

CLAY COUNTY ARKANSAS



Economic Development Strategic Plan

Committee Review Draft — August 2013



A Building Communities™
Strategic Plan



Clay County, Arkansas Economic Development Strategic Plan

Prepared for
Clay County
and
reNEW East Arkansas

Prepared by



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ABOUT reNEW East Arkansas

In the fall of 2011, The East Arkansas Planning and Development District partnered with the 12 counties in its region and several other entities to apply for funding from U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create a 20-year Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Each partner contributed in-kind matching funds to the effort, allowing the creation of locally based plans that will contribute to the overall Regional Plan.



The counties, along with seven colleges and universities, two regional coalitions, two Metropolitan Planning Organizations, representatives of traditionally

marginalized populations and five state agencies have combined to form reNEW East Arkansas, a consortium of interests working to diversify the regional economy and take measures to improve the overall quality of life.

The Project Support Team list at right shows the key organizations collaborating to advance the regional planning effort. The work is centered around a set of principles, the Livability Principles, being advanced by the three federal agencies directly involved with the Partnership for Sustainable Communities—HUD, the US Department of Transportation and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

This strategic planning document is one of a series of locally based (either city or county) plans that is but one of eight overall deliverables by reNEW East Arkansas. The eight planning products include: 1) an active community engagement effort; 2) locally based economic and community development strategic plans; 3) an underutilized asset inventory; 4) land use and transportation scenario plans; 5) a regional housing analysis; 6) a healthy foods initiative; 7) visioning and modeling for several key initiatives; and 8) the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

The development of this document was locally driven by a community-based Steering Committee formed under the leadership of a local Plan Director. The findings from this local plan will be combined with the findings of other such plans to form the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development in 2014.

PROJECT SUPPORT TEAM

East Arkansas Planning and Development District (EAPDD)

Clay County

Craighead County

Crittenden County

Cross County

Greene County

Lawrence County

Lee County

Mississippi County

Phillips County

Poinsett County

Randolph County

St. Francis County

**Arkansas State University
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Gary Howell
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Piggott Elementary School

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The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Our Community and Vision

Clay County, Arkansas is a small county of just over 16,000 people located in the northeastern corner of the state along the Missouri border. What we lack in population, we more than make up for in heart. Although our communities have seen some success in our individual efforts, we have not yet established countywide partnerships to give us greater opportunity for success. Through this strategic planning process, we are building these partnerships ones we hope will last well into the future.



Our youth are the future of Clay County. We recognize this in every aspect of what we do. Our Steering Committee, which includes representatives from local high schools, realizes that there is a strong sense of pride that ties us all together. No matter what the age group, we all feel that this is our town, our county and our time to make a difference.

We are a community that is still patriotic. We still believe in this great nation we call the United States of America. We are proud to grow food that feeds the world and grow cotton that clothes it, a true testament to the glory of this country. Our families grew up in agricultural communities – we worked together, lived together, played together and harvested together as families. These values are still present today, rooted in the heritage and characteristics of our children.

We've experienced hard times, just like other communities in East Arkansas and other rural communities around the nation. This process of strategic planning has encouraged us to be optimistic. We are lighting a fire here in Clay County, fanning the flames of hope with hard work and dedication to future success. This is our opportunity to shine and to make Clay County a beacon for other small communities around the country, proving once and for all that a small group of people can make a difference.

We will make a difference.

Background and Context for Planning

Clay County, Arkansas is a participant in the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership (Partnership) to develop a Regional Sustainability Plan for Eastern Arkansas.

This planning effort is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in conjunction with the US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The participating entities (counties, cities and MPOs) are utilizing the Building Communities-based approach to economic development strategic planning first to develop a strategy for community and economic development at the local level. Information gained from this local planning process is then considered by the Partnership in the development of the Regional Sustainability Plan.

This planning process began in February 2012 as a part of the three-year process to develop local and regional plans for development and sustainability.

Scope of Plan

This strategic plan has a three-to-five year plan horizon, and is focused on Clay County, Arkansas. The local planning effort has been led by the Clay County and leadership from the Cities of Corning, Piggott and Rector.

Looking to the Future

Clay County may seem like a collection of sleepy rural communities in northeastern Arkansas at first glance. If you look closer, you'll find that there is a new energy spreading throughout our county, an energy that we are harnessing to create a better future for our children and grandchildren. We recognize that it is up to us to make a difference. Because of this, we are coming together as a county, as a community, to build a strategy for our future.

We want to develop strong leaders who can make changes wherever they may go, though we hope they will consider coming back to Clay County and continue to provide the solid leadership they were taught. In order to entice them, we must have educational opportunities, high-wage jobs, quality housing, recreational amenities and an involved citizenry. These items will be the focus of our efforts throughout the strategic planning process and its implementation. Clay County is ready to seize this opportunity and make it our own!

Community and Economic Development Strategies

- Attracting Government Funding
- Education Development
- Environmental Restoration
- Health Care
- Infrastructure Development
- Local/Regional Tourism
- Value-added Agriculture

Quality-of-Life Initiatives

- Civic Engagement, Leadership and Volunteerism
- Community Beautification
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Senior Living

Section 1:

Introduction

Planning Methodology & Approach

1 - Introduction

Planning Methodology

In order to maximize community participation in the planning process, and to quickly transition the community to plan implementation, Clay County engaged Building Communities to employ its unique strategic planning methodology in the development of this plan. The Building Communities approach to strategic planning bypasses traditionally used planning and research components—such as lengthy demographic studies, which often add little to a plan in terms of usefulness over time and focuses instead on the development of action-oriented projects and initiatives. The Building Communities planning approach is objective, comprehensive and expeditious.

- **Objective:** Communities select community and economic development strategies and initiatives based on a logical analysis of the factors most relevant to community advancement
- **Comprehensive:** Communities consider a host of possible strategies and initiatives to improve local economic conditions, and to sustain and advance overall quality of life
- **Expeditious:** The process is fast-paced (typically 13 hours total) and excludes discussion unrelated to the development and implementation of the strategic plan

Vision and Mission

The development of vision and mission statements has long been “standard procedure” in traditional community and economic development strategic planning processes. These statements are crafted to inspire, convey core values, and to indicate the direction communities desire to head as they implement their plans. These are all important ingredients in any strategic plan. In the Building Communities planning methodology, vision and mission statements assume a different form. In fact, vision and mission statements *appear* to be absent in the planning process and final plan, at least as traditionally seen. But they are anything *but* missing.

The Building Communities methodology recognizes that communities embrace similar values, missions, objectives and visions for the future—leadership, integrity, health, quality services, safe environments, responsible use of resources, economic growth and quality living, to name a few. Fully recognizing that these values and ideals are both common to, and important in, nearly all communities (if not all!), the Building Communities methodology integrates vision and mission statements seamlessly into the strategic plan, both expanding their content and application, and making them unique to the community.

As part of the Building Communities planning approach, Clay County’s vision—“*what we aim to become based on who and where we are*”—is presented in a lengthier format than just a sentence or two. It is found under the header “Our Community and Vision” in the *Executive Summary*. The plan itself can also be considered an extension of Clay County’s vision—a palpable manifestation of its values and desires—while the strategies and initiatives which constitute the bulk of the plan define Clay County’s mission—“*what we want to do to enact our vision*.”

Defining a community’s vision and mission is at the core of the Building Communities planning approach. For Clay County, these elements emerged as participants were guided through a planning process that had two over arching objectives—improving local economic conditions and enhancing quality of life in the community.

Objectives of Methodology

The Building Communities approach is firmly grounded in the belief that the objectives of community and economic development strategic planning (like the values and aims of visions and missions) are also common among communities—*improving economic condition* and *enhancing quality of life*. These two high-level objectives can be directly related, indirectly related, or almost complete insulated from one another, depending on the development projects being pursued by the community. For example, development of value-added projects offers the potential for significant improvement to a community's economic condition, but may only indirectly improve the quality of life enjoyed by its citizens. In like manner, strategic positioning as a bedroom community can dramatically improve general community conditions for residents in the form of residential amenities and aesthetic elements, but may only indirectly contribute to the economy. And some initiatives, such as well-developed tourism campaigns, may result in enhancements to both quality of life and the local economy.

The relationship between these two objectives works in both directions. That is, while improvements in one category may have a positive effect on the other, neglect in one—or overemphasis on it—may have a drag-down effect on the other. In order to maximize the benefit of community projects and initiatives, the Building Communities methodology emphasized analysis and planning in both of these categories during the planning process.

Major Components of Planning Approach

The Building Communities planning approach brings together three important components to produce a strategic plan—people, analysis and action. These components were carefully combined and organized for Clay County in order to minimize time spent on relatively fruitless planning activities, while maximizing the power that each of the components brings to the process:

- **People:** The Plan Director, Plan Facilitator, Building Communities Support Staff, Steering Committee—and the Community at large
- **Analysis and Action:** Plan Week, which included these analyses and action-assignment sessions:
 - Key Success Factor Analysis
 - Quality-of-Life Initiatives (QOLIs) Session
 - Community Organizer Assessment
 - Voice of the Community Meeting
 - Strategy & QOLIs Selection Session
 - Assigning Essential Action Steps
 - Elevator Speech Session

The People

Communities are people. And, this strategic plan is a road map to better the individual and collective lives of its people. As such, the Building Communities methodology places high value on involvement of the people. In fact, perhaps more than any other strategic planning process currently in use, the Building Communities approach invites—no, requires!—community members themselves to do the analyses and evaluations, determine the strategic projects and initiatives to be pursued, develop the content which constitutes the “meat” of the completed strategic plan and conduct follow-up activities to ensure that it is implemented, with Building Communities guiding the process.

Contrast this to traditional approaches in which often “detached” hired consultants do most or all of the analyses, interpret local conditions, write the plan, and community members accept the resulting plan as “their own.” Though this is the common formula, it in many cases leads to strategic plans being little more than expensive dust collectors. This is no future, and the Building Communities methodology does not use in this model.

The Building Communities methodology employed the services of the following people:

- **Plan Director:** Janet Manchester, Rector Community Development - Serves as the liaison between Building Communities and Clay County; oversees community outreach efforts; assists in creating the Steering Committee; coordinates all planning and implementation efforts over the life of the plan.
- **Plan Facilitator:** Jennifer Watkins, Building Communities Inc. - Deploys the Building Communities Strategic Planning methodology, tools and software; provides guidance and assistance to the Plan Director; conducts planning, analysis and content-development sessions; delivers the plan in its various drafts and forms.
- **Building Communities Support Staff:** Though never visible to the community, Building Communities’ support staff works behind the scenes to provide communities with effective and efficient planning tools, and to deliver a polished plan they can be proud of and use effectively.
- **Steering Committee:** Includes the Plan Director and represents the interests of Clay County in the planning process; participates in all Plan Week work sessions; invites community participation in the planning process; weighs all community input; selects strategies and initiatives for implementation; reviews and provides feedback on the draft final plan; leads implementation efforts during the life of the plan. Clay County Steering Committee members:
 - Haven Cagle
 - Scott Cole
 - Louie Cordell
 - Lindsey Ford
 - David Freeman
 - Gary Howell
 - Blake Johnson
 - James Magee
 - Leann Mann
 - Gerald Morris
 - Dewayne Phelan
 - Judy Phelan
 - Debbie Piland
 - Johnna Redman
 - Kim Romine
 - Sidney Simmons
 - Daniel White
- **Clay County Citizenry:** Includes all citizens and elected officials; provides crucial input during the Voice of Community Meeting and during plan review and adoption proceedings; assists and supports the Steering Committee during planning and implementation.

Overview of Plan Week

The bulk of the analysis and data gathering needed to build the strategic plan were accomplished during Plan Week—a term actually coined by a Building Communities client to describe the series of rapid-fire Building Communities planning sessions. For Clay County, Plan Week consisted of the seven sessions listed previously and was conducted on July 23-25, 2012.

Data-gathering and analysis sessions were first in the process. They drew on the knowledge and experience of Steering Committee members and community members. Evaluation sessions followed, in which collected data and information were assessed and weighed. Next were decision-making sessions during which Steering Committee members determined the strategies and initiatives which would define Clay County's mission during the life of the plan. Initial plan implementation steps were also determined by the Steering Committee in the later sessions, and finalization of these "*Essential Action Steps*" was concluded. In the final session of Plan Week, Steering Committee members were invited to reflect on the results of the preceding sessions, and to merge these with Clay County's identity and aspirations to create an expanded statement of its vision and direction.

