



ANNUAL REPORT

Lakeland Economic Development Council
2017



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT STEVE SCRUGGS

The past twelve months have set a benchmark of unprecedented, significant growth and learning for the LEDC, YLakeland, and Catapult. We met with many of you this year during our 46 member visits. You told us that talent recruitment & retention, public education, permitting, downtown and amenities are key issues you want the LEDC to focus on next year.

In 2018, we plan to significantly change the format of how we interact with our members. We plan to host special tours and receptions throughout the year at new facilities, hold focus group meetings with members regarding issues specific to their industry, and host stakeholder meetings on important community topics affecting our business climate and economic development efforts. All of these new initiatives are being implemented to drive more value and return on investment to our members.

Thank you for your continued support of the LEDC, YLakeland, and Catapult. I have never been more excited to start a year than 2018. Buckle up as we get ready for what we believe will be a year of positive change, progress, and exponential, high-quality growth.

Steve Scruggs
LEDC President

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I LEDC YEAR TO DATE STATISTICS



LEDC YEAR TO DATE STATISTICS



DS SERVICES

DS Services, the largest provider in the country for residential and commercial coffee, tea and water, expanded their Lakeland customer care facility by 12,500 SF. This expansion resulted in 150 new jobs and \$4M in capital investment.



PEPSICO

PepsiCo's Quaker + Gatorade division leased 605,412 SF at Brennan's Center State Logistics Park, located on SR 33. They plan to create 40 distribution and warehouse jobs.



GEICO

GEICO is building a 50,000 SF office and training center adjacent to their regional office in Lakeland on Pipkin Rd. This expansion will bring 500 high-skill, high-wage jobs and \$12M in capital investment.



MISSION FOODS

Mission Foods added two new manufacturing lines at their Lakeland facility which resulted in 110 new jobs and \$20M in capital investment.

CHEP PALLETS
MANUFACTURING: 120,000 SF.
\$6.3M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

PLASTIPAK
MANUFACTURING: 112,557 SF.
\$1M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

PEPPERIDGE FARM
DISTRIBUTION: 90,000 SF.
\$2.3M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

RECLEIM NOVA
MANUFACTURING: 70,000 SF.
\$2.1M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

OLD DOMINION
DISTRIBUTION: 50,000 SF.
\$5.5M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

IGT
MANUFACTURING - 43,680 SF.
\$15.9M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

DRAKEN INTL.
CORP HQ - 36,000 SF.
\$1.2M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

DICOM TRANSPORTATION
DISTRIBUTION: 33,800 SF.
\$1.7M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

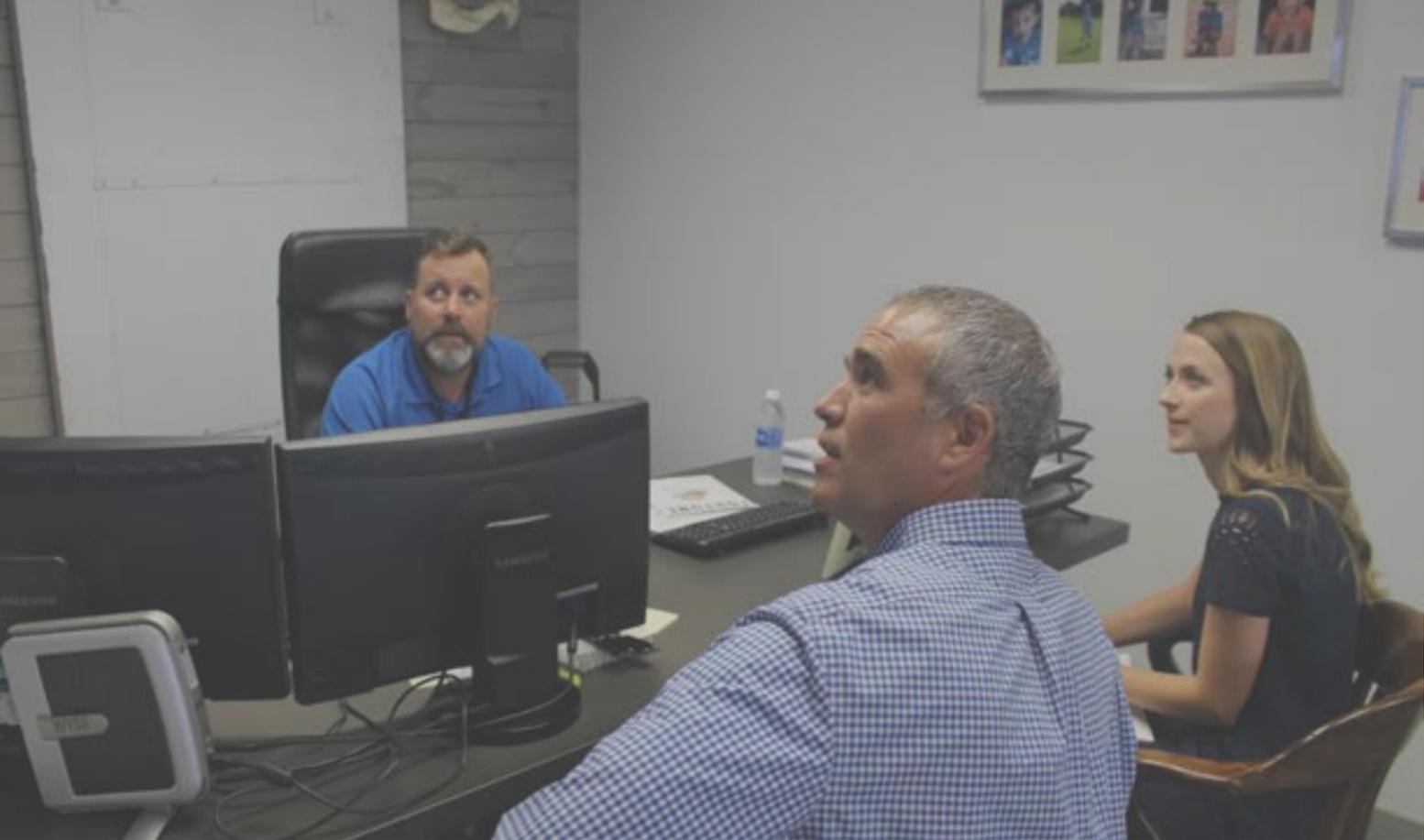
EMPIRE CO.
DISTRIBUTION: 26,000 SF.
\$7M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

