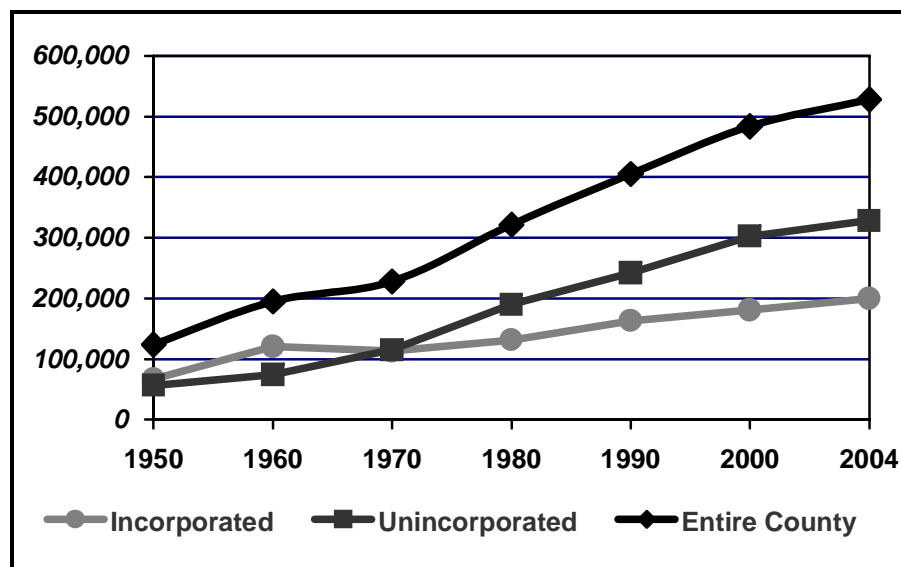


### 3. Population & Employment Forecasts

#### HISTORICAL GROWTH TRENDS

Located within one of the fastest growing areas of the state, Polk County has more than quadrupled its population since 1950. The county's population has grown from 123,997 in 1950, to an estimated 528,389 in 2004 - now the eighth most populated county in the state of Florida. The county contains seventeen municipalities, with the Lakeland-Winter Haven Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ranking 70th nationwide for growth rates.

**Chart 3.1 Population Growth, 1950-2004**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

In 1950, Polk County had an unincorporated population of 56,830 with a population of 67,167 residing within the city limits. Although populations continued to rise both in and outside of the incorporated areas in the following decade, cities experienced a much higher growth rate. This trend shifted between 1960 and 1970, when the unincorporated county's growth rate exceeded 50 percent, and populations within the city limits declined.

Overall, Polk County experienced a population increase of approximately 112 percent between 1970 and 2000, and between 2000 and 2004, 44,465 new people entered the county. Today, the unincorporated areas of the county contain a

significantly larger population than the combined populations of the municipalities.

Over the decades, Polk County's population increases largely have been attributed to the low cost of living and affordable housing, the completion of Interstate 4, and its proximity to the surrounding Tampa Bay and Orlando metropolitan areas.

#### FUTURE POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

2030 TRIP planning is based on a future population of 821,440, an employment projection of 319,875, and a population/employment ratio of 2.568 (almost 2.6 residents per job in Polk County). The 2030 population total used by the Polk TPO falls between the medium and high projections that the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research's (BEBR) has recently published for Polk County.

**Table 3.2 Population & Employment Forecasts through 2030**

Year	1980	1990	2000	2020	2030
Population	322,172	405,396	481,360	721,877	821,440
Employment	131,549	149,920	207,070	271,488	319,875

In developing these forecasts, the TPO staff used a "top-down" approach or methodology to address two basic issues:

- How much population and employment growth will occur in Polk County through the year 2030?
- Where will this growth occur within Polk County?

Countywide population and employment forecasts were prepared based on a review of peer studies and historic trends. Next, projected growth was allocated to sub-regions within the county. The county was divided into four separate planning areas (see on opposite page), and population and employment control totals were established for each area. These planning areas were defined to provide the opportunity to analyze growth trends by sub-regions within the county and to allow local governments to address specific growth trends within their sub-region.

**Table 3.3 TPO Planning Area Descriptions**

Planning Area	Description
West	Greater Lakeland

Central	Winter Haven/Auburndale
East	Ridge area communities
South	Communities south of SR 60

The final step was to assign population and employment growth to individual traffic analysis zones (TAZs) within each planning area. This was done based on the development potential of each TAZ. Local governments were asked to rank the development potential of the TAZs in their planning area for population (residential land uses) and employment (non-residential land uses) growth.

TAZs were ranked as having low, medium, high, or no growth potential and the rating were based on the following factors:

- Available vacant land
- Future land use category (residential or non-residential)
- Available infrastructure
- Development limitations (wetlands, flood plains, etc.)

