



Chapter One



The State of the Region

Introduction

Florida Regional Planning Councils must adopt Strategic Regional Policy Plans (SRPP) and update them every ten years. The current ECFRPC SRPP was completed in 1998. A formal update process was begun in 2008 with a series of public information meetings, surveys, subject sounding boards, and staff research.

The *myregion.org* Partnership

The update actually began in 2006, when the ECFRPC, in partnership with *myregion.org*, a private planning foundation created by the Greater Orlando Chamber of Commerce, produced a ground-breaking regional visioning study entitled “How Shall We Grow?” That effort had begun in 1998 with the Chamber asking its members how the region could be globally economically competitive in the 21st century and maintain a high quality of life.

The conversation expanded to what defined the economic region. Initially the sense was that it was Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, but eventually expanded to a seven county economic region (Brevard, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, Volusia and Polk). This region is, with the inclusion of neighbor Polk County to the south, co-terminus with the boundaries of the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council.

After a million dollars of research and six regional studies, *myregion.org* concluded that it was the sprawling development pattern of central Florida that was threatening its quality of life, rapidly destroying its most precious natural resources, and congesting its vital transportation corridors.

And thus began the landmark “How Shall We Grow?” regional visioning process in March 2006. The goal was to widely include the 93 communities of seven counties in a broad discussion of the region’s future development patterns. If the region could come together in a broad consensus to stem its sprawl, protect its natural resources, and improve its transportation system, the hope was the region would be globally competitive with a high quality of life.

From the beginning, “How Shall We Grow” was intended to be the most inclusive citizen participation planning effort ever done in Central Florida (see www.howshallwegrow.org).

This truly was a collaborative effort.

- *myregion.org* was the convening partner;
- Foundation for Better Communities, a non-profit subset of the Chamber, was the primary funding partner;
- ECFRPC was the primary technical planning partner and a funding partner;
- Central Florida Regional Planning Council was also a technical planning partner and a funding partner;
- The Florida Department of Transportation provided consultants for transportation modeling;
- University of Florida’s Geo Plan Center provided “what if?” future land use scenario modeling;
- The Florida Department of Community Affairs was a funding partner;
- Five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MetroPlan Orlando, Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Volusia and Central Florida) all were partners.

From its first kickoff public gathering of over 700 attendees to the final adoption of the regional vision on August 7, 2007, over 20,000 citizens and elected officials were directly involved in 150 public meetings.

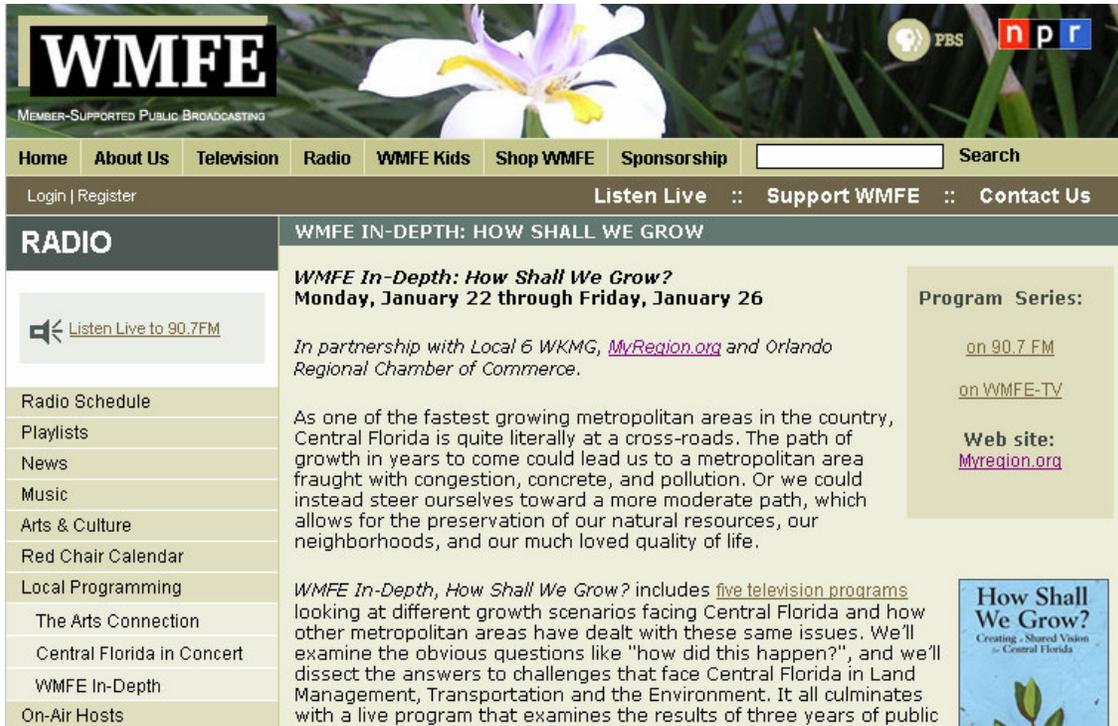
- 30 public participation meetings were held throughout the region, with over 3,000 attendees participating in “development dot” games.



