

2007- 08 GREENE COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN - REPORT BRIEF

The 2007-08 Strategic Action Plan is based upon the vision for Greene County derived from studies conducted and reports compiled since 2002 and prioritized at a public meeting held on June 28th 2007, plus numerous conversations with residents from all sectors of the community.

The following commonalities were revealed:

- A. Greene County is at a crucial juncture that presents two options:
 - 1. Ignore the signs of economic distress and, without intervention, be consigned to a common rural pattern being experienced across the U.S., that of further economic decline.
 - 2. Capitalize on the limited window of present opportunities based on our greatest assets, i.e.
 - a. Agricultural resources: 170,000+ acres of farmland and 130,000+ acres of timberland provide tremendous opportunities for development of 'green business,' including value-added manufacturing and niche product marketing.
 - b. Goose Pond: Drawing national attention, it is what gives Greene County its unique point of distinction and, so has been used as the basis for Greene County's branding image. This attraction also provides a powerful basis for the development of a tourism industry.
 - c. NSWC Crane & WestGate@Crane: Creates opportunities for relocating businesses and local entrepreneurs, plus further development of a high-technology industry sector.
 - d. I-69: This opens up multiple opportunities county-wide to attract visitors and relocating businesses, plus increases in retail sales.
- B. The type of economic development desired by most residents would a) overcome the issues of youth attrition, industry decline and increased poverty without compromising the rural lifestyle and environment, and b) create a vibrant economy, conditions that promote quality jobs, diverse opportunities at all skill levels and a 'home-town' environment that would encourage the retention and/or return of our high school alumni.

In order to do this, a long-term commitment to economic development is necessary. All efforts target the four areas outlined above, i.e. Agriculture, Tourism and NSWC Crane & WestGate@Crane, and I-69. Greene County Economic Development Corporations (GCEDC) is responsible for providing mechanisms and community program support necessary to create a healthy economic environment (higher-paying jobs, increased business opportunities) and promote an enriched quality of life. Also, GCEDC is the agency primarily responsible for business attraction. With limited resources, proactive marketing is cost-prohibitive. Attraction efforts focus on building community capacity, developing an inventory of buildings and sites, and response to leads generated by State agencies, utility companies and the GCEDC website.

Community involvement and efforts are crucial and, in 2008, affect three key focus areas, each assigned a Focus Area Committee (FAC) to oversee development and implementation of specific action strategies:

- 1. Business Development-Entrepreneurship: This includes facilitating the development of a business-friendly environment and the nurture of new locally-owned businesses. The Economic Growth Group, using the HomeTown Competitiveness (HTC) strategy, is the FAC overseeing of the entire HTC program implementation. Besides entrepreneurship, the other three HTC aspects or "pillars" are Capital Assets, Leadership and Youth. These latter are Community Development subjects that are to be developed further than their current status.
- 2. Business Development-Tourism: involves the launch of an entire industry, including components such as community branding, funding, infrastructure and marketing. The Greene County Chamber Coalition and its Tourism Committee is the FAC overseeing this activity.

By extension, education and workforce development issues, key components of any business development, are also addressed by each of the above FACs.
- 3. Community Development-Land Use: is focused on two facets, i.e. the development of the I-69 corridor and the development of a Greene County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This effort requires a long-range perspective, as it directly contributes to the legacy we provide our offspring. The FAC for this will support the efforts of an Area Planning Commission, yet to be formed.

Economic development is a process and what is outlined above constitutes only the initial steps, with ongoing activities requiring continual review, assessment and revision of priorities.

