

In August of 2008, the EDC Board of Directors approved the formation of three task forces to assist the organization with strategic planning for 2009. The task force chairs were charged with the development of the case statement and recommendations for the EDC to work in unison with our local and state governments to help our community become more competitive in the area of quality job creation. When the national economic crisis escalated, the EDC organized an Economic Growth Summit held on October 29, 2008. At

the Summit, the Task Force Chairs presented their work in progress. The Case Statement and recommendations were then approved at the November Board meeting. This body of work will help guide the Strategic Plan for the EDC in 2009. As an investor, or potential investor, review these recommendations and feel free to contact EDC staff or Board members with any questions or comments you may have.

**Get involved in our community's journey to economic recovery in 2009!**

## **The Case Statement for Economic Diversification in Marion County**

- **A Range of Value Industries with Primary Jobs Are Well-suited for Growth and Investment in Our Community**
- **Residents and Families of Marion County Need Employment Choices and Opportunities**
- **The Community Needs 4,500 Acres of Commercially Zoned Property by 2035 to Attract New and Expand Existing Businesses and Jobs**
- **Research Indicates Every House in Marion County Needs Two Jobs to Support Quality of Life and Cost of Living**
- **The Economic Diversification Agenda Must Be Compatible with Cultural and Natural Assets**
- **Economic Diversification Will Improve the Tax Base, and Promotes Investment in Vital Infrastructure Such As Education**
- **Recruiters Want to Assure Talent that Local Career Paths Are Expanding**
- **Growing a Portfolio of Businesses Around Great Brands, Research, Products, and Technologies Will Help Our Community Avoid the Spikes and Challenges of Economic Change**
- **The Community Has and Will Continue to Have a Foundation and Track Record for Aligning Education and Workforce Programs to Careers and Industries of the Future**

### RECOMMENDATION – Adopt and Execute a Concise Statement of the Case for Economic Diversification to Create Quality Jobs in Our Community

We recommend that the Strategic Plan of the EDC be updated to indicate adoption of the Case for Economic Diversification in our community, and to set an agenda for using this Case as the primary economic agenda item in all pertinent documents, plans and communications. Share and seek support and adoption by all key partners.

### RECOMMENDATION – Strongly Advocate and Support the Inclusion of an Economic Development Component in the Marion County Comprehensive Plan (Inclusive of the Municipalities)

We recommend that the EDC continue to build on the Task Force’s conversations with Marion County thus far by updating the EDC’s Strategic Plan to include high-priority volunteer and staff engagement to support and inform the crafting and approval of an Economic Development Component for the Marion County Comprehensive Plan. For the mid and long-term, we need to begin to identify the areas where development of the right industries should take place. The Comprehensive Plan, currently lacking an economic development component, is the right starting place and adoption by all key partners.

### RECOMMENDATION – The EDC Will Advocate for the Immediate, Continued, Collaborative Use of Marion County’s Newly Released Wilson Miller Economic Assessment Tool

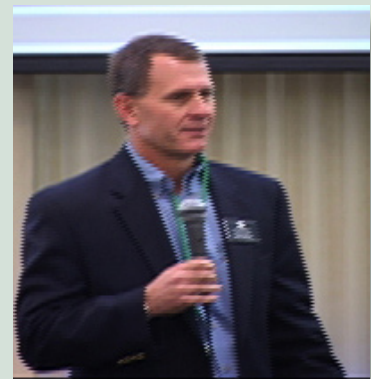
We recommend that the EDC adopt an action plan to utilize and support the newly-released Wilson Miller Study and fiscal impact analysis tool to: evaluate available sites today; improve our overall public and private state of “readiness” for inquiries, expansions, and new projects; and provide the valuable data/intended outcomes required to support the Case for Economic Diversification. “Readiness” is tied to the Task Force #2 agenda for outstanding customer service. “Readiness”, over time, indicates to the global market that we take diversification seriously.

### RECOMMENDATION – Provide a Thorough Briefing to the EDC Board and Key Partners on Current Investments for Target Industries

We recommend that the EDC team-up with key partners to ensure awareness of all investments and their applications to diversifying our economy. The desire for the current portfolio of tools and investments was so strong in the Task Force, we believe that this must be a component of annual EDC Board orientations, and be set out in support of the Case for Economic Diversification.

