Final Report

Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Prepared by

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In association with:

PBS&J

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Introduction

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is planning extensions for the Pinellas Trail, a pedestrian and bicycle facility that currently runs from Tarpon Springs in northwestern Pinellas County to St. Petersburg in southeastern Pinellas County. There have been objections to the proposed extensions because of perceived problems with crime, property values and neighborhood privacy adjacent to or near the trail. In order to assess these perceptions, the MPO's general planning consultant has conducted a study that includes:

- A review of recent trail-related community impact studies from across the country (summarized in Chapter 1);
- A property value trends assessment for those properties near the trail compared to property value trends elsewhere (Chapter 2);
- An analysis of Pinellas County and St. Petersburg crime statistics (Chapter 3);
- A mail-back questionnaire survey of property owners adjacent to the trail that provides a large sample indication of what homeowners think of the trail (Chapter 4);
- A telephone survey of homeowner association officers to determine whether their members perceive the trail positively or negatively (Chapter 5), and
- A telephone survey of realtors who sell properties near the trail to determine whether they perceive the trail to be a positive or negative factor to prospective homebuyers (Chapter 6).

In summary, the national and local research indicates that the perceptions of higher crime, lower property values and neighborhood privacy problems are unfounded. The homeowners survey indicates a high percentage of those living near the Pinellas Trail perceive it as an asset and not a liability. This positive perception is not unique to the Pinellas Trail. The national research indicates positive perceptions by homeowners living along other trails around the country. The positive perception is translating into the values of homes along the Trail, which are increasing at a faster rate than home values elsewhere in the County. And, crime rates along the trail are no different than they are elsewhere in the County.

B. National Literature Review

Before looking specifically at conditions along the Pinellas Trail, the study team conducted a national literature review. The review indicates that multiuse trails are an asset to the communities that they serve. The studies reviewed conclude that trails actually deter crime, have no or slightly positive influence on property values and bring new money into the local economy.

The studies indicate residents experienced few trail-related problems. Most said that living near the trails was better than they had anticipated and better than living near the unused railroad lines. They also reported that their proximity to the trails had not adversely affected their property values.

The popularity of trails may deter crime simply due to the level of activity that occurs on trails throughout the day. One study found that multiuse trails increased tourism and brought between $300,000 and $600,000 of "new money" into the local economy annually, depending upon the trail.

C. Pinellas Trail Assessment

The analysis of conditions specifically along the Pinellas Trail focused on the four areas listed below and shown in Exhibit ES-1:

- St. Petersburg – between 9th Avenue North and Central Avenue;
- Seminole – between 102 Avenue North and Park Boulevard;
- Dunedin – between Michigan and Sunset Point Road, and
- Palm Harbor – Nebraska Avenue to Tarpon Avenue.

The market areas generally extended a quarter of a mile on either side of the trail.

Residents' Perceptions

Nearly two-thirds of the 441 households who completed the homeowners survey say they use the trail at least once a week, while only five percent have never used it. Nearly two-thirds indicate they are walking more now that the trail is open than before. Those surveyed feel that recreation and fitness are the primary reasons people use the trail.

Perceptions of the trail depend significantly on the use of the trail, with the most negative perceptions by those who never use it. Those who use the trail at least once a month think the trail notably improves:

- Their home's value;
- The value of other homes in the neighborhood;
- Accessibility to other places in the community, and
- Neighborhood acquaintances.

Those who used the trail less than once a month give the trail slightly lower positive ratings in each of these areas. As a group, the only respondents who negatively rate the trail on these points are those who never use the trail. Because there are so few who never use the trail, the overall perception of the trail is positive.

Property Values

An evaluation of property values from the Pinellas County Property Appraiser's records concludes that property values of homes adjacent to the Pinellas Trail followed countywide trends soon after the trail opened, but in recent years trailside home values have been increasing at a faster rate. In St. Petersburg, for example, trailside and countywide home prices changed at roughly the same rate between 1990 and 1995, but since that time the trailside home prices have escalated faster. This trend occurred in all four of the market areas. Overall, the median sale prices for single-family homes adjacent to the trail are rising faster than the median sales price of homes throughout the county. Property data indicate that trailside residential property values are increasing by two to three percent annually over countywide residential properties.

Crime

Crime data from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and the St. Petersburg Police Department for 1993, 1995 and 1999 indicate that crime rates along the trail are no different than elsewhere in the county or city. In 1993 and 1995, crime rates along the trail were lower than county-wide rates, and in 1999 the rates were still lower, but closer to the countywide average.

There are a few areas along the trail with higher than average crime rates due to factors other than the trail. Most notably, shoplifting crimes are much higher near large shopping malls along the trail. The relationship between shoplifting and major shopping malls is evident in other areas of the county as well.

Homeowners Association Perceptions

More than a third of the officers of the homeowners associations in the four market areas said the Pinellas Trail concerns have never been raised by their boards. When asked about possible concerns, the officers noted landscaping and maintenance as most problematic, with crime and loitering also noted. HOA officers are most disconcerted by perceived inequities and disparities in trail quality and amenities between communities.

Realtor's Perceptions

Nearly all (90%) of the realtors interviewed via a telephone survey said that home sales along the trail had either "increased somewhat" or "increased significantly." None said that home sales had "decreased." Most thought that the opening of the Pinellas Trail increased buyer interest in the area, particularly by those who plan to use the trail for recreation and fitness. This perception is confirmed by the resident's survey, which found that those who use the trail most frequently rate it very positively. The trail is likely attracting home buyers with an interest in using the trail.

D. Summary of Findings

There have been objections to proposed extensions of the Pinellas Trail because of perceived problems with crime, property values and neighborhood privacy adjacent to or near the trail. The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization conducted this *Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study* to address those concerns.

The study concludes that the perceptions of higher crime rates, lower property values and neighborhood privacy problems are unfounded. Those who live along the trail are much more likely to perceive its benefits than negative impacts, and this perception is translating into higher

property values. Realtors note that the demand for homes along the trail is increasing, particularly by those with an interest in using the trail. This perception is supported by the survey of residents, which found that those who use the trail perceive it most positively. In sum, the Pinellas Trail is perceived by most to be a community asset and does not contribute to criminal activity or declining property values by its presence in a neighborhood.

Pinellas County MPO

PINELLAS TRAIL COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY

MARKET AREAS FOR PROPERTY SALES ANALYSIS

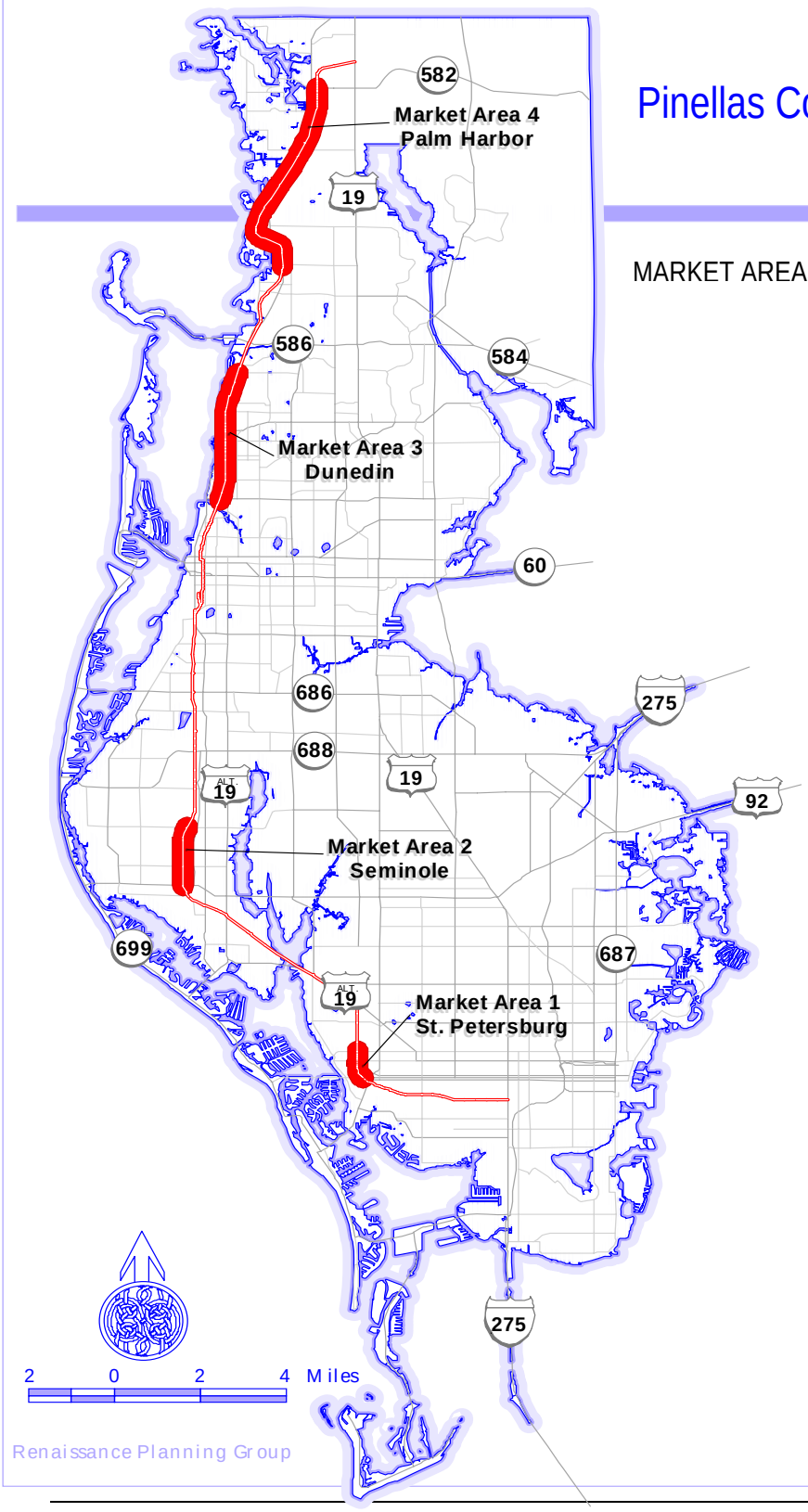


Exhibit ES-1: Market Areas

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes the most recently published community impact studies and articles that relate to multiuse trails. The review focuses on publications that examine community opposition to new trail extension projects; particularly, those based upon concerns that crime or noise would reduce property values. In Pinellas County, much of the opposition appears to center upon a fear that by increasing accessibility, the trail will introduce crime into adjacent neighborhoods and thereby reduce property values within adjacent neighborhoods.

The following reviews include a description of the project, a summary of the associated issues or impacts, any pertinent data collected to address those issues and identification as to what courses of action are being recommended or have been implemented to address local concerns and/or mitigate the impacts.

A. ***"The Impacts of Rail-Trails: A Study of the Users and Property Owners from Three Trails"*** (U.S. Department of the Interior; National Park Service; Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; February 1992)

This study examines the benefits and impacts of rail-trails and systematically assesses both the trail users and nearby property owners of the same trails. Three diverse rail-trails from across the U.S. were studied: (1) the Heritage Trial, a 26-mile trail which traverses rural farmland in eastern Iowa; (2) the St. Marks Trail, a 16-mile trail beginning in the outskirts of Tallahassee, Florida and passing through small communities and forests to the Gulf of Mexico; and (3) the Lafayette/Moraga Trail, a 7.6-mile paved trail 25 miles east of San Francisco, California. The following are some of the findings from the study:

- The amount of "new money" brought into the local county(s) by trail visitors from outside the county(s) was $630,000, $400,000 and $294,000 annually for the Heritage, St. Marks, and Lafayette/Moraga Trails, respectively.
- Overall, trail neighbors had experienced relatively few problems as a result of the trails. The majority of owners reported that there had been no increase in

problems since the trails had been established, that living near the trails was better than they had expected it to be, and that living near the trails was better than living near the unused railroad lines before the trails were constructed.

- Landowners along all three trails reported that their proximity to the trails had not adversely affected the desirability or values of their property. Of those who purchased property along the trails after the trails had been constructed, the majority reported that the trails either had no effect on the property's appeal or added to its appeal.

The results of this study indicate that rail-trails are valuable recreation resources that provide a wide array of benefits to users, neighborhood landowners, and local communities. They attract and keep a core of very dedicated users, and in many instances, attract visitors from outside the local communities. These non-local visitors are the most important source of economic benefits generated by the trails. Most landowners were satisfied with living near the rail-trails examined in this study.

B. ***Rail-Trails and Safe Communities; Executive Summary*** *(Rails-to-Trail Conservancy in cooperation with the U.S. Department of the Interior; National Park Service; Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; 1998)*

This comprehensive study combines a survey of rail-trails across the country and an analysis of federal crime statistics to illustrate that the fact that greenways with trails have very low crime rates. Rail-trail managers across the country were surveyed in an effort to document the level of crime on trails and to identify effective crime mitigation measures adopted along the trails. Only 11 of the 327 survey respondents reported any type of serious crime for 1995, and only ten reported incidences of serious crimes for 1996. These figures are very low considering that the survey covered over 7,000 miles of trails and approximately 45 million annual trail users. The trail crime rate was calculated at 0.53 crimes per 100,000 persons. These crime rates were contrasted with national major crime statistics in urban, suburban and rural areas. The national crime statistics identified a rate of muggings for the year 1995 at 335 per 100,000 people. These national

crime rates, compared with the 1995 trail crime rates, revealed that rail-trails experience very low major crime rates.

The study also reviewed trail design and management strategies employed to minimize the possibility of crimes. Various rail-trails incorporated the use of design features such as long sight lines, the reduction of possible hiding places, and lighting at trail heads. The survey also revealed that 69 percent of the trails have a type of safety patrol to deter crime and found that trails, because of the high user population at various times of the day, actually discourage the incidence of crime.

C. Evaluation of the Burke-Gilman Trail Effect on Property Value and Crime; Executive Summary *(Seattle Engineering Department, Office for Planning, May 1987)*

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect, if any, the Burke-Gilman Trail has had on property values and crime affecting property near and adjacent to the trail. Another purpose of the study was to evaluate public acceptance of the trail and the trail's effect on the quality of life of adjacent neighborhoods. The need for the study became apparent when property owners in a different area of the city expressed concern over the development of a new trail project on the basis that it might reduce their property values, increase crime, and generally reduce the quality of life. The Burke-Gilman Trail is a 12.1-mile long (9.85 miles are in Seattle), eight to ten foot wide, multi-purpose trail that follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way. Most of the trail passes through residential neighborhoods. The study concluded that:

- Real estate companies regard the Burke-Gilman Trail as an amenity that helps to attract buyers and to sell property.
- Property near but not immediately adjacent to the Trail is significantly easier to sell and sells for an average of six percent more as a result of its proximity to the trail.
- The trail has no significant effect on the selling price of homes immediately adjacent to the trail.

- The existence of the trail has had little, if any, effect on crime and vandalism experienced by adjacent property owners.
- Police officers interviewed stated that there is not a greater incidence of burglaries and vandalism of homes along the trail. They attribute that fact to the absence of motor vehicles.
- The police officers also said that there would be no significant trail problems as long as parking lots are away from the trail and bollards prevent motor vehicle use.
- There is a very high level of public acceptance and support for the trail. Not a single resident surveyed felt the trail should be closed. Less than three percent said there were any problems associated with the trail that were serious enough to cause them to consider moving and almost two-thirds of the residents felt the trail increased the quality of life in the neighborhood.

In summary, this study indicates that concerns about decreased property values, increased crime, and a lower quality of life due to the construction of multi-use trails are unfounded. In fact, the opposite is true. The study indicates that multi-use trails are an amenity that helps sell homes, increase property values and improve the quality of life.

D. ***Converted Railroad Trails: The Impact on Adjacent Property*** (*Leonard P. Mazour Masters Thesis, Kansas State University, Department of Landscape Architecture, Manhattan, KS, 1988)*

This study involved the survey of adjacent property owners along the Luce Line State Trail in Minnesota to determine the impacts of the trail on property values. The Luce Line State Trail is a 63-mile long, limestone and natural surface trail that runs from Plymouth to Cosmos, Minnesota. The former railroad line was converted to a trail for biking, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and skiing.

The results of the study indicated that property owners, appraisers and realtors believed that trail had positive impacts on Trail-adjacent property values. Properties included in the survey encompassed a variety of land uses from suburban residential and small town commercial to farmland. Overall, 87 percent of the surveyed property owners

felt that the trail increased or had no effect on the value of their property. In reviewing the survey results based on property owner characteristics, 56 percent of farmland residents thought that the trail had no effect on their land value, and 61 percent of the suburban residential owners noted an increase in their property value as a result of the trail. More recent property owners felt that the trail had a positive effect on property value than did continuing owners. Realtors and appraisers were also interviewed as part of the study. The results of these interviews indicated that the trail was a positive selling point in the sale of residential, small town commercial, and agricultural properties proposed for development.

E. General Conclusions from the Literature

The literature review was designed to determine if similar community concerns are being raised regarding trail development in other areas of the country and to outline findings of other studies. Interestingly, all of the literature seems to indicate that crime does not appear to be introduced into neighborhoods. Instead, the studies generally conclude that the popularity of multiuse trails may deter crime simply because trails are popular and used throughout the day leaving few opportunities for crimes to occur unnoticed. The absence of vehicular access along the trail also acted as a deterrent to crime.

As far as property values are concerned, surveyed property owners, realtors and appraisers indicated that multiuse trails either had no effect on the marketability of property or the trails were perceived as an amenity which led to slight increases in property values. ·Trail neighbors experienced few trail-related problems. Most owners reported that there had been no increase in problems since the trails had been established and that living near the trails was better than living near the unused railroad lines. Landowners also reported that their proximity to the trails had not adversely affected the desirability or values of their property. Of those who purchased property along the trails

after the trails had been constructed, most indicated that the trails either had no effect on the property's appeal or added to its appeal.

One study also found that multiuse trails increased tourism and brought between $300,000 and $600,000 of "new money" into the local economy annually depending upon the trail. The results of that study found rail-trails to be valuable recreation resources that provide a wide array of benefits to users, neighborhood landowners, and local communities. In particular, trails attract a core of dedicated users and attract visitors. These non-local visitors are the most important source of economic benefits generated by the trails.

Accordingly, this Literature Review indicates that multiuse trails are an asset to the community, have a deterrent effect on crime, have a neutral or slightly positive effect on property values, and tend to bring new money into the local economy.

CHAPTER TWO

PROPERTY VALUE TRENDS ASSESSMENT

PROPERTY VALUE TRENDS ASSESSMENT

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is increasingly encountering citizen concerns that extending the Pinellas County Trail would adversely impact property values within neighborhoods where trail extensions are planned. This chapter examines average home sale price trends along the trail to verify this assumption.

A. Survey Methodology

Information from the Pinellas County Property Appraisers office was obtained for properties within one-quarter of a mile of the trail in the four market areas shown in *Exhibit 2.1: Market Areas*. Single-family home sale prices from this dataset for the years 1990, 1995, and 1998 were compared with overall countywide property values for the same three years to determine the effects of the trail.

Pinellas County single-family home sales data for the years 1985 through 1999 were downloaded from Win2Data2000, a secondary real estate information server that obtains its information from the Pinellas County public records. As a secondary source of data, the information collected from Win2Data2000 is not considered 100 percent accurate.

WinData2000 was used to identify properties within the market areas that are less than a quarter mile from the Pinellas Trail. This dataset was queried for single-family home sales. The sales records from each market area were labeled M1 (St. Petersburg), M2 (Seminole), M3 (Dunedin), and M4 (Palm Harbor). Each record was also tagged with a letter identifier (i.e. M1A or M3G). Because the Win2Data2000 dataset only includes the past two transactions for each property, a number of sales from 1985 may be excluded. Efforts were made to exclude mobile homes from the analysis.

