

Greater Daytona Region/Volusia County

GREATER DAYTONA REGION/VOLUSIA COUNTY

A burgeoning talent pipeline. Technology innovation. Entrepreneurship. Business growth. General economic vitality. Community depth. A crossroads location and transportation hub. Plus a lifestyle of fun in the sun mixed with arts, culture and entertainment. Volusia County — 1,432 square miles with 16 cities and approximately 550,000 residents — is riding a wave of promise.

By Michael Candelaria

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Waves of Promise as One

In the wake of COVID-19, the theme for post-pandemic Volusia County surely could have been fun in the sun or a burgeoning talent pipeline or technology innovation and entrepreneurship or general economic growth. Instead, it's cohesion.

Left: Historic Coquina Clock Tower at Daytona Beach, Center: Daytona Beach

ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS ARE WORKING IN STEP TO DRIVE BUSINESS EXPANSION

For a county that extends 1,432 square miles, encompassing 16 cities and approximately 550,000 residents, its leaders seem almost in absolute lockstep. Hard to imagine, sure. Yet, along Volusia's vast shoreline — 47 miles, to be exact — there are like minds at the top.

"We all work together," says Debbie Cotton, president/CEO of the Ormond Beach Chamber and chair of the Volusia County Chamber Alliance, consisting of seven chambers.

"I like to say it's our differentiator," comments Nancy Keefer, president of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce. "There's a definite level of

respect and trust." And, Keefer adds, it matters: "We've had more than prospects say they just feel it when we all get in a room."

"I think the community now, as a whole, is collaborating differently and better than it ever has in the past," agrees Rodney Cruise, senior vice president and COO of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

States John Guthrie of Halifax Health: "We are working together. That's the strength that we have."

And, for good measure, Keith Norden, president and CEO of the Team Volusia Economic Development Corp., has



Distinction & Diversity

DeLand is home to historic Stetson University and features a downtown highlighted by arts and cultural attractions, and a strip of 19th-century buildings.

Deltona is the county's most populous city, it sits alongside Lake Monroe and attracts worldwide visitors with its numerous nature trails.

Edgewater is located on the shore of the Indian River and features 142 acres of designated parkland.

Lake Helen is nicknamed the "Gem of Florida" by virtue of its tree-lined streets, historic architecture and small-town charm.

Ormond Beach is bordered by the Tomoka River to the west and the Atlantic to the east, and delivers a wealth of water-related recreation opportunities, as well as an historic downtown district with ample retail and dining choices.

Pierson is referred to as the "Fern Capital of the World," relying greatly on agriculture.

"One thing that is apparent is that location and community resources are making Volusia County extremely competitive in the economic development arena."

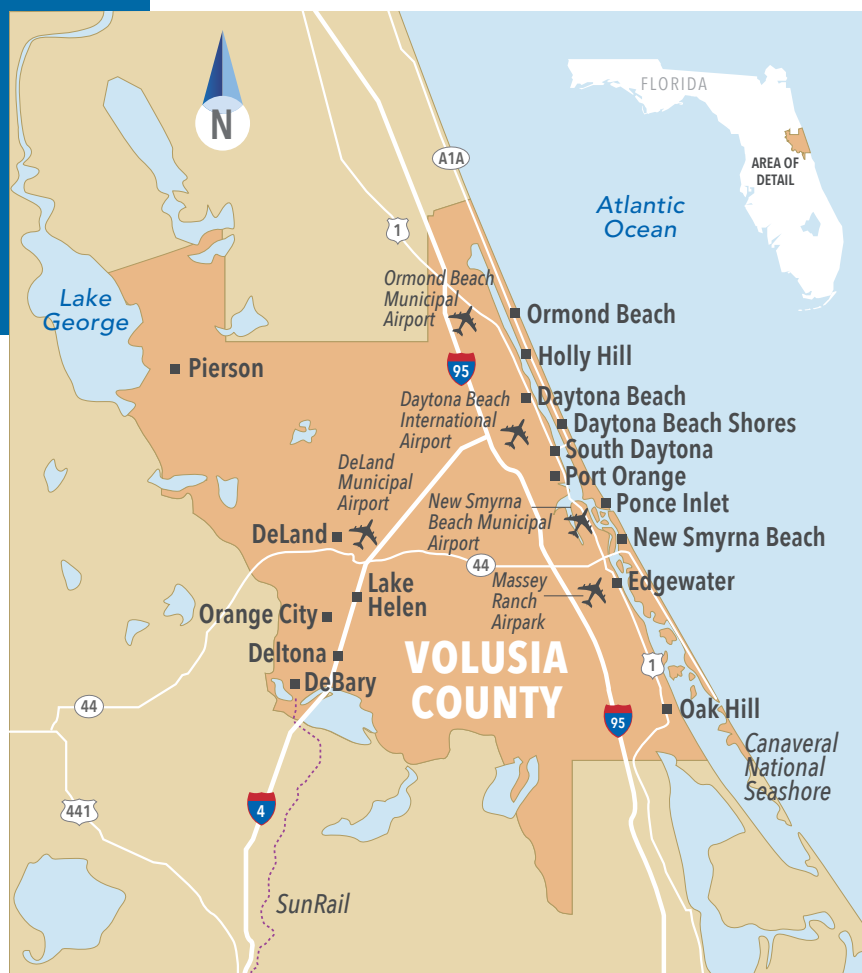
- Keith Norden,
President and CEO of the
Team Volusia Economic
Development Corporation

this to say: "The thing that makes Volusia County very different are the partnerships and the collaboration that we have. We all get along."

COHESION.

Mostly, there is unified movement forward, bringing both an uncommon sense of one about the future and substantial post-pandemic promise.

Bob Davis, president and CEO of the Volusia Lodging & Hospitality Association, has lived in the county for 50 years. His conclusion: "I've never seen the explosion, or the greatness, that's happening [here]."



MAP TERESANNE RUSSELL



Daytona 500
starting line

DID YOU KNOW?