### RECOMMENDATION – Creation of Sites is the Primary Goal for the EDC and It’s Key Partners

We recommend that the EDC establish “readiness” as a primary metric for the EDC. This should take the form of near, mid, and long-term site availability and be stated in direct support of the Case for Economic Diversification. Marketing resources are diluted in impact if the product that is fundamental to inspiring industry inquiries and due diligence is not available.



“We would like to thank our three Task Force Chairs Dr. Charles Dassance, Doug Cone and Brian O’Connor for leading this initiative. The recommendations from *Raising the Bar* will guide our economic recovery efforts in 2009.”

**RECOMMENDATION – Build on Task Force Breakthroughs, Expertise and Enthusiasm to Form a Customer Service Committee of the EDC**

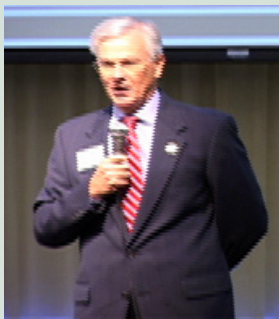
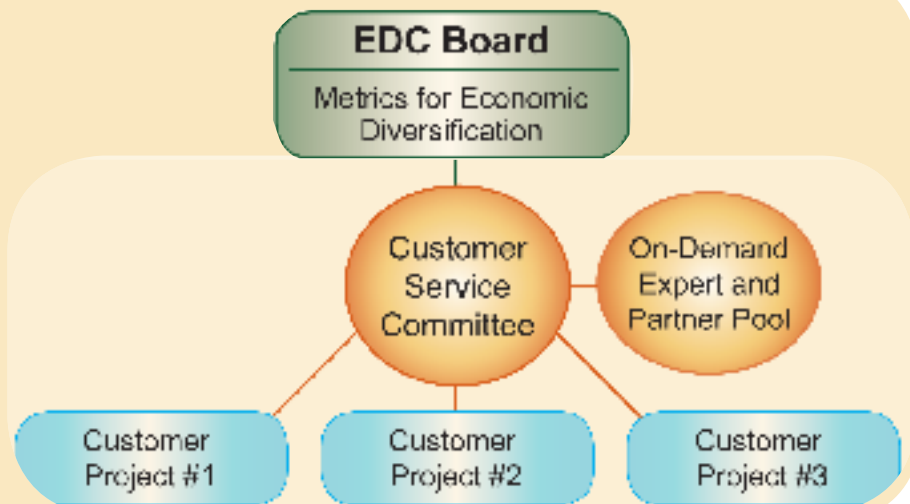
**RECOMMENDATION – Work to Make Next Economic Development Projects in the “Pipeline” Pilots for Customer Service and Engagement**

Because of Task Force work thus far, we believe the right leaders are at the “table” to apply our high standards to the next economic development projects in the “pipeline”. As the Task Force closes its work, we recommend that Customer Service be elevated as one of the highest priorities of the EDC and the community as a whole through the establishment of a Customer Service Committee. This Committee will: draw on the talents and achievements of the Task Force membership; take on pilot projects that support the Case for Economic Diversification (retention, growth, and re-location); measure execution and customer satisfaction; deepen the partnership among civic and local government leaders; and draw on a pool of experts and partners on a customized project-

to-project basis. We believe that EDC governance should be changed to charge a new committee in order to ensure the work in each pilot project is given priority attention by both Board and investors. Specific emphases of the Committee include: speed, candor, flexibility, and consistency of messages. The Committee, on behalf of the EDC, will support the City of Ocala’s transition from the current EIF process and Marion County’s review and clarification of their EIF process. The Committee will work under and in support of the Case for Economic Diversification. The Committee should work with the County team to ensure the appropriate details of customer service are embedded into the economic element of the Comprehensive Plan, web and other communication resources, and in the communications coming from satisfied customers. When feasible, the Committee will share tracking of breakthroughs and strengths among competitor markets.

