9 Counties, 36 Cities and Towns

- **Counties:** Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry, & Collier

**Land Area:** 9,511 square miles

The inland area is known as “The Florida Heartland”
Collier County Highlights

- Established in 1923
- County Seat: Naples
- Known to the region as “the Paradise Coast”
- By 1880’s Naples and Marco Island already popular vacation spots
- This area has a wide diversity of natural habitats – estuaries, mangroves, cypress swamps, forests, and beaches

Top Industries: Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, Accommodation & Food Services, Real Estate, Construction

Source: paradisecoast.com; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019; BEBR, 2019
Hendry County Highlights

- Established in 1923 and named after Captain Francis Hendry “Cattle King of South Florida”
- County Seat: LaBelle
- 72% of the land in Hendry County used for agriculture
- Lake Okeechobee is the #1 place for Bass Fishing in the state

Top Industries: Forestry & Fishing, Government, Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Services, Health Care & Social Assistance

Source: Discoverhendrycounty.com; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019; BEBR, 2019
Note: Top Industries by 2017 Employment
Lee County Highlights

- **Ponce De Leon** explored the area between 1513 & 1521
- County Seat: **Fort Myers**
- Established in **1887** from Monroe County
- Downtown Fort Myers is known regionally as “the City of Palms”

**Top Industries:** Retail Trade, Government, Accommodation & Food Services, Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance
Charlotte County Highlights

- Charlotte Harbor was initially platted in 1860’s, but Charlotte County was established in 1921
- County Seat: Punta Gorda
- Charlotte Harbor includes one of the world’s largest marine estuaries at 270 sq. miles

**Top Industries:** Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, Accommodation & Food Services, Government, Real Estate
Glades County Highlights

- Established from DeSoto County in 1921
- County Seat: Moore Haven
- Glades County fronts more than 30 miles of Lake Okeechobee
- Lakeport is locally known as “Fish Capital of Florida”

Top Industries: Government, Manufacturing, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing
DeSoto County Highlights

- Established in **1887** and named after Spanish explorer **Hernando de Soto**
- County Seat: **Arcadia**
- City of Arcadia is known for it’s antique district of **more than 25 antique stores**
- DeSoto is **one of Florida’s leading producers** of watermelon, blueberries, peaches, olives and tomatoes

**Top Industries:** Forestry & Fishing, Government, Transportation & Warehousing

Sources: desotobocc.com; www.visitdesoto.com; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019; BEBR, 2019

Note: Top Industries by 2017 Employment
Highlands County Highlights

- Highlands County was established in **1921**
- County Seat: **Sebring**
- Sebring is known to the region as “the Circle on the Circle” due to the circular plan of the community
- Sebring started annual international sports car racing during the 1950s, creating the “**12 Hours of Sebring**”

**Top Industries:** Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Administrative & Support, Government, Accommodation & Food Services

Sources: visitssebring.com; information: www.floridamemory.com; sebringflchamber.com; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019; BEBR, 2019

Note: Top Industries by 2017 Employment
Established out of DeSoto County and named after Governor Hardee in 1921

County Seat: Wauchula

To locals, Hardee and Wauchula are interchangeable

Known regionally as the “Cucumber Capitol of the World”

Top Industries: Government, Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Services, Construction
Polk County Highlights

- Established from Eastern Hillsborough and Western Brevard counties in 1861
- County Seat: Bartow
- Florida’s first theme park, Cypress Gardens, was created in 1930s
- Famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed 13-structure collection in Lakeland at Florida Southern College

Top Industries: Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance, Government

Sources: visitcentralflorida.org; polk-county.net; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019; BEBR, 2019
Note: Top Industries by 2017 Employment
Public Engagement

Task Force Engagement
- Task Force Meetings
- Community Open Houses
- Community Workshops
- Briefings
- Website

Project Development Engagement
- Public Information Meetings
- Public Workshops
- Press Releases
- Public Hearings
- Website

Public Engagement, Engagement, Engagement…
Southwest-Central Florida Connector
- Collier County
- Hendry County
- Lee County
- Glades County
- Charlotte County
- Highlands County
- DeSoto County
- Hardee County
- Polk County