

## Administration

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Flagler County launches collaborative economic development initiative with municipalities

**March 27, 2023** – Flagler County has been meeting with municipalities as part of an economic development initiative to create a single, unified plan aimed at diversifying the tax base for the benefit of all its residents.

County Administrator Heidi Petito recently provided an update to the Board of County Commissioners about the work to date, which included an overview of the State of Florida – ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the country as a place to business – and the competition that both the state and Flagler County face.

“Florida continues to make significant progress with promoting our state as open for business,” Petito said. “When you look at the state’s ability to bounce back from COVID and how quickly we were able to do that, I think it is a testament to the governor. Last year, as well as with this year’s proposed (state) budget, we’ve seen unprecedented funding going into technology, education, public safety, and infrastructure, so I anticipate that Florida’s ranking is only going to improve.”

Petito pulled data originally presented by CNBC: “[America’s Top States for Business in 2022](#).” It scored all 50 states on 88 metrics in 10 broad categories of competitiveness.

“Each category is weighted based on how frequently states use them as a selling point in economic development marketing materials,” the report states. “That way, our study ranks the states based on the attributes they use to sell themselves.”

Florida ranked well for its economy, workforce, education, infrastructure, and the cost of doing business. It received a “C” ranking for access to capital and cost of living. It ranked poorly for business friendliness, as well as life, health, and inclusion.

Petito showed a U.S. map shaded by state ([www.stateincentives.org](http://www.stateincentives.org)) to give an indication of incentives offered at the state level, with Florida shaded to the mid-level in the United States and among the group of five viewed to be in close competition: North Carolina (ranked #1); Texas (#5); Tennessee (#6); Georgia (#10, though offering the most incentives); and, Florida (#11).

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Andy Dance  
District 1

Greg Hansen  
District 2

David Sullivan  
District 3

Leann Pennington  
District 4

Donald O’Brien, Jr.  
District 5

“You can see that state incentives are not totally driving the scores,” Petito said.

Petito then talked about Flagler County’s statistics – 86.9% of its tax base is residential, and only 8% combined, including vacant, is commercial or industrial. Flagler County ranks higher than state and national averages for construction and leisure and hospitality jobs. It also ranks below state and national averages for manufacturing and financial-related jobs.

The initiative – which started with an economic development retreat arranged by the county with the cities of Bunnell, Flagler Beach, and Palm Coast – is to prepare for countywide growth and will include collaboration with the Palm Coast-Flagler Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Northeast Florida Regional Council, and Jax USA.

“At the retreat we talked about how to deliver on each other’s expectations, and we’ve started to have quarterly meetings,” Petito said. “We will have a meeting ... about Strategic Site Inventory (to strengthen competitiveness within targeted industries) with Enterprise Florida and FPL to identify greenfield sites (undeveloped areas, typically on agricultural land, sought after for the construction of manufacturing plants and other commercial projects).”

Petito mentioned other opportunities Flagler County has already established: Foreign Trade Zone #64 (Jax Port); Certified Economic Opportunity (Palm Coast); PACE Program; and, the Florida High Tech Corridor (Northeast).

Target industries have been identified as those that provide high paying jobs, such as: advanced/light; manufacturing; agritechnology; aviation and aerospace; financial services and financial technology; life sciences and health care; intermodal logistics (warehousing and distribution); and, corporate headquarters.

Petito proposed a number of potential incentives including: ad valorem tax incentive; customized packages (impact fee offset); fast track permitting; industrial development revenue bonds (industrial revenue bonds); “REV” Grant (Recaptured Enhanced Value Grant or Tax Increment Grant Area); tangible property tax abatement; wage incentive grant; and, public private partnerships (P3s).

“We want to make the county the most desirable within the region if not the state,” Petito said.

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