South Florida Regional Planning Council

Testimony Provided to a Hearing Entitled
"The American Community Survey:
The Challenges of Eliminating the Long Form from the 2010 Census"

Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census,
Adam H. Putnam, Chair
House Committee on Government Reform,
Tom Davis, Chair

Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2154
May 13, 2003

The American Community Survey:
Improved Information to Enhance Our Communitites

Richard F. Ogburn, Principal Planner
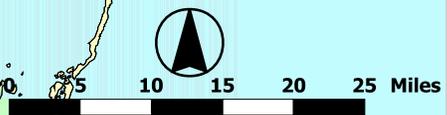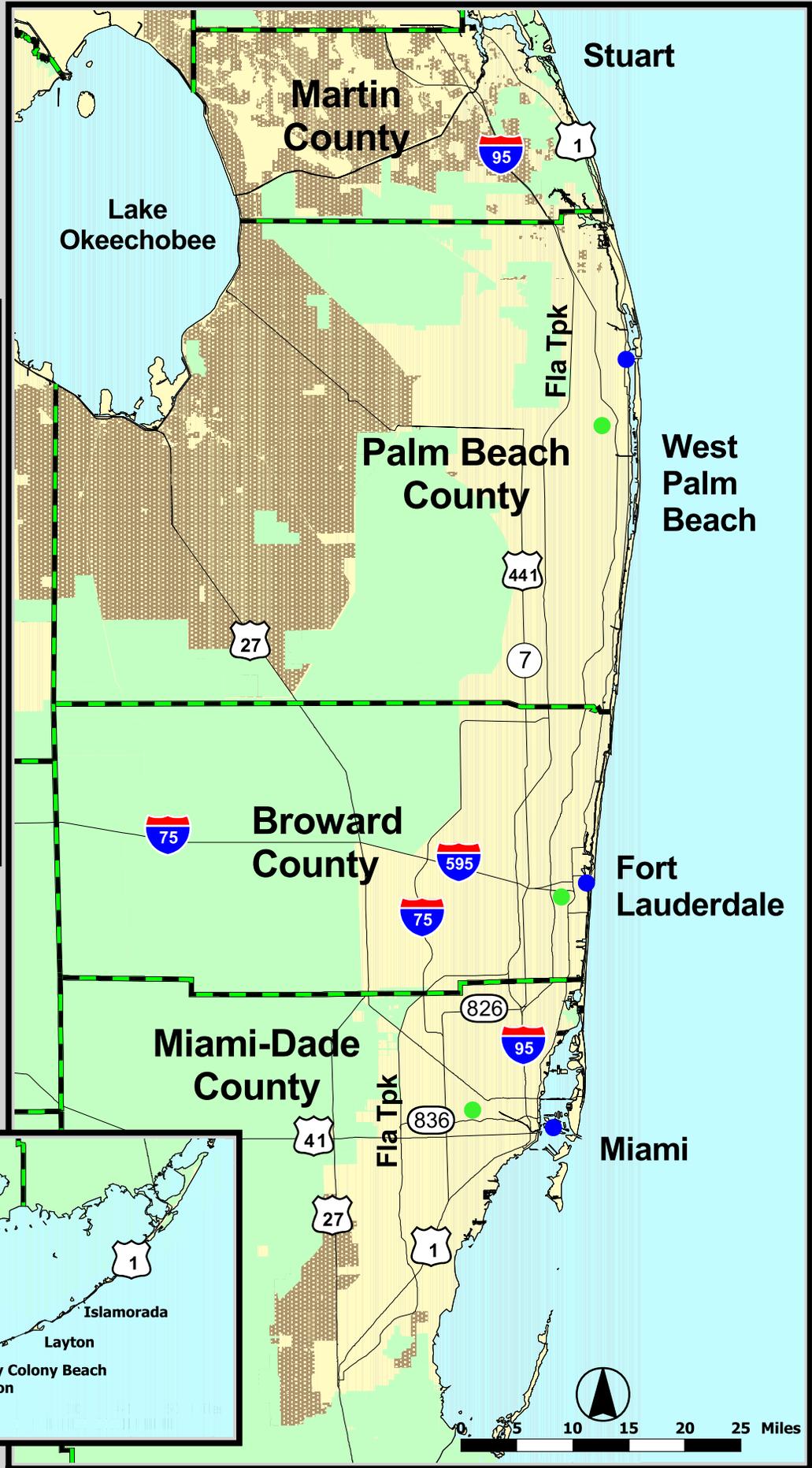
Counties in the Southeast Florida Region

