

# INLAND PORT MAKES EASY JOB OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UPSTATE

BY JOHN LUMMUS

With \$4 billion in new investment last year, 2014 was a period of tremendous growth and investment in the Upstate of South Carolina. By working collaboratively and focusing on creating a powerful brand and image for the region, we hope to attract more global investment and enhance the prosperity and quality of life for our community.

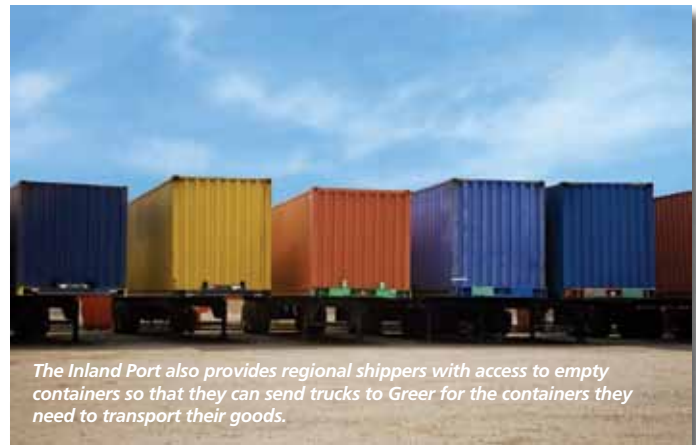
South Carolina has a strong manufacturing economy, and the Upstate is a huge part of that. The resource-rich area has successfully attracted attention from international companies looking to locate their businesses and manufacturing facilities here. The modern manufacturing facility requires streamlined access to international export and import facilities, a highly-skilled and trainable workforce and the resources for continued innovation. Opportunities for growth and international investment in the Upstate region have continued to increase thanks, in large part, to easy and efficient access to resources such as the South Carolina Inland Port (located in Greer), the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport and the I-85 corridor. This infrastructure network allows companies to get products to market faster, uniquely positioning South Carolina to remain at the forefront of manufacturing investment. Access to all modes of transportation – rail, truck service, water and an international airport – in one convenient location makes the Upstate of South Carolina an appealing place for manufacturers to call home.

The Inland Port is a 24/7 facility, providing quick and direct rail access to the Port of Charleston. Located along the I-85 corridor between Atlanta and Charlotte, the Port provides shippers with access to more than 95 million consumers within a one-day drive. The port is cost-effective for businesses, minimizing time spent in the shipping process, reducing fuel costs for importers and exporters, and boosting overall efficiency for international freight movement. In its first full year, the Inland Port exceeded expectations for operations by more than doubling its monthly count of container lifts, handling a total of 42,555 rail moves. As an additional benefit, the Port also provides regional shippers with access to empty containers so that they can send trucks to Greer for the containers they need to transport their goods. Now with more than 10 customers, the Port continues to be a major draw for international companies looking to expand or relocate in the Upstate.

For example, BMW Manufacturing, a staple in the economic landscape of the Upstate since the early 1980s, has cited the Inland Port as a major factor in their decision to announce a \$1 billion expansion project in the region. BMW has relocated its export operation from Duncan to a new, \$20 million building adjacent to the Inland Port.

The Inland Port is also attracting the interest of distribution centers that would locate in the area in order to support e-commerce and this new generation of imports. Additionally, the Greenville Area Development Corporation cites access to cargo shipping at the Inland Port, along with the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, as a catalyst for new speculative building projects. In the northwest part of the region, Oconee County officials are in the process of readying an industry site that has infrastructure and rail connections capable of providing a direct link to the Inland Port. With the ability to send and receive products overnight through the Inland Port, the site should be very attractive to international investors.

The opportunities for international investment and growth in the Upstate are plentiful. In addition to transportation infrastructure, the Upstate region offers favorable energy costs, available land and innovative programs aimed at creating a highly skilled workforce to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century manufacturer. The Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR) is one of those programs. CU-ICAR is an advanced technology research campus where academia, industry and government organizations collaborate on automotive research. Additionally, CU-ICAR's Partnership Office focuses on economic development by making connections between automotive companies and programmatically linking those companies to Clemson University's faculty and research expertise. Another program aimed at workforce development is The Center for Manufacturing Innovation, a collaboration



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between Greenville Technical College and Clemson University that broke ground in January 2015. Once open, the program aims to increase the pipeline of advanced manufacturing and engineering technicians by creating an internationally recognized learning environment that integrates research and education.

The Upstate is home to some of the world's most forward-thinking companies and cutting-edge technologies across a number of industries. Three hundred seventy-five international companies from 31 different countries have chosen Upstate South Carolina as their home because of the progressive climate, dynamic workforce and research capabilities. It is our belief that more international companies are on their way to making this region their next hub for business investment.

*John Lummus joined the Upstate SC Alliance as its president and CEO this year. Formed in 2000, the Upstate SC Alliance is a public/private regional economic development organization designed to market the 10-county Upstate region to the world. The 10 counties of the Alliance represent the northwestern corner of South Carolina, including the I-85 corridor and the Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson Combined Statistical Area (CSA).*