LEON COUNTY INNOVATIVE GRANT

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Leon County was awarded an Innovative Grant by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), March 20, 2000. The purposes of this grant were:

- To Determine the amount of carpet being disposed of in Leon County by fiber type
- To quantify the volume of carpet being disposed of in Leon County
- To determine the types of equipment required to process carpeting to meet the end user specifications at various volume levels
- To determine the economics of an unsupported carpet recycling operation
- To determine the economics of a regional facility for other counties to participate
- To determine the economic impact on Leon County of other counties establishing these types of facilities
- To recommend to state government possible future legislation that would be beneficial to carpet recycling and removing this commodity from our landfill
- To establish a self-supporting private facility for future operation

FDEP targeted waste carpet as an Innovative Grant project in Leon County due to large amount of state owned and leased office space and student housing at two universities and a community college. The Department of Management Services manages more than 5,000,000 square feet of state-owned space, with additional space leased or owned by individual state agencies. There are also 16,000 multi-family units and 104,000 single family homes in Leon County.

An initial survey of carpet waste was conducted in 1999 resulted in data that indicated that waste carpet represents approximately 6% of the total Class III waste stream, 400,000 pounds per month or twice the statewide average. There is only one permitted Class III facility in Leon County which is owned and operated by the county.

The grant provided valuable information that will be applicable to other waste materials, as markets develop, that can use this type of recovered material as feedstock. The process and equipment necessary to provide a marketable feedstock from waste carpet had not been developed at a scale that could be permanently maintained. This Innovative Grant demonstrated that carpet can be successfully diverted from the waste stream, sorted (typed), baled and marketed.

Implementation of the Project

It was determined that a processing facility (warehouse) would need to be leased since there was no county-owned space available. Two collection sites were set up to accept waste carpet. A vinyl shelter was installed at the Solid Waste Management Facility (landfill), which accepts Class I and Class III waste as well as metals, asbestos, appliances and woodwaste. A warehouse was leased in an industrial park in Southwest Leon County (SW carpet plant). Each had the capability of weighing and storing carpet - the SW plant processed the carpet for marketing. The SW Plant had approximately 16,000 square feet of warehouse and workspace on approximately two acres of property. It was close to the Truck Route which afforded good access for commercial truck traffic. We were able to obtain a month-to-month lease. The building was equipped with an overhead crane.

A plant manager was hired who had a great deal of experience and knowledge of the construction & demolition debris business in Tallahassee. He was a great asset to this project. His contacts and business experience were crucial to the success of the program. Daily reporting forms were developed and used to track receipts, contamination and sales. These were used to prepare the monthly reports and track operation costs.

A method of weighing carpet brought to the SW Plant was necessary. We selected a hanging scale for use with the overhead crane. This was the least expensive and fastest way to begin operation. (The best type of scale for this operation would have been a drive-on truck scale.) Scales were necessary for data collection and because padding was purchased at $.10 per pound. The purchase of padding was to offer an incentive to bring the carpet to the SW plant. Weights were taken on incoming carpet and finished bale for inventory tracking purposes.

A forklift powered by propane, rather than gas or electric, was selected because of working inside the building. We were able to locate a fork lift that came equipped with a bale clamp to enable us to move bales of carpet easily. This clamp also provided the means to stack bales effectively for storage prior to shipping.

The baler selection took a bit longer. We contacted several operators who were baling carpet. A local retail outlet was using a vertical downstroke baler. Larger operators, primarily construction & demolition facilities were using high production two ram balers. The vertical balers did not have the capacity we needed and were very labor intensive to operate. The high production bales would do the job, but were too expensive for our budget. We were looking for a baler that could handle our anticipated volume efficiently. A primary consideration in a baler selection was the size of the material being baled. We originally thought that carpet would have to be size-reduced to be baled. Various size reduction techniques were observed at other facilities: shredding, slitting, sawing and shearing. Santa Rosa County's recycling center had recently purchased a baler similar to what we

had in mind. We took carpet samples over for a test. The test proved satisfactory in shearing and baling the samples. After several tests, it was determined that the baler could perform the size reduction (by shearing) at the same time it was baling. This reduced handling the carpet pieces, decrease space requirements and reduce our initial capital requirements - and handle our anticipated volumes. A horizontal baler with shearing capabilities and a large feed opening was selected. The Excel EX-62 baler was purchased.

