A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

for the

Putnam County Chamber of Commerce
Palatka, Florida

2017-2021
PUTNAM COUNTY CHAMBER MISSION STATEMENT

The Putnam County Chamber of Commerce is the principle leader in the promotion of commerce. Our mission is to be a creative force that promotes excellence in leadership, coordination and orderly development of business enterprise.

PUTNAM COUNTY’S DESIRED FUTURE

By 2021, Putnam County will:

- Attract at least 500 new quality sustainable jobs that pay competitive wages with employment opportunities to keep young people here.
- Prepare a workforce with increased skill and education levels.
- Possess available shovel-ready commercial and industrial sites.
- Have ultra-high-speed broadband infrastructure throughout the county.

The plans desired outcomes include:

- Increase in general property values.
- Increased high school graduation rates, educational attainment and student test scores.
- Attraction of upscale housing that includes rental and ownership opportunities.
- Improved appearance of communities.
- Having a trained and prepared workforce.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In essence, the critical factors affecting Putnam County will be:

- Developing quality, regionally competitive wage jobs.
- Providing a sustainable business environment.
- Having a qualified workforce able to fill current and future jobs.
- Ensuring an attractive community.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/BUSINESS CLIMATE

GOAL: Cultivate a business-friendly environment and encourage investments in infrastructure to create opportunities for new industry development. Provide the resources and supportive environment to help local businesses and startup companies grow.

I. OBJECTIVE: Invest in Priority Infrastructure needs.

STRATEGIES:

1. Invest in critical infrastructure needed to enhance Putnam County’s competitiveness.
   • Work with local public works and planning departments to extend water and wastewater systems and reduce the use of septic tanks.
   • Advocate for the replacement of the Shands Bridge. Work with FDOT to develop a plan to address height issues.
   • Conduct an infrastructure needs assessment of the entire county to prioritize future investments – focusing on new highway construction and access, aging bridge replacement, and other top infrastructure needs.

2. Inventory industrial and commercial sites in Putnam County.
   • Identify sites with the most potential
   • Identify priority investments and upgrades needed to enhance sites, such as roadway improvement and utility development.
   • Partner with organizations such as JAXUSA Partnership, Enterprise Florida, NFEDP, and DEO to obtain financial resources for eligible site upgrades. Include government partners and their lobbyists when appropriate.
   • Develop overall county comprehensive zoning plan.

3. Inventory Putnam County’s housing stock.
   • Conduct an independent inventory of all housing in Putnam County to identify specific areas that are underserved – including geographic regions and housing types (rental, multifamily, etc.).
   • Work directly with private developers to create market opportunities to construct new housing to fill gaps identified in the current supply.
   • Until new housing is developed, market available housing in surrounding counties when recruiting businesses and talent.
   • Support upscale housing to attract professional workforce.
   • Identify sites with the potential to be successful housing developments.
   • Identify relevant demographic information that supports the development of middle and upper scale housing within area. Market information to developers.
• Inventory infrastructure expansions (telecommunications, water/sewer, and roads) to business sites, which can also be used to attract upscale housing.
• Develop partnerships with financial institutions, builders, and others.
• Encourage incentives that include infrastructure for developers to develop upscale housing.

II. OBJECTIVE: Target industries for Putnam County.

STRATEGY:
4. Work to build relationships within targeted sectors identified in both the Innovate Northeast Florida Sub-Cluster Industry Study 2012 and Rural Florida Study 2013.
   o Innovate: Aircraft & Aviation Components, Back Office Services and Call Centers, Clean Transportation (Fuels & Technologies), Data Centers, Food Processing, Heavy Equipment Manufacturing, Tool & Die Machining.

III. OBJECTIVE: To ensure that Putnam County has a business-friendly regulatory environment that protects community interests without overly restricting businesses.

STRATEGIES:
5. Create a business-friendly climate and streamline regulations across all cities.
   • Encourage investments in technology for upgrades to automate permitting processes, such as the ability of inspectors to use mobile devices on site to enter inspection results.
   • Work with governmental entities to ensure all key information and forms are available online.
   • Motivate and encourage all government entities to become “an easy place to do business”.

