

# Daily Messenger

## Buxton excites local leaders

By Greg Oliver

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CLEMSON – As Buxton Company representative Chip Rodgers told Clemson City Council members about the things to look for in bringing potential businesses to the city, local business and government leaders seated in the audience looked on with interest.

“I think this study was an excellent idea,” Central Town Administrator Phillip Mishoe said afterwards. “Whatever Clemson does definitely affects the town of Central.”

Bobby Ballentine, chairman of the Central Area Business Council, agrees.

“The information published is not just for Clemson only – but also for Pendleton and Central,” Ballentine said. “We’re not isolated anymore.”

The Buxton study funded by the city through TIF money, consisted of three different marketing analyses for Clemson. In addition to retail, the study also included medical facilities and expanded convention meeting space.

Rodgers informed council members during his presentation that the medical facilities and convention and meeting space portions of the study were not yet completed.

City Council now faces the challenge of narrowing more than 200 potential businesses down to 20. Once that has taken place council will then submit the list to Buxton so they can begin the recruiting process.

Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce President Eddie Nail said he sees a lot of good things happening in the city, adding that the Buxton report is just one example.

“We went through a tough time economically at the beginning of the millennium, but we’ve turned the corner,” Nail said. “I thank the City Council for being such visionaries.”

Local business owner Ed Martin said he appreciates the city sharing its economic development vision for the future.

“It’s good to look into the future and choose what we want here,” Martin said.

Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy said the dream of bringing additional businesses to the city was discussed at the City Council retreat last spring.

“This is going to move us a step closer to seeing this dream become a reality,” Abernathy said. “There is a wonderful business community in this town and I see it getting better and people benefiting from it.”

The Mayor assured local business owners that the council’s first priority is ensuring that none of the potential businesses under consideration for Clemson would harm the local businesses that already exist.

“Locally-owned businesses come first,” Abernathy said. “We’re not going to go out and bring in something that would hurt

other locally-owned businesses because that wouldn’t make sense.”

But Abernathy said he is anxiously waiting to hear reports on the health care and conference center aspects of the Buxton study.

“I’ve generally made no secret that health care is a major, major issue,” he said. “I would like to see comprehensive and advanced medical service available to our older population. Most of us can drive to Highway 81 (where the AnMed Health Center is located) but a lot of our older folks can’t do that.

“We believe there is a very obvious niche for a conference center as well. The Madren Center sets the tone for us but that facility is virtually maxed out.”

Rogers said one of the biggest errors that communities often make is underselling their ability to attract potential businesses.

“It’s based on convenience (rather than simply size),” Rogers said.

Before pairing down the list, council members requested that Buxton group the listing of potential businesses into categories. Rogers said he would be happy to comply.

Rogers said The Buxton Company represents more than 1,200 clients and around 220 municipalities in determining how to best target retailers for their respective markets.