

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2014-2019

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Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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Executive Summary

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District was established in 1966 as a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. The mission of the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District is to foster community and economic growth in our local economy by providing community and economic development, workforce innovation, transportation and emergency planning and various other professional services in support of our Region. We are the central catalyst for community-centered economic development that links our counties, cities and businesses with state, federal and private resources to aid in a higher quality of life while promoting future growth for all citizens of Western Arkansas.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) establishes the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic problems and capitalize on the resources of the region.

WAPDD covers these 6 counties within rural western Arkansas: Sebastian, Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, and Scott. The total population of the WAPDD area based on the 2010 Census is 206, 065. WAPDD's largest county is Sebastian County with a population of 125,744. The smallest county in the WAPDD area is Scott County with a population of 11,233.

Western Arkansas is predominantly rural, made up of mostly small cities and towns. Within the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District there are 42 cities and towns. Thirty-nine or 92.8% of them have populations of less than 5,000. Additionally, of those 42, 18 or 42.8%, had a decrease in population from 2000 to 2010 according to 2010 U.S. Census data. The largest city served by WAPDD is Fort Smith in Sebastian County with 86,209 people. The smallest town served by WAPDD is Wiederkehr Village in Franklin County with just 38 people.

Within the 6 WAPDD counties are both north-south and east-west transportation networks to support industrialization, manufacturing, and tourism growth. Interstate 40, a major east-west corridor that spans across the United States, cuts through Franklin and Crawford counties. U.S. Route 71 crosses through Polk, Scott, Sebastian, and Crawford counties on its way from Louisiana to Canada. The future Interstate 49 is planned to roughly follow the U.S. Route 71 alignment. The northern part of the district boasts the Boston Mountains and the Ozark National Forest, while the southern part of the district is home to the Ouachita Mountains and the Ouachita National Forest. The Arkansas River Valley runs through the central part of the district between the two mountain ranges.

With respect to waterborne transportation, only the Arkansas River is navigable for commercial transport. The McClellan-Kerr Navigation System, as it is called, through a series of seventeen locks and dams opened in the late sixties the Arkansas River from the Mississippi River to Tulsa as a dependable, navigable waterway for commercial barges.

Fort Smith had become one, if not "the manufacturing city of the Southwest" with an outsized intensity of manufacturing activity, producing over \$7 billion of goods in 2007, an increase of \$2 billion or about forty percent over that produced in 1997, according to the federal government's

nationwide censuses of business. This amounts to \$25,000 of goods produced per resident in the Fort Smith metro area, which is almost twice the nation-wide amount per capita and considerably more than any other metro area in the state and region.

Making it an exceptional manufacturing city are the 300 or so manufacturing establishments and their just over 25,000 employees located in the Fort Smith metropolitan area of Sebastian, Crawford and Sequoyah counties, producing a wide variety of goods which are shipped all over the country and world. Accounting for one-fourth of the area's entire labor force of almost 100,000, manufacturing workers annually earn wages in excess of \$800 million. These earnings represent about 30 percent of all area enterprises' payrolls.

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has identified 14 Targeted Business sectors to create strategic investments designed to transition the state's economy to one supported by higher-paying knowledge-based jobs. AEDC's Targeted Opportunities fall into one of the following categories: Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging, Aerospace/Aviation, Biosciences, Data Centers, Distribution and Logistics Services, Firearms and Ammunition, Paper and Timber Products, Regional Headquarters, Smart Grid Technologies (Power Electronics), Software Development & Data Management Services, Sustainable Building Products and Fixtures, Technical Support Centers, Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, Walmart Suppliers.

Of the top growth industries identified for Western Arkansas by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, only 3 align with the state's Targeted Business sectors: Administrative and Support Services, Food Manufacturing, Management of Companies and Enterprises. Western Arkansas already has several successful Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging companies in Gerber Foods, American Vegetable Soybean and Edamame, Inc., and Greenwave Foods. Likewise, Western Arkansas has many Regional Headquarters including C & C Market Research, Arkansas Oklahoma Gas Corporation, Cloyes Gear, Cooper Clinic, and QualServ.

ArcBest Corporation, Carco Transportation Services, USA Truck, and Dancor Transit are all successful Distribution and Logistics companies with corporate headquarters in Western Arkansas.

Western Arkansas has experienced growth in several of the other statewide Targeted Business sectors and there is potential for continued growth and new opportunities. Western Arkansas has several Technical Support Centers including Experian, Sykes Call Center, Answer Fort Smith, and Health Management Associates. In regards to Firearms and Ammunition, Western Arkansas boasts Umarex and Walther Arms. Western Arkansas also includes companies producing Paper and Timber Products like Graphic Packaging International, General Pallets, and Travis Lumber Company.

Fort Smith will soon be home to Arkansas's first college of osteopathic medicine and one of just 31 in the U.S., thanks to a more than \$58 million investment from the Fort Smith Regional Healthcare Foundation (FSRHF) and a grant of 200 acres from the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA). The medical school is estimated to have a \$100 million annual economic

impact on the region. The first phase of the medical school campus includes a 60,000-square foot building, several smaller buildings, a campus green, main entry, and a proposed pond. A second phase includes a “village green” area with more buildings. Future development around the campus includes space for a medical office park and commercial and retail development.

When fully operational, the school would serve about 600 students, and employ around 65 (full-time equivalent jobs) with an average salary of \$103,000. The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education aims to address a great need with the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine. Arkansas ranks 48th in physician accessibility in the United States. The western side of the state, including the Fort Smith region, has been identified as the most underserved area in Arkansas.

The Western Arkansas Planning and Development District area has many opportunities for growth and trends that need to be taken advantage of. The goal is to turn the strengths and weaknesses of the region into opportunities. It is also important to note that this area needs to retain and strengthen the ratio of industrial employment to other economic sectors such as services, transportation, and agriculture and to further develop the tourism sector into a more dependable, year round and stable economic sector. This region currently has the following opportunities:

1. 1-49 construction and completion
2. Port Facilities in Crawford and Sebastian Counties
3. US Marshal’s Museum to be constructed
4. Rail and River Infrastructure
5. Universities in Fort Smith, Ozark and Mena
6. Riverfront Development in Fort Smith, Van Buren, and Ozark
7. Osteopathic College to be constructed and completed in Fort Smith by 2016
8. Commercial Airport in Fort Smith, Airport and training center at Airport in Mena
9. Ability to leverage one community’s assets with a neighboring community to maximize competitiveness
10. Empty and available building space in downtowns
11. Partnerships with state agencies, governmental officials, elected officials
12. Potential to further diversify economy
13. Brownfields redevelopment
14. Some communities are beginning to establish parks and recreation plans
15. Some communities are in the strategic planning processes and will establish economic development plans
16. Mitigation Planning and COOP Planning is occurring in our Region to ensure resiliency
17. Growing healthcare services to meet the needs of the population
18. Paris Satellite Training Center

Strategic projects, programs and activities identified in the Strategy are designed to expand these opportunities.

Summary Background

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Within the 6 WAPDD counties, the percentage of the population that is under 18 years of age is equal to or higher than the National percentage (2010 U.S. Census data). The same is true for the percentage of the population that is over 65 years of age (2010 U.S. Census data). Across the 6 WAPDD counties, the average percentage of the population that is over 65 years of age is 16%, compared with 13% across Arkansas and 14% nationally. Polk County has a population that is 19% over the age of 65. Having such a large percentage of the population that has reached retirement age greatly impacts workforce availability.

The total WAPDD area is 20% minority, not much different from the state of Arkansas that is 23% minority. However, the percentage of minorities varies greatly across the 6 WAPDD counties with Franklin County with just 5% minority population and Sebastian County with 23.4% minority population. In addition, the state of Arkansas's largest minority is the African American population at 20%. In Western Arkansas, at 6 % of the population, more minorities identified themselves as Other than any other minority race listed in the 2010 Census. In Western Arkansas, 11% of the population identifies themselves as Hispanic or Latino, while only 6% of the total population of the state of Arkansas does.

