2026-2027 Draft TDC Destination Development Plan & Tourism Department Budget

VISIT Sebring

AVON PARK & LAKE PLACID, FL

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THE WORK OF A DESTINATION ORGANIZATION

1. VISIT

If you built a place where people want to visit, then you have built a place where people want to live.

2. LIVE

And if you built a place where people want to live, then you have built a place where people want to work.



4. INVEST

And if you built a place where business and residents will invest, then you have built a place where people will want to visit.

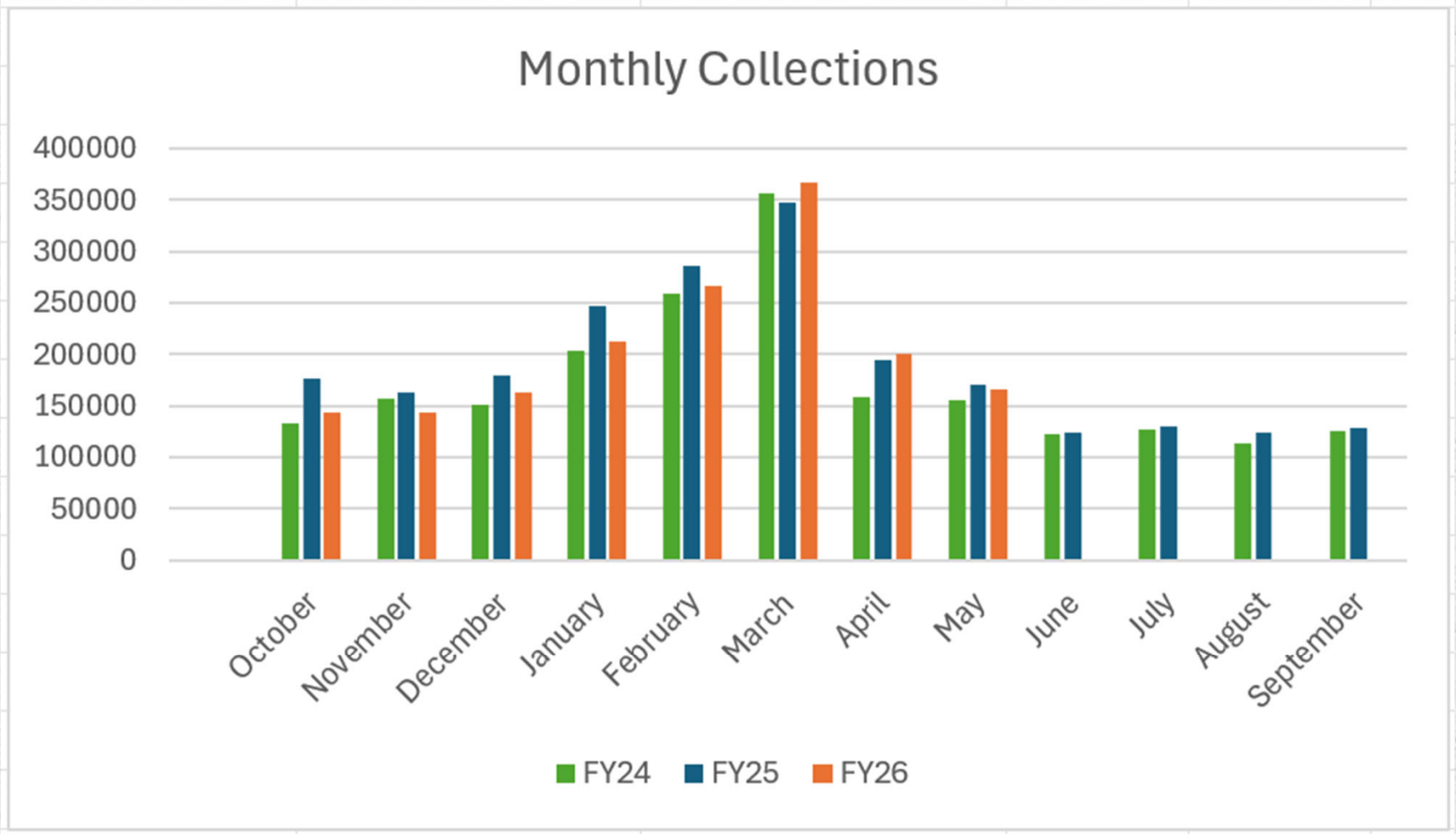
3. WORK

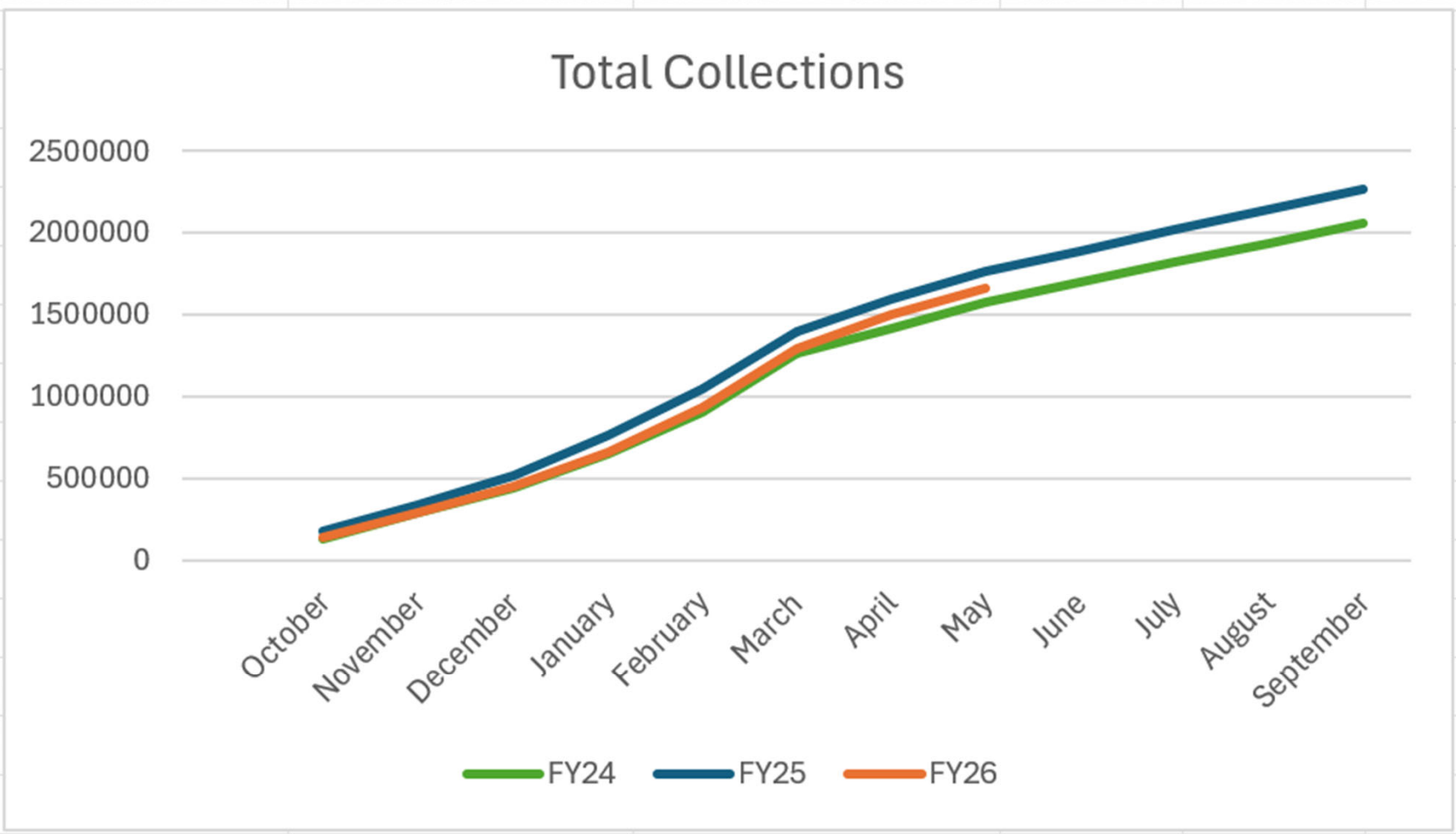
And if you built a place where people want to work, then you have built a place where business and residents will invest.

DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

FY 2025-2026 Collections to Date

	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	% change YOY	% change 2Y YOY
Oct	$ 132,758.45	$ 175,788.94	$ 142,905.89	-19%	8%
Nov	$ 157,706.47	$ 162,284.79	$ 143,177.35	-12%	-9%
Dec	$ 150,311.58	$ 179,080.94	$ 163,516.78	-9%	9%
Jan	$ 203,565.26	$ 246,349.78	$ 212,267.40	-14%	4%
Feb	$ 258,286.64	$ 285,562.00	$ 267,085.08	-6%	3%
Mar	$ 356,562.71	$ 346,907.48	$ 366,495.52	6%	3%
Apr	$ 157,799.95	$ 194,317.11	$ 200,751.00	3%	27%
May	$ 155,657.68	$ 170,741.71	$ 165,765.00	-3%	6%
June	$ 121,827.72	$ 124,536.54			
July	$ 127,730.68	$ 130,229.84			
Aug	$ 113,699.57	$ 123,419.85			
Sept	$ 125,673.44	$ 128,482.65			
TOTAL *to current reported month*	$ 1,572,648.74	$ 1,761,032.75	$ 1,661,964.02	-6%	6%


Monthly Collections
400000
350000
300000
250000
200000
150000
100000
50000
0
October
November
December
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
FY24
FY25
FY26


Total Collections
2500000
2000000
1500000
1000000
500000
0
October
November
December
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
FY24
FY25
FY26

HIGHLANDS COUNTY
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT BALANCES
FY 2025 / 2026

Description	Operations 5301	Marketing & Events 5305	Lakes 5306	Asset Dev/Enhance 5309	TOTALS
Ending Balance 09/30/2025	0.00	2,486,953.40	6,373.22	2,984,736.08	**5,478,062.70**
Revenue Replace Allocation	0.00	0.00	0.00	100,000.00	**100,000.00**
Tax Revenue - FY 25/26 *	161,518.64	960,631.17	0.00	374,049.94	**1,496,199.75**
Grants / Misc. Revenue	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**
Interest Adj. per Finance	0.00	(25,379.14)	108.62	25,270.52	**0.00**
Expense - FY 24/25 **	161,518.64	522,102.17	0.00	833,210.38	**1,516,831.19**
Less Encumbrances ***	55,108.60	309,070.04	0.00	0.00	**364,178.64**
Less Contingency		200,000.00			**200,000.00**
Available Balance	**(55,108.60)**	**2,391,033.22**	**6,481.84**	**2,650,846.16**	**4,893,252.62**

*** - Revenues (taxes & interest) thru 4/30/26**

**** - Expenses thru 4/30/26**

***** - Purchase orders "pulled" thru 4/30/26 but funds not expended yet; does not necessarily equate to Tourist Board's approved projects list.**

2025-2026 TDC Collections for 2026-2027 TDC Budget

$2,200,000 – 2025-2026 TDT Collections (estimated)

-$440,000 (20% = 3rd penny for Asset Development)

$1,760,000

-$475,000 + $60,000 (Tax collector) – Operations (#5301)

$1,225,000* – Available for Marketing

$ 475,000 – From Reserve Account

TOTAL FOR MARKETING: $1,700,000

*Tentative number as not all collections accounted for.

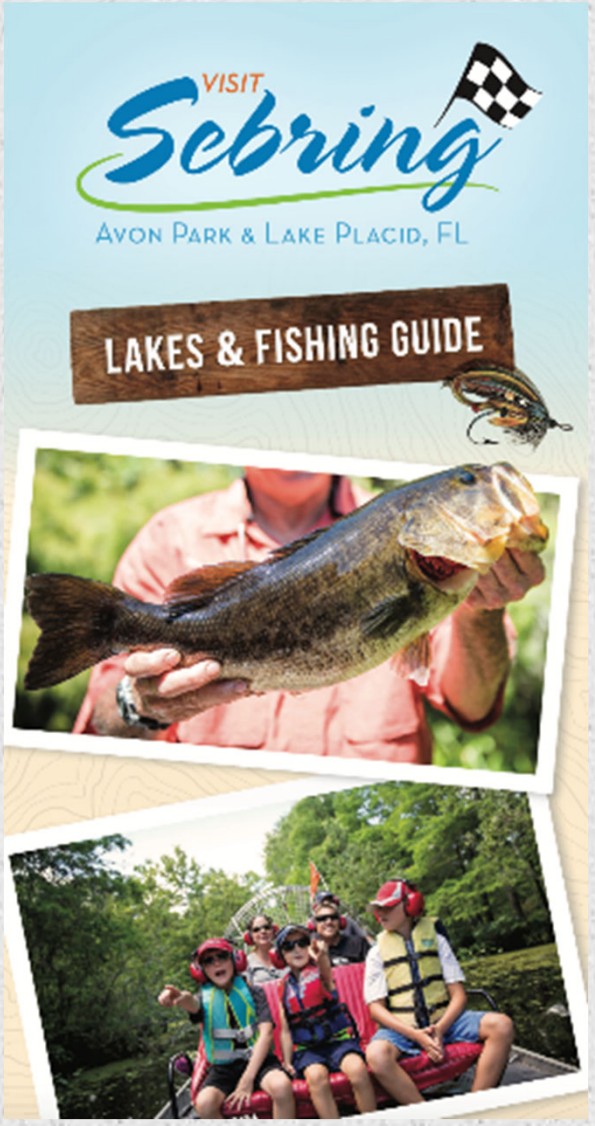
Key Recommendations
Operations – Acct 5301

Organizational Strategic Plan – Last plan was 2019. Budgeting $50,000 for new Strategic Plan for the DMO.
~Potential state planning grant $50,000

Local TDT collection – Move TDT collection to local tax collector for increase in revenues & enforcement.
$60,000/year

State Grant Consultant – Continue with state grant consultant on an 'as-needed' basis to find, apply, and manage any state grants TDC may be interested in. Recommended budget up to $20,000

Lakes Promotions - 5306



- Currently has nearly $6,500 in account
- Recommend re-designing and re-printing the Lakes Guide.
  - Update with other water-related activities
  - If costs exceed $6,500, we will use funds from 5305
- After funds are depleted, we will close this account.

Key Recommendations
Marketing – Acct 5305

Destination Development/Experiences – As the destination development leader, TDC can incentivize the development of new interactive ecotourism/nature/agritourism experiences per our Tourism/Recreation Facility Study & Strategic Plan.
Recommended budget up to $50,000. (Lake June Lagoon $50,000)

VISIT FLORIDA Video Marketing Co-op Campaign - $37,000
Target Audience: Travel Intenders - past travelers to Florida and/or competitive destinations, travelers showing travel interest and travel-ready indicators, travelers actively researching and looking to book travel, frequent travelers, etc.
Campaign: May-June 2026 ($75,000 total). VISIT FLORIDA to pay $42,000.

