2010

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

BUSINESS
or
PLEASURE
BOTH

SUMTER COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Powered by 5 e solutions inc.

Mission Statement

Retain and assist Sumter County businesses, improve their success and encourage their expansion.

Expand Sumter employment opportunities by attracting new, high-quality, diversified businesses that offer "living wage" jobs

Energize the Sumter County business climate while preserving the county's quality of life.

Promote awareness of Sumter County as a desirable and convenient location for doing business.

Provide timely and efficient support to Sumter County businesses, public organizations, civic and business associations and the educational system, with a "Team Sumter" spirit.

Increase availability of a well-trained and productive workforce to assure a vital and diversified Sumter economy.

Communicate Sumter County business and services information in all available ways.

VISION AND RESULTS

More and Better Jobs for Sumter County

Our Philosophy

We support Sumter County's entrepreneurial spirit.

We believe the Sumter County entrepreneurial spirit makes jobs for others, creates stability and wealth for our families, our communities and our country.

We celebrate the values of Sumter County's entrepreneurial spirit, pursuing dreams, seizing opportunities and taking responsibility for our own destiny.

We build the strongest business climate through superior education and training, savvy outreach marketing and sensible recruitment of new and productive businesses. Thus, Sumter County entrepreneurs help themselves while also helping others.

We salute Sumter County entrepreneurs who mentor other aspiring individuals and give back to their community with their time, resources and support.

We believe that the ideas and experience stories of Sumter County entrepreneurs challenge others, enhance the community and offer examples of what can be accomplished when individuals work together to build countywide success. All Sumter County entrepreneurs share and benefit directly from the accomplishments of others through the partnering called "Team Sumter."

We know that the execution of these self-reliant principles builds more and better businesses, more and better jobs and a higher quality county to live, to work and to play.

We join all Sumter County entrepreneurs in competitively seizing the best opportunities of the new economy in the new Florida. We will balance our "best way of life" and "best business climate" through the values of Sumter's entrepreneurial spirit.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The crucial problems in strategy are most often those of execution and continuous adaptation: getting it done, staying flexible."

Tom Peters, Business Management Guru and Best Selling Author

Sumter County businesses and families have faced severe challenges, but some significant and unique factors have lessened the total negative impact of this Country's longest recession. Sumter County has been blessed with a unique and highly successful large planned community for retirees, The Villages, which has continued to grow between 200 to 300 units per month despite the worst national housing downturn in the past 30 years. The 89,000 residents of The Villages bring an average family income of over $92,000 per household, which has led to retail sales gains of 172%, according to the most recent economic census data.

Sumter County has not escaped all of the economic downturn. We are still averaging a 9.9% unemployment rate and a low average annual wage of $32,473 per year, which is about $4,000 below the "living wage" for an individual, or about $14,000 below the "living wage" for a family of four, according to Poverty in America. The combination of low average annual wages combined with a high unemployment rate translates into more than 70% of children in the public school system qualifying for the federal free lunch program and nearly 26% of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty level (FEDR).

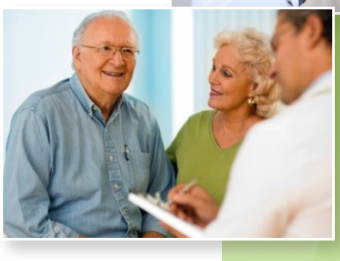
Looking forward, we must promote our strengths including: a low and stable ad valorem tax rate; a low and well-managed County government and school system, low debt ratio; an "A" rated public school system and a highly rated charter school system; a unique physical location serving as the natural crossroads of Interstate 75, the Florida Turnpike and CSX railroad, (with access to major airports and seaports less than 90 minutes distant), which is a major regional transportation hub in Central Florida; positive population growth of 78.7% in the past nine years (which on a percentage basis ranks Sumter County as the second fastest growing County in the United States); a vibrant and growing partnership between the Central Florida Health Alliance and The Villages; strong and flexible agreements for growth and service delivery crafted between the county and its charter cities; a flexible and conservative pro-business county commission and a broad range of business, civic, not-for-profit and government entities ready to partner to build the future.

The length, depth and breadth of this recession demand our best economic strategy. We must remain agile, mobile and ready to anticipate and execute in a new and radically different economic landscape. The old rules for industry, government, families and economic development are broken. New paradigms must be formed to meet an uncertain and tenuous economic landscape. What we should do:

Become a National Model for Healthcare Research/Service Delivery to Senior Adults

a) It is a service issue: In the next five years, the completion of The Villages will mean more than 100,000 seniors will call Sumter County home. They deserve and will demand the best quality, lowest-cost health and wellness delivery system.

b) It is an employment issue: There are already critical national shortages across the board in healthcare related careers. Today, in Central Florida there are more than 1,800 vacancies for registered nurses and more than 1,700 vacancies for occupational therapists that remain unfilled despite a double-digit unemployment period. Additionally, national job forecasters indicate that 10 of the top 20 occupations for the next decade will be in the field of healthcare. Finally, not only will there be a steady and increasing demand for trained healthcare professionals, the vast majority of these jobs will exceed "living wage" levels.



c) It is a collateral business/research development opportunity: With the unique partnership of The Villages and the Central Florida Health Alliance, combined with the high concentration of senior age adults, there is a unique opportunity to become a major national medical research/ business center.

d) It is the largest, most stable growth industry: Almost 25% of the federal budget is currently expended on healthcare issues. This factor combined with the new federal law and our unique local circumstances makes this already exploding growth industry a reliable and strong strategic decision for long-term and stable employment and business growth.

Become an Agricultural Business and Research Cluster

Provide key support for a local industry of great history and bright future: The cattle industry is as old as Sumter County history itself. It provides a strong economic segment while also helping to generate economic viability of the county's pastoral openness. Residents consider Sumter's natural open space and farmlands key quality of life and business attraction features. The county is working in partnership with Central Beef, the processing plant that is currently responsible for 98% of the cattle processed in Florida. As Central Beef undertakes a dynamic $10 million expansion, they will double their existing capacity, expanding employment and providing a magnet to attract collateral research and supporting business development.

Expand Existing Business

Existing businesses provide the best return on investment for job creation: Central Beef is just one of the many local businesses looking for success today and seeking ways to thrive in this emerging new economy. Research underscores that the expansion of local business is always the least expensive method to create new jobs. This year, Sumter County hired a private sector company to assist in all aspects of economic development. This has produced communication tools such as a website, newsletters, news alerts, business summits, business surveys, brokering of federal and state technical and financial assistance, the adoption of the State of Florida incentive packages for business expansion and the creation of the first ever Sumter County incentive package for business expansion. Also to assist local businesses increase their expertise and profits, a new flow of technical, financial and business information has begun.

Recruit New Business

"Tell them and they will come."

In the 1960's, the City of Phoenix was generally unknown among the concentration of major business corporations throughout the northeast. The city leaders invited leaders of the Fortune 500 companies to spend a golfing weekend in their emerging desert city. About 70 corporations came to play golf for the weekend and came away from the experience with a much different view of Phoenix as a business opportunity. Over the next five years, 25 of the "golfing visitors" moved their corporate headquarters to Phoenix. This wonderful story about recruitment is a reminder that the ultimate decision to move part or all of a company has both business and personal factors and also underscores how tourism attraction and business recruitment can blend to become mutually reinforcing as a core, combined strategy.

