

Cities Mean **BUSINESS**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA | ISSUE 2 | 2009

Win-win situation

Outdoor amenities create healthy communities and encourage economic development

Cities are seeing green

Leaders encourage energy efficiency

Sustainable living

Communities thrive when residents buy local





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.

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM

www.citiesmeanbusiness.org

Cities Mean Business

CONTENTS

10 Win-win situation

By Amy Geier Edgar, Contributing writer

As more cities focus on creating outdoor amenities to get residents moving, leaders realize the benefits of their efforts are two-fold. Not only do parks and walkable downtown areas improve the health of their communities, but they also provide opportunities for economic development.

Cover photo: Annual professional cycling race in downtown Spartanburg.

(Photo/Spartanburg Partners for Active Living)



Cities Mean BUSINESS

A publication of Municipal Association of South Carolina

1411 Gervais St., P.O. Box 12109
Columbia, SC 29211
803.799.9574
mail@masc.sc
www.masc.sc

Miriam Hair
Executive Director,
Municipal Association of SC

Reba Campbell
Deputy Executive Director,
Municipal Association of SC

Editorial staff
Casey Fields
Mary Brantner

Contributing writers
Ashley Cook
Amy Geier Edgar

Published by

SC BIZ  NEWS

www.scbiznews.com



8 Cities are seeing green

Energy-efficient initiatives are the talk of South Carolina's cities and towns

By Amy Geier Edgar, Contributing writer

13 Sustainable living

South Carolina's "buy local" effort helps to sustain local economies

By Ashley Cook, Contributing writer

5 Outlook: Work, thrive together

By Ed Sellers and Rick Danner

7 Perspective: Cool cities get cool

By Jeff Baxter

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the **EDITOR**

Sustainability is a buzz word we're hearing more frequently these days relative to economic growth in our cities and towns. Depending on the context, sustainability can have different definitions, but bottom line, sustainability is the intersection of the economy, our society and the environment.

In this issue of *Cities Mean Business*, we look at what it means to be a sustainable city or town from several perspectives. Common themes you will see woven through this issue's featured cities and towns are public/private collaboration, wise use of resources and increased viability of local businesses.

First, we look at partnerships and policies South Carolina cities and towns are putting in place to encourage residents and businesses to be more energy efficient, preserve natural resources, recycle and make their communities more "green friendly."

Second, we examine the literal "green" aspects of sustainability and what cities and towns around the state are doing to encourage walking, biking and healthy outdoor activities in their downtowns and other parts of the community.

Finally, our third feature looks at sustaining the local economy during these challenging times. We learn about what cities and towns are doing to encourage the "buy local" movement at farmer's markets, in downtowns and through tourism.

Columns in this issue feature the voices of the Urban Land Institute, New Carolina and the Municipal Association. These organizations work together to sustain the local economy by recognizing our state must look at new approaches to economic growth for long-term success.



Reba Hull Campbell

Reba Hull Campbell

rcampbell@masc.sc

Editor

Work, thrive together

Collaborate to create an environment of knowledge and ideas

By Ed Sellers and Rick Danner



Ed Sellers



Rick Danner

As South Carolina continues to move

toward a new economy based more on knowledge jobs and a collaborative approach to increasing our state's competitiveness, our state leaders — both private and public sector — must lead by example in creating an environment where new ideas and innovation can be developed and maintained over the long term.

No longer do we exist in an environment where every business enterprise or government entity can go it alone. Now, more than ever in recent history, we must focus on developing a sustainable economy in South Carolina by encouraging an environment that embraces the idea of regionalism and partnerships.

In this context, environment means more than just our physical space. We must create an environment in which new ideas can be created and encouraged in the context of a modern economy that is based on the exchange of knowledge and ideas, not just creating and selling a product. Innovative ideas lead to technology advances that come from new and existing services and manufactured goods. In cities and towns, where people and businesses with different skill sets can share knowledge and work together, this process usually happens faster and more efficiently.

As we look at how the public and private sectors can work better together, New Carolina's approach of growing our state's economy through the concept of clusters is gaining momentum. Clusters allow us to align our existing economic assets to work together rather than to compete against each other. This focus on developing clusters of industry where new jobs can grow and thrive is even more relevant today as our

state struggles to overcome the challenges posed by the current economic situation.

