



IMAGE BUILDING

WHILE VOLUSIA WILL FOREVER BOAST OF A FAMOUS BEACH, INDUSTRIAL GROWTH IS STEADILY PUSHING MANUFACTURING INTO THE COUNTY'S PICTURE.

by Kevin Fritz

Volusia County is home to one of the best-known beaches in the world, and its economic development activities outside of tourism generally fly under the radar. Yet, while Daytona Beach's sandy shores will probably always be the county's postcard image, a closer look reveals that much more is happening than fun in the sun.

Industrial parks, for instance, are creating a wealth of new tax-base dollars for the county, and the manufacturers moving into those parks represent more local jobs.

That's the message from Richard Michael, director of the Volusia County Department of Economic Development, who says his mission is to further improve "employable" conditions.

According to Michael, the department is currently working on developing Corporate Center, a 95-acre industrial park at Daytona Beach International Airport zoned for a combination of professional office and manufacturing space. It's expected to create 2,500 new industrial high-tech jobs, including those in avionics, medical and technical simulation.

"Fifty percent of our time is spent in land development and site development," he says, noting that his department's focus on manufacturing technology in the auto and medical products industries is paying big dividends. "Two of three [companies] that we recruit fall into the medical or automotive area."

For one, the county's newly opened DeLand Crossings Industrial Park has attracted some of those key new tenants. NSI Intellitec Products, which designs, manufactures and markets vehicle specialty components, is building a 64,000-square-foot manufacturing facility at the 43-acre park, located at Interstate 4 and State Road 44. NSI will bring 120 new jobs to Volusia.

In addition, BBK Performance Inc. is making its way to the county in a 62,000-square-foot facility expansion at DeLand Crossings. BIB, which will add 40 jobs, manufactures products like chrome wheels for the automotive industry's aftermarket.

Notably, DeLand Crossings alone is anticipated to generate \$35 million in total capital investment. Upon eventual build out, the industrial park will contain roughly 300,000 square feet of production space capable of supporting approximately 300 manufacturing jobs.

Those numbers come as no surprise to Michael.

"We're the only regional county that has had a 10 percent growth in manufacturing," he points out.

Jayne Fifer, president and CEO of the Volusia Manufacturing Association, asserts that manufacturing has become one of the county's more potent assets.

"We are one of the strongest groups," she says, "although still small when compared to tourism."

And any talk of an economic recession, she contends, just doesn't add up. "The [manufacturers] that are here are growing," she says. "We've had tremendous growth."

It's about the "little guy," too. The recruitment of new companies has made an impact, sure. At the same time, small existing entities show impressive strength. Of the 200 companies that make up the membership of Fifer's association, 65 percent have 15 employees or fewer. Those 200 companies employ more than 12,000 employees. And, indeed, manufacturing is a hidden gem across Central Florida, where the Manufacturing Association of Central Florida counts approximately 2,200 such companies.

Further proof in Volusia: homegrown Ocean Design and Raydon Corp.

Ocean Design recently completed construction on a 100,000-square-foot facility, where 300 employees work in the areas of deep sea, gas and oil, and defense. Raydon is in the process of consolidating five Daytona Beach locations under one roof and is expanding into virtual reality medical treatment.

"It's beyond military simulation," comments Michael. "It's medical simulation."

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Better yet, he adds, the new Raydon consolidated business model calls for a total of 400 employees, including 200 current employees, in high-tech simulation jobs.

Industrial parks and manufacturing may not be the sexy imagery that sells. Nonetheless, they are integral cogs in the economic development engine of the county, with local support and an infrastructure that has created a virtual incubator for growth.

"Ocean Designs and Raydon both started in someone's garage with an idea," says Fifer. "They are perfect examples of what is going on in Volusia County."