We are still in the midst of the worst and longest economic recession in our country's history. Most existing businesses are very uncertain about the future and plans for expansion/relocation are in suspension until there is more confidence about content, size and direction of the new economy. The County has spent the past 10 months doing important foundational work for successful recruitment. Even before the new economy shakes out, we have begun the process of positioning Sumter County as a best new economy location. "Our Top 10 Strengths" quickly outline core elements that lead our recruitment strategy.

(See sidebar on page 5)

Build a Unified Tourism Strategy

Tourism promotion grows new business opportunities and outreaches to potential business relocations:

Sumter County is the best "undiscovered" business and recreational opportunity in the region and the state. The Villages has become a national/international attraction, but many who know of its unique charms are not aware of its physical location within Florida and Sumter County. To build and coordinate an overall strategy for tourism development, e5solutions will develop a companion strategy for tourism outreach and marketing to be completed in five months. This work will parallel and reinforce economic development outreach. Initial discussions and research show opportunities for eco-tourism, agri-tourism, medical-tourism and special events. This tourism strategic plan will also consider the unique character and attractiveness of the variety of smaller communities and historic/recreational areas throughout the county.

Build and Brand a Regional Hub for Transportation

Transportation was the past and is the future:

The City of Wildwood first came into prominence as a major transportation hub when Florida first developed as a state. The reemergence of the importance of rail transportation coupled with the natural confluence of Interstate 75, the Florida Turnpike, US-301 and the close affinity of two international airports and nearby seaports make this opportunity viable. Effectively branding the opportunity will bring both industrial development and regional distribution warehousing. Existing major corporations such as the stainless steel fabricating plant, Outokumpu, and the beef processing plant, Central Beef Industries, are also well-positioned to grow with new transportation advantages. The City of Wildwood, in cooperation and coordination with Sumter County, has done major advance planning with state approval, making development options around this transportation hub much more viable.

Incubators

Startup your own:

According to recent studies, more than 80% of the new jobs developed during this recession have come from start-up entrepreneurs or incubator companies. The new economy may offer more entrepreneurial opportunities than vacancies in traditional jobs. Sumter County also has a unique advantage in forming incubator businesses. The Villages houses thousands of individuals who have previously run successful large corporations and small businesses. Many of them are interested in an encore career starting a new business, or assisting others in the County in unique mentoring partnerships. This special resource of retired senior adults may also be helpful in many other aspects of business development and recruitment because of their unique experiences and past successes. There is also the opportunity for start-up businesses in agriculture that might increase local profits through approaches such as co-op canning, product branding, marketing, and regional distribution. Medical services and research start-ups are a natural fit in cooperation with the strategy to expand and promote the medical cluster. Also, with this dynamic retail success around The Villages, successful retail incubator businesses could grow into a "big league" business opportunity.

Marketing Outreach

Telling the "untold" story:

Sumter County is Florida's "undiscovered and best-kept secret" for business relocation. Through the past 10 months of work, e5solutions and its partners have started this outreach by launching an interactive website; creating and packaging both State and local relocation/expansion business incentives; building an interactive search engine for commercial property location called "Site Seeker"; conducting a full county business survey; expanding the distribution database of local partners; sharing news and information regularly through the newsletter, "Tips, Trends & Friends," and e5 market Alerts; sharing important business developments with regional and state agencies such as Enterprise Florida and Workforce Central Florida; developing Sumter County's first business summit, and periodic press/media announcements that generate positive information. As previously mentioned, e5solutions will also be preparing a major tourism marketing plan for community input and county commission approval during the next five months. The New Story of Sumter County will share our dual attraction: Sumter County is a special and unique place for a tourist to visit for a weekend and the best new location for business to relocate for a lifetime.

Education

Building skilled people and a stronger workforce:
Vocational, post-secondary and workforce training must be increased and enhanced. Local employers (strongly evidenced in the business survey) found the lack of properly trained/educated workers as a key weakness in their successful operations. The County is blessed with outstanding public and charter school systems, but the postsecondary area improvement is a key to future business recruitment and expansion. From certificates to degrees, the quality of secondary education builds a skilled workforce and that attracts business growth and higher paying jobs. We must invite innovative education partners that help set targets higher than state or national averages. This is an especially core ingredient in building a national model for healthcare research/service delivery to senior adults.

Our "Credo": We Must All be Entrepreneurs

It is Sumter County 's Way: During the longest and deepest recession in our history, more than 80% of all new jobs came from "start up" or incubator businesses. In many ways this should not surprise us, since small businesses always were the source of more than 59% of the jobs created in our country. The very foundation of action and philosophy for this country was powered by the opportunity of individuals to create their own business and work for a brighter future. Innovation, new products, new services and new approaches have always been the strength of our economy and always come from that resilient entrepreneurial spirit.

It is not just about creating new business. Research shows that investments in entrepreneurial and self-sufficiency education lead students "on a path to self-sufficiency, preparing them to hold good paying jobs, raise their families, and become productive citizens."

These ideas are reality in our Sumter County. Self-reliance, commitment to excellence, a fair wage for a good job, hard work and the structure of solid families with good educational opportunities have always been the benchmark. As Ewing Kauffman, the founder of the Kauffman Foundation said, "Every individual that we can inspire, that we can guide, that we can help start a new company, is vital to the future of our economic welfare." We need to be the "Entrepreneurial County of Florida".

Team Sumter:

The Sumter Team Partnering for a Better Future:
We have found excellence and commitment throughout the County. Policy makers, educators, elected officials, civic organizations, business leaders from all size companies, regional organizations, nonprofit organizations, church organizations, volunteers and residents have a strong and personal commitment to the quality of life for all. Equally important, almost to a person they say to us "What can I do to help?"; "How can my business assist?"

This personal commitment is not only our most important strength for economic strategic success, but is also the fundamental ingredient in Sumter County being uniquely special as the best place in Florida to live, work and play. e5solutions has been talking and listening with hundreds of businesses and individuals over the past 10 months and, more recently, specifically met with the public and more than 40 major organizations and businesses over the past six weeks seeking their ideas about Sumter's economic future. Each participant and Sumter leader committed to shouldering part of the responsibility and part of the coordinated team effort to reach economic success. They want to preserve and protect the County's quality of life historically set in the pastoral fields and open spaces, but also want to help create jobs with "living wages" that will build stronger families for now and for generation to come.

Pursue Development While Protecting Quality of Life

A balanced approach
Clean air, clear water, lush landscapes, open pastoral areas, and abundant wildlife are the heritage and legacy of Sumter County. Compelling recreational and cultural assets like lakeside amenities and a performing arts future center augment the natural features of the county, making for an even more compelling quality-of-life, which will ultimately attract more businesses, residents and visitors. This plan balances the desire of residents to improve the quality, quantity, and wage scale of new jobs while protecting the exceptional land and water environments that makes this county unique and special to those who live here, and to those who will be attracted to bring new businesses.

Sumter County must follow a balanced strategy of protecting the environment, promoting economic prosperity, and always improving the quality of life.

Let us begin....

Top 10 Strengths

10 reasons Sumter County is tops for new and expanding business.

