

Lee County:
Research & Enterprise Diamond

Summary of Findings

February 23-24, 2012



**Urban Land Southwest Florida
Institute**

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About the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

Founded in 1936, ULI has 40,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. ULI is committed to:

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

About ULI Southwest Florida

ULI Southwest Florida is ULI at the local level. Through District Council sponsored educational forums and events, ULI Southwest Florida offers an unbiased, nonpartisan, and open exchange of ideas impacting land use and the quality of life in the Southwest Florida region. *SWFlorida.ULI.org*

What is a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP)?

Objective of the ULI TAP Program

The ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program brings the finest expertise in the real estate, planning and development fields together to collaborate on complex land use and redevelopment projects. TAPs are designed specifically to be run and implemented by District Councils, and are intentionally flexible to provide sponsoring organizations a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues.

Who serves on a TAP?

Once a project has been designated as a TAP project, the District Council TAP Committee assembles a group of ULI members with expertise in the topics under consideration. Depending on the assignment, panel members may include developers and land owners, investors, designers, planners, engineers, market and financial analysts, as well as members of the public sector. These experts volunteer their time for a one or two day working session at no cost. Following the TAP, the District Council compiles a summary of the presentations and recommendations in a ULI TAP Report.

How Can TAPs Help Public Agencies or Non-Profit Organizations?

The TAP program can help public or non-profit organizations by:

- Analyzing the re-use potential of existing properties;
- Identifying key economic and management issues relating to public/private land use projects;
- Developing criteria for evaluating development proposals and project feasibility;
- Assessing overall development strategies and policies.

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Expert Review Panel

ULI Southwest Florida is grateful to these experts who served as Panelists, provided objective review, insight and perspective, and are responsible for the content of this document:

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Acknowledgments

ULI Southwest Florida gratefully acknowledges the support of the following individuals for coordination and implementation of the TAPs program:

Tim Byal (ULI Southwest Florida – Treasurer)
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Miromar Development Corp.

David Farmer (ULI Southwest Florida – Chairman)
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Executive Summary

In response to a Lee County application, the ULI Southwest Florida District Council formed a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) of real estate professionals to review a 40-square mile area in Southern Lee County identified as the “Research and Enterprise Diamond.” Specifically the TAP would review the existing conditions and constraints of the Diamond and advise the county on three areas; Market Potential, Planning and Design, and Implementation Strategies. The panel produced the following summary of findings:

- **The Research & Enterprise Diamond with its resources of the Southwest Florida International Airport and Florida Gulf Coast University has the greatest potential to attract new businesses to Lee County that meet the changing demographics, economy and workforce.**
- **The process of transforming the land use within the Diamond, in accordance with the Vision, is a long term project that will take shape over the next 10-20 years.**
- **The availability of improved land; predictability of cost and time for development; and a qualified workforce are the keys to successful business development in the Diamond.**
- **A “Core” area within the Diamond should be defined for pedestrian and transit oriented development where higher density, reduced parking and pedestrian infrastructure should be encouraged by the County.**
- **The best way to stimulate the creation of desired mix of land use is through stakeholder participation in the planning efforts for the Diamond and for Lee County to address zoning and permitting in a global context to help mitigate the current development constraints.**
- **From a Business development perspective, the Research & Enterprise Diamond should expand its target beyond renewable energy and consider clustering as a tool to accelerate relocation of similar technologies based on an incentive program.**
- **Land surrounding the airport is well positioned with good infrastructure however the panel recommends a “business partner” to facilitate marketing efforts and the capital investment needed to develop the planned logistic and airport support businesses.**
- **The panel recommends that Lee County develop a strategic master plan for the Research & Enterprise Diamond by convening all the major stakeholders in the area for a planning charrette facilitated by ULI Southwest Florida.**

The area within the Research & Enterprise Diamond includes a wide range of land uses with unique goals and objectives. Overall, there can be a common vision but the tactical execution should be addressed separately. The Panel saw different solutions for the Port Authority land; the Clean-Tech Industrial property; FGCU and Residential areas. The good news is that the relationship between these land uses is primarily synergistic rather than competitive. The key, as indicated above, is to develop an inclusive process to create a master plan for the area which will maximize the benefits to each stakeholder.

Overview of Key Issues

Lee County has identified a roughly 40 square mile diamond shaped area in south Lee County as being uniquely situated to provide a livable, economically diverse hub for high technology/clean/green/sustainable economic development. Identified as the “Research & Enterprise Diamond”, this area offers Lee County an opportunity to maximize its resources in the Diamond to benefit from existing infrastructure and resources in transportation, education and recreation.

The Research & Enterprise Diamond includes several assets that make this use of the land in this area a unique and compelling case:

- Southwest Florida International Airport, a recently expanded International Airport;
- Florida Gulf Coast University, a rapidly growing state university with 13,000 existing and 24,000 projected enrollment;
- Significant vacant land already zoned for industrial, commercial and residential uses;
- Existing and planned infrastructure improvements that will support development;
- Location in SW Florida with a high-quality of life and comparatively lower cost of living environment than many larger urban areas; and
- Existing businesses such as Algenol, Gartner, Interop Technologies, VR Labs and NeoGenomics

These assets provide an opportunity for creating synergies that will attract new business and economic growth in the Research & Enterprise Diamond. Lee County seeks to employ new development standards and procedures that will transform the Diamond into a magnet for Cleantech Companies; Research & Development oriented firms, Logistics & Distribution Operations, and Green Real Estate development projects.

The two key issues to recognize are: 1.) the transformation of the land use in accordance with the Vision is a long term project that, if properly executed, will take shape over the next 20 years and 2.) Providing a comprehensive set of development standards or policies will not necessarily encourage growth or business development. What we heard from the interviewees and the panelists is that availability of land, predictability of the time and cost to develop and a qualified workforce were the key elements to successful business recruiting in this area.

The Vision

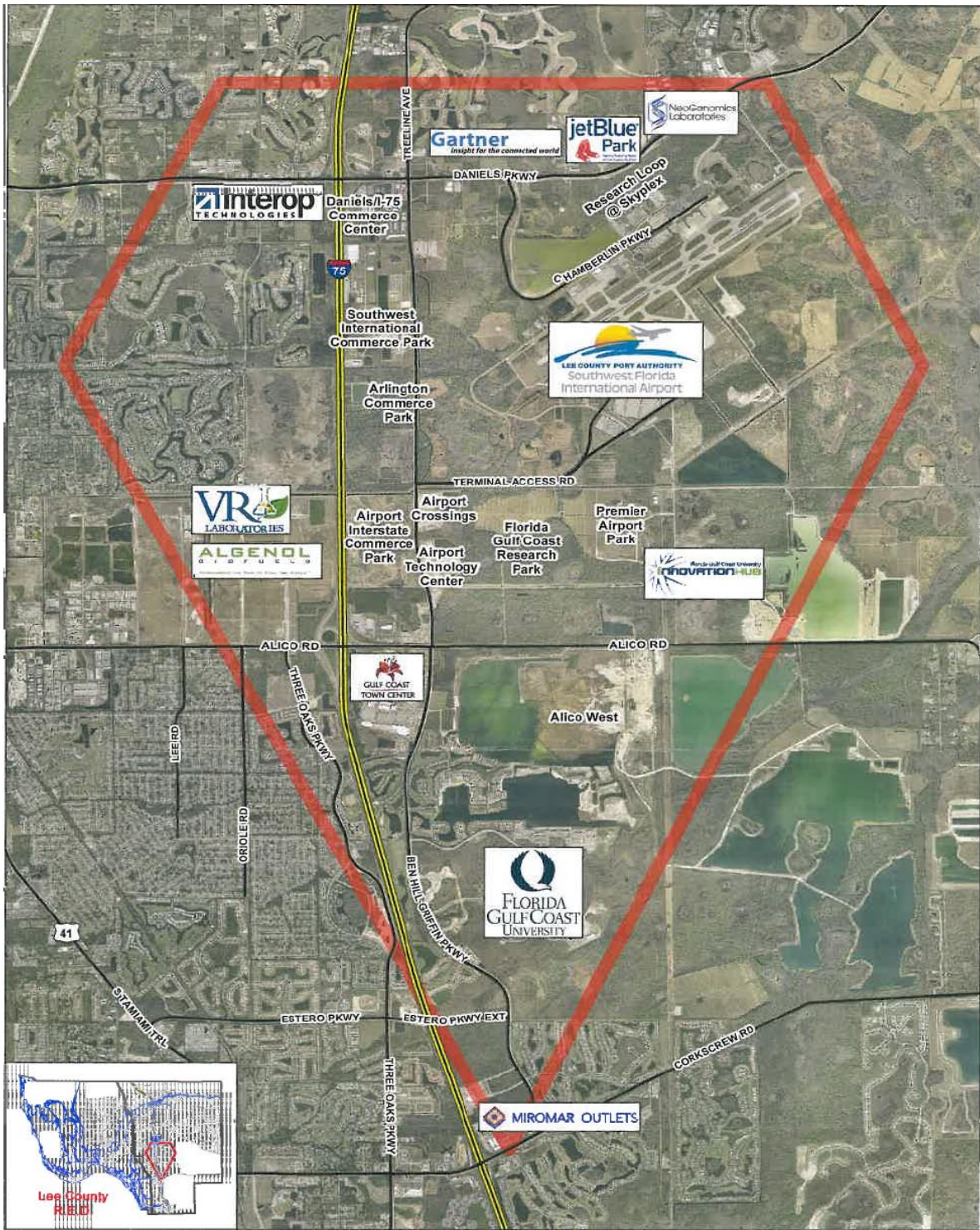
According to Lee County, presently the Vision for the Research & Enterprise Diamond is to be a livable, economically diverse hub for high technology/clean/green/sustainable economic development that addresses the lifestyle needs of the new employees, University students and existing residents through the implementation of infill development that includes more walkable, transit-oriented communities and commerce providing convenience, sociability and excitement to the area.