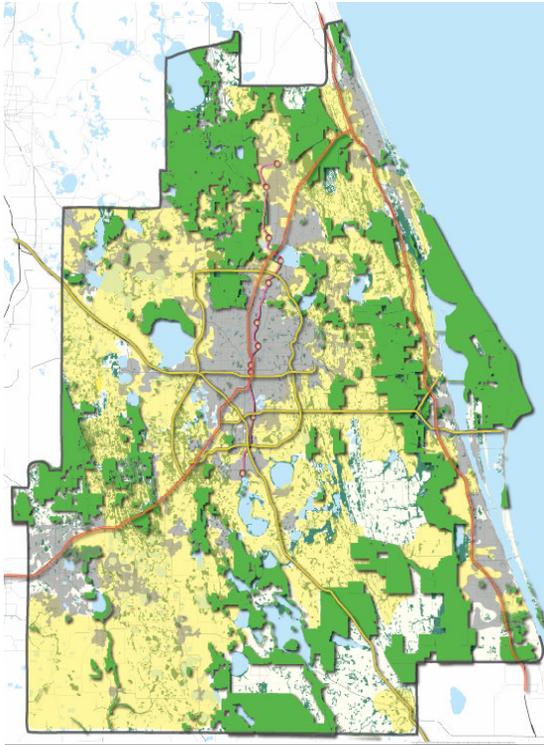
Participants in a “Development Dot game” at Eustis Community Center, May 2006

- Numerous radio and editorial board interviews were given.

- Local public television station WMFE hired a documentary film maker to research and follow the progress of the issues from How Shall We Grow. In January 2007 one hour of public television was aired each night for five consecutive nights in prime time to educate the public about regional growth issues and to enlist them in the debate.



- Four alternative future growth scenarios and their impacts** were displayed and discussed with the strengths and limitations of each alternative compared by a series of indicators. All scenarios allocated 2050 medium regional population (as derived by the Bureau of Economics and Business Research at University of Florida) using LUCIS, a “what if?” software land use and conflict model developed specifically for this purpose by the University of Florida Geo Plan Center.

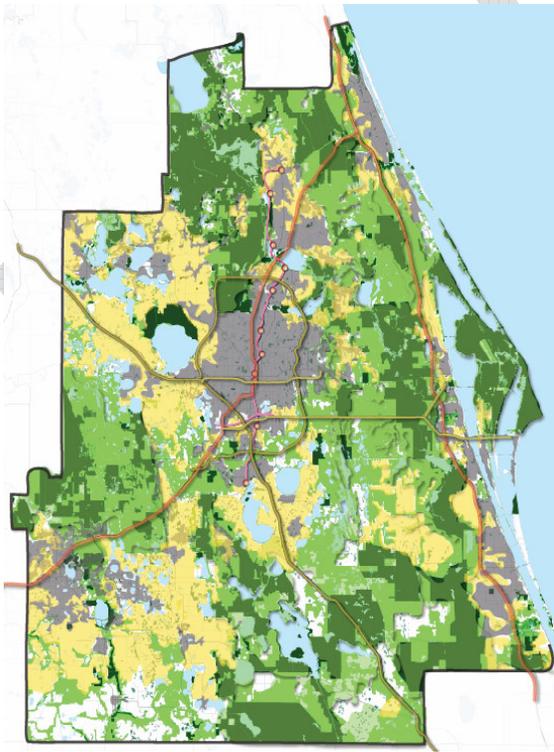


Trend- Continued current development patterns and densities, allowing sprawl to continue into critical ecosystems based upon current practices and demands of the model.

