

Cities Mean **BUSINESS**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA | ISSUE 1 | 2009

Restoring eyesores

**Turning abandoned
buildings into assets**

Creativity becomes an Cotton Factory **economic force**

**This non-traditional
industry sector is thriving**

Play ball

**Sports tourism boosts
local economies**





You see a street.

We see a lifeline that is a hometown with planned traffic flow, fire stations, thousands of visitors each year, low unemployment rate, city parks and community centers for children of all ages. Our streets take us to our jobs, our churches, our fun places and even to grandma's house.

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By Amy Geier Edgar

As cities and towns face the task of renovating various types of old buildings and vacant properties, officials have found that public/private partnerships are key in turning eyesores into assets.



Cities Mean BUSINESS

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Welcome to *Cities Mean Business*, a new publication celebrating the state's 270 cities and towns as magnets for thriving businesses and the hubs for economic growth. *Cities Mean Business* focuses on initiatives around the state where strong cities play a critical role in successful public-private partnerships.

Cities and towns are in the business of making our state more competitive, helping generate jobs and providing the services and amenities to support the quality of life that attracts and keeps businesses in our state. In this first issue, we take a look at what city leaders around the state are doing to encourage economic growth through public-private investment and community support.

In the following pages, you'll read about how cities and towns are working with local business leaders to make sports tourism a viable economic engine for their hometowns. Barnwell, Simpsonville and Easley illustrate how cities of all sizes can reap the benefits of public-private partnerships to lure tourists — and their dollars — to our communities for sporting events.

You'll also learn how creativity is becoming a driving economic force in cities and towns around the state. No longer is creativity reserved just for the niche local arts fair. Local leaders in Spartanburg, Charleston and Columbia are on the bandwagon to tout creativity as a competitive advantage ... especially when it comes to recruiting and retaining young people to their cities.

And, you'll discover what city leaders in Rock Hill, Chesterfield and North Charleston are doing to restore fading eyesores into valuable and sustainable community assets.

Finally, this issue features columns with the voices of New Carolina, the Palmetto Institute, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce and the Municipal Association of South Carolina echoing the theme of collaboration and partnership, recognizing strong South Carolina cities as hubs for economic growth.

To learn more about how South Carolina cities and towns are making our state more competitive, visit www.citiesmeanbusiness.org.



Reba Hull Campbell

Reba Hull Campbell

Editor

Collaboration makes South Carolina more competitive

By Miriam Hair and Otis Rawl



Miriam Hair



Otis Rawl

The economic situation our state is in today requires a new approach to solving problems. No longer can we afford an adversarial relationship between businesses and local governments. It takes both entities working together for the future success of our state and our economy.

While sometimes it may appear the interests of the business community can be at odds with the priorities of local governments over certain issues, the reality is we are all working toward the same goals to make our state more competitive, bring jobs to our communities and provide a quality of life that attracts and keeps businesses thriving.


Successful businesses are drawn to strong cities and towns with good schools, stable infrastructure and safe streets. The success of our state's economic development efforts is directly tied to the strength of our cities and towns to provide the quality of life, services and amenities that residents and businesses demand.

The two of us move into the leadership of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and the Municipal Association of South Carolina at a time of unprecedented challenge and change in our state. It's easy in bad times to see everything through the lens of problems to be solved rather than opportunities to be seized. Both of our organizations recognize this economic downturn is a unique opportunity to build on the idea that when times are bad, people tend to look closer to home for the things that are most important to them — good job opportunities, safe neighborhoods, quality education and high-quality recreational space. All these things are tied to the quality of life in our hometowns.

The Toft study that the South Carolina Chamber is using to measure the state's competitiveness points to

quality of life as one of the six drivers we must measure to make our state more competitive. While quality of life is a phrase that's often discussed, it's rarely defined and difficult to measure quantitatively. There's no set formula for defining quality of life ... we know it when we see it. And increasingly, the workers of the new economy are seeing quality of life in our cities and towns of all sizes as a real draw for our state.

