



WALT DISNEY World



Reimagining the Possible

At the time of the opening of Walt Disney World on October 1st, 1971, Disneyland in California had already been open for over 16 years. Walt Disney had a vision for building a Florida attraction to supplement the California park since 1959, but he did not want the new location to be surrounded by the same types of low-end hotels and other shady establishments that sprung up around the outskirts of Disneyland. To prevent this, he ultimately secretly procured some of the largest tracks of land in Central Florida through various shell companies to prevent tipping off speculators which could buy up the land or drive up the cost.

WALT DISNEY WORLD

REIMAGINING THE POSSIBLE | 2022 ENGINEERS WEEK



Internally referred to as “The Florida Project”, the original feasibility studies pointed to Ocala, Florida as the site for the attraction; however, the construction of Interstate 4 and Florida’s Turnpike ultimately convinced Walt Disney that Orlando would be the better location for the park. There were many business obstacles to overcome, not the least of which was getting the State to allow Disney to set up the Reedy Creek Improvement District which provided Disney with all the rights and abilities of an incorporated city including issuing tax-free bonds and side-stepping land-use laws.



WALT DISNEY WORLD

REIMAGINING THE POSSIBLE | 2022 ENGINEERS WEEK

Initially Walt Disney had very broad dreams for an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) at this location which would have been a real functioning test city for innovative living in addition to the theme park. Unfortunately, Walt Disney passed away in December of 1966 before the completion of his Florida EPCOT vision and his brother Roy Disney came out of retirement to complete the project, albeit short of Walt's original EPCOT vision. Many



design professionals were ultimately involved in the development of Walt Disney World; however, William Everett Potter was most notable in the construction and oversaw the construction of the underground utilities and other park infrastructure. One of the ferries that transports guests to the park bears his name in his honor.

Walt Disney World is a key example of taking something that seemed impossible and making it possible.

