



Florida's  
**ADVENTURE COAST**  
BROOKSVILLE ♦ WEEKI WACHEE

# 2023 – 2033 Strategic Plan

Presented By:



Research | Strategy | Marketing



## Introduction

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We are delighted to present the final strategic plan for Hernando County Tourism, known for its captivating brand, Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee. This comprehensive document is the culmination of a collaborative effort between our experienced team and the Hernando County Tourist Development Council (TDC), aimed at fostering sustainable growth and development for the region's tourism industry. Drawing upon insights from the DestinationNEXT Futures study and an extensive scope of research, this plan offers a cohesive vision for the future of Hernando County's tourism sector, emphasizing the importance of innovation, collaboration, and adaptability in an ever-evolving industry landscape.

Our team has conducted thorough research to inform the strategic plan, ensuring a data-driven and well-rounded approach to destination development. This research includes a comprehensive situational analysis, stakeholder and visitor awareness and perception assessments, as well as an extensive inventory of Hernando County's unique tourism assets. By integrating these research components, the plan provides a solid foundation upon which to build strategic objectives and recommendations for the county's tourism growth.

The DestinationNEXT Futures study plays a pivotal role in shaping this strategic plan, offering valuable insights into emerging trends, best practices, and innovative approaches to destination marketing and management. These insights have been carefully integrated into our recommendations, ensuring that Hernando County Tourism remains at the forefront of industry innovation and is well-positioned to capitalize on new opportunities in the years ahead.

The strategic plan is designed to serve as a valuable resource for the entire organization, including the TDC board, addressing the needs of both the destination and the organization. The plan is structured to provide a clear roadmap for destination development, encompassing strategic objectives, destination stewardship, community alignment, and digital conversion. By aligning these elements with the extensive research and the findings of the DestinationNEXT Futures study, the plan lays the groundwork for a successful and sustainable future for Hernando County Tourism.

In summary, this final strategic plan represents a forward-looking and comprehensive approach to destination development in Hernando County, built upon a solid foundation of research, collaboration, and a deep understanding of the region's unique attributes. With the guidance of the DestinationNEXT Futures study and a strong emphasis on innovation, we are confident that this plan will serve as a roadmap for success, leading Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee towards a vibrant and prosperous future in the ever-evolving world of tourism.

## Approach

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Our robust methodology encompasses a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as collaborative workshops for stakeholder engagement and strategic planning. The key components of our research methodology include the following:

**Stakeholder Interviews:** We conducted 13 in-depth interviews with crucial stakeholders in Hernando County, such as business owners, county commissioners, and elected officials. We also distributed an online survey to those stakeholders who did not participate in the interviews, resulting in 28 completed responses.

**Brand Awareness Online Panel Survey:** Our team carried out a brand awareness study with 1,400 adults from four distinct US regions: Florida, South, Midwest, and Northeast. After ensuring respondents met specific criteria, we analyzed a total of 1,532 completed responses.

**Brand Perception Dispatch Interview Survey:** This survey gathered the perceptions of 250 out-of-county visitors to Hernando County at various events and attractions. We conducted two rounds of dispatch survey interviews during the summer and winter seasons, obtaining a total of 256 completed surveys.

**Secondary Research:** To supplement our primary research, we examined various data sources, such as occupancy rates and revenue figures from county hotels, tourist development tax dollars, Google Analytics reports of the county's tourism website, and competitor analysis of other Florida counties. We also reviewed academic and media articles on rural tourism development, resistance to rural development, and heritage/historical tourism.

**Strategic Planning Stakeholder Workshop:** On February 28, 2023, we facilitated a two-hour-long workshop with key stakeholders to review the research findings, discuss the critical challenges facing Hernando County, and provide recommendations for the county's consideration.

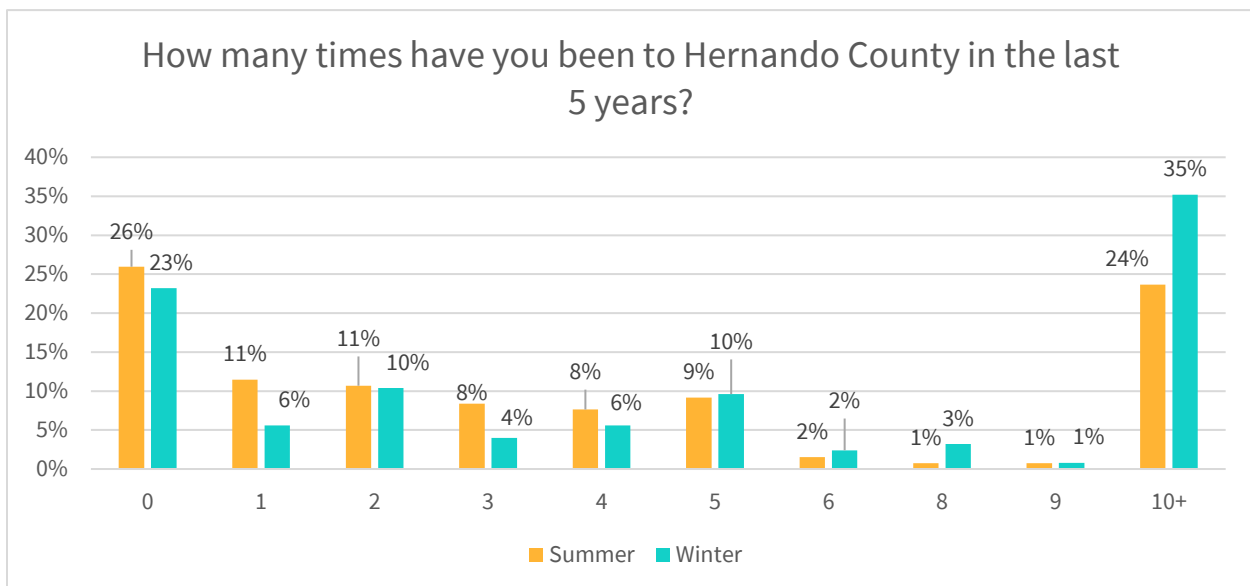
**Strategic Planning Staff Workshop:** We organized an all-day workshop on March 16, 2023, engaging Hernando County staff in Tourism and Economic Development. During this workshop, participants conducted a thorough review of the findings from previous steps and discussed the key goals and objectives of the new strategic plan.

Our multifaceted approach integrates diverse insights into the perceptions and performance of Hernando County's tourism, providing a solid foundation for the strategic planning process and ensuring the development of an effective and comprehensive plan for the county's tourism sector.

## Top-line Research Findings

The data collected across these different research methodologies provided insights into the perspectives of visitors to the county, prospective visitors to Hernando County and Central Florida, more generally, and stakeholders in Hernando County tourism. For more information on the research findings, please see the foundational research summary completed as a component of this project.

Overall, a majority of Hernando County's tourists surveyed came from other parts of Florida. However, there was a considerably large segment of visitors that came from other areas of the United States. During the dispatch interview process, 29% of respondents reported they lived in an area outside of Florida. This offers some evidence that Hernando County offers attractions that draw people from various parts of the country or provide attractions that Florida residents bring visiting friends or relatives to enjoy during their stay.



Hernando County continues to attract a large number of new visitors to the area. While a majority of guests had visited the county three or more times in the last five years, about a quarter of total dispatch survey respondents indicated that it was their first time visiting the county. This shows that many travelers are continuing to learn about and travel to attractions in the county. In addition, most visitors expressed satisfaction with their visit to the county. Almost all (88%) respondents in the panel study who had visited Hernando County expressed interest in returning to the county, while more than three-quarters (78%) of dispatch respondents rated their experience a five (very satisfied) on a scale from one to five. These data show that visitors are generally satisfied with their experiences in the county and return or are interested in returning in the future.

Though satisfaction amongst visitors is high and many are likely to return, most do not stay overnight in the county. When asked, half of the sample stated that they were returning home after the event or activity. Of those who were staying overnight, nearly all were not staying in hotels in the county. Many opted to camp or stay with friends or relatives who lived nearby. Though new tourists are continuing to come to Hernando County, few visitors are staying in lodgings in the county.

