

North Florida's Regional Future



The Reubin O'D.
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North Florida's Regional Future



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INTRODUCTION

On September 22, 2001, the Public Policy Institute of Marion County, Central Florida Community College and the Reubin O'D. Askew Institute at the University of Florida sponsored a program that addressed various aspects of North Central Florida's past and future growth and development. Citizens from Marion County, joined by Representatives Dennis Baxley and Ed Jennings, discussed the growth and development of the North Central Florida region. They also discussed the ways in which that growth could be channeled to enhance job opportunities for residents and improve the quality of life.

Professor Lance deHaven-Smith of Florida State University provided a historical, economic, and political perspective on these developments. In his presentation, he noted that growth has often overwhelmed certain communities in Florida, and other communities needed to be careful about what they wished for. Growth, as he observed, did not always mean an improvement in the quality of life and in economic opportunities for citizens. He noted that the North Central Florida region had grown significantly in the past two decades but that much of that growth had occurred in Ocala and Gainesville. The challenge, he commented, was for the region to shape that growth by planning for the kind of growth it desired and then providing the infrastructure to sustain it.

Dr. deHaven-Smith's presentation provided the basis for the subsequent discussion that involved all participants. That discussion was lively and generated various opinions on whether and how counties in the region could effectively work together and what the benefits of such collaborations would be. The following sections provide readers with a brief history of the region, the general discussion, and the recommendations of the group.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION GROUPS AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Each of the groups began by assessing the opportunities and challenges facing the North Central Florida region. There were several commonalities among the groups: all agreed that the growing elder population provides a wealth of knowledge and experience that is beneficial to many communities in the region. The available labor pool presents an opportunity for economic expansion in the area, although many participants argued that there was a need for increased training to upgrade workers' skills. The higher education system is excellent and will be key to assisting business and industry in taking advantage of new trends in technology and health care as well as in training workers. Location was also considered important. As the gateway to South Florida, the central Florida counties have the opportunity to capture the interest of many organizations interested in the state.

The geography of the area and the broad expanse of land were viewed as opportunities. Unlike the more crowded counties to the south, North Central Florida counties have space to plan growth, preserve environmentally sensitive areas and designate public areas for community recreation. Finally, the health care system, especially in Alachua and Marion counties, is excellent and provides many opportunities for growth.

Most participants found it easier to identify challenges to the North Central region than to outline opportunities for the region. Each of the groups feared a crisis in public funding. The shrinking state budget coupled with tax exemptions for seniors and agricultural lands make it difficult for counties, especially the most rural counties, to raise public money to pay for items such as infrastructure maintenance and expansion, public transportation and the basic needs of a growing population. All the groups considered waste and water management a problem. A number of participants expressed concern about the lack of a state water plan and feared that the more populous counties to the south would "steal" water from the region. The lack of a regional airport was also seen as a significant drag on economic development.

Many North Central Florida residents perceive gated communities as a serious problem. Many participants expressed concern that these communities isolated elders from larger community issues and created obstacles for seniors to share their wisdom and experience with the larger community. One participant added,

however, that the developer of a gated community in Marion County was actively providing ways for the residents to participate in the civic life of Ocala and that other developers were watching to see if this effort reduced the isolation of the residents.

While the basic health care system is good, many participants were concerned that availability of different levels of care varied in the region. As the region's elders age, there will be a need for more specially trained doctors and nurses as well as additional home care, assisted living, and nursing homes. The availability of these services in the most rural areas is in need of updating.

Education was a concern to all the groups. Many participants thought that the schools were doing a poor job of educating students for available jobs as well for the

jobs of the future. At times a vicious circle is created: students do not work hard in school because there are few high paying jobs, and businesses avoid the area because the workers tend to be marginally educated with low-skills. Students who do want to succeed often leave the area. Their departure creates a brain drain which North Central Florida cannot afford.

Finally, everyone agreed the North Central Florida counties need to work together. Cooperation on broad concepts has been impossible to sustain in part because political organizations do not exist to support such cooperation on a multi-county basis. However, many participants felt that working together on two or three issues that affect all counties in the region would be helpful to building a vision for the future.

