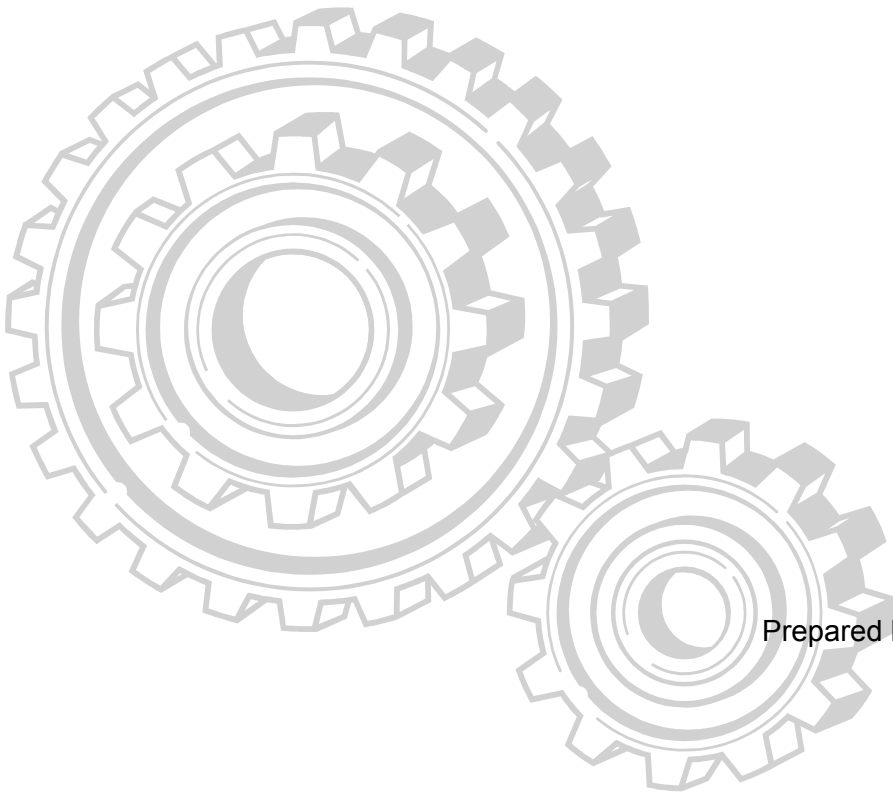


CITY OF LEESBURG STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Prepared by the Leesburg Economic Development Office



LEESBURG
The Lakefront City

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Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.

Charles Darwin

What is Economic Development?

The answer to this question varies between communities, residents and businesses. If you ask some residents they will simply say that economic development means jobs for themselves and the community. Business and property owners might say that it is profits and return on investment. For most communities, economic development has come to mean an increased quality of living for all persons living in a community. All too frequently, economic development is seen as the same as population growth. It is important to note, however, that economic vitality is not dependent on population growth and can be achieved with little to no increase in a community's population.

The goal of economic development is to adopt a consistent set of policies that will increase the standard of living for residents in the City of Leesburg. This is accomplished through the adoption of policies and programs that enhance the competitive position of all businesses in the City and attract other complementary businesses to locate in the City of Leesburg and Lake County.

Why Pursue Economic Development?

- ◆ Stimulate Business Growth.
- ◆ Expand Job Opportunities.
- ◆ Enhance the Fiscal Base.
- ◆ Strengthen the Area Economy.
- ◆ Raise Standard of Living for Residents.
- ◆ Increase Competitiveness of Local Businesses.

Mission Statement

The City of Leesburg's economic development mission is to ensure the quality of life now and in the future through the establishment of partnerships with the business community, educational providers and governmental entities resulting in increased economic activity for sustaining our local economy.

Plan Overview

The City of Leesburg Strategic Economic Development Plan establishes a course of action designed to facilitate a collaborative partnership between the private sector and the City. At times, this partnership calls upon the City to actively invest resources in projects that assist businesses. At other times, the City's role is simply to "get out of the way" of business by streamlining regulations.

There are four major sections to the Plan. Chapter two of the Plan provides a series of goals, policies and objectives for the current and future economic development efforts of the City. Chapter three of the Plan provides a summary of labor and development conditions within the City and Lake County. Chapter four looks at the economic development opportunities that exist based on the trends and conditions. Chapter five provides a listing of services and incentives that are available for business retention, expansion and recruitment.

Executive Summary

The Leesburg and Lake County area has over the last decade benefited from a strong local and regional economy. The City and the County have witnessed strong business development and expansion; improved wages; and enhanced tax revenues.

Beyond the strong national and regional economies, which have boosted local development, there are many local factors that are currently affecting the development climate now and for the future.

Positive Findings:

- The economies of Lake County and the City of Leesburg are well diversified among the various business sectors.
- Between 1996 and 2006, 17,169 jobs are projected to be created in Sumter and Lake counties.
- Housing costs are approximately \$20,000 less than in Orlando.
- The healthcare industry over the next decade will provide the greatest increase in new jobs.
- The 1998 unemployment rate for Lake County was 3.8 percent, which is 1.5 percent below the State average.

- Ninety-six percent of all Lake County workers work for businesses with less than 50 employees.
- Sixty-eight percent of City residents work in the City.
- The eleven largest private employers in Lake County only represent 15% of the employed workforce.
- The City is well positioned to provide utilities to all businesses seeking to expand or locate in the City or in the service area.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- The availability of affordable, high quality housing for working families will be a major concern over the next decade, based on the projected employment growth.
- Unless high school graduates improve on the level of college education attainment, area businesses in the next decade will have to look to surrounding counties for managerial and technical employees.
- Currently, Lake County workers are earning less than workers in Seminole and Orange Counties. However, within 10 years Lake County workers should earn more than Orange County.
- Some older commercial strip centers have become vacant and have declined in appearance.
- Lake County has a high seasonal unemployment rate compared to Metro Orlando and the State of Florida.
- Currently, there is a lack of available industrial buildings in Leesburg for the five to ten thousand square foot user.

Proposed Actions

Chapter five of this Plan specifically identifies objectives and policies to be implemented by the City in order to better facilitate economic development in the City. The following list of objectives only considers the major items to be addressed. The action plan, in Chapter five, details how the City will implement the following objectives:

- The City shall maintain low unemployment by targeting specific industries that will ensure a strong local economy.

- The City staff will work diligently to enhance the City's reputation regarding its support of economic development.
- The City shall continue to provide incentives which encourage economic development and that are competitive with regional jurisdictions.
- The City shall pursue additional public and private incentives necessary to stimulate economic development.
- By 2000, the City will have procedures for ensuring cooperation from municipalities, state and federal agencies for economic development projects in the City and in the economic region.
- By 2001, the City shall formally establish tourism as a component of its economic development marketing.
- By 2004, the City will work with local educational providers to ensure the availability of additional four-year educational programs in the County.
- By 2006, the City staff shall seek to increase manufacturing jobs in the City by 600, in an effort to improve the quality of available jobs.

Recommended Policies

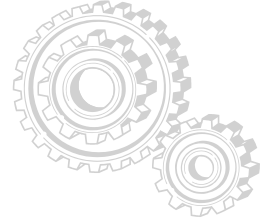
The only economic development policy that the City has currently adopted is the impact fee financing ordinance. Currently, the City provides impact fee financing for projects with impact fees over \$20,000. This would require a manufacturing building of approximately 45,000 square feet to qualify for the program. A revision of this policy to allow financing of impact fees starting at \$5,000 for industrial uses is recommended. This change will more appropriately reflect the type of businesses that need this incentive program.

Since the City approved the Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program by Referendum in 1996, it is recommended that the City Commission adopt an ordinance that establishes program requirements that identifies local requirements that differ from minimum State law requirements. This would provide City staff with the ability to market this incentive more effectively to businesses seeking to locate in Leesburg.

Finally, it is recommended that the City Commission adopt an incentive policy as defined in Appendix 1 that provides incentive funding for businesses expanding or locating in the City. While funds will not be set aside for this fiscal year, the policy will provide a framework for businesses and the City staff, when funding is appropriate.

Conclusion

This Strategic Economic Development Plan represents only the beginning of the City's economic development effort. City staff will work to implement the policies and objectives established in the Plan. In addition, an economic development element to the City's Comprehensive Plan will be prepared for adoption with the next Comprehensive Plan update, so that economic development planning is properly coordinated with land development planning.



Chapter 2: ACTION PLAN

Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.

Booker Washington

Introduction

The following goal and objectives are statements of aims and desired future conditions relating to the economic development of the City of Leesburg. The policies identify the direction and actions which the City will pursue to achieve the goals and objectives. The goals, objectives, and policies are presented topically, not by priority. Policies with the “◆” symbol are specifically implemented or coordinated by the Leesburg Economic Development Office.

Goal

It is the goal of the City of Leesburg to have balanced and orderly economic growth.

Objective 1: Low Unemployment Rate

The City shall maintain an average unemployment rate that is within two percentage points of the State of Florida’s average annual unemployment rate.

Policy 1.1: The City shall focus its industrial expansion efforts on attracting and expanding clean, small-scale light manufacturing and assembly industries. ◆

Policy 1.2: The City shall utilize existing industries as a magnet to attract new industries, including support businesses for industries located in the City of Leesburg and surrounding cities. ◆

Policy 1.3: The City shall encourage the expansion of existing manufacturing industries and attraction of new manufacturing industries that are listed in the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes 20 through 39, or that are identified by the City as target industries, by offering the following economic development incentives and assistance:

- Lake County Jobs Growth Investment Fund;
- Lake County Traffic Impact Fee Deferral Program;
- Expedited permitting process;

- Financing of water and sewer impact fees;
- Maintaining infrastructure with sufficient capacity (roads, water, sewer);
- Providing Industrial Revenue Bonds through the Lake County Industrial Development Authority;
- Providing job training through Lake-Sumter Community College, One Stop Career Center and the Lake Technical Center
- Assisting with Federal or State grant applications (such as Community Development Block Grants);
- Participating in the State Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program. ♦

Policy 1.4: The City shall promote the growth of industries listed in SIC code 20 through 39 and industries targeted by the City which provide jobs that pay higher than average wages. ♦

Policy 1.5: The City shall, on a bi-annual basis, survey targeted businesses having more than ten employees. The purpose of the survey is to identify opportunities and ~~problems~~ associated with businesses, to identify businesses willing to expand and to identify businesses considering relocation. ♦

Policy 1.6: The City, as part of setting its list of target industries, shall target different employment sectors whose seasons supplement the seasons of the citrus agricultural and packing industry and tourism industry. ♦

Policy 1.7: The Economic Development Manager for the City of Leesburg shall maintain contact with various businesses on a continuing basis and provide a quarterly report to the City Manager, indicating the number of contacts and the number of possible jobs, as well as results, problems, solutions and other pertinent information. ♦

Policy 1.8: The City shall continue a relationship with the Lake Technical Center and Lake-Sumter Community College for quick response to City of Leesburg employers needing training for existing and prospective employees. ♦

Policy 1.9: As an employer, the City shall employ local residents, use local services and retain local contractors, whenever possible.

