



March 2017

## The Voice of Progress

By the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County

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### [From The Director's Desk](#)

By Nathan Sparks, CEcD  
Executive Director



"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" - such reads the first line of Charles Dickens' timeless classic "A Tale of Two Cities". Were Dickens alive today, he might also use such a descriptor to refer to the age that we currently find ourselves living in. Why is that, you ask? Let's start with "the best of times". In case you missed it, the U.S. economy is white hot. Unemployment on all fronts (state, local and national) remains low, the Dow and NASDAQ have both achieved all-time highs thus far in 2017 and the respected Business Roundtable CEO Economic Outlook Survey - conducted quarterly since 2002 - is equally bullish. Of particular note is the CEO Economic Outlook Index and its sharp 19 point increase from the last quarter of 2016. The dramatic increase is tied to growing optimism among CEOs and their near term (6 month) expectations of sales increases, capital investments and, yes, new hiring. Locally, with our national defense clearly a top priority for the Trump Administration, many within our defense contracting community are also expressing optimism.

Now for "the worst of times". At a time when our national economy is gathering steam and many businesses are preparing to invest in new facilities and talent, our great state is making some rather curious decisions that many have equated to "closing for business". Just last week the Florida House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed HB 7005 - legislation that effectively eliminates Enterprise Florida, the state's public-private economic development partnership that many consider to be a national model. At issue are economic incentives - often referred to as Florida's "economic tool kit". These statutorily-created programs are designed to reward companies (both new and existing) that commit to creating higher wage jobs in Florida in sectors determined to be strategic to the future of our state. Such programs and concessions have grown in importance as economic development has become increasingly competitive - with states and communities vying for a very limited number of "projects" each year. Today, economic incentives are offered by virtually every state under the sun - though specific requirements can vary greatly. Florida's economic incentives are strictly "performance based" - meaning that the company must make the contemplated investment and create (and maintain) the jobs in order to keep up their end of the deal. If the company fails to perform, the incentives are cancelled. Further, "claw back" provisions protect tax payers by ensuring that incentives are paid back in rare instances of non-performance on the part of the company. Those who oppose incentives often refer to them as "corporate welfare" and suggest that the State should not be in the business of "picking winners and losers". These same individuals are also known to take the viewpoint that "we

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## EDC Core Values

- Integrity
- Respect
- Accountability
- Performance Excellence

## Members in the News

Landrum HR, has acquired the assets of The Employee Management Team (EMT), a Sarasota, Florida based PEO with small and medium sized business clients located throughout central Florida. Landrum will maintain the Sarasota office and employ the existing staff members. Now in its 47th year, LandrumHR is a staffing and PEO company that provides hiring and staffing solutions, as well as HR outsourcing, training and consulting.

**Congratulations!**



First Partners Financial, Inc. and Progress Financial Corporation jointly announced the signing of a definitive agreement under which Progress Bank & Trust will acquire First Partners Bank to create the eighth largest bank headquartered in the state of Alabama. The combined institution will have banking operations in Northern Alabama, the Birmingham MSA and Destin, FL, and, based on

are Florida, and businesses are going to come here regardless".

Truthfully, Florida WILL attract its share of businesses because of its favorable tax climate, enviable logistics network, notable talent pipeline and yes, even its beautiful beaches and warm weather. However, what is missed by many who stand in opposition to Enterprise Florida and the programs that it facilitates is that economic incentives are an essential tool when courting transformative economic opportunities that can truly locate anywhere in the world. Companies ranging from aircraft and biomedical manufacturers to advanced technology developers can - and do - command state and local participation in their new facility investments precisely because they are bringing game-changing employment opportunities to the area in question. One needs only to research the deals that led to noteworthy southeastern economic development success stories like Airbus (Alabama), Kia (Georgia) and Boeing (South Carolina) for proof. And based on the results of the previously mentioned CEO Economic Outlook Survey, more facilities and jobs are on the near horizon. With the passage of HB 7005, is Florida really saying to this group of decision makers, "thanks but no thanks"?

