

2025-2026 TDC
Marketing Plan &
Tourism Department Budget



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.



Destination International's Community Vitality Wheel

TDC Strategic Plan Vision & Mission

Vision: The Highlands County TDC inspires **research-based decision making** which leads to the type of tourism destination development that inspire future generations to remain in the community and not move out of town. The TDC allocates resources to enhance the **quality of life for our residents**; including efforts to **reduce seasonal employment** and to **create a place for families to raise their children**.

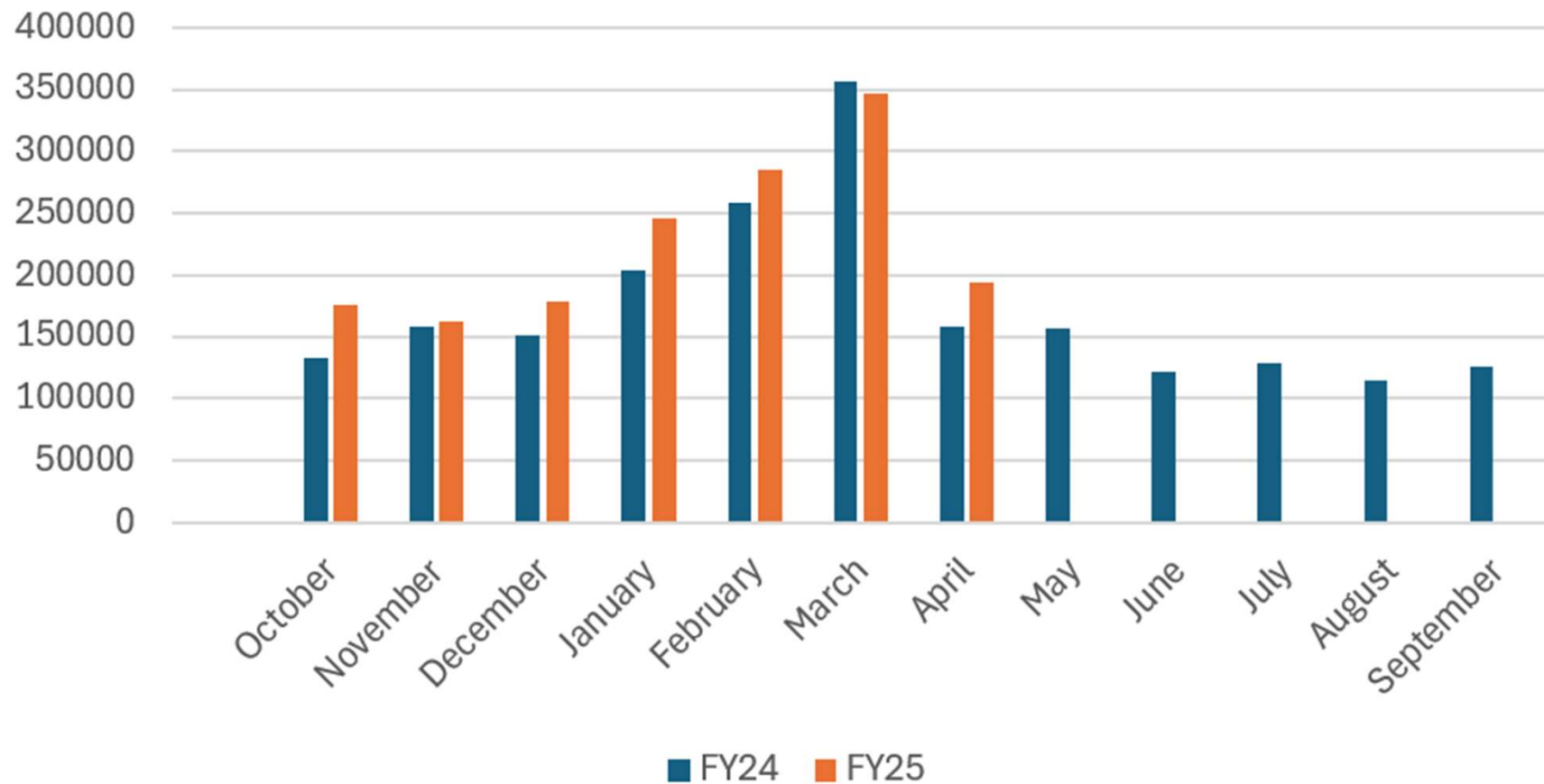
Mission: To contribute to a **positive quality of life** for the residents of Highlands County (our customer) through destination promotion, tourism development, advocacy and resource management – which are foundation pieces for future economic growth.



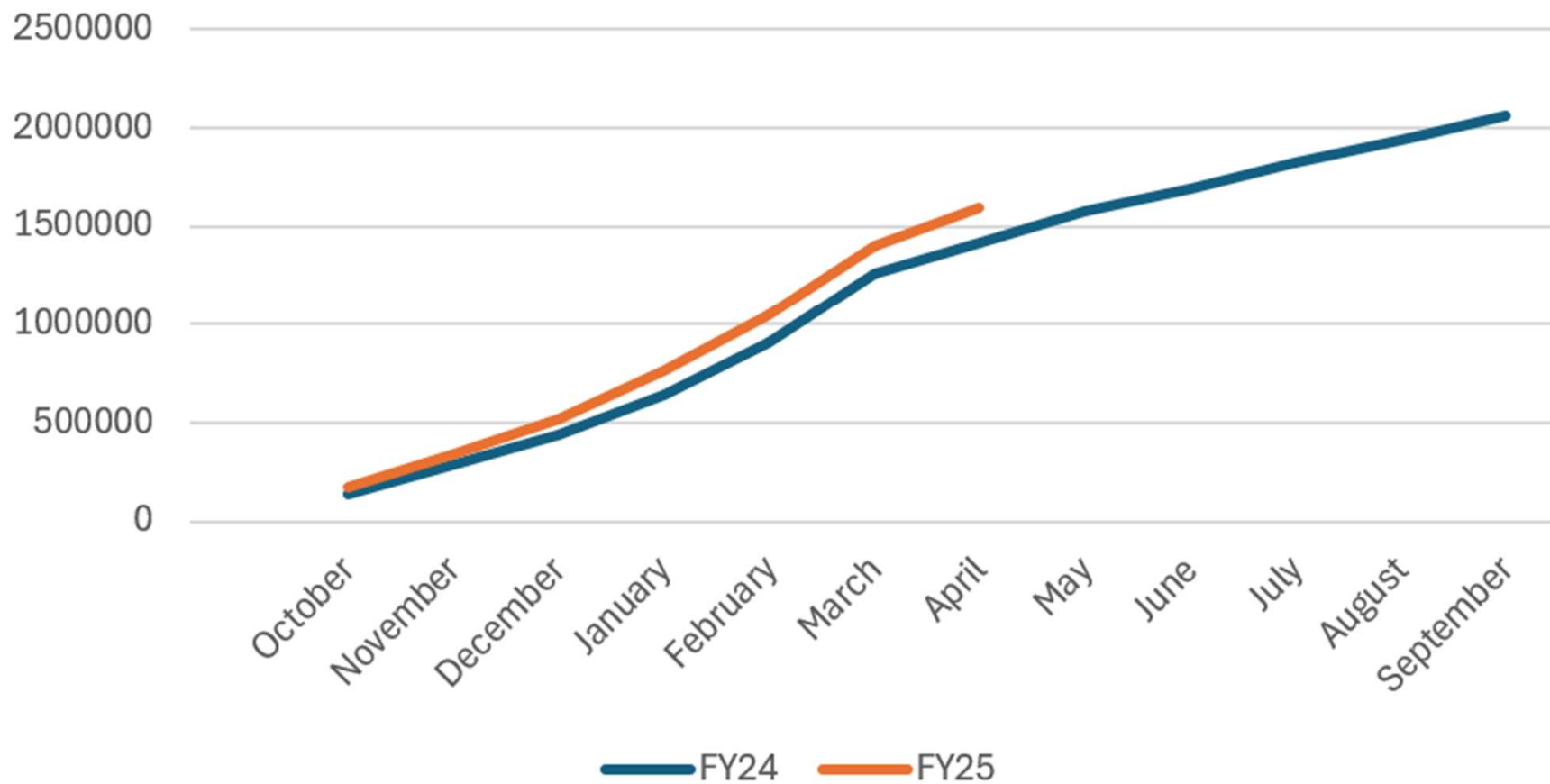
FY 2024-2025 Collections to Date – Trending up 12%