Volusia County has been “global” for more than a century, becoming synonymous for fast cars while supplanting Belgium and France as the preferred location for world land speed records. Today, from its Daytona Beach headquarters, NASCAR sanctions more than 1,500 races at 100-plus tracks in 48 states, Canada, Mexico and Europe.

WHAT’S IN A NAME? A LOT.

Volusia County lies near the intersection of interstates 4 and 95. In many ways, I-4 puts the county at the crossroads of Central Florida, including Orlando and Tampa. I-95, meanwhile, connects the county to the nearby Space Coast, Jacksonville and South Florida, as well as the entire Eastern Seaboard.

The county, close in size to Rhode Island, is about 25 miles northeast of Orlando, 30 miles north of the Kennedy Space Center, 90 miles south of Jacksonville and 250 miles from Miami.

Wrapped within are those 16 cities, 47 miles of beaches, the scenic St. Johns River, lagoons and freshwater springs, entertainment and enterprise.

As Norden of the Team Volusia Economic Development Corp. explains things, effective marketing of the region required a magnet — an instant locator with global gravitas. Like Daytona Beach, home of

the Daytona 500, NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) and the Daytona International Speedway, commonly referred to as the world center of auto racing.

“Daytona, because of the racing, is what’s known globally. We take advantage of that brand. So, we call ourselves the Greater Daytona Region,” Norden explains.

“We’re blessed by a global brand when we travel to recruit internationally. People know and have heard the name.”

Jordan Jiloty, managing director, Government & Community Affairs, NASCAR and chairman, Team Volusia Economic Development Corporation, drives the point a bit further. “What NASCAR represents,” Jiloty describes, “is a way for us to showcase what we have here, and what’s been built here [in Daytona Beach and Volusia County].”

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Contact Team Volusia Economic Development Corporation

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TEAMVOLUSIA

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Location: Victory Circle at ONE DAYTONA



Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical University
Research Park

INNOVATION DRIVES GROWTH IN THE ECONOMY

"The area is in a real renaissance and has been for the past few years. And we're seeing that through new investment coming into town. And I think you're going to see a lot more coming in, across the board."

- **Jayne Fifer**,
President
and CEO of
the Volusia
Manufacturers
Association,
founded in 1980

In Volusia, there are three — three — separate and independent organizations promoting economic development countywide. And that, as the saying goes, is a very good thing.

A dynamic innovation-driven economy totaling 14,000 enterprises and producing more than \$17 billion annually has taken shape across multiple industries — ranging from advanced manufacturing and aviation/aerospace to logistics/distribution, entrepreneurship/innovation and more.

Suzanne Forbes, managing partner of James Moore & Co., a ubiquitous accounting firm countywide, takes a stab at describing the activity. "We have businesses moving here, but it's not just businesses moving here," Forbes says. "One of the big things is that we have businesses expanding in this community. They are growing. ... The amount of growth I see with clients in the area is tremendous. And it's across all industries."

"We didn't miss a beat [during the pandemic]," notes Norden of Team Volusia. "We continue to be in focus. ... We are definitely a global focus community."

Hence the need for the three: Team Volusia, the CEO Business Alliance and the Volusia County Division of Economic Development.

Team Volusia is a public/private partnership, funded by Volusia County government, municipalities, colleges and universities, and 80 private-sector investors. The CEO Business Alliance, formed by business and civic leader J. Hyatt Brown, is a privately funded, self-governing organization. The Volusia County Division of Economic Development also is funded by the county government and generally guides efforts related to Volusia's economic development ecosystem.

"Because we have a high level of respect for each other," says Kent Sharples, president of the CEO Business Alliance, "the collaboration comes together the way it should."

Clearly, there's plenty of industry innovation and economic growth to go around, such as at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, which provides a nexus between the academic environment of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach and partner enterprises in aerospace and other industries.

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"There are a lot of good things going on," says Cruise, the university's senior vice president and COO, citing the recent recruitment of three international companies and the attraction of more than \$54 million of outside investment into the park, among other examples.

To complete Phase I of the park's development, another 10,000 square feet of production space recently was added, dubbed the Advanced Technology and Manufacturing Center. Half of the space will support the expansion of WeatherFlow-Tempest Inc., an existing innovator of weather observation, modeling and forecasting technology. The other half of the building is devoted to research park operations.

The cornerstone of the park is the MicaPlex (officially the John Mica Engineering and Aerospace Innovation Complex), where the entrepreneurial ecosystem mostly resides, including an incubator that supports start-up and early-stage companies, among other components.

Embry-Riddle actually sits on acreage at Daytona Beach International Airport, which also houses the Volusia County Business Incubation Program, in partnership with the University of Central Florida, the Florida High Tech Corridor Council and others.

Aside from accommodating passenger travel on 890 acres, the airport consists of 2,000 acres and serves as an economic engine to the roar of a \$2.1 billion annual impact. The airport has approximately 50 tenant agreements, plus substantial undeveloped land that is drawing "lots of interest" by virtue of its proximity to Brevard County's Space Coast, according to Volusia County Manager George Recktenwald.

Further, Recktenwald notes, the availability of air services — and the land — is proving critical to attracting



corporate and regional headquarters, service companies and manufacturing/R&D facilities.

In January, for example, Volusia County established a site plan that placed a special designation on 435 acres of undeveloped land at the airport. The move promises to speed up local and state permitting, making the property significantly more attractive to aviation and aerospace firms.

Already, global giants are dotted across the landscape, such as B. Braun, a 182-year-old German company and the world's largest privately owned medical device producer. As the company continues to expand its manufacturing and distribution presence in Volusia, Norden calls the investment a "stamp of approval," giving the county "credibility that we are a good place to do business."

Manufacturing and distribution, in fact, are very big deals in Volusia. While Norden, Sharples and other county promoters certainly will stay busy at international tradeshow, they aren't likely to neglect advanced manufacturing and logistics/distribution.

"The area is in a real renaissance and has been for the past few years," comments Jayne Fifer, president and CEO of the Volusia Manufacturers Association, founded in 1980. "And we're seeing that through new investment coming into town. And I think you're going to see a lot more coming in, across the board."