The seven sessions of Plan Week are designed to capture the "full body" of community and economic development considerations:

- A logical assessment of what the community **should do** based on the likelihood of success (the "mind")
- The passion the community has to advance in a desired direction, or what it **wants to do** (the "heart")
- The capacity of the community to advance based on its human, financial and technical resources, or what it **can do** (the "muscle")

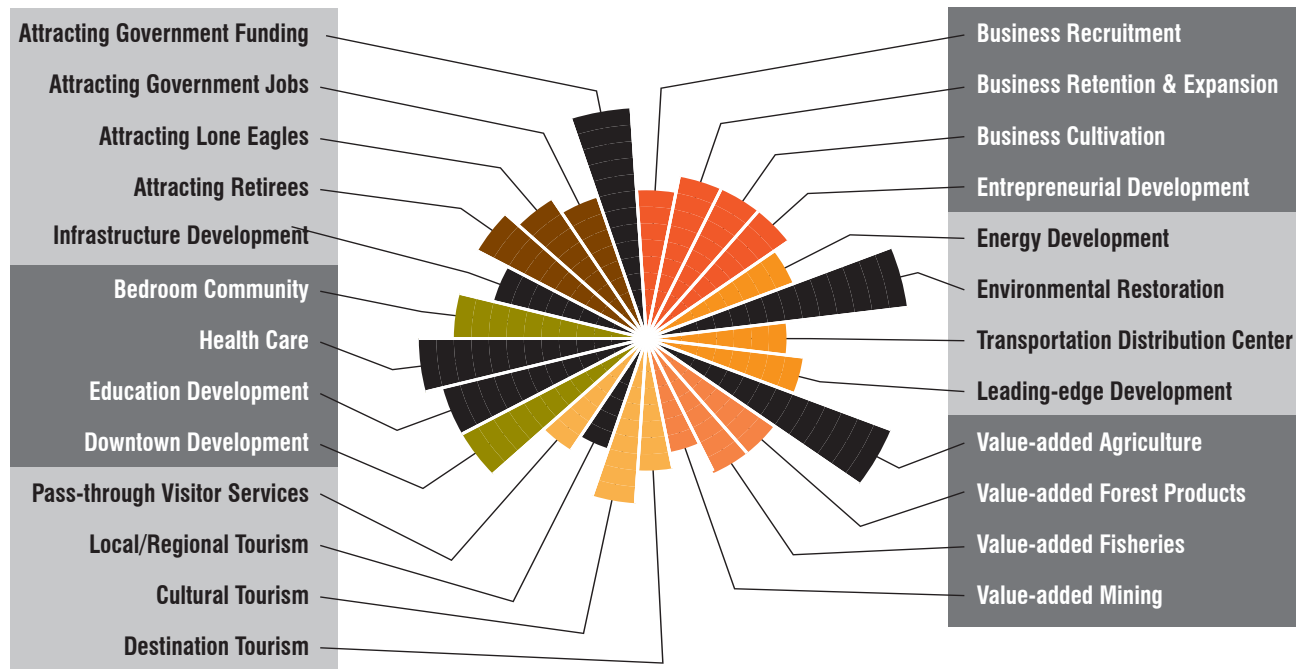
Session 1: Key Success Factor Analysis



Plan Week began with a fast-paced analysis of Clay County's comparative advantage for a host of *Key Success Factors*—conditions, assets, abilities, etc., possessed by the community—relevant to 25 community and economic development strategies the community could pursue to improve economic

condition and enhance quality of living.

The graphic to the right shows the carefully developed menu of strategies which the Steering Committee considered in this first session, and which the broader community also considered in a later session. Strategies ultimately selected are noted with an asterisk (*).



The input from this session yielded Clay County's *Prioritized Strategy Report*—a ranking of the 25 strategies on a scale of 0 to 100 based on the likelihood of successful implementation. This report, along with a more detailed explanation of its content, can be found in Section 2 of this plan.

Session 2: Quality-of-Life Initiatives Session



Unlike the 25 strategies, which are presented as a finite list, *Quality-of-life Initiatives* are an “open book” whose main purpose is to address quality-of-life issues faced by the community. In Session 2 members of the Steering Committee were asked the question, “What would improve the quality of life in your community?” and invited to consider major issues or concerns they have about the livability in Clay County. In addition to the addressing specific issues, *Quality-of-life Initiatives* are also designed to capture development and sustainability elements consistent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD)’s Livability Principles:

1. Providing more transportation choices
2. Promoting equitable and affordable housing
3. Enhancing economic competitiveness
4. Supporting existing communities
5. Coordinating and leveraging federal policy and investments
6. Valuing communities and neighborhoods.

Many topics were brought forward by the Steering Committee, including but not limited to:

- Affordable, Quality Housing
- Road Improvements
- Daycare
- Ambulance Services
- Water and Wastewater Expansion
- Emergency Communications Systems
- Public Safety
- Beautification Efforts

- Recycling Program Expansion
- Retail Services
- Health Care Access
- Recreational Opportunities
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Arts and Culture
- Plans for School Expansion
- Assisted Living Facility
- Incorporation of Other Communities
- Highway Signage
- Parking
- Support for Sale of Land

These initiatives were presented to the broader community in a later session for their consideration and input, before the final selection of initiatives to pursue was completed by the Steering Committee. A more detailed treatment of the *Quality-of-life Initiatives* follows in Section 4 of this plan.

Session 3: Community Organizer Assessment



One part of community and economic development strategic planning often ignored is determining the capacity of the community to implement its plan. *Capacity* relates to the human, financial and technical resources needed to generally engage in community and economic development activities, and considers such things as unity of vision, land-use policy, community attitude

and organizational stability.

The Building Communities planning approach addressed this critical element in Session 3—the *Community Organizer Assessment*—in which were presented a series of questions specific to the community and business development development aspirations of the community. This yielded a report detailing specific recommendations about how Clay County can increase its capacity in order to successfully implement its strategic plan. The results of the *Community Organizer Assessment* can be found in Section 5 of this plan.

Session 4: Voice of the Community Meeting



The entire community was invited to Session 4, a town-hall-style meeting carefully designed to receive broader input about the same strategies and initiatives being considered by the Steering Committee. During this meeting, two overall objectives were met.

First, the community was asked to consider the 25 strategies earlier presented to the Steering Committee and answer the following questions in relation to each:

- Would you like to see this strategy implemented in Clay County?
- Do you believe that Clay County can successfully implement this strategy?

The second objective was to present the results of the Steering Committee's work on Quality-of-life-Initiatives (from Session 2) and to receive feedback and other input on these topics. The results of the Voice of the Community Meeting were added to those of the Key Success Factor Session and presented to the Steering Committee in a later session as the *Enhanced Strategy Report*. This report can be found in Section 2 in this plan.

Session 5: Strategy and Quality-of-Life Initiatives Selection Session



After the Steering Committee considered the “full body” of community and economic development considerations it made a final selection of strategies and *Quality-of-life Initiatives* in Session 5. For the strategies, this was accomplished during a detailed review of all strategy-related information from previous sessions. Where consensus could not immediately be reached about how to treat specific strategies, they were “held” and reviewed again later. This pattern continued until an acceptable subset of “selected” strategies was complete.

Additionally, the Steering Committee reviewed all previously considered *Quality-of-life Initiatives*, along with all related information collected in previous sessions. From the original list of topics, the Committee chose to “act on,” “write about” or “ignore” the concern or issue. Topics selected for action became full-fledged initiatives and were slated, along with the selected strategies, for further development in Session 6.

Session 6: Assigning Essential Action Steps



Comparatively speaking, deciding *what* to do is almost always easier than determining how to get things done, not to mention actually *doing* them. Community and economic development strategic planning is no different. Determining how to begin implementation of selected strategies and initiatives, deciding who will lead these efforts for each strategy/initiative and determining exactly what steps need to be taken along the way is challenging work. Accordingly, this is of paramount importance in the Building Communities methodology. And, equally important (perhaps even more so) is that community members themselves assume ownership of making these implementation decisions. The “Achilles heel” of many strategic plans is the disconnect between community members and their plan when implementation consists of little more than “the consultant says this is what we should do.”

With these ideas in mind, during Session 6, each selected strategy and initiative was individually assigned to Steering Committee members or community organizations to act as “lead.” Committee members were then introduced to an online tool designed by Building Communities to help them identify *Essential Action Steps* (EASs) for each strategy/initiative and “Tasks” for each *EAS*. Essentially, designated Steering Committee members were assigned to detail “who will do what by when, and with what resources” for each strategy and initiative. This was no small task, and the Steering Committee’s work, together with all their input earlier in Plan Week (and that of the broader community) constitute the bulk—and certainly the “meat”—of this strategic plan. Building Communities takes great pride in being able to work with and engage great people in accomplishing such a huge task. We applaud you all!

Session 7: Elevator Speech Session



The final session returned to the heart of the matter: why are we doing strategic planning in the first place? Steering Committee members were asked to reflect on why they care about their community and what they desire for the future. During this time, the group explored and discussed what is unique about Clay County and what they expect as a result of conducting the strategic planning process. The result of this last session became the opening message in the plan and makes a unique statement about the heart of the community and what to expect in the plan—and during the years to come.

Objectivity of Planning Methodology

Great care was taken during Plan Week to avoid traditional strategic planning pitfalls. One of the most common of these pitfalls is the tendency in communities for the “loudest voice” or “most important person in the community” to dominate discussions and to silence (intentionally or otherwise) those who might disagree or, quite frankly, have better ideas. The Building Communities methodology used by Clay County employed a system which collected participants’ public responses to important questions anonymously in real-time. Because initial responses were given privately and silently, results were very likely genuine and representative of participants’ true positions. This ensured that discussions were fruitful, and that the issues, initiatives and concerns discussed were representative of the group rather than reflective of the opinion of one or two people. In other words, this provision for anonymity made what is, by its nature, very subjective work, as objective as possible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Clay County has done a remarkable job of selecting strategies and initiatives that fit for this community. Additionally, the steps to be taken are reasonable. Though the county lacks paid staffing dedicated to economic development, there is a sufficient pool of other staff members and volunteers to achieve the goals. It will take hard work and dedication, but that is nothing new to Clay County.

Section 2:

Plan Week Results

Plan Week Results

Overview

To gather the information from which to begin formulating Clay County's strategic plan, the Steering Committee participated in a multi-session planning process called Plan Week, which is outlined in detail in Section 2 of this plan. During these sessions, the Steering Committee considered 25 specific community and economic development strategies and a community-generated list of initiatives to improve Clay County's quality of life. The community at large was also invited to consider and provide input about these same strategies and initiatives. At the conclusion of Plan Week, the Steering Committee selected the following strategies for implementation in Clay County:

- Attracting Government Funding
- Education Development
- Environmental Restoration
- Health Care
- Infrastructure Development
- Local/Regional Tourism
- Value-added Agriculture

In addition, these *Quality-of-life Initiatives* were selected for advancement:

- Civic Engagement, Leadership and Volunteerism
- Community Beautification
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Senior Living

Strategy Selection Process

As mentioned briefly in Section 1, the Clay County Steering Committee participated in an objective assessment of the most viable economic development strategies for a given community—the *Key Success Factor Analysis*. Using this rating and scoring system, the Steering Committee considered a host of strategy-specific *Key Success Factors*, rating Clay County’s comparative advantage for each factor, relative to communities of a similar size.

Each of the *Key Success Factors* was scored on a scale of ‘0’ to ‘4’. Where the Steering Committee determined that Clay County has a significant comparative advantage relative to its competition, that factor was scored a ‘4’. Where a particular Key Success Factor was determined to be relatively absent in Clay County, it was given a score of ‘0’. Intermediate scores from ‘1’ to ‘3’ were given for factors in the middle of the range.

The scores provided by the Steering Committee were then integrated with each of the 25 strategies on a weighted basis. The result is the *Prioritized Strategy Report* to the right, which presents all 25 strategies, ranked by Building Communities according to the likelihood of successful implementation.

This initial *Prioritized Strategy Report* provided the Steering Committee with a solid foundation from which it could begin considering which of the 25 strategies the community should ultimately pursue. As the Building Communities approach recognizes that making wise choices in representative government requires not only capable leaders but an involved citizenry, the views of the community were also sought, in order that the collective voice of the community could be heard and given weight in the decision-making process. This began in the *Voice of the Community Meeting* in which the community at large was asked whether or not it would like to see the community advance each of the 25 strategies, and whether or not it believes the community could successfully do so.

