

# Chapter One



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## Regional Vision to Policy Plan

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### INTRODUCTION

Florida Regional Planning Councils must adopt Strategic Regional Policy Plans (SRPP) and assess and update them every 5 years. The previous East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) policy plan was completed in 1998.

At an ECFRPC retreat at Stetson University in April 2006 the Council discussed its pending Policy Plan update and determined that visioning models and citizen input should be the first steps taken in the development of the Policy Plan update. This decision anticipated that the ECFRPC was about to embark on an 18 month regional visioning process in collaboration with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council, the Brevard, Lake-Sumter, MetroPlan, Volusia, and Polk Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Florida Department of Community Affairs, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce subsidiary *myregion.org*. In addition, the visioning process anticipated the use of sophisticated future development scenario models developed by University of Florida's (UF) Geo Plan Center.



### REGIONAL VISION INFLUENCED SRPP UPDATE

The regional visioning project began in May 2006 as a citizen participation planning effort including elected officials, residents, and businesses in 93 communities across seven counties. Over the next 18 months more than 20,000 people attended 150 public meetings. Thirty of those 150 meetings were active participation workshops where more than 3,000 attendees participated in playing

“Development Dot” games regarding preservation of natural resources, development patterns, densities, and future transportation networks.

More than 65,000 development intensity dots were placed on a base map, which was mapped by the University of Florida Geo Plan Center (Figure 1).

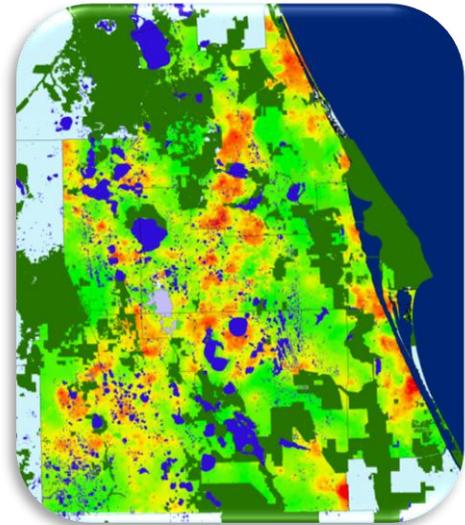
Visioning participants almost universally declined to draw new roads but were eager to draw future transit routes (Figure 2). Figures 1 and 2 showed three themes.

- Centers- strong preference to promote development in centers
- Corridors - establish high density transit corridors
- Conservation- conserve green space

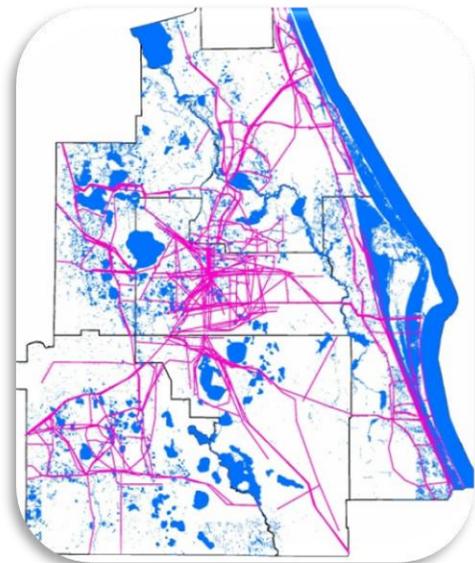
These three themes are a marked change from the current regional pattern of low density sprawl. The result of such a shift in development patterns would ultimately be the retention of large areas of green space, the preservation of sensitive ecosystems and migratory animal corridors, and redevelopment of current urban centers. The visioning groups confirmed they wanted to see model results for these three themes.

Four alternative future growth scenarios (Trend, Conservation, Centers, Corridors) and their impacts were developed and discussed with the strengths and limitations of each alternative compared by a series of indicators.

Using the UF Geo Plan LUCIS software model, all four scenarios spatially allocated a 2050 population as projected by the UF Bureau of Economics and Business Research (“medium projections”). Traffic impacts were modeled by consultant HNTB using the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Florida Standard Urban Transportation Modeling System (FSUTMS) model. Economic impacts were modeled by ECFRPC using the Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) Policy Insight model.

