

7 counties unite on regional issues and position area for federal grants

By Ashley D. Torres

Florida's seven southeast counties have formed a regional partnership with the goal of addressing regional issues and applying for federal grants.

The Southeast Florida Regional Partnership was formed to foster communication among the seven East Coast counties: Broward, Indian River, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie.

With greater communication and an established partnership, the region is to be in a better position for federal grants such as the Sustainable Communities Planning Grants Program, whose goal is to promote regional federal housing, transportation and environmental protection.

The partnership is currently in the application process for this grant, which is a joint effort of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency. The application is due Aug. 23.

The partnership is to address Southeast Florida issues such as affordable housing, transportation, water infrastructure and other areas of concern as they relate to creating sustainable communities, said Isabel Cosio Carballo, legislative & public affairs coordinator for the South Florida Regional Planning Council, whose staff along with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council makes up the formal organization of the partnership.

Other topics that could be addressed in the application and a draft work plan are health care and arts and culture, which also have an impact on the region's plans for sustainability, Ms. Carballo added.

If the region receives the grant, the maximum amount of money it would receive is \$5 million.

The three US departments developed six "Livability Principles" to guide regional projects.

These principles are: provide more transportation choices; promote equitable, affordable housing; enhance economic competitiveness; support existing communities; coordinate policies and leverage investment; and value commu-

nities and neighborhoods.

The partnership added a seventh principle, which is to enhance community resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

The partnership has gained support throughout the region in the form of letters, resolutions and memorandums of understanding. Organizations that have agreed to offer their resources to the partnership include all seven East Coast counties, the Beacon Council and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

The partnership is also in the process of forming a consortium that would have a more direct role in the implementation of the grant, Ms. Carballo said.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is asking for a demonstration of commitment in the form of a consortium prior to receiving the grant to ensure that a strong regional multi-sector partnership exists, Ms. Carballo said.

The Metropolitan Planning Organizations of Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties and district IV and VI of the Florida Department of Transportation have already agreed to be consortium members.

With the partnership and the support of the region's businesses and organizations, "we can speak with one voice to advocate for projects that are important to the region," Ms. Carballo said.

While the Southeast Florida Regional Partnership is in its infancy, many other regional partnerships have existed for many years.

The Tampa region's One Bay and Central Florida's myregion.org are steep in-state regional competitors for South Florida. Nonetheless, the partnership is pushing forward to apply for the grant as a region that does not have an existing regional plan for sustainable development but is in the process of creating one.

"This is a process," said Carolyn Dekle, the South Florida Regional Planning Council's executive director, "that is designed to improve the quality of life for everyone."

First FIU venture capital conference targets Florida, hemispheric funding

By Zachary S. Fagenson

Florida International University is hoping to draw the eye, and pocketbook, of venture capitalists to entrepreneurs in South Florida and Latin America, even if many of them are still hiding their money under the mattress in the aftermath of the recession.

FIU's Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center in November will host the inaugural Americas Venture Capital Conference, giving small businesses in such areas as pharmaceuticals, energy and web technologies the opportunity to make their best pitch to potential investors from across the US.

"Most of the venture capital conferences have a very local draw and they primarily draw companies from their vicinity," said Irma Becerra-Fernandez, director of the entrepreneurship center. "This is the first that also attracts new ventures from throughout Latin America in addition to South Florida, as well as venture capitalists interested in investing in South Florida and emerging markets."

The key business sectors the conference will focus on are agriculture and water quality, biotechnology, pharmaceutical, energy and green technologies, entertainment, information technology and mining.

In addition to networking events and seminars examining everything from emerging markets in Latin America to how to structuring exit strategies, the conference will offer 15 companies, selected by a judging committee, the chance to pitch their business plan to the entire conference the first afternoon.

And with Florida's venture capitalists still hesitant to invest, businesses not selected as one of the 15 still have a rare opportunity to rub shoulders with potential funding sources.

"Right now the venture capital market is asleep nationwide and here too," said Andrew Peck, president of Financial Support Services Inc. and a board

member of South Florida's Gold Coast Venture Capital Association. "Companies... are investing significantly less, 50% or less, on an individual deal.

And "an investor who was a \$500,000, \$1 million investor [i]s sitting on the money," he added.

Yet Florida before the recession "became a significant place for investment" and whenever it does again, medical technologies are likely to be the leader, Mr. Peck said.

Research-based medical facilities like the Max Planck Institute, the University of Miami's rising Life Sciences & Technology Park and the Scripps Research Institute in Palm Beach County South Florida could be poised to draw plenty of venture capital once firms feel comfortable investing again.

FIU's conference will kick off the afternoon of Nov. 17 with panel discussions examining "innovation engines" in university and national laboratories and the legal strategies surrounding venture capital.

That same afternoon it will play host to the 15 firms selected to pitch their businesses. The following day it will host events looking at risk-management strategies in emerging markets and finding the "right" investors and advisers.

Whatever investments are made as a result of the conference are likely to be significantly discounted compared to years past.

