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# **South Central Florida's Regional Economy**

Report to the  
Central Florida Regional Planning Council

By  
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH  
College of Business Administration



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## *Preface*

The Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) is the state-mandated planning organization for the region of south-central Florida. The CFRPC Planning district is comprised of the following five counties: DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Polk, and Okeechobee. The CFRPC is undertaking an update of the Economic Development section of its Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) and production of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for its District. The CFRPC commissioned an economic analysis of the region, summarized in this document, to serve as a component of the SRPP and CEDS. The document is designed to encourage public discussion and to stimulate additional input into CFRPC's strategic planning efforts.

This summary report presents information and analysis from a study titled *The Status of South Central Florida's Regional Economy: An Update*, dated May, 2001. This report includes input from representatives of economic development organizations in the five counties of the CFRPC district. It is made available for public review and comment.

The background study *The Status of South Central Florida's Regional Economy: An Update* was prepared by the Center for Economic Development Research, College of Business Administration, University of South Florida. CEDR provides information and conducts research on issues related to economic growth and development in the Nation, in the state of Florida, and particularly in the central Florida region. The Center serves the faculty, staff, and students of the College of Business Administration, the University, and individuals and organizations in the University's service area. CEDR's activities are designed to further the objectives of the University and specifically the objectives of the College of Business Administration.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR), College of Business Administration (COBA), University of South Florida (USF), analyzed the regional economy of the five counties that comprise the area of responsibility of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). The five counties are DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee, and Polk. These counties are referred to in the report as the CF-counties. CFRPC has distributed CEDR's comprehensive report of the regional economic analysis. The comprehensive report is titled *The Status of South Central Florida's Regional Economy: An Update*. The report is dated May 2001.

This document summarizes the comprehensive report. The comprehensive report is based on publicly available data published by federal agencies, the Florida Agency on Workforce Innovation (formerly Florida Department of Labor) and the Florida Department of Education. In this summary report, we have supplemented the federal and State data with input from local area economic development officials in the CF-counties. These economic development officials reviewed the comprehensive analysis and then augmented the analysis by providing us input based on information and data available to their agencies.

During the last decade Florida's economy has been fuelled by population growth. From 1990 to 2000 the state's population grew by almost 23%, the state's labor force grew by slightly over 17%, and employment in Florida grew by almost 21%. However, Florida's rural counties did not always proportionately share in this growth. Population growth in the Central Florida (CF) region was only slightly below the statewide rate. However, the growth rate of the labor force lagged the state's rate in each CF-county. Similarly, employment growth in each CF-county was less than the statewide rate. (The labor force and employment actually declined in Hardee County and in DeSoto County.) In the comprehensive report we also compared the CF region with the neighboring metropolitan counties of Hillsborough and Orange. Again, the CF regional growth rates generally trailed those in metro areas.

Insufficient resources often hamper rural economic development agencies. Programs for rural development run by Enterprise Florida, Inc., the state's principal development agency, may require added funding. Economic development officials from Polk County observed that Enterprise Florida, Inc., does not "spend enough time" on rural economic development, particularly in such areas as Hardee and DeSoto Counties. This deficiency has been noted at the state level. Additional resources for rural development have been made available in the most recent state budget under the Governor's "Toolkit for Economic Development Communities" assistance program.

## POPULATION

Polk County's population is almost three times that of the combined populations of the CF region's remaining four counties. In 2000, 483,924 of the CF region's population of 668,347 persons lived in Polk County.