While the baler was on order, we concentrated on methods of sorting and identifying the waste carpet. Evergreen Recycling and Honeywell provided a device called the CARPID. The CARPID is an electronic spectroscope supplied by Evergreen Recycling Company. Carpet was separated according to the face fiber as identified with the CARPID device. The CARPID identified N6, N6.6 and "unknown" type of carpet. This tool worked very well on dry carpet. Because moisture content rendered the CARPID inoperable, waste carpet had to be dried using a hair dryer on sample pieces. Fortunately our warehouse was large enough to allow for the drying carpet. Evergreen Carpet Recycling provided advice throughout the pilot project which proved very beneficial to the success of the program, especially the quality of the N6 loads delivered to their facility.

The Project also needed a piece of equipment with which to move loose carpet about the facility. Our choices were reduced to a wheeled loader or a hydraulic crane - preferably mobile rather than stationary. We selected a skid-steer type loader. Carpet is heavy, especially when tipped at the facility from roll-off containers. The hydraulic crane was necessary to efficiently separate large loads of carpet waste. Once the carpet was tipped onto the floor the crane was used to separate the face fiber types as identified with the CARPID. It was moved with the crane into pre-baling sorting areas. Scanning of small pieces of carpet is possible but cost prohibitive. Unless small pieces match larger pieces previously scanned, they were diverted to the unidentified or "other" category.

One large State demolition project allowed us to source separate carpet during the demolition process. By working with the demolition contractor we received relatively clean loads of carpet waste. This material was all one face fiber type which made processing very efficient. The contractor, working with a local container provider, removed the carpet as a phase of his initial demolition. The carpet was rolled and placed in a covered container. These were the best loads received at the facility, demonstrating that when possible, source separation is by far the best alternative when processing waste carpet.

Deliveries to the SW carpet plant from local haulers contained varying amounts of contamination. Private haulers who leased containers to installers brought in loads that contained many razors (from the carpet cutting knives),other types of flooring, cardboard and food waste. At the landfill, our drop-off site was unattended which resulted in a greater accumulation of contamination. Scavenging of carpet padding occurred regularly at the landfill as well since there were two padding brokers (including our project) who purchased padding. It is very important to process waste carpet as quickly as possible. The accumulations at the landfill, which was unattended, resulted in stockpiles that grew more contaminated with each new delivery - and harder to process due to the volumes that stockpiled.

More carpet was delivered to the landfill than the SW plant. Contractors and private haulers preferred tipping their loads at the designated area of the landfill reserved for carpet deliveries. It was part of their routine and the hours of operation were more convenient (including Saturdays). The established infrastructure continues to be appealing.

For this project, the carpet dropped off at the landfill was reloaded and taken to the SW plant for processing. Obviously this added costs to the project. For this demonstration project, the recycling truck operator incorporated these trips into his workload with some overtime. It was nevertheless necessary in order to get the carpet from the landfill to the SW processing plant. The permanent facility at the landfill will reduce handling and sorting costs because the scale house operators will have the opportunity to inspect each load and determine the recyclability of incoming carpet waste.

Summary

Equipment was borrowed to begin the project until we could determine the best specifications for permanent equipment for this project. An Excel EX-62 baler was chosen because the hopper was capable of cutting the scrap and compacting it into acceptable bales. The number of wire ties had to be increased for carpet due to the resilience and memory of the carpet fiber, in order to safely secure each bale. Other equipment that proved challenging to set up was for the weighing of scrap brought to the SW carpet plant. The project used scales at a nearby recycling plant to weigh truck load quantities. Portable hanging scales were used to weigh small loads from jobbers. Padding was purchased in order to supply incentives for carpet retailers, jobbers and local haulers to bring material directly to the processing facility. Initially, manual labor was used to sort, identify and separate carpet. This required three full time employees. A small portable crane was leased that proved very valuable in streamlining the processing of waste carpet. The plant manager was able to handle the daily workload when all the equipment was in place and working properly.

