

BY BECKY MANN
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Economic Development Experts See a Good Year Ahead

Collaboration among economic development groups should support a broad base of economic development.

In 2010, *Business Facilities* magazine named South Carolina number one for economic growth potential, promising news in a time when the words “economy” and “good” weren’t often used together. What does 2011 hold? A number of announcements made recently for the Greenville area are encouraging signs of economic improvement.

Perceptis Inc., a Cleveland, Ohio-based company that provides help desk and customer support services for higher education clients, will open a Greenville County facility in March. The company, founded in

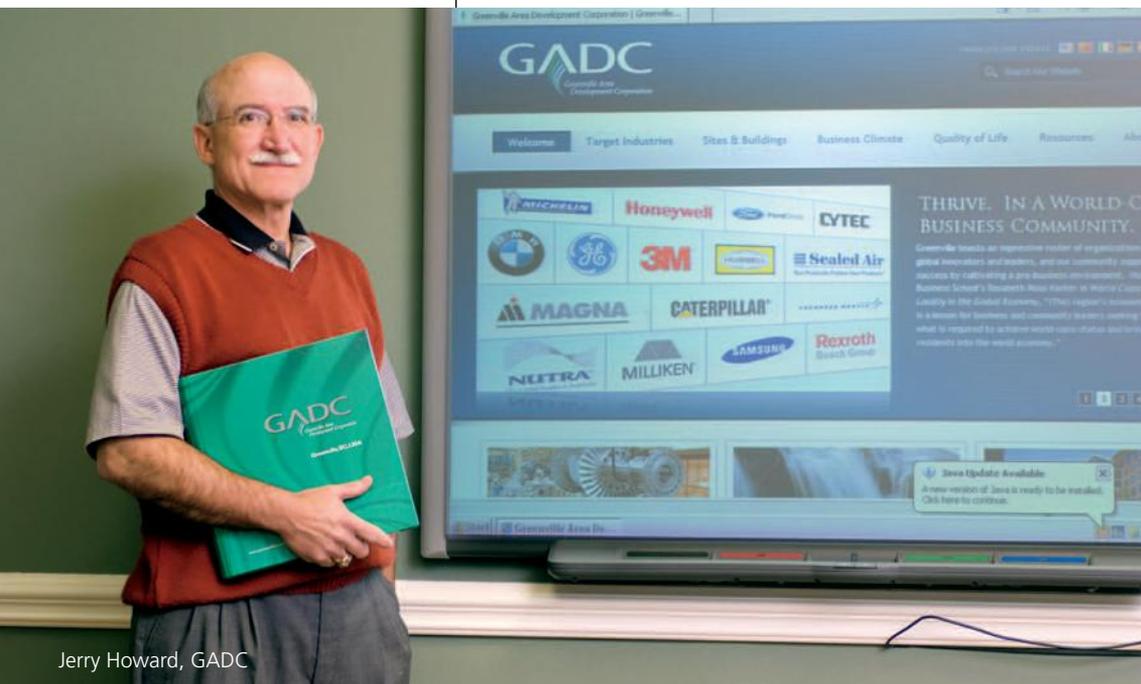
2004, assists more than 100 institutions with customer service for IT, financial aid, human resources, recruitment, admissions, enrollment, retention, facilities and general switchboard functions. Clients include Arizona State University, the Colorado Community College System and University of Virginia. Locating on West McBee Street in downtown Greenville, the company expects to create 200 new jobs and to invest \$1.125 Million in the new facility over the next five years.

Century Plastics, a Simpsonville-based, family-owned business for nearly three decades, will expand its

production facility on Neely Ferry Road. With a new, 93,000 square foot building expected to be completed in May, Century Plastics will increase production capacity. A new line of Dispensing Spout Caps will be launched in 2011 by the company, which molds plastic parts for agriculture, and the appliance, automotive, food service, juvenile furniture, packaging and pharmaceutical industries. The expansion will allow the company, which employs 175 people, to add 25 new positions.

Coast Sign, Inc. will locate a new manufacturing center on Perimeter Road in the South Carolina Technology and Aviation Center. Headquartered in Anaheim, California, the company, through a Tennessee location and a project management facility in Arizona, creates, installs, and maintains exterior illuminated signage for banks, hotels, restaurants, offices and retail stores nationwide. The Greenville County location, a \$2.4 million investment, is expected to generate 135 jobs.

The former KEMET Electronics facility on Fairview Street Ext. in Fountain Inn will soon house SAATI Americas Corporation, a subsidiary of SAATI Group S.p.A. The company will establish a new U.S. composites and protection



Jerry Howard, GADC

SPECIAL BUSINESS REPORT

division and distribution operation at the site. According to the company's website, SAATI Americas is a global leader in the development, production, and marketing of high-quality textile and chemical products with a range of industries including screen printing, medical filtration, acoustics, chemical manufacturing, composites, and ballistic protection. Eighty new jobs are expected to result from this expansion.

OpTek Systems Inc., located on Pilgrim Road, will expand operations over the next several years, generating up to 20 new jobs. The expansion will involve facility improvements, increased clean room space, equipment upgrades and the in-house fabrication of additional laser systems. The company is a high-tech manufacturer of fiber optic devices and laser systems serving defense, medical and telecommunications markets.

Saint-Gobain Abrasives will expand operations by adding equipment and space at its Travelers Rest location, investing \$1.4 million to meet customer demand. The company, headquartered in Paris, is the world leader in the abrasives industry,

producing superabrasives, industrial diamond and cubic boron nitride products used in precision manufacturing for the aerospace, automotive, bearing and other markets. A North Carolina operation will be consolidated into the expanded facility.

With these announcements, what kind of year is 2011 looking to be? Jerry Howard, president and CEO for the Greenville Area Development Corporation, is hopeful. "I think we're going to continue to see a lot of the same types of projects that we've had historically — automotive, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing, call centers and back office," he says. "We are hopeful that some of the projects that have been put on hold for a variety of reasons having to do with customers or markets or the economy or financing or whatever it may be, hopefully those projects are going to start up again this year."

Howard says collaboration among economic development groups including the city of Greenville, the Upstate Alliance, and the Greenville Chamber should support a broad base of economic development. "All the organizations have our

separate funding sources, boards, charters, missions, programs of work and expertise," he says. "But we are taking some major steps in developing an overriding strategic piece that brings all that together. We are figuring out first and foremost how we further our mission and be the best at what we do and how we also maximize opportunities to offer support in other areas where we don't have primary responsibility."

Joe Taylor, who served as secretary for the South Carolina Department of Commerce from 2006 until the recent appointment of Bobby Hitt, is pleased by the progress made during his tenure. "The Department of Commerce produced exceptional results in 2010," he says. "In fact, the year set a new record for jobs recruited by the agency. With continuous years of record job recruitment, the pipeline for new jobs coming to South Carolina is extremely promising and these recruitment efforts will continue to pay dividends in the years ahead. With this success, South Carolina is well positioned to continue to attract new jobs and investments in 2011." ■

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