	FY23/24	FY24/25	% change
Oct	\$ 132,758.45	\$ 175,788.94	32%
Nov	\$ 157,706.47	\$ 162,287.29	3%
Dec	\$ 150,311.58	\$ 179,080.94	19%
Jan	\$ 203,565.26	\$ 246,349.78	21%
Feb	\$ 258,286.64	\$ 285,562.00	11%
Mar	\$ 356,562.71	\$ 346,907.48	-3%
Apr	\$ 157,799.95	\$ 194,317.11	23%
May	\$ 155,657.68		
June	\$ 121,827.72		
July	\$ 127,730.68		
Aug	\$ 113,699.57		
Sept	\$ 125,673.44		
TOTAL <i>to current reported month</i>	\$ 1,416,991.06	\$ 1,590,293.54	12%
<i>Year End Total</i>	<i>\$ 2,061,580.15</i>	<i>TBD</i>	

Monthly Collections



Total Collections



Anticipated TDC Collections

Preliminary TDC Budget

\$2,400,000 – Anticipated 2025-2026 TDT Collections

-\$480,000 (20% = 3rd penny for Asset Development)

\$1,920,000

-\$375,000 – Operations (#5301)

\$1,545,000* – Available for Marketing

\$ 255,000 – From Reserve Account

+ \$0 – Possible FL Sports Foundation Grant Income

TOTAL FOR MARKETING: \$1,800,000

o TDC: Use \$255,000 from Reserve Account for a \$1,800,000 marketing budget. As of March 31, \$2,195,281 is in this reserve account.

**This income projection is TBD; based on collections through May 2025.*

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.

VISIT FLORIDA Video Marketing Co-op Campaign - \$33,000

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.

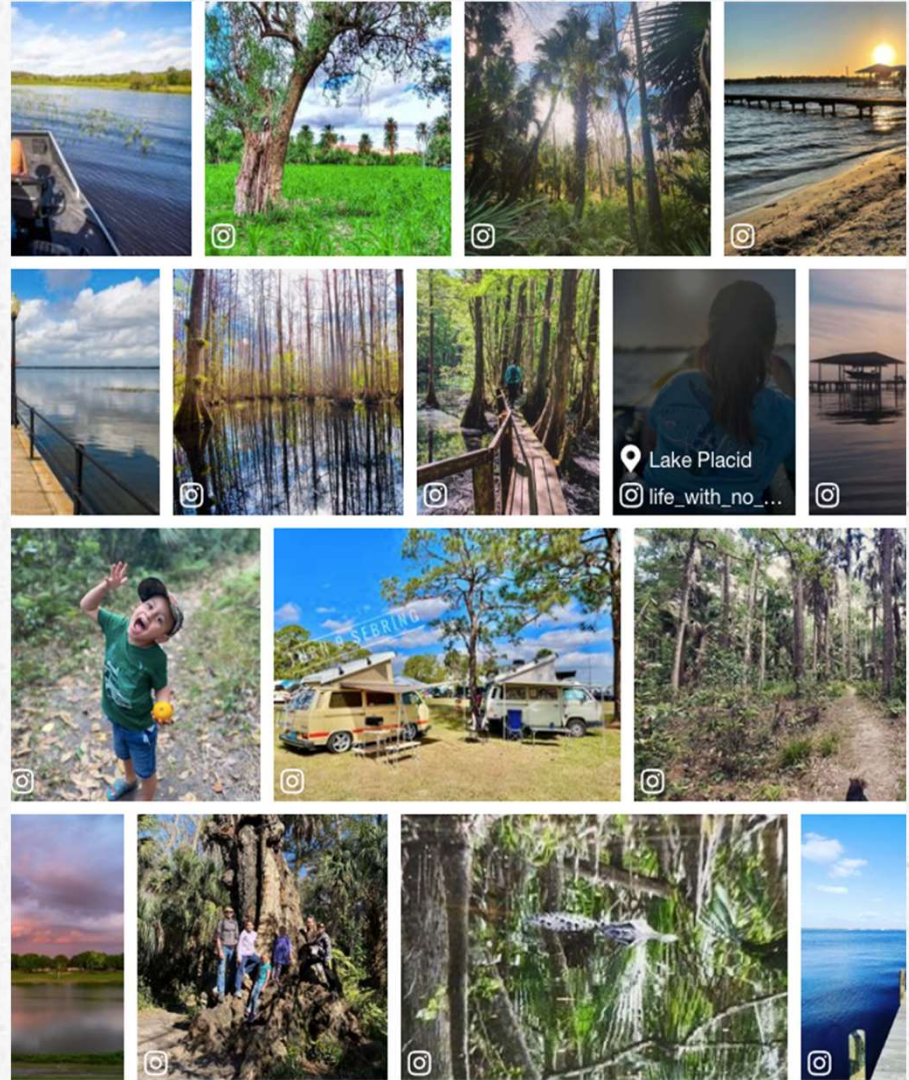
Campaign: May-June 2026 (\$75,000 total). VISIT FLORIDA to pay \$42,000.

