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# From The Magic Kingdom To A Medical City: How A Culture Of Collaboration Is Fueling A New Orlando

By Buddy Dyer

For more than half a century, the world has known Orlando as America's top vacation destination. Our local economy is built around, and benefits greatly from, the flood of tourists who visit our world class attractions every year. Yet, as the Great Recession illustrated, even a magic kingdom isn't immune to a worldwide economic collapse.

Given the climate of recovery, it may surprise you to learn that national publications such as [Forbes](#) are declaring Orlando "America's Next Boom Town" and describing our city as a place that's primed to recover faster and stronger than most anywhere else.

These bold predictions aren't some pixie dust fueled mirage. They are the result of a decade of hard work by the Orlando community to diversify our economy beyond its base of tourism and create the industries and jobs of the future. These transformational projects, which began in the years prior to the recession, are slowly paying dividends as our community moves from recession into recovery and, ultimately we believe, into prosperity.

- In southeast Orlando, our new "Medical City" is almost complete. This unique cluster of clinics, classrooms and laboratories will create more than [30,000 jobs](#) and have a 10-year economic impact of nearly eight billion dollars.
- In downtown Orlando, the initial stages of construction are happening on what will become our "Creative Village," a live, work, learn and play campus that's home to educational institutions and companies in cutting edge industries like digital media and modeling and simulation. The Creative Village will be another economic engine for our city, creating more than 5,000, quality jobs.
- We're also using public transportation to reinvigorate our economy. Nineteen months from now, Central Floridians will be able to board a commuter train called SunRail that connects our entire region along a 60 mile line. SunRail is expected to generate 250-thousand jobs and have an 8 billion dollar economic impact over the next 30 years.
- We've also managed to build the world's top sports and entertainment venue in the Amway Center. And, we'll soon complete a world class performing arts center and a refurbished Citrus Bowl Football Stadium. These venue projects will give our residents access to new sports, arts and entertainment options while fueling our local economy.

As impressive as these projects are, the way they were secured is the real story. They were made possible because of an unprecedented commitment to partnership and collaboration. In an era where partisan rhetoric and rancor is at an all time high, Orlando has managed, in large part, to move beyond divisive politics in favor of actually getting things done.

It hasn't been easy. Elected officials, including myself, have had to swallow hard and not just be open to the concept of compromise, but instead seek out ways to work together. We've had to let go of decade's worth of paralyzing regional and jurisdictional differences. We've had to engage the academic, philanthropic and corporate communities to help generate public/private solutions. We've had to learn how to share the credit and, in some cases, the blame.

Most of all, we've had to embrace the notion that there is no such thing as a Republican pothole or a Democratic fire; and that the only way our common challenges can be overcome is by common, collaborative solutions.

The sad truth is Orlando's story, and our newfound "culture of collaboration," should not be remarkable. We're not exactly splitting the atom here in Central Florida. Our success only seems remarkable because of the toxic political climate that seems to surround us all.

Even so, the model for partnership as a mechanism for economic recovery and revitalization is working in Orlando. It's working in other cities. But, it can work in more. It can certainly work at the federal level, too.

As Americans, we need only to take the first step and realize and acknowledge that sharp ideology may be a way to succeed politically, but it's lousy for the economy. I am proud to offer up Orlando's story as a progressive, pragmatic blueprint for how local leaders can reinvigorate their share of our national economy and lead by example.