

Alachua County Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Accomplishments Report FY2022-23/ Annual Workplan 2023-2024

Date: November 14, 2023

Board/Committee Name: Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)

Chair 2022/2023: Elliott Welker

Board Liaison: Sean McLendon

Brief History of Committee: The reconstitution of the Economic Development Advisory Committee was approved by the County Commission 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.

Mission Statement: The responsibility of the Economic Development Advisory Committee shall be to develop and provide policy recommendations to the County Commission related to the promotion of sustainable economic development activities within Alachua County.

Note from Chair:

The Economic Development Committee was pleased with its outreach efforts to the municipalities and progress on its work plan. The County is starting to see benefits from large and small economic development capital commitments of the Board. The Committee looks forward to beginning 2024 with new members and challenges.

Major Accomplishments in FY2022-23:

- 2023 Small Municipality and Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement. Continuing their outreach work from 2022, the Committee visited three stakeholders to better understand their interests and preferences for economic development. The Committee will bring the Board summary recommendations on engaging with the small municipalities as they meet with them.
 - June - Gainesville Regional Airport & Airport Authority Meeting
 - August - City of Waldo
 - September - City of Newberry
 - October - UF Innovate Sid Martin

Findings from 2022-2023

- Per the Airport Gateway project work, the Gainesville Airport is interested in getting more shovel-ready sites online for development that can drive demand for airport services. The long-range goal should be promoting good-paying jobs in these development opportunities that employ more than just people with doctorates. The other big economic issue for working folks is affordable childcare. The City and County could create an entity that exclusively focuses on creating high-quality development for the study area and looking for funding sources to support it.
- The Committee recommends that the Board engage with municipalities that want to develop shared service 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 the champion of a regional waste-water model and presented its plans to the Committee.
 - Hawthorne would like to revisit the distribution of sales tax revenue as they do not see an equivalent benefit from their overall contribution per the current inter-city formula.
 - Waldo has emphasized several priority areas around increasing water pressure on Hwy 301, blueways & greenways infrastructure support, and encouraging mid-price housing developments. Related to blue ways & greenways, the Committee recommends the following specific actions as of 2023: investigate ways of partnering to support the economic development priorities between Waldo and Melrose and Waldo and Starke.
 - The City of Newberry would like to build upon its productive working relationship with staff for agricultural-related economic development priorities as well as working to preserve the surrounding green between Newberry and Jonesville. The FDOT One-Way Pairs Road improvement will enhance the City's business district.
 - UF Innovate - To successfully recruit businesses, our K-12 system needs to be excellent. The community needs to let businesses know that they are open to opportunity. That means that the airport needs better connectivity and that prospects hear a consistent, supportive voice from local governments.
 - General comments from all groups – Build the talent pipeline and work to keep them here. Find more incentives for businesses. Build on regionalism. Make job creation a priority. Prioritize broadband deployment and mitigate delays in action by the private sector. Traffic management and utility rates are a drag on economic development.
- Sports Events Complex Major Project Milestone - Facility ribbon cutting and commencement of services.
 - Oversight of the EcoLoop prospect selection methodology and review of applications for Board consideration.
 - The Committee is standing by to vet additional project applications and recommend to the Board on EcoLoop prospects.
 - Oversight of (SMAACA Grant) agriculture grants supporting small farms.
 - The Committee has provided staff feedback on improvements to the program for the 2024 funding cycle.
 - Oversight of Community Redevelopment Funds for the Gainesville Metropolitan Area - The Committee continued to oversee the Airport Gateway Phase I Analysis.
 - 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 (USEDA) matching funding will be sought in advance.

- Phase 3: Construction - The third phase would seek USED A funding to construct facilities and infrastructure supporting the master plan.

EDAC Goals & Objectives for FY2023-24:

In addition to the **Standing Goals** of the Committee, EDAC is interested in reporting back to the Board on its **Small Municipality & Stakeholder Engagement** meetings. County Commissioners are invited to attend these meetings with them. EDAC is also interested in growing a **regionalist perspective**. Alachua County is the epicenter of many diverse communities and local governments. Thinking holistically about what these partners contribute to the quality of life and economic priorities will make us all more prosperous. These ideas will be further explored and articulated to the Board in 2024.

- Support Small Municipality & Stakeholder Economic Development
 - Recommend how the County can promote economic development in the small municipalities. The Committee has an ordered list of meetings. However, if cities are unwilling to participate in a discussion, staff will move on to the next city. Some conversations may come out of order depending upon the availability of the towns.

2024 Tentative Municipal & Stakeholder Meetings

| Location | Topics |
|---|--|
| Archer | Shovel Ready Industrial Lands, P3 Utility Scale Solar PV |
| Lacrosse | General Discussion, Broadband Follow-up w James Woodard |
| Hawthorne | General Discussion, Surtax, Gas Tax Formula, |
| Micanopy | General Discussion, Surtax |
| High Springs | CRA-Downtown Redevelopment, Residential Development |
| Santa Fe College -Charles R. Perry Construction Institute | Construction and Technical Program, Green Jobs Pipeline |

- Grow a Perspective of Regionalism
 - Further explore regional water and wastewater service for communities to support economic development and environmental goals.
 - Support inter-city dialog around blueways and greenways.
 - 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 on 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

Standing Goals:

- Continue to encourage responsible east county development and provide recommendations to BoCC.
- Support initiatives to diversify the local economy in targeted industries.
- Provide recommendations to the BoCC regarding economic development activities and projects at the EcoLoop and East County development as needed.
- Provide recommendations, as necessary, to the BoCC related to future business development, grant funding, zoning, and incentives zones.
- The Committee will take a proactive role in the community in evaluating and advancing the County's competitiveness.
- Collaborate with state economic development agencies in promoting economic development in Alachua County.
- Extend an invitation to smaller municipalities to participate in EDAC monthly meetings.
- Invite economic development stakeholders to attend one EDAC meeting to discuss alignment and economic development priorities in the community.
- Monitor, support as appropriate, engage and provide input regarding the Greater Gainesville Chamber's strategic plan and implementation.
- Assist the County Economic Development Manager in accomplishing the goals and objectives of EDAC work plan.

Last modified October 30, 2023