

COUNTY CONTRASTS Earth Tech and Dais Analytic represent the diversity of companies in Pasco County. Earth Tech's CEO Ron Broadrick is pictured here and Dais Analytic's is below.



Kevin Kolber

New Directions

➤ Accelerating the growth of a more diverse economy is the sharpened focus of Pasco's government and business community.

Pasco County is at a crossroads. There's a new strategy and a new leader for its economic development efforts. The county's economic drivers are diverse, no longer all but dominated by housing. That diversity is perhaps best illustrated by two Pasco companies making a splash last year: Dais

Analytic and Earth Tech. While Earth

Tech is a "down and dirty" endeavor – mainly, Florida's largest soil and sink-




DAIS ANALYTIC
CEO Timothy Tangredi

hole stabilization company – Dais Analytic uses patented nanotechnology for its global products. At its Odessa facility, Dais manufactures the industry-award-winning ConsERV energy recovery ventilator, a "green" product that uses less energy and has lower emissions than traditional heating and A/C equipment.

Dais has 19 employees and has been in business in Pasco since 1998. Last September, the company announced the details of a \$200-million international trade agreement with Genertec-America, a subsidiary of a state-owned Chinese company, to bring high-tech "green" products to

Asia. The company creates a variety of energy saving products in the area of heating, air conditioning and water cleaning, including desalination.

The company's ConsERV can lower or raise the moisture and

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by Janan Talafer • jvt916@verizon.net

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temperature of air going to heating and air conditioning systems, which makes the process more efficient and effective, says President Tim Tangredi. More importantly, "it doesn't use standard fluorocarbon refrigerants so it doesn't deplete the ozone and it's based on only 60 watts of electricity so it lowers energy costs," he says.

NanoClear, a Dais product under development, cleans water from wastewater reclamation or seawater desalination. Tangredi says Dais Analytic currently has 18 patents for the company's technology with an additional seven pending. Many more products are on the horizon. In 2010, the company expects to double its 2009 ConsERV product revenues to about \$3-million, and, in total, to have sales of \$8-million or more in 2010 from product, materials, license fees and royalties.

On the dirty – but far from low-tech side – is Earth Tech. When a massive sinkhole the length of a football field got in the way of widening Interstate 4 outside of Orlando last year, the father and son business from Land O'Lakes came to the rescue.

Earth Tech drilled down into the limestone bedrock that underlies much of Central Florida. Then the crew pumped in a cement-like mix of sand, fly ash and water that hardens like rock.

"We used enough to fill 500 swimming pools," says CEO Ron Broadrick. "According to the Florida Department of Transportation, this was one of the largest sinkhole stabilizations ever performed in the U.S."

Despite the slowdown in the commercial and residential market, Earth Tech's business is booming with 35 percent growth in 2008 and 40 percent in 2009, says Broadrick, who runs the company with his father Lewis. They've been in business since 1991. The company has about 110 employees and plans to add additional crew in 2010. The private company doesn't

release revenue figures.

Broadrick attributes Earth Tech's success to an aggressive marketing stance and the ability to manufacture nearly everything in-house. Earth Tech has its own machine shop in Land O'Lakes and in Dade City its own batch plant that makes grout, the cement-like mix. The company was named the Pasco Economic Development Council Manufacturer of the Year for 2009.

Morton Plant



HEALTHY GROWTH Morton Plant North Bay Hospital in New Port Richey is undergoing a \$50-million upgrade.

While big, dramatic sinkholes may make news, Broadrick says the real core of his business involves the smaller, more common sinkholes that cause homes and businesses to sink and settle. "We typically have about a dozen of those projects any day of the week," he says.

Not all of Earth Tech's work involves sinkhole remediation. It often is called in to shore up the ground to create a stronger foundation for buildings, like the work the company did last year for the new Salvador Dalí museum near the St. Petersburg waterfront. And in 2000, they stabilized the causeway sections on either end of the Howard Frankland Bridge; all of that equipment had to be custom-made for the project, according to Broadrick.

A Restructuring

With a county unemployment rate of 13.2 percent in November 2009 (up 50 percent from November 2008) helping local businesses like Dais Analytic

USF opened Pasco's first on-site Small Business Development Center in Lutz.

and Earth Tech grow and be profitable is one of the priorities of the Pasco Economic Development Council (PEDC). The PEDC itself has undergone substantial changes with a new governance model and a new president and CEO.

John Hagen, most recently the economic development director in Surprise, AZ, officially joined the PEDC in December. He brings more than 30 years of economic development experience at the city and county level.

