

# Strategic Thinking about Florida's Future

## How Florida CEOs see the state's future shaping up.



The Florida Chamber Foundation is designing Florida 2030, a blueprint for Florida's future. The report will address ways to ensure global competitiveness, prosperity and vibrant and sustainable communities as Florida continues to grow and encounter both the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Creating Florida 2030 involves research that's meant to stimulate strategic thinking about Florida's future. On these pages you'll find a summary of the results of a survey of 100 of the state's leading CEOs. We expected advice — which we got — and regularly heard “right direction.” Even we were surprised, though, by the overwhelming exuberance of Florida CEOs. Learn more details about the interviews and the project at [Florida2030.org](http://Florida2030.org).

### Fundamental Strengths

The state's “business fundamentals” are solid — along with its traditional strengths of climate and beauty, Florida is a right-to-work state with no personal income tax and a strong pro-business environment driven by Gov. Rick Scott. The state has a strong fiscal balance sheet and has improved its regulatory environment. Our workforce is skilled — and diverse. Growth is driving job creation. Most CEOs we spoke with were expanding. To a person, none of the CEOs thought another state would afford their company a better opportunity to grow.

“The state has a good system of universities and a lot of smart, talented entrepreneurs.”



### A Welcoming Climate

Florida's business culture welcomes both ideas as well as people — our state isn't set in its ways. Business executives in most parts of Florida say it's possible for a new business to come in and immediately participate in the business and civic life of the community — you don't have to be born here, or even be a longtime resident, to participate fully.



“The only thing harder than attracting somebody here is getting rid of them. Once you get 'em here, they and their families fall in love, don't want to leave.”

### Planning for Connectivity

Moving forward, Florida will need more transportation options to deal with a growing population. There is a broad sense, however — validated by independent data — that the state's roads and bridges are in better shape than infrastructure in the rest of the country. Our airports and seaports are a strength — and keep Florida connected to global markets.



“Even if I had flexibility to go somewhere else to expand, I would still keep my headquarters in Florida for sure.”

### Talent Is Key

No issue was more important to our CEOs than education. Our CEOs believe Florida has a deep and diverse talent pool and see the state's colleges and universities as good resources for developing needed workforce skills. The consensus that emerged from the interviews was that the K-12 system clearly has improved and is better than its national reputation. But it still needs work if Florida is to attract 21st century firms whose workers and executives demand quality educational opportunities for their children.



“Our state's workforce is above average and sufficient for my company's needs. I don't go to any other state, or anywhere, and feel our workforce doesn't match up.”

### Fostering a Unique Quality of Life

Along with issues like continued support for economic development, affordable housing and arts and culture, many CEOs mentioned protecting Florida's natural environment as a key business-related priority for the state. The state is particularly welcoming to tech companies and clean industries. Organizations that are focused on giving back to the environment and minimizing the human impact to the environment will be especially well-received by Floridians and welcomed into business communities throughout the state.



“Quality of life is unsurpassed in Florida. This is one of the great places to live in the country. I travel often for work and always look forward to returning.”

### Notes for Our Next Governor

Florida is moving in the right direction, but one thing that CEOs are acutely aware of is that leadership matters. What can Florida's next governor do to help ensure Florida continues to win?

- Keep transportation infrastructure strong and improve transit.
- Tell Florida's story better, including our progress in K-12 education and reforms.
- Improve the legal climate. The lack of tort reform adds to the cost of doing business. “I think that somebody up in Tallahassee needs to corral lawyers to create a less litigious society,” said one CEO.
- The state needs to continue its focus on affordable “workforce” housing.
- Reverse the trend against support for economic development incentives.
- Florida is truly a global economy. Our state and national government officials need to think that way, too.

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