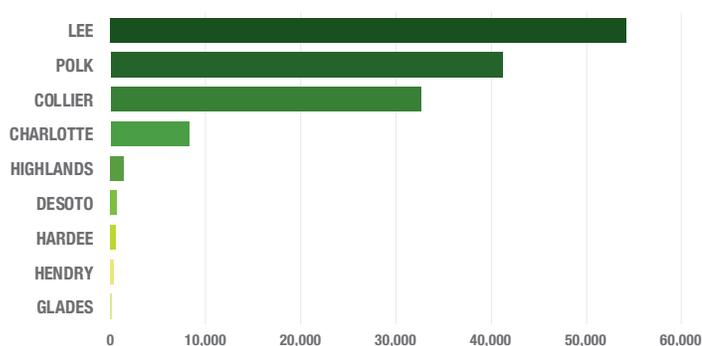


Regional Trends and Conditions

REVITALIZE RURAL COMMUNITIES

- About 90% of the study area's population is clustered along the coast: Charlotte, Collier, and Lee counties and Polk County near Interstate 4. (*U.S. Census Bureau, 2018*)
- The study area added nearly 335,000 residents between 2010 and 2018, primarily in the coastal counties and Polk County. Hardee County lost population during that period. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)
- Migration from other states and nations accounted for all net growth during this period. However, Hardee and Hendry counties experienced a net loss of residents to other states and nations. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)
- Population growth is anticipated to be clustered in the larger urbanized areas in the northern and southwest coastal ends of the study area. Population growth is projected to lag the statewide average in the remaining counties. (*University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research*)
- Median household income is below the statewide level in every county except Lee and Collier. (*U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017*)
- All six inland counties have poverty rates above the statewide average, with the rate exceeding one out of every five residents in DeSoto, Hendry, and Hardee counties. (*U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, Model-Based Estimate for States, Counties & School Districts, 2017, released November 30, 2018*)
- DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, and Highlands counties - as well as the community of Immokalee in Collier County - have been designated as Rural Areas of Opportunity and a priority for economic development.

139,000 NET NEW JOBS NEEDED BY 2030 TO ACCOMMODATE PROJECTED GROWTH



Source: Florida Chamber Foundation, November 2019 estimate

ENCOURAGE JOB CREATION

- The nine counties need to create more than 139,000 net new jobs by 2030 to accommodate population growth and keep unemployment rates low. (*Florida Chamber Foundation*)
- As of October 2019, seven out of nine counties exceed the statewide unemployment rate of 2.9%. Hardee, Hendry, and Highlands counties are three of the five counties with the highest unemployment rates statewide. (*Florida Department of Economic Opportunity*)
- The region is building on its traditional industry base while diversifying into new industries with different transportation needs:
 - ▶ Agriculture, natural resources and related industries
 - ▶ Tourism
 - ▶ Arts, Entertainment & Recreation
 - ▶ Construction
- Emerging industries include:
 - ▶ Education and health services (19% of jobs)
 - ▶ Transportation, warehousing, and wholesale trade (7% of jobs)
 - ▶ Manufacturing (5% of jobs)
- Economic development partners are identifying specific development sites in these industries, such as potential research parks or intermodal logistics centers.
- Regional and local economic development plans typically focus on a common set of targeted industries, such as advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, and life sciences and health care.
- Access to high capacity transportation corridors, as well as a skilled workforce and a competitive business climate, often is a key factor for recruiting and retaining businesses in these industries.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017



ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

- About 16% of residents in the nine-county region have access to fresh food within 1/2 mile, compared to a statewide average of 31%. Less than 6% of residents in Glades and DeSoto counties have access to fresh food within a 1/2 mile or a 10 minute walk. *(Florida Department of Health, 2016)*
- Hendry, Hardee, DeSoto, and Glades counties each have fewer than 20 licensed physicians and 50 hospital beds, requiring many residents to drive to surrounding counties for medical care. *(Florida Department of Health, 2018)*
- Large portions of the study area - particularly along the coast, Lake Okeechobee, and the Peace River - are designated evacuation zones during emergencies. *(Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, 2017)*
- Evacuation times may take as long as 60 hours during major emergencies. *(Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, 2017)*
- Education attainment in most of the study area counties lags the statewide average. More than one out of four residents have not completed a high school diploma in Hendry, DeSoto, Hardee, and Glades counties. Fewer than one in six residents have completed a four-year college degree in every inland county, making it challenging for businesses to find skilled workers. *(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2013-2017)*



PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

- About 32% of the study area's acreage is held in conservation, compared to 28% statewide. *(Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2019)*
- Much of the study area has been identified as a high-priority critical linkage as part of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network.

PROVIDE REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY WHILE LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

- Only four counties are served by a limited access highway: Polk, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier.
- Only three counties have fixed-route transit providers: Collier, Lee, and Polk. However, transit remains a critical way for many residents to access jobs, health care, and other services.
- Hendry and DeSoto counties are the top two counties in Florida for the percentage of commuters using transit, with Hardee, Highlands, and Collier counties also ranking among the top ten. *(U.S. Census Bureau, 2017)*
- More than one out of every five residents in Lee, Charlotte, and Highlands counties live within a 1/2 mile or 10 minute walk of an off-street trail system. *(Florida Department of Health, 2016)*
- The region has two commercial service airports, three intercity rail stations, and 12 Greyhound intercity bus stations.
- More than 93% of households in Polk, Collier, and Hardee counties have access to high speed broadband; in DeSoto County, that share falls to 67%. Broadband gaps tend to be concentrated in rural portions of each county. *(Federal Communications Commission, % of population living in areas with access to Fixed 25 Mbps/3Mbps, Dec 31, 2017)*



HOW MAY I PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK?

Public participation is vital to the M-CORES process, and there are many ways to share your comments or ideas. FDOT encourages public participation.

MAIL: FDOT Public Information Office
605 Suwannee Street MS 54
Tallahassee, FL 32399

EMAIL: FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us

 @FloridaMCORES

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Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status.

Anyone who requires special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or translation services (free of charge) should contact Marlon Bizerra by email at Marlon.Bizerra@dot.state.fl.us or by telephone at **(863) 519-2250**, at least seven days prior to the meeting.