- Urbanizes an additional 2,577 square miles of land by 2050 at a cost of \$148 billion.
- Destroys another 344 square miles of habitat.
- Major population shifts into Polk, Lake and Volusia counties.



How shall We Grow?

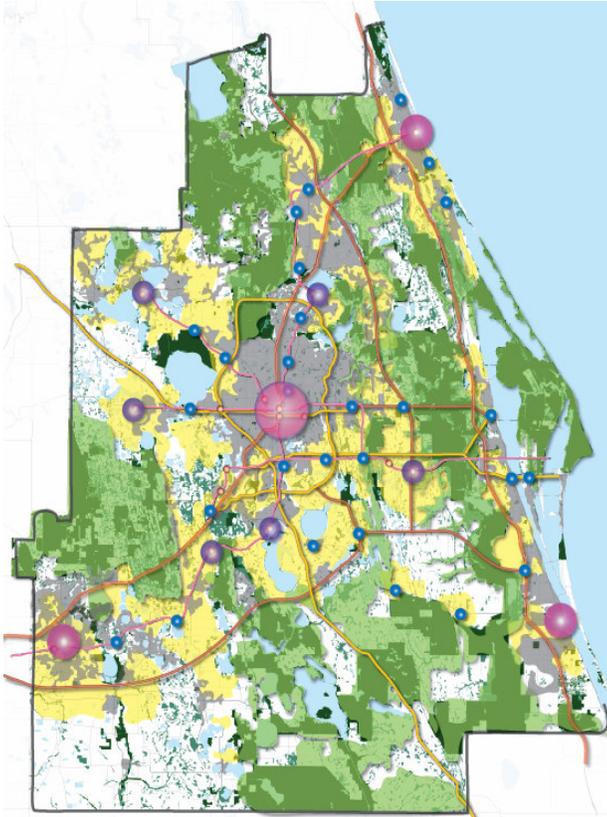


Green Areas- Emphasis was protecting/connecting natural ecosystems. Also provided additional open space where 3000 workshop attendees placed “green dots”.

- Urbanizes an additional 918 square miles of land by 2050 at a cost of \$53 billion.
- Destroys another 45 square miles of habitat.
- Major population shifts into Polk and Lake Counties.

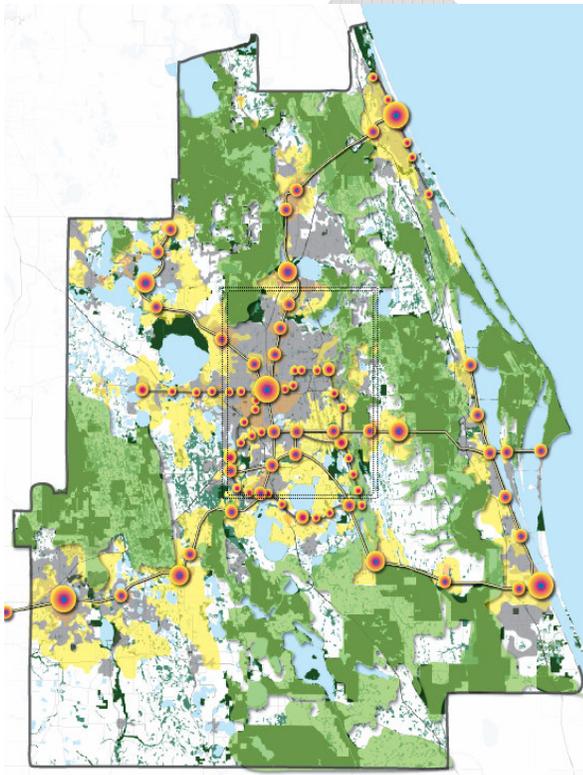


How Shall We Grow?



Centers- Emphasis was on promoting more growth in existing urban centers, keeping critical ecosystem corridors connected, adding some rail transit.

- Urbanizes an additional 844 square miles of land by 2050 at a cost of \$49 billion.
- Destroys another 45 square miles of habitat.
- Adds 370 miles of new toll roads, 282 miles of rail transit
- Opens up sensitive habitat to urban development.

