
Director's Report – DRCI

May 2024

Entrepreneur Program Update

- STARTUP companies
 1. Hardee Greens
 2. ChangePoint
 3. Petitek
 4. ESA
 5. Pro Series Golf Irons
 6. OPFOB
 7. Dance Canape
 8. Part of the Family
- GROWTH
 1. Beachside Tire
 2. Bluffton Electric
 3. LaSource
 4. Delta Roofing
 5. Custom Audio Video
 6. Universal Bookkeeping
 7. Noble Hearts Human Resources

Key efforts in May

- Universal Bookkeeping is back at the DRCI as a GROWTH company
- Noble Hearts Human Resources started as a GROWTH company
- Diligence Meeting with potential STARTUP Program

Economic Development Update

Overview

Following the enactment of the Economic Development Ordinance, the DRCI is increasingly engaged in traditional economic development activities. Our current primary focus encompasses two critical elements:

1. The implementation of a comprehensive marketing strategy aimed at enhancing awareness of the EDO program. A meticulously crafted marketing plan has been developed, incorporating various activities designed to generate leads and facilitate communication. This plan includes targeted messaging, digital media initiatives, social media engagement, and other strategies to effectively disseminate information and streamline the application process for potential participants.
2. The ongoing development of the Buckwalter Place Project, situated near the LEC, is another key undertaking. DRCI is set to occupy a portion of Building A, and various aspects of this project are now entering a phase requiring detailed review and oversight.

In addition to these projects, we maintain regular interactions with Assistant Town Manager Chris Forster and the BCEDC. These meetings are instrumental in ensuring that all parties are consistently informed about emerging opportunities and collaborative endeavors that may benefit any or all of the involved organizations. Our goal is to foster a synergistic approach to economic development, leveraging the strengths and resources of each entity to maximize impact and efficiency.

Key efforts in May

- Launched the Economic Development Incentive Program website, found at www.blufftonbusiness.com.
- This site provides general information, news, and application details for prospective participants.
- The site will be accessible directly and through links on the DRCI and TOB websites.
- Engaged with an existing Bluffton company regarding a second location in the New Riverside area. Although the industry (automotive repair) is not among the target industries and thus did not qualify for the program, we offered support in locating appropriately zoned sites.
- Consulted with two veterinarian businesses regarding their eligibility. There is currently some uncertainty about whether veterinarians qualify for the incentive plan under the medical industry category. Clarification is needed promptly to provide accurate guidance to prospects.

Operations and Marketing

- Presented quarterly Town Council Update
- Presented DRCI to Councilwoman Burden
- April Board meeting
- Staff members attended Heritage on Friday and Saturday
- Held AI in Business lunch and learn classes for the greater Bluffton community
- Partnered with TCL to do an AI series starting in May
- Going to present AI series to NIOA/Government Committee Workshop. Debbie Szpanka is a member.
- OPFOB held their 3rd Annual Concert for the Heroes – about 3000 in attendance
- Several conference room rentals
- Working on developing a new program called THRIVE
- Working on developing a new program called EVOLVE
- Working on developing a new program called TRADEUP
- Hosted Professional Women’s Network at The HUB
- Attended Arbor Day celebration
- Attended TCL groundbreaking celebration
- Hosted 5th annual HHCA Shark Tank event
- Attend the Barnwell Chamber of Commerce event in which the women's business center was opened. Also, at this event met with other StimulateSC grant attendees as the Department of Commerce organize the meeting of recipients. When asked to give an update on our AI program the group was very enthusiastic about learning more and perhaps having the Don Ryan Center present to other groups throughout the region.
- Our AI series continues to generate interest and enhance the Don Ryan Center's reputation. One of our strategic goals is to establish the DRCI as a thought leader in artificial intelligence, and we are making significant progress. In addition to hosting events at TCL and an upcoming Beaufort Digital Corridor event, we've been invited to present for other organizations in the region. As technology evolves, we continually update our presentation series to remain current and relevant. Many in the business world are uncertain about how to approach AI from an executive perspective. Our goal is to clarify the basics and highlight productivity gains without delving into excessive pessimism, focusing instead on practical benefits for companies.

Mentor Program

- 70 Mentors

Partnerships

Hardeeville

- Planned AI Educational Series to start in June
- Working with City of Hardeeville on social media sites DRCI/HDV
- Annual paid partnership renewed

BlacQuity

- Graduation in June

Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation

- Working with them on multiple projects

Greater Bluffton Chamber

- Exhibitor at the Greater Bluffton Chamber Business Expo
- GBCC Membership 101 The Hub
- Attended multiple ribbon cuttings

Hilton Head – Bluffton Chamber

- Attended multiple ribbon cuttings and ground breakings