Countywide housing sales data were collected from two independent sources: (1) the Pinellas County Housing Report produced by the Pinellas County Planning Department; and (2) University of Florida - Shimberg Housing Data produced under the direction of the Florida

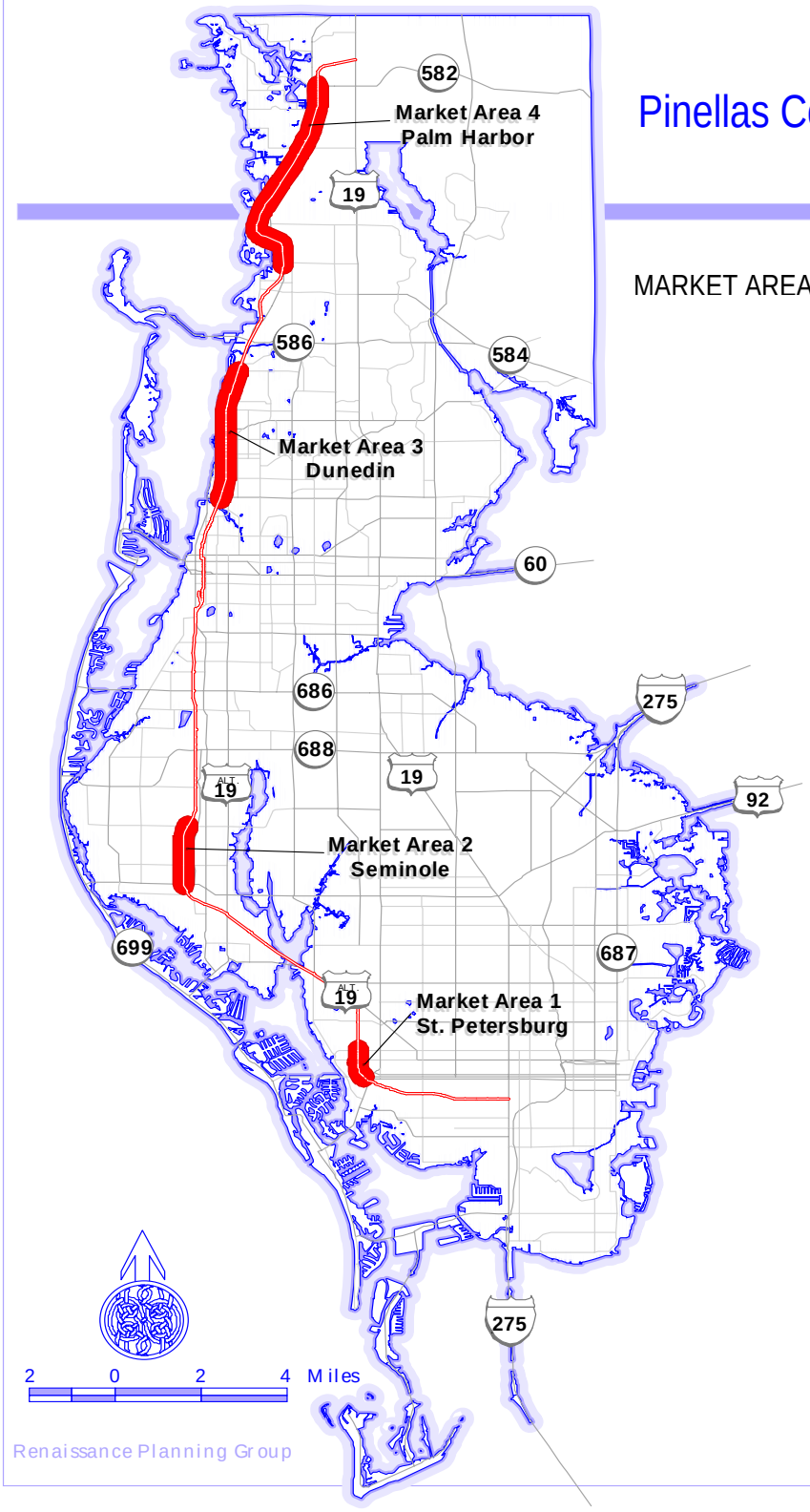


Exhibit 2.1: Market Areas

Department of Community Affairs. Consistently collected and comparably aggregated existing single-family home sales data were only available for the years 1990, 1995, and 1998.

B. Analysis of Pinellas County Home Values

Table 2.1 summarizes the median sale prices for 1990, 1995, and 1998 for each of the four market areas: (M1) St. Petersburg; (M2) Seminole; (M3) Dunedin; and (M4) Palm Harbor. Additionally, the median sale prices for single-family homes are aggregated into an "all segments" category. These values are compared to the average median sales prices for Pinellas County obtained from the *Pinellas County Housing Report* for the years 1990, 1995, and 1998. On the right side of *Table 2.1* the annualized net increase (or decrease) in median sales prices is calculated for comparison purposes.

Table 2.1
Existing Single Family Residence (SFR) Median Sale Price (1990-1998)

Existing SFR Median Sale Price (1990-1998) Pinellas Trail Homes Compared to Pinellas County Homes				Gross Change		Annual Change		
	1990	1995	1998	% (90-95)	% (95-98)	% (90-95)	% (95-98)	% (90-98)
Pinellas Trail - St. Petersburg Segment	$67,250	$65,000	$87,500	-3.35%	34.62%	-0.67%	11.54%	3.76%
Pinellas Trail - Seminole Segment	$75,750	$81,000	$97,500	6.93%	20.37%	1.39%	6.79%	3.59%
Pinellas Trail - Dunedin Segment	$58,500	$60,450	$63,200	3.33%	4.55%	0.67%	1.52%	1.00%
Pinellas Trail - Palm Harbor Segment	$65,000	$68,000	$97,900	4.62%	43.97%	0.92%	14.66%	6.33%
Average Sales for Four Pinellas Trail Segments	$67,000	$66,800	$82,500	-0.30%	23.50%	-0.06%	7.83%	2.89%
Pinellas County: Existing Single Family Home Sale Prices Countywide	$77,500	$75,000	$85,500	-3.23%	14.00%	-0.65%	4.67%	1.29%

Between 1990 and 1995, the gross change and the annual change in existing single-family home prices declined countywide (-3.23% and -0.65%) and in the St. Petersburg market area

(-3.35% and –0.67%) at nearly the same rate. When St. Petersburg market area home prices recovered, they escalated faster that the countywide averages.

Between 1990 and 1998, Dunedin is the only market area that showed a slower annual rate of increase in median sale prices (1%) than Pinellas County on the whole (1.29%). The largest 1990-1998 single-family home sale price increases occurred in the Palm Harbor market area, with an annual increase of 6.33 percent and gross increases of 4.62 percent and 43.97 percent for the '90-'95 and '95-'98 timeframes respectively. The most dramatic reversal of fortunes occurred in the St. Petersburg market area where the gross change in median sale prices declined 3.35 percent between '90-'95 and rose sharply between '95-'98. The St. Petersburg annual changes indicate a modest decline between 1990 and 1995 that was more than overcome by the rising homes values occurring in 1995 through 1998. Annually, the median sale prices increased 2.89 percent for existing single-family homes for all four-market areas along the Pinellas Trail while countywide increases were 1.29 percent.

The average sale price trends for homes in the cities of St. Petersburg, Seminole, and Dunedin were compared with countywide and trail market area trends (*Table 2.2*). It should be noted that the Pinellas County Housing Report did not include median sale prices for individual cities in 1990 and that Palm Harbor figures are not available since it is unincorporated. Between 1995 and 1998 the average existing trail market area home sold for roughly three percent more than the average existing home in the three cities.

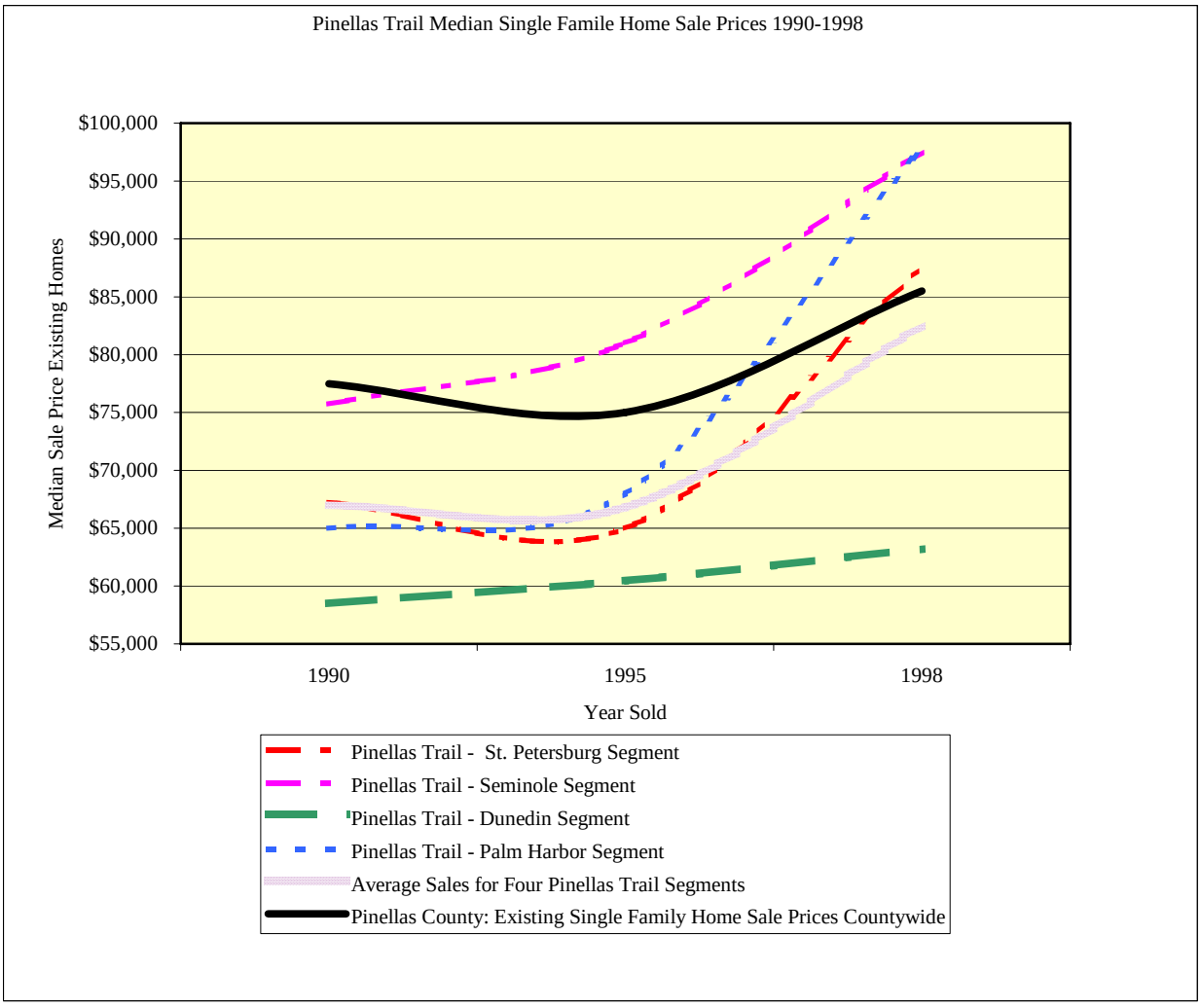
Table 2.2
Trail Segments Compared to Cities

Pinellas County Housing Report Data for the Years 1990, 1995, and 1998: Median Sale Price data for existing single family units				Annual Change 1995-1998	
	1990	1995	1998	*% (90-95)*	*% (95-98)*
St. Petersburg	n/a	$59,900	$68,000		4.51%
Seminole	n/a	$65,000	$77,000		6.15%
Dunedin	n/a	$77,000	$86,000		3.90%
Palm Harbor	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a
Countywide	$77,500	$75,000	$85,500	-0.65%	4.67%
Unincorporated	n/a	$90,000	$105,000		5.56%

Pinellas County Trail Data (1990, 1995, and 1998) Median Sale Price data for existing single family units				Annual Change 1990-1998	
	1990	1995	1998	*% (90-95)*	*% (95-98)*
M1	$67,250	$65,000	$87,500	-0.67%	11.54%
M2	$75,750	$81,000	$97,500	1.39%	6.79%
M3	$58,500	$60,450	$63,200	0.67%	1.52%
M4	$65,000	$68,000	$97,900	0.92%	14.66%
All Segments	$67,000	$66,800	$82,500	-0.06%	7.83%
Countywide	$77,500	$75,000	$85,500	-0.65%	4.67%
Unincorporated	n/a	$90,000	$105,000	n/a	5.56%

Exhibit 2.2 presents the trends for median sale prices for each of the Pinellas Trail market areas studied and a composite trend line for all four segments in comparison to countywide sale prices. The Palm Harbor and St. Petersburg trend lines cross the countywide line between 1995 and 1998, indicating that trailside sale prices in those two communities are accelerating faster than countywide median sale prices. The Seminole market area trend line is increasing at a steeper slope (faster pace) than the county generally. Overall, the median sale prices for single-family homes adjacent to the trail are rising faster than the median sales price of homes throughout the county. These results clearly indicate that the trail does not negatively affect property values of adjacent homes, and suggests that the trail may help increase property values.

Exhibit 2.2



C. Summary

The property value trends assessment concluded that property values follow local sales trends initially and then increase a few years later. As an example, St. Petersburg trailside and countywide home prices declined at the same rate between 1990 and 1995; however, St. Petersburg trailside home prices recovered quickly and have escalated faster than countywide or for any other trail segment by 1998. For all trail segments, the median sale prices adjacent to the trail are escalating faster than countywide and the rate of increase is most significant in St. Petersburg, Seminole, and Palm Harbor. The median price of trailside homes in St. Petersburg and Seminole is higher than respective citywide prices. These results clearly indicate

that the trail does not negatively impact property values of adjacent homes and suggest that the trail may help increase property values by roughly two percent to three percent annually.

CHAPTER THREE

CRIME STATISTICS

CRIME STATISTICS

A. Introduction

This chapter of the Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study examines the relationship between criminal activity and the Pinellas Trail. As discussed elsewhere in this study, there have been objections to proposed trail extensions because of perceived problems with crime and neighborhood privacy. To present an overview of crime rates, crime data for 1993, 1995, and 1999 have been collected for Pinellas County and St. Petersburg. St Petersburg was focused on because crime data is separated by crime tract, which allowed for a greater level of comparative analysis. The sampling techniques used by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department and the City of St. Petersburg Police Department resulted in significantly different samples. Accordingly, crime data from St. Petersburg is not comparable to the Pinellas County data as detailed later.

In both the county and St. Petersburg samples, the study team found that peaks in crime rates along the trail were generally related to the character of the surrounding area rather than to the existence of the Pinellas Trail. For example, a peak in shoplifting crimes occurred in the St. Petersburg trail tracts near the Tyrone Square Mall as well as other trail tracts traversing retail commercial areas. Upon further examination, the study team found that there were roughly 10 crime tracts throughout the city with higher than average shoplifting crimes (for each of the three reported years one to three of the top 10 shoplifting crime tracts were trail tracts). The general character of the top 10 shoplifting crime tracts was consistently retail or non-residential. When shoplifting crimes were controlled for in the analysis, there was no difference between the growth rates of crime in citywide crime tracts, trail tracts, and non-trail tracts.

The literature review suggests that crime rates may be lower along multiuse trails because they are used frequently and busy areas tend to discourage opportunistic crimes. Generally, the 1993, 1995, and 1999 crime statistics support the finding that the trail has not had an adverse impact on crime. Factors external to the trail seem to be better indicators of crime rates than the

presence of the trail, as predicted by one survey respondent in the homeowner's association officer survey section of this report.

This chapter summarizes the crime data sampling methodology, countywide crime data, City of St. Petersburg crime data and general conclusions or findings regarding crime rates and the Pinellas Trail. The findings and summary conclusions of the crime statistics are related to the findings from the property value trends assessment, realtor's survey, neighborhood association survey and resident's mail-back questionnaire evaluations.

B. Methodology

Actual reported crimes for the years 1993, 1995, and 1999 were collected for four Pinellas Trail segments. The identified trail segments were the same as those discussed in *Chapter 2: Property Value Trends Assessment* of this report and are specifically defined as:

- St. Petersburg – between 9th Avenue North and Central Avenue;
- Seminole– between 102 Avenue North and Park Boulevard;
- Dunedin – between Michigan and Sunset Point Road; and
- Palm Harbor - Nebraska Avenue to Tarpon Avenue.

The market areas generally extended approximately one quarter of a mile on either side of the Pinellas Trail along each of the four segments. Initially, the countywide and St. Petersburg data were analyzed together but once the crime data were evaluated it was apparent that the sampling methodologies were distinctly different. The Pinellas County collection method allowed the study team to pinpoint the exact location of reported crimes whereas the collection technique for St. Petersburg only placed the crime incident within a large geographic area or "crime tract" (similar to Census Tracts or Traffic Analysis Zones). When countywide Pinellas Trail crime data was compared to St. Petersburg trail-related crime statistics, the countywide trail-related crime sample was somewhat small.

As shown in *Table 3.1: Crime Data Summary*, these sampling differences resulted in a sample of 627 crimes in St. Petersburg for the three years (1993: 211; 1995: 187; and 1999: 227 total crimes). The countywide data set was much smaller with a sample of 43 crimes for the three years (1993: 9; 1995: 15; and 1999: 19). Based upon these geographic differences, the crime data from St. Petersburg is not comparable to the Pinellas County data. Accordingly, the study team analyzed the two groups of data separately as outlined below.

Table 3.1: Crime Data Summary (St. Petersburg and Pinellas County)

Summary of Crime Types Committed - Pinellas Trail

Crime Group	1993 [1]	93 St. Pete	1993 Total	1995 [1]	95 St. Pete	1995 Total	1999 [1]	99 St. Pete	1999 Total	Final Total
Other	4	-	4	3	-	3	4	-	4	**11**
Murder	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
Forcible Sex Offenses	1	3	4	3	5	8	4	4	8	**20**
Robbery	0	5	5	3	6	9	1	7	8	**22**
Aggravated Assault	1	51	52	3	32	35	6	54	60	**147**
Burglary	2	40	42	2	44	46	3	38	41	**129**
Larceny	1	94	95	1	85	86	1	110	111	**292**
Motor Vehicle Theft	0	17	17	0	15	15	0	14	14	**46**
Totals	**9**	**211**	**220**	**15**	**187**	**202**	**19**	**227**	**246**	**668**

1. Years include all areas except for St. Petersburg.

The sampling methodology for the City of St. Petersburg data included all incident reports for "Crime Tracts" that the Pinellas Trail abuts or traverses. It should be noted that the study team looked at incidents of crime reported for "trail tracts" (crime tracts abutting or traversed by the Pinellas Trail) and all other city crime tracts. Crime Tracts are geographic boundaries created by the City of St. Petersburg to report and summarize crime statistics (similar to Census Tracts or Traffic Analysis Zones). Accordingly, the study methodology was modified to include a comparison of St. Petersburg citywide crime rates and trail-related crime statistics within the City of St. Petersburg. We found that peaks in crime rates along the trail-abutting crime tracts could generally be explained by the characteristics of the surrounding area.

C. Crime Rates Along The Trail

Although each crime report includes a specific description of the type of offense, for analytical purposes the reports were summarized and tabulated as they would be for national crime reporting efforts. Each of the crime reports was categorized using eight of the possible 13 FDLE crime-reporting categories. The following eight categories were used for this study: (1) murder; (2) forcible sex offenses; (3) robbery; (4) aggravated assault; (5) burglary; (6) larceny; (7) motor vehicle theft; and (8) other. The "other" category included offenses such as (a) possession drug paraphernalia; (b) possession controlled substance; (c) resisting or obstructing a law enforcement officer without violence; (d) shooting or throwing a missile at a dwelling; (e) arson; (f) litter; and (g) violation of a county ordinance. All crime reports were included in one of the eight general crime categories.

