

Sparta-Hancock County, Georgia

Strategic Economic Development Plan

June 2019



From the Author

This is my contribution to the City of Sparta and County of Hancock. I heard this old saying, no one ever became poor by giving. This document was a labor of love for the love of this community.

-Will Minter

Brian P. Kemp
Governor



Christopher Nunn
Commissioner

June 19, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sparta-Hancock County Economic Development Strategic Plan is a good working document. I feel the document is on the right track to move the community forward in their economic development efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Hutcheson".

Tina Hutcheson
Region 7 Representative
Georgia Department of Community Affairs

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7. The Jewell House Events Venue
8. Chamber of Commerce Pancake Breakfast Kickoff Packs the House
9. Children Visiting Lone Branch Farm

Sparta Hancock Strategic Economic Development Plan for the Next Five Years

Table of Contents

Current Contributors to Economic Development in Hancock	5
About This Plan	7
Executive Summary	9
Demographics Overview	11-16
Impact on Regional Collaboration	17
Tourism Impact	18
Branding Recommendations	19
Recruiting New Businesses and Growth for Existing Businesses	22
Downtown Revitalization	35
Tourism in Hancock County	40
Quality of Life Issues	45
Communications and Marketing	49
Recruiting Industries	51
Implementing Recommendations	57
Plan Contributors	58
Healthy Hancock Improvement Partnership Summary	59

Contributors to Economic Development in Sparta and Hancock County

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City of Sparta

Mayor: William Evans, Jr.
Mayor Pro Tem: R. Allen Haywood
Council Member: James Clark
Council Member: John T. Roberts
Council Member: Sandra F. R. Sherrod

Board of Education

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Sparta Hancock County Economic Development

Sparta Hancock Community Group

About This Plan

This strategic plan is being presented to the citizens of Hancock County and the city of Sparta as a preliminary framework towards creating jobs, recruiting new businesses, growing existing businesses and improving the quality of life for all citizens in Hancock County.

As residents review this plan, we ask that they consider adopting a regional culture point of view. The southern half of Hancock County is considered a “mecca” relative to deer hunting. Worthy of consideration are the assets of the counties contiguous to Hancock County that can be consolidated into a regional approach to tourism, recruitment of new industries, expansion of existing firms, workforce training and development, and the like.

Currently these counties operate in individual silos, yet all suffer the same barriers to enhancing quality of life for their residents. Communities around the country that are improving their quality of life have adopted this regional lens as it relates to Economic Development, which focuses on education and workforce development. This plan is a first step in motivating all of us to adopt future steps toward this aim of regionalism.

This plan is a mere beginning of the planning process to be shared with citizens, businesses and elected officials of Hancock County and the city of Sparta. It is a framework for creating jobs, increasing our population and giving Hancock County and Sparta an economic edge and improved quality of life for all residents.

This plan is part aspiration with a balance of statistics and factual foundations. Our young people deserve the opportunity and choice to live, work and play in our community. And, if they choose to leave the immediate community, how has the region been enhanced to attract this younger generation?

This plan does not cover every aspect of economic development; subjects such as industrial recruitment, housing, public safety and education are all related to improving an economy. However, it does promote the first step of looking at the powerful impact of adopting a regionalism mindset by assessing this county’s impact as a combined region with Hancock/Baldwin County as the Micropolitan center. Micropolitans are urban core populations of less than 50,000 and more than 10,000 people.

It is our hope and recommendation that the appropriate officials in this county and city will begin the planning process of creating jobs and improving the quality of life for our citizens and businesses.

Executive Summary

This economic development strategic plan is a roadmap that is open to suggestions, changes and revisions. It simply means that during the journey toward economic recovery alternative routes may appear, based on changes in the environment.

This plan is based on several factors:

1. Leveraging the current business climate.
2. Helping local businesses by providing technical assistance aimed toward growth.
3. Creating jobs.
4. Recruiting new businesses that can be successful in Hancock County.

This plan recommends that the new Sparta-Hancock Chamber of Commerce manage economic initiatives and provide the necessary services for business development and recruitment. The Chamber's selection of the proven "Main Street Approach" to downtown development sets the tone for a return to a robust downtown. As Sparta seeks to create shopping options for local citizens and destinations for tourists and visitors, tourism will become a major player in establishing a Main Street. Such an initiative will bring economic rewards to the entire county.

This plan further recommends that the Chamber of Commerce enter into contracts with both the city and county. This contract will sanction the Chamber to handle economic development in most areas for the county and city. Recruiting major industries would become a shared arrangement with the Sparta-Hancock Development Authority. The Chamber will provide technical assistance to the Development Authority for recruiting new industries and acquiring the land to support industrial development activities.

Main Street, business growth and expansion and new business startups will be the major focus of the Chamber on behalf of the city and county governments. Business advocacy is an ongoing priority. A strong volunteer team and paid staff are noted among the strategies for accomplishing the plan goals.

It is further recommended that the Chamber launch a tourism and convention committee, get it operational and allow it to spin off as a separate Chamber function.

As outlined in the Strategic Plan, the Chamber will work with federal, state and local governments to put in place a Best in Class approach to economic development.

As mentioned above, the first order of business recommended is to contract with both the city and the county, followed up by seeking grants for each of the designated areas planned. This will allow the Chamber to give both the city and county time to provide their own funding for various tasks the Chamber will be conducting.

It is proposed that two projects set the tone for downtown development:

1. An anchor business for downtown, such as recruiting an upscale diner
2. A go-kart type racing track that is fully self-contained

These two items – attractions for children and adults – can signal to the public a willingness to grow. “Buy local” can become a local mantra. The use of a digital billboard can build public awareness of the plan’s accomplishments and success stories.

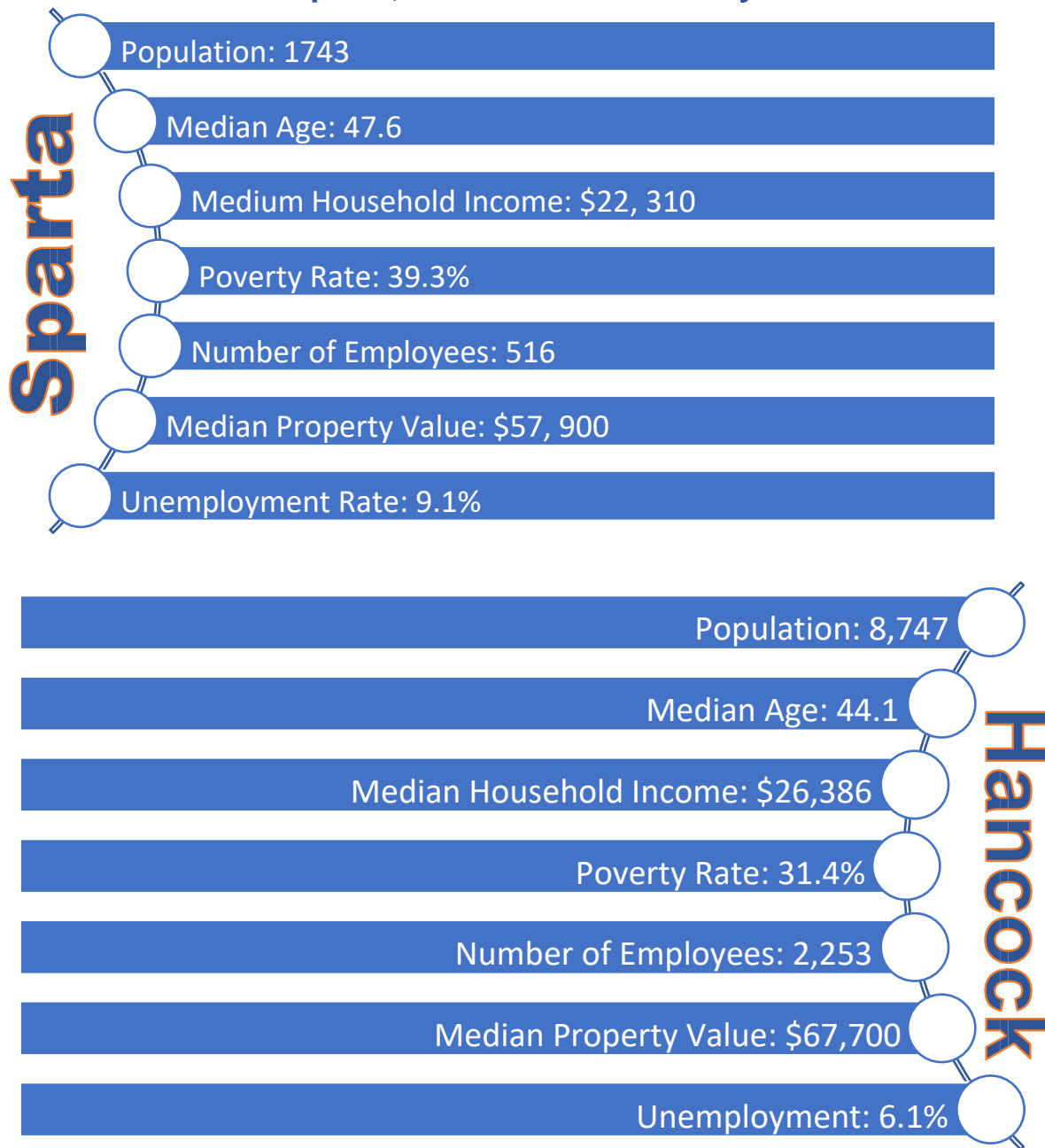
This plan encourages leadership to immediately address opportunities with African American-owned businesses in Hancock County. We must try to level the playing field of equal opportunity in Hancock County. The plan calls for training workshops and funding to assist budding entrepreneurs in order to increase the number of businesses overall.

This plan does not address housing; the Housing Authority operates according to its own directives. The Chamber is available to collaborate to ensure the Authority’s plans are parallel to the overall economic development plan.

The Hancock County education system could greatly benefit from a student workforce readiness program. These programs offer simulated work environments and STEM curriculums. Industries are attracted by a prepared workforce.

