

COMPREHENSIVE  
**Economic  
Development  
Strategy**  
**(CEDS)**  
2017

Economic  
Development  
District serving  
**DeSoto • Hardee • Highlands  
Okeechobee • Polk**

# COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017

CENTRAL FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT SERVING  
DESOTO, HARDEE, HIGHLANDS, OKEECHOBEE, AND POLK COUNTIES



**United States Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration**

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Atlanta, GA 30308-3510



**Central Florida Regional Planning Council**

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For more information on the contents of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, please view the CEDS Data Document at [\*\*www.cfrpc.org/CEDS/\*\*](http://www.cfrpc.org/CEDS/)

## Guide economic growth

**A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** is an ongoing planning process that requires participation and input from both the public and private sectors, along with the communities of a region.

The CEDS is designed to guide economic growth by fostering a more stable and diversified economy, to assist in the creation of jobs, and thereby improve the quality of life in Desoto, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee, and Polk counties.

## Assist in the creation of jobs



## Improve the quality of life

**The development of the CEDS is guided by the CEDS Committee. The Committee is comprised of representatives of both the public and private sectors.**

Todd Parker  
Sean Malott  
Douglas Conner  
Donna Doubleday  
Terry Burroughs  
Tim Texley  
Taylor Benson  
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Tara Jeffries  
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Bill Lambert  
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Jerry Miller

Arr Maz Custom Chemicals, Inc.  
Central Florida Development Council  
Clear Springs Land Co.  
CareerSource Heartland  
FHRO (Florida's Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity)  
Century Link  
Highlands County Economic Development (IDA/EDC)  
Sebring Airport Authority  
South Florida State College (Farmworker Career Development)  
DeSoto County Economic Development  
Winter Haven Economic Development Council  
Heartland Agricultural Coalition and Town of Lake Placid Council  
Florida Power & Light  
Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce Board  
Hardee County Economic Development  
Lakeland Linder Regional Airport  
Duke Energy



## BACKGROUND AND KEY REGIONAL ISSUES

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) analyzes the regional economy and creates a road map to economic diversity through private sector investment and job creation. The CEDS is developed in alignment with regional and state principles, primarily guided by:

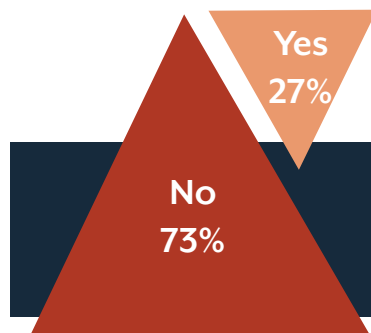
- > **Heartland 2060: Building a Resilient Region** ([www.heartland2060.org](http://www.heartland2060.org)), which is the Heartland region's long term vision plan for economic diversity and resiliency.
- > **The Florida Chamber's Six Pillars** ([www.flchamber.com/six-pillars/](http://www.flchamber.com/six-pillars/)), which strategically plans for Florida's future.
- > **The Florida Chamber's Florida 2030 Project** ([www.flchamber.com/florida-2030/](http://www.flchamber.com/florida-2030/)), which is designing a blueprint for Florida's future through engagement with business and community leaders in each county.
- > **Florida's Strategic Plan For Development**, the State of Florida's first statewide vision for economic development.

### Some of the economic development issues in the region include:

- > The need to diversify the region's economy for long term stability and prosperity;
- > The need to build a skilled workforce and increase average wages;
- > The need for greater infrastructure planning and capital commitment; and
- > The need for sufficient resources, particularly for rural economic development.

**9,031 new jobs are needed in the Heartland of Florida by 2030**

Source: [TheFloridaScorecard.org](http://TheFloridaScorecard.org),  
Florida Chamber Foundation



### *What the community said:*

Is your community and region positioned for global competition, economic diversification, prosperity and high wage jobs of tomorrow, and vibrant and sustainable communities?

## Population

The region's population continues to grow, primarily due to in-migration, and with a growing population, there may be opportunity to expand the labor supply and bring new talent into the region. Additionally, the growing diversity of the population adds potential to the bilingual workforce. However, the region has a significant aging population as well, which means members of the workforce are aging out of the job market creating a shortage of skilled labor in local businesses and industries.

The region also continues to struggle with its youth migrating out of the region for employment or educational purposes.

**852,104**

2016 Estimated  
Region Population

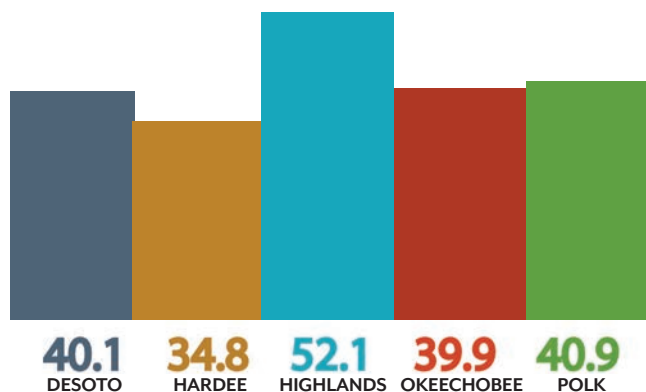
## POPULATION INCREASE

**13,414**  
Total  
Increase



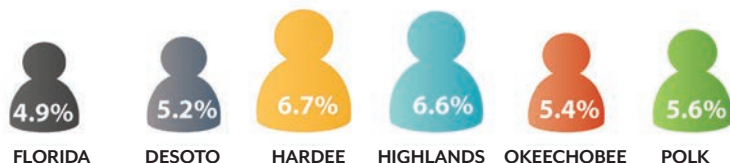
**+ 11,747**  
due to migration

## MEDIAN AGE



## Employment

### UNEMPLOYMENT



The region's economy has adapted to change in the past, having shown its ability to expand the service sector while moving away from the declining natural resources industry. However, employment in the region's traditional industries has in some cases continued to decline, and overall unemployment continues to be higher than the State average. The region should prepare to offer a workforce that has the skills necessary to adapt to rapidly growing or new employment sectors, as diversification of the economy and industries continues.