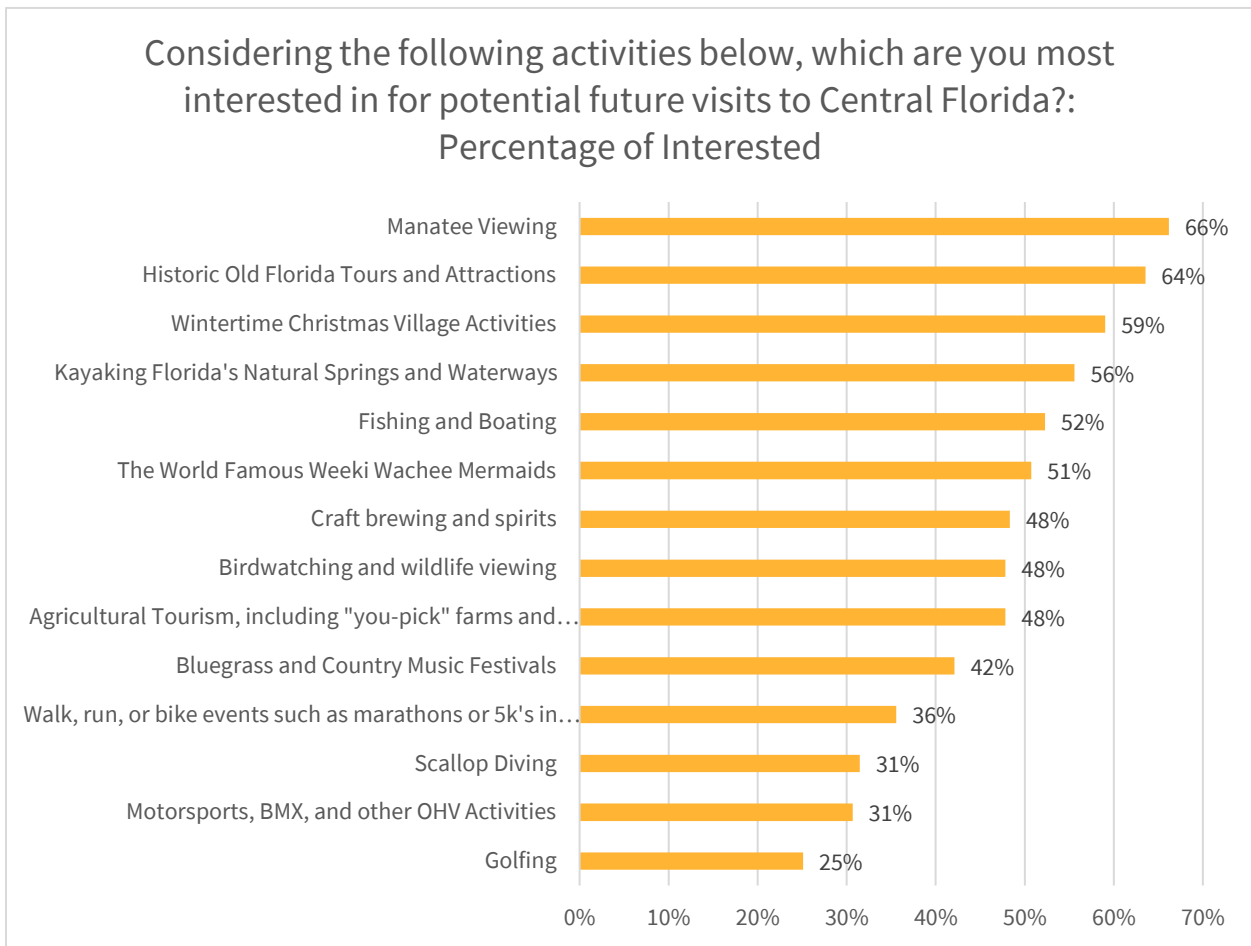


Visitors to the county associate the county with its natural aspects and a more laid-back feeling. When dispatch respondents were asked which word better described their experience in Hernando County, most respondents (61%) believed the county was more "easygoing" compared to "adventurous". Furthermore, nearly all respondents indicated that the county was more "scenic" (89%) and "relaxed" (87%) compared to "lively" and "outgoing," respectively. Moreover, a majority of panel respondents (62%) who visited the county mentioned that the natural aspects of the county and the old Florida feel were the best part of their visit. Though Florida's Adventure Coast's branding emphasizes the adventurous activities, respondents were mixed on their perceptions of the county and their attraction.

However, the branding of Florida's Adventure Coast is largely recognized by potential visitors in the market. When panel respondents were given a list of different names and brands associated with areas in Hernando County and nearby places, Florida's Adventure Coast was the most recognized name out of the set at 43%. Following closely was "Florida's Nature Coast" at 42%. While there may be a recognition of the former due to some associations with the latter brand, Florida's Adventure Coast was more recognized by respondents than "Weeki Wachee" (25%), "Hernando County" (22%), and "Brooksville" (20%). This shows the strength of the new brand, and while current visitors may not always associate the county as adventurous, the brand does have noticeable recognition compared to other names and areas in the county.

When respondents were asked the type of group that they most recently visited Central Florida with, a majority (55%) of respondents identified they came with family. This is not surprising, as Central Florida is well known for family-focused attractions. However, these types of groups may also be looking for activities to satisfy multiple different interests or may be looking for budget-friendly alternatives once they are in the market to maximize their time in the region. Hernando County offers an array of affordable options that may suit the various needs of these types of groups.

Respondents also indicated an interest in the range of attractions and amenities offered in Hernando County. Panel respondents expressed the greatest interest in manatee viewing (66%), historic old Florida tours and attractions (64%), and wintertime Christmas village activities (59%). These findings indicate that these three activities have broad appeal for a range of potential visitors to Hernando County/Central Florida. However, several niche attractions also received noticeable levels of interest from respondents. Attractions such as scallop diving (31%), motorsports and OHV activities (31%), and golf (25%) received the lowest amount of interest from the panel respondents. However, these attractions are more niche and receive a noticeable amount of interest. In addition, these are all strong aspects of tourism in Hernando County. These findings demonstrate the importance of marketing to different audiences. The attractions that received the most interest would be best to include more broad appeals to drive tourists to the destination. With the attractions with less broad interest, marketing could shift to publications and websites that are focused on those activities to draw in tourists who have the most interest in traveling for those attractions and activities.



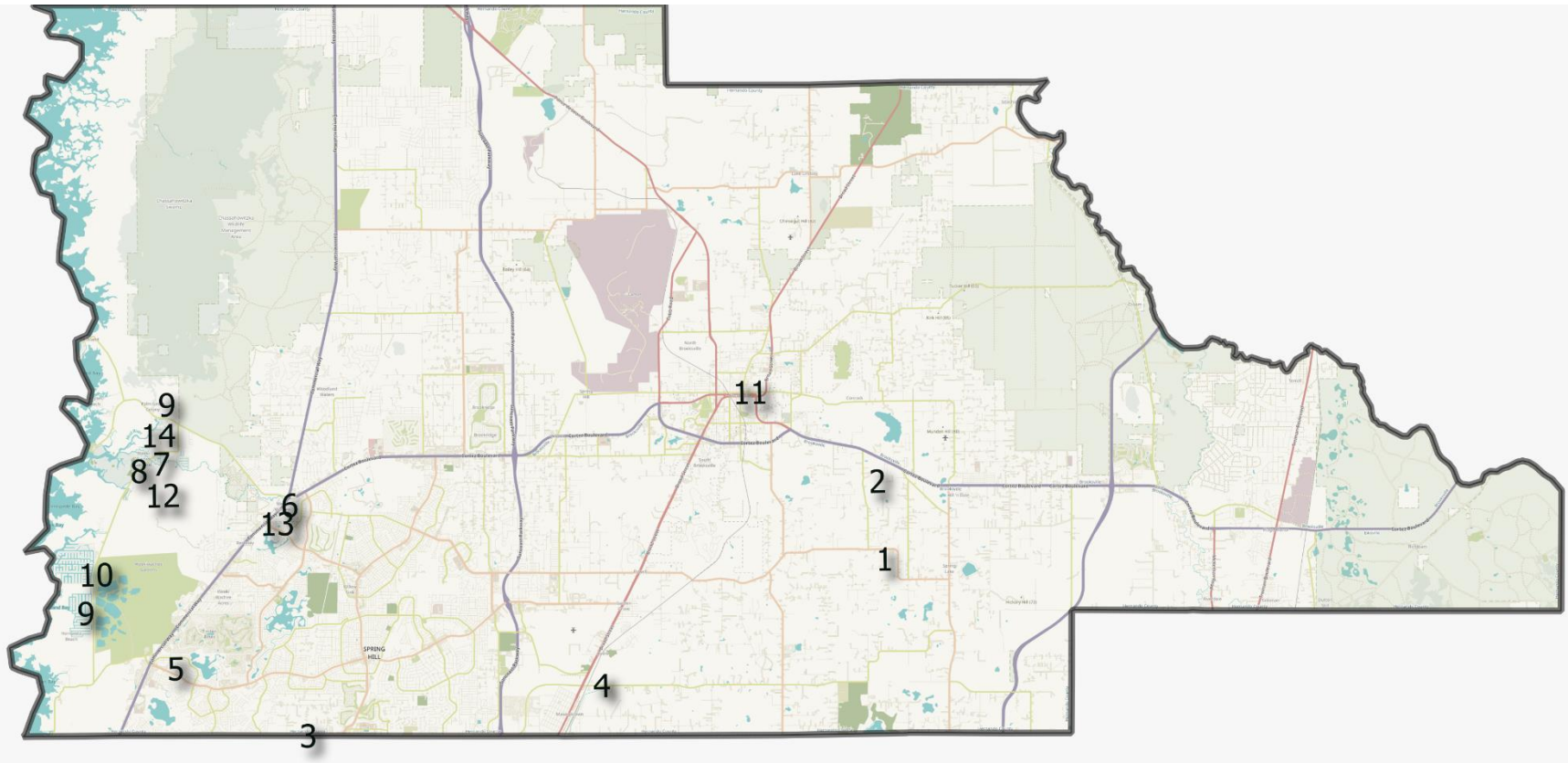
In conclusion, Hernando County is a destination largely visited by other people from Florida. However, Florida residents come from across the state, including South Florida. This dispels the notion that Hernando County is solely a “day trip” destination for its neighboring counties in Central Florida. Moreover, there is a noticeable percentage of visitors who came from outside of the state, showing the growing popularity of the area. Potential visitors are most interested in manatee viewing and historic old Florida tours and attractions, but there is a considerable interest in niche activities like scallop diving and golf that may allow Hernando County to draw in dedicated segments of tourists. These groups may be more likely to spend multiple days in the county, which is different from our sample findings, which shows that most people returned home after their event or did not stay in hotel lodging in the county. While visitors to the county associated the area and attractions as more easygoing, scenic, and relaxed, Florida's Adventure Coast branding was the most recognized by potential visitors.

## Hernando County Tourism Inventory

The following section details the comprehensive inventory of major tourism draws across Hernando County. They are divided into the following categories: Adventure Attractions, Agritourism, Food and Drink, Golfing, Historic Attractions, and Natural Attractions.

### Adventure Attractions

Hernando County offers a range of thrilling adventure attractions for adrenaline junkies. From kayaking in the crystal-clear Weeki Wachee River to exploring deep caves, visitors can experience the great outdoors like never before. With plenty of opportunities for hiking, camping, and zip-lining, adventure enthusiasts are sure to find their next thrilling experience in Hernando County.