1) Strategic Transportation Location: Sumter County is the Crossroads of Central Florida, where North/South Interstate 75 joins the East/West Florida Turnpike, at the Sumter-Wildwood interchange. This strategic connection joins Orlando, Tampa Bay and Wildwood/The Villages to form, with CSX Rail, the Apex of Central Florida's Economic Triangle, providing convenient, economical access for products, customers, employees and visitors.

2) Pro-Business Leadership: For six consecutive years Sumter County Commissioners have avoided ad valorem tax increases.

3) High Financial Ratings: In light of stagnant commercial and residential growth in Florida and the nation, Sumter County's economy is stable, with strong financial operations, ample reserves and a low debt burden…" Sumter maintains a Dunn & Bradstreet A and A+ rated county economy and bond rating.

4) New Economic Partner for Business Growth: Sumter County retained an experienced private sector economic developer, e5solutions, Inc., to assure that business needs and expectations are anticipated and met with care and good speed. Sumter is the only one of Florida's 67 counties with a commercial organization responsible for the design and execution of its business development initiative.

5) An Action Plan for Future Development: Sumter County has forged unique, innovative partnership agreements with its cities and the State of Florida, and gained broad gauge, fast-track 30-day approval processing on "shovel-ready development sites." In 2009 alone, more than 50 new leases were signed for businesses to operate in The Villages area.

6) Leading Education System: Sumter boasts one of the few A-rated public school systems in Florida, and even features an award winning charter high school which achieved a 100% graduation rate. Elementary and middle schools scored "A", 13th highest of 75 Florida districts, on the '09-'10 FCAT (comprehensive assessment) test. The school system also received a financial "A" rating by Standard & Poor's for judicious use of resources.

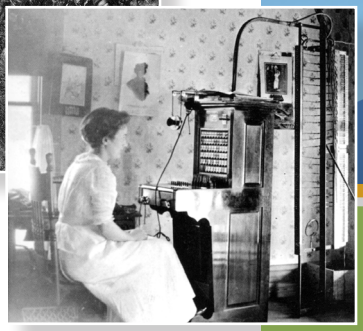
7) Sumter County Leads in Many State and National Growth Categories: Among them, new home sales and construction, Sumter is averaging up to 300 sales per month in 2010, and posted 8% of the entire State of Florida's home building permits in 2009. Its population soared 78.7% from 2000 to 2009, and now tops 95,326, the 2nd fastest growth of Florida's 67 counties. In '08 the Census Bureau reported The Villages was the fastest growing Micropolitan Statistical Area in the U.S., and the 2nd fastest growing Florida housing market from 2000 to 2008, plus the nation's 4th fastest growing county over the past 6 years in terms of baby-boomers. (Univ. of Florida and Stats America 4/2010)

8) Progressive Health Care Systems: "During the past year, no fewer than two dozen health care practices of all kinds either expanded or opened new offices to serve the area's growing population, an exciting time for the area health care industry," according to a report in The Villages Daily Sun.

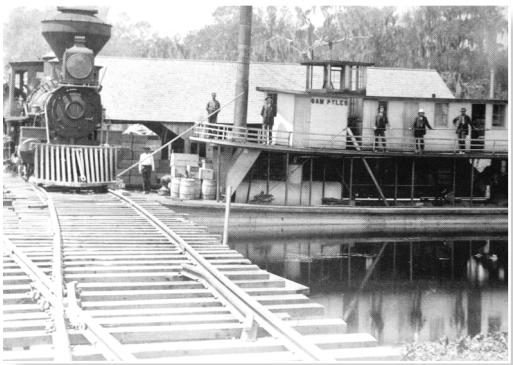
9) Unique Blend of World-Class Community Development & Rural/Agricultural Environments: The Villages, "Florida's Friendliest Hometown," at the northern end of the county is the largest single-site, residential lifestyle community in the U.S., spanning 26,000 acres (5.6 sq. mi.) and directly employing over 12,000 people, with average residential income more than double the U.S. average. Adjacent to The Villages is the aggressively expanding city of Wildwood, considered Florida's transportation hub City. In south county is the "Down Home" City of Bushnell, the core of Sumter County's judicial activities, which is now marketing prime "shovel-ready" development sites.

10) Affordable Cost of Living and Unique Quality of Life: In many ways, Florida's cost of living is below that of other states and regions with similar economic growth conditions. Sumter County leaders continue to ensure that housing, tax rates, land costs and government services remain most affordable, driven strongly through aggressive northern county development and expansion. The quality lifestyle, made famous through popularity of The Villages, features golf courses, recreation centers, swimming pools, retail shopping villages, daily organized entertainment, and 85 miles of golf cart trails, anchored by more than 36,000 homes on rolling, grass covered terrain.

HISTORY



Sumter County became the 29th Florida county and was established January 8, 1853, actually beginning before Florida became the 27th state in the Union. Indians were the earliest settlers of the land that would later become Sumter County. The early Sumter settlers obtained land permits resulting from the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, a program devised by Gov. Richard Call to defeat the Seminole Indians following the end of the Second Seminole War in 1842. This war was the most expensive U.S - Indian War and longest lasting between the American Revolution and the Vietnam War.



With Sumter County leading the nation in the early 1900's in string beans, cabbage, and cucumbers, vegetable packing sheds were numerous.

Sumter County has had various county seats, changing borders and even gave birth to its neighbor, Lake County, since officially becoming a county in 1853. Sumterville was the county seat until its courthouse burned down in 1909. On June 22, 1910, Judge Bullock of Ocala issued an ultimatum to Sumterville – build a courthouse by March 1, 1911, or face contempt charges. Sumter Commissioners at the time decided not to fight the legal ruling because they didn't want to spend taxpayer's money on the issue. So, on September 1, 1911, a public runoff election between Wildwood and Bushnell was held for the new county seat. Bushnell won, 657 – 648.

Much of Sumter' growth was stimulated by the Florida citrus industry, with more than 100 Sumter County orange growers reported in 1881, and citrus remained the top industry for the next 10 years. Agriculture and the cattle industry reigned as the rural county's top business enterprises for most of the 1900's. In fact, Sumter communities achieved world agricultural recognition. Center Hill was known as the "String Bean Capital of the World," Coleman was the "Cabbage Capital of the World," and Webster was known as the "Cucumber Capital."

Then, in the 1960's, a new Sumter seed was planted, and evolution began in the county's northern sector. The concept was based on land and lifestyle developed for retirees. Eventually named The Villages, the concept has evolved and encompasses environmentally sensitive land development, new home community clusters, athletic and recreational support services, retail, food, entertainment, health and educational programming, all surrounded by the simplicity of a personal transportation network.

The Villages has become Sumter County's prime public relations and economic engine. It is the nation's foremost lifestyle community, and is designed to accommodate a build-out of 100,000 residents. Although Sumter remains primarily rural, the positive economic impact of The Villages impacts every Sumter resident and enterprise.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

The population of Sumter County has grown tremendously over the past few decades. The obvious growth in the northern region of the County, fueled primarily by The Villages, is leading to substantial gains in overall population figures, reaching 95,345 according to 2009 UF data. This represents an impressive 78.7% growth rate for 2000 -2009: much higher rate of growth compared to 17.3% for Florida as a whole over the same period.

Density

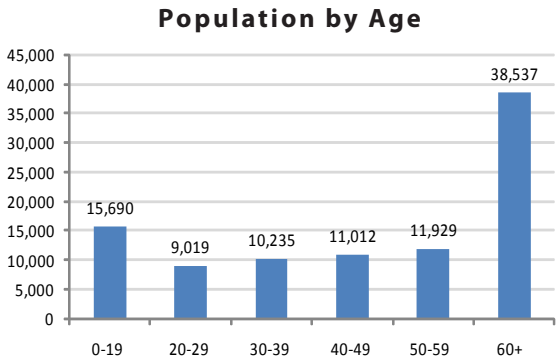
The County has an average population density of 175 persons per square mile, however this figure does not fully reflect the disparity in population densities found within the County. Population density varies from as low as 42 persons per square mile in the southern portion of the County, to 2180 persons per square mile in The Villages. Despite the dense micro-urban population in the northern region of the county, a rural population distribution is the attribute that characterizes most of the county. According to 2009 figures, 90% of the County's population resided in unincorporated areas of the County, with 10% residing within municipalities. (Office of Economic and Demographic Research, OEDR)

Age

Much of the population of Sumter County is characterized as 60 and over years of age, representing a full 40% of the total population. The population range between the ages of 30-59, representing prime labor force aged adults, totalled 34.4%. This tells us that while there is a large population of senior residents, they are not largely participating in the job market, leaving promising advantages to the remaining workforce-aged residents who are in a position to serve those affluent markets. This bodes well for the recovery and sustained growth of employment in the near term. (Economic Development Intelligence Systems and ESRI)

Education

Residents with a "High School graduation or higher" level of education equals 77.3%, just below par compared to 79.9% of all Florida's



residents. However, the percentage of residents with a "BA degree or higher" education is nearly half the state's rate; 12.2% in Sumter vs. 22.3% for the state. (US Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics) This is indicative of the lack of substantial post-secondary educational facilities available within the county.

Personal Income

Personal Income in Sumter County totaled $921,469,000 for 2008 and has been trending upward substantially over the last couple of decades. In fact, personal income was up almost 59% during the previous 5 years, ranking Sumter the #1 County in Florida regarding the growth rate in aggregate personal income.

Per Capita Income

Sumter County is ranked #2 in the state for growth in per capita income over the last 10 years, climbing from $19,702 in 1998 to $27,504 in 2008, a 39.6% increase, due in large part to the influx of residents to The Villages. (US Bureau of Economic Analysis)

Labor Force

The Sumter County labor force has also increased dramatically, rising 51.8% over the previous 5 year period and 114.1% for the previous 10 year period, ranking Sumter first in both 5 and 10 year categories of Labor Force Growth when compared to other counties in the state.

Average Wage Level

While per capita income and total personal income have climbed for the county as a whole, the individual 2008 Average Annual Wage for Sumter County shrunk to $32,473. The State average annual wage for that same year was

$40,568. While the State encountered a mere 1.7% drop in AAW (typical and symptomatic of the US economic downturn as a whole), Sumter County saw a 7.5% drop in AAW during that same period (2007-2008); a decrease 4.5 times that incurred by the state.

Median Income

Sumter County Median Household Income equalled $48,106 in 2008, boasting a 21.3% gain and again ranking Sumter County first among Florida counties, this time in the category of Growth of Median Household Income. It should be noted that Median Income would naturally show an increase as a result of the higher-income "Villagers" moving into the County.

Median Household Income

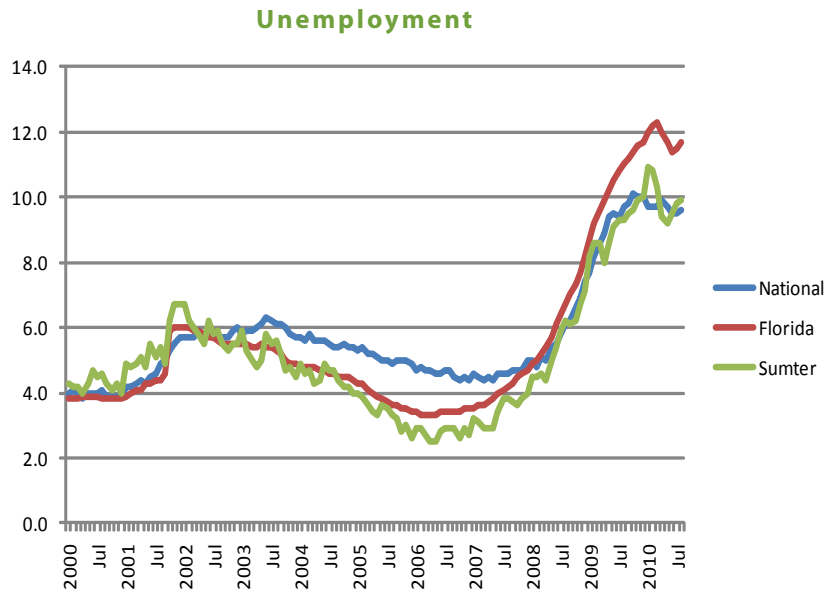
Description	Amount	Growth
2000 Median HH Income	$31,895	
2009 Median HH Income	$39,720	24.50%
2014 Median HH Income	$42,639	7.30%
(Estimated)		

Sources of Income

When studying the sources of income within the county an interesting trend emerges. While total earnings rose nearly 58% over the past 5 years to a total of $921.4 Million, (making Sumter the number one County in the state for 5 yr. growth in total income), an equally surprising increase has occurred in transfer income (retirement income). The total transfer payments in the county, derived from Sumter's large and growing population of retirees, grew more than 69% over the previous 5 years to a substantial $785 Million, ranking Sumter the number one County in the state for growth in the category of Transfer Payments. This indicates money flowing into the county from other parts of the United States (through means other than the sale of goods and services) nearly equaled that of revenue generated through the actual sales of goods and services. (SOURCE: US Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, University of Indiana and StatsAmerica).

Unemployment

Sumter's unemployment stands at 9.9% (Aug. 2010) as cited by the State Office of Economic and Demographic Research (OEDR), compared to the state unemployment rate of 11.7%. (Aug. 2010). (See Chart Below)