The 2010 American Community Survey results show the United States poverty rate as 15.1%. Local data included in the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates show poverty rates between 14.3% and 23.9% for WAPDD's 6 counties.

The U.S. Median Household Income is \$49,445; but the Median Household Income for WAPDD's 6 counties is between \$32,064 and \$40,197.

The national unemployment rate for July 2014 was 6.2%. The unemployment rate across WAPDD's 6 counties ranged from 5.5% to 7.3%. The Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area had an unemployment rate of 6.4%.

According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, the percentage of households that received food stamps/SNAP benefits is much higher across the WAPDD area compared with the national percentage. Locally, between 11.2% and 15.9% of households receive food stamps/SNAP benefits while the national rate is just 9.2%.

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District Demographics and Socioeconomic Data									
	Crawford County	Sebastian County	Franklin County	Logan County	Scott County	Polk County	WAPDD	Arkansas	National
Population ¹	61,948	125,744	18,125	22,353	11,233	20,662	206,065	2,915,918	308,745,538
Unemployment ²	7.2%	6.8%	6.1%	7.2%	6.3%	7.6%	6.3%	7.4%	7.2%
Civilian Labor ² Force	26,250	56,675	7,525	9,400	4,725	8,100	112,675		
Poverty Rate	18.3% ⁴	18% ⁴	17.8% ⁴	14.3% ⁴	23.9% ⁴	20.4% ⁴		18% ⁴	15.1% ³
Percent Minority ¹	11%	23.4%	5%	6.8%	12%	7.3%	20%	23%	26.7%
Percent Hispanic or Latino ¹	6%	12%	2%	2%	7%	6%	11%	6%	16.3%
Median Household Income	\$40,197 ⁴	\$39,482 ⁴	\$32,064 ⁴	\$37,551 ⁴	\$36,417 ⁴	\$32,525 ⁴		\$39,267 ⁴	\$49,445 ³
Population Under 18 ¹	26.3%	25.3%	24.4%	25%	26%	24%	32%	24.3%	24%
Population Over 65 ¹	13%	13%	17%	17%	17%	19%	16%	14%	13%
Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits (households) ⁴	13.6%	11.2%	14.2%	13.7%	15.9%	12.8%		12.5%	9.2%

¹ Data is from 2010 U.S. Census and is available at www.census.gov

² Data is from Bureau of Labor Statistics and is available at www.bls.gov (September 2013)

³ Data is from 2010 American Community Survey and is available at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html

⁴ Data is from 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates and is available at www.census.gov

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The rivers and streams of western Arkansas are significant to the development of the region in at least three ways: the extent to which they can support transportation of resources and products; the extent to which flooding jeopardizes development; and the extent to which their

classifications dictate the costs of development, especially in terms of their ability to absorb effluent discharged by developed areas.

With respect to waterborne transportation, only the Arkansas River is navigable for commercial transport. The McClellan-Kerr Navigation System, as it is called, through a series of seventeen locks and dams opened in the late sixties the Arkansas River from the Mississippi River to Tulsa as a dependable, navigable waterway for commercial barges. The dams have also helped control flooding along the River. The “Jeta Taylor” Lock & Dam 12 is located near Ozark, Franklin County’s most populated city. Lock 13 forms the jurisdictional boundary between Crawford and Sebastian Counties. Increasing the channel depth of the entire length of the Arkansas River Navigation Waterway from the Mississippi River to the Port of Muskogee to 12 feet is a goal of the Regional Intermodal Transportation Authority of Western Arkansas (RITA). The purpose of RITA is to plan and provide for and to develop initiatives and projects important to this region’s economic development future and particularly improvements that support the movement of the region’s goods and freight. RITA’s role is to be a voice for the region and a catalyst and supporter for transportation improvements benefitting the Sebastian-Crawford County region. Its primary focus is developing transportation improvements that support economic development and, particularly, the movement of goods and freight into and out of the region by road, rail, water and air. RITA’s project priorities also include developing plans and funding for new and expanded river port infrastructures. Additionally, several cities along the Arkansas River are exploring options for future riverfront development.

The Arkansas River is the boundary of northern Logan County and the northeastern portion of which forms the Lake Dardanelle pool. Scott County’s northern boundary is located approximately 20 miles south of the Arkansas River. Major rivers within Scott County include the Poteau and Fourche Rivers. The Mulberry River in Crawford and Franklin Counties is also significant to the region in regards to agriculture and tourism.

The climate of the area is influenced predominantly by the Gulf of Mexico, particularly in the spring and summer, with the autumn and winter season influenced by continental air masses from the north. Summer months are quite warm and winters, on the whole, are mild with cold temperatures generally prevailing for only short periods. For the area, typical annual rainfall is 40 to 50 inches, with the wettest month typically being May and the driest being August. The range of mean temperatures for January, the coolest month, is 36 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit and for July, the warmest month, is 78 to 84 degrees. Slightly cooler temperatures prevail in the mountainous reaches. The average duration of the growing season is 200 to 240 days.

In recent years numerous natural disasters have resulted in significant economic disruptions. In 2008, Arkansas experienced 5 presidentially declared disasters, including FEMA Disaster #1751 for severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in Sebastian, Crawford, Franklin, Logan, and Scott Counties. Other declared disasters have included 2009 FEMA Disaster #1819 for severe winter storms in Franklin and Crawford Counties, and 2009 FEMA Disasters #1834 and #1845

for severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in Polk County. 2011 FEMA Disasters include #1975 for severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in Crawford, Franklin, and Polk Counties, and #4000 for severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in Franklin and Crawford Counties. 2013 FEMA Disasters include #4124 for severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding in Scott and Polk Counties and #4160 for severe winter storms in Sebastian, Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Scott, and Polk Counties.

Western Arkansas has a rich history in coal mining and timber production and more recently manufacturing. Franklin County is the site of one of the first oil strikes in Arkansas. Franklin County also has many wineries, the Cherokee Prairie, and a vast array of Ozark Highland Trails. Logan County is home to some of the oldest settlements in western Arkansas as well as the Mount Magazine State Park which is located on the highest elevation in Arkansas at 2,760 feet. The Crawford County Courthouse which is listed on the National Historic Register is thought to be the oldest active county courthouse west of the Mississippi River. Crawford County also has the historic King Opera House and many sites of historic preservation in downtown Van Buren. Polk County contains 225,000 acres of the Ouachita National Forest and since the Ouachita Mountains run east and west, their south facing and north facing slopes have very different flora and fauna. Scott County also has the Ouachita National Forest as a major natural attraction as well as Lake Hinkle which is a 960 acre lake. Sebastian County is home to two National Guard Bases: Ebbing Air National Guard Base which houses the 188th Fighter Wing and Fort Chaffee, a former U.S. Army base.

In 1995, the defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission recommended the permanent closure of Fort Chaffee. The federal government opted to lease 65,000 acres to the Arkansas Army National Guard to be used for training. The remaining 7,000+ acres were turned over to local communities for redevelopment. The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority was formed in 1997. The Authority is dedicated to ensuring that this great opportunity reaches its full potential. They are stewards of this resource and will ensure that the public receives the full market potential for the property. To accomplish this, guidelines are required to enhance and perpetuate property values, to manage the timing of land sales to coincide with supply and demands in the market, and to schedule efficient expansion of the infrastructure. In addition to economic stewardship, the natural resources of the area must be conserved and the history of the area must be honored in the new community. Authority members believe that sustaining property values is a critical element of their stewardship. They believe that each new building sets a standard or precedent for the buildings that will follow. They believe that there is value in design and that design can be incorporated into a site or building in an affordable way. They believe that design guidelines can establish a level of quality while still leaving room for creativity and expression. They believe that design guidelines can ensure that this will become a community where parents will be proud to show their children where they work.

