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- **Technology**

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Savannah and Augusta have been named by a Georgia Senate committee as areas to establish information technology corridors.

The recommendations are part of a state Senate study committee report completed on Dec. 27 that looked at incentives for technology growth and for locations for the corridors.

Keith Fletcher, the COO of local business technology firm Speros, said the committee's report is "terrific."

"I am extremely happy for Savannah and Chatham County that the state has identified Savannah as one of the two areas for a tech corridor," Fletcher said.

When formed, the committee's task list did not have Savannah as a possible recommended site.

Chair of the committee, Sen. P.K. Martin, however, noted that the list of areas wasn't exhaustive, and he was "an open book," as far as location was concerned.

Fletcher has been a vocal advocate for Savannah as the ideal location for a corridor and the many benefits it would bring. Fletcher made two presentations to the committee, including one in North Georgia.

The committee recommendations state that Savannah and the surrounding area could "immediately benefit substantially," from a program with a focus on logistics technology innovation.

For the Augusta area, the committee states the focus should be on cyber/information security technology.

The Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center is currently under construction in Augusta. The center will house a state-owned cyber range and training facility. The center will provide cybersecurity awareness, training and education to state agency information security officers. It will house the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Cyber Crime Unit. Plans are for it to open in July.

Industries that could benefit from — and contribute to — a tech corridor’s success included logistics, maritime, hospitality and gaming, Fletcher said.

The impact from high-tech jobs with good salaries would be a boon to Savannah, Fletcher said.

The state will have to take the next “first” step, Fletcher said.

“The report was about should we do this and where should it be,” Fletcher said. “They’ve done that, now they have to get in gear.”

Those steps include include committee recommendations that the state legislature become more involved and aware of the “constantly changing information technology industry...” They also recommend that an advisory committee be formed to create future grant programs, find ways to better coordinate with industry leaders and identify opportunities and areas that could benefit.

Fletcher said now that the report is done it’s time for the local community to get to work.

“We need to work together for the best locations,” Fletcher said. “Part of what makes these work is proximity.”

Fletcher has said the most successful tech corridors are in geographically defined areas, with businesses that are close enough to encourage collaboration and innovation.

Fletcher hopes local government will get on board and work towards what is such an important goal.

“So far, I’ve been driving it,” Fletcher said. “Be we have to work together — Savannah needs this.”