1. **Takoda Wellness Ranch** is a premier health and wellness retreat located at 24280 Powell Rd, Brooksville, FL 34602. The ranch offers luxurious accommodations, wellness treatments, and outdoor adventures such as hiking, horseback riding, and yoga classes to help guests recharge and rejuvenate their minds, body, and soul.
2. **FLG X Adventure Course - Tampa** is an exciting adventure attraction located at 6440 Cedar Ln, Brooksville, FL 34601, that offers multiple large circuits, each containing a mixture of approximately 10-17 different obstacles and zip lines. Visitors can challenge themselves with rope swings, scrambling walls, hanging nets, wobbly bridges, and suspended "surprises" while enjoying the beautiful scenery.
3. **Adventure Coast Fun Park** is an entertainment center located at 9227 County Line Rd, Spring Hill, FL 34608, that features a variety of fun activities for all ages. Visitors can enjoy go-karts, mini golf, an arcade, batting cages, and a ropes course.
4. **Leadfoot City** is a multi-purpose automotive facility located at 17109 Old Ayers Rd, Brooksville, FL 34604, that hosts events, car shows, and a dragstrip, along with automotive-themed shops. Visitors can experience high-speed thrills or explore the unique collection of cars and memorabilia on display.
5. **Nature Coast Botanical Gardens** is a 3.5-acre botanical garden located at 1489 Parker Ave, Spring Hill, FL 34606, that features themed gardens, sculptures, and a nursery. Visitors can take a leisurely stroll and admire the beautiful flora and fauna while learning about the local ecosystem.
6. **Weeki Wachee Canoeing and Tubing** is a popular adventure attraction located at 6131 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606, that offers canoe and tubing rentals to explore the Weeki Wachee River within the state park. Visitors can enjoy the crystal-clear waters and lush scenery while floating down the river.
7. **Weeki Wachee Kayaking and Paddleboarding** is another exciting adventure attraction located at 5414 Darlene St, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607, that offers kayak and paddleboard rentals for exploring the Weeki Wachee River. Visitors can enjoy a peaceful journey down the river while taking in the beautiful surroundings and wildlife.





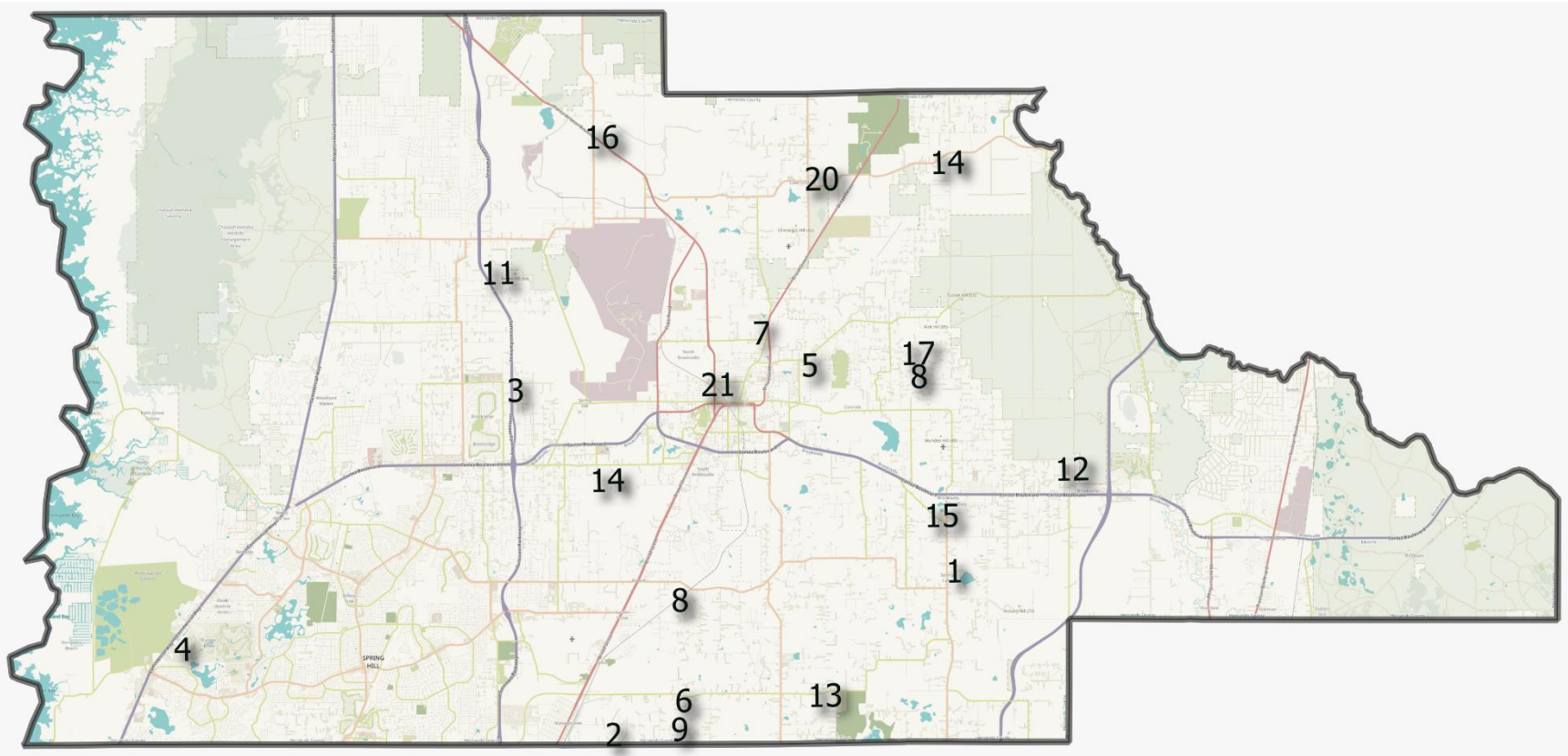
8. **Weeki Wachee Marina** is a full-service marina and boat rental company located at 7154 Shoal Line Blvd, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607. The marina offers a variety of boats, kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards for rent, as well as bait, tackle, ice, snacks, and drinks for sale. Guests can enjoy a day on the water, exploring the Weeki Wachee River and the Gulf of Mexico, where they can fish, swim, snorkel, or just relax and enjoy the scenery.
9. **Bayport Airboat Tours** is a thrilling and educational airboat tour company located at 4140 Cortez Blvd, Spring Hill, FL 34607. The company offers custom tours of the Gulf of Mexico and the Weeki Wachee River, where guests can experience the speed and agility of the airboat, as well as the beauty and diversity of the marine life and birds. Guests can also learn about the history and ecology of the area from the knowledgeable and friendly captain.
10. **Hernando Beach Scuba** is a PADI scuba instruction business located at Hernando Beach, FL 34607. The business offers scuba classes from open water to dive master level, as well as scuba equipment and travel. Hernando Beach Scuba is a great choice for anyone who wants to learn or improve their scuba skills and explore the underwater world.
11. **Better Off Wet Charters** is a boat charter service located at PO Box 10071 Brooksville FL, 34603. The service offers sightseeing tours and pleasure cruises, as well as scalloping charters, to various destinations with abundant wildlife and scenic views. Visitors can enjoy water and ice supplied on board, or opt for a memorable picnic experience with American Picnics.
12. **KayaKing Weeki Wachee** is a family-owned and operated kayak rental company located at 6131 Commercial Way, Weeki Wachee, FL 34606. The company provides quality kayaks and equipment, friendly service, and shuttle transportation to and from the Weeki Wachee River. Guests can enjoy a relaxing and scenic paddle along the crystal-clear river, where they can encounter manatees, turtles, fish, birds, and other wildlife.
13. **Buccaneer Bay** is a water park located at 6131 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606, that features four water slides, a lazy river, a kiddie pool, and a white sandy beach. Visitors can cool off and have fun in the natural spring water or relax under the shade of the palm trees. The park also offers picnic areas, volleyball courts, and canoe rentals.



14. **Get Up And Go Kayaking - Weeki Wachee** is a unique kayaking experience provider located at 17951 Hamilton Rd, Dade City, FL 33523. The company offers guided tours in clear kayaks that allow guests to see the underwater world and wildlife of Florida's springs, rivers, and coastlines. Guests can choose from various tour options such as bioluminescent tours, manatee tours, sunset tours, and more to enjoy a fun and memorable adventure on the water.

## Agritourism

Hernando County is home to a flourishing agricultural community that offers visitors an opportunity to experience authentic farm life. Visitors can pick their own fruits and vegetables, go on guided farm tours, and more. With its fertile soil and warm climate, Hernando County is a prime location for agritourism.





1. **Boyett's Grove and Citrus Attraction** is an exciting agritourism destination located at 4355 Spring Lake Hwy, Brooksville, FL 34601. Visitors can explore the lush citrus grove and learn about the history of citrus farming in Florida. The attraction also features a zoo with a variety of animals, including monkeys, lemurs, and birds. The gift shop offers a variety of unique souvenirs, citrus products, and homemade fudge. Families can enjoy a day filled with activities such as gem mining, mini-golf, and a playground.
2. **Sweetfields Farm** is a charming agritourism destination located at 17250 Benes Roush Rd, Masaryktown, FL 34604. The farm offers seasonal events throughout the year, such as a corn maze in the fall and a sunflower maze in the spring. Visitors can also pick their own produce, such as pumpkins and strawberries, or shop at the farm store for fresh produce, jams, and honey. The farm also features a variety of farm activities, including hayrides, a petting zoo, and a pumpkin patch.
3. **The Olive Grove** is a unique agritourism attraction located at 15016 Rester Dr, Brooksville, FL 34613. Visitors can explore the beautiful olive grove and learn about the production of olive oil. The farm offers tours, tastings, and a gift shop featuring a variety of olive oil products, including infused oils and gourmet spreads. Visitors can also enjoy a picnic on the farm while taking in the serene countryside views.
4. **Hernando County Farmers Market** is a weekly agritourism destination located at 2468 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606. Visitors can shop for fresh local produce, baked goods, crafts, and other products from local vendors. The market is a great place to sample the flavors of Hernando County and support the local community. Visitors can also enjoy live music and other entertainment while browsing the booths.
5. **Patrick's Produce** is a wholesale and retail produce company located at 22316 Croom Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The company has been in business since 1991 and sells fresh fruits and vegetables to customers and restaurants. Patrick's Produce is known for its quality produce and customer service.
6. **Upicktopia** is a u-pick farm and winery located at 19125 Phillips Rd, Brooksville, FL 34604. The farm has over 56 acres of land where it grows blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, sweet corn, watermelon, squash, cabbage, beets, and pumpkins. The farm also makes its own wines from its fresh fruits and has a tasting room under construction. Upicktopia is open from Friday to Sunday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM from October to June and offers a fun and healthy experience for visitors of all ages.
7. **Havenwood** is a new wedding venue located at 19125 Phillips Rd #6952, Masaryktown, FL 34604, that offers a woodsy, whimsical garden feel for weddings. The venue is situated on a 33-acre private estate that features a clear tent and landscaped woods.



