



Delta Bridge Project



Strategic Community Plan

Spring 2007 - 2nd Edition

Phillips County, Arkansas

2005 - 2010



Strategic Community Plan
Phillips County, Arkansas

Second Edition

Introduction

The second edition of the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan (“the Plan”) has been prepared to assist readers in determining the progress achieved in implementing the Plan since the date of the document’s initial publishing in August 2005. This second edition provides updates on the status of items in the Plan as of April 2007.

The Strategic Goals and Action Steps contained within the Plan are in various stages of implementation. The amount of progress made on those items is determined by many factors, including the priorities of citizens in the community, the availability of funding, and a variety of environmental conditions. In this second edition of the Plan, criteria have been applied to each Goal and Action Step in the Plan so that the reader may judge the progress made on their implementation.

Strategic Goals and Action Steps that have not been acted upon as of the time of this document’s publication remain subject to future implementation. Goals and Action Steps that have been acted upon are defined as follows:

- **“Completed”** - all parts of the project have been fully completed
- **“Active”** - some parts of the project have been completed and subsequent steps are being actively pursued that should result in 100% completion within the period defined by the Strategic Plan
- **“Ongoing Development”** – the project is still in the planning stages and has not yet produced tangible results, but action is expected to take place in the foreseeable future.

For various reasons, some Steps or Goals have changed significantly since the original Strategic Plan was drafted. Those projects have been labeled **“Under Revision”** in this Second Edition and may be modified or removed from the Plan in the future. Moreover, not all of the projects categorized as **“Complete”**, **“Active”** or **“Ongoing Development”** have been coordinated and funded by the Delta Bridge Project. The text indicates when this is the case.

The insert included at the end of this document contains brief descriptions of all projects that *have* received Delta Bridge funding and/or support. No significant changes have been made to the actual text of the Goals or Action Steps. Readers seeking further information on a particular Strategic Goal or Action Step should turn to the Delta Bridge Project’s website at <http://www.deltabridgeproject.com> or ask to speak to a staff member at (870) 816-1121.



STATE OF ARKANSAS
MIKE BEEBE
GOVERNOR

February 12, 2007



To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to endorse the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan. Rural Arkansas and the Delta, in particular, are experiencing fundamental economic changes. The region has suffered for decades from extreme poverty, population migration, and an eroding economic base. To remediate this, Phillips County residents have put aside historical differences to develop a strategic plan for economic and social change in the hope that Phillips County will become competitive in the 21st-century global economy.

I am encouraged that the people of Phillips County have accepted responsibility for their future and have actively taken steps to address their needs. I hope that other Arkansas communities will follow this example and work to develop initiatives for revitalization. Successful community development must begin with local citizens acting in concert for the benefit of all concerned.

Currently, the Phillips County revitalization efforts have leveraged more than \$50 million in development funding, and this figure is expected to grow. By any measure, this is no small accomplishment. I pledge state cooperation, coordination, and partnership whenever possible to help implement Phillips County's strategic objectives. I encourage its citizens to remain steadfast, as the reversal of multiple decades of stagnation takes time. Economic progress will not occur instantly and will present challenges still unforeseen. I urge you to celebrate your victories, but never lose sight of your ultimate goals.

Our collective future depends on our ability to work together for a common purpose, even in the face of great obstacles. I enthusiastically endorse this plan and am available if I can be of assistance in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Beebe".

Mike Beebe

MB:jb

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
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FINANCE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING



June 8, 2005

Ben Steinberg, President
Members of the Board of Directors
Southern Financial Partners
502 Cherry Street
Helena, Arkansas 72342

Dear Friends:

I am extremely pleased that the efforts of over 300 Phillips County residents working together for 10 months has resulted in the *Phillips County Strategic Community Plan: 2005-2010*. Progress is built on the foundation of sound social and economic planning.

As a native of Helena, I am delighted to participate with residents and community organizations to achieve our dreams. The recent vote to consolidate the cities of Helena and West Helena demonstrates a unified community vision and a desire to move confidently to enhance economic and social opportunities in our area.

The Phillips County Strategic Community Plan's vision is sound and one that I wholeheartedly endorse. We have exciting months and years to come as we implement the goals identified in the plan. I look forward to working with you and the citizens of Phillips County to make those goals become reality.

Sincerely,

Blanche L. Lincoln

BLL:dky

ENDORSEMENTS

United States Senator Mark Pryor United States Representative Marion Berry United States Representative Mike Ross

State Attorney General Dustin McDaniel
State Senator Jack Crumbly
State Representative Clark Hall

PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas Department of Economic Development
Arkansas State Parks and Tourism Department
Phillips County
City of Elaine
City of Helena – West Helena
City of Lakeview
City of Lexa
City of Marvell

ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS

Barton-Lexa School District
Delta Area Heath Education Center (AHEC)
Elaine School District
Great Rivers Educational Cooperative
Helena-West Helena School District
KIPP Delta College Preparatory School
Marvell School District
Phillips Community College of the University of
Arkansas
University of Arkansas
University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public
Service
University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension
Service in Phillips County

BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

AAA Therapy Care, Inc.
Amerimax
Best Western
BPS Inc.
Centerpoint Energy
Cline-Frazier Consulting Engineers
CoCo Distributing
Cunningham Inc.
DBG Enterprises
Daily World
Delta American Fuel
Economy Drugs
Edwardian Inn
Entergy
First Bank of the Delta
First Delta Insurance
H & M Lumber Company Inc.
Helena National Bank

Helena Regional Medical Center
Hickory Hill Pharmacy
Hoffinger Industry Inc.
Isle of Capri Casino
Juengel & Associates
KCLT Radio
KFFA Radio
KJIW Radio
King Farms
Motel 6
Olivers Restaurant
Phillips County Chamber of Commerce
Phillips County Port Authority
Planters Service & Sales
Producers Tractor Company
River Road Restaurant
West-Hornor Motor Company

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas Hospitality Association
Boys and Girls Club of Phillips County
Boys, Girls, and Adults Community Development
Center (BGACDC)
Delta Cultural Center
E.C. Morris Foundation
Helena Health Foundation
Main Street Helena
Mid-Delta Community Services
Partners in Hope
Phillips County Community Foundation
Southern Financial Partners
Southern Good Faith Fund
The Walton Family Foundation
Walnut Street Works

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Kappa Alpha
Alpha Phi Alpha
Delta Sigma Theta
Kappa Alpha Psi
Kiwanis Club
Lions Club
Rotary Club

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Phillips County Ministerial Alliance
Phillips, Lee, Monroe, & Deshea Counties District
Association

Executive Summary

The Strategic Community Plan for Phillips County, Arkansas, is a long-range visioning document created over a ten-month period by approximately 300 Phillips County residents. The Strategic Community Plan depicts collective hopes and desires and is a broad based vision of what can be. The purpose of the Strategic Community Plan is to identify and promote implementation of comprehensive community initiatives that improve quality of life and economic opportunities for all residents of Phillips County.

The Strategic Community Plan organizes the community’s long-term vision into 46 strategic goals and 190 actionable items. This document is a blueprint for change with workable plans of action that provide organized community engagement in a comprehensive process involving each of the five fundamental pillars of community life: economic development, housing, education, leadership development and health care.

The Strategic Community Plan is designed to coordinate resources from interested parties, including federal, state and municipal organizations, philanthropic foundations, economic development agencies, key regional leaders, legislators, commercial businesses and community citizens.

The Strategic Community Plan was developed through an intense 10-month planning process that included over 300 community residents. Involvement in the rigorous planning process was open to all residents of Phillips County and took into consideration the county’s historic racial and cultural diversity. The Strategic Community Plan has the endorsement of community, civic, business and governmental organizations in Phillips County and throughout the State of Arkansas.

The Strategic Community Plan is dynamic in nature and will be updated annually to incorporate new ideas, concepts and action steps.

Initial development of the Strategic Community Plan encompassed 10 community discussion meetings conducted by Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences designed to identify areas of community interest and develop an overall community vision. These meetings involved 154 community residents (80 African American and 74 white). Results of the community discussions indicate that residents of Phillips County want (i) a good education for their children, (ii) access to jobs for themselves and their children and (iii) a safe, nurturing, and attractive community in which to live.

Table of Contents	
STRATEGIC AREA	PG.
Economic Development:	
A. Tourism	10
B. Business and Job Creation	21
Housing Development and Redevelopment	28
Education	33
Leadership Development	38
Health Care	40
What is the Delta Bridge Project?	43
Community Achievements	44
Project Funding	46
Delta Bridge Project Achievements	47

In order to develop the Strategic Community Plan, the Phillips County Steering Committee was formed in January 2004. This initial Steering Committee was comprised of approximately 50 community residents.

In March 2004 the Steering Committee hired a professional facilitation organization, Performance Development Plus of Metairie, Louisiana, to facilitate the Steering Committee meetings and processes. The Steering Committee and subcommittees thereof met monthly from March 2004 through January 2005 and were responsible for preparation of the Strategic Community Plan. The Plan was unanimously ratified by the Steering Committee in January 2005.

Mission Statement

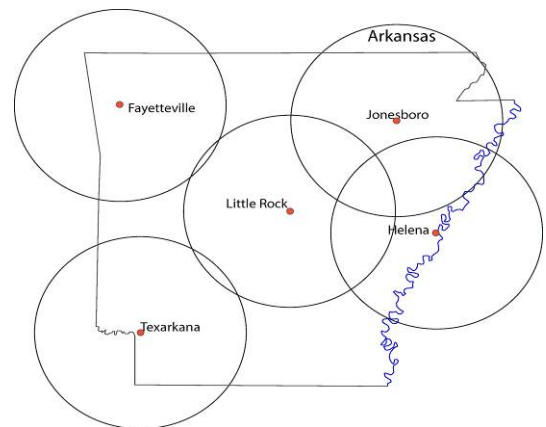
Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee

The Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee is a public-private partnership that will create and harness community spirit, reduce racial disparity, and unify community organizations and citizens so that together we create, promote, and support development efforts that result in the greatest possible benefit for all citizens.

Key concepts included in this plan were obtained from the Assessment Report and Action Blueprint prepared by Main Street Arkansas and the Department of Arkansas Heritage in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and from the offices of United States Senator Blanche Lincoln.