Demographic Overview

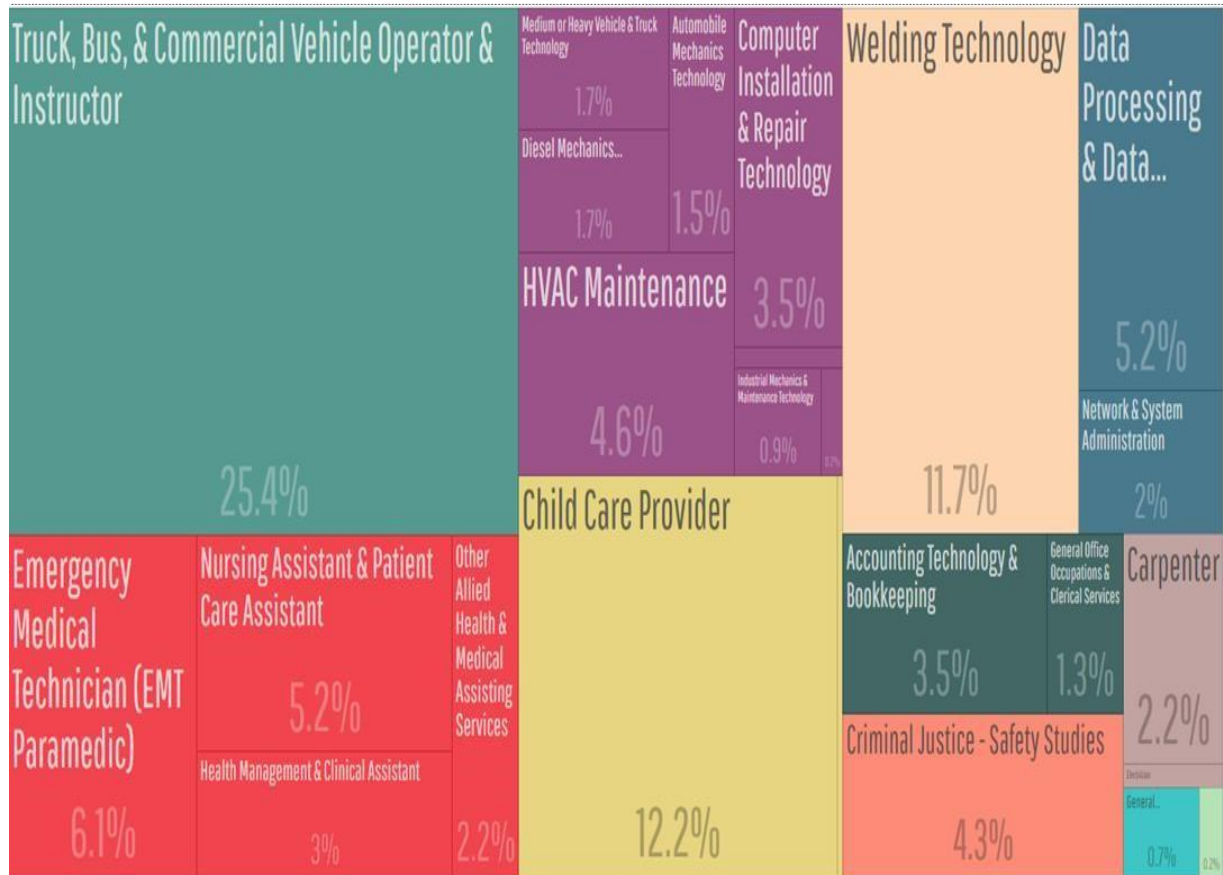
Sparta, Ga & Hancock County



Education Overview

1. In 2015 universities in Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (West & Outside Richmond & Columbia) PUMA, GA awarded 793 degrees.
2. The student population of Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (West & Outside Richmond & Columbia) PUMA, GA is skewed towards females, with 391 male students and 402 female students.
3. Most students in Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (West & Outside Richmond & Columbia) PUMA, GA are as follows:
4. White (409 and 51.6%), followed by Black or African American (361 and 45.5%), Hispanic or Latino (11 and 1.39%), and Asian (5 and 0.63%).
5. The largest universities in Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (West & Outside Richmond & Columbia) PUMA, GA by number of graduates are Oconee Fall Line Technical College (793).
6. The most popular majors in Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (West & Outside Richmond & Columbia) PUMA, GA are Truck, Bus, & Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor (117 and 14.8%), Child Care Provider (56 and 7.06%), and Welding Technology (54 and 6.81%).

Concentration of Careers Info Graphic



SURROUNDING COUNTY STATISTICS

Unemployment Statistics

- Taliaferro: 5.6%
- Warren: 5.1%
- Wilkes: 5.1%
- Putnam: 5.0%
- Jefferson: 4.9%
- Washington: 4.9%
- Baldwin: 4.7%
- Green: 4.4%
- Wilkinson: 4.4%
- Glascock: 3.6%
- Morgan 3.3%

Population

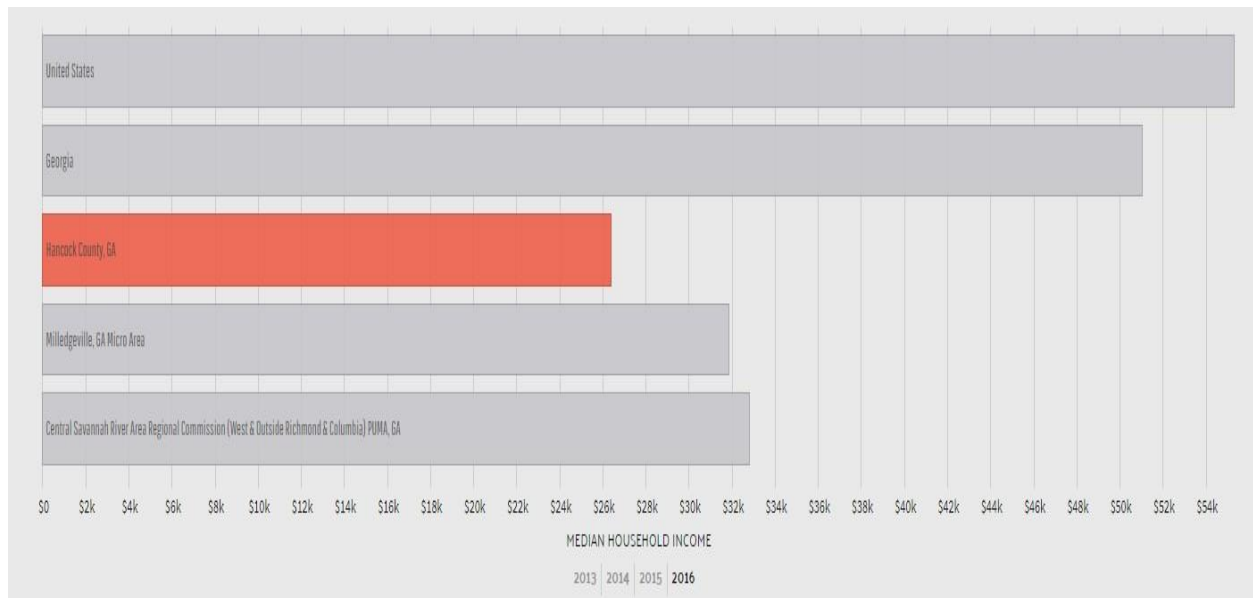
- Baldwin: 45,808
- Washington: 20,680
- Putnam: 21,259
- Morgan: 17,943
- Greene: 16,535
- Jefferson: 16,201
- Wilkes: 9,924
- Wilkson: 9,312
- Warren: 5,504
- Glascock: 3,053
- Taliaferro: 1,904
- TOTAL: 173,627

- **Hancock: 8,747
- **Total Micropolitan Area Population: 182,374**

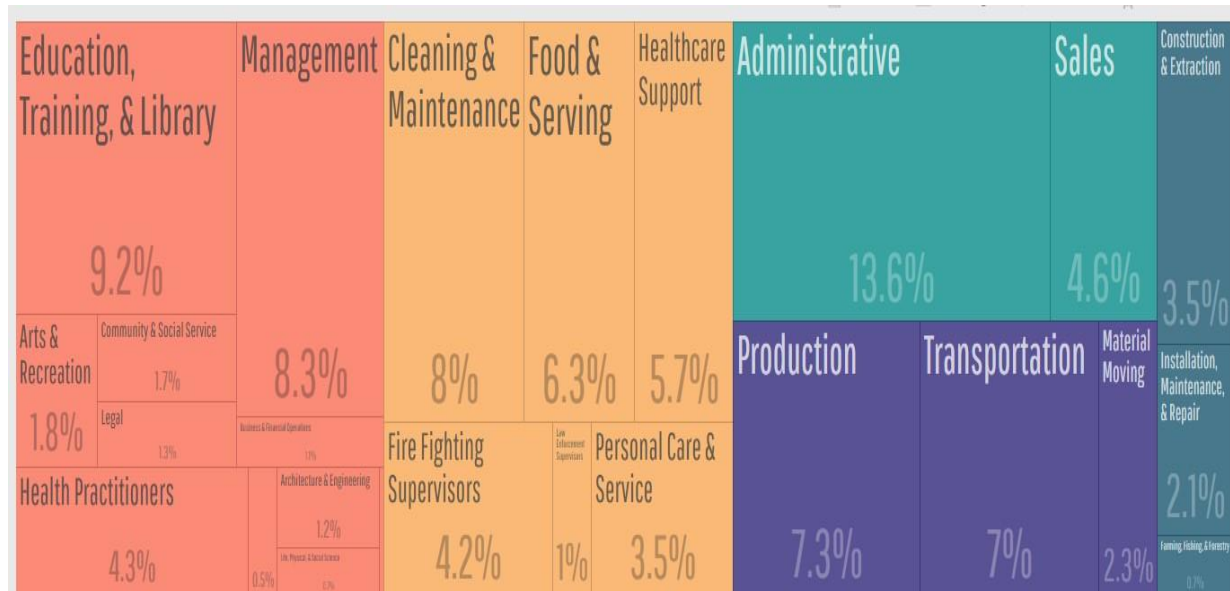


Workforce Strengths

Key workforce strengths are that wages are relatively the lowest in Georgia and in comparison, to the surrounding economic development district of the Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission as well as in comparison to the largest Micro City of Milledgeville. This makes Hancock County and the contiguous counties attractive to industries such as call centers and light manufacturing.



Employment by Occupation – Hancock County



Impact on Regional Collaboration

Adopting a “Regionalism” economic development philosophy from a perspective of Hancock County would allow the County to leverage the current job training and educational infrastructure that is outputting people into trucking, welding, healthcare and administrative workers.

A regional approach would allow other economic development agencies, elected officials and education institutions to chart additional industries that could be added to Hancock County without creating new programs. These would be industries that are lateral to current job training initiatives, such as call centers, senior-assisted living facilities, data centers and light manufacturing. For example, manufacturing plants would favor this area’s number of welding graduates.

Tourism Impact

Hunters realize that the Southern half of Hancock County is a deer and buck haven. Leveraging this would be a boom to the region but one that would require a regional approach so that one county is not overused versus another.

Proper studies, research, and management need to occur to ensure stability of the deer population. The impact of hunting could potentially be another economic impact driver for the region. Hancock County was one of the leaders in hunting results in Georgia, second only to Burke County from 2017-2018.

County	Male	Female	Total	Archery	Firearm	Muzzleloader
Hancock	1359	1738	3097	217	2724	156

Branding Recommendation for Hancock County and Sparta

Big Question: Who Are We?

The Answer:

“Taller Than a Georgia Pine”

Could this be our Brand?

I am recommending that we consider “Taller Than a Georgia Pine” as the Brand for Sparta and Hancock County. Most of the land in Hancock County is covered in Pine Trees. Our largest festival is the Pine Tree Festival and that has been the case for nearly 30 years.

Many companies and businesses make a profit growing pine trees in Hancock County. My research clearly shows that branding is always better when you have an infrastructure to support your brand.

The following article is my justification for recommending this brand.

Did you know pine trees can be used as food, medicine and survival equipment?

Natural News

Wednesday, January 21, 2015 by Daniel Barker

The pine is one of the most useful trees on the planet, providing food, shelter, medicine and fuel. Knowing how to utilize this versatile resource could someday be the key to your very survival if you find yourself alone in the wilderness.

There are many species in the pine family (or genus *Pinus*), and they can be found virtually everywhere in the world.

Here are just a few of the many uses for pine trees (or conifers):

Food:

Many types of pine needles can be used to make a tea rich in vitamin C. Simply steep a handful of needles for 5-10 minutes. The longer you steep them, the less vitamins will remain, so don't overdo it.

It's important to note that some pine needles are poisonous -- be sure to avoid consuming the needles from the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*), the Yew (*Taxus*) and the Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa* -- also known as Western Yellow Pine, Bull Pine and Blackjack Pine). Make sure to learn the differences between the edible and non-edible varieties before making pine needle tea.

Pine nuts from all varieties of pine are edible, although some are small and not typically harvested. They can be a little tricky to harvest and perish quickly once they are shelled but can be stored longer if left in their shells or roasted.

Inner pine bark and pine resin are edible; male pinecones and their pollen can also be eaten. Native Americans chewed pine resin as sort of a natural chewing gum. The inner bark of large pine trees is edible, and the bark from young pine twigs can be eaten as well. Be careful not to damage or kill a pine tree by tearing off too much bark, and never "ring" the bark from a pine tree.

Instead, tear off small pieces of bark or look for branches that have already fallen. The inner bark can be eaten raw -- it can also be boiled, fried or cooked over a flame.