6. Develop a formal incentives policy.
   • Create an incentives policy aligned with the County’s economic development goals that outlines a process of evaluating projects and granting incentives consistently.
   • Include in the incentive policy the following provisions: benefits should exceed costs; the same evaluations standards are used consistently for all economic development projects; incentives are not
front-loaded; incentives are available for small business and business retention, not just relocation of new businesses; and the policy includes claw back provisions in the instance that the recipient does not fulfill its contractual obligations.

IV. OBJECTIVE: Continue investing in programs and resources that support small business development.

STRATEGY:
7. Continue to provide informational resources to startups and existing businesses.
   • The Chamber should continue to serve as the main point of contact for businesses needing guidance.
   • Continue conducting regular visits to local businesses to ensure their needs are being met.

V. OBJECTIVE: Ensure the Chamber has appropriate funding and a robust marketing toolkit that clearly communicates county and regional assets and opportunities.

STRATEGIES:
8. Update Putnam County Chamber’s marketing toolkit.
   • Include more marketing messages directed towards target industries on the Chamber website and across all marketing materials, such as those identified in the Asset Mapping Exercise.
     o For each target industry, share major employers and suppliers; a map or list of supporting assets; links to sites and buildings that are a good fit for the industry; success stories and local business testimonials; a link to a printable PDF document about the industry; and industry-specific talent demographics and education programs.
     o Market not just what is within Putnam County, but assets all around the region, such as schools, housing options, and quality of life amenities.
   • Invest in a few key printed collateral pieces, such as one-pagers about each target industry. Include links to download these on the website and use in direct sales meetings and presentations.

9. Leverage current regional relationships
GOVERNMENT ISSUES/ADVOCACY

GOAL: Coordinate actions to create and protect a healthy business environment.

VI. OBJECTIVE: Represent business interests at the city, county, regional and state levels. Monitor Chamber’s Legislative Agenda items and other issues approved by Chamber. Identify and take appropriate action on other proposed legislative and regulatory issues affecting the business community. Educate voters on key issues.

STRATEGIES:

10. Understand & Act Upon Business Issues
   • Collaborate with members to identify priorities
   • Communicate clear reasons to support or oppose issues
   • Rally business community to take action

11. Be an active voice of behalf of the business community. Monitor and take action necessary on existing legislative issues when appropriate. Some examples below:
   • Pursuing replacement of the Shands Bridge to allow maritime commerce
   • Supporting all efforts to save Rodman Reservoir
   • Opposing EPA’s Clean Power Plan
   • Pushing for completion of four lane projects (SR 20 & US 17).

12. Explore best practices for local vendor preference ordinances and pursue implementation throughout all government entities.

13. Prepare Leaders for Public Service
   • Encourage business-minded leaders to consider public office
   • Educate potential candidates about critical issues impacting Northeast Florida
   • Connect potential candidates with mentors

   • Work with partners to reduce the regulatory burden of doing business in Florida.
   • Support legislation advancing Rural Development efforts in Florida.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/TALENT SUPPLY

GOAL: Provide strong education opportunities to all residents and boast a workforce pipeline aligned with local business needs.

VII. OBJECTIVE: Ensure student success

Strategies:

15. Explore best practices for high-quality early learning
   • Target reading programs (K-3)

16. Enhance STEM education.

17. Work with partners for solutions to increase high school graduation rates.

VIII. Objective: Educational and training programs are aligned with local business needs.

Strategies:

18. Implement innovative workforce training solutions to meet changing economy.
   • Establish partnerships with industries/businesses to determine future workforce needs

19. Involve local employers in developing training programs from K12 to higher education.
   • Increase business community representatives on education boards, as well as involvement in teacher support and student work programs.
   • Continue to engage local employers to develop curriculum that matches skill needs at SJRSC, First Coast Technical College and other post-secondary institutes.
   • Continue the Workforce Development Task Force made up local employers, K12 representatives, First Coast Technical College, and St. John's River State College. This group would meet quarterly to discuss workforce needs and development new training and education programs to address gaps.

20. Educate residents about local career opportunities, such as those in technical trades.
   • Encourage SJRSC and First Coast Technical College to expand career connector events to both middle school and high school students. Engage
local employers to attend the showcases to educate students about their industry and share job openings.

- Improve awareness and support of multiple education pathways to meet changing economy (e.g., vocation school, certification programs). Create informational materials about various career pathways, including job descriptions, average salaries, education needed, and available jobs in Putnam County. Share these materials with career counselors, teachers, and students.
- Consider developing internship or apprenticeship opportunities for high school students to earn credit and gain job experience before graduating.

