

CITY OF DUNNELLON
DISTINCTLY DUNNELLON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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The City of Dunnellon
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Mayor Dale Burns and the Dunnellon City Council for allowing Kimley-Horn to prepare this report and submit it to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity on behalf of the Citizens of Dunnellon, Florida. *(This project was fully funded by a 2018/19 Competitive Florida Partnership Grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.)*

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Special thanks to the following City employees for the assistance throughout this process:

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It is the hope of the citizens of Dunnellon that through this process, the community can define its ***economic development spirit.***

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 2 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 5 |
| CHAPTER 1: VISION STATEMENT | 7 |
| CHAPTER 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY | 8 |
| 1. Supporting Businesses..... | 9 |
| Goal #1. Retain and expand existing businesses..... | 9 |
| Goal #2. Attract new businesses | 9 |
| Goal #3. Promote entrepreneurship | 10 |
| Goal #4. Encourage business growth in infill locations | 10 |
| 2. Supporting Workers..... | 10 |
| Goal #5. Improve access to local employment opportunities | 11 |
| Goal #6. Increase access to advanced education, workforce development, and job training opportunities | 11 |
| Goal #7. Improve the quality of K-12 education | 12 |
| 3. Supporting Quality of Life | 13 |
| Goal #8. Promote a vibrant downtown, historic district, and commercial district..... | 13 |
| Goal #9. Attract stores and services for daily needs to downtown areas and residential neighborhoods | 14 |
| Goal #10. Ensure the availability of a wide range of housing types that are affordable to different income levels | 14 |
| Goal #11. Increase access to open space, parks, and recreation | 15 |
| Goal #12. Preserve natural space in the City and surrounding region | 16 |
| Goal #13. Maintain character and distinctive community assets..... | 16 |
| CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS | 17 |
| CHAPTER 4: PROJECT ACTION PLAN & ENGAGEMENT | 24 |
| Project #1: Create an Economic Development Strike Force | 24 |
| Project #2: Retain & Expand Existing Businesses and Cultivate Entrepreneurship | 24 |
| Project #3: Foster Development and Redevelopment in Priority Areas | 24 |
| Project #4: Career Pathways Program | 24 |
| CHAPTER 5: MONITORING..... | 26 |
| CHAPTER 6: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS | 27 |
| CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & SWOT ANALYSIS | 28 |
| Community Meetings/Conversations Feedback..... | 28 |
| Community Meeting/Conversation #1..... | 28 |

Community Meeting/Conversation #2..... 29

Community Meeting/Conversation #3..... 30

Community Asset Inventory & Mapping 31

Community Asset Mapping Exercise Event..... 31

Team Assignments and Field Asset Assessment..... 31

Brainstorming Session..... 31

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT 38

SWOT ANALYSIS 38

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION 39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Dunnellon is a vibrant community located approximately 25 miles southwest of Ocala in Marion County, Florida. While the City has had some positive growth, the City will never realize its full economic potential without a blueprint for intentional growth. The City Council, City Administration, and City Planning Department were successful in securing a grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) through the Competitive Florida Partnership Program to create an Economic Development Strategy for the City. The City of Dunnellon engaged Kimley-Horn to facilitate the Competitive Florida Partnership process, working hand in hand with the Florida DEO, and to create this plan that is ***Distinctly Dunnellon***.

While data can play a critical role in defining the existing context and challenges for a focus area, extensive data collection and analysis in the early phases of developing an economic development strategy might not be necessary, especially for small communities such as Dunnellon where detailed data might not exist or be readily available for the focus area. It is critically important to consider a broader range of information than traditionally considered in an economic development strategy. This information is data that is designed to help identify place-based assets and challenges. This Economic Development Strategy for Dunnellon takes both types of data into consideration.

This document highlights the current state of the City and provides recommendations for how it should adapt for capturing future success. It begins by discussing the demographics of Dunnellon and includes population, age cohorts, and educational attainment. We also examined tax data from 2008 through 2018 to provide a comprehensive understanding of the City's current economic state. Such data included property, sales, and income taxes as well as property values.

A series of three (3) ***Community Meetings / Conversations*** were held to solicit input and engagement from the community. This plan documents the discussions held and input received (refer to DEO Grant #0337 Deliverable 1).

An ***Asset Inventory*** was created by citizens and Kimley-Horn which resulted in an ***Asset Mapping Exercise*** facilitated by the DEO (refer to DEO Grant #0337 Deliverable 2).

The information collected throughout the ***Community Meetings / Conversations***, the ***Asset Inventory***, and the ***Asset Mapping Exercise*** resulted in the creation of a ***SWOT Analysis***. This is an analysis commonly performed to evaluate a community's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This will help the City leadership to determine where the most focus should be placed to position the City for economic growth.

Pursuant to DEO Grant Agreement #P03337 the Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy includes the following:

- A clearly defined vision statement that demonstrates where Dunnellon would like to be in the future. (Chapter 1)

- Goals and measurable objectives that guide Grantee towards the vision statement. (Chapter 2)
- Actionable projects to accomplish the Dunnellon's goals and objectives. (Chapter 3)
- An explanation for how goals, objectives, and actionable projects were prioritized through the stakeholder engagement process. (Chapter 3)
- A timeline built into the action plan that assigns a date or time period for the completion of each action. (Chapter 3)
- An organization or entity identified to lead each project. (Chapter 3)
- A defined process for updating or maintaining the strategy. (Chapter 4)
- A section that addresses regional partnerships and collaborations with neighboring jurisdictions. (Chapter 5)
- A section that discusses how the public was involved in the creation of the strategy and documentation of the opportunities for input afforded to the public. (Chapter 6)
- A section including a SWOT analysis to identify internal and external competitive advantages (Chapter 6)

Kimley-Horn then explored economic development programs that could become part of the ***Dunnellon Economic Development Tool Box***. Things such as state grant and loan programs, tax credits, incentives, access to capital funding, bond financing, tax abatement and tax increment financing were considered.

The ***Economic Development Strategy*** concludes with identified short, medium, and long-term projects to help the City of Dunnellon realize what it means to be Distinctly Dunnellon and realize its long-term economic development potential.

CHAPTER 1: VISION STATEMENT

Beginning in January 2019, Kimley-Horn facilitated a series of three (3) **Community Meetings** related to the creation of this Economic Development Strategy. Through these **Community Meetings**, the following Vision Statement was developed for the City of Dunnellon:

Dunnellon is a historic community rich in ecotourism that strives to offer its residents and visitors opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while protecting its heritage and natural resources for future generations.

Dunnellon seeks to enhance its economy by diversifying employment opportunities for its citizens while maintaining its small-town charm.

This Vision Statement served as the guide for the creation of this Economic Development Strategy and for the future of the City of Dunnellon. Additional information regarding the creation of the Vision Statement is provided in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Out of the conversations held at the *Community Conversations / Meetings*, three (3) clear overarching themes were confirmed. These themes include:

- 1) Supporting Businesses;
- 2) Supporting Workers; and
- 3) Supporting Quality of Life.

These are common themes when it comes to creating an economic development strategy and widely used in the industry. These broad themes became the basis for the *Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy* goals and subsequent action items outlined in the sections to follow.

To begin the creation of the *Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy*, and in accordance with DEO Grant Agreement #P0337, Kimley-Horn used the “15 Ways to Make Florida’s Communities More Competitive” list as provided below:

- Whole community approach to planning and implementation.
- Retain current businesses and support expansion.
- Attract new businesses and industries.
- Build human capital and develop the workforce.
- Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Preserve sense of place.
- Build community leadership.
- Encourage commercial district revitalization.
- Improve resiliency to disaster.
- Provide quality education.
- Increase the availability of affordable housing for the workforce.
- Promote recreation, culture, history, and the arts.
- Ensure the availability of quality healthcare facilities.
- Promote sustainable building and economic development practices.
- Support neighborhood revitalization.