Project Results

Carpet was collected for eleven months July 2000 through May 2001. **Table One** is the inventory summary. Five loads of N6 sent to Evergreen were 98% pure which indicated that the CARPID device worked well. It is not certain how much of the "other" carpet could have been misidentified. But, indications from the results of the N6 separation indicated that there were very little false-positive results with the use of the CARPID.

Two loads of padding were sold. This was reported as being a good quality product. The N6.6 and "other" carpet was baled and stored. Project Consultants, Inc., our partner in the project, worked very diligently to find markets for this material. When the program was suspended, the remaining inventory was taken to the landfill. The bales were used as berm material to abate flooding. Landfill supervisors were very pleased with the performance of these

bales for stormwater detention. The remaining bales of waste carpet will be used in this manner as well.

Accounts for seven "regular" customers were set up during the first six months of operation. They indicated that the service received at the SW plant was to their satisfaction and more convenient than using the landfill. It also helped that carpet padding was purchased from these installers. They were able to offset disposal costs by selling their scrap padding. Overall, the majority of carpet waste was delivered directly to the landfill. This played a major role in our decision to permanently relocate the facility to the landfill. The landfill location will also provide more educational opportunities since Class III disposal will continue to be operational after the Class I solid waste is transferred out of the county.

Proformas done in May 2001 (Tables One and Two attached) indicated that Leon County could continue to recycle carpet - just separating N6 and padding, charging a reduced tipping fee (which would be needed to sustain the operation until markets could be found for the N6.6 and other types).

At the end of the initial grant period, March 20, 2001 through June 5, 2001, an extension was requested and granted. This time was used to construct a permanent collection structure at the Solid Waste Management Facility (landfill) in order to segregate carpet and process it for marketing. In the fall of 2001, Evergreen temporarily suspended its carpet recycling operation. Leon County moved forward with plans to establish permanent carpet recycling operations after consulting with the Carpet and Rug Institute and its consultant, Project Consultants, Inc.

Status of Carpet Reclamation

The year 2001 has been a significant, yet volatile year for carpet reclamation and recycling. This year provided both opportunities and lost opportunities for the progress of carpet reclamation and recycling overall.

The closing of the Evergreen nylon 6 recycling facility in Augusta, GA created a highly visible negative impact on carpet recycling in general. It was the first major attempt in the US to address the real issue of carpet recycling since DuPont Flooring Systems began their nylon 6.6 carpet recycling program about 6 years ago.

There were real differences between the two programs. The Evergreen project provided tangible tracking of a nylon fiber actually being recycled back into carpet product, thus providing both the nylon producers and carpet manufacturers a sustainable recycling program. The DuPont nylon 6.6 reclamation program recycles only certain carpet categories into other products. Backing and not-conforming face fibers have ended up in long-term storage with the hope that technologies will catch up.

There is strong evidence that the Evergreen facility will reopen within the coming year, but will

probably have new owners or at least a new joint venture. Sadly, the collection infrastructure created by Evergreen of independent entrepreneurs has been financially devastated. And the 16½ million pounds of nylon 6.6 collected in that program sorely needs market outlets.

On a more positive note, after four years of extensive research production trials, a process has been developed to utilize reclaimed whole carpet, size-reduced and densified, into a feedstock which can be utilized in combination with recycled plastics, i.e., HDPE, LDPE and polypropylene, to make a variety of products. These products include lumber profiles, highway sound barrier systems, highway guardrail offset blocks, landscape amenities, railroad ties, marine timers and pallets. The material has been successfully tested in the products of existing companies with existing markets in both extrusion and injection molding manufacturing processes.

The collapse of the Evergreen program has impacted the ability to sustain a reliable supply of this material. However, other nylon producers have indicated their intent in providing support for the development of this opportunity. In addition, one carpet manufacturer has increased its appetite for reclaimed PVC backed carpet and carpet tiles for its recycling program and is actively purchasing that product nationally.