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Poverty

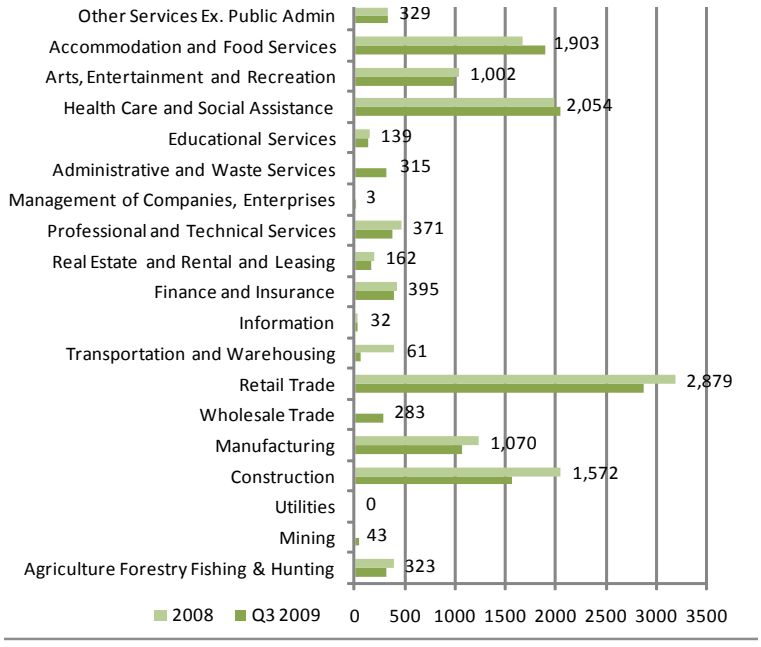
When it comes to Poverty Rates, Sumter County is improving, but this is a false positive to a large degree. The percentage of individuals living below the poverty line in 2008 was 13.2%, (0.1% lower than the state wide rate of 13.3%). However, while the poverty rate has decreased from 14.9% to 13.2% over the 8 year period between 2000-2008 , the population of the County exploded due to the expansion of The Villages, thus reducing the rate as a percentage of the entire population. But when factoring out the extraordinary, predominantly affluent population gains in The Villages, it should be noted the net effect has been an increase in the physical number of families and individuals living in poverty over that same period. Currently, 25.6% of children aged 0-17 live below the poverty level. (FEDR)

Industry Types, Income and Wages

The Government sector is the leading employer in the county, employing over 18.5% of the Sumter County workforce, followed by the retail sector, employing 15.2% of the labor force, construction employing 10.8%, and healthcare, 9.4%. The high numbers in Government sector employment can be attributed in large part to the number of jobs provided by the State and federal prisons, which inflates the numbers beyond the typical county and city government employment totals. Below is a chart reflecting the total number of individuals employed in each of the various sectors of the economy.

When considering the wages associated with each of the employment sectors, Government, Education & Manufacturing were responsible for the highest wages paid among the various sectors, with government leading at an average wage of $62,847, followed relatively closely by Educational Services at $60,390; each of which was substantially higher than third-ranked Manufacturing wage levels, which averaged an annual wage of $50,532. (US Bureau of Economic Analysis).

Employment by Industry Type



SOURCE: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

LOCAL ASSETS

Transportation

Positioned at the apex of central Florida's economic triangle, Sumter County represents a distribution hub unique in the state. Major transportation arteries include Interstate 75, the Florida Turnpike, US Highway 301, and State Roads 44, 48 and 470. In addition, CSX rail bisects the county from north to south. This unique coalescence of transportation systems makes Sumter an ideal distribution hub for businesses considering regional or national product distribution.

Land Use

Dynamic, forward thinking Sumter County Government leadership, in coordination with its city partners, has made great strides in planning future growth and land use characteristics within the county. The county has planned for corridors of industrial expansion along State Roads 44 and US 301 at the north and south ends of the county, as well as a section along CR 470 adjacent to I-75. The County contains state conservation lands totaling 65,389 acres, or 102 sq. miles, 18.6% of the total 548 square miles that constitute Sumter County.

Housing

In addition to the rapidly expanding retiree housing in The Villages, Sumter County encourages and promotes the availability of adequate and affordable housing resources for all Sumter County residents. This includes pursuing funding to provide housing for low and moderate income families. This also includes housing for special needs, including rural and farm worker housing as well as sites for group homes, foster care facilities, and very low and moderate income families.

The County also periodically reviews and updates all housing and land development codes to ensure a streamlined land development review and approval process.
Mid priced housing targeted toward younger families is a key component to future economic growth.

Infrastructure

The county provides acceptable levels of public services in accordance with state law. New development may only proceed at a pace necessary to ensure that public services and facilities hold to the level of service standards. The table below summarizes important level of service standards for infrastructure and public services.

The Sumter County comprehensive plan specifies how additional future infrastructure will be provided and funded. The county shall determine the financial feasibility of any capital improvements. State planning mandates now require the capital improvement element of local comprehensive plans be updated on an annual basis. Provision of infrastructure necessary to enable desired economic growth within the county is a key challenge and should constitute a major aim of economic development efforts.

Financial Resources

County General Funds

Sumter County has not had an ad valorem tax increase in the previous six years. This fiscal conservatism is a significant encouragement to new and existing business enterprise and a major asset in county economic development efforts.

Public Debt

Fitch Rating Service affirms: "in light of stagnant commercial and residential growth in Florida and the entire nation, Sumter's economy is stable, with strong financial operations, ample reserves and a low debt burden. "Sumter maintains a Dunn & Bradstreet A and A+ rated county economy and bond rating. Sumter County's public schools also maintain an "A" rating in terms debt and operational efficiency.

Water Resources

Abundant ground and surface waters are among the county's most valuable natural assets. Ground water serves as the predominant source of potable water within the county. The county has good groundwater quality.

Surface water quality is also good and of vital importance to the County's recreation and natural resource-based tourism industries, thereby of importance to the area's economic well being.

Sumter County structures its water and sewer services through a unique and innovative system of localized agreements with its constituent municipalities, designating Utility Service Areas (USA) wherein the City provides water, wastewater and reclaimed water services. The county itself abstains from the development and operation of public water and sewer services, except under certain circumstances where a local municipality might fail to provide adequate services.

Noteworthy is the success of recent well fields in the City of Wildwood, accessing the Florida deep water aquifer; providing fresh, abundant water supplies to the City, the residents and businesses within their joint planning area, and to other individual entities through separate agreements.

Sumter County is an active member of the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority, engaging in long-term planning of water supplies within the region.

Sewer

Sanitary sewer service is provided by cities and limited private groups. In most cases, sanitary sewer provision follows the same model as water provision: municipal facilities serving larger Utilitiy Service Areas (USA), with package plants or septic systems serving localized areas.

Solid Waste

The County provides a solid waste drop off location for the non-commercial individual citizen at the County's solid waste facility. The County designated Sumter Sanitation, LLC as the commercial solid waste disposal location. Each city provides the collection of solid waste within its jurisdictional boundaries.

Roads

Sumter County contains 132 miles of state highways within its borders. Major transportation arteries include Interstate 75, the Florida Turnpike, US Highway 301, and State Roads 44 and 48. This unique coalescence of transportation systems make Sumter an ideal distribution hub for businesses considering regional or national product distribution.

Sumter County has adopted the FDOT LOS standards to coordinate its traffic circulation plans and policies with the Florida Department of Transportation's Five (5) Year Transportation Plan.

Railroads

CSX rail is an Integral element of the Sumter County/Wildwood transportation hub. The CSX rail transportation system runs the entire north-south length of the county, providing Sumter businesses major distribution advantages, both current and future.
Sumter County and regional leaders project the expansion of rail freight as a prime benefit to future business development. When the widened Panama Canal opens, the flow of Asian goods to the U.S. East Coast and Midwest will increase dramatically. CSX is gearing up to handle the impact with rail routes re-structured to handle heavier loads from Atlantic ports. CSX reports that significant portions of their rail freight traffic will be diverted from their Florida East Coast "A" line to the Central Florida "S" line, which runs through Sumter County.

CSX maintains a large rail yard in Wildwood, directly adjacent to the interchange of Florida's Turnpike and Interstate 75, providing multi-modal distribution and transportation convenience unlike any other in Florida.