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billion or about forty percent over that produced in 1997, according to the federal government's nationwide censuses of business. This amounts to \$25,000 of goods produced per resident in the Fort Smith metro area, which is almost twice the nation-wide amount per capita and considerably more than any other metro area in the state and region.

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The impact of these payroll dollars on the local economy as they are spent and re-spent locally for goods and services, commonly referred to as the ripple effect, is an estimated \$2.2 billion annually. To put the impact in perspective, for the Fort Smith area it is estimated that each manufacturing job supports the presence of at least one other job outside of manufacturing. Indeed, Fort Smith is a manufacturing city and manufacturing is the economic engine largely driving its economy. However, circumstances have become such that this exemplary status is also now its vulnerability. While the Fort Smith-Western Arkansas area continues to be extraordinary place for manufacturing businesses, the Fort Smith area is facing more challenges in today's economic times and many large manufacturing businesses have recently left Fort Smith. Most recently, on June 29, 2012, Whirlpool closed its Fort Smith manufacturing plant resulting in 917 jobs lost. However, Whirlpool's Fort Smith plant employed 4600 in 2004. As a direct result of Whirlpool closing, Fortis Plastics LLC and ILPEA both also closed their Fort Smith operations resulting in 134 more jobs lost. According to a University of Arkansas at Little Rock study, the loss of the Whirlpool jobs will result in the overall loss of 1550 jobs and a labor income reduction of \$56.9 million.

Major Business Closures/Layoffs, 2011-2012			
Business	Location	Announcement	Number of Affected Workers
Penske Logistics	Fort Smith	2011 Department closure	16
Fortis Plastics	Fort Smith	2011 Business closure	94
Rheem Mfg. Co.	Fort Smith	Layoff	250
Stark Mfg.	Logan Co.	Layoff	28
Whirlpool Corp.	Fort Smith	Plant Closure	934
Allen Canning	Van Buren	Consolidation to Siloam Springs plant.	150

Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Prior to these most recent events, on March 23, 2008, a series of explosions destroyed the Cargill Meat Solutions Plant resulting in 800 jobs lost. Shortly afterward, Cargill announced it would not rebuild the plant. According to the Institute for Economic Advancement at the University of

Arkansas at Little Rock, the loss of the Cargill Plant represents approximately \$20 million in payroll lost and an additional 2834 indirect jobs affected and 730 induced jobs affected for a total of 4364 total jobs affected.

In addition to these plant closings, in February 2012, the Air Force re-missioning plan called for the 188th Fighter Wing based at Fort Smith's Ebbing Air National Guard Base to lose its 20 A-10 aircraft. In September 2013, the first 2 A-10s departed Fort Smith, with 2 more leaving in November 2013. The 188th Fighter Wing continued to lose aircraft until June 2014 when the final 2 departed. The future of the 188th Fighter Wing is still unknown at this time. The unit employs 350 full time personnel, with about 1,000 on the base once a month for training. An annual impact to the community of approximately \$150 million is expected. Concern about the 188th's future comes just 4 years after the unit converted from the F-16 fighter jet to the A-10 ground support aircraft. Conversion to the A-10 was the result of a last minute reversal of a decision to close the 188th.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Fort Smith MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) – which essentially represents the Fort Smith economic region and the area for which the city of Fort Smith is the trade center – added approximately 24,700 jobs. During the following decade, however, the region experienced a significant shift in its industrial employment. The negative side of this shift was primarily the result of the manufacturing sector's continued and already well-established worldwide trend to shed jobs and the exacerbation of that trend by the national economic recession that began in the early 2000s. Between 2000 and 2012, the metropolitan area lost just over a third of its manufacturing workforce, amounting to 12,100 lost jobs that represented 10% of the region's entire workforce. On the positive side, these losses were numerically offset by employment increases in other sectors, largely health services and local government. With further investigation, including calls to area school districts, a sizable portion of the growth in local government jobs was found to be staff additions by the area's growing public schools, which in Arkansas are funded by relatively dependable funding sources and somewhat immune to the vagaries of general economic conditions. Overall, over the 2000 to 2012 period, the result for the Fort Smith region was a negligible net increase of 700 jobs (0.6%).

Over one-half of the 14,400 jobs gained are attributable to two sectors: *Health & Education* (most of which is health services) (29%) and *Local Government* (much of which are area public school districts) (25%). The trucking, construction, leisure and hospitality, and wholesale trade industries also contributed positively to the area's employment growth. Of the 13,800 jobs lost, almost nine out of ten (88%) were in manufacturing.

The Fort Smith MSA, which is comprised of the Arkansas counties of Sebastian, Crawford and Franklin and the Oklahoma counties of LeFlore and Sequoyah, fairly well describes the Fort Smith economic region and the Fort Smith trade area. Between 2000 and 2011, the Fort Smith metro area had a decline in employed workforce of 1,865 persons, a 1.5% decrease. Crawford

County, with an increase of 1,550, was the only one of the five metro counties to show an addition of employed residents. Sebastian County showed a slight decline of 50. The other three more rural counties experienced declines of six to nine percent in their numbers of residents employed.

The 2011 average mean wage for the Fort Smith metro area was 76% of the average mean wage for the United States. This is the same percentage as the metro area's 2011 per-capita income percentage of the U.S., which explains the metro area's per-person income standing relative to that of the U.S., considering that wages are the biggest component of the area's personal income.

Change in Employment by Industry Sector for FS MSA, 1990 to 2012 and 2000 to 2012							
				Chg. 1990 - 2012		Chg. 2000 - 2012	
	1990	2000	2012	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Manufacturing	27,200	31,300	19,200	-8,000	-29.4	-12,100	-38.7
Construction, Nat. Resources, Mining	4,800	5,600	6,900	2,100	43.8	1,300	23.2
Retail Trade	10,600	13,500	13,100	2,500	23.6	-400	-3.0
Wholesale Trade	2,900	3,200	4,100	1,200	41.4	900	28.1
Trans., Warehouse & Utilities	4,000	5,800	7,100	3,100	77.5	1,300	22.4
Information	1,500	1,900	1,400	-100	-6.7	-500	-26.3
Financial Activities	3,200	4,100	4,300	1,100	34.4	200	4.9
Professional & Business Services	6,600	11,700	11,000	4,400	66.7	-700	-6.0
Health & Education Services	9,400	12,900	17,100	7,700	81.9	4,200	32.6
Leisure & Hospitality	6,400	8,000	9,000	2,600	40.6	1,000	12.5
Other Services	2,800	3,200	4,400	1,600	57.1	1,200	37.5
Federal Government	2,100	1,700	1,600	-500	-23.8	-100	-5.9
State Government	2,000	2,400	3,100	1,100	55.0	700	29.2
Local Government	7,800	10,700	14,400	6,600	84.6	3,700	34.6
Total Nonfarm Employment	91,300	116,000	116,700	25,400	27.8	700	0.6

Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Industry Sectors in the Fort Smith MSA Gaining & Losing Jobs, 2000 - 2012			
	2000 – 2012 Change		Comments
	Number	Percent	
Sectors with Job Gains			
Health & Education Services	4,200	32.6%	Most of these job increases are related to the health services sector.
Local Government	3,700	34.6%	Many of these are jobs with public school districts in the metro area.
Transportation, Warehouse & Utilities	1,300	22.4%	Most of these job increases are related to the trucking industry.
Construction, Natural Resources & Mining	1,300	23.2%	Most of these job increases are related to the construction industry.
Leisure & Hospitality	1,000	12.5%	
Wholesale Trade	900	28.1%	
State Government	700	29.2%	
Financial Activities	200	4.9%	
Other Services	1,200	37.5%	
Total for Sectors Gaining Jobs	14,500		
Sectors with Job Loses			
Manufacturing	-12,100	-38.7%	
Professional & Bus. Services	-700	-6.0%	
Information	-500	-26.3%	
Retail Trade	-400	-3.0%	
Federal Government	-100	-5.9%	
Total for Sectors Losing Jobs	-13,800		
Net Increase in Jobs for FS MSA, 2000-2012	700	0.6%	

Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

The Fort Smith regional economy ended 2012 on a positive note, but the regional economy is having a tough time maintaining this momentum. There has been stabilization to the regions job losses, and many announcements of new businesses and current businesses' expansions have occurred recently. Despite the set-back in manufacturing employment, there is a growing stability of the Fort Smith regional economy.

