

Helicopter Tours Show Influencers Local Economic Assets

Johnston County, N.C. – September 12, 2019. Lynn J. Good, chairman, president and CEO of Duke Energy Corp., was the keynote speaker at a broker/consultant “fly-in” held at Johnston Regional Airport (JNX) on Tuesday afternoon. The crowd of over 75 included national location advisors, industrial property brokers and real estate professionals, as well as local, regional and state economic development leaders and private allies. The event, held for the second year, was organized by the Johnston County Office of Economic Development. Sponsors included Duke Energy, ElectriCities, the NC Railroad Company and the Johnston County Visitors Bureau.



“Not only are we dedicated to providing affordable and reliable service, which we know all of you count on, but also to the partnerships that are important around community initiatives in economic development,” Good told participants gathered under a tent on the JNX tarmac. “Thank you for your partnership and the fact that we work so well together,” said Good, who leads the nation’s largest utility holding company. “We really look forward to ways to continue to support making Johnston County all that it can be.”

Good and others speaking at the event praised Johnston County leaders for their vocal advocacy for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), a \$7 billion initiative that will upgrade North Carolina’s natural gas network. The project, a partnership among Duke Energy, Dominion Energy and other utilities, has been held up by legal action from environmental opponents. Johnston County is among several North Carolina counties the pipeline will traverse and is set to benefit from construction jobs and, once complete, new property tax-base. “We see ACP as infrastructure that will be important for this region, not only for delivering natural gas but for powering generation and economic development for years to come,” said Good, who is based in Charlotte. “It takes all of us to make common-sense arguments about why infrastructure, business development and economic development are so important. We’re anxious to get 4,500 people back to work on this project and get it into service, and we look forward to ways we can continue to work with you to support this project as we go forward.”



Among the site-selection consultants participating in the fly-in was James Blair, managing director at Navigator Consulting LLC, which has offices in Atlanta, Jackson, Miss., and Dusseldorf, Germany. “I can only participate in a limited number of community tours,” said Blair, whose advisory practice concentrates on foreign direct investment (FDI) projects. “But when I had a chance to get to know this growing and successful region better, I definitely wanted to explore developments 30 minutes east of Raleigh.” Blair called his helicopter tour of Johnston County “spectacular,” enabling him to view the county’s available and newly-developing industrial properties. “For such visits, helicopter transport is no luxury but rather an essential tool to see and appreciate industrial sites from the air,” Blair said.

Jordan Holt, director of business development at Bordeaux Construction Company in Raleigh, called her aerial tour “fabulous.” It was a really good overview of the various assets, including access to rail and I-40, proximity to Raleigh and connectivity to other parts of the state,” said Holt. Bordeaux Construction is a 42-year-old company working a range of institutional and governmental projects across North Carolina. “Seeing everything by air is a unique way to experience the story of Johnston County and how it’s growing.”



Among local leaders participating in the fly-in was Ted Godwin, chairman of Johnston County's Board of Commissioners. He said the helicopter tours showcase the county's economic engines, appealing quality of life and more. "Once you're up in the air, you get a different perspective," said Godwin. "You can certainly see all the roof tops, but you also see plenty of greenspace. You can see that we have great infrastructure as well as the fact that we have ample room to grow."



State leaders also were in attendance. Chris Chung, president and CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), explained that half of the state's site selection projects come from third-party influencers like consultants, brokers, attorneys and others. "Building relationships with those third parties is critical because you could either go try to find that needle in a haystack or you could talk to the firms that represent multiple needles in the haystack every year," said Chung. While numerous communities across the state host such gatherings, "Johnston County does their event exceptionally well." Attendees, for example, chatted while sipping beer and wine and eating local barbeque. "Putting on a first-class event really makes an impression," Chung said. "This is about showing consultants that when they bring prospects here they can be confident in this kind of red-carpet treatment and expect to see all the key players."

The Johnston County Economic Development Office (JCEDO) facilitates value-added interaction between government, education and the private sector in encouraging and promoting job creation and economic investment in Johnston County. A unit of county government, JCEDO collaborates with local, regional and statewide partners and allies in providing confidential location assistance to businesses and technical support to the county's 11 municipalities. Its menu of services includes customized digital mapping, labor and wage analysis, site readiness assistance and incentive packaging. For additional information, visit <http://www.jenced.com>.