

2000 Issue Forum Final Report

Business Climate and Economic Trends

This forum group explored the community's commitment to fostering an environment wherein emerging businesses can develop and prosper. They discussed issues related to the current business climate, the availability of capital, incentives for economic development, and the City's efforts to attract high-tech industries.

Key findings:

- The two key areas toward which the City of Jacksonville would like to focus its efforts are workforce preparation and regional cooperation.
- A great need exists to ensure that Jacksonville's workforce is adequately prepared to meet the technological challenges of the new millennium.
- Both capital and business assistance are available for small and emerging businesses in Jacksonville but are not adequately marketed. Therefore, many business owners are unaware of how to access these resources or what is involved to take advantage of them.

Action plan—Increase Efforts for Workforce Preparation to Meet Future Needs:

Although several opportunities for advocacy were possible, forum group members came to consensus about the important link and current disconnect between workforce preparation and the City's desire to attract high-tech industries to Jacksonville. They will target their advocacy efforts to a new City Council Technology Committee chaired by Council President Alberta Hipps. This will include a formal letter outlining their study findings as well as group participation at regular meetings of the new technology committee. Forum group members want to advocate for a more focused approach toward preparing the local workforce, including high school and college students, for technology jobs.

Community Leaders and Resource Experts

Issue forum groups met with both community leaders and resource experts who provided valuable information for group discussions. We wish to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the Forward process.

Ron Baker, CIO/CFO, JEA
Bob Baldwin, Vice President, Ch.A.S.E.
Ron Johnson, Specialist, U.S. Small Business Admin.
Paul Krutko, Director, Downtown Development
Sam Perone, First Vice President, Merrill Lynch
Alan Rossiter, President, N. FL Venture Capital Net.
Dr. Henry Thomas, Chair, Political Science, UNF
Mike Weinstein, Executive Director, JEDC
Bob White, Vice President, Compass Bank

Issue-Forum Participants

Forum groups met biweekly for four months. They received information from knowledgeable resource people and additional written materials provided by Forward staff. Congratulations on your efforts and future civic involvement and advocacy.

Valerie Williams, Chair
Les Roberts, Vice Chair
Betty Davis (JCCI Advisor)
Oliver Barakat
Andy Butterfield
Reeda Harris
Arlisa Jackson
Mia Jones
Jason Parry

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Evin Willman
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