



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

8



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CHAPTER 8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

I. Introduction

The Economic Development Element is an optional element in Port St. Lucie's Comprehensive Plan. ~~It~~This element will addresses the City's current economic ~~challenges~~issues facing the City today, and anticipates ~~potential economic issues the City may face in the future~~ opportunities and obstacles. ~~While~~Although not a required element, ~~the subject is important enough to~~ its significance warrants careful consideration in shaping ~~when planning the City's future~~ long term prosperity. A well-structured plan ~~that~~ provides direction for ~~the future helps provide for the~~ sustainable economic growth ~~well-being of the City's present and future population,~~ ensuring a high ~~and to maintain the City's~~ quality of life for present and future residents.

~~This plan element~~ Recognizing ~~es that the interconnected nature of~~ economic relationships ~~exist between~~ across geographic areas, this element emphasizes ~~€~~coordination with various levels of government and ~~with~~ private enterprise ~~can help achieve to foster~~ successful economic development. This element serves as a foundation and a strategic tool, documenting key data, identifying opportunities, and guiding policy decisions ~~is a starting point and a tool, to promote economic development. Its value lies in documentation of statistics and conditions, and in providing ideas, opportunity, and policy.~~ However, its effectiveness depends on implementation alongside targeted ~~This element needs to be used with additional~~ strategic actions ~~for to drive~~ future economic ~~development~~ progress.

A. Economic Development History

In 1993 the U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded St. Lucie County a grant to fund a county-wide economic plan. The development of the county's draft Economic Plan involved the creation of two requisite work products, a base study document entitled Economic Activities in St. Lucie County (1995), and a second document called Vision St. Lucie (1995).

As part of Vision St. Lucie, the City completed the following to support economic development:

- Internet homepage providing information about the City.
- City beautification projects (i.e. landscaping, signage, entry features).
- Development of a new City motto.
- Support of design improvements for Port St. Lucie and Gatlin Boulevards.
- Riverwalk along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, now known as the Port District.

The City is continuing the following activities to attract new businesses:

- Increase quality jobs and attract investment in the community.
- Promote quality development for cultural, arts, and entertainment facilities.
- Promote existing attributes (i.e. PGA headquarters, NY Mets spring training camp).
- Pursue feasibility to develop a downtown or town center as a community focus and meeting place.
- Explore potential.

B. Past Trends

The economic emphasis at the time General Development Corporation (GDC) designed the community, was the platting of residential lots for sale. The population at the time was less than several hundred residents in the 78 square miles that made up the City limits.

~~As time passed~~Over time, GDC ~~succeeded in selling~~successfully sold most of the 80,000 residential lots they had platted. ~~The area's~~Low cost of living, sub-tropical climate, and ~~a centralized~~influenced location ~~influenced~~contributed to rapid population growth, ~~particularly~~the population grew rapidly during the late 1970's and 1980's. ~~By 1990, the population exceeded~~to more than 55,000 ~~people in 1990~~and grew to more than ~~exceeded~~76,000 at the beginning of ~~by early~~1997. However, the ~~percentage of persons in the available~~labor force ~~grew~~expanded at a disproportionately higher rate than ~~local job availability~~the number of available local jobs. ~~Leading to~~This trend continues today and has created two persistent challenges~~situations~~; a higher ~~than~~average unemployment rate and a ~~higher than average rate~~significant percentage of residents commuting ~~of people working~~outside the City for work~~community~~.

~~In the City's early growth stages, the availability of~~The lack of planned areas for economic development ~~was not a major problem in the early days of the City's growth as there were adequate areas appointed for~~commercial, office, and industrial use ~~areas was sufficient~~to support the early population. ~~However, As~~growth accelerated, the shortage of ~~time progressed and the City population grew at a rapid pace the lack of areas for designated~~economic development areas became ~~apparent~~evident. ~~To address this,~~the City created ~~established~~land use conversion zones, ~~that allow~~ing conversion from residential ~~areas~~land use to commercial, office, institutional, and multi-family uses along ~~designated~~major corridors to transition into commercial, office, institutional, or multi-family uses. This ~~initiative along with the annexation of additional land for economic development including St. Lucie West, LTC Ranch, and the southwest annexation area~~has helped ~~relieve some of~~alleviate the shortage of land ~~available~~for economic development. The Future Land Use Element of this ~~plan expands further details necessary on~~land use changes ~~needed to create to~~foster new commercial centers ~~in the City~~.

Moving forward, identifying and strategically positioning additional commerce centers will be essential to capitalizing on economic development opportunities. Expanding and diversifying the local economy will help retain, grow, and attract businesses within the City's existing and target industry base.

II. Description of the Local Economy

The following provides a general description of the local Port St. Lucie economy. The data includes an analysis of industry diversity, major employers, educational attainment, cost of income, and cost of living.

A. Industry Diversity

The Port St. Lucie economy is comparable to the State's in terms of employment diversity. In 2024, 2014-2018, for the employed population 16 years and older, the leading employment classifications industries in Port St. Lucie were educational services, health care, and social assistance, which accounted for 23-28.6 percent of the workforce; while retail trade, which accounted for 17-15.3 percent; arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services, which accounted for 13.7 percent; and professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services, which accounted for 10.2 percent of the workforce. This economic mix has contributed to a median income that exceeds the State average. This is a positive trend that can be further strengthened through targeted market and policy initiatives.