Medicine:

Pine resin is a natural antiseptic and disinfectant. It also has antimicrobial and antifungal properties. It can be directly applied to wounds or sores and helps keep germs out. Pine resin can also be used to staunch the flow of blood.

The resin can also be used to extract splinters -- just dab some on the skin where the splinter is embedded and within a day or two the splinter should come out on its own.

Fuel:

Pine resin makes a great fire starter, particularly in damp settings. You can usually find a spot on a pine tree where resin is oozing out from a break in the bark -- try not to injure the tree to collect pine resin, but if necessary, make a small break in the bark or break a branch. The resin will begin to ooze out as protection for the tree.

If you are in an area where there are pine stumps, look for places on the stump where resin has soaked the wood and made it sticky. Tear small strips of the stickiest wood from the stump and save them as aids for starting fires.

Shelter:

Pine boughs can be used to create shelter, and pine needles can be used to make a soft, warm and dry bed.

Waterproofing and other uses:

Pine resin can be used as a waterproofing agent and works well on tent seams, boots and mittens.

Heat pine resin up and mix with ashes or charcoal from your campfire to make glue. Once cooled, the glue will harden but can be easily heated up again when it is needed.

Sources: <http://prepforshftf.com>

1. Recruiting New Businesses and Growth of Existing Businesses

WHY A “GROW YOUR OWN” STRATEGY?

There are differing opinions about the economic value of using incentives, a core piece of the traditional model. State governments spend an estimated \$50 billion each year on economic development incentives with limited evidence that the practice is effective. Research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City suggests that focusing on the growth of existing small businesses and entrepreneurs can be a more productive and cost-effective strategy than recruitment of new businesses.

Executive Summary of Business Growth and Expansion Goals

1. Identify potential businesses and locations desiring assistance
2. Conduct business feedback sessions and assessments
3. Manage and maximize business incentives, grants, loans and investors
4. Conduct available business facility inventory
5. Utilize the Chamber as the local business advocate
6. Identify unrestricted business funding
7. Enhance the agriculture business industry
8. Fund staffing for Business Development Office

Business Growth Objectives

1. Cultivate a “barn-raising” mindset
2. Look for underserved markets
3. Tap into social media

4. Invest in your community
5. Grow your rural businesses through e-commerce

Small businesses that succeed in rural communities like Hancock

1. Coffee Shop and Bar

When you think of your neighborhood coffee shop and bar, you might not think of the same establishment. But if your town is small enough, and clientele scarce, merging these two business ideas might be just what the mayor ordered.

Now, before you go telling us that combining after school 12-year-olds and college 21-year-olds is a terrible idea, hear us out. We're not suggesting a full-on bar, simply a coffee shop that after 4 pm also serves wine and beer. The concept behind being a coffee shop that serves alcohol is that in the post-noon hours, coffee consumption begins to taper off significantly. If you're looking to stay open later and need the cash, filling an additional need in your small community is the perfect business idea. Now you not only have a place for business meetings and freelancers, but also happy hours and first dates.

One additional thing to keep in mind is to make sure that your coffee shop design appeals to both a mid-day and a post-work crowd. Nothing says small town charm like a simple, relaxed business layout. Opting for a design concept that is genuine and modest will suit most customers and provide that small-town ambiance patrons crave.

2. Pet Grooming and Boarding

Pet businesses are a \$60 billion industry in the United States, so it just plain makes sense that a small town has at least one pet grooming or boarding facility or a combination of the two. The pet industry is also one that shows no signs of slowing down. In 1988, 56 percent of households in the United States owned a pet, in 2016 that percentage jumped to 65. This means that there are almost 80 million households in the U.S. with at least one pet.

Pet grooming and boarding are also businesses where convenience and distance matter, making them perfect ideas for rural businesses. No one wants to drive two towns over to drop their pet off for a trim, nor drive back to pick them up. Since most small towns don't have a pet specialty chain such as a Petco, businesses can also capitalize on the lack of a major pet store where owners would usually purchase food, toys, and clothing for their pets. If you plan your business well, you can become the one-stop shop for all things furry and that translates to big profits.

3. Clothing Boutique

One of the primary amenities that small towns tend to lack is decent shopping. And we don't just mean a large shopping mall. Often, those living in smaller towns and communities must drive significant mileage just for basic clothing necessities. That's why starting a clothing boutique will not only put you on the map but will make you a popular destination for most residents in the vicinity.

4. Vape Shop

Though this might seem like a very niche market for a small-town business, the reality is that the vaping industry (and community) is currently exploding in the U.S. To give you a sense of how big the vaping market is, Quartz reported that Yelp has 10,591 "vape shops" currently listed in their database. That's a huge number, especially considering that the rate of traditional smoking continues to steadily decline. Depending on where you are in the country, however, due to state regulations, opening a vape shop will be easier in some states than in others. So, make sure to check out your state's laws before pursuing this business idea. Resources such as Vape Mentors can also help guide you when getting your business up and running.

5. Bakery

From your morning coffee to your kid's birthday cake, neighborhood bakeries can fill a vast number of small-town needs. Though owning and operating a bakery is hard work, if it's your life-long dream to produce pastries for the masses, it's a business idea that can be incredibly rewarding. Employing youth from your town is also a great way to give back and stay connected to your community. If you're a newbie to owning a business in a small town, doing research on opening a successful bakery is extremely important.

6. Grocery Store/Specialty Food Shop

Maybe this is an obvious choice for a small-town business opportunity, but sometimes the obvious answers are the most overlooked. Though a grocery store might not sound like the sexiest business choice, it is one of our most practical recommendations and one that your whole town is guaranteed to need. Like many small-town business ideas, there are many directions you can take this business in. Perhaps your town already has a local grocery store, in that case, opening a specialty food shop might be the right call. If your town already has that as well, what about a wine or cheese shop? Though you might be thinking, "how much wine or cheese can one small town consume?" Remember, when

serving a small community, options are limited, which can open an opportunity for you to serve residents in more ways than one. Consider opening a wine and cheese shop combination. Just make sure not to bite off more than you can chew. Being a few things to a few people is ok, but don't try to be everything to everyone.

7. Lawn and Gardening Service

One thing that most small towns have in common is grass, lots, and lots of grass. Since small towns tend to be in rural areas, more residents are likely to have lawns and larger gardens. That means people will be on the hunt for lawn and gardening services. A few of the benefits to starting a business such as this in a small town is its predictability, reliability and scalability. Once you begin finding customers, if you have quality services that are reasonably priced, you're likely to keep the same customers for years. You'll also be able to predict the repeat services that customers will need. Not only does grass need to be cut repeatedly, but lawns need to be fertilized and treated for weeds and bugs on a regular basis. Lawn care is also an ideal small-town business idea that will scale well. You can start off by offering a few services such as lawn and shrubbery care but can later expand to offering landscaping services as well.

8. Food Trucks

Opening a taco or food truck might not have been first on your list of ideas for a successful small-town business, but depending on the location of your town, the seasonality of its residents, and the weather, starting a food truck business can be a great investment. Many small towns have vibrant communities, and often these include outdoor activities such as sporting events, festivals, and markets. Having the ability to drive your business to where the crowds are means major cash in your pocket. Food trucks also have the added benefit that they can be rented for special events. So, for a small town that might lack a proper catering service, being able to hire a food truck for a special event can be a perfect local option.

9. Thrift Shop

Yes, there might be fewer people in a small town, or fewer stores and shops, but that doesn't mean that babies don't grow out of their onesies, people don't buy new furniture and kids don't move off to college. Fewer people doesn't always mean less stuff. So, opening a secondhand store or thrift shop is a great way to help the people of your town recycle unwanted items while giving those that might not have as much a less expensive shopping option. One reason why opening a thrift store in a small town is a great idea, is

that much of the merchandise you sell you will receive via donations. This does present logistics to think about regarding how to regulate and keep track of inventory, but it also means that even though you sell items for less than a traditional store, you'll never owe money to a middleman or manufacturer.

10. Tutoring Service

Though the internet abounds with online tutoring services, nothing can ever replace the benefits of having an in-person teacher. In addition to be a great business idea for small towns, tutoring can also be a profitable business for both yourself and those working for you. If you are looking to hire employees, we recommend starting with a few tutors that specialize in math, reading, writing, and science. Don't attempt to hire tutors that brand themselves as a jack of all subjects, those individuals are few and far between and most likely would be too expensive for you to employ from the start. Instead, look for tutors that specialize in one subject and have previous tutoring or teaching experience.

11. Car Wash

If there isn't a car wash in your town already, opening a car wash might be your perfect small-town business opportunity. One thing to think about before getting started: location, location, location. Nail this stage of the planning and you'll make the rest of your ride significantly easier.

12. Gym/Exercise Studio

If you think that starting a gym in a tiny town is a bad idea, think again. Just as the physical body comes in many different shapes and sizes, so do gyms and exercise studios. Though fitness businesses are great small-town business opportunities, they are especially lucrative for locations where the weather is colder more months out of the year than not. It's also worth mentioning that the boutique fitness trend is red-hot now and shows no signs of dying down. The appeal of massive gyms with rows and rows of weights and cardio equipment is losing popularity. So, there is no better time than now to capitalize on the boutique fitness trend.

13. Restaurant

Every town, big or small, needs (and deserves) a few good restaurants. Your local pizza castle won't suffice for all occasions and events. But much like owning a bakery, opening a restaurant is not something to go into halfheartedly. You need to have the passion, the

drive, and the obsession of both a great entrepreneur and a chef (or at least a hard-core foodie).

If you have that drive and experience, however, being a restaurateur can be a successful endeavor and a great business for a small town. Just be aware that as glamorous as it might seem from the outside, one-quarter of all restaurants will fail within the first year. Doing your market research prior to opening and investing in technology such as a restaurant POS system, can help you ensure your business' success.

14. Sports Bar

Though we already suggested a wine bar/coffee shop combo above, the clientele you'll attract for that small-town business idea versus this one is significantly different. Think first dates and book clubs versus Super Bowl Sunday and Monday Night Football. Speaking of which, special events for sports games can drum up major business. Opening a successful sports bar in a sports-centric town can be a great investment. But if you miscalculate the interests of your town, it can also be disastrous. So, make sure you know the personality of the community going into this venture.

15. Specialty Health Food/Organic Food

There is one trend that has been sweeping the country for the better part of two decades: health food. Though what is considered healthy food has shifted and changed frequently over this period, the general concept of eating healthier to live longer and look your best is not going anywhere. One facet of this trend that has scientifically proven benefits is eating organic food. People eat organic for a variety of reason but living in rural areas and small towns can often make it difficult to find fresh organic produce and food. Global sales of health food are expected to reach \$1 trillion by 2017. Whether or not you consider yourself a health nut, that's a hard number to ignore. Research also shows that consumers are willing to spend more for healthy food. So, if access to allergen-free and organic food is limited in your area, consider going the organic route. Small town business idea, large town business idea, a health food store is a good idea wherever you reside.

16. Hair Salon/Barber Shop

It's one service, that regardless of your age, most people need a few (if not a few dozen) times a year. If you're currently calculating the average number of women in your town and multiplying it by three, thinking that is the amount of business you will drum up yearly, you're thinking too narrowly. Opening your own hair salon has a variety of additional services that go far beyond haircuts. Think coloring, nails, and makeup, just to

name a few. And remember, men tend to get their hair cut at least once a month. And, if you're covering up that gray, every six weeks sounds about right. Just make sure you have a solid business plan before opening your small-town shop.

17. Ice Cream Shop

Opening an ice cream shop in a small town is a business idea guaranteed to draw a crowd. Knowing your product, being familiar with the most popular ice cream flavors, and having a willingness to work nights and weekends are all important factors to consider. Just remember, this business comes with the challenges of seasonality. So, as we recommended boutique fitness businesses as great for cold weather climates, we are recommending ice cream shops for areas that are warmer. Find the perfect town with the perfect weather and this small-town business idea is a no-brainer.

