

## Economic Development

In today's global economy, one of the most important characteristics a community can claim is diversity. The time when agriculture, manufacturing, or even technology alone could sustain the local economy is fading away. In Kershaw County, we are exceptionally fortunate that our natural resources, small towns, schools, farms, industries, and small businesses all contribute to the economic diversity that allows us to enjoy a high quality of life.

For a long time, Kershaw County has been primarily rural in character. Nevertheless, change is certain, and we are living through a period of transition to a more urbanized lifestyle. In order to accommodate this transformation in the best way possible, our efforts must be directed toward positioning this county to take advantage of the opportunities we are given. Thus we will ensure that future generations will enjoy a quality of life as good or better than our own.

That means that we must recognize how I-20 will continue to bring growth to the area, as industries look for new locations and as more workers seek homes away from large cities. Rather than merely serve as a bedroom community for other cities, or to provide jobs for those who live elsewhere, we must seek a balance that will encourage people to choose Kershaw County as an ideal place to live and work.

In setting such a goal, one of our biggest challenges will be to invest in the necessary infrastructure – roads, water, sewer, telecommunications, etc. We are on the brink of good things coming to Kershaw County, and need to work in unison to achieve the goals we as a community have set for the future.

Of course, much of that future is tied to our past – history, natural resources, and family farms. These are key elements of the diversity we now have, and it is critical that we ensure that they are not compromised by new elements we add to the local economy. The future is bright in that regard.

In planning for future growth, we would be prudent to focus first on our existing infrastructure. Where water, sewer, and transportation services exist, we can make better use of our tax dollars by encouraging infill development. By taking this approach, we also promote the conservation and preservation of farmland, which in turn may lead to the development of alternative energy sources for sustainable growth.

Hand in hand with the preservation of farmland for cultivation, we must ensure that our equine industry continues to prosper and grow. Likewise, the tourism

trade – historical, ecological, cultural, and recreational – is far too important a part of our economy to overlook.

Current citizens and new residents also will want the convenience of shopping at home, without having to drive out of the county. Our economic development strategy must include a retail component. This should include supporting local entrepreneurs and recruiting existing businesses that contribute to the diversity to our retail mix.

In summary, I feel very encouraged about the economic development prospects of Kershaw County. We have a rich past, a dynamic present, and a bright future.

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