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SECTION 4 -- OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS
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I. INTRODUCTION

Washington County is centrally located in the Florida Panhandle which makes it attractive to those seeking to relocate to an area that offers a rural lifestyle, an excellent climate; and is conveniently located near the beaches and shopping. Potential residents are also able to find less expensive real estate in Washington County. Many of those living in Washington County commute to Bay County to work and Bay County residents are now migrating to Washington County as they seek a more secluded lifestyle. I-10's east - west path through the County also provides expedient and easy access to employment centers located to the east and west. When completed, the future four-lane projects of SR 79 and SR 77 will also serve to provide access to the County for both residential and economic development.

Population data, unless otherwise noted, is based on statistical data compiled by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) who projections are based on assumptions about birth rates, death rates, immigration, and emigration. This report will use BEBR's moderate approach.

II. THE EXISTING SYSTEM ANALYSIS

Much of Washington County is rural, with most of the estimated population of 21,192 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001 estimates) residing in and around the City of Chipley (3,545), and the Towns of Caryville (312), Ebro (250), Vernon (758), Wausau (405) and 16,167 residents are in the unincorporated. According to the 2000 Census: 1) 23.4% (4,958) of the County's population is 17 years of age or younger; 2) population per square mile is 36.2; and 3) the number of Hispanic or Latino population is 487 (2.3%). The African-American population is 2,903 (13.7%). Population density is concentrated in and around the City of Chipley, with smaller population centers in the other municipalities and in a few unincorporated communities throughout the county. Additional population concentration is beginning to build from suburbanization along SR 77 near the Bay County line north to Greenhead and in the large Deltona development known as Sunny Hills, located just south of Wausau. There is generally a proportional age distribution across the entirety of the county proportional to population. There are no developments or geographic locations, other than a nursing home, where elder residents are in high concentration. There are no tourist destination resorts in the County. Washington County's quality of life, immigration into the County and population projected to increase at a conservative steady pace over the next 30 years. Factors that will attract growth to the County will be based on the availability of health care, housing, educational opportunities, and economic opportunities that become available to the residents of the County.

A. Historical Population Growth for the County

For several decades, the County has experienced growth as reflected in Table 5-1. Currently, the County ranks 53rd in population out of 67 counties in Florida. Formerly, residential development was focused toward the central part of the County, but in recent years, that center has moved to the southeastern Washington County area near the Sunny Hills’ area and south along the SR 77 corridor to Panama City. This is not expected to change over the next 30 years as economic growth and employment opportunities in the County and adjacent counties continue. Some growth can be expected in and around Ebro with the advent of the new Panama City International Airport in northwest Bay County.

From 2000 to 2005, the population of the County increased from 20,973 to 23,097 for an increase of 2,124, or 10.13% which equates to 2.02% growth rate per year. The growth rate from 2005 of 23,097 persons to 2006 of 23,719 accounted was 2.69%

Table 5-1. Washington County Population Growth 1950 – 2030 Actual, Estimated and Projected	
Year	Population
1950	11,888
1960	11,249
1970	11,453
1980	14,509
1990	16,919
2000	20,973
2005	23,097
2006	23,719 (Estimated)
2030	31,180 (Projected)
Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2005 Estimate, Florida Estimates of Population, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida	

B. Historical Population Growth for Municipalities

As shown by Table 5-2, the towns of Vernon and Wausau have shown modest growth in recent decades. The decline in growth in Caryville between 1990 and 2000 results from the FEMA buyout program of homes located within the floodplains of Caryville. These property owners relocated outside of the town limits of Ebro. There is little new development within Caryville at the present time and this trend is expected to continue in the future. Ebro had slight growth while Caryville and Chipley have shown a decline in population over the same time period. The four-lane expansion of SR 79 combined with the recent developments in Bay County (relocation of the Bay International Airport) can be expected to influence the increased development of both Ebro and Vernon as well as the portion of the County between Vernon and Ebro along SR 79.

Year	Caryville	Chipley	Ebro	Vernon	Wausau	Unincorporated County
1990	631	3,866	255	778	313	11,076
2000	218	3,592	250	743	398	15,772
2005 Estimate	356	3,601	259	784	436	17,661

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2005 Estimate, Florida Estimates of Population, Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

C. Population Profile for the County.

1. 2000 Age of Population. In 2000, the population between the ages of 20 and 64 was 11,184 or 56% of the total population (less the institutionalized). Corresponding, the percentage of person under the age of 19 was 27% in Washington County compared to 23% for the State and 26% nationally. The percentage of persons over 65 was 3,279 or 17%.
2. 2005 Age of Population. In 2005, the population between the ages of 20 and 64 was 12,453 or 57% of the total population (less the institutionalized). Corresponding, the percentage of person under the age of 19 was in Washington County was 5,670 or 26%. The percentage of persons over 65 was 3,608 or 17%. Characteristics of the population compared to the 2000 Census as it relates to age showed no significant changes and can be expected to remain basically unchanged in relation to future growth. Table 5-3 summarizes the characteristics of the County by age.

Year	Total	0-4	5-19	20-44	45-64	65-74	75 and Over
2000	19,835	1,267	4,105	6,172	5,012	1,750	1,529
2005	21,731	1,179	4,491	6,687	5,766	1,912	1,696

Source: Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse/Shimberg Center, University of Florida

3. Population by Sex. An examination of the number of males and females of Washington County indicates that the ratio of the two sexes is almost parallel to that of the State. The County male population in 2005 was estimated to be at 12,454 or 51.95%. The State male population is at 48.92%. Female population comprises 11,519 or 48.05% of the population as compared to the State's rate of 51.08.

