

ESCAMBIA COUNTY – IEDC MEETINGS ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Discussion Issues:

- **Major Industries:**
 - Tourism – latest toll booth numbers show visitors down by more than 40,000 cars a month
 - Aviation/Aerospace/Defense
 - Health

- **Planning and Infrastructure (Projects Planned):**
 - Santa Rosa/Avalon Blvd. Last Phase – FUNDED now
 - Escambia/Beulah Road-Outer Beltway
 - Pensacola/Port, Rail Safety and Marine Transportation

- **Major Concerns/Challenges Identified by Santa Rosa County participants:**
 - Tourism significantly down. Media making the matter worse than it is; there is no oil here. However there is a continued perception that there is a problem due to the media and BP commercials.
 - Need better research on water samples by an entity with experience with the Gulf. UWF has 20 years of water sample research.
 - Confusion in determining direct/indirect impact and long-term impacts.
 - Fear of being forgotten despite the fact that the oil spill will have long-term impacts
 - Diversifying the economy is crucial to the community for growth and development and to prevent future crises like this one. Need for growth around high-tech industries identified in workforce/industry report (e.g. engineering).
 - Most of the income for businesses occurs during the summer, getting through winter months financially sound will be difficult.

- **Economic Recovery Ideas/Needs of Community**
 - Create a Technology Council of NW Florida to help counties attract, retain, and grow high-tech industry. Requesting \$10 mil. state funding on an annual basis for 5 years.
 - Gulf Opportunity Zone (GO Zone) Legislation – Support federal legislation by Miller that will provide federal tax incentives for coastal counties impacted by oil spill. Consider adding state incentives to any legislation that passes to encourage increased growth in these counties. The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005, signed into law by President Bush on December 21, 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, contained significant economic incentives to rebuild the Gulf Coast, as well as to attract new investments to the affected areas. Modeled after the New York Liberty Zone incentives created for parts of lower Manhattan after the 9-11 disaster, these incentives are intended to stimulate

rapid, private investment within the Gulf Opportunity Zone (GO Zone) within the window of time provided.

- TIGER II Grants – Federal road/infrastructure grants; applications have been submitted. Deadline for awards is September 15, 2010. Anything the feds could do to help Florida panhandle draw down grants for infrastructure would be beneficial.
 - Waive match fund requirements for federal programs.
 - Provide priority for receiving federal grants.
 - Accelerate any and all projects.
 - Continue federal funding for initiatives like WIRED. WIRED has helped develop curriculum, could help develop curriculum around energy sustainability. Florida's Great Northwest "WIRED Grant" monies running out later this fiscal year.
 - Offer Ph.D. program at UWF for engineering to provide a skilled workforce for the community.
- **Recommendations presented by IEDC**
 - Continue to follow strategy for economic development, but also focus on short-term solutions that will affect economy – next 6 months- 1 year.
 - Don't lose sight of current economic anchors. Tourism is critical to the economy; don't forget about it while you try to diversify in other ways.
 - The impact of tourism on the community will have a ripple impact – likely up to 100 miles inland. This is a DIRECT impact on all industries.
 - Provide case management for businesses
 - Improve capital access including nontraditional lending – those able to lend at a higher risk to businesses with creative plans.
 - Continue on dual tracks: 1) maintain existing base, while 2) diversifying economy.