

# Chapter 8

## Economy

Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan

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# Chapter 8 Economic Development

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## Introduction

Sarasota County has long been the location of winter homes belonging to the affluent, a tourist destination for both winter and summer, and year round home for many retired persons. As early as 1910, when most of subtropical Florida was still unsettled, Sarasota was being promoted in the northern states as a resort area. The settlement of wealthy and influential people in those early years, such as Mrs. Potter Palmer and John Ringling, led to the beginnings of an emphasis on cultural activities. As patrons of the arts, those new residents and their friends brought their love of the arts to Sarasota. The cultural orientation has continued and has become an important aspect of Sarasota's attraction for both residents and tourists alike.

Sarasota County's attraction to visitors and retirees has made tourism and retirement the "heart" of Sarasota's economy. These have resulted in an economy that has a slightly higher proportion of jobs in retail trade and services than is the case state-wide. Correspondingly, there are a smaller proportion of jobs in manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation, communications, and utilities. Currently, economic development activities in Sarasota County are directed toward creating a more diversified economy with more high paying jobs.

While Sarasota County has a strong history of economic development through tourism and service to the local economy, there is also a long-standing, yet smaller, base of traded sector industries and a growing number of manufacturing and professional services firms. In addition, Sarasota County has significant community assets for a region its size--institutions like the Ringling School of Art and Design, Selby Botanical Gardens, Mote Marine Laboratories, and numerous health care facilities can demonstrate growing economic value. The region's array of higher education institutions and growing number of knowledge-based companies provide a foundation for innovation and new ideas.

Those economies that will sustain themselves have a skilled and educated workforce, a strong innovative and entrepreneurial climate, and the ability to rapidly start and expand businesses. Sarasota County has a unique set of economic assets on which to develop its economic future, and balance the demands of a knowledge-based global economy with the desires of the community. The County's reputation for high-end establishments, exceptional quality of life, and a friendly business climate are central to its future. Its focus on sustainability and the ability to balance social and environmental issues with economic development needs will provide a critical foundation for its new economic development plan well into the 21st century.

This, the Economic Development Chapter provides an insight into those elements critical to the development and success of the next level of economic development in Sarasota County for the new millennium. Key among them are:

- Supporting a competitive economic asset base for a knowledge economy, including industry clusters that generate high wages and bring new wealth into the region,
- Promoting an entrepreneurial climate and further tapping into the expertise that exists within the community,
- Building the capacity for innovation and the ability to rapidly turn ideas into viable businesses,
- Encouraging a business climate that is supportive of both local and export-oriented industries and is responsive to the changing needs of a global economy.
- Fostering effective public-private partnerships that leverage limited resources toward a common set of economic objectives, and capitalizing on regional relationships,
- Developing a strong, distinctive presence in appropriate national and international economic markets, and
- Ensuring that the County's economic strategy reflects and incorporates the differences in approach to economic development in various parts of the County, while maintaining a shared economic vision and effective working partnerships.

It is the role of private and public sector organizations to promote economic development, ensuring that economic development can be accommodated as needed to serve the growing population.

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## Planning Studies

Every five years, Sarasota County develops a long-term economic development plan. As part of the 2003 update, Sarasota County recognized that economic development was more than the expansion and retention of businesses and it should coordinate with tourism, arts, workforce, and sustainability efforts. Specifically, Sarasota County asked the consultants to develop a plan that not only included economic actions, but connected those actions to other community efforts and provided a structure to effectively implement the plan.

The strategies that were recommended, and are being implemented, to achieve the County's economic vision include: value-added industry cluster development; innovation and entrepreneurial development; local and regional cooperation; business climate improvement; and an organizational restructuring. The restructuring effort brought the not-for-profit Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to fruition in 2004 to replace the Committee for Economic Development. The EDC is tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Economic Development Plan. Furthermore, various County advisory boards that provide strategic direction to arts, tourism, and economic development activities were restructured. The result is a strategy that coordinates the multiple efforts that affect economic development activity in the County; coordinates and cooperates on local, regional, and global levels; and enhances working relationships between the public and private sectors. The next Economic Development Plan update is scheduled for 2008.

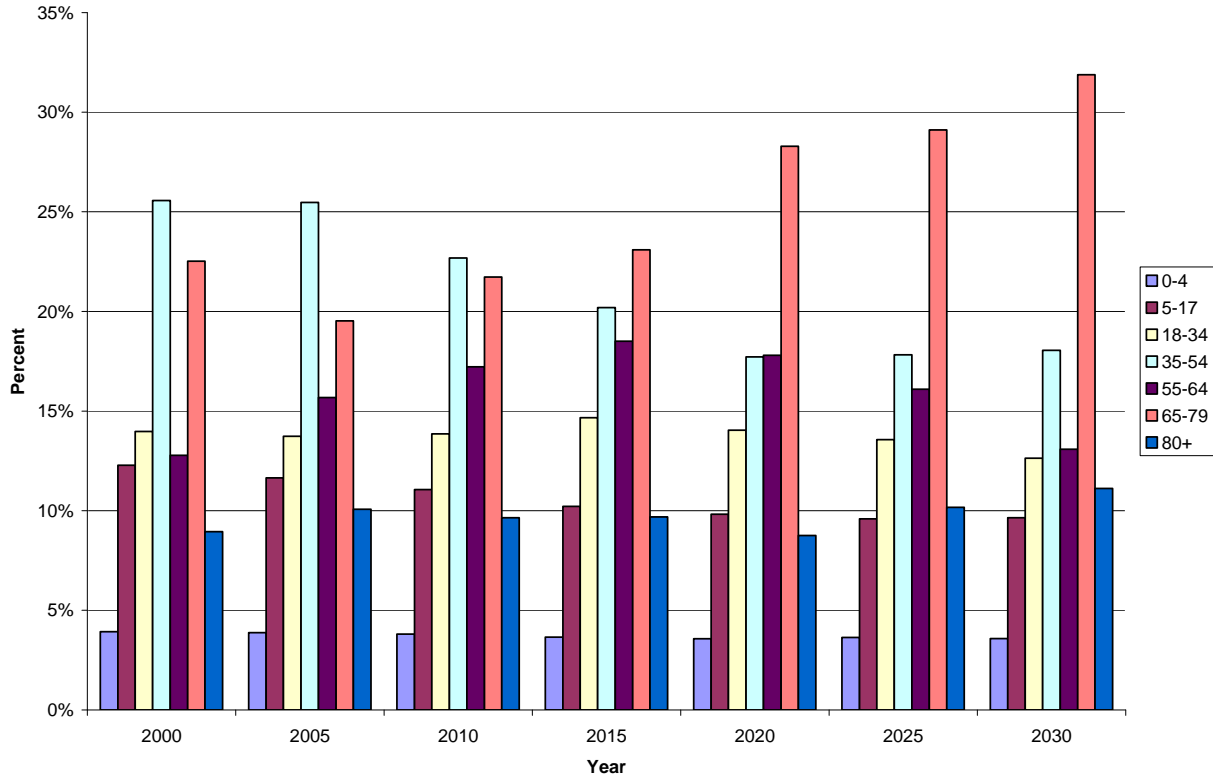
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## **Inventory**

### **Age Characteristics and Income Sources**

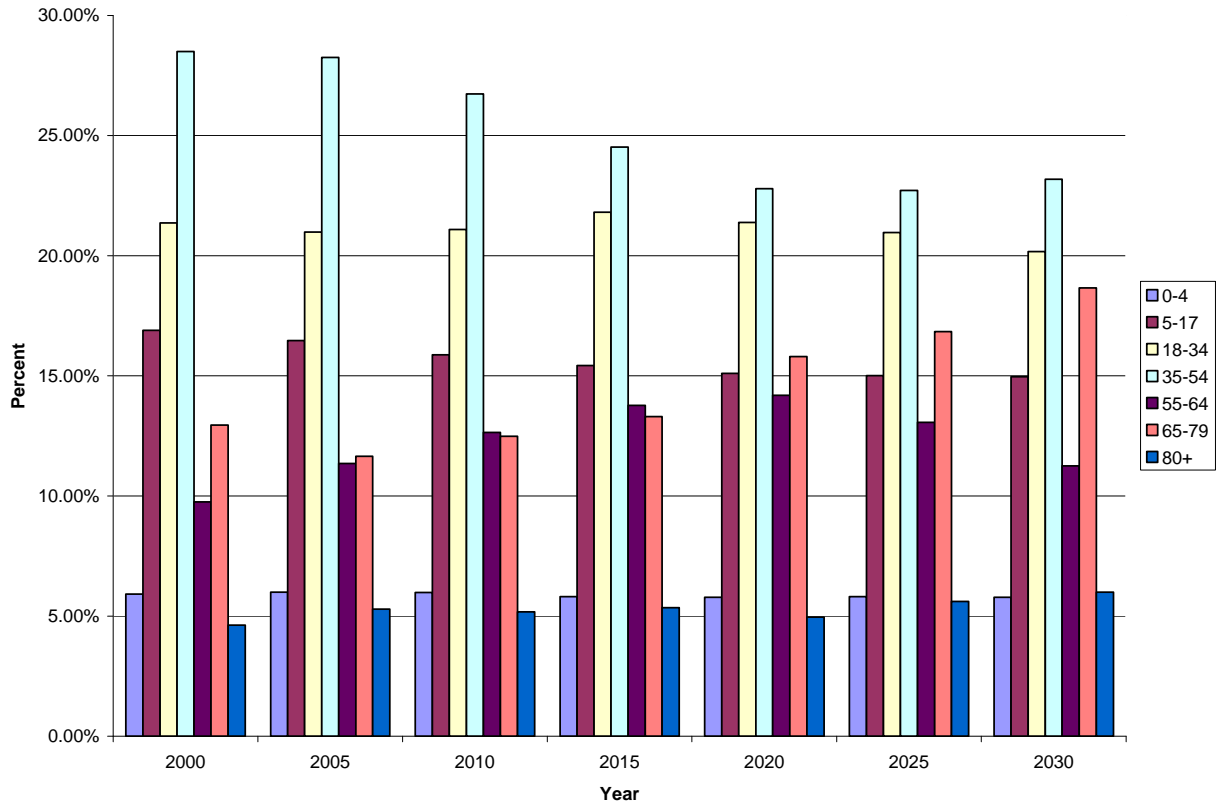
According to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), approximately one third of Sarasota County residents are 65 years old or older. Even in a state noted for its attraction for retirees, one-third is an unusually large proportion of the population to be in this age group. State-wide only 17 percent of the population is 65 or older. BEBR projects a slight increase in the number of older persons by 2010 with continued increases in the future. These relationships can be seen in Figure 8-1. The projected increase in the number of older persons can largely be attributed to the ever lengthening survival rates among older persons, and to a lesser extent to net in-migration of older persons. BEBR's projection methodology takes into consideration both survival rates by age group and migration rates.