These strategies were taken into consideration as each goal and action item was developed. Each goal includes a data indicator to help the City track its progress toward achieving the goal and a target to clarify the direction in which the indicator should move to signify progress. A list of potential data sources for each indicator and links to those sources where available has also been provided.

1. SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

A clear objective of any economic development strategy is to support and expand existing businesses while at the same time attracting new businesses. This can be accomplished by helping businesses create jobs, encouraging entrepreneurship, enhancing fiscal sustainability by expanding and diversifying the tax base, and improving the overall community quality of life with new services and amenities. Goals in this section are intended to nurture existing businesses and draw new businesses to Dunnellon.

Goal #1. Retain and expand existing businesses

For the Economic Development Strategy to be effective, it is critical to start with the businesses that already exist in Dunnellon. Public feedback reiterating this objective was obtained through the Asset Inventory and Mapping exercise and through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat (S.W.O.T.) exercise. Citizens, many of whom were local business owners, provided comments so that their challenges could be identified and so that the project team could explore an economic development strategy that will best support their long-term success. It was important to the citizens of Dunnellon that the Economic Development Strategy emphasized nurturing relationships with existing businesses and not strictly focus on attracting new businesses. Updating the City's Comprehensive Plan to include Goals, Objectives and Policies that further business retention and expansion should be a goal of the City.

Indicator:

1. Number of existing businesses

Target:

1. Maintain status quo
2. Increase number of business

Data Source:

1. City business license data

Goal #2. Attract new businesses

Attracting new businesses could help build the City's tax base. Attracting new businesses will be most effective when the effort is tailored to the industries that are best suited to Dunnellon's assets and can provide employment options for residents. The Asset Mapping Inventory and Exercise provided a strong basis of Dunnellon's existing industries that can be built upon and complemented. Updating the City's Comprehensive Plan to include Goals, Objectives and Policies that further business attraction should be a goal of the City.

Indicator:

1. Number of new businesses

Target:

1. Increase in number of businesses

Data Source:

1. City business license data

Goal #3. Promote entrepreneurship

Encouraging people to start businesses helps foster pride in their own communities. Entrepreneurs tend to support other local businesses as they hope for the same themselves. The money they spend in the community has a direct relationship to the success of the local economy. Business owners develop a sincere and vested interest in the community because they want to ensure its success and are less likely to be attracted to moving elsewhere.

Indicator:

1. Number of new businesses founded by residents

Target:

1. Increase number of new business founded by residents

Date Source:

1. City business license data

Goal #4. Encourage business growth in infill locations

Where businesses locate within the community is also important. Business growth in infill locations can be doubly beneficial, as it can provide valuable, visible storefronts for new businesses in place of dilapidated or vacant properties in prominent locations. Through the creation of the **Dunnellon Asset Inventory**, several buildings and vacant lots in strategic locations were identified that could be used as infill development. The City should pursue a review of the City's Comprehensive Plan to strengthen Goals, Objectives and Policies that encourage business growth in infill locations that utilize existing infrastructure.

Indicator:

1. Number of new businesses in downtown, in the historic district, or along East Pennsylvania Avenue, in particular

Target:

1. Increase number of new businesses in downtown, in the historic district, or along East Pennsylvania Avenue

Data Source:

1. City business license data

2. SUPPORTING WORKERS

This economic development component focuses on how well the skills and education of the local workforce align with the needs of existing and growing industries and provides insight into what the community can do to help workers better match businesses' needs. It is essential to ensure that residents can successfully compete for jobs and to attract new businesses to the community. Having the right workforce in Dunnellon may also contribute to limiting the quantity of workers who commute elsewhere for employment. Dunnellon needs to focus on providing opportunities for its residents to have the necessary education and appropriate skills to compete for employment opportunities. Goals in this section address increasing access to jobs and workforce development.

Goal #5. Improve access to local employment opportunities

As of 2015, the City of Dunnellon had 1,195 workers in primary jobs. The highest percentage of those jobs—44.2% (or 528)— were in the retail sector, and the next closest industry sector was accommodation and food services at 24.9% (or 297 jobs). Health care and social assistance accounted for approximately 6.0% of jobs (72) and public administration accounted for approximately 6.0% of jobs (72), with the remainder of the jobs being sparsely populated through a variety of other sectors. (Source: U.S. Census “LEHD OnTheMap”)

The City of Dunnellon could improve access to employment opportunities by bringing more jobs closer to residents and increasing access through transportation investments in better bike, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities. Creating a local circulator would expand commute options for local workers. This is an option that was previously discussed in Dunnellon and a concept that is worth reconsidering, particularly given the lack of parking options in the downtown core. Providing a public circulator that picked residents up from the State Park and brought them downtown to shop, eat, or recreate could help boost business in the downtown and support those workers. The City’s Comprehensive Plan should be updated to strengthen Goals, Objectives and Policies that address multi-modal transportation, parking and transportation opportunities for commuters.

Indicator:

1. Number of jobs in the City of Dunnellon
2. Number of jobs within 2 miles of the City limits
3. Average commute time for City residents

Target:

1. Increase number of jobs in the City of Dunnellon
2. Increase the number of jobs within 2 miles of the City limits
3. Decrease in average commute time for City residents

Data Source:

1. U.S. Census “LEHD OnTheMap” <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>
2. U.S. Census “American FactFinder”
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Goal #6. Increase access to advanced education, workforce development, and job training opportunities

Providing workers with an opportunity to educate themselves and train for more skilled jobs helps foster a competitive job market. If residents can gain additional training and skills, they will be able to compete for a wider range of jobs. This also could lead to a reduction in the number of residents who commute long distances to find appropriate employment. In turn, this could improve citizens’ quality of life and reduce traffic congestion. Workforce training programs that teach both job-specific technical skills and soft skills

such as communication, teamwork, and time management are critical to create a competitive workforce in Dunnellon. The City should work with the College of Central Florida and Rasmussen College, as well as the State's workforce board (CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion) as key partners in achieving this goal.

Indicator:

1. City's unemployment rate
2. Educational attainment

Target:

1. Decrease in City's unemployment rate
2. Increase in educational attainment

Data Source:

1. Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (<http://floridajobs.org>)
2. U.S. Census. "American FactFinder."
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

Goal #7. Improve the quality of K-12 education

It is critical that students receive appropriate training, such as establishing science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) programs, to be able to compete for jobs and advanced education in fields that use these skills. Dunnellon High school offers a robust Advances Studies Program that includes several arts and vocational programs. Courses include:

- Agriculture;
- Building construction;
- Culinary arts;
- Digital video (TV) production;
- Early childhood education;
- Health occupations;
- Microsoft Office;
- Teacher Assisting;
- Web Design/Gaming; and
- Welding.

Duke Energy also offers the Our Power Generation Academy at Dunnellon High School. This program has a goal of "*preparing students for the thousands of high skilled, high demand jobs available in the power and energy industry.*"

The City of Dunnellon should continue to support the Marion County School Board in the provision of this wide range of practical skills to prepare local youth for success. Having these diverse programs also helps to attract young families and the businesses that want to employ them.