Hagen joins the PEDC at a pivotal time as the county and the business advocacy group work together to address a number of issues, from rewriting land development codes to aggressive job creation. Hagen will also preside over a new board structure based on corporate investment; a reorganization that the PEDC says is more inclusive and allows local businesses to participate at different levels of equity. It's a major change from the past and a new way of doing business, says John Walsh,

a long-time PEDC staff member who served as interim director during the search for a new president.

"In the past we had a limited number of ways for the business leadership in the community to interact with us," says Walsh. "With the new structure, it certainly brings a completely different dynamic to our board meetings."

Wilton Simpson, president of Simpson Farms and Simpson Environmental and the current PEDC board chairman, agrees. "With the new board model, we're bringing in some very prominent businesses and setting the stage for the EDC to have a wider reach and greater impact throughout the county," he says. "This is not just another board to sit on. When you have an equity stake in something, you expect to see greater results."

The reorganized PEDC has identified six strategic focus areas, ranging from fostering economic growth and developing business product to providing leadership and developing the workforce. A key initiative is to help small business by identifying the resources they



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need to expand and move to the next level.

"We're talking about growing and supporting the businesses we already have here in our area," says Simpson. "Statistics show that about 80 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses and we want to create a business-friendly environment for them."

Denise Sanderson, PEDC business retention and expansion manager, is hoping that "economic gardening," a term for offering aid to "second stage" entrepreneurial companies, can help. Last year, Governor Charlie Crist signed legislation offering economic stimulus funds to help qualified firms who have a "high potential for growth and 10 to 50 employees."

"COMPANIES REACH A CERTAIN size and may confront certain challenges," says Sanderson. "They've outgrown the incubator stage and are kind of a teenager in the life cycle of business. They may need access to research and marketing data, help with technical services or identifying investors."

Last November, Sanderson organized a county-wide economic gardening workshop to provide information to local business owners. Out of that session came interest in the potential for a Pasco-based CEO roundtable of companies. The PEDC wouldn't facilitate the roundtable, says Sanderson, but would help market the idea and recruit interested members from companies of similar size with similar issues.

Anthony Gaeto, president of Web Direct Brands, an online marketplace, was among a dozen or so business persons to attend the workshop. "This is all about creating jobs in Pasco by helping businesses get from stage two to stage three," says Gaeto. "When you're part of a growing organization, you run up against certain challenges and you can't go ask advice of people who haven't been through the experience. It can be helpful to talk it over with other people who have had to work through the same things."

Additional help for small businesses comes from Pasco's first on-site University of South Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC). According to Eileen Rodriguez, director of the USF center, the new Pasco

An Artful Dade City

In the heart of Dade City's historic district, a new non-profit center showcasing the arts is flourishing in the renovated Keifer Building in the city's Courthouse Square.

The brainchild of Dade City commissioner Camille Hernandez, the project first began as a pilot for youth and has evolved into a comprehensive program that includes gallery space for artists, art classes for children and adults, and even an after-school program for budding artists.

The nonprofit center opened in late summer, followed by the HiBrow Art Gallery in November and then the Expressions of Art, a studio that houses classes and the after school program. A gift shop was expected to open in January.

"I'm not an artist, but I believe it is important to have art in your life," says Hernandez. "In the future we hope to branch out and offer art camps and workshops. We're also partnering with St. Leo University to bring in the work of their students and adjunct professors."



Richard Riley

satellite "dovetails" perfectly with the economic gardening program. It's staffed two days a week, and local businesses can receive free, confidential one-on-one counseling.

The program is still a pilot, says Rodriguez, but "we know it's needed, we just need to prove that the demand is there. It's a win-win for everyone." While the SBDC has always served Pasco, Rodriguez says the organization hasn't been able to serve the community properly. "It's been inconvenient for people to drive from Pasco to get to our offices in Tampa," she says. The new center is located at the PEDC offices in Lutz.

A Workforce for the Future

In 2007 the Florida Legislature mandated that every school district in the state begin creating career academies in high-demand job fields. Pasco got a jump start, working in collaboration with the PEDC, Pasco-Hernando Community College, the Pasco Hernando Workforce Board and others to make it happen.

"Career academies are a key component of our strategy to build a community in which targeted businesses can grow and prosper," says the EDC's

"We're setting the stage to have a wider reach and greater impact."

