

NEWSPAPER COLUMN
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The Columbia County IDA Board and Staff would like to extend our wishes to everyone for a very Happy New Year. We all wish everyone a prosperous 2010, as we hope the economy continues to see steady improvements.

The year 2009 brought about significant changes for the IDA structure. For the past 27 years, the IDA and the Lake City-Columbia County Chamber have shared staff, office space and workload in a partnership that served the community well. In 2009, the IDA separated from the Chamber of Commerce and moved into a new office. This allows the IDA staff to focus entirely on economic growth and development in our community. Best wishes to Dennille Roberts-Folsom as she begins her position as the Executive Director of the Lake City-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has been an important partner to the IDA and its economic development efforts and we look forward to a continued strong working relationship for the future.

The Columbia County IDA cannot accomplish anything by itself. Any success lies in successful partnerships between the IDA, Columbia County, the State of Florida, City of Lake City, local organizations and most importantly strong community support. The IDA also partners with private companies like Plum Creek to promote strong economic growth for the future.

The Columbia County IDA has three major priorities for 2010:

1. Complete and implement the Go-To-Market Columbia County plan by March of 2010.
2. Work closely with Enterprise Florida, OTTED, Plum Creek, and Columbia County, the 14 counties making up the North Florida Economic Development Partnership and other involved agencies to develop the Catalyst Site designated for Columbia County. The location has been determined and we will soon begin steps to make the site ready for company locations.
3. Partner with Plum Creek, CSX Railroad, Columbia County and local and state agencies to develop the Inland Port location east of Lake City on U S 90. This 2,500 acre site has the potential to assist in job creation for Columbia County for years to come.

The IDA has worked with a Rudder Team to develop the Go-To-Market Plan for Columbia County. The team has looked at Columbia County as a whole for future development. It is important to point out that no one particular parcel has been reviewed but rather certain geographic areas as a whole were identified and reviewed for potential and possible timetable for development. The IDA Board and Board of County Commissioners for Columbia County will discuss the draft plan at a workshop meeting in February. Following that meeting and any after any adjustments are made, the plan will be implemented with time tables and goals for accomplishments. The IDA expresses our thanks to those that have served on the Rudder Team and to the County for the support in developing the plan.

The Catalyst Site and Inland Port concept will be in partnership with Plum Creek. The IDA Board recognizes that working with the private sector can bring greater opportunities for success. The IDA will look at other potential opportunities to work with the private sector to increase the potential for successful development of Columbia County in the future. The joint working relationship between public and private sectors eliminate duplication and demonstrate a strong commitment from the community to achieve planned success.

Your Columbia County IDA Board consists of Donna Brown, Suzanne Norris, Jeff Simmons, Marc Vann, Gus Rentz, and Carlton Jones. Your staff includes Jim Poole and Gina Reynolds. The phone number to reach them is 386-758-1033. Once again, Happy New Year.

Donna Brown
Chair, Columbia County IDA Board of Directors