

Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)
Annual Work Plan and Accomplishments Report: FY22-23

Chair: Elliott Welker

Board Liaison: Sean McLendon, Economic Development & Food System Mgr.

Brief History of Committee:

The County Commission approved the reconstitution of the Economic Development Advisory Committee on August 12, 2008. Its purpose is to develop and provide policy recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for promoting sustainable economic development activities within Alachua County.

Responsibilities and Duties:

Develop and provide policy recommendations to the County Commission related to the promotion of sustainable economic development activities within Alachua County, including, but not limited to, the following actions:

1. Review the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, with particular consideration of the Goals, Objectives, and Policies contained in the Economic and Future Land Use Elements and provide policy recommendations through the periodic Evaluation and Appraisal (EAR) update process.
2. Prepare an annual "State of Alachua County's Economy Report" as outlined in the Economic Element of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan;
3. Provide recommended standards to evaluate new proposals for economic development and associated funding requests;
4. Provide recommendations on funding requests for economic development proposals when specifically directed by the Board of County Commissioners.

Accomplishments:

- Small Municipality Outreach and Engagement. The Committee visited six communities better to understand their interest and preferences for economic development.
 - January - City of Newberry
 - February - City of Alachua
 - March - City of Hawthorne
 - April - City of Waldo
 - May - City of Micanopy
 - August - City of High Springs
 - Per these conversations, the Committee recommends that the Board engage with municipalities that want to develop shared service and inter-city infrastructure projects. Hawthorne and Micanopy discussed the lack of connection to water and wastewater systems as an economic development inhibitor and contributor to environmental degradation.
 - The City of Newberry is a champion of this model and presented its plans to the Committee in January.

- Sports Events Complex Major Project Milestone - Topping Off Ceremony and Beam Signing
- US Army Reserve Equipment Concentration Site Major Project Milestone - Groundbreaking Ceremony
- Oversight of the EcoLoop prospect selection methodology and review of applications for Board consideration.
 - The Committee vetted and recommended the adoption of the EcoLoop Prospect Selection Methodology used to screen the three applicant businesses.
 - In addition to recommending Florida Express Environmental to the Board as the first occupant of the EcoLoop, the Committee also recommended a review of the Board's waste policies as they may be inadvertently inhibiting companies from being tenants at the EcoLoop. The Environmental Protection Advisory Committee had similar concerns as EDAC.
- Oversight of (SMAACA Grant) agriculture grants supporting small farms.
- Oversight of Community Redevelopment Funds for the Gainesville Metropolitan Area - The Committee continued to oversee two Community Redevelopment Fund projects: the Airport Gateway Phase I Analysis and EcoLoop Finalization of Marketing Materials.
 - Airport Gateway Objective – Promote a sense of place through a unified vision of 21st Century light industrial and commercial property opportunities in the Airport-Waldo Road and 39th Avenue area (Airport Gateway). This will be achieved via three phases. The first phase will be a City-County jointly funded property analysis and a follow-up market and real estate study of the project area's industrial and commercial property. This analysis will also make recommendations suitable to guide A phase 2 master planning effort. Phase 1 will also provide recommendations about governance, incentives, and public-private collaboration options to promote light industrial and commercial property opportunities.
 - Phase 2: Master Plan - The second phase will be a master planning effort. US Economic Development Administration (EDA) matching funding will be sought in advance.
 - Phase 3: Construction - The third phase would also seek EDA funding to construct facilities and infrastructure to support the master plan.
 - EcoLoop Finalization of Marketing Materials - This is the final step to develop a complete marketing package to promote the EcoLoop. Frankel is providing the services to the County. The staff's next steps will be to solicit a real estate broker with the credentials and expertise to promote the EcoLoop at a national level and bring prospects to the park. Approximately 1/3 of the available property is under negotiation right now. There is a chance that all available acreage will be under an agreement in the next two-four years. Once the first lease is signed, the EcoLoop will have exceeded its annual property absorption rate under the ten-year business proforma.

Goals:

- Further explore regional water and wastewater service for communities to support economic development and environmental goals.
- Make recommendations to promote entrepreneurship in the County
- Continue to engage with all municipal governments to hear their thoughts on economic development
- Monitor and provide recommendations for Alachua County's investment in the Sports Event Center at Celebration Pointe
- Encourage initiatives to advance reliable and affordable internet infrastructure in Alachua County.
- Support the development of municipalities' bike/pedestrian plans and ecotourism for integration into a County-wide plan (Trail Towns)
- Monitor and provide input related to CRA projects for East Gainesville – particularly Waldo and 8th Avenue redevelopment proposals.
- Monitor and support the Airport Gateway project in 2023 as the analysis progresses.
- Promote the reuse/circular economy potential in Alachua County (added by BoCC in 2021) - This item will include a review of the business selection criteria
- Monitor and provide recommendations for the development of the business at the Alachua County EcoLoop