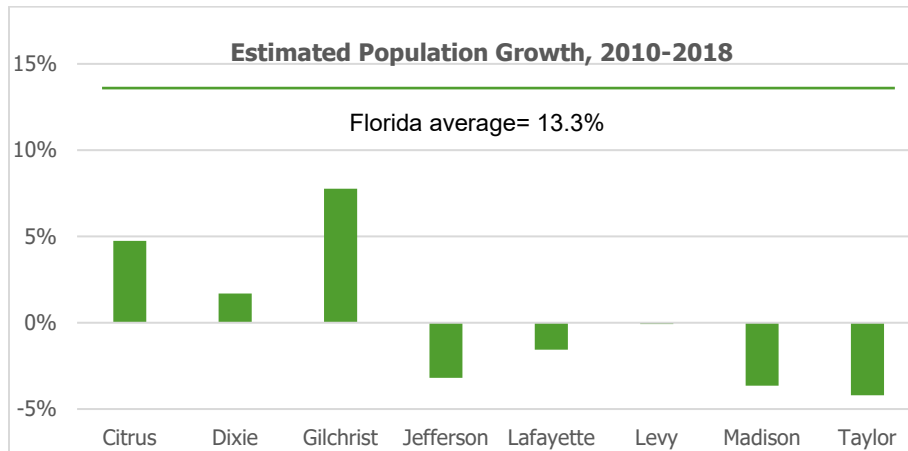


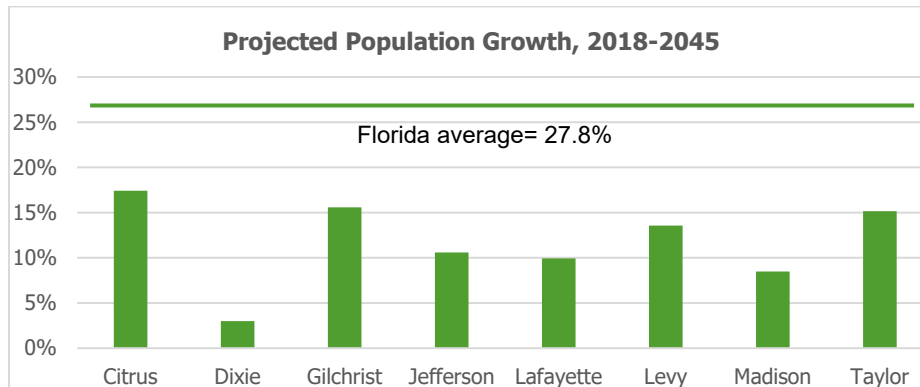
Regional Trends and Conditions

Revitalize Rural Communities

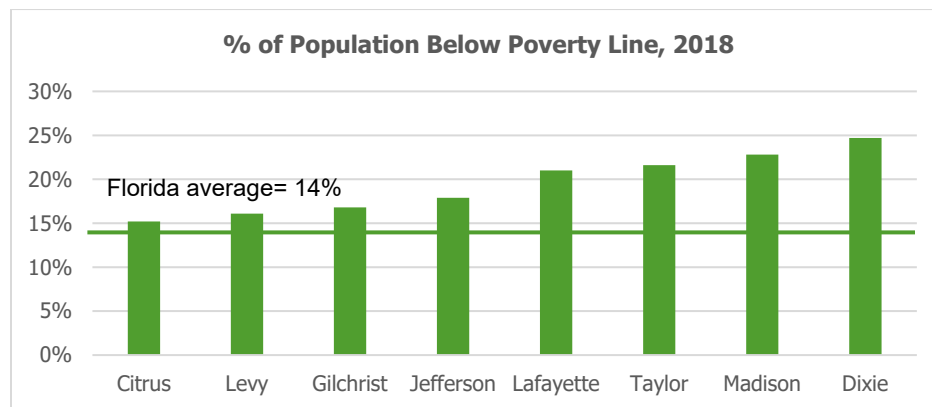
- The eight-county study area had a total population of nearly 287,000 residents in 2018. Citrus County, the only study area county with an urbanized area, accounts for more than half of the study area’s total population. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)
- Only three (Citrus, Dixie, and Gilchrist) of the eight counties in the study area experienced population growth from 2010 to 2018, collectively adding over 6,000 net residents to the region. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)



- The change in population during 2010-2018 mainly was driven by domestic migration. Citrus, Gilchrist, Levy, and Dixie counties all experienced a net migration of residents from other parts of Florida or other states during this period. All counties except Gilchrist experienced more deaths than births during this period, reflecting on older population. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)
- The population of the eight-county region is projected to increase 14.6% by 2045, about half the pace of the state (27.8%). Growth in all eight counties is projected to fall below the statewide average. Citrus County is forecasted to account for more than 61% of the region’s population gain during this period. (*University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research*)



- Median household income in every county was below the statewide average during the 2014-2018 period. Jefferson County had the highest median income of the eight counties, while Madison County's was the lowest. (*U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey*)
- All eight counties had a greater share of their population living below poverty line compared to the statewide average of 14% in 2018. Counties in the northern part of the study area (Dixie, Madison, Taylor, Lafayette) had comparatively higher poverty rates, above 20%. (*U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates*)



- Transportation is the highest household expense on average, exceeding the cost of housing in all counties except Citrus. Madison is one of the top five counties in Florida for the transportation's share (39%) of household income. (*Center for Neighborhood Technology, H+T Affordability Index*)
- All seven rural counties of the study area have been designated as Rural Areas of Opportunity. (*Florida Department of Economic Opportunity*)