Policy 1.10: The City shall create a Commercial/Industrial Data Source Book. This book will consist of planning, zoning, land use, demographic, and other socio-economic information helpful to businesses desiring to relocate. ♦

Policy 1.11: The City shall promote growth in ~~provide adequate infrastructure to~~ areas designated for commercial and industrial development.

Policy 1.12: By 2001, the City shall ~~maintain its~~ evaluate the potential of a utility line extension reimbursement policy for firms which oversize utility lines or install new lines consistent with the City of Leesburg Utilities Master Plan. ♦

Policy 1.13: The City shall maintain its existing process of addressing complaints or concerns by business owners. This involves designating the Assistant City Manager and the Economic Development Manager to act as facilitators. ♦

Policy 1.14: The City, through the Human Resource Department, shall promote the hiring of former welfare recipients by local businesses through the State WAGES Program.

Objective 2: Diversified Economic Growth

By 2006, in order to upgrade the quality of jobs and the average wage and salary scale, manufacturing jobs (SIC code 20 through 39) in the City of Leesburg will increase by 600 to represent at least 15% of the City's average annual total employment.

Policy 2.1: The City shall maintain a current economic base study by updating the study every two years. ♦

Policy 2.2: Based upon the conclusions of each updated economic base study, the City shall adopt appropriate or revise existing economic development policies. ♦

Policy 2.3: The City shall designate sufficient land on its Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map for future commercial/industrial uses and shall provide infrastructure for these lands to facilitate development of industrial parks within the City.

Policy 2.4: The City shall ~~coordinate with~~ assist private industrial park developers to establish industrial parks at in industrial zoned locations within the City. ♦

Policy 2.5: The City, in coordination with the Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce and the Lake County Economic Development Office, shall establish a list of target industries and evaluate this list at least every two years in order to reflect the current economic needs of the county as well as the actual marketing results. The following is the current list of the City's target industries:

- Food Products - SIC Code 20
- Construction Products - SIC Code 024
- Printing and Publishing - SIC Code 27
- Plastics – SIC Code 308
- Fabricated Metal Products - SIC Code 34
- Machinery and Computer Equipment - SIC Code 35
- Electronics – SIC Code 36
- Transportation Equipment & Manufacturing - SIC Code 37
- Laser & Robotic Technology – SIC Code 38

- Simulation/Training – SIC Code 3823
- Fasteners – SIC Code 3965
- Transportation Services - SIC Code 47
- Communications - SIC Code 48
- Mechanical Assembly – SIC Code
- Computer Programming, Data Processing and other Computer Related Services - SIC Code 737
- Health Services - SIC Code 80
- Medical Laboratories – SIC Code 8071
- Testing Laboratories – SIC Code 8734
- Space Technology Research – SIC Code 9661 ♦

Policy 2.6: The City shall focus its recruitment activities on businesses which are within target industries, SIC codes 20 through 39, and which provide year round employment opportunities. ♦

Policy 2.7: The City shall analyze the potential market of the fiber optic cable system and create a marketing strategy to attract high technology jobs. ♦

Policy 2.8: The City shall utilize the City-owned Industrial Park to facilitate development that is not suitable or available on private industrial parks. ♦

Policy 2.9: Upon full development of the City-owned Industrial Park, the City shall analyze the viability of additional City-owned industrial parks. ♦

Policy 2.10: The City shall promote creative land-ownership, construction and financing strategies to promote new commercial and industrial development. ♦

Policy 2.11: The City shall annually review the local economic conditions and determine the appropriate amount of funding to the City of Leesburg Jobs Growth Incentive Program.

Objective 3: Skilled Labor Force

By 2004, the City of Leesburg will have additional educational facilities offering post-secondary education and vocational training.

Policy 3.1: The City shall work with Lake Sumter Community College to expand the four year programs offered by the University of Central Florida at the community college. ♦

Policy 3.2: The City shall inform existing and potential employers of available employment training opportunities through Lake Sumter Community College, One Stop Career Center and the Lake Technical Center. ♦

Policy 3.3: The City shall work with local and regional educational providers to enhance educational opportunities through the use of the fiber optic cable system. ♦

Objective 4: Encourage Economic Development

The City will continue to have policies, regulations and economic development incentives which encourage economic development.

Policy 4.1: The City, through its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations, shall maintain and/or improve the quality of life by providing protection of environmental, cultural and aesthetic features of the City.

Policy 4.2: The City shall review and evaluate the City's land development regulations on a regular basis. Any regulations that might impede economic development will be considered and evaluated for possible revision.

Policy 4.3: The City shall on a regular basis re-evaluate the size and location of its commercial/industrial nodes.

Policy 4.4: By 2000¹, the City shall make its policies, regulations, information and application forms available for the public to access through a City web site on the Internet.

Policy 4.5: The City building division shall provide weekend inspection services at cost, based on employee availability and the commercial/industrial tenant's need.

Policy 4.6: The City shall on a regular basis re-evaluate its economic development incentives by comparing its incentives with incentives offered by other jurisdictions. ♦

Policy 4.7: The City shall ensure that impact fees are reasonable and equitable compared to the impact that new commercial/industrial development will have on the City's water and wastewater systems by reassessing impact fee rates on a regular basis.

Policy 4.8: The City shall continue to offer water and sewer impact fee financing programs which allow the spreading of impact fee payments over several years.

Policy 4.9: The City's Economic Development Office in cooperation with the Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce, shall develop information on businesses that are locating in the City. This information shall be used for marketing activities. ♦

Policy 4.10: The City's Economic Development Office shall provide assistance to relocating companies during the relocation process and afterwards as needed. ♦

Policy 4.11: The City's Economic Development Office shall develop and provide a community information package for new employees relocating to the City of Leesburg. ♦

Policy 4.12: By 2001, the City shall categorize occupational licenses by SIC code. This new categorization of occupational licenses will provide employment information that is currently not available through any other source.

Policy 4.13: The City shall actively market airport industrial land and coordinate its economic development plans with the airport's marketing plans. ♦

Policy 4.14: The City shall support economic development in the downtown through the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency and the adopted redevelopment plan.

Policy 4.14: The Economic Development Manager for the City of Leesburg shall actively implement City regulations that limit industrial uses in commercial shopping centers and in areas of high residential use. ♦

Policy 4.15: The City shall ensure that industrial properties are appropriately evaluated for code enforcement compliance. Through code enforcement, deteriorated structures shall be repaired or demolished.

Policy 4.16: The City continually shall monitor the needs of the business community by working with the Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Committee. ♦

Policy 4.17: The City shall support small business development in the community by working with area small businesses, educational providers and small business centers. City staff shall help small businesses find needed resources. ♦

Policy 4.18: By 2001, the City staff shall analyze the viability of developing a business incubator in the City to support increased development of targeted industries.

Policy 4.19: By 2001, the City shall create a formal expedited permit process for specific economic development projects.

Objective 5: Intergovernmental Coordination

By 2000, the City will have a mechanism in place to ensure cooperation from municipalities, state and federal agencies for economic development.

Policy 5.1: The City shall involve appropriate parties in any economic development project so that all entities are properly represented. ♦

Policy 5.2: The City shall disseminate any new information to those groups that are most responsible for implementing various economic development projects. ♦

Policy 5.3: The City shall ensure an efficient permitting process among all government departments and agencies to facilitate a smooth transition for industries relocating to the City of Leesburg.

Policy 5.4: The City shall maintain an active relationship with Lake County, Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission and Enterprise Florida in order to support regional economic development initiatives. ♦

Objective 6: Tourism Development

By 2001, the City shall formally establish tourism as a component of its economic development marketing.

Policy 6.1: By 2001 the City, in cooperation with the Tourist Development Council, shall continue to market eco-tourism and cultural tourism in relation to the City's environmental amenities and cultural offerings. ♦

Policy 6.2: By 2002 the City, through the Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce and its Tourism Division, in cooperation with local resorts and motels, shall market the City as a vacation/recreation area. ♦

Policy 6.3: By 2001, the City shall publish advertisements cross-selling tourism and economic development. ♦

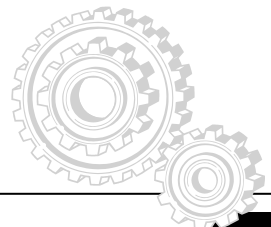
Policy 6.4: The City shall study the possibility of a highway beautification program with emphasis on private participation.

Objective 7: Improved Pro-Economic Development Perception

By 2000, the City will develop an enhanced reputation regarding its support of economic development.

Policy 7.1: The City shall implement economic development plans that reflect community goals and preserve the present quality of life. ♦

Policy 7.2: By May of every year, the City shall develop a specific plan to market the City's economic development potential.



Through research, the City shall identify the most effective and cost efficient way to inform potential employers of the City. ♦

Policy 7.3: The Leesburg Economic Development Office shall be responsible for tracking businesses that contact the City for relocation information and shall provide a quarterly report of the marketing results to the City Manager. ♦

Policy 7.4: By 2000, the City shall adopt the Leesburg Economic Development Plan as an economic development element of the comprehensive plan.

Policy 7.5: On an annual basis, the City shall request in writing that the Lake County Area Association of Realtors provide information pertaining to residential, commercial and industrial property sales data to determine current real estate trends. ♦

Policy 7.6: The City's Economic Development Office shall continue its efforts to maintain and increase the level of public and private funding support for economic development and increase awareness through informational workshops.

