



PRESS RELEASE

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City of Albemarle Announces Hiring of Keith Tunnell as Economic Development Director

ALBEMARLE, NC -- City of Albemarle City Manager Michael Ferris has appointed Keith Tunnell as the City's new Director of Economic Development. Tunnell will begin his duties for the City of Albemarle on Oct. 12 and fills the vacancy created by the retirement of former Economic Development Director Mark Donham.

Tunnell comes to the City of Albemarle from the private sector, having served as an economic development consultant the past 4 years as owner of Vision Economic Development Consulting and as owner of MyWebsiteGuys, LLC, an internet design and marketing company both based in Rock Hill, S.C. Tunnell's consulting work includes long-term contracts with OceanaGold assisting with development of a workforce training and assessment program for the company's gold mine in Kershaw, S.C., and site selection and incentive negotiations for McClancy Seasoning Company located in Indian Land, SC. His website company specializes in development and marketing of highly successful economic development websites.

Prior to his work as an economic development consultant, Tunnell served as President of the Lancaster County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) from 2003-2015 after serving as Assistant Economic Development Director with the LCEDC for one year. From 1999-2002, Tunnell served as Research Director with the South Carolina Department of Commerce and was Public Information Officer for the City of Sevierville in the Smoky Mountain Tourism Region from 1996-1999.

During his stint as President of the LCEDC, Tunnell was instrumental in directing an economic turnaround in Lancaster County. His efforts led to diversifying the economy from one dominated by textiles for over 100 years. Through targeted strategic planning and marketing of the County, Tunnell and the ED team, stakeholders, and allies were able to recruit corporate headquarters, back office operations, high-tech manufacturing, mining, distribution, a wide array of housing, and retail-commercial businesses that invested more than \$1.5 billion throughout the County and led to creation of thousands of jobs.

Tunnell implemented a business retention and expansion program that assisted existing business and industry with expansions, workforce issues, and other assistance to ensure those companies remained

in the County and continued to grow. The LCEDC assisted with more than 20 expansions during his time as economic development lead, retained thousands of jobs, and increased investment and job growth.

“Many of the challenges faced in Lancaster County are similar to the challenges that face Albemarle. But challenges are opportunities,” said Tunnell. “Albemarle is in a unique position to grow and diversify the economy and you do that by building a strong program of work that has the support of the elected officials, City leadership, allies, and stakeholders. To have success in economic development you must have a team approach with the cooperation and commitment of every elected official, ally, and stakeholder. I see that here in Albemarle.”

“With the addition of the Pfeiffer University Health Sciences Center and the development of the 282-acre Albemarle Business Center, the City will be in a strong position to continue and expand downtown redevelopment efforts as well as recruit new business and industry,” Tunnell said. “But just as important as downtown redevelopment and recruitment of new business and industry, we must also build a strong business retention and expansion program to keep the business and industry we already have here to help them grow, invest, and create more jobs,” Tunnell added. “We must also work with the K-12 education system and continue to provide excellent workforce skills training by continuing the strong partnership with the State of North Carolina and Stanly Community College.”

“I have experienced firsthand that you don’t have to be in Charlotte to have success in generating new investment and good, high-paying jobs. I am very excited about this opportunity and looking forward to building on the City’s economic success. Together we can do great and wonderful things for the citizens of Albemarle and I appreciate the trust the City Council and City Manager Michael Ferris has placed in me by hiring me as the next Economic Development Director for the City of Albemarle.”

Tunnell is a native of Greeneville, Tennessee and a 1987 graduate of East Tennessee State University where he earned a B.S. degree in History. He is a graduate of the FEMA Emergency Management Institute Advanced Public Information Officer Program and has completed much of the coursework to obtain his Certified Economic Developer certification (CEcD). He is a past member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), the South Carolina Economic Developer’s Association (SCEDA), and the North Carolina Economic Developer’s Association (NCEDA). He serves as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of the Mt. Calvary Outreach Center, a non-profit agency providing summer and after-school programs for over 130 under-served children in Kershaw, SC.

Tunnell enjoys spending time with his 9-year-old son, basketball, golf, travel, reading historical biographies, attending University of Tennessee athletic events, and working as a member of the Mt. Calvary Outreach Board of Directors.