Recognizing this momentum, both the City of Port St. Lucie and the St. Lucie EDC are committed to fostering continued economic diversification and growth over time.

Table 8 - 1. Employment by industry

INDUSTRY	Port St. Lucie		State of Florida	
	Number of Employees	Percent	Number of Employees	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	<u>45</u> 242	<u>0.1%</u> 0.3%	<u>36,533</u> 94,058	<u>0.4%</u> 1.0%
Mining	<u>11</u>	<u>0.0%</u>	<u>4,996</u>	<u>0.1%</u>
Utilities	<u>21</u>	<u>0.0%</u>	<u>24,710</u>	<u>0.3%</u>
Construction	<u>2,915</u> 6,841	<u>6.4%</u> 8.4%	<u>498,017</u> 677,886	<u>5.3%</u> 7.3%
Manufacturing	<u>1,156</u> 3,687	<u>2.5%</u> 4.5%	<u>404,070</u> 470,883	<u>4.3%</u> 5.1%
Wholesale trade	<u>696</u> 2,215	<u>1.5%</u> 2.7%	<u>308,854</u> 248,949	<u>3.3%</u> 2.7%
Retail trade	<u>6,946</u> 14,452	<u>15.3%</u> 17.7%	<u>1,223,198</u> 1,194,414	<u>12.9%</u> 12.9%
Transportation and warehousing	<u>676</u> 3,682	<u>1.5%</u> 4.5%	<u>235,286</u> 502,921	<u>2.5%</u> 5.4%
Information	<u>920</u> 1,533	<u>2.0%</u> 1.9%	<u>223,657</u> 171,201	<u>2.4%</u> 1.9%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	<u>2,499</u> 3,638	<u>5.5%</u> 4.5%	<u>754,671</u> 715,483	<u>8.0%</u> 7.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	<u>4,636</u> 8,722	<u>10.2%</u> 10.7%	<u>1,148,881</u> 1,211,027	<u>12.2%</u> 13.1%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	<u>13,012</u> 19,282	<u>28.6%</u> 23.6%	<u>2,147,209</u> 1,945,214	<u>22.7%</u> 21.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	<u>6,235</u> 9,772	<u>13.7%</u> 12.0%	<u>1,291,312</u> 1,132,844	<u>13.7%</u> 12.2%
Other services, except public administration, and unclassified establishments	<u>3,881</u> 4,415	<u>8.5%</u> 5.4%	<u>603,732</u> 491,801	<u>6.4%</u> 5.3%
Public administration	<u>1,770</u> 3,133	<u>3.9%</u> 3.8%	<u>543,402</u> 397,251	<u>5.8%</u> 4.3%
Total	<u>45,419</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>9,448,528</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Source: *American Community Survey, 2014-2018* [ESRI BAO Business Summary 2024](#)

B. Major Employers

Major employers located in ~~Port~~ St. Lucie [County](#) include the following.

Table 8 - 2. Major Employers

Employer	Average Number of Employees
St. Lucie Public Schools	6,017
Walmart	3,376
Publix	1,974
Lawnwood St. Lucie Medical Center	1,751 1,850
City of Port St. Lucie	1,324 1,164
Indian River State College	1,471
Cleveland Clinic Martin Health System	1,402
Amazon Fulfillment Center	1,200
Oak Hill Hospital	950
St. Lucie County	857
Teleperformance	799 1,600
St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department	731
Atlantic Payroll Partners	694
PB Holdco	669
Maverick Boat Group	566
Florida Power & Light	526 772
Home Depot	522
FedEx Ground	451
Cheney Brothers	310
Amazon Delivery Station	300
City Electric Supply / TAMCO	234 225
Cleveland Clinic (Lerner Research Institute) - FRIC	234
Change Healthcare	549
Treasure Coast Newspapers	215
Club Med Sandpiper Bay	180
PGA Golf Club	177
Keiser University	139
Remetronix	132
ABC Medical	121
Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies	117
Atlantic Precision	93
Riteway Linens	86
Expert Shutter Service	68
Liberty Medical Supply	50

Source: [St. Lucie EDC, 2024](#)

C. Education

According to the [American Community Survey Key Population & Household Facts, 2018-2022](#), ~~in 2014-~~ ~~2018, 87.90.7~~ percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and ~~26.220~~ percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Port St. Lucie has a [higher](#) ~~lower~~ percentage of residents

graduated from high school than the State of Florida, ~~and also~~ but a lower college graduation ~~rate~~ than the State ~~of Florida~~.

