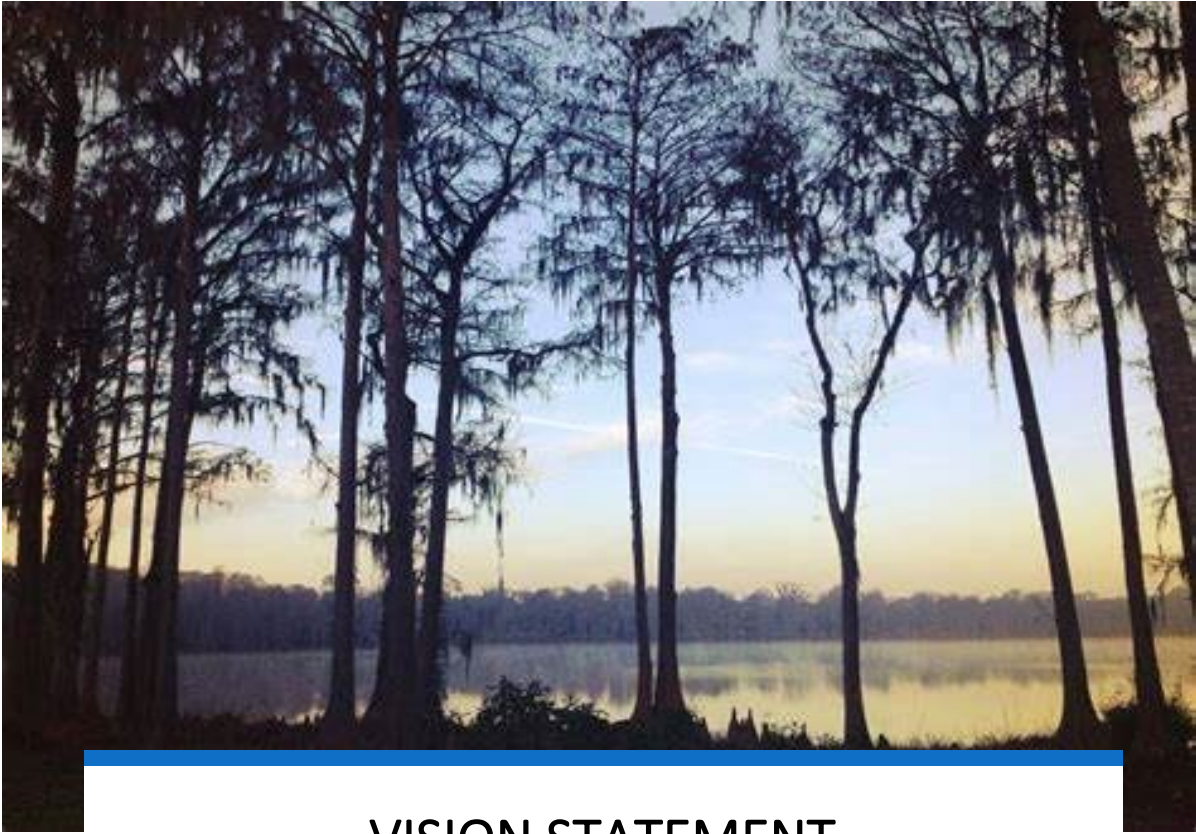


NATURE COAST BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

2022-2023 Strategic Planning
Sessions Summary





VISION STATEMENT

The place where businesses,
families and nature thrive.





MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the NCBDC is to work in cooperation with various public and private partners to create an attractive business environment for new and existing businesses that will foster economic growth in Levy County while maintaining our rural character, hometown atmosphere and strong sense of community.



GOALS STATEMENTS

- #1: Ensure the fiscal sustainability of NCBDC.
- #2: Concentrate on identifying and recruiting new businesses well suited for Levy County.
- #3: Increase the value to and engagement of NCBDC membership to maximize Levy County's economic development competitiveness.



SMART Objectives

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ENSURE THE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY OF NCBDC.

