

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

Strategic Regional Policy Plan

(Adopted September 15, 2011)

I. Introduction

Florida Statute Section 186.502(4) states that the Regional Planning Council is recognized as Florida's only multipurpose regional entity that is in a position to plan and coordinate intergovernmental solutions to growth-related problems on greater-than-local issues, provide technical assistance to local governments, and meet other needs of the communities in each region. To fulfill this responsibility, the Florida Legislature required all Regional Planning Councils to develop Strategic Regional Policy Plans.

The Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) for Southwest Florida provides a long range guide for the physical, economic, and social development of the region. The overall purpose of the SRPP is to steer the region toward a more healthy and sustainable future. The SRPP is not merely a plan for the Council; it is a plan for the region and all those who are active participants in shaping its future.

General Scope and Application

The Florida Legislature mandates that the SRPP for each region of the States contain the following five elements:

- Affordable Housing
- Emergency Preparedness
- Natural Resources
- Economic Development
- Regional Transportation

Each element of the SRPP contains Strategic Issue Areas – issues that will have the most significant impact on the region and for which there are windows of opportunity for actions to create desirable change. These issues are generally multi-jurisdiction and cross-programmatic in nature. Each Strategic Issue Area contains a Trends and Conditions Statement which describes past and present conditions with respect to the issues and forecast future activities. Each Strategic Issue Area also contains one or more Goals. Every Goal is supported by Strategies, which are the ways in which programs and activities are conducted to achieve identified Goals, and each Strategy is supported by an implementation Actions. The Strategies are not intended to be prescriptive nor exhaustive, rather a listing of alternative methods for enacting the Strategy. Finally, each goal area includes indicators for evaluating attainment of the desired Goals.

In addition to being used as a guide for shaping the region's future, the SRPP is used by the Council as a framework to link planning and implementation activities of various entities; to review local Comprehensive Plans and large-scale Developments of Regional Impact; to facilitate resolutions of disputes in planning and growth management issues; and to guide all of the Council's activities. Specifically, the following rules provides for the development and evaluation of the Plan:

Legal Requirements (27E-5.001)

- 1) The purpose of this rule is to establish minimum criteria and a uniform format for strategic regional policy plans. Strategic Regional Policy Plans (SRPP) are required by Section 186.507 of the Florida Statutes as a means to guide long range physical, economic, and social development of a comprehensive planning district which identifies regional goals and policies.
 - These plans shall be developed through a collaborative process that emphasizes consensus and coordination between local governments, regional entities, state and federal agencies, other appropriate organizations and the public.
 - The resultant plan is a plan for the region, not merely for the regional planning council.
 - Regional goals and policies shall be used to develop a coordinated program of regional actions directed at resolving identified problems and needs.
 - These plans shall contain regional goals and policies that address affordable housing, economic development, emergency preparedness, natural resources of regional significance, and regional transportation, and other regional goals and policies as deemed appropriate by the council.
 - The plans shall identify and address significant regional resources and facilities.
 - Strategic Regional Policy Plans shall be strategic rather than comprehensive in nature and need not address all goals and policies in the State Comprehensive Plan. However, goals and policies included in a Strategic Regional Policy Plan shall be consistent with and further the State Comprehensive Plan.
- 2) For the purposes of the State and Regional Planning Act of 1984, as amended by Chapter 93-206, Laws of Florida, the Strategic Regional Policy Plan, upon its adoption, shall replace the comprehensive regional policy plan. However, the regional planning council may engage in activities not addressed by the plan so long as the council is not otherwise prohibited from such activities.
- 3) The Strategic Regional Policy Plan shall not establish binding level of service standards for public facilities and services provided or regulated by local governments.
- 4) Strategic Regional Policy Plans shall serve as a basis to review the resources and facilities found in local government comprehensive plans.

Purpose of the Plan (27E-5.003)

- 1) To implement and further the goals and policies of the State Comprehensive Plan with regard to the strategic regional subject areas and other components addressed in the plan.
- 2) To provide long range policy guidance for the physical, economic, and social development of the region.
- 3) To establish public policy for the resolution of disputes over regional problems, needs, or opportunities through the establishment of regional goals and policies and to provide a regional basis and perspective for the coordination of governmental activities and the resolution of problems, needs, and opportunities that are of regional concern or scope.
- 4) To establish goals and policies, in addition to other criteria establish by law, that provide a basis for:
 - the review of developments of regional impact
 - regional review of federally assisted projects
 - other activities of the regional planning council
- 5) To establish goals and policies to assist the state and the council in the determination of consistency of local comprehensive plans with strategic regional policy plans and the state comprehensive plan. Strategic Regional Policy Plans shall serve as a basis to review the resources and facilities found in local government comprehensive plans.
- 6) To establish land development and transportation goals and policies in a manner that fosters region-wide transportation systems.
- 7) To serve as a basis for decisions by the regional planning council.
- 8) To guide the administration of federal, state, regional, and local agency programs and activities in a region to the extent provided by law.
- 9) To identify significant regional resources and facilities, infrastructure needs, or other problems, needs, or opportunities of importance to the region.
- 10) To identify natural resources of regional significance and promote the protection of those resources.
- 11) To set forth economic development goals and policies that promotes regional economic growth and improvement.
- 12) To set forth goals and policies that addresses the affordable housing and emergency preparedness problems and needs of the region.

Evaluation and Modification of Plans (27E-5.008)

- 1) Evaluations of Plans. Each council shall prepare and evaluation report on its plan at least once every five years assessing the successes or failures of the plan and preparing necessary amendments, revisions, or updates to the plan. The evaluation report shall primarily be based upon the region's progress toward attainment of strategic regional policy plan goals using the indicators described in subsection 27E-5.004(6), F.A.C. The evaluation reports shall identify plan amendments which may be necessary as a result of changing regional conditions,

changes to the State Comprehensive Plan, and other statutory changes. The evaluation reports shall be submitted on or before the following dates, and every five years thereafter:

<u>Council</u>	<u>Submission Date</u>
Southwest Florida	March 15, 2000

- 2) Plan Changes. All amendments, revision, or updates to a plan or the maps required by paragraph 27E-5.004(3)(a), F.A.C., shall be adopted in the same manner as the original plan and shall be prepared as needed because of changes in the State Comprehensive Plan or law or as a result of modifications recommended in the evaluation conducted pursuant to subsection 27E-5.008(1). F.A.C.

The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council adopted its Strategic Regional Policy Plan on July 4, 2001. Florida Statute Section 186.511 requires the Council to assess the Strategic Regional Policy Plan once every five years to evaluate its successes and shortcomings and identify potential amendments, revisions, or updates needed to bring the Plan up to date and address issues that may not have been at the forefront when the Plan was previously created.

Evaluation and Appraisal Report

It is the purpose of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report to examine the effectiveness of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan's Goals, Strategies, and Actions for each of the five (5) strategic subject areas. The Report evaluates each Element separately, and then provides a Summary Recommendation by element for potential changes to the Plan.

History of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council Strategic Regional Policy Plan

The first Regional Comprehensive Plan was a Policy Plan. It went into effect in 1975, and was a series of goals and policies that provided staff direction and boundaries for its various actions and reports. Its legitimacy was within the State Planning Act of 1972 (Chapter 23, F.S. at the time), and Chapter 380, F.S. (Land and Water Management Act). A lot of refinement occurred through federal initiatives for clean water and housing.

With the passage of the State and Regional Planning Act of 1984, the Council adopted an amended plan, a Regional Comprehensive Policy Plan, which also incorporated further considerations contained in the 1980 Regional Planning Act (Chapter 160, F.S.).

A further refinement occurred after ELMS III (1992-3) which directed regions to redefine the scope to be a Strategic Regional Policy Plan, which was to further the (repealed) Growth

Management Element of the State Plan, as well as address issues pertinent to the Region. Those changes established the framework of the Plan that exists today.

Passage of additional Local and State planning direction in the intervening two decades (changes to transportation concurrency, the addition of school concurrency, the Governor's executive orders on climate change and energy, etc) and the recognition of the National American Planning Association (APA) of the critical trends in Smart Growth for a Changing World lead to a reexamination of the issues in the development of the Evaluation Appraisal Report (EAR) of the existing Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP), adopted pursuant to Chapter 29I F.A.C.

State of the Region

Context – The Greater Southwest Florida Region

The regional visioning process “People, Prosperity, Preservation” is outlined as the precursor to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan update. The process resulted in a discussion of the future of the region and the potential impacts on traffic, environment, community livability, and quality of life. The problems associated with the region’s generally low density development, automobile oriented sprawl land uses patterns are described and the negative impacts are identified and set the stage for a review of the various Goals, strategies and actions found in this Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR). The visioning process that conducted in 2010 is the first part of the development of the future plans for the region. This EAR is the second part of the regional planning process and will result in the identification that the SWFRPC desires to take in the future. The final step in the process will be an update of the SRPP that will guide local governments in their future comprehensive planning efforts and provide a framework for development policies that will direct the actions of the Council during the next seven (7) year planning timeframe.

When the Southwest Florida Regional Planning (SWFRPC) initiated the effort to convene a regional visioning process it first sought to determine what communities comprise Southwest Florida. While SWFRPC is made up of Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Glades, and Hendry Counties, the council wanted to determine which counties truly comprise the region in order to ensure that the vision plan met the needs, concerns, and demands of all communities in the greater region.

The council sought to answer this question by asking regional stakeholders what communities link together citizens, businesses, and ecosystem together in one region. Additionally, the council conducted research about how the mutual concerns interconnect and unite the region.

Through this process, the council sought to define the region’s boundaries by determining common characteristics and features shared between local municipalities and county governments. The region completed this evaluation by examining key community development factors including: geographic makeup, demographics, economic marketplace, and transportation

systems. Together these factors help define the Southwest Florida Region by determining where local communities and counties interconnect and unite into a single territory.

After reviewing all of the information and considering what comprise the Southwest Florida Region, the SWFRPC determined the region is made up of the eight counties that stretch south from the Sunshine Skyway Bridge to the Everglades National Park and east to Lake Okeechobee. The counties are: Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, and Hendry. The regional definition includes the six SWFRPC counties plus Manatee and DeSoto Counties, which have been added due to their connection to the other counties in the region.

Geographic Make-up of the Region

Southwest Florida is a diverse geographic area. The region is based upon the coastal areas that extend along the Gulf of Mexico from the Tampa Bay Harbor in the north to the Everglades National Park in the south. These coastal areas are linked to inland areas by a complex ecosystem that includes wetlands, rivers and their tributaries, old Florida preserves, and rural lands that extend from the Gulf of Mexico to the interior.

The components of the geographic features are as follows:

- Coastal Areas: barrier islands, beaches, harbor, and wetlands
- Old Florida Preserves: pine forests, wetlands, rivers and their tributaries
- Rural Lands: cattle lands, citrus groves, sugar cane farms, and other produce farms

The coastal areas are located along the Gulf of Mexico shores which stretch the entire west coast of the region from Manatee to Collier County. The old Florida preserves are dispersed throughout the region as they help protect the region's most valuable resources. The region's largest preserved area is the Everglades National Park, which is located at the region's southern section in Collier County. Rural lands dominate the region's three interior counties, but also include areas outside the development corridors of the five coastal counties. Together these areas make up the single geographical area identified as Southwest Florida.

