



Evansville Economic Development Project



Task Force Report



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TASK FORCES SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Evansville Economic Development Committee contracted Whalen & Associates, Inc. in June, 2007 to design and facilitate a process that would result in an Economic Development Plan. The project fulfills an action item of Evansville's Smart Growth Plan. The Smart Growth Plan on page 133 states that Evansville "needs more commercial and industrial development to permit the City to reduce its relatively high property tax rate without reducing services." The project's planning team - consisting of Mayor Sandy Decker, City Administrator Dan Wietecha, Chamber of Commerce Promotional Director Bridgit Larsen and consultant Judy Whalen began meeting in July, 2007. A series of information gathering activities were designed to provide data from which an economic development plan would be developed. The major information gathering activities included:

- **Focus Groups** – Five focus groups were conducted August 27-28, 2007. Representatives from 26 businesses in the categories of agribusiness, manufacturing, construction/development, retail and service participated in the focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to:
 - To gather information about major concerns about economic development
 - To create awareness about the City's commitment to economic development
 - To gather ideas and assess interest in an Economic Development Summit.
- **Phone Survey** – Through collaboration with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UW-Whitewater, 136 businesses were identified to be contacted by the SBDC. Thirty-three phone surveys were completed as of January 20, 2008. The phone survey continued until all of the 136 businesses had been contacted at least once.
- **Summit** – The Economic Development Summit was conducted January 12, 2008 to provide business representatives the opportunity to provide further input into the topics that should be

addressed in the Economic Development Plan. The agenda included two speakers addressing entrepreneurship and ways to differentiate your business, a summary of the focus group that were conducted and three interactive sessions during which participants explored topics related to economic development. Resources from the Summit are available on the City's website: www.ci.evansville.wi.gov/Summit.htm

- **Task Forces** – Five task forces were formed after the Summit to develop the action plans to address the key strategic issues. Volunteers were recruited by the Planning Committee to participate on the task forces.

PROCESS

- The Planning Committee determined five task forces were needed to address the five key strategic issues of:
 - Workforce Development
 - Downtown Revitalization
 - Intergovernmental Relations
 - Marketing
 - Entrepreneurial Environment
- Volunteers from the community were appointed to each of the task forces.
- Bridgit Larsen, Promotional Director of the Evansville Chamber of Commerce coordinated the activity of the Task Forces.
- The task forces used the action planning process recommended by Judy Whalen.
- Bridgit facilitated a kick-off meeting February 5, 2008 to explain the action planning process to the task force volunteers. (See attachments.)
- The task forces had a six-week period in which to develop the goal, objectives and action plan for the assigned key strategic issue.

- Bridgit met with the task forces during the six-week work period. She helped them understand the process, clarify their thinking and meet the deadline.
- The task forces presented their action plans to the Economic Development Committee April 17, 2008. (See attached items.)

TASK FORCE PARTICIPANTS

- Workforce Development
 - Jim Brooks
 - Julie Hermanson
 - Michael Pierick
 - Sandy Sayarath
 - Tina Rossmiller
- Business, Community and Government Relations
 - Betsy Ahner
 - Heidi Carvin
 - Kelly Gildner
 - Barb Jacobson
 - Jim Kopecky
 - John Morning
- Downtown Revitalization
 - John Decker
 - John Gishnock III
 - Tony Wyse
 - Jean Wyse
 - Cheryl Fuchs
 - Amelia Mauer Royko
 - Jim McGoey

- Marketing
 - Roger Berg
 - Bud Gayhart
 - Brad Goodspeed
 - Bob Kuha
 - Nicole Huff
 - Greg Marshall
 - Don Meggers
- Entrepreneurial Environment
 - Eric Larsen
 - John Gishnock
 - Lori Allen
 - Cindy Hammer
 - Bill Lathrop
 - Gene Bass
 - Steve Royko

ACTION PLANS

- Each task force presented a set of action plans to the Economic Development Committee April 17, 2008. (See the attached spreadsheets.)