

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to describe current economic conditions in Washington County and its municipalities, Caryville, Chipley, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau. The Element should present forecasts for the county's economic development, select a preferred course of economic development, advance economic goals, design a set of objectives and policies to achieve preferred economic development, and present a strategy for implementing those policies that is consistent and in concert with the county and city's growth management plans. The ability to achieve such goals relies partially on state, national, and global economic events and policies. However, this element will focus on how the county and its municipalities can support their local economies, attempt to protect them from economic downturns, and encourage prosperity during periods of economic growth.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Development Element is an optional element in both the Washington County and City of Chipley Comprehensive Plans. Economic Elements are to act as a guide for achieving desirable economic development, which in turn fosters an improved commerce and quality of life for all residents throughout the county. For that reason, a joint effort of Washington County and its municipalities, Caryville, Chipley, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau in the creation of their Economic Elements is beneficial. The county and the City of Chipley have separate Comprehensive Plans and apply separately for any grants to aid in the development of individual elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Although this is the case, it is apparent there is a benefit of a joint effort to include the City of Chipley and the other county municipalities in the process.

III. DATA AND ANALYSIS

The Economic Element is based on the best available data of measurable economic indicators, trend analysis, and assumptions based on the measurable economic trends. Relevant data from the 2000 Census with projections from the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) will form the basis of the data for this element. The Economic goals, objectives, and policies were formulated to provide guidelines for achieving economic development consistent with the Comprehensive Plans and the area's many assets.

A. Population. As in virtually all communities in recent years, Washington County and its municipalities are experiencing slow growth in the incorporated towns and cities, while growth continues to climb in unincorporated areas of the county (Tables 1 and 2). The annual growth rate of the unincorporated area of the county (3.63%) is higher than the overall county's annual growth rate (2.24%), which translates to an out-migration of people from the incorporated areas of the county to the unincorporated land, increased growth in the unincorporated areas, or both. This faster growth in the unincorporated and primarily rural areas will translate into rising costs for utility and community services for the

county as growth occurs in previously undeveloped areas. The population base of Washington County can be considered to be rural in nature

1. Historical Population Growth for the County. For several decades, the County has experienced steady growth as reflected in 1. Currently, the County ranks 53rd in population out of 67 counties in Florida. Formerly, residential development was toward the central part of the county, but in recent years, that center has moved to southeastern Washington County around 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 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	

Historical Population Growth for Municipalities

As shown by 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

3. Population Profile for the County.

- a. 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%.
- b. 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 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

- c. 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				

d. 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.

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%
Population Other Native American	1,060	4.59%	3,864,000	21.56%
Latino/Hispanic Other	356			
	608 96			
Source: Bureau of Economic & Business Research, University of Florida				

e. 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 is estimated to be about two hundred individuals during the peak harvest season.

Inmates. 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.

No remarkable change in populations is expected to occur for the County, but continued growth can be expected at a slower and steady pace. The majority of the growth is expected to be in the southeast and southwest sections of the County.

Year	Population	Numerical Change	Average Annual Percentage Change
2000	20,973		
2005 Estimate	23,097	2,124	2.02%
20 10 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

Looking at the components of population change in Washington County from 1990 to 2000 reveals a high percentage of the increase (94%) is due to migration as opposed to natural increase. A further breakdown of the in-migration reveals that in 2000, 74.3% of the population gains came from other Florida counties and the remaining 25.7% from other U.S. states (FL Statistical Abstract). This would suggest that certain characteristics of Washington County such as the rural environment, lack of overcrowding, commitment to a high quality of life, and lower cost of living are attracting new residents from elsewhere in Florida. Therefore, these are all attributes that need to be monitored to ensure continued future in-migration.

B. Income

Household income levels can be a good economic indicator for an area as they demonstrate the purchasing power and savings capability of each household, which in turn, generates funds for investment. The Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) considers the measurement of per capita income when it is determining economic distress. To be considered "distressed," an area must have a per capita income equal to 80% or less of the U.S. per capita income of \$28,509 equating to (\$22,8097 in 2000). As seen in Table 7, Washington County and all its municipalities would be considered in economic distress by EDA.

The economic scenario described in Table 7 is common for many areas of Northwest Florida. Higher per capita income levels are typically found in the southern coastal areas of the state, while non-coastal counties and cities in north Florida tend to have higher poverty rates and overall lower per capita income levels. As seen in Table 7, Vernon and Caryville each have over one-third of their population living below the poverty level, and close to one-third of their families living below the poverty level. The City of Chipley, the county seat and most populous area, has the highest median household and family income levels, and also the lowest percentage of families living below the poverty level, 11.3%. But even in this case, the city's per capita income is only 58.77% of the national per capita income. According to 2005 estimates, the county's Median Household Income has increased considerably to \$ _____ ; however, the percentage of people living in poverty remains close to the 2000 rate of _____ (Florida Statistical Abstract).

Table 7. Washington County and Selected Sub-County Areas Poverty Level and Per Capital Income (PCI)

Poverty Status	Washington County	Caryville	Chipley	Ebro	Vernon	Wausau
Total Population						
All persons determined						
% of persons below poverty level						
% of families below poverty level						
Per Capita Income						
Median Household Income						
Median Family Income						
Median Non-Family Income						
Per Capita Income						
Percent of US PCI (\$ _____)						

Source: 2000 Census

C. Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment. Even though population decreased in the incorporated areas of Washington County on a whole by 642 persons from 1990 to 2000, the total population for the county increased approximately 24%. rates which are around during that same time, the labor force has increased even more, with a 38% gain since 1990

(8a). A portion of this labor force increase may be attributed to the change in age distributions within the incorporated areas of the county. The portion of the county's population considered to be of typical working age, age 18 to 65, rose from approximately 57% in 1990, to 61% in 2000.