Prioritized Strategy Report

STRATEGY	SCORE	STRATEGY GROUP
Value-added Agriculture	76	Value-added
Environmental Restoration	73	Sector-specific
Attracting Funding	70	Other
Health Care Expansion	63	Community Development
Downtown Development	60	Community Development
Education Development	58	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	56	Community Development
Attracting Retirees	53	Other
Entrepreneurial Development	50	General Business
Cultural Tourism	50	Tourism
Attracting Lone Eagles	50	Other
Business Retention and Expansion	49	General Business
Business Cultivation	48	General Business
Business Recruitment	46	General Business
Value-added Fisheries	46	Value-added
Leading-edge Development	44	Sector-specific
Value-added Forest Products	44	Value-added
Infrastructure Development	44	Other
Energy Development	43	Sector-specific
Attracting Government Jobs	43	Other
Pass-through Visitor Services	40	Tourism
Logistics Centers	39	Sector-specific
Destination Tourism	37	Tourism
Local/Regional Tourism	35	Tourism
Value-added Mining	33	Value-added

The results of the *Voice of the Community Meeting* were then weighed, factored and combined with the results of the *Key Success Factor Analysis* to produce the *Enhanced Strategy Report*. This report provided the Steering Committee with a more complete view about the desires and confidence level of both leaders and citizens with respect to each of the 25 potential strategies. This information, along with the *Prioritized Strategy Report*, served as the foundation for the final strategy selection process. In addition, before strategies were actually selected, the Steering Committee was asked to assess the capacity of the community to carry out both general and specific community and economic development activities. This was done during the *Community Organizer Assessment* session during *Plan Week*. The recommendations that resulted from that session will help the community refine and increase its capacity to work together and succeed as it begins implementing the strategic plan.

Enhanced Strategy Report

STRATEGY	SCORE	WANT	CAN	STRATEGY GROUP
✓ Value-added Agriculture	268	96%	100%	Value-added
✓ Attracting Funding	252	96%	95%	Other
Business Retention and Expansion	239	100%	95%	General Business
Downtown Development	232	94%	92%	Community Development
✓ Education Development	230	95%	91%	Community Development
✓ Health Care Expansion	227	93%	89%	Community Development
Attracting Retirees	223	93%	93%	Other
Business Recruitment	218	100%	86%	General Business
Business Cultivation	216	95%	89%	General Business
Entrepreneurial Development	210	94%	86%	General Business
✓ Environmental Restoration	209	89%	79%	Sector-specific
✓ Local/Regional Tourism	203	94%	90%	Tourism
✓ Infrastructure Development	202	89%	90%	Other
Cultural Tourism	194	88%	84%	Tourism
Pass-through Visitor Services	174	86%	81%	Tourism
Energy Development	115	74%	62%	Sector-specific
Attracting Lone Eagles	114	70%	62%	Other
Bedroom Community Development	110	64%	63%	Community Development
Logistics Centers	61	68%	43%	Sector-specific
Attracting Government Jobs	55	54%	52%	Other
Value-added Forest Products	22	46%	43%	Value-added
Value-added Fisheries	0	41%	36%	Value-added
Leading-edge Development	-22	37%	30%	Sector-specific
Destination Tourism	-23	33%	37%	Tourism
Value-added Mining	-128	13%	7%	Value-added

With these various analyses and assessments in place, the Steering Committee's task was to choose the strategies which the community would ultimately advance. Consideration of the *Prioritized Strategy Report* yielded an initial selection of the "most viable" strategies.

Importance of Recommendations

The Building Communities methodology results in two types of recommendations: 1) *Essential Action Steps* associated with the selected community and economic development strategies and *Quality-of-life Initiatives*; and 2) organizational capacity recommendations generated by the *Community Organizer Assessment*.

Combined, these two elements generate a substantial number of recommendations and actions the community should take in order to successfully implement its selected strategies.

However, the results of the *Community Organizer Assessment* should be seen as supporting recommendations. In other words, it is the *Essential Action Steps* that should be the primary focus, with the recommendations provided through the *Community Organizer Assessment* viewed more as a “tune-up” for the assigned organizations—and the community as a whole—to get the work done. The recommendations of the Community Organizer follow the Selected Strategies section of this plan.

While it is recommended that the Steering Committee review the *Essential Action Steps* on a monthly basis, it may only be necessary to review the *Community Organizer Assessment* recommendations on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

SWOT Analysis

Overall SWOT Summary

The Building Communities economic development strategic planning approach does not utilize a conventional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis as a starting point for the process. Instead, it presents *Key Success Factors* for community and economic development.

The local assessment of the relative comparative advantage of each of the *Key Success Factors*, in effect, yields a SWOT analysis based on these seven categories:

- Assets
- Capital
- Expertise
- Government
- Infrastructure
- Labor
- Location



The table below presents a brief description of each category and the average score of the community in each of those categories.

Scores for Key Success Factors in Clay County are generally in the middle of the range. In fact, the average score for each category is about 2. As is the case in many communities, our lowest score is in the Labor category. While we do have people willing to work, having those with the right skills is a challenge. On the other hand, the Infrastructure category received our highest score. This is certainly a reflection of the leadership we have in our local communities and the county, and their abilities to move projects forward. While our small size may limit the number of paid staff and organizational structures we have in place, our volunteers are unmatched in their willingness to step up to the plate. We will utilize this wonderful resource pool while we strive to build our capacity.

Key Success Factor Categories		AVG SCORE
Assets	Industry-specific or activity-specific conditions or dynamics critical to certain strategies.	2.3
Capital	Business debt and equity funding as well as consistent funding for development organizations to succeed.	1.9
Expertise	The skills, connections and abilities of local professionals.	1.7
Government	The citizenry and government agencies/committees, whose decisions and opinions shape the community's actions.	2.2
Infrastructure	The land, buildings and infrastructure necessary to advance many of the business development strategies.	2.7
Labor	The labor force of a community.	1.0
Location	The relative proximity of the community to the marketplace.	1.8
Scores reflect the community's relative capacity in each category on a scale from 0 to 4.		

Assets

The “Assets” category generally presents *Key Success Factors* unique to particular strategies. For example, the “availability of energy resources” is a unique Key Success Factor to the Energy Development strategy.

Scores in the Assets category range across the board in Clay County. It’s no surprise that access to agricultural commodities ranks a perfect score -- this is the heart of farm country. Commodities such as cotton, rice and soy beans are grown in abundance here. Along with a strong agricultural foundation, we also have strength in housing, recreational assets, climate, health care and education. Many of our chosen strategies are focused around these strengths.

Key Success Factors - Assets

Proximity to large volumes of agricultural commodities	4
Quality residential neighborhoods	3
Accurate, long-term analysis of infrastructure needs and costs	3
Available, desirable housing	3
Desirable climate	3
Existence of recreational amenities	3
Existing or prospective cultural attraction	3
Expandable educational institution	3
Financially sound existing health care facility	3
Recognizable central business district/downtown	3
Sufficient local entrepreneurial base	3
Insulation from industrial business annoyances	3
High availability of urban services	2
Proximity to travel routes	2
Proximity to urban population and workforce centers	2
Sufficient base of local businesses	2
Availability of energy resources	1
Local recreational and visitor attractions	1
Proximity and access to forests and forest products	1
Proximity to fisheries commodities	1
Proximity to nationally recognized attractions	1
Proximity to raw materials and minerals	0

Capital

Access to—and consistent availability of—capital is significant in two general respects. First, businesses must be able to secure sufficient debt and/or equity capital for their formation, operations, retention and expansion. Second, development organizations must have reliable sources of funding in order to regularly engage in activities consistent with their mission.

For businesses, access to capital is the lifeblood of the business itself. For small businesses that can demonstrate loan repayment capability, programs to provide such capital can be very traditional (bank and credit union lending), or they can be government-supported loan, loan guarantee or credit enhancement measures designed to supplement traditional lending.

Key Success Factors - Capital

Access to small business financing	3
Access to large-scale capital	3
Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants	3
Ability to secure long-term contracts for forest materials	2
Ability to secure power-purchase agreements	2
Availability of appropriated funds	2
Competitive recruitment incentives	1
Dedicated local financial resources for staffing recruiters	1
Local funding for downtown development	1
Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget	1

For development organizations, reliable funding is necessary so the board and staff can engage primarily in activities consistent with the organizational mission, rather than regularly chasing funding sources for the preservation of the organization itself.

Clay County has seen success in accessing capital for projects and infrastructure. This is reflected in the scores in the Capital category. Once again, we are going to keep doing what we already do well i.e., enhancing our ability to attract funds for projects and programs. In addition, we will examine some areas of weakness, such as marketing and promotions funding. Capital funding could be critical to some of the strategies we've chosen to pursue.

Expertise

In this information age, it should be no surprise that one of the broadest and most important categories of *Key Success Factors* is expertise. The successful implementation of virtually every strategy requires expertise from a broad array of professionals in any community.

Not only must sufficient expertise be possessed by the individuals on the front lines of community and business development, but such capability is also important in various professional sectors of the local economy, for the advancement of targeted tourism and downtown development strategies and in the professionals backing up the front-line community and business developers (city managers, public works directors, county commissioners, etc.).

Expertise is an area where our small size can be a detriment. Even so, there are areas where we can compete with the best of the best. Because of our strong agricultural economy, we understand global competition, industry trends and commodity markets. This can help us in other areas as well. Additionally, we have very capable health care leaders who understand how to grow this sector in a small county. Our government leaders are also very knowledgeable and experienced when it comes to preparing funding proposals. While there are definitely areas of improvement on which we hope to focus, our efforts will be solely dependent on the strategies we've selected and the associated needs.

Key Success Factors - Expertise

Ability to compete in a global market	3
Ability to identify product and service gaps	3
Ability to successfully market materials	3
Ability to understand industry trends and opportunities	3
Competent, strategic-minded hospital and health-care executives	3
Existing excellence in local health care	3
Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal	3
Ability to network and attend relevant trade shows	2
Downtown organization and staff	2
Implementation of national Main Street Four-Point Approach™	2
Relative sophistication in coordinating and marketing local events	2
Sophisticated use of the internet for marketing	2
Support from local education professionals at all levels	2
Ability to build a team comprised of energy-development experts	1
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	1
Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community	1
Cultural development and advocacy organization	1
Dedicated business coaching staff	1
Staff focused on attracting retirees and/or lone eagles	1
Supportive post-secondary education training program	1
Relationship with site selectors	0
Sophisticated tourism development & promotion	0
Team approach to infrastructure finance	0

Government

Increasingly people argue that “if only government would get out of the way” our communities and businesses would thrive. In reality, however, it is through government (federal, state and especially local) that key strategies are envisioned, defined and implemented.

Governmental bodies not only establish policies and funding programs, but establish cultures and attitudes that are either pro-development or anti-development. Strong collaboration between government and the private and volunteer sectors is an essential ingredient for success.

The Government category boasts a strong overall score for Clay County -- and it's no wonder. We have leaders and communities that are very supportive of growth and business. We will continue to develop ways to engage our local business owners and citizens throughout this process.

Key Success Factors - Government

Local government support	4
Community acceptance of the visitor industry	3
Local pro-business climate	3
Strong community support	3
Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation	3
Support for attracting retirees	3
Active engagement of downtown building and business owners	2
Favorable state policies with respect to office locations	2
Support from local businesses	2
Local policies and ordinances supporting quality neighborhood development	2
Supportive state energy policies and incentives	2
Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases	1
Local focus on revenues from visitors	1
Projected growth in government budgets	1
Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses	1

Infrastructure

In order for communities to be attractive and appropriate for the implementation of many strategies, they must possess sufficient land, infrastructure, buildings and housing. Building Communities uses the term infrastructure in a very broad sense in this context (beyond just sewer, water and power facilities).

As noted earlier, the Infrastructure category is the strongest in Clay County. We have been quite successful in completing needed upgrades to our infrastructure. Additionally, our communities are blessed with an abundance of land for development. Our infrastructure capacity will be a huge asset in many of the strategies we pursue.

Key Success Factors - Infrastructure

Adequate housing for labor force	3
Adequate telecommunications infrastructure	3
Availability of brownfield sites	3
Availability of industrial-zoned land for industrial park development	3
Availability of land for business prospects	3
Availability of local buildings	3
Availability of local infrastructure	3
High-speed internet	3
Land/Buildings/Campus for education development	3
Proximity to transmission lines with excess capacity	2
Excess water and sewer infrastructure capacity	1

Labor

It takes a deeper bench than simply the “experts” to successfully implement many strategies. The availability and skills of the local labor force are critical to the implementation of many strategies.

Key Success Factors - Labor

Local, available, low-skill labor pool	1
Local, available, high-skill labor pool	1

Most communities struggle with developing and maintaining a skilled labor force readily available for work. Clay County is no different. Our efforts to improve our labor force will start with the development of strong educational and training programs tailored to fit our existing and new companies.

Location

The location of the community is very important to the success of many of our strategies. For example, communities strategically located to provide access to markets have a comparative advantage versus relatively isolated communities.

Location is an uncontrollable factor, though a very important one. Clay County’s location in the northeastern corner of

Key Success Factors - Location

Proximity and access to markets	3
Prospect of an expanded geographic market for health care	2
Strategic location for distribution centers	2
Advantageous location for government or education expansion	1
Proximity to scheduled air service	1

Arkansas may not make it attractive for some of the possible strategies. However, for those we’ve chosen, our location is a plus. We do have solid access to transportation -- people can easily travel here by car from a variety of areas. Our location does give us a unique opportunity to bring visitors to the county.

