



**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

The Columbia Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, May 9, 2023 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Peter M. Brown, Chair called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Peter M. Brown	Chair	Present	
Will Brennan	Member	Present	
Aditi Bussells	Member	Remote	

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Economic Development Model and Opportunities - Mr. Jason Tompkins, Managing Partner / Asana Partners

Mr. Jason Tompkins, Managing Partner of Asana Partners said Asana Partners was founded in Columbia eight years ago and has since expanded to six offices across the country. We saw an opportunity in near-urban neighborhoods to aggregate institutional capital and bring in expertise to renovate buildings, bring interesting tenants into neighborhoods, and drive economic activity. We have a portfolio of almost \$7 billion in assets in 26 cities. We invested in 65 neighborhoods across those cities. Asana Partners seeks to invest in neighborhoods that resemble areas like the Vista or Five Points, which are active and vibrant. The strategy involves identifying owners in targeted neighborhoods and acquiring critical mass to improve buildings and enhance the overall neighborhood atmosphere. By curating a desirable ground floor tenant mix, we attract both young residents and businesses seeking attractive locations for their employees.

There was a discussion about the importance of effectively marketing the community, activating the riverfront, and creating vibrant areas that cater to the preferences of young people.

Mayor Rickenmann highlighted the need for new towers and adaptive reuse of existing buildings to address the shortage of Class A space. Incentives such as tax credits were considered to attract investments.

The committee explored strategies for economic development in Columbia, with a focus on revitalizing neighborhoods, attracting young professionals, and fostering collaboration between the private sector, municipalities, and institutions like the University of South Carolina.



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2. Central SC Alliance Fiscal Year 2022-23 Contract - Mr. Ryan Coleman, Director of Economic Development

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Director of Economic Development introduced Grace Salter, the new business recruiter for the Office of Economic Development. He explained that the current contract with Central SC Alliance covers the period of July 1 to June 30 of the current year in the amount of \$72,000. He acknowledged the obligation to fulfill the current contract but emphasized the need to reevaluate future contracts and the strategic plan.

Councilor Brown suggested that future contracts align with the city's economic development goals.

Councilor Brennan added that they should meet with the economic development partners to understand how they fit into the city's future plans.

Dr. Bussells suggested focusing on the specific skill set that partners like the Central SC Alliance have to offer and potentially investing in components that the city may not have the capacity for, such as research or marketing. Columbia often gets lost in regional efforts. I suggest a more targeted approach to better highlight the city's strengths and opportunities.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Director of Economic Development shared that the Central SC Alliance provides research and marketing support. We discussed utilizing their expertise to create promotional material for the riverfront.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager / CFO emphasized the need for in-depth discussions with the committee and other funded groups in the fall. The goal is to assess the value these groups bring to the city's economic development mission and to make informed decisions about funding.

Councilor Brennan suggested they wait for proposals to come in from potential partners rather than specifically budgeting a line item. This approach would allow for more flexible decision-making based on the proposal's alignment with the city's needs.

Councilor Brown shared a quote from Andy Golubitsky, founder of Astral Development, in The State Newspaper that said: "Columbia is still a little bit under the radar, which is attractive to us. The region of stabilizing factors which include government offices, universities, health care facilities, Fort Jackson, and the Bull Street District make Astral Development confident in the projects." That's the messaging we want in Columbia.



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There was consensus of the committee to endorse the contract with Central SC Alliance for City Council's consideration. The Central SC Alliance will come back to the committee with suggestions in June.

3. Create Opportunity Funding Request - Mr. Ryan Coleman, Director of Economic Development

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Director of Economic Development said Create Opportunity is the creation of a workplace development training program specifically focused on the information technology sector. The program has been transferred to the South Carolina Technical College System Foundation. There is a request for additional support in the amount of \$50,000. The demand for information technology is growing and they've had good support through the program with placements at Colonial Life, Diesel Laptops, and Nephron. You don't have to attend college. Individuals take an online aptitude exam. Once they are pre-screened and deemed eligible, they complete a six month boot camp through Midlands Technical College. Then they participate in a two-year apprenticeship program with an identified employer. The employer gets labor with some preliminary training at a lower cost. Upon completion of the apprenticeship, participants have a degree and two years of on-the-job training. We contributed \$40,000 to get it started in 2020. At least 15 students have completed the six month training program. Our initial request of them was that participants come from within the city of Columbia.

There was consensus of the committee to obtain clarification on the level of commitment needed from the requestor. The committee will review this request again at its next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk