

Leaders in luring jobs to area probe how to make best case

By SUSAN DANSEYAR

One of the most important questions those fostering economic development should ask a company considering expansion or relocation to Miami-Dade is what are the three issues driving the decision.

That's the advice Del Boyette, president and CEO of Boyette Strategic Advisors, had for municipal officials and community stakeholders who attended a workshop on bringing jobs and investment to the county that was co-hosted by the Beacon Council and Florida Power & Light this week.

Mr. Boyette and Chief Operating Officer Tracy Sharp, both part of FPL's economic development team promoting our state to new and expanding businesses that create jobs for Floridians, shared best practices on how to recruit businesses and encourage investment on state, regional and local levels.

Whatever is driving the decision — whether three or as many as five factors — is vital to know, Mr. Boyette said. For the most part, he said, community members and groups vying for the company's relocation will get involved when the request for information or proposals is put together for a site.

"That's the first opportunity to make the business case for a company to invest in Miami-Dade County," Mr. Boyette said. "If you understand the important factors behind the decision, your marketing and research people can put together a good package for you to go out and sell."

Local economic development is more important in Miami-Dade than it ever has been, said Larry Williams, president and CEO of the Beacon Council, who introduced Crystal Stiles, manager of economic development at FPL. "This is the beginning of a dialogue on how to combine efforts for what it



Del Boyette said most critical to know when a company considers relocation is issues driving a decision.

takes to compete today."

The workshop was titled "The Serious Game of Economic Development: What does it take to win?" The name indicates the process has never been more competitive, Mr. Williams said, and communities must be prepared to successfully vie for projects.

Companies will have a strategy that you need to understand, Mr. Boyette told stakeholders. This involves partnering with a good economic developer like the Beacon Council for advice; taking a strategic approach much like One Community One Goal, which was a rigorous, thorough process; understand the critical components such as the site selection process from the company's point of view; and have a good relationship with site consultants.

Marketing is vital. Whatever you're thinking, think bigger, Mr. Boyette advised. "That means having the strongest web presence you can and coming



Dyan Brasington, Beacon Council's new executive vice president for economic development, and Javier Betancourt of Coral Gables at rear.

up with robust, current information," he said. "It's essential to have a social media presence; use Twitter, but be sure what you're sending out is relevant."

It's definitely important to reach out via social media, but the challenge is getting through the clutter and noise of it, said Susan Greene, chief marketing officer for the Beacon Council.

Attendee Peter England found the discussion about social media interesting but told Miami Today he doesn't use it, both because he never learned how and isn't used to it.

And he's not certain it's always necessary. "It depends

on the age of the person in the company who is making the decision about re-location," Mr. England said. "Perhaps that individual is older, not comfortable with social media, which means you won't be reaching out that way."

Mr. England serves as chairman of the Palmetto Bay Partnership, a relatively new 13-member group appointed by the village council to explore the community's economic development potential.

He said he's grateful to the Beacon Council and Florida Power & Light (FPL) for providing the opportunity to attend

what he found an extremely helpful workshop. "[Mr. Boyette] reinforced issues I've been aware of in the past but needed to be reminded of," Mr. England said Tuesday. "I found it very interesting to hear his point about sustainability and how important that is to companies when relocating. It's the key component in the equation that companies look at."

That's particularly relevant to the work he's going with the Palmetto Bay Partnership. "Our commercial area that's ripe for development is along the US 1 corridor," Mr. England said. "Hearing about sustainability made me focus on how woefully inadequate our mass transit is and how much more we have to do to make it viable."

Mr. England said he found Ms. Sharp's presentation useful for reminding everyone of all the positive things we have to say about Miami-Dade, such as the "best business climate, low cost and reliable power."

Sell Florida for its positive landscape instead of selling incentives, Ms. Sharp said. As for Miami-Dade, she said this county is home to one of the most diverse, multilingual populations and workforces in the US, is a global center for international trade with both imports and exports rising in recent years, and has convenient direct air service from Miami International Airport.

Additionally, PortMiami is Florida's largest container port, and two of the county's high schools are among the best 25 in the nation, according to US News and World Report.

"We tend to forget all the wonderful things about this county and take them for granted," Mr. England said. "It's important to remember."

The workshop helped the organization and local officials better understand the important issues on the minds of corporate relocation specialists who represent companies considering Miami-Dade for expansion or relocation, Ms. Greene said, and the Beacon Council plans to do more of these types of educational programs and work closely with local communities to "create the best opportunities for job growth and investment."

THE LAST WORD

EX-MAYOR HONORED: Donald D. Slesnick II, honorary consul of Australia and partner in the law offices of Slesnick & Casey who has been in private legal practice since 1976, is to receive the American Bar Association Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division's Lifetime Achievement Award May 13 during a meeting at the Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel. Mr. Slesnick was mayor of Coral Gables for 10 years ending in 2011.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY: This marks the 42nd anniversary of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the 25th year of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. They provide grants to hundreds of local governments to help them improve the physical, economic and social conditions in their communities and to create safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. This coming program year, the City of Miami will utilize its CDBG allocation of \$4.7 million, along with Social Service Gap funding, to fund about 25 different non-profit agencies offering services to low-income residents including meals for the elderly, after school activities for youth, and childcare activities. Another four non-profit agencies were funded to carry out economic development efforts in low-income areas including commercial façade programs, public facilities and improvements and the provision of assistance to for-profit businesses. Meanwhile, the city's HOME allocation of \$2.56 million will be used to fund affordable housing efforts for low- to moderate-income renters and homeowners.

OLYMPICS ON OUR SIDE: Officials at Miami International Airport plan to work in conjunction with the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau to market Miami as a travel destination during the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. A joint 2014 campaign created a 15% passenger increase during the FIFA World Cup in Brazil by marketing Miami as a stopover on the way to Brazil, said Miami-Dade Aviation Director and CEO Emilio González. "We found that it was easier to fly to Manaus from Miami than it is to fly to Manaus from Rio de Janeiro," he told the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. The airport, he said, is already "doing its homework" on how to handle a large increase in passengers.



Local economic development is more vital in Miami-Dade than ever, said Beacon Council's Larry Williams.