

### The Year in Review



Polk Vision ended 2005 with 345 Vision Partners committed to supporting the implementation of the community's vision for the future of Polk County. Each Vision Partner organization will implement a single strategy or many strategies as their contribution to achieving the Vision. In the fall of 2004, the Polk Vision Steering Committee selected strategies from each foundation area as priority strategies for implementation during 2005 based upon recommendations made by each of the foundation teams. The following is a summary of the strategies selected for 2005 and a brief report on the progress of their implementation. Please note, complete wording of the strategies is available in the Vision document at [www.polkvision.com](http://www.polkvision.com).

*Colleen Burton, Executive Director*

#### Education

(Strategies A4 & A5)



##### Higher Education and Skills Training

- Provide the opportunity to increase the Polk County workforce's compensation by increasing the productivity of the current Polk County workforce through education and training.
  - Develop user-friendly transition programs for adults returning to higher education.
- The Continuing Education Support Alliance was formed and is in the process of determining current programs and levels of participation.

#### Economic Development

(Strategy 5)



- Create highly competitive incentive and tax exemption programs that attract new higher paying jobs through relocation, expansion, retention and new enterprise creation.

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners approved an incentive program developed by the Central Florida Development Council.

#### Infrastructure

(Strategies A1b & A1f)



##### Growth Management

- Maintain a comprehensive land use plan that is coordinated with countywide infrastructure plans.
  - Ensure cooperation, equity and trust from all parts of the county in creating and maintaining the plans. Create and maintain a public partnership and a private-public partnership for all elements of infrastructure planning and development.
- The Infrastructure Foundation Team began the process of identifying key stakeholders necessary for the successful implementation of this strategy.

- Develop an "activity-based cost accounting" system to create an equitable and fair land use planning computer model.

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners approved a selection committee's recommendation to select a Growth Management Fiscal Analysis Model at its December 21, 2005 meeting.

#### Government

(Strategies 1 & 2)



- Encourage all levels of government in Polk County to formally endorse Polk Vision and provide the leadership and resources to implement the Strategies, Visions and Key Benchmarks and use the Core Values in guiding decision making.

The Government Cooperation and Participation Alliance successfully achieved Vision endorsement by 86 percent of government entities.

- Create more cooperation and teamwork between cities, county, school board, state and federal government, private sector, and citizens to resolve and/or solve problems and better utilize scarce resources.

The Government Cooperation and Participation Alliance organized the first Elected Leadership Summit, a "first step" in creating teamwork across the county.

#### Quality Of Life

(Strategies E3 & F3)



##### Social Services

- Coordinate funding and service provision by social service organizations countywide to maximize scarce resources in the most effective and efficient way.

The Social Services Coordination Alliance was founded and meets on a monthly basis to implement this strategy.

##### Public Safety

- Maintain a comprehensive plan to ensure the safety of all citizens, governments and schools from all high-risk threats (natural or manmade).
- The Polk County Emergency Management Dept. has a well-developed plan and is responsible for updating and maintaining the plan.

#### Private Sector Leadership

(Strategy 3)



- Sustain a strong private-sector commitment to implement and communicate Polk Vision.
- The Private Sector Leadership Foundation Team sponsored community information sessions to educate citizens on important issues.



# Benchmarks



Pat Steed, Co-Chair - Benchmark Task Force

## EDUCATION ■ JOB GROWTH AND BUSINESS INVESTMENT ■ INFRASTRUCTURE STABLE MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES ■ POVERTY ■ ARTS AND CULTURE RACIAL HARMONY, DIVERSITY AND OPPORTUNITY

As Polk's Vision is contained in vision statements, core values and strategies, its success is measured through benchmarks. Measurements are used to monitor progress toward change in the community. Over the course of the next twenty years, numerous key benchmarks will be used to determine how the above overall areas improve countywide.

In addition to these areas of key benchmarks, there will be individual strategy benchmarks set by alliances as they work toward accomplishing specific changes in the foundation areas of Education, Quality of Life, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Government and Private Sector Leadership.

The Benchmark Task Force is a group of volunteers who meet regularly to

determine what types of measurement will be needed and to bring data from many different sources together. Their role is to report, in an objective and unbiased way, Polk Vision's success, or lack of success, in many different ways.

Not all information used to measure key benchmarks is available yearly, such as data from the US Census conducted every ten years. Also, some new information will be needed from new local sources. Gathering this type of information will be an important role of Polk Vision in the years to come.

Without honest, accurate and regular appraisal of the Vision results, we cannot maintain our credibility in the community.

