

Cities Mean **BUSINESS**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Business Friendly Cities

**Building relationships
between local government
and business**

You see a police car...



We see a police officer 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.

CITIES MEAN BUSINESS

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By Page Ivey



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Downtown Columbia.
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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

Contributing writers
Page Ivey,
Megan Sexton

Published by

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Letter from the **EDITOR**

As the recession gets further in the rear view mirror and our state's economic development efforts are really showing results, cities and towns are seeing positive outcomes from their work to make their communities a magnet for growth and prosperity.

In this issue of Cities Mean Business magazine, we take a look at how economic development is more than just recruiting new businesses. Learn what four cities and towns are doing to go above and beyond to attract and keep businesses – especially in their downtown districts. Often it's more than just providing the convenience of online bill payment or free parking downtown. It's a personal touch to help a business owner solve a problem or overcome a challenge that city regulations may pose. Learn what Columbia, Union, Bennettsville and North Charleston are doing to be more business-friendly.

With the focus these days on all things locally sourced, a new business sector in South Carolina is booming. Local craft breweries and food trucks are popping up all over the state. They have a positive impact on local economic growth as tourism generators, job creators and magnets for downtown districts. Read how city leaders in Greenwood, North Charleston and Rock Hill are working with these local entrepreneurs to ensure these new businesses – as well as existing traditional storefronts – have every opportunity to thrive.

Once they get people to their city, local leaders know it's important that both residents and visitors know how to get around. Creative and consistent wayfinding signage is more than just sticking a few signs in the ground. It's a deliberate part of a city's economic development strategy related to parking, business development, branding and tourism. Learn about how city leaders in Newberry, Travelers Rest and Camden use wayfinding signage in their economic development efforts.

All of these stories illustrate innovation, creativity and forward-thinking strategies cities and towns are using to grow and thrive.



Reba Hull Campbell

Reba Hull Campbell

rcampbell@masc.sc

Editor

Collaboration, joint marketing bring wins to S.C.

By Bobby Hitt



Bobby Hitt
S.C. Secretary
of Commerce

Globally renowned tennis star Venus Williams once said, “You can never get complacent because a loss is always around the corner.” As we move into a new year in South Carolina, these are important words to consider. Since 2011, we’ve enjoyed significant economic success in the Palmetto State, but it’s imperative that we continue our winning ways and bring more opportunities to the people of this great state.

Through a united effort bringing together the various selling agencies of the state, local governments, regional economic alliances and our private sector partners, our Team South Carolina has spread the word about what makes our state an ideal place for companies from around the world to do business. Collaborative efforts on mission trips, industry-specific trade shows, a statewide branding effort and joint marketing have continued to move the needle on business recruitment and have boosted our state’s global reputation.

This approach has led to record levels of investment in our state — big announcements by some of the world’s most respected brands and thousands of new jobs serving to

boost our economy. As we look down the road, it is with Team South Carolina fully engaged that we will post more wins here at home.

It’s my belief that everyone who wants a job should have the chance to obtain one. In South Carolina, we’ve made notable headway in this endeavor over the last five years, recruiting more than 80,000 new jobs to our state. And, as a result, our unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level since 2001.

Thanks to these recruitment efforts, we’ve seen South Carolina’s economy thrive. The Palmetto State has experienced five consecutive record years in export growth, leading the nation in the export of both automobiles and tires. We must continue to push forward, however.

As we all know, business doesn’t sit still. It’s constantly growing and evolving. Throughout this new year, I look forward to collaborating with public and private sector partners as we continue to work to meet the needs of our dynamic industries. ●

Bennettsville updated building facades at no cost to the property owners. Photos/Campbell Meek and Associates, Architects

Before



Business Friendly Cities

By Page Ivey

When Columbia restaurateur Kristian Niemi was planning his new Main Street location, Bourbon, he had to install a grease trap to meet environmental regulations.

“He was looking at a customized system, like \$50,000,” said Ryan Coleman, director of the city of Columbia’s economic development office. “Our wastewater guy looked at his usage, and we determined he didn’t need as big a system as he thought. He was looking at a system with a lot of extra bells and whistles that we didn’t require. We helped him come up with a solution that met the requirements and saved him more

than \$30,000. It took a little longer than he wanted, but in the end, the cost savings was worth it.”

