

CLAY FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

# Strategic & Financial Development Plan

June 2021





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## Introduction & Project Overview

The Clay County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) has served as an essential component of the community's economic development successes. The CCEDC and the county have experienced industrial project wins recently that leverage its location, workforce and strong collaboration among partners.

VisionFirst Advisors appreciates its selection as a partner to CCEDC to develop a strategic and financial development plan to further its efforts. Given the market disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is wise for the organization to evaluate its strengths and opportunities and craft a plan for moving forward.

The plan on the following pages includes tactics to improve organizational performance, enhance the community's available product (industrial sites and buildings), understand competitive advantages and build trust with area stakeholders throughout all aspects of economic development.

It was important for this plan to specifically address how the community competes as it relates to sites and product. While companies considering a location or expansion evaluate a multitude of factors, mitigating risk is a critical and underlying component. Without a strong inventory of identified sites that demonstrate a clear pathway to acquisition, readiness and due diligence, Clay County will be at a disadvantage as compared to regional and national competitors.

However, through collaboration with private landowners, these property challenges can be addressed to show prospects a pathway to success. Continuing the CCEDC's proactive marketing efforts, along with new initiatives surrounding product development, will elevate the county's project pipeline and overall economic opportunity.



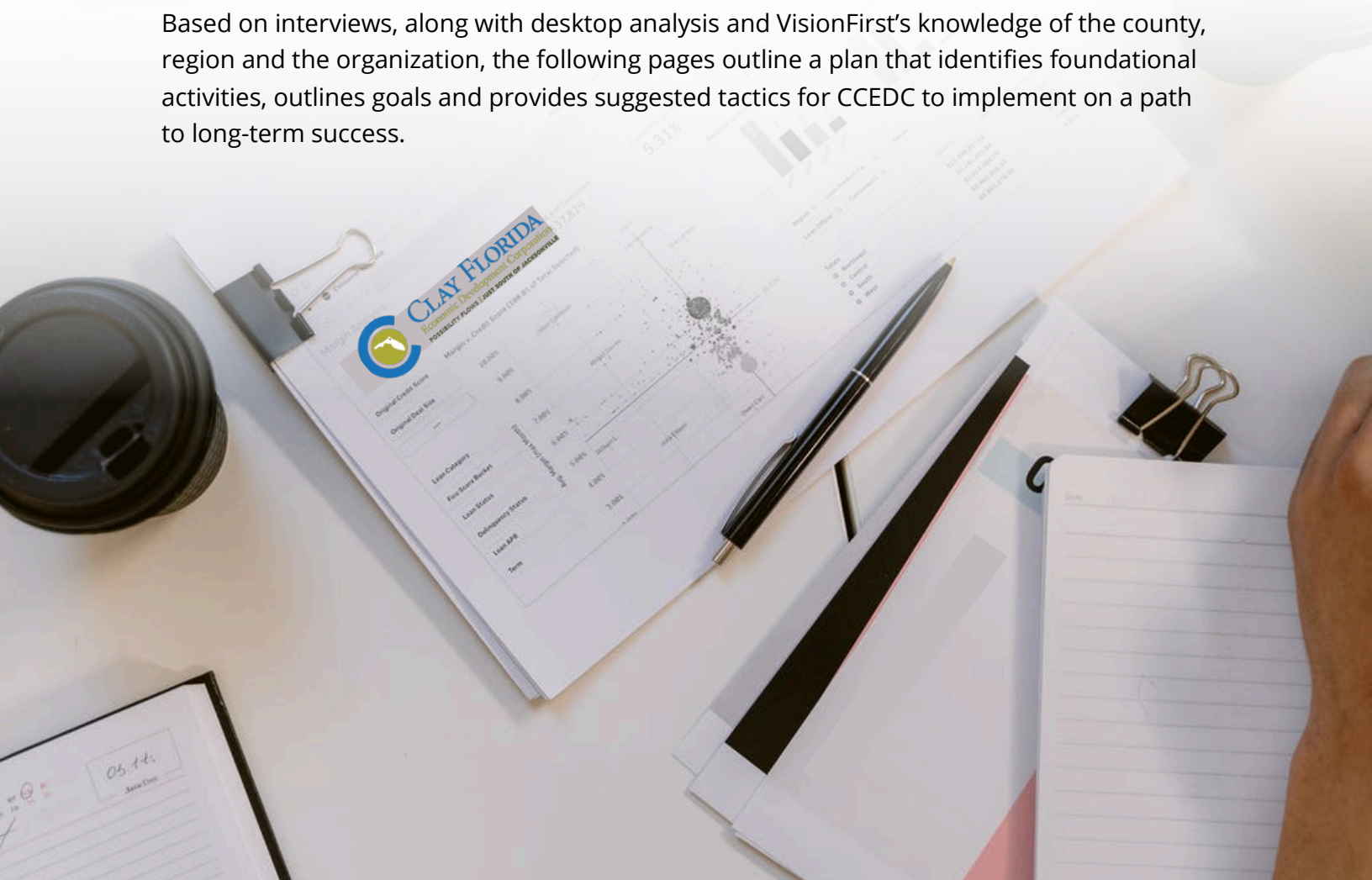
## Project Overview

To develop a meaningful and implementable strategic plan, which the community can successfully implement, it was important to not only gather data and trends, but to seek stakeholder input from a variety of voices, providing context to the analytics.

### VisionFirst Advisor's project approach included:

- **Gathering feedback** through conversations with numerous community leaders, business leaders and staff regarding the community's current economic development efforts and suggestions for moving forward.
- **Analyzing data** trends and projections regarding the county's growth, gaps and opportunities as compared to the region, state and nation.
- **Evaluating** the county's target industries.
- **Assessing** the county's assets both tangible and intangible.
- **Developing** a suite of goals and strategies for the county to use for increased economic prosperity.

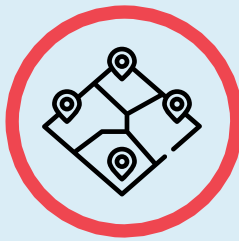
Based on interviews, along with desktop analysis and VisionFirst's knowledge of the county, region and the organization, the following pages outline a plan that identifies foundational activities, outlines goals and provides suggested tactics for CCEDC to implement on a path to long-term success.





## First Impressions

Communities rarely see their surroundings as clients, guests, prospective industries and newcomers do; below represent the **first impressions as perceived by a site selector**.



### **MISSED PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES**

Clay County is expansive ranging from Orange Park in the north and then south to Keystone Heights. Each part of the county has assets for industries to potentially leverage. However, several large landowners hold sizeable parcels which require significant infrastructure investments.

Given the lack of infrastructure, it is more profitable to turn the parcels into housing developments. The lack of land in public ownership or with agreements for public purchase make it challenging for the EDC to successfully recruit large projects.



### **RESIDENTS ARE DRAWN TO THE COMMUNITY**

Given the proximity to Jacksonville, a strong school district and high quality of place amenities, Clay County is a desirable location for residents. However, many residents are traveling to Jacksonville for work – making Clay County a commuter community. As

such, the county has attracted highly educated and well-paid professionals. Attracting an industrial workforce to the county for potential employers may prove to be a challenge.



### **BENEFITS & PERCEPTIONS OF GROWTH VARY**

Clay County has different identities within it. The northern part is associated with Jacksonville, Green Cove Springs is known for its river access and natural amenities while the southern portion and Keystone Heights is known for Camp Blanding. Each portion has assets, but the idea of growth means different things to each community. As the

CCEDC looks to recruit projects, the perceptions around the benefits of growth and smart growth will need to be addressed with stakeholders.





## Stakeholder Feedback

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**In Your Words** - VisionFirst hosted numerous stakeholder meetings over the course of the project with elected officials, business leaders and community members.

Conversations with the professional staff members allowed VisionFirst to gain a better understanding of current operations, programs, products and services. These conversations also helped identify challenges faced due to macro-economic trends and local issues, especially as the nation and community builds resiliency following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meetings with business and community stakeholders allowed VisionFirst to gain insights through the lens of each groups' focus and how the CCEDC and its partners can find long-term success. Every stakeholder meeting produced productive dialogue about the county's future, identifying both critical issues and attainable opportunities. During the conversations, VisionFirst sought answers to questions centered on such topics as:

- What is the definition of economic development for Clay County?
- Who are the CCEDC's internal and external customers?
- What are the barriers to success?
- Who are the partners for the county's economic development efforts?
- What does success look like for the CCEDC and economic development overall?
- What should be the top priorities be as it relates to sites and buildings?
- What has changed in the market that may change the focus of how economic and community development activities are handled?
- How should the organization measure success?





## Key Findings

Key findings from the meetings are presented in aggregate below and have been grouped by the main themes that resulted from the stakeholder conversations.

**The comments listed are a sampling of the meeting outcomes from local leaders and do not reflect VisionFirst's opinion.**

### KNOWN AS A COMMUTER COMMUNITY

- With communities like Fleming Island and a strong K-12 public school district, employees from the surrounding region have chosen to live in Clay County.
- Many residents are leaving the county to work in surrounding communities.
- Residents enjoy the county's natural amenities and community feel.
- Given the numerous benefits of the community, some residents are concerned about continued growth and traffic impacting what they enjoy.
- Portions of the county want to maintain their more rural and natural identity rather than recruiting industrial projects.

### LACK OF MARKETABLE PRODUCT

- The county has large portions of undeveloped property but much of it is owned by several private landowners.
- The parcels that are available lack infrastructure and utility connections, which are both expensive and have long timelines for completion.
- Prior development of office space that stayed vacant for years has given developers hesitation about speculative product development.
- The county's housing growth has made residential development more attractive to landowners given the short timelines and increased profitability.

### MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- Since January 2020, the CCEDC has received RFPs for 30 projects representing a combined total of nearly 10,500 jobs.
- Many of these projects required controlled sites for Clay County to be even considered.
- These projects represent a combined private capital investment of over \$1.2 billion.



- While incentive packages would be required to be successful, including property tax abatements on portions of the ad valorem tax liability, the projects would generate immediate tax revenue that would increase substantially over 10 to 20 years.

### **SHORTAGE OF INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE**

- Given the residential nature of the community, there is a lack of an industrial workforce.
- Recruiting large projects in the advanced manufacturing and aviation sectors may prove challenging to attract workers to travel into the community.
- The county's public school system is well respected in the community and statewide and offers opportunity for increased industry alignment for targets using CTE programs.
- A lack of public transportation exacerbates the workforce and housing challenges.

### **THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD**

- All the major industries within the county are expanding, but few people are aware of the growth.
- The county must determine what type of community it wants to be - industrial, tech, office or education.
- There are opportunities to break down traditional silos for greater collaboration and increased competitiveness.

### **FUNDING & CAPACITY ARE A CHALLENGE**

- Clay County is a fiscally conservative community, which poses challenges as it relates to willingness to apply for grants and additional funding streams.
- CCEDC staff have an expansive county to market with a variety of assets, however, the small staff size and budget provides limitations as to what initiatives they are able to move forward.
- Roadway improvements coupled with low milage rates have tied up a portion of the county's funding.



