

CONSULTANTS
FORUM



Ft. Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort, Florida

DECEMBER 15-17, 2025

organized by **AREADEVELOPMENT**

FALL CONSULTANTS FORUM

Area Development would like to acknowledge our Host Sponsors:



OPENING — MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

5:30 – 8:30 pm **Registration**
Ocean Ballroom Foyer

6:00 – 7:00 pm **Sponsor and Speaker Private Reception**
Dunes Terrace

Sponsor:



7:00 – 9:00 pm **Welcome Reception and Dinner**
Oceanview Terrace

Reception Sponsor:



Dinner Sponsor:



DAY ONE — TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16

7:15 – 8:15 am **Opening Breakfast**
Oceanview Terrace

Sponsor:



8:30 – 8:45 am **Opening Remarks**
Ocean Ballroom

Dennis Shea
President & Publisher, Area Development

Bob Swindell
President & CEO, Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance

8:50 – 9:25 am **Where Domestic Investment is Flowing—and Why**
The leadoff session will break down where companies are growing, what's motivating location decisions, which sectors are heating up, and how states and communities can position themselves to capture investment in 2026.

Panelists:

Amy Gerber
Executive Managing Director, Americas, Strategic Consulting
Cushman & Wakefield

Brad Migdal
Executive Managing Director, Americas, Strategic Consulting
Cushman & Wakefield

Brooklin Salemi
Senior Managing Director, Economic Incentives Advisory
Newmark

9:30 –
10:05 am

**Reshoring, Near-Shoring & Trade Disruption:
What It Means for Your State or Region**

From manufacturing returning to North America to shifting trade routes and geopolitical uncertainty, reshoring and near-shoring are redefining what “competitive advantage” looks like for states and regions. The panel brings together consultants with on-the-ground perspectives from the U.S., Mexico, and Canada to explore how international companies are weighing total cost, speed-to-market, and risk diversification across borders.

Panelists:

Marc Beauchamp
President
SCI Global

Ford Graham
Senior Vice President,
Infrastructure & Economic Development
McGuireWoods Consulting

Carlos Sanchez
Managing Director, Global Strategy & Consulting
Newmark

10:10 –
10:30 am

Refreshment Break

Foyer

Sponsor:



Conference Wi-Fi Sponsor:



10:35 –
11:10 am

Beyond the Incentive: Infrastructure, Workforce & Energy as the Real Game-Changers

Today’s winning communities are those that can guarantee infrastructure capacity, deliverable workforce pipelines, and reliable, competitively priced energy. The session will break down why these fundamentals increasingly outweigh cash packages in the final cut.

Panelists:

Shannon O’Hare
Executive Managing Director, Americas, Strategic Consulting
Cushman & Wakefield

Alan Reeves
Managing Director, Global Strategy
Newmark

Brandon Talbert
Managing Director
Austin Consulting

11:15 –
11:50 am

Staying Competitive: Rural, Small-Metro and Secondary Markets

Current Economic conditions have opened plenty of opportunity for smaller markets to be considered and win new investment. The panel will explore what smaller communities are doing to proactively describe their competitive advantage and remain in serious contention against larger markets.

Panelists:

Benton Blaine
Managing Director, Americas, Strategic Consulting
Cushman & Wakefield

Scott Kupperman
Founder
Kupperman Location Solutions

Chris Schwinden
Partner
Site Selection Group

12:00 –
1:00 pm

Networking Lunch

Oceanview Terrace

Sponsor:



AFTERNOON — BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Please refer to the emails that were sent to you or the monitors in the Ballroom Foyer for your room assignments.

- 1:15 – 2:00 pm** **Breakout Sessions**
Ocean Ballroom I, II & IV, III
- I** **Brad Elmer – Baker Tilly**
The Big Beautiful Bill: Redefining the Incentives and Infrastructure Landscape
- II & IV** **Brian Kelsey – EY**
Checking Receipts: Five Defining Trends of 2025
- III** **Mario Ochoa – JLL**
Seizing the Opportunity of Advanced Manufacturing
- 2:15 – 3:00 pm** **Breakout Sessions**
Ocean Ballroom I, II & IV, III
- I** **Ken Biberaj – Savills**
Positioning Your Community for the New Wave of Defense Tech Investment
- II & IV** **Alicia Janesko Hutchings – Cresa**
Steven Pearce – McGuireWoods Consulting
How Site Consultants Evaluate and Narrow the Field
- III** **Shane Williams – EY**
What Tariffs and Changing Trade Policy Mean for Economic Development
- 3:00 – 3:15 pm** **Refreshment Break**
Foyer

Sponsor:



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Caribbean Ballroom

3:15 – 4:45 pm

The four (4) Roundtables are meant for casual discussion and to provide an additional platform for speakers and attendees to connect. Please refer to the back of your badge for your assigned table numbers (left to right). Be ready to introduce yourself and help drive the conversations!

SPONSOR AND SPEAKER PRIVATE RECEPTION

Dunes Terrace

5:30 – 6:30 pm

Sponsor

St. Lucie
EDC 

GROUP NETWORKING RECEPTION

Oceanview Terrace

6:30 – 7:30 pm

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GREATER HOUSTON
PARTNERSHIP

Please wear your badge to the evening Reception(s)

DAY TWO — WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17

NETWORKING BREAKFAST 7:30 AM | CLOSING BREAK 10:45 AM

Sponsor



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BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 8:45-9:30 AM

OCEAN BALLROOM II & IV

Best Practices for Greenfield Projects

From untapped sites to thriving developments, success starts long before the first shovel hits the ground. This session highlights how economic development professionals are streamlining processes, elevating documentation, and positioning their communities to attract and accelerate major investments.

Speaker:

Jenae Valentine
Senior Manager, Location Analysis & Incentives
Maxis Advisors

OCEAN BALLROOM I & III

One Industry, Two Stories: Navigating the Diverging Paths in the Forestry and Related Products Sector

The forestry and related products sectors are experiencing a striking duality. In some regions, longstanding operations are shuttering. Meanwhile, other areas are witnessing a surge of investment and expansion. This session will delve into the factors driving this contrast—exploring market dynamics, policy influences, and strategic decisions that are reshaping the landscape.

Speaker:

Lindsey Cannon
Managing Director
Quest Site Solutions

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 9:45-10:30 AM

OCEAN BALLROOM II & IV

Investigating the Impacts of Data Center Projects on State and Local Economies

Data centers are emerging as major economic drivers as AI and GPU-intensive technologies reshape power needs, project design, and site selection priorities. The session breaks down the key players, essential site requirements, incentive considerations, and RFP expectations to help communities position themselves competitively.

Speaker:

Steve Brunson
Vice President, Credits & Incentives
DMA Inc.

OCEAN BALLROOM I & III

Building a Project Aftercare Strategy That Protects Your Deals

Winning a project is only the beginning—communities must now support companies through the critical period between announcement and full production. This session will outline what best-in-class project aftercare looks like from a site selector's perspective. Attendees will learn practical strategies to help new investors meet aggressive start-of-production timelines and ensure projects stay on track long after the deal is signed.

Speakers:

Leah Scott
Director, Deal Advisory & Strategy
KPMG

Sarah Vosler
Director, Deal Advisory & Strategy
KPMG

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