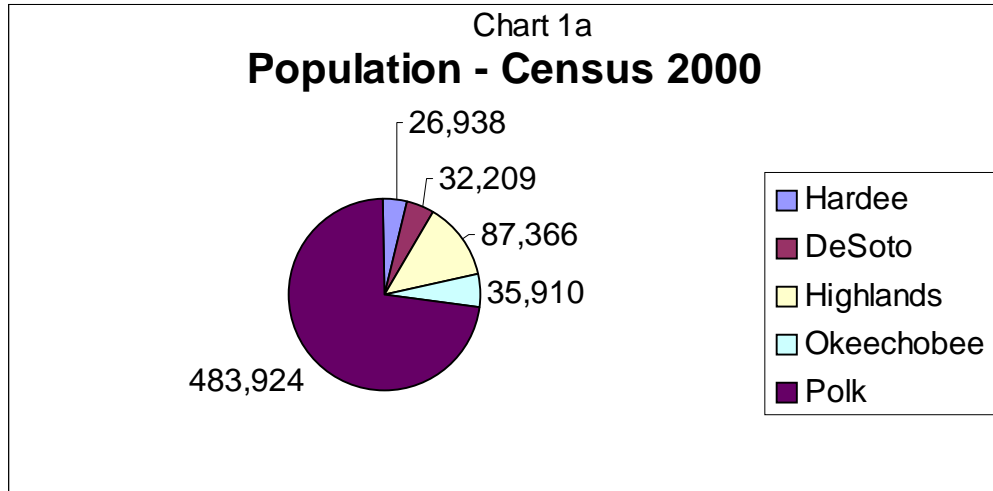


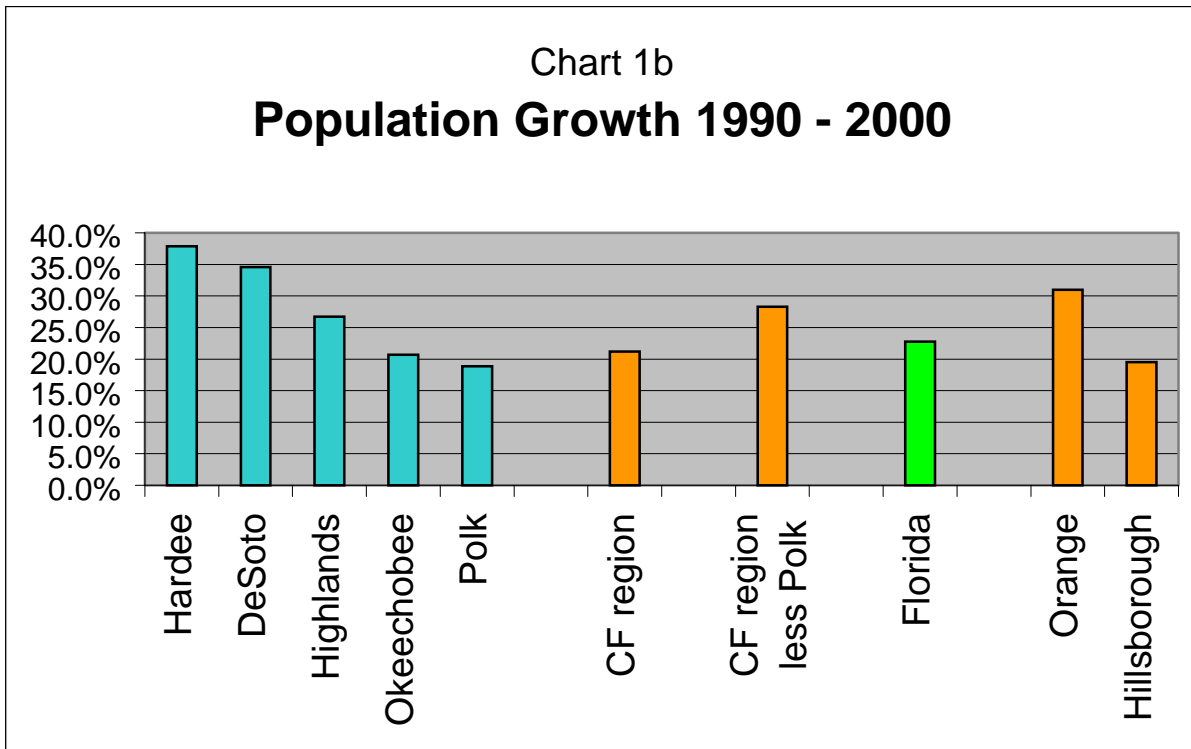
Table 1 reports population growth between 1990 and 2000. The CF region's population growth rate of 21.2% was only slightly under the statewide rate.

Table 1  
Population Growth 1990 - 2000

Place	Population		% Change
	1990	2000	
Hardee	19,542	26,938	37.8%
DeSoto	23,938	32,209	34.6%
Highlands	68,957	87,366	26.7%
Okeechobee	29,756	35,910	20.7%
Polk	407,222	483,924	18.8%
CF region	551,405	668,347	21.2%
CF region less Polk	142,193	182,423	28.3%
Florida	13,018,365	15,982,378	22.8%
Orange	684,473	896,344	31.0%
Hillsborough	835,937	998,948	19.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Hardee County experienced the fastest population growth rate while Polk County's rate was the slowest.



In this instance, however, the percentage figures for growth rates may be misleading. Combined population growth in Hardee, Highlands, DeSoto and Okeechobee during the decade was only 40,230 persons. Polk County's population, which grew from a larger base, increased by 76,702 persons over the same period.

## LABOR FORCE

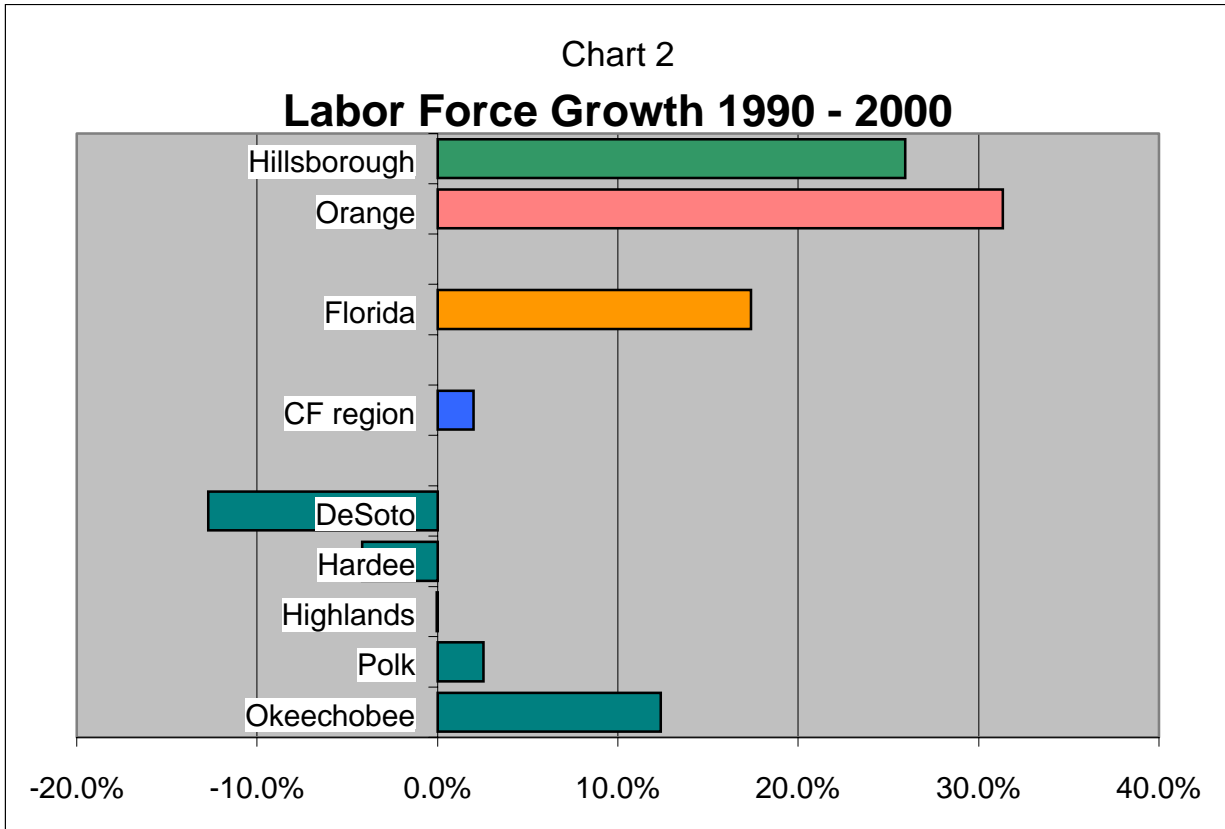
Table 2 reports labor force growth between 1990 and 2000. The labor force growth rates in the CF-counties lagged behind the statewide rate.

