



# Strategic Community Plan

PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

2005 – 2010

Summer 2005



*On the banks of the Mighty Mississippi*



# Strategic Community Plan

## PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS



STATE OF ARKANSAS  
MIKE HUCKABEE  
GOVERNOR



Dear Reader:

I'm honored to have the opportunity to endorse the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan. This plan emerged following almost a year of dialogue by Phillips County residents. They came together and brought positive, fundamental change to their county. With continued local commitment, the ambitious goals of this plan will be achieved.

What excites me most about this plan is that it unlocks the potential of Phillips County and provides the blueprint for residents to attain a greater quality of life. I hope people across the state and region will join Phillips County residents as they move forward, providing encouragement, support and partnership to revitalize this once-great area of our state. We must learn to forget old rivalries and forge new partnerships. We must also realize that not everything can happen at once. It will require time to implement this plan, but it's clear that some of the things outlined already are occurring. Phillips County has the chance to once again become a regional center for Arkansas.

If you're reading this report, you can help make it happen. With so many action steps in so many areas, there's something here for everyone. I challenge you to get involved in the areas that interest you most. Working together, we can show what's possible when citizens decide to make their community a better place to live.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature of Mike Huckabee in black ink.

Mike Huckabee

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY  
FINANCE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING



June 8, 2005

Ben Steinberg, President  
Members of the Board of Directors  
Southern Financial Partners  
502 Cherry Street  
Helena, Arkansas 72342

Dear Friends:

I am extremely pleased that the efforts of over 300 Phillips County residents working together for 10 months has resulted in the *Phillips County Strategic Community Plan: 2005-2010*. Progress is built on the foundation of sound social and economic planning.

As a native of Helena, I am delighted to participate with residents and community organizations to achieve our dreams. The recent vote to consolidate the cities of Helena and West Helena demonstrates a unified community vision and a desire to move confidently to enhance economic and social opportunities in our area.

The Phillips County Strategic Community Plan's vision is sound and one that I wholeheartedly endorse. We have exciting months and years to come as we implement the goals identified in the plan. I look forward to working with you and the citizens of Phillips County to make those goals become reality.

Sincerely,

Blanche L. Lincoln

BLL:dky

# ENDORSEMENTS

## United States Senator Mark Pryor United States Representative Marion Berry United States Representative Mike Ross

State Attorney General Mike Beebe  
State Senator Steve Higginbothom  
State Representative Arnell Willis

### PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas Department of Economic Development  
Arkansas State Parks and Tourism Department  
Phillips County  
City of Elaine  
City of Helena  
City of Lakeview  
City of Lexa  
City of Marvell  
City of West Helena

### ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS

Barton-Lexa School District  
Delta Area Health Education Center (AHEC)  
Elaine School District  
Great Rivers Educational Cooperative  
Helena-West Helena School District  
KIPP Delta College Preparatory School  
Marvell School District  
Phillips Community College of the University of  
Arkansas  
University of Arkansas  
University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public  
Service  
University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension  
Service in Phillips County

### BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

AAA Therapy Care, Inc.  
Amerimax  
BPS Inc.  
Centerpoint Energy  
Cline-Frazier Consulting Engineers  
CoCo Distributing  
Cunningham Inc.  
DBG Enterprises  
Daily World  
Economy Drugs  
Entergy  
First Bank of the Delta  
First Delta Insurance  
H & M Lumber Company Inc.

Helena National Bank  
Helena Regional Medical Center  
Hickory Hill Pharmacy  
Hoffinger Industry Inc.  
Isle of Capri Casino  
Juengel & Associates  
KCLT Radio  
KFFA Radio  
KJIW Radio  
King Farms  
Olivers Restaurant  
Phillips County Chamber of Commerce  
Phillips County Port Authority  
Planters Service & Sales  
Producers Tractor Company  
West-Hornor Motor Company

### NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas Hospitality Association  
Boys Girls Adult Community Developmental  
Center (BGACDC)  
Delta Cultural Center  
Habitat for Humanity  
Helena Health Foundation  
Main Street Helena  
Mid Delta  
Partners in Hope  
Phillips County Community Foundation  
Southern Financial Partners  
Southern Good Faith Fund  
The Walton Family Foundation  
Walnut Street Works

### CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Kappa Alpha  
Alpha Phi Alpha  
Delta Sigma Theta  
Kappa Alpha Psi  
Kiwanis  
Lions Club  
Rotary

### FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Phillips County Ministerial Alliance  
Phillips, Lee, Monroe, & Deshea Counties District  
Association

## Executive Summary

The Strategic Community Plan for Phillips County, Arkansas is a long-range visioning document created over a ten-month period by approximately 300 Phillips County residents. The Strategic Community Plan depicts collective hopes and desires and is a broad based vision of what can be. The purpose of the Strategic Community Plan is to identify and promote implementation of comprehensive community initiatives that improve quality of life and economic opportunities for all residents of Phillips County.

The Strategic Community Plan organizes the community's long-term vision into 46 strategic goals and 190 actionable items. This document is a blueprint for change with workable plans of action that provide organized community engagement in a comprehensive process involving each of the five fundamental pillars of community life: economic development, housing, education, leadership development and health care.

The Strategic Community Plan is designed to coordinate resources from interested parties that includes federal, state and municipal organizations, philanthropic foundations, economic development agencies, key regional leaders, legislators, commercial businesses and community citizens.

The Strategic Community Plan was developed through an intense ten month planning process that included over 300 community residents. Involvement in the rigorous planning process was open to all residents of Phillips County and took into consideration the County's historic, racial and cultural diversity. The Community Strategic Plan has the endorsement of community, civic, business and governmental organizations in Phillips County and throughout the State of Arkansas.

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The Strategic Community Plan is dynamic in nature and will be updated annually to incorporate new ideas, concepts and action steps.

Initial development of the Strategic Community Plan encompassed 10 community discussion meetings conducted by Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences designed to identify areas of community interest and develop an overall community vision. These meetings involved 154 community residents (80 African American and 74 white). Results of the community discussions indicate that residents of Phillips County want (i) a good education for their children, (ii) access to jobs for themselves and their children and (iii) a safe, nurturing, and attractive community in which to live.

In order to develop the Strategic Community Plan, the Phillips County Steering Committee was formed in January 2004. The Steering Committee was comprised of approximately 50 community residents.

In March 2004 the Steering Committee hired a professional facilitation organization, Performance Development Plus of Metairie, Louisiana, to facilitate the Steering Committee meetings and processes. The Steering Committee, or subcommittees thereof, met monthly from March 2004 through January 2005 and was responsible for preparation of the Strategic Community Plan.

## Mission Statement

### Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee

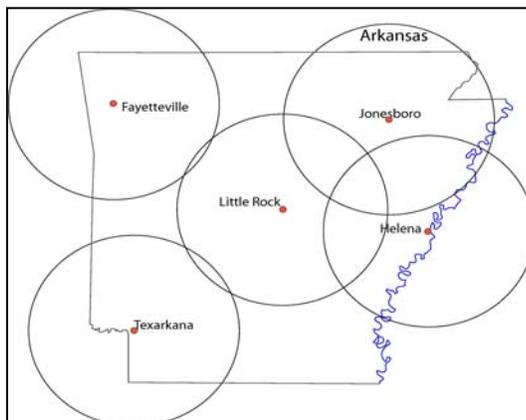
The Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee is a public-private partnership that will create and harness community spirit, reduce racial disparity, and unify community organizations and citizens so that together we create, promote, and support development efforts that result in the greatest possible benefit for all citizens.

Key concepts included in this plan were obtained from the Assessment Report and Action Blueprint prepared by Main Street Arkansas and the Department of Arkansas Heritage in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and from the offices of United States Senator Blanche Lincoln.

