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Chad Chancellor: Welcome to this week's episode of the Next Move Group We Are Jobs podcast. This is Chad Chancellor, co-founder of Next Move Group and today, I've got Clarence Hulse with us. Clarence is the economic development director in Michigan City, Indiana, and Clarence, I've enjoyed getting to know you and little did I know you spent some time in Mississippi getting your education. So, you wonder how I could get along with a man from Indiana. You're really from Belize. We'll get into all of that, but the truth is you spent some time in Hattiesburg.

Clarence Hulse: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. Good old Southern Miss.

Chad Chancellor: That's right. Well, tell these folks about Michigan City. I know you all have had-- I can't remember-- several billion dollars in investment since you've been there.

Clarence Hulse: 1.5.

Chad Chancellor: Talk about all the good stuff going on.

Clarence Hulse: It's a great small Midwest city; a city that's on the comeback. We've started with the downtown; trying to get the downtown back. We spent probably over \$25-\$30 million in infrastructure projects. We did the artist loft space announced in 2015. When I got there in 2013, we had plywood on the windows and today, I've got 30 new restaurants; all independents. Jamaican, Japanese, Mediterranean, Polish, Italian. So, seafood, steak-- so, it's a great food town. Little many food town now.

So, we're now work on housing; multifamily. We did some launch last week \$45 million 120-unit luxury apartments. We've been giving out grants to business owners and property owners to do up their lofts second and third floors. The City gives them 20 grand per unit to get those areas done, but we've seen \$1.5 million worth investment in the past 8 years and over half of that is public sector and private sector.

What we did was the city leadership decided they wanted to invest in themselves so they've upgraded the parks, the roads, sidewalks, landscaping and water sewer connections and when the private sector developer saw how we were spending it on ourselves, that became a catalyst to start having large expansion projects in the community and some new projects.

This year alone, we have done over \$100 million in private sector investment. We had a \$30 million expansion from Shell, which is a Dutch company. We have a \$35 million expansion from Hitachi, which is an air compressor company. We have a company called GAF that build commercial shingles under the \$30 million project 300,000 square feet warehouse. Those are just like big hits with local companies that are expanding.

We've had two relocations; a German company Maybach they do a lot of machining and we had a social media company move into downtown. They wanted 25 people and they were looking for journalism and English majors; my first ever.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, I would say that too.

Clarence Hulse: Yes, but one of the reasons is we have 14 fiber trunks that run through Michigan City and so if you press the button in Chicago the trade in New York City, that signal passes through Michigan City.

Chad Chancellor: I see.

Clarence Hulse: So, they became aware of all the fiber we had in our downtown and they wanted to be in a city that is 24 connected to the rest of the world. So, awesome things going on. We continue to be aggressive marketing. We are in social media. And one of the little knowns-- our known secret we are proud to let people know that we are number one in the state of Indiana and probably the Midwest for the air compressor industry. This is not the one in your window. These are these pumps that if you want equipment that sucks or blows air or gas, you come to Michigan City.

Chad Chancellor: And Michigan City is what? The highway to Chicago?

Clarence Hulse: Hours southeast from Chicago. We are on Interstate 904 and Interstate 80, so we've got great access. We got a number of state roads that pass through Highway 12, Highway 20. We got a port 15 miles away Blue Harbor. We're an hour from Chicago Midway, an hour and a half from O'Hare and 30 minutes from South Bend International Airport. So, we got great access from both of them. We got two passenger trains both Amtrak and South Shore passenger. We got a short rail that comes through our city that connects to all of the larger tier one. So, from getting stuff in and out, people, products, we're in a great location.

Chad Chancellor: So, we're recording this in Chicago at a MidAmerica EDC event. So, if you hear a little background noise, we're at the conference. Everybody is getting their breakfast this morning.

Clarence Hulse: Oh, yes. Don't get in their way.

Chad Chancellor: You told me last night they're building a rail line. Is that straight from Chicago to Michigan City?

Clarence Hulse: We have an existing rail line from Chicago-- South Shore passenger that goes and we have 14 trains per day back and forth into Chicago. Currently, it's 90 minutes because of course you are aware freight takes precedence, so whenever a freight train is on that rail, we have to park and wait for them to get through. So, we're going to spend over half a billion dollars. Both State and the Feds are partnering with the City and the counties to build 16 miles of brand new track between Michigan City and Gary. That way you can leave Michigan City and get to downtown Chicago within exactly one hour.

Chad Chancellor: Wow! Yes, that's a game changer.

Clarence Hulse: Right now it's 10 bucks each way, so it's a great value, but our goal right now is to look at a few of the projects within a mile of the train station. We're having a lot of RFQs and people looking for information and property because a lot of developers want to see mix-use multifamily type projects within walking distance of the train station.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I want to get into your story a little bit because you're a well-known professional, one of the best in the business. So, how does a man grow up in Belize and end up in Michigan City, Indiana doing economic development? What are all the stops you've had along the way?

Clarence Hulse: Well, I tell people my compass is broken. I'm heading north in the wrong direction.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, most people come to the south. They go to Belize, they don't leave.