Encourage Job Creation

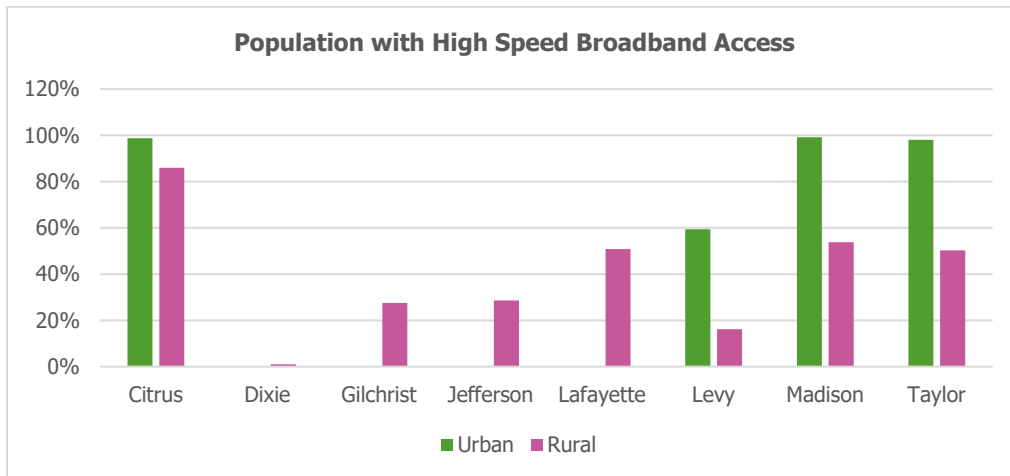
- All eight counties need around 8,300 net additional jobs by 2030 to accommodate projected population growth. (*Florida Chamber Foundation, TheFloridaScorecard.org, 2020 estimate*)
- As of December 2019, all counties in the study area, except for Lafayette, have higher unemployment rates than the statewide average of 2.5%. Citrus County, at 4%, is among the top five counties with the highest unemployment rates statewide. These unemployment rates are significantly lower than during the period of the recession. (*Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.*)
- The economy of the study area is anchored by both traditional and emerging industries. Agriculture and forestry (4% of jobs), construction (9%), manufacturing (6%), retail trade (14%), and education and health services (23%) all accounted for a larger share of employment than the statewide averages. (*U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017*).

Percent of Workforce Employed in Selected Industry Sectors

Study Area Counties	Agriculture, Forestry	Construction	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Educational and Health Services
Citrus	1%	10%	4%	15%	24%
Dixie	7%	12%	10%	13%	21%
Gilchrist	4%	10%	7%	13%	22%
Jefferson	6%	7%	3%	10%	27%
Lafayette	12%	5%	7%	12%	20%
Levy	6%	11%	5%	15%	21%
Madison	3%	7%	11%	15%	26%
Taylor	5%	6%	13%	14%	22%
Eight County Total	4%	9%	6%	14%	23%
Florida	1%	7%	5%	13%	21%

Provide Regional Connectivity while Leveraging Technology

- The rural counties in the study region generally have limited access to high speed broadband services. A vast majority of residents (94%) in Citrus County have access to broadband services, compared with between 20-30% of residents in Gilchrist, Levy, and Jefferson counties and 1% of residents in Dixie County. (*Broadband Deployment Report, 2019, Federal Communication Commission*)



- Among the eight counties, only Madison, Jefferson, and Citrus counties currently are served by limited access highways. (*FDOT, State Highway System Mileage and Travel Report*)
- There are no fixed-route transit service providers in the study region. Most of the counties in the area do not have any commuters riding public transit to work. Three of the eight counties (Citrus, Gilchrist, and Lafayette) have less than 0.8% of the population commuting to work using public transportation, below the statewide average. (*U.S Census Bureau*)

- All eight counties are below the state average for the percentage of the population living within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of an off-street trail system. The highest shares are in Citrus (14.5%) and Levy (10%) counties. (*Florida Department of Health*)

Enhance Quality of Life and Public Safety

- About 2% of residents in the eight-county region live within 1/2 mile of a healthy food sources, compared to 31% statewide. Lafayette and Gilchrist both are below 1.3% of residents having access to fresh food within 1/2 mile. (*Florida Department of Health*)
- All eight counties had a higher percentage of adults reporting a personal healthcare provider than the statewide average of 72% in 2016. However, four counties (Dixie, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Lafayette) did not report any hospital beds in 2018, and all counties except Citrus reported fewer than 10 licensed physicians in fiscal year 2019. (*Florida Department of Health*)
- The eight-county region experienced a 44% increase in total traffic fatalities from 2010 to 2018, compared to 28% statewide. (*Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles*)
- Daily vehicle miles traveled grew only 8.2% from 2010 to 2018, compared to 13% statewide. (*FDOT, Public Road Mileage and Travel Report*)
- About 81% of residents of the study region have earned a high school diploma. About 22% of residents hold an associate degree or higher. Both fall short of the statewide averages. In Dixie, Jefferson, Lafayette, and Taylor counties, nearly one in every five residents have not earned a high school diploma. (*U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017*)
- Portions of the coastal counties (Citrus, Levy, Dixie, Taylor) of the study area are designated as emergency evacuation zones. (*Florida Division of Emergency Management*)

Protect the Environment and Natural Resources

- About 20% of the total study area's land is held in conservation, with Citrus and Jefferson counties having more than 30% of their land under conservation. (*Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2019*)
- A significant portion of the coastal counties has been identified as medium and low priority critical linkage as part of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. (*Florida's Ecological Greenways Network, The Conservation Fund*)