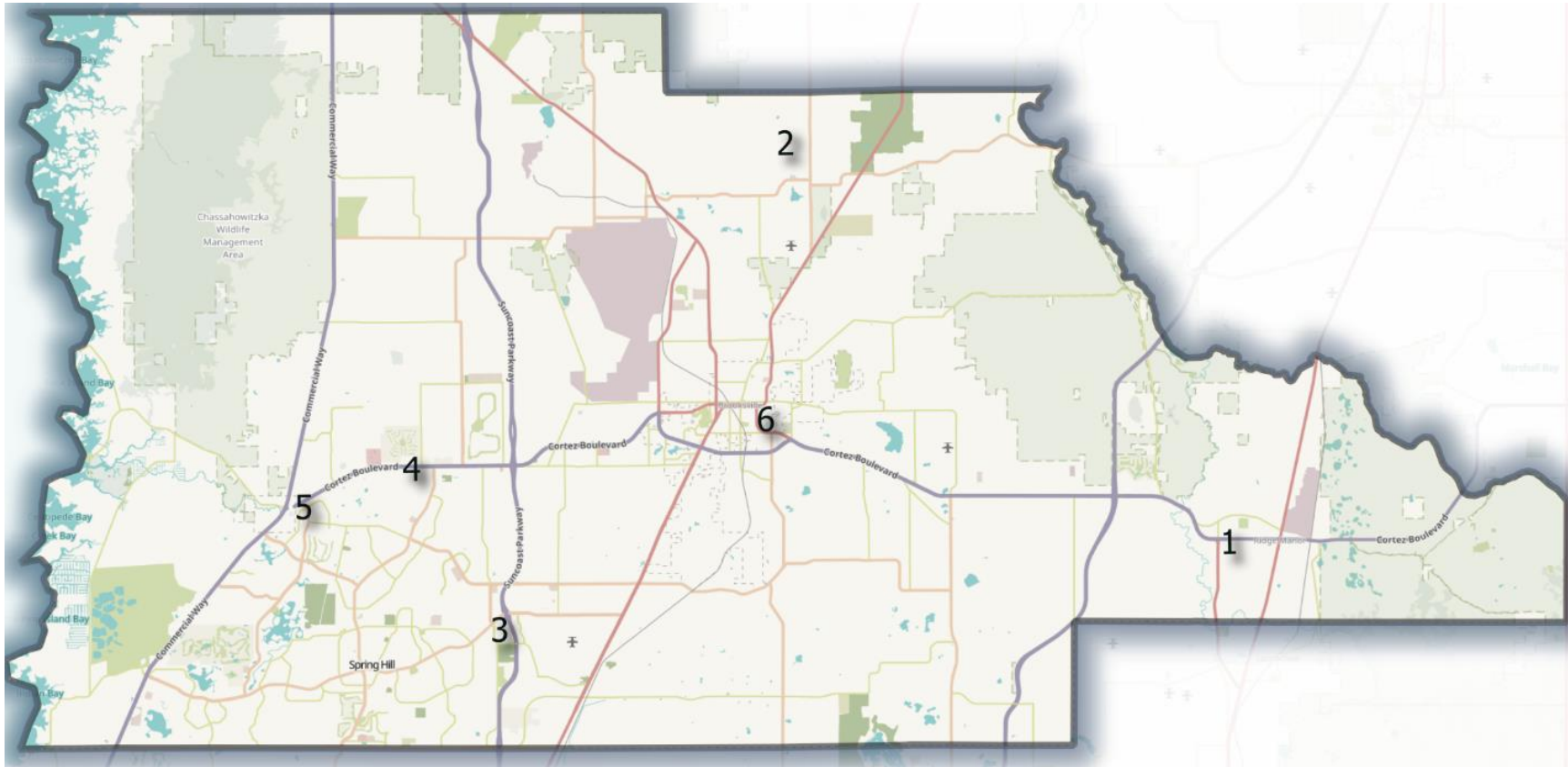
8. **Hart Horse Farm LLC** is a full-service horse boarding and training facility located at 24198 Lanark Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm offers a safe and clean environment, personalized care, and professional instruction for horses and riders of all ages and skill levels. Guests can enjoy the large pastures, covered arena, round pen, wash rack, and tack room while learning from certified trainers and instructors.
9. **Masaryk Winery** is a family-owned winery located at 19125 Phillips Rd, Brooksville, FL 34604, that produces and sells wines made from locally grown fruits. Visitors can taste and buy a variety of wines, tour the winery, and enjoy the comfortable atmosphere. The winery also hosts events and offers wine club memberships.
10. **Black Creek Farms** is a family-owned and operated farm located at 22250 Croom Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm produces and sells fresh eggs, honey, jams, jellies, and baked goods. Guests can visit the farm stand, meet the animals, and enjoy the peaceful country setting. The farm also hosts events such as weddings, parties, and workshops.
11. **The Hivery and Potager at Heaven on Earth Ranch** is a unique and creative space located at 1210 S Main St, Brooksville, FL 34601. The space offers a variety of services and products, such as honey, beeswax candles, soap, pottery, art, and jewelry. Guests can also enjoy workshops, classes, and events on topics such as beekeeping, gardening, pottery, and painting. The space is a place to learn, create, and connect with others.
12. **Spotted Dance Ranch** is a family-owned and operated horse boarding and training facility located at 17351 Wiscon Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The ranch provides quality care, spacious stalls, and professional instruction for horses and riders of all levels and disciplines. Guests can enjoy the scenic trails, indoor and outdoor arenas, round pens, and tack rooms while learning from experienced trainers and staff.
13. **Bramble Creek Farms** is a fruit farm located at 23031 Hayman Road Brooksville, FL 34602, that grows and sells figs, passion fruit, and blackberries. The farm is open for the 2023 season and has frozen fruit available. Visitors can see the 2023 Season Tab for more information on what fruit is in season and how to order.
14. **Lake Lindsey Farm** is a charming and cozy farm stay located at 22251 Lake Lindsey Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm offers comfortable rooms, delicious breakfasts, and friendly animals to interact with. Guests can relax in the hammock, explore the nature trails, feed the goats and chickens, or visit the nearby historic town of Brooksville.



15. **Guardian Angel Alpacas Inc.** is a family-owned alpaca farm located at 12345 Alpaca Lane, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm started as a dream in 2014 and became a reality in 2017 when the alpacas moved to their new home. Visitors can meet the friendly alpacas and llamas, learn about their care and history, and shop for alpaca products such as yarn, socks, and blankets.
16. **The Little Rock Cannery** is a community resource center located at 15487 Citrus Way, Brooksville, FL 34601, that offers canning services, classes, and produce from local growers. Visitors can learn how to preserve their own food, purchase fresh and healthy ingredients, and join the Hernando County Growers Association for exclusive benefits and discounts.
17. **Beasley Farm** is a local farm that sells fresh produce and offers u-pick activities at 10137 Preston Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm grows its produce free of pesticides and with non-GMO seeds and has a variety of vegetables year-round. The farm also has farm animals such as cows, goats, chickens, and bunnies that visitors can feed. On market weekends, the farm hosts vendors selling plants, crafts, soap, kettle corn, and other goods.
18. **JG Ranch** is a family-operated farm located at 17200 Wiscon Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601, that offers a variety of fresh produce, eggs, honey, and beef. Visitors can shop for farm-to-table goods or enjoy the scenic views of the ranch.
19. **Frazier Farms** is a family-owned farm that sells fresh sweet corn and other vegetables at 20175 Manecke Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The farm has a sunflower patch that visitors can enjoy and pick their own flowers. Frazier Farms is known for its delicious corn and friendly service and has been serving the community for over 40 years.
20. **Golden Rainbow Ranch** is a non-profit animal rescue and therapy ranch located at 11219 Snowbird Ave, Brooksville, FL 34614. The ranch offers environmental therapy, volunteer work, and nature education for visitors of all ages. Visitors can enjoy a tour of the 10-acre farm, interact with various animals, and participate in nature crafts. The ranch is open by appointment only and relies on donations to fund its mission.

## Food and Drink

Hernando County is known for its delicious cuisine and locally brewed beer. From casual beachside cafes to elegant fine dining restaurants, visitors can indulge in a variety of culinary delights. Hernando County is also home to several craft breweries and wineries, offering visitors a chance to taste the unique flavors of the area.