The region's geography supports an array of recreational, economic, and environmental resources including:

- Water resources - boating, fishing scuba diving, and swimming.
- Florida natural resources - hiking, camping, beach-based activities, boating, and natural photography/arts.
- Agricultural resources - produce farming, livestock, nurseries, and aquaculture.

These opportunities are the reason that Southwest Florida is able to provide community members, business owners, and visitors a high quality of life with many opportunities to live, work, and play in the region. Indeed, the geographic diversity of the region is the reason why people are attracted to the region as it provides the foundation for the region's economy.

Southwest Florida is a multi-generational region, with community members from all age groups. While the area is commonly thought of as an area that is tailored to senior retirees, data from the Shimberg Center for Housing shows that the region's population is fairly evenly distributed among all age groups.

The following demographic profile from 2010 shows this distribution:

Total Population:	1,889,419
17 and under:	353,550 / 19%
18 - 34:	317,578 / 17%
35 - 54:	456,595 / 24%
55 - 64:	270,218 / 14%
65 - 79:	356,073 / 19%
80 and over:	135,405 / 7%

The highest percentage of residents fall in the 65 and over age group and the lowest percentage is the 20 - 34 year olds. Yet despite this difference, most of the age groups make up approximately 20% of the population - a clear indication that the region's age distribution is fairly equitable through all generations.

The largest counties are located along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico:

1. Lee County

2010 Population:	618,754
Location:	Coastal County north of Collier County, and west of Hendry and Collier Counties
Municipalities:	Cities of Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, and Sanibel Island, and Town of Fort Myers Beach
Population make up:	
17 and under:	120,869 / 20%
18 - 34:	113,354 / 18%
35 - 54:	152,233 / 25%
55 - 64:	87,192 / 14%
65 - 79:	108,041 / 17%
80 and over:	37,065 / 6%

2. Sarasota County

2010 Population:	379,448
Location:	Coastal County north of Charlotte County, and west of DeSoto and Dade Counties
Municipalities:	Cities of Sarasota, North Port, Venice, and the Town of Longboat Key (Note: Longboat Key is also located in Manatee County)
Population make up:	
17 and under:	59,735 / 16%

18 - 34:	53,403 / 14%
35 - 54:	89,748 / 24%
55 - 64:	58,335 / 15%
65 - 79:	81,156 / 21%
80 and over:	37,071 / 10%

3. Manatee County

2010 Population: 322,833

Location: Coastal County north of Sarasota County, and west of Hardee and DeSoto Counties

Municipalities: Cities of Anna Maria, Bradenton, Bradenton Beach, Holmes Beach, and Palmetto and Town of Longboat Key (Note: Longboat Key is also in Sarasota County)

Population make up:

17 and under:	66,283 / 21%
18 - 34:	55,586 / 17%
35 - 54:	80,775 / 25%
55 - 64:	45,080 / 14%
65 - 79:	53,618 / 17%
80 and over:	21,491 / 7%

4. Collier County

2010 Population: 321,520

Location: Coastal County north of Monroe County, and west of Broward and Dade Counties

Municipalities: Cities of Naples, Marco Island, and Everglades City

Population make up:

17 and under:	62,647 / 19%
18 - 34:	54,596 / 17%
35 - 54:	76,386 / 24%
55 - 64:	42,940 / 13%
65 - 79:	63,011 / 20%
80 and over:	21,940 / 7%

5. Charlotte County

2010 Population: 159,978

Location: Coastal County north of Monroe County, County, and west of Broward and Dade County

Municipality: City of Punta Gorda

Population make up:

17 and under:	22,878 / 14%
18 - 34:	19,798 / 12%
35 - 54:	35,327 / 22%

55 - 64: 27,379 / 17%
65 - 79: 39,768 / 25%
80 and over: 14,831 / 9%

6. Hendry County

2010 Population 39,140

Location: Inland County north of Collier County, Glades County, and west of Palm Beach County

Municipalities: Cities of Clewiston and LaBelle

Population make up:

17 and under: 10,886 / 28%
18 - 34: 9,841 / 25%
35 - 54: 10,274 / 26%
55 - 64: 3,648 / 9%
65 - 79: 3,440 / 9%
80 and over: 1,051 / 3%

7. DeSoto County

2010 Population 34,862

Location: Inland county north of Charlotte County, south of Hardee County, and west of Highlands County

Municipality: City of Arcadia

Population make up:

17 and under: 7,835 / 22%
18 - 34: 8,314 / 24%
35 - 54: 8,521 / 24%
55 - 64: 3,964 / 11%
65 - 79: 4,791 / 14%
80 and over: 1,437 / 4%

8. Glades County

2010 Population 12,884

Location: Inland County north of Hendry County, south of Highlands County, and west of Charlotte County

Municipality: City of Moore Haven

Population make up:

17 and under: 2,417 / 19%
18 - 34: 2,686 / 21%
35 - 54: 3,331 / 26%
55 - 64: 1,683 / 13%
65 - 79: 2,248 / 17%
80 and over: 519 / 4%

Coastal and Inland Counties

Demographic Makeup, County Population Distribution, Population Centers

The largest population centers in Southwest Florida region are located along the Gulf of Mexico. These five coastal counties - Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier - are home to a population of 1,802,533 of the population. Whereas, the three inland counties - DeSoto, Hendry, and Glades - have only 86,886 residents. The reason for this disparity is that the five coastal counties are made up of larger urban / suburban areas while the three inland counties are identifies by their rural agricultural lands. The differences include:

Southwest Florida has 22 incorporated municipalities, eighteen of which are located in the five coastal counties.

The region's thirteen most populous municipalities located in the five coastal counties, west of I-75:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Cape Coral (154,305) | 8. Naples (19,537) |
| 2. Fort Myers (62,298) | 9. Punta Gorda (16,641) |
| 3. North Port (57,357) | 10. Marco Island (16,413) |
| 4. Sarasota (51,917) | 11. Palmetto (12,606) |
| 5. Bradenton (49,546) | 12. Longboat Key (6,888) |
| 6. Bonita Springs (43,914) | 13. Sanibel (6,469) |
| 7. Venice (20,748) | |

96% of the region's population lives in 5 coastal counties; 4% of the population lives in the 3 inland counties.

The region has three commercial airports, all of which are located in the coastal section of the region.

I-75 is the region's only Federal Interstate Highway. It travels predominantly through the five coastal counties.

Regional Economic Factors

When the SWFRPC asked a group of regional stakeholders to describe the region many people said it is where the market conducts its primary business. This group of community leaders, business owners, and public officials explained that the most important factor in determining what makes up the southwest region is what counties are tied to a shared economy.

As this response resonated strongly with the region's leaders, we sought to quantify these questions by conducting a study of the top industries located within each of the proposed eight counties. The answer was quite insightful as it found that all of the top business sectors correlate in one way or another to the other counties. Indeed, the 2007 U.S. Economic Census found that each county's top industry sectors were also a found in the other counties, though not in the exact same order.

This review found that the region's top industries are associated with leisure-oriented, service-based economic activities as they were related to the support and provision of services, goods, food, and housing.

The following list highlights the top 15 industry sectors in Southwest Florida as reported by the 2007 U.S. Economic Census:

- Admin and Support Services: 142, 224 / 47.09%
- Retail: 79, 096 / 26.19%
- Construction: 78, 548 / 26.00%
- Health Care: 77, 699 / 25.72%
- Hospitality and Restaurant: 59, 374 / 19.66%
- Professional and Technical Services: 31, 229 / 10.34%
- Manufacturing: 28, 716 / 9.51%
- Art, Entertainment, and Recreation: 22, 354 / 7.4%
- Other Services: 22, 221 / 7.36%
- Finance and Insurance: 20, 762 / 6.87%
- Wholesale Trade: 19, 620 / 6.50%
- Agriculture: 18, 763 / 6.21%
- Real Estate: 14, 230 / 4.71%
- Information Production and Distribution: 10, 133 / 3.35%
- Management Companies: 7, 547 / 2.50%

The fact that these industries cross county lines underscores the strength of Southwest Florida region's cohesiveness.

The region's economic interdependence upon housing, tourism, and other service-based industries has been particularly evident in the current economic market. The failure of the housing industry has caused the region's economy to spiral downward. Coastal communities which at one time seemed invulnerable to national economic ups and downs have led the region's current economic downturn.

As the nation's housing crisis has crippled the region's core industries, new unfinished neighborhoods are left to deteriorate in the hot Florida sun. According July 2009 economic figures from the Florida Research and Economic Database, the state of Florida's unemployment rate had reached a 16 year high of 11.0% - Florida had a 3.0% unemployment rate as recently as April 2006.

The economic conditions for Southwest Florida were even worse, as the combined 8-county region's unemployment rate was 12.4% or 104,344 individuals. Every county in the region had double digit unemployment as every county except Glades had an unemployment rate that was higher than the state average:

Hendry County / 16.4%
Lee County / 13.2%
Manatee County / 12.2%
Collier County / 12.1%
Charlotte County / 12.0%
Sarasota County 11.5%
DeSoto County / 11.4%
Glades County / 10.6%

United States and Florida Unemployment Rates (seasonally adjusted)

Leading the economic downturn is job associated with the following industries: construction, trades, transportation, utilities, professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, financial services, other services, and information related industries. In particular, construction jobs accounted for over 26 percent of the losses in the state.

According to Florida labor statistics, the two bright spots were education and health services and total government jobs. Increases in education and health services was reported to have been caused by the continued strength of the health care industry as a whole and specific increases in jobs in nursing and residential care facilities. The State reported that the increase in total government is due to seasonal patterns in state universities employment.

Future Economic Outlook

Immediate Economic forecasts for 2009 do not show much improvement as the Florida Agency for Work-force Innovations indicates that, like the nation, Florida must overcome issues related to high home fore-closures, stagnant lending practices, and consumer confidence. However, despite current economic conditions, state officials and real estate experts believe Florida's economy will rebound strongly.

State planners and real estate market advocates suggest that are reasons to be optimistic. Statistics from the Florida Associate of Realtors suggest that there is reason to believe in the continued resilience of Florida's housing market and economic base including:

Reduced Home Costs. Florida's median sales price for existing homes in June 2009 was \$148,000. A year ago it was \$205,300, which is a 28% decrease. However, the statewide existing home median price in June increased 2.49% over May's median price. It also was higher than the statewide median price reported each month since the start of 2009.

Increasing Home Sales. June 2009 saw an increase in new homes sales for the tenth straight month — a clear sign that the housing market may be on the rebound.

High housing inventories. As the housing market stagnated homes did not sell and new homes came on the market. Even though many builders suspended construction plans, a glut of existing homes remained. This glut has resulted in a buyer's market.

Federal Mortgage Rates. In an attempt to encourage home buying, Federal agencies have kept rates at the lowest levels since the 1960s.

Florida is still seen as a growth state. Lenders are still willing to lend to home buyers in Florida because the long-term growth forecasts remain strong. 2010 Census projections have Florida as the third most populous state.