The Pinellas Trail crime reports provided by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department are shown in *Table 3.1: Crime Data Summary*. The number of trail-related crime reports escalated from nine in 1993 to 12 in 1995 and 15 in 1999. This trend is inconsistent with both statewide and countywide crime rates for similar periods. According to the FDLE, Florida's total crimes index declined between 1990 and 2000, both in total violent and property crimes and in the index rate crimes per 100,000 persons. The most recent peak in crime occurred in 1991 and crime rates have declined since then. From 1990 to 2000, index crimes are down 20.2 percent in number and 34.4 percent in rate (FDLE, Florida Statistical Analysis Center, 2001). The FDLE also reported that the Pinellas County Total Crime Index declined between 1993 and 1999, as depicted in *Table 3.2: Total Index Crime for Pinellas County*. In Pinellas County, all types of crime decreased between 1993 and 1999 with the notable exception of murder and motor vehicle theft. The extremely small sample size could account for the discrepancy between the sampled segments of the Pinellas Trail and countywide and statewide crime trends. For example, it is possible that a random sample of all crimes that have occurred on the Pinellas Trail between 1990 and 2000 would reflect the countywide and statewide trends. The discrepancy could then be attributed to the geographic limits of the three sampled segments rather than an actual trend in general criminal activities.

Table 3.2: Total Index Crime for Pinellas County Florida (1993 -1999)				
Year	1993	1995	1999	Change 1993-99
Pinellas Co. Population	864,953	876,200	898,784	
% Change	-	1.3%	2.6%	3.9%
Murder	39	52	42	
% Change	-	33.3%	-19.2%	7.7%
Forcible Sex Offenses	1,027	811	880	
% Change	-	-21.0%	8.5%	-14.3%
Robbery	2,259	2,183	1,759	
% Change	-	-3.4%	-19.4%	-22.1%
Aggravated Assault	6,165	6,195	4,932	
% Change	-	0.5%	-20.4%	-20.0%
Burglary	12,046	10,879	10,191	
% Change	-	-9.7%	-6.3%	-15.4%
Larceny	33,615	33,919	30,365	
% Change	-	0.9%	-10.5%	-9.7%
Motor Vehicle Theft	2,719	2,936	3,898	
% Change	-	8.0%	32.8%	43.4%
Total Index Crime	57,870	56,975	56,479	
% Index change	-8.17	-5.80	-7.8	-2.4%
Index Rate per 100,000 persons	6,690.5	6,502.5	6,330.5	
Rate Change	-8.61	-6.39	-8.5	-5.4%

SOURCE: Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Crime in Florida, Florida Uniform Crime Report. Tallahassee, FL: FDLE. Florida Statistical Analysis Center, 2001.

As summarized in *Table 3.1*, there were no instances of murder and motor vehicle theft on the three identified trail segments in 1993, 1995, or 1999 (excluding St. Petersburg data) whereas these crimes escalated countywide and declined somewhat in St. Petersburg trail tracts. The most notable increases in trail-related crimes occurred in the aggravated assault and forcible sex offenses categories; however, burglaries and robberies also appeared to increase over the study period rather than decline as noted in the statewide and countywide crime statistics. This initial finding appears to support citizen concerns that were the impetus for this study. Accordingly, the crime data were examined in terms of time of day and location. The peak crime activity period appears to be from 3:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. During this time of day, criminal activity peaked in

Table 3.3: Pinellas Trail Crime Data Summary

Summary of Crime Types Committed - Pinellas Trail

Crime Group #	1993	1995	1999	Final Total	Change 93-99
Aggravated Assault	1	3	6	**10**	**500%**
Forcible Sex Offenses	1	3	4	**8**	**300%**
Other	4	3	4	**11**	**-**
Burglary	2	2	3	**7**	**50%**
Larceny	1	1	1	**3**	**-**
Robbery	0	3	1	**4**	**100%**
Motor Vehicle Theft	0	0	0	**0**	**-**
Murder	0	0	0	**0**	**-**
Totals	**9**	**15**	**19**	**43**	**111%**

Note: Table includes countywide crime data, except for St. Petersburg.

Table 3.4: Time Crimes Committed - Pinellas Trail

Time Crimes Committed	1993	1995	1999	Totals
07:00 - 15:00	3	2	5	10
15:00 - 23:00	4	11	8	23
23:00 - 07:00	2	2	6	10

1. No specific times were available from St. Pete.

1995 and declined somewhat in 1999.

Crime rates have increased at different rates along different sections of the trail (*Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7*). For example, trail-related crime rates increased in section #2 from three total crimes (one crime per four months) in 1993 to six total crimes in 1995 and 1999 (one crime per two months). This trend line indicates a leveling off over the study period whereas there is a steady increase in crime in section #3. As depicted in *Exhibit 3.3*, total crimes increase from two to nine over the study period in this segment. Along section #4, total reported crimes decreased from four in 1993 to two in 1995 and then increased again to four in 1999.

Most notable from these statistics is that crime is not very prevalent along the Pinellas Trail. The first segment of the Pinellas Trail opened on December 1, 1990. The initial five-mile segment connected Taylor Park in Largo to Seminole City Park in Seminole. The Pinellas Trail is now 34 miles long and connects Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg. Pinellas County Planning now estimates that more than 90,000 persons use the Pinellas Trail each month (*Pinellas Trail Guide,* World Wide Web, 2001). In 1999, there were roughly 1.6 crimes per month along the selected segments. This is quite a small number when the total population served by the Pinellas Trail is taken into consideration. In part higher use, may explain why crime rates continued to increase along the Pinellas Trail while countywide and statewide crimes rates steadily decreased.

Table 3.5					
Trail Crime Statistics - County Section #2: 102nd to Park					
Crime Category	**Group #**	**1993**	**1995**	**1999**	**Totals**
Other	0*	1	1	1	**3**
Murder	1	0	0	0	**0**
Forcible sex offenses	2	0	1	1	**2**
Robbery	3	0	1	0	**1**
Aggravated Assault	4	0	2	2	**4**
Burglary	5	1	1	1	**3**
Larceny	6	1	0	1	**2**
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	0	0	0	**0**
Total crimes		**3**	**6**	**6**	**15**

Table 3.6					
Trail Crime Statistics - County Section #3: Michigan to Sunset					
Crime Category	**Group #**	**1993**	**1995**	**1999**	**Totals**
Other	0*	2	2	2	**6**
Murder	1	0	0	0	**0**
Forcible sex offenses	2	0	1	1	**2**
Robbery	3	0	2	1	**3**
Aggravated Assault	4	0	1	3	**4**
Burglary	5	0	0	2	**2**
Larceny	6	0	1	0	**1**
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	0	0	0	**0**
Total crimes		**2**	**7**	**9**	**18**

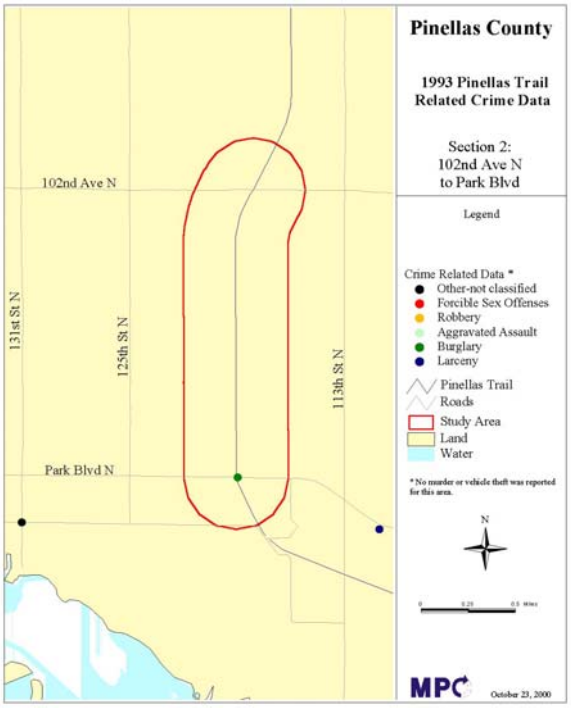
Table 3.7					
Trail Crime Statistics - County Section #4: Nebraska to Tarpon					
Crime Category	**Group #**	**1993**	**1995**	**1999**	**Totals**
Other	0*	1	0	1	**2**
Murder	1	0	0	0	**0**
Forcible sex offenses	2	1	1	2	**4**
Robbery	3	0	0	0	**0**
Aggravated Assault	4	1	0	1	**2**
Burglary	5	1	1	0	**2**
Larceny	6	0	0	0	**0**
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	0	0	0	**0**
Total crimes		**4**	**2**	**4**	**10**

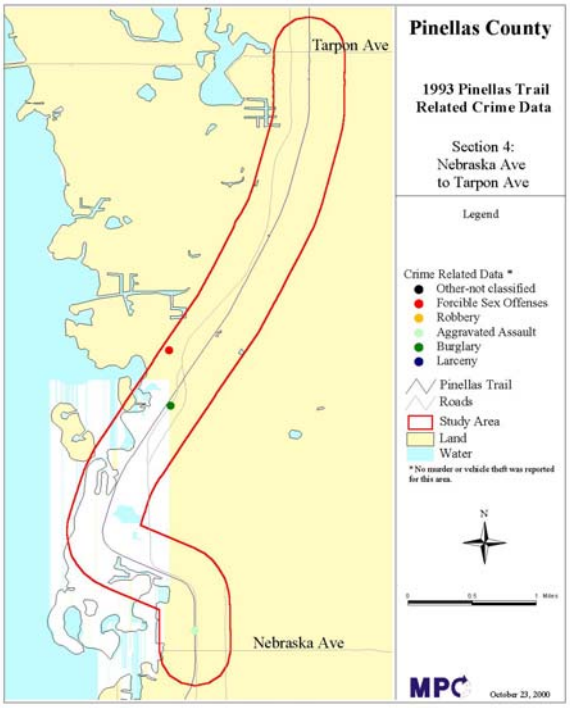
Although this sample is relatively small, it is indicative that there are few crimes per user and the neighborhood that the trail traverses may impact crime rates.

Tables 3.5 through 3.7 are three tables depicting the total number and type of crime for the years 1993, 1995, and 1999 by trail section. For the three measured years, there were four aggravated assaults reported for the trail segments from 102nd to Park and Michigan to Sunset whereas there were only two assaults reported for the Nebraska to Tarpon section for the same period. The segment from Nebraska Avenue to Tarpon had the fewest total number of incidents reported over the three study years whereas Section 4 had slightly more than Section 2. Forcible sex offenses appear to be more likely to occur along Section 3 than along Section 2 or 4. The reported crimes have been color coded and illustrated in *Exhibits 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4* below. The

maps clearly pinpoint the exact location of the reported crimes. For example, it is clear that three of the 1993 reported crimes occurred about one-half mile east and west of the Pinellas Trail adjacent to Section #2.

Exhibit 3.2: Pinellas Trail Related Crimes (1993)





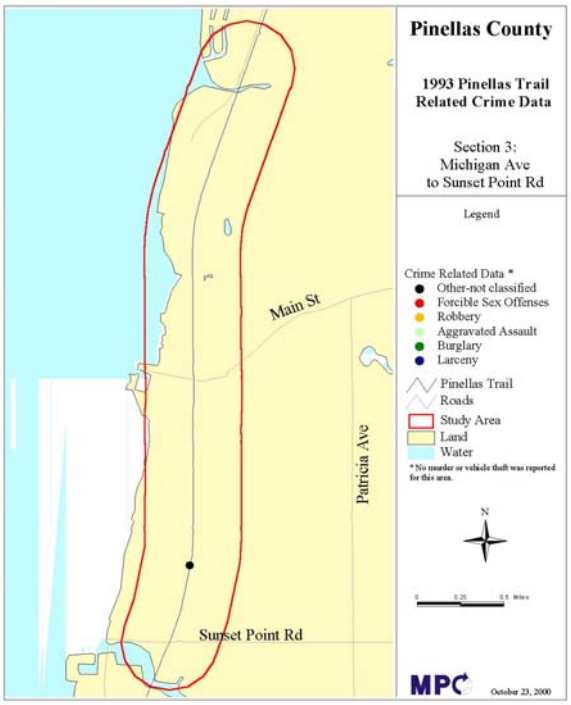
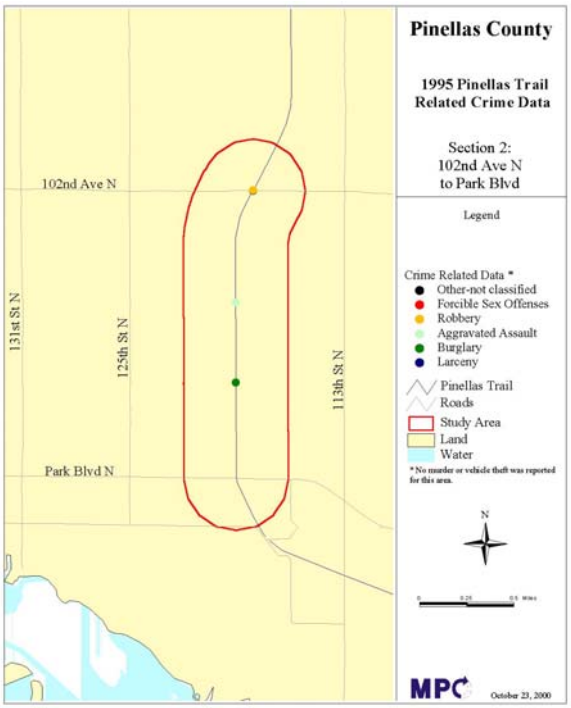
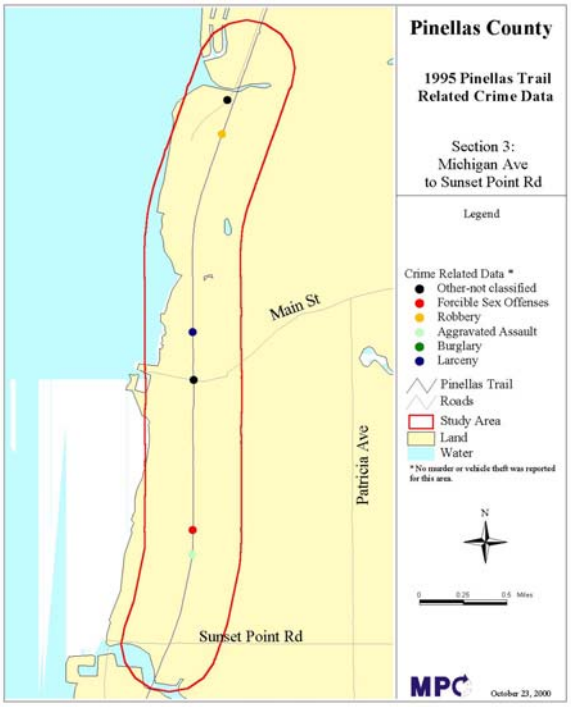


Exhibit 3.3: Pinellas Trail Related Crimes (1995)





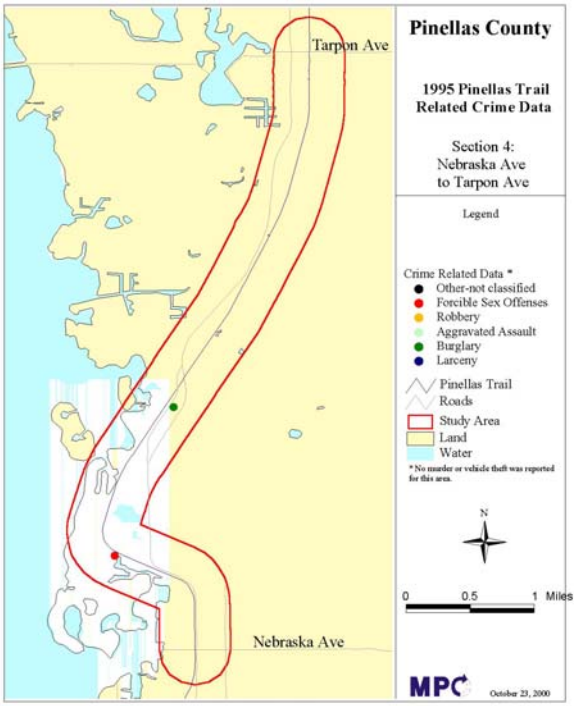
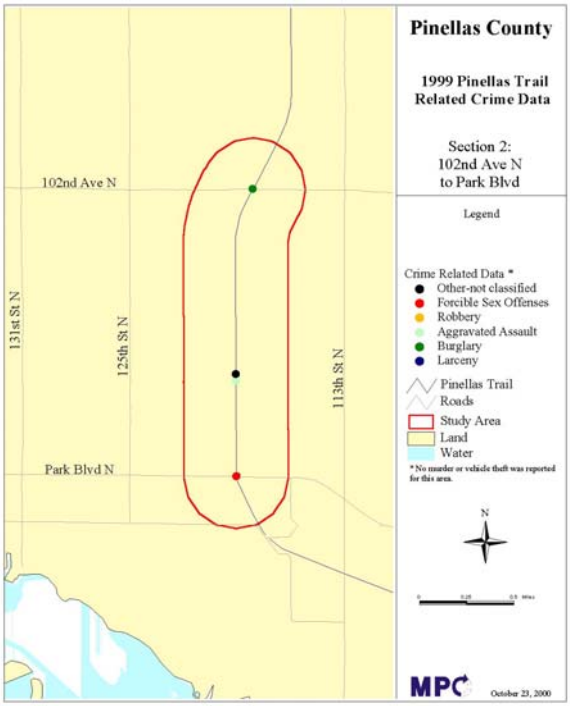
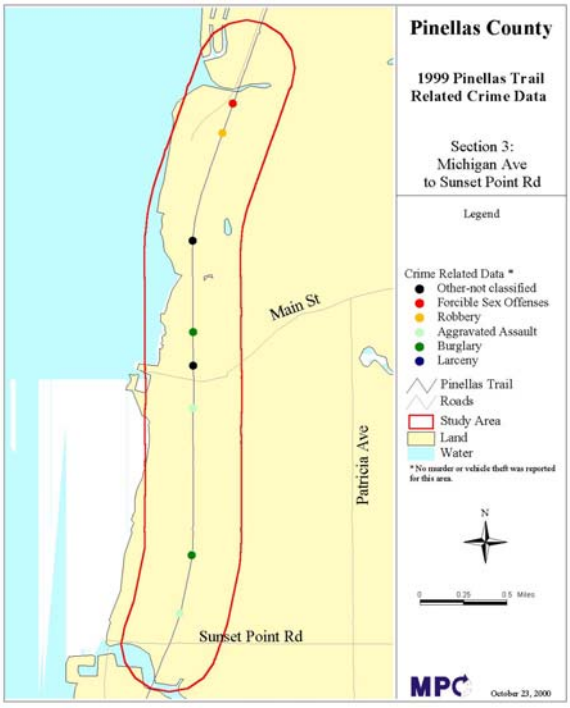
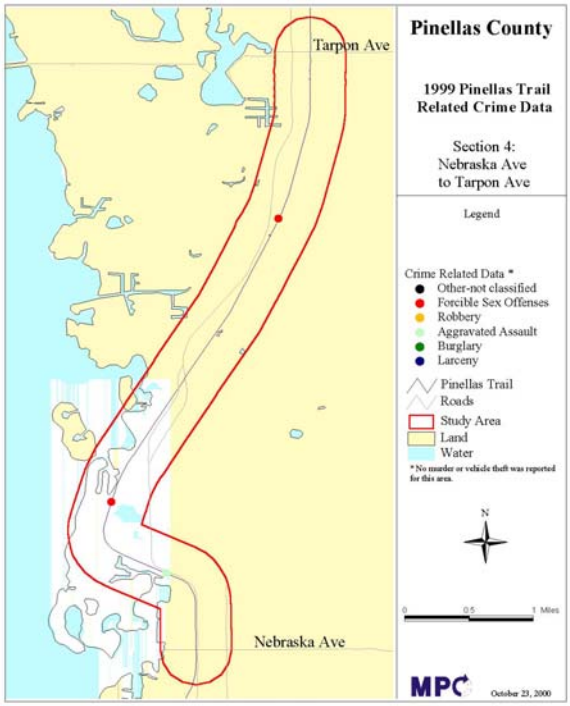


Exhibit 3.4: Pinellas Trail Related Crimes (1999)







D. St. Petersburg Crime Statistics

The following is an assessment of the City of St. Petersburg Police Department Crime Tract dataset. As noted earlier, the sampling methodologies differed in their geographic level of specificity; therefore the Pinellas County and St. Petersburg crime data sets are not comparable. The City of St Petersburg crime tracts sampling methodology yielded a larger sample, thus the study team determined that it would be appropriate to evaluate the St. Petersburg crime data in relation to citywide crime statistics. Data for the years 1993 and 1995 was only available in hard copy format. The 1999 data was provided in a digital format. The study team entered and coded the data in a manner consistent with the crime data provided by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department crime data analyzed elsewhere in this chapter. The St. Petersburg crime data was evaluated to determine whether crime tracts that contain or abut the Pinellas Trail (known as "trail tracts") were unsafe or attracted crime compared to those crime tracts that do not contain or abut the Pinellas Trail.