Three examples: This spring, Alcom LLC, a leading manufacturer and distributor of premium trailers based in Maine, announced an expansion to DeLand. Factory Direct Marine & RV announced the selection of Edgewater for its second Florida location and eventual relocation of its headquarters from Tennessee. Bajío, a maker of performance sunglasses, chose a New Smyrna Beach site for its headquarters.

As for distribution, a sign of things to come arrived in late 2020 with the opening of an Amazon Fulfillment Center — 1.4 million square feet — at 129-acre Portland Industrial Park in Deltona. Deltona Mayor Heidi Herzberg sees more of those mega centers in the county's future, with a focus on "bringing in sustainable jobs."



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In addition, a general wave of entrepreneurship — both big as in aviation/aerospace but also small — has washed ashore.

"A lot of people are saying, 'I don't think I necessarily want to go back to

work and work for anybody. I want to start up a business now," says Nancy Keefer, Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce president. "And they're doing it by the beach."

Heather Vargas, managing partner of

the Cobb Cole law firm, agrees, noting, "We're seeing more of the traditional businesses coming back and feeling comfortable and investing in intellectual property and their intangible assets."

And those people are finding a welcoming place for growth.

One case in point is that new expeditious permitting on the 435 acres of undeveloped land at Daytona Beach International Airport. Another came in March when the Jacksonville Port Authority and Volusia County signed a memorandum of understanding that establishes a working relationship to promote each other's geographical and business advantages.

The goal of the partnership is to attract more global businesses to Volusia County, bring more Florida-bound cargo through JAXPORT and create high-wage jobs for Florida. Under the agreement, JAXPORT and Volusia will work together to attract new distribution, manufacturing and related facilities to the county while also highlighting the logistics benefits of moving cargo bound for Central Florida through JAXPORT.

"The county really does take a proactive approach in setting the environment for the economic growth," says Helga van Eckert, Volusia County director of economic development.

"There is land, and there are opportunities," says Brian Rademacher, economic development director for the city of Ormond Beach. "Manufacturing, aviation and professional services are all doing well."

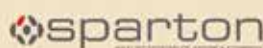
Concludes Recktenwald: "It's a great place to live and a great place to work. And we are discovered. People are coming."

VOLUSIA COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



"Our decision to expand manufacturing operations and relocate our headquarters to Volusia County was motivated by the pro-business environment and support from Volusia County Economic Development's business retention and expansion program."

Bill Toti
President & CEO



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Enter Daytona State College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Stetson University and Bethune-Cookman University, along with the University of Central Florida – Daytona Beach, Keiser University and Palmer College of Chiropractic.

"We couldn't be in a better place with the variety of schools and universities that we have," says Ed Noseworthy, president/CEO for AdventHealth Daytona Beach.

Adds Vargas of the Cobb Cole law firm: "One of the things that's amazing about Volusia County is the number of higher education opportunities that are available here." A native of Daytona Beach, Vargas serves on the executive board of the FUTURES Foundation for Volusia County Schools, established in 1985 to increase business/community involvement in public schools.

Daytona State offers 100-plus certificate, associate and bachelor's degree programs, as well as customized short-term training to businesses through its Center for Business and Industry, Small Business Development Center, School of Workforce Training and School of Adult Education.

In April, Daytona State announced the creation of a new Automotive Apprenticeship program made possible through the Florida Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant program. The college will work in conjunction with Daytona Toyota to develop the curriculum and receive additional support from CareerSource Flagler



Rendering of the new Cici & Hyatt Brown Hall for Health & Innovation at Stetson University

Volusia. In May, a ranking by Best Value Schools placed Daytona State No. 2 nationally for an "online electrical engineering degree" and No. 3 among the top electronic engineering programs overall.

Embry-Riddle offers more than 100 degrees, from associate to doctorate, in aviation; applied science; business; computers and technology; engineering; security, intelligence and safety; and space. Embry-Riddle's undergraduate Aerospace Engineering programs have been ranked No. 1 by U.S. News & World Report for the past 20 years.

In July 2020, Christopher F. Roellke, became the 10th president in Stetson's 138-year history. Stetson ranks No. 4 on U.S. News & World Report's 2021 list of Best Regional Universities (South), and was recognized as one of The Princeton Review's 386 Best Colleges in its 2021 edition. The private liberal arts university in DeLand has more than 55 majors and minors leading to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education and Bachelor of Business Administration degrees, in addition to 18 graduate programs.

In June, groundbreaking occurred for the Cici & Hyatt Brown Hall for Health & Innovation, a 40,000-square-foot building that will create a science

complex for students studying the health sciences, environmental sciences and other fields.

Bethune-Cookman, founded in 1904, offers 38 degrees and is one of three private, historically black colleges in Florida. Last year, its L. Gale Lemerand School of Nursing had a 100% pass rate among its spring graduates on the National Council Licensure Examination. Recent grants at the university include \$400,000 to combat food insecurity/food desert; \$1 million to assist small churches; and \$13 million in recurring state funding to serve students.

Additionally, among the new leaders at Bethune-Cookman is Glenda Noel-Ney, vice president of Institutional Advancement, who arrived in 2020 with an impressive background as a fundraiser, including work with Jazz at Lincoln Center, part of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City.

And, as for entrepreneurship, local leaders are responding to this increasingly prevalent, pandemic-driven line of thought among residents and newcomers alike: "Why go back to work for somebody? I want to start my own business."

COUNTY IS CREATING A TALENT PIPELINE

Like in many other regions, the post-pandemic challenge to not only get workers back on the job, but also to elevate their skill sets is happening in Volusia. The county provides a case study in win-win-win partnerships among industries, educators and residents.

Meanwhile, educators — from local colleges and universities to K-12 schools — are listening and reacting to labor-force needs by developing and implementing new targeted courses of instruction while also placing a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship.

The result: a rich and deep talent pool that totals more than 200,000 workers within a 100-mile radius.

Robin King, president and CEO of CareerSource Flagler Volusia, describes those community partners as being “joined at the hip.”