Major New Business Locations/ Expansions, 2005-2013			
Business	Location	Announcement	Investment & Number of New Jobs
Phoenix Metals	Fort Smith	2013 new plant announced by existing business 65,000 sf	\$12 mil., 40 jobs
14 Various Businesses	Fort Smith	2012	\$52.3 mil. in capital investments
30 Various Businesses	Fort Smith	2012	\$57 mil. in capital investments and 1,100 new jobs
Graphic Packaging	Fort Smith	2005 new plant constructed by existing Fort Smith firm	Total current employment 370
Glatfelter	Fort Smith	2017 Renovation of Mitsubishi plant 200,000 sf	\$57 mil. capital investments and 83 new jobs
Mars Petcare	Fort Smith	2010 new plant constructed	250 jobs
Umarex USA	Fort Smith	2010 new plant constructed 100,000 sf	60 jobs
Sykes Call Center	Fort Smith	2013 expansion 15,000 sf	200 jobs, \$1 mil.
Alma Healthcare and Rehabilitation	Alma	2013 expansion 10,800 sf	20 jobs, \$2.4 mil.
Health Management Associates	Fort Smith	2013 regional service center 90,000 sf	500 jobs,
Gerber Foods	Fort Smith	2013 expansion	90 jobs, \$150 mil.
Answer Fort Smith	Fort Smith	2013 renovation 35,000 sf	90 jobs, \$1.7 mil.
American Vegetable Soybean and Edamame Inc.	Mulberry	2013 new plant announced	100 jobs, \$5.2 mil.
Mercy Hospital	Fort Smith	2013 Orthopedic Hospital construction 69,000 sf	100 jobs, \$42 mil.
SGL Carbon	Ozark	2013 Upgrade	\$26 mil.
Tankersley Food Service	Van Buren	2013 expansion 28,000 sf	40 jobs, \$4 mil.
Umarex USA	Fort Smith	2013 expansion with Walther	70-120 jobs, \$7 mil.
Walther Arms	Fort Smith	2013 expansion with Umarex	see above

Source: Information provided by Chaffee Crossing, Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce, The City Wire, hudexchange.info

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers was the largest occupation in the Western Arkansas Workforce Investment Area (WIA), which mirrors WAPDD's coverage area, in 2013 with an estimated employment of 4,184, earning \$35,155 in annual average wages. Western Arkansas is the home of several trucking companies and is located along Interstate 40 and the proposed Interstate 49. Registered Nurses, with an estimated employment of 1,947 had the highest annual wage of the 10 largest occupations, earning \$53,040 annually. Family and General Practitioners was the occupation paying the most in the Area, earning \$234,684 annually. Chief Executives

were second on the list, earning \$151,453. Natural Science Managers finished the list, earning \$103,837.

2013 Western Arkansas WIA Wages of 10 Largest Occupations				
Occupation	Estimated Employment	Average Wage	Entry Wage	Experience Wage
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,184	\$35,155	\$25,698	\$39,884
Retailer Salespersons	3,331	\$22,193	\$16,887	\$24,846
Office Clerks, General	2,623	\$24,764	\$16,956	\$28,668
Cashiers	2,460	\$18,043	\$16,905	\$18,612
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,394	\$23,850	\$16,803	\$27,374
Waiters and Waitresses	2,054	\$16,934	\$16,752	\$17,024
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	1,954	\$16,954	\$16,770	\$17,046
Registered Nurses	1,947	\$53,040	\$41,794	\$58,663
Nursing Assistants	1,916	\$20,303	\$16,820	\$22,044
Helpers—Production Workers	1,874	\$22,555	\$16,990	\$25,337

Source: 2014 Arkansas Labor Market & Economic Report

The Western Arkansas WIA is expected to experience a net gain of 1,125 jobs during the 2013-2015 projection period. Goods-Producing industries are projected to have a net loss of 852 jobs, while the Services-Providing industries are estimated to add 1,985. A small loss of eight Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers is anticipated during the projection period.

Professional and Business Services is expected to be the top and fastest growing super sector in the Area with a gain of 1,476 jobs during the projection period, an increase of 14.42 percent. Three industries in the super sector are estimated to be the top three growing industries with Administrative and Support Services leading with 768 new jobs. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are estimated to be the fastest growing super sector increasing employment by 23.20 percent. Overall, four industries are forecasted to add more than 10 percent to their respective workforce. However, some areas of the Western Arkansas's economy are not faring as well. The Manufacturing super sector is predicted to experience a net loss of 689 jobs. Driving this decline is Machinery Manufacturing, which is anticipated to lose 348 jobs, a decline of 26.26 percent making it the top and fastest declining industry in the Western Arkansas WIA. Natural Resources and Mining could lose 109 jobs, or 4.70 percent of its workforce. The decline in manufacturing and mining creates an opportunity and potential for Western Arkansas to begin to diversify its economy. Further driving the area's efforts to diversify the region's economy is the presence of post-secondary educational opportunities. Within Western Arkansas are the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, Arkansas Tech University-Ozark, and Rich Mountain College in Mena. Outside of Western Arkansas, but still relatively close are additional educational opportunities at Carl Albert State College in Poteau, Oklahoma, the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, and Arkansas Tech University-Russellville.

The Western Arkansas WIA is projected to have a net job gain of 0.98 percent between 2013 and 2015. Around 3,612 annual job openings are expected to be available during the projection period with 2,645 for replacement and 967 for growth and expansion. Office and Administrative Support Occupations is projected to be the top growing major group with 230 new jobs, while Business and Financial Operations Occupations is predicted to be the fastest growing major group with a gain of 5.90 percent. Waiters and Waitresses, of the Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations major group, is anticipated to lead all occupations in net growth with an increase of 79 jobs, while Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers, of the Healthcare Support Occupations major group, could see a 21.82 percent rise in employment. The Production Occupations major group could see the worst outlook among the major groups with a net loss of 337 jobs, or 2.36 percent of its workforce. Team Assemblers is projected to be the top declining occupation with a loss of 166, while Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters could be the fastest declining occupation with a loss of 14 percent of its workforce. All five on the Top 5 Declining Occupations list and four of the occupations on the Top 5 Fastest Declining Occupations list are in the Production Occupations major group.