The vision includes several components that affect land use. The first component includes Business Development issues that impact the industrial and airport land. The second encompasses the lifestyle needs of the new employees and University students that will drive development of residential and commercial land in the area.

A more detailed look at the land use within the Diamond reveals the following zoning or uses that generally support the Vision for the Research & Enterprise Diamond: Industrial; Airport Support/Logistics; Commercial; FGCU; Residential; and Mixed Use.

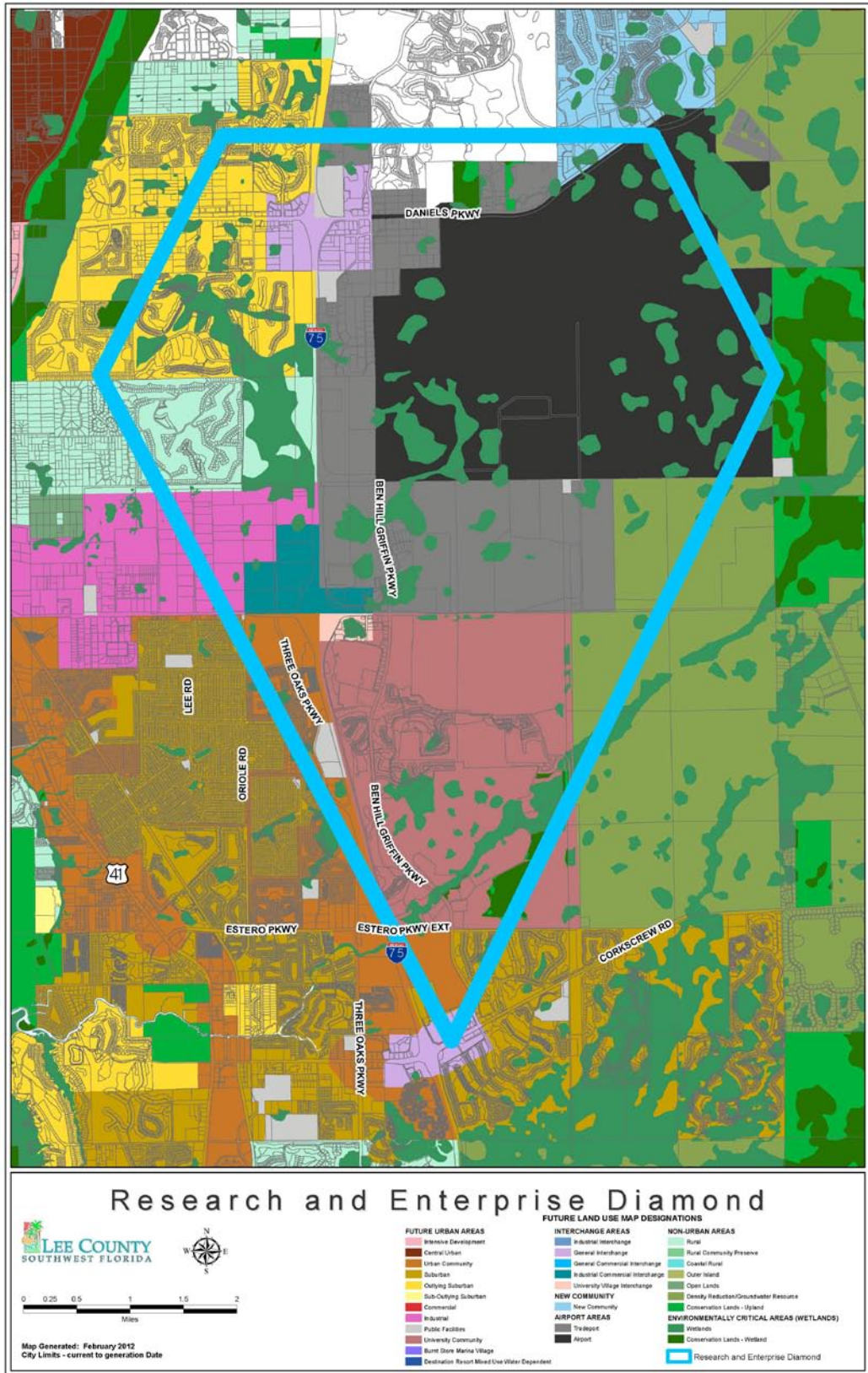
The Panel had differing views on the banding concept for the Research & Enterprise Diamond; however this issue was deferred during the TAP process since it does not specifically relate to land use. We believe this concept could be refined during a planning charrette.