It is that kind of business-friendly attitude that cities all across South Carolina are making part of their daily routines to make sure businesses not only comply with regulations, but are also able to achieve their goals.

Bret Gillis, a highway engineer with North Charleston civil engineering and architecture firm Stantec, said his company has worked on many projects, such as intersection and road improvements, that required quick action from the city of North Charleston engineering department.

“We’ve always had good positive interactions with them,” Gillis said. “They help us get things permitted and meet city requirements. Part of it is just the mindset of whoever you are working with, being responsive, having a mindset of working toward a solution — a bias toward action, we call it. That can go a long way.”

That bias toward action comes from the top down, said Ryan Johnson, spokesman for the City of North Charleston.

“Mayor Summey says the city is not successful unless business is successful,” Johnson said. “We focus on safety and quality of life issues, then we get out of their way.”



North Charleston expedited permitting to help Boeing's construction. Photo/Boeing

Johnson cites Boeing's final assembly building as his city's best example of this way of working with companies. The project was completed six months earlier than expected.

"Our part was ensuring that we weren't the reason they were held up," Johnson said. "We had a building inspector on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

The city did the same thing for a Sam's Club that was moving and needed its new location to be ready before the lease ran out on its old one.

"We made sure people were on call as needed," Johnson said.

And, it's not just the big projects. The city promises to complete inspections in the same day for requests made in the morning and before lunch the following day for requests made after noon.

But more than being responsive, Johnson said, is the mindset of helping businesses reach their goals while still working within the rules and regulations.

"Every issue isn't black and white," he said. "You have to use a little bit of common sense in interpreting the codes. It's the difference between being a public servant versus being a bureaucrat."

A city doesn't have to be a large one to have a business-friendly mindset at work.

The town of Bennettsville used a Department of Commerce grant seven years ago to redo 98 building facades at no cost to the property owners. For those grants, the city partnered with the Bennettsville Downtown Development Association, said executive director Ken Harmon.

The façade program was funded by a \$2 million grant, but Harmon says the payoff has been much greater.

"Most of our downtown buildings are more than 100 years old," said Harmon, who has been involved with the downtown development organization since it was created in 1986 and has been executive director since 1997. "When we did those 98 building facades, it turned our city around."

Harmon said the association and the city have worked together more and more over the years.

"The basic premise we operate under is that art of success is partnership and, very often, that means compromise," Harmon said.

And, often, that also means an understanding person on the other side of the counter.

"In business licenses, we are often seen as being 'on the opposite side' from business," said Fran Adcock, in the city's business license division and formerly a grant writer in the city's economic development office. "We work really hard to show businesses that we are on their side."

Adcock and her husband, in fact, are new business owners, opening a Hwy 55 Burger Shakes and Fries franchise.

"It gives me a different perspective," she said. "I have a lot of respect for small-business owners."

Adcock said she knows personally almost everyone she deals with through the business license department. Plus she knows from her own experience what business owners need.

"We try to steer them where they need to go, like the South Carolina Business One Stop to help set up tax papers," she said. "Sometimes you just need someone who knows how to navigate the system."

Cities themselves often need a little help in creating not only the atmosphere of co-operation, but also the rules and regulations that take into account what they want their city to look like as well as how to help businesses get started and be successful.

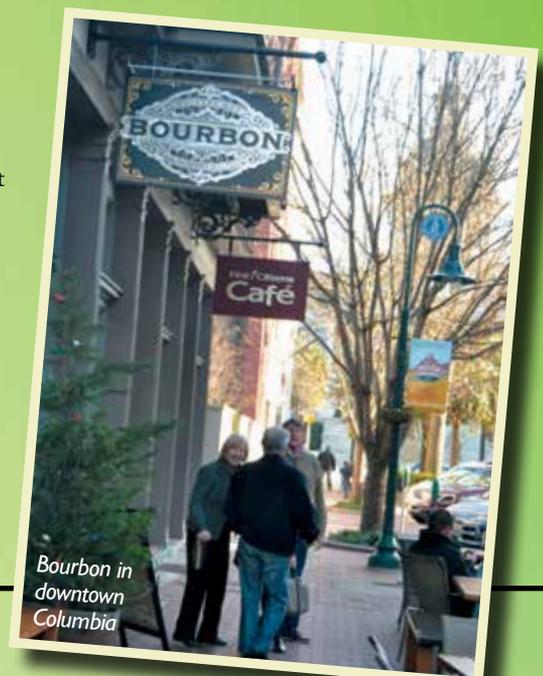
Bennettsville does that through the Main Street South Carolina program, which is a program of the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

The Main Street SC program offers consulting services, such as master plans or educational workshops for the business and property owners. It is targeted toward cities and towns of all sizes looking to re-energize their downtown districts.