Key Recommendations

Marketing – Acct 5305

Visitor Research - $100,000

Assess visitor demographics, trip patterns, travel motivation & perceptions of Highlands County as a tourist destination. Evaluate event EI & value to county

Biggest Fish Contract - $85,000

Destination Collaboration, Hospitality Training + attending conferences

Destination Channel - $80,000 – Year #2

Develop custom TV channel to level-up our brand exposure, awareness of local happenings/storytelling and help reach our targeted marketing reach.

Enhance Accessibility to Sebring/Two Microsites (Madden) - $40,000

HGTV & Sports + "Getting Here" Landing Page

Key Recommendations

Marketing – Acct 5305

Amplify Garden Week 2027 - $50,000 (County-wide Collaboration)

Digital advertising, collateral material, digital passport, outsource social media, web page enhancement (includes interactive map), photo & video capture.

Connected Communities Summit - $10,000 (County-wide Collaboration)

Visit Tampa Bay CEO Santiago Corrada – keynote speaker and roundtable facilitator

New PR Firm- $75,000/year (PR/Promotions)

Tanya Churchmuch (Much PR) is retiring. Developing RFP to secure a new PR firm.

Visitor Guide Update & Re-print- $40,000

Every other year we update/refresh the Visitor Guide and print new copies.

Key Recommendations

Marketing – Acct 5305

International Dining Initiative - $25,000 (County-wide Collaboration)

Coordinate all of the international dining options in Highlands County and create a special week or experience to amplify this hidden gem in our destination.

Luxury Racing Experience Initiative - $25,000

How can we "drive" tourism during slow season and create a "luxury" racing experience for race fans. Had an initial call with Seven Hotel & Raceway.

Video content development- $50,000

Channel will need 24/7 content; capturing new video that can be used is essential during the next few years. This content can also be used for digital media.

In-market signage - $25,000

QR code signs in public places (Raceway, Airport, Parks, downtowns, Sports Complex, etc allowing visitors the ease of using QR code to find our website

Key Budget Recommendations

Asset/3rd Penny – Acct 5309

Funds budgeted into projects:

Indoor Facility - $1,900,000

Sports Complex - $872,644.63

Pre-Construction/Construction Consulting– Recommend budgeting up to $500,000 for pre-construction/construction consulting and related expenses for existing Highlands County Sports Complex and/or Indoor Facility.

Account 5305 (Marketing)	'25-'26 Budget	'26-'27 Budget	Notes
Advertising/SEM/ SEO/Website	675,000	725,000	$33k VF coop $40k Microsites $80k TV Channel $50k Garden Week $50k video conent Prowatercross, Motosurf, Kayak Fishing, Last Paddler Standing $25k - CGT
Experience Enhancement	50,000	100,000	1) Lake June Lagoon - $50k 2) Luxury Racing - $25k 3) Int'l Dining - $25k
Promotions/PR	85,000	100,000	New PR firm, promotional items & FAMs
Sports Marketing	86,000	90,000	Airstream Ventures
Visitor Services	40,000	75,000	In-market signage and Visitor Guide re-prints.
Industry Relations	100,000	110,000	Education for TDC staff & members & Summit. Biggest Fish Consulting contract & add'l conference registrations.
Grants/Contract Services >Event Grants	460,000	375,000	New events + recurring events.
Special Projects & Research	98,000	125,000	Special projects, TBD. $100k visitor research
FSF Income	+ $1,595	0	
TOTAL	**$1,594,000**	**$1,700,000**	**+/-**

TDC Budget by Account

Account	Approved 2025-2026	Proposed 2026-2027	Funding Difference
Operations (5301)	475,000	475,000	+0
Marketing & Events (5305)	1,594,000	1,700,000	+106,000
Lakes (5306)	0	6.500	+6,500
Asset Enhance & Development (5309)	500,000	500,000	+0
TOTAL	$2,569,00	$2,681,500	+112,500

Will bring adjusted budget back to TDC & BOCC in early 2027.

Any questions?

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