The healthiest clusters are the ones in which the members each contribute unique skills. To do this, you need a critical mass of people or businesses with different skill sets coming together. This type of critical mass tends to congregate around cities and towns that can provide the environment this new type of worker is seeking.

This means ensuring we have an educated work force qualified to handle these new and advanced jobs. Plus, we must supply the high quality of life

that these workers will want. People with advanced degrees often cluster in urban centers because they seek the cultural opportunities and diverse amenities that only cities can offer. Others may congregate in small towns that boast good schools, a strong sense of community and attributes like broadband and easy access to transportation.

to transportation.

By supporting the development of clusters and regional collaborations, cities and towns of all sizes become the conduits that can connect the dots between business and government partners. Our communities can no longer compete against one another. We are at war with every other regional economy in the world. There will be winners and losers, and we must focus on those strategies unique to our environment that will help us win. 📌

Sellers is the chairman, president and CEO of Blue-Cross BlueShield of South Carolina and chairman of the New Carolina board. Danner is mayor of Greer, S.C. and president of the Municipal Association of SC.



Cool cities get cool

By Jeff Baxter



Jeff Baxter

The word “cool” has many meanings above and beyond its most basic definition of “moderately cold.” In fact “cool” may be one of the most common slang words used today.

The word is mainly used to describe something that is popular, awesome or nice. But, if you place “cool” in front of the word city, “cool city” carries a much broader definition: unique, fun, diverse, vibrant, rich in history, innovative and evolving.

Cool cities celebrate traditions rich in architecture, entertainment, art or food. When asked to name examples of “cool cities,” people are likely to list such places as Austin, Portland, Vancouver and Nashville, among many others around the world.

Closer to home, downtown Greenville, the Vista area in Columbia, and the core areas of Aiken, Beaufort and Charleston stand out. The appeal and unique identity of these cool cities relate directly to an increased tax base and economic vitality.

Lately, another definition for cool city could be carbon neutral, in light of the recent climate change

debate that indicates gradual global warming is here to stay. Increased greenhouse gas emissions and burning of fossil fuels have emanated from our metropolitan areas.

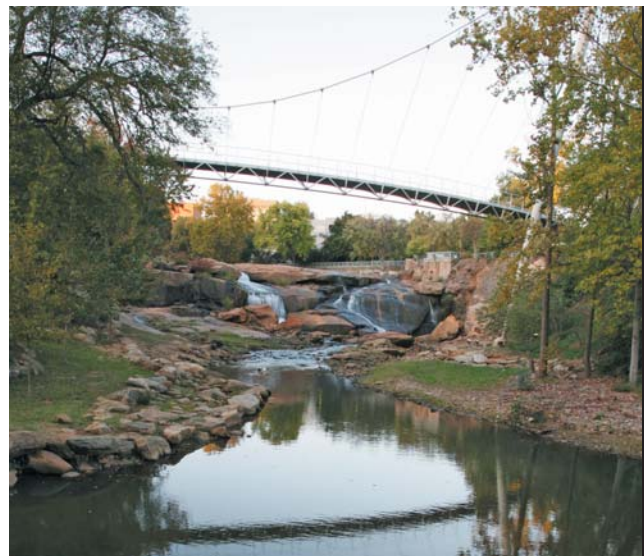
As our cities’ populations have grown, dependence on the automobile and vehicle miles traveled per person have increased two- and three-fold. Further, we consume more acres per person than we did in the past. These trends are all unsustainable and literally make our cities less cool.

We must refocus our cities and let cool lead to cool. Leading the way on this front is the Urban Land Institute, a nonprofit research and education organization whose mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

One example of a “cool city” partnership is the Noisette Community Master Plan area in North Charleston. In 2001, the City of North Charleston entered into a public-private partnership to redevelop 340 acres of the closed Charleston Naval Base and to



Diners enjoy a meal at the Motor Supply Co. Bistro on Gervais Street in Columbia's Vista. (Photo/Courtesy Congaree Vista Guild)



Falls Park on the Reedy River in downtown Greenville. (Photo/Kevin Greene)



EVO Pizzeria is one of North Charleston's many "cool" places. (Photo/Ryan Wilcox)



Above: A community picnic at Oak Terrace Preserve, a green, infill neighborhood in North Charleston. (Photo/Elias Deeb)



Right: The farmers market in North Charleston. (Photo/City of North Charleston)

revitalize an additional 2,700 acres that surrounded it into a sustainable city.

