

Economic Development

Defining Economic Development

The terms “economic growth” and “economic development” are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. The focus of economic growth is creating jobs and production of goods and services. The main goal of economic development is improving the economic well-being of a community through actions and policies that retain and create jobs, enhance the tax base, and improve quality of life. Quality of life implies increased per capita income, better education and health, as well as a healthy natural environment necessary to sustain the current population and future generations.

There is no single program, policy or strategy for successfully accomplishing economic development. Each community is unique and ultimately has its own challenges and opportunities for economic development and achieving its desired quality of life. Additionally, we now operate in a worldwide economy with rapid technological advances that has changed locational requirements for many businesses and how communities must consider economic development. Pleasant Hope does not function in isolation. It is part of the larger Springfield metropolitan region; thinking regionally should be part of the city’s basis for defining its economic development goals and strategies and creating its niche in the regional economy.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan does not present a traditional analysis of Pleasant Hope’s economy or address strategies for maintaining or attracting specific businesses. Rather, it focuses on quality of life and maintaining an environment necessary to meet the needs of the current population as well as serve future population and private investment in Pleasant Hope. Smart growth principles and strategies that can assist the city in enhancing quality of life and creating economic development are discussed. Many of these principles are incorporated into the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the various preceding chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. A summary of Pleasant Hope’s most recent initiatives in partnering with other communities at the county and regional level to attract new business development is also presented in this chapter.

Smart Growth for Economic Development

Smart growth is defined as development or renewal that benefits the economy, community, and the environment. It is an approach to land development that promotes mixed land uses, preserves green spaces, and offers a variety of transportation and housing choices. Smart growth offers an alternative to sprawl development that places substantial cost burden on the delivery of public infrastructure and community services and that may negatively impact environmental resources.

Smart growth can provide many benefits to cost-conscious communities. Communities benefit fiscally by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure such as roads, sewer systems and other public services. New infill development on vacant lots will help to conserve undeveloped land and reduce the infrastructure and services costs of sprawl. Conserving undeveloped land will help protect air and water quality as well as other natural resources. Another key feature of smart growth is providing alternative means of transportation throughout the community. Greenways and trail ways provide opportunities for biking, walking, and running while also preserving green spaces.

Pleasant Hope's heritage is that of a rural crossroads community, thriving on the movement of agricultural produce from its surrounding working landscape (grain crops, dairy and beef cattle, vegetables and fruits) to urban markets. While Pleasant Hope is no longer dependent on its historical role as a farm to market crossroads community, its rural working landscape is still very important to its desire to retain the best of small town life and preserve a quality natural environment.

Pleasant Hope looks to attract residents seeking a natural environment with small town charm. However, thoughtful planning and development strategies are necessary so that the community does not become a victim of its own success. Scattered development in and around the community can fragment farm and forest lands as well as pollute waterways with surface water runoff. Poorly planned residential and commercial development could cause unnecessary environmental impacts and threaten the viability of existing neighborhoods and older commercial areas along Main Street. Application of smart growth principles will aid Pleasant Hope in preserving its small town character while enjoying the benefits of its economic development initiatives.

As noted, many of the principles of smart growth are incorporated in the goals, objectives and strategies of the different elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The following subsections discuss in greater detail the benefits of certain smart growth principles including mixed land uses, compact building design, creating a more walkable community, and creating a sense of place. All of these should be part of the city’s toolkit for promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life that will make Pleasant Hope the desired place to live and invest.

Mixed Land Uses

Mixing land uses can create vibrant and attractive communities. Communities of the early 20th century typically had mixed land uses which let people walk to their neighborhood stores, workplaces and public meeting places. The abuses to human health and the environment during the period of early industrialization led to the separation of differing land uses through zoning codes to protect schools and residential areas from industrial and business pollution. The separation of land uses mandated by the first zoning codes became the norm throughout the country, a pattern of land development further advanced by construction of the highway and interstate system and the growth of suburban communities. Separating land uses has fundamentally changed the character of communities and reduced opportunities for people to get around without the use of an automobile.

As Pleasant Hope develops a zoning code, it should incorporate flexible development techniques which allow for mixed land use development. Many industry and business operations are much cleaner than in the past due to environmental regulations and private sector innovations.

Compact Building Design

As the size of homes and retail business spaces continues to increase, communities are consuming more land than ever before. Increased land consumption translates into loss of green space, increased infrastructure costs to the developer which are ultimately passed on to the consumer, and increased long-term maintenance and

replacement costs for the city. In a larger metropolitan city, compact building will help achieve a higher density. For Pleasant Hope to maintain its small town character, it is neither expected nor desired that the city encourage development densities found in a metropolitan core. However, Pleasant Hope can encourage more compact development at moderate densities in appropriate locations and still maintain its small town character.

Incorporating flexible development techniques in zoning and subdivision codes, such as mixed use cluster development or residential subdivision cluster development, would be cost beneficial for both private sector developers and the city. By clustering residences on smaller lots in a portion of the development tract, the remaining open land can be devoted to permanent and usable open space, such as greenways, trail ways or neighborhood parks. With fewer linear feet devoted to extension of infrastructure, the costs of development and maintenance can be reduced. Leaving land open also provides for absorption of storm water runoff, reducing the potential for flooding.