South Florida Regional Planning Council

05/07/03

www.sfrpc.com

- ● **International Airports**
- ● **Seaports**
- **County Boundaries**
- **Major Highways**
- **Land**
- **Everglades, Water Preserves, Conservation Lands, etc.**
- **Agricultural Lands**
- **Water**

Sources:
FDEP, SFWMD, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin and Monroe Counties, SFRPC (maprequests).

Note:
This map is for planning purposes only. All contents are approximate.

Stuart

Martin County

95

1

Lake Okeechobee

Fla Tpk

Palm Beach County

West Palm Beach

441

27

7

75

Broward County

595

75

Fort Lauderdale

826

95

Miami-Dade County

Fla Tpk

836

41

Miami

27

1

Monroe County

Islamorada

Layton

Key Colony Beach
Marathon

Key West

1

0   5   10   15   20   25   Miles

INTRODUCTION

It is an honor to be here today and to have the opportunity to address the Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census, on the subject of the American Community Survey. I have been asked to share some of the experiences we have had working with community organizations, planners, policy analysts, and decision-makers in Broward County and the South Florida region, as the Census Bureau has carried out the pilot phase for developing the approach to what it calls "continuous measurement."

I would like to start by saying that the Board of the South Florida Regional Planning Council believes that full implementation of the American Community Survey will bring about a sea change in how we plan at the local level. It will support the more effective allocation of scarce public resources in our communities, by enabling us to (1) better understand the need, (2) more accurately target federal, state and local program resources, and (3) better assess the impact of those resources. As local governments and community organizations across the nation assume an ever-increasing portion of the responsibility for enhancing the quality of life in their communities, more current and better quality information is an essential tool. At the same time, businesses in South Florida have little choice but to either purchase or develop their own local market statistics to guide decisions, although such inter-censal estimates are generally unreliable in fast-growing regions of the country, especially the small-area markets that are of most interest to smaller businesses.

The Census Bureau and its federal, state and local partners, have led the way in collecting **annual** statistics for the nation, the states, metropolitan regions and, to a lesser extent, counties. Our local communities are the next frontier. The American Community Survey builds on the decennial census, the "gold standard" for understanding the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of our communities. Using tried and true methodologies along with innovative new approaches, the ACS will ensure that the information we need is collected with a consistent approach across all jurisdictions. Without a recognized source for information with which to plan and evaluate programs and to understand our markets, we would be forced to divert scarce program resources from services for people and job creation to costly local surveys and other information gathering. Annual tabulations of the ACS will improve our ability to understand our communities **as we change**. By enabling us to strengthen our economies and our communities, it will contribute forcefully to enhancing the quality of life, as well as the security, of the nation as a whole.

THE SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to explain what we do. The South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC, www.sfrpc.com) represents three counties with a population of over 4 million residents: Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe (which includes the Florida Keys). Broward County, with 1.6 million residents, is one of 31 sites selected for

the pilot phase of development of the American Community Survey methodology. Our mission is to "identify and analyze the challenges facing South Florida on a regional level; anticipate what the future holds for the region; and provide the region's leaders with information and strategies to build a better future for South Floridians."

Created in 1976 under Chapter 186 of the Florida Statutes, the South Florida RPC is one of 11 councils in the state. Our Board is made up of 13 elected officials and 6 Governor's appointees, drawn from the 3 counties we represent. The *Strategic Regional Policy Plan for South Florida* is the document that embodies our assessment of the trends, conditions, opportunities and challenges facing the region and a shared vision for the future.

Our direct federal partners include the Economic Development Administration, which designated South Florida as an Economic Development District in 1994, and the Environmental Protection Agency, which designated the South Florida Brownfields Partnership as one of 16 National Brownfields Showcase Communities in 1998.

The Council provides technical assistance and expertise in a number of fields that affect the economy and quality of life of every resident of South Florida. Our assistance includes land use and natural resources planning, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, emergency preparedness, human services, geographic information services, and collaborative processes and consensus building. In each of these activities, an analysis of trends and conditions and area profiles based on socioeconomic data from the census are standard tools that policymakers use for program development and to assess the impact of programs on the people of the region. Below are highlights of some specific activities that use decennial census data and would be greatly enhanced with updated ACS profiles - more information about each of these is available at www.sfrpc.com.

