

Advancing White County Strategic Plan



2010-2015

Letters of Endorsement

Insert letters

Message from Project Co-Chairs

Accepting the challenge from Governor Beebe to develop a plan for White County has been a rewarding experience. As citizens from across our county gathered in meetings to speak toward the future of White County, the result is a plan called Advancing White County. We have sought to become one mind and voice to advance our county for the sake of our children and grandchildren. As a citizen of White County, I am proud to reside in a county with so many resources. As White County Judge, I am honored to serve the dedicated citizens of White County. As we recognize our wealth of resources, we also seek to improve our weaknesses. Advancing White County will allow us to continue on the path of excellence. We stand on the threshold of a new era, a new challenge to advance our county into new heights of opportunity. Opportunities of excellence in education, health care and economic development. Advancing White County will help us focus on the challenges of providing adequate infrastructure needs throughout our county. Advancing White County will urge us toward a continued bright future. The plan is a living document. As our needs change, so does our plan. Advancing White County will require us to be on the move. Continuing to progress, not resting on our laurels. I am excited about Advancing White County. Come join us as we begin the Advance.

I would like to express my thanks to Mayor LaForce for her leadership in the planning process. A word of thanks for Kelly and Amy for their guidance along the way. Now **let's go Advance White County.**

Yours Truly,

County Judge Michael Lincoln
Advancing White County Co-Chair

In October 2008 Governor Mike Beebe began an unprecedented state-wide effort to unite Arkansas business, education, community and government leaders in a common vision for continued education improvement and greater economic prosperity. Our challenge as one of 75 counties was to implement a local community assessment and create a strategic plan of action that would make White County a better place to live, learn and work and thereby do our part to build a brighter economic future not only for White County, but for all of Arkansas.

From the Governor's initial charge, "Advancing White County" was born. As local government, business and community leaders began meeting together, brainstorming and offering venues for public involvement and input, we began to realize what a huge undertaking this was going to be. We immediately realized that we needed professional assistance in this endeavor and that would require a financial buy-in. I would like to personally express my appreciation to White County Judge Michael Lincoln and the White County Quorum Court who financed this endeavor, as they realized the importance of envisioning a plan for our future. I also want to thank Entergy's Teamwork Arkansas for their financial contribution to the project. Advancing White County enlisted the assistance of a professional team of community development facilitators from the University of Central Arkansas to steer us through this process and deliver the final product. We certainly appreciate the expertise and persistence of our valuable team which consisted of Kelly Lyon, UCA Executive Director of CDI (Community Development Institute), Amy Whitehead, and Ancil Lea.

The final Strategic Plan Document initiated from the establishment of the steering committee, the discovery process consisting of personal interviews and business surveys, and the development and planning of the four basic committees: Economic Development, Education, Infrastructure/Transportation and Medical Services/Facilities. Encompassing the discovery information and dialogue we now have finalized goals and objectives and envisioned action items resulting from the total fourteen month effort.

Our Advancing White County Strategic Plan is our road map to accomplishing a stronger economy for White County. Through this process we have developed a united team of business and government leaders who now have common goals and objectives to move forward together. I have been most proud of the united effort from every area of White County, which I believe has been the greatest achievement of this entire process. We need to stay united as we implement and continually update and revise our plan in the future.

United we stand and together we can build a brighter future for all.