Community Vision

Successful regional development requires anchor communities that attract and promote economic activity and growth. Central Arkansas benefits from the Little Rock metroplex, and Northwest Arkansas benefits from the conflux of Fayetteville, Springdale and Rogers. Southwest Arkansas is tied to Texarkana, while Northeast Arkansas's economic vitality is centered in Jonesboro.



The merged city of Helena-West Helena is geographically located to serve as the regional hub community for Southeast Arkansas. It is the vision of community residents in Phillips County that Helena-West Helena achieve this status and become an economic and cultural force throughout Southeast Arkansas in a manner similar to the communities mentioned above.

To this end the Phillips County Steering Committee adopted the following Vision Statement in June 2004.

Vision Statement

Phillips County Strategic Planning Steering Committee

By 2010 Phillips County will be a model community for the Delta, one that is economically strong, spiritually enriched, and demonstrates equality among its people by building on the unity of its citizens, strength of its leadership, its rich history and natural beauty. Phillips County will be a safe community with quality job opportunities for all citizens, excellent housing for all income levels, proactive healthcare and social services, excellent education for its children and workforce, and premier recreational and tourism attractions that promote cultural enrichment for all.

Additionally, residents of Phillips County understand the importance of connectivity with the Memphis Regional Economic Development Zone. As such, the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan is intrinsically linked to the Economic Plan for the Greater Memphis area.

Community Challenges

The economic base of Phillips County is agriculture. The general decline in agriculture as a major source of employment as well as the loss of numerous industrial and manufacturing jobs has resulted in an out-migration of over 14,000 Phillips County residents from 1970 to 2000. This loss has constituted over 35% of the county's population, which has declined from 40,000 to 26,000 residents in the last 30 years. Additionally, racial issues and political tension have historically created an environment that is not conducive to new business development.

To deal effectively with these challenges, Phillips County has adopted a strategy of using existing strengths and opportunities (agricultural strength, the Mississippi River, proximity to Memphis and the Tunica gaming center, blues music, cultural heritage, etc.) to reframe itself and create a positive community image through doing so. Additionally, Phillips County has aligned itself with the Memphis Economic Development Zone, strengthening its economic alliance with this significant regional partner through regional marketing and economic development programs.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths - Opportunities:

- One hour south of Memphis, Tennessee
- Proximity to Memphis International Airport
- Thirty minutes south of Tunica, Mississippi with 12 million visitors per year
- Close proximity to Isle of Capri Casino
- Potential for significant tourism
- Main Street Helena
- Delta Cultural Center
- Distinctive history and cultural heritage:
 - Mississippi River
 - Blues Music – Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival
 - Civil Rights
 - Civil War – Union Army Fort
 - Historic Churches
 - Great River Road
 - Delta Byways
 - Louisiana Purchase Marker
- Historic, architecturally attractive buildings
- Third largest port on the Mississippi River
- Phillips Community College
- Friendly people
- Low cost of living – inexpensive labor and real estate
- Agricultural industry – even though it is declining
- Transportation
 - River
 - Rail

Weaknesses - Threats:

- Racial issues
- Negative perceptions
- General appearance of community
- High unemployment
- Loss of businesses/job opportunities
- Loss of population
- Loss of historic property
- Challenged housing stock
- Declining middle class
- Poorly performing public school system
- Lack of community pride
- Loss of family farms
- Lack of an interstate highway system
- Diminished capacity in the form of:
 - Unified leadership
 - Volunteer base
 - Shared vision
 - Technological sophistication
 - Local organizations
 - Public entities – limited tax base
- Abandoned industrial sites
- Public transportation systems

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified by Phillips County residents during focus group meetings conducted at the beginning of the strategic planning process.

1A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – TOURISM

The distinctive historic and physical characteristics of a community are key factors in its ability to:

- Attract tourists and visitors
- Attract business and industry
- Serve as a desirable location for retirees and others who are relocating

Developing a viable tourism industry in Phillips County is an important first step in community redevelopment; improving the overall appearance and vibrancy of an area enables attraction of commercial businesses and related employment opportunities.

Improved physical image will positively impact business opportunities as company representatives considering relocating a business will view Helena-West Helena in a more favorable light. Tourism does not require development of the education system, improvement of housing stock or state of the art health care. Proper development of a tourism plan, however, will provide a springboard, timeline and revenue source from which needs in education, housing and health care can be addressed.

A significant strength available to Phillips County is its close proximity to Memphis, Tennessee and Tunica, Mississippi. The Memphis metropolitan market and international airport is only one hour north of Helena-West Helena. Tunica, located 30 minutes north of Helena-West Helena, is a rapidly growing tourist destination with the presence of nine casinos (MGM, Ballys, Fitzgeralds, etc.). Approximately 12 million tourists visit Tunica every year. Additionally, the Isle of Capri Casino operates immediately across the Mississippi River from Helena-West Helena in Lula, Mississippi.

In order to develop itself as a meaningful secondary destination for tourists visiting Memphis, Tunica and the Isle of Capri Casino, the City of Helena-West Helena has adopted a strategy that capitalizes on the cultural heritage of Helena, including its civil war battles, blues music and the Mississippi River. The infrastructure currently present in Helena-West Helena, however, is insufficient to provide tourists with a positive impression and must be developed. The Strategic Community Plan provides a blueprint for such development.