Daytona State College President Tom LoBasso asserts, “The main role in our community is to provide talent to the variety of businesses and organizations here.”

Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce has created a new staff position, vice president of resource development.

In collaboration with CareerSource, a chamber grant is funding an aptitude-testing program in Volusia County Schools for the purpose of aligning student skill sets with future jobs.

Fifer of the Volusia Manufacturers Association points to her industry and a new regional employer-led advanced training program at Daytona State, launched by the Florida Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education. The earn-while-you-learn model provides students with a pathway to obtain an industry recognized degree while gaining valuable experience at a local sponsoring company. In two years, graduates of the program can have an associate’s degree in engineering technology.

According to John Guthrie, vice president, corporate communications & executive director, Healthy Communities at Halifax Health “There would be a terrible nursing shortage, if not for our colleges and universities.



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France
Tower at
Halifax Health

HEALTH CARE IS EXPANDING TO KEEP UP WITH A GROWING COMMUNITY

Patients across the county are being treated with surgical precision, literally, thanks to two providers: independent/community Halifax Health and interconnected AdventHealth.

Halifax Health has the county's lone Level II Trauma Center and consists of three hospitals and 46 specialty services locations. Its first hospital opened in 1928, and while community hospitals steadily disappeared through the years, Halifax Health remained strong by avoiding the notion of "just doing the bare minimum," according to John Guthrie. Guthrie adds that "technology and training have been saviors," pointing to radiology and heart groups as being particularly outstanding. Also, he cites, Halifax Health provided \$56 million worth of uncompensated care to patients in 2020.

Further, Halifax Health is continuing to expand a successful partnership with University of Florida Health,

one dating back to 2015. Last year, the relationship brought a new hospital, the Halifax Health I UF Health Medical Center of Deltona — a six-story medical center with 43 licensed beds and a two-story medical annex building. "That provides a differentiator because we can attract a higher echelon of providers," Guthrie says about the UF Health partnership.

And this spring, Halifax Health announced four new ExpressCare locations in Volusia County along with plans for a new medical park in Port Orange, where Halifax Health will be the anchor tenant. "With the increasing number of people moving to our community, our residents will need enhanced access to primary care, urgent care and other ambulatory health-care services," explains Halifax Health President and CEO Jeff Feasel.

AdventHealth is one of the nation's largest faith-based health care systems, with approximately 50 hospitals

and hundreds of care sites in nearly a dozen states. In Volusia County, AdventHealth hospitals are located in Daytona Beach, DeLand, Orange City and New Smyrna Beach, with each receiving a patient-safety grade of "A" from the industry-recognized Leapfrog Group. Additionally, there are five urgent care centers, six emergency care locations, eight imaging centers and six sports medicine/rehabilitative sites.

As with Halifax Health, continued growth is a theme. In May, AdventHealth Fish Memorial in Orange City officially opened a new \$100 million patient tower for obstetric services. The 72-bed tower expands the size of the hospital's emergency room, among other benefits. Also, the 24-bed AdventHealth Port Orange Freestanding Emergency Department is rising, to be operated as part of AdventHealth Daytona Beach. And in early 2020, more than 100 acres of land were purchased at the intersection of Interstate 95 and State Road 44 for the future relocation of AdventHealth New Smyrna Beach. Its current location is landlocked and unable to expand.

Plus, AdventHealth is seeking to move closer to its patients, literally. A partnership with Volusia County Schools, for example, is enhancing the delivery of care via three-way calling among parents, providers and the school.

"What we're normally known for is people coming to us when something has gone wrong," says Ed Noseworthy, CEO for AdventHealth Daytona Beach, who also has responsibility for AdventHealth New Smyrna Beach. "So, we're trying to be a little more proactive in being able to prevent [patients coming to the hospital]." Similarly, AdventHealth is working with real estate developers with the thought of "How can we approach health care in a community before that health care is needed?"

As a result, health care is ... healthy.

HALIFAX HEALTH



BY THE NUMBERS

Daytona Beach



Port Orange



Deltona



Three Full-Service Hospitals Open 24 Hours a Day

TOP 50 Halifax Health has been awarded Nation's TOP 50 Cardiovascular Hospital for two consecutive years

1,653 Babies were born in 2020 at Halifax Health

Level III Halifax Health Medical Center has the area's only Level III Neonatal ICU

104,979 Halifax Health - Emergency Department visits last year

1,065 Patients were treated last year by the area's only Level II Trauma Center

14,502 Over 14,000 surgeries were performed last year at Halifax Health

\$56 Million Halifax Health provided over \$56 million, at cost, of uncompensated care and community programs last year

15,000 Over 15,000 COVID-19 vaccines administered to date

Over
500

Physicians on staff at
Halifax Health

Over
56

Specialties represented
by Halifax Health



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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE IS BOOMING

Recently driven down the stretch of highway along Interstate 95 in Daytona Beach that's called the LPGA Boulevard corridor? If so, you're one of roughly 88 million people who travel through there annually. And, likely, you've seen the commercial growth.

Five or six years ago, the big stories included the arrival of a Trader Joe's distribution center, Tanger Outlets mall, the Tomoka Town Center, a luxury apartment complex or two, and the new headquarters site for TopBuild Corp., a Fortune 1000 company. Then came more retail, restaurants and the massive live/work/play communities of Mosaic and Latitude Margaritaville.

Today, that's old news — replaced by emerging activity in the form of new shopping centers — the Shoppes at Williamson Crossing across the street from Tomoka Town Center, the Cornerstone Exchange, and Tymber Creek Village. Those additions could bring another 500,000 square feet of stores, dining and service businesses to the LPGA area. And, for good measure, the I-95/LPGA interchange has a Buc-ee's, the grandest gas station in Florida with its 120 pumps and 53,000-square-foot convenience store. That's the size of some supermarkets.

Plus, more is on the way for the corridor, such as a 130,000-square-foot Veterans Affairs outpatient center to be built and opened by early 2024, as announced earlier this year.