## Defense Support Initiatives Committee, DSI

*By Pete Gandy*  
*DSI Chairman*

In February 2017, HB 7005 was introduced and passed by the Appropriations Committee and passed the vote by the Florida House. Among other provisions contained in the bill, abolishing Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) abolishes the Florida Defense Alliance (FDA) and transfers all authority and responsibilities to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) effective July 1, 2017. If this is allowed to happen, it will pose extremely negative impacts to local community efforts here and around the state to protect our bases and military missions. EFI, a public-private partnership between the state and local communities, and FDA were formed to stem future losses following BRAC 1995 when Florida lost significant military missions and 1,000's of jobs to other states. Over the past 20 years, EFI and FDA have provided millions of dollars in defense grant funds to local communities, which were leveraged at a 3 to 1 match from Department of Defense (DOD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiatives (REPI) funds, to acquire land and conservation easements to help buffer our bases from encroachment-a major reason why missions were realigned and bases were closed during previous BRAC rounds.

We have made tremendous progress over the years with the help of EFI and FDA as evidenced by the additional missions (Joint Strike Fighter and 7th Special Forces Group) picked up locally in BRAC 2005. Governor Scott opposes HB 7005 and he has asked for our help. Your Defense Support Initiatives (DSI) committee opposes this bill and has contacted our senators and representatives to vote against HB 7005. The military presence in NW Florida represents more than 30% of the economy and \$ 10 billion annually in economic benefit to our area. DSI urges you to contact your senator and representatives in Tallahassee today to vote against HB 7005 and any other proposed legislation that would eliminate EFI and FDA. Let's continue to be a Great American Defense Community!



financial results as of December 31, 2016, will have approximately \$1 billion in total assets, \$750 million in total loans and \$850 million in deposits.

*Congratulations!*



**Twin Cities Hospital** has earned the 2016 Unit of Distinction (UOD) Award in an annual program that recognizes and rewards exemplary Medical-Surgical units at Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) facilities. The "Unit of Distinction" designation is achieved through measurable, outstanding performance in nursing leadership, professional practice, and operations and outcomes.

*Congratulations!*



**Sunshine Shuttle and Limousine** service is proud to introduce their ON-DEMAND RIDER APP designed to provide the Emerald Coast with a safe, secure, high quality, on-demand riding experience. This next step is designed to meet the needs and growing demands of both residents & tourists who desire an ON-DEMAND APP style service from a quality, experienced, & LOCAL company like Sunshine Shuttle.

*Congratulations!*



**Saltmarsh, Cleaveland and Gund** is pleased to announce that Reingruber & Company, P.A., of St. Petersburg, Florida and its Nashville, Tennessee-based affiliate have merged with the firm. Claudia E. Reingruber, CPA has joined the firm as a shareholder, accompanied by her team of healthcare consultants.

*Congratulations!*



**The Howard Group** is pleased to announce that award-winning

## Technology Coast Manufacturing and Engineering Network, TeCMEN

*By Maynard Factor  
TeCMEN Chairman*

Wow, we are already closing out the first quarter of 2017 and where has the time gone! At least with regards to TeCMEN, the time has been well spent holding diligent to our mission of promoting technology-based business growth within the Northwest Florida community through the facilitation of innovative collaboration and the advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives. At the rate we are going there is nothing we won't be able to accomplish this year.

We had a busy February meeting that was kicked off with two new TeCMEN Member Highlight presentations. The Member Highlight presentations are an opportunity for TeCMEN members to take the floor and talk a bit about what their company does and discuss where there may be opportunities for other TeCMEN members to collaborate. The highlights provided in February were from Rexel/Gexpro Services and On-Point Defense Technologies. Both briefings were very informative and yielded a significant amount of discussion among the group.

During the meeting there was also an announcement that registration was opened for two new UWF/TeCMEN Training Courses. The UWF/TeCMEN Advanced Skills Training program offers an amazing opportunity for TeCMEN members to obtain localized, no-cost training on a variety of specialized course topics highly relevant to our technology and manufactured based organizations. Over the years, the program has provided hundreds of employees of more than 20 TeCMEN member firms with training on an extensive range of topics. The two newest training opportunities announced are for Certified Lean Practitioner and Project Management Professional. Additionally, in March it was announced that an AS9100D Internal Auditor course has come online as well. Participating in this program is a great way to take advantage of continuing education to enhance knowledge base and sharpen competitive edge.