## Community Vision

Successful regional development requires anchor communities that attract and promote economic activity and growth. Central Arkansas benefits from the Little Rock Metroplex. Northwest Arkansas from the conflux of Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers. Southwest Arkansas is tied into Texarkana and Northeast Arkansas's economic vitality is centered in Jonesboro.

The merged city of Helena-West Helena is geographically located to serve as the regional hub community for Southeast Arkansas. It is the vision of community residents in Phillips County that Helena-West Helena achieve this status and becomes an economic and cultural force throughout Southeast Arkansas in a manner similar to the communities mentioned above.



To this end the Phillips County Steering Committee adopted the following Vision Statement in June 2004.

## **Vision Statement**

### **Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

By 2010 Phillips County will be a model community for the Delta, one that is economically strong, spiritually enriched, and demonstrates equality among its people by building on the unity of its citizens, strength of its leadership, its rich history and natural beauty. Phillips County will be a safe community with quality job opportunities for all citizens, excellent housing for all income levels, proactive healthcare and social services, excellent education for its children and workforce, and premier recreational and tourism attractions that promote cultural enrichment for all.

Additionally, residents of Phillips County understand the importance of connectivity with the Memphis Regional Economic Development Zone. As such, the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan is intrinsically linked to the Economic Plan for the Greater Memphis area.

### **Community Challenges**

The economic base of Phillips County is agriculture. The general decline in agriculture as a major employer as well as the loss of numerous industrial and manufacturing jobs has resulted in an out-migration of over 14,000 Phillips County residents from 1970 to 2000, or over 35% of its population, as it declined from 40,000 to 26,000 residents. Additionally, racial issues and political tension have historically created an environment that is not conducive to new business development.

To deal effectively with these challenges, Phillips County has adopted a strategy of using existing strengths-opportunities (agricultural strength, Mississippi River, proximity to Memphis and the Tunica gaming center, blues music, cultural heritage, etc.) to reframe itself and by doing so create a positive community image. Additionally, Phillips County has aligned itself with the Memphis Economic Development Zone and by doing so, strengthens its economic alliance through regional marketing and economic development programs of this significant regional partner.

| <b>SWOT ANALYSIS</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Strengths - Opportunities:</b></p> <p>One hour south of Memphis, Tennessee</p> <p>Proximity to Memphis International Airport</p> <p>Thirty minutes south of Tunica, Mississippi with 12 million visitors per year</p> <p>Close proximity to Isle of Capri Casino</p> <p>Potential for significant tourism</p> <p>Main Street Helena</p> <p>Delta Cultural Center</p> <p>Distinctive history and cultural heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mississippi River</li> <li>- Blues Music – King Biscuit Festival</li> <li>- Civil Rights</li> <li>- Civil War – Union Army Fort</li> <li>- Historic Churches</li> <li>- Great River Road</li> <li>-Delta Byways</li> <li>- Louisiana Purchase Marker</li> </ul> <p>Historic, architecturally attractive buildings</p> <p>Third largest port on the Mississippi River</p> <p>Phillips Community College</p> <p>Friendly people</p> <p>Low cost of living – inexpensive labor and real estate</p> <p>Agricultural industry – even though it is declining</p> <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- River</li> <li>- Rail</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses - Threats:</b></p> <p>Racial issues</p> <p>Negative perceptions</p> <p>General appearance of community</p> <p>High unemployment</p> <p>Loss of businesses/job opportunities</p> <p>Loss of population</p> <p>Loss of historic property</p> <p>Challenged housing stock</p> <p>Declining middle class</p> <p>Poorly performing public school system</p> <p>Lack of community pride</p> <p>Loss of family farms</p> <p>Lack of an interstate highway system</p> <p>Diminished capacity in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unified leadership</li> <li>- Volunteer base</li> <li>- Shared vision</li> <li>- Technological sophistication</li> <li>- Local organizations</li> <li>- Public entities - limited tax base</li> </ul> <p>Abandoned industrial sites</p> <p>Public transportation systems</p> |

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified by Phillips County residents during focus group meetings conducted at the beginning of the strategic planning process.

## 1A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – TOURISM

The distinctive, historic and physical characteristics of a community are key factors in its ability to:

- Attract tourists and visitors.
- Attract business and industry.
- Serve as a desirable location for retirees and others who are relocating.

Developing a viable tourism industry in Phillips County is an important first step in community redevelopment by improving overall appearance and vibrancy of the area - to enable attraction of commercial businesses and related employment opportunities.

Improved physical image will positively impact business opportunities as company representatives considering relocating a business will view Helena-West Helena in a more favorable light. Additionally, tourism does not require development of the education system, improvement of housing stock or state of the art health care. Proper development of a tourism plan, however, will provide a springboard, timeline and revenue source from which education, housing and health care can be addressed.

A significant strength available to Phillips County is its close proximity to Memphis, Tennessee and Tunica, Mississippi. The Memphis metropolitan market and international airport is only one hour north of Helena. Tunica, Mississippi, 30 minutes north of Helena-West Helena, is a rapidly growing tourist destination with the presence of nine casinos (MGM, Ballys, Fitzgeralds, etc.). Approximately, 12 million tourists a year visit Tunica. Additionally, the Isle of Capri Casino operates immediately across the Mississippi River in Lula, Mississippi.

In order to attract tourists from the Memphis and Tunica areas, the City of Helena-West Helena has adopted a strategy that capitalizes on the historic nature of Helena, its cultural heritage, civil war battles, blues music and the Mississippi River to develop itself as a meaningful secondary tourist destination to the current tourist demand available in Memphis, Tunica and at the Isle of Capri Casino. The infrastructure currently present in Helena, however, is insufficient to provide tourists with a positive impression and must be developed. The Strategic Community Plan provides a blueprint for such development.

Historic Helena will be the marketing theme of this effort and community infrastructure will be designed to tell the story about the civil war battle fought in Helena in support of General Grant's attack on Vicksburg, the garrisoning of Fort Curtis and the four Mississippi River batteries by Union Army soldiers and the subsequent creation of a major training facility at Fort Curtis for African American soldiers that fought for the Union Army – with a special museum developed for this purpose and potentially expanded into a national museum.



Fort Curtis

Helena's four civil war batteries overlooking the Mississippi River will be redeveloped, and the Centennial church, pastored by Dr. Elias Camp Morris from 1895-1919 and president of the National Baptist Convention, will be restored. Designed by Henry James Price, the Centennial Church is the only known example of an African American Church designed by an African American architect. Cherry and Walnut Streets will also be redeveloped to include tourist based businesses, pubs, blues music clubs, antique stores, novelty shops, restaurants and hotels.



Battle of Helena



Public Pier in Helena

A public pier will be built at the Port of Helena to provide both a positive tourist experience and state of the art docking facilities for the River Boats that bring tourists down the Mississippi River. The current river park area will be redeveloped as a Patriots Point, with the docking of historic naval vessels (submarines, PT Boats, swift boats as well as civil war era gun boats).



Patriots Point

**Strategic Vision – Promote and develop Helena as a historic community with attractions of interest.**

The strategic tourism focus is to create Historic Helena as a cross between Williamsburg, Virginia and Branson, Missouri and to allow tourists to experience the unique history and culture of Helena as well as be entertained by a “blues light district” that includes blues music clubs, pubs and close proximity to top quality casinos in Mississippi.

Tourist flow will primarily be generated from Memphis, Tennessee and the region east of the Mississippi River with tourists crossing into Arkansas at the Helena Bridge. The two mile corridor between the Mississippi River Bridge and downtown Helena is an important first impression tourists will have of the community and this impression must match the historic theme adopted by the community.