Top 10 Growing Industries (Ranked by Net Growth)					
NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
561000	Administrative and Support Services	5,910	6,679	769	13.01%
541000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,047	2,522	475	23.20%
551000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,127	2,360	233	10.95%
621000	Ambulatory Health Care Services	4,622	4,789	167	3.61%
623000	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	3,360	3,499	139	4.14%
722000	Food Services and Drinking Places	7,099	7,202	103	1.45%
452000	General Merchandise Stores	3,801	3,866	65	1.71%
484000	Truck Transportation	4,308	4,371	63	1.46%
999300	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,735	2,785	50	1.83%
453000	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	530	575	45	8.49%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 10 Fastest Growing Industries (Ranked by Percent (%) Growth)

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
541000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,047	2,522	475	23.20%
561000	Administrative and Support Services	5,910	6,679	769	13.01%
325000	Chemical Manufacturing	165	184	19	11.52%
551000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,127	2,360	233	10.95%
453000	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	530	575	45	8.49%
512000	Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	145	156	11	7.59%
211000	Oil and Gas Extraction	231	247	16	6.93%
531000	Real Estate	652	693	41	6.29%
331000	Primary Metal Manufacturing	768	805	37	4.82%
623000	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	3,360	3,499	139	4.14%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 5 Declining Industries (Ranked by Net Growth)

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	1,325	977	-348	-26.26%
335000	Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing	2,690	2,513	-177	-6.58%
213000	Support Activities for Mining	1,318	1,221	-97	-7.36%
337000	Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	479	397	-82	-17.12%
622000	Hospitals	4,108	4,034	-74	-1.80%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 5 Fastest Declining Industries (Ranked by Percent Growth) (Minimum Decline of 5)

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	1,325	977	-348	-26.26%
337000	Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	479	397	-82	-17.12%
115000	Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry	72	63	-9	-12.50%
492000	Couriers and Messengers	171	151	-20	-11.70%
511000	Publishing Industries (except Internet)	225	201	-24	-10.67%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry and Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 10 Growing Occupations (Ranked by Net Growth)					
SOC Code	SOC Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,993	2,072	79	3.96%
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,884	1,959	75	3.98%
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,687	2,756	69	2.57%
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	745	807	62	8.32%
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,264	1,324	60	4.75%
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,696	1,749	53	3.13%
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	1,936	1,988	52	2.69%
33-9032	Security Guards	590	642	52	8.81%
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	792	838	46	5.81%
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	1,748	1,794	46	2.63%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 10 Fastest Growing Occupations (Ranked by Percent (%) Growth) (Minimum Net Growth of 5)					
SOC Code	SOC Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	55	67	12	21.82%
17-1011	Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	50	59	9	18.00%
17-3011	Architectural and Civil Drafters	56	66	10	17.86%
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	98	114	16	16.33%
13-2082	Tax Preparers	124	144	20	16.13%
17-3031	Surveying and Mapping Technicians	57	66	9	15.79%
15-1133	Software Developers, Systems Software	41	47	6	14.63%
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	190	217	27	14.21%
43-6012	Legal Secretaries	124	141	17	13.71%
17-2051	Civil Engineers	93	104	11	11.83%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 5 Declining Occupations (Ranked by Net Growth)					
SOC Code	SOC Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
51-2092	Team Assemblers	1,657	1,491	-166	-10.02%
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	719	690	-29	-4.03%
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	958	931	-27	-2.82%
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Braziers	644	618	-26	-4.04%
51-9198	Helpers--Production Workers	1,648	1,624	-24	-1.46%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections 2013-2015

Top 5 Fastest Declining Occupations (Ranked by Percent (%) Growth) (Minimum Decline of 5)					
SOC Code	SOC Title	2013 Estimated Employment	2015 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth
51-7011	Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters	50	43	-7	-14.00%
51-4081	Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	114	101	-13	-11.40%
51-4031	Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	188	167	-21	-11.17%
51-2092	Team Assemblers	1,657	1,491	-166	-10.02%
47-5081	Helpers--Extraction Workers	149	137	-12	-8.05%

Source: Local Workforce Investment Areas Short-Term Industry and Occupational Projections 2013-2015

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has identified 14 Targeted Business sectors to create strategic investments designed to transition the state's economy to one supported by higher-paying knowledge-based jobs. AEDC's Targeted Opportunities fall into one of the following categories: Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging, Aerospace/Aviation, Biosciences, Data Centers, Distribution and Logistics Services, Firearms and Ammunition, Paper and Timber Products, Regional Headquarters, Smart Grid Technologies (Power Electronics), Software Development & Data Management Services, Sustainable Building Products and Fixtures, Technical Support Centers, Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, Walmart Suppliers.

Of the top growth industries identified for Western Arkansas by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, only 4 align with the state's Targeted Business sectors: Administrative and Support Services, Food Manufacturing, Management of Companies and Enterprises, Aerospace/Aviation. Western Arkansas already has several successful Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging companies in Gerber Foods, American Vegetable Soybean and Edamame, Inc., and Greenwave Foods. Likewise, Western Arkansas has many Regional Headquarters including C & C Market Research, Arkansas Oklahoma Gas Corporation, Cloyes Gear, Cooper Clinic, and QualServ.

ArcBest Corporation, Carco Transportation Services, USA Truck, and Dancor Transit are all successful Distribution and Logistics companies with corporate headquarters in Western Arkansas.

Western Arkansas has experienced growth in several of the other statewide Targeted Business sectors and there is potential for continued growth and new opportunities. Western Arkansas has several Technical Support Centers including Experian, Sykes Call Center, Answer Fort Smith, and Health Management Associates. In regards to Firearms and Ammunition, Western Arkansas boasts Umarex and Walther Arms. Western Arkansas also includes companies producing Paper and Timber Products like Graphic Packaging International, General Pallets, and Travis Lumber Company.

Fort Smith will soon be home to Arkansas's first college of osteopathic medicine and one of just 31 in the U.S., thanks to a more than \$58 million investment from the Fort Smith Regional Healthcare Foundation (FSRHF) and a grant of 200 acres from the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA). The medical school is estimated to have a \$100 million annual economic impact on the region. The first phase of the medical school campus includes a 60,000-square foot building, several smaller buildings, a campus green, main entry, and a proposed pond. A second phase includes a "village green" area with more buildings. Future development around the campus includes space for a medical office park and commercial and retail development.

When fully operational, the school would serve about 600 students, and employ around 65 (full-time equivalent jobs) with an average salary of \$103,000. The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education aims to address a great need with the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine. Arkansas ranks 48th in physician accessibility in the United States. The western side of the state, including the Fort Smith region, has been identified as the most underserved area in Arkansas.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

What does our region do well?

What unique resources do we have?

What do others see as our strengths?

1. Natural beauty, lakes, mountains
2. Strong University presence and partnerships with WIA to establish workforce training programs
3. Universities in Fort Smith, Ozark, and Mena within Western Arkansas and also in Poteau, Fayetteville, Russellville, Clarksville outside the area
4. Safe and friendly place to raise a family/retire
5. Strong tourism industry with long history in Fort Smith and Van Buren
6. Fort Smith Airport – accessibility
7. Transportation Hub- I-40, I-540, I-49
8. Location of River with city controlled river front property in Fort Smith, Van Buren, and Ozark
9. Our Region has 2 Transportation Organizations: the Regional Intermodal Transportation Authority (RITA) and the Frontier Metropolitan Organization (MPO)
10. Fort Smith Regional Alliance
11. Arkansas Regional Coalition of the Ouachitas
12. Fort Chaffee Crossing Redevelopment
13. Available Workforce
14. Commercial Airport in Fort Smith, Airport and training center at Airport in Mena
15. Easy access to North West Arkansas
16. Abundance of Land for residential and commercial development
17. Regional Cooperation among Mayors, County Judges, and Chambers
18. Our region has low crime rates

Weaknesses:

What could our region improve?

Where do we have fewer resources than others?

What are others likely to see as our weaknesses?