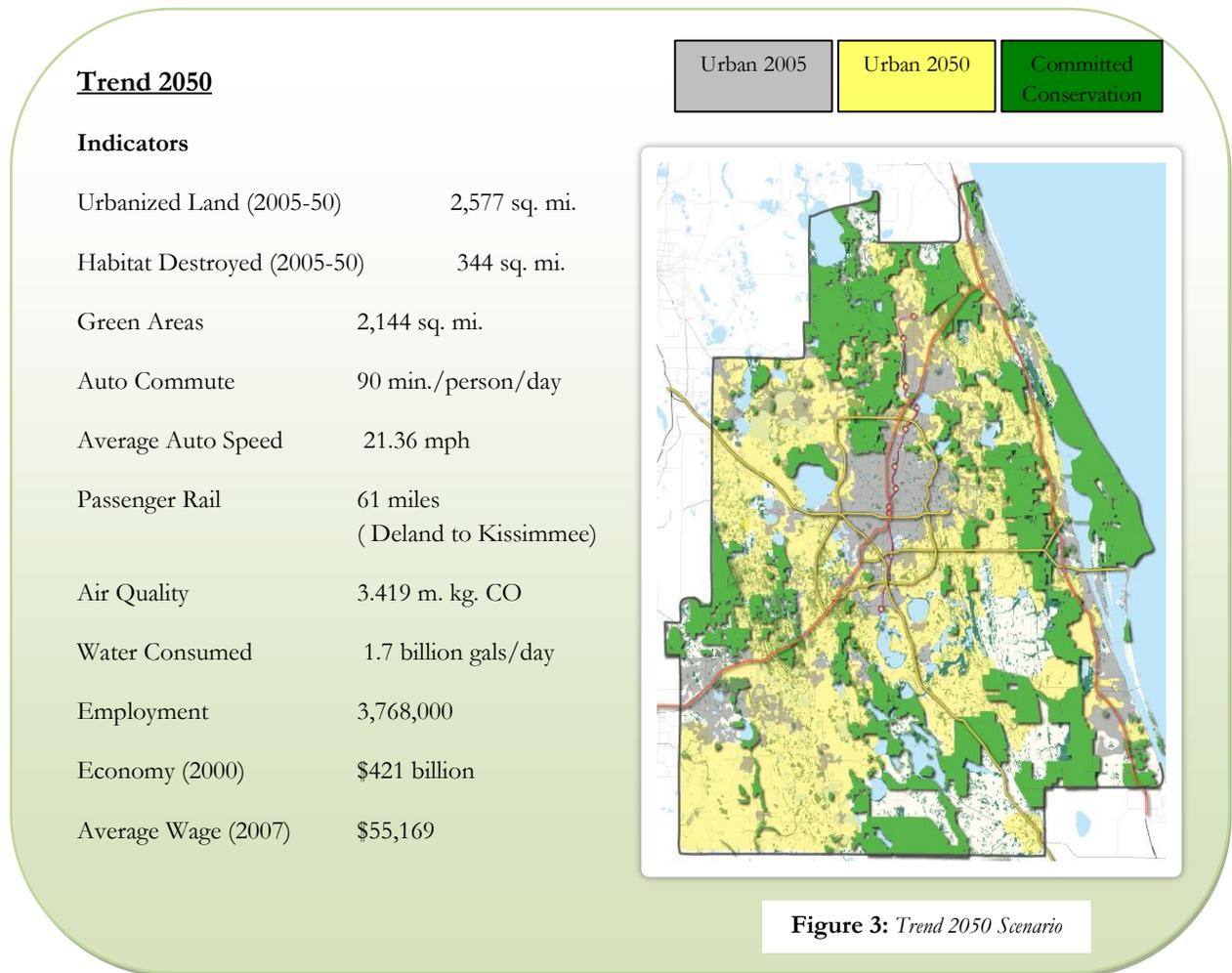


**Figure 1:** *Development dots mapped for intensity preference. Red is most intense, yellow is least intense, green is green space. Source: ECFRPC and University of Florida*



**Figure 2:** *Transit corridors drawn by regional visioning participants*

In all four scenarios, gray represents urban area in 2005, yellow represents urbanized area 2005-50, and dark green represents conservation land. *Note: The scenarios were developed for modeling purposes and no individual scenario was endorsed.*



**The Trend 2050 Scenario:**

- Continued current development patterns and densities (circa 2005) would allow sprawl to continue into critical ecosystems.
- Urbanizes an additional 2,577 square miles of land by 2050 at an estimated infrastructure cost of \$148 billion.
- Destroys an additional 344 square miles of habitat.
- Makes major population shifts into Polk, Lake and Volusia counties.

## Green Areas 2050

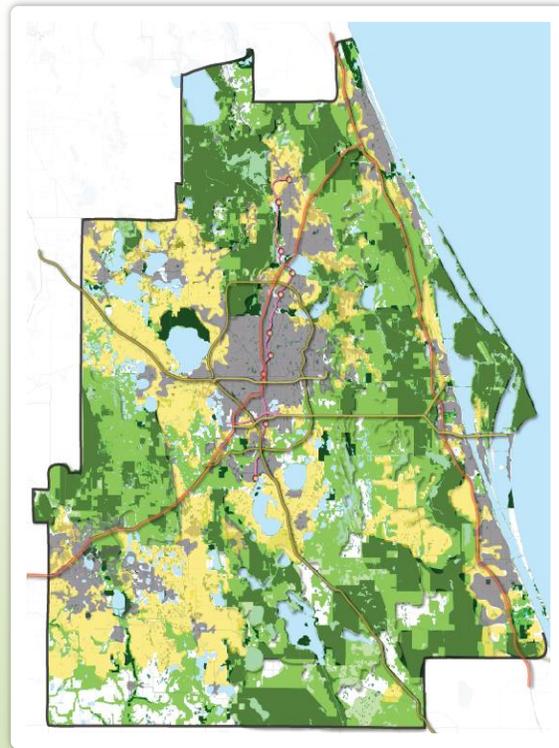
Urban 2005

Urban 2050

Conservation

### Indicators

Urbanized Land (2005-50)	918 Sq. mi
Habitat Destroyed (2005-50)	45 sq. mi.
Green Areas Added (2005-50)	2,483 sq. mi.
Auto Commute	87 min./person/day
Average Auto Speed	21.69 mph
Passenger Rail	272 mi.
Air Quality	3.407 m. kg. CO
Water Consumed	1.57 billion gals/day
Employment	3,966,000 (Trend + 198 K)
Economy (2000)	\$449 billion GRP (Trend + \$ 28 billion)
Average Wage (2007)	\$ 55,236



**Figure 4:** *Green Areas Scenario*

### **The Green Areas 2050 (Conservation) Scenario:**

- Emphasized protecting/connecting natural ecosystems. Also provided additional open space where 3,000 workshop attendees placed “green dots”.
- Urbanizes an additional 918 square miles of land by 2050 at an estimated infrastructure cost of \$53 billion.
- Destroys an additional 45 square miles of habitat.
- Makes major population shifts into Polk and Lake Counties.

