

**A Community & Economic Development  
Strategic Planning Project for  
White County, Arkansas**

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**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**September 2, 2009**



# Project at a Glance



**Initiated by:** Advancing White County

**Vision for:** A Comprehensive Community & Economic Development Plan

**Mission:** *Advancing White County: Preserving the past while strategically planning for a promising future for all citizens through mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.*

**When:** May 2009 – Spring 2010

**Why?** Actively create our future rather than just let it happen

# Agenda



- Arkansas Works initiative
- Review of Town Hall Meetings – 5 minutes
- Economic & Community Development Best Practices – 15 minutes
- Consulting Team Report - 30 minutes
  - Competitive Assessment
  - Overview of Interviews
  - Business Survey
- Next steps – Monthly meetings (first Wednesday of the month at noon?)
- Questions?

# Arkansas Works Initiative



- <http://www.arkansasworkssummit.com/>
- Calls for counties to do strategic plans to flow into regional and state plans
- Governor is visiting some of the counties to support the process


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## Status

This is a status update showing the progress of each county in working toward the goals established at the 2008 Arkansas Works Summit.

COUNTY	COUNTY COORDINATOR DESIGNATED?	ASSESSMENT COMPLETED?	STRATEGIC PLANNING PHASE BEGUN?
ARKANSAS	✓		
ASHLEY	✓		
BAXTER	✓	✓	
BENTON	✓	✓	
BOONE	✓	✓	
BRADLEY	✓	✓	
CALHOUN		✓	
CARROLL	✓		
CHICOT	✓	✓	
CLARK	✓	✓	



# ARKANSASWORKS2008

THE GOVERNOR'S SUMMIT ON EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



- HOME
- SUMMIT 2008
- STATUS
- IN YOUR AREA
- MISSION
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- CONTACT

## In Your Area

[Local Chambers of Commerce](#)

### County Coordinators

COUNTY	DESIGNATED CONTACT	E-MAIL/PHONE NUMBER
ARKANSAS	VIVIAN MEINS SECRETARY, DEWITT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	
ASHLEY	PAM FERGUSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CROSSETT AREA CHAMBER OF	

SHARP

ST. FRANCIS

ORAL EDWARDS  
OWNER, GES  
INC./FOOD GIANT

STONE

JIMMIE EDWARDS  
PRESIDENT,  
MOUNTAIN VIEW  
AREA CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

UNION

LARRY MOSER  
SOUTHARK  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE[LMOSE@SOUTHARK.EDU](mailto:LMOSE@SOUTHARK.EDU) <!--[IF !  
SUPPORTLINEBREAKNEWLINE]-> <!--  
[ENDIF]->

VAN BUREN

ROBBIE INGLE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR,  
FAIRFIELD BAY AREA  
CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

WASHINGTON

MIKE MALONE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR,  
NORTHWEST  
ARKANSAS COUNCIL

WHITE

BELINDA LAFORCE  
MAYOR, CITY OF  
SEARCY

WOODRUFF

KIP DAVIS AUGUSTA  
AREA CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

YELL

BRAD WEAR COUNTY  
JUDGE, YELL  
COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE



# Higher Education's Role

- Cleburne County at ASU-Heber Springs
- Faulkner County at UCA (Community Development Institute)
- White County at ASU-Beebe  
Friday, September 4  
11:30 a.m.  
Arkansas State University-Beebe  
Science Building  
300 Peach Street, Beebe

# Town Hall Meeting Summary

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First piece of the  
Competitive Assessment





# Town Hall Meetings

- 120 participants
- Summary report sent out July 1
- Good qualitative data
  - Strengths
  - Weaknesses
  - Wish List

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# Economic & Community Development “Smart Practices”





# Why Focus on “Smart Practices”?

- Making Communities Economic Development Ready and Training Community Leaders is Key to Success in Economic Development
  - Thousands of communities are chasing a few hundred new locations and relocations annually
    - “Fatal flaws” will eliminate you
    - Site selection is really community elimination
  - Must be proactive with a good ED program and a development ready community to make the short list and ultimately win
  - Retention and expansion of existing businesses and start-up of new businesses is key part of ED program -- same principles apply



## “Smart Practice” Areas

- Understanding Community Development and Economic Development
- A Strategic Approach to Community and Economic Development
- Total Community Team Approach
- Marketing
- Regionalism
- Evaluation of Economic Development Program

# Community and Economic Development



- Community Development is about preparing the “product” – your community and region
  - “Physical capital” including roads, utilities, hospitals, schools, all public facilities
  - “Human capital” including education, workforce training, race relations, social fabric of community
  - Good, efficient government and good business climate
- Economic Development is about marketing the product – creating jobs and increasing standard of living
  - Recruitment
  - Retention and expansion of existing businesses
  - New Business start-ups
- Average time spent: 50% on community development, 50% on economic development

# Making the Community “Development Ready”



- Infrastructure Sufficient to Support Growth
- Prepared Sites and/or Available Buildings
- Effective Economic Development Program
- Community United and Working Together
- Community Able to Close Deal
- All Aspects of Community: You Never Know What's Going to Win the Project
  - Education
  - Health care
  - Quality of life
  - Good local government
  - Community spirit
  - Community appearance and redevelopment