— Wilton Simpson
PEDC Board
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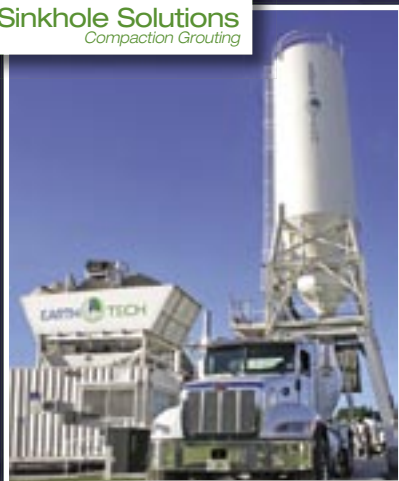


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3 Questions

John Hagen joined the Pasco EDC in December after serving as the economic development director for the City of Surprise, AZ for the past five years. Surprise has been described as one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. In the early 1980s, the city had less than 4,000 people and today has a population of more than 110,000. Hagen helped in the creation of five new business parks and six major retail centers.



1. What are Pasco's greatest opportunities? "The private and public sector leadership are really moving forward and coming together to forge a good partnership. There's new energy in the county's strategic plan, which is going to open up some terrific opportunities. I also like that Pasco offers a number of small, older traditional communities, yet we're a big county with a large land mass. We have an opportunity to become the location of choice for companies that need to grow and want to relocate to the Tampa Bay region."

2. The county's greatest challenges? "Because it's a big place, there are a lot of different players and we need to get a handle on which priorities are the most critical to put our time and effort into. We also need developers to work with us; new business parks and product; and good workforce, education and training programs. I'm not saying we don't have these things, but we need to pick up the pace."

3. Any parallels with your experience in Arizona and Pasco? "In Surprise I had the chance to help create a new city, which began as a collection of subdivisions with virtually no major employers. One of our major accomplishments was to help the chamber of commerce develop as a regional organization covering not just Surprise, but the surrounding communities. Now that everything is in motion, it's more about traditional economic development. Coming to Pasco offers new challenges, a bigger, more complicated arena and the chance to work on county-wide issues and with business."

Sanderson. "A workforce whose skills align with the needs of industry is one of the most important factors companies consider when making a decision to locate, expand or stay in the community."

Now each high school in the county has a career academy, such as the new engineering academy that opened in New Port Richey's River Ridge School last August for the 2009-2010 school year. The academy had a record enrollment of 75 students; the highest for any career academy so far, says Principal Maria Swanson.

Students take regular high school classes, along with engineering class work that leads to industry certification. The academy hopes to one day offer college credit for classes and internships with local businesses.

"What we are trying to do is provide the community with a skilled, trained workforce and helping our students get a jump start on a good career path," says Rob Aguis, the school district's director of career and technical education. "We are transforming older vocational programs into a more academically rigorous and relevant technical program of study."

Peter Buczynsky, president of Micron Pharmaceuticals, is one of the many business leaders acting as advisors to the career academies by offering curriculum guidance. His company works with the River Ridge Engineering Academy.

"We have a passion for students," says Buczynsky. "It's exciting to raise the level of interest in young people. When they come through our facility they light up and begin to realize what's possible for them as a career."

ST. LEO UNIVERSITY ALSO TAKES A STRONG ROLE in future workforce training and economic development. University President Arthur Kirk serves on the PEDC's policy council. "As the only university in Pasco we need to play an important role in helping create the quality of life that will attract businesses to the county," says Kirk.

The university has the largest Catholic school of business in the country and recently announced a \$12-million capital campaign to build a freestanding building for the program. Plans call for groundbreaking to take place this summer. Architects are currently working on the design and a pre-qualified

"We have the opportunity to become the location of choice for companies that need to grow."

— John Hagen
 President/CEO
 Pasco EDC




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PASCO COUNTY::

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list of contractors has been selected, but no firm decisions have been made, says Kirk.

Pasco-Hernando Community College is expanding its reach, too. The college plans to build a campus on 60 acres of donated land at Wiregrass Ranch in Wesley Chapel. It will be several years before campus construction begins.

Medical Mini-Boom

Construction is also underway at several hospitals in the county.

New Port Richey's Morton Plant North Bay Hospital is tackling a three-phase, \$50-million project to expand and upgrade its campus. It's the largest expansion in the hospital's history since it was built in 1965, says COO John Couris. "Health care is a growth industry for the county right now," says Couris. "Just because the economy is the way it is right now doesn't mean that health care needs are any less."

The first phase of the project opened in January – a three-story medical office building and outpatient center. The new facility connects to the main hospital with a covered walkway

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and will house outpatient rehabilitation services, a sleep disorders center, an outpatient lab and physician offices.

