

A vibrant street scene in a downtown area. The image shows a sidewalk lined with trees on the left and a row of shops with colorful awnings (yellow, blue, red) on the right. A storefront with a large window is visible, displaying clothing and a sign that says "Ruffled Down South". A mailbox with the number "153" is also visible. The overall atmosphere is bright and lively.

Cities Mean **BUSINESS**

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ISSUE 2 | 2016

Creative ideas for downtowns

Innovative plans for growth

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 Reba Hull Campbell

Cover Photo: Hartsville has launched a StartUp Hartsville program to help businesses open downtown.



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Letter from the **EDITOR**



Reba Hull Campbell
*Editor and Deputy
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It's always exciting to celebrate what's going on in our state's cities and towns, and new approaches to economic development give us great reason to celebrate. This issue of Cities Mean Business highlights several creative approaches to economic development that cities are using to attract new businesses, residents and tourists.

Economic development can no longer be about the old "if we build it, they will come" philosophy. Read about how city leaders in Hartsville, Anderson and Greenwood are proving that innovative ideas can spur economic growth.

Ample and diverse recreational opportunities in cities and towns help increase residents' quality of life. But it's not just the playgrounds and ballfields that fill this need. Learn about how Greenville, Walterboro and Charleston have invested in passive parks that offer residents and visitors green space and access to natural resources right in their own back yard.

Trails are another outdoor amenity that make good business sense as well as support healthy lifestyles. Find out about how cities and towns of all sizes around the state are connecting to each other by strategically using trails that foster economic growth and help create community.

Placemaking is a term we hear more and more in economic development circles. It means bringing people together around a community's unique spaces that enhance the human experience. Get insight from state and national experts about the importance of placemaking as a way to engage people and encourage economic growth.

In each issue, we feature a guest columnist who brings a business perspective to our pages. Ted Pitts, president and CEO of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, spotlights the business community's focus on building great places for South Carolinians to live and work.

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Editor

Building a business-friendly South Carolina can start with our cities

By Ted Pitts



Ted Pitts

President and CEO,
South Carolina
Chamber of Commerce

Local government leaders often ask me what they can do to get more businesses to locate in their municipality. The answer is simple: provide services efficiently and let the market do its work. In South Carolina, we are fortunate to have many great local leaders who have been committed to creating an environment of limited government interference so our businesses can grow and create jobs.

Our cities, in many cases, are a big part of the reason why South Carolina continues to see industry and job growth. As a state overall, however, we have work to be done in three areas in particular.

Infrastructure: Having the right infrastructure is a key component to growth and that is why it is one of the State Chamber's most important Competitiveness Agenda items. Proper planning for infrastructure is a critical role we see local leaders helping with when it comes to economic development.

Our businesses need reliable roads, bridges, water, sewer and telecommunications infrastructure to operate efficiently.

We see action now being taken at the state level and want to work with our local leaders to continue the calls to improve our state's infrastructure.

Taxes: Businesses don't mind paying taxes, but in order to grow, they require a fair tax system that is easy to comply with and understand. That is why the work being done on standardizing the business licensing process in South Carolina is so important.

Right now, nearly 230 municipalities and eight counties impose a business license tax. That means a company could be required to pay for 28 municipal

business licenses and complete 28 sets of paperwork to operate in the Charleston area alone.

This kind of policy discourages business growth instead of encouraging it. This is why the State Chamber has been committed to working with municipalities to streamline the application process and standardize the tax structures. Businesses and local governments must continue to work together to standardize a system that makes it easier for local governments to administer and for businesses to comply with.

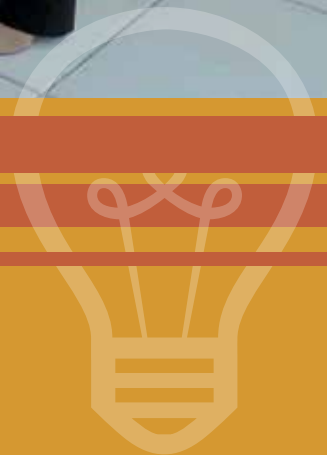
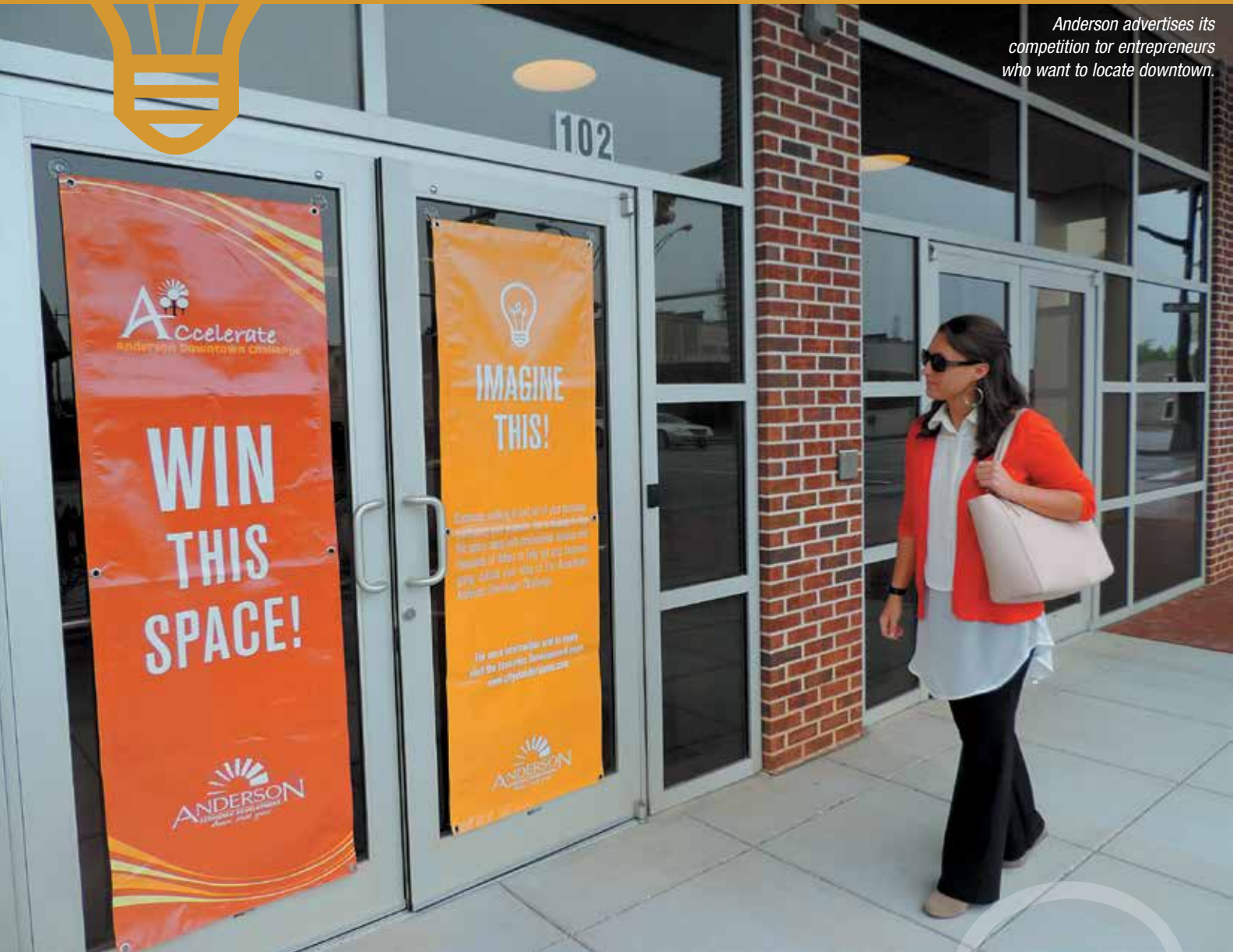
Workforce: As I travel around the state and talk with business leaders, I ask CEOs what worries them the most about the future of their company. No matter what industry, they all say the same thing: workforce. They are concerned about having enough trained, capable and dependable workers to do the job.

I would encourage cities and counties to work together to become a Certified Work Ready Community. This program demonstrates to businesses a commitment from community leaders on workforce. Cities and the quality of life they help provide are a key part of keeping and recruiting the workforce of tomorrow. While education and training are key, don't underestimate how important the quality of life a community provides for workers and their families is to recruiting and retaining skilled workers.

