



UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

Jettison the generic

Noted city redevelopment consultant Roger Brooks shared the most common words South Carolina cities and towns use on websites and in marketing materials to describe themselves. It sounds good to ask people to “explore” and “discover” a “unique town” with “local history,” “friendly people,” “outdoor recreation” and “something for everyone,” until one realizes that almost every town in the country uses those phrases, Brooks said.

“You have to jettison the generic,” Brooks said several times during both his keynote address and follow-up breakout session during this year’s Annual Meeting in Greenville.

Going beyond the ordinary and expected was a key part of Brooks’ advice. Bottom line is, he said, too many cities and towns try so hard to be crowd pleasers that they fail completely to make people want to visit. The trick for cities and towns—large and small—is to be unique and to have that one thing that people will leave the comfort of their own hometowns to visit.



Roger Brooks encouraged South Carolina municipal leaders to be unique and find the one thing that people will leave the comfort of their own hometowns to visit.

Brooks explained the concept of branding. “Branding is the art of setting yourself apart from everyone else, and making you the destination of choice for investment, business opportunities, and as the place to live and visit.

He cautioned that a brand is not a logo or a slogan. “Logos and slogans are used to reinforce the brand. Brands are what people think of you. It is earned over time.”

Some of the key ideas he shared

- Focus on actual assets. People don’t search the Internet for town names when looking for places to visit. They look for an emotion or an idea such as “South Carolina towns near lakes” or “South Carolina horse country.” Telling people a town is friendly isn’t going to get them in.
- Create something people want to see and do not focus on a logo and a tagline. Worrying about a logo is a

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waste of time. He shared a comical clip from the NBC show “Parks and Recreation” to highlight this when the town parks director reads off every terrible tagline used to promote the town during the course of a century. That won’t cut it.

- Establish an icon. That could be something natural (a waterfall) or artificial (an oversized peach), but make it the one thing people remember and want to get a picture of when they visit your town.
- Do not rely heavily on focus groups because of the tendency to dilute the message from core strengths to a generic, one-size fits all approach.
- Don’t let local politics kill an effort.
- Never roll out a brand that cannot be delivered. If a town is going to call itself the pumpkin capital of the South, for example, it better be able to back up that claim.

Verhonda Crawford, a Chesnee city councilwoman, said much of Brooks’ message rang true when she heard it.

“You have to make it different in order to succeed,” she said.

During Brooks’ breakout session, he laid out a 13-step process to turn around a city’s image. He used a small town in Michigan called Alpena, located on the shores of Lake Huron, as an example. Alpena was a rust belt town that got a second life by focusing on tranquil tourism and touting its nearby water sanctuary.

1. Create a committee of private and public sector individuals to develop the brand.
2. Educate community members about what a brand is and get their input. Also, inventory the community’s assets.
3. Identify who you want to attract to your community.
4. Filter out generic ideas.
5. Form a brand leadership team. The brand development committee takes the initial lead in creating the brand; the leadership team will carry the

“Brands are what people think of you. It is earned over time.”

Roger Brooks
City Redevelopment
Consultant

project forward and be champions of the brand.

6. Develop a product “brand bank.” These are the ideas that will reinforce and support the brand such as wayfinding signs, special events and facade improvements. The key is to get people invested.
7. Clearly define goals or brand promise. The brand promise describes what the community wants to be in the future.
8. Create the look and feel of the brand - the logo, color schemes, taglines.
9. Develop an action plan not a strategic plan. Make it a to-do list.
10. Make something happen. This may be a small project, but something tangible needs to be done to get people excited about the brand.
11. Get the energy going. Do not let lack of money, local politics or lack of local champions make you lose focus on future success.
12. Make a splash by telling people the plan and making changes on things such as letterhead.
13. Do not let the plan gather dust on a shelf.

Brooks said it comes down to patience, passion, persistence and a little bit of pain to succeed in redefining a city. But it works. In Alpena, the downtown rate of vacant properties went from 40 percent to 5 percent in one year by following the steps.

“That’s how cool this can be,” he said.

For more information on the 13 tips and Roger Brooks, visit www.rogerbrooksinternational.com.



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NEWS BRIEFS

The **City of Columbia** was named one of America's "10 Great Places to Live" by Kiplinger's Personal Finance. Released annually, the rankings place an emphasis on small and midsize cities that offer good jobs, affordable homes, quality schools and access to great health care.

Members of the **Association South Carolina Mayors** recently elected their 2013-14 officers: President: Mayor Dick Cronin of *Isle of Palms* and Vice President Mayor Lisa Sulka of *Bluffton*. They also elected four new board members for a three-year term: Mayor Bill Collins of *Summerville*; Mayor Marion Glenn of *Bowman*; Mayor Lee Logan of *Due West* and Mayor George Sheppard of *Tega Cay*. Mayor Steve Benjamin of *Columbia* was elected to serve a one-year unexpired term on the board.