History in this area is deep and includes remnants of an 1890s park created by the designer of New York's Central Park; the former Charleston Naval Base, which operated from 1901 to 1996; and a unique garden-city concept that was built beginning in the early 1910s.

But the closure of the naval base in 1996 sent the surrounding community into decline. As a result of various partnership efforts, revitalization is taking hold and inviting people back to an area that had been neglected for decades.

Now, instead of people moving to the outer edges of the region, young families are finding that a great neighborhood exists close to jobs and is centrally located in the region. Traditional cool is leading to climate cool.

The small stretch of East Montague Street in North Charleston is historic, diverse and

unique. The revitalization of this key street has attracted newcomers. Half Moon Outfitters recently completed a LEED Platinum (meaning ultra-green for those not familiar with LEED) office building. The very cool EVO Pizzeria, which opened a couple of years back, has introduced new people to the area who have gone on to buy houses in Oak Terrace Preserve, a new green neighborhood nearby. A city-run farmers market operates on Thursdays featuring locally-grown produce.

When people live closer to where they work, eat, shop and play, they spend less time in their cars, thereby reducing their carbon footprint. Complemented with innovations in green design, we are moving toward a cool future. We have a long way to go, and change will take time. But ultimately, we need to embrace cool to achieve cool. 🍷

Jeff Baxter is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and is director of development for the Noisetto Co. in North Charleston.



CITIES ARE SEEING GREEN

By Amy Geier Edgar, Contributing writer

Across South Carolina, cities are seeing green. They're sharing that vision by taking steps ranging from creating policies to encourage energy-efficient businesses to partnering with private companies on green development projects.

In the Upstate, the City of Greenville is working with community leaders to create a vision for the future. Russell Stall, executive director of Greenville Forward, sums up that vision: "There are 38 Greenvilles in the U.S.A. and we want to be the greenest."

Stall's organization of public and private sector leaders is working closely with city leaders on four focus areas: health and wellness; a culture that values education; transportation and connectedness; and the environment.

The city is using green building methods to construct facilities, and Stall expects to see more buildings meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and Energy Star certification in the future.

Another important issue is containing sprawl in Greenville, Stall said. Cities need to create communities that are walkable, and downtown Greenville certainly is, he said.

Greenville City Manager Jim Bourey said his city supports green initiatives and has made steps to lead by example. The city has hired an employee who focuses solely on sustainable development and land usage issues.

The city is promoting public transit by taking over city bus operations and revamping the fleet. The city has converted its diesel fleet to biodiesel, is using some hybrid vehicles and is looking at electric cars in the future.

City buildings have been updated with energy-efficient HVAC units and lighting, and plans are in the works to plant numerous trees in landscaped areas around town. Greenville also has an extensive recycling program in the city, Bourey said.

The vision extends across Greenville County, where other cities, including Mauldin and Simpsonville, are pushing green initiatives such as creating pedestrian-friendly commu-

The City of Greenville is just one of many cities and towns in South Carolina that encourages the public and private sectors to work together on green initiatives. (Photo/James T. Hammond)

nities and including environmental elements in their comprehensive plans, Stall said.

"There are lots of people and businesses in this community who have dreams and visions," Stall said. "The pride we have in our community helps make initiatives work."

But often, businesses are not aware of what services are available or how much money they could save by using environmentally-friendly methods, said Jane Hiller, an account representative for Sonoco Recycling in Columbia.

That's where the city can step in. For example, the City of Columbia has a Green Business Member program, which is a voluntary program to recognize businesses that take steps to be greener and to encourage others to improve their environmental record.

The program includes about 80 workplaces as members, including businesses



of all sizes, nonprofits and even a church, according to City of Columbia Sustainability Facilitator Mary Pat Baldauf.