Unemployment rates are down from 1990, with the county average of 4.8% over the last two years (Table 8a). However, the U.S. average for that same two-year period was 4.4 %, almost a half of a percent lower than Washington County. The reduction in unemployment throughout the county is a good indicator of a strengthening economy in terms of matching the work force with available jobs. In order to further economic growth, the county will need to enhance the skill level of the work force while enticing higher skilled and higher wage jobs to the area.

Unemployment varies widely within the county and its municipalities. Current rates show the city of Chipley with an impressively low 2.4% unemployment rate, while areas like Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau have rates which are around 10% (8s 9a and b).

Table 8A. Unemployment Rates - 2000 Unemployment Rate

	Washington County	Caryville	Chipley	Ebro	Vernon	Wausau
Labor Force						
Employed						
Unemployed						
Unemployed Rate						

Source: 2000 Census and the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Labor Market Statistic, LAUS Program

Table 8B
 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES - CURRENT 24-MONTH
 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

	Washington County	Caryville	Chipley	Ebro	Vernon	Wausau
Labor Force						
Employed						
Unemployed						
Unemployed Rate						

Source: 2000 Census and the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, Labor Market Statistic, LAUS Program

In 2000, the diversity of employment within Washington County was divided among the following sectors: Public (35.99%), Retail (18.29%), Service (14.23%), Construction (5.96%), Transportation and Public Utilities (5.01%), Finance (1.47%), Wholesale (1.18%), Agriculture (0.90%), and Other (16.96%) (Figure 1). The high percentage of "public" employment is due to the location of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 3 office and Washington County Correctional Facility within Washington County. Compared to the state averages for each of these categories, Washington County relies on the Public sector more heavily than the state, and has a much smaller percentage of their workforce in the Service sector.

The major employers in Washington County include the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Wal-Mart, WestPoint Stevens, the Northwest Florida Community Hospital, the Washington County Kennel Club, the Washington County Correctional Facility, and the Washington County School District (Table 9). While the county benefits from such large employers, these seven employers provide approximately 35% of the total county employment. Should one of these employers be forced to close or scale back, if the state cut funding to the DOT or WestPoint Stevens closed their line manufactured in Chipley for example, then up to 8% of county employees could suddenly find themselves unemployed. Economic growth that fosters a more diverse base of employers would help reduce this reliance on a few large employers.

Table 9 MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN WASHINGTON
COUNTY - 2005

Employer	Number of Employees
WestPoint Stevens	
Washington County School District	
Florida Department of Transportation, District 3	
Wal-Mart	
Washington County Correctional Facility	
Northwest Florida Community Hospital	
Washington County Kennel Club	

Source: Washington County Chamber of Commerce

Washington County employees receive an average wage less than the state average in all industry sectors (9). The highest paying sector in proportion to state overall wages is the agricultural sector, which pays 95.92 percent of the state average; however, agricultural wages are relatively low statewide. The county also has several low paying economic sectors in comparison to the state average. For example, the wholesale sector paid 42.81 percent of the state average, the lowest in the region. The average county wage was 78.35 percent of the state average (Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security). This inequity in wages is likely one catalyst for the out-migration of the younger, working age population in the county.

The sector paying the highest average wage is the Transportation sector at \$33,731. Transportation along with Construction, Finance, and the Public sector all pay average wages from \$1,300 to \$11,400 higher than the county average (Table 10). In contrast, the Retail sector has the lowest average wage at approximately \$10,000 less than the county average. This is daunting as Retail is also the sector that provides the second highest number of county jobs.

Table 10. Washington County 2000 Average Wage per Economic Sector

Rank by Wage	Industry	Washington County	State of Florida	Percentage	Total County Jobs
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
Overall Average					
Source					

D. Vacancy Rates.

The percent of vacant housing units has remained fairly steady from 1990 to 2000. However, as seen from Tables 10 a and b, Caryville and Vernon have experience higher percentages of vacant housing units than the county average (21.8% and 20.4%). The recent flood buyout is a likely reason for its high vacancy rate in the town of Caryville.

Table 10A. Residential Vacancy Rates - Washington County and Municipalities			
Total	WASHINGTON Co.	CARYVILLE	CHIPLEY

	UNITS	PERCENT	UNITS	PERCENT	UNITS	PERCENT
	9,503	100.0%	110	100.0%	1,694	100.0%
Occupied	7,931	83.5%	86	78.2%	1,442	85.1%

Owner Occupied	6,493	81.9%	68	79.1%	921	63.9%
Rental Occupied	1,438	18.1%	18	20.9%	521	36.1%
Vacant	1,572	16.5%	24	21.8%	252	14.9%
Owner Vacancy Rate	1.8%	(X)	0.0%	(X)	3.4%	(X)
Rental Vacancy Rate	152%	(X)	25.0%	(X)	17.7%	(X)
Source: 2000 Census						

Table 10B. Residential Vacancy Rates - Washington County and Municipalities						
Total	EBRO		VERNON		WAUSAU	
	UNITS	PERCENT	UNITS	PERCENT	UNITS	PERCENT
		116	100.0%	372	100.0%	177
Occupied	102	87.9%	296	79.6%	163	92.1%
Owner Occupied	74	72.5%	219	74.0%	123	75.5%
Rental Occupied	28	27.5%	77	26.0%	40	24.5%
[Vacant	14	12.1%	76	20.4%	14	7.9%
Owner Vacancy Rate	0.0%	(x)	2.2%	(X)	3.4%	(X)
Renter Vacancy Rate	3.4%	(x)	25.2%	(X)	4.5%	(x)
Source: 2000 Census						

The percentage of owner-occupied residential properties is relatively high throughout the county's municipalities, and is even higher for the county itself. This is likely due to the affordability of the homes in the county and a less mobile population base.