Creating a More Walkable Community

Creating walkable communities is also a key principle of smart growth. With the advent of mass ownership of the automobile, combined with construction of highways and the interstate system throughout the nation since the 1950s, communities have been less focused on designing places for pedestrians and more focused on designing places for cars. Creating a more walkable community involves more than just developing sidewalks and trails for pedestrians. Other pedestrian oriented features must also exist; concentrating important community facilities, public places and services near homes and walkways will help make Pleasant Hope more walkable. Encouraging more compact design and the inclusion of walkways and trail ways in planned residential and mixed use developments will also enhance mobility options and aid in creating a more walkable community. Where possible, retail businesses should also be encouraged to incorporate pedestrian features in the design of their developments.

Sense of Place

The proliferation of chain store retail businesses and eating establishments throughout metropolitan areas and smaller communities, along with common subdivision layout and housing choice, has created communities that look very similar to one another. Smart growth promotes designs that foster a unique sense of place and distinctive community. Creating its own unique sense of place is important for Pleasant Hope to maintain and enhance civic pride and to generate interest in the city from potential home buyers, businesses, and employers.

Pleasant Hope has already taken actions to help create a sense of place. It has developed the Veteran's Memorial and started implementation of its Pleasant Trails Master Plan with development of the Phase 1 trail between the elementary school and the farmer's market. The city's decision on community character and the sense of place it desires to achieve should be supported through its policies, regulatory controls, programs and initiatives undertaken to promote economic development and market the community.

The city's vision statement includes the phrase that it will preserve the friendly environment. In addition to the various actions discussed throughout the Comprehensive Plan to preserve the environment, the community can also enhance an aesthetically pleasing environmental sense of place through tree plantings, landscaping and signage with a common theme. Creating a gateway into the city is also a recommended smart growth action so that visitors and potential investors clearly know when they have entered or left Pleasant Hope.

The city maintains and regularly updates its website to provide residents and visitors with current information on the community. The vision and mission statements are clearly stated on the homepage. However, the city should consider developing a very short and simple slogan (perhaps four to six words) and related graphic image that is easy to remember and that can be expressed by any public official, resident, business proprietor or civic group when asked about the city by a casual visitor or a potential investor. This slogan should be conveyed not only on the website, but should be also be designed on the city's letterhead and all marketing materials used locally as well as marketing strategies that Pleasant Hope partners in at the county and regional level.

Economic Development Initiatives

This section provides a brief summary of Pleasant Hope’s current participation in regional economic development efforts and some of the resources available to assist the community in promoting sustainable economic development.

Polk County Economic Development Coalition

In June, 2011 the City of Bolivar, the Bolivar Area Chamber of Commerce and Polk County organized the Polk County Economic Development Committee (PEDCO) to coordinate the efforts of a new regional economic development initiative that would cover all of Polk County. PEDCO’s purpose was to: (1) evaluate the current economic landscape and climate, (2) discuss the importance of economic development for Polk County’s future, and (3) prepare plans for proactively creating economic development opportunities for the county.

Shortly after its organization, PEDCO engaged in a strategic planning process to clarify its mission and to develop a plan which includes specific goals and strategic actions. Pleasant Hope joined in on this effort and participated on the committee that drafted the *Polk County Economic Development Coalition Strategic Plan 2011-2016*. Approved by the PEDCO membership, one of the eight goals identified in the Strategic Plan is the creation of an enhanced enterprise zone (EEZ) for Polk County (Goal #3).

This goal has been accomplished. The EEZ application for Polk County was prepared by the Southwest Missouri Council of Governments and the EEZ designation for Polk County was approved by the Missouri Department of Economic Development in December 2011. While the EEZ designation does not guarantee new business development in Pleasant Hope, it does provide Pleasant Hope a new tool to market the community and raises its competitive position in the region and state for creating private investment opportunity.

Springfield Regional Economic Partnership

The Springfield Regional Economic Partnership (SREP), a program of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. SREP’s purpose is to promote sustainable economic opportunities for partner members in a ten-county region of southwest Missouri, including Polk County. Pleasant Hope is a member of SREP at the Regional Partner membership level, which provides the city with access to professional economic development staff and other resources.

Southwest Missouri Council of Governments

Pleasant Hope is a member of the Southwest Missouri Council of Governments and has access to professional planning staff, grant writing, GIS mapping and information services, and other state wide planning initiatives brought to the regional level. These resources can assist the city in addressing needs and enhancing quality of life and its desired economic future.

As noted in the section on Defining Economic Development, thinking regionally should be part of the city’s basis for defining its economic development goals and strategies and creating its niche in the regional economy. The goals and strategic actions detailed in the *Polk County Economic Development Coalition Strategic Plan 2011-2016* are closely aligned with many of the goals, objectives and actions of the Pleasant Hope Comprehensive Plan. It is recommended that the city consider formally incorporating the appropriate goals of the PEDCO plan into this Economic Development element of the Comprehensive Plan and further continue to define strategic actions that will advance its vision of creating a prosperous economy.