

Brevard Tomorrow



“Preferred Future” Strategic Plan

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Detailed Table of Contents

Overview.....	1
Introduction	3
“Preferred Future” Statement.....	5
Issue #1 – Governance: Unification, Cooperation, and Provision of Services.....	7-13
Goal #1	8
Goal #2.....	9
Goal #3.....	11
Issue #2 – Civic Infrastructure: Community Involvement.....	14-18
Goal #1	14
Goal #2.....	17
Issue #3 – Land Use and Growth: Coordination and Planning	19-25
Goal #1	20
Goal #2.....	22
Goal #3.....	24
Issue #4 – Economy: Diversification and Program Delivery.....	26-34
Goal #1	29
Goal #2.....	30
Goal #3.....	31
Goal #4.....	33
Goal #5.....	33
Issue #5 – Education and Workforce: Improvement	35-41
Goal #1	36
Goal #2.....	39
Key Players.....	42

Overview

In today’s world, where boundaries are no longer strictly defined, globalization and the Internet have opened up communities to influences beyond traditional sources. As a result, many communities are confronting the issue of defining who they are, what they want to become, which issues need to be addressed and in what order, and how to manage/control growth to enrich and maintain the existing community.

Brevard County, the 25th county established in Florida on March 14, 1844, was originally named St. Lucie County, but was renamed in 1855 for Judge Theodore Washington Brevard, a North Carolinian who served as Comptroller of Florida from 1853-1861. Arriving at its current configuration in 1905, Brevard County is one of the longest counties in Florida, stretching 72 miles along the Atlantic Coast and famous Indian River.

Today, Brevard County is composed of 15 incorporated cities and eight unincorporated communities. With a population of 476,230 according to the 2000 Census, the County has arrived at a crossroads of determining its path for the future. Having experienced steady growth since 1977, numerous agencies and organizations have developed strategic plans that address different issues confronting the community. However, most of these plans were developed independently of one another with little to no collaboration with other interested and relevant groups and organizations.

As a result of the various interests and pressures impacting Brevard County today, a comprehensive group of concerned citizens, organizations, agencies, and businesses believed that a unified and holistic strategy that broadens and refocuses the discussion for Brevard County’s “preferred future” needed to be developed if Brevard County was going to preserve what citizens love about the County, while at the same time improving their quality of life. Spearheaded by a broad-based consortium of Brevard County investors, *Brevard Tomorrow* has been charged with the task of creating a comprehensive, sustainable strategic plan for the County. Directed by a 24-member Steering Committee representative of educational, governmental, business, and civic interests across the community, *Brevard Tomorrow* is intended to examine and address quality of life issues including environmental, cultural, economic, educational, youth and adult, and growth concerns.

In July 2001, *Brevard Tomorrow* contracted with *Market Street Services, Inc.*, a national community and economic development consulting firm located in Atlanta, Georgia, to facilitate and guide the development of the strategic plan for Brevard County. Through a comprehensive process that involved both community input and statistical information, the “what” Brevard County wants to become was shaped and defined and culminates in a “preferred future” strategic plan that also outlines “how” Brevard County will execute the strategies identified and outlined in the plan.

The process for creating the strategic plan for Brevard County involved five components:

- ◆ **Economic and Demographic Profile** – objective analysis that provides a vehicle for the community to agree upon current realities. Encompasses analysis of demographic and economic indicators and comparisons to selected communities;
- ◆ **Community Capacity Assessment** – competitive assessment that evaluates how attractive the community is both as a place to live and as a place to do business.

- Highlights the competitive advantages and disadvantages in relation to comparison communities;
- ◆ **Community Dynamics Assessment** – through Leadership Team meetings, interviews, and focus groups, the vision for Brevard County will be developed and the issues and opportunities facing the area will emerge;
 - ◆ **“Preferred Future” Strategic Plan** – defines “what” Brevard County wants to become. Provides the steps to help Brevard County reach its desired future identified through this process and also promote a healthy and balanced economy and quality of life; and
 - ◆ **Implementation Plan** – articulates “how” Brevard County will execute the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan.

This report comprises the fourth component of the strategic planning process, and presents the “*Preferred Future*” *Strategic Plan* for Brevard County based upon input and findings from the first three components.

Introduction

As the *Brevard Tomorrow* process has evolved over the last six months, what has clearly emerged is the tremendous amount of love the citizens of Brevard County have for their community, tempered by their concern about how the County has changed and grown over the last several decades, and how the County will address the challenges brought about by growth. With a population growth rate that is nearly three times the national average, an over 69 population that has increased over 50% during the last decade, the continuing loss of open space and natural habitats to development, the presence of 15 incorporated cities and eight unincorporated areas with one seeking incorporation this upcoming January, and an economy that has historically and continues to be dominated by space and space-related industries, Brevard County has arrived at a crossroads with respect to its future. Either the County can continue to grow and develop based upon the push and pull of market forces or the County as a whole can come together and decide what they want to be and strategically plan and direct that growth to arrive at that “preferred future.”

With the establishment of *Brevard Tomorrow*, led by a Steering Committee composed of stakeholders from both the private and public sector and funded by both public and private organizations, and the embarkation upon a strategic planning process, the citizens of Brevard County have unmistakably stated that they want to be in control of their future and are willing to work together to make their desired future a reality. The “Preferred Future” Strategic Plan presented in this report is the culmination of an extensive planning process, which built upon existing data sources and information and was combined with input and feedback from key stakeholders from all across the County.

Pulling from the three previously completed steps of the process – the *Economic and Demographic Profile*, the *Community Capacity Assessment*, and the *Community Dynamics Assessment* – five key issues emerged as areas of high priority, including:

- Governance: Unification, Cooperation, and Provision of Services;
- Civic Infrastructure: Community Involvement;
- Land Use and Growth: Coordination and Planning;
- Economy: Diversification and Program Delivery; and
- Education and Workforce: Improvement.

“Quality of life,” which was repeatedly mentioned by members of the community, has not been separately identified as an issue because quality of life is essentially a theme that runs underneath and drives each of the issues listed. While there is no one definition of quality of life, and the definition will vary from individual to individual, most people would agree that it means quality schools, availability of good jobs, low-crime neighborhoods, healthy environment, responsive and representative government, and the presence of appropriate services to meet basic human needs and livability standards. All of these elements and more are considered in the five key issues identified. In other words, one could call the “Preferred Future” Strategic Plan for Brevard County the “Quality of Life Strategic Plan.”

For each issue area, a series of goals and action steps to accomplish each goal were developed. As each issue was defined, there were two guiding principles behind each issue. First, the “Preferred Future” statement, which was created by the Steering Committee and voted upon during a

Leadership Team meeting, defines what Brevard County wants to be in the future and helps to identify what goals and action steps will move the County closer to this selected future. Second, the work that has already been done by existing organizations and groups in the County was used to the greatest extent possible as a starting point for each action step, allowing the plan to capitalize upon ongoing momentum in the County and not reinvent the wheel. The strategic plans reviewed and utilized in the development of this “*Preferred Future*” *Strategic Plan* include, in alphabetical order:

- ◆ Brevard Commission on Aging;
- ◆ Brevard County Board of County Commissioners;
- ◆ Brevard Cultural Alliance;
- ◆ Brevard Nature Alliance;
- ◆ Brevard Public Schools;
- ◆ Brevard Workforce 2020;
- ◆ Canaveral Port Authority;
- ◆ Cape Canaveral Spaceport;
- ◆ Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast;
- ◆ Together in Partnership; and
- ◆ United Way of Brevard County.

As other strategic plans are identified, they should be reviewed to see how they could support and help to accomplish different action steps within each issue. For organizations or groups currently undergoing strategic planning processes, the *Brevard Tomorrow “Preferred Future” Strategic Plan* should be taken into consideration to identify if there are any action steps that can be adopted and supported to create greater synergy in the accomplishment of a goal.

This report starts out with the “Preferred Future” statement and defines what is meant by each element. Then, each issue area is discussed along with supporting information as to why this issue is important for Brevard County. Underneath each issue area, a series of goals and action steps to address each issue are identified and formulates the basis upon which Brevard County will move toward their “preferred future.” Finally, key players that need to be involved in the “*Preferred Future*” *Strategic Plan* are discussed.

There are an infinite number of steps that could be undertaken for the goals listed under each of five critical issues identified if there was an unlimited amount of time available to work on each goal. However, without a specific time frame, processes and actions have a tendency to become bogged down in bureaucracy and related and unrelated tangents. Therefore, the action steps presented for this “*Preferred Future*” *Strategic Plan* are based upon a five-year time frame, and should be seen as a guide map to taking decisive action to reach the preferred future for Brevard County. It is important to remember that the issues, goals, and action steps discussed are interrelated across different issue areas, and that the accomplishment and success of one goal or action step has an impact on several other issues.

“Preferred Future” Statement

A “preferred future” statement serves as the vision or guiding statement to help determine the goals and action steps for Brevard County. All of action steps undertaken in this strategic plan should move the County closer toward this vision for their future. The “preferred future” statement for Brevard County is:

Through effective and collaborative public/private relationships, Brevard County is a visionary community with a vibrant economy and unparalleled quality of life. Our values include educational excellence, entrepreneurship, resource conservation, managed growth, cultural diversity, and space heritage that frames and sustains who we are today and into the future. An open and inclusive community, Brevard County values all of its citizens and welcomes newcomers and businesses alike.

What Brevard County values is extremely critical in assessing what goals and action steps should be performed to move the County toward its “preferred future.” Therefore, the definition of each value cherished by Brevard County is defined below:

- *Educational excellence* – spans the entire educational system from pre-kindergarten and early childhood to primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Brevard County desires to have the best primary and secondary education system in the State of Florida where students are challenged to perform their best and are ready for life after graduation whether they go to a traditional four-year college or university, a technical or community college, or into the workplace. Brevard County embraces the diversity of its student population and values all students regardless of their academic path. With respect to post-secondary education, Brevard County wants to be able to offer to its citizenry quality options ranging from technical degrees, continuing education, and lifelong learning opportunities, to the more traditional Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate degrees in a variety of fields.
- *Entrepreneurship* – aside from the economic aspect that most of the new job creation is occurring in small to medium size companies, a strong entrepreneurial spirit in a community is reflected in the demeanor of the public. For example, entrepreneurship encourages innovation, creativity, critical thinking, independent decision-making, and leadership. These qualities, while necessary in a successful entrepreneur, are also highly valued and demanded in many communities and workplaces today.
- *Resource conservation* – Brevard County has one of the most diverse ecosystems found in the world, and conserving it in the face of continuing growth and development is a challenge that the County is willing to confront. Resource conservation includes preserving wetlands and natural habitats; conserving biological diversity; reducing the emission of polluting elements into the air, land, and water; reusing available resources such as gray water for irrigation; lessening dependence on scarce natural resources such as oil; and educating about energy and water conservation.
- *Managed growth* – with a growth rate that is almost three times the national average, Brevard County is willing to plan for future growth, ensuring that the necessary

infrastructure, systems, and services are in place, while at the same time preserving and maintaining what makes the County a great place to live, work, and visit.

- *Cultural diversity* – as an international and domestic destination for new residents, businesses, and visitors, Brevard County welcomes people from all different backgrounds, races and ethnicities, religions, and lifestyles. Each of these individuals contributes positively to the diversity of the community and makes Brevard County a “community of choice.”

- *Space heritage* – since 1950 with the launching of the Army’s Bumper 8 from Cape Canaveral and the establishment of the Kennedy Space Center in 1961, space and space-related industries have been an integral economic and social foundation of Brevard County. The long history of space has not only shaped what the County is today, but also provides it with the basis from which Brevard County can diversify its economic base and be at the forefront of research, technology, and development in the world.

