

# **BUILDING FLORIDA'S FUTURE**

## State Strategies for Regional Cooperation

*A Report from the  
ULI Florida Committee  
for Regional Cooperation*

# ABOUT ULI—THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute supported and directed by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 25,000 members and associates from 80 countries representing all land use and development disciplines.

ULI works with a broad cross section of community leaders in cities around the country to develop and implement policies and practices addressing regional cooperation, workforce and affordable housing, transit-oriented development, open-space preservation, and smart growth. By researching land use and development trends, identifying best practices, and building consensus for change, ULI's research, education and community outreach programs serve to improve the built environment in communities across the country.

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Also important to the success of this initiative are the chairs of the four Florida ULI district councils—Neisen Kasdin, ULI Southeast Florida and Caribbean; Toxey Hall, ULI Tampa Bay; David Graham, ULI Southwest Florida; and Randy Lyon, ULI Central and North Florida—as well as their staff members. Their leadership and guidance were instrumental in bringing this project to life. The Florida district councils contributed to this initiative in countless ways, including having the initial vision for the project, providing project funding, and acting as hosts of the regional forums. ULI is also grateful to Anthony Trella and Russell Weyer, ULI Regional Initiative chairs for southeast and southwest Florida, respectively, and to the many business and community leaders who participated in the regional forums. In addition, ULI is grateful to the individuals who donated their time to provide information for this initiative, especially Jim Murley and his staff at the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES) at Florida Atlantic University.

ULI extends a very special thanks to members of the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation, who so generously shared their time and their insights into the growth challenges facing Florida. Their cumulative knowledge of the state is amazing and made a real difference. The committee cochairs, Peter Rummell and Nathaniel Reed, merit special recognition. Their generous donation of time, leadership, and wise guidance led to a strong, balanced, and carefully thought-out set of strategic recommendations that will advance regional cooperation in Florida to the benefit of all its communities. ULI also expresses its appreciation to Bob Rhodes for his ongoing leadership and sage advice. The other person who deserves special recognition is Shelley Lauten, director of the ULI Florida Initiative on Regional Cooperation. She was the force that held everyone together. Her enthusiasm for the project and her energy and skillful attention to the details that matter made the work of the committee seem effortless.

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## FOREWORD

Over the next 15 years, Florida must address a major challenge: how to maintain the state's economic competitiveness while continuing to offer a high quality of life to its citizens and visitors. With the anticipated influx of nearly 5 million new residents by 2020, Florida's response to this challenge will have a significant impact on the state's future. The best response will be effective regional collaboration that creates distinctive, economically competitive metropolitan and rural centers around the state.

Florida today looks significantly different than it did in 1970. Since the early 1970s, the state has welcomed almost 1,000 residents a day, making it one of the fastest-growing states in the country.<sup>1</sup> Most of these new residents have settled in urban areas, with the result that over 90 percent of Floridians are currently urban dwellers. Formerly distinct communities that 30 years ago were surrounded by rural countryside are now a series of socially, economically, and environmentally interdependent metropolitan regions. As a longtime Florida observer noted, "It is an easy task to understand that Florida is a series of regions. Simply get into a plane and fly over the state at night. From the sky, the regions of Florida are self-evident."

Most of the newcomers to Florida in the past 20 years have settled in urban areas, with the result that over 90 percent of Floridians now live in urban settings.



TAMPA BAY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

The economy of Florida is also different than it was three decades ago. Today, Floridians live and compete in a global economy. In this new economy, metropolitan regions provide the large reservoir of resources that businesses require to remain competitive. While these regions are large enough to provide the resources essential to a successful business, they are also small enough to allow the development of solid working relationships between the public and private sectors and a shared identity built around common issues and resources. Successful businesses choose regions that are healthy and vibrant, offer a desirable quality of life, and have broad regional constituencies committed to maintaining that quality of life.

Today, Floridians live and compete in a global economy. A unified, regional approach to economic development would help to advance Florida's capacity for new aerospace-related investment.



FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST OFFICE OF TOURISM

Virtually all of Florida's growth-related issues—from how to achieve economic diversity to how to integrate land use and transportation planning in order to accommodate growing populations—are regional in scale. The issues are simply too large and complex to be solved by localities acting on their own. Some Florida communities are beginning to think and act regionally to address some of these issues, but regional cooperation is neither widespread nor widely encouraged across the state.

Recognizing the importance of regional cooperation to the future economic competitiveness and livability of Florida and its communities, the Urban Land Institute and its four Florida district councils in 2003 launched the ULI Florida Initiative on Regional Cooperation. This multi-year initiative seeks to identify new opportunities for Florida to support and encourage regional cooperation. The ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation, representing a broad cross section of stakeholders and leaders from throughout the state, has led the initiative.

The committee has spent the past year engaged in fact finding, research, and careful listening across the state, and what it has learned is clear: if Florida is to maintain and enhance its quality of life and succeed in the global economy, it must recognize the importance of regional approaches, then match the new regional realities with leadership and resources that will encourage and enhance creation of regional solutions to regional problems.

The committee's recommendations focus on how the state can embrace its new regional reality. State leadership must actively encourage and support the regional cooperation necessary to build and sustain strong and competitive regions. While local government can and should participate in regional efforts, it is the state government that must take the lead. If Florida is to achieve a competitive advantage as it continues to accommodate a growing and changing population, the time to act is now.

Florida's future economic competitiveness is in the balance. Transforming the recommendations of the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation into reality will require the participation and

support of public and private sector leaders and citizens throughout Florida. Regional cooperation will yield benefits around the state as it faces the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. If we as Floridians do not take the big steps today to make regional cooperation work, a generation from now, we will look back and wish we had.

**Nathaniel P. Reed**

*Former Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and National Parks,  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Cochair, ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation*

**Peter S. Rummell**

*Chairman and CEO, St. Joe Company  
Cochair, ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation*

June 2005

# INTRODUCTION

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**C**onsider the following scenario:

*It is 2025, 20 years after Florida developed a new approach to increase the state's global economic competitiveness and enhance residents' quality of life through regional cooperation. Under the governor's leadership in 2005, the state made a commitment to take a unique approach to addressing its challenges and opportunities by providing financial incentives and technical support to regions throughout the state to help them develop regional visions and action plans. As a result, neighboring communities across the state have established shared regional visions, and together they are collaborating across local boundaries to implement regional action plans that integrate transportation planning, housing affordability, economic development, and natural resource management.*

*For example, in south Florida, the largest of Florida's regions, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Port St. Lucie are working together on a regional port strategy. In the southwest region, Naples and Fort Myers, in close collaboration with the smaller communities to their east, have developed plans to accommodate new residents in urban villages while preserving the western edge of the Everglades. The central Florida region that stretches from coast to coast, connecting Tampa, Orlando, Daytona Beach, and Cape Canaveral, is implementing a strategy for a regionwide rapid public transit system to reduce traffic and leverage dollars across the region. The Jacksonville region is creating regional partnerships that cross not only county but also state boundaries. And, in the Panhandle region, stretching from Tallahassee to the Alabama border, a regional strategy for locating housing affordable to people of all income levels near jobs is well on its way to implementation.*

*To sustain the regional visions and coherent actions of each of these regions, the state has provided ongoing financial incentives for regional cooperation, and each state agency has aligned its actions and investments to support those regional initiatives. Some impressive changes have taken place as a result of this strong foundation of regional cooperation: the strategic efforts of these regions have enabled Florida to maintain its economic and global competitiveness over the past 20 years while absorbing 5 million new residents and improving the quality of life for all Florida residents.*

Is this just a view in a particularly rosy crystal ball? Not at all. This promising vision of Florida 20 years in the future is one that leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can, in fact, achieve, if strong foundations are put in place now.

