

Our Florida. Our Future.

Progress Report | February 2011



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COLLINS CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY
Thinking. Doing. For Florida.



OurFlorida. OurFuture.

Our Florida. Our Future. is a multi-year effort to envision the future of Florida. It includes three major thrusts: develop a scenario planning process, reach at least 4 million Floridians in this discussion, and support both the scenarios and the civic engagement efforts with appropriate research, data collection and policy papers. This effort began in early 2010 with a challenge from Collins Center Trustee Emeritus Charles Zwick to engage Floridians in a discussion about their future. Research and conversations held over the past year resulted in the strategy presented here.



This project will help Floridians prepare for the future and increase their chances for a better quality of life. It will nourish a deliberative democracy that legitimizes the vision.

It will create a broad civic dialog around plausible visions of the future (scenarios), based on informed discussions across the state, in partnership with other groups and organizations. These discussions will build relationships and organizations that will continue into the future and enable Floridians to guide our destinies.

Our goal: to create a dynamic, global state with communities that are prosperous, healthy, just, neighborly and sustainable.

Why is it important to envision Florida's future?

No one doubts the future will be challenging, not just for Florida, but for the nation and the world. Forces are converging to create unprecedented changes in technology, the economy, the environment, and world affairs. Those changes will tax Florida's ability to make wise and prudent decisions to prepare for and be successful as they occur.

It is difficult to see beyond the daily struggles that demand our attention. But nothing is more relevant to the future than understanding our current situation and considering the possibilities and dangers around every corner. All Floridians should have the chance to live as well as, or better than, their parents.

What does it mean to envision Florida's future?

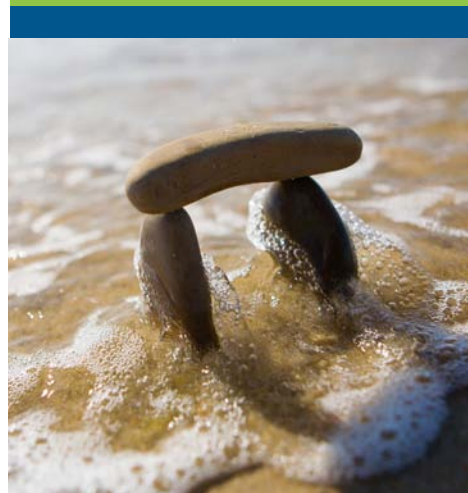
The future appears in many forms. One is the future we expect, usually based on trends, plans and assumptions about how the world works and how change occurs. Called a "baseline scenario," it is what happens if nothing surprising occurs and if no steps are taken to alter its course. But surprises happen, it seems, with increasing regularity. Can those surprises be predicted? Of course not. No one can predict the future. But using the techniques of the emerging field of *strategic foresight*, scenarios can be developed that represent a range of plausible futures.

Scenarios are not predictions. Rather they are stories (told in words, graphs, pictures and videos) about how the future might unfold. They not only reveal the inescapable fact that the future will be different from the present, but show us that it could be quite different from what is expected. A deep consideration of plausible scenarios creates an understanding of the dynamics of change, uncovers and chal-

lenges deeply held assumptions about the future, and creates a sense of urgency that something needs to be done.

Scenario planning allows for an understanding of the options and rehearsal of the available strategies long before the crisis occurs. By doing so, it raises specific issues and opportunities that would be missed in a standard predictive planning process.

In The Art of the Long View, author Peter Schwartz writes:



Scenarios deal with two worlds...the world of facts and the world of perceptions. Their purpose is to gather and transform information of strategic significance into fresh perceptions. When it works, it...leads to strategic insights beyond the mind's previous reach.

Scenarios are not about predicting the future; rather they are about perceiving futures in the present...

Why is extensive community involvement important?