Table 8-2

Table 8 - 3. Educational Attainment of People in Port St. Lucie City in (2014-2018-2022)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Port St. Lucie		State of Florida	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 25 years and over	<u>151,542</u> 129,416	100%	<u>15,579,847</u> 14,686,727	
Less than 9th grade	<u>4,990</u> 6,583	<u>3.3%</u> 5.1%	<u>679,669</u> 723,824	<u>4.4%</u> 4.9%
Some high school 9th to 12th grade, no diploma	<u>9,033</u> 9,506	<u>6.0%</u> 7.3%	<u>991,203</u> 1,045,665	<u>6.4%</u> 7.1%
High school graduate or GED (includes equivalency)	<u>46,832</u> 42,428	<u>30.9%</u> 32.8%	<u>4,316,799</u> 4,231,678	<u>27.7%</u> 28.8%
Some college, no degree	<u>33,355</u> 29,913	<u>22.0%</u> 23.1%	<u>2,987,680</u> 2,963,473	<u>19.2%</u> 20.2%
Associate's degree	<u>17,653</u> 14,205	<u>11.6%</u> 11.0%	<u>1,567,030</u> 1,438,630	<u>10.1%</u> 9.8%
Bachelor's degree	<u>26,714</u> 17,690	<u>17.6%</u> 13.7%	<u>3,154,240</u> 2,721,635	<u>20.2%</u> 18.5%
Graduate or professional degree	<u>12,965</u> 9,091	<u>8.6%</u> 7.0%	<u>1,883,226</u> 1,561,822	<u>12.1%</u> 10.6%
High school graduate or higher	<u>137,519</u> 113,327	<u>90.7%</u> 87.6%	<u>5,037,466</u> 4,291,723	<u>89.3%</u> 88.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	<u>39,679</u> 26,781	<u>26.2%</u> 20.7%	<u>5,037,466</u> 4,283,457	<u>32.3%</u> 29.2%

Source: American Community Survey Key Population & Household Facts, 2014-2018-2024; ESRI Business Analyst Outline

College programs within the City have expanded extensively in the past ten years with more four-year programs. Higher educational resources within the City include Indian River State College (IRSC), Keiser University, and extension campuses of Florida Atlantic University and Barry University. Each of these institutions offers four-year degree programs.

D. Income

According to the American Community Survey, the 2018-2022 median income (adjusted for inflation) for the Port St. Lucie Metro Area, adjusted for inflation, is was \$75,040 \$57,113 compared to \$67,917 for the State of Florida per the 2018 American Community Survey and the median income for the State of Florida is \$52,267. While this is a positive indicator, further economic diversification is needed to sustain income growth. Port St. Lucie, in collaboration with the St. Lucie County Economic Development Council, is actively working to toward this goal.

Tourism and retail/services are growing and well-represented sectors in the local economy. However, wages in these industries often lag behind the city's median and average household incomes. Food service, personal service, and sales occupations in particular offer significantly lower annual wages, creating income challenges for residents employed in these fields. Addressing these disparities through economic development initiatives will be key to strengthening the city's long-term prosperity.

Table 8 - 4. Port St. Lucie Income

Median Household Income	\$75,040
Average Household Income	\$94,089

Source: American Community Survey Key Population & Household Facts, 2018-2022; ESRI Business Analyst Outline

Table 8 - 5. Port St. Lucie MSA Wages by Occupation

Occupation	Hourly Median Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	\$14.02	\$32,800
Personal Care and Service Occupations	\$17.12	\$35,610
Sales and Related Occupations	\$21.42	\$44,560

Source: Employment and Wage Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023

E. Financial Health and Cost of Living

The following table compares Port St. Lucie's cost of living to other Florida cities and the nation. Based upon the overall cost of housing, transportation, utilities, and food, everyday costs are lower in Port St. Lucie compared to Fort Lauderdale, Miami and the US overall. A lower cost of living makes Port St. Lucie an attractive location for new residents as well as attractive to businesses interested in relocating.

Table 8-3

Table 8 - 6. Cost of Living

	Port St. Lucie	Fort Pierce	W. Palm Beach	Ft. Lauderdale	Miami	U.S. Avg.
Cost of Living						
Overall	98.6 100	98.6 87.6	114.1 108.1	110.5 117.9	118.9 123.1	100.0
Housing	98.9 96.9	69.9 66.7	102.0 104.4	135.3 135.9	136.5 142.7	100.0
Transportation	102.7 102.7	88.1 88.1	127.4 127.4	130.8 130.8	144.5 144.5	100.0
Utilities	94.0 93.9	95.0 95.4	97.0 97.1	96.0 96.4	96.0 95.5	100.0
Food & Groceries	104.7 104.7	101.6 101.6	104.8 104.8	107.6 107.6	107.3 107.3	100.0
Health	103.7 100	103.7 87.6	101.0 108.1	99.2 117.9	104.0 123.1	100.0
Miscellaneous	86.5 96.9	86.3 66.7	108.8 104.4	107.6 135.9	100.2 142.7	100.0
Housing						
Median Home Cost	\$372,300 \$224,100	\$274,000 \$154,100	\$397,000 \$241,400	\$521,000 \$314,300	\$524,600 \$329,900	\$338,100 \$231,200
Environment						
Comfort Index (Higher=better)	6.8	7	6.6	6.4	6.4	--
Precipitation-Days	131.8	127	140	134	129	100
Air-Quality (100=best)	71	76	69	72	53	58
Water-Quality (100=best)	54	54	30	50	50	55

{Source: Sperling's City Profile 05/20/2020}

F. Unemployment

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual average unemployment rate for the Port St. Lucie Metropolitan Area, which includes St. Lucie and Martin County counties in March 2020 was 5.33.8 percent in 2024 compared to a statewide unemployment rate of 4.32.9 percent (not seasonally adjusted) per the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation. These rates are near full employment, indicating that while many residents commute outside the area for work or earn lower-than-average wages, unemployment itself is not a significant local issue.