Building a South Carolina that is the best place in the world to work and live starts with our cities. By supporting and enacting business-friendly initiatives, cities can bolster local economies and foster an environment that drives job creation and contributes to the prosperity of our state. ●



Anderson advertises its competition for entrepreneurs who want to locate downtown.



SPARKING CREATIVE IDEAS FOR DOWNTOWN GROWTH

By Reba Hull Campbell

The state's economy is bouncing back, and cities are getting creative in how they attract and support local businesses. It's no longer about just the old adage of "if we build it, they will come."

Anderson, Hartsville and Greenwood have taken imaginative approaches to reach the same goal of getting entrepreneurs interested in bringing unique businesses downtown. Leaders in all three of these cities agree that the city's role in economic development is defining and creating a business-friendly environment that will be a catalyst for economic growth both downtown and citywide.

Hartsville and Anderson have launched programs that give local entrepreneurs the chance at incentive reimbursements to help them get a business up and running.

"We want to make it easy for businesses to want to locate in downtown," said Hartsville's Main Street Manager Suzy Moyd.

Hartsville launched its StartUp Hartsville program that features a "Shark Tank"-type competition to help entrepreneurs open a downtown business. Last May, the program kicked off by awarding \$10,000 in rental assistance to two

businesses that were already planning to open downtown. The program also provides legal, marketing and accounting support to the winning businesses.

The owners presented their business plans to a panel of business leaders and economic development professionals. Selection was based on economic viability, solid business plans and the ability to open quickly. An entrepreneur opening a boutique featuring handmade accessories and another who owns a furniture boutique and wine/bourbon bar were the first winners of the contest.

Leaders in Anderson took a similar approach launching the Accelerate Anderson Downtown Business Challenge in 2015.

"The contest helps local entrepreneurs bring their business downtown," said Assistant City Manager David McCuen.

The Challenge awards winning recipients \$12,000 in incentive reimbursements that can be spent on lease or rent payments, up-fit, design and signage.

Using creative signage in vacant storefront windows, the city promoted the contest with banners that said "Win This Space" and "Picture This ... Winning \$12,000 to help get your business going." In its first year, the

Challenge awarded incentives to two businesses: a chocolate shop and a theater. The chocolate shop relocated from another part of town, and the theater opened in the Anderson County Arts Center.

The success of Greenwood's growing creative economy stems in large part from the 2003 Greenwood City Center Master Plan focused on developing the Emerald Triangle in Greenwood's City Center. The Emerald Triangle is a nine-acre block that creates an arts district and helps establish a "sense of place" for downtown, according to City Manager Charlie Barrineau.

Using the 2003 master plan as its guide, the city and its partners have focused largely on building the "destination" and letting the businesses follow, according to Barrineau. The Uptown Greenwood Development Corporation started a formalized marketing effort three years ago with targeted ads in regional quality of life magazines and a focused approach to social media.

The city has widely used a number of videos for social media targeted to sell the Uptown as a destination where new business can grow. ●



TRAILS BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES

By Megan Sexton

Hiking and biking trails do more than promote healthy lifestyles, improve quality of life and share the beauty and history of South Carolina's cities. They make good business sense, too.

Trails run through many of the state's cities and towns, often transforming the paths of abandoned railroad lines into opportunities to offer residents and visitors a chance to exercise, enjoy the outdoors and help the local economy.

"Cities and communities that embrace trails are considered places with a high quality of life," said Natalie Cappuccio Britt, executive director of the Palmetto Conservation Foundation. "Well-designed trail systems attract tourists, new businesses and revitalize small towns."

A good example is the Doodle Trail that runs between Pickens and Easley in Upstate South Carolina. It follows the route of the Pickens Railroad, nicknamed the

Doodle Line because it ran back and forth between the two towns during the height of the area's industrial period, similar to the movement of a doodle bug. Now, it's a multipurpose trail, uniting the two cities by foot or bicycle.

The cities of Easley and Pickens, along with the Rails to Trails program, worked together to create the trail. "In our plan for the city, we are looking for the highest quality of life possible," explained Lindsay Cunningham, public information officer and marketing coordinator with the City of Easley. "We had a strong recreation program, but we wanted something all ages could use and that was accessible. It's been everything we hoped it would be."