The aerials and maps on the following exhibits identify the major elements and land uses within the “Diamond” area.



Research and Enterprise Diamond Lee County, Florida





The Process

The Technical Assistance Panel was held on February 23-24, 2012 in Fort Myers, Florida and was the product of a diverse group of stakeholders from Southwest Florida committed to solving one of the most urgent needs of the region. It was organized by the ULI Southwest Florida Executive Committee and participants from both the public and private sectors were largely responsible for the workshop's success.

The TAPs process for the Research & Enterprise Diamond included the following activities:

- Preliminary review and study by the Panel of detailed information provided by Lee County and related articles and research papers from ULI
- Windshield and Helicopter tour of the property;
- On-site meeting with Florida Gulf Coast University;
- Interview with all applicable Lee County Planning, Administration, Transportation and Port Authority officials;
- Interview with Landowners in the area including Alico Land Development and NM Development Group; and
- Brainstorming session with the Panel, ULI support personnel, and key Lee County Community Development Staff.

Heather Francis, District Coordinator for ULI Southwest Florida was largely responsible for the accumulation of data and production of the report.

The Questions

In the TAPs application, Lee County posed questions for the panel to address. The following responses from the panel resulted:

- 1. Market Potential:** *What techniques should the County use to ensure active and constructive participation by the private property owners, residents, and public stakeholders in the Research & Enterprise Diamond to achieve the vision?*

The Panel agreed that the County should conduct a charrette with the Stakeholders in the Diamond area to fully develop the Vision and formulate a strategic master plan for the Research & Enterprise Diamond. The process should include County and State Elected Officials, key staff from Lee County Planning, Transportation, Business Development, and the Port Authority; FGCU Planning, Administration and Research; Landowners within the area; concerned Business, Civic and Environmental Groups; Existing and Targeted Business within the area.

This process should create an atmosphere where the stakeholders are comfortable saying what they really think and come ready to engage. The goal is to identify areas of cooperation and resources that foster the Vision. As an example, Florida Gulf Coast University is land constrained yet their current plans include construction of more campus housing while planning to locate research facilities off-campus. A masterplan of the area might, alternatively, encourage FGCU to keep the research on campus and allow adjacent properties to undertake student housing (e.g., the University Highlands Parcel, or Alico West, or other similar land uses in the area). Also during the charrette the County should address what's missing in the area for young professionals to relocate and identify what it takes to encourage development of the missing components.

- 2. Planning and Design:** *Given the vision for the Research & Enterprise Diamond, its existing public infrastructure, and the current state of development, what is an appropriate mix of uses?*

The Research & Enterprise Diamond is a large area and may require definition of specific geographic boundaries for sub-districts for creation of clusters. For instance, there appears to be three general zones within the R&E Diamond:

- 1.** Some primarily residential areas (the very Northwest and West of I-75);
- 2.** One area which can be fully mixed use (the South/Southeastern zone) centered around FGCU; and
- 3.** The more industrial/jetport oriented area.