*Florida has very distinct and different regions. To accomplish greater regional collaboration, it is important to first figure out the needs of each region and then fashion a plan that works for each.*

—Peter S. Rummell,  
committee cochair,  
and chairman and CEO,  
St. Joe Company

To lay the foundation needed to make this vision a reality, the Urban Land Institute, in collaboration with its four Florida district councils, undertook the ULI Florida Initiative on Regional Collaboration in 2003. At the forefront of this multiyear initiative is the statewide ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation, composed of leaders from the development community, civic and environmental groups, community-based organizations, and the public sector. The committee engaged in a 12-month fact-finding process to identify state barriers to regional cooperation and to forge a consensus on a recommended set of state actions and reforms to facilitate regional thinking and regional action. The committee augmented its work with input from regional forums and from experts who shared their experiences in other parts of the country.

The message from the committee's year of fact finding is clear: there is a mismatch between Florida's traditional approach to responding to growth pressures and its current regional realities. To remain competitive, Florida must take strong and immediate action to embrace a regional outlook. Doing so will expand the capacity of both the state and the localities to support the emergence of regions and their ability to tackle problems. The message from across the state was also clear: to develop the capacity to act regionally, the state must review and revise the current planning and policy framework—which is based largely on a top-down, state-to-local model—to include regional thinking and solutions that are tailored to the needs of each region and the localities within them. To succeed, strong state leadership, funding, and incentives are essential.

In response to what members heard, and drawing on its own substantial experience and knowledge, the committee adopted four major recommendations and identified several strategies to implement them. The recommendations and the specific strategies to accomplish them are described in more detail in the “Achieving Regional Cooperation” section of this report. The committee is now working to implement its recommendations. Those recommendations are:

**Recommendation 1:** The governor should exercise leadership and an ongoing commitment to statewide regional cooperation.

**Recommendation 2:** The state should enable each region to develop a regional vision and an action plan to implement that vision.

**Recommendation 3:** The state should ensure that all state agencies function in a highly responsive and integrated way to foster and monitor regional cooperation and promote and support regional initiatives.

**Recommendation 4:** Because regional cooperation must be sustained and improved over time, the state should encourage and support, on an ongoing basis, each region's efforts to make measurable progress toward its vision and to continue to improve regional cooperation.

# THE ULI FLORIDA INITIATIVE ON REGIONAL COOPERATION



The ULI Florida Initiative on Regional Cooperation is composed of three phases designed to maximize thoughtful feedback from business and civic leaders, elected officials, and key state government staff members on what Florida can do to encourage regional collaboration. Those phases are:



JIM MCLAUGHLIN/ULI SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

The recommendations of the ULI Florida Initiative on Regional Cooperation are based on thoughtful feedback from business and civic leaders, elected officials, and state government staff.

- ◆ establish a statewide committee—the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation—to examine the history of regional cooperation in Florida and to make recommendations for what the state can do to improve regional collaboration;
- ◆ develop recommendations through the statewide committee meetings, regional forums organized by ULI’s district councils, and a ULI Advisory Services workshop; and
- ◆ implement the statewide committee’s recommendations through an outreach initiative, including a statewide symposium, a series of briefing meetings with stakeholder groups across the state, and media briefings.

*Regionalism should be a fact of life in a state that will continue to grow. If we don't take the gigantic step and make regionalism work, 40 years from now we will look back and wish we had.*

—Nathaniel P. Reed, committee cochair, and former assistant secretary for fish, wildlife, and national parks, U.S. Department of the Interior

*The message from the participants at the forum was clear: due to the unique diversity of Florida, change must be driven by the regions, and state agencies should be directed to foster, support, and facilitate regional collaboration.*

—G. Russell Weyer, senior associate, Fishkind Associates, and chair, ULI Southwest Florida

## **The ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation**

The ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation is at the forefront of the ULI regional initiative, meeting regularly from December 2003 to December 2004 to identify barriers to and new opportunities for Florida to support and encourage regional cooperation. The driving force that brought and kept this diverse group together was the recognition that regional collaboration is imperative in order for Florida to compete effectively in the global economy and to solve the problems stemming from a period of unparalleled growth.

### **Committee Focus**

The committee organized its work into three tasks:

- ♦ examine the history of regional cooperation in Florida and assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing regional efforts and organizations in the state;
- ♦ explore how to update and improve Florida's framework for regional cooperation; and
- ♦ recommend specific steps Florida should take to remove barriers and improve the current system of regional cooperation.

### **Committee Membership**

The committee's 37 members were selected for their standing in their communities, and their knowledge of and interest in Florida's regional potential. Care was taken to ensure that all geographic areas of Florida were represented and that the committee included respected leaders with a variety of perspectives, including the development community, civic and environmental groups, community-based organizations, and the public sector. Because of the committee's balanced representation, members learned from each other about Florida's growth challenges, and their recommendations reflect the views of diverse interests across the state. Recognizing the urgency of its work, the committee met in five one-day sessions and one two-day session over 12 months. During that time, members also participated in regional forums held in different parts of Florida. They also tapped into the skills and knowledge of experts around the country through a ULI Advisory Services panel workshop.

## ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation

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Former Assistant Secretary for Fish,  
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## Regional Forums

The committee convened two rounds of regional forums to provide input at key points in the fact-finding process. Sponsored by ULI's district councils, the forums were held in Tampa Bay, central Florida (including participants from north Florida), southeast Florida, and southwest Florida. The forums allowed the committee to learn first-hand about stakeholders' experiences with regional cooperation and to seek their ideas for improvements to the system. Forum participants in each region included representatives from the regional planning councils (RPCs), local governments, and business, environmental, and civic organizations. The forums were held in spring and fall 2004.

*We heard from the forums that whether it is about economics, natural resources, or some other common target, a shared vision of the future is important. It is not possible to make effective decisions in Fort Myers without first establishing where, as a region, we want to go or what we want to be.*

—Jim Humphrey,  
Mayor, Fort Myers

Participants in the forums played a key role in honing the work of the committee by reviewing and reaching agreement on topics such as regional similarities and differences, the barriers to regional cooperation, and recommendations outlining what the state can do to overcome the barriers and foster regional collaboration. They also agreed on what it means to be a region and the principles that constitute effective regional cooperation. Forum participants reached a consensus that Florida's growth offers both opportunities and challenges that are addressed best by regional action guided by a shared vision of the unique needs of each region. Such regional action can be enhanced and expanded through the state providing strong leadership and regional resources.

## ULI Advisory Services Workshop Findings and Recommendations

From August 1 to 4, 2004, a ULI Advisory Services panel of experts from around the country gathered in Florida to examine key questions, consider obstacles to and explore incentives for regional cooperation, and produce an initial set of recommendations for improving regional cooperation in the state. The committee used the panel's recommendations and those of the regional forums to develop a set of recommendations outlining what the state should do to encourage regional cooperation. The panel members were:

- ♦ David Bragdon, president, Metro Council, Portland, Oregon;
- ♦ Robert J. Grow, senior counsel, O'Melveny and Myers, LLP, and founding chair, Envision Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah;
- ♦ Ellen Heath, principal and vice president, EDAW, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia;
- ♦ Doug Henton, president, Collaborative Economics, Mountain View, California; and
- ♦ Curtis Johnson, principal, Citistates Group, St. Paul, Minnesota.

