



A weekly roundup of growth, expansion and revitalization news in The Villages.

WEEKLY GROWTH REPORT

T&D Job Training Strategy Cuts Into Jobless Rate

The Villages Health's continuing expansion also contributes to increase in employment.

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1. Land Purchase:

359 acres just south of Buena Vista Boulevard to provide multi-modal access to Fenney and Southern Oaks.

2. Land Purchase:

652 acres at Morse Boulevard.

3. Land Purchase:

Nearly 2,000 acres from the city of Leesburg adjacent to the Village of Southern Oaks.

There's no question Terry Yoder and his diversified construction group contributed to the healthy decrease in unemployment in Sumter County that can be seen in the latest report.

Over the past year, the chairman and CEO of Wildwood's T&D Family of Cos. adopted a strategy to recruit and train unemployed workers in communities like Webster, Center Hill, Bushnell and Lake Panasoffkee in support of The Villages' expansion south of State Road 44 in and around the villages of Fenney and Southern Oaks.

That strategy produced immediate results.

During that time, Yoder's senior construction team has recruited 260 workers and trained them for a range of construction jobs, mostly through the T&D Concrete division.

"I'm sure that we made a huge dent in the unemployment rate," Yoder said.

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The success of T&D's recruitment and training program, and job growth particularly in and around The Villages, occurred as the September jobless rate dropped by 1.3 percent to 4.7 percent, the lowest level in years, the state Department of Economic Opportunity announced a week ago.

It's also fairly obvious that Yoder's recruitment effort contributed to the positive gain in September's employment growth. Just from August to September, employment grew by 694 Sumter residents, the report showed. Year-over-year employment grew by 1,710 Sumter residents.

While pleased with the early success of this hiring strategy, Yoder said he wants to recruit and train even more Sumter residents to meet The Villages' expansion needs.

"It's going real good, but it's not where I would like it," he said. "Right now, anyone not working in Sumter chooses not to work. There are opportunities to work whether at T&D or in retail. There's something for everyone in Sumter County with the growth that we've had."

Also: No question that health care contributed to the increase in Sumter's employment numbers with the recent opening of the Brownwood Care Center. The Villages Health will offer a hybrid slate of specialty and primary care services at that location. But the opening of that 20,000-square-foot medical facility signals only the next step in the health care group's goal of transforming The Villages into "America's Healthiest Hometown," said Dr. Jeffrey Lowenkron, The Villages Health's chief medical officer. The health care group now embarks upon a new development phase on 31 acres just west of the care center in partnership with Anchor Health Properties, a privately owned Charlottesville, Virginia-based health-care development company. Anchor Health anticipates breaking ground sometime in the first quarter 2018 on a 285,000-square-foot multi-specialty health care center connected to a 150-room hotel and conference center with a medical spa and a Wolfgang Puck-licensed restaurant on that property.

Also: Speaking of growth in Fenney, The Villages received approvals last week on three plats for development of 272

more homes. At its Oct. 23 meeting, the Wildwood City Commission approved 126 single-family detached units on about 44 acres in the Unit 7 subdivision, 80 single-family detached units on 9.46 acres in the Magnolia Villas subdivision and 66 single-family detached units on 13.32 acres in the Live Oak Villas subdivision. With these approvals, The Villages now may begin home construction in each of these neighborhoods in Fenney's southeastern quadrant. Each of the plats governing these subdivisions also falls under the 1,048-acre Fenney master plan that the commission approved in May.

Also: One reason accounts for this unprecedented growth in new health care services at Brownwood — new Villagers buying homes. Growth in Fenney, along with some fill-in development in a few other Villages neighborhoods, primarily accounted for the 44 percent year-over-year increase in new Sumter County building permits for the fiscal year ended Sept. 30. The 1,527 permits the county Planning Department issued over that time produced a 33 percent increase, or \$428 million, in new construction value. It's only the beginning, however, with The Villages presently possessing approved entitlements to build up to 14,000 resident units in the city of Wildwood.

Also: Another indicator of this growth was the 28 percent year-over-year increase in documentary tax stamps assessed in August on home deeds filed in the county. The tax just for that month was nearly \$1.1 million, according to the Florida Department of Revenue.

Also: State planners are now reviewing two proposed Leesburg city ordinances that would govern The Villages' development of the 2,600-acre Villages of West Lake property north and south of County Road 470 along the east side of Florida's Turnpike. The Leesburg City Commission approved one ordinance that amends the city's master land use plan to create the development category of age-restricted. The other ordinance amends the city's future land use map to classify West Lake as an age-restricted community from the current classification for industrial and technology use. The sale of this surplus city land to The Villages is contingent on a due-diligence review that could be completed as early as the end of the year.