

Project Update
Preliminary Findings &
Team Planning
November 30, 2009



Agenda

- Project Update
 - Website Live
- Preliminary Findings
 - Demographic & Economic Base
 - Interviews
 - Business Survey
 - County Tour
- Discuss successful team formation for next phase



Web Site

www.advancingwhitecounty.org





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Preserving the past while strategically planning for a promising future for all citizens through mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.



The Beebe News

Advancing White County is a comprehensive community and economic development strategic planning project for White County, Arkansas. This project began in May 2009, and was jump-started by Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe at the Arkansas Works Summit – a call-to-action for all 75 Arkansas counties to participate through an assessment and planning process.

Co-chaired by County Judge Michael Lincoln and Searcy Mayor Belinda Smith, this project will result in a completed assessment and strategic goals for White County. Participation is open to any interested citizen. Please use this site for information about past events, find out about upcoming events, link to site resources, and contact the project team.



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Upcoming Events

November Steering Committee Meeting - Monday, Nov. 30, 6:00 pm, Beebe City Hall

Past Events

Business Survey – ongoing throughout October

Stakeholder Interviews – ongoing throughout October

Driving Tour – October 26

Kick-off Meeting – May 1, 2009, Searcy

[Presentation](#)

[Minutes](#)

Town Hall Meetings – June 22-23, 2009, Beebe, Bald Knob, & Rose Bud

[Presentation](#)

[Minutes](#)

September Meeting – September 2, 2009, Searcy

[Presentation](#)

[Minutes](#)



Wendy Neill



The Beebe News/Lee M



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Assessment Phase

Advancing White County is currently in the Assessment Phase. This phase is focused on gathering information for the Diagnostic Report, which will include an analysis of the county's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and provide some recommendations. Understanding the current situation of the county is an important step that must be undertaken before the community can start setting strategic goals. You can't know where you want to go if you don't know where you are!

This phase will include research and data collection from publicly available data sources, as well as one-on-one confidential interviews of key community and business leaders, a driving tour, and a business survey.

Phases of the Project

The strategic planning process has several phases. Though we have formally moved into the Assessment Phase, we will continue to expand the Steering Committee, which is a key part of the Initiation and Organization Phase. The graphic below illustrates the phases.

Assessment Methods

- ✓ 3 Town Hall Meetings (~ 120 people)
- ✓ 25 Interviews
- ✓ County Tour
- ✓ Business Survey (136 surveys completed)
- ✓ Community Development Best Practices and Strategic Planning Experience
- ✓ Mining existing data from county and public sources



Demographic & Economic Base Highlights



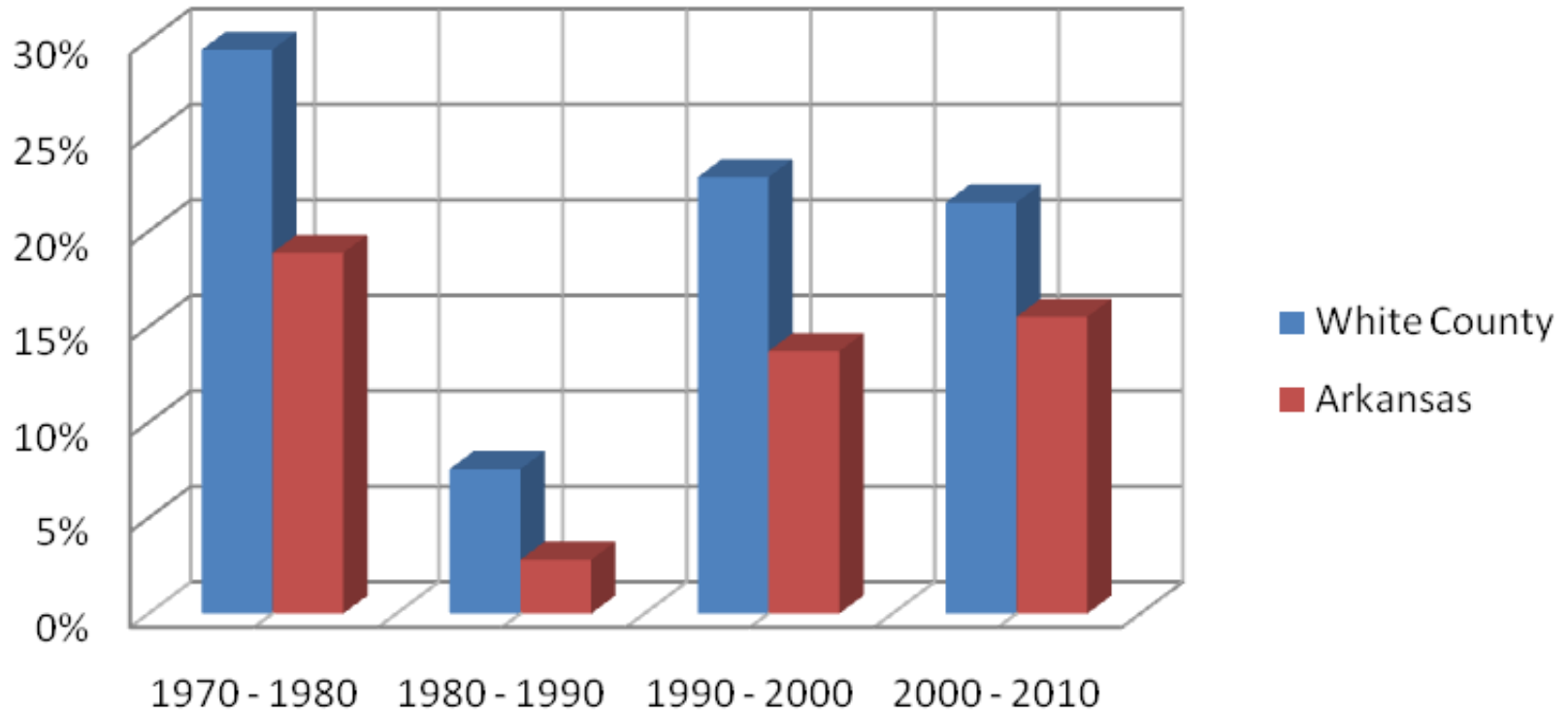
Demographic Summary

Demographics at a Glance, White County, 2006	
Population	72,560
Households	27,454
Average Household Size	2.5
Owner Occupied Housing	19,691
Renter Occupied Housing	7,763
Median Age	36