Indicator:

1. Florida school performance score

Target:

1. Increase in Florida school performance score

Data Source:

1. Florida Department of Education U.S. Census. "American FactFinder."
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

3. SUPPORTING QUALITY OF LIFE

A good quality of life is a fundamental goal of residents and businesses in any community. There are a number of key factors that can improve quality of life: an active and successful downtown; neighborhood shops and restaurants; green and open space; a variety of transportation choices (including options for walking, biking, driving, and public transit); artistic, cultural, and community resources such as museums, public art, community centers, religious institutions, and other community gathering spaces; and medical, technical, and academic institutions. Other improvements within a community also contribute to quality of life.

Goal #8. Promote a vibrant downtown, historic district, and commercial district

A vibrant downtown can be a local entertainment and retail destination. Dunnellon already has a great start to creating a healthy downtown, a historic district, and commercial corridor along East Pennsylvania Avenue. If successful, these areas can also lead the way to downtown property contributing more to the city's tax base. Achieving this goal requires ongoing collaboration between civic leaders, business owners, and residents, as well as public infrastructure investments. Mixed-use, downtown areas typically contribute the highest property tax revenue per acre of any area, making downtown revitalization a worthwhile investment for any community's fiscal health. Updating the City's Comprehensive Plan to include Goals, Objectives and Policies that further mixed-use development opportunities should be a goal of the City. The City of Dunnellon may want to reconsider the return of the Main Street program.

Indicator:

1. Retail sales for downtown, historic district, and the commercial corridor along East Pennsylvania Avenue
2. Retail and office lease rates for downtown, historic district, and the commercial corridor along East Pennsylvania Avenue

Target:

1. Increase retail sales for downtown, historic district, and the commercial corridor along East Pennsylvania Avenue
2. Increase the retail and office lease rates for downtown, historic district, and the commercial corridor along East Pennsylvania Avenue

Data Source:

1. City sales tax data

2. Business Survey
3. City business license data

Goal #9. Attract stores and services for daily needs to downtown areas and residential neighborhoods

Easy access to needed goods and services is important for an improved quality of life. This is especially important in downtown and in residential neighborhoods. This goal focuses on retail and services for daily needs—such as nutritious foods, medicine, and other essential items—rather than on non-essentials and luxury goods. The City's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map should be reviewed to ensure neighborhood commercial opportunities are available close to the downtown and also residential neighborhoods. The Goals, Objectives and Policies could be strengthened to permit local level stores and neighborhood services for residents.

Indicator:

1. Number of retail businesses
2. Walk score for residential neighborhoods

Target:

1. Increase number of retail businesses
2. Increase in Walk score

Data Source:

1. City business license data
2. Walk Score. <https://www.walkscore.com>

Goal #10. Ensure the availability of a wide range of housing types that are affordable to different income levels

A mix of different housing types (e.g., rental and for sale, multi-family and detached, and large and small) can accommodate people in various stages of life. This includes young people starting out in the workforce to those raising a family to those later in life who are retiring. Centrally located residential neighborhoods with homes appropriate for a range of income levels and family types make it possible for people to live near their jobs and let residents stay in the same neighborhood even if their income or lifestyle changes. The City's Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies related to housing should be reviewed and revised to encourage a mix of housing sizes and price points throughout the City.

Indicator:

1. Number of homes affordable to each income group

Target:

1. Increase in number of homes affordable to each income group

Data Source:

1. U.S. Census. "American FactFinder."
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Goal #11. Increase access to open space, parks, and recreation

Quality of life can be significantly enhanced by the amount of available open space, parks, and recreation in a community. Dunnellon is truly blessed in this area by having access to two (2) rivers as well as an extensive network of trails, paths, and on-street bike routes that surround the City. Bicycle routes that connect neighborhoods to employment centers could improve access to jobs and reduce driving as workers are more likely to walk or bike to work if it is safe and convenient. The City is currently working with the Florida Department of Transportation to make some such improvements along East Pennsylvania Avenue. Open space and public gathering spaces, including playgrounds and parks, can raise property values in residential areas and can help attract new residents and workers. The City has made major investments in park improvements funded in part by grants from State agencies and should continue its current the path for improving existing open space and establishing new open spaces to maintain the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Two major opportunities exist at the time of this report related to open space, parks, and recreation. These two efforts could benefit from the City leadership support of the acquisition and preservation of these two properties for public purpose. Both could provide ecotourism opportunities to the City. These should be further explored and pursued, if possible. Opportunities like these do not present themselves often in a single community.

1) 9 Island Cove – this is an area that is a key location for a public park. By providing a park at 9 Island Cove, the City would be encouraging a more pedestrian-friendly downtown. This would leave to the alleviation of some of the City's current parking congestion and lack of parking issues in the downtown. If developed as a public park, this area could be a catalyst for bringing tourists downtown. Designation as a park would also help preserve the delicate ecosystem at 9 Island Cove that has evolved since it was abandoned as a phosphate mine over 100 years ago. That site is also of historical significance because it is the general location of the discovery of phosphate. If designated as a park, this property could promote economic development, protect the environment and preserve a valuable historic site with one land purchase.

2) 113-acre Rainbow River Ranch Acquisition (The property bordering the Rainbow Springs State Park/east side of the river, divided by SW 190th Ave., and the long frontage on SR 484 west of the City of Dunnellon.) This might be a good acquisition property for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The following opportunities have been identified by citizens that the City could further explore for this property: 1) use of a section of the Rainbow River Ranch Property as a "camp grounds/primitive camping/tent sites" offering a group picnic pavilion, potable water/restrooms. Many youth groups come to Dunnellon to go kayaking, biking and tubing. There are no campgrounds available for group camping at this time as the Rainbow River State Park reserves all but a few of their sites for RVs, motor homes, camper trailers because that is where their fees bring in the most money. Youth groups representing church affiliated youth outings, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and families seeking wholesome outdoor experiences could benefit from this park acquisition; 2) Single Track Bike Trails provide an opportunity for this property. Having another trail head and trails to ride in this area would be economically-beneficial to the City. The sport of riding bikes through wooded areas is one of the fastest growing outdoor sports in America on two wheels. Trail bike riders will drive hundreds of miles to a good bike trail. Trails and old logging roads and rail beds already exist on the east of the river side of the Rainbow Springs State Park. There are several hundred acres of varied terrain; 3) Develop a campground, no hookups, potable water provided for the many people that travel with their trail riding horses. The huge pole barn located on the Rainbow River Ranch Property has water lines/well in place. There are six (6) trail heads at greenways and other local state lands and

parks within a 40-minute drive time from the Rainbow River State Park. There are many trails but there is a lack of horse and rider camping facilities for riders driving long distances to ride the trails offered in the Greater Dunnellon Region.

Indicator:

1. Amount of land dedicated to open space and/or parks

Target:

1. Increase in the amount of land dedicated to open space and/or parks
2. Miles and number of trails, paths and river access points

Data Source:

1. City of Dunnellon Comprehensive Plan (www.dunnellon.org)

Goal #12. Preserve natural space in the City and surrounding region

Preserving natural areas in Dunnellon and surrounding region provides important recreational, ecological, and economic benefits that enhance quality of life. As previously mentioned in Goal #4, encouraging growth in infill locations and redevelopment sites helps reduce the pressure to develop these natural areas, making it easier to protect them.

Indicator:

1. Percentage of land that is natural space in the City and surrounding area

Target:

1. Maintain percentage of land that is in natural space in the City and the surrounding area

Data Source:

1. City of Dunnellon Zoning Map (www.dunnellon.org)

Goal #13. Maintain character and distinctive community assets

It is important to maintain the assets that make Dunnellon special, such as religious institutions, public art, museums, natural landscapes, gathering places, and historic buildings. These places, along with attractive streetscapes and storefronts, contribute to a sense of place and neighborhood identity, which help retain existing residents and attract new residents and businesses. Additional focus could be places on a murals program or art in public places program.

