

**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

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John Weaver
Mayor
City of Jasper

Mike Denson
Chairman
Economic
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Denise Duncan
Executive President
Chamber of Commerce

**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL**

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Pickens County

John Weaver
City of Jasper

Tom Lindsey
Pickens County
Development Authority

Mike Denson
City of Jasper
Development Authority

John Trammell
Private Sector
Representative

Bob West
Private Sector
Representative

Chuck Payne
Private Sector
Representative

Mike Setser
Private Sector
Representative



**Economic
Development Report**

First Quarter 2011

New Manufacturing Company Selects Pickens County



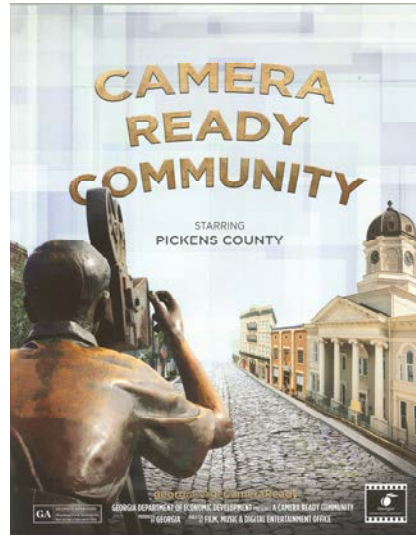
Vetrazzo Welcomed to Tate

Recruiting new industry to a community is a challenging process with a great amount of work occurring behind the scenes and for Pickens County, this effort has paid off with Polycor Georgia Marble selecting the Tate Plant for the home of it's recently acquired business- Vetrazzo. Under the Direction of Kourosh Fatemi, Vetrazzo manufactures an environmentally responsible product that is composed of 85 percent recycled glass. Its' uses include counter tops, tiles, and other surfaces.

During a ceremony on the Georgia Marble grounds, Francis Dairyman, President of Polycor thanked Community Economic Development Director Gerry Nechvatal for his work on the project. Commissioner Rob Jones as well as Norman Pope, Director of Public Relations for Pickens County, were recognized for their assistance and for their roles in the creation of the Marble Valley Sustainable Opportunity Zone, which was a requirement for bringing the company to Tate. Appreciation also goes to Wayne Reece and Associates for assistance in creating the Opportunity Zone in addition to their work as the Project Consultant for Polycor.

Congressman Tom Graves participated in the event and spoke of the importance of new industry. Deputy Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development Gretchen Corbin expressed her appreciation that a Georgia community was selected, and Sole Commissioner Rob Jones noted that generations of Pickens County family members, including his own, had worked at the facility and the addition of Vetrazzo would offer opportunity for many more. Vetrazzo Brand Manager Mary Warner closed the event by leading the attendees in a very appropriate commemorative "bottle tree" decorating activity which was immediately followed by a plant tour and a lunch.

Pickens County Designated a Camera Ready Community



ATLANTA (March 21, 2011)— Governor Nathan Deal and the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office, a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), designated 73 Georgia counties Camera Ready at the Georgia State Capitol today. The state’s Camera Ready Community Program was launched as part of the state’s ongoing efforts to bolster Georgia’s growing film and television industry.

“We have experienced a significant increase in jobs, investment, infrastructure and film induced tourism, making Georgia’s entertainment industries among the state’s fastest growing sectors,” said GDEcD commissioner Chris Cummiskey. “The statewide response has been tremendous from Georgia counties that want to become Camera Ready in order to help bring jobs and investments to their local communities.”

The initiative began on a clear chilly day when writer and columnist Alan Gibson, KnowPickens owner Mari Livsey, and Community Economic Development Director Gerry Nechvatal set out to identify and photograph interesting locations that could attract film opportunities to Pickens County. Ten locations were selected to begin the process of populating Reel Scout, an online tool for finding and promoting film locations, and the first step in recruiting entertainment industry productions.

“Being in the group of counties that participated early in the

program and responding quickly to inquiries has really paid off” states Nechvatal. “We have received several information requests just over the past few weeks resulting in one scouting visit by the Film Office and a possible scouting visit by a production company in May.”