~~In Early 2020, Coronavirus (Covid-19), an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, caused nationwide unemployment due to the temporary closing of businesses in efforts to stop the spread of this disease. In May 2020, City Council approved the Covid-19 Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance Grant Program which provides assistance to eligible residents who experienced loss of income, reduction in work hours or unemployment as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has produced a short-term spike in the local unemployment rate which will skew the unemployment numbers for the City for 2020.~~

G. Future Land Uses

The future land use map allocates 8.7 percent of the total acreage in the city for commercial use and 1.2 percent for industrial use. Compared to past percentages (4% commercial and 1% industrial in 2012), it is evident that the city is transitioning from a bedroom community to a more diverse mix of uses. Lands with a Commercial of Industrial future land use designation made up 4% and 1% of the land area of the City respectively. This compares to 10.0% commercial, and 8.0% industrial land uses based on a national average of other similar size communities. Prior to the mid-2000s Historically, residential development has been was considered a better stronger investment in the Port St. Lucie area. However, the City has in more recent years prioritized developed commercial growth. Key developments include commercial centers including sites located near major interchanges and the technology cluster at Tradition. The required mixed of uses in the Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) reflects aligns with this policy strategy.

Located along Interstate 95 between the Tradition Parkway and Becker Road interchanges, the Southern Grove Jobs Corridor is a major employment and economic hub in Port St. Lucie. The area supports large-scale manufacturing, logistics, and retail development, offering a central location between major metropolitan areas and international airports in Orlando and West Palm Beach. Southern Grove includes the Tradition Center for Commerce and the Tradition Center for Innovation, which together provide substantial acreage and square footage for office, industrial, warehouse, and retail uses. The corridor continues to attract investment in sectors such as manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, corporate and medical offices, research and development, retail, multi-family residential, hospitality, and education.

Port St. Lucie DRIs in the southwest area utilize the New Community District (NCD) future land use designation. The ~~New Community District~~ NCD future land use designation (~~NCD~~) accounts for approximately 19 percent of the total land area in the City. The NCD District was created as a land use for Developments of Regional Impact to reflect the mixed use nature of these projects and allows commercial and industrial uses in addition to residential uses.

Port St. Lucie has several areas designated as light industrial ~~areas~~ that provide somewhat higher paying jobs (than the County average) in light manufacturing and assembly. The City is also encouraging light clean industry, life sciences, and technology as a means to increase the number and quality of the available jobs within the City and lower the proportion of retail and construction jobs.

III. Important Economic Issues

A. Tourism

Eco-tourism is an emerging tourism trend that focuses on marketing of the environment. Eco-tourism involves experiencing the natural environment and educating about natural resources without threatening the environment. The North Fork of the St. Lucie River and other pristine natural habitats such as the Savannas Preserve State Park, and the County's Oxbow Eco-Center provide ideal settings for establishing eco-tourism. ~~St. Lucie County is currently in the process of acquiring several thousand acres of pristine natural areas through grants and a \$20 million bond approved by county voters.~~ Developing this market with activities such as backpacking, bird watching, horseback riding, canoeing, camping, and fishing will help expand the tourism season and reduce the unemployment gap.

B. Public Infrastructure

The ability of a community to attract and sustain economic development depends on the quality of the community's infrastructure. Infrastructure includes roadways and bridges; airports; drainage and stormwater facilities; water and wastewater systems; electric generation and transmission systems; solid waste collection, recycling and disposal facilities; schools; parks; and any other facility that is basic in daily life. These facilities are the skeletal structure that support community life and economic development. Other elements of this plan provide details on City activities in these areas.

The City annually updates the Capital Improvements ~~Element~~ schedule to ensure level of service standards are met for existing and future development.

C. Transportation

Efficient transportation of ~~The ability to move~~ people, goods, and services ~~efficiently~~ is an important part a key driver of economic development. The region benefits from strong ~~county has good~~ inter-modal ~~transportation~~ access to larger markets through the Port of Ft. Pierce, a deep water seaport and the Treasure Coast International Airport, a major regional airport. These transportation hubs provide significant commercial opportunities and enhanced connectivity.

According to the 2035 Florida Aviation System Plan, ~~the~~ Treasure Coast International Airport's ~~and the Port of Fort Pierce offer important commercial opportunities to further increase transportation linkages. The 2035 Florida Aviation System Plan indicates that the Treasure Coast International Airport's~~ economic development potential was recently ~~bolstered~~ strengthened by a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. ~~Commerce Division of the~~ Economic Development Administration. Combined with state and county ~~dollars~~ funding, this ~~federal~~ grant supports the construction of ~~will help fund~~ a 30,000-square-foot hangar ~~with sufficient space for~~ capable of housing two Boeing 737 aircraft. Additionally, the ~~Treasure Coast International A~~irport has ~~also recently made significant investments to~~ expanded its customs processing capacity and improved its taxiway system to support future growth.

Although the airport and port are outside City limits, their proximity enhances Port St. Lucie's attractiveness for businesses seeking strategic access to transportation infrastructure.