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

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

Destination Development

- Locals & Tourists Want More Outdoor Recreation & Experiential/Interactive Options.
- Locals & Tourists Want More Things to Do for Families
- Focus on our Top 3 Outdoor Experiences for Families
 1. Lakes - Summer Splash Park
 2. Nature - State Park/Nature Immersion
 3. Racing - Raceway Experience



Nature/Ecotourism Experience

- Martin County Tourism Dept hired a nature expert/staff person to create and manage their Ecotourism Program. Could be a contracted position.

The **Explore Natural Martin** program allows people to engage with our amazing natural resources sustainably by offering various eco tours and experiences year-round that focus on education, adventure, and stewardship.

Explore this page to learn more about the program and view upcoming events [here](#).

We hope you enjoy these beautiful ecological sites and remember to “take only pictures and leave only footprints.” Learn more about Martin County’s partnership with **Leave No Trace** by clicking [here](#).

Nature/EcoTourism Program

Possible Highlands County Locations

- o Highlands Hammock State Park
- o Forestry Lands
- o Hickory Hammock – FWC & WMD
- o Archbold Biological Station
- o Avon Park Air Force Range
- o Lake June-in-Water Scrub Park
- o Royce Ranch – Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife & Environmental Area
- o Sun N Lake Preserve – County
- o Seven Lakes at HHSP



Events

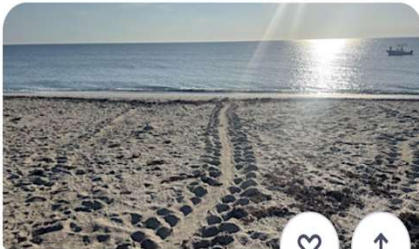
Upcoming (11)

Past (46)



Exploring Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park

Wednesday • 9:00 AM
8120 SE Paulson Ave
Free



Sea Turtle Celebration Beach Walk

Tue, Apr 30 • 8:30 AM
Bob Graham Beach
Free



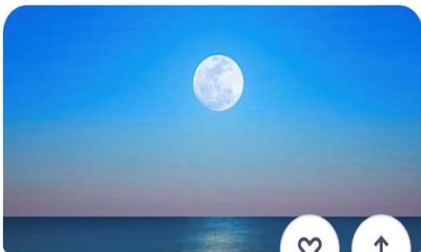
Mushroom Walk

Fri, May 3 • 9:00 AM
Halpatiokee Regional Park
Free



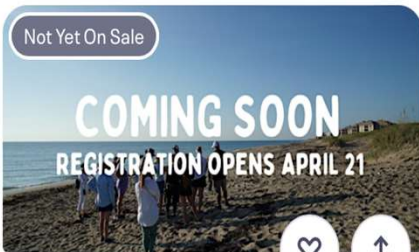
The Secret Life of Tortoises

Tue, May 14 • 9:00 AM
Halpatiokee Regional Park
Free



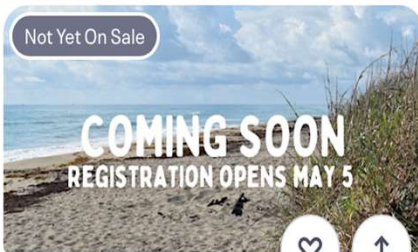
Moon Observation Night with Treasure Coast Astronomical...