- Implementation of the State of Florida's landmark growth management legislation
  - ➤ Review of local government comprehensive plans and amendments for each of the 3 counties and 69 municipalities (Chapter 163, Florida Statutes)
  - ➤ Coordinated review of large-scale development in the region (Chapter 380, Florida Statutes)

- Promotion of redevelopment and environmental preservation
  - ➤ Eastward Ho! Initiative - Preservation of the Everglades through refocusing growth on redevelopment of the eastern corridor.
  - ➤ Everglades Restoration - Membership on the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida / Water Resources Advisory Committee.
  - ➤ South Miami-Dade Watershed Study - Oversee preparation of an integrated land use and water management plan for the area between Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park.

- Transportation
  - ➤ Regional Business Alliance - Business leaders from Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties spearheaded the creation of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority during the 2003 Legislative Session, with technical and administrative support from the RPC.

- Regional demographic and economic forecasting
  - Creation of a partnership with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, the planning region north of us, and the member counties in both planning regions, to acquire a 7-county demographic and economic forecasting model.

- Disaster preparedness
  - Through the *Strategic Regional Policy Plan* and the review of local comprehensive plans, the Council concentrates on hazard mitigation as the preferred strategy to protect lives, property, and the regional economy prior to disasters. The Council also works with local government and emergency preparedness agencies to ensure that residents will be evacuated and sheltered safely in the event of an emergency.

- Hazardous materials management
  - Council has staffed the District XI Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) for the last 14 years, bringing together emergency management, public safety, law enforcement and medical professionals with hazardous materials facility operators, community groups, and others from Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties on a regular basis.

- Human services system planning
  - The Coordinating Council of Broward (www.theccb.org) - Development of tools to support improved service delivery, including *The Broward Benchmarks*, and the Community Resource Inventory.
  - Broward Regional Health Planning Council (www.brhpc.org) - Evaluate the Broward County Community Access Program (CAP) grant, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services since 2001.
  - United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse (www.unitedwaybroward.org) - Develop profiles of youth substance abuse, drawing socio-economic data for small areas from the decennial census, as well as locally derived annual crime and treatment data, and program and service data taken from The CCB Community Resource Inventory. The profiles will be used by neighborhood substance abuse coalitions to develop intervention programs. Once ACS data for small areas becomes available, it will be incorporated into these profiles.

- The Institute for Community Collaboration (www.sfrpc.com/institute.htm)
  - State Road 7 / US 441 Collaborative - Planning improvements to a 25-mile corridor that cuts across 14 jurisdictions in Broward County.
  - The Violence Against Women On Campus Task Force at Florida International University

We are an affiliate of the Florida State Data Center, through which we receive and disseminate Census Bureau data. We work in partnership with our member local governments to identify and understand the best available sources of data and information to guide their decision-making. We use this demographic and economic data to develop our analysis of regional trends, and to profile specific areas of the region in virtually all of the programs and projects in which we participate. We also use

geographic information systems (GIS) software to create maps that help policymakers visualize data, and we often provide these services to partners who do not have their own. We keep current information about the region for our many users on our web site (www.sfrpc.com/region.htm).