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey



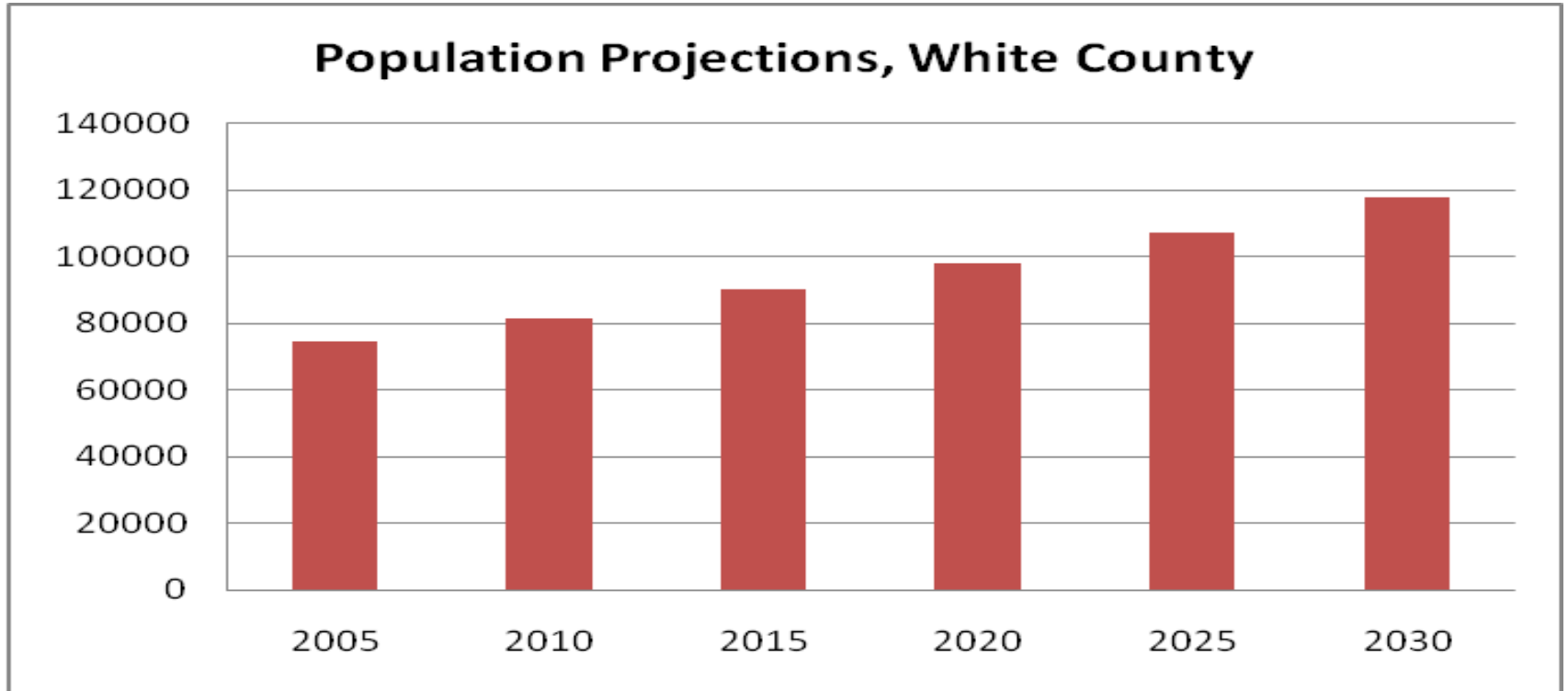
Population Trends Change 1970 - 2010



Source: UALR's Institute for Economic Advancement State Data Center



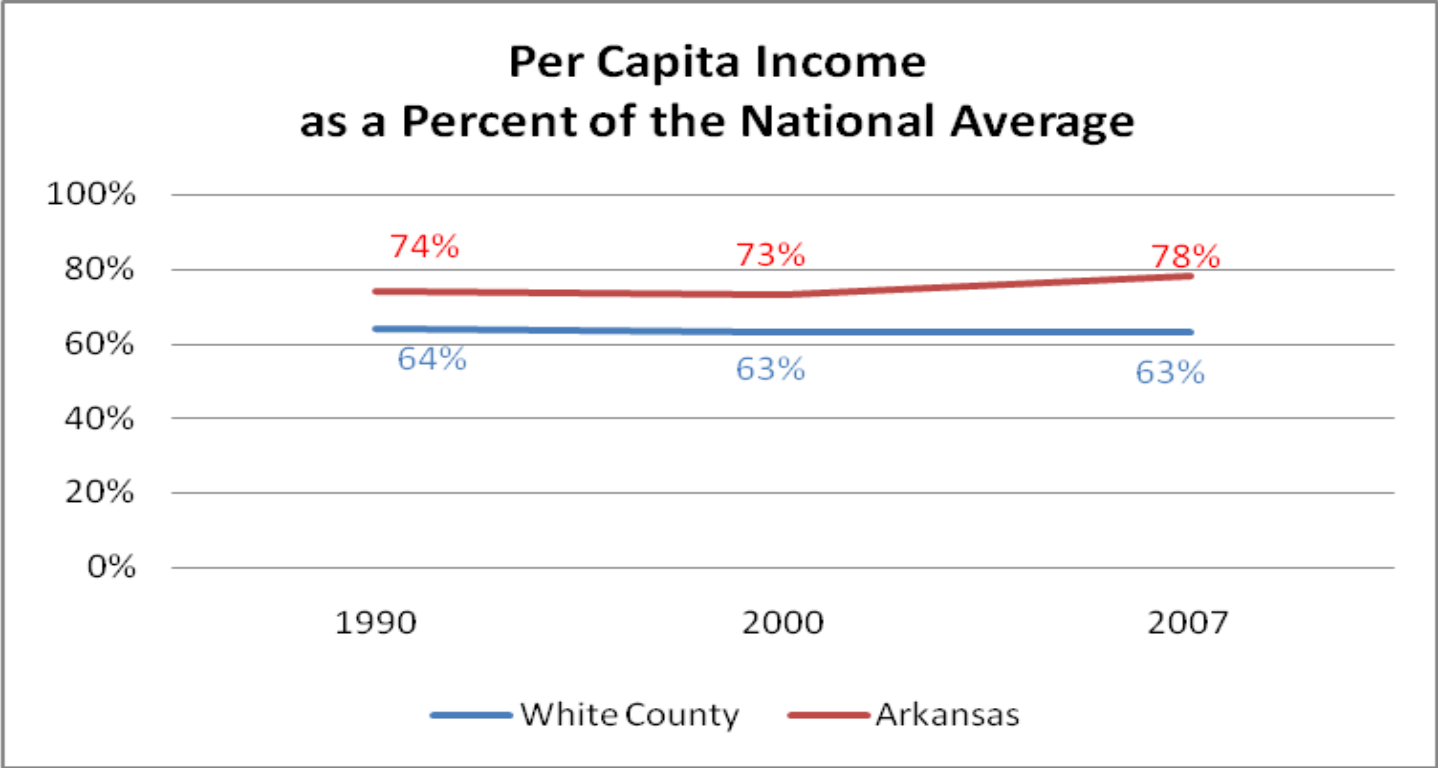
Population Projections



Source: UALR's Institute for Economic Advancement State Data Center



