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3 **Joseph P. Riley, Jr.**

4 **London: Charleston is considered one of the country's most livable and progressive**  
5 **cities and this is due in large part to a lot of hard work and cultivation of**  
6 **partnerships between business, between non-profits and government and the**  
7 **between the citizens of Charleston and the citizens of the state of South Carolina. I**  
8 **expect, however, that the cities level of success would have been different if it were**  
9 **not for the effective leadership and creativity and for the vision of Mayor Joe Riley.**  
10 **Today we are going to ask Mayor Riley to expand his vision to the State of South**  
11 **Carolina. Mayor Riley, it's great to see you.**

12 **Riley:** Thank you Donna, it's great to be with you.

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14 **London: I would like to start by asking you, what is your vision for South Carolina**  
15 **and what South Carolina might be in the next decade.**

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17 **Riley:** Well, this is South Carolina's century and certainly South Carolina's decade. We  
18 have a fabulous future ahead of us, and what I see is a state that is physically beautiful  
19 with wonderful climate and a great variety of the mountains to the ocean. People are  
20 increasingly staying here because it's such a wonderful place to live and people moving  
21 here because it's such a wonderful place to live. So what we have to do is make the most  
22 of this opportunity and make a decision that we as a people are going to excel and that in  
23 everything we do, our goal is excellence and that means focusing on education, making  
24 South Carolina an education leader. Our future depends upon the quality of education for  
25 our kids. Early childhood education, four year olds absolutely, making our teachers paid  
26 a level that is commensurate with the responsibility that we give them by shaping our  
27 future and making South Carolina an education leader. If we have the finest education  
28 possible here and the natural resources we have, the future is ours.

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30 **London: In terms of the key issues that you see facing us, what must we address in**  
31 **order to achieve the best we can be in the next decade?**

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33 **Riley:** There are a lot of issues. The first is education. We have to give our young  
34 people the chance to have the best education possible in South Carolina. That's going to  
35 be what defines states or countries in the future. We are competing with the world, as we  
36 know. So, making sure our kids are ready to learn, that no child starts the first grade  
37 unprepared and not ready to learn and that they have the skills, emotional/educational  
38 skills ready to achieve in school and to make sure that every component of the education  
39 system and paying our teachers well, making sure the class size is well, make sure we  
40 have diverse offerings and that we never miss that following, that drum beat of  
41 excellence in education. That's the first issue.

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43 Another issue that is very important to our state during this time of growth is wise land-  
44 use and resource planning. The State of South Carolina should want to make sure that we  
45 are avoiding the mistakes that other states have made. That we don't, for example, allow  
46 unbridled sprawl to take away the physical beauty of our state and then to create

1 problems whether it's traffic jams or over-crowded schools because the school system  
2 wasn't dove-tailing with the planning of the region. Not just the city or county, we have  
3 to start thinking of regional planning. I think it's essential that our state provide the  
4 leadership, not a top down in terms of planning but the top encouraging the bottoms up so  
5 that we have a collective vision for our state so that our resources are allocated pursuant  
6 to that vision and that we make sure that the physical beauty of South Carolina isn't dim.  
7 Then we need to focus on being very competitive nationally in terms of attracting the  
8 right jobs. The quality of life in South Carolina, the new book *The Rise of the Creative*  
9 *Class*, by Richard Florida, talks about the fact that people are going to make a decision  
10 where they work by where they want to live. So we have got the livability quotient.  
11 What we've got to do is make sure that we are as aggressive as possible in attracting the  
12 new economy, the knowledge-based economy by using the research engines that we have  
13 in South Carolina, primarily Clemson University, University of South Carolina, Medical  
14 University, clustering the business and economic development entities around those  
15 research engines so that South Carolina can be a leader in the new economy.

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17 **London: The items that would appeal to the creative class, the arts, are not**  
18 **available everywhere in the same fashion as they are here in Charleston. I wonder if**  
19 **you could expand on that a bit, as to how we can bring that on a statewide basis.**  
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21 **Riley:** Livability is about qualitative values and what we need to make sure we do in  
22 South Carolina is say this, "We are going to be the best." This is a physically beautiful  
23 state. It is unscarred with many of the scars that other places in America have that went  
24 through this development surge before we did. So, we can learn from that. But let's  
25 make sure that everything we do is aimed at the best quality possible. We don't have to  
26 settle for second best now. We don't have to take anything. We can be selective and  
27 that's not just the big cities. It's the small towns. In fact, I think that the small towns are  
28 South Carolina's unappreciated treasures. They present wonderful quality of life  
29 opportunities, places where people know each other. Where the fabric is real and the  
30 scale is very nice. So, making sure that we in the development and redevelopment of our  
31 towns and cities, that we make that physically beautiful, that we have very high standards  
32 and arts and cultures, again not just the big cities, but the small towns. A great example,  
33 of course, is the Newberry Opera House. But there are wonderful arts activities going on  
34 in small communities in South Carolina that people increasingly want. They want the  
35 inspiration that arts give you, as well as the entertainment, enjoyment and relaxation that  
36 it does. We should be so optimistic about its future, because we have the potential of  
37 having the highest quotient of livability of any place in our country, but we must keep our  
38 standards very high.

