OSCEOLA
ARKANSAS

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Committee Review Draft — February 2014

reNEW East Arkansas

BC BUILDING COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC PLANNING

A Building Communities™ Strategic Plan

EAPDD East Arkansas Planning & Development District

Osceola, Arkansas
Economic Development Strategic Plan

Adopted X X, 20XX

Prepared for
Osceola

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 Delta Center for Economic Development

Building Communities, Inc.

JQuad Planning

ReSEED Advisors

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Plan Director

Debra Felske
Owner
Deb's Room

Steering Committee Members

Ed Allred
Public Works Director
City of Osceola

Sherri Bennett
Vice President
Arkansas Northeastern College

Bishop Gregory Brown
Senior Pastor and Overseer
New Mt. Pleasant Christian Worship Center

Ollie Collins
Osceola Police Department

Sandra Collins
Osceola Apt. LLC

Michael Cox
Superintendent
Osceola School District

Scott Creecy
Code Enforcement Officer
City of Osceola

Michael Ephlin
Parks & Recreation Director
City of Osceola

Lea Hedger
Manager
Actagro, LLC.

Fred Hendrix
Plant Manager
American Greetings, Corp.

Dickie Kennemore
Mayor
City of Osceola

Steve Knox
Osceola Times

Sandra Mitchell
Joe Harris Trucking

Dr. James Shemwell
President
Arkansas Northeastern College

Ammi Tucker
Executive Director
Osceola/SMC Chamber of Commerce

Linda Warhurst
Bancorp South

John Warriner (dec.)
Principal
John Warriner Architects

Ann Whitis
Arkansas Northeastern College

Sally Wilson
Arkansas Northeastern College

Plan Facilitator

Jennifer Watkins
Building Communities, Inc.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Our Community and Vision

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Osceola was a town on the ropes. In a span of three years, we lost about 4,000 jobs in the area. The population decreased sharply because people relocated to find work. We could have given up and thrown in the towel…but that's just not the way we do things here.

Instead, we focused on bringing new jobs and investment into the community. Our leaders throughout the county worked hard to pass a self-imposed sales tax dedicated to economic development. We hired experienced staff to lead the charge. We made investments in our infrastructure to ensure that land, water, sewer and power were available. Most importantly, we worked together toward a common goal. As a result, we've turned our economy around with substantial investments from companies like Denso Manufacturing, NUCOR Corp. and recently recruited Big River Steel. Thousands of new, well-paying, family-wage jobs have been added to the employment rolls in Osceola and surrounding Mississippi County. Our unemployment rate has fallen from a high of over 13% in 2010 to under 7% in 2013, and it continues to drop.

With such a successful recruitment program, one would think that Osceola's challenges would disappear. Yet, our population continues to decline, our service businesses struggle, our public schools have decreasing enrollment and new housing starts are practically non-existent. A closer examination reveals that many of the people who work here choose to live elsewhere. Other communities are reaping the benefits of our hard work and investment.

So can we turn the tide? Should we merely be satisfied with our economic development successes and hope for the best? While we're quite proud of what we've accomplished, we always know that more can be done. A proactive initiative to change the way Osceola is viewed by the rest of the world may sound like an impossible undertaking, but our leaders and citizens are up to the challenge.

That's what this strategic plan is all about. We want to keep doing the things we're doing well: business recruitment, retention, expansion, cultivation and infrastructure development, to name a few. Still, we realize there are other areas that also demand our attention in order to make Osceola shine. Housing, education, health care, small business assistance, downtown development, daycare, parks and recreation – these are all important factors in improving the quality of life. Our current citizens deserve these enhancements. Furthermore, we will not be able to attract new residents without them.

Change is inevitable. It happens no matter what we do. In Osceola, we don't allow change to happen to us. Rather, we initiate change to ensure that it's as beneficial as possible. Our future relies on all of us making well-informed and smart decisions now. This plan is for all of Osceola, and we are ready to get to work. That's just how we do things here.

Background and Context for Planning

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

This planning effort—called Renew East Arkansas—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 Osceola, Arkansas. The local planning effort has been led by the City of Osceola, the Osceola Chamber of Commerce and leaders from throughout the community.

Looking to the Future

Osceola has a lot to be excited about these days. Our economy is growing, thanks to the strong businesses we have and new recruits on their way. And for the first time in many years, leaders throughout Osceola and Mississippi County have embarked on a process of collaboration and cooperation that will allow us to collectively work toward common goals.

We must capitalize on these opportunities while the proverbial iron is hot. In order to reap the full benefits of economic growth, our community must be ready. We have immediate needs for housing, education, new recreational amenities, health and wellness programs and small businesses that will increase our quality of life. Our focus over the short term will be to develop these aspects of Osceola, thereby encouraging new employees to become new residents.

Community and Economic Development Strategies
- Attracting Government Funding
- Business Cultivation
- Business Recruitment
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Cultural Tourism
- Downtown Development
- Education Development
- Infrastructure Development

Quality-of-Life Initiatives
- Affordable, Quality Housing
- Communications & Public Relations
- Daycare Facilities
- Parks & Recreation

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, Osceola 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, Osceola'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 Osceola's vision—a palpable manifestation of its values and desires—while the strategies and initiatives which constitute the bulk of the plan define Osceola'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 Osceola, 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 completely 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 Osceola 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 this model.

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

- Plan Director: Debra Felske, Owner, Deb's Room- Serves as the liaison between Building Communities and Osceola; 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 Osceola 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. Osceola Steering Committee members:
    - Ed Allred
    - Sherri Bennett
    - Bishop Gregory Brown
    - Ollie Collins
    - Sandra Collins
    - Scott Creecy
    - Michael Ephlin
    - Lea Hedger
    - Fred Hendrix
    - Dickie Kennemore
    - Steve Knox
    - Sandra Mitchell
    - Dr. James Shemwell
    - Linda Warhurst
    - John Warriner
    - Ann Whitis
- **Citizens of Osceola:** 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 Osceola, Plan Week consisted of the seven sessions listed previously and was conducted January 14 and 15, 2013.

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 Osceola'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" is nearing completion. 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 Osceola'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 Osceola's comparative advantage for a host of Key Success Factors—conditions, assets, abilities, etc. possessed by the community—related to 25 community and economic development strategies the community could pursue to improve economic condition and enhance quality of life.

The graphic below shows in "thumbprint" showing all the strategies the Steering Committee considered in this first session, and that the broader community also considered in a later session. Strategies ultimately selected appear as dark spokes, with the length of the spoke indicating the strategy's potential for successful implementation.
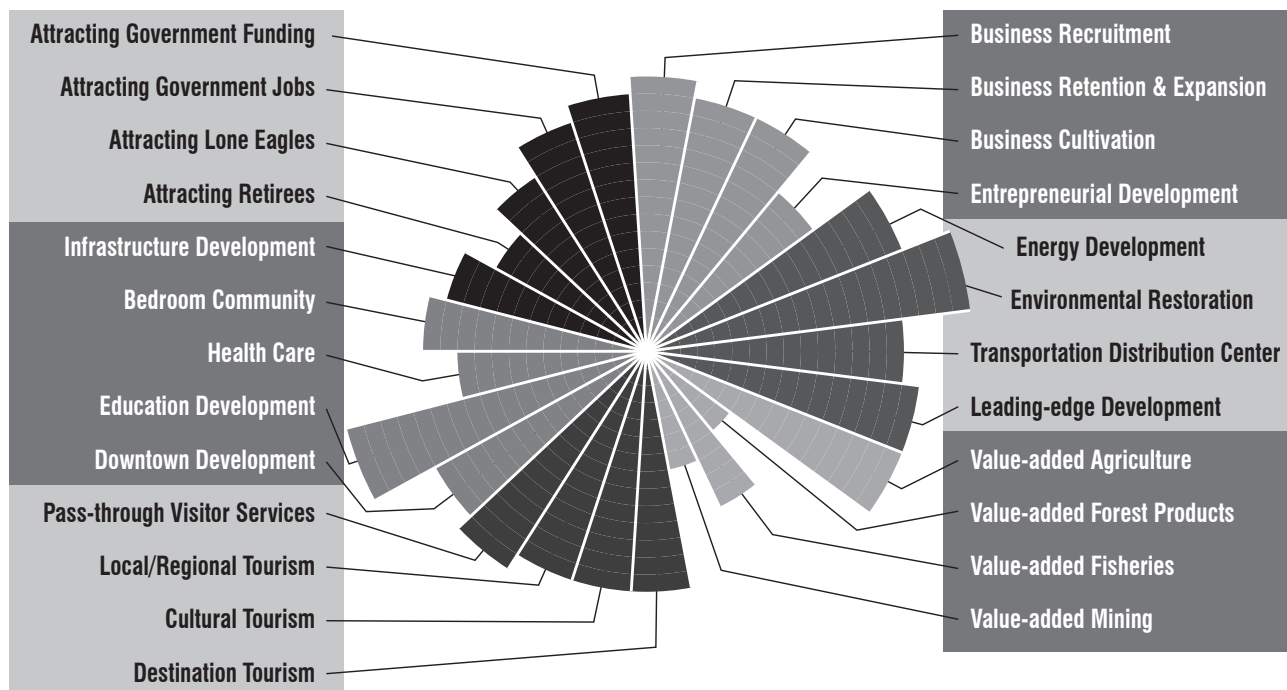
The input from this session yielded Osceola's *Prioritized Strategy Report*—a ranking of the 25 strategies on a scale of 0 to 100 based on the likelihood of successful implementation.   This report, along with a more detailed explanation of its content, can be found in Section 2 of this plan.