CSX currently rolls 15 to 25 trains per day through Wildwood and Sumter County, each pulling up to 90 freight cars, serving 23 states, over their 21,000 mile rail network. In Florida alone, CSX operates 1,650 miles of railroad, moving 929,500 carloads of freight in 2009, employing 4,500 Floridians and compensating them a total of $493.5 million.

Airports and Potential Seaport

Sumter County is located approximately one hour from both the Tampa and Orlando International Airports. Sumter is also served by a regional airport, capable of jet traffic, at Leesburg Municipal Airport. And though there are no seaports located in Sumter County, our excellent highway and railway transportation arteries make us a prime candidate for development of an inland seaport. An inland port would ease multi-modal freight movement by shifting traffic eastward away from the increasingly congested Tampa Bay and Eastern corridors.

Industrial Parks

Sumter County has a limited number of industrial parks across the county. Future plans involve Wildwood housing a 4 million sq. ft. industrial warehouse park development of regional impact (DRI). The industrial park would be at the Morse Boulevard interchange along the Florida Turnpike.

Broadband

Broadband in Sumter County is available everywhere In the areas that are not wired with FiOs, or hooked into cable; satellite broadband has become the go-to format for rural areas in need of broadband. However, while satellite broadband may be sufficient for residential customers, it is only broadband in download speed. Upload speeds for satellite systems are still limited to dial-up speeds, making satellite insufficient to handle business operations.

Telecommunications

Today while the cost of cell phones has made calling long distance much cheaper and easier, the residents of Sumter County who still prefer to have a land line find themselves being charged long distance rates to call the opposite end of the county. Long distance charges may create a natural barrier between intra-County commerce and business because ordering products, and calling suppliers requires a long distance call. Cell phone coverage in the county also needs to be addressed. There are significant "dead spot" areas in the county where no cell traffic can be received or sent. These "dead zones" are most commonly found between the townships and cities, where new industrial development may likely locate.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

Pro-Business Leadership & Political Support

In a progressive and innovative move by the County, the Sumter County Commission retained an experienced private sector economic developer, e5solutions, Inc. to provide economic development services. Sumter is the only one of all Florida's 67 counties with a private sector corporation responsible for the design and execution of its business development initiative. Sumter County has forged unique, innovative partnership agreements with its cities and the State of Florida, and gained broad gauge, fast-track 30-day approval processing on "shovel-ready" development sites.

Dynamic Micro Urban Growth

The Villages, "Florida's Friendliest Hometown," at the northern end of the county, is the largest single-site, residential life-style community in the U.S., spanning 26,000 acres (5.6 sq.. mi.) and directly employing over 12,000 people, with average residential income more than double the U.S. average. The Old Florida flavor, with wide agriculture and cattle enterprises, reigns throughout the county, with urban creativity diversifying the pace for Sumter County through development of The Villages in the north.

VILLAGES HOSPITAL AND DEVELOPER JOIN FORCES

NEW VILLAGES HEALTH SYSTEM DESIGNED TO BE 'WORLD CLASS'

SUN

HEALTH SYSTEM

ILES FOR SECOND HOSPITAL

OPOSED SOUTH VILLAGES HOSPITAL CAMPUS WOULD BE NEAR BROWNWOOD

Progressive and Innovative Healthcare Approach

The Villages and the Regional Healthcare Alliance have partnered to plan and deliver a high-level wellness system. "During the past year, no fewer than two dozen health care practices of all kinds either expanded or opened new offices to serve the area's growing population, an exciting time for the area health care industry," according to a report in The Villages Daily Sun. "What's happening here is not happening anywhere else that I know of," reported Dr. Nelson Kraucak, managing physician of the Life Family Practice Center.

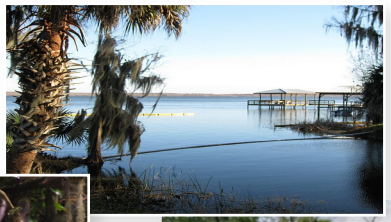
With the recent announcement of the Moffit Cancer Center and a third Villages affiliated Hospital, Sumter County is emerging as a model for healthcare services cluster.

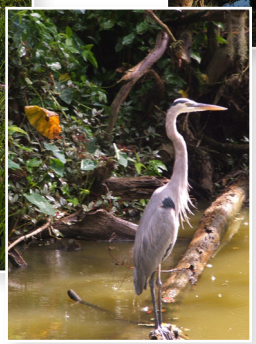
Entrepreneurial Values and Commitment

Sumter County government, Sumter County schools, Sumter County Chamber of Commerce, the Sumter Ministerial Association, major and small businesses, and agricultural and cattle enterprises, all combine to comprise a unique philosophical approach to making self-reliant individual and business life choices. Sumter offers a true commitment to the fundamental values of American business that are increasingly unique, not only in the State of Florida, but in the entire nation.

Diverse and Unique Small Towns

Adjacent to The Villages is the progressively expanding City of Wildwood, considered Florida's transportation hub. In South County is the "down home" City of Bushnell is now marketing its prime "shovel-ready" development sites. Add to these the unique smaller towns of Webster, Center Hill, and Coleman, and you have a variety of growing communities with their own special qualities to attract residents and visitors.





Natural Features

Sumter County has a unique and diverse environment. It is dotted with major lakes, ponds combined with the one river and major streams. It has diverse and established federal, state and local park lands. It still remains predominantly rural in nature as it combines its productive agriculture and cattle raising farmlands to create a picturesque, scenic county of rolling open space directly along the busy, rapidly developing corridor of I-75. From the Green Swamp to the National Cemetery to major preservation and open space areas, Sumter County offers unique and surprising opportunities for passive and active open space use from wildflower scenic highways to bird watching, suggesting the development of eco-tourism as a core element in attracting regional visitors.

Leading Education System

Sumter boasts one of the few A-rated public school systems in the State of Florida, and features an award winning charter school system which achieved a 100% graduation rate in 2009. The school system also received a financial "A" rating by Standard & Poor's for judicious use of resources. In addition, for the third year in a row, another "A", 13th highest in the state out of 75 school districts, in the 2009-2010 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). As Superintendent Richard Shirley said, "our elementary and middle school kids and their teachers did it again. I get pretty hyped about this!"

Low taxes

For six consecutive years the Sumter County Commission has avoided tax increases for taxpayers.

Business Incentives

A comprehensive research report and competitive analysis on business incentives were created by e5solutions to investigate best practices and to study various incentive options, based on what is currently available at the Federal, State and local levels. In June of 2010 Sumter County adopted all of the state business incentive programs and also approved its own entrepreneurial-based business investment incentives for the first time in 2010. In addition to the monetary incentives adopted in 2010, the county has also put in place fast-track permitting and pre-approved zoning which has reduced the permitting and zoning processes from months to weeks in duration.

WEAKNESSES

Inadequate Vocational, Post Secondary and Workforce Training Programs

The lack of vocational, post-secondary and workforce training is resulting in an emigration out of the county for higher education. This shortcoming is leaving our local workforce uncompetitive when facing the challenges of modern employment and rendering them unprepared to fill the widening gap of qualified candidates to meet the existing needs of the current job market.