## Centers 2050

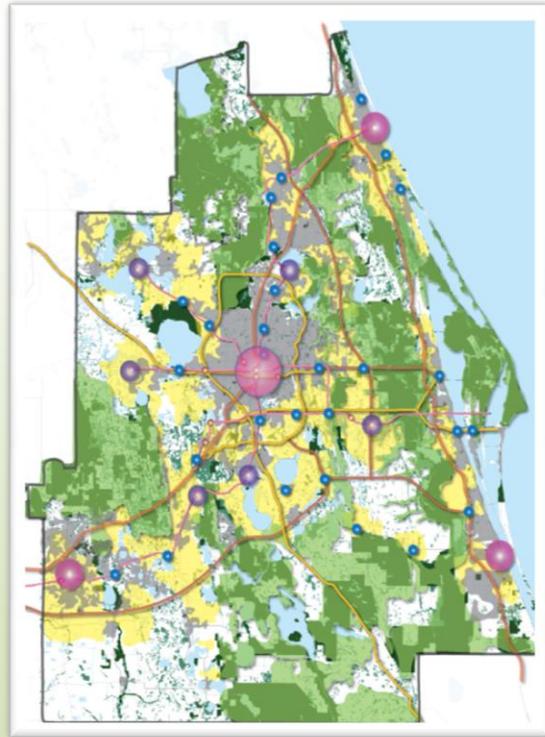
Urban 2005

Urban 2050

Conservation

### Indicators

Urbanized Land (2005-50)	844 sq. mi.
Habitat Destroyed (2005-50)	45 sq. mi.
Green Areas Added (2005-50)	2,054 sq. mi.
Auto Commute	66 min./person/day
Average Auto Speed	25.86 mph
Passenger Rail/Streetcar	282 mi.
Air Quality	2.824 m. kg. CO
Water Consumed	1.56 billion gals/day
Employment	4,123,000 (Trend + 354K)
Economy (2000)	\$461 billion (Trend + \$ 40 billion)
Average Wage (2007)	\$55,963



**Figure 5:** *Centers 2050 Scenario*

### **The Centers 2050 Scenario:**

- Emphasized 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 an estimated infrastructure cost of \$49 billion.
- Destroys an additional 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 2050

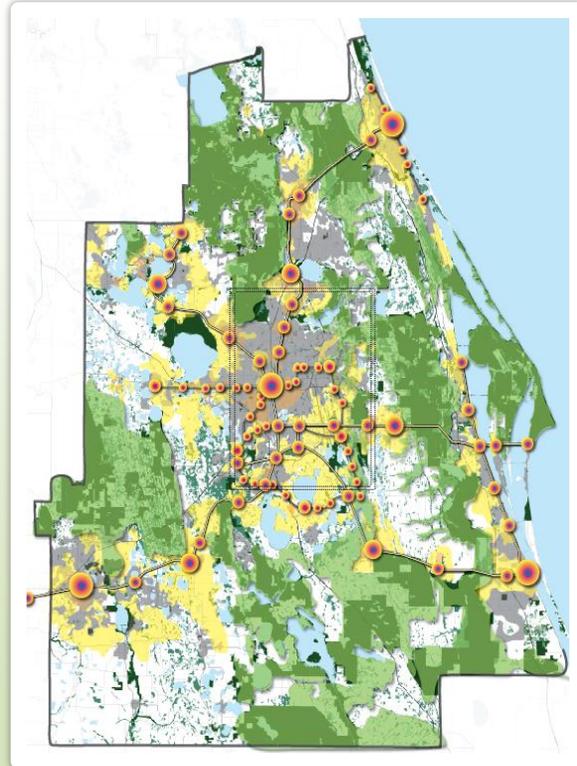
Urban 2005

Urban 2050

Conservation

### Indicators

Urbanized Land (2005-50)	660 sq mi.
Habitat Destroyed (2005-50)	28 sq. mi.
Green Areas Added (2005-50)	1,672 sq. mi.
Auto Commute Time	80 min./pers./day
Average Auto Speed	23.18 mph
Passenger Rail/Streetcar	413 mi.
Air Quality	3.125 m. kg. CO
Water consumed	1.55 billion gals/day
Employment	4,225,000 (Trend + 456,000)
Economy (2000)	\$513 billion (Trend + \$92 billion)
Average Wage (2007)	\$58,990



**Figure 6:** *Corridors 2050 Scenario*

### **The Corridors 2050 Scenario:**

- Similar to Centers, but also allocated population along high density mixed use rail corridors. Only adds one person per urban acre for an average urban density of 3.15 persons per acre, about what Volusia County was in 2005.
- Urbanizes an additional 660 square miles of land by 2050 at an estimated infrastructure cost of \$38 billion.
- Destroys an additional 28 square miles of habitat.
- Adds 413 miles of rail transit, with major intensity increases around rail stops.
- Saves \$110 billion in unnecessary infrastructure over the Trend.