Section 3:

Selected Strategies

Attracting Funding
Education Development
Environmental Restoration
Health Care Expansion
Infrastructure Development
Local/Regional Tourism
Value-added Agriculture

Selected Strategies

Clay County's Selected Strategies

Ultimately, the Steering Committee recommended the advancement of seven strategies to enhance the economic condition and overall quality-of-life for Clay County:

On the following pages, each strategy is listed and described. In addition, the overall objective of the strategy is presented as well as the strategy-specific results of the *Key Success Factor Analysis*. The *Essential Action Steps* associated with each strategy are also listed.

Two figures lead out on each strategy's page—"Score" and "Rank."

Score - This represents each strategy's overall score on a basis of 100 points, and is the result of the Steering Committee's collective responses to the *Key Success Factor Analysis* in the first session of Plan Week. A score of 85 or higher indicates a strategy that is highly recommended for advancement. A score of 70 to 84 indicates a strategy that should be seriously considered for advancement. A score below 70 indicates that there likely exist serious impediments to successful implementation of the strategy.

Rank - This represents the position of each strategy among all the strategies, based on its score.

The strategies selected by the Clay County Steering Committee are:

- Attracting Government Funding
- Education Development
- Environmental Restoration
- Health Care
- Infrastructure Development
- Local/Regional Tourism
- Value-added Agriculture

Strategies not selected include:

- Attracting Government Jobs
- Attracting Lone Eagles
- Attracting Retirees
- Bedroom Community
- Business Cultivation
- Business Recruitment
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Cultural Tourism
- Destination Tourism
- Downtown Development
- Energy Development
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Leading-edge Development
- Pass-through Visitor Services
- Transportation Distribution Center
- Value-added Fisheries
- Value-added Forest Products
- Value-added Mining

Recommendations for Implementation

The Clay County has formed a very engaged Steering Committee and subcommittees for the purposes of identifying its viable strategies and assigning its Essential Action Steps. It is strongly recommended that the Steering Committee and subcommittees remain functional for at least three years to implement the respective strategies.

In general, the Steering Committee should meet monthly and hear reports from its members about the progress in advancing the *Essential Action Steps* for each strategy.

In addition to the monthly meeting, the Steering Committee should hold a meeting approximately every nine months to consider every Essential Action Step in a systematic fashion. For each step: 1) completion of the step should be noted; 2) progress should be noted; 3) efforts to restart the effort should be planned; or 4) the particular step should be recognized as no longer relevant. This systematic approach will ensure that nothing falls through the cracks during strategy implementation.

Attracting Government Funding





Attracting Government Funding

SCORE: 70

RANK: 3

Strategy Summary

Communities can create jobs and improve their overall quality of life through either a onetime or consistent approach of attracting government appropriations and grants.

Hundreds of state and federal agencies manage grant programming and/or legislative earmarks (funding directives) which can be utilized to complete projects for a wide variety of purposes. States or localities with congressman/legislators participating on powerful appropriations committees are particularly well positioned to benefit from this strategy.

While the vast majority of such funding either goes to formula-based entitlement programs or for competitive grant processes, a small percentage of the funding is directed by state and federal appropriators, thus bypassing the formula or competitive approach.

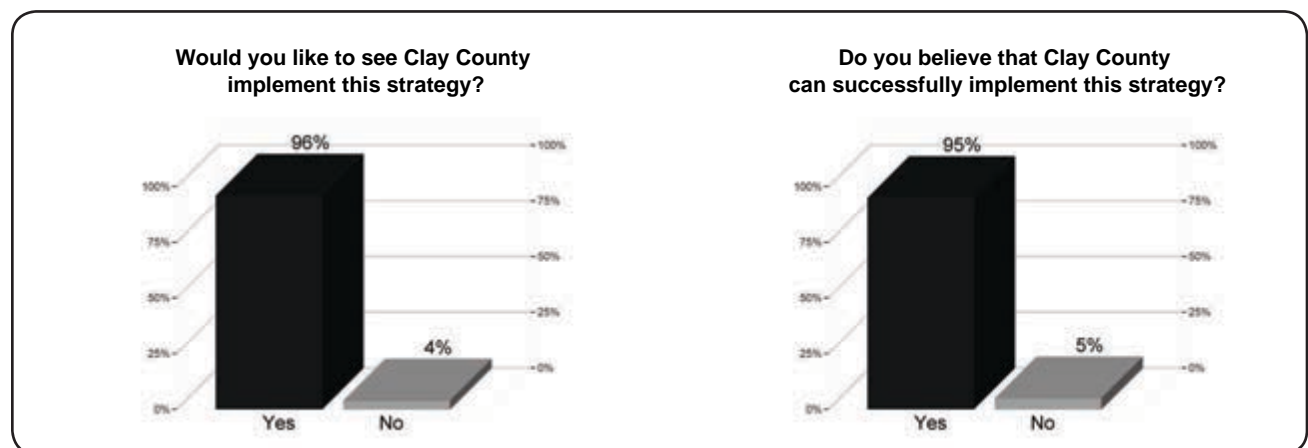
Often maligned as “pork barrel spending”, this strategy may face local opposition by individuals that are principled against such redistribution of government funding.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on:

- whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy, and
- whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it.

Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

There are a number of projects that can only be completed with assistance from state and federal agencies. Communities have many demands placed on their limited resources and need to leverage what they have in order to accomplish large-scale efforts. Clay County has a proven track record of doing just that.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Our county and city leaders have been quite successful in garnering funding for local projects. For this strategy, we hope to take that to the next level. Increased coordination and collaboration will be our focus as we step up our efforts and hone in on critical projects that could change the future of our community.

Key Success Factor Report - Attracting Government Funding

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
No Entries	Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal Strong community support Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
No Entries	No Entries

Education Development





Education Development

SCORE: 58

RANK: 6

Strategy Summary

The provision of educational services, especially in rural communities, comprises a significant portion of the overall economy of a community. Communities that are home to community colleges, and especially four-year higher education institutions, benefit from an even higher percentage of economic impact derived from provision of educational services.

More and more, the ability to derive a family-wage is dependent upon educational attainment. As such, counties, states and regions that have a more educated population tend to compete better in the 21st century marketplace. The combination of these two dynamics may inspire a community to develop an Education Development Strategy.

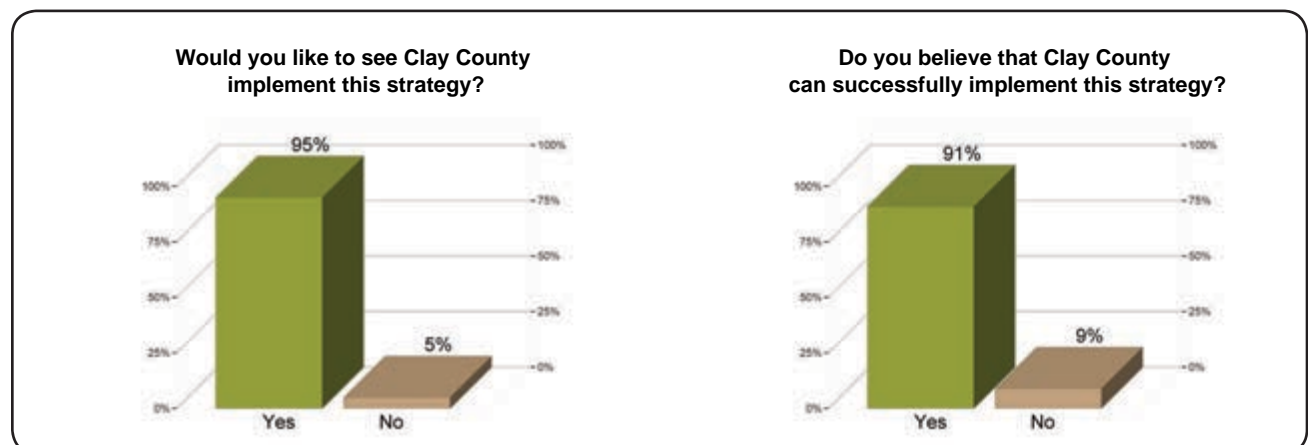
By developing a community development—and a political—strategy to create or enhance provision of educational services at all levels, communities can derive economic benefit. Wages associated with the delivery of educational services tend to meet family-wage levels.

Such a strategy might simply entail the augmentation or expansion of existing post-secondary educational services. Alternatively, a strategy could be more ambitious such as the creation of an institute dedicated to researching and resolving emerging issues or perhaps the establishment of a four-year educational institution.

Communities desiring to pursue an Education Development Strategy must be cognizant of the budget dynamics and emerging educational trends associated with the educational institution they are trying to attract/expand.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

Education Development is designed to increase employment and workforce training opportunities in a community. Clay County has a number of impressive resources that give it a major comparative advantage with this strategy.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Clay County has educational assets that are important to our future. We will look at potential expansion of educational facilities throughout our county. Additionally, our goals for this strategy include the expansion of training opportunities specific to job creation and tourism opportunities.

Key Success Factor Report - Education Development

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
Local government support	Expandable educational institution Land/Buildings/Campus for education development
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Advantageous location for government or education expansion Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community	No Entries

Selected Strategy:

Environmental Restoration





Environmental Restoration

SCORE: 73

RANK: 2

Strategy Summary

Communities have the opportunity to “turn lemons into lemonade” by focusing on derelict industrial buildings and sites for redevelopment.

Frequently, communities may have industrial sites from a bygone era that are not currently in use. These sites relate to natural resource-based extraction industries that may have utilized chemicals or compounds that have left the industrial land unusable for future use without first completing clean-up activities.

The benefits of this strategy are twofold: 1) jobs can be created initially by clean-up activities; and 2) the residual industrial site becomes available for promotion and development thus creating jobs in the long-term.

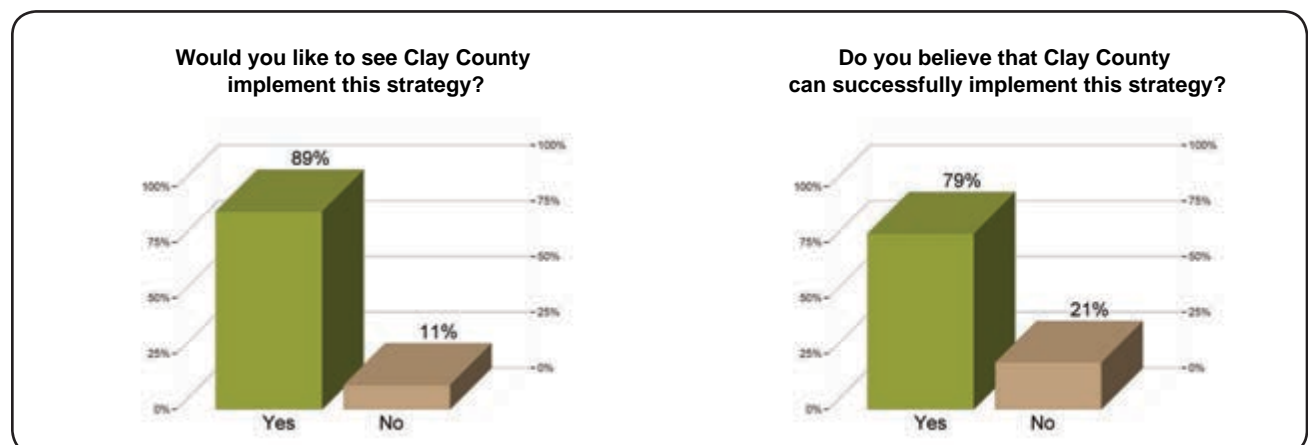
First and foremost, communities must have an eligible site for an environmental restoration strategy. One or more former industrial sites that have environmental contamination preventing future redevelopment are essential to advance this strategy. These sites are frequently referred to as brownfield sites.

A community must then mobilize itself by first assessing the condition of the property, and then developing a specific action plan to remediate the environmental problem. Of critical importance is the formation of a local team that can network with state and/or federal contacts to attract the funding necessary to assess and address the environmental problem.

Finally, communities must have the local sophistication to redevelop and market the restored site for future use.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

An Environmental Restoration strategy can yield long-term benefits to any community. Clay County has a number of sites in need of redevelopment, so this strategy is a natural fit for our plan. Additionally, through some initial work being done by the East Arkansas Planning and Development District, there is an excellent source of information regarding the status of such properties. Putting a strong plan together for implementation is the next step.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

In Clay County, we have already done some initial work identifying potential sites for environmental clean-up. We wish to work closely with the EAPDD to put together a solid program of identification, consultation and clean-up for any of the property owners wishing to redevelop such lands.

