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Consultants unveil first phase of economic-development analysis

IslandPacket
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Published Thursday, September 29, 2011
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The study, which will be delivered to the Lowcountry Economic Alliance today, is the first of a three-phase analysis local leaders hope will create a framework for growth.

Staff from two consulting firms -- Avalanche Consulting of Austin, Texas, and McCallum Sweeney of Greenville -- unveiled the data Thursday during a conference call with alliance officials and community leaders.

Conversations centered around strengths, weaknesses and perceptions of the local economy.

Survey-takers gave the Lowcountry a C-minus for its economic performance over the past five years.

But Avalanche president Amy Holloway said Beaufort and Jasper counties are lagging the national average, at least in terms of employment.

The number of jobs in the two-county region dropped 2.6 percent between 2009 and 2010, and a full 10 percent since 2007, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Thirty-nine percent of respondents said job creation should be the highest priority, and 72 percent support higher funding for economic-development initiatives.

Yet many were concerned that might mean smokestacks and urban sprawl.

"Some people in the community associate economic development with a deteriorating quality of life," Holloway said. "And that's just not the case."

OTHER FINDINGS

Weaknesses highlighted by the study include the perception that public schools are underfunded and low-performing and concern over aging hotels, cumbersome local regulations and inconsistent development standards.

But the consultants said opportunity looms large, particularly because of the Lowcountry's location in what they called an "aerospace corridor" and between two major ports, Savannah and Charleston.

"You guys are kind of right in their path from both directions -- a great place to be in," said Ed McCallum,

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senior principal of McCallum Sweeney.

Consultants expect to finish a report on which industry niches the Lowcountry should target by late October.

Final recommendations and marketing plans are expected in January.

Kim Statler of Lowcountry Consulting, which was hired to oversee the study, said she is encouraged by many of the results.

"We're finally to the point where we're putting some structure around what exactly we need to do moving forward," Statler said. "We have seen such a great interest in our region, but we are missing some critical pieces to translate those prospects into job creation."

The alliance, primarily funded by the state, has said the study will cost about \$116,900, with \$25,000 of that coming from a grant from a group that includes the state's electric power industry.

Beaufort County Council's economic development task force unveiled a separate study earlier this week.

Follow reporter Kyle Peterson at twitter.com/EyeOnBeaufortCo.

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Sardonic

I wonder why we have property that is zoned industrial. The industrial zones have been subjected to the very same rules & regs as the residential. Oh wait. That must be what they are talking about when they say CUMBERSOME RULES AND REGULATIONS.

I AM BOEING. I AM NOT COMING TO BEAUFORT COUNTY, BECAUSE I WILL HAVE TO PUT A ROSE GARDEN ON TWENTY OF MY THIRTY ACRES TO SATISFY THE JAMAICAN.

09/30/2011 09:11 PM [Report Abuse](#)

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MsFlo

This is a scam.....The main reason jobs are not available from 2005 and on is because 100,000 or more illegal aliens and thier children invaded South Carolina and businesses hired them which in turn american citizens lost thier jobs to employers who did not pay workmans compensation, business taxes or unemployment by dulling out cash to the workers. We never before had day labor sites and the south americans who are here illegally did what ever they wanted breaking our laws, but the town leaders including mayors did nothing about it so it spread like cockroaches. I agree with a person here who stated we need an entire overhaul in our town officials, they are one of the main reasons for the unemployment here in S.C. I watch the town meetings on tv and I am here to tell you folks it is a joke. Question? Why is former mayor Tom Peebles at these meetings speaking for them are we still paying this man who brought the majority of illegals to hilton head to work for his building business? And when are the new mayors going to do something about the illegals here still working here?

09/30/2011 10:16 AM [1 Like](#) [Report Abuse](#)

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MadMax

I believe we've talked this thing to death.....So...\$116,000.00 minus \$25,000.00...

Sign up for the daily deal email

\$91,000.00... Wow what a deal for the Taxpayer...

Hah ha ha. Let's set this to music with lyrics....."A fool and their money".....or maybe

"Sad ..so Sad...It's a sad sad Situation"

(I hope when you vote.....you send the bums that OK'ed this "Pork-Package".... packin'....)

09/30/2011 10:05 AM Report Abuse

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JAM61

The major problem is with our local leaders. They insist on a form of government that hamstrings companies with unconstitutional "business license" taxes and endless regulatory hurdles like citizen "commissions" for approval of any project.

Either something is allowed or it isn't and the government staff can make that determination with any appeals going to the Town or County councils. There is no reason to wait for weeks or months for a panel of NIMBYs to make up additional hurdles on the spot.

And the illegal "business license" tax is just plain mafia type greed by our Town and County Managers...they know it is illegal, but they figure it is more expensive to fight it than to just pay them off, in the mean time, they are surprised that companies don't want to move here and submit to their extortion.

If you want economic development, then fire the idiots running the local governments.

09/30/2011 08:42 AM 7 Likes Report Abuse

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Overalls

"But the consultants said opportunity looms large, particularly because of the Lowcountry's location in what they called an "aerospace corridor" and between two major ports, Savannah and Charleston."

You would think so.. but it's not true. I came down here eight years ago for the exact reason quoted above. There is something missing here, some important component of economic development. I think it can be fixed, but something in the fundamental structure needs to change.

09/30/2011 07:48 AM 1 Like Report Abuse

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riffthrobber

One thing sure remains constant.
O! Kimmie Statler flappin' her jaws....
and takin' the checks.

"Kim Statler of Lowcountry Consulting, which was hired to oversee the study, said she is encouraged by many of the results."

Yeah, me too. Especially page 29 of the report.
It says 71.6% of responders are OPPOSED to further funding of this nonsense.
Hey Kimmie, make a note of it.

What a scam. Wish I'd thought of it.

09/30/2011 07:09 AM 4 Likes Report Abuse

Like Reply



cockyman

I offer consultive advice that will not cost anything. Run Kim Statler out of town. She represents a total void in economic development success and has been after close to ten years still continued selling snake oil to the dummies who continue to use are limited talents to no avail. What a waste. The folks that hire her are clueless and she is taken us long enough. Fire her.

09/30/2011 01:53 PM in reply to riffthrobber 2 Likes Report Abuse

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riffthrobber

Sorry cockyman, I can't fire her , or she'd have been gone when she tried to con the county taxpayers into buying her Hwy. 21 stumphole.
Contact your County Councilman, they keep cutting the checks.

09/30/2011 05:20 PM in reply to cockyman Report Abuse Like Reply



Kyle Peterson (IP/BG)

Riff: The consultants said they accidentally flip-flopped those numbers on their presentation slides.

In reality, 71.6 percent of responders supported further funding for economic development, as the story states.

09/30/2011 08:51 AM in reply to riffthrobber Report Abuse Like Reply



riffthrobber

Thank you Kyle, but hogwash.

09/30/2011 11:24 AM in reply to Kyle Peterson (IP/BG) 1 Like Report Abuse Like Reply

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