

Highlands County
2009 EAR – Comprehensive Plan Amendments
Economic Development Element (Updated)
Overview

The Economic Development Element provided on October 23, 2009, has been revised based on input received from the Economic Development Commission and Highlands County.

Major Amendments

Throughout	Eliminates the specific job creation target number of 50
Policy 2.8	Removes policy for promotion of the film industry and replaces with potential incentives for business expansion and new business
Policy 2.5	Removes Economic Base Study from the Element
Policy 3.3	Policy revised to include further support for vocational and advanced training
Objective 4	Objective added for support to airports

Minor Amendments

Policy 2.1	Recognizes the expansion of job opportunities
Policy 2.2	Clarifies that the target is to annually reach a minimum of 2 percent growth for the business sector
Policy 2.13	Removes policy from the Element.
Policy 2.3	Language added to provide for the encouragement of: diversification and expansion of the County's tax base; business attraction, expansion, and job creation; and advertising, promotional activities, and other sales and marketing techniques to attract new business to the County

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT
(REVISED DRAFT)**

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GOAL **CREATE AND SUPPORT A DIVERSE ECONOMY IN HIGHLANDS COUNTY THAT IS CONDUCTIVE TO THE PROSPERITY OF ALL RESIDENTS BY OPTIMIZING THE MOST DESIRABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC EXPANSION, BETTER JOBS, AND REVENUE GROWTH DURING THE ~~1998—2010~~ 2010-2030 PLANNING PERIOD.**

Comment: The Goal is revised to reflect the planning timeframe of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 1: Mission Statement for the Industrial Development Authority

~~Beginning Fy93-94,~~ The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) shall administer economic development programs approved by the Board of County Commissioners for the purpose of expanding and diversifying the County's tax base while protecting the current quality of life of Highlands County residents.

Comment: The Objective is revised to remove the past timeframe.

Policy 1.1: Relationship between the Industrial Development Authority and the County

A. In addition to its statutory authorities and responsibilities, the ~~Industrial Development Authority (IDA)~~ shall be the County's official liaison between the Board of County Commissioners and

the local business community on matters which foster and promote economic growth and diversity in Highlands County.

In this relationship, the IDA's primary role shall be to provide counsel, advice, guidance, and assistance to County staff and the Board of County Commissioners on strategic economic planning and local economic issues, on the economic climate and job profile in the County, and on actions taken to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The IDA's mission shall encompass the following areas of responsibility:

1. Targeting and recruiting desirable businesses,
2. Enhancing job opportunities,
3. Promoting commerce,
4. Obtaining and distributing information that profiles local economic sectors,
5. Formulating public and private partnerships to secure the benefits of desirable economic growth,
6. Recommending courses of action or measures related to the above; and
7. Establishing benchmarks for evaluating progress.

The County recognizes that successful economic development is a partnership with the County, IDA, and the Economic Development Council.

Comment: Added to provide a measurement of progress.

- B. In order to accomplish the mission statement of Policy 1.1, the ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA shall ~~undertake a "Program of Work"~~ continue to prepare an Annual Work Program that includes activities and measures that involve the Goal and each objective and policy of this Element and to recommend amendments to the Economic Development Element. ~~pursuant to Section 163.3187, F.S.~~

- C. The Board of County Commissioners may from time to time review, redefine, modify, expand, or diminish the role of the IDA or may assign additional tasks or missions to the IDA. The Board of County Commissioners will consider the funding of programs contained in this Element and of the IDA and allocate appropriate funding according to available revenues and prioritized needs, as determined by the Board of County Commissioners.
- ~~D. The County Administrator shall instruct the appropriate County Department Directors to conduct and implement the programs and plans contained in the Element within the established time frames.~~

Comment: Policy 1.1.D. will be moved to the Administrative Section. This is a procedural policy.