The workshop participants spent three days in Florida meeting with local leaders. The result was a set of policies and procedures that the panel recommended the state consider in order to increase regional cooperation. (The panel's recommendations are summarized in the report *Regional Cooperation for Florida's Future: A Report to the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation*, published by ULI in winter 2004). The panel made recommendations in five areas:

- ♦ *Leadership*: Strong leadership at the local, regional, and state levels is key to fostering regional cooperation. The critical link is strong, visible leadership by the governor.
- ♦ *Communication*: Regional cooperation results from effective communication among all sectors, starting with regional visioning processes, fostered by state support, that create a dialogue among the public and regional stakeholders about the future of a region.
- ♦ *Best practices*: Florida needs to learn from examples of successful regional collaboration taking place in the state and in other parts of the country. With the assistance of university research centers, success stories should be shared around the state.
- ♦ *Regional cooperation*: The governor should take the lead to encourage regional cooperation, remove barriers, and create incentives to work across traditional boundaries. Florida's top-down planning processes must be redesigned to allow for more bottom-up, locally based innovation and experimentation. In a diverse and rapidly changing state, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.
- ♦ *Measurement and accountability*: Each region should develop measurable quality-of-life and growth indicators to demonstrate how much progress it is making toward reaching its goals. To ensure accountability, public and private funding, policy decisions, and program priorities should be linked to progress on these indicators.

*The governor needs to bring clout, the panel noted, to a "higher-stakes game—getting Florida organized by natural economic regions and aligning its resources and decision-making apparatus so that the state and its regions can compete in a global economy."*

—ULI Advisory Services panel report, August 2004

*Just as Florida once was recognized as a leader in growth management in the 1980s, it can now become a leader in a new form of regional governance that is more appropriate to new realities.*

—ULI Advisory Services panel report, August 2004

# FLORIDA'S GROWTH: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION



*Whether it is a region that is more mature and densely developed, an urbanizing region, or a more rural region, the challenge for Florida is to accommodate new growth in the right locations and the right urban form so that the quality of life of current residents is enriched rather than degraded. Florida's communities can meet this challenge only by working together with a common regional vision.*

—Timothy J. Jackson,  
president, Glatting Jackson  
Kercher Anglin Lopez  
Rinehart, Inc.

**E**ach day, almost 1,000 people move to Florida—providing fresh opportunities for the state's economic competitiveness and quality of life, as well as posing new challenges. As a result of the fast pace of growth, high-velocity change has become a way of life. No part of Florida is left untouched: urban, suburban, and rural areas alike will face critical changes in the coming years.

State leaders are recognizing that regional cooperation is imperative if Florida is to accommodate this growth effectively, maintain its economic vitality, and preserve its acclaimed quality of life. To understand how communities can most productively engage in regional cooperation, it is important first to understand Florida's growth challenges, study examples of where regional cooperation around the state is working, and examine the current barriers to widespread regional cooperation. It also is important to appreciate what the state leadership can do to promote regional cooperation by supporting existing regional initiatives and fostering new ones.

**Steady growth for Florida means that urban, suburban, and rural areas alike will face critical changes in the coming years.**

**Located along Fort Lauderdale's riverfront, Las Olas Boulevard is evolving into one of south Florida's most dynamic downtown commercial districts.**



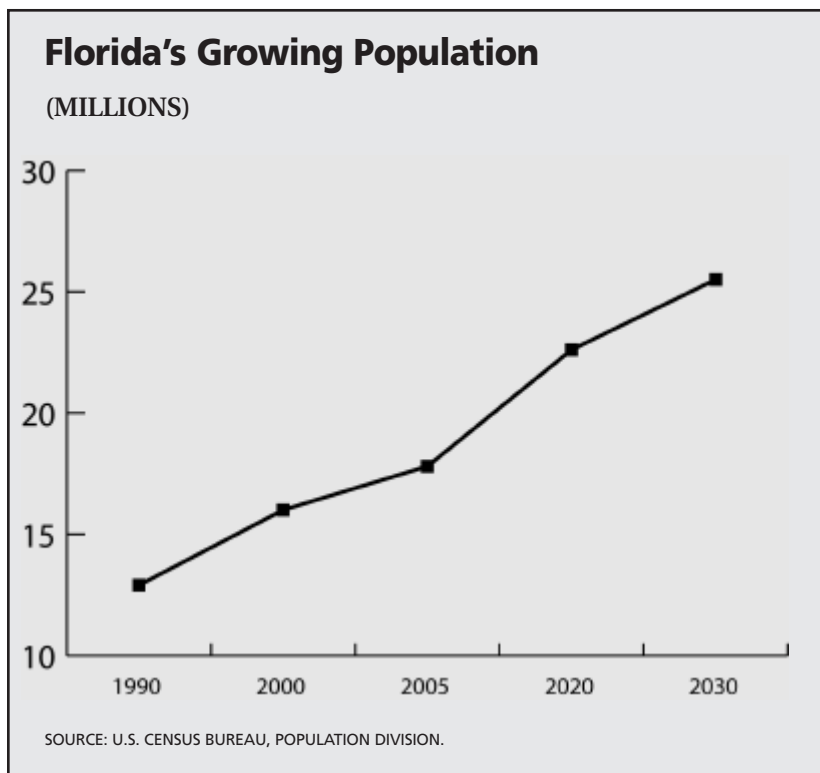
BARBARA CORDOVES/THE BROWARD ALLIANCE



State leaders are recognizing that regional cooperation will provide Florida with the means to accommodate growth effectively. South Florida is one of the state's fastest-growing regions, facing rapid population increases that threaten to strain the area's resources and infrastructure.

## Florida's Growth Challenges

To envision the magnitude of Florida's growth challenges and the dramatic evolution of its economy and population—as well as the changes in store for the near future—it is important to look back at Florida's rapid growth over the past 30 years, where the state is now, and where it is going.



### Where Florida Has Been—1970 to 2000

Florida changed dramatically in the last three decades of the 20th century, including in the following areas:

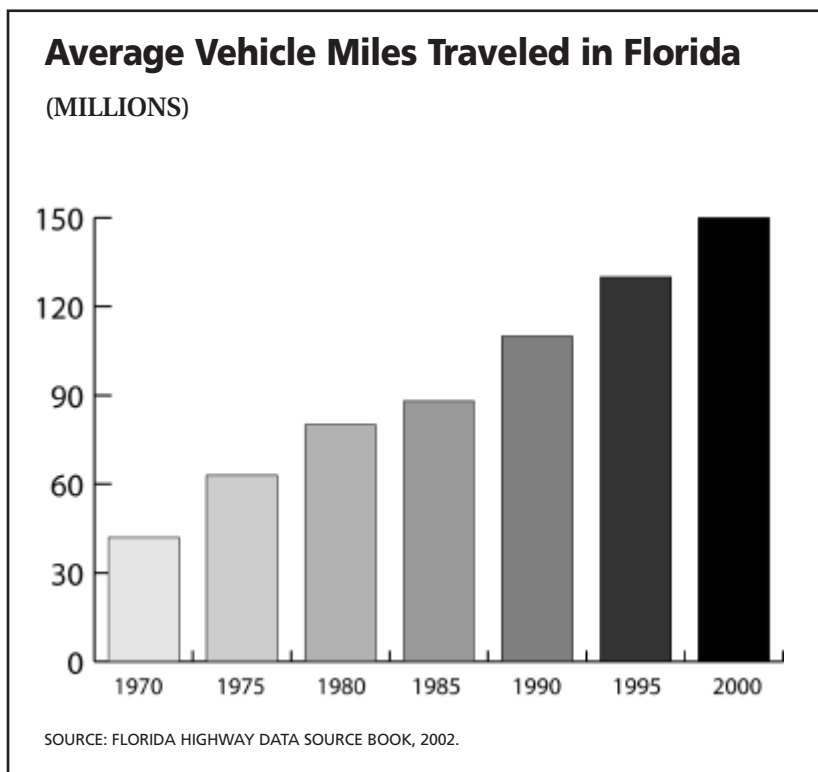
- ♦ *Population.* Florida's population has more than doubled in three decades—from less than 7 million people to more than 16.5 million—making it one of the fastest-growing states in the country.<sup>2</sup>

The number of vehicle miles traveled annually in Florida increased by more than 250 percent between 1970 and 2000.



