

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 | 2024



CENTRAL FLORIDA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Polk County's
Economic Development
Partnership







WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

Grow an economy based on high-skill, high-wage sustainable businesses.

ORGANIZATIONAL PILLARS

-  Promote Polk County as Florida’s Best Place for Business
-  Advocate for Key Business Issues
-  Facilitate Collaborative Partnerships
-  Advance Strategic Initiatives

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



CHAIR
Gene Conrad
Aerospace Center for Excellence



VICE CHAIR
Dave Shepp
The Southern Group of Florida



SECRETARY/TREASURER
Emery Smith
Ben Hill Griffin



PAST CHAIR
Maggie Mariucci
Florida Polytechnic University




COUNTY COMMISSIONER
George Lindsey
Board of County Commissioners



COUNTY MANAGER DESIGNEE
Bart Allen
Peterson & Myers, P.A.



AVIATION COMMITTEE CHAIR
Rick Garcia
Gulf Coast Avionics



COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS CHAIR
Deena Drumgo
City of Lake Wales




COMPETITIVENESS & ADVOCACY CHAIR
Kyle Story
The Story Companies



INVESTOR RELATIONS CHAIR
Pete Frantzis
Cyndeo Wealth Partners




TALENT PIPELINE CHAIR
Dr. Amy Bratten
Polk State College



BOARD MEMBER
Brandon Clark
The Ruthvens



BOARD MEMBER
Randy Knapp
RLK Real Estate & Development



BOARD MEMBER
Jeremy Voss
SpringerVoss Construction



BOARD MEMBER
Drew Wilcox
Nucor Steel Florida

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COUNTY PARTNER



VISIONARY



INNOVATOR



CONNECTOR



MUNICIPAL PARTNERS



POLK BY THE NUMBERS

#1

fastest growing
MSA in the U.S.
*by % growth

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

#1

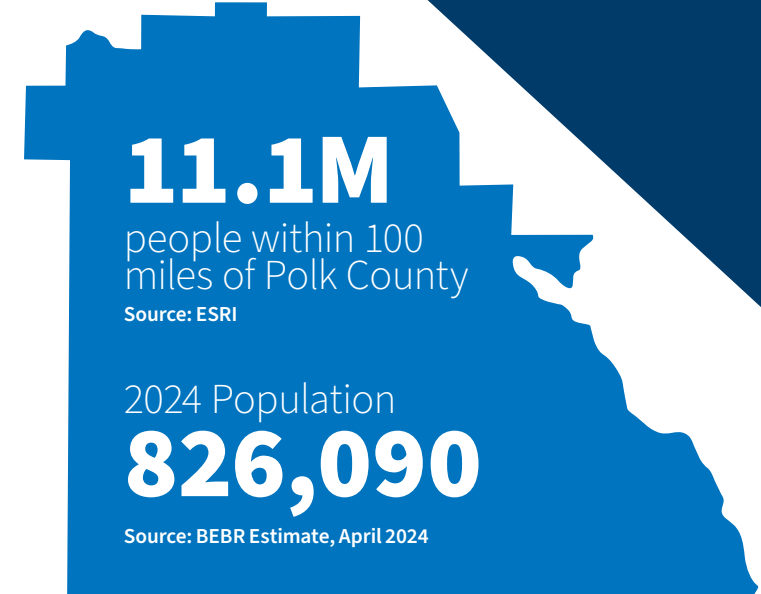
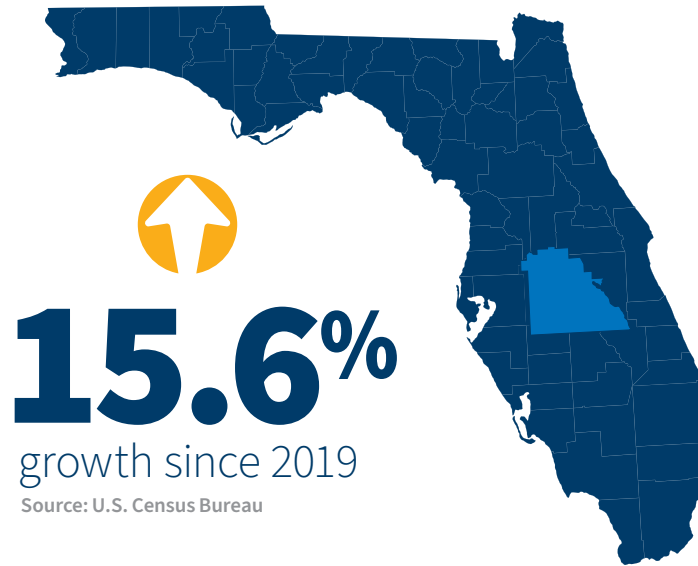
state for income
migration