Elected Officials Institute has 15 new graduates

The summer 2013 graduates of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government are, in alphabetical order, Councilmember Henry Alexander Campbell of *Varnville*, Councilmember Jimmy Carroll of *Isle of Palms*, Mayor Bill Collins of *Summerville*, Councilmember Harriet Cox of *Pamplico*, Councilmember Gail Bush Diggs of *Aiken*, Councilmember William D. Harkins of *Hilton Head Island*, Councilmember Mary Morris Huggins of *Olanta*, Councilmember Debbie Littlejohn of *Clover*, Councilmember Robert H. Martin Jr. of *Prosperity*, Mayor Rick McCormick of *Westminster*, Councilmember Mattie McGee of *Andrews*, Councilmember William E. McIntosh III of *Summerville*, Councilmember Jimmy Powell of *Westminster*, Councilmember Allen Smith of *Kingstree* and Councilmember Ronald L. Williams of *Varnville*. (not all graduates pictured)

The next Institute class is September 19 and will cover "Municipal Economic Development" and "Forms of Municipal Government." For more information or to register, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: MEO)

Sumter mayor elected to lead Association



Mayor Joe McElveen

Delegates at the 2013 Annual Meeting unanimously elected Mayor Joe McElveen of the City of Sumter as the 2013-14 president of the Municipal Association. Elections took place on Friday, July 19. When asked about his vision for South Carolina hometowns, here is what Mayor McElveen had to say:

Why are cities and towns so important to the economic development success of South Carolina?

A. Cities and towns are the lynchpin of economic development success in our state because they provide the sense of place and belonging that companies and their families are looking for in a location. While cities and towns provide the

utility infrastructure and police and fire protection that companies need, hometowns also provide a sense of community with arts and cultural activities, a vibrant downtown, and activities for families. Giving cities and towns tools to attract and retain both large and small businesses is critical to the future success of our state.

What do you see as the biggest challenge cities and towns face?

A. As local elected leaders of our state's cities and towns, our biggest challenge is boosting economic success by attracting business, while also encouraging community development and providing a positive quality of life for residents. All of this must be done while addressing the challenge of shrinking resources.

How can cities and towns influence change in South Carolina?

A. As local leaders, our responsibility is to influence change both in our communities and at the State House in Columbia. From small towns in rural parts of the state to our capital city and other urban cores, legislators need to hear from mayors and councilmembers about the positive quality of life in our hometowns and the high standard of our services and amenities for residents, businesses and visitors. It is our responsibility to make sure our statewide leaders know our hometowns are where economic growth originates and prospers.

Hampton first award recipient



Executive Director Miriam Hair (r) presents Gail Hampton, collection programs manager, with the Association's Retirement Service Award. Hampton, who retires in November, is the award's first recipient. The Award recognizes Municipal Association retirees with 28+ years of dedicated service to SC cities and towns. "Gail has served the Association with both passion and integrity and has played a critical role in the success of the collection programs for the benefit of our cities and towns," said Hair. Hampton was accompanied on stage by her husband John Hampton.

Annual Meeting Greenville



The 73rd Annual Meeting in Greenville brought together more than 1000 municipal officials, staff, speakers, exhibitors and guests for four days of great sessions, networking and new ideas.

Sumter Mayor Joe McElveen was elected president of the Association at the opening session on Friday. Officials heard from nationally recognized speakers and local leaders talking about making our cities stronger and more attractive for business and residential growth.



Young professionals from Greenville, Anderson and Spartanburg shared their perspective on promoting young leaders in South Carolina.

Young professionals give advice for the future

Five professionals under age 40 sat on a stage before a crowd of municipal officials during an Annual Meeting general session. Each one of them was involved in a young professionals group in their own hometowns of Greenville, Anderson and Spartanburg. However when session moderator Peter Kagayama asked audience members if their cities had similar groups aimed at promoting young leaders in their communities, very few people raised their hands

“That’s a little surprising,” Kagayama said.

But maybe that is why so many city and town leaders found their way to the general session on building and developing young professionals during July’s Annual Meeting. The need and desire to cultivate young professionals between age 22 and 39 is there, but many communities struggle with achieving it.

Moncks Corner Councilmember Tonia Aiken-Taylor said the session was good because it hit on an issue many leaders are thinking about. “We need to know what we can do better,” she said.

“A good young professionals group is about creating good leadership and building on their strengths,”

Tammy Johnson

Former chair of a large young professionals group called PULSE

While there have been many social outlets over the years for young professionals (think Jaycees), many communities have not cultivated them as civic

leaders. If a community saw a young leader emerge, it was an organic thing that initiated from the individual as opposed to an organized effort to engage him.

There is no denying the power that young professionals are having on economic and social growth in South Carolina.

More and more companies are looking for young professionals in terms of recruitment as well as for site location. Instead of just looking at land and natural resources, companies are looking for places with a large number of young professionals because that group is considered a strong talent pool.

In addition, young professionals are more likely to move every few years and switch careers than previous generations. They also are more likely to start their own businesses. They will go to places where they feel accepted.

The young professionals brought together for the Annual Meeting mirrored those growth trends. There were three South Carolina natives – one who left and came back, one who wanted to leave the state but decided to stay, and the third who grew up here and wanted to work here as well. There also were two transplants – one who came originally for college and the other for work.

“I live here because I love it, but I stay here because of the business opportunities,” said Tammy Johnson, owner of Liquid Catering in Greenville and the former chair of a large young professionals group called PULSE.

