

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS**

A comparison of the plan's regional indicators with the latest available data clearly shows that the region has participated in the nationwide employment boom of the late 1990s. In sum, every county in the region is better off financially than in the early 1990s. The number of employers has risen, unemployment rates have dropped, and average incomes have increased.

#### **REGIONAL GOAL 2.1. ATTRACT NEW HIGH-PAYING, VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES AND EXPAND EXISTING BUSINESSES IN THE REGION.**

Regional indicator 2.1.1 measures the number of new reporting units within the region. Reporting units are individual employment locations which are subject to the state's unemployment compensation law. For example, each supermarket in a supermarket chain is considered a separate reporting unit. An increase in the number of reporting units indicates an increase in the number of businesses.

In 1993, the average number of monthly public and private employment reporting units located in the region was 8,018.<sup>1</sup> This information was derived from the Florida Statistical Abstract as prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida. Since 1994, BEBR has excluded public (i.e. government) reporting units from this statistic. Therefore, a comparison of 1993 and 1996 data will not fully reflect the growth rate of private employers. With this caveat in mind, the statistic nevertheless reveals significant growth in the number of new reporting units. Between 1993 and 1996, the number of reporting units in the region increased by 174, or 4.5 percent, to 9,382. Between 1996 and 1997, the number of north central Florida private reporting units increased by 210, or 2.5 percent, to 8,592.

#### **REGIONAL GOAL 2.2. RAISE THE MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA HOUSEHOLDS.**

The available data suggest that north central Florida incomes have increased at a rate faster than the underlying rate of inflation since adoption of the regional plan. However, this conclusion is drawn from only two data points, 1996, the year of plan adoption, and 1997, the latest year for which data is available. Between 1990 and 1996, the annual rate of increase, as measured by average salary per job, was 3.0 percent, which approximates the annual inflation rate for this period.

The regional plan contains two regional indicators by which to measure achievement of Regional

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<sup>1</sup> A reporting unit is an employer (business). Some large employers may be comprised of multiple reporting units.

Goal 2.2. Regional Indicator 2.2.1 measures median household income while Regional Indicator 2.2.2 measures the region's per capita income. The data source for both indicators is the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. The year 2000 census data will be unavailable until after the Council's January 2001 submittal deadline. Therefore, a proxy measure is used for median household income and an inter-census year estimate of per capita income are used in this report.

Regional Indicator 2.2.1 notes that the 1990 north central Florida median household income was \$21,489. A Bureau of Economic Analysis publication entitled Regional Economic Information System 1996-1997 provides average wage per job data by county of job location for payroll covered by unemployment compensation law. This data reports the 1990 average wage per north central Florida job was \$18,378. In 1996, it had risen to 21,881, a gain of 19.1 percent, or an annual average increase of 3.0 percent. In 1997, the average wage per north central Florida job was \$22,795, representing a 4.2 percent increase over 1996.

Regional Indicator 2.2.2 identifies the 1990 per capita income of north central Florida residents as \$11,083. The Regional Economic Information System provides estimated per capita personal income for the years 1990, 1996, and 1997. It reports a 1990 regional per capita income of \$14,192. By 1996, per capita income increased to \$17,896, a 26.1 percent gain, or an average annual gain of 4.0 percent. By 1997, the north central Florida per capita income was \$18,733, representing an increase of 4.7 percent over 1996.

**REGIONAL GOAL 2.3. EXPAND NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA FOOD,  
AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE, FORESTRY AND RELATED INDUSTRIES IN  
ORDER TO BE A COMPETITIVE FORCE IN STATE, NATIONAL, AND  
INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACES.**

Measuring achievement of Regional Goal 2.3 has proven to be elusive. The regional plan contains two regional indicators for the goal. Regional Indicator 2.3.1 notes that in 1990, 6,914 north central Florida residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. Comparable data is unavailable until publication of the year 2000 census. Inter-census year data is available from the State of Florida, Bureau of Labor Market Information ES 202 reports. Unfortunately, data is suppressed for this employment category for some north central Florida counties, rendering the ES 202 report data unusable as a proxy. Regional Indicator 2.3.2 notes that in 1990, 4.6 percent of all north central Florida employed residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. As with Regional Indicator 2.3.1, comparable data is unavailable until publication of the year 2000 census. Therefore, three proxy measures are used to assess goal achievement. These are: 1) Farm Labor and Proprietor's Income; 2) Total Fish and Shellfish Landings; and 3) Cords of Harvested Pulpwood.