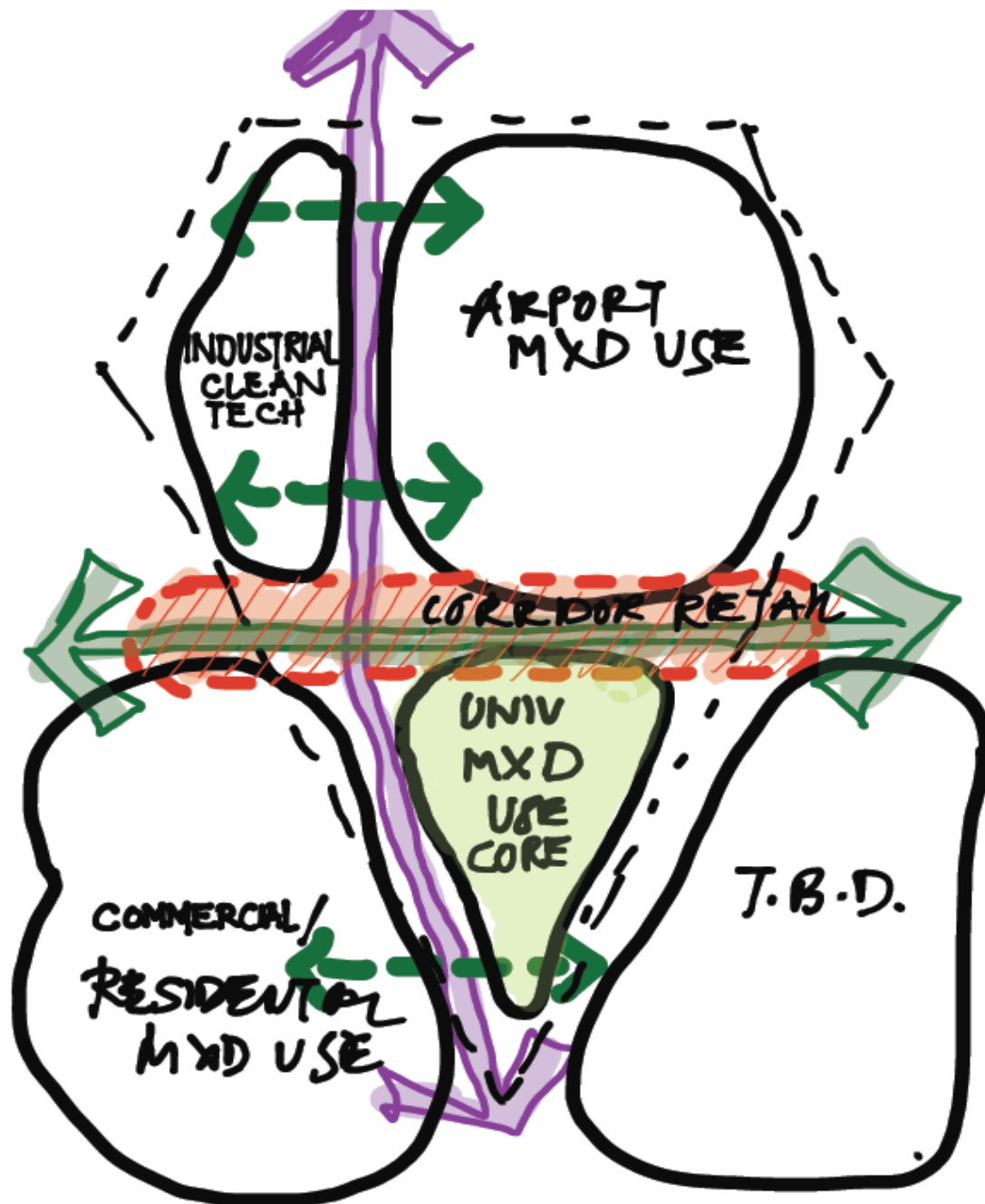
Dr. Van Buskirk's population modeling indicates that the percent of the labor force involved in construction and related trades diminishes as Lee County passes the midpoint of its development and is replaced by an increase in the labor force associated with manufacturing and service. Accordingly, the Research & Enterprise Diamond with its resources of the international airport and the university has the greatest potential to attract new businesses that meet these changing demographics. Therefore the significant amount of industrial land in the mix is considered appropriate; however priority in development and incentives should be directed towards those properties that have sufficient infrastructure in place and full entitlements (although recognizing in the long run, other areas may warrant priority for infrastructure investment.) This prioritization will improve the business development prospects by reducing uncertainty in the development process and reduce capital expenditure for infrastructure. The prioritization will also encourage businesses to develop in a cluster where synergies can be identified and capitalized upon.