Yet, many city and town leaders have trouble engaging young leaders. This is part generation gap and part misunderstanding.

From comments during the session, older elected officials wondered why young professionals were not seeking office. For many young professionals, elected office is not the most desired way to give back to the community, but that does not mean they do not want to be involved.

Getting young professionals engaged needs to start with city leadership, the panelists agreed. Young professionals are ready and eager to help, but if they cannot get feedback from current leadership they will seek opportunities elsewhere.

“Exclusion needs to give way to inclusion,” said Meric Gambel, director business development at the Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce.

Finding those young professionals, though, can be tough, several people in the crowd said. Sarah Sherwood, mayor of Abbeville, talked to several of the panelists after the event to brainstorm ways to cultivate young professionals.

“It’s a struggle finding them,” she said.

Todd Horne, who chaired Spartanburg’s young professionals group two years ago and now sits on the Spartanburg Chamber board, advised the officials to do things that will attract young professionals to your community.

That could be free music events, more outdoors activities and making the city more walkable.

“Ask them, and they will tell you what works,” he said.



Panelists agreed that the quickest way to lose the interest of young professionals is to dismiss them.

But if a community does have potential young leaders, many times the local leadership does not know how to cultivate them. A big topic for the panel was what goes into making a strong young professionals group. Johnson said it has to be more than just social events.

“A good young professionals group is about creating good leadership and building on their strengths,” Johnson said.

Mike Pennington, a Greenville native, who is involved in PULSE as well, said those leadership skills can come from several avenues. He recommended things such as “lunch and learns” with area leaders, a mentoring program where current community leaders help young professionals, volunteering and learning the importance of local history.

Chris Smith of the Upstate Network—a young professionals’ spin off of the Urban League—encouraged officials to not overlook diversity in young professionals. Jobs are here in South Carolina for African-American young professionals, and

they will come if they believe city leaders want them taking part.

Johnson also suggested looking at the biggest employers in town. Ask them who their rising stars are under 35 then take those people out for coffee. That is a practical gold mine for finding sharp, intelligent new thinkers.

Another issue for involving young professionals is listening, Smith remarked. Just because young professionals are the same age as many older leaders’ children does not mean they should be treated like kids. Young professionals have an education and jobs.

“They will be leaders,” he said. “Treat them like it.”

Panelists agreed that the quickest way to lose the interest of young professionals is to dismiss them quickly. This generation does not expect all of their ideas to be implemented, but they do expect their work to be recognized.

“If you shoot down creativity quickly, you will lose it,” Gambel said.

Tips to getting young professionals engaged

- Form a young professionals group focused on leadership
- Hold events for young professionals
- Directly ask young professionals to become involved.
- Look to the diversity in your population
- Listen to them for new ideas.



Cultivating talent: build place alongside the economy

By Katherine Swartz, Leadership Center at Columbia College

You've read the headlines for years now: Talent matters, now more than ever.

Our state's ability to attract, engage and retain talented, creative, entrepreneurial and socially conscious citizens will be critical to our success for generations to come.

Creating jobs and fostering an environment for successful business expansion strengthens our economy – but only if we have the right talent to fill those positions. And only if our cities and towns are attractive to young generations who consider where they live in conjunction with finding or creating jobs.

Research by The Knight Foundation indicates strong positive correlations between community attachment and economic prosperity – the more connected South Carolinians are to their community, the more prosperous our state will become. Cultivating cultures of service and philanthropy is a key component to success – and to cultivating talent. Municipalities, government agencies, community organizations and businesses must band together to improve quality of life in our state while opening their doors to allow young talent to be leaders in this effort. We must leverage the energy, passion and experience of young talent as vehicles for change. We must challenge

native talent to reinvent and rediscover their community.

Organizations like Greenville's PULSE, Charleston Young Professionals, Grand Strand SCENE and Columbia Opportunity Resource work in tandem to identify, engage and retain talent. You will find programs ranging from group mentoring series, to issues forums, to largescale community service projects and a wide array of social events all designed to connect peer leaders to each other for the purpose of improving life in their community. Ultimately these connections make the talent magnet that much stronger, even irresistible, for our state.

Our state offers so many amenities to young people considering where to live. Unfortunately a positive first impression (even worse a lifelong impression) may often be overshadowed by negative press and the perception that our state is not inclusive or progressive. This hurdle can be overcome by fostering and creating personal connections — our state is small enough to be able to manage such an effort.

The newly launched Diversity Recruitment Consortium is making this a reality, by “bringing a concerted group of organizations together to be effective at presenting a fairer picture of lifestyle in the state than that which is possible with any single

organization.” Spearheaded by The Riley Institute, the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, the program deploys an ARC method: attract, recruit, cultivate, with the goal of not only recruiting talent, but also helping individuals become thriving citizens in our state. The person-to-person approach has the ability to revolutionize the talent war for South Carolina.

By focusing on creating person-to-person connections among young talent; by connecting them to the community and state they may consider calling home; by eliminating obstacles to living, working, learning, leading and playing large; by touting our state's strengths and peak assets, we can and will create a world-class talent magnet that attracts, retains and engages the best and brightest talent.

Katherine Swartz is former vice president of talent and leadership development for the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce and executive director of Columbia Opportunity Resource. She is currently director of the Leadership Center at Columbia College.

