



Palm Beach County Economic Development Office Quarterly Report

Implementing the Palm Beach County 21st Century Strategic Economic Development Plan

The following news excerpts provide an update for a group of action items in the Palm Beach County 21st Century Strategic Economic Development Plan during the third quarter of the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The BCC adopted Plan builds on the results of the Palm Beach County (PBC) Economic Summit of November 2005 and shapes the County's policies and directions that define its economic future. The Plan provides a comprehensive overview of the economy, sets policy direction for economic growth, and identifies strategies, programs and projects to improve the tax base and the economy.

The PBC Economic Development Office is currently engaged, along with the multiple public private partnerships that have been established with various stakeholders, in the implementation of the projects within the Plan.

The complete Palm Beach County Strategic Economic Development Plan can be viewed and downloaded at the PBC EDO website: www.pbcgov.com/edo/

[DOWNTOWN BELLE GLADE WINS MAKEOVER](#) © Palm Beach Post, June 3, 2008

[DELRAY CORRIDOR PLANS FOCUS ON TRANSIT - WORKFORCE HOUSING NEAR I-95, TRI-RAIL](#) © South Florida Sun-Sentinel, April 8, 2008

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EDO Quarterly Report

Prepared by the Center for Urban & Environmental Solutions (CUES)

at Florida Atlantic University

[DOWNTOWN BELLE GLADE WINS MAKEOVER](#)

The Palm Beach Post, June 3, 2008

Author: DWAYNE ROBINSON, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

The city's dilapidated downtown will soon begin a multimillion-dollar face-lift, thanks to federal funds, the county announced Monday.

The Palm Beach County Economic Development Office won a national competition, awarding it a \$1.2 million grant to remake four commercial city blocks on Avenue A in Belle Glade. As a result, it also received a \$2.6 million allocation in federal low-interest loans, although the exact amount available is not yet known. "It's the first step in the rebirth of Belle Glade," City Manager Bill Underwood said.

The \$8.35 million project will spruce up the 37 properties lining Avenue A along both sides of the Hillsborough Canal. The money would go toward new streetlights, sidewalks, streets and building facades, he said. The canal could become a waterway of boat traffic if the city is able to build locks that would allow travel from Lake Okeechobee directly onto drainage canals.

The remaining money for the downtown rehabilitation is expected from loans, which all of the owners of the 37 participating properties will help secure, according to the county.

"The reason you renovate waterfront property is because it increases the value of the land by an additional 8 to 10 percent a year," said Kevin Johns, county director of economic development. "This will be a major regeneration project that's getting started in downtown Belle Glade." BACK TO TOP

[DELRAY CORRIDOR PLANS FOCUS ON TRANSIT - WORKFORCE HOUSING NEAR I-95, TRI-RAIL](#)

South Florida Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) - April 8, 2008

Author: Maria Herrera Staff Writer

The vision seemed simple: convert Congress Avenue into a "live, work, play" oasis bustling with restaurants, condos and shops - all steps away from Interstate 95 and the Tri-Rail station. The city rezoned the area to allow developers to build it all. Then they waited.

Now, nearly four years after the idea was conceived, plans are finally taking off after Palm Beach County officials decided to rebuild and reconfigure some buildings on the 25-acre South Palm Beach County Administrative Complex, just south of Atlantic Avenue on Congress Avenue. The plan is being called a catalyst for what officials believe will be the future of transit-oriented development in the area. "You had this zoning that we put in place but somebody had to get the ball rolling, something had to ignite it," City Commissioner Gary Eliopoulos said. "This is the thing that will kick it in the right direction."

The plan calls for consolidating several office and administrative buildings to one area of the 25-acre site, renovating the buildings and having developers propose a mixed-use residential complex for the rest, County Commissioner Mary McCarty said. "We want the rest of the property to go back to the tax rolls," McCarty said. "We are looking at 370 units and some of them have to be workforce housing, and we're looking at retail that will work well with transit."

Delray Beach city officials liked the plan and voted recently to work with the county in developing a request for proposals. Currently the corridor is a hodgepodge of auto shops, defunct office complexes and strip malls. "Right now it is a no man's land," McCarty said. "You have office buildings with people who have to get in their cars to go have lunch or get any services."