In each of the last 5 decades, South Florida has grown by somewhere between ½ and ¾ of a million residents. While the population more than doubled between 1950 and 1960 (from 600,000 to 1.3 million), it grew by 21% in each of the last two decades. Today, at just over 4 million, the population of South Florida is larger than 24 states, and 176 new residents settle here each day. We project that another 600 thousand new residents will call South Florida home in each of the next 3 decades, taking the region's population to 5.9 million (almost 10 times the population in 1950).
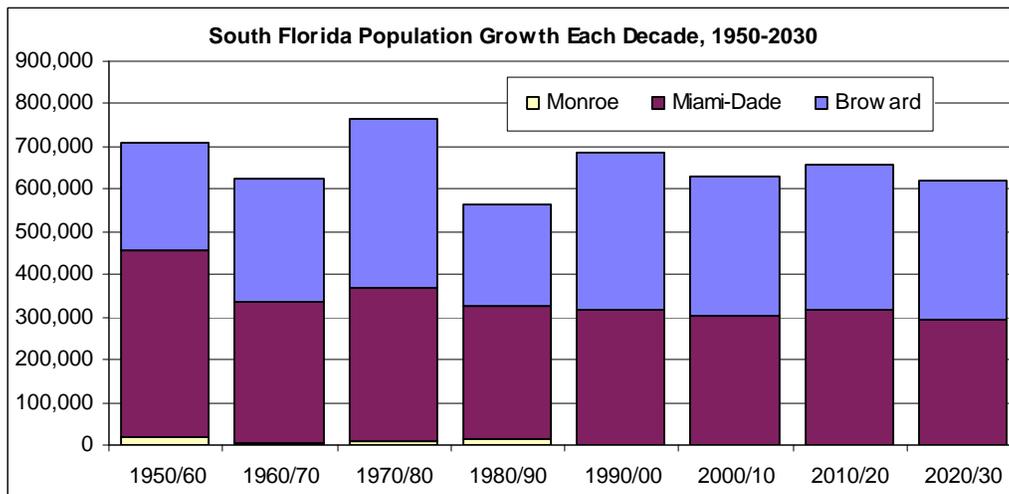
Much of the growth in South Florida in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was based on retirees coming from other areas of the United States, who contributed to a dramatic rise in the elderly population of the region. Although growth today continues to come from in-migrants, it is no longer primarily those who are ready to retire, but rather international migrants, most of whom are pursuing economic opportunity.

During each of the last 2 decades, roughly 7 out of every 10 new residents in South Florida were foreign-born. Today, the foreign-born represent 40% (1.6 million) of the region's population, up from 25% in 1980. While a third of the foreign-born population has come from Cuba, the other two-thirds represent an extremely diverse group (which is not all Hispanic or Latino). In 2000, each of the following countries was represented with at least 20,000 residents in South Florida:
- More than 500,000 - Cuba
- 80,000 to 120,000 - Haiti, Colombia, Jamaica and Nicaragua
- 20,000 to 50,000 - Dominican Republic, Peru, Honduras, Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil, Canada and Argentina

South Florida's Foreign-Born Growth, 1980-2000
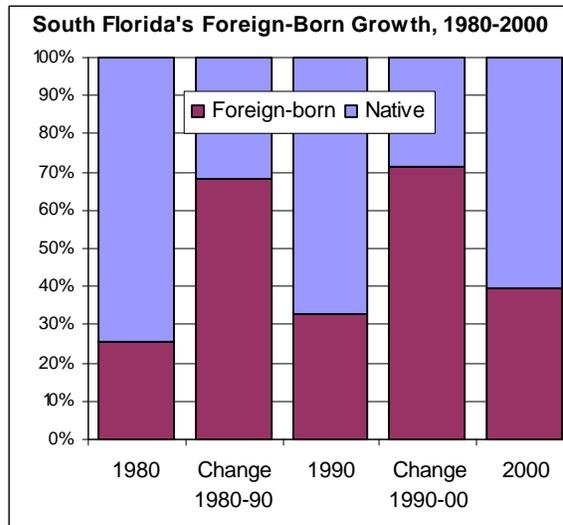
Factors that are largely external to the region affect the pace and flow of in-migrants from abroad – since the 2000 Census was completed, for example, there has been a significant increase in the influx of people from Colombia and Venezuela, mostly in response to events occurring in those countries. The changing composition of the population moving into the region, and shifting around within the region, play too important a role to be captured only once every 10 years.

A couple of examples may help to clarify the effects on a more local level.

- When Hurricane Andrew swept through southern Miami-Dade County in 1992, it devastated a relatively less densely occupied area that includes the City of Homestead. That City's population of 26,694 in 1990 is estimated to have fallen to 18,732 in 1993, before gradually growing back to 31,909 in 2000. Miami-Dade County estimates that there was a one-time loss of approximately 30,000 residents, who moved out of the county to find housing and never returned. Both the County and the State of Florida conducted surveys to develop these estimates, but there was no way to learn about the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population that stayed (or that left), so as to help in the response to the disaster.