Film production is not new to Pickens County with the Kevin Costner movie The War being made here in 1994, and many local residents recall being in the picture. The “old” water tower in Lee Newton Park was constructed for the film and presented to the community when production was completed.

Quality Products Create Growth Opportunities for Local Manufacturers

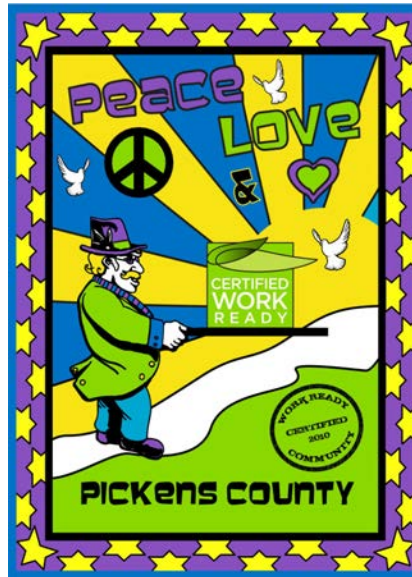
Despite an economy that remains very slow, many Pickens County and City of Jasper manufacturing companies report that business in 2010 was generally good and several have reported very strong sales in the first quarter of this year. Common factors contributing to the success appears to be quality products coupled with seeking new opportunities and finding ways to overcome obstacles that could limit growth.

According to Scott Hall, founder of DayStar Apparel, “The good news is that our sales revenues are up 18% for the first quarter over 2010. While this is really good news, it is tempered by the fact that cotton is over \$2.00 a pound, up from \$.60 pound a year ago, creating a major increase in our fabric prices. The cotton crisis is also creating a shortage in the fabric available in the market. It is hard to guess what will be the implications for the rest of 2011 from the high prices and scarcity of fabric. To top it off, we are anticipating a major increase in health insurance in July. DayStar is looking for ways to cut costs and find alternative fabric sources to survive until this cotton crisis is over.”

Scott Evans with Southern Fire Apparatus notes that “As for us, we are being very blessed right now. The changes we put into the organization the first of last year began to take root in August. We’ve had very, very good numbers ever since. Our first quarter this year was better than the whole year last year.”

A significant percentage of jobs in a community are created by existing businesses and manufacturing jobs typically offer attractive wages and benefits. The Economic Development Department at the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce supports business growth in numerous ways including business lead generation, networking opportunities, direct consultation, and industry specific information.

Pickens County Celebrates Receiving Certified Work Ready Community Designation



After being snowed out in December, the achievement of becoming a Certified Work Ready Community was celebrated at a ceremony that followed the January Chamber Breakfast and included colorful commemorative T-shirts for all in attendance. "This has been a real team effort" said Community Economic Development Director and Pickens County Work Ready Team Leader Gerry Nechvatal. "Without the vision of Chattahoochee Technical College President Dr. Sanford Chandler, Pickens County Sole Commissioner Rob Jones, City of Jasper Mayor John Weaver, Pickens County School Board Chairman John Trammel, Chamber of Commerce Executive Denise Duncan, and United Community Bank Business Development Officer Cassie Rasco, as well as the on-going support by the Economic Development Department at Chattahoochee Tech Appalachian Campus, we would not be celebrating this achievement today." Being a Certified Work Ready Community is vital to economic development because it tells a prospective company that they will be able to find qualified employees in Pickens County. This increases the competitiveness of our community and greatly enhances our new business recruitment efforts.

Keynote Speaker Fred McConnel, Deputy Director of External Affairs with the Governors Office of Workforce Development, spoke of the value that a Work Ready Certificate offers to individuals seeking jobs by having a document that validates skill levels which gives the applicant a competitive advantage. Employers benefit from the program by being able to find applicants with competencies that better match available positions. Another a component of the program offered through Chattahoochee Tech to Pickens County employers is Job Profiling, which is a method of identifying and documenting job requirements.