“Historic Helena” will be the marketing theme of this effort, and community infrastructure will be designed to tell the story of the Civil War battle fought in Helena in support of General Grant’s attack on Vicksburg, including the garrisoning of Fort Curtis and four Mississippi River batteries by Union Army soldiers and the subsequent creation of a major training facility at Fort Curtis for African American soldiers that fought for the Union Army.



Fort Curtis

A special museum will be developed for this purpose and potentially may be expanded into a national museum.

Helena-West Helena's four civil war batteries overlooking the Mississippi River will be redeveloped and the Centennial Church, located in downtown Helena, will be restored. Pastored by Dr. Elias Camp Morris from 1895-1919 (president of the National Baptist Convention) and designed by Henry James Price, the Centennial Church is the only known example of an African American Church designed by an African American architect. Cherry and Walnut Streets will also be redeveloped to include tourist-based businesses, pubs, blues music clubs, antique stores, novelty shops, restaurants and hotels.



Battle of Helena



Patriots Point

A public pier will be built at the Port of Helena-West Helena to provide both a positive tourist experience and state-of-the-art docking facilities for the riverboats that bring tourists down the Mississippi River. The current river park area will be redeveloped as a “Patriots Point”, with the docking of historic naval vessels (submarines, PT Boats, swift boats as well as Civil War era gunboats).

Strategic Vision – Promote and develop Helena-West Helena as a historic community with attractions of interest.

The strategic tourism focus is to create Historic Helena as a cross between Williamsburg, Virginia, and Branson, Missouri. Tourists will experience the unique history and culture of Helena as well as be entertained by a “blues light district” that includes blues music clubs and pubs in close proximity to the top-quality casinos in Mississippi. Tourist flow will primarily be generated from Memphis, Tennessee, and the region east of the Mississippi River with tourists crossing into Arkansas at the Helena Bridge. The two-mile corridor between the Mississippi River Bridge and downtown Helena makes an important first impression on tourists, and this impression must match the historic theme adopted by the community.

Strategic Goal Number One - Convert travel corridor from the Mississippi River Bridge to downtown historic Helena into a historic park/greenspace with civil war cannons, historic markers and hiking trails.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Purchase or receive donations of available property in this corridor and remove related dilapidated buildings to create the necessary park-greenspace entrance to Historic Helena.

Status: Active

- B) Develop the park-greenspace corridor. The merged City of Helena-West Helena will work with appropriate State of Arkansas and National Historic agencies to achieve this goal and to pass appropriate zoning to preserve the historical context of the area.

Status: Ongoing Development

- C) Build a specially-designed hand-crafted wood sign and place it at the entrance to the travel corridor that welcomes people to Historic Helena.

Status: Ongoing Development

- D) Refurbish the hotel at the crossroads of the Mississippi River Bridge and open it for business.

Status: Complete

- E) Use a historic downtown house in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the Department of Heritage as a State of Arkansas Welcome Center/museum that will focus on the cultural heritage of Helena-West Helena. The Welcome Center will feature interactive exhibits, big-screen monitors that present the history and cultural diversity of Helena-West Helena, state of the art computers and picnic areas. This center will also serve as the National Forest Visitors Center

- F) Redevelop the unused Pyco Industry grain facility into an agricultural museum and park area that provides opportunities for visitors to learn how cotton is processed and presents information about communities in the Delta where visitors can experience the Delta's agricultural heritage. The museum will display a historical account of mechanization of the Delta with a display of vintage tractors through modern farming.

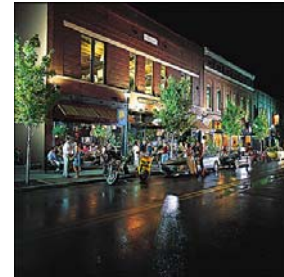
- G) Determine feasibility of adaptive reuse or removal and replacement of the Old Helena High School as a community park.

Status: Ongoing Development

Strategic Goal Number Two – Redevelop downtown Helena (specifically Cherry and Walnut Streets) to focus on their historical context and create a positive experience for tourists.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

- A) Develop a comprehensive and achievable master plan for historic Helena and the riverfront area that (i) addresses specific requirements of a historic downtown district, (ii) defines land and building use plans that recognize the context-sensitive nature of historic Helena and (iii) establishes standard design guidelines, including building appearance, signage and general streetscape requirements. Extend this master plan into an artists rendering of a redeveloped historic Helena.



Cherry and Walnut Street
Renovations

- Status: Ongoing Development**
- B) Coordinate and host a preservation design charrette in Helena-West Helena. Invite nationally known architects, preservationists and developers to work on preservation and development scenarios for Cherry Street and adjacent streets. Work in cooperation with the Building Trades Institute to create several hands-on working experiences. Invite all Delta Initiative communities to participate in the charrette.
- C) Identify properties or districts in Historic Helena that are eligible for the National Register. Obtain historic designation for all such properties identified.
Status: Ongoing Development
- D) Nominate Helena-West Helena for the National Trust’s 2006 Most Endangered Places List. This nomination would position Helena-West Helena as a community most representative of the important physical fabric and cultural heritage in the Delta that will disappear if measures are not taken to preserve it. Apply for endangered building and Preservation Services Fund (PSF) grants.
Status: Complete
- E) Seek designation for Helena-West Helena as a strategic demonstration site by the National Trust’s Department of Community Revitalization to enable more closely focused services from National Main Street and other community partners.
Status: Complete
- F) Stabilize historic buildings on Cherry Street by updating and repairing roofs to prevent further water damage to the structures.
Status: Complete
- G) Develop and execute a broad based plan in conjunction with the master plan for restoring available buildings that create functional commercial space and specialty shops at the street level. Loft apartments and professional office space on the second floor of the redeveloped Cherry and Walnut Street buildings will attract renters. This plan will use historic tax credits, rent and tax incentives and other special inducements to attract and promote business.

