

BLYTHEVILLE

Arkansas



PLAN WEEK: SEPT. 17-18, 2012

Plan "Snapshot"

Potential—a word full of hope, but no guarantees of success.

Winston Churchill said that it takes “continuous effort” to unlock the potential in each of us. This is true for individuals, and also meaningful for communities.

Over the past few decades, Blytheville has gone in many different directions, twisting and turning reactively to external and internal challenges. It is time for us to choose. Do we want to move forward as one, proactively defining our future and continuously striving toward a common goal? Or, do we want to stay reactive and splintered, constantly struggling to find a foothold?



To us, the answer is clear. Our population has declined year after year, even while our job picture is strong. We’ve have experienced many tribulations that have been difficult to overcome, and still which affect us today. Our community has had every reason to fail, yet we persevere, realizing success on many fronts. Imagine what we can do if we all work together.

This strategic plan embodies that exciting possibility. The time is right for us to rally as one community, bound by our faith in each other and in our hometown of Blytheville. This is a tremendous place, and we know we can make it even better. We cannot wait any longer – the future of our community depends on what we all do today.

Our plan takes a two-pronged approach. On one hand, we look at the economic development strategies that will provide more and better jobs for our residents. On the other, we know there is more to life than work, which is why quality-of-life initiatives are a large area of focus. Both are necessary to achieve the goals and dreams we have for Blytheville: population growth that is meaningful; increased community pride; stronger relationships among neighbors; better jobs for our citizens; quality education for our children; health care that meets all of our needs; and safety on our streets and in our homes.

PLAN DIRECTOR

L.C. Hartsfield
Plan Director City of Blytheville

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Tommy Abbott**
City Councilor, City of Blytheville
- Richard Atwill**
Superintendent, Blytheville Public Schools
- Megan Atzert**
Executive Director, Main Street Blytheville
- Elroy Brown**
Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Blytheville
- Mike Carney**
Fire Chief, City of Blytheville
- Marvin Crawford**
Public Works Director, City of Blytheville
- Charles P. DeGeso II**
Citizen
- Eddie Echols**
Blytheville Community Samaritan Ministries
- Elaine Goff**
Owner, Goff Real Estate
- Jennifer Hardesty**
Mississippi County Health System
- Vivian Harrison**
Realtor
- Lori Hixson**
Me and My Sister Merle Norman
- George Hubbard**
*President, Blytheville Chamber
Owner, Hubbard & Hoke Furniture*
- Idell Jenkins**
Retired School Administrator
- Peggy Lemons**
CEO and Owner Temps, Plus Staffing
- Mike Lester**
KJAM Radio Station
- Jim McClain**
Vice President, Arkansas Northeastern College
- Toby McClanahan**
Owner, Mailboxes and Beyond
- Linda Moore**
Dawson Employment Services
- Phillip Mullins**
Citizen
- Linda O’Guin**
Executive Director, Westminster Village of the Mid-South

Our potential knows no boundaries, if we are united. We will not always agree on the best course of action, and hard decisions will need to be made. However, we are all a part of something grander – a community that we call home. This is our chance to realize the potential that we know we have. Let’s realize it together.

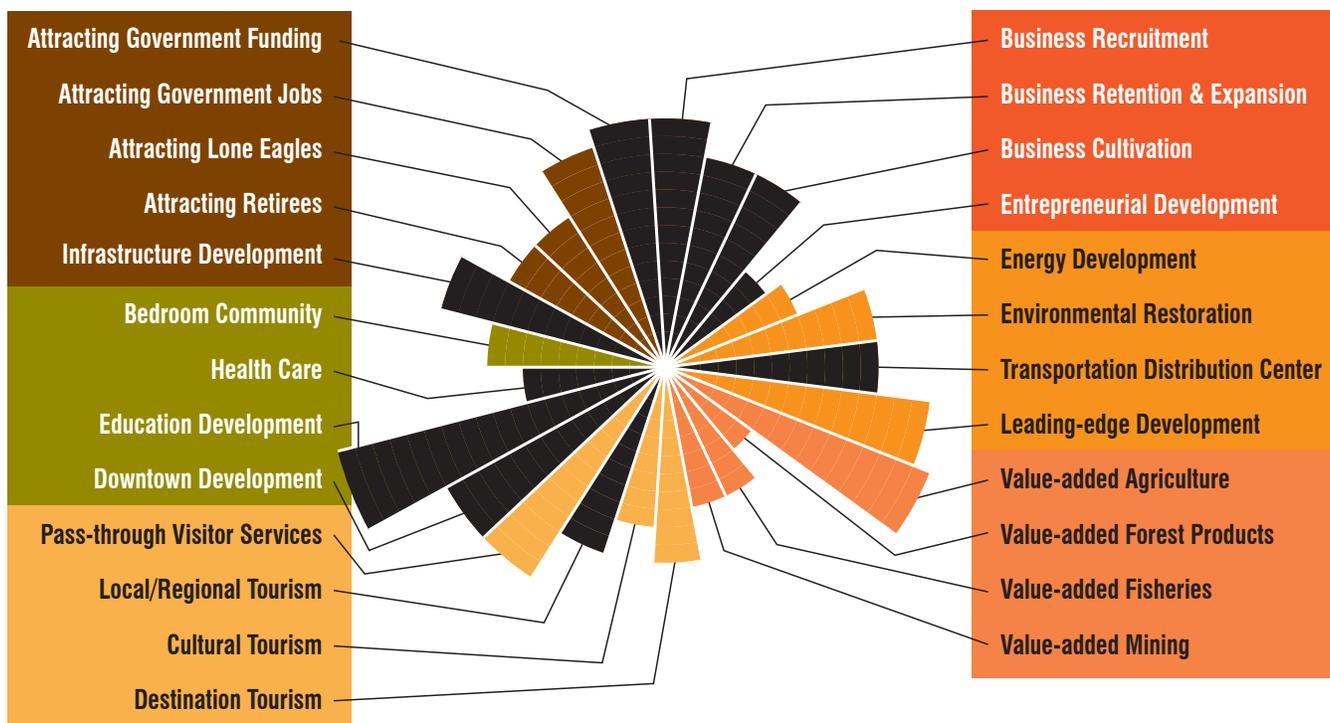
Last year, South Bancorp announced a new strategic planning initiative for Mississippi County. Since then, we’ve worked closely with both the ReNew East Arkansas and Southern Bancorp projects to ensure that we’re collaborating at the most effective level.

The Southern Bancorp Community Partners organization has been a wonderful resource for Blytheville and all of Mississippi County. Their mission to “transform rural Southern communities by creating new educational and economic opportunities for people with limited resources” aligns with the work we’re doing at a local level. As a result, many of the strategies and initiatives we chose through our planning process have been championed at the county level as well. Therefore, the projects identified in this plan will be enacted locally, countywide or both.

Because one of our goals is to increase the teamwork between municipalities and Mississippi County, these two processes couldn’t have happened at a more opportune time. We’re already seeing positive results with some of our top priorities. Looking ahead, we believe that this partnership will prove to be the catalyst to accomplishment for Blytheville and all of Mississippi County.

BLYTHEVILLE STRATEGY “THUMBPRINT”

The strategy “thumbprint” depicts twenty-five community and economic development strategies in terms of Blytheville’s potential to successfully implement each of the strategies. The longer the “spoke,” the greater the likelihood that Blytheville could see success in pursuing that strategy. Black spokes indicate strategies that have been selected for implementation by the Blytheville Steering Committee.



STEERING COMMITTEE CONT'D

- Stan Parks**
City Councilor, City of Blytheville
- Marcia Raeber-McClain**
*Retired School Teacher
Blytheville Historic Commission*
- Thomas Reagan**
Carlock Automotive
- James Sanders**
Mayor City of Blytheville
- Sam Scruggs**
Executive Director, Mississippi County Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.
- Dr. James R. Shemwell**
President, Arkansas Northeastern College
- Mary Gay Shipley**
*Founder and Former Owner,
That Bookstore in Blytheville*
- Steve Southard**
Nucor-Yamato Steel Co.
- Teryn Spears**
*Technology Integration Specialist,
Blytheville Public Schools*
- Paul Strong**
Pastor, Bible First Assembly of God
- Leanard Thompson**
Retired Factory Worker
- Ross Thompson**
Chief of Police, City of Blytheville
- June Walters**
*Former Interim President,
Arkansas Northeastern College*

SELECTED STRATEGIES

The Blytheville Steering Committee analyzed and ranked 25 potential community and economic development strategies by evaluating the comparative advantages of the city with respect to a host of “key success factors”—conditions or abilities that are required to successfully implement one or more strategies.

Generally speaking, those strategies with a score of 70 or higher indicate that the foundation for success has already been built. Education Development, for example, shows great promise for immediate implementation.

When reviewing the strategies for selection, the Steering Committee also considered those that scored lower on the scale. In some cases, such as Health Care or Entrepreneurial Development, the Steering Committee felt strongly that these particular strategies needed to be better developed in order to diversify and strengthen the economy and the overall quality of life for Blytheville residents.

QUALITY-OF-LIFE INITIATIVES

Improving the quality of life in Blytheville is a fundamental theme of the entire strategic plan. When looking at the initiatives selected by the Steering Committee for implementation, all have commonalities.

We want to make significant improvements to the livability, beauty and safety of our community. We seek to have broader engagement from our citizens. And, we wish to have better recreation and entertainment opportunities for all ages.

The Steering Committee recognizes the tremendous work that has been done to bring family wage jobs to the region. In order to make the most of those investments, we need to ensure that Blytheville -- and all of Mississippi County -- is the premier place to live in the Delta.

STRATEGIES BY SCORE	
Education Development	93
Value-added Agriculture	79
Leading-edge Development	72
Pass-through Visitor Services	70
Attracting Government Funding	70
Downtown Development	68
Business Recruitment	67
Infrastructure Development	63
Attracting Government Jobs	63
Transportation Distribution Center	61
Attracting Lone Eagles	61
Business Retention and Expansion	59
Environmental Restoration	59
Business Cultivation	56
Destination Tourism	56
Local/Regional Tourism	55
Bedroom Community	49
Attracting Retirees	49
Entrepreneurial Development	43
Cultural Tourism	43
Health Care	40
Value-added Fisheries	38
Energy Development	37
Value-added Mining	35
Value-added Forest Products	28

QUALITY-OF-LIFE INITIATIVES
Affordable, Quality Housing
Board and Commission Volunteer Training
Communications
Crime Reduction
Property Maintenance and Code Enforcement
Retail Development
Youth Activities and Recreation