Community development, more than money-making, was the overarching plan for the Doodle Trail, Cunningham said. But along with being an example of a strong partnership between the two cities and a

source of civic pride for residents, the trail has brought some new commercial ventures. Two stores catering to walkers and bicyclists opened on each end of the trail in Easley and Pickens. In addition, the trail transformed some rundown areas, raising property values and spurring development, she said.

That's not unusual. Britt said multiple studies indicate that property values for homes and businesses near trails are greater—with increases ranging from 4 percent to 20 percent when compared to properties not along trails.

"That is not surprising given the results of a recent survey by the National Association of Realtors that cited walking and biking trails as the top amenity desired by homebuyers," she said.

Cunningham said Easley looked to the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville County to learn best practices for organizing and

regulating trails. The Swamp Rabbit, a 13.5-mile walking and bike trail that stretches from Travelers Rest to Greenville, has become one of the region's most popular attractions. It's also been credited with fostering economic development along its path, including a bike-friendly inn in Greenville and new restaurants and shops catering to cyclists and walkers in Travelers Rest.

In fact, a Furman University study of the economic impact of the Swamp Rabbit Trail showcased one business in Travelers Rest reporting that 75 percent of Saturday business is directly related to the trail, Britt said.

The largest trail in South Carolina, the Palmetto Trail, extends from the coast near Charleston to the mountains in the Upstate. When completed, it will cover more than 500 miles for hikers and bicyclists. Last summer, the City of Walhalla celebrated a new partnership with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to extend the trail into its downtown.

Mayor Danny Edwards believes the addition of the Palmetto Trail will offer an economic boost to Walhalla. He said downtown businesses, including a group of investors planning a new boutique hotel, are very supportive of the trail coming to the city.

"It will bring a new group to our city that normally goes to northeast Georgia, western North Carolina or other biking and hiking communities in the Southeast," Edwards said.

"We know the Swamp Rabbit Trail has brought over a half million riders to Travelers Rest in the last couple of years. We may never have those numbers, but what if we did?"

"Our restaurants and other businesses would be overflowing with customers."

He said the partnership with the Foundation started with a casual conversation between Foundation board members and the president of Walhalla Partners for Progress. The city, the Walhalla Chamber of Commerce and other leaders supported the idea from the beginning.



Saluda Mountains Passage is part of the statewide Palmetto Trail.

"We just can't wait to get started with the trail. You go to places like Bryson City, Brevard and now Travelers Rest and see what's happening, and think, 'Wow, we can do this.' Everyone is very excited about our future," Edwards said.

The Palmetto Trail also runs through the historic city of Eutawville in Orangeburg County, passing through areas that hold much history from the Revolutionary War, including the Battle of Eutawville Springs and downtown Eutawville.

Eutawville Councilmember Brandon Weatherford said plans now being discussed to beautify the trail's path through the town will offer a strong opportunity to show off its history and boost tourism. "When the trail receives this much needed face-lift, people will want to visit our village and see the history. This will help our businesses in town," Weatherford said.

The North Augusta Greenway (spelled that way as a nod to former Mayor Thomas Greene, credited with helping develop the city's trail) is a more than seven-mile paved recreational trail that also follows the route of an abandoned railroad right-of-way the city purchased in 1988. The trail has grown over the years and now meanders through

the city and many of its neighborhoods, with public access at three locations.

"We have counters out there that show numbers as high as 60,000 people use the Greenway each month," City Administrator Todd Glover said. "People are coming to our city from all over. And when they leave the Greenway, they stop at restaurants and eat, they fill up with gas, they go to the grocery store."

Right now, no businesses are located adjacent to the Greenway, but that may be changing. Glover said the city is working on a Greenway connector, an urban spur that will turn the existing alleyway system downtown into an extension of the Greenway walking trail. The portion will connect churches, schools and business in the downtown district.

North Augusta has applied for grant funding to get the first three phases of the spur started. Because the alleyways are already set up for pedestrian traffic, Glover anticipates an easy conversion to the trail.

He explained that potential new businesses looking to move to downtown always ask about traffic counts. "If I can tell them there will be 60,000 people a month on foot? That will get their attention." ●

GREAT PLACES START WITH PEOPLE COMING TOGETHER

By
Amy Edgar

For two months last winter, residents gathered at Charleston’s St. Julian Devine Community Center on Monday nights and knitted colorful squares that would eventually be pieced together into a giant, 40-foot flag. In February, the group hung their work on the old brick Cigar Factory behind the community center as a way to draw attention to the center and its programs.

