

Business Climate Minutes from February 4, 2005 Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice

Welcome and introductions were made by the Co-Chairs Teri Hansen and Anne Merrill. The Co-Chairs posed this question to the group for discussion. What is the one huge barrier that is affecting doing business in Sarasota County for relocation and expansions? Some of the answers and points for discussion were as follows:

- Permitting, time it takes
- Workforce Training
- Low Unemployment (labor pool)
- Affordable Housing (Median cost of home in Sarasota County almost \$300,000)
- DRI (Development Regional Impact)

Diane Andrews gave the EDC update about their move on February 18, 2005 to Live Oak Corporate Park. There is a Cluster Calendar of Events that will be e-mailed to all Cluster participants and will be on the website, www.edcsarasotacounty.com We will be happy to include any event related to Cluster activity.

Tim Dutton showed a Power Point presentation to the Group from the SCOPE Diversity Report. The data was compiled from the census (4 years ago) about race and age diversity. The population growth has been 17% and that is mostly in Hispanic growth (143%). For the complete presentation go to SCOPE's website, www.scopexcel.org

Report on funded Initiatives was from Tom Quale. He showed the new printed brochures which highlights the Business Funding Resource website. Tom said they want to speak at organizations around the County telling them about the website and what a great resource this is. He welcomes invitations to clubs and associations.

The group then broke up into three working sub groups for the new Strategies to discuss Action Steps and Measurable outcomes to the objectives discussed in the planning sessions.

Regulatory Environment: Benchmark the best practices of the permitting process within the County and use a test case for comparison of processes. Consolidate the issues coming out of the focus groups that the County conducted. Staff will contact Vivian Roe. Hold a joint meeting with the Advisory Board to exchange development issues and recommendations.

Creating a Diverse Economy: The group decided that in order to understand the meaning of Diversity and what is already being done that they want to have a meeting with Hispanic and Afro American leaders in the Community. The enthusiasm for this type of meeting was clear by the fact that they want to meet in another two weeks. Staff will begin coordinating calendars.

Workforce Housing: The question of workforce availability and transportation is being discussed by every group private and public in the County. The group decided to

approach the issue by developing an Employer Assistance Program. They want to develop a survey of employers which would identify employee needs i.e. transportation, research option for employer assisted group transportation and publicize options to employees. Survey questions will be worked on and brought to the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Group will be May 6, 2005 from 9:00-11:00 Place TBD.
The sub groups will meet monthly or in the case of Diversity more frequently and work with staff to coordinate dates.