## Housing

Home ownership rates in the region are above state and national rates, as home prices have fallen and housing has become more affordable in the region. Home values have fallen and median housing values are below the state values. However, the difficulty in securing mortgage funding has continued to suppress the production and availability of housing in the region. There is particularly a shortage of rental housing in some areas of the region. An ongoing additional concern in the region is the number of mobile homes, which are vulnerable to extreme weather events.

**52.6%**

said the affordability  
of housing was a  
weakness, and  
getting worse

### MEDIAN HOME VALUE



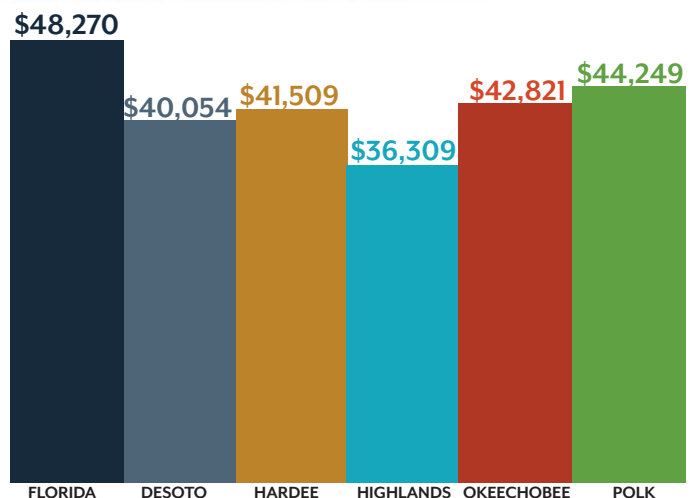
## Wages and Income

Wages and per capita income in the region continue to lag behind state and national averages. This results in a high poverty rate throughout the region. Although low wages may be attractive to some potential employers, poverty rates may continue to rise as wages in those markets do not increase. In order to increase the availability of high skill high wage jobs, the economy must be diversified.

### PER CAPITA INCOME

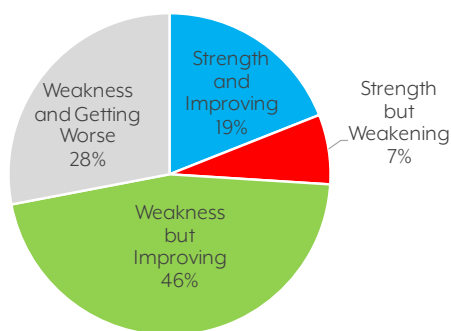


### AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES



## Transportation

Community members said our transportation is a...



The region's central location within the Florida peninsula gives it high potential to continue to grow as an intermodal transportation hub. Coordinating transportation planning with land use planning can improve local economies as well as quality of life. The region contains corridors of statewide importance and an extensive freight rail network. However, some parts of the roadway network do not meet current transportation needs, which can decrease the attractiveness of sites for economic development.

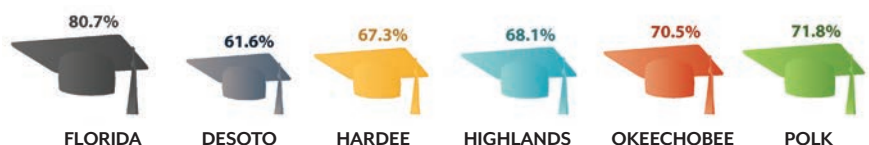
### Heartland transportation infrastructure includes:

- 12 General aviation airports
- 4 Amtrak stations
- 1,628 miles of state & US highways
- 490 miles of railroad track

## Education and Workforce

The Central Florida region shares workforce development issues with most other rural areas. The region's workforce is characterized by low graduation rates and high out-migration of young students and workers to urban and scholastic centers. Businesses, especially in high-tech fields, are often challenged to find well-trained administrative, management, and even entry-level employees. A major step forward for workforce development has been the inclusion of relevant training in K-12 and community college curricula to provide technical training in fields that do not require degrees.

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



Community members said our talent pipeline is...

**A Weakness but Improving 67%**

**A Weakness & Getting Worse 17.8%**

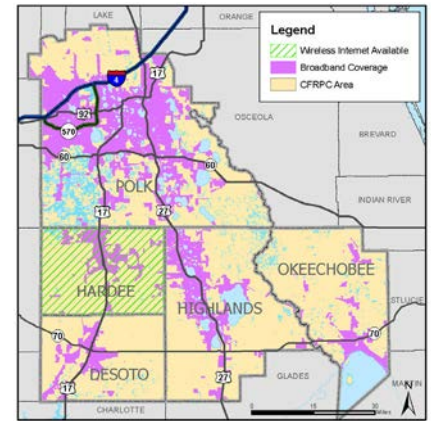
**A Strength but Weakening 10.2%**

**A Strength & Improving 4.6%**



## Infrastructure

The region's infrastructure would require updating or expanding, in order to support certain economic development activities. Although slower development of land allows local governments to plan appropriately for land use, utilities, and transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of future economic and population growth, emerging technologies may be delayed, resulting in decreased attractiveness of potential development sites. Additionally, some utility systems throughout the region are underfunded and underdeveloped, and Broadband continues to be unavailable in many parts of the region.