**Strategic Goal Number One - Convert travel corridor from the Mississippi River Bridge to downtown historic Helena into a historic park/greenspace with civil war cannons, historic markers and hiking trails.**

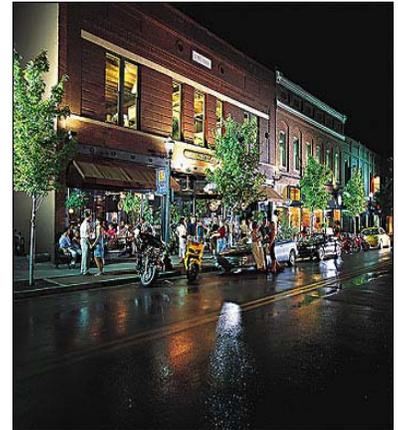
**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Purchase or receive donations of available property in this corridor and remove related dilapidated buildings to create the necessary park-greenspace entrance to Historic Helena.
- Develop the park-greenspace corridor. The merged City of Helena-West Helena will work with appropriate State of Arkansas and National Historic agencies to achieve this goal and to pass appropriate zoning to preserve the historical context of the area.
- Build a specially designed hand crafted wood sign and place it at the entrance to the travel corridor that welcomes people to Historic Helena.
- Refurbish the hotel at the crossroads of the Mississippi River Bridge and open it for business.
- Use a historic downtown house in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the Department of Heritage as a State of Arkansas Welcome Center/museum that will focus on the cultural heritage of Helena. The Welcome Center will feature interactive exhibits, big-screen monitors that present the history and cultural diversity of Helena, state of the art computers and picnic areas. This center will also serve as the National Forest Visitors Center
- Redevelop the unused Pyco Industry grain facility into an agricultural museum and park area that provides opportunities for visitors to learn how cotton is processed and presents information about communities in the Delta where visitors can experience the Delta's agricultural heritage. The museum will display a historical account of mechanization of the Delta with a display of vintage tractors through modern farming.
- Determine feasibility of adaptive reuse or removal and replacement of the Old Helena High School as a community park.

**Strategic Goal Number Two – Redevelop downtown Helena - specifically Cherry and Walnut Streets to focus on their historical context and create a positive experience for tourists.**

**Actions steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

- Develop a comprehensive and achievable master plan for historic Helena and the riverfront area that (i) addresses specific requirements of a historic downtown district, (ii) defines land and building use plans that recognize the context sensitive nature of historic Helena and (iii) establishes standard design guidelines, including building appearance, signage and general streetscape requirements. Extend this master plan into an artists rendering of a redeveloped historic Helena.
- Coordinate and host a preservation design charrette in Helena. Invite nationally known architects, preservationists and developers to work on preservation and development scenarios for Cherry and adjacent streets. Work in cooperation with the Building Trades Institute to create several hands-on working experiences. Invite all Delta Initiative communities to participate in the charrette.
- Identify properties or districts in Historic Helena that are eligible for the National Register. Obtain historic designation for all such properties identified.
- Nominate Helena for the National Trust’s 2006 Most Endangered Places List. This nomination would position Helena as a community most representative of the important physical fabric and cultural heritage in the Delta that will disappear if measures are not taken to preserve it. Apply for endangered building and PSF grants.
- Seek designation for Helena as a strategic demonstration site by the National Trusts Department of Community Revitalization to enable more closely focused services from National Main Street and other community partners.
- Stabilize historic buildings on Cherry Street by updating and repairing roofs to prevent further water damage to the structures.
- Develop and execute a broad based plan in conjunction with the master plan for restoring available buildings that create functional commercial space and specialty shops at the street level. Loft apartments and professional office space on the second floor of the redeveloped Cherry and Walnut Street buildings will attract renters. This plan will use historic tax credits, rent and tax incentives and other special inducements to attract and promote business.
- Create a “blues light district” on Cherry and Walnut Street that includes a series of outdoor musical stages for informal performances by local artists and expand downtown businesses to includes pubs, restaurants, antique stores and gift shops so



Cherry and Walnut Street Renovations

that a festive and positive atmosphere is created in this area that will become the heart and soul of Historic Helena's tourism industry.

- Commission historic murals on key downtown buildings. Initiate this process by restoring and preparing a mural on the old water tank located just off Cherry Street.
- Prepare a feasibility analysis and estimate of costs to renovate the historic Cleburne Hotel in partnership with the property owner. This renovation will be used as a cornerstone of a revitalization of Historic Downtown Helena. Based on the feasibility analysis and subject to projected occupancy rates initiate renovation efforts on the hotel.



Cleburne Hotel

- Develop Riverview Condominiums as a high-end multi-unit property development, with a view of the Mississippi River and Historic Downtown Helena.
- Create a program under the administration of the City of Helena's Property Standards Commission that administers and maintains the historic brick streets of downtown Helena and the Beech Street residential community.
- Create a King Biscuit Anniversary Photo Exhibit that includes a collection of photographs taken by various photographers during the past 19 festivals. The exhibit will be used to market the King Biscuit Blues Festival and will be premiered and displayed at the Delta Cultural Center but will also be packaged for travel to statewide, national and international venues as a promotional of the King Biscuit Blues Festival.

- Rebuild an exact replica of Fort Curtis on Walnut Street and restore the civil war batteries that surround Helena. Within the context of this redevelopment, partner with the Delta Cultural Center to construct a museum that portrays the involvement of African American soldiers in the Civil War.



Centennial Church

- Complete renovation of the Centennial Church, the only known example of an African American Church designed by an African American architect. The Centennial Church is currently listed as a National Historic Landmark.
- Renovate the Hornor Home, as a significant and historical structure of Helena and present information on its involvement in the Battle of Helena.

- Develop a historic trail between the Centennial Church, Fort Curtis, the Horner Home, significant cannon emplacements, batteries and the Confederate cemetery. Place markers and monuments in locations of historic sites and key battles. Receive national historic battlefield designation.

- Develop a commercially viable covered farmers market on Walnut Street modeled after the farmers market concept in the River Market area of Little Rock. The farmers market will be a direct link between the Phillips County farmer and the Phillips County consumer, will increase traffic flow to Historic Downtown Helena and will be an active outlet for local and regional farmers and will meet consumer demand for fresh, healthy and locally grown food.



River Market

- Renovate the Sonny Boy Music Hall into a Blues Studio. Once the Music Hall is renovated KBBF will operate the Hall as a premier facility for producing and distributing blues related entertainment material for television, web programs and as a recording studio for established and emerging Blues artists.

- Develop an American Music Museum with specific emphasis on blues music. This museum will be used as a significant tourist attraction and also as a facility that educates people about the culture and diversity of blues music.



Community Park

- Develop, further, the community park area across from the Phillips County Courthouse with the construction of a Victorian bandstand - using the historic themes established for downtown Helena. Highlight the many nationalities that settled in Helena through construction of monuments and a flag exhibit that displays flags from all nationalities that settled in Helena.

- Incorporate a police substation facility in the redevelopment plan for Cherry and Walnut Streets in a manner similar to that used in the River Market area of Little Rock.



Police Substation

- Relocate the Phillips County Library and Museum to the existing Save-a-lot building on Columbia Street. The increased size of the Save-a-lot building will

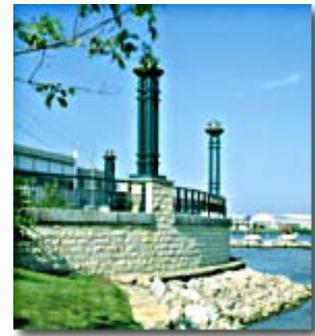
accommodate a larger number of patrons and will enable a general expansion of technological capabilities and allow the Phillips County Museum to expand its storage and exhibit areas in the existing building.

- Establish a Delta Center for Traditional Southern Arts and Crafts in downtown Helena. This center will teach, practice, demonstrate and sell traditional arts and crafts of the southern United States - enabling area residents to learn, practice and potentially generate income from these activities as the overall tourist industry is developed.
- Create opportunities for local civic organizations – specifically churches – to engage in monthly clean-up campaigns through specific adopt a block or adopt a building program.