This column originally appeared in the Summer 2013 issue of the Cities Mean Business magazine. For a copy of the magazine, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: CMB).

Clemson works with cities

to support small tech businesses

As the owners of Greenbug Inc., an ecofriendly pest control company, Louise and Dan Hodges face many of the same challenges as other small business owners. Yet there are a few differences. For one, this Beaufort couple has a team of Clemson University graduate students doing bug research for them.

How can a small business have the backing and resources of a major research institution? The Hodges' business is one of an inaugural group of companies in a technology business incubator program created through a public/private partnership among Clemson, the Town of Bluffton, Care Core National, Buckwalter Place and additional private sponsors.

Greenbug Inc. is one of nine businesses in the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, which opened its doors in May 2012. The center's program provides business space and resources to help entrepreneurs, inventors and small business owners be successful. The incubator program assists small business owners with intellectual property, technology evaluation, product development services, seed financing, business mentorship, corporate relationships and recruiting employees.

The Center, a 501(c)3 organization, reports to a seven-member board appointed by the Bluffton Town Council that works in cooperation with the Clemson University Institute for Economic and Community Development. The Center is designed for small and medium-sized cities, building local partnerships to diversify economic development, according to Karl Kelly, director of commercialization and technology incubation in Clemson's economic development division.

"We're able to use our many resources across Clemson to help these companies develop," said Kelly, adding that the program hopes to help establish 15 to 30 companies a year.



Mindy Taylor of Duke Energy, Rep. Jay Lucas, Sen. Gerald Malloy, Ben Chastain of the Duke Energy Center for Innovation, Mayor Mel Pennington of Hartsville, the Rev. John Foster III, and Karl Kelly of Clemson University participated in the ribbon cutting for the Duke Energy Center for Innovation.

In addition to getting help with research, Louise Hodges said she's received input on her business plan, and legal and financial advice from the program.

"If I, as a small business owner, had to pay for all these services, I couldn't do it," she said.

Bluffton Mayor Lisa Sulka was a strong advocate for bringing the center to Bluffton.

"One of the town's goals is to enhance economic development," Sulka said. "With an average age of 32 in the town of Bluffton and an ever growing population in our high school, we need to look for ways to bring jobs to our area and train our workforce for the companies moving to our area. Having Clemson University's presence in our town opens the doors to the world in terms of knowledge and expertise in the economic development arena. This, along with USC-Beaufort just minutes away from our town, makes us the perfect location for this innovation center."

The center's success already has been recognized throughout the region and state, according to Bluffton Town Manager Anthony Barrett.

"Many of the innovators are close to launching their businesses and products. As a community we are all better off and have been served well and will continue to be served by the center," he said. "Not

only is it an idea whose time has come; it is a working and living example of how true entrepreneurial spirit works in a public-private partnership."

Sulka said she expects the innovation center will have a large impact on the town and region, with increased revenue coming from business licenses and property taxes.

"My hopes are that these innovators will leave the center and open their businesses in Bluffton or the surrounding area," Sulka said.

Barrett said the center demonstrates the town's commitment and attitude toward economic development.

"The town views this initiative as more than an incubator; it is letting the entire world know we are serious about economic development," Barrett said. "The synergy and word-of-mouth chatter around the state and beyond about the Don Ryan Center has created a robust 'economic state of mind,' which is just as important as the 'Bluffton state of mind.' It is a harbinger of great things to come in developing companies as well as creating opportunities for true economic development here and in the region."

The incubator is a three-year pilot program with five communities, Kelly

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said. Rock Hill currently is developing a program, and another launched in Hartsville in July.

Rock Hill plans to select businesses for its incubator in the coming months, said Stephen Turner, executive director for the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation, adding that a number of promising businesses have expressed interest. Rock Hill, the RHEDC, Winthrop University, York Technical College and private partners are involved in running the program.

The goal, Turner said, is to get a few small technology-based businesses to grow into larger businesses that eventually will create more jobs for people in the area.

Having Clemson as a resource is a tremendous plus for the program, said Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols.

"I know the results in Bluffton have been positive, and I expect an equal amount of enthusiasm in our community," Echols said. "This is a piece of our

continuing effort to make Rock Hill a great place to do business."

The Duke Energy Center for Innovation in Hartsville is in a downtown storefront that the city is providing at no cost. The city hired a director in July to manage the day-to-day operations of the incubator, and has assembled a diverse board of directors.

Mayor Mel Pennington says the incubator partnership is a huge win for Hartsville and the city's efforts to bring jobs to the community. "Jobs, jobs, jobs – that's the single most important thing in any community."

The ability to bring the incubator program to Hartsville comes from a grant from the Duke Energy Foundation.

"Fostering economic development in the communities we serve is a critically important mission for Duke Energy," said Mindy Taylor, Duke's community relations manager for eastern South Carolina. "We think it will pay dividends for the community for years to come."

One unique asset Hartsville can draw



The Greenbug Injector System uses an existing irrigation system to distribute Greenbug for Outdoors so that anywhere water is directed becomes safely pest free.

on is the students at the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, who will be able to utilize the incubator. "We have the brightest kids in the state right here in Hartsville," Pennington said. "This is exciting for the City of Hartsville, and we are thankful for the partnership with Duke Energy."

