

ECONOMIC ELEMENT

Goals, Objectives and Policies

GOAL 1

ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OF ALL CITIZENS OF ALACHUA COUNTY AND EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY THE COUNTY'S TAX BASE.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Provide a comprehensive economic development program Alachua County.

Policy 1.1.1 Alachua County shall coordinate its economic development activities with its municipalities and the appropriate federal, state, regional and local agencies including the University of Florida, Santa Fe Community College, the School Board of Alachua County and economic development organizations.

Policy 1.1.2 Alachua County shall pursue an integrated approach to economic development that includes citizen input and addresses the needs of the County. The County shall support and coordinate the activities of the County's Economic Development Advisory Committee in the development and implementation of a strategic plan for county-wide economic development.

Policy 1.1.3 Alachua County shall encourage the allocation of resources for the retention, expansion and development of local business and the recruitment of businesses and industries. Priority shall be given to the retention, expansion and development of local businesses.

Policy 1.1.4 Alachua County may elect to implement all or part of this element through a contractual agreement with another agency or agencies engaged in the business of economic development. Specific responsibilities shall be set forth in such an agreement to ensure compliance with this plan.

Policy 1.1.5 The Alachua County department or the agency contracted to implement this plan shall develop an annual program to retain, expand and develop local businesses. This program shall also explore opportunities for attracting appropriate businesses and industries. This program shall encourage the availability of economic opportunities for all segments of the community, monitor and reduce the extent of underemployment in the community, and recruit businesses and industries that will utilize and train the local labor force as their employees.

This program shall:

- a. Provide current informational material to prospective businesses and industries that includes but is not limited to:
 1. An inventory of available commercial and industrial land and vacant buildings.
 2. Analysis of labor force characteristics and needs.
 3. Availability and cost of electricity, water, sewer, and natural gas.

4. Analysis of community characteristics (e.g., quality of public schools and cultural amenities).
 5. Provide site location and development review assistance.
- b. Advise the Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners on economic development issues that affect comprehensive planning and land development regulation activities.
 - c. Participate in the review of grant proposals relating to economic development.
 - d. Provide a review of barriers to employment and economic prosperity (e.g., transportation, child-care, education, employability and health-care) and ways to overcome those barriers.

- Policy 1.1.6 Industries which create a market for local agricultural products shall be encouraged to locate or expand existing local business in Alachua County.
- Policy 1.1.7 Alachua County shall establish a matrix for ranking future economic development proposals/initiatives and requests for funding from economic development organizations based on their contributions to sustainable economic development.
- Policy 1.1.8 Priority should be given to businesses and industries that would contribute to the flow of income into the local economy through the sale of goods and services outside of the County, or that would produce goods and services that would otherwise be imported into the County and such firms should be encouraged to locate or expand existing local business in Alachua County.
- Policy 1.1.9 Alachua County recognizes Research and Technology Parks as valuable economic assets to the community. Development of such parks and other similar ventures through expansion, development and recruitment of appropriate businesses and industries shall be given high priority.
- Policy 1.1.10 Alachua County shall support the development and expansion of small and minority businesses.
- Policy 1.1.11 Further, to support local and minority business efforts, Alachua County's purchasing policies shall provide the maximum opportunity for increased participation by local, small and minority business.
- Policy 1.1.12 Alachua County shall promote methods of financing infrastructure and public services that will minimize costs to current and future taxpayers.
- Policy 1.1.13 Alachua County shall initiate efforts and support the efforts of other agencies to obtain grant monies (e.g., Community Development Block Grants) and other funds designed to assist local economic development projects.

Policy 1.1.14 The County shall conduct a cost/benefit assessment of any financial incentives proposed to be provided by the County to support the retention, expansion or development of local business or to attract new business. Such an assessment shall factor in the financial costs as well as the social equity and environmental impacts of proposed incentives.

Policy 1.1.15 A comprehensive annual "State of Alachua County's Economy" report shall be presented to the Board of County Commissioners. This document shall review the economic indicators of the local economy and the impact of economic development efforts on the goals and objectives outlined in this plan. This report shall be developed by the County Manager or his designee in cooperation with any agency which may be contracted to implement this element. This report shall include at a minimum:

- a. A review of the annual economic development program for Alachua County as it relates to the objectives and policies set forth in this Economic Element.
- b. Recommendations concerning identified infrastructure needs to support economic development efforts; this information shall be considered as part of the annual update of the Capital Improvement Program.
- c. A report of existing business expansions and new business starts within the County.
- d. A report on businesses attracted to the County through the recruitment efforts of Alachua County or the agency.
- e. A report on vocational training opportunities, including identification of needed job skills reported by businesses during the recruitment or expansion process.
- f. The number of new jobs created.
- g. A report on the costs and benefits to the County, as well as the effectiveness, of any incentives provided by the County to support the retention or expansion of existing businesses or to develop or attract new business.
- h. A report on the effectiveness of the economic development program in improving the economic well being of the unemployed poor, including those not covered by general unemployment statistics.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Coordinate educational, vocational, and technical training opportunities with the needs of new and existing employers.

