

**CITY OF PALM BEACH GARDENS  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT  
SUPPORT DOCUMENT**

**Prepared by:**

**The City of Palm Beach Gardens**

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## I. INTRODUCTION



Photo: Palm Beach State College Bioscience Complex offering a new A.S. Bioscience Degree Program. City of Palm Beach Gardens.

The Economic Development Element in the City's Comprehensive Plan has a single goal; to achieve sustainable economic development through a balanced and diversified economy.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens has evolved into an upscale community with a fairly diverse economic base including employment in the fields of healthcare, tourism and leisure, engineering, and education. The City also benefits from having the Scripps Florida Research Institute and Max Planck Society located

in Northern Palm Beach County. The City has a strong tax base with approximately 79% of ad valorem taxes generated by the residential component. Additionally, the City does not assess many of the traditional taxes that other municipalities use for generating revenue, but rather, it primarily depends on ad valorem taxes to fund services. Residents are not assessed additional taxes for utility, solid waste, storm water, or fire rescue; and pay a minimal amount in communication services taxes. The City has opted to pay for these services out of ad valorem assessments.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens has been fortunate to have land mass that has been available for future development, which will only further enhance the City's economic base and allow the City to continue to prosper with additional employment opportunities and increases in property valuations and revenues. Three major developments that could potentially increase employment include the following:

Florida Power & Light - Purchased a vacant parcel with plans on constructing a new 993,000 square foot corporate research and development center, which will create additional jobs and provide a boost to the local economy.

Avenir – The proposed project includes a 4,763-acre site with approved plans for 2,407 acres of conservation, 3,250 residential units, 1.94 million square feet of office, 400,000 square feet of commercial, 200,000 square feet of medical office and 300 hotel rooms. The project also includes a 20-acres of agriculture and land dedication for a school, recreational purposes, and municipal functions totaling 145 acres. The proposed increase in population from this project represents approximately 15% of the City's current population.

Alton – Formerly known as the Florida Phase II/Briger Tract, is a 681-acre Development of Regional Impact (DRI) project with approval for 600 single family homes, 1,400 multifamily townhomes, 703 apartment units, 2.6 million square feet of industrial/research, 1.2 million square feet of office, 500,000 square feet of retail, and

300 hotel rooms. Construction activity on the site currently consists of a residential neighborhood comprised of 217 single family homes and 143 multifamily townhomes, the United Technologies Corporation 224,066 square foot Center for Intelligent Buildings Technology Complex that will be used to showcase the company's innovative products and integrated systems, and a 353-multifamily apartment project.

Through the Goals, Objectives and Policies of the Economic Element, the City is committed to achieve a balanced and diversified economy which is compatible with the City's quality built environment and protects important natural resources.

The City has committed a portion of fund balance that will be used to provide future economic incentives as a way to attract companies in industries such as biotechnology, communications, information technology, medical products, marine biology, aerospace research, and associated ancillary businesses.

The City has currently earmarked funds for four companies that have already or plan to expand and establish headquarters within the City of Palm Beach Gardens. Chromalloy Gas Turbine LLC – manufacturer of jet turbines, TBC Corporation - a tire distribution company, Zimmer Biomet Holdings – a medical device company, and United Technologies Corp. – a technology company that focuses on the aerospace and building industries.

Major industries with headquarters or divisions located within the government's boundaries or in close proximity include bioscience, security, medical manufacturing, education, health care, financial services, and leisure service industries. Major employers include, Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center, Palm Beach County School Board, PGA National Resort & Spa, TBC Corp, Zimmer Biomet, Belcan Engineering Group, and Synthes Anspach Companies.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens had an unemployment rate of 3.8% as of September 2015. This rate compares favorably to the State of Florida rate of 5.2% and to the national unemployment rate of 5.1%. With the prospect of new development projects and the addition of a number of corporate headquarters, future employment within the City appears more than stable.

*Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for FY end 9/30/15.*

## **II. Trends and Challenges**

As illustrated in Table 1, the City remains competitive to residents and business because of its ability to provide for municipal services while maintaining the lowest cost on ad-valorem and non ad-valorem taxes. This factor is important when marketing economic development opportunities.

