



UNC
FRANK HAWKINS KENAN
INSTITUTE OF
PRIVATE ENTERPRISE



UNC
KENAN-FLAGLER
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Assessing the Competitiveness of Gulf County, Florida

**James H. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.
Catherine Wheeler McClain**
*Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
Kenan-Flagler Business School
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3440*

October 2006

Assessing the Competitiveness of Gulf County, Florida

**James H. Johnson, Jr.
Catherine Wheeler McClain**

Table of Contents

- **Executive Summary**
- **Introduction, Critical Background, and Purpose**
- **Methodology**
- **The Study Area**
- **Demographic Profile**
- **SWOT Analysis**
- **Summary and Recommendations**
- **Appendix**
 - **Table A1: Summary of SWOT Results**

List of Tables

- 1. Types of Community Capital Assets**
- 2. Questions Posed in a Community-Level SWOT Analysis**
- 3. Gateways and Databases Used in the Research**
- 4. Key Demographic Characteristics of Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000 and 2005**
- 5. Income, Poverty, and Adult Education: Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000**
- 6. Distribution of Jobs by Industrial Categories: Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000**

List of Figures

- 1. A Business-oriented Conceptual Model for Enhancing Community Competitiveness**
- 2. Population by Sex and Age, for Gulf County, Florida**

Executive Summary

Using a conceptual model anchored in recent research on community competitiveness and information culled from a fifteen-year survey of several electronic databases, Gulf County's ability to compete in the new economy is evaluated by assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in its existing stock of *polity, financial, physical, human, cultural, and social capital*.

The findings suggest strongly that, given its locational advantages and natural attributes, Gulf County has the opportunity to become a highly attractive place to live and do business. There are, however, major challenges which must be overcome if the community is to become highly competitive in the 21st century knowledge-based economy.

Gulf County's major challenges present opportunities for workforce development, job creation and governmental transparency. The rapid growth of high-end residential communities creates the opportunity for new business development, more jobs and increased community diversity but these changes can also threaten the social fabric of the community if residents are not prepared for diversification. These opportunities also may present economic challenges to some long-term residents as property values significantly increase. Implementing new training and development partnerships would enhance the workforce and prepare local citizens for new employment opportunities while, at the same time, mitigating the threat of the decrease in human capital assets in the community. Creating governmental transparency will go a long way towards building trust between voters and County government which, in turn, will make Gulf County a more attractive place to live and do business. The improvement of County infrastructure will also greatly enhance the attractiveness of the community, thereby increasing the potential for economic development of the area.

To balance these and other opportunities and threats Gulf County currently faces, the following five step action plan is recommended:

Recommendation #1: Bridge the communication gap between citizens and government. A high degree of transparency exists in highly competitive communities, which creates trust among the community's various stakeholders. In such communities, government decisions are made at the speed of business. Gulf County must significantly re-engineer the way it does the community's business if it is to retain existing residents and firms and compete successfully for new businesses and jobs in the years ahead. This re-engineering must include open communication with local citizens in order to begin building trust that local government can effectively operate and that they represent the true interests of the community.

Recommendation #2: Invest in the community's physical infrastructure.

A world class infrastructure that connects the community to the regional, national, and global economy is a prerequisite to compete in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century. Gulf County officials must recognize this, look forward to anticipate the future infrastructure needs of the community and raise the requisite financial capital to build a world class infrastructure, without placing all of the sudden burden on local community members with tax increases that outpace County economic growth. This planning can be accomplished by developing a thorough and thoughtful strategic plan for the County.

Recommendation #3: Embrace Population Diversity. At present, Gulf County is predominantly white and the County is led by a predominantly white group of males. If County growth continues, however, the population will become far more diverse in the years ahead, particularly as the number of Hispanics move in to take advantage of jobs in the construction trades and other blue-collar industries. Research has shown that economic development potential associated with growing population diversity, especially the influx of Latino or Hispanic immigrants, can be enormous. Accordingly, local officials must effectively manage this transition to a more diverse society. This strategy must include not only the physical impact these changes will have on the community but also how the county will adapt itself to avoid racial tensions.

Recommendation #4: Pursue civic entrepreneurial strategies of economic development. In order to increase opportunities within the county as well as increase financial capital, an entrepreneurial culture should be cultivated through improved access to credit, skills training, business incubation, and development of a Community Development Venture Capital network. Local government should strategically position local entrepreneurs to tap into venture initiatives. Creation of more small businesses leads to job creation and a more stable and diversified economy.

Recommendation #5: Bridge the Technology Gap. Gulf County should establish its own technology learning center to deliver technology services to three core groups that find themselves on the margins of the knowledge economy —old economy displaced workers, nonprofit organizations, and small and medium-sized businesses. The mission of the center should be to equip each of these groups with the skills and know-how they will need to compete and thrive in the digital economy. The County also needs to vigorously pursue efforts to ensure that hi-speed telecom is consistently available throughout the County.

Introduction, Critical Background, and Purpose

Research indicates that communities that have proven to be attractive places to live and do business in the 21st century knowledge-based economy possess a distinct set of characteristics. Highly attractive and competitive communities:

- Actively and aggressively pursue strategic alliances with other communities, domestically and especially internationally, with an eye toward developing not only cultural ties but also profit-centered activities that generate revenue and create jobs for the local citizenry.
- Create a regulatory environment that promotes and supports the generation of new community wealth via civic entrepreneurial ventures and innovations that are designed specifically to sustain and enhance the health, viability, and vitality of the community.
- Recognize the need for, and are committed to continuous investment in, a world-class physical infrastructure that connects them to the regional, national, and international economy.
- Invest heavily in their educational system (K–12, community colleges, and four-year institutions) to ensure the availability of education and training programs for their citizens so that they can compete for new economy jobs, thereby enhancing the community's attractiveness to businesses.
- Instill in their citizens, especially their youth, the attitudes, values, and beliefs about education and work that are key to upward mobility in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.
- Strive to reduce, to the maximum extent possible, geographical, racial and/or ethnic, and class disparities by investing substantial resources in an array of community-building institutions (e.g., the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Boys and Girls Club) that seek to mend the social fabric and provide bridges to education and economic mainstream for their members, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Under-girding these characteristics, as Table 1 shows, are six types of community capital assets — polity, physical, financial, human, cultural,

and social—which interact, as specified in Figure 1, to create a healthy, highly competitive community.¹ It is important to note that the absence of any one of these six types of capital can seriously limit the ability of a community to compete in the 21st century marketplace. But, as Figure 1 shows, it is the polity capital (i.e., the local government), which creates the conditions or climate enabling the other five types of capital to drive competitiveness. In highly competitive communities, government decision-making is agile and flexible, not static or bureaucratic. Assuming the business-equivalent role of managing partner, the local government is prepared — almost on an ad hoc basis — to foster or facilitate networks and linkages among key community stakeholders to build or develop the requisite physical, financial, human, cultural, and social capital to facilitate community economic health and competitiveness.²

