

i n t r o d u c t i o n

This chapter of the Vision Plan summarizes facts and trends that influence Vero Beach. Both past and current conditions are provided in order to understand the foundation for addressing the future. The following topics are presented in this chapter: regional context, local history, physical characteristics, demographics, economic statistics, and considerations for the future.

c h a p t e r o n e

1.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Vero Beach is located on the Atlantic coast of Florida, approximately 100 miles southeast of Orlando. Interstate 95, the major north / south transportation artery on the eastern seaboard, runs just west of Vero Beach. I-95 connects Vero Beach to several large metropolitan areas in relative close proximity, including Miami and Jacksonville; and to distant metropolitan areas like Washington D.C., New York, NY, and Boston, MA.

The following lists the driving distance between Vero Beach and select metropolitan areas in Florida and elsewhere:

Miami	148 miles
Tampa	140 miles
Jacksonville	212 miles
Fort Myers	147 miles
Tallahassee	378 miles
Atlanta, GA	557 miles
Mobile, AL	615 miles
Washington D.C.	923 miles
New York, NY	1,157 miles
Boston, MA	1,372 miles



REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP

SOURCE: GOULD EVANS ASSOCIATES

Vero Beach is one of five municipalities, as well as the county seat of Indian River County. The other four municipalities are Sebastian, Indian River Shores, Fellsmere, and Orchid. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau recognizes nine other unincorporated Indian River County communities, classifying them as "designated places". These eleven designated places are Gifford, Wabasso, Roseland, Vero Beach South, Florida Ridge, South Beach, North Beach, Winter Beach, West Beach, West Vero, and Wabasso Beach.



VERO BEACH AND VICINITY

SOURCE: GOULD EVANS ASSOCIATES

Four other counties border Indian River County. These neighboring counties are Brevard County to the north, Osceola County to the west, Okeechobee County to the southwest, and St. Lucie County to the south.

1.2 LOCAL HISTORY

Native Americans were the first known inhabitants in and around the Vero Beach area. The first Western European inhabitants to Vero Beach and the Indian River area were the English and Spanish over three hundred years ago. Settlement patterns of these individuals generally followed a north to south movement along eastern Florida. Initially, settlers in the area planted large acreages of sugarcane and pineapples. By the early 20th Century, however, grapefruit and oranges were the crops of choice, flourishing in Florida's sun. The Indian River area became known for its citrus crop. In part to meet the demands of agricultural industry, the area's first railway opened in 1903. The train station was built in a settlement called Vero. Sixteen years later, in 1919, Vero was incorporated. On June 1, 1925, the city was renamed Vero Beach.

By the 1930's, Indian River County had grown to a population of roughly 7,000 residents, and a growing population of seasonal residents from northern states impacted the growth and development of the area. The Riomar Country Club, a well-renowned winter resort of that day, was started by a group of seasonal residents from Ohio during this time.

Vero Beach and Indian River County continued to grow. By the late 1940's, Indian River County had a population of over 11,000 residents. In 1948, local businessman Bud Holman persuaded the then Brooklyn Dodgers to use a Naval air station, abandoned since the end of World War II, for spring training. Known as Dodgertown, the Los Angeles Dodgers have called Vero Beach home for spring training ever since. In 1953, the current ballpark was constructed in Vero Beach and named after Bud Holman.

By the 1970's, the population of Indian River County was nearing 40,000 residents. Similar to other Indian River County communities, Vero Beach was facing building and development pressures that influenced the community's existing scale and design. To combat these pressures, Vero Beach adopted a series of ordinances that addressed both height and density issues.

**Sources used for the history summary include City of Vero Beach website (<http://vero-beach.fl.us/info/history.html>) and <http://vero-beach.fl.us/playing/sports/dodgers.html>.*