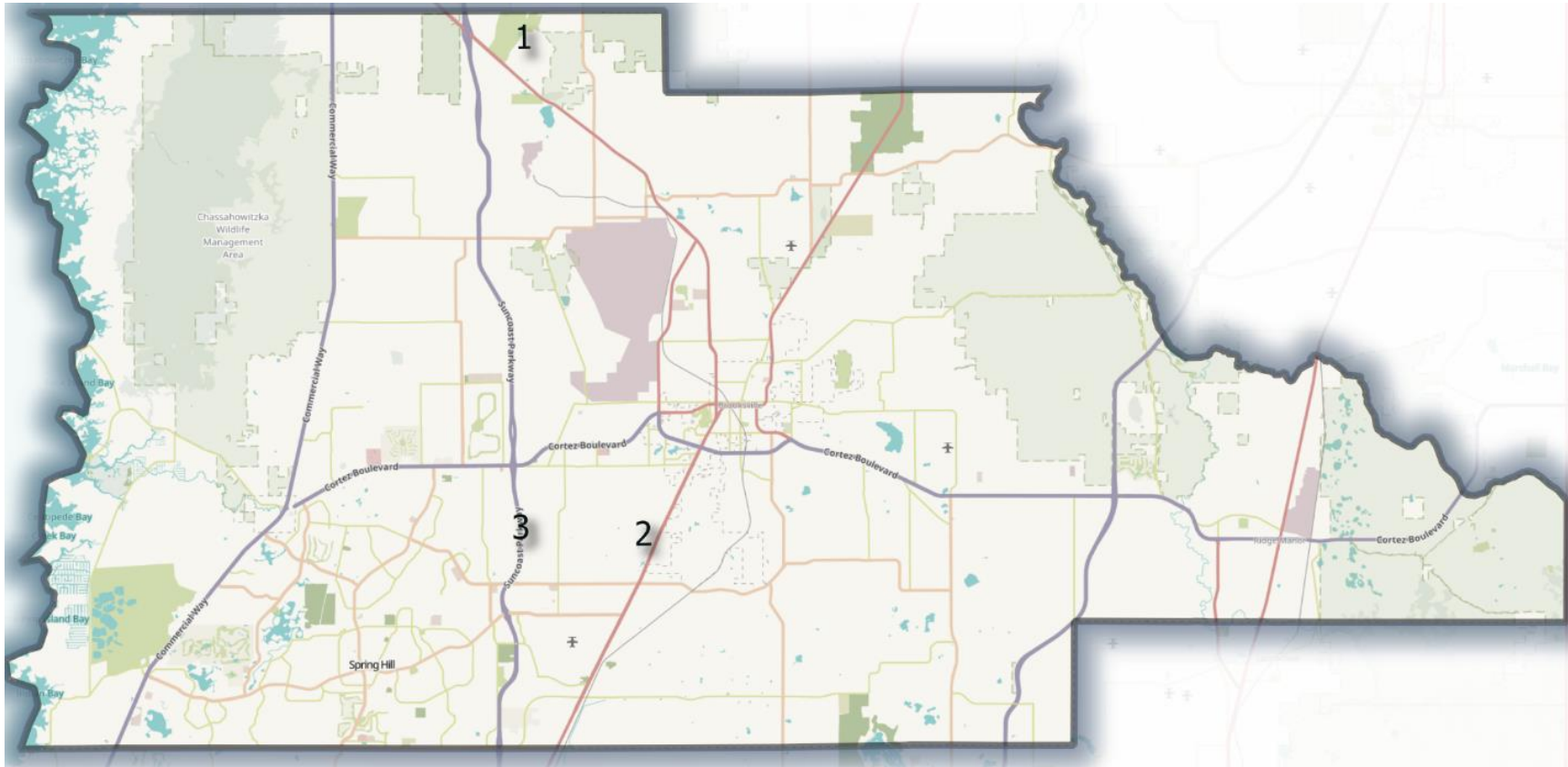


1. **Wild Buck Whiskey Distillery** is a must-visit food and drink destination located at 33239 Cortez Blvd, Ridge Manor, FL 33523. The craft distillery specializes in handcrafted whiskey made with locally sourced ingredients. Visitors can enjoy whiskey tastings and tours by appointment, which provide a unique glimpse into the distilling process. The distillery also features a gift shop where visitors can purchase bottles of their favorite whiskey.
2. **Sparacia Witherell Family Winery & Vineyards** is a charming winery and vineyard located at 21509 Snow Hill Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. Visitors can sample a variety of award-winning wines while taking in the stunning views of the vineyards. The winery also offers tours and events throughout the year, such as live music and food pairings. The gift shop features a variety of unique wine accessories and gifts.
3. **Tidal Brewing Company** is a popular craft brewery and taproom located at 14311 Spring Hill Dr, Spring Hill, FL 34609. Visitors can enjoy a rotating selection of beers, including IPAs, stouts, and sours, in the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the taproom. The brewery also hosts a variety of events, such as trivia nights, live music, and food truck rallies.
4. **Marker 48 Brewing** is a spacious craft brewery located at 12147 Cortez Blvd, Brooksville, FL 34613, featuring a taproom, beer garden, and special events. Visitors can sample a variety of innovative beers, such as the popular "Weeki Wachee Wild Ale," which is brewed with local honey. The brewery also features a rotating selection of food trucks, live music, and other entertainment.
5. **Mermaid Winery & Bistro** is a unique food and drink destination located at 6234 Commercial Way, Weeki Wachee, FL 34613. Visitors can enjoy wine tastings while dining on delicious menu items made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The winery also hosts a variety of events, such as live music and trivia nights, making it the perfect spot for a fun night out.
6. **Florida Cracker Kitchen** is a beloved Southern-style restaurant located at 966 E Jefferson St, Brooksville, FL 34601. Known for its mouth-watering breakfast and lunch dishes, the restaurant also features a taproom with a rotating selection of Florida craft beers. The casual atmosphere and friendly staff make it a favorite spot for locals and visitors alike.



## Golfing

Hernando County is a golfer's paradise with award-winning golf courses. The county is home to championship courses designed by world-renowned golfers, offering breathtaking views and challenging courses. With a mild climate year-round, visitors can enjoy golfing in Hernando County any time of the year.

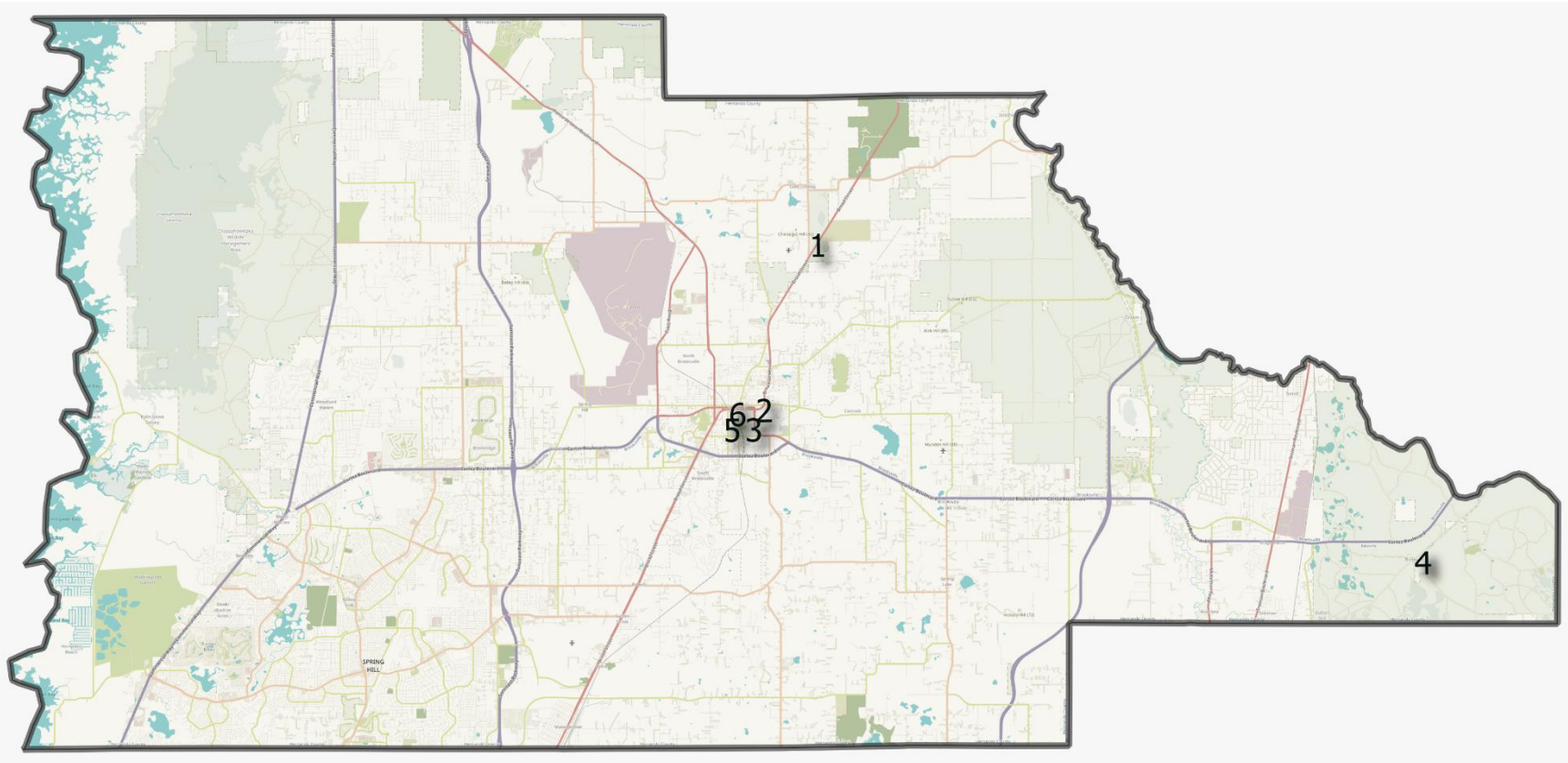




1. **Cabot Citrus Farms** is a highly anticipated golf attraction located at 17590 Ponce De Leon Blvd, Brooksville, FL 34614. Currently in the planning and development stages, Cabot Citrus Farms is a redevelopment of the former World Woods Golf Course. The project promises to offer world-class golf and premier lodging, making it an exciting addition to the golfing scene in Hernando County.
2. **Hernando Oaks Golf Club** is an 18-hole championship golf course located at 5230 Delacroix Dr, Brooksville, FL 34604. The golf club offers a challenging yet enjoyable course for golfers of all skill levels. Visitors can also enjoy the pro shop, which features a variety of golfing accessories and apparel. The clubhouse offers a relaxing atmosphere and a variety of food and beverage options, making it the perfect spot to unwind after a round of golf.
3. **Silverthorn Country Club** is an 18-hole championship golf course located at 4550 Golf Club Ln, Brooksville, FL 34609. The course offers a challenging layout with rolling hills and picturesque scenery. Visitors can also enjoy the pro shop, which offers a variety of golfing equipment and accessories. The restaurant at Silverthorn Country Club features a delicious menu and a comfortable atmosphere, making it a popular spot for golfers and non-golfers alike.