**Figure 8-1: Population Projections by Age Group - Sarasota County**  
 (as percent of total population)



Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Population Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for Florida and Its Counties 2003-3030 Volume 37, Number 3, Bulletin 139, July 2004

**Figure 8-2: Population Projections by Age Group - State Of Florida**  
(as percent of total population)

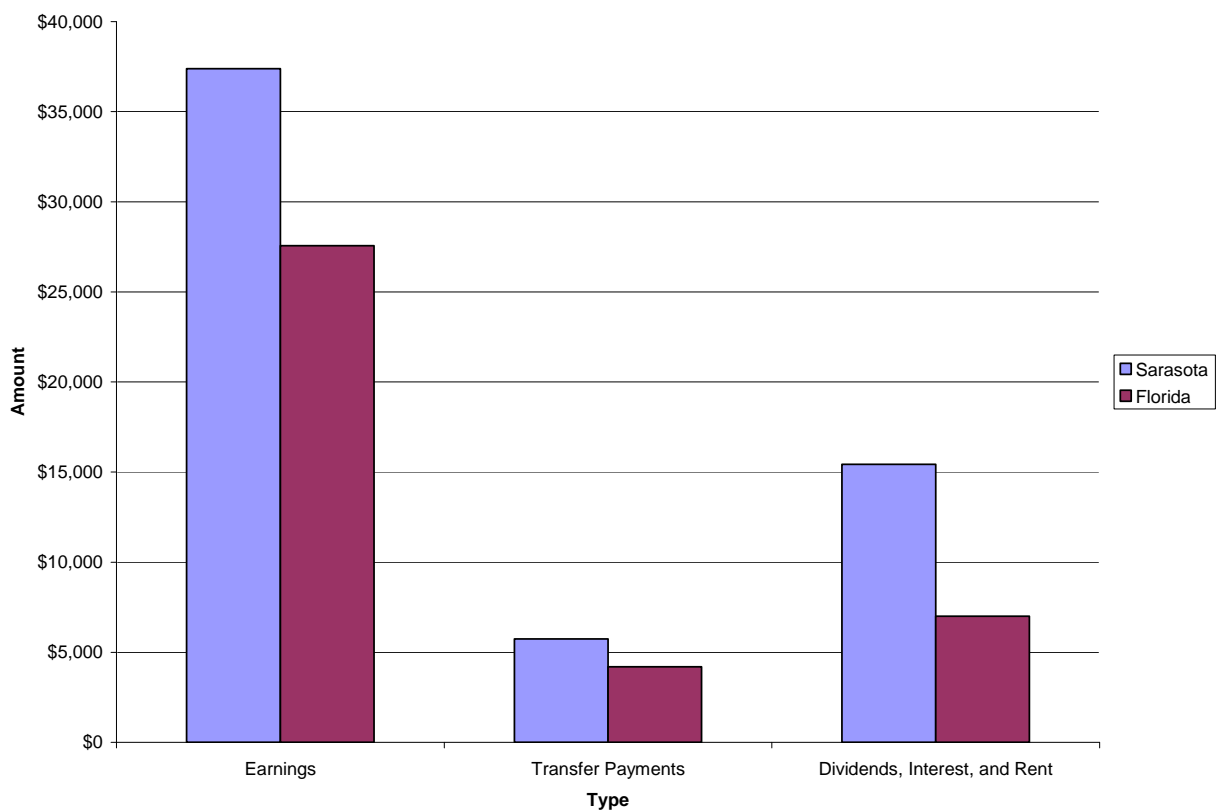


Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Population Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for Florida and Its Counties 2003-3030 Volume 37, Number 3, Bulletin 139, July 2004

Corresponding to the high proportion of persons in the older age groups, there is a lower number of persons in the younger age groups, as compared with the state-wide population. The proportion of children in the Sarasota County population is lower than state-wide, as is also true for the age groups from 18 to 34 years old. As the proportion of older persons is projected to increase slightly, it follows that a small decrease is projected in the proportion of persons under 17 years old by the year 2020.

As would be expected given the many persons of retirement age, 57 percent of the income of Sarasota residents comes from dividends, interest, rent and transfer payments. These relationships are shown in Figure 8-3. State-wide, where the proportion of older persons is smaller, 41 percent of personal income is derived from these sources. Income from dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments includes government and business disbursements for which no services are currently rendered, such as Social Security and pensions; earnings includes wages and salaries, and proprietor's income. When the total amount of personal income from all sources was divided by the number of residents, the per capita personal income for Sarasota County was \$37,430 in 2000. This amount is the fifth highest in the state, and significantly above the state-wide per capita figure of \$27,764.

**Figure 8-3: Sources of Personal Income, Sarasota County and Florida 2002**

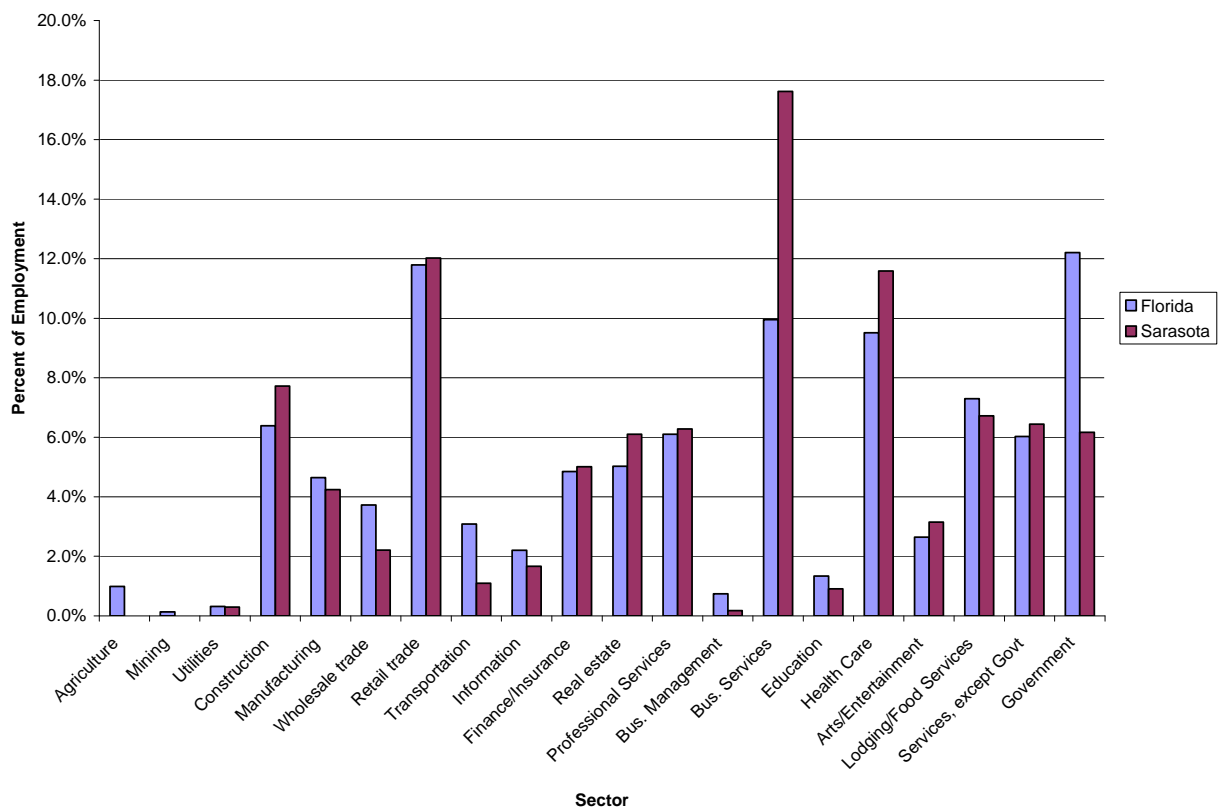


Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research Florida Statistical Abstract, 2002

## Employment by Sector

Data on the number of jobs in an area is usually classified into a standard list of employment sectors. For example, retail trade, business administration, and health services are among the standard categories. The share of jobs in each sector in Sarasota County is compared with the state-wide proportions in Figure 8-4.

**Figure 8-4: Employment by Sector**



Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002

## **Retail Trade and Services**

The three largest employment sectors in Sarasota County are business services, retail trade, and health care, in that order. These sectors account for a higher share of employment in Sarasota County than State-wide, as can be seen in Figure 8-4. The single largest employment sector is business services. Some 17.6 percent of the jobs in Sarasota County in 2002 were in business services as compared with 10 percent state-wide. This is a change from the last Comprehensive Plan update in 1997 when retail trade was the single largest sector. The second largest employment sector is retail trade, which accounted for 12 percent of all employment in the County, which is slightly higher than the 11.8 percent state-wide. The third largest employment sector in Sarasota County is health care, which accounted for 11.6 percent of all employment in 2002, as compared with 9.5 percent state-wide.