“A majority of businesses are seeing savings, especially those that have adopted energy conservation steps,” Baldauf said.

To become a Green Business Member, businesses must apply and complete a goal sheet on ways to be greener. These goals often include improvements in recycling and energy and water conservation, said Hiller, who also is chairwoman of the city’s Green Business initiative.

The Green Business program offers boot camps where members can learn tips and share best practices. There is an annual conference where members can receive more education and offer advice to each other.

“It pays off,” Hiller said. “If you’re losing less energy, your energy costs go down.” For example, she said if a business recycles cardboard, its garbage expenses decrease.

Hiller said some business members have told her that they have saved up to \$100,000 a year.

“Businesses want to do the right thing, but they also like to save money,” she said.

Other cities face more specific environmental concerns. In North Augusta, industrial activity had ripped gaping holes in the riverfront area. For a time, industries dug clay from excavation pits for their pottery and brick manufacturing. After the industry left, these massive, man-made ponds became flooded with stagnant stormwater.

The city partnered with the North Augusta Riverfront Co. to redevelop the area. The company was brought in to design a development that would blend in with the rest of the city and offer a lot of green space, said Turner Simkins, project director for the Hammonds Ferry residential development. The initial plan was to fill portions of the ponds, as it

would have been ideal to have more development space, Simkins said.



An area in North Augusta that was left with gaping holes from companies that harvested clay to make pottery and bricks has been made into Brick Pond Park, a beautiful 30-acre public park that includes 30 acres of ponds and wetlands, 10 acres of trees and a number of greenway trails.

The west side of the ponds already had clean water and was home to animals such as blue herons and ducks. The east side, however, had stagnant water and was, as Simkins said, “gnarly, black and not inviting.”

The developers started wondering why one side was “gnarly” and the other clean.

Simkins brought in an official from the Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy, of which Simkins was a board member, to investigate. The researcher determined that the eastern pond contained more nitrogen than oxygen and was filled with old stormwater.

“It was dead, ecologically speaking,” Simkins said.

The developers soon decided against filling the ponds. Instead they worked to restore them. Together, the city and the North Augusta Riverfront Co. secured a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and began the renovation.

“We decided to use a restoration model and clean the water out,” Simkins said. “We created a public nature park.”

The decision meant the developers would lose 100 lots, thus decreasing their revenue and reducing future city tax revenue, but it was worth it, Simkins said.


“We created a real asset, and we hope to get an even higher value out of it than before,” he said.

Citizens got involved in the process, with Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops installing duck boxes and vegetation, and other nonprofit organizations donating time.

Today, local wildlife has a new habitat and residents have a beautiful new park.

Brick Pond Park includes 30 acres of ponds and wetlands and 10 acres of trees that connect to greenway trails. The area is home to turtles, migratory and wetland birds and even a few alligators. It also serves an educational role in the community, with schools using the park as an outside classroom.

Brick Pond Park also provides the city with a new method to handle stormwater run-off. Stormwater from the downtown area and U.S. 25 now runs into the ponds and is naturally cleansed by the new system. The ponds are interconnected and a waterfall was constructed to help circulate water, which treats the water, said Tanya Strickland, the city’s environmental coordinator.

The city now manages the park. “The end result is significant,” said Skip Grkovic, director of Planning and Economic Development. 



Win-win situation

Outdoor amenities attract economic development and improve quality of life for residents

By Amy Geier Edgar, Contributing writer

Whether you're in the mood to

conquer the mountains near Spartanburg on a bike, walk or jog the winding trails in Florence, or simply stroll down Main Street in Greenwood, South Carolina's cities offer countless options to get people moving.

Many cities are taking extra steps to provide outdoor amenities to encourage citizens to get out of their cars and get more active. The efforts are aimed not only at addressing environmental concerns, but also making their communities healthier.

Greenwood: Walkable downtown

During a master planning project in Greenwood five years ago, city leaders sought a way to develop a pedestrian-friendly cultural district downtown that would attract new economic development and future investment, said Greenwood Assistant City Manager Charlie Barrineau.