The idea of creating a district that could attract the work force as well as businesses that could relocate their national or international headquarters to the area began at a design summit with former Mayor Jeff Perlman. Last year, city officials approved the new zoning for 225 acres along Congress Avenue to increase density and allow developers to build condos and apartments next to restaurants, dry cleaners and hair salons.

The Alta Congress Project, a 451-rental apartment project, was the first to be approved in the new district, said developer Jay Jacobson with Wood Partners. "We were looking for a site that was close to I-95 and the train station," he said.

Perlman has now been working with the Greater Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce's economic development committee to come up with what kind of industries would thrive in the corridor. "The key to the city's success is to attract jobs, and the corridor is perfect for that," he said. But Perlman said the city has an important role to play in cleaning up the corridor and creating a neighborhood feel with linear parks and pedestrian walkways. "We need to do more in marketing the site and work closely with Boca Raton, which has a great corporate address," he said.

The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority has several proposals for 6 acres near the Yamato Tri-Rail station in Boca Raton, where officials envision a similar mixed-use, transit-oriented project. "There's really potential for this near all of our stations," Transportation Authority spokeswoman Bonnie Arnold said.

BACK TO TOP

[SAVE THE GLADES WHILE SAVING THE EVERGLADES](#)

The Palm Beach Post, July 6, 2008

Imagine Everglades National Park extending north into Palm Beach County. Four trails lead from the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail atop the lake's dike into four downtowns, "little San Antonios" with restored streets, coffee shops, restaurants and bike shops in Belle Glade, an amphitheater and marina in Pahokee, a "parking area" for horses in South Bay and trailside eateries and businesses in Canal Point. An upscale eco-tourist hotel and resort overlook the lake.

Unrealistic? Until two weeks ago, so was the idea of the state buying U.S. Sugar for Everglades restoration. So, for communities hard hit by the state's plan, government needs to think big, and some of that thinking has produced ideas.

Kevin Johns, Palm Beach County's economic development director, has more than \$5 million in state and federal money to get started. He predicts that 200 jobs will open this year for trailhead renovation and the sprucing up of four city blocks along the canal in Belle Glade. Expanding the national park and recruiting a hotel-resort still are dreams, but he believes that all the plans could open hundreds of "green collar" jobs in eco-tourism, water management, canal and green space maintenance.

Some Palm Beach County lakeside towns, along with Indiantown in Martin County, are interested in an "inland port" -- a shipping center near the lake. But the market for such services is unknown. Hendry County, U.S. Sugar's home, is one of six designated a state area of critical economic concern. County Administrator Wayne O'Neal said leaders are trying to convince the South Florida Water Management District that "we need to be actively involved ... we want to know how we will be made whole."

Hendry, Clewiston and LaBelle officials met Tuesday to talk about ways to diversify their economies beyond farming. One idea is to promote Hendry County's Everglades Industrial Park, 4 square miles near the intersection of U.S. Highway 27 and State Road 80. The state plan to buy sugar industry land is so new that all the groups working on ways to minimize the impact of as many as 1,700 lost jobs in lakeside communities are just beginning to learn what others are doing, water district Director Carol Wehle said. She predicts that fewer jobs will be lost, since a citrus processing plant and sugar mill will stay in production. And when U.S. Sugar ceases to exist after six years, "we still will have to have farming operations. We can't just let exotics take over the land."

Florida's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. Ms. Wehle said, has a department devoted to rural economic development. But there must be a way for all these groups to get together and, as Ms. Wehle put it, "create a vision for what we want these communities to be and then target the development we want." Gov. Crist proposed the state purchase of U.S. Sugar. Now, he should name someone who will lead the state effort to keep the purchase from devastating the Glades. [BACK TO TOP](#)

[IN WELLINGTON, BURNING ISSUES ON MANURE PLANT - COST AND LOCATION WORRYING RESIDENTS](#)

South Florida Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL), June 18, 2008

Author: Stephanie Horvath Staff Writer

What's it going to cost me and where's it going to be? Those were the two major questions that a small group of local equestrians wanted answered Tuesday night by Wellington Energy LLC, a local company that wants to build a manure-burning power plant here. The answers weren't immediately clear.