The four future land use scenarios (Chapter 1, Figures 3-6) modeled for the “How Shall We Grow?” project revealed some realistic population distribution implications.

## The Four Futures: 2050 Population

**Red=highest population for that scenario**

**Green=lowest population for that scenario**

*Source: population and allocation modeling done by University of Florida GeoPlan Center*

County	2005 Population	BEBR 2050	Trend 2050	Green Areas 2050	Centers 2050	Corridors 2050
<b>Brevard</b>	531,970	932,704	<b>888,333</b>	914,981	958,939	<b>967,129</b>
<b>Lake</b>	263,017	653,766	<b>531,942</b>	<b>831,354</b>	662,686	652,410
<b>Orange</b>	1,043,437	2,230,650	1,819,062	<b>1,477,974</b>	2,203,565	<b>2,203,642</b>
<b>Osceola</b>	235,156	688,296	<b>413,624</b>	669,095	<b>752,315</b>	588,742
<b>Polk</b>	541,840	969,088	1,507,076	<b>1,595,293</b>	<b>977,565</b>	1,097,067
<b>Seminole</b>	411,744	<b>775,265</b>	623,145	593,375	681,169	<b>589,836</b>
<b>Volusia</b>	494,649	874,001	<b>1,340,569</b>	1,041,647	<b>894,077</b>	1,022,564
<b>Total Population</b>	3,521,813	7,123,770	7,123,751	7,123,719	7,130,317	7,121,390

### Population Conclusions of “How Shall We Grow?” Modeling by University of Florida for ECFRPC and *myregion.org*

- Seminole County will build out in the near future, but BEBR’s population projections cannot predict this. Seminole’s opportunity for new growth will be along old commercial corridors, and this redevelopment is also not anticipated by BEBR.
- In the Trend model, as Seminole County builds out, population spills over into Volusia. By 2050, Volusia County has 466,000 people more than projected by BEBR medium. If local planners are depending on BEBR to reliably project population for concurrency, especially transportation concurrency, they could be significantly undercounting, unless development patterns change.
- Lake County’s lowest population is in the Trend model, but this does not tell the whole story. Lake County builds at very low densities in the Trend, so it is largely built out by 2050 in the Trend.

- BEBR probably significantly under-projects population in Osceola County, where there is significant land for development, and many approved major developments of regional impact.
- BEBR potentially under-projects population in Polk County.
- Orange County will not likely reach BEBR 2050 projections under the Trend, mostly due to environmental constraints.
- The region would have had more balanced population growth if it grew consistent with the Corridors scenario, which is the closest to the Central Florida 2050 Regional Vision. However, the 2050 Regional Vision (Chapter 1, Figure 8) was not a modeled scenario but instead an artist’s rendering of the best attributes from three scenarios (centers, corridors, and conservation). For this Policy Plan update, an actual model of the future assumptions was run and the results are shown in Chapter 12.

In January 2007 one hour of public television was aired in prime time each night on station WMFE for five consecutive nights to educate the public about regional growth issues and to enlist them in the debate.

After the final night of television coverage, the audience was asked to visit the Internet Web site [www.howshallwegrow.org](http://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 visited the web site within two weeks time, and selected their preferences for the scenarios and for a series of the following indicators:

- 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

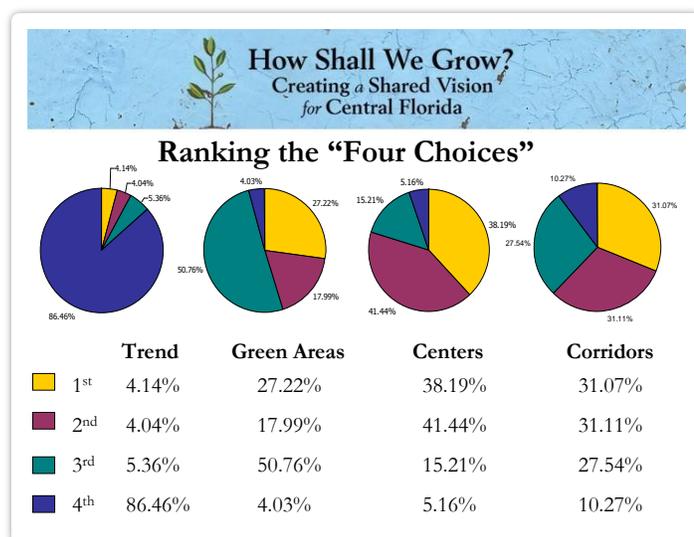


Figure 7: Internet Survey Results

Two results were obvious from the internet surveys. First, 96% rejected the Trend as their first choice. Second, none of the scenarios garnered more than 50% of the votes. The Indicators survey clearly showed that a combination of the Corridors scenario, with the best points from Centers and Conservation seemed to be the “Consensus Vision” for future growth:

- Develop the least amount of land (Corridors)
- Conserve the most natural resources (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)

An artist used these assumptions to create a 2050 Central Florida Regional Vision based loosely on the Corridors scenario with wispy arches representing new transportation corridors connecting centers. Some of these centers were purely speculative while others exist today.



Figure 8: Artist rendering of the Regional Vision

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

- **C**onserve our most critical natural resources, and do this first.
- Promote more growth in walkable, great urban **C**enters, with amenities such as parks, live and work neighborhoods, cultural and educational centers, all in close proximity.
- Connect major centers with **C**orridors served by a balanced multimodal transportation system of roads, rail transit (commuter rail, light rail and streetcar) bus rapid transit, bus, bike and pedestrian ways.
- Take the pressure off the **C**ountryside so viable agriculture and open land are still abundant.