Policy 1.2: Annual Progress Report

- A. Within 30 days of the end of each fiscal year, the Industrial Development Authority shall present an Annual Report to the Board of County Commissioners which summarizes the year's activities and the status of all objectives and policies in this element and each project under the stewardship of the Authority IDA. The Report should evaluate progress made against benchmarks, objectives, and initiatives.

- B. As part of the County's budget process, the IDA shall present the Annual Work Plan which shall be incorporated into the budget.

~~At the beginning of each fiscal year and not later than the third week of November, the IDA will hold a planning retreat to develop a Program of Work for the fiscal year.~~

~~The completed Program of Work will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners no later than the second week of December and will describe priorities which the IDA recommends for undertaking during the forthcoming fiscal year.~~

Upon confirmation by the Board of County Commissioners, these priorities of the Annual Work Plan will be undertaken by the IDA.

Comment: Policy amended consistent with the EAR recommendation to provide a summary of progress made against benchmarks, objectives and initiatives.

Policy 1.3: Maintain Appropriate Staffing and Budget

In consideration of ~~it's~~ the IDA's mission statement and ongoing responsibilities under the Economic Development Element Policy 1.1, the Board of County Commissioners shall take appropriate steps each fiscal year to provide the financial and staff support that will be necessary to accomplish the Annual Work Program ~~of Work~~ and the other requirements of this Element.

Policy 1.4: Funding Alternatives for the Annual Work Program ~~of Work~~

It shall be the responsibility of the Industrial Development Authority to explore alternate funding mechanisms to carry out the Annual Work Program ~~of Work~~ and to present these alternatives in their annual report to the Board of County Commissioners. Among the sources of funds that may be analyzed to pay for the items in the Annual Work Program ~~of Work~~ are non ad valorem taxes, grants, user fees, millage increases pursuant to Section 159.48, F.S., in-kind services, and increases in licensing fees, ~~and implementation of the Tourist Development Act.~~

Comment: Policy 1.4 has been amended to reflect the updated reference to the Annual Work Program. Implementation of the Tourist Development Act has been removed as this is not part of the IDA's responsibilities. This is implemented through the Tourist Development Council.

Objective 2: Maintain and Enhance the Economic Base and Retain and Create New Jobs

Maintain and enhance the economic base and retain and create new jobs by supporting the retention of ~~and retaining~~ existing business, promoting existing business expansion, and recruiting appropriate businesses and industries.

Policy 2.1: Diversify the Economy

It shall be the policy of Highlands County, through the IDA, to continue establishing and maintaining programs identified in this Objective that expand job opportunities and diversify the economy to mitigate the impact of any significant economic downturns.

Industries shall be identified and targeted ~~(as described in Economic Policy 2.13)~~ which are sensitive to the County's environment and natural resources, and create new jobs that offer wages at or above the County median average income.

Comment: Amended language recognizes the expansion of job opportunities. The policy reference is deleted.

Policy 2.2: Targets for Growth

The County, through the IDA, shall maintain programs and develop new programs which:

- A. Support existing businesses and their expansion and attract ~~shall recruit new businesses~~, both of which are sensitive to the County's environment and natural resources. ~~in order to achieve a net growth rate of an average of two percent per year for the business sector.~~
- B. Expand and enhance the County's existing economic base and assist existing companies in expansion efforts ~~in order to create a minimum of 20 new jobs annually.~~
- C. Assist in the location of new companies in the County. ~~in order to create a minimum of 30 new jobs annually.~~

Comment: The added language clarifies the goal to reach a minimum of a two percent annual growth rate.

The language eliminates specific target numbers. These numbers will change over time as the County continues to grow. This change provides for a more achievable policy.

Policy 2.3: Economic Development Strategy

- A. The long-range Economic Development Strategy (EDS), as periodically updated, shall be implemented through the Annual Work Program. The structure shall address items such as: incentives for local entrepreneurship and job creation by the expansion of local business; economic diversity and self-sufficiency by expanding the tax base with targeted businesses recruitment; and, enhanced employment options and labor force skills.