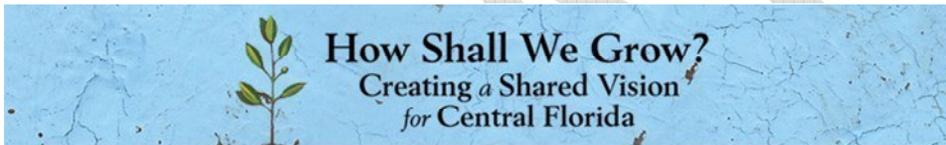


Corridors- Similar to Centers, but also allocated population along high density mixed use rail corridors.

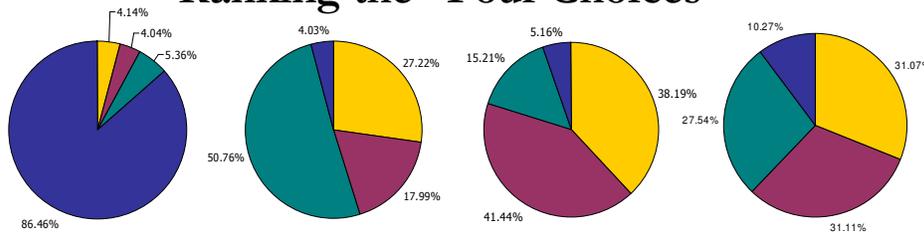
- Urbanizes an additional 660 square miles of land by 2050 at a cost of \$38 billion.
- Saves \$110 billion in unnecessary infrastructure over the Trend.
- Only adds one person per urban acres for an average urban density of 3.15 persons per acre, about what Volusia County is in 2005.
- Destroys an additional 28 square miles of habitat.

- After the final night of television coverage, the audience was asked to go to the internet website www.howshallwegrow.org and select their preferences from the four alternative future growth scenarios. They were also asked to choose which indicators of their region they would prefer.
- 7,319 people selected their preferences on the website, both for the alternative scenarios and the following indicators of growth:

- * Percentage of developed land, 2050
- * Percentage of conserved land, 2050
- * Air Quality, 2050
- * Water Demand, 2050
- * Transportation choices, 2050
- * Commute Times, 2050
- * Economic Impact, 2050



Ranking the “Four Choices”



	Trend	Green Areas	Centers	Corridors
1 st	4.14%	27.22%	38.19%	31.07%
2 nd	4.04%	17.99%	41.44%	31.11%
3 rd	5.36%	50.76%	15.21%	27.54%
4 th	86.46%	4.03%	5.16%	10.27%

- Two results were obvious from the How shall We Grow internet surveys.
 1. There was a clear loser. 96% of those surveyed did not prefer the Trend, the scenario that simulated the continuation of current development patterns and densities to the year 2050.
 2. **None of the three alternative scenarios (Green Areas, Centers, and Corridors) garnered more than 50% of the votes.** Nonetheless, the **Indicators survey clearly showed that the Corridors scenario, combined with the best points from Centers and Conservation, seemed to be the “Consensus Vision” for the future growth over the next 40 years.**

For the 2050 Vision, the preferences (and their scenarios) were:

- Develop the least amount of land (36.4% region) (Corridors)
- Conserve the most natural resources (51.3% region) (Green Areas)
- Attain the best air quality (Centers)
- Reduce water demand (Corridors)
- Provide the most transportation choices (Corridors)
- Have the shortest commute time (Centers)
- Stimulate the most robust economy (Corridors)

For Regional Cooperation, the preferences were:

- Preserve green areas- 65%
- Provide access to education, healthcare, cultural choices - 53%
- Create safe, attractive places to live- 49%
- Create a variety of transportation choices- 52%
- Create a range of housing options- 31 %
- Develop a diverse economy- 43%

An artist combined the best aspects of the alternative scenarios into a 2050 Central Florida Regional Vision.



