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Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Competitive Florida Partnership: City of Stuart 2016-2017

City of Stuart Stakeholder Engagement
Strategy Deliverable 1

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The City of Stuart has been designated a 2016-2017 Competitive Florida Partnership community. In order to maintain a thriving and vibrant city, the City of Stuart identified the need to develop an economic development strategy. As part of the Competitive Florida Partnership planning process, this stakeholder engagement strategy, is not only the first deliverable as part of the City's contract with the Department of Economic Opportunity, it is essential to a productive economic development plan. A successful plan will create buy-in from the community and develop actionable items for an effective economic development program within the City of Stuart.

Background

Stuart is a community of 15,593 persons, as reported in the 2010 Census. The downtown area dates back to the 1880's when it was originally named Potsdam. The name was changed to Stuart in 1895. The town was noted for its pineapple and citrus farming, flowers and fishing industries. The Florida East Coast Railway runs through the downtown, and when first constructed, it became an important boost to the local economy. Stuart enjoyed strong growth during the early 1900's, with the Feroe and Stypmann subdivisions adding to what is today the Historic Downtown.

Haney Circle, Downtown Stuart

In the late 1920's, the collapse of the Florida land boom, the demise of the pineapple industry due to insects and Cuban competition, and the onset of the Depression hit Stuart particularly hard. The growth of tourism helped to alleviate some of the hard times, but development activity did not really resume until after World War II.

Most of the City lies south of the St. Lucie River, but the construction of the Roosevelt Bridge in 1933 spurred development in the North Point area.

Today, Stuart is noted for its high quality of life for seasonal and year round residents. The proximity of a large amount of sheltered, inland waterfront has made it a natural focus for water-related recreational activity. Fishing remains a significant local industry. Today, Stuart serves as the center of governmental, medical, legal, financial, and social activity in Martin County.

The City's historic downtown has been acclaimed as the 2016 "Happiest Seaside Town" by Coastal Living magazine. This continues to add to the small town charm that is a sacred characteristic of the City of Stuart.

Although our economy is diverse, in comparison to other small towns in the state; the City does not have a clear economic development strategy.

Priority Areas

Priority areas were identified by considering various planning documents, and pertinent policy initiatives that impacted our decision making on determining the priority areas. The Capital Improvement Plan is adopted annually; it provides long-term capital planning in 5 year increments. The CIP is a component of both the Comprehensive Plan and the City approved annual budget. Inclusively, the Economic Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan provides guidance on economic development in the City of Stuart. The Economic Element is utilized as a policy document to be expanded upon by other policy initiatives.

The City's 2015 Strategic Goals report identifies two goals; "Neighborhoods" and "Attracting People" as priorities within the community and economic development realms. More specifically the community development component of the City's strategic goals are defined as building upon neighborhood pride and identity. The economic development component as defined by the City's strategy goals is that the City will build a community by attracting people through a business friendly environment and a lifestyle enriched by art, sports, education, events and celebration.

Iconic Sails, Downtown Stuart

Additionally, the City of Stuart Community Redevelopment Plan is responsible for community development, revitalization and economic development within the City Stuart CRA area. This CRA plan identifies many projects and programs; once implemented, would remove and prevent blighted conditions in the CRA and promote economic vitality in the area.

 All the aforementioned policy documents have not produced a unified program that addresses economic development in the City of Stuart. Via this Stakeholder Engagement Strategy the City hopes to gain a clearer understanding of needs, unknowns and direction on a successful economic development program.

With the assistance of the Department of Economic Opportunity provided a teleconference titled, "Data Conversation" with Richard Fetchick, Community Program Manager; with this conversation led to the City concurring on its four priority areas. By initiating this discussion with the City of Stuart leadership team it provided the opportunity for an honest discussion on what economic and community development areas the City needs answers to in order to develop an effective economic development strategy.