Table 2  
Labor Force Growth 1990 - 2000

<u>Place</u>	<u>Labor Force</u>		<u>% Change</u>
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	
Okeechobee	13,659	15,350	12.4%
Polk	200,240	205,352	2.6%
Highlands	25,733	25,723	0.0%
Hardee	9,185	8,800	-4.2%
DeSoto	9,670	8,442	-12.7%
CF region	260,477	265,667	2.0%
Florida	6,468,000	7,593,000	17.4%
Orange	390,727	513,162	31.3%
Hillsborough	452,770	570,195	25.9%

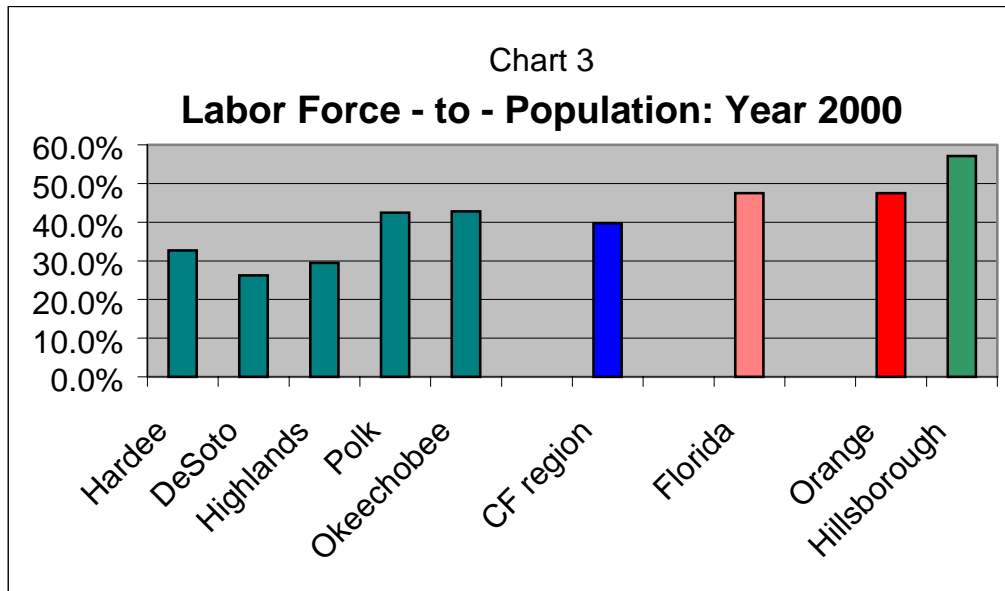
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Over the past decade the labor forces in DeSoto County and in Hardee County declined despite rising county populations. In Highlands County labor force growth was essentially flat. Okeechobee County had the greatest labor force expansion among the CF-counties at 12.4%.





In 2000, the measure of the labor force as a percent of the population, i.e. labor force participation rate, was below the statewide rate for all CF-counties.



Further, while Florida's labor force participation rate declined 2.2% between 1990 and 2000, the decline in the CF region was 7.5%. See Table 3. Hardee County suffered the largest decline, falling from 47.0% to 32.7%. The smallest decline was in Okeechobee County, where labor force participation dropped from 45.9% in 1990 to 42.7% in 2000.

**Table 3**  
**Labor Force - to - Population Percentage**

<u>Place</u>	<u>Percentage</u>		
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>
Hardee	47.0%	32.7%	-14.3%
DeSoto	40.4%	26.2%	-14.2%
Highlands	37.3%	29.4%	-7.9%
Polk	49.2%	42.4%	-6.7%
<u>Okeechobee</u>	<u>45.9%</u>	<u>42.7%</u>	<u>-3.2%</u>
CF region	47.2%	39.7%	-7.5%
Florida	49.7%	47.5%	-2.2%
Orange	57.1%	47.5%	-9.6%
Hillsborough	54.2%	57.1%	2.9%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## EMPLOYMENT

The growth in the number of employed residents in the CF region between 1990 and 2000 was well below the statewide growth rate in employment. Table 4 reports the number of employed persons by the place of residence and the change in employment between 1990 and 2000.