The “Love Bomb” is part of an effort by local nonprofit Enough Pie to catalyze community engagement through creativity, according to Executive Director Cathryn Zommer. Enough Pie uses partnerships, artistic collaborations and placemaking to inspire inclusivity and community involvement in Charleston’s Upper Peninsula.

“You can ignite a Main Street with placemaking,” Zommer said. “It’s a great way to revitalize underutilized places.”

Placemaking is the concept of helping people to create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. An



St. Julian Devine Community Center officially “love bombed” (with knitted yarn) in Charleston.

effective placemaking process centers on community-based participation, and then focuses on that community’s assets, inspiration and potential to create quality public spaces that contribute to people’s health, happiness and well-being, according to the Project for Public Spaces.

Too often, cities have been designed around cars. Placemaking focuses on the importance of the human experience—

walkable areas, lively neighborhoods and inviting public spaces.

Certain cities around the country seem to be a magnet for talented young professionals. It’s not because of their taxes or regulations but, very simply, because of their “place,” according to Dan Gilmartin, executive director and CEO of the Michigan Municipal League, and a national leader in the field of placemaking. These cities are the

kinds of places that attract a young, well-educated, talented workforce.

Gilmartin said these young professionals are looking for 21st century communities that put a focus on 1) physical design and walkability, 2) green initiatives, 3) cultural economic development, 4) entrepreneurship, 5) multiculturalism, 6) technology, 7) transit and 8) education.

“If I’m a city leader, I need to understand what people are looking for,” Gilmartin said. “You’ve got to provide it or go forward at your own peril.”

Placemaking starts with an inclusive, bottom-up approach, often driven by individuals who want to make a change or impact on their community. The city then needs to create the platform for that change to occur, Gilmartin said. Historic districts, for example, are often created when one entrepreneur or a group decides to come in and make changes. The city would need to facilitate those changes to spur economic growth.

Civic engagement is an important piece of placemaking. Elected officials need to realize that they need to engage people in different ways. Gilmartin said there are many people who want to be involved in civic life, but they’re not going to meetings at city hall.

“You’ve got to meet people where they are, get out of your comfort zone,” Gilmartin said. “There are so many ways to get hold of folks and get them engaged in the community, but you cannot go through the same old channels.”

Placemaking should be the result of a holistic approach to community design, according to Randy Wilson, president of Community Design Solutions and frequent resource team member for Main Street South Carolina.

Placemaking efforts should be authentic to a place, Wilson said. For instance, a com-



Sumter ‘parklet’ brings outdoor dining downtown. (Photo/The Sumter Item)

munity cannot simply import something done by another town. Rather, city leaders should look at what other towns do and consider how to shape those ideas to meet their community’s own unique needs and features.

Not everything has to be expensive; sometimes a simple approach is better. Wilson said he worked with the city of Pascagoula, Miss. The city was struggling to address its issues with a small urban core consisting of a Main Street only two to three blocks long. Overpriced buildings made it hard for business owners to buy or rent property.

The town repurposed Mississippi cottages — emergency housing put in place after Hurricane Katrina — into a small business incubator section downtown. The addition of the cottages extended the Main Street area and provided affordable rentals for small startup businesses, Wilson said. The cottages were arranged around a boardwalk and town green. The area has evolved into a festival and event location, he added.

Effective placemaking is complemented by regular programming, Wilson said. It’s not enough to create a place, there also needs to be a plan in place about what will go in it, he said. Variety also is important. Some public space might find use as a dog park, another as a gathering spot for festivals. Public input is key in determining the needs and desires of the community. Through the collaborative process city leaders can shape public spaces to maximize shared value.

The city of Sumter allows a local restaurant access to two parking places on Main Street through a signed license agreement. The restaurant built a “parklet” to allow outdoor dining.

“It has been wildly successful for them, and it’s also great to have folks eating and hanging out on the outside. This is an option that we have extended to all restaurants located on a city-owned street with guidelines approved by city council,” said Howie Owens, downtown manager in Sumter. ●

Falls Park/Photo:
City of Greenville



PARKS MAKE THEIR MARK

By Amy Edgar

Parks serve numerous purposes in a community, including connecting people with nature, providing social gathering spots, helping the environment and offering health benefits from physical activity. While active parks such as playgrounds and ball fields may offer the most obvious physical benefits, passive parks, with their benches, trails or greenspace, also play an important role in the community's well-being.