Further bolstering the City's accessibility ~~In addition~~, the Florida Turnpike, ~~and~~ Interstate 95, ~~as well as and~~ the Florida East Coast (FEC) railroad all traverse the ~~county area, providing critical transportation linkages for industry and commerce. Currently, the City counts with 2 Interstate-95 interchanges providing access to the Southern Groves employment center: one at Tradition Parkway and another one at Becker Road. To further~~

improve regional connectivity and support economic expansion within Southern Grove, a future interchange at Marshall Parkway and Interstate 95 has been identified as a key infrastructure need.

D. Quality of Life

The Treasure Coast Region enjoys an excellent quality of life. The indicators of quality of life include the natural environment, recreation, culture, safety, education, housing and health services. The perception of an area having a good quality of life is critical for many businesses when determining whether or not to invest in an area. A community must call attention to its diversity, identity, and individuality to attract capital and investment. In addition, a community must continue efforts to maintain and expand the infrastructure and other amenities (museums, theater, sports, entertainment, recreation) to sustain a quality of life enjoyed by residents and found attractive to outside businesses.

Port St. Lucie has invested in quality of life through the development of the [Mid Florida Event Center](#)~~Civic Center~~, the Botanical Gardens, [Pioneer Park](#), and ample park facilities. The City also supports public art projects and community and cultural events such as City Fest, jazz concerts, and holiday events.

The Public Art Advisory Board, established in 2009, was formed to prepare a Public Art Master Plan and recommends specific public art projects, including the selection of works of art, special landscape treatments and architectural enhancements. [The City's Art in Public Places Program, as amended in 2018 and 2021, requires](#) ~~The Public Art Program requires~~ all new development requiring a site plan or site plan amendment to provide public art. [In March, 2021, the City adopted an Art in Public Places Plan that establishes the vision and strategy for developing arts Citywide. Specifically, the Plan points to connections to the City Strategic Plan and in terms of economic development, efforts at building the arts portfolio in redevelopment activities.](#) ~~In November 2019, the City selected Designing Local Ltd. to prepare an updated Public Art Master Plan expected to be completed sometime in 2020.~~

E. Location identification to build on job creation efforts

There has been great success in development associated with Southern Grove in preceding years and the City has an interest in identifying additional physical inventory locations that can become the focal point for job creation efforts. These include developing job corridors of opportunity throughout the City particularly with regard to eastside initiatives such as US 1 and Walton and One. In addition, additional commerce park space capacity and supporting infrastructure would be important to provide opportunities to further develop large scale commercial and industrial employment.

F. Continued Small Business Support and Development

The City aims to supports small business growth by developing programs tailored to their unique needs. This may include program development with partners to provide small business and entrepreneurial services and from the City's perspective, guidance in navigating City regulatory procedures that adhere to small business development.

G. Provision of Workforce Housing Opportunities

Provision of adequate workforce housing will be important to the ability of the City to maintain the necessary workforce to serve local employers. Where possible, the City will need to partner with the private development community and housing provision partners to ensure that workforce housing opportunities align with workforce housing needs.

IV. Economic Development

A. Business Navigator Program

In 2017 the City of Port St Lucie established the Business Navigator position to assist applicants understand the land development and permitting process and work with the land development departments to resolve issues and streamline the development process. The Business Navigator provides the following value-added services to the development and business community in Port St Lucie.

1. Development Services

- Consultation to determine a company's business needs and provide an orientation to the land development and permitting process.
- Guidance throughout the approval process and clarifying requirements for obtaining a business license, zoning approvals and building permitting.
- Serve as the company's business facilitator with all City Departments.
- Act as a liaison to resolve concerns in the development process to keep the project on schedule.

2. Business Assistance

- Assist companies with identifying available sites including retail, office and industrial properties.
- Provide information on available City, County and State incentive programs and assist with the submission of applications and approvals.
- Coordinate peer-to-peer meetings with local business leaders, the St Lucie County Economic Development Council, St Lucie County Chamber of Commerce, Treasure Coast Manufacturers Association and the Treasure Coast Builders Association.
- Coordinate with CareerSource Research Coast to provide access to labor market information and employee training programs and incentives.

B. Economic Development Activity

[The 2017–2024 Economic Impact Analysis, released by the Economic Strategy Center of Atlanta in February 2025, evaluates economic activity across St. Lucie County, more specifically focusing on the economic impact of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County from 2017 through 2024 for new and retained jobs from 64 projects. The economic impact of future jobs from commercial and industrial parks was also included. The report findings indicate that the majority of recent economic growth has occurred within Port St. Lucie.](#)

[According to the report, \\$20,116,746 in annual tax revenue was generated in 2024 across St. Lucie County's two municipalities from the 64 EDC-supported projects included in the IMPLAN model. Of that amount, \\$16,737,133 were returned specifically to the City of Port St. Lucie. This figure reflects a notable increase in tax revenue over the study period and the trend is expected to continue in the coming years. In addition, the County retained 12,997 jobs, coupled with the creation of 11 commercial and industrial parks and 2 spec buildings in the Legacy Park at Tradition.](#)

Southern Grove has been one of Florida's most unique job opportunity areas for large-scale manufacturing, logistics and retail development. It had the largest swath of development-ready vacant land in all South

Florida that fronts over four miles of Interstate 95, with interchanges at both Tradition Parkway and Becker Road. Port St. Lucie has a talent-ready labor market with a central location between several major metro areas, including international airports located in Orlando and West Palm Beach. Village Parkway runs from Tradition Parkway at the north down to Becker Road at the south, offering four miles of completed water, wastewater, electric, gas and fiber infrastructure.

