A LOCAL DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE

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

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

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.

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

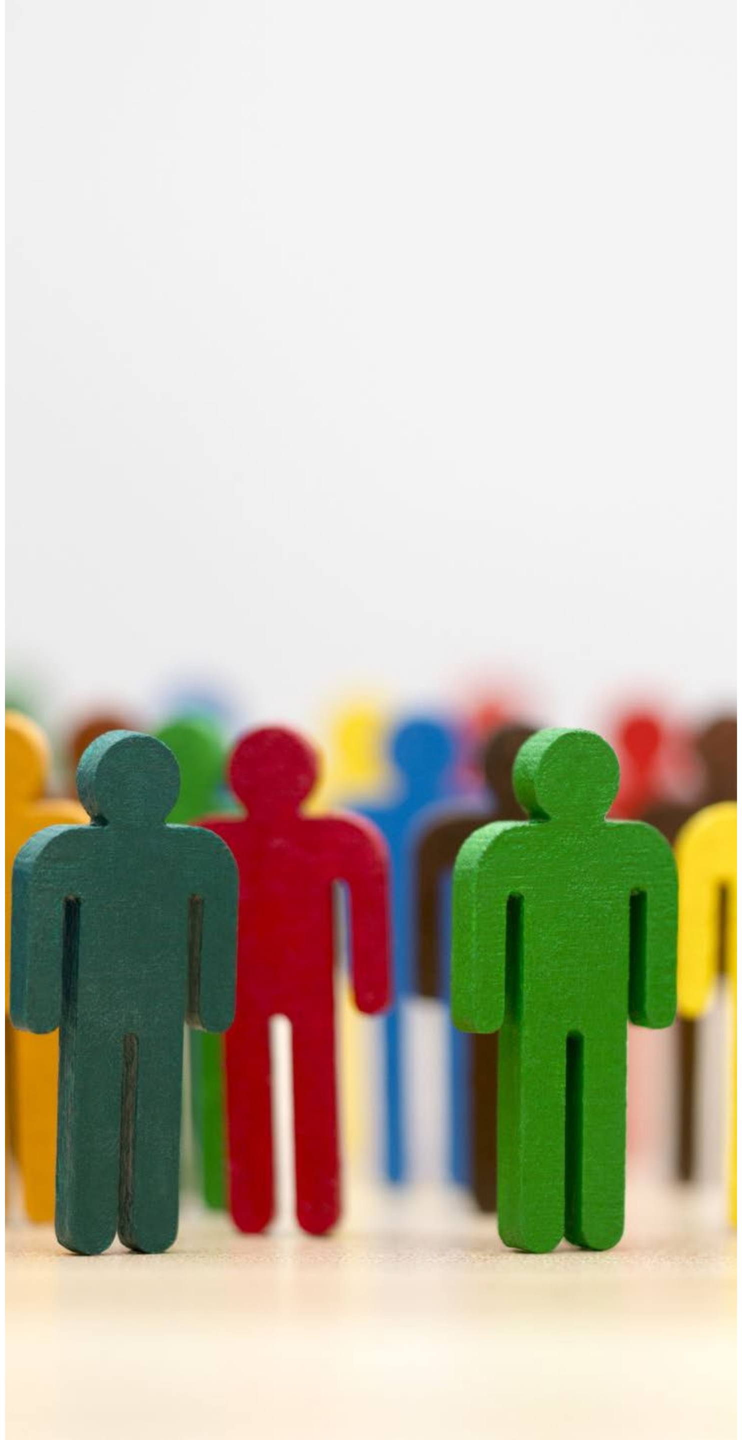
Break His Word

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPUTATION

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

THREE WAYS TO LOSE A DEAL WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

1. Break promises.
2. Bad-mouth your existing industries.
3. Fight each other in public.



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

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

WHO GETS THE VISIT?

COUNTY A:
DIVIDED,
REACTIVE,
DIFFICULT.

COUNTY B:
ALIGNED,
RESPONSIVE,
PREDICTABLE.

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.

KEEP THE BUREAUCRACY IN CHECK

Enough process to protect the public.

Not so much process that opportunity leaves town.

FINAL THOUGHTS

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

THANK YOU!

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