In general TAZs rated with high growth potential received twice as much growth (55 percent) as those rated medium (30 percent), and three times the growth compared to TAZs rated as low (15 percent). See map entitled, *TAZ Growth Potential*, at the end of this chapter.

Where applicable, specific information from approved Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) was used for TAZ projections.

#### CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

In developing future population and employment forecasts, the TPO consulted with local governments to ensure forecasts were consistent with their comprehensive plans. The population and employment forecasts used to estimate future travel demand are based on local government future land use elements. The TPO utilized information from local governments regarding future land use, planned annexations, and utility expansions and approved and proposed developments to ensure consistency.

Several meetings of the transportation and Land Use Subcommittee were held to discuss the development of the

forecasts as well. This is in addition to regular consultation with the TPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

The TPO has been and continues to be an active participant in local (Polk Vision) and regional visioning (myregion.org) processes.

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## *Chapter 3 Maps*

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# Single Family Development Potential



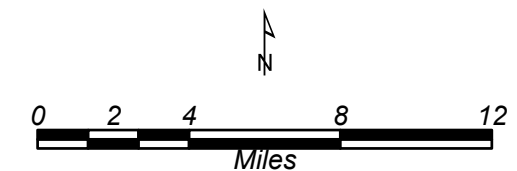
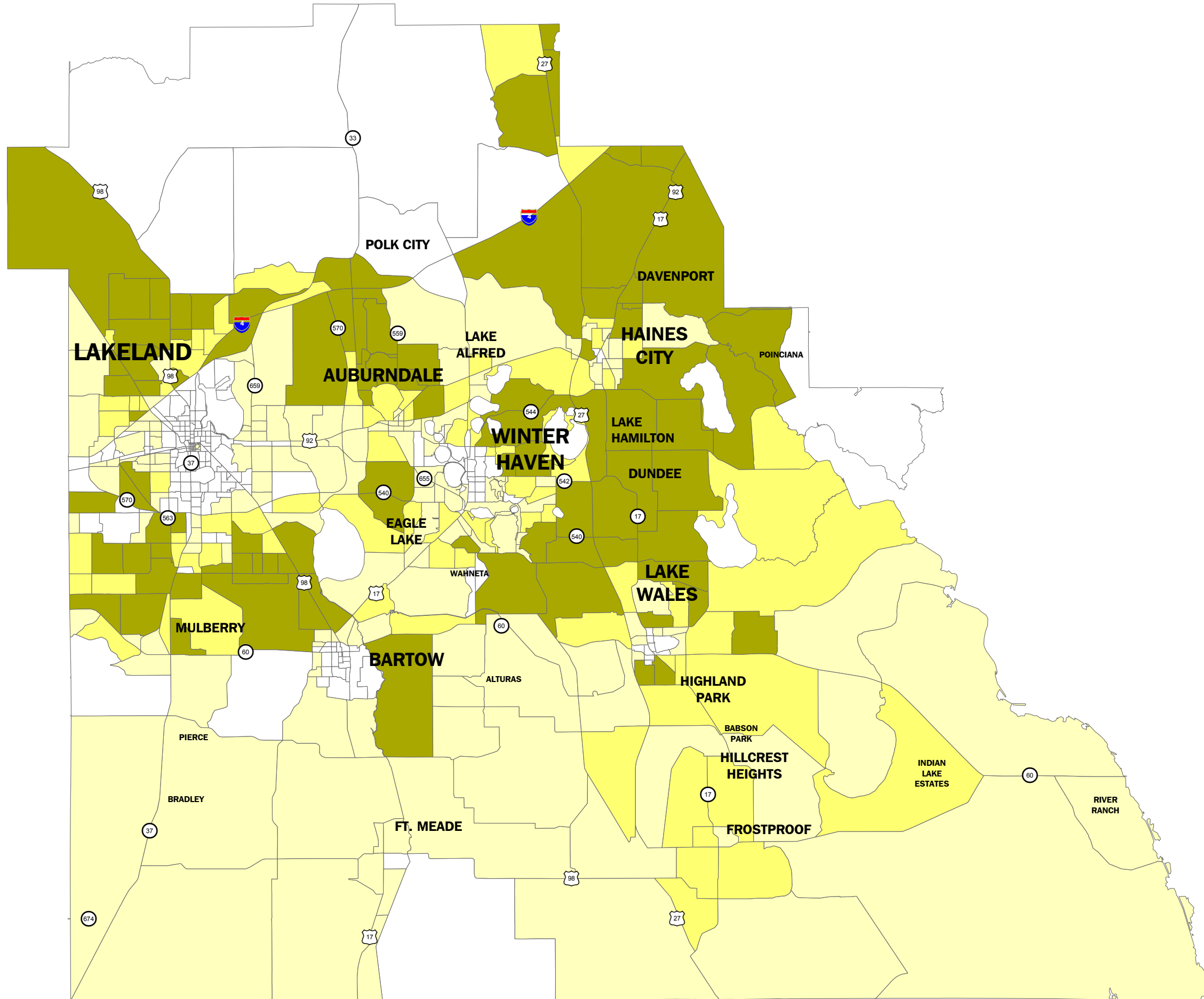
## Legend