~~An Economic Development Strategy shall be prepared for Highlands County which establishes actions that will be undertaken by the County to establish a stable revenue stream for the planning period.~~

~~Provide incentives for local entrepreneurship and job creation by the expansion of local business;~~

~~Promote economic diversity and self-sufficiency by expanding the tax base with targeted businesses recruitment; and,~~

~~Enhance employment options and labor force skills.~~

- B. The County and the IDA shall coordinate during the updates of the Economic Development Strategy. As a means to accomplish this task coordination shall occur between the Office of Management and Budget, the Planning Department, and the Industrial Development Authority.

- C. The County shall continue to partner with the IDA in implementing the IDA's Economic Development Strategy. Upon completion of the Economic Development Strategy, the Industrial Development Authority shall explore avenues for cooperative and active partnerships between local citizens, private business, and public school systems in an effort to provide education and training programs that are geared to the skill requirements of targeted businesses.

~~D. The Economic Development Strategy shall be updated concurrently with the statutory scheduled Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) for the Comprehensive Plan.~~

Comment: Language added to provide for the encouragement of: diversification and expansion of the County's tax base; business attraction, expansion, and job creation; and advertising, promotional activities, and other sales and marketing techniques to attract new business to the County.

Policy 2.4: Business Retention

The ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA shall ~~establish and~~ continue to maintain an ~~the~~ organized network for measuring community business needs and concerns through completion of a Business Retention Survey. ~~The survey shall be updated at least every six years.~~

Policy 2.5: Information Resources ~~and Economic Data Base~~

A. ~~Upon adoption, the~~ The Industrial Development Authority IDA shall ~~begin the creation of~~ maintain databases ~~to~~ which establish an information network that will provide financial and technical assistance information, seminar and activity schedules, and an inventory of industrial and commercial sites that are available in the County. Said inventory shall, at a minimum, identify the availability and capacity of infrastructure to serve each site.

Comment: Amended per EAR recommendation to provide this infrastructure information.

- B. In order to use this data base as a marketing tool for recruiting businesses into Highlands County, the ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA shall:
1. Supplement this information ~~base~~ with economic and demographic profiles about Highlands County; and,
 2. Introduce a methodology ~~into the Economic Base Study~~ for analyzing the impacts of commercial and industrial relocation both into and from Highlands County.

C. The ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA shall promote the existence of these informational tools to the extent that relocating and expanding businesses across the nation are aware of the business climate and resources in Highlands County. The County will continue to assist the IDA in providing information to companies that seek to expand, as well as businesses that wish to relocate to Highlands County.

~~D. The Industrial Development Authority shall make available to the public and prospective businesses the following documents:~~

~~A Directory of Local Manufacturers and Businesses in Highlands County;~~

~~A Directory of Major Employers and Occupations in Highlands County;~~

~~A Directory of State, County, and City Regulatory Authorities;~~

~~A Directory of Financial Institutions doing business in Highlands County; and,~~

~~A Directory of Utility Companies operating in Highlands County.~~

Policy 2.6: Encourage International Trade

The IDA shall continue programs and develop new programs that encourage and assist existing businesses in the expansion of their market through potential international trade ~~and market for international trade and~~ as well as reverse investment opportunities.

Policy 2.7: Encourage Tourism

The IDA shall continue to assist the Tourist Development Council ~~and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau~~ in the promotion of tourism in Highlands County as ~~measured by the industry's investment in the County, the taxes generated by tourists for the County, and the number of persons employed within the industry.~~

Policy 2.8: **Encourage the Film Industry**

~~The IDA shall assist the Highlands County Film Commission to recruit film production in the County.~~

Comment: Policy 2.8 is proposed for deletion. This is an activity that should not be provided by the IDA.