1.3 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

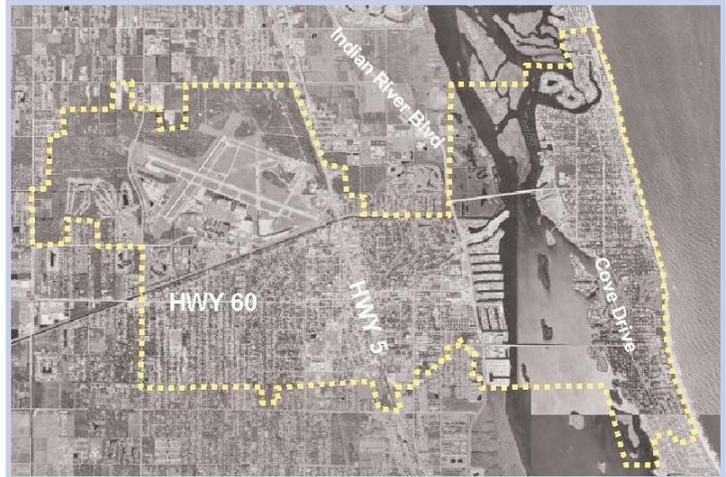
Indian River County is on the Atlantic coast between Melbourne-Titusville and Ft. Pierce. It is approximately 549 square miles in area. Roughly 13 of the 549 square miles are within the city limits of Vero Beach. The county includes 43 square miles of water and 23 miles of Atlantic Ocean beaches. The average January temperature is 63.4 degrees F, and the average August temperature is 81.3 degrees F. May through October is considered the rainy season. The average annual rainfall is between 50-55 inches.

Numerous water bodies are located in and around Vero Beach. Besides the Atlantic Ocean, they include the Indian River, surface canals, and the headwaters of the St. Johns River. These waterways

provide for commercial and recreational opportunities, as well as habitats for wildlife. Various birds, fish, reptiles, and mammals make up the local wildlife, including dolphins, manatee, whales, turtles, storks, eagles, pelicans, and alligators.

Vero Beach is located in a transition zone between temperate and tropical climates. The result is a mix of vegetation common to both climates that can survive and flourish in the area. The presence of the significant tree canopy in Vero Beach is partially attributable to this mild climate. The topographic features in Vero Beach consist of a coastal ridge and sandy flat lands with area elevations starting at sea level that rise to 30 feet above sea level. From the sand ridge that defines the edge of these geologic features, development has moved east and west, typically within 5 to 10 miles of the ocean. The remaining undeveloped portions of the county are predominately grove, hardwoods and marshlands with nearly half of the land in the county being in public ownership.

**Excerpts from the 1992 Vero Beach Comprehensive Plan were used to complete this section.*



AERIAL OF VERO BEACH AND CITY LIMITS

SOURCE: GOULD EVANS ASSOCIATES



TREE CANOPY

1.4 DEMOGRAPHICS

Since 1980, the population of Vero Beach has remained relatively constant. In 1980, the city's population was 16,179 residents; and in 2000, the population was 17,705 people. In the same 20-year period, however, Vero Beach's population as a percentage of Indian River County's population has decreased. The following projections were taken from the Indian County Community Development Report, January 2004.

	U.S. CENSUS			PROJECTIONS		
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Vero Beach	16,176	17,350	17,705	18,239	18,422	18,792
Other Municipalities	5,265	14,715	23,582	33,355	44,752	50,145
Places	33,031	49,897	59,306	69,959	77,647	88,549
Unallocated	5,242	8,246	12,354	14,247	16,679	20,014
Indian River County	59,896	90,208	112,947	135,800	157,500	177,500

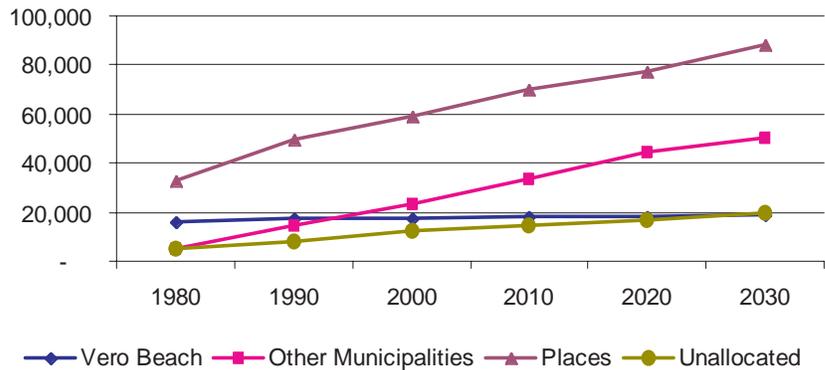
POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT, JANUARY 2004

