

### **Airco Golf Course Redevelopment Feasibility Study**

On December 6, 2005, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will be asked to accept a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – Economic Development Initiative Grant to conduct a feasibility study on the potential redevelopment of county owned Airco Golf Course.

Information concerning this issue is provided below in a question & answer format.

**1. What is a feasibility study?**

A feasibility study is the analysis of the practicability of a proposed idea. It evaluates the economic, environmental, technical and quality of life aspects of proposed business ideas. Coupled with the project's compatibility with the local community, this information allows decision makers to have the accurate and relevant information needed to make informed choices.

**2. Why is the county conducting a feasibility study for the Airco Property?**

The St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport is required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure that the Airco property is utilized to its highest and best use. By conducting a feasibility study, the county can gauge the best use of the Airco parcel, direct and indirect economic impacts, compatibility with the adjoining land uses and evaluate a strategy to facilitate any recommendations outlined in the study.

The feasibility study will provide a summary of the current real estate market and the regulations associated with any possible changes to its current land use and will allow the county to determine additional land use strategies and the costs, revenues, impacts and market demand associated with each.

**3. What is Airco and where is it located?**

Airco is an 18-hole, par 72 golf course open to the public. It is a 129-acre parcel located on the east side of the airport, with an entrance on Ulmerton Road.

**4. How is Airco currently funded?**

Airco's current operations do not use county taxpayer's dollars. Instead the course is supported by fees charged to users, and any additional funding required to cover expenses is provided by the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

**5. Who owns the Airco parcel?**

The land is owned by Pinellas County Government as the sponsoring agency for the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport and is subject to FAA deed restrictions and regulations. The St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport manages the parcel.

**6. Who will conduct the feasibility study?**

A firm to conduct the feasibility study has not yet been selected, but responses will be solicited through a Request for Proposal (RFP) issued through the Pinellas County Purchasing Department. County staff will evaluate the RFP responses, assigning a grade to each proposal. Grades will be based on technical experience and project approach, the firm's overall consulting experience, price, references, and availability of staff and resources.

**7. How much will the feasibility study cost?**

The study is estimated to cost in the \$200,000-250,000 range. Part of the RFP process will involve companies submitting a detailed budget, allowing the county to gauge a competitive cost associated with this study.

**8. How will the county pay for this study?**

The county received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the amount of \$298,230 to conduct this study. The study should cost less than the grant amount. Any remaining funds could be used to assist with implementation of the study's recommendations should they be approved.

**9. Why is HUD providing the county with a grant for a feasibility study?**

HUD is concerned with all aspects of urban development. In a community that is reaching 98% build-out, such as Pinellas County, it is of critical importance to use all remaining land to its highest and best use. The funding from this grant will allow the county to identify the best use of the parcel and plan accordingly.

**10. How is the Pinellas County Economic Development Department involved?**

Economic Development is partnering with the Airport to develop a strategy for the Airco parcel that complements the county's overall redevelopment plan, which was developed in conjunction with the Pinellas Planning Council and is detailed at [www.PinellasByDesign.org](http://www.PinellasByDesign.org).

If the feasibility study suggests the best possible outcome for the Airco parcel is redevelopment that will accommodate office space or business park development, Economic Development will work with local businesses and developers to ensure high-wage jobs are created in targeted industry sectors. The county is committed to developing a strategy that considers the project's impact on the area's quality of life and enhances the business environment in our entire community.

**11. What are the possible outcomes of the feasibility study?**

All of the outcomes generated by the feasibility study are not known. However, several alternatives have been suggested for further exploration, including:

- a. Developing the Airco parcel into an office park/business park with land set aside for aviation related development consistent with recommendations in the airport's Master Plan,
- b. Arranging for the county to directly fund Airco golf operations, allowing the airport and county to enter into a form of a land lease, or
- c. Additional forms of development that would support high-wage job creation in targeted industries.

Once the study is complete, Pinellas County will have a list of suggested uses and the economic, environmental, and quality of life implications associated with each option.

**12. Why is the county considering redeveloping this large parcel of land?**

As the airport's governmental sponsor, the county must adhere to FAA regulations that require the airport to identify revenue sources and ensure the airport is utilizing its land to its highest and best use. This study will assist the county in achieving the requirements of the FAA by reinforcing the Airco parcel's current use, or suggesting modifications that will allow it to be utilized to its maximum potential.

As Pinellas County is reaching build-out, and vacant land is scarce, the county is working to identify remaining parcels of land and ensuring that they are used for the maximization of resources, quality job creation for citizens, and highest revenue potential. Many parcels have already been preserved for green space and the feasibility study will allow the county to determine how Airco should best be utilized.

**13. When will the feasibility study begin?**

Pending BCC approval, the feasibility study will begin after a firm is selected through Pinellas County's Request for Proposal (RFP) Process. Once the RFP package is developed through Pinellas County Purchasing and the HUD grant is awarded, it will be placed online at [www.pinellascounty.org/purchase](http://www.pinellascounty.org/purchase). The entire RFP process, including evaluation of proposals and review by the Board of County Commissioners is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2006.

**14. How long will the process take?**

The suggested timetable for the study will be a part of the Request for Proposal process. Each consulting firm that submits a proposal will identify how long they believe it will take them to complete the study. The county is committed to conducting and completing the study as soon as possible, and proposals will be rated accordingly.

**15. When will the community know the outcome of the study and how can citizens get involved?**

Gathering public input and comments regarding the future uses of Airco, is an important element in accomplishing the study's goal of proposing the best use of the land for the entire Pinellas County community. There will be a public outreach component during the study designed to solicit input from citizens. Additionally, when the study is completed, recommendations will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners. The public will also have an opportunity to comment at that time.

Periodic updates and information regarding the study will be available online at [www.Fly2Pie.org](http://www.Fly2Pie.org) and [www.pced.org](http://www.pced.org). Citizens may also contact Michele Routh, Airport Community Relations Director, at (727) 453-7879 or Stacey Swank, Pinellas County Economic Development Manager, at (727) 464-7425 for information about the Airco feasibility study.

**16. What happens after the study is conducted?**

The report will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) at a public meeting. The results of the feasibility study and the input gathered from citizens will give the BCC timely and accurate information to make considered and informed decisions regarding the future of Airco. Any policy decisions regarding implementation of the recommendations of the study would have to be made by the BCC at a public meeting.