Male	12,454	51.95%	8,765,300	48.92%
Female	11,519	48.05%	9,152,900	51.08%

Source: Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida

4. Race and Ethnicity. The population composition of Washington County remains predominantly white and is not comparable to that of the State. The white

population rate of the County exceeds that of the state by approximately 18%, with the black and other races (combined at 17%) being less than that of the State (37%) by about 20%. Approximately 4.59% of other races make up the balance of the population. In 2000, the population composition was more comparable to the State composition.

Table 5-5. 2005 Population Characteristics by Race				
Characteristics	Washington County	% of Population	Florida	% of Population
Total Population All Races	23,097		17,918,200	
Population White	18,875	81.72	11,277,600	62.94%
Population Black	3,161	13.69%	2,776,600	15.5%
<u>Population Other</u>	<u>1,060</u>	4.59%	3,864,000	21.56%
Native American	356			
Latino/Hispanic	608			
Other	96			
Source: Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida				

5. Special Facilities/Populations

Farm workers – Although the county has a sizeable agricultural economy, much of the crop produced is poultry, cotton, and truck crops. Poultry is shipped via cages on trucks, primarily to processing facilities in DeFuniak Springs by local labor. Cotton and soybeans are mechanically harvested and transported. Watermelons are picked by hand. Migrant farm laborers, mainly Latinos, provide some of the workforce for watermelon harvest. A firm count of these laborers is difficult to obtain, as there are no migrant farm worker housing facilities in the County, but it is estimated to be about two hundred individuals during the peak harvest season.

Inmates –Washington Correctional (WCI) is a 1,100 inmate facility located near SR 77 at Greenhead about ten miles south of Wausau. WCI and Florida Department of Corrections officials are fully responsible for the safety and well-being of inmates.

D. Population Projections and Residential Lot Needs for the County.

The location of Washington County in relation to the Gulf Coast, the access corridors including US 231, SR 77 and SR 79 combined with state policies desiring to direct population away from the coast combined the emerging trend for inland development as well as the designation of Washington County as a Foreign Trade Zone and the construction of the Panama City / Bay County International Airport, the pace of growth is anticipated to increase. While not significant due to the current low populations, a growth factor of between 2 percent and 4 percent is considered reasonable. The majority of the growth is expected to be in the southeast and southwest sections of the County.

Table 5-6. Population Projections, 2000 – 2030			
Year	Population	Numerical Change	Average Annual Percentage Change
2000	20,973		
2005 Estimate	23,097	2,124	2.02%
2010 Projection	25,759	2,662	2.31%
2015 Projection	27,194	1,435	1.11%
2020 Projection	28,605	1,411	1.04%
2025 Projection	29,947	1,342	0.94%
2030 Projection	31,180	1,233	0.82%
Source: Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida			

Based on the BEBR projections for growth from 2005-2030, there will be a need for housing to accommodate 8,083 residents. Applying the 2.46 ratio of persons to a household demonstrates a need for 3,286 residential units over the next 23 years through at least 2030. As stated in the Identified Issues section of this report, *the EAR recognizes that there are factors that are influencing the future growth of Washington County. These factors combined with the presence of key transportation routes between Washington County and the Coast (including US 231, SR 77 and SR 79, the relocation of the Panama City /Bay County International Airport and the Foreign Trade Zone designation are influential factors suggesting that Washington County will experience a higher rate of growth than historically. As a result, it is suggested that the BEBR “High” projections would be more appropriate. The High BEBR projections for Washington County should be the minimum projections to address the implications of growth and thereby enable the County to be better prepared to react to those influences. This may be a necessary step to better project the future population of the County. Should the County decide to pursue this avenue of population projections, the County will work with the Department of Community Affairs to ensure that the most effective means of population projection is utilized.*

An examination of the Census Block Numbering areas in 2000 delineates a distinctive pattern of increased development in the northeast corner of the county in and around the City of Chipley and the geographical center of the county in and around Vernon. A concentration of this population continues in the southeastern section of the county in and around the Sunny Hills and south toward the Bay County border on SR 77. The population in other parts of the county remains sparse with the most notable reductions in density occurring in the extreme northwestern section in and around the Town of Caryville. This reduction is due FEMA buyouts, and should funding become available in the future, more buyouts may be negotiated.

Table 5-7. Available Subdivision Residential Lot by Municipalities	
Area	Residential Lots
Unincorporated County (Includes Sunny Hills Subdivision and NRPI lots)	26,819
Caryville	80
Chipley	297
Ebro	6
Vernon	97
Wausau	46
Subtotal for Platted Lots	[27,345]
Platting in Process (Clustered)	128
Potential to be Developed (not platted)	1,098
Pending FLUM Change Approval DCA	924
Total Subdivision Lots Potential and Available for Residential Development	29,495
Source: Washington County Planning Office and Washington County Appraiser's Office	

III. SUMMARY.

Generally, the County has been able to maintain levels of service within the unincorporated areas of the county with regards to transportation, parks, libraries, and solid wastes. The municipalities with central wastewater treatment facilities have upgraded or are in the process of upgrading those facilities. Sunny Hills and Aqua Utilities will need to reevaluate both the water and wastewater treatment facilities within the parameters of the Sunny Hills Subdivision. Until this is accomplished, these platted lots may not be considered suitable for future development. Although not all lands are the same when it comes to suitability for development and placement of population, the need for adequate subdivision of lots should be examined in the western section of the County. The majority of available lots are in the eastern half of the County with the western portion of the County having only 183 lots available to meet housing needs over the next 23 years.

The *Trends and Conditions Report – 2007*, published by the Florida Department of Transportation (using forecast figures from BEBR -- the Bureau of Economic and Business Research), indicate the growth rate of Washington County from 2000-2006 to be at 0.5 -1.8 % yearly with projected growth expected to be at 0.46 – 1.14 % over 2006 – 2030. This rate of growth is consistent with those rates shown in Table 5-6.