Key Success Factor Report - Environmental Restoration

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
Local government support	Availability of brownfield sites Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation Access to large-scale capital
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	No Entries

Selected Strategy:

**Health
Care**





Strategy Summary

Communities that have established notable centers of excellence for broad-based health care or specific health care specialties benefit from an unusually large cadre of well-paid professionals.

Communities such as Rochester, Minnesota, home of the Mayo Clinic, for example, benefit substantially from having a high health care location factor. ("Location factors" are an economic term referring to a high density of employment in an industry within a specific region.)

National trends have a significant impact on health care, especially in rural communities. Mergers and acquisitions create a dynamic where there are fewer health care conglomerates controlling hospitals dispersed throughout the country.

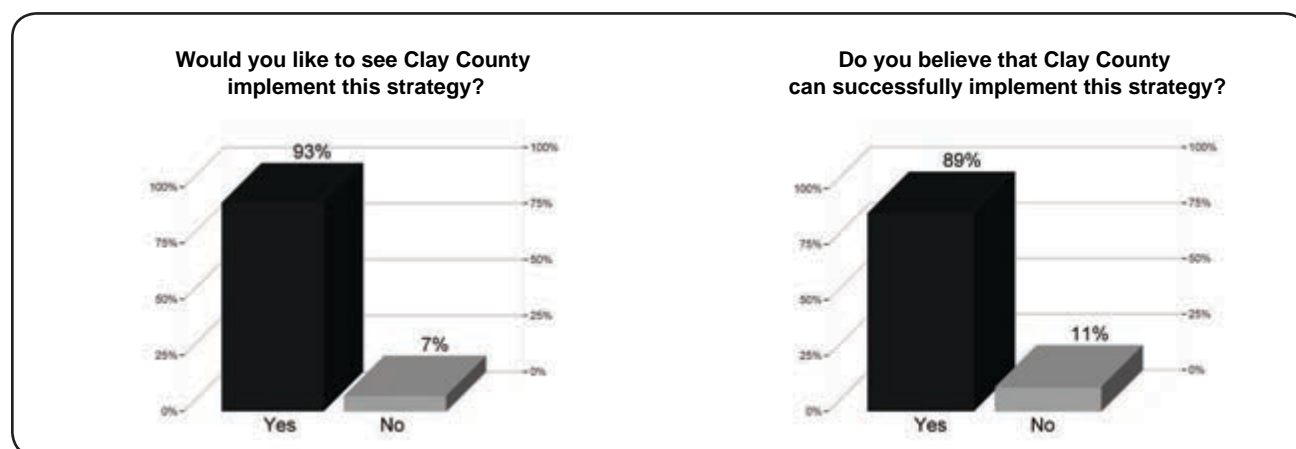
Additionally, federal policies on Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements have created a significant financial challenge for rural hospitals.

Communities desiring to pursue a health care-based business development strategy should begin with a very objective analysis of the true competitive position of their local hospital and medical community. While every community likes to boast that they have competitive superiority with respect to health care professionals and facilities, a realistic assessment may prove otherwise.

It may be more realistic to target a specialty area of health care. For example, many rural hospitals have targeted orthopedic care based upon the superiority of one or more orthopedic surgeons and the investment in state-of-the-art orthopedic assessment and surgery equipment.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

FA Health Care strategy is an excellent choice for a community like Clay County. We already draw from a service area well beyond our county boundaries. We want to ensure that our community hospital and health care providers are the first stop for health care needs, not only for our residents but for those in neighboring communities as well.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Leaders at Piggott Community Hospital have done an excellent job providing services in Clay County. For this strategy, we will focus on expanding existing health care services where needed. We'll look to invest in our facilities and equipment, and encourage our residents to form relationships with local health care providers.

Key Success Factor Report - Health Care

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
No Entries	Financially sound existing health care facility Competent, strategic-minded hospital and health-care executives Existing excellence in local health care Strong community support
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget Local, available, low-skill labor pool Local, available, high-skill labor pool	No Entries

Infrastructure Development





Infrastructure Development

SCORE: 44

RANK: 18

Strategy Summary

The term infrastructure describes all of the basic utilities and public services needed by communities and businesses. Infrastructure includes, but is not limited to, power, water, sewer, storm sewer, street/roads, and telecommunications.

Although “infrastructure development” is an economic development strategy, it is typically viewed of a means-to-an-end in terms of providing the necessary input for other strategies to be successful.

Infrastructure development is considered an economic development strategy in-and-of-itself in that it is a long-term commitment for toward the betterment of communities and the businesses that they support.

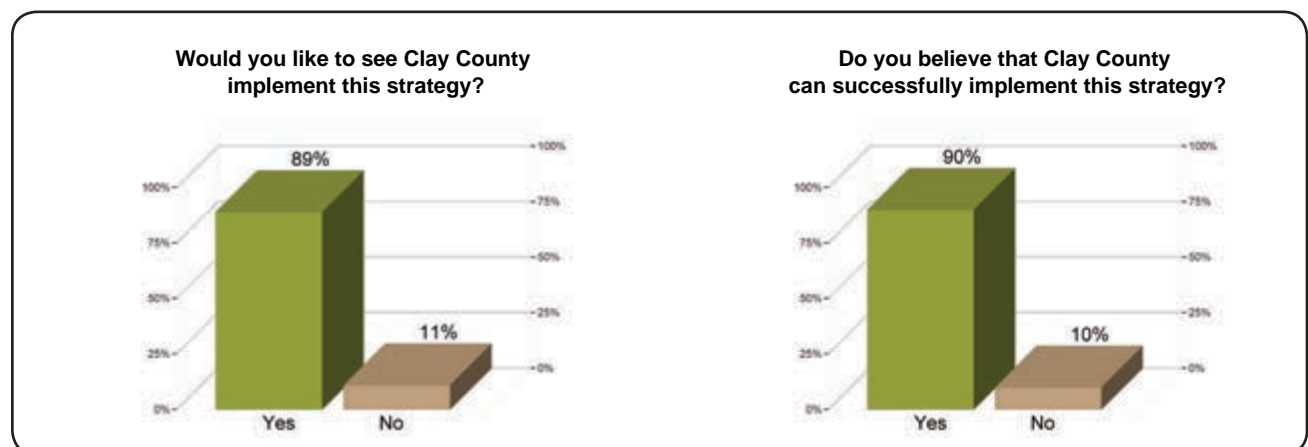
Communities need to examine the infrastructure requirements both of their current residents, as well as their projection of future residential, commercial, and industrial demands.

The federal government, and most state governments, provide long-term, low-interest debt financing to advance eligible infrastructure projects. At times, particularly when immediate job creation opportunities arise, grant funding is available for infrastructure development.

Communities pursuing an infrastructure development strategy should strategically assess their needs, and engineer solutions consistent with long-term projections.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

Infrastructure development is especially important in Clay County. We have done an excellent job of upgrading our infrastructure in many instances. There is still much work to do. For this strategy to work, our first step will be to conduct a complete assessment of our infrastructure and prepare a master capital facilities plan that encompasses the entire county's needs.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

As indicated by our Key Success Factors, we have some strengths relevant to this strategy. We have done a good job of assessing our needs and related costs, at least on an individual community or county level. We will look at developing a team approach to funding these projects, working together to prioritize the needs of the county as a whole.

Key Success Factor Report - Infrastructure Development

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
No Entries	Accurate, long-term analysis of infrastructure needs and costs Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases	Team approach to infrastructure finance

Selected Strategy:

Local/Regional Tourism



Strategy Summary

While most communities do not have a destination attraction in their backyard, they may have sufficient recreational or historical amenities that can draw visitors within a one-day drive and thus stimulate the local economy.

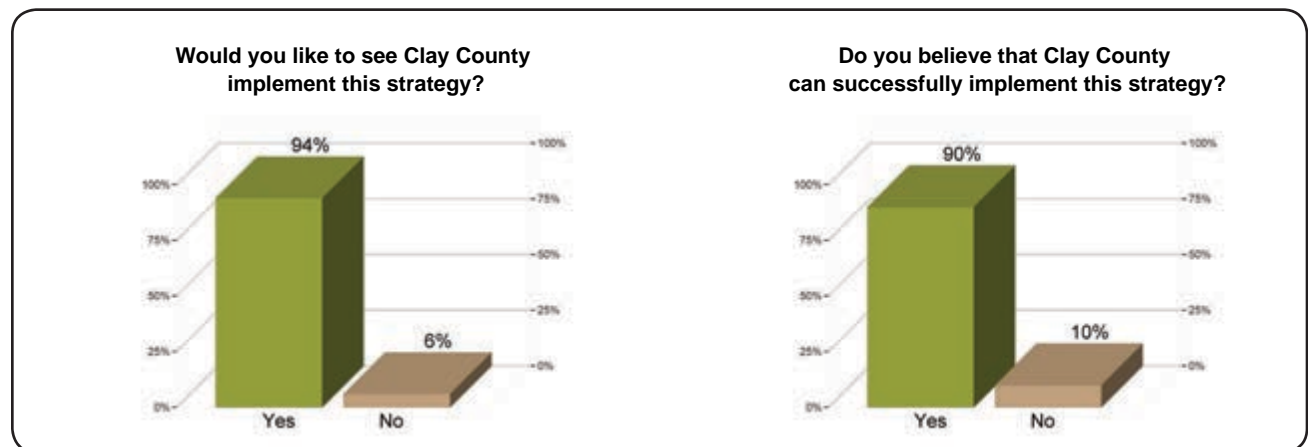
Many communities have successful weekend events designed to celebrate the community's history and/or culture. These events have potential to draw people from a county or two away.

By investing in the local tourism "product" and marketing efforts, tourism expenditures can be maximized.

Communities should understand that employing a local/regional tourism strategy is not an economic panacea. Such a strategy can have a modest economic impact, however, and bolster community pride.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

For Clay County, local and regional tourism has a significant and singular meaning: development of a lake. While there may certainly be other, smaller projects we will consider, no project could have as much of a positive impact on the future of our community as "Clay Lake." Our energies will be devoted to reviewing what has been done through past initiatives and how we need to proceed to complete this large-scale, highly visible project that will affect every community in our county.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

While we may not have a unique attraction to offer currently, we will be dedicating a tremendous amount of time and effort to the development of such an attraction. “Clay Lake” is a project that has been undertaken before. We will analyze what has been done in the past before developing a revised plan to complete this project and create a remarkable opportunity for tourism in Clay County.

Key Success Factor Report - Local/Regional Tourism

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
No Entries	Strong community support
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Local recreational and visitor attractions Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget	No Entries

Value-added Agriculture





Value-added Agriculture

SCORE: 76

RANK: 1

Strategy Summary

Counties—and frequently clusters of counties—may produce an inordinate amount of one or more agricultural products based upon competitive advantages such as soil types, climate, and elevation.

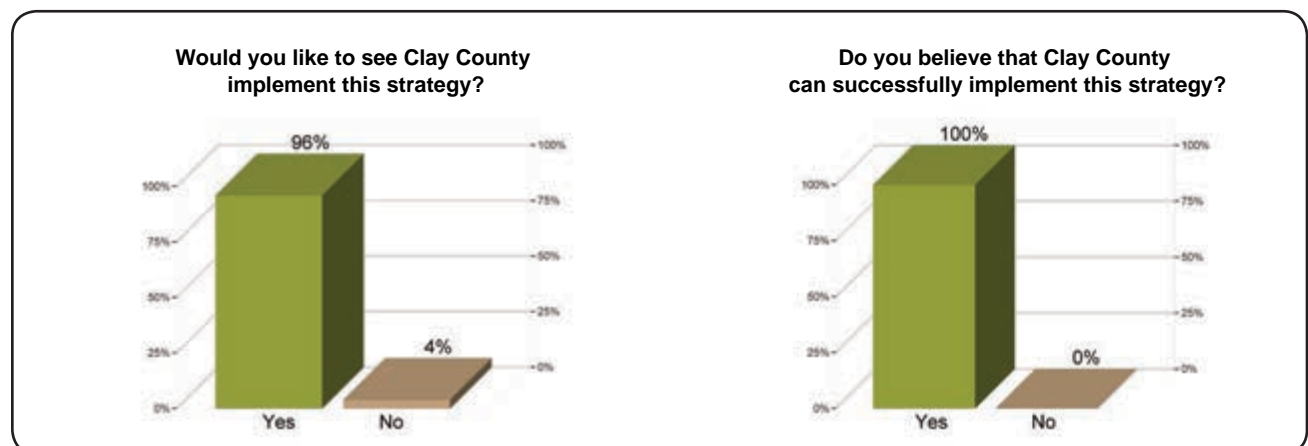
If sufficient volumes of individual raw materials are produced, communities may have an opportunity to “add value” to the raw commodities through processing. Examples include producing french fries from potatoes, sugar from sugar beets/sugar cane, steaks from cattle, and wine from grapes.

