acquired through this program has been in the Brooker Creek Preserve, the over 8,000 acre natural preserve managed by Pinellas County in the northeastern section of the County. Additional lands acquired under the Preservation 2000 program include the McKay Creek Greenway acquisitions associated with the Pinewood Cultural Center. More recently, the County has utilized the Florida Forever Program, Preservation 2000's successor, to help acquire land surrounding Wall Springs Park and the Brooker-Anclote ecological corridor. The County has also applied for and received greenway grants through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for lands to include as a part of the Weedon Island Preserve and to preserve Cunningham Key. Through this process, the State acquires the land, but the County is the land manager. Other successful partnerships

include, but are not limited to: (1) that between the County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District to acquire lands for inclusion in the Brooker Creek Preserve, (2) the joint purchase by the County and the [then] Department of Environmental Regulation of the Gateway area, 699 acres of contiguous preservation lands along the eastern coast of Pinellas County, (3) the interlocal agreement between the County and the City of Oldsmar for the management of the Mobbly Bayou Wilderness Preserve, and (4) joint acquisition with the City of Clearwater of Cooper's Point for conservation purposes, and with the City of Largo for the Largo Narrows. Additionally, the County has received 705 acres of environmentally sensitive land through the process of individual donations.

Frequently, the County and a participating agency may collaborate not only in acquisition but in management as well. Overall, these partnerships are both fiscally and environmentally successful and advantageous.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COUNTY'S LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM**

One of the hallmarks of the County's land acquisition program remains the over 8,800 acres of land systematically acquired in north County to comprise the Brooker Creek Preserve. A management plan for the Preserve was completed in 1993, with the cooperation of scientists and technical experts from the University of South Florida, the Audubon Society, etc. The management plan is currently undergoing revision.

Another very significant achievement/acquisition has been the County's ability to acquire almost all of Shell Key, one of the most significant bird habitats/stopovers in the region. Again, this has been accomplished through a process of systematic land acquisition by the County, partnership with the State (to lease certain lands under State ownership), and ongoing negotiations with private landowners for the last remaining two submerged parcels not yet acquired. The management plan for Shell Key has recently been completed.

Overall, the amount of land acquired and managed for environmental purposes in Pinellas County since the 1970s represents one of the most aggressive land acquisition programs in the State. In fact, to date, all but one of the lands targeted through the Red Flag Charrette have been acquired by the County, by another municipal government or by another agency, or they have been set aside as preservation lands without development potential. Similarly, during the process of evaluating the success of Comprehensive Plan implementation in 1996, County staff reviewed the "Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System" report compiled in 1994 by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This review revealed that most of the significant lands identified by the State as being critical for meeting the conservation goals for declining wildlife and plant species were currently in public ownership within Pinellas County.

Finally, an innovation for the County is the Pinellas County Environmental Foundation, managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with the intent of providing support for the environmental conservation and management goals of Pinellas County. The Pinellas Foundation, established in 1998, is the very first partnership of this kind between a local government and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Foundation provides grants for those activities that further the Foundation's environmental conservation goals, including land

acquisition and management. This is discussed further under the 'Innovative Programs and Partnerships' section of this Element.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MASTER PLAN AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS**

**Table 23** lists the recreation, open space and culture capital projects summary. Anticipated sources of public funding include current, approved Capital Improvements Program (CIP) funding (labeled as 'scheduled'); anticipated "Penny 3" funding; 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. Please see the *Recreation, Open Space and Culture Master Plan* for more detail. Other potential sources of park development funding include:

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

The County could revise its land development regulations to require developers in unincorporated Pinellas County to help fund the land acquisition and facility development required to meet the needs of new residents. Possibilities include the dedication of land, development of facilities and payment of fees. The County could also review its current Parks Impact Fees to determine if any revisions are necessary. It may also be beneficial to revise the County's roadway design standards to require street trees, bike lanes, crosswalks, and other related improvements where feasible and appropriate. Lastly, it is important that the County continue to coordinate with the School Board, municipalities and non-profit agencies to provide for joint planning of facility-based recreation activities and facilities, neighborhood and community parks, sports complexes, multi-use trails, and other elements of the *Recreation, Open Space and Cultural Master Plan*.