"There's a great opportunity for venture capital to tap into because right now they can get into these projects at a lower cost of investment as compared to what they'll realize two years later," said Prashant Shah, CEO of Miami-based Bollywood Hollywood Productions. Many films, he said, rely on venture capital for large parts of their budgets, and while producers are slashing budgets, films are still making money.

"Cinema and motion pictures do well whether there's a war or happiness," he said, "People want entertainment."

Details: (305) 348-7156 or entrepreneurship@fiu.edu.

THE LAST WORD

HISTORIC HONOR: A long-awaited 10-foot bronze of **Julia Tuttle** was to be unveiled Wednesday at Bayfront Park on the City of Miami's birthday. Ms. Tuttle, a major Miami landowner, is credited with convincing railway tycoon Henry Flagler in 1896 to extend his railroad to Miami, leading to the city's incorporation. In addition to depicting the historic character, the statue's design incorporates images illustrating the history of Miami's founding in a relief on the statue's skirt.

PICKING UP PROFESSIONALS: Coral Gables-based Professional Bank has named **Roberto R. Munoz** executive vice president and chief lending officer and **Charles C. Papy III** vice chair. Mr. Munoz, most recently CEO, president, chief lending officer and a board member at Marquis Bank, received a bachelor's in finance and international business from Florida International University and now sits on the university's advisory board. Mr. Papy, who is managing partner of the Miami office of Duane Morris LLP, was an original investor in Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust and sat on its board until 2005. He received a bachelor's and a law degree from the University of Miami.

NEW POST: Holliday Fenoglio Fowler, LP has hired **Chris Drew**, formerly with Cushman & Wakefield of Florida, as an associate director in the debt and structured finance capital markets group in its Miami office. Mr. Drew, with six years of commercial realty experience, is to focus on originating debt and structured finance transactions in the southeastern US. During his time at Cushman & Wakefield, he launched the South Florida private client group, leading a team that advised private investors and developers on selling and buying office and retail properties valued under \$25 million.

DETAIL HALT: A bid to lure the military's US Africa Command to Miami-Dade County won't be on the table until 2013, according to **Fred Oladeinde**, president of the Foundation for Democracy in Africa. Meanwhile, the foundation is working to bring Gen. **William E. Ward**, commander for AFRICOM, to deliver a keynote address here on the command's work at the 2010 AfrICANDO conference. "We are waiting to confirm the general's availability for the Aug. 25 event. We want the good people of Miami-Dade to know about what the command has done and what they plan on doing in the future," Mr. Oladeinde said. The foundation is working with both Miami-Dade and the command to make sure both sides are well-informed. "We want the leaders of AFRICOM to know what Miami-Dade has to offer as a community," he said. Mr. Oladeinde said he hopes by bringing the general to South Florida both the community and the command will know more about one another and "there will be enough time for questions until discussions continue in 2013."

LOCAL LOYALTY: The Buy Miami discount program is looking to create a "loyalty card that would provide discounts for residents shopping at certain local businesses," says **William Porro**, City of Miami special projects administrator. The card would benefit both parties: mom-and-pop businesses would receive revenue and consumers would get discounts, according to Mr. Porro. The program was launched last November to encourage locals to shop at area businesses by allowing visitors to print out discount coupons and read profiles of local businesses under "Shop" "Eat" "Play" and "Relax" categories on the website, www.buymiamibiz.com. The city is currently working to find businesses to sponsor the new initiative. "I don't want to sound pessimistic but there is nothing concrete at the moment," Mr. Porro said. "We are in the process of getting everything together."

GLOBAL JOBS: A job fair held during World Trade Week in the Miami Free Zone was successful enough that organizer World Trade Center Miami may start holding them throughout the year. "We had 550 people come in and we had 43 employers," said World Trade Center Miami President **Charlotte Gallogly**. "I've heard back that 10 or more participants got jobs as a result of it." The weeklong event included the jobs fair, tours of Miami International Airport and the Port of Miami, meetings with trade regulators and a seminar on export finance. It attracted 2,300 heads of local businesses with international operations and was the "first time in many, many years," Ms. Gallogly added, "that we had such a large group of private sector and nonprofit organizations working to foster international trade."

DESIGN RUT: Streetscape improvement planned for Miracle Mile and Giralda Avenue in the Coral Gables shopping district have been in the design and development stage since July 2009. **Mari Gallet**, executive director of the Business Improvement District and a member of the Streetscape Design Committee, said, "We are still in the same stage, and funding is remains an issue." Ms. Gallet said she hopes new city manager **Patrick Salerno** will help move the project along. "The new city manager has experience in dealing with developmental projects such as these and is excited about the project." She said the next stage would be to work with the property owners and retail stores. "We will need to find a way to mitigate the dust during the construction phase and find a way for the stores to stay open when improvements are being made." Mr. Salerno had nothing to add to Ms. Gallet's statements but said he'd inform the public when plans for streetscape improvements progress.



Charlotte Gallogly



Mari Gallet

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