Again, on a positive note, the Carpet & Rug Institute (CRI), along with the US EPA and 30 states, plus most of the carpet industry, has committed to a carpet recycling initiative to be announced shortly. This initiative will set recycling and other sustainable goals to be achieved over the next five years to get the majority of the reclaimed carpet out of US landfills. This is the first time that the carpet industry has come together under a memorandum of understanding to actually set goals for waste prevention, waste reduction and recycling as an industry goal. Additional pressure to meet these goals will be accomplished through state and federal carpet procurement guidelines.

All in all, it appears that carpet recycling has finally reached the same level of importance as plastic recycling and that there are finally markets developing to utilize reclaimed carpet in various products.

Markets will develop slowly and will build to very respectable volumes of reclaimed carpet being recycled and otherwise utilized, changing carpet from a waste stream to a feedstock stream. The support of state and federal government will continue to be critical to the speed of how this will be accomplished, just as it has been in the development of other recycling projects.

Findings and Conclusions

The carpet recycled from the Leon County Carpet Recycling Pilot was: 20% nylon 6, 34% nylon 6.6, 28% “other” and 18% padding. There was a very small amount of vinyl backed product collected as well (less than 1%).

Equipment procured for this project worked well to handle the daily throughout and keep up with the demand using one full time plant manager and a project manager and occasional day labor.

The removal of waste carpet from the Class III waste stream improved the efficiency of operations there. Waste carpet requires more labor and equipment time to compact than typical debris such as wood, furniture, and demolition debris.

During the peak operating months of this pilot (September 2000 through April 2001)
In all, 744,204 pounds of carpet were removed from the waste stream for recycling. Of that, 142,088 pounds were shipped to Evergreen Recycling. They reported more than 98% pure product was received certifying our operations and the CARPID identification system.

More than 372 tons of waste carpet were diverted from disposal at the landfill. The baled carpet not sold, N6.6 and "other," was used as stormwater detention within the landfill. The overall results can be counted as avoided costs associated with normal landfill operations. Total tones collected were 372. At $29.00 per ton $10,788 were saved. Because of the extra operational efforts, additional savings to the landfill operations can be assumed though hard to document.

Carpet recycling can economically be incorporated into the current Solid Waste Management Facility operations. The diversion of waste carpet from the Class III section of the landfill will add to its life span as well as allow for more efficient operations of Class III due to the elimination of waste carpet.

Florida, as well as other states, should continue to support recycling and waste diversion programs that will extend existing landfill capacity.

These are some of the findings that resulted from the pilot carpet recycling program:

- Based on financial projections, by charging a reduced tipping fee ($25/ton as opposed to the standard $29/ton) at Leon County's Solid Waste Management Facility, processing of carpet and carpet padding can continue to operate economically provided there are markets for at least N6 material.
- Class III operators reported that without carpet to impede operations, their job was much smoother.
- Baled Carpet was an excellent replacement for hay bales and silt fencing within the landfill. Carpet bales were larger, more resistant to stormwater run-off and remained in place better.
- This Pilot Project proved that carpet can be processed into a marketable feedstock..
- Independent installers were more inclined to take the carpet to the SW plant with the reduced tipping fee and padding sales as incentives.
- Private haulers and the City continued to bring carpet waste to the landfill, using the designated carpet tipping area. They preferred this to driving into the Class III working area due to ease and convenience, avoiding other Class III waste.

- Unattended drop-off sites are not feasible with a recovered materials program.
- Waste carpet delivered to either facility from private Construction & Demolition landfills was too contaminated and too wet to be recycled, in spite of the requirement that these facilities separate carpet from their waste stream.
- There is a great deal of fluctuation in the waste stream that is directly related to the universities semester year. Most multi-family complexes change-out carpeting in their apartments each August just before the fall semester begins.

A final expenditure summary is attached as **Table Two**. As it indicates, Leon County contributed over $87,000 of in-kind services and expenditures to ensure that this program will continue. The plans for the permanent carpet recycling building at the landfill were permitted and construction was underway prior to Evergreen Recycling closing its doors. Plans for this building include the recycling of corrugated cardboard including the carpet rolls. These rolls, the fiber tubes carpet is rolled onto, as well as other corrugated containers are found in most carpet roll-off containers.