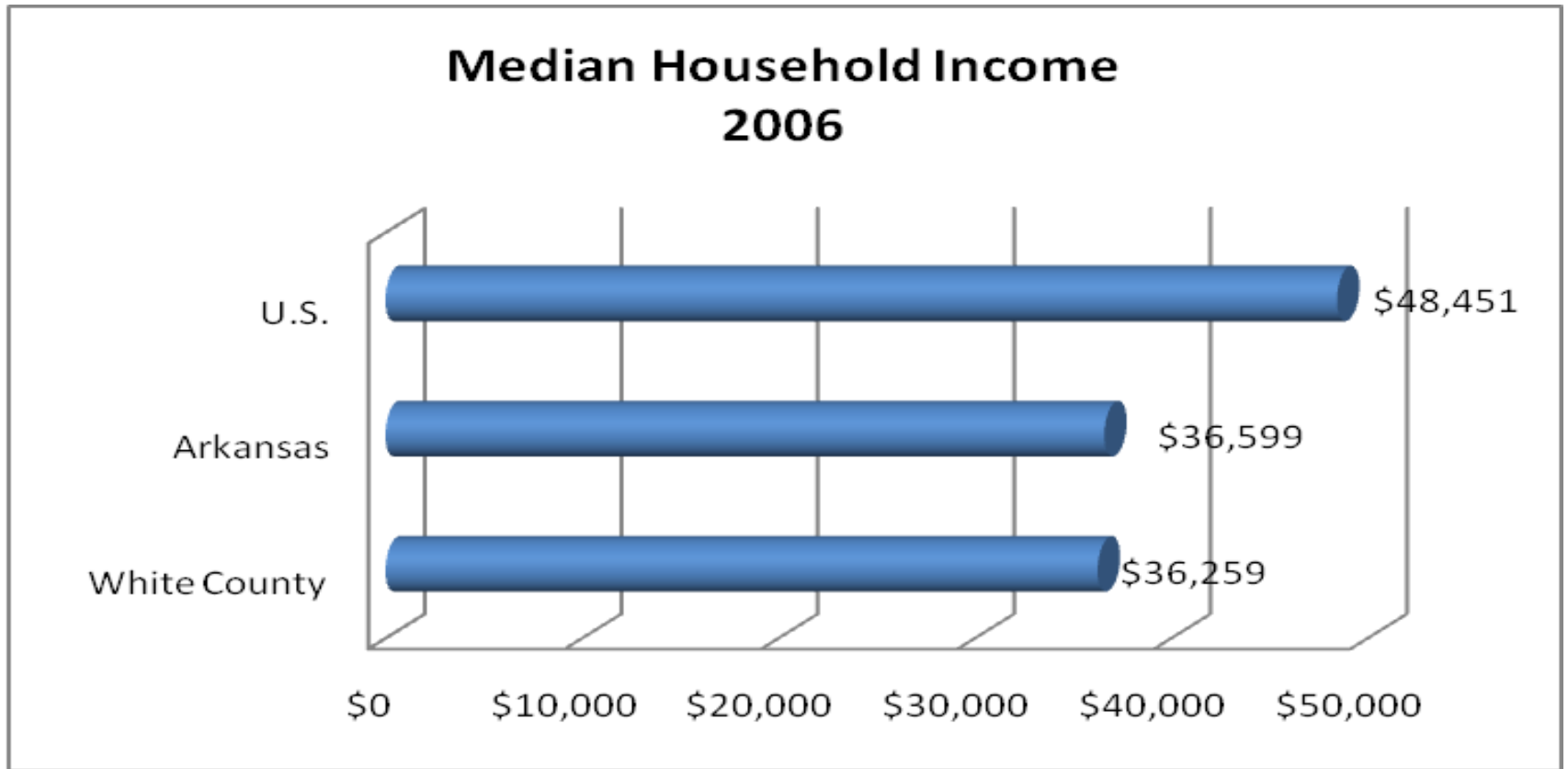
Income



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis



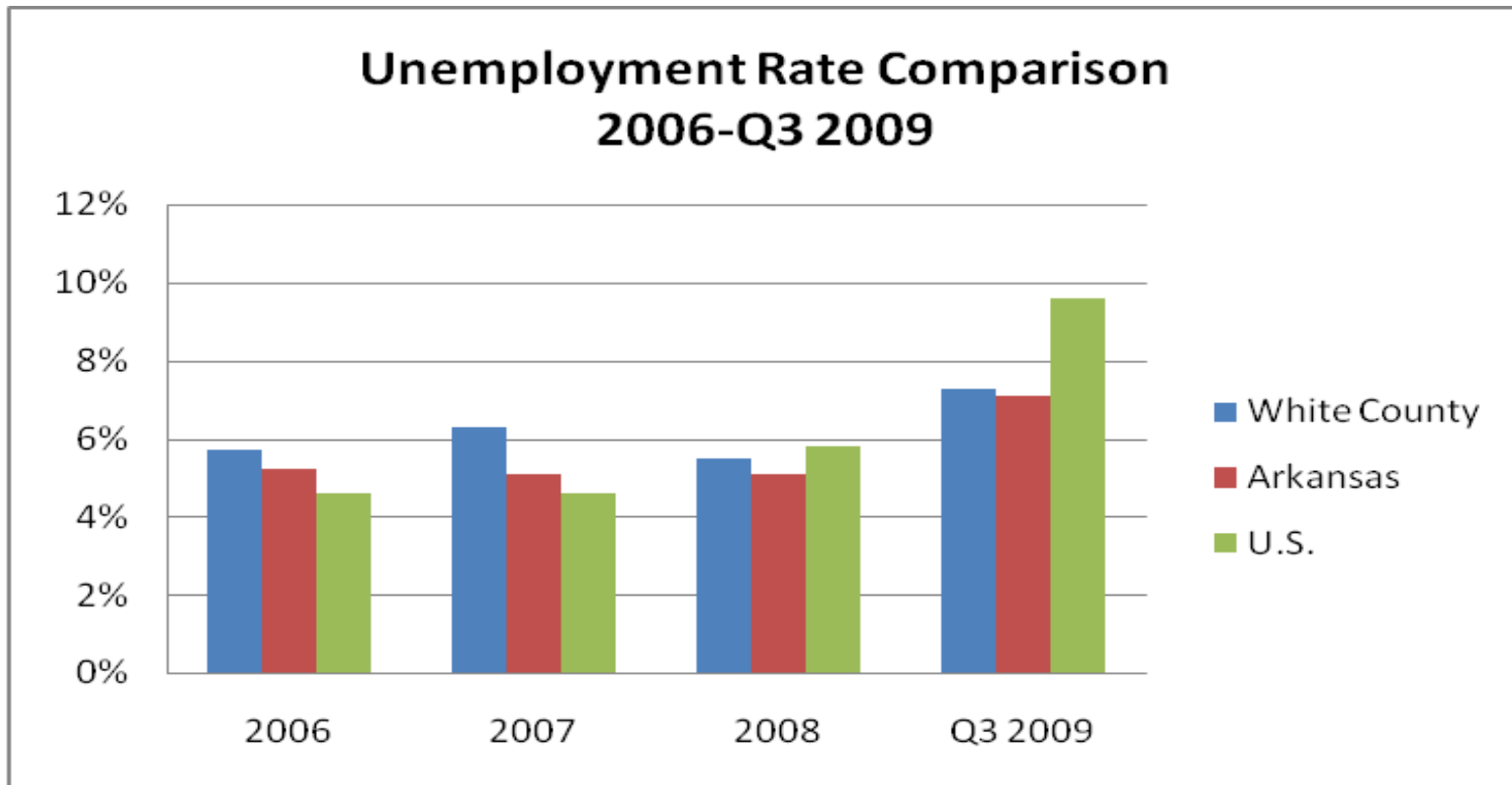
Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey



Unemployment Rate



Source: Discover Arkansas

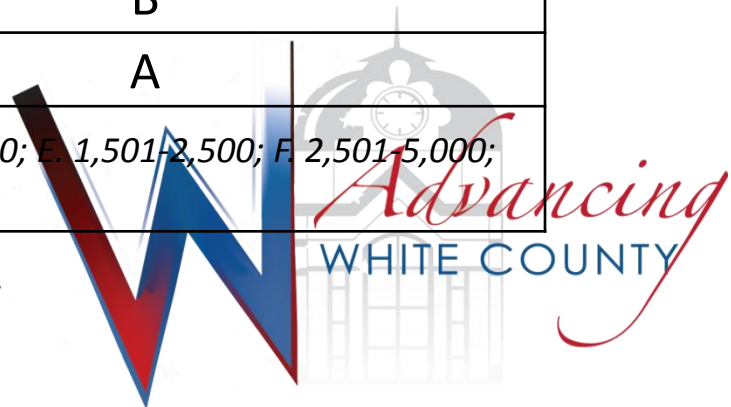


White County Major Employers

White County Major Employers	
Employer	Employee Code*
Wal-Mart	E
White County Medical Center	D
Harding University	C
Land O Frost	C
Arkansas State University	B
Beebe School District	B
Searcy School District	B
The Bryce Company	B
Vickers, Inc.	B
Bald Knob School District	A

* Employee Code: A. 75-250; B. 251-500; C. 501-1,000; D. 1,001-1,500; E. 1,501-2,500; F. 2,501-5,000; G. 5,000-10,000