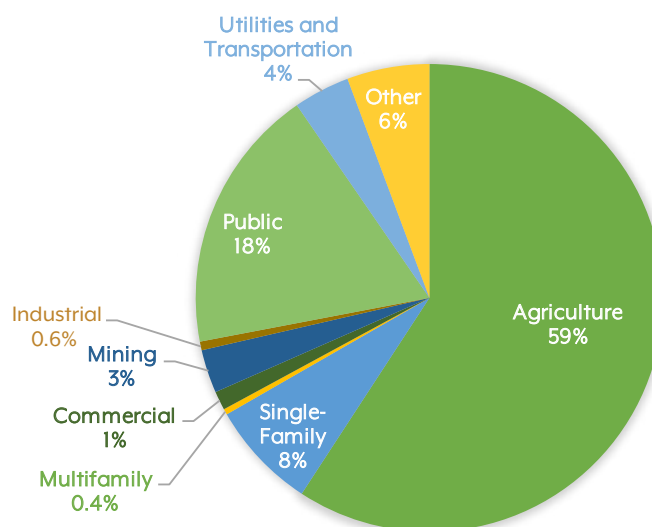
## Water Resources

**42.8%**  
said our water  
infrastructure  
was a weakness,  
but improving

Water resources, both for economic development and general development use, will be a major challenge facing both the state and this region in the coming decades. Conserving water, developing alternative sources, and reusing water resources will be important elements in the economic development of the region. Wildfire hazard and fire management are also key elements in natural resources planning in the region, as wildfires occur every year, and are more prevalent during droughts. Preservation and restoration of natural habitats and ecosystems and programming water quality will give rise to increased opportunities for ecotourism. As the coastal areas of the state become saturated with population, and the cost of developing and residing along the coasts continues to rise, the Central Florida region may become more attractive for population and economic development. The region's resources provide a natural location for the next wave of growth but require water supply planning and conservation measures to ensure water will be available to meet growth.

## Land Use

Diversification of the regional economy is dependent upon suitable land use for a variety of industries, businesses, and agricultural support facilities as well as institutional, governmental, and residential-support uses. To ensure this is not a hurdle, a variety of future land use categories are appropriate. A local



government comprehensive plan that supports future land uses and infrastructure to support those land uses while avoiding unnecessary encroachment upon natural systems will provide opportunities for economic prosperity. The 30 local governments in the EDD all maintain Comprehensive Plans addressing land use.

## Economic Resiliency

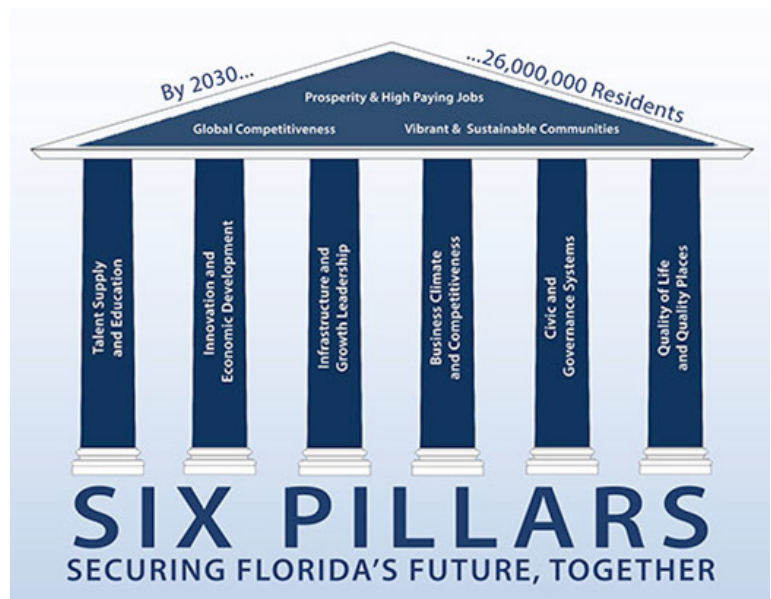
The region has suffered various disruptions in its economy over time. Whether storm damage creates a loss of infrastructure and housing or prevents businesses from operating while residents and workers are displaced, it disrupts the economy. When disruptions in an industry occur, such as citrus diseases, related sectors of agriculture are also impacted. When top employers are unable to recruit skilled workers, industry clusters are disrupted creating job loss. Diversifying the economy with traditional and emerging industries, adopting post disaster recovery plans and flexible regulations, and ensuring a continuously trained workforce, are all crucial to economic resilience.



## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives of the CEDS were developed by using the foundations of Heartland 2060: Building a Resilient Region, the Florida Strategic Plan for Economic Development, the Florida Chamber's Florida 2030, and the Six Pillars of Florida's Future Economy. These documents establish a clear vision for Florida's private and public sectors, and for Central Florida's Heartland Region to guide a strong future economy. As the region seeks economic diversification, it seeks to ensure preservation of our unique values, a mix of urban and rural lifestyles, and good stewardship of our natural resources while supporting growth and development in our communities.