**Table 1 – Comparison of City Taxes**

City	City Ad Valorem	Other Ad Valorem	Utility Tax	Com. Svc. Tax	Solid Waste Collection	Storm Water	Fire Assessment	Total
P.B. Gardens	1,703	4,556	0	126	0	0	0	6,385
Boca Raton	1,104	4,652	318	195	0	0	105	6,374
Jupiter	815	5,193	191	188	143	55	0	6,585
Royal Palm Beach	576	5,594	318	188	92	0	0	6,768
Juno Beach	699	5,631	144	188	145	0	0	6,807
Wellington	732	5,593	240	188	135	0	0	6,888
N. Palm Beach	2,199	4,378	258	188	0	0	0	7,023
Riviera Beach	2,536	4,378	318	188	136	0	0	7,556
West Palm Beach	2,548	4,378	318	195	192	0	25	7,656

*(Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens Finance Department 2016)*

## **Long Term Economic Vision**

The City of Palm Beach Gardens continues to provide opportunities for a diversified tax base that promotes a strong economic environment within the City that provides a job base for residents and a sustainable economy. As part of this, sound planning practices are being implemented to strive to create sustainability in a community, which incorporates all of the elements of living, working, playing, and learning.

Currently, the City's land-use base for residential is (22%), as shown on Table 1-2 in the Future Land Use Element Support Document. This does not include residential uses included within the City's Mixed Use Development designation. Sustainable economic growth will be achieved by supporting retail, restaurant, office personnel that need to work in the City; increasing property values and tax base to provide as much opportunity for mobility as possible; assisting and promoting bioscience clusters; remaining competitive in the regional market; expanding the need of Class A offices that require access to large markets; and focusing growth in the Regional Center.

## **Economic Sustainability**

On February 14, 2006, the Palm Beach County Commission designated the Abacoa FAU/Briger site as the alternative site for the Scripps Florida development, which required a hundred acres with the potential for two (2) million square feet for Scripps Florida and additional opportunities for up to six (6) million square feet of available land to accommodate the creation of a bioscience research/biotechnology industry cluster within a five (5) mile radius of the Scripps Florida campus on the Abacoa FAU/ Briger site. In order to accommodate the second condition, the City, in partnership with the Town of Jupiter, the City of Riviera Beach, the Town of Lake Park, and the Town of Mangonia Park, provided an inventory of properties that could be used for bioscience research/biotechnology users within their respective boundaries. As part of the alternate site proposal, each municipality committed to amend its respective comprehensive plan to create an overlay that would provide for and encourage the cluster of the bioscience research / biotechnology industry uses within its community.

On December 21, 2006, the City Council adopted Ordinance 17, 2006, Ordinance 18, 2006, Ordinance 19, 2006, and Ordinance 20, 2006, which amended the City's Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan text to create a Bioscience Research Protection Overlay (BRPO). The BRPO encourages the use of incentives on behalf of the City to promote the development of Bioscience Users within a close proximity to Scripps Florida, located on the FAU Abacoa Campus and the Briger Site. The State's expedited permitting program is an incentive consistent with the City's intent in creating the BRPO, as it will expedite the review process for Bioscience/Life Science Projects within the Bioscience Overlay.

On August 16, 2007, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the City Council of the City of Palm Beach Gardens approved that created a specific expedited permitting review process, which requires the Office of Tourism Trade and Economic Development (OTTED) to create regional permit action teams (RPATs) and certify projects eligible to use this process. The RPATs will consist of signatory agencies and other agencies which have agreed to participate and have jurisdiction over a certified project. The City of Palm Beach Gardens will be a participating agency of the RPATs. The process does not modify, qualify, or otherwise alter existing state or regional agency or County non-procedural standards.

### **Transit, Housing, Land Use and its link to Economic Sustainability**

Palm Tran operates 35 fixed routes. Six (6) routes pass through and serve bus stops within the City, including the Gardens Mall as a destination, as well another service and business centers, such as the Gardens Hospital, North County Senior Center, North County Courthouse and Palm Beach State College. Map A.17 *Mass Transit Routes & Regional Attractors* provides a map of the Palm Tran bus routes and their route numbers.

Tri-Rail carried more passengers in 2013 than during any other year in its 25-year history of operation. According to records, 4,350,782 trips were taken on the commuter rail line in 2013, up from approximately 4,300,000 in 2008 when gas prices were at their highest. The increased ridership is attributed to the recovering economy and employment numbers as well as increased service on weekends. Tri-rail goes from the Miami Airport to Mangonia Park in Palm Beach County. There are six (6) Tri-Rail stations in Palm Beach County, none within the City. However, a Tri-Rail future station has been identified on PGA Boulevard and the FEC railroad.

Bike paths and pedestrian pathways are available throughout the City, and continue to be expanded in existing neighborhoods. Bike and pedestrian paths are included with all new roadway construction and road widening projects using state funds, and the City's parkway system has been designated as an urban component of Florida's Greenway's System.