In March, the four-story Starkey patient care tower opens with a new ICU, cardiac telemetry unit, offices and a conference/education center. Then work will begin on interior renovations in the main hospital, which Couris says will include an upgrade to the emergency department and converting the Mitchell Rehabilitation Hospital to all private beds.

HCA Community Hospital is on track to build a new 236-bed hospital with all private rooms on 55 acres at the corner of State Road 54 and Little Road in the community of Trinity.

The new hospital will have the latest technology, including wireless Internet access for staff, patients and visitors, electronic medical records, and digital archival for all diagnostic imaging tests. And when it opens in late 2011, it will spell the demise of the older New Port Richey hospital, which will close its doors as

The Shops at Wiregrass



THE PLACE TO BE Holiday events at The Shops at Wiregrass pulled in crowds of people.

part of an agreement it made with the approval of the new facility, says hospital spokesperson Shani Jefferson.

In Wesley Chapel, University Community Hospital of Tampa and the Adventist Health System are partners on an 80-bed hospital to be built at C.R. 581 and S.R. 56. The project is still in the

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A Million Chicks A-Laying

Simpson Farms is a perfect example of Pasco's agricultural past mixing with its pursuit of new high-tech target industry.

In Trilby, Simpson Farms has a million egg-laying chickens producing millions of eggs annually, says Wilton Simpson, who has owned the farm since 2002. But you won't find the Simpson Farms label on cartons at the local grocery store. The farm provides the eggs to private label customers. A USDA inspector is on the premises seven days a week to check the quality of the product, says Simpson. He also notes that the farm is fully sustainable with everything on-site required to get the eggs in cartons and to the customer. Chicken feed is produced locally and the waste sold as organic fertilizer.



Saint Leo University has the largest Catholic business school in the country.

preliminary stages with the first significant construction not occurring until approximately spring of 2010, says Phoebe Ochman, UCH spokesperson.

UCH has also opened a long-term acute care center at Connerton, the master-planned community that has fallen on hard times. Connerton's developer closed its sales office and welcome center in December, but the UCH hospital remains open in the community's Commerce Park. The 50-bed, 48,000-square-foot facility cares for people with "medically complex illnesses" that require longer specialized treatment up to 25 days, compared with standard hospital care of a few days.

Connerton, however, is not the only large community having troubles. The 5,000-acre Wiregrass Ranch, in south central Pasco, lost its "master developer" for housing the end of 2009. According to a *St. Petersburg Times* report, that happened when the nation's largest homebuilder, Pulte Homes, sold its 800 acres for \$5 million. The company reportedly had purchased the property in 2004 for \$12.8 million.

Hot Retail

Wesley Chapel is the county's – and Tampa Bay's – hot spot for retail. Its Shops at Wiregrass offers retail and restaurants in an open-air concept on 67 acres at S.R. 56 and Bruce B. Downs Boulevard. The mall is doing well, reports General Manager Greg Lenner. "Over the holidays, we had more than 20,000 cars

in the parking lot for our annual outdoor light show where a quarter-million LED lights were synchronized to music," he says.

The Grove at Wesley Chapel at I-75 and S.R. 54 is also going strong. Its newest feature: Cobb Theatre's CineBistro, which offers fine dining and cocktails while watching a movie in reserved seating area for customers age 21 or older.

In the meantime, the area's long-awaited Cypress Creek Town Center mall has been plagued with a number of setbacks and was recently granted a 10-year extension by county commissioners. The project now has an anticipated 2021 date for completion.

County Streamlines

The county is embarking on its first major strategic plan: preserving open space, farmland and the natural environment while allowing for walkable communities of higher density and a diversity of housing choices. There's also talk of increasing the land zoned for industrial growth, creating a public transportation plan and creating more jobs to move the tax base from a reliance on residential housing.

Much of the impetus for the new direction is the result of feedback from an Urban Land Institute review of the county, says Michele Baker, chief assistant county administrator and an ex-officio member of the PEDC. Baker says the institute's review identified a number of problem areas, including dissatisfaction with the development process and the need to create a more formal vision for the county's growth.

In the past year, the county staff has worked to improve the permitting process with shorter turnaround times and improved customer service. And judging from positive feedback from the development community, says Baker, it's working. The next step is for county officials to rewrite outdated land development codes and solicit feedback from various stakeholders, including developers, businesses and residents.

Under the new strategic plan, the county will be divided into five geographic areas, with each region having a different density, feel and timetable for growth, says Baker. "For example, we are recommending that the west and south market areas of the county be designated high-density urban services areas and tied into the concept of a regional Tampa Bay transit plan," says Baker. Look for concentrated growth in the U.S. 19 corridor and along S.R. 54. ■

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