LENZO WHEELS
MANUFACTURING: 21,840 SF.
\$700,000 CAPITAL INVESTMENT

MAXPAK
MANUFACTURING: 19,400 SF.
\$5M CAPITAL INVESTMENT

CROWN LAUNDRY
DISTRIBUTION: 17,000 SF.
\$250,000 CAPITAL INVESTMENT

OMEGA INSURANCE
OFFICE - 6,618 SF.
\$1.2M CAPITAL INVESTMENT



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Our existing industry visit program has been well received by our members. Talent recruitment + retention, public education, amenities, downtown, and City of Lakeland permitting issues were consistently mentioned as areas of concern.

LEDC

MEMBER VISITS

LEDC Business Development Director Ashley Cheek and Jason Wiley, City of Lakeland Economic Development Director, conducted 46 existing industry visits with our members. They met with 71 corporate executives representing over 4,600 employees in over 7.1M square feet of space. These meetings created multiple action items and learnings.



Talent Recruitment + Retention

Employers are struggling to find skilled and degreed employees in our market.



Amenities + Downtown

Our members want the LEDC to continue to focus on expanding downtown amenities and infrastructure.



Public Education

Lakeland's public education system has been identified as a major issue in attracting high-skill, high-wage employers to our market.



City of Lakeland Permitting

"It's too hard to pull a permit in the City of Lakeland," is something we hear frequently in meeting with our members. This is affecting potential investment and development opportunities in our community.

RESEARCH

We surveyed 20 of Lakeland's high-skill, high-wage employers with regards to top recruits that had accepted jobs with Lakeland-based companies but then moved to another city. The surveys were completed by 84 business executives, of which 58 live in the Tampa Bay Region, 10 in the Orlando area, and 16 in other cities within Polk County. The study found that public schools were the number one reason top executives won't move to Lakeland, followed closely by available amenities, housing, spouse's job, and family + friends.

BLOG

In the past, the LEDC's communication strategy typically focused on LEDC members, key city contacts, and The Ledger. Although this worked for us back then, the strategy is no longer effective with the emergence of social media. We now believe we need to have an ongoing community conversation about significant issues that affect our community from an economic development perspective, so the LEDC launched its first blog in the fall to expand upon those issues.

RECENT BLOG POSTS:



INCENTIVES



LAKELAND ELECTRIC



FRAMEWORKS

CATAPULT UPDATE

LAUNCH

For the second year, **9 local financial institutions** partnered to support the Launch Micro-Grant program at Catapult. Financial institutions include: Bank of Central Florida, Fifth Third Bank, TD Bank, MIDFLORIDA Credit Union, SunTrust, Wells Fargo, CenterState Bank, Bank of America, & Regions Bank. The fund awarded a total of \$69,521 to **7 companies:** Little Remi, The Balance Culture, Gator Creek Technologies, Steed Armor, Cheeses & Crust, Boondock Studios, and Reeve's Lawn Care.