Wellington Energy said it's looking at four different sites, including ones on 50th Street and Flying Cow Road. They said they didn't know how much it would cost equestrians to dump their manure there. "We won't do this if it costs us double the price," said Michael Fawcett, the company's chief operating officer. "Cost effective means you all will support it so you don't sneak it in your pick up truck and dump it in a canal during the night."

Each winter, Wellington produces at least 100 tons each day thanks to thousands of show horses and polo ponies that season here. The traditional solution has been to truck it to farms, lawns, nurseries, anyone who would have it.

Wellington Energy said it has the only viable solution. But it needs the equestrians to get on board, which is why it hosted what it said would be the first of a series of public sessions Tuesday night at the Players Club. For its \$15 million plant to work and get financing, Wellington Energy representatives say, they need a monopoly on all of Wellington's manure. They also need Wellington to pass a law allowing that monopoly.

One thing the plant won't do: take manure from outside of Wellington. Scott Swerdlin, a local equine veterinarian and the company's CEO, said it's not in their plans. "The last thing we want is to be a magnet for horse manure," he said. According to his proposal, the two-boiler plant would put out between 1.5 megawatts and 5 megawatts, depending on how much manure it is able to secure. It would be quiet and odorless and have low emissions. The company hopes to sell the power to Florida Power & Light. The half-ton of ash created every hour can be used as a fertilizer.

Most of the 22 people at the meeting seemed supportive but wanted to know how it would work. "This looks like an attractive solution but within financial parameters I can afford," said Chris Gillman, an equestrian who owns farms in Wellington and Loxahatchee Groves. "I'm looking for an incentive to participate." Swerdlin said equestrians will have pay a little more in order to solve the bigger problem. "We've looked at everything. There isn't a better solution than this. Is it inexpensive? No," he said. "People will have to jump in and say I'll do it. I'll do it for the future of Wellington. ... But you can't keep doing business as usual."

BACK TO TOP

[INCUBATOR GETS FIRST BIOTECH](#)

The Palm Beach Post, April 5, 2008

Author: STEPHEN POUNDS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Alexandria Real Estate Equities, the nation's biggest landlord for laboratory space, has found the initial tenant for the area's first state-of-the-art incubator aimed at biotechnology companies. Cytonics Inc. moved into about 2,000 square feet of Alexandria's lab building at 555 Heritage Drive in Jupiter in March. It's a short distance from Scripps Florida's three-building site now under construction at the Florida Atlantic University campus here, Chief Executive Officer Rush Simonson said.

The company, which employs four people, is developing a protein that will help to pinpoint the precise location of pain in the body, potentially saving the cost of needless surgeries from a mistaken diagnosis. "We're really glad to be here. We've got some really cool stuff here," Simonson said. "We have a lot of equipment for (drug) discovery."

Elsewhere, FAU's research park in Boca Raton has a high-tech incubator but it lacks the wet-lab space of the 40,000-square-foot building in Jupiter. There are other incubators in the planning in Palm Beach Gardens and Port St. Lucie, but Alexandria's is the first to open for business. The incubator will be a center for local and out-of-state biotech companies, Alexandria Chief Executive Joel Marcus said.

"What we're going to be doing really is starting up companies there," Marcus said. Alexandria is modeling its Jupiter center after one it started more than five years ago in Seattle. The Seattle center has its own venture capital fund to form two start-up companies each year. Then the companies find their own investors to move the company forward.

Since Accelerator Corp., Alexandria's biotech incubator in Seattle, opened in 2003, it has raised \$130 million from venture funds including Amgen Ventures and Arch Venture Partners for companies that Alexandria has helped to start. Once those companies were ready for the next level, they raised another \$200 million on their own, Marcus said.

Biotech leaders hailed Alexandria's first tenant in Jupiter as an important step in the area's development as a life-science hub. "They'll eventually get more tenants in there, and there'll be a buzz about the place," said Russell Allen, president of the trade group BioFlorida. Rina Dukor, chief executive of BioTools Inc. in Jupiter, said the incubator's opening will be a signal to the life-science industry that the area has the kind of building space to specifically accommodate the chemistry and biology done by biotech research firms.