Infrastructure Deficiencies (Power, Water, Communications)

Due to the County's rural character, infrastructure distribution remains uneven. Lack of infrastructure in industrially zoned areas is an important factor that is currently limiting the county's economic growth. In some cases adequate infrastructure does not exist to support development activities. Availability of infrastructure, or the economic feasibility of providing infrastructure, often plays a determining role in industrial relocations and land development opportunities.

Depending on the specific carrier, cell phone coverage is uneven and intermittent in some areas. Additionally, certain areas of the county are subject to a long distance toll charges when placing a call from north to south, or vice-versa. While this may only be a perceived barrier to business, it is a barrier none-the-less.

Business class broadband services are no exception. Broadband is a fundamental building block for business development, economic growth, and quality of life in any community. Broadband pipes must be properly located and sized to meet the current and future needs of a community.

Inadequate Business Market Positioning and Identity

Image is the way the county is perceived in the minds of people, near and distant. Image is the personality and potential the county displays to the state, nation and the world. This perception, though possibly not reality, is what prompts investors to invest, business planners to meet, travelers to visit and businesses and new residents to locate.

One can't help but see the undeveloped and unrealized opportunities presented by Sumter. The pristine county offers undeniable economic potential. Whether for business development and expansion, for living quality or simply to relax in leisure, Sumter County is so close, so convenient and so easy to discover. But to a large degree, Sumter County still awaits discovery. Sumter County is one of Florida's best-kept secrets, but soon it will be revealed.

Low Average Annual Wage

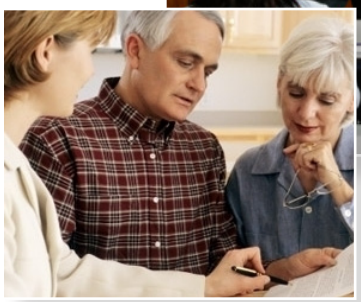
Sumter County has not escaped all of the economic downturn. As of Q3 2010 we are still averaging a 9.9% unemployment rate and experiencing a low average annual wage of $32,473 per year, which is about $4,000 below the living wage for an individual, or approximately $14,000 below the living wage for a family of four (Poverty in America). The combination of low average annual wages combined with a high unemployment rate translates into more than 70% of children in the public school system qualifying for the federal free lunch program and nearly 26% of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty level (FEDR).

Limited Low and Mid-Range Housing Availability

While there are several housing developments planned for the county over the next 5-10 years, there currently exists a shortage of mid-level housing to serve both the middle-class population already working in the county and those considering moving themselves or their businesses here. In fact, we have found through our research that a significant number of workers are commuting into the county for work, yet residing and spending those dollars in neighboring counties, thereby reducing our tax base, limiting their investment in the local community, and setting a trend that will have repercussions for generations to come.

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

OPPORTUNITIES



Brand and Expand the Regional Transportation Hub

The City of Wildwood, by the confluence of roads, interstates, railroads and nearby airports and ports, has a natural ability to develop as Central Florida's major transportation and distribution hub north of Tampa and northwest of Orlando. To move this potential high goal to reality requires careful and continued cooperation and partnership between existing major stakeholders, such as CSX and existing industrial operations. Building a regional transportation hub requires first the connecting pieces and second, a combination of marketing and mainline customers to launch the reputation and efficiency of the location. An analysis of "free trade zone" designations may also increase the viability of this important economic key.

Focus Retail, Service and Health Businesses to the Congregation of Senior Adults with Strong and Sable Retirement Incomes

Sumter County was #1 in percentage of retail growth last year at a 172% increase. This is a direct reflection of the continued growth and existing vitality of the senior residents of The Villages. The Villages is the most successful and fastest growing planed lifestyle community in the nation. With an average household income of more than $92,000, the crippling national recession has only had minor impacts on retail and home sales growth in Sumter County.

Utilize the Inherent Business and Life Skills of Retired Senior Adults

In early November, e5solutions will begin the first organizational meetings of Sumter County CEOs, a collection of retired business executives who will assist in marketing and outreach, primarily back to their former home communities. The skills and business experience of these retired seniors may also be tapped to build successful new incubator ties with young people and to also offer seniors the opportunity to begin encore careers with new incubator entrepreneurs. The senior retirees of The Villages are not only the primary economic drivers of the County's current financial success, but also are equally important resources in helping to build other successful business segments. Using the same approach, Sumter CEO's may encourage other small business owners to retire to The Villages. This may even generate a whole new market segment of retirees who would not only move themselves to Sumter, but bring along their small businesses at the same time.

Market Sumter's Diverse Attractions of Historic, Agrarian Open Space and Attractive New Urban Centers

Sumter County is committed to protecting not only its rural beauty, but the quality of its native environment. This basic approach makes "eco-tourism" a natural attraction to develop for regional visitors. Promotion of the area's cultural and natural resources, it's greenways and river corridors and it's many historic sites are the uppermost priority. Scenic and inviting attractions range from cemeteries to battlefields to delightful preserved slices of the old Florida, which are rapidly disappearing elsewhere. Building on the foundation of the

county's natural appeal is the creativity of the residents in staging frequent and wide-ranging public events, action activities, displays, shows, reenactments, demonstrations and celebrity introductions. Many activities are free and open to public participation. Growing and marketing a wide-range of special events can become Sumter's prime visitor attraction when combined with eco, medical and agri-tourism marketing initiatives.

THREATS

Balancing a Shared Economic and Quality-of-Life Vision

Sharing a common economic growth and quality-of-life vision among all sectors and geographic locations within the county will maximize a successful balanced development. The balancing act almost every resident and business person states is the need to create "more living wage jobs in a diversified economy" while protecting the rural and agrarian way of life that are the legacy of Sumter County.

Not only does Sumter County need to strike a common vision and action plan, but like all emerging counties, the business community must partner closely together to achieve these goals. By early next year, the County and all of its cities will have executed cooperative agreements to reduce costs, build customer service, find economies of scale and make sure that there is a united approach to attracting, hosting and cultivating existing and new business. This partnership must reach out to all of the civic, business, religious and not-for-profit organizations to assure that the common goals are not only known and supported, but individual organizations reflect such goals in their own action plans.

Competing with Emerging Counties in Florida and the Country

The uncertain direction of the economy both in Florida and throughout the country has caused many counties to offer new and deep incentives to attract and maintain business. The competition for the new economy will be especially fierce since many counties and cities are experiencing unusually serious financial circumstances. Sumter County has several competitive advantages including location, stable tax base, a major economic generator in The Villages, emerging industrial growth. On the other hand, even with national and international recognition of The Villages, the entire County is almost "undiscovered" as a major point for business relocation. Recent articles and statistics about the stability and growth of Sumter County as contrasted against other counties in the state will help build that marketing identity. During the next five months, e5solutions will construct a marketing plan to bring forward as part of a more systematic and targeted outreach for tourism development.

Current Macro-Economic Conditions

The U.S. economy is experiencing the longest and most severe national recession in the country's history with major unemployment, business contraction and uncertainty about the time and size of recovery. Some economists believe that the economy has re-stalled and headed toward "a double dip". The combination of housing foreclosures, major business and industry failures, massive unemployment, and severe tightening of credit availability, have many businesses focused on cutting expenses and reducing overhead. With many businesses still experiencing economic difficulties, and believing there's more economic difficulty forthcoming; strategies for business relocation are still quite tenuous. The nature of the national and state economy demand that Sumter County prepare for a number of possible options that are very clear, but at the same time remain agile and flexible and ready to pursue new and unanticipated growth sectors not yet on the horizon.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Strategy:
Retain, Assist and Improve Existing Businesses

Existing businesses should receive the highest priority. They've already invested their future with this County. Resources spent to create new job development among these businesses will always be less than resources spent to attract new companies.