Advantages from value-added agricultural business include retaining profits and job-creation opportunities locally, providing jobs consistent with skill levels of the local labor force, and reinforcing the culture and economy of local communities.

Drawbacks from a value-added agriculture strategy typically include a high demand on local utilities (typically water, sewer, and power), frequently below-to-average wage levels, and sometimes undesirable wastewater and air emissions.

Voice of the Community Survey Results

During the Voice of the Community Meeting the community at large was asked to weigh in on 1) whether or not they wanted to see Clay County implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Clay County could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:



Objectives of Strategy Implementation

With large-scale production of agricultural commodities already underway in Clay County, pursuit of a value-added strategy makes perfect sense. We will encourage local businesses to explore opportunities for expansion into this area.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Scores in this area are very strong for Clay County. We have already laid a great foundation for this strategy. We'll use our strong base of producers to help us develop a strategy that meets their needs. Also, we will first look to local business owners to provide additional services to add value to the products we produce in large quantities.

Key Success Factor Report - Value-added Agriculture

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	Slight Comparative Advantages
Proximity to large volumes of agricultural commodities	Access to large-scale capital Proximity and access to markets Ability to successfully market materials Ability to understand industry trends and opportunities Availability of land for business prospects Availability of local buildings Availability of local infrastructure
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	Major Comparative Disadvantages
Excess water and sewer infrastructure capacity Local, available, low-skill labor pool Local, available, high-skill labor pool	No Entries

Section 4:

Quality-of-Life Initiatives

Civic Engagement, Leadership and Volunteerism

Community Beautification

Recreation and Entertainment

Senior Living

Quality-of-life initiatives

Summary

Although *Quality-of-life Initiatives* are not regarded as Building Communities strategies in traditional economic development strategic planning, the broadening of objectives from “economic development” to “quality-of-life” brings a new set of considerations for communities.

Quality-of-life Initiatives have been added to the traditional Building Communities approach and include the additional *Key Success Factors* and *Essential Action Steps* that this broader approach requires.

These initiatives are included, in part, to surface considerations encompassed in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Livability Principles (see table above).

Quality-of-life Initiatives differ from the traditional 25 strategies in that they encompass a critical set of disciplines and values (housing, transportation, and environmental quality). Discussions related to *Quality-of-life Initiatives* will be widely divergent from one community to the next, based upon the specific interests and opportunities of the communities themselves.

These broader considerations will help each community identify issues, challenges, opportunities, and potential development projects that can be supported by programs aimed at improving quality of life, as well as those that promote community and economic development.

Housing and Urban Development’s Livability Principles	
Provide more transportation choices	Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
Promote equitable, affordable housing	Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
Enhance economic competitiveness	Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs of workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
Support existing communities	Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment	Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
Value communities and neighborhoods	Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Example Projects and Initiatives

- New or expanded transit services connecting housing to jobs and services
- Affordable housing development strategically situated to minimize traditional transportation time and costs
- Mixed-use development projects combining housing, services, and work opportunities
- Proactive zoning to facilitate growth
- Health and fitness walking path systems/promotional campaigns urging pedestrian and bicycle transportation activity
- Sustainable local foods initiatives Forest stewardship initiatives

- Energy conservation activities
- Establishment of arts and crafts coops
- Green jobs initiatives
- Strategic use of treated wastewater
- Development of Parks and Recreational Facilities

Potential Advantages to Implementing these Initiatives

- Improve local quality of life
- Long-term perspective on infrastructure investments
- Reduction of traffic congestion
- Upgrading historically blighted areas
- Air quality improvement
- Short-term job creation from development projects
- Forest sustainability
- Support for local farmers and growers
- Engagement of cross-section of local population focused on sustainability
- Support for other strategies related to community livability

Potential Drawbacks to Implementing these Initiatives

- Effort-to-visible-benefit ratio sometimes challenging
- Perception that local resources are being redirected to benign initiatives

Brief Overview of Selected Initiatives

Clay County thoroughly evaluated the Quality-of-life Initiatives and found them to be in line with what they wanted for their community. Additionally, the community input received during the Voice of the Community session was substantially focused on these quality-of-life initiatives.

Both the Steering Committee and the community participants acknowledged that in order to achieve their vision for Clay County, the focus needs to be on more than just the economy. Affordable housing, a strong arts community, efficient use of energy, an urban forest initiative, the pursuit of green jobs, appropriate mixed-use development policies, multi-modal transportation choices, expanded parks and recreation opportunities and healthy local food options are issues that the citizens feel need to be pursued as part of the overall planning process. In fact, the participants felt like the accomplishment of these strategies is crucial to the continued success of Clay County on all fronts.

Civic Engagement, Leadership and Volunteerism

In Clay County, we have a great deal to do. To accomplish the goals we have set, we must establish a solid group of leaders and volunteers to lead us. Additionally, we need to prepare our youth to lead in the future. For this initiative, we will be considering the establishment of leadership training and programs for our elected officials and volunteers; preparing a plan of action to integrate civic education into our school systems at an early age; establishing a civics club countywide for our high school students; putting together a communications strategy that will help us speak with one voice in a positive manner about what's happening here in Clay County; creating a countywide web page to communicate about events and news for the county; reaching out to organizations throughout the county to encourage volunteerism and holding events to recognize our volunteers for their efforts.

Community Beautification

Our county is quite beautiful -- and we wish to keep it that way. In order to do this, we are planning coordinated volunteer clean-up efforts throughout the county. We will include new entrance signs, flower

gardens, paint-the-town projects and neighborhood clean-ups to complete this initiative. Ultimately, we hope to shift our focus to downtown commercial districts as the basis for a future downtown development strategy.

Recreation and Entertainment

Recreational and entertainment opportunities are scarce for our youth in Clay County. We asked them to participate in this discussion to tell us what they would like to see. Their sense is that we should have something unique to the region, rather than competing with neighboring communities. Therefore, we are going to consider development of new sports complexes for baseball, softball, soccer and other sports. Additionally, we are focusing on amenities such as a swimming pool or splash park, paint ball facilities, a video arcade, miniature golf and go-cart tracks. Finally, we will also examine the feasibility of developing an RV Park and an associated ATV trail system, or BMX bike trail system.

Senior Living

While assisted living is available in Piggott, the other communities within our county lack this service. Our goal is to develop assisted-living and other senior residential services in Rector, Corning and other areas of the county.

Key Considerations

With ever-increasing focus and attention being placed on livability and environmental issues, communities that proactively address quality-of-life projects are riding a popular wave. State and federal agencies, as well as foundations, are redirecting funding and technical resources toward these initiatives.

Quality-of-life initiatives may be viewed by traditional community and (especially) business development activists as peripheral to the essential development activity needed by the community. Alternatively, many communities advance these initiatives as a central cornerstone to their economic development program.

Section 5:

Community Organizer Results

Community Organizer

Overview

Recognizing that the successful implementation of an economic development strategic plan takes more than simply selecting the right strategies, Building Communities presents the *Community Organizer Assessment*. This tool helps Steering Committee members to ask and answer the right questions with respect to the identification of the current and desired levels of capacity to implement business and community development strategies. The Clay County Steering Committee met to consider both the business development and community development approaches to the *Community Organizer Assessment*.

The tool is organized by presenting a series of scenarios that describe alternate levels of capacity with respect to seven elements relevant to business development and community development. The Steering Committee was asked to consider each scenario, and then to come to a consensus as to which scenario best describes the current capacity of their community. Each of the members were also then asked to identify their desired level of capacity. The tables below presents the results of the *Community Organizer Assessment* for Business and Community Development Capacities, respectively. In every case but one, the desired level of capacity was the highest scenario presented.

Business Development Capacity Report

ELEMENT	SCENARIO SCORES										ASSESSED CAPACITY	PRESCRIBED CAPACITY
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J		
Business Development Strategy	7	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	28 / 37	37 / 37
Local Staff and Team Development	3	0	2	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	5 / 37	37 / 37
Industrial Land and Infrastructure	5	3	7	5	2	2	8	4	2	2	40 / 68	68 / 68
Targeted Industries	2	4	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6 / 19	19 / 19
Marketing	0	3	0	0	4	—	—	—	—	—	7 / 33	33 / 33
Prospect and Lead Management	5	4	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9 / 27	27 / 27
Closing the Deal	0	4	6	3	4	—	—	—	—	—	17 / 26	26 / 26
TOTAL POINTS											112 / 247	247 / 247

Community Development Capacity Report

ELEMENT	SCENARIO SCORES					ASSESSED CAPACITY	PRESCRIBED CAPACITY
	A	B	C	D	E		
Strategic Plan/Vision	10	3	3	10	0	26 / 32	32 / 32
Project and Issue Development	1	3	4	3	0	11 / 16	16 / 16
Organizational Capacity	0	0	2	3	0	5 / 38	38 / 38
Staffing	8	0	0	1	—	9 / 23	23 / 23
Civic Volunteerism	5	1	—	—	—	6 / 8	8 / 8
Community Attitude	5	3	—	—	—	8 / 13	13 / 13
Maintaining Community as the Goal	3	2	—	—	—	5 / 9	9 / 9
TOTAL POINTS						70 / 139	139 / 139

The *Community Organizer Assessment* not only presents a description of the current level of capacity, but also prescribes the steps necessary in order for the county to achieve its desired level of business and community development capacity.

Business Development Capacity

The information below itemizes the specific “capacity building action steps” needed in order for the community to reach its desired level of capacity for both business development and community development activities.

1 - Business Development Strategy

ASSESSED SCORE: **28 / 37**

PRESCRIBED SCORE: **37 / 37**

Definition

A business development strategy, which can be viewed as a subset of a community and economic development strategy, should be very clear in its scope. In addition to answering the question “What types of business development activities should we engage in?”, the strategy should be equally clear in identifying “What business development activities are beyond the scope of our community?” That is, many communities, due to limitations in factors such as labor force, proximity to markets, and available infrastructure, ought to conclude that the recruitment of large-scale business development opportunities is beyond the realistic grasp of the community.

Business development strategies should also assess the desirability of business growth for a community. Many urban and suburban cities experienced such dramatic growth in the 1990s that they became very selective about new job creating possibilities. Times of economic recession cause communities to rethink these policies.

Often overlooked, and frequently most important, are activities to support existing businesses within a community. In the end, a large percentage of jobs created in any community will come from the expansion of existing businesses. Additionally, communities can often offset the threat of curtailment of business operations with proactive business retention efforts.

Communities must also assess the business development climate that they offer. What is the condition of the state and national economy? How competitive is the state’s business climate? How streamlined is the community’s regulatory process for businesses?

1a. Relationship with Community’s Strategic Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

1b. Desirability of Business Development

- ☐ Analyze the support for business development activities in the community, hold an open dialogue on the subject, and document strong levels of support.

1c. Appropriateness of Business Development

- ☐ While being mindful of any invitations, conduct a broad array of business development activities based upon relative strengths of the community.

1d. A Foundation of Support for Existing Businesses

- ☐ Proactively engage existing business community in business development activities; reinforce the symbiotic relationship between new and prospective businesses.

2 - Local Staff and Team Development

ASSESSED SCORE: 5 / 37	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 37 / 37
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Definition

Similar to the community development capacity requirements, business development requires strong staffing, organization, and volunteerism to succeed. Communities must be careful not to assume that simply because they have broader community development organizations in place (that advocate for community livability, tourism development, downtown development, historic preservation, arts and culture, and/or other priorities), that they have a business development organization. Business development advocacy can be coordinated through an organization with broader purposes, but in order to be effective, the specific skills and focus of business development cannot be lost.

2a. Focused Business Development Organization

- ☐ Ensure that business development priorities are not subordinated to community development priorities by the respective organization(s) advancing that such activity.
- ☐ Ensure that all business development priorities are specifically being advance by one or more organization(s).
- ☐ Ensure that the business development organization has long-term staying power in terms of its organization and budgeting.

2b. Stability of Business Development Organization

- ☐ Recognize that between four and ten percent of the time of the staff and volunteers is dedication toward budgeting and fundraising.
- ☐ Ensure that no more than four percent of the time of the staff and volunteers is committed toward budgeting and fundraising.

2c. Frequency of Meetings

- ☐ Ensure that that full board meets at least monthly.
- ☐ In addition to regular monthly board meetings, ensure that subcommittee activity also generates results.

2d. Business Development Staff

- ☐ Higher or contract for a business development staff person.
- ☐ Recognize that the lack of tenure limits the capability of the existing business development staff person.
- ☐ Recognize that the community has a capable lead economic development person but the position is hampered by the lack of administrative support.
- ☐ Ensure that the organization not only has a capable staff person, but also has adequate administrative support.