Policy 7.7: The City shall annual produce *Success in Leesburg* magazine or a similar product that provides information on the quality of living and pro-business atmosphere in Leesburg. This magazine shall be widely distributed and used in all recruiting efforts. ♦

Chapter 3: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS & TRENDS

*Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea,
never regains its original dimensions.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Introduction

As you review the existing conditions and historical trends of Leesburg's and Lake County's economies, you might ask, "Exactly what does this information mean?" The conditions and trends described in this chapter provide an indication, at a given moment in time, of the extent of our resources, whether that be the number of jobs, the type of jobs, our available work force or personal income. These "snapshots" are the best available information, which allow us to evaluate historical trends and compare Leesburg resources to County, Regional and State patterns. This information has been used to provide some conclusions regarding the relative strength of our economy, as well as how it reacts to and interacts with outside influences.

Economic data indicates that Lake County and the City of Leesburg has a service and retail-based economy largely dependent on construction and other growth-related industries, and is therefore, vulnerable to economic recession and downturns.¹ In addition, Leesburg's economy is linked to the economies of other municipalities; the unincorporated area of Lake and Sumter counties; and the four-county metropolitan area (Lake, Seminole, Orange and Osceola). While each economy of these various markets is unique, they also share various similarities related to the labor force, life style, employment base and other characteristics. This chapter will explore these relations and will attempt to look at the positive and negative characteristics of Leesburg and Lake County.

Labor Force

A fast growing labor force in conjunction with low unemployment rates indicates a strengthening economy. Unemployment in Lake County is currently averaging 2.7 percent (1999) and is about 1.3 percent below the State average.² Chart 3.1 provides a comparative analysis of unemployment rates for Metro Orlando, Lake

¹ Geostat: Lake County Business Patters (1995), University of Virginia: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu>; and Economic Census – City of Leesburg (1992): <http://govinfo.library.orst.edu>.

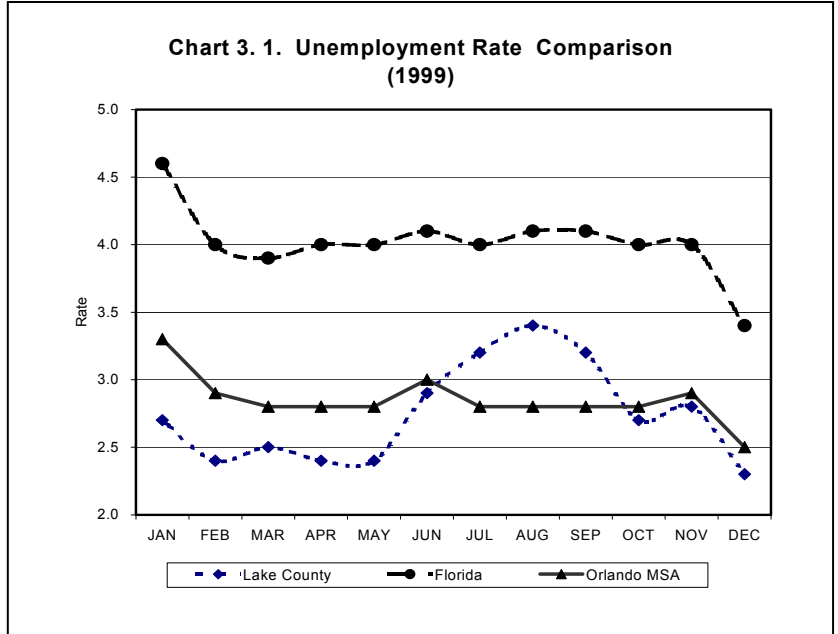
² State of Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program", March 4, 1999.

County and the State of Florida. The chart illustrates that the Lake County unemployment rate is lower than the Metro Orlando area and the State on average, except for the period of June through October.

Seasonal employment can be attributed for this spike in unemployment during this period.

Seasonal employment results in an overall lower median income for the County, resulting in a host of issues for economic development. Every effort should be made to minimize unemployment due to seasonal employment.

The two major factors that currently impact Leesburg and Lake County’s seasonal employment is agriculture and the retail and service industry that support the elderly seasonal population.



While the influx of elderly into the region is continuing to occur, the jobs associated with agriculture will continue to decline due to the reduction in farms and farmland in the County. Since, 1992 farmland has decreased by seven percent, while the value of agriculture products sold has increased by 86 percent to \$167 million.³

The Florida Department of Labor projects for the period of 1996-2006, there will be 17,169 new jobs created in Lake and Sumter counties, which is an annualized increase of 1,722.⁴ Economists from Fishkind & Associates are even more positive on employment increases in Lake County alone in the near future. They estimate that in the year 2000, Lake County will have an employment increase of 3,254 new jobs.⁵

A factor to consider when analyzing Lake County’s economy is the ratio of employed persons to the total population. In 1997, Lake County had 31% of the

³ United States Department of Agriculture, Florida Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture County Profile.

⁴ State of Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, “Florida Industry and Occupational Employment Projections”, August 10, 1999.

⁵ Fishkind & Associates, “Econocast – Lake County, Florida Economic Data, www.fishkind.com/lakecnty.html, 1999.

population working compared to the statewide average of 45%.⁶ A factor in the working population analysis is that 29 percent of Lake County’s population is over the age of 64 compared with 18 percent for the State of Florida.⁷ While the majority of the elderly population is not in the workforce, they do provide a significant economic impact through their purchasing power. Government transfers (i.e. retirement, disability, medical benefits, etc.) in Lake County represent 29% of all personal income.⁸

While the elderly do support the economy by purchasing goods and services, there are mixed opinions as to the long term benefit of recruiting retirees as an industry. According to a recent report by Henry H. Fishkind, President of Fishkind & Associates, retiree spending in Florida reached a whopping \$37 billion in 1997, second only to the \$42 billion spent by tourists.⁹ In addition, Mr. Fishkind estimates that at least 20% of the State’s workforce can be attributed to the retirees.¹⁰ The problem that faces Lake County is the type of jobs that are generated by the needs and demands of the retirement community. The retail, service and a portion of the health service jobs created by the retiree community are not high paying jobs. Therefore, the increasing dependence on retirees as a major, driving force of the local economy raises concerns for the economic future of Leesburg and Lake County.

Another impact on Lake County, as a result of the retirement community, is the limited workforce availability for the future. Currently, the 15-45 age group represents only 32% of the population, while the State average is 41%.¹¹ This makes Lake County less competitive for new manufacturing jobs.

According to the University of Florida between 1990 and 1998, Lake County’s population increase was due solely to migration into the County.¹²

Table 3.2. 1996 Employment by Occupation
(Lake and Sumter Counties)

Occupations	Employment	
	Number	Percentage
Executive/Management	4,459	6.1%
Professional/Paraprofessional	12,785	17.5%
Marketing & Sales	9,469	12.9%
Admin/Clerical	11,032	15.1%
Service	13,493	18.4%
Agriculture	6,611	9.0%
Manuf./Const./Maint.	15,382	21.0%

Source: State of Florida, Department of Labor and Employment Security.

⁶ Fishkind & Associates, “Econocast – Lake County, Florida Economic Data, www.fishkind.com/lakecnty.html, 1999; and Florida Statistical Abstract (1998), University of Florida.

⁷ Florida Statistical Abstract (1997), University of Florida.

⁸ Policom Corporation, “Where the Money is in the Lake County Economy”, July 10, 1999.

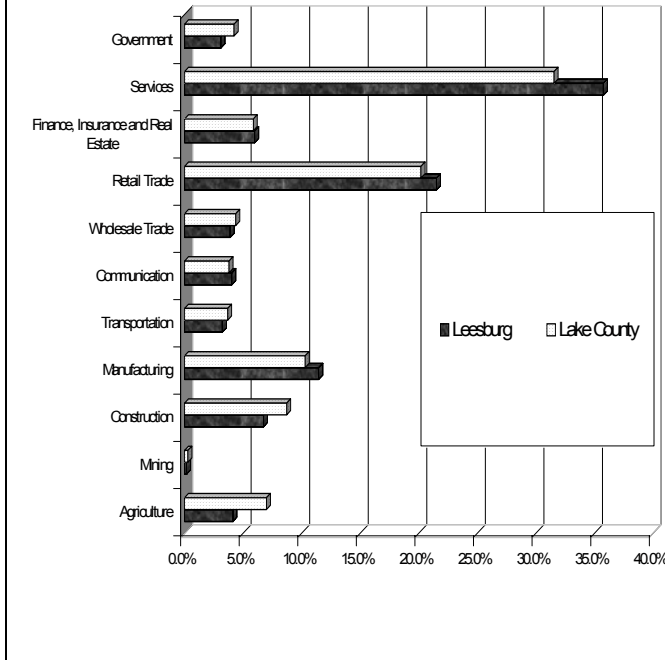
⁹ Johnson, Robert, “Gray is Green: Retirees Have Huge Fiscal Impact”, *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition*, March 4, 1998.

¹⁰ Johnson, Robert, “Gray is Green: Retirees Have Huge Fiscal Impact”, *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition*, March 4, 1998.

¹¹ Florida Statistical Abstract (1997), University of Florida.

¹² Florida Statistical Abstract (1998), University of Florida.

Chart 3.3. Lake County and Leesburg Industries



Source: United States Census Bureau, 1992 Economic Census

This means that there were more deaths than births in the County. This trend may be reversed in the next decade with increased residential development in South Lake County due to western expansion of the Orlando metropolitan area.

Resident Employment: Where do Leesburg Residents Work?

Another indicator of job creation and available labor force can be found by evaluating the change in commuting patterns over time. In 1990, 68% of Leesburg residents that were employed worked in Leesburg and 9% worked in Lake County.¹³ However, the demographics in Lake County are significantly different. Thirty-three percent of Lake County residents worked outside of the County in 1990. The year 2000 census will provide additional data concerning job employment and travel. While

the majority of Leesburg residents work in Leesburg, the greater Lake County economy is tied to the success of the greater Metro Orlando area.

Chart 3.3 clearly indicates that the Leesburg employment sectors mirror that of Lake County. This indicates a strong relationship between employee resources, suppliers and customers for businesses in Lake County and those in the City of Leesburg.

¹³ United States Census Bureau, 1990 Census.