This new "creative class" of increasingly mobile workers who will fill the knowledge economy jobs of the future will demand features like universal broadband access, recreational opportunities close to work and home, accessible arts and cultural amenities, and affordable housing and transportation. These new demands will require business, government, education and other private sector leaders to work together with a more deliberate and planned approach than ever before.

Now, more than any time in recent history, we have public and private sector leaders around the state moving us toward a single goal of increasing our state's competitiveness to ensure the economic well-being of our citizens. We are committed to working with the leadership from all sectors of the community — local elected leaders, business owners, residents and public policy decision makers — to move our state in a positive direction and support initiatives that bring jobs to the state, keep education at the top of the agenda and recognize cities and towns as economic engines. 

Miriam Hair is the new executive director of the Municipal Association of South Carolina. Otis Rawl is the new president of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce. Both took their new positions on Oct. 1, 2008.

Cities and towns are succeeding locally and competing globally

By Darla Moore, Chairman, Palmetto Institute

Cities and towns must play a critical role

in the state's effort to be successful in the new global knowledge-based economy.

Our hometowns must not only participate, but lead the way in the state's effort to be economically competitive, especially in today's world market. I have a special place in my heart for small towns because I grew up in Lake City. That is where my family is. That is where my farm is. That is where my passion for cities and towns succeeding and attracting workers and business comes from.

Business leaders, local elected leaders and residents in my hometown of Lake City have been working together to strengthen our hometown's economy, our potential to attract visitors and our ability to contribute to the state's success as a strong rural town. If cities and towns don't succeed, then the state will not succeed.

Local leaders play a critical role in improving the economic foundations of our state to be more competitive. So, when cities and towns cannot support the state's economic foundations — like education and work force quality, solid infrastructure and innovative research to support our businesses — we will not fare very well in our effort to compete globally.

Municipalities must see each other and their neighbors not as competitors but rather as partners in boosting their chances for success. In particular, rural and urban links are essential in creating regional vitality. Rural areas in this state cannot survive without a tie to a growing metropolitan area. Lake City must be tied to Florence for the very reasons I have just mentioned.

For cities and towns to provide the infrastructure and services to support the state, there must be an understanding at the state level that a fair and equitable tax structure is necessary for both the hometowns and the businesses that operate in those hometowns.

Piecemeal tax legislation harms businesses that operate in our hometowns. It hurts cities and towns that provide the services and infrastructure for businesses. And, it hurts our state's ability to compete in a global market.

Working together with schools and county governments, cities and towns must utilize local assets to keep jobs and workers in hometowns while attracting new businesses to bring economic stability for residents. This is true in Lake City and it is true for the other 269 cities and towns throughout the state.

We each live locally in our own hometown, and we enjoy the services and amenities it provides. However, we must always remember that we compete globally for jobs, for innovation, technology and businesses.

Succeeding locally and competing globally are the ways South Carolina can contribute to the future success of the global market. 



Darla Moore



Columbia takes on the brain drain: Building a creative class

By Amy Love, Deputy Director, New Carolina



Amy Love

From restaurants, nightlife and green

spaces to a depth and breadth of job opportunities, affordable housing and a safe environment — what will it take to turn the city of Columbia into a place that attracts the “creative class”?

The Columbia Talent Magnet Project was created to examine this question and come up with ways to appeal to, and keep, today’s “creative class” in Columbia. The project is a collaborative effort among New Carolina — South Carolina’s Council on Competitiveness, EngenuitySC, the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the Columbia Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Columbia Opportunity Resource.

Knowledge-intensive jobs are critical to this community’s economic success and a higher standard of living for its residents. To make the connection between strong hometowns and the state’s global competitiveness, Columbia needs knowledge-intensive jobs. This is a cause for attention, for several important reasons.

“The more graduates a region retains, the higher per capita income levels the region achieves,” emphasized The Brookings Institution, a national economic research organization, in a 2003 report. Studies have found that it is not just those regions with high-level jobs that benefit when there are more college graduates in the area, but all wages levels tend to be higher. Young, well-educated residents can also add economic vitality and an entrepreneurial spirit to a community.