PENSACOLA CONVENTION AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

- ◆ *Land use.* From 1964 to 1997, nearly 5 million acres of agricultural land was lost, and the amount of land in urban areas increased from 1.2 million acres to more than 5 million.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ *Transportation.* The average number of vehicle miles traveled in the state increased by more than 250 percent from 1970 to 2000.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ *Economy.* From 1970 to 2000, Florida's economy changed dramatically: tourism became a year-round industry, international trade expanded, business and financial services grew, and a fast-growing high-tech corridor developed along Interstate 4.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ *Employment.* The civilian labor force more than tripled, growing from 2.6 million in 1970 to 7.9 million in 2000.<sup>6</sup>





PENSACOLA CONVENTION AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

Tourism is one of Florida's major economic drivers. The Pensacola Cultural Center is a downtown hub of arts and entertainment.

### Where Florida Is Now—2000 to 2005

Today, Florida is at a turning point, according to many indicators, including the following:

- ◆ *Economy.* Florida ranks first among the 50 states in international tourism, third in high-technology exports, and seventh in foreign investments.<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ *Employment.* Florida has the fastest rate of annual job growth among the ten most populous states.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ *Housing.* Florida's statewide median home price increased by 74.5 percent between 2000 and 2005, creating an increasing challenge of affordability in a state where wages lag behind the national average.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ *Growth.* More than 90 percent of Floridians now live in urban areas, which continue to expand farther into undeveloped areas.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ *Natural resources.* Florida consumes more fresh water than any other state east of the Mississippi.<sup>11</sup>

### Where Florida Is Going—2000 to 2030

Among the many changes that are expected to continue and accelerate in the coming decades are the following:

- ◆ *Population.* By 2030, Florida's population will have increased by nearly 40 percent from the 2000 level.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ *Growth.* Most of the built environment that will exist in 2030 has yet to be constructed.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ *Diversity.* Hispanics will make up 23 percent of Florida's population by 2030, up from 17 percent in 2000.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ *Transportation.* Daily vehicle miles traveled are projected to increase by 103 percent between 2000 and 2030.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ *Land use.* By 2020, more than 2.6 million acres of agricultural land—7.5 percent of the state's total land area—is expected to be converted to urban uses.<sup>16</sup>



BARBARA CORDOVES/THE BROWARD ALLIANCE

Most of the built environment that will exist in Florida in 2030 has yet to be constructed.

In many parts of the state, leaders are recognizing that growth challenges—as well as opportunities—are regional in scale and thus need to be addressed on a regional basis. In these areas, Florida’s leaders are reinventing themselves to act regionally on the challenges posed by continued rapid population growth and to capitalize on the opportunities created by an expanding economy. Many businesses, government agencies, and civic groups are already coming together to promote economic opportunities and address important quality-of-life issues, such as water supply, an efficient transportation network, and protection of natural

resources. These efforts, some of which are described below, provide valuable models for how regional cooperation can be implemented. They also offer a glimpse of the potential benefits to every Floridian of widespread regional cooperation.

## Regional Cooperation: Florida’s Best Practices

Today, Florida is defined by its rapidly expanding metropolitan areas. What were once separate communities within geographic areas are now physically, economically, and environmentally interdependent as part of a shared regional system. Their futures are linked inextricably. As a result, Florida communities can no longer exist in a vacuum.

To match this new regional reality, citizens, public officials, and business leaders across the state are starting to think and act regionally. Many local leaders have already come together to solve particular regional issues or to build broad-based regional coalitions to overcome

**The protection and management of natural resources benefit from a regional strategy.**

*Today, most of the big challenges we are dealing with are regional and cannot be solved by one local jurisdiction acting alone. In southeast Florida, setting aside turfs for a common goal—the restoration of the Everglades—will be key to our future prosperity and quality of life.*

—Katy Sorenson,  
commissioner, Miami-Dade  
Board of County  
Commissioners



PENSA COLA CONVENTION AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

Many businesses, government agencies, and civic groups are coming together to promote economic opportunities and address quality-of-life issues.



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the limits of single-jurisdictional and single-issue thinking. The following are some of the best examples of how communities in Florida are applying regional cooperation to increase economic competitiveness, enhance the quality of life, and create a sense of regional identity and awareness.

### **Regional Cooperation for Economic Competitiveness**

**Florida High Tech Corridor Council.** The Florida High Tech Corridor Council was established in 1996 by regional leaders from 21 counties in central and south Florida to attract, retain, and develop high-tech industries, and to help the region to be more competitive in a global economy. Council members—representing a cooperative partnership of the region’s universities, high-tech companies, community colleges, and more than a dozen economic development organizations—have attracted more than \$100 million in investments.

**Tampa Bay Partnership.** The Tampa Bay Partnership (TBP) is a regional organization that works with its partners to market the region nationally and internationally, conduct regional research, and influence decisions on business and governmental issues that affect economic growth and development. The TBP is composed of individuals representing the diverse interests of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota counties. Until TBP was created, member counties seldom communicated with each other and often competed for economic development opportunities.

**Florida’s Great Northwest.** Similar to the Tampa Bay Partnership, the Florida’s Great Northwest organization in the Panhandle is marketing the Panhandle as a whole and is galvanizing regional leadership in 16 counties to build regional identity and prosperity.

**Regional Business Alliance.** The Regional Business Alliance, established in 2002, was south Florida's first regional coalition of CEOs, representing Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties. Its members—sharing a commitment to south Florida, regionalism, and collaborative approaches—are working in partnership across county jurisdictional lines to present a unified front on a variety of issues affecting sustainability and quality of life in south Florida. The alliance is best known for its leadership role in the 2003 creation of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, which is responsible for developing and coordinating transportation systems in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

### **Regional Cooperation for Quality of Life**

**Tampa Bay Water.** Tampa Bay Water (TBW) is a special district created by agreement among local governments to supply wholesale water to Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties, St. Petersburg, New Port Richey, and Tampa. TBW provides wholesale water to its member utilities, which in turn provide water to more than 2 million people in the tricounty area. Local governments in the region worked cooperatively to form TBW to solve problems after years of water shortages and litigation caused by competition among localities when each managed its own water supply facilities.

**Reducing Health Care Costs through Regional Cooperation.** In southwest Florida, Fort Myers Mayor Jim Humphrey and Lee County Manager Don Stilwell explored the cost savings that could be realized by obtaining comprehensive medical insurance on a countywide basis for government employees of Lee County, the county's five cities, the school board, and the sheriff's department. Their research showed that consolidating the purchase of health insurance could save Lee County taxpayers 8 to 12 percent of the total cost. The next step is to work with the regional planning council and neighboring counties to see if these cost savings can be extended regionally.

**Wekiva River Basin Area Task Force.** To balance protection of the Wekiva Basin with new growth and future transportation needs in east-central Florida, Governor Jeb Bush appointed the Wekiva Basin Area Task Force in September 2002. The task force was responsible for recommending the most appropriate location for a highway connecting State Road 429 to Interstate 4, and for developing a transportation plan based on evaluation of the diverse considerations associated with potential expansion of roads or corridors within the Wekiva Basin area. As a result of the task force efforts, the 2004 Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act was approved, authorizing construction of the parkway and providing protection for the river system.