Table 4  
Employment (Local Area Unemployment Survey)

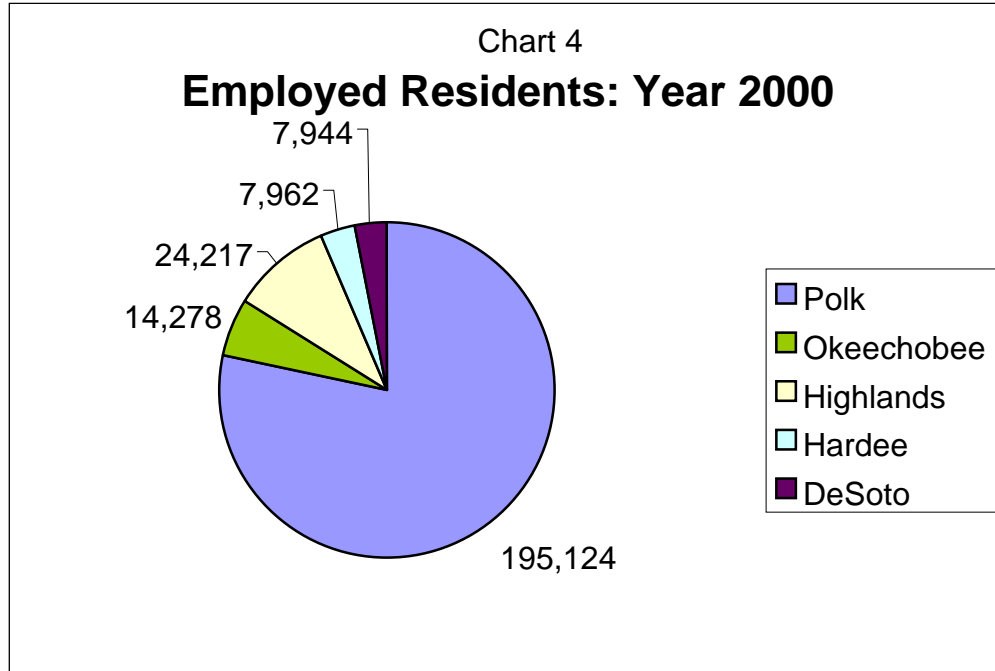
Place	Employed Residents			
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Polk	180,475	195,124	14,649	8.1%
Okeechobee	12,554	14,278	1,724	13.7%
Highlands	23,487	24,217	730	3.1%
Hardee	8,135	7,962	-173	-2.1%
DeSoto	8,995	7,944	-1,051	-11.7%
CF region	235,636	251,525	15,889	6.7%
Florida	6,078,000	7,310,000	1,232,000	20.3%
Hillsborough	431,421	554,720	123,299	28.6%
Orange	369,708	499,770	130,062	35.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employment in DeSoto County and in Hardee County actually declined from 1990 to 2000. Okeechobee County managed the biggest percentage gain, 13.7%, during the decade by placing an

additional 1,700 residents in jobs.

In 2000, there were more than 3.5 times the number of employed residents living in Polk County than the number of employed residents in the four remaining CF-counties combined.



From 1990 to 2000, all CF-counties enjoyed a falling unemployment rate. In 2000 Okeechobee County had the highest unemployment rate, 7.0%, in the CF region. Table 5 compares unemployment rates in 1990 with the rates in 2000.

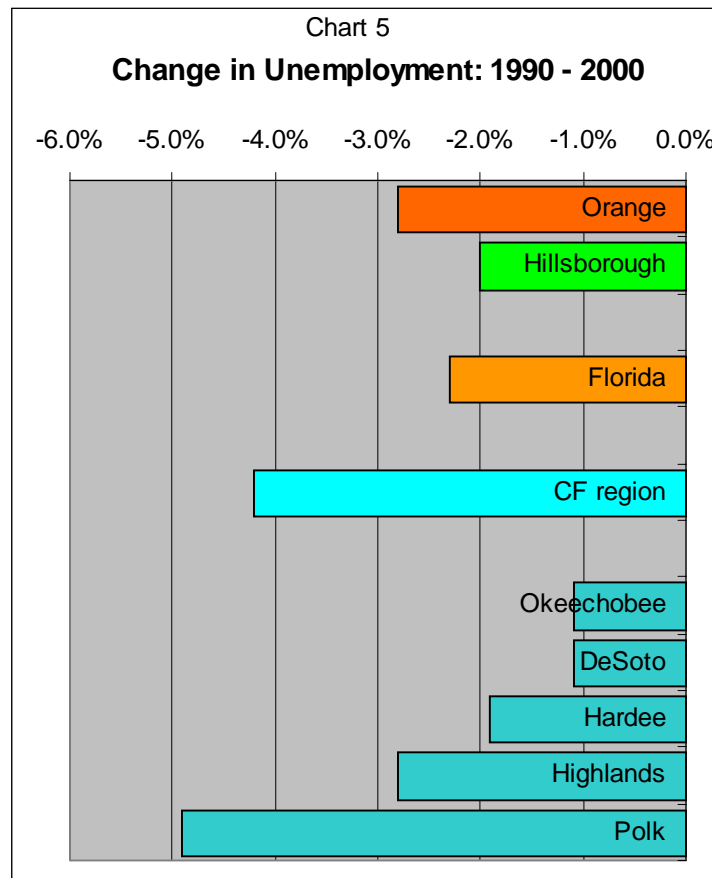
Table 5  
Unemployment Rate

<u>Place</u>	<u>Percent of Labor Force Unemployed</u>		
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>
Polk	9.9%	5.0%	-4.9%
Highlands	8.7%	5.9%	-2.8%
Hardee	11.4%	9.5%	-1.9%
DeSoto	7.0%	5.9%	-1.1%
Okeechobee	8.1%	7.0%	-1.1%
CF region	9.5%	5.3%	-4.2%
Florida	6.0%	3.7%	-2.3%

Hillsborough	4.7%	2.7%	-2.0%
Orange	5.4%	2.6%	-2.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Polk County had the largest decline in the unemployment rate as it fell from 9.9% in 1990 to 5.0% in 2000. See Chart 5 for the changes in unemployment between 1990 and 2000.