Four out of five new businesses are started by the younger generation, pointed out *Time* magazine in an article on Generation X. Like many communities

across the nation, Columbia’s population and work force are aging. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that South Carolina’s population of younger workers, ages 25-44, will actually decline between 2000 and 2020, at the same time that the population of seniors age 65 and over will increase by more than 78 percent.

What can we do to retain and attract young, talented residents in Columbia? What should be our priorities? How can we get people involved? The Columbia Talent Magnet Project created a survey in October 2008 to take the “pulse” of our community to identify Columbia’s perceived strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. In




The Talent Magnet Summit gave business, government, civic and cultural leaders the opportunity to discuss positive changes to Columbia’s attributes from the perspective of the people who live, work, learn and play in the city as a part of the “creative class.”

conjunction with the Southern Growth Policies Board, a regional research group focusing on strengthening the South’s economy, the Columbia Talent Magnet Program hosted a forum in November 2008 to get a conversation started and to make plans for Columbia’s future as a strong hometown.

The outcomes of this survey produced three approaches for

Columbia to take to build a talent-powered economy: focus on jobs; focus on quality of life; and focus on local leadership.

By focusing on engaging, attracting and retaining young, mobile knowledge workers, the city of Columbia will be well positioned in the competition for talent as this becomes one of the top competitive issues facing our hometowns and the state. 

Amy Love is the deputy director of New Carolina. For additional information about the Columbia Talent Magnet program, visit www.ColumbiaTalent.com. You can also find it on Facebook by searching for Columbia Talent Magnet Project in the Groups application.

CREATIVITY BECOMES AN ECONOMIC FORCE

By Ashley Cook, Contributing Writer

A community's strength comes from many sources and experts have long argued that there is a significant correlation between a strong community and the quality of life it offers. In fact, D. Garth Taylor of the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. said that this is “evidence of magnetization — or an increase in the desirability, commitment, social integration and quality of life in a community.”

In short, a strong arts community not only attracts artists, but it also lures the increasingly cultured work force of “high-paying” industries known to some as the “creative class.” This concept is catching on as small and large cities alike have begun tirelessly promoting South Carolina’s distinctive regional arts communities.

New Carolina – South Carolina’s Council on Competitiveness is taking the idea of magnetism seriously. In October, New Carolina was a partner in the group that launched the Columbia Talent Magnet Project. For a city that loses a majority of its graduates to larger cities with more cultural options, Columbia leaders understand keeping and attracting professionals aged 35 and younger is a key to stimulating the city’s growth.

And knowing what people want is the first step to getting them into the city.

Participants in the Columbia Talent Magnet Project decided that the city needed focused marketing efforts to direct residents to arts opportunities. The group also decided the city needed collaboration between local govern-



Pecha Kucha, Japanese for the sound of conversation, is a mix of show-and-tell, open-mike night and hands-on experiences that play to the five human senses to stimulate ideas on design, architecture and other forms of creativity. (Photo/Jerry Cahalan Photography)

ment and business leaders. Not surprisingly, the most important objective is creating job opportunities for college graduates.

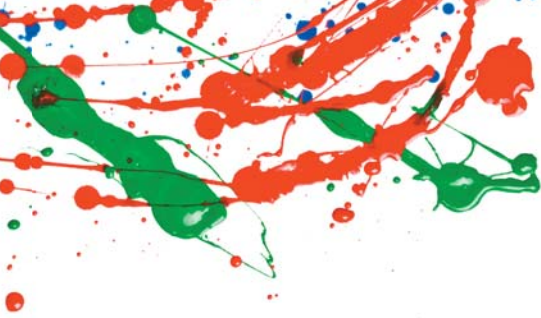
In the Lowcountry, New Carolina helped launch a Creative Industries Cluster to capitalize on what has become an economic force in the region. A cluster is a group of businesses in a region with a focus on a particular industry with the intention of promoting growth, attracting jobs and advancing the economy.

“We wanted to shine the light on the fact creative industries are a major economic driver in the Lowcountry,” said Beth Meredith of New Carolina. “Companies in this non-traditional industry are thriving, starting businesses that create jobs and attracting like-minded people to the area.”

