

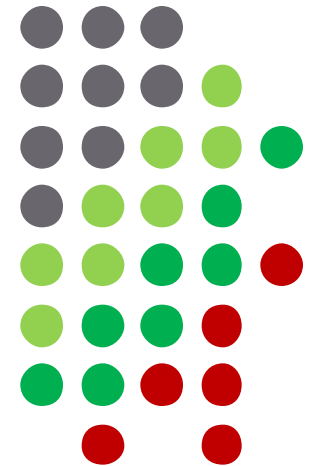


**A Community & Economic Development  
Strategic Planning Project for  
Desha County, Arkansas**

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# **Steering Committee Meeting**

**October 23, 2008**





# Project at a Glance

- Initiated by:** The Economic Development Coalition of Desha County - now called: ***Desha Forward***
- Vision for:** A Comprehensive Community & Economic Development Plan
- Mission:** ***Desha Forward will create and implement a strategic planning process for the county that is inclusive of all its citizens incorporating these core values: honesty, cooperation, trust, and focus on the future.***
- When:** July 2008 to June 2009
- Why?** Actively create our future rather than just let it happen





# Desha Forward's Project Goals

- Create a vision related to the knowledge-based economy
- Grassroots citizen engagement from all parts of Desha County
- Focus on identification and leverage Desha County assets
- Develop realistic solutions and implementation strategies based on best practices and use of technology





# Agenda

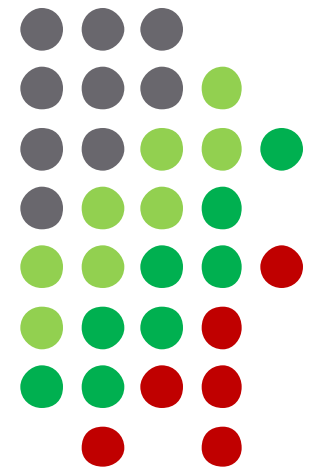
- Economic & Community Development Best Practices – 30 minutes
- Consulting Team Report - 30 minutes
  - § DeshaForward Website
  - § Overview of Interviews
  - § Business Survey
  - § Schedule Update
- e-Community Committee Report – 10 minutes
- Next steps – Questions?





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**Economic & Community  
Development  
“Best Practices”**





# Why Focus on “Best Practices” in Economic Development?

- Economic Development Success is Easy to Measure
  - § More higher paying jobs
  - § More wealth created
  - § More tax revenues
  - § Community appearance, spirit improves
- But, Success of Economic Development Program is Hard to Measure
  - § Many factors responsible for economic development success
    - | State of global, national economies
    - | Is community economic development ready?
  - § Can community as a whole close the deal?
    - | ED pro/team is like a real estate agent -- finding and matching buyers (prospects) and sellers (the community)
    - | Buyers and sellers must ultimately come to terms



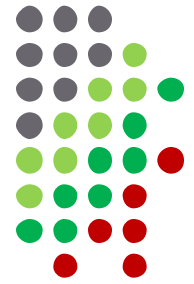


## Why Focus on “Best Practices”?

- 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



# Some Economic Development Best Practice Areas to Discuss Today



- Understanding Community Development and Economic Development
- A Strategic Approach to Community and Economic Development
- Organization of Economic Development Program
- 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 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





# Organization of ED Program

- Effective Governance and Direction
  - § Board of Directors sets policies and charts direction based on strategic plan
  - § Board does not manage day-to-day operations
  - § Differences of opinion resolved in good faith without public posturing
- Staff and Budget Must Be Sufficient to Do Job
  - § Funding commensurate with community size and ED mission
  - § Funding for all phases of ED activities
    - | Community development
    - | Business recruitment
    - | Business retention and expansion
    - | New business start-up





# Organization of ED Program

- Public/Private Partnerships Are Generally Most Effective
  - § Public sector buy-in and financial support important; need public sector to “close the deal”
  - § Private sector provides continuity, “good business practices” and financial support (especially for marketing)
  - § Strong public/private cooperation sends a good message to prospects





# 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





# Economic Development Marketing

- Marketing is Targeted, Focused
  - § Target industries like a Cruise Missile, companies are identified
- Selling Proposition or “Pitch” is Established and Delivered Effectively to Target Industries
- Marketing Budget is Established and Efficiently Allocated Over Different Activities
- Marketing Budget and Program Are Revised Through Experience and Learning What Works Best
- Staff is Sufficient to Carry Out Marketing Activities
- Marketing Program is Proactive and Balanced
  - § Community engages in direct marketing; doesn't just rely on state or utility for leads
  - § Retention and expansion as well as recruitment
  - § Internal and external marketing programs





## 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



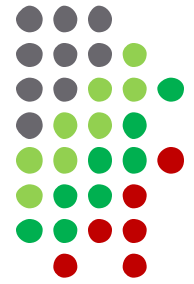
# Evaluation of Economic Development Program



- 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 Best Practices ED Program and Stay the Course
- Success is Rarely Instantaneous But, Creating a Best Practices ED Program and Making Community Development Ready Generally Leads to Success Over Time
- Create a set of Community Indicators that include community, economic, and social/human measures
- Economic & Community Development: You Gotta Have Faith!



# Consulting Team Report



- DeshaForward Website
- Overview of Interviews
- Business Survey
- Schedule Update



# DeshaForward Website



- [www.deshaforward.org](http://www.deshaforward.org)





# Desha Resident Interviews

- Over 60 interviews completed
- 45-minutes long
- Confidential
- Results will be aggregated together



# Early Desha Interview Results: STRENGTHS

- “Can do” people
- Rural way of life
- Existing Ag-Business
- Positive business climate
- Collaborative governments
- Unique natural resources



# Early Desha Interview Results: WEAKNESSES



- Lack of “development ready” sites and buildings
- Workforce (quality, work ethic, availability)
- Infrastructure problems (internet, roads, telecom, utilities)
- Appearance of area
- No formal/active leadership development
- Generational poverty



# Early Desha Interview Results: OPPORTUNITIES



- New sense of “community” in Desha
- Emerging internet technology
- Cotton seed processing facility
- Other ag-related industries and leveraging existing use of technology
- EAST Labs and Youth Advocacy Councils



# Early Desha Interview Results: THREATS



- No formal business retention and expansion program
- Presence of a county-wide economic development framework
- Lack of understanding of community and economic development processes
- Lack of engagement by public
- Demographic “story”



# Business Survey



- Strategy to accomplish this....



# Schedule



- November – No Steering Committee Meeting
  - § November 19<sup>th</sup> – Technology Focus Groups
  - § Electronic project status report to Steering Committee
  - § Draft of Discover Report to Executive Committee
- December 18<sup>th</sup> – Steering Committee receive Discovery Report results
- January 22<sup>nd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> Strategic Planning Meeting of Steering Committee



# e-Community Committee Report



- Jim Daniels: e-Champion
- Results of meeting on Tuesday





**Questions? Next Steps....**

**Many Thanks for Coming to this Evening!!**





# Desha Forward's Facilitators

- The Strategic Growth Institute at UCA
  - § Mission: to help communities, regions and states develop and implement creative, sustainable community and economic development programs
- Connect Arkansas
  - § Mission: to facilitate high speed internet access to every citizen and business in Arkansas.
- Project Manager: Jennifer Tanner (501.269.8950)  
[jtanner@strategicgrowthinstitute.org](mailto:jtanner@strategicgrowthinstitute.org)