Data Limitations

There are some dataset limitations that should be noted at the outset of this analysis. The crime data are constrained by the fact that crime figures by crime tract simply represent the total number of crimes in the tract. In other words, it cannot be determined whether the crime occurred along the Pinellas Trail, near the Pinellas Trail or even as far as a mile from the Pinellas Trail. The available City of St. Petersburg crime data do not allow an examination of the amount of crime within a certain geographic buffer. Were better location data available, it would be desirable to select crime reports that would exclude the crimes that occurred far enough away to not be attributed to the trail.

St. Petersburg Police Department staff stated that some crime tract boundaries were slightly modified after calendar year 1995. The analysis of selected crime tracts across years would not be exactly comparable because of these boundary changes. Accordingly, the study team has not made any such comparisons. The geographic boundaries are, however, similar.

The study team has computed averages and standard deviations that describe the crime statistics provided by the City of St. Petersburg Police Department. These averages are based upon the total number of crimes divided by the number of crime tracts (472). The 1993 and 1999 averages are based upon the total number of crimes divided by the number of crime tracts that reported crimes within the calendar year, which for both years was fewer than the 472 total tracts. Thus, the computed averages are not exactly comparable and caution should be used in interpreting the data and making judgments regarding the levels of crime from one year to another.

Exhibits 3.5 through 3.8 reflect the initial sample of crime data provided by the City of St. Petersburg at the time that the countywide data was collected. It should be noted that this data set stopped at Central Avenue and did not include crime data for all St. Petersburg crime tracts that either abutted the trail or were traversed by the trail (there was no data for trail tracts southeast of Central and the Pinellas Trail). The data is only included here for comparison purposes. These figures illustrate the need for the second sampling effort and the disparity between the crime statistics for Section #1 in comparison to the other three county sections.

Table 3.8

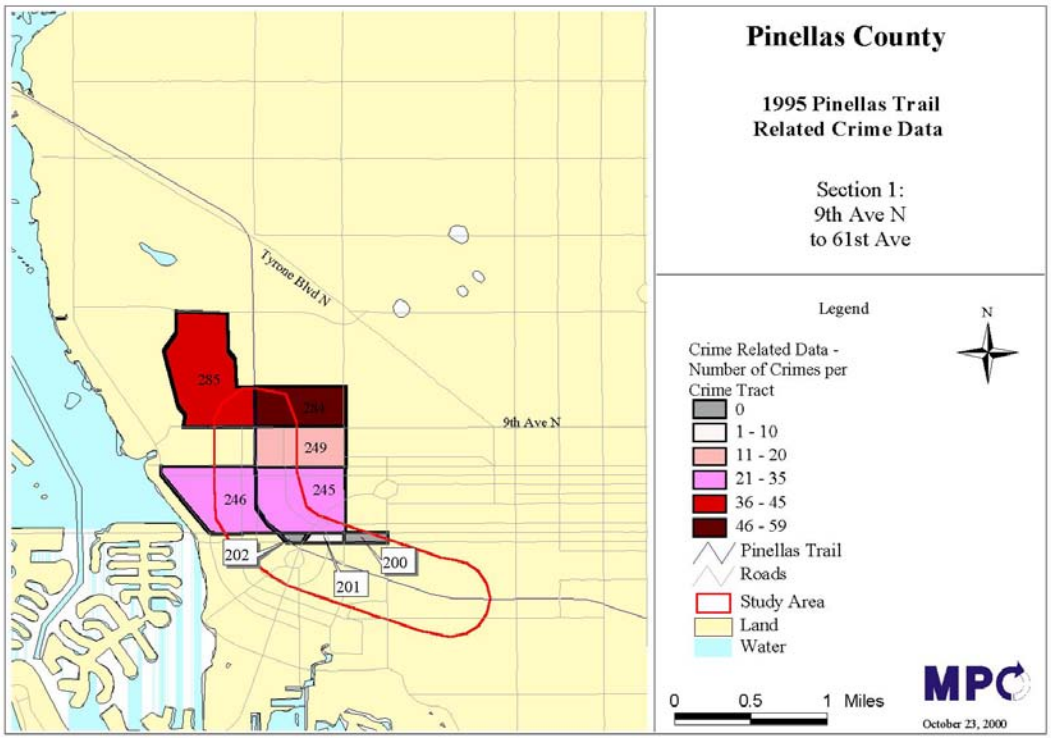
Pinellas Trail Crime Statistics - City Section #1: St. Petersburg

Crime Category	Group #	1993	1995	1999	Totals
Other	0*	-	-	-	0
Murder	1	1	0	0	1
Forcible sex offenses	2	3	5	4	12
Robbery	3	5	6	7	18
Aggravated Assault	4	51	32	54	137
Burglary	5	40	44	38	122
Larceny	6	94	85	110	289
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	17	15	14	46
Total crimes		**211**	**187**	**227**	**625**

1. Due to the large numbers of crimes, all totals were summed from master lists.

*. No specific addresses or dates and times, were available for this area.

Exhibit 3.5: 1993 and 1995 Trail Crime Data for St. Petersburg



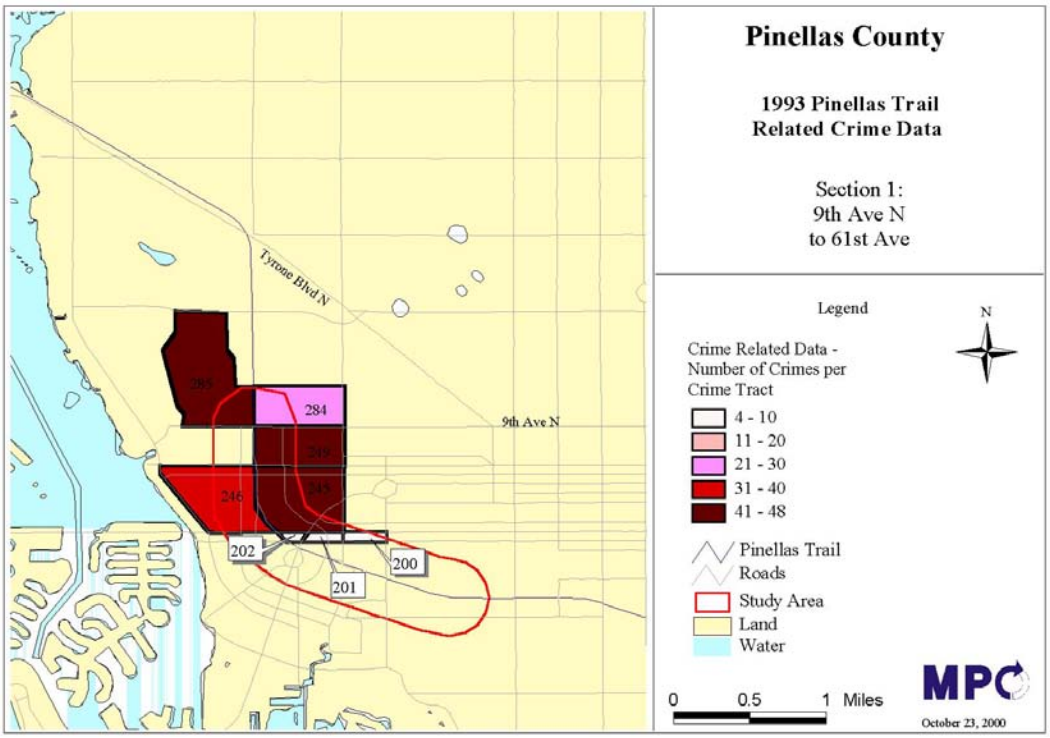
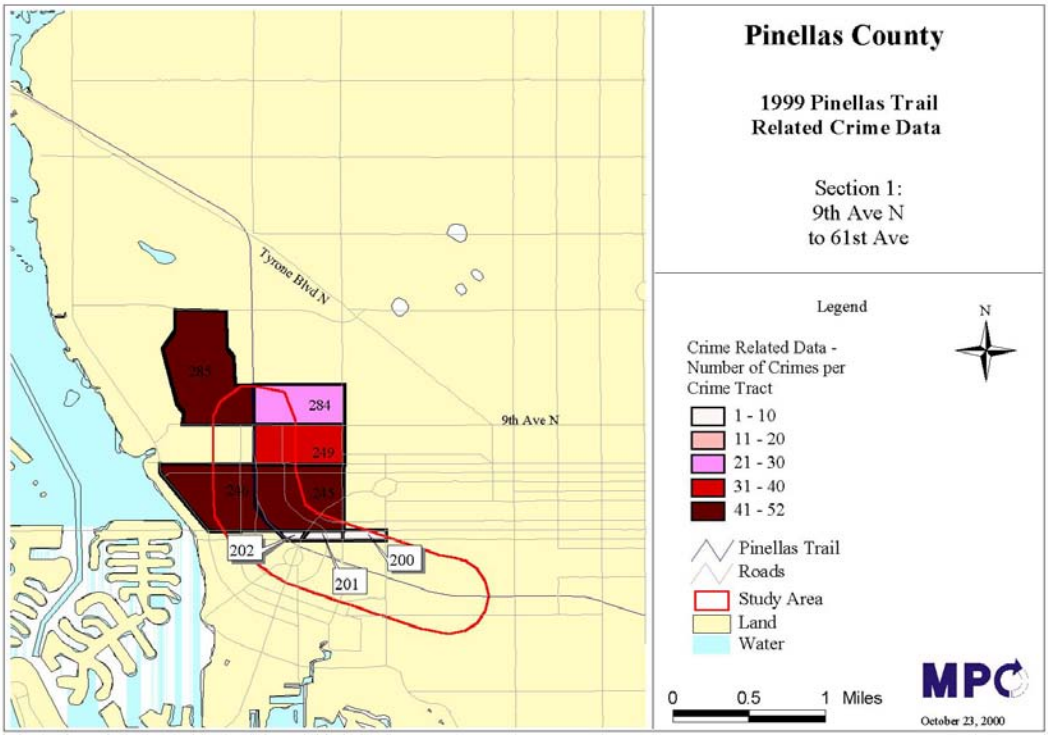


Exhibit 3.6: 1999 Trail Crime Data for St. Petersburg



St. Petersburg Full Dataset Statistics

After the second sample was collected and tabulated, the study team was able to determine that crime in the City of St. Petersburg, as a whole, increased from 1993 to 1995 and decreased from 1995 to 1999, while crime in trail tracts increased from 1993 to 1995 and continued to increase from 1995 to 1999. The study team evaluated the data and determined that the city did not use an identical total number of crime tracts across the three years studied. Due to the variation in the number of total tracts, total crime in St. Petersburg decreased from 1995 to 1999 while the average crime per tract figure increased. This St. Petersburg crime dataset shows a different trend from the steady decline in statewide and countywide crime rate between 1993 and 1999.

The study team examined the number of crime reports per geographic area (crime tract). For each crime tract, the average number of reported crimes was computed to provide a basis for

comparison between trail tracts and citywide crime tracts. The average amount of crime per trail tract within the city of St. Petersburg has increased over the three measured years. The average number of crimes per trail tract was 43.45 in 1993, 54.16 in 1995, and 58.97 in 1999. So, the average number of crimes in trail tracts increased by about 12 percent per year from 1993 to 1995 and slightly more than two percent per year from 1995 to 1999.

In 1993, the amount of citywide violent crimes totaled 4,073, with 121 of those occurring within trail tracts (3 percent). In 1995, the amount of citywide violent crimes totaled 4,721 with 166 of those occurring within trail tracts (3.5 percent). In 1999, the amount of citywide violent crimes totaled 4,010, with 127 of those occurring within trail tracts (3.2 percent). For the three measured years, shoplifting led in each of those years in occurrences per trail tract. Burglary, simple assault, larceny (from vehicle) and larceny (other) rounded out the top five in each of those years, although in different ranking order. None of the crimes in the yearly top five are violent crimes. For this assessment, violent crimes were considered to be murder, manslaughter, rape, sodomy, child molestation, robbery and aggravated assault.

A t-test was used to determine whether the average crime rate in tracts along the trail are statistically different than the overall average crime rate in St. Petersburg. A t-test measures the truthfulness of a hypothesis in order to draw conclusions about data relationships. The t-test formula is:

$$T = (x - u) / (s / \text{square root of } n)$$

Where:

X = *mean of tracts along the Pinellas Trail*
U = *overall mean of all tracts in St. Petersburg*
S = *standard deviation of tracts along the Pinellas Trail*
N = *number of tracts along the Pinellas Trail*

Some area residents hypothesize that crime along the Pinellas Trail is higher than elsewhere in the city. The test of this hypothesis would be: "The average crime rate for tracts along the trail for 1999 (58.97) is no different than the average crime rate for all tracts (58.53)."

A rejection of this hypothesis supports the case that the average crime rate along the Pinellas Trail is higher. Conversely, acceptance of the hypothesis indicates that, to a high degree of confidence, differences in crime rates are due to sampling errors or other data deficiencies, not to higher crime rates along the Pinellas Trail. A 90 percent level of confidence is used for the evaluation.

For a sample size of 31 (the number of crime tracts along the Pinellas Trail) the critical value of t at 90 percent is 1.282. This means if the calculated t value, which measures the difference in the trail average and overall average, is greater than 1.282, then there is a 90 chance that the crime rate along the trail is higher due to factors other than sampling errors. The t statistic for 1993 is –0.536, –0.135 for 1995, and 0.0196 for 1999.

Because the t statistic for all three years is less than the critical value of t (1.282), this means that the null hypothesis is accepted. As discussed above, acceptance of the null hypothesis indicates that the difference between the average crime rate of the Pinellas Trail tracts and the overall crime rate cannot be explained by anything other than sampling errors. Accordingly, it is concluded that crime rates along Pinellas Trail tracts is not higher than the overall crime rate.

Crime tract 346 is located on the south side of Tyrone Boulevard. This particular tract has led all tracts in shoplifting reports for the measured years (351 in 1993, 478 in 1995 and 473 in 1999). While this may be an alarming statistic, one must realize that shoplifting is more of a retail-oriented crime of opportunity than the typical type of crime attributable to a trail. After further analysis, the study team found that a key characteristic that may be driving this statistic could be that the Tyrone Square and Crosswinds Malls located within this tract. In addition, there are several other commercial developments in close proximity, thus providing the opportunity for these types of crimes to occur.

Crime tract 401 along the trail is also heavily commercial, and thus, the same rationale could be assumed to explain its high number of shoplifting crimes. If all other crimes were

Exhibit 3.7: St. Petersburg
Crime Tract Averages (all crimes)

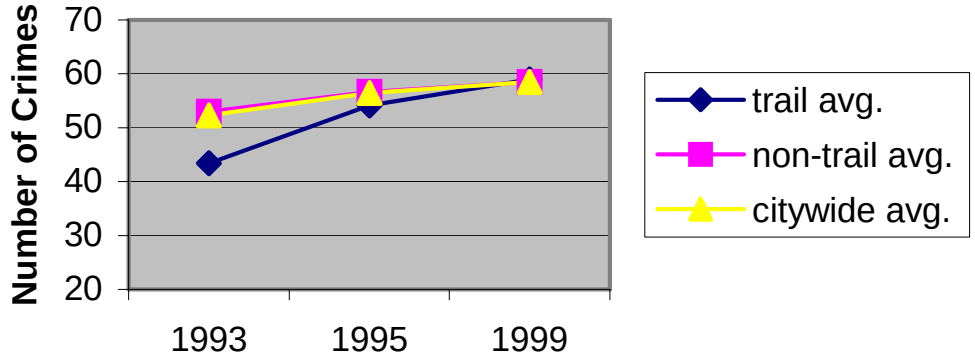
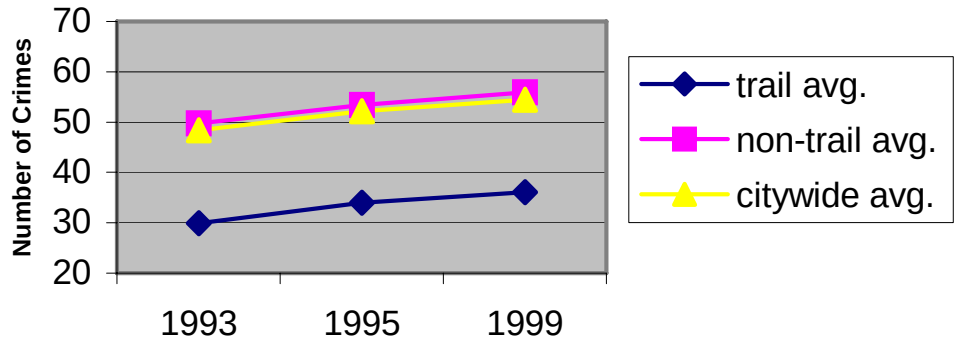


Exhibit 3.8: St. Petersburg
Crime Tract Averages (excludes shoplifting)



considered in the absence of shoplifting crime reports, the total trail tract crimes would decrease by 39 percent as illustrated in *Exhibits 3.7 and 3.8*.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESIDENTS' MAILBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

RESIDENTS MAIL-BACK QUESTIONNAIRE

The residents survey consisted of a mail-back questionnaire hand-delivered to 1,488 residents along the four previously identified market areas of the Pinellas Trail. This quantitative survey was designed to assess resident perceptions regarding the trail's impact on neighborhood quality and property values.

A. Survey Distribution

To obtain a valid cross section of the various communities traversed by the Pinellas Trail, the MPO's general planning consultant designed a study sample to distribute 1,600 surveys within the four market areas along the Pinellas Trail, or roughly 400 questionnaires in each market area. The St. Petersburg and Dunedin market areas had to be extended slightly to ensure that 400 surveys could be disseminated. The questionnaires were handed out to residents of properties located within approximately one quarter of a mile on either side of the trail along the selected segments. Ultimately, 1,488 surveys were distributed to area residents.

B. Response Rate

Of the 1,488 surveys disseminated, 441 surveys were mailed back completed. This response represents a response rate of 30 percent with the highest response from the Seminole market area (37%). The average and individual market area response rates fall within acceptable limits for mail-back surveys. A further break down of responses is contained in *Table 4.1: Distribution and Responses*.

Table 4.1: Survey Response Rate

Area	Distributed	Returned	Response
Seminole	400	146	37%
St. Petersburg	400	108	27%
Clearwater/Dunedin	400	112	28%
Palm Harbor	288	75	26%
Total	1,488	441	30%

Only 288 questionnaires were distributed in Palm Harbor because of two obstacles. First, many Palm Harbor homes and condominiums are located within private gated communities that hampered the distribution of questionnaires. Second, the Palm Harbor market area is a sparsely populated part of the trail. Residents mailed back 75 questionnaires from Palm Harbor, which provides a sufficient sample size for analysis.

C. Survey Instrument

The questions and potential answers are listed in *Exhibit 4-1*. This mail-back questionnaire was stamped and self-addressed. The form was to be completed by one member of the household. It included a brief explanatory paragraph, and MPO staff contact names and telephone numbers. The questions were formulated to evaluate resident perceptions regarding the trail's impact on adjacent neighborhoods. The questionnaires were handed out to residents living within approximately one quarter of a mile of the trail. Within each of these areas, a cross section of community types was selected to encompass urban, suburban, and commercial activity center areas. Recently sold homes (within 2-3 years) were targeted in an attempt to ensure they comprised an estimated 25 percent of the survey sample.

D. Response Summaries

Survey responses are summarized in the following sections, beginning with an overview of the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents. The summaries also identify the user's perceptions of the trail. *Appendix A* includes the written comments that were provided by resident respondents. *Appendix B* is a summary of the survey responses from trail-abutting business owners.