## Data-At-A-Glance

When evaluating a community either for strategic plans, communications or site selection, VisionFirst Advisors conducts a high-level data analysis of the county and region. Emphasis is placed on labor force participation rates, educational attainment, talent pipeline, industry location quotients and leading industries. This data provides a baseline of information to educate and inform decisions and better position the community.

**VisionFirst compiled a majority of the data from Chmura's JobsEQ which utilizes data from national sources. Data shown is from Q3 2020, the most recent available. Data from additional sources is noted.**

**FIGURE 1: COMMUNITY MARKETING & POSITIONING**

	Clay County	Jacksonville MSA	Florida
<b>Population (ACS)</b>	211,405	1,503,574	20,901,636
<b>Median Age</b>	39.7	38.4	42.0
<b>Population Annual Average Growth</b>	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%
<b>People per Square Mile</b>	362.8	487.2	400.5
<b>Labor Force Participation Rate and Size</b> <i>(civilian population 16 years and over)</i>	62.1%	63.4%	58.7%
<b>Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate and Size</b> <i>(civilian population 25-54)</i>	81.7%	82.4%	81.2%
<b>Armed Forces Labor Force</b>	1.0%	1.3%	0.3%
<b>Veterans, Age 18-64</b>	13.6%	9.5%	5.3%
<b>Private Sector Union Membership</b>	6.5%	6.8%	2.6%
<b>Average Salary</b>	\$40,877	\$52,671	\$52,079
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$65,740	\$62,211	\$55,660
<b>Mean Commute Time (minutes)</b>	33.7	27.0	27.8
<b>No High School Diploma</b>	7.6%	8.5%	10.7%
<b>High School Graduate</b>	29.8%	27.0%	27.9%
<b>Some College, No Degree</b>	24.3%	22.0%	20.1%
<b>Associate Degree</b>	13.3%	10.6%	10.9%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	17.3%	21.5%	20.0%
<b>Postgraduate Degree</b>	7.6%	10.4%	10.4%
<b>Median House Value</b> <i>(of owner-occupied units)</i>	\$185,400	\$208,591	\$215,300
<b>Poverty Level (of all people)</b>	10.2%	12.6%	14.0%



In looking at the data from Figure 1, Clay County is fortunate to have strong markers that are worth noting in positioning the county for competitive economic development projects:

- The county's continued growth, but with less density than the region and state, are attractive to residents as well as potential industry.
- Both percentages relating to labor force participation are strong and compare well to the national average.
- Given its proximity to military installations, the high percentage of veterans is attractive to potential industries looking for a reliable and trained workforce.
- The county's educational attainment levels demonstrate a wide variety of skills and education, however, knowing that many travel outside the county for work could pose challenges for human resource professionals.
- The county's commute time is high and given growth projections, those numbers may increase with additional traffic on roadways.

### **Taking a Closer Look at Target Industries »**

From an industry perspective, Clay County is known for its growing healthcare community as well as professional services. While VisionFirst did not conduct a comprehensive target industry study, by considering existing industry supply chains, educational programs, commuting patterns, workforce demographics and assets there are both opportunities and challenges as it comes to marketing and recruiting targeted industries. The next several figures provide a baseline of information about existing and emerging industry strength.

#### **FIGURE 2: CLAY COUNTY INDUSTRY CLUSTERS (JOBSEQ)**

A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. There are 22 industry clusters defined by JobsEQ. Industry clusters can form and grow because of a region's competitive advantages – resources such as location, trained labor and education systems. *(following page)*
















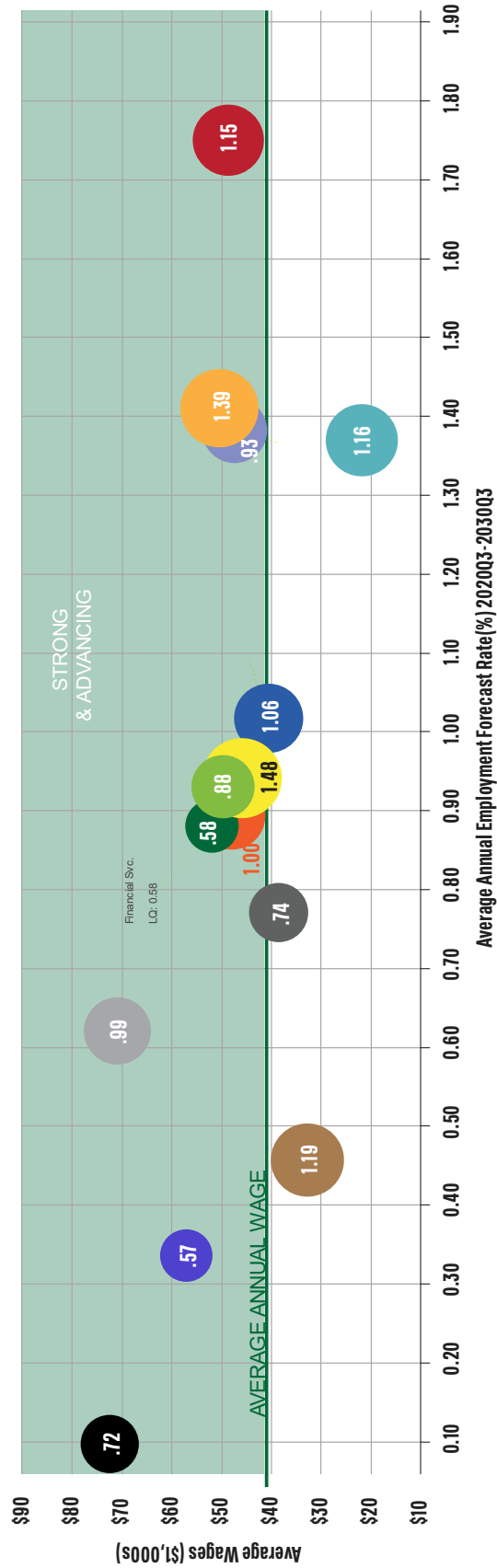
**\$40,887** —  
Average Annual Wage  
in Clay County, Florida

Competitive Advantage Threshold »

1.00

Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 2020 Q3

	CONSTRUCTION	1.48		RETAIL	1.19		HEALTH	1.15		EDUCATION	1.06		METAL & PROD MFG.	1.00
	FREIGHT TRANS	.99		PROF SVC	.93		AUTO/AUTO RELATED	.74		COAL/OIL/POWER	.72		FINANCIAL SVC	.58
													MACHINE MFG	.57





In looking at Figure 2, Clay County is fortunate that all of its industries are projected to grow at some level – this is rare in most rural communities. However, while the county is fortunate to have larger clusters in consumer services and retail, those industries pay below the average wage.

To identify and/or validate target industries from a county perspective, the community should consider three factors:

1. Industries projected to grow by at least 1.1% as that is the total for all industries by the next 5 years.
2. Industries that the county boasts a high location quotient (at least greater than 1.00 but ideally 1.25 or higher).
3. Industries that have a higher average annual wage than the county (\$40,877).

On a county level, two industries meet those criterion – Professional, Scientific and Technical Services along with Health Care and Social Assistance. Although health care is typically considered a market-driven industry there are opportunities for targeted recruitment of research or specialty services that offer long-term value to the county. Given the projected growth, CCEDC should continue to pursue their targets as with robust and meaningful outreach, the organization can facilitate cluster growth with high wage jobs.

### FIGURE 3: INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT WITHIN CLAY COUNTY (JOBSEQ)

Understanding the existing labor force and the growth/decline of targeted industries is an important first step to better positioning Clay County for future competitive projects that meet community objectives.

NAICS	Industry	Employment	Avg Ann Wages	Location Quotient	5-Year Historic Growth	5-Year Forecasted Growth
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	9,780	\$48,435	1.15	3.0%	1.7%
44	Retail Trade	8,807	\$28,717	1.49	0.7%	0.5%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	6,461	\$18,308	1.39	1.7%	1.4%
61	Educational Services	5,131	\$44,378	1.08	0.6%	1.0%
23	Construction	4,975	\$45,612	1.47	2.8%	1.0%
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	4,347	\$53,283	1.08	0.8%	1.8%
56	Admin, Support & Waste Management, Remediation Services	3,207	\$32,835	0.88	5.8%	1.3%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,769	\$28,211	1.10	-1.3%	1.2%
92	Public Administration	2,473	\$45,676	0.87	2.0%	0.9%



<b>48</b>	Transportation & Warehousing	1,830	\$64,822	0.67	1.0%	0.7%
<b>31</b>	Manufacturing	1,615	\$50,145	0.34	4.2%	0.4%
<b>52</b>	Finance & Insurance	1,376	\$51,773	0.58	3.2%	0.9%
<b>71</b>	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,313	\$28,396	1.32	-2.6%	1.7%
<b>53</b>	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	934	\$48,728	0.92	-3.1%	0.6%
<b>42</b>	Wholesale Trade	871	\$60,639	0.39	7.3%	0.4%
<b>51</b>	Information	779	\$51,245	0.68	-0.6%	-0.3%
<b>22</b>	Utilities	509	\$70,054	1.66	2.7%	0.5%
<b>11</b>	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	298	\$23,931	0.38	-1.2%	0.3%
<b>55</b>	Management of Companies & Enterprises	151	\$90,141	0.17	3.1%	1.2%
<b>21</b>	Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas Extraction	76	\$65,494	0.33	62.2%	2.0%
<b>99</b>	Unclassified	71	\$36,080	1.20	18.9%	1.1%
	<b>Total - All Industries</b>	<b>57,772</b>	<b>\$40,877</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

A closer look at Figure 3 notes the positive and continued growth in all industries other than information sector. Across all industries, projected growth is expected at 1.1 percent. However, it is important to note that the CCEDC's target industries of manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance (business support services) and as noted information are lower than the overall projected growth. To compete in these sectors will require significant marketing and prospecting to grow over the next five years.

In addition to identifying the county's industry strengths, it is also important to consider the average pay for those industries relative to the average wage. Currently, average wages for the county, region, state and nation are:

**Clay County: \$40,877** | **Jax MSA: \$52,671** | **Florida: \$52,079** | **USA: \$60,042**

Comparing those numbers to the top industries, retail trade and accommodation and food services pay significantly lower wages, but provide opportunity to offer upskilling to employees to move to other industries such as manufacturing or transportation and warehousing. Strong partnerships with the public-school system, St. Johns River State College along with additional state and federal funding could provide the talent pipeline needed for these sectors.

## Workforce & Industry Alignment »

Given the relatively low employment numbers in targeted industries such as manufacturing, transportation and warehousing and information, it will be critical for the



CCEDC to continue coordination with education providers to highlight the pathways in career and technical education programs.