18. Home Improvement

Are you the one all your friends call when their sink is clogged, or their roof is leaking? Are you looking to start your own business but not thrilled about having a brick-and-mortar location? A home improvement business might be just the small-town business idea you're looking for. When small towns lack a basic handyman, residents must book appointments days, if not weeks in advance to have a larger service visit their home. That's not so convenient if your toilet has been clogged for three days. If you are qualified, have the experience, and know your way around a tool shed, starting a handyman business is straightforward and requires little overhead.

19. Gift Card Shop

Americans purchase on average 6.5 billion greeting cards each year. While sales are estimated between \$7 and \$8 billion annually, according to the Greeting Card Association, many of these cards are now purchased in big box stores, such as Target and Walmart. Those living in small towns often don't have access to these types of stores, at least not in their immediate vicinity. Providing the people of your town with a place to not only purchase cards but gifts as well is a prime retail opportunity. The variety and diversity of products you can carry are endless, which allows you the freedom to play around with your inventory until you find that special mix of products for your small-town business.

20. Flower Shop

It might surprise you but opening a flower shop is an inexpensive business idea and great for small towns. That is, less expensive than say a restaurant or a car wash. According to openflowershop.com, starting a flower shop has relatively few costs compared to other retail businesses. One of the only costs you will be faced with is the purchase of a cooler to keep your product (aka pretty flowers) fresh and cool.

Though your local community will be thrilled to have fresh flowers in their town, you will still have the struggle of competing against online delivery services. Remember, if you are the first florist the town has ever seen (or at least for a while), they are probably used to ordering online. Habits can be hard to break. The best way to compete with the online sea of flora is with reasonable prices, attention to detail, customer service, and a sprig of creativity.

21. Cleaning Service

Like a handyman service, a cleaning service is also a solid business idea for small towns. That is if you are looking to forgo a storefront. Though it's becoming increasingly popular these days for customers looking for cleaning services to use larger companies or startups, often services such as these either haven't expanded into rural areas or don't have contract workers willing to travel to more remote towns. This might be frustrating for those seeking a sparkling kitchen, but it's a massive business opportunity for you! It's also one of the easiest businesses to start with very little, if any, overhead.

22. Bookstore

Bookshops might now be different and resemble little of what most of us remember from childhood, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. If anything, the need for bookstore owners to create new and innovative ways to succeed has opened a plethora of additional business opportunities. And aren't that what small towns are all about, creating opportunity and coming up with creative ways to provide the most options for their communities?

Of course, if you decide to open a bookstore as your small-town business, you'll want to make sure that the focus is books. But that doesn't mean you can't incorporate other aspects of your community or additional products into your store. It's rare nowadays to go into a bookstore just for books. They're now a prime destination for gifts, crafts, e-readers, coffee, and events. Selling a variety of merchandise and holding events will diversify your revenue stream and bring additional customers into your store, those that traditionally might not be the paper book type.

It also might surprise you that though there are far fewer bookstores around these days, sales at bookstores that have weathered the storm are up five percent. Though it is partially due to less competition, it is also that the opportunity to reinvent bookstores for the 21st century has proved lucrative.

23. Electronics Dealer

If you're looking to do something a little bit off the beaten path, now's the time. How about trying your hand as an electronics dealer specializing in drones and drone accessories? If this sounds a little too off the straight and narrow, trust us, it's worth a go. The commercial drone market is predicted to grow to over \$1 billion by 2022. That's a massive market and you can get in early and be a disruptor. Looking for an out-of-the box small town business idea? This is it!

24. Bed and Breakfast

If you have ever lived in a small town and entertained houseguests, you've probably often wished that your town had a bed and breakfast. Though small towns with a tourism industry will often have historical inns or at least a motel or two, towns that aren't exactly Plymouth, MA or Williamsburg, VA often go without. That means no place for the in-laws to stay or guests for a family reunion or wedding. Opening a small inn or bed and breakfast can help fill a need in your area. If you're worried about being able to keep your rooms booked, go small. Bed and breakfast owners tend to live in the same homes they manage, often converting their larger homes into B&Bs. This is a great idea for those who have recently become empty nesters with too many rooms to fill. If you're later in life and looking for business ideas for small towns, this concept is a great one to explore.

25. Bowling Alley

Though not the cheapest of business ideas on this list, it's one that can be extremely lucrative as well as appeal to the widest range of patrons in a small town. A successful bowling alley can become the center of a town's social life. Besides the obvious bowling revenue stream, food and drink (especially alcoholic beverages), can also help you pull in the big bucks. Small town bowling alleys can also be rented out for additional income. Like all businesses, large and small, having a quality business plan for your bowling alley is incredibly important.

26. Microbrewery

Even if it might seem like a saturated industry, the reality is that even though microbreweries are opening at a rate of two breweries per day, it's just not enough for the demand the industry is seeing. So, if you've been hesitant to follow your passion, let us just put this out there that this is the time to tap into a business industry that is perfect for a small town.

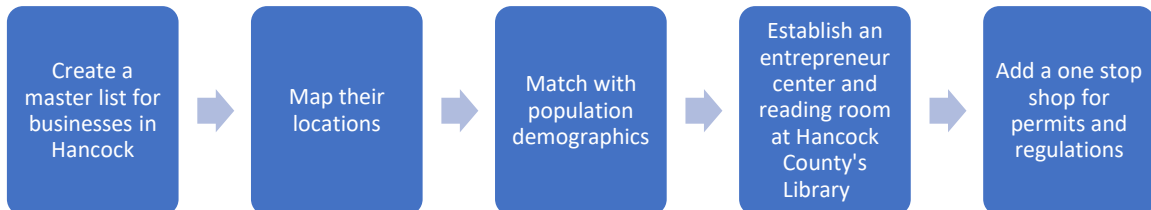
27. Massage Therapist

Just because you don't have the hustle and bustle of the big city breathing down your neck, doesn't mean small town residents don't have aches and pains and plenty of stress. If you're a people person that likes working with their hands and meeting new people, this could be a great career and business idea for a small town. Massage therapy does, however, require a significant amount of training, so it's not a business you're going to be able to open in the next few weeks unless you are already a licensed massage therapist. There are, however, a variety of schools and programs you can enroll in to become licensed. Once your training is complete, being a massage therapist allows you to set your own hours, work when and where you like, and develop a strong repeat customer base.

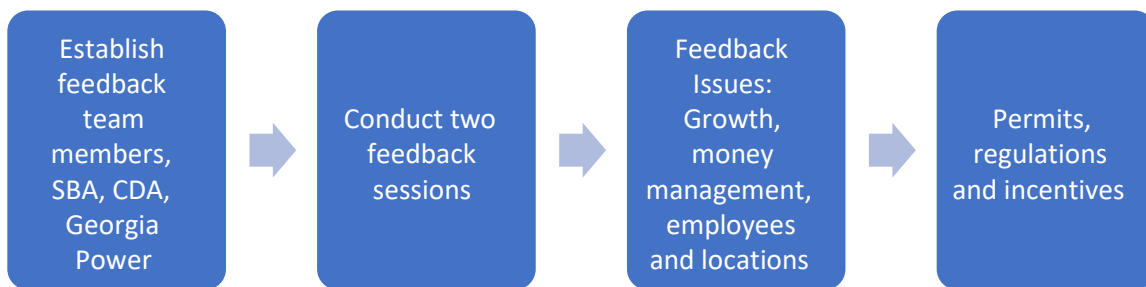
More Potential Short-Term Businesses to Consider

1. Bed and Breakfasts
2. Diner/Café
3. Slaughterhouse/Butcher Facility and Stockyard
4. Auto Maintenance
5. Flea Market and Farmers Market
6. Pet Grooming and Supplies
7. Bakery and Sweet Shop
8. Gym/Exercise studio
9. Bee Keeping and Production
10. Cattle and Pork Production
11. The Oasis Farm's rare and unique bird raising facility
12. Food Trucks
13. Bonded warehouse and distribution center

Strategies: Goal 1 – Identify Potential Businesses



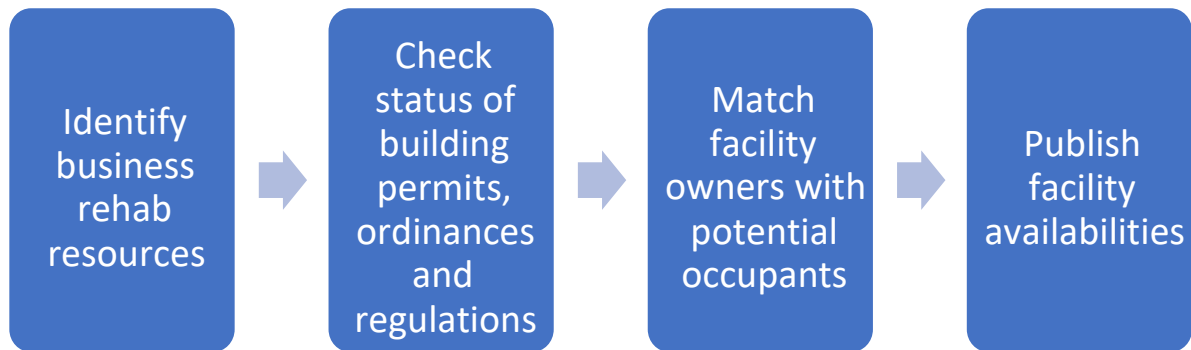
Strategies: Goal 2 - Feedback Sessions



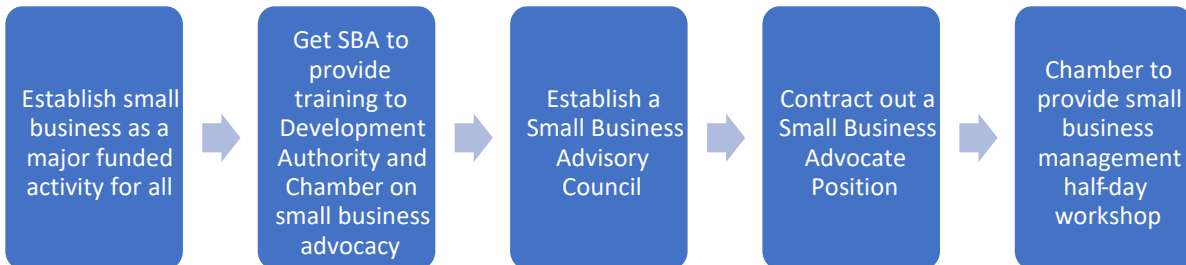
Strategies: Goal 3 – Loans, grants and incentives



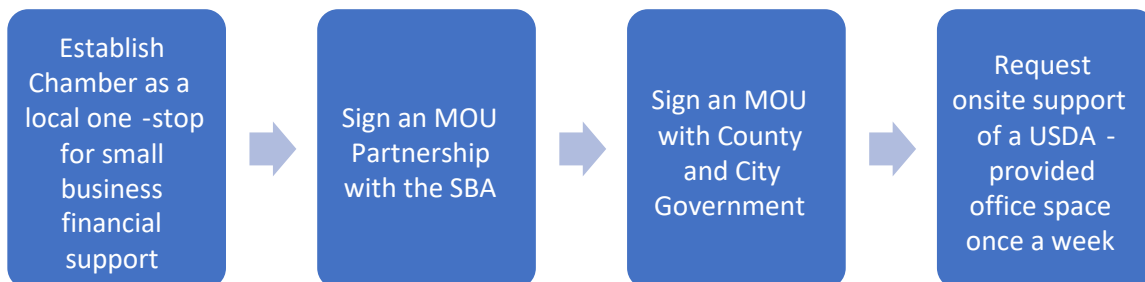
Strategies: Goal 4 - Business Facility Inventory