The following recommendations are directed to community leaders and government officials in North Central Florida:

1. Begin to develop a unified vision and cooperative strategy to reach regional goals. The North Central Florida counties will be much more effective if they can work together and provide a unified voice in Tallahassee and Washington. This strategy should be based on the general goal of preserving and enhancing the quality of life in North Central Florida.
2. Explore new ways of financing local government services so that local governments can better meet community needs in education, transportation and infrastructure development. Growth is currently outstripping the capacity of many communities to pay for needed services. Regional efforts to obtain more federal funds should be part of this plan.
3. Find ways to attract higher wage jobs, perhaps through focusing on existing strengths such as the health care industry and higher education, including research spin-offs in medicine and information technology. Coalitions with the private sector are essential to this effort.
4. Improve the educational system so that residents have access to the best educational services in K-12. Lifelong learning opportunities should also be enhanced to update job skills and to encourage civic participation. County school boards in the region should be encouraged to work together to provide a wide range of services at the lowest cost.
5. Pay special attention to water and waste management. As state needs for water grow, the North Central Florida counties must work together to ensure that any plans for redistribution of water do not harm the region's continued growth as well as its natural beauty. In addition, better plans are critically needed for waste management.
6. Find ways to improve communication on an ongoing basis between city and county governments and school boards, the private sector, educational institutions and other stakeholders.
7. Work with existing health care providers to enhance the availability of all types of services for seniors.
8. Increase professionalism in local governments and work together to increase the pool of qualified leaders. Cities and counties should also provide opportunities for continued education for office holders. They should also work to increase opportunities for all citizens to participate in the civic life of their communities.
9. Focus on one important project, such as the regional airport, which, if successful, could be a prototype for additional regional cooperative efforts in the future.

KEY ISSUES FACING FLORIDA AND THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION

BY DAVID R. COLBURN AND LYNN LEVERTY

Historical Background:

What a century! In 1900 most Floridians lived within fifty miles of the Georgia border in what was largely a rural, agricultural, and frontier-like society. Jacksonville was the largest city with 28,249 residents and Pensacola stood a distant second with 17,747. Miami was a mere village with 1,681 residents.

As late as 1940, Florida was still the smallest state in the South with a population of 1,897,414, making it smaller than Mississippi or South Carolina. The state had grown dramatically in the previous forty years, but its political, social and economic culture had evolved little during that time. With the world on the verge of war, there was little indication that Florida would be fundamentally changed by it.

Although the state's development was probably inevitable given its semi-tropical climate, its economic potential, and its lush environment, substantial growth did not occur until World War II when the federal government poured massive funds into the state, and over 2,000,000 men and women arrived for military training. Those who came to Florida liked what they saw. A young Virginian, Dan Moody, captured that sentiment when he wrote home to his parents after arriving in Miami Beach on January 29, 1944 and being housed in the Hotel Blackstone. "Mother, this is the most beautiful place that I have ever seen . . . I really think when the war is over, I'll move down here." He would not be alone.

Population Growth:

During the sixty years from 1940 to 2000, Florida has been transformed and is only barely recognizable as the state that languished behind the region during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In one of the more astonishing growth curves in the 20th century, Florida's population increased from 1.9 million in 1940 to 15.9 million in 2000, an average increase per year of 232,000 people - or the equivalent of adding a city the size of Boca Raton every year. Today, as a result, Florida is the most urbanized state in the South, the fourth largest state in the nation, one of the country's three most urbanized states, and one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the United States.

Florida is a place of unusual variety. And the way it harmonizes this diversity, adjusts to the demographic developments of the 21st century, and intersects with the new-world order of the twenty-first century is what stimulates so much interest in the state. According to *The New York Times*, Florida is one of the bellwether states in the nation with demographics that will epitomize most states in the 21st century and that politicians and economists watch closely to understand changes that will influence the rest of the nation.