Indicator:

1. Inventory or map of community assets

Target:

1. Maintain or increase in number inventory of community assets

Data Source:

1. Community Asset Inventory

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Economic development tools will be most effective when linked to specific issues. Sometimes more than one tool can help achieve a single goal. This Chapter explores policy tools that Dunnellon could utilize to boost its economy. It includes conventional economic development tools and tools that might not typically be considered part of an economic development strategy—such as transportation options or infill development—that support economic development.

The goals and actionable projects were prioritized based on the stakeholder engagement process through the series of three (3) **Community Conversations / Meetings** and a S.W.O.T. (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, or Threats) exercise held with the citizens. Through the meetings, a clear consensus emerged regarding which goals were most important to the attendees.

The following table describes specific actions in each goal area, including a potential project lead, the economic development goals that the action could help achieve, and a timeline for when each project should be completed. This includes short-term (within 3 years); mid-term (within 5 years); and long-term (within 10 years) timeframes.

Table 1: Tools & Actionable Projects

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|--|--|----------------|
| SHORT-TERM (WITHIN 3 YEARS) | | |
| <p>1. Land Use and Zoning for mixed-use development: Revise the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code to allow provisions for better mixed-use development to help create walkable, mixed-use places. Currently mixed-use development is permitted by PUD however the Code could be strengthened to better promote this. Encourage mixed-use, compact development to allow, encourage, or require desired building types, land uses, and density. Changes might include reduced minimum lot sizes, setbacks, or parking ratios, or increased maximum densities or floor-area ratios. Training of the Planning Board by certified planners could be incorporated into this Project to help educate them as lay-people the importance of land use and zoning actions and their implications to the business community</p> | Community Development Department | 2, 4, 8, 9, 10 |
| <p>2. Quick-reference zoning handout: Make easy-to-understand zoning handouts available online and at City Hall. Providing a simple explanation of what is allowed and contact information for further questions can ease the burden of seeking City approvals.</p> | Community Development Department | 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 |
| <p>3. Community code enforcement program: Rehabilitating vacant or blighted properties in downtowns and other central locations can clean up environmental hazards and make these locations more attractive to investors and residents. The program could include reviewing and revising existing codes to more explicitly address the code violation issues in the</p> | Community Development Department (Code Enforcement); | 8 |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|--|--|------------|
| community, preparing community code enforcement guidelines or protocols so that community members are clear about what they can do to report code violations to the city, and developing a website or other tools for reporting and tracking progress resolving complaints. Some communities have hired outside consultants to train anyone in the code compliance process, including community members, City staff, and property owners. | Building Department | |
| 4. Public art program: An art in public places program can bring public art to the community and enhance the local sense of place. Artists can work with the City and apply for permits. Applicants could be required to hold a community meeting to notify the neighborhood about the proposed artwork and answer questions. This program could help improve the neighborhood's appearance and spark conversation by adding art. | Community Development Department and/or Planning Commission | 13 |
| 5. Landlord education program: A landlord education program is intended to help property owners learn best practices in property management. The program could educate landlords on complying with codes, applicant screening, fair housing rules, lease agreements, the eviction process, and other relevant information. Program benefits could include better property maintenance, safer homes, a more stable tenant base, and lower city costs for code enforcement. | Community Development Department (Code Enforcement) | 10 |
| 6. Peer city technical assistance program: To help with local economic development goals, work with a peer city in the same state to learn best practices in applying for grant money and developing programs that adhere to state laws. Reaching out to another city's staff members could reveal how that city was successful in its application and lessons relevant to the local process. | City Administrator or Designee | All goals |
| 7. Business assistance program: Create a program to provide local businesses with technical assistance in marketing, accounting, or finance, and low-interest loans to fund improvements to landscaping, signs, or building façades. | Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association; Small Business Administration; SCORE | 9 |
| 8. Permit and approval process task force. Develop and maintain a City Permit and Approval Process Task Force to | City Administrator | 1, 2, 3, 4 |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|--|--|----------------|
| <p>identify ways to make the Dunnellon development process more simple, swift, and certain. The task force should be a partnership of City staff, boards and committees, private sector developers, architects, engineers, planners, etc.</p> | <p>or Designee, and Community Development Department</p> | |
| <p>9. Economic development strike force: Ongoing collaboration between the public and private sectors is a key component of economic development. To encourage collaboration, form an economic development task force with representatives from the public and private sectors to discuss how the city could better facilitate economic development. Representatives from the business community could include business owners, property owners and developers, or leaders from the Dunnellon Chamber and Business Association. This group could meet monthly or quarterly.</p> | <p>Business Community; City Administrator or Designee, City Ambassadors; Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association</p> | <p>1, 2</p> |
| <p>10. Wayfinding signage: Wayfinding signage helps visitors locate landmarks and businesses in the downtown. An attractive and distinctive system can improve the appearance and bring visitors to the area, potentially increasing the number of customers for local businesses.</p> | <p>Community Development Department / Community Redevelopment Agency</p> | <p>8, 9</p> |
| <p>11. Young entrepreneurs and professionals. Prepare a competitive analysis comparing Dunnellon with other cities of comparable size in terms of characteristics, programs, and services leading to the successful retention and recruitment of young residents. Create a think tank/advisory resource group of young people for retaining them.</p> | <p>Community educator/ leader</p> | <p>3, 6, 7</p> |
| <p>12. Annual career fair. Create a robust Career Fair concentrated on 9th grade students.</p> | <p>Economic Development Strike Force (see Goal 9); Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association</p> | <p>7</p> |
| <p>13. Cost Comparison Study. Prepare a Cost of Doing Business Comparison between Dunnellon and other similar cities. Where Dunnellon has a cost advantage, use this in marketing the City. Where it has a disadvantage, find ways to reduce this.</p> | <p>City Administrator or Designee; Economic Development Strike Force (see Goal 9);</p> | <p>2</p> |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <p>14. Real estate inventory. Prepare and maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings and sites in the City. Make this inventory available on the City's website</p> | <p>Community Development Department, Ocala/Marion County Association of Realtors</p> | <p>2, 4</p> |
| <p>15. Homebuyer education and down payment assistance: To help residents find homes they can afford and opportunities to invest in the community, create a program to educate residents about homeownership and down payment assistance opportunities. This program would educate would-be homebuyers about real estate financing and offer grants for the down payment. Financial resources for this program could come from a federal agency such as HUD.</p> | <p>USDA; Local realtor's association; local banks</p> | <p>10</p> |
| <p>16. Educate businesses about tailored job-training programs: Job-training programs that are tailored to the needs of businesses are more likely to successfully prepare workers for local jobs. Partner with local businesses and College of Central Florida, Rasmussen College and/or CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion to create a tailored curriculum that prepares students for jobs in high-priority industries. It's important to educate the business community that this type of training exists.</p> | <p>Economic Development Strike Force (see Goal 9), CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, College of Central Florida, Rasmussen College</p> | <p>3, 5, 6</p> |
| <p>17. Establish community goals for vacant or underutilized buildings and lots: Community participation is an effective means for building broad support for how to best develop vacant or underutilized buildings and lots to ensure that future development helps achieve community goals. Engage Dunnellon residents by creating a Vacant Buildings / Lots Task Force to learn community priorities for vacant and underutilized buildings and lots.</p> | <p>Community Development Department; Vacant Buildings / Lots Task Force (New)</p> | <p>4, 8, 12</p> |
| MID-TERM (WITHIN 5 YEARS) | | |
| <p>18. Green infrastructure: Green infrastructure can improve water quality and supply, reduce flooding risk, save public and private funds, and protect public health through improved air quality and green spaces, among other benefits. Develop a plan to incorporate green infrastructure into the community to achieve multiple environmental, public health, social, and economic goals.</p> | <p>Community Development Department; DEO</p> | <p>9</p> |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|--|---|-------------------|
| <p>19. Economic development website: In addition to providing new and expanding businesses with information and resources, a dedicated economic development website sends a clear message that a city is “open for business” and available to help. Create and maintain an economic development website that could be a one-stop shop to help new and existing business owners with business startup or expansion. This website could include a step-by-step guide to starting or expanding a business in the city, links to important contacts and forms, and links to resources outside the community, such as loan programs from the Small Business Administration.</p> | <p>Economic Development Strike Force (see Goal 9)</p> | <p>1, 2, 3</p> |
| <p>20. Site-selection assistance: Providing site-selection assistance to new or relocating businesses could encourage businesses to locate in infill locations and established centers. This could include suggesting locations and giving site tours to new businesses looking to locate in Dunnellon and existing businesses seeking to expand.</p> | <p>Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association; Enterprise Florida, Inc., site selectors</p> | <p>1, 2, 4</p> |
| <p>21. City-school district partnership: A high-quality public education system supports the local economy by helping to ensure the community has workers with needed skills and better preparing students for jobs. Dunnellon can work more closely with local school districts to improve public education by supporting school programs and building connections between government and the education sector. Options could include regular meetings with administrative staff and school board members or creating an education task force comprised of representatives from the education system, business community, and local government. Potential avenues of exploration might include creating a mentorship program for high school students to teach them about different educational opportunities and professions and better prepare them to enter the workforce. The Duke Energy Our Power Generation Academy at Dunnellon High School can be used as a template.</p> | <p>City Administrator or Designee and/or Mayor's Office; local educator; Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association</p> | <p>7</p> |
| <p>22. Preservation of open and agricultural space: Preserving natural areas in the City and surrounding region provides important recreational, ecological, and economic benefits that enhance quality of life. Review the City's Zoning Code and make necessary adjustments to preserve agricultural land, open space, and other environmentally sensitive areas.</p> | <p>Community Development Department</p> | <p>11, 12, 13</p> |
| <p>23. Career Pathways Program. Work with employers to identify available career pathways for youth and the necessary</p> | <p>Economic Development</p> | <p>5, 6</p> |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|--|---|--------------------|
| educational or technical training needed. Consider “Fast track” opportunities for Veterans. | Strike Force (see Goal 9); local educator; Veterans associations | |
| 24. Historical tourism task force. Create a task force of citizens who are knowledgeable and care about the history of Dunnellon that can develop a tourism tract centered around its robust history. This could be tied together with the Phosphate Trail. | Dunnellon Historic Preservation Board; Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association | 1, 2, 4, 8, 13 |
| 25. Promote bicycle tourism. Form a bicycle tourism committee. Group should focus on creating opportunities for what cyclists want such as bike loops, roads & trails for various skill levels, destinations/amenities (shops, secure bike storage, bike wash), quality food and drink, predictable weather, brochures, attractions, etc. This could create additional opportunities for people to come to the area, stay, and spend money. | Bicycle tourism committee (New) | 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13 |
| 26. Conduct a community design charrette. Host a community design charrette to determine if a building theme for the community would be appropriate. | City Administrator or Designee; Community Development Department, | 8, 13 |
| 27. Regional tourism marketing. Work with adjacent communities for regional marketing opportunities to keep tourists in area for longer periods of time. One suggestion that could be considered for this would be a business asset map that shows the locations of various businesses in the City so that visitors and residents alike would learn there are businesses scattered throughout the City and not just in the historic district, for example. | Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association; VisitFlorida | 11, 13 |
| LONG-TERM (WITHIN 10 YEARS) | | |
| 28. Coordinated infrastructure investments: Encourage coordinated infrastructure investment across city departments and with outside jurisdictions to reduce redundant tasks and save money. Wherever possible, improvements to walking and biking facilities should be made at the same time as larger infrastructure investments. This process could include establishing an interdepartmental or multi-jurisdictional working group, inventorying planned infrastructure | Community Development Department and other City and County agencies | 9 |