In-migration Remains Strong. Despite the downturn, Florida's growth rate remains strong and is expected to be about 317,000 people a year in the next decade.

Retiring Baby Boomers. As some 80 million baby boomers retire, Florida is seen as a favorable destination.

Growth Industries. Even as the economy is in a state of slow growth there are industries that are doing well. Among those industries are health care, technologies, green energies, all of which are important industries in Southwest Florida.

High Homeownership Rates. Florida has a high owner-occupied housing rate which means community members have a high personal investment in their communities. As a result residents are likely to support local efforts, like this regional visioning process, which seeks to address community issues needs and concerns.

Florida is a Destination. State planning officials remind people that Florida is a place that people want to come to. The features that originally attracted people to the state -sunshine, water, and tropical weather continue to draw residents.

What does this mean for Southwest Florida? That now is the best time to focus on planning for the future. Planning is best accomplished in a stable environment. Stability enables community members, business owners, public organizations, and elected officials to determine what the proper course of action is before the change occurs. Southwest Florida's economy will recover. When it does, the region should have a plan that helps direct the growth in such a way that helps the region achieve its future vision.

Current Economic Conditions

In December 2008, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council sponsored two forums aimed at initiating a regional visioning process for the 8-county Southwest Florida region. Over eighty elected and community leaders participated in the People, Prosperity, and Preservation

visioning process forums. Participants included community groups, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and public agencies.

The purpose of the forums was to 1) build upon the various long-term visioning efforts that the have been undertaken through the region and 2) design a visioning process that produces real implementation.

The forums achieved their goal by encouraging participants to consider the region's future by discussing their ideas and concerns about the

Discussions addressed the various challenges and opportunities for developing a regional vision in Southwest Florida as well as why participants thought a vision was important for the region's future.

The forum discussions were framed around three primary topics:

- The region's boundaries and issues.

- Visioning experiences and expectations.

- Visioning Process form, function, and goals.

At the conclusion of the workshop, consensus started to form regarding the best approach to implement a visioning process. This visioning process, as described in this report, is based upon the region's desire to address common regional needs and promote the region's economy while providing excellent public services and superior quality of life that all generations can enjoy. This vision process will continue to be fine-tuned and developed through additional meetings with community members, public officials, intergovernmental partner agencies, and elected government bodies. Additionally, it will reflect the best planning practices of regional planning efforts held through the State of Florida and United States

Focus on Regional Concerns

The communities of Southwest Florida face a number of challenges as they work towards providing their community members, business owners, and visitors a great place to live, work, and play. Many of these challenges transcend local borders and impact the people, economy, and ecosystems of the entire region. Challenges such as housing development, local police and fire services, and recreational resource are primarily local issues that are influenced by regional factors. Others - such as economic development, transportation, and natural resource protection - are regional issues that impact the quality of life for local communities. In either case, local solutions will not succeed unless the regional concerns involved with such issues are resolved.

The challenges facing the communities of Southwest Florida include concerns related to:

Development and Planning

1. Construction of vibrant community centers, strong neighborhoods, viable business areas, and valued public spaces, civic resources, and park and recreational opportunities.
2. Provision of varied housing options that meet the needs of a diverse regional population.
3. Land use patterns that support multi-modal transportation alternatives.
4. Sustainable land development practices that protect vital coastal areas, wetlands, and natural Florida ecosystems.

Economic Development

1. Creation of high quality jobs and diverse economic opportunities.
2. Business development that provides needed jobs, services, and economic resources.
3. Economic efforts that spur long-term business growth and economic sustainability.
4. Provision of private and public services that meet the community's needs.

Education and Workforce Development

1. Support of the educational resources that provide learning opportunities for a lifetime:
 - Pre-school and childhood education.
 - Workforce and job skills training.
 - College and post graduate education.
 - Continuing workforce and professional skills development.
 - Senior and active adult education.

Emergency Management

1. Protection of people, property, natural habitats, and other community assets from fire, tropical events, human caused events, and other emergency events.
2. Provision of emergency services — police, fire, health — which meet the needs of an emergency event and protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of the region.

Environmental Sustainability

1. Protection of vital natural resources.
2. Support of green economy opportunities.
3. Mitigation of the impacts of climate change and habitat degradation.

Health Care and Human Services

1. Support of quality health care and human services needed to care for and maintain people's wellbeing.
2. Health care facilities
3. Emergency care services
4. Family medical services
5. Therapeutic care

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

1. Provision of high quality utility services, infrastructure systems, and natural systems related to the needs of:
 - Potable water and wastewater
 - Solid waste
 - Stormwater management
 - Telecommunications
 - Energy

Public Services, Cultural Resources, and Recreation

1. Support and provision of public services that meet the social, cultural, and personal needs of the community:
 - Parks and recreational resources
 - Library and historical resources
 - Civic and arts resources
 - Other community services
 - Support and provision of opportunities for community members and visitors to play and recreate:
 - Parks
 - Sporting venues
 - Arts and theater
 - Beaches and waterways
 - Trails and bikeways
 - Natural open areas

Transportation Mobility

1. Provision of an integrated, multi-modal system that enables community members, business owners, and visitors to travel within and through the community.
 - Pedestrian sidewalks and trails
 - Bikeways
 - Transit
 - Roadways
2. Support of land use and development patterns that provide for multi-modal transportation systems.
 - Mixed-use development patterns
 - Community centers and density

The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council specifically represents six (6) counties and sixteen (16) municipalities. With a total land area of 6,663 square miles southwest Florida covers 10% of the State's land area and is home to 1 out of 12 Floridians. Since April 1, 2000, the Southwest Florida population (1,206,635) has grown by 28%. It is projected that the region will almost double its current estimated population of 1,552,350 by the year 2030 to 2,396,793 (BEBR, Vol. 41, Bulletin 151, July, 2008.) The age cohort 35-64 make up the largest share of the regional population. The abundance of people in this age group makes for a healthy

workforce. The age cohort 18 to 34 is the second fastest growing population; with an expected average annual growth rate of 3%. This age group is a vital part of our future as a region. The fastest growing population cohort - residents age 65 and older - bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to Southwest Florida. Southwest Florida has a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. According to the 2000 Census, 23% of Southwest Floridians (age 25 and over) had a college degree or higher compared to 24% in the nation.

The regional land use is characterized by a mix of land uses and has a historical urban and rural split. Urban communities stretch along the coastal areas and then transition into large tracts of agricultural lands. The region has a large set of environmental resources. The freshwater swamps and sloughs, including the Big Cypress National Preserve and the Everglades National Park include eco-systems that contain the largest remaining habitats for rare and endangered species in Florida.

The region has access to both the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Okeechobee. Charlotte Harbor, the coastal center of the Region's west coast, is one of the nation's few largely undeveloped estuaries. The Region's beaches and enclosed back water bays provide abundant recreational opportunities that attracts tourist from around the world. Southwest Florida has no port facilities and retirement income, tourism and agriculture make up the three largest components of the region's economy. Florida will add almost 10 million more people over the next 25 years. From metropolitan areas to its rural inlands, all regions in the State of Florida will be affected by growth-related changes in the future. It is critical to manage change to be prosperous in the new global economy while maintaining our quality of life.

Regional Issues

Based on the existing trends, information gathered in public presentations and forums held around the region the Future of the Region from 2011 to 2035 identified within the framework to the SRPP will be as follows:

Population

1. The Region will continue to grow – Just different than expected: lower natural increases, fewer affluent retirees, and more immigrants.
2. Continued multi-cultural, religious and ethnic groups.
3. Boomers will be challenged to sell homes up north.
4. Demand for younger people to support older population.

Economic Development

1. Tourism will continue - if the environment is protected.
2. Retirement will continue to dominate. Retirement checks may be threatened.
3. Construction related activities will be less.
4. Gasoline Prices will become more and may change mobility trends.

5. More locally grown food will increase - which will increase the need to protect farmlands.
6. Not much export and limited local consumption oriented manufacturing.
7. Services will continue to be in demand.

Natural Resources

1. Acquisition of parts of larger natural systems will continue to keep area eco-system healthy and maintain the tourist/retirement oriented economy.
2. Wildlife will continue to be protected.
3. Watershed management will help water quality.
4. Sea level rise will continue.
5. Water amounts will be problematic.

Emergency Management

1. Hurricanes will continue to impact the region.
2. Accidents will continue happen in the region.

Affordable Housing

1. Pockets of wealth will continue to require service populations and these servers will require housing.
2. The demand for smaller units will grow as incomes stagnate, complexities in integrating housing and businesses within the same setting need to be overcome.

Transportation

1. Complete streets will become increasingly in demand.
2. Multi-modal transportation facilities integrated with increased density land uses will increase.

Regional Challenges

Growth in the region has been significant over the past 60 years. By 1990, the region's population growth was more than five times that of 1960. In the year 2006, the Southwest Florida Region continued its significant growth reaching over 1.5 million people and has been estimated to reach an estimated 2.3 million people by 2030. This population growth and demographic changes will drive the development of the region and will and has produced changes in the region's economic trends, land uses and growth pressures at the "edge" of the existing urban core areas. Because of the automobile oriented land development patterns, job dispersion resulting in a jobs/transportation imbalances have occurred and as energy prices increase in the future this imbalance will cause significant stress to the region and could potentially thwart future growth and development. The region also has significant pressures

related to the conservation and preservation of Agricultural lands. These pressures could impact the future costs of food stuffs should imports of food from external sources be stressed due to population and demand growth in other parts of the world. Additionally, given the economic downturn due the past several years, retirement populations may be reduced and the income derived from these sources may also experience reductions. Since these income sources are a major portion of the southwest Florida economy, current trends could produce challenges that will slow the future development of the area.

To address these problems, the SWFRPC has been working to coordinate the people of the region to address community, education, health and cultural issues. The SWFRPC desires to provide a framework for prosperity that includes job creation, property value increases, economic development and transportation network improvements at the same time addressing the preservation of the environment that attracts retirees and related service populations to the area. In order to address the balanced use of the region's environment, the SWRRPC has been emphasizing environmental, agriculture, open space, water, energy and land uses through preservation by planning for the protection of vital resources, by linking multi-modal transportation facilities and land uses, by providing leadership in the establishment of sustainable communities, by searching for linkages between existing and emerging centers transportation and by searching for coordination of leaders efforts to provide consistency across regional boundaries.

The Strategic Regional Policy Plan desires to lead the region to an overall sustainable Florida that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The results of the region's "People, Prosperity, and Preservation" was a vision that stated it is a desire of the region to provide, "an effective partnership of public agencies, business, industry, and communities working together to further regional investment that provides for a sustainable quality of life, ensures the mobility of people and goods, while recognizing the interrelationship between the economy and environment."

