

groups with a trained volunteer facilitator to review and finalize goal language. The participants made necessary changes to ensure the goals accurately represented the ideas generated during the brainstorming sessions. The participants also identified strategies for achieving the goals. In total, the participants at the Goal Writing meetings developed 19 goals and 105 strategies. See Chapter 6 for a complete list of all goals and strategies.

#### Step Four: Refining the Vision and Setting Priorities

Imagine Manatee sought the broadest public participation possible in the final stages of refining the vision and setting priorities through Visit the Vision events and the Community Choices workshop.

#### Visit the Vision

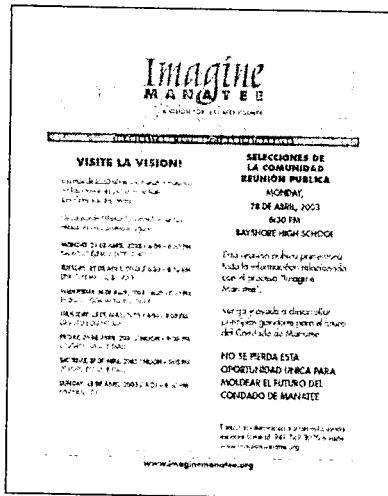
During the seven Visit the Vision open house style events held at strategic sites throughout the County, Imagine Manatee goals and strategies were presented on large format, tabletop displays. Visitors were given the opportunity to indicate which of the goals they felt were most important to the future of Manatee County and to sign up to work on implementing their priority goal. The Visit the Vision events provided a special opportunity to generate additional public awareness of and participation in the Imagine Manatee visioning process.

#### Community Choices

The Community Choices workshop was the final public participation event of Imagine Manatee. Held in April 2003 at Bayshore High School, Community Choices was designed to present all the information developed during the Imagine Manatee visioning process, to involve participants in further refining aspects of the vision, and to assess participants' priority goals for the future.

First, participants were divided into eight groups to discuss design principles and implementation tools for creating quality places in Manatee County. The principles and tools represented issues that pervaded the output of previous Imagine Manatee activities, but were not adequately addressed in the goals and strategies developed during the Goal and Strategy Writing Meetings. These included:

1. Community Appearance;
2. Land Preservation (Natural Areas, Agricultural Lands, and Parks and Open Space);
3. Mix of Uses;
4. Redevelopment, Infill Development, and Renovation;
5. Social Equity;
6. Civic Involvement;
7. Code Review and Enforcement; and
8. Neighborhood and Countywide Planning and Zoning.



This flyer was displayed and distributed in both Spanish and English to promote participation in the Visit the Vision and Community Choices activities.

**Goals in Priority Order**

Through the Imagine Manatee process, nineteen distinct goals for the future were developed. These goals were prioritized by participants during Visit the Vision and Community Choices. The results of the prioritization are listed below.

Goals by Rank	Total Votes
1 Preservation of Natural Areas	79
2 Environmental Quality	75
3 Automobile Transportation	69
4 Education	63
5 Growth Management	48
6 Parks and Trails	46
7 Affordable Housing	38
8 Culture, Arts, and Historic Preservation	37
9 Crime and Public Safety	34
10 Government and Leadership	26
11 Public Transportation	24
12 Neighborhood Character	22
13 Alternative Transportation	21
14 Social Issues	20
15 Planning and Zoning	20
16 Community Spaces	18
17 Economic Development	17
18 Downtowns	15
19 Delivery of Services and Water Supply	14

Next, the participants reviewed all the goals and strategies, registered their priorities, and were given the opportunity to register to assist with implementation of one or more goals. The results of Community Choices are included in Chapter 6.

**Step Five: Involving Elected Officials**

In the course of the public process phase of Imagine Manatee the ACP Team met on two occasions with elected officials from all jurisdictions in the County. These informal meetings were held to keep elected officials informed about developments in Imagine Manatee and gather their feedback.

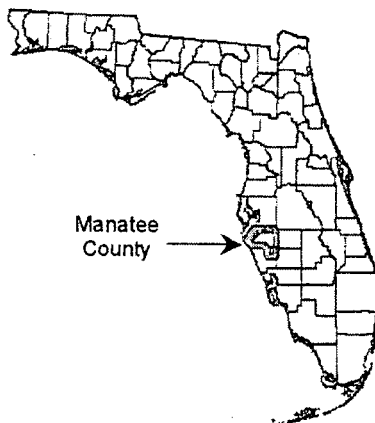
The first meeting of Elected Officials was held following the Stakeholder Workshop in November of 2002. It included a review of preliminary existing conditions and trends and a presentation of the results of the Stakeholder Workshop. The second meeting was held at the conclusion of the Public Brainstorming meetings in March 2003. The meeting included a presentation of the final existing conditions and trends and a discussion of the results of the public meetings. The discussion focused both on the substance of the public input as well as on a review of the demographics of the participants.