F. New Construction and Home Sales.

The value of single-family residential construction permits last year was \$6,088,000. This was up from the previous year, which saw a drop in permits issued. Other than the year 2000, building permits in Washington County for single-family homes have remained fairly steady over the last five years, averaging 91 permits per year (Table 11). Mobile homes are required to obtain an electrical permit from the county as opposed to a construction permit. In 2001, there were 211 mobile home electrical permits issued. This is more than twice the number of single-family permits issued that year, showing a county trend toward this traditionally more affordable housing alternative.

According to the Washington County Building Department, the estimated value of commercial building permits in the county during the same time period was only \$15,859,403, approximately

half of the residential value during the same time. Included in this five-year time period is the construction of the new Super Wal-Mart in Chipley, which in 2001 had a market value of almost \$4,000,000.

Table 11. New Residential Construction Activity - Washington County 1997 - 2006

YEAR	SINGLE FAMILY PERMITS ISSUED	CONSTRUCTION COST
1997	95	5,235,000
1998	96	8,344,000
1999	94	6,296,000
2000	79	5,437,000
2001	93	6,088,000
2002		
2003		
2004		
2005		
2006		
Annual Average		
Source: Washington County Building Department		

F. SALES TAX COLLECTION

Sales tax collection in Washington County over the past year has slowly grown from 0.10 percent of the State sales tax receipts in the first quarter, to 0.12 percent of receipts in the last quarter (Table 12). This growth has been constant, except for the months of July and August of 2001. Washington County tax receipts for January were up compared to the previous year, with a 27.7 percent increase over the 2001 value. Total yearly sales tax receipts show a steady increase in the amount of county sales tax collected over the last five years (Table 12). In 2001 there was a slight drop, however this followed a boom year in 2000 that was most likely affected by the construction of the new Wal-Mart in the City of Chipley.

Table 12. Washington County Local Optional Sales Tax Receipts - 2006

Washington County	% Change	State	% of State
81,021		81,877,550	0.10%
73,305	-10.5%	71,775,147	0.10%
74,197	1.1%	75,373,843	0.10%
84,087	13.3%	84,229,737	0.10%
83,926	-0.2%	77,539,375	0.11%
80,944	-3.7%	75,036,841	0.11%
128,233	58.4%	76,675,695	0.17%
42,027	-67.2%	75,614,168	0.06%
80,328	91.1%	77,332,173	0.10%
78,470	-2.4%	69,065,953	0.11%
82,431	5.0%	68,844,624	0.12%
87,189	5.8%	73,197,201	0.12%
103,453	18.7%	83,526,884	0.12%

Source: Florida State Department of Revenue Office of Research and Analysis

Table 13. Washington County Yearly Sales Tax Receipts

YEAR	SALES TAX \$ RECEIPTS	PERCENT CHANGE
1997	643,742.87	-
1998	741,236.58	15.1
1999	786,298.00	6.1
2000	939,819.74	19.5
2001	904,007.00	-4.0
2002		
2003		
2004		
2005		
2006		

Source: Washington County

G. Physical and Location Characteristics of Washington County (Including Caryville, Ebro, Vernon, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau)

One of the more positive assets of Washington County for future economic development is its centralized location within the panhandle region and its accessibility via the numerous thoroughfares serving the area. Running east/west through the county are Interstate 10, U.S. Highway 90, and SR 20. Major north/south routes within the county include SR 79, SR 77, and SR 277. Interstate 10, SR77, US Highway 90, and SR277 all pass through or near the county seat of Chipley, connecting the city and its businesses to nearby markets in all directions. Air service is somewhat limited since the county is currently served by Panama City-Bay County International Airport in Panama City located approximately 40 miles away. Tri-County Airport is located just inside Holmes County in Bonifay, but offers only general aviation facilities. CSX railway provides for efficient rail transportation to the area. Port Panama City and Foreign Trade Zone #65 located to the south in Panama City provide for somewhat distant port access.

The county has two interstate exits (Exit 104 at Caryville and Exit 120 at Chipley) and one within 1.5 miles of the Washington County line (Exit 112 at Bonifay). Exit 104 is in a floodplain and little development can be expected in this area due to the potential to flood and amount of public land ownership. This leaves Exit 120 at Chipley as the primary interchange where commercial development has been most rapidly occurring and is also most likely to occur in the future within Washington County.

Washington County Industrial Park is a 220-acre industrial park currently being developed between Highway 90 and SR 273, directly adjacent to the city limits of Chipley. The Industrial Park is within the State Enterprise Zone, like the current Chipley Industrial Park, and therefore eligible occupants may qualify for property tax exemptions. The CSX railway will also serve the new industrial park.

H. CitvofChipley

Chipley is the county seat of Washington County and is located in the extreme northeast corner of the county. This gives the city access to markets in both Holmes and Jackson Counties, as well as Washington. The city is served by many of the county transportation alternatives, including I-10 (with a Chipley exit), SR77 which travels north/south and links the Panama City area, two east/west arterials (US 90 and SR 273), and CR 77A which acts as a major collector. The town is also bisected by the CSX railroad.