Sarasota County's population is both more affluent and older than the residents of most of the other counties in Florida. These demographic characteristics are most likely the reason that there is a higher proportion of jobs in retail trade and health services in Sarasota County.

In 2000 Sarasota County's per capita income was \$37,430, as compared with \$27,764 state-wide. The greater proportion of jobs in the retail sector is probably related, in part, to the higher per capita income. Tourism, which includes summer and winter visitors from abroad as well as the U.S., may also stimulate the retail sector, which includes eating and drinking establishments, as well as stores that sell goods.

According to the U.S. Census, the median age of Sarasota County's population was 50.5 in 2000 up from 48.9 in 1990. This is significantly higher than the 38.7 State-wide median. The higher proportion of older persons is the most likely reason that there is a higher proportion of persons employed in health services in Sarasota County. Older persons are likely to need more health care services than younger persons, and they are the primary users of hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, whose personnel are included in counts of the number of employees in the health care sector.

## **Educational Services and Government**

There is a smaller share of employment in both education and government in Sarasota County than state-wide. The percent of persons employed in education in Sarasota County is 0.9 percent, as compared with 1.3 percent state-wide. Similarly, government employment in the County accounts for 6.2 percent of all jobs, as contrasted with 12.2 percent state-wide. Education includes both public and private teaching institutions. Government includes a wide range of government services and programs including executive and legislative functions, finance, justice, public order and safety, human resources, economy, housing and environment.

The smaller share of persons employed in education is related to the age characteristics of Sarasota County. The age profile of the County, which has a disproportionately large number of older persons, has correspondingly, a smaller number of young persons. Only 12 percent of the population was school age in 2000, down from 15.8 percent in 1990. State-wide, children age 5-17 comprise 16.9 percent of the population in 2000 compared to 22.3 percent in 1990.

## **Construction**

This sector increased by 2 percent in Sarasota County from 1990. The share of jobs in the construction sector, 7.7 percent, is slightly higher than the state-wide 6.4 percent. Activities that are grouped in the construction sector include building construction (residential, commercial, office), heavy construction (highways, bridges, sewer and water projects), and special trade construction (carpentry, electrical work, painting, plumbing).

## **Industrial Uses**

Employment in jobs related to industrial operations include: transportation, utilities, information, manufacturing, and wholesale trade. Industrial employment in Sarasota County is relatively low with a combined total of 9.5 percent for the sectors mentioned above as compared to a state wide average of 14.0 percent for these sectors.

Jobs in the manufacturing sector comprise 4.2 percent of Sarasota County employment and 4.6 percent state-wide. Activities grouped into the manufacturing sector include: mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products; assembly of subcomponents of manufacturing products; and blending of materials.

Sarasota County's share of jobs in transportation, information, and public utilities is 3.1 percent, as contrasted with 5.6 percent state-wide. Activities in these sectors include passenger and freight transportation, communications (radio, television, telephone), and electric, gas, water and sewer. Many of the services are provided by single public utilities such as Verizon and the Florida Power and Light Company. The wholesale trade sector includes jobs in warehousing as well as wholesale selling. This sector accounts for 2.2 percent of the employment in Sarasota County, as compared with 3.7 percent state-wide.

## **Agricultural Employment**

Activities grouped into the agriculture sector include agricultural production (both crops and livestock) and agricultural services such as soil preparation, veterinary, landscaping, horticultural services, commercial fishing, hunting, and forestry. While agricultural employment in Sarasota County in 1991 comprised 1.3 percent of the total employment, in 2002 it consisted of only 628 persons or 0.2 percent of the total employment.

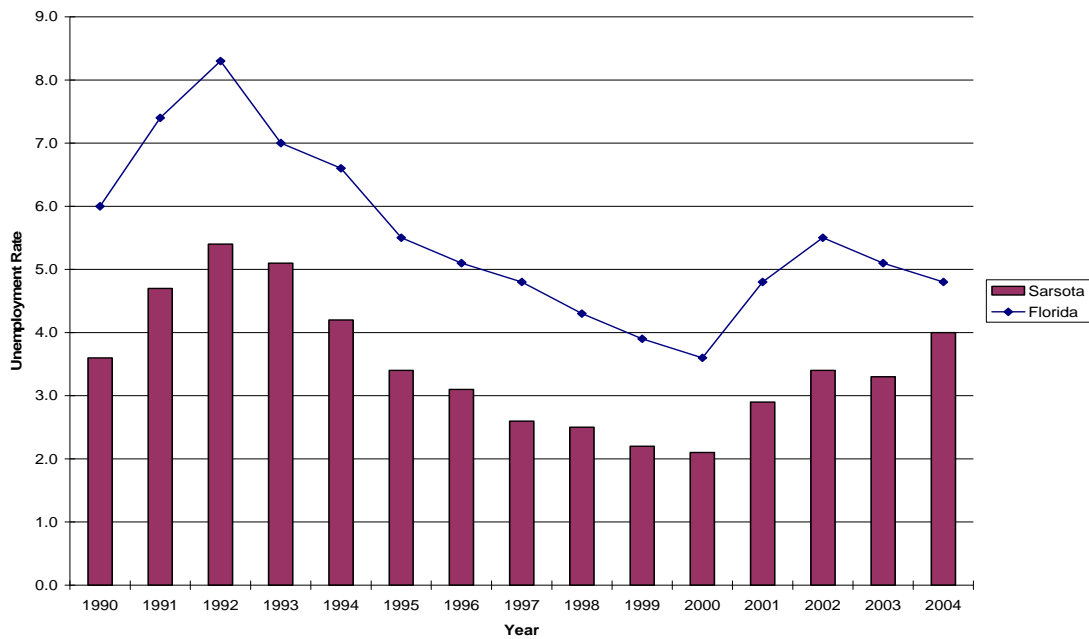
## **Marine Fisheries**

The fishing industry was once an important component of the agriculture sector. In recent years the commercial fishing industry has left Sarasota County. The decline of fisheries in the Bay cannot be traced to any single source. The most likely factors are the decline of mangrove, and sea grass habitats and alterations of water quality, but over fishing might also be a factor. The adverse habitat alterations are associated with the construction of the Intercoastal Waterway and canal communities in the 1950s and 1960s, and increased pollutants from septic tanks, sewage plants, and urban stormwater runoff. Future improvement of the fisheries will be dependent upon habitat maintenance and restoration, and reducing pollution from wastewater and stormwater.

## Unemployment

Since 1977, Sarasota County's unemployment rate has been lower than the rate for Florida. As of 2004, the County's unemployment rate was 4.0 percent. Average annual unemployment for Florida and Sarasota County from 1990 through 2004 is shown graphically in Figure 8-5.

**Figure 8-5: Average Annual Unemployment Rate**



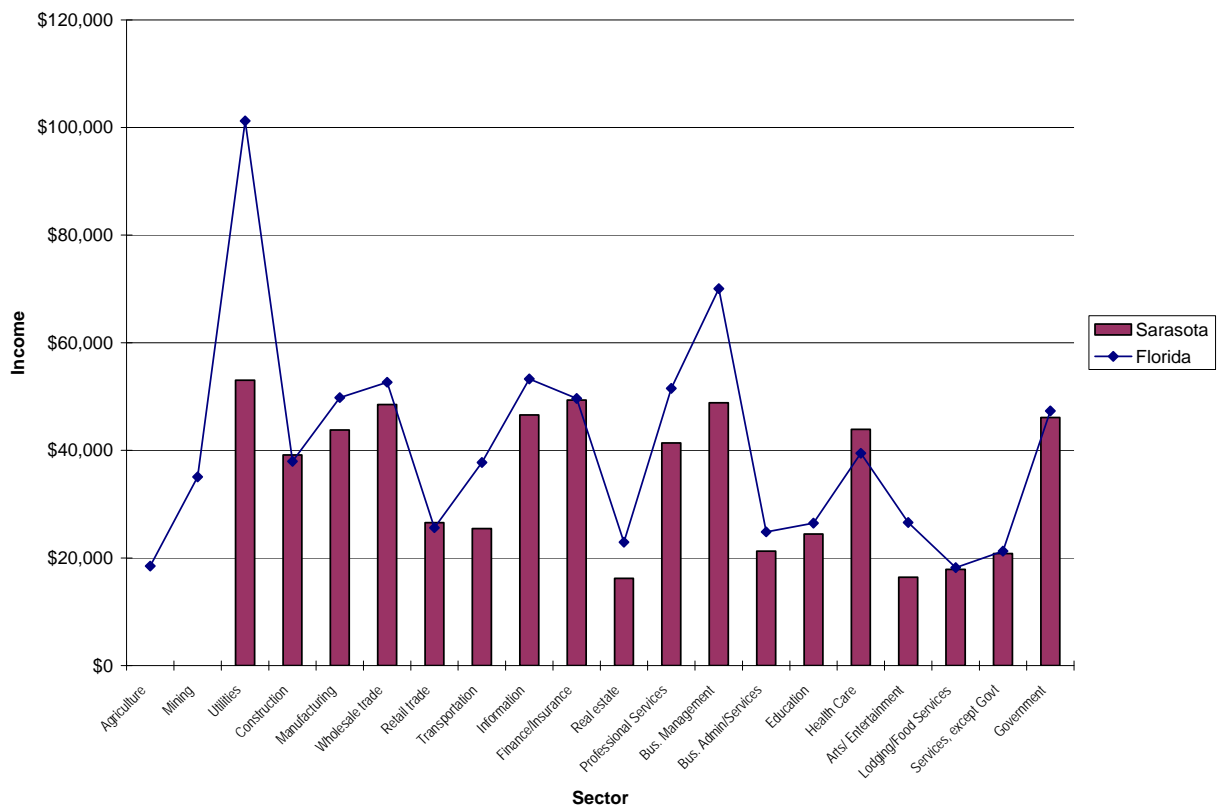
Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005.