| Tools & Actionable Projects | Potential Project Lead | Goals |
|---|--|-------|
| improvements and identifying areas of overlap, and prioritizing projects and funding sources based on shared infrastructure requirements. | | |
| <p>29. Multimodal transportation plan: Safe walking, biking, and public transportation routes protect public health by encouraging physical activity and reducing pollution from vehicles. Develop a transportation plan that makes walking, biking, and public transportation safe, reliable options in addition to driving. The plan would identify assets, challenges, and opportunities for improving transit, biking, and pedestrian facilities, particularly in downtowns and other locations identified for infill development.</p> | Community Development Department, FDOT | 8, 11 |

CHAPTER 4: PROJECT ACTION PLAN & ENGAGEMENT

The City of Dunnellon is prepared to begin work on actionable projects identified in the Economic Development Strategy in compliance with Deliverable 4 of DEO Agreement #P0337. These four projects have been identified to kick-off the implementation of the *Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy*. Ideally, these four projects can be initiated within the first year of implementation of the Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy.

Project #1: Create an Economic Development Strike Force

By creating the Dunnellon Economic Development Strike Force, the community would have a group of dedicated citizens to help businesses sort through the regulatory challenges of development and connect with resources, including local, state, and federal contacts. The Dunnellon Economic Development Strike Force would be made up of appointed City staff as well as representatives from the business community including business owners, property owners and developers, and/or leaders from the Dunnellon Chamber and Business Association. One key role of the group is to be ambassadors of Dunnellon when new businesses are considering coming to the community. This group could meet monthly or quarterly.

Project #2: Retain & Expand Existing Businesses and Cultivate Entrepreneurship

Dunnellon's economy is driven by small business and entrepreneurship. It is important that Dunnellon fosters a healthy business environment that supports the success of small businesses. The City needs to create a positive climate for business development. It is important to take care of existing businesses and not to just focus on attracting new business. Creating a program to help nurture existing businesses, find ways to help them expand and to cultivate the entrepreneurial spirit within the community can help to grow the local economy.

Project #3: Foster Development and Redevelopment in Priority Areas

This project focuses on driving real estate development and tax base creation into key locations such as downtown, the historic district, and the East Pennsylvania Avenue commercial corridor. These areas can support growth and additional investment. Maintaining a healthy and growing tax base is critical to the City being fiscally strong. Having a healthy tax base requires a strong real estate market, encouraging development and redevelopment where appropriate.

This could be a multi-tiered effort to create new housing, commercial, and additional business development in priority areas with the focus on growing the City's tax base, creating jobs, providing quality, affordable housing, and better filling vacant or underutilized buildings and lots.