Strategic Regional Policy Plan Evaluation and Appraisal

The Southwest Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan (Volume Two: Adopted on June 13, 2002 and Effective on July 4, 2002) has been evaluated base on relevant current information, future trends, present required functions and on-going activities of the Council, Federal, State, and grants budget limitations, and input provided from public meetings held throughout the region. The evaluation and appraisal of the SRPP was implemented in order to update and correct the information found in the SRPP related to the Goals, Strategies, and Actions found in the Plan. The SRPP was restructured by adding an additional Element to the Plan named "Livable Communities." The new Element was added in order to make future reviews of Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Developments of Regional Impact, Intergovernmental Coordination and Reviews, and other uses of the SRPP to be more clearly defined and to allow development issues not previously addressed in the SRPP to be identified. The following matrices provide a detailed evaluation on whether to retain, remove, or amend all of the Goals, Strategies and Actions found in the Plan. The amended SRPP was adopted by the Council on September 15, 2011.

Strategic Regional Policy Plan Goals, Strategies, and Actions

Economic Development Element

Economic Infrastructure

Goal 1: A well-maintained social, health, and educational infrastructure to support business and industry.

Strategy: Continually improve the educational system to produce an educated and trained work force.

- Action 1:** Use the economic advisory committees to assist in the exchange of information between the educational system and the business community about business needs.
- Action 2:** Use the economic advisory committees to advise educational institutions to increase upper division and graduate level studies through programs appropriate to regional needs.
- Action 3:** Review proposed development impacts on and opportunities to provide needed educational facilities and services.

Indicators

- Student retention rates that meet or exceed those of the state.
- Rate of high school graduates entering post-secondary school that meets or exceeds that of the state.
- Expansion of degrees and programs offered by post-secondary schools.

Strategy: Ensure a health care system that addresses the needs of both business and the work force

- Action 1:** Where possible participate in the study of health insurance options for employers and employees.
- Action 2:** Review proposed development for impacts on and opportunities to provide needed health care facilities and services.

Indicators

- Decreased rate of death, disability, and illness.
- Reduction in the rate of health care cost increases.
- Reduction in the rate of health insurance cost increases.

Strategy: Maintain the physical infrastructure to meet growth demands.

- Action 1:** Review plan amendments, development proposal, and clearinghouse items for public facility deficits and encourage mitigation of those deficits.
- Action 2:** Assist local governments and state agencies in planning for future support service facilities, before the need arises.

- Action 3:** Review proposed public facilities to ensure their location in urban areas that have in place, or are covered by binding agreements to provide, the resources and facilities for desired growth in an environmentally acceptable manner.
- Action 4:** Study alternative and assist other entities to study alternatives to encourage land development that maximizes the use, rehabilitation, and re-use of existing facilities, structures, and buildings as an alternative to new construction and development.
- Action 5:** Review proposed development to require the developer to install or finance the necessary infrastructure and to provide land for the needed support services.

Indicators

- An inventory of support services and facilities.
- Increased funding of infrastructure from non-local sources.

Strategy: Ensure the adequacy of lands for commercial and industrial centers, with suitable services provided.

- Action 1:** Include in planning efforts the recognition of lands with natural capacity, accessibility, previous preparation for urban purposes, and adequate public facilities.
- Action 2:** Participate, coordinate, or promote intergovernmental coordination for siting unpopular land uses.
- Action 3:** Review proposed development for increased densities and infill in suitable urban areas.

Indicators

- Increased square footage of development in central business districts when compared with overall population growth.
- Reduced average distance from residential areas to commercial/service sites.
- Increased expansion of appropriate trade and service areas for future residential areas.

Strategy: Ensure the availability of the infrastructure needed for advanced telecommunication and high-technology.

- Action 1:** Promote public and private efforts to monitor and anticipate the need for high-technology infrastructure and to evaluate funding sources to meet those demands.
- Action 2:** Participate with public and private entities to address potential conflicts due to the placement of communication towers and similar high-technology infrastructure.

Indicators

- Cooperative arrangements with regulators and public and private providers of high-technology infrastructure.

Strategy: Ensure adequate infrastructure for rural areas.

Action 1: As requested evaluate locally undesirable land uses as part of rural economic development.

Action 2: Assist rural local governments to develop grant applications.

Indicators

- Adopted levels of service in rural areas, compared with levels of service in urban areas.
- Improve rural infrastructure.

Strategy: Promote the use of alternative energy resources.

Action 1: Review proposed development to promote energy conservation.

Action 2: Participate in an ongoing regional forum on alternative energy research and development.

Indicators

- More occupational licenses for energy production or installation of energy conservation appliances or energy-producing devices or equipment.
- Increased sales of solar water heaters and other alternative energy systems.

The Work Force

Goal 2: A well-educated, well-trained work force.

Strategy: Enhance the skill level of the regional work force.

Action 1: Coordinate with the public and private sectors to assess skills for targeted industries.

Indicators

- Increased capacity of job-training programs.
- Increased participation by employers in work force development.
- Improvements in educational attainment.

Strategy: Ensure a wide range of employment for all Southwest Floridians.

Action 1: Identify employment sectors that create jobs appropriate to this region.

Action 2: Participate in business, industrial, and governmental organizations to attract diversified and permanent employment.

Action 3: Assist rural local governments to increase services for start-up businesses and entrepreneurs.

Indicators

- A regional job creation rate greater than the rate of population increase.
- A regional job creation rate greater than the state rate.
- Increased number of enterprise zones, free trade zones, etc.

Strategy: Improve the high rates of unemployment and low wage scales in rural areas.

- Action 1:** Identify economically depressed areas and assist with applications for funding and economic development planning.
- Action 2:** Assist communities largely reliant upon agricultural income or employment to diversify their employment and tax bases.
- Action 3:** Assist in the development and expansion of rural tourism and eco-tourism.
- Action 4:** Assist in the development of information programs, including signage coordinated with transportation agencies, for rural historic places and cultural and historical activities.

Indicators

- Reduced out migration rates among younger rural residents.
- Increased median education and income levels in rural areas.
- Increased real value or square footages of commercial, governmental, residential, and cultural land uses in rural areas.
- More rural economic development programs.
- More programs for rural downtown preservation and revitalization.

Diversity

Goal 3: A diverse regional economy.

Strategy: Diversify the regional economy by attracting new business and industry.

- Action 1:** Work with business, industry, and government to target industries appropriate for their markets.
- Action 2:** Develop and publish demographic information and marketing materials to assist communities in business development.

Indicators

- Periodic publication of essential demographic and marketing information.

Strategy: Inventory the business incentives offered in the Region.

- Action 1:** Review and analyze the effects of incentives, such as jobs created and average wages, as well as the community's estimate of benefits.

Indicators

- Publication of an assessment of incentives offered to business.

Strategy: Work with communities to develop eco-tourism.

- Action 1:** Assist in development, expansion, and funding of eco-tourism, especially for rural areas.
- Action 2:** Provide eco-tourism information on the SWFRPC web site.

Indicators

- Increased information about eco-tourism on the SWFRPC web site.

Marketing

Goal 4: Increase tourism and business relocation.

Strategy: Promote both internal and inter-regional tourism.

Action 1: Encourage increased regional tourism and promotion by local interests in other areas.

Action 2: Advocate tourism between this and other regions and protect inter-regional tourism resources.

Indicators

- Reduced variations in seasonal occupancy versus non-seasonal occupancy.
- Reduced variation in the percentage of tourist development taxes collected during the winter season versus summer season.
- Increase local participation in regional promotional efforts.

Strategy: Re-evaluate the success of Southwest Florida as a retirement and tourist destination.

Action 1: Review proposed development to protect the resources important to the quality of life.

Action 2: Review capital improvement programs to identify the impacts and needs of residents and tourists and to prioritize improvements to accommodate both.

Indicators

- Analysis of retirement and tourism in the regional economy.

Strategy: Promote Southwest Florida as a business location.

Action 1: Participate in local and regional efforts to attract targeted business.

Action 2: Encourage increased regional efforts to promote business relocations.

Indicators

- Increased number of new business locations from other areas.
- Increased local participation in regional promotional efforts.

Strategy: Provide technical assistance to member local governments and other public economic development interests.

Action 1: Develop and distribute economic and demographic information.

Action 2: Maintain and expand the SWFRPC library of items about economic development.

Action 3: Exchange information through workshops, economic groups, and committees.

Action 4: Review economic proposals, such as plan elements, projects, and grant applications.

Action 5: Assist in development and preparation of applications for funding.

Indicators

- Number of volumes in the economic section of the SWFRPC library.
- Number of projects and applications assisted by the SWFRPC.

Regional Cooperation

Goal 5: A system of cooperation and coordination for economic development that includes a broad range of public and private participants.

Strategy: Promote regional cooperation and coordination for economic development.

Action 1: Promote cooperative arrangements and actions for economic development among business, governmental, and environmental groups, and other public and private entities.

Indicators

- None.

Natural Resources Element

Public Awareness

Goal 1: The Region's environmental awareness educational programs will be supported and directed to as many audiences as possible.

Strategy: Provide technical assistance to the Region's various public awareness programs.

Action 1: The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council will assist School Boards and Environmental Education Centers in the design of awareness programs.

Action 2: Local, regional and state agencies should establish non-regulatory, educational urban non listed wildlife programs, which include:

- a. The identification of wildlife living in urban areas;
- b. Public education concerning the behavior and needs of urban wildlife;
- c. The benefits of maintain urban wildlife;
- d. Measures to avoid conflicts between urban wildlife species and man, and the means to resolve such conflicts.

Indicators

- None.

Natural Resource Protection

Goal 2: The diversity and extent of the Region's protected natural systems will increase consistently. The increase will be based upon 1998 acreage of existing conservation, preservation and stewardship lands.

Strategy: To identify and include within land conservation preservation and stewardship programs, those lands identified as being regionally necessary for the sustainability of southwest Florida.

Action 1: Provide a regional clearing house and inventory of lands included in all land acquisition programs in a regional Green Print shared at the SWFRPC web site.

Action 2: Support continued acquisition of lands targeted for conservation and recreation by land acquisition programs, including federal, state regional, local, and private efforts in the region.

- Action 3:** Assist federal, state, regional, local and private entities to evaluate projects that have been submitted for consideration under the land acquisition programs, as requested by reviewing staff on an application-by-application basis..
- Action 4:** Support continued preservation of lands targeted for conservation and recreation by Private Environmental Land Trust Programs in the Region.
- Action 5:** Facilitate and assist in the coordination of all land acquisition programs in the southwest Florida region by sponsoring an annual meeting of all public and private initiatives.
- Action 6:** Maintain the Green Print map depicting land that has been set aside for conservation purposes by federal, state, regional, local and private entities, including existing conservation easements.
- Action 7:** Maintain the existing Green Print map layer of non-regulatory gaps of land needed for recreation, hunting/fishing, flood control, forestry activities, etc. to provide support for future populations, maintain and support the regional economy and to protect existing ecosystems.
- Action 8:** Working with the various acquisitions programs identified in the Plan and working with Local Governments and private landowners, develop a strategy to protect gaps lands identified in the above action, using the Tools outlined in the plan.
- Action 9:** Assist in the preparation of applications of existing programs for funding of land acquisitions for gaps lands shown on the Green Print map.
- Action 10:** Support the formation of new conservation programs and land trusts, and encourage existing land trusts to focus on land acquisition and on other land conservation techniques within portions of southwest Florida not currently within a program and not depicted on the Green Print map.
- Action 11:** Encourage the establishment of management funding at the time of acquisition and refine existing management strategies to insure that the lands acquired are maintained in the natural or goal condition that led to their preservation status. Encourage management strategies that include provisions for natural fire management.