BACK TO TOP

[INTRACOASTAL PLAN AIMED AT BENEFITING RESIDENTS, MERCHANTS](#)

The Palm Beach Post, May 16, 2008

Author: CHUCK MCGINNESS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

A plan for the future of the Intracoastal Waterway through Palm Beach County strives to retain existing marina villages and enhance them with public spaces and new businesses and homes. Created from a weeklong series of meetings coordinated by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the Palm Beach Metropolitan Planning Organization, the "work in progress" was presented to about 80 people Thursday at Palm Beach Atlantic University.

Finding ways to expand opportunities for both residents and merchants at waterfront developments from Jupiter to Boynton Beach was one of the priorities. In Palm Beach Gardens, for example, the restaurants at the four corners of PGA Boulevard and the waterway could be connected with boardwalks under the bridge. "There would be enough activity to make them useful destinations," planner Kim Delaney said.

Throughout the week, more than 200 people who live and work along the Intracoastal along with representatives from 24 local governments offered their ideas. Among the main recommendations of the study are to expand public access and recreational facilities, create some type of transportation system, protect natural areas, promote eco-tourism and expand economic development. The findings will be compiled into a final report in about three months.

Creating a water-based transit system for commuters is not realistic because the manatee protection zones prevent high-speed travel, Delaney said. But a short-distance, weekend water taxi service is a possibility. One of the more creative ways of opening the waterway to the public that was discussed is to build street-end parks, with small buildings where residents could store their canoes and kayaks. It's also important to maintain existing parks, Delaney said. "When you look at a map of Palm Beach County, there are not very many opportunities left," she said.

The study looked at a 43-mile section of the Intracoastal and adjoining land between the Atlantic Ocean and Interstate 95. About 44 percent of the county's population and nearly half of its jobs, including 6,000 in marine industries, are in this area.

BACK TO TOP

[LANGUAGE LESSONS SET TO EXPAND - BILL ADDS CERTIFICATION FOR 11 MORE](#)

South Florida Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) - May 27, 2008

Author: Josh Hafenbrack Staff Writer

Coming soon to Florida's public classrooms: lessons in Chinese, Japanese and even Farsi.

A state legislative effort led by Rep. Maria Sachs, D-Delray Beach, this spring dramatically expanded the list of foreign languages that teachers can become certified to offer along with the staples of Spanish, German, Latin and French. The measure, approved by the Legislature earlier this month, expands the roster of foreign languages to 15 from the four established in 1989.

"These kids today have to compete in a global economy," said Sachs, who included the foreign language expansion in a major education package to overhaul school testing. "The world is a lot different than it was. In those days, the '80s, French was the diplomatic language. Now everyone wants to know Chinese and Portuguese because of what's going on in Brazil with renewable energy."

Previously, teachers had no way to get certified in alternative foreign languages because the state Department of Education didn't offer the proper tests. Sachs' bill allows the teachers to bypass the state and gain certification through an exam offered by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages.

The new languages are Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Russian. Statewide, languages outside the four mainstays are taught sparingly. Only 57 schools offer courses in Italian, while 25 offer Chinese, often by teachers who are in Florida on an exchange program or are natives of the countries, according to the state. "This is really great news for all the Chinese living in Florida," said Vivian Wang, president of the Chinese Language Teachers Association of Florida, who teaches at the Contemporary Chinese School of Broward.

"There has been a big demand, but there was a big shortage of certified teachers," she said, noting China is becoming more and more relevant because of the country's rapid economic development. "I think it's mainly because of the rising Chinese economy, the impact on South Floridians' - almost everybody's - daily lives."

Palm Beach County school lobbyist Vern Crawford said the foreign language expansion doesn't mean these languages will start popping up on curricula in the coming school year, but it could have an impact down the road and be a helpful recruiting tool to bring in teachers interested in teaching these languages. Sachs said Florida, positioned as a gateway to the Caribbean and Central America, needs to modernize the languages offered to its schoolchildren. "Our state and our county is a gateway to trade with these countries," she said.

