



PARTNERSHIPS BENEFIT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Working Together Toward Industry Development and Job Creation

By Sherry Howard, Deputy Director
Palm Beach County Department of Economic Sustainability

When the Research Park at Florida Atlantic University decided that it was time to expand their range of services, they contacted the Palm Beach County Department of Economic Sustainability (DES). This led to a collaboration and partnership that resulted in a successful grant application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to determine the feasibility of establishing a science and research park in northern Palm Beach County. The \$290,600 Regional Innovation Science and Research Development Grant awarded in May, 2015 will support a study to determine if there is demand for the products and services offered in the park; if there will be a need for additional resources; how best to spread the word about the new park; and a prospective timeline. If determined to be feasible, the park will provide "Economically diverse, high-wage employment business development and growth, particularly in targeted industry clusters" which "is key to achieving economic sustainability," said Andrew Duffell, President and CEO of the Research Park at Florida Atlantic University.

Hot on the heels of this EDA award, the City of Lake Worth was notified by EDA in August, 2015, that the City's grant application which was prepared and submitted by DES for the Lake Worth Park of Commerce Infrastructure Improvements project, was selected through EDA's competitive application review process for further funding consideration. The grant application was in the amount of \$1,389,100 under the EDA's Public Works program. Funding is subject to appropriations allocated to the EDA by the U.S. Congress for FY 2016.

The City is seeking to fully develop the 375 acre site into a fully operational business/industrial park. Its vision is for the Park of Commerce to become a vital center for light industry and a major employment center. This project satisfies EDA's investment priorities; Collaborative Regional Innovation – as the project supports the development of a unique manufacturing cluster that builds on existing Regional strengths. For many years, the City of Lake Worth and Palm Beach County recognized this favorable location for its economic potential, which is adjacent to major transportation routes including I-95 and CSX rail, Palm Beach International Airport, Florida's Turnpike, Port of Palm Beach and FEC railroad. The City and County are working together to resolve right-of-way and intersection challenges along Boutwell Road. However, funding for the myriad of other infrastructure improvements necessary for the park's development remained illusive until this grant funding opportunity was realized.

According to Michael Bornstein, City Manager for the City of Lake Worth, "the biggest strategic alliance is with Palm Beach County – specifically the Department of Economic Sustainability. Without their expertise and guidance in grant writing along with the approval by the County Commissioners making Palm Beach County a co-applicant for the EDA grant, the Park of Commerce would not have been as competitive."

For more information about the County's Economic Development programs, contact Sherry at DES, (561) 233-3653.