The goals and objectives were sorted into categories, to provide consistency with the Six Pillars. The performance measures which can be found in the Data Document at [cfrpc.org/CEDS](http://cfrpc.org/CEDS) are used to measure the success of the goals and objectives also sorted by the Six Pillars. Those pillars are:



- > **Talent Supply and Education** – The foundation for growth and success is a talented workforce
- > **Infrastructure and Growth Leadership** – Infrastructure preparedness for long term growth
- > **Innovation and Economic Development** – Creation of an environment for innovators to thrive
- > **Business Climate and Competitiveness** – Provide resources for businesses to start and grow
- > **Civic and Governance Systems** – Cultivating leaders, engaging youth, promote participation in civic affairs
- > **Quality of Life and Quality Places** – Encourage and create opportunities for prosperity

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## Talent Supply & Education

**Provide sufficient funding and encourage flexibility to allow regional stakeholders to address local needs in education, training and workforce development.**

- > Adequate funding shall be available to provide education and training.
- > Attract and develop a sufficiently skilled workforce to meet future employment demands.

**Ensure educational systems and workforce training to support innovation and creativity.**

- > Review policies and rules to identify barriers to innovation and creativity in schools.
- > Become a leader in providing resources to support workforce training and skill development programs.

## Infrastructure & Growth Leadership

**Develop transportation systems to support a prosperous, globally competitive economy while minimizing impacts to the natural environment.**

- > Establish hubs for global, national, and state distribution through development and implementation of a multimodal, interconnected transportation system in the region.
- > Ensure that growth and infrastructure are planned with natural resources protection.
- > Support and promote the growing Aviation-Centric Employment Centers.

**Develop a strong export economy.**

- > Complete a logistics study for filling empty containers to increase exports.
- > Develop a distribution network of hubs that connect to global markets and complement existing networks.

**Maintain regional economic resilience strategies to mitigate adverse impacts to local economy as the result of housing and infrastructure loss (including broadband) due to a significant storm event, and assist local governments with economic resilience strategies.**

## Innovation & Economic Development

**Provide funding for ongoing economic development activities.**

- > Establish funding mechanisms for ongoing economic development activities.

**Provide technical assistance and use new technology to promote job growth.**

- > Develop technical assistance programs to support new technology.

**Build seamless information technology infrastructure.**

- > Develop projects that support information technology infrastructure.

**Support location of bio-medical life science facilities consistent with the Catalyst Project.**

- > Complete all infrastructures necessary to support the Catalyst project.
- > Expand the number of key educational resources and medical support staff to build support for a global medical treatment center.

**Encourage alternative energy and green product industries.**

- > Use clean energy to drive economic development and increase energy related employment.
- > Export power produced by renewable energy in the region to the state's coastal grids.

**Diversify the economy with traditional and emerging industries.**

- > Promote economic resilience through business retention and expansion programs of both traditional and emerging industries.



## Business Climate & Competitiveness

**Encourage local governments to adopt streamlined development approval procedures to support competitiveness through resilience.**

- > Identify current development approval procedures in local governments that may be streamlined.
- > Adopt land development regulations which provide for temporary accommodations and flexible regulations to ensure businesses return to operation quickly after natural and man-made disasters.

**Create a regional data collection repository by industry and county.**

- > Monitor CEDS Performance Measures.

**Develop projects and programs that support existing and new business.**

- > Develop vertical and horizontal integration of key industries, including expanding manufacturing and research in the region.

**Increase investment in business development and placement in the region.**

- > Support outreach promoting the region's target industries including Agriculture.

## Civic & Governance Systems

**Improve coordination of economic development, land use, infrastructure, water and natural resource decision making.**

- > Coordinate local government comprehensive planning and regional strategic planning with capital improvement projects to further regional goals.
- > Collaborate to improve emergency and non-emergency medical transportation, retain
- > and expand existing healthcare facilities specifically in rural areas, and provide incentives to attract healthcare providers (physicians and facilities).

**Improve public/private/civic cooperation, collaboration, and communication of the region's economic strategies.**

- > Cooperate on a regional communications, marketing, and programming plan to strengthen and promote a sense of regional identity, expand opportunities, and increase youth retention.

**Maintain regional evacuation plans and assist local governments with evacuation planning.**

## Quality of Life & Quality Places

**Protect natural resources to support quality environment and ecotourism.**

- > Provide for connectivity of targeted conservation and preservation lands on both public and private lands.
- > Increase conservation lands by implementing local government incentives through comprehensive plan provisions, tax incentives, and other innovative programs to encourage landowners to participate in conservation programs.

**Develop projects that improve the region's quality of life.**

- > Integrate alternative modes of travel, including walkability, into new and existing communities.
- > Ensure access to high quality health care, including primary, specialty, and ancillary services.