### **Multiple-Issue Regional Cooperation**

**Jacksonville Community Council Inc.** The Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) is a nonprofit civic organization that seeks to improve the quality of life in northeast Florida by increasing public awareness and promoting positive action. Since 1975, JCCI has convened diverse groups of citizens each year to identify significant com-

munity issues for in-depth study. The past 30 years of studies have created significant improvement in the region's quality of life.

**myregion.org.** The organization *myregion.org*, made up of citizens and leaders from public, private, and institutional sectors, is seeking to prepare the seven-county central Florida region to compete more effectively economically in the 21st century while enhancing the quality of life of the region's residents. Created in 2000, *myregion.org* brings people together to learn about issues, understand options, and build and implement a regional agenda in six priority areas: economic leadership, the environment, education, smart growth, fragmentation of the region, and quality of life.

**Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast.** Established by Governor Jeb Bush in 2004, the Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast (CSTC) has the goal of improving the quality of life, the built and natural environments, and the economy of the Treasure Coast region. Members of the committee include elected officials from Indian River, Martin, and St. Lucie counties; officials from towns and cities in those counties; and stakeholders from Treasure Coast quasi-governmental, educational, conservation, business, and regional interests. CSTC is using a consensus-based process to determine findings and recommendations related to the long-range planning necessary to ensure sustainable development in the three-county planning area.

**Issues '05: Southwest Florida Regional Forum.** This event, convened in December 2004, was the first of its kind in the region. Spearheaded by state Representative Mike Davis of Naples, Issues '05 brought together state House and Senate members from a six-county area to discuss issues and legislative initiatives of regional importance. More than 300 people attended to hear presentations by business and community leaders on transportation, growth management, natural resources, educational and workforce development, and economic development. The results of the forum are predicted to serve as a launch pad for an organized southwest Florida regional initiative.

### **Regional Cooperation with Statewide Support**

**Enterprise Florida 2004–2009 Statewide Strategic Plan.** Enterprise Florida, Inc., (EFI) is the public/private partnership created in 1996 to lead Florida's statewide economic development efforts. More than 1,000 stakeholders, including business, education, government, and economic development leaders at both the state and regional levels, contributed to the EFI's 2004–2009 Statewide Strategic Plan. Its goal is development of regional plans that cross functional boundaries, plus a road map of key priorities to diversify Florida's economy for global competitiveness.

**Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern.** The state established its Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC) program in 1999 under the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI), a multi-agency initiative coordinated by the state Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development that helps rural communities solve problems affecting their fiscal, economic, or community viability. An area desig-

nated as a rural area of critical economic concern receives priority attention from state agencies to ensure that its communities receive the technical resources and other assistance needed to advance economic development initiatives and local projects. There are three designated RACECs: Northwest Florida (eight counties), South Central Florida (six counties), and North Central Florida (14 counties). Each of the RACECs employs regional cooperation to accomplish common goals and achieve the desired changes. Additionally, the RACEC regions have joined together to produce the Seven-Point Plan for Rural Florida, which identifies seven statewide issues to be addressed for the benefit of all rural parts of the state.

**Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions.** The Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES) at Florida Atlantic University is working in partnership with regional planning organizations to build a stronger capability to meet regional needs and a greater awareness of the importance of thinking and acting regionally to solve complex, cross-jurisdictional problems. CUES demonstrates the ability of a university to act as a catalyst for a region, serving as a convener of regional forums and a source of information and expertise.

**Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies.** Housed at the University of Central Florida, the Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies provides a forum for addressing key issues of concern in the region. It offers the university's expertise, research, and resources to citizens and decision makers as they address the challenges facing central Florida.

**Florida Chamber Foundation New Cornerstone Study.** Sponsored by private and public organizations throughout the state, the 2003 New Cornerstone Study by the Florida Chamber Foundation provides a business-driven agenda for enhancing Florida's economic competitiveness. Its objectives include making Florida the most competitive state in key industries, raising per-capita income levels above the national average, and making Florida the number-one state in which to live, work, and do business. The plan emphasizes the link between the competitiveness of the state economy and the quality of its workforce, communities, and environment, as well as the need to address these elements at the regional level.

**Florida Regional Stewardship Academies.** The Florida Regional Stewardship academies—a collaborative project of the Florida Chamber Foundation with its regional and local partners—address a critical element for successful regional cooperation: community leaders who can think and act regionally. The academies emphasize leadership development, performance monitoring, and networking, and are designed to support regional economic development and community development initiatives consistent with the Florida Chamber Foundation's New Cornerstone Study. Three pilot academy sites have been selected: central Florida, Jacksonville, and south Florida.

**Florida Department of Transportation Strategic Intermodal System Plan.** Leading the rest of the state government, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Plan has taken a regional approach to transit. SIS was established in 2003 to enhance Florida's economic competitiveness by focusing limited state resources on those transportation facilities that are critical to Florida's economy and quality of life. FDOT also is working with metropolitan planning organizations, counties, and other regional and local partners to enhance regional coordination efforts and to identify and set priorities for regionally significant transportation facilities not included in the SIS. In addition, FDOT emphasizes funding assistance for regionally significant facilities.

## Opportunities for State Leadership

Interest in regional cooperation is clearly increasing as the steady growth and expansion of Florida's metropolitan areas fosters more shared interests among localities. In this context, the key question is how the state should respond. The answer from throughout Florida is that the state should respond by providing strong leadership, which means not only becoming the champion of regional thinking and action across the state, but also leading by example. Leadership as well as funding and other incentives must come from the state, and the state must realign its current structure and programs to support a regional framework.

Regional initiatives around the state have made significant progress toward solving the problems they set out to address. These initiatives have emerged because citizens and community leaders recognize that single-jurisdictional thinking no longer works to solve today's chal-

**Building regional partnerships is far from a one-size-fits-all approach; a rural community trying to attract growth clearly has different priorities than a more developed community grappling with sprawl.**



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lenges. Their efforts provide useful models for some of the most advanced strategies to date for grappling with regional realities. If the state were to match its resources with the reality of Florida's regional needs, the current regional initiatives could be stronger and more comprehensive. At the same time, state leadership to promote cross-jurisdictional cooperation would help many other parts of Florida benefit from comparable efforts.

However, an integral part of matching state resources with Florida's regional reality is the understanding that a uniform state policy will not work across all regions. Rather, effective and lasting solutions must be tailored to meet the needs of Florida's distinct regions. Each of Florida's regions has a different settlement pattern, is at a different point on the growth continuum, and is defined by its own economy, culture, and environment. One way of understanding Florida's regions

Each of Florida's regions is defined by its own economy, culture, and environment.



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is through the framework of what Steve Seibert, former secretary of the Florida Department of Community Affairs, calls “the three Floridas”—urban, suburban/exurban, and rural Florida. There is a big difference between a rural community trying to attract growth and a more developed community dealing with issues of redevelopment and transit.

Although each of the “Floridas” within a region experiences different problems on different scales, they are, in fact, connected by a common environment, transportation system, culture, and economy. The task of making regional cooperation work within each region requires understanding of and respect for the differences among each of the three Floridas and a commitment to build on the commonalities to find solutions to the challenges that cut across communities and that preclude solution by a single local government acting in isolation from its neighbors. The critical link is state support tailored to the unique needs of each region. The result of such support will be a greater capa-

bility in all parts of Florida to build and sustain the strong, resilient, regional systems required to enhance the quality of life and to succeed in the global economy.

To overcome the barriers to effective regional cooperation in Florida, as well as to build on the lessons of the successful regional initiatives underway and the recommendations of the regional forum participants, the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation developed six principles to encourage regional cooperation (see next section). The principles emphasize the significance of inclusive regional leadership, dialogue, and planning.

