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Foundation Announces Columbia County as the First Six Pillars Community in the State of Florida

Tallahassee, Florida (January 28, 2011) – The Florida Chamber Foundation announced that Columbia County has completed the steps to becoming the first Six Pillars Community in the State of Florida during a press conference today. The event took place at Columbia County High School's Career Center with local leaders who spearheaded this effort for the County's economic future.

In August of 2009, Columbia County IDA started out on a mission to develop a strategic plan for their community. After a presentation by the Florida Chamber Foundation on the 2030 Project to community leaders, the Columbia County IDA recognized the importance of aligning their efforts with what was being done on a state level by the Foundation.

"Florida is embarking on a new economy and communities across the state must take an active role in designing the future of their regions," said Dr. Dale Brill, president of the Florida Chamber Foundation. "Columbia County sets the example of how to effectively plan for a new economy that they will be a part of."

In order to become a Six Pillars Community, a municipality in Florida must complete a 10-step process focused around the Six Pillars for Florida's Future framework. This framework serves as an organizing force for strategic planning at local, regional and state levels. It provides a means of harnessing fragmented viewpoints into a common and consistent conversation so that thoughtful and productive planning can take place. This ensures that communities across the state of Florida will design plans unique to their area – all connected by a common language that bubbles up to inform the state plan.

"We had a dedicated team of community leaders made up primarily of private business but also included local government, who worked tirelessly to position Columbia County as a player in economic development," said Gina Reynolds, Deputy Director, Columbia County IDA. "The Six Pillars Community designation offers us the power of collective resources and a unified vision which will bubble up to state-wide efforts."

The Columbia County IDA identified five strategic goals that will position the county for prosperity, high-wage jobs, and the ability to compete in a global market:

1. ***The Right Portfolio of Sites***
2. ***High Performing RACEC Catalyst Site***
3. ***Unprecedented Customer Service***
4. ***Outstanding Market Communications***
5. ***Engaged and Informed Partners***

Implementation of the strategic goals has been a team effort of community leaders. A trained and equipped workforce is important to the future of the community's prosperity. Community educators took the lead and developed a Career Academy for Global Logistics at Columbia High School and a Bachelors Degree in Global Logistics at Florida Gateway College. Coupled with the Employ Florida Banner Center for Global Logistics at Florida Gateway College, Columbia County is preparing their workforce in one of their target industries.

Preparations are already underway by working groups focusing on specific areas of development. The working groups will have input into the overall direction and marketing efforts of economic development.

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The Florida Chamber Foundation is a business-led, problem-solver and research organization, working in partnership with state business leaders to promote a vibrant Florida economy. The Foundation's "Six Pillars" serve as a visioning platform for moving Florida forward. The Foundation's work focuses on: 1) Talent Supply and Education, 2) Innovation and Economic Development, 3) Infrastructure and Growth Leadership, 4) Business Climate and Competitiveness, 5) Civic and Governance Systems, and 6) Quality of Life and Quality of Place. Founded in 1968, the Foundation is a critical voice for improved public education and a pro-Florida business climate. For more information, visit www.FLFoundation.org.