

December 2007 Economic / Community Development Update

The Oglethorpe County Chamber of Commerce continues its focus on Community / Economic Development. Highlights during the second half of 2007 include:

Technology

Following a series of discussions on Media Applications which would enhance productivity in the business/governmental/educational and personal sectors of the county, the TechSmart Team invited county non-profit organizations to work with the team, County School System, and Oglethorpe ECHO to design a demonstration project, the "Oglethorpe AGORA", which will utilize local technology talent and students to provide basic digital media functionality in the form of an online meeting and market place. This AGORA will lay the foundation for more advanced applications. For example, the paper can use the agora to sell prints from digital photos of community events, which in turn will provide the basis for live and recorded streaming video of happenings. The schools will put class content on the agora as a step toward online virtual classrooms. The chamber will use the agora for its committees to communicate and collaborate and for members to do e-commerce and e-marketing, and eventually for publishing multimedia content. Each of these applications promises to make the partners more efficient and boost participation in and support for their operations, but they also will provide models and a platform for other community enterprises. Once the project is completed, the team will develop a Request for Information from various public and private vendors and request BRIDGE Program Asset Acquisition funding from the OneGeorgia Authority along with matching support from private and local sources for the actual implementation of our recently revised Community Technology Roadmap.

Tourism/Agritourism

Members of the Chamber have participated in workshops on developing strategies to support Creative Economies and Agritourism, which both focus on Georgia Grown and Made goods and services. By example, the Chamber is a founding member of the Arts Development Council of Georgia, which during 2007, has expanded its scope statewide and welcomed new members from across the state as well as the home base in Northeast Georgia. The ACDG has developed workshops which help artisans to develop business plans and establish rational pricing and distribution of their products and services.

Further information:

Cary Fordyce
706-743-3113

Oglethorpe County has expanded its presence in the Classic South regional tour brochure and is working with other sponsors to reissue the Heritage Art Loop and Heartland of the Confederacy tour pamphlets.

Workforce Development

Our Work Ready Community Certification effort is off to a good start. In partnership with the Board of Commissioners, Athens Tech and Oglethorpe County Schools, we have established a local testing site and trained our own proctor. Twenty high school seniors and six Chamber members have completed the testing and certification. Working with the Jobs for Georgia Graduates program and the Oglethorpe County High School administration, we hope to certify the 2008 graduating class. A group of county's largest employers will invite their employees to test and gain certification in early 2008.

Innovation Crescent Life sciences Region

Oglethorpe County is working with other communities (extending from the Athens area to Cobb County) to establish this Human and Agricultural Life sciences Workforce/Business Region. Our objective is to highlight the current workforce and Life sciences asset base to potential businesses, investors and government programs. A working group expects to roll-out this program in early 2008

Quality Growth Team Visit

The county hosted a Quality Growth Resource Team, from the Department of Community Affairs, which analyzed what we can and should do to encourage smart growth and development in the county's Employment Center. After spending a week in the county late in September, the team is developing a set of recommendations which will be published early in 2008 for action by citizen teams on a broad range of topics critical to the future growth of the county.

Entrepreneurial Friendly Designation

After two years of work, the County received this designation in recognition of our efforts to foster existing small businesses and encourage new businesses. The Chamber is developing a budget for establishing ongoing efforts in this area to be funded with monies from the *OneGeorgia Authority* and local matching funding.

Depot/Park Improvements

We have received final approval from Georgia DOT for our plan to rehabilitate the Depot and Park. Additionally, the Chamber received a favorable opinion from the Oglethorpe County Superior Court on our claim to title of the Depot and Park. Based on these actions, the Chamber will complete detail design work and proceed to bid the project during 2008.

/-----/

Work on all of these activities will continue during 2008, and we encourage you to join the efforts! Further information is available from Cary Fordyce at the Chamber Office, 706-743-3113, foxtrote@sprynet.com or www.countycommerce.org .