- The City of Pembroke Pines, in southwest Broward County, with 65,566 residents in 1990, more than doubled in size to 137,427 in 2000. During this period, the Hispanic or Latino population of the City grew from 11.5% to 28.2%. At least some of the growth is believed to have come from those who migrated north from southern Miami-Dade County after Hurricane Andrew. Pembroke Pines was one of the cities with data tabulated starting with the 1998 American Community Survey, released in 1999, which enabled the City to establish a much-needed profile of their rapidly changing population 3 years earlier than would have been possible if they had had to wait for the 2000 Census.

- Hallandale Beach, in Broward County, with a large area of multi-family housing once mostly occupied by retirees, underwent a large shift in the age composition of its population over the last decade. In 1990, almost half (48.5%) of its 30,996 residents were elderly (65 years or older). In 2000, the population was 10.6% larger, but the elderly population fell by 18.5%, and now represented only about a third of the total (35.8%). In the same period, the school-age population (5-17) grew by 52.9%, with an increase of 1,095 children. This shift was accompanied by significant growth (137.5%) of the Hispanic or Latino population in the City, to 6,447 (18.8% of the total). Because of its size, data was not available during the pilot phase of ACS to help Hallandale Beach get a head start on documenting these changes and adapting their priorities to meet the needs of their changing population.

Other characteristics of the population such as the language capability of the residents, their levels of educational attainment and income are required to plan for adult educational services, language remediation, health and human service delivery. Another issue of increasing importance in South Florida is the availability and distribution of affordable housing in the region, which has an important cross-linkage to the efforts to develop a regional transportation system that can get people to and from work around the region. All of these issues will be better understood with the help of American Community Survey data, leading to more timely program responses by local governments and community organizations.

While these highlight some rather dramatic examples in South Florida, the pace of change is accelerating throughout most of the country. Aging Baby Boomers will affect the age composition of the population in every corner of the nation, and creating services to meet their needs will be a concern in every community. Continued growth of the Hispanic or Latino population, combined with the mobility of the US population, will contribute to changes in other parts of the country that, if different in magnitude from those in South Florida, will have similar impacts. Whether an area is subject to hurricanes or floods or earthquakes, natural disasters will continue to occur around the country. Measuring the effect of population and job losses requires an ongoing, current source of household and housing unit characteristics. As affected areas recover, knowledge of the rate at which the local population rebounds, if and how their characteristics have changed, and the effects of the rebound, can help policymakers gauge the new needs and resources, as well as any lasting impact of the event on the local economy.

HOW WILL ANNUAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA ENHANCE OUR EFFORTS?

"Planning in a fast-growing region like South Florida with decennial socio-economic profiles is like trying to aim underwater without goggles."

Following are some specific examples of ongoing activities where the availability of annual socio-economic data will make a significant difference.

- Population estimates - The Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida (www.bebr.ufl.edu), in coordination with the Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (www.state.fl.us/edr), annually prepares the official estimates of population for the State of Florida. The estimates are derived by a methodology that tracks the number of housing units in each jurisdiction and multiplies that by the average number of persons per household. Prior to the 2000 Census, official population estimates used to distribute revenue-sharing dollars in the state underestimated the 2000 population of South Florida by 185,996 residents (64% of the statewide underestimate). Annual ACS data will make it possible to adjust the average number of persons per household for each jurisdiction as it changes during the decade. In addition, month-by-month surveys should help clarify the impact of seasonal occupancy on the estimates.

- Population projections - Generally, population projections are built on some combination of natural growth and net migration. Today, the largest component of growth in South Florida is net domestic and international migration. This, in turn, affects both the age distribution of the population and its race/ethnic distribution in the base year, which are key parameters for cohort survival models of natural growth. Annual ACS data will enable periodic adjustments to each of the components of these population projection methodologies.

- Better intergovernmental coordination on population estimates and projections - Greater detail in the data will make it easier to reconcile state, county and local population estimation and projection methodologies, including those developed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations for transportation planning and by school boards for student and teacher planning. Current differences exist because of differing needs, and the lack of detail and appropriate frequency in available data, which has lead to very different methodologies. This can lead to a lack of coordination between land use planning and school facility planning, for example.