- SMART Objective 1: Approve an internal annual operating budget for NCBDC by April 1, 2024, and submit this budget to the Levy County Board of County Commissioners no later than May 1, 2024.
- SMART Objective 2: Develop a stakeholder/investment recruitment plan for NCBDC by December 31, 2023.
- SMART Objective 3: Develop a value-proposition for current and prospective investors and board members that outlines the benefits of membership in NCBDC by December 31, 2023.
- SMART Objective 4: Identify and approach private companies, public organizations, and other prospective investors to solicit investments to NCBDC by May 1, 2024. The initial goal is to generate total investments of at least **HALF** of what the Board of County Commissioners contribute annually to NCBDC; this investment recruitment effort shall be an ongoing priority for the NCBDC.
- SMART Objective 5: By December 31, 2024, seek and partner with organizations, local government entities, and associations who are interested in co-funding a grant writer to identify and submit grant applications for economic development opportunities in Levy County. This person may also assist with administrative duties for the NCBDC and partners including grant management, reporting, and other administrative duties needed. This person would start out serving as part-time with the NCBDC with the possibility of expanding responsibilities and work hours as funding increases.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: CONCENTRATE ON IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING NEW BUSINESSES WELL SUITED FOR LEVY COUNTY.

- SMART Objective 1: Develop a targeted industry list for Levy County by December 31, 2024. This would require securing a grant(s), partner support, and/or dedication of NCBDC funds to hire an outside, experienced third-party consultant to conduct a comprehensive study to determine the targeted industries throughout Levy County.

- SMART Objective 2: Develop and distribute no later than September 1, 2023, a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking vendors that would be interested in developing a new, comprehensive economic development website for the NCBDC. The intent is to seek funding support to pay for the website so that a website would be fully operational no later than May 1, 2024.
- SMART Objective 3: Work with existing partners (e.g., Small Business Development Center, SCORE, CareerSource CLM, and others that may be identified) to develop and implement a plan to help and provide technical assistance to new and existing businesses by June 2024.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: INCREASE THE VALUE TO AND ENGAGEMENT OF NCBDC MEMBERSHIP TO MAXIMIZE LEVY COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMPETITIVENESS.

- SMART Objective 1: Executive Director to develop quarterly presentation for NCBDC at BOCC meetings beginning January 2024.
- SMART Objective 2: Create a strategic outreach plan that includes national, state, regional and community events by June 2024.
- SMART Objective 3: Develop a plan to create and host an annual event to recognize accomplishments of NCBDC and our partners by December 2023.



A photograph of a hand holding water over a small green seedling growing from soil. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of yellow and green light. A solid blue diagonal shape covers the bottom-left portion of the image, containing white text.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Discussion Notes

Appendix B: Levy County SWOT

Appendix C: NCBDC SWOT

Appendix A: Discussion Notes

How would you describe the overall attitude of Levy County residents as it relates to economic growth?

- Commission is pro-business/pro-growth
- A segment of the citizenry tends to not want growth at all – particularly newer residents.
- Citizens are more pro existing businesses, not pro new businesses.
- Concern that existing infrastructure is degrading and falling apart.
- Want improvements but that will not come from residential growth – must come from manufacturing – but must be manufacturing that matches the needs of the county.
- Growth is inevitable in the current climate, so the issue is identifying the right kind of growth for this community.
- Industry is not vertical – all agricultural products go somewhere else to be produced into end products (ex. lots of timberland – no sawmills; lots of peanuts – no food. manufacturers) – need food processing and distribution arms of agriculture incorporated into the local agriculture industry.
- Target industries/companies need to be “good neighbors” that don’t exploit local resources, workforce, and current businesses.

What do you believe the primary purpose of the NCBDC is as it relates to stimulating economic development activity in Levy County?

- To be a driver of strategic growth.
- Public-private partnerships.
- The economic development arm of Levy County – help the executive director to meet expectations and create economic development.

What is the one most important thing you hope to accomplish?