Florida's dramatic growth is expected to continue well into the 21st century:

Nat'l Rank	Population	Year
4	16,900,000	2005
4	17,836,377	2010
3	20,710,000	2020

What intrigues historians, demographers, and political scientists about Florida is the way it responds to the needs and concerns of its dynamic and divergent population, and the way it creates one out of the many who choose to settle here.

Urban Growth:

Florida's urban communities remain the focus of much of this growth. Between 1940 and 1990, of the ten fastest growing cities in the nation, five were in Florida:

Rank/Metro area	1940 pop	1990 pop	Change
2 Sarasota-Bradenton	42,204	489,483	1,059.8%
3 West Palm Beach	79,989	863,518	979.5%
5 Miami-Ft. Lauderdale	307,533	3,192,582	938.1%
6 Orlando	129,752	1,224,852	844.0%
10 Tampa-St. Petersburg	291,622	2,067,959	609.1%

Population projections indicate that Florida's urban communities will continue to lead the state's dramatic growth well into the 21st century. The West Palm Beach-Boca Raton area is expected to experience the sharpest rise of any of the top-50 metropolitan areas, climbing 11 positions from 48th in 1995 to 37th in 2020.

Although North Central Florida counties were smaller in size than those in central and south Florida, their growth rate in many cases has rivaled that of central and south Florida.

County	1940 pop.	2000 pop.	Change
Marion	31,243	258,916	828.7%
Clay	6,468	140,814	2187.2%
Alachua	38,607	217,955	564.5%
Lake	27,255	210,528	772.4%
Citrus	5,846	118,085	2019.9%

Several counties in the region, however, have seen few changes despite the state's population boom. These counties have retained their agricultural base, for the most part, and have struggled to redefine their place in this dramatically changing state.

County	1940 pop.	2000 pop.	Change
Levy	12,550	34,450	274.5%
Putnam	18,698	70,423	376.6%
Sumter	1,577	53,345	338.1%

By the year 2000, fewer than half the state's residents had lived in Florida prior to 1970, and more Floridians had been born in New York than in any other state, excluding Florida. Consequently, Floridians have little sense of their own identity, and few issues unite them as a people. The residents of Orlando, for example, believe they have little in common with those who reside in Miami or in Tallahassee. Tourism and the mega-theme parks shape the world-view of Orlandoans. Latino residents of Miami similarly have little sense of north Florida and its residents and see them as potential enemies rather than as neighbors. Moreover, few Latinos share much in common. The large Cuban population dominates the region, but southeast Florida has many Latino people from Haiti, Nicaragua, Brazil, Colombia, etc.

The absence of a statewide identity occasionally reaches the trivial in the state. One humorist commented that Floridians are so divided that they cannot even agree about the design of their license plate.

Population Diversity:

The rapid transition from a state that was predominantly southern to one that is increasingly diverse helps explain in part the perceptions of whites. Only one hundred years ago, most Floridians came from Georgia, Alabama or South Carolina, and they resided within 50 miles of the Georgia-Alabama border. Less than a century later, a majority of the 15.9 million Floridians live closer to the Caribbean than to Georgia, and these newcomers are a heterogeneous lot by any measure. People from throughout the United States and the Western Hemisphere have discovered Florida in just the past half-century. A sociologist describes Floridians as different and as vibrant as a patchwork quilt, but that diversity has never been as significant or as important as it is today.

The history of modern Florida is the story of millions of individuals and groups who migrated or immigrated to Florida in search of freedom and economic opportunity. In many ways, Florida offered the same promise of starting over as the great American West did. People from the Caribbean and Central America presently constitute 16.8 percent of the population, of which Cuban Americans constitute half that number. Florida is one of six states, along with California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois that receive more than 90 percent of the immigrants, legal and illegal, who enter into the United States each year.

In the next millennium, Florida's population is expected to continue its dramatic growth, and notions of what it means to be a Floridian will continue to change. Florida's Latino population, now at 16.8 percent (slightly over 2.5 million people), is projected to

reach 24 percent (or nearly 5,000,000 people) in 2025. The state's black population, currently at 14.6 percent (2.2 million people), is projected to increase to 17 percent (3,554,000 people) in 2025.