Such assistance may take several forms: Provide existing businesses the best business, technical and financial information available. Last year, e5solutions promoted the first business Summit in Sumter County which introduced major state, federal and other business organizations which exist to assist small business; organizations such as Enterprise Florida, The Small Business Administration, SCORE, the Small Business Development Center, local banking institutions, professional associations and the local Chamber of Commerce. We've strengthened these business services connections through an active website, newsletters, business alerts, hundreds of individual meetings and responses to requests for assistance.

Strategy:
Attract New Businesses with an Emphasis on Living Wage Jobs

Even before the new economy shakes out, we have begun the process of positioning Sumter County as a best new economy location. "Our Top 10 Strengths" quickly outline core elements that lead our recruitment strategy.

The average working wage in Sumter County is approximately $32,000 per year or $4000 per year below the living wage level for an individual. For a family of four, the average wage is approximately $14,000 below the needed living wage. This low average wage is also reflected in the fact that more than 70% of school-age children in Sumter County qualified for the federal free lunch program. Future vitality for families is focused on locating, developing, training, educating and planning for county wage earners to be able to secure "living wage" jobs. In this economy, all jobs are important, but to build the type of economic vitality and family strengths over a period of time, we must strategize and implement the things required to attract and satisfy employers who pay above the living wage.

Strategy:
Focus on Healthcare Delivery and Research for Seniors as a Major Economic Strategy

If one looks at national projections, the top 20 job skills projected for the future in terms of pay and availability contain 10 healthcare oriented careers. There is already a shortage of trained healthcare workers existing even in this period of major unemployment. Workforce Central Florida projects more than 1800 registered nursing vacancies and more than 1700 occupational therapist vacancies exist right now.

Not only are health care positions in great demand, the majority of them pay living wage salaries or above. With more than 75% of the federal budget being expended in healthcare, it is an industry with an assured future of employment. The Villages and its residents provide e5 a unique service requirement and the unique manner in which to build our economy. With more than 100,000 seniors scheduled to live in Sumter County by the next decade, the demand for qualified, excellent and cost-efficient healthcare services will be the highest service demands of local residents. Fortunately, Sumter County is well served by a new partnership between the Central Florida Health Alliance and The Villages. This partnership has already announced construction of a new hospital in the Wildwood area and also has captured a highly respected satellite expansion of the Moffitt Cancer Center.

Healthcare provides a great challenge, but also presents the best economic strategy around which to build a cluster of collateral business activity. Healthcare for seniors is and will be a high volume citizen service that will increase the already superheated vacancies in the healthcare industry. That suggests the need for targeted education by our local public and charter schools and the addition of post-secondary education and training for a variety of careers in the industry. This massive demand for healthcare services will not only provide the growing increase in collateral business growth in our County, but also provide a unique and specialized research component that can make Sumter County the national center for best practices and research for healthcare delivery to a senior population.

Strategy:
Become a Center for Agricultural Business and Research Cluster

The cattle industry is as old as Sumter County history itself. It provides a strong economic segment while also helping to generate economic viability of the county's pastoral openness. Residents consider Sumter's natural open space and farmlands key quality of life and business attraction issues. The county is working in partnership with Central Beef, the processing plant that is currently responsible for 98% of the cattle processed in Florida. As Central Beef undertakes a dynamic $10 million expansion, they will double their existing capacity, expanding employment and providing a magnet to attract collateral research and supporting business development.

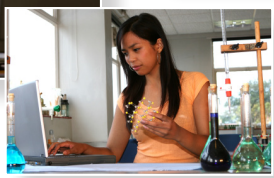
Strategy:
Train Workforce to Better Serve Existing business Community and Fill Existing Job Market Vacancies

There is inadequate post-secondary training, certificate training, apprentice programs and degree programs to provide training and skills for the emerging new economy. e5 will look at existing resources such as Lake-Sumter Community College, but also other resources from throughout the state and region that might be available to plug into our educational needs in an expedient and cost-effective approach.

Strategy:
Pursue Development While Protecting Quality of Life

Clean air, clear water, lush landscapes, open pastoral areas, and abundant wildlife are the heritage and legacy of Sumter County. Compelling recreational and cultural assets like lakeside amenities and a performing arts center augment the natural features of the county, making for an even more compelling quality-of-life, which will ultimately attract more businesses, residents and visitors. This plan balances the desire of residents to improve the quality, quantity, and wage scale of new jobs while protecting the exceptional land and water environments that makes this county unique and special to those who live here, and to those who will be attracted to bring new businesses.

Sumter County must follow a balanced strategy of protecting the environment, promoting economic prosperity, and always improving the quality of life.



Strategy:
Provide Incentives for New Businesses to Relocate to Sumter County

In the past year, Sumter County Board of County Commissioners approved the adoption of All state incentives that are available for new or existing businesses in Sumter County. Furthermore, for the first time, the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners enhanced the state incentives by also offering County incentives for job growth. This is a competitive step in the marketplace, but it is based on the entrepreneurial philosophy of providing a real partnership with emerging and growing businesses.

Strategy:
Partner with all Available Resources and Organizations to Grow Businesses

The local Chamber of Commerce, SCORE, SBA, Workforce Central Florida, and all other agencies involved with helping and training small businesses have good and strong resources and programs. e5solutions focus will be to make sure local businesses are aware of these many technical and financial programs and have clear opportunity to take advantage of these educational resources.

Strategy:
Develop Support for Incubator Facility and Start-Up Business Program

In this recession, more than 80% of new jobs have been created by start up or incubator businesses. Not only does starting new businesses prove to be a cost-effective way of growing jobs, but it underscores Sumter County's entrepreneurial commitment to economic growth. It also offers many people the opportunity, training and support to build something for themselves and for their families. Much of the American Dream has been based on owning and operating your own business. Everything e5solutions can do that strengthens this entrepreneurial spirit and skill will not only build new businesses but also help current employers find employees with a different view of what a job represents.

Strategy:
Create Regional and National Business Identity for Sumter County to Attract New Business and Tourism

Sumter County is a great secret. The County is still "undiscovered" as a great educational location, as a stable and steady tax base location, as the expanding construction location, as a fast-growing and successful retail location, as a thriving and growing agrarian location, as a core hub transportation and distribution center for Central Florida, and as the most successful planned community in the United States. During the next five months, e5solutions will develop Sumter County's first major marketing and outreach program.

Strategy:
Expand Infrastructure

Infrastructure to attract, support and maintain business growth must be built. Water, sewer, roads systems, parks, communication issues such as cell phones and broadband coverage, utility lines and extensions all come together as either a package that supports existing business expansion and new business development or business relocations. It is an challenge that must be met when many competitors are truly "shovel ready" with many sites. This must be done in a deliberate process. We must not overbuild systems too early, but we must be ready to respond to new growth initiatives without curtailing development.