

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

Highlands County, located in Florida’s Heartland, has been referred to as “lake country” because of its more than 100 lakes surrounding the towns of Sebring, Avon Park, and Lake Placid. A combination of natural areas and opportunities make Highlands County a desired location for outdoor recreation activities. Conservation lands in the county include Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, Lake June-in-Winter Scrub State Park, Highlands Hammock State Park, and Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area. Local activity offerings include shops, restaurants, paddling, swimming, boating, golfing, hiking, and the Sebring International Raceway.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR A REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

Highlands County currently includes an approximately 18-mile segment of existing paved multi-use trail that is part of a larger Lake Placid Loop Trail in the southern part of the county. The Lake Placid Loop Trail and the proposed Heartland Trail corridor extending south from the Polk County line are intended to be part of a larger network identified by the Office of Greenways and Trails and the SUN Trails program. The Florida Cracker Trail segment of the Heartland Trail Corridor extends east to connect to Okeechobee County and the Florida National Scenic Trail. A regional multi-use trail could also provide connectivity to unpaved trails located within Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge and Highlands Hammock State Park.

Highlands County is home to 7 Great Florida Birding Trail sites and 18 Florida Heritage Trail Sites within the Black Heritage, World War II Heritage, and other heritage trails. Notably, Highlands Hammock State Park, one of eight Florida parks built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) under President Roosevelt’s New Deal, is home to Florida’s CCC Museum. Avon Park, Lake Placid, and Sebring’s local art, dining, small-town character, and connections to natural areas provide attractive destinations for development of a regional trail network.

Existing Trails and Opportunities

Lake Placid Loop Trail
(18 miles existing)

Heartland Trail (Highlands County Connector & Florida Cracker Trail)
(Opportunity)

Example Destinations in Highlands County

State Parks (Lake June-in-Winter Scrub State Park, Highlands Hammock State Park)

Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge and Hickory Hammock Wildlife Management Area

Downtowns of Lake Placid, Sebring, and Avon Park

Nearly 20 Florida Heritage Trail Sites within the Black Heritage, World War II Heritage, Jewish Heritage, Golf Heritage, and other heritage trails

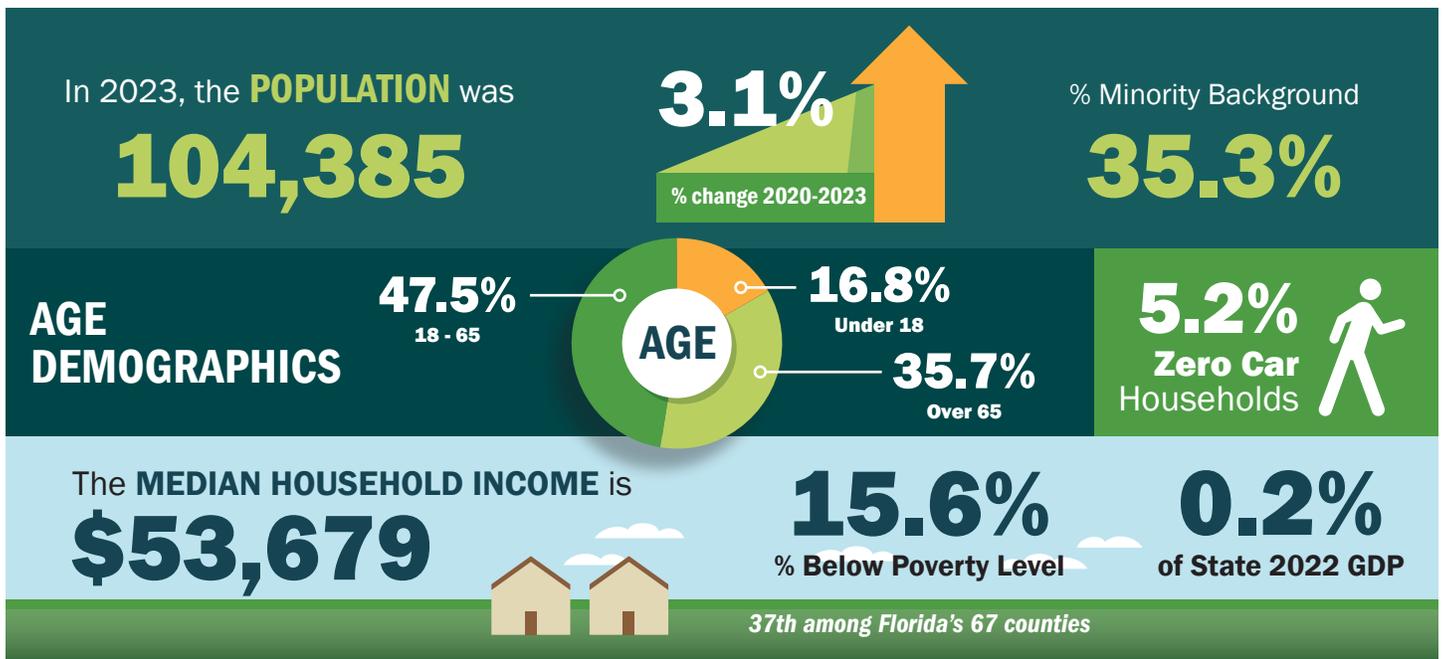
OUTDOOR RECREATION DEMAND AND IMPACT

Residents and tourists to Highlands County spend an estimated \$61 million annually on outdoor recreation, putting it 3rd among study area counties but first among the four Heartland counties. This is likely due to the diverse range of recreational activities and amenities the county offers. From biking, hiking, and wildlife viewing to paddling, boating, and camping, Highlands County offers many assets that support visitor spending on outdoor recreation and trails. The following summarizes the annual spending by residents and tourists in Highlands County for these activities typically associated with a multi-use trail, based on the 2019 Statewide Conservation Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

D1 Regional Trail Study Area Counties	Total Outdoor Recreation Activity Spending
Collier County	\$2,680,095,358
Polk County	\$1,765,618,168
Highlands County	\$61,004,689
Hendry County	\$31,153,773
Glades County	\$3,667,949
Hardee County	\$3,637,868



POPULATION AND ECONOMY AT-A-GLANCE



HIGHLANDS COUNTY



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| State Park Entrance | Greenways and Trails | Trail Towns |
| State Park | Existing Land Trail | Designated Trail Town |
| Conservation Land | Existing Paddling Trail | Potential Trail Town |
| City Limits | Priority Trail/SUN Trail Corridor | |
| Tribal Lands | | |
| County Boundary | | |

