

# Columbia makes "most livable" list

Group praises city's efforts

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## **Tom Pioreschi pledges nothing can get him to leave Columbia.**

The developer said he moved here from New Jersey six years ago because of family and the city's friendly people. But after he arrived, he said he also found that officials were working vigorously to improve the downtown area through business partnerships and revitalization efforts.

"The city is extremely receptive to and helpful for everything we're doing as developers," he said.

It's that sentiment that earned Columbia a place on a list of "America's Most Livable Communities." It's the only city in South Carolina that made the list.

The Partnership for Livable Communities is a Washington-based coalition of business and community leaders who provide resources for local governments looking to improve their communities. About every 10 years, the partnership releases a list of the most livable cities in the country. This year, the group named 30 cities and regions, and, for the first time, Columbia is on the list.

"We were very impressed with a lot of projects and initiatives going on in Columbia," said Irene Garnett, a spokeswoman for the partnership. "We see that Columbia is doing amazing things that they're not getting recognized for."

Mayor Bob Coble, along with other elected officials and civic leaders, will travel to Washington, D.C., on Tuesday for the official announcement and awards ceremony at the National Press Club.

Also on Tuesday, the partnership will unveil a new Web site that will provide information on each of the 30 communities.

Coble said the exposure that the list brings is its primary benefit.

"It will be a way of promoting Columbia and getting publicity," he said. "When we have innovative programs, they can be featured on the Web site."

He said the designation is "independent validation" of the city's progress for people who might want to invest in the area.

Garnett said officials were particularly impressed with the city's technology initiatives, such as the public wireless Internet network recently established in the Vista.

She also noted the city's initiatives to improve affordable housing options and its efforts to join with neighboring governments through the River Alliance and the Central Midlands Council of Governments.

Prioreschi, who is on the board of the City Center Partnership, said officials have been working hard to improve the downtown area.

"And if you have a great core, you have the possibility of having a great city," he said.

Charleston was on the last list, released in 1994.

Garnett said that cities are judged based on improvements and initiatives over the last 10 years and are not necessarily judged against each other. This resulted in a mix of large, medium-sized and small cities being included on the list, she said.

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