This article is reprinted from the Cities Mean Business magazine and the topic was covered in a session at the 2013 Annual Meeting in July.

Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act

The General Assembly passed the Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act at the end of the 2013 session, giving local governments a new economic incentive tool. The Act, sponsored by Representative James Smith, provides two incentive options for investors to offset costs associated with the rehabilitation, demolition, renovation or redevelopment of a building and its site: income tax credit or property tax credit.

The Act defines an abandoned building as a building or structure that has been at least 66 percent vacant and nonoperational for income producing purposes for at least five years. The building may not have been a single-family residence at the time it was abandoned. The investor applying for the credit cannot have been the owner of the building when it was abandoned.

Local government entities that may offer the property tax credit to an investor

include counties, school districts, special purpose districts and municipalities.

To qualify for the credit, the building's total amount of rehabilitation expenses must meet a minimum investment level based on the city or county's population as follows.

Population Threshold	Amount of Investment
< 25,000	< \$250,000
1,001 – 24,999	< \$150,000
> 1,000	< \$75,000

Before incurring any expenses, the investor/taxpayer desiring a tax credit must submit a Notice of Intent to rehabilitate a qualifying building to the city council if located in an incorporated area or the county council if located in an unincorporated area, outlining the project's intent and scope.

The city or county council considers the eligibility of the building site and proposed expenses for the tax credit. Eligibility is

required to be certified by adopting a resolution with a positive majority vote of the governing body followed by a public hearing and approval of an ordinance enacting the property tax credit.

Within 45 days prior to holding the public hearing, the governing body must notify all affected local taxing entities of its intention to grant the property tax credit. If a taxing entity does not file an objection prior to the public hearing, the local taxing entity is considered to have consented to the tax credit.

The property tax credit equals 25 percent of the actual rehabilitation expenses incurred, not to exceed 75 percent of the real property tax liability due. While the credit may be used for up to eight years, it cannot be used until the rehabilitated building is placed into service.

The Act's provisions are effective beginning with tax year 2013 and sunset after tax year 2019.

Beyond the pothole



City officials – both elected and appointed – have the basic task of making their locales safe and functional.

This is one of the core responsibilities of local government and means working on what often seems to be a never ending array of fixing potholes, upgrading utilities, addressing crime and fixing more potholes.

Noted author and city planning consultant Peter Kagayama said that is all well and good, but ultimately it is not making a city a place where people want to actually live, work and play. Yes, residents complain about the potholes, he said, but that is because that is the only emotion they can muster.

“The pothole is the immediate pain. It is the hangnail. It is the paper cut,” he said.

Presenting a preconference workshop before the Association’s Annual Meeting, Kagayama spoke about making cities a place that individuals love – not just tolerate. His message was not some pie-in-the-sky mantra, but something rooted in the cold hard facts of commerce.

Local economic growth is connected directly to the passion of its residents. Government can only push growth so far. If the private sector is not involved and caring about a city, real progress will not happen.

“We like to believe that people love the cities they live in because they live in them, but do they love their cities?” he asked. “Most people do not and that hurts you in the long run.”

But getting city leaders to figure out how to get people to care is tough, he said.

“There is no playbook for emotional engagement,” Kagayama said.

Playbook, no. But ideas are plentiful. Kagayama gave numerous example of how leaders in cities and towns across



Participants were challenged to come up with ideas on making their towns a better place.

the country created unique ways to make their towns more interesting. The results were happy residents.

- Anchorage, Alaska, leaders created interactive ice sculptures including swings.
- Raleigh, NC, residents put up signs that told how many minutes it would take to walk to the next attraction.
- Dog walking allows people to interact more quickly. Dogs are a natural conversation starter.

“The goal is to delight and surprise your residents and visitors,” Kagayama said.

On the flip side, he warned of little things that can make a city seem unfriendly. That includes bad parking lot design and lack of places for people to bike and walk. They all seem small, but people notice.

City leaders cannot do all of this alone. They must seek out and cultivate what he termed “co-creators.” These are the community members who can serve as anchors for projects and new ideas. They can be from any sector of the community, but city leaders need to listen to them even if they do not implement the ideas.

These are the people who will fall in love with a city and promote it. Kagayama

also stressed looking at things for children to do because “happy kids make for happy parents” who will think more favorably about your community.

“Emotions are contagious,” Kagayama said. “Emotions matter.”

Kagayama also stressed not getting stuck in familiar patterns. He advised mashing up long-standing traditions with new ones to make something more interesting. The traditions do not necessarily have to be good ones. He pointed to one town where teens would vandalize pumpkins every Halloween by rolling them down a long hill.

Instead of cracking down with extra police, town leaders made a contest out of it where the whole community was invited to roll pumpkins.

“Sell people on the little things,” he said.

Kagayama also challenged his audience to come up with ideas on making their towns a better place by coming up with what he called a “\$500 idea” or basically something inexpensive but fun that would build off what a town already does.

Several ideas were put forth including planting flowers, public rocking chairs and high school students painting old buildings. Greenville Councilmember Amy Ryberg-Doyle came up with the idea of having local businesses sponsor hopscotch boards on the street during one of that city’s larger festivals, Artisphere. The idea is it gets children more involved in the arts festival and doing something physical, she said.