Policy 2.98: **Identify Growth Businesses**

~~A. The Industrial Development Authority shall, as part of its Annual Report to the Board of County Commissioners, identify key businesses or groups of businesses in the local economy that are poised for stable and beneficial growth.~~

Attention shall be given to identifying those key businesses or groups of businesses which are related to commerce currently located within the County (i.e. filling backward linkages in sectors such as warehousing and distribution, medical care, recreation industries, and agricultural supports).

~~B. The Industrial Development Authority shall, continue to update the Economic Base Study of Highlands County, when necessary but not less than every six years, identifying appropriate industries for concentrated recruiting efforts.~~

Policy 2.109: **Target Industries**

~~The IDA Annual Work Program shall include an updated list of targeted businesses. Based on the report described in Economic Policy 2.5.A, the IDA shall maintain in its Economic Development Strategy an updated list of target businesses and strategies to recruit and a six-year program to recruit such businesses into the County.~~

~~The Industrial Development Authority shall recommend an annual Target Industry List to the Board of County Commissioners as part of their annual Program of Work.~~

Policy 2.11 10: Business Expansion Incentives

- A. ~~In connection with the Economic Development Strategy (Policy 2.5 above), the Industrial Development Authority shall develop a marketing plan and~~ The IDA shall develop a marketing strategy and provide a strategy to provide financial and/or in-kind incentives that will assist in the recruitment of new commerce and/or the support of existing commerce.

Comment: Language added consistent with the EAR recommendation to develop a marketing plan.

Such strategies could provide for financial support, full or partial temporary tax or fee relief, manpower recruitment and training, facility planning and/or support and any other such items.

- ~~B. The Industrial Development Authority shall then present such strategies to the Board of County Commissioners, for approval or modification; following which the approved strategies shall be implemented by the County.~~

Policy 2.12 11: County to Facilitate Recruitment of Adequate Industrial Sites Targeted Businesses and Industries

- A. ~~The County shall strive to ensure that there is sufficient Industrial land with proper FLUM and proper zoning and adequate infrastructure for future development including industrial parks and business campuses. In order to ensure that Highlands County has enough industrial land with proper Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) categories, proper zoning, and adequate infrastructure for present and future development, the County, through the IDA or its agent, shall pursue acquiring adequate land for a publicly developed industrial park or industrial parks with adequate infrastructure. The target goal is to develop sufficient industrial sites to meet demand.~~

- B. ~~The County and IDA shall continue to seek state or federal matching grants and use all other resources to assist in the establishment of~~ establish the necessary infrastructure to make the public industrial parks, referenced in Economic Policy 2.12, functional.

- C. The County, through its partnership with the IDA shall identify target development areas to increase the number of targeted industry jobs necessary to support a stronger job, tax and education base within the County.
- D. The County, through its partnership with the IDA shall prepare a Strategic Economic Development locations map that indicates the areas within the County that have been identified as potential targeted development areas for new job creation.

Policy 2.13: ~~Additional Privately Owned Industrial Lands~~

~~In order to ensure that Highlands County has enough industrial land with proper FLUM categories and zoning and adequate infrastructure for present and future development, the County will encourage owners of property meeting the criteria of Future Land Use Policy 1.13 to apply for amendment(s) to the Future Land Use Map for the Industrial category and rezonings to Industrial. The target goal for the Planning Period will be determined on a case-by-case basis.~~

Policy 2.14 12: Streamlined Development Review

- A. The County will continue to review its development approval process to identify and eliminate any unnecessary impediments to a fast, effective, and efficient development review process within the County for all economic development projects.
- ~~B. The County will implement one stop shopping for all new development under the County's review in order to expedite the processing of economic development projects.~~
- C. The County, through the IDA, will use the State of Florida Expedited Permitting Process to create a Fast Track Option for Critical Economic Development projects, ~~as defined by Florida Statutes 403.973,~~ when requested by the IDA.
- D. The County shall continue the use of pre-application conferences and preparation and distribution of guides, handouts, and other information on regulatory and permitting procedures affecting

economic development to streamline and expedite the application review and permitting process.