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Expand development efforts around the Mississippi River to take advantage of this tremendous natural resource. Development efforts will be focused on creation of specific attractions of interest to tourists. Such attractions will be key in drawing people to Historic Helena.**

**Actions Steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Expand the current river park area to include a “Patriots Point” concept that will include venues of historic significance designed specifically to attract tourists to Historic Helena. The primary venue will be historic naval warships that would be open for public tour. Examples of such would be swift boats, PT boats, submarines as well as a reproduction of the civil war era gun boat, Tyler. The river park area would be designated as either a national or state park and would be connected to the recently approved Mississippi River State Park.
- Develop a mid 1800’s style public pier and dock at the Port of Helena to provide improved access and a visually pleasing embarkation point for tourists who travel the Mississippi River on River Boats. This Pier and related attractions will be tied into the Tunica and Lula casinos and will be part of an organized effort to bring more tourists to the region.
- Connect the Patriots Point River Park with the development of the Helena Harbor Boardwalk and Nature Trail. The Boardwalk will cross the wetlands beside the Harbor and will include a nature trail into the wetlands, with historic lighting, signage and maps depicting the importance of native flora and fauna.
- Establish a Delta Convention Center and visitor’s bureau on the banks of the Mississippi River. This convention center will provide a forum for company retreats, meetings and seminars and will be modeled after the general themes of Historic Helena.



Public Pier in Helena

- Develop historic markers and place them throughout the Mississippi River area from Historic Helena to the Patriots Point River Park depicting key historical events that occurred in this area.
- Plan and develop an annual recurring festival/celebration that attracts cyclists from the Mississippi River Valley area and create a prominent regional cycling event using the Mississippi River Trail.

**Strategic Goal Number Four - Create six major tourist events that occur on an annual basis that promote business volume and traffic flow to Phillips County. Currently the King Biscuit Blues Festival and the Wild Hog Rally bring in approximately 150,000 visitors annually. Four additional events of equal magnitude would increase visitor volume to almost a half million visitors per year.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Expand marketing efforts for the King Biscuit Blues Festival and the Wild Hog Rally to include national and international advertising. Coordinate such marketing with the casinos in Tunica and Lula, Mississippi.
- Promote an annual civil war reenactment of the July 4, 1884 Battle of Helena. Coordinate this event with traditional 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities.
- Develop and plan four additional events in the Phillips County area specifically designed to attract tourists. These events will focus on heritage tourism, defined as the expression of stories, places, artifacts and experiences that authentically represent the lives and history of people. Specific emphasis will be directed at African American heritage and the civil rights activities that occurred in Phillips County.
- Expand marketing for group tour operators to national and international audiences. Group tours commonly are directed at Delta Heritage – specifically the African American culture, music and music interest groups, haunted house tours, high school reunions, family reunions and church groups.

**Strategic Goal Number Five – Expand emphasis on arts and entertainment to improve community involvement in such venues.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:**

- Expand the Warfield Concert’s free family entertainment offerings in order to create progressive opportunities in the performing arts for all members of the community. Such programs will include (i) Artists in Action – a program directed at area students from kindergarten to college, (ii) the Volunteer Committee Program that will broaden community involvement and increase support for local cultural programs, (iii) the Warfield website that will provide information and schedules of concerts, biographies of performing artists, outlines of the Artist in Action Program and the Volunteer Committee Program which will link to other local web sites, such as the Chamber of Commerce web site, and (iv) the program for elementary school students will be

expanded to include a Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts tour group and the Arkansas Arts Center Tell-A-Tale Troupe.

- Develop and produce a series of theatrical productions and special events spearheaded by the Theatre Delta Production Company that will include a cemetery and historic church living history event/tour.

**Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop county-wide tourism through creation and promotion of available scenic and recreational activities.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:**

- Develop the Louisiana Purchase Marker into a higher profile tourist attraction by the creation of 26 mile hiking and bike trail from the Mississippi River to the historic marker. This historic marker --26 miles west of Helena-- is the location from which the United States measured its purchase of the American West from France in 1815. The trail will begin in Helena and will follow the original route taken by the surveyors. This trail could be used to promote a Louisiana Purchase marathon race.
- Utilizing 73 miles of property available to Phillips County through the State of Arkansas's Rails to Trails Program, expand the 5-mile "Delta Heritage Trail" just west of Helena and affiliate it with the Louisiana Purchase Marker Trail.
- Develop the Mississippi River Trail as a 10-state, 2,000-mile bike trail that begins at the headwaters of the Mississippi River and ends in the Gulf of Mexico. Create suggested bike itineraries to include in marketing materials.
- Develop a museum in Elaine, Arkansas, in conjunction with the Delta Heritage Trail "Trailhead" that commemorates the Elaine race riots. Tie this museum into the Delta Cultural Center and the historic redevelopment of Helena.
- Prepare a feasibility study that addresses the practicality and economic impact of developing a resort in Lakeview to take advantage of the oxbow lake's beautiful scenery and fishing.
- Identify properties or districts throughout Phillips County that are eligible for the National Register. Obtain historic designation for all such properties identified.
- Identify significant historical events and sites in Phillips County and erect appropriate historical markers and interpretive signage. Tour maps and brochures will be developed accordingly.
- Develop a Water Spray Park in Marvell, Arkansas. This park will provide a safe and affordable area for the children of Marvell and Phillips County to enjoy water play and to gather with friends and family.
- Purchase a van or small bus for the Delta Regional Tourism and Transportation Coalition that will to be operated and shared by tour operators in Phillips, Lee,

Monroe, Arkansas and St. Francis counties in order to support existing and new tourist operators.

**Strategic Goal Number Seven – Partner with other Delta Communities and create a tri-state blues music trail. Potential communities for partnership are Memphis, Clarksdale, Greenville and Indianola.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:**

- Initiate discussions with the Chambers of Commerce in each potential partner community and the marketing managers of major casinos in the region to determine the level of interest in a tri-state blues music trail.
- Complete a comprehensive feasibility study and plan to be developed and formally adopted by each community if interest is sufficient.

**Strategic Goal Number Eight – Create a Delta Image Campaign and joint marketing program with the State of Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Heritage and other interested Delta communities to provide shared marketing materials for the region.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:**

- Develop a logo of Historic Helena to be used as a focal point in all marketing campaigns.
- Create a joint seasonal calendar of events in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, the Arkansas Department of Heritage, the Arkansas Delta Byways Commission and the Great River Road Scenic Byways Commission.
- Create shared marketing materials with other Delta Communities and in collaboration with the Tunica and Lula Casinos, cross promote events throughout the Delta. This would involve joint seasonal promotions based on shared themes, such as a calendar of live entertainment in the Delta by specific weekend, week or month of year.
- Form a Friends of Phillips County organization, chaired by prominent current or former Phillips County residents. Use this organization to promote Phillips County on a state and national level.
- Create a process to track tourism data and create a baseline from which to measure the impact of tourism on the local economy.