The Chipley Industrial Park, currently the only occupied industrial park in Washington County, is located in southwest Chipley. The Industrial Park is owned by the city and consists of 156 acres which are 60% occupied. The current Chipley Park is located within a State Enterprise Zone, and therefore property tax exemptions are available for qualified manufacturing projects and distribution facilities. The Chipley Industrial Park currently has electric, gas, water, and

sewer infrastructure already in place to serve its occupants. It is anticipated that future facilities may require fiber optic services, which is currently only offered in one Industrial Park in the Northwest Florida EDD. Therefore, providing this type of service could make the Chipley Park more attractive to business relocating to the region.

IV. COMMUNITY PROFILE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Community services are an important factor affecting decisions of business and industrial location. Education is of particular significance for community economic development today. More and more jobs require good education and a high level of skills. Gains in productivity and maintaining a competitive edge increasingly rely on the availability of a well-educated, fully-trained and flexible labor force. As society becomes more affluent, demands for recreation and security are also increasing. Therefore, the availability of recreational facilities and public protection facilities and services has become an indispensable factor to be considered as part of the economic development process.

- A. Quality of Life. Of utmost importance to all the residents of Washington County is a good quality of life, which includes both time for work and quality time for family and friends. This unhurried lifestyle gives growing families the opportunity to provide strong values and spiritual foundations to their children. It also provides for an ideal location for retirees who wish to leave the hustle and bustle of their working lives.

A strong commitment to quality of life issues by local government provides the vehicle for both economic growth and personal tranquility for all citizens, and should be strongly considered in all economic development actions and decisions. The philosophy of "less is more" translates to less stress, less crime, less congestion, less pollution, less traffic, less daily aggravation, and more tranquil enjoyment of everyday life.

Washington County derives its beauty and heritage from the land. This fact is reflected in its resilient and resourceful citizens who know the importance of neighbor helping neighbor.

- B. Education.

The Washington County Public School District oversees two high schools (Chipley and Vernon), two middle schools (Chipley and Vernon) and two elementary schools (Chipley and Vernon), as well as the Washington-Holmes Technical Center located in Chipley. Education excellence is of paramount importance in Washington County and the County can boast of an 81.8% graduation rate with 59.7% of students going on to higher education studies.

Access to institutions of higher education is within easy reach: Chipola Jr. College (Marianna), Florida State University (Panama City Campus), and Gulf Coast Community College (Panama City).

The Panhandle Area Education Consortium is headquartered in Washington County. PAEC provides excellent teacher training and plans for a state-of-the-art teaching academy are underway.

C. Medical.

Northwest Florida Community Hospital, affiliated with Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, is an 81-bed community hospital located in Chipley. The hospital is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and licensed by the State of Florida. It is certified by Medicare and Medicaid. The hospital offers a broad range of services: Medical and Surgical in-patient care; 24-hour physician staffed Emergency Room; Full-service imaging Department; out-patient Surgery; Rural health clinics; Women's health services; Physical, occupational and speech therapy; Respiratory therapy; Cardio-pulmonary services; Laboratory services; Dialysis unit; Short- and long-term care facilities; and home health services.

D. Recreation.

Washington County has a wealth of recreational resources for just about everyone. Falling Waters Country Club and Sunny Hills Country Club are wonderful public golf courses for the serious duffer. The Choctawhatchee River and Econfina Creek are excellent canoeing, tubing and rafting sites. Falling Waters State Recreation Area provides excellent opportunities for hiking, bird-watching, swimming and camping. There are numerous other camping and/or boating sites: N.W. Florida Campground and Pine Log State Forest to name only a few. For the dog racing enthusiast, visit Ebro Greyhound Race Track.

Numerous community parks provide both active and passive recreational activities. Fishing, hiking, swimming, water-skiing, hunting, bird-watching, snorkeling and scuba diving, all may be enjoyed in Washington County.

E. Security Protection.

Washington County is provided law enforcement services by the Washington County Sheriffs Department for all areas outside the city limits of Chipley, and by the City of Chipley Police Department. The State Highway Patrol also provides law enforcement services primarily related to traffic control within the area.

Fire protection services are provided for the City of Chipley as well as for the areas immediately

surrounding the city by the Chipley Fire Department. The other areas of the county are served by several volunteer fire departments.

F. Public Services.

1. Washington County (including Carville, Ebro, Vernon, and Wausau). As a primarily rural county, supplying utility services to the entire county is not practical. Therefore, currently no water or sewer service is provided within the County, except for the immediate area surrounding the City of Chipley. County residents are primarily required to use septic tanks and well water. Three different companies provide electrical service to county residents. These include County West Florida Electric Co-p, County (South) Gulf Coast Electric Co-op, and Gulf Power Company. Bellsouth supplies telephone service to residents throughout Washington County.

With the exception of within Sunny Hills, municipalities are the primary providers of potable water services in Washington County. The Town of Ebro does not have a potable water system. Since availability of potable water services increases density of land use and can facilitate development, the county should carefully plan with municipalities and private water companies how and where water services are installed so as to facilitate orderly development in municipalities and adjacent unincorporated areas.

2. City of Chiplev. Utility services offered within the City of Chipley include water, sewer, gas, and trash collection services. In 1998, water pumpage records indicated that the city water system was operating at 53% of its permitted annual allocation. Electric and telephone services are provided by the same providers as the county. Further discussion of the city's public facility capacities and Levels of Service can be found in the Public Facilities and Services section of the Comprehensive Plan.

V. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Washington County is committed to maintaining a high quality of life, along with the rural family oriented nature of the area. This has served to maintain the high quality of the environment, has limited congestion as well as has created an overall lower cost of living. This has made the area attractive for people to relocate to as evidenced by the fact that over 94% of the growth in population is due to immigration. Further evidence of the attractiveness and draw of the area is that of this total immigration, almost three quarters (74.3%) is from other areas within the State of Florida. Future economic development strategies employed by the county should strive to maintain these positive quality of life factors.

Thus far, Washington County has managed to accomplish this. The County has successfully blended a rural quality of life with ever expanding business amenities. County and municipal governments have embraced one-stop permitting, property tax abatements, partial waiver of occupational licenses where applicable (Chipley), Enterprise Zone and Hub Zone Empowerment Program designations. Quality businesses and industries are welcome. The Economic Development Council for Washington County also works to ease the way for relocating or startup businesses.

The Chipley Industrial Park offers full service sites for manufacturers and light industry. A second industrial park site of 220 acres is under development.

A. ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The primary issues and concerns which could potentially affect Washington County economic development in a negative manner, or preclude future economic development are as follows:

1. Lack of sufficient water and sewer service to the newly development 220 acre industrial park.
2. Insufficient mix of skills in local labor pool. Lack of well developed secondary local road system.
3. Limited provision of urban services (water, sewer, and storm water management) to areas outside of the City of Chipley and the other municipalities.
4. Limited local market for goods and services coupled with corresponding limited provision of a wide range business services.

B. Opportunities. The primary opportunities and positive conditions which should serve to support economic development in Washington County are as follows:

1. Generally high quality of life combined with low cost of living.
2. Designation as a Federal Hub Zone as well as Area of Critical Economic Concern by the State of Florida.
3. Reliability and dependability of work force.
4. Ongoing immigration of population to county.
5. Centralized location in the West Florida Region and the corresponding strong link to regional highway systems.

VI. CONSIDERATION AND REVIEW OF OTHER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

- A. Background and Overview. State rules require that all elements of the Comprehensive Plan be consistent. Therefore, the goals, objectives, and policies adopted in the Economic Element will be consistent with those plan elements which address related issues. For example, the Future Land Use Element, the Public Facilities Element (water and sewer sub-elements), and the Capital Improvements Element will all be impacted by, and must be consistent with the Economic Element. If certain objectives and policies contained within the economic element identify capital improvement projects, then the capital improvement element will need to be amended to contain those projects and their potential funding sources.

General examples of the direct inter-relationships between the economic element and other elements of the plan are outlined in the following table. Indirect relationships, particularly those resulting from population growth induced by economic policies, are reflected in all elements of the plan.

B. Elements Normally Impacted by the Economic Element

1. Land Use Element.

- a. There must be adequate amount of land designated (zoned) for commercial and industrial use.
- b. There should be proper location of such lands with adequate access, facilities, buffered from residential uses).
- c. Land development regulations should be conducive to quality, and economically feasible development.

2. Capital Improvement Element

- a. Identified improvements (water, sewer, roads) placed in CIE (capital improvement element)
- b. Revenue sources identified

3. Infrastructure Elements

- a. Improvements for water, sewer, stormwater management and solid waste

identified

4. Housing Element

- a. Adequate provision for housing work force
- b. Housing costs, affordable housing programs
- c. Higher density land uses to allow construction of rental units.

5. Other Elements

- a. Traffic circulation compatible with commercial/industrial areas
- b. Intergovernmental coordination of economic development plans

C. Consistency Review. The following presents an analysis of the consistency of the Washington County Plan with the impacts created by the Economic Element.

1. Future Land Use Element. There is an overall adequate amount of land designated for commercial and industrial use. Although this is the case, there has been some demand for re-zoning of property for these uses (primarily commercial) in locations other than those presented on the Future Land Use Map. Most of these re-zoning requests have been for small commercial ventures located some distance from existing commercially developed areas. Most of this is due to these locations being close to Bay County with frontage on major thoroughfares.

The present location of commercial and industrial designated land appears to be generally appropriate. Such land is concentrated within and/or immediately surrounding the municipalities of Chipley, Ebro, Vernon and Wausau. These cities and towns offer some degree of urban services and are natural commercial/economic centers due to their geographical location and roadway access.

2. Capital Improvement Element. As noted previously there is a need for additional water, sewer and stormwater management services in the new industrial park as well as in the immediate areas surrounding the municipalities. The funds necessary for provisions of these services will need to be identified, planned for, and presented in the Schedule of Capital Improvements.
3. Infrastructure Element. As noted in the preceding section, expansion of water, sewer, and stormwater management services will be required for future industrial park development. This will need to be planned and amended in the Infrastructure

Element.

4. Housing Element. Although the availability of suitable housing is somewhat of a problem within the county, it is more the result of the limited income of the population versus a lack of land and/or ability of the construction industry to produce such housing. There are several housing programs (SHIP, COBG, and HUD) which are striving and making progress towards improving local housing conditions. This coupled with an improvement in the income base of the area should serve to contribute to an ongoing and ever increasing improvement in the county's housing stock.
5. Transportation Element. The transportation element appears to be generally consistent with the Economic Element. In the future, the transportation element should identify, prioritize and provide funding mechanisms such that the improvements to the county's secondary and local roadway system can be expedited.
6. Intergovernmental Coordination Element. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element is consistent with the Economic Element. To insure future consistency, the county as well as all municipalities, should continue to maintain a joint comprehensive plan as well as one-stop building permitting.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The economic development strategies employed by Washington County and the municipalities located therein should be directed toward attracting outside capital investment and/or relocation of new business and industry to the area. This should focus on attracting business and industry which pay wages which are equal to or above the current average wages paid in the area. The creation of an environment which promotes the investment of local capital and spending into the local economy by local residents and business owners such that dollars earned in Washington County will tend to stay in Washington County.