A third meeting is scheduled to present the Imagine Manatee final report to a joint session of the County's elected officials.

## Part II: Community Profile

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Manatee County is located roughly midway along Florida's west coast.

### 3. The County

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The visioning process is designed to be both informed and intuitive – analyzing available data on the existing conditions and trends in the County while incorporating the insight of those who live and work in the County through the public involvement process. This chapter on the County and the following chapter on County Data and Trends deal with documenting and analyzing conditions in the County.

#### Location

Manatee County is located roughly midway along Florida's west coast and is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and Hillsborough, Hardee, DeSoto, and Sarasota Counties (see map in sidebar). The County has six municipalities comprised of diverse communities, each with its own particular character and identity. All of the municipalities are active participants in the Imagine Manatee visioning process.

The six municipalities are:

- Anna Maria,
- Bradenton Beach,
- Bradenton,
- Holmes Beach,
- Longboat Key, and
- Palmetto.

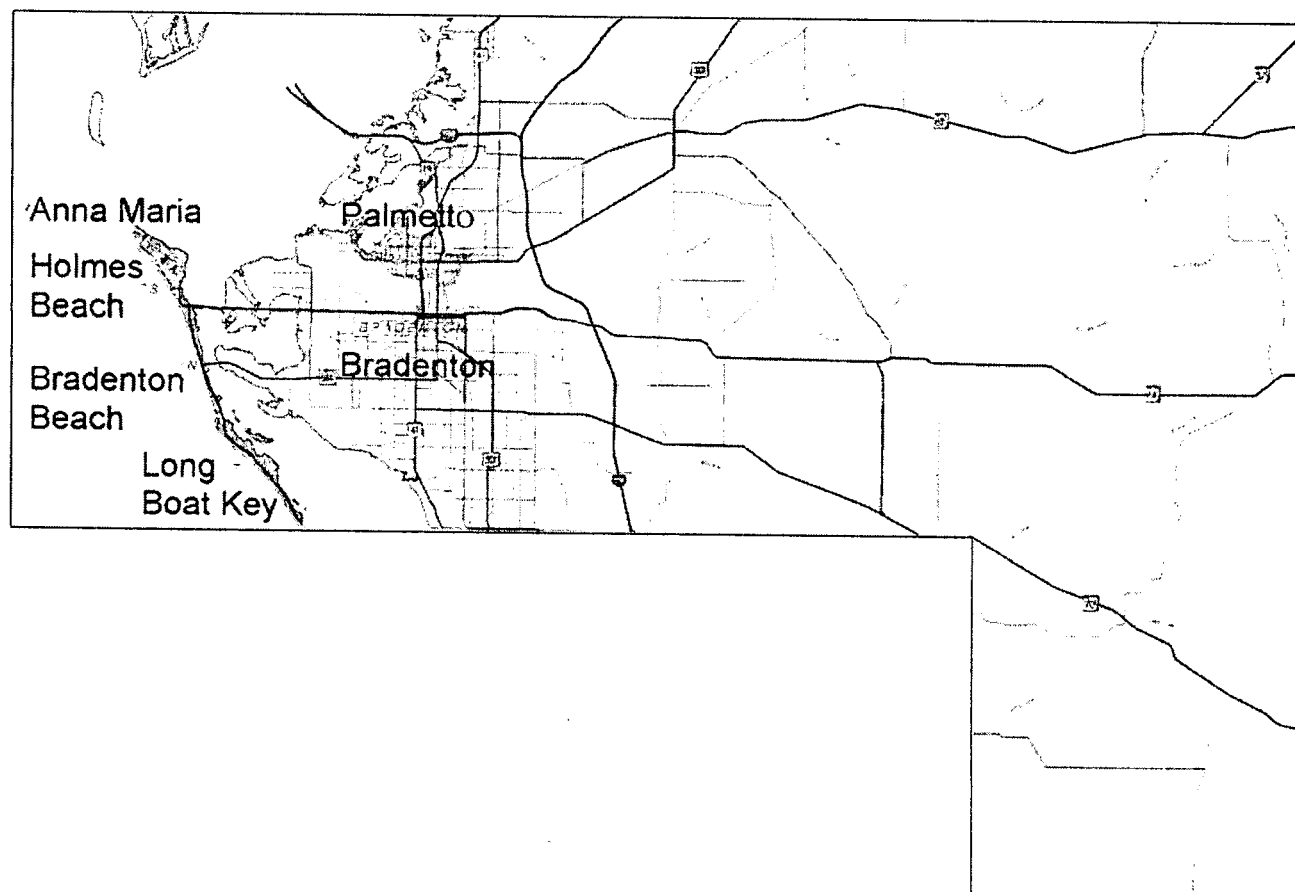
The municipalities are located on the west side of the County, four of which are on barrier islands. Anna Maria Island, a seven-mile long barrier island located due west of the City of Bradenton, is home to the cities of Anna Maria, Bradenton Beach, and Holmes Beach. Longboat Key is also a barrier island whose northern half is within Manatee County boundaries and southern half is in Sarasota County. The largest municipalities in the County are the cities of Palmetto and Bradenton. These cities lie on either side of the Manatee River – Palmetto on the north side and Bradenton on the south. A map of the County is provided at the end of this chapter.

