

### **Environmental**

Nature trails provide opportunities to linearly connect federal, state and local parks. Nature trails provide the user diversified cultural, historical and environmental education opportunities; preserve natural ecosystems, wildlife corridors and scenic vistas; and provide respite and relief from the urban environment. Greenways also provide opportunities for the user to learn more about their natural surroundings and Florida's ecosystems through the use of interactive outdoor classrooms.

### **Historical/Archaeological**

Greenways give communities the opportunity to connect to local heritage by linking people to the past through the protection and preservation of archaeological/ historic sites. In a county like St Johns, which is rich in cultural and historical resources, greenways can serve to protect and preserve these resources in their natural setting, thereby enriching the user's experience. In addition, archaeological/ historic sites create a connection between people and the landscape by creating a sense of place and a sense of origin.

### **Social Interaction**

The Greenway/Blueway system can provide for healthy outdoor opportunities for people to interact and enjoy various activities located along a trail, including cultural, civic, school and service oriented activities. An effective Greenways and Blueways system can also connect the county's neighborhoods, providing an essential thread that connects cultural, historical and recreational facilities together.

### **Smart Growth**

An important need for greenways and trails is that they can be used as part of a growth management strategy. Not only do Greenways and Blueways provide alternative means of transportation, but greenways can also help shape the urban form by interconnecting neighborhoods and natural areas, functioning as greenbelts, agricultural reserves and/or to separate land use buffers. In addition, greenways can function as development buffers, water quality (stormwater) purifiers, air quality purifiers, scenic roadway buffers and/or conservation easements.

### **Alternative Transportation**

Greenways and Blueways provide an alternative means of transportation to school, neighborhoods, cultural resources and activities, to various parks/conservation areas and to local areas. Greenways encourage the use of non-polluting transportation alternatives by encouraging people in the community to travel by foot or by bike.

## **Economic Benefits**

The creation of greenways can also promote eco-tourism, which ultimately will attract new business, stimulate new jobs and increase local tax revenue. The Pinellas Trail, which travels through downtown Dunedin along the abandoned CSX rail corridor, is a very good example of an economic success story. The City of Dunedin was experiencing an economic decline in the early 1990's, which included a 35% storefront vacancy rate. In 1995, the City spent \$500,000 on beautification projects along the Pinellas Trail and an additional \$500,000 in 2000. After the improvements were made, the older establishments began to remodel their storefronts, new businesses opened and the storefront occupancy rate increased by 100%. The Pinellas Trail became so popular that the store owners turned their storefronts around to face the greenway instead of the street. The City reported that their tax base rose from \$37 million in 1997 to \$51 million in 2000.