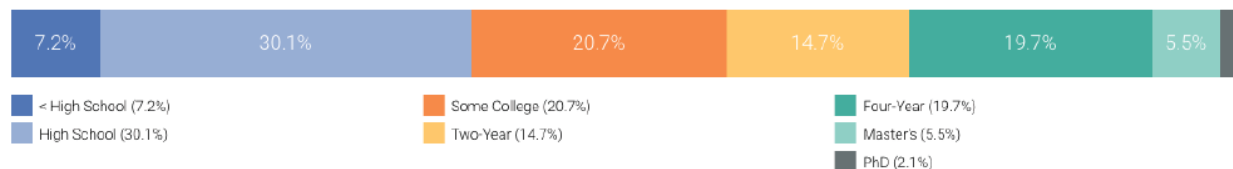
According to an article by the World Economic Forum, “In the coming year, the velocity of retirement by late-career workers will increase and this ‘grey tsunami’ will become an existential crisis for manufacturers already faced with the fact that, by 2025, 75% of the workforce will be millennials and 2.4 million industrial jobs in the US alone will be unfilled by 2028.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition, as the CCEDC recruits industry it must convey the need for prospects to pay competitive wages as compared to neighboring counties to not only attract a workforce but to retain employees. The next several charts evaluate the current workforce and potential gaps as well, as commuting patterns and salaries in relation to the regional economy.

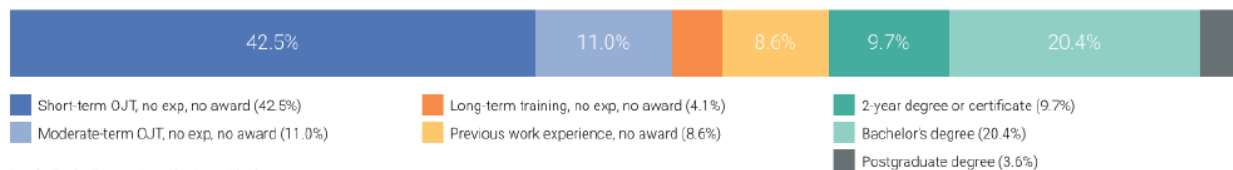
When assessing the county's labor market, it is important to look beyond unemployment rates and labor participation rates. Clay County's **Labor Force Educational Attainment versus Education and Training Requirements** (Fig. 4) show 33.7% of the jobs in the county require a two-year certificate/degree or higher, compared to 42% of the workforce who currently have a two-year certificate/degree or higher.

**FIGURE 4: EDUCATION ATTAINMENT COMPARED TO TRAINING REQUIRED<sup>2</sup> (JOBSEQ)**

**Educational Attainment :**



**Education and Training Requirements :**



Data for Total - All Occupations, Clay County, Florida  
Source: JobsEQ®, Data as of 2Q20Q3.

To further examine labor force's competitive advantage, especially for Clay County's **manufacturing** and **transportation, distribution and logistics** cluster labor base, VisionFirst assessed the labor force educational attainment versus education and training Requirements in manufacturing occupations.

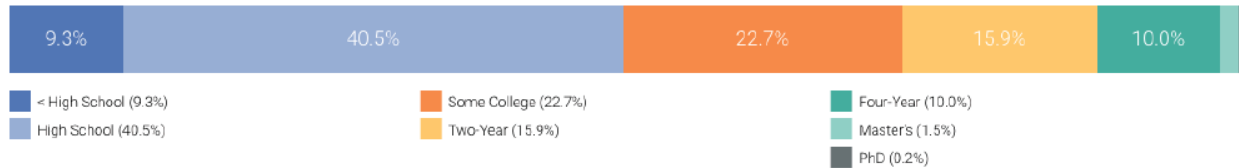
<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum - 3 reasons manufacturing in 2021 will focus on connecting workers

<sup>2</sup> JobsEQ



## Manufacturing cluster education attainment compared to training required –

### Educational Attainment :



### Education and Training Requirements :

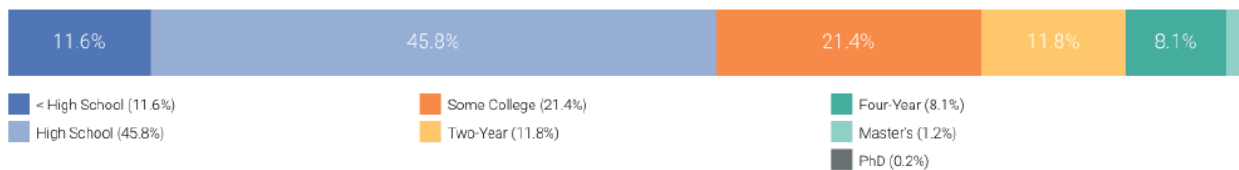


Data for Manufacturing (CTE Cluster), Clay County, Florida  
Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2020Q3.

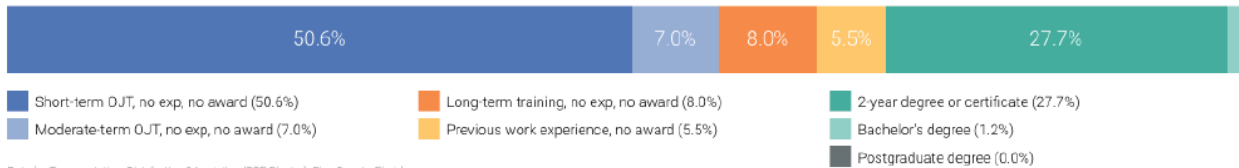
At present, 31.6% of manufacturing jobs in the county require some form of long-term training, compared to 50.3% of the workforce possessing some college or higher level of education. This is a significant selling point for the organization when trying to expand and attract skilled jobs because it highlights a portion of the pipeline with skilled workers to meet current and future workforce demands.

## Transportation, distribution and logistics cluster education attainment compared to training required –

### Educational Attainment :



### Education and Training Requirements :



Data for Transportation, Distribution & Logistics (CTE Cluster), Clay County, Florida

Conversely, 42.4% of transportation, distribution and logistics jobs in the county require some form of long-term training, compared to 42.7% of the workforce possessing some college or higher level of education. This poses a potential threat for the organization when trying to expand and attract additional logistic industries.



**FIGURE 5: POTENTIAL ANNUAL OCCUPATION GAPS OVER 10 YEARS IN CLAY COUNTY (JOBSEQ)**

SOC	Occupation	Annual Supply Gap/Surplus	Current Employment Q3 2020	Total Annual Demand	Projected Employment 2030
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	-39	3,991	312	4,674
11-0000	Management	-30	3,330	335	3,762
13-0000	Business & Financial Operations Occupations	-28	2,612	312	3,052
25-0000	Educational Instruction & Library	-18	3,910	407	4,347
47-0000	Construction & Extraction	-10	3,753	476	4,183
15-0000	Computer & Mathematical	-9	935	90	1,091
21-0000	Community & Social Service	-8	955	128	1,128
17-0000	Architecture & Engineering	-5	662	62	729
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	-4	834	108	925
19-0000	Life, Physical & Social Science	-4	322	37	375
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance & Repair	-4	2,379	267	2,606
31-0000	Healthcare Support	-4	2,705	436	3,420
23-0000	Legal Occupations	-2	316	26	355
45-0000	Farming, Fishing & Forestry	1	107	18	111
33-0000	Protective Service	1	993	122	1,101
51-0000	Production	5	1,591	195	1,666
39-0000	Personal Care & Service	9	1,908	342	2,206
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving	9	3,944	559	4,342
43-0000	Office & Administrative Support	26	6,666	816	6,886
41-0000	Sales & Related	48	6,862	1,050	7,211
35-0000	Food Preparation & Serving Related	64	6,600	1,321	7,630



**FIGURE 6: OCCUPATION WAGES, AVERAGE HOURLY IN CLAY COUNTY 2019 (JOBSEQ)**

SOC	Occupation	Mean	Entry Level	Experienced	Mean Jax MSA	Mean Florida
11-0000	Management	\$44.90	\$20.31	\$57.19	\$50.32	\$49.78
13-0000	Business & Financial Operations	\$29.40	\$16.20	\$36.00	\$32.37	\$33.21
15-0000	Computer & Mathematical	\$34.54	\$18.55	\$42.54	\$38.16	\$39.46
17-0000	Architecture & Engineering	\$35.99	\$19.91	\$44.03	\$38.80	\$38.04
19-0000	Life, Physical, & Social Science	\$30.36	\$15.76	\$37.66	\$32.71	\$32.37
21-0000	Community & Social Service	\$19.00	\$11.86	\$22.57	\$20.35	\$21.66
23-0000	Legal	\$45.18	\$18.02	\$58.76	\$46.84	\$48.24
25-0000	Educational Instruction & Library	\$22.21	\$11.21	\$27.72	\$25.96	\$24.61
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	\$23.10	\$10.91	\$29.20	\$25.18	\$26.38
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$34.94	\$16.28	\$44.27	\$39.02	\$38.46
31-0000	Healthcare Support	\$13.44	\$9.67	\$15.32	\$14.64	\$14.69
33-0000	Protective Service	\$19.95	\$10.56	\$24.65	\$19.58	\$21.27
35-0000	Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$10.96	\$8.56	\$12.17	\$11.99	\$12.48
37-0000	Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	\$12.57	\$9.00	\$14.36	\$13.45	\$13.78
39-0000	Personal Care & Service	\$13.75	\$8.90	\$16.17	\$14.94	\$14.29
41-0000	Sales & Related Occupations	\$15.96	\$9.01	\$19.43	\$19.40	\$19.78
43-0000	Office & Administrative Support	\$17.13	\$11.10	\$20.15	\$18.66	\$18.37
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	\$16.87	\$9.91	\$20.35	\$15.03	\$13.63
47-0000	Construction & Extraction	\$18.25	\$11.88	\$21.44	\$19.97	\$19.89
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	\$20.23	\$12.04	\$24.32	\$21.74	\$21.29
51-0000	Production Occupations	\$17.18	\$10.55	\$20.49	\$18.42	\$17.56
53-0000	Transportation & Material Moving	\$15.97	\$9.73	\$19.09	\$17.49	\$17.30
00-0000	Total - All Occupations	\$20.56	\$9.86	\$25.90	\$23.39	\$23.42



## Commuting Patterns »

**FIGURE 7: RESIDENTS OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA AND WHERE THEY WORK (JOBSEQ)**

FIPS	Region	Commuters
12019	Clay County, Florida	43,500
12031	Duval County, Florida	36,531
12109	St. Johns County, Florida	3,183
12095	Orange County, Florida	2,863
12001	Alachua County, Florida	2,210
12057	Hillsborough County, Florida	1,689
12007	Bradford County, Florida	980
12127	Volusia County, Florida	883
12117	Seminole County, Florida	862
12107	Putnam County, Florida	842
12089	Nassau County, Florida	554
12003	Baker County, Florida	506

**FIGURE 8: WORKERS IN CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA AND WHERE THEY LIVE (JOBSEQ)**

FIPS	Region	Commuters
12019	Clay County, Florida	43,500
12031	Duval County, Florida	3,909
12109	St. Johns County, Florida	2,720
12089	Nassau County, Florida	729
12107	Putnam County, Florida	671
12007	Bradford County, Florida	540
12035	Flagler County, Florida	436

As noted throughout the interview process, leaders are well aware of the county's current commuting patterns – with most residents leaving each day for work. While ideally with recruitment, the county may be able to retain those residents for local employment, but it is important to consider the occupations leaving versus those that the county is trying to recruit to ensure alignment.