- E. The County shall work to reduce or eliminate permits, inspections, or functions that duplicate or overlap State and/or Federal permits, inspections or functions. This shall not preclude the adoption of County regulations more stringent than State or Federal regulations, if so desired, by the Board of County Commissioners.
- F. The County, through the IDA, will disseminate information on existing and pending local legislation affecting economic development activities.
- G. The County will review its existing regulations and rectify or eliminate conflicts that may exist to improve service and expedite permit processing for new and/or expanded businesses to encourage the promotion of economic growth.

Comment: Language added to further promote expedited development review.

Policy 2.15 14: Additional Privately Owned Industrial Lands

In order to ensure that Highlands County has enough industrial land with proper FLUM categories and zoning and adequate infrastructure for present and future development, the County will encourage owners of property meeting the criteria of Future Land Use Policy 1.13 to apply for amendment(s) to the Future Land Use Map for the Industrial category and rezonings to Industrial. ~~The target goal for the Planning Period will be determined on a case-by-case basis.~~ Analysis of sufficient industrial lands will be conducted at a minimum with the required Evaluation and Appraisal Report of the Comprehensive Plan.

Comment: Analysis of sufficient industrial lands may be conducted at anytime, but at a minimum is part of the EAR process.

Objective 3: Education and Training

The Industrial Development Authority shall initiate partnerships with the South Florida Community College, the Highlands County School District, local Chambers of Commerce, and the Heartland Workforce Economic Development Commission for the purpose of providing education and training programs that concentrate on the labor skills needed by the local business community.

Policy 3.1: Business Seminars

- A. The ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA shall continue to conduct annual, publicized seminars to inform area businesses and residents of grants, loans, and other assistance available.
- B. The County, through its partnership with the IDA, will encourage partnerships between existing and potential businesses and educational institutions to develop educational programs that will utilize new and existing technologies as they become available and widely utilized in the marketplace.
- C. The County, through its partnership with the IDA, will encourage business and trade associations to develop apprenticeship programs with existing and potential businesses.

Policy 3.2: School-Based Economic Awareness

- A. The ~~Industrial Development Authority~~ IDA will work in coordination with public schools and other institutions to incorporate basic economic awareness in public school curricula.
- B. The County will consider utilizing its various departments for internship opportunities, school visits, and presentations to educate students of the role of government in the local economy.
- C. The IDA, through its partnership with the County, will coordinate with educational institutions and the business community to encourage the development of educational programs, which provide students with skills matching the needs of local employers.

Policy 3.3: Vocational and Advanced Training

During FY93-94 and at least every fourth year thereafter, the The Industrial Development Authority IDA, at least every four years, will survey local business and prospective employers to identify their job skill and manpower needs. The County will encourage educational and other institutions to develop and implement training programs. The County and the IDA will foster partnerships to meet these needs, as well as attract, expand, and retain targeted, high-value industry and sustain the economy.

- A. The County and the IDA shall foster and support implementation and continuation of the Florida Career and Professional Education Act, F.S. 1003.491 to provide a planning partnership between the business and education communities.
- B. The County and the IDA shall foster partnerships between the business and education communities in order to attract, expand, and retain targeted, high-value industry and to sustain a strong, knowledge-based economy.
- C. With the aged population in the County continuing to grow rapidly, the County shall encourage State and local nursing programs to provide training in geriatric care and shall encourage the State University System and local and regional hospitals to continue to improve geriatric services in the County.
- D. The County shall encourage multifamily housing and mixed use development where housing, shopping, recreation, medical and other services and facilities are in close proximity, allowing senior citizens to perform needed and desired daily activities without the need to own an automobile or to drive to a destination.

Objective 4: Support of Airports

The County shall support airport activities that increase economic opportunities in the County; provided the opportunities do not increase any negative effects beyond an acceptable level.

Comment: Language added to further support airports.