Source: Florida Chamber, Feb. 2024

Best state

for business
startups

Source: Florida Chamber, Feb. 2024



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



Expand Polk County's ecosystem for technology enabled employment including Health Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, Autonomous Systems and Aviation & Aerospace



Elevate Polk County's competitiveness within the state and nation for higher wage innovation and research employment



Advance Polk County's water, road and multimodal transportation infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of the community to ensure future business growth

INFLUENCES



Greater ad valorem tax
received by the county

Higher average annual
wage of county residents

Additional businesses
operating within the county



4TH

fastest-growing
county in the nation

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



85⁺

people moving to the
county per day

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



9TH

best county
for talent attraction

Source: Lightcast 2023 Talent Attraction Scorecard

Average annual wage increased

\$53,249 +10% since 2021

Source: Florida Department of Commerce, January 2025

Total Employment within the County

283,027 +11.9% growth since 2020

Source: JobsEQ, October 2024

Commercial & Industrial Taxable Value

\$11.2B + 39.69% since 2020

Source: Polk County Property Appraiser, July 2024

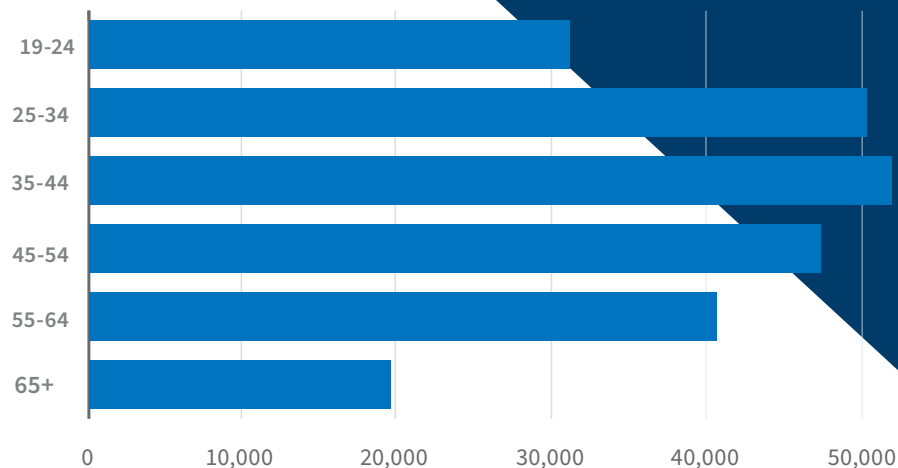
Commercial & Industrial Taxes Collected

\$78.2M +38% since 2020

Source: Polk County Property Appraiser, July 2024

County Labor Force by Age

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, February 2025



Manufacturing
Sector Growth

**6.1% GDP
GROWTH**

over the last 10 years

+ 18% growth in
manufacturing companies
in Polk over the last 5 years

Source: JobsEQ, October 2024



Working Age

3-Year Percentage Change

+ 7.9%

In ages 25-64

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, February 2025

County GDP Growth by Industry

3-Year Percentage Change

Source: JobsEQ, October 2024



+79.1%

Arts, Entertainment &
Recreation



+54.7%

Transportation &
Warehousing



+33.0%

Management



+30.9%

Manufacturing



+30.7%

Health Services



+28.5%

Real Estate



+27.9%

Information Technology



+26.4%

Construction



+13.5%

Financial Activities

JOB CREATION & INVESTMENT



Capital Investment

\$840,000,000



Total Jobs (new & retained)