- H) Create a “blues light district” on Cherry and Walnut Street that includes a series of outdoor musical stages for informal performances by local artists and expand downtown businesses to includes pubs, restaurants, antique stores and gift shops so that a festive and positive atmosphere is created in this area that will become the heart and soul of Historic Helena’s tourism industry.
- I) Commission historic murals on key downtown buildings. Initiate this process by restoring and preparing a mural on the old water tank located just off Cherry Street.

Status: Active

- J) Prepare a feasibility analysis and estimate of costs to renovate the historic Cleburne Hotel in partnership with the property owner. This renovation will be used as a cornerstone of a revitalization of downtown Historic Helena. Based on the feasibility analysis and subject to projected occupancy rates, initiate renovation efforts on the hotel.



Cleburne Hotel

Status: Ongoing Development

- K) Develop Riverview Condominiums as a high-end multi-unit property development with a view of the Mississippi River and Historic Downtown Helena.
- L) Create a program under the administration of the City of Helena-West Helena’s Property Standards Commission that administers and maintains the historic brick streets of downtown Helena and the Beech Street residential community.
- M) Create a Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival Anniversary Photo Exhibit that includes a collection of photographs taken by various photographers during the past 19 festivals. The exhibit will be used to market the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival and will be premiered and displayed at the Delta Cultural Center but will also be packaged for travel to statewide, national and international venues as a promotional of the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival.
- N) Rebuild an exact replica of Fort Curtis on Walnut Street and restore the civil war batteries that surround Helena-West Helena. Within the context of this redevelopment, partner with the Delta Cultural Center to construct a museum that portrays the involvement of African American soldiers in the Civil War.

Status: Ongoing Development

- O) Complete renovation of the Centennial Church, the only known example in Arkansas of an African American Church designed by an African American architect. The Centennial Church is currently listed as a National Historic Landmark.



Centennial Church

Status: Ongoing Development

- P) Renovate the Hornor Home, as a significant and historical structure of Helena-West Helena and present information on its involvement in the Battle of Helena.

Status: Complete

- Q) Develop a historic trail between the Centennial Church, Fort Curtis, the Hornor Home, significant cannon emplacements, batteries and the Confederate cemetery. Place markers and monuments in locations of historic sites and key battles. Receive national historic battlefield designation.

Status: Ongoing Development

- R) Develop a commercially viable covered farmers market on Walnut Street modeled after the farmers market concept in the River Market area of Little Rock. The farmers market will be a direct link between the Phillips County farmer and the Phillips County



River Market

consumer and will increase traffic flow to Historic Downtown Helena. It will also be an active outlet for local and regional farmers and will meet consumer demand for fresh, healthy, locally grown food.

- S) Renovate the Sonny Boy Music Hall into a Blues Studio. Once the Music Hall is renovated, Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival will operate the Hall as a premier facility for producing and distributing blues-related entertainment material for television and web programs and as a recording studio for established and emerging Blues artists.

- T) Develop an American Music Museum with specific emphasis on blues music. This museum will be used as a significant tourist attraction and also as a facility that educates people about the culture and diversity of blues music.

Status: Ongoing Development



Community Park

- U) Develop further the community park area across from the Phillips County Courthouse with the construction of a Victorian bandstand, using the historic themes established for downtown Helena. Highlight the many nationalities that settled in Helena through construction of monuments and a flag exhibit that displays flags from all nationalities that settled in Helena.

Status: Ongoing Development

- V) Incorporate a police substation facility in the redevelopment plan for Cherry and Walnut Streets in a manner similar to that used in the River Market area Little Rock



Police Substation

- W) Relocate the Phillips County Library and Museum to the existing Save-a-lot building on Columbia Street. The increased size of the Save-a-lot building will accommodate a larger number of patrons and will enable a general expansion of technological capabilities, allowing the Phillips County Museum to expand its storage and exhibit areas in the existing building.

Status: Ongoing Development

- X) Establish a Delta Center for Traditional Southern Arts and Crafts in downtown Helena. This center will teach, practice, demonstrate and sell traditional arts and crafts of the southern United States - enabling area residents to learn, practice and potentially generate income from these activities as the overall tourist industry is developed.

- Y) Create opportunities for local civic organizations – specifically churches – to engage in monthly clean-up campaigns through specific adopt-a-block or adopt-a-building program.

Status: Ongoing Development

Strategic Goal Number Three – Expand development efforts around the Mississippi River to take advantage of this tremendous natural resource. Development efforts will be focused on creation of specific attractions of interest to tourists. Such attractions will be key in drawing people to Historic Helena.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Expand the current river park area to include a “Patriots Point” concept that will include venues of historic significance designed specifically to attract tourists to Historic Helena. The primary venue will be historic naval warships that would be open for public tour. Examples of such would be swift boats, PT boats and submarines as well as a reproduction of the civil war era gun boat, the USS *Tyler*. The river park area would be designated as either a national or state park and would be connected to the recently approved Mississippi River State Park.