Consider the commuting patterns in the following two-digit SOC codes associated sectors:

- Manufacturing CTE Cluster
- Information Technology
- Transportation & Material Moving



The tables represent the top counties with more than 100 employees. The volume of employees leaving the county may not be sizable enough for a company to believe the workforce is available. Increased marketing and messaging will be needed.

**FIGURE 9: COMMUTING PATTERNS BY INDUSTRY (JOBSEQ)**

Manufacturing (CTE Cluster) Living in Clay County, Florida and Where They Work		
FIPS	Region	Commuters
12031	Duval County, Florida	2,714
12019	Clay County, Florida	1,863
12109	St. Johns County, Florida	336
12095	Orange County, Florida	288
12001	Alachua County, Florida	183
12057	Hillsborough County, Florida	171

Information Technology Living in Clay County, Florida and Where They Work		
FIPS	Region	Commuters
12031	Duval County, Florida	965
12019	Clay County, Florida	571

Transportation & Material Moving Living in Clay County, Florida and Where They Work		
FIPS	Region	Commuters
12031	Duval County, Florida	4,187
12019	Clay County, Florida	2,954
12095	Orange County, Florida	300
12109	St. Johns County, Florida	296
12001	Alachua County, Florida	168
12057	Hillsborough County, Florida	149

In reviewing the data by county and industry, it is also important to consider the larger labor market in Duval County. As Clay County looks to recruit workforce, a regional perspective that includes the Duval County workforce must be considered along with their wages and commute times. The figure below represents the employment in associated targeted industries.

**FIGURE 10: LABOR INVENTORY DUVAL COUNTY (JOBSEQ)**

Sector	Employment	Average Wage
Information	6,288	\$117,964
Manufacturing	24,702	\$65,513
Professional and Business Services	80,873	\$81,502
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	41,893	\$49,277
Wholesale Trade	20,408	\$71,411



The global pandemic shifted the nation's workforce once again. According to a Wall Street Journal article," The labor-force participation rate—the proportion of working-age Americans with a job or actively looking for one—is at low levels not seen since the late 1970s, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The U.S. labor force lost roughly 3.8 million workers since February 2020 as fewer people are working or looking for a job and the pandemic has pushed many baby boomers out of the workforce. Those people aren't counted in the most widely used measure of unemployment."

And while companies are hiring, the competition for employees has increased. In the same article, "For manufacturers, staffing shortages have been caused by factors including a surge in new jobs tied to e-commerce—many of which offer better pay than factory work—and absences caused by Covid or family obligations such as childcare."<sup>3</sup>

These trends are not likely to change given the disruptions in supply chains worldwide. While these national and global trends cannot be rectified by the CCEDC, it is critical to understand how these trends are impacting local existing employers, how these trends can impact the ability to recruit new industry and where opportunities exist for increased educational partnerships at all levels.

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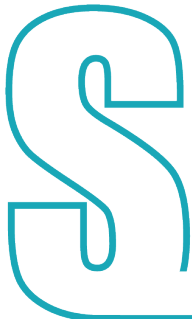
<sup>3</sup> WSJ: Low on Workers, Manufacturers Recruit Their Executives for the Factory Floor



## SWOT Analysis & Leverage Points

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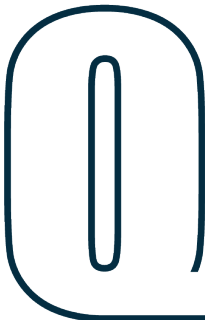
Based on the conversations with stakeholders and the in-depth labor and industry research, VisionFirst identified the county's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the community's economic development efforts as well as the county's competitiveness overall. This analysis relied heavily on qualitative input as well as industry knowledge.



- **Growing community that is attractive to professionals and skilled employees**
- **Strong K-12 school system with successful CTE programs**
- **CCEDC is well regarded in the county**
- **Industry is expanding in the region**



- **Current growth of the county is not transformative**
- **Economic development timelines and expectations are not well understood**
- **There is not a large industrial workforce in Clay County**
- **Limited funding and staff capacity at the EDC**
- **Little appetite for using public finance to purchase land**



- **Investments in water pipeline and roadways**
- **Low taxes and millage rates**
- **Utility partner to offer flexibility and investment**
- **Clay EDC's board to encourage creative solutions**
- **Increase staff capacity to grow new programmatic solutions**



- **Lack of publicly owned or controlled properties**
- **Cost and timelines associated with infrastructure improvements and connections**
- **Growth mindset of some portions of the county**
- **Ability to draw workers back to the county**
- **Public solicitation for economic development services**



## Leverage Points »

Far too often SWOT analyses are conducted for discovery purpose only. VisionFirst goes beyond the initial step of conducting the analysis and develops strategies to leverage or capitalize on each strength or opportunity and to minimize or mitigate weaknesses and threats. These strategies or “leverage points” help illustrate the timeliest, most important calls-to-action for the county to execute in order to strengthen its position, achieve its mission and move the community to a greater competitive stance for jobs and investment.

Strength	Leverage Point
<b>CCEDC is well regarded in the county</b>	Increase overall marketing and communications to both internal and external customers that underscores the process and complexities of economic development efforts, in addition to highlighting wins and achievements.
Weakness	Leverage Point
<b>Current growth of the county is not transformative</b>	While the community continues to grow from a residential perspective, talent continues to migrate out of the county for employment. Focus on industrial growth that offers higher wages and stability locally.
Opportunity	Leverage Point
<b>Increase staff capacity to grow new programmatic solutions</b>	Identify opportunities that would allow the CCEDC to add additional staff capacity to lead critical initiatives such as workforce alignment, site readiness or marketing.
Threats	Leverage Point
<b>Lack of publicly owned properties</b>	Work with private landowners to control significant acreage and widely market land as a development ready industrial site.



## Product Review

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One of the biggest limiting factors a community faces to compete for economic development projects is the availability of quality sites. From industrial property to available buildings, economic development organizations (EDO) around the country are becoming increasingly aggressive in their efforts to identify quality product that can be marketed to attract industry to their region. Over and above the identification of the product, EDOs are working to control those assets and provide necessary infrastructure to ensure the viability of those sites and buildings. Prospective companies want to understand not only the cost associated with a site but the time it will take to provide the necessary infrastructure to begin construction. Any perceived gap will be viewed as risk and difficult to overcome in a competitive environment.

And while the CCEDC has been diligent in identifying product in Clay County, there is limited control and still some unknowns regarding cost and time of infrastructure delivery. Understanding and offsetting these risks are a major hurdle for the EDC and the county in their economic development efforts.

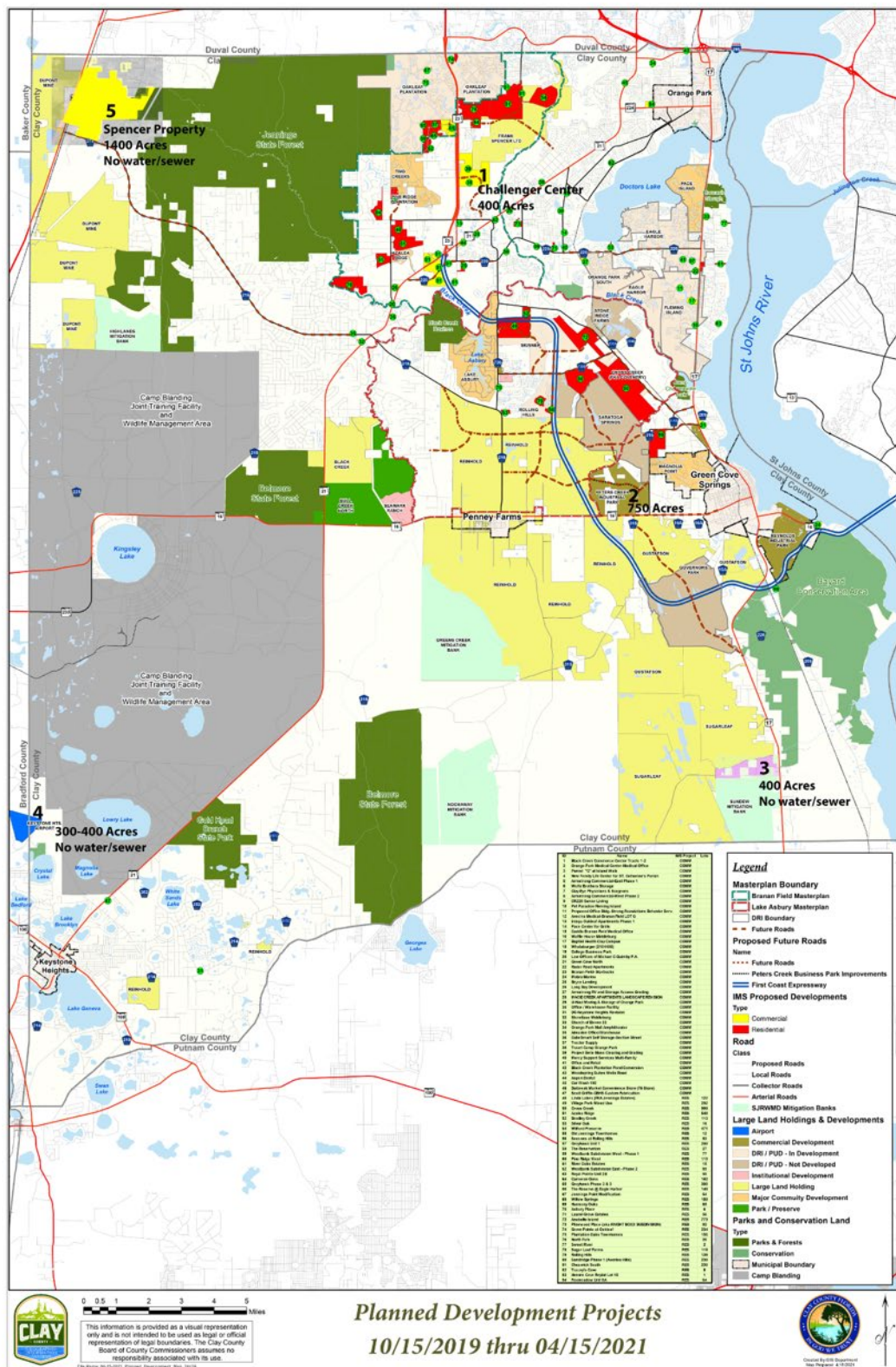
In order to increase competitiveness, there must be a willingness on the part of the county to work with private landowners to secure public control of industrial property. Many projects view publicly owned sites as more secure, offering less risk and unknowns than privately held property. From price uncertainty, to cost there are many factors that lead projects to favor publicly owned parcels. A good balance of public and private sites should be the focus in Clay County.