Issue #1 – Governance: Unification, Cooperation, and Provision of Services

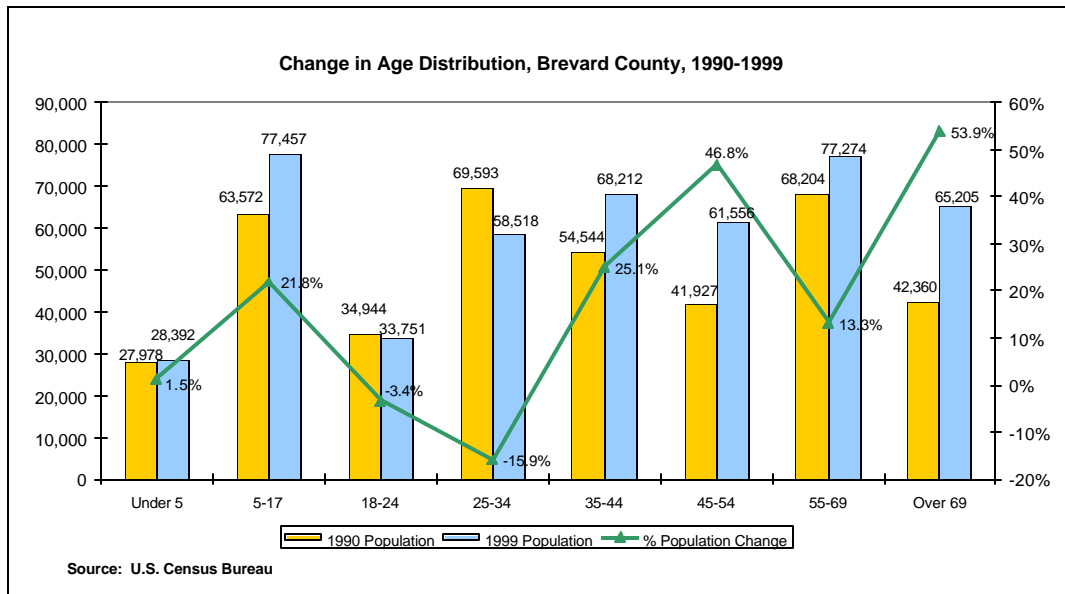
With a 2000 population of 476,230, Brevard County has grown at a rate almost three times the national average over the last 30 years. Encompassing 15 incorporated cities and eight unincorporated communities – one of which is applying for incorporation this upcoming January – Brevard County has over time become more and more fragmented as the individual cities and communities have staked out their own territory. This plurality of municipalities in a single county has led to multiplicity and duplication of services, wide variations in rules and regulations, and a lack of cohesiveness and identity within the County. For example, there are 12 different police departments in the County in addition to the Brevard County Sheriff's Office, and 12 different fire departments in addition to Brevard County Fire & Rescue. The 15 incorporated cities range in size from a low of 706 in Melbourne Village to a high of 79,413 in Palm Bay. With the exception of Palm Bay, Melbourne, and Titusville, the remaining cities have fewer than 21,000 people each.

The multiplicity of incorporated cities and unincorporated areas, coupled with the geographical layout of the County of being 72 miles long and 20 miles wide, has led residents to mentally and verbally separate Brevard County into three parts – north, south, and central Brevard. People from the northern part of the County feel as though they are ignored by the rest of the County, while people from the southern part feel that the central part of the County receives too much attention, while the people in the central part of the County are happy they are not living in either the north or south parts of the County. This self-categorization within the County has contributed to the sense of disunity among residents.

While there has been a history of disjointedness in the County, continuous prosperity and growth has kept the affects of this parochialism to a minimum because everyone was doing well. It is only over the last decade where growth pressures, changes in growth patterns, and alterations in the economy have highlighted the fissures in the County.

This fragmentation and territorialism has also carried over to the private and non-profit sectors and the service provider community, and led to duplication of services and competition for the same pool of scarce resources. The framework for cooperation and communication among similar interest groups is emerging, with several good examples already in place in Brevard County (e.g. Together in Partnership and Brevard Cultural Alliance), but significantly more efforts need to be made in various areas. Additionally, more cross communication and partnership between different groups that are targeting similar populations needs to occur to create additional synergy.

Additionally, throughout the planning process, the need to do a better job of providing for all citizens in the County was stressed. This included the provision of appropriate services, access to those services, and direct confrontation and realization of the changes and problems in the County. For example, a major component of Brevard County's growth over the last decade has been an influx of older individuals. As illustrated in the chart on the following page, between 1990 and 1999, the over-69 population increased over 50% while the population aged 18-24 and 25-34 actually experienced population loss. This aging of the population has created concern in Brevard County regarding the potential impact on the County's services, and the types of economic and community growth that is supported by an older adult population. These older individuals require better public transportation linkages to provide them with access to both recreational and health services, and social services that are targeted towards their changing needs as they continue to age.



Public transportation, while a critical issue for older individuals, is also a significant problem for those without their own means of transport to access employment, education, training, and other services and activities. Although the Space Coast Area Transit (SCAT) operates 21 bus routes in the County with 27 buses, most individuals felt that the service was minimally adequate at best.

Another problem that has only recently received heightened attention by the public is drug use among youths as demonstrated by the special series of articles run by *Florida Today* brought about by the drug overdose death of a young woman. The 2000 Florida Youth Substance Survey showed that drug use by youths is higher in Brevard County than in Florida as illustrated in the table below.

Percent of Youth Reporting Drug Use in the Last 30 Days						
	Brevard County			Florida		
	Middle School	High School	Total	Middle School	High School	Total
Alcohol	28.3	49.9	38.0	20.4	43.4	31.0
Cigarettes	17.4	25.0	20.9	9.8	21.7	15.3
Marijuana	9.0	22.3	15.0	5.1	18.3	11.2
Methamphetamines	1.4	4.2	2.7	0.5	2.0	1.2
Cocaine	1.6	3.6	2.5	0.8	2.0	1.4
Heroin	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.4	0.9	0.6
Hallucinogens	2.1	7.5	4.6	1.0	3.9	2.4

Source: Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, 2000

Addressing this problem requires both preventative measures to keep the problem from happening in the first place, and treatment services to help those abusing drugs overcome the problem.

Goal #1 – Promote cooperation and communication among public, private, and non-profit organizations.

Beyond governmental entities, Brevard County has a plethora of organizations that address a number of similar issues. This has led to territorialism, fragmentation, and competition for the same

resources among these different issue groups. Consolidation and/or greater cooperation would significantly benefit these organizations and Brevard County.

✓ *Encourage additional cooperation, coordination, and consolidation among similar interest organizations.*
Brevard County already has a number of excellent examples of cooperation and coordination among groups of similar interests such as the Brevard Cultural Alliance, Brevard Nature Alliance, Together in Partnership, and the Cape Canaveral Spaceport master planning effort. Each of these entities has brought together organizations with similar mandates to work together to develop a holistic strategic plan that establishes their position and sets the stage for their future actions. Other groups with similar interests should be encouraged to undertake the same type of effort. The next step for these groups would be to explore the benefits and possibility of consolidation and/or joint service agreements to maximize resources and the ability to produce results as Together in Partnership is currently doing.

✓ *Create opportunities for cooperation and communication across the entire County, including County and local leadership.*
In addition to increasing cooperation and communication among similar interest groups, there needs to be a dialogue between the leaders of the different facets of the community. The lack of coordination between leadership is evidenced in the strategic plans for Brevard County where organizations are setting goals and action steps that do not always take into account what other organizations are doing that can add value to their goals and actions. This results in fragmentation and a lack of coordination in the provision of services to County residents and businesses. This could take the form of a Leadership Council. The Council for Environmental Quality as has been put forth by the Brevard Nature Alliance to bring together a variety of stakeholders with respect to environmental issues would be another good example. To generate enthusiasm and excitement, an annual award for excellence in leadership could be instituted. Another function of the Leadership Council could be to serve as an information clearinghouse of County events and actions, and educate residents about current and long-term issues.

✓ *Support regionalism and regional approaches.*
Looking beyond County boundaries, Brevard County could also gain from the adoption of regional approaches, relationships, and coordination in many different areas including services, economic development, and legislative matters. The Strategic Plan for the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners includes a number of provisions for regional coordination and dialogue including regional meetings with other governments, and regional coordination for support of legislative issues in Tallahassee and Washington. In the past, Brevard County has had the opportunity to partake in regional entities such as the Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission but declined to do so. Currently, Brevard County is participating in myregion.org, a regional planning/partnership program for east central Florida along with six other counties. As additional future opportunities to participate in regional collaborations arise, they should be seriously considered for the benefits they provide to the County.

Goal #2 – Clarify and streamline the existing government structure.

One County government, in addition to 15 municipal governments and five unincorporated areas, has inevitably resulted in confusion, conflict, and competition between and within the different governmental entities in the County. This has led to over-regulation, inefficient processes, and a

wasting of resources. As one participant put it, “The process grows year after year.” This fragmentation has led to and aggravated a host of other problems.

✓ *Continue to increase communication and cooperation between and among County and municipal governments.*
As a part of its Strategic Plan, the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners is working with municipalities on developing and implementing Joint Planning agreements in the provision of services with the Local Mitigation Coordinating Committee fostering cooperation. These agreements not only clarify who is responsible for what, but also allows for more efficient expenditure of taxpayer dollars for services. The County Manager’s practice of distributing a newsletter to City Managers and conducting monthly meetings with the other Managers should continue, with additional areas for cooperation continuously explored.

✓ *Eliminate duplication and multiplicity of governmental organizations and services.*
The fragmentation of the County has resulted in the County being over-organized, with multiple organizations dealing with the same issue or providing the same services, and the only difference being the geographical area they serve or oversee. This problem spans both the public and private sector, but only the public sector is addressed in this action step. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners has recognized this as a significant issue and is working on eliminating unnecessary, duplicative programs, services, and regulations through the Sunset Review Process. This ongoing effort should be expanded, with the assistance of the Space Coast League of Cities, to include the review of organizations, the consolidation of services and organizations, and be given “teeth” to actually be able to set up time frames for the phasing out of duplicative services and organizations. Some areas to potentially be addressed include:

- Creation of interagency agreements to coordinate services and eliminate overlaps in existing service programs and areas (e.g. fire and police protection);
- Consolidation of transportation boards including airports, port, and public transit; and
- Development of a consistent set of rules and regulations from municipality to municipality.

✓ *Remove perceived and real political fragmentation within and at the County level.*
Currently, County Commissioners are elected by district, which contributes to the sense of fragmentation and parochialism in the County, with residents feeling that a Commissioner is only looking out for and trying to benefit their district. If the County truly has the goal of creating unification and cooperation throughout the area, the County may want to consider altering this structure. Some options the County could explore include:

- The addition of some at-large Commissioners to the County Board along with the single-member district Commissioners, as has been done in the City of Atlanta with the City Council;
- Keep single-member districts in place but allow voters to vote on all County Commission posts regardless of their place of residency within the County, as has been done in Fayette County in Georgia or Charleston County in South Carolina;
- Keep single-member districts in place but add one at-large county commissioner who is the Chairperson of the Commission, as has been done in Spartanburg County, South Carolina;
- Eliminate all single-member districts and have all County Commissioners elected countywide in at-large districts, as has been done in Bay County, Florida, which would

help to balance the vote between areas with high density development and areas with low-density development; or

- Some combination or variation of the above options.

Changing the current structure of the County governments sets an example and precedent for the local governments to consider alterations in how they determine local representation.

✓ *Address County enclaves within cities.*

Throughout Brevard County there are "County enclaves" which are unincorporated areas that are surrounded on all sides by a city. Because these areas are not part of the city, they do not receive city services and are instead supposed to be serviced by the County although it requires the County to go through the city to provide services. The existence of these enclaves has continually posed problems for both cities and the County and contributes to the fragmentation of the community. Unfortunately, at the local level, both County and city governments are powerless to rectify this problem since the State's law only addresses the built environment. Since this is a State issue and other counties across the State probably also confront this issue, Brevard County should consider forming a group to study the issue, and involve other counties. Once a recommendation or solution has been arrived at, it should be presented to the State legislature for consideration.

✓ *Educate residents about the benefits of consolidation and streamlining of services.*

To enhance and support the streamlining of government, whether through consolidation or joint service agreements, a marketing and educational campaign targeted toward the citizens and businesses of the County could be undertaken. This would include an explanation of the different arms of government, their responsibilities, and the real costs involved with having so many different and separate entities. Since residents and the business community are the ones most greatly affected by changes in governmental operations, obtaining their support should facilitate the occurrence of governmental change. Additionally, once they see the positive results of streamlining and/or consolidation, it should spur further efficiencies.

✓ *Explore governmental consolidation.*

Governmental consolidation has a number of benefits, including the pooling of resources, clarifying of processes, and unifying of communities. With so many municipalities varying in size from a few hundred to 50,000 individuals, the voice of each is necessarily weakened and eventually ineffective. Consolidation allows for the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts, which benefits all residents and businesses. Understanding that this would be a difficult task to accomplish, it should be explored thoughtfully with involvement from all affected parties, with associated education about the benefits gained from such a move.

Goal #3 – Expand and coordinate social and support services.

A number of enhancements to current social and support services have been identified by different organizations throughout the County. There appears to be many similarities between the goals of these different groups, and coordination and cooperation among these organizations would create a significant amount of synergy and result in better services than what could be done individually.

✓ *Centralize information about available resources and service providers.*

In many of the strategic plans provided, there was discussion about the centralization, integration, and coordination of information and resources for access by the public and service

providers. For example, Together in Partnership wants to create an integrated web-based management and information system and data collection system in support of youth and family initiatives; the Brevard Cultural Alliance wants to build a directory of community-based arts offerings and make it available via television and the Internet; and the Brevard County Commission on Aging wants to promote consumer education to help individuals access available resources and make informed decisions about their needs. While each of these actions is valuable in itself, if there are too many outlets from which different information is accessed, the information may only become accessible to a knowledgeable few. The development of a central repository for the information that is publicized in a coordinated public relations campaign to the public may provide better resource accessibility. A couple of possibilities include the expansion of the 211 information and referral initiative by the United Way, and the Brevard County web site with either pages providing the information or links to other pages.