Clarence Hulse: I know. I know. I actually had a great growing up in the country of Belize and when I got to the age where I was trying to figure what to do, I spent two years in mission field; Honduras, Nicaragua, southern Mexico. I worked with a lot of orphanages and refugees and I quickly realized if I want to help people, it's great to be hands-on, but I saw a lot of money spent with people not getting the real help that needed to control their own destinies. So, I was looking for the right career to be able to help people.

So, when I discovered economic development, I realized if I can help somebody, get them on their feet, train them so they can feed themselves so to speak, I was sold. So, I got my bachelor's degree from Harding University in Arkansas, Public Administration, and then I went over to Southern Miss for my masters in economic development back in the day. I started working in Florida, North Carolina, and I've been in Indiana over 10 years and so I've been heading north, but it's been a great ride. I worked both public, private, public-private and just enjoy what I do because it's not a job for me; it's a calling.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, yes and so, you got your masters in Southern Miss back when you didn't do it online. Now, they do it online.

Clarence Hulse: I know. We were there, had to do all the essays and all the hardy work back in the day. We paved the way.

Chad Chancellor: Sometimes they get me to come speak to their class and I end up mainly talking into a camera; a little bit of camera because most people watching it are online. So, you did it--

Clarence Hulse: They are somewhere else.

Chad Chancellor: Well, what have you found-- we have a lot of young professionals that listen to our podcast because they like hearing some of the distinguished professionals speak and give advice. So, based on your experience, if you would start maybe from scratch, 30 years old let's say, what events should folks go to? What has kind of been the key to success in your mind? What are the skills they need to develop and the rapport they need to have with certain people?

Clarence Hulse: This is a people business. You've got to have great relationships and build them along the way and you've got to take them to the long haul. Get involved in your state association. Get involved in IEDC; that was the first thing I did even from college. I got involved in IEDC. I was on the board for eight years. I've just turned out, but it's been a great experience for me.

Find a mentor. There are a lot of people who are-- in this business, people want to share what they do and that's one of the great things of being in economic development. People love to talk about what they do and they are never afraid to talk about what they do. So, there are some great mentors out there. Find a couple of them and learn your craft.

I found over the years that the more you read and become a lifelong learner, you will be good in this business because you got to stay on track on what's happening in the business from a business side and you get to learn a lot about other things; real estate, stock market, trade, the tariffs and so on. You become a jack of all trades and a master of none.

Chad Chancellor: I tell people you got-- what's my saying? You got to know-- you got to be an inch deep and a mile wide because you got to know a little something about everything.

Clarence Hulse: Everything, everything.

Chad Chancellor: Education, you got to know something about sewer, water.

Clarence Hulse: Exactly. And a lot of times I tell people you can't be afraid to take risks because you get into a project and you realize I have no clue what I'm doing here. You better get on the phone and call somebody quick quick. So, don't be afraid to ask for help is probably what I would say.

Chad Chancellor: You know Michigan City, so you've been there 10 years?

Clarence Hulse: I've been in Michigan City six years, but I was in southern Indiana for four years.

Chad Chancellor: So, it's really fun now because the economy has improved and especially some Midwest towns. I remember how bad it was in '08 and '09. So, talk about I guess how exciting it is. Back then, we just wanted any job we could get and now, you actually can be strategic. You used to be just a recruiting job, now you can actually be strategic.

Clarence Hulse: Very strategic and I would tell any professional, don't underestimate the importance of a good BR&E program. We have used that to really not only expand our local business but also find entrepreneurs within those companies who want to spin out their own companies. So, a good BR&E program will go a long, long way for the community to help both job growth and also expansion within the community and also spinning off new companies because you get to know the CEOs, you understand that they got some money they want to spend and do something totally different.

So, those are great conversations, but the economy is great and from seeing plywood on downtown and activities and the festivals and lights and music and all the restaurant activity, we've got three microbrewers in the downtown. So, this job, you got to have great spirits.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, that's right, that's right.

Clarence Hulse: So, they go well together; a winery and so we've had a lot of activity in the downtown because placemaking is big in this business. Talent attraction is the thing these days because everybody is trying to find new employees and keep the ones you've got. So, for us placemaking is huge in terms of helping to attract talent. It will probably be a lifetime to maintain them.

Also, housing is a big push for us both single family and multifamily. We haven't had something built in 20 years. So, we've now started to last month. We got a condo project in the waterfront and we got a 120-unit apartment complex; \$45 million. They were announced last month. So, we got a number of initiatives to do housing right now because our goal is to attract people and then keep the ones we have.

Chad Chancellor: Right, right. Well, Clarence, thank you for being with us today. Is there anything you want to tell the folks about Michigan City or your story I didn't ask you?

Clarence Hulse: No. Just so you know we are number one in Indiana for the air compressed industries. We also have the only Compressed Air Academy in the country. We have 12 companies in the air compressing business. We got them all together with our local schools. We created an academy, so you get two years of credentials, five credentials and we guarantee you an interview when you finish. I did a guinea pig of 10 kids last year and this year we got 45 kids who are graduating in two years who are guaranteed a job in the air compressing industries. So, we like to make sure people know we make things happen in Michigan City.

Chad Chancellor: Right. Give these folks your website in case they want to learn more about you.

Clarence Hulse: edcmc.com

Chad Chancellor: All right. Thank you for being with us today.

Clarence Hulse: Thank you, Chad.

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