While Table 4 reports the number of employed persons by place of residence, Table 6 shows employment by place of work. Table 6 also shows the percent change in employment from 1990 to 1995 and from 1995 to 2000.

Table 6  
Employment Growth: 1990 - 1995 and 1995 – 2000

Employees by Place of Work					
<u>Place</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>% Change</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>% Change</u>
DeSoto	7,994	8,878	11.1%	8,576	-3.4%
Hardee	6,821	7,689	12.7%	6,895	-10.3%
Highlands	20,479	22,460	9.7%	22,900	2.0%
Okeechobee	7,762	8,815	13.6%	9,705	10.1%
Polk	157,062	165,255	5.2%	181,900	10.1%
CF region	202,108	215,092	6.4%	231,976	7.8%
Florida	13,018,000	14,505,000	11.4%	15,982,000	10.2%
Hillsborough	440,584	492,841	11.9%	591,832	20.1%
Orange	429,105	489,690	14.1%	612,941	25.2%

Source: FL Department of Labor ES-202

From 1990 to 1995, there was an increase of 12,984 persons working in the CF region. This increase represents a 6.4% growth rate in employment over the period. During the 1990 to 1995 period all CF-counties enjoyed increases in the number of people employed. Except for Polk County, which had a relatively low 5.2% increase in employment, the rate of growth in the other CF-counties was on a par with the statewide rate and employment growth in the comparison counties of Hillsborough and Orange. In the second half of the decade, 1995 to 2000, there was an additional increase of 16,884 persons working in the CF region, yielding a 7.8% growth rate for the five-year period. However, the employment growth rates in the counties were somewhat divergent. DeSoto County and Hardee County had declines in numbers of employees of 3.4% and 10.3%, respectively. Okeechobee County and Polk County each added about 10% to their employee totals. The increases in employment in the CF region were far below the over 20% increases experienced by the comparison, mid-Florida counties of Hillsborough and Orange.

As noted above, percentage numbers do not reveal the absolute changes. In absolute numbers, employment increases in the rural CF-counties over the decade was small.

A county's ability to generate employment opportunities can be observed from the relationship between the employment growth rate and the population growth rate. For example, for the 1990-2000 decade, Highlands County employment growth rate is approximately half its population growth rate.

The 1990-2000 trend may be projected into the coming decade on the assumption that it is a long run phenomenon that will continue in the coming decade. In doing so one must keep in mind that changes in infrastructure capacity, rural status, or population characteristics may have profound effects on the reliability of forecasts based on this kind of historical evidence. A benefit of trend analysis is that it identifies these variables and encourages a development agency to keep track of them.

## INCOME

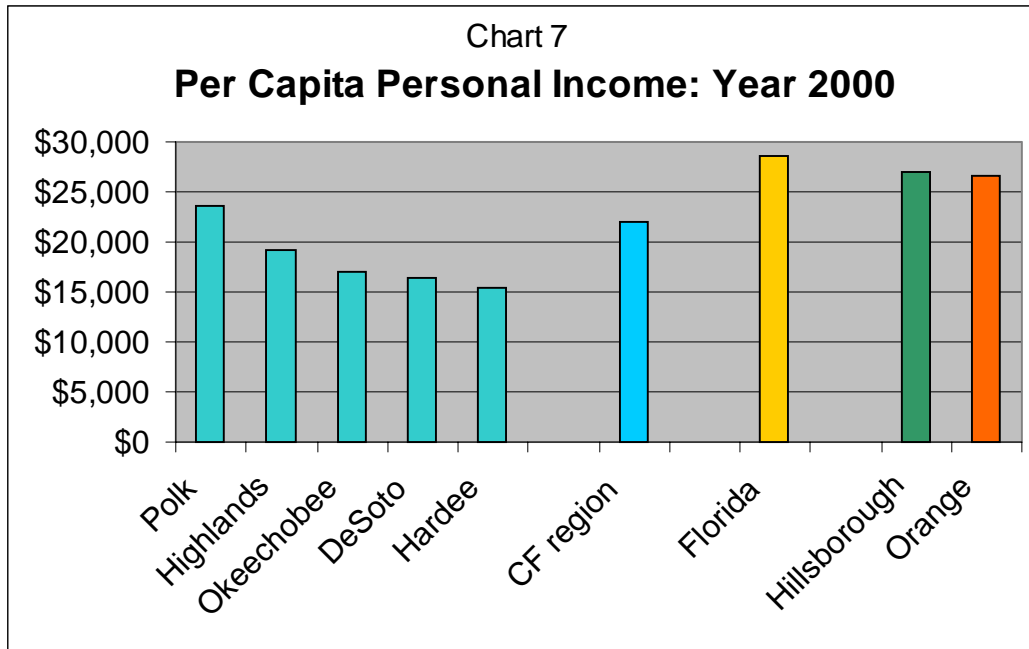
Per capita personal income in the CF-counties lags behind Florida's per capita personal income as well as the incomes in the comparison counties of Hillsborough and Orange.

Table 7 reports per capita personal income for 2000.

