

MBLG Regional Competitiveness Initiative

Regional Branding Committee

Refreshed Talking Points

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Pick your favorite talking points and be comfortable sharing them with friends, family, colleagues and visitors
 - Incorporate these phrases where you can:
 - City-meets-nature
 - Year-round amenities
 - High-value lifestyle
 - Manageable urban environment
 - Authentic and accessible
 - Diverse array of amenities
 - Don't forget to add your local love story! Customize all of these talking points with your favorite features.
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City meets nature in a year-round, high-value lifestyle

Nurture your soul year-round with a diverse array of world-class amenities.

Talking Points:

- With over 700 miles of freshwater shoreline, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the U.S., world-class bass fishing, three rivers with natural whitewater rapids, 50+ miles of walkable shoreline, and a year-round climate, you can enjoy a resort lifestyle minutes from downtown.
- The Columbia Region boasts one of the top 10 national parks in the country and the only national park in South Carolina. Congaree National Park offers an incredible ecosystem experience with its dozens of champion trees and largest intact hardwood forest.
- Riverbanks Zoo and Garden - a top 10 zoo in the country - welcomes millions of visitors each year with over 2,000 animals in natural habitat and numerous family fun opportunities.
- The Midlands is home to the University of South Carolina Gamecocks, which competes in the Southeastern Conference, the highest level of athletics competition in major college sports. Fan support for the University's 21 athletics teams is among the best in the nation, ranking in the Top 25 in attendance in many sports.
- Whether spring, summer, fall or winter, sports fans in the Midlands can attend a variety of sporting events, including college and high school sports, minor league baseball and other major sporting events such as NCAA Championships, professional fishing tournaments and semi-pro soccer.
- Columbia is the birthplace of the pimento cheeseburger and expertly serves other southern staples made with year-round, farm-fresh ingredients from places like City Roots - SC's first urban farm. And renowned chefs from NYC, DC, Charleston and more are flocking here to be a part of our heirloom-inspired food scene.
- The Columbia region has over 120 pieces of public art that bring delight to all who experience them.

Bottom Line

Columbia is uniquely positioned with 700 miles of freshwater shoreline just minutes from a thriving capital city center. Residents enjoy robust water recreation, year-round spectator sports, a nationally recognized zoo, 17+ entertainment districts, and chef-driven dining - all within minutes of home.

South Carolina's smartest city provides lifelong learning

The low cost of living and abundance of higher education options provide lifelong learning for all ages.

Talking Points:

- Our city harbors one of the best library systems in the country, as Richland Library recently earned the National Medal from the IMLS.
- With more than 12 institutions of higher education and over 68,000 students, you may come to Columbia to earn a degree, but with a thriving technology industry and an emerging entrepreneurial community, you can graduate right into a promising career.
- Columbia is a city with both small-town hospitality and international culture and presence. We are delighted to be a city that speaks 90 languages from almost all of the recognized nations around the world.

Bottom Line

With 12 higher education institutions, the National Advocacy Center, a critical military training center in Fort Jackson, a plethora of museums, a world-class library and more, Columbia offers stimulating lifelong-learning for all ages.

Economic stability meets entrepreneurial spirit in a manageable urban environment

With our authentic, accessible culture, you can do more than make an incredible life - you can make your mark.

Talking Points:

- When you cross a capital city with the state's largest university, you get big ideas, vitality and a creative culture that's palpable.
- Our strong public sector provides economic stability while our entrepreneurial spirit means continuous innovation, and that makes Columbia the perfect place to build a business, grow a career or nurture a new skill.
- The entrepreneurial success rate in Columbia is one of the strongest in the nation because of the low cost of living, abundance of resources and qualified workforce.
- You can literally build a life in Columbia - our city has been ranked by Forbes as one of the most affordable places to own a home.
- Thanks to business leaders who are approachable and accessible, community movements that are open to all, and young professional groups who are engaged and welcoming, anyone can have a hand in shaping our future.

Bottom Line

Columbia is the place where you can transform your "to do's" into "ta-da's" — all without making a move.

BONUS BRAGS:

- #1 - Columbia is the smartest city in SC - 12.1% of residents hold a graduate or professional degree, the highest in the state.
- #1 - UofSC has 47 nationally ranked academic programs, more than any other university in the state (U.S. News 2019).
- #1 - Expedia Top Destination to Travel in the U.S. in the month of April (for festivals)
 - Region welcomed 14.7 million visitors in 2016, making tourism a \$2.1 billion industry for this community
 - Total Solar Eclipse - More than 1 million traveled in South Carolina to view the eclipse; leaving \$269 million impact
- #1 - Smithsonian Magazine named Congaree National Park the Best Place in North America to See Synchronous Fireflies
- #1 - The South Carolina Honors College is ranked as the nation's best public honors college
- #1 - Undergraduate International Business program for 20 consecutive years; #1 Graduate International Business program; #1 Graduate International MBA - in the top 3 overall for 29 consecutive years. (U.S. News & World Report)
- #2 - Columbia is #2 among the Top 10 Cities Where Millennials are Moving, according to SmartAsset (2018).
- #4 - In 2016, Columbia was ranked 4th lowest in startup costs in the nation at \$232,541 – lower than Charleston by 5.3 percent
- #4 - UofSC is the 4th fastest growing flagship university in the nation, as noted by the Washington Post (2016).
- #7 - Columbia named the #7 best place in country to start a career by WalletHub.com based on factors such as entry-level jobs, starting salaries, job growth rate, economic mobility, job security, etc. (May 2018).
- #11 - Business Insider named Columbia #11 in the 13 best cities in the US to find a job (2018 by Business Insider)
- #25 - UofSC is the #25 flagship university in the U.S. News rankings (2019 U.S. News rankings of College Board designated flagships).
- #56 - US News and World Report ranked the Columbia #56 on list of Best Places to Live US News
- #67 - One of "America's Best Employers," the university is ranked in the top 100 of Forbes' America's Best Employers (#67) and is the 9th best university to work for in the nation and the 2nd best flagship university. UofSC is the only higher education institution in South Carolina in Forbes' top 100 employers, and the only other entity in South Carolina on the top 100 list is Michelin.
- Top 1% - UofSC is in the top 1% globally of patenting universities.
- Top 3% - Diverse magazine places UofSC in the top 3% of universities for graduating African-American students.
- Top 5 - The 5 Best (and Most Affordable) Places to Travel (2018 PureWow)
- Top 8 - In 2017, Thrillist named Columbia one of eight "under-the-radar" American cities to visit "before they're too popular."
- Top 8 - Thrillist named Columbia as one of 8 American Cities Making Big Improvements in 2018 for BullStreet
- Top 25 - Fodors - America's 25 Cutest Main Streets in Small(er) Towns
- Thrillist named Columbia a "Great American Cities Where You Can Still Buy a House on a \$50K Salary."
- National Geographic Travel - One of the Best Small Cities in the U.S.
- U.S. News named UofSC a "Best Value School" in the 2019 rankings (No. 145).
- Recognized by Forbes magazine as one of the "Best Value Colleges: 300 Schools Worth the Investment" (No. 216 out of 300 -- August 2017) and one of the country's "Top Colleges" (No. 208 -- August 2017).