



**WAKULLA**  
Economic Development Council

# EDC COORDINATOR MONTHLY REPORT

*Wakulla County Economic Development Coordinators in Action*



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## Message from the EDC Coordinators

*Beth Cicchetti and Julie Dennis*

Throughout the month of September we have moved forward with proposals to attract new employers to Wakulla County while also exploring ways to use important designations like Opportunity Zones as leverage for Opportunity Park. We have also enjoyed learning more about the emerging oyster aquaculture industry in Wakulla County. With over 80 leases in this region, Wakulla County is said to produce over 40% of the State's farmed oysters. Recognizing this impressive industry, we spent time meeting with workforce partners, oyster farmers and community leaders to understand the challenges and needs of this industry. In addition, we completed a grant application that if funded will help brand our coastal areas as a top oyster farming area in Florida. As we round out our third month on the job, we are enjoying the opportunity to dive into the needs of Wakulla County.

# Summary of Activities for the Month

Throughout the month of September, the Wakulla County Coordinators conducted the following activities:

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Met with Bob Ballard, Executive Director of the Wakulla Environmental Institute to discuss workforce training opportunities, current programs available at WEI, and research ventures of TCC surrounding oyster aquaculture.
- Met with the Panacea Waterfronts Florida Economic Development Sub-Committee to discuss projects and priorities in the Community of Panacea including the recruitment of a grocery store, an oyster aquaculture nursery and RV parks.
- Met with Jeff Tilley, local entrepreneur and owner of Fyre Boss and Oyster Boss to discuss future business ventures and needs of the aquaculture industry.

## MARKETING AND LEAD GENERATION

- Hosted a call with N.G. Wade and one of the State's leading experts (Madison Street Strategies) on Opportunity Zones to discuss ways to leverage this designation to attract businesses. This call resulted in an additional free consultation for N.G. Wade to speak to a top tax attorney in the State on how to use this designation.
- Connected with the South Regional Director at NOAA Office for Coastal Management to highlight the emerging aquaculture industry in Wakulla County and learn about national priorities for aquaculture and how Wakulla County can tap into these opportunities.
- Evaluating the DEO Rural Infrastructure Fund Feasibility Study Program \$5 million set-aside for Hurricane Michael as an opportunity to develop an economic development strategy for Wakulla County and move forward with planning for specific infrastructure.
- Developed and submitted a grant application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Partnership Initiative Program to create murals and an oyster trail to highlight the emerging oyster aquaculture industry in Wakulla County. If awarded this grant will create public art installations that highlight the history of working waterfronts both past and present. This project was identified in the Panacea Community and Economic Revitalization Plan and is being led the Panacea Waterfronts Florida Partnership. The goal of this effort is to kick-start revitalization and brand the coastal areas of Wakulla County as the top oyster farming area in the State of Florida.
- Presented a proposed aggressive marketing strategy to the Wakulla EDC Coordinators Committee which was approved for a six month implementation period.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- Since July of 2020, we have submitted proposals to companies in the following industry sectors. The average building size requested ranges in 30,000 to 100,000 square feet with jobs ranging from 200 to 500:
  - Manufacturing - 3 companies
  - Logistics, Distribution & Warehousing - 1 company.

# What's Happening in Wakulla County

## Marketing Plan Approved for the Wakulla County EDC

The Wakulla County EDC Economic Development Coordinator's Committee held a meeting on Monday, September 21 and approved an aggressive marketing strategy to recruit new major employers to Wakulla County with a focus on Opportunity Park and other large parcels of available land. This strategy will include:

- The implementation of ProTrack Client Resource Management (CRM) system which will allow EDC Coordinators to track Business Retention and Expansion Opportunities as well as better manage projects.
- Social media campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram to promote Wakulla County as open for business.
- A lead generation subscription with Global Site Location Strategies which includes access to vetted companies who are actively seeking new markets, virtual trade show registration and live podcasts and opportunities to interact with project CEOs.
- A three month digital presence as a Virtual Industry Sponsor in the sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Energy/Sustainable Development, and Logistics, Distribution and Warehousing (AreaDevelopment.com)

## BUILDING THE WAKULLA COUNTY PRESENCE

Our goal over the next year is to improve the Wakulla EDC website as a tool for prospective businesses with resources to grow small businesses. We are now moving forward with the following activities:

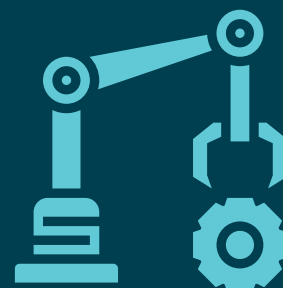
- Working with Duncan McCall, the website designers who developed the site to create small updates as well as adding a searchable buildings and sites database.
- Wakulla EDC Coordinators are being trained on the current website with plans to take over future updates to the site.
- Exploring grant opportunities to create a 2.0 version of the website that showcases the assets we have to offer to prospective employers.

## Economic Resources for Working Waterfronts Webinar

On Tuesday, October 13 at 2 p.m., NOAA and the National Working Waterfronts Network will host a webinar that will highlight publicly available economic data sets, learning opportunities and case studies on working waterfronts. To register, click [here](#).

## October is Manufacturers Month!

Throughout the month of October our nation celebrates the manufacturing industry and the many employers that provide jobs to residents all over the county. We want to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful manufacturers - big and small - in Wakulla County who help support our local families. Great resources for manufacturers can be found online at [FloridaMakes.com](http://FloridaMakes.com).



# Resources for Rural Communities

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity recently announced a technical assistance opportunity aimed at helping rural communities develop successful grant applications for the **Hurricane Michael Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program**. Grant programs will be available that focus on infrastructure repair and enhancement, workforce training, commercial revitalization and voluntary home buyouts for areas that frequently flood. Interested local governments can complete the application online in about 15 minutes. While there is no funding associated with this program, DEO will pair the community with a consultant to assist with grant application development. DEO will host a webinar on October 20 to provide details on this program. This is a first come-first served program that is available now until funds are exhausted. Interested communities should submit an application soon to be first in line for this opportunity. For more information visit the [DEO website](#).

## Save the Date!

The Florida Chamber Future of Florida Forum will be hosted as a virtual event October 20 - 22. To learn more about how you can participate in this event, visit the [Florida Chamber website](#).

## Priorities Expressed by Community Stakeholders

We have a growing list of priorities through our conversations with community leaders and business owners. Here are several more from our meetings this month:

- A Sea Grant Extension Agent that specializes in oyster aquaculture.
- Partnerships with local government to create an oyster nursery.
- Digital marketing opportunities.
- Creative opportunities that leverage public waterfronts.

We will expand this list as we meet with additional stakeholders. This list can serve as a starting point for an economic development strategy. Through this process, we will come to the Wakulla EDC to prioritize these items. Send us a quick email if you have something you'd like to add to the list!

## We hope to hear from you in the future as we work on exciting opportunities for Wakulla County!

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