The following areas have been identified as the City of Stuart Economic and Community Development priority areas:

Housing

Redevelopment

Business Expansion

Data Analysis

Some core unknowns regarding the four priority areas are; how do we gain access to valuable data to assist us in decision making for the future of the City's economy; is there a willingness in increasing housing options and residential density, how do we attract professionals that work in Stuart but live elsewhere; redevelopment is a core mission of the City of Stuart (under the Community Redevelopment Agency) however redevelopment of properties have been sporadic, how do we create the next redevelopment catalyst; business expansion and retention are clear areas in which the City can assist the small business owner but how does the City accomplish this and who are those businesses that are ready to grow. The goal is to get many of these unknowns answered by engaging our stakeholders and developing a strong economic development plan.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Priority: Housing

Objective: Increasing housing opportunities, increasing density and population within the City and identifying obstacles.

Stakeholder	Role in Activity	Engagement Strategy	Follow-up and Feedback
Realtors	Defining real estate market	Targeted survey to realtors	Analyze survey results, additional questions would result in one-on-one meetings
Planners	Zoning and identifying development opportunities	In house open discussion	Gather zoning documents, analyze planner input; follow up individual issues
Affordable/attainable housing providers	Assist in identifying gaps in affordable housing	Focus group with similar providers	Follow up, if necessary, through executive director
Commissioners	Identifying policy and willingness to increase housing opportunities	One on one interviews	Present results of stakeholder strategy; follow up with one-on-one interviews
Top Industry Employees	Identifying housing likes and dislikes, needs and opportunities	Targeted survey to employees	Follow up with CEO one-on-one interviews with the top 5 industry employers
Residential Developers	Identify obstacles to residential construction	Focus group	Analyze information, follow up with any specific improvement

Priority: Redevelopment

Objective: Identify missed opportunities; focus on infill properties and redevelopment of City owned parcels and increasing Tax Increment Funds.

Stakeholder	Role in Activity	Engagement Strategy	Follow-up and Feedback
Commercial Realtors	Defining real estate market and trends	Focus group	Compile notes from focus group session, follow up should be on an individual basis
Developers	Identify missed opportunity, and trends	Focus groups with commercial realtors	Compile notes from focus group session, follow up should be on an individual basis
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council	Identify redevelopment strategies and best practices	Small group discussion with City staff	Follow up, if necessary, with designee
Lost Investor*	Understand why they did not find the City a viable place for their investment	One-on-one interviews	Analyze information for trends and areas of improvements
Strategic Property Owners	Understand obstacles to redevelopment from their perspective	One-on-one interviews	Identify trends and opportunities from discussion

*Lost investor is defined as those parties that showed interest by either proposing a development on a City owned property or simply showed interest. Why did they walk away? What was the obstacle that prevented them from investing in Stuart?

Priority: Business Expansion

Objective: Small businesses are at the core of the City of Stuart, retention and expansion is an area in need of greater focus; how do we assist businesses and how do we retain them within City boundaries.

Stakeholder	Role in Activity	Engagement Strategy	Follow-up and Feedback
Downtown Business Association	Provide input on small business needs from City	Gamestorming* in a small group setting	Draft recommendations for further review by DBA
Chamber of Commerce	Assist in identifying missed opportunities; how can the City assist in business expansion	In house open discussion	Follow up by providing information on City products that could assist Chamber members
Small Business Development Center/SCORE	Identify what tools they can provide to assist with expansion and retention	In house open discussion with Chamber of Commerce	Work together to develop and communicate SBDC tools to small businesses
Property Owners/Landlords	Identify how the City can work hand in hand with the property owners with expansions	One-on-one interviews	Update them on internal improvements that could assist their tenants
Business Development Board	Identify tools available to small businesses and trends in business expansion and retention	In house discussion with SBDC, and Chamber	Identify best mode of communication BDB tools to small businesses by collaborating with City
Representative from Key Industries**	Identify opportunities for industry clusters	Industry targeted focus groups	Develop an map of targeted industry clusters; follow up by analyzing zoning and available lands for expansion
Home based businesses/small offices	Identify possible business expansion; getting home based businesses into brick and mortar	Open house networking with a gamestorming session	Analyze data collected from engagement and identify gaps and opportunities