Table 1: Types of Community Capital Assets

¹ For a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of our model of community competitiveness, see James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002a, “Enhancing the Competitiveness of North Carolina Communities,” *Popular Government*, Winter, pp. 6-18; James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002b, U.S. Immigration Reform, Homeland Security, and Global Economic Competitiveness in the Aftermath of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks,” *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, Vol. 27, pp. 419-464.

² To play this role effectively, the local government in a highly competitive community typically establishes a knowledge management system and data warehouse, which enables it to monitor trends and developments internal and external to the community in real time. For a detailed discussion of the importance of having such a system in place, see Don A. Holbrook, 1995, “Economic Development Facing up to the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/edirfacing21st_cent10595.html, accessed March 28, 2003; and IEDN, 1996, “Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era & Global Economy.” IEDN’s Economic Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/janedire.html>, accessed March 27, 2003; IEDN, 2000, “Rural Economic Development Issues for the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/FEBEDIRE>, accessed March 28, 2003.

- **Polity Capital:** commitments from local government organizations to continuously strive to enhance the health and socioeconomic well being of local residents and advance the competitiveness of the local community in the global marketplace.
- **Physical Capital:** the network of highways, railways, airports, telecommunications (telephone, Internet, etc.) and water and sewer systems that form the infrastructure of the community.
- **Financial Capital:** traditional and non-traditional sources of revenue that support the provision of services and promote future economic growth and community development.
- **Human Capital:** individuals with the requisite education, training, and “soft” skills to compete for jobs in the highly integrated world economy.
- **Cultural Capital:** residents with the appropriate values, attitudes, and beliefs about their current life chances and their future opportunities in the local community.
- **Social Capital:** resources – personal and institutional – through which individuals maintain their social identity and receive emotional support, material aid and services, information, and new social contacts.

Source: Johnson (2002a).

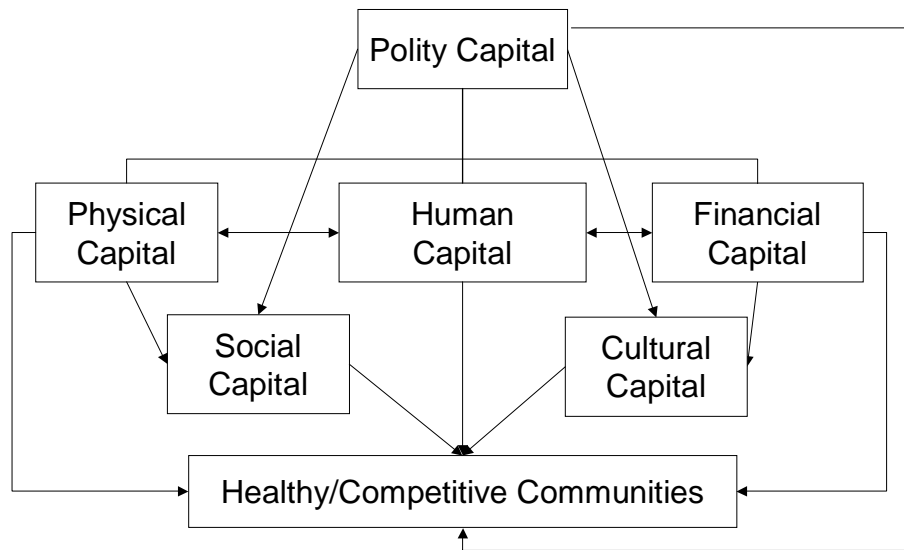
Depending on the nature of the issue, these networks may be industry- or sector-specific, ethnic-based, or regional in composition.³ In some instances, they may involve business leaders who are staunch competitors in the local marketplace. In highly competitive communities, leaders of competing businesses often work together to solve local problems because they recognize that their “cooperation” or “competitive collaboration” will ultimately benefit their respective companies.⁴ In other words, it is a form of enlightened self-interest.

³ Joel Kotkin, 1998, “Cities Need Leaders ... and Businessmen are Indispensable,” *The American Enterprise*, September/October, Vol. 9, pp. 24-26+.

⁴ John K. Conlon and Mellisa, Givagnoli, 1998, **The Power of Two**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Figure 1

**A BUSINESS-ORIENTED CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR ENHANCING
COMMUNITY COMPETITIVENESS**



Sources: Compiled by authors based on Johnson (2002a).

In the remainder of this report, we apply this model in a case study assessment of the current competitive position of Gulf County, Florida. We begin by describing the methodology employed to operationalize the model. Next, we provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile of Gulf County and then present the results of the competitive assessment.

METHODOLOGY

To operationalize the model, we conducted a community-level SWOT analysis, which identifies the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) forces that shape an area's overall health,

economic well-being, and attractiveness as a place to live and do business.⁵ (IEDN, 2000; Holbrook, 1995). As Table 2 shows, such an analysis strives to answer specific questions about the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 2: Questions Posed in a Community-Level SWOT Analysis

Strengths
• What does the community do well?
• Does the community have a clear strategic vision?
• Does the community have an entrepreneurial orientation?
• Does the community culture produce a healthy environment in which to live and do business?
Weaknesses
• What could be improved in the community?
• What does the community do poorly?
• Is the community able to finance needed infrastructure?
• Does the community have poor debt or cash flow?
Opportunities
• What favorable circumstances is the community facing?
• What are the interesting trends?
• Is the community positioned to take on those trends?
• Is the community advanced in technology?
Threats
• What obstacles does the community face?
• What are the community's competitors doing?
• Are the demographic and economic conditions changing?
• Is technology threatening the community's competitiveness?
• What policies are state and federal lawmakers backing?
• Do the policies affect the community and, if so, how?

