

Bushnell Center for Urban Sustainability ***Changing the Way We Does Business***

In a little more than 125 years, Pinellas County was transformed from an isolated, largely undisturbed wilderness into a major urban community. The County's small size and the speed with which this urban growth occurred has placed Pinellas in a position where it will soon become the first county in the State of Florida to run out of undeveloped vacant land available for growth and development. In land area, the County is small – only 280 square miles in size - yet its population of approximately 950,000 permanent residents makes it the fifth most populous county in Florida, and 41st in the nation.

A key concept in planning for the future of Pinellas County is the idea expressed by the Board of County Commissioners at a Visioning Workshop in 1997. During that workshop, the individual members of the Board were united in agreement that Pinellas County should be the kind of place where families and businesses will want to stay and where children will want to remain or return once they become adults. This idea of people and businesses planning to stay in Pinellas County because they desire to live and work nowhere else is foundational to an overall vision for the future of Pinellas County.

The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners completed a blueprint for urban sustainability in Pinellas County following a strategic plan, known as Vision Pinellas in 2005. The Board made a commitment to fund the first Regional Specialized Agent for Urban Environmental Sustainability in partnership with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). The *Bushnell Center for Urban Sustainability* was formed at Pinellas County Extension to help lead the county's sustainability efforts.

The goal is to create a coordinated, multi-discipline approach to providing programs and information on urban sustainability to the community and local governments. This will enhance the local and regional efforts to provide the most appropriate methods and engage a wider audience on an ongoing basis. Through UF/IFAS Extension, information will be provided to the community on the benefits, costs and implementation strategies.

As part of the county's sustainability program, application was made to the [Florida Green Building Coalition](#) for Green Local Government certification. This award is a tool that offered an opportunity to measure the county's efforts and determine where new initiatives could be developed. Pinellas County was awarded the [First Green Local Government certification in the state of Florida](#) in December 2006, due to the county's ongoing and innovative programs in comprehensive planning, waste management, environmental management, and community education. Looking to the future, the Board of County Commissioners also adopted a Sustainability Resolution that helps to foster a culture of sustainability in the county government and enable the adoption of sustainable practices in the community.

All through this process an internal team of county leaders has served as an institutional guiding force for sustainability. The team began meeting in March of 2006 and began developing the community model for the governance of the program. The focus on sustainability has improved collaborations within county government, enabled strategic interfacing with the private and non-profit sustainability actors and is inspiring programmatic and policy changes in the County that will create a more sustainable Pinellas County. This team has been part of larger process innovation, our County's Leadership and Implementation Plan, which enables the institutional transformation to a more sustainable County. The Plan engages County technical staff, managers and administration as well as members of the larger community (businesses, civic organizations and individual households).

The Bushnell Center provides coordination and facilitation of the above described initiatives and more fundamentally spearheads the development and implementation of the County's overall Sustainability Model. Please visit the [Bushnell website](#) for more details. Just this past May the [Council for a Sustainable Florida](#) acknowledged our innovative and comprehensive approach to Sustainability by awarding us the Government Award for Sustainability.

