

Background

- For 30 years Leon County, in partnership with Florida State University (FSU) and Florida A&M University (FAMU) have operated, managed, and controlled Innovation Park. Innovation Park is a 208-acre research park that is home to some of the County's leading research industries including the FAMU/FSU College of Engineering, National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, and a number of technology based small businesses. Innovation Park houses a business incubator in association with FAMU. Innovation Park is a self-supporting enterprise with liabilities and net assets of \$19.1 million and an operating budget of \$1.3 million. Approximately 2,000 Leon County residents are employed at Innovation Park.
- The Targeted Business Pilot Program (TBPP) was created jointly between the County and City of Tallahassee in 2001 to attract high wage, targeted businesses to the community. The TBPP provides for the reimbursement of up to 100% of development (permit) fees and ad valorem taxes (capped at the City's millage rate) to qualifying local businesses that locate in designated economic growth areas and meet job creation goals. Since 2003, Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC) has remained the only business participating in the TBPP program.
- In 2002, the Board led the legislative effort to create the Tallahassee-Leon County Enterprise Zone (EZ), which is approximately 20 square miles. It offers significant state-based tax incentives to property and business owners within the EZ boundaries that renovate homes, create jobs, and/or expand businesses. These incentives include rebates of state sales tax paid for equipment and construction materials and a state tax credit for increases in local property taxes due to property improvements.
- Through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) payments, the County has provided over \$10 million to the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The CRA governing body is comprised of five City Commissioners and four County Commissioners. In addition, the Board dedicated \$10.7 million of the County's 10% share of the sales tax extension funding to the Gaines Street Reconstruction Project and in 2004, the Board levied the fourth cent Tourist Development Tax for the construction of the Performing Arts Center.
- Since 1995, the County has contracted with Tallahassee-Leon County Economic Development Council (EDC) to assist in the creation of high-wage jobs and offering incentives to businesses that seek to relocate into the community. The County contracts with the EDC in the amount of \$199,500 annually.
- The County provides \$25,000 annually to the Qualified Targeted Industry (QTI) program through its contract with the EDC, to leverage state funds to local businesses. Program incentives include refunds on various state taxes and ad valorem taxes.
- In 2006, the Board approved the allocation of \$300,000 for the start-up of a Leon County Small Businesses Enterprise program. The County entered into a performance agreement with the FAMU Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to foster growth in the County's economy by affording small businesses an opportunity to gain the necessary experience, knowledge, and training to compete and secure contracts in the County bidding process. A total of 117 businesses were approved to receive SBDC training, of which 55 received training or were exempt.
- In 2007, the Board created Vision 2020, LLC, a private venture fund to provide financial and technical assistance to local start-up and emerging businesses. The Board appropriated an economic grant to Vision 2020 in the amount of \$810,704. Since its creation, the private venture fund has reached its fundraising goal of \$2 million, leveraging \$2 for every \$1 dollar provided by the County.

Current Issues

- A dedicated funding source for economic development. For the past decade, economic development has been identified as one the County's top priorities, however funding has been limited.

Near-Term Considerations

- Annual Report Presentation by the EDC
- EDC 08/09 contract renewal
- Vision 2020 quarterly reports
- Appointment of County Commissioner to CRA Board

Long-Term Considerations

- To continue to be a catalyst for new ideas in economic development (i.e. the County's role as a catalyst for the "Green Economy").
- To continue to be a viable economic development partner in the community.
- To consider the County's role in economic development.