Table 7  
Per Capita Personal Income: Year 2000

<u>Place</u>	<u>Personal Income (est.)</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Per Capita</u>
Polk	\$11,426,263,000	483,924	\$23,612
Highlands	\$1,675,228,000	87,366	\$19,175
Okeechobee	\$609,662,000	35,910	\$16,977
DeSoto	\$526,661,000	32,209	\$16,351
Hardee	\$412,376,000	26,938	\$15,308
CF region	\$14,650,190,000	666,347	\$21,986
Florida	\$456,095,000,000	15,982,378	\$28,537
Hillsborough	\$27,026,000,000	998,948	\$27,054
Orange	\$23,761,000,000	896,344	\$26,509

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis and US Bureau of Labor Statistics



Per capita income may not reflect the impacts of income changes in households, as it does not adjust for differences in household size. It was pointed out that, if per capita income were \$16,000 per year, a family of four moving into the area would have to have a household income of \$64,000 per year to maintain the existing level of per capita income. Likewise, if a county's per capita income were \$23,000 per year, a family of four moving into the county would have to generate a household income of \$92,000 to maintain the existing level of per capita income. Thus, we must track also changes in household size.

**POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS**

Table 8 describes the population according the characteristics of ethnicity (white and Hispanic) and age. The percentages of Hispanics residing in three CF- counties, Hardee (35.7%), DeSoto (24.9%), and Okeechobee (18.6%), exceed the statewide percentage of 16.8%. Overall the region has a lower percentage of Hispanics than statewide.

Table 8  
Population Characteristics - Census 2000

Place	Population	Ethnicity		Age		
		White	Hispanic	0-24	25-64	65+
DeSoto	32,209	73.3%	24.9%	33.8%	46.0%	20.2%
Hardee	26,938	70.7%	35.7%	40.2%	44.4%	15.3%
Highlands	87,366	83.5%	12.1%	24.1%	39.8%	36.1%
Okeechobee	35,910	79.3%	18.6%	38.7%	45.0%	16.3%
Polk	483,924	79.6%	9.5%	33.4%	47.6%	19.0%
CF region	666,347	79.4%	12.1%	32.8%	46.2%	21.0%
Florida	15,982,378	78.0%	16.8%	31.8%	50.2%	18.0%
Hillsborough	998,948	75.2%	18.0%	35.2%	52.3%	12.6%
Orange	896,344	68.6%	18.8%	37.0%	52.4%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Economic development officials in the CF-counties observe that Hispanics are moving into some CF-counties in relatively large numbers. However, it is unclear why Hispanics are attracted to Florida and to certain Florida counties more than other counties. What are the implications for economic development in counties that are highly attractive for Hispanics?

The CF region's percentage of senior citizens, age 65 or over, exceeds the state of Florida by two percentage points. The CF region's largest concentration of senior citizens is in Highlands County, where more than one out of three residents are age 65 or over.

Economic development officials from Polk County also observe that the over age 65 population is more active than in the past. They perceive a need for a recreational and educational infrastructure to support these more active seniors' needs. The region's development agencies should ask the question: Is there an economic development role for addressing the more active seniors' needs?



## PERSONAL INCOME SOURCES

An examination of personal income sources – Table 9 - reveals a smaller percentage of income from earnings and a larger percentage of income from transfer payments for the CF-counties as compared to Florida and the comparison counties of Hillsborough and Orange. This reflects relatively low workforce participation in the CF-counties. Highlands County also receives a disproportionate share of income generated by dividends and interest. The high percentage of dividend and interest income in Highlands County and the high transfer payment percentage in the county are consistent with its relatively older and retired population. Furthermore, with relatively fewer large-company employers in the CF-counties, the percentage of proprietors' income is greater in the region's counties that statewide and in the comparison counties.

Table 9  
Sources of Personal Income in 2000  
Panel A

Place	Source		
	Earnings	Dividends / Interest	Transfer Payments
Highlands	38%	32%	29%
Okeechobee	56%	18%	26%
DeSoto	57%	20%	24%
Hardee	64%	15%	21%
Polk	61%	21%	19%
CF region	59%	21%	20%
Florida	58%	26%	16%
Hillsborough	67%	19%	14%
Orange	71%	16%	12%

Table 9  
Sources of Personal Income in 2000  
Panel B

<u>Place</u>	<u>Source</u>	
	<u>Wages &amp; Benefits</u>	<u>Proprietors' Income</u>
Highlands	82%	18%
Okeechobee	80%	20%
DeSoto	77%	23%
Hardee	76%	24%
Polk	87%	13%
CF region	86%	14%
Florida	90%	10%
Hillsborough	93%	7%
Orange	92%	8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

## PAYROLL EARNINGS

In 2000, average private-sector wages in the CF-counties lagged the state average of \$28,849. Although the CF region's industry structure explains some of this shortfall, pay in most industry divisions for the region also falls below the state average for those divisions. Average wages in Polk County were higher than in the other CF-counties and closer to the state average for each industry division.

Economic development officials informed CEDR that a broadly acknowledged goal of economic development activity is to raise average wages within the community. Many development agencies attempt to raise average wages in their communities by attracting firms that pay high wages from other areas. However, an alternative method for raising average wages is to attract jobs that pay above the low end of the community's prevailing wage scale and that are compatible with the skills and abilities of the community's lower wage workers. This method allows current residents of the community to move up to higher paying jobs, thereby raising average wages. The location of GEICO insurance company into Polk County was cited as an example of this alternative method.

## INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

The industry structure of the CF region reflects its rural nature. Agriculture and agricultural service industries are prominent. In 2000, about 30% of the employment in DeSoto County and in Hardee County was in agriculture. In Highlands County and in Okeechobee County agriculture encompassed about 15% of all jobs. In Polk County, agriculture made up only 4.5% of total employment, but that was still more than double that of Florida and the comparison counties (Florida 2.1%, Hillsborough 2.0%, Orange 1.4%).