IX. Objective: Provide education opportunities for students and adult learners.

Strategies:
   - Partner with local nonprofits to share information about scholarships and job opportunities available to local students.
   - Encourage SJRSC and First Coast Technical College to develop programs that are tailored to adult learners, such as online and evening classes for those who work during the day.
   - Determine obstacles faced by adult learners like transportation and daycare and explore solutions.

22. Conduct a needs assessment with partner organizations to address systemic issues that affect educational attainment rates – including housing, transportation, and health care.
   - Identify priority issues, organizations responsible for addressing them, resources needed.

TOURISM & QUALITY OF PLACE

GOAL: Putnam County is nationally recognized as a premier location to live, work, and visit.

X. OBJECTIVE: Develop and Promote Putnam County as a tourist destination.

STRATEGIES:

23. Identify all tourism assets: Inventory all tourism assets, events and businesses in the promotion of Putnam County.
24. Develop annual advertising and marketing campaigns to promote Putnam County as a tourist destination.
   - Build Awareness: Promote Putnam County as a destination to targeted travel markets.
   - Increase awareness of Putnam County’s outdoor recreation amenities
     - Include more outdoor recreation content on the Chamber website that will position Putnam County as a must-see destination.
     - Include sample itineraries that help capture the experience of a long weekend in Putnam County, from the best trails to favorite local restaurants.

25. Solicit large-scale events – both televised and national.
26. Provide information on attractions and activities for visitors to Putnam County.
   - Fulfill all visitor inquiries.

27. Market Putnam County as a tourist destination.
28. Administer the Putnam County Tourist Development Council activities.
29. Assist in the development of new and existing tourism related businesses.
30. Support community development efforts that increase the attractiveness and appeal of the community.

XI. OBJECTIVE: Support Community Tourism Product Development.

STRATEGIES:

31. Continue to improve public areas. Provide resources and services for development of natural (waterfront development), cultural and historic areas for tourist use.
32. Protect and preserve the quality and nature of resources. Work with local businesses, government and community organizations to assure that tourism product is protected and presented in an authentic manner.

XII. OBJECTIVE: Develop partnerships to enhance regional tourism efforts.

STRATEGIES:

33. Participate in existing regional tourist-related groups.
34. Take advantage of significant opportunities that affect the region.
35. Identify and work with nearby communities with tourist sites that compliment those of Putnam County.

XIII. OBJECTIVE: Promote and provide support for existing and new special events.
STRATEGIES:

36. Continue to administrate the Putnam County Tourism Development Council administration for Festivals and Event Grant Program.
37. Continue to encourage and support sporting events including fishing, softball, bicycling, baseball, golf, motocross, mud bogging and sailing.
38. Continue development of the countywide calendar that includes all tourism and community events.
39. Identify and develop nature, art, local events, and history related activities that would attract tourists.

XIV. OBJECTIVE: Identify/Develop tourism activities using natural resources.

STRATEGIES:

40. Continue assisting in the development and marketing of Putnam County as the trail hub of NE Florida.
41. Maintain driving and walking tour route information.
42. Incorporate local birding sites into a local loop of the Florida Birding Trail.

XV. OBJECTIVE: Improve the visual appeal of the community.

STRATEGIES:

43. Improve county appearance with beautification and careful attention to identity entrances to parks, highway corridors, downtowns, and other service areas.
44. Way Finding: implement a unified, specialized signage throughout the community so visitors have a sense of arrival.

ORGANIZATION

GOAL: Position the organization for long term success.

XVI. OBJECTIVE: Enhance Revenue

STRATEGIES:

45. Grow the membership base by attracting and retaining members at all levels.
46. Grow the number and dues investment of the Putnam County Economic Development Council.
47. Provide desirable and appropriate benefits for all levels of membership.
48. Increase and diversify revenue.
49. Grow reserves to reach at least 50% of annual budget. Aim for contingency fund target of approximately six months to a year of operating expenses for the chamber.
XVII. OBJECTIVE: Improve operations and enhance image

STRATEGIES:

50. Align staff and resources with priorities
51. Maintain the Chamber's role as the voice of business and continue to have our opinion sought after.
52. Maintain 5-star accreditation status with the U.S. Chamber, as well as other recognitions and awards of excellence.