Exhibit 4.1: Survey Form

1. How long have you lived at this address?
   a. Fewer than 5 years b. 5 years or more

2. Do you own or rent your home?
   a. Own b. Rent

3. Including yourself, how many adults age 18 or over living in the household are:
   a. Retired? c. Working outside the home?
   b. Working at home? d. Not employed?

4. If there are minors or college-age children living in your household, how many are there:
   a. Under five years old? d. In college?
   b. In grades K-5? e. Over 16 but not in school?
   c. In grades 6-12?

5. Would you say that you ride your bicycle or jog/walk more often, less often or about the same since you began living near the Pinellas Trail?
   a. More often b. Less often c. About the same

6. How often do you or others in the household use the Pinellas Trail?
   a. Never (skip to question 8) d. Often (about once a week)
   b. Seldom (a few times a year) e. Daily (5 to 7 times a week)
   c. Sometimes (1 or 2 times a month)

7. Why do you use the trail? (Rank all that apply by putting a "1" by the type of trip you make most frequently, "2" by the second most frequent type of trip, "3" by the third most, etc.)
   a. To commute to work e. To shop or eat out
   b. To travel to school f. To exercise
   c. To visit a friend / socialize g. Other (please describe and rank
   d. To visit a park / recreate _____

8. How would you rate the trail on the following?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
a. Ease of access from home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Ease of access to destinations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Crime safety/security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Crash/traffic safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Ease of travel (level of congestion)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Other (please describe below and rate)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. On a scale of negative three to positive three, with negative three being very negative, positive three being very positive and zero being no change, how has the Pinellas Trail changed:

Negative No Change

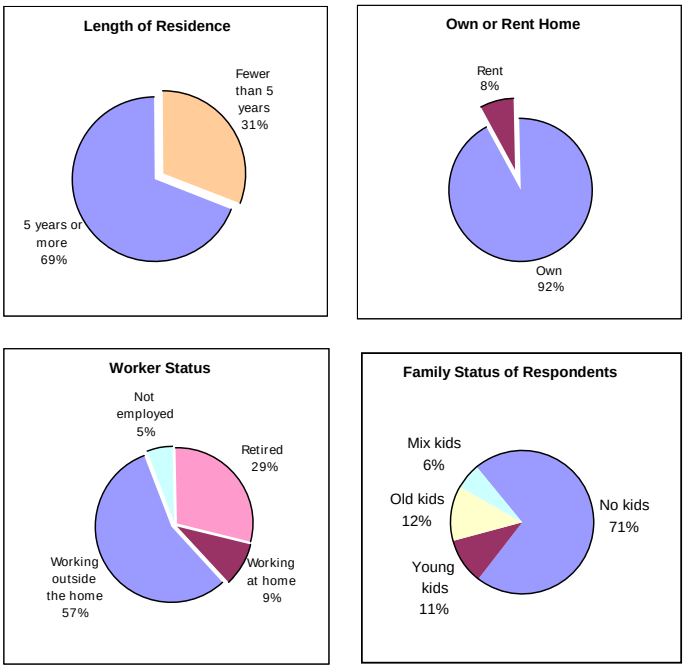
Positive

	- 3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
a. Your property value?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Neighborhood property values?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Level of Crime/Sense of security?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Privacy?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Noise?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Accessibility to activities/destinations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Neighborhood acquaintances?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

1. *Socioeconomic Characteristics*

The 441 households that mailed back surveys represent a population of 736 adults and 216 children. In general, the survey respondents are homeowners (92%) with an average of 2.16 persons per household (Exhibit 4.2). Most respondents have lived in the same house for more than five years (69%) and currently work outside of the home (57%). Twenty-nine percent are retired and 29 percent have children. There is a good balance between employed and retired respondents as well as a fair mix of family types and ownership status.

Exhibit 4.2: Socioeconomic Characteristics



2. *Trail Use*

Sixty-five percent of those surveyed indicated that they use the Pinellas Trail at least once a week, thus confirming its popularity among Pinellas residents (Exhibit 4.3). This finding was echoed by the responses from the realtors and homeowner's association officers' surveys. The remaining use characteristics are summarized in the three pie charts below.

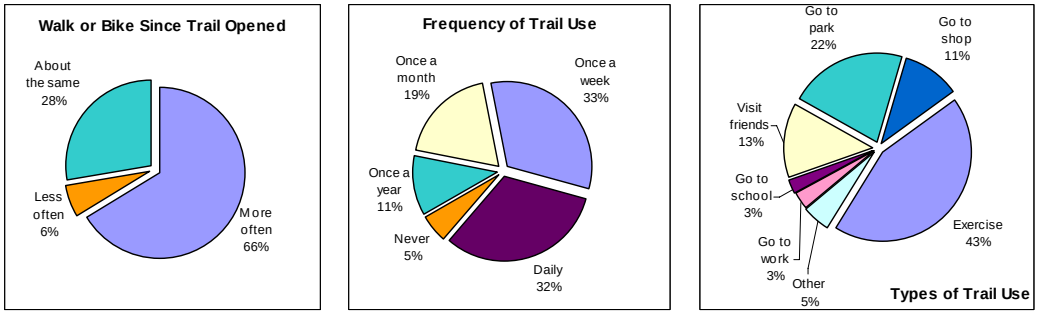


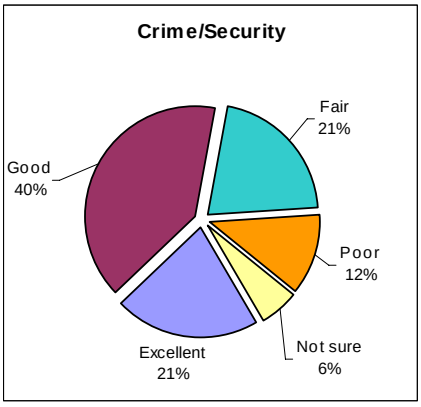
Exhibit 4.3: Trail Use

Most area residents use the Pinellas Trail to either "*exercise*" (43%) or to "*go to a park*" (22%). The trail is also used for non-recreational, or utilitarian trips. Eleven percent of those surveyed use the trail "*to shop*" and another 13 percent are use it to "*visit friends.*"

Two-thirds of the respondents exercise more since the trail opened while another 28 percent exercise about the same amount as they did before the trail opened. Another six percent say that they exercise less since the trail was constructed.

3. Perceptions of the Trail

The Pinellas Trail appears to be a popular recreation and transportation facility with respondents. Over 80 percent of those surveyed said that access from their home was "*excellent*" and another 13 percent said that access was "*good.*" Survey respondents also considered the trail to have "*excellent*" or "*good*" access to destinations (44% and 40% respectively) and ease of travel is also rated highly (42% and 48% respectively).



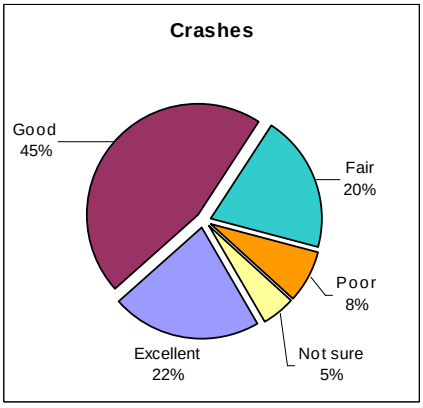


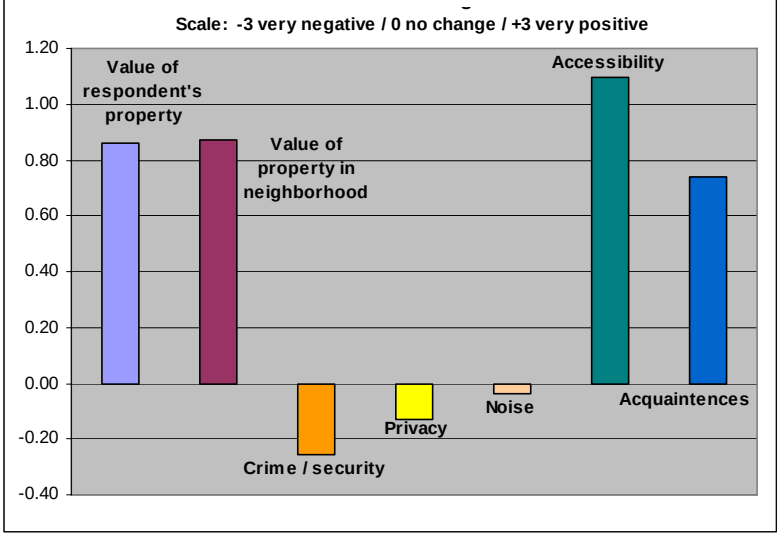
Exhibit 4.4: Trail Perceptions

A majority of respondents (61%) rate the trail as excellent or good in terms of crime and security. Likewise, more than 60 percent rated the trail either "*good*" or "*excellent*" in terms of crashes, as summarized in the pie charts to the right (Exhibit 4.4). In the comments portion of the surveys, residents expressed a variety of safety and crash concerns. Most of the comments specifically identified the failure of both motorists and cyclists to stop at trail crossings. The crossings at 64th Street and east of Pasadena were identified by name. Some comments expressed concern about high-speed cyclists and skaters colliding with pedestrians.

4. Composite Rating

A composite rating is used to identify overall satisfaction with the trail (Exhibit 4.5). The rating uses a scale that ranges from negative three (a very negative rating) to a positive three (a very favorable rating). A rating of zero indicates neither positive nor negative perceptions.

Exhibit 4.5: Trail Rating



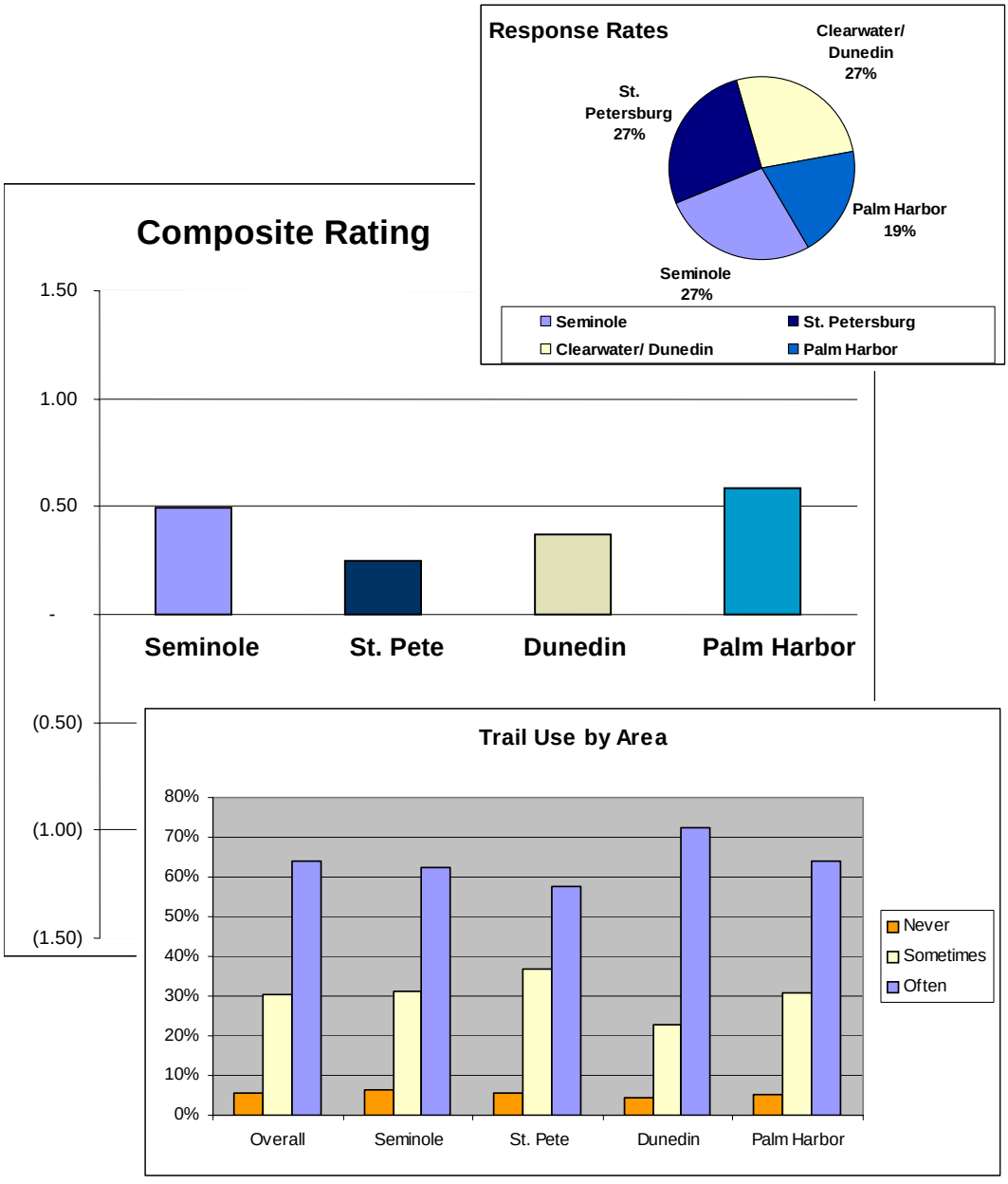
On the whole, respondents rated the trail's impact on access to activities, value of their property, value of neighborhood properties and neighborhood acquaintances positively. They negatively rated the trail's impact on crime/ security, privacy and noise. Several stratifications of the survey sample attempt to explain how use and perceptions of the trail differ among respondents. The stratifications are by market areas, length of residence, employment status, family status, and frequency of use.

5. Market Areas

Perceptions from the four market areas (Seminole, St. Petersburg, and Dunedin and Palm Harbor) are nearly identical (Exhibit 4.6). The highest ratings are from residents along the Seminole and Palm Harbor segments, the lowest are from the St. Petersburg area.

Use of the trail is also similar among the four areas. Dunedin residents are more likely to use the trail "often" (72%) but the percentage that never used the trail is essentially the same among the market areas. Despite the perceived inequities cited in the homeowner's association officer's survey, trail use and perceptions by abutting property owners are not impacted by community or location.

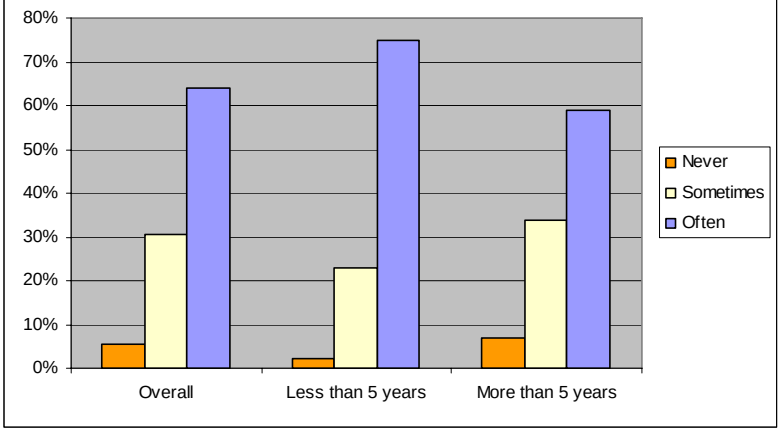
Exhibit 4.6: Trail Perceptions by Market Area



6. *Tenure*

The length of residence influences use of the trail (Exhibit 4.7). Those who have lived in the house fewer than five years are more likely to use the trail (75%) than those who had lived in the house longer (59%). The realtor survey supports this finding, with many realtors suggesting that those with active lifestyles tend to seek homes near the trail. As with the use results, the composite ratings indicate that those living in the house less than five years are somewhat more satisfied with the trail than those with longer tenure.

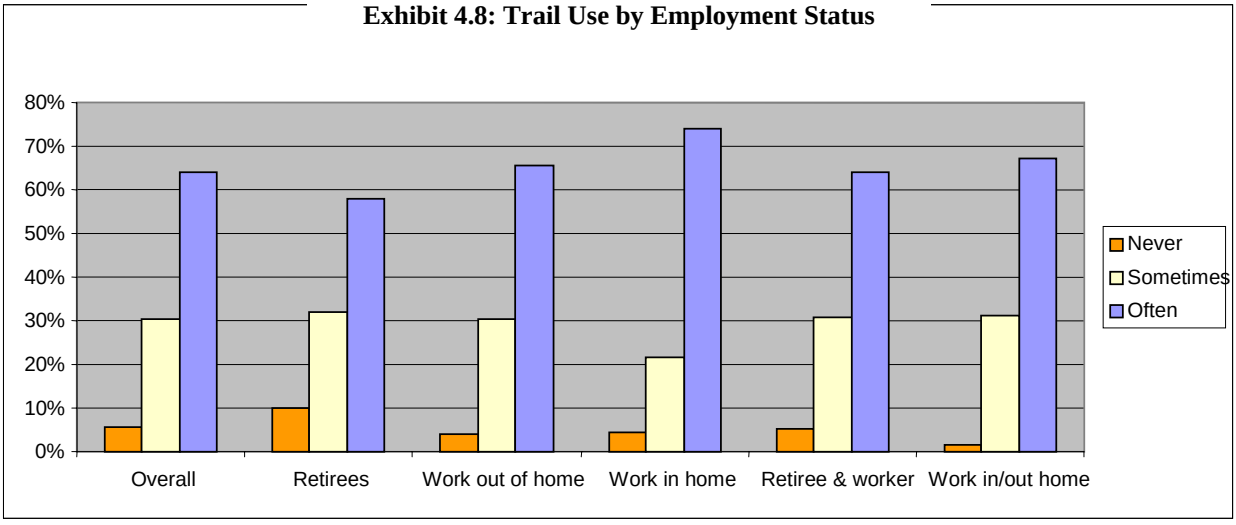
Exhibit 4.7: Trail Use by Length of Residence



7. *Employment*

Households were stratified by those where all members are retired, those where members worked in the home, those where members worked out of the home and those with a combination of employment types (Exhibit 4.8). Several of the realtors interviewed believe that retirees do not use the trail as often as others, but there is also a sense the trail attracts those with

Exhibit 4.8: Trail Use by Employment Status

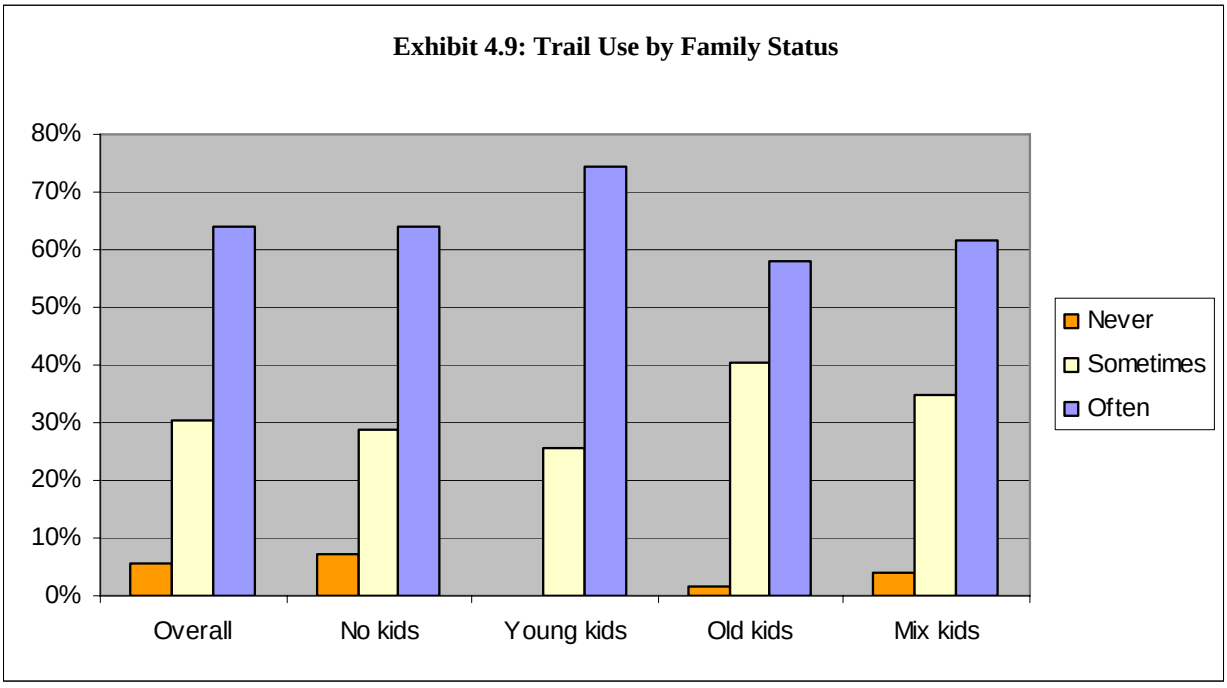


active lifestyles, which does not always relate to age or retirement status. Survey results support the latter notion. Findings indicate that 58 percent of retirees use the trail once a week or more, which is very comparable to the 64 percent of the overall sample who use it as often. The highest trail use is by respondents who work at home (75%). As with use, retirees tend to have a slightly lower positive opinion about the trail than other household types, but the difference is not significant.