- Strategic plan for organization – expectations and priorities – recruiting and retention –small- to mid-size manufacturers.
- Actions that are able to implement with the resources currently available.
- Encourage a written set of processes to hand to potential businesses looking to locate here –development of a how-to manual – new businesses or expansion of existing.
- Refocusing of mission and goals to current situations.
- Identification/inventory of internal assets already present and how best to use those resources to drive economic development.
- County is missing career technical education options matched to economic opportunity options; avenues to fill teaching voids so that training can be provided.
- Bring city and county planners into alignment with each other.



Appendix B: SWOT Analysis - Levy County

The strategic planning process should include a review of **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. This **SWOT** exercise provided an opportunity to discuss internal and external issues to be considered in developing targeted, strategic priorities for economic development in the county.

Strengths

- Affordable land and utilities.
- Low taxes and very reasonable cost of living.
- Reasonably well functioning County Government.
- Ecotourism opportunities (e.g., kayaking, bike trails, fishing, hunting, springs).
- Quality of life including low crime; short, lower congestion commute times; ability to live and spend time with family; a strong sense of community (hard to measure but it is evident).
- Transportation assets/facilities including Highway 19/27 (four-lane highway) and access to I-75; Williston Airport and available land at the airport for economic development; Short-line rail at airport that runs to Crystal River.
- Cedar Key Airport (owned by the county).
- College of Central Florida satellite campus and COCF investments made throughout Levy County.
- Agriculture and manufacturing industries (Monterey Boats, Ancorp).
- Duke Energy and their investment in the county.
- Future broadband capacity (Central Florida Electric).
- County Commission open to the appropriate and high-quality growth that maintains the character of the county.
- Local venues and campaigns including Black Prong Bar and Grill, Elvis “Follow that Dream,” Scooter Haven Biker Club – open to the public and for events.
- Local Chapter of SCORE.

Weaknesses

- No cluster of manufacturing.
- Unskilled, local workforce.
- Negative attitude toward growth among some citizens – especially those that have migrated to the county recently (they moved here to get away from congestion); Citizens Against Virtually Everything (CAVE).
- Lack of central sewer system(s) across many areas of the county, lack of capacity. deters/impacts business recruitment and retention.
- Most utilities provided by cities, and they lack financial ability to expand and extend facilities/services.
- While rail facilities are available, there is a lack of targeted/strategic spurs along the rail line(s).
- Lack of businesses locally to hire local – leads to local workers working outside of the county.
- Lack of manufacturing businesses within the county.
- Lack of affordable housing for young families, workforce.
- Perception that we are a bedroom community for Gainesville.
- Lack of large-scale USDA facilities/services for access by Agricultural businesses.
- Lack of consistent, cohesive intergovernmental cooperation between county government and some municipalities.
- Lack of regional-level health care facility with specialized services.
- Lack of current vocational certifications.

Appendix B: SWOT Analysis - Levy County (cont.)

The strategic planning process should include a review of **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. This **SWOT** exercise provided an opportunity to discuss internal and external issues to be considered in developing targeted, strategic priorities for economic development in the county.

Opportunities

- Expansion of trade certification programs (COCF Campus or a new technical college to serve the region including Levy County).
- Identifying new jobs that may emerge from expansion, construction, and maintenance of broadband facilities, and developing certifications around these type types of jobs.
- Ability to encourage and steer business and economic development through current and future Comp Plan updates.
- Expansion of manufacturing, agri-business, aviation-based industries in county.
- Future capacity of broadband offered through Central Florida Electric.
- Ability for businesses and schools to partner on initiatives to make students aware of local opportunities and career paths, and for businesses to identify local talent.
- Effective use of new GIS mapping program for Planning and Zoning Department.
- Advancing the Center for Excellence focused on technology-based businesses, jobs, etc. (Central Florida Electric and SCORE).
- Targeting value-added strategies/business approaches in agriculture, technology/software development, processing, and manufacturing of ag and food products (peanuts, timber, watermelon, and cattle specifically).
- Finding ways to encourage/attract cold storage facilities.
- Skilled workforce in the surrounding areas (while we make efforts/strides to get more locally skilled workers).
- Jobs and capacity provided by broadband installation and services.
- Continued population growth (although this could be viewed as threat as well).
- Terminus of Suncoast Parkway.
- Broadband education and jobs, remote businesses and working opportunities (coupled with great quality of life).
- Clustering of manufacturing and similar businesses in specific, targeted areas of county.