1. Some areas are over reliant on tourism
2. Lack of affordable housing
3. Labor force – lack of abundant supply of quality employees, highly skilled workers
4. Lack of professional opportunities for young adults, out-migration of young adults
5. Some local governments are not business-friendly, permitting can be difficult
6. Lack of broadband in rural areas
7. Lack of healthcare (medical personnel and medical infrastructure)
8. Lack of Doctor Recruitment in the area
9. Some rural areas still have a lack of water supply

10. Local Leadership and their understanding of economic development and their role/ownership
11. Lack of higher wage service sector jobs
12. Funding mechanisms are needed for commercial and business development.
13. Rural areas need solid waste and recycling programs
14. Lack of website development/presence for our communities – city and county, chamber level
15. Dependence on manufacturing sector
16. Lack of Business Retention Expansion programs in our communities – we do not know what our existing businesses/industry need
17. Lack of diversity in economy
18. Dysfunctional downtown merchants (shops aren't open regularly for business)
19. Local people do not support LOCAL
20. Lack of things to do and nightlife to keep our young people here

Opportunities:

What good opportunities are open to the region?

What Trends could we take advantage of?

How can we turn strengths/weaknesses into opportunities?

19. 1-49 construction and completion
20. Port Facilities in Crawford and Sebastian Counties
21. US Marshal's Museum to be constructed
22. Rail and River Infrastructure
23. Universities in Fort Smith, Ozark and Mena
24. Riverfront Development in Fort Smith, Van Buren, and Ozark
25. Osteopathic College to be constructed and completed in Fort Smith by 2016
26. Commercial Airport in Fort Smith, Airport and training center at Airport in Mena
27. Ability to leverage one community's assets with a neighboring community to maximize competitiveness
28. Empty and available building space in downtowns
29. Partnerships with state agencies, governmental officials, elected officials
30. Potential to further diversify economy
31. Brownfields redevelopment
32. Some communities are beginning to establish parks and recreation plans
33. Some communities are in the strategic planning processes and will establish economic development plans
34. Mitigation Planning and COOP Planning is occurring in our Region to ensure resiliency
35. Growing healthcare services to meet the needs of the population
36. Paris Satellite Training Center

Threats:

What trends could harm our region?

What is our competition doing?

What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?

1. Continued decline of manufacturing sector
2. Loss of talent – workforce smaller in areas
3. Lack of competitive business environment – capital and incentives
4. Lack of access to health care
5. Small rural communities that have blighted properties and empty buildings downtown (quality of place issue)
6. Our area is facing more and more competition and our industries are faced with the challenges of finding ways to reduce costs
7. Hard to compete with Northwest Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma
8. Losing our youth – they are not coming back after college to work and live in our communities
9. Loss of “things to do” – quality of place
10. Household Income in our region is below the US Median Income
11. Poverty Rate (food stamps, etc.) for our area is higher than national percentages
12. Lack of urgency to continue to improve K-12 schools in some areas.
13. Lack of new leadership
14. Attitudes – too many with the attitude of what are “they” going to bring to us not what can “we” do to improve!

Note:

We need to retain and strengthen the ratio of industrial employment to other economic sectors

such as services, transportation, agriculture, etc. Further development of the tourism sector into a more dependable, year round and stable economic sector

Strategic Direction/Action Plan

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy establishes the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic problems and capitalize on the resources of the region. Strategic projects, programs and activities identified in the Strategy are designed to fulfill these goals and objectives. The goals and objectives are organized using the Arkansas Statewide CEDS Seven Primary Initiatives for Economic Development in Arkansas.

It is our vision to constantly ascertain economic conditions within our Region; to consistently help in establishing stability; to always strive for improvement; and to foster growth and future prosperity for all of Western Arkansas. We will be at the fore front of providing “Excellence” in community and economic development, workforce innovation, transportation and emergency planning, while serving our local governments, our businesses, and our citizens with a higher quality of life.

Our Region is a distinct area having a unique character, vibrant business sector, a focus on quality of life and the beauty of the natural environment, valued historic and cultural assets, diverse infrastructure that supports business activity and has vital local, state and national partnerships. It is a community that enjoys a high sense of place, provides ample opportunity and quality living to all its citizens, and attracts and retains its youth.

1. Foster vibrant communities as good places in which to live, work, invest, and to do business.

GOAL – Create quality spaces and vibrant downtowns as magnets for economic activity.

Objective – Use things such as the Main Street Arkansas Program and the Arkansas Downtown Network to create engaging and attractive downtown spaces.

- a. Encourage other cities to join Main Street Arkansas with the goal of adding 1 new community to the programs by 2020. Currently only Ozark participates in Main Street Arkansas.
- b. Assist communities with limited resources to join Arkansas Downtown Network with a goal of adding 3 to the program by 2020. Fort Smith is the only city participating in this program at this time.

PROJECT: Invite AHPP to participate in new elected officials training.

GOAL – Cultivate community development.

Objective – Review and revise local codes and policies to ensure that they do not actively encourage urban sprawl and greenfield development – ensure that infill development, reuse, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of properties are equally encouraged.

- a. Continue to pursue EPA Brownfields funding by first applying for assessments funds and later cleanup funds.
- b. Continue to pursue funding through the USDA Community Facilities Program for healthcare, public safety, public services, and other essential community facilities.

PROJECT: Submit FY2016 EPA Brownfields Assessment Application targeting Fort Smith, Ozark, Mulberry, and Booneville.

GOAL – Augment education and amenities that make communities more attractive.

Objective – Develop trails, linear parks, river/lake front areas and parks, and seek out street scape projects.

- a. Continue to pursue Arkansas Outdoor Recreation Grant Program funding.
- b. Pursue Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Recreational Trails Program funding.

PROJECT: Submit FY2016 ORGP FUN Park applications for Denning and Rudy.

PROJECT: Submit FY2016 ORGP Trail applications for Huntington.

PROJECT: Submit FY2016 ORGP 50/50 application for Scranton.

GOAL – Promote healthier communities.

Objective – Support local public health programs that target chronic diseases and under-served communities.

- a. Continue to work with Waldron and Healthy Connections, Inc. to establish rural health clinic with a goal of having a clinic in place by 2016.
- b. Seek funding assistance for units designated as Critical Access Hospitals in the region.

PROJECT: Submit a 2016 Blue & You Foundation Grant application for Waldron.

2. Ensure infrastructure that supports business activity, quality communities, and development.

GOAL – Identify and support water/wastewater project sources and supplies, make wise use of what is available, and properly deal with waste water runoff.

Objective – Engage in long range planning to identify and help secure funding for construction of facilities to provide adequate water/wastewater supply for multiple jurisdictions.

- a. Continue to pursue Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and USDA funding for water/wastewater projects by submitting at least 2 applications per year.
- b. Work with community leaders to identify potential future needs based on growth patterns.

PROJECT: Submit 2016 ANRC application for the Scott County-Harvey Water Project.

GOAL – Address the multiple modes of transportation used to move goods and people within and through the State.

Objective – Support the completion of the Interstate Highway System in Arkansas, specifically Interstate 49.

- a. Support RITA and the Frontier MPO in their efforts to complete Interstate 49 and increase the channel depth of the Arkansas River Navigation Waterway to 12 feet.
- b. Encourage Arkansas Highway Department to start \$30 million study of I-49 River Bridge as well as develop funding streams for said study.
- c. Provide letters of support for I-49 to Frontier MPO.

GOAL - Support all Modes of Transportation throughout the region.

Objective –Support the update of the State Wide Rail Plan.

- a. Attend meetings with Arkansas Highway Transportation Department staff, Legislators, and appropriate facility staff to discuss project.
- b. Compile a rail database and mapping for our region.

Objective - Assist Frontier MPO in updating Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

- a. Provide freight and waterways information and data to Frontier MPO.
- b. Assist in coordination of parks and trails planning.

Objective - Continue to support a Regional Intermodal Port.

- a. Promote awareness of Intermodal Port.
- b. Encourage Corp of Engineers to publish the completed USACE-CAP 107 Small Navigation Report.
- c. Attend meetings with Corp of Engineers and other groups to include Arkansas World Trade Center, Arkansas Waterways, MKARNS River Port Operators and Legislators.

