

For Immediate Release
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Strategic Sites Inventory (SSI) in North Central Florida Gets Major Boost with Duke Energy Foundation Support

Duke Energy Foundation Awards \$99,000 Grant toward NFEDP's Number One Priority: Product Development

Tallahassee, Florida—The North Florida Economic Development Partnership's (NFEDP) highest, strategic priority—systematically developing and marketing an inventory of high quality sites for private development—received a tremendous boost from one of its strongest supporters, Duke Energy. The Duke Energy Foundation recently notified the NFEDP of a \$99,000 grant award that will focus on identifying and initiating the analysis of high-potential sites for private industrial and commercial development throughout the NFEDP's 15 county region. The effort will leverage and further Duke Energy's previous investment in a Strategic Sites Inventory (SSI) program conducted by Leotta-Evers Consulting (LEO, LLC) in cooperation with Enterprise Florida, Inc.

"The ability to compete for economic development projects, especially in the Southeast, is being largely driven not only by the availability of high-quality, raw land, but more so by the due diligence and evaluation conducted on those sites, and providing certainty those sites can be made readily available for development", said Julie Conley, Chair of the NFEDP and Executive Director for the Jefferson County Economic Development Council. "It is critical that our local, regional, and state resources be invested in efforts that have real opportunity to provide a significant return on investment. We are grateful to Duke Energy for believing in and generously supporting our highest economic development priority."

"Duke Energy proudly supports the North Florida Economic Development Partnership," said Alex Glenn, Duke Energy state president – Florida. "The original Strategic Sites Inventory program was a tremendous success for Florida. It outlined a roadmap and prioritized next steps to help recruit businesses that will ultimately create jobs for Floridians."

"Strong partnerships like this are incredibly important to the competitive economic development process," said Bill Johnson, Florida Secretary of Commerce and Enterprise Florida president & CEO. "When companies are looking for their next location and expansion sites, they want to know they can find not only the workforce, infrastructure and pro-business climate they need to be successful, but they also want to know there are resources that will make their location easier. Florida has all of those assets, and we have great partners like Duke Energy and

the NFEDP who make the economic development process more efficient through tools like the SSI.”

The initial SSI investment by Duke in 2015 yielded over 100 properties possessing highly attractive characteristics required to compete for quality, job-creating projects in the State of Florida. The next step is to leverage this initial work and drill down even farther into the North Central Florida region to identify, analyze, secure availability, and ultimately market high quality sites nationally and internationally. NFEDP Executive Director Jeff Hendry commented, “There is nothing more valuable and cost-effective than to develop this inventory of sites and market it relentlessly. Simply stated, if we do not have the product--and I mean product that is high-quality and readily available--we cannot be competitive in rural Florida for the target industries we are focused on including heavy and light industrial and advanced manufacturing; product/freight logistics, warehousing, and distribution; targeted health care and aviation-based services; and natural resource, food and other agri-business-based processing and distribution.”

NFEDP Vice Chair and Baker County Chamber Executive Director Darryl Register stated “our Board of Directors, staff, and entire region will continue to pursue resources to create the most competitive and successful rural region for economic development, not only in our state but in the entire Southeastern United States. We have a plan and the SSI program is the launching point for executing that plan over the next 5-10 years to transform our region. We are so grateful to Duke Energy for taking this first of many steps in providing the necessary resources to make our region the most competitive it can be.”

The project, secured through the Duke Foundation’s highly competitive grant application process, is expected to begin immediately. For more information about the project, please contact Jeff Hendry, Executive Director, NFEDP via email at jhendry@iog.fsu.edu or at (850) 443-7103; or contact Diane Scholz, Rural Economic Development Services Director at the Florida Institute of Government at dscholz@iog.fsu.edu or (850) 728-51921.