Threats

- Certain segments of residents do not want/like change.
- Closure of businesses and loss of existing jobs.
- Government overreach (regulations, septic to sewer, etc.).
- Loud minority influence of Citizens Against Virtually Everything (CAVE).
- Additional businesses could create competition for existing workforce; existing businesses may suffer.
- Dependence on federal and state government funding to solve our local problems (where they exist); these funds will go away at some point.
- Corridor Plan (???)
- National, state, local recession conditions—must keep this in mind when planning locally.
- Be wary of increasing taxes.
- Growing too quickly and outstripping local capacity to handle growth.

Appendix C: SWOT Analysis - Organization

Committee members were asked to participate in a conversation designed to identify the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**, and **Threats** of and for the Nature Coast Business Development Council as an organization. The following represents a list of those issues identified in the conversation:

Strengths

- Levy County BOCC support and buy-in of NCBDC.
- Current support from CareerSource CLM for current staff position.
- Strong commitment and participation from Board Members.
- Local knowledge/familiarity of County, and dedication from current Executive Director.
- For those that know the NCBDC, it is well-respected (Image is positive).
- Strong history of existence and commitment to sustaining the Board.
- Acknowledgement of need to diversify funding sources for sustainability.

Weaknesses

- Lack of visible projects (economic development) coming to actual fruition.
- Visibility and marketing of the organization and what we do.
- Lack of funding to provide services (such as marketing) more comprehensively.
- Need for additional staff to expand services that can be provided (Scott is just one person).
- Current land use zoning and land development codes in the County (although this is being addressed by the County).
- Regulatory structure of 501c (3) – creates Government in the Sunshine restrictions and some others that can hinder open discussions with the Board regarding projects.
- Lack of collaborative communications with local Chambers of Commerce – perception of this at least.
- Lack of engagement with municipalities within the county (perhaps looking to bring on Board of Directors?).
- Lack of clearly defined role/mission of NCBDC (although that is one of the primary purposes of the Strategic Planning initiative).
- Lack of training/capacity building of staff and Board members specific to Economic Development, and what is involved in success economic development efforts.

Appendix C: SWOT Analysis - Organization (cont.)

Committee members were asked to participate in a conversation designed to identify the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats of and for the Nature Coast Business Development Council as an organization. The following represents a list of those issues identified in the conversation:

Opportunities

- Modernization and updating of County Land Development Codes and Zoning (this should enable more flexibility in the locating of economic development projects in the future).
- Expand communication and partnerships throughout the county including Chambers of Commerce, Municipalities, local K-12 Schools, and higher education, etc.
- Become a visible convener of key initiatives and partners related to issues that can affect economic development.
- Expand and develop public and private member support for the NCBDC.
- Learn from and communicate regularly with other counties (regionally) and statewide.
- Develop a brand and visibility as the “Go to” organization for new businesses, for existing businesses that may need support, and for Municipal and County governments, utility companies, and others when job leads come into the County. Example is when a call comes into the County referring to locating in Levy County, refer these calls to NCBDC.
- Increasing marketing and building identity of NCBDC within the County, regionally and statewide, and outside of the state.
- Ensuring state agencies and other partners recognize the Director of NCBDC as the central point of contact for all things economic development.

Threats

- Stable, sustainable funding for the organization.
- Unknown in terms of the economy and how that will affect rural counties including Levy County.
- Citizens Against Virtually Everything (CAVE) influence growing within and throughout the county.
- Without visible successes, citizens and funders questioning value of NCBDC.
- Lack of identity and marketing could lead to questioning of value of organization.