- B) Develop a mid-1800's style public pier and dock at the Port of Helena-West Helena to provide improved access and a visually pleasing embarkation point for tourists who travel the Mississippi River on riverboats. This pier and related attractions will be tied to the Tunica and Lula casinos and will be part of an organized effort to bring more tourists to the region.



Public Pier in Helena

- C) Connect the Patriots Point River Park with the development of the Helena Harbor Boardwalk and Nature Trail. The Boardwalk will cross the wetlands beside the Harbor and will include a nature trail into the wetlands with historic lighting, signage and maps depicting the importance of native flora and fauna.
- D) Establish a Delta Convention Center and visitors' bureau on the banks of the Mississippi River. This convention center will provide a forum for company retreats, meetings and seminars and will be modeled after the general themes of Historic Helena.
- E) Develop historic markers depicting key historical events that occurred in this area and place them throughout the Mississippi River area from Historic Helena to the Patriots Point River Park.
- F) Plan and develop an annually recurring festival/celebration that attracts cyclists from the Mississippi River Valley area and create a prominent regional cycling event using the Mississippi River Trail.

Strategic Goal Number Four - Create six major tourist events that occur on an annual basis that promote business volume and traffic flow to Phillips County. Currently, the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival (formerly the King Biscuit Blues Festival) and the Wild Hog Rally bring in approximately 150,000 visitors annually. Four additional events of equal magnitude would increase visitor volume to almost a half million visitors per year.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Expand marketing efforts for the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival and the Wild Hog Rally to include national and international advertising. Coordinate such marketing with the casinos in Tunica and Lula, Mississippi.
Status: Ongoing Development
- B) Promote an annual civil war reenactment of the July 4, 1884 Battle of Helena. Coordinate this event with traditional Fourth of July activities.

- C) Develop and plan four additional events in the Phillips County area specifically designed to attract tourists. These events will focus on heritage tourism, defined as the expression of stories, places, artifacts and experiences that authentically represent the lives and history of people. Specific emphasis will be placed on African American heritage and the civil rights activities that occurred in Phillips County.

Status: Ongoing Development

- D) Expand marketing for group tour operators to national and international audiences. Group tours commonly are directed at Delta Heritage – specifically the African American culture, music and music interest groups, haunted house tours, high school reunions, family reunions and church groups.

Status: Ongoing Development

Strategic Goal Number Five – Expand emphasis on arts and entertainment to improve community involvement in such venues.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:

- A) Expand the Warfield Concert’s free family entertainment offerings in order to create progressive opportunities in the performing arts for all members of the community. Such programs will include
- i. Artists in Action – a program directed at area students from kindergarten to college;
 - ii. the Volunteer Committee Program – an initiative that will broaden community involvement and increase support for local cultural programs
 - iii. the Warfield website — providing information about and schedules of concerts, biographies of performing artists, outlines of the Artist in Action Program and the Volunteer Committee Program and links to other local websites such as the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce website; and
 - iv. the expansion of an arts program for elementary school students to include a Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts tour group and the Arkansas Arts Center Tell-A-Tale Troupe.

Status: Ongoing Development

- B) Develop and produce a series of theatrical productions and special events spearheaded by the Theatre Delta Production Company that will include a cemetery and historic church living history event/tour.

Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop county-wide tourism through creation and promotion of available scenic and recreational activities.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:

- A) Develop the Louisiana Purchase Marker into a higher-profile tourist attraction by the creation of a 26-mile hiking and bike trail from the Mississippi River to the historic marker. This historic marker – 26 miles west of Helena-West Helena – is the location from which the United States measured its purchase of the American West from France in 1815. The trail will begin in Helena-West Helena and will follow the original route taken by the surveyors. This trail could be used to promote a Louisiana Purchase marathon race.
- B) Utilizing 73 miles of property available to Phillips County through the State of Arkansas’s Rails to Trails Program, expand the five-mile “Delta Heritage Trail” just west of Helena-West Helena and affiliate it with the Louisiana Purchase Marker Trail. **Status: Ongoing Development**
- C) Develop the Mississippi River Trail as a 10-state, 2,000-mile bike trail that begins at the headwaters of the Mississippi River and ends at the Gulf of Mexico. Create suggested bike itineraries to include in marketing materials.
Status: Active
- D) Develop a museum in Elaine, Arkansas, in conjunction with the Delta Heritage Trail “Trailhead” that commemorates the Elaine race riots. Tie this museum to the Delta Cultural Center and the historic redevelopment of Helena-West Helena.
Status: Under Revision
- E) Prepare a feasibility study that addresses the practicality and economic impact of developing a resort in Lakeview to take advantage of the oxbow lake’s beautiful scenery and fishing.
Status: Under Revision
- F) Identify properties or districts throughout Phillips County that are eligible for the National Register. Obtain historic designation for all such properties identified.
- G) Identify significant historical events and sites in Phillips County and erect appropriate historical markers and interpretive signage. Tour maps and brochures will be developed accordingly.
Status: Active
- H) Develop a Water Spray Park in Marvell, Arkansas. This park will provide a safe and affordable area for the children of Marvell and Phillips County to enjoy water play and to gather with friends and family.
Status: Under Revision
- I) Purchase a van or small bus for the Delta Regional Tourism and Transportation Coalition that will to be operated and shared by tour operators in Phillips, Lee, Monroe, Arkansas and St. Francis counties in order to support existing and new tourist operators.