✓ *Expand the current public transportation system.*

Although Brevard County has a public transportation system (SCAT), improvement and expansion of the system was highlighted as a major need by participants and is noted as an action area in many of the strategic plans, including the Brevard Commission on Aging, the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners, Together in Partnership, and the Brevard Workforce 2020. Transportation is a vital issue to citizens when accessing social services, seeking employment, getting to work, and accessing retail and other services in the County. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners, through its Work Transportation sub-committee, should work to implement the recommendations of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) regarding the expansion of the existing public transportation system and construction of sheltered bus stops, in addition to coordinating the specific needs identified by other entities.

The identification of programs that may be potential sources of revenue and coordination with other transportation agencies (such as the Florida Department of Transportation) can serve as a funding strategy for enhanced transportation plans. Local initiatives could include an increase (\$.01-\$.02) in gas tax money to support improvements and a transportation incentive for employers to purchase transportation packages for their employees.

✓ *Increase and enhance services for youths and families.*

In virtually every strategic plan reviewed, there was an initiative or action step targeting the youth population and/or families. Collectively, a full continuum of services could be developed to address problem behavior such as drug use and crime, a variety of activities and programs implemented to stimulate and engage young minds, and programs promoted that enhance parenting skills. A sampling of services that could be developed and expanded include:

- Greater participation in the Healthy Kids program;
- An increase in the number of before and after school arts programs;
- A full continuum of services to prevent and reduce child violence, abuse, and neglect;
- Promotion of parenting skill programs;
- Recreational opportunities with an emphasis on social/emotional development;
- Involvement of faith-based organizations in providing social services; and
- A juvenile drug treatment facility in the County.

✓ *Improve services to older adults.*

The County's senior population continues to grow, and the services provided to older adults need to reflect these demographic patterns. The Brevard Commission on Aging was specifically created to examine issues surrounding an older population, which resulted in a Strategic Plan with specific goals and action steps. Some actions included improvement in the health and wellness services available dealing specifically with elder care; the development of leisure and recreational activities for the needs of older adults; and the establishment of a Senior Assessment Center to house and coordinate existing community resources for seniors and their families, provide information about health, housing, transportation, nutrition and legal services, and senior care management. Service providers, the Commission on Aging, and senior citizens can work together to develop and monitor standards for care managers, and research and promote "best practices" approaches to coordinated care management. These centers could be housed at the County's Health and Human Services offices or at the Brevard Workforce Development Board's "one stop" centers.

✓ *Expand the availability of mental health and drug treatment services to all age groups.*

Currently, there is a dearth of mental health and drug treatment services available in Brevard County, with many people requiring such services having to leave the County. Both the United Way and the Brevard County Board of Commissioners have recognized this as a critical need in their strategic plans. As with other services, there are a handful of providers but there is little coordination or cooperating between these agencies, with conflict over access to scarce resources. Therefore, there needs to be both greater coordination and collaboration between existing organizations, and recognition in the larger community that these services are needed and funding is required.

Issue #2 – Civic Infrastructure: Community Involvement

Similar to Governance, civic infrastructure and the increase in community involvement is also of great importance to Brevard County in being able to move forward and achieve its stated “preferred future.” General citizen apathy has been identified as a major issue in the *Brevard Tomorrow* process and is considered as a barrier to positive change in the County. A low level of public involvement in local politics and little support for elected officials negatively impacts the civic infrastructure of the County. One participant in the community input process dubbed it as the “Association of Apathetic Individuals” and “Procrastinators International.” This apathy was evident during the most recent County referendum and election in November 2001. According to *Florida Today*, more than 80% of the 290,000 registered voters did not participate. While this is not unique to Brevard County, the high level of fragmentation in the County exacerbates the problem by allowing only a vocal few to shape the direction of public policy. As a result, some individuals stated that they would never consider running for public office because of the abuse elected officials receive and the need to receive “combat pay.”

Aside from public apathy, participants also strongly felt that the newspapers in the County, specifically *Florida Today*, prevented positive things from happening. Complaints centered around the newspaper focusing too much on negative news and sensationalized stories versus providing a more balanced approach and viewpoint. Given that newspapers are a main source of information about local events, if only negative or bad things are reported on, this does not foster a sense of pride or investment in the community.

This low of community involvement is also aggravated by the lack of a unifying vision and image for the County. One theme that was continuously raised during the planning process was that Brevard County lacked an identity. This lack of an identity has led to residents being less vested in the County as a whole, and, instead, focusing solely upon their local community. Along the same lines, Brevard County is home to a diverse range of people from different backgrounds, races and ethnicities, religions, and lifestyles. Participants felt that there was little integration and linkages between these diverse communities in the County with everyone keeping to themselves.

With more than 80% of the growth over the last decade due to in-migration versus natural change, Brevard County also has to confront the issue of getting these non-natives involved and willing to invest in the community. Similarly, with the County’s average age continuing to increase as a result of the influx of older individuals, young people in Brevard County currently view their opportunities to become involved in the community as very limited. The perception of “an atmosphere of youth versus 50-somethings” and “a lack of leadership in the younger community” has prevented younger people from participating in various aspects of the community. Additionally, young adults perceive that their needs are being ignored or overlooked by the County, who is instead focused upon the growing older population. There is a lack of recreational and entertainment activities that appeal to young adults, and has led them to nickname Melbourne as “Mel-boring.”

Goal #1 – Increase citizen involvement and pride throughout the County.

Clearly, one of the number one issues holding back Brevard County from moving forward together is citizen apathy and a broad lack of interest to get involved in community issues. Underlying all of the goals and action steps for this issue is the need for a serious education, communication, and public relations strategy. Public participation is an essential element in the realization of the

“preferred future” for Brevard County. For people to get involved, they need to understand why an issue is important, and why it is important to them. If an issue has substance and is important, people have a greater tendency and motivation to rally around that issue.

- ✓ *Develop a communications plan, utilizing print, television, radio and Internet mediums.*
Creating a communication plan through which any and all type of information would be conveyed to the public is needed to keep them informed about what is happening in Brevard County. Because of the multitude of ways in which individuals today receive their information, all avenues of communication should be considered with minimums as to how often the information will be updated. Some of the communication tools that could be utilized include newsletters, newspaper articles, television spots, public radio programs, and Internet web sites. Whenever this type of information is disseminated, it should always include a contact number for interested individuals to receive more information or find out how to get involved.
- ✓ *Work with local newspapers to become promoters of positive community activity.*
Local newspapers, especially *Florida Today*, were cited by participants as having too negative of a focus, with the end result of always focusing on negative events in the County versus positive ones. The continual bombardment of negative headlines has contributed to a lack of civic pride in the community. Because of the limited amount of time newspaper writers have to cover local stories, the communication plan could provide for the writing of positive stories about different facets of the community (seniors, military, farmers, and environmentalists), human interest stories, and ongoing activities that are then given to newspapers for their publication, including smaller newspapers such as *El Playero* and the *Titusville Star Advocate*. A stronger, but much more difficult approach, would be to work with *Florida Today* to turn it into a community newspaper that celebrates the County or develop a new newspaper to fill that role.
- ✓ *Create an image for Brevard County with which the public can identify.*
The creation of an image for Brevard County will go a long way toward increasing civic pride and involvement. Currently, there is no “identity” on which the County can move together as a whole, which is manifest in the fragmentation, territorialism, and competition exhibited. Additionally, the lack of an identify means that Brevard County has very little name recognition, with most unaware of where it is in Florida unless one mentions Cocoa Beach or the Kennedy Space Center. This is not to suggest that the identity should promote Brevard County as one large city. Instead, it could bring together all of the unique aspects of the County and celebrate those as part of the whole. An image for Brevard County will not only help with increasing community pride and ownership, but will also bolster economic and tourism development opportunities. The “preferred future” statement developed by *Brevard Tomorrow* moves the County one step closer towards creating an image for Brevard County.
- ✓ *Facilitate and celebrate volunteerism and community service.*
One of the most critical foundations of strong communities is a high level of resident involvement in volunteer activities, ranging from delivering meals to the elderly to serving on a board for a community organization. While there has been a decline in volunteerism nationwide (which may change given the events of September 11, 2001), a significant number of people do not volunteer because it is difficult to find out about appropriate volunteer opportunities. However, there does appear to be a strong ethic of volunteerism in the County as there is a high level of volunteering for environmental projects. The United Way has recognized this decline by

earmarking building social capital as one of their level one priorities. There are several ways in which a higher level of community service and volunteerism could be facilitated:

- Centralization of volunteer and community service opportunities and marketing of the selected outlet containing the information;
- Public forums held in different locations where civic organizations gather twice a year to recruit volunteers and/or new members would open up the avenues for greater civic involvement;
- Expansion of the Citizens Academy conducted by the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners by local colleges and universities that focuses on local services and gains community input;
- Linking community service to the provision and receipt of social services; and
- Replication of the Brevard Community College Service Learning Program, combining volunteer and community service activity with learning.

In addition, a process through which volunteers across the community are recognized for their contribution, accomplishments, and involvement should be instituted, providing a non-monetary way in which volunteers receive encouragement and community support, while at the same time promoting and marketing volunteerism to the community.

✓ *Continue efforts to recognize the cultural diversity of the community.*

Planned countywide activities and events that recognize different parts of the community are important in fostering a positive image of the County among residents. For example, turning into an annual event the recent tribute Brevard County did on Veteran's Day recognized the large number of veterans in the County as a result of the services available at Patrick Air Force Base. This had a huge positive impact on the veteran's community as to how they felt about the County because they felt valued and an important part of the larger community. Similar events could center around Hispanic or African-American culture, or the environment.

✓ *Establish a welcoming committee for new residents and businesses.*

Mechanisms to formally welcome new residents and businesses into the community and expose them to the array of community involvement opportunities will also increase civic participation. An outreach program between the Chambers of Commerce, County and local governments, United Way, and schools could provide sponsors for newcomers to the community who can familiarize new residents and businesses with the County.

✓ *Engage County leaders and elected officials in educating citizens and encouraging community involvement.*

Too often, leaders and elected officials are removed from the general citizenry and unduly influenced by a very vocal minority on selected issues. Educating the public about issues and the impact of these issues is a key component in increasing community involvement at all levels. If the community better understands the policy-making process and how these decisions will influence their quality of life, the overall support for County leaders and elected officials could be improved. This educational process should also involve schools and parents where elected officials conduct presentations in the schools about how government operates on the local level. A strong system of governmental forums will define and establish the role of citizens in uniting the various municipalities in the County.

- ✓ *Educate politicians and political candidates about County issues.*
Conversely, elected officials and potential candidates need to hear from the public about issues that are important to them. These educational efforts could improve the quantity and quality of people who run for political office. Leadership Brevard, with its mission of educating, preparing and inspiring leaders to address the challenges facing Brevard County, could spearhead the establishment of this dialogue. The Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce in Michigan has actually instituted a public service candidate school to educate potential candidates about local issues.

- ✓ *Continue and expand neighborhood building and engagement processes.*
At the core of communities are the neighborhoods in which people live. As people have become busier and busier with a number of activities competing for their attention and time, neighborhoods have become less cohesive and dynamic. Placing a priority on rebuilding and strengthening neighborhoods is another avenue through which greater community involvement and pride can be established. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners is currently undertaking a pilot neighborhood engagement process in two neighborhoods in the County, while the United Way operates a Neighborhood Partnership Program which also incorporates public safety and schools. These efforts should be coordinated and expanded to the entire County. While the development of neighborhoods may be seen as further fragmenting the County, it serves as a building block for greater community involvement and connects people together as individuals.

Goal #2 – Increase opportunities for inter- and intra-generational, multi-income, and multi-racial interactions.

As a County with rapidly changing demographics, including an increasing percentage of older individuals and people of Hispanic ethnicity, part of building a stronger community is to create linkages between the different parts of the population to get everyone vested and interested in the future of the County.

- ✓ *Continue to expand opportunities for intergenerational contact.*
Intergenerational programming needs to be improved and expanded to engage the youth and senior populations with one another. The United Way, the Children’s Services Council, and other agencies are currently reviewing strategies to improve intergenerational programs. Existing programs that can be expanded include the Freedom 7 Senior Center’s joint venture with the Boys and Girls Club, the Melbourne Police Department’s joint venture with the Hacienda Girls Ranch, and the Relay for Life event in Titusville. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners is exploring establishing a resource bank to match senior-mentoring programs with youth as a means of better connecting these population groups, while the Brevard Cultural Alliance is interested in developing a Seniors for Arts in Education volunteer program which would involve areas such as literacy and instrumental music instruction. Linking the senior population with youth through mentoring programs or “Adopt a School” programs will engage older adults and provide activities for youth in the County.

