

JAX CHAMBER PRESS RELEASE

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JAX CHAMBER'S LEADERSHIP TRIP AND 90-DAY LISTENING TOUR BRINGS IDEAS OF CHANGE TO NORTHEAST FLORIDA

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Dec. 17, 2013) – When JAX Chamber President and CEO Daniel Davis took the helm of the [JAX Chamber](#) in June this year, his number one goal was to understand the needs of the local business community who make up the JAX Chamber's membership. He embarked on a 90-Day Listening Tour and traveled to Charlotte to attend the 33rd annual Leadership Trip. Both activities provided great insight about the success of another city on the rise and the potential and assets within the JAX region.

“While we learn from the successes of other world-class cities, it is important to celebrate the business assets in our region that mean so much to our economy and quality of life,” Davis said. “I enjoyed meeting with our local business leaders and their feedback provided us with compelling ideas and a bold vision for the Chamber's 2014 Action Plan.”

The annual Leadership Trip provided the groundwork for Jacksonville leaders to implement new economic development opportunities throughout the region.

“Charlotte is an energized regional community with a revitalized city center and offers residents and visitors alike an exceptional quality of life,” said 2014 Chamber Chair Dr. William Rupp, CEO of Mayo Clinic in Florida. “Our Jacksonville leaders learned about Charlotte's many successes and returned to Northeast Florida with strategic recommendations for applying the best practices to our region.”

The trip focused on public/private partnerships, downtown revitalization, sports marketing and education. Here are the top takeaways:

- Public/Private Partnerships – Create a collaborative vision and develop successful icons to attract people downtown and to the region. Bring public and private leaders together to join forces on a shared vision, set priorities, obtain funding and execute an action plan.
- Downtown Revitalization – Downtown Jacksonville is currently the region’s best kept secret. It is vital to celebrate and build on downtown’s considerable successes. Develop a timeline that highlights current and future offerings in the urban core. Collaboration is essential between the Downtown Investment Authority and the Civic Council with support from the business community and private citizens. Potential funding sources include the City of Jacksonville, private investments and bonds.
- Sports Marketing – Charlotte possesses a very high level of cooperation and synergy in the promotion and support of its sports industry. Jacksonville would benefit from public and private partnerships dedicated to helping develop and promote sporting events and opportunities.
- Education – Improving educational achievement and graduation rates remains a top priority. It is important to strengthen the engagement between business and education leaders and develop a legislative platform covering the needs of both K-12 and higher education. To ensure success, there needs to be a renewed commitment to education priorities throughout the community.

“Our leadership is focused on developing a bold vision to create the best opportunities for the region’s future economic growth,” said 2015 Chair John Delaney, president of the University of North Florida. “Now that we have established a strategic direction, it is time for our leadership to execute an agenda for action and start making change happen.”

While the Leadership Trip provided opportunities to review Charlotte’s many successes, leaders examined Northeast Florida’s business assets during the JAX Chamber’s Industry Weeks and 90-Day Listening Tour. In 90 days, Davis and community leaders traveled 1,950 miles in Northeast Florida, touring more than 50 companies and corporations that make up the region’s targeted industries: advanced manufacturing, aviation and aerospace, financial services, health and life sciences, information technology, logistics and military.

Industry Weeks reinforce the Chamber’s commitment to advance economic development for the benefit of the community. The 90-Day Listening Tour also provided the momentum for the Chamber’s 2014 Action Plan. The recommendations included:

Establish a State of the Chamber – A Transition Committee conducted an internal review all aspects of the organization.

Increase Membership by 10 percent – The membership committee advised establishing quantifiable benefits tailored to member needs, such as small business strategic programs.

Communicate – Recommendations included delivering creative, accurate and impactful communication using traditional and innovative tools.

Public Policy and Politics – The committee proposed effecting governmental affairs' policy and politics with a renewed focus for JAXBIZ, a nonpartisan political organization affiliated with the JAX Chamber.

Also in 2013, the JAX Chamber's Small Business Center (SBC) celebrated 20 years providing services to area entrepreneurs. The Jacksonville Women's Business Center (JWBC), a program of the JAX Chamber Foundation, will celebrate 10 years of assisting the country's fastest growing business segment, women business owners in 2014. Both programs are departments of the JAX Chamber's Entrepreneurial Growth Division, which provides mentoring, entrepreneurial education, consulting and networking opportunities to aspiring entrepreneurs and business owners with up to \$49 million in annual revenue.

The SBC provides entrepreneurs with the critical skills needed to start and grow a business. Services include business counseling, a business resource library, entrepreneurial education and workshops. The JWBC provides educational programs, which include a mentoring component, training, consulting, networking opportunities and targeted business connections to advance the success of women entrepreneurs at every stage of business development. The JWBC is partially funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

"The programs of the JAX Chamber's Entrepreneurial Growth Division are designed to support our community's entrepreneurs and strengthen our local economy," said Sandy Bartow, vice president of the Entrepreneurial Growth Division and president of the JAX Chamber Foundation. "Our clients tell us repeatedly our mentoring and training programs have played a key role in their success."

More information is available at www.myjaxchamber.com.

About JAX Chamber

The [JAX Chamber](#) is the business membership organization dedicated to driving quality economic growth in Northeast Florida to make this region the best place to live, work and play. Membership provides the opportunity to connect with and buy from other Chamber members. The connections result in business growth and a more prosperous economy.

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Approved By: Daniel Dawson

Date: 12/18/13

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