



# Pinellas County

## Staff Report

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File #: 23-0609A, Version: 1

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### **Subject:**

Three applications for funding under the Penny for Pinellas Employment Sites program.

### **Recommended Action:**

Conditional approval and funding of the three projects presented here following the successful completion of due diligence to comply with program guidelines as determined by the County Administrator.

It is further recommended that the Board delegate authority to the County Administrator to negotiate and execute all agreements and documentation associated with the Employment Sites Program project funding.

A total of three applications were received and evaluated. Based on scoring evaluations and the determination of these projects' readiness to proceed, all three applications are recommended for conditional funding at this time.

- Johnson Development Associates, in the amount of \$2,151,867.00 to fund the relocation of the existing drainage pond and associated infrastructure, structural fill, and above market landscaping package required under the Property Owner Association for Gateway Center Business Park.
- National Doors and Hardware, in the amount of \$327,000.00 to assist in the relocation and consolidation of two existing sites in Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs to a new 10,000 square foot facility on a vacant 0.82 acre industrial site located in Tarpon Spring's Riverbend Business park, ensuring the retention of a local business and improving their ability to deliver services.
- Racetrack 430, in the amount of \$1,100,000.00 for numerous costs including underwriting of 12,000+ yards of fill dirt to bring both industrial buildings to a dock high floor elevation, demolition of part of the existing building along with asphalt, curbing, sidewalks and other existing infrastructure that will be required to be rebuilt and underground stormwater vaults.

This application for Employment Sites Program is budgeted under Penny IV Economic Development Capital Projects Countywide Investment program funding (project 004149A). Funding in the total amount of \$3,578,867.00 for these applications is available in this Capital Improvement Project.

### **Strategic Plan:**

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.1 Proactively attract and retain businesses with targeted jobs to the county and the region

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.1 Maximize partner relationships and public outreach

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources

**Summary:**

The fourth application cycle for the Employment Sites Program opened on November 15, 2022 and closed on January 17, 2023. Three applications were submitted requesting project funding assistance in a total amount of \$3,578,867.00. Pinellas County Economic Development staff scored each application based on objective evaluation criteria based on the public policy goals. Then County staff from multiple departments reviewed and provided input on all proposed projects. Three projects are recommended for funding. The recommended projects meet the eligibility criteria and comply with the public policy goals as set forth in the program guidelines.

**Background Information:**

Penny IV Funds are provided through an extension of the Infrastructure Sales Surtax, a voter-approved 1.0% sales tax that is dedicated to infrastructure improvement projects in Pinellas County. Penny IV was approved by 83% of Pinellas County voters on November 7, 2017. The approved ballot language included "capital projects to support economic development" as permissible uses of funds. On August 1, 2017, prior to the vote on the Penny IV ballot initiative, an Interlocal Agreement between Pinellas County and the 24 municipalities was approved to allocate the proceeds from the 2020-2029 infrastructure surtax. Under the Interlocal Agreement, 8.3% of the net proceeds of the surtax is dedicated to countywide investments in the areas of Economic Development Capital Projects, as authorized in Section 212.055(2)(d)3, Florida Statutes, and "Housing" land acquisition in support of affordable residential housing, as authorized in Section 212.055(2)(d)(1)(e), Florida Statutes.

The Board established a Joint Review Committee (JRC) to develop guidelines for the use of Penny IV Funds for affordable housing and economic development capital projects. The JRC was comprised of City and County representatives and met monthly between March and October of 2019. The County engaged a consultant to assist the JRC by conducting market research to inform policy regarding the deployment of Penny IV Funds. This research indicated that there is strong demand for the development of industrial and office properties within Pinellas County. However, while there is a potential market for future development, attraction and retention of targeted industry employers will likely be limited by various factors including:

- 1) Competition for target industry employers from other markets
- 2) Presence of obsolete buildings that do not meet modern target industry employers' needs
- 3) Unavailability of sites
- 4) Inadequate infrastructure
- 5) Financial feasibility of new office and industrial development
- 6) Lack of workforce housing

Program guidelines prescribe that the Penny IV Funds be used for strategic investment in economic development capital project to address these identified challenges which prevent or limit desired economic development. These guidelines were approved by the Board on December 10, 2019 and establish minimum criteria and project eligibility requirements. Based on the guidelines, staff developed an application along with evaluation criteria that align with the public policy goals. The guidelines identified three primary categories for funding.

- 1) New construction, expansion, and/or rehabilitation of office and industrial buildings
- 2) Site-readiness
- 3) Public infrastructure

The fourth application cycle for the first category of funding focused on the private sector's ability to complete new and/or substantially improved office and/or industrial spaces to accommodate target industry jobs. All proposals were required to submit an online application that included a financial plan to demonstrate and document a financial gap. Following conditional Board approval, due diligence will be completed to ensure compliance with program guidelines. A summary sheet for each project application is included as an attachment.

Staff recommends the Board approve the following maximum funding amounts for three project applications and authorize the County Administrator to negotiate and approve the terms and final funding:

\$ 2,151,867.00 - Johnson Development Associates  
\$ 327,000.00 - National Door and Hardware  
\$ 1,100,000.00 - Racetrack 430  
  
\$ 3,578,867.00 Total funding amount

**Fiscal Impact:**

Total Maximum Expenditure - \$3,578,867.00

Funding to support the recommended applications is budgeted in the County's Capital Improvement Program, funded by the Local Infrastructure Sales Surtax (Penny for Pinellas) in project 004149A Penny IV Economic Development Capital Projects. This funding is from the Penny for Pinellas countywide investment for Economic Development Capital Projects and Housing.

**Staff Member Responsible:**

Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Director, Economic Development  
Teresa Brydon, Business Development Manager, Economic Development

**Partners:**

City of Oldsmar  
City of Pinellas Park  
City of Tarpon Springs

**Attachments:**

Project Summary Sheets  
Penny IV Affordable Housing and Economic Development Program Guidelines