## 1B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – BUSINESS AND JOB CREATION

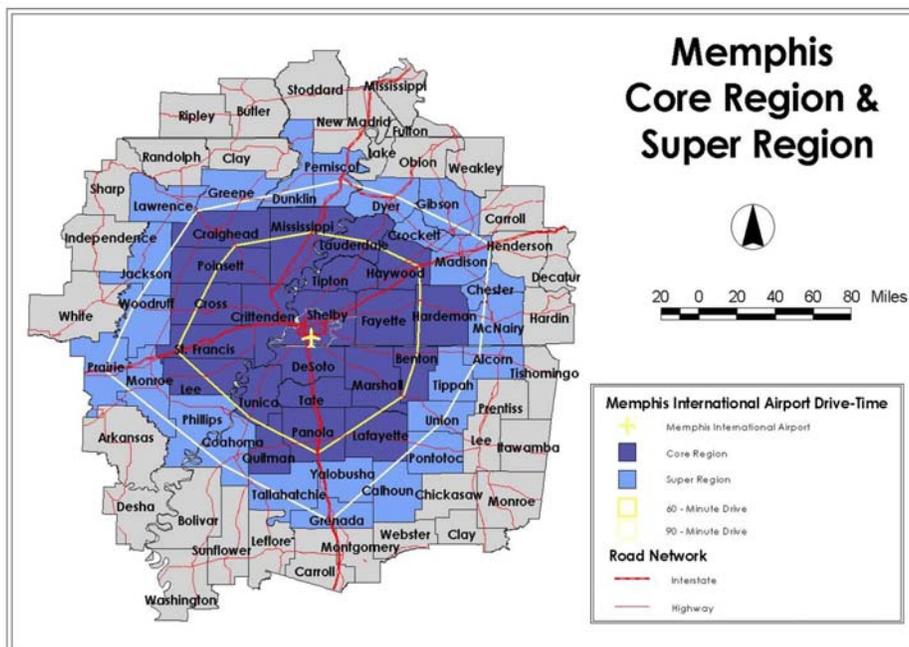
The primary economic activity in Phillips County is agriculture. As such, business and job creation depends on maximizing traditional opportunities provided by agriculture while creatively expanding into new and market viable agribusiness concepts.

In addition to agribusiness opportunities, the Port of Helena is the third largest port on the Mississippi River. Phillips County also operates a slack water harbor, with tonnage from this harbor, adding to that currently processed at the Port of Helena. The slack water harbor is fully equipped with electric, gas and water utilities as well as rail transportation.



Helena Slack Water Harbor

Finally, Phillips County is within the boundaries of the Memphis Economic Development Zone. This geographic connection to Memphis is a significant attribute and will enable Phillips County to partner with other counties to attract potentially significant employers.



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During the last twenty years, the City of West Helena developed as the business center for the Twin Cities and for Phillips County. As such, primary business and job creation efforts will occur in West Helena.

**Strategic Goal Number One – Expand capacity of the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce and the Port Authority to allow engagement in large-scale industrial recruitment.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Create a Cyberspace Community Doorstep by redesigning and upgrading the current Chamber of Commerce website to re-image Phillips County in a manner that encourages expansion and retention of existing businesses, promotes community events and attracts new business opportunities.
- Prepare meaningful demographics on Phillips County and surrounding areas, with specific emphasis on the Memphis Economic Development Zone. This demographic data will be compiled into professional quality marketing materials that promote Phillips County. Additionally, such information will be posted on the web site.
- Collect and maintain pertinent databases to promote business development activities, as follows:
  - In partnership with the Memphis Economic Development Zone, prepare a comprehensive labor study to document the demographics, availability and quality of the labor pool in the region.
  - Create a leased property database that identifies properties for lease and available square footage, the condition of the property, required tenant improvements, lease terms and contract information for property owners and managers.
  - Create a development opportunity database that provides prices, cost per square foot, sales comparisons, rental comparisons, market analysis, owner contact information, local lenders, local appraisers, vacancy rates, building condition, photographs, sample development agreements, potential funding sources and other pertinent information.
  - Create a strategic partner database that identifies organizations that would assist in redevelopment efforts. This is a comprehensive list of companies, organizations and agencies that could be collaborative partners in continued revitalization efforts.

**Strategic Goal Number Two - Develop and implement a comprehensive business retention and expansion effort in Phillips County that identifies existing business needs and challenges. Based on identified needs and challenges, develop a plan to assist local businesses address these issues.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

- Form a business advisory team to manage business retention and expansion efforts. This team, appointed by the Chamber of Commerce, will approach Entergy and seek inclusion of Phillips County into the Business Retention Expansion program (BRE).
- Complete an inventory of businesses in Phillips County that employ between 80% and 90% of the county's workforce and establish goals for the number of these businesses that will be visited by the business advisory team to discuss needs and challenges. Visits by business advisory teams will identify the following:
  - Star businesses that are performing well. A best practices will be compiled from these businesses.
  - Successful businesses that are not appropriate for prime retail space.
  - Specific needs of minority businesses. Team members will work with key leadership in the minority community to develop specific action steps that assist this business group.
  - Businesses that are needed in the County but are struggling or need some form of assistance.
  - Marginal businesses that are not doing well.
  - Businesses that may need to transition within the next couple of years – for example, if the owner is nearing retirement age.
- Train the business advisory team to conduct successful on-site visits with business owners and plant managers so that meaningful information is collected and a process of assistance is developed. Entergy has agreed to provide the training. When applicable, the business advisory team will identify those businesses that are managed by an out of state headquarters. In these cases an ongoing visitation schedule will be developed so that the site manager and the Chamber of Commerce can visit the company headquarters on a periodic basis to determine the needs and challenges of senior management as it pertains to their Phillips County operations.
- Develop specific actionable items to address the needs and challenges of each business. The Chamber of Commerce will coordinate a community engagement process for addressing all indicated needs and challenges.

Based on preliminary research, it appears that many existing businesses lack capacity, with inexperienced ownership and inadequate capital.

Specific actions to be taken by the Chamber of Commerce are:

- Mobilize and focus community support for existing businesses.
- Pro-active involvement in the political and/or judicial processes.
- Assistance with infrastructure needs.
- Assistance with government and non profit organizations.
- Assistance in finding low cost consulting services for technical assistance.
- A data base of business needs and challenges will be developed, with such needs matched to specific available consulting assistance.

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate a structured planning and development process designed to create a viable biodiesel industry in Phillips County.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Use as a foundation the pre-feasibility analysis prepared by Winrock International in April 2004, which determined the general viability of a biodiesel facility in Phillips County.
- Using the results of the pre-feasibility study, engage consulting engineers with specific experience in biodiesel production facilities to perform a site specific feasibility study that would be sufficiently detailed to provide to investor groups interested in developing Phillips County’s biodiesel program.
- Create a comprehensive investment plan to attract investor groups to this venture in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Economic Development.

**Strategic Goal Number Four – Create a Sweet Potato Distribution Center in West Helena, Arkansas. The Distribution Center will create jobs and provide value added agriculture by allowing local growers to supply distributors and grocery stores throughout the year.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Create an ownership, organizational and management structure that will operate the distribution center and adopt appropriate articles of incorporation and bylaws.
- Obtain no less than 20 acres of property from the County, with such property subject to a long term lease with the County.
- Develop a specific financial plan and structure for build out of the distribution facility and the initiation of operations using grants from the Economic Development Administration, bank loans and loan guarantees by the USDA Rural Development Program.

**Strategic Goal Number Five – Obtain a commitment that USDA will conduct regional training programs in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas through the assistance of the Arkansas Congressional delegation and from discussions with representatives at USDA. Subject to this commitment and the number of specified training days, develop a training center with sufficient capacity to host such events.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:**

- Identify locations able to host USDA trainings and the cost of building development or refurbishment, if necessary. Once this is complete perform a feasibility study to determine the number of committed training days necessary to allow financial viability for this effort.
- Work with members of Congress and the USDA to obtain a long-term and definitive plan for regional training. This process may require federal legislation mandating training in Helena.

**Strategic Goal Number Six – Improve the transportation infrastructure of Phillips County by creating a four lane highway system that connects proposed Interstate Highway 69 to Mississippi State Highway 61 and Arkansas State Highway 49 to Interstate 40 at Brinkley, Arkansas. This will require expansion of the Helena River Bridge into a four lane bridge and improvement of Arkansas State Highway 49 into a four lane state highway from the Mississippi River to Brinkley, Arkansas.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:**

- Initiate joint discussions with the Arkansas and Mississippi Congressional delegations regarding the possibilities and processes of expanding the Helena River Bridge into a four lane bridge.
- Request that the Arkansas Highway Department conduct a traffic count analysis and feasibility study of current traffic over the Helena Bridge
- Develop a detail plan of action and timeline for the river bridge project based on Congressional discussions.
- Initiate a meeting with the Arkansas State Highway Department and appropriate Highway Commissioners to access the possibilities and processes of expanding State Highway 49 into a four lane highway from the Helena Bridge to Brinkley.
- Develop a detailed plan of action and timeline for expanding State Highway 49 based on discussions with the State Highway Commission.

