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Site certification begins with a complete and thorough assessment of each piece of property.

Inside Site Certification

APRIL 25, 2014

by Sherry Jackson



Companies like McCallum Sweeney and GADC help businesses decide where to build in the Upstate

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Time. Cost. Risk. Those three basics are crucial assessments in any business transaction, but for companies looking to relocate their headquarters or open a new manufacturing location, knowing those basics before buying a piece of property can be the difference between making money or losing everything.

Enter the world of certified sites and certified site consultants.

Even though there is no national standard, a certified site means, “the land is ready for industrial development,” says Lindsey Myers, a senior consultant with McCallum Sweeney Consulting, one of the largest firms that offers site certification in the country. Meyers says while her firm doesn’t use the familiar term “shovel-ready” because “you still have to get permits,” the designation does mean that all of the due diligence has already been done.



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And the due diligence means a complete and thorough assessment of each piece of property so certified. The designation usually includes a “five-inch thick binder” or CD-ROM offering utilities assessments, topographical surveys, environmental assessments, wetlands assessment, protected species assessments, deed and

ownership verification, geotechnical investigations and much more, says Kevin Landmesser, interim president and CEO of the Greenville Area Development Corp., which offers site selection (helping firms seeking locations for new facilities or relocating operations) for companies looking at Greenville.

GADC also solicits and obtains grants on behalf of The Matrix, a 1,100-acre master-planned business and technology park at U.S. Highway 25 and I-185 in southern Greenville County.

Myers previously worked for the South Carolina Department of Commerce, which she said used “more of a checklist” before McCallum Sweeney became involved. In 2010, McCallum Sweeney took over that work, “revamped the whole program, and now runs the program and certifies all sites for the state of South Carolina,” says Myers.

Site certification is really for industrial properties, says Landmesser, although it could be applied to any large tract of land. Timber companies, rail and utility companies and economic development departments in cities and states throughout the country are large customers, Myers said.



Recently purchased land is marked by surveyor's tape.

Photo by Greg Beckner

The cost ranges from \$60,000 to \$80,000, depending on the property, Landmesser said. Usually the developer or landowner pays for the studies and the state pays for the actual certification.

Certification programs vary from state to state, says Landmesser, but still tend to be very similar.

“If Volkswagen is looking to build a new plant somewhere, they’re going

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Expand

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Spartanburg-based Denny's Corp. reports first-quarter earnings ht.ly/whnGp

BrainsOnFire 17m
@BrainsOnFire
Fasten your seat belts, #WOMMnext folks! It's time to go Back to the Future with @genochurch + @BrandAutopsy.

to want the same information across the country,” he said. “It’s a great marketing tool. Now, not only are we ready for whoever, but we’ve got a product on the forefront of a leading marketing group’s mind.”

Site certification grew organically and originated out of Fluor Corporation. Ed McCallum and Mark Sweeney, who began McCallum Sweeney Consulting in 2000, both previously worked in Fluor’s Global Location Strategies group, where they developed and managed some of the first site evaluation programs in the county, Build Now New York and Pennsylvania SelectSites Round I.

The certification program took off when the Tennessee Valley Authority contacted McCallum Sweeney in 2004 to find out why the state was continually losing sites for large automotive projects.

The team met and scoped out a comprehensive certification program and out of that, certified nine sites. Since then, five sites have sold with an average \$1 billion investment and 1,000 jobs, says Myers. Once people saw the success of that program, they really saw the benefit, she says.

While primary site selection consulting accounts for about 70 percent of McCallum Sweeney’s revenue, Myers says the certification business continues to grow. To date, the company has certified 68 sites with another 50 in the hopper to be completed this year.

“Our biggest competitor is not really other site location and certification companies; it’s really a company doing a search on their own,” says Myers.

In Greenville County, Landmesser says The Matrix has about 750 acres left that is certified, along with a 40-acre property in Mauldin. A southern Greenville park has about 800 acres that is currently going through the certification process.

“Speed to market is more important now,” says Myers. “There’s pressure to get to market in a reduced timeframe and a need and demand for certified sites.”

SCDOC 2014 Criteria Guidelines (click to enlarge)

SCDOC 2014 Category Criteria Guidelines									
	TOTAL ACREAGE	MIN. CONTIGUOUS & DEVELOPABLE ACREAGE	HIGHWAY ACCESS Availability Timeframe	RAIL REQUIRED? Availability Timeframe	ELECTRIC REQUIRED? Availability Timeframe	NATURAL GAS (Distribution) Availability Timeframe	WATER (Municipal) Availability Timeframe	SEWER (Municipal) Availability Timeframe	SITE DEVELOPMENT MITIGATION ¹ Availability Timeframe
General Industrial Site	50 - 249	40 - 199 80% of total	10 miles ¹ 8 months	No 12 months ²	2.5 MW 8 months	10,000 6 months	100,000 6 months	100,000 6 months	3 months
Large Site	250 - 499	200 - 399 80% of total	10 miles ¹ 8 months	No 12 months ²	5 MW 8 months	15,000 6 months	300,000 6 months	300,000 6 months	3 months
Super Site	500 - 999	400 - 799 80% of total	5 miles ¹ 8 months	Yes 12 months ²	10 MW 8 months	25,000 6 months	600,000 6 months	400,000 6 months	3 months
Mega Site	1,000 +	800+ 80% of total	5 miles ¹ 12 months	Yes 12 months ²	30 MW ¹ 12 months	50,000 12 months	1,200,000 12 months	1,000,000 12 months	6 months
General Industrial Park	100 - 249 with one site → 20 acres	20 acre site, 60% of remaining acreage	10 miles ¹ 8 months	No 12 months ²	5 MW 8 months	15,000 6 months	300,000 6 months	200,000 6 months	3 months
Large Park	250 - 499 with one site → 50 acres	50 acre site, 60% of remaining acreage	10 miles ¹ 8 months	No 12 months ²	10 MW 8 months	25,000 6 months	600,000 6 months	400,000 6 months	3 months
Super Park	500+ with one site → 100 acres	100 acre site, 60% of remaining acreage	5 miles ¹ 8 months	No 12 months ²	15 MW 8 months	32,500 6 months	900,000 6 months	600,000 6 months	3 months

¹ - Distances and developable acreage may be at most 80% of total acreage and a 200-acre site must have at least 200 contiguous developable acres. ² - Absence of state highways. ³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹² - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²² - Minimum 100-acre site. ²³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ²⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³² - Minimum 100-acre site. ³³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ³⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁴⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁵⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁶⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁷⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁸⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹¹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹² - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹³ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁴ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁵ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁶ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁷ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁸ - Minimum 100-acre site. ⁹⁹ - Minimum 100-acre site. ¹⁰⁰ - Minimum 100-acre site.

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