### Area

Manatee County is 740 square miles in area with 150 miles of coastline and 27 miles of beaches. Its unincorporated area is approximately 718 square miles. Roughly 13 percent of the unincorporated area is urbanized, consisting of residential, commercial, office, industrial, utilities, and institutional land uses. A considerable amount of land is allocated to agricultural and open space land uses. Approximately 43 percent of the unincorporated area is identified as agricultural and 12 percent is identified as conservation or parkland.

I've seen this county change quite a bit — some good, some bad.  
— Public Meeting Participant

Map of Manatee County



### History

In 1855, Manatee County was formed from portions of Hillsborough and now defunct Mosquito counties where thousands of cattle roamed unfenced land in the interior sections of the County. The County soon experienced a large influx of settlers from Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina.

In 1867, as land was opened for settlement, over 800 families made up mostly of ex-confederate soldiers and their families moved to Manatee County. A person could claim 180 acres for homestead if they cleared a portion, defended it, and occupied it for five years. Most settlers brought small herds of cattle to the area, built homesteads, and grew sugar cane, corn, and other vegetables.

In 1887, Desoto County was formed from eastern Manatee County and the City of Arcadia was designated as the new county seat. Manatee's county seat was relocated from Pine Level, now a ghost town in Desoto County, to Braidentown (modern Bradenton). It was not until 1921 that Sarasota County was formed from the southern portion of Manatee County.

Cattlemen continued their trade from the 1880s through the 1920s, but the 1920s marked the beginning of Florida's boom years when thousands of people arrived in the state seeking prosperity. During this time, development in the City of Palmetto was accelerated by construction of the Victory Bridge, the first bridge across the Manatee River between the Palmetto and Bradenton. Similarly, the coastal area of the County began to develop when the first bridge to Anna Maria Island was built in the 1920s.

The County's population progressively filled in the areas between the barrier islands and the cities of Palmetto and Bradenton, creating Manatee County's present day urban core. As the resident population grew, agricultural lands were increasingly replaced by suburban development. Today, the County continues to draw new residents who are attracted by the County's pleasant climate, relatively low taxes and overall cost of living, availability of housing, proximity to regional markets, and abundant recreational resources. The local economy has developed around tourism, retirement living, retail trade, and real estate development.

### Manatee County Today

The physical location, environmental attributes, and history of any locality greatly influence the form of its physical and economic development, governmental structure, and social character. There are numerous examples of how these factors have influenced Manatee County.

The County originally developed around agriculture, which continues to play a critical role in the local economy. Although agricultural employment has declined, acreage in crop production remained stable between 1990 and 2000. Out of Florida's 67 counties, Manatee County ranks first in tomato and watermelon production, second in cabbage, and third in pepper crops. During the visioning process, residents indicated their desire to preserve

the agricultural character and economy in parts of the County (see Part III, The Vision).

Manatee County's location in Florida along US Highway 41 and access to the Manatee River and the Gulf of Mexico initially made the County an attractive area for seasonal retirees. The combination of its small town feeling and being part of the Tampa Bay metropolitan area, which includes Tampa and St. Petersburg to the north, and Sarasota to the south, contributed to turning Manatee County into a desirable area in which to live and work. More recently, I-75 and I-275 have played key roles in the development of the county. This dynamic has led to notable population growth affecting various aspects of development and quality of life in the County.

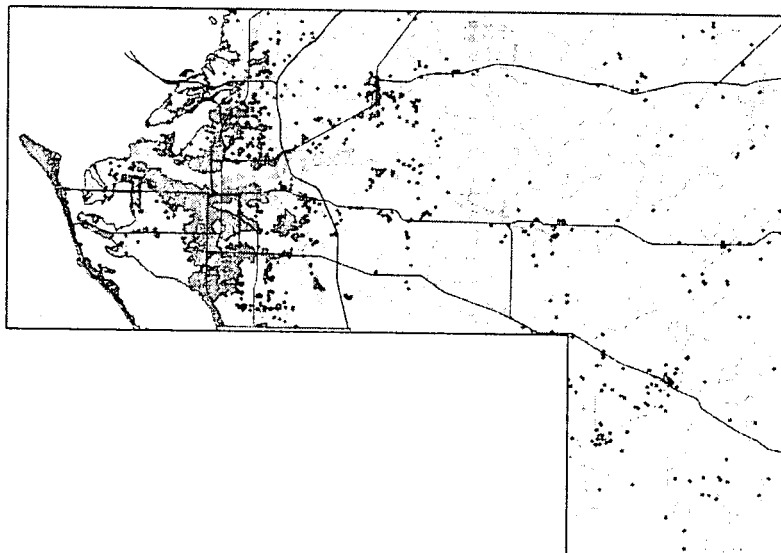
The maps on the following page illustrate the changing development patterns growth has created in the County. In the past, development was focused near the waterfront. Today development is spreading eastward into agricultural and previously undeveloped areas. In fact, between 1990 and 2000, approximately 83 percent of population growth took place in the unincorporated areas of the County. In addition, density is decreasing. The number of dwelling units per acre has declined from 2.8 to 2.5 units per acre in recent years.

Concerns about population growth were raised continually during the visioning process and numerous goals and strategies (see Chapter 6) attempt to deal with the resultant impacts of population growth on land, the environment, public services, and infrastructure.

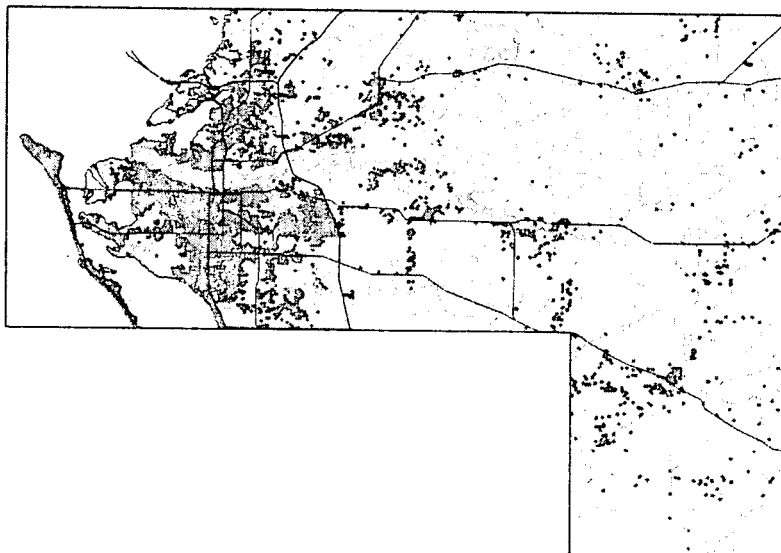
### Changes in Development, 1960 to Today

The maps below present all structures extant in Manatee County for the years 1960, 1980, and today. Each structure is represented by one dot. The maps illustrate the historical concentration of development near the water in the western portion of the County and the more recent expansion eastward.

1960

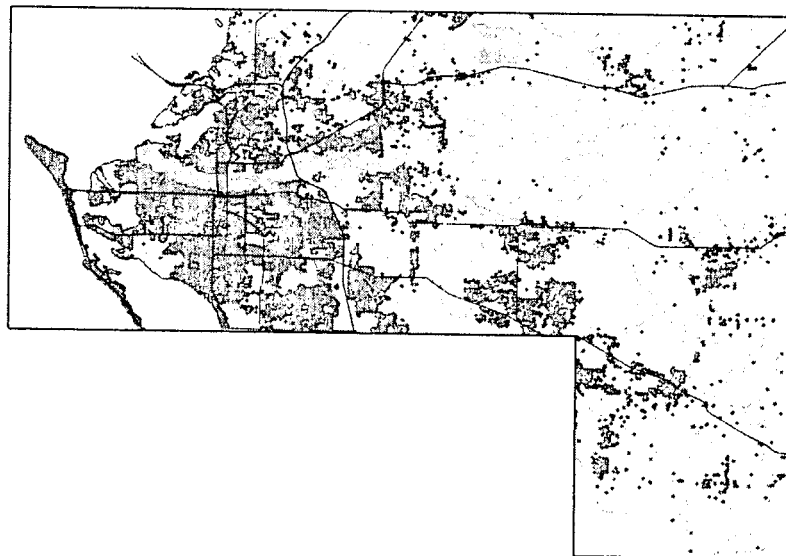


1980





Today





#### **A Day in the Life**

Based on current trends, between 2000 and 2010, Manatee County can be expected to change in the following ways, everyday...

- 14 more people,
- 6 new dwellings,
- 2.5 acres developed for residential uses,
- 62 new transportation trips on area roads, and
- 4 new jobs created.

## 4. County Data and Trends

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An extensive technical analysis of Manatee County's historical and projected demographics, socioeconomic indicators, and land use was conducted. Data was assembled from several sources for this analysis, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Florida and U.S. Statistical Abstracts, the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research, the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, and local government comprehensive plans. When appropriate, Manatee County is compared to the region (defined for this report as Hillsborough, Sarasota, DeSoto, and Pinellas counties), the State of Florida, and the nation.

Outlined below are highlights from the findings of the data and trends analysis. The full Existing Conditions and Trends Report prepared by the ACP Team is included in Appendix B. In addition to a thorough analysis of conditions in the County, the appendix includes a comprehensive list of key findings. These findings correlate closely with the intuitive results of the Stakeholder Interviews (see Appendix A) and other Imagine Manatee public involvement activities.

Although data and trends are critical to generating understanding of the County, it is important to remember that trends are not destiny. Existing conditions are facts. Forecasts are predictions of what the future may hold – they are not set in stone. The Vision for Manatee County when implemented may very well change the course of current trends to create a community representative of the goals and aspirations of its residents.

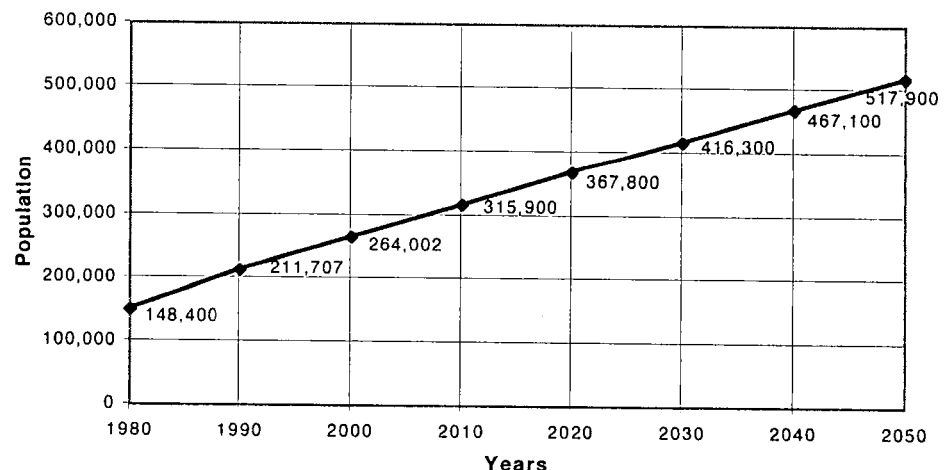
### Snapshot of Manatee County

#### Population

As of year 2000, Manatee County had a population of 264,002. According to the Census, 86.4 percent of the population is white, 8.2 percent of the population is black or African American, and 9.3 percent Hispanic or Latino. Although the percentage of the Caucasian population decreased four percent between 1990 and 2000, Manatee County is still slightly less diverse than the region, state, and nation.

In the next 50 years the population of Manatee County is likely to almost double. It is projected that the population of Manatee County will grow by approximately 50,000 people each decade through year 2050 adding over 250,000 new residents for a total estimated population of 517,900.