1,024



Total New Project
Square Footage

2,480,000



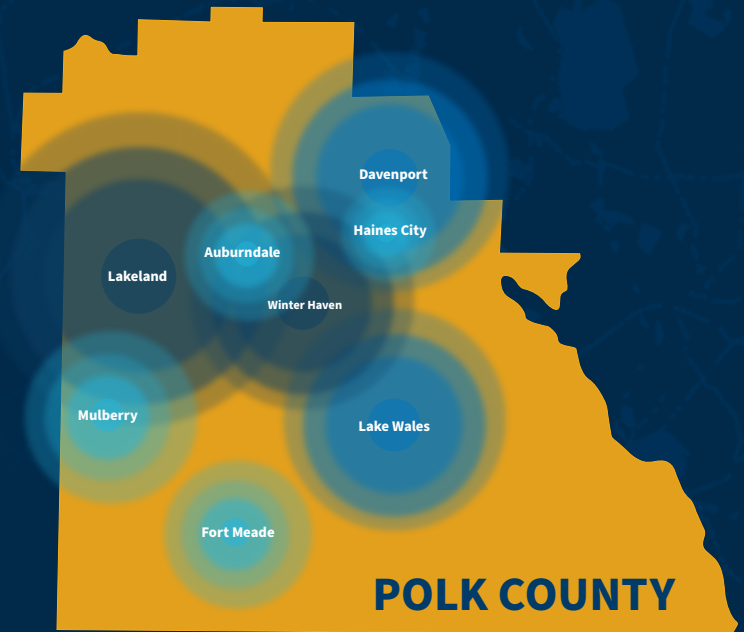
Average Annual Wage
of Projects

\$68,698



Total New Projected
Annual Payroll

\$64,370,468



Lake Wales

Advanced Drainage Systems
New Jobs: 200

Fort Meade

Novaphos
New Jobs: 28

Davenport

D.R. Horton
New Jobs: 117

Mulberry

Equipment Share
New Jobs: 40

Winter Haven

Niagara
New Jobs: 200

Lakeland

WellDyne
New Jobs: 250

Auburndale

RealCold
New Jobs: 94

Haines City

Sika
New Jobs: 8

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS



Advanced Drainage Systems (ADS), is a manufacturer of high-performing, durable pipe and innovative stormwater management solutions. The company has announced the construction of a new, \$250M flagship plant in Lake Wales that will add 200 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$55,500+.



RealCold, a national cold storage provider, has broken ground on a \$66M cold storage facility in Auburndale. This marks a significant milestone in the company's expansion and commitment to providing industry-leading storage solutions, bringing 94 new jobs at an average annual wage of \$57,000+.



D.R. Horton announced the construction of their new 40,000 sq ft regional headquarters in Davenport. Polk is an important market for the firm and the new \$15.9M regional operations hub will add 117 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$138,000.



Sika, a local chemical manufacturer, announced an expansion to construct a 20,000 sq ft manufacturing facility, investing \$10M in construction and equipment. The project will create at least 10 new full-time jobs with an average annual wage of \$95,000+.



Equipment Share is a construction and heavy equipment rental company bringing 40 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$50,000 to Mulberry. The \$40M capital investment in their new facility is a key linkage within their operations throughout Central Florida.