Frank Molnar, principal of Lifestyle Group and Oceans Luxury Realty, who has had a development role in many of the county's biggest commercial real estate deals over the past few years, provides this succinct summation: "It's an exciting time to be part of the Daytona Beach business community."

It's not only Daytona Beach, either. Consider Ormond Crossings, a



Tanger Outlets,
Daytona Beach

3,000-acre, mixed-use development at I-95 and U.S. Highway 1 that extends beyond Volusia into Flagler County. Brian Rademacher, economic development director for the city of Ormond Beach, labels it the "future grow" for his city.

As preliminarily planned, the development constitutes a business park, town center and residential neighborhoods, among other components. Because of its proximity to major transportation links, including Ormond Beach Municipal Airport and Florida East Coast Railroad, the undeveloped site is believed to be the ideal location for multiple types of industrial and commercial uses. The city of Ormond Beach and developer Tomoka Holdings LLC, in partnership with the county, are working together on the planning, approvals and permitting.

Another example of growth potential is Portland Industrial Park in Deltona, where the first major tenant was an

Amazon distribution center on 85 acres. Arriving in late 2020, it's the largest distribution center in the county, double the size of the LPGA Trader Joe's center, and the second-largest building overall, smaller only than Daytona International Speedway's grandstand building.

Yet, Jerry Mayes, the city's economic development administrator and ecological sustainability manager, touts the industrial park as being "bigger than Amazon," and there are expansive plans for its total of 250 acres along Interstate 4. Those plans include an additional 1-million-square-foot logistics center building, another building at 198,000 square feet and a third at 178,000 square feet. "Then," Mayes says, "we still have opportunity for additional light manufacturing concepts."

Ambition that is actual. The same can generally be said about the county's appetite for commercial real estate development.



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Selina A.
Business Services
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Daytona Beach

Interstate 4 running 27 miles west from the Volusia coast, while Interstate 95 runs north/south for 38 miles in the county. The same goes for more localized arteries. Meanwhile, by the end of 2020 Votran — the Volusia County Public Transit System — provided nearly 2.7 million rides throughout its fleet of services.

SunRail, a commuter line connecting Volusia with Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties to the west, also is part of the transportation picture. And there's now new discussion of service

expansion. Currently, SunRail ends at DeBary in Volusia, but preliminary agreements are in place that could make a 12-mile extension farther east to DeLand a reality. Maybe.

COUNTY BOASTS TRANSPORTATION MILESTONES

File this bit of information under "Surprising Facts About Volusia County." During the very midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in summer and fall 2020, Daytona Beach International Airport was the busiest airport in Florida for takeoffs and landings, according to Federal Aviation Administration statistics. For the record, the activity largely was the result of flight operations at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and takeoffs and landings by private planes. The airlines that provide daily service at Daytona airport accounted for only a fraction of the total.

Yet, regardless of details, it's clear: DAB, as it's called, is a real fixture on the state's transportation map, serving both as a training site and as a hub for daily nonstop flights along with a wide assortment of connecting flights. Also, pardon the pun, DAB is a real economic engine — making big noise with an annual economic impact of \$2.1 billion to the county, as tabbed by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Notably, that impact touches the very top. Airport Director Karen Feaster is a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and joined the DAB team as a volunteer intern in 1992, the year the airport opened. DAB recently completed a \$14 million facelift, too.

To complement, general and corporate aircraft are served by municipal airports in DeLand, Ormond Beach and New Smyrna, as well as privately owned Massey Ranch Airpark in Edgewater and Spruce Creek Airport in Port Orange.

Unlike with air travel, no such surprises are apparent regarding roadways, where, as Volusia County Manager George Recktenwald states things, "We're trying to help solidify our very strategic location as the head, or beginning, of the I-4 corridor."

Consequently, FDOT work seemingly never ceases, with

The most significant transportation milestone in the past two years was somewhat based on beauty — the opening of the award-winning Tom Staed Veterans Memorial Bridge, ranked by Roads and Bridges magazine as the No. 3 bridge constructed nationally in 2020. The picturesque bridge crosses the Halifax River to connect east Volusia's mainland with its beaches, replacing a drawbridge that had been there for more than 60 years.



DeBary SunRail

Embry-Riddle Research Park Business Earns FDA Clearance for Medical Invention

TECHFIT Digital Surgery — creator of precisely fitted custom implants for people with injuries caused by trauma, infection or cancer — just received U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) clearance to market its Patient-Specific Maxillofacial System in the United States.

Since joining Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Research Park in 2018, TECHFIT Digital Surgery has created high-paying jobs, invested more than \$2 million to help drive Volusia County's economy forward, and sold 2,400 innovative surgical implants, CEO and Co-founder Mauricio Toro reported.

The company is promoting job growth and economic development from its manufacturing facility in the MicaPlex, the cornerstone facility of Embry-Riddle's Research Park in Daytona Beach. At the same time, TECHFIT Digital Surgery is improving quality of life for patients who have suffered serious injuries or illnesses such as tumor removal.

For each implant, Toro's team consults extensively with the patient's surgeon before creating custom implants offering a perfect fit. The TECHFIT approach helps reduce surgical time and complication rates while improving accuracy, Toro said. The company has earned multiple awards and scored a prior approval from the FDA for a wrist implant.

Expanding Innovation

TECHFIT Digital Surgery is one of many success stories to emerge from Embry-Riddle's Research Park. Since its launch four years ago, innovation at the Research Park has generated 104 full-time jobs paying an average annual salary of \$67,000.

In addition, 24 entrepreneurial companies affiliated with the Research Park have raised \$41.4 million from investors and grants, while employing 159 student interns. Overall, Embry-Riddle's economic development activities have created 14,800 permanent jobs in Florida, producing total annual economic impacts of nearly \$2 billion within the state, according to the Washington Economics Group.

Embry-Riddle's Research Park seeds innovation by bringing both established and emerging businesses together with hundreds of faculty experts and students who bring fresh ideas to the table. The Research Park helps companies stay ahead of technology trends by plugging into a transformational incubator environment. At the same time, as students interact directly with business leaders to solve real-world problems, they are preparing to become Florida's next generation of innovators.