Source: Compiled by authors.

⁵ Don A. Holbrook, 1995, "Economic Development Facing up to the 21st Century," IEDN's Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at http://iedn.come/information/intelligence/articles/edirfacing21st_cent10595.html, accessed March 28, 2003; IEDN, 2000, "Rural Economic Development Issues for the 21st Century," IEDN's Economic Development Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/FEBEDIRE>, accessed March 28, 2003.

To answer these questions for Gulf County, our case study community, we engaged in the same type of *community competitiveness intelligence gathering* that a corporate relocation consultant pursues to develop a short list of ideal sites for a client’s business relocation or expansion.⁶ That is, we conducted an exhaustive search of publicly-available information using the electronic search engines and research indexes identified in Table 3.

We used Gulf County and the names of specific communities within the county (e.g., Port. St. Joe, Wewahitchka, Windmark Beach and Mexico Beach) as place identifiers and combined this information with an array of search terms culled from prior research on community competitiveness. The search, which included mainly newspaper and popular articles, technical reports, government documents, and statistical information, spanned a fifteen-year period, 1991 to 2006. Most of the news articles are from *The Star*. Much information was gained directly or indirectly (through links) from the Gulf County government and tourist web sites. The community-level SWOT results discussed below are based on our content analysis of these search results.

Table 3: Gateways and Databases Used in the Research

GATEWAYS	DATABASES
AltaVista.com	All Business Websites
Google.com	General Search Engine
Yahoo.com	General Search Engine
ABI Inform/ProQuest	Periodicals and Newspapers
Topix.net	Newspapers

⁶ IEDN, 1996, “Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era & Global Economy.” IEDN’s Economic Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/janedire.html>, accessed March 27, 2003.

ProQuest	All Articles
Lexis/Nexis	Academic Universe
	Statistical Universe
	Government Periodical Universe

Source: Compiled by authors.

The Study Area

Our target area in this research is Gulf County, Florida. Gulf County comprises 559 square miles. The County is located in the Northwest part of the state and is bordered by Calhoun County to the North, Bay County to the West, Franklin and Liberty Counties to the East, and the Gulf of Mexico to the South. The County averages 82 degrees in the Summer and 54 degrees in the Winter. Gulf County has a population density of approximately 24 persons per square mile. Timber companies have historically been the predominant political and commercial force in the County. Despite the closing of the St. Joe Mill in 1998 the St. Joe Company still owns approximately 80% of the land in Gulf County. Current development in the County appears to focus on attracting high-end tourists to the County's over 40 miles of sandy white beaches.

Below, we utilize data mainly from Census 2000--but also some from the 1990 Census--to illustrate how Gulf County stands on key demographic, social, and economic indicators.

Demographic Profile

Gulf County, Florida had 13,975 residents in 2005,⁷ an increase of 4.8% over the Census 2000 population of 13,332 (see Table 4). During the 1990s, Gulf County's population grew by almost 16%, so the rate of growth has slowed over the past five years. Almost 80% of Gulf County residents are white and

⁷ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12045.html> . Note that the Census Bureau actually reports a 4% decline in Gulf County's population between April 1, 2000 and April 1, 2005 based on their estimated population of 14,560 in 2000.

16.9% are African American. Only 2% of Gulf County's residents are Latino, much lower than the state rate of 16.8%.

Table 4: Key Demographic Characteristics: Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000

	Gulf County	State of Florida
Total Population, 2005	13,975	17,789,864
Population Change, 2000-05	4.8%	23.0%
% Female	46.6%	51.2%
% <15	17.6%	22.8%
% > 65	15.7%	17.6%
White	79.9%	72.3%
African American	16.9%	19.6%
Hispanic	2.0%	16.8%

Source: Summary File 1, Census 2000 www.census.gov

Almost one fifth (17.6%) of residents were under age 18, and 15.7% were 65 or older. Unlikely to be full-time workers, these two age groups are often referred to as “dependent” populations since they typically rely on either family or institutions (e.g. Social Security) for support. Women comprise only 46.6% of the population, making Gulf County one of a relatively few places other than counties with large military bases where women are in the minority.

Gulf County clearly faces economic challenges. The median household income in 1999 was \$30,276, compared with \$38,829 for Florida, and the median family income in Gulf County (\$36,289) was more than \$10,000 less

than the state median family income (\$46,677) (see Table 5). Further, 16.7% of Gulf County residents lived in poverty. And, during the economic boom ongoing in 2000, 6% of Gulf County's work force was unemployed.

Table 5: Income, Poverty & Adult Education: Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000

	Gulf County	State of Florida
Median Income		
Household	\$30,276	\$38,819
Family	\$36,289	\$45,625
% Poverty	16.7%	12.5%
Education (25+)		
<12 Years	27.4%	12.3%
High School	37.1%	28.7%
Some College	25.3%	28.8%
College Graduate	6.6%	14.3%
Post Graduate	3.5%	8.1%

Source: Summary File 3, Census 2000 www.census.gov

Table 6 shows the distribution of employment by industry in Gulf County relative to the state of Florida. Six industry categories are highlighted:

1. Primary activities (agricultural and mining);
2. Transformative activities (manufacturing and construction);
3. Distributive services (transportation, communication, wholesale and retail trade);
4. Producer services (finance, insurance, real estate, and business services);

5. Personal services (entertainment, repairs, food and beverage), and
6. Social services (medical, education, and government).

Table 6: Distribution of Jobs by Industrial Categories: Gulf County and State of Florida, 2000

	Gulf County	State of Florida
Transformative Activities (e.g. manufacturing and construction)	18.7%	15.3%
Distributive Service (e.g. transportation, communications, wholesale and retail trade)	18.3%	22.8%
Producer Services (e.g. finance, insurance, information services and other business services)	14.5%	21.7%
Personal Services (e.g. entertainment, food services)	12.9%	15.6%
Social Services (e.g. health care, education, government)	32.8%	23.2%
Primary Activities (e.g. agriculture)	2.8%	1.3%

Source: Table P49, Summary File 3, Census 2000

There are two notable differences in the employment patterns in Gulf County relative to employment patterns for Florida. First, only 14.5% of jobs in Gulf County are in Producer Services compared to 21.7% of the jobs across Florida. Many of the new knowledge-intensive information jobs are in this category, indicating that relatively few new economy jobs are being created in Gulf County. Second, almost a third of jobs in Gulf County are in the Social Service sector (32.8%) compared with 23.2% for the state. Such reliance on

employment in health care and government jobs are common in rural counties, but this sector rarely leads employment expansion.