**TABLE 23**  
**RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & CULTURE PROJECT SUMMARY, 2007-2020**

PROJECT ID	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT STATUS <sup>1</sup>
918	Art in Public Places Funding	Scheduled
N/A	Beach Access Acquisition and Development	Planned
1212	Belleair Causeway Park – New Bridge	Scheduled
939	Brooker Creek Preserve Boardwalks and Trails	Scheduled
992	Brooker Creek Preserve Education Center Exhibits	Scheduled
1070	Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center	Scheduled
1244	Brooker Creek Preserve Maintenance Complex	Scheduled
1241	Brooker Creek Preserve Public Use Infrastructure	Scheduled
N/A	Chesnut Park Boardwalk/Tower	Planned
1637	Chesnut Park Habitat Restoration and Installation	Scheduled
N/A	Community Library Improvements	Planned
N/A	Community Parks Land Acquisition and Development	Planned
N/A	Community Recreation Centers Development	Planned
N/A	County Extension Center Building Replacement	Planned
1081	Countywide Beach Accesses	Scheduled
922156	Countywide Boat Dock Facility Upgrades	Scheduled
N/A	Countywide Park Boat Ramp Land Acquisition/Development	Planned
632	Countywide Park Exotic Plant Removal	Scheduled
922475	Countywide Park Facilities Roof Improvements	Scheduled
921707	Countywide Park Improvements	Scheduled
N/A	Countywide Park Infrastructure Improvements	Planned
630	Countywide Park Playground Replacement	Scheduled
629	Countywide Park Sidewalk Replacement	Scheduled
1231	Countywide Park Utility Infrastructure	Scheduled
922473	Countywide Replacement of Boardwalks, Towers, Docks	Scheduled
732	Countywide Restroom Facility Replacements	Scheduled
628	Countywide Roadway and Parking Area Upgrades	Scheduled
625	Eagle Lake Park Development	Scheduled
154	Endangered Lands Acquisitions	Scheduled
1121	Extension Center Improvements	Scheduled
1473	Florida Botanical Gardens Boardwalk	Scheduled
738	Florida Folk Music and Cultural Center	Scheduled
622	Fort DeSoto Administration Building Expansion	Scheduled
N/A	Fort DeSoto Bay Pier	Planned
921706	Fort DeSoto Facility Improvement and Road Widening	Scheduled
623	Fort DeSoto Fort Site Evaluation	Scheduled
N/A	Fort DeSoto Park Improvements	Planned

**TABLE 23 continued****RECREATION, OPEN SPACE & CULTURE PROJECT SUMMARY, 2007-2020**

<b>PROJECT ID</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>PROJECT STATUS<sup>1</sup></b>
1288	Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail CSX Corridor Trail Extension	Scheduled
922481	Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail Improvements	Scheduled
932	Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail Overpasses	Scheduled
839	Friendship Trail Bridge	Scheduled
922231	Gandy Boulevard Causeway Enhancement	Scheduled
851	Heritage Village Improvements	Scheduled
N/A	Heritage Village Master Plan Implementation	Planned
928	Heritage Village Sponge Warehouse	Scheduled
922470	Howard Park Bridge Replacement	Scheduled
N/A	Howard Park Improvements	Planned
881	Joe's Creek Greenway Park	Scheduled
1456	McMullen Booth Road/Union Street Soccer Complex	Scheduled
1236	North County Boat Ramp	Scheduled
1192	Pinewood Cultural Park Entrance	Scheduled
1235	Pinewood Cultural Park Preservation Site	Scheduled
539	Pop Stansell Park Improvements	Scheduled
922499	Progress Energy Trail Extension	Scheduled
874	Recreation Grant Projects	Scheduled
1080	Sand Key Park Shelters/Parking	Scheduled
1638	Taylor Park Seawall	Scheduled
1246	Therapeutic Riding Center	Scheduled
524	Wall Springs Development Phase 3	Scheduled
840	Wall Springs Park/McMullen Property	Scheduled
730	War Veteran's Memorial Park Oyster Bar Creation	Scheduled
953	Weedon Island Boardwalk Reconstruction	Scheduled
1243	Weedon Island Canoe Trail Reconstruction	Scheduled
888	Weedon Island Exhibits	Scheduled

Sources: Pinellas County Capital Improvements Program & Office of Management and Budget, 2007

N/A = Not Assigned

<sup>1</sup> 'Scheduled' indicates the project is included in the six-year (2008-2013) CIP list; 'Planned' indicates the project is anticipated to be implemented beyond 2013, up to the year 2020.