- ✓ *Expand and advertise recreational and cultural programs for youths and young adults.*
Participants noted that while Brevard County is great place to retire or raise young children, there is a lack of appropriate activities that interest youths and young adults in the County. The Brevard Cultural Alliance has as a goal to increase participation in the arts among the County’s

youth by making linkages between artists and cultural sector providers to reach more 18-year olds and younger children. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners is seeking to support community initiatives to increase funding for future parks, athletics, and recreational facilities. These efforts should be continued in addition to implementing other recreational and entertainment programming for young adults, including those in their late teens and early twenties. Creative approaches should be considered, including the establishment of an entertainment district in the County, better transportation to and from activities if alcohol is involved, and the development of an "Orlando shuttle" to facilitate access to entertainment venues in Orlando.

✓ *Create a Young Professional's Organization.*

As a disparate group spread across the County, young professionals are very interested in meeting other young professionals and establishing a peer group connection that is currently missing. The establishment of a Young Professional's Organization would create an avenue through which they could meet, network, organize, provide support, be social, and engage in similar interest activities. Harris Corporation has started a young professional group for its employees that could be used as a model. The Young Professional's Organization could also serve as a linkage to the rest of the community by sponsoring activities in conjunction with Chambers of Commerce, sponsoring a Volunteer Corps as a way to connect them to community involvement and activity as the United Way of Miami has done, and developing leadership opportunities in partnership with Leadership Brevard.

✓ *Develop opportunities to engage and involve individuals from all different backgrounds in both formal and informal venues.*

While most individuals felt that Brevard County was a tolerant community that welcomed individuals from all different backgrounds and histories, they also felt that there was little communication, interaction, and dialogue between people of different races, ethnicities, incomes, faiths, sexual orientation, and ages. Formal and informal opportunities to engage some or all of these different groups with each other, and celebrations of the County's cultural diversity, would be highly beneficial in breaking down stereotypes, perceived barriers, and ignorance.

✓ *Continue to increase opportunities to engage older individuals in the community.*

As the population continues to age and grow through migration, it is extremely important to continue to engage these new, older residents in the community because of the resources, knowledge, and experience they bring. Often, the senior population is seen as impeding positive change, but that is typically because they are disengaged, removed, or separated from the rest of the community. To overcome these barriers, suggested actions include the establishment of a Senior Leadership Brevard Program, the implementation of a Senior Mentoring Program, and a centralized volunteer information clearinghouse. The Brevard Commission on Aging also suggests programs for lifelong learning.

Issue #3 – Land Use and Growth: Coordination and Planning

As noted previously, Brevard County has seen a steady and strong rate of growth over the last 30 years. As the County has more than doubled in population size, the amount of open space and natural habitats has decreased significantly. For example, between 1943 and 1990 the amount of urban and developed land increased by over 500% from 10,917 acres to almost 75,000 acres, while land classified as coastal strand, flatwoods, and scrub decreased by over 50% from 133,415 acres to 65,208 acres. Similarly, while the amount of agricultural land increased between 1943 and 1990, this land is currently being threatened by encroaching development pressures.

Preserving the community’s natural resources is a critical factor when considering future growth in the County. As the prevalence of urbanized and developed land continues to creep outward and along the coast, the potential threat to environmentally sensitive lands, wetlands, and water habitats will also increase. Brevard County has two basic watersheds – the Upper St. Johns River and the Indian River Lagoon watersheds. Both systems have numerous and widespread wetlands associated with them. Also, particular attention needs to be paid to the County’s scrublands, since they serve as aquifer (drinking water) recharge areas, host many unique endemic plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world, and are an important part of the County’s nature tourism assets. One third of the world’s remaining population of Florida’s scrub jays, Florida’s ONLY endemic bird, lives in Brevard County’s scrub areas.

Land acquisition has been one method utilized to protect the natural resources within the County. The Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EELs), which was approved and funded by Brevard County residents, and the St. Johns River Water Management District have contributed to the purchase and acquisition of approximately 24,000 acres of land in the County, while the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge comprises 140,000 acres of natural habitat. Some property owners have challenged such land acquisitions, and this has resulted in a debate between the issues of conservation versus individual property rights. These issues surfaced during the community input process, with some citizens feeling that preservation decreases or “locks” their property values, and that the County should offer incentives to farmers and property owners to maintain their property in its natural state.

Beyond the loss of open space and natural habitats, the provision of adequate services, including public infrastructure, to support this growth will be critical. Road infrastructure has been identified as a potential problem for Brevard County, and according to one resident, “we can see an increased number of cars and grid-locked areas in the County.” Currently, the overall water and sewer infrastructure is fragmented, with services being provided by city government in incorporated areas, or by the County’s Water Resources Department in several unincorporated areas of Brevard. Nearly 25% of the residents in the County are on septic systems, which may pose long-term hazards to the environment. As one resident put it, “The County must figure out service needs and look at strategic planning to account for changes.”

The issues of urban sprawl and managed growth are of primary concern to residents when discussing the County’s future land use policies. As demonstrated in a survey of 400 residents by the Kitchen Group in June 2000, 53% felt that Brevard County was being developed too fast and only 9% saying that it was not developing fast enough. In addition, in the same survey, 80% of respondents agreed with the statement “If we do not save our beaches, forests, scrub, wetlands, and

places like the Enchanted Forest now, they will be lost forever to development.” There is widespread support for “Smart Growth” and redevelopment policies that limit sprawl and improve the aesthetics of the community. Some residents suggested that the County develop incentives for the renovation of existing building and strip malls and adopt uniform building regulations. Economic development and natural resource protection strategies developed by the County should be incorporated into this plan.

Essentially, Brevard County now finds itself at a crossroads – it can either move forward with a typical Florida growth pattern that will lead to greater sprawl, declining environmental conditions, and reduced quality of life; or it can take this opportunity to become a model for sustainable economic development and preservation of natural systems. The multiplicity of governments with their separate policies, plans, and regulations is a source of confusion for those living, working, or building in the County, and the cost and time to do the right thing increases exponentially as a result.

Goal #1 – Educate and reach consensus about growth and conservation issues.

Across the County, there are a number of different positions and knowledge levels about issues that affect growth. The adoption of countywide policies about these growth issues can serve as the foundation for coordinating land use and developing growth policies that will affect how the County develops now and in the future.

✓ *Reach a consensus between conservation and personal property rights.*

A discrepancy currently exists between the issues of the conservation of property as related to environmental issues and the property rights of private landowners, primarily associated with agricultural property. The current conservation land acquisition program is a “willing seller” program with the public and the market determining the amount of land going into conservation protection. A series of meetings mediated by a professional mediator could be held to help each side of the issue understand the other’s perspectives, values, and goals to arrive at a consensus that would help shape the County’s stance on this issue. This will necessarily entail agreement about the level of conservation efforts to be pursued, reimbursements or incentives to property owners to maintain and/or hold on to environmentally sensitive land, and management of preserved property. The Brevard Nature Alliance has done preliminary work to coordinate the interests of the different environmental and preservation organizations in the County, and has issued a Natural Resources and Conservation Report outlining their goals and recommendations. This now needs to be extended to include other key stakeholders, including developers, property owners, residents, and the business community to arrive at a cohesive approach.

✓ *Promote and incentivize redevelopment of existing property.*

As growth has occurred in the County, more and more land has become developed. In many instances, especially in commercial areas, buildings have been abandoned by businesses as they have transferred their operations to another part of the County or closed shop, resulting in buildings and strip malls that are suffering from neglect. Because of a lack of a policy about redevelopment of existing sites, new development continues to occur on undeveloped land. While this has not been a serious issue for the County in the past, as less and less developable land is available due to physical characteristics of the County and the need to protect natural areas, a policy of redevelopment becomes more imperative. The County has the opportunity to encourage redevelopment and beautification of these older commercial districts through

business and development incentives. This can be accomplished through tax credits, expedited plan review and permitting processes, and County-supported infrastructure improvements.

✓ *Educate about Smart Growth principles.*

Smart Growth is a term often utilized in planning today to discuss and shape development. Even though the term is widely used, understanding what Smart Growth actually is and how it shapes development policies is not. In reality, there is no single definition of Smart Growth, with it meaning different things to different people and dependent upon context, perspective, and timeframe. The common thread among different views of Smart Growth is development that revitalizes central cities and older suburbs, supports and enhances public transit, promotes walking and bicycling, and preserves open spaces and agricultural lands. Smart Growth is not "no growth"; rather, it seeks to revitalize the already-built environment and, to the extent necessary, to foster efficient development at the edges of the region, while creating more livable communities. Smart Growth meets the key goals of sustainable development – a prosperous economy, a quality environment and social equity – through community design. To gain consensus and change long-standing approaches to development, elected officials, County leaders, developers, the public, and other private and non-profit organizations should be educated about the precepts of Smart Growth and how it benefits their situation.

✓ *Instill a conservation ethic.*

As a result of geographical constraints, physical characteristics, and limited resources, the development of a conservation ethic in Brevard County will become more important as scarce resources are used up or polluted. Before the County enters a crisis situation, the establishment of a conservation ethic across all segments of the community would be extremely beneficial. The public needs to be educated as to why this is important, how it affects them personally, and what they can do on an individual level. For example, water usage and the depletion of fresh water supplies is a concern for residential, business, and agricultural users. A range of approaches and actions can be undertaken, several of which could be adopted by County and local governments to set an example for others in the County, including:

- Establish a Council for Environmental Quality;
- Get power providers to burn gas in lieu of oil;
- Require the use of reused water for irrigation in all new developments, and adopt landscape programs focused on improved storm water quality, reduced irrigation demands, and reduction of impermeable surfaces;
- Reduce pollutant loading from nutrients, pesticides, herbicides, and petroleum hydrocarbons;
- Control spread and growth of invasive exotic plant species;
- Reduce water consumption and link new growth to the sustainability of water resources and the protection and preservation of natural resources;
- Provide public education programs to inform businesses and residents about stormwater and water conservation issues and appropriate actions they can take, and implement and promote water conservation programs;
- Improve energy efficiency for homes and businesses;
- Improve the alignment of educational institutions with natural resources conservation;
- Develop approaches to transportation that do not require the building or widening of roads; and

- Increase the availability and use of alternative fuels, and set a public example by implementing a plan to convert or replace government fleet vehicles with alternative fuel vehicles.
- ✓ *Develop an education process for acceptance of and support for federally- and State-owned property.*
Certain tracts of land within Brevard County are owned and maintained by the federal or State government, and therefore cannot be developed by the County. Most of this property is related either to the space industry, other federal or military operations, or environmental purposes. There exists a lack of knowledge among the general public about the purpose and benefits of the federally-owned and State-owned property in Brevard County. The larger public needs to be educated about the purpose and the needs of the users of this land, what services it provides to the local populace, and how it fits in with the overall land use plan for the County. This is a very important issue as the allowable uses next to federally-owned and State-owned property may negatively affect the operations of NASA/Kennedy Space Center, Patrick Air Force Base, 45th Space Wing, and the Spaceport Florida Authority. Currently, the Cape Canaveral Spaceport Master Plan process is underway to establish broad collective goals for the next 50 years, which may provide a good opportunity for education about and support for federally-owned land. Additionally, efforts to partner together with the owners of the land should continue to be pursued. For example, the Brevard Zoo and Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge are working together to build a wildlife education center, and the commerce park at the Kennedy Space Center housing high-tech and aerospace technology together is a trial partnership between private industry and federal and State agencies.

Goal #2 – Develop a coordinated and seamless system for the County’s comprehensive plans.

With 15 municipalities within the County boundary, there are a number of comprehensive plans that govern land use, transportation planning, housing development, infrastructure, open space, and resource conservation for a specific part of Brevard County. While the Comprehensive Plan for Brevard County covers the entire County, it is not necessarily coordinated with the comprehensive plans developed at the local level by the municipalities. The development of seamless comprehensive plans will help Brevard County to focus and clarify its approach to areas of growth and conservation.

- ✓ *Establish a committee to manage and oversee coordination of planning activities across the County.*
The development of a staff-level Coordinated Planning Committee representing city and County departments could be responsible for planning, engineering, public works, economic development, and water and sewer, to encourage city and county governments to approach development issues jointly. This committee can focus on a long-term plan to support long-term growth by addressing traffic and transportation needs, providing sufficient water and sewer capacity, and promoting the deployment of advanced communications in Brevard County. In addition, they could support the adoption of “compatibility review” provisions in the development review processes of each jurisdiction. The city and County development review processes would include the consideration of compatibility of new development or associated infrastructure improvements with proposed development and improvements in the adjoining jurisdiction.

