

Proposed hub targets coworkers, collaborators



By Colleen Jones
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A local entrepreneur is looking to further his own ambitions and spark those of like-minded innovators with a project tentatively called the Hub at Nocatee.

The plan calls for construction of a 22,500-square-foot office complex within the Nocatee Town Center where Raghu Misra would relocate his Jacksonville-based tech company as well as a coworking space and community activity center.

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.

In September, the county approved an economic development incentive package for the plan worth \$183,960.

Misra, who lives in Nocatee but works in Jacksonville, said he believes he's filling a void in creating a space where creativity and fledgling businesses can co-exist.

“There’s no one place where tech entrepreneurs can go to exchange ideas and network,” Misra said in a recent interview with The Record.

Melissa Glasgow, director of economic development, supports the project.

“Technology and innovation-related companies are targeted industries for the county, in particular, for the high-wage, high-skilled positions they provide for residents, as well as the capital investment they make in a community,” Glasgow said in an email to The Record.

Misra’s own 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.

Misra said he knows many others in the technology and startup field who commute to Jacksonville. But with so much growth in northern St. Johns County, he thinks the area could use its own tech hub.

Glasgow said the county has received several inquiries about coworking centers and “it will be great to add this type of space to our product mix.”

The project would be monetized, at least initially, through a membership fee-based business model.

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 also envisions a collaborative center with the theme of “learn, play, make, do” with activities that bring people of all ages together. Pre-K story hours could be offset by meet-ups older folks might be interested in, such as indoor golf or new language classes.

“It would really be about engaging and mentally challenging yourself,” Misra said.

The project is awaiting final site plan approval and building permits from the county but Misra hopes to break ground on the hub by spring and hopefully open a year from then in 2021.