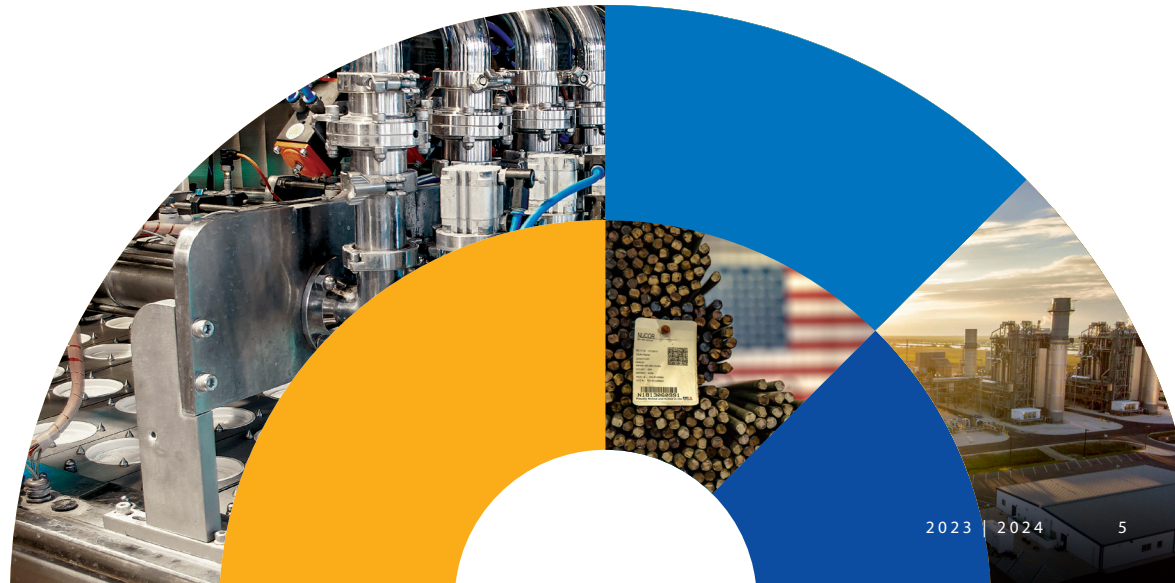
WellDyne is expanding their local employment in the Health Sciences industry in Lakeland by adding 250 new jobs at an average wage of \$64,485.



Niagara, a beverage manufacturer, is investing \$421M in a new facility to be located at the Integrated Logistics Park in Winter Haven. This new 1M sq ft building will add 200 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$56,000+.



Novaphos, announced a local expansion to construct a 40,000 sq ft manufacturing and processing facility in Fort Meade. The company will add 28 new jobs with an average annual wage of \$56,000 as part of the \$34M expansion.



CELEBRATING POLK'S BUSINESS SUCCESSES AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Hosted in the Skylight Hangar on the SUN 'n FUN Expo Campus, the CFDC was pleased to gather leaders from across Polk County for the 2024 Annual Meeting. During the event, **Camp Margaritaville** was honored with the George W. Harris Jr. Economic Development Award for Success in Large Business, and **Straughn Trout Architects** received the Jim Brantley Economic Development Award for Success in Small Business.

"These companies, along with all the finalists, represent the very best of Polk County," said Sean Malott, President & CEO of the CFDC. "They are passionate about their companies and the people who work there, committed to giving back to the community in many ways and enthusiastic in helping make the county the best it can be. Their leaders are the cream of the crop."

Also at the meeting, **Commissioner George Lindsey** was presented the Chair's Award from outgoing Chair Gene Conrad, President & CEO of the Aerospace Center for Excellence.

"This evening, we celebrate a remarkable leader, a dedicated public servant and a champion for economic development in our county," Conrad said. "For several years, this individual has served as the liaison between our organization and the County Commission. And in that time, we have seen firsthand the impact of their commitment and vision."

Gene Conrad,
welcomes Dave Shepp
as the 2024|2025
Board Chair.

The evening's
keynote speaker,
Vice Admiral Nancy
Hann with NOAA
discussed hurricane
response & local operations



Camp
Margaritaville
Auburndale
recognized with
the Success in L
Business Aw



Straughn
Trout Architects
recognized with
the Success in
Small Business Award





Recognizing great CFDC leaders completing their board service, Bart Allen (Peterson & Myers P.A.) to the left, Pete Frantzis (Cyndeo Wealth Partners) bottom left and Maggie Mariucci (Florida Polytechnic University) bottom right



As a strong businessman, he understands the challenges we face and the opportunities we can seize. His insights have not only guided our initiatives but have also inspired us to think bigger and bolder.”