- ✓ *Coordinate land use including areas of growth and conservation.*

Rapid growth in the County, and the issue of how to best manage it while preserving natural resources and promoting economic development, is a primary concern. Future land use plans should be reviewed to ensure that they meet several criteria including current and future needs of economic development and business, population growth and service, and resource and habitat protection. One approach may be to focus new growth around development corridors that avoid high value natural areas and can be better serviced by public transit and infrastructure. The establishment of urban growth boundaries and implementation of Smart Growth principles are strongly encouraged to help maintain the balance between growth and development, and resource conservation and protection.
- ✓ *Coordinate infrastructure planning to minimize environmental impact and gain multi-locational efficiencies.*

In addition to coordinating land use, infrastructure development also needs to be coordinated among the different comprehensive plans to support areas of future growth and address current needs. For example, the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners has a Surface Water Improvement Program that works closely with the St. Johns River Water Management District on water quality improvement projects, and is currently funding three stormwater projects. A number of homes in Brevard County are on septic systems that may lead to long-term environmental issues, therefore a plan for constructing public or private sewer systems and improved on-site systems needs to be explored. Since these issues span municipal boundaries, the County can benefit from collaboration and coordination of infrastructure efforts and reduce financial costs.
- ✓ *Develop a funding strategy for necessary infrastructure needs in the County.*

Financial resources will play a major role in identifying the infrastructure requirements that the County will be able to meet over a determined period of time. The utilization of a ‘true cost’ accounting approach could evaluate the costs of amenities associated with the cost of living for Brevard County, and these expenditures could be generated from increased impact fees and broad based tax increases. Other alternative funding sources could come from increased gasoline taxes (\$.02 to \$.05) or a \$.01 sales tax that would support necessary improvements in the County.
- ✓ *Coordinate transportation planning.*

This type of planning includes roadways, bicycle paths, and pedestrian sidewalks. The coordination of transportation planning would help to facilitate vehicular movement across and through the County, in addition to providing a strong collective base from which to apply for other sources of revenue for transportation infrastructure, and to ensure that Brevard County projects are a priority with the Florida Department of Transportation. Not only should the transportation planning be coordinated across the County, but also the implementation and connection of alternative transportation modes. Both the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners and the Brevard Commission on Aging would like to foment the construction of pedestrian and bicycle ways in conjunction with new development or when roadways are being built or rebuilt. Other efficiencies that can be gained when a new road is being constructed or reconstructed should be explored, such as installing water and sewer lines, burying electric cables, and including fiber optic cables, because of the cost savings that can be realized.

✓ *Coordinate housing planning.*

This includes both the location of new housing, which would be covered under the auspices of land use, and the provision that the housing is appropriate to serve the population. As the County’s population grows, there is an increased need for senior housing for both independent and assisted living, nursing homes, and affordable housing for both seniors and families. The Brevard Commission on Aging’s plan includes housing as one of its main elements, including providing incentives to developers to increase the number of affordable units for seniors, improving the permitting process for all senior housing and care facilities, and rezoning land to promote the development of housing for older adults. The issue of affordable housing also needs an equal level of review to ensure that there are an adequate number of units throughout the County in good locations to serve lower income families.

✓ *Add an economic development element to the comprehensive planning process.*

Economic development is a critical aspect to the future growth of a community and should be incorporated into the comprehensive planning process. Economic growth and sustainability in Brevard County is directly linked to natural resources protection and management. Currently, there is not an economic development component in the comprehensive plan for Brevard County, and the addition of such an element should be considered, and would involve both the business and economic development community along with County and local leadership. An example of what could be included in this element is the development of land regulations that give businesses the flexibility to achieve high productivity to cost ratios while protecting and enhancing the quality of life for neighboring residents. A survey of existing businesses and their needs in term of land use, infrastructure, workforce, and regulations will help to inform this component of the comprehensive plan.

✓ *Coordinate and streamline permitting processes and development regulations and policies.*

One of the greatest impediments in Brevard County is the plurality of rules, regulations, ordinances, and permitting processes through which developers, businesses, and residents have to undergo to secure the required permits and clearances. The County should explore coordinating and unifying all of the processes, regulations, and policies to minimize confusion, and establish “one-stop” permitting and registration locations in the County where individuals and businesses can go and get all of the necessary paperwork completed and processed. The Space Coast League of Cities can facilitate the coordination of different rules, regulations, and ordinances between the different municipalities and the County.

Goal #3 – Establish countywide property maintenance, and building and design standards.

Many individuals felt that many parts of Brevard County, especially main thoroughfares and beachfront areas, were extremely unattractive visually from both a maintenance and design perspective. Additionally, the unattractiveness of certain areas was both exacerbated by and contributed to the lack of property maintenance evident from the street. The establishment of countywide building and design standards is a key to building community pride by instilling a “sense of place” in residents and businesses. It is important to remember that improving the look of the community does not happen overnight and will require time to happen.

✓ *Implement building and design standards to improve the aesthetic environment.*

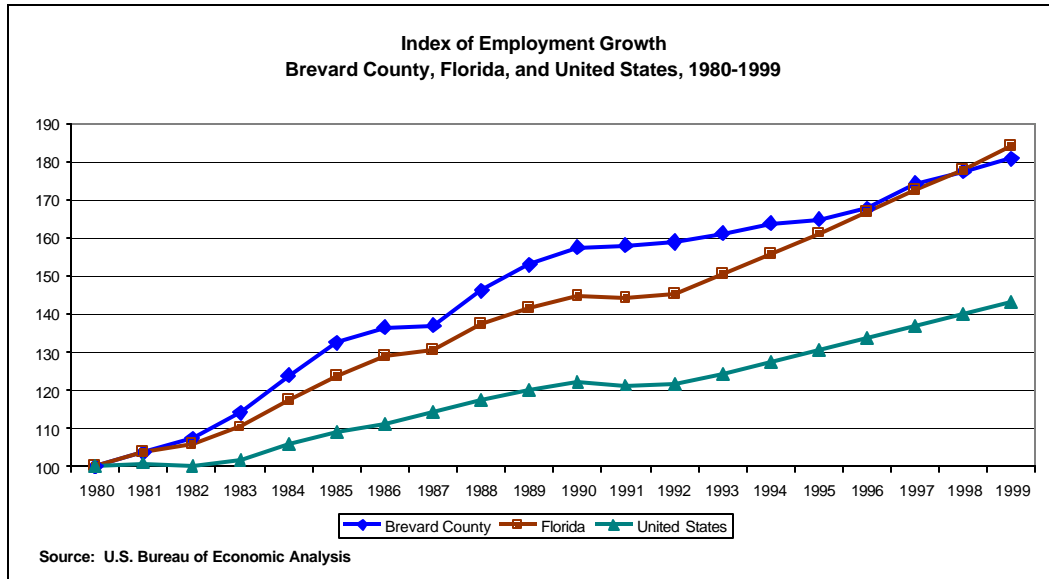
The Brevard Cultural Alliance has proposed the creation of a Committee for Community Design involving a wide range of participants and stakeholders to help determine what residents and businesses want the County to look like and how they want it to be perceived by visitors. This Committee would be responsible for developing voluntary design models to recommend ways for new development to be more aesthetically pleasing, and estimating the costs and labor involved. The Committee can help to encourage and develop incentives for their use, and research federal and state government subsidies to support improvement initiatives to the County's built environment, such as Community Development Block Grants, the Main Street Program, and National Trust for Historic Preservation. These design models can be modified for each municipality or one overarching one can be adopted. Additionally, the Committee should dialogue with the City of Titusville about the issues they have had in enforcing building and design standards to brainstorm about what else could be done. An example of an incentive program is the structure of the redevelopment district in downtown Melbourne and how they were able to obtain compliance.

✓ *Adopt a property maintenance program throughout the County.*

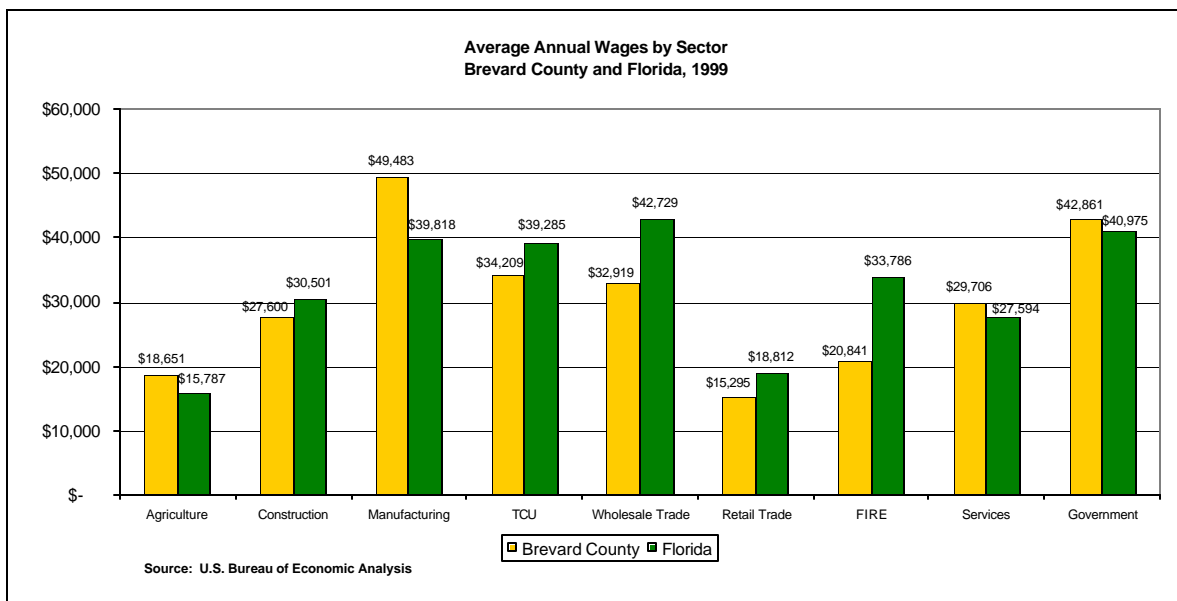
The same Committee for Community Design can review the various public maintenance programs in place by the various municipalities, unincorporated areas, and County, and establish property maintenance standards. The Committee can then explore how they can achieve compliance and adherence to the standards, which may include incentives, penalties, and increased funding to intensify the services provided by public entities. To achieve voluntary compliance by property owners, the Committee may embark upon an extensive beautification campaign to educate the public about the positive benefits associated with an attractive community. For those unable to comply because of financial reasons, this can be turned into a civic activity through Keep Brevard Beautiful with volunteers helping with property maintenance.

Issue #4 – Economy: Diversification and Program Delivery

The economy in Brevard County has historically been strong, with much of it driven by space and space-related industry. Over the last 20 years, the rate of employment growth in the County was nearly twice that of the nation as illustrated in the chart below. At the same time, the unemployment rate in the County has steadily decreased since 1992. However, unemployment rates have been slowly creeping upwards over the last several months, increasing from a low of 3.2% in March 2001 to 4.8% in October 2001, but this rate is still below the State and national unemployment rates.



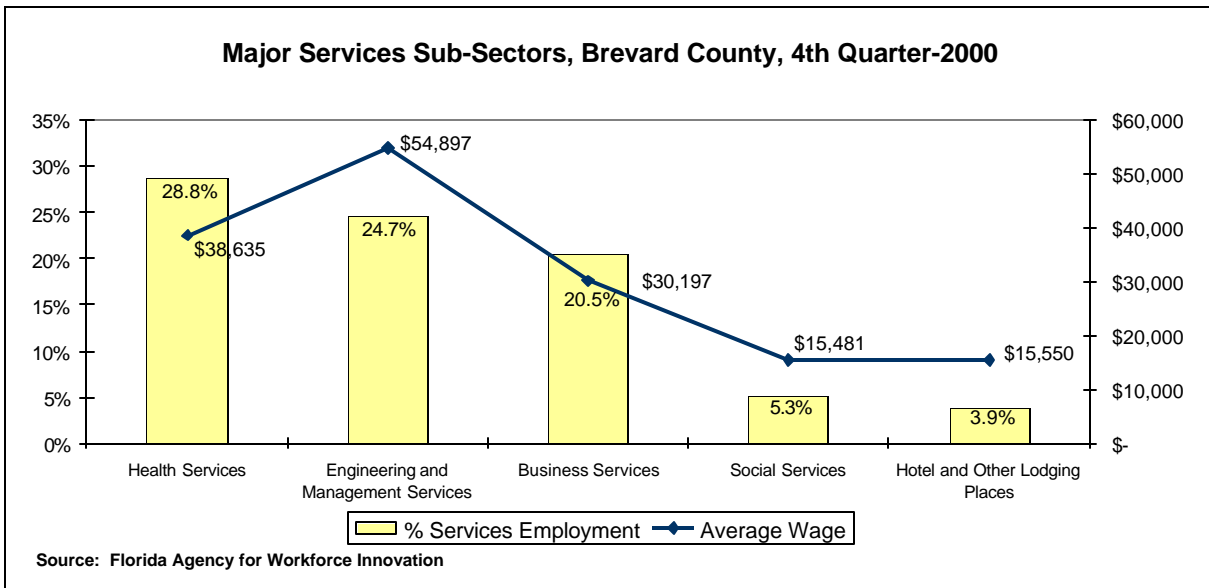
Average annual wages in Brevard County are also strong, much of it due again to employment either directly or indirectly related to the space program. The average annual wage in Brevard County is higher than the State average. As illustrated in the chart below, the high average annual wage is driven by strong wages in the Manufacturing, Services, and Government sectors.