The Economic Development Element contains an important policy that links transit, housing and land use to promote economic sustainability, and is proposed to be updated with the 2016 EAR-based amendments as follows:

**Policy 13.1.1.9.:** ~~By December 31, 2010, the City shall~~ continue to assess land use, transportation and business patterns and trends to identify areas that are suitable for redevelopment to provide business retention, expansion, relocation and development incentives for those areas.



Figure 1 represents the balance between land use, transit and housing. Economic development remains strong only with these other supporting components. This concept is crucial when examining such decisions as Future Land Use changes to the provision of affordable housing to the consideration of additional public transit facilities.

Developments including Downtown at the Gardens, PGA Commons, the Gardens Mall, and Midtown provide approximately 65% of the City’s retail base, and plays an integral part of the City’s local economy. Affordable housing opportunities and transit systems must be in place to provide the necessary support systems to sustain this service employment base in the local area. As fuel

prices fluctuate, the demand for public transit is critical. Policy 13.1.4.5. addresses the City’s role in its current position to be a regional destination center.

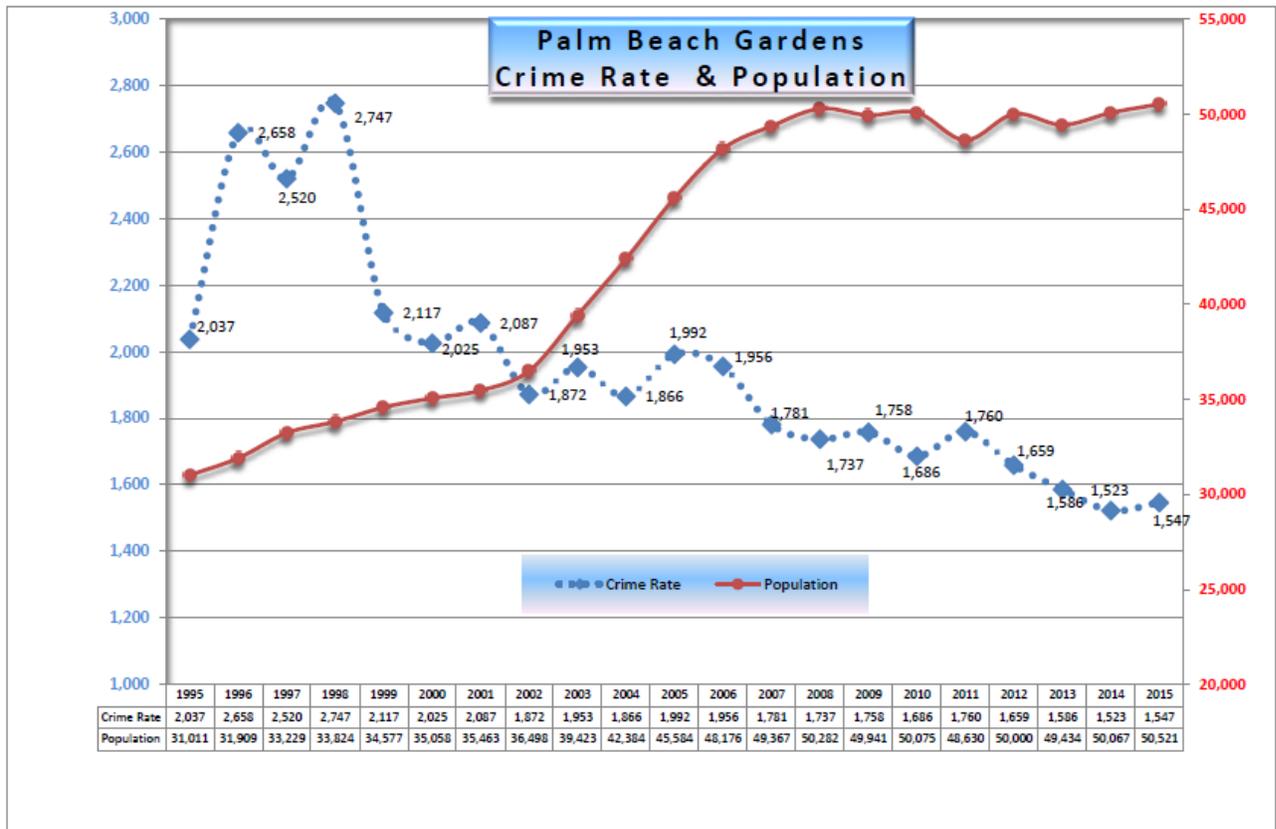
***Policy 13.1.4.5.:*** *The City shall acknowledge its strategic location and promote mass transit to consolidate its position as a regional destination center.*

**Public Safety:**

Another component to maintaining sustained economic growth is the importance of public safety in the City. Figure 2 illustrates that although population has grown in the City of Palm Beach Gardens, the rate of crime has consistently declined (*Source: City of Palm Beach Gardens Police Department 2016*).