The strength of the Lowcountry’s arts community was evidenced by Pechu Kucha Night, held last fall in Charleston. A Japanese word meaning “sound of conversation,” Pechu Kucha provides a forum for creative people to meet, network and show their art.

More than 200 people attended Pechu Kucha, viewing work from presenters in fields ranging from literature to urban planning.

While the Midlands and Lowcountry are joining the creative movement, it’s fair to say



that leaders in Spartanburg spearheaded it.


What was once an old car dealership is now the front line of creative culture in downtown Spartanburg. City officials made a strategic decision to begin marketing to its own community. They recruited local, young, creative writers and artists to raise awareness among residents and visitors about entertainment options in Spartanburg.

The city placed the program in the hands of the Hub City Writers Project, a grassroots literary movement formed in Spartanburg years ago. The city provided \$50,000 for the start-up phase. They launched Hub-Bub.com, a Web site created to reach their young and media-savvy target audience. With permission from the city, artists spray painted graffiti images of the Web site's name around town to publicize the program.

Early programs featured music, fine arts, movies, dance, literature, readings, slam poetry and food. Hub-Bub now hosts more than 100 nights of entertainment a year. It has succeeded in bringing people downtown and provided young citizens with a sense of community through a cultural movement that celebrates creativity, ideas and the beliefs of the creative class.

Mark Scott, city manager, is encouraged by the renaissance effect it's had on the city.

"We have people downtown! People are parking in parking garages at night! Who knew? We are very excited about what seems to be igniting here," Scott said.

Every city has a unique group of artists and unique audience waiting to receive them. So Spartanburg may never be New York City and Columbia isn't the next Hollywood, but together they can be something even better — a prosperous and vibrant South Carolina. 



(Top and middle) Each presenter during Pecha Kucha Night had six minutes and 40 seconds to share their creative perspective with the audience using photos, videos, music and even food. (Bottom) The Hub-Bub Showroom Gallery and Performance Hall is now the front line of creative culture in downtown Spartanburg, offering more than 100 nights of entertainment a year. (Photos/Jerry Cahalan Photography)

RESTORING EYESORES INTO ASSETS REQUIRES PARTNERSHIPS

By Amy Geier Edgar, Contributing Writer

As local leaders increasingly consider redevelopment projects as a way to turn vacant properties into community assets, a heightened level of coordination and partnership becomes necessary. Cities, both large and small, across South Carolina have been faced with the task of renovating various types of old buildings and vacant properties.

They have found that partnerships between public and private entities are essential in restoring fading eyesores into valuable community assets.

In Rock Hill, the Cotton Factory sits like a castle on the edge of downtown. For years, it had been a center of industry. The facility was the state's first steam-powered textile mill, producing yarn when it opened in 1881.

Over the next century, the building was used to manufacture denim, rope and sheeting.

In recent years, the building sat vacant. It was a hulking eyesore in Rock Hill's downtown area. That was until city leaders came up with a plan to save the historic mill, utilize its space and create jobs.

The Cotton Factory is part of a larger redevelopment project of Rock Hill's textile corridor, explained Mayor Doug Echols. The project has required cooperation among government agencies and the private sector. City leaders in Rock Hill found a strong partner in Williams & Fudge Inc., a Rock Hill-based student loan collections company that worked to design and renovate the building.

The city of Rock Hill collaborated on the redevelopment with Gary Williams and Bob Perrin, principals of Williams & Fudge, and developer Bryan Barwick. They had to replace infrastructure, including sidewalks and water and sewer systems, and bring the building up to code.

"It took a real cooperative effort," said Echols. "Renovating a building is not as easy as building from the ground up."

After about two years of planning and labor, the process was complete. Today, tenants fill the building. Williams &

Fudge occupies about 45,000 square feet. It relocated all of its employees there and has even added staff. Springs Creative Products Group, which sells sewing and craft fabrics, occupies a 25,000-square-foot space on the first floor. Upscale furniture retailer New South Interiors also occupies some 22,500 square feet of the facility.