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

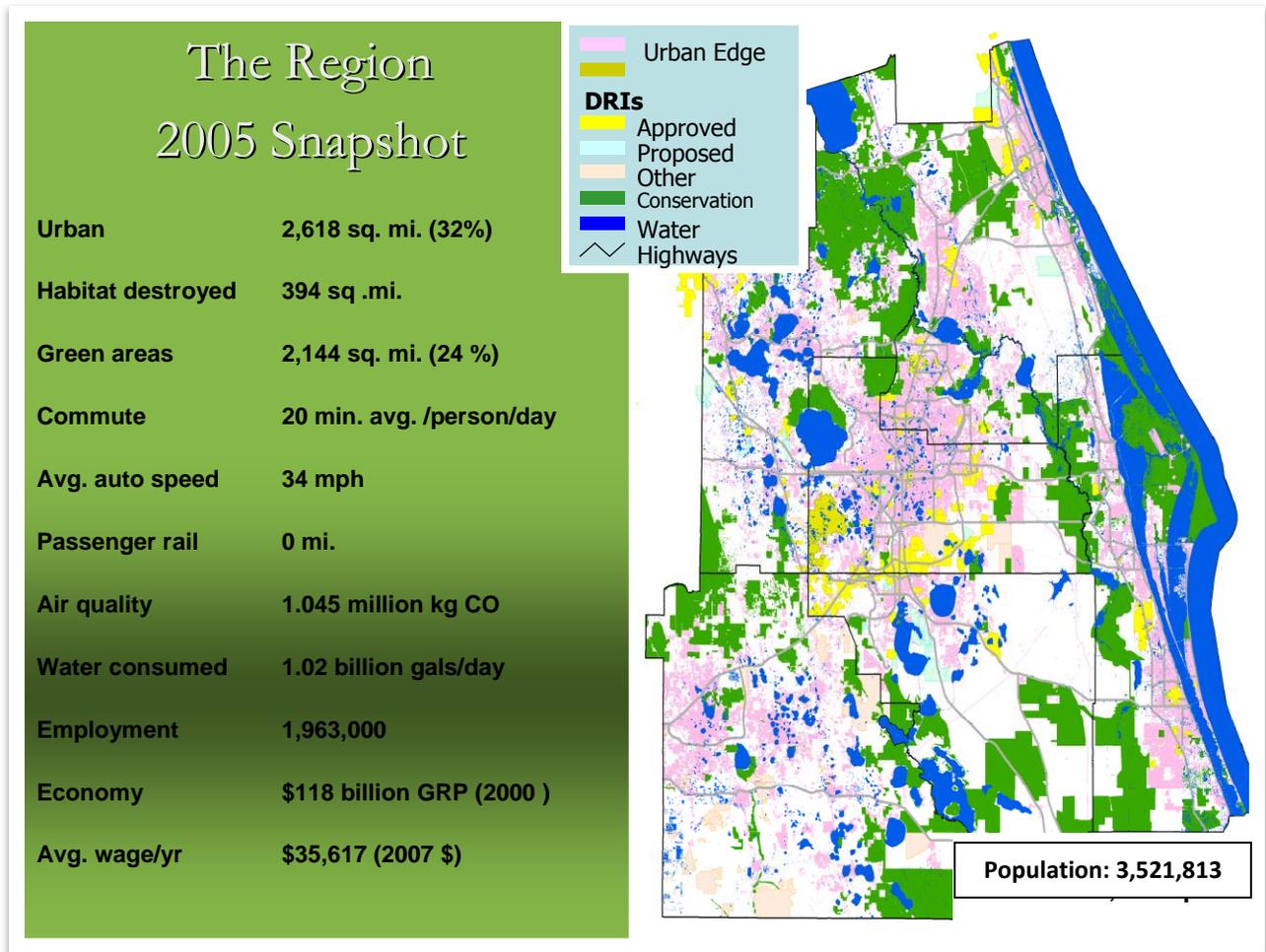
Following the completion of the Regional Visioning Process in August 2007, the ECFRPC staff began to update the 1998 Policy Plan, including the research of current conditions and policy direction.

A formal update process began in January, 2008 with a series of public information meetings, surveys, subject sounding boards, and staff research. Since the regional visioning study had included Polk County, the decision was made to also include Polk County for modeling purposes in the policy plan update.

A stakeholder “sounding board” was established for each of the plan elements discussed in Chapters 3-9. The list of sounding board members is printed at the end of each of these chapters together with the dates they met to discuss the issues and policies.

## **THE STATE OF THE REGION**

Extensive data modeling was completed for the Regional Vision in 2007 and the results are displayed on the following pages. The models noted in Chapter 12 (Figure 1. and Figure 2.) are more recent and relevant assumptions specific to these scenarios are discussed further in Chapter 12.