Source: Arkansas Economic Development Commission, as cited in Searcy Chamber of Commerce power point presentation, March 2009



Commuting Patterns

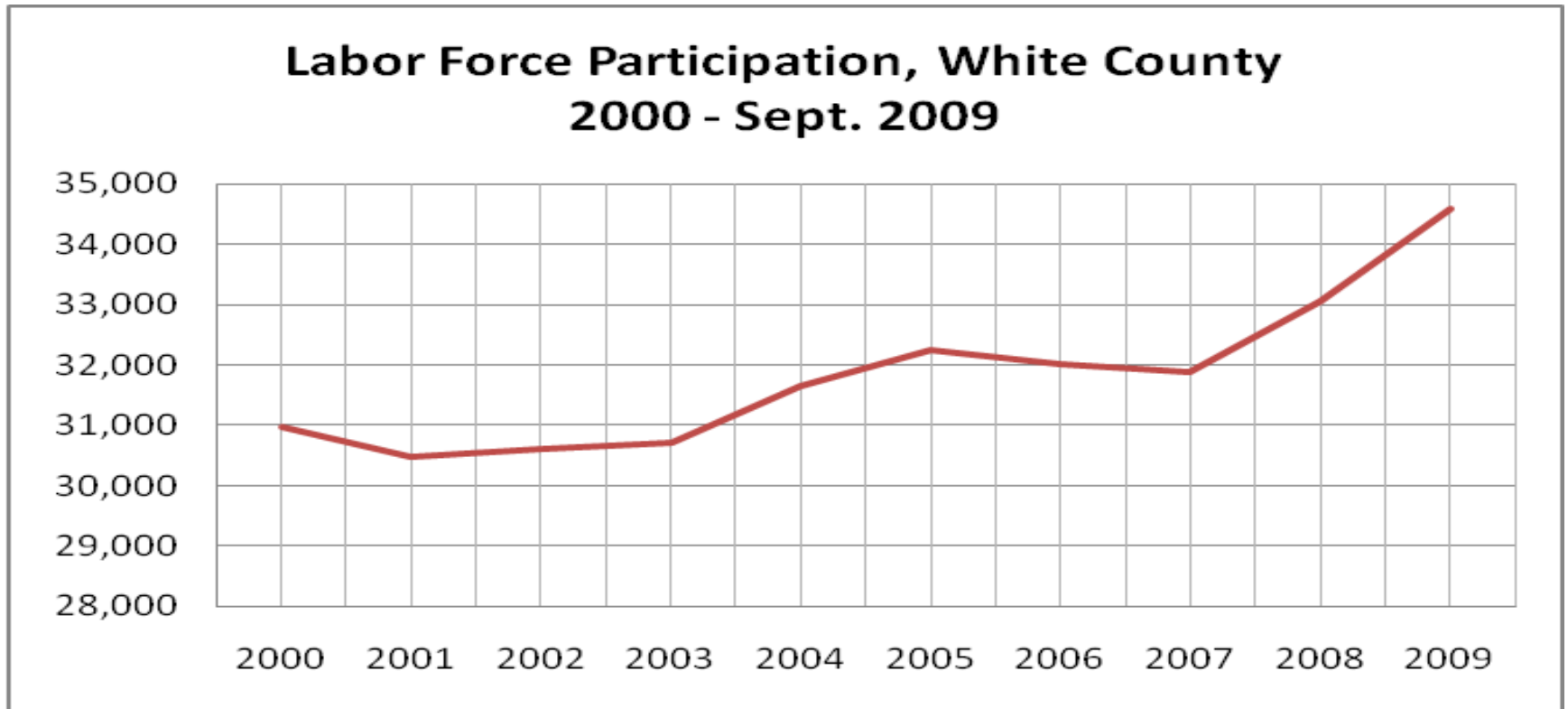
White County Commuting Patterns, Selected Counties			
County	Live in White Co./Work Outside	Live Outside/Work in White Co.	Net Gain (+) or Loss (-)
Cleburne	415	780	365
Faulkner	458	262	-196
Independence	290	338	48
Jackson	167	503	336
Lonoke	917	656	-261
Pulaski	3,546	442	-3,104

There is a net daily loss of 2,742 workers commuting out of White County



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 data, cited in Searcy Chamber of Commerce power point presentation, March 2009.