Session 2: Quality-of-Life Initiatives

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 of concern to 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 Osceola. 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
- Communications & Public Relations
- Daycare Facilities
- Parks & Recreation

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 Osceola 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 Osceola?
- Do you believe that Osceola 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

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

Deciding *what* to do is almost always easier than determining how to get things done. Making decisions about how to begin implementation of selected strategies and initiatives, about who will lead these efforts for each strategy/initiative and determining exactly what steps need to be taken along the way is challenging work in the Building Communities methodology. And, equally important (perhaps even more so) is community members assuming 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 points 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) constitutes 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

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 Osceola 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 Osceola 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

Osceola has some challenges to overcome in order to get the most out of new and emerging economic opportunities. By working together and following our plan, we should see real progress. Our ability to stay focused and cohesive will determine whether or not we achieve the success we want.

Plan Week Results

Plan Week Results

Overview

To gather the information from which to begin formulating Osceola's strategic plan, the Steering Committee participated in a multi-session planning process called Plan Week, which is outlined in detail in Section 1 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 Osceola'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 Osceola:

- Attracting Government Funding
- Business Cultivation
- Business Recruitment
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Cultural Tourism
- Downtown Development
- Education Development
- Infrastructure Development

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

- Affordable, Quality Housing
- Communications & Public Relations
- Daycare Facilities
- Parks & Recreation

Strategy Selection Process

As mentioned briefly in Section 1, the Osceola 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 Osceola'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 Osceola 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 Osceola, 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
Environmental Restoration	93	Sector-specific
Education Development	90	Community Development
Value-added Agriculture	82	Value-added
Leading-edge Development	81	Sector-specific
Business Recruitment	80	General Business
Energy Development	78	Sector-specific
Business Cultivation	77	General Business
Logistics Centers	77	Sector-specific
Business Retention and Expansion	76	General Business
Attracting Funding	76	Other
Pass-through Visitor Services	75	Tourism
Attracting Government Jobs	71	Other
Local/Regional Tourism	70	Tourism
Cultural Tourism	69	Tourism
Destination Tourism	68	Tourism
Downtown Development	68	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	66	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	63	Other
Entrepreneurial Development	60	General Business
Attracting Lone Eagles	60	Other
Health Care Expansion	53	Community Development
Value-added Fisheries	49	Value-added
Attracting Retirees	48	Other
Value-added Mining	35	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	32	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
✓	Business Recruitment	280	100%	100%	General Business
✓	Business Retention and Expansion	276	100%	100%	General Business
✓	Business Cultivation	269	96%	100%	General Business
✓	Attracting Funding	250	92%	95%	Other
	Entrepreneurial Development	242	96%	95%	General Business
	Value-added Agriculture	242	91%	89%	Value-added
✓	Education Development	240	89%	86%	Community Development
✓	Infrastructure Development	235	91%	95%	Other
✓	Downtown Development	234	92%	91%	Community Development
	Pass-through Visitor Services	225	86%	89%	Tourism
	Health Care Expansion	211	93%	86%	Community Development
	Logistics Centers	205	79%	85%	Sector-specific
✓	Cultural Tourism	199	83%	82%	Tourism
	Local/Regional Tourism	188	81%	78%	Tourism
	Environmental Restoration	180	81%	63%	Sector-specific
	Energy Development	158	70%	70%	Sector-specific
	Attracting Lone Eagles	152	79%	67%	Other
	Attracting Government Jobs	121	65%	60%	Other
	Leading-edge Development	75	50%	47%	Sector-specific
	Destination Tourism	66	55%	44%	Tourism
	Bedroom Community Development	58	52%	44%	Community Development
	Attracting Retirees	34	58%	35%	Other
	Value-added Fisheries	-55	24%	24%	Value-added
	Value-added Mining	-143	5%	6%	Value-added
	Value-added Forest Products	-148	5%	5%	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. The Enhanced Strategy Report was then considered and, in general, the strategies initially identified persisted through the "first cut." After considering both reports, the Steering Committee ultimately chose eight of the 25 strategies to be integrated into the strategic plan. For each of these strategies, the Steering Committee then assigned one or more organization(s) to play a lead role in strategy implementation.

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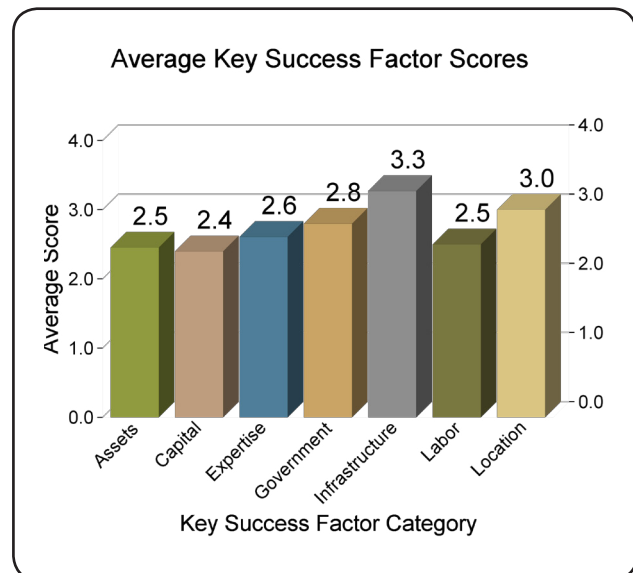
The table below presents a brief description of each category and the average score of the community in each of those categories.

Scores across all categories are strong in Osceola. Infrastructure tops the list at 3.3, demonstrating our commitment to investing in the future of our community. Location comes in a close second at 3.0, which is no surprise considering our prime setting with direct access to freeways, rail and waterways.

While our lowest-scoring category is Capital, it still ranks fairly high at 2.4. We have steady sources of funding for staffing and business development opportunities through a local sales tax dedicated to economic development. Where we struggle is with funding for other types of community development activities, such as marketing for tourism, downtown development and community projects. This will be a topic of discussion for certain strategies we've chosen.

Key Success Factor Categories		AVG SCORE
Assets	Industry-specific or activity-specific conditions or dynamics critical to certain strategies.	2.5
Capital	Business debt and equity funding as well as consistent funding for development organizations to succeed.	2.4
Expertise	The skills, connections and abilities of local professionals.	2.6
Government	The citizenry and government agencies/committees, whose decisions and opinions shape the community's actions.	2.8
Infrastructure	The land, buildings and infrastructure necessary to advance many of the business development strategies.	3.3
Labor	The labor force of a community.	2.5
Location	The relative proximity of the community to the marketplace.	3.0
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 are very good, especially those related to the strategies we've chosen for Osceola. Arkansas Northeastern College is a strong partner throughout the county and on a track to grow. Agriculture is the foundation of our economy here in the Delta region. We have recreational and cultural amenities, visitors attractions, good transportation access, solid local businesses and the ability to draw from other markets.

Housing presents an interesting dichotomy in our community. While we have wonderful, quality neighborhoods with available housing, there are other areas of Osceola with a dire need for rehabilitation.

There are a few instances where we will have to devote more time to improving our existing conditions, especially in the areas of health care and entrepreneurship.