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**Figure 2 – Palm Beach Gardens Crime Rate & Population**



The City provides business incentive programs, and continues to be a Partner with several existing Organizations and Affiliates including Palm Beach State College (PBSC), Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center, North Palm Beach North Chamber of Commerce, the Honda Classic, local charities, and the Department of Veteran Affairs' Hospital. Through these Partnerships, the City provides more opportunity for economic growth and a business-friendly environment.



Several value-added employment and educational facilities are located in the City of Palm Beach Gardens including the PBSC Bioscience Complex, a 92,000-square-foot facility that provides for an A.S. Bioscience degree program and state of the art labs, Anspach, WM Thies & Sons, The Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, BioMet, 3i, Implant Innovations Inc, Seacoast National Bank Headquarters, and The Wackenhut Corporation

Since most of the City is built-out, much of the future growth in non-residential development will be primarily infill development located in the eastern area of the City. This Policy is not only important because it promotes redevelopment, but is also references the need to address land use and transportation trends.

## City Programs

### *Economic Development Incentive Program*

The City has an Economic Development Incentive Program to provide funding assistance toward attracting businesses to the City of Palm Beach Gardens and supporting local expanding businesses. This program is designed to stimulate the creation of new full-time jobs or keep current employees and employers in the City of Palm Beach Gardens, preferably quality, high skill and high salary positions.

### *Ad Valorem Tax Program*

The Ad Valorem Tax Exemption Program is an Economic Development Incentive Program that was passed by the voters of Palm Beach Gardens in November 2012. The program authorizes the City Council to grant Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions for qualifying new and expanding businesses in Palm Beach Gardens. The qualifying businesses could receive an exemption to their municipal property taxes of up to 100% for up to 10 years. This program remains in effect until November 2022.

The Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption program diversifies the City's business base by encouraging industries that offer higher-than-average salaries to locate and expand in the City of Palm Beach Gardens. The program also enables Palm Beach Gardens to more effectively attract new businesses to the City. To be eligible, any new businesses and expanding businesses that can prove they meet the definition of New Business or Expansion of an Existing Business as defined by Florida State Statute 196.012 (15) or (16) and determined to be a targeted industry by the City Council. The exemption applies only to taxes levied by the City of Palm Beach Gardens. It does not apply to taxes levied by the County, School District, water management district, waste management district, or stormwater management district.

### *Targeted Expedited Permitting Program*

The Targeted Expedited Permitting Program was effectuated through Ordinance 1, 2006 adopted in December of 2005 and provided for a streamlined expedited review process for those qualifying projects. WM Thies & Sons, a distribution warehouse center, utilized this process and was approved in 49 days. The project consisted of 40,000 square feet of office with a projected 454 employees, including 150 value-added jobs. Most recently, the Center for Intelligent Buildings Technology Complex in the Alton project utilized this process and was approved in 58 days. The project consists of 241,400 square feet for a commercial aerospace, defense and building industry, with a projected 500 employees.

## The Scripps Research Institute and the Bio-Science Industry Sector

Scripps contains 350,000 square feet on 30 acres, and is located in Jupiter, immediately north of the City. It provides for more than 600 jobs, including 56 faculty. The campus provides for several local educational opportunities, including but not limited to:

- K-12 Student and Teacher programs
- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Graduate Studies and Degrees



Scripps Florida at FAU/Abacoa

Scripps Florida brings to this community a core group of world renowned scientists who will help to re-invent the way drugs are discovered in this country and contribute to mankind's knowledge of human biology.

As part of the ongoing effort to promote the Bioscience Industry, the Economic Development Element provides the following policies:

**Policy 13.1.4.6.:** *The City shall encourage developers of property within and adjacent to the Bioscience Research Protection Overlay (BRPO) to dedicate connections or provide easements for supportive infrastructure specific to bioscience research, such as propane gas lines.*

*As amended with the 2016 EAR-based amendments:*

**Policy 13.1.4.7.:** ~~By December 31, 2011,~~ *The City shall continue to identify sites that foster the development of wet laboratories and other research facilities which are location sensitive and require extensive public agency coordination and private investment.*

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### III. SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The City continues to maintain its quality level of service due to responsible budget management. The collective effort the City has made toward long term economic growth clearly signals the City's commitment to economic sustainability. From the Targeted Expedited Permitting Process to the Partnerships with Chamber and BDB, the City has clearly taken action to promote Economic Development as a key goal.