Incubating Big Ideas

As one example, Scott Weintraub swiftly launched his own Florida-based business, now called Modularity Space, Inc. in 2016, after graduating from Embry-Riddle with a degree in Commercial Space Operations. From its headquarters in Embry-Riddle's Research Park, Modularity Space so far employs 16 people, including six full-time professionals as well as part-time workers and interns.

Weintraub's big idea, which has received support from NASA and



TECHFIT Digital Surgery CEO and Co-founder Mauricio Toro shows off a high-tech surgical implant that just won FDA clearance.

the U.S. Air Force development group AFWERX, has the potential to revolutionize the space industry. By developing modular, reusable satellites and manufacturing them in a standardized way, Weintraub believes it should be possible to cut satellite makers' costs and development time by more than half — while reducing space debris.

"Our goal," he explains, "is to accelerate innovation by orders of magnitude by preventing companies from having to build or buy their own satellite." By 2022, Weintraub expects to fly one of his modular-built satellites — with onboard lease space available to serve up to 25 companies. This novel satellite rental model should be in high demand. Building a satellite from scratch involves a hefty investment of time and money, and often, companies simply want to place a particular instrument in space, Weintraub notes.

Advancing Rural Broadband

Aveopt Inc., the most recent addition to Embry-Riddle's Research Park, plans to create new jobs in Volusia County once its disruptive communication technology takes off, CEO Arthur Kahn reported. Aveopt's Communication Infrastructure Mesh (CIM™) will collect, analyze, prioritize and distribute improved wireless communication signals across an integrated land, air and space network, vastly expanding connectivity in rural and remote areas while making efficient use of current telecommunications and utility infrastructure.

By bridging gaps in connectivity and improving signal quality, the CIM™ technology will help make many different applications more robust and effective — from fighting wildfires and improving telehealth services, to advancing urban air and ground mobility, safety and security, transportation, education.

In particular, the Aveopt technology suggests a way to accelerate the development and use of autonomous vehicles. "By improving on-board connectivity of autonomous vehicles, from place to place, developers can improve the safety of autonomous vehicles, too," Kahn explains. "Aveopt's CIM™ could also vastly expand connectivity in rural and remote areas."

Embry-Riddle's Research Park plays a key role in supporting business throughout Florida, and particularly in Volusia County. It is also providing real-world learning opportunities for graduates of the university so that they can, in turn, make important contributions to Florida's economy.

Companies like Aveopt, Modularity Space and TECHFIT Digital Surgery — to name only a few of the successful organizations affiliated with Embry-Riddle's Research Park — are advancing innovation and promoting efficiencies that support business growth. That enterprise will pay off in job growth, enhanced prosperity and improved overall quality of life for Volusia County communities.



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Ocean Walk
Shoppes

"You're not going to stop the growth and development; you have to manage it. ... That's the bigger challenge for us as a municipality and other municipalities around the region."

- Heidi Herzberg,
Mayor of Deltona

NEW-HOME COMMUNITIES ABOUND

The list of new-home communities throughout the county isn't endless; it only seems that way. There is Latitude Margaritaville in Daytona Beach, along with Victoria Gardens in DeLand, Brown's Landing in Port Orange, Sarinna Lakes in New Smyrna, Woodbridge Lakes in Edgewater, Pineland in Ormond Beach and so on — a slew of them.

In essence, it represents housing construction east and west, north and south. Or, as Glenn Storch of Storch Law describes, "We do see a lot of projects coming online that will be exciting for the area." Storch, by the way, has been engaged in Volusia real estate development for the past 35 years and represents approximately one-fifth of the county's land.

Why the surge? Frank Molnar has a simple answer: "Seems like more and more the word is getting out about how tremendous an area this is."

Molnar then offers an explanation. "The cities in Volusia County are business friendly," he says. "All of the municipalities and the county are working together better than ever. More and more companies are realizing that [this] is an amazing location to not only start a business, but also the perfect location to relocate their businesses and to live."

The bottom line is that housing is hot.

And that's not even considering the county's resale market. According to data from Redfin, a national real estate brokerage based in Seattle, Volusia's home prices were up nearly 20% this spring, compared to last year, on average selling for a median price of \$270,000 after just 33 days on the market, compared to 55 days last year.

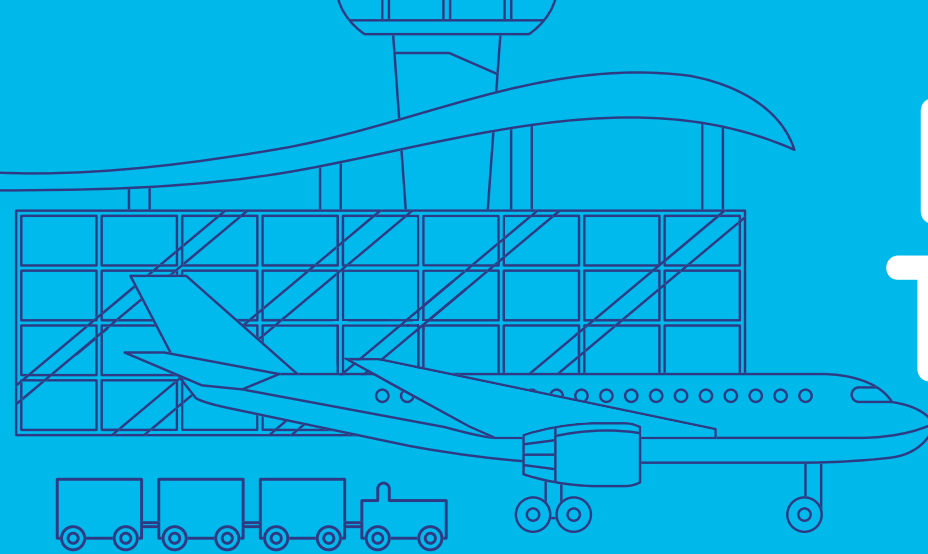
The housing market is so busy, in fact, that it bears watching for another reason, cites Heidi Herzberg, the

mayor of Deltona, which is one of Volusia's hottest places for new planned subdivisions.