Key Success Factors - Assets	
Expandable educational institution	4
Proximity to large volumes of agricultural commodities	4
Quality residential neighborhoods	3
Availability of energy resources	3
Available, desirable housing	3
Desirable climate	3
Existence of recreational amenities	3
Existing or prospective cultural attraction	3
Local recreational and visitor attractions	3
Proximity to nationally recognized attractions	3
Proximity to travel routes	3
Proximity to urban population and workforce centers	3
Recognizable central business district/downtown	3
Sufficient base of local businesses	3
Accurate, long-term analysis of infrastructure needs and costs	2
Financially sound existing health care facility	2
Sufficient local entrepreneurial base	2
Insulation from industrial business annoyances	2
High availability of urban services	1
Proximity to fisheries commodities	1
Proximity and access to forests and forest products	0
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	
Ability to secure power-purchase agreements	4
Dedicated local financial resources for staffing recruiters	4
Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants	3
Competitive recruitment incentives	3
Access to small business financing	2
Access to large-scale capital	2
Availability of appropriated funds	2
Local funding for downtown development	2
Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget	2
Ability to secure long-term contracts for forest materials	0

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.

Access to capital is a bit of a mix in Osceola. Our strengths lie in those factors related to business development, as funding is in place for staff, incentives and infrastructure development. There are some areas where additional funding will be crucial, such as for marketing, promotions and downtown development.

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.).

Osceola has many strengths in the area of Expertise. Our proven track record in business attraction and expansion is due to the work of our very capable economic development professionals and the relationships they've built throughout the community. We also have solid Chamber of

Key Success Factors - Expertise	
Ability to successfully market materials	4
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	4
Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community	4
Relationship with site selectors	4
Supportive post-secondary education training program	4
Ability to compete in a global market	3
Ability to identify product and service gaps	3
Ability to network and attend relevant trade shows	3
Cultural development and advocacy organization	3
Downtown organization and staff	3
Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal	3
Relative sophistication in coordinating and marketing local events	3
Support from local education professionals at all levels	3
Ability to build a team comprised of energy-development experts	2
Ability to understand industry trends and opportunities	2
Competent, strategic-minded hospital and health-care executives	2
Implementation of national Main Street Four-Point Approach™	2
Sophisticated tourism development & promotion	2
Team approach to infrastructure finance	2
Dedicated business coaching staff	1
Existing excellence in local health care	1
Sophisticated use of the internet for marketing	1
Staff focused on attracting retirees and/or lone eagles	1

Commerce and Main Street programs that promote and support our cultural assets. Arkansas Northeastern College is one of the most robust community colleges in the state. It continues to demonstrate tremendous leadership on our behalf.

Still, there is work to be done. Our health care industry has struggled to find its niche. While large industrial development has been quite successful, support systems for smaller entrepreneurs are not in place. Larger-scale marketing and promotion of the area hasn't been done as well as it could be, especially through the use of the Internet. These are factors that should be considered as we advance our strategies and initiatives.

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.

Once again, Osceola has a number of strengths when it comes to the relationships between government and other community groups. Our citizens and businesses feel good about our leaders, and we have working relationships with our state and federal elected officials. Overall, the rapport is positive.

We can do more to better engage our citizens and business leaders, especially in our downtown district.

Key Success Factors - Government	
Local government support	4
Local pro-business climate	4
Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation	4
Community acceptance of the visitor industry	3
Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases	3
Local focus on revenues from visitors	3
Strong community support	3
Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses	3
Support from local businesses	3
Local policies and ordinances supporting quality neighborhood development	3
Active engagement of downtown building and business owners	2
Favorable state policies with respect to office locations	2
Projected growth in government budgets	2
Supportive state energy policies and incentives	2
Support for attracting retirees	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 the highest scoring category, Infrastructure demonstrates just how much our community has invested in its future. We have land, buildings, water, sewer and power available for growth. Our Internet service is good, though expanding that service may be necessary. Where we have an immediate need is in our supply of mid-range housing for workers. This is a top priority for Osceola.

Key Success Factors - Infrastructure	
Availability of brownfield sites	4
Availability of industrial-zoned land for industrial park development	4
Availability of land for business prospects	4
Availability of local buildings	4
Availability of local infrastructure	4
Land/Buildings/Campus for education development	4
Proximity to transmission lines with excess capacity	4
High-speed internet	3
Adequate telecommunications infrastructure	2
Excess water and sewer infrastructure capacity	2
Adequate housing for labor force	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	3
Local, available, high-skill labor pool	2

The labor supply in Osceola is actually very good, especially in comparison to those in neighboring counties. Because we are seeing economic growth, we also have the opportunity to draw new workers. Our partnership with Arkansas Northeastern College allows us to offer targeted training programs to fit the needs of any employer.

Location

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

Key Success Factors - Location

Proximity and access to markets	4
Prospect of an expanded geographic market for health care	3
Proximity to scheduled air service	3
Strategic location for distribution centers	3
Advantageous location for government or education expansion	2

Location is a significant advantage for Osceola. We have excellent access to the rest of the world via freeway, marine ports, rail and close proximity to air and freight service in Memphis. Our location is one of the main reasons for our economic success. We want to ensure that any future investments serve to enhance our location as a place to live, work and play.

Selected Strategies

Attracting Funding
Business Cultivation
Business Recruitment
Business Retention and Expansion
Cultural Tourism
Downtown Development
Education Development
Infrastructure Development

Selected Strategies

Osceola's Selected Strategies

Ultimately, the Steering Committee recommended the advancement of eight strategies to enhance the economic condition and overall quality of life for Osceola.

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 Osceola Steering Committee are:

- Attracting Government Funding
- Business Cultivation
- Business Recruitment
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Cultural Tourism
- Downtown Development
- Education Development
- Infrastructure Development

Strategies not selected include:

- Attracting Government Jobs
- Attracting Lone Eagles
- Attracting Retirees
- Bedroom Community
- Destination Tourism
- Energy Development
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Environmental Restoration
- Health Care
- Leading-edge Development
- Local/Regional Tourism
- Pass-through Visitor Services
- Transportation Distribution Center
- Value-added Agriculture
- Value-added Fisheries
- Value-added Forest Products
- Value-added Mining

Though Cultural Tourism is named as our tourism strategy, we will be including elements of Local/Regional Tourism and Pass-through Visitor Services in order to develop a robust and wide-reaching visitor industry.

Recommendations for Implementation

Osceola has formed an engaged and representative Steering Committee and subcommittees for the purposes of identifying its viable strategies and assigning its Essential Action Steps. However, with the preponderance of strategic planning happening in Mississippi County, there is a danger of losing momentum on the local front. It is strongly recommended that the Steering Committee and subcommittees remain functional for at least three years to implement the selected strategies. Additionally, leaders should continue to recruit new members to serve on either the Steering Committee or subcommittees to ensure the completion of its action plans.

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: 76 | RANK: 10 |

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 who support our efforts can help better our communities through 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 Osceola implement this strategy, and
- whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it.

Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

92% Yes
8% No

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

95% Yes
5% No
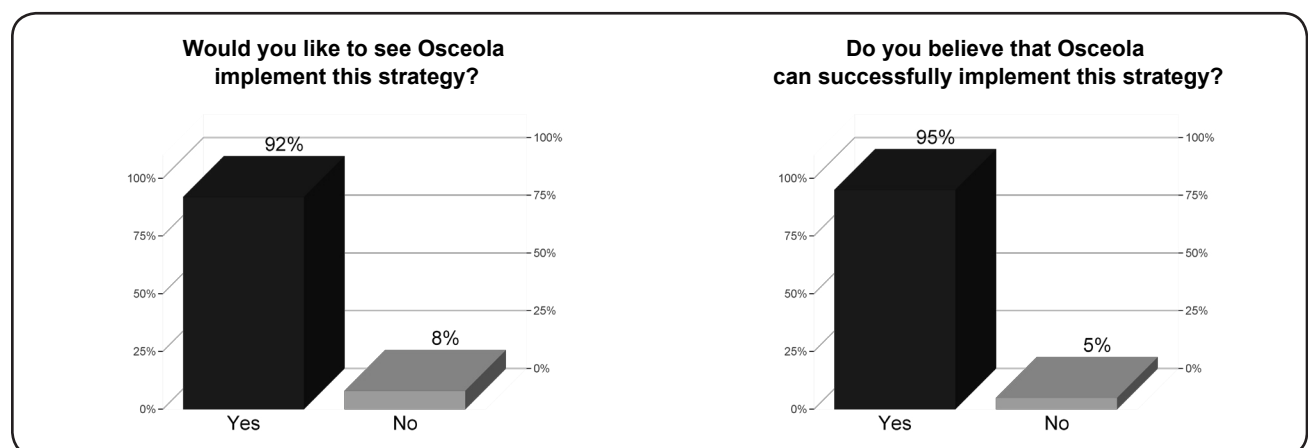
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

As in any community, Osceola does not have all of the resources it needs to complete its long list of priorities. We must seek outside assistance from both public and private sources in order to be successful. This strategy will help us to identify potential funders and collectively advance our projects with a goal of gaining the full support of the community. We need to boost our grantwriting capacity by working closely with EAPDD and local partners to find the right type of assistance. We will build community awareness and an internal collaboration to work toward the same vision and goals.

## Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

The stage is set very well for Osceola to seek grants. We've been successful in the past in advancing projects. New partnerships with Southern Bancorp and EAPDD give us a unique advantage. Furthermore, recent economic development successes have elevated the awareness of our community to the national stage, a position that could be instrumental in attracting funding.

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation	Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal
Existence of prime activities and social programs that are grant worthy	Strong community support
Serving as a model for other communities in funding projects	Reputation for completing successfully funded projects
	Addressing difficult issues for potential funding
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
Community collaboration needs strengthening	Availability of volunteers
KEY	
Identified through Key Success Factor Analysis	Identified by Attracting Government Funding Committee

Business
Cultivation
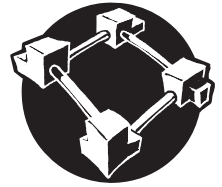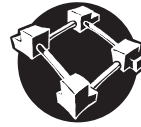
Business Cultivation

SCORE: 77   RANK: 7

Strategy Summary

Opportunities for business expansion and business recruitment can evolve from the concept and methodology of import substitution. Import substitution is the process of identifying goods and services that are "imported" into the city/county/region that have the potential to be produced/provided locally.
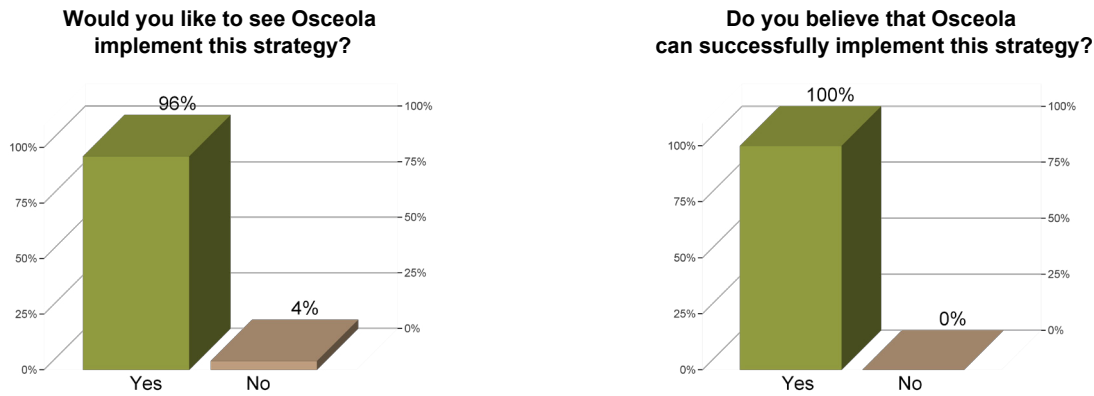
One example would be the provision of cabinetry for the recreational vehicle industry. If a community has one or more recreational vehicle manufacturers that are purchasing cabinetry out of the county/region in large quantities, there may be a business case for an existing or new company to fill that need. Many other examples exist in other industries.

By identifying products and services imported into the area in large volumes, business development strategies can be created. Similarly, industrial clustering recognizes that many communities have a variety of businesses that operate within the same industry (or serve as suppliers to a common industry). By bringing together the cluster of businesses within an industry, many opportunities and benefits present themselves:

- Efficiencies can be gained by understanding and advancing the needs of an entire industry rather than simply one business at a time;
- Frequently new business relationships between individuals in the same community generate advantages simply by getting to know one another;
- Communities can "adopt an issue." That is, a group of business leaders can identify a problem or issue that can best be addressed and advanced by local government or economic development organizations. Goodwill is built and jobs can be retained or created;
- Import substitution opportunities can be realized. A group of similar businesses may be able to identify new business opportunities (suppliers, professional services, etc.) that may generate business activity and create jobs by producing locally what has been "imported" into the county/region.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

reNEW
East Arkansas

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

96%

4%

Yes   No

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

100%

0%

Yes   No

Objectives of Strategy Implementation

As a part of Mississippi County, Osceola utilizes the services of the Mississippi County Economic Development Area (MCEDA) to address our business development needs. This organization has a proven track record of successful recruitment and expansion projects in its portfolio. Our main objective for business development strategies is supporting the larger, countywide effort already in place. We are represented on the MCEDA board and will continue to encourage growth in our and other communities in Mississippi County.

For the Business Cultivation Strategy, we'll work closely with our economic development staff to conduct a gap analysis to identify goods and services that could be provided by local businesses.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

A Business Cultivation Strategy makes perfect sense for Osceola and Mississippi County based on the assets we have in place. We have a strong, global economy; highly qualified economic development staff; land, buildings and infrastructure to support growth and good relationships with our businesses. Conducting a gap analysis is something we can do and will incorporate into our outreach program.

Key Success Factor Report - Business Cultivation

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Proximity and access to markets	Sufficient base of local businesses
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	Ability to identify product and service gaps
Availability of land for business prospects	Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses
Local pro-business climate	Local, available, low-skill labor pool
Availability of local buildings	
Availability of local infrastructure	
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
No Entries	No Entries

Business Recruitment

Business Recruitment

SCORE: 80 | RANK: 5

Strategy Summary

Perhaps the most widely recognized economic development strategy is business recruitment, which is the act of proactively soliciting existing businesses located out-of-region to expand or relocate into a community.

Business recruitment can be very advantageous for local communities desiring to establish new jobs, focus on family wage jobs, expand the local tax base—and generally enhance community vitality.
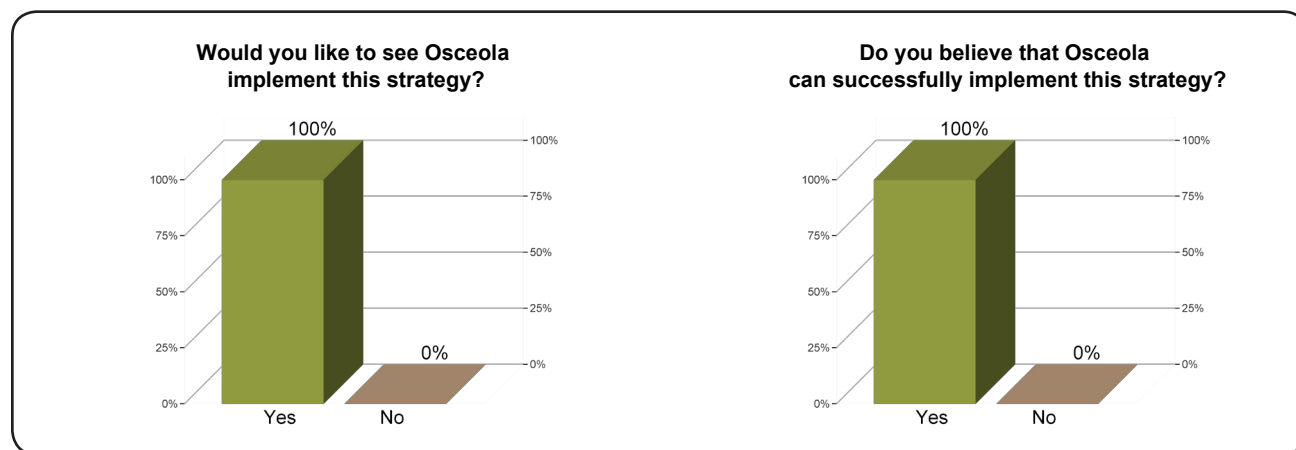
However, business recruitment can have drawbacks. Communities that do not have the desire or infrastructure capacity for growth may view business recruitment negatively.

Communities that rely on business recruitment as a substantial component of their economic development strategy should view their effort as a long-term endeavor. Frequently, communities can go months (even years) without tangible results. This does not necessarily mean their efforts are poorly planned or executed. The fact is, there are far more communities chasing new businesses than there are businesses looking for new communities.

Business recruitment activity can also be costly. Advertising, public relations, attendance at industry trade shows, website development and maintenance, and informational and promotional materials are expensive.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

100% — Yes
0% — No

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

100% — Yes
0% — No

Objectives of Strategy Implementation

As a part of Mississippi County, Osceola utilizes the services of the Mississippi County Economic Development Area (MCEDA) to address our business development needs. This organization has a proven track record of successful recruitment and expansion projects in its portfolio. Our main objective for business development strategies is supporting the larger, countywide effort already in place. We are represented on the MCEDA board and will continue to encourage growth in our and other communities in Mississippi County.