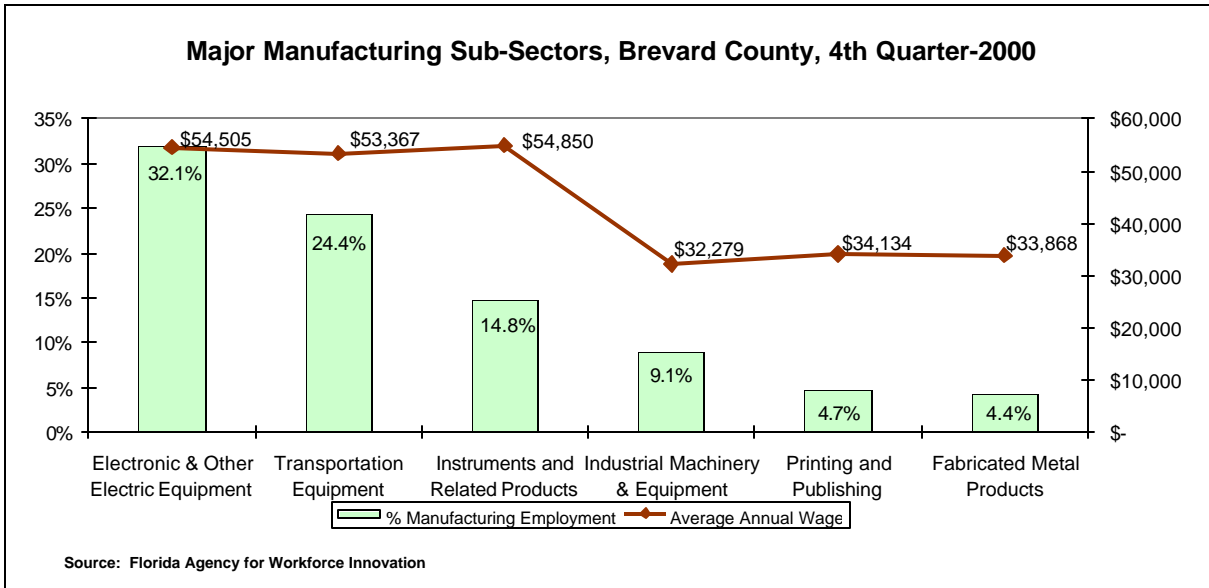


Clearly, space and space-related industry are of central importance to the economy in Brevard County, and this industry should continue to be nurtured and expanded. However, there is concern within the community about the lack of economic diversity, especially given the recent events of September 11, 2001 and the lower priority of space in the face of national security threats, and the continued downsizing of the NASA budget. As one participant put it, "It's not smart to have all of our eggs in one basket."

Additionally, while not evident according to public data sources, participants also felt that the lack of attention to other aspects of the economy have resulted in both a dearth of employment with good career paths and the opportunity for upward mobility, and a discrepancy in wage earnings, creating an environment of the "haves" and "have nots." In other words, there tends to be more employment opportunities for those with either a lot of experience or little experience, but few opportunities in the middle that would be stepping stones for continuing career development. This particularly affects career-oriented young professionals who have a few years of experience and do not see a clear path for upward mobility in their current employer.

Also, while wages in Brevard County are stronger than the State, this is because the averages are skewed by a number of high paying jobs in a select few subsectors, while the remaining jobs are below average as illustrated in the chart below and on the following page.





The ability to strategically diversify the County’s economy is hampered by the existence of a number of organizations dealing with economic development. There are four Chambers of Commerce, two Economic Development Commissions, and a Tourist Development Council. These organizations have divided the County into several parts and pieces, and have been one deterrent to the development of a coordinated and comprehensive economic development plan that would shape, direct, and lead economic growth and sustainability for the entire County.

For example, tourism is an important factor to the community and businesses in the County. In 2000, a total of 1.8 million overnight visitors and 2.4 million daytime visitors spent time in the County. The Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast estimates that more than 25,000 residents were employed directly and nearly 10,000 employed indirectly in the tourism industry, with total wages paid to these employees at \$397 million. However, citizens feel that the tourism industry is underutilized. With further development of a nature-based, heritage, and cultural tourism cluster, the potential exists to truly market the County as a destination versus “just a place to get on a cruise ship.” The County is replete with a number of tourism opportunities, the sustainability of which are dependent on a number of critical factors which are not currently in place, such as protection of natural and non-renewable resources and capturing the market. Here, Brevard County has the opportunity to become a model as to how to sustain a thriving eco-tourism economy.

Brevard County residents have also expressed their desire for additional high-technology industries within the County. Currently, the Florida/NASA Business Incubation Center contributes to the high-tech economy in Brevard to reduce costs to new businesses in the high-tech industry. In 2000, a publication issued by the American Electronics Association and NASDAQ Stock Market ranked Brevard County as 8th out of 60 metropolitan areas in the U.S. with respect to the number of high-tech workers per 1,000 population. The average wage in these jobs was \$44,506. Being included on this list clearly indicates that Brevard County is a high-tech player in the U.S.

The number of nonfarm proprietors is an indicator of entrepreneurship in an area, and in 1999, the County compared favorably to other areas, with entrepreneurship comprising 16.5% of total employment. Brevard County is also competitive in terms of the number of patents issued, which represents potential new products that can establish a local economy in the area of new technological advancement. In 1999, Brevard County residents received a total of 178 patents, ranking second against other comparison communities.

Overall, Brevard County offers a positive business climate for businesses wanting to relocate to another county or state. Participants ranked Brevard County on a scale of 1 (best) to 5 (worst) as a place to do business, with the County receiving an average ranking of “2,” as the business community feels that the County is receptive to their needs and the availability of resources is good. However, some people feel that the business climate is declining due to increasing County and municipal regulations. As one business owner stated, “It’s trending down. My business is based on population and the popularity of my product. Therefore, from a customer standpoint, Brevard County is very good. However, I believe that Brevard County has over regulated itself and has been resting upon its laurels with the good economy and growth it has thus far. The County needs to run itself like a business and spend its money wisely.”

Goal #1 – Clarify the structure of economic program delivery.

Currently, there are several economic development and economic development-related entities that serve Brevard County, including four Chambers of Commerce - Titusville Area, Melbourne-Palm Bay Area, Palm Bay, and Cocoa Beach Area, the Brevard Council of Chambers, the Brevard Tourist Development Council, the Brevard County Workforce Development Board, the Space Coast Economic Development Commission, and the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast. This fragmentation of the delivery system has led to duplicative and competing efforts with confusion as to who is responsible for what, and an inefficient use of existing business resources because many businesses pay dues to multiple organizations.

- ✓ *Review the structure, mission, goals, plans, and responsibilities of the different economic development organizations.*

The multiple providers of economic development services in Brevard County contribute to overall sense of separation and fragmentation in the County. These different entities should come together to review the structure of the economic development program delivery system and the services each are providing, including their mission, goals, and plans, and look for areas of overlap, conflict, duplication, and unique approaches. These organizations should then work on how they coordinate their service delivery and come to an agreement as to roles, responsibilities, and areas of influence. This may require a number of mediated sessions to arrive at a consensus among the different organizations. The establishment of an annual planning retreat to identify common goals and issues for these organizations would help to create areas in which partnerships can be formed, and a forum in which effective and innovative approaches can be shared.

- ✓ *Pursue consolidation of economic development entities.*

Consolidation is ultimately what should be achieved if the economic delivery system in Brevard County is to maximize its resources from both a financial and staff perspective. Additionally, this would greatly enhance the business environment in the County because of the identification of one “go-to” organization for economic development issues, and the pooling together of

resources for maximum effect and benefit. Smaller teams could be established to investigate sub-issues such as economic recreation opportunities and funding mechanisms. In addition, consolidation would promote the encouragement of deeper and more expansive partnerships between local companies and other sectors. An example of successful consolidation in Brevard County is the history of the formation of the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast, where a Blue Ribbon Committee was spearheaded by the head of Rockwell Collins to result in the consolidation of a number of economic development organizations in Brevard into the current Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast.

Along with consolidation, the funding structure of the resulting organization(s) should be reviewed to determine if it is appropriate to allow the organization to accomplish its mission and goals. For example, the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast currently receives the majority of its funding from the County. Because of the dependency of the organization upon County funds, it may not necessarily make decisions or promote policy changes that benefit the business community first. Greater leadership separation between the economic development agency and the government is suggested, but does not mean that these two entities cannot work together to enhance the economic environment in Brevard County.

Goal #2 – Develop a comprehensive, coordinated, and seamless economic development plan.

Because of the existing fragmentation of the economic delivery system, there is not a truly comprehensive and coordinated economic development plan in place for the County. For example, while the strategic plan for the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast is supposed to span the entire County, because of the number of economic development organizations present, it was developed to ensure that it did not interfere or address areas overseen by another organization.

- ✓ *Create a comprehensive and coordinated economic development plan to guide future economic development.*
Although many economic development organizations within the County may have existing strategic plans, representatives from these entities must come together to create and “buy into” a unified strategy for the County’s economic base and climate. The comprehensive economic development plan should incorporate the stated economic diversity goals as adopted by *Brevard Tomorrow*, and include other entities with strategic plans underway or completed including the Cape Canaveral Spaceport, the Canaveral Port Authority, the Brevard Cultural Alliance, and the Brevard Nature Alliance.

- ✓ *Research funding mechanisms to support economic development activities.*
The plan should also provide for research of different funding mechanisms including grant money, such as Community Development Block Grants, for economic development programs and projects. Other programs that support economic development activity include tax credits, abatements, bonds, grants, and other incentive programs offered at the federal, state, and local levels should be identified and catalogued. The Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast has targeted expanded use and award of Small Business Innovation Research Program grants, Small Business Technology Transfer Program grants, and venture capital interests to fund economic development activity.

- ✓ *Implement a marketing and public relations campaign.*
Participants felt strongly about the need for a marketing and public relations campaign to put a face on Brevard County. On its own, people outside of Florida do not know where Brevard County is, but do recognize it if one explains that Cocoa Beach or the Kennedy Space Center is located in the County. Promoting the County as a place to work and do business through education and marketing efforts, developing a public relations and image campaign for corporate and countywide marketing goals, and participating in trade missions, trade shows and exhibits is necessary to raise the awareness of Brevard County. Beyond promotion of the County to outsiders, a public relations and education campaign targeted at all the citizens of Brevard County is also needed to understand what businesses and industries are located in the County, what they do, and how they contribute to the local economy.

- ✓ *Adopt and participate in a regional approach to economic development.*
Through a regional economic development approach and identifying with a broader region, Brevard County can recruit targeted business sectors that capitalize on the region’s competitive advantages and have stronger market opportunities. While Brevard County is actively involved with organizations such as Enterprise Florida and the East Coast Florida Group, the County should also belong to the Economic Development Commission of Mid Florida and the I-4 High Technology Corridor Group, and be seeking out other opportunities for regional economic development.

- ✓ *Establish “one-stop” shops for business information and permitting.*
The fragmentation of the County has frustrated the business community because of the different rules and regulations from municipality to municipality, and the need to go to many different places to get the appropriate information and permitting. Centralizing permitting, government registration, and other activities in a “one-stop” shop for all of the municipalities would create a better business environment in the County. These could be located in conjunction with the offices of the different economic development entities.

Goal #3 – Pursue economic diversification and growth of existing economic engines.

As noted earlier, the economy in Brevard County is highly reliant upon space and space-related industry. To develop a more well-rounded economy, new potential industries should be developed, in addition to supporting the existing industries to ensure their continued growth and prosperity.

- ✓ *Review existing target clusters and determine new business clusters.*
The Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast identified in their strategic plan six current clusters – aerospace and related industries, aviation and related industries, silicon technology, microelectronics, laser optics, and information technology. They also identified three emerging industry groups – Display/Imaging/Data Manipulation and Management, Biomedical and Health Technology, and Simulation. A close review of existing business clusters should be performed to identify any needs they may have, and the emerging clusters should be reviewed to establish that they are appropriate for Brevard County, and what supporting mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure their success. Any potentially new clusters that may be viable and would diversify the economic base of the County should be researched, and may include a tourism cluster, research and technology cluster, and a business services cluster.

