Oconee ranked 27th in country

Top 'micropolitan' community in state

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Oconee County was recently recognized as one of the top "micropolitan" areas in the country, based on rankings of non-urban communities for the number of economic development projects in 2013.

The Seneca micropolitan community, which includes all of Oconee County, was ranked 27th out of 576 communities nationwide — and No. 1 of 13 micropolitan communities in South Carolina — by Site Selection Magazine. Orangeburg was ranked the second-highest South Carolina micropolitan at No. 70 nationally.

Micropolitan areas are identified as non-urban communities anchored by a town of no more than 50,000 people. Oconee's

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recognition is up from a ranking of 45th by the magazine in 2012.

Oconee County had six announced economic development projects bringing in a total investment of $48.5 million in 2013. Four of those qualified in the area for the recognition — BorgWarner, Ulbrich Precision Flat Wire, Sandvik Corporation and Greenfield Industries.

"We finished 27th out of 576; when you think of that, it's pretty impressive," Oconee Economic Alliance director Richard Blackwell said. "That kind of recognition helps us, because we get to say when we meet with corporate decision-makers and site consultants that this is a growing community.



Blackwell

It's not just us saying it. This is further evidence that this is a great place to live, work, play and invest."

Blackwell said the micropolitan ranking compares similar communities.

"This is comparing apples to apples," he said. "We can't compare Oconee to Greenville, because that's apples to bananas. When you compare us to the likes of Orangeburg, we outperformed them in 2013. We feel that's a good testament to our efforts, but we're not satisfied. We know we can do more, and that's what we're focused on. Our goal is to be a top 10 community in the entire nation."

Site Selection Magazine is an economic development magazine that delivers expansion planning information to thousands of corporate executives, facility planners and site selectors of rapidly growing firms across the nation.

"This speaks volumes for Oconee County and is something to celebrate," said Glenn Buddin, chairman of the Oconee Economic Alliance and chief executive officer and chief financial officer of Blue Ridge Bank. "Our economy is becoming more diverse, yet we must continue to do everything possible to keep our momentum towards creating more jobs and opportunities for the citizens of Oconee County."

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