## Earnings by Sector

Overall, earnings are below the state-wide average in most employment sectors in Sarasota County.

Earnings are lower in all the service sectors except construction, retail trade, finance/insurance, health care, lodging/food services, and other services excluding government where the annual earnings meet or exceed the state wide average. In all other sectors, the earnings are lower than the state wide average. These relationships can be seen graphically on Figure 8-6.

**Figure 8-6: Average Earnings by Sector Sarasota County and Florida, 2002**

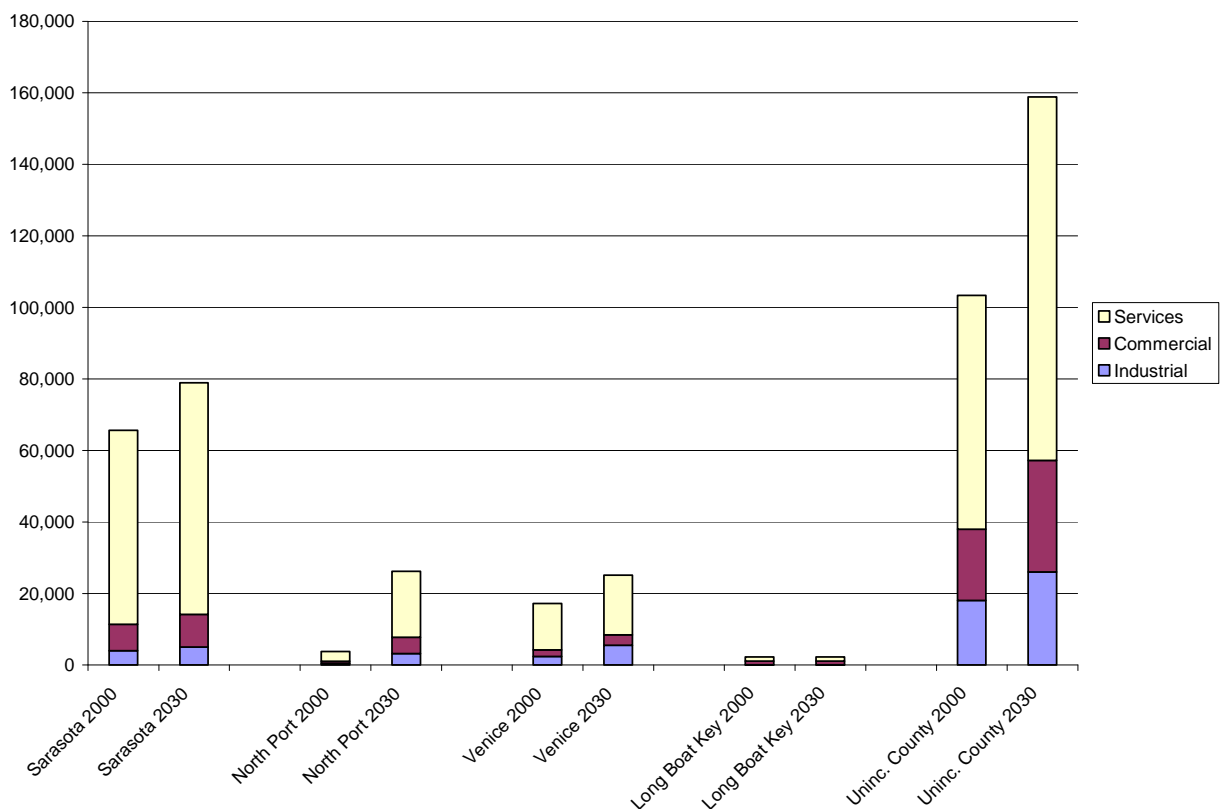


Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005

## Employment Distribution and Projections

As of 2000, a little more than half, 54 percent, of the employment in Sarasota County was located in the unincorporated area. This is an increase from 1995 when 51 percent of employment was located in the unincorporated county. Slightly more than one third, 34 percent, was located in the city of Sarasota in 2000. The cities of Sarasota and Venice each had a much higher proportion of service business than the unincorporated area, whereas most of the industrial businesses were located in the unincorporated area. These relationships are illustrated graphically in Figure 8-7.

**Figure 8-7: Employment Distribution and Projections by Jurisdiction, 2000 And 2030**



Source: Draft Metropolitan Planning Organization 2030 Socio-Economic Forecast

These employment figures were taken from the draft “Socioeconomic Data Forecasts” prepared by a consultant for the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for its use in preparing the “Year 2030 Financially Feasible Transportation Plan.” This report is expected to be finalized in November 2005.

The data in the “Socioeconomic Data Forecasts” was aggregated into three major sectors: commercial, service and industrial. These are the divisions that the MPO is required to address in preparing its Year 2030 Financially Feasible Transportation Plan.

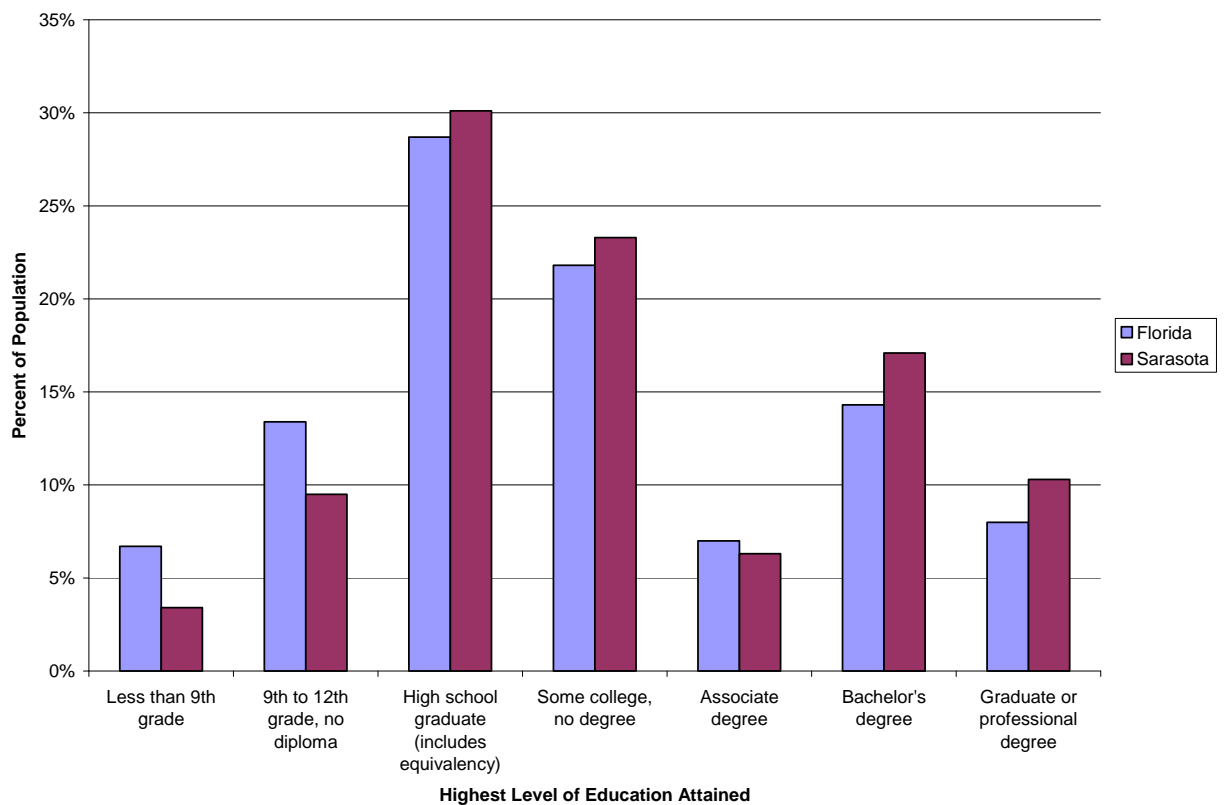
Collectively, the projections show an increase of 99,072 jobs above the 2000 estimated employment of 192,300. The total number of jobs used in the “Socioeconomic Data Forecasts” is slightly different than the totals produced by the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, which accompanied the discussion on employment by sector. These differences result, in part, from differences in reporting units and the categories into which the data is aggregated.

About 55,469 of the 99,072 projected jobs are expected to be located in the unincorporated area. Job growth in that area was projected to be distributed among the three major sectors as follows: 7,967 industrial jobs, 11,266 in commercial businesses and 36,236 service jobs. The distribution of employment growth to the various jurisdictions took into consideration land availability. Half of the job growth, projected to occur between 2000 and 2030, is expected to occur in the unincorporated area where most land is available. The increase in the number of jobs in North Port is significant, from 3,808 in 2000 to 26,211 in 2030, an increase of 588 percent. This is compared to a 54 percent increase in the unincorporated County. Much of this growth may be attributed to the lower cost of housing in North Port. As North Port fostered rapid housing growth, job creation occurred in many sectors, tapping into less expensive land and readily available labor.

## Education Attainment

The population of Sarasota County is well educated compared to the population of Florida. In fact 87 percent of residents that are at least 25 years old have a high school education or better, compared to 80 percent statewide. A well educated workforce is an important asset as explained in the workforce section later in this chapter. The complete breakdown of educational attainment in Sarasota County and statewide is illustrated in Figure 8-8.