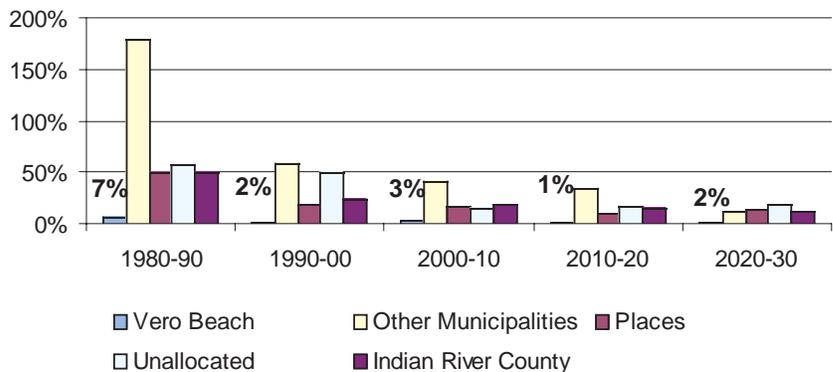
In 1980, Vero Beach's 16,179 residents represented 27% of the County's total population. Twenty years later, Vero Beach's population of 17,705 comprised 16% of the County's total population. By the year 2030, it is projected that approximately 10.6 % of the residents in Indian River County will reside in Vero Beach. The following table and charts compare population growth rates and projections between 1980 and 2030.

The sustained population growth in Indian River County can be partially accounted for by the net migration of people from northern states and people moving out of southern Florida. Although population will continue to increase, it is anticipated that the rate of growth in the area will decline between now and 2030. Incoming residents are typically White, over 54 years of age, with a middle to upper class household income. This in-migration has and may continue to influence the aging of Vero Beach and Indian River County.

POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS
SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT



PERCENT POPULATION GROWTH AND FORECAST
SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT



In 2000, over 40% of Indian River County's population and 41% of Vero Beach's population was over the age of 54. Both percentages are much greater than the 2000 national average of 21%. The 2000 median ages of Indian River County and Vero Beach were 47.0 and 47.7 years respectively. Both are greater than the 2000 national median age of 35.3.

Vero Beach and Indian River County have average household sizes less than the national average. The lower household size and the high median age indicate that many residents are past the "family raising" life-stage. Since 1990, age cohorts of 44 years of age or less represent a decreasing portion of the overall population in Indian River County.

	% Over 54	% Under 20	Median Age	Ave HH Size
Vero Beach	41%	18%	47.7	2.02
Indian River County	40%	21%	47.0	2.25
United States	21%	29%	35.3	2.59

AGE AND HOUSEHOLD AVERAGES

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS

Over 87% of Indian River County's and 93% of Vero Beach's population is classified as White. Though the area has become more diverse over the past 50 years, both Vero Beach and Indian River County have higher White populations, by percentage, than the national average (75%). In contrast, the Black and Hispanic percent population in both Vero Beach and Indian River County are below the 2000 national averages of 12% (Black) and 13% (Hispanic). The following table lists the racial and ethnic breakdown for Vero Beach, Indian River County, and the United States in 2000.

	Vero Beach	Indian River County	United States
White	93%	87%	75%
Black	3%	8%	12%
American Indian	0%	0%	1%
Asian	1%	1%	4%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
Other Race	2%	3%	8%
Hispanic*	6%	7%	13%

*Ethnicity

RACE AND ETHNICITY

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS

The 2000 nation-wide household income average of \$41,994 is higher than both the average household income of Indian River County (\$39,635) and Vero Beach (\$38,427). Using this statistic, however, in an attempt to compare general socioeconomic conditions of the overall community is skewed due to the high number of retired Vero Beach and Indian River County residents not earning a daily wage as defined by the census. Those who earn a daily wage in Vero Beach tend to earn slightly less than

the national average. In fact, 47% of Indian River County residents and 42% of Vero Beach residents received Federal Social Security benefits in 2000. In contrast, less than 26% of the total U.S. population received benefits in 2000. In addition, only 6% of both Indian River County and Vero Beach residents were considered as living in poverty. This is lower than the national average of over 9% in 2000. The following table compares 2000 Census income data.