2e. Business Development Training

- ☐ Provide limited training to economic professionals and volunteers.
- ☐ Ensure access and commitment to economic development training for staff.
- ☐ Ensure not only that the lead economic development professional has adequate training, but also that board members are exposed to economic development principals and practices.

3 - Industrial Land and Infrastructure

ASSESSED SCORE: 40 / 68	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 68 / 68
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Definition

Many communities get geared up to conduct business development—and particularly business recruitment—activities without first conducting an objective analysis of the existing availability of land and infrastructure.

Frequently, communities confuse the availability of land “zoned industrial” with the true availability of such land for business expansion and business recruitment endeavors. Simply because land exists does not mean that it is for sale. It does not mean that it is for sale at a competitive price. It does not mean that the land is necessarily served by infrastructure. It does not mean that the land is served by specialized infrastructure requirements of a particular industry. And it does not mean that the land is clear from environmental constraints.

Indeed, the availability of land, or lack thereof, that is truly available, appropriate, and competitive for business development uses becomes a huge opportunity or constraint for a community.

Issues of land ownership must also be considered. Although the community may think it has land available, what really happens when the existing expanding business or the industrial prospect comes seriously knocking on the door? Will the price of the land suddenly escalate? Is the landowner truly motivated to sell? Are they legally empowered to sell?

Communities may wish to consider the public ownership of industrial land to ensure that the public interest, rather than an individual or corporation’s private interest, dominates the motivations of a future transaction.

Perhaps this public ownership is in place through a port, county, city, or other public entity. Even if the land is publicly owned, does the public body have a strategy for its ultimate use?

3a. Availability of Industrially-Zoned Land

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3b. Potential for Land

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3c. Land Ownership

☐ Ensure that publicly-controlled industrial land is competitively priced.

3d. Environmental Considerations

☐ Conduct an environmental assessment and conclude that industrial land has no environmental limitations.

3e. Land Price

☐ Ensure that the available industrial land is competitively priced

3f. Availability of Buildings

- ☐ Identify existing industrial and/or commercial buildings that are generally desirable and competitive for developing.
- ☐ Document existing buildings that are highly competitive for business development opportunities.
- ☐ Not only document the availability of competitive industrial buildings, but also outline the expandability of such buildings.

3g. Basic Infrastructure

- ☐ Document how available basic industry is already available for the majority of business. development opportunities

3h. Access Infrastructure

- ☐ Document, if possible, how the access infrastructure (and therefore the community) is within five minutes of an interstate system.
- ☐ Establish and document the availability of rail spurs.
- ☐ Ensure the availability and document scheduled air service and/or barging services within 30 minutes of the community.

3i. Special Infrastructure

- ☐ Ensure that availability of all of the needed specialized infrastructure based upon the business development priorities being selected.

3j. Land/Target Compatibility

- ☐ Complete specialized activities ensuring that all of the unique land requirements associated with business development activities can be met by the community.

4 - Targeted Industries

ASSESSED SCORE: 6 / 19	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 19 / 19
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Definition

Similar to communities being focused on specific objectives within the context of a strategic plan, communities must also have a focus in their business development activities in order to be successful.

The concept of “targeted industries” is the most often used procedure to identify, on a selective basis, the types of industry that are consistent with the development and recruitment desires of a particular community.

Typically, businesses are targeted based on the type of industry they represent utilizing the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This system replaced the U.S. Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. There are additional methods for targeting industries that can be done either in addition to, or in replacement of, the industry selection process. Communities may target industries based upon a geographic region or based upon other factors such as the size of typical companies.

Communities may wish to begin their Targeted Industry Analysis by analyzing the types of companies that could locate in their community to produce products that are typically imported into their community. That is, they can substitute the local manufacturing of goods and services that have historically been imported into the community. This is a process known as “import substitution.”

Still other communities may wish to conduct their Targeted Industry Analysis to be consistent with other objectives and priorities within a community. For example, communities that have historic strength—or current strategies—to expand the visitor industry, may wish to recruit businesses consistent with this focus.

Targeted Industry Analysis is a very sophisticated field, and communities can initiate fairly complex strategies and contract with specialized consultants to conduct such industry targeting.

4a. Import Substitution

- ☐ Conduct a full-scale import substitution analysis.

4b. Connection with Strategic Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time

4c. Targeted Industry Analysis

- ☐ Complete an informal target industry analysis.
- ☐ Engage a qualified consulting firm to develop a target industry analysis specific to the community.
- ☐ Ensure that the target industry analysis yields a series of businesses to be recruited.
- ☐ Ensure that current connect information exists for targeted businesses.
- ☐ Ensure that the target industry analysis provides sufficient background information about targeted businesses that the community has a “running start” with recruitment activities.

5 - Marketing

ASSESSED SCORE: **7 / 33**

PRESCRIBED SCORE: **33 / 33**

Definition

Once the business development strategy is in place, a local development team is poised, land and infrastructure is ready, and some level of Targeted Industry Analysis has been completed, the community is only then prepared to conduct specific business development marketing activities.

The sequential nature of the elements of business development capacity must be recognized. Conducting marketing activities without land to be offered is a waste of resources. Conducting a marketing strategy without some form of targeting, or market segregation, can be very inefficient—if not completely unproductive.

The community needs to take a holistic, sophisticated approach to marketing techniques including direct mail, industry trade shows, web sites, cold calling, alliances with site selectors, and other methods.

Finally, communities may wish to conduct business development—and, in particular, business recruitment—activities in concert with other communities and counties in their region. By conducting a regional approach, costs can be shared, and the possibility of attracting a company to the region increases.

5a. Marketing Track Record

- ☐ Research and document past business recruitment marketing efforts.
- ☐ Build upon past, albeit mixed, results of business marketing efforts.
- ☐ Build upon recent successes in business marketing to launch continued successful efforts.

5b. Professional Marketing Assistance

- ☐ Collaborate with a business marketing consultant to ensure success.

5c. Diversification of Marketing Techniques

- ☐ Ensure that at least two business development marketing techniques are being deployed.

5d. Financial Resources

- ☐ Dedicate at least \$50,000 cash toward business marketing efforts on an annu

5e. Use of the Internet

- ☐ Post a complete website generally providing 100% of the relevant business development information online.
- ☐ Create a client-specific business development reporting system allowing business development prospects to download relevant community-based reports.

6 - Prospect and Lead Management

ASSESSED SCORE: 9 / 27	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 27 / 27
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Definition

All of the activities thus far in this business development capacity assessment tool are designed to ultimately generate business development leads or prospects (these terms are used interchangeably here, although prospects can refer to a more developed stage of relationship between a community and a business).

Businesses can take two years—or more—to make a business location decision after they have made preliminary contacts with cities and states for site information. Generally, however, this process takes between six and twelve months. Regardless of the duration of this period, communities must be prepared to address each and every concern and need of a prospect.

Business development—and particularly business recruitment—is a process of elimination. Companies come to their ultimate site decision through a process of eliminating other communities that have one or more significant variances from the ideal conditions being sought by the company. Given this, communities must manage prospects by addressing each and every need.

Prospect management requires a very steady, professional approach to businesses. The combination of a strong network of civic advocates and, especially, a well-trained business development professional maximizes the likelihood of business development success.

6a. Community Profile

- ☐ Complete a “hard copy” community profile that has a comprehensive and current display of relevant community and business development information.
- ☐ Ensure that all of the relevant business development information is readily available online.

6b. A Professional Community Response

- ☐ Assemble a business development team that possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to professionally respond to business development inquiries; make business development responses a priority.
- ☐ Formalize the community’s business response team and ensure that adequate training and resources are available for professional responses.

6c. Availability to Travel

- ☐ Ensure that staffing and funding is available on an emergency basis for top priorities in order to travel to be with business prospects.
- ☐ Create a standing business development account and resource team that are immediately available for proactive business recruitment.

7 - Closing the Deal

ASSESSED SCORE: 17 / 26	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 26 / 26
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Definition

All of the prior steps in this business development capacity assessment mean virtually nothing if the community is not capable of “closing the deal.” Generally, closing the deal is the process of eliminating any remaining uncertainties in the minds of the company decision makers. Almost always, these details—as well as the overall commitment by all parties (the company, the community, the state, and possibly other entities)—are formalized in a contract or memorandum of understanding.

Communities, therefore, have to be willing to put their commitment in writing. Both the company and the community may have to back up their commitment with potential penalties in the event that either party does not perform. Typically, performance from a community would be the guarantee of the delivery of land, infrastructure, and local incentives. Communities, and particularly the State, typically require a guarantee by the company to create the jobs negotiated in the site location process.

It is typical—and most preferable from the State’s perspective—for the topic of incentives to be seriously discussed late in the site location process. Companies that insist upon detailed incentive commitments early in the process may have the importance of incentives out of balance with respect to other site location factors (access to markets, cost of labor, etc.). Nonetheless, incentives of some form almost always become a required provision of the memorandum of understanding.

7a. Deal Making Experience

- ☐ Document lessons learned from at least one “near miss” business development opportunity.
- ☐ Build on past success of closing successful business development deals.

7b. Expertise with Incentives

- ☐ Recognize the depth of understanding of incentives and ability to “package the deal” in concert with state and federal partners.

7c. A Winning Attitude

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7d. Community Sophistication

- ☐ Recognize capability of in-house attorney with expertise in negotiating business development deals.

7e. Project/Contract Monitoring

- ☐ Develop a compliance document/system to ensure legal obligations are met.

Community Development Capacity

1 - Strategic Plan/Vision

ASSESSED SCORE: 26 / 32	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 32 / 32
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Definition

Communities are in various stages of commitment to a strategic planning process. Some communities have never engaged in such an effort to collectively envision the future and set specific projects in motion to capture that vision. Conversely, some communities not only have a strategic planning process in place, but have engaged in professional strategic planning consultants, widely participated in the development of the plan, reviewed the plan regularly, and have even engaged one or more times in updating their strategic plan.

1a. Existence of Community-wide Strategic Planning Document

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

1b. Acceptance of Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

1c. Professional Development of Plan

☐ Gain a very high level awareness and acceptance for the specific consultant and methodology.

1d. Use of Strategic Plan

☐ Make widespread and very regular use of economic development strategic plan; recognize plan as an essential guidebook for community and economic development activities.

1e. Plan Updating

☐ Recognize that the existing strategic plan has been updated once.

☐ Recognize that the existing strategic plan has been updated twice.

☐ Recognize that the existing strategic plan has been updated on three or more occasions.

2 - Project and Issue Development

ASSESSED SCORE: 11 / 16	PRESCRIBED SCORE: 16 / 16
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Definition

Typically, a strategic planning process yields an overall vision statement and then a series of goals and objectives related to projects and issues.

For the purposes of this evaluation tool, projects and issues are separated from the strategic planning process.

Ultimately, it is the success, or lack thereof, of a community in advancing projects and issues that reinforces the community's commitment to long-term strategic planning. Communities must see this "pay-off" to reinforce a long-term outlook.

2a. Community Wish List

- ☐ Recognize that an existing “wish list” exists, and that the list is less than four years old.
- ☐ Recognize that an existing “wish list” exists, and that the list is less than two years old.

2b. Identification of Strategic Issues

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2c. Large Project Advocacy

- ☐ Recognize that the community has a demonstrated track record of completing large-scale projects.

2d. Coordinating Projects with State and Federal Processes

- ☐ Recognize that the community is a regular participant in state and/or federal funding processes.

2e. Incorporation into Community Facilities Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3 - Organizational Capacity

ASSESSED SCORE:	5 / 38
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PRESCRIBED SCORE:	38 / 38
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Definition

Strategic planning and project identification means very little to a community if it does not have the organizational capacity to carry out the city’s priorities. Although there is not “one correct way” to organize a community to conduct community development activities, there are some basic principles that apply. First of all, the scope of the community development activities needs to be defined. Communities may desire to implement projects and address issues that deal with the following types of community development activities: tourism development, historic preservation, arts and culture development, infrastructure improvements, and community facilities. A community’s priority list may even stretch longer than this.

A community may seek to empower one organization to advance the full gamut of community development priorities. Conversely, a community may wish to have more than one organization focused on specific priorities (a visitor and convention bureau, a downtown development association, a business recruitment organization, etc.). This Continuum is designed so as not to advocate for one form of organizational structure over another, but rather to simply advance the notion that the community must be specific in the priorities that it tends to advance and to empower one or more organizations to successfully advance these priorities.

This process advances, therefore, the following specific principles with respect to a community’s “organizational structure”:

- A community must have one or more organization(s) dedicated to advancing specific priorities identified in the strategic plan.
- If a community has more than one organization serving a community development advocacy role, the organizations must avoid duplication of services and serve to reinforce each other.
- Organizations should have adequate, stable funding and dedicate a majority of their time to reaching stated objectives rather than simply keeping the organization afloat.