## Historic Attractions

Hernando County has a rich history dating back to the 1800s. Visitors can explore historical sites such as the Brooksville Historic District and the May-Stringer House Museum, which offers a glimpse into life in Hernando County in the early 1900s. With a variety of historic sites and landmarks, history buffs are sure to enjoy a trip to Hernando County.





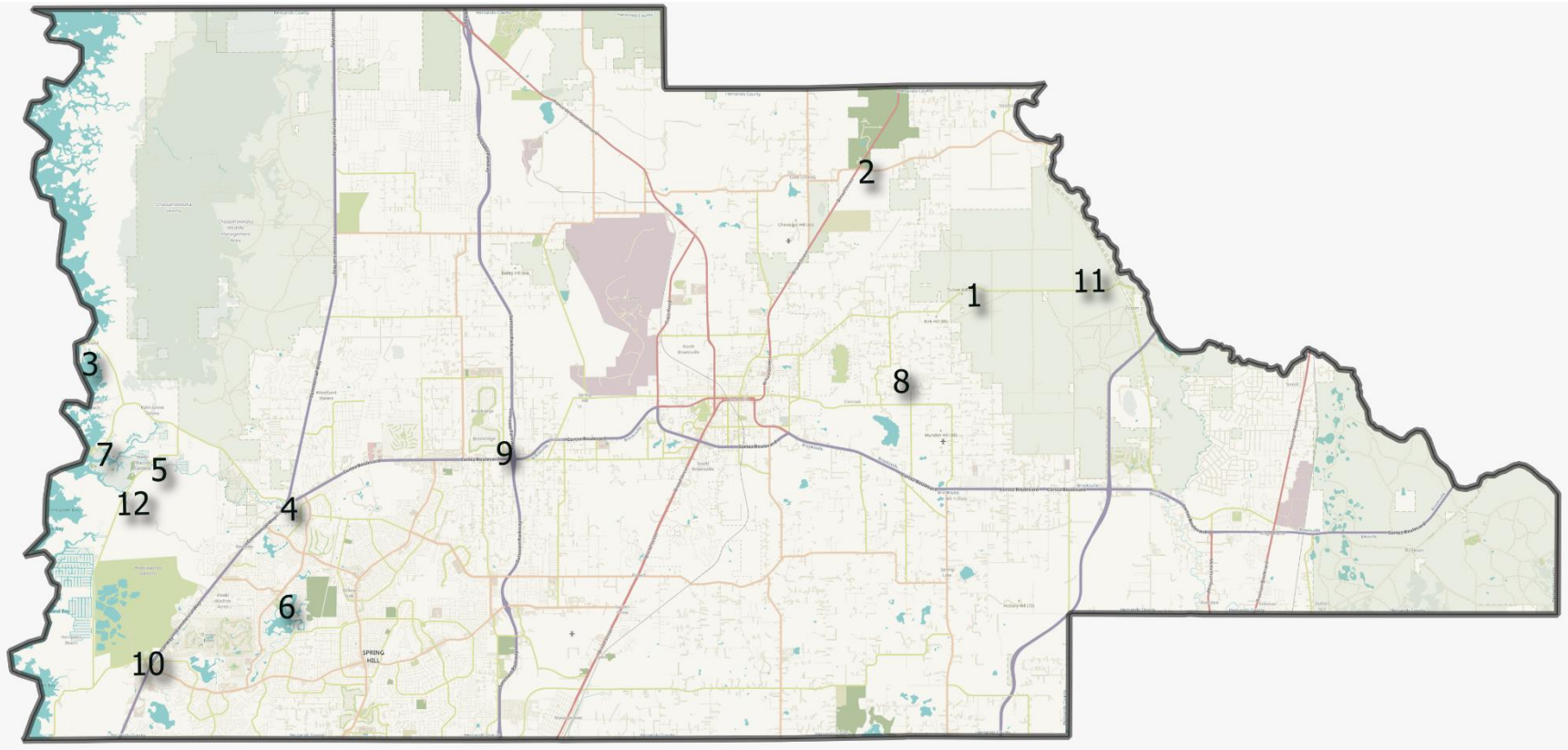
1. ***Chinsegut Hill Retreat and Museum*** is a historical attraction located at 22495 Chinsegut Hill Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. The property features a historic home and grounds that offer a glimpse into Old Florida's history. Visitors can take guided tours of the property and learn about its rich history. The museum also hosts a variety of events, such as workshops and lectures, as well as overnight accommodations, making it the perfect spot for a historic getaway.
2. ***Hernando Heritage Museum*** is a must-see historical attraction located at 601 Museum Ct, Brooksville, FL 34601. The museum is housed in the historic May-Stringer House, which dates back to the mid-1800s. Visitors can explore the house and its exhibits on local history and Victorian-era artifacts. The museum also hosts a variety of events throughout the year, such as ghost tours and holiday celebrations.
3. ***Brooksville Railroad Depot Museum*** is a fascinating historical attraction located at 70 Russell St, Brooksville, FL 34601. The museum is housed in the historic train depot and showcases local history and railroad artifacts. Visitors can learn about the important role that railroads played in the development of the region and explore the exhibits on display. The museum also hosts special events, such as train rides and themed tours.
4. ***Richloam General Store*** is a unique historical attraction located at 38219 Richloam Clay Sink Rd, Webster, FL 33597. The store was placed on the National Register for Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior in 2017, and it remains a family-owned and operated business. Visitors can step back in time and explore the store's exhibits and artifacts from a bygone era. The store also offers a variety of locally sourced products, including homemade jams, jellies, and honey. Richloam General Store is a true treasure of Old Florida that should not be missed.
5. ***Countryman One Room Schoolhouse Museum*** is an invaluable historical attraction located at 66 Russell St, Brooksville, FL 34601. This preserved piece of history offers a rare glimpse into the education system of the past. Housed in a one-room schoolhouse, the museum showcases a variety of educational artifacts and exhibits from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Visitors can sit at antique desks, peruse old textbooks, and get a sense of what a school day was like in a different era. The museum hosts various events throughout the year to further engage the community in historical education.



6. **Historic Downtown Brooksville** is a vibrant and picturesque historical attraction nestled within brick paved streets in Brooksville, Florida. The area's history dates back to the 19th century and is rich with a variety of architectural styles and historic landmarks. Visitors can immerse themselves in Brooksville's past by taking the Brooksville Main St Historic Tour, which guides them through key historical sites, unique local businesses, and stunning vintage structures. Alongside its historic charm, Downtown Brooksville also boasts a variety of shops, restaurants, and seasonal events, making it a popular destination for locals and tourists alike.

## Natural Attractions

Hernando County is blessed with a diverse ecosystem, offering visitors a chance to experience the natural beauty of Florida. Visitors can explore the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, which is home to several endangered species, or hike along the Withlacoochee State Forest. With its stunning beaches, lakes, and rivers, Hernando County is a natural wonderland waiting to be explored. Several parks and preserves, including Chinsegut Hill, Lake Townsen Preserve, Cypress Lakes Preserve, and others, were purchased under the Hernando County Environmentally Sensitive Lands program. This forward-thinking approach created a variety of eco-tourism opportunities for current and future Hernando County residents and visitors alike.





1. **Croom Wildlife Management Area** is a natural attraction located at 26416 Croom Rd, Brooksville, FL 34601. This beautiful wilderness area is popular for hunting, hiking, birdwatching, and horseback riding. Visitors can explore the varied landscapes, from rolling hills to cypress swamps, and observe the diverse wildlife that calls this area home.
2. **Withlacoochee State Forest** is a vast natural attraction located at 15003 Broad St, Brooksville, FL 34601. The forest offers visitors a range of recreational activities, including hiking, biking, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing. Withlacoochee State Forest is a great place to connect with nature and take in the beautiful surroundings.
3. **Pine Island Park** is a family-friendly beach located at 10840 Pine Island Dr, Weeki Wachee, FL 34607. The park features shallow waters for swimming, as well as picnic areas and a playground. Visitors can enjoy a day of fun in the sun while taking in the beautiful natural surroundings.
4. **Weeki Wachee Springs State Park** is a natural attraction located at 6131 Commercial Way, Spring Hill, FL 34606. The park is home to a natural spring and water park and is famous for its Weeki Wachee mermaids. Visitors can take a boat ride down the Weeki Wachee River, go swimming in the spring, or watch one of the famous mermaid shows.
5. **Rogers Park** is a scenic natural attraction located at 7244 Shoal Line Blvd, Spring Hill, FL, 34607. The park spans three acres along the Weeki Wachee River and offers a boat launch, swimming beach, and the chance to spot manatees in their natural habitat. Visitors can also enjoy picnicking and birdwatching in this tranquil setting.
6. **Delta Woods Park** is a natural attraction located at 3400 Deltona Blvd, Spring Hill, FL 34606. The park features walking trails, sports facilities, and picnic areas. Visitors can take a leisurely stroll through the woods, play a game of tennis, or enjoy a family picnic in this lovely natural setting.
7. **Bayport Park** is a scenic natural attraction located at 4140 Cortez Blvd, Spring Hill, FL 34607. The park offers boat ramps, a fishing pier, picnic areas, and walking trails. Visitors can enjoy fishing or boating in the Gulf of Mexico, take a walk along the beach, or enjoy a picnic while taking in the beautiful views.