✓ *Encourage and expand technology, research, and development.*

One particular area that received a lot of interest and attention was the industry sectors related to technology, research, and development. Brevard County is well positioned to gain national and international recognition for creating and implementing a strategy to become a recognized leader in science, technology, and natural resources conservation. Given the community's resources, participants felt very strongly about creating a focus on health, space, digital arts, communication, and environmental research and development. Two specific areas for growth and development are described in the Cape Canaveral Spaceport Master Plan and the Brevard Nature Alliance's Natural Resources and Conservation report. The Cape Canaveral Spaceport Master plan calls for the Spaceport with its International Space Research Park to become a center of excellence for developing new spaceport technologies, and becoming a leader in a global launch network, guiding international space projects that include research, commerce, and exploration. The Brevard Nature Alliance calls for the County to become a recognized center for environmental and scientific research because of the unique advantages it has with a well-established high-tech and scientific industry and significantly diverse ecosystem. Brevard County should look for ways to diversify its economy through a coupling of high technology applications, natural areas research and management, education, and nature tourism that could be modeled after North Carolina's Research Triangle. The Florida Institute of Technology, with its current emerging and research technology programs, is a key asset in supporting this diversification.

✓ *Capitalize on tourism opportunities.*

Many participants identified tourism an economic opportunity that could be further expanded in Brevard County given its location, resources, and amenities, instead of just being a pass through location for those boarding cruise ships or watching shuttle launches. The Brevard Tourist Development Council, in conjunction with the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners, Brevard Cultural Alliance, Brevard Nature Alliance, and local businesses have been developing strategies to attract "add-on" trips by visitors who utilize Port Canaveral. However, the tourism cluster should have a multi-field approach, including attracting conventions and business meetings. Evaluating the existing historic, recreational, and cultural resources of the County can help to determine how Brevard County can be marketed as a tourist destination in and of itself.

✓ *Explore development of eco-tourism as a sub-cluster.*

Because of Brevard's rich abundance of natural resources, eco-tourism is another economic sector that could benefit the County's economic climate. This would involve the branding of the County as an eco-tourism destination and increasing the number of nature-based businesses, both of which the Brevard Nature Alliance could facilitate. However, prior to significant growth in this sub-cluster, a plan for sustainable use of areas of conservation and natural resources needs to be developed, so that the areas upon which eco-tourism is based do not get overused or depleted. This includes who is responsible for managing and maintaining the land and waters, how these areas can and should be used, and the extent of access to these areas to ensure protection of the habitat's value and minimizing ecological impact to the area.

✓ *Establish an ongoing Business Calling Program.*

A Business Calling Program is an ongoing effort to visit individual businesses, assess business assistance requirements, and determine expansion potential. This allows the economic

development community to be proactive in helping existing businesses succeed and grow by being aware of their needs and helping to address them. This information should be coordinated in a database that includes existing employers location, size, company background, worker profiles and needs, current SIC/NAICS codes, and contact information.

✓ *Increase utilization of the Melbourne International Airport.*

The Melbourne International Airport was hard hit by the events of September 11, 2001, with two of its core airlines, Continental and Spirit, pulling their operations soon after the tragic event. The siting of an international airport in Brevard County is a tremendous benefit, but is not currently well utilized, even before September 11, because of the limited destinations offered and the cost of flying out of this airport. A number of people said that they flew out of Orlando for that very reason, and for people living in the northern part of the County, Orlando was actually easier and quicker to access. The County should explore ways in which utilization of the Melbourne International Airport could be increased, and see if it can be transformed into a gateway for Brevard County residents and those in the surrounding counties.

Goal #4 – Foster small businesses and encourage entrepreneurship.

In today’s economy, most of the job growth and creation are occurring in small to medium size businesses, and Fortune 500 companies continue to lose their job share with each passing year. Because of the concentration of high-tech industries in Brevard County, the area would benefit from incubator programs that foster entrepreneurship and small business programs to help entrepreneurs grow and succeed. However, there are also other business sectors with good employment that should be supported.

✓ *Expand programs that nurture new small businesses and entrepreneurship and support existing small businesses.*

The following programs and services can be coordinated to support the long-term accomplishments of the business community and create new economic opportunities:

- Providing small businesses with access to technical and financial assistance available at the local, state, and federal levels;
- Creating a “virtual” small business resource guide on the Brevard County website with links to resources of financial assistance and other small business programs;
- Assisting start-up business with seed and venture capital for technology based companies;
- Regularly educating business about export opportunities;
- Organizing an Entrepreneur’s Roundtable sponsored by the Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Commissions to promote entrepreneurial programs and services;
- Preparation of an Entrepreneur’s Tool Kit as a how-to guide for local entrepreneurs regarding business formation, management, finance, and recommended resources;
- Increasing community support for incubators and incentives for businesses and schools to include youth involvement in a NASA incubator; and
- Continued assistance by the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast to expand the number of Small Business Innovation Research Program and Small Business Technology Transfer Program grants.

Goal #5 – Create and expand a competitive employment environment.

While Brevard County has a strong employment base, the business community and young professionals identified issues with job choice, career opportunities, and wage levels. In terms of job

choice and career opportunity, these are directly related to diversification of the economy. With respect to wages, this mostly involves how Brevard County compares to other metropolitan areas.

✓ *Determine competitive wage levels.*

Different from the Livable Wages Study done by the Brevard Workforce Development Board, a study as to how wages in Brevard County compare to their main competitive markets for employees, taking into account cost of living differentials, should be conducted. This information should then be disseminated to employers and economic development professionals to help them understand the labor market for which they are competing, and they can decide if wages should be adjusted as necessary based upon the findings from the study.

✓ *Market quality of life aspects to employees.*

In conjunction with the determination of competitive wages, a marketing package that extols the non-monetary benefits of living in Brevard County should be created. This could include information about the County that make it a great place to live such as mild climate; beach access; availability of bike paths, parks, nature trails, and cultural arts; lower cost of living including housing and health care costs; lack of traffic congestion; good public school system; and proximity to Orlando but without its problems. This marketing package could serve as a cost-effective manner in which to enhance the County's image as a place to live and work.

✓ *Improve and expand connections to the workforce development community.*

The economic development community should be responsible for establishing, maintaining, and communicating with the workforce development system in the County to ensure that local employment needs are being fulfilled, to identify and communicate skill gaps, and to connect research institutions and resources with the business community. One example of this connection is Brevard Workforce 2020 where the Melbourne-Palm Bay Area Chamber and the Brevard Workforce Development Board have collaborated to facilitate the building of a competitive, promotable, and sustainable workforce for the good of local employers and residents through surveys, Academics of Learning, and Business and Community Roundtables.

Issue #5 – Education and Workforce: Improvement

Educational opportunity and the quality of all levels of the educational system and workforce are important to the County's future and economic capacity. Employers need assurance that an individual has received the level of education that will allow them to be successful employees. Various indicators can measure the success of a community's educational system, including drop out rates and test scores. In 1990, 82.3% of the Brevard County population over age 25 had graduated from high school, which was similar to the comparison communities. However, Brevard County fell behind these same communities regarding levels of higher educational attainment.

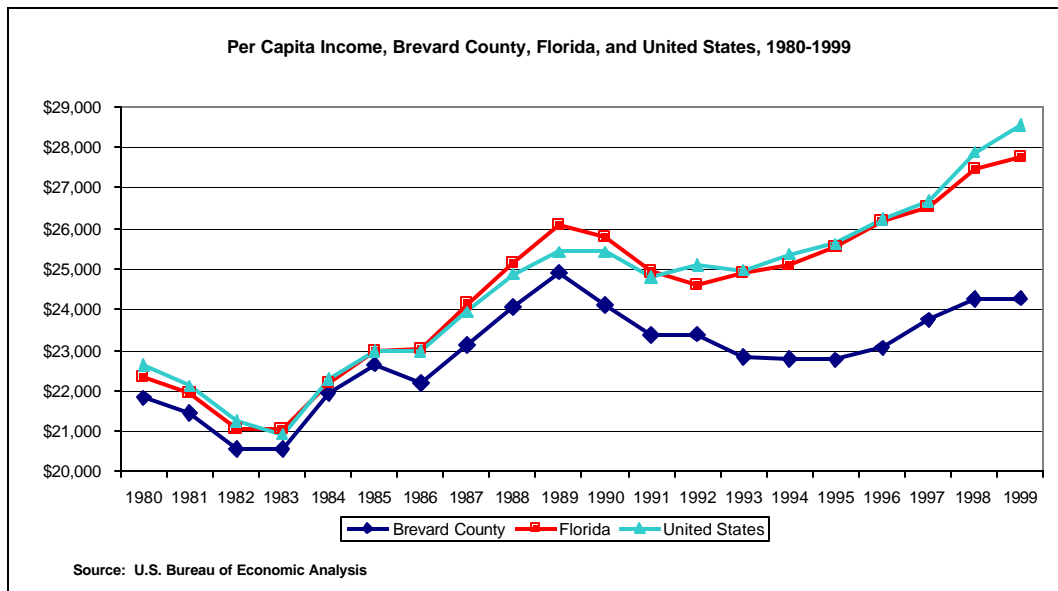
Educational issues in Brevard County expand beyond the traditional student who pursues a four-year degree to students who may instead immediately enter the workplace or obtain a technical degree. There are concerns about the lack of adequate funding for the K-12 schools system related to the development of appropriate infrastructure and a solid base of quality educators. The need for certain accredited degree programs in higher educational institutions directly impacts the attraction and retention of young professionals in the community. Weak linkages between educators and administrators, parents and employers also contribute to the concerns about the County's educational system. Additionally, continuing coordination and further focusing of the workforce development system would help to establish priorities for improvement throughout the educational system.

Overall, the County has made great strides in the area of education. According to the Florida Department of Education, Brevard County graduates more high school students than any other district in the State, with a graduation rate of 86.8% in 2001. The County's high school dropout rate (1999-2000) was 2.0%, compared to the State average of 4.6%, which indicates that more students are remaining in school, and attendance rates at all school levels have significantly improved since 1996. Student scores on the Scholastic Achievement Tests (SAT) and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in Brevard County are above State and national averages. However, the FCAT received a great deal of criticism from County residents, who believe that it is merely the State's method for "preparing students to take tests and generate funding for schools," and that too much emphasis was placed on performance on the FCAT.

Another concern expressed was related to the educational system and how it prepared students to enter the workforce or pursue a technical degree. Participants described high school graduates as "either highly skilled or under-skilled, with nothing in between," and feel that the "educational system contributes to our problems because students are leaving without basic skills." Participants indicated that Brevard County does have a high quality workforce, but that the overall skill levels of the labor pool will be an ongoing challenge as skill requirements for future industries continue to fluctuate, and the need to place a higher value on the obtainment of technical degrees.

A measure of a community's flexibility in filling new positions is the labor force participation rate (LFPR), which indicates the number of working age people (18-69) who are employed or actively seeking employment. In 1999, Brevard County's LFPR was 68.7%, translated into 29,321 working age adults who are not actively engaged in the labor force and contributing to the local economy. This rate is below that of the State (77.3%) and nation (78.6%). The impact of a low labor force participation rate is clearly seen in the real per capita income trend for Brevard County. As illustrated in the chart on the following page, the real per capita income for the County has lost

ground to the State and national average since 1989. This is because people of working age who are not in the labor force are earning no income. Therefore, they are still counted in the denominator of calculation of real per capita income but do not contribute to the numerator.



Low unemployment rates and LFPR, together with demographics of the County, indicate that the labor market is tight, and that steps to improve the flexibility of the workforce are needed.

Goal #1 – Strengthen and support the pre-K and K-12 educational systems.

Brevard Public Schools is one of the higher performing school systems in the State of Florida. However, there are certain areas that were identified by participants as needing strengthening, review, or improvement. This incorporates both programs for students prior to and during their enrollment in the school system, and the retention and recruitment of quality teachers to enhance the educational environment for the entire population.

- ✓ *Improve the quality of the curriculum for students who either immediately enter the workforce or pursue a technical degree.*

The Brevard Public Schools was complimented for their work in preparing students for college, but criticized for their curriculum and overall attitude toward other students who may either work or obtain a technical degree upon graduation from high school. Essentially, the schools do not place a high value on these students and do not have appropriate programs in place to prepare these students for their chosen career path. Based upon the skills needed by the future workforce, the quality of these programs must be re-addressed and the image of technical education changed. Equal value needs to be attached to all students and their educational choices, which means creating quality educational programs for all. The Brevard Public Schools in their First in Florida Strategic Plan has recognized the need to enhance the curricular and instructional opportunities for all students, including implementing a CHOICE program to provide a comprehensive selection of vocational/technical programs for all high school students, and providing access to at least three vocational/technical exploratory program areas in every middle school. Other potential actions may include cooperative efforts with Brevard Community College to develop joint programs, working together with the Brevard Cultural

Alliance to develop programs focused on the arts, and partnering with local businesses to develop a mentoring and/or internship program.

