





Where the FUTURE



Written by Anne Lindert-Wentzell

Thirty years ago, social psychologists David McMillian and David Chavis formulated a theory about the power of communities. In essence, their theory postulates that a sense of community is derived from an emotional connect- edness to a region – a feeling of belonging – with a shared faith that all needs and visions for the future will be realized and commitment to making that happen. It is this sense of connect- edness that proves crucial for attaining healthy communities - communities that offer an unrivaled quality of life.

There are some communities that will falter in the attempt to achieve this end, but such is not the case for Edgewater, Florida. This riverfront city of close to 22,000 and growing, recently cele- brated its sixty-fifth anniversary since being incorporated in 1951. There is so much more to celebrate moving forward.

Not only has Edgewater's quaint charm earned it the title of 'The Hospitality City', but this vibrant, centrally-located business and commercial community is well positioned to take advantage of any investment interests through its busi- ness-ready strategy.

Edgewater is on I-95, which runs along the Atlantic seaboard from Florida to the New England states and is less than a half hour to the east-west interstate I-4 corridor. The U.S. Route 1 – a historic highway on the nation's east coast – runs through the city.

Samantha Bishop, Edgewater's economic development and rede- velopment coordinator, says that the internal roadways within the



Located in southeast Volusia County, Edgewater is an IntraCoastal waterfront community, adjacent to the Indian River and the renowned Mosquito Lagoon with 21,000 acres of sports fishing paradise and a haven for nature tours. The lagoon is also the site for the Kennedy Space Center.

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city "are under capacity. So we have plenty of infrastructure avail- able for growth and development as we move forward."

The Florida East Coast Railway operates from Miami to Jackson- ville and runs directly through Edgewater providing access to a number of ports.

The city is conveniently located between two deep-water ports. The international trade seaport of Jacksonville Port Authority is an hour and half away to the north, and the Port Canaveral Authority – a cargo, cruise and naval port – is less than an hour away to the city's south. "Everything for the space transporta- tion programs that are opening up the Kennedy Space Centre all come through [Port Canaveral] as well," adds Samantha.

The city offers easy access to a number of airports including the Massey Ranch Airpark and the neighboring municipal airport located at New Smyrna Beach. Daytona International is a half- hour away, and Orlando International is an hour outside the city.

The largest employers in Edgewater are in education, health- care and government. Manufacturing also plays a vital role in the Edgewater landscape with twenty-five percent of the city's workforce skilled in the mechanical, construction and manu- facturing industries.

The biggest manufacturers include luxury boat builders such as Boston Whaler, Everglades Boats and Edgewater Power Boats. Brunswick Commercial and Government Products is also in the ▶



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city and specializes in craft requirements for law enforcement, fire and rescue agencies and special operations and combat.

Diversity enables target industries to engage with a specialized labor force that provides the knowledge and skill sets that make such industries productive. Edgewater’s target industries are based, “in aviation, space transportation [and] IT,” says Samantha. “Some of the skill sets that are required for boat building would transfer over to aviation. We obviously have the skilled workforce that can do that.”

And that skilled workforce is provided by five universities and colleges in southeast Volusia, all within thirty miles. These institutions include Stetson University, (known as the Harvard of the South), University of Central Florida, Daytona State College, Bethune-Cookman College and the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, which is “the top aviation school in the world,” says Samantha. The Advanced Technical Center in Daytona Beach is also a short commute from the city.

These institutions provide, “some great production training programs for certified production technicians and programs that hit on all of those skill sets required” she says. They align themselves closely with the local manufacturing industries and are quick to respond in providing the required training programs necessary. “They are very responsive to our needs.”

Additionally, the Edgewater Public School recently earned AdvancED STEM Certification, a further indication of the city’s commitment to preparing students for post-secondary educa-

tion. The school is the “first STEM certified elementary school in the state of Florida,” affirms Samantha.

Edgewater is well positioned to both attract and retain business interests and capital investment with available incentives. These include a recently approved tax abatement program for every ten new jobs created. This abatement, “provides tax abatement for the city taxes up to one hundred percent and up to ten years,” states Samantha.

Brownfield grants are also available for the redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized properties situated along the southeast Volusia corridor which include the city of Edgewater and nearby cities of New Smyrna Beach and Oak Hill. These grants are approved by the Southeast Volusia Improvement Coalition (SVCIC). Its mandate is, in part, to assess environmental concerns, strengthen these cities’ economies and financially support all brownfield undertakings.

“Those brownfield grant dollars can be used to pay for a Phase I and a Phase II environmental survey, as well as clean up,” explains Samantha. If a property is going to be redeveloped into housing projects, there are additional bonus funds for the purchasing of building materials. “There are great opportunities there.”