3. Produce a workforce with the right education, hard and soft skills for jobs created and retained.

GOAL – Assist in developing a workforce that can fill local and regional jobs.

Objective – Aid local governments to act as catalysts for increased business/employer-education interaction targeting specific employers and particular needs.

- a. Host meetings between industry and post-secondary leaders to determine industry needs and post-secondary capabilities with a goal of 3 meetings per year, one for each post-secondary facility in our district (UAFS, ATU-Ozark, Rich Mountain College).
- a. Continue to work with the city of Paris regarding the Logan County Career Center.

PROJECT: Coordinate AEDC assistance to compliment private and GIF funding to break ground for Career Center in Paris by 2017.

4. Create a business friendly climate throughout the region.

GOAL – Foster public-private-nonprofit partnerships where diverse efforts can be made to complement one another.

Objective – Facilitate partnerships with local governments and chambers of commerce.

- a. Continue to facilitate strategic planning in our communities with efforts in Van Buren

and Paris to be completed in 2015.

- b. Seek opportunities to bolster regional impact by coordinating efforts in the ARCO counties.

PROJECT: Complete Van Buren and Paris Strategic Plans by December 2015.

PROJECT: Identify new communities where strategic planning is needed and begin planning efforts in 2016.

Objective – Create or strengthen industrial and downtown development authorities.

- a. Continue to work with the Scott County Industrial Board on economic development efforts and reach out to other organizations with similar goals.
- b. Work with state agencies on industrial outreach in low LMI communities.

PROJECT: Complete SWOT analysis of Scott County in 2016.

5. Focus efforts targeted on creating and retaining jobs with existing businesses.

GOAL – Concentrate localized efforts into business retention and expansion/

Objective – Develop business retention tools that can be employed by local governments; develop how-to guide on the available tools and how to use them.

- a. Assist Van Buren in establishing Business Retention and Expansion programs.
- b. Work with Greenwood to incorporate use of BRE program received from CDI.

PROJECT: Host BRE training with more communities in district during 2016 and 2017.

GOAL – Determine locally appropriate development and guide efforts in those areas.

Objective – Focus efforts on further development of existing industry clusters and of those businesses that serve these clusters.

- a. Coordinate efforts of similar production types throughout the region.
- b. Identify support industries in these areas and determine assistance needed in getting them established.

PROJECT: Aid coal production facilities in Hartford with 2016 POWER initiative.

Objective – In rural areas, recognize that retail development may be the first step in viable growth.

- a. Track private investment and jobs created / retained.
- b. Build a knowledge of available retail space in these communities and insure they are being listed on a state level at a minimum.

PROJECT: Continue reporting project outcomes to GPRA on annual basis.

GOAL – Find the right balance of inducements and incentives to recruit industry and site development

Objective – Advise local governments on possibilities of contributing utility infrastructure as inducements to complement and improve new business recruitment efforts.

- a. Continue to pursue EDA funding for infrastructure projects that assist in recruiting and retaining industry with a goal of 1 application per year.
- b. Seek state and private sources for infrastructure projects that promote multijurisdictional projects.

PROJECT: Submit EDA grant for improvements at Chaffee Crossing.

6. Promote and aid in the delivery of locally driven planning and economic development.

GOAL – Invest in efforts to produce knowledgeable leaders who can drive local efforts.

Objective – Educate local public leaders as to how their local governments are the owners of the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District

- a. Host training for public officials on a regular basis that incorporates the role and purpose of WAPDD.
- b. Seek out opportunities in regional communities to deliver the same message to the public through the chamber of commerce and industrial boards.

PROJECT: Continue to hold quarterly WAPDD Board meetings.

GOAL – Find the next generation of leaders and nurture their development.

Objective – Establish or support local and regional leadership programs that target those less than 50 years of age.

- a. Support and participate in local leadership programs in Fort Smith, Crawford County, Franklin County.
- b. Continue to support education efforts of WAPDD staff in economic and community development techniques to train out to the region.

PROJECT: Encourage other counties to establish similar programs. Assist existing programs in recruiting participation by younger citizens. Allow WAPDD employees to participate in local leadership programs.

Objective – Use the graduates of the leadership program

Objective – Create internship opportunities and foster the development of mentors

- a. When hiring additional WAPDD staff, consider those who have completed a local leadership program.
- b. Encourage cities, counties, and local employers to do the same.

PROJECT: Hire additional WAPDD staff to perform community liaison role.

7. Enhance collaboration and regional approaches that engage a wide range of partners.

GOAL – Assist cities and counties in discovering win-win solutions.

Objective – Advance the understanding that cities and residents in those cities are also part of their counties.

Objective – Foster the mindset that counties and cities must both succeed if they are to prosper.

- a. Facilitate meetings between city and county leaders, especially in those counties where there has been strife between the mayors and county judge.
- b. Endorse the idea of regionalized cooperation and branding as a growth strategy.

PROJECT: Arrange a meeting of elected officials in Franklin County.

Evaluation Framework

The Western Arkansas Planning and Development District's performance and evaluation measurement process is tied directly to the long-term goals and objectives that were developed. The CEDS goals and objectives outline criteria from which progress can be measured in the areas of:

Amount of public land that remains available for development and wise multiple usage.

Amount of green spaces that are available for parks and recreation.

Increase in local public health programs and facilities.

Increases in average household wages and income.

Number of new customers added to public water systems through CDBG funding.

Number of meetings with local elected officials.

Number of public meetings to prioritize community needs.

Number of CEDS goals and objectives advanced or accomplished.

Number of jobs retained.

Number of jobs created.

Number of new businesses and companies.

Number and types of public sector investments undertaken.

Amount of Federal, state, and local investment in the district.

Amount of private sector investments in the district.

Changes in the economic environment of the district such as adjustments to taxes, fees, and new incentives.

Trends in key economic development indicators and any significant changes in the district's economy will be monitored by WAPDD staff and CEDS strategy committee. The effectiveness in meeting the CEDS goals will be evaluated regularly and adjustments to the CEDS document and WAPDD annual plans of action will be made as needed to meet the economic development needs of the district.

Economic Resilience

Regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions to its economic base. In an economic development context, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid a shock. According to the US Economic Development Administration, the shocks or disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

1. Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
2. Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or
3. Other external shocks such as natural or manmade disasters, closures of military bases, exit of a major employer, and climate change.

The Western Arkansas Planning and Development District has focused on economic resilience in the following ways in our Region:

1. The District is engaged in comprehensive planning efforts with all six counties (Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, Scott and Sebastian) and municipalities within these counties, also including the School Districts, Colleges, and other groups such as the Salvation Army and local chambers. WAPDD currently assists all the above mentioned counties and participating jurisdictions in FEMA approved Hazard Mitigation Plans. Polk County's Mitigation Plan with FEMA does not expire until 2018. Crawford County and Sebastian County have current Hazard Mitigation Plans. Logan County has a Hazard Mitigation Plan which has been submitted to the state and FEMA pending approval. WAPDD is also working with Franklin County, Logan County, and Scott County in updating their Mitigation Plans to keep them in compliance with FEMA and engaged in the planning efforts to establish economic resilience. WAPDD also conducts pre-disaster recovery planning to define the stakeholders, roles, responsibilities and key actions needed.
2. The District Participates in the Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) or Comprehensive Planning for many of our area cities and offer this service to all participating jurisdictions. WAPDD is currently keeping the Crawford County COOP updated quarterly and participates in testing of the plan with ACOOP and the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM). The COOP elements consists of the essential processes of daily positions, the orders of succession, delegation of authority,

interoperable communications (emergency contact information and alternate contact information), vital records, human capital, alternate locations such as backup sites and offsite storage, devolution planning and reconstitution. A leadership succession plan for short, intermediate, and long term recovery needs is a key component of COOP.

3. WAPDD has listed in their goals and objectives to begin initiating and establishing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) programs in our Region. This goal and objectives will include assisting areas with economic recovery post-disruption. WAPDD also promotes business continuity and preparedness so that businesses and communities understand their vulnerabilities and can be prepared to take action to resume operations after an event. Another element that is incorporated into the BRE programs is to establish a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues.
4. WAPDD has listed in their goals and objectives the proposed project of assisting the Logan County Career Center in Paris. This training facility is being established to meet the areas need for skilled labor and to build a resilient workforce that can transition between jobs and industries when changes occur in jobs or required skills.
5. WAPDD has a GIS department that maintains geographic information systems and mapping that link with business establishment's data, taxing information, zoning, fire department district boundaries/locations, transportation data and flood plain areas. Our GIS department can provide available development site data as well as property ownership information to our district.
6. WAPDD's community development department and GIS department assists communities, local chambers, industrial boards and businesses in employing safe development practices. Such strategies include assisting in city and regional planning in locating structures outside of floodplains, preserving natural lands and creating green spaces, and protecting downtowns and other existing development from the impacts of extreme weather.

APPENDIX

CEDS Committee Members

WAPDD Maps

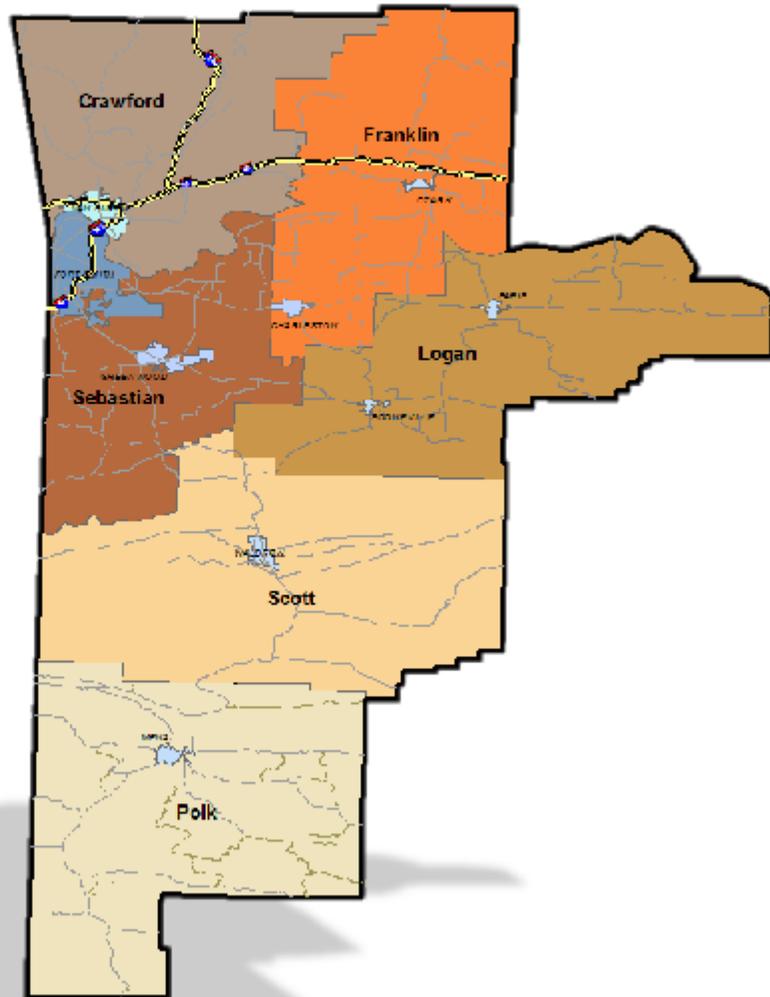
WESTERN ARKANSAS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.

CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Name	Race	Sex	Date	Co. Res.	Position	Locality	L.E.O.	Econ. & Bus. Dev.	Emp. Training	Comm. Org.	Private Bus.
John Hall, President	W	M	01/07	Crawford	Judge	Van Buren	X				
Gary Baxter, President-Elect	W	M	01/09	Crawford	Mayor	Mulberry	X				
Daniel Rogers, Vice President	W	M	01/11	Logan	Mayor	Paris	X				
Jackie Krutsch	W	F	11/07	Crawford	Chamber	Van Buren	X	X			
Brandon Ellison	W	M	01/09	Polk	Judge	Mena	X				
Rickey Bowman	W	M	01/15	Franklin	Judge	Ozark	X				
George Lynn McKee	W	M	01/07	Polk	Mayor	Mena	X				
James Forbes	W	M	01/17	Scott	Judge	Waldron	X				
David Hudson	W	M	10/97	Sebastian	Judge	Fort Smith	X				
Keith Greene	W	M	01/15	Crawford	Mayor	Alma	X				
Robert Freeman	W	M	01/99	Crawford	Mayor	Van Buren	X				
Jerry Wilkins	W	M	01/03	Logan	Mayor	Booneville	X				X
Tommy McNutt	W	M	01/15	Franklin	Mayor	Ozark	X				X
Doug Kinslow	W	M	06/14	Sebastian	Mayor	Greenwood	X				
Larry Austin	W	M	02/16	Sebastian	Mayor	Mansfield	X				
Neil Cherry	W	M	02/16	Scott	Mayor	Waldron	X				
DeWite DeShazo	W	M	11/07	Crawford	Businessman	Rudy					X
Lyn Miller	W	F	11/07	Crawford	Businesswoman	Van Buren					X
Rob Ratley	W	M	02/16	Sebastian	Utility organization	Fort Smith		X			X
Mitch Minnick	W	M	08/13	Sebastian	Housing Authority	Fort Smith	X			X	

Kevin Settle	W	M	01/09	Sebastian	Businessman	Fort Smith					X
Veronica Post	W	F	01/15	Franklin	Mayor and ATU	Altus/Ozark	X		X	X	
Ken Warden	W	M	02/16	Sebastian	UAFS	Fort Smith		X	X		
Edward Serna	W	M	02/16	Sebastian	UAFS	Fort Smith		X		X	
Katie Beshoner	W	F	02/16	Sebastian	Greenwood Chamber	Greenwood	X	X			
Jay White	W	M	01/15	Crawford	Pepper Source	Van Buren					X
Bruce Sykes	W	M	02/16	Franklin	ATU	Ozark		X	X		
Ivy Owen	W	M	01/15	Sebastian	Chaffee Crossing	Barling	X				
Julia Heffington	W	F	02/16	Logan	Booneville Chamber	Booneville	X	X			
Tonya Baumgartner	W	F	04/14	Logan	Paris Chamber	Paris	X	X			
Linda Milsap	W	F	02/16	Franklin	Ozark Chamber	Ozark	X	X			
Steve Rook	W	M	02/16	Polk	Rich Mtn College	Mena			X	X	
Jamie Scott	W	M	02/16	Sebastian	USDA	Fort Smith	X	X			
Matt Twyford	W	M	2/16	Pulaski	AEDC	Little Rock	X	X			
Robert Null	W	M		Crawford	Arkansas Lamp	Van Buren					X
Kevin Wright	W	M	2/16	Sebastian	Businessman	Fort Smith					X
Lorlla Wallace	W	F	2/16	Scott	Boys/Girls Club	Waldron				X	
Mat Pitsch	W	M	1/15	Sebastian	Transportation	Fort Smith		X		X	X
Dianne Morrison	W	F	1/15	Sebastian	Transportation	Fort Smith		X			
Terry Rice	W	M	1/15	Scott	Businessman/Senator	Waldron					X
Tom Webb	W	M	1/15	Sebastian	Medical College	Fort Smith			X		
Joe Hurst	W	M	2/16	Crawford	City Admin	Van Buren	X				

WAPDD Service Area



Western Arkansas Planning and Development District