Sincerely,

Searcy Mayor Belinda LaForce
Advancing White County Co-Chair

Plan Initiation

Background

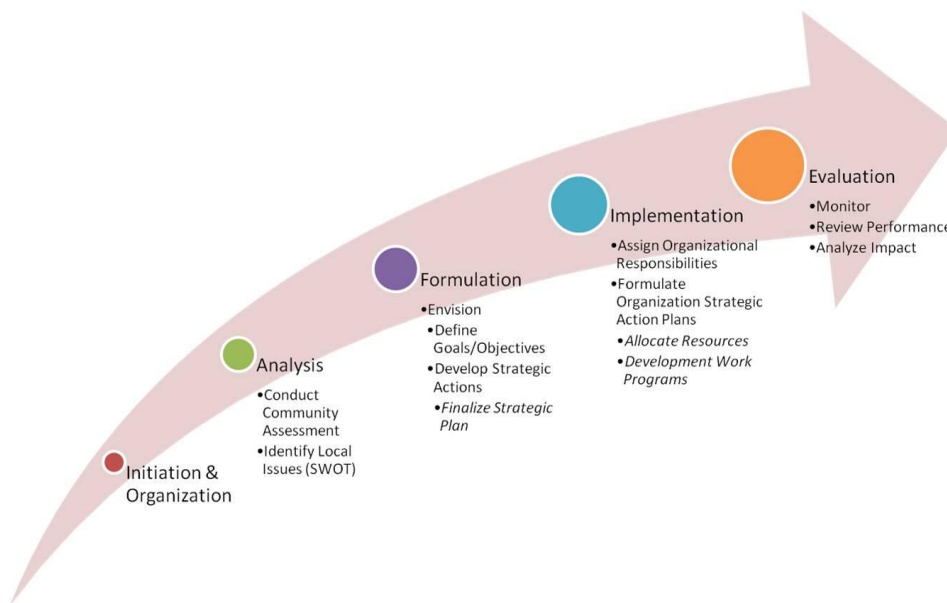
Advancing White County is a comprehensive community and economic development strategic planning project for White County, Arkansas. This project began in May 2009, and was jump-started by Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe’s Arkansas Works Summit — a call-to-action for all 75 Arkansas counties to go through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

Co-chaired by County Judge Michael Lincoln and Searcy Mayor Belinda LaForce, this project has resulted in a completed assessment and strategic goals for the county. Participation was open to all citizens and stakeholders who wanted input into the county’s future.



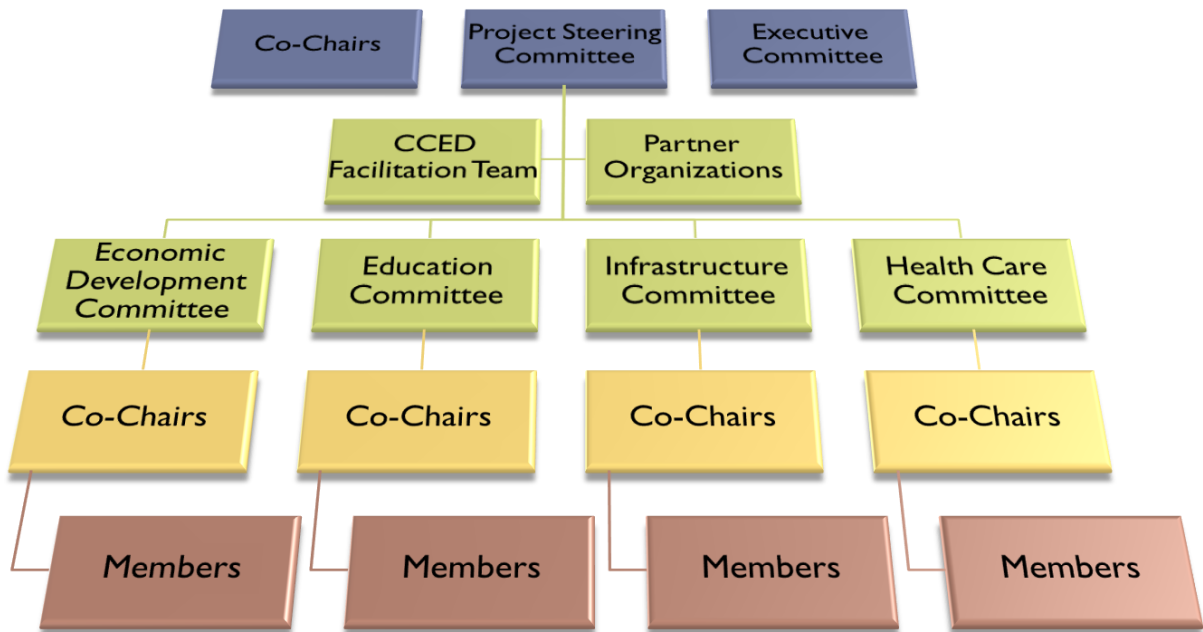
Planning Process

This project followed the community development strategic planning process, which is defined by inclusiveness and broad public participation, analysis and assessment of the community’s current situation, and formulation of a vision and strategic goals.