*To develop solutions to regional growth challenges that will be effective and endure, it is important to understand, acknowledge, and respect the pressures on each one of the three Floridas within a region. The needs of urban, suburban, and rural Florida are very different. The problem is that the state's regulatory framework generally treats each of these Floridas the same.*

—Steve Seibert, president, the Seibert Law Firm

# ACHIEVING REGIONAL COOPERATION

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The ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation developed a consensus-based list of primary barriers to cooperative regional action in Florida, refined a definition of what constitutes a “region,” and established a set of guiding principles for regional cooperation. The committee’s hallmark was to listen carefully to all stakeholders and to research the issues thoroughly. It first tested ideas with regional forum participants, then asked for advice from the ULI Advisory Services panel. The conclusions were consistent across Florida’s different regions and across different perspectives and areas of expertise.

## Barriers to Regional Cooperation

The best practices in regional cooperation from around the state described earlier in this report provide excellent examples of communities working in collaboration to solve problems and seize opportunities. However, the committee identified barriers that still deter many Florida communities from undertaking comparable initiatives and that often limit current efforts. It is only when these obstacles are removed that stakeholders will be able to truly work collaboratively to create a competitive advantage for a region and all its citizens. The principal barriers that the committee identified are:

- ♦ the lack of a shared regional identities, visions, and goals;
- ♦ the absence of regional leadership;
- ♦ the fragmented state regulatory system; and
- ♦ a state funding system that lacks coordination or incentives for regionalism.

### **Barrier 1: The lack of shared regional identities, visions, and goals**

Many factors contribute to this barrier, including the fact there is little sense of a regional identity in most metropolitan areas and the intense competition among cities and counties for development. In addition, many of Florida’s new residents continue to identify with communities outside the state. Underlying the lack of regional identity is the fact that the definition of “region” is unclear.

### **Barrier 2: The absence of regional leadership**

Few mechanisms exist to encourage regional communication and cooperation among civic, government, and business leaders. Consequently, there is a lack of trust among local governments, between governments at the local and state level, and among the public sector, the private sector, and citizens groups. Other sources of potential leadership are lost when business leaders are hesitant to lead large-scale regional initiatives, or if public officials are unwilling to support regional approaches.

### **Barrier 3: The fragmented state regulatory system**

Current state and local governmental structures do not accommodate effective regional approaches. Also, state policies and programs do not promote regional cooperation, and the promotional efforts of regional planning councils vary in their effectiveness. As a result, plans for transportation investment, though theoretically regionally based, are not coordinated with land use decisions.

### **Barrier 4: A state funding system that lacks coordination or incentives for regionalism**

Regional programs and regional planning councils lack dedicated funding sources, and local governments are unwilling to share regulatory power and revenue sources.

## **Definition of a Region**

To address these barriers and identify solutions, the committee realized it would be essential to establish a clear, consistent definition of region. Reflecting important themes emerging from the regional forums, the committee's definition of a region emphasizes the common attributes that bind together distinct and different communities within a region, the capacities of regions for collective action, and the important balance between preserving local identity and coming together for regional benefit.

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The committee agreed on the following definition:

*A region is an area of distinctive communities, cities, and counties where residents share:*

- ◆ *a geographic identity and social, economic, and cultural interdependence;*
  - ◆ *a capacity for planning and functioning cohesively for communication, education, transportation, housing, and the protection of natural resources; and*
  - ◆ *a capacity to create competitive advantage to promote opportunity and prosperity for all.*
-

*We need to seize today's opportunity because we won't have it again. We are brilliant collectively, but challenged individually. Leadership, a shared vision, mutual trust, and communication are fundamental.*

—R. Randolph Lyon, Jr., president, Xentury City Development Co., and past chair, ULI Orlando

## Principles of Regional Cooperation

Building on the recommendations of regional forum participants, the committee adopted six guiding principles for encouraging regional cooperation. Designed as guidelines for how to overcome the barriers to regional thinking and action, the principles emphasize the importance of inclusive regional leadership, dialogue, and planning. They also focus on the need for regional visions and the capacity of such visions to provide a foundation for engaging in cooperative action, maintaining community identity, and ensuring environmental sustainability. In addition, the principles call for investment of public and private resources to encourage creative regional collaboration and planning.

The committee believes that for regional cooperation to succeed, each of Florida's regions must implement the following principles:

### Principle 1: Develop a network of regional leaders.

These leaders must represent the region as a whole, constituting a diverse geographic and demographic mix of people representing businesses, civic/environmental organizations, and government bodies willing to engage in and discuss issues that cross traditional jurisdictional boundaries.

### Principle 2: Create and sustain a regional identity and vision.

Regional visions should originate at the local level and address ways to respect individual community identity while building unity around issues of regional importance.

### Principle 3: Develop and maintain a mechanism for ongoing regional dialogue and planning.

Whether it is a public agency, a private organization, or a collaboration of community groups, an organization is needed by each region to be responsible for convening groups, creating opportunities for ongoing dialogue, and building trust among diverse interest groups.



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Public and private resources should be available to encourage regional collaborations among the public, private, and civic sectors of the community.

**Principle 4: Direct public and private resources to address regional issues.**

Public and private resources, including incentives, should be made available to encourage creative regional collaboration among the public, private, and civic sectors of the community. Regional plans that extend beyond traditional jurisdictional boundaries should be supported with both public and private investments.

**Principle 5: Plan for and implement environmental sustainability.**

Regions are built on an environmental foundation. Leaders must recognize the environmental consequences of regional decisions and ensure that environmental resources are sustained for future generations.

**Principle 6: Measure and evaluate progress.**

To ensure that regional collaboration attains its intended results, regional benchmarks should be established and a process defined that allows the region to measure progress on regional goals and plans. Evaluation determines whether policies are working and whether they need to be changed.

Leaders must understand the consequences of regional decisions and ensure that environmental resources are sustainable for future generations.



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# THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

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*Looking at Florida's long-term trends, it is difficult to imagine that any one governmental institution can solve the problems. We need regional institutions charged with the big regional issues like transportation, affordable housing, and natural resource protection.*

—James F. Murley, director,  
Catanese Center for Urban  
and Environmental  
Solutions, Florida Atlantic  
University

**T**he recommendations of the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation are the result of 12 months of listening carefully to a broad range of stakeholders in all parts of the state, an assessment of regional cooperation in Florida and other regions to determine what has and has not worked, and an analysis of how most effectively to update and improve Florida's framework for regional cooperation.

## **What the Committee Heard**

The planning and decision-making mechanisms that served Florida well in the past need to be updated if the state's regions are to remain economically competitive in a global economy and continue to offer a desirable quality of life. Regional cooperation and regional-scale solutions are required to address the state's most critical growth planning challenges that cut across city and county lines.

The first step toward establishing effective solutions for regional cooperation must be taken at the state level. As a result, the committee's recommendations focus on what the state can do to promote regional cooperation. The recommendations seek to build on one of Florida's greatest assets: its demographic and geographic diversity; each region has its own distinct cultural, environmental, and economic character, providing residents and businesses with choices of where to locate and where to invest.

## **What the Committee Recommends**

Strong state leadership, starting with the governor, and a demonstrated statewide commitment to regional cooperation are essential. This means that the state should foster, promote, and monitor regional cooperation and organize the delivery of state policies, services, and financial resources along regional lines. Also essential are locally generated regional visions and action plans tailored to the needs and aspirations of each region.

A one-solution-fits-all approach will not work in Florida, given its size, the speed of its growth, and the diversity of its regions and population. State approaches to promoting and enhancing regional collaboration must be flexible, incentive based, and start from the bottom up. To that end, state policies and programs should be designed to:

- ♦ provide each region with the flexibility and resources to develop regional structures tailored to its individual needs, assets, community character, culture, and history; and
- ♦ support each self-defined region with a strong system of incentives and backing at the state level.