As can be seen in Table II-1, below, north central Florida farm labor and proprietor's income has

increased between 1990 and 1996. Farm labor and proprietor's income appears to have peaked in 1993. Nevertheless, the data indicates an annual average increase of 2.6 percent between 1990 and 1996. Although small, the average annual regional increase stands in contrast to the statewide decline in farm labor and proprietor income of approximately 4.8 percent during this period.

Table II-2 examines total fish and shellfish landings between 1990 and 1997. As can be seen in the table, the 1994 passage of the constitutional amendment eliminating net fishing within Florida coastal waters has significantly reduced the region's fish landings. Between 1992 and 1997, north central Florida fish landings declined by 81.5 percent, from 3,398,498 pounds in 1992 to 628,828 pounds in 1997. Shellfish landings increased by 23.9 percent during this period, an increase which is likely due, at least in part, to the rise of clam farming in the region's coastal counties.

Table II-3 reveals that north central Florida pulpwood production has remained flat since 1991, increasing by 2.3 percent between 1991 and 1995. Pulpwood production declines in Alachua, Dixie, Madison, and Union counties were offset by increased production in the remaining north central Florida counties.

While the available data does not suggest complete achievement of the regional goal, the Council has, since 1996, been actively involved in promoting economic development in the region's two coastal counties in support of the goal. Regional activities in support of this goal are discussed in later sections of this assessment.

**TABLE II-1**

**FARM LABOR AND PROPRIETOR'S INCOME, 1990 THROUGH 1996\***

Area	Year						
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<b>Alachua</b>	16,434,000	14,417,000	20,488,000	20,826,000	17,742,000	17,260,000	12,986,000
<b>Bradford</b>	4,586,000	3,952,000	4,213,000	5,401,000	5,670,000	6,704,000	6,510,000
<b>Columbia</b>	7,648,000	5,820,000	7,447,000	7,096,000	6,685,000	6,457,000	5,903,000
<b>Dixie</b>	1,034,000	475,000	894,000	1,297,000	1,351,000	10,673,000	731,000
<b>Gilchrist</b>	9,628,000	7,410,000	9,116,000	8,731,000	10,305,000	6,788,000	8,162,000
<b>Hamilton</b>	6,985,000	8,425,000	11,306,000	11,386,000	6,788,000	6,428,000	7,413,000
<b>Lafayette</b>	15,499,000	17,641,000	19,031,000	18,706,000	14,081,000	11,577,000	15,768,000
<b>Madison</b>	3,564,000	7,133,000	6,720,000	7,740,000	5,532,000	4,421,000	5,600,000
<b>Suwannee</b>	21,325,000	19,390,000	23,340,000	24,574,000	38,599,000	39,124,000	45,125,000
<b>Taylor</b>	1,299,000	65,000	1,126,000	1,162,000	267,000	81,000	140,000
<b>Union</b>	5,856,000	1,854,000	2,570,000	2,700,000	1,400,000	1,363,000	1,102,000
<b>Region</b>	93,858,000	86,582,000	106,251,000	109,619,000	108,420,000	110,876,000	109,440,000
<b>State</b>	2,343,740,000	3,116,228,000	2,736,328,000	3,002,985,000	1,644,865,000	1,964,579,000	1,773,580,000

\*Revised Annual Data is used for all years except 1996.

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 1992 through 1998, Table 9.22.

**TABLE II-2**

**DIXIE AND TAYLOR COUNTY FISH AND SHELLFISH LANDINGS, 1990-1997**

Year	Landings (Pounds)		
	Total	Fish	Shellfish
1990	4,814,637	3,394,327	1,420,310
1991	2,216,443	1,704,813	511,630
1992	4,419,362	3,398,498	1,020,864
1994*	3,823,753	2,408,169	1,415,584
1995	2,369,407	1,095,147	1,274,260
1996	2,201,840	624,298	1,577,542
1997	1,893,275	628,828	1,264,447

\*No data available for 1993.

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 1991 through 1998, Table 10.40.