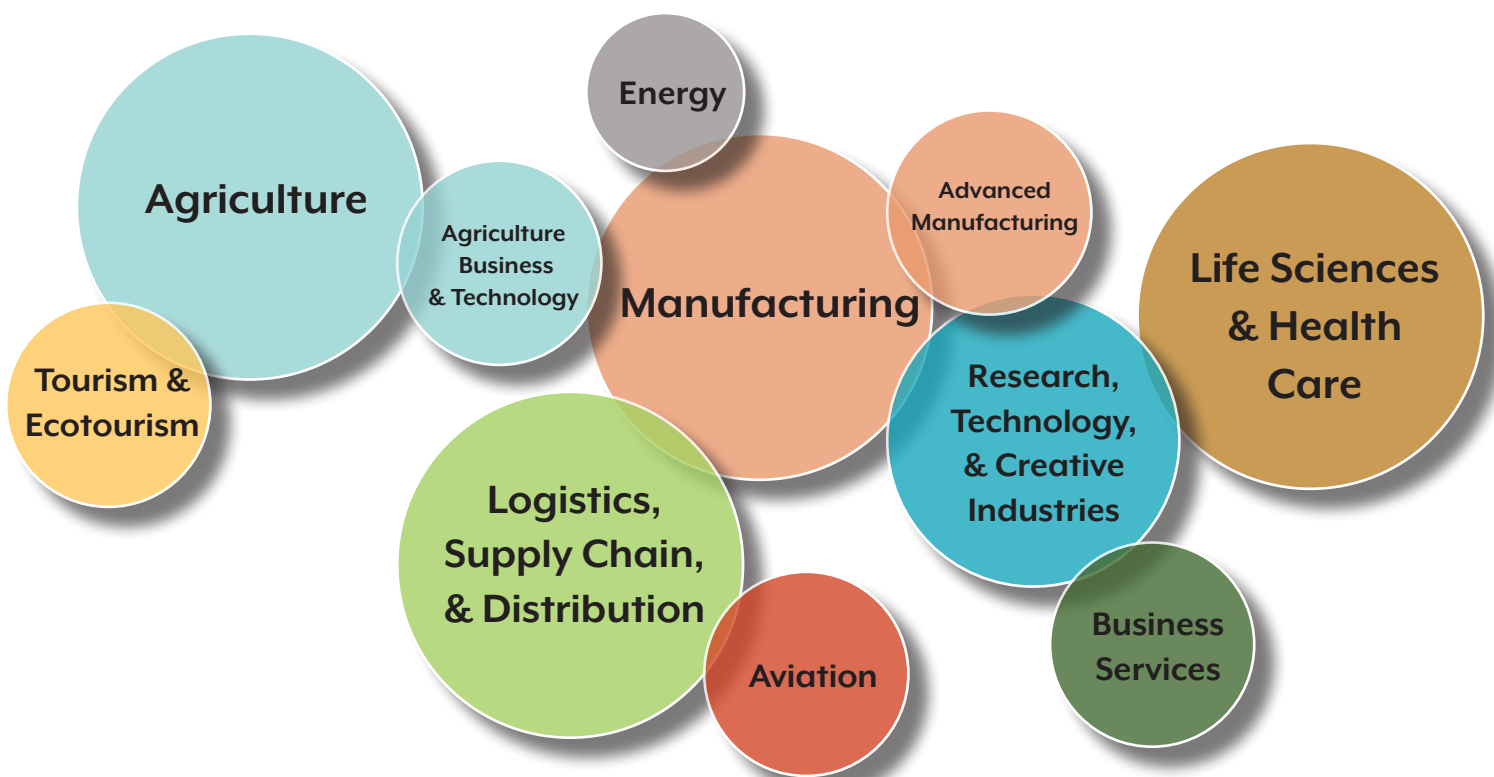
**Develop and maintain strategies for emergency and temporary housing.**

- > Provide access to short-term emergency shelters, longer-term temporary housing, and additional rental units for coastal evacuees and local residents in the event of significant and long-term storm effects.
- > Adopt implementing regulations in the land development regulations and/or Code of Ordinances to address post-disaster residential and non-residential accommodations for each jurisdiction.





## TARGET INDUSTRY CLUSTERS



Target Clusters are groups of businesses or industries within a geographic area that are similar in products, services, labor needs, or supply chains. Typically, clusters increase the productivity needed to compete nationally and/or globally. The CEDS Committee has recommended 5 target clusters and 6 sub-clusters for the 2017 CEDS. The cluster map above shows the relationships between target clusters, with the overlapping circles indicating those clusters that are significantly interconnected. The target clusters are consistent with the economic planning and initiatives within the five counties of the region.



## Agriculture & Agriculture Business & Technology

Agriculture is one of the traditional industries of the region. The primary industries are cattle farming and citrus, which has been undergoing a decline due to diseases reducing citrus production. Because of the need to transport the products of the region's agricultural industries to a global market, agriculture is closely linked to Logistics.

This cluster also contains the sub-cluster of Agriculture Business and Technology (which is also linked to Manufacturing). As agricultural technologies continue to develop, new opportunities to improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of agriculture will arise. This cluster is also linked to the Tourism and Ecotourism cluster because of the region's agricultural heritage and resources, and the opportunities to link both activities.

## Life Sciences & Health Care

Life Sciences and Health Care are already top employers throughout the region, and stand to see strong gains consistently in the future.

This industry cluster overlaps with the Research, Technology and Creative Industries industry cluster because of the close connection between the life sciences and the research and development of new technologies.

## Logistics, Supply Chain, & Distribution

The region is gaining importance in the field of Logistics. Two major transportation freight corridors pass through the region: US 27, a major highway connecting the Miami area to the Central Florida area; and Interstate 4 in the far north of the region, connecting the Tampa Bay and Orlando metro area. With the opening of the CSX Integrated Logistics Center in Winter Haven and the progress of Americas Gateway Logistics Center south of the region in Glades County, the region is becoming a major logistics hub.

