Upstate Alliance calls for new strategy to bring in industy

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

PENDLETON — Upstate counties should zero-in on four target industries to attract business, a new Upstate Alliance marketing strategy shows.

Alliance officials rolled out Friday a study that was six months in the making. The new strategy would target cluster industries related to automotive, bioscience, energy and advanced materials.

By focusing on these areas, pooling resources and implementing new and effective marketing tools that could draw global attention to the Upstate, consultants who directed the study said the Upstate should easily triple the number of projects in the region from 40 to 120 by 2015.

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> U.S. congressman

Planning and economic development officials from each of the 10 counties served by the Alliance, including Oconee and Pickens, packed Tri-Count Technical College's Parker Auditorium for the study's unveiling.

Also present were busi-

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ness leaders from across the region, including top officials from Blue Ridge Electric, Duke Energy and BMW.

Republican U.S. Congressman Gresham Barrett, who is running to become South Carolina's next governor, briefly addressed the gathering of movers and shakers.

"To see a group of business leaders excited about the future, it gets me excited," Barrett said. "There is hope. There is a future. Collectively we can change this state and this nation."

Barrett said much could be accomplished by breaking barriers — "whether political barriers or county lines," he said.

Consultants Amy Holloway and Ed McCallum presented details of the new strategy. The two visited each of the 20 counties in the Alliance, took note of the industry already present and assessed the counties' strengths and weaknesses.

After involving more than 200 people in the process and gathering the information, the consultants forged the new strategy.

"The strategy takes the current Upstate strengths and builds on what we already have," Holloway said.

A Virginia transplant who now lives in the area, McCallum said the timing of the study, coming as it does after most economic experts have said the recession is over, could not be better.

"We're going to see things happen here," McCallum predicted. "It's a great time to do something."

Within each of the targeted industries the study also included a related cluster.

For instance, automotive includes diesel power train, boutique and specialty original equipment manufacturers, and automotive research & development

The Journal
SAT. Nov. 14th 2009

in fuel efficiency, batteries and plug-in hybrids; biosciences contains medical devices, biomaterials R&D, and clinical testing and outsources R&D; energy includes energy grid components, energy solutions, nuclear components, and clean energy such as wind and solar; while advanced materials would include metal fabrication, Optoelectronics and photonics and advanced textiles.

Among the tools recommended for marketing the region to attract these industries, the study recommends a supplier list and maps, a company database, a media database, a dedicated Web page and micro-sites, which are smaller Web pages similar in function to an interactive brochure.

The study also recommends the hiring of four full-time target industry managers and the creation of four target industry task forces.

It also calls for a 45 percent increase in the Upstate Alliance's budget to $2.5 million, which would put it in the ballpark with other regions' marketing budgets.

The study could not overemphasize the need to leverage the presence of Clemson University as a pitch to attracting new business to the area.

In a concluding pep talk, Upstate Alliance CEO Hal Johnson issued a call for support for the new marketing plan.

"We have to invest," Johnson said. "It's not a cost, it's an investment."

He too stressed the importance of Clemson University.

"Clemson is the dot connector to our strategy," Johnson said.

for new marketing strategy for businesses

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