Abstract of the Program

Launched in 2011, PBC Interactive is the first of its kind business web-application for economic development purposes in Palm Beach County. Created by a diverse group of professionals skilled in economics, planning, real estate appraisal and information technology, the program allows for broad-scope research and exploration of business opportunities by companies interested in the County as a potential site to relocate or expand their business. The general public also benefits by being able to search for information about land development issues that may affect their neighborhood.

PBC Interactive is accessible via the Palm Beach County Homepage at http://maps.co.palm-beach.fl.us/gis/edo.aspx? It includes multiple economic data layers maintained in real time and offers a variety of features for obtaining business information about commercial or industrial uses of specific properties, future and existing land uses, zoning districts, industry classification codes, census data, enterprise zones, ownership and property tax information, and more.

PBC Interactive was developed in-house without any external costs to the County. The popularity of this unique and innovative application is borne out by the volume of website visits. Between May 1, 2013 (when website statistics were first available) and January 1, 2016, the PBC Interactive website was visited 15,943 times.

The Problem or Need for the Program

Palm Beach County is contacted annually by more than 1,500 businesses looking for various types of information relating to the business climate in the County. The nature of the requests varies depending on the needs of the business. Requests include questions about property development regulations (e.g., land use, zoning, infrastructure and services), enterprise zones, municipal and community redevelopment agencies (CRAs), economic development agencies, educational facilities and locations of prospective competitors or customers. In order to improve responsiveness to businesses, expand the business community's access to public information and increase the efficiency with which staff responds to numerous requests for information, the County designed an all-inclusive information site that provides one-stop-shopping for current data to assist businesses, economic development and governmental agencies, as well as the general public.

Description of the Program

PBC Interactive enhances opportunities for new business development. It has features to assist with site location planning and existing business expansion, business-to-business marketing and incentive relocation programs. It offers accurate, real-time, parcel-based information to facilitate economic development using the geographic information systems (GIS) format. Multiple search layers show parcel ownership and valuation, existing and future land uses, enterprise zones, census data, traffic analysis zones, and NAICS classified businesses. Government information is organized by combining the County's internal resources with other public government sources, such as the Property Appraiser' data, countywide GIS layers, Palm Beach County Land Use from Planning Zoning & Building, NAICS codes from the US Census Bureau, and US Census information.

The core of the application is an all-inclusive information site for geographically locating economic development parcels for the use of:

- Increased responsiveness to local and non-local businesses
- Identifying incentives
- Future and existing land use
- Cluster industries
- Municipal and Community Redevelopment Agency Jurisdictions
- Economic Development Agencies
- Census Data

The types of data and GIS information maintained in PBC Interactive include:

- **Future Land Use** – describes the planned future land use designation for a property
- **NAICS** – North American Industry Classification System data related to property
- **Zoning** – identifies zoning classification assigned to a particular parcel
- **Existing Land Use** – describes the current land use designation for a property
- **Public Schools** and **Public School Zones**
- **County Assisted Developments**, residential and commercial
- **Enterprise Zones** – boundaries of areas within which businesses are entitled to receive financial aid
- **HUB Zones** – boundaries of historically underutilized areas within which businesses are entitled to a percentage of contracts from the Federal Government
- **Demographics** – zip code/census tracts with approximately 20 demographic data sets (population, birth data, income, etc.)

- **Municipalities** – the current municipal boundaries for Palm Beach County
- **Urban Job Tax Credit** – boundaries of areas within which tax credits are available to businesses
- **Community Redevelopment Agency** – boundaries of redevelopment districts
- **Downtown Development Authority** – boundaries of downtown enhancement districts
- **Chamber of Commerce** – location of business office for each Chamber
- **Economic Development Organizations** – business office locations for various Economic development organizations
- **Incubators** – locations of designated organizations which provide technical assistance to small, start-up businesses
- **Tourist Development Agencies** – business location for Tourist Development offices
- **Aerial photography** – digital orthographic photos covering Palm Beach County
- **Parcels** – Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's parcel boundaries
- **Roads** – road network for Palm Beach County
- **Bus Stops and Routes** – Palm Tran bus stops and routes
- **Railroads – rail line**s passing through Palm Beach County

The application provides detailed reports on economic and business data and consolidates the pertinent data, reflecting the search of the users for their convenience. Users can easily generate reports on the results of their research without staff assistance.

This project involved a collaborative effort between the Informational Systems Services (ISS) Department, the Planning, Zoning and Building Department, the Property Appraiser's Office and the Department of Economic Sustainability. This collaboration allowed the County to utilize existing staff resources to conceive, design, develop and implement the system thereby avoiding an external development costs. Components of the relevant information were already available on various individual websites and were linked to provide an all-inclusive site with tools that assist businesses, site selection consultants, developers, planners and the general public.

