

A LOCAL DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE



SCAC • July 2026 • Rick Farmer, Director, Newberry County Economic Development

1

WHAT A DEVELOPER DOES

- Real Estate
- Planning and Land Use
- Economics
- Utilities
- Construction
- Finance
- Planning
- Education
- Marketing
- Law
- Psychology



A Good Developer is:

A Public Servant



2

WHAT MAKES A GOOD LOCAL DEVELOPER?

Lives what they sell.

Is Innovative but Grounded

Understands it's not a 9-to-5 profession.

Never stops selling, never stops learning.

Is Trusted, accessible, respected, and visible.



3

WHAT A DEVELOPER DOES NOT DO

- Hide
- Bad mouth his community - ever
- Make decisions that are not his... unless...
- Neglect or ruin good relationships
- Tear down; he builds

The WORST
THING a
Developer
Can Do

Break His
Word

4

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPUTATION

- Good reputation opens doors.
- Bad reputation arrives before you can open the door.



5

THREE WAYS TO LOSE A DEAL WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

1

Break
promises.

2

Bad-mouth
your existing
industries.

3

Fight each
other in
public.



6



THE MOST IMPORTANT SLIDE TODAY

- Economic development is a relationship business. Full stop.
- People invest where trust exists.
- People avoid places where drama exists.
- Relationship management is critical to success, especially in small communities

7



COUNCIL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The relationship between the Developer and the Council is often determined by the executive.
- Boards/Commissions can depoliticize decisions, but often create more bureaucracy and more politics.
- Council should fund, prepare and adopt a economic development strategic plan; then insist administration follow it.
- Elected officials change, but Economic Development strategy should be consistent ... until it's changed

8



WHO GETS THE VISIT?



COUNTY A:
DIVIDED,
REACTIVE,
DIFFICULT.



COUNTY B:
ALIGNED,
RESPONSIVE,
PREDICTABLE.

9

HOW COUNCIL CAN HELP



Hire qualified professionals.



Fund the work adequately.



Communicate frequently.



Follow the plan.



Eliminate bureaucracy.

- Economic Development **ONLY** happens when OPPORTUNITY meets PREPARATION.
- Preparation costs money, time and effort.
- If you don't invest, you don't compete, you don't win.
- Relationships compound over time.
- Trust is hard to build and easy to lose.



10

KEEP THE BUREAUCRACY IN CHECK

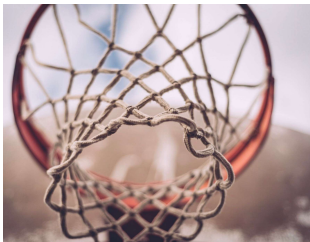
Enough process to protect the public.

Not so much process that opportunity leaves town.



11

FINAL THOUGHTS



- Economic development is a team sport.
- It's about public service
- Keep asking: Does this improve quality of life?

THANK YOU!

Rick Farmer
Newberry County Economic Development
(803) 321-2042
rfarmer@newberrycounty.gov



12
