

2 Existing Conditions

Pinellas County is the second smallest county in Florida with roughly 944,000 permanent residents in 2007. The land area is small, about 280 square miles, but there are 25 local governments located within this small peninsular county. As of 2007, the County is considered over 96 percent built-out. This set of circumstances is unique in Florida, and has resulted in, among other things, provision of verity of essential governmental services and agencies in the County.

For land use analysis purposes, the Pinellas County Planning Department has divided the County into 14 planning sectors. The location, boundary and relation of these 14 planning sectors with the municipalities are depicted on Figure 1. The discussion of land use in unincorporated areas and its relation with municipalities are discussed in the following chapter. Figure 2 depicts unincorporated areas of Pinellas County.

Special Districts Overview

The small size of Pinellas County, the presence of 25 local governments, and the rapid urbanization since the 1940s and 1950s has required the County and the municipalities to expand the provision of essential public services and facilities to the entire County. The delivery of services is accomplished routinely and efficiently through the combined efforts of State and regional agencies, Pinellas County, the municipalities, and special districts. There are a total of thirty six special districts throughout Pinellas County. These are considered either independent or dependent special districts and include community redevelopment areas (CRA), community development districts (CDD), special fire control districts, emergency medical services, housing authorities, The Juvenile Welfare Board, and downtown development boards. These districts were created by either the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, a special act of the Legislature, elected municipal officials, and/or by both by the County and the municipality.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Independent and Dependent Special Districts

In Pinellas County, there are more than 18 independent and dependent Special Districts, not including the nine community redevelopment areas throughout Pinellas County. All these districts were created under statutory authority by either local ordinance or by special act of the State Legislature. Funding for these districts comes from diverse sources such as the federal government, local and valorem taxes, and fees. (See Table 1).

Community Redevelopment Areas (CRA)

The Community Redevelopment Act (Chapter 163, Part III, F.S.) enables local governments are able to prepare redevelopment plans for areas of their communities that experience slum and blight conditions. The redevelopment plan identifies improvements that act as a catalyst for public and private development. One mechanism that may be used to help fund these improvements is tax-increment financing. Tax-increment financing allocates ad valorem tax revenue for infrastructure in areas where redevelopment is desired but funding for public facilities is not otherwise available when needed. Increase in tax revenues above a 'base line' tax base that are realized as a result of new development in a specified area are earmarked for financing public improvements or services in that area. Currently, there are eleven community redevelopment areas (CRAs) throughout Pinellas County; nine of the CRAs utilize tax-increment financing. Figure 3 illustrates the locations of all CRAs in Pinellas County.

TABLE 1

FIGURE 3

Community Development Districts (CDD)

There are three community development districts (CDD) in Pinellas County. Clearwater Bay Community Development District (Clearwater), Eastlake Oaks Community Development District (Oldsmar), and Entrada Community Development District (St. Petersburg) were enacted as independent special districts by local ordinances for the purpose of community development initiatives. The CDD funding is derived from special assessments within the districts.

Fire Districts

There are a total of 23 fire districts in Pinellas County. There are nineteen dependent fire districts and four independent Special Fire Districts throughout Pinellas County. A map depicting the fire districts and their boundaries is shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

EXISTING LAND USE OVERVIEW

The Future Land Use & Quality Communities Element concentrates on land use considerations that affect the unincorporated area and on the interrelationships between land use decisions in the unincorporated area and other local governments and agencies, such as the School Board of Pinellas County. Land use is the most fundamental and dynamic element of the local comprehensive plan. Of all the elements, it is the one that is most familiar to the elected officials since they regularly hear testimony and must make decisions on proposed changes to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and the related Zoning Atlas. It is also the element with which citizens are most likely to become engaged since the Future Land Use Element along with the implementing Zoning Code have perhaps the greatest influence on the desirability of their community as a place to live and work. The Transportation Element would be a close second in influencing the livability of a community. Since January 1998, when the prior EAR-based amendments were adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, land use activity in the unincorporated area of Pinellas County can be summarized as primarily a filling in of the land use pattern that was established in the County's initial local comprehensive plan adopted in 1982. By 1998, most of the development in unincorporated Pinellas County, as in the municipalities, was occurring as infill development on smaller vacant lots interspersed among existing urban and suburban development. As the availability of undeveloped land has become increasingly scarce, redevelopment has taken on a greater share of the building activity within the unincorporated area. Figures 5a and 5b identify the location of vacant developable parcels of land of five acres or more within Pinellas County, while Table 2 shows the acreage of all vacant developable parcels throughout the County and within the unincorporated area. With only between 5% and 6% of the unincorporated area and the entire county currently vacant and suitable for development, it becomes readily apparent why infill development and redevelopment have become the predominant building activity within Pinellas County and the unincorporated area. Figure 2 shows the locations of the unincorporated areas within Pinellas County, and Table 2 identifies the acreage of vacant developable land by its Future Land Use Map category for the unincorporated area, the municipalities, and the entire county. Appendix A differentiates this information further among each of the 14 planning sectors.