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The committee’s recommendations focus on what Florida can do to promote regional cooperation. In summary, the state should:

1. Exercise leadership.
  2. Promote regional visions and action plans.
  3. Provide state support for regional visions and action plans.
  4. Sustain and improve action plans.
- 

**Recommendation 1: The governor should exercise leadership and an ongoing commitment to statewide regional cooperation.**

**1.1** The governor should articulate clearly, consistently, and publicly the benefits of regional cooperation to various stakeholders and voice support for creating regional solutions for the most pressing growth challenges in the state. These challenges include issues relating to:

- ♦ transportation, land use, and infrastructure;
- ♦ housing at all income levels;
- ♦ economic development;
- ♦ the environment, natural resources, and parks and recreation;
- ♦ high-quality education;
- ♦ emergency preparation and recovery;
- ♦ health care;
- ♦ human services; and
- ♦ arts, culture, and heritage.

**1.2** The governor should invite legislators and leaders of state agencies to join him or her in convening regionwide meetings with public, private, civic, and not-for-profit leaders in each region to begin organizing for regional cooperation.

- ♦ The governor should work with regional leaders to identify the key stakeholders who should participate in a regional visioning process. Representatives from federal agencies and city and county officials should participate in these meetings.
- ♦ Enterprise Florida’s economic regions should be used as a beginning framework for regional conversations. Leaders in each region should consider the rationale for why the economic region was created and consider whether a different boundary should be adopted for building a regional vision and action plan for that region. Recog-

*It will take strong, sustained leadership and vision by the governor and a significant commitment of state resources to change the status quo, which currently rewards thinking and acting locally, even on problems that cross jurisdictional lines and impact more than one county or community.*

—Sheri Coven, executive director, Florida chapter of the American Planning Association

*To have the better communities we want, leadership, collaborative regional visions, and state incentives are essential. By applying funds to larger-scale, multijurisdictional problems, the impacts will be longer term and funds will go further. As a result, we can do a better job with the taxpayers' money.*

—W. Stewart Gibbons, vice president and general manager, Terrabrook

A regional vision can provide a foundation for engaging in cooperative action, maintaining community identity, and ensuring environmental sustainability.



JEFF GREENBERG/ALACHUA COUNTY VCB

tion of ecosystems and local government boundaries should be considered in the definition of regions.

**1.3** The governor should ensure that the state uses its capacity and resources to provide research, funding, and technical assistance to support and sustain regional initiatives.

- ◆ The Department of Community Affairs or another state agency should serve as a repository of best practices for regional cooperation currently in place in the state and throughout the nation.
- ◆ University-based institutes, not-for-profit organizations, advocacy groups, the private sector, regional planning councils, or some combination of these groups should be encouraged by the state to provide technical assistance for regional initiatives.
- ◆ The governor should support the development and adoption of model programs that demonstrate effective regional cooperation.
- ◆ A governmental partner or consortium of partners in each region should be established as the repository of regional data to provide information, research, and analysis for the regional planning efforts on an ongoing basis.

**1.4** The governor should ensure continued coordination among state agencies and serve as an advocate for programs and legislation that support ongoing regional visions and action plans.

**Recommendation 2: The state should enable each region to develop a regional vision and an action plan to implement that vision.**

**2.1** The governor and the legislature should establish a program to support regional visioning around the state. State funding to support the development of these regional visions should be provided as a matching grant, with funding generated regionally. This program should include incentives to encourage all parts of the state to participate in regional collaborations to address issues of regional concern.

**2.2** Each region should undertake a regional visioning initiative that would include the following elements:

- ◆ a leadership team composed of public, private, and civic leaders from regional agencies; local and state governments; and business, civic, and not-for-profit organizations.
- ◆ a lead organization, or consortium of organizations, that would convene the regional visioning process. This lead organization should have a proven record

of success with geographically and demographically diverse audiences and have demonstrated effective and innovative leadership in the region. Its character and composition may vary from region to region.

- ◆ a process for the region's stakeholders and citizens to develop several alternative long-range scenarios with different possible outcomes to address growth-related challenges. A public outreach program enabling citizens to understand the implications of preferred scenarios for the future growth of their region should be part of the process.
- ◆ funding from private and public stakeholders, including the state, to support a regional vision and action plan initiative.

**2.3** Each regional leadership team—working with legislators, local officials, and state and federal agency representatives within its region—should develop a regional action plan that addresses the key challenges and sets goals, objectives, and strategies for implementing the regional vision.

**2.4** The regional visions and action plans should clearly articulate how regions build and sustain communities, improve the quality of life, preserve environmental quality, and define and enhance community character.

- ◆ Each regional vision should clearly outline to diverse stakeholder groups the benefits of engaging in regional cooperation and the cost of failing to do so.
- ◆ The regional action plans should emphasize collaboration among the region's governmental entities to strengthen the region's ability to achieve stated goals and objectives.
- ◆ The geography of the region should be defined as part of the regional visioning process.
- ◆ Regional visions and action plans should be communicated using visual images.

**2.5** The state should encourage broad citizen engagement and consensus building in developing and implementing these regional visions and action plans. Because reaching consensus requires a substantial commitment of time and financial resources, the state should provide technical tools, resources, and data that:

- ◆ communicate regional, state, and national economic trends, and other data that affect and are affected by growth; and
- ◆ identify and promote best practices in regional and local planning.

**2.6** Regions that develop and implement action plans for regional collaboration should be rewarded with state incentives such as priority

funding, regulatory waivers, or reimbursement of a percentage of sales tax revenues.

**2.7** These regional visions and action plans should set a context for the creation, review, and reconsideration of all other regional and local plans. These other plans, including the strategic regional policy plans, should be considered with regard to how they support or hinder the implementation of the regional vision and action plan.

**2.8** The state should fund the convening of periodic statewide meetings of regional leaders to do the following:

- ♦ review and evaluate the effectiveness of state programs to support regional collaboration;
- ♦ assess each region's progress on regional action plans;
- ♦ recognize and reward best practices; and
- ♦ identify and prioritize needed changes to state policies, practices, and legislation.

*There are no meaningful state incentives or policies to encourage and reward bottom-up, common problem solving and regional actions. This is important at a time when most of Florida's biggest challenges cross municipal and county boundaries and cannot be solved by one jurisdiction alone.*

—Stuart L. Rogel, president,  
Tampa Bay Partnership

**Recommendation 3: The state should ensure that all state agencies function in a highly responsive and integrated way to foster and monitor regional cooperation and promote and support regional initiatives.**

**3.1** The current statewide system for managing growth in Florida should be reviewed and revised to support the development and implementation of regional visions and action plans.

**3.2** The governor should review the current responsibilities, activities, and interactions of state agencies as they relate to regional cooperation and recommend how they can be improved to support regional visions and action plans. He or she should recommend legislative changes as needed. State agencies should be directed to work across jurisdictional and functional boundaries to solve problems at the regional and local levels.

**3.3** The governor should review the current boundaries of districts for the delivery of state and regional services—e.g., the Department of Transportation/Strategic Intermodal System, Enterprise Florida, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional planning councils, the Department of Environmental Protection, and water management districts—and recommend whether and how these boundaries should be aligned to better support regional visions and action plans.

- ♦ The definition of these boundaries should be responsive to the visions and action plans developed by the regions.
- ♦ Where beneficial, boundaries for the delivery of services should be consistent across agencies and programs.

**3.4** The governor should continue to build on the current Strategic Intermodal System Plan and the strategic regional policy plans to

ensure that planning for transportation investments occurs at a regional level, consistent with the vision and action plans developed by each region. Effective and integrated regional land use and transportation planning is vital to meeting the challenges posed by Florida's rapid growth.