The intent of the 4C's 2050 Regional Vision is:

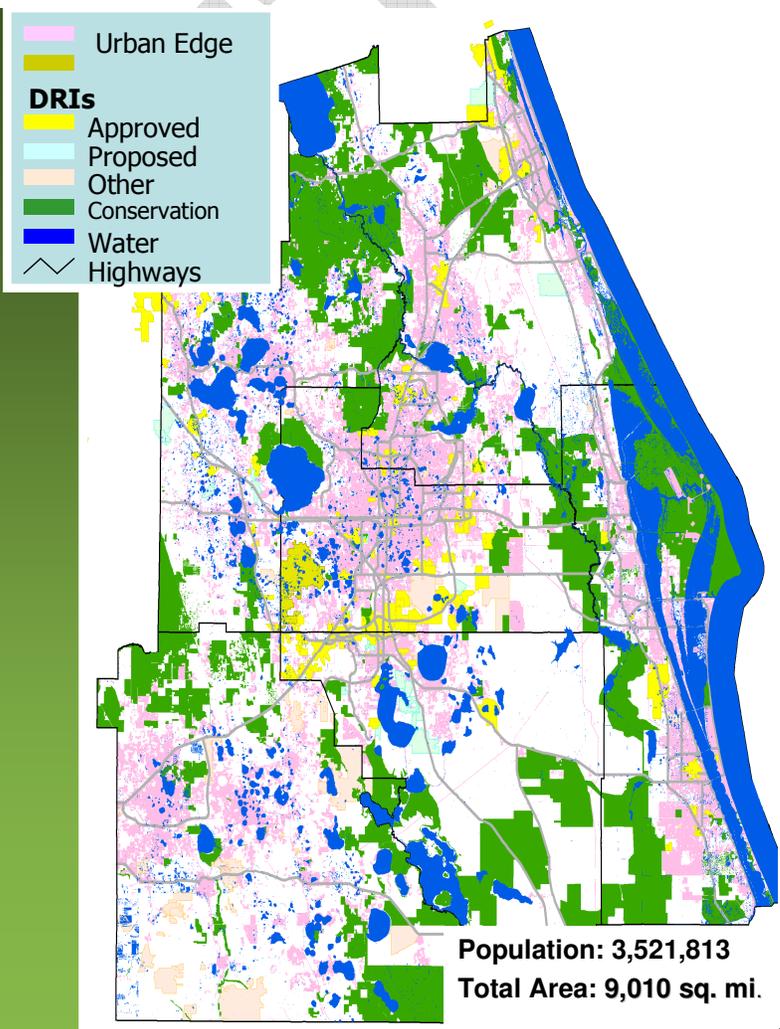
- **Conserve** our most critical natural resources, and do this first.
- Promote more growth in walkable great urban **Centers**, with amenities like parks, live and work neighborhoods, cultural and educational centers all in close proximity.
- Connect major centers with **Corridors** served by a balanced multi modal transportation system of roads, rail transit (commuter rail, light rail, streetcar,) bus rapid transit, bus, bike, pedestrian ways.
- By doing all of the above, take the pressure off **Countryside**, so viable agriculture and open land are still abundant.

The “4C’s (Conservation, Centers, Corridors and Countryside) 2050 Regional Growth Vision” was unanimously adopted by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, by *myregion.org* and by representatives of all 93 central Florida land use jurisdictions.

The State of the Region

Due to the housing and growth slowdown that began in 2007, the extensive analysis done for the How Shall We Grow study is still reasonably current and will be used here and updated appropriately.

The Region 2005 Snapshot	
Urban	2,618 sq. mi. (32%)
Habitat destroyed	394 sq .mi.
Green areas	2,144 sq. mi. (24 %)
Commute	20 min. avg. /person/day
Avg. auto speed	34 mph
Passenger rail	0 mi.
Air quality	1.045 million kg CO
Water consumed	1.02 billion gals/day
Employment	1,963,000
Economy	\$118 billion GRP (2000)
Avg. wage/yr	\$35,617 (2007 \$)



Sour

ces: Geographic and natural resources data: UF Geo Plan Center ; Economic and Employment Data: ECFRPC REMI Policy Insight model; Transportation: HNTB and FDOT; Air Quality: FDEP; Water consumption: SJWMD