CATAPULT 2.0

Catapult 2.0 progress was halted with the devastating blow from Hurricane Irma. The Cash Feed building will be demolished before the end of the year and plans are underway with our architects to design a facility with a similar footprint in the same location.

EDUCATION

Catapult had **779 participants** in its educational programs. Fifty-five percent of participants were non-members and forty-five percent were Catapult members.

- LUNCH & LEARNS
- SEMINARS
- OFFICE HOURS
- MEETUPS
- MENTOR PROGRAM
- BOOTCAMP



VIDEOS

Catapult partnered with members, Jamie Clemens and Caleb Randall, to produce an innovative video series focused on Catapult 2.0.

BRICK + MORTARS

This year, **6 Catapult members** launched into Brick + Mortar locations: Haus 820, The Collective, Jordan Weiland Photography, Dynamic Security of Florida, Boondock Studios, and All About Aging.



YLAKELAND UPDATE



WEBSITE REDESIGN

YLakeland redesigned its website based on input from our 2016 focus groups. The new website was launched in early 2017 with new features including: a more mobile-friendly platform, insider tips + guides, improved event calendar, happy hour calendar, business listings, interactive map, neighborhoods, and more. Following the redesign, we've seen more involvement and pageviews than ever before.



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

YLakeland launched a weekly event newsletter in February. In just 8 months, over 2,400 people subscribed to the newsletter with an average open rate of 25% and an average click rate of 44%. These newsletters deliver fun, exciting events and stories to our audience on a weekly basis, keeping them engaged and active in the Lakeland community by allowing them to be more informed regarding the bountiful amenities the city has to offer.



TEXT MESSAGE MARKETING

The last item on the idea list from the 2016 focus groups was a text message subscription service. In September, YLakeland addressed this by launching its text message platform as an additional way to engage with our target audience while also providing Lakelanders an extra incentive to engage with the community. Event reminders and exclusive deals are sent to our subscribers weekly. In just 2 short months, YLakeland added over 500 subscribers.

YLAKELAND ISN'T SIMPLY A PART OF THE COMMUNITY; WE REPRESENT LAKELANDERS AS A WHOLE.



CAMPUS AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

In January, we enlisted 10 student brand ambassadors from 5 local colleges to increase our engagement with students and young professionals, our target audience. Students were paid to represent YLakeland on and off campus, throughout the community, and on social media.

In the fall we expanded this program to 15 student brand ambassadors. Over the year, our ambassadors have posted 600 times on their social media accounts relating to YLakeland and fun things to do in Lakeland. 120 class presentations have been given and ambassadors brought friends to 76 community events.



LAKELAND INTERN PROGRAM

YLakeland soft launched the Lakeland Intern program in September. This program will act as a matching service for students seeking local, paid internship opportunities and companies interested in hiring local interns. Both students and companies can create profiles on the website, browse students/opportunities, and find resources to aid in the process. This initiative will go live in January, 2018.



PRESIDENT'S ROUNDTABLE

The LEDC and City of Lakeland partnered with the presidents of FSC, SEU, Keiser, PSC, and Florida Poly to create the President's Roundtable. The City of Lakeland is represented by its Mayor and City Manager, and the LEDC's past Chair, Chair, President, and YLakeland Executive Director are also present. The council focuses on talent recruitment and retention issues as it relates to Lakeland's 17,000+ collegiate students. Collaboration projects emanating from this conversation include YLakeland's Ambassador Program, Intern Program, and piloting a finals late night study spots project with four local coffee shops.

LOOKING | AHEAD

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US.

The LEDC's primary role is to help create jobs and capital investment by attracting new companies as well as facilitating the expansion of existing companies in the Lakeland area, which we will continue into 2018.



NEW MEETING STRUCTURE



We plan to host special tours and receptions throughout the year at new to Lakeland facilities, hold special focus group meetings with members regarding issues specific to their industry, and organize stakeholder meetings.



CATAPULT 2.0



The Cash Feed building will be demolished before the end of the year and plans are underway with our architects to design a new facility at the existing location. Stay tuned...



THE LAKELAND INTERN PROGRAM



Lakeland Intern goes live January 2018. Students will be able to find internships, employers find interns, and educators find ways for their students to gain practical, local experience.