### TAZ Development Potential

- High
- Medium
- Low

### Other Map Features

- Major Roads
- County Boundary



ADOPTED  
December 8, 2005



# Commercial / Retail Development Potential



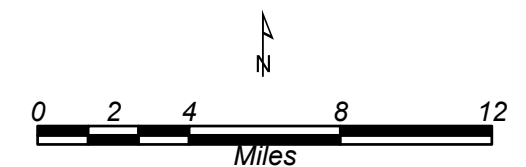
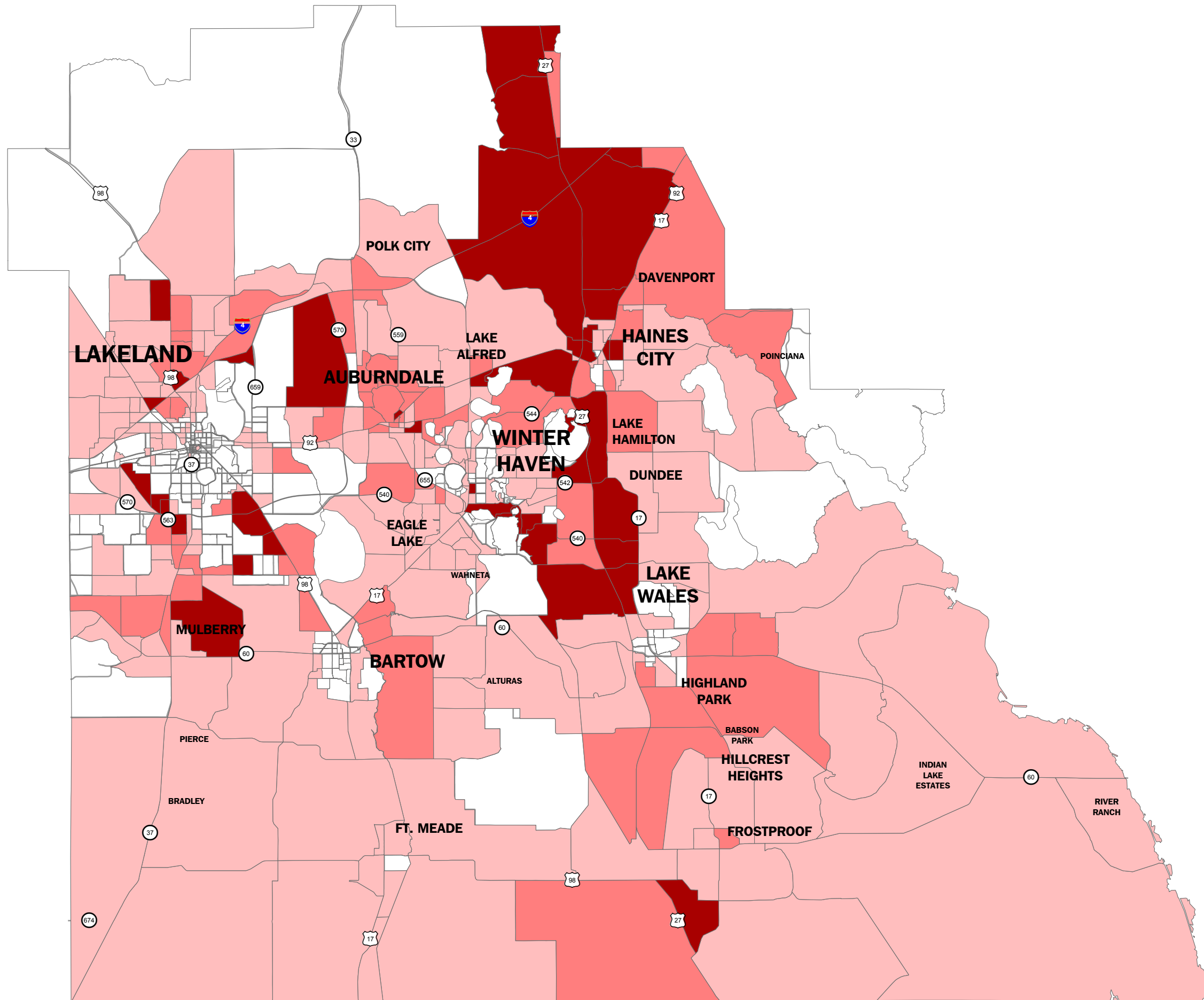
## Legend