Fri, May 17 • 8:30 PM
Indian Riverside Park
Free



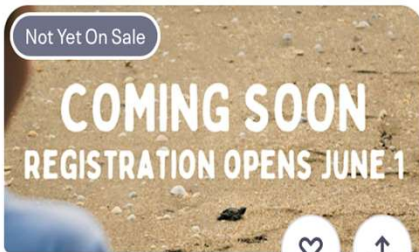
Sea Turtle Ecology Beach Walk

Tue, May 21 • 8:30 AM
Bob Graham Beach
Free



Summer Morning Beach Walk

Wed, Jun 5 • 7:30 AM
Beachwalk-Pasley Beach
Free



Sea Turtle Nest Excavations

Mon, Jul 8 • 8:30 AM
Stuart Beach
Free

Key Recommendations

Marketing – Acct 5305

Madden Contract Increase - \$50,000

Account digital management, content storytelling + amplification, prospecting & retargeting advertising, SEM, enhanced SEO due to AI.

Tourism Marketing Assistance Program (TMAP) Grant - \$50,000

Application-based reimbursable marketing grant program to help tourism-based businesses enhance their marketing efforts outside of Highlands County in order to attract visitors.

Biggest Fish Contract - \$82,800

Bus Tours, Collaboration, Hospitality

HGTV & Sports Tourism Microsites (Madden) - \$TBD

Influencer Campaign (Madden) - \$31,000

Two-three influencers for a 3-6 month campaign.

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

Key Recommendations Marketing

Acct 5305

Hotel/Destination TV Channel

Pending approval from local hotels, develop a custom TV channel for visitors and locals to level-up our brand exposure, awareness of local happenings/news and our targeted marketing reach.

Let people know what to do in destination.

Channel could also be aired in local professional, medical offices and other in-county businesses. *\$100,000 pending majority of hotels agreeing to deploy*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkHAiG0Vsag>



Key Budget Recommendations

Asset/3rd Penny – Acct 5309

Sports Complex Land Purchase – Option to purchase additional 43+/- acres adjacent to current Sports Complex. Recommend TDC portion of purchase price up to \$400,000 with matching state grant of \$400,000 plus up to \$30,000 for pre-purchase costs.

WiFi at Sports Complex – Recommend budgeting up to \$20,000 for WiFi capabilities at Sports Complex for event organizers. Many events interested in Sebring/Sports Complex need WiFi. This is a preliminary estimate.

Pre-Construction Cost Evaluation – Recommend budgeting up to \$500,000 for pre-construction cost evaluation for a publicly-owned asset enhancement or construction project that TDC would like to explore funding. This would only fund the pre-construction cost evaluation and not the actual construction.

Account 5305 (Marketing)	'24-'25 Budget	'25-'26 Budget	Notes
Advertising/SEM/SEO/Website	525,000	629,000	\$50k + for Madden; Microsites, Accessibility; TV Channel
Experience Enhancement	50,000	100,000	1) Lake June Lagoon 2) Nature Experience
Promotions/PR	65,000	85,000	Domestic Media Missions (2); Host IPW FAM Tour; Hosting Influencers & Media
Sports Marketing	82,000	86,000	Airstream Ventures
Visitor Services	40,000	75,000	Went over by \$25,000. In-market signage and Visitor Guide re-prints
Industry Relations	20,000	125,000	Went over by \$13,000. Education for TDC staff & members & more local outreach. Biggest Fish Consulting contract & add'l conference registrations.
Grants/Contract Services >Event Grants >Marketing Grants (TMAP)	575,000	500,000	New events + recurring events; addition of TMAP grant program at \$50,000.
Special Projects	63,000	200,000	Facility planning & HGTV Special Projects; State Grant Consultant; \$50,000 Strategic Plan \$60,000 Local TDT collection. Other special projects, TBD.
FSF Income	+ \$1,595	0	
TOTAL	\$1,420,000 + FSF income	\$1,800,000	+\$135,826

TDC Budget by Account

Account	Approved 2024-2025	Proposed 2025-2026	Funding Difference
Operations (5301)	300,000	375,000	+75,000
Marketing & Events (5305)	1,420,000	1,800,000	+380,000
Lakes (5306)	0	0	
Asset Enhance & Development (5309)	450,000 (Sports Complex: interior netting, land purchase) Facility Study <i>Actual to date: \$86,178 (Facility Study, netting & land appraisal)</i>	1,200,000 Land purchase at Sports Complex expansion & improvements (wifi). Other facility improvements TBD. Pre-construction evaluation costs.	+750,000
TOTAL	\$2,170,000	\$3,375,000	+\$1,205,000

*Will bring adjusted budget back to
TDC & BOCC in early 2026.*

Any questions?