### KEY BENCHMARKS The following areas were targeted for measurement in the first year of Polk Vision:

#### Education

Polk Vision and the Polk County School Board set these three key benchmarks for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

These 2005 numbers will be used to measure future success of education efforts.

**Benchmark A:** Increase the graduation rate by 3% per year

2005 - Graduation rate: 70.5%

**Benchmark B:** Increase 10th grade reading proficiency by 3% per year

2005 - Students in the 10th grade reading at 10th grade level: 26%

**Benchmark C:** Increase the percentage of children ready for kindergarten by 3% per year

2005 - Children ready for kindergarten: 76%

#### Job Growth and Business Investment

From 1990 to 2003, Polk County produced 2,541 average annual net new jobs with a high of 6,891 in 1994 and a low of -4,625 in 1991. Meeting this benchmark will help reduce those workers commuting out of the county, retain and attract more young people to the county, keep our unemployment rates low and provide jobs for new residents.

**Benchmark:** 7,000 net increase in jobs per year

December 2004 to December 2005 – 9,751 net new jobs

In the first year of Polk Vision, the benchmark for jobs was exceeded by 2,751!

*This was a remarkable start for job growth.*

#### Infrastructure

Polk Vision identified that there was a substantial infrastructure gap occurring in providing facilities to meet growth as it occurs. This lack of infrastructure affects not only quality of life, but also the continued economic vitality of Polk County.

**Benchmark:** Reduce existing infrastructure gap to zero by 2014

Identified Deficiencies	Funded in 2005	Remaining Deficiencies
\$581,000,000	\$43,200,000	\$537,800,000

#### Stable Marriages and Families

Live births to unwed mothers and live births to teenage mothers under age 18 both reflect issues confronting families and have significant impacts on other Vision areas including education, economy and quality of life.

**Benchmark:** Reduce the birth rates of unwed mothers and teenage mothers

% births to unwed mothers		Births to mothers under age 18 (rate per 1,000)	
2002	45.6%	2002	14.3
2003	46.5%	2003	13.2
2004	48.0%	2004	13.8
State 2004 – 41.3%		State 2004 – 8.8 per 1,000	

#### Arts and Culture

The arts make a significant impact on both the quality of life and the economy in Polk County. "Cities Ranked & Rated" ranks metropolitan areas throughout the US and Canada.

**Benchmark:** Polk County to be rated in the upper one-quarter of those ranked by 2024

In 2004, Polk County ranked 231 out of 403 US and Canadian metropolitan areas. This information, previously reported in "Places Rated Almanac," is now published in "Cities Ranked & Rated."

The Polk Vision benchmark areas of Poverty and Racial Harmony, Diversity and Opportunity will be measured in future years.



# Vision Partner Perspectives



I have been amazed how motivated citizens have been so successful in altering the course of our county in many significant aspects. Although we will always debate exactly how to get there, our diverse vision group believes that our goal is to make Polk County the greatest place in the world to work, play and raise our children and grandchildren. And, we all know and believe that implementing our Polk Vision is the only way to achieve our goal.

**Ron Clark**  
Co-Chair, Polk Vision  
President - Clark, Campbell & Mawhinney, P.A.



Polk Vision has brought about community participation in determining needs and working to accomplish goals. We've achieved this through partnerships with businesses, non-profit organizations and governmental entities countywide. Our accomplishments have provided a plan to continue making Polk County a better community in which to work, live and serve.

**Cindy Price**  
Co-Chair, Polk Vision  
Regional Manager - Community Relations, Tampa Electric



Polk Vision has been a driving force in helping to develop partnerships within the community with people and organizations in every sector impacted by cultural arts organizations and individual artists. By promoting collaboration, the Polk Arts Alliance and Polk Vision are working to build a stronger voice in support of the arts. The cultural arts in Polk County have relevance to all of the issues that were chosen as priority issues for Polk Vision; especially quality of life, cultural diversity, culture and the arts, education, economic development and youth issues. The cultural arts, Polk Vision and the Polk Arts Alliance are impacting all of these critical areas of our lives.

**Mischelle Anderson**  
Executive Director - Polk Arts Alliance



It has been fascinating to see what started as a United Way of Central Florida Community Needs Assessment become, in a little more than three years, the major program we now know as Polk Vision. Working with so many fine people who want to keep the good and change what is necessary to improve the quality of life for all Polk County citizens has been a privilege. We have learned that areas such as Education, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Government, Business, Social Services, Health Care, and the Arts are interdependent and all have a profound effect on our "Quality of Life." Polk County can become the model for the proper way to grow.

**Joe O'Leary**  
Community Volunteer



I think Polk Vision was successful in getting elected officials in Polk County Government as well as appointed public servants to come to grips with the growing infrastructure gap and to deal with it by providing a new revenue stream. We are now investing in the future of Polk County to provide our citizens with a greatly improved quality of life.

**Mike Herr**  
County Manager - Polk County Board of County Commissioners



Polk Works is an active Vision Partner in a number of key areas related to education, workforce development and economic development. As a co-chair of the Economic Development Foundation Team, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the activity being generated as a result of the Vision process. As a matter of fact, when Polk Works enters into its next phase of strategic planning, the Board has elected to use the Vision document as the foundation for that plan! Of course our hope is that this will create a powerful synergy between what the citizens of Polk County want our community to be and the direction we pursue strategically on a daily basis. Through this and other powerful partnerships, the Vision will be achieved!

**Nancy Thompson**  
Executive Director - Polk Works



We appreciate the emphasis on education throughout the Polk Vision document and the commitment and interest of the diverse groups of citizens who crafted the plan. We have taken the items related to education seriously and have aligned our entire school district's strategic plan with the Polk Vision Plan. Each goal and objective is correlated to Polk Vision. All the publications that are distributed to each school reflect this correlation.

As educators, we are encouraged at the level of interest and commitment our Polk County community has shown toward the work that we do within the public school system. We further believe that the alignment of our various efforts will serve Polk County well and will be a catalyst for an even brighter future!

**Gail F. McKinzie, Ph.D.**  
Superintendent - Polk County Public Schools



Polk Vision provides a collective dream of what our community can be. It outlines specific community priorities with established goals. By striving together toward the ideal (the Vision), our community becomes an even better place to live. United Way of Central Florida has identified Strategy C in the Education Foundation as our primary vision strategy. We know that children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to graduate from high school and become productive adults.

Many, if not all, of United Way's partners are engaged in cooperative efforts to fulfill an assortment of the goals in Polk Vision. Life is too short to be complacent. We know that our community is a great place to live and work for many and are striving to make it the best place to live for all.

**Terry Worthington**  
President - United Way of Central Florida



The utilization of the Polk Vision document as a road map has allowed the implementation phase of Polk Vision to have a defined focus during the first year. Since the document was developed by the citizens throughout the county, the voice and direction is global and well defined. The establishment of priorities has gone well, and the continued awareness of the citizens' voice is being communicated. The first year demonstrated that the Vision Document can be used as a tool kit by community members and government to address the issues to have a better community.

**Charles W. McPherson**  
Chairman, President and CEO - SunTrust Bank, Mid-Florida



# Looking Ahead...

The Polk Vision Steering Committee identified 12 priority strategies for 2006. These strategies encompass a wide variety of issues including literacy, county branding, healthcare, arts and culture, environment preservation, government, and the establishment of a county-wide leadership development program. There is a role for every organization, private or public, to play in building Polk County's future by getting involved in implementing any of the more than 150 strategies in the Polk Vision document.

The Polk Vision Steering Committee adopted a guiding principle "to create a Polk County sense of community that fosters pride in our county, emphasizes our sense of place, celebrates our heritage and recognizes and includes our many physical assets and diverse cultures." Become part of the Vision by becoming a Vision Partner.



For more information contact Polk Vision –  
■ (863) 646-0439 ■ Email: [info@polkvision.com](mailto:info@polkvision.com)  
■ Or visit our Web site: [www.polkvision.com](http://www.polkvision.com)

# Vision Partner Invitation

Please accept this invitation to become a supporter of the Vision process, and join the growing list of organizations throughout Polk County that, as Vision Partners, are working together to "create our future."

## What is a VISION PARTNER?

Any organization which supports Polk Vision and any of the Visions, Strategies and Key Benchmarks found in the Vision document.

## Ways to participate include (but are not limited to):

- Adopt and implement Strategies found in the Vision document.
- Encourage other organizations to become Vision Partners, and promote Polk Vision by referencing your affiliation with us in printed and advertising material or by creating a link to the Polk Vision Web site ([www.polkvision.com](http://www.polkvision.com)) on your organization's Web site.

Yes, please include us as a **Vision Partner of POLK VISION**

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary area of interest:

- |                                     |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education  | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of Life      | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector Leadership |

Please return completed form to:

P. O. Box 1506 ■ Highland City, FL 33846 ■ Fax: (863) 619-7307



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# Progress Report 2005