

Tribune photo by MARK GUSS

Pinellas has hundreds of old dumps, and officials are just now trying to identify them in the state's most densely developed county.

Pinellas' Lost Landfills

Many areas lie hidden, posing possible pollution, or, with methane gas, explosion problems.

By CARLOS MONCADA
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CLEARWATER — People live, work and play on or near hundreds of old dumps in Pinellas County, yet officials have no idea where most of that unseen waste is buried — or whether it poses environmental, structural or health threats.

"We know where some of these properties are by institutional knowledge," said Jake Stowers, a longtime assistant county administrator who oversees environmental issues. "But there isn't a big comprehensive map that shows where everything is."

Pinellas officials have just begun trying to identify and record former landfills and other waste disposal areas in the state's most densely developed county.

This month, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection asked all 67 counties to map their former dumps as part of a statewide inventory.

The agency cited concerns and incidents — though isolated — involving public health and safety from development elsewhere in Florida on or near land once used for waste disposal.

Like most counties, Pinellas does not have thorough records of landfills that were closed before 1975, when the state began regulating them.

Nor does the county have the manpower or the delegated state authority to compile such information and investigate every old dump, many of which were never recorded, much less monitored.

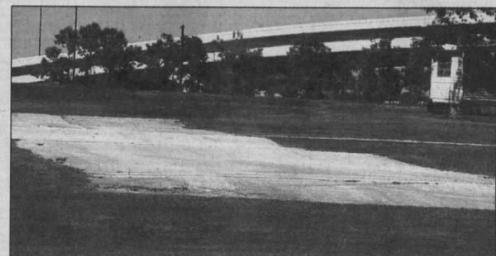
"That's a state agency role," Stowers said. "Should we be in that business? I'm not so sure. You get into a duplication of records, many sites may not be found.

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Tribune photo by BRUCE HOSKING

Vernon Bryant, horticulture director at Florida Botanical Gardens in Largo, says the main concern about the gardens expanding into Pierce Landfill is methane gas.



Tribune photo by MARK GUSS

The old Toytown dump, used by model airplane enthusiasts, could become a golf course, baseball park, or outdoor amphitheater, officials say.

County Looks For A Future For The Old Toytown Dump

GOLF COURSE, BALLPARK, AMPHITHEATER MENTIONED

By CARLOS MONCADA
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ST. PETERSBURG — Two decades have passed since Pinellas County's largest garbage dump was closed.

Since then, several ideas have been floated for the former Toytown landfill, including a golf course, a spring training baseball stadium and an outdoor amphitheater.

None of those proposals, including a course designed by golf legend Lee Trevino, has ever gone beyond anything more than wishful thinking.

Still, county officials remain optimistic the scruffy, windswept 230 acres east of Interstate 275 and south of Roosevelt Boulevard at the gateway to St. Petersburg will one day become something more than just a monument to waste.

Most of the discussions about what to do with the old dump have focused on an 18-hole or 27-hole golf course. But the site also is being talked about for other recreational uses, such as soccer or baseball fields.

Pinellas Utilities Director Pick Talley, whose department maintains the landfill, said a golf course would be the best use of the property.



Tribune map by CAITLIN HOPE WRIGHT

"To build a good golf course, you need 100-plus acres," he said. "We've got 200 out there and could build an excellent golf facility."

Athletic fields can be created on smaller parcels available in the county, he said. Plus, a golf course could eventually be self-supporting, but other types of recreation would require tax dollars, he said.

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Officials optimistic.

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