Labor Force



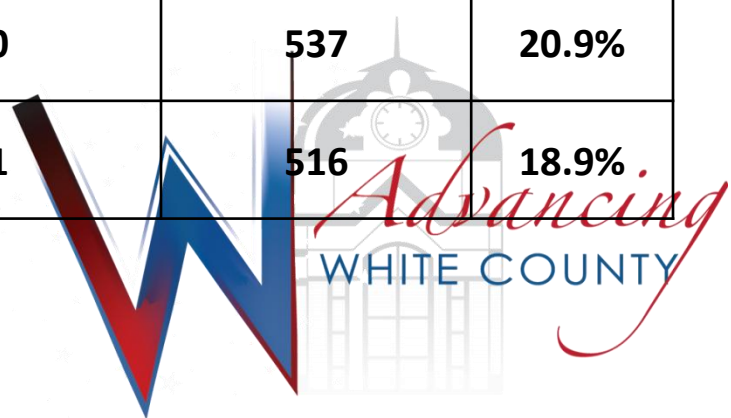
Source: Discover Arkansas



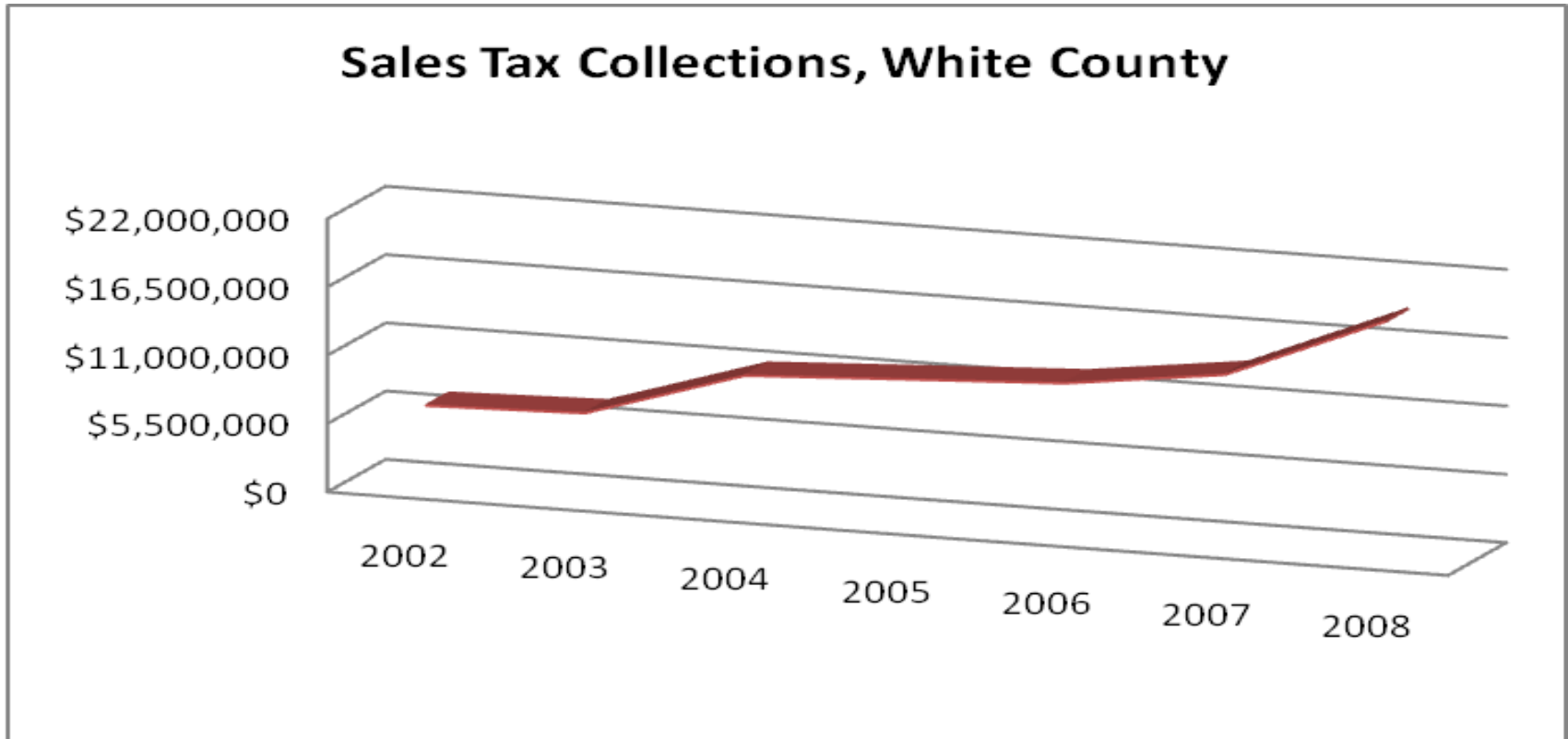
Top Ten Growth Industries, 2006-2016
Ranked by Net Growth

Industry	2006 Base Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Net Growth	% Growth
Food Services and Drinking Places	5,151	6,861	1,710	33.2%
Educational Services	8,862	10,497	1,635	18.4%
Administrative and Support Services	1,962	3,259	1,333	69.2%
Hospitals	3,491	4,484	993	28.4%
Mining	358	1,201	843	235.5%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,842	3,682	840	29.6%
Food Manufacturing	3,801	4,525	724	19%
State Gov't, excluding Education & Hospitals	2,004	2,576	572	28.5%
General Merchandise Stores	2,573	3,110	537	20.9%
Local Gov't, excluding Education & Hospitals	2,725	3,241	516	18.9%

Source: Discover Arkansas



Sales Tax Collections



Source: Department of Finance & Administration



Education

Education Indicators, White County School Districts, 2008

	Bald Knob	Beebe	Bradford	Pangburn	River view	Rose Bud	Searcy	White County	Arkansas
4 th Grade Literacy*	71.9	75	94.1	72.1	84.7	73.1	94.4	81.5	67.8
4 th Grade Math*	85.4	85.1	100	78.7	76.5	88.5	86.3	83.3	75.1
8 th Grade Literacy*	72.4	78.5	78.6	69.8	79.4	70	86.3	74.5	68.1
8 th Grade Math*	57.1	62.6	59.5	62.8	75	5	74.9	51.1	58
11 th Grade Literacy*	71.9	61.4	46.3	43.4	48.1	42.2	63.2	67.5	52.6
Dropout Rate	3.3	2.9	0	0.6	1.3	4.7	2.2	1.7	3.3
Graduation Rate	75.5	81.02	97.44	98.36	91.03	83.95	80.77	96.4	68.2
College Remediation Rate	37.7	45	60.9	17.2	56.8	48.5	27.5	57.7	46.3
Avg. ACT Score	21.4	21.2	20.5	23	19.6	21.4	23	20.1	20.99
Enrollment	1,319	3,072	529	722	1,270	833	3,857	707	466,391

*Percent Proficient and above



Source: Arkansas Department of Education, School Report Cards
<http://normessasweb.uark.edu/schoolperformance/index.html>