**Strategic Goal Number Seven – Develop a comprehensive community transportation plan that focuses on intermodal transportation, public transit, recreational transportation and health care transportation.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:**

- Commission a comprehensive study of transportation options in Phillips County that transitions into a specific community transportation plan with defined plans of action. The transportation plan will address issues such as light rail and trolley system transportation – possibly between key points of historic interest in Helena as well as across the Mississippi River to the Casino in Lula.
- Address transportation systems to improve accessibility to health care facilities.
- Establish bicycle and walking trails.

**Strategic Goal Number Eight – Expand the slack water harbor infrastructure to a fully functional intermodal port able to load and offload bulk, break bulk, containerized, Ro-Ro and liquid goods to serve the county’s existing and future agricultural and manufacturing infrastructure.**

**Action Steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:**

- Commission a comprehensive feasibility and economic impact study that identifies economic prospects available to a full service port facility with intermodal transportation and integrated industrial park.
- Using the results of this study and assuming that this study reflects significant economic impact, develop an action plan and sequence of projects necessary to achieve this goal.
- Pursue specific industries, as identified above, and through any and all other process to create commercial business activities at the Port.

**Strategic Goal Number Nine – Initiate a financial technical assistance program with all incorporated communities in Phillips County to improve the financial viability of these communities.**

**Action Steps in support of strategic goal number nine are:**

- Determine the interest of municipal governments for this type of assistance.
- Engage a professional consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of municipal government finances and accounting control procedures if sufficient interest exists.
- Issue evaluation reports to each participating municipality at the conclusion of the comprehensive review.

**Strategic Goal Number Ten – Evaluate the benefits of forming a Tax Increment Financing and/or Business Improvement District or other types of overlays.**

**Action Steps in support of strategic goal number ten are:**

- Determine if this goal is appropriate for Phillips County in consultation with appropriate State and Federal Agencies
- Apply for such status based on the above determination.

**Strategic Goal Number Eleven – Implement programming in Phillips Community College’s Small Business Incubator facility to provide services to small business owners and potential owners.**

**Action Steps in support of strategic goal number eleven are:**

- Conduct an environmental study of the building currently housing the PCCUA incubator and determine the level of remediation necessary to occupy the building.
- List the property as a Brownfield site and perform a phase I audit, as indicated above. Based on the results of the environmental analysis, develop a site remediation plan.
- Develop a plan for small business development, including technical assistance needs and opportunities in conjunction with PCCUA.
- Locate no fewer than five businesses into the incubator during the strategic plan period.

## **2. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT**

Successful community development in Phillips County requires revitalization of historic commercial districts and adjacent neighborhoods. The perception of a downtown area and its adjacent neighborhoods impacts the ability of a business district to attract customers and recruit businesses.

Historic buildings and related public spaces of traditional commercial districts enrich civic life and add value on many levels to a community. Historic preservation involves not only the process of rehabilitating, restoring and renovating older commercial buildings but also the process of adopting planning and land uses policies.

Public interviews in the five cities involved in the Main Street Arkansas Delta Initiative support the viability of downtown housing in the upper stories of commercial buildings as well as the need to improve the housing stock of adjacent neighborhoods.

Housing development and redevelopment will begin with general clean-up and code enforcement activities, maintenance of properties and then move to more extensive redevelopment efforts. The problem of absentee ownership and rapidly deteriorating housing stock is significant and in certain cases building demolition and removal is the only feasible option.

**Strategic Goal Number One – Commission housing market studies for Helena, West Helena, Marvell and Elaine, Arkansas in order to assess the need for additional housing in Phillips County and determine the specific types of housing needed.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Obtain qualified market studies for all primary communities in Phillips County.
- Use data from these studies to establish a baseline of housing in Phillips County and with this baseline information develop comprehensive housing plans.

**Strategic Goal Number Two – Develop and implement a general neighborhood revitalization and development plan in cooperation with the municipalities in Phillips County and existing neighborhood organizations.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

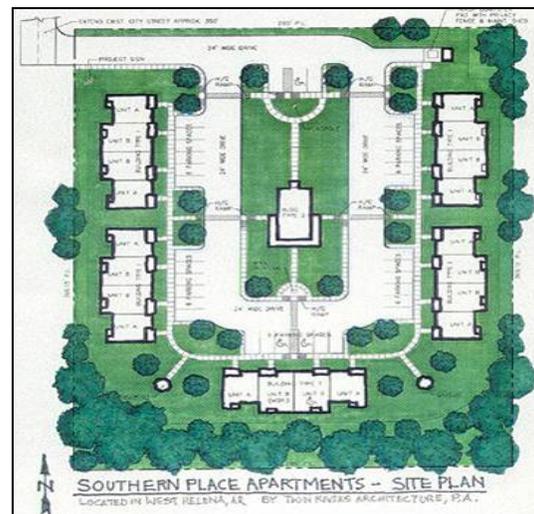
- Support the City of Helena’s property standards committee’s enforcement of city code and abatement of substandard properties. Based on initial neighborhood inspections, it appears that at least 50 properties a year will be abated in Helena and West Helena.
- Create pilot neighborhood projects in Helena and West Helena that allow for the development of neighborhood revitalization guidelines, processes and procedures. Using these pilot neighborhoods initiate five neighborhood projects designed to improve neighborhood appearance and to create a sense of community engagement and pride.

- Expand the neighborhood campaigns into the surrounding neighborhoods in Helena and West Helena and into the other communities in Phillips County once the pilot programs are fully engaged and the process of neighborhood redevelopment established.
- Design and fund a low interest rate revolving loan fund that provides owners of historic properties access to funding for restoration and renovation of unique historic homes in Phillips County.
- Provide Phillips County residents with viable access to the secondary mortgage market in cooperation with regional resource organizations. Using this program, begin a process of new home construction and development.
- Design and promote neighborhood clean-up, painting and general renovation programs.

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Construct a quality affordable housing complex that includes 20 units (2 and 3 bedrooms) as a replacement for existing substandard housing that exists in the historic corridor from the Mississippi River bridge to downtown Helena and in the Over the Levee area.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Complete financing structure for affordable housing development in West Helena.
- Engage a builder with specific experience with construction of affordable housing units.
- Begin construction in 2005 and complete construction and have the facility ready for occupancy no later than March 31, 2006.



Southern Place Apartments

**Strategic Goal Number Four – Complete the Brownfield planning study and obtain Brownfield designation from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Work in cooperation with the Brownfield’s Assessment Program to return abandoned commercial and industrial properties, whose reuse may be impeded by real or perceived contamination to active economic and community reuse.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Complete Brownfield planning study and identify and inventory all eligible brownfield properties in Helena-West Helena.
- Identify eligible properties with the best opportunities for reuse. Perform Phase I and Phase II environmental audits to determine the level of contamination.
- Engage in community outreach and planning to identify potential land reuse opportunities and development strategies, including green spaces. Incorporate brownfield development strategies into the larger Phillips County redevelopment vision.
- Visit communities currently active in Brownfield redevelopment and identify strategies that could be effective in Helena-West Helena.
- Identify programs and agencies with EPA and the Federal Government that support Brownfield activities – cleanup grants, revolving loan funds, workforce training, etc.).
- Execute a broad based and comprehensive Brownfield redevelopment program.