Local Employment

Lake County's employment base is largely comprised of small businesses (see Table 3.4). It is estimated that 96% of all business employees work in establishments with fewer than 50 employees. The eleven largest private employers in Lake County account for approximately 15% of the employees in Lake County (see Table 3.5). The County and the City are not as dependent upon large single private sector employers (i.e. Disney, Universal Studios, Martin Marietta, etc.) typical of the Orlando area. However, since many of Lake County's residents are employed by these enterprises, a dependence on large employers in the Metro Orlando area exists even if they are not located in Lake County.

Wages and Personal Income

The level of average wages is a crucial measure of the economy because wage levels affect consumer spending and savings, which in part determines the overall growth of new jobs. The 1990 Lake County median income of \$23,395 had risen to \$28,327 by 1996 – a 17.4% increase. This is the highest increase in the immediate four county area (see Table 3.6).

**Table 3.4. Lake County
Businesses by Size**

Number of Employees	Number of Businesses
1 to 4	2,423
5 to 9	778
10 to 19	442
20 to 49	284
50 to 99	81
100 to 249	67
250 to 499	6
500 to 1000	6

Source: United States Census Bureau, "1996 County Business Patterns – Lake County",
<http://tier2.census.gov/cgi-win/cbp/cbp.exe>.

Quality of Life Factors

Businesses seeking to relocate or expand their operations into the City of Leesburg will analyze the work force, development costs and the quality of life in the community. In the current tight labor market, the ability to retain top employees during business expansions and relocations is key. Quality of Life factors include availability and cost of housing; medical facilities; recreational opportunities; tax levels; and many more factors. While the analysis of these factors is beyond the scope of this plan, a number of the factors are reviewed.

Table 3.5. Top Private Sector Employers in Lake County

Village of Lake-Sumter, Inc.	1,651
Florida Hospital/Waterman, Inc.	1,500
Leesburg Regional Medical Center	1,300
Winn Dixie Stores	1,190
Publix Supermarkets, Inc.	1,001
Sprint	650
Golden Gem Growers	629
Florida Crushed Stone Company	600
Lester Coggins Trucking, Inc.	500
Dura-Stress, Inc.	450
Cutrale Citrus Juice, Inc.	245

Source: The Economic Development Commission of Mid Florida, Inc.

Education

Local workforce educational level is a major factor when a company is looking to develop new operations in an area. Graduation rates and educational attainment are indicators of workforce quality. Lake County graduation rates have steadily improved over the last five years to a point that they are the highest in the region (see Table 3.7). In addition, drop out rates and the percentage of students continuing their education is competitive with other area counties (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.6. Increase in Median Income (1990-1996)

County	Median Income		Change
	1990	1996	
Lake	\$23,395	\$28,327	17.4%
Sumter	\$23,687	\$24,024	1.4%
Seminole	\$35,637	\$41,428	14.0%
Orange	\$30,252	\$34,558	12.5%

Source: AMS Homefinder Report, www.amshomefinder.com & U. S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census.

While Lake County graduation rates and continuing education levels are good; there is always room for improvement. Currently, math and reading scores barely meet minimum standards. In addition, educational spending per student is well below the statewide average.¹⁴

Table 3.7. Graduation Rate (1997-1998)

Community	Graduation Rate
Lake County	76.98%
Sumter County	74.50%
Seminole County	75.06%
Orange County	70.59%

Source: Florida Department of Education

An area for improvement in collegiate level education is the number of graduate-level college educated workers in Lake County. Currently, only 11.9%

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, School Accountability Report, 1999.

of the population over the age of 18 have graduate-level education compared with 24% for Seminole County.¹⁵ Based on this condition, high technology, professional and managerial positions in the future will, at least partially, be filled by residents of other counties, or the jobs will be moved.

Lake County has a variety of educational opportunities available to high school graduates and for working adults. These facilities include: Lake Technical Center, Lake Sumter Community College, Beacon College and the University of Central Florida. There are many more college and university programs in the Metro Orlando area that offer weekend and evening courses.

Table 3.8. Educational Attainment (1995-1996)

Community	Drop Out Rate	Continuing Education	Continuing Education & Working
Leesburg	N/A	50%	27%
Lake County	6.32%	45%	27%
Sumter County	10.19%	41%	22%
Seminole County	2.77%	61%	34%
Orange County	3.70%	45%	28%

Source: Florida Department of Education

Housing

The City of Leesburg has a variety of existing housing stock (7,326 housing units) that is diverse and very affordable. The median home value in Leesburg is \$54,600, which is about \$20,000 less than in the City of Orlando. Rental property is also affordable with an average rental rate of \$358.¹⁶ Currently, the majority of housing construction permits are based on renovation of existing construction, with limited new housing being developed in the City beyond senior-based housing. As demand continues to grow for family oriented homeownership and rental property, the City must continue to analyze the availability of land for new housing development.

Construction Activity

The mix of residential, commercial and industrial development as measured through building permit applications, is important to a stable community tax base. The City’s ability to provide services is based on the tax base. It is important that a balance exist between the taxes paid by residential property owners and commercial and industrial property owners. A strong tax base is usually supported primarily through commercial and industrial property improvements.

¹⁵ Florida Department of Education. FETPIP Report.

¹⁶ AMS Homefinder Community Profile, www.amshomefinder.com.

Table 3.9 displays building permit activity for the City of Leesburg during the period of 1996 to 1998. While the number of permits issued per year has fluctuated, values of the construction have increased for both residential and commercial/industrial improvements. With the construction industry being a major component of the local economy, the building permit history appears to support continued viability of this local industry.

Land Analysis

The last major land use analysis for the City was conducted in 1988 as part of the comprehensive planning process. At that time, there were 575 acres of commercial property (8%) and 215 acres of industrial property (3%). The total acreage of the City in 1988 was 7,485 acres. During this planning process, future land use designations were modified, resulting in 749 acres of commercial property and 357 acres of industrial property.

Since this time, there have been many annexations to the City, increasing residential land use by 1,393.2 acres, commercial land use by 147.14 acres, industrial land use by

Year	Commercial		Housing	
	Number	Value	Number	Value
1996	149	\$ 22,047,170	253	\$4,940,239
1997	143	\$ 27,424,289	234	\$6,127,635
1998	147	\$ 58,976,774	221	\$7,339,624

Source: City of Leesburg, Development Services

520.29 acres and public land use by 1,386.58 acres. Therefore, the total current acreage of the City is estimated at 10,932.21 acres.

Commercial land is concentrated along the length of U. S. Highways 27 and 441 through the planning area. Lake Square Mall, a 500,000 square foot enclosed shopping center is located on U. S. Highway 441. Additional commercial areas include:

- Main Street between U. S. Highway 27 and Lake Street.
- Main Street between County Road 468 and High Street.
- Griffin Road between U. S. Highway 27 and Thomas Avenue.
- Dixie Avenue between U. S. Highway 27 and Lake Port Boulevard.

Many of the City’s early shopping centers, motels and commercial “stand-alone” sites are now under-leased, vacant or in disrepair. These buildings are taxed at a reduced commercial rate and the City loses tax revenue as a result of this disrepair as surrounding property values decline and prospective new businesses are lost due to the poor visual quality of the area.

It is important to ensure that newly annexed property does not cause a reduced market for older sites in the City. By limiting new development through the extension of infrastructure, existing underdeveloped property in the City can be appropriately repaired and utilized. Without monitoring growth, existing commercial property becomes desirable for industrial use, creating land use conflicts. The City must minimize the conversion of commercial property to industrial use through zoning and code enforcement regulations.

While certain commercial centers in the City are facing decline, the downtown area of Leesburg is currently undergoing a major renovation. In 1994, the City established a redevelopment agency to assist the revitalization of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The City created a redevelopment plan that serves as “blue print” for the redevelopment effort. A tax increment financing district was formed to assist with the financing of the renovations. In addition, the City has created partnerships with residential and commercial non-profit organizations to help facilitate the improvements in the downtown area. Through these partnerships, the City is better able to communicate and receive input on project proposals. The downtown revitalization program will take many more years of construction and management to meet the needs and goals of the downtown residents and businesses.

As for industrial property, this land use is currently centered in the following four areas of the City:

- U. S. Highway 441, between U. S. Highway 441, Main Street and Cloud Street (Cutrale).
- An area bounded by Griffin Road on the north, Thomas Avenue on the east, Old Coastline Railroad on the south and Snowberger Avenue on the west.
- An area defined by Griffin Road on the south, Tally Road on the north, Sanford Street on the west and the railroad on the east.
- A small industrial area in the northeastern section of the City, north of U. S. Highway 441 on Ice Cream Road.

Since the adoption of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the City has annexed 1,508 acres of which 20% (302 acres) is zoned for industrial use. As a result of this new annexation, a future industrial area will be centered at the intersection of County Road 470 and the Florida Turnpike. An interchange is planned for this intersection within the next five years. The City is currently planning utilities for this industrial area.

On May 4, 1984, the City created the Leesburg Municipal Industrial Park to stimulate industrial development in the City. The Park is located on State Road

44 on the West side of the City of Leesburg. The Park is conveniently located to major highways, including U. S. Highways 441-27, Interstate 75, and the Florida Turnpike. The Turnpike provides quick access to Orlando and Miami, while I-75 provides access to Tampa and North Florida. U. S. Highways 27 and 441 provide access to the Ocala and Orlando markets.

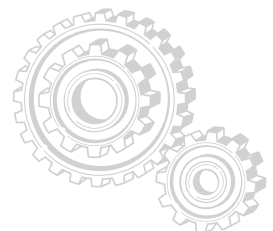
The Industrial Park provides industrial property at a reasonable cost and includes all necessary utilities, including storm water management. The Park has 24.5 acres of developable property, of which 13.4 acres has been developed or is under contract. Currently, there is an increased interest in the Park, due to rising development cost throughout Lake County. It is anticipated that the Park will be completely sold within one year, pending no major change in the regional or national economy.

Beyond the Leesburg Municipal Industrial Park, additional development of industrial property is being proposed by a variety of landowners and developers. This development is based on the increased demand for medium to high quality industrial property and the strong local economy. The majority of this proposed development is located in areas with adequate supply of infrastructure to meet the additional demand.