**RECOMMENDATION – Work and Measure Success under the Case for Economic Diversification**

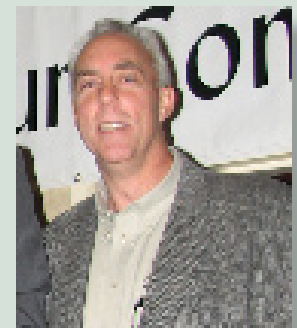
We recommend the development of diversification metrics at the EDC Board level that are specific enough to support and guide the progress of the Customer Service Committee. We need the consistent communication of the Case for Economic Diversification through all EDC channels and partners.



Dr. Charles Dassance  
Chair Task Force 1



Doug Cone  
Chair Task Force 2



Brian O'Connor  
Chair Task Force 3

### **RECOMMENDATION – Use Focused Resources to Support and Engage Existing, Technology-enabled Industries that Represent Our Aspirations for Economic Diversification**

We recommend that a roster of existing industries be utilized to help the EDC “Raise-the-bar” in: understanding of supply chain, productivity, new markets, marketing, finance and other categories of management and growth; engaging to sustain and grow vital industry’s’ presence; and promoting a stronger reputation for working with “technology-enabled” industries. These “bulls-eye” companies already represent the potential power of the Case for Economic Diversification through their brands, applications, products, supply chains, and services. We recommend the Board approve a “bulls-eye” strategy, refreshed over time through annual reviews and brainstorming. We recommend that the staff team: play the point role in these engagements; report to the Board on a routine basis regarding progress, learning and new entries; and keep the Customer Service Committee informed of issues and opportunities. New “bull’s eye” entries should include some of the following characteristics: green/alternative energy, education markets, healthcare and life sciences, and niche/innovative manufacturing and components.

This Task Force recommends the EDC help ensure that our market, our education programs, and our “bulls-eye” companies are connected to Florida’s aerospace agenda. We need to explore a closer relationship with SpaceFlorida, and understand the supply chain relationships our legacy aerospace industries have or could have with Marion County.

The EDC was a sponsor of the 2008 Innovation Benchmark Study, and this document needs to be used as a resource for leaders on the geographic and political fragmentation of Florida, the need to promote state-level coordination to support an innovation economy, and the importance of leveraging intellectual infrastructure, especially Florida’s research universities.

### **RECOMMENDATION – Connect Existing, High-performance, Low-cost Resources in the Region and Florida to Our “Bulls Eye” Companies and Other Existing Industries/Inventory and Resource Toolkit**

Productivity emerged as an area of interest for both Task Force members and statewide experts. This

continued...

is a critical value for our community. As a result, productivity and other existing resources in the region and across Florida need to be inventoried and assessed in terms of timing and application to local companies. We recommend that the EDC Board approve the incorporation and utilization of a resource toolkit which, in part, sets out critical resources and contacts at the three nearby universities (USC, UCF, and UF), CFCC, the Florida High Tech Corridor Council, and other service providers. We recommend continuous update of the tool and its contacts, and leveraging of contacts as long-term advocates of the Case for Diversification. This is a staff-supporting and staff-driven tool, but the Board should be updated at least once per year on the best performing interventions.

### **RECOMMENDATION – Ensure that the Case for Diversification Makes It Clear that the Talent We Need in this Market Requires Evidence of Multiple Career Paths**

We recommend partnering with education and workforce professionals to track and communicate the broadening and deepening of career paths as the diversification agenda takes hold. We recommend a year-long effort to translate positive trends and successes into tools and communications resources for industry recruitment.

The EDC should also learn to communicate the attributes of the people (versus the skills) needed to energize existing companies and build innovative enterprises of the future. Marketing communications and success stories should begin to lean towards telling the story of a growing community of creative people who choose to live in Ocala and Marion County.

### **RECOMMENDATION – Adopt the Florida High Tech Corridor Council’s Virtual Entrepreneurship Tool as a Primary Community Resource/Website that Connects Entrepreneurs Starting, Growing or Relocating their Business with the Resources, People and Services They Need to Be Successful**

We recommend that the EDC Board raise the bar on resources by adopting the Florida High Tech Corridor’s Virtual Entrepreneurship tool. The EDC should work with the HTCC over the next two years to provide updates on local utilization and business needs.