The plan involved revitalizing three key downtown cultural facilities – the Greenwood Federal Building, the Greenwood Community Theatre and the Greenwood Museum — located in an area known as the Emerald Triangle. Many buildings near these facilities were pegged for new and enhanced development. Most were graceful, century-old buildings dulled by years of neglect.

Greenwood photographer Jon Holloway saw the potential in one of these old buildings. He purchased his 1901 building for his Sundance Gallery three years ago and oversaw major renovations. A former auto shop, the building had once housed thousands of clunky mufflers. Today, it has been restored to its original charm and now hosts events and exhibitions.

Holloway is part of the change in downtown Greenwood, but the city's efforts are helping to bring in the customers.



Downtown Greenwood circa 1975 and today after the city's revitalization efforts.

The city completed major streetscape projects, placing overhead utilities underground and planting more than 50 trees. Landscaping bump-outs create a traffic calming effect and encourage more pedestrian traffic. Clearly marked decorative concrete crosswalks encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment and decorative street lamps create visual appeal and better lighting for nighttime safety.

The new streets, lighting and sidewalks in the Greenwood project create a welcoming, walkable downtown that residents are more likely to visit, Holloway said.

Previously, the area by Holloway's shop had no sidewalks, a rough road and no

streetscaping. The original buildings had been covered up with façades erected in the 1970s, he said. Today, the renovations are complete, and Holloway said out-of-town visitors who come to his studio express surprise to find such a hidden gem.

“Anything we can do to make it an area that’s more inviting and welcoming — that’s a win-win for the community and the city,” Holloway said.

Barrineau said the project has been a successful public/private partnership.

“The community has invested close to \$12 million in projects located in the Emerald Triangle since 2005. This is a mixture of local, state and federal tax dollars and grants, along with private and foundation investment,” Barrineau said. “We are now seeing the private investments — retail and restaurant — follow.”

Holloway said the improvements also add accessibility, which entices people to visit the downtown area.

“Communities are finally realizing that, in order to attract businesses and residents, they need to focus on quality of life,” he said.

He praised his own community and city leaders for their efforts. “They can see the vision,” he said.

Spartanburg: Bike town

Spartanburg leadership had its own vision; it was one involving spokes and a kickstand.

The Upstate city received the national designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community in 2007 by the League of American Bicyclists.

Spartanburg’s Bike Town initiative began in 2005 with a \$106,000 three-year grant from the Mary Black Foundation. Four nonprofit groups – Palmetto Conservation Foundation, Palmetto Cycling Coalition, Freewheelers of Spartanburg and Partners for Active Living – worked together on the program.



Above: The building that now houses Sundance Gallery in Greenwood has been restored to its original charm. (Photo/jon holloway)

Right: Left to right: Tony Fisher, City of Spartanburg Public Safety Director; Bill Barnet, Mayor of Spartanburg; Anne Chapman Jeter, Principal of Pine Street Elementary School. (Photo/Spartanburg Partners for Active Living)



The City of Spartanburg earned an honorable mention as a bike-friendly community in 2006. The following year, Spartanburg earned its designation and became the first bike-friendly community in South Carolina, said Jean Crow, associate director for Partners for Active Living.

The city received its title based, in part, on work done to improve and increase bike safety education opportunities; improve engineering of bike facilities and increase bike infrastructure; and improve enforcement of local and state laws related to bicyclists.

Spartanburg has about 35 miles of bike lanes and about 135 miles of bike-friendly roads and paths. The city is working with Spartan-

burg County on a bike/pedestrian master plan to identify additional bike connections and infrastructure needs, said Spartanburg planning director Stephanie Monroe.

Interest in such pedestrian and bike plans is growing across the country in an effort to address obesity and environmental concerns. In particular, those communities looking at such plans are ones who have a “long-term vision,” said Crow.

Promoting walking and biking within Spartanburg fits in with one of the city’s initiatives to promote alternatives to auto transit, Monroe said. A step the city has made is to allow businesses to add bike racks if they fall short of their parking space requirement.



Boardwalks provide connections between and to the Florence Trail System and present opportunities to interact with nature.

“That’s showing we’re starting to get people to support an active lifestyle,” Monroe said.