**Strategic Goal Number Five – Initiate specific neighborhood revitalization and development plans in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:**

- Organize and develop community meetings/forums in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood to discuss development needs and desires.
- Using market studies obtained in strategic goal number one, identify realistic housing opportunities and review results with all collaborating partners.
- Survey the “Over the Levee” neighborhood and prepare a report on substandard housing. Review this report with all collaborating partners.
- Establish a structured plan of removal of substandard and vacant housing as the first step in neighborhood revitalization.
- Establish a structured plan and process of new home development to replace substandard housing. This plan will include homebuyer counseling, construction of new homes, homeowner financing in the secondary markets and the creation of a revolving loan fund focused on low-income housing redevelopment.

- The model used in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood will allow replication in other neighborhoods in Helena-West Helena and Phillips County.

**Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop and implement a homeownership program that educates prospective home buyers on skills such as budgeting, family economics, general home buyer and renter education and the benefits of Individual Development Accounts so that new homeowners are better equipped to maintain their homes in good order.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:**

- Identify partnering organizations in each community in Phillips County who will provide the homeownership training program.
- Obtain or develop appropriate adult curricula in conjunction with partnering organizations.
- Establish an on-going home buyer education program that provides four homebuyer education classes and twelve economic skills classes on an annual basis.

**Strategic Goal Number Seven – Redevelop and improve Holly Street by widening the road, covering open drainage ditches that run along both sides of the road, add sidewalks and lighting so that traffic flow is improved and the neighborhood is safer for residents.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:**

- Engage an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study for redevelopment of Holly Street.
- Establish a specific redevelopment plan and timeline for project initiation based on the results of the engineering study.

**Strategic Goal Number Eight – Develop a neighborhood safety program for communities in Phillips County that includes organized neighborhood watch and alert programs that focus on general safety issues, with specific emphasis on crime reduction.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:**

- Develop specific neighborhood safety program goals and objectives in conjunction with strategic goals 2 and 4, above, and working with neighborhood organizations.
- Develop an organizing process within each neighborhood involved in this effort to provide the ability for the neighborhoods to sustain this effort after establishment of goals and objectives.
- Employ up to 15 additional police officers to patrol communities in Phillips County.

**Strategic Goal Number Nine – Redevelop the historic MM Tate School in Marvel, Arkansas, a former black high school with historic significance to the community, into a multi-use facility. The MM Tate school is located in a twelve block area previously targeted for redevelopment by the citizens of Marvel and would serve as a cornerstone of redevelopment for this area.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number nine are:**

- Obtain ownership and control of the property by the MM Tate Community Development Corporation from the Marvel School District.
- Conduct a feasibility study to identify how to convert this property into a multi-use facility in conjunction with the MM Tate Redevelopment Corporation. The facility would include assisted living areas, a health center, an information center history room and meeting rooms.
- Develop the financing needed for redevelopment. Assuming feasibility, use federal and state programs and income tax incentives.

### 3. EDUCATION

Improvement in educational systems, processes and most importantly student achievement is a critical foundational activity impacting the success or failure of all other community development programs. At the present time three of the four schools in Phillips County are under some form of academic or fiscal distress.

Educational goals considered in the Community Strategic Plan include improvement of student literacy levels, involvement of parents in their children's education, fostering greater involvement in public education by the business community, increasing experience levels of school administrators, principals and school board members, expanding the KIPP School to provide education for children from kindergarten through high school, engaging the public school system with Phillips Community College and providing workforce education and job skills training for adults.

**Strategic Goal Number One – Initiate comprehensive training for public school teachers, principals, administrators and board members, with such training designed to promote current leadership development techniques as well as improved course curriculum.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Engage the Rensselaerville Institute to conduct its one-year school turnaround program focused on school principals in Phillips County's public school systems—specifically in the Helena-West Helena School District, the largest in the county.
- Based on the one-year school turnaround program conducted in the Helena-West Helena School District, a district wide turnaround strategy will be prepared and expansion of the Rensselaerville Institute program into other school districts in Phillips County will be considered.
- Initiate the Core Knowledge Program in the Helena-West Helena school system for kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This program is a focused teacher training process designed to improve teaching techniques, methods and most importantly student achievement.
- Implement a senior level mentoring and advisory position/consultant to work with the school boards in Phillips County to develop school board meeting processes, agendas and define responsibilities of the school boards and school district management.
- Align public school curriculum, instruction and services around all public school systems in Phillips County to facilitate unity of purpose and a common educational process to improve effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs and district operations.

**Strategic Goal Number Two - Expand the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School to educate children from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

- Develop a comprehensive plan and financial budget for expanding the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School (“KIPP”) program to include kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This plan will address all aspects of expansion, including teaching programs, staffing needs and physical facilities requirements.
- Acquire land in downtown Helena that provides for future expansion of KIPP’s physical facilities so that sufficient classroom space is available for children from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Execute the comprehensive plan discussed above.



KIPP School

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate programs designed specifically to improve literacy and mathematics aptitudes for students in Phillips County. Specifically, this strategic goal involves implementation of the “PRIISM” initiative – Partnership to Renew Interest and Improve Student Mathematics.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Provide certification, recertification and/or continuing professional education to at least 10 degreed persons currently teaching mathematics in Phillips County to improve the instructional competencies of Phillips County’s teachers through a partnership with a four-year university and Phillips Community College (“PCCUA”). The mathematics certification, recertification and continuing professional education program will be offered annually to all interested mathematics teachers through PCCUA.
- Provide course work to at least 20 college juniors and seniors designed to create a pool of teachers with a BSE/MSE Middle School Teacher Certification through a partnership with a four-year university and PCCUA.
- Provide on-site follow-up and mentoring for students and teachers participating in the PRIISM initiative.
- Initiate a web based mathematics center administered by PCCUA that assists teachers design innovative and effective instructional materials for public school students and reinforces classroom learning. This program will contain a database of mathematics instructional materials, programs and activities.

- Initiate the Science, Math, Reading and Technology (“SMRT”) program to enhance the teaching and learning of science, math, reading and technology for students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This program will provide scholarships to encourage students to enter math and science education programs.

**Strategic Goal Number Four – Develop and initiate occupational educational programs for Phillips County’s high school students that provides them with necessary skills for employment in a trade or craft.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Develop a Secondary Educational Technical Center occupational instruction program for high school students and enroll 90 students a year in this program at PCCUA. The occupational program will provide enrolled students college credit courses in three career paths – Industrial Equipment Technology, Computer Engineering and Medical Professional Education.
- Implement a bridge program that will allow at least 40 students enrolled in the Secondary Educational Training Center program during the traditional school year to take additional college courses and experience job shadowing/internships during the summer months.
- Develop a reading, writing and mathematics lab to assist students enrolled in the Secondary Educational Technical Center improve their proficiencies in these areas.

**Strategic Goal Number Five – Develop and implement the Career Pathway Program for adult residents of Phillips County. The Career Pathway Program will start with adult education that is contextualized to a particular career/activity available in Phillips County and will include nursing/allied health programs, education, manufacturing, mechanical and industrial maintenance, technology and behavioral health.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:**

- Meet with local employers and determine the demand for specific occupations and the skills needed for career ladder opportunities.
- Develop and implement specific career pathway programs based on results of the employer meetings.

**Strategic Goal Number Six – Establish a University Center at Phillips Community College to accommodate post-secondary study beyond a two-year program. The Center would serve as a coordinating agent for programs from various colleges and universities.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:**

- Locate the University Center on the PCCUA campus.
- Design the Center to house all college and university programs offered in Phillips County, with multiple programs scheduled at the facility.

- Include in the Center computer labs, two CV classrooms, a seminar room and conference room.
- Provide the following PCCUA programs:
  - University of Arkansas at Fayetteville - BSE in human resource development, MSE in adult and vocational education.
  - University of Arkansas at Monticello - BSE in childhood education, MAT in education, BS in business.
  - Harding University – MAT in education, MSE in leadership.
  - UAMS – BS in MLT.