The basis for this pattern of employment is clearly seen in the distribution of educational attainment for adults age 25 and older (Table 5). Over a quarter of adults (27.4%) did not complete high school, and 37.1% ended their education with high school graduation. Just 10.1% of Gulf County's residents received college and post graduate degrees. This pattern of adult education cannot serve as the basis for significant economic development and employment growth in the 21st Century economy.

SWOT Analysis

If Gulf County is to compete more effectively in the global marketplace in the years ahead, local community stakeholders must understand and leverage the community's comparative advantages based on an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Below, the most significant findings of our SWOT analysis for Gulf County are presented. A summary of the SWOT findings is provided in Appendix Table A1.

Strengths

Gulf County's strategic location is probably its greatest strength. The County has a wealth of natural resources which make it an ideal tourist destination. In addition, its close proximity to a deep water channel, as well as major rail and highway connectors provides for quick and easy movement of goods.

Gulf County's strategic position on the Gulf of Mexico allows the county to accommodate barge traffic via the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway, providing access from St. Marks, Florida to Brownsville, Texas. From the Intercoastal Waterway barges can be moved inland on various river systems along the Southeastern U.S. coast. The Port of Port St. Joe shipping channel is congressionally authorized to a depth of 37 feet and connects to the shipping lanes of the Gulf of Mexico.

Bringing goods to and from the port is relatively easy via either rail or highway transport. There are three main corridors for highway shipping and transportation through Gulf County. State Road 71 runs Northward from Port St. Joe into southeast Alabama and provides quick access to I-10, which traverses the Country from Florida to California, with only 2 traffic lights in existence between Port St. Joe and the I-10 exchange. US Highway 98 runs through Port St. Joe and then East/West along the coastline. Parts of Hwy. 98 are under construction to create a Gulf to Bay Highway that will further improve and encourage business development and transportation throughout the County. And State Road 22 runs Westward through the County from Wewahitchka to Panama City.

The Apalachicola Northern Railroad (AN) services Gulf County directly. The AN then connects with the Class I CSX Transportation Railroad in Chattahoochee, Florida. Gulf County hosts a small regional airport for private planes and is only a 40 minute drive from the Panama City/Bay County International Airport and 100 miles from the Tallahassee Regional Airport.

Along with the County's proximity to and accessibility via interstate highway, airports and seaports, Gulf County is endowed with pristine white beaches, rivers, lakes and commercial forestland, all of which make it an attractive tourist destination. In 2002 "Dr. Beach", Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman, ranked St. Joseph State Park number 1 on his list of America's top beaches.⁸ The park continues to make the Top 10 list each year. The abundance of Gulf County's natural assets provides numerous opportunities for fishing (both salt and fresh water), bird watching (over 340 species, including the Peregrine Falcon and the Bald Eagle, have been recorded at St. Joseph's Park), boating, swimming, canoeing/kayaking, hiking and numerous other types of outdoor activities. The county has developed an extensive park system. There are upwards of a dozen parks which not only serve to attract tourists and enhance the quality of life for local residents, but also assists in attracting new businesses and residents to the area.

Gulf County is also home to the famous Tupelo Honey, found in the Tupelo gum trees on the swampy edges of the Chipola and Apalachicola River basin. This northern area of the County is the only region of the country where the honey is commercially harvested.

In addition to its locational advantages, the quality of Gulf County's public schools constitutes a significant strength. Gulf County District Schools consistently have the highest high school graduation rate of all Florida School Districts, and ranks within the top quartile on standard achievement and

⁸ www.visitgulf.com/drbeach.cfm

college admissions test.⁹ The County's 2 elementary schools and 4 secondary schools all offer after school tutoring and last year Havana High School raised its educational ranking from an "F" rating to a "B" rating.¹⁰ In addition to high graduation rates, Gulf County secondary schools have student/teacher ratios that are below state averages and mandates for smaller class sizes, which translate into more individual attention for the students.

Gulf County Government also seems to have an ever improving relationship with school personnel which may make it easier to recruit and retain well qualified teachers to the County. Starting in the current school year teachers were given a 6% salary increase above and beyond the incremental step increases which go to employees who have served the district between 3 and 23 years. In addition the district has increased the amount it will contribute towards teacher's health insurance. The entire package represents an 11% increase for teachers and non-instructional employees and was the result of very smooth and quick (2 sessions) union negotiations.¹¹ The money for these increases came, at least in part, from an awarded \$1.55M (\$423,678 of this new dollars) the County just received from the State for the hiring of new teachers and teacher raises.¹²

⁹ <http://gulfcountyedc.org/education.cfm?pg=Education>

¹⁰ <http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35847&Section=Local%20News>

¹¹ <http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=36022&Section=School%20News>

¹² <http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35794&Section=School%20News>

Gulf County's healthcare system represents another major strength of the community. Recently the County received an award from the state in recognition of "setting the standard in dealing with the county health care system". Since this award, the county has been contacted by 5 surrounding counties to see how Gulf County "put itself on the cutting edge of county health care".¹³ In addition, the County's lone hospital, Sacred Heart, anticipates constructing a new building in the County. Florida Governor Jeb Bush is working to help in fast-tracking the permit process so that construction can begin immediately. The new hospital was listed on the permit as April 2008, just past the original fall 2007 deadline.

In addition to the school and health systems, the County has several other polity capital assets that can be leveraged to promote and facilitate community and economic development in Gulf County. These include Opportunity Florida, Florida's Great Northwest, the Gulf County Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise Florida, and the Gulf County Economic Development Council. The Gulf County Economic Development Council and the Gulf County Chamber both have web sites which provide specific community data. The Gulf County Economic Development Council provides detailed information about transportation, industry, finance, enterprise zones and industrial parks in the county. The Gulf County Chamber provides a complete calendar of events as well as a searchable online directory of Chamber members.