Osceola has proven that recruiting new businesses can be done here. Most recently, Big River Steel announced a $1.1 billion project that will lead to the employment of thousands. While we don't expect this type of project on a regular basis, we do have significant assets that can be used to attract new businesses. We'll continue to support our economic development staff in their efforts to diversify our economy.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

One only has to look at the list of comparative advantages below to see that Business Recruitment is a strategy that works well in Osceola. Our position is extremely solid, a fact that can be attributed to years of hard work and commitment on both the local and the county level. Our only disadvantage is our inadequate use of the Internet for marketing purposes. We are in the process of refurbishing the Mississippi County Economic Development Area website to provide better and more complete information to prospects.

Key Success Factor Report - Business Recruitment

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Dedicated local financial resources for staffing recruiters	Proximity to scheduled air service
Proximity and access to markets	Ability to compete in a global market
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	Competitive recruitment incentives
Relationship with site selectors	Strong community support
Availability of land for business prospects	Support from local businesses
Local government support	Local, available, low-skill labor pool
Availability of local buildings	Ability to network and attend relevant trade shows
Availability of local infrastructure	

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
Sophisticated use of the internet for marketing	No Entries

Business Retention & Expansion

Business Retention & Expansion

SCORE: 76	RANK: 9

Strategy Summary

It is widely agreed by most economic development professionals that opportunities for job retention and job expansion with existing companies exceed the number of opportunities for recruiting new businesses to their communities.

Communities can employ a variety of approaches to foster the expansion of existing companies. One of these methods is to conduct a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program. The BR&E approach utilizes a systematic outreach to existing companies to identify their needs, challenges and opportunities. Several programs are available that can be adapted for the specific needs of a particular community.

Benefits of the BR&E approach include:

- Identifying opportunities to encourage the expansion of new companies;
- Identifying opportunities to avert pending job losses or business closures;
- Ability to take a community-wide approach to addressing business needs;
- A systematic way to collect information;
- Ability to immediately identify solutions for businesses;
- Opportunity to engage civic groups or volunteers to partner in the work;
- Building good public relations for municipalities and economic development organizations; and
- Identifying vendor and subcontractor business networking opportunities.

By meeting the needs of existing businesses, the stage is also better set for successful business recruitment efforts. Potential new businesses to a new community may investigate the satisfaction of existing businesses, and base a portion of their business location decision on such satisfaction levels.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?
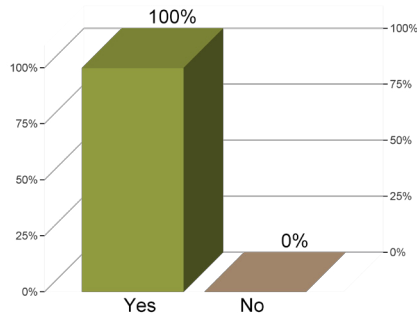
Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?
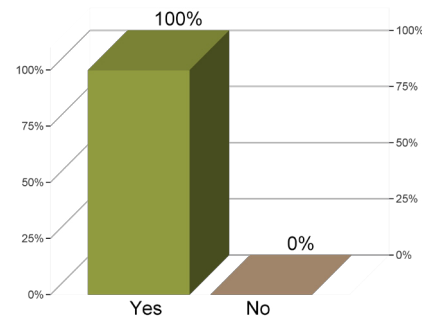
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

As a part of Mississippi County, Osceola utilizes the services of the Mississippi County Economic Development Area (MCEDA) to address our business development needs. This organization has a proven track record of successful recruitment and expansion projects in its portfolio. Our main objective for business development strategies is supporting the larger, countywide effort already in place. We are represented by the MCEDA board and will continue to encourage growth in our and other communities in Mississippi County.

Perhaps the most important business development strategy we can pursue is Retention & Expansion. We've done a wonderful job bringing in new employers. Now, we have to keep them happy and healthy. We'll work with our economic development staff and local leaders to enhance our outreach program and make sure our businesses have what they need to succeed.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Once again, our comparative advantages are all in place. We have the necessary staff, infrastructure, relationships and businesses. Moreover, Retention & Expansion is nothing new to us. We simply need to continue building our relationships and responding to requests for assistance.

Key Success Factor Report - Business Retention and Expansion

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Capable, experienced economic development professionals	Sufficient base of local businesses
Availability of land for business prospects	Ability to compete in a global market
Local pro-business climate	Support from local education professionals at all levels
Availability of local buildings	Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses
Availability of local infrastructure	Local, available, low-skill labor pool
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
No Entries	No Entries

Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism

SCORE: 69   RANK: 14

Strategy Summary

Many communities have capitalized on local culture to create jobs. Cultural opportunities based on dance, theater, music, food or other human interests can stimulate the local economy.

In order to be successful in capitalizing on cultural tourism, a high standard of excellence must be set and pursued. People will travel from hundreds of miles away, for example, for an excellent Shakespearean Festival.

The pursuit of a new cultural tourism attraction should not be undertaken without significant research into the prospective competitive advantages that the community would enjoy, and the long-term operational and marketing obligations required.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

- Yes: 82%
- No: 18%
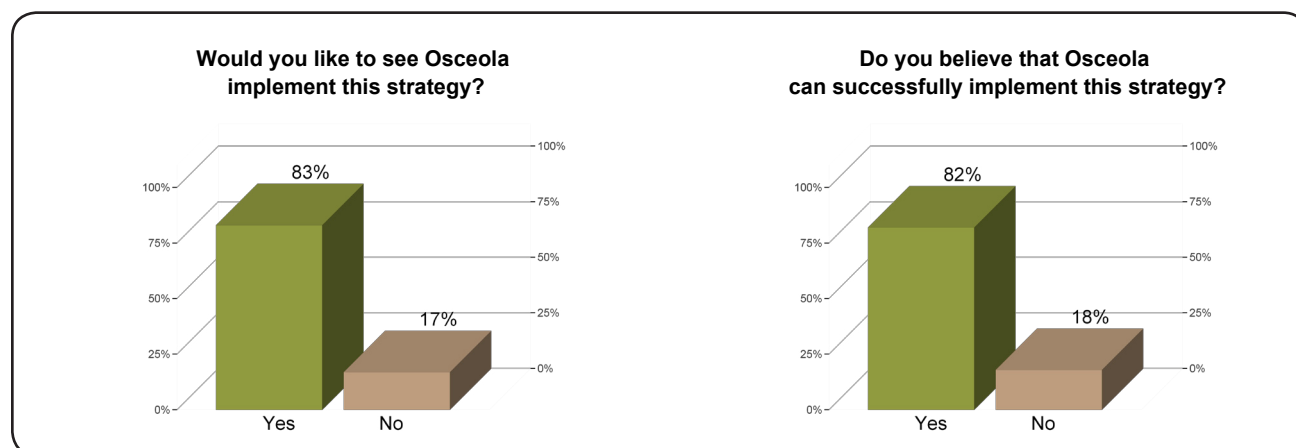
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

Osceola has a rich cultural history full of legacies about Native American tribes, blues musicians, steamboats, Civil War battles and even WWII German POW camps. While we have done a lot to catalog and preserve this history, we haven't promoted Osceola as a significant tourism destination. This is something we'd like to change. For this strategy, we'll inventory our tourism assets and prepare for new and enhanced attractions based on our unique heritage. Finally, a robust marketing campaign will be structured to let the world know what Osceola has to offer.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Scores related to a Cultural Tourism strategy are strong for Osceola. We have a unique cultural heritage that we could use to diversify our economy, increase our quality of life and preserve our historical assets for future generations.

Key Success Factor Report - Cultural Tourism

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
No Entries	Existing or prospective cultural attraction
	Cultural development and advocacy organization
	Local, available, low-skill labor pool
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
No Entries	No Entries

Recommended Essential Action Steps

1. Determine top tourism sites to promote.
2. Examine the community for existing cultural attractions that are drawing visitors from beyond 300 miles.
3. Train "first responders" to promote Osceola and cultural tourism sites.
4. Plan local and regional itineraries.
5. Record memories from senior residents to be maintained and preserved at the museum. ntory infrastructure needs (customer/organization beds, meeting spaces, Wi-Fi, utilities and other basic infrastructure, zoning).