In Greenville, Falls Park is the picturesque epicenter of the downtown and provides an oasis for a variety of users. The park plays a prominent role in Greenville's quality of life by providing a welcoming space where downtown employees, visitors and local residents gather to work, play, picnic, read a book or just sit quietly to enjoy the natural beauty in one of its gardens.

"Falls Park has set the standard for future public space by providing a seamless alignment between architecture, art and nature," said Dale Westermeier, deputy director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Greenville. "Additionally, it has served as a model for future park development by providing a guiding principal for public and private partnerships. The Carolina Foothills Garden Club, Furman University, corporations and individuals all played a role by providing an endowment, property, sponsorships and other enhancements."

Falls Park hosts a wide array of activities and events, including Shakespeare in the Park, Artisphere, the Reedy River Duck Derby, the Chautauqua festival and numerous concerts and gatherings. The park has generated more than \$100 million in

economic development— with projects including residential, office, retail, hotels, restaurants and mixed-use development.

This has revitalized Greenville's West End, Westermeier said. The park's development transformed a once desolate and neglected space into an urban oasis complete with gardens and visually stunning waterfalls and vistas, he said.

Greenville realized the beauty of its natural resources—the Reedy River and falls—had the potential to draw visitors and play a role in economic development, said Jim Headley, executive director of the S.C. Recreation and Parks Association.

"Every single community across the state has its own Falls Park," Headley said. "They all have something unique in their own back yard."



Charleston's Park
Angels/Photo:
Charleston Parks
Conservancy

For the residents of Walterboro, their back yard contains a 600-acre unspoiled preserve containing four miles of boardwalks, and hiking, biking and nature trails. This habitat for more than 80 species of birds and other abundant wildlife is protected by the Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary. It hosts nature tours, fundraisers and 5K runs, among other activities. Its strategic location near I-95 also makes it an inviting destination for vacationers looking for family-friendly entertainment, said Walterboro City Manager Jeff Molinari.

“Drawing an estimated 150,000 visitors to the area each year, the Sanctuary serves as a major economic force for Walterboro, creating a demand for expanded tourism amenities such as high-quality hotels, restaurants and shops,” he said.

The city’s park system helps promote a healthy environment for residents and visitors alike, Molinari said.

“Parks greatly enhance the quality of life in Walterboro by providing opportunities for exercise and social interaction, and helping to revitalize neighborhoods,” he said. “City parks also play an important role in beautification, which creates a welcoming environment for visitors.”

Work began in Charleston in 2007 to increase the quality, awareness and usage of the city’s parks and greenspaces with the founding of the Charleston Parks Conservancy. Businesswoman and philanthropist Darla Moore founded the group, which works closely with the City of Charleston Parks Department and an active group of volunteers.

“The impact has been incredible by bringing citizens back to their parks,” said Jason Kronsberg, deputy director of parks for the City of Charleston. “This re-engagement has resulted in elevated level of park beautification and park maintenance by giving people a renewed sense of pride and ownership in their parks.”

Individuals dubbed “park angels” and “aqua angels” volunteer in the parks, working with and learning from the conservancy’s horticulturalist. This learning also takes place in one of the three existing community gardens that the Conservancy operates in city parks, Kronsberg said.

Charleston has more than 120 parks and athletic complexes spanning the peninsula to the neighborhoods of West Ashley, Johns Island and Daniel Island. Parks in the his-

toric district provide visitors with an activity to pass the time between tours or before dinner. The city’s waterfront parks offer visitors and residents a place to take in the view, catch a cool breeze or go fishing.