Indicators

- **Green Print Map**
- **Annual meeting**
- **Acres of protected natural systems and other natural areas owned by local governments, water management districts, and privately held natural preserves depicted on the Green Print map.**
- **Net change in native wetland acreage.**
- **Net change in native upland acreage**

Water Resource Management

Goal 3: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts, and local governments must have programs based on scientific modeling to protect surface water, potable wells, wellfields and contributing areas from contamination.

Strategy: Implement the six water quality resolutions adopted by the SWFRPC in all plan and project reviews.

- Action 1:** Working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts and local governments, assist in the creation of a modeling tools to evaluate current resource conditions based on alternative rainfall scenarios including future climate change. The modeling tool needs to be able to predict and evaluate future resource conditions based on alternative land use and rainfall scenarios. The tools need to be able to evaluate and predict future resource conditions based on alternative land use and rainfall amounts.
- Action 2:** Work with the Water Management Districts and local governments to insure that the resource condition evaluation addresses surface and groundwater, quality and quantity, flow, volume, direction and the hydro period cycle.
- Action 3:** Work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts regional water authorizes, and local governments to insure a better land use/water linkage and provide for consideration that the land use scenarios recognize the land use patterns of urban, agricultural, and natural system coverage, and the social/economic factors that guide change to land use.
- Action 4:** The different communities and agencies in a given natural basin area need a common forum and coordinated planning framework to pursue a shared response to the selected management system needed for the basin. In lieu of another entity serving that function, the Regional Planning Council should serve that function.
- Action 5:** Where economic/political units are divided by Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts' boundaries, and regional water authorities (i.e., metropolitan areas or cohesive rural food and fiber production areas), assist in the coordination between districts and the political units that emphasizes the planning for water resource management.
- Action 6:** Work with the state to reestablish the intent of the State and Regional Planning Act of 1984 and Growth Management Act of 1985, and support that Water Management District Board Members be included among the Governor's voting appointments to Regional Planning Councils.
- Action 7:** Address long-term planning of potable supply quality and quantities, including promotion of conservation, non-polluting reuse programs and development of alternative water sources that do not impair natural systems including wetlands and fisheries.
- Action 8:** Working with the South and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, the SWFRPC will promote maximum efficiency and protection for the future development of water resource management in the region.
- Action 9:** The SWFRPC will assist as requested in the long-term planning and coordination for restoration programs in the region as pursued by the South and

Southwest Florida Water Management Districts. These restoration programs will include: the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan, and the coastal watershed projects.

Strategy: SWFRPC will coordinate as requested the long-term planning for potable water supplies and sources in the region as pursued by the South and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts.

Action 1: Working with the South and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, the SWFRPC will promote water conservation, reuse, regional interconnects and development of alternative water supplies.

Action 2: Working with the South and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, the SWFRPC will utilize the Council's review, planning, and intergovernmental roles to better integrate water resource management and land use planning in the region.

Action 3: Work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts regional water authorizes, and local governments to insure a better land use/water linkage and provide for consideration that the land use scenarios recognize the land use patterns of urban, agricultural, and natural system coverage, and the social/economic factors that guide change to land use.

Indicators

- Number of implementations of the six water quality resolutions adopted by the SWFRPC in reviews of projects.

Resources

None

Regional Cooperation

Goal 4: Effective resource management is maintained across the borders of sovereign public agencies.

Strategy: All plans concerning the same resource shall have as objectives the same effective results.

Action 1: Assist in the creation of proactive boating siting and management programs that will protect the West Indian Manatee, seagrass areas, sanctuaries, fisheries habitat and other necessary natural features and at the same time identify and maximize the use of available land most suitable for public access to the natural resource.

Action 2: The SWFRPC will play an active role on the Management Conferences for the Charlotte Harbor and Sarasota Bay National Estuary Programs.

Action 3: The SWFRPC will promote state, regional and local agencies to consider lands identified as priority habitat and areas formally designated as critical habitat for the Florida Panther to be incorporated in the agency's natural resource management programs and provide intergovernmental coordination for the implementation of management practices that based on existing data, would be expected to result in maintaining habitat conditions for the panther.

- Action 4:** The SWFRPC will continue to support the regional management of the Region’s beaches and shores through the Southwest Florida Beaches and Shores Convocation.
- Action 5:** The SWFRPC will continue to support the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management consistent with the Settlement Agreement for the permitting of Florida Gulf Coast University and in coordination with the signatories of the Settlement Agreement.
- Action 6:** The SWFRPC will continue to coordinate with the entities of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Working Group and the Southwest Florida Watershed Protection Plan in their restoration efforts.
- Action 7:** The SWFRPC will continue to support the Local Emergency Planning Committee for Southwest Florida and their training for Hazardous Materials handling, storage, management, emergency response and disposal.

Indicators

- None

Resources

None

Livable Communities Element

Livable Communities - Economic Development

Goal 1: A stable economy based on a continuing excellent quality of life.

Strategy: Maintain and improve the natural, historic, cultural, and tourist-related resources as primary regional economic assets.

- Action 1:** Assist in the identification and acquisition of Potential Park and recreational sites and other resources in future growth areas.
- Action 2:** Participate in studies, plans, and programs for public access to beaches and other resources.
- Action 3:** Review proposed development to require that natural and other resources of regional significance are maintained, enhanced, restored, or re-created, as appropriate.

Indicators

- Development of a regional inventory of natural and other resources.
- Increased preservation/conservation/utility zones covering water sources.
- More public beach access points and boat ramps.
- Fewer closing of public swimming areas or shellfish beds due to health hazards.
- Increased designation of historic sites, with public access.

Strategy: Ensure sustainable volumes of natural resources for economic productivity.

- Action 1:** Promote and assist resource planning programs to incorporate local government population projections and assessments of land consumption.

Action 2: Offer mediation and facilitation to resource-based planning programs that have conflicts with land use-based planning programs.

Indicators

- Reduced application times for standard permits.
- Increased identification and “pre-clearance” of sites suitable for permitting.
- More “ready-to-serve” designated areas.

Strategy: Enhance existing commercial, service, and industrial centers through adequate maintenance and reinvestment.

Action 1: Maintain an inventory of public infrastructure and recommended improvements.

Action 2: Review plan amendments, new plans, and land development regulations for incentives to develop and redevelop.

Action 3: Review proposed development to maximize the use, rehabilitation, and reuse of existing infrastructure.

Indicators

- Increase building permit values in existing urban areas.

Strategy: Protect the regional energy supply against disruption.

Action 1: Review proposed development to promote development and construction patterns, techniques, and designs for more efficient use of energy.

Action 2: Review proposed development to include alternative transportation methods such as sidewalks and bike lanes for greater energy efficiency.

Action 3: Coordinate with other agencies to develop and/or modify transportation plans, traffic circulation plans, and regulations for more efficient use of energy.

Indicators

- Reduce per capita fossil fuel use.
- Reduce proportion of energy from fossil fuels.
- Increase percentage of homes with solar energy devices or equipment.

Strategy: Increase the retention and expansion of local business and industry and encourage local entrepreneurial development.

Action 1: Provide services to facilitate entrepreneurship and the development of small and minority-owned business.

Action 2: Cooperated with the public and private sectors to maintain information on regional economic development needs.

Action 3: Coordinate among learning institutions, employment agencies, and others for training and educational needs.

Action 4: Assist in increased use of economic development tools such as enterprise zones, incubator areas for small business formation, and community development corporations.

Action 5: Identify and publicize programs for business assistance.

Action 6: Identify the needs of local businesses for capital or other assistance and the products they purchase and sell.

Indicators

- Development and maintenance of a needs inventory for businesses.
- Publication of a resource guide for business development assistance.
- Increased number and range of SBA programs in the region.
- More accessible incubator sites for manufacturing and service and retail trade.

Strategy: Increase the preparedness of businesses for potential hazards and natural disasters.

Action 1: Work with local emergency preparedness offices, economic development organizations, and other interested groups to alert businesses of the need to prepare for natural disasters.

Action 2: Assist in making disaster-preparedness planning resources and tools, such as the Disaster Survival Workbook for Businesses, available to businesses in the region.

Indicators

- Cooperative arrangements with interested groups for disaster preparedness for businesses.
- Development and publication of a guide for disaster preparation for businesses.

Strategy: Enhance support for economic development.

Action 1: Educate residents about the benefits of economic trade.

Action 2: Demonstrate to residents the benefits of reducing the over-dependence on residential properties for tax revenues.

Indicators

- Periodic publication of the benefits of economic development.

Strategy: Streamline regulatory processes to avoid delays for new or expanding businesses, provided safety, health, and environmental requirements are met.

Action 1: Encourage local governments to expedite the permitting process and to assist businesses in permitting and licensing matters.

Action 2: Cooperate with local governments, public agencies, environmental groups, and business groups to review permitting and licensing processes, forms, and related aspects for efficiency and standardization.

Indicators

- Reduce time and cost to obtain standard permits for business formation and operation.
- Establishment of bodies to review permitting and licensing.
- Creation of ombudsman positions to assist businesses applying for permits or licenses.

Strategy: Promote agriculture in the face of growing competition for land and water.

Action 1: Cooperate with public and private entities to protect lands with high, sustainable production capability.

Action 2: Participate in economic analyses of agricultural uses.

Indicators

- Real dollar increases in agricultural production value, overall and by crop.
- Increased number and types of agricultural products.

Livable Communities - Natural Resources

Goal 2: Livable communities designed to improve quality of life and to provide for the sustainability of our natural resources.

Strategy: Promote through the Council's review roles community design and development principles that protect the Region's natural resources and provide for an improved quality of life. Implement the six water quality resolutions adopted by the SWFRPC in plan and project reviews and support implementation where possible development concepts put forth by Cross Streets, Low Impact Design, Fit-Friendly Southwest Florida, Climate Prosperity, Food Systems Planning, and other initiatives consistent with the mission of the SWFRPC.

Action 1: Working with agencies and local governments provide for the disposal of man's liquid and solid wastes in a manner that will not lead to long-term degradation of air, ground, and water resources.

Action 2: Working in cooperation with agencies and local governments insure that beaches and inlets that have been damaged by human activity are replaced/renourished and/or managed in order to have the total system function naturally.

Action 3: Working in cooperation with agencies and local governments provide for Air quality improvement and maintenance as our population and urban areas increase.

Action 4: Working in cooperation with agencies and local governments insure that all mining and borrow operations are appropriately sited and do not impact regional natural resources protection areas, prepare and implement reclamation programs that restore and ensure long-term sustainability of their watersheds and native habitats.

Action 5: Working in cooperation with agencies and local governments insure that agricultural operations are compatible with identified natural resource protection areas. Encourage adaptive agriculture that is compatible with a sustainable southwest Florida.

Action 6: Working in cooperation with agencies and local governments insure that new public facilities, facility expansions and additions, and transportation projects avoid designated natural resource protection areas.