BACK TO TOP

[SCRIPPS BUILDINGS TAKING SHAPE, STANDING OUT AT FAU JUPITER](#)

The Palm Beach Post, April 11, 2008

Author: STEPHEN POUNDS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

An order is taped to several laboratory benches in Building A, the 100,258-square-foot chemistry building at Scripps Florida. It warns: "Finished areas, work carefully." Those signs on the laboratory's third floor are just one signal that construction of Scripps' permanent home on Florida Atlantic University's Jupiter campus is ahead of schedule.

Palm Beach County officials were taken on a tour of the site Thursday and shown the interior of the chemistry building, which is the first that will be finished. It will be done by late October, with the entire project slated for completion by Dec. 2. Scripps will formally take possession at the end of January, although scientists will begin the painstaking move of sensitive instruments as buildings are completed.

"One of the primary drivers of the schedule is to minimize disruption of the science," said Pete Herold, Scripps' director of facilities, planning and construction. And science is well under way already at temporary labs, with Scripps receiving 39 research grants valued at more than \$30 million and one start-up company spun off from its research. It's made 13 patent applications and hired 260 employees.

The exterior of its three buildings is nearly complete, much of it painted in muted shades of blue, green, yellow and brick-red. The spire at the top of the centrally located administration building, with its cafeteria and auditorium, is already an engaging landmark for drivers on Donald Ross Road. It will be lit at night.

"They didn't necessarily want to blend in," Assistant County Administrator Shannon LaRocque said. "They wanted a signature building." Lab benches with black epoxy countertops and sandy wooden drawers -- a rarity for today's chemistry labs -- line the 9-foot-high research laboratories, many with hoods to protect scientists from toxic fumes. Eye-wash faucets are in many labs, and showers to hose down in the event of a chemical accident are sprinkled through the building, said Deborah Beetson, construction manager for builder Weitz/DPR.

The Scripps buildings have gone up quickly, considering that site-clearing began just 14 months ago and alterations had to be made on the original design meant for the Mecca Farms site. "We had to shrink the site from 100 acres to 30 acres," said David Parlin, program manager for engineering consultant Fluor Corp.

After the tour, County Commissioner Karen Marcus said the arrival of Scripps and the impending arrival of Germany's Max Planck Society has exceeded her expectations. After overcoming political and environmental squabbling, Jupiter is better than the Mecca site west of Palm Beach Gardens, she said. "If we had done it out there, with the state of the economy, they would have been out there by themselves," Marcus said.

BACK TO TOP

[HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY OKS \\$42 MILLION FOR TRI-RAIL](#)

The Palm Beach Post, April 24, 2008

Author: CHUCK MCGINNESS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

A bill that would redirect about \$42 million a year from the state transportation department to Tri-Rail for future operations unanimously passed the state House on Wednesday. "The fact it was a 113-0 vote speaks volumes," said Joe Giulietti, executive director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, which runs the commuter rail.

Without a permanent revenue source, Tri-Rail officials say they will have to reduce the weekday schedule from 50 trains to 20 and eliminate all weekend service. The Florida Department of Transportation is fighting to keep the revenue it receives from an existing \$2 rental car surcharge. If Tri-Rail gets it, state officials say, key local road projects will be delayed, including the widening of State Road 710 west of the Port of Palm Beach and the extension of State Road 7 to Northlake Boulevard.

In the Senate, a 35-page amendment to an omnibus transportation bill includes a provision that would allow the authority to collect a new \$2 fee on vehicles rented at international airports. It would require voters in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties to approve the measure.

The amendment, proposed by Senate Majority Leader Dan Webster, R-Winter Garden, was approved Tuesday by the Transportation and Economic Development Committee, and is now before the full Senate for a vote. "Right now, the whole process is to come up with some sort of compromise," Giulietti said. "That's what we're pushing for."

The House bill relieves the three counties from having to contribute about \$21 million each year to the authority for operations and future capital improvements. Because of state-mandated property cuts over the past year, the counties had planned to cut back their subsidy to Tri-Rail. It would also relieve the state of its obligation to match the county money.

BACK TO TOP

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