Randy Wilson, an architect and consultant with the Main Street SC program, said cities that have the greatest success offer businesses some sort of reason to make changes.

When the city of Union created its façade master plan, Wilson said, officials got business owners to give the town an easement that allowed the city to make the improvements to the buildings so they would meet the new codes.

"If you don't have a carrot in addition to the stick, you end up creating an adversarial relationship," Wilson said. "You give the business added impetus and satisfy local regulations." ●





Brew AND Chew

Breweries, food trucks bring new vitality to cities

By Megan Sexton

When talking about downtown revitalization, craft beer or the popularity of food trucks, leaders of the city of Greenwood know it's all about timing.

In 2003, the city adopted a master plan aimed at creating an improved sense of place in Greenwood's center city, City Manager Charlie Barrineau said. At the time, the city was flooded with vacant office space in the downtown, with few residential units, a shuttered hotel, and a lackluster restaurant and nightlife scene.

In a little over a decade, the city council has invested more than \$20 million in the city center, with the fruits of that work really paying off now.

Part of the success came from people willing to take a huge risk and invest in parts of Uptown Greenwood targeted by the master plan for redevelopment. Those included entrepreneurs who — with the help of a small business loan and grants — bought a building on Maxell Avenue that opened in 2010 as the Mill House restaurant. It was so successful, the owners purchased the adjoining building in 2011 and expanded the Mill House in 2012.

This year, the Mill House opened Good Times Brewing. The owners began by pouring at the Mill House and now are permitted as a distributor. They distribute through Carolina Beverage Co. of Anderson and have the beer placed in numerous venues in Greenwood County.



Coast Brewing in North Charleston is one of several breweries that have made the city the craft beer capital of the state.

In October, the owners drove to Cincinnati to purchase an old milk truck they intend to turn into a “beer truck” for street festivals, events and advertising, Barrineau said. Good Times Brewery sits across the street from a city-built \$3 million market with an interactive water feature.

“People say, ‘There can’t be that many vegetables to sell at a market.’ But it’s more than that. It’s about a sense of place. It’s about creating an environment where people want to return to downtown,” Barrineau said.

The investments by the city and entrepreneurs have paid off in a big way. A hotel has just reopened downtown. Condominiums are set to open. And a clientele, including a large number of millennials, are finding their way to downtown Greenwood. With historic roots as a textile town, Greenwood is now home to service and professional employees, with the hospital being its largest employer.

“Millennials want to see trees, they want live music, craft beer, coffee,” Barrineau said. “It’s about a sense of place. It’s about creating an environment where people want to return downtown.”

Craft beer is becoming big business — and a big draw for tourists — all over South Carolina.

Before 2013, South Carolina had only eight breweries. But changes in the state’s beer laws cleared the way for those wanting to open. Since those changes, there has been a 200 percent increase in the number of breweries opening, said Brook Bristow, executive director of the S.C. Brewers Guild and a craft beverage industry lawyer in South Carolina, representing about 40 breweries, wineries and retailers.

Now, South Carolina is home to 27 breweries and 13 brew pubs. Last year, craft brewers in South Carolina produced 56,261 barrels of beer — more than 14 million pints. That translates to a large impact on tourism and economic development, Bristow said.

“Beer isn’t beer any longer,” Bristow said. “There is no longer a stigma attached to it, and our leaders shouldn’t believe in one. Beer means jobs and economic investment in communities. Breweries are quickly becoming the new town halls of America where people meet, talk, discuss issues, exchange ideas, and grow their communities. And what better way to do that than over a pint?”

Bristow said South Carolina is following the national trend in which breweries have become catalysts for the revitalization of neighborhoods and communities.

For example, a study by the Brewers Guild in the six months after the passage of the Pint Law in 2013 found that nearly \$14 million of new investment had come into the state, he said. An economic forecast by the guild showed that by 2019, South Carolina will have about 45 breweries that will have created about 700 jobs and an economic impact of well over \$325 million.