A. Mechanisms to Promote Strategies. Although there are many such mechanisms that can be employed to promote these strategies, some of the most immediate and direct are as follows:

1. Support the training and education of the local citizens and workforce. Insure that adequate infrastructure is available to meet the needs of business and industry as well as of residents relocating to the area.

Promote local, state and national incentives directed toward assisting with the economic development of the area.

Promote and preserve the positive quality of life factors present within the county. Strive to enhance and improve intergovernmental coordination with a focus being to support the expansion and retention of business and industries.

There are specific federal, state and local programs which are designed to support the implementation of the mechanisms for economic development noted above as well as others. These major programs are presented below:

- a. Designation of Area of Critical Economic Concern. Washington County has been designated as an "Area of Critical Economic Concern" by the Governor. By being a "Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern" Washington County has better access to government programs that ultimately benefit the citizens by creating more economic opportunities. The "Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern" initiative allows the Governor, through the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI), more flexibility in applying criteria requirements or similar provisions of any economic development incentive. REDI is a multi-agency initiative, led and coordinated by the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, that assists rural communities to solve problems that affect their fiscal, economic or community viability.

Some of the incentives included in the designation are:

- Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program
- Quick Response Training Program
- "Road Fund" Projects
- Brownfield Redevelopment Bonuses
- Rural Job Tax Program

In addition, the initiative provides communities receiving the designation with greater access and flexibility with the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan and Regional Development Grant Programs.

Designation as a Federal Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Zone The HUB Zone Empowerment Contracting Program was enacted in 1997 as Title VI of Public Law 105-135 to provide Federal contracting assistance for qualified Small and Minority Owned Business concerns located in historically underutilized business zones, and non-metropolitan areas which were identified as qualified census tracts. All of Washington County has been designated as a HUB

Zone. This program provides for both sole-source and competitive set asides of Federal contracts to firms headquartered and doing business in these geographic areas. The law requires that, in addition to being headquartered in a HUB Zone, 35% of a contractor's employees must be HUB Zone residents. Firms cannot self-certify HUB Zone status. They must register with, and be approved by, the Small Business Administration.

Qualified Target Industry CQTD. The Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund is a tool available to Florida communities to encourage quality job growth in targeted high valued-added businesses. New or expanding businesses, serving multi-state and/or international markets, in targeted industries or designated corporate headquarters are eligible for this refund. Pre-approved applicants who create new jobs in Florida, paying 115% of the average annual area wage, can receive tax refunds up to \$3,000 per new job created, up to \$6,000 in an Enterprise Zone or Rural County. Additional "per job" bonuses are available for businesses paying 150 or 200 percent of the average annual area wage.

Quick Response Training (QRT). Quick Response Training is a customer driven training program designed as an inducement to secure new value-added businesses to Florida and provide existing businesses the necessary training for expansion. Through this incentive, Florida is able to effectively retain, expand and attract employers offering high-quality jobs. Workforce Florida, Inc. administers the program, with technical advice provided by the Department of Education. Eligible projects are new or expanding Florida businesses that produce exportable goods or services, created new permanent full-time jobs and employ Florida workers who require customized entry-level skills training.

Economic Development Transportation Fund Road Fund). The Economic Development Transportation Fund, commonly referred to as the "Road Fund", is an incentive tool designed to alleviate transportation problems that adversely impact a specific company's location or expansion decision. The elimination of the problem must serve as an inducement for a specific company's location, retention or expansion in Florida and must create or retain jobs.

Incumbent Worker Training (TWT). The incumbent Worker Training Program is funded by the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and administered by Workforce Florida, Inc. Through this program, Florida is able to provide grant funds to companies for training currently employed workers to keep Florida's workforce competitive in a global economy and to retain existing businesses. The IWT program is open to all Florida businesses that have been in operation for a minimum of one year prior to the application date, have at least one employee, and are current with all state taxes.

8. High Impact Performance Incentive Grant (HEPI). The High Impact Performance Incentive Grant (HIPI) is a negotiated incentive used to attract and grow major high impact facilities in Florida. Grants are provided pre-approved applicants in certain high-impact sectors (currently silicon technology and transportation equipment manufacturing) as designated by the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. In order to participate in the program, a company must be a designated high impact sector; create at least 100 new full-time equivalent jobs (if a research and development facility, create at least 75 new full-time equivalent jobs) in Florida in a three year period; and make a cumulative investment in the state of at least \$ 100 million (if a research and development facility, make a cumulative investment of at least \$75 million) in a three year period.
9. Capital Investment Tax Credit (CITC). The Capital Investment Tax Credit (CITC) is an annual credit against Florida state corporate income tax liability. The amount of the annual credit is equal to 5 percent of the eligible capital costs and can be taken for 20 consecutive years. Eligible capital costs include all expenses incurred in the acquisition, construction, installation and equipping of a project from the beginning of construction to the commencement of operations. For projects making a cumulative capital investment of at least \$100 million, the credit may be applied towards one hundred percent (100%) of the project's annual Florida corporate income tax liability for 20 consecutive years. If the cumulative capital investment is at least \$50 million but less than \$100 million, the credit may be applied to seventy-five percent (75%) of the project's annual corporate income tax liability. The ultimate value of credit will depend on the project's Florida corporate tax liability for 20 years following commencement of operations. Florida's Corporate Tax Rate is 5.5% of apportioned taxable income.
10. Rural Infrastructure Fund. The Rural Infrastructure Fund is a resource available to rural communities in Florida to facilitate the planning, preparation and financing of infrastructure projects in rural communities which will result in job creation, capital investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural economies by promoting tourism, trade and economic development. There are three types of grants available under the fund: (1) Total Project Participation Grant; (2) Feasibility Grant; and (3) Preclearance Review Grant.
11. Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Program. This program provides financial assistance to local governments in the form of either a loan or loan guaranty of up to \$560,000. The purpose is to provide financial assistance for a specific project that will lead to the creation of new jobs and increase the economic vitality and diversification of Florida's rural counties.
12. Rural Job Tax Credit A rural job tax credit is an incentive for eligible businesses located within one of Florida's 33 rural areas to create new jobs. The tax credit