*Gamestorming: A game may be thought of as an alternative to the standard business meeting. Most games involve 3 to 20 people and last from 15 minutes to an hour and a half. A game suspends some of the usual protocols of life and replaces them with a new set of rules for interaction. Games may require a few props such as sticky notes, poster paper, markers, random pictures from magazines, or thought provoking objects. Gamestorming skills include asking questions (opening, navigating, examining, experimenting, closing), structuring large diagrams, sketching ideas, fusing words and pictures into visual language, and most importantly, improvising to choose and lead a suitable game or invent a new one.

**Key Industries have been identified by DEO held within the data analysis of top industry with high wage jobs; such as Information, Healthcare, Warehousing, Education and Public Administration.

Priority: Data Analysis

Objective: The City of Stuart's largest gap is in the area of data. This data would provide the necessary economic indicators to assist in policy and decision making process. By working with our stakeholders, the City could close the data gap. Opportunities for additional data should be identified at the end of this process.

Stakeholder	Role in Activity	Engagement Strategy	Follow-up and Feedback
Economic Council of Martin County	Identify what data they collect	Targeted survey	Follow up with additional clarification to survey
Chamber of Commerce	Identify what data they collect and data needs	Targeted survey	Follow up with additional clarification to survey
Small Business Development Center/IRSC	Identify their data collection	Targeted survey	Follow up with additional clarification to survey
City staff	Identify data needs and how to improve business license forms to assist in improved data collection	Small group discussion/gamestorming if applicable	Follow up with draft business license application and work with IT to improve website with data collection
Business Development Board	Identify data collection capabilities and future needs and collaboration	survey	Follow up with additional clarification to survey
Tourism	Identifying their data collection	One-on-one	Collect date and follow up with additional questions to executive director

Next Steps

City staff, with the support of DEO, will take this Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and begin implementation.   Attached to this document is a schedule of tasks to be completed within the next 6 months.

The schedule collapses certain tasks such as preparing surveys, making initial contact with our stakeholders and identifying top industry leaders as being accomplished in unison the first two weeks. Following this initial contacting is scheduling meeting and facilitating meetings. City Manager's office staff will facilitate most meeting between Robin LeMay, CRA Specialist and Teresa Lamar-Sarno, AICP, Special Assistant to the City Manager. The Small Business Development Center will be integrated to assist with the Business Expansion tasks such as facilitating meetings and follow up with stakeholders. The Community Services Department has the capacity to assist with facilitation of the networking meeting and getting the survey out to the identified stakeholder.

Our goal for the results of this engagement strategy is to allow the City of Stuart to discover new opportunities and answer many "unknowns".

Gantt chart: Stakeholder engagement timeline (14-Nov through 6-Mar)

Tasks (top to bottom):
- Draft data and housing surveys
- Initial contact with realtors, economic council, BDB, SBDC, Chambers, re: survey
- Identify Top industry Employers
- Contact top industry employers re: survey
- Distribute survey to realtors, and economic dev agency group
- Gather home based business list
- Housing meeting with City Dev. Dept.
- Data meeting with City staff
- Contact Affordable Housing group
- Focus Group: Affordable Housing
- Contact Residential Developers
- Focus Group: Residential Developers
- One on One: Top Industry employers
- Distribute survey to employees
- Identify Strategic Property Owners
- Contact commercial realtors and developers
- Meet with TCRPC: Redevelopment Priority
- Identify and contact Lost Investor group
- One on one: Strategic Properties Group
- One on One: Commissioners
- Contact SBDC about role in facilitating Business Exp. Priority Engagement
- Promote and advertise to home based business on networking event
- One on one: Tourism mtg on Data