Action 7: Working with all levels of government within southwest Florida actively plan and prepare for the potential long-term impact of sea level rise climate upon the Region's natural systems including fisheries and agriculture.

Action 8: Working with all levels of government within southwest Florida actively plan for lands that have been acquired for natural resource purposes to be maintained and managed to protect and support their environmental integrity.

Action 9: Insure that opportunities for governmental partnerships and public/private partnerships in preserving wildlife habitats are maximized.

Indicators

None.

Resources

None

Livable Communities – Emergency Management

Goal 3: New private and public developments are built further from flood prone areas than in the past and structures and roadways are protected from rain induced flooding.

Strategy: New public structures be located outside the Category 2 Hurricane Flood Zone and outside of rainfall induced flood-ways.

Action 1: Assist local mitigation strategy programs to identify relocation sites for most exposed public facilities.

Action 2: Review local Plan amendments and development proposals for their ability to locate new development outside of the category 2 flood zone and rainfall flow-ways.

Action 3: Promote provisions for the acquisition of hurricane valuable land, including channels, low-lying areas, and shoreline by federal, state and local governmental sponsored land acquisition programs.

Action 4: Promote public acquisition of property that has been destroyed or damaged as the result of a hurricane, storm wave, or tidal action.

Indicators

None

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

None

Strategy: New developments and redevelopment of existing areas should provide for increased land elevations for public infrastructure and community infrastructure, including potential sheltering and refuge sites.

Action 1: Promote local development requirements with each mobile park outside of the Category I Surge Zone that there be adequate shelter space with elevated structures to accommodate those who do not want to evacuate outside their community.

Action 2: Promote local development requirements that there will be designated refuge space in condominium and apartment complexes outside of the Category 2 Zone (but within the Category 5 Zone).

Indicators

None

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

10 square feet per person, on an occupancy rate of 75% for mobile home, 41% for a resident recreation vehicle, 78% for apartments, and 64% for condominiums.

Livable Communities - Affordable Housing

Goal 4: Southwest Florida will develop (or redevelop) communities that are livable and offer residents a wide range of housing and employment opportunities.

Strategy: Development livable, integrated communities that offer residents a high quality of life.

- Action 1:** Encourage programs that promote infill development in urban areas to maximize the efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- Action 2:** Work with local governments to promote structures and developments that combine commercial and residential uses as a means of providing housing that is affordable and near employment opportunities.
- Action 3:** Encourage communities that are pedestrian friendly or offer alternative modes of transportation to overcome transportation problems many low-income families face.
- Action 4:** Encourage new housing to be built in higher areas to reduce the need for costly flood insurance.
- Action 5:** Promote the mix of affordable and non-affordable housing to create integrated communities.

Indicators

- Communities that have incentive or other programs to promote infill development.
- Communities that promote combined commercial and residential uses in developments and structures.
- Number of developments containing affordable and non-affordable housing.

Strategy: Protect existing, well-established neighborhoods and communities and revitalize those experiencing deterioration.

- Action 1:** Encourage communities to fill existing infrastructure gaps (such as sidewalks, parks, lighting, etc.) in neighborhoods that offer affordable housing.
- Action 2:** Assist communities in identifying neighborhoods that are, or are in danger of, deteriorating.
- Action 3:** Assist communities in their efforts to develop methods for removing or rehabilitating substandard units, abandon or unsafe property, and blighting influences in residential areas and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Action 4:** Assist communities in establishing effective housing codes that include ongoing monitoring and enforcement programs.
- Action 5:** Review comprehensive plans and land development regulations to encourage the inclusion of incentives to develop and redevelop land downtown.

- Action 6:** Work with local agencies to apply for state or federal programs that assist in community revitalization.
- Action 7:** Encourage communities to focus on troubled areas in a comprehensive method that coordinates programs and services, rather than using a shotgun approach.
- Action 8:** Promote resident involvement in neighborhood planning efforts, so residents are active in making decisions that will affect their areas.

Indicators

- Communities with rehabilitation and demolition programs.
- Communities with active code enforcement programs.
- Communities with incentive programs.
- Number of applications submitted for state or federal community revitalization programs.

Livable Communities - Transportation

Goal 5: Livable communities designed to affect behavior, improve quality of life and responsive to community needs.

Strategy: Promote through the Council’s review function a good environment for driving, walking, bicycling, and public transit using a highly connected network of public streets, green space, and community centers.

- Action 1:** Work in cooperation with local government to establish criteria reflective of Smart Growth and Livable Communities initiatives.
- Action 2:** Review future projects so that they implement where possible Smart Growth and Livability principles.
- Action 3:** Work in cooperation with local government as possible to complete a regional bicycle and pedestrian inventory of existing and needed facilities.
- Action 4:** Review comprehensive plans and land development regulations for incentives to develop and redevelop using mixed uses, higher densities, shared parking; and improved vehicular, mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle access and travel, as well as providing a variety of affordable residential densities and types.
- Action 5:** Coordinate as possible with local governments in the construction of bicycle paths and pedestrian ways that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Action 6:** Assist local government and private sector in the design and location of shared parking to enhance the character and attractiveness of the community and to encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation.

Strategy: Encourage local governments and the private sector to implement travel demand management policies and actions to relieve traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce energy consumption.

- Action 1:** In conjunction with the MPOs and transit providers, work to identify residential communities linked with job centers through transit or through carpooling, or other high-occupancy vehicle mode of transportation.

Strategy: Incorporate community impact assessment techniques throughout the transportation project planning and development process.

Action 1: Identify community needs through coordination and partnering with advisory committees, political entities, civic associations, agencies, church groups and other organizations in the community.

Action 2: Work with project development members to identify potential design or engineering options to address community impacts starting with avoidance, and then moving on to minimization on minority and low income populations.

Action 3: Coordinate enhancements opportunities that are a reasonable expenditure of funds to help projects fit harmoniously into the community and avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low income populations.

Strategy: Review projects for impacts on neighborhoods, commercial centers, and natural areas due to roadway expansions and right-of-way reservations.

Action 1: Work with local government comprehensive plans to protect future state, regional, and local public facilities, corridors, and rights-of-way from building encroachment.

Action 2: During the development approval process, assist local government in requiring dedicated right-of-way where there is a relationship between the land use and need for the transportation improvement.

Strategy: Assist as possible agency reviews related to the relationship between transportation, natural and manmade resources and impact on the quality of life.

Action 1: Coordinate with FDOT, local governments, and the MPOs the region's efforts to direct the expansion of the regional transportation system and its associated development to avoid impacting significant natural resources.

Action 2: Assist FDOT, local government, and the MPOs in reviewing transportation access plans to ensure that roads are directed away from identified environmentally sensitive areas and other regional significant natural systems.

Action 3: Assist local government in the review of special lighting zones and guidelines when planning for highway and parking improvements near coastal shoreline areas where lighting and turtle nesting beaches interact.

Action 4: Review the impact of transportation improvements in coastal high-hazard areas or in identified environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, listed species habitat, or marine areas.

Action 5: Assist local governments to improve regional air quality by promoting the use of alternative fuel vehicles and less polluting vehicles and promoting intelligent highway systems.

Emergency Preparedness Element

Natural Hazards

Goal 1: The general public and its governmental agencies become aware of the extent of flooding that can be induced from the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Okeechobee by tropical storm or hurricane.

Strategy: Make easily understood information available with timely updates.

Action 1: Maps depicting areas subject to storm surge flooding will be regularly updated and circulated to affected populations.

Indicators

- Storm surge atlases and summary maps widely reprinted.
- Current atlases available at public libraries.
- Current atlases available through emergency management and planning offices.

Facilities

Hoover Dike is the region's only facility established solely for hurricane surge protection.

Planning Standard

Level A-E Storm Standards.

Goal 2: An organized recovery response to the effects of freezes, droughts, or floods on food and fiber production.

Strategy: Coordinated local, sub-state, and state short-term emergency response plans for relief and assistance for areas with catastrophic job losses due to freezes, droughts or floods.

Action 1: Petition Congress, the President, and FEMA to identify drought as a natural disaster deserving emergency relief.

Action 2: Promote with the Water Management agencies, drought, freeze, and flood management programs that promote increased natural system storage to reduce impacts of fire, water shortages, and flooding.

Indicators

- Relief plans with interagency agreements for relief support.
- Management Plans that indicate pre and post storage capacities.

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

Relief support should be prepared to meet 10% of labor force of Glades, Hendry, and Collier Counties, and 2% of the remainder of the region.

Goal 3: Safe evacuation or protection for the most threatened populations.

Strategy: Develop programs that assess risk and are capable of giving priority to those who have the greatest threat, when time or resources provide constraints on total evacuation.

Action 1: Each hurricane study update shall update the numbers and locations of the most exposed populations.

Action 2: Each hurricane study update shall update the evacuation times of the exposed zones, and recommend for prioritization for road improvements those zones with greater than 18 hour evacuation times.

Action 3: Each hurricane study update shall update estimates and concentrations of housing types more subject to hurricane force wind damage, and prioritize these populations for sheltering.

Action 4: Continue requiring all deeds to property located within a Development of Regional Impact located within the Southwest Florida Special Hurricane Preparedness District as required by Rule 9J-2.0257(4) shall be accompanied by a disclosure statement in the form of a covenant stating that the property is located in a hurricane vulnerability zone, that the hurricane evacuation clearance time for City/County or the Southwest Florida Region is high, and hurricane shelter spaces are limited.

Action 5: Work with all local governments in the region to require all deeds to hurricane vulnerable property located within their jurisdiction be accompanied by a disclosure statement in the form of a covenant stating that the property is located in a hurricane vulnerability zone, that the hurricane evacuation clearance time for City/County or the Southwest Florida Region is high, and hurricane shelter spaces are limited.

Indicators

- Forecast evacuation times that exceed 18 hours.
- Number of counties with those forecasts which have developed priority programs for the most threaten residents.

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

Evacuation times.

Goal 4: Ensure that emergency management programs have the logistical support for successful evacuation, sheltering, and post storm relief and recovery.

Strategy: As possible maintain and keep up to date inventories of personnel, communities with mutual aid agreements, public shelter, evacuation route control points, supply lists needed for sheltering and recovery, recovery sites and staging areas for recovery operations.

Action 1: Annually review and update the identification of potential disaster field offices and disaster assistance centers.

Action 2: Assist communities in annually reviewing traffic control points for evacuation.

Action 3: Review local plan amendments and development plans for the staffing, evacuation and sheltering needs of all new development within flood hazard areas in the event of hurricane type high wind and water conditions.

Indicators

None listed.

Facilities

Regional storm recovery sites on Map 2.

Planning Standard

None

Technological Hazards

Goal 5: Reduce to the greatest degree possible the potential for harm to life, property, and the environment from hazardous waste by being prepared to respond to accidental spills of hazardous materials or severely improper disposal of hazardous wastes.

Strategy: All sites that generate, use, or store significant amounts of hazardous materials (including wastes) having appropriate plans to manage spills or releases, and appropriate procedures for safely disposing unneeded materials.

Action 1: Update inventories at least every 5 years of the location, type, and quantity of hazardous materials.