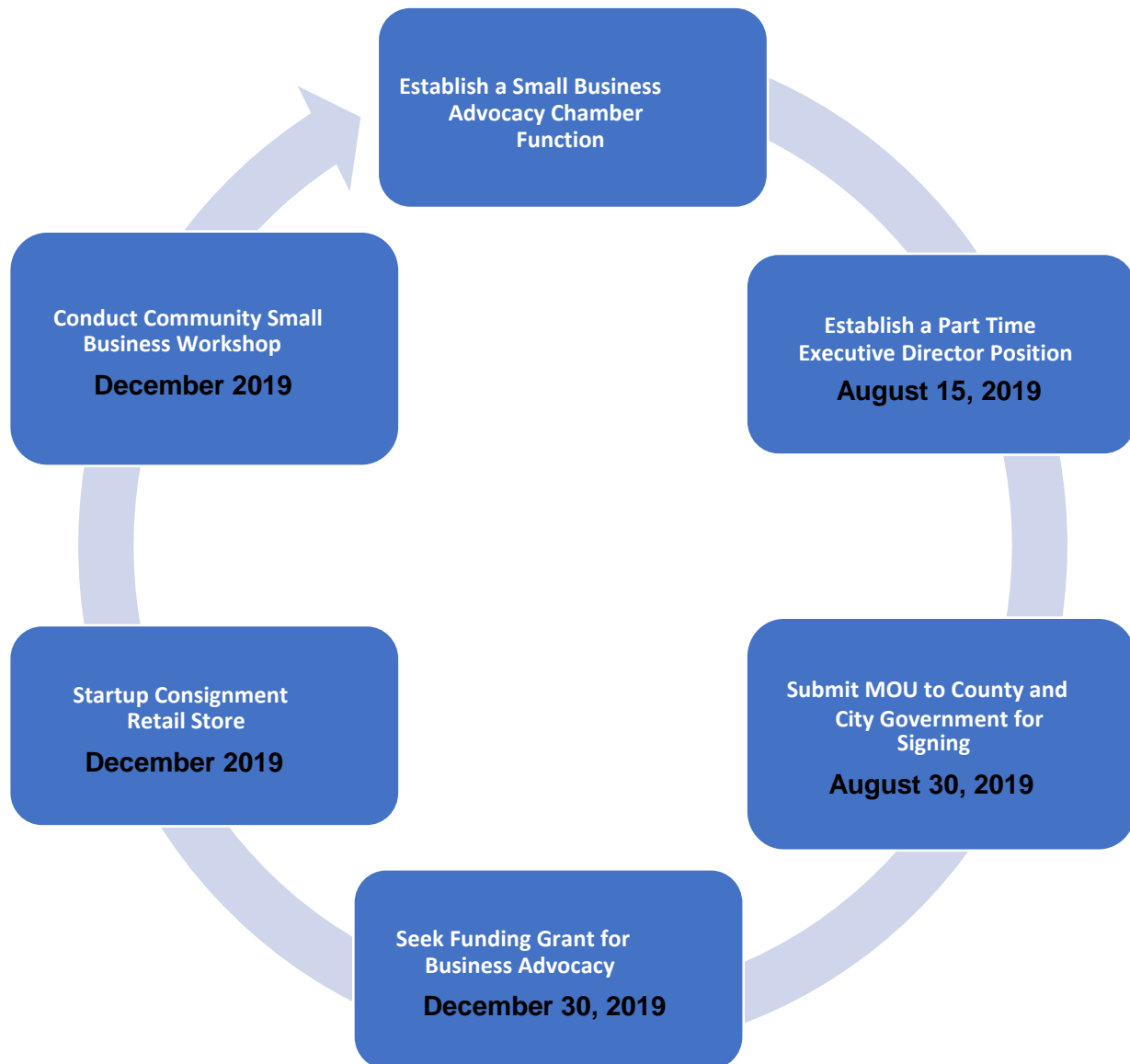
Strategies: Goal 5 - Chamber Business Advocate



Strategies: Goal 6 - Identify Unrestricted Funding



Action Plan and Timeline



2. Sparta Downtown Revitalization



Helen, Ga., built tourism around its Swiss-style architecture theme.

Considerations

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Review successes in other rural city downtown development | 1. Create a marketplace |
| 2. Meet and explore with store front owners | 2. Hold a Flea Market |
| 3. Focus on what you already have | 3. Make your downtown family friendly and entertaining |
| 4. Design a cost-effective new look for downtown | 4. Business incubator space |
| 5. Encourage more apartments and housing near downtown | 5. Downtown park with waterspouts |
| | 6. Food truck alley |
| 6. Be unique, creative and out-of-the-box | 7. Classic movie house and history museum |

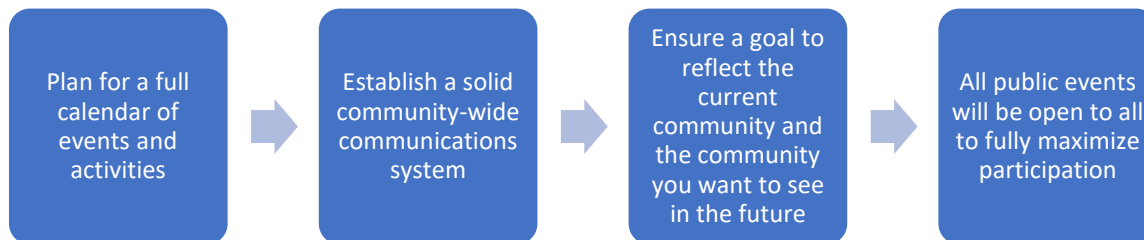
Goals for Downtown Revitalization

1. Seek a Mainstreet designation point
1. Build a downtown financial director position incentive package: Loans, grants and tax incentives
2. Increase foot traffic downtown
3. Streamline business and building permit process
4. Open an anchor business like a classy diner
5. Utilize the incubator approach
6. Develop a marketing plan

Goal 1: Strategy - Establish a Main Street Director Position



Goal 2: Strategy-Increase foot traffic downtown



Goal 3: Strategy - Open an Anchor Business



Goal 4: Strategy - Downtown Financial Incentive Package



Goal 5: Strategy-Streamline Business and Building Permit Processes



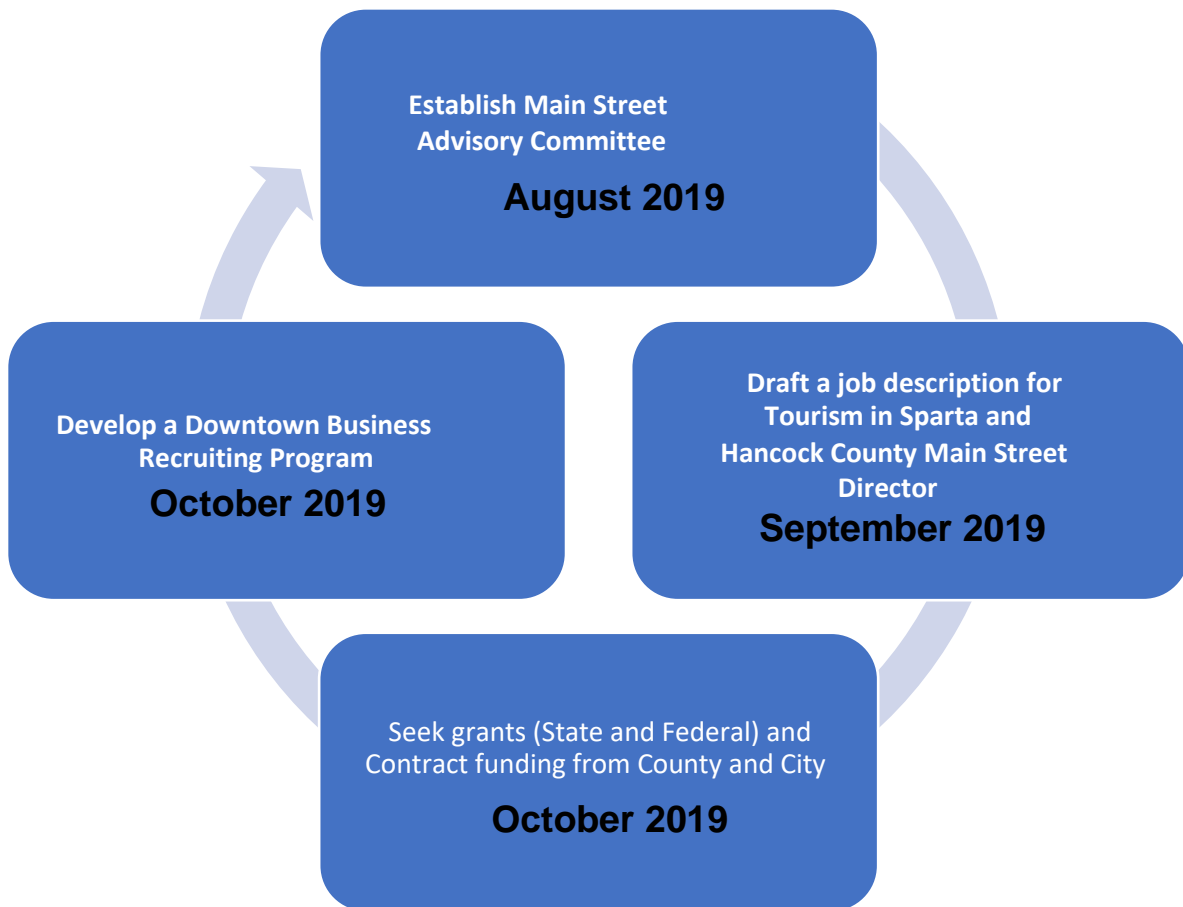
Goal 6: Strategy - Utilize the Incubator Approach



Goal 7: Strategy-Marketing Plan



ACTION AND TIMELINE



3. Tourism in Hancock County

Tourism is an important economic development tool

1. It generates income and creates jobs.
2. If done right, it can be a major source of income for an entire City or County.
3. Tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth. It currently provides for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide.

Heritage Tourism is one of the anchors for economic development for Sparta and Hancock County.

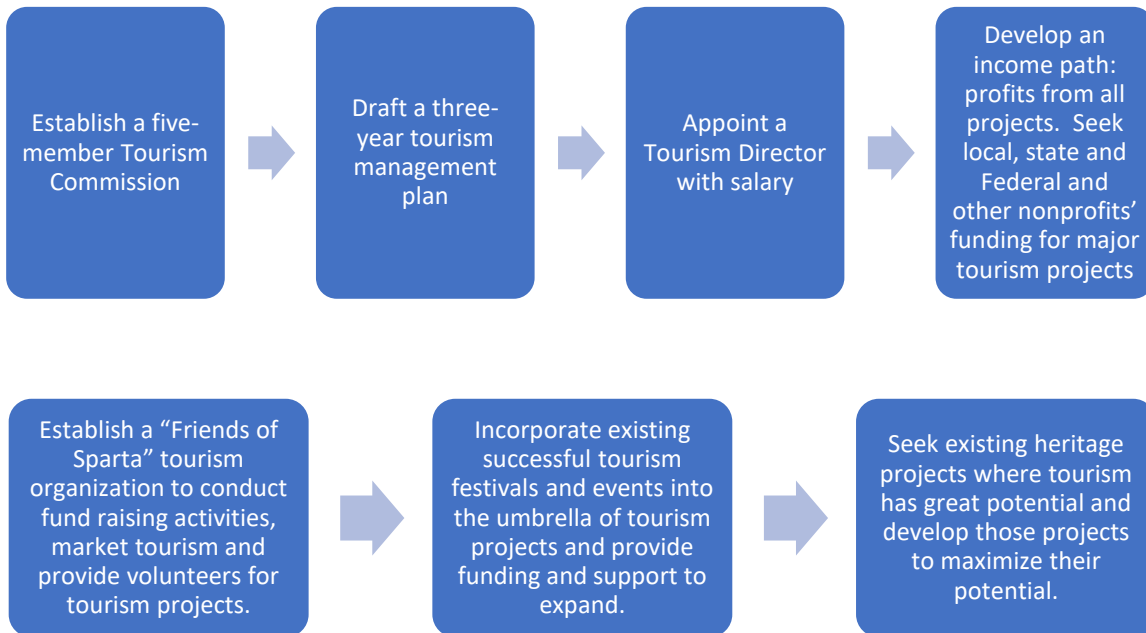
Tourism Program Goals for Sparta and Hancock County

1. Establish a Sustainable Development base for tourism while minimizing cost.
2. Seek ways to expand and grow existing tourism opportunities and locations (e.g., guided and self-guided tours, outdoor movies, plays, street performances, tourism material as well as storytelling with knowledgeable volunteers.
3. Seek ways to blend new technologies such as holograms, video games, Facebook, Instagram, etc. to make heritage exciting and educational.
4. Use the abundance of pine trees to create the largest Pine Tree Maze Challenge and Pine Tree trails or highly publicized scavenger hunts.
5. Incorporate resources such as the 4-H Club and other agricultural-related groups.
6. Develop a tourism marketing plan that includes broadcast, print and social media to accomplish plan goals.