Strategic Goal Number Seven – Partner with other Delta communities to create a tri-state blues music trail. Potential communities for partnership are Memphis, Clarksdale, Greenville and Indianola.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:

A) Initiate discussions with the Chambers of Commerce in each potential partner community and the marketing managers of major casinos in the region to determine the level of interest in a tri-state blues music trail.

Status: Ongoing Development

B) Complete a comprehensive feasibility study and plan to be developed and formally adopted by each community if interest is sufficient.

Strategic Goal Number Eight – Create a Delta Image Campaign and joint marketing program with the State of Arkansas, the Department of Arkansas Heritage and other interested Delta communities to provide shared marketing materials for the region.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:

A) Develop a logo for Historic Helena to be used as a focal point in all marketing campaigns.

Status: Active

B) Create a joint seasonal calendar of events in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, the Arkansas Delta Byways Commission and the Great River Road Scenic Byways Commission.

Status: Ongoing Development

C) Create shared marketing materials with other Delta communities and in collaboration with the Tunica and Lula casinos to cross-promote events throughout the Delta. This would involve joint seasonal promotions based on shared themes, such as a calendar of live entertainment in the Delta by specific weekend, week or month of year.

Status: Ongoing Development

D) Form a Friends of Phillips County organization, chaired by prominent current or former Phillips County residents. Use this organization to promote Phillips County on a state and national level.

Status: Active

E) Create a process to track tourism data and create a baseline from which to measure the impact of tourism on the local economy.

1B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – BUSINESS AND JOB CREATION

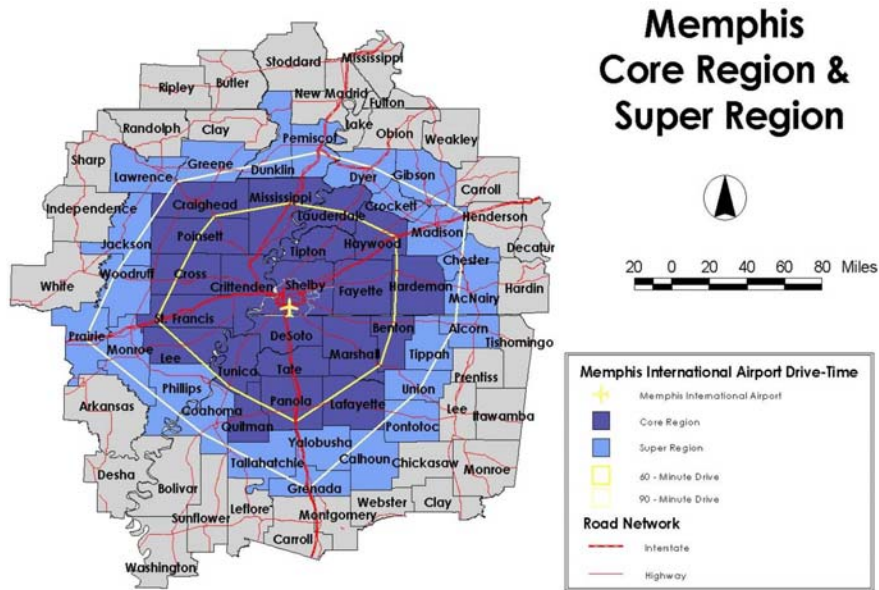
The primary economic activity in Phillips County is agriculture. As such, business and job creation depends on maximizing traditional opportunities provided by agriculture while creatively expanding into new and marketable viable agribusiness concepts.

In addition to agribusiness opportunities, the Port of Helena-West Helena is the third largest port on the Mississippi River. Phillips County also operates a slack water harbor, with tonnage from this harbor adding to that currently processed at the Port of Helena-West Helena. The slack water harbor is fully equipped with electric, gas and water utilities as well as rail transportation.



Helena Slack Water Harbor

Finally, Phillips County is within the boundaries of the Memphis Economic Development Zone. This geographic connection to Memphis is a significant attribute and will enable Phillips County to partner with other counties to attract potentially significant employers.



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During the last twenty years, the City of West Helena developed as the business center for the Twin Cities and for Phillips County. As such, primary business and job creation efforts will occur in West Helena.

Strategic Goal Number One – Expand capacity of the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce and the Port Authority to allow engagement in large-scale industrial recruitment.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Create a Cyberspace Community Doorstep by redesigning and upgrading the current Chamber of Commerce website to re-image Phillips County in a manner that encourages expansion and retention of existing businesses, promotes community events and attracts new business opportunities.
- B) Prepare meaningful demographics on Phillips County and surrounding areas with specific emphasis on the Memphis Economic Development Zone. This demographic data will be compiled into professional quality marketing materials that promote Phillips County. Additionally, such information will be posted on the Chamber website.