At the end of the session, Kagayama gave a piece of sage advice.

“Bring these ideas back to your communities,” he said.

For more on Peter Kagayama, go to <http://fortheloveofcities.com>.

A Day in the Life of an Economic Development Director

The "Day in the Life" series gives an insider's look at the professions that make South Carolina cities and towns great places to live, work and play. Municipal employees from around the state explain their role, discuss challenges they face and share interesting stories from the unique world of municipal government service.

As part of a series of articles on the duties and responsibilities of municipal employees, we spoke with four different economic development directors. These professionals are responsible for attracting and retaining businesses, community development, and planning.

Wade Luther has been with the City of Camden for four years - the first year as downtown manager, the next three as economic development director. Before his work in Camden, he was a planning consultant in the private sector and a land development planner for the City of North Myrtle Beach.

The duties of an economic development director vary greatly from day to day, Luther said.

"One minute you are managing an engineering project, the next working with various tourism agencies on marketing plans or assisting a potential small business in finding a location downtown," Luther said. "The job responsibilities cover a wide spectrum of duties from project management to policy development and implementation, to marketing, tourism, business retention, recruitment and expansion."

"It is not a profession you can go into with tunnel vision. You must be aware of how the economy applies to all aspects of your community and others, and be a little bit of an expert on everything," he said.

Nancy Whitworth agrees. She has been in economic development with the City of Greenville for more than 30 years, serving as director since 1992. During her tenure, Whitworth has seen the demands and expectations of an economic development professional in a municipal setting increase.



"In economic development, there is no 'instant gratification.'"

Donna Smith
economic developer,
City of West Columbia

"There is pressure from all constituencies - elected officials, neighborhood groups, businesses, developers - to get it right! The skill set of a successful local economic developer must adapt and change as the demands and expectations change," Whitworth said. "Keeping the process transparent, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality, can test even the most seasoned professional. It's also about maintaining a sense of urgency along with a healthy dose of patience."

Others may not realize that interpersonal skills play such a large role in business development, Luther said.

"The most important part of business development in our small city is building relationships," Luther said. "Without those key relationships and partnerships in place, the rest of your economic development strategies will remain idle."

Indeed, relationships are vital to the job of economic development, Whitworth said.

"One often assumes it is important to understand the technical aspects of the profession, but the ability to work with others, communicate effectively and employ the gentle art of persuasion have much more to do with success," she said.

For Whitworth, a day at the office could involve her working on a major downtown development project, responding to a request for information from a prospect, helping solve a variety of business concerns, or holding a neighborhood meeting to discuss a redevelopment project. Her role also includes planning, community development, and building and environmental codes.

Whitworth thinks most people do not realize that everyone in local government is in the business of economic development.

"Greenville's effectiveness in economic development is a result of providing superior levels of service and ensuring that Greenville is a great place to live and do business. It is a 'can do' spirit that permeates throughout the departments and allows us, who are charged with economic development, to be able to tap into a depth of resources," she said. "We in economic development might be the face, but it is all of our city departments that make it work. I also think that the link back to the city also ensures that we evaluate incentives not just from the standpoint of making the deal but also as to the long-term impact of a particular project - it gives that added level of accountability."

Luther said he did not expect there to be so much collaboration between communities on developing economic

development programs, policies and projects. In fact, staff members in surrounding communities are very eager to share their experiences and give advice to help further each city's economic development goals, he said.

Although new business recruiting tends to get the most public attention, others may be surprised to learn that business retention is one of the most important functions of the job, said Reno Deaton, who has been the executive director of the Greer Development Corporation since 2007. Before that, he served as executive director of the Carroll County Community Development Corporation in Kentucky.

"We spend a great deal of time and effort working with existing businesses and industries to understand the nature of their business, the challenges that they face, and the strategies that are available to help them to eliminate and overcome those challenges," he said.

Deaton said his work at the Greer Development Corporation includes four areas of focus: business retention, new business recruiting, marketing and product development. Most of his days include work in each of these focus areas and usually involve a series of meetings, phone calls and emails with internal and external partners including consultants, industry professionals, industrial and commercial prospects, staff from the county and state economic development agencies, real estate brokers, bankers, utility providers, and staff of the City of Greer and Greer Commission of Public Works.

Deaton's organization provides staff support for the Partnership for Tomorrow, a community-based, public-private partnership that maintains an independent program of work that includes economic development, quality of life initiatives, and community master planning. They also assist the Greer Station Association, the historic downtown merchants' association.

Donna Smith started working for the City of West Columbia as the director of economic development in August 2005. Before that, she held a similar role with the Town of Lexington, in conjunction with being the executive director of



People do not realize that everyone in local government is in the business of economic development.

Nancy Whitworth
*economic developer,
City of Greenville*

the Lexington Economic Development Association. Prior to moving to South Carolina, she was the director of business services for the Virginia Peninsula Economic Development Council.

For Smith, a day at work may consist of administering and inspecting ongoing grant projects; meeting with contractors, engineers and SCDOT representatives; talking to various business owners and potential owners; researching property information for commercial realtors and/or businesses – including zoning information and water and sewer availability; talking to businesses and homeowners groups about annexation; and attending ribbon cuttings and grand openings.

