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Authority wants new KSU campus, business incubator

by Ashley Fuller

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12.02.09 - 12:00 am

The Development Authority of Cherokee County's 2010 business plan includes researching the possibility of locating another college campus as well as a business incubator in the community.

The plan, which was approved on Monday by the authority board, also calls for initiating its white-collar recruitment strategy.

Earlier this year, the authority began a White Collar Initiative to attract more such jobs to the county. White-collar jobs include primarily salaried workers in professional, managerial, administrative or sales-oriented positions.

Step one in the process is to consider a name change for the authority.

"We have shot around different things, but nothing that everyone agrees on," Misti Martin, executive director of the authority, said.

A consultant working with the authority on its strategy advised the board its name "has more of an industrial feel instead of an all-encompassing economic development feel."

She said she hopes by January to have a recommendation for a new name to present to the authority board.

Part of the implementation also will be to hire a consultant to perform a labor analysis on Cherokee. The analysis will determine what kinds of jobs local residents are leaving the county for so the authority will know what kind of jobs to recruit to the area.

The authority also is looking at bringing a business incubator to Cherokee.

During the board meeting on Monday, member Pat Comeaux, who has introduced the topic to the board, said the authority is gathering information about incubators around the state.

An incubator can provide shared space, boardrooms and receptionists for businesses not yet earning enough to lease their own space.

"It is the bridge between running a business in your basement and going to private industrial or office space," Mrs. Martin said about the importance of having an incubator in the county.

The authority also plans next year to start on a master plan for a new business park on Highway 92 in southwest Cherokee.

This summer, the authority purchased 52 acres on Highway 92 near Interstate 75

to develop into a business park.

"We want to get a good plan on paper so we can market it," she said of the development.

Another item in the business plan is to work in conjunction with Chattahoochee Technical College and Reinhardt College to research the possibility of a Cherokee campus for Kennesaw State University.

"Any time you can add more higher education facilities, that is a plus," authority Chairman Marshall Day said. "Any time you talk about what is good for economic development, more higher education comes up."

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