¹³<http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35934&Section=Local%20News>

Some of the above mentioned polity capital assets pursue a much broader economic and community development agenda. For example, Florida's Great Northwest constitutes a group of business, academic and economic development leaders from the sixteen Northwest Florida counties who have joined together to promote the entire region. The web site (www.floridasgreatnorthwest.com) highlights the regional benefits of relocating to the area, providing information on labor force, education and training, incentives, transportation and the business climate. The web site also provides specific information for each member county and is currently building a database, which will be available online, of all available properties in the counties.

Opportunity Florida (www.opportunityflorida.com) is also committed to growing the regional economy of the Gulf County area. Opportunity Florida is an eight county regional economic development alliance creating opportunities for regional businesses and workers. Its web site supplies information on regional Enterprise Zones, Incentives, Industrial Parks (broken down by County), and a link to and explanation of possible venture capital funding.

Realizing that rural areas often do not have the same advantages as urban ones in attracting new businesses, Florida has designated Gulf County as a Rural Enterprise Zone. As a consequence of this designation, new and expanding companies may qualify for tax credits for job creation, investments in machinery and equipment, worker training, economic development and investments in business property. Gulf County has significantly benefited from

this designation. Tax advantages and incentive awards in the County increased from \$20,435 in 2000-01 to \$496,601 in 2003-04. In the most recent fiscal year, Gulf County accounted for 40% of all incentives awarded state wide, due mainly to substantial growth in residential development, a resurgence of downtown business activities and aggressive marketing of the Enterprise Zone Program to small businesses.¹⁴

Gulf County also has an array of social and cultural capital assets that can be leveraged in the economic development marketplace. The County has an extensive park system, a renovated downtown historic district in Port St. Joe, the Constitution State Museum, 4-H, Girl Scout and United Way programs, and Gulf Coast Community College, which not only provide institutional leadership but also enrich the quality of social life in the community through their sponsored programs and cultural events.

All of Gulf County's assets have obviously been acknowledged as is evidenced by the large Windmark Beach Community currently under construction off of Hwy. 98. The Windmark Beach community is being developed by the St. Joe Company, one of Florida's largest land developers, and, when complete, will include 1,662 houses located on 2,020 acres, including 3.5 miles of beachfront. The planned community will include shops, a spa and fitness center, an ice cream and coffee shop, a small boutique and a new restaurant. The first homes, released for the sale this past Spring, range

¹⁴ <http://www.floridaenterprisezones.com>

from \$800,000 to over \$2 Million.¹⁵ Planning experts say the Panhandle is fortunate that St. Joe and its subsidiary Arvida are the ones remaking the region. St. Joe's developments follow the "New Urbanism" trend, putting schools and businesses within walking distance of homes.¹⁶

Weaknesses

While Gulf County has many capital assets, which should make it an attractive place to live and do business, there are a few areas in which major improvements are necessary if the County is to achieve the status of a highly competitive community. County infrastructure and utilities are key examples.

Gulf County's sandy white beaches are offset by trash accumulation on the sides of the road, especially Hwy, 98, a main tourist route. This trash accumulation is so severe that it is causing a problem with rat infestation which, in turn, poses a public health problem.¹⁷ The County is also struggling to keep up with current refuse levels, a situation which would be further exacerbated by a sudden population explosion. While the county is considering the purchase of a new trash compactor to help alleviate the current strains,¹⁸ more long-term planning is necessary to create a competitive community with a

¹⁵ www.findnewhomesinflorida.com/communities/beach_communities_homes/windmark-beach-luxury-beach-front-homes-port-st-joe.htm

¹⁶ http://www.sptimes.com/2002/04/21/news_pf/State/Florida_s_Great_North.shtml

¹⁷ <http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35934&Section=Local%20News>

¹⁸ <http://starfl.enctoday.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35879&Section=Local%20News>

stable infrastructure. County Commissioners are also dealing with water and sewer problems. The County is having a difficult time keeping up with current water demands and there is a collapsing sewer system on Sunset Circle which is unable to handle heavier loads from storms and drainage use.¹⁹ Indicative of a low level of environmental consciousness, these problems, in all likelihood, discourage tourism and deter business recruitment.

Gulf County also has significant weaknesses that hinder job creation and economic development. Many of the weaknesses are historical and structural (e.g., lack of major employers that generate spin-off businesses) and will change over time as economic development occurs. Others must be addressed directly if significant economic development and job creation is to occur in the community.

Gulf County appears devoid of an entrepreneurial climate, which has been instrumental in generating profits and creating jobs in most highly competitive communities. For example, there is no small business center in the County to cultivate entrepreneurial skills. While there are several local banks and credit unions, there are no major bank branches in the County. Also, there appears to be no easily accessible venture capital networks. While the Opportunity Florida web site does provide some information on venture capital and a number to call to discuss a business idea, there is neither information on projects funded in the past nor a listing of venture capital companies investing in the area.

¹⁹<http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=36099&Section=Local%20News>

In addition to the absence of a strong entrepreneurial orientation, Gulf County has not taken full advantage of the World Wide Web as an economic development marketing tool. Indeed web access itself seems to be a weakness as high-speed telecom services are not available throughout the County. In addition, both the County and Chamber of Commerce web sites lack essential information that would facilitate business recruitment and economic/community development. First, neither site contains information on available land and commercial real estate for business development, growth and expansion. Making this information available online will help companies decide whether the County is a feasible option for relocation. Second, County Commissioners' meeting minutes are not available electronically. Having this information available online will illustrate to outsiders how the government works and demonstrate its attitude and orientation toward business and industry, diversity, and other important issues.

Several of the County's web sites contain dated information and do not do enough to promote the business climate of the County. As an example, the Gulf County Economic Development Council web site (www.gulfcountyedc.com) provides a link for Labor Force information but the information is from 1998.²⁰ More current data are available and should be provided in order to attract new business ventures. Also on the web site there is a link for "Incentives" but no information, save the phone number for the Council, is provided. The Gulf County Chamber of Commerce site (www.gulfchamber.org) also does little to

²⁰ www.gulfcountyedc.org/laborforce.cfm?pg=Labor%20Force

promote the community. While there is minimal County information available on the site, some of the information is again outdated (Census and employment data from 2000 presented when 2005 data are available) and there is nothing on the site which communicates the business environment or provides information on incentives, relocation or available real estate. Similarly, the Gulf County Government site (www.gulfcountygovernment.com) does little to communicate information on the County and no County services, such as permitting, are available online. Since transparency and the efficient flow of information are keys to community competitiveness these web sites need to be updated. If new businesses (and jobs) are to be attracted to Gulf County, updated information should be readily available on the Gulf County Economic Development web site, the Gulf County Government web site, and the Gulf Chamber of Commerce web site.