provides for \$1,000 per qualified employee and can be taken against either the Florida Corporate Income Tax or the Florida Sales and Use Tax. Five million dollars of tax credits may be approved in a calendar year. These tax credits are provided to encourage meaningful employment opportunities that will improve the quality of life of those employed and to encourage economic expansion of new and existing businesses in rural areas of Florida.

Enterprise Zones. Enterprise Zones are areas targeted for economic revitalization. The Florida Enterprise Zone program offers financial incentives to businesses located in designated areas found in urban and rural communities. These incentives are offered to encourage private investment in the zones as well as employment opportunities for the area's residents. A portion of the City of Chipley has received designation as an Enterprise Zone. Specific benefits which are available to businesses located in Enterprises Zones are as follows:

- a. Jobs Tax Credit. Credit either against the Florida Corporate Income Tax or the Florida Sales and Use Tax on wages paid to new employees who have been employed by the business for at least 3 months and are residents of a Florida enterprise zone.
- b. Property Tax Credit. New or expanded businesses located in an enterprise zone are allowed a credit on Florida corporate income tax equal to 96% of ad valorem taxes paid on the new or improved property (the assessment rate varies by county).
- c. Sales Tax Refund for Business Machinery and Equipment Used in an Enterprise Zone. Refund on sales taxes paid on the purchase of certain business property.
- d. Sales Tax Refund for Building Materials Used in an Enterprise Zone. A refund for sales taxes paid on the purchase of building materials used to rehabilitate real property located in an enterprise zone.
- e. Sales Tax Exemption for Electrical Energy Used in an Enterprise Zone A 50% sales tax exemption available to qualified businesses located in an enterprise zone on the purchase of electrical energy.
- f. Local Government Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption Local government can provide newly established businesses and/or expand businesses with exemption on ad valorem taxes. These exemptions can serve to reduce the cost of doing business in order to support the creation of new jobs. Washington County has granted such exemptions in the past.

g. The Federal State Rural Development Council. The Florida State Rural Development Council (FSRDC) is a pro-active, private/public alliance that fosters the ongoing ability of rural communities to further their goals and addresses issues that affect rural Florida communities. FSRDC operates the following:

- A toll-free resource assistance line that performs funding searches and conducts grant development workshop
- A corporate donation and government surplus initiative which provides donated items and surplus office equipment and computer systems to rural challenged children/youth, nonprofit organizations and jurisdictions
- A rural Americorps*VISTA team. Team members receive a monthly stipend and an educational award while providing community assistance through their efforts with community organizations.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLCIES

Washington County including the municipalities of Chipley, Caryville, Ebro, Vernon and Wausau. This section of the element presents the goals, objectives, and policies to be adopted and implemented by Washington County and the municipalities noted above. The goals, objectives, and policies are intended to guide the County and municipalities in achieving its preferred economic future.

GOAL: Support and promote balanced economic growth; strengthen neighborhoods and communities; expand availability of educational and training opportunities; improve the tax base; improve opportunities for existing businesses; and promote and encourage participation for all citizens.

OBJECTIVE 1: The County and municipalities will create and maintain an economic development program and its related activities which will strive to achieve diversified economic growth and a balanced economic base.

Policy 1.1 - Develop and maintain a list of targeted private and public industries that are most suitable for the current potential assets of the County and municipalities.

Policy 1.2 - Work with appropriate groups to promote economic development in targeted areas.

Policy 1.3 - Establish an incentive program to redirect new economic development into existing vacant buildings within Central Business District (CBD) to hinder commercial sprawl and to maintain an active commercial core and tax base in the City of Chipley and the other areas in the County in need of redevelopment.

Policy 1.4 - In attracting new businesses and expansion of existing businesses, the County will stress the availability of current residents in the labor market, including semi-retired residents. Where practical, the County will assist in advising residents of job opportunities, including opportunities for "job sharing" by semi-retired residents.

OBJECTIVE 2: By the end of 2003, the County and municipalities will prepare and maintain an inventory of land (including finished sites) appropriate for development of employment uses, as well as inventory of finished and available building space.

Policy 2.1 - The County and municipalities will annually review the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the land development regulations, to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of vacant land available for various types of employment oriented land uses, and that such land is reasonably capable of being developed in a timely manner.

Policy 2.2 - The County and municipalities will coordinate with property owners and developers to prepare and pre-approve development plans and permits for sites so as to reduce implementation time.