The Logistics industry is intertwined with the Manufacturing industry cluster, which requires transportation of both input and output materials.

## Manufacturing & Advanced Manufacturing

Although employment in Manufacturing has experienced fluctuation in the region in recent years, this remains a key cluster.

Manufacturing is linked to the sub-clusters of Agriculture Business and Technology and Advanced Manufacturing (which is also linked to the cluster of Research, Technology, and Creative Industries) because of the opportunities to manufacture goods available through new technology. Since the input materials and end products of manufacturing must be transported, this cluster also overlaps with Logistics.

## Research, Technology, & Creative Industries

Research, Technology, and Creative industries continues to be a rising industry in the region. Significant regional assets include the Polk Commerce Center, a mixed-use development near Auburndale in Polk County, and the new Florida Polytechnic University campus near the interchange of Interstate 4 and the Polk Parkway. Other notable institutions are the Florida Industrial and Phosphate Research Institute in Polk County and Archbold Biological Station, an ecological research organization in Highlands County.

This cluster overlaps with the Life Sciences & Healthcare cluster because of the close connection between the life sciences and the research and development of new technologies, and with the Advanced Manufacturing sub-cluster because of the close relationship between research and manufacturing specialized goods or materials with the benefit of new technologies.

## Tourism & Ecotourism

The region's most prominent tourism sites include LEGOLAND Florida Resort and Bok Tower Gardens in Polk County. Traditional tourism still plays a large role in the regional economy. However, in recent years ecotourism has become an important part of the tourism economy, with Lake Okeechobee as the largest ecotourism destination in the region. The region's unique natural features and large amounts of open space offer great potential for ecotourism. The region is home to more than 550 lakes, as well as The Lake Wales Ridge, which is home to a globally unique ecosystem, and many trails, parks, and nature preserves, including Circle B Bar Reserve.

Ecotourism related to the unique natural resources in the region is becoming more prominent, with residents and visitors taking advantage of the hiking, fishing, and birdwatching opportunities throughout, as well as resorts and golf courses developed around the natural resources and the special opportunities they provide.

The Tourism & Ecotourism industry cluster overlaps with the Agriculture cluster because of the opportunities presented by the region's agricultural heritage and resources; for example, the region hosts regular rodeos and is home to a number of ranch resorts, offering fishing and hunting opportunities.

## Business Services

Business Services has been a major employment industry in the region for a number of years, and that trend is expected to continue. The state of Florida hosts a significant number of professional and technical business service companies and that is reflected in the Central Florida region. The region has a strong CareerSource presence which connects employers to the talent needed for this industry cluster.

The Business Services cluster is not shown as connected to any other target industry but is intertwined with all clusters.

## Aviation

Aviation is emerging as an important industry cluster in the region. There are currently nine general public airports throughout the region, providing goods movement and private passenger travel, and including several smaller private airports. The Sebring Multimodal Logistics Center contains a 2,000 acre Business Park and a Foreign Trade Zone, and houses a variety of tenants including several in aviation. The Lakeland Linder Regional Airport houses tenants in aviation and defense contracting, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Aviation industry cluster is connected to the Logistics, Supply Chain, and Distribution cluster because as we look to the future, airports will likely be an integral part of that cluster.

## Energy

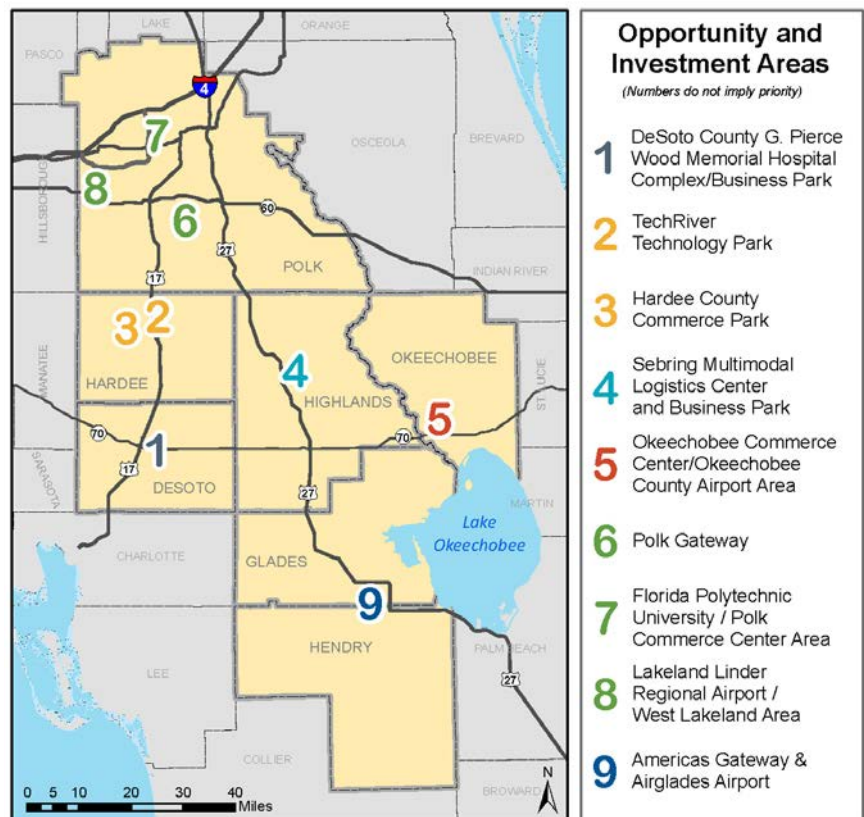
Energy generation to produce electricity continues to be a growing part of the regional economy. There are currently 20 power producing plants using either natural gas or coal, one that uses steam, and one that runs on the waste byproducts of a landfill. A major new natural gas plant has just completed all regulatory approvals and will utilize the new natural gas transmission line which traverses portions of Okeechobee and Polk Counties. With five solar fields and many more planned, traditional and alternative energy production and distribution will continue to grow.



## OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT AREAS

Opportunity and investment areas in the region are identified based on compatibility with the CEDS goals and the Six Pillars, and are expected to make a future impact on the regional or local economy based on the suitability and marketability of the site; or, because of the investment that has already been made on the site.

As projects are considered for public funding opportunities, priority will be given to those that are compatible with the goals of the CEDS and are aligned with the Six Pillars. Priority projects impact the regional economy in terms of job creation for the local or regional populace, or as catalysts for future development. Completed projects that are viewed as catalysts for additional future development and employment may also be identified as ongoing opportunities and investments in the region.



**No**  
14%

**Yes**  
86%

### What the community said:

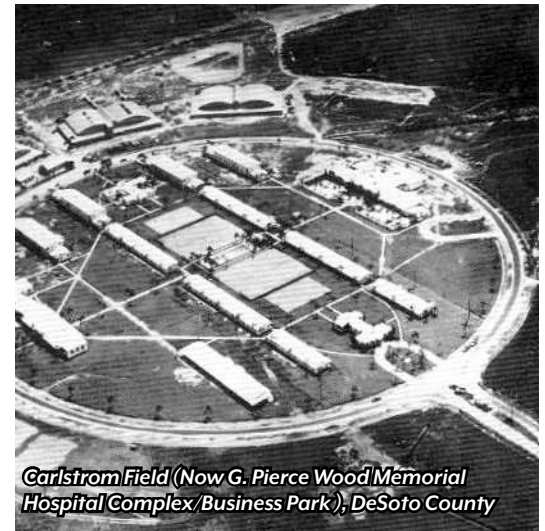
Are you optimistic about Florida's future?



## DeSoto County

### DeSoto County G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital Complex/Business Park

The former G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital Complex consists of 803 acres with approximately 80 existing buildings, air hangers, and a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) permitted grass air-strip. The property was formerly a federal air base, and subsequently a mental health facility and juvenile justice facility; the latter closed in 2011. Site visits were conducted by FHERO, the DeSoto County EDO, and the Florida Polytechnic University in an effort to develop a list of appropriate uses and private interest in the site's redevelopment. Preliminary marketing plans are being developed, and further legislative initiatives are anticipated with regard to the site's long-term use.



*Carlstrom Field (Now G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital Complex/Business Park); DeSoto County*

## Hardee County

### TechRiver Technology Park

The TechRiver Technology Park is the result of the Hardee County IDA's effort to promote the growth of the technology industry in the Central Florida Region. The building was purchased and renovated by the IDA. The site has 500 MGS of broadband, and a multitude of power supplied from the grid, substation, and generator, making it virtually impossible to lose power. TechRiver is home to startups and small businesses, and offers entrepreneurship classes and workshops to the community in order to attract new talent and create jobs for the region's residents. The campus also features community co-working areas used for collaboration. TechRiver's future partners include Microsoft, Oracle, HP, and Cisco. TechRiver University, is located in the Technology Park off of US 17 in Wauchula.

### Hardee County Commerce Park

The Hardee County Commerce Park is a 160-acre shovel-ready manufacturing and light industrial incentivized development located in north central Hardee County. It is fully supplied with all utilities, including broadband availability. It is managed by the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority. The Commerce Park also houses a Sheriff's Office Substation. The Park is within close proximity to rail as well as two major highways, making the location ideal for goods and supply movement.



*TechRiver Technology Park, Hardee County*

## Highlands County

### Sebring Multimodal Logistics Center and Business Park

The purpose of the RAO (Rural Area of Opportunity) Catalyst Project is to target future industries, locate regional catalyst sites, and improve the sites to meet industry or target company needs, making each site a credible economic asset. Sites must be shovel-ready, infrastructure-ready, and readily developable. The Sebring Regional Airport (now the Sebring Multimodal Logistics Center) and Business Park property was selected as a catalyst site, and houses a 2,000-acre business park. Tenants include manufacturing and production businesses, aerospace, and multimodal activities to include air, roads, and rail. In addition, the planned extension of one of the runways will reduce or eliminate load limitations and allow the airport to be marketed to larger aircraft. The entire footprint of the airport is a designated Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ), making it attractive to importers/exporters and site locating. The complex also includes a fuel tank farm, adjacent industrial park, hotel, and Sebring International Raceway.

RAO  
Catalyst  
Project



## Okeechobee County

### Okeechobee Commerce Center/Okeechobee County Airport Area

The Okeechobee Commerce Center is a 124 acre industrial park owned by the City of Okeechobee. It sits next to the CSX rail line and is located near US 441. The Commerce Center has full infrastructure on the site, including high speed internet. Included in this opportunity area is the Okeechobee County Airport and Industrial Park, located in unincorporated Okeechobee County. The airport consists of 852 acres, including the airfield and the Industrial Park. Easy access to the airport is available from US 98 and US 441. The Industrial Park is home to several active businesses as well as a County-owned Incubator consisting of three 4,500 square foot bays.