Southern Grove includes both the Tradition Center for Commerce and the Tradition Center for Innovation, home to Cleveland Clinic Martin Health. Tradition Center for Commerce is a 1,175-acre part of the 8,200-acre community better known as 'Tradition'. It has been an opportunity for development with the City of Port St. Lucie with over 10 million square feet of office, industrial, warehouse and retail space. Parcel sizes are flexible to allow for opportunity for large-footprint users. Potential development include manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, corporate office, medical office, research & development, retail, multi-family residential, hospitality and educational uses.

Legacy Park is the largest park within the Southern Grove Jobs Corridor, a 1,247-acre area approved for a mix of employment-generating uses. Spanning approximately 400 acres, Legacy Park at Tradition is one of the largest master-planned industrial parks in Florida. The park is already home to a 245,000-square-foot FedEx Ground Sortation Center, a 367,000-square-foot Cheney Brothers food distribution facility, a 220,822-square-foot Amazon warehouse, and is planned to accommodate several other major developments, including a Costco Warehouse Depot, which is currently under construction and is planned to total 1.87 million square feet.

Recent data indicates that approximately 651 acres of City-owned land in the Southern Grove Job Corridor have been sold, with pending options on an additional 111 acres and 106 acres still available for development.

LTC Ranch Industrial Park is another major employment generating development in Port St. Lucie, encompassing approximately 1,960,200 square feet of industrial space and 1,508,500 of office space per the DRI. This site also contains a 1,000,000-square-foot Amazon warehouse. The park supports a diverse range of uses and contribute significantly to the local economy by creating skilled and professional employment opportunities that can expand the City's tax base and complement the other employment hubs, such as Southern Grove.

The City has also experienced growth in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors in St Lucie West, the Midway Business Center, as well as the Tradition Center for Commerce. The following table summarizes the recent expansions, job creation and capital expenditures of companies expanding or relocating to the City of Port St Lucie.

Table 8 - 7. Job Growth

Project/ Company Name	Industry	Baseline Jobs	Projected New Jobs	Current 2019 Existing Jobs (12/31/24)	BLDG SQ FT
A&G Concrete Pools	Manufacturing Construction Services	60	10	8962	19,000
TAMCO/City Electric Supply	Manufacturing	210	50	211234	411,000
Expert Shutters	Manufacturing	31	10	6985	24,800

Cleveland Clinic Martin Health System	Life Sciences	1,241	150	1,402	45,000
OCULUS Surgical	Manufacturing	27	50	46 37	53 150,000
Accel- Florida	Manufacturing	0	125	18	150,000
Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Inst/ Vaccine (FRIC)	Life Sciences Research	0	50 100	105	100,000 107,000
Convey Health Solutions	Professional Services	200	150	420	65,000
Drexel Metals	Manufacturing	0	25	13 7	25,000
Ross Mixing	Manufacturing	40	16	40	55,000
FedEx Ground	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	40	451	245,000
Total Truck Parts	Warehouse/ Distribution	16	10	15	51,780
Amazon Fulfillment Center	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	500	1,200	1,100,000
Chandler Bats	Manufacturing	0	11	21	17,000
Cheney Brothers	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	275	310	427,000
Amazon Delivery Station	Warehouse/ Distribution	170	330	300	220,000
Florida Coast Medical Center (Tenet Health)	Life Sciences	0	600	0	181,925
LactaLogics	Life Sciences/ Headquarters	0	60	6	60,000
Costco Depot Phase 1	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	265	0	622,685
Marine Digital Integrators	Marine	0	61	0	40,000
Import Mex Distributors (fka Alex Lee, Inc Ph 1; Project King)	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	121	0	165,000
Project Four PSL	Manufacturing	0	225	0	250,000
Costco Depot Phase 2	Warehouse/ Distribution	0	115	0	1,247,955
TOTAL		1,795	2,769	4,291	\$5,448,145
Teleperformance	Business-Support Services		300		
McKesson	Business-Support Services		150		
IVox Solutions	Business-Support Services		300		



		941	473	145,000
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Source: City of Port St. Lucie, 2024.

C. Economic Development Accomplishments

The City continues to diversify ~~the local~~ its economy and ~~create~~ expand jobs ~~opportunities~~. Port St. Lucie is ~~home to the~~ spring training ~~home of the~~ New York Mets' ~~spring training facility~~, a major league baseball team and ~~home of its~~ minor league ~~team~~ affiliate, the St. Lucie Mets, ~~contributing to the local sports and tourism economy~~. Additionally, ~~T~~he Professional Golf Association (PGA) has a ~~home~~ presence at PGA Village, ~~and along with their outstanding~~ ~~which features world-class~~ golf courses ~~has built a state-of-the-art~~ ~~PGA learning center~~.

