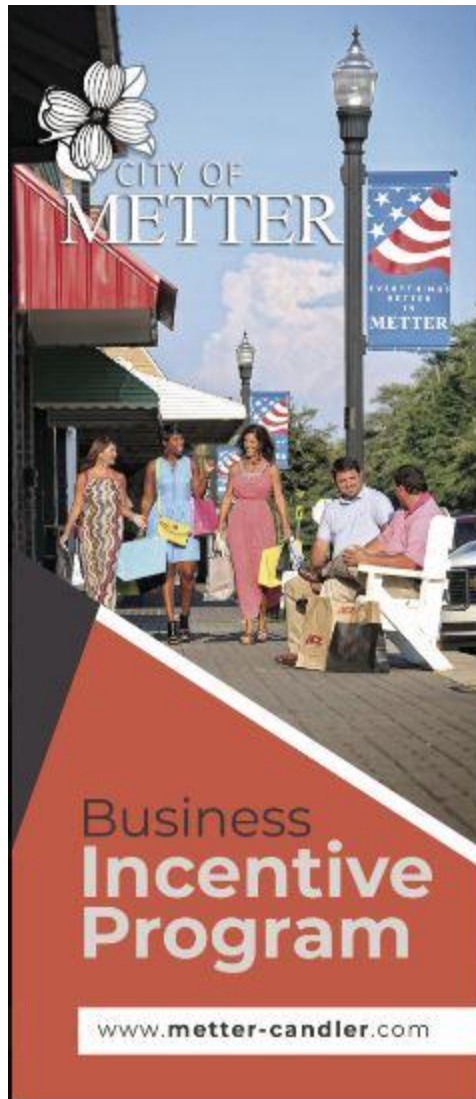


Metter develops plan for new business



The City of Metter is ready to welcome new and expanding businesses!

During their March meeting, Metter City Council agreed to partner with the Georgia Department of Economic Development in a pilot program for Metter to encourage commercial businesses to locate in town.

Council also approved a new business incentive program that will waive certain fees and charges as an inducement to attract new commercial development.

To reach prospective commercial development for the community, a business development team will be formed.

This team, under the local direction of Heidi Jeffers, director of

tourism and business development, will identify companies that are a good fit for Metter and reach out to those businesses about the possibility of expanding into the local market.

“We want to put Metter on their map,” Jeffers said of prospective businesses. “We want to make commercial prospects aware of the opportunities we have here in Metter.”

Jeffers explained that the process includes a careful review of the types of businesses that would be a good match for a community like Metter. Those businesses would be invited to visit Metter, she explained.

“We want to show them where we are and we want them to see that this city wants to develop business tourism. We have such a great niche here -- we’re the only downtown located on I-16. We want businesses to see that,” she said.

Jeffers said that the city’s goal is to make Metter a *must-stop* location for travelers on I-16.

“We have to create a destination point,” she said. “We want to find those restaurants and shops that are favorites and show those businesses that Metter would be a good place for a second location for their business.”

That means the development team will also be working with chain establishments to reach out and let them know the benefits of locating in Metter.

“If we can bring just one destination point to Metter,” Jeffers said, “it creates a spillover effect.” Jeffers explained that once people drive to Metter to stop at that destination, other shops will benefit from the increased traffic.

Jeffers said once the businesses are identified and prospects express an interest in locating in Metter, the team will help facilitate the process.

“The whole goal is to walk the prospect from conception to completion,” Jeffers said.

Part of that will include the city's business incentive plan, which will provide financial benefits for qualifying businesses looking to locate in the downtown or I-16 corridor district.

Those benefits could include the waiving of business license fees, building permit fees, water and sewer tap fees, alcohol license fees and sign permit fees, a savings of up to \$6,676.

"This incentive plan is strong and convincing," said City Manager Mandi Cody.

And commercial growth can have a direct impact on the community. "These businesses will improve the quality of life here and increase the dollars that will stay here," said Mayor Ed Boyd.