DeSoto County and Hardee County have distinctive industry structures. At 3% or less of total employment, manufacturing jobs in these counties were less than one-half of the state's proportion of manufacturing jobs. Employment in the wholesale and retail trades was also well below the statewide percentage – 16.8% versus 25.2% around the state. Similarly, employment in service industries, which was 11.5% in DeSoto County and 17.5% in Hardee County, ranked behind a statewide percentage of 35.2%. On the other hand, government jobs at 31.8% of total employment in DeSoto County and at 24.6% in Hardee County were above Florida's 13.8% of total employment in the public sector.

On average, the industry structures of Highlands County and of Okeechobee County more closely resemble the state of Florida. A notable exception to this observation is, however, that Okeechobee County had the smallest percentage of manufacturing jobs in the CF region. Only 1.7% of employment in Okeechobee County was in manufacturing compared to 6.9% statewide.

A Highlands County economic development official noted that the data source utilized to describe industry structure in the comprehensive report is restricted to payroll workers. Local data in Highlands County measures manufacturing employment to be 1,000 jobs higher than the establishment total. Much of this difference is in two-person manufacturing businesses that do not participate in the State's unemployment insurance program.

Highlands County counted 5.3% of jobs in manufacturing. Wholesale and retail trade jobs at about 25% of total employment closely mirrored the state. Employment in service industries – 28.9% in Highlands and 23.3% in Okeechobee – compared favorably with Florida's overall proportion of 35.2%. These percentages reflect increased demand for services by residential populations who tend to be older and include more retirees. The proportion of government workers in Highlands County and Okeechobee County only slightly exceeds the state's proportion.

The proportionality of Polk County's industry structure largely resembles that of its more populated neighboring counties, Hillsborough and Orange.

Agriculture, mining and construction, manufacturing, and utilities traditionally are considered export-base industries. We call these industries “goods-producers.” Goods-producing businesses often offer high paying jobs with good benefits. Many high-tech manufacturing firms offer good jobs that are typical of the goods-producers. However, goods-producing industries are generally cyclical resulting in layoffs during periods of economic slowdown. Furthermore, goods-producing employment has been steadily declining in the U.S., making it more difficult for economic development officials to attract goods-producers to their local area.

In 2000, good-producers employed nearly 40% of workers in DeSoto County and in Hardee County. Goods-producers employed almost 30% of workers in Highland County, in Polk County, and in Okeechobee County. For comparison, goods-producers employed less than 20% of workers in Hillsborough County and in Orange County.

There is much discussion of the emergence of a “new economy” in the U.S. based upon telecommunications, information technology and research-based product innovation. In Florida these manifestations appear in the growing business services industries that are locating in the state’s major metropolitan areas. Technology intensive business services are related to finance and insurance, telecommunications, and information-based business support. Administrative support employment is also growing rapidly. But much administrative support employment is less technology-oriented and reflects employment outsourcing of a broad spectrum of other industries. Business services employment requires a large employment base. Limited employee bases in the CF-counties has prevented them from sharing in the growing business services employment.

See Appendix A for a table outlining the industry structures of the CF-counties.

A Highlands County economic development official noted that Research and Development types of manufacturing jobs are not likely to be lucrative in rural areas. In-migration of workers to rural areas from urban centers or areas with coastal amenities has not proven to be a satisfying move in certain case studies.

Another point, related to the above, is that utility infrastructure planning and capital commitment seems to be limited in rural areas. Certain areas that are experiencing substantial growth via residential housing development are dealing with water supply and sewage disposal issues on a project-to-project basis, rather than as a regional issue. Continued growth in commercial and industrial activities is contingent upon the successful planning, implementation and provision of spatially integrated capital improvements necessary to sustain growth.

## PROJECTED COUNTY-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

The individual county projected growth rates for all jobs and for just private sector jobs are shown in Table 10.

Table 10  
Projected County-level Employment Growth, 2000 to 2005

<u>Place</u>	<u>Growth in Jobs</u>	
	<u>All Jobs</u>	<u>Private Sector Jobs</u>
Okeechobee	9.1%	8.9%
Polk	9.0%	8.9%
Highlands	7.1%	6.8%
Hardee	4.8%	3.6%
DeSoto	4.7%	3.3%
Florida	11.5%	11.9%
Hillsborough	12.7%	13.2%
Orange	14.9%	15.3%

Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation

## COMMUTING TO WORK

The CF region's workers look outside their counties of residence for a place to work. Table 11 compares place-of-residence (LAUS) estimates of the workforce with place-of-work (ES 202) estimates. The data imply that, except for DeSoto County, residents of a particular county are working on a net basis in another county.

Table 11  
Commuting to Work

<u>Place</u>	<u>Employed Persons in 2000</u>		<u>Implied Net</u>	
	<u>by Place-of-Residence</u>	<u>by Place-of-Work</u>	<u>Commuting</u>	
Polk	195,124	181,900	13,224	out
Okeechobee	14,278	9,705	4,573	out
Highlands	24,217	22,900	1,317	out
Hardee	7,962	6,895	1,067	out
DeSoto	7,944	8,576	-632	in
Hillsborough	554,720	591,832	-37,112	in
Orange	499,770	612,941	-113,171	in

Note: Besides place-of-residence versus place-of-work, another distinction between the two data sets is that LAUS includes self-employed persons while ES 202 does not.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Survey (LAUS), for place-of-residence data and Florida Department of Labor, Covered Employment (ES 202), for place-of-work data.

## K THROUGH 12 EDUCATION

Measures of education inputs, cost per regular pupil and the number of pupils in a language class, are in line with the statewide averages and the comparison counties. See Table 12.