Downtown Development

Downtown Development

SCORE: 68 | RANK: 16

Strategy Summary

Most communities have a central business district commonly referred to as their "downtown". Frequently, this area is recognized as the community's business center, and can become the emotional heart of the community.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the National Main Street Center approach which recognizes a four-point method for downtown advocacy:

- Organization (volunteers, staffing, board of directors)
- Promotion (events, public relations, advertising)
- Design (building and amenity stabilization, preservation, beautification)
- Economic Restructuring (supporting existing businesses; promoting new businesses)

Often ignored is the large employment centers represented by downtowns. While most downtown business activity is in response to serving other businesses and residents, it still represents a vital economic sector for most communities.

By capitalizing on the four-point approach described above, jobs are created, communities have increased vitality, and a sense of pride and optimism is maintained.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

92% Yes
8% No

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

91% Yes
9% No
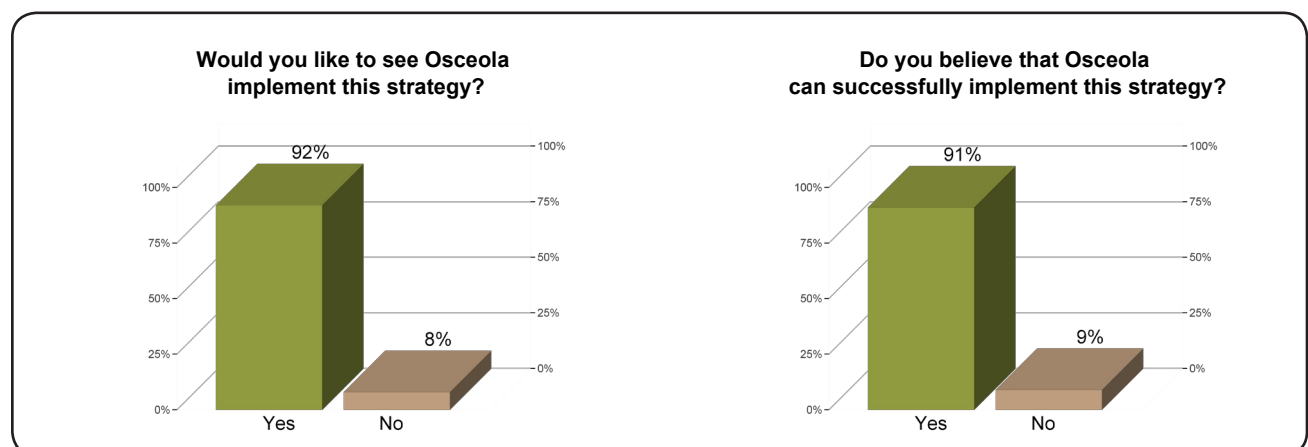
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

Main Street Osceola is a non-profit organization designed to follow and capitalize on the National Main Street Four-Point Approach. We have a wonderful downtown historic district laid out around our beautiful, copper-domed courthouse and its open square. Four committees are in place to work on design, organization, promotions and economic restructuring.

While the program has been successful over the years, we want to take our efforts to the next level. A downtown is the heart of a community. We want ours to be a unique place that's full of life while providing a safe, secure and inviting atmosphere. Our goal for the next several years will be to create an arts, tourism and entertainment district that will bring people from around the region. Small boutiques, art galleries and restaurants will be the focus for recruitment efforts. The new pocket park could be utilized for small performances, capitalizing on the wealth of musical culture in the area. There are also properties that need refurbishing, including spaces that can be redesigned for residential use or overnight guests. Putting together a program to assist willing property owners will be an important task. In order to better engage our property and building owners, we'll establish a process that allows each block to select the types of improvements and businesses they'd like to see. Finally, we'll consider adding special events to draw more people downtown.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Osceola has a lot to be proud of when it comes to our downtown. We have a very distinct district and an organization in place to advance projects. As is often the case, funding is a struggle. We'll need to work on securing additional sources in order to accomplish more.

Key Success Factor Report - Downtown Development

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Local government support	Recognizable central business district/downtown Downtown organization and staff
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
No Entries	No Entries

Education Development

Education Development

SCORE: 90   RANK: 2

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 sustainable 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 creating a community development—and a political—strategy to create or enhance provision of educational services at all levels, communities can derive economic benefit. Advances of educational services tend to enhance state wages.

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 a plan to promote educational and skill attainment.

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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?

89% Yes   11% No

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?

86% Yes   14% No
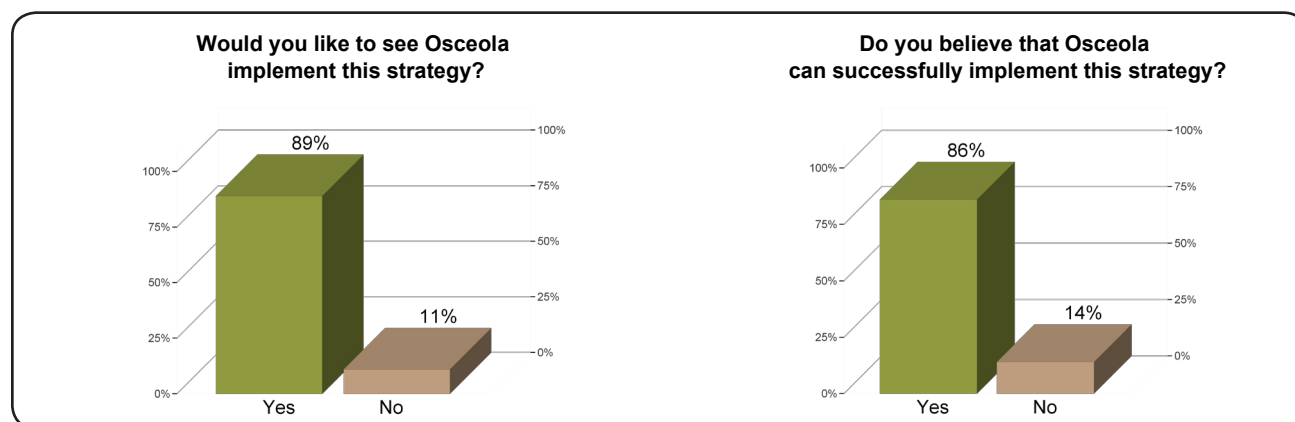
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

Education is a top priority in Osceola. We have a wonderful partnership with Arkansas Northeastern College, a community college that offers a wide variety of technical, professional, adult education and traditional programs. Osceola School District and South Mississippi County School District are making remarkable improvements to our K-12 system as well.

Our approach for the Economic Development Strategy is threefold. First, we will develop a promotions campaign designed to better inform our community about the many positive aspects of our educational system. Next, we'll increase collaboration among our schools, churches, local organizations and general citizenry to reach our goal of providing a comprehensive support system to increase local workforce skills. Finally, we'll provide training programs for our workforce based on regular input from our local business leaders.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

In reviewing the Key Success Factors for Education Development, it's easy to see that there is a lot of potential for growth in this industry. We have the resources available to expand, quality relationships in place and the support of our local leaders to make it happen. With the influx of new employers to the area, an exceptional educational system will be even more important for our future.

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
Expandable educational institution	Advanced technology in schools
Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community	Unified stakeholders
Land/Buildings/Campus for education development	Concurrent and advanced placement opportunities
Local Government Support	
Vocational Training aligned to industry needs	
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
Added-increased opportunity for expanding the arts	Perception of education system
Parental involvement	College remediation rate
Educator pay scale	Customer service skills
KEY	
Identified through Key Success Factor Analysis	Identified by Education Committee

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure Development

SCORE: 63 | 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 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 Osceola implement this strategy and 2) whether or not they believed Osceola could successfully implement it. Below is a summary of community responses:

Would you like to see Osceola implement this strategy?
Yes: 91% No: 9%

Do you believe that Osceola can successfully implement this strategy?
Yes: 95% No: 5%
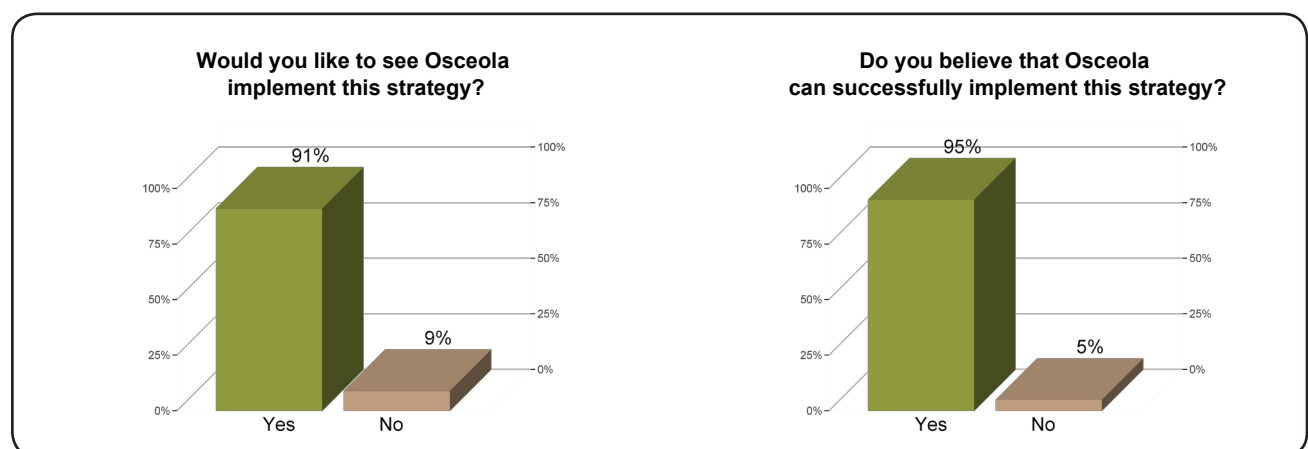
Objectives of Strategy Implementation

As Osceola experiences growth, staying on top of our infrastructure will be more and more important. Currently, our local infrastructure is in good shape. However, we don't have a comprehensive assessment in place to accurately forecast our future needs. This is the primary objective for the strategy. Our goal is to identify the top priority projects for our water, sewer, street, rail and telecommunications systems and then create a plan to make the needed improvements over the next twenty years.

Findings from the Key Success Factor Analysis

Scores for Infrastructure Development are mostly neutral for Osceola. We have kept up with our current demand but don't have a solid plan to address our future needs. Developing such a plan is a crucial first step.

Key Success Factor Report - Infrastructure Development

STRENGTHS TO BUILD UPON	
Major Comparative Advantages	**Slight Comparative Advantages**
No Entries	Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants
	Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases
CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	
Slight Comparative Disadvantages	**Major Comparative Disadvantages**
No Entries	No Entries

Quality-of-Life Initiatives

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).

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.

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.

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

Osceola thoroughly evaluated the Quality-of-life Initiatives and found them to be in line with what we want for our 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 our vision for Osceola, the focus needs to be on more than just the economy. We considered a number of possible quality-of-life factors, such as our support for a countywide animal shelter, health and wellness programs, train whistles, public transportation and a new bridge across the Mississippi. After discussing all of the possibilities, the Steering Committee chose the following initiatives to pursue over the next three to five years.

Affordable, Quality Housing

Providing affordable, quality housing to our citizens may be the most important initiative we're tackling in Osceola. We have too many dilapidated, vacant and abandoned houses in our community. This is not an issue only in Osceola but in all of Mississippi County. Because of this, we are working with our other partners throughout the county to deal with it. Southern Bancorp, EAPDD, the Mississippi County Housing Goal Team and local communities are banding together to develop a comprehensive program for rehabilitation of our neighborhoods. Some funding has already been secured through Southern Bancorp, and the Environmental Protection Agency has committed resources for technical assistance needed to formulate a broad-based strategy.

Communications & Public Relations

We have a lot happening in Osceola. Getting accurate and complete information to the public about everything is quite a challenge. We need to better utilize existing mechanisms to communicate and promote our community, both internally and externally. Our overall objective is to increase the amount of positive information about things like our schools, law enforcement, utilities, local government and general happenings.

Daycare Facilities

Daycare is a growing need, both for our younger families with children and our seniors who need minor assistance. We'll start with an inventory of the services available, as well as a review of the requirements for establishing a new facility. After evaluating the gaps, we'll work with existing organizations and/or other interested parties to create new facilities.

Parks & Recreation

Osceola has a Parks & Recreation Department with a lot of resources and skilled staff. There are also very experienced people throughout east Arkansas who can help guide us in our efforts to expand our parks system. We'll work with these experts to develop priority projects, such as a new water park and fingertip parks connected by a trail system. Additionally, we're considering further development of Sans Souci Park, the only public access to the Mississippi River between Memphis and St. Louis.

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.

Community Organizer Results

Community Organizer Results

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 tool. 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 Osceola Steering Committee met to consider both the business development and community development approaches to the Community Organizer tool.

The tool presents 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 to reach a consensus about which one best describes the current capacity of their community. Each of the members were also asked to identify their desired level of capacity. The tables below present the results of the Community Organizer tool for Business and Community Development Capacities.

The *Community Organizer Assessment* not only presents a description of the current level of capacity,

Business Development Capacity Report

ELEMENT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	ASSESSED CAPACITY	PRESCRIBED CAPACITY
Business Development Strategy	7	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	28 / 37	37 / 37
Local Staff and Team Development	10	5	7	10	5	—	—	—	—	—	37 / 37	37 / 37
Industrial Land and Infrastructure	5	3	10	7	2	10	8	10	4	4	63 / 68	68 / 68
Targeted Industries	2	4	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16 / 19	19 / 19
Marketing	4	5	3	10	4	—	—	—	—	—	26 / 33	33 / 33
Prospect and Lead Management	8	10	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23 / 27	27 / 27
Closing the Deal	5	6	6	4	5	—	—	—	—	—	26 / 26	26 / 26
TOTAL POINTS											**219 / 247**	**247 / 247**

Community Development Capacity Report

ELEMENT	A	B	C	D	E	ASSESSED CAPACITY	PRESCRIBED CAPACITY
Strategic Plan/Vision	10	3	3	10	0	26 / 32	32 / 32
Project and Issue Development	4	2	4	3	2	15 / 16	16 / 16
Organizational Capacity	10	5	5	7	1	28 / 38	38 / 38
Staffing	8	1	2	1	—	12 / 23	23 / 23
Civic Volunterism	5	1	—	—	—	6 / 8	8 / 8
Community Attitude	3	1	—	—	—	4 / 13	13 / 13
Maintaining Community as the Goal	3	2	—	—	—	5 / 9	9 / 9
TOTAL POINTS						**96 / 139**	**139 / 139**

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:	**37 / 37**	PRESCRIBED SCORE:	**37 / 37**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2b. Stability of Business Development Organization

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2c. Frequency of Meetings

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2d. Business Development Staff

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2e. Business Development Training

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3 - Industrial Land and Infrastructure

ASSESSED SCORE:	**63 / 68**	PRESCRIBED SCORE:	**68 / 68**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3d. Environmental Considerations

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3e. Land Price

❑ Ensure that the available industrial land is competitively priced.

3f. Availability of Buildings

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3g. Basic Infrastructure

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

3h. Access Infrastructure

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3i. Special Infrastructure

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3j. Land/Target Compatibility

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

4 - Targeted Industries

ASSESSED SCORE: **16 / 19**	PRESCRIBED SCORE: **19 / 19**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

5 - Marketing

ASSESSED SCORE:	**26 / 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

❑　Build upon recent successes in business marketing to launch continued successful efforts.

5b. Professional Marketing Assistance

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

5c. Diversification of Marketing Techniques

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

5d. Financial Resources

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

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: **23 / 27** | PRESCRIBED SCORE: **27 / 27** |

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

❑　Ensure that all of the relevant business development information is readily available online.

6b. A Professional Community Response

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

6c. Availability to Travel

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7 - Closing the Deal

ASSESSED SCORE: **26 / 26**   PRESCRIBED SCORE: **26 / 26**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7b. Expertise with Incentives

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7c. A Winning Attitude

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7d. Community Sophistication

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

7e. Project/Contract Monitoring

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

Community Development Capacity

1 - Strategic Plan/Vision

ASSESSED SCORE: **26 / 32**   PRESCRIBED SCORE: **32 / 32**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

1d. Use of Strategic Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

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: **15 / 16**   PRESCRIBED SCORE: **16 / 16**

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2b. Identification of Strategic Issues

❑ Demonstrate action toward addressing key strategic issues within the community.

2c. Large Project Advocacy

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2d. Coordinating Projects with State and Federal Processes

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

2e. Incorporation into Community Facilities Plan

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

3 - Organizational Capacity

ASSESSED SCORE:	28 / 38	PRESCRIBED SCORE:	38 / 38

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)

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time.

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

Capacity achieved. No further action necessary at this time..

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: **12 / 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 the effectiveness of the staff support.

4c. Staff Focused on Organizational Objectives

❏ Recognize and ensure that the staff does not spend more than four percent of his/her time on fundraising and budgeting matters.

4d. Staff Training

❏ Provide consistent and comprehensive training to staff.