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40 **London: How do we get that word out that we can be selective and that we can still**  
41 **have progress?**  
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43 **Riley:** It's an attitude or paradigm shift, because South Carolina was poor for a long time  
44 after the Civil War. If we could get anything we wanted, something was better than  
45 nothing. We have to realize now that they are coming. We don't have to beg them to  
46 come any more. They are coming because what we have is so beautiful. We have to say,

1 “Oh yeah, we can now be selective. Let’s look the gift horses in the mouth. Is this the  
2 best we can do? No, we can do better. Is this development the right thing? It’s a nice  
3 tax base, but is that the right kind of development? Is it in the right place? Is it  
4 preserving or is it going to despoil something that is very precious? That’s what we have  
5 to do and I think a heightened level of self-confidence that this state, this Palmetto State,  
6 could be on the verge of the best years ever. As I said the century, this century is ours and  
7 the mountains and the ocean and the rivers, and the streams and the Carolina Bays and  
8 forests and vistas and the small towns filled with their fabric in history and our wonderful  
9 thriving cities and our arts and culture. We have to say we have something very special  
10 here and every development decision must respond to this question. Is it the very best  
11 that can be done? Does it achieve excellence? That’s how we have to start thinking in  
12 South Carolina.

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14 **London: We forget how important every individual decision is.**

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16 **Riley:** Every decision, I ask the wonderful people with whom I work here each time to  
17 ask themselves and to ask me, “is this the best we can do?” If the answer is well, if we  
18 tried a little harder or if we were more selective we could do even better. Then we are  
19 going to try a little harder and be more selective. We have to be able to say this is the  
20 best and we want to achieve excellence in every decision we make.

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22 **London: Now I know that you have a number of issues that I’ve learned about**  
23 **today that you are extremely passionate about.**

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25 **Riley:** Well, we need to work very hard on regional planning and I know when we say  
26 regional, people say that sounds very boring, but we have to in South Carolina start  
27 thinking in terms of regions. We have to do that here in the low country so for us  
28 together, Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester, eventually Colleton, perhaps southern  
29 Orangeburg, Georgetown, Williamsburg, we have to be thinking as a region, think in  
30 terms of watersheds. Kind of erase the political lines for a minute. We hold this in trust  
31 for the future generations. What are we doing that is going to make this fabulous 100  
32 years from now. Ask this hard question. So for us here in Charleston, we are working on  
33 lots of things. So for us to work hard to develop a regional consensus of where the  
34 growth ought to go. Where will it be helpful and constructive? Where do we need to  
35 preserve for future generations? What zones are important to not be subjected to urban  
36 and suburban growth pressures and what areas need the urban and suburban growth  
37 pressures and service of that? That’s a hard issue because it’s vague to many people. But  
38 we have to do that and I really think South Carolina has to do that because every region  
39 ought to be thinking together. Not just this city alone or maybe even just the county, but  
40 the counties together, the region. What is our future and how are we supporting each  
41 other to make it the best that it can be?

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43 **London: I recall in an earlier discussion that we had about regional planning and**  
44 **statewide planning, you said that it’s no one’s job to oversee that we are**  
45 **collaborating.**

1 **Riley:** South Carolina needs a division. We recommended it in the Office of the  
2 Governor. But a place where a person gets up in the morning and their responsibility is  
3 thinking about the physical development and the future of South Carolina in every  
4 component. That's not a negative thing, a regulatory thing, but how do you help it, how  
5 to you help the small towns excel? What are the problems the small towns are having?  
6 How could we do more? With highway funds, what are the most important from the  
7 state's standpoint? What will leverage economic development in South Carolina the  
8 most or from land use decisions? What decisions will make it easier for communities to  
9 protect their adjacent forest or vistas or lakes or special places? We have to do that.  
10 Someone needs to be waking up in the morning and say that, "My job is that I'm for the  
11 Governor, for the Legislature, I'm looking at the future of South Carolina and I'm  
12 worrying about it everyday. Worrying in a positive way, but it's my job to help develop  
13 a collective vision, a collective plan for the future of our state."  
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15 **London: What responsibilities do South Carolina leaders have regarding future**  
16 **generations of South Carolinians?**  
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18 **Riley:** The leaders of South Carolina should be thinking about the people who will live  
19 here 50 and 100 years from now. I worry in a positive way about my decisions impacting  
20 the lives of people who are unborn and the unborn's children, my great-great-  
21 grandchildren. Our responsibility is for them and many decisions we make will affect  
22 them. If they are the best decisions, we affect them positively. We make decisions about  
23 land use and about preserving special places in South Carolina; we have given a gift to  
24 people who live here forever. We make poor decisions about physical development or  
25 we don't have the energy to seek to achieve excellence in education, then those alive 50  
26 or 100 years from now will have fewer opportunities than they otherwise would have.  
27 The old saying a statesman is someone who doesn't worry about the next election but  
28 rather about the next generation. We all need to be statesmen and stateswomen; we need  
29 to be thinking about those generations yet to come.  
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31 **London: Said by a true statesman.**  
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33 **Riley:** Thank you, Donna.  
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35 **London: I have been speaking with Mayor Joe Riley. He is the mayor of the City of**  
36 **Charleston. For the Jim Self Center on the Future, I am Donna London.**  
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