The Industrial/Clean Tech and FGCU land uses have a synergistic relationship, Accordingly, the Panel does not see the benefit in pushing the FGCU Research activities to a site "off campus" which does not have existing infrastructure that would be better suited to integrate the research activities with the main campus. There is a significant amount of improved, fully zoned land that is better suited for this development within the Diamond. Also, the Panel believes that Clustering of uses should be encouraged to attract similar technologies such as renewable energy.

The Port Authority land surrounding the airport is ideally suited for the planned industrial uses for logistics and airport support business. The market for firms that are attractive synergistically to the airport is different than that of other parts of the Diamond.

The entire Diamond cannot be pedestrian oriented due to the transportation corridors (I-75) and the nature of businesses that comprise the Research and Enterprise cluster. However, areas of perhaps approximately 1/4 mile diameter should be defined for pedestrian and transit oriented development (Diamond Core). Higher density, reduced parking, and pedestrian infrastructure should be permitted and supported by the County in this Core area. A node in the regional transit system should also be created in the Core so that maximum transit service is available as a viable alternative to driving. The ideal location of this sub-district is adjacent to the University, where there is already a critical mass of transit-oriented population and infrastructure and entitlements are complete.

The appropriate mix of uses for the Core includes high density residential including student housing, hotels, street oriented retail, professional office, entertainment, restaurant and civic buildings. The University should be encouraged to co-locate University facilities such as a book store within the Core so that a town-gown interaction can be induced. The mix will also have to cover the entire scope of services and amenities for a vibrant "Live/Work" community.



Note: This bubble diagram is a conceptual representation of synergistic land uses that are associated with a mixed-use “core”. It is not intended to identify specific land use relative to the a geographic location (i.e. T.B.D. includes land that has restricted development rights under the DRGR designation)

3. Implementation Strategies: *How can the County stimulate the creation of the desired mix of land uses? What development related incentives should be implemented to attract private investment consistent with the vision related above?*

The best way to stimulate the creation of a mix is by stakeholders' participation in a strategic master plan for the Research & Enterprise Diamond and for the County to address permitting in a global context to help mitigate current development constraints.

From a business development perspective, the Research & Enterprise Diamond should expand its targeted firms beyond renewable energy to medical tech. Consideration should be given to clustering as a tool to accelerate relocation of similar clean tech business to a specific sub-zone within the Diamond. Incentives could be provided to firms that locate within a cluster. Clusters around the airport are different from those elsewhere in the Diamond. For example, distribution facilities will be needed to enhance cargo shipping as a revenue source.

The land adjacent to the airport is well positioned with good infrastructure. The Panel believes that there should be a strategic business plan developed to attract the targeted logistic and airport repair business to “redevelop” this property. This plan should encourage participation with a “business partner” to facilitate marketing efforts and capital investment necessary to make this development a reality. A business partner could include a national commercial real estate broker or an industrial development company that is interested in a joint venture opportunity. The Panel sees this activity as a separate process from the high tech industrial and mixed use activities in the southern portion of the “Diamond”.

Predictability is critical to attract private investment. Business relocation is hampered by a 2 year-plus entitlement process with no reliable expectation up front of the outcome or development conditions that will be imposed. Programs that address these costs and uncertainties will stimulate development and help attract private investment. As an example, Broward County created a “Permitting Excellence” process where businesses within a targeted segment qualify for streamlined permitting and inspection process to reduce the development time involved in their relocation. Similarly, the cost and timeline involved in wetland and panther mitigation provides a barrier to business relocation and capital investment. Perhaps County conservation lands could be used to provide pre-development environmental mitigation for the Research and Enterprise Diamond.

An important incentive to encourage development within the Diamond Core, described above, is public investment in transit / bike/ pedestrian infrastructure to fill the gap between what the real estate market can afford to support and what is needed to create an appropriate environment for each of the sub-districts or clusters in the Diamond. For example, in the Core area a high level of investment is needed for construction of sidewalks, bus shelters, bike lanes, and urban open spaces. However, in the initial stages

of creating this Core, the private market may not support both the density and infrastructure need to achieve the preferred form of development. The County could invest in infrastructure (or provide credits to developers) to reduce the time from concept to implementation of the desired improvements. The County should also coordinate with local and regional agencies to ensure the Research Diamond infrastructure is given highest priority. Public investment will help make initial projects in the Core feasible, which will lead to the critical mass required to eventually be self-supporting. In addition the County could also consider public/private partnerships to achieve these infrastructure needs and development goals.