8. *Family Status*

Realtors also believed that households with young children use the trail more frequently than other families (Exhibit 4.9). This assumption is borne out by the survey results (75 percent of families with young children use the Pinellas Trail *"often"*). Fewer families with older children use the trail *"often."* While children in a family influence trail usage, it appears that there is a base level of trail usage across family types.

Exhibit 4.9: Trail Use by Family Status



E. Trail Use And Perceptions

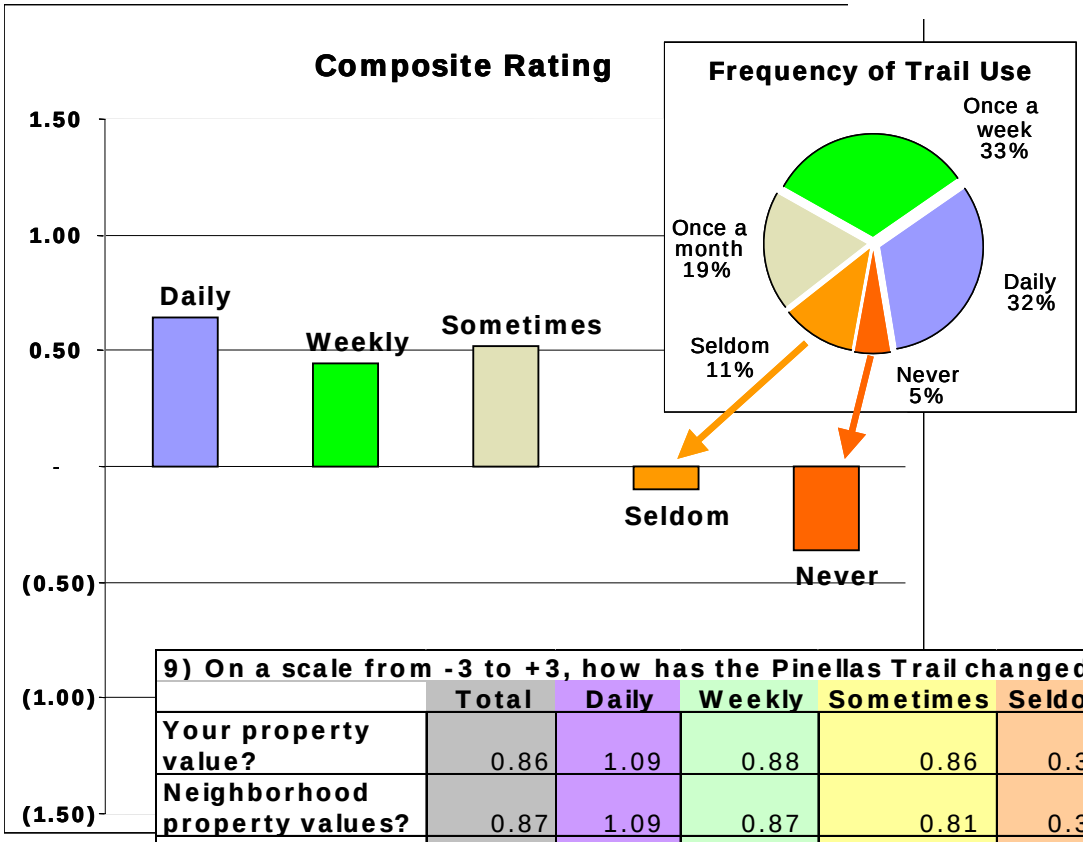
The geographic and socio-economic stratifications of the sample did not reveal significant differences among respondents' use or perception of the trail. The results did suggest that an intervening factor, intuitively understood by the realtors, that active people tend to have more positive opinions of the trail. To test this relationship, the sample was stratified by the frequency of use. The stratification did clearly indicate that trail use influences trail perceptions (Exhibit 4.10). Infrequent users rated the Pinellas Trail more negatively in every category than more frequent users.

Less than five percent of the respondents have "*never*" used the Pinellas Trail and their combined ratings of "*how the trail has changed*" were the most negative and negative in every category. The 11 percent of respondents who use "*seldom*" use the trail rated the trail a bit higher, but still negatively. Those who use the trail "*sometimes,*" "*often*" *and* "*daily*" have very similar, positive overall ratings.

Comparing the ratings by categories, all but the "*never*" users rate the trail positively for impact to property values, accessibility and acquaintances. All but the "*sometimes*" users rate the trail negatively for crime and privacy. Only the "*daily*" and "*sometimes*" users rate the trail positively for noise.

In summary, trail use is the best indicator of perceptions about the trail. Those who never use the trail are likely to have a poor opinion of its impacts. This is supported by the realtor interviews. Several believed that those with active lifestyles, regardless of age, employment or family status, are more likely to purchase a home near the trail. The significance of this finding is that a very low percentage of respondents never use the trail.

Exhibit 4.10: Composite Rating of Trail



9) On a scale from -3 to +3, how has the Pinellas Trail changed:	Total	Daily	Weekly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Your property value?	0.86	1.09	0.88	0.86	0.31	(0.42)
Neighborhood property values?	0.87	1.09	0.87	0.81	0.33	(0.38)
Level of Crime / Sense of security?	(0.26)	(0.09)	(0.28)	0.04	(0.98)	(0.50)
Privacy?	(0.13)	(0.05)	(0.12)	0.07	(0.58)	(0.38)
Noise?	(0.04)	0.09	(0.02)	0.05	(0.54)	(0.04)
Accessibility to destinations?	1.09	1.36	1.05	1.10	0.56	(0.33)
Neighborhood acquaintances?	0.74	1.03	0.76	0.68	0.21	(0.50)
Composite	3.14	4.51	3.13	3.62	(0.69)	(2.54)

1. Survey Comments

Respondents added a number of written comments to the survey forms that helped clarify responses. The following sections summarize the written comments.

2. Why do you use the trail?

Under the "other" option for this question, 29 respondents said they used the trail to walk their dogs. Eighteen respondents use the trail for scenic relaxation, family time and aesthetic reasons including "to admire the greenery, shrubs, and oak trees." Most of the remaining comments related to accessibility. Out of 23, 21 residents noted the trail's access to the post office, barbershop, library, bank, downtown Dunedin, shopping, beach, and Swenson's Creek. Only one negative comment came in under this question, "This trail is a big cancer."

3. Crime and Loitering Comments

Thirty-two complaints or suggestions were made about crime, sense of security, and lighting. Many complaints were about an increase in loitering on the trail by teenagers and strangers. Of particular note were complaints about loiterers drinking, breaking glass, using foul language, making noise, and unsupervised teens congregating after dark. Some respondents cited recent crimes including theft of ladders, fruit, bikes, basketballs, and a gas hedge trimmer as well as burglary of cars. Respondents commented about a lack of security in particular areas and at night. Three different respondents were concerned that recent break-ins could potentially be connected to the trail. Five residents suggested that the trail needed lighting.

4. Accessibility and Safety Comments

Thirty-nine accessibility and safety comments and suggestions were made on the residents' survey. Two people complained about ADA access for wheelchair and motor scooters. Several respondents complained about high-speed trail users and bicycle clubs. One person suggested the need for a speed limit. Thirteen respondents were concerned about safety at

intersections and crossings, stating that both motorists and trail users fail to stop or slow down at stop signs. Parking was also a concern for five respondents, particularly around 102nd Avenue. Inaccessibility between Pasadena Avenue and 1st Avenue South and on the east side of Pasadena was also mentioned. Three residents complained about a large ditch that prevents trail access. Other safety issues noted were shoulders with drop-offs and parts of the trail being located too close to Alternate US 19. Two respondents were looking forward to trail additions such as a new pedestrian overpass and future access to the Wal-Mart/Tyrone area.

5. Property Value Comments

Comments on costs and property values ranged from one end of the scale to the other. One respondent said the trail was the "best value the taxpayers ever got. The 'Penny for Pinellas' was used well." Another comment was that "too much money was spent on this farce." One resident was concerned that the trail would "bring down property values in the re-sale market with the crime that the trail has brought in."

6. General Comments

Some of those surveyed preferred the trail because the noise of the train that "used to go by a few times a day" was eliminated. Twenty-four comments fell into the great scenery and outdoor enjoyment category. A number of respondents echoed the comment, "The trail is one of Pinellas County's finest and best accomplishments. We love the trail!" As an example of a non-user comment, this trail resident commented, "Haven't heard any complaints. I am 90 and am too old now to walk the trail – my husband used to walk it every day – but now just can't. I do enjoy sitting on my porch and watching the people go by, to and from the trail, and they all look like they enjoy it." Another positive resident commented that the trail "cuts down on car traffic, people relax more, it slows down the pace of life."

Ten negative comments were made concerning loose dogs and dog litter. Out of 24 comments on facilities, six were complimentary and 18 were complaints or suggestions. Some residents complained about garbage and trash left along the trail. Others suggested spraying for bugs, adding public telephones, public bathrooms and "watering points" for runners and cyclists. It was also suggested that rules, regulations and hours of access should be posted along the trail. In general, these written comments tend to support those made during the interviews with homeowner association officers.

F. Conclusions

There are several important findings from the residents' survey. Residents are concerned about crime, privacy, and noise whereas the homeowner's association officers ranked crime, loitering, and landscaping as the most important among trail-related concerns. Roughly two-thirds of the surveyed residents are using the trail to exercise at least once a week. More residents are exercising more than they did before the trail opened. While any trail-related concerns should be addressed, there is a significant community benefit associated with such an amenity used by 66 percent of surveyed residents at least once a week.

Although families with young children, newer residents, and Dunedin residents were more likely to use the trail, geography, tenure, employment, and family status are not the best indicators of trail perceptions. The most negative perceptions of the trail are held by the five percent of residents who have never used the trail. Even though infrequent users gave the Pinellas Trail a negative overall rating, their composite score was not as low as the score given by residents who had never used the Pinellas Trail. Additionally, infrequent users were primarily concerned about the trail's adverse impact on crime, privacy, and noise. As a group, they still rated the trail as having a positive impact on property values, accessibility, and neighborhood acquaintances. Daily users had the highest composite rating of the trail; however, they were still marginally concerned about crime (0.09) and privacy (0.05). Clearly, the single strongest

indicator of trail perceptions is trail usage and, because of the high use of the trail, the overall perception of the trail is positive.

CHAPTER FIVE

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

The MPO's general planning consultant interviewed the officers of several homeowner's and neighborhood associations in an effort to determine whether issues reported in the press and by individual survey respondents were indicative of a "silent majority" or a "vocal minority." Some general indications of the importance of any issue to a group of residents are whether an issue was discussed at an association board meeting and whether the association took any further action to resolve the matter.

The study team conducted a ten-question directed telephone survey of association officers to evaluate the trail-related impacts on surrounding residential areas. The sample size of the survey is too small for statistical analysis, but the responses of participants do yield helpful insights into perceptions of the trail.

A. Survey Methodology

To adequately assess the trail's impact on neighborhoods, eight neighborhood association officers were interviewed by telephone during the fall of 2000. The respondents were interviewed using the survey instrument shown in *Exhibit 5.1*. Certain questions on the Homeowner's Association Officers (HOA) survey intentionally resembled questions from the residents' survey. In particular, the HOA Officers survey asked respondents for their opinions about trail-adjacent property crime, privacy, noise, loitering, and other issues. Additional questions were added to gauge whether officers had discussed the Pinellas Trail or taken any action regarding concerns about trail-related impacts on their neighborhood. It should be noted that the survey size is inadequate for a quantitative analysis and this survey is considered qualitative in nature.

Exhibit 5.1: Pinellas HOA Officer Survey

1. How long have you served on the Homeowner's Association Board for this neighborhood?
   a. Fewer than 5 years b. 5 years or more

2. Do you like the Pinellas Trail? Yes/No

3. Is the Pinellas Trail an asset to the neighborhood/ community? If so, how?

4. Have any of the following types of trail-related concerns been discussed by the Homeowner's Association Board during your tenure (if no, skip to question 8)?

	Yes/No		Yes/No
a. Crime/ safety/ security?		d. Nuisance/loitering?	
b. Privacy?		e. Other?	
c. Noise?			

5. What action, if any, did the Homeowner's Association Board take in response to these concerns?

	Yes/No		Yes/No
a. Called the police department?		d. Discussed matter further?	
b. Set up community watch?		e. Formed a study committee?	
c. Installed sign or fence?		f. No action taken?	

6. Of the issues discussed at recent Home Owner's Association Meetings, which issues were most important to the following neighborhood groups?

	Crime/Privacy/Noise/Loitering/Other
a. All property owners	
b. Many property owners	
c. Owners of first and second tier lots	
d. Owners of abutting properties	
e. Only a few owners	
f. One owner	

7. Please rank the importance of recently discussed trail-related concerns to the HOA Board as a whole?
   (Use 1 to indicate most important and 5 as least important)

a. Crime/ safety/ security?		d. Nuisance/loitering?	
b. Privacy?		e. Other?	
c. Noise?			

8. Do you use the Pinellas Trail for any of the following activities?

a. To commute to work	e. To shop or eat out
b. To travel to school	f. To exercise
c. To visit a friend / socialize	g. Other (please describe and rank _____
d. To visit a park / recreate	

9. How would you rate the Pinellas Trail's impact on property values in your neighborhood?
   a. Increased property values significantly
   b. Increased property values somewhat
   c. No change
   d. Decreased property values somewhat
   e. Decreased property values significantly
   f. No opinion/ not sure

10. How would you suggest that the Pinellas Trail be changed or improved?

B. Response Rates

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) compiled a list of eleven (11) homeowner's or neighborhood associations located within the four market areas shown in *Map 2.1: Market Areas*. Eight HOA officers were ultimately contacted and interviewed (as listed below). During the survey, the respondent was asked whether there were other HOA officers who should be interviewed about the trail. The only HOAs mentioned by survey respondents were already on the contact list prepared by the MPO.

Exhibit 5.2: Homeowners' Association Contact List

Gayle Sims
Childs Park Neighborhood Association
4336 Fairfield Ave. S.
St. Petersburg, FL 33711

Mort Sherman
Crossroads Area Homeowners Assoc.
6723-14th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33710-5405

David Archie
Citizen's Alliance for Progress
P.O. Box 295
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688-0295

Sharon Colfert
Holiday Village Association
6580 Seminole Blvd., #320
Seminole, FL 33772

Julie Martin
Jungle Terrace Civic Association
7101-36th Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33710

Kathryn Wilmot
Crystal Bay Travel Park, Inc.
2002 Ketch Circle
Palm Harbor, FL 34683

Tasker Beal
Friends of Ridgecrest
1731 Taylor Lake Park
Largo, FL 33778

Guy Keirn
Park Street Neighborhood Association
7535-3rd Ave. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33710

C. Survey Instrument

The initial survey questions were introductory in nature and included to put the respondent at ease while allowing for open-ended responses. For example, the HOA officers were asked how long they had served on the association board and whether they personally liked the trail. For the most part, the respondents had served on the association boards for fewer than five years and enjoyed using the Pinellas Trail. While many of the officers stated that they felt the Pinellas Trail was an asset to their neighborhood/community, they were hard-pressed to

articulate the basis for that conclusion other than many of their neighbors use it. They were also unable to articulate supporting information in conjunction comments concerning insufficient landscaping, buffering, and maintenance along the older segments of the Pinellas Trail. The following survey instrument was used to conduct a directed interview with the representatives of eight HOAs to evaluate their perceptions regarding the impact of the trail on their neighborhoods.

D. Survey Responses

Three respondents said that their boards had not discussed the Pinellas Trail or trail-related concerns. Two respondents stated that they felt that there were "two different trails." They asserted that one trail that was "an ugly concrete sidewalk on an old rail bed" and the other was lushly landscaped and well maintained. They believed amenities, or lack thereof, were based on community prestige.

Five respondents said that their boards had discussed the Pinellas Trail. The chief concern was crime/safety/security issues. Two neighborhoods only discussed crime and had no other trail-related concerns. Of the three others, two were concerned about loitering and amenities/landscaping while another discussed privacy. Emotions ran high concerning the existence of attractive landscaping, consistent provision of amenities, amount of buffering and the quality of landscape maintenance. This point was echoed in the recommended improvements portion of the survey. Additionally, several officers had specific questions about pedestrian overpasses and they were directed to speak with the MPO staff.

Some respondents said that contacting the police was a very effective means of addressing neighborhood concerns about crime along the trail while others said that it was extremely ineffective. Three associations contacted their Community Policing Officer (CPO) to report crime problems. One of the three, the Friends of Ridgecrest, set up a community watch and installed a fence to address crime, safety or security issues. Their representative stated that contacting the CPO was highly effective and "took care of the problem." The other two

respondents said that they have contacted their CPO without results. When the issue of police responsiveness was scrutinized, it was found that if a homeowner's association was primarily concerned about crime, then the police responded effectively. Conversely, if the chief concerns were loitering, graffiti and potential criminal activity, then the police were limited in their ability to respond. The respondents confirmed this by saying that police could not eliminate loitering, graffiti, and "gang activity" unless people were caught "in the act" of committing a specific crime.

Another interesting finding was that if an association was dissatisfied with CPO responsiveness, the importance of other trail-related issues were amplified due to their frustration relative to loitering or other issues. For example, one of the two neighborhoods frustrated about responsiveness was also frustrated about landscaping/lawn maintenance and contacted County code enforcement as well as the local newspaper seeking satisfaction. They said that "baby-sitting" the Pinellas Trail should be the County's responsibility, not the adjacent property owners'.

The survey instrument also included a question designed to determine which groups of residents were most affected by specific trail-related concerns. In other words, does privacy and noise only affect trail-abutting properties? Since the highest rated trail concerns were crime, loitering and landscaping, most respondents felt that these issues impacted many or all neighborhood residents.

When the HOA Officers ranked the importance of trail-related concerns, crime, loitering, and landscaping were ranked most important. Interestingly, when asked how the Pinellas Trail could best be improved, the two neighborhoods that were most agitated by crime/loitering only suggested that maintenance and landscaping be improved and made no comments related to crime. Accordingly, it seems that they are most disconcerted by perceived inequities and disparities in the Pinellas Trail quality between communities.

Seven of eight HOA Officers said that they used the Pinellas Trail for recreation and exercise more often than commuting, shopping, and visiting friends. This pattern of used is

echoed in the residents' survey. Several respondents offered recommendations to encourage commuting on the trail, including sufficient lighting, consistent amenities, overpasses for congested intersections, more informational signs and consistent mileage markers and distance to selected locations signs.

Four respondents stated that they felt that the Pinellas Trail had increased property values somewhat. Two respondents were unsure of the trail's impact on neighborhood property values and the other two asserted that the trail had had no impact on property values. Notably, no respondent stated that property values had declined even though there were two potential answers in that direction. These responses are consistent with the residents' survey and actual sales data.

The survey instrument also included an open-ended question about how the Pinellas Trail could be improved. The most unique suggestion was that long-range surveillance cameras be installed and monitored remotely by volunteers. Several people suggested that the cameras be installed on light stanchions that are needed to adequately light the trail and that motorcycle police could respond to any incidences along the trail.