**Figure 8-8: Educational Attainment (Population 25 years and older)**

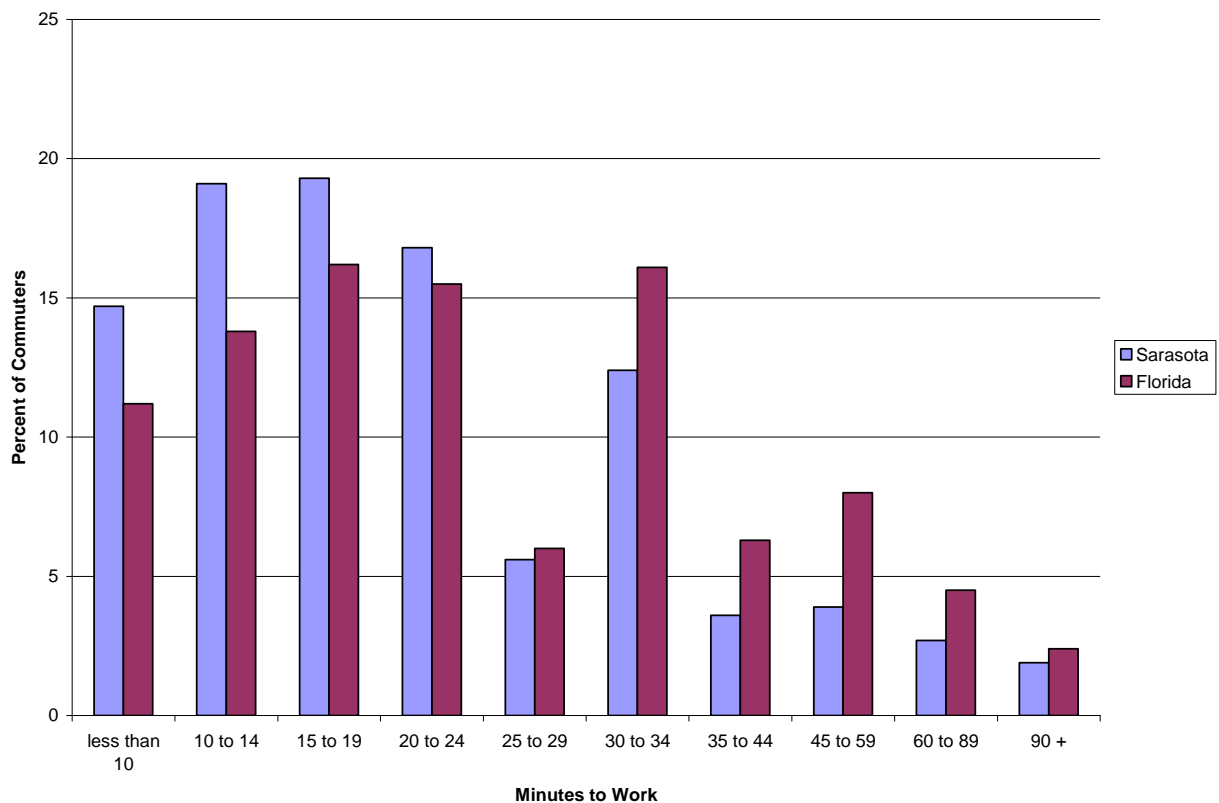


Source: 2000 US Census

## Commute Time

Sarasota County also has economic advantages over Florida in the amount of travel time workers incur in commuting. The mean travel time in Sarasota County is 21.8 minutes whereas statewide the average is 26.2 minutes. The travel times of Sarasota County and Florida are illustrated in Figure 8-9 below.

**Figure 8-9: Travel Time To Work**



Source: 2000 US Census

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## Analysis

### Ability to Accommodate Non-Residential Land Uses

Designating an adequate amount of land to accommodate projected non-residential growth is a fundamental part of land use planning. The remaining capacity within the areas designated on the Future Land Use Map for various types of non-residential uses has to be evaluated against the projected growth in the office/services, commercial and industrial sectors. The Future Land Use Map has several land use designations where non-residential development is permitted. Industrial uses can be accommodated on land designated for Major Employment Centers. Office/Services uses can be developed on land designated as Commercial Center, Commercial Corridor, Office/Multi-Family Residential, Light Office, Future Land Use Map designated Town and Village Centers, and in conjunction with certain kinds of planned commerce developments. Commercial uses can occur on lands designated as Commercial Highway Interchange, Commercial Center, Commercial Corridor, Future Land Use Map designated Town and Village, and in conjunction with certain kinds of planned residential and planned commerce developments. The development potential or future capacity within these three major areas is reviewed in the sections that follow.

Different methodologies have been utilized and the conclusions should only be used as a general guide. The analysis produces outcomes solely measured in raw land (acres), and does not take into consideration underutilized lots and potential for redevelopment, particularly in a development form that better utilizes the property. These may be viewed as providing potential additional capacity, but it is difficult, if not impossible to quantify and measure.

The relationship of the capacity analysis provided below also does not take into consideration the potential capacity in the Sarasota 2050 Plan Villages and Town Centers. The Economic Development Resource Management Area (RMA) includes current designations included in the analysis; however it also includes adjacent lands considered appropriate for potential infill and redevelopment over the 50-year planning horizon, such as high density residential, which may not be included in the analysis.

Finally, when businesses contemplate whether to locate or expand in Sarasota County, the suitability of a property is taken into account, both for its compatibility to neighboring properties as well as proximity to its customer base. While available lands may be available in the inventory, in particular, industrial and commercial uses have these other criteria involved in the decision-making.

According to the Sarasota County Property Appraiser's database, the unincorporated County had the following acreages in commercial, industrial, and office/service uses in 2000.

Commercial = 2,421.07 acres

Industrial = 2,610.38 acres

Office/Service = 6,698.24 acres

Total = 11,429.69 acres

The Property Appraiser uses North American Industry Classification System (NAICS, formerly known as SIC) codes to categorize the various land uses. Uses that are not included in the above figures include lands used for airports, piers, marinas, gas, electric, telephone, television, water and sewer, and solid waste.

There are also 6,433.72 acres of vacant commercial, industrial, and office/service lands, according to the 2000 database. The breakdown of the vacant lands is as follows:

Vacant Commercial = 4,502.63 acres

Vacant Industrial = 814.26 acres

Vacant Office/Service = 1,115.83 acres

Total Vacant = 6,433.72 acres

To calculate if sufficient lands are available in 2030, the future combined demand for these land uses was projected to be 452 acres for each subsequent five-year interval, or 90.40 acres per year, based on forecasts for commercial, industrial, and office/service job growth. (Note: This demand projection of 90.4 acres per year is based on the MPO 1994 Socio-Economic Forecast. The MPO is currently updating the forecast report, and is expected to be finalized by November 2005.)

When projecting demand to 2030, approximately 2,712 acres of additional land is required (30 years x 90.40 acres/year). This requirement (2,712.00 acres) is well below the amount of vacant lands (6,433.72 acres) in the 2000 Property Appraiser's database.

The draft MPO 2030 Socio-Economic Forecast, as illustrated in Figure 8-7, can also be used to calculate non-residential land demand. According to the MPO forecast, the unincorporated County had the following number of employees in commercial, industrial, and office/service uses in 2000:

Commercial = 19,911 employees

Industrial = 18,090 employees

Office/Service = 65,382 employees

Total for 2000 = 103,383 employees

The MPO employment data for 2030 is as follows:

Commercial = 31,177 employees

Industrial = 26,057 employees

Office/Service = 101,618 employees

Total for 2030 = 158,852 employees

Using both the Property Appraiser's and MPO data, there were approximately 9.05 employees per acre in 2000 (103,383 employees / 11,429.60 acres). Projecting to 2030, using this same employee per acre ratio, the required lands for 2030 would be 17,541 acres (158,852 employees / 9.05 employees per acre). The additional amount of lands required from 2000 to 2030 is therefore 6,111.31 acres (17,541 – 11,429.69). This 6,111.31 acres demand is significantly higher than that calculated above using the projected demand of 90.4 acres per year. It is still, however, less than the amount of vacant lands (6,433.72 acres) in the Property Appraiser's database.

*NOTE: While the projected demand implies that sufficient lands are available to meet future needs, discussions with industry leaders and representatives of the Economic Development Corporation indicate that many businesses are not finding suitable lands for their expansion and relocation needs within Sarasota County. Other factors that lead businesses to locate elsewhere are lack of infrastructure or insufficient levels of service, particularly for traffic and water and sewer; high cost of land; and lands not rezoned appropriately for more immediate use. The Real Estate Oversight Committee, a subcommittee from the EDC, is working with County staff and industry leaders to review and analyze the data, the inventory of vacant lands, trends, and issues surrounding this subject.*

## Workforce Considerations

Economic development is dependent upon the availability of a quality workforce in sufficient numbers. Most recent industry location surveys rank labor quality as the top concern of expanding industries. A study of the Sarasota-Manatee workforce, commissioned by the Suncoast Workforce Board, Inc., was completed in the same time frame as the Economic Development Strategic Plan. Industry and education focus groups were conducted jointly with the workforce consultants, Workforce Associates, Inc., and have benefited the final "21st Century Workforce Study", produced in August 2003.

There are several crucial components with respect to the availability of a broad-based, well trained and experienced workforce in sufficient numbers upon which a successful economic development program relies. Those elements that are considered of major significance are: 1) Education and applicable skills and training; 2) Competitive wages and salaries; and 3) Affordable workforce housing.

## Workforce Education and Training

A highly skilled and educated workforce is a key competitive advantage. As technology becomes omnipresent in our lives and professional services replace goods-producing jobs, people with a college education and well-developed technical and entrepreneurial skills become an essential asset. The quality of Sarasota's secondary and post-secondary education, and the opportunities it offers for lifelong learning and training, will be of growing importance in achieving economic success.