Central Florida counties have experienced both an increase and decline in the percent of residents of color. All eight counties have experienced an increase in the number of Hispanic residents; over the last ten years these increases range from 1% in Citrus county to 4% in Sumter county. Despite this growth, all of these counties are far below the statewide average of 16.8% for Hispanic residents. On the other hand, only three counties (Alachua, Citrus and Clay) have registered any increase in African-American residents, and these increases are quite small (.1% to 1.5%). The remaining five counties have seen a decrease in the percent of African-American residents that ranges from 2.5% in Sumter county to 1% in Marion, Lake, Levy and Putnam. In the 2000 census, only two counties, Alachua (19.3%) and Putnam (17%), exceed the state average for African-Americans (14.6% of the population). Central Florida counties tend to be less diverse than the state as a whole, and projections for the future indicate they will remain so.

Florida as a Retirement Haven:

One of the most significant demographic developments in Florida in the past thirty years has been the growth of its retirement population. The emergence of a large and dynamic senior population has been unfolding rapidly in Florida during the past thirty years. Seniors represented only 6.9 percent of Florida's population in 1940. Four decades later that figure had leapt forward to 17.3 percent. By 1990, ten of eleven of the nation's most senior counties and fifteen of the top nineteen could be found in Florida. Florida currently has the second largest percentage of senior citizens (beyond only West Virginia) in the United States, with 18.5 percent or more than 2.8 million people over 65. Florida's retirement community in 1998 is, in fact, larger than the population of seventeen states in the United States.

Traditionally a place of youth and beauty, Florida has more recently become a state for growing old and dying. It is a sea change in the way the nation views Florida and in the way Florida sees itself. The consequence of this change has extended even to business. Eastern Airlines, for example, delayed its bankruptcy by delivering coffins from southeast Florida to various parts of the United States, and Delta Airlines transported over 40,000 coffins in 1998.

Seniors first came to Florida because of the appeal of the weather, the environment, low taxes, and relatively cheap property. The weather and the environment offered them a lifestyle that enhanced their senior years, and the tax structure enabled most to live comfortably on their fixed, retirement incomes. Seniors have generally settled along the southeast or southwest coast of Florida, with the Sarasota-St. Petersburg region being the most popular. H. Irwin Levy, a West Palm Beach attorney, observed the growing number of seniors in his area and launched the massive Century Village. Built on 685 acres of land in 1968, Century Village became the model for other retirement villages throughout south Florida in the 1970's in which as many as 10,000 retirees lived together.

The historian Gary Mormino reminds us "No society had ever confronted or conceived a future in which a large part of its

population lived for two or more decades after they stopped working.” The state’s seniors are currently larger by comparison than that of seventeen states. Their sheer numbers give them an influence that few other age groups can match.

Moreover, seniors exercise enormous political muscle in Florida because they vote in much larger numbers than other constituent groups. The U.S. Census Bureau and Division of Elections found in the 1998 elections that seniors constituted 18 percent of the state’s population, 24 percent of the voting age population, and 27 percent of the state’s registered voters. Political Scientist Susan MacManus recently observed that exit surveys of the 1998 gubernatorial election revealed that seniors represented 32 percent of all voters. And when those 60 and older were lumped together, they represented a staggering 42 percent of the voters. The challenge facing Florida is to get seniors to look beyond their own self-interest and support the needs of the rest of society.

In the North Central Florida region, elders constitute an even larger percentage of the population. In Marion County, for example, the US Census Bureau estimates that 64,751 senior citizens lived in the county in 2000. This number is expected to increase to 83,782 by 2010. Similar increases are projected for virtually all the central Florida counties.