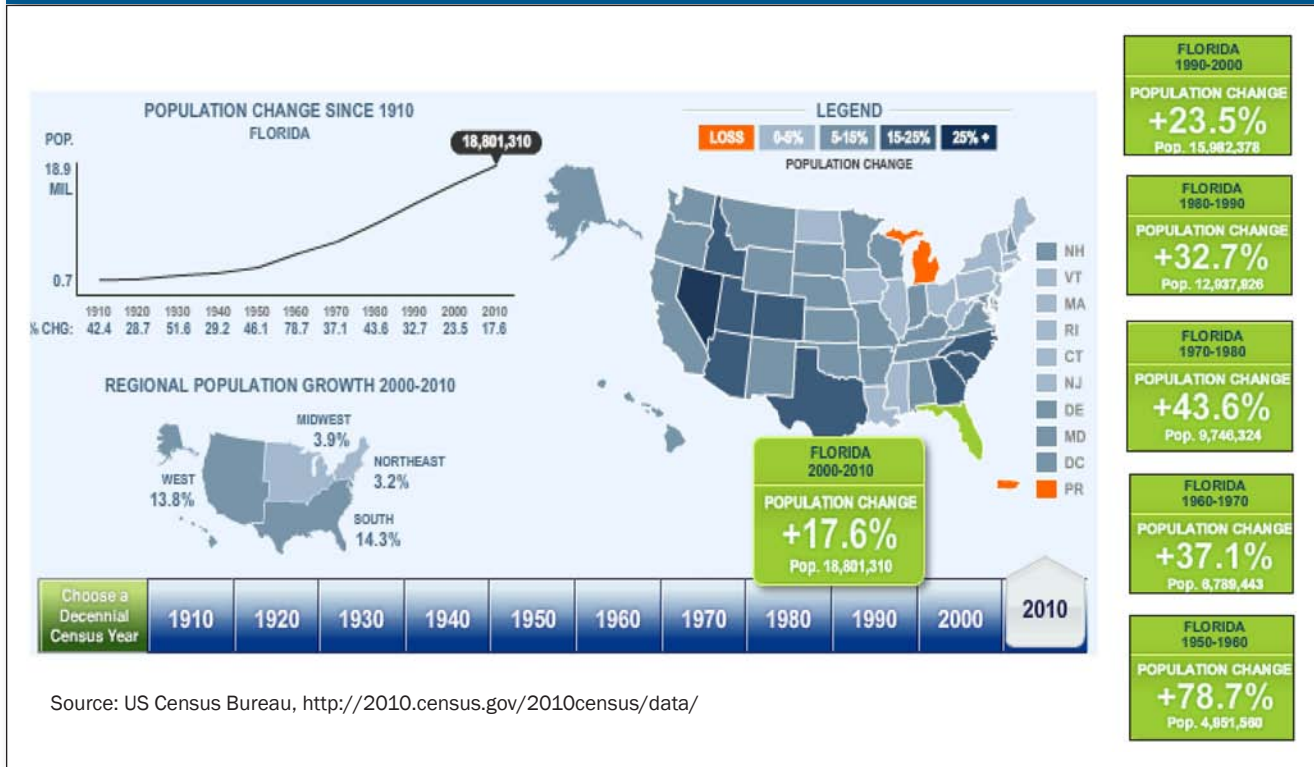
Too often, efforts to envision Florida's future fail because a few decision makers determine what is important. After a few years, the plans are forgotten and a new group of decision makers is formed to do the same thing — usually with the same results.

The Collins Center believes that many people across the state need to think about — and discuss with others — their aspirations and the changes they see occurring around them. People who have never been asked for their opinion need to be asked. Communicating across the partisan, racial, economic, cultural, age, geographic and gender divides that often separate us will be critical.

Scenarios represent the basis for this community discussion because there are no winners or losers in a scenario dialogue. Anyone with a legitimate perspective and a plausible future has a seat at the table. No one is right; no one is wrong. All plausible futures are "right" until proven otherwise.

The plan is to involve at least 4 million Floridians in the discussion, about 20 percent of the state's population. We believe that will be necessary to create Florida's best hope for the future.

Our population grows



Florida's remarkable population growth presents challenges few states are forced to confront.

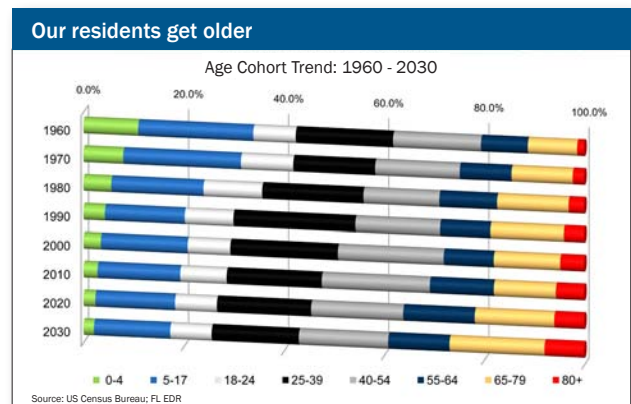
What information supports this project?

All good visioning efforts start with information collection and analysis. What are the key data points describing the current situations and what trends can be predicted? Statewide indicators on demographics, the economy, the environment, education, technology, and public safety will be compiled. These facts allow us to build a “baseline scenario”—a story about what Florida may become should current trends continue without significant change. This scenario is not to be evaluated as right or wrong. Rather, the baseline scenario will serve as a starting point for the community meetings and conversations.

In addition, several “working papers” will inform this project. The first, by author Cynthia Barnett, will discuss developing a “water ethic” in Florida. Another compiles significant events in Florida history and analyzes how they occurred. Were they the result of strong leadership or citizens coming to a single opinion, or did the change occur because of outside forces...or some combination of the three? Understanding how change occurred can help influence future change.



Several other policy papers are being considered, on new forms of governance, alternative energy, the future of agriculture, population trends, and how to create more civil and productive civic discourse. The Collins Center has an active research arm delving into areas such as regional problem-solving, health care, neighborhood revitalization, immigration and justice reform. The information gained in this research will help us understand Florida's future.