In trying to find secondary markets for waste carpet, I met with Dr. Andrew A.Dzurick, P.E., Dr. Danuta Leszczynska, and Dr. Amy Chan Hilton, Florida State University/Florida A&M University (FSU/FAMU) School of Engineering to discuss with them the possibility of researching uses for waste carpet. They expressed an interest in a research project. Had Innovate Grants continued, FSU/FAMU were interested in partnering with Leon County to propose such a project.

It was determined, based on Proformas for projecting continued operations, that with a reduced tipping fee and purchase of scrap padding, a carpet recycling operation can feasible as part of Leon County's Solid Waste Management facility. We studied two scenarios, one marketing only Nylon 6 (**Table Three**) and once considering markets for Nylon 6.6 (**Table Four**). When markets exist for nylon 6 the program can be self sustaining with enough through-put. By adding Nylon 6.6 to the equation, the operation can generate additional revenue. Economies of scale improve with increased amounts of waste carpet.

Leon County will continue to work with our Innovative Recycling Grant partner, Project Consultants, Inc. to monitor markets for waste carpet. We will be able to offer feedstock for various test markets in hopes of securing long term purchase orders for our material. The outlook for future markets for post consumer waste carpets looks promising. Leon County has proven that a carpet recycling program can operate effectively and efficiently to divert waste carpet from disposal.

The outlook for future markets for post consumer waste carpets looks promising. Leon County has proven that a carpet recycling program can operate effectively and efficiently to divert waste carpet from disposal.

TABLE ONE

Leon Carpet Recycling
Final Inventory

	N6			**N66**			**Other**			**Padding**			**Vinyl**		
Date	In	Out	Bal	In	Out	Bal	In	Out	Bal	In	Out	Bal	In	Out	Bal
July-00	3336		3336	11352		11352	5494		5494	10180		10180			
August-00	14736		18072	24520		35872	21042		26536	2714		12894			
September-00	21794		39866	32150		68022	44788		71324	18724		31618			
October-00	19940	34846	24960	41704		109726	28200		39524	10794		42412			
November-00	16178	21652	19486	31606		141332	19110		118634	11956		54368	3052		3052
December-00	14184		33670	23362		164694	15552		134186	18462		72830	0		3052
January-01	12168	33316	12522	29998		194692	28212		162398	10850		83680	0		3052
February-01	11638		24160	20982		215674	16192		178590	11460		95140	0		3052
March-01	16166		40326	14610		230284	12310		190900	9310	52844	51606	0		3052
April-01	14974	35294	20006	23256		253540	15006		205906	13908		65514	0		3052
May-01	1902	16980	4928	2674		256214	1102		207008	12556	60666	17404	0		3502
June-01															
	147016	142088		256214			207008			130914	113510		3052		
Percentages	19.75%			34.43%			27.82%			17.59%			0.41%		
Bales	127			225			182			113			2		
Av lbs/bale	1157			1139			1137			1004			1526		

TABLE TWO

LEON COUNTY INNOVATIVE CARPET GRANT
PROJECT EXPENDITURES

Project Cost Summary							
Grant Award	$ 249,997.00						
Grant $	Periods 1 & 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	Total All Periods	In-Kind
Administration	$ 16,000.00	$ 16,000.00	$ 3,000.00	0		$ 35,000.00	$ 18,000.00
Equipment	$ 72,944.36		$ 4,500.00	0		$ 77,444.36	$ 13,562.40
Operations	$ 25,251.44	$ 19,610.31	$ 37,831.75	0	$ 34,998.25	$ 117,691.75	$ 50,000.00
Advertising	$ 5,000.00		$ 5,000.00	0		$ 10,000.00	
Education	$ 331.00			0			$ 6,000.00
Totals	$ 119,526.80	$ 35,610.31	$ 50,331.75	0	$ 34,998.25	$ 240,467.11	$ 87,562.40
Total Expenditures	**$ 240,467.11**	**73%**					
Total In-Kind	**$ 87,562.40**	**27%**					
Total Project	**$ 328,029.51**	**100%**					