The most significant factor on business development over the last decade, Smith said, is the change in banking standards. "Loans once fairly easily obtained for most businesses are now at a premium," explained Smith.

Smith said that when she started working for the City of West Columbia, her biggest surprise was her level of involvement in the grants she secured. At other jobs, she wrote and secured grants, but the administration was done by someone else. In West Columbia, Smith not only writes the grant application, but she also administers the grant and is the on-site project manager.

"I've worked directly with engineers and contractors and am responsible for the design aspects of the project. I have been involved with such details as selecting the brick and granite for signs and water features, and selecting flowers, trees and shrubs, paint colors for façade renovations, and streetlight fixtures," she said.

Despite the challenges, these economic development professionals say they feel rewarded by their contributions to the community.

Smith relishes seeing a project come to fruition.

"In economic development, there is no 'instant gratification.' Many months and years can go into preparing for the project, so whether it's landing a new business or completing a business façade renovations project, when the ribbon is finally cut, you know you've put in a lot of hard work and it's finally paid off," she said.

Deaton said he enjoys being part of a team of partners in the Greer community, at the state and county level, and the private sector, who work together well to facilitate new job creation and the attraction of new capital investment. For Whitworth, the most rewarding part of the job is seeing how her contributions have led to positive changes in the lives of others, whether through new jobs created or retained or through the public and private investments that have created wonderful public spaces.

Luther said he takes pride in a completed project.

"Not only can I look back and say I took part in that, but a whole cast of people can make that same claim," Luther said. "We can all look back and take satisfaction in the fact that we worked together and we left behind something that will make this community a better place."



The Francis Marion Performing Arts Center is the anchor for the Florence cultural developments.



ArtFieldsSM attendees admiring artist Kathie Alford's competition artwork, *Roots of Love Grow All Around*, in the Jones-Carter Gallery. (photo/ Justin Nathanson)

Florence, Pee Dee experiencing renaissance

Over the decades, the Pee Dee region has gone through many transformations, relying on agriculture, then textiles and manufacturing as its economic base. Today, the once-struggling area is slowly experiencing growth and revitalization sparked in part by economic development efforts in downtown Florence, the heart of the Pee Dee.

Florence once was a bustling railroad town that produced cotton and tobacco, but over time it shifted away from its rail- and farm-based economy. Many of the small downtown businesses moved out or closed up shop, leaving shuttered storefronts that gave the city a black eye. Although new industry moved to the area with companies such as Monster.com, QVC and Roche Carolina opening facilities, the downtown area remained troubled.

Things began to change in 2005 when the city hired a consultant to create a master plan for downtown redevelopment. The plan found that arts and cultural development were necessary to bring about renewal in the city center.

"When we're competing for jobs, companies like to see the arts, green spaces and a revitalized downtown," said Florence City Manager Drew Griffin. "The Florence community is starting to realize that diversity is part of the culture of industry and from that comes creativity."

In the past, Florence has struggled with recruiting business because of the lack of arts and cultural activities, Griffin said. After the downtown redevelopment master plan was created, the city leaders

worked with community stakeholders to establish a downtown cultural campus. Today, Florence is experiencing somewhat of a "renaissance," said Florence Mayor Stephen Wukela. A new library and theater were built, and a new museum soon will be complete.

The anchor of the downtown cultural developments is the Francis Marion Performing Arts Center. The \$37 million state-of-the-art facility has a main stage and outdoor amphitheater, a garden courtyard, an academic wing, and upper and lower lobbies for events and receptions. The Center recently won a 2013 Municipal Association of SC Achievement Award for economic development.

City officials formed partnerships with Francis Marion University and the nonprofit Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation to secure the land and fund construction. The University operates the Center and will use it as an academic facility for its theater and music programs.

The Performing Arts Center, which opened two years ago, has been a catalyst for downtown revitalization, said University President Dr. Fred Carter. It has brought people to an area – downtown Florence – which had become downtrodden in the past three decades, and become a springboard for additional development, Carter said.

A boutique hotel, new restaurants and other new businesses have since opened downtown. Office and retail space are being redeveloped and façade improvements have been made. Plans also are underway for the construction of a Health and Science building to house programs

for nurse practitioner students from Francis Marion. A facility will also be used by third- and fourth-year medical students from the University of South Carolina. Already developers are expressing interest in building apartments and mixed-use developments, Griffin said.

"The Performing Arts Center represents an investment from state, city and major private foundations," Carter said. "That sends a very strong message of confidence and support to private entrepreneurs looking to build restaurants and shops."

The efforts are paying off, as more people are being drawn downtown and new developments are taking off, Griffin said.

It also benefits quality of life in the Pee Dee at large, as residents did not previously have a local venue to enjoy musical and theatrical performances. The push for the arts seems to be spreading across the region. The Town of Latta recently opened its 20,000-square foot Ellis Performing Arts Center, which will provide a venue for school fine arts programs and community productions. And Lake City held its "ArtFields" festival and competition in April with the support of Lake City native and businesswoman Darla Moore.

