



DATE: June 19, 2014
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Commission
VIA: Russ Blackburn, City Manager
FROM: Erik A. Bredfeldt, Economic Development and Innovation Director
SUBJECT: Status Report – Economic Development and Innovation Department

At the May 15th City Commission meeting, it was requested that a City Commission item be placed on a future agenda to review the direction and activities of the Economic Development Director.

The Director has been on the job full-time since mid-October, 2013. The budget for the Department is approximately \$195,000 annually and the Director receives part-time administrative support from the City Manager’s office.

The Director’s focus is on job creation and development of the City’s tax base Citywide and activities are generally governed by the City Commission’s Strategic Plan, the ED Strategic Action Plan and more concretely the following six (6) activities:

- 1) Development and Redevelopment Facilitator (Citywide);
- 2) Collaboration with Community Economic Development Partners on various policy matters;
- 3) Marketing of Airport Industrial Park and projects on Airport lands;
- 4) Facilitation of the Innovation Economy (Citywide);
- 5) Role as Development Ombudsman; and
- 6) Staff to the City’s Economic Development University Community Committee (EDUCC) and Gainesville Alachua County Regional Airport Authority (GACRAA).

Development and Redevelopment Facilitator

In this role, the Director attends General Government First Step and GRU Project meetings in order to become aware of projects and to track progress through development review. When necessary, attempts are made to facilitate issues by working with staff and applicants (or applicant’s agents) on resolution of technical planning/utility issues and the Director serves as an owner in the outcome of the process. In addition to development review facilitation, the Director works with individuals/entities from inside and outside of the community that are interested in conducting business within the City.

Routinely this involves assisting them in navigating the regulatory process, in terms of business licensing and in some instances securing referrals for other types of assistance (financial, educational, incentives, etc.) from community economic development partners.

Collaboration with Community Economic Development Partners

This component of the Department's activities has an internal and external component.

Internally, the City Manager has an Economic Development Team consisting of the CRA Manager, Planning and Development Services Director and Economic Development and Innovation Director that meets bi-weekly to coordinate approaches to various facets of economic development within the community. The Director has a similar informal relationship with GRU staff and the City Attorney's Office.

Externally, the Director works with various partners inclusive of the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce/CEO, University of Florida Development Corporation, UF Health, Santa Fe College, Gainesville Regional Airport and private industry to bring various policy matters to fruition. Currently those policy matters include:

- Working with the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce on implementing Small Business Growth recommendations, as well as various Workforce Development efforts (SmartQuest, Hiring Heroes and an Employer Referral List for the Gainesville Empowerment Center);
- Working with Council for Economic Outreach (CEO) on various QTI incentives for City Commission consideration and with Regional Partners on regionally oriented Economic Development priorities;
- Working with the various partners on Innovation Square and building the Innovation Economy citywide;
- Working with the Airport on developing Airport lands and Airport Industrial Park;
- Working with Santa Fe College on various aspects of the Gainesville Technology Entrepreneurship Center; and
- Working with Private Industry on various projects across the board at all points on the continuum.

Gainesville Regional Airport and Airport Industrial Park

The Director sits as an ex-officio member of the Gainesville Alachua County Regional Airport Authority (GACRAA) and attends monthly GACRAA meetings. In addition, the Director works on developing the City's Airport Industrial Park and with the Airport staff on development of opportunities on Airport lands. Currently, the Director is working on several opportunities with private industry and one overall large scale matter which is remediation of a pre-existing environmental condition at the Gainesville Job Corps facility to ensure future development opportunities.

Facilitation of Innovation Economy

The Director is working on all aspects of a primary competitive advantage for the area and that is the presence of an abundance of intellectual and related human capital and the ability to gain a return for the community on its further development. This involves projects located Citywide and can run the gamut from development review/regulatory process facilitation to assistance on infrastructure concerns to the provision of incentives. Importantly, and in sync with this effort, the Director has worked internally on efforts at accentuating the innovative impulses of City employees through the Innovation Academy Team. The Team recently sponsored the first City Hackathon resulting in various citizen created software applications employing City data to make City processes more efficient and additionally, provided recommendations to the City Manager regarding efforts at facilitating an innovative problem-solving workforce.

Ombudsman

In addition to working on project level development review/regulatory process facilitation, the Director acts as development ombudsman and is tasked with identifying systematic hindrances within the City's policies, procedures and practices and recommends improvements to the City Manager, General Manager of Utilities and City Attorney. Over the past several months, a focus has been on improving the development review process in the context of Chamber of Commerce Small Business Growth Recommendations however other improvement opportunities will be communicated to the aforementioned Charter Officers on an annual basis.

Staffing

The Director is tasked with staffing the Commission Economic Development University Community Committee (EDUCC) and reviewing Commission referrals and assigned Strategic Initiatives in this forum. Current Strategic Initiatives assigned to the Committee that have the Director as Champion are related to developing the Innovation Economy; workforce/talent development and benchmarking. As mentioned, the Director sits as an ex-officio member of GACRAA and works with Gainesville Regional Airport staff on various economic development efforts.

Summary

In summary, after several months on the job, the substance of this memo represents the Director's portfolio of Economic Development activities. At this time, they seem to be consistent with the position's job description, as well as the direction of the Commission as captured in Commission Strategic Initiatives and controlling policy documents.

Importantly, because there is a broad swath of activities that represent the duties of the Director, it is important to strike the right balance in carrying them out. The Director has to remain pretty light on his feet and plug in and collaborate where necessary rather than getting too bogged down in particular assignments in order to remain successful.

In addition, the Director position is nuanced in that in order to be successful there has to be a consistent team problems solving and problem anticipating approach with regard to both staff (across Charters) and with the business/development (and citizens) community. This too is crucial to the success of the position at overall economic development efforts.

Finally, the Director does have benchmarks to meet that have been developed and aligned between the existing Strategic Action Plan for Economic Development and the position's management plan. Future refinement of these benchmarks is anticipated based upon review by the EDUCC and in consultation with community economic development partners.

I appreciate the opportunity to communicate the status of the Director position and the Department and would be happy to answer any questions.