If trends hold, the number of Floridians over 65 increases while those under 40 decreases. How should Florida prepare?

{ Information. Discussion. Engagement. Action. }



What does success look like in three years? In ten years?

In three years, we hope the scenario plans will be completed and become part of the Florida political nomenclature. News outlets, blogs, candidates and decision-makers will refer to the scenarios when forming public policy.

In ten years, we hope there will be references to the “golden age” when enough common ground was discovered to communicate civilly about Florida’s plausible and preferred futures. Meaningful deliberation about policy challenges will be the norm, both for elected officials and their constituencies. Citizen engagement will be measurably improved.

Ultimately, we hope that, because *Our Florida. Our Future*, Floridians will be better prepared to thrive in an uncertain and rapidly changing world.

Anyone can put forth proposals in a deliberative democracy, which is motivated by consensus and not bound by pre-existing norms or power structures.

Will there be meaningful results?

Better policy and a more inclusive deliberative process is our goal. Simply hosting more civil conversations will not necessarily get us there.

The use of scenarios will create a more thoughtful, inclusive and honest civic conversation than has ever occurred. And that will lead to broad support for better policies.

We believe those who make decisions will respect the process, which includes broad civic engagement and evidence-based, non-partisan policy analysis. As the “talking” occurs, specific and compelling recommendations for policy change will arise and will not be easily dismissed.

The helpful acronym **IDEA** illuminates the process: Information, Discussion, Engagement, Action. Identifying the indicators, writing the policy papers and developing the baseline scenario all constitute the information stage. Discussions are already occurring in exploratory meetings across the state. These discussions will lead to building more complete scenarios and a more formal and broader engagement strategy. All this activity will undoubtedly lead to specific actions, both in substantive policy reform and in creating a process of civic engagement that should live in communities long past the life of this project.

Our Progress.

Spring 2010

Challenged by Collins Trustee Emeritus Charles Zwick, former budget director under President Lyndon Johnson, Rand Corp. trustee, and head of Southeast Banking Corp., to create a vision for Florida's future.

Began designing an initiative to bring citizens, communities and leaders into a thoughtful and collaborative process to envision the future of Florida.

Reviewed other planning initiatives within the state to determine the unique role the Collins Center might play.

Summer 2010

Attended conference at the University of Houston, where project manager Steve Seibert became certified in strategic visioning.

Investigated models from across the country and world and determined to pursue a scenario planning model.

Fall 2010

Collins Center Board of Trustees committed to a project spanning at least five years.

Project publicly introduced at Annual Sustainability Conference in Palm Beach Gardens.

Began statewide focus groups, inviting leaders to the Collins Center retreat outside Tallahassee to advise on project.

Set goal to reach at least 4 million Floridians.

Winter 2010/2011

Began designing conversation starters: water ethic; civic education; understanding the Florida budget; population projections.

Continued with focus groups across the state; Central Florida, Southwest Florida, Miami.

Gathered a focus group that helped develop *Our Florida. Our Future.* project name.

Began describing *Our Florida. Our Future.* in public and private presentations.

Built web site for project.

Met with national organizations experienced in deliberative democracy (America Speaks, Public Agenda).

Implemented **IDEA** process (Information, Discussion, Engagement, Action).

Published paper on creating a "water ethic".

Our Florida. Our Future. Our Plan.

- Create a *baseline scenario plan*, plus three to five alternative scenarios, as tools for communities to discuss their futures.
- Create *niche scenarios* by industry, sector, region, or other categories.
- Draft *reports* to inform scenarios and spur regional and community discussions.
- Create *short videos* to inform the public about imminent public policy issues.
- Perform and publicize *other research* by collecting data, polling, and creating infographics.
- Create an *online game* that allows users to create a better future Florida and engages new constituencies.
- Award an annual *Zwick Leadership Award* to acknowledge excellence in addressing future challenges.
- Prepare a progress report, due every February.
- Build a better *civic infrastructure* in partnership with local and regional groups.
- Train pro bono *facilitators* and conduct town hall meetings around future scenarios.
- Identify traditional and non-traditional institutions for *civic education initiatives*.
- Work with others to develop a *statewide agenda* on civic engagement.
- *Coordinate* with and support regional visioning initiatives, chambers of commerce, economic development councils, professional organizations, other non-profits, community groups, and religious institutions.
- Help *replicate* successful civic engagement models.
- Create an *interactive web site* to host elements such as “Florida stories,” a timeline, a grid of civic organizations and alternative scenarios.
- Provide *information portal*, e.g. links to key reports and other groups.
- Make editorial board visits, *public presentations* and submit opinion columns.



Visit www.OurFloridaOurFuture.org for more information on this initiative.



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We sincerely welcome your participation
in *Our Florida. Our Future.*

To share your ideas and comments
visit OurFloridaOurFuture.org

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This project is entirely funded by private donations.
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