There is also a concern about not achieving the density or critical mass required to reach a “tipping point” for the success of the Diamond. Incentives should be focused within more refined sub-districts of the Diamond to maximize the benefit. The larger the area the more diluted the incentives.

The Recommendations

The Panel was unanimous in its recommendation that the Research & Enterprise Diamond needs to develop a strategic master plan for the area land uses. The process for developing this master plan should include all the major stakeholders in the area: State and County Elected Officials, key staff from Lee County Planning, Transportation, Business Development, Port Authority; FGCU Planning, Administration and Research; Landowners within the area; concerned Civic and Environmental Groups; Existing and Targeted Business within the area.

The convening process is a core concept of the Urban Land Institute and the SW Florida District Council would volunteer to facilitate a planning charrette that convenes all the stakeholders to develop a strategic master plan for the Research & Enterprise Diamond.

The area within the Research & Enterprise Diamond includes a wide range of land uses with unique goals and objectives. Overall, there can be a common vision but the tactical execution should be addressed separately. The Panel saw different solutions for the Port Authority land; the Clean-Tech Industrial property; FGCU and Residential areas. The good news is that the relationship between these land uses is primarily synergistic rather than competitive. The key, as indicated above, is to develop an inclusive process to create a master plan for the area which will maximize the benefits to each stakeholder.

From the Business Development perspective, the strategic master plan will better define the development opportunities; enhance the permitting and incentive process to reduce uncertainty for prospective business relocations; identify clustering opportunities for similar technologies; stratify the business uses between logistic and clean-tech; and identify educational, research and living opportunities within the area.

Additional Resources

Web Sites

ULI—the Urban Land Institute- <http://www.uli.org>

Books and Reports

Smart Growth Transportation for Suburban Greenfields. Washington, D.C.: ULI–Urban Land Institute, 2003.

The New Shape of Suburbia: Trends in Residential Development. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2003, Schmitz, Adrienne.

Creating Walkable Places: Compact Mixed-Use Solutions. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2005, Schmitz, Adrienne and Jason Scully.

Creating Value: Smart Development and Green Design. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2007.

Building Florida’s Future: State Strategies for Regional Cooperation. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2005, ULI—the Urban Land Institute.

Regional Cooperation for Florida’s Future: a Report to the ULI Florida Committee for Regional Cooperation. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2004.

ULI Community Catalyst Report Number 6: Compact Development: Changing the Rules to Make It Happen. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2007.

Higher-Density Development: Myth and Fact. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2005.

Getting Real about Urbanism: Contextual Design for Cities. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2008, Zyscovich, Bernard and Porter, Douglas R.

Participating Expert Panelist Information

Carron Day, AICP, CEP, CNU-A, Tampa, FL and eastern NC

Carron Day is distinguished for her planning and land development expertise, credibility, experience leading large complex projects, business development success and project management skills. She has successfully managed the planning and entitlement of some of Florida's largest and most successful developments, over 300 square miles of comprehensive plan land use map amendments and served as lead planner for a 10-county study locating a preferred corridor for over 200 miles of 500-kV and 230-kV transmission lines. Carron is currently leading PlanIt EAST, a regional planning partnership for nine counties in eastern North Carolina and is project manager for EnvisionEast-2050, a ULI Reality Check exercise scheduled for eastern North Carolina in October 2012.

She has a Masters in City and Regional Planning from the Illinois Institute of Technology, is a member in multiple state American Planning Association chapters and elected as local APA section Secretary/Treasurer, Vice Chair and Chair. She's also been elected section Secretary/Treasurer, Vice President and President of the Florida Planning and Zoning Association, and appointed to six terms on the Lee County FL Planning and Zoning Commission. Carron is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), is a Certified Environmental Professional (CEP) of the Association of Environmental Professionals and Academy of Board Certified Environmental, accredited by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU-A) and certified as a Public Meeting Facilitator by the National Charrette Institute.

Anish Kumar, AIA, AICP, Principal, tvsdesigns

Anish leads tvsdesign's global master planning and urban design practice from the Firm's headquarters in Atlanta and offices in Chicago, Shanghai, and Dubai.

A licensed architect and planner, Anish's experience encompasses a wide range of transformative urban projects in communities throughout the world, including projects in Atlanta, Chicago, China, India, Chile, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Dubai.