Existing Tourism Opportunities in Sparta and Hancock County

1. The Amanda Dickson Story
2. The visit by General Lafayette
3. Shoulderbone Indian Mounds-The Lamar Culture
4. Hancock Grist Mills (Ogeechee and Mill More Grist Mills)
5. Tour of Historic Homes
6. The John McCown Era and the Mayfield Community
7. Reenactment of Public Duel Downtown Sparta
8. Edith Ingram Day
9. Church Tour
10. Courson's Winery
11. "Half House" Story and Tour
12. Hubert Family Community
13. Oasis Farm Experience
14. Jewel House "The Wedding Place"
15. Motor Cross and other sports events
16. Art in Sparta
17. Family Reunions in Hancock County

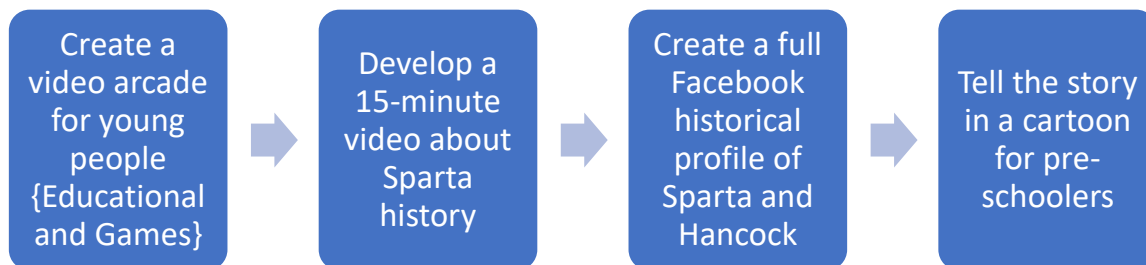
Goal 1: Strategy



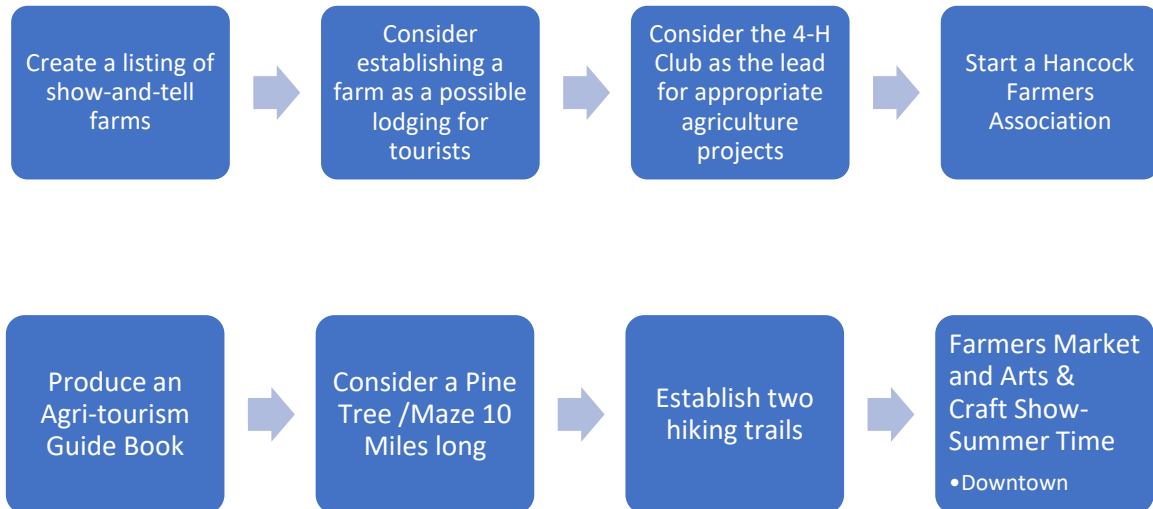
Goal 2: Strategy



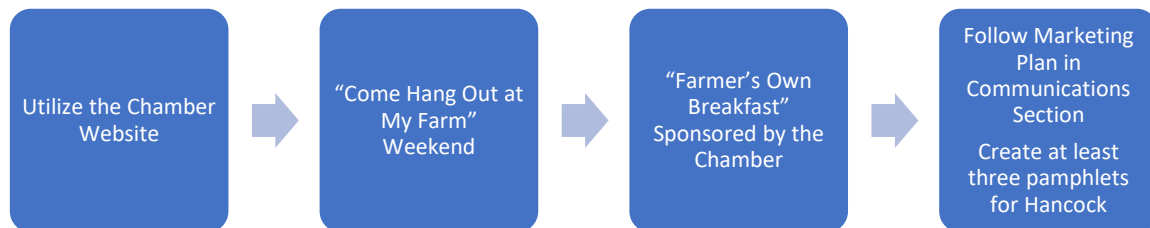
Goal 3: Strategy Use of Technology



Goal 4: Strategy- Agriculture



Goal 5: Strategy- Tourism Marketing Plan



ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE



4. Quality of Life Issues (Parks, Recreation, Youth & Adult Entertainment)

Approach

1. Parks, recreational facilities, health centers, festivals and amenities, such as walking trails, contribute positively to a community's economy.
2. They increase the value of nearby properties, thereby raising property tax collections.
3. This directly benefits entities funded by property taxes such as school districts.
4. They improve a community's capacity to attract and retain sought-after companies and people.
5. Amenities attract desirable jobs, residents and tourism - particularly valuable to Georgia communities that depend on income tax revenue.

Scope of Initiative

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Students | 6. Parks and activity facilities |
| 2. Lakefronts | 7. Adults |
| 3. Young adults | 8. Health care centers |
| 4. Senior Citizens' Centers | 9. K-12 Education (public, private and home school) |
| 5. Senior Citizens | |

Considerations

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Best-In-Class goals | 9. Results count |
| 2. Youth and adult activities: Festivals and entertainment | 10. Inventory of Quality of Life |
| 3. Cost-effective and unique, out-of-the-box events | 11. Quality of Life Coverage Facilities |
| 4. Use of facilities | 12. Education |
| 5. Health care is a necessity | 13. Skating rink facility |
| 6. Leadership | 14. Parks and recreational facilities |
| 7. Developing pride in your town | 15. Senior Citizens Center |
| 8. Skilled workforce | 16. Health care and hospitals |
| | 17. Ball Park |
| | 18. Recreation Park |

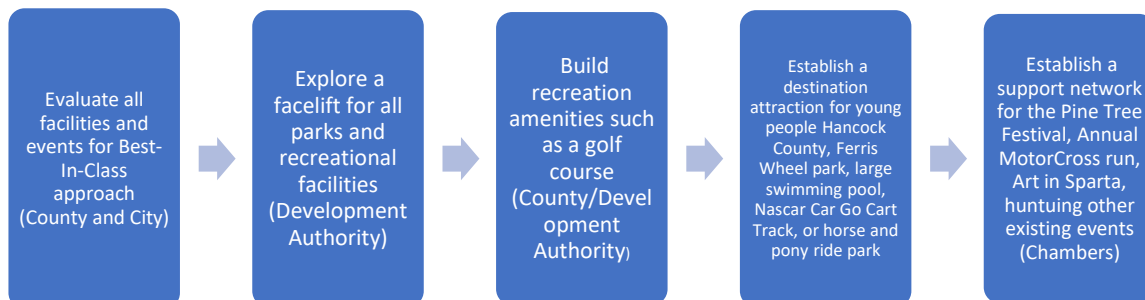
Quality of Life Goals

1. Ensure citizens are healthy, engaged and proud of their community
2. Ensure that facilities and events are inclusive of both citizens, visitors and tourists
3. Strive for health and education systems that are Best-in-Class
4. The awareness of a calendar of events that is shared community-wide
5. Ensure a long-term strategy for public safety and fire prevention

Goal 1: Strategy –Citizens are Healthy, Engaged and Proud



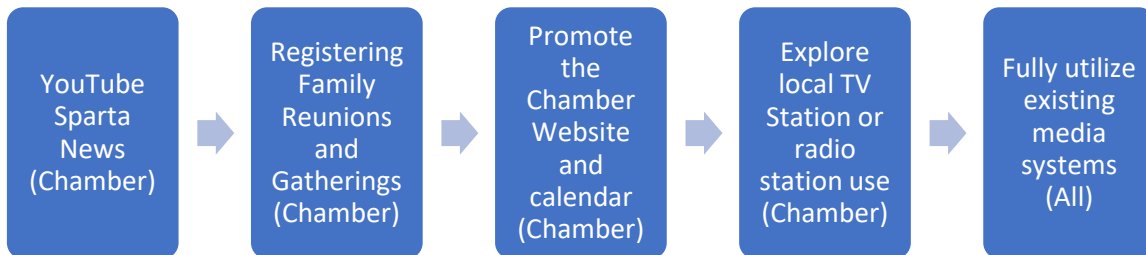
Goal 2: Strategy-Facilities and Events



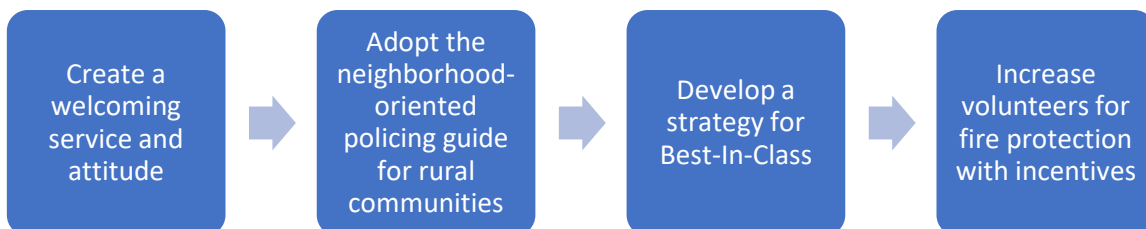
Strategies: Goal 3 - Health and Education



