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## **Shumaker's Ben Hanan takes on the chair role at Bradenton's EDC**

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Gittings Photography

Ben Hanan

Benjamin Hanan has plenty of business experience in Tampa Bay.

He's a partner at Shumaker and is the corporate, tax and transactions regional service line leader. He's known for managing complex transactions, bringing problem-solving to his clients, and for counseling on entity formation and funding, among other tasks.

He's bringing all of this to his newest role as the new chair of the Bradenton Area Economic Development Corp. He's been a board member of the EDC since 2017, watching as the business has bloomed in the area.

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**What made you decide to seek the chair position for the EDC?** I was born and raised in Sarasota and I was chair of the EDC of Sarasota County, so I have a little bit of familiarity with the economic development space. Several years ago, the Bradenton EDC asked me to join as a board member, and I thought it was a

natural fit. Other than the fact that University Parkway divides the two counties, there's overlap — what's good for one is good for the other.

Our firm has offices in Sarasota County and Tampa, so we are pretty much around Manatee County and have a number of clients here. I honestly thought there was an all-around great fit not only for my practice but for our community involvement and the continued growth of our region.

**What is it that you like about the economic development space?**

I've lived here a long time. I experienced 2008 here. The mission of growing and diversifying our economy is important beyond tourism and construction. Not that those aren't important, but when things turn we definitely need some other areas to sustain us.

Adding to the opportunities in our area can only further strengthen and enhance the area and help minimize some of what I understand is called "brain drain." We educate lots of folks with our wonderful institutions and then they leave, and maybe they retire here, but I'd love to capture them before they leave because I think we have a ton of talent. I grew up and moved away and came back, so I think it's a great spot.

**What do you hope to accomplish during your time as chair?** The EDC has a fantastic staff. I think Sharon [Hillstrom] does a great job. So I'll continue down the path that the people before me have created. I'm only here for a year and it's going to exist a long time after me.

But we'll keep it focused on areas where we actually can make a difference. We try to stay out of the area's politics and do what's best for the region from an economic perspective. We recognize that we have not only a duty to the existing companies that are in town, but to continue the pipeline of talent, we need to attract other businesses. If we can make some headway and continue to develop the talent pool and something along the lines of affordable housing, I know that's not going to be accomplished in a year, but if we can set the course, then we will be successful.

**What would you say is the biggest economic challenge and the biggest economic opportunity in Bradenton?** In general, we are trying to bring high-wage jobs to the area and create a talent pipeline. There are definitely more jobs available than we have workers to fill them. So we work with institutions in the area to develop the programming, to develop the talent that employers need.

We're also starting at the younger level. We're working on a pilot program that uses virtual reality to teach students who may not necessarily be on a college path, or even if they are, that there are other ways to earn a living in the area. Also, we're testing whether that virtual reality might be even something that we could use to create some sort of job training. Those are some unique areas that we're looking at.

Affordable housing is something that's front and center. We've received about 500 responses from employers to help us better understand the housing and services that employees want and what employers might be in a position to help provide to make this an attractive area for a skilled workforce. We're trying to capitalize on our resources.

In addition to the educational institutions, we have sports performance, whether it's IMG [Academy], the Benderson rowing facility or the new Terra Nova Equestrian facility. Those are unique assets that we think we can continue to build upon and attract other providers in those areas.

**As part of you're legal practice you're involved a lot with startups and venture capital; is that correct?**

I do a lot of that work, but a lot of merger and acquisition work. It's not just startup and venture capital, but definitely lots of existing businesses of kind of all shapes and sizes. I also am involved in estate planning and so we get involved in a lot of succession planning from one generation of business ownership to the next.

**It seems like a natural line to cross over into economic**

**development.** Absolutely, yeah. I went to law school knowing I never wanted to become a litigator or became a CPA before going to law school. If I do my job right, I stay out of the courtroom.

**Closer look**

**Name, title:** Ben Hanan, chair, Bradenton Area EDC

**Age:** 52

**Education:** JD, George Washington University, 1996; MPA, The University of Texas at Austin, 1993; BBA, The University of Texas at Austin, 1991

**His service lines at Shumaker:** Corporate, tax, and transactions; corporate law/business organizations; mergers and acquisitions and divestitures; securities; taxation; wealth strategies; estate planning; trusts and estates

**Hobbies:** Pickleball

**Children:** Three daughters, ages 25, 25 and 22

**Bradenton EDC reach:** All of Manatee County

# Day in the life of Ben Hanan

● Sleep ● Personal time ● Work





**Pam Huff**

Managing Editor - *Tampa Bay Business Journal*

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