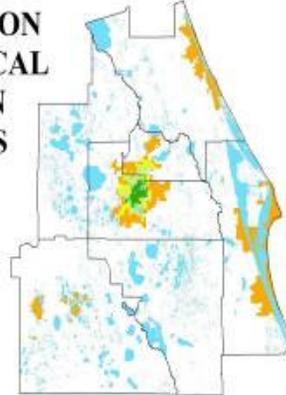
**MY REGION
HISTORICAL
URBAN
EDGES**

Urban Edge
1950's
1960's
1970's



**MY REGION
HISTORICAL
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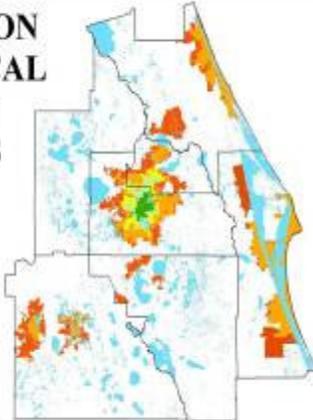
Urban Edge
1950's
1960's
1970's
1980's



The following images depict the urban growth of the region from 1950- 2000.

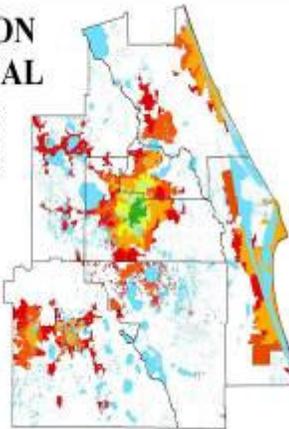
**MY REGION
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1960's
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1990's
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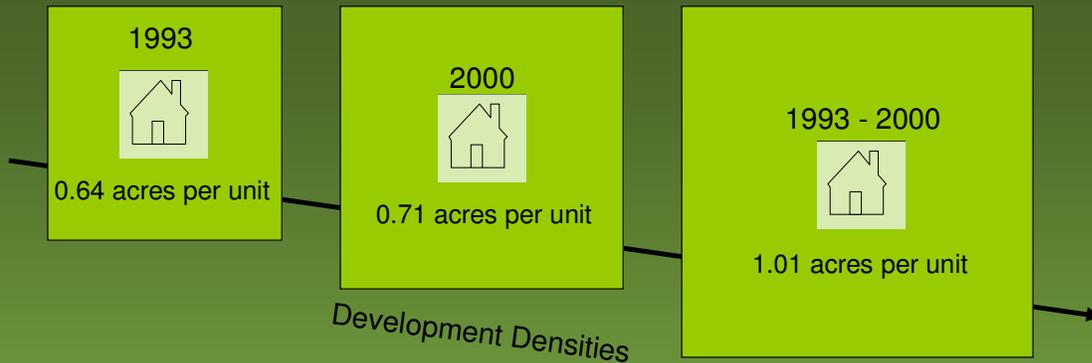


Rapid regional growth has created two kinds of problems:

- the quantity (amount and timing) of growth
- the quality (location and design) of growth.

One obvious development pattern problem throughout central Florida is the low density sprawling pattern of growth. This is the result of residential densities dropping. Many communities required larger lots (lower densities), but builders also sensed a market for larger homes on larger lots during the 1980s, and 90's and continued this trend until the housing bubble burst in 2007.

More land is being consumed by development



As densities grow ever lower, sprawl encroaches on critical natural resources

Some counties have encouraged suburban sprawl by providing water and sewer services in unincorporated areas and zoned for low density suburban development.

Some cities have not behaved like cities by growing in an exclusively residential low density sprawling pattern with no defined core or mixed use downtown.