Such activity brings both blessing and curse.

Perhaps nowhere is that more apparent than with the potential of Avalon Park Daytona. In July 2020, its developer, Avalon Park Group/sitEX, closed on more than 3,000 acres of land on State Road 40, west of Interstate 95 and south of West Granada Boulevard/State Road 40, next to Latitude Margaritaville. The goal was to build an entirely new town, including 3,350 single family homes, 1,650 single family attached units and 5,000 multi-family units (plus mixed-use commercial space).

Today, Avalon Park Group/sitEX, the same developer of highly successful Avalon Park in east Orlando, led by well-known Beat Kahli, is moving forward. Following much deliberation, Daytona Beach commissioners in May unanimously approved a preliminary plat for 783 acres and approximately 1,600 residential units in Avalon Phase 1. The first homes are expected to be ready for occupancy next year.



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Ponce Inlet
Dog Beach

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES IS GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Clearly, the affirmation was an easy choice. In 2000, residents of the county voted to approve a referendum to fund the Volusia ECHO program, designed to finance the acquisition, restoration, construction or improvement of facilities to be used for environmental, cultural, historical and outdoor recreational purposes. Then last year, with the program sunset in 2021, residents did the same again — voting by more than a 70% approval rate to continue ECHO funding through 2041. Since 2001, the program has raised more than \$95 million and funded more than 240 projects.

Similarly, with the looming sunset of Volusia Forever, part of a statewide conservation and recreation lands acquisition effort, that program was extended by voters, too. Since the inception of Florida Forever in July 2001, the state has purchased more than 869,477 acres of land with approximately \$3.2 billion. Counties compete for those Forever dollars, and Volusia has seen its share.

ECHO and Volusia Forever are financed by small property tax rates — a maximum of one-fifth of a mill per year for each program. And the county's residents don't mind paying.

"Conservation, protection and preservation aren't buzzwords, but rather guiding principles ingrained into all of our processes and procedures and our programs and services," Volusia officials wrote in their 2021 State of the County report, adding that such efforts "significantly advanced the cause of natural resource preservation."

Not every county in Florida can say the same, contends Jerry Mayes, city of Deltona's manager for economic development & ecological tourism sustainability. His words: "The people in Volusia County 20 years ago decided we are willing to tax ourselves, so that we can have money to set aside land and historical buildings, and everything along those lines. ... Once [natural resources] are gone, they're gone forever.

"We have all the cities working together in this (ecological) area. We're starting to become known for that. It has been a blessing for our citizens and to our visitors."

- **Jerry Mayes,**
Manager of economic
development & ecological tourism
sustainability, city of Deltona

"We're on the ocean and we're away from the ocean but on the river [St. Johns and Halifax, among others]. And we've always preserved as much green space as we could with reasonable development."

Mayes' Deltona, the county's largest city, provides ample proof. In 2019, it was designated as one of Florida's official Trail Towns by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails. Among Deltona's nature trails are the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop and the Spring-to-Spring Trail, which extends from Gemini Springs Park in DeBary to DeLeon Springs State



Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet



Paddleboarding
in Daytona Beach

Park with trail heads at multiple locations. In addition, among numerous other well-preserved natural settings, Deltona has the 20-mile Lake Butler Chain Blueways Trail — canoes, kayaks and paddleboards — all within the city. Plus, there are eight ecological nature parks and another four new parks in development or planned — essentially nature-themed parks. Not surprisingly, ecotourism in Deltona has bloomed.

Across the county, the ECHO and Volusia Forever programs have been responsible for the preservation of more than 38,000 acres of land for public use, as well as projects in support of parks, playgrounds and ballfields; museums, theaters and cultural/arts centers; and other land-restoration efforts.

Infrastructure to protect natural resources also is a countywide priority. Last October, for example, two water improvement projects moved forward when the county landed state grants to help fund new stormwater systems impacting Mosquito Lagoon on the east side of the county and Lake Beresford on the county's west side. Both projects are expected to result in higher levels of stormwater treatment reaching those bodies of water.

Further, the county and the cities of west Volusia launched a public-awareness campaign, titled "Time to Change the Way We Go," to focus on issues that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has identified

as the top contributors to pollution impacting popular Blue Spring.

All is in the name of protecting — and enhancing — the county's natural resources.

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VISITORS ARE THE ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR VOLUSIA COUNTY

With all there is to describe about tourism across the county — and there's plenty — this is the most telling: In the midst of the pandemic, when workplaces were vacant and tourism virtually disappeared everywhere, people still came to Volusia, even to work.

"People were thinking, 'Why not Volusia County for our remote office?' And it's true," says Keefer of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Pointing out that "wide open fun" has been a tourism theme for years, Lori Campbell Baker, executive director of the Daytona Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, adds: "Never has it been more relevant than during a pandemic."

"We didn't suffer like everybody else," agrees Bob Davis, president/CEO of the Lodging & Hospitality Association of Volusia. "Fresh and clean. Beautiful salt air. It's a drive-to market and with no lines. We were nowhere near historical levels. So, there was some economic suffering, but not as bad as many other places."

And, although not great of course, that was good news for an economy deeply tied to visitors. For every dollar spent on renting a room, Davis notes, 21 cents go to hotel, 27 cents go to shopping and 52 cents to gas, amusements and restaurants. "We are the economic engine of Volusia County," he adds, also citing the full expectation that people will continue to "come in droves."

Quite apparently, hoteliers feel the same way, particularly in Daytona Beach, where approximately \$500 million can be totaled in current new construction and renovations. For example, on the heels of a four-star Hard Rock Hotel Daytona Beach joining the market in spring 2018, with \$40 million invested into the 200-room beachfront property, the venerable, iconic Plaza Resort & Spa made plans for renovation work that now continues along landmark Seabreeze Boulevard, which also is getting a facelift. And a \$50 million, 191-room Marriott Renaissance hotel is being built, scheduled to open next summer.