Comparison of the 85 and Older Population from 1990-2000

	1990	2000	Change
Alachua	1,642	2,500	52.3%
Citrus	1,807	3,738	48.3%
Clay	872	1,382	58.5%
Lake	3,239	5,694	56.8%
Levy	299	533	78.3%
Marion	2,588	5,443	110.3%
Putnam	753	1,033	72.8%
Sumter	393	871	45.1%
FLORIDA	210,110	331,287	57.7%

Florida’s Children:

Almost lost in these demographic changes and their significance for the state’s future have been Florida’s children. Florida’s teenage population growth has, in fact, expanded at a rate that exceeds that for seniors in the past decade. During the 1990s, the state’s teen population grew by 35 percent as compared to 18 percent for seniors. Florida’s 1.2 million teen population places the state fourth behind California, Texas, and New York and is larger than that for all six New England states combined. Projections for the next twenty years suggest that the teenage population will continue to expand in Florida, reaching nearly 2 million. As a proportion of the population, Florida’s child and youth population was the second highest nationally (behind only Nevada) during the past fifteen years. Moreover, between 2000 and 2015, the number of teenagers

and young adults (those between 14 and 24) is expected to increase by 23 percent. These are statistics that very few Floridians are aware of because of concerns about the graying of Florida.

In the rush to address the needs of seniors, Florida’s political leaders have only recently paused to weigh the needs of its children. While the future of seniors offers serious challenges to the state, the educational and demographic situation for the state’s children presents an ominous window into the future. In 1995, Florida ranked among the bottom ten states in the nation in a host of categories that dealt with the well-being of children. From death rates for children (ranked 8th) to violent death rates for teens (ranked 4th) to arrest rates for juveniles (ranks 3rd), Florida children and teenagers were a generation at great risk. The poverty figures and health needs of these children further underscored this dismal picture. Florida ranked 7th nationally in the rate of children in extreme poverty and 7th in the rate of children without health insurance. Added to these statistics, the state ranked 3rd in the rate of single-parent families, 1st in the rate of high school dropouts, 4th in the number of teenagers who were not in school and not working, and 5th in the rate living in high dropout neighborhoods.

Since 1995, the administrations of Governors Lawton Chiles and Jeb Bush have invested heavily in the Healthy Start, Healthy Kids, and Healthy Family initiatives. According to the 2000 National Kids Count Data Book, Florida now ranks 35th in the nation on a composite of ten key indicators of child health, family security, education, and youth well-being, up from 40th in 1995 and from 48th in 1994. Florida can take little pride in its standing among its sister states, however, since its per capita income ranks 20th in the nation.

Central Florida counties share in the struggle to assist children living in poverty. Of our eight counties, only one, Clay County, is above the state average (21.8%) for the percent of children living in poverty. In Sumter County 32 % of children live in poverty, followed by 31.5 % in Putnam County, 29 % in Levy County, 26.7 % in Marion County, 25.6 % in Citrus County, 23 % in Alachua County, and 22.7 % in Lake County. The children’s poverty rate is exacerbated by the fact that many of these children and their families live in rural areas where services are often harder to access and may cost more to provide.

Moreover, public education continues to frustrate parents, business leaders, and legislators. Floridians of all stripes complain repeatedly that the shortcomings in the state’s educational system have severely limited Florida’s economic advancement. In an era of high technology and expanding global trade, businesspeople argue that Florida is being held back by a floundering educational system that leaves many young people with insufficient skills to contribute to this new economy. Educational statistics have underscored their concerns. Florida ranks near the bottom of the nation in the graduation rate of students and among the lowest on student achievement test scores on national examinations.

Despite these major initiatives, Florida currently ranks 31st nationally in funding per student. Too many teachers, especially those in mathematics and science have no degree or specialization in those fields. Moreover, many children continue to be taught in portable classrooms although recently enacted laws should cause these facilities to meet higher safety standards.

Identifying and resolving the principal problems with Florida’s

public schools continues to confound even the experts. Most agree that there are a host of factors which, when combined, would cause educational problems anywhere in the world. The increase in single parent households and the high rate of poverty among such families, experts note, undermine educational support for children at home and parent involvement in the schools. Middle and upper class children traditionally do well in school, because they receive strong encouragement and support from their parents at home and have many other advantages associated with their parents' income.

The educational challenges facing the state have been compounded by the high rate of mobility in Florida. Children switch schools when parents relocate. Thus teachers must struggle to integrate new arrivals into their classrooms, only to find them departing the school three months later.

