

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Date: January 23, 2025
Time: 2:30 pm
Location: County Administration Building - Grace Knight Conference Room
12 SE 1 Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM.

Members Present: Carrie Bush, Nedra Goettling, Romona Jackson, Linda James, Levy Odera, Elliott Welker, and Ying Xu

Members Absent: Jeffrey Arnold, Michael Carnevale, Alexander Hamilton Sanchez

Others in Attendance: Sarah Rockwell, Bill Dorman, Sean McLendon

2. Introductions and Overview

- **Introductions and Overview of Workshop Intent**

EDAC members in attendance introduced themselves to the Tourist Development Council (TDC).

3. Small Group Topical Rotating Discussions

- **Small Group Topical Rotating Discussions (15 Minute per Topic)**

Small groups were formed that included both EDAC and TDC members. The small group addressed four topics and associated Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Where possible, the groups ranked their top three issues. Not all SWOT items were ranked.

- **Workforce Development: Ready for Opportunity and Extending Prosperity**

Strengths

1. College students seeking mentorship.
2. University / SF College / Technical Schools
3. Diversity; age, education, etc.

- Central location in state
- Nature / Sports: opportunities for work/life balance.
- Highly educated workforce

Opportunities

1. Turnover
2. Growth of population
3. Building awareness of programs
 - Transportation
 - Develop more public/private opportunities
 - Market targeted industries
 - Major employers; non-medical / educational
 - East side development
 - Educating communities on resources available.

Weaknesses

1. Public Transportation; bus system
2. Awareness / emphasis on programs
3. Labor infrastructure / skilled labor training programs
 - Traffic
 - Gaps; income, wealth, education
 - Transient population
 - Vocational / trade training opportunities (CDL)

Threats

1. Infrastructure development of other counties
2. Perception of college education requirements
3. Artificial Intelligence
 - Money allocation

- Housing
- Retention of graduates
- Cost of living / income/ wage potentials
- Property taxes / utilities
- Schools (grades and state policies)

- **Infrastructure Investments: Shovel-Ready and East-West Parity**

Strengths

1. Airport expansion + parking
 2. Natural attraction / green space
 3. Armory on 39th
- I-75
 - RTS for UF
 - County investments on local roads
 - Water / sewer system quality
 - Reliable and local electricity
 - Stable county management / finances
 - Resistance to economic bubbles (no wildfires, earthquakes, etc.)

Opportunities

- Airport infrastructure
- Zoning limitations
- Land to develop
- Meat processing plant
- Builder incentives for affordable housing
- Use of more local vendors/suppliers
- Designate more areas for development.

- Rural areas
- Improve utility resilience

Weaknesses

1. Road Conditions
2. Public utilities in rural areas
3. Cost of living
 - Non-developable land
 - Public transportation
 - Parking meters
 - Lack of direct flights
 - Uneven / one-sided development focus
 - Traffic congestions
 - Wetlands / Hurricane fears
 - GRU Utilities
 - Affordable Housing

Threats

- Resistance to growth / urbanization
- Diminished road conditions
- Aging water treatment
- Superfund sights
- Over population, esp. during hurricane influx.
- Flooding
- High cost of insurance
- Property taxes
- Economic shifts, esp. in education

- Increase density
- **County Partnerships: Leveraging Relationships for Inclusive Growth**

Strengths

- More money + ideas
- Strategic plans with target industries to narrow focus
- Lots of activities / events
- UF/IFAS, UF Health
- UF Industrial Complex
- SF College
- RTS
- State funding
- Non-profits
- 80 active organizations
- Good understanding of need for partnerships
- VA Hospital
- Shands

Opportunities

- Understand roles of various agencies, municipalities and chambers
- Teamwork to complete shared goal
- SBAC Housing / affordable housing
- Regionalism
- Economic development corp (nonprofit)
- University + community development projects
- Long term community development
- Recruitment + training

Weaknesses

- Competition across economic development agencies
- Meeting space / convention spaces
- Lack of hotels
- Lack of Economic development corp
- Funding
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of incentives
- Lack of coordination between partners
- Recruitment
- Training
- Exposure for grassroots partnerships / inclusive opportunities

Threats

- Too many voices
- **Focus Areas: Prioritizing for Impact and Aligning with Strategic Goals**

Strengths

- I-75
- Sports tourism
- Airport
- Families
- Cultural activities
- Natural aspects
- Sports Center Complex
- Stability from economy
- UF as a driver for development

Opportunities

- Open spaces for tourism (hot air balloon festivals)
- Music festivals
- Small business “fast track: w/ incentives (meat packing plant)
- Agri-tech
- Bio-tech
- Artificial intelligence
- Distribution centers
- More diversified space in local economy.
- Reduce barriers of accessibility.
- Education / ambassador programs for new business owners
- Event promotion
- Apple store
- Growing food scene

Weaknesses

- Lack of open space for festival (medieval faire)
- Communication
- Counterintuitive restrictions
- Focus on small business and entrepreneurship
- Central location
- Accessibility to our cultural activities / reduce barriers
- Overdependence on UF
- Non-taxable land
- Lack of awareness of what is happening

Threats

- Government regulations

- Bureaucracy for projects
- Lack of “long game”
- Lack of innovation
- Operating in silos (needs more collaboration)
- Lack of city pride
- Tele-health
- Artificial intelligence

4. Group Findings and Future Actions

- **Small Group Report Out – Summary of Recurring Themes; Next Steps**

Staff will compile the thoughts and reference them as part of the Tourism & Economic Development Office first year of efforts. These topics may be used as a recurring theme for an annual check-in with both committees.

5. Member Comments

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.