Williams praises the cooperation of Rock Hill officials and notes that state and federal tax credits helped make the renovation a reality.

"This is a perfect model for other communities in South Carolina that have old textile buildings," Echols said. "You can save old buildings and help to revitalize the areas near these old mills."

It's not just huge, empty textile mills in South Carolina that need new life. Some smaller municipalities also find themselves struggling to renew buildings in their communities.

The Town of Chesterfield had been using a former high school as a community center. Money that was raised from volunteer donations and a matching town grant paid for the restoration of the 1930s stone structure. Yet in 2004, fire destroyed the building.

The community had to build partnerships to find a way to replace the community center, according to Mayor John Douglas. Town officials contacted the Chesterfield County School District about the availability of a former middle school. The school district agreed to sell the building and surrounding property to the town for \$81,000.

Town officials then contacted the YMCA of the Upper Pee Dee in Hartsville about bringing a YMCA branch to Chesterfield. Community interest was high. The town committed insurance funds from the old community center to renovate the majority of the first level of the school to house the YMCA.

Chesterfield and YMCA then signed an agreement allowing the YMCA to provide recreational services for the town for \$75,000 per year. The town saved money and the YMCA received guaranteed funding to help it increase its services in the community.

The facility opened in 2006, complete with a state-of-the-art fitness center, class-

rooms, youth center, saunas and an after-school room. Nearly 1,300 people have become members in a community of only about 1,400 residents. Citizens of nearby municipalities and counties also enjoy this facility that was made possible by pooling public and private resources.

Other municipalities face greater challenges. The city of North Charleston has been working to redevelop its former naval base, which closed in 1996 after a federal base realignment program.

In all, 3,000 acres of the historic urban core of North Charleston will be redeveloped, including the central 340 acres that once housed the former Navy base. That area, which is being called the Navy Yard, will consist of six districts focusing on entertainment, residential and commercial areas.

City leaders have formed a successful partnership with the development firm, Noisette Co. The redevelopment project aims to renew residential neighborhoods,

commercial structures and municipal property. The Noisette Co.'s plan seeks to restore the area's environmental stability, attract jobs and improve services and quality of life for residents.

North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey said the city's partnership with Noisette has been invaluable.

"Not only have we worked with them on redevelopment of the naval base but also on the surrounding areas as well," he said. "They also have helped us better understand the importance of sustainability.

"Every relationship we have requires give and take," Summey added. "Unless there's that willingness to work together, oftentimes nothing is accomplished." ♡



Left: The renovation of the Rock Hill's Cotton Factory marks the first major accomplishment of the Textile Corridor redevelopment plan to create a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, urban village in the former textile manufacturing area of the city.



Below: Development of the Navy Yard will preserve the history and beauty of the Cooper River with the use of earth-friendly energy-efficiency, a variety of creative design and sustainable construction.





PLAY BALL

Sports tourism boosts local economies

By Jake Broom, Contributing Writer

Sports tourism in South Carolina

isn't limited to just Clemson and Columbia anymore. It doesn't take 80,000 screaming fans to make an economic impact on many of the smaller cities and towns in the state, and the success stories of a few South Carolina municipalities are inspiring others to join in.

"We had about 1,100 kids a year playing on ball fields from the 1950s and 60s, and we decided it was time to upgrade our facilities," said John Zawacki, city administrator of Barnwell, a small city in the process of constructing a new sports complex, Lemon Park. "A \$3 million project in a city our size is usually met with high opposition, but we've had more than a 90 percent acceptance rate. People know it will have a huge economic impact on the city in the long run."

Barnwell is using the need for new facilities as a chance to create a park that will increase local sports tourism — a growing component of small-town economic development.

One city already feeling the economic impact is Easley, home of the J.B. "Red"

Owens Recreation Complex. The 104-acre complex features 14 fields, two playgrounds, an 18-hole disc golf course and a one-mile nature trail.

Easley is known as the home of the Big League World Series, a worldwide tournament for baseball teams made up of players ages 16 to 18. Last year, the tournament attracted teams from as far away as Germany and Saipan. ESPN broadcast the championship game. While the Big League World Series is the complex's flagship event, the economic impact of the facility is felt yearlong.

