



### PROJECT AND SESSION SUMMARY

The Rudder Team for the Go-to-Market Columbia County Initiative guides the project’s inquiries, considers data and consultant recommendations, and imagines how potential and existing strengths of Columbia County may be combined to help the community compete. The two-hour, October 20 meeting at Lake Shore Hospital Administrative Complex, identified as Session 4 in the process focused on guiding principles for the economic development in Columbia County, value propositions of “Interstate” Communities, and preparations for a November 3 discussion with Enterprise Florida, Inc. (Florida’s privatized department of commerce). The Team discussed the best approaches to providing useful data on the Go-to-Market initiative in an upcoming Board of County Commissioner’s Workshop on economic development, and the Consultant Team agreed to provide a supporting workshop presentation, aligned with the work thus far.

The “Interstate” Communities review allowed the Team to focus on how other counties in the Sunbelt make commitments to customers, set out information about target industries and assets, and relate to other local, regional and state partners (if any). There were a number of examples of over-commitment, breakage in information links, and overlaps in roles. The use of messages about geographic location and access to multi-modal transportation infrastructure was more of a “table stake” (a starting point for a relationship with customers/site locators) than a distinguishing value. Cases where consistency existed in state and/or regional strategies and communications were of special interest. The early-stage regional efforts in North Central Florida (limited resources at this time) may require much more attention, discussion and alignment between the CCIDA and state level partners like Enterprise Florida, Inc. A lengthy conversation on the identity and scale of Columbia County’s region revealed interest in the central, regional activity center

value of Columbia County, the commuting patterns of residents in other counties, and the best representation of market dynamics of Central Florida.

A Working Draft of Guiding Principles for Planning were reviewed and met with general consensus. However, the principles of ENGAGING IN REGIONAL LEADERSHIP and MEASURING AND SUPPORT OF REGIONAL PROGRESS are especially important and challenging at this time.

The project timeline, featured on the first page of all Session Notes, has been extended to take advantage of state partners’ interest in sharing data and insights with the Team.

### SESSION AGENDA AND OBJECTIVES

#### WELCOME

Jim Poole - Executive Director  
Columbia County Industrial Development Authority

#### INTRODUCTIONS

Rudder Team, Experts, and Special Guests

#### BUSINESS OF THE DAY

Don Upton - President, Fairfield Index, Inc.

#### BREAKING NEWS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Upton and Team

#### SITE ASSESSMENTS - ROUND 2

Michael English, AICP - Principal-In-Charge,  
WilsonMiller  
Neale Stralow, ASLA, AICP - Project Manager,  
WilsonMiller

#### CONFIRMING THE SHAPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE COLUMBIA COUNTY “PORTFOLIO” OF SITES

Upton and Team

#### TARGET INDUSTRIES - ROUND 1

Poole, Upton and Team

#### NEXT STEPS AND NEXT AGENDA

Poole, Upton and Team

#### ADJOURN



**INSIGHTS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Drawing from prior Sessions, the Team was presented with a Working Draft of Guiding Principles for Planning. The document included:

- Balance immediate community needs with long-term business and employment opportunities*
- Focus on shared rather than personal agendas – Seek consensus*
- Find most promising opportunities for the community and its businesses focus*
- Ensure sustainability of precious springs resources is a priority*
- Ensure target industry and cluster alignment with schools and curriculum – Promote industry certification and Career Academies*
- Ensure close, working relationship with Lake City Community College*
- Let regional, state and federal partners know our aspirations and intentions – Seek counsel and share successes*
- Take actions that ensure Columbia County is viewed as a leader in economic development and customer service*
- Engage in regional leadership*
- Measure and support regional progress*
- With limited resources and high potential, all activities must be action and outcome-oriented*
- Commit to developing strategies to get the job done*
- Ensure the CCIDA exhibits excellence in customer service and promotion of community and civic collaboration*
- Ensure experts, consultants and industries are able to find and use clear, trustworthy, updated and motivational data about business and talent opportunities*

During Session 4, the Team returned to the subject of regional identity and collaboration a number of times, seeking some clarity on the makeup of Columbia County’s region. Team members with service areas or franchises for their own businesses (from higher education to banking and healthcare) shared market similarities and differences. Jim Poole set out the 14 county make-up of the vast North Central Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC), which includes Levy, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Suwannee, Columbia, Baker, Union, Bradford and Putnam Counties. Fairfield Index, the consulting team, noted the fundamental indicators of commuter patterns and industry clustering; and asked the Team consider how these factors make the region potentially interstate in nature.

“Interstate” Communities were qualified as Sunbelt counties that are similarly situated to Columbia County relative to the following characteristics: includes or are in proximity of major interstate crossroads; near or in close proximity to economic engines like ports, consumer markets, and manufacturing centers; and are likely to have decisions to make about economic growth driven by regional or state trends. The Communities could realistically compete for some or all of Columbia County’s target industries, but were likely to use their own assets and communications in different ways. As agreed on in prior Rudder Team meetings, the primary focus of the research would be on value propositions and collaboration. Population was not used as a primary qualifier, though the consultant team used a soft cap of 250,000 people and attempted to place Columbia County as close to the center of targets’ populations as possible so that the Rudder Team could view high-potential small/rural markets, emerging markets like Columbia County, and larger markets in or near large metropolitan areas. Session 4 included the following counties and basic demographics:

Community	Population Estimate 2008	Median Household Income 2007	High School Graduates (persons age 25+) 2000
Anderson County, SC	182,825	\$41,691	73.4%
Bibb County, GA	155,216	\$36,954	77.2%
Greensville County, VA	11,955	\$37,509	62.1%
Lauderdale County, MS	78,180	\$32,778	74.9%
Spartanburg County, SC	280,738	\$41,160	73.1%



Community	Population Estimate 2008	Median Household Income 2007	High School Graduates (persons age 25+) 2000
Tangipahoa Parish, LA	117,001	\$34,132	71.5%
Tuscaloosa, AL	179,448	\$41,543	78.8%
Wilson County, VA	77,527	\$38,500	69.4%
Columbia County, FL	69,092	\$40,422	74.7%

Session 5 will wrap up with the additional Georgia Counties of Glynn and Lowndes, which were requested by the Rudder Team.