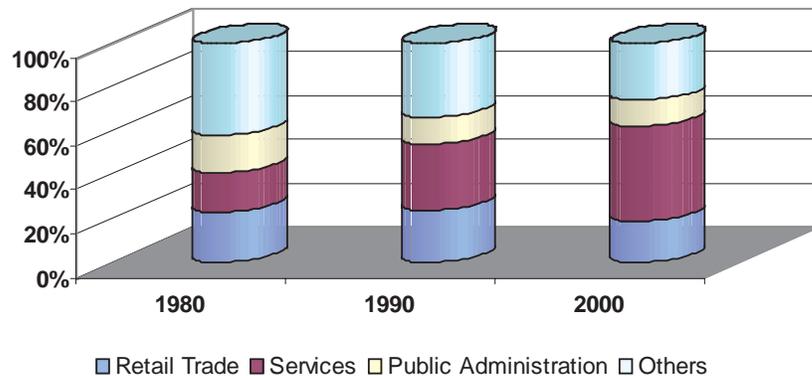
	HH Income	Income > \$75K	Social Sec	Poverty
Vero Beach	\$ 38,427	23%	42%	6%
Indian River County	\$ 39,635	20%	47%	6%
United States	\$ 41,994	23%	26%	9%

EXISTING SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS

1.5 ECONOMICS

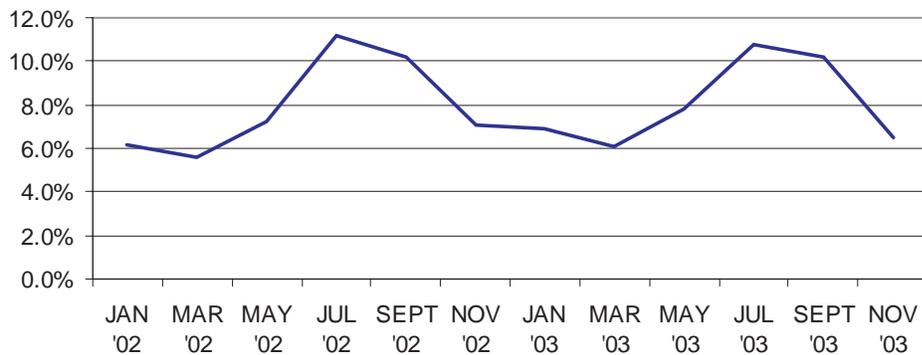
According to the Indian River County Community Development Report, January 2004, since 1980, Indian River County has become increasingly more dependent on the Service Industry. Since 1980, the three largest employment sectors in Indian River County have been Retail Trade, Services, and Public Administration. In 1980, these three industries comprised 58% of the county's employment; Retail Trade 23%, Services 18%, and Public Administration 17%. By 2000, the three industries made up over 76% of the entire county's employment. Both Retail Trade and Public Administration decreased to 19% and 12% respectively. This means that in 2000, the Services industry made up 43% of the county's total employment. In 2000, Vero Beach's Service industry was even higher at 50% of total employment. The following chart illustrates employment by industry trend in Indian River County.



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY EMPLOYMENT TREND

SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The growing service sector has been a nation-wide trend for over 20 years. In 2000, 42% of the nation's workforce was employed in the service industry. The higher service industry employment in Indian River County and Vero Beach can be explained by supply and demand. Retirees and seasonal residents have brought a relatively high disposable income to the area. A significant portion of this income is spent on health care, retail goods, food, entertainment, and recreational activities. This demand for services and the population that this service-oriented labor force supplies is a primary driver of the economy in Vero Beach. As population growth has occurred unemployment levels have remained slightly higher than national levels. The following chart illustrates the seasonal fluctuation in the County's unemployment rate.



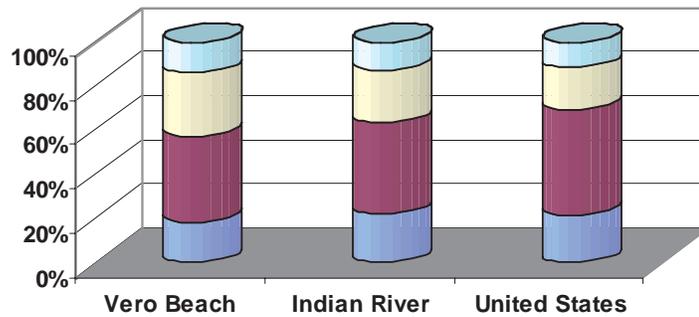
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY SEASONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FLUCTUATIONS 2002-2003

SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Despite fluctuating annual rates, historic trends show that unemployment typically increases during the summer time. This is related to the lower demand for services due to the summer absence of seasonal residents and the seasonal nature of the citrus industry. The United States Census Bureau divides service jobs into four basic categories. These categories are:

- Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (1)
- Educational, health and social services (2)
- Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (3)
- Other services (4)

Vero Beach and Indian River County deviate less than 10% from the Service industry's national average. The breakdown of service jobs into the four basic categories differs significantly, however, when comparing Vero Beach and national averages. In 2000, Vero Beach's highest employment percentage was in the third service category (Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services). It was higher than Indian River County's percentage and almost twice the national percentage. This portion of the service industry creates jobs that typically pay lower wages. The Service Industry Breakdown chart on page 1-9 illustrates the difference in the breakdown of service categories for Vero Beach, Indian River County, and the United States, for 2000.



■ 1 (Professional...) ■ 2 (Health...) □ 3 (Arts...) □ 4 (Other services...)

SERVICE INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN

SOURCE: INDIAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The largest employer in the county is the Indian River County School District with almost 2000 employees in 2004. The following is a list of the five largest employers in Indian River County and the number of people employed.

1. School District of Indian River County.....1,945
2. Indian River County Government.....1,333
3. Indian River Memorial Hospital.....1,100
4. Publix Supermarkets.....801
5. New Piper Aircraft.....752

A number of City decisions have resulted in minimal population growth over the last 25 plus years for Vero Beach. Restrictions on height, density, and the decision to limit annexation have all attributed to a relatively slow rate of growth. A community experiencing minimal population growth over a sustained period of time, while neighboring communities are increasing by double-digit percentages, tends to be labeled as a community in decline. However, this is not the case for Vero Beach. Instead, the low growth rate is largely a result of small household size and the decreasing availability of developable land.

In essence, Vero Beach is "built-out," and the reinvestment and redevelopment market will impact the shape of the city in the future. This trend will continue to influence real estate values, as well as the type of development that will occur in the future. Since 1980, Vero Beach's residential real estate has appreciated at a faster rate than the national average. By 2000, the median value of a single-family home was \$144,800. This value was both higher than Indian River County (\$104,000) and the national average (\$119,600). In addition, over 22% of Vero Beach's single-family units were above \$300,000. This is significantly higher than Indian River County (12%) and the national average (9%). The following table compares the 2000 Census housing value statistics.

	Median Value SF Household	Value Above \$300K	Mortgage < 15% of HH Income	Median Rent
Vero Beach	\$ 144,800	22.3%	42.5%	\$ 598
Indian River County	\$ 104,000	12.5%	40.8%	\$ 615
United States	\$ 119,600	9.5%	36.5%	\$ 602

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS

1.6 CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This information geographic and demographic information leads to the identification of key facts and trends worthy of consideration when developing the vision for the Vero Beach.

- Indian River County, including the City of Vero Beach, is an environmentally diverse location in the transition zone between temperate and tropical climates.
- The City of Vero Beach is a decreasingly smaller percentage of the Indian River County population - 27% in 1980, 16% in 2000 and projected to be 10.6% in 2030.
- The median age of Vero Beach is significantly older than the nation's population (47.7 to 35.3 respectfully). Additionally, 41% of Vero Beach's population is over 54 years of age, compared to 21% nationally.
- The Indian River unemployment rate fluctuates dramatically during the year (due to seasonal influences). It has generally shown a historic trend of being slightly higher than the national unemployment rate.
- In 2000, approximately 50% of the employment in Vero Beach was occurring in the Services sector of the economy. This reflects a greater economic dependence on the economic sector with little to no employment growth in other sectors.
- Roughly 14% of the employment in Vero Beach represents jobs in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services. That is a significantly larger percentage than the national employment average in the same job categories.
- The County's top three largest employers are public or institutional employers (i.e. the county school district, the county, and the hospital).
- The combination of an aging Vero Beach population, restrictions on height and density, lack of large tracts of developable land, and the decision to limit annexation contribute to a relatively slow population growth rate in the City. Simultaneously, these factors are influencing an increase in the median value of housing in Vero Beach.