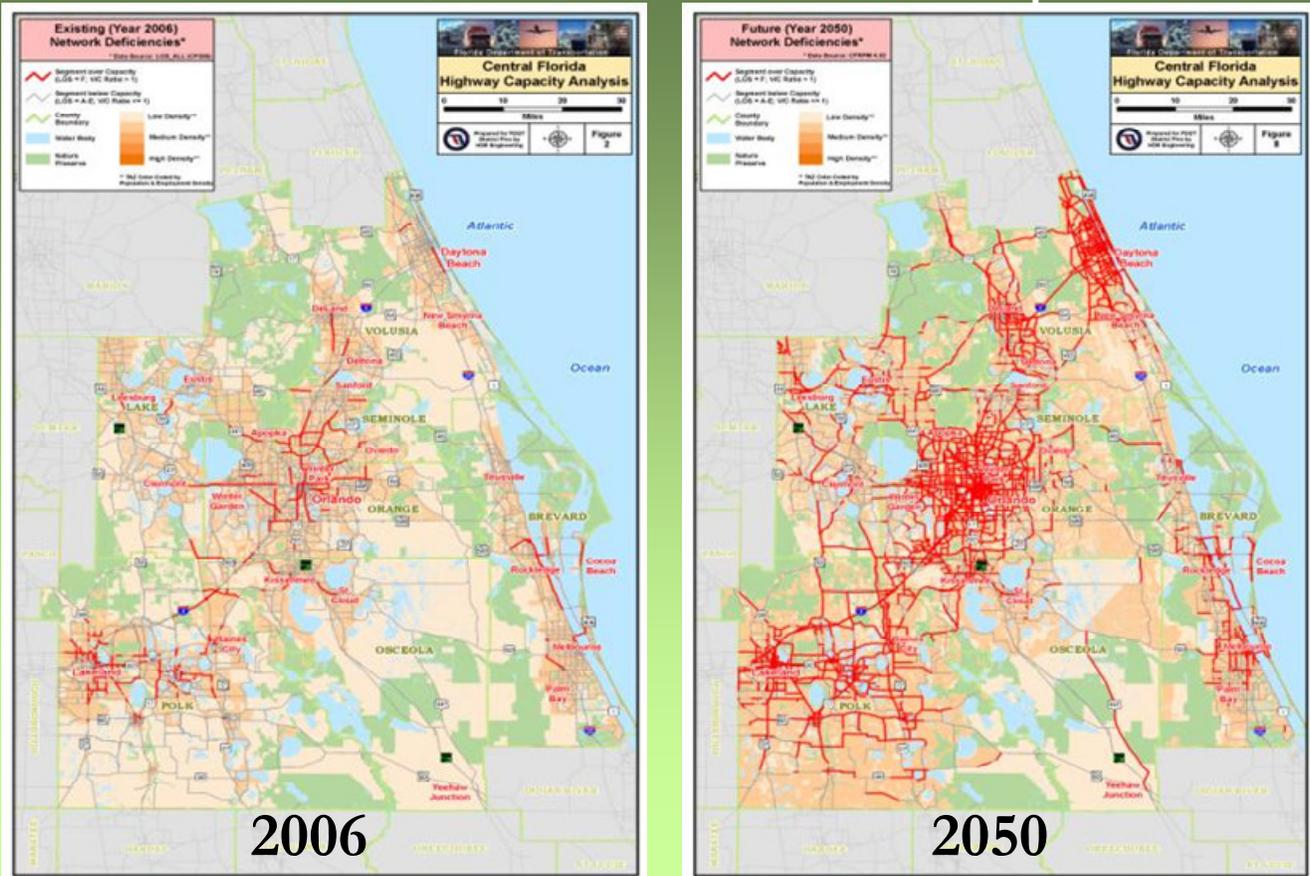
This auto oriented sprawl development pattern, combined with extensive dead end or cul de sac streets, creates intersection failure and leads to traffic congestion.

The following graphic illustrates the negative impact on roads of continuing our current development patterns and densities to 2050.

The roads in red are constrained, meaning severely congested during peak hours.

By 2050 all the regions arterials and collector roads are constrained.

The Trend- the Path We're On . . . In Transportation



State of the Region: Conclusions

- The Regional Vision is a viable alternative, and well supported by over 20,000 directly involved citizens.
- The Regional Vision is a vastly more appropriate growth pattern than the Trend, which is where our current development patterns and densities are taking us.
- The avoidance of 1,917 square miles of unnecessary urban infrastructure by achieving the Vision over the Trend is a real saving of \$110 billion dollars in initial cost and many times that in permanent public maintenance. This is a real regional savings, which could be more properly invested in rail transit and conservation of natural resource lands once an instrument for its capture (such as long term bonding) is created.

- The region must gradually end its low density sprawling development patterns, and emulate the Central Florida 2050 4 C's Regional Vision.
- The challenge for the 2009 East Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan is to create simple compelling policies that will, if universally adopted by its cities and counties and implemented via their local land development regulations, change the regional development patterns.
- The interpretation of that vision by each of 93 jurisdictions in seven counties is a sovereign matter for each community to consider how they want to grow, or even if they want to grow.

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