Conclusion

The following items represent major findings in this chapter:

- There is low unemployment in Lake County, but a larger than normal (based on State average) seasonal unemployment.
- The Lake County area economy will continue to be significantly impacted by the influx of retirees to the area, resulting in sustained construction employment, but lower paying service sector jobs.
- While school graduation rates are high for the region, test scores and college level educational attainment can be improved upon.
- Housing costs are low in Leesburg, but demand for new, non-senior housing will not be met if current development trends continue.
- An adequate supply of commercial and industrial property exists within and adjacent to the City.



Chapter 4:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt

A Vision for the Future

In order to establish goals for the future, some basic questions need to be asked about our development goals, desired industries and our ability to provide the needed services to new businesses. This section provides a series of questions designed to provide a better understanding of Leesburg's economic development opportunities.

What Industries Will Help Leesburg Meet its Economic Development Goals?

In developing a listing of key industries, there are several goals that must be used in determining appropriate industries. These goals include:

- Reduce the City's property tax burden on residential use.
- Reduce the City's susceptibility to national economic recession.
- Increase City residents' earning potential through higher paying jobs.
- Target industries that are more likely to prosper due to local area advantages.

The resulting list of industries that meet these goals are identified in Table 4.1. This list is consistent with Lake County's targeted industries, as defined by the Jobs Growth Incentive Program.

Table 4.1. LEESBURG'S TARGETED INDUSTRIES

- Communications
- Computer Programming, Data Processing and other Computer Related Services
- Construction Products
- Electronics
- Fabricated Metal Products
- Fasteners
- Food Products
- Health Services
- Laser & Robotic Technology
- Machinery and Computer Equipment
- Mechanical Assembly
- Medical Laboratories
- Plastics
- Printing and Publishing
- Simulation/Training
- Space Technology Research
- Testing Laboratories
- Transportation Equipment & Manufacturing
- Transportation Services

Does the City have Sufficient Infrastructure to Serve New Growth and Development?

One advantage that the City of Leesburg provides its residents, business owners and industrial users is a one-stop utility service. The City provides water, wastewater, gas, electric, solid waste, fiber optics and Internet service. As a result, there are no conflicting interests in the development of the “infrastructure plan” for a new business.

The City currently has 15 wells producing 5.5 million gallons per day (mgd) of potable water. The City estimates that water production is at 29% of plant capacity. An expansion of the water system is anticipated on the South side of Leesburg along the U. S. Highway 27 corridor to service new housing/commercial developments.

The City’s wastewater system has a capacity of 3.5 mgd capacity. A system expansion of an additional three mgd is currently under construction and is scheduled to be completed in July 2000.

Wastewater reuse is a commodity that is important for certain industries that require high volumes of water at reasonable rates. The availability of reuse water in industrial areas should be analyzed and provided as a means of reducing the City’s use of potable water.

The City provides natural gas service to both residential and industrial users. The City needs to expand its supply of natural gas and is currently in the planning phase of securing additional gas supply. The City also provides incentives to residential builders, developers and homeowners to utilize gas appliances in residential structures.

The City has its own electric department and purchases electricity through an electric cooperative of municipal communities (FMPA). A merchant power plant is proposing to locate in the City within the next five years. The location of the power plant will provide a boost for local tax revenues, utility consumption by the plant and provide the City through FMPA a secondary source of electricity.

Internet access and telecommunication infrastructure is becoming a more important site location criterion. Access to the Internet is vital for many businesses to successfully compete in today’s market. There are several local Internet service providers, including the City of Leesburg. In addition, the City has 40 miles of fiber optic lines installed, which can be utilized by businesses to improve computer networking.

What are the Industrial Markets?

Leesburg’s central geographic location allows for relatively easy access to a number of metropolitan markets within the State of Florida. Cities such as Orlando and Ocala are accessible within an hour. Tampa, Gainesville and Daytona Beach are accessible within 90 minutes. With the provision of an adequate transportation system, business and industry located in Leesburg can rapidly access a number of metropolitan markets within the State of Florida.

It is difficult to predict the type of industry that will find Leesburg attractive in the future, but based on inquiries in the past, the types of industry vary greatly. However, the majority of inquiries can be categorized as defined in Table 4.2.

As City policies and regulations are developed, the City Commission and staff must consider the impact on attracting the targeted industries.

Are Development Costs Competitive?

This question cannot be answered in a general manner for industrial uses, as demands and needs vary between industries. It is very likely that a business will analyze many Lake County communities during the site selection process. A number of factors that can be important in the site selection process are as follows:

- Availability of existing structures
- Proximity to suppliers and customers
- Business friendly atmosphere
- Cost to modify buildings or sites
- Transportation access
- Utility rates and capacity
- Construction costs
- Impact fees
- Land cost
- Labor costs
- Lease costs
- Lease duration
- Proper zoning
- Taxes

Table 4.2. Major Land Use Inquiries to the City

- Wholesalers seeking capitalization of local market.
- Manufactures seeking lower operating costs compared to Metro Orlando.
- Distribution/transportation providers seeking access to I-75/turnpike corridor.
- Retail/wholesale construction industries marketing services and supplies along the U. S. 27 corridor (Lady Lake to Clermont).

Source: Leesburg Economic Development Office

Table 4.3. Impact Fee Example

(Based on 10,000 square Foot Manufacturing Facility with 25 employees – Estimated construction cost of \$600,000)

City Water Impact Fee	\$ 725
City Sewer Impact Fee	\$ 3,875
County Transportation Fee	<u>\$18,000</u>
Total Impact Fee	\$22,600

Source: City of Leesburg, Development Services

This list provides only the general factors affecting most industries. Each industry will have specific needs that will quickly impact site suitability analyses.

Market conditions will establish lease rates; building and land availability; and construction costs. The City can impact these costs through zoning regulations; infrastructure availability; utility costs; and tax rates.

Factors that are included in construction cost are generally considered first in evaluating sites, but normally have limited impact on final operating costs. These factors include impact fees and taxes. Leesburg currently has very low impact fees for water and sewer service. As can be seen in Table 4.3, the City's impact fees represent a very small portion of the construction costs.

Certain city-controlled factors can serve as a barrier to development. These factors include zoning regulations, availability of infrastructure, utility rates and tax rates. Extensive development requirements for commercial and industrial sites can serve as a development barrier. However, some Florida communities are increasing their development requirements to include enhanced landscaping and aesthetic design. In addition, many cities are looking to flexible zoning to allow for increased design possibilities while still meeting zoning and site design goals. The City of Leesburg is embracing this concept as demonstrated by the flexible landscaping requirements that were recently adopted.

The availability of infrastructure is paramount to industrial and commercial development. Currently water, wastewater, gas and rail service are provided to all major commercial and industrial areas of the City. Recently annexed areas do not have sufficient utility service but these areas are currently being planned for future infrastructure development.

Table 4.4. Ad Valorem Tax Rates by Lake County Municipalities (1998)

	City Portion	Total
Astatula	2.0000	18.0568
Clermont	2.9790	19.7678
Eustis	5.3500	21.4068
Fruitland Park	3.3900	19.4468
Groveland	6.0000	22.7888
Howey in the Hills	5.4450	21.5018
Lady Lake	2.7200	18.7768
Leesburg	4.5000	20.5568
Mascotte	5.3520	22.1408
Minneola	3.3900	20.1788
Montverde	2.9900	19.7799
Mount Dora	6.1810	22.2378
Tavares	4.4200	20.4768
Umatilla	5.5140	21.5708

Table 4.5. Ad Valorem Tax Rates by Regional Municipalities (1998)

Leesburg	20.5568
Orlando	21.6657
Sanford	23.0721
Kissimmee	21.8198

Source: Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission

Ad Valorem tax rates in Lake County vary by less than five mills between the various municipalities (see Table 4.4). A portion of the rate variation between municipalities can be directly attributed to the level of services and infrastructure that is available. Some municipalities do not have utility systems or full time fire and police service. On a regional basis, the City of Leesburg’s ad valorem tax rate is very competitive (See Table 4.5). In Lake County, only Leesburg and Eustis have created an Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program. This program allows Leesburg to abate the local portion of the Ad Valorem taxes (4.5 mills) for a period of 10 years. As a result, Leesburg and Eustis have the least expensive tax structure in Lake County for industrial development.

A major factor in long term industrial operation costs is utility costs. The City of Leesburg provides gas, water, sewer, electric and fiber optics to its businesses. Currently, the City’s water and wastewater rates are very competitive with surrounding providers (see Table 4.6). However, the City’s electrical and gas rates are not as competitive (See Table 4.7). With deregulation looming in the near future, it will be important to not only provide a competitive rate structure but to also provide business and industrial support programs that are currently being provided by the public utilities. The City is currently analyzing the need for utility rate restructuring.

Is Leesburg’s Labor Force Consistent with the Targeted Industries?

The type of job growth a local economy experiences is an indication of its diversity and stability. Strong growth in a variety of sectors is preferable to growth in only a few service-based industries that are vulnerable to outside economic forces.

Employment increases through 2006 are projected to diversify through various occupations (see Table 4.8). Lake and Sumter County appear to be heading toward improved wages due to the type of employment areas that are projected to grow. When you look at the top 15

Table 4.6. Water and Wastewater Rates for 60,000 Gallons

	<u>Water</u>	<u>Wastewater</u>
Leesburg	\$64.35	\$47.44
Orlando	\$64.39	\$222.90
Apopka	\$57.42	\$96.00
Kissimmee	\$63.60	\$193.20

Source: Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission
 Note: Based on 2 inch meter

Table 4.7. Commercial Electric Rates for 30,000 KWH

Leesburg	\$2,076
Orlando	\$1,704
Ocala	\$1,752
FL Power	\$1,646
FPL	\$1,649
Gulf Power	\$1,326
SECO	\$2,010
TECO	\$1,744

Source: Florida Municipal Electric Association

fastest growing occupations projected through the year 2006 (Table 4.9), eight of the 15 occupations are health care related.¹⁷

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, in 1996, the average health care wage in Lake County was \$27,412, while the average wage for a service worker was only \$20,639.¹⁸ In addition, manufacturing is not

identified in the top 50 fastest growing occupations but, the white collar service industry appears to be taking up the slack. While the health care industry is subject to changes in governmental reimbursement policies, consolidation of health care providers and restructuring of insurance programs, it appears to be less effected by economic factors than tourism. As the elderly population continues to increase in Lake County, so shall the health care industry.