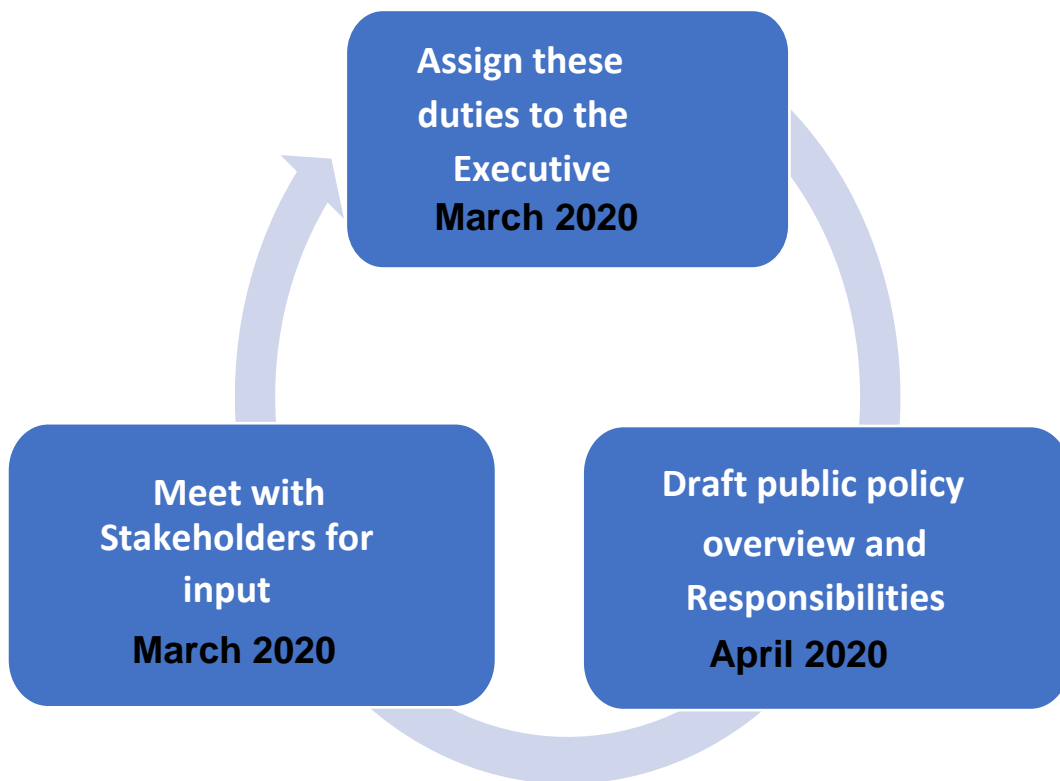
Goal 4: Strategy - Communicating with Citizens



Goal 5: Strategy-Public Safety and Fire Prevention



ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE



1. Communication and Marketing

Viable and Visible: Marketing and Communications Concepts for Sparta Hancock

Viable: feasible, practical, worthwhile and sustainable

Visible: evident, obvious, noticeable

The following marketing and communications observations and recommendations are made on behalf of the city of Sparta and Hancock County. These strategies support the economic development initiatives presented throughout this document. Readers should consider this as an evolving communications plan that will change often with input.

The objective of this plan is to identify key strategies and actions that will guide Sparta and Hancock County in developing a repositioning strategy and a long-term marketing program focused on attracting new business and supporting the city's economic growth.

The idea is to first prove the City's viability for economic development and quality of life: Sparta is interested in jobs, new businesses, plants, technology, faster internet and education. We welcome visitors and tourists and appreciate our citizens. Sparta is a worthy investment for new businesses. We have magnificent homes and stretches of available land for industrial, commercial and residential use.

Secondly, with evidence in hand, we proceed to create visibility for Sparta and Hancock County, using successes and energy to tell our story to the right audiences for the right reasons personified.

It is when the visibility generates interest and interest leads to income that we will know we are on the right road.

The final plan will address existing businesses, stakeholders and allies within the region; and external groups where we want to generate interest. It will present best practices on how to educate and engage citizens in initiatives directed to provide jobs, find new businesses and create a more modern and improved environment for economic growth.

Where are our ideal opportunities?

Identifying the marketing opportunities starts with first defining the target market segments with differentiated needs. There are many diverse individuals and groups that may be considered “customers” of the city and county. Customers include residents, the City Council, County Commission, community leaders, local businesses and potential businesses. To ensure adequate focus on moving closer to its economic development vision of building a business cluster and attracting new businesses, our research identified three key audiences: location advisors, developers and regional organizations.

Location Advisors

Location advisors, also known as site selectors, are the executives within an organization who are responsible for deciding where to locate next. Case studies on successful business clusters indicate that this group is at the core of the target segment. For example, Research Triangle Park in North Carolina has received over 70% of its projects through location advisors.

Developers

Developers, specifically those with expertise in biotech such as Alexandria Real Estate, play a highly active role in forming bioscience clusters. The kind of space required by bioscience firms is highly specialized and technologically complex. It is rare that small firms and start-ups have enough capital to build their own space. Because of their investment in both cities and firms, developers function as key partners in attracting new businesses and maintaining industry growth.

Regional & Intermediary Organizations

Regional and intermediary organizations serve as catalysts and neutral meeting grounds to connect the private sector and the public sector. Given the limited resources, it is recommended that the Sparta-Hancock Chamber of Commerce partner with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the State Tourism Agency and others to reach industries looking for locations for new or existing businesses.

Sparta and Hancock County must have their profiles, features, advantages and benefits to locating here well documented and displayed when anyone or any organization looks this way.

Maximize existing opportunities or, work with what you have.

2. Recruiting Industries

Both the City of Sparta and the County of Hancock should know by now that you can't compete against the larger cities out to land big industries. If you spend all your money, time and energy chasing this rainbow, you're in for a rude awakening. However, let me encourage the leaders of Hancock County to prepare yourself so industries can see your worth.

It is the writer's recommendation, supported by national experts in the field of economic development, to follow these steps:

Prepare yourself with a unique and well-trained workforce. Begin now to train your students in technical areas as well as skill crafts and more.

Ensure the highest degree of education in computer science and technology. Bring in the best computer instructors to teach kids starting in middle school.

This advance computer knowledge gives the school system a chance to bring college-level computer science to junior high students. A program such as this requires incentives for Saturday courses. Industries consider workforce development as a plus and will seek out communities who support diverse education in college prep, technical and craft skills.

Secondly, ensure the presence of broadband throughout your community. Without it, citizens are unable to keep pace with society. Companies are unable to communicate with customers. Corporations are looking for people to work at home; these teleworkers require fast, reliable Internet.

Improve citizens' housing options and access to resources. Work to enhance the quality of life throughout the community.

Currently it is the Development Authority that is responsible for industry recruitment. They should continue this role while at the same time the Chamber of Commerce is encouraged to champion issues related to education, broadband and quality of life issues.

The writer believes industries may be encouraged to consider Sparta after learning of our approach. The "sell" package can include spec buildings, land availability and residential housing.

The key is trifold: a highly trained workforce, available facilities and high-speed Internet.

Sparta has strengths and resources that are underused because citizens and outsiders don't know they exist.

Among them:

1. Great expanses of affordable land for commercial or residential development
2. Tourist-worthy attractions
3. Ready-to-work citizens
4. Rich, historical tapestry of structures and stories, including history-makers and heroes
5. Unique entrepreneurs within the county
6. An abundant number of artists
7. Community-entrenched annual events
8. Unique special events, e.g., Beekeepers Convention

Strategy

1. Develop a campaign that will package the uniqueness of the city and county to appeal to internal and external audiences.
2. Develop and publicize business successes that will become role models to attract new businesses and opportunities
3. Include the faith community to create an information distribution that captures all citizens
4. Create leadership ambassadors to champion the cause, e.g., elected and appointed officials, business owners, faith leaders, youth leaders

Tactics

1. Create new information channels that expand throughout the county population
2. Maximize publicity for each event, internal and external
3. Promote a "social media showdown" that will engage the community
4. Create channels that push and pull information
5. Create opportunities for the Faith Community.

Tools

The goal is to increase opportunities for the public to hear positive news about Sparta. As often as possible, produce messages over multiple forms of media in a timely fashion.

1. Social Media: Facebook, websites (highly coordinate with local government and community websites), Twitter, Instagram
2. Collateral material: Newsletters, brochures, leave-behinds, bookmarks, banners
3. Media: Print and video news releases; public service announcements (PSAs), print, broadcast, podcasts, blogs, vlogs
4. Magazines: Tourism, state and local publications (seven surrounding counties), national

Embrace and Brand Current Activities

With “staycations” still the rage, it would benefit Hancock County to promote its most popular festivals to improve attendance and profits.

1. Annual Pine Tree Festival
2. ART in SpARTa
3. Pews and Pulpits*
4. Historical Tour of Homes*
5. Annual CJE Fourth of July community picnic
6. Annual CJE Christmas community event
7. Labor Day Community Picnic (Elm Street Farms)

Strategy

1. Maximize publicity for each event, targeting audience/media contacts.
2. Promote a “social media showdown” that engages the community.
3. Create channels that drive citizens toward information.

To explore potential partnerships, create a list of groups whose objectives closely align with the Chamber, beginning with:

1. Hancock County Community Group
2. Sparta-Hancock Development Authority
3. Hancock County Historical Society
4. Garden Club
5. Faith Community

One theme that continually emerged throughout our research was the need for the city to invest in growing its network and to build stronger partnerships with a wider variety of stakeholders. Adopting a collaborative approach with public and private organizations brings the potential for success closer for each partner. Collaboration and partnerships, access to resources, funding and expertise will be explored in greater detail throughout the plan.

**These events are partnerships and are usually sold-out each year, but still represent the quality of activities offered.*

We will outline goals to address establishing a fully funded marketing plan.

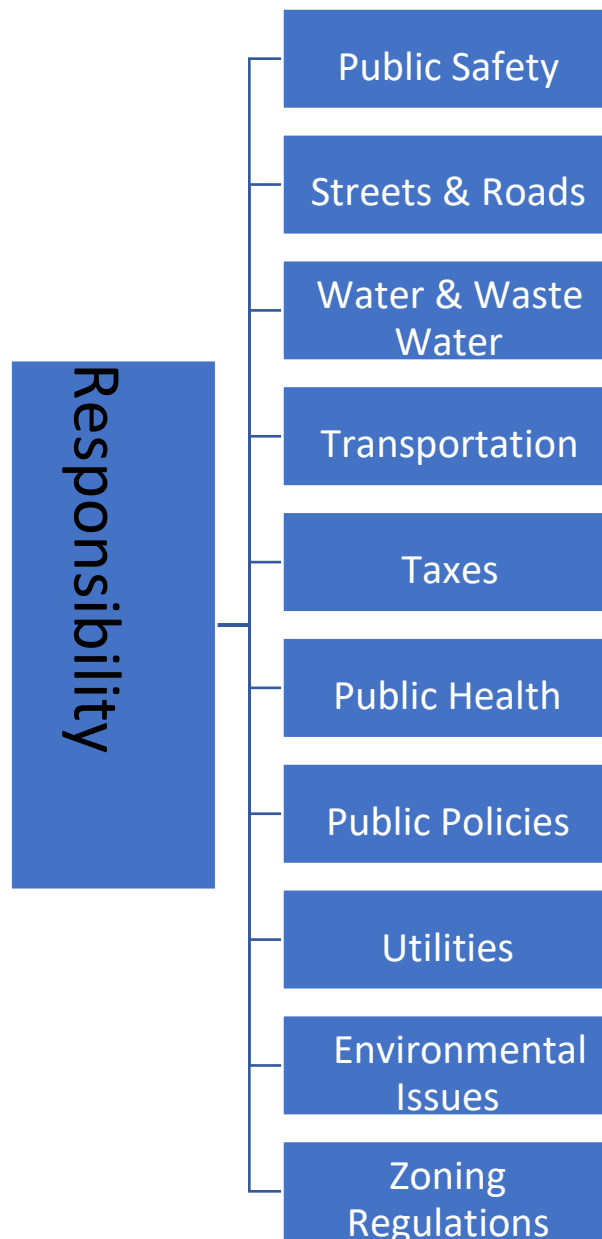
Once fully developed, this will become a strategic document with elements that should improve how Sparta presents itself, and eventually, how Sparta is perceived, by its citizens and the public.

Action plan and timeline



Critical supporting actions

The city of Sparta and the county of Hancock both are required to have a comprehensive plan that addresses issues for which they are directly responsible and their budgets on a continuous basis.