Action 2: Update and maintain through the LEPC a coordinated program among regulatory agencies for the effective regulation of generation, storage, treatment, disposal, and transportation of hazardous materials and waste.

Action 3: Continue to support a region-wide hazardous waste program which:

- a. provides for regional siting for area wide hazardous waste sites;
- b. increases on-site treatment of appropriate wastes;
- c. recycles reusable water;
- d. maintains a pick up system for households, small businesses, and other small quantity generators of hazardous wastes;
- e. develop environmentally safe treatment, storage, and disposal facilities;
- f. provides training and certification for appropriate personnel;
- g. implements the plan for siting of hazardous waste storage and transfer facilities, as previously adopted;
- h. provides public education about hazardous and special waste treatment, disposal and recycling;
- i. encourages the establishment of used oil recycling centers in each county of the Region;
- j. coordinates between land use agencies and transportation agencies in the location of industrial and utility facilities which require a transport along public highways of hazardous waste materials;
- k. restricts hazardous wastes and materials from being transported through residential areas;
- l. evaluates hazardous material and waste movement, includes measures for risk reduction of hazardous waste transport, coordination with emergency contingency plans, off-peak routing schemes or restrictions, and consideration of other transportation modes;
- m. requires carriers to be qualified and permitted, properly identified and marked, and requires vehicles to transport only properly packaged materials and wastes;
- n. addresses and properly disposes of or recycles special wastes, such as construction and demolition debris, white goods, waste tires, bio-hazardous wastes, and batteries; and

- o. provides public information and public notice for proper storage and disposal of hazardous waste and materials, including special opportunities for disposal or technical assistance in proper storage.

Goal 6: Ensure effective emergency response and emergency preparedness to minimize the risk to public health and safety and damage to property and the environment from hazardous materials incidents such as spill or contamination.

Strategy: Promote the proper handling, treatment and disposal of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes.

Action 1: Avoid to the extent possible, treatment and disposal of hazardous materials to sensitive uses such as hospitals, schools, residences, and environmentally sensitive area.

Action 2: Support land use patterns that avoid development of hazardous waste generators adjacent to sensitive land uses.

Action 3: Encourage practices and technologies which will reduce the generation of hazardous wastes at their sources.

Action 4: Promote the recovery and recycling of hazardous materials.

Indicators

- None

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

None

Goal 7: Emergency response plan requirements should be considered in new development within a planning area relative to transmission pipelines.

Strategy: Transmission pipeline operators should have procedures and established contacts with local enforcement personnel in order to act appropriately to halt dangerous excavation activities that may damage their pipelines and potentially cause an immediate threat to life or property.

Action 1: Transmission pipeline operators should provide pipeline information to local governments and property owners. Local government authorities regulating development should use this information to establish requirements regarding land use and development around transmission lines.

Action 2: Utilities both above and below ground should be preferentially located and designed to reduce the consequences that could result from a transmission pipeline incident.

Action 3: Work with appropriate agencies to ensure effective emergency response and preparedness to minimize the risk to public health and safety and limit property and environmental damage due to hazardous incidents such as spills or contamination.

Indicators

- Percentages of sites generating or storing hazardous materials that have adequate disposal emergency plans.

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

None

Goal 8: Designate shelters safe from flooding, and containing enough capacity to meet existing estimates of need.

Strategy: Increase shelter space at rates greater than population growth.

Action 1: Promote programs to provide adequate storm elevation shelters that:

- a. Require all habitable areas of new residential construction in identified flood-prone areas to be elevated above the level subject to flooding as identified for the statistical 100-year storm or Federal Flood Insurance Program;
- b. Incorporate in shelter efforts the voluntary participation of owners of structures identified as potential storm evacuation shelters that are elevated above the level subject to flooding as identified for the Category 3 Storm Surge height;
- c. Require all new development of more than 100 dwelling units located outside Category 1 and 2 zones, but with 3-5 zones, to provide on-site refuge facilities for residents of the development;
- d. Require all development located outside 1 and 2 flood zones to provide refuge space at a ratio of 20 square feet per person in common areas or other shelter areas; all development in Category 1 and 2 zones should identify and secure unused shelter space in inland areas;
- e. Require deeds, covenants, and all similar documents, for multi-story residential structures, to contain provisions to permit temporary shelter, during Category 1 and 2 storm events, in upper interior hallways, or similarly protected areas, which contain no openings directly to the exterior, provided the structure is located in Category 3, 4, 5 flood zones;
- f. Require any shelter to be designed and constructed to withstand winds of at least 120 miles per hour sustained winds;
- g. Require any shelter to be equipped with emergency power, potable water supplies, and wastewater treatment capacity;
- h. Require any shelter to be constructed with as little glass as possible, while providing adequate protection by shutters or boards for any glass used;
- i. Require any shelter to have adequate ventilation, sanitary facilities, and first-aid equipment;
- j. Establish Homeowner's Associations to provide information to their residents concerning hurricanes, evacuation shelters, and related materials; and
- k. Requires any new residential development within Category 1, 2, and 3 storm zones, and or with evacuating population, to mitigate impact on inland shelter space.

Action 2: Support management programs that advise hotels/motels in Category 1 and 2 storm zones to evacuate during a hurricane watch and should not be utilized as storm shelters.

Action 3: Discourage all Plan reviews the placement of storm shelters on islands.

Indicators

- Ratios of available public shelter capacity to the projected demand.
- Percentage of new shelters built above the storm surge height.

Facilities

Shelters depicted in SWFRPC Hurricane Evacuation Study (and updates)

Planning Standard

20 square feet for storm duration per person, 40 square feet for a long term stay, power generator and refrigeration, toilet and cooking space, and withstand 120 mph sustained winds. Occupied floor elevations to exceed those heights forecasted for category 3 storms, be located outside of the 1-2 zones according to County Hurricane Storm Tide Atlas, and space is exclusive of unshuttered windowed rooms.

Goal 9: Plan for and accommodate the segments of the population with special evacuation needs.

Strategy: Involve the expertise of human service agencies in identifying and accommodating those with special evacuation needs.

Action 1: Integrate human service entities in evacuation and shelter planning.

Action 2: Provide for special shelter needs for the frail, elderly, handicapped, persons with special medical/support conditions, and people with other conditions requiring specialized attention, who lack a dependable support not within a regular shelter.

Action 3: Include additional disaster preparedness requirements in reviewing existing and new developments whose future residents, including the elderly, might have limited mobility or demand specialized attention.

Indicators

- Designation and capacity of special needs shelters.

Facilities

Shelters designated in 2001 Update, as special needs.

Planning Standard

1 percent of evacuating population, as special needs.

Goal 10: Public Buildings designed to serve as short term shelters.

Strategy: Make all public entities aware of the serious emergency shelter deficits that exist and that the situation affects the lives of the members of the agencies and their families.

Action 1: Promote major public buildings outside of the Category 1 flood zone meeting state building standards for shelters and having on-site facilities which are adequate for maximum capacity short-term occupation.

Action 2: Promote innovative programs for financing shelter space, including municipal service benefit districts and shelter impact fees.

Indicators

- Percentage of new local, district, state, and federal buildings which meet these criteria.
- Percentage of public agency bid packages that included this in the criteria for architectural design and construction.
- Capacity of new shelters.

Facilities

Public Buildings listed as “Secondary Support Services,” Support Services, 2001, SWFRPC

Planning Standards

None

Goal 11: Regional medical centers capable of operating through a natural disaster.

Strategy: Power, water, and sanitation self sufficiency (for temporary periods) for each major medical facility.

- Action 1:** Promote funding eligibly for the retrofit of existing hospitals with Hurricane Andrew Trust Funds, as well as with similar resources.
- Action 2:** Promote in reviews that services necessary for hospital operation during emergencies be located on floors above the forecasted Category 3 flood elevation.
- Action 3:** Promote during reviews of new hospitals (of 100 or more beds) that they should be located outside of the category 1 storm surge zone and should not be located on barrier islands.

Indicators

- Percentage of medical centers that can operate in category 3 storms.
- Percentage that can operate in 1 or 2 only; and the change in percentage through time

Facilities

Major Medical Sites depicted in Map 4.

Planning Standards

Wind-proofing to 120 mph; flood elevation of first occupied floor level to category 3 storm surge heights; elevated generator and water supplies.

Goal 12: A Region prepared for potential fuel shortages or prolonged electrical outages.

Strategy: Maintain up-to-date fuel shortage and energy loss emergency response plans.

- Action 1:** Assist communities in maintaining inventories of commercial fuel storage and sales sites, and in keeping up-to-date ordinances for emergency management of sale.
- Action 2:** Promote public agencies setting examples by maintaining emergency response plans for staff, which include mandatory car pooling for work, and optional programs for family use.
- Action 3:** Promote electrical utilities maintaining and keeping up-to-date fuel emergency and electrical conservation plans, coordinated with local and state regulatory authorities for energy conservation.

Indicators

- Percentage of counties with up-to-date fuel shortage plans.
- Percentage of customers of electrical utilities whose service does not rely on a single generating or transmission system, or fuel type.

Facilities

Regional transmission lines depicted in the Description of the Region; FPL Plant on Caloosahatchee River.

Planning Standard

None

Goal 13: Fire, ambulance, and police services provide satisfactory service and response time, notwithstanding the pressures of growth.

Strategy: Investing in personnel, equipment, and managerial structure to achieve or maintain a response capacity and capability within the recommended response times.

- Action 1:** Promote increasing law enforcement and fire protection or equivalent community programs to match growth rates and eliminate current service deficits.
- Action 2:** Review plans for development to ensure that adequate supplies of water for firefighting are available.
- Action 3:** Promote coordination agreements that enable all medical response teams to take victims to the nearest appropriate emergency facility, regardless of administrative jurisdiction.
- Action 4:** Promote the participation of all jurisdictions in interagency agreements to cover insurance liabilities and staff and equipment costs when emergencies require assistance between neighbors.

Indicators

- Percentage of emergency calls receive the response within the recommended times; ISO ratings for individual fire departments, including water supplies suitability.

Facilities

None

Planning Standard

ICMA recommended response times for urban and rural communities.

Transportation

Goal 14: Evacuation routes identified and clearly designated, and at capacity and quality needed to carry the expected number of evacuating vehicles.

Strategy: Reduce evacuation times through capital investment and traffic management.

- Action 1:** Recommend prioritization in FDOT or local capital improvement programs for evacuation routes with evacuation capacity restrictions, particularly intercommunity evacuation routes.

Action 2: Review development and plan amendment proposals to ensure that there is mitigation of the impact of all new development on emergency evacuation routes, including consideration of non-road alternatives such as on site sheltering.

Indicators

- Time to evacuate, by county and by region.

Facilities

Evacuation routes as depicted in the 2010 SWFRPC Regional Hurricane Evacuation Study (as updated).

Planning Standard

2 persons per vehicle; 1.1 vehicles per dwelling, based upon seasonal occupancy rates by unit type; route capacities as calculated according to the Highway Capacity Manual, 1985 edition, and its successor documents.

Regional Coordination

Goal 15: As possible work with regional news media fully aware of and prepared for their critical role in helping the public respond to emergencies.