**TABLE II-3**

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ANNUAL PULPWOOD HARVEST, 1991, 1993, & 1995 (CORDS)**

Area	Year*			Pct Change, 1991 - 1995
	1991	1993	1995	
<b>Alachua</b>	113,261	136,593	124,934	(10.3)
<b>Bradford</b>	139,822	79,446	79,309	43.3
<b>Columbia</b>	140,079	121,832	131,526	6.1
<b>Dixie</b>	89,862	116,269	136,020	(54.1)
<b>Gilchrist</b>	73,292	47,025	51,424	29.8
<b>Hamilton</b>	105,825	59,476	57,464	45.7
<b>Lafayette</b>	96,512	41,652	33,589	65.2
<b>Madison</b>	60,141	50,467	62,596	(4.1)
<b>Suwannee</b>	106,730	75,552	73,078	31.5
<b>Taylor</b>	451,281	516,673	564,241	25.0
<b>Union</b>	36,980	41,802	66,919	(81.0)
<b>Region</b>	1,413,785	1,286,787	1,381,100	2.3
<b>State</b>	3,976,163	3,545,975	3,957,034	0.5

\*Data unavailable for years 1990, 1992, and 1996.

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 1991 through 1998, Table 10.07.

## **REGIONAL GOAL 2.4. EXPAND THE REGIONAL TOURISM INDUSTRY.**

Regional indicators 2.4.1, 2.4.2, and 2.4.3 seek to measure change in the region's tourism and eco-tourism industry. They measure licensed restaurant seats, hotel rooms, and attendance at state parks and preserves for Fiscal Year (July through June) 1993-94. Restaurants, hotel rooms, and parks are used by both local residents and tourists. Therefore, the rate of increase in these measures should be greater than the underlying regional population growth rate if the region is successful in expanding its tourism industry. Unfortunately, only attendance at state parks and preserves showed a rate of growth which was faster than the region's underlying population growth rate.

Regional Indicator 2.4.1 identifies 7,315 licensed north central Florida hotel and motel rooms in Fiscal Year (FY) 1993-94. By FY 1995-96, there were 7,426 licensed hotel and motel rooms in the region, representing an annual average growth rate of 0.8 percent during this period. Between FY 1995-96 and FY 1997-98, the number of licensed rooms declined by 786 to 6,640. The decline is due to a reported loss of 788 Alachua County rooms during this period. When Alachua County is removed from consideration, the rate of increase in hotel/motel room formation is flat for this time period, as the number of rooms increased by only two between FY 1995-96 and FY 1996-98.

Regional Indicator 2.4.2 identifies the fiscal year 1993-94 licensed seating capacity of north central Florida restaurants as 51,208. In FY 1995-96 there were 53,277 licensed restaurant seats in the region, representing an increase of 2,069 seats, or 4.0 percent. The 54,376 licensed seats reported in FY 97-98 represents an increase of 1,099 seats, or an increase of 2.1 percent over the FY 95-96 seating capacity.

Regional Indicator 2.4.3 notes that FY 1993-94 total annual attendance at state parks, preserves, and other state-owned areas located in north central Florida as 530,626. Total annual attendance increased by an annual average rate of 6.3 percent, or to 599,775, between FY 1993-94 and FY 1995-96. The rate of increase was greater than the underlying regional population increase of 5.6 percent for this time period. Between FY 1995-96, which represents conditions at the time of adoption of the regional plan, and FY 96-97, which is the latest available data, attendance increased by 10,816, or an increase of 1.8 percent, which was less than the regional population increase of 2.6 percent for this period.

## **REGIONAL GOAL 2.5. REDUCE THE REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE.**

Regional unemployment rates have declined significantly since adoption of the regional plan. Regional Indicator 2.5.1 identifies the region's January, 1993, unemployment rate as 7.0 percent. In 1996, the average annual regional unemployment rate dropped to 3.8 percent. In 1997, the unemployment rate remained at 3.8 percent.

Regional Indicator 2.5.2 notes the January, 1993, Dixie County unemployment rate as 11.0 percent. In 1996, which represents conditions at the time of adoption of the regional plan, the average annual unemployment rate in Dixie County was 8.18 percent. By 1997, the average annual Dixie County unemployment rate had declined to 7.2 percent.

Regional Indicator 2.5.3 places the January, 1993, Taylor County unemployment rate at 13.6 percent. In 1996 the average annual rate had dropped to 9.6 percent. By 1997, the Taylor County unemployment rate had declined to 9.0 percent.

Regional Indicator 2.5.4 identifies the January, 1993, Hamilton County unemployment rate as 16.5 percent. In 1996, the average annual unemployment rate was 7.4 percent, less than half of the 1993 rate. By 1997, the Hamilton County unemployment rate was 7.0 percent.