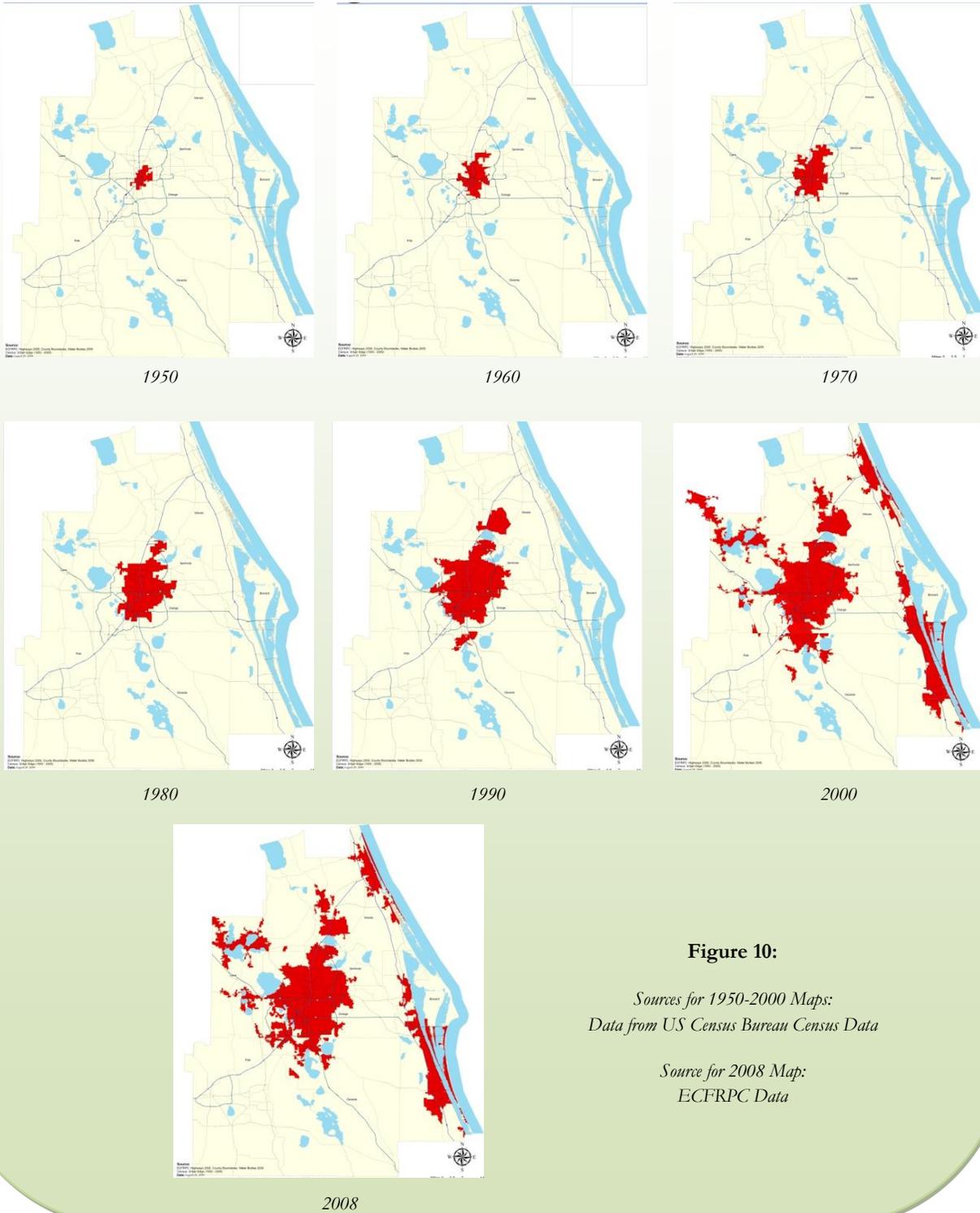
**Figure 9:** *State of the Region- Indicators 2005*

*Sources:* 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

Figure 10 shows rapid regional population growth from 1950-2006, which has two kinds of problems that will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters:

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

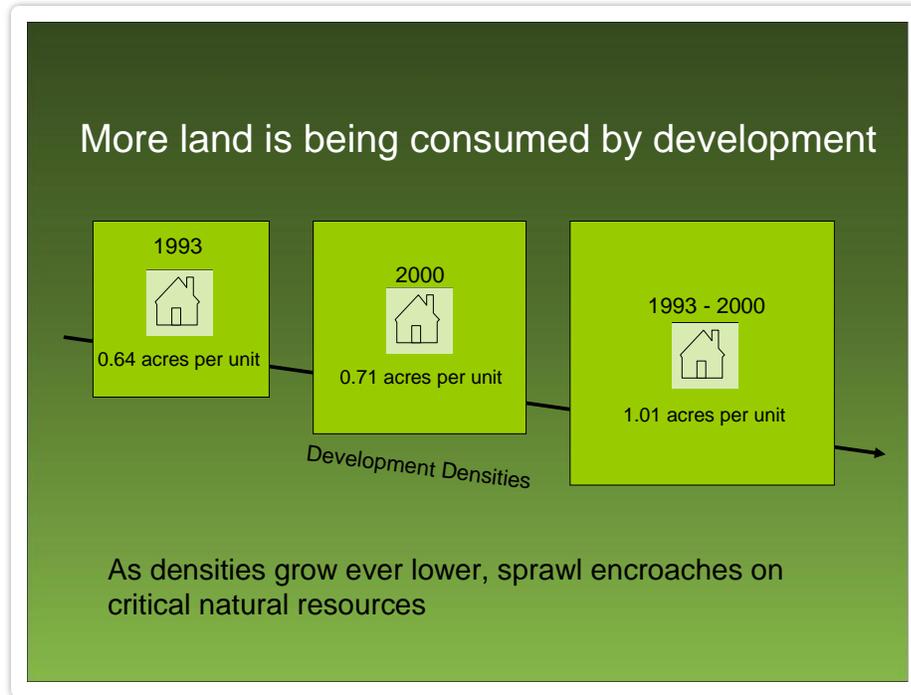
The following maps show the growth of the urban edge for each decade from 1950 - 2008:



**Figure 10:**

*Sources for 1950-2000 Maps:  
Data from US Census Bureau Census Data*

*Source for 2008 Map:  
ECFRPC Data*



**Figure 11:** *Land Consumption*

One obvious development pattern problem throughout Central Florida is the low density sprawling pattern of growth, and collateral issues as follows:

1. More land is being consumed...why? This is the result of residential densities dropping. Many communities followed a regional trend of requiring larger lots, which lowers densities. Home builders also responded to 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.
2. Some counties have also encouraged suburban sprawl by providing water and sewer services in unincorporated areas and zoned those areas for low density suburban development.
3. Some cities have not behaved like cities by growing in an exclusively residential low density pattern with no defined core or mixed use downtown.
4. This auto-oriented sprawl development pattern, combined with a disconnected local street pattern, forces vehicle trips onto the arterial streets for almost every human need. This overloads and chokes the arterials and creates intersection failure, which results in traffic congestion.
5. Traffic congestion is the most easily recognized indicator of the beginning failure of our current regional development patterns. FDOT used the "Trend 2050" scenario to estimate how badly roads would be congested if we continued to develop the way we are.

Figure 12 illustrates the negative impact on roads of continuing our current development patterns and densities to 2050. The roads in red are congested, meaning roads typically characterized by slower speeds, longer trip times, and increased queuing.

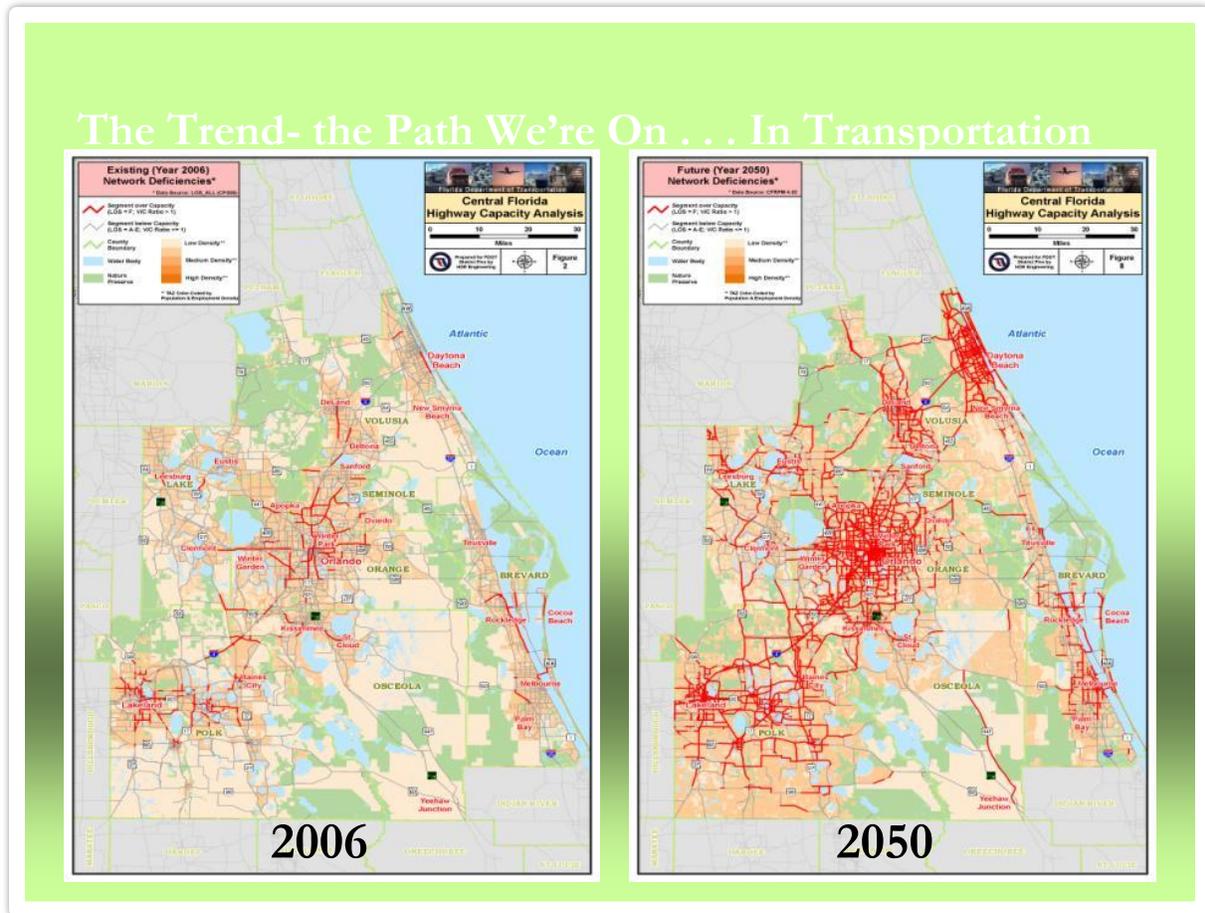


Figure 12: Congested Roads- 2005 and 2050

## STATE OF THE REGION: CONCLUSIONS

- The 2050 Regional Vision was well communicated to over 20,000 directly involved citizens at public workshops and events.
- The 2050 Regional Vision, although an artist rendering and not a plan, is a more appropriate growth pattern than the Trend, which is where our current development patterns and densities are taking us.
- If we develop more like the Vision, and not like the Trend, the region avoids unnecessary development of over 1 million acres ( $\pm 2,000$  square miles) by 2050. Based on a 2005 myregion.org report, which contains a University of Pennsylvania urban infrastructure estimate of \$90,000 per acre, this would equate to an infrastructure saving of over \$100 billion dollars in initial infrastructure cost, and more in permanent public maintenance.