**Manatee County Historical & Projected  
Population Growth, 1980-2050**



#### Employment, Income, and Poverty

In examining socioeconomic indicators there are four employment sectors of particular interest: arts, lodging, and entertainment which grew by 527 percent from 1990 to 2000; education/health and retail trade which are the first and second largest employers respectively; and agriculture which experienced the greatest decline in employment from 1990 to 2000 decreasing by 54 percent.

Median household income in 2000 was \$38,673, which is on par with the State of Florida but lower than regional and national figures. Manatee County's percent increase in household income between 1990 and 2000 was greater than those of the region, state, or nation. The percentage of those living below the poverty line remained relatively unchanged between 1990 and 2000 at 10 percent of the population.

### **Housing**

According to recent data, the housing stock is increasing in value. The average cost of a new home in Manatee County in 2000 was \$105,689. A large majority of housing in Manatee County (70 percent) has been built in the last 30 years. Approximately 74 percent of housing is owner occupied.

### **Transportation and Traffic**

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are estimated to increase by 99.8% from 1995 to 2025. Due to increasing congestion, it will take 23.5 percent more time to get to a destination in year 2025 compared to 1995.

### **Land Use**

The total land area of Manatee County is 474,000 acres. As of 2000, urbanized areas of the County totaled 59,700 acres, an increase of 31 percent from 1990. Residential land use is the largest consumer of land occupying approximately 44,000 acres in 2000. Two or fewer home-sites per acre represented the greatest increase in land consumption, growing by 97 percent between 1990 and 2000. It is anticipated that the trend in land conversion to urban uses will continue – unless steps are taken to alter development patterns – thus resulting in the urbanization of an estimated total of 128,000 acres of land by 2050.

## Part III: The Vision

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## 5. Goals and Strategies

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### Goals and Strategies

The goals and strategies contained in this chapter represent the collective vision for the future of Manatee County. The goals express Manatee County residents' hopes and aspirations for their community and the strategies provide the roadmap to achieving the goals. Both the goals and strategies were articulated, refined, and validated through extensive public involvement efforts as documented in Chapter 2.

The 19 goal areas listed below are in alphabetical order in this chapter. The related strategies are listed within each goal in priority order based on the results of the Goal and Strategy Writing Meetings.

- Affordable Housing
- Alternative Transportation
- Automobile Transportation
- Community Spaces
- Crime and Public Safety
- Culture, Arts, and Historic Preservation
- Delivery of Services and Water Supply
- Downtowns
- Economic Development
- Education
- Environmental Quality
- Government and Leadership
- Growth Management
- Neighborhood Character
- Parks and Trails
- Planning and Zoning
- Preservation of Natural Areas
- Public Transportation
- Social Issues



Participants record their ideas at a Public Meeting.

If we want to solve problems, we need to find other ways that will work. We need to think out of the box.

— Public Meeting Participant

### Affordable Housing

#### Goal

A community with safe, diverse, new, and existing neighborhoods that provide adequate amounts of quality affordable housing for very low and moderate-income families, agricultural workers, migrant workers, seniors, and residents with special needs throughout the County.

#### Strategies

1. Revise local development codes to encourage traditional neighborhood development, boosting affordable housing by design.
2. Offer tax incentives or impact fee credits to builders and investors.
3. Offer families that are currently on subsidized housing assistance homeownership options, including faith-based initiatives.
4. Develop inclusionary zoning.
5. Local elected officials encourage developments consistent with the goal.

### Alternative Transportation

#### Goal

A community with a fully integrated and regional multi-modal transportation system that serves everyone and promotes safety, increases transportation network efficiency, and maximizes neighborhood connections.

#### Strategies

1. Establish rules and regulations that facilitate the incremental development of the goal in all construction, development, and redevelopment or scheduled infrastructure improvements/repairs.
2. Form a task force that includes all sectors of the community and local experts, that will determine the specific transportation needs, and will interact with the appropriate government and other agencies to plan, fund, and implement recommended changes.
3. Establish transit lines that are dense and frequent throughout the County.
4. Add sidewalks and bicycle paths on all major roads and around schools.
5. Coordinate with all regional public transportation systems seeking advice and suggestions.

### Automobile Transportation

#### Goal

A community that plans, develops, and maintains a comprehensive network of efficient roads, highways, and infrastructure while encouraging the use of cleaner more fuel-efficient vehicles and other forms of alternative transportation, thereby creating beautiful livable roadways that improve travel throughout the County.