Status: Ongoing Development

- C) Collect and maintain pertinent databases to promote business development activities, as follows:
 - In partnership with the Memphis Economic Development Zone, prepare a comprehensive labor study to document the demographics, availability and quality of the labor pool in the region.
 - Create a leased property database that identifies properties for lease and available square footage, the condition of the property, required tenant improvements, lease terms and contract information for property owners and managers.
 - Create a development opportunity database that provides prices, cost per square foot, sales comparisons, rental comparisons, market analysis, owner contact information, local lenders, local appraisers, vacancy rates, building condition, photographs, sample development agreements, potential funding sources and other pertinent information.
 - Create a strategic partner database that identifies organizations that would assist in redevelopment efforts. This will be a comprehensive list of companies, organizations and agencies that could be collaborative partners in continued revitalization efforts.

Strategic Goal Number Two - Develop and implement a comprehensive business retention and expansion effort in Phillips County that identifies existing business needs and challenges. Based on identified needs and challenges, develop a plan to assist local businesses in addressing these issues.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

- A) Form a business advisory team to manage business retention and expansion efforts. This team, appointed by the Chamber of Commerce, will approach Entergy and seek inclusion of Phillips County into the Business Retention Expansion program (BRE).
- B) Complete an inventory of businesses in Phillips County that employ between 80% and 90% of the county's workforce and establish goals for the number of these businesses that will be visited by the business advisory team to discuss needs and challenges. Visits by business advisory teams will identify the following:
- Star businesses that are performing well. Best practices will be compiled from these businesses.
 - Successful businesses that are not appropriate for prime retail space.
 - Specific needs of minority businesses. Team members will work with key leadership in the minority community to develop specific action steps that assist this business group.
 - Businesses that are needed in the county but are struggling or need some form of assistance.
 - Marginal businesses that are not doing well.
 - Businesses that may need to transition within the next couple of years – for example, if the owner is nearing retirement age.
- C) Train the business advisory team to conduct successful on-site visits with business owners and plant managers so that meaningful information is collected and a process of assistance is developed. Entergy has agreed to provide the training. When applicable, the business advisory team will identify those businesses that are managed by an out of state headquarters. In these cases an ongoing visitation schedule will be developed so that the site manager and the Chamber of Commerce can visit the company headquarters on a periodic basis to determine the needs and challenges of senior management as it pertains to their Phillips County operations.

- D) Develop specific actionable items to address the needs and challenges of each business. The Chamber of Commerce will coordinate a community engagement process for addressing all indicated needs and challenges. Based on preliminary research, it appears that many existing businesses lack capacity, with inexperienced ownership and inadequate capital. Specific actions to be taken by the Chamber of Commerce are:
- Mobilizing and focusing community support for existing businesses.
 - Proactive involvement in the political and/or judicial processes.
 - Assistance with infrastructure needs.
 - Assistance with government and nonprofit organizations.
 - Assistance in finding low cost consulting services for technical assistance.
 - Developing a database of business needs and challenges, with such needs matched to specific available consulting assistance.

Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate a structured planning and development process designed to create a viable biodiesel industry in Phillips County.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Use as a foundation the pre-feasibility analysis prepared by Winrock International in April 2004, which determined the general viability of a biodiesel facility in Phillips County.
Status: Complete
- B) Using the results of the pre-feasibility study, engage consulting engineers with specific experience in biodiesel production facilities to perform a site specific feasibility study that would be sufficiently detailed for investor groups interested in developing Phillips County's biodiesel program.
Status: Complete
- C) Create a comprehensive investment plan to attract investor groups to this venture in conjunction with the Arkansas Department of Economic Development.
Status: Complete

Strategic Goal Number Four – Create a Sweet Potato Distribution Center in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas. The Distribution Center will create jobs and provide value-added agriculture by allowing local growers to supply distributors and grocery stores throughout the year.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Create an ownership, organizational and management structure that will operate the distribution center and adopt appropriate articles of incorporation and bylaws.
Status: Complete
- B) Obtain no less than 20 acres of property from the County, with such property subject to a long term lease with the County.
Status: Complete

- C) Develop a specific financial plan and structure for building the distribution facility and initiating operations using grants from the Economic Development Administration, bank loans and loan guarantees by the USDA Rural Development Program.

Status: Complete

Strategic Goal Number Five – Obtain a commitment that USDA will conduct regional training programs in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, through the assistance of the Arkansas Congressional delegation and from discussions with representatives at USDA. Subject to this commitment and the number of specified training days, develop a training center with sufficient capacity to host such events.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:

- A) Identify locations able to host USDA trainings and the cost of building development or refurbishment, if necessary. Once this is complete, perform a feasibility study to determine the number of committed training days necessary to allow financial viability for this effort.

Status: Complete

- B) Work with members of Congress and the USDA to obtain a long-term and definitive plan for regional training. This process may require federal legislation mandating training in Helena-West Helena.

Strategic Goal Number Six – Improve the transportation infrastructure of Phillips County by creating a four-lane highway system that connects proposed Interstate Highway 69 to Mississippi State Highway 61 and Arkansas State Highway 49 to Interstate 40 at Brinkley, Arkansas. This will require expansion of the Helena-West Helena River Bridge into a four-lane bridge and improvement of Arkansas State Highway 49 into a four-lane state