The current public high schools' graduation rates are not reflected in the education of the County's workforce. As stated above, over a quarter of adults (27.4%) did not complete high school, and 37.1% ended their education with high school graduation. Only 10.1% of Gulf County's residences received college and post graduate degrees, resulting in lack of a well-educated workforce, a powerful disincentive for corporate and residential relocations.

In addition, Gulf County has Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs) that are typically perceived to have an adverse affect on property values and by extension, detract from the attractiveness of the community as a place to live and do business. Most notable in this regard is the Gulf County Prison. Crime

and perceptions of crime are a continuing weakness that must be addressed to improve economic development opportunities in Gulf County. And, while the prison is a major employer in the County, it is not being properly maintained and is in desperate need of renovation funds which the Gulf County Commissioners have not yet approved.²¹

Local Government appears to be another weakness in Gulf County. Many residents seem to doubt that the city is truly concerned about their interests, especially with regards to land development. The structure and execution of some city programs and policies contribute to this distrust. For example, in 2002 when the County was considering a proposal to move parts of Hwy.98 in order to create more waterfront property for the St. Joe Company's Windmark Beach development, the Gulf County Commissioners decided to let the public vote on the proposal. However, after a private meeting with Clay Smallwood, a St. Joe Company executive and head of the Gulf County Planning Commission, the County Commissioners decided to move forward with the proposed Hwy. 98 project without a public vote. The St. Joe Company agreed to pay half of the \$47 million project. Local taxpayers are covering the rest.²²

Local government also appears to be wrestling with their ability to get along amongst themselves. As one source reported "...the most common form of inter-governmental communication is sniping." The source went on to say that "...small businesses, residents on fixed incomes and blue collars folks –

²¹<http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35988&Section=Star%20Staff%20Editorial>

²²http://www.sptimes.com/2002/04/21/news_pf/State/Florida_s_Great_North.shtml

have been badly bruised by the lack of foresight and broader visions in government.”²³

In addition to concerns about interests and governmental in-fighting, local government’s ability to budget accurately is also a concern. The County has grown only marginally over the past 5 years but the County budget has increased by almost \$8 billion.²⁴ Whether valid or not, Gulf County’s long-term residents’ lack of confidence in the county and its intentions is an ongoing challenge that must be addressed directly if the community is to be successfully revitalized. Continued open communication between Gulf County residents and development agencies, along with a more concerted effort on the part of Gulf County elected officials to communicate with the local citizenry, may go a long way toward establishing residents’ confidence in ongoing efforts to create new opportunities for Gulf County.

Opportunities

Major opportunities exist to promote and facilitate economic development in Gulf County. The opportunities are based largely on the strengths of the community, including the community leadership from businesses, and nonprofit groups that support entrepreneurs and community

²³<http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=36025&Section=Star%20Staff%20Editorial>

²⁴<http://www.starfl.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/Templates/Details.cfm&StoryID=35956&Section=Star%20Staff%20Editorial>

development. Other opportunities come from the area's proximity to various transportation modes and residential developments.

A unique opportunity exists for Gulf County officials to improve the County's physical infrastructure, including expanding sewer and refuse services, especially around highway corridors, and completing the proposed water system. They should also focus on expanding high speed telecom services throughout the entire County. To create a more attractive and appealing environment, local officials need to continue to make cleaning up roadways and waterways a priority.

By building upon the County's physical capital assets, these infrastructure and environmental improvements would afford the County the additional opportunities for new business development. In 2002, Jim Garth moved his family and his large flooring business, Decorative Flooring, from Atlanta, GA to Gulf County after falling in love with the community on a family vacation. Gulf County presented an opportunity for the family to experience a better quality of life and yet also be located near numerous transportation options for the company. Decorative Flooring renovated an old Supermarket building in downtown Port St. Joe to house the business. When asked about relocating to Port St. Joe, Mr. Garth replied, "this is the place where I plan to live the rest of my days. It has so much, and relocating the business here--while challenging--wasn't a gamble. Port St. Joe has a deep port, rail service and UPS and FedEx deliver to most anyplace in two days."²⁵

²⁵ Panama City News Herald, "Floored in Florida" by Dwayne Hartnett, December 9, 2002

An opportunity also exists to diversify the economic base of the County and create more jobs. Toward this end, local officials should develop, nurture and promote a spirit of entrepreneurialism locally. In developing such a culture, improved access to capital is a strategic imperative. This can be achieved by establishing a community development financial institution (CDFI) or by tapping into an existing community-development venture capital fund network. Forging additional public/private ventures with this goal in mind will create additional economic opportunities locally and, in the process, enhance the county's attractiveness as a place to live and do business. The County's designation as a specialized economic development zone should serve to help attract both new employers and new financial institutions to the area.

Another way to diversify the local economy is to increase promotion of Gulf County as a tourist destination. Properly marketed, the County's numerous physical and historical assets have the potential to lure even more tourists, with a possible focus on the ever growing eco-tourism sector.

The changing face of Gulf County is also the basis for opportunities. With the expansion of Windmark Beach and other similar residential and tourist developments come new residents as well as more migrating workers to build these new developments. As many of the state's construction workers are of Hispanic origin, all of the new development in the County is sure to result in a rapidly growing Hispanic population. These new residents and workers create an opportunity for business expansion and development, most notably in the service sector.

To demonstrate Gulf County's ability to move goods quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively, the County should post on the local government's, the Chamber's and the Gulf County Economic Development Council's web sites, information regarding available land, shell buildings, and the local transportation infrastructure. These web sites should also advertise residential real estate, especially waterfront sites, for corporate managers and executives who might move to Gulf County as part of a company's relocation or site section decision. Visitors to these web pages should be able to do virtual tours of each site and the marketing of these sites should be linked to the larger effort to promote the Gulf County EDZ.