TeCMEN took a Spring Break in March and did not have a formalized meeting. However, not meeting did not slow the group down from achieving its mission objectives. An announcement was made to the group that our friends at the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) Munitions Directorate and the Doolittle Institute will be presenting a SBIR/STTR Transition Workshop in April supported by a Florida Defense Support Task Force Grant. This workshop will inform, educate, and deliver the tools necessary to help small business become more aggressive with commercial success. The goal is to foster participation and facilitate technology insertion into the Air Force acquisition program to increase private sector commercialization of Air Force research and development technologies. This is an incredible opportunity for small businesses and a huge turnout is expected.

Needless to say, it has been a busy past few months and we expect this to be a trend that continues throughout the remainder of the year...which at this rate will be over before we know it!



## Business Expansion Assistance

*By Caroline McCoy*



restaurateur, cookbook author and television star Chef Emeril Lagasse will be opening his newest restaurant, Emeril's Coastal Italian, in Grand Boulevard in late Spring 2017.

*Congratulations!*



## EDC Director at Florida Job Summit

### GOVERNOR RICK SCOTT'S 2017 JOBS SUMMIT



EDC Executive Director Nathan Sparks was asked to serve on the kickoff panel moderated by Governor Rick Scott at the Jobs Summit in Orlando on February 2. Joining Sparks were Kelly Smallridge (West Palm Beach), Craig Richard (Tampa) and Amy Gowder (Lockheed Martin).

## TCPI Eglin Community Partnership Highlighted



Mark Wise, Deputy Director Okaloosa Water and Sewer, Jeff Fanto, Community Planner Eglin AFB, and Gordy Fornell, Lt. Gen. USAF Retired were panelists on a national best case study moderated by Kay Rasmussen, Associate Director of the Economic Development Council at the Association of Defense Communities Installation Innovation Forum February 27, 2017. The foursome overviewed the collaboration improving water treatment resiliency and sustainability with the Arbennie

## Director of Business Expansion

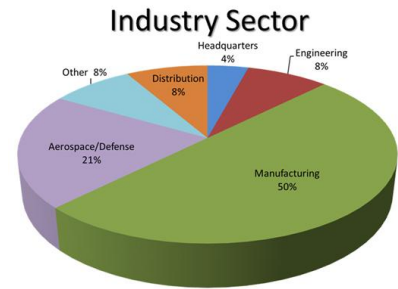
The EDC has 24 projects in the pipeline and as it stands today, Aerospace/Defense accounts for 21% of our projects, Manufacturing at 50%, Engineering at 8%, and Headquarters at 4% and Distribution at 8%. Approximately 8% of our projects are categorized as "other."

The EDC has seen an increase of requests from companies seeking

Greenfield sites. The range of these requests vary from 20 acres to 200 acres and in most cases the properties need to be contiguous, flat, cleared and free of wetlands. We welcome these types of projects as Greenfield site projects tend to have higher capital investment in the community that they are seeking to locate into. Furthermore, it allows us to compete due to our limited availability of buildings larger than 100,000 SF.

Our investors will be soon receiving a hard copy of the EDC's 2016 Annual Report in the mail if you did not receive one in person at recent EDC events. Be sure to check out this year's Case Study highlighting Props Craft Brewery!

If you are planning a major expansion or know of a company who is considering locating to Okaloosa County, please let us know as soon as possible!



Are you or someone you know looking for commercial property?

Visit: [www.okaloosa.com](http://www.okaloosa.com)

Thank you for your partnership.

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A non-profit 501(c)(6) organization.

Pritchett partnership facility.

## Announcements

EDC members with special announcements such as leadership change, office openings, organizational achievements or awards that would like to have them shared in an upcoming newsletter, please forward them to: [kayr@florida-edc.org](mailto:kayr@florida-edc.org)