The 21st Century Workforce Study was aimed at synthesizing existing information, and therefore did not include specific recommendations. However, it did include a list of eight challenges to the community:

1. Improve the educational performance of K-12 students
2. Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling
3. Reduce high school drop out rates, and increase graduation rates
4. Align education, training, and career preparation with major economic clusters
5. Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community
6. Promote and support entrepreneurship
7. Draw pre-retirement professional baby boomers to the area
8. Brand the Suncoast as a place where creative professionals of all ages are valued and supported

Each of these directions is broadly aligned with the recommendations of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, especially challenges four through eight. The directions toward aligning education with major clusters, encouraging entrepreneurship, and improving interaction between educators and the business community are taken a step further by the specific recommendations of the Strategic Plan.

## Workforce Wages and Salaries

The County's enviable high average income level is based on passive and retirement income, while wages remain lower than average. As reported in the 21st Century Workforce Study, the Suncoast compares unfavorably to other areas. In 2001, the last year for which data are available, the Average Annual Wage among all occupations in the Suncoast was \$28,240- the lowest among all eight national "competitor" metro areas. The Median Annual Wage in the Suncoast was even lower at \$22,410. This presents a significant challenge in attracting and retaining the highly skilled workers necessary for economic success. It also results in a large number of young professionals leaving Sarasota County in search of better prospects.

Among the most important economic findings of the workforce study are the following:

- Average wage levels in Sarasota and Manatee are below those of most other metropolitan regions in Florida,
- Apart from tourism and real estate development, two areas that have been particularly important to the economy are health care and creative arts,
- Increasing the development of value-added industries, thus higher wages, will be a significant challenge.
- Compared to other states, Florida has a low proportion of its workforce in knowledge-based occupations such as professional and technical services, engineering, or management. Moreover, relative to other Florida metropolitan areas, the Suncoast region has a low proportion of its workforce in knowledge-based occupations.
- Workforce demand in recent years has outstripped the working age population, which portends a worker shortfall of roughly 15,000 by 2010.
- There is relatively little commuting into, and out of, the two county region, but there is significant two-way commuting between Manatee and Sarasota counties.

Public input indicated that the Sarasota-Manatee region has a strong working relationship between its Workforce Board, economic development agencies and educational institutions. This foundation is critical for continuing the alignment of economic and workforce development efforts that will produce a more focused and strategic set of workforce programs aligned with regional industries. There are three general themes that emerge as the basis for a collaborative economic/workforce strategy. These include:

- Aligning workforce development efforts with identified industry clusters in Sarasota County to enhance incumbent worker training for value-added industries, and to work with educational institutions to expand or enhance the quality of programs for knowledge-based workers.
- Building a broad base of entrepreneurial skills that will not only serve as a foundation for those wishing to start businesses, but for helping all types of employees understand how they contribute to the success of their business and community.
- Connecting economic and workforce policies and planning processes to leverage resources and conduct joint projects with high rates of return to workers and employers.

The Suncoast Workforce Board, Inc. (SWB) has reviewed the 21st Century Workforce Study and developed a strategic plan based in part on the findings of the report. The development of the SWB strategic plan in concert with the Economic Development Strategic Plan has aligned the two plans and put in place mechanisms to ensure that economic development and workforce development activities remain closely inter-related, at an institutional and cluster level.

The Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County (EDC) and the SWB should continue to work together intensively to ensure their strategic plans are closely aligned in strategic approaches and in implementation.

## **Workforce Housing**

An adequate supply of affordable workforce housing is a challenge in practically every jurisdiction in the nation. Sarasota County is no different; in fact, the supply of affordable workforce housing is a particularly acute problem in Sarasota County because:

- Low average wage levels mean that many working families cannot afford reasonably priced housing.
- With much of the local economy dependent on the creation of high quality housing for the second home market and for relatively affluent retirees, land costs and the price of housing continue to escalate.
- Difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled employees, particularly younger employees with fewer resources to devote to housing.
- Longer commutes, causing road congestion and lower employee productivity.
- Tax losses due to employees living in lower cost adjoining counties.

An analysis of the affordable workforce housing issue resulted in recommendations including:

- A consolidation of existing fragmented approaches to increasing the supply of affordable workforce housing, including the creation of a new organization devoted to advocacy and other actions to promote affordable workforce housing.
- Rehabilitation of existing substandard housing.
- Making more land available for affordable workforce housing.
- Regulatory reforms, reduced fees and other incentives for the supply of affordable workforce housing.

On-going efforts to increase the supply of affordable workforce housing is critical because housing cost is a key consideration in attracting and retaining the skilled employees that Sarasota County will need to increase its capacity to export value added goods and services. A more in-depth discussion of the affordable workforce housing issue is addresses in the Housing Chapter. Furthermore, the Future Land Use Chapter includes recommended revisions to the Future Land Use map that increase residential densities, assisting in the provision of workforce housing.

## Development Review Process

In 1993, Sarasota County established Land Development Services for the purpose of streamlining the development review and permitting process, making review times more predictable, and thereby, facilitating economic development. Land Development coordinates the Development Review Committee (DRC) which includes representatives of the County reviewing agencies including: Transportation, Fire Marshal, Environmental Engineering Health, History Center, Natural Resources, Resource Protection, Stormwater, Zoning, and Utilities. In 1998, a one-stop permitting center was established to allow an applicant to bring all development and construction documents to one location.

Under the land development review system, both site and development (including preliminary subdivision) and construction plans reviews have a 20 working day review deadline. At the developer's discretion, the site plan and construction plans reviews may be conducted concurrently to save time.

The building permit application and final plat can only be approved once the site development and construction plans have been approved for the proposed project. All review agencies have 10 days to review the project for final plat approval. The building permit application has a review time of 10 days. Other permit review times are as follows: signs (three days); fuel tank permits (three days); demolition permits (three days); and certificates of occupancy (two days).

The County has an expedited permitting review directed toward meeting economic development goals, called Sarasota Means Action Response Team (SMART). The team includes members of the DRC plus additional staff and representatives of outside agencies, such as the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The Team facilitates the expansion and relocation of companies that are export oriented. These types of businesses may include, but are not limited to, transportation, advertising, computer, and engineering services.

To be eligible for expedited permitting review, eligible companies must have an average wage equal to or exceeding the average for all industries in Sarasota County, and have a critical timing need. In addition, the owner of the property and the architect/engineer working on the project must both attend SMART meetings.

The SMART review process includes a pre-approval by the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County before it is submitted to the County. The review time for projects selected for the SMART process should not exceed three working days. However, in order for this time schedule to be followed, the site must have proper zoning, and any necessary Critical Area Plans or Development of Regional Impact applications must have been approved.

## Ad Valorem Taxes and Impact Fees

A company's decision to expand or relocate in Sarasota County may be based, in part, on the cost of ad valorem taxes and impact fees. Impact fees are a one-time payment, typically paid before a building permit or certificate of occupancy is issued. Impact fees are imposed on new development or on new expansions of existing development. The funds collected from impact fees must be used for capital expenses only not operating costs. A 100,000 square foot light industrial plant, built in 2004, would be charged a road impact fee approximating \$193,000. The road impact fee for a 100,000 square foot office building would be approximately \$354,000.

Ad valorem taxes represent an on-going long-term cost to property owners. The one-time cost of impact fees is based on property values that can be offset by the County's relatively low millage rate which in 2005 was 4.0939 mills (including the County general fund, transportation, mosquito control, bonds and debt service, Environmental Sensitive Lands Protection Program, and emergency medical services). This is lower than the surrounding seven county area (Charlotte, Collier, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas and Polk) average which is 6.4981 mills. Additionally, the County collects millage for other agencies including Sarasota Memorial Hospital District, West Coast Inland Navigation District, Southwest Florida Water Management District, Manasota Basin Board, and the Sarasota County School District. The overall county-wide millage rate for 2005 was 9.4830 mills.

The up-front cost of impact fees can be further offset by the County's Impact Fee Mitigation Program. The program was established by Ordinance No. 95-054 and Resolution No. 95-095 as a means to implement the County's economic development policies. The mitigation program allows the County to mitigate up to 100 percent of the road impact fees. In order to qualify for mitigation, the applicant has to meet criteria for job quality, percent of local jobs created, and percent export revenue derived from out-of-County sales. The qualifying development has to be classified as one of the following land use types: general light industrial; general heavy industrial; warehouse; industrial park; manufacturing; corporate headquarters building; general office park; medical office building; research center; or business park. In addition, the development must be located in specific geographic areas of the county including: Major Employment Centers, Interstate Regional Office Parks, designated redevelopment areas, and Tax Increment Financing Districts. The County projects that, over time, the additional taxes paid by new or expanded businesses will pay for the program.

## Quality of Life

Business location decisions are influenced by the quality of life in a community. Many entrepreneurs were attracted by Sarasota's quality of life and have started successful businesses here. Quality of life considerations include the natural environment, , arts, cultural and recreation educational excellence, social, health, safety, and the availability of affordable housing.

## Natural Environment

Sarasota County's 35 miles of beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and Sarasota Bay are world famous for the purity of their quartz-white sand. The average year-round temperature is 72 degrees. The County operates 135 parks and recreation centers and there are two State parks within the County. The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program is a taxpayer-funded program designed to acquire and protect natural lands. All these natural amenities have continued to lure visitors and businesses to the County.

## Arts, Cultural and Recreation

Sarasota possesses an arts and cultural reputation that is unparalleled on the west coast of Florida. The abundance of arts and cultural resources contribute significantly to the quality of life in the area and are considered an integral part of the infrastructure. Sarasota County is known as Florida's "Cultural Coast", with its professional theaters, symphonies, ballet, opera, art galleries, and performing centers. The majority of the arts and cultural facilities, however, are located within the city of Sarasota. The Sarasota County Arts Council estimates that the area's culture and non-profit artistic industry was responsible for 3,000 jobs and an economic impact of \$123 million. Sarasota has several live theaters, a wide variety of musical offerings, and art gallery and museum facilities. The art scene is centered in a revitalized downtown area in the city of Sarasota.