Perhaps more telling of the region's improving economic health than the decline in unemployment rates is the one-two combination of an increasing labor force and a decreasing number of unemployed persons. Between 1993 and 1996, the region's labor force increased by 4.5 percent, from 173,512 to 181,371. During the same period the total number of unemployed persons declined by 37.3 percent, from 11,085 in 1993 to 6,954 in 1996. Between 1996 and 1997, the latest year for which labor force data is available, the region's labor force increased by 0.2 percent while the number of unemployed declined by 1.6 percent. While the regional plan provides information on labor force size, it does not use labor force and number of unemployed persons as regional indicators. It is recommended that labor force size and number of unemployed persons be added as regional indicators for Regional Goal 2.5.

**REGIONAL GOAL 2.6. ENSURE ADEQUATE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND FACILITIES TO SERVE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE REGION.**

Regional Indicator 2.6.1 identifies 26 of the region's 33 incorporated municipalities with centralized water and 19 with centralized sewer. As of 1999, one municipality, the Town of Fort White, installed a centralized water system. Additionally, the unincorporated Dixie County community of Suwannee has installed a centralized wastewater treatment system since plan adoption. The Suwannee wastewater treatment system was primarily constructed to address the specific problem of untreated effluent entering the Suwannee River estuary which was adversely affecting the estuary's clam beds.

**REGIONAL GOAL 2.7. ESTABLISH LOCAL DIAL-UP ACCESS FROM EVERY NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA COUNTY TO THE INTERNET AND TO COMPUTERIZED PACKET SWITCHING NETWORKS.**

Regional Indicator 2.7.1 identified four of the region's 11 counties as having local dial-up access to the Internet in 1995. By 1999, all north central Florida counties had toll-free access to the Internet through private service providers.

## **IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS**

The goals and policies of the regional plan's Economic Development Element do not directly address local government comprehensive plans. Therefore, it is concluded that the element has not directly impacted local government comprehensive plans.

## **SUCSESSES AND SHORT COMINGS**

While the previous section examined goal achievement based on regional indicators, the following section highlights the successes and failures of the individual regional plan policies and Council programs in implementing the subject area's goals.

### **NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA AREAWIDE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ADCO)**

Regional policies 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 call for support and maintenance of ADCO, a U.S. Small Business Administration Certified Development Company (CDC) which provides long-term, low-interest financing assistance through the SBA 504 Program to small businesses in a 12-county area. There are more than 250 CDCs in the United States, nine of which operate in Florida.

ADCO has participated in projects totaling over \$31 million with seven financial institutions since 1978. Additionally, ADCO has processed nine 7(a) guaranty loans for approximately \$4,000,000 since 1992. Due to a greater need by local businesses, in 1996, the Council placed greater emphasis on ADCO. Between 1996 and 1998, ADCO has participated in loans projects totaling \$11.35 million, which resulted in creating or retaining 315 full-time jobs in a 12-county area (including Levy County). As a result of the increase in activity, the Florida SBA District Office recognized ADCO as the most improved CDC in the state in FY 1997. ADCO was also recognized nationally for having tied for the "Fastest Growing Small CDC" in the country.

### **REVOLVING LOANS AND MICRO-LOANS**

Regional policies 2.1.3 and 2.1.5 call for the establishment of a revolving loan program and a micro-loan program. Neither of these policies have been implemented. Since adoption of the regional plan, Council staff has reviewed the possibility of implementing these programs and determined both to be financially infeasible for the Council to administer. Therefore, it is recommended that these policies be deleted.

### **THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AND THE BIG BEND TRI-COUNTY TASK FORCE**

Policy 2.1.7 calls for the expansion of the economic structure of Dixie and Taylor counties. In furtherance of this policy, the Council assisted in creating a new interlocal agreement agency, the North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership, which joins the resources of 11 counties to address regional economic development problems and opportunities. The formation of the

regional partnership in 1996 set in motion the opportunity for local agencies to take full advantage of the realignment of functions of the Florida Department of Commerce into the Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development within the Executive Office of the Governor, and to take advantage of the newly-created Enterprise Florida, Inc.

Recognizing that the region has a number of functioning local economic development programs in addition to several regional efforts, the Partnership provides a forum to coordinate, complement, and enhance those economic development programs. The regional partnership requires financial or in-kind commitments from the private and public sectors. Efforts to-date have been directed to promoting a regional identity, creating a regional data base for business properties available throughout the region, and providing expertise and overseeing the tourism and aquaculture activities for the *Original Florida's Hidden Coast* counties (Dixie, Levy, and Taylor counties).

