

2.1 Comprehensive Economic Development Plan

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| Assessment Process | |
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| A. | Economic Development priorities were established in 1994 through a Baseline Study chartered by the City of Lamar. The REAP Program allowed for a full-time Economic Development service. Since 1996, private donations and memberships in the Chamber of Commerce sustain this program. |
| B. | Annual surveys, focus group studies, and an annual strategic planning retreat steer the course for effective economic development. |
| C. | Regional priorities are determined through the Southwest Missouri Development Alliance and District 6 of the Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC). MEDC and the Missouri Department of Economic Development help direct state priorities. Local aspects of both regional and state priorities are implemented in the annual Action Plan for economic development through the Chamber of Commerce. |

| Program Standards | |
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| A. | Organization: Through a main fiscal agent, Barton County Community Development Corporation, funding is combined with the resources of the Barton County Chamber of Commerce to serve as the primary organization for economic development. |
| B. | Mission Statement: The prime directive of the Barton County Chamber of Commerce is to engage in activities that enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of Barton County. |
| C. | <p>Opportunities, Resources, Potentials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location at the junction of two U.S. highways, 160 and 71. Highway 71 is slated for interstate status in future years, enhancing the opportunity for Lamar on what will be a key north-south corridor connecting the Kansas City market with the Gulf of Mexico. Currently interstate accessibility is only 29 minutes away. • The community has two rail carriers serving the area with immediate adjacency to key industrial zones; both carriers intersect at Lamar • Newly expanded and updated public school and vocational-technical training facilities. Lamar participates in Missouri's A+ Program with junior college scholarship incentives • Top-rated city parks and facilities • Tourism attractions such as a 250-acre lake and the expanding Truman Birthplace State Park Historic Site • Lamar has five financial institutions and has built a strong, sustainable foundation of economic development services originating with the REAP grant • Award-winning Community Betterment Program. Lamar is one of only six communities in the state to remain continually active in Missouri Community Betterment since the statewide inception back in the 1960s. • Lamar's municipal electric utility offers what is generally among the top ten lowest electric rates in Missouri • Strong capacity for production of agricultural-based raw materials that may be used in generation of energy and other life sciences/biotechnology goods |

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| D. | <p>Deficiencies, Problems, Liabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of housing for every segment of the community, especially in the low-to-moderate income level for renters and first-time homebuyers • Inhibited development due to not incorporating U.S. Highway 71 into the city limits • Insecurity/vulnerability from dependence upon two major employers and the need to diversify the local economy with smaller companies • Diversification and new markets need to be developed for the vulnerable agricultural sector • Declining base of small-to-mid size retail and service businesses and leakage of retail sales dollars outside the city, county, and the state (into Kansas) • Inability to retain youth in the community • Tourism attractions have not reached their full potential for economic impact • Certain community needs outweigh available resources |
| E. | <p>All elements of the MoCAP Economic Development Program are present within the Chamber's annual action plan. All of the MoCAP standards are addressed in the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2 Industrial Attraction 2.3 Industrial Site Development 2.4 Business Retention and Expansion 2.5 New Business Development 2.6 International Marketing 2.7 Job Development 2.8 Tourism 2.9 Downtown Revitalization 2.10 Agribusiness |

Program Goals and Planning

Specific program goals and planning components are addressed in sections 2.2 through 2.10

Program Evaluation

The success of economic development endeavors for Lamar are addressed through:

- Specific economic indicators available from the local agencies, the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center and the U.S. Census Bureau
- Benchmarks established through the Lamar Baseline Study
- Monthly focus group sessions conducted by the Chamber of Commerce
- Annual Surveys of the local business community
- Annual Strategic Planning Retreat of Chamber Board Members and invited executives from other local civic groups engaged in economic development