Policy 2.3 - The County and municipalities will continue to monitor and participate in discussions regarding the extension of transportation facilities and services to the community, including rail transit services, and will maintain the Plan to support the development of such facilities and services.

Policy 2.4 - The County and municipalities will continue to provide for the development of a tourist and travel oriented business area adjacent to the I-10/SR 77 interchange.

Policy 2.5 - The County and the City of Chipley will facilitate the preparation and implementation of a development plan for the new 220 acre industrial park, and will seek appropriate funding to support planning, design, infrastructure, and development costs.

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide enhanced opportunities for the County and municipalities workforce to obtain necessary work skills to qualify for higher wage jobs.

Policy 3.1 - Provide community-based educational support for potential entrepreneurs to develop business skills.

Policy 3.2 - Promote development of a comprehensive program to facilitate market identification, management training, technical assistance and improve capital access.

Policy 3.3 - Facilitate the development of business incubator facilities.

Policy 3.4 - Support financial assistance and specialized training programs to encourage the development of small businesses, minority and women-owned businesses and disadvantaged business enterprises.

Policy 3.5 - Identify local and special business funding needs and work with appropriate agencies to encourage funding of economically viable businesses and disadvantaged business enterprises.

Policy 3.6 - Support child care programs for single parents pursuing higher education.

Policy 3.7 - Provide resident organization information on, and assistance in, completing community development corporation applications to encourage revitalization and create job opportunities in the community.

Policy 3.8 - Assist neighborhoods in obtaining federal planning grants to stimulate business growth and job creation in neighborhood commercial areas.

Policy 3.9 - Promote the evaluation and update of community training programs to meet the current and projected skill needs.

Policy 3.10 - Support an incentive program which will include, among other things, in-plant training, rapid response training, job training partnerships and education vouchers to encourage the hiring and upgrading (training) of the local workforce.

Policy 3.11 - Facilitate the alignment of the workforce development goals with the long-range plans of the Comprehensive Plan, the State Comprehensive Plan, and the West Florida Strategic Regional Plan.

OBJECTIVE 4: The County and municipalities will carry out the following policies to help achieve its development and redevelopment objectives by directing community facility improvements to serve employment areas and uses.

Policy 4.1 - In developing the annual update of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the adoption of the capital budget, the County and municipalities will consider proposed and developing employment centers and other non-residential uses. Where physically and financially feasible, capital facility improvements will be planned and constructed to support the development of employment uses, and to remove potential regulatory level of service deficiencies.

Policy 4.2 - The County and municipalities will ensure that streets and roads serving employment areas are constructed to standards sufficient to safely serve trucks. Where necessary, consideration will be given to adequate pavement thickness and width, curves, setbacks to pedestrian areas and landscaping, accessibility to parking and loading areas, and similar issues.

Policy 4.3 - The municipalities shall pursue annexation which proves to be cost beneficial for the residents and the city/town itself in terms of tax base versus cost of public services.

OBJECTIVE 5: The County and municipalities will carry out a program of activities to facilitate the efficient and effective review of land development proposals for economically beneficial land uses.

Policy 5.1 - The County and municipalities will continue to review and monitor the Plan, the Land Development code, and the development review process to identify specific regulations and/or specific regulatory procedures which are detrimental to rapid review and approval of commercial and industrial development proposals, and will revise the regulations and procedures as indicated.

Policy 5.2 - The County and municipalities will identify differences in development practices between residential and non-residential projects and will apply the procedures most appropriate to the type of development proposed.

Policy 5.3 - The County and municipalities will consider methods for allowing short-cut procedures for review of new development or modifications to existing development in already established non-residential areas, and will consider methods for modification and/or waiver of development standards where necessary to accommodate appropriate development of employment users.

Policy 5.4 - The County and municipalities will facilitate off-site mitigation required for environmental permitting for development of appropriate employment uses through pre-permitting of development, through participation in mitigation parks, and through coordination with permitting agencies.

OBJECTIVE 6: Modernize and continually improve access and communication links to the County and municipalities for economic development.

Policy 6.1 - Promote fiber optic capability and other technology which will provide access to high-speed electronic internet linkage as an attraction for new industry and business.

Policy 6.2 - Review economic development proposals for impacts upon the adopted level of service standards and for consistency of right-of-way needs with the projects listed in the Six-Year FDOT Plan and Florida Intrastate Highway System Plan.

OBJECTIVE 7: The County and municipalities will carry out a program of activities to improve the recognition of Washington County throughout the state, the region, and the nation as a community which is actively interested in development of appropriate economic development.

Policy 7.1 - The County and municipalities will encourage advertising by businesses and organizations within the area include references to their location in the area and the qualities of the area for economic development purposes.

Policy 7.2 - The County and municipalities will give special consideration to economic development projects which create a positive high visibility for the area in a large market area.

Policy 7.3 - The County and municipalities will facilitate community identification and community spirit throughout sponsorship and cooperation in festivals, such as The Water Melon Festival, The Possum Festival, and the Balloon Festival.

Policy 7.4 - The County and municipalities will use advanced information technology (such as the internet) to ensure that information about the County and opportunities therein reach a worldwide audience in a cost effective manner.

OBJECTIVE 8: The County and municipalities will seek to actively participate in and coordinate its activities with existing development organizations in the area.

Policy 8.1 - Where available and cost-effective, the County will maintain active participation in those groups established to promote economic and tourism development within the region, and will seek to ensure that Washington County is prominently mentioned in materials.

Policy 8.2 - The County and municipalities will prepare and/or assist in the preparation of informational materials regarding the attributes of Washington County and of the benefits for development of employment uses.