Policy 1.2.1 Alachua County shall assist in the coordination of educational, professional, technical, and vocational training of the labor force with the needs of businesses and industries. This assistance shall include, but not be limited to, disseminating information about the vocational and other programs available through Santa Fe Community College and the School Board of Alachua County to prospective businesses and industries and disseminating statistical data on

population and employment relating to labor markets for use by potential employers and vocational programs.

Policy 1.2.2 Alachua County shall foster collaboration among the educational institutions, the employees and employers to ensure that the skills of the County's labor force closely match the demand for labor.

Policy 1.2.3 Alachua County shall, as referenced in the County's Strategic Plan for Sustainable Economic Development, collaborate with local educational institutions to expand vocational skills training and provide entrepreneurial opportunities for students.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

The County shall evaluate and ensure that the types of new businesses and industries developing and locating in Alachua County (and the expansion of existing businesses and industries) will contribute to maintaining a clean environment (air, water, soil) and be located in areas with suitable infrastructure and compatible land uses. Each employer shall be a good neighbor by preventing adverse impacts on the environment with emphasis given to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.3.1 Alachua County shall adopt objective standards for timely decisions on applications for development approval for business and industrial uses that correspond to Alachua County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinances. Such standards and procedures shall be reviewed on an annual basis to determine their effectiveness in facilitating the permitting process and protecting the environment. The County shall develop and maintain, as a mechanism for expediting the development review process, an inventory of suitable potential business locations which would include information on the infrastructure available and the environmental conditions of the site.

Policy 1.3.2 Alachua County shall encourage the development and expansion of business and industry in appropriate locations that make efficient use of existing public services and infrastructure.

Policy 1.3.3 Industries or businesses generating hazardous wastes shall follow procedures and guidelines for the use, storage, and disposal of such materials as set forth by ordinance and in accordance with the Solid Waste Element and Objective 5.7 of the Conservation and Open Space Element of this plan.

Policy 1.3.4 Alachua County shall encourage and allow flexibility in the development of "home-based businesses" consistent with public health and safety concerns. Home-based businesses are defined as a business or commercial activity conducted on a residential property which is accessory to the residential use of that property.

Policy 1.3.5 Alachua County shall develop a system for registering all businesses operating in the County.

OBJECTIVE 1.4

Provide economic opportunities for all segments of Alachua County. Particular emphasis shall be given to activities which increase economic opportunities for persons at or near the poverty level and to activities which eliminate blighted commercial and industrial uses. Alachua County shall utilize the following indicators:

- a. per capita incomes for Alachua County.
- b. Percentage of persons living at or below the poverty level.
- c. unemployment rates.

- Policy 1.4.1 Businesses and industries that meet the demands of the existing labor force by providing employment opportunities and equitable salaries shall be given a high priority in recruitment efforts and in provision of support for expansion of existing local business.
- Policy 1.4.2 Businesses and industries that are willing to participate in the training of skilled and unskilled workers through the local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and/or other similar programs, shall be given a high priority in recruitment efforts and strongly encouraged to locate in Alachua County, and in provision of support for expansion of existing business.
- Policy 1.4.3 Alachua County shall support and encourage the development of public/private partnerships which assist small and minority businesses that may otherwise not have access to adequate start up capital.
- Policy 1.4.4 The County shall create incentives for the development or redevelopment of specific economically distressed areas by sharing or incurring the cost of extending essential infrastructure to those areas.
- Policy 1.4.5 Alachua County shall support Welfare Transition employment/training projects in the County.
- Policy 1.4.6 Alachua County shall collaborate with local businesses and organizations, including builders, developers, contractors and labor unions, to create a program that enhances apprenticeship opportunities for vocational trades.
- Policy 1.4.7 Alachua County shall support the development of micro-enterprises and small businesses.
- Policy 1.4.8 Alachua County shall support existing businesses and encourage new business development in economically distressed areas of the County.
- Policy 1.4.9 In order to redevelop the County’s economically distressed areas, Alachua County shall pursue appropriate grant funds to acquire for re-development at least one blighted commercial or industrial property per year.
- Policy 1.4.10 Alachua County shall strive to compensate its employees with a combination of wages and benefits needed to cover the costs of life’s basics, including shelter, food, clothing, utilities, transportation, child care and health care and is based on economic conditions of North Central Florida.

OBJECTIVE 1.5

Diversify the County’s economy.

- Policy 1.5.1 Alachua County shall expand its economic base by creating an environment which encourages entrepreneurship.

- Policy 1.5.2 Alachua County shall promote economic development efforts that build on and complement existing commercial, industrial and agricultural assets in the local economic system.
- Policy 1.5.3 Alachua County shall implement the goals of the Alachua County Visitors and Convention Bureau to promote North Central Florida as a tourism destination through events, advertising and accessible recreation sites. The County shall promote tourism, including eco-tourism, and tourism-related businesses which complement the County's environmental, social and economic quality.
- Policy 1.5.4 Alachua County shall encourage the development and expansion of e-commerce.