# Cover Sheet: Wellington, Florida

Case Study Title: Economic Gardening: Business-Friendly Wellington, Connecting Government and Business

Case Study Category: Economic Vitality

Jurisdiction: Wellington, Florida

City Manager: Paul Schofield

Award Consideration: Yes

Consideration for Rapid Fire Session: Open to possibility

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Presentation Style: Energetic, interactive, fully engaged discussion employing a combination of visual tools that will likely include Prezi, PowerPoint, Video, Turning Technologies and group exercises/audience interaction for an entertaining and educational presentation that will encourage participants as well as provide take aways.

**Economic Gardening: Business-Friendly Wellington, Connecting Government and Business**

Wellington 2060 is not just a plan but a series of services delivery models and a collection of strategies embraced by the community to keep it a Great Hometown long into the future. Beginning with a long-term economic vision focused on eight achievable concepts, owing to community support, bold political leadership and consistency of objectives, Wellington 2060 relies on realistic strategies with priorities, manageable budgets and identified stakeholder involvement to ensure a sustainable future economically, environmentally and socially. Wellington’s business development strategy is a component of its economic development philosophies. By employing a sustainable holistic approach to economic development, Wellington placed itself in the best position to avoid many fiscal pitfalls that have plagued local governments, particularly in the suburban Sunbelt.

**Economic development begins at home**

Ensuring the economic viability of residential development is often a direct paradox of past economic development efforts in which development was the major driver of the economy. Such an unsustainable practice seems almost unthinkable today because of the economic downturn yet still many view housing starts as a sign of recovery and progress – completely ignoring the role unsustainable development-driven economies have played is many local economies. Wellington believes that in order to maintain a healthy local economy, in which a business has the greatest chance to succeed, investment in existing communities is paramount. Infrastructure, community programs and aesthetic initiatives and similar investment all benefit Wellington’s communities and are viewed as “economic development.”

**All employment is not equal**

It goes without saying that the vast majority of local governments desire high-wage employment. Of course, not all businesses will create these types of positions and lower-paying jobs such as those in the service sector, are a necessary reality to meet demands of the community. Wellington recognizes is that while most businesses provide an asset to the community, public investment in the form of dollars, incentives or other mechanisms, should be largely limited to businesses creating “value added” employment (in Palm Beach County this refers to positions that pay an average of 10% over the median wage). In a “built out” suburban community such as Wellington value-added employment is highly desirable as it contributes to a sustainable local-economy. Value added employment provides a sustainable economic development strategy because it: 1) benefits the residential sector (from proximity to high-wage jobs). 2) benefits the commercial sector (from increased demand). 3) benefits for the employer (who’s talent pool deepens as a result of quality residential areas and in Wellington’s case, an educated workforce).

**Policy = economic development**

Fewer and fewer local governments can fund their own projects. As grants and other governmental funding sources disappear the private sector will increasingly be relied on to implement economic development. Working on a professional-level with investors, developers, banks, business groups etc. is a necessity in Wellington. By local government acknowledging

the age-old adage “time is money” at the onset of coordination with potential investors you can begin to build a true public-private partnership. Once an agreed set of community values is established, understood and maintained, it is simply suicidal for local governments to impede investment through excessive or repetitive regulation. Wellington understands that local government’s role in economic development is that of a partner. Wellington believes its “business friendly” strategies reflect the essence of sustainable economic development.

Wellington has designed initiatives and programs to enhance existing business, commercial and community assets to foster economic viability, organizational design, community building and partnerships. Our efforts balance the need for protecting our residential lifestyle with development of a sustainable economic base and the understanding the role of municipal government is to facilitate business development through the provision of adequate infrastructure and a friendly government environment. .  This is achieved by maintaining the quality and value of our neighborhoods, creating jobs, expanding education opportunities and supporting residential and commercial reinvestment. The following initiatives are the core of Wellington’s economic development efforts.

**Equestrian**

* Develop a master plan to provide guidance for public and private investment/lifestyle decisions to preserve and enhance the equestrian community
* Inventory equestrian facilities and estimated equine population
* Work with residents and stakeholders to solidify Wellington as a world-class equestrian destination.

Wellington’s equestrian community is an integral part of the economic demographic and physical infrastructure.  Like each planned development that borders the equestrian community there are distinctive equestrian communities that have evolved. This evolution started over 30 years ago and has seen a transformation from single-family residential homes to show barns and high-end competitive equestrian training facilities. This transformation has evolved around the equestrian venues that support polo, dressage, hunter and jumper competitions. Wellington has made a substantial investment to support the equestrian community through the adoption of the Equestrian Overlay Zoning District (EOZD), the Equestrian Preserve Area (EPA), along with Land Development Regulation (LDR’S) that recognize the distinctive needs and characteristics of each equestrian community.   The focus of the Equestrian Master Plan is the communities’ vision of the EPA to preserve and enhance the future of the equestrian community.