Sarasota County offers excellent recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy. Sarasota County provides many recreational opportunities through collaborations and partnerships. With over 250 partnerships annually, the community has an opportunity to participate in a variety of recreational programs and events at county owned or maintained facilities. Programs include: organized sports, lawn bowling, croquet, Teen Clubs, summer camp, senior programs, therapeutic recreation programs, health and wellness programs and a large variety of outdoor special events.

The County owns 4,692 acres of park lands. Sarasota County has some 40 miles of Gulf-front beach acreage on barrier islands. Sarasota, Little Sarasota, and Lemon bays are located behind the islands. These areas are primarily state-owned sovereign submerged lands and water areas that offer extensive sports fishing, sunbathing, swimming, and beachcombing opportunities. Over 100,000 acres of Sarasota County are designated as environmentally protected conservation lands or have some conservation component. That acreage comprises approximately 30 percent of the County's total area. These lands are owned and managed by different county, state, and federal agencies and funded through various programs, grants, and taxes. Public conservation lands in the County include all state, county, and municipal lands managed for the conservation of Sarasota County's natural heritage. These lands range from the larger ones like Myakka River State Park, Oscar Scherer State Park, T.Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve, Pinelands Reserve, Deer Prairie Creek, and Jelks Preserve to the smaller ones like Red Bug Slough Preserve, Pocono Trails Preserve and Curry Creek Preserve. Approximately 104,000 acres are in public ownership; Sarasota County owns almost half of that acreage (> 48,000 acres). Ownership of the remaining public lands are as follows: Florida Department of Environmental Protection (approx. 38,000 acres); Florida Division of Forestry (approx. 8,700 acres); Southwest Florida Water Management District (approx. 8,500 acres); and, 46 acres are in municipal ownership. The County has 42 golf courses spanning the County, two of which are public courses. The diversity of programs and outdoor recreation available to residents and visitors contributes significantly to the quality of life in this community.

## **Education**

In a national survey, Sarasota County was one of only 15 percent of school districts in the country to receive the "What Parents Want Award". Sarasota County high school students have scored consistently higher than the national average on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). School district students score at the top of the state in every section of the state's comprehensive assessment test. Sarasota County schools boast excellent student-teacher ratios, outstanding public and private school programs, a high number of Florida National Merit Scholars, technology-driven classrooms with Internet access, and an ongoing Campaign for Excellence devoted to improving educational programs and services. Sarasota County Public Schools is the only district in Florida to receive a Gold Medal distinction from Expansion Management, an organization that evaluates school districts based upon a set of criteria important to business and industry. Other than the traditional schools, the school district also offers exceptional, alternative and charter schools. The County is also served by numerous private schools and schools for higher education, such as New College of Florida, University of South Florida, Manatee Community College and the Ringling School of Art and Design.

## **Social, Health and Safety**

Sarasota County Health and Human Services offer numerous programs designed to protect and improve the health and safety of visitors and residents of Sarasota County, by providing quality environmental and personal health services and promoting healthy lifestyle practices. Sarasota County has six hospital locations throughout the County.

Crime rate is a key concern for the tourist industry, the retirement industry, and for companies seeking to expand or relocate. Sarasota's crime rate for non-violent crime is slightly higher than the national rate, but the rate for violent crime is lower than the national rate. Sarasota is lower in both violent and non-violent crime than the State of Florida as a whole.

Sarasota's rate of 455 per 100,000 for violent crime is lower than the 494 national average, and the 767 state rate. Moreover, the rate of violent crime in 2003 was 3 percent lower than it was in 1995. Perhaps the lower Sarasota rates can be attributed to its character as a wealthy retirement and tourist town.

Sarasota's 3,890 per 100,000 non-violent crime rate is lower than the 4,631 Florida rate, and lower than the 4,119 national rate. Sarasota's declining non-violent crime rate continued to drop 4 percent from 2002 to 2003. This decreasing crime rate should enhance Sarasota's capacity for economic growth.

## **Affordable Workforce Housing**

While the current availability of affordable workforce housing in Sarasota County is diminishing, the County is taking a proactive and comprehensive approach to help alleviate the situation. The County understands the symbiotic relationship of a healthy economy and the availability of affordable workforce housing.

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## **Summary**

The County's economic development potential is based on the favorable factors of high quality of life, low taxes, a well organized and comprehensive approach to economic development, a, and a good history of public/private cooperation. Although, Sarasota has been traditionally known as a tourist and retirement area, the County is actively working to diversify the economy.

The County's strategy for economic development is set forth in the Sarasota County Economic Development Plan. The Plan is being implemented by the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County which is a non-profit organization created in 2004. The Action Plan for the Economic Development Plan provides recommendations for cluster development, entrepreneurial development, business climate, regional and county collaboration, and funding mechanisms.

Sarasota County maintains its goal to attract new businesses and expand existing ones. It funds economic development activities through an annual occupational license fee, per capita contributions by local governments, and private sector contributions. It encourages business expansion by maintaining an efficient land development review process, by mitigating the road impact fees for targeted businesses, and providing locations for new business facilities with supportive infrastructure such as roads and central water and wastewater.

## **Economic Development Plan**

### **Intent**

The County has a key role in recognizing, enhancing, and protecting what has made Sarasota County's economy functional and unique: its high quality of life. The natural and cultural amenities of Sarasota County must be maintained if the resort/retirement sector is to remain healthy, as well as encouraging value added new businesses to diversify the economy.

The County has the responsibility to support and accommodate projected economic development activities while serving the public interest and not compromising the quality of life. It has a key role in providing infrastructure which supports economic development including public works, environmental conservation, education, investment incentives, and coordination of economic development efforts.

### **ECON Goal 1 Economic Infrastructure**

Diversify and grow the economic base of Sarasota County by investing in human capital and workforce development in areas with high returns, promote partnerships and synergies that more effectively leverage financial resources, and develop a supportive culture and physical infrastructure for entrepreneurs.

#### **ECON Objective 1.1. Human Capital**

Encourage the development of an adaptable workforce and associated human resource infrastructure to meet the growing and ever-changing demands of the high-skill, high-wage, value-added employers in Sarasota County.

##### **ECON Policy 1.1.1.**

Increase the number of skilled workers and high-wage jobs in Sarasota County by supporting, where appropriate, programs and institutions that provide training opportunities.

### **ECON Policy 1.1.2.**

Sarasota County will support, as appropriate, the development of education facilities and programs to meet the demands of a continuously adapting workforce.

### **ECON-Objective 1.2. Financing**

Increase access to capital for value added industries and to maintain a sustainable source of support for tourism and economic development efforts.

### *Access to Investment Capital*

#### **ECON Policy 1.2.1.**

Be a catalyst for second-tier capital formation by tapping into existing wealth in the county.

#### **ECON Policy 1.2.2.**

Develop and maintain a comprehensive directory of financial sources available in Sarasota County for leveraging resources that can accelerate attainment of the goal of economic diversification and development of quality jobs.

#### **ECON Policy 1.2.3.**

Work with local financial institutions to understand capital needs and financial models of value-added industries.

#### **ECON Policy 1.2.4.**

Identify funding sources for value added industries as identified in the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

### *Budgetary Support*

#### **ECON Policy 1.2.5.**

Maintain dedicated funding for business plan implementation utilizing occupational license tax receipts, shared per capita contributions, grants and private sector matching contributions.

**ECON Policy 1.2.6.**

Develop sustained resources for other programs that affect economic development, such as tourism, arts and culture, Enterprise Zone, and revitalization.

**ECON Objective 1.3. Infrastructure**

Enhance business development opportunities by ensuring that Sarasota County develops and maintains a comprehensive, long-range infrastructure program as a key critical component of its economic development strategy. This shall include encouraging and supporting the maintenance, construction, and installation of viable, working waterfront development.

**ECON Policy 1.3.1.**

Allocate adequate commercial, industrial, and residential acreages to meet future needs.

**ECON Policy 1.3.2.**

Maintain and where appropriate encourage the expansion and development of public services and infrastructure, such as transportation, utilities, and stormwater that complement economic development and diversification.

**ECON Policy 1.3.3.**

Encourage the development of affordable, convenient, and accessible transportation services with the capacity to convey them and their services around the community and around the world to their chosen destination at their chosen times.

**ECON Policy 1.3.4.**

Promote economic opportunities through the utilization of the Sarasota Bradenton International Airport and strengthen its role in Sarasota County's economic development.

**ECON Policy 1.3.5.**

Continue local neighborhood revitalization efforts throughout Sarasota County to leverage private sector reinvestment activities with public investment in community development and infrastructure improvements.

**ECON Policy 1.3.6.**

Encourage the expansion of existing and/or development of new businesses and industries in appropriate locations in order to maximize the use of existing public services and infrastructure.

**ECON Policy 1.3.7.**

Encourage the location of businesses and industries in areas with adequate infrastructure capacity and in areas scheduled for future facility improvements to expand existing capacity as designated in Sarasota County's Capital Improvement Program and consistent with the requirements of concurrency management.

**ECON Policy 1.3.8.**

Where financially feasible, align the capital improvements budget with the economic development priorities of the Comprehensive Plan.

**ECON Policy 1.3.9.**

Encourage the Tourism and Economic Development Board and other appropriate agencies, to provide comments on projects proposed for the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

**ECON Objective 1.4. Business Climate and Regulatory Environment**

Ensure County policies and regulations are consistent with and promote economic goals, develop public understanding and support for the economy and its connection to a sustained quality of life, and align community development issues, such as affordable housing, with economic efforts.

*Regulatory*

**ECON Policy 1.4.1.**

Identify and correct or eliminate those laws, regulations and government practices that, as determined by the Board of County Commissioners, restrict business, professional and vocational activities and no longer serve a valid public purpose.

**ECON Policy 1.4.2.**

Sarasota County will continue to utilize county staff and private citizen committees to recommend revisions that will streamline development regulations.