- Affordable Housing Needs Assessments – The Shimberg Center for Affordable Housing at the University of Florida (www.shimberg.ufl.edu), in partnership with the Florida Department of Community Affairs, has developed a methodology for projecting the need for affordable housing in each county and municipality in the state, in support of the affordable housing elements in comprehensive plans. In their words, "the ACS combines in a single resource the sufficient scale, precision and frequency to track changes in population growth, age, and race/ethnicity, and the housing consumption patterns tied to these compositional changes. This will, in turn, infuse the [needs assessment] household estimates and projections with the necessary precision at the appropriate scale that has only been approximated using the decennial census."

- Broward County Department of Planning and Environmental Protection (www.broward.org/dpep.htm) - The County's population estimates and forecasts prepared by this department will be improved with the availability of annual data on the age and race/ethnic distribution of the population, as well as the occupancy characteristics of seasonal units and the estimates of domestic and international migration into the County.

- Broward County Department of Human Services (www.broward.org/wecare.htm) - This department both directly provides and contracts for the provision of services to Broward County residents. Needs assessments, strategic plans and outcome indicators all rely on the rapidly changing demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population. While countywide ACS statistics have been helpful, most planning today targets smaller areas within the County.

- Broward Sheriff's Office (www.sheriff.org) - The BSO uses a sophisticated geographic information system (PowerTrac) to track arrests and other crime data. Once annual small-area data from the ACS is available, they expect to use it in place of decennial census data to develop demographic and socio-economic profiles of the areas served.

- Children's Services Council of Broward County (www.cscbroward.org) - This recently created agency has developed the Children's Strategic Plan in coordination with all of the funders and providers of services to children in Broward County. Outcome and performance indicators included in the plan draw from ACS data both for specific indicators (number of children in poverty) and for a more accurate age distribution of the population to calculate rates for other children's indicators.

- North Broward Hospital District (www.nbhd.org) - This tax-assisted healthcare district with four hospitals and a network of primary care clinics serving the northern two-thirds of Broward County plans to use American Community Survey data to guide decisions about expansion of its facilities as the County's population continues to grow. In addition, the availability of annual demographic data about the population in their service areas will enable them to provide services that are tailored to the changing characteristics of the communities served.

- City of Coral Springs (www.ci.coral-springs.fl.us) - The City produces an "environmental scan" that is used in its bi-annual Strategic Plan, its annual Business Plan and its Annual Budget. These documents are used both to guide city decision-making and to market the City. The American Community Survey is a primary source for the socio-economic characteristics of this fast-growing municipality.

- City of Pembroke Pines (www.ppines.com) - The City will complete the Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its comprehensive plan in 2006. The State of Florida's growth management legislation requires local governments to update their plans every 7 years. When the cycle coincides with the recent release of decennial census data, profiles of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the jurisdiction's population help to guide facilities and service planning for the 5-year and 10-year horizons required. When it does not coincide, local governments have few tools to support this planning, especially for smaller communities within their jurisdictions. Annual data from the ACS will fill that void.

- Palm Beach County Planning, Zoning and Building Department (www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/pzb/) - This county to the north of Broward County has accompanied development of the pilot project and has begun evaluating the American Community Survey as a future source for the development of its own population projections. As the first County to finalize a public school concurrency plan, coordination with the public school system will be a high priority. Annual small-area data will be critical to this effort.

- Demographic Data for Decision-Making, Inc. – This demographic consulting firm provides geo-demographic data and analysis to both public and private sector clients in South Florida. At present, according to the President of the company, too much of their time and too many of their client's dollars are wasted producing "best guess inter-censal demographics." The availability of reliable American Community Survey data at the tract level, or even better, at the block group level, would significantly improve the timeliness and the quality of project outputs, thereby greatly improving client decision-making.

CONCLUSIONS

As local responsibilities grow, not having annual community-level data to guide program design, implementation and evaluation, as well as business decisions, is no longer an option. We use the data to provide technical assistance to our constituents (member local governments, state and federal partners, businesses, community organizations), and they use the information to inform decisions that affect all of us.

Without annual data from an independent, reliable source, we will be obliged to divert program resources to developing alternative data sources, at a cost that could not produce the economies of scale that the Census Bureau can bring to continuous measurement.

The American Community Survey offers the best option because (1) it builds on the gold standard for socio-economic analysis (the decennial census); (2) it will make it possible to monitor and evaluate targeted program implementation; and (3) it ensures trustworthy data for all with the least expenditure of scarce resources.