Several respondents suggested that the trail should include more pedestrian and cyclist amenities including water fountains, wastebaskets and shaded benches whereas another respondent was concerned that such amenities would create opportunities for loitering or otherwise encourage it.

One respondent suggested that any access to alleys be eliminated and that entry points to the trail be restricted to certain locations. Another suggested that dog-litter was a concern and that the trail needed more ground markings to separate cyclists and pedestrians. Both of these concerns were echoed in the residents' mail-back survey. It was also suggested that the trail include exercise stops (parcours) for sit-ups and the like. One representative said that the trail should have had more of an economic impact for adjacent businesses than it has to date. Another advised that bicycle bells would decrease bike accidents and asked that the trail be

better landscaped along Alternate US 19. A respondent of the residents' survey also suggested additional landscaping along Alternate US 19. Six of the respondents mentioned either landscape maintenance or lack of flourishing landscaping. As noted above, several pointed out wide disparities in the appearance of the Pinellas Trail.

E. Conclusions

The HOA telephone interviews were designed to identify how the Pinellas Trail affects neighborhood quality, property values, and quality-of-life. The interview also sought to identify what actions, if any, the HOAs had taken to address specific issues. Eighty-seven percent of HOA officers said that they used the Pinellas Trail for recreation and exercise more often than for commuting, shopping, and visiting friends. This pattern of use is echoed in the residents' survey with the trail being used less frequently for non-recreational or utilitarian trips. Fifty percent of the HOA respondents said that the Pinellas Trail had increased property values "somewhat" while 25 percent were "unsure" and the remainder said that it had had "no impact" on property values. Notably, no respondent stated that property values had declined. These responses are consistent with the realtors' survey, residents' survey, and actual sales data.

Of particular significance are opinions regarding the disparity of trail amenities among communities. Emotions ran high concerning the existence of attractive landscaping, consistent provision of amenities, amount of buffering and the quality of landscape maintenance. This point was echoed in the recommended improvements comments while crime was not. More than a third of the officers said that their boards had not discussed the Pinellas Trail or trail concerns. They ranked crime, loitering, and landscaping most important among trail-related concerns. While police responsiveness was a stated concern, it appears that if a homeowner's association was primarily concerned about crime, then the police responded effectively when aided by a neighborhood watch. Accordingly, it seems that the HOAs are most disconcerted by crime and perceived inequities in trail quality between communities.

CHAPTER SIX

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF REALTORS

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF REALTORS

The study team conducted a telephone survey of realtors as a reasonableness check of the property trends assessment and the residents' perceptions of trail effects upon property values. This chapter summarizes the methodology and findings that can be derived from this informal survey of realtors who specialize in the four market areas near the Pinellas Trail. The directed telephone survey of realtors' helped identify the professionals' perspective of trail-impacts on surrounding residential areas, particularly how the trail has influenced property values. The sample size of this survey is too small to yield statistically valid findings, but the survey does help provide insights into prospective buyer and seller perceptions of the trail.

A. Survey Methodology

To adequately assess the trail's impact on property values, 21 Pinellas County real estate professionals were interviewed by telephone. The respondents were interviewed using the survey instrument shown in *Exhibit 6.1: Realtor Survey*. Certain questions on the real estate survey purposely resembled questions from the residents' survey. In particular, the realtor survey asked respondents for their opinions about trail-adjacent property values, quality of life and community safety. The survey instrument was designed by Renaissance Planning Group and approved by the MPO prior to conducting any interviews.

B. Response Rates

Approximately 60 Pinellas County realtors were randomly contacted by telephone and 21 eventually completed the entire directed interview. Each realtor was asked whether they had recently listed or sold properties near or adjacent to the Pinellas Trail. If they were unwilling to be interviewed or inexperienced with trail properties, the interview was terminated.

Exhibit 6.1

Realtor Survey

PINELLAS TRAIL COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY
REALTOR SURVEY

1) How long have you sold properties in this area? (This segment of the Pinellas Trail)
   a) Less than 5 years ____
   b) More than 5 years ____

2) Have home sales in the area changed much since the opening of Pinellas Trail?
   a) Sales have decreased dramatically ____
   b) Sales have decreased somewhat ____
   c) No change in sales ____
   d) Sales have increased somewhat ____
   e) Sales have increased significantly ____
   f) Not sure ____

3) How do values for properties abutting the trail differ from the values of the same type of properties further from the trail?
   a) Properties next to the trail have significantly lower value ____
   b) Properties next the trail have somewhat lower value ____
   c) There is no difference ____
   d) Properties next to the trail have somewhat higher value _____
   e) Properties next to the trail have significantly higher value ____
   f) Not sure ____

4) How important is the Pinellas Trail to the following buyers when selecting a home?
   a) Retirees (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   b) Singles (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   c) Married working couples with no children (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   d) Families with young children (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   e) Families with older children (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)

5) When showing properties adjacent to the Pinellas Trail, how would you rate the following issues in terms of importance to home sellers and/or potential home buyers:
   a) Crime safety / security (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   b) Privacy (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   c) Noise (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   d) Proximity to the trail for exercise, commuting, etc. (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   e) Accessibility to destinations such as parks, businesses, school (very, somewhat, not at all, not sure)
   f) Other _____

6) All things being equal, would you say that properties located within a short walk or bicycle ride of the Pinellas Trail are more marketable and stay on the market a shorter period of time than similar properties located further away from the trail?
   a) Yes, more marketable
   b) No, less marketable
   c) Not sure / no opinion

7) Are there other real estate professionals you know in the area with whom we should also talk about the effects of the Pinellas Trail on property value?

Two realtors from St. Petersburg and three from Palm Harbor were interviewed. In Seminole and Dunedin, six realtors were willing to be interviewed. The remainder of the sample included realtors from outside of the four specified market areas who were nonetheless familiar and experienced with listing single family homes near or adjacent to the Pinellas Trail.

The last survey question asked whether there were other real estate professionals who should be interviewed about the trail. This question led to 12 referrals, six of whom agreed to take the survey.

Because the sample size of the realtor survey is inadequate for a quantitative analysis, its results are considered qualitative in nature. Accordingly, the summaries and findings should be evaluated in terms of their relationship with the quantitative property owners' survey.

C. Survey Responses

The first question determines the experience of the interviewed realtors with the local market conditions. Realtors unfamiliar with local conditions might mistakenly attribute property value vacillations to extraneous factors. Of the 21 real estate professionals interviewed, 90 percent had more than five years experience and many stated that they had over 10 years in the local real estate market. Accordingly, the interviewed group had adequate expertise with the cyclical nature of real

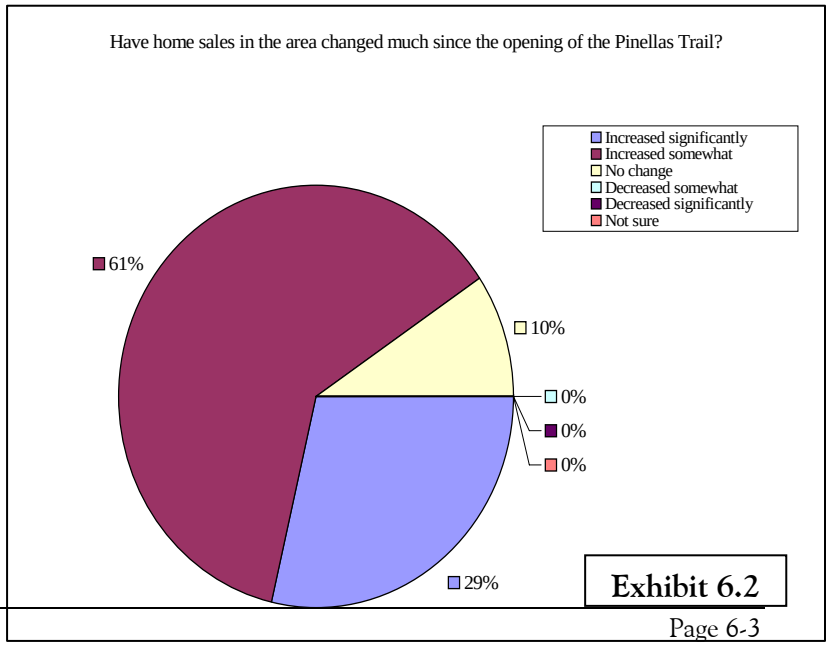


Exhibit 6.2

estate prices and contributing conditions.

Question two is a broad inquiry about whether the number of houses sold had changed in the area since the opening of the Pinellas Trail. As *Exhibit 6.2* illustrates, 90 percent of the respondents said that home sales had either "increased somewhat" (61%) or "increased significantly" (29%) since the opening of the Pinellas Trail. More notably, none of the realtors interviewed felt that home sales had "decreased." Many of the respondents noted that the home sales in general had been increasing due to national economic trends. Further inquiries determined that, while the number of homes sold increased for broad economic reasons, the opening of the Pinellas Trail was considered a contributing factor to the increase, however slight. It was interesting that even those professionals who were not fans of the trail personally or professionally, concluded that the Pinellas Trail increased interest in the area.

The third question asked how abutting property values were affected by the trail. *Exhibit 6.3* summarizes the responses to the Question: "How do values for properties abutting the trail differ from the values of the same type of properties further from the trail?" Of the 21 realtors surveyed, 52 percent believe that property values for abutting single-family homes have either a "somewhat higher value" (47%) or a "significantly higher value" (5%). This perception is supported by the actual sales price information presented in the previous section.

Twenty-four percent of the realtors responded that property values for abutting properties had "decreased somewhat" and no respondents indicated that values had "decreased significantly." Another 24 percent of the respondents either felt property

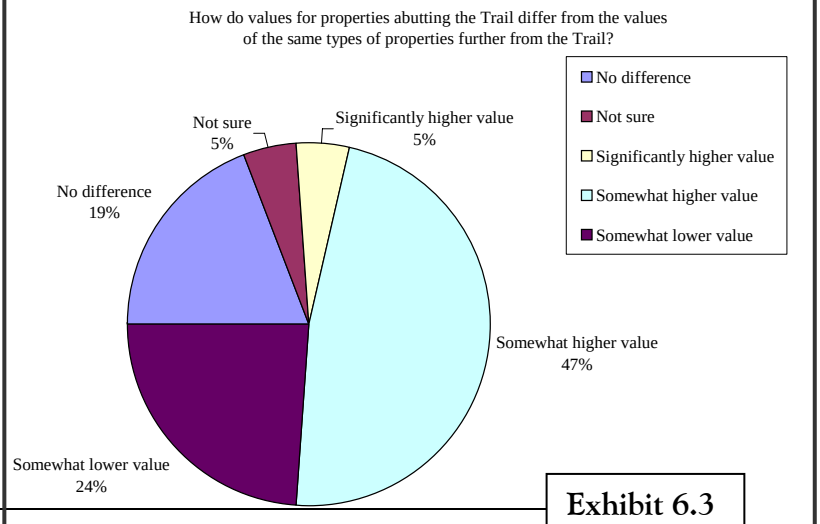


Exhibit 6.3
Telephone Survey of Realtors

values had "not changed" (19%) or were "not sure" (5%) if they had.

Among those realtors who responded, "property values were somewhat lower," many indicated that buyer's or seller's lifestyles affected their perception of the value of properties abutting the trail. In other words, active people considering similar homes would prefer an abutting property to a home located farther from the trail. One realtor who felt that property values were adversely affected by the trail said that it was a "perception problem." She added that she wished that the trail got more positive press since it was her opinion that the trail would be an asset to any buyer if not for negative press generated by a few isolated incidences.

Question four asked real estate professionals how important the trail is to selected groups of buyers when selecting a home. The results are summarized in *Table 6.1.* It is unclear whether this survey instrument is the best measure of the importance of the trail to different demographic groups because it seemed that realtors found it difficult to answer this question. Many respondents said that the importance depends on the lifestyle of a particular family. Many respondents stated some concerns about drawing conclusions from their answers.

That being said, more than 80 percent of the realtors surveyed concluded that the trail is either somewhat or very important to singles, married couples without children, and families with children. Conversely, the trail was not considered very important to retired homebuyers. These perceptions are reflected in the homeowners' survey, described elsewhere in this report, which indicates that the trail is frequently used by all groups, but of the few who do not use the trail, many are either parents of older children or retirees.

The fifth question was designed to determine how significant selected issues were to potential homebuyers and sellers. The realtors indicated that proximity to the trail is an

Table 6.1: When showing properties adjacent to the Pinellas Trail, how would you rate the following issues in terms of importance to homes sellers and/or homebuyers?

	Proximity?	%	Crime?	%	Access?	%	Privacy?	%	Noise?	%
Not at all	2	9.5%	5	23.8%	7	33.3%	8	38.1%	11	52.4%
Not sure	1	4.8%	2	9.5%	0	0.0%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%
Somewhat	8	38.1%	5	23.8%	10	47.6%	7	33.3%	4	19.0%
Very	10	47.6%	9	42.9%	4	19.0%	5	23.8%	6	28.6%
Combined Imp.	85.7%	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%	57.1%	100.0%	47.6%	100.0%

important positive factor (nearly 80 percent said it is a somewhat to very important factor). Crime was viewed as a relatively important negative factor (over 40 percent indicated it is very important). There were disagreements about the importance of crime, with several realtors explaining that any incidences of crime were isolated cases and many saying that crime was only an issue on the Pinellas Trail if it had already been a concern prior to the trail's construction.

The realtors believed that accessibility to destinations was somewhat important but not nearly as important as proximity to the home for those buyers with active lifestyles. Last, privacy and noise were more minor concerns and many respondents said that they had never heard a potential buyer discuss noise or privacy. One realtor said that privacy was only an issue if the trail was not properly buffered, and the homeowner's association officers confirmed this opinion. One realtor said that he had sold a trail-abutting home and the buyer had spent more than $15,000 to re-engineer the home so that it faced the Pinellas Trail.

As a concluding question, the realtors were asked, "All things being equal, would you say that properties located within a short walk or bicycle ride of the Pinellas Trail are more marketable and stay on the market a shorter period of time than similar properties located further away from the trail?" Seven of the 21 real estate professionals surveyed were not sure or had no opinion.

Exhibit 6.4: All things being equal, would you say that properties located within a short walk or bicycle ride of the Pinellas Trail are more marketable and stay on the market a shorter period of time than similar properties located further away from the trail?

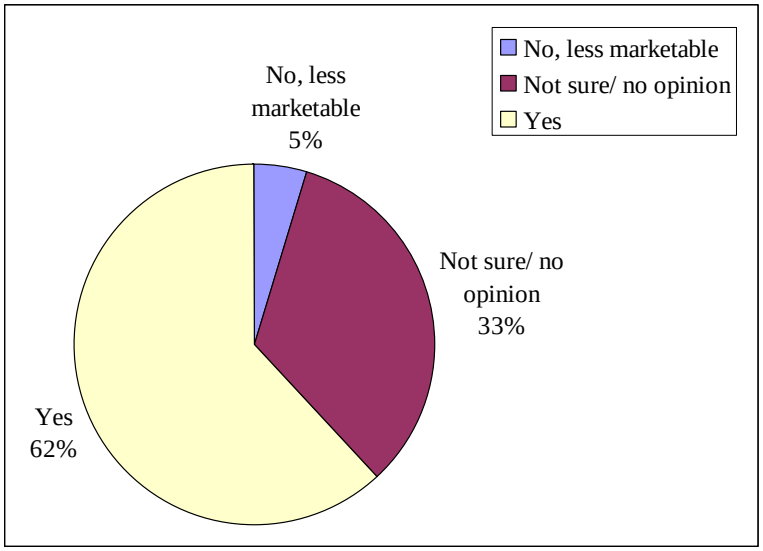
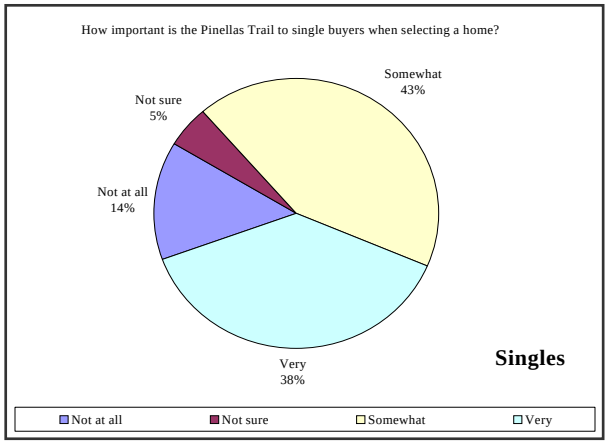
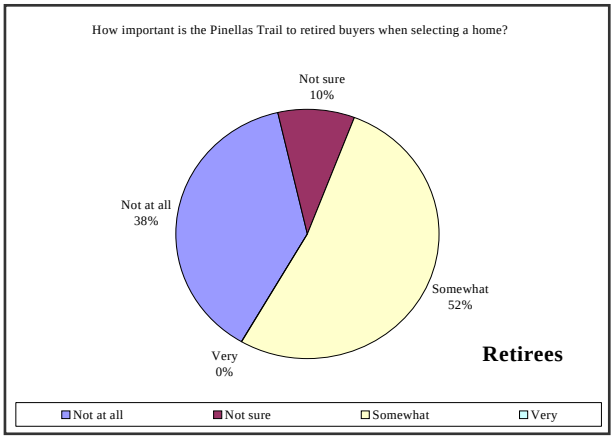
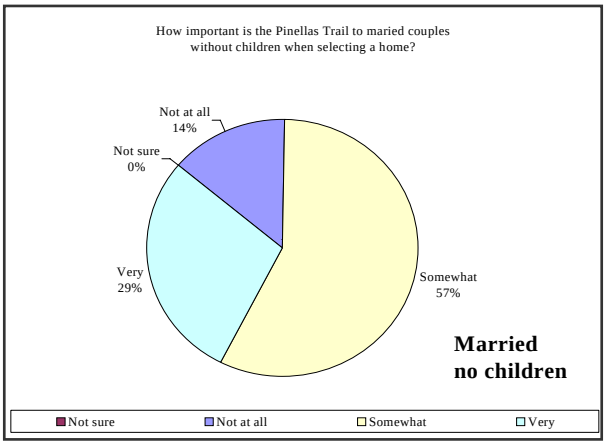
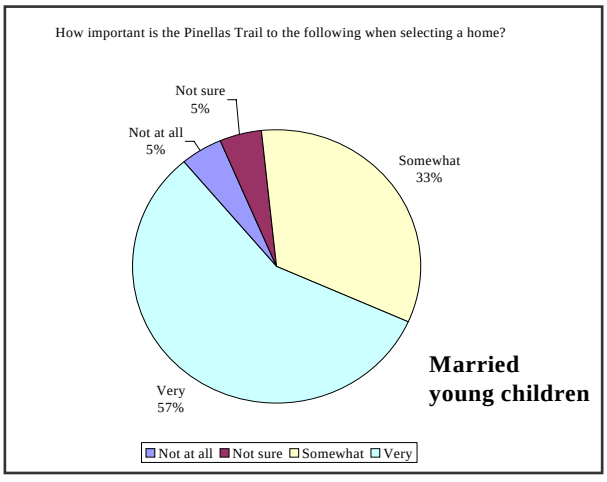


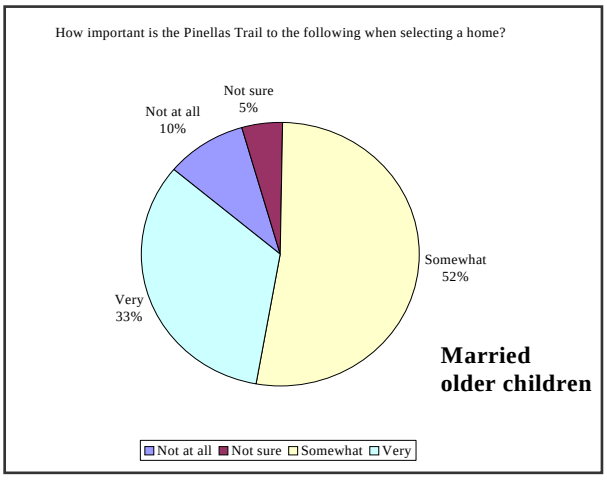
Exhibit 6.5: How important is the Pinellas Trail to the following groups of buyers when selecting a home?