Structure of the Project

An illustration of the project structure is offered below. The project Co-Chairs and Executive Committee helped guide some of the major decisions of the project. This guidance, along with input from the Steering Committee, drove the process. The facilitation team was in place to help keep momentum going and to provide administrative support for the effort. Four committees were staffed by steering committee members, and participation was open to any interested individual in the county.



Mission Statement

A kick-off meeting was held on Friday, May 1, 2009 at the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce. At the first meeting, a mission statement for the planning process was developed, and plans for town hall meetings were outlined.

The mission state for the strategic planning process is:

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

Key components of this statement were identified by asking the participants:

- What core values should this project embody?
- What strategies should be used to make this project successful?
- Who should participate in this process to make it successful?
- Who will benefit from this process?

Expansion of Steering Committee

Community development projects work best when a broad cross-section of stakeholders is engaged in the planning process. To reach out to different parts of the county and expand the steering committee, a series of Town Hall Meetings were held. On June 22-23, meetings were held in Beebe, Bald Knob, and Rose Bud with a total of 120 people in attendance. Anyone in the county could attend any of the meetings. At these meetings the participants voted on whether or not to continue the project, with a unanimous vote to continue. Participants also voted on a logo/branding for the initiative, and gave input on what they believed to be the county's assets, barriers, and their wishes for the future.



Assessment

To understand the county's current situation, an assessment was conducted. A Discovery Report was issued that provided a demographic and economic base analysis, with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified.

The final report was a result of research and data collection from publicly available data sources, as well as one-on-one confidential interviews of key community and business leaders, three town hall meetings, a driving tour, and a business survey. The report is not meant to be exhaustive, due to the resources available for the project, but rather a starting point and a robust response to the county-wide assessment called for by the Arkansas Works Initiative.

The Discovery Report, this strategic plan, and all meeting presentations and minutes can be accessed online at www.advancingwhitecounty.org.

Committee Deliberation

After the assessment was completed, committees were formed to develop strategic goals and action items in four areas: Economic Development, Education, Infrastructure, and Health Care. Anyone could participate on these committees.

It was recognized that the committees would not be able to address every issue. The committees were charged with meeting at least three times to brainstorm and find consensus on three to five goals, knowing that the plan could be updated at a future time to reflect changing circumstances and completed goals. Committee work was conducted during the months of February - April 2010.

Vision Statement

After reviewing the goals and strategic action items of the four committees, the Executive Committee was able to draft a vision statement that summarized the future, desired state of the community. Instead of dictating the vision to the committees on the front-end, this allowed the vision to surface organically, as a result of citizen input in the goal-setting process.

By 2015, White County will be established as a county of sound economic growth for business, industry, and agriculture, supported by a high quality of life. By leveraging its assets in health care and medicine, natural gas, and educational opportunities, White County will be known as a regional leader in community and economic development.

The Plan

This plan was constructed to serve as a road map for community and economic development efforts in White County, Arkansas through 2015. While this strategic plan is not comprehensive—it does not attempt to address every issue or priority in the county—it does provide a prioritized set of goals to guide county leaders and organizations in their development efforts.

Overarching Priorities and Summary of Committee Goals

The Advancing White County Executive Committee developed two overarching priorities that encapsulate the broad themes of the four committees' goals. These overarching priorities, as well as a summary of each committee's goals are offered below. The goals and action items for each committee are then listed in further detail in following sections.

Overarching Priorities:

- Help Citizens and Businesses in White County understand that they are a valued piece of the development efforts of the community. The county can help others understand their role in community and economic development by:
 - a. Working with the media to include and incorporate them in economic development efforts. A media relations effort is important to the success of the community, and influences how potential investors or residents view the area. Information, particularly digital media communications, is a key way that many interested parties learn about what is happening in your community.
 - b. Informing local educators and students regarding the skills needed for a 21st century workforce, the personal and professional opportunities available in the county, and how leaders and organizations are working together to improve upon the high quality of life in White County for current and future generations.
 - c. Supporting businesses in White County through business retention and expansion efforts. By taking care of the businesses that are currently in the county, and working to create a healthy climate for conducting business, the county will become a more attractive place for new investment.