*Incentives*

**ECON Policy 1.4.3.**

Support incentive programs that will invest in retaining and creating high wage job opportunities and value-added businesses.

**ECON Policy 1.4.4.**

Study economic incentives utilized by various Florida communities and seek to implement those incentives appropriate for Sarasota County to place the county in a competitive position to attract new businesses and business investment.

*Business Climate*

**ECON Policy 1.4.5.**

Interact with the Economic Development Corporation, prospects and other organizations involved in economic development.

**ECON Policy 1.4.6.**

Sarasota County, in coordination with the Economic Development Corporation and other appropriate entities, will continue programs that are designed to encourage the retention and expansion and recruitment of targeted industry businesses.

**ECON Policy 1.4.7.**

Sarasota County, through the Tourism and Economic Development Board and in coordination with the Economic Development Corporation and other appropriate entities, will sustain a coordinated local, regional, national and international marketing program that will identify and attract industrial, commercial, and office space users.

**ECON Policy 1.4.8.**

Sarasota County, through the Tourist Development Council will continue to support the area's domestic and international tourism development, arts, and culture to ensure continuation and expansion of the tourism and arts industry.

*Housing*

**ECON Policy 1.4.9.**

In order to encourage economic diversity, workforce housing should be available to persons earning a livelihood in Sarasota County through the goals, objectives, and policies of the Housing Element.

**ECON Policy 1.4.10.**

Sarasota County will foster the development of a diverse mix of housing types by size and income level served by maintaining mixed land use categories in the Future Land Use Element.

*Redevelopment*

**ECON Policy 1.4.11.**

The County's Brownfield Program established in 2002 shall be implemented by the Planning and Development Services Business Center, in cooperation with other County departments and agencies, to address brownfield redevelopment in response to private sector requests.

**ECON Policy 1.4.12.**

Sarasota County will continue local revitalization efforts to leverage private investment activities through public investment in community development and infrastructure improvements.

**ECON Policy 1.4.13.**

The County will encourage redevelopment by establishing strategies, such as mixed use and increased densities, in the goals, objectives, and policies of the Future Land Use Element.

**ECON Objective 1.5. Quality of Life**

Ensure the enhancement of business development opportunities by maintaining a “Quality of Life” component of those desirable community elements consisting of the preservation of the natural environment, enjoyment of arts, culture and recreation, educational excellence, and promoting social wellbeing, a healthy community, and keeping the community safe.

*Natural Environment***ECON Policy 1.5.1**

Protect and enhance the resources of the natural environment as they positively enhance the quality of economic development.

**ECON Policy 1.5.2.**

Manage the built environment to ensure that its development and maintenance is accomplished in a manner that preserves and enhances natural ecosystems and is maintained to enhance the natural beauty, quality, and visual aesthetics.

**ECON Policy 1.5.3.**

Preserve and enhance sensitive natural resources, including beaches, wetlands, estuaries, historic resources, scenic vistas and other unique natural resources through public acquisition and/or regulatory protection.

**ECON Policy 1.5.4.**

Maintain a publicly sponsored solid waste recycling program, sustainability education, as well as the “Keep Sarasota County Beautiful”, “Adopt a Road” and “Adopt a Beach” programs to maintain a clean, attractive community and positive public quality of life image.

*Arts, Culture and Recreation***ECON Policy 1.5.5.**

Promote venues for citizens to fulfill their desires to support, have access to and actively patronize a significant diversity of opportunities in Sarasota County for cultural and artistic enrichment and for recreational, leisure and entertainment activities, such as eco-tourism, in coordination with the Tourist Development Council and other appropriate entities.

**ECON Policy 1.5.6.**

Enhance and develop diverse cultural facilities, through public, private or public/private partnerships, that meet the needs of residents and visitors of Sarasota County. This shall include encouraging and supporting the construction and installation of art in public and private places.

*Educational Excellence*

**ECON Policy 1.5.7.**

Continue to coordinate with and assist the Sarasota County School Board in the planned expansion of educational facilities that enhance economic development and achieve a desired quality of life.

**ECON Policy 1.5.8.**

Encourage the local institutions of higher learning to develop cooperative and integrated curriculums that enhance and increase the productivity of the local workforce and serve to attract industries needing skilled workers.

*Social, Health and Safety*

**ECON Policy 1.5.9.**

Provide support for those in need by encouraging citizens and institutions to support philanthropy and volunteerism to enhance the social environment and foster citizens sharing social interactions characterized by equality of opportunity, in coordination with social service delivery institutions in the region,

**ECON Policy 1.5.10.**

Encourage health care institutions in the area to deliver medical and health care services with excellence and ensure that all citizens have access to these services regardless of financial means to ensure that the citizens generally experience a high level of physical and mental health.

**ECON Policy 1.5.11.**

Promote the opportunity for development and support of hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and additional medical related facilities in order to promote a continuum of care to enhance the quality of life throughout Sarasota County.

**ECON Policy 1.5.12.**

Cooperate with state entities and other social service providers to encourage the establishment of programs and facilities that assist the very young, elderly, homeless, mentally infirmed and other needy populations of Sarasota County.

**ECON Policy 1.5.13.**

Support public safety agencies providing high quality rescue, fire and law enforcement services so that citizens generally experience low levels of crime and high levels of personal safety.

**ECON Goal 2 Coordination, Collaboration, and Cooperation**

Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of overall economic development efforts through coordination, collaboration, and cooperation with federal, state, regional, and local authorities.

**ECON Objective 2.1. Economic Development Program**

Provide a coordinated and cohesive economic development program that represents the needs and desires of Sarasota County's citizens.

**ECON Policy 2.1.1.**

Pursue an integrated balanced approach to economic development that includes tourism, arts and cultural resources, natural resources, education, business, and government.

**ECON Policy 2.1.2.**

Develop and maintain relationships, and support the efforts of, appropriate federal, state, regional, and local agencies involved in economic development. This should include, but is not limited to, The State Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development; Tampa Bay Partnership; Suncoast Technology Alliance; Economic Development Corporation; Tourism and Economic Development Board; Tourist Development Council; Sarasota County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Arts Council; Fair Association; Chambers of Commerce; educational institutions; Suncoast Workforce Board; Manatee, Charlotte, and Desoto counties; and local municipalities.

**ECON Policy 2.1.3.**

Continue to prepare and implement the Sarasota County Economic Development Strategic Plan, 21st Century Suncoast Workforce Study, and the Visitor Industry Strategy Implementation Plan as a continuing effort to expand and diversify the economic base of Sarasota County.

**ECON Policy 2.1.4.**

Actively participate in the activities of the federal, state, regional, and local economic development organizations.

**ECON Policy 2.1.5.**

Collect, maintain, and share economic, geographic, and demographic data to assist on both public and private economic development decision-making.

**ECON Policy 2.1.6.**

Support the efforts of other agencies and organizations to obtain grants and other funds to assist in economic development efforts.

**ECON Goal 3 Diversify the Economy**

Achieve a diversified and sustainable economic base in Sarasota County to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy to economic fluctuations.

**ECON Objective 3.1. Support Existing and Attract New Businesses**

Sarasota County will support existing businesses and attract new high wage paying, value-added businesses.

**ECON Policy 3.1.1.**

Encourage and, where appropriate, support the economic development efforts of local private organizations, such as cluster groups.

**ECON Policy 3.1.2.**

Encourage the location of businesses and industries that meet the criteria established in "Guiding Principles (Guidelines) for Determining Desirable Business and Industry."

**ECON Policy 3.1.3.**

Encourage and, where appropriate, support the establishment of special districts to encourage the retention and attraction of high wage job opportunities and value-added businesses.

**ECON Policy 3.1.4.**

Preserve and build Sarasota County's reputation as a cultural center that attracts desirable business relocations and educated, creative workforce.

**ECON Objective 3.2. Support Existing and Attract New Agricultural Enterprises**

Sarasota County will preserve and enhance economic opportunities for agricultural enterprises.

**ECON Policy 3.2.1.**

Encourage expansion of existing agriculture uses and development of new business involved in agriculture.

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## **Guiding Principles for Determining Desirable Business and Industry**

The following guidelines are provided as criteria for evaluating the desirability of new business and industry. Sarasota County should encourage development that:

- can meet or exceed Sarasota County environmental quality standards;
- promote long term, year round employment stability and promote long-term, year-round employment opportunities;
- are consistent with the relevant goals, objectives and policies of the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan;
- will attract employees having a high degree of technical skill and education while at the same time offer career opportunities for those having lesser skills or education;
- will market its product(s) or service(s) regionally, nationally, and/or internationally, not locally only;
- will maintain its physical facilities in a manner as to complement the natural environment of the community;
- will not consume large volumes of water and energy resources;
- will not emit noxious fumes, odors, or waste products into the atmosphere, ground, or water;
- will share an interest in the well being of Sarasota County;
- will help Sarasota County maintain its superior quality of life;
- will vigorously work for better employment, education, medical, and cultural facilities for all Sarasota County's citizens; and
- will work in harmony with and will support by doing business with existing business and industry in the area as feasible.
- will incorporate sustainability principles and practices into their operations and services
- will be certified as a Sarasota County “Green Business”
- Examples of desirable business and industries include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a) business and financial services including insurance, securities, engineering, architectural and accounting services;
  - b) life and environmental sciences including health care suppliers, medical device and equipment manufacturers, research and development laboratories, and pharmaceutical manufacturers;

- c)** telecommunications and information industries including wholesalers and manufacturers of computers and computer components, communications equipment, electronic equipment, optic and photonic products, software developers, and printing and publishing firms;
- d)** international, national and regional headquarters;
- e)** creative services such as motion picture and television production, sound recording, design services, advertising, and performing arts;
- f)** specialty manufacturing and other high technology firms; and
- g)** agriculture and related businesses.