- The region must gradually end its low density sprawling development patterns, and emulate the Central Florida 2050 Regional Vision.
- The challenge for the 2060 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 over the next 50 years.
- The interpretation and implementation of the Policy Plan by its member cities and counties is a sovereign matter for each community to consider how they want to grow, or even if they want to grow.

## **EMERGING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS**

Consumer desires and behavior are changing both nationally and in Central Florida. Surveys by RCLCO and the Concord Group indicate:

- 77% of new boomers plan to live in an urban core.
- 2/3 (two-thirds) of new boomers said that living in a community where they could walk to work, shop, and find entertainment is important.
- 1/3 (one-third) of new boomers said they would pay more to have these amenities.
- More than 1/2 (one-half) of the survey respondents said they would trade lot size for proximity to shopping or work. Even among families with children, one-third said they would make the trade-off.
- 81% said it was very or somewhat important to live near alternative modes of transit such as bus and rail lines and 67% said they would pay a premium to do it.

The baby boomer generation is reaching retirement age and is quickly being replaced by Generation Y (teens to young 20's), which represent a larger population with different preferences on where and how they want to live. The business community and real estate professionals are recognizing the interests of this group. A May, 2010 Harvard Business Review, characterized the increasing number of businesses that are changing their focus to urban areas as “getting a jump on a major cultural and demographic shift away from suburban sprawl”.

Other related trends are also beginning to show us that shifts are occurring. Total vehicle miles traveled (vmt) has been steadily declining since 2006 and transit ridership has continued to increase with a 52-year high observed in 2008. Car sharing and bicycle ridership continue to gain in popularity giving more people the freedom to abandon their vehicles. Energy efficient and green

buildings are becoming more commonplace. Water shortages are already beginning to threaten expansion and forcing water conservation.

As these trends continue, more money will be invested in smarter infrastructure and public transportation over the expansion of existing infrastructure. The resulting shift will have a tremendous effect on real estate markets and how our communities function and grow. The communities that best recognize these trends and gracefully adapt to them will be the winners in a new age of competition for economic viability.

There are several sources that discuss and quantify the trends and demographic shift described above. Two such publications include:

1. ***“On Common Ground”, Megatrends for a Decade, National Association of Realtors, Summer 2010;*** and,
2. ***EPA Report: Redevelopment Continues in Urban Neighborhoods, Smart growth strategies emphasize reuse of land.***

According to *“On Common Ground”*:

- ✓ New boomers (GenY) dislike homogeneity (cookie-cutter suburbs);
- ✓ view long vehicle commutes as a strain on quality of life standards; and,
- ✓ are drawn to neighborhoods in city centers and inner suburbs that are convenient, accessible, and possess a sense of character and community.

The Martin Prosperity Institute, a think tank affiliated with the University of Toronto, compiled a list of best USA places to live for young singles ages 20-29. College towns and larger cities dominated the list, led by Boulder; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; Madison, Wisconsin; and Boston.

Retiring baby boomers have also become interested in urban living after a lifetime spent in the suburbs. This is creating a competition between baby boomers and new boomers who won't be able to financially compete for a limited supply of urban housing, which demands higher prices. According to John McIlwain, senior resident fellow and J. Ronald Terwilliger, chair for housing at the Urban Land Institute, the supply of urban housing is not keeping up with the demand. Many communities are just beginning to figure out how to implement this type of development.

This dynamic is actually expected to force new boomers to consider the less expensive outer suburbs. According to McIlwain, “This provides a major opportunity for developers to create new outer-edge communities with real town centers and urban amenities”. Even on the outer edges a

compact, walkable lifestyle that is affordable will be attractive...especially if it has transportation alternatives.”

Much like the findings noted in the “*On Common Ground*” publication, the updated U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report (*Redevelopment Continues in Urban Neighborhoods*) shows a continuing shift in development toward urban neighborhoods in the United States. The update actually incorporates several months of data acquired in 2008 during the national economic downturn and includes a comparison to the early 1990s.

Results show that the share of construction in urban neighborhoods was up 28 percent in those mid-sized metropolitan regions that have promoted redevelopment of underused sites and development around transit. In 2008, Portland, Oregon issued 38 percent of all the building permits within its region, compared to an average of 9 percent in the early 1990s; Denver, Colorado accounted for 32 percent, up from 5 percent; and Sacramento, California accounted for 27 percent, up from 9 percent. An even stronger trend emerged among larger metropolitan regions. In 2008, New York City accounted for 63 percent of the building permits issued within its region, compared to 15 percent of regional building permits issued during the early 1990s. Similarly, Chicago now accounts for 45 percent, up from just 7 percent in the early 1990s.