The city and its private partners have been working to create awareness of bicycling and active living. Crow said her organization has benefitted from a close relationship with the city. Partners for Active Living has been involved with the city’s pursuit of the Bicycle Friendly designation on every level, from making infrastructure suggestions, to marketing events, to sponsoring bicycle commuter and mechanic classes. Another popular event is the 102-mile bike ride called the Assault on Mt. Mitchell.

Crow’s group has used National Bike Month in May as a springboard to promote as much activity as possible. The events began in 2005, and Crow said she has seen participation and the number of partnerships skyrocket. The city and county also are heavily involved, she said.

One of the events is a bike ride with elected officials. This event started out as a ride with mayors from all over Spartanburg County but expanded to include elected officials from all levels. It’s a great event that draws media attention and makes decision makers personally aware of biking issues and what bicyclists face on the road, Crow said.

Florence Trail System

A decade ago, leaders in the City of Florence had a plan to link natural resources and green spaces with city parks to create distinct trails winding through the city’s green space.

The Florence Trail System now spans 21 miles within the city of Florence. It has three groupings of trails across the community designed to highlight the existing natural beauty of the area and promote conservation and appreciation.

A 10-mile section on the west side of the city consists of environmental trails, with links to wetlands and a special section for Sierra Club educational programs, said Florence Public Works and Utilities Director Drew Griffin. These trails also connect to neighborhoods, hotels, the mall and restaurants. An 11-mile section of trail on the east side of town contains about 300 acres of preservation area, Griffin said. Between the two trail groups is another section of urban trails, which connects city parks and sidewalks.

The trails are part of the downtown redevelopment vision, and local businesses are on board. Much of the land was donated, Griffin said. For instance, he said, Wal-Mart gave a half-mile of land to the trail system, helping to link the high school to the mall area.

The green space is home to a variety of wildlife, including two nesting pairs of bald eagles, Griffin said.

For its work, Florence has been named one of the Sierra Club’s Cool Cities, a designation for cities that work with residents and local leaders to implement smart energy solutions to save money and build a cleaner, safer future.

Griffin said the city’s original vision to create green space has evolved into so much more. It is a place for residents to get fit, enjoy nature and their history, and connect with the entire community. 

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

South Carolina's 'buy local' effort helps to sustain local economies



By Ashley Cook, Contributing writer

If there is a silver lining in the recession cloud we're under, it's that people are looking closer to their own community for the things they need. "Buy local" initiatives are sprouting up in cities all over the state, encouraging residents to take advantage of South Carolina resources before buying elsewhere.

But it's not all about economics. Buying local is also about plump tomatoes, crisp okra and pie-worthy peaches. Cities and towns around South Carolina have been working with their rural neighbors to provide residents with fresh produce. City-sponsored farmers markets are on the rise.

Mount Pleasant holds its farmers market on Tuesday afternoons — perfect for those who might be busy on the weekend but only watching reruns on a Tuesday night. Crowds gather on the grounds of the newly-rebuilt Moultrie Middle School from April to October. There are free (and educational) activities for kids and rotating music acts.

"First and foremost, this is a place for the community to gather," said Ashley McKenzie, community development and tourism officer for the Town of Mount Pleasant.

While large cities often have the resources to put together these markets, small towns may need to form partnerships to see results.

Officials in Blackville put this concept to work when they decided to reopen the



Mount Pleasant Farmers Market (Photo/Ryan Wilcox)

town's farmers market. They partnered with the Clemson Extension and the Blackville Downtown Development Association to get their market up and running.

Historically, Blackville was a market town that grew up as a prominent stop on the Charleston to Hamburg railroad line. As commerce moved from rail to road, the Blackville market was left in the dust. The farmers market was shuttered and remained that way for decades.

Last year, to celebrate the town's 175th anniversary, officials decided to return to their roots and open another market. Clemson Extension provided expertise in agriculture, and the

Downtown Development Association provided marketing know-how.

The Downtown Blackville Market opened in 2008 to eager residents. "There is no grocery store in Blackville," said Terri Smith of the Clemson Extension, "so there was a great deal of interest."