- Promote the high quality of life of White County by:
 - a. Utilizing existing structures and programs to develop strategies for funding and improvement of quality of life in the county. This includes educating the public on how quality of life impacts economic development, ways to improve quality of life, and how initiatives might be funded on the community or county level.
 - b. Encouraging individual cities to develop and implement their own comprehensive growth and land use documents, which could address quality of life issues such as transportation and infrastructure, public safety, parks and recreation, downtown beautification and revitalization, etc. Individual communities must take charge of their own destiny for White County as a whole to move in a positive direction.
 - c. Reinforcing many of the assets and goals already identified in the Advancing White County process, namely the high quality of the county's educational opportunities, the state-of-the-art medical facilities and services available in the area, and the potential for increased tourism and retiree attraction.

The goals of this plan are not ranked in any particular order. Goal priorities will fluctuate based on the needs, opportunities, and funding that exists at any given time. So while the goals may be listed numerically (1, 2, 3, etc.) within the body of the plan, this is not necessarily a reflection of what will be worked on or accomplished first, second, or third.

Summary of Economic Development Goals

- Increase business development through strategic marketing, business recruitment, retention and expansion efforts
- Promote entrepreneurship and small business development
- Continue to develop and provide quality workforce development opportunities
- Form collaborative partnerships to more effectively promote locations
- Improve the business climate
- Work with natural gas companies to maximize current economic opportunities related to the Fayetteville Shale Play

Summary of Education Goals

- Increase the education level of citizens by decreasing drop-out rates and increasing graduation rates at secondary and post-secondary institutions
- Improve coordination of education by establishing methods for P-16 educational organizations to communicate, coordinate efforts, and align curriculum
- Engage parents in partnerships that support education
- Prepare students for success in kindergarten
- Create a secondary/postsecondary partnership to raise awareness of available postsecondary programs

Summary of Infrastructure Goals

- Improve the roadway transportation infrastructure
- Improve the overall infrastructure (railroads, water/wastewater, and technology and communication)

Summary of Health Care Goals

- Initiate a transportation system to ensure access to health care providers
- Enhance awareness of health care resources that are available
- Identify areas of preventative care that need focused resources and attention
- Develop communication between educational providers and health care businesses regarding workforce needs in the health care fields

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Economic Development

Economic Development emerged as a strong priority for the county, with movement seen towards a county-wide approach. The business climate in White County was seen by residents as good, and business survey participants were optimistic about conducting business in White County over the next five years. The natural gas industry was acknowledged as having a buoying effect for the community, and stakeholders want to leverage the Fayetteville Shale exploration for long-term development efforts. The county has active workforce development opportunities to serve and drive the labor force in the area, which are an asset for the county. These strengths influenced the goals and actions outlined in this section.

Goal # 1 - Increase Business Development in White County through strategic marketing, as well as businesses recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts

- a) Develop Formal Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program to identify expansion and retention opportunities and develop relationships with existing industries. Determine manufacturing, professional and business strengths in the county, and develop opportunities to capitalize on those strengths. Long term results include new and retained jobs, additional capital investment, and retention of current businesses in the county. Responsible organizations include Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Commissions, and the county.
- B) Seek to purchase and develop property to be used for multiple economic development purposes, which would include rail-served sites, Industrial land and a Technology Park. Estimated costs for land acquisition and development are \$1 million to \$15 million, and would directly impact the county's ability to attract new businesses, and retain businesses that would like to expand.
- C) Encourage each city in White County to list their available buildings and sites that meet the requisite requirements on the Arkansas Site Selection website that serves as the central database for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Teamwork Arkansas and the Metro Little Rock Regional Alliance. <http://www.arkansassiteselection.com/>.
- D) Encourage each city in White County to list their available buildings and sites that do not meet the Arkansas Site Selection minimum criteria (including industrial,

commercial and office space) on the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce website to provide a primary and centralized building and site database for all business opportunities in the county.

<http://www.searcychamber.com/economic-development/available-buildings-and-sites>. Emphasize the website www.searcychamber.com as the primary marketing tool for the county, which will result in a single source of economic development information, maintained by a full-time, professional staff.