## Polk County

### Polk Gateway

The Gateway Area in Polk County centers around the Central Florida Intermodal Logistics Center (or CSX ILC). Properties include Clear Springs, a sector plan with approved industrial and research and development entitlements for over 17 million square feet. It also includes CSX land surrounding the ILC, with over 1,800 acres of industrial and business park future land use that lies within this key logistics center area. The facility provides a centralized hub for transportation, logistics and distribution serving Orlando, Tampa and other regional Florida markets. The 318-acre intermodal terminal has capacity to process up to 300,000 containers a year and is designed for scalable expansion as freight volumes continue to grow. The development is expected to have a \$10 billion economic impact over ten years. Near the Polk Gateway area is the Lake Wales Commerce and Technology Park, a 25-acre site two miles south of Lake Wales along US-27. Originally a public-private partnership, the Park is now privately owned and is currently home to Merlin, the parent company to LEGOLAND Florida Resort, as well as a winery and an equipment manufacturing company. The Park is ideal for light manufacturing, distribution, or other diverse industries as a large investment was made to provide infrastructure including roads and utilities to the site.



### Florida Polytechnic University/Polk Commerce Center Area

Florida Polytechnic University is the state's newest university, and the only public polytechnic university in the state. The university collaborates with high-tech corporate organizations to assist with research and provide internship opportunities. Partners include Microsoft, Lockheed Martin, Cisco, and Mosaic. The University also has a partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Included in the Opportunity area is the Polk Commerce Center, just east of the University, where infrastructure is in place to accommodate business park growth. The area includes SunTrax, a research, development, and testing facility for emerging transportation technologies; and the Florida Industrial and Phosphate Research Institute (FIPR).

### Lakeland Linder Regional Airport/West Lakeland Area

Located in Polk County, the Lakeland Linder Regional Airport is comprised of 1,742 acres, 1 million square feet of leasable space, and more than 250 acres available for development. The airport currently houses tenants in aviation and defense contracting, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). It is also the home of Sun 'n Fun International Fly-In and Expo, the Central Florida Aerospace Academy, and Polk State College Aerospace. A new intermodal center will provide for shipment of products nationwide and globally. West Lakeland is home to a growing logistics industry with over 7 million square feet allocated for logistics.



## Central Florida Region Impact

### Americas Gateway in Glades County & Airlglades Airport in Hendry County

Americas Gateway Logistics Center will be a master-planned, mixed-use, integrated logistics center comprising 770 acres near Moore Haven in Glades County, and will include advanced manufacturing operations, distribution centers, an intermodal center, and other transportation/logistics and service-related facilities. The Center will serve as an export and import hub for emerging markets in Latin America as well as Asian markets via the Port of Miami, Port Everglades, Port Manatee, Port of Palm Beach, and international airports including the developing Airlglades Airport proposed to be a cargo hub in Hendry County. Although not located in the EDD's region, this project will impact the entire Central Florida area.

## Regionwide Energy Investments & Opportunities

Investment in energy continues to increase in the region. The region has considerable potential for the production of solar energy given the area's many annual hours of sunshine, and has an abundance of compatible land for solar as well as other types of energy production, especially with the suitability of certain agricultural crops with some types of energy production. The DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center, operated by Florida Power and Light, opened in October 2009 as the largest solar photovoltaic plant in the country. The City of Lakeland in Polk County is home to five Solar Farms. Additionally, in Okeechobee, Florida Power & Light will build and operate the Okeechobee Clean Energy Center, which will be a high-efficiency power-generating facility fueled by clean natural gas. Fort Meade in Polk County is home to Renewable Energy Group's demonstration plant, which produces biodiesel by fermenting renewable cellulosic sugars from sources such as agricultural waste. Planning continues for alternative fuel projects in Highlands County as United States EnviroFuels, LLC. is currently in the process of developing a 20 million gallon per year sugar based ethanol plant, using sweet sorghum as the primary feedstock, and sugar cane when sorghum isn't available. U.S. EcoGen, LLC, has plans to develop a biomass electricity generation facility in Fort Meade, Polk County. The location is ideal due to its size, location, and competitively priced agricultural lands for growing biomass fuel.

**More information on the contents of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Central Florida may be found in the CEDS Data Document at [www.cfrpc.org/CEDS/](http://www.cfrpc.org/CEDS/) including:**

### **Regional Economic Development**

- > Florida 2030 Community Survey - Town Hall Meetings

### **Economic Resilience**

- > Action Plan Strategies
- > CEDS Committee

### **State and Local Economic Development Plans**

### **Performance Measures (Six Pillars) & Monitoring**

- > Average Annual Wage
- > High School Graduation Rates
- > Gross Domestic Product
- > Bed Tax Collections
- > Trade Export
- > Population Counts and Projections
- > Populations Estimates
- > Annual Building Permits
- > Vehicle Miles Traveled per Lane Mile
- > Average Annual Unemployment Rates
- > Employment by Industry
- > Wages by Industry
- > Registered Nonprofit Organizations (501(c)(3) only)
- > Per Capita Income
- > House Cost Index
- > Persons Living in Poverty

### **Shift-Share Analysis**

### **Location Quotient Analysis**





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