8. **Good Neighbor Trail** is a remarkable 10-mile natural attraction, a trail that gives visitors an opportunity to explore the scenic surroundings on foot, bike, or rollerblades. The trail, which is part of the larger Coast-to-Coast Connector trail, winds through a variety of landscapes, from woodlands to open fields, and includes both paved and unpaved sections. Wildlife enthusiasts may also enjoy spotting local bird species and other animals along the route.
9. **Suncoast Trail** is a picturesque natural attraction and a perfect place for outdoor enthusiasts. This paved multi-use trail spans over 42 miles, running parallel to the Suncoast Parkway. Ideal for bicycling, walking, running, and rollerblading, the Suncoast Trail also features several wildlife viewing areas and trailheads equipped with amenities like restrooms, picnic shelters, and drinking fountains. Visitors can relish the chance to see a diverse range of flora and fauna while basking in the beauty of nature.
10. **Weekiwachee Preserve**, located at 2345 Osowaw Boulevard, Spring Hill, is an expansive natural attraction covering more than 11,000 acres of preserved wetlands and uplands. This untouched beauty boasts a variety of wildlife, unique geographical features like coastal marshes, and freshwater and saltwater systems. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy activities like hiking, cycling, birdwatching, fishing, and kayaking. The area's lakes and springs also offer opportunities for swimming and diving.
11. **Withlacoochee State Trail**, located at 3100 S. Old Floral City Road Inverness FL 34450, is a 46-mile-long paved trail known for its scenic landscapes. It cuts through three counties and offers a wide range of activities, including biking, horseback riding, and hiking. Along the trail, visitors can see various wildlife, enjoy the native vegetation, and visit historical sites.
12. **Linda Pedersen Park**, located at 6400 Shoal Line Blvd, Spring Hill, FL 34607, is a delightful family-friendly attraction. This park features numerous amenities including a playground, a swimming area, and a four-story observation tower. Visitors can enjoy fishing from the pier, launching a boat for a day on the water, or simply relaxing by the water's edge. The park's tower offers panoramic views of the surrounding area, including the serene salt marsh and the expansive Gulf of Mexico.



## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

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### Strengths:

These are the internal factors that make the destination attractive and unique. Strengths can include natural attractions, cultural heritage, a thriving local economy, and high-quality tourism infrastructure. Identifying strengths can help a destination market itself more effectively to potential visitors.

**Unique natural attractions:** Hernando County is home to natural attractions like Weeki Wachee Springs, which offers kayaking, canoeing, and the famous mermaid show. The Withlacoochee State Forest provides visitors with hiking, biking, and horseback riding opportunities.

**Topographical variation:** Another important aspect of the natural attractions in the county is the topography of the area. Unlike many parts of Florida, Hernando County has varied levels of elevation that make it attractive for certain activities, such as mountain biking and golfing.

**Eco-tourism potential:** With a focus on preserving the environment, the county has the potential to capitalize on the growing global eco-tourism trend.

**Proximity to major cities:** The county's close location to Tampa and Orlando allows it to attract visitors from these major tourist hubs.

**Strong local culture and history:** Hernando County boasts a rich history with several museums and historical sites, such as the Hernando Historical Museum and Chinsegut Hill, which can attract history enthusiasts.

**Outdoor recreational activities:** In addition to its natural attractions, the county offers various outdoor recreational activities, including fishing, boating, golfing, and birdwatching, catering to a wide range of interests.

**Affordable destination:** Compared to other popular Florida destinations, Hernando County is a more affordable option for visitors, making it an attractive choice for budget-conscious travelers.

## Weaknesses:

These are the internal factors that hinder the destination's attractiveness or competitiveness. Weaknesses can include poor infrastructure, a lack of amenities or attractions, or negative perceptions among potential visitors. Identifying weaknesses is crucial for understanding the challenges the destination faces and helps prioritize the steps necessary to plan improvements.

**Limited accommodation options:** The county has a limited number of overnight accommodation options, which limits the frequency of visits or the number of days visiting, which may discourage visitors from seeking more diverse and upscale lodging choices.

**Lack of extensive marketing:** The tourism industry in Hernando County does not have a strong marketing presence, particularly when compared to nearby cities like Tampa and Orlando.

**Insufficient public transportation:** Limited public transportation options can make it challenging for visitors to access attractions without a personal vehicle.

**Limited variety of tourist attractions:** While the county has several natural attractions, it lacks a wide variety of other entertainment options for visitors. Current attractions also have limited hours of operation, limiting the times in which certain areas are active.

**Seasonality:** Tourism in Hernando County is affected by seasonality, with peak visitation during the warmer months potentially leading to a decline in visitors during the off-season.

**Infrastructure limitations:** The county's infrastructure may struggle to support a significant increase in tourism, including roadways, parking, and other public facilities.

**Limited Water Access:** The county has a limited amount of accessible shoreline and boat ramps available throughout the county, restricting access to tourists to enjoy water-based attractions.

## Opportunities:

These are external factors that can be leveraged to enhance the destination's attractiveness or competitiveness. Opportunities can include new transportation links, changing travel trends, or the development of new attractions or amenities. Identifying opportunities can help a destination capitalize on emerging trends and stay ahead of the competition.

**Increased marketing efforts in the region:** Investing in marketing and communications campaigns in the region can raise awareness of Hernando County's attractions and increase its appeal to potential tourists.

**Tourism Advocacy:** Disseminating information and educating residents will help improve the relationship between the resident's awareness of tourism benefits while advocating for encouraging family and friends to visit.

**Expansion of accommodation options:** Encouraging the development of more accommodation options, such as hotels, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, and vacation rentals, can cater to a broader range of visitor preferences.

**Sustainable tourism development:** Focusing on sustainable tourism initiatives can attract environmentally conscious tourists and help preserve the county's natural resources.

**Development of niche tourism:** The county can capitalize on its strengths by developing niche tourism marketing and assets, covering niches such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism, or cultural and historical tourism.

**Events and festivals:** Organizing events and festivals related to local culture, history, or the environment can further promote Hernando County as a tourist destination.

**Improved public transportation:** Developing a better public transportation system can increase accessibility for visitors without personal vehicles, enhancing the overall tourist experience.

## Threats:

These are external factors that could negatively impact the destination's attractiveness or competitiveness. Threats can include economic downturns, natural disasters, or negative publicity. Identifying threats is important for understanding the risks the destination faces and taking steps to mitigate them.

**Environmental degradation:** If not managed sustainably, increased tourism can lead to environmental degradation, negatively impacting the appeal of Hernando County's natural attractions.

**Political Impacts on Travel:** Current political events in the state of Florida may impact tourism to Central Florida as people choose to travel to other parts of the country.

**Competition from nearby destinations:** Other areas in the state offer similar attractions to Hernando County. Most notably, Citrus County offers nearly the same types of attractions with noticeable strengths that could impact tourist choices between the two counties.

**Economic downturns:** Economic downturns may lead to reduced leisure spending, affecting the overall tourism industry and visitor numbers in the county.

**Climate change and natural disasters:** Climate change and the potential for natural disasters, such as hurricanes, can negatively impact tourism in the region and cause potential visitors to choose other destinations.

**Changes in travel trends:** Shifts in travel preferences or trends may affect Hernando County's appeal to potential visitors. For example, if tourists start favoring urban destinations, the county's natural attractions may become less attractive.

**Regulatory challenges:** Changes in local, state, or federal regulations related to land use, the environment, or tourism could potentially hinder the growth of the tourism industry in Hernando County.

**Local Resistance:** Though small, local resistance to new development in some areas of the county could impact the creation of new attractions and expansion of current attractions.

**Job retention and lack of workforce training opportunities:** Attractions and accommodations in the county have had issues retaining workers, placing stress on those businesses to operate and provide quality services and excellent customer experiences. Additionally, there are not adequate workforce training and education opportunities to help increase the local workforce. These issues may hurt maintaining future attractions and accommodations in the county.

## Lessons from Other Destinations

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An important component of strategic planning is identifying the areas of competitive weakness as well as competitive strength. While the next section speaks to the objectives that Hernando County should pursue, these are two examples of **less than opportune**

### Sports Tourism (Pasco County)

Pasco County has made substantial investments in sports tourism, with a prime example being the Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus managed by RADDSports. This investment aimed to bolster the county's 'Experience Florida's Sports Coast' brand. However, the actual return on these efforts, particularly the overall management by RADDSports, provides a cautionary tale for Hernando County. The company's focus shifted to local events over the initial vision of attracting sports tourism, which failed to contribute substantially to the expected overnight stays at the affiliated sports park hotel. This disappointing result brings the issue of risk versus reward to the forefront.

Tampa Bay area, in general, is home to numerous sports complexes which continue to compete for a finite number of regional and national events. Adding another sports complex in Hernando County would just increase this competition, possibly causing an oversupply and subsequently diluting the potential benefits. Moreover, constructing a new sports complex requires a considerable capital investment, which may not result in the anticipated financial returns, as the Pasco County example illustrates.

Furthermore, the hospitality infrastructure of Hernando County, primarily the available hotel inventory, is not sufficient to accommodate the large influx of visitors that a successful sports complex would attract. Building a sports complex without ensuring a substantial increment in hotel inventory for block room booking would potentially create a supply-demand imbalance, impeding the county's ability to fully leverage the benefits of sports tourism.

### Convention Centers (Pinellas County)

When considering convention facilities, one of the fundamental requirements is a substantial inventory of hotel rooms in close proximity. A sufficient supply of hotel rooms is vital in supporting large conventions and meetings. Unfortunately, Hernando County's current hotel inventory may not be suitable to support such a venture.

The larger literature on convention tourism underscores the importance of not only having a large number of rooms but also of having varied accommodation types to suit different budgets and preferences. However, the supply of rooms alone does not guarantee the success of convention tourism. Challenges such as the recruitment and retention of large-scale events, the need for state-of-the-art facilities, and stiff competition from well-established convention destinations also factor in.

