



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort Commerce Park earns ‘Palmetto Site’ recognition by SC Commerce Department

Beaufort’s 161-acre Commerce Park near Marine Corps Air Station earned recognition as a “Palmetto Site” and gains exposure to companies seeking to relocate.

Through a partnership with the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, the City of Beaufort completed the application and data submission during the summer. A report from the S.C. Department of Commerce’s consultants outlines the Beaufort Commerce Park’s strengths, weaknesses and challenges.

“This state-level program accomplishes two things for us,” said Stephen Murray, the Beaufort City Councilman who spearheaded Beaufort’s participation in the project.

“First, it helps identify areas where we can improve the marketability of the Beaufort Commerce Park. Just as important, it provides our Commerce Park’s data and specifications to the State Commerce Department so they have updated information for when they meet with industries,” he said.

The Beaufort Commerce Park can be used to satisfy the needs of companies looking to relocate to Northern Beaufort County. It offers the City and the County great economic development opportunities to attract new industry, especially to firms interested in the coastal Lowcountry lifestyle.

“We owe a big thanks to Jason Ruhf and the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce for helping put together our application,” Murray said. “It was a team effort and we hope it will produce results across northern Beaufort County as we grow our economy.”

The Palmetto Sites Program emphasizes the importance of the data-gathering step in site selection to make properties more competitive for projects. Participants answer extensive questions and provide details that explain the property’s availability, zoning, developability,

transportation, and utilities, said Sarah White, a senior consultant with McCallum Sweeney Consulting in Greenville. The firm worked with the S.C. Department of Commerce to review, catalog and recognize qualified commerce parks across South Carolina.

In the Palmetto Sites Program, the properties are graded against mock criteria that are based on McCallum Sweeney's siting experience. The firm then analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the property and gives recommendations for further improving the property's readiness for development.

The Beaufort Commerce Park earned high marks for:

- Zoning
- Mostly high ground, in a FEMA Flood Zone C
- Direct access to U.S. Highway 21, which leads to both US Highway 17 and I-95
- Infrastructure already in place at the park, including roads, water/sewer, electrical, natural gas and communications
- Beaufort County's overall job growth compared to South Carolina
- The county's high school graduation rate and bachelor degree attainment, which are higher than the state and nation's
- Quality of lifestyle, including water access and nearness to the Atlanta Ocean beaches.

Challenges listed included:

- No master development plan currently in place for the Beaufort Commerce Park
- No rail service
- Multiple wetlands on the property
- No traffic signal from the site onto U.S. 21.

"We are working with the Redevelopment Commission on several ways to build and expand our economy," Beaufort City Manager Bill Prokop said. "The more we can share information about opportunities here in Beaufort, the better."

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