"In 2007, the city hosted approximately 50 state, regional or district tournaments in baseball, football, soccer and softball," said Fox Simons, Easley's city administrator. "We estimate each visiting family to spend about \$150 to \$175 per day in our community for hotels, restaurants, shopping and other incidentals. A three-day tournament with 250 children and parents is conservatively estimated to generate \$140,000 in direct spending in our community. Multiply that

\$140,000 by 50 tournaments and you can conservatively estimate that the park generates over \$5.6 million in economic activity in our community a year."

Simpsonville's Heritage Park is another new facility proving sports tourism is not limited to cities with college and professional teams. The 90-acre park features nine sports fields, a 17,000-seat amphitheater that attracts major touring shows and concerts, two score towers, paved and lighted walking and bike tracks, and a miniature steam train on a half-mile track with buildings representing old Simpsonville. The park is focused around the CentrePlex, a corporate shelter that accommodates 100 people with concession areas, a game room, offices and a police substation.

In 2005, the park hosted 24 regional tournaments and events. Since then, more than 30 tournaments and events have come to Simpsonville each year.

The park also hosts Freedom Weekend Aloft, a four-day festival with hot air balloon



McCar HOMES
F.I.E.L.D

Simpsonville's Heritage Park complex will accommodate local sports leagues as well as provide for year-round tournament availability.



(Top) The city of Barnwell recently received a \$194,250 grant from the Baseball Tomorrow Fund to upgrade one of the 200-foot baseball fields at the Lemon Park complex. (Bottom) At the center of Heritage Park is the CentraPlex, which includes corporate meeting space, sport concession areas, a game room, offices and a police substation.

rides during the day and a concert series each night. In addition to the hot air balloons, the event features a home run derby, a family field day, the U.S. Disc Dog Freedom Weekend Nationals, the Freedom Ride cycling event, the YMCA-sponsored Active Upstate Walk in the Park, the Wii Challenge tent, the Bi-Lo KidZone and a large area dedicated to interactive activities for children of all ages. The event benefits local charities and draws tourists from around the state.

“Heritage Park has proven to be a great investment in the future of our city that continues to pay dividends in quality of life and business prosperity,” said Russell Hawes, Simpsonville’s city administrator. “The economic impact of the 200,000-plus annual visitors is profound; in the range of \$10 million per year since opening.”

Back in Barnwell, bulldozers and dump trucks scatter across the 16-acre future site of Lemon Park, which broke ground in August and is expected to open in April. The barren land will soon be home to seven fields, a two-acre playground and multiple concession stands. Its brown dirt will soon turn to green grass, with the rumble of heavy machinery replaced by the encouragement of cheering fans.

“We already have a major softball tournament lined up in 2009,” Zawacki said. “We formed a standing sports committee on our city council to find tournaments that fit well with our new facility and recruit teams from out of the region to play in them.”

Zawacki hopes that his city’s facility can mirror the success of those in Simpsonville and Easley.

“This facility is a big part of our economic plan going forward,” Zawacki said. “We can’t wait to get started in Barnwell.”



You see a police car.

We see a police officer named Hal who works closely with fire departments and EMS, who knows every business owner downtown, who can name every city street and who buys 12 snow cones on Saturdays even though his T-ball team has never won a game.

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Engines that drive commerce



Every year, the vast majority of jobs created in our state locate in our cities and towns, and it's easy to understand why.

Cities and towns offer more of what a business needs, including infrastructure, productive work force, support services and financial resources.

Add to that civic-mindedness of community leaders, regional cooperation and a favorable tax structure – tools to remain competitive in an increasingly global marketplace. And our state's year-round climate also makes it a great place to live and work – from Anderson to Hilton Head Island and from Aiken to Dillon.

To continue to grow and prosper, South Carolina must be competitive in attracting its share of economic development. With strong cities and towns leading the way, we will.



Cities Mean Business

To learn more about how strong cities contribute to the state's economic prosperity, visit www.citiesmeanbusiness.org.