- E) Continue to participate in the Metro Little Rock Alliance (MLRA), and encourage all economic development organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and cities in White County to participate. The estimated annual cost is \$23,000, and will result in additional marketing of the county, and the ability to participate in targeted recruitment of those industries identified as a competitive fit for the region, as outlined in the MLRA and AEDC strategic plans.
- F) Work with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to enhance the Henry Gray/Hurricane Game reserve to increase its appeal to tourists. Long term, pursue the possible creation of a County/State Park along the Little Red River. Not only will this investment result in an enhanced marketability and quality of life for the county, but it will also increase tourism, and thus increase tax revenues and tourism-related business development. Cost-sharing strategies among the county, cities, Chambers, and economic development organizations should be identified, and may include the seeking of state and federal grant monies.
- G) Expand and improve the Searcy Municipal Airport and the Instrument Landing System (ILS) opportunities. Improved infrastructure at the airport will improve the attractiveness of White County as a centrally located, accessible area in which to conduct business.
- H) Support efforts of the White County Extension Office and Farm Bureau to promote Agriculture as a viable business development opportunity within the county.

Goal # 2 – Promote entrepreneurship and small business development within White County

- A) Create a business incubator center, which will promote entrepreneurship and small business development in the county. Focus on encouraging and assisting entrepreneurs that have a focus on technology. In addition to serving as an incubator, this facility could also be used to educate young people about

entrepreneurship and build the entrepreneurial spirit of the community. To assist with this and other entrepreneurial efforts, create a committee of ten to twenty successful small business executives, which could be structured under the wing of the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce.

- B) Work with Harding University, ASU-Beebe, and ASU-Searcy to encourage current students and alumni to establish new businesses, or to relocate their current business, in White County.
- C) Provide resources and assistance to prospective and current small business owners through partnerships with the ASU-Beebe Small Business Center and the Arkansas Small Business Technology & Development Center. Assistance to potential and current entrepreneurs will promote investment within the county and increase the probability of long-term success of local business ventures.

Goal #3 – Continue to develop and provide quality workforce development opportunities for citizens and businesses in White County

- A) Increase the number of workers with post-secondary training through increased enrollment and retention in programs offered through ASU-Searcy, ASU-Beebe, and Harding University. This will result in a competitively trained workforce that has an improved earning potential.
- B) Educate and promote local businesses participation in the Governor’s Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program, which will increase the number of quality, work-ready people in the county’s labor force. A focus on skill set-based job placement will help ensure success in the workplace and decreased employee turn-over.
- C) Work to identify the characteristics that local employers want from their employees, and educate local educators and students regarding expectations for a 21st century workforce. This is a collaborative opportunity that will result in educational curriculum that is tailored to the workforce needs of the business community.
- D) Develop a county-wide leadership community and economic development program to renew and engage current and potential leaders, particularly in the younger generation. Use existing resources and civic organizations as the foundation for this initial effort. This will result in a pool of community leaders who understand the needs of the county, and who are trained, ready, and able to assume positions of responsibility within the county.

Goal # 4 - Form Collaborative Partnerships to more effectively promote locations within White County

- A) Develop Chambers of Commerce/Economic Development Corporations User Group, made up of volunteer representatives from the local active organizations within the county. This group will be responsible for prospecting for new business and industry, and sharing economic development “best practices.” This User Group would meet on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, with a goal of promoting and providing an organized effort to promote White County.
- B) Explore and promote partnership opportunities with Harding University, ASU-Beebe, ASU-Searcy, White County Medical Center, financial institutions and other private sector businesses. Organizations involved in this effort would include Harding University, ASU-Searcy, ASU-Beebe, White County Medical Center, financial institutions, private sector businesses and all Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations

Goal # 5 - Improve the Business Climate of White County

- A) Investigate the feasibility of creating a dedicated funding source for Economic Development in White County. A dedicated pool of economic development funds would provide flexibility to effectively recruit and compete for new business investments.
- B) Form a Government Relations/Affairs committee to advocate county positions on state and federal legislative issues of particular importance to the business community. This committee would develop a strategy before each legislative session, which will result in a unified lobbying voice for the good of White County.
- C) Promote White County as a premier location for Retirement and Tourism. Focus on enhancing and expanding the recreational opportunities and medical facilities that exist in White County and the surrounding area.
- D) Encourage individuals, organizations, and businesses to buy locally when and where feasible. This keeps local dollars from leaking out of the community, and will keep White County’s wealth circulating in the local economy.