* Wellington utilized GIS to determine access to legal public bridle pathways that helped improve conductivity to various venues and points of interest. Now we will use GIS to expand our utility systems and expansion of our broadband system Village-wide.
	+ Cost: Partnership with FAU (Florida Atlantic University) – approximately 80k portion of entire partnership agreement
	+ Savings: Initial plan was to hire an entire consulting team, Wellington chose to hire a project director and perform the work in-house
	+ Obstacles: Timing, equestrian master plan coinciding with a private proposal for an equestrian development i.e. Equestrian Village; community believed the work performed was related to the private proposal
	+ Private consultant used: No

**Medical Arts District**

* Designate 210-acres located Intersection of SR 7 & Forest Hill Boulevard
* Create a “shovel-ready” regulatory framework – land use, zoning, traffic approvals, infrastructure financing
* Leverage Wellington Regional Medical Center (WRMC) and Palms West Hospital to retain / create an estimated 6,000 jobs
* Establish an integrated development pattern 7 in a campus setting
	+ Cost: Staff resources
	+ Savings: N/A
	+ Obstacles: Lack of support at the County level; multiple property owners with different agendas
	+ Private consultant used: Yes for legal and traffic analysis

**Midtowne (Town Center)**

* Develop Wellington’s “core” to create a destination and location of community amenities and services, such as the Amphitheater, Scott’s Place, 9/11 Memorial, Aquatic Center, and future Community Center
* Invest in new Village Hall to centralize government services
* Establish Forest Hill as a “gateway” to enhance community identity through residential, commercial and community reinvestment opportunities
* Enhance existing Wellington-owned facilities/amenities and resources for community
* Enhance public access to Lake Wellington & Lake Victoria
* Promote and support the redevelopment of specific residential areas
* Explore potential acquisition key private properties for park and open space (i.e. “central park”).
* Expand community identity and sense of place.
	+ Cost: Cost of building the facilities – funded by impact fees
	+ Savings: Consolidation of government facilities and services; reduced life cycle of building maintenance by constructing a LEED certified Village Hall
	+ Obstacles: N/A
	+ Private consultant used: Designers, architects, and contractors

**Wellington Business Support**

* Streamline regulatory processes to simplify business approvals and requirements, including expedited permitting for qualifying projects
* Promote local businesses through “Shop Wellington”, an online business directory for Wellington businesses
* Develop community broadband
	+ Develop community fiber-optic infrastructure add to economic development incentives
	+ Enhance local broadband services for businesses and residents
	+ Provide faster, lower-cost service for businesses and residents
* Provide Financial Support / Public Investment
	+ Pursue opportunities for public financing and investment for business/commercial development:
	+ Utilize dependent district (ACME Improvement District) to maximize financing potential
	+ Propose Business Improvement Districts to increase funding options for targeted area
* Florida Atlantic University “Living Lab” – Wellington Business/Asset Analysis
	+ Project will study inter-relationships between various components of Wellington’s economic community
	+ Study will included analysis of seasonal and equestrian businesses
	+ Viability determination of Wellington’s economic climate

**The VIZ: Village Innovation Zone**

* A science and technology campus proposed to be located on approximately 70-acre property owned by Wellington that is designed as a “smart zone” with a mix of uses and activities that creates an environment to encourage nurture and sustain innovative and technologically advanced business investment.
* The Village Innovation Zone will target innovating businesses that also support existing commercial areas, enhance educational opportunities, and promote community reinvestment. It is anticipated to attract industry clusters as well as entrepreneurs, spur growth in technology, and support existing commercial businesses.
* The mixed use campus will include commercial and light industrial consisted of uses such as science, technology, research and development, light assembly and distribution.
* The campus will also include a sustainable educational, training and certification component, combined with public and private partnerships.
* The campus would also include support uses such as restaurants, hotel and cultural.
	+ Cost: FAU partnership and staff resources; Shop Wellington vendor contract approximately 3k per year; Broadband consultant fee approximately 50k; K Park appraisal fee; staff time
	+ Savings: Shop Wellington provides a savings directly to businesses; Living Lab deliverables are a better value than utilizing consultants
	+ Obstacles: Broadband challenge is convincing the decision makers to make the capital investment
	+ Private consultant used: Yes for Broadband, the appraisers for K Park and the vendor for Shop Wellington

**Education Partnerships**

* Pursue university presence and campus
* Establish 3-year partnership with Florida Atlantic University (FAU) School of Urban and Regional Planning to assist with major planning efforts, including:
	+ Demographic Inventory (completed)
	+ Equestrian Community Study (in progress)
	+ Business and Employment Analysis (pending)
* Work with Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBA) on expansion opportunities; local campus in Medical Arts District
* Coordinate with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) to develop local campus/student facilities; students/interns at WRMC in Medical Arts District
* Increase opportunities for workforce training and education through expansion of existing college, technical or vocational programs and development of new college, technical or vocational programs.
* Enhance/encourage partnerships between educational community and Wellington businesses.
	+ Cost: FAU partnership 248k for three years; staff time
	+ Savings: Value over consultants
	+ Obstacles: N/A
	+ Private consultant used: No

**Community Reinvestment**

* Increase business options in targeted areas: adopted Flex Zoning District to allow a wide range of uses emphasizing “clean” businesses including  technology, research and development, and light industrial
* Promote private investment and development/redevelopment of vacant or underutilized commercial areas by streamlining the regulatory processes
	+ Promote and support the private redevelopment of specific commercial areas.
	+ Encourage open space and pedestrian friendly green space to connect the commercial centers and adjacent residential neighborhoods.
	+ Implement and support commercial marketing programs to assist in the decrease of vacancy rates and promote Wellington for new businesses.
	+ Expand community identity and sense of place.
* Develop plans for neighborhood improvements through the Community Development Block Grant program
* Direct and promote investment into our communities
* Improve Wellington’s neighborhoods through private and public reinvestment and/or redevelopment
* Leverage public and private resources to achieve maximum benefit for neighborhoods
* Improve Wellington’s “transitional” neighborhoods
* Invest in Wellington’s neighborhoods to promote safe, family environments, leverage public and private resources to achieve maximum benefit for neighborhoods and Wellington.
	+ Cost: Staff time
	+ Savings: Reallocation of staff
	+ Obstacles: N/A
	+ Private consultant used: No

With an eye on the future, Wellington is distinguishing itself by maintaining a community that remains a great hometown. From streamlining regulatory processes making it easy to get business up and running to offering a wide range of zoning districts, Wellington is creating economic sustainability by focusing on culture change and technological advancement connecting our community.