Pinellas County's struggle to find a suitable location for a convention space, despite having a substantial hotel inventory, serves as a notable example of the difficulties in successfully implementing a convention strategy. Therefore, it may be more prudent for Hernando County to invest in initiatives that would encourage hotel development and recruitment efforts with incentives for meeting and event spaces. Not only could this help to increase the county's hotel inventory over time, but it would also offer a more diversified approach to tourism development that could attract a broader range of visitors.

## Strategic Plan Objectives

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The objectives outlined in this strategic plan are grouped according to the three goals of the DestinationNEXT futures study – Destination Stewardship, Community Alignment, and Digital Conversion.

### Destination Stewardship

The ethos of destination stewardship, based on sustainability, environmental consciousness, and community pride, forms a cornerstone in the strategic planning for Hernando County, Florida. With a rich array of natural assets—like Weeki Wachee Springs, the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area, and numerous county parks—effective stewardship involves not only preserving these resources but also highlighting their splendor and making them accessible for visitors. Education is crucial in promoting responsible tourism practices; so, initiatives aimed at encouraging eco-friendly behavior among visitors, local businesses, and stakeholders should be prioritized. Through these efforts, the community will foster a sense of pride and ownership, and sustainable growth and development will align with the preservation of the county's distinctive character and charm.

#### Emphasize Quality Over Quantity of Visitors in Promoting Hernando County

In keeping with sustainable tourism practices, focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of visitors should be the guiding principle of Hernando County's promotion strategy. High-value visitors, those who stay multiple nights and genuinely appreciate the county's unique offerings, are the target demographic. These visitors often belong to niche markets such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and gastronomy tourism, where interest extends beyond generic travel experiences.

- Suggested key performance indicators (KPIs) for this objective include an increase in average tourist spending, length of stay, and satisfaction scores.

#### Invest in Focused Development of Enhanced Access to Natural Attractions

Expanding access to Hernando County's natural attractions—while ensuring that these enhancements respect and maintain ecological balance—is a key part of the county's development strategy. Potential projects may include creating more trails for hiking or biking, establishing additional water access points for boating or kayaking, and offering guided tours to educate visitors on the local flora and fauna.

- Suggested KPIs include the number of new or improved access points and an increase in visitation to natural attractions.

#### Recruit New, Higher-End Hotels with Meeting and Event Emphasis

To cater to the growing demand for luxury accommodation and business-oriented spaces, Hernando County aims to attract investments in higher-end hotels and resorts. These establishments, equipped with meeting rooms and event facilities, will serve both business travelers and large groups of leisure visitors. Collaboration with potential investors and renowned hotel chains is crucial to highlight the county's potential as a prime location for meetings, events, and luxury stays.

- Suggested KPIs include an increase in the number of high-end hotels and event spaces, as well as an increase in events booked.

## Further, Promote and Encourage Signature Events within Hernando County

Signature events that reflect the county's cultural identity and natural beauty are an effective way to attract target tourist segments. By working closely with local organizations, the county can foster festivals, sporting events, and cultural experiences that truly reflect the Hernando County spirit. Ensuring these events are well-publicized and accessible to visitors will not only boost the county's reputation but also increase tourism.

- Suggested KPIs include an increase in the number of signature events and corresponding tourist visits, as well as the economic impact of these events.

## Invest in Beautification and Preservation of Hernando County's Urban Assets

Urban beautification and preservation efforts play an important role in creating an inviting atmosphere for visitors. By funding and implementing projects such as public art installations, the development of green spaces, and historic preservation efforts, Hernando County can continue to enhance its urban appeal. Collaborations with local governments and community organizations will be instrumental in realizing these initiatives.

- Suggested KPIs include the number of beautification and preservation projects completed and the increase in tourist satisfaction scores.

## Community Alignment

Community alignment constitutes a central pillar in the planning and implementation of any successful destination marketing strategy. It essentially represents the unison of various stakeholders - ranging from local residents, businesses, government agencies to non-profit organizations, around a common goal or vision. In the context of Hernando County, this principle emphasizes the need to encourage synergies and establish consensus around the region's tourism objectives, projects, and overall narrative. By fostering an active community participation in decision-making procedures, the DMO can more effectively identify and address the community's needs and ambitions. Additionally, it offers an avenue to tap into local expertise and resources, leading to a comprehensive, efficient, and inclusive marketing strategy. A cohesive community also helps ensure that the perks of tourism are equitably shared, contributing to improved living standards for residents.

### Deepen engagement with local business and community organizations:

Strong relationships with local businesses and community organizations are instrumental in creating a collaborative tourism environment. To cultivate these ties, it's advisable to join forces with entities like the local chamber of commerce, aligning shared goals and maximizing collective resources. To maintain these collaborative efforts, it's important to establish regular communication channels, convene joint planning sessions, and create an environment that encourages working towards shared objectives. This could potentially lead to increased cooperation between the DMO and the chamber, promoting joint initiatives and driving overall tourism growth.

- Suggested KPIs include the number of joint initiatives, overall tourism growth, and increased collaboration between the DMO and the chamber.

## Implement Resident Education Programs on the Value of Tourism:

Education programs aimed at residents offer a proactive way to address misconceptions about tourism and foster a welcoming environment for visitors. Such programs can highlight the economic and cultural benefits of tourism, including job creation, increased revenue for local businesses, and promotion of local culture and heritage. By conducting workshops, seminars, and community events focused on the positive impact of tourism in Hernando County, the DMO can facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of tourism among the local community.

- Suggested KPIs include the number of educational programs conducted and improvement in resident sentiment towards tourism.

## Digital Conversion

In the fast-paced digital era, leveraging technology and online platforms is not only advantageous, it's critical for destinations to remain competitive and at the forefront of tourists' minds. In Hernando County, digital conversion must be a strategic focus, employing all digital avenues to not just engage potential visitors, but also convert their interest into actual visitation and consequent spending.

Key to this will be the development of a robust digital marketing strategy, one that leverages the strengths of social media platforms, content marketing, and SEO tactics. By targeting specific demographics with engaging content on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, Hernando County can raise its profile and reach potential visitors where they are most active. The effective use of SEO will ensure that the County's digital content is easily discoverable on search engines, driving organic traffic to the official tourism website.

Alongside these initiatives, Hernando County should capitalize on enhancing the digital visitor experience. This could involve the development of mobile apps tailored to guide visitors through the county's rich offering of attractions and experiences. Interactive maps and virtual tours can give a taste of what to expect, building anticipation and making the planning process easier.

## Reimagine the Welcome Center:

As the face of Hernando County to visitors, our Welcome Center should reflect our community's warmth and hospitality. By transforming it into an unmanned, technology-driven community center, we not only enhance efficiency but also provide valuable information around the clock.

In addition to serving as an information hub, the revamped Welcome Center can host various programs to enlighten residents about tourism's profound impact. Regular workshops and seminars can demonstrate the economic benefits tourism brings, while community events can foster a welcoming atmosphere by celebrating the unique aspects of our culture, history, and natural beauty.

The Welcome Center can also integrate digital screens or touchpoints providing real-time updates on attractions, events, and local businesses, thereby serving as an innovative model of community engagement and visitor interaction.

- Suggested KPIs include the number of educational programs conducted and improvement in resident sentiment towards tourism.



## Enhance Digital Storytelling:

Hernando County is rich in unique attractions, stories, and experiences—it's essential to communicate these aspects effectively through digital storytelling. Content should not just describe these attractions, but bring them to life in a way that is immersive, engaging, and captures the imagination of potential visitors.

The use of digital media formats such as videos and podcasts will be instrumental in this strategy. High-quality videos can visually depict the beauty of Hernando County, while podcasts can delve into the history, culture, and personal stories that make the county unique. Interactive maps can give visitors a comprehensive overview of the county's attractions, allowing them to plan their visit effectively.

- Suggested KPIs include an increase in content engagement, user-generated content, and digital conversions, such as newsletter sign-ups or itinerary downloads.

## Support Partner Business Digital Marketing Efforts:

The tourism strategy of Hernando County must work in tandem with the marketing efforts of local businesses and organizations. By fostering collaborative relationships, the DMO can amplify digital marketing efforts, creating a louder and more cohesive voice for the county's tourism sector.

Co-op promotions, shared content, and co-branded marketing campaigns can be utilized to mutually beneficial effect. The DMO could host social media takeovers, allowing local businesses to showcase their offerings, or invite stakeholders to contribute guest blog posts that provide insider perspectives of Hernando County. Such initiatives will serve to enhance online visibility, drive web traffic, and boost social media engagement, ultimately leading to an increase in tourism for both the DMO and partner organizations.

- Suggested KPIs include an increase in online visibility, web traffic, and social media engagement for both the DMO and partner organizations.

## Concluding Thoughts & Living Document

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In conclusion, the strategic plan for Hernando County's tourism industry is designed to create a more sustainable and high-value destination. By prioritizing destination stewardship and investing in enhanced access to natural attractions, Hernando County can attract a more discerning and niche market of tourists who are likely to stay longer, spend more money, and appreciate the unique offerings of the county. The focus on recruiting new, higher-end hotels with meeting and event space, as well as the development of signature events, will help Hernando County position itself as a prime location for both leisure and future growth in business travel.

The plan's emphasis on beautification and preservation of urban assets and community alignment will create a more welcoming environment for visitors and foster collaboration between the DMO and local businesses and organizations. The implementation of resident education programs and the digital conversion of the welcome center will help Hernando County residents understand the value of tourism and become ambassadors for the destination.

Overall, the strategic plan provides a roadmap for the continued growth and success of Hernando County's tourism industry. It is important to note that this plan is a living document that needs to be revisited annually throughout its 10-year plan. As market conditions and visitor preferences change, the plan will need to be adapted to ensure that Hernando County remains competitive and appealing to tourists. By following this plan and being open to change, Hernando County can look forward to a robust tourism industry that benefits both visitors and residents for years to come.