In reviewing the occupations that are set to decline between 1996 and 2006, the majority are not high paying jobs. A second positive factor is that the total lost jobs for the top 15 declining occupations only represents 375 jobs or less than one-half of one percent of the projected employment in 2006.¹⁹

As noted in Chapter 2, over 50% of high school graduates are continuing their education, which reflects well on our community’s ability to meet the labor force needs of the future. Our ability to maintain a good high school graduate rate and continuing education rate will be paramount to Leesburg’s future. Additional analysis is needed to determine if local higher education programs are consistent with the anticipated employment needs of the next several decades.

Table 4.8. Projected Employment Increases by Occupation For Lake and Sumter Counties

Occupations	Employees		Increase
	1996	2006	
Executive/Management	4,459	5,553	25%
Professional/Paraprofessional	12,785	16,515	29%
Marketing & Sales	9,469	12,013	27%
Admin/Clerical	11,032	13,083	19%
Service	13,493	18,046	34%
Agriculture	6,611	6,940	5%
Manuf./Const./Maint.	15,382	18,250	19%

Source: State of Florida, Department of Labor and Employment Security.

¹⁷ State of Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security, “Fastest-Growing Occupations”, August 10, 1999

¹⁸ United States Census Bureau, “1996 County Business Patterns – Lake County”, <http://tier2.census.gov/cgi-win/cbp/cbp.exe>.

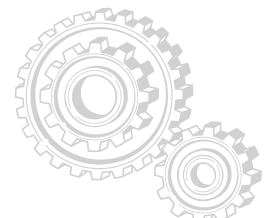
¹⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

- An opportunity exists to increase use of the City’s fiber optic network.
- Reuse water planning should occur, especially in regards to industrial and certain commercial uses.
- Electrical rates and programs need to be more competitive with other providers.
- Natural gas service needs to be expanded to new industrial areas of the City.
- The educational system must continue to be a primary focus for the business community’s involvement to ensure that the workforce is prepared for the changing work environment.
- While there are large industrial parcels available in the City, additional industrial facilities need to be constructed and made available for lease.

Table 4.9. Occupation Growth Projections – Top 15 (Lake and Sumter Counties)

RANK	OCCUPATION	EMPLOYMENT		INCREASE
		1996	2006	
1	Cashier	2,354	3,225	871
2	Salesperson, Retail	2,239	2,854	615
3	Registered Nurse	1,460	1,943	483
4	Hand Packer and Packager	810	1,252	442
5	Waiter and Waitress	1,434	1,843	409
6	Food Preparation Worker	855	1,252	397
7	General Manager and Top Executive	1,804	2,176	372
8	Correction Officer and Jailer	1,003	1,345	342
9	General Office Clerk	1,830	2,171	341
10	Home Health Aide	332	639	307
11	Nursing Aide and Orderly	1,058	1,362	304
12	Child Care Worker	620	877	257
13	Receptionist, Information Clerk	675	928	253
14	Teacher, Secondary School	896	1,116	220
15	Food Preparation Server, Fast Food	659	876	217



Chapter 5: Economic Development Resources

Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.

Abraham Lincoln

Introduction

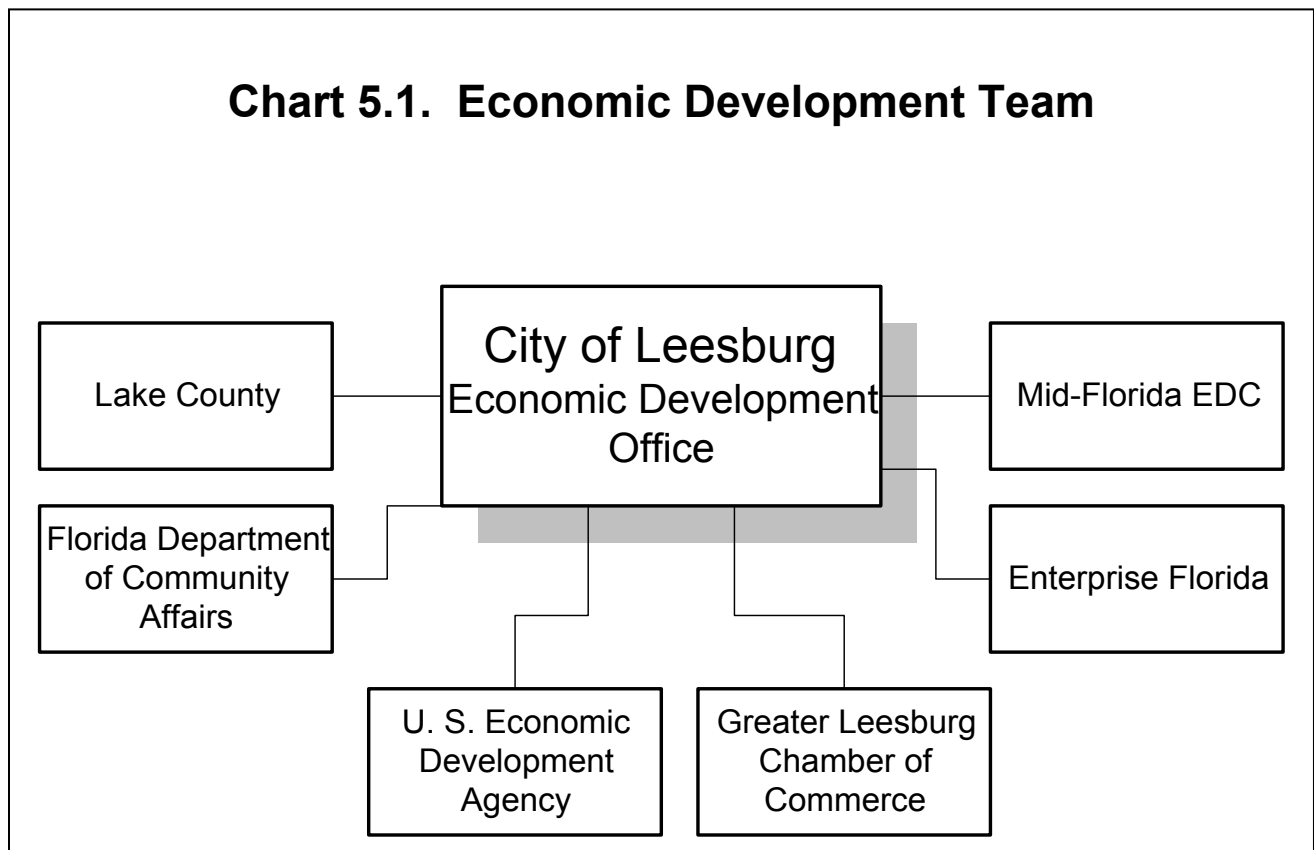
The City of Leesburg is fortunate to have a variety of incentive programs and resources that are available through the City, County, State and Federal governments, as well as, regional economic development organizations. As Central Florida’s economy continues to grow and change, the incentives and support programs offered by local governments, must also change and respond to dynamic conditions. This Chapter will highlight the

current economic development programs that exist and identify new opportunities for assistance programs.

Current Economic Development Program

The City of Leesburg is privileged to work in a team approach with many economic

Chart 5.1. Economic Development Team



development program providers to ensure that existing and new businesses are provided a quality response to needs and issues. When a business has a specific need, the Leesburg Economic Development Office is able to call on a variety of resources to address the need. The following information identifies the current roles and resources that are provided by the various agencies.

City of Leesburg

The City of Leesburg, through the Economic Development Office, is primarily responsible for providing the first response to business retention, expansion and new development. The City's Economic Development staff provides a variety of marketing and business assistance services. The following highlights these services:

Ombudsman Services

A key factor for a business to make the decision to locate in the City of Leesburg is how well they are received during both telephone conversations and physical visits to the community. The Economic Development Office staff ensures that all business inquires are appropriately addressed by the various City departments and that every effort is made to utilize the various community resources to ensure a positive response. Oftentimes, area businesses will participate in site inquires by attending orientation meeting with prospective businesses.

Once a business has made the decision to locate in the City of Leesburg, the Economic Development Office assists the business with all aspects of becoming a member of the community. Often, this will

include assistance with City permits and licenses; becoming familiar with local suppliers and vendors; assistance with housing needs for their employees and coordination with any incentives programs they may be participating in.

The Ombudsman services are not limited to new businesses. The Economic Development staff also assists existing business with any concerns that may be affecting their ability to remain in the City or expand their operations. This effort will be expanded in the coming months to be a more active versus reactive program. Staff will identify key accounts and industries for active management and coordinate on-site review meetings. The purpose of the meetings will be to let them know the City is available to assist them with their needs. Furthermore, these meetings will aid in identify any concerns or problems that the business is having with services, impediments to expansion and labor/training needs. The City staff will continue to work with the business in addressing any problems affecting their operations.

Promotional Advertisement and Material

The City of Leesburg cannot rely solely on the ability of the Chamber of Commerce, Lake County or Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission to market the City of Leesburg for business recruitment. Therefore, the City has since 1992, developed informational material and advertised in appropriate venues such as the *Florida Trend*, *Florida Commercial Real Estate Guide*, *Living in Lake County* and *Orlando Business Journal*. In addition, local advertisement of the Leesburg Municipal Industrial Park has occurred on billboards, Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce material, and other regional publications.

It is important to realize that business leaders view the community as a place where they thrive. They make visual assessments of the community to determine whether their business will “fit in” with existing development and businesses. The City has developed a promotional video that provides a twenty-minute overview of the City’s business friendly environment and high quality of life surroundings.

The most recent promotional advertisement activity is the creation of *Success in Leesburg* publication. This high-quality, magazine style publication is designed to provide businesses with detailed information concerning the business environment and the local quality of life. This publication will be a focal point of Leesburg business recruitment information.

Business Recruitment Program

Marketing activities play a key role in the economic development process. Outside of providing support for the expansion of existing businesses and facilities already located within the community, the major focus of the economic development program is to encourage the relocation of new businesses. Although effective marketing efforts may yield significant results with relocation of new businesses, marketing activities are often costly and may be ineffective unless they are directed in an effective manner. As such, it is important to concentrate marketing efforts in areas that will result in the greatest benefit for the resources invested. Therefore, direct marketing efforts and incentives will be focused on the targeted industries identified in Chapter 2 and those that will yield at least 20 new jobs that pay at least the median average wage for Lake County.