Given the importance and limited availability of publicly owned sites for competitive economic development projects, VisionFirst Advisors, along with CCEDC, conducted a site tour and assessment of properties. The following properties offer the most potential for large, long-term industrial potential:

- Challenger Center
- Gustafson Industrial Park
- Keystone Heights Airport
- New's Property
- Peter's Creek Industrial Park
- Reynolds Park



### FIGURE 11: DEVELOPABLE LAND ASSETS





## SITE: CHALLENGER CENTER

**Overview:** From direct access to the First Coast Expressway to the potential access to utility infrastructure, the Challenger Center offers significant development potential. However, the unique needs of the initial anchor tenet and their willingness to fund their own infrastructure improvements have raised unrealistic expectations. This will not be the norm for most prospects, and the EDC will need to work with local partners to overcome this. If those expectations can be tempered, there is a considerable opportunity for the CCEDC to work with the landowner to own or at least option a portion of this property to be marketed as a light industrial center.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 740-acre site with 390 acres available</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No public control</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clay electric substation on site*</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilities at company's expense</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct access to First Coast Expressway</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wetlands and Environmental barriers unknown</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Closest developable land south of Cecil Commerce Center</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketed as a "mixed use" development which could be a concern for certain industry targets</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most potential for reverse commute from Duval</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Price per acre prohibitive for most industrial targets</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foreign Trade Zone</li></ul>	

\*5 Acres allocated for future construction

## SITE: GUSTAFSON INDUSTRIAL PARK

**Overview:** The Gustafson Industrial Park is an intriguing option as it offers significant acreage within proximity to the First Coast Expressway. Proximity to I-95 may also provide logistics industry potential. However, utility capacity information is unknown and could require significant expense.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 884-acre site</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No public control</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple access points from County Road 15-A to US Highway 17</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential abutting the northern and southeast border</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential CSX main line access</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unimproved industrial land</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some Utility infrastructure onsite</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$33,000 an acre comparable</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proximity to I-95</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential construction</li></ul>



## SITE: KEYSTONE HEIGHTS AIRPORT

**Overview:** Keystone Heights Airport represents the county's best asset in terms of aerospace development. With developable property on an airport with runway access, the Park gives the county the opportunity to market the area for aerospace growth. The proximity of Camp Blanding Joint Training Center brings potential military applications to pursue. The major hurdle to overcome is the lack of some basic infrastructure to the site. While the cost to provide water/sewer is significant, it must be addressed if the EDC looks to target the industry for growth.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2,400 developable acres with a 5,044-foot runway</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No municipal water/sewer and cost prohibitive to bring it to site</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proximity to Camp Blanding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Area is tourism/recreation focused</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foreign Trade Zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Measured approach to industrial development</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to Gainesville workforce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Isolated from county government</li></ul>

## SITE: NEW'S PROPERTY

**Overview:** This property represents one of the few true sites with a heavy industrial focus in the county. The CSX mainline is just 100 yards from the property and the fact that rail only exists in the eastern part of the county makes this site intriguing. There are still some unknowns about the ability to tie onto the line, but it is worth pursuing long-term.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 400 Acres</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited access to CSX Main line (50 acres with side rail access)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSX Mainline</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unimproved industrial land</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heavy industrial focus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long term development play</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motivated landowner</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Backs up to solar farm</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DOD connections</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not listed on either EFI or EDC website</li></ul>



#### SITE: PETER'S CREEK INDUSTRIAL PARK

**Overview:** Peter's Creek Industrial Park is one of the most site ready properties VisionFirst reviewed. While there are still environmental questions that remain, access to utilities with significant capacity make this a promising site. There is a desire by ownership to target healthcare/commercial and low-profile light industrial. However, potential targets would need to be defined.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 779 Acres</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not publicly held</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Least costly to develop</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Owners prefer low profile development</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CCUA Water/wastewater/gas onsite</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Surrounded by residential</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FPL/Clay Elect/City of GCS Redundancy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wetlands?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access from both Rosemary Hill and Chesser Road</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not listed on EFI or EDC website</li></ul>

#### SITE: REYNOLDS PARK

**Overview:** On paper the Reynolds Park is one of the crown jewels of the Clay County Product Catalogue. With direct access to the St. John's River, CSX mainline and a private airport there is little in the industrial world that the site would not appeal too. The biggest challenge and the main reason this has not been a focus is the apparent commercial focus on the part of the landowners.

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,700 acres</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not listed on EFI website</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St. Johns River access</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commercial Focus</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CSX Mainline access</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not publicly held</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5,000 ft private runway</li></ul>	





# Goals

- 01 Heighten Organizational and Operational Performance
- 02 Focus on Business Recruitment, Retention & Expansion Programs
- 03 Implement Robust Product Development & Site Readiness Initiatives



## Strategies & Tactics

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Vibrant local economies are the result of holistic strategy that requires collaboration from elected officials, private business leadership, education/workforce providers, local organizations and many others; all having a shared vision of success.

The CCEDC has taken important strides in the improvement of the organization's performance as well as the community's overall competitiveness. Over the last several years, the organization has undertaken the development of high-impact governing initiative, re-evaluated its incentive policy, began a site readiness program with a utility provider, applied to become an accredited EDO and more. The staff and leadership understand the pathway for success and have been incrementally implementing those initiatives. This plan was developed to compliment those efforts rather than duplicate them.

To develop the goals, strategies and tactics, VisionFirst reviewed CCEDC's economic development activities to assess effectiveness in the alignment of assets and resources to be competitive for jobs and investment. VisionFirst considered the support and the demands placed on the organization that fall within and outside its purview in determining what should be its primary focus over the next five years.

Utilizing facts and trends drawn from the data<sup>4</sup> as well as economic development best practices, VisionFirst identified both core and enabling strategies for implementation. Within each strategy is a series of tactics that provide an approach to implementation.

- **Core Strategy:** Core strategies are those that fall directly within the purview of CCEDC. They are essential for the organization to meet its mission and improve the economic vitality of the community.
- **Enabling Strategy:** Enabling strategies are designed to assist the core strategies by providing the resources and infrastructure required to achieve success within the organization's objectives. For these strategies, CCEDC may partner with other organizations or entities to facilitate or advocate for change.

For the purpose of the plan, the timeframes are defined as:

- **Short-Term:** Six Months to One Year
- **Mid-Term:** One Year to Two Years
- **Long-Term:** Three Years to Five Years
- **Ongoing**

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted all data is compiled from JobsEQ



## Goal: Heighten Organizational Performance

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The CCEDC is strategic and aggressive in its recruitment efforts and has taken critical steps to ensure the organization is a respected entity of the county, the region and the state. Staff are seen as experts and trusted leaders who encourage collaborative partnerships with workforce and education partners in addition to local organizations. The staff is small but has continued to pursue efforts to strengthen overall performance.

CCEDC recently became an accredited EDO by the International Economic Development Council which further elevates its position. Additionally, the CCEDC has seen demonstrated project success and a renewed commitment by the county for its efforts; however, there is an opportunity to expand its programs and offerings.

Continued education of the role of the CCEDC and its mission is paramount. From a recent public solicitation for economic development services to general misunderstanding of the general roles and mission of the CCEDC it is clear that messaging has to be a priority. Efforts like a public bid process for economic development services in attempts to lower costs, contradicts the message that the county is open for business. Instead, the county needs to invest further in its economic development efforts and the organization to help increase the capacity to compete.

### CORE STRATEGY: EXPAND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

With increased success comes increased responsibility for many EDOs. This is true for the CCEDC. Over the last several years, the organization has become more efficient, professional and successful despite its small staff and budget. As the county looks to increase commercial and industrial development to generate tax revenue, the CCEDC and its leadership also need to address the size and scope of the organization.

**Tactic \ Expand Organizational Funding Streams: MID-TERM** Currently, the CCEDC funding includes more than 50 percent in public funds and approximately 35 percent in private donations. In addition, it was noted in interviews that the current funding of the CCEDC greatly inhibits the ability to develop and implement significant and transformative initiatives surrounding product development, creative incentive packages and marketing outreach. These are not merely perceptions of the stakeholders or staff but also have been ground-truthed through incentive studies, community benchmarking and salary surveys.

With a desire to increase project activity and wins there is a need for additional funding in order to undertake a more aggressive approach to marketing and outreach – especially as travel restrictions are lifted and in-person events take place. While the CCEDC is part of the regional JAXUSA organization, it is important to pursue its own efforts and generate its own leads.



Accordingly, it is critical to identify additional funding streams for the organization that go beyond traditional investor recruitment. While the issue of developing product is addressed later in this report, in discussing capacity at a minimum two additional funding streams should be considered:

1. The County should increase the 5% Incentive Participation Fee to 10% as one means of providing additional budget capacity to the organization. Any collection of this fee means new investment in the county and was not a previously budgeted item. Additionally, this fee represents revenue that is a direct result of the EDC efforts and allows the county to reinvest in its own success.
2. The County should provide all funding mechanisms for the EDC to acquire and develop land parcels such as TIF, EDIT taxes and a .5% ad valorem tax. While some of these suggested funding mechanisms can be challenging for the county in the short term, they are essential for increasing competitiveness. Accordingly, county leadership should continue to have conversations in an effort to better understand the long term potential of these types of programs.

**Tactic \ Increase Investor Funding: MID-TERM** Economic development success is directly related to maintaining strong relationships. This includes prospects, existing business, elected officials, state economic development professionals, local stakeholders and organizational investors. In a good year this is a difficult task; given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic this is even more challenging.

Another way to increase funding is by pursuing additional private investors and increase the levels of current investors. **The CCEDC should consider several tactics as part of an outreach campaign to raise funding.**

- Invite potential members to attend future board meetings to introduce them to the efforts of the CCEDC.
- Communicate about strategic plan implementation and progress to the board, stakeholders and potential investors through email communications, invitations to events and personal meetings.
- Develop membership levels to allow new business members to invest at a variety of levels based on size, but not at levels so low the CCEDC cannot absorb the cost to maintain active engagement with investors.

**Tactic \ Increase Staff Capacity: MID-TERM** It was noted in all the interviews that the current economic development team has the trust of the elected leadership, county administration and its board. It is clear that efforts made by staff have led to increased credibility and success. However, to continue that momentum, the issue of capacity will need to be addressed.



If the expectation is to maintain a proactive business recruitment program, comprehensive business retention and expansion program, the development of sites and buildings as well as marketing and communications, then a significant investment in capacity must be made. With only two individuals responsible for a county the size of Clay, which continues to grow, performance will suffer regardless of the talent level of the individuals.

While further defining the goals of economic development and maintaining mission discipline will help, capacity must be added. There are two ways to accomplish this, the addition of strategic partnerships and new personnel.

**In looking at communities of similar size, the addition of a new position should be considered.** Earlier this year, the CCEDC contracted for a salary survey to benchmark the organization to other communities of similar size and structure. Given the considerable differences in the average budget and allocation per resident, the CCEDC board should consider not only increasing staff capacity but also aligning the budget to a per capita amount that is reflective of the priorities for economic diversification and growth placed on the organization and its measurement of success.