- ◆ Regional transportation planning should support the regional vision and action plans and be integrated with plans for regional land use, economic development, the ecosystem, and other regional systems.
- ◆ MPOs should use a portion of existing transportation planning funds for regional transportation planning that is integrated with plans for other regional systems. Moreover, the state should provide additional financial and other incentives to encourage MPOs to plan and invest funds on a regional basis, consistent with regional visions and action plans, building on the foundations established with the Strategic Intermodal System.
- ◆ As the regional visions and action plans are developed, the state should work with regional leaders to determine the best configuration and management structure for MPOs to ensure effective regional transportation planning. MPO boundaries should be reviewed and, if appropriate, realigned to support regional visions and action plans. In some cases, MPO boundaries may be realigned to incorporate the entire region; in others, inter-MPO agreements may serve as the basis for regional transportation planning.
- ◆ Where inter-MPO alliances are created for regional planning, the MPOs and the state should ensure that these alliances have sufficient funds and authority to carry out their mandates.
- ◆ Regional transportation planning should guide transportation investments made by the state and the localities. Transportation projects that receive high priority through the regional planning process should also receive high priority from the state. The state should provide additional funding to support these projects as an incentive for regional cooperation in planning and implementing them.

**3.5** The governor should ensure that state agencies responsible for Florida's natural systems participate in the development of the regional visions and action plans and that their programs and investments are consistent with and supportive of those visions and plans. Effective and integrated regional land use and natural resource planning is vital to protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the state's natural systems while ensuring an adequate supply of water resources.

**3.6** The governor and the legislature should allocate funds to support regional cooperation.

- ◆ The state should adopt enabling legislation to provide options for regional revenue sources so the regions can generate funds.
- ◆ Regional action plans should guide state funding decisions (e.g., SIS planning funds). State general revenue sharing for local govern-

ments should be amended to include support for regional visions and action plans. Additional funds should be allocated to the revenue-sharing program for this purpose.

- ◆ Discretionary state funds should be used to help support regional visioning and development of regional action plans.
- ◆ Funds from existing sources (e.g., water management districts) should be directed to help support the development of regional action plans.
- ◆ Incremental funds generated from growth (e.g., the documentary stamp tax) should be directed to support regional cooperation.
- ◆ A portion of the savings generated from regional cooperation (e.g., Fort Myers's approach to employee health care) should be earmarked to support regional initiatives.

*Big issues need big responses, and big responses need the big view, which means greater than local perspective. With Florida's growth, the time for the big view is now. Plus, it pays to work together as a region. Regional cooperation has made the northeast region much more competitive in seeking economic development opportunities and government funds.*

—Robert M. Rhodes, of counsel, Foley and Lardner

**Recommendation 4: Because regional cooperation must be sustained and improved over time, the state should encourage and support, on an ongoing basis, each region's efforts to make measurable progress toward its vision and to continue to improve regional cooperation.**

**4.1** To ensure accountability, regional leaders from across the state should be brought together periodically to determine both common and unique indicators of regional performance and progress within and across regions. A tracking system should be developed and funded at the state level that can demonstrate each region's progress in addressing key growth challenges.

**4.2** The state should establish a partnership with one or more organizations in each region to serve as the regional repository of data and to provide information, research, and analysis of the regional action plans. Each region should identify the partner or consortium of partners that would serve in this capacity. Potential partner organizations could include the regional planning councils, state universities, community colleges, and MPOs.

- ◆ The information should be standardized across the region and maintained on a long-term basis.
- ◆ These institutions should document, publish, and widely disseminate this information.

**4.3** The state should direct and provide funding to the state universities and community colleges to support and encourage regional cooperation on an ongoing basis. For instance, these institutions could provide:

- ◆ programs, seminars, or other educational opportunities for the training and development of regional leaders;

- ♦ research and analysis on regional trends and issues; and
- ♦ assistance with the development of regional indicators.

**4.4** Each regional action plan should include benchmarks against which the region can measure its progress. The state should monitor this progress and provide periodic feedback.

**4.5** The state should benchmark regional efforts against national and international indicators to determine how regional-scale problem solving can advance the state's overall economic vitality and quality of life. The effectiveness of these efforts should be evaluated over time and revised based on these evaluations.

**4.6** The state should support regional efforts to communicate to the public the importance and value of regional cooperation and collaboration.



# CONCLUSION

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*Regionalism is just a word that describes working together to address mutual challenges or take advantage of an opportunity. By participating, you're saying we are all in the same boat, so we might as well work together for success.*

—Carolyn A. Dekle,  
executive director, South  
Florida Regional Planning  
Council

The recommendations of the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation outline the steps that Florida should take to encourage and reward regional thinking and actions. These steps are based on a year of careful listening throughout the state and thoughtful research on existing barriers to and the need for effective regional cooperation in Florida. The committee's conclusion by an overwhelming majority is that the time is right to move forward with a strong state agenda to make regional cooperation the chosen means for making Florida more competitive in the global economy of the 21st century and maintaining the state's acclaimed quality of life.

There is a growing recognition in Florida that regional cooperation is the only means by which the state can remain competitive while accommodating nearly 10 million new residents over the next 30 years. In all areas of the state—the more highly developed areas of southeast Florida, the rapidly urbanizing areas of central and southwest Florida, and the less developed areas of northeast and northwest Florida, as well as the rural areas throughout the state—there is broad agreement that Florida today is made up of metropolitan regions, and, like it or not, communities in each of those regions are linked together. The message is clear: regional cooperation must start today if Florida's communities are to remain economically competitive and maintain the quality of life they value so highly. The most pressing and complex issues facing Florida's regions—mounting traffic congestion, concerns about adequate water supply, rising housing costs coupled with growing disparities in income, and diminishing natural resources—do not stop at the county line. Attacking these issues the same old way—one jurisdiction at a time—no longer works. No single city or county, no matter how large, can succeed by acting in isolation.

Successful regional cooperation in Florida means there must be a change in the status quo that rewards local thinking. The catalyst for that change must be state government, starting with the governor. The state's role is to provide the leadership, resources, and flexibility that encourage collaborative, community-based regional initiatives. Because of the diversity of Florida's regions, effective, long-term regional solutions must be found at the regional level, then rewarded and reinforced by the state. These solutions must be based on a comprehensive understanding of the complex, interdependent issues confronting every region in Florida and on an understanding of and respect for the distinct features of the “three Floridas” within each region in order to address their specific concerns.

The committee's next steps will focus on how Florida can improve regional cooperation while addressing the most important issues at the local and regional levels. Specific steps include the following:

- ◆ a statewide symposium to engage stakeholders in a collaborative dialogue concerning the recommendations and the challenges inherent in their implementation;
- ◆ outreach and continued collaboration with other organizations working to apply regional-scale problem solving to the growth challenges facing Florida; and
- ◆ conversations with elected officials, state agency staff members, and key stakeholder groups to share and discuss the findings and recommendations of the committee.

Implementing these steps will not be easy. Success depends on the support and participation of a broad-based group of stakeholders, policy makers, and committed leaders throughout Florida. The result, however, will be a state that, unlike many others in the country, continues to live up to its promise of economic prosperity, a protected environment, and a highly desirable quality of life for all citizens.

*Florida's continuing evolution as a major global business center is at a crossroads; we can either shape our regions into efficiently functioning economic powerhouses that are both great places to live and work, or we can fail to respond and let the problems created by rapid growth and regional fragmentation diminish our regions' livability and economic viability.*

—Neisen O. Kasdin, partner, Gunster Yoakley and Stewart, and chair, ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean



# NOTES

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