In the Upstate, the Laurens Farmers Market is in its second year and growing. The market promotes South Carolina-grown produce but takes it a step further to feature food grown in Laurens County.

It's not just about profit, said Jonathon Irick, executive director of Main Street Laurens USA. It's also about rebuilding the economic sustainability of the downtown



Buy local efforts statewide include encouraging residents to purchase produce at their local farmers market.

area. “People are coming back downtown. They’re doing what they used to do — come into town to catch up with friends, get an ice cream.”

But the local farmers market is just a component of Laurens’ buy-local efforts.

“We’ve partnered with the county Chamber of Commerce to initiate our *Shop Laurens County First* program,” said Irick. “We want people to buy what they can here.”

The Laurens County Chamber of Commerce, Laurens Main Street USA, and the City of Clinton’s downtown development association have worked together to promote the program. They’ve handed out stickers and T-shirts, and provided incentives for residents to shop local, such as a monthly drawing with prizes like a flat-screen TV and an all-inclusive sports package.

“One of our businesses just had the best month it’s ever had, so I think the campaign is certainly working and bringing dollars back downtown,” said Irick.

The efforts in Laurens echo those in the rest of the state. Along with the success of farmers markets, buy-local campaigns have taken on a broader scope, encouraging residents to support local tourism and patronize their city’s unique collection of independent businesses.

In Myrtle Beach, where tourism is king, the local Chamber of Commerce began an incentive program for local residents. Locals involved with business and social organizations are encouraged to provide referrals that result in groups meeting in Myrtle Beach. Locals whose referrals result in at least 25 hotel rooms booked per night receive a two-night “staycation” in Myrtle Beach, including gift cards for area entertainment and restaurants.

“Groups traveling to the Myrtle Beach area represent an estimated 10 percent of our annual visitors,” said Danna Lilly, who works with the city’s Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The program is an excellent opportunity to get the local community involved in growing group business.”

Myrtle Beach isn’t the only city partnering with local businesses to keep local dollars downtown. Conway’s Main Street Program introduced a Conway Gift Certificate that residents can purchase and use at all participating stores.

Lowcountry Local First, an organization made up of independent business owners and supported by cities in the Lowcountry, has joined in the national Ten Percent Shift project. This movement, touted

as a “local stimulus package,” asks individuals, businesses, nonprofits and governmental agencies to shift 10 percent of their purchases to local independent businesses.


According to the Ten Percent Shift project, if one out of every 10 trips results in a local purchase, this shift could generate about \$140 million nationally in total new economic activity, \$50 million in new wages and more than 1,000 new jobs.

Along these lines, the Mount Pleasant Town Council directed all departments to make every attempt to purchase items within town limits, excluding those that require a bid.

“Whether it’s a hammer or copy paper, if no bid is required, we must try to find the product in Mount Pleasant before we shop elsewhere,” said Mac Burdette, town administrator.

Other cities around the state are involved with another national buy-local movement, called the 3/50 Project. Forest Acres, Beaufort, Conway, Florence, Orangeburg and Summerville have all signed on to the project that encourages residents to pick three of their favorite independent businesses and make a purchase there every month. If 50 percent of the working population did this, it would generate an extra \$42 billion in revenue nationally.

“Forest Acres’ economic vitality is increasingly dependent on the health of our local businesses as their success unquestionably adds to the quality of our lives,” said City Manager Mark Williams.

There are opportunities for growth in this economy. In these tough times, hometowns are coming up with innovative ways to sustain their local livelihoods. 





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.

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM

Magnets for good living



Quality of life is an essential element in attracting new businesses.

The good life. In this state, you only have to look as far as our cities and towns to find it. A pro-business attitude, diversified economies and a commitment to enhancing overall quality of life are the cornerstones of the almost 300 hometowns across our state.

People and businesses are drawn to the positive quality of life strong cities and towns offer... from the arts to recreation to quality city services.

This is a proven formula for success and a primary reason cities and towns are strong catalysts for growth and prosperity. But this doesn't happen by accident.

Hard work, vision and regional cooperation have helped make our cities and towns the centers of commerce they are today.

And the best is yet to come.



Cities Mean Business

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