**FIGURE 12: EDC BENCHMARKING (LOGAN DEVELOPMENT GROUP)**

City/County	Population	Budget	Staff	Budget per Resident
Sullivan Partnership (Kingsport, TN)	510,761	\$795,000	5	\$1.56
Henderson County Regional Development (NC)	115,708	\$639,017	4	\$5.52
Florence County Economic Development Partnership (SC)	138,566	\$893,093	5	\$6.45
Morgan County Economic Development Association (AL)	118,818	\$750,000	2	\$6.31
St. Landry Parish Economic Development (LA)	82,124	\$718,000	3.5	\$8.74
Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance	366,950	\$1,868,452	11	\$5.09
Florida West Economic Development Alliance	487,784	\$1,060,494	6	\$2.17
Economic Development Council of Okaloosa (FL)	203,794	\$597,722	3	\$2.93
Economic Development Alliance of Bay County (FL)	182,161	\$729,214	3	\$4.00
<b>Averages</b>	<b>245,185</b>	<b>\$894,555</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$4.75</b>
<b>Clay County Economic Development Corp. (FL)</b>	<b>219,252</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>\$1.82</b>

In the short-term, the additional capacity of just one position would allow the team greater focus on mission-critical efforts. The additional position could include conducting business development outreach and marketing.

However, while the budget remains at current levels, the CCEDC should consider strategic partnerships or contracted employees. Partnering with board members, regional allies and private sector partners are all ways to utilize additional resources. Even with the addition of personnel, partnerships of this type are essential to growing organizations.



## ENABLING STRATEGY: EXPAND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

EDOs are at their core sales and marketing organizations that promote their communities to investors and business decision makers to provide opportunity for residents. However, in their efforts, messaging to internal stakeholders can sometimes become overlooked. A community's internal stakeholders are not only critical in shaping opinion on the success of the organization, but they can also serve as surrogates in sharing messaging about the benefits of economic development, industry diversity and growth. Recently, the CCEDC implemented a High-Impact Governing Initiative Action Report that updates and expands the board structure and develops an advisory council. These groups will be critical in sharing the success and messaging about the organization to key stakeholders. By positioning these groups as an extension of the sales team, CCEDC can expand their sphere of influence and marketing efforts with little expense. Given the size, diversity and economic goals of the county, providing specific and ongoing messaging to both internal and external stakeholders is a crucial part of success.

**Tactic \ Develop Growth Messaging: MID-TERM** Clay County is a diverse region made up of cities with their own identities, priorities for growth and assets. During stakeholder interviews, the idea of growth and increased industry in the county was perceived differently depending on the community. As the CCEDC looks to recruit additional business to the county, ensuring stakeholders and residents understand the type of industry and subsequent impacts of that growth will be vital to success. **The CCEDC should develop a messaging platform by community to address recruitment efforts and benefits of measured and targeted growth.** The messaging can then be deployed to stakeholders, including in briefing documents associated with projects and online marketing materials.

**Tactic \ Communicate Economic Development Timelines: SHORT-TERM** The most common measure of success for any EDO by stakeholders is project announcements. Rarely will internal stakeholders understand the months of work, data analysis, communication and site visits taken to reach an announcement – if one happens. Even a project that is lost offers significant benefit to a community to learn where improvements can be made in the pitch, proposal or asset development.

Currently, the CCEDC provides press releases, industry news and a monthly economic summary to stakeholders. **In addition to the monthly report, the CCEDC should consider stakeholder training that explains the project process and where stakeholders may play a role. The CCEDC should also consider a quarterly report** that outlines the project pipeline; indicators in the report could include:

- Number of active projects
- Potential jobs new and retained
- Potential annual payroll



- Potential capital investment
- Projected activity percentage increases over the year
- Industry sectors for active projects
- Timelines for projects under consideration and/or won/lost from start of RFI process

**Tactic \ Partner to Expand Marketing Efforts: MID-TERM** The CCEDC is fortunate to have partners in the county who understand and support its efforts. Both the Chamber and the Tourism Development Council provide opportunities for partnership that could expand marketing and communications efforts and overall promotion of Clay County as a business destination.

Often EDOs do not have the staff nor financial capacity to have robust outreach programs.

**By leveraging partnerships, the CCEDC can expand its reach even if the targeted messaging is not traditional to competitive recruitment.**

As a result of the pandemic, Florida is receiving increased attention for the state's business decisions along with its desirable quality of life amenities. A recent report by the Pew Research Center noted that around one-in-five U.S. adults (22%) say they either changed their residence due to the pandemic or know someone who did, according to a new Pew Research Center survey.

By partnering with the tourism development council to include them on targeted recruitment markets such as the northeast or Midwest during active projects, Explore Clay can utilize its marketing funds to geofence those cities with tourism digital advertising to promote the county's recreational and outdoor amenities that showcase the region as a desirable location to live and work.



## Goal: Focus Business Recruitment, Retention & Expansion Programs

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As with almost all the communities in Florida, growth is imminent in Clay County. Over 300,000 people moved to the state in 2020 and that number is only increasing as evidenced by early trends in 2021. What does that mean to Clay County? Growth.

Even if the CCEDC and its board chose to take the year off, Clay County would still grow. The challenge is the type of growth that will be realized. Residential growth and market-based construction are net positive, but it is not transformative. The type of growth that reverses the commuting trends, keeps talent at home and increases the opportunity of all citizens comes from targeted economic diversification and subsequent industrial growth. The CCEDC and its leadership realize this challenge and undertake strategic initiatives to facilitate meaningful growth.

While recruitment of new industry is vital, meaningful success comes from a focus on existing companies in Clay County that aim to diversify the local economy. Both new business recruitment and prioritizing the health of existing industries are vital to any local strategy. While the CCEDC is performing at a high level, to find continued success in such a competitive field there are several steps that can be taken to maximize effectiveness.

### CORE STRATEGY: DEFINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a common term with many different meanings. But as the organization responsible for economic development in the county, a common definition must be realized and used to define the organization's mission. This goes beyond what is generally publicized on websites and documents.

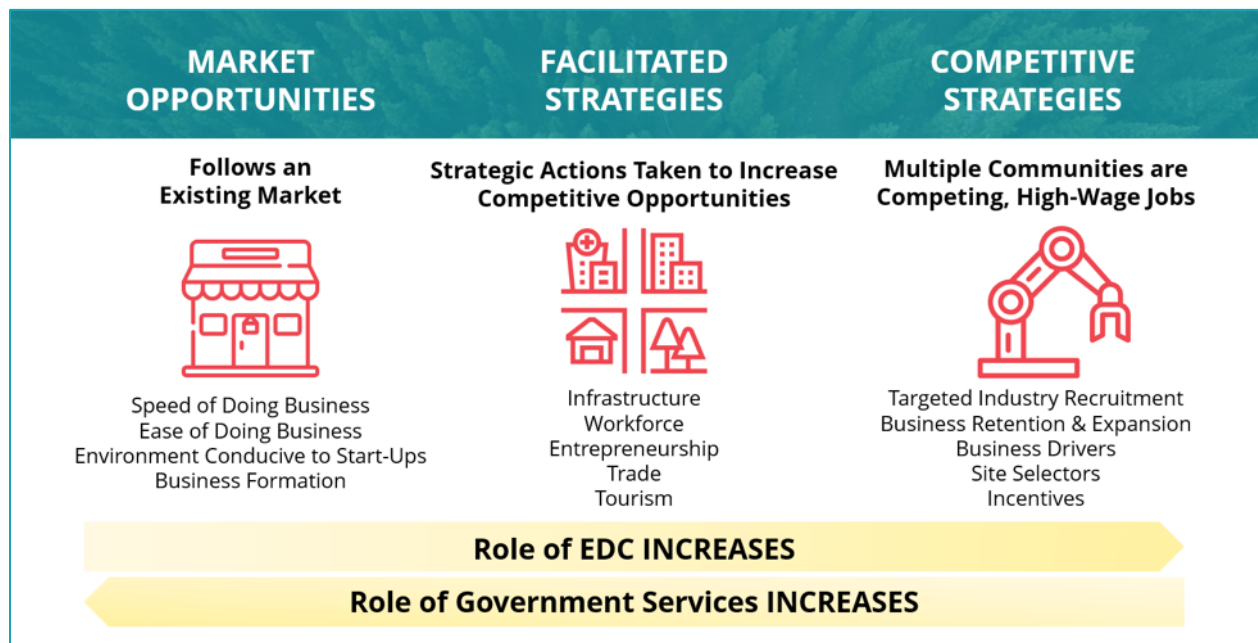
The challenge, for any county-wide organization, is that there are numerous stakeholders with a variety of ideas of how to accomplish the main goal, and even what that main goal should be. As such, there are a multitude of opinions as to what the CCEDC should be accomplishing. This is not unique to the CCEDC, but something in which almost every community struggles. The challenge for the CCEDC may not be what they are going to do day-to-day, but what they are not going to do. Currently, as with many EDOs, the staff is all things to all people.

If the CCEDC is going to tackle residential, commercial and industrial recruitment while keeping a focus on business formation, there will most certainly be a capacity challenge. Many of these challenges are market driven and the impact on this growth by the EDC will be minimal. While these targets should be facilitated and even advocated by the EDC, they should not be responsible for it nor be judged on the success or failure of those efforts. Successful EDOs define not only what the mission is, but what it is not. The figure below



outlines the types of growth experienced by a community, as well as where and what entities have a role in that growth.

**FIGURE 13: HOW COMMUNITIES GROW**



Within Fig. 13 it is important to note what the role of government is versus the role of the CCEDC. Government services, regulations and the cost to do business along with a growing population will ultimately drive market growth. Together, government and the CCEDC can make tactical investments in opportunities surrounding trade and entrepreneurship. The CCEDC is responsible for competitive projects and the engagement of audiences that drive those projects.

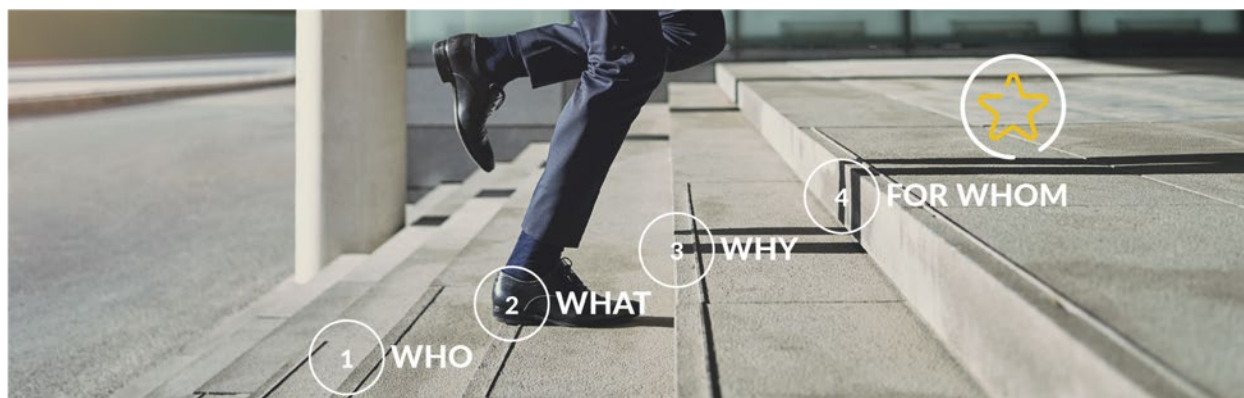
**Tactic \ Develop a Definition of Economic Development:** **SHORT-TERM** The CCEDC should define economic development with the sole purpose to streamline the activities of the CCEDC. This definition should be specific enough to highlight distinct core activities, but broad enough to allow for economic expansion as markets change.