Incentive Strategy Management

The use of incentives to attract businesses has become a mainstay of the economic development community. However, a balance must be achieved between promoting quality business development and best utilization of financial resources. Furthermore, the goal of the Economic Development staff is to minimize the amount of financial incentives utilized to recruit businesses. Also, staff members ensure that financial incentives result in an appropriate return on investment for the City.

In addition to coordinating other government agency incentive program applications for businesses wishing to expand or locate in Leesburg, City staff also coordinate the City’s incentive programs. Currently, the City has three incentive programs:

- Expedited Permitting Process
- Impact Fee Financing Program
- Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program

The Economic Development Office staff works with the various City departments to ensure that permit applications are expedited and that issues that arise are quickly addressed.

The Impact Fee Financing Program provides financing opportunities when the total of City impact fees reaches \$20,000. The fee may be financed over five years with the interest being set at the prime rate.

The Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program provides industrial, manufacturing and distribution companies with up to a 10-

year exemption from ad valorem taxes and tangible personal property taxes. Other program requirements apply and are fully described in Appendix 3.

Job and Training Coordination

The availability and quality of the labor force is a primary factor in business relocation and expansion. The Economic Development staff works with various agencies to ensure an adequate supply of workers for existing and new businesses. In this time of low unemployment, the availability of workers is a critical issue to businesses. The Economic Development staff assists businesses in locating qualified staff by working with Job Services of Florida, Lake Technical Center, Lake-Sumter Community College, University of Central Florida and the Florida WAGES program.

Commercial/Industrial Site Inventory

Business expansion and relocation decisions involve a wide range of site development issues. In order to expedite business development plans and respond to site information needs, it is important for the Economic Development office to maintain an inventory of land and existing buildings. The database includes information on zoning; land and building costs; and availability of utilities.

Economic Development Research

In order to support local businesses and market Leesburg to new companies, accurate information about the community must be available to key decision makers. Business leaders are keenly aware of the factors affecting the cost of development and daily operations. They continually weigh factors such as tax rates, utility

rates, incentives, development costs and available labor against the option to lower these costs by relocating to other communities. Therefore, it is essential to list public and private services and activities that benefit local businesses.

The City is one of many organizations that are actively marketing Leesburg to the business community. While these other agencies are discussed further in this plan, they serve as an invaluable information resource to the City. Many of these business support agencies prepare extensive marketing material that is very helpful to the City in providing accurate demographic and quality of life information to prospective businesses. Through a continued coordinated effort between the City and the various agencies, the City's resources can be effectively focused on business contact management and marketing.

Annual Activity Report

As economic conditions change within the City and the region, the Economic Development staff will analyze the effectiveness of various incentive programs and make revision recommendations to the appropriate agencies. An annual report will be provided to the City Commission concerning the activities of the Economic Development Office. This report will include a listing of businesses retained or expanded; businesses recruited; various economic indicators; use of incentives; analysis of targeted industries and an analysis of incentive effectiveness.

Internet

As the Internet continues to grow, so must the City's economic development presence on the Internet. Businesses

wishing to relocate or expand are increasing their use of the Internet to provide a listing of available sites, analyze site location costs and preview quality of life information. The City’s Economic Development Office will strive to provide the best information available on the Internet. This resource can increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts and staff time.

Lake County

In an effort to compete with economic development efforts by surrounding counties and jurisdictions, Lake County has created two economic development programs to support business development.

Lake County established and funded a job growth investment trust fund to assist business expansion and relocation projects deemed to be economically significant to Lake County. Business can receive up to \$2,500 per job created, if they meet specific program requirements. All jobs created for which assistance is requested must earn at least the annual median wage, which is currently \$9.80 per hour. This program functions to promote high-paying jobs in targeted industries within Lake County.

The second Lake County program is the Impact Fee Deferral Program. For industrial businesses seeking to locate in the City of Leesburg, the major use of this program will be for the Lake County Transportation Impact Fee. The appropriate County impact fees can be deferred over a period of time. The number of jobs created, the wages paid and other program requirements determine the time period.

TABLE 5.2: Job Growth Incentive Fund Projects in Leesburg

Business	Type Of Business	Number of Jobs
Sunrise Arc of 12 Lake County	Assembly Packaging	
Power Technologies	Generator Assembly	9
Burton International	Metal Fabrication	7
Barham Industries	Electrical	12
Bailey Industries	Electrical	20
Bailey Industries	Wood Products	15
Utility Tools, Inc.	Manufact. Tools	17
Water Works Plumbing	Plumbing	5
Beverage Body & Trailer Sales	Truck Refurbishing	15
Tucker Machine & Steel	Steel Form Manufacturing	5
Infotrac, Inc.	Emergency Response	15
Romac	Truss Manufacturing	14
Gary Stanley Electric	Electrical	12
Skybolt	Airplane Parts Manufacturing	<u>14</u>
Total		152

Mid-Florida Economic Development Commission (EDC)

The mission of the EDC is to initiate business investment, to coordinate the economic development efforts of the four-county Metro Orlando area and to market the area as the world's premier business location. One of the top 10 economic development groups in the world, the EDC has worked with thousands of new and expanding companies. Clients include domestic and international manufacturers, distributors, high-tech firms, and corporate and regional headquarters. In addition, the Metro Orlando Film & Television Office works with motion picture and television producers who are interested in filming in the area, and the International Affairs and Trade Development department works to increase exports and trade within the region.

The EDC has dedicated a full-time staff member to work on economic development in Lake County. This staff person works with County and municipal staff and elected officials on business expansion and business relocation efforts. This effort will often include analyzing facilities to meet a business' needs and to coordinate the incentive program application process for the business. The EDC conducts trade shows and advertises the region throughout the Country and internationally. As a result, the EDC staff brings business leads to the City to be jointly developed and managed.

Enterprise Florida

Most State of Florida economic development marketing and incentive programs are managed by the public/private part-

nership created by the Florida Legislature and known as Enterprise Florida. This organization is a non-profit organization responsible for marketing the State to the whole country and internationally. In addition, the organization manages a variety of incentive programs, including the following:

- Qualified Targeted Industry Tax Refund Program.
- Quick Response Training.
- Economic Development Transportation Fund.
- Child Care Tax Credit.
- Small Business Technology Growth Fund.

These programs are described in Appendix 4.

Enterprise Florida also provides business expansion and relocation leads to the City of Leesburg through the Mid-Florida EDC.

Florida Department of Community Affairs

The Florida Department of Community Affairs administers two federally funded economic development programs: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the Section 108 Program. The CDBG program currently provides \$12 million annually to Florida jurisdictions with fewer than 50,000 in population and counties with populations under 200,000. These funds are generally used to provide infrastructure to a new business. The major focus of the program is the creation of jobs. Funding, up to \$750,000 per project, is based on one job being created for every \$35,000 in grant funding. The City of Leesburg recently obtained a \$750,000 CDBG grant for an

airplane parts manufacturer to relocate to Leesburg.

The Section 108 program serves as a bond financing program that has the same basic requirements of the CDBG program, but provides greater flexibility in the use of the funds. However, the major difference between the CDBG program and the Section 108 programs is the requirement to repay the funding and the requirement of the City of Leesburg to collateralize the loan.

United States Economic Development Agency (EDA)

EDA currently provides grant funding to economically distressed communities throughout the nation. Currently, the City's low unemployment rate precludes it from participating in their programs. However, if economic conditions change, EDA programs could be used to attract or retain existing businesses.

Greater Leesburg Chamber of Commerce

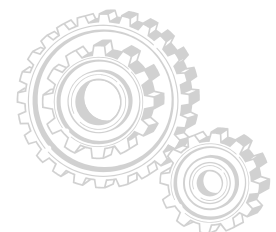
The Greater Leesburg Chamber of Commerce provides invaluable service to the City by coordinating and supporting business retention and expansion in the area. The Chamber helps to promote the area through publications, business member networking and education programs. City staff works in concert with the Chamber to promote business groundbreaking ceremonies and in marketing the City to visitors and businesses.

Additional Incentive Opportunities

While there are many incentive programs available through governmental agencies, the City does not have a "cash" based incentive program. A local incentive policy, during strong economic times, helps to attract the City's targeted industries. Currently, all Lake County municipalities can take advantage of the Job Growth Incentive Program by Lake County and Leesburg has been very successful in obtaining funding for local business. If the City of Leesburg had a local incentive program, it would service to differentiate Leesburg from the other 13 municipalities. A draft incentive program for Leesburg is provided in Appendix 1 for consideration by the City Commission.

Conclusion

The City of Leesburg needs to continue to maximize its resources by networking with other economic development entities and by leveraging program funds with other financial programs. The City should consider adopting its own incentive program to increase the job growth in the targeted industries.



Appendix 1: CITY OF LEESBURG INCENTIVE POLICY – DRAFT

(This policy must be adopted by resolution or ordinance to be effective)

It is the intention of the City of Leesburg to utilize this policy of economic incentives to attract certain targeted industries and businesses to locate and/or expand their operations in the City of Leesburg. It is anticipated that through these efforts, the City of Leesburg will be taking a proactive policy to its citizens while simultaneously broadening and diversifying the overall economy of the City of Leesburg.

1. **Minimum Criteria:** The City of Leesburg will offer incentives contained in this policy to new or expanding target industries or developers creating facilities to be located within the City of Leesburg which will:
 - (a) Create a minimum of 10 new full-time jobs in the City of Leesburg within two years for new businesses and a minimum of 5 jobs must be created in one year for existing businesses; and
 - (b) Created jobs must be from one of the targeted industries identified in Table 1 and Table 2.
2. **Award Amount:** The maximum award amount that a business or developer is eligible to receive per new Leesburg employee based on the targeted industries in Table 1 and Table 2 is based on the average starting wage identified below:

<u>Wage Rate Category</u>	<u>Maximum Incentive Per Job</u>
110% of County Average Wage	\$ 500
125% of County Average Wage	\$1,000
150% of County Average Wage	\$1,500
200% of County Average Wage	\$2,000

3. **Other Program Requirements:** The following program requirements shall apply to all applicants.
 - (a) It is the intent of the City Commission to work in cooperation with other economic development agencies and if possible find other funding to supplement or replace incentive funding provided through this policy.
 - (b) It is the intent of the City Commission to only consider applications which have identified and have acceptable documentation that a specific site has been selected within the City of Leesburg and said application is not a relocation from, or in competition with another city or county in Central Florida including Orange, Lake, Volusia, Osceola and Seminole Counties unless the company is also exploring the option of leaving Central Florida, or having outgrown the current location and desires to relocate in the Central Florida area.