### TAZ Development Potential

- High
- Medium
- Low

### Other Map Features

- Major Roads
- County Boundary



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# Services / Office Development Potential



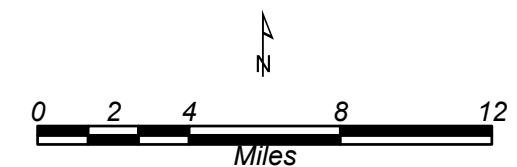
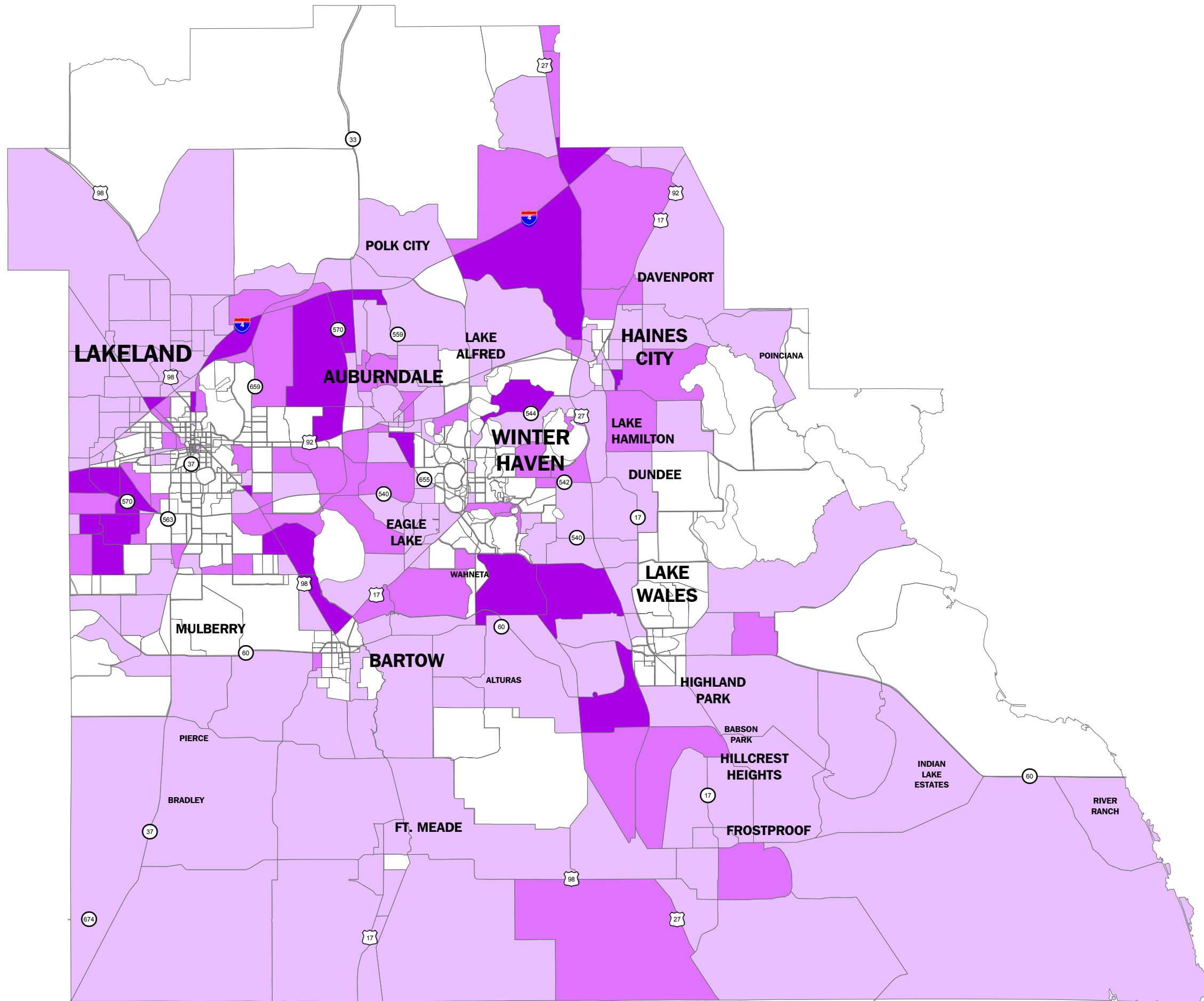
## Legend

### TAZ Development Potential

- High
- Medium
- Low

### Other Map Features

- Major Roads
- County Boundary



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