**Tactic \ Create a mission statement that considers the “Four Ws” of Mission Clarity:** **SHORT-TERM** Consider why the organization was created and who it impacts on a daily basis. Define what you are going to do through that statement and allow it to be your guiding principle moving forward.

VisionFirst uses four questions, referred to as the “Four Ws”: who you are, what you do, why you do and for whom? Below represents stakeholder feedback.



**FIGURE 14: MISSION CLARITY & THE “FOUR WS”**



<b>WHO:</b>	Clay County Economic Development Commission, the primary orchestrator of economic development activities for the county
<b>WHAT:</b>	Creating opportunity for all by working together as a region to improve competitiveness and the economy overall
<b>WHY:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support businesses in creating meaningful job opportunities</li> <li>• Grow the county's economy with a diversified business and industry base</li> <li>• Increase individual prosperity and per capita income</li> <li>• Maintain and improve quality of place for residents and visitors of all ages</li> <li>• Expand the opportunities for young families to remain and prosper in the area</li> <li>• Improve the quality of life for the residents of Clay County</li> </ul>
<b>FOR WHOM:</b>	<p>Direct Customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Decision-Makers (both for existing and new business)</li> <li>• Site Consultants</li> <li>• Entrepreneurs</li> </ul> <p>Indirect Customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxpayers/Citizens</li> </ul>

**Tactic \ Leverage definition of economic development to adopt a comprehensive incentive strategy: SHORT-TERM** Often times communities provide an incentive package to projects in their pipeline with little consideration to how the community wants to grow and transform its economy. A manufacturing project with significant job creation and sizable capital investment is treated in the same manner as a call center when it comes to a community's proposal – this does little for the company or the community.

Each incentive may be site specific, or many vary by industry, anticipated investment, jobs or wages, or any other drivers important to the community. It is important to remember that a strong incentive policy is simply a guideline. There should always be some flexibility in the incentive process to allow for unique project opportunities.



For example, if a project is a marquee name or is likely to attract suppliers or other colocation opportunities, the community may choose to be more aggressive, and if the company is a start-up, creates environmental concerns, or places significant stress on the county's existing infrastructure, the county may be less generous.

Regardless of the incentive policy, creating the agreement will allow the board and economic development team to thoughtfully consider Clay County's assets and how best to use them to encourage economic development for its citizens. **In reviewing the recent incentive policy conducted by Crowe, it is recommended that the CCEDC move forward with adoption on the policy and recommendations with the ability to provide flexibility where and how it makes sense on a project-by-project basis.**

### **CORE STRATEGY: BUILD ON EXISTING OUTREACH**

The CCEDC team has a strong existing industry outreach program that helps employers identify their critical issues and how to tackle them. The relationships that are developed from this program generate benefits far beyond local good will. Every outreach and follow up leads to a culture of partnership between the CCEDC and private business that has innumerable benefits for the business climate for years to come. Three of the most important advantages for the CCEDC are:

1. **Business Intelligence.** The CCEDC becomes keenly aware of the challenges facing industry in Clay County, and with that understanding they are better prepared to address any issues that impact business operations and identify growth opportunities.
2. **Community Evaluation.** While the pandemic and global disruptions are changing the way we operate on a daily basis, there is no better gauge on the local business climate than the information coming from business on the ground which are operating in that environment. Understanding how that climate is viewed is crucial to remaining competitive.
3. **Location Marketing.** Regardless of the outreach of the CCEDC and others in the community, no one is more effective at telling the story of a favorable business climate than those that operate in it every day. Businesses that feel like they have a partnership with their local EDO will continually market for the area within industry circles that are impossible for economic developers to reach.

It is important to understand these benefits when evaluating the efforts of business retention and expansion programs. While individual outreach is instrumental, there are opportunities to further collaborate with industry sectors. Creating a dialogue for business leadership, human resource directors and plant managers to share challenges and opportunities along with best practices is invaluable to not only those individual employers, but the CCEDC as well. That sense of collaboration and continued engagement is critical to any existing industry approach.



**Tactic \ Coordinate Employer Roundtables: SHORT-TERM** Employer roundtables go beyond industry visits and business leaders to engage. It is important to create agendas designed to maximize dialogue leading to specific action items that provide long term value to participants. **Consider breaking the events into CEO, plant manager and human resource professional sessions to provide maximum coordination and information flow.**

### **ENABLING STRATEGY: ACCELERATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH**

One significant challenge facing the CCEDC is not being on the radar screen of many site consultants and project decision makers, which is a challenge to most rural communities. The County and region have numerous assets from a strong workforce, logistical advantages and a desired quality of life. But if those advantages are not known to the companies and site consultants helping them evaluate locations, then the community is missing out on opportunities.

However, ensuring that story is heard can be expensive. Regardless, whether in person or through digital outreach it is critical that the Clay County story be told. Currently, the CCEDC is making the most of their opportunities by bringing in consultants and select outreach. By working with its outside marketing firm, the CCEDC already has a strong foundation for marketing and outreach. However, by leveraging strong relationships with existing industry leaders as well as known consultants, the CCEDC can maximize their efforts as well as the tools developed by the firm.

**Tactic \ Expand brand recognition with conferences and digital media. SHORT-TERM** As in-person events begin again, the CCEDC should consider supplementing their networking with social and digital outreach to maximize brand recognition. Social media has increasingly become a 'pay-to-play' medium. Every channel is dictated by their own rules, algorithms and metrics – all of which are constantly changing. It is impossible to keep up with these changes, especially when the audience for an economic development organization is much more limited than a retail business or the like. One thing that is constant regardless of the channel or audience is each channel responds when money is spent. The good news is it does not have to be a lot of money.

The CCEDC's current activities can be expanded with the targeted use of digital and social media. Digital/social media has the dual benefit of being lower cost than most traditional earned or paid media and being highly targeted, allowing the organization to maximize its budget as well as its well-designed brand. It does not replace the website, newsletter or events but rather complements and promotes them.

Given the current existing budget, it is recommended the CCEDC determine two-three times during the year when a digital media campaign would be the most effective and relevant – potentially around attended events or after project announcement. It is



suggested to use a mix of search engine marketing and digital display retargeting supplemented by limited hyper contextual display targeting.

- **Search Engine Marketing (SEM):** also known as Paid Search, displays text ads on search engines such as Google or Bing. SEM is a cost-effective means to drive qualified traffic to websites because it is a Pay-per-Click (PPC) medium. Copy is customized to specific search terms and audiences linking them directly to relevant content.
- **Digital Display Retargeting:** digital display retargeting capitalizes on the qualified traffic generated by SEM by serving static visual/graphic ads to users who previously visited a website or clicked on an SEM.
- **Hyper Contextual Display Targeting:** unlike digital display retargeting that is only shown to users who have previously engaged with a site or ad; hyper contextual display targeting seeks out users who have not previously engaged with the site or ad. This is a VERY customized approach, targeting specific audiences through location, interests or specific websites.

**Tactic\ Maximize digital and social media efforts. ONGOING** In today's crowded marketplace, having a social media presence is crucial to any business, organization or government agency. However, it is important to identify the appropriate social channels for the audience, industry and objectives. The CCEDC should consider additional ways to expand its social presence each are low-cost but have the opportunity to maximize exposure.

- **Optimize digital persona of staff:** Use LinkedIn to provide a trusted resource to the industry. As local economic development experts, staff are uniquely positioned to show the personal side of the county, as well as highlight expertise in the field. Staff serve as a trusted source for the target audience and by engaging with the LinkedIn community through shared articles, comments and personal messages, he can increase visibility for organization and the county.
- **Supplement organic content with minimal advertising spend:** While the CCEDC has a Facebook account and is active in posting, it should also consider boosting select content with minimal spends. Through specific targeting and messaging, the CCEDC can see their reach and engagement grow. In addition, schedule evergreen content that promotes the website and videos in advance and mix in timely news to ensure consistent posting.
- **Reimagine the look of media outreach:** Social and digital media have transformed the typical press release. With news reaching people constantly online, press releases do not look or sound the same as in the past. Press releases whether emailed or posted online should contain images, videos or infographics to make the content more shareable. Use a mix of media to give context to the news from the perspective of the intended audience.



- **Use Video Content:** Currently, videos have more engagement than any other content in the world of digital and social media. Videos can be used on social media and websites. For social media, they need to be short – no more than 30 seconds. In addition, they need to be visually engaging, but also able to be viewed without sound – which means captions embedded within the video. Videos can feature real people or can be created using a slideshow of images or infographics.

## **CORE STRATEGY: BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM**

While the achievements of the CCEDC are clear to those engaged in the organization's efforts, there is often much more that has taken place than what is included in press releases or newsletters. From the comprehensive approach in existing industry outreach to the continual efforts to spread the message that Clay County is open for business, the team is clearly forging the right path to secure economic opportunity for its citizens.

However, the current measures of jobs and investment are inaccurately representing these proactive efforts. While these measures should always be included in the evaluation of an EDO, so much more goes into achieving these results.

The economic development world is growing more competitive by the day and the factors that determine the location and growth of a business are often beyond the control of one EDO. From logistics to infrastructure, there is no one factor that will determine a location. Often communities do everything in their power to reach a positive location decision only to miss the opportunity based on something outside their control. From location bias to market factors, a project can be lost for any number of reasons.

It is important to understand all the activities that are undertaken just to compete in order to measure performance. Many factors will be essential to the success of the organization, but the following metrics will also determine the long-term value to the county:

- **Awareness:** Consider conducting a survey or outreach on how familiar stakeholders are with what the CCEDC does and what their central mission is. In the first year, it is done to establish a baseline and then attempt to increase that baseline by a realistic percentage. Additional awareness can be measured by an increase in key audiences, event attendance, promotional email open rates, etc.
- **Advocacy:** This is a core and successful component of the what the CCEDC is currently doing. This should be measured by utilizing numbers related to outreach of state and local leadership. Total consultations and meetings would be the measured number.
- **Business Development Impressions:** This is considered as unique opportunities for leads. The organization should not be judged solely on jobs and investment, but also by how many opportunities are being generated. This should not be limited to specific leads generated by the CCEDC. Enterprise Florida, JAXUSA and utility partners bring opportunities and leads to the county based on staff's ability to develop relationships



and their comfort with professionalism and ability to deliver by the CCEDC. Metrics could include RFPs, site visits, active projects.

- **Fundraising:** With nearly 50 investors, the CCEDC has strong support, but there is a desire to increase the level of funding provided. Consider metrics that measure not only the number of investors, but the amount contributed and the retention of current investors.
- **Original Lead Generation:** As there are no guarantees given the many external factors that play a role in the number, it is important to set realistic expectations. VisionFirst recommends this metric as a stretch goal that is aspirational in nature and not one that staff will be penalized for not meeting.
- **Marketing Effectiveness:** The CCEDC has solid marketing and communications collateral, but it is also important to have a metrics system in place to demonstrate its effectiveness. Consider how many unique and new visits to the site, time spent on the site, downloads bounce rates and search engine optimization referrals. If specific digital campaigns are launched, measure those separately.