No incentive shall be awarded under this policy if the projected return to the City from ad valorem sales, personal property and other taxes, and other projected direct or indirect benefits will not equal or exceed the amount of the incentive within not more than five (5) years from the date of the agreement.

- (c) Applicants receiving an economic incentive award must get a certificate of occupancy within two (2) years from the date of the site plan approval by the City.
- (d) Incentive funds must be spent within twelve (12) months of award or an extension must be applied for in writing and approved by the City Commission.
- (e) The City of Leesburg reserves the right to offer other businesses economic incentives on a case-by-case basis if it is determined that the economic benefits of a proposed project or annexation would clearly outweigh the related costs of the economic incentives. Such benefits may include, but not be limited to expedited review and permitting, and/or waiver of building permit, zoning and inspection fees, payment of transportation impact fees, relocation costs, employee training, building construction loans, leasehold improvements and any other legitimate business expenses.
- (f) Only the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, by a majority vote of its membership (3 votes) may approve economic incentive requests.
- (g) Monies committed each fiscal year to the funding of this economic incentive program by the City will be allocated through the City's annual budget process.
- (h) Nothing contained in this policy shall be construed to be a guarantee or entitlement to an economic incentive from the City of Leesburg regardless of the applicant's conformity to these guidelines, the City's financial condition, or the amount of monies budgeted for economic incentives.
- (i) The City will only provide funds to an awarded business upon hiring of all required jobs and acceptance of employment and program compliance documentation. Failure of an awarded business to meet all job employment creation as proposed in the application will result in the award being reduced based on the final number of jobs created. However, no funds shall be provided if the business fails meet minimum program requirements.
- (j) Developers receiving incentive funds under this program must utilize the assistance for infrastructure necessary to directly support the business or businesses that are creating the jobs. The City reserves the right to review site design documentation prior to approval of incentive funding and upon project construction completion. Failure of the developer to install infrastructure as agreed upon by the City and the developer will result in an obligation of the developer to repay the City for all infrastructure funds spent that do not provide needed services to the business creating the jobs. The developer, the business or businesses creating the jobs and the City shall execute a Participating Party Agreement. The Participating Party Agreement shall outline the obligations of all parties.

(k) In consideration for the incentive funds provided by the City, the business creating the jobs must agree to execute a utility agreement for City water, sewer, natural gas, electricity, fiber optics and other available utilities for a period of time sufficient to produce a net income sufficient to offset the cost of the incentive funds provided to the business, or for ten years, whichever is a longer period of time.

4. **Recapture Provision:** The recipient of these incentives will be required to repay incentive monies to the City if the recipient business relocates or ceases operations within a one (1) year period from the date of job creation.
5. **Compliance:** Job creating businesses, for which incentives were provided either directly to the business or to the project developer, must submit annual proof of compliance with the terms of the agreement for a period of two years from the date of release of incentives by the City. If during the monitoring process it becomes evident that the number of jobs for which incentives have been provided have not been maintained by the business, then the business is required to repay the appropriate prorated portion of the incentive funds within 60 days. Failure to repay funds within 60 days of written notification of request to repay will result in the placement of liens by the City on any business property owned by the business.

Table 1

OFFICE USES	MANUFACTURING	HIGH TECH
Associations Corp. Headquarters	Plastics & Commercial Printing Electronics/Mechanical Assembly MP & TV Support Auto Parts Fasteners/Spacers Construction Products Food Processing Machinery Transport Aircraft Maintenance & Modification Aircraft Manufacturing General Manufacturing	Research/Develop. Space Technology Simulation/Training Laser Technology Robotics Computer Software Computer Hardware Testing Medical Labs

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION	FINANCIAL SERVICE	OTHER
Food products Consumer Products Restaurant/Commissary Control Airline Services Air cargo/Mail Services MP & TV Support Durable Goods Distribution Non-Durable Goods Distribution	Data Centers Insurance Banks Claims Office Fulfillment Centers Business Services Health Services Engineering	Long Stay Tourism Hotels & Lodging Hospital Sports Associated Industries

Appendix 2: CITY OF LEESBURG FAST TRACK PROGRAM – DRAFT

(This policy must be adopted by resolution or ordinance to be effective)

Purpose:

The City of Leesburg's Fast Tract Program expedites site plan and building permits for projects of economic significance. All Fast Track projects must be either commercial or industrial in nature.

Applicant Qualification Requirements:

- Must be approved for the Lake County Job Growth Incentive Fund program, and create at least 20 full time jobs, or
- Locate in the Leesburg Municipal Industrial Park, or
- Locate in an area of the City designated as a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). Projects in a CRA must be either commercial or industrial in nature and create at least 10 jobs.

Program benefits:

- Site plans and building plans will be reviewed simultaneously, providing for a fast approval process.
- Permits can be issued in seven days if all permitting requirements are met during first review. If changes are required, a second review and approval can occur within an additional three days.
- Economic Development Office serves as coordinator to ensure that expedited process occurs.

Additional Requirements:

- Applicant must complete one-page application for fast track process.
- Applicant must attend a pre-application meeting with City staff. Representatives of the applicant that are responsible for the design of the site plan and the structure must attend the meeting. Pre-application meetings can be scheduled within three days of submission of Fast Track Application.
- Applicant agrees to submit site plan and building design that is complete, accurate and conforms to the City Code.

Appendix 3:

AD VALOREM TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Purpose:

The purpose of the tax exemption is to provide incentives to new industry to locate in Leesburg and aid in the expansion of existing businesses.

When will the exemption be available?

This exemption must be approved by an individual ordinance of the City Commission on a case-by-case basis.

What does this exemption consist of?

The City Commission has the authority to exempt businesses that qualify from ad valorem taxes from 0 to 100% of the assessed value of all improvements to the real property, but not the land itself.

In addition, the Commission can exempt tangible personal property up to 100% of the assessed value of added improvements made to facilitate the expansion of an existing business.

The exemption would be from the 4.5 mils levied by the City. It does not include school taxes, county taxes or special district levies. This applies only to improvements and tangible property taxes. Taxes due or owed on land must be paid.

Additional Provisions:

- ◆ Exemptions may be granted for one to ten years.
- ◆ Real estate purchased to replace existing property does not qualify.
- ◆ A business must be an industrial or manufacturing plant creating at least 10 new jobs.

or

- ◆ A wholesale distribution or export business, which is a part of an industrial or commercial operation that creates 25 new jobs and sells a majority of its products outside the State of Florida.

or

- ◆ A new corporate office creating 50 or more full-time jobs that clearly is separate from any other commercial or industrial operation owned by the same business.

or

- ◆ Any business located in an enterprise zone that is established on a site separate from any other commercial entity owned by that business.

What will not qualify:

- ◆ Property acquired to replace existing property does not qualify (i.e., buildings, equipment).
- ◆ Retail, commercial and service industries do not qualify.

Appendix 4:

ENTERPRISE FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Certified Capital Companies-Creates certified capital companies (CAPCOs) designed to make venture capital investments in qualified Florida businesses. These CAPCOs will be funded by insurance company investments via credits against their insurance premium tax liability.

Capital Investment Tax Credit-Provides annual corporate income tax credits to eligible high-impact sector businesses equal to 5 percent of the eligible capital costs of a new or expanding Florida facility.

Florida Energy Loan Program-The program provides low-interest loans to small businesses to purchase and install energy-efficient equipment or otherwise improve a facility's energy efficiency.

High Impact Business Performance Grant-This is an incentive used to attract and grow high-impact businesses in Florida. For example, a qualified high-impact business making a cumulative investment of \$100 million and creating 100 jobs may be eligible for a total grant award of \$1 million to \$2 million. A qualified company engaged in R&D that makes a cumulative investment of \$75 million and creates 75 new jobs may be eligible for a total grant award of \$2 million to \$3 million.

Intangible Tax Reforms-Provides for a phase-out of the intangibles tax on accounts receivable over a three-year period; improves Florida's competitiveness for certain headquarters operations. Banks and insurance companies are exempt.

Qualified Defense Contractor Tax Refund Program-The refund provides up to \$5,000 per job created or saved in Florida through conversion of defense jobs to civilian production. Also qualifying are the acquisition of a new defense contract or the consolidation of a defense contract that results in at least a 25 percent increase in Florida employment or a minimum of 80 jobs.

Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program-This program provides tax refunds to pre-approved applicants of up to \$5,000 per new job created; \$7,500 in an enterprise zone.

Quick Response Training Program-Working with community colleges, vocational/technical centers, state universities and other institutions, the program provides start-up training tailored to a company's needs.

Sales Tax Exemption on Aircraft Parts, Repair and Maintenance- Creates a sales tax exemption for replacement engines, parts and equipment used in the repair and

maintenance of eligible aircraft. Also provides a sales tax exemption for the sale or lease of qualified aircraft.

Sales Tax Exemption on Electricity- Clarifies the provisions of the current sales tax exemption, removing the requirement for separate metering, but requiring at least 75 percent of a facility's energy usage be dedicated to eligible manufacturing to receive a 100 percent exemption.

Sales Tax Exemption on Manufacturing Machinery and Equipment-Allows for the purchase of certain manufacturing machinery and equipment (MME) to qualify for an exemption from paying the state sales/use tax.

Sales Tax Refund on Manufacturing or Research Equipment-Transforms an existing sales tax refund program for silicon technology machinery into a direct and recurring exemption.

Small Business Technology Growth Fund-Creates a new program to provide financial assistance (loan guarantees, letters of credit) to Florida businesses with emerging technological potential and fewer than 100 employees.

Venture Capital Network Development-Enterprise Florida Capital Development participates in the activities of Florida venture entrepreneurship networking and support organizations.

Source: Enterprise Florida