Not coincidentally, Volusia has three tourism advertising authorities, each

promoting a specific area of the county, and all funded by a portion of the 12.5% tax assessed on hotel stays.

At the same time, the county is much more than sand, surf and beach hotels — as in historic downtowns, arts/culture and general entertainment enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.

The cities of DeLand and Sanford offer quaint, iconic downtowns, with DeLand in 1997 becoming Florida's first community to receive the Main Street designation. Sanford, on the shores of vast Lake Monroe, has been revitalized by new upscale eateries and breweries. New Smyrna Beach has lively Flagler Avenue to go along with its nearby downtown district. Ormond Beach's downtown is highlighted by the locally owned and operated Granada Plaza Shopping Center and its multitude of dining/shopping options. Even ONE DAYTONA, across from Daytona International Speedway, can be considered a downtown — sort of — serving as a sprawling place to gather, even if you're not into racing. It's an inviting 300,000-square-foot retail, dining and entertainment district. New for 2021 is Run Daytona (Sept. 10-12), a family-oriented run that takes participants through Daytona International Speedway.

Deltona has its network of nature trails. There are grand nature parks, such as Blue Spring State Park in Orange City and De Leon Springs State Park in De Leon Springs. De Leon Springs is ideal for active outdoor recreation in the form of canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding. And it's right next door to Chuck Lennon Park's seven trails for off-road cycling.

Meanwhile, the Ocean Center offers an entirely different reason to congregate: conventions. With the Ocean Center mostly empty in 2020 and early 2021, renovations took the stage, with the work encompassing both functionality and style. Just before the pandemic hit, the Ocean Center had hosted two major industry

groups, VISIT FLORIDA's Florida Huddle and the Southeast Tourism Society.

Arts and culture? The Museum of Arts & Sciences in Daytona Beach, a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate, is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The 100,000-square-foot facility, located on a 90-acre Florida nature preserve, contains a planetarium, permanent art collections, restored railroad cars, decorative arts, Cuban art, African art and hands-on science center. The Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art houses the largest collection of Florida-based art in the world.

The Museum of Art – DeLand is an interactive visual arts museum of permanent collections, art exhibitions and educational programs. Ormond Beach's Ocean Art Gallery showcases

the works of more than 25 artists in media that range from watercolor and photography to pottery and sterling silver jewelry. The Casements in Ormond Beach is the former winter home of millionaire and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller.

Lighthouse Point Park isn't necessarily about art, but the scene certainly is artistic — a 52-acre inlet park located along the northern shoreline of Ponce de Leon Inlet. A nature trail in the forested area in the center of the park leads to an observation tower overlooking the Halifax River.

And there's an especially uncommon trail — the Monument and Statue Trail and its tour of history, including the Legend of Tomokie at Tomoka State Park in Ormond Beach. Created in 1955, the 40-foot, art-deco statue

commemorates the Timucua people who were native to this area and lived here for thousands of years. The Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statue stands proudly on the campus of Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, while not far away is the Jackie Robinson Ballpark and Statue.

Also, a Wright Flyer Sculpture is at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and a statue of the late NASCAR star Dale Earnhardt Sr. is outside Daytona International Speedway. And, among others, the Veterans Memorial beams at Daytona Beach's Riverfront Park.

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SENSE OF COMMUNITY

A blend of nostalgia, steeped in legacy, to go along with emerging progress.

That's one way to describe the essence of community across Volusia. As the county sprouts anew, deep roots remain.

Rick Karl, who retired in June as director of the county's Department of Aviation and Economic Resources, represents legacy.

He is a Daytona Beach native whose family goes back four generations there. His father, Fred Karl, was a state senator and the last justice of the Florida Supreme Court to be elected by statewide voting. His grandmother, Mary Brennan Karl is considered the founder of Daytona State College.

Karl earned his commercial pilot's license at then-Daytona Beach Regional Airport, where he worked in high school. He practiced law at a venerable local firm (Cobb Cole), as well as at the county attorney's office

before taking over at the Department of Aviation and Economic Resources, where his duties included overseeing the now-Daytona Beach International Airport. Also, he was one of the architects of Team Volusia, which has helped to ensure sustained vitality.

The county, in time and place, has that kind of a distinct homegrown feel.

Not coincidentally, in late April at Volusia's State of the County virtual event, county chair Jeff Brower made this proclamation: "People who live in Volusia County don't necessarily want to be Orange County or Tampa or Fort Lauderdale. Each of those places has something unique to offer. But I believe we're special here. We're different."

Among the special assets is a nonprofit sector marked by high-profile nonprofit organizations.

From July 2020 through May, the Second Harvest Food Bank gave out 5.6 million meals to county residents. The Volusia Council on Aging quadrupled meal deliveries by volunteers.

Philanthropy is a given, such as the Lohman family foundation. Last fall, Lowell and Nancy Lohman, local business owners, made their single largest gift as an endowment to provide diabetes resources for patients at Halifax Health. The result is the Lohman Diabetes Center of Excellence at Halifax Health Medical Center. The Lohman family foundation has also assisted on multiple economic redevelopment projects.

Further, that spirit is evident through corporate commitments, such as the work of Forough Hosseini, founder (along with husband Mori) of ICI Homes, a large regional homebuilder. In 2007, Forough created Food Brings Hope, an organization that fights local homelessness, unemployment and poverty while also helping renters become homeowners. Her efforts have only grown since that time.

Similarly, there is Brown & Brown Inc., cofounded in Daytona Beach in 1939 by J. Adrian Brown. Hyatt Brown, his son, became CEO in 1961 and now chairs one of the largest insurance brokerages nationwide. In turn, Hyatt and wife Cici remain active philanthropists throughout Volusia, while the company opened a \$70 million-plus downtown Daytona Beach headquarters in early 2021 that has spurred adjacent revitalization.

That's progress.

"Community involvement isn't just important; it is essential," says Bob Lloyd, general counsel of Brown & Brown, himself a Volusia native and part of a third-generation family in the county. "We are not just here to collect our paychecks. We are embedded in this community and dedicated to making this a better place to live."

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