Furthermore, the City has partnered with the United Soccer League (USL) to bring a professional men's and women's soccer franchise to the Port St. Lucie community. A 6,000-seat stadium is planned on nearly six acres within the Walton & One development, with room for future expansion based on league demand. The project is being led by Ebenezer Holdings, LLC and Ebenezer Management, LLC, in partnership with The McCullers Group and LaBella for construction and design. The stadium will be home to the Port St. Lucie Sports Club, a USL League One men's team expected to begin play in 2027, with a women's team to follow. The City will have access to the stadium for 24 event days annually.

Additional plans for a sports training complex are being considered outside Walton & One. This facility is expected to serve as a cultural and entertainment anchor for Walton & One, stimulating additional commercial and mixed-use development, supporting local jobs, and enhancing Port St. Lucie's profile as a regional sports and entertainment destination.

The City also benefits from strong higher education institutions, with Indian River State College, Keiser University, Florida Atlantic University, and Barry University ~~have all maintaining~~ facilities ~~located~~ within Port St. Lucie providing residents with excellent ~~higher~~ educational and workforce development opportunities.

In recent years, the City in partnership with St. Lucie County and the Economic Development Council (EDC) of St. Lucie County recruited three major life science institutions.

The EDC is also a partner in Florida's Research Coast. ~~Florida's Research Coast was~~ established in 1998 as a regional economic development initiative. It includes Indian River County, Martin County, St. Lucie County, and Okeechobee County.

The Economic Development Council has focused on diversifying the economy through a focus on growth and development of several target industries inclusive of: Advanced Manufacturing, AgTech/Nutraceuticals, Aviation/Aerospace, Composite Materials, Distribution/Logistics, Life Sciences and Marine Industries. These target industries roughly align with those identified by the City.

Some recent accomplishments announced in the City by the EDC include:

- **Costco Depot.** In January 2024, the EDC made its largest single project announcement to date. Costco will be bringing hundreds of jobs to the region as the company develops a multi-phased cold and dry storage depot at the Sansone Group's Legacy Park at Tradition. The global company's depot is currently under construction and will ultimately include two facilities totaling 1.87 million square feet and employ more than 500.

- **Lightbridge Academy.** Lightbridge Academy broke ground in April 2023 for the national educational childcare center's first Florida location. The 11,000+ SF facility with extensive outdoor play areas in Port St. Lucie near PGA Village was developed by Dragonfly Investments. Currently enrolling infants, toddlers and pre-K children, the academy opened this spring and held its official grand opening celebration in June. The academy also offers a summer camp with a learning-through-play theme.

Port St. Lucie is home to cutting-edge research facilities focused on human health, aquaculture, agriculture, our ocean and rivers. Hundreds of scientists and their staff live, work and make important discoveries here.

~~FIU at Torrey Pines:~~

~~The biotech industry took root in the City with the relocation of the Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies from its location in Southern California. The City built a 100,000 square foot laboratory and office space, and Torrey Pines moved into the new facility in January 2009. Torrey Pines employs 95 scientists and is expected to employ 190 employees at their final build out phase.~~

~~The Mann Research Center has also made a commitment to locate in Port St. Lucie. Eventually, other companies will emerge to provide supplies and services for these prestigious institutions~~

~~The Florida Board of Governors approved the merger of Florida International University (FIU) with Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies in 2020. FIU plans to conduct research in the fields of brain cancer, Alzheimer's disease, ALS, Parkinson's disease and other memory disorders. FIU estimates it will spend \$5 million over the next decade to address deferred maintenance of Torrey Pines building including a ventilation system, roofing, doors, and exterior paint. FIU plans to increase the number of research teams at Torrey Pines from four to eighteen within three years and intends to increase grant funding from \$2.2 million annually to \$18 million.~~

~~The Tradition Area in Port St. Lucie has become a technology cluster with three prestigious biotechnology institutions: Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies, Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute, and the Mann Research Center, LLC having located operations in this area. Other technology companies such as the digital animation studio, Digital Domain may complement the technology cluster in Tradition.~~

- **The Florida International University Center for Translational Science (CTS)** is a biomedical research center focusing on lung, vascular & airway disease (COPD, congenital heart disease); brain injury & aging (Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, brain tumors); inflammation, infection, & immunity; bioinformatics; and metabolism. CTS had 13 labs and 75 employees in 2023 and ultimately plans to expand to 25-30 labs and employ 250-300 scientists and staff. FIU offers local high school and Indian River State College students research opportunities through summer internship and undergraduate programs.
- **Cleveland Clinic Florida Research and Innovation Center (FRIC)**, led by Dr. Michaela Gack, is a cutting-edge research institute dedicated to advancing medicine and saving lives through groundbreaking research, discovery and innovation. Researchers work to expedite the timeline of translating basic science discoveries into treatments that can extend human life and improve the efficiency of healthcare delivery. Currently, more than 100 scientists and staff are employed at FRIC, investigating the mechanisms and manifestations of infectious and inflammatory diseases and designing novel cancer therapeutics that are urgently needed.