How, then, are Florida's public schools to be made accountable to the communities and state they are supposed to serve? There are no easy answers to Florida's educational problems in the short-term. But there clearly needs to be systematic efforts to improve public education that includes additional funding, teacher and parent accountability, and parent and community involvement in the educational process. Perhaps the worst thing Florida can do is settle for the educational solution of the day. That has been tried frequently in the state's past and has consistently proven unsuccessful.

Economic Growth and Employment:

Florida has continued to see a significant shift away from its agricultural roots as more and more citizens and newcomers move into other areas of economic activity. Florida's non-farm jobs are expected to increase by over thirty percent between 1993 and 2005.

The service economy will continue to predominate in Florida and it will continue to hold salaries below the national average. But income projections for Florida from 1993 to 2005 will place Florida 25th in the nation (\$16,112 in 1993 to \$18,749 in 2005) reflecting the dominance of service-oriented jobs.

Although Florida will continue to have many low-paying jobs, its economy is expected to remain dynamic well into the 21st century. Six of Florida's major regions will be among the top thirty-one in terms of employment expansion.

Projected Employment Growth, 1993-2005

Rank/Metro. Area	1993-2005 Change	1993 (actual)	2005 (proj.)
2 Orlando	42.00%	800,000	1,136,000
3 Sarasota-Brad.	39.03%	269,000	374,000
7 WPB-Boca R.	35.03%	491,000	663,000
11 Tampa-St. Pete	30.25%	1,114,000	1,451,000
21 Jacksonville	25.67%	561,000	705,000
31 Miami-Ft. Laud.	22.51%	1,759,000	2,155,000

In north central Florida, employment will continue to expand, and the region will become less agricultural as more population growth occurs. The projected shift away from agriculture is reflected in the figures below:

	1999	2010	Percent Change
Alachua	118,000	141,100	19.6
Citrus	27,000	36,000	33.8
Clay	37,000	36,000	38.4
Lake	65,700	85,400	30.0
Levy	7,100	8,800	23.9
Marion	83,300	107,700	29.3
Putnam	18,900	22,500	19.0
Sumter	8,500	10,500	23.5

Floridians of all ethnic and racial backgrounds are expected to benefit from the state's economic growth. Economic statistics between 1980 and 1998 reveal that residents prospered during the periods of economic advancement in those two decades. Florida, for example, ranks very high in the number of black (4th), Hispanic (3rd), and women-owned firms (4th).

The only group that has not experienced the advantages of Florida's economic boom is women who head single parent households. Florida ranked 8th nationally in the rate of births to single mothers in 1996, suggesting the severity of the problem for the state. Nationally and statewide, this group of women has been unable to take advantage of the economic growth and has been left further behind as the economy has expanded.

The fastest growing area of the state economy is in global trade, and it also offers the greatest promise for personal income gain among Floridians. Jobs in this sector offer incomes 25 to 33 percent higher than those in the service sector. Miami has led the state in this direction, often being referred to as the *de facto* capital of Latin America and the crossroads of the Americas. There have been some bumps in the road of late, especially with the decline in the microelectronics industry, but Miami and Florida's economic future have begun to meld into the global marketplace. Global trade offers some interesting challenges and opportunities for the state and its citizens.

Conclusion:

The projected demographic trends for the first quarter century indicate that change will continue to be a central part of the Florida experience. Floridians had little understanding of the changes that commenced in 1940 and reshaped their state over the sixty years that followed. As a consequence, they were unable to plan for these changes as well as they might have. That is not the case as we enter the 21st century. Today the demographic trends are well known, but the challenge is no less great. How to plan for the magnitude of these changes and secure the future for the next generation of Floridians is the issue before the state and Florida's North Central region.

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2003

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE 2003 ASKEW MEETING

We hope you will join us beginning the evening of February 13th and ending on the morning of February 15th, 2003. The conference will take place in Gainesville at the University of Florida Hotel and Conference Center on SW 34th Street across from the Harn Art Museum and Florida Museum of Natural History.

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