

Colleton County Promise Zone Town Hall

USC Salkehatchie – Walterboro - July 15, 2015

Facilitator: Andy Brack | Attendees: 130 people

Q: What are Colleton County's strengths?

- Geography
- Historic resources
- Natural resources
- USC-Salkehatchie
- Airport
- Interstate 95
- Good people
- Infrastructure in place
- Diverse community
- Good leadership -- county and local
- City and county governments work together
- Eat Smart Move More in Colleton (a healthy living program)
- Solar energy via great sunshine
- Active civic organizations
- Agriculture
- Farmers market
- Kids
- 29 community gardens /farmers market
- Regional hospital
- Land availability
- Veterans Victory House
- Career Skills Center
- Library
- Engaged community willing to support education
- Aquaculture; oysters
- ACE Basin
- First Steps program in the county
- Four rivers and the ocean
- Tourism
- Arts programs for kids
- New high school facility
- Strong churches
- Entrepreneurial program at high school – Tech
- Commercial kitchen
- Artisan Center
- Leadership Colleton program

* reflects an addition from group notes provided after the meeting

- Lowcountry Area Health Education Center – new building – growing – serves 12 counties
- “Robust wood basket” – strong timber industry
- Local USDA office
- Senior living facility
- Recent passage of a penny sales tax for 13 projects worth \$30 million
- Great sites for industries
- Library outreach program
- Thunderbolt Career and Technology Center
- Great existing industrial companies

Q: What is your vision for Colleton County for 2035?

- Vibrant neighborhoods
- An active retirement community
- Balanced economy with more industry
- Lower taxes
- More college-educated adults in population
- Good early education – prenatal to 5 years old
- Primary care providers for all
- Being a hub for international trade and commerce
- Vibrant working waterfront creating jobs in the ACE Basin
- You should be able to buy all you need in Walterboro
- Entertainment – more recreation
- USC-Salkehatchie is a four-year college
- Healthier community – nutrition and exercise opportunities
- The School district that produces college- and career-ready graduates
- Adult education are plentiful after high school
- Smooth, paved roads
- There’s a branch library in Cottageville
- More research resources
- Less crime
- Beautiful, affordable housing at all sizes and levels
- Independent of electric grid – reliant on solar
- Technical education for credit
- Nice place to stay
- Better public transportation
- Greater access to Wi-Fi
- Public transportation to jobs and college
- Increased high school graduation rates
- No empty buildings; existing buildings look better
- Both local and national investments and businesses
- All power lines are buried underground

* reflects an addition from group notes provided after the meeting

Q: What would you do to grow jobs in Colleton County?

- Bring in companies through tax incentives
- Extend water and sewer capabilities
- Establish a Wetland Bank -- with site development closer to existing infrastructure
- Have an early education school
- Have better transportation
- Hire more local people
- Steal companies from Dorchester and Berkeley counties
- Embrace aerospace technology and grow this cluster
- Diversify companies
- Have completed 50,000sf to 100,000sf facilities that are ready for businesses to occupy
- Keep timber processing here
- Forestry-related education
- More youth apprenticeships
- Low interest rates for workers
- Incubators for small businesses
- More incentives for health care providers
- Investment in education technology – tech schools
- More tourism -- bring tourism-related dollars into the economy
- Improve and widen Interstate 95
- Decrease crime
- Waterfront development
- Have a ready and educated workforce
- Improve quality of life with more recreational opportunities and retail businesses
- Infrastructure and property available
- Improve education
- Incentives for people to move and stay here
- Keep existing industry
- Better organizations for people and families
- Focus on airport as asset
- * Legislation for Colleton County for companies to invest back in community
- * Promotion of telecommunications and power company infrastructure and assets
- * Find a niche
- * Improve image
- * Draw from aerospace industry
- * Promote diverse manufacturing/distribution
- * Develop technology infrastructure
- * Entrepreneur education
- * Incubator business opportunities
- * Better lighting at I-95 exits

* reflects an addition from group notes provided after the meeting

Q: What would you suggest to improve education in Colleton County?

- Improve state funding
- Smaller classroom sizes
- Better inspiration of kids
- More incentives to educators
- More libraries
- Greater access to technology, Wi-Fi
- Early education beginning at K3
- Move volunteers in classroom
- Mentorship of young mothers
- Increase parent involvement
- Increase affordable after-school care
- Vocational schools and transportation to
- Internships and apprenticeships at the high school level
- Expand USC-Salkehatchie to a four-year college
- Go back to the basics – make change
- Stop teaching to tests
- Motivate children and parents to create “culture of education”
- Increase the tax base so there’s more educational spending
- Teacher retention via better pay
- More Performance-based learning and skills
- More facility utilization in after-school hours
- Churches involved to stimulate activity
- Accessibility of schools for community activities
- Community centers – for after hours and summer
- * Increase county’s tax base
- * Improve wages
- * Technical college campus
- * Smaller classrooms

Q: What would you suggest to reduce crime in Colleton County?

- More parental involvement
- More family-friendly entertainment, restaurants
- Increase law enforcement capabilities, better training
- Enforce discipline in schools at lower levels
- Better representation from the solicitor’s office
- Grow jobs and improve education
- More youth programs like the YMCA, Big Brother
- More positive mentors
- Rehab programs for convicted felons – jobs, training

* reflects an addition from group notes provided after the meeting

- Reduce poverty and provide shelter for homeless
- Build more trust between communities and law enforcement
- * Educate youth about crime and consequences; prison visit
- * Jobs have to pay more than dealing drugs
- * Neighborhood watch
- * More officers
- * Not enough solicitors -- need more
- * More family-friendly entertainment

Q: What are some impediments or barriers to change in Colleton County?

- Good-old-boy system
- Need higher expectations for the next generations
- Better representation at the state level
- Poor use of programs that exist
- Lack of community involvement
- Lack of micro loans, student loans, etc.
- We don't define, understand or acknowledge poverty here
- There's a racial divide which is now an economic divide
- 30 percent of 3rd graders aren't reading at grade level
- We are not caring for senior citizens well
- Lack of high-speed IT infrastructure
- Low-paying jobs
- Lack of understanding why industry doesn't choose us
- Hesitant to use tax dollars for infrastructure investment

Q: If you had only one big Idea to make Colleton County better, what would it be?

- Invest and diversify in education to make kids college- and career-ready
- Pay teachers more for Colleton County
- Install IT infrastructure
- Pass a law that requires companies to re-invest profits in our counties
- Create and install Big Solar infrastructure
- Make sure all people can read, obey law, respect neighbors, be self-sufficient
- Mentoring programs
- Micro-loan programs
- Develop the Interstate 95 corridor
- Year-round, large recreation complex
- Rehabilitate existing housing and business building
- Increase water, sewer and power infrastructure in rural areas
- Develop eco-tourism
- Change perception of community about crime

- Encourage home-grown investments
- Incorporate the arts in all endeavors
- Have an information clearinghouse to have information available to people about various available programs in the area.
- Have a several-thousand-acre industrial park on Interstate 95 with full infrastructure for large projects
- Make sure the community takes advantage of the Promise Zone by pursuing federal grants that fund projects