Gene Conrad welcomed the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, **Vice Admiral Nancy Hann**, as the keynote speaker for the evening. She is responsible for the day-to-day management of the agency’s operations and is a key advisor to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere on NOAA program and policy issues.

As Hann explained what NOAA does, she talked about how it tracks weather, including Hurricane Milton. The agency worked alongside the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). They assisted in recovery post-storm, making sure the Port of Tampa opened as soon as possible.

Admiral Hann repeatedly praised Polk County and its residents. It is “absolutely an opportunity and privilege to serve Central Florida,” she said. “We are all over this community, and I could not imagine a better place to do that work.”

As the last order of business, Conrad handed the Chair’s position to **Dave Shepp**, a Partner with The Southern Group.

Shepp thanked Conrad for being a one-of-a-kind leader. “Your energy, wit, drive for success and pursuit of excellence has excelled CFDC. We have been fortunate to have your leadership.”

Polk County Commissioner George Lindsey accepts the CFDC Board Chair award.



#POLKPROSPERS

FACILITATING PARTNERSHIPS

CFDC Past
Chairs Luncheon



CFDC Board of
Directors Annual
Board Retreat



Members touring
Miller Electric
during the 2024
CFDC Leadership
Mission



CFDC Innovator
Workshop



ADS company
representatives at
March Investor Meeting



CFDC Site Selector
& Developer Spring
Training Game



Local officials tour
West Palm Beach
Brightline Station



Investor
members at August
Investor Meeting

POLK COUNTY AT A GLANCE

The unemployment rate in Polk County is in the normal range at 4.6%, slightly above the rate of 4% from August 2023. The labor market has settled a bit with employment levels dropping through the first part of the year and unemployment rising slightly as the Federal Reserve began to loosen monetary policy in the 3rd quarter.

Since 2019 (pre-pandemic), our Labor Force grew by 14.8%, Employment grew by 14.1% while Unemployment is up by 28.8%. Over the past 12 months, we saw job expansion in most industries, with the largest growth coming from Education and Health Services (+5.4%). We did see contraction in Information (-4.2%), however Mining, Logging and Construction (+4.3%) and Manufacturing (+2.1%) returned to job growth.



PREPARED BY

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Florida Southern College



POPULATION

Polk County outpaced the state and nation in population growth between the July 2023 and April 2020 estimates, growing 12.9% as compared to 5% and 1% for the state and nation, respectively. Within the larger cities (populations greater than 5,000), growth is being led by Davenport, Haines City, and Auburndale, with all more than 25% estimated growth over the period.



AGE

The county's age distribution reflects a larger portion of younger people (22%, under 18) than the state (19.4%) and a larger population of older people (19.4%, 65 and over) than the nation (17.7%). Both Florida (21.7%) and Polk County have older populations than the national average, however, the county's proportion of older people fell while the state's rose over the past year. The larger portions of younger and older people negatively impact our economy as it results in a smaller population of working age people, as reflected in the smaller labor force population (56.5%, 59% and 63% for the county, state and nation based on 2018 – 2022 data, respectively).



HOUSEHOLD

Polk County continues to have higher than average homeowner occupancy (69.8%, 66.9% and 64.8% for the county, state, and nation, respectively) and lower than average costs for both homeowners and renters.


Polk County has also seen meaningful growth in taxable property values, with total taxable value increasing from \$59.5B in 2023 to \$66.3B in 2024 (+11.4%), with over \$2.7B of that attributable to new construction. Taxable new construction continues to be concentrated in Haines City (\$353M), Winter Haven (\$245M), and Auburndale (\$191M). The substantial increase in taxable value should provide a meaningful revenue increase for the county to alleviate the growing costs that come with the population growth the county has experienced.

FLORIDA *within* REACH



CENTRAL FLORIDA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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