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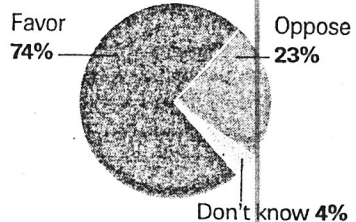
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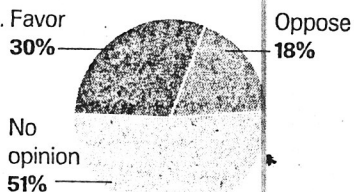
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## St. Petersburg Times poll

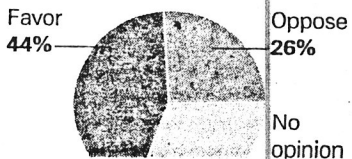
Do you favor or oppose the class-size amendment?



Do you favor a proposal to allow schools to meet class-size limits as an average, instead of in every classroom?



Do you favor a proposal to allow schools to exceed classroom limits in emergencies?



# Old dump smells of money

Pinellas' largest property open for redevelopment.

County officials sought out developers for the property and chose a team that includes Industrial Realty Group of California and Bear Creek Capital of Ohio.

Developers are investigating the geology and working with the county on details such as how many and what type of parks to build.

When negotiations conclude in about six months, developers will seek a rezoning from the city of St. Petersburg and approval from the Department of Environmental Protection.

More government reviews will be required because Toytown sits in an area designated as a "development of regional impact." It could take more than two years for construction to begin.

The group is not paying Pinellas County for the land but has agreed to build as much as 60 acres of recreation facilities, including baseball and soccer fields and a link to the Pinellas Trail. In addition, about 20 percent of the housing would be "affordable."

Developers also have an option on an adjoining 60-acre former landfill, for a total of 300 acres.

Today, the old dump smells like money. "There's not a whole heck of a lot of developed land left in Pinellas County," said Greg Scheper, of Bear Creek, "and surely not of this size."

For developers, the advantages of the site are obvious. It's convenient, close to I-275 and big.

Todd Pressman, a consultant for the developers, said the project makes sense because "there's no true upscale shopping locale in Pinellas County. One of the reasons that International Plaza has done so well ... is that all of Pinellas treks all the way over."

Here's the vision: Work at one of the office buildings and live within walking distance. Shop nearby on lunch hour or walk to a nice restaura-



Times map

take root in a faltering economy. St. Petersburg economic development director Dave Goodwin said the timing for Toytown and downtown St. Petersburg could be good because the economy may be booming again when the projects get under way.

More challenges lie beneath the surface of Toytown.

All these new stores, offices and homes would be built over layers of trash Pinellas County residents spent decades throwing away.

Think of the landfill as a giant heap of garbage encased in a trash bag. The garbage is essentially sealed in — covered by a layer of dirt and grass, and sitting atop a natural 30-foot layer of clay. When rain falls on top of the landfill, it slides down the grassy slope into a drainage system.

Building atop a landfill generally means sinking pilings through the garbage and into ground or bedrock below. It's like poking sticks all the way through the trash bag without letting anything leak out.

Wayne Dorband of Mountain Sky Group in Colorado, who is working with the devel-

into the cracked bedrock could allow contaminants to leak out, or to let water seep up into the trash.

Inside the landfill, decades-old trash continues to decay, building up methane gas. Some system would be installed to dispose of the potentially explosive methane, Dorband said.

Whatever system is designed, environmental effects will need to be monitored. John Morris, a geologist with the Department of Environmental Regulation, said workers already check special wells around the site to make sure groundwater is not getting contaminated. That would almost certainly continue. And the DEP will closely review the developers' plans.

Pinellas economic development director Meidel said the county is pleased the developers have agreed to take over the county's liability of building on the environmentally sensitive site.

But an economic question remains: Can St. Petersburg support two major developments such as Toytown and the redeveloped Tropicana Field site? Representatives of both developments were happy to talk confidently about their own projects, but said they didn't know much about the other.

In the discussions so far, at least one interesting wrinkle has come up. Welch, the county commissioner, said he wonders if Toytown would make a good site for a new baseball stadium, if plans to build one in downtown St. Petersburg fall through.

"Maybe that's ultimately what we'll see, is a great new development that includes retail, residential, hotel and maybe a ballpark as well," Welch said.

Michael Kalt, senior vice president of development for the Rays, said he has heard that idea but team owners prefer a downtown stadium.

Scheper, of the Toytown developers, said a major league stadium is not part of their plans. But he said the group is more than willing to listen to the community's ideas, "whether it be a new ballpark or whether it