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- ▶ Developers can “take advantage of low-interest rates for any loans associated with redeveloping that property and building something new on that property.”

Since 2005, Edgewater has been home to Volusia County’s largest industrial park – ParkTowne Industrial Center – located on over 342 acres and ideal for commercial and industrial interests. Currently, the occupancy rate is fifty percent and parcels of land are shovel-ready with electricity, water and sewage available. There is an eighty-three-acre tract available on the north side of the park with other parcels for sale by private owners that are, “willing to do build-to-suit buildings and do some great creative opportunities there.” There are also other industrial areas with properties that have, “rail spurs available for any of the businesses that would be relocating here that would need rail service.”

Moreover, there is free fill through the city’s partnership with the Florida Inland Navigational District (F.I.N.D.) which can provide, “750 cubic yards of fill material for each full-time job created.”

Further enhancing the community is Edgewater’s Massey Ranch Airpark, a presence in the city since the 1950s. This fly-in residential community also serves as a commercial/industrial park. The airpark has a 4,360-foot lighted paved runway with

residential properties to its east and an industrial park to its west and is just east of the I-95.

Currently, there is a waiting list for Tee hangars and larger hangars are ninety-five percent occupied by businesses. “There are 30,000 square foot hangars or manufacturing available for sale. Aero-Tech Business Park consists of 50 acres available for additional commercial/industrial development. I just need someone who is interested in developing them,” says Bliss Massey, broker associate with Massey Properties. “We have fifty acres called Aerotech Business Park for additional commercial/industrial development,” she continues.

“We have luxury homes, taxiway homes with private hangars available for sale including the townhome development the Villas at Massey Ranch. Residents’ ability to live on taxiways and have planes in their garages is really a very nice feature with beautiful upscale homes,” adds Samantha.

At the southwest corner of the I-95 is the nine-hundred-acre Deering Park Center, a mixed-use development. It is still in the planning stage and will include housing, medical centers, hotels, shopping, parks and industrial development. Upon completion, Deering Park is expected to accommodate 1.5 million square feet of non-residential area. This development

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will proceed with a conscious approach to environmental planning and economic growth that will foster Edgewater’s quality of life. Deering Park is, “a complete planned unit development,” explains Samantha.

In 2014, Edgewater’s first Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) was approved and will incorporate a twenty-year plan to redevelop a stretch of the U.S. Route 1 that is in need of revitalization and to create a downtown area. The U.S. 1 Route was the only roadway fifty years ago, taking travelers from Key West to Maine before the I-95 was built.

Many of the properties are small with older buildings and odd lot sizes that don’t accommodate the landscaping, parking and storm water requirements. “The CRA is created to help offset those costs to allow and provide funds for property owners that want to enhance these properties,” explains Samantha. The premise is to establish an appreciation for the U.S. 1 corridor and bring customers back to the existing businesses, some of which have been there for decades. “We just don’t want our residents and visitors to forget that we have some great businesses along U.S. 1 as well.”

The city of Edgewater anticipates having approximately 30,000 residents by 2020. “We are working every day at preparing our infrastructure to be able to accommodate that growth,” comments Samantha. Part of this population growth will be due to the Deering Park development as well as the over 5,000-acre Restoration DRI (Development of Regional Impact) to the north of the park. These two developments are unique because they are related to phases of development and activity that lead to job creation.

“It’s all tied to jobs created as far as being able to develop into the next phase,” explains Samantha. “That’s how we’re able to put a control on it, so that we’re growing with some control and planning and making sure that we can provide the jobs, the infrastructure and the city services that those extra residents are going to need.”

Ecotourism is big business in Edgewater. Numerous activities encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles. The city’s paved and marked East Central Regional Rail Trail recently opened not far from downtown. It will eventually stretch fifty-



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two miles from Enterprise, Florida to Edgewater. With other trail systems, including the Springs Trail one can, “essentially, start here in Edgewater and end up going and having dinner in Tampa, on your bicycle,” laughs Samantha. Some trails also allow horseback riding.

The Indian River provides activities such as guides, paddling and sports fishing. Menard-May Park has a beach area and a fishing pier and boat launch. Lighthouse Point Park, the Marine Science Center, Daytona Speedway and Sun Cruz Casinos are all a short drive away in Daytona Beach.

The sister city of New Smyrna Beach offers Turtle Mound National Historic Site Park; the Little Theatre; and the Old Fort Park Archaeological Site. Edgewater is conveniently located within a half hour to Orlando; the Kennedy Space Center; and Tampa, two hours away.

Samantha notes that “our city council members – our elected officials – are very pro-business, and they are hands-on in the community, making sure that they’re bringing feedback to the administration. We want everyone to know that we, in Edgewater, are open for business. We are very blessed to live in such a beautiful place.” ■





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