The County can also better leverage its web sites for individuals and families contemplating residential relocation. The County government web site should be expanded to include current and archived county commissioners' meeting minutes and the web sites should be kept current and updated on a regular basis.

Threats

Ironically, many of the threats in Gulf County are the flip side of the opportunities. As noted previously, the growth of the Hispanic population is an opportunity, but these changes also threaten the social fabric of the community and may present economic challenges to some long-term residents. That the racial and ethnic composition of Gulf County is sure to change as the County experiences further development presents a unique set of challenges.

As discussed earlier, Gulf County is predominantly white, with only a small number of African Americans and Hispanics. As the County becomes more diverse, the community may be forced to deal with new racial tensions caused by this diversity if proactive human relations policies are not put into place. The apparent inability of the local citizenry to get along could lead to problems in attracting outside business to the area.

Transforming neighborhoods can improve an area's physical infrastructure and increase property values, but it also threatens long-term residents, especially since there is a significant difference in economic status between the long-term residents and the newcomers. Long-term residents appreciate the neighborhood improvements, but the increasing property values have resulted in property tax hikes that they are finding themselves hard-pressed to pay.

Residents are also suspicious of the city's motives in its efforts to develop parts of Gulf County. As noted earlier, recent decisions of local government have been viewed by many citizens as evidence that the County is willing to sacrifice the wants of long-term residents to the will of large Florida developers. And, while the economic development efforts of the County will most likely result in new jobs, these jobs will most certainly not be at the same level as the \$20/hour jobs created by the Mill, in the past. As one Gulf County citizen put it: "Basically the jobs will be as servants, waiters and waitresses to clean up after the rich people".²⁶

²⁶ http://www.sptimes.com/2002/04/21/news_pf/State/Florida_s_Great_North.shtml

Many County residents also feel powerless about their ability to create their own future. Since the St. Joe Company owns approximately 80% of the land in the County, citizens and government alike feel powerless to stop any efforts undertaken by the company. As Billy Traylor, a Gulf County Commissioner, put it: "But they're a large corporation, and they own 80 percent of the land here in the county, so in the end, they're basically going to get what they want."²⁷ Another citizen put it this way: "... we've got to take the hand we're dealt, and we've got to hope that St. Joe means what it says -- that it won't kill the goose that laid the golden egg."²⁸ This feeling of helplessness not only leads to resentment but does not contribute towards positive civic, business and governmental interactions. This tension is certain to come through to other companies who may be considering business development in the County.

A final threat comes from brain drain, where successful high school graduates and prime working age adults move out of the County to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere. Recent data show that Gulf County is experiencing a net population out-migration.²⁹ Gulf County must create new economic development opportunities for County residents in order to retain its qualified workers and attract new ones to the area.

²⁷<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=7&did=127776111&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1154963069&clientId=15094>

²⁸<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=7&did=127776111&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1154963069&clientId=15094>

²⁹www.eflorida.com

Summary and Recommendations

We have conducted a community level SWOT analysis in an effort to identify ways Gulf County can improve its attractiveness as a place to live and do business in the ever-changing knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. Toward this end, we utilized a conceptual framework and methodology for monitoring and evaluating community competitiveness developed in the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, the applied business research arm of the Kenan-Flagler Business School, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

From a content analysis of publicly available information accessed through the World Wide Web, we have identified current strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that Gulf County currently faces. The following specific recommendations flow logically from this community-level SWOT analysis.

Recommendation #1: Bridge the communication gap between citizens and government. A high degree of transparency exists in highly competitive communities, which creates trust among the community's various stakeholders. In such communities, government decisions are made at the speed of business. Gulf County must significantly re-engineer the way it does the community's business if it is to retain existing residents and firms and compete successfully for new businesses and jobs in the years ahead. This re-engineering must include open communication with local citizens in order to

begin building trust that local government can effectively operate and that they represent the true interests of the community.

Recommendation #2: Invest in the community's physical infrastructure. A world class infrastructure that connects the community to the regional, national, and global economy is a prerequisite to compete in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century. Gulf County officials must recognize this, look forward to anticipate the future infrastructure needs of the community and raise the requisite financial capital to build a world class infrastructure, without placing all of the sudden burden on local community members with tax increase that outpace County economic growth. This planning can be accomplished by developing a thorough and thoughtful strategic plan for the County.

Recommendation #3: Embrace Population Diversity. At present, Gulf County is predominantly white and the County is led by a predominantly white group of males. If County growth continues, however, the population will become far more diverse in the years ahead, particularly as the number of Hispanics moves in to take advantage of jobs in the construction trades and other blue-collar industries. Research has shown that economic development potential associated with growing population diversity, especially the influx of Latino or Hispanic immigrants, can be enormous. Accordingly, local officials must effectively manage this transition to a more diverse society. This strategy must include not only the physical impact these changes will have on the

community but also how the county will adapt itself to avoid racial/ethnic tensions.

Recommendation #4: Pursue civic entrepreneurial strategies of economic development. In order to increase opportunities within the county as well as increase financial capital, an entrepreneurial culture should be cultivated through improved access to credit, skills training, business incubation, and development of a Community Development Venture Capital network. Local government should strategically position local entrepreneurs to tap into venture initiatives. Creation of more small businesses leads to job creation and a more stable and diversified economy.

Gulf County should invest in Civic Entrepreneurship training for workers in the government and nonprofit sectors. Civic Entrepreneurship training programs are designed to change the way in which the non-profit and government sectors operate and the way these two sectors view themselves in relation to the for-profit sector of the economy. Typically the programs are comprised of courses in Strategic Management and Planning, Finance and Legal Issues, Organizational Effectiveness, Social Marketing, Business Communication, and Principles of Sustainable Community Development.³⁰

Upon successful completion of such a program, Gulf County government and non-profit organization leaders should become stronger and better able to

³⁰ A number of organizations have emerged to provide this type of training. They include the Minneapolis-based National Center for Social Entrepreneurship; Share Our Strength's (SOS) Community Wealth Ventures, Inc.; and the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, the outreach arm of the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Whereas the National Center for Social Entrepreneurship and SOS target non-profits in their training and technical assistance programs, the Kenan Institute targets both non-profits and government organizations.

employ Civic Entrepreneurial strategies in their efforts to address pressing local problems. More specifically, by acquiring skills in the “nuts and bolts” of sound, socially responsible business practices, they should be able to pursue a wide range of entrepreneurial approaches, including leveraging the resources that they currently spend with private sector companies, which will generate community wealth — revenue that can be used to solve pressing local problems.³¹

In a similar vein, Gulf County school officials should devise and implement a plan for infusing course content on entrepreneurship and economic literacy in the public school curriculum. In so doing, schools can begin to foster, nurture, and facilitate the development of the next generation of homegrown entrepreneurs, who will, in turn, create jobs through their business ventures.