Project #4: Career Pathways Program

This effort would focus on working with the Marion County School District, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, the Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association, College of Central Florida, and possibly Rasmussen College, as well as other community partners to build on existing and future efforts to create internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships for Dunnellon's youth. This program could help to create individual pathways for each student to align their educational with career interests. Creating and supporting work-based learning opportunities would be part of this experience. The City could be a useful partner by coordinating and building upon work-based learning opportunities in Dunnellon. The role of City staff could

be forging partnerships, aligning resources, and filling gaps in these programs. The City could consider offering internship and mentorship programs within the City government.

| FIRST YEAR IMPLEMENTATION – PROJECT ACTION PLAN & ENGAGEMENT | |
|---|--|
| Project #1: Create an economic development strike force | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a whitepaper describing the details of how the Dunnellon Economic Development Strike Force will function. 2. Appoint City Staff to facilitate the initial group meeting. 3. Seek volunteers from the business community to participate in the group. |
| Project #2: Retain and expand existing businesses & cultivate entrepreneurship | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek community volunteers to create an existing business outreach program that fosters business retention and expansion. 2. Convene focus groups with key businesses and industry groups to seek feedback on how to encourage retention and expansion. 3. Establish current business metrics as a baseline (i.e. number of employees; average wage) and update by reaching out to businesses monthly. 4. Connect existing businesses with resources that can assist with funding and with complimentary businesses that may help them expand into new markets. |
| Project #3: Foster development and redevelopment in priority areas | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research redevelopment models from around the country. 2. Identify priority areas throughout the City that would connect portions of the City together if they were utilized to their highest and best capacity. 3. Develop a report with specific recommendations, including funding assistance opportunities. 4. Establish clear parameters for outcomes (i.e. encourage mixed-use rather than single use, set target for number of jobs created or number of affordable housing units created). |
| Project #4: Career Pathways Program | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a youth internship/mentorship program with City government and businesses. 2. Help align related programs and resources and connect the business community to the youth to help train the future workforce and engage youth in the community. |

CHAPTER 5: MONITORING

The *City of Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy* is not intended to be yet another plan that sits on a bookshelf. Throughout the Community Conversations / Meetings, the citizens and City staff were adamant that steps be taken to ensure follow through on the Strategy. This plan will maintain relevance in large part due to the monitoring requirements of the DEO Grant Agreement. As such, this document is to be updated annually.

Using the metric-based approach outlined in Chapter 3 will be a useful tool for tracking progress, evaluating performance, and keeping the City on track for achieving the goals outlined in this Economic Development Strategy. The targets outlined in Chapter 3 will be the baseline measures of the work getting done, leadership being committed, and deliverables being completed. The outcomes of the annual monitoring will attempt to measure the extent to which the projects are ultimately effective in terms of having a positive economic impact in Dunnellon.

Changing market conditions over time may have an impact on reaching all these goals. Conducting an annual monitoring will allow the City to stay on task of adjusting the goals as appropriate given a change in conditions. A simple monitoring report that briefly addressed the status of each goal shall be presented to City Council prior to end of each year.

CHAPTER 6: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

There is already a foundation that has been established for the City of Dunnellon to participate in collaborative efforts with neighboring jurisdictions through the “Historic Towns of the Rock Ridge Phosphate Trail” effort. (<http://visitrockridgetrail.com>). This partnership was funded in part by VisitFlorida and provides an opportunity for the cities of Inverness, Dunnellon, Floral City, and Brooksville. These relationships could be leveraged further to help with economic development activities between the four communities.

CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & SWOT ANALYSIS

COMMUNITY MEETINGS/CONVERSATIONS FEEDBACK

Public engagement was an important part of the community meeting/conversation process. City staff posted the meeting notices on the City website and on Facebook. Attendance at each of the Community Meetings/Conversations was broad and attendee participation was robust. Several of the City’s Elected and Appointed Officials attended the meetings, as well as members of the business community, residents of both the City and the unincorporated Marion County, and a couple of high school students. During the interactive portions of the meetings, there was much **public engagement** and a significant amount of information was gathered from the public.

Community Meeting/Conversation #1

Community Meeting/Conversation #1 was the project kick-off meeting. This meeting was held on January 23rd at City Hall. Mayor Burns welcomed the attendees and the project team. There were an estimated 45 people who attended the meeting. At this meeting, Kimley-Horn introduced the Competitive Florida Partnership program and set the expectations for what the community would be experiencing through this process.

Kimley-Horn asked the attendees to reflect on how they would **currently** describe Dunnellon and write their comments on notecards; these included both positive and negative comments. Those comments are captured as follows:

Table 2: How the Citizens See Dunnellon Today

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Stagnant | Scared | Family-oriented | Controlling | Beautiful |
| Untapped | Natural | Love the slow pace | Convenient | Limited |
| A natural treasure | Eco-tourism | Mis-managed | Young | Ready to grow |
| Quaint | No future focus | Historic resources | Home | Indecisive |
| Diamond-in-the-rough | Great potential | Tourist-friendly | Almost crime-free | Entrepreneur-friendly |
| Destination | Attractive | Sleepy | Great rivers | Crowd control |
| Two rivers | Lacks vision / leadership | Ranching / agriculture | Ecology | Ruined ecological potential with gas pipeline |

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Small-minded | Benefits certain people | A lot of good folks have been stomped on | Needs to move forward | A lot to offer our residents and visitors |
| Poor zoning | River protection | Needs smart growth | Needs nightlife | Needs industry |

Subsequently, Kimley-Horn asked the attendees to reflect on how they envisioned the **future** of Dunnellon and write their comments on notecards. Those comments are captured as follows:

Table 3: How the Citizens Envision Dunnellon in the Future

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Great vision | Epicenter of regional eco-tourism and outdoor activities | Seasonal protection of waterways | More collaboration and communication | More outdoor activities |
| Controlled growth | Better aesthetics | Increase minority hiring in City gov't | A downtown square | Better leadership |
| More activities for youth and seniors | Need more parking | Clean up old buildings | No more large developments | Community support |
| Needs specific direction | Job opportunities | No coastal connector / roads | Community center | Retain history |

Kimley-Horn collected the cards which would then be used by Kimley-Horn to create a **Draft Vision** for discussion at Community Meeting/Conversation #2.

The meeting was closed out by Kimley-Horn with a review of the project schedule and draft agenda for Community Meeting/Conversation #2.

Community Meeting/Conversation #2

Community Meeting/Conversation #2 was held at City Hall on February 12th. Approximately 100 people attended this meeting. After a welcome from Mayor Burns, Kimley-Horn opened this meeting with a brief review of an overview of the Competitive Florida Partnership Program and Community Meeting/Conversation #1. At this meeting, participants reviewed a **Draft Vision** prepared by Kimley-Horn based on the information received from the participants of Community Meeting/Conversation #1. The **Draft Vision** stated:

Dunnellon is a community rich in ecotourism that strives to offer its residents and visitors opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while protecting its natural resources for future generations.

Dunnellon seeks to enhance its economy by diversifying employment opportunities for its citizens while maintaining its small-town charm.

Attendees provided feedback about the **Draft Vision** to Kimley-Horn for final editing in advance of Community Meeting/Conversation #3.

The remainder of the meeting was focused on a facilitated discussion regarding identification of Dunnellon's most cherished assets. Members of the public were asked to cite places, organizations, and other things they found important in the community. These were used to create the **Dunnellon Asset Inventory** provided to the DEO on March 17th, 2019 in advance of the **Asset Mapping Exercise** that DEO will host on April 4th, 2019 in Dunnellon.

Kimley-Horn concluded the meeting with a review of the project schedule and the draft agenda for Community Meeting/Conversation #3.

Community Meeting/Conversation #3

Community Meeting/Conversation #3 was held at City Hall on March 12th. Approximately 30 people attended this meeting.

The third and final Community Meeting/Conversation had several components. It first included a review of the **Final Vision**. With some minor tweaks, the participants unanimously agreed that Kimley-Horn had crafted an Economic Development Vision that spoke to the citizens of Dunnellon. The **Final Vision** is as follows:

Dunnellon is a historic community rich in ecotourism that strives to offer its residents and visitors opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while protecting its heritage and natural resources for future generations.