Subsequent to the successful attainment of a grant from the Ford Foundation, the Big Bend Tri-County Task Force was formed in late 1995. The task force was comprised of residents, business owners, and local government officials from Dixie, Levy, and Taylor counties. The Council utilized the grant to employ a coordinator to work with the task force as it addressed the economic revitalization of the tri-county area in the aftermath of the constitutional amendment banning net fishing. Given the successes and progress of the program in its first two years, the Ford Foundation agreed to continue providing financial assistance to the Council over a second two-year period commencing October 1, 1997.

The Ford Foundation grant allowed the Council to continue working with the task force in 1998. As a result of recommendations put forward by the Big Bend Tri-County Task Force, in 1998 the Council assisted shellfish farmers in forming a non-profit corporation named the "Hidden Coast Shellfish Producers Association, Inc." With technical assistance from the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Harbor Branch International, and the Council, along with grant funds from the State of Florida and a donation of land by the Dixie County Commission, the Association was successful in building a land-based shellfish nursery capable of producing over 20 million clam seeds annually for area clam farmers. The first seed clams produced by the nursery were planted off the Hidden Coast in 1999.

The improved effluent stream from the unincorporated community of Suwannee, combined with the clam seeds grown by the Association, are anticipated to result in increased clam harvests beginning in 2000.

## **THE ORIGINAL FLORIDA TOURISM PROMOTION TASK FORCE**

Furthering regional policies 2.4.1, 2.4.2, and 2.4.3, the Council continued supporting The Original Florida Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of representatives of the region's 11 counties who are appointed by county commissions to oversee and direct a regionwide tourism promotion effort. The members have varied background, but they share one thing in common; the desire to carve out their share of the number of tourists who visit Florida each year, and to do so without harming the natural resources which are the mainstay of the region's attractions.

In 1994, the Task Force hired a public relations firm to assist in promoting The Original Florida area. In 1996, 62 travel writers visited the area who, in turn, have written and had published in various news media (travel magazines, travel sections in major newspapers throughout the country, etc.) a total of 16 articles, reaching an audience of approximately 30 million readers. By 1998, the numbers increased to 96 visiting writers, 389 articles, and 63 million readers.

In 1998, lodging establishments and businesses in the region began participating in a campaign promoting January as “Canadian Month.” Participating organizations throughout *The Original Florida* region offer discounts on lodging to Canadian citizens during the month of January. The Task Force believes the program can be enhanced by creating and promoting private/public partnerships. As such, the task force entered into a partnership agreement with Florida Living Magazine. The arrangement promotes *The Original Florida* region as a tourism destination, both nationally and internationally.

Finally, the Task Force was successful in its efforts to have the Florida Commission on Tourism create an eighth tourism district for the state of Florida. All 11 of the region’s counties (along with five other counties) are now in one region called the North Central Florida Region. The region’s counties were previously split between two tourism districts.

## **THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

In support of Regional Goals 2.1 and 2.6, the Council continued activities to maintain its designation as the North Central Florida Economic Development District (EDD). Designation as an EDD allows north central Florida local governments to receive financial assistance from the federal Economic Development Administration. In order to receive and maintain EDD designation, the Council maintains and annually reports on its Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP).

The initial OEDP was submitted to the Economic Development Administration in October, 1977. An update and a major revision to this document was completed in 1993. The OEDP contains economic development goals and objectives for which applications for EDA financial assistance must further. In drafting the regional plan in 1995-96, the goals and objectives of the OEDP were reviewed and, in many cases, incorporated in the goals and policies of the regional plan to assure compatibility between the two documents.

No significant changes have been made to the goals and objectives of the OEDP since the adoption of the regional plan. Although the OEDP furthers achievement of the regional plan’s Economic Development Element, the element in turn does not contain specific policy direction calling for the Council to undertake actions to maintain the region’s EDD designation. It is recommended that a policy to this effect be added to regional plan.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

In support of Regional Policy 2.6.1, the Council continued to assist local governments in assessing their community development needs. These assessments addressed the need for housing rehabilitation and neighborhood revitalization. The community development needs assessments resulted in the Council assisting with the preparation of many Community Development Block Grant applications between 1996 and 1998. Some of these applications involve the expansion and/or improvements to centralized water and sewer systems. In 1998 the Council provided administrative assistance on current projects for the municipalities of Brooker, Hawthorne, Lake City, Live Oak, Mayo, and Perry, as well as Columbia, Suwannee, and Taylor counties.