“Those numbers are about to be shattered with years to spare,” Bristow said. “Breweries are quickly becoming community anchors. ... Beer tourism is real and the places that are embracing it are really reaping the benefits.”

That’s what’s playing out in North Charleston, home to the most breweries in the state, with more in the planning and development stage. Ryan Johnson, public information officer for the city of North Charleston, believes brewery visitors make craft beer the No. 1 tourist attraction in the city.

Traditionally, city breweries have opened in industrial space. In the Charleston area, much of the affordable industrial space is located in North Charleston, where the first brewery opened in 2007.

“We soon came to know that they are assets to the community and are a significant



Food trucks like Charleston Caribbean Creole, left, bring excitement to communities. Good Times Brewing, above, is a new attraction in Greenwood.

contributor to the economy,” Johnson said. “It’s an industry that pays more taxes on the dollar than most others and an industry that has seen double digit growth for many, many years with no sign of a slowdown.”

The city’s zoning ordinance had always allowed alcohol manufacturing in light industrial areas. Recently, the regulations have changed to allow brewers to locate in the Commercial Redevelopment District, and now breweries are looking to locate in the Park Circle area.

“We wanted to bring these closer to the population centers, so people can walk, ride their bikes. Younger professional folks are drawn to craft beer more than older people, but it’s really a wide swath of people,” Johnson said.

While most of the growth in the craft beer industry is in the state’s major cities — Greenville, Charleston and Columbia — Bristow said cities on the next population tiers are starting to show growth, including Hilton Head/Bluffton, Rock Hill/Fort Mill, Greenwood and Spartanburg.

“I think if history nationwide is any indicator, then we should start seeing breweries pop up in our smaller metro areas in the near future. The smallest community that supports a brewery in the state is Travelers

Rest, with its population of 4,843. I think that very soon we’ll begin seeing growth in places like Newberry, Georgetown and Gaffney,” Bristow said.

For an example in the surge of food trucks, look at Rock Hill, where city leaders had expected the inaugural Food Truck Friday in Fountain Park last May to draw about 1,200 people. Between 3,000 and 4,000 showed up, catching organizers off guard and causing people to wait in long lines for food from the six or seven trucks, according to Cathy Murphy, Rock Hill’s downtown development manager.

The word spread quickly about the wonderful downtown site for the monthly food truck event, and it grew to more than 30 trucks on the third Friday of the months through October. The lineup of trucks offered a wide variety of international cuisines plus sliders, cheese steaks, pizza and gourmet items, along with craft beers. The event will start again in the spring, Murphy said.

“People loved to get together with friends for an inexpensive evening out. It became a great event people could walk to,” Murphy said. “The diversity of the crowd: young, old, all ethnicities. It was an awesome experience for our community.”

While there is no question that food trucks and craft breweries are exploding, that growth and popularity also raises questions about regulation and location.

For cities, it’s important to welcome the new types of businesses — and the customers that come along with them — while at the same time being attentive to the needs of traditional storefront business. Cities must consider policies for temporary businesses that cover zoning, permitting, fees and business licenses.

“It needs to be a careful balancing act so it’s not perceived by brick and mortar business as one is getting an advantage over the other,” said Eric Budds, deputy executive director of the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

Like many cities and towns, Greenwood adopted a food truck zoning amendment in 2014. The city now charges an annual permit of \$500, requires the trucks to park at least 750 feet from a permanent restaurant and makes sure the trucks don’t reduce parking spaces of an established restaurant or hamper traffic flow, among other regulations.

“The city council has to keep its finger on the pulse of the community to be sure it’s fair for everybody,” Barrineau said. ●



THE WAY TO GO

Wayfinding helps visitors find downtown businesses, enjoy attractions

By Megan Sexton

Newberry city officials knew they had plenty of parking for their downtown business district—they just needed to help visitors find it.

“We have more than 250 parking spots downtown, but if you’re not from the area you may not see the parking spaces, think there is no available parking and take your business elsewhere,” said Matt Dewitt, Newberry’s assistant city manager. “We wanted to say, ‘Hey, there’s plenty of parking downtown. Stop and shop.’”

And that’s exactly what wayfinding accomplished; that, and much more.

