

Barbara Carr, M.P.A. and M.N.M  
City of Fort Myers  
Business and Economic Development



July 21, 2021

## Focus on New Opportunities with a Mindset of Smart Growth

Having the right mindset helps you to see beyond what worked in the past and toward what is needed in the future. One of my roles over the last year has been to listen to area businesses, keep an eye on other regional areas and most importantly, establish trust and accountability to help deliver results.

In today's marketplace we are seeing a push against the status quo. Finding ways to anticipate changes in priorities and technology is happening at a more rapid pace. Staying agile as an established business has kept many companies working on proof of concepts to stay ahead of future needs in their industries. And disruptions from a new start-up business can be seen as competition or an opportunity to partner and create new and innovative outcomes. Finding new ways to interact with one another and grow our local economy is key to our future economic development needs as a community.

For smart growth to occur, effective innovation requires leaders and community members to master problem solving and develop strong leadership skills. Working together cohesively is more important than adding more people to the table. Everyone sharing mutual responsibility for positive change creates a transparent city. Why change is happening with a focus on accelerating adoption is not done just for the sake of change. An education on why it is happening and how it affects them as well as empowering them to take some ownership over the change creates an inclusive environment.

Collaboration does not happen through osmosis. To create a collaborative environment, you need skills in communication, negotiation, change management, project management, and support to break down silos and work as a team. For us, as a community, to improve we need to rely on others. Transparency can play a big part in this. Important initiatives need timelines and shared accountability to reach the goal in mind. That requires agreement on what the goal is and why it is important.

I encourage a curious mindset and finding ways to create value to the community. Economic Development is about a win for many vs. a few. It is a team sport where you can solve problems and see the world through the communities' eyes and have a mindset toward strategic recommendations actionable and in alignment with community input. If you would like to schedule a visit with Barbara to discuss your business, she can be reached at 239-321-7912.

Barbara Carr has two Master's degrees in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management. Her dual Bachelor of Arts degree is in Communication and Political Science. She was a business owner for over 20 years in the insurance and financial services. She was the Executive Director of a nonprofit economic development organization which provided financial assistance, incubator space, and obtained grant funds for area businesses. She has project management experience and enjoys facilitating stakeholder meetings and creating positive impact that benefits the community.