Dunnellon seeks to enhance its economy by diversifying employment opportunities for its citizens while maintaining its small-town charm.

Next, the Kimley-Horn team discussed the formation and evolution of the Economic Development Strategy and the **Overarching Themes** of (1) Supporting Businesses, (2) Supporting Workers, and (3) Supporting Quality of Life. Kimley-Horn presented various examples of types of **Economic Development Initiatives** that the City could embrace to help them pursue economic development. Approximately 15 example initiatives were reviewed and enthusiastically received by the participating public. This gives Kimley-Horn a good sense of the types of strategies that can be proposed in the overall **Economic Development Strategy** to be produced as a final deliverable. These **Economic Development Initiatives** will have **Goals** and be tied to **Overarching Themes** which will give them relevance for tracking purposes. The meeting attendees supported the direction presented by Kimley-Horn and gave them direction with which to proceed with the preparation of the overall **Economic Development Strategy**.

COMMUNITY ASSET INVENTORY & MAPPING

Community Asset Mapping Exercise Event

The meeting was convened at the City of Dunnellon City Hall, located at 20750 River Drive in Dunnellon and it began at 9:00 AM. Sign-In Sheets were provided for the day of the Community Asset Mapping Exercise Event. While not all attendees signed in, approximately 50 participants were at the event.

Present at the meeting were the following State and Federal Employees:

- **Department of Economic Opportunity**
 - Joshua Askey and Dan Pennington
- **Florida Department of State**
 - **Division of Historical Resources**
 - Jason Aldridge
 - **Main Street Program**
 - Kathie Beck
- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**
 - Stephanie Hodges
 - Elizabeth Whitaker
- **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)**
 - Tina Williamson
 - Vickie Wyche

The reason for holding this workshop is that the DEO has found that there is often a disconnect between the community and the State. Holding the Asset Mapping Exercise in the community allows for a networking opportunity between citizens, City staff, and State agency representatives who may or may not have ever been to Dunnellon. It also intended to provide a lift for the community and it encourages broad participation from citizens who may otherwise not participate in other City-run events.

Unique to Dunnellon, six (6) students from Dunnellon High School participated in the Community Asset Mapping Exercise. This was facilitated at the suggestion of Kimley-Horn through the assistance of Vice-Mayor Valerie Hanchar, Principal Martin, Sargent Gunter, and City Administrator Dawn Bowne. No other Competitive Florida Partnership Program city has involved the youth; however, it was important to Dunnellon because it was a recurring message during the three (3) Community Conversations that activities for the youth were lacking and that the City needed to find ways to engage them in the community and encourage their participation for the future of Dunnellon. It was thought that their input in this event would be beneficial to the Economic Development Strategy and to the youth who participated.

Team Assignments and Field Asset Assessment

Following introductions, every participant was assigned to a team and each team was assigned a group of assets to go visit. There were nine (9) teams of approximately five (5) people per vehicle.

Brainstorming Session

At approximately 11:30 a.m., all teams were back at the Civic Center and reconvened to begin the Brainstorming portion of the Community Asset Mapping Exercise. Teams spent time discussing amongst

themselves what they learned at their respective assets – the pros, the cons, specifically focusing on the **New / Useful / Feasible Test**. Each group was to ask themselves the following questions:

- 1) **Is the idea new?** Old ideas have likely been pursued and/or rejected before. New ideas are more likely to be potentially attainable, particularly if they are “quick fix” ideas.
- 2) **Is the idea useful?** If it is, what is its relationship to the community and what is the community’s relationship to it? Ideas that are beneficial to both the City and the asset itself are those that can be most successful.
- 3) **Is the idea feasible?** Consider rough cost approximations. Does it make sense? We won’t necessarily nix ideas that are costlier, but let’s try to be reasonable today. Costlier ideas may end up being long-term community goals.

Another opportunity to be considered is a **trolley** to run between the Springs and the downtown Dunnellon area. At one time, CSX considered running a train back and forth to move people and keep traffic out of downtown – helping with the lack of parking; however, that project didn’t move forward. He also briefly discussed the East Pennsylvania Avenue multimodal path project.

Comments provided by each group about the assets they visited follows:

- **Blue Run Commercial**
 - 220 vacant acres/pasture
 - Could be good waterfront commercial property – would benefit the community
 - Previously used for city events such as hot air balloons
 - Could be used for parking
 - Could be a Science Center/Freshwater Institute/Education Facility
 - Could be an Environmental Eco-Resort/ Corporate Team Building Center
- **Datesman Park**
 - Provides parking in an area that doesn’t have retail to support it
 - Seems that a lot of money has been invested into this park/parking lot —gazebo, brick paver, raised landscape bed — and there are no businesses around it
 - Used as overflow parking to support river access/boat ramp by City Hall
 - Contrast with other parking areas that could be improved off East Pennsylvania Avenue to support existing retail areas that are seriously neglected
- **Rainbow Springs Art Cooperative**
 - Adds art into the community
 - Good retail and location
 - Additional landscaping could be provided
 - More public outreach – classes for students or public beautification projects would be good
 - More parking would be helpful

- **Other considerations**
 - Trolley linking downtown to State Park to alleviate parking issues downtown
 - Trees along sidewalks/multi-use paths

- **Commercial vacant buildings downtown (previously owned by Dr. Hampton)**
 - Ideal location for commercial development
 - Few vacant buildings, not well-maintained
 - “Need some love”
 - Located behind “Al’s T.V.”
 - Might have some historic value
 - Might be good for a live/work opportunity

- **Dunnellon Public Library**
 - Librarian gave a great tour of the facility
 - Team was very impressed
 - Offers assets for children, students, and seniors.
 - Has resource labs and windows look out onto wooded areas
 - Great resource to the community – very impressive
 - Access to the facility is a problem
 - It is off the beaten path
 - No signage on Highway 41 – no directional signage
 - No way to get to it from a car
 - City recently passed an Ordinance that will allow golf carts – this may help some citizens to be able to get to the library better

- **Dunnellon Little League**
 - Managed exclusively by volunteers
 - Needs some attention and infrastructure improvements
 - A little below standard but serves community need
 - Travel leagues could help support this facility, but facilities and field quality are not adequate to host tournaments/events that would attract them
 - Florida Sports Foundation might be able to assist with marketing efforts www.flasports.com
 - Mayor Burns is meeting with County Commissioner Bryant to see how the County may be willing to partner with the City to help make some improvements to the Little League facility since it is used by County residents, as well

- **Vogt Springs/Vogt House**
 - Not well-maintained; quite over-grown
 - Other than history, what does this property have to offer the community?
 - Perhaps the City can talk to the State to see if they might want to acquire a portion of it so that there can be additional access to the River on a small scale from this property

- **Family Hope Resources**
 - Family Hope Pregnancy Center Inc. (FHPC) is a 501(C)(3) non-profit ministry

- **Vacant parcels**
 - Dunnellon has some vacant parcels that could be developed to bring growth to the community
 - Two large parcels consisting of 13 acres of commercial property and 20 acres of pasture
 - Could be sold as 33 total acres or 20-acre pasture alone
 - Originally a Gator Farm (currently not in use) could easily convert to raising Tilapia or Tropical Fish. Gator building is 46 feet x 103 feet and has 8 pens, 4-1/2 inch well, a water reservoir holding approx. 17,700 gal and gravity sanitation system to three ponds
 - Gator office or house 20 feet x 41.5 feet, has 1 bedroom or office 12 feet x 20 feet, kitchen dining area combined 12 feet x 20 feet, bathroom, and large storage room.