Board of Education

One of the most critical components of any economic development strategy requires that a solid and excellent education program must be in place in order to supply the work force necessary to support any growth in business and industries.

While public education has been an issue in the past the author of this strategic plan believes that the system is on its way to overall improvements.

It is recommended that the businesses must require an outstanding school system and in return the business community is encouraged to support the school system financially and rally the community to invest in our school system.

When given two choices, Hancock County must take both: Business Development and Educational Excellence. Each is critical to economic development and supporting jobs.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Have the Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce approve the plan.
2. Have the County Commission and City Council officially adopt the Economic Development Plan once it has been completed.
3. Refine the suggested schedules for all elements of the initial plan to create a master calendar of implementation work that reflects staff availability, funding and other factors.
4. If warranted, find a volunteer if necessary, for oversight of the economic development program and its elements.
5. Create a Resources and Logistics Plan to anticipate and provide for implementation needs. This should include the assignment of staff responsibilities and the development of collaborative efforts with allies.
6. Contact the State of Georgia to discuss the best way to incorporate the plan into an existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plans of the City and County to increase the likelihood of obtaining EDA funding for eligible initiatives and elements.
7. Consider employing a 5x8 foot LED Billboard featuring the County Chair and City Mayor welcoming all to Sparta and Hancock County. Include major current attractions and calendar of major events in Hancock and surrounding counties. We are in the center of seven counties and we need to own this position.
8. Recruit a NASCAR Go-Kart Track as one of the major attractions for families. This amusement will attract families from the seven counties surrounding Hancock. This is our opportunity to create visual hope for our community.
9. The next step to seek an events center that could serve as a Performing Arts Center, Visitors Center and could house the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber will pay rent to contribute support to this facility. The old school board building downtown is a possible site.
10. Aggressively pursue the identification of an application for grant funding to support implementation of Initiative Elements.

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Statistical Data

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Report Preparation

Submitted by Hancock Health Improvement Partnership

Hancock Health Improvement Partnership (HHIP) is a group of citizens, businesses, organizations, and other entities in Hancock County with the mission “to work together to become the healthiest county in Georgia”. HHIP has worked together to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan for Hancock County and is working towards addressing three specific areas: Economic Development, Healthy Environments and Literacy.

Economic Development:

Achieving health equity in a community requires more than providing access to healthcare. Economic factors such as poverty, employment and income all serve as health equity indicators and influence access to healthy food, healthcare and the resources and opportunities necessary to develop healthy behaviors.

Healthy Environments:

Social determinants of health are defined as the conditions of the places in which people live, work, play and pray. These conditions can impact health outcomes in both positive and negative ways. Good health depends on having a home that is safe and free from physical hazards, having access to healthy food options and having access to opportunities for physical activity.

Literacy:

Literacy, or lack thereof, can greatly impact an individual’s health and wellbeing. Higher education levels have been linked to lower rates of obesity, smoking and premature death, while a lack of basic literacy and health literacy skills reduces an individual’s ability to achieve the highest level of health. Literacy is a key factor in addressing and achieving health equity.

Some of HHIP’s activities include:

1. Increasing small business opportunities
2. Promoting county tourism
3. Providing nutrition education
4. Planting community gardens
5. Increasing opportunities for physical activity
6. Increasing access to books

**Hancock Health Improvement Partnership is funded by a grant from Healthcare Georgia Foundation as part of The Two Georgia’s Initiative.*

Biography for Will Minter Author and Researcher for This Plan

Will Minter is currently the Director of Strategic Planning and Government Relations for the Sparta-Hancock Chamber of Commerce. Minter and his wife Carolyn are owners of the Lone Branch Farm in Sparta, Georgia, where they raise Angus cows and buffaloes.

Minter is a retired senior manager with both Lockheed Martin Energy and Battelle Corporation contractor that managed the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), one of the nation's largest research laboratories. Minter also served as an assistant to the director of ORNL, who was also president of Lockheed Martin Energy Systems.

As a division director, Minter was responsible for several departments including but not limited to small business program contractor, engineering support for new facilities, science education, property management and the conference center. During Minter's career, he also served as a management trainer and as head of Engineering Services and Records and Information Management.

Minter previously served as a city councilman, Mayor pro tem, Board of Education member in the Oak Ridge, Tennessee community. He chaired the City Council Economic Development Committee.

Minter was elected to the Board of Directors and named to the advisory team for the National League of Cities. He served on the National Black Leadership team with Coretta Scott King, Joseph Lowery and 16 other national leaders. He was elected president and CEO of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials representing over 3500 mayors and city councilmen throughout the U.S.

Minter also was national regional vice president of the National Black Caucus of School Board Members. Minter cochaired the strategic planning committee for the Oak Ridge school system. In 2018, the Oak Ridge school system was named number one in the state of Tennessee and continues to be one of the top school systems in the country.

Minter is nationally known in both his professional career and in public service. His awards and honors are numerous. The following is a partial list.

- Lifetime Achievement Award for Small Business Program Management – created to recognize Minter's outstanding contributions, Department of Energy, 2009
- Black Engineer of the Year Award by *Career Magazine* for Promotion of Higher Education, 2009
- Morehouse College "Federal Champion Award," 2009
- Top Supporter of HBCU and Minority Serving Institutions, USBE, 2009
- White House Initiative on HBCUs Leadership Award, 2008
- National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education President's Award, 2008
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Award of Merit, 2008
- Secretary of Energy Diversity Best Practice Award for the Day of Science, 2007

- Alpha Pi Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Minority Women's Business Conference Certificate of Appreciation, 2007
- U.S. DOE M&O Small Business Innovation Award, 2007
- U.S. Small Business Administration's Frances Perkins Vanguard Award, 2007
- U.S. Small Business Administration's Certificate of Excellence, 2005
- U.S. Small Business Administration's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award – R&D Category, 2005
- Recognition Award presented by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, 2005
- Letter of Recognition from Nashville Congressman Jim Cooper for participation in the Small Business Procurement Conference, 2004

Notables

- Letter from President Bill Clinton in recognition and appreciation as an advisor for the White House Affirmative Action Program, 1995
- Invited to the White House to meet with the president on crime and violence, 1994
- Won the "Best Idea Contest" for the 1982 World's Fair. The idea eventually became the Sun sphere, the iconic golden landmark in Knoxville, Tenn.

Will and Carolyn Minter have four children and two grandchildren.

LETTER OF REFERENCE



ENVIRO AgScience, INC.

Landscape Design Build and Maintenance Professionals
P.O. BOX 23285, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29224
Phone: 803-714-7290 Facsimile: 803-714-7990
www.enviroags.com

Date: November 21, 2011
Subject: Letter of Recommendation

Dear Sir/Madam:

ENVIRO AgScience, Inc. has had a positive business relationship with Minter and Associates, as well as Mr. Will Minter, for the past three years.

Minter and Associates has facilitated and guided our company in our efforts to increase our federal government contracting. With the assistance of Will Minter and Minter and Associates, ENVIRO AgScience, Inc. was able to secure an extension on one of our biggest federal contracts.

Will Minter has always provided personalized services to our company. Minter and Associates provides a depth and breadth of knowledge of the small business programs that have been beneficial to the growth of our company.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Louis B. Lynn'.

Dr. Louis B. Lynn
President
ENVIRO AgScience, Inc.



LETTER OF REFERENCE

WSI-OR-II-440-001
161 Mitchell Road Oak Ridge, IN 37830



January 25, 2011
SUBJECT: LETTER OF REFERENCE FOR MINTER AND ASSOCIATES

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this reference letter for Minter and Associates, subcontractor for the Small Business Program Strategic Plan Subcontract for WSI Oak Ridge.

Minter and Associates is a highly qualified management consulting firm with extensive knowledge, experience and success in all aspects of small business programs. The scope of Minter and Associates' knowledge includes federal regulations, compliance, small business subcontracting, business development, procurement, policy management practices and communication strategies.

Since the inception of the WSI Oak Ridge Small Business Program Strategy Contract in December, 2010, Minter and Associates has consistently delivered the types of programs and solutions necessary for WSI Oak Ridge to achieve "Best In Class."

In addition, the management team of Minter and Associates has firsthand proven knowledge in all aspects of small business programs. They have provided innovation and expertise in assisting WSI Oak Ridge in meeting its Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration small business goals, as well as opportunities for small businesses in other areas.

Minter and Associates would serve as a valuable asset to any Small Business Program effort.

Sincerely,

Rosie Weaver

Rosie Weaver, Buyer Contracting
Officer for WSI Oak Ridge Small Business
Program Strategic Plan Contract

LETTER OF REFERENCE

CITY OF KNOXVILLE



Finance & Accountability
Office of the Purchasing Agent

To Whom It May Concern:

I strongly recommend employing the services of Minter & Associates for any project or initiative you may undertake to improve the amount of business you conduct with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE's). The City of Knoxville contracted Minter & Associates (M&A) to determine why the City does not receive an adequate number of bids, proposals, and statements of qualifications from the minority owned business community and to develop an action plan to help us markedly improve our performance in this area.

As the administrator of this contract, I am proud to say that Will Minter and his team have performed in an outstanding manner thus far on this project. Specifically, they have met with numerous business owners, stakeholders, chambers of commerce and so forth to identify the key reasons that the minority owned business community does not compete for City business to the extent that we desire. Moreover, M&A has conducted a thorough exploration of the City of Knoxville's business practices, procedures, and overall organizational structure to determine any and all barriers to conducting more business with minority owned businesses. Their findings, as reported to the City, have proven extremely insightful and comprehensive.

As a result of their intensive research, I believe they have laid the essential ground work for helping us prepare a comprehensive plan to acquire more bids, proposals, and statements of qualifications from the minority owned business community which will result in our city doing much more business with DBE's in general.

Minter & Associates has proven to be extremely responsive to our needs, understanding of our situation, as well as adept at conducting research (both internal and external to the City), and has demonstrated that they are very knowledgeable about how to increase the amount of business that organizations conduct with DBE's.

Again, I can say, with confidence and without reservation, that Minter & Associates is a "top notch firm" that renders outstanding results (on time and to standard).

Please contact me if you desire further clarification of their capabilities.

Sincerely,

Boyce H. Evans
Purchasing Agent
City of Knoxville

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WWW.CITYOFKNOXVILLE.ORG



1400 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830
Phone: 865-483-1321
www.oakridgechamber.org

March 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to serve as a reference for Mr. Will Minter who in many ways has served as a key volunteer leader for the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce.

I have known Mr. Minter since 1997 and worked with him as he managed numerous small business affairs with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, one of East Tennessee's largest employers and an enormous source of small business opportunities. In that capacity Mr. Minter was a vigorous advocate for small businesses seeking to supply products or services to the laboratory. I also knew Mr. Minter in his capacity as a member of the Oak Ridge City Council where he chaired the Council's Economic Development Committee. In that role he demonstrated an understanding of business issues and challenges associated with the attraction of new capital investment and the expansion of existing enterprises.

Mr. Minter also was a leading volunteer for our Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce and provided exceptional leadership in a multi-year Small Business Opportunities Conference conducted by our chamber. The purpose of the conference was to connect the small business communities with opportunities afforded by the U.S. Department of Energy and their major Oak Ridge contractors. His five-year work in that arena was extraordinary. For the two years that he served as Conference Chair the event attracted more participants and provided more small business linkages than ever before.

Mr. Minter also was an effective volunteer in Chamber membership sales. This was particularly evident in 2001 when, after the 9/11 events that dramatically affected America's business climate in general and Oak Ridge's in particular, Mr. Minter led our sales effort in terms of financial volume.

It is my pleasure to serve as a reference for Mr. Will Minter. I will be happy to elaborate at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Parker Hardy".

Parker Hardy, CCE
President/CEO