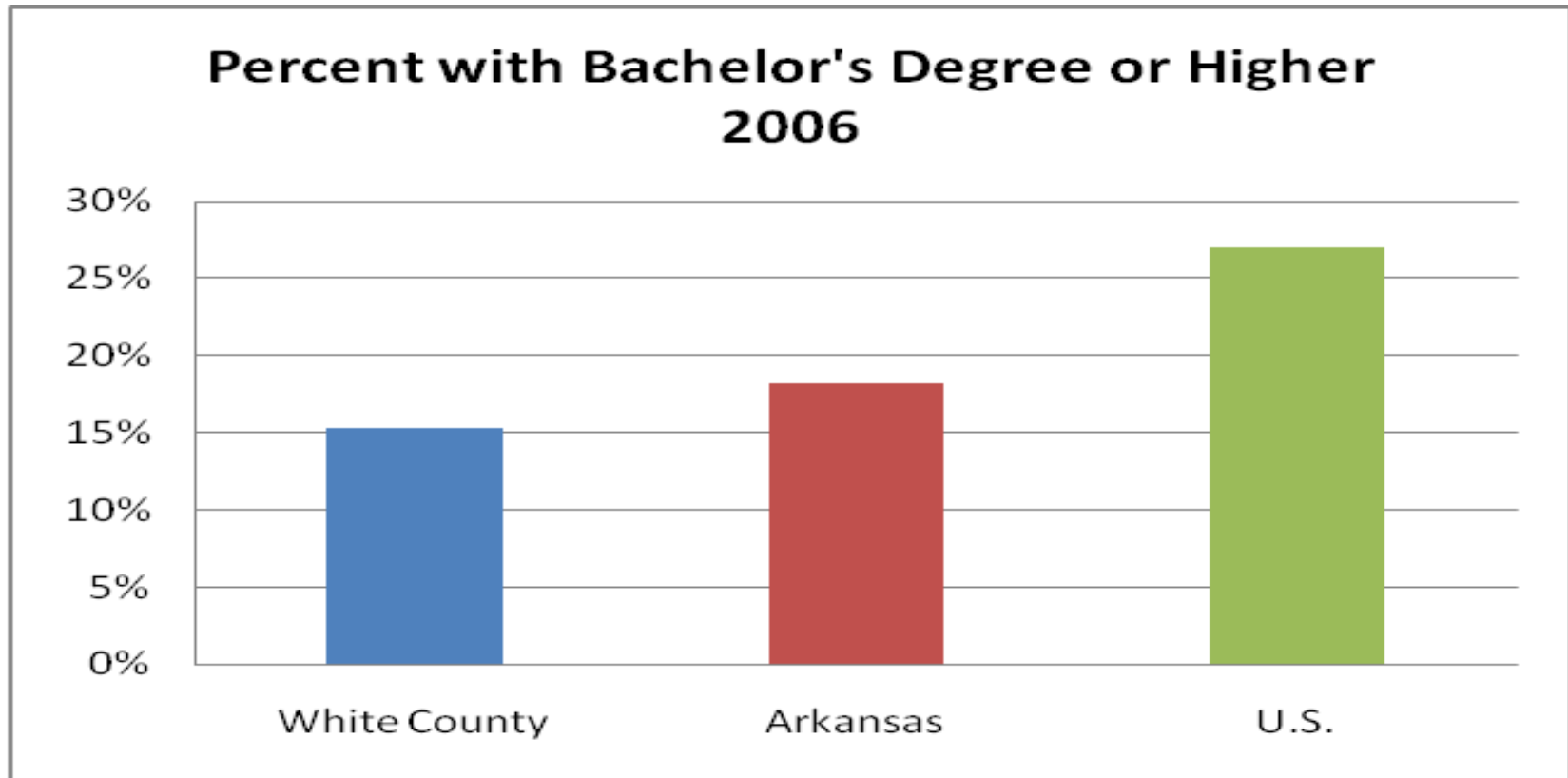
Education

Education Attainment						
	White County		Arkansas		United States	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Population Age 25+	46,066	--	1,847,325	--	195,923,824	--
Less than 9 th Grade	4,969	10.79 %	136,143	7.37%	12,743,555	6.50%
9 th -12 th Grade, no diploma	5,351	11.62%	223,906	12.12%	18,502,540	9.44%
High School Diploma or GED	18,232	39.58%	671,500	36.35%	59,123,954	30.18%
Some college, no degree	8,648	18.77%	378,534	20.49%	38,185,678	19.49%
Associate's Degree	1,801	3.91%	100,619	5.45%	14,486,202	7.39%
Bachelor's Degree	3,830	8.31 %	221,233	11.98%	33,496,187	17.1%
Professional Degree	3,235	7.02%	115,390	6.25%	19,394,708	9.9%
High School Graduate or Higher	--	77.6%	--	80.5%	--	84.1%
Bachelor Degree or Higher	--	15.3%	--	18.2%	--	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey



Education



Source: Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey



Interviews
September 21-22, 2009
October 28, 2009

Participants
Themes



Interviews: Types of Residents

Mayors

Directors

Business Owners

President's and CEO's

Presidents and Vice Presidents

School Superintendents

Newcomers to White County

Long-term residents

Life-time residents



Interviews: Communities & Topics

- Communities Represented
 - Bald Knob, Beebe, Bradford, McRae, Rosebud, Searcy
- General Topics
 - Business Climate & **Economic Development**
 - Community Leadership
 - Government regulation/environment
 - **Infrastructure** – traditional and **technology**
 - Quality of Life – 10 factors (**healthcare +9**)
 - Workforce
 - **Education**



Interview Themes: AWC Initiative

This is the first **county wide** initiative and most are enthusiastic about the possibilities of economic development. Some feel that “key leaders” need to “own” and take part in Advancing White County. Certain issues, efforts and business relations will need to be addressed in the initiative, but most believe this is a process that could “open their eyes” to “**untapped potential**” to compete as a county within Arkansas.



