

\$1.5M spec building draws interest

Oconee County hopeful of making prospect's short list

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — On Father's Day two weeks ago, Jim Alexander must have felt like a proud daddy showing off his pride and joy.

Late at night that Sunday, Alexander, Oconee County's Economic Development director, accompanied someone interested in looking at the county's spanking new \$1.5 million speculative building.

"We have people interested," Alexander said Friday. "I think the key is having people looking because we have a shell building. I'm excited to have a product I can show."

It was a strange hour (10 p.m.) for someone to want to see a spec building.

Alexander said the prospective company's representative was on a tight schedule and wanted to look at the new building at the Oconee Commerce Center on Highway 11 before heading out of town.

"They were looking in six or seven states,"



PHOTO COURTESY OF OCONEE COUNTY

The almost \$1.5 million shell building Oconee has up for sale apparently shows well at night. Economic Development Director Jim Alexander said he recently showed the building to a prospective investor on a tight schedule at 10 p.m. one Sunday night. The investor left impressed and may return for another visit.

Alexander said, who's optimistic of making the firm's short list. "If we're on the short list, they'd come back in late July.

Neither Alexander, nor County Administrator Scott Moulder, would offer a hint of the firm's identity, or that of another party interested in the spec building.

Alexander said he did more listening than speaking during the late-

night visit to the building.

"The key is to listen to what they need and then build an answer to what those needs are," the veteran economic development official said.

Other than asking the obvious questions — How many jobs? How much investment? What future expansion plans? — Alexander said the key is listening.

This is the second spec

building that Alexander is marketing for Oconee.

Alexander always reminds everyone that Oconee "came out whole" in terms of direct costs for the first spec building.

He convinced Oconee County Council that the jobs, new taxes and fees generated by the first shell building justified building a second one.