When considering the targets, overall breakage and potential customer confusion resulted from the following:

- *The appearance of multiple point teams at the county or local level*
- *Actual multiple point teams at the county or local level*
- *Stale and poorly organized data and links on web pages*
- *Burden placed on customers to figure out players in economic development on their own*
- *Over-promising on seamless customer service*
- *Over-promising on assets, and questionable value propositions*

Overall strengths, “reputation-builders” and “customer satisfiers” included:

- *Connection with greater regional team and assets*
- *Sound collaboration with workforce developers and quick response training*
- *Close connection with state-level/Department of Commerce agenda and alignment of messages*
- *Understanding of targeted industry needs*

The Team considered other counties in the context of: collaboration among key, local organizations like school districts, workforce, local governments, and economic development organizations; relationships among local economic development organizations, region and state; preparedness for project leads and inquiries at multiple local, regional and state levels; and working in the absence

of a strong and/or aligned regional partner. Fairfield Index’s Preliminary Report provided the following summary:

Among the eight “Interstate Communities” considered within this scan, several notable concerns arose. Duplication of efforts is present in cases where multiple organizations are charged with economic development responsibilities or marketing roles, and where partnership linkage is not seamless. While these communities may espouse global competitiveness or claim a one-stop-shop advantage, this duplication renders damage to such claims and confuses employers’ (customers’) attempts to gain guidance and information. While many of the communities’ value propositions point to the importance of characteristics such as workforce, partner linkage is not evident; such absence, again, damages the intended assertion. In other cases, communities fail to leverage amplified marketing reach and power by not fostering regional or state-level alliances.

In every “Interstate” Community reviewed, proximity to transportation infrastructure appeared as a value. Based on this scan, Fairfield Index considers this trait a ground-level value. Those communities which successfully incorporate the quality into their marketing strategy have built an approach founded on seamless customer service pathways, efficient linkage to and among critical partners, and clear staging of a cadre of value propositions. *Go To Market Columbia County: Preliminary Report/Market Comparisons.*

Key observations from the Team included:

- Columbia County is somewhat wealthier than most “Interstate” Communities and is about the third highest in high school graduates. How do we position these items as strengths?
- Provide a future profile/comparison of Columbia County to add value to “Interstate” Communities document
- Having a clear point team or ombudsman for all local organizations and assets appears to be very important
- Customers should not be asked to figure out the local economic development system and relationships on their own – Centralize customer service while encouraging collaboration and shared successes



- Positioning and refreshing of critical data for potential customers and site consultants is an important step
- How do we confront the limitations of an important but young regional movement, and use limited resources to their fullest?
- What do we need to do to align with and gain support of Enterprise Florida?
- Geographic location, especially relative to transportation infrastructure and port(s), is the beginning of value-building and not the closer
- Great working relationships with workforce agencies appears to be the breakaway play for some “Interstate” Communities
- It appears to be important to know how potential customers and site consultants learn about, review critical data, and reach out to Columbia County, especially on the worldwide web – and we should respond
- Now that the portfolio is coming into focus, we should explore what “readiness” means for our sites, our service, and our community and regional partnerships
- Alignment, wherever possible, with leadership organizations at the state level is vital
- The overlapping relationships of our target industries

The Team was also provided with the North Central RACEC Target Industry Report of May 2007 (prepared for Enterprise Florida, prepared by Cambridge Systematics in association with Fairfield Index, Inc.) in anticipation of the November 3 Session with Enterprise Florida. It outlines target industries from a regional perspective, a pre-recessionary demographic and economic overview, and details on the value jobs role of the targets.

### REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

There were three new requests for information:

1. Provide “Interstate” Community assessment of Columbia County
2. Attempt to provide economic development budgets for “Interstate” Communities
3. Provide a presentation for the upcoming County Commission Workshop

### MILESTONE DECISIONS

The Team reached consensus on the DRAFT Guiding Principles, with the assumption that more could be added.

### NEXT STEPS - NEXT SESSION AGENDA

The next Session agenda will focus on Enterprise Florida, the RACEC *Catalyst* Site and state level collaboration. Wilson Miller will update the team on the final site assessment product, and Fairfield Index will provide an update “Interstate” Communities document.

### FOR STATUS, QUESTIONS, AND INPUT CONTACT:

**Jim Poole** - Executive Director, Columbia County IDA  
386.758.1033 | jim@ccflida.com

**Gina Reynolds** - Deputy Director, Columbia County IDA  
386.758.1033 | gina@ccflida.com

### **CONSULTANT TEAM**

#### Fairfield Index:

**Don Upton** - President  
813.490.3890 | Toll Free 877.490.3890  
dupton@fairfieldindex.com

**Teresa Barber** - Manager, Regional Strategies & Transformation  
813.767.5782 | Toll Free 877.490.3890  
tbarber@fairfieldindex.com

**Melody Swindle** - Business Illustrator & Design Consultant  
813.490.3890 | Toll Free 877.490.3890  
mswindle@fairfieldindex.com

#### WilsonMiller:

**Michael English**, AICP - Principal-In-Charge  
813.223.9500 | MichaelEnglish@wilsonmiller.com

**Neale Stralow**, ASLA, AICP - Project Manager  
813.223.9500 | NealeStralow@wilsonmiller.com