Table 12  
K through 12 Education Inputs, Academic Year 1999-2000

<u>Place</u>	<u>Cost per Regular Pupil</u>	<u>Avg. Language Class Size (pupils)</u>
Hardee	\$4,437	23.5
Polk	\$4,287	21.9
Okeechobee	\$4,211	20.5
DeSoto	\$4,187	23.0
Highlands	\$4,132	28.0
Average	\$4,251	23.4
Florida	\$4,247	25.3
Hillsborough	\$4,052	22.7
Orange	\$3,934	25.4

Source: Florida Department of Education

Measures of education performance also compare favorably with statewide averages. Graduation rates are above the statewide rate in all CF-counties except Polk County. Also notable, the FCAT (reading) score in Okeechobee County is significantly lower than the scores of other locations. See Table 13.

Table 13  
K through 12 Education Performance  
Academic Year 1999-2000

<u>Place</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>FCAT (reading) Score</u>
DeSoto	67.5%	33%
Hardee	65.5%	29%
Highlands	64.7%	36%
Okeechobee	64.3%	23%
Polk	55.3%	30%
Average	63.5%	30%
Florida	62.3%	33%
Hillsborough	71.4%	38%
Orange	49.5%	36%

Source: Florida Department of Education

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the past decade, 1990-2000, Florida's population increased by about 24%, its labor force increased by about 16%, and employment was up by about 19%. However, the state's rural counties did not proportionately share in the growing economy as indicated by the statewide increases in population, labor force, and jobs. While the CF-counties added 21.2% to the population base, labor force in the counties grew by only 2.0%. Small labor force growth limited employment gains in the CF-counties to 6.7%. The good news, reflecting a strong economy, is that employment outgrew labor force, bringing down the region's unemployment rate. When compared with its metropolitan neighboring counties of Hillsborough and Orange, the CF region trailed in measures of economic expansion during the past decade. Per capita personal income as well as payroll earnings in the CF region were below state averages.

The industry structure of the CF region reflects its rural nature. Agriculture and agricultural service industries are prominent. In addition, the CF region's workers often look outside their counties for a place to work.

In the CF region, education inputs and performance are on a par with Florida averages. However, there is room for improvement. For example, the graduation rate in academic year 1999-2000 was 63.5% in the CF region and 62.3% Florida-wide.

Some of the issues cited by CF regional economic development officials include: 1) insufficient resources, particularly for rural economic development, 2) the implications for economic development in counties that are highly attractive for Hispanics, 3) an economic development role for addressing the needs of an active age 65 and over segment of the population, 4) a goal of raising average wages in a community and means of achieving that goal, and 5) the need for greater infrastructure planning and capital commitment, particularly in rural areas.



**Appendix A**  
Table  
Industry Structure - Year 2000

Industry Divisions	Place: DeSoto		Hardee		Highlands		Okeechobee		Polk	
	Jobs	%	Jobs	%	Jobs	%	Jobs	%	Jobs	%
<b>GOODS-PRODUCING</b>										
Agriculture	2,616	30.5%	2,064	29.9%	3,396	14.8%	1,698	17.5%	8,211	4.5%
Construction & Mining	320	3.7%	180	2.6%	952	4.2%	510	5.3%	12,339	6.8%
Manufacturing	225	2.6%	209	3.0%	1,218	5.3%	166	1.7%	19,737	10.9%
Utilities	89	1.0%	128	1.9%	659	2.9%	473	4.9%	8,922	4.9%
Total goods-producing	3,250	37.9%	2,581	37.4%	6,225	27.2%	2,847	29.3%	49,209	27.1%
<b>SERVICE-PRODUCING</b>										
Trade	1,440	16.8%	1,159	16.8%	5,415	23.6%	2,553	26.3%	50,946	28.0%
Finance	177	2.1%	252	3.7%	665	2.9%	238	2.5%	8,565	4.7%
Services	982	11.5%	1,204	17.5%	6,628	28.9%	2,257	23.3%	45,940	25.3%
Government	2,727	31.8%	1,699	24.6%	3,967	17.3%	1,810	18.7%	27,240	15.0%
Total service-producing	5,326	62.1%	4,314	62.6%	16,675	72.8%	6,858	70.7%	132,691	72.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,576</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>22,900</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>9,705</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>181,900</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Industry Divisions	Place: CF region		Florida		Hillsborough		Orange	
	Jobs	%	Jobs (000)	%	Jobs	%	Jobs	%
<b>GOODS-PRODUCING</b>								
Agriculture	17,985	7.8%	150	2.1%	11,946	2.0%	8,729	1.4%
Construction & Mining	14,301	6.2%	396	5.6%	28,602	4.8%	28,673	4.7%
Manufacturing	21,555	9.4%	485	6.9%	37,892	6.4%	37,342	6.1%
Utilities	10,271	4.5%	350	5.0%	32,807	5.5%	34,196	5.6%
Total goods-producing	64,112	27.9%	1,381	19.5%	111,247	18.8%	108,940	17.8%
<b>SERVICE-PRODUCING</b>								
Trade	61,513	26.7%	1,784	25.2%	129,860	21.9%	138,397	22.6%
Finance	9,897	4.3%	437	6.2%	47,266	8.0%	33,645	5.5%
Services	57,011	24.8%	2,491	35.2%	233,581	39.5%	272,987	44.5%
Government	37,443	16.3%	977	13.8%	69,878	11.8%	58,972	9.6%
Total service-producing	165,864	72.1%	5,689	80.5%	480,585	81.2%	504,001	82.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229,976</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>7,070</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>591,832</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>612,941</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: FL Department of Labor ES-202