Interviews: Business Climate

It is good in some aspects and lacking in others. White County (WC) is open to new business, due to the lack of 'burdensome regulations' and space in local communities, but it has lost businesses in the past due to land and buildings that were not "shovel ready." One resident expressed that on a scale from 1-10 White County is a 5, or "**in the middle.**" White County has lost a fair amount of manufacturing businesses in recent years which has in turn produced less jobs. There are two Wal-Mart distribution centers, but many believe that if Wal-Mart left White County would be in trouble.



Business Climate (continued)

The natural gas industry has kept the Business Climate from feeling the major economic ripples, but non-profits and other businesses are still feeling a major change. White County faces major obstacles in the current Business Climate. Some believe that leaders in most communities need more experience in CED, as well as there is no internal business development happening, either for new or existing businesses. Searcy “drives” the business climate in White County and many would like to see a large company come to the area.



Education

Education in White County is a high priority for most citizens. Most talk highly about the school districts in the county, and they are touted as some of the best in the state. Some of the smaller communities have had to fight to keep their schools and others have had to consolidate, while others have experienced growing pains due to the population increase in the county.



Education (Continued)

Higher Education is a strength and an asset for White County. ASU-Beebe and Harding are strong institutions that many students from White County attend. Harding is a known nationwide and is the nation's fastest growing private institution. ASU is seen not only as a good provider of education, but also customized training for industry. Overall, White County has a strong hold on education compared to the State of Arkansas, with the major drawback being the comparative low number of residents with college degrees.



Education (Continued)

- The highest results in the business survey supported residents pride in education!
- Overall quality of K-12 system = **4.07**
- Overall quality of community/technical colleges = **4.0**
- Overall quality of colleges & universities = **4.02**



Healthcare

In White County Health Care and Medical Services are adequate to some while others are not confident in the services the county has available. Many residents tend to go out of the county for medical services. It is hard to recruit doctors to the area, and there is a need for rural clinics and pharmacies. The overall opinion is that the medical services in White County are good, but limited. Most residents still prefer to go out of town for “serious” or specialty medical needs.



Healthcare (continued)

Many interviewees indicated they felt the quality of medical care was actually better when there were two hospitals. Competition resulted in a better quality and range of services being offered. Some indicated now that there is only one hospital, it is a monopoly that yields adequate, but not excellent care.



Infrastructure

The Infrastructure of White County is in need of updates and changes due to recent growth in the county. The roads are a major concern for all in the county. Heavy trucks and usage by the natural gas industry have damaged the roads. Another concern is the water management and sewage system. Drainage of rains and other issues in water are major issues that all communities in the county face.



Infrastructure (continued)

The airport is a positive part of White County that has a small amount of private and corporate traffic come in and out of. If needed a flight to Little Rock is easily arranged. There is no easy access to Memphis, and many believe they are in need of a bypass or highway that would make access to Memphis easier.



Technology

Most interviewees are not yet making the connection between high-speed, affordable internet access and economic development. Answers to the business survey show that most people who answered the survey have access to high speed internet and use it frequently to conduct business. However, the interviews revealed that in parts of the county, both high speed internet access and cell phone coverage are spotty.



Business Survey
October 12 – November 1, 2009



Business Survey

- Sent out electronically to Bald Knob, Beebe, and Searcy
- Sent out hard copies to Bald Knob, Bradford, McRae, Pangburn, and Rose Bud
- Approx 600 surveys went out, and 136 were returned for a rate of return of 22.67%, but the rate of return was probably higher due to duplication of recipients



Business Survey

- 41% of businesses do 75 – 99% of their sales within the region, and 20% of respondents have 100 percent of their sales within the region.
- 89.1% of businesses are headquartered in the region
- 43.8% of respondents were the Owners, Presidents, or Vice Presidents of companies in White County, and 71% had lived in the region for 15 years or more



Business Survey

- 86.9% rated the region as a good, very good, or excellent location for their business to succeed, and 62.3% said they believe the quality of the region will improve over the next five years
- An overwhelming number of the respondents, 95.3 %, have access to high-speed internet, and 94.6% use the internet more than once a week
- Universities in the area were consistently cited as being valuable to respondents' business innovation.
- On questions related to the business and civic environment of White County, no indicator had an average rating that was below average
- **Many of the factors ranked neutral**



County Tour

October 26, 2009



County Tour

- Most significant findings were the developments related to natural gas industry (housing, storage, drill sites, equipment mechanics, traffic)
- Beautiful area with many natural and man-made assets
- Available land and buildings



White County Competitive Factors Detailed in the Discovery Report

1. Available Land & Buildings
2. Business, Political & Economic Climate
3. Taxes & Incentives
4. Workforce
5. Education
6. Utilities & Infrastructure
7. Transportation & Market Access
8. Quality of Life



What do we do with this information?

1. Think about the future you want to see for White County—it's up to you.
2. Think about the difference between a plan that sits on a shelf and a living document and process that guides major county decisions and investments
3. Think about who isn't yet engaged that needs to for this to **really** work.
4. Think about who needs to be on the planning teams to be formed in December.



Planning Committees

1. Economic Development
2. Education
3. Health Care
4. Infrastructure
5. Technology



What will the planning committees do?

- Select a team leader
- Meet as a group three times with us
- Use forms/materials we provide (see sample)
- Develop 3-5 big goals, each with specific action times, responsible parties, and some idea of general cost and source of funding



Questions / Discussion?



Next Steps

- We complete competitive assessment/ recommendations, post on website for input/review
- Now through December 15 form committees
 - Establish committee chairs (co-chairs?)
 - Build committee membership (recommend 6-8 people)
- January & February Committee Meetings
- March – Next Steering Committee Meeting
 - Each committee to give update
 - Develop vision for strategic plan with Executive Committee



Closing Remarks and THANK YOU!