Goal # 6 - Work with natural gas companies on issues impacting White County to maximize current economic opportunities related to the Fayetteville Shale Play

- A) Create a program to promote White County as a leader in the use of natural gas and as a green community through innovative leveraging of natural gas investments. This will position the county as a positive example of a small town taking advantage of a unique economic opportunity.
- B) Seek and secure funding for ASU-Searcy's Floor Hand Training Program. Sources of funding may include natural gas companies and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. This will continue to demonstrate ASU-Searcy's leadership in workforce training.
- C) Explore requirements and encourage the establishment of Natural Gas fueling stations in White County, which will highlight the area as promoting a green agenda, and could result in additional green jobs and investments.
- D) Encourage the conversion to Natural Gas of all municipal fleet vehicles, school districts and various other industries. This will promote the county as a leader in green technology, and result in cost-savings over time.
- E) Host annual Conference on Natural Gas, and invite internationally known speakers such as T. Boone Pickens or Aubrey McClendon to speak.

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Education

White County considers its secondary and higher education institutions as some of its strongest assets, as well as a source of pride. The goals in this section are designed to increase institutions' and students' preparedness to educate for, and participate in, the 21st century economy and its changing workforce needs.

Goal #1 - Increase the education level of citizens in White County by decreasing drop-out rates and increasing graduation rates at secondary and postsecondary institutions

- A) Public school districts, postsecondary institutions, and other educational organizations in the county will make it a priority to communicate to parents and students the correlation between future employment and earnings potential with level of educational attainment. This will require a sustained and concerted outreach and advocacy effort that should result in a heightened awareness of the value of education.
- B) A committee of White County administrators will meet with legislators, the Governor's Office and state education officials to discuss the possibility of offering alternative and innovative routes to graduation, which may include online instruction, distance learning, and night classes. This will result in educational opportunities that are more accessible to the individual needs of the county's students.
- C) Work with the state home school office to gather research on the number of home school students who do not complete high school.
- D) Establish county-wide programs to allow students who have dropped out of school to improve academic skills through access to resources such as computer labs, teaching technology classes, and summer classes, with the ultimate goal of continued educational attainment.

Goal #2 - Improve coordination of education in White County by establishing methods for P-16 educational organizations to communicate, align curriculum and coordinate efforts

- A) A committee will be formed to research student performance from secondary to postsecondary by collecting assessment data.

- B) Representatives from each secondary and postsecondary school will meet to discuss goals, curriculum and ways to improve the process.

Goal #3 - Educational Agencies in White County will employ methods to engage all parents in partnerships that support education

- A) School Districts of White County and postsecondary institutions will attempt to make personal contact with parents and community stakeholders in order to increase parental involvement with students and student activities, because increased parental involvement results in increased student success. A mechanism to identify and coordinate potential opportunities for parental involvement will need to be established, such as a Parental Involvement Committee and/or Coordinator.
- B) Institutions will implement programs targeted to parents, including disadvantaged, ESL and minority parents, which will help them understand the benefits of education throughout life. This message can be pushed out through the school message systems, mail outs, web pages, and school newsletters.
- C) White County Educational Agencies will work with the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to develop innovative parental involvement strategies.
- D) Promote a county-wide initiative to advocate the practice of allowing “Release Time” for parents, grandparents or patrons to visit schools while supporting their children’s activities or to volunteer.

Goal #4 - White County students will begin kindergarten ready to learn

- A) The superintendents of each school district will study the feasibility of preschool in their districts as resources allow.
- B) School districts will conduct a survey to determine the number and type of child care options available in each district. After results are collected, superintendents will appoint a group to develop or find a training program for day care providers and preschool employees. This effort will require the input of the White County School Districts, Pre-Kindergarten Directors of White County Districts, Head Start, HIPPY

Director and Director of Early Childhood at the Wilbur D. Mills Educational Cooperative, and volunteers from local daycare providers.

- C) Research the availability of vouchers being available for ABC programs within the county.