Wayfinding is getting increased attention in South Carolina’s cities and towns these days. In its simplest form, it is a way to help visitors and locals navigate a town without difficulty. It can be as basic as a few signs directing visitors to parking or as broad as a

part of a comprehensive citywide rebranding or beautification plan.

In Newberry, the wayfinding effort involved hiring an outside design consultant and holding community meetings to get suggestions and buy-in from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Dewitt said the city decided to start with the central business district, with about 100 signs in the downtown area. The signs were designed using the recognizable steeple of the Newberry Opera House. Newberry also added seven mall-style pedestrian kiosks to guide visitors to specific locations.

Dewitt stressed the importance of keeping the process open, through regular meetings and a partnership with the local newspaper, which kept readers informed about each step. Newberry also put out

sample signs to give people a real feel for what was coming.

When the installation was finished in summer 2014, the reaction from the community was “overwhelmingly positive. There was not one piece of negative feedback. I think that’s because of the job we did on the front end,” Dewitt said.

In Camden, wayfinding is part of a strategic tourism plan and branding initiative the city started about 18 months ago, said Wade Luther, the city’s economic development director. Wayfinding signage was one part of that overall plan.

“Wayfinding is a reflection of our brand and creates an experience for our visitors,” Luther said.

Camden has a wide variety of historical assets, and those tourism districts are reflected in the wayfinding signs. Visitors can take self-



Travelers Rest is using signs to help visitors find its new amphitheater and farmers market, at left. Above, Newberry has added pedestrian kiosks at various locations to guide visitors.

guided tours, whether their interest is Colonial history, the antebellum period, African-American sites or the history of the mill era.

“Each district has a distinct brand, logo, name, identity, brochure, information kiosk and a trailhead to gather and start the tour,” Luther said.

Camden started the development process last summer, finished the development phase in January and will begin placing signs in July. The first phase, paid for with about \$125,000 in hospitality tax revenues, includes four gateway signs, municipal parking signs, information kiosks and about 100 directional signs.

Luther expects all three phases of the re-branding campaign to cost about \$500,000. “The cost depends on how much you want to do. We are going high end, top of the line with a quality finish,” he said. The city will spread the project’s cost over two to three fiscal years.

Like Newberry, Camden worked with an outside consulting and design firm, sought buy-in from all the stakeholders and kept the

process public. “People bought into the new brand,” he said. “I feel the aesthetic quality of the signs contributes to our overall beautification efforts.”

In Travelers Rest, the addition of a new park with an amphitheater and farmers market pavilion coupled with the popular Swamp Rabbit Trail has brought more visitors to the Upstate town.

“We wanted to make sure that navigating around the city and to those particular points was as easy as possible,” said City Administrator Dianne Turner. “We also have free parking that is accessible to patrons of our many new downtown businesses. We wanted to guide drivers to the public parking areas as well. Additionally, we are surrounded by state and county parks. We use the brown color (like the park service) to point people to those areas of interest outside of the city.”

Travelers Rest’s wayfinding program was funded by Enhancement Grant Funds through the Federal Highway Administration. The project was administered by the S.C. Department of Transportation.

“We hear numerous compliments on the signs from an aesthetic standpoint as well as being useful in guiding visitors,” Turner said. “The signs use the same colors and format as our branding campaign, so they’re easily recognizable and specific to our community.”

In Mount Pleasant, town leaders are tackling wayfinding as part of the Coleman Boulevard Revitalization Plan. The large street project, which features drainage improvements and a beautification plan for the Coleman Boulevard corridor, is also aiming to build a downtown feeling in Mount Pleasant, said Katherine Hendricks, assistant town administrator.

“We want to make it pedestrian-friendly and let people know they’ve arrived in Mount Pleasant,” she said.

The wayfinding plan is in its initial stages, with proposed signs featuring a nautical feel, drawing inspiration from the town’s shrimping industry. Hendricks said she expects the wayfinding signs will debut in another year, when the extensive road project will be complete. ●

HOMETOWN SNAPSHOT



Photo/Campbell Meek and Associates, Architects

Downtown Bennettsville looks bright these days after using a Department of Commerce grant to redo its facades. "When we did those 98 building facades, it turned our city around," says Ken Harmon, executive director of the Downtown Development Association.

You see a street...



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

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