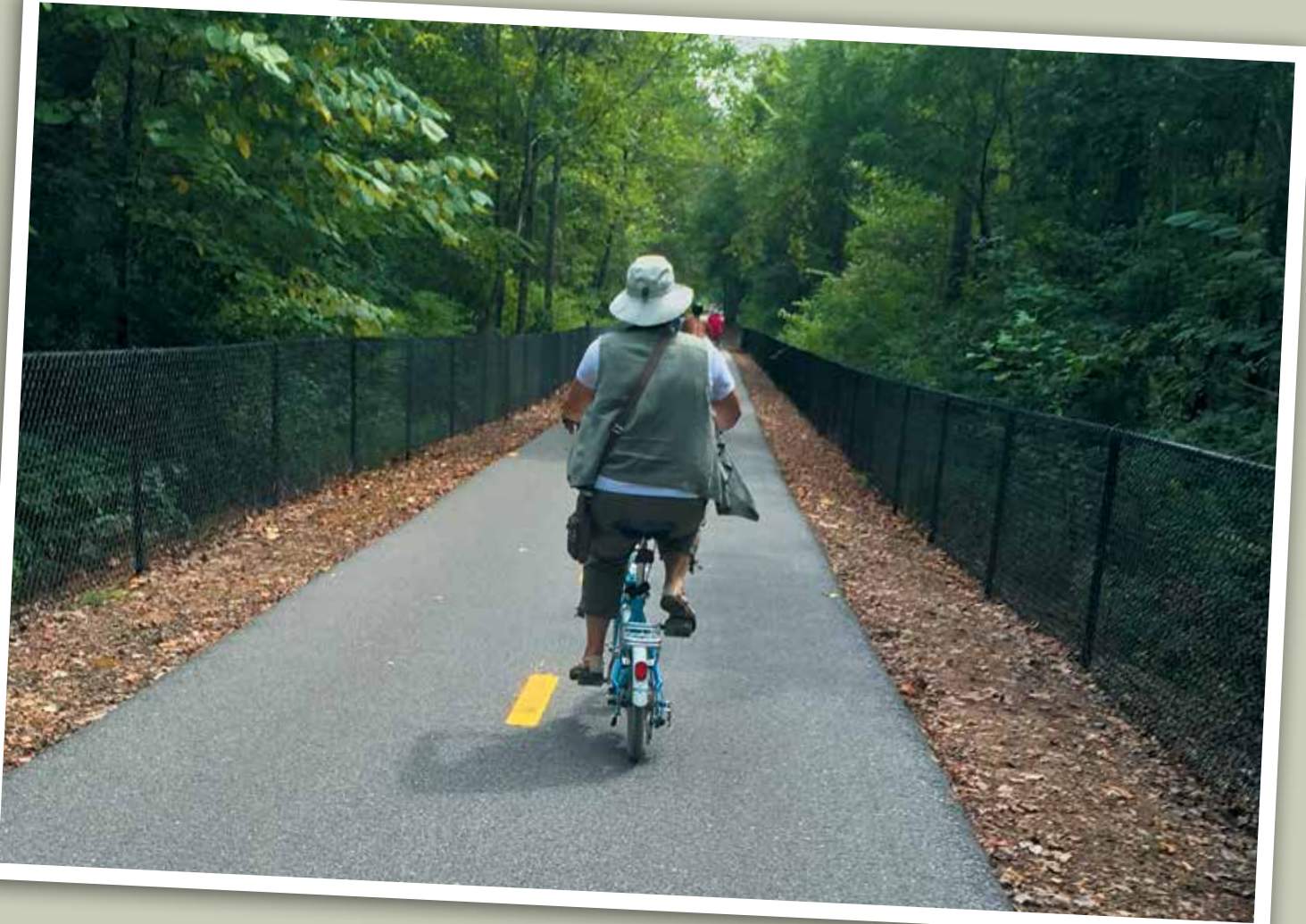
“The value of parks and open space is immeasurable based on the enjoyment provided for the people and the benefits to the environment,” Kronsberg concluded.

Those environmental benefits are plentiful. Parks provide a habitat for birds and animals. They can filter stormwater before it enters the drainage system. A mature tree canopy provided by parks can cool the hot surfaces of rooftops, concrete roads and parking lots in a city, reducing the urban heat island effect. Trees in parks also can help improve air quality by reducing pollutants caused by traffic and other sources.

Studies have shown that the property values are higher—as much as 20 percent—for homes located near passive parks. Many people are willing to pay more for a house located near a park.

With the many benefits—environmental, economic and health—“cities really have a responsibility to invest in parks,” Headley said. ●

HOMETOWN SNAPSHOT



Photo/Reba Hull Campbell

The Swamp Rabbit Trail connecting Greenville and Travelers Rest is popular for hiking and biking and has also led to economic development along the way. Communities across South Carolina have taken notice and are working to replicate the experience.

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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