Responding to Economic Downturn

The project was undertaken, in part, as a response to the Great Recession which began in 2008. The project has helped to revitalize the Palm Beach County economy by providing businesses with useful information which helps analyze the viability of business relocations, expansions and start-ups. PBC Interactive is one of multiple tools used by the Department of Economic Sustainability to attract and grow businesses. The Board of County Commissioners also budgets for incentive funds which are awarded based on the number of jobs created and has established a tax abatement program for qualifying industries. Economic development programs around the

state and the region are very competitive and PBC Interactive may help provide an edge to the County by streamlining the planning process.

An application such as PBC Interactive which is designed specifically to aid the private sector in relocation choices is the epitome of an IT project that responded to the economic downturn. New and expanded businesses mean more and more jobs for local residents. As of late March 2016, Palm Beach County's unemployment rate has reached its pre-recession low of 4.9%.

Use of Technology

PBC Interactive was developed with Microsoft's .NET platform. The application is compatible with all the major browsers, including Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Safari, and has a clean and intuitive design, combined with a selection of easy-to-use, integrated tools. The website is freely available on the Internet and is fully compliant with the W3C standards.

The site does not process personally identifiable information and financial transactions are not part of the system. Privacy and security concerns are not an issue with **PBC Interactive** because only public records are displayed. The application does not require users to login to the website, nor is any user-related data collected or distributed.

The Cost of the Program

PBC Interactive was developed as an in-house application without any external costs to the County. The application was designed and developed as a joint project involving Information Systems Services, the Department of Economic Sustainability and the Property Appraiser's Office. Approximately two FTE programmers were assigned to the project over a six month period. The team consisted of two programmers, four economists, a planner and a real estate appraisal specialist.

The Results/Success of the Program

PBC Interactive has accelerated the countywide search of business information from days, or sometimes weeks of manual searches, to only minutes. Employees from the County's Department of Economic Sustainability now have a "one stop shop" application where they can quickly respond to questions or requests for information. Users can easily generate reports on the results of their research without staff assistance.

Between May 1, 2013 (when website statistics were first gathered) and January 1, 2016, the PBC Interactive website has been visited 15,943 times. Year-by-year visit statistics are as follows:

5,513 in 2013 (projected from 8 months); 5,302 in 2014; and 6,942 in 2015. ISS also published a book on PBC Interactive (http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00CR0N6DY), of which some 600 copies have been ordered by persons in the United States and nine other countries.

While many factors have contributed to the economic rebound of Palm Beach County, PBC Interactive has played a significant role in the County's recovery. The program has received many accolades with some businesses, the Board of County Commissioners, and members of the public praising the application for its benefits. A staff presentation to the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners highlighting the benefits of the application can be accessed via the following link: http://www.pbcgov.com/_code/videos/JWPlayer.htm?id=iss/A9r529e

Economic Development Incentives for FY 2015 included the following awards:

Direct Financial Incentives

- Biotest Pharmaceuticals
- Digital Risk, LLC
- Pratt & Whitney
- ADT, LLC
- SBA Communications, Corp

Indirect Financial Incentives

- Black Business Investment Corporation
- Business Development Board
- Film and Television Commission

Tax Based Incentives

- Atkins Tender Loving Care, Inc. File A / File B
- Bentley's Child Development Center, Inc.
- Bright Ideas Educational Foundation, Inc.
- Tyson Tiny Tots, Inc C/O
- Office Depot
- Aldi, Inc. C/O (Florida South Division LLC)

Collectively, these companies and organizations have added hundreds of jobs to the payroll and hundreds of thousands of dollars to the property tax roll.

Worthiness of Award

The PBC Interactive application serves as an excellent example of inter-departmental and inter-governmental cooperation which enables business-related data to come together in a format that provides unparalleled access, reporting and mapping. In an environment where economic development programs are competing to entice new business start-ups and relocations, PBC Interactive provides the kind of insight into Palm Beach County that allows businesses to make critical decisions to move or expand their organizations into Palm Beach County. The general public also benefits by using the application's online maps, data layers and tools to search for information about land development issues that may affect their neighborhood. In summary, PBC Interactive has become a valuable GIS tool for economic development.

PBC Interactive has also been featured at the Southeast Florida GIS Expo, one of the largest such annual conferences of GIS professionals in country.

Supplemental Materials

PBC Interactive Presentation, BCC Workshop