Anish has a strong commitment to sustainable development and urban place-making. His strength as a conceptual designer enables him to translate his clients' goals into practical strategies and ambitious designs for the integrated development of buildings, infrastructure, and open space.

Anish is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and has served on the Institute's National Advisory Panels and on the Executive Steering Committee of the Philadelphia District Council.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and the Ahmedabad School of Architecture, Anish is an Adjunct Professor in Architecture/Urban Design at Drexel University and also sits on the Advisory Board of Philadelphia University's College of Architecture and the Built Environment.

tvsdesign is an international architectural firm with expertise in a wide range of project types. The firm was recognized with the American Institute of Architects' prestigious "Firm of the Year Award" in 2002.

Brian Latta, Market Officer, Flagler Development

Brian Latta is Market Officer for Flagler Development, a full-service commercial real estate firm with approximately 12 million square feet of Class-A office and industrial space and 5,000 acres of land. Mr. Latta currently oversees management of Flagler's Office assets in Broward and Palm Beach County and is the Development Manager for Flagler's Countyline development, a 500 acre C&D landfill in Hialeah FL that is being re-purposed as a 6,700,000 Office/Industrial park. Prior to this, Mr. Latta served five years as the Development Manager for Beacon Lakes, a 6,000,000 SF Class A Office / Industrial Park in the Airport West section of Miami-Dade County.

With over 20 years of experience, Mr. Latta has managed the entitlements, development and construction of over 1.2 million square feet of projects that span the spectrum distribution warehouse facilities to biomedical research laboratories. Clients include: AMB Properties, Mercantil Commercebank, Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, Glaxo SmithKline, Jackson Memorial Hospital, Comcast and Toll Brothers.

Active in industry and business organizations, Mr. Latta is member of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), the Broward Alliance and is licensed general contractor in the State of Florida. Mr. Latta has a BS from Washington University Olin School of Business and MS from University of Florida M.E Rinker School for Building Construction where he was a member of Sigma Lambda Chi, national construction honor society.

Michael T. Hoyt, Senior Vice President of Development, The Lutgert Companies

Mike Hoyt is the Senior Vice President of Development at The Lutgert Companies with responsibility for planning, design, sales, construction, start up, operation, maintenance and warranty for the company's many developments. Mike started with The Lutgert Companies in 1995 and has since overseen the development of many residential high-rise condominiums as well as several mixed-use commercial developments such as The Promenade at Bonita Bay and the Mercato in Naples. Currently, Mike is closely involved with various aspects of the day-to-day facility management including sales, operations, tenant build-outs and renovations of the ongoing concerns at the Mercato mixed-use lifestyle center in Naples, The Venetian Village in Naples, The Lutgert office buildings, The Strada Condominiums at Mercato and the Tavira Condominium at Bonita Bay in Bonita Springs. Prior to joining The Lutgert Companies, Mike worked as a project manager for Brasfield & Gorrie General Contractors in the Southeastern United States on projects ranging from industrial (US Air Hangar at Tampa International), commercial/governmental (Orlando City Hall, Hillsborough County Center), and health care (Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, Palms of Pasadena Medical Office complex in St. Petersburg) and for Metric Construction on the East/West Expressway in Orlando. Mike is an '89 graduate of the University of Florida in Building Construction and a '07 graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University with an MBA in Finance.

Dr. Paul Van Buskirk, Van Buskirk Ryffel & Associates

Dr. Van Buskirk is the recipient of the Charles Evans Hughes Award from the American Society for Public Administration, for courageous, resourceful, and imaginative work in municipal government and its future development. He was featured, along with other alumni's, on the cover of Rensselaer's Catalog celebrating its 150 Anniversary as representative of its graduates that are applying engineering sciences to urban problems. His career as an engineer, city planner and urban modeler has over four decades of service to cities, counties, states, and private developers throughout the country and overseas.

Dr. Van Buskirk taught for several years at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the Urban and Environmental Studies Program. He also was the co-author of several published studies on urban modeling. He has been a guest lecturer at Yale, St. Lawrence, and the University of Florida and is the author of a book on a case study of comprehensive physical, social, and economic planning. He has been designated as a fellow at the New York State Academy of Public Administration and a former member of the Development Regulations Council of the Urban Land Institute. Dr. Van Buskirk is a licensed engineer in three states, a Charter Member of APA, and AICP. He is the author and designer of the Interactive Growth Model and the author of several comprehensive plans.

He received his undergraduate degree in engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and his Masters of Science and PhD from Barry University.