## **INTERSTATE 75 CORRIDOR COUNCIL**

In furtherance of Regional Goal 2.4, the Council serves as staff to the Interstate-75 Corridor Council. The I-75 Corridor Council was formed in 1997 to develop a program of improvements for Interstate Highway-75 from the Georgia state line to Wildwood. The corridor council is comprised of local elected officials whose charge is to assist with the planning for physical improvements to the corridor, to create a program of interchange maintenance, to consider uniform outdoor advertising standards, and to promote alternative advertising methods in order to promote north central Florida tourism. In recognition of the Council's activities, it is recommended that a policy similar to the following policy be added to Regional Goal 2.4:

Policy 2.4.4. Assist the Interstate-75 Tourism Task Force to address physical improvements to Interstate Highway 75, to create a program of interchange maintenance, to consider uniform outdoor advertising standards, and to promote alternative advertising methods to promote tourism in north central Florida.

## **UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Annual reports prepared by the Council since 1996 contain a section entitled Upcoming Activities, which outlines actions and work activities of the Council for the upcoming year. While economic development actions and work activities contained in the annual reports are consistent with the goals and policies of the Economic Development Element, the action and work activity statements represent an unanticipated opportunity to amend regional plan policies to more accurately reflect Council actions in support of regional goals.

The 1996, 1997, and 1998 annual reports state that the Council will continue assisting businesses with SBA 7(a) loans and, through its contract with the North Central Florida Areawide Development corporation, Inc., SBA 504 loans. This action is consistent with regional policies 2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 2.1.4, which are as follows:

**Policy 2.1.1.** Support and maintain the North Central Florida Areawide Development Company, Inc, an SBA 504 Certified Development Company which serves the region.

**Policy 2.1.2.** Provide assistance to the business community in the retention and expansion of their businesses by packaging SBA 7a loans.

**Policy 2.1.4.** Work with private financial institutions to co-finance business loans.

It is recommended that Policy 2.1.4 be deleted as Policies 2.1.1. and 2.1.2 more accurately reflect Council actions in support of the small business community.

The 1996 through 1998 annual reports call for the Council to continue assisting local governments and organizations in the implementation of The Original Florida Tourism Promotion effort. This action is consistent with Regional Policy 2.4.1, which calls for the Council to provide assistance to regional tourism efforts. It is recommended that Policy 2.4.1 be amended to more specifically identify The Original Florida Tourism Promotion Task Force and their plans and promotion. Possible rewording is as follows:

**Policy 2.4.1.** ~~Provide assistance to the regional tourism development effort currently underway.~~ Assist local governments and organizations in implementing The Original Florida tourism program and related promotions.

The annual reports also call for the Council to continue working with the Big Bend Tri-County Task Force to address economic development issues in the three coastal counties of Dixie, Levy, and Taylor. This activity is consistent with and furthers Regional Policy 2.1.7, Regional Goal 2.3, and Regional Policy 2.5.1. Regional Goal 2.3 calls for expansion of the region's agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and related industries. Regional Policies 2.1.7 and 2.5.1 are very similar. Policy 2.1.7 calls for expansion of the economic structure of the region's coastal counties to minimize the adverse impacts of the Florida net ban, while Policy 2.5.1 calls for coordination of actions directed to mitigate the adverse economic impacts created the fish net ban. Since Policies 2.1.7 and 2.5.1 are very similar, it is recommended that Policy 2.1.7 be deleted. It is further recommended that Policy 2.5.1 be relocated under Regional Goal 2.3.

**Policy 2.1.7.** ~~Expand the Economic structure of Dixie and Taylor counties in order to minimize the adverse economic impacts of the Florida net ban.~~

**Policy ~~2.5.1~~ 2.3.4.** Coordinate actions directed to mitigating the adverse impacts created by the fish net ban.

The annual reports since 1996 state that the Council will continue to work with the North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership to address regional economic development problems and opportunities. Policy 2.2.2 is similar, making the current wording of 2.5.3 somewhat duplicative. Therefore, it is recommended that Policy 2.5.3 be amended to reflect the Council's continued relationship with the economic development partnership. Suggested wording for the proposed amendment is as follows:

**Policy 2.5.3.** ~~Diversify the region's economy by providing technical assistance and information.~~ Continue working with the North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership to address regional economic development problems and opportunities, including economic development issues affecting, Dixie, Levy, and Taylor Counties.

