



FLIGHT PLANS

Friday Economic Roundup | 03.17.2017

Founder's Festival offers first look at Babcock Ranch

By **GARY ROBERTS** - Staff Writer - CHARLOTTE SUN

BABCOCK RANCH - At this weekend's Founder's Festival, celebrating the startup of Babcock Ranch, Tiffany Kern enjoyed a tour of the emerging community, but it took some effort. Competing in the 5K Sun Run, she took the scenic Sunset Trail, encircling a lake and fishing pier, crossing a bridge, and passing a dog park and model homes along the way.

"It made me excited about the neighborhood, something new and fresh," she said.

Kern was running with the Bonita Gulf Trotters, coached by her sister-in-law, who convinced her own father and Kern to join the do-it-yourself tour group.

"I did well. I finished the whole thing," she gasped.

Hundreds of others who turned out for this weekend's festivities opted for the more conventional tours of model homes in the first phase of development. But even these trips were nontraditional, as potential customers and the curious boarded buses, solar-powered vehicles and one driverless shuttle, a nod to the technology ingrained in the 18,000-acre community.

"This is so exciting. It's here," developer Syd Kitson told the crowd, noting the microphone he was using also was run by the sun.

Speaking from the Founder's Square bandshell - in front of the Great Lawn and surrounded by the Table & Tap restaurant, Curry Creek Outfitters and the under-construction Babcock Neighborhood School - Kitson was thrilled to introduce the public to his life's dream, where science and nature live in harmony.

"Our goal from the very beginning was to build the most sustainable town in America. And you can see our progress," he said.

Kitson also had a special announcement. Lennar had just agreed to combine efforts with five other builders, providing single-family homes from \$179,000 to the low \$200,000s.

"We promised you we will have a full range of price and products. Everything here is about affordability," he said.

And more is on the way. Lake Babcock will double in size to 240 acres, a cafe and grocery is taking shape, and a wellness center is about to break ground, along with more than 300 homes in Phase 2, he said.

Charlotte County Commissioner Ken Doherty recalled how the project was stalled for more than a decade, allowing the housing crisis to pass. But then Kitson stopped by his office one day and said he was ready to start.

"I breathed a sigh of relief," Doherty said. "That's when I knew we were out of the recession." And now, all can share in Kitson's success.

"How many times are you going to see a new city coming out of the ground?" Commission Chairman Bill Truex said. "It's really a neat concept, with a focus on conservation and the environment."

All of which was a little overwhelming for perennial Michigan snowbirds Holly and Jay Payne, who years ago took their grandchildren out to Babcock Wilderness Adventures, when few man-made marvels existed out this way.

"This is something new and we thought we'd take a peek," she said. Cindy Baerman of Fort Myers was looking forward to touring the model homes, but admitted she wasn't a serious buyer.

"I'm serious about the concept, though. I love the sustainability," she said.

Ann Letterio of Port Charlotte had a different reason for visiting. Her granddaughter was part of the entertainment, playing in the "Pride" of Port Charlotte High School Marching Band, while also doing some marketing for Babcock Ranch on the side.

"She told her mother, who teaches at Neil Armstrong School, that they should move out here and her mom could teach at the charter school," Letterio said.

DEP Meet-Ups Monthly Workshop Environmental Services Business Expo and Drinking Water Training Session

About the Expo: You are invited to this free Environmental Services Business Expo, which offers the opportunity to meet the businesses that help you meet your environmental needs. This networking opportunity will help facilitate discussion between communities, businesses and government agencies in identifying actions that can stimulate economic growth and regional cooperation while protecting natural resources. DEP staff will also be available to answer any questions.

Expo vendors include:

A-C-T Advance Compliance Technology	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Advanced Environmental Laboratories Inc.	GHD
Applied Polymer Systems, Inc.	Johnson Engineering
AquaFiber Technologies	Lentus Products
Biovation Environmental Services	LMK Pipe Renewal
Clark Environment	LMK Pipe Renewal
Classic Controls	R.H. Moore & Associates, Inc.
Covanta Energy	TrapBag
DRMP	Turrell, Hall & Associates
Earth & Turf Reps/Profile Products	UF-TREEO

EarthBalance

US Ecology

Environmental & Technical Services

Waste Connections, Inc.

Florida Rural Water Association

Waste Management

About the Training Session: Florida Rural Water Association will be conducting an Alternative Oxidants for Disinfection Byproducts Compliance training class. For more information and to register for the training session, click [here](#) .

For additional information, please contact Martha.Avila@dep.state.fl.us or Terry.Cerullo@dep.state.fl.us

When:

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Training: 8 a.m. - noon

Expo: 1 - 5 p.m.

Location:

Joseph P. D'Alessandro Building, Room 1652295

Victoria Ave. Fort Myers, FL 33902

[REGISTER NOW!](#)

Florida is Number 1 in Job Creation

New numbers released on Monday prove Florida is the best state for job creation in the entire nation. In January, private sector businesses across the state created more than 50,000 jobs, the highest number of jobs created in any one month since 2004.

Over the past six years, since Gov. Scott took office, more than 1.34 million jobs have been created for Florida families, and the unemployment rate has dropped by more than half. Right now, there are 250,000 job openings from the Panhandle to the Keys.

Housing prices are up, and so are wages. Our job growth rate is double the job growth rate of the nation and double the job growth rate of our leading competitor state of Texas.

Over the past year, Florida was first in job gains in the country in the industries of professional and business services, construction, and manufacturing. Our priorities are to continue diversifying and growing our economy for the next six years.

To do this, we must invest in marketing Florida as the best state to visit and the best state for business. We must focus on bringing new companies to our state, while also supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs right here. It is critical that we keep Florida as the best state for jobs now and in the future.

- Cissy Proctor, DEO Executive Director

Florida Economic News

- Naples area ranked first in Florida for industry diversification ([Naples Daily News](#))
- Jobs, jobs, jobs: Space Coast companies on a hiring spree ([Florida Today](#))
- Space business an economic engine for Florida ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#))
- Nonprofits pack \$26 billion economic punch in Florida ([South Florida Business Journal](#))
- Hertz expands services overseas ([Business Observer](#))
- Florida adds construction jobs as firms fight to keep up with demand ([AGC America](#))

- Florida added 16,800 private sector jobs in February ([Florida Trend](#))
 - Digital studio gets \$1.25M incentive deal for move to Orlando ([Orlando Sentinel](#))
 - Florida's economy still growing ([AP](#))
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Entrepreneur News

- New start-up company in UCF incubator to hire for administrative, advising positions ([Orlando Business Journal](#))

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