Of the 14 who offered an opinion, 13 realtors believed that properties located closer to the trail were more marketable. There is a group of potential buyers who lead an active lifestyle and, accordingly, prefer to live closer to the trail. The addition of that group of buyers into the local real estate market appears to have increased the marketability of homes located near the trail. Again, the realtors often cautioned that a potential buyer's lifestyle was the strongest indicator of the importance of the trail.

D. Summary and Conclusions

The above survey instrument and telephone interviews were designed to evaluate the opinions of local realtors with respect to trail impacts on property sales, values, and marketability. The study was too small to justify any quantitative results; however, this survey does tend to confirm the results of the home value assessment and residents surveys. According to the realtors interviewed, the number of houses sold has increased since the opening of the Pinellas Trail. None of the realtors interviewed felt that home sales had "decreased." Many of the respondents noted said that while the number of homes sold increased for broad economic reasons, the opening of the Pinellas Trail was considered a contributing factor to the increase, however slight. It was interesting that even those professionals who were not personally or professionally fans of the trail concluded that the Pinellas Trail increased interest in the area. The realtors emphasized that lifestyle more than demographic characteristics was the best indicator of trail popularity and this finding was confirmed by the residents' survey.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The Pinellas Trail Impact Study entailed a literature review, property value assessment, evaluation of crime, and surveys of residents, homeowner's association officers, and local realtors specializing in areas within one-quarter mile of the Pinellas Trail. The study yielded a number of interesting conclusions. Chief among them was that trail usage is a strong indicator of a person's perception of the Pinellas Trail. Residents who have used the trail, even infrequently, are more likely to perceive its benefits than non-users. While the trail is generally seen as a community asset, the neighborhoods that are the most concerned about the Pinellas Trail are those who perceive inequities between communities in the way that the trail is constructed, maintained, and policed. The residents' survey included a number of creative suggestions that could be implemented along the existing and proposed trail segments. Serious crimes have occurred along the studied Pinellas Trail segments; however, those crimes that can be attributed directly to the trail occurred less frequently than once a month for the studied years (1993, 1995, and 1999). Because specific crime locations could not be pinpointed in St. Petersburg, a statistical analysis was performed which indicated that crimes do not occur more frequently along trail tracts. Other major study conclusions are summarized below.

Literature Review

The literature review concluded that multiuse trails have a deterrent effect on crime, a neutral or slightly positive effect on property values, and bring new money into the local economy. Residents report that multiuse trails are an asset to the communities they serve. The studies also conclude that the popularity of multiuse trails may deter crime simply due to their level of activity throughout the day. As far as property values are concerned, most surveyed property owners reported that living near the trails was better than they had anticipated and better than living near the unused railroad lines. They also reported that their proximity to the trails had not adversely affected their property values. One study also found that multiuse trails

increased tourism and brought between $300,000 and $600,000 of "new money" into the local economy annually depending upon the trail.

Property Values

The property value study concluded that property values follow local sales trends initially and then increase a few years later. As an example, St. Petersburg trailside and countywide home prices declined at the same rate between 1990 and 1995. However, St. Petersburg trailside home prices recovered quickly and escalated faster than countywide or for any other trail segment by 1998. For all trail segments, the median sale prices adjacent to the trail are escalating faster than countywide and the rate of increase is most significant in St. Petersburg, Seminole, and Palm Harbor. The median price of trailside homes in St. Petersburg and Seminole is higher than citywide prices. These results indicate that, rather than negatively impacting property values of adjacent homes, the Pinellas Trail may in fact contribute to increasing adjacent property values.

Crime Statistics

A comprehensive analysis of Pinellas County, St. Petersburg citywide, and St. Petersburg trail tract sample dataset crime statistics concluded that the presence of the Pinellas Trail does not contribute to an increase in crime in adjacent areas. Detailed analysis of St. Petersburg data sample using descriptive statistical analysis determined that crime rates for "trail tracts" were not statistically significant or different from citywide crime tracts. Generally, it was concluded that peaks in crime rates along the trail seemed to be related to the character of the surrounding area rather than to the existence of the Pinellas Trail itself. For example, there was a peak in shoplifting crimes in the St. Petersburg trail tracts near the Tyrone Square Mall as well as other trail tracts traversing retail commercial areas. Upon further examination, the study team determined that there were similar shoplifting crime peaks occurring in non-trail tracts throughout the City when they were near or abutting non-residential areas. External factors seem to be better indicators of crime rates than the presence of the trail.

Residents Survey

There are several important findings from the residents survey. Residents are concerned about crime, privacy, and noise, whereas the homeowners association officers ranked crime, loitering, and landscaping most important among trail-related concerns. Roughly two-thirds of the surveyed residents are using the trail to exercise at least once a week. Residents are exercising more than they did before the trail opened. While the trail-related concerns should not be overlooked, there is a significant community benefit associated with such an amenity used by 66 percent of surveyed residents at least once a week.

The most negative perceptions of the trail are held by infrequent trail users as well as the small number of residents who have never used the trail. Infrequent users were primarily concerned about the trail's adverse impact on crime, privacy, and noise. As a group, they still rated the trail as having a positive impact on property values, accessibility, and neighborhood acquaintances. Daily users had the highest composite rating of the trail; however, they were still marginally concerned about crime and privacy. Clearly, the single strongest indicator of trail perceptions is trail usage and, because of the high use of the trail, the overall perception of the trail is positive.

Homeowners Association Telephone Survey

The study also included a telephone survey of homeowners association (HOA) officers designed to identify how the Pinellas Trail impacts neighborhood quality-of-life. The survey was too small to justify quantitative results; however, the survey findings do support and clarify the findings of the realtors and residents surveys. More than a third of the HOA officers said that their boards had not discussed the Pinellas Trail or trail concerns. They ranked crime, loitering, and landscaping most important among trail-related concerns. The most notable was concerning the lack of attractive landscaping, consistent provision of amenities, amount of buffering and the quality of landscape maintenance along certain portions of retail. HOA officers are most disconcerted by perceived inequities and disparities in trail quality between communities.

Eighty-seven percent of HOA Officers said that they used the Pinellas Trail for recreation and exercise rather than for commuting, shopping, and visiting friends. These trends are similar to the residents' survey. Fifty percent of the HOA respondents said that the Pinellas Trail had increased property values "somewhat" while 25 percent were "unsure" and the remainder said that it had had "no impact" on property values. Notably, no respondent stated that property values had declined. These responses are consistent with the realtors and residents survey and with actual sales data findings.

Some trail opponents asserted that trailside homes were less marketable than other homes. However, a telephone survey of local realtors in conjunction with the home value study found that the presence of the trail increased homebuyer interest and contributed at least slightly to increased home sales. The realtors emphasized that lifestyle, more than household demographics, was the best indicator of trail approval and this finding was confirmed by the residents' survey.

More than 80 percent of the realtors concluded that the trail is either "somewhat" or "very" important to singles, married couples without children, and families with children. Conversely, the trail was not considered to be as important to retired homebuyers and families with older children. These perceptions are consistent with the residents' survey, which indicates that all groups frequently use the trail, but of the few who do not use the trail, many are either parents of older children or retirees.

Residents, realtors, and HOA officers agreed that the trail was more popular in Seminole, Palm Harbor, and Dunedin than in St. Petersburg. The HOA Officers seemed to think that older segments of the trail did not have as many amenities and were not as attractively landscaped or maintained as the segments further north. All three sets of respondents said that the trail could be improved by adding landscaping along selected segments. Although families with young children, newer residents, and Dunedin residents were more likely to use the trail, it is clear that geography, tenure, employment, and family status are not the best indicators of trail perceptions.

APPENDIX A

COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

Pinellas Trail Survey Comments from Respondents

7. Why do you use the Trail? Other:

Dogs - 29 respondents use the trail to walk their dog.

Accessibility/Safety

I live on the trail. Easy to get on
Go to Post Office
Bus, do a lot of walking, bank, post office & to eat
To commute to shop, service car, etc.
To use the library
Go to Post Office
Post Office (Crystal Bch)
Go to Post Office
Use library & downtown Dunedin activities
Only used trail once. It was the shortest route between Myrtle Ave and my apartment.
But now wife is in wheelchair and access is poor without subjecting ourselves to dangerous traffic.
SYAA Ball Field
Other activities in down town daylight only
For fun esp. 2 the beach in tourist season, it's the quickest route.
We use it as a safe means to ride bikes to the mall
Need speed limit for bicycle clubs they almost run you over
Safe & convenient
Can not walk, ride rascal
See Grandpa
Barber shop
Pleasure
See the wading birds @ Swenson's Creek. T even though it doesn't get mentioned anywhere in city lit.
I bought this house because it's on the Trail!

8. How would you rate the Trail on the following? Other (please describe below and rate)

Dogs

Dog feces on trail, owners not picking up after dogs, have complained to parks dept. several times about this. No one cares?
Too many dogs - too much dog poop left on trail! Owners frequently allow dogs to poop right on the black top!
Dogs running loose on trail/need to spray for bugs.
Poor - are to many large dogs for my liking
Persons on trail leave dog droppings. Note: we are generally very positive re: trail.
Beach laws are not enforced or pooper scooper, my yard is not the trail.
People walking dog letting them poop & pee in my yard.

Facilities

Messy, weeds
Clean & well kept
Maintenance
Very well maintained
Aesthetics - Fair but improving. It would be nice if trees that were planted on the west side of the trail near the 8th Ave. SPJC area had been planted on the east side where it is barren & hot. Some trail areas are in more pleasant surroundings & seem to have more trees, etc., but it is improved greatly!!! Thank you for putting in sod & cement pathways in various places. It really looks better!
Smoothness of walking and riding pavement
Garbage along trail & in side ditches
Need to spray for bugs. A lot of trash gets thrown in our yard
Many downed trees. People dump stuff from Park Blvd. To 86th St. Trees, brick & logs. It is a shame people are so bad. We love the trail.
Need relief stations/people are using trees & bushes at end of our street.
Landscaped for nature with trees, shrubs
The area from 5th Ave N - 22nd Ave N is very industrial - not attractive.
Nice, safe, beautiful place and CLEAN.
Emergencies i.e. Bathrooms/telephone
Would like to see public phones along trail.
Hours of access, rules and regulations. None posted.

I used the trail often until you dug the stupid ditch. A culvert was dug 10' wide & 15' deep preventing access from home. Poor on weekends.
Terrible - I can't walk and would like to use my motor scooter on the trail
Stretch between Pasadena Ave & 1st Ave S. need to be opened
We are limited on the East of Pasadena Ave. It is very dangerous to cross.
Should be open 24 hours
Can't ride at night. Trail like buses. Bankers hours.
I almost got run over! People do not stop when driving across the trail!! Someone is going to get hurt bad!! Seriously!!
Better stops - signs for people on trail or at least slow down at street crossing
As a motorist I always anticipate the cyclist not to stop even when a stop sign exists. They seldom stop ever.
4 way stop signs need to be removed for rider. Do not work.
Don't like the slight downward slope to some of the road crossings
Someone needs to watch how many bicyclists blow the STOP signs and cause accidents or near misses.
Parking availability for those how do not live close to trail.
The ditch we must cross is very dangerous - to bodies & bikes getting on & off the trail. Makes it hard for kids. Steep sides, garbage in ditch.
Large ditch I can not access trail directly
Drivers go thru stop signs mostly at Beltrees [sp?]
Parts are too close to Alt 19
Downtown Palm Harbor-Crystal Beach Trail & Street intersections can be dangerous
Crash/traffic safety - crossing 64th Street
Persons on trail <u>often</u> ignore stop signs, unlike cars.
Safety is definitely a factor, kids ride by very fast & scream & scare me. Must be really difficult for older people - maybe some how put monitors on trail incase someone needs help??

<u>Positive</u>

People will not walk to get to any destinations
More nosie people coming into neighborhood
The Pinellas Trail is really good.
The Trail is one of Pinellas County's finest & best accomplishments
We love the trail! Thanks!!
Scenic/beauty/restfully therapeutic [See work, Fdk Law Olmsted, Vision of Eden (a book) (1998)
Very efficient on time when traveling
Meet friends & family

Costs/Property values

Best value the taxpayers ever got. The "Penny for Pinellas" was used well.
Talk of pumping station s and other foolishness can destroy home values. Keep the trail for recreation, not commercial advancements.
The money used to build & maintain the trail could have been used to benefit 99% more people by upgrading the roadways (not planting flowers & trees in the median which increases maintenance costs 7 uses our water).
Too much money spent on this farce.
Also used to bring down property values in the re-sale market with the crime that the trail has brought in.

Access/Safety

Please consider access for people (not kids) who have to use motor scooters to get around.
When the trail is completed near the Walmart/Tyrone area it will significantly affect accessibility, continuity safety from traffic. I will feel safe to even ride my bike to work.
Ease of traveling
When overpass is in will be able to safely utilize.
There needs to be more access to the trail. We have a lot of people - children & adults cut thru our lawn (which I have worked extremely hard to preserve, just because we are at the end of a cul-de-sac & our yard sits at the trail line. We can't afford to put up a fence.
There is a fence across the street at the end of our block, we have to go thru some big bushes to get to the trail. &the Ave. North & 70th Street
Cuts down on car traffic, people relax more, slows down the pace of life.
Specifically purchased this home due to close proximity to trail!!!!
Being able to ride bike without traffic!
H-Road is traveled way to fast now - speed zone road kill will get much worse.
I have a son who travels from New Port Richey to roller blade on the Trail. He does this 2 or 3 times a month.

Scenic/Aesthetics

Great scenery.
Scenic improvement
Noise - +1 -The freight train used to go by a few xs [times].
Much rather have than railroad!
Noise compared to train
Loss of Wildlife.
E-Noise has increased a lot and will worsen!!!

Summary:

Walking dog – 29
Family time and guests - 7
Fun, relaxation, "cruising" - 9
Enjoy nature and sightseeing – 5
Access to Post Office, barber shop, SYAA field, mall, beach, down town, Swenson's Creek, library and downtown Dunedin activities, to bus, to commute to shop, service car, bank, to eat, to Myrtle Ave from apt.
Negative comments –

walk & relax. But now wife is in wheelchair and access is poor without subjecting ourselves to dangerous traffic.
Need speed limit for bicycle clubs they almost run you over.
This trail is a big cancer

Other comments:

To offer a fine privilege to our guests!
I'm elderly and do not use trail, but I believe it brings families together.
I am retired & not able to use the trail. I think the trail is great - Have nephews that visit me & they brought their own bike from home
To admire the greenery, shrubs, oak trees, and pretty girls on skates.
We use it as a safe means to ride bikes to the mall
For fun esp. 2 the beach in tourist season, it's the quickest route.
I bought this house because it's on the Trail!
Other activities in down town day light only
See the wading birds @ Swenson's Creek. There is a small park in our area even though it doesn't get mentioned anywhere in city lit.

APPENDIX B

BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

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BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

To provide an additional perspective on the impacts of the Pinellas Trail, business owners were surveyed to determine what influences the Pinellas Trail may have had on their business decisions. Surveys were manually distributed to various businesses located in the four market areas described elsewhere in this report. The questions were targeted at business owners. The survey included questions relating to: (1) the type of business; (2) how long the business had been operated at its present location; (3) categorizing the business as Trail-related or not; and (4) the influence of the Trail on business location decisions. Respondents rated Trail influence on their business using a scale from –3 to +3 in relation to relocation, expansion, profitability, new customers and crime. Existing trail-adjacent businesses were also asked whether they would advise a new business to locate near the Pinellas Trail.

Ninety-four surveys were returned postage pre-paid. The business owners were asked to classify their businesses within the following categories: (1) retail; (2) service; (3) office; (4) construction; (5) manufacturing; or (6) other. Most of the respondents were operating either a retail (55%) or service business (27%). Several other respondents selected categorized their businesses as both retail and service. Another eight percent of the businesses were classified as offices, two percent as construction, two percent as manufacturing, and six percent as other types of businesses.

The businesses were split fairly evenly between businesses that have had the same location for more than five years (55%) and those that located near the Trail within the last five years (45%). The breakdown of business types was not substantially different when newer businesses were compared to older ones except for the manufacturing and construction categories. None of the newer businesses were categorized as either "manufacturing" or "construction-related." Historically, it would not have been uncommon to find a concentration of manufacturing businesses along a railroad corridor. Quite likely, older industrial uses are

located along the Pinellas Trail because these types of land uses have historically been allowed within industrial zoning categories that were clustered along railroad corridors. The older construction-related businesses may have been located there historically for similar zoning-related reasons. Newer Trailside businesses seem to primarily be either retail or service businesses. This trend may be an effort to take advantage of the increasing passerby traffic generated by the Pinellas Trail. In fact, many of the respondents indicated that the Trail had had a positive influence on attracting new customers.

The Pinellas Trail was a major or contributing factor influencing the location decision of a third of the newer business owners. Older businesses were not asked whether or how the Trail influenced their location decisions since it was assumed that they had made their location decision before the Trail was completed. Although older businesses were asked to by-pass this question, three owners of older businesses credited the Pinellas Trail as a major or contributing factor in doing business in their present location.

One interesting aspect of the business survey was that nearly 60 percent of the owners indicated that the Pinellas Trail did not affect their businesses. Business owners were asked to rank the Pinellas Trail's impact on five business-related concerns: relocation, expansion, profitability, new customers, and crime. On a scale of negative three to positive three (–3 - +3), business owners gave the Trail a composite rating that was nearly neutral (-0.12). Of the five business-related issues, crime was perceived to be a concern and business owners indicated that they were concerned that the Trail exacerbated local crime. Accordingly, the Trail's composite ranking was most negative for crime and this finding is consistent with responses from the realtor's, resident's, and neighborhood association officer's surveys described elsewhere in this report. However, it should be noted that only 12 percent of the respondents attributed crime problems to the Pinellas Trail with a score of minus one or lower. Another eight percent of the business survey respondents believed that the Pinellas Trail had had a positive impact on crime concerns reflected with a positive one or higher ranking. Although the overall influence of the Trail was considered neutral, many businesses noted the Trail's positive influence on business

profitability. New customer traffic was also credited to the Pinellas Trail and the Trail was ranked higher in this category than for any other business factor.

Of the 94 respondents, nine percent of the business owners described their business as Trail-related and six percent considered their businesses dependent upon the Pinellas Trail. Trail-related businesses were primarily retail in character and considered the Pinellas Trail strongly in their location decision. More so than other respondents, Trail-related business owners gave the Pinellas Trail high marks in all categories of influence - including expansion, profitability, new customers, and, even, crime. All of the Trail-dependent businesses were newer and each respondent gave the Trail a high composite ranking and would recommend that a new business locate near the Trail.

The most notable aspect of the study is that nearly 40 percent of all business respondents indicated that Trail-proximity would be favorable for a new business. It seems that the Trail's positive affect on "profitability" and "new customers" would influence many business owners to locate near a rail-to-trail project. Only 11 percent of all business owners surveyed would not recommend locating near the Pinellas Trail. Two-thirds of the business owners who would not recommend a Trailside location had older retail, service, and manufacturing businesses. Only one owner of a Trail-related business said that he would not recommend that another business locate near the Pinellas Trail. Since that respondent also operated an older retail business, it is may be that the retailer didn't want the added competition attracted by the Pinellas Trail.

Generally, the Pinellas Trail's influence on nearby businesses was neither negative nor positive; however, it appears that it has had a demonstrated positive impact on new businesses. Owners of newer businesses in the vicinity of the Trail gave the Pinellas Trail a more positive composite ranking than older businesses. Many new business owners noted that they had selected their business's location because of its proximity to the Pinellas Trail. Of particular note, those businesses ascribe higher customer traffic and increased profitability to the Pinellas Trail. Older establishments have survived before the Trail was constructed and indicate little or no

effects on their business from the Trail's existence. Just the same, nearly 40 percent of the business survey respondents would recommend the location for other businesses and thought the Pinellas Trail was good for business.