**Tactic \ Establish metrics that consider all aspects of economic development:**

**SHORT-TERM It is important to develop percentage metrics that align with realistic measures.** The goal is to evaluate these elements along with the creation of jobs and investment to paint a clear picture of how well the organization is representing Clay County.



## Goal: Implement Robust Product Development & Site Readiness Initiatives

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Clay County has a virtual infinite supply of potential economic development sites. Just a few of those potential sites are catalogued above in the product review section. But available land and a project ready site are two very different things. Site selection by its nature is really site elimination.

How does a consultant that represents a company take a group of potentially endless sites and scale that list down to just a handful that work for the company's location needs? By establishing criteria and eliminating as many as possible. If power infrastructure is the driving force, how many sites have that capacity to the site today? If it is not there, the site is eliminated. Wastewater? What is currently available now? As mentioned above, there are too many competing sites, in counties just like Clay County that have already made these investments in hopes that a project will look consider their community. If the CCEDC competes against that site and it is ready and the Clay County site is not, the community will have a hard time competing.

Utility infrastructure is just the baseline. Site control, of both the development and the pricing are also critical. Currently, the CCEDC and the county have virtually no control over what development is planned or how the sites are priced. This is a challenge in terms of competitiveness. As discussed, communities are making product development a priority and Clay County's dependence on outside forces is a risk to the transformative growth they are seeking.

As it currently exists, the CCEDC has very little ability to aggressively market the current sites around the county as staff does not have access to prices nor have the ability to negotiate with prospects. The control of the development of those properties is just as challenging. Large industrial sites that are whittled away with the location of commercial and residential developments lose their appeal to large industrial projects. Regardless of current zoning, each of those developments present risks to a manufacturer or other heavy industry and they will typically shy away from the location. Working with private landowners to gain some control over the development of a large parcel is critical for the CCEDC moving forward.

### CORE STRATEGY: DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT A SITE READINESS PROGRAM

Public investment in product development can be challenging. Product development is generally a long-term proposition. Success does not happen overnight. The purchase of land or construction of a speculative building has the potential to remain on the county rolls for some time. Depending on how it is acquired, public property for economic development purposes has to be considered an investment and not just a short-term



liability. Markets fluctuate and economic development is not an exact science but there are countless of example where foresight and strategic investment transformed communities. In the discovery phase of the project there was a common theme both on the part of Clay County government and the private landowners to find a solution that benefits both parties and the region as a whole. There are many creative approaches communities have taken in terms of product development and the EDC should explore those that have the most potential to work in their area.

### **Tactic \ Obtain, Develop and Market a Clay County Ready Site: MID-TERM**

Understanding Clay County's desire to compete for global projects and the need to identify ready product CCEDC should consider the following options to move forward.

#### **Traditional Option Agreements**

One of the most common methods for public entities to control industrial property is the option agreement for a period of time. While the CCEDC is clearly familiar with this practice it does require public investment and the risk that the land optioned for contract may not ever be executed. However, there is significant benefit to both the private landowner and the public entity. The traditional option agreement includes a price per acre contingent upon no cultural resource or environmental issues along with a percentage calculation if any should arise. This is typically done in a lump sum payment that can sometimes be credited or prorated upon final purchase. This ensures a modicum of control for the EDO and reduced risk for potential companies. The landowners benefit from having their property become a focus for outreach and marketing efforts in various industrial markets.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has precedent for providing Jobs Grant Funds to build infrastructure on sites optioned or controlled by local governments. CCEDC could work with private landowners to obtain option agreements for land to be used for industrial purposed and collaborate on obtaining grants from DEO.

#### **Bonding Authority**

Another common practice of many counties is issuing general obligation bonds for product development. The general process is to approve intent to issue specific amounts of the general obligation bond for economic development. While this resolution will expire, through a public hearing at the end of each term it can be renewed. Through the interview process, it is clear that the county is very debt averse so this may not be a viable option but worth exploring due to its ability to help with both purchase and infrastructure.

#### **Land Swaps**

While traditionally used to exchange comparable acreage in terms of commercial or industrial developments, many communities have found success in offering in kind services that have significant benefit to the landowner in exchange for privately held land. Many



communities with publicly held municipal departments are working with private landowners to provide specific infrastructure such as water and sewer in exchange for portions of large parcels. This serves to open the site to future development for the private landowner and give control of a piece of the overall site the EDO in that community. That infrastructure is typically worth far more to the private landowner than the acreage being donated and the county gains control of a significant site with infrastructure in place to market for transformative projects.

### **Creative Financing**

In some examples of product development, communities have worked with the sellers to finance the purchase of industrial property. Examples abound of private landowners offering significant financing deals to municipal governments usually consisting of smaller up-front fees, quarterly or semi-annually payments and then close out sums at the end of the term. This allows the public purchaser to save over traditional financing models and allows the seller to reduce tax obligations by receiving the money over time and providing annual income.

### **Utilize Government Lending and Grant Programs**

Many communities have been able to realize significant benefits through application for these programs. Purchase of land through USDA as well as infrastructure improvements through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the previously mentioned Florida Growth Fund are just a few of the possibilities. Florida's Community Redevelopment Act provides an opportunity for establishment of a community redevelopment agency (CRA) and the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to finance the development. The biggest challenge with using TIF to purchase industrial land is generating tax revenue. For Clay County, a project of this type would potentially have to be mixed use and include commercial components to generate revenue until manufacturing matures.

### **BEST PRACTICES**

While many of these examples require significant investment of the county, EDOs across the country continue to find creative ways to offset some of this investment through partnerships with the private sector. One example of this partnership comes from the Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA) in Madison, Mississippi.



## MADISON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MCEDA)

MCEDA was able to partner with two private companies, Agracel, an industrial development company and Ergon, a group of privately held companies to construct a 100,000-square foot speculative building in the county on the county's megasite. The building will be privately owned but provide a significant competitive advantage to the county's economic development efforts. The county will not have to provide significant upfront capital but will reap the reward of any future industrial job creation.



Another example of a public/private partnership is the Lakeland Central Park. The park is being developed by Parkway Property Investments, LLC and Silverpeak Real Estate Partners in conjunction with the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC).

## LAKELAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (LEDC)

Recently LEDC announced the development of a 740-acre industrial park by Parkway Property and Silverpeak. The park will contain more than five million square feet of industrial space for manufacturing and distribution. Parkway will develop and manage the park and market the property in conjunction with LEDC and the Central Florida Development Council. The first phase of construction will total close to \$200 million in industrial space.



**Tactic \ Improve Digital Presence & Data for Sites:** **MID-TERM** Pre-pandemic, having an online presence and ample marketing collateral to connect with customers was considered a competitive advantage. But today, online databases and marketing materials are essential when it comes to the promotion of industrial products and assets within a region – ultimately increasing a community's credibility and chance to compete for competitive projects.

Site selector searches typically begin by reviewing a larger geographic footprint before narrowing down to specific communities. Risk mitigation is a key factor for competitive projects. **CCEDC should highlight all due diligence performed on each property,**



**provide detailed property attributes regarding utility and transportation infrastructure and update attachments with recent aerial photography, supporting maps and executive summaries.**

First impressions are everything, especially for those looking to stand out in a highly competitive market. While the CCEDC does an excellent job promoting featured properties on its website, some are missing from the Enterprise Florida database. To increase exposure to listings, the following checklist can help rectify inconsistencies, inform and establish trust among potential customers and improve asset awareness.

**FIGURE 15: COMPETITIVE PROPERTY CHECKLIST**

- ☐ **Recent Aerial Photography**
- ☐ **Letter of Commitment (if applicable)**
- ☐ **Conceptual Site Plans**
- ☐ **Covenants**
- ☐ **Executive Summary**
- ☐ **Flood Map**
- ☐ **Foreign Trade Zone**
- ☐ **Gantt Analysis/Timeline**
- ☐ **Infrastructure Development Plants for Sites not Shovel Ready**
- ☐ **Location/Vicinity Maps** *with local and regional amenities:*
  - ☐ Global
  - ☐ USA
  - ☐ Regional
  - ☐ County
  - ☐ City
  - ☐ Ingress/Egress Routes to Property
- ☐ **New Market Tax Credits**
- ☐ **Ownership/Tax Maps**
- ☐ **Report/Summaries:**
  - ☐ Phase I
  - ☐ Environmental
  - ☐ Geotechnical
  - ☐ Soils
  - ☐ Wetlands
- ☐ **Topography Map**
- ☐ **Zoning Map** *with surrounding areas up to one mile*
- ☐ **Utility Maps** *with existing and proposed utilities defined and providers). Consider using the [APWA color guide](#) to highlight current and proposed utility infrastructure.*
  - ☐ Broadband/Fiber
  - ☐ Electric
  - ☐ Natural Gas
  - ☐ Telecommunications
  - ☐ Water
  - ☐ Wastewater and Sewer

Color	Utility Line
WHITE	Proposed Excavation
PINK	Temporary Survey Markings
RED	Electrical Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
YELLOW	Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
ORANGE	Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
BLUE	Potable Water
PURPLE	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
GREEN	Sewer and Drain Lines



## Best Practices

- 01** Provide downloadable links to MBCIA existing KML/KMZ Google Earth files on executive summaries on online databases.
- 02** Drone videos and photography are an effective marketing tool. Enhance drone site footage to create **360°**, interactive drone photos for virtual site tours to engage prospective clients. [Kuula Pro](#) offers an inexpensive platform for virtual site tours.
- 03** [Creativemarket.com](#) offers inexpensive and customized templates (Microsoft Word and PowerPoint) that can be used to develop branded MBCIA executive summaries.





## Moving Forward

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Clay County is fortunate to be a desirable location, with a growing and educated population along with offering a host of quality of place amenities. The CCEDC has done a solid job in positioning Clay County for success. But no amount of outreach can overcome the current lack of industrial product in the County. While continued growth in certain areas is a foregone conclusion, truly transformative growth opportunities are being missed due to the lack project ready sites.

Proactive economic development must become a priority for the county to generate new revenues and be successful in providing high wage jobs within the county for its citizens. Residential growth and commercial development will continue but will not generate the long-term results stakeholders desire.

At a minimum, CCEDC and the county commission should prioritize identifying potential industrial site(s) and work with the landowner owner(s) to develop a plan to option or acquire. The First Coast Expressway will bring untold opportunities to Clay County's doorstep, the CCEDC must be in a position to take advantage of them.

Lastly, over the past three years the County has witnessed significant success in economic development and much of that can be attributed to the CCEDC's efforts. But that success can be fleeting if not understood by key stakeholders. Moving forward the CCEDC must continue to communicate its core mission of economic development to the elected officials and key partners. A clear understanding of the mission of the CCEDC and the value proposition of the organization is critical moving forward if you are to realize the area's potential.