5 - Civic Volunteerism

ASSESSED SCORE:	**6 / 8**	PRESCRIBED SCORE:	**8 / 8**

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:	**4 / 13**	PRESCRIBED SCORE:	**13/ 13**

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** | PRESCRIBED SCORE: | **9 / 9** |

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

❏ Formalize a "teaming of projects" to ensure coordination and potential collaboration.

Appendix

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
Environmental Restoration	93	81%	63%	Sector-specific
Education Development	90	89%	86%	Community Development
Value-added Agriculture	82	91%	89%	Value-added
Leading-edge Development	81	50%	47%	Sector-specific
Business Recruitment	80	100%	100%	General Business
Energy Development	78	70%	70%	Sector-specific
Business Cultivation	77	96%	100%	General Business
Logistics Centers	77	79%	85%	Sector-specific
Business Retention and Expansion	76	100%	100%	General Business
Attracting Funding	76	92%	95%	Other
Pass-through Visitor Services	75	86%	89%	Tourism
Attracting Government Jobs	71	65%	60%	Other
Local/Regional Tourism	70	81%	78%	Tourism
Cultural Tourism	69	83%	82%	Tourism
Destination Tourism	68	55%	44%	Tourism
Downtown Development	68	92%	91%	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	66	52%	44%	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	63	91%	95%	Other
Entrepreneurial Development	60	96%	95%	General Business
Attracting Lone Eagles	60	79%	67%	Other
Health Care Expansion	53	93%	86%	Community Development
Value-added Fisheries	49	24%	24%	Value-added
Attracting Retirees	48	58%	35%	Other
Value-added Mining	35	5%	6%	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	32	5%	5%	Value-added

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 Osceola'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:

- Environmental Restoration
- Education Development
- Transportation Distribution Center
- Leading-edge Development

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
- Business Recruitment
- Business Cultivation
- Business Retention and Expansion
- Energy Development
- Attracting Government Funding
- Pass-through Visitor Services
- Attracting Government Jobs
- Local/Regional Tourism

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

- Cultural Tourism
- Destination Tourism
- Downtown Development
- Bedroom Community
- Infrastructure Development
- Entrepreneurial Development
- Attracting Lone Eagles
- Value-added Fisheries
- Health Care
- Attracting Retirees
- Value-added Mining
- Value-added Forest Products

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	80	General Business
Business Retention and Expansion	76	General Business
Business Cultivation	77	General Business
Entrepreneurial Development	60	General Business
Energy Development	78	Sector-specific
Environmental Restoration	93	Sector-specific
Logistics Centers	77	Sector-specific
Leading-edge Development	81	Sector-specific
Value-added Agriculture	82	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	32	Value-added
Value-added Fisheries	49	Value-added
Value-added Mining	35	Value-added
Destination Tourism	68	Tourism
Cultural Tourism	69	Tourism
Local/Regional Tourism	70	Tourism
Pass-through Visitor Services	75	Tourism
Downtown Development	68	Community Development
Education Development	90	Community Development
Health Care Expansion	53	Community Development
Bedroom Community Development	66	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	63	Other
Attracting Retirees	48	Other
Attracting Lone Eagles	60	Other
Attracting Government Jobs	71	Other
Attracting Funding	76	Other

Appendix D

Alphabetical Listing of Strategies

STRATEGY	SCORE	STRATEGY GROUP
Attracting Funding	76	Other
Attracting Government Jobs	71	Other
Attracting Lone Eagles	60	Other
Attracting Retirees	48	Other
Bedroom Community Development	66	Community Development
Business Cultivation	77	General Business
Business Recruitment	80	General Business
Business Retention and Expansion	76	General Business
Cultural Tourism	69	Tourism
Destination Tourism	68	Tourism
Downtown Development	68	Community Development
Education Development	90	Community Development
Energy Development	78	Sector-specific
Entrepreneurial Development	60	General Business
Environmental Restoration	93	Sector-specific
Health Care Expansion	53	Community Development
Infrastructure Development	63	Other
Leading-edge Development	81	Sector-specific
Local/Regional Tourism	70	Tourism
Logistics Centers	77	Sector-specific
Pass-through Visitor Services	75	Tourism
Value-added Agriculture	82	Value-added
Value-added Fisheries	49	Value-added
Value-added Forest Products	32	Value-added
Value-added Mining	35	Value-added

Appendix E - Key Success Factor Report

Key Success Factors with a Score of "4":

Expandable educational institution
Proximity to large volumes of agricultural commodities
Ability to secure power-purchase agreements
Dedicated local financial resources for staffing recruiters
Ability to successfully market materials
Capable, experienced economic development professionals
Cooperation of economic development staff and educational community
Relationship with site selectors
Supportive post-secondary education training program
Local government support
Local pro-business climate
Strong state and/or federal legislative delegation
Availability of brownfield sites
Availability of industrial-zoned land for industrial park development
Availability of local land
Availability of local buildings
Availability of local infrastructure
Land/Buildings/Campus for education development
Proximity to transmission lines with excess capacity
Proximity and access to markets

Key Success Factors with a Score of "3":

Quality residential neighborhoods
Availability of energy resources
Available, desirable housing
Desirable climate
Existence of recreational amenities
Existing or prospective cultural attraction
Local recreational and visitor attractions
Proximity to nationally recognized attractions
Proximity to travel routes
Proximity to urban population and workforce centers
Recognizable central business district/downtown
Sufficient base of local businesses
Access to long-term infrastructure loans and grants
Competitive recruitment incentives
Ability to compete in a global market
Ability to identify product and service gaps
Ability to network and attend relevant trade shows
Cultural development and advocacy organization
Downtown organization and staff
Local ability to identify and advance a funding proposal
Relative sophistication in coordinating and marketing local events
Support from local education professionals at all levels
Community acceptance of the visitor industry
Community support for needed infrastructure rate increases
Local focus on revenues from visitors

Strong community support
Strong relations between economic development organization and local businesses
Support from local businesses
Supportive local government policy and focus
High-speed internet
Local, available, low-skill labor pool
Prospect of an expanded geographic market for health care
Proximity to scheduled air service
Strategic location for distribution centers

Key Success Factors with a Score of "2":

Accurate, long-term analysis of infrastructure needs and costs
Financially sound existing health care facility
Sufficient local entrepreneurial base
Insulation from industrial business annoyances
Access to small business financing
Access to large-scale capital
Availability of appropriated funds
Local funding for downtown development
Sufficient marketing, promotion, or public relations budget
Ability to build a team comprised of energy-development experts
Ability to understand industry trends and opportunities
Competent, strategic-minded hospital and health-care executives
Implementation of national Main Street Four-Point Approach™
Sophisticated tourism development & promotion
Team approach to infrastructure finance
Active engagement of downtown building and business owners
Favorable state policies with respect to office locations
Projected growth in government budgets
Supportive state energy policies and incentives
Adequate telecommunications infrastructure
Excess water and sewer infrastructure capacity
Local, available, high-skill labor pool
Advantageous location for government or education expansion

Key Success Factors with a Score of "1":

High availability of urban services
Proximity to fisheries commodities
Dedicated business coaching staff
Existing excellence in local health care
Sophisticated use of the internet for marketing
Staff focused on recruitment objectives
Support for attracting retirees
Adequate housing for labor force

Key Success Factors with a Score of "0":

Proximity and access to forests and forest products
Proximity to raw materials and minerals
Ability to secure long-term contracts for forest materials
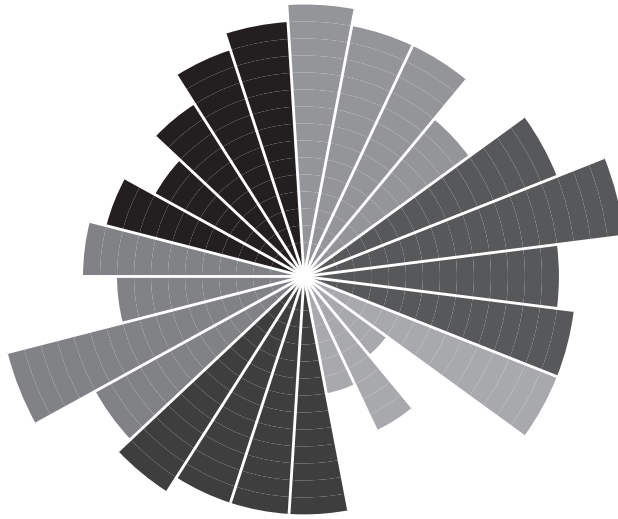
Osceola

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