

## **Nocatee innovator envisions 'building of the future' for community tech hub**



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St. Johns County innovator and tech leader Raghu Misra is working to fill a void he sees in Northeast Florida: a central hub and cowork space where people of all ages can connect, interact and collaborate with like-minded individuals, businesses and creators.

The project, called "the link," is under construction at the Nocatee Town Center, close to the Ponte Vedra Beach community where Misra and his family call home.

In December 2019, Misra introduced the concept for the hub — a first for St. Johns County — in an interview with The Record, saying: "There's no one place where tech entrepreneurs can go to exchange ideas and network."

Since then, Misra has expanded the idea to include activity programming for kids, as well as others, to stimulate their curiosity and creativity ranging from yoga classes to "games from around the world."

"I think we all realize the need to reduce the screen time of our young people and encourage interpersonal skills," Misra added.

## **Green construction and cutting-edge technology**

More recently, Misra, who will serve as CEO, announced that he is building the 22,500-square-foot building according to the highest standards of green construction and also wiring it with cutting-edge technology that increases its energy efficiency to the point of making it a virtual Net-Zero Energy Building.

To oversee the build-out of infrastructure, the link has employed smartengine wtec which designs what it calls "intelligent buildings" equipped with sensors that automatically turn electrical and cooling systems on and off in rooms based on their occupancy or vacancy 24/7.

Tim Miscovich, chief commercial officer for wtec who is also a resident of St. Augustine, said that while the company has mostly enterprise-level clients across the globe, this is a groundbreaking development for St. Johns County.

"There's not really anything like this in Northeast Florida," Miscovich said. "It will truly be a building of the future."

Misra added: "With the inclusion of the latest and greatest technologies of IOT sensors, artificial intelligence building controls, among others, wtec will deliver world-class comfort to our members and also make the building ultra-sustainable. The various technologies we will have at the link will bring out anyone's inner tech nerd."

Miscovich said that with all the uses Misra has planned, it will allow individual rooms within the community center to adjust accordingly to their own needs and schedule.

## **Innovative services**

Misra envisions the link as a place where members come to "Learn-Play-Think-Do," as their slogan goes. Fees will be subscription-based but rates have not been finalized yet.

Professionals could pay a monthly cowork fee and also take advantage of other on-site services that might benefit startups in the incubation period, such as legal advisers or venture capital firms.

Misra's own Jacksonville-based firm, Wired2Perform, specializes in data analytics in the field of human resources and team building but he also previously ran a company called ShipXPress developing technologies to predict when railcars need repairing in the transportation industry. He plans to relocate his own headquarters to within the building.

In his mind, Misra sees the link as being a spark for the growing innovation economy of Northeast Florida, which includes St. Johns County, Jacksonville and the surrounding area.

Misra teased an announcement he said will be coming soon about a partnership with a major technology provider "that will increase our offerings by a lot."

The \$6.5 million project is anticipated to generate at least 10 new jobs averaging about \$90,000 a year, and Misra thinks the number of positions will increase as the concept grows.

The link is tentatively slated for a soft opening in June, when Misra hopes to open the center for drop-in clinics so the community can sample the range of offerings, with an official opening in July.

Said Misra: "The outpouring support, interest and collaboration from potential members and users of the space have continued to affirm the need for this type of model project in Northeast Florida."