Finally, the annual reports note that the Council will continue to provide assistance to local governments and area development authorities in securing federal funds and assistance from other sources to accommodate additional industrial growth. This action is consistent with regional Policy 2.6.1, which reads as follows:

**Policy 2.6.1.** Provide technical assistance to local governments in applying for state and federal grants to construct or expand public facilities necessary to attracting and accommodating businesses and industries.

The wording of Policy 2.6.1 fully reflects the language contained in the annual report. Therefore, no change is necessary to this policy.

## **IMPACT OF CHANGES IN STATE STATUTES AND RULES AS WELL AS THE STATE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT (JTPA)**

As a result of a 1996 legislative initiative to combine JTPA with other state and federal initiatives to reduce the welfare rolls, increase welfare-to-work programs, combined with the reorganization of the Florida Department of Commerce into Enterprise Florida, the state created Work Force Development Boards whose responsibility is to oversee and coordinate activities and programs to achieve the goal of reducing the state's welfare rolls. One result of their efforts was to restructure the JTPA program. Prior to 1996, the JTPA Service Delivery Area (SDA) was coterminous with the boundaries of the Council.

In 1996, the Board broke the region into three SDAs which coincided with the service areas of the region's three community colleges (Lake City Community College, North Florida Community College, and Santa Fe Community College). As a result, three work force development boards were created, one for each new service area. When the three boards were created, it was no longer possible for the Council to continue to provide staff services to the three separate boards. The three community colleges currently provide staff for the Boards. The North Central Florida Private Industry Council and the Job Training Consortium were subsequently disbanded. Their functions were absorbed by the work force development boards which are now responsible for administering the JTPA program. Therefore, the background section of the Economic Development Element should be updated to reflect the transition of the administration of the JTPA program to the work force development boards.

**NEED FOR PLAN AMENDMENTS AND NEW ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PLANNING  
ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE EAR**

Various recommendations have been included in earlier sections of this review regarding possible changes to the plan's Economic development Element. This section recaps the recommended amendments.

1. Add a new Regional Indicator 2.5.5 to measure the size of the regional labor force and Regional Indicator 2.5.6 to measure the number of unemployed persons.
2. Delete Regional Policies 2.1.3 and 2.1.5
3. Add a new regional policy calling for the Council to undertake actions to maintain the region's EDA Economic Development District designation.
4. Delete Policy 2.1.4.
5. Revise Policy 2.4.1 to more specifically identify the Original Florida Task Force and their plans and promotion. Possible rewording is as follows:

**Policy 2.4.1.** ~~Provide assistance to the regional tourism development effort currently underway.~~ Assist local governments and organizations implement The Original Florida tourism plan and related promotions.

6. Add Policy 2.4.4 to address the Council's involvement with the Interstate-75 Corridor Task Force:

Policy 2.4.4. Assist the Interstate-75 Tourism Task Force to address physical improvements to Interstate Highway 75, to create a program of interchange maintenance, to consider uniform outdoor advertising standards, and to promote alternative advertising methods to promote tourism in north central Florida.

7. Delete Policy 2.1.7 as it is duplicative of Policy 2.5.1. Relocate Policy 2.5.1 under Regional Goal 2.3.
8. Amend Policy 2.5.3 similar to the following to reflect the Council's continued relationship with the economic development partnership:

**Policy 2.5.3.** ~~Diversify the region's economy by providing technical assistance and information.~~ Continue working with the North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership to address regional economic development problems and opportunities, including economic development issues affecting, Dixie, Levy, and Taylor Counties.

9. Update the text of the Economic Development Element to reflect the transition of the administration of the JTPA program to the Work Force Development Boards.
10. Update the text of the economic Development Element to reflect the economic development activities of the Council since plan adoption.
11. Where possible, the regional indicators should be updated to 1996 data to portray conditions in the region at time of plan adoption.
12. Consider replacing regional indicators which cannot be measured on a more frequent basis than once every ten years with measures which are more frequently updated.
13. Remove comments from the text of the Economic Development Element addressing the need for toll-free Internet access for north central Florida.
14. Delete Regional Goal 2.7 and its associated policies since toll-free Internet access is now available regionwide.