Goal #5 - Create a White County Secondary/Postsecondary Partnership for the purpose of raising awareness in the community regarding various postsecondary programs available as students progress from high school to postsecondary education

- A) Develop a marketing campaign to advertise the benefits of postsecondary education and training to encourage high school graduates to enroll in postsecondary education (university, technical).
- B) Form a partnership with business and industry in White County to determine local workforce needs from employers.
- C) Work with state and county officials to publicize economic benefits of career and technical education.
- D) Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to better understand the workforce needs of the 21st century economy, and how to prepare students to be successful within this context.
- E) Create a planning committee of higher education and P-12 administrators to develop an action plan for promoting post secondary vocational messages opportunities. This could be accomplished by creating promotional messages from 30 seconds to one minute to be played at sporting events, school activities, radio, and television media within the county. Create a “BLITZ”.

Infrastructure

There is clear recognition in White County that infrastructure is a key component to business attraction and quality of life. From availability of water, to rail access at industrial sites, to high speed internet access, the county has identified clear goals for infrastructure improvements.

Goal #1 - Improve the roadway transportation infrastructure of White County.

- A) Highway 36/Highway 13. Improve Highway 36 west and then build a new road to Highway 13. The state has studied three options: Honeyhill Loop, Nicholson Road, or a new road south of Valley Baptist Church.
- B) North Bypass – Phase I. Provide a route between Highways 36 West, 16 and 67 for traffic traveling from areas west of the city (Highway 36 West) to the north (Highway 16) or to the east (Highway 67). Complete the Eastern Section which consists of developing Highway 16 to Highway 67/167. Depending on the route selected, the estimated cost of this project would be \$16.8 - \$17.3 million (2008 dollars). Possible funding sources include the City of Searcy, White County, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds. This project would provide a north by-pass of Searcy, reducing the traffic coming in to the city, thereby reducing the costs to maintain the streets. New commercial growth areas would also form along the bypass.
- C) Unified Road Improvement Plan/Ongoing Maintenance. Work with the Planning and Research Division of the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and/or engage an engineering firm specializing in traffic pattern design/analysis to conduct a comprehensive study comparing existing traffic patterns, road and highway infrastructure to an optimal traffic pattern and road/highway infrastructure design. This plan would include a schedule for existing road maintenance and repair based on volumes of traffic currently being experienced. This would be the first transportation plan for the county. This plan would help identify the needs of the county, which could then be advocated for in a strategic manner.
- D) Highway 367 – Judsonia to Bald Knob / Development Zone. Construct a plan for developing the Section of Highway 367 from Judsonia to Bald Knob as an Industrial Development Zone. Potential sources of funding include White County, Cities of Bald Knob and Judsonia, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds. Benefits to the community include job creation and facilitation of major industrial operations relating to the natural gas drilling industry.

- E) North Bypass – Phase II. Plan and complete construction of the Western section of the North Bypass. The Western Section consists of developing Highway 36 to Highway 16. This would be the second and final step to providing a route between Highways 36 West, 16 and 67 for traffic traveling from areas west of the city (Highway 36 West) to the north (Highway 16) or to the east (Highway 67). Depending on the route chosen, the estimated costs are \$ 17.7M - \$26.7M (2008 dollars), with potential funding sources being the City of Searcy, White County, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, American Reinvestment & Recovery Act Funds (Stimulus). This development will provide a north by-pass of Searcy reducing the traffic coming into the city thereby reducing the cost to maintain the streets. This project will also create new commercial areas for future growth along the bypass.

- F) Brantley Road Improvement. Improve Brantley Road from exit 42 to Gum Springs Road. Estimated costs are \$8.9 million (2008 dollars), with potential sources of funding being the City of Searcy, White County, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds. This construction will result in the necessary road access to the 84-acre industrial site on Brantley Road, which will improve the possibility of capital investment and new jobs created at the site.

Goal #2 - Improve the overall infrastructure of White County.

- A) Improve the Short Line DK & S Railroad leading from the Main Line Union Pacific Railroad. Potential sources of funding include the City of Searcy, White County, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds. This improvement would provide rail access to several sites such as the Doniphan Industrial Area, Moore property, land in Kensett along Searcy Street, and land along Park Avenue in Searcy.