Lake City, like Florence, has grappled with changes – from moving from an agriculture-based economy to experiencing the collapse of the textile industry. Today the local economy is driven by manufacturing, and work continues to strengthen the downtown.

"There's not one way to fix the economy in an area," said Lake City Mayor

Lovith Anderson, Jr. “You need education, social and physical infrastructure.”

Anderson said he and city council are taking steps to make downtown amenable to businesses and shopping. The partnership with his former high school classmate Moore on ArtFields has been a catalyst for change. Upwards of 20,000 people came through town during the 10-day festival, Anderson said.

Two new restaurants have opened, other downtown storefronts are filling up and a façade restoration project is underway, he said. Anderson credits strong relationships with local stakeholders, as well as county officials and the county’s legislative delegation, for the positive changes.

“Collectively, the Pee Dee area as a whole is coming together,” Anderson said.

Indeed, the region has seen a recent uptick in both business expansion and new project announcements, according to Jeff McKay, executive director of the North Eastern Strategic Alliance.

“Companies seem to be in the mode of looking at potential growth and focusing on areas that offer a value proposition. That’s what we give them. For instance, we’ve had several existing companies who have announced expansion in the region. Frequently, that causes other companies to take a look and see what the cause behind their growth is. This in turn will lead to outside companies inquiring into the region with regard to their own growth possibilities,” McKay said.

Local officials continue to work on spreading the word about the Pee Dee and bringing in jobs. McKay said his group has been ramping up efforts to make the region more visible to companies that are in high growth sectors and targeting manufacturers that may bring long-range job investments.

While things are improving in the region, economic revitalization is an arduous process and work is ongoing.

“This is a long-term investment that’s going to require a coalition of divergent groups,” said Wukela. “You have to have a unified effort, and you have to be in it for the long haul. You need a shared vision for what your community can be and a desire to see that vision come to reality.”

Frequently asked questions

FOIA and Economic Development

The economic development exemption to the state’s Freedom of Information Act includes several exemptions that allow public bodies to keep certain information confidential during project negotiations.

Why is confidentiality important to your community when working on economic development projects?

- Your site may be eliminated if a prospect believes confidentiality is not maintained.
- You may invite unwanted competition from other communities interested in the same project.
- Your reputation for being able to maintain confidentiality may affect your city’s ability to attract quality projects in the future.

What are the economic development exemptions in the FOIA?

- Working papers related to the project during the recruiting process including email
- Proposed contracts and incidental documents (including any “confidential proprietary” information companies may provide to a public body)
- Trade secrets which include unpatented, secret, commercially valuable plans, formulas or processes generally recognized as confidential. For public bodies that market services or products in competition with others, trade secrets also include feasibility, planning, and marketing studies; marine terminal service and nontariff agreements; and evaluations and other materials that reference potential customers or competitive information.

When are disclosures required, and what public records are not exempt?

- After incentives are accepted and a company announces or when the incentive agreement is finalized, whichever occurs later. Typically, a company’s execution of a final incentive agreement constitutes acceptance of the incentive.
- Documents incidental to a proposed contract (e.g., application for incentives and cost benefit).
- Trade secrets and confidential proprietary information of a company are **never** required to be disclosed and may be redacted from otherwise nonexempt records.

What are an elected official’s responsibilities during the recruitment process?

- Maintaining confidentiality throughout the recruitment process
- Maintaining confidentiality regarding the project even if your community has been eliminated from consideration
- Educating others involved about when discussion of a project is appropriate
- Waiting until after the project is announced to discuss details of a project within the parameters allowed by law.

Information for this article was provided by Karen Manning, chief legal counsel at the SC Department of Commerce. Presented to the SC Economic Developers Institute in August 2012.



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Calendar

For a complete listing of training opportunities, visit www.masc.sc to view the calendar.

SEPTEMBER

4 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Appalachian COG area, Simpsonville Activity and Senior Center.

5 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Pee Dee COG area, National Bean Market Museum, Lake City.

11 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Catawba COG area, Veterans Memorial Lodge, Union

11-13 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute. Clarion Hotel Downtown, Columbia. Topics include forms of government, business license administration and the role of the municipal clerk.

12 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Lower Savannah COG area, Depot Community Center, Holly Hill

12 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting/Exhibitor Showcase. Columbia Conference Center.

18 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Lowcountry COG area, Colleton County Library, Walterboro

18-20 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting. The Westin Poinsett, Greenville. Topics include the Criminal Justice Information Services, IT disaster recovery and mobile device management.

19 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester COG area, Coliseum Club Room, North Charleston

19 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Municipal Economic Development and Forms of Municipal Government. Via Web stream. Councils of Governments' offices.

OCTOBER

9 SC Utility Billing Association Fall Meeting. DoubleTree Hotel Columbia.

10 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting. SC State Museum, Columbia. Topics include HUD's nationwide database on CDBG programs, community museums, branding and wayfinding.

11 Forum for SC city/town managers and administrators. Clarion Hotel Downtown, Columbia.

22-24 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Annual Meeting. Columbia Marriott. Topics include performance management, meeting minutes, state Department of Revenue services and reporting requirements for the state Ethics Commission.

23-25 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Annual Academy. Columbia Marriott. Topics include business license auditing, methods for identifying businesses that need a license and the state's economic forecast.