- ✓ *Implement innovative or non-traditional teaching methods and programs to better engage students.*
Schools across the nation have implemented various innovative programs for their youth to better address the needs of traditional and non-traditional students. Currently, the Brevard Public Schools has three CHOICE elementary schools that provide enhanced education in a particular area in addition to the regular curriculum and are open to anyone in the County. They are also considering establishing a CHOICE high school in their strategic plan. They are also looking for way to extend learning opportunities for students through the use of extended day classes, Saturday classes, Adult Education, on-line courses, and summer and intersession classes.

The Brevard Cultural Alliance is very interested in reintegrating arts and culture back into the classroom as demonstrated in their Strategic Plan. The Brevard Public Schools could work together with the Brevard Cultural Alliance to revitalize the Arts for a Complete Education Advisory Committee to help reposition the cultural sector as an aid to the County's education system. The goal of this Committee is to integrate the arts into the Sunshine State Standards classroom curriculum, resulting in better engagement of students, increased learning, and higher test scores. Additionally, the Brevard Cultural Alliance is interested in helping to identify any systemic needs in the school system and helping to develop programs and services to address those gaps.

- ✓ *Create mentoring programs to retain students and promote career choice.*
The Brevard Public Schools is planning to implement a mentoring program for students in every school. This mentoring program should involve parents, the business community, seniors, and community college and college/university students, faculty, and staff as mentors to students. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioners is researching establishing a senior mentoring program to enhance intergeneration contact. Local businesses could host a Shadowing Program to allow students to visit area businesses based on their chosen career path. Employees from various companies could visit local schools and speak to students about different careers to generate interest among students, and inform them about different career opportunities available to encourage students to remain in Brevard County following graduation.

- ✓ *Continue to support and expand pre-kindergarten and early childhood programs.*
One key component to early and future academic success is the availability, quality, and utilization of pre-kindergarten and early childhood programs by children under the age of five. The State of Florida, with its establishment of a statewide school readiness program for the State's at-risk birth to age five population, recognizes how critical this time period is in a child's life. The Brevard County School Readiness Coalition was incorporated in May 2000 and is the local vehicle through which funding from the State is distributed. With the goals of partnering with local community resources to share resources and create a system of care; expanding family support and home visiting programs for at-risk families; increasing the number of licensed and accredited childcare facilities; development comprehensive service networks for targeted high-risk zip codes; and creating a community-wide literacy awareness program; the work of the School Readiness Coalition should continue to be supported and expanded. While with a specific target of at-risk children, manners in which the efforts of the Coalition can be expanded to address at children under the age of five should be explored.

- ✓ *Develop cooperative efforts between the public and private school systems.*
Because of the similar mission and goals of all primary and secondary educational school systems in Brevard County, benefits and synergies can be gained through cooperative efforts among all school systems. Opening up the lines of communication between the different school systems promotes a venue in which effective practices can be shared and resources can be combined to improve all of the educational systems in the County.

- ✓ *Implement programs to retain and increase the number of teachers and enhance teacher quality.*
To ensure a high quality pool of educators for Brevard County, the Brevard Public Schools has made as one of their goals the recruitment, employment, and retainment of high quality employees. They are looking to offer competitive wages and benefits, implement a tuition reimbursement plan, establish a mentoring program for new teachers, and increase expenditures for professional development, among other actions. The Brevard Cultural Alliance would like to see arts included in the professional development offerings for teachers. Other programs that could be considered are a public-private fund to initiate a "teacher advancement grant" to support summer sabbaticals, advanced studies, and other additional training for Brevard teachers; student loan forgiveness programs to help to retain new teachers who want to teach in the County but may be unable to because of financial burdens; and summer programs for teachers to work in the business community so they are kept up to date about the skills needed in today's workplace. Beyond specific programs to enhance the quality of teachers, the value and importance placed on teachers themselves in the community needs to be improved. Teachers play a very critical role in the community and should have the accompanying social and financial support necessary to allow them to educate their students the best they can given available resources.

- ✓ *Create stronger connections between communities, parents, and schools.*
Better communication between parents and teachers at the local level can enhance ways for parents to learn how they can support their children's academic progress, and can also remove the divisiveness that currently exists as a result of poor communication. For example, often when a child comes home with a problem, the parent tends to immediately approach the principal versus discussing the issue with the teacher. The Brevard Public Schools is examining a number of options as a part of their goal to have the highest levels of community and parent involvement, including the implementation of support programs for parent organizations, increasing senior citizen involvement, establishing standards for school newsletters and websites, implementing parent-teacher communication software via the Internet, and conducting parent workshops to inform them about the education of their children. Workshops and meetings should be held multiple times of the day to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to attend regardless of their working hours.

Beyond parent-teacher connections, the Brevard Public Schools needs to enhance its connections with the larger community including educating and marketing the very important role they play. As the population in the County continues to age and includes more empty nesters and retirees, there has been an attitude of "I have already paid to educate my children, so why should I support the schools here?" This has placed a severe crunch on the financial foundation of the school system, with budget shortfalls and the inability to construct adequate facilities to move students out of portable classrooms. This is probably a task for a larger entity than just the Brevard Public Schools, but needs to focus on the fact that schools should be

supported by everyone regardless of age and/or family structure, because the quality of the education provided has tremendous primary and secondary impacts on quality of life in the community; therefore, a strong school system benefits everybody. Brevard Public Schools needs to continue planning for growth with the local governments to ensure that quality educational environments are created, which includes classroom size.

- ✓ *Review the use of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) and other Statewide grading systems to evaluate school success.*

Community members criticized the FCAT as changing the learning environment in schools into one where they “teach students how to take tests,” and that too much emphasis was placed on the FCAT, which has an effect on student self-esteem and self-confidence. As a result of using the FCAT scores to rank schools, schools that serve special students end up being penalized, administrators and teachers end up not wanting to educate these students in their schools, and students feel that if they perform poorly on the test and their school performs inadequately, they are responsible. Since the State of Florida governs the administration and usage of the FCAT, a task force that includes the Brevard Public Schools and other key stakeholders such as parents and employers should be created to review State-level policies to assess their appropriateness and usefulness for the goals of the public schools in the County. Additionally, the public needs to be educated about the FCAT and school grading systems to understand their purpose. Because this is an issue that affects all school districts across the State, the task force could also reach out to other school systems to see if they have similar issues. If so, this places Brevard County in a stronger position to approach the State to ask for changes, waivers, and exceptions as appropriate. This is especially timely since the Florida Department of Education is also currently undertaking a review of the FCAT and other programs and how they are utilized in education.

Goal #2 – Strengthen and expand the workforce, workforce development, and post-secondary educational systems.

A world class workforce development system engages three primary components: the workforce development system including K-12, community colleges, four year colleges and universities, workforce investment boards, and welfare programs; the business community including public, private, and non-profit; and the workers themselves. A good workforce development system contains seamless lines of communication and coordination to address any needs that may arise quickly and efficiently.

- ✓ *Continue to improve and expand upon Brevard Workforce Development Board activities.*

The Brevard Workforce Development Board is in the process of developing its new Strategic Plan and is currently working with a consultant to complete the plan in January 2002. Once the plan has been completed, appropriate elements that inform the creation of the “preferred future” for Brevard County should be incorporated into relevant action steps. The Brevard Workforce Development Board should continue to establish and facilitate strategic partnerships, linkages, and relationships with other key stakeholders in the overall workforce development system, and continue its efforts to best serve the workforce development needs of the County. Regular community forums that bring together employers, workers, and the workforce development community will assist with keeping lines of communication open and informing each other about needs and available services. One particular area that was consistently raised was the lack of work ethic/employability skills among the workforce, which is not unique to

Brevard County. An effective program or strategy to address this issue for all types of workers is needed.

- ✓ *Increase workforce participation among individuals with skills and experience who are not currently in the workforce.*

Brevard County has a very low labor force participation rate in comparison to the State and national average, with almost 30,000 adults of working age not currently engaged in the labor force. A significant proportion of these adults, who are most likely older given the County's demographics, would probably work if the appropriate opportunity arose. Since these individuals may have a significant amount of skills and experience, their inclusion into the labor force would greatly enhance the quality and quantity of the workforce. The Brevard Commission on Aging has included as one of its goals expanded employment opportunities for older adults working together with the Brevard Workforce Development Board. Similarly, disabled individuals tend to be less likely to participate in the workforce, but with some additional thought and planning, can become productive members of the workforce. Some suggested actions could include:

- Developing of an educational workshop for local businesses and employers to increase awareness of the importance of older and disabled adults to the workforce and identify obstacles they may face in the workplace;
- Identifying job opportunities for older and disabled adults and the skill sets needed to perform the jobs;
- Holding focus groups with older and disabled adults to identify the types of employment being sought and methods to recruitment, retention, and training;
- Hiring a placement and assistance specialist to match older and disabled workers with employers, provide assistance with the job search, and maintain a database of skills and experiences of older and disabled adults; and
- Expanding the Senior Community Services Employment Program to serve all older adults and not only low-income individuals.

- ✓ *Expand programs available to address the increase in Hispanic workers.*

Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in Brevard County increased almost 80%. With this population growth and the greater prevalence of Hispanic workers in the workplace, the community and employers have needed to make adjustments to accommodate these new workers, a portion of which may not speak English very well. As the Hispanic population continues to increase, the programs and services available to assist these individuals and their employers need to be expanded. These may include additional Spanish language classes at Brevard Community College that specifically address Spanish in the workplace; English as a Second Language classes offered in a number of non-traditional locations such as churches, community centers, and school cafeterias; and hiring of additional bilingual staff by service providers.

- ✓ *Expand and market post-secondary educational opportunities in local colleges and universities.*

Brevard County currently has a number of strong post-secondary resources and programs. Local colleges and universities need to continue to monitor the educational and career interests of residents and changes in workforce demand to explore adding, modifying, or maintaining exceptional programs. For example, none of the schools currently offer a law degree program or a Master of Planning program. Other suggestions may include a Master of Fine Arts program

as the Brevard Cultural Alliance would like to establish, or advanced degrees in Digital Arts. With respect to changes in workforce demand, the aging population in Brevard County has increased the need for registered nurses and physician assistants, and there are waiting lists to enter these programs. Employers today are also looking for workers who are not necessarily educated/trained in one particular field, but for people who come out of programs with multiple competencies. Therefore, integrating different programs to produce cross-trained graduates are becoming more in demand by employers. Additionally, the existing programs offered need to be better marketed to both the general public and employers to inform them of the educational opportunities that are available in the County.

- ✓ *Continue to encourage and expand linkages between post-secondary educational institutions and employers.*
In the face of a rapidly changing global marketplace, the ability of the local post-secondary educational system to respond to local employment needs is imperative. This includes the ability to produce the right graduates at the right time, and modifying program delivery to address the changing skills needs in the workplace. Ensuring that post-secondary educational institutions are addressing the correct needs requires that these institutions work closely with employers and maintain a system of continual interaction and networking. The Florida Institute of Technology and its method of interfacing with employers to meet local workforce needs could be used as a model by the community. Encouraging and expanding this practice by all post-secondary institutions in Brevard County would be highly beneficial.

- ✓ *Work to ensure continuity of the post-secondary education system in economic and workforce development.*
The role that post-secondary educational institutions play in the local community is influenced tremendously by the mandate and goals of the current president of that institution. Many post-secondary institutions across the country are not considered good community citizens because of a policy of isolation and not working with or reaching out to the surrounding community. As the presidents of the post-secondary education institutions change over time, it is important to ensure continuity of the institutions role and involvement in community, economic, and workforce development, and the County should be meeting with college and university trustees to ensure that the next president also values community involvement and participation.

Key Players

The “Preferred Future” Strategic Plan presented in this report spans a number of different issues and areas that requires the participation, support, and involvement of different groups, organizations, and individuals throughout the entire County to be successful. Because of the wide range of key players that need to be involved, the individual identification of specific groups, individuals, and organizations for each issue, goal, or action step is not feasible. Additionally, because all of the issues are interrelated with one another, all of the key players are necessarily essential to the accomplishment of the entire strategy. Below are listed, in alphabetical order, the types of groups, organizations, and individuals that need to be involved in the execution of this “Preferred Future” Strategic Plan:

- Civic Organizations
- Cultural Organizations
- Economic Development Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Employers
- Environmental Organizations
- Faith-Based Community
- Federal, County, and Local Governments, Organizations, and Agencies
- Financial Institutions
- Foundations
- General Public
- Health Service Providers
- Leadership Organizations
- Media
- Non-profit Organizations
- Senior Organizations
- Social Service Providers
- Youth Organizations