- B) Expansion of the Searcy Water Treatment Plant. The expansion of the existing water treatment facility from 15 MGD capacity to 19 MGD capacity would provide an abundant, long-term water source to all service areas of White County. Estimated cost is \$17.8 million, with a potential funding source being a loan from the State Revolving Fund (SRF). Primary responsibility for expansion lies with the Searcy Board of Public Utilities. An expansion of the treatment facility's capacity would result in sufficient supply of water for homeowners, commercial, and industrial customers, even during summer months.

Goal #3 - Improve the technology and communication infrastructure of White County to provide the county with a universally high level of communications technology, including broadband, cell phone, and wireless internet access

- A) Develop a comprehensive plan to provide broadband internet service throughout White County. This plan will detail the infrastructure requirements, capital needs, management, and organizational support necessary for such services. Analyze partnering with existing providers. White County should consider hiring a consultant with expertise in this area. Estimated costs are \$5,000 - \$50,000, with the goal of having a final plan available on the websites of major organizations in the county.
- B) Locate and obtain control of land to develop a Technology Park. This would be a joint effort between the economic development organizations in the county and the county government. Hiring a consultant with expertise in this area may be required. Ultimately, this would provide a site for knowledge-based employment opportunities in the county.
- C) Develop a major internet hub in the County to reduce the mileage surcharge for major bandwidth customers. This hub could be located at the new technology park. Lots in the technology park should be made ready for construction of technology-oriented businesses. Estimated costs are \$1 million - \$10 million, with potential sources of funding being White County, General Improvement Fund (GIF) Grant, Community Development Block Grant, and American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Funds.

Health Care

Health care and medical services in White County are responding to many of the same trends that are happening around the country: an increased demand in health care-related occupations, improve access to health care, and improving overall community health by addressing preventable diseases. The goals in this plan were designed to take a proactive approach to health care delivery in the county.

Goal #1 - Initiate a transportation system for citizens of White County to get them to their health care providers

- A) Conduct a needs assessment to better understand transportation access issues related to health care.
- B) Identify areas in the county most affected by the lack of transportation.
- C) Work with the County to develop possible solutions to improve health care-related transportation.
- D) Research the possibility of having a private or non-profit organization operate vans/buses.
- E) Enhance White County citizens' knowledge of transportation services, such as Medicaid Managed Care Services.
- F) Conduct a cost analysis for transportation within the county to identify needed funding.
- G) Identify funding/grant opportunities available for improved transportation.

Goal 2: Enhance the awareness of White County citizens to resources currently available in the community

- A) Create a pamphlet/brochure, which will be available at strategic locations, that provides a list of contact information for available health care resources in White County.
- B) Identify funding opportunities such as grants to assist in funding of pamphlets/brochures.
- C) Solicit media to do air Public Service Announcements that address health care issues.
- D) Utilize the Day of Caring event to increase public awareness and provide printed reference material.
- E) Encourage volunteer organizations to provide booths at the White County Fair to enhance health care awareness and provide printed reference material.
- F) Use organizations, such as the White County Health Department, to research target groups and health care issues of greatest concern for White County.

Goal #3 - Identify areas of preventative care needed in White County and utilize strategic actions to provide resources to assist citizens

- A) The top five targeted preventative health care needs will be identified with resources available in the county to assist citizens in their preventative care.
- B) Utilize information gathered for the health care awareness in White County to provide resources.
- C) Establish a preventative care campaign to involve public schools and colleges in White County.

- D) Utilize the White County Extension Office and the Hometown Health Improvement Committee to take an active role in promoting preventative care.
- E) Encourage White County employers to provide education and incentives to their employees who focus on preventative care.

Goal #4 - Enhance the economic development of White County by developing communication between educational providers and health care businesses regarding educational needs at each level and job opportunities in health care in the various health care businesses in White County

- A) Identify and collect information on all educational providers that have health care programs in White County, and all businesses in White County that employ health care professionals.
- B) Develop a pamphlet/brochure that lists health care employers in the area, as well as the education requirements of the health care occupations employed at those establishments.
- C) Schedule a meeting of all high school counselors in White County to share information on educational programs in White County that provide health care training, and the career paths to which these training and educational programs would lead.