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TABLE THREE

LANDFILL CARPET RECYCLING
MONTHLY PROFORMA
NO 6.6

	50 TONS PER MONTH	100 TONS PER MONTH	150 TONS PER MONTH	200 TONS PER MONTH
ASSUMPTIONS				
CARPET RECEIVED IN TONS/MONTH.	50	100	150	200
NYLON 6 PERCENTAGE	25%	25%	25%	25%
NYLON 6.6 PERCENTAGE	40%	40%	40%	40%
OTHER CARPET PERSENTAGE	30%	30%	30%	30%
TIPING FEE	$ 25.00	$ 25.00	$ 25.00	$ 25.00
PRICE OF NYLON 6 PER TON	$ 120.00	$ 120.00	$ 120.00	$ 120.00
PRICE OF NYLON 6.6 PER TON	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
PRICE OF OTHER PER TON	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FOAM PADDING RECEIVED (LBS.)	5000	10000	15000	20000
REVENUES				
TIPING FEES	$ 1,250.00	$ 2,500.00	$ 3,750.00	$ 5,000.00
NYLON 6	$ 1,500.00	$ 3,000.00	$ 4,500.00	$ 6,000.00
NYLON 6.6	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
PADDING ($.15/LB)	$ 750.00	$ 1,500.00	$ 2,250.00	$ 3,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES	$ 3,500.00	$ 7,000.00	$ 10,500.00	$ 14,000.00
EXPENSES				
LABOR	$ 4,000.00	$ 5,600.00	$ 6,400.00	$ 7,200.00
EQUIPMENT REPAIRS	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00
SUPPLIES	$ 150.00	$ 175.00	$ 200.00	$ 250.00
UTILITIES	$ 150.00	$ 200.00	$ 250.00	$ 300.00
TELEPHONE	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
INSURANCE	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00
TRAVEL	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
MISC.	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	$ 5,000.00	$ 6,675.00	$ 7,550.00	$ 8,450.00
NET PROFIT	$ (1,500.00)	$ 325.00	$ 2,950.00	$ 5,550.00

TABLE FOUR

LANDFILL CARPET RECYCLING
MONTHLY PROFORMA - ***SELLING N6.6***

	50 TONS PER MONTH	100 TONS PER MONTH	150 TONS PER MONTH	200 TONS PER MONTH
ASSUMPTIONS				
CARPET RECEIVED IN TONS/MONTH.	50	100	150	200
NYLON 6 PERCENTAGE	25%	25%	25%	25%
NYLON 6.6 PERCENTAGE	40%	40%	40%	40%
OTHER CARPET PERSENTAGE	30%	30%	30%	30%
TIPING FEE	$ 25.00	$ 25.00	$ 25.00	$ 25.00
PRICE OF NYLON 6 PER TON	$ 120.00	$ 120.00	$ 120.00	$ 120.00
PRICE OF NYLON 6.6 PER TON	$ 40.00	$ 40.00	$ 40.00	$ 40.00
PRICE OF OTHER PER TON	0	0	0	0
FOAM PADDING RECEIVED (LBS.)	5000	10000	15000	20000
REVENUES				
TIPING FEES	$ 1,250.00	$ 2,500.00	$ 3,750.00	$ 5,000.00
NYLON 6	$ 1,500.00	$ 3,000.00	$ 4,500.00	$ 6,000.00
NYLON 6.6	$ 800.00	$ 1,600.00	$ 2,400.00	$ 3,200.00
PADDING ($.15/LB)	$ 750.00	$ 1,500.00	$ 2,250.00	$ 3,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES	$ 4,300.00	$ 8,600.00	$ 12,900.00	$ 17,200.00
EXPENSES				
LABOR	$ 4,000.00	$ 5,600.00	$ 6,400.00	$ 7,200.00
EQUIPMENT REPAIRS	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00
SUPPLIES	$ 150.00	$ 175.00	$ 200.00	$ 250.00
UTILITIES	$ 150.00	$ 200.00	$ 250.00	$ 300.00
TELEPHONE	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
INSURANCE	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ 200.00
TRAVEL	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
MISC.	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00	$ 100.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	$ 5,000.00	$ 6,675.00	$ 7,550.00	$ 8,450.00
NET PROFIT	$ (700.00)	$ 1,925.00	$ 5,350.00	$ 8,750.00