

■ *Future Plans and Opportunities* ■

Supporting Economic and Employment Potential with County Projects and Plans

Integral to achieving the maximum potential of the Gateway Area is a comprehensive planning approach that recognizes the diversity of uses and activities in the Gateway Area and seeks logical connections among and between those uses and activities. With sound planning, the County has the ability to use County-owned properties to help fill the gaps in needed or desirable services and uses, and to create the synergistic relationships with area businesses, industries and governments that will position the Gateway Area for successful local, regional, national and international interaction. With the same confluence of conditions that first set the Area apart for its economic and employment potential thirty years ago still in place today, and with significant development activity still underway, the Gateway Area is already a diverse and dynamic employment center of the County. How then to make it better? The evaluation of the County-owned properties in the area, particularly those that might be underutilized from a contributory economic and employment perspective, is critical to this question.

Maximizing the employment potential of the Area requires attracting and retaining businesses and industries. How does this impact the transportation network, and the ability to effectively manage traffic carrying capacity of the major roadway system? How will development and redevelopment affect the natural environment? How do we ensure that planning for new opportunities is compatible with the need to plan and fund needed support facilities and services? And finally, how do we make sure that the quality of life for Gateway Area residents remains protected, and even enhanced, by implementing a long range plan for the Gateway Area? To answer these questions requires that we have well-thought-out plans and policies to guide critical future decisions. The following discussion explores the potential for County projects, properties and planning in the Gateway Area to impact and influence the goals and outcomes for the Gateway Area.

■ ■ **Recreational Plans and Opportunities**

The most significant recreational opportunity located in the Gateway Area, and perhaps for the County as a whole, is associated with property under Pinellas County Utilities/Solid Waste Operations ownership. The **241 acre closed Toytown landfill** is one of the few large properties not yet committed for a specific development (**see Figure 2**). Particularly if associated with adjacent privately-owned property, creative multi-use recreational opportunities exist at this location. However, since it is a closed landfill, any future development for a public use, including a recreational use, must be planned to address the physical, environmental and permitting limitations imposed by the site characteristics. With the County's build-out condition, opportunities to purchase or develop vacant tracts of this size are rare. But a tract of this size is required if the County is going to plan for any sort of regional recreational venue. Recreational