Recommendation #5: Bridge the Technology Gap. Gulf County should establish its own technology learning center to deliver technology services to three core groups that find themselves on the margins of the knowledge economy —old economy displaced workers, nonprofit organizations, and small and medium-sized businesses. The mission of the center should be to equip each of these groups with the skills and know-how they will need to compete and thrive in the digital economy. The County also needs to vigorously pursue efforts to ensure that hi-speed telecom is consistently available throughout the County.

³¹ Bill Shore, 1997, “The Other Los World, Who Cares?” *The Tool Kit for Social Change*, September-October, 16-17.

SWOT Results for Gulf County

1. Polity Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Industrial Parks
- ❖ Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund for businesses serving multi-state and international markets
- ❖ Development organization's such as Gulf County Chamber of Commerce, Gulf County Economic Development Council, Opportunity Florida and Florida's Great Northwest

Weaknesses

- ❖ Gulf County residents' distrust of county government's intentions
- ❖ Low median household incomes
- ❖ Lack of information available on web sites regarding available real estate
- ❖ Lack of County Commissioners meeting minutes available on County web site
- ❖ Unskilled workers with few higher education degrees
- ❖ Lagging state in creation of jobs

Opportunities

- ❖ Increase educational attainment levels to create a skilled workforce
- ❖ Create more open dialogue between citizens and government by posting County Commissioner meetings on County web site
- ❖ Posting of available real estate on County and economic development web sites.
- ❖ Public/Private Partnerships

Threats

- ❖ City's neglect of job creation and economic development in Gulf County
- ❖ Lack of Diversified workforce or government
- ❖ Businesses lured to larger metro areas
- ❖ Rising property taxes
- ❖ Rising Insurance Costs
- ❖ Relationship with St. Joe Company

2. Physical Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Beaches and access to a wide variety of recreational activities
- ❖ Transportation access via road, rail and water and access to main shipping channels
- ❖ Sacred Heart Hospital
- ❖ Tupelo Honey

Weaknesses

- ❖ Aging and inadequate physical infrastructure (water, sewer, refuse)
- ❖ Lack of environmental consciousness
- ❖ Vacant and Abandoned buildings
- ❖ Other local unwanted land-uses
- ❖ High-speed telecom service unavailable county-wide

Opportunities

- ❖ Clean-up roadsides to create a more appealing County
- ❖ Capitalize on strategic location by positioning and marketing as a logistics and distribution hub
- ❖ Increase livability of area to facilitate improved health and welfare of residents (e.g., exercise trails)
- ❖ Increase access to high speed/telecom services
- ❖ Increased tourism opportunities

Threats

- ❖ Natural Disasters
- ❖ Inability to maintain roads and utilities to keep up with demand
- ❖ Capital improvement projects are costing more than budgeted

3. Financial Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Local economic development organizations like Opportunity Florida, the Economic Development Council and
- ❖ Tax Incentives
 - Hub Zones

- Enterprise Zone Tax Credits
- Grants
- ❖ Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Program
- ❖ Community Financial Institutions

Weaknesses

- ❖ Lack of national banking institutions
- ❖ Lack of significant investment capital
- ❖ Limited larger retail businesses
- ❖ Lack of small business center or small business incubator to cultivate entrepreneurship

Opportunities

- ❖ Take advantage of workforce and development fund available through Florida's Great Northwest
- ❖ Downtown Port St. Joe redevelopment and commercial development
- ❖ Growing Latino market
- ❖ Develop Community Development Venture Capital network
- ❖ Improve access to credit

Threats

- ❖ Historic reliance on cyclical industries
- ❖ Large reliance on Government and Administrative jobs for employment opportunities
- ❖ Economic Downturn
- ❖ State and Federal budget cuts

4. Human Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Gulf County School System
- ❖ Low student/teacher ratios
- ❖ Gulf County Community College
- ❖ Incumbent worker training
- ❖ Quality of Life
- ❖ High Home ownership rate

Weaknesses

- ❖ Significantly lower levels of education

- ❖ Lower incomes
- ❖ Higher poverty rates
- ❖ Higher unemployment rates
- ❖ Only one post-secondary education institute in County

Opportunities

- ❖ Opportunities available through Florida's Great Northwest
- ❖ Technology and more training option for the community
- ❖ Increase home ownership through Gulf County's State Housing Initiative Partnership Program
- ❖ Expansion of Florida's Bright Horizon's Program

Threats

- ❖ Financial challenges of higher education institutions
- ❖ The County has a negative net out-migration

5. Cultural Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Extensive Park System
- ❖ Historic Downtown Business District in Port St. Joe
- ❖ Historical Attractions such as Constitution Museum, Constitution Monument & Museum, area lighthouses and Dead Lakes State Park.

Weaknesses

- ❖ Little focus on diversity in community events
- ❖ Physically run down buildings

Opportunities

- ❖ Gentrification
- ❖ Residential expansions bringing in a more diverse population
- ❖ Promote tourism
- ❖ Increase marketing of historic/cultural attractions

Threats

- ❖ Gentrification

- ❖ Residential expansions bringing in a more diverse population which could cause racial tension

6. Social Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Churches and civic organizations
- ❖ Boys and Girls Club
- ❖ United Way
- ❖ Gulf County Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Abundant recreational activities – boating, fishing, bird watching, swimming, hiking,

Weaknesses

- ❖ Little information regarding youth activities
- ❖ Resident's distrust of city's intentions

Opportunities

- ❖ Community resources and leadership from colleges and universities
- ❖ More development of programs focused on diversity and youth

Threats

- ❖ Lack of communication between government and citizens

Population by Sex and Age, Gulf County, FL