**Strategic Goal Number Seven – Develop, implement and provide community-based broadband internet access and computing technology to the communities of Helena-West Helena, Marvell and Elaine.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:**

- Develop a comprehensive plan to provide broadband internet service to the indicated communities. This plan will detail the infrastructure requirements, capital needs, management and organizational support process and the specific uses for such services.
- Implement the broadband internet plan.
- Once broadband internet access is available to the communities in Phillips County:
  - Create and implement community computer access and support programs through the development of community centers that provide computer training and education to children, adults and seniors.
  - Enhance computer engineering programs at the high schools in Phillips County through the integration of student training from the community computer center as well as a school-home communication program.
  - Develop and implement specific business activities using broadband availability.

**Strategic Goal Number Eight – Formalize and expand the Phillips County Educational Foundation which has as part of its mission reconnecting the local business community to public education.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:**

- Formalize the structure of the Phillips County Educational Foundation to include no less than ten key business leaders and the superintendents of the public school systems in Phillips County.
- Develop a specific charter and operational responsibilities for the Educational Foundation, elect a Chairman and determine frequency of meetings.

## **4. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Long-term sustainability for any community process requires continual development of leadership capacity, programs and processes that provide growth opportunities for existing leaders, focused leadership training for emerging leadership (ages 18 through 40) and initial leadership programs for individuals younger than the age of 18.

**Strategic Goal Number One – Initiate an annual Delta Regional Leadership symposium focusing on programs and activities that increase leadership capacity of existing community leaders, specifically including city and county leadership positions.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Develop training curriculum and a symposium plan.
- Review leadership training programs currently offered in the mid-south Delta region in coordination with action step one. Identify facilitators and resources available for such training.
- Determine processes to ensure the leadership symposium is sustainable and implement symposium activities.

**Strategic Goal Number Two – Initiate annual leadership training programs for emerging leaders in the 18 to 40 year age category.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

- Identify organizations that will serve as community sponsors and key stakeholders.
- Purchase or develop curriculum and determine nature, timing and extent of program activities. This action step will include program management, recruitment, funding, sponsorships, operations and length.
- Retain the services of the Center for Regional and Community Development in Jonesboro, Arkansas to provide training in the areas of leadership principles and practices, economic development, diversity and community collaboration.

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Create a youth leadership academy that provides leadership training focused on civic awareness and public service. This academy will serve at least 50 youth annually.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Develop academy curriculum, schedules, operational procedures, objectives and staffing requirements, including sustainability requirements.
- Recruit initial class of no less than 50 participants for the youth academy.

- Implement pre-interest surveys/inventories and knowledge based assessments to determine interest levels and understanding of civic responsibility and public service.
- Implement a six-week summer activities program designed to provide hands on activities that foster leadership skills for the youth participants.
- Initiate an academic year phase of the youth leadership academy that involves bi-monthly training programs.

**Strategic Goal Number Four – Form a series of Boys and Girls Clubs for children at greatest risk in Helena-West Helena, Marvel and Elaine. These clubs will provide participants with organized recreational activities and specific opportunities for leadership experiences.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Develop a detailed plan for implementation of Boys and Girls Clubs, including annual financial budgets, staffing plans and activities curriculum.
- Open the first club in Helena-West Helena and after one year of operation expand the clubs into Marvel and Elaine.

## **5. HEALTH CARE**

The Health Care strategy for Phillips County is to improve citizen health by promoting healthy lifestyles through innovative educational and healthcare service programs that address such issues as drug and alcohol abuse, diet, exercise and lifestyle.

**Strategic Goal Number One – Expand operations of the Delta Arkansas Health Education Center (Delta AHEC) in Phillips County to allow for greater community impact and improved health education and awareness.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:**

- Expand physical facilities for the Delta AHEC from 4,000 square feet to at least 25,000 square feet by working with the Helena Health Foundation to construct the building.
- Contract with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to include the Delta AHEC in its medical internship program so that Phillips County residents have access to such expertise.
- Promote health education, exercise, proper nutrition habits, tobacco and other substance abuse clinics using the Delta AHEC as the provider.
- Develop a transportation process to allow residents of Phillips County access to the Wellness Center.

**Strategic Goal Number Two – Charter a health clinic and related substance abuse prevention, research and treatment facility to improve access to health care for the residents of Phillips County.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:**

- Engage a professional consultant who will develop and produce a comprehensive plan to charter and operate a health clinic and substance abuse treatment facility. This plan would include (i) program planning and evaluation, (ii) preparation of employment and personnel policies, (iii) identification of program services, (iv) requirements for accreditation/license, (v) recommendations on proper staffing levels and specific skills needed by employees, (vi) development of articles of incorporation and a general policy-procedures manual and (vii) a five year financial budget.
- Execute the action items of the plan, using the suggested timeline and priority of objective critical activities to create the health clinic and substance abuse facility.
- Access services of UAMS's College of Public Health to assist in the establishment of the prevention and research programs that will be included in the substance abuse treatment activities.

- Develop a drug court and substance abuse rehabilitation and assistance program similar to the programs currently in operation in St. Francis County. This program compels a substance-abusing offender to deal with his or her substance abuse problem through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services and immediate sanctions and incentives.

**Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate a program in conjunction with the Helena Regional Medical Center that addresses the multiple challenges faced by rural hospitals.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:**

- Develop a program to assist with physician and nurse recruitment, with specific emphasis on attracting medical specialists.
- Develop a medical scholarship program for physicians and nurses that provides for their medical training if they will commit to practice in Phillips County.
- Develop a specific marketing campaign designed to promote the Helena Regional Medical Center as a high quality medical complex to the Delta region.

**Strategic Goal Number Four – In cooperation with the Education Goal Team create a medical magnet school in one or more public school districts in Phillips County, the purpose of which is to develop a pool of young talent for employment in the local healthcare industry.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:**

- Form a planning group to include representatives of the local school boards and the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School Board to make a site visit to the successful medical magnet school in Mercedes, Texas and to obtain technical assistance. After returning from Mercedes, the planning group will seek local buy-in.
- Obtain funding to conduct a detailed feasibility study for the medical magnet school concept once community support is strong.
- Begin raising additional funds to hire additional staff, identify local new faculty, and purchase distance learning equipment to link with UAMS and other participating institutions.
- Improve labs and the library at the medical magnet school during the second year.

**Strategic Goal Number Five – Initiate a county-wide health promotion network of churches for the purpose of improving health awareness, knowledge and behaviors of Phillips County residents.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:**

- Develop a comprehensive health plan based on the National Cancer Institutes “Body and Soul Project” to be called the “Healthy Phillips County Faith Network” in partnership with the Governor’s Healthy Arkansas Project.

- Identify 12 churches that will agree to partner in the project and recruit volunteers and train lay health advisors who will participate in the program.
- Develop an annual financial budget for the program and summarize expected outcomes and long-term program sustainability.

**Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop a Soup Kitchen in Helena modeled after the Soup Kitchen concept in Clarksdale, Mississippi, which addresses the needs of the homeless and elderly population in Phillips County. The Soup Kitchen will provide nutritious foodstuffs at affordable prices to low-to-moderate income families as well as life skills training, financial planning and home living training.**

**Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:**

- Initiate a local soup kitchen using local contributions and small grant support to run on a once per week basis.
- Identify additional grant funding opportunities and develop a plan to increase local community support for the soup kitchen so that the soup kitchen provides at least one meal every day of the week as demand for soup kitchen meals increases. Identify additional sources of support for financial and life skills training for the served population.
- Identify a sustainability plan for the soup kitchen to ensure the continual ability for the soup kitchen to provide meals to individuals in need and to complement meal with continued trainings.