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## Countywide construction picking up steam, says land planner

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By [Bill DiPaolo](#) - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Developments such as Midtown at Town Center in Boca Raton to Harbourside in Jupiter are proof that pent-up demand is revving up the county economy, north county land planner George Gentile told about 100 listeners Tuesday at the Economic Forum of Palm Beach County. “Lots of things are happening. Thousands of jobs are being created,” Gentile said.

Countywide, more building permits are being submitted. The demand is especially strong in the unincorporated areas and north county, said Gentile. Florida Power & Light has won approval to build a campus on 86 vacant acres in Palm Beach Gardens on the north side of PGA Boulevard between Interstate 95 and Alternate A1A. Toll Brothers is finishing the 48-home Frenchman’s Harbor development on the Intracoastal Waterway near Juno Beach. Riviera Beach has a \$29 million plan to renovate its waterfront. The Briger property in Gardens on the south side of Donald Ross Road at I-95 has been approved for two million square feet of residential, retail and research. “Briger will be the next area to take off in north county,” said Gentile, a senior planner with Gentile, Glas, Holloway, O’Mahoney & Associates in Jupiter.

**Boca Raton’s Midtown, an office/retail development at Glades Road and I-95, and Jupiter’s \$150 million Harbourside retail/marina/hotel project at Indiantown Road and U.S. 1 are meeting the need for existing office space, said Rebel Cook, a Realtor. “If governments would speed up permitting, tax dollars would be coming in quicker,” said Cook.**

The proposed minor-league baseball stadium off Central Boulevard in Gardens is needed to boost the north county economy, said Bill Davis, a member of the board of directors of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. Plans call for a new \$100 million stadium to host spring training for the Houston Astros and Toronto Blue Jays. “The hurdle is convincing the public to agree to spending tax dollars to build the stadium,” said Davis.

Examples of growth in central and south county are Trader Joe’s in Delray Beach, the proposed Chapel by the Sea condominiums in West Palm Beach and the future development of the A.G. Holley hospital site in Lantana, Gentile said at the Cohen Pavilion at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts.

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Despite the uptick in demand, not all projects can expect approval, said Gentile. Avenir, a proposed development calling for 7,600 homes on the Vavrus Ranch property on the Beeline Highway in Gardens, faces traffic and environmental issues. Suni Sands, a Jupiter waterfront mobile home park recently sold for \$16 million, likely has historical artifacts underground. Archaeological studies must be done before the 10-acre parcel could be developed, said Gentile.

“Those projects could take a long time,” said Gentile.