# Strategic Approach



- Community Strategic Planning and Visioning: What Do We Want to Be and What Can We Realistically Be?
  - Manufacturing based?
  - “White-collar” and service based (e.g. headquarters, call center, financial, etc.)?
  - Technology based (e.g. bio-tech, information industries)?
  - Tourism based?
  - Bedroom community with high quality of life?
- Develop Strategic Development Plan Based on Above
- Competitive Assessment: Strengths and Weaknesses of Community and Area

# Strategic Approach



- After Competitive Assessment, Complete the Rest of the Development Plan
  - Target industry and activity analysis: what specific kinds of industry, tourism, etc. do you want to attract and can you attract?
  - Marketing plan
    - New industry (recruitment)
    - Existing industry (retention and expansion)
    - New business start-up
    - Goals, objectives, detailed action steps
  - Implementation of Marketing Plan
    - Budget, Staff, Partners (region, state, utilities, etc.)
- Above Must Be Based on Competitive Assessment to be Accurate

# Total Community Team Approach



- It's Not Just the Local Economic Developers' Job
- Board Members, Elected Officials, Government Employees, all Stakeholders Must be Involved
  - The community will “close” the deal
  - Community development is everyone's job
  - Everyone can help market a community
    - Role for business leaders, elected officials
    - Residents
- All Citizens Should Understand Economic Development and the Role They Play



# Marketing

- What sets your county and region apart?
- How can you capitalize on the unique features AND smart economic development and technology practices?
- Understand the community development strengths may “close the [economic development] deal”
- Must have a robust on-line presence or you’re not in the game

# Regionalism: A MUST In Econ. Dev.



- Pressures From Global Economy and Increased Economic Development Competition Driving a Regional Perspective
- Regionalism Leads to Economies of Scale in Infrastructure Development (Sites, Transportation, Utilities, etc.) and Marketing
  - Bigger marketing budgets get you on the radar screen for more projects (trade shows, advertising, etc.)
  - Regions can be proactive, not just rely on state or utility for leads
- Companies and Site Consultants Look At Regions, Not Just Individual Communities
  - They prefer regional data, marketing materials

# Regionalism: A MUST in Econ. Dev.



- Regionalism Sends a Positive Message That Communities are Working Together
  - Companies like that – indicates a good business climate
  - Companies DO NOT like “fussing and feuding” by communities in a region – indicates a bad business climate
- All Communities Win When a Company Relocates to or Expands in a Region – No Matter Where it Locates
  - Labor commutes from all over region, more taxes for all communities
  - “Rising tide lifts all boats”
- Regionalism is a Key to Rural Economic Development
  - Rural areas can be marketed as part of a region and attract interest they never could themselves
  - Sell the full package – rural and urban together

# Evaluation of Economic Development Program



- Understand Difference Between ED Success and Success of ED Program
- Don't Rely Solely On Yearly Quantitative Measures of Success Such as Number of New Jobs Created
  - What kind of jobs?
  - Community as a whole, not just ED program is responsible for success
- ED is a Long-Term Relationship Business
  - Most companies are not in expansion mode when first contacted
  - Key is to keep message in front of target companies so community will be on radar screen when expansion occurs
- Make Sure ED Program and Community Adhere to Best Practices

# Evaluation of Community & Economic Development Program



- Create a Smart Practices approach and stick with it
- Creating a Smart Practices approach takes time and effort and is a long-term investment
- Create a set of Community Indicators that include community, economic, and social/human measures
- Economic & Community Development: You Gotta Have Faith!
- What are you going to evaluate?
  - The Competitive Assessment is the information you'll need to set goals and action items in the strategic plan

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- Competitive Assessment Overview



# Competitive Assessment Overview



- Need to fully understand the county's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats
- Will fulfill the Governor's call for each county to have a completed assessment
- This assessment will go above and beyond a base-level assessment



## Competitive Assessment Overview

- A common document for the community to work from— a shared understanding for making decisions
- Data source for marketing plan or community profile that can serve as the basis for responding to an RFI



## Types of Data

- Quantitative
- Qualitative

Business location decisions may be based on subjective factors!



## Focus Areas

- **Business, Political & Economic Climate-** cooperation among local governments, economic development programs, business climate, economic base analysis, financial capital
- **Workforce-** labor availability, industry composition, training programs



## Focus Areas

- **Education-** indicators for k-12 and higher education institutions
- **Utilities, Land and Resources Availability-** cost & capacity of utilities, natural gas, available land & buildings
- **Infrastructure-** air, rail, roads, telecommunications
- **Quality of Life-** affordable housing, health care, fire/police protection, cultural & recreational opportunities

# Data Collection Methods

- One-on-One Interviews
- Driving Tour
- Business Survey
- Research
- Previously published reports



# Interviews



- Cross section of county stakeholders
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September
- Confidential

# Business Survey



- Will be sent out through Chamber of Commerce
- Electronic
- Last week of September

# Community Research



- Free, publicly available data
- Both County-wide and City-specific data
- Previously published reports

# Schedule



- September – Assessment phase begins
- October – Assessment continues
- November – Present assessment data/Draft Strategic goals/action items
- December – Refine Strategic goals/action items
- January – Rough draft of strategic plan
- February – Review
- March - Celebrate

# Questions?

Next steps...

Thank you!