- **Rainbow Springs State Park/State Park Addition**
 - This is a 117-acre addition that is to be added to Rainbow Springs State Park
 - This is a priority project of the Mayor and Council

- **Dunnellon Chamber & Business Association (DCBA)**
 - In need of money for building maintenance, specifically a new roof and signage
 - Business Association and Chamber of Commerce combined, and they also serve as a **Travel Bureau/Welcome Center**
 - need to help them get the word out that they offer travel information
 - Planned 125th Anniversary park adjacent to the DCBA building has yet to be constructed

- **Greater Dunnellon Historical Society/Train Depot**
 - Easily accessible from downtown
 - Significant potential as a historical resource and attraction
 - Hosts a variety of community events
 - Holds a lot of history of Dunnellon
 - Recently got a caboose
 - What else can be done at the Train Depot?
 - Connect it with a Trolley around town

- **Nine Island Cove**
 - Great natural resource
 - Could add walking trails to make it an even better asset
 - Would serve to connect trails east of Dunnellon to City center
 - State property acquisition opportunity

- **Vogt House/Vogt Springs**
 - Eco-tourism opportunity
 - See above (Team 2)

- **Other considerations**
 - Natural amphitheater in Centennial Park by the boat ramps, behind City Hall
 - Could show movies or have live music

- **Cuban restaurant**
 - Located downtown so parking limited
 - Home to one-of-a kind custom built bar in 1862 by Brunswick Corp.

- **Project LIFT**
 - 501(c)(3) Nonprofit organization
 - Helps students with disciplinary issues find direction (ages 14-19)
 - Provide vocational skills training
 - Help High School dropouts to obtain their High School Diploma (Not just GED)
 - Provide mental health therapy
 - In need of funds for program expansion

- **Grumbles House**
 - Located in Dunnellon's Historic District (House built in 1908)
 - Sell antiques, garden/home décor, plants/flowers, and much more!
 - Struggle with parking
 - In April 2016 added Sweetie's Café

- **Chaplin A. Dinkins**
 - Memorial Park located on the river where the Rainbow and Withlacoochee meet
 - Playground and Swimming Area
 - Parking is very limited

- **Other considerations**
 - Parking issues in the downtown
 - Need higher/better paying jobs (Publix pays \$10/hour)
 - Need sustainable jobs
 - Ecotourism should be a focus
 - Community college satellite campus would provide an option for high school graduates to stay in Dunnellon
 - Generally cleaning up the town would be good
 - Affordable housing options are needed
 - Community events need better publicity
 - Walking tours/historic tours
 - Support local businesses and restaurants
 - Consider a survey to see why people come to Dunnellon to better understand what we could provide to make them want to stay and or come back
 - River access and public restrooms could be improved
 - Advertise what else Dunnellon has to offer – not just the rivers
 - Having vendors at the Springs would be helpful

- **KP Hole**
 - Beautiful
 - Parking is overwhelmed during summer rush
 - County run facility
 - City makes no money off this facility, but the City's infrastructure is impacted by its use – traffic, utilities etc.

- It would be nice to find a way for the City to realize some of that money

- **Comfort Suites**
 - Beautiful
 - Exercise room/pool/suites
 - Needs better advertising
 - Cannot get a sign on Highway 41 – partly an FDOT issue
 - More visibility of their location would be helpful

- **Tuber Exit**
 - Parking is a major problem by the bridge

- **Ernie Mills Park**
 - Restrooms, concession, playground, other amenities
 - Lack of parking
 - Basketball court is seldom used because of its condition
 - Might be good to improve it or replace it with something that the youth would better use
 - Could also be a parking area instead

- **Other considerations**
 - A YMCA would benefit the community
 - Pedicabs could give youth jobs and help relieve traffic congestion

- **L.O. Robertson Park**
 - Trash cans are needed
 - New, hasn't gotten a lot of attention
 - Small park that few people use
 - Good for kids, fenced, simple & safe
 - Neighborhood park
 - Could use more benches
 - Consider wheelchair access
 - A picnic table would be an asset
 - Use of solar technology
 - Campground

- **Dunnellon Police Department**
 - Provides protection for the citizens
 - Community policing, keeping the citizens and visitors safe
 - Need more space inside
 - Need a larger parking lot for equipment
 - Parking lot on fire department side needs improvement
 - Single electric source – redundancy would be nice
 - USDA Grants are available to assist with funding
 - A new roof is needed

- Needs infrastructure to be viable during hurricanes
- **Riverland News**
 - Does a good job informing the community of local news, events, and activities
 - Great location in the center of town
 - Could have more student involvement
 - Needs more advertisers
- **Blue Run Park**
 - Needs more, clear, simple, interpretive signage
 - Offers access to river and appreciation for nature
 - Encourages ecotourism
 - Restrooms are in progress
 - More informational signage about native species would be good
 - Bridge in progress
 - No sidewalks but planning in progress
- **Swampy's Restaurant**
 - Good facility because it allows people to enjoy dining by the waterfront
 - Useful to the community, good location
 - Improved entrance off East Pennsylvania Avenue would be beneficial
 - Parking lot could be improved
 - Invested in the community
 - Supply food to the High School Band
- **Historic District**
 - Great community asset, should be better supported
- **Blue Run Park**
 - Could always use additional beautification
 - Parking is a problem
 - See above (Team 7)
- **Greater Dunnellon Historical Society & Train Depot**
 - See above (Team 4)
- **Other Considerations**
 - Grant Programs
 - Main Street Program should be revitalized
 - Riverwalk concept that was previously designed should be revisited
- **City Beach**
 - Could use a new parking area
- **Historic District**
 - Traffic is a huge problem
 - People throwing trash into the district is also a problem

- **Lack of Parking**
 - Proposed new bike path doesn't solve the parking problem

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Finally, the public was encouraged to reach out to the City Council, City Staff, and/or Kimley-Horn at any time throughout this project to provide input. Many members of the community participated in this via email or in-person one-on-one meetings.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The final portion of the third Community Meeting/Conversation was dedicated to conducting a community **S.W.O.T. Analysis**. A S.W.O.T. Analysis is a common method for taking a deeper look at a community's **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. There was much participation during this part of the meeting. Comments received were as follows:

| Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Age • Career experience that could be passed on to the youth by elders • Loyalty • Passion • Affordability • Natural resources • History / heritage • Connectivity • Infrastructure • Small size • Community services • Climate • Crossroads • Parks • Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of motivation for action • Lack of parking • Need for mentorship • Short term rentals • Haven't emphasized the experience of Dunnellon • Aesthetics • Lack of community swimming pool / community center / YMCA • Poor tax base • Lack of environmental awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-owned land • Solar panels / co-ops • Education / learning center • Vacant land (especially riverfront) • Composting • Intergovernmental partnerships • Young entrepreneurs • Career centers / mentors • EV charging stations • Aquaponic farm/museums • CRA funds available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nitrates in river / water quality • Toll road, traffic and other road growth • Compressor station "Dunnellon CS" has a bad stigma • Wild hogs • Limited multifamily housing • Declining population • Depressed economy • Shrinking tax base • Losing native wildlife • Sea level rise • Social media • Potential for stagnation • Losing appreciation for the City's history • Nothing will happen with these efforts |

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This *Economic Development Plan* lays the groundwork to guide Dunnellon toward economic greatness. The recommendations set forth in this plan are proposed to catalyze growth and development in Dunnellon. There must be a strong determination and a commitment from stakeholders to realize the recommendations. Implementation of the *project action plan* will begin to define what it means to be *Distinctly Dunnellon*.