Strategy: Keep the media informed and answer questions as best as possible.

Action 1: Promote local and state emergency managers annually brief the local news media about the nature of emergencies, likely public responses, and procedures for obtaining and circulating accurate information during emergencies.

Action 2: Promote and maintain information accessible to the public on what can be done to prepare for the nature of emergencies of most importance to them.

Indicators

- Percentage of media participation in annual briefings.

Facilities

All daily print media; all commercial broadcast media with news component.

Planning Standard

Regional Transportation Element

Balanced Intermodal/Multimodal System

Goal 1: Construct an interconnected multimodal transportation system that supports community goals, increases mobility and enhances Southwest Florida's economic competitiveness.

Strategy: Identify the general transportation system composed of connected corridors, facilities, and services for the effective movement of freight and visitors.

Action 1: Continue to identify sites that lack connectivity including ground access to airports, public transportation, waterways, and non-motorized vehicle modes in DRI and Comprehensive Plan reviews.

Action 2: Continue assisting appropriate agencies with applications for intermodal funding, including rail.

Strategy: Ensure that a network of interconnected roads exist that provide the timely, cost effective movement of people and goods within, through and out of the Region.

Action 1: Continue assisting appropriate agencies to review plans that will provide an intermodal transportation network.

Strategy: Promote Smart Growth where residential communities are linked with job centers through transit, carpooling, or other high occupancy vehicle transportation.

Action 1: In cooperation with transit providers and other governmental and private entities, seek long term, dedicated funding sources for use for improving and expanding the transit system.

Strategy: In cooperation with FDOT and the region's airport operators develop a mode balanced plan for people and freight.

Action 1: In cooperation with FDOT, local government, and the MPOs, support where possible airport improvements that optimize Intermodal connections with other transportation modes.

Strategy: Assist as possible agencies responsible for the airports in the Region so as to assure that they will be expanded to meet the regional aviation systems needs for foreseeable demand in passengers and cargo and in private small plane operations.

Action 1: Support where possible assistance programs which support aviation systems plans identified as capital improvements to airport-managed properties.

Strategy: Coordinate investments in rail infrastructure with the needs of the private sector to maximize the development of existing and future industrial, manufacturing, and agricultural centers.

Action 1: Continue to identify any expansion of rail service planned to optimize intermodal connections.

Action 2: Assist local and state planning efforts to incorporate the land use and transportation needs for rail service, including rail related warehousing and industrial uses.

Strategy: As possible, continue to assess the freight capacity of non-highway infrastructure throughout the Region.

Action 1: Work with the FDOT and the MPO to complete a comprehensive transportation programs analysis the includes: waterway plan, combining the natural waterways, maintained intracoastal waterways, interconnecting channels, and current and forecasted users; and an assessment of existing and future suitable pipeline corridors.

Action 2: Continue coordination with governmental agencies and the West Coast Inland Navigational District to ensure that future water system needs can be met with a minimum of land use conflict.

Economic Competitiveness

Goal 2: Achieve a competitive and diversified regional economy through improved work force development, enhanced access to technology and education, and investment in multi-modal transportation facilities.

Strategy: Enhance economic prosperity and competitiveness through a transportation system composed of corridors, facilities, and services for the effective movement of freight and visitors.

Action 1: In cooperation with FDOT, local government, MPOs and private sector businesses coordinate freight movement performances measures, based on operational studies.

Action 2: In cooperation with the FDOT, local governments, MPOs and the private sector assist in the identification of the transportation requirements of lending and emerging sectors of the regional economy and distinctive needs of all business sectors of the regional economy to move people and goods within and through the region.

Strategy: Enhance the movement of goods and freight by identifying important routes as a funding priority in the transportation planning and capital improvement programming process.

Action 1: In cooperation with FDOT, local government and the MPOs, assist in the designation of trade routes networks that accommodates the efficient movement of goods and freight.

Transportation Safety

Goal 3: A regional transportation system that provides Southwest Florida citizens and visitors with safe, timely and efficient access to services, jobs, markets and attractions.

Strategy: Continue to work with the FDOT to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes, promote bike/ped safety, and to reduce aggressive driving.

Action 1: Identify and document safety issues and concerns to improve highway safety by working with CTST members and local engineering, enforcement, emergency and educational representatives.

Action 2: Develop public and private support and participation for the Community Traffic Safety Team Program through public service announcements, presentations and distribution of safety information.

Action 3: Coordinate with the 47 CTSTs in the Florida Community Traffic Safety Team Coalition to share accomplishments, safety materials, programs, and to facilitate technology transfer among teams.

Strategy: Work with the appropriate agencies to ensure evacuation times in coastal regions will not decline significantly.

Action 1: Develop land use plans and policies that assess the potential for adverse impacts to transportation facilities and protects investment in transportation infrastructure.

- Action 2:** Identify and document evacuation routes with evacuation capacity restrictions, particularly inter-community evacuation routes, to ensure routes receive high priority in FDOT and local capital improvement programs.
- Action 3:** Assist local governments in adopting minimum level-of-exposure standards for the design of local roadway storm drainage systems to prevent flooding during evacuation.
- Action 4:** Identify transportation improvements in local, regional, and state transportation plans related to emergency evacuation constraints, and assist in prioritizing their mitigation in appropriate capital improvement plans.
- Action 5:** Coordinate emergency evacuation routes designated in each of the Counties' comprehensive emergency management plans with the findings of the regional emergency evacuation study.
- Action 6:** Review all disaster preparedness plans for transportation accommodations for the handicapped and transportation disadvantage.

Regional Cooperation

Goal 4: Assist as needed in the development of a cost-effective and financially feasible transportation system that adequately maintains all elements of the transportation system to better preserve and manage the Region's urban and non-urban investment.

Strategy: Assist in the development of land use plans and policies that assess the potential for adverse impacts to transportation facilities and protect investment in transportation infrastructure.

- Action 1:** In cooperation with FDOT, local government, and MPOs, collaboratively test coordinated land use and transportation plans.
- Action 2:** Assist FDOT, local government, and the MPOs in designing plans that connect and serve urban communities with an efficient, transit oriented, and multi-modal transportation system.
- Action 3:** Ensure local governments and metropolitan planning organization, through their planning programs and future road networks, accommodate travel demand across jurisdictional and neighborhood boundaries.
- Action 4:** In conjunction with FDOT, local government, and the MPOs, the capacities and operations of major regional roadways should be protected through coordinated land use, careful site plan review, driveway access management, coordinated signal spacing and timing, paralleling roads, and connection permit policies and other Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives among all levels of government.
- Action 5:** In cooperation with FDOT, local government, and the MPOs, review transportation plans and projects to direct development in areas where adequate transportation facilities exist or are planned.
- Action 6:** In conjunction with FDOT, local government, and the MPOs, direct transportation investments in such a way so that it contributes to efficient urban and non-urban development throughout the region.

Action 7: Enhance economic prosperity and competitiveness through development of a transportation system composed of corridors, facilities, and services for the effective movement of freight and visitors throughout the region.

Action 8: The Council will work with the Urbanized MPOs, FDOT, and local governments in promoting regional coordination for addressing transportation planning and programming for the entire region, including those counties and portions thereof that are not represented with the MPO.

Strategy: Implement new financing alternatives to overcome the shortfall of transportation funding.

Action 1: Assist transit providers and other governmental and private entities should seek long term, dedicated funding sources for use for improving and expanding the transit system.

Action 2: The Council, in cooperation with representative of the state, regional, and local public transportation agencies and private sector transportation professionals, will undertake a continuing public education program to inform area citizens of transportation issues, their implication to area travel patterns and conditions, and constraints to their full implementation.

Strategy: Encourage local governments to create inter-local and regional agreements to better address joint planning and revenue sharing.

Action 1: Assist non-urban local government in the prioritization of regional transportation improvements.

Action 2: Encourage intercounty bus service as appropriate to meet growing intra-county travel demands.

Action 3: Review all planning for the Florida High Speed Rail system to ensure future links to Southwest Florida and eventual completion of a statewide High Speed Rail System.

Affordable Housing Element

The Supply of Affordable Housing

Goal 1: Supply a variety of housing types in various price ranges to ensure that all residents have access to decent and affordable housing.

Strategy: Increase the supply of affordable housing through public and private efforts.

Action 1: Review housing elements of local comprehensive plans to ensure those needs are identified and considered when funding choices are made.

Action 2: Work with local governments to promote structures and developments that combine commercial and residential uses as a means of providing housing that is affordable and near employment opportunities.

Action 3: Encourage local governments to adopt strategies that promote the development of affordable housing by the private and nonprofit sectors.

Action 4: Work with state programs to change current criteria that make it difficult to compete for projects in some portions of the region.

Action 5: Continue to educate elected officials and citizens on the need for and benefits of affordable housing.

Indicators

- Number of housing elements in local governments' comprehensive plans that identify current and future housing needs of their residents and recommend actions to address those needs.
- Innovative funding or incentive programs in use in the region.
- Number of affordable housing units built in the region through local, state, and federal programs.

Persons with Special Needs

Goal 2: The housing needs of persons with special needs will be met.

Strategy: Develop housing and services to assist persons with special needs live as independently as possible.

Action 1: Review local government comprehensive plans to ensure that housing for persons with special needs is considered and provided.

Action 2: Encourage communities and organizations to utilize appropriate housing methods to serve developmentally disabled and physically handicapped individuals.

Indicators

- Housing elements that identify the housing demands of special needs populations and recommend actions to address those needs.
- Number of applications submitted to address the housing and service needs of special needs populations.
- Number of cooperative agreements or arrangements between housing and service providers.

Strategy: Farmworkers will be recognized as an essential part of our economy and their housing needs will be included in community programs.

Action 1: Continue to educate citizens and local officials on the need for additional farmworker housing.

Action 2: Work with public and private partners to provide and maintain safe, sanitary housing for farmworkers.

Indicators

- Number of workshops and public meetings to discuss the issue of farmworker housing and alert citizens to the need for housing.
- Number of newly constructed farm worker housing units.

Human Services Needs

Goal 3: Communities and non-profit organizations will work together to identify and address the population's human service needs.

Strategy: Coordinate local housing programs with related programs to enhance services to clients.

Action 1: Work with service providers and local governments to identify critical needs that cannot be resolved through current funding sources. Where possible, assist communities in developing local or regional networks to address those needs.

Indicators

- Number of cooperative agreements or arrangements between housing and service providers.
- Number of multi-party applications submitted for state or federal funding.

Regional Cooperation

Goal 4: Communities and non-profit organizations will cooperate when possible to reduce duplication of services and improve cost efficiency.

Strategy: Communities will work together to address regional housing needs.

Action 1: Where possible assist communities in development interlocal agreements with neighboring communities so they work together to jointly address community-wise or regional housing concerns.

Action 2: Continue to coordinate the Housing Providers Coalition as a means of bringing together housing providers from the Region to share information and ideas.

Action 3: Where possible assist housing and service providers in working together to stretch limited dollars and eliminate any unnecessary overlap of services.

Indicators

- Number of communities with interlocal agreements to address housing needs.
- Number of Housing Provider Coalition meetings held or other regional forums for sharing information.