- Organizations must meet frequently enough to advance identified priorities.

3a. Connectedness and Focus of Organization(s)

- ☐ Ensure that all of the priorities identified in the local strategic planning process are assigned to one or more community development organizations.

3b. Organizational Stability

- ☐ Ensure that a long-term sustainable, adequate funding stream is committed to one or more community development organization(s).

3c. Focus on Business of Community

- ☐ Ensure a complete, holistic approach to how community development is executed through completion of all of the activities identified in the strategic plan through one or more organization(s).

3d. Frequency of Meetings

- ☐ Commit to regular (at least monthly) activity by one or more community development organization(s) with regular sub-committee activity advancing community priorities.

3e. Organizational Board Training

- ☐ Engage in a broad, community-wide initiative to train community volunteers in leadership and project advocacy principals.

4 - Staffing

ASSESSED SCORE: **9 / 23**

PRESCRIBED SCORE: **23 / 23**

Definition

For community development organizations to reach optimal effectiveness, a professional staff person must serve them. Community development organization staffing requires a talented individual (or team of individuals), strong staff support, a connection to organizational objectives, and long-term staff training and development.

4a. Skill Level of Staff Person

- ☐ Recognize that the staff displays excellence in terms of skills, accomplishments, and credentials.

4b. Support Staff

- ☐ Recognize that the staff support exists but capabilities could be stronger.
- ☐ Recognize the effectiveness of the staff support.

4c. Staff Focused on Organizational Objectives

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

4d. Staff Training

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

5 - Civic Volunteerism

ASSESSED SCORE:	6 / 8
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PRESCRIBED SCORE:	8 / 8
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Definition

Individuals are frequently motivated to commit time to their community because they are willing to give to a greater cause. Volunteers appreciate being a part of a “winning team” and desire to see their community succeed. Successful communities inspire civic volunteerism, and often reward volunteers for their time and service.

5a. Opportunities for Service

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

5b. Celebration of Volunteerism

- ☐ Maintain and consider expanding regular events to honor civic volunteerism.

6 - Community Attitude

ASSESSED SCORE:	8 / 13
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PRESCRIBED SCORE:	13 / 13
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Definition

Although it is intangible, the attitude of a community is a major factor in the community’s capacity for community development. Like individuals, communities can be either proactive or reactive. They can believe that they are in charge of their destiny or be resigned to the fact that too many issues are uncontrollable.

Success is contagious. Failure is contagious. Communities that have established a track record of envisioning and completing community development projects believe that their next success is imminent. Likewise, communities that have either tried and failed—or have not tried at all—do not sense a control of their destiny. It’s all about attitude.

6a. Proactive vs. Reactive Communities

- ☐ Recognize (either formally or informally) the nucleus of forward-thinking civic volunteers that are able to “carry the day” on certain key projects and initiatives.
- ☐ Recognize that one of the hallmarks of the community is a deep and growing cadre of elected and non-elected individuals that regularly succeed with projects and initiatives.

6b. Viewing the Glass Half-Full

- ☐ Recognize that the community sees its “glass half full”; enact initiative to fill the glass.

7 - Maintaining the “Community” as the Goal

ASSESSED SCORE:	5 / 9
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PRESCRIBED SCORE:	9 / 9
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Definition

A community completes a strategic planning exercise. The exercise yields a series of community development projects. Local organizations, equipped with staff and volunteers, focus on the implementation of the strategic projects. How does the community, at that point, view the importance of the projects? Do the projects become of paramount importance over the broader, strategic direction of the community? Or do civic leaders maintain the appropriate perspective of successful projects fitting into the broader community development vision?

Ideally, civic leaders will view their efforts to advance a project in the broader context. Even the chairperson for the largest community development project should view their project as subordinate to the community’s strategic plan.

7a. Depth of Community “Vision” or “Mission Statement”

- ☐ Keep the community strategic plan and mission statement so visible to a broad array of its citizenry that the mission and vision statements are virtually memorized.

7b. Formal or Informal Subordination of Projects to Community

- ☐ Conduct one or more informal meetings amongst major project advocates for information sharing and potential “cross pollenization”.
- ☐ Formalize a “teaming of projects” to ensure coordination and potential collaboration.

Appendices

**Prioritized Strategy Report w/ Community Input
Strategy Recommendations
Strategies by Group
Alphabetical Listing of Strategies
Key Success Factor Report**

Appendix A

Prioritized Strategy Report

STRATEGY	SCORE	WANT	CAN	STRATEGY GROUP
Value-added Agriculture	76	96%	100%	Value-added
Environmental Restoration	73	89%	79%	Sector-specific
Attracting Funding	70	96%	95%	Other
Health Care Expansion	63	93%	89%	Community Development
Downtown Development	60	94%	92%	Community Development
Education Development	58	95%	91%	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	56	64%	63%	Community Development
Attracting Retirees	53	93%	93%	Other
Entrepreneurial Development	50	94%	86%	General Business
Cultural Tourism	50	88%	84%	Tourism
Attracting Lone Eagles	50	70%	62%	Other
Business Retention and Expansion	49	100%	95%	General Business
Business Cultivation	48	95%	89%	General Business
Business Recruitment	46	100%	86%	General Business
Value-added Fisheries	46	41%	36%	Value-added
Leading-edge Development	44	37%	30%	Sector-specific
Value-added Forest Products	44	46%	43%	Value-added
Infrastructure Development	44	89%	90%	Other
Energy Development	43	74%	62%	Sector-specific
Attracting Government Jobs	43	54%	52%	Other
Pass-through Visitor Services	40	86%	81%	Tourism
Logistics Centers	39	68%	43%	Sector-specific
Destination Tourism	37	33%	37%	Tourism
Local/Regional Tourism	35	94%	90%	Tourism

Appendix B

To aid communities in determining which community and economic development strategies are most viable for them, Building Communities answers three questions using input gathered from the community:

- What should we do?
- What do we want to do?
- What can we do?

The “Recommended Strategies” report is based on the findings of the Key Success Factor (KSF) Analysis and answers the question “What should we do?”

In the KSF analysis, the steering committee considered Clay County’s comparative advantage relative to a host of specific factors in categories such as community assets, public- and private-sector expertise, access to funding, etc. Responses were run through Building Communities’ strategy-selection algorithm which returned a rank-based list of strategies—the Prioritized Strategy Report—from which the recommendations below are drawn. Recommendation thresholds used in the Prioritized Strategy Report are:

Recommended (score of 85 and above) - It is highly recommended that these strategies be considered for implementation:

- No strategies in this category

Borderline (score between 70 and 84) - These strategies may be pursued with a degree of confidence, although existing obstacles may make successful implementation more challenging:

- Value-added Agriculture
- Environmental Restoration
- Attracting Government Funding

Not Recommended (score under 70) - Serious impediments exist which are likely to make successful implementation of these strategies very difficult:

- Health Care
- Downtown Development
- Education Development
- Bedroom Community
- Attracting Retirees
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Business Cultivation
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Value-added Fisheries
- Cultural Tourism
- Attracting Lone Eagles
- Transportation Distribution Center
- Value-added Forest Products
- Leading Edge Development
- Business Recruitment
- Attracting Government Jobs
- Infrastructure Development
- Energy Development
- Value-added Mining
- Pass-Through Visitor Services

- Destination Tourism
- Local/Regional Tourism

As indicated, these recommendations are viewed in reference to the question, “What should we do?” Strategies are not selected on the basis of these recommendations alone, but are determined after considering the other two questions as well. Material examined and data gathered in the Voice of the Community and *Community Organizer Assessment* sessions of Plan Week were also considered before final selection of strategies took place.

Appendix C

Strategies by Group

STRATEGY	SCORE	STRATEGY GROUP
Business Recruitment	46	General Business
Business Retention and Expansion	49	General Business
Business Cultivation	48	General Business
Entrepreneurial Development	50	General Business
Energy Development	43	Sector-specific
Environmental Restoration	73	Sector-specific
Logistics Centers	39	Sector-specific
Leading-edge Development	44	Sector-specific
Value-added Agriculture	76	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	44	Value-added
Value-added Fisheries	46	Value-added
Value-added Mining	33	Value-added
Destination Tourism	37	Tourism
Cultural Tourism	50	Tourism
Local/Regional Tourism	35	Tourism
Pass-through Visitor Services	40	Tourism
Downtown Development	60	Community Development
Education Development	58	Community Development
Health Care Expansion	63	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	56	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	44	Other
Attracting Retirees	53	Other
Attracting Lone Eagles	50	Other
Attracting Government Jobs	43	Other

Appendix D

Alphabetical Listing of Strategies

STRATEGY	SCORE	STRATEGY GROUP
Attracting Funding	70	Other
Attracting Government Jobs	43	Other
Attracting Lone Eagles	50	Other
Attracting Retirees	53	Other
Bedroom Community Development	56	Community Development
Business Cultivation	48	General Business
Business Recruitment	46	General Business
Business Retention and Expansion	49	General Business
Cultural Tourism	50	Tourism
Destination Tourism	37	Tourism
Downtown Development	60	Community Development
Education Development	58	Community Development
Energy Development	43	Sector-specific
Entrepreneurial Development	50	General Business
Environmental Restoration	73	Sector-specific
Health Care Expansion	63	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	44	Other
Leading-edge Development	44	Sector-specific
Local/Regional Tourism	35	Tourism
Logistics Centers	39	Sector-specific
Pass-through Visitor Services	40	Tourism
Value-added Agriculture	76	Value-added
Value-added Fisheries	46	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	44	Value-added

Appendix E - Key Success Factor Report

Key Success Factors with a Score of “4”:

- Proximity to large volumes of agricultural commodities
- Access to small business financing
- Access to large-scale capital
- Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants

Key Success Factors with a Score of “3”:

- Quality residential neighborhoods
- Availability of energy resources
- Recognizable central business district/downtown
- Absence of industrial business activity
- Ability to secure power-purchase agreements
- Availability of appropriated funds
- Competitive recruitment incentives
- Ability to successfully market materials
- Ability to understand industry trends and opportunities
- Support from local education professionals at all levels
- Team approach to infrastructure finance
- Community acceptance of the visitor industry
- Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases
- Local government support
- Local pro-business climate
- Projected growth in government budgets
- Strong community support
- Supportive local government policy and focus
- Supportive state energy policies and incentives
- Availability of brownfield sites
- Availability of local infrastructure
- Advantageous location for government or education expansion

Key Success Factors with a Score of “2”:

- Proximity to raw materials and minerals
- Ability to identify product and service gaps
- Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses
- Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation
- Adequate telecommunications bandwidth
- High-speed telecommunications

Key Success Factors with a Score of “1”:

- Accurate, long-term analysis of infrastructure needs and costs
- Desirable climate
- Existence of recreational amenities
- Proximity to travel routes
- Sufficient base of local businesses
- Sufficient local entrepreneurial base
- Dedicated local financial resources for staffing recruiters
- Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal

Relative sophistication in coordinating and marketing local events
 Sophisticated use of the internet for marketing
 Supportive post-secondary education training program
 Active engagement of downtown building and business owners
 Support from local businesses
 Availability of industrial-zoned land for industrial park development
 Availability of local land
 Excess water and sewer infrastructure capacity
 Land/Buildings/Campus for education development
 Proximity to transmission lines with excess capacity
 Prospect of an expanded geographic market for health care
 Proximity and access to markets

Key Success Factors with a Score of “0”:

Available, desirable housing
 Existing or prospective cultural attraction
 Expandable educational institution
 Financially-sound existing health care facility
 High availability of urban services
 Local recreational and visitor attractions
 Proximity and access to forests and forest products
 Proximity to fisheries commodities
 Proximity to nationally-recognized attractions
 Proximity to urban population and workforce centers
 Ability to secure long-term contracts for forest materials
 Local funding for downtown development
 Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget
 Ability to build a team comprised of energy-development experts
 Ability to compete in a global market
 Ability to network and attend relevant trade shows
 Capable, experienced economic development professionals
 Competent, strategic-minded hospital and health-care executives
 Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community
 Cultural development and advocacy organization
 Dedicated business coaching staff
 Downtown organization and staff
 Existing excellence in local health care
 Implementation of national Main Street Four-Point Approach™
 Relationship with site selectors
 Sophisticated tourism development & promotion
 Staff focused on recruitment objectives
 Favorable state policies with respect to office locations
 Local focus on revenues from visitors
 Support for attracting retirees
 Adequate housing for labor force
 Availability of local buildings
 Available local labor force
 Proximity to scheduled air service
 Strategic location for distribution centers



Clay County

Strategy Thumbprint™ by Building Communities, Inc.



The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.