~~The former Oregon Health and Science University's Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute (VGTI) has become Cleveland Clinic's Florida Innovation and Research Center. The Center is managed by Cleveland Clinic's~~

~~Lerner Institute and will create a translational vaccine and immunotherapy institute that will become the focal point for development of therapies across the areas of cancer, neuroscience, infectious disease and allergies. The aim will be to connect the new institute with local clinical and science research groups, and to seed new opportunities to enable teams of clinical scientists, physicians, and basic science teams to develop strategies to improve patient care nationwide. Vaxine is an international biotechnology that will relocate its corporate headquarters to the Florida Innovation and Research Center. Vaxine is developing clinical stage immunotherapies and vaccines across infectious disease, cancer, allergy and drug addiction. The Center will also house researchers from Florida International University and the recently announced Cleveland Clinic Center for Global and Emerging Pathogens Research which will broaden the understanding of emerging pathogens. The projected number of jobs created from this research collaborative is 100 jobs paying an average wage \$47,652 which represents 125% of the average wage in St Lucie County as of 2019.~~

D. Business Retention and Expansion

One of the EDC's key programs is the development of a Business Retention and Expansion program (BRE) for businesses located in Port St. Lucie through a collaborative effort between St. Lucie County's Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast, St. Lucie County's Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County.

The BRE Program tries to identify the following:

- Companies at risk.
- Companies ready for expansion.
- Company business needs - Uncover business needs, local factors, or trends that might lead a company to shut down, relocate or expand.
- Communication - Establish on-going communication between the public and private sector and build a pro-business attitude for local businesses.
- Knowledge - Build a knowledge base of how the local economy works.

E. Economic Development Incentives

The City of Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie County have a number of incentives for business to relocate to the City and St. Lucie County. They include:

- Job Growth Investment Grant
- Ad Valorem Tax Abatement
- Industrial Development Revenue Bonds
- Economic Development Impact Fee Mitigation
- Foreign Trade Zone
- Brownfield Site
- Franchise Fee Rebate

The City of Port St. Lucie supports creation of new business by holding new business training classes with sessions in English, Spanish and Creole. These programs complement the following State of Florida economic development incentives:

- Sales and Use Tax Exemptions
- Qualified Target Industry Grant

- Capital Investment Tax Credit
- High Impact Performance Grant
- Infrastructure Incentive Road Fund

According to the 2018 St. Lucie County Economic Development Data and Analysis, in April 2009, the Economic Development Council and the St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce hosted the St. Lucie Economic Roundtable to discuss the County's transition to a knowledge-based economy and to create a vision for the future, which resulted in a series of actions to be taken in the next three to five years.

As a result of this action plan, in 2009 St. Lucie County in partnership with the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County was able to create a 3,000 new, high wage jobs; a thousand of which are also high wage, high skill positions. By 2010, St. Lucie County became the new home of prestigious biotechnology institutions such as the Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies, and the Mann Research Center, LLC.

The Economic Strategy Center of the National Community Development Services presented to the St. Lucie Economic Development Council in January 2018 their report titled Economic Impact Analysis Return on Investment, 2015-2017 summarizing the more recent successes of the EDC's partnerships with local governments. During the period the EDC worked on 29 projects that retained and created 2,867 jobs, the largest of which are represented by Maverick Boat Group's current expansion and Tradition Medical Center phase I and phase II expansions.

Additionally, the group determined to work collaboratively between City management and County administration to publish an official vision statement for the County and create a list of potential financing opportunities.

V. Future Considerations **CONCLUSION**

As the City of Port St. Lucie continues to grow, it remains proactive in fostering economic opportunities within its boundaries. A key ~~The City Council's~~ strategic goal for economic development ~~activities is the creation of to~~ create a diverse economy and expand employment opportunities for Port St Lucie residents. ~~Two major objectives identified in the 2019-2020-2024-2025 Strategic Plan Update includes identifies the following two~~ major objectives under the Economic Development Goal:

- **Expand Job Opportunities and Support Economic Development:** Southern Grove was initially expected to develop over a longer timeframe. However, the City was able to quickly find employers interested in the area and the rapid land acquisition has demonstrated strong demand for industrial and commercial space, attracting major employers to the City. To further capitalize on this momentum, the City is actively pursuing developing additional employment corridors to ensure sites are ready for business expansion. To further enhance this effort, the City has launched the Eastside Economic Development and US 1 Business Revitalization Strategy.
- **Revitalize Eastern Port St Lucie and Local Small Businesses:** The Walton and One project, which will include the United Soccer League (USL) stadium, will serve as a cornerstone for economic growth in eastern Port St. Lucie, creating a vibrant mixed-use district where residents can live, work, and play. Advancing the Walton and One Master Plan remains a top priority to enhance economic vitality and quality of life. Additionally, the City is committed to supporting small businesses by facilitating workshops and providing business assistance programs ensuring small businesses thrive in the community.

- ~~• The build-out of Southern Grove in Tradition as an employment center for bio-science, health care, manufacturing and other job-creating commercial enterprises, the sale of City-owned land in the Tradition Center for Commerce.~~
- ~~• Making City Center the mixed-use cornerstone of eastern Port St Lucie through the creation of a convention/entertainment district.~~

The Economic Development Element Goals, Objectives, and Policies ~~that follow this section~~ are a means to help realize orderly economic growth. Land use planning, zoning, and fiscal policy should encourage patterns of development that will foster redevelopment, ~~and~~ infill of existing commercial areas, and ~~cause~~ develop new ~~areas to form in a way that will increase viable locations for~~ economic hubs development. The Future Land Use Element of this plan also furthers this concept by designating compact centralized locations including commercial nodes and mixed use within the City suitable for expanded commercial activity.