Tier Change is a Good News Bad News Story

When the Job Tax Credit Tiers were released for 2011, Pickens changed from a Tier 4 County to a Tier 3. From the perspective of Community Economic Development Director Gerry Nechvatal, this is both good and bad news. "This new ranking is actually more consistent with the overall economic condition of our community and it potentially helps job creation efforts because a lower number of new positions are required for a business to qualify for the credits and there is a higher dollar value per job. The downside is that the change indicates a reduction in the overall financial position of our residents."

In a Tier 3 County a business must create and maintain 15 new jobs in order to receive a credit of \$1,250 per job. The previous Tier 4 ranking required 25 new jobs and the credit was \$750. For comparison, a Tier 1 location enjoys a low 5 job threshold and a high credit of \$3,500. In counties such as Pickens that belong to a joint development authority, an additional \$500 per job credit is available at all Tiers.

Within an Opportunity Zone Tier 1 incentives are in effect so the creation of these zones enhances the ability of a community to attract new business. In Pickens County, the Marble Valley Sustainable Opportunity Zone was a key component in the successful recruitment of Vetrazzo and additional locations are being evaluated to see if the required criteria such as pervasive poverty within a Census Block Group is present.

Slow Recovery Takes Toll on New Opportunities Measures to Increase Competitiveness Considered

Although the official rate of economic growth in the US seems to fluctuate, there is little disagreement that improvement has been very slow and will likely remain slow for some time to come. This has resulted in a reduction of new business opportunities.

In order to increase competitiveness, actions such as the Development Authority taking a greater role in property acquisitions of a wider variety is under review. Transactions involving property suitable for industry has been the traditional focus of development authorities, but more and more are acquiring commercial properties to spur economic growth. In a recent segment on NBC Nightly News, Thomasville, Georgia was featured as an example of a community thriving in spite of the downturn and it was noted that the development authority routinely acquired and renovated downtown buildings that became vacant. A concern to this approach is that private investment will be crowded out of the market which could actually hamper growth in the long run. At this point no policy changes have been made at any authorities in Pickens County.

Upcoming Business Related Chamber Events

SPRING FIESTA MIXER

When: May 3, 2011 from 4:30-6:30pm

Where: Chamber Community Room

This is a quarterly networking event that offers all members a valuable opportunity to network with other members and with the public. We will run an ad in Pickens County Progress promoting the event. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served by Mexicali Joes. Also we have many door prize drawings throughout the event.

The Banner Program applies to this event. If you have not already arranged for your banner to be hung, call the Chamber to reserve your space.

There are 6 tables available for rent around the perimeter of the community room where you may display your products, services and any marketing materials. The tables are available on a first come, first served basis. The displays are an excellent way to share your product or service in a more personal way with the membership and the community. Tables go quickly, so make your reservations for a table now.

For more information, please contact the Chamber at 706-692-5600 or email karla@pickenschamber.com [<mailto:karla@pickenschamber.com>]

LUNCH and LEARN

ChamberMaster Partnership for Chamber Members

When: May 19, 2011 from 11:30-1:00pm

Where: Chamber Community Room

Cost: \$10.00 which includes your lunch

Pickens County Chamber of Commerce announced its' partnership with ChamberMaster over a year ago. ChamberMaster is the #1 provider of web-based software solutions for Chambers of Commerce.

New opportunities now exist for your business to attract new customers and share information with the community and the world.

You will learn about:

- Business Directory Listing
- Online Informational Brochure
- Job Postings
- Hot Deals
- Event Postings
- "Email to a friend" link

ChamberMaster is completely free to our members to utilize, so we hope you can take the time to learn how to take advantage of this benefit. There will be a 30 minute tutorial, followed by Question & Answer and one on one.

We encourage you to bring your laptops so that you can work with this program as you are learning about the many benefits it has to offer. If you don't have a laptop, don't worry we will have a hand out for you to take back to your business.

RSVP NOW [<mailto:karla@pickenschamber.com>] *if you RSVP and do not attend you will be billed.

For further information about this report or how to join the Chamber call Gerry Nechvatal at (706) 692-5600.