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Gov. Scott: Jacksonville's economic development not aggressive enough



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At Councilwoman [Lori Boyer](#)'s son's college graduation in Raleigh, N.C., another student's father told Boyer how impressed he was with Gov. [Rick Scott](#)'s economic development efforts: The man had just received a call from Scott, who was trying to recruit his business to come to Florida.

On Sept. 29, when Scott visited Jacksonville to attend a Jaguars game, Boyer told him how impressed she was by the story. But the feeling isn't mutual: Scott, Boyer said, told her Jacksonville lags Florida's other cities in job growth, and that he thinks other municipalities are more aggressive in their recruitment efforts — that city council members and business leaders are more involved elsewhere.

On Thursday morning, Boyer will bring that conversation before the city's consolidation task force.

She's called in [Paul Crawford](#), deputy executive director of the Office of Economic Development, and [John Haley](#), who was senior vice president of business development for **JaxUSA Partnership** until his August 2012 retirement, to answer the taskforce's questions about economic development efforts, and to see whether the city's consolidated structure is hindering those efforts.

"Is there something about consolidated government that makes us less nimble?" Boyer said.

In a Wednesday conversation with Crawford and [Jerry Mallot](#), president and CEO of JaxUSA, Boyer said, one of them made the point that Northeast Florida has received 25 percent of the state's public investment incentive dollars in the last year. But Boyer points out that perhaps other cities were able to recruit jobs without incentive packages.

Boyer said she's seen studies that show that until 2008, Jacksonville's unemployment numbers and per capita income were better than other Florida's cities. But five years ago, those other cities started to surpass Jacksonville — cities that were harder hit by and bounced back faster from the recession.

"I'm asking, as a councilwoman, how do we impact that? How do we move the needle?" Boyer said.

The consolidation taskforce meets at 9 a.m. Thursday in the City Council chambers at City Hall.

Ashley covers real estate, hospitality and retail