In 1995, vacant developable land accounted for approximately 12.8% of the entire County and 15% of the net acreage of the unincorporated area. In 2007, vacant developable land accounted for approximately 5.5% of the entire County and 5.9% of the unincorporated area (Table 3). The growth that has occurred in the County since the previous EAR-based amendments were adopted in 1998 largely took place as anticipated in the Comprehensive Plan at that time. The urban infill development and redevelopment that has occurred since 1998 has followed the land use pattern established by the Future Land Use Map and supporting policies. One relatively small scale modification to the anticipated development pattern is represented by County land acquisitions for public open space and environmental protection. The extent of urbanization in Pinellas County and the high cost of land have kept recent land acquisitions limited in size, but they have removed development potential from coastal locations, some of which are located in the coastal storm area. These modifications have had a salutary effect on surrounding communities and the County at large by providing parkland and environmental preserve lands in an urbanized environment.

FIGURE 5A
VACANT LAND IN PINELLAS COUNTY (5 ACRES OR GREATER) SOUTH

FIGURE 5B
VACANT LAND IN PINELLAS COUNTY (5 ACRES OR GREATER) NORTH

Table 2

EXTENT OF ALL VACANT DEVELOPABLE PARCELS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY AND WITHIN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA, 2007		
	ACRES	PERCENT OF AREA*
Countywide	8,124	5.1
Unincorporated Area*	3,571	5.7

Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, 2007
 * Net Acreage - excludes public rights-of-way and submerged land.

**Table 3
VACANT DEVELOPABLE LAND
IN PINELLAS COUNTY BY
FUTURE LAND USE MAP CATEGORY****

FLUM Code	Munic. Acreage	Uninc. Acreage	County Total
* RR	30.43	1307.44	1337.86
* RE	48.68	132.79	181.47
* RS	160.37	339.73	500.10
* RL	467.27	507.20	974.47
* RU	626.46	278.71	905.16
* RLM	102.72	75.13	177.85
* RM	364.24	29.28	393.51
* RH	14.33	5.81	20.14
RVH	0.12	0.00	0.12
* R/OL	13.44	2.27	15.72
* R/OG	201.37	16.46	217.83
* R/O/R	86.72	70.38	157.10
RFM	12.72	0.00	12.72
RFH	14.91	0.00	14.91
* CN	4.91	8.00	12.91
CL	29.71	0.00	29.71
* CR	1.76	2.61	4.37
* CG	533.19	158.98	692.17
* IL	1091.95	347.62	1439.56
* IG	206.81	123.85	330.66
* I	260.52	131.17	391.69
* T/U	13.28	31.85	45.13
* CRD-AC	0.00	1.65	1.65
CRD	157.91	0.00	157.91
CBD	109.05	0.00	109.05
TOTALS	4552.83	3570.91	8123.74

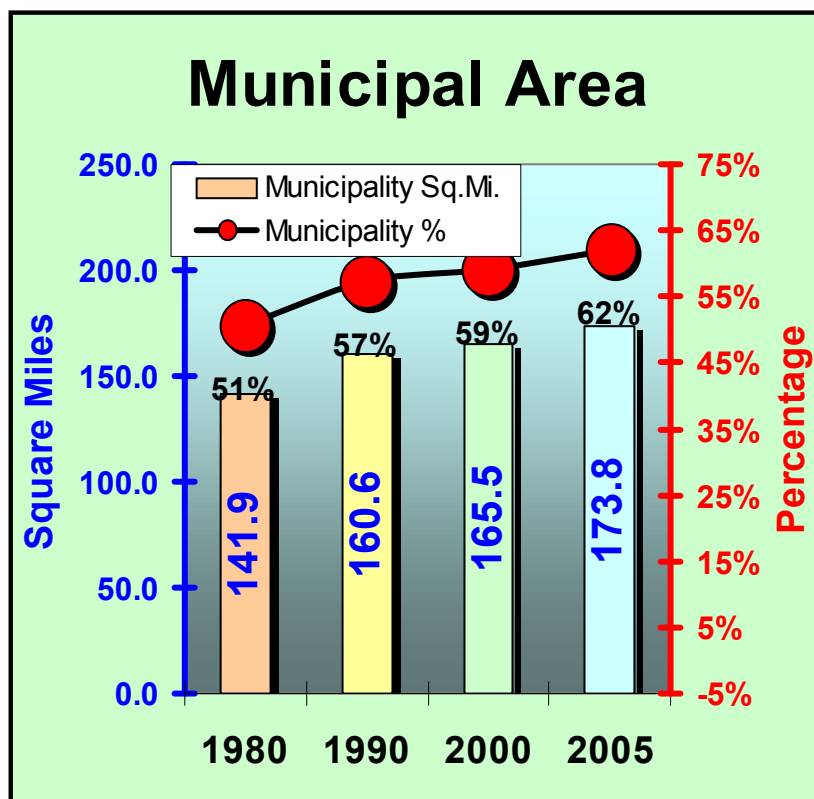
* Unincorporated Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Categories

** Overlay FLUM categories are not included

Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, October 2007

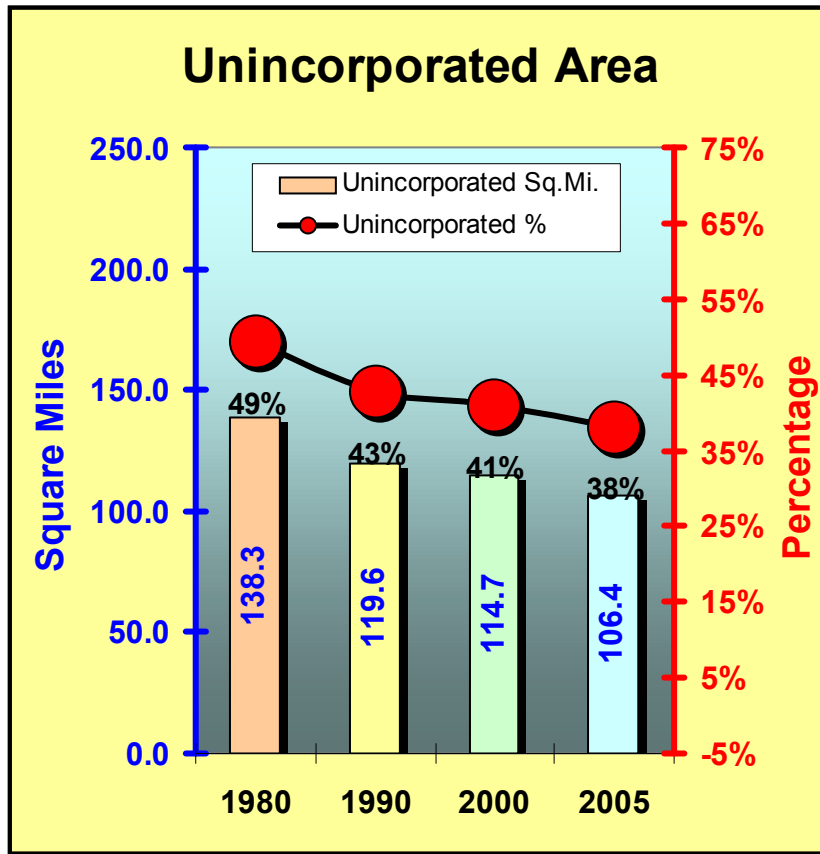
The unincorporated area of Pinellas County, itself, has decreased in size due to annexation activity. Between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2005, approximately 6,925 acres have been annexed by 11 of the 24 municipalities within the County. Most of this annexation activity has been conducted by the cities of Largo, Pinellas Park, Seminole, and St. Petersburg within the central and south central portions of the County. Figures 6, 7 and 8, reveal the change in the unincorporated acreage between January 2000 and December 2005, and show that, in spite of continued annexation, the unincorporated area still accounted for 38% of land acreage in Pinellas County and 30% of the permanent population at the end of 2005.

FIGURE 6



Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, 2006

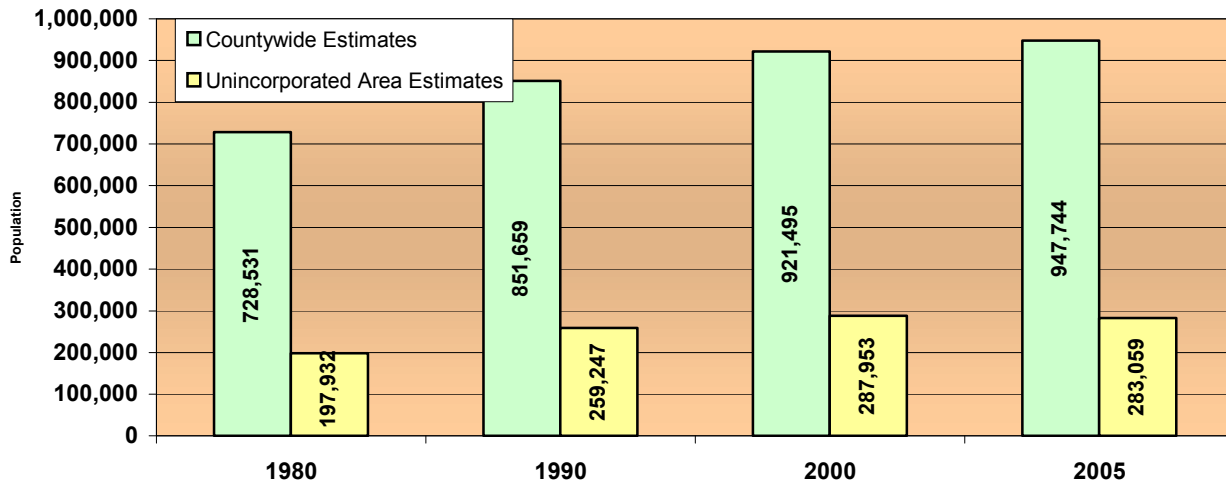
FIGURE 7



Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, 2006

FIGURE 8

Changes in Municipality and Unincorporated Area Population from 1980-2005



Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida

TABLE 4**Distribution of Acreage in Pinellas County by Type of Land Use, Countywide and Unincorporated, 2007**

ELU Category	Unincorp. Acreage	Unincorp. % of Net Acreage	County-wide Acreage	County-wide % of Net Acreage
Single Family	19398	31.18%	52895	33.78%
Mobile Home	1971	3.17%	5173	3.30%
Duplex/Triplex	375	0.60%	1565	1.00%
Multi-Family	3265	5.25%	11038	7.05%
Commercial	2390	3.84%	10901	6.96%
Industrial	1897	3.05%	5299	3.38%
Public/Semi-Public	5415	8.70%	13262	8.47%
Agriculture	1030	1.66%	1175	0.75%
Rec/Open Space	5898	9.48%	14845	9.48%
Vacant	2680	4.31%	7580	4.84%
Miscellaneous	5218	8.39%	11061	7.06%
Conservation/ Preservation	12631	20.30%	21549	13.76%
Marina	49	0.08%	225	0.14%
TOTALS	62216	100.00%	156568	100.00%

Source: Pinellas County Planning Department, 2007

Table 4 compares the percentage breakdown of the entire county and the unincorporated area by the different types of existing land use. The actual acres of the various existing land uses are listed in Appendix B and the map in Attachment A shows the location of existing land uses throughout Pinellas County.

Several conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of Table 3 and a comparison with similar information for 1989 and 1995. It should be noted that the unincorporated area has continued to decrease in size over the past 18 years due to annexation. The differences in the composition of the unincorporated area's existing land use are therefore influenced not only by development activity within the unincorporated area but also by annexation, much of it involving land that is already developed for urban purposes. At the countywide level, single-family and multi-family residential uses account for an increasing percentage of the County's overall area; however, the percentage of land area devoted to mobile homes and duplex-triplex uses decreased. The percentage of Pinellas County's land area used for commercial development or set aside for conservation/preservation purposes increased steadily between 1989 and 2007. Meanwhile, industrial and recreation/open space uses grew as a percentage from 1989 to 1995, but then decreased over the next 12 years. It should be no surprise that the percentage of the County comprised of agricultural land and vacant developable land continued to decline to a total of only 5.6 % in 2007.

While the trends in existing land use for the unincorporated area mirror in many respects what occurred at the countywide level, there were some differences. One notable difference is that commercial acreage accounted for an increasing percentage of the unincorporated area between 1989 and 1995, but then decreased from 4.4% to 3.8% over the next 12 years. Countywide, the percentage of the County devoted to commercial activities kept increasing, and accounts for almost 7% of the countywide net acreage in 2007. Similarly, the percentage of Pinellas County land used for industrial purposes increased from 1989 to 2007, while the percentage decreased in the unincorporated area, with a significant drop between 1995 and 2007. No doubt annexation has contributed to this reduction of commercial and industrial uses as a percentage component of land uses in unincorporated Pinellas County. This reduction appears to have resulted in a less diverse tax base for the unincorporated area, placing increased reliance on residential properties for raising property taxes to pay for municipal services in the areas outside the municipalities. Further analysis of the impact of annexation and what affect it may have had on the diversity of the unincorporated area's tax base should be conducted before decisions are made on proposed solutions to various annexation issues.

Since January 1998, there have been some transitions in how the Board of County Commissioners and County staff have approached land use planning. With the impending advent of "buildout" (this term refers to the condition where essentially all buildable parcels of land not set aside for parks, open space, and natural preserves have been put to some urban use) the emphasis has shifted from the review and approval of large subdivisions to a focus on helping existing communities retain and improve the conditions in their neighborhoods. This has resulted in placing additional staff and financial resources into assisting in the revitalization of communities and neighborhoods in different parts of unincorporated Pinellas County. Revitalization efforts that were initiated before 1998 have continued and a new effort in Central Lealman was initiated in 2000. Revitalization efforts in the Dansville and Greater Ridgecrest communities have been underway for several years and have included construction of a major community recreation facility that is currently operated by the YMCA, resolving numerous parcel boundary discrepancies in the Dansville community to clear up property titles, and improved infrastructure such as construction of a landscaped regional retention facility in Dansville along with road improvements. Work will continue in the Greater Ridgecrest and Dansville communities. Construction of sidewalks along two streets in Greater Ridgecrest will be part of a streetscaping project to upgrade the appearance and provide safety for pedestrians along the streets. Support for operation of the YMCA Ridgecrest Branch will continue. In Dansville, infrastructure improvements continue with the end goal of providing 55 additional single-family homes in the area.

Pinellas County has also established two County Connection Centers to more expeditiously respond to citizen and business concerns and to provide a more localized communications link between County government and neighborhoods and communities.

In north county, the Board of County Commissioners has supported the efforts of the Old Palm Harbor Community to revitalize their historic downtown by approving a Master Plan for downtown improvements in December 2001, adopting a new Future Land Use Map category and Zoning District for Downtown Palm Harbor in 2002, and funding the installation of streetscape improvements that are being installed in phases. In 1999, Downtown Palm Harbor was selected to participate in the Florida Main Street Program, and the Board provided a staff

person to lend support to the Downtown Palm Harbor Main Street effort during its first three years of operation.

Since 1998, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners and the School Board of Pinellas County have continued to improve coordination between their different areas of responsibility. The School Board and the Board of County Commissioners have twice been able to utilize the Public School Siting Process established by Interlocal Agreement in 1996 to allow construction of a public school on a specific property without having to amend the Future Land Use Map. In April 2003, Pinellas County, the twelve municipalities in the County that contain one or more public school, and the School Board entered into an Interlocal Agreement that established procedures for coordinating public school facilities planning, land use and development decisions, the collocation and shared use of facilities, and other decisions that affect the participants in the Agreement. Pinellas County and the School Board have for several years participated in a multi-jurisdictional effort by the Metropolitan Planning Organization to develop population projections that can be used by the various local governments within the County and the School Board in developing their planning programs. Population projections for Pinellas County are based upon the 1980 and 2000 U.S. Census and the ultimate number of dwelling units derived from local government Future Land Use Maps. A mathematical model known as the Double Exponential Growth Model uses this information to project the County’s population. This mathematical model makes the time of total buildout for each planning sector a function of growth rate and the remaining growth potential for each sector. The most recent population projections using this multi-jurisdictional approach were completed in 2004 and revised in early 2007; the results are shown in **Table 5** and resulted in the following projected growth for the permanent, seasonal, and tourist/visitor populations in Pinellas County:

**TABLE 5
Population Projections for Pinellas County, FL**

	PLANNING YEAR				
	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Permanent	944,772	964,477	979,489	990,703	999,911
Seasonal	78,106	79,708	80,919	81,824	82,550
Tourist/Visitor	91,019	91,990	92,703	93,244	93,652
Total	1,113,897	1,136,175	1,153,111	1,165,771	1,176,113

Note: 1. Seasonal Population is defined as persons who reside in Pinellas County for less than six months and declare their permanent home elsewhere.

2. Tourist/Visitor Population represents the impact that tourists and visitors have on public services and facilities that are comparable to the impact of an equivalent number of permanent residents.

Source: Pinellas County Planning Dept., 07/04, Rev. 02/07

Due to the extent of urbanization in Pinellas County and the relative stability of the overall existing development pattern, the local adopted Future Land Use Maps and any anticipated redevelopment were used to project growth in dwelling units, which were then converted to an associated increase in the permanent and seasonal populations. Growth in the numbers of permanent and seasonal residents take into consideration the maximum number of dwelling units permitted by the local comprehensive plans as modified to account for anticipated

redevelopment. These modifications due to anticipated redevelopment over the next 20 years were not substantial because of the current extent of urbanization and the limited opportunities for significant changes to the established land use patterns in much of the County.

In compliance with the 2003 Interlocal Agreement, the School Board also provides to each local government a copy of the District's five-year school plant survey and any annual updates for local government review and comment. Pinellas County also complies with the Interlocal Agreement by informing the School Board in advance of proposed Future Land Use Map amendments and/or zoning changes with sufficient time for School Board review and comment.

There are no military installations located in Pinellas County subject to the recent amendments to Sections 163.3175, 163.3177, 163.3187, and 163.3191, F.S., of the Growth Management Act. Therefore, no amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to include criteria for coordination with military commanders and compatibility of adjacent or closely proximate lands with military installations are required.

While not classified as military installations, the District Seven U.S. Coast Guard Air Station – the largest Coast Guard air station in the Country – is located in Pinellas County, as is the adjacent Army Reserve Black Hawk Training Facility. In both cases, maintaining the compatibility of adjacent land uses is vital. Coordination will be ongoing in regard to land use decisions that have the potential to impact the facilities. Since both facilities are in close proximity to the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport, land use compatibility considerations usually address all three facilities. The Transportation Element and its supporting policies help to ensure that land uses in proximity to the Airport and related installations are compatible with their continued operation.

Existing Land Uses in Adjacent Jurisdictions

Adjacent land uses for other jurisdictions within Pinellas County are included in the Existing Land Use Map found in Attachment A. In Planning Sector 1 of Pinellas County, the existing land uses in adjacent Pasco within one mile of the Pinellas/Pasco County line include single family, commercial, public/semi-public, open space/wetlands, mobile home, and industrial uses as well as vacant land. In Planning Sector 2, adjacent land uses in Pasco County within a one mile radius of the Pinellas/Pasco county line include single-family, multi-family, commercial, agricultural, and open space/wetlands. (See Figure 1 for a map of the Planning Sectors in Pinellas County.) Attachment B is the existing land use map for Pasco County. Land uses in Hillsborough County adjacent to unincorporated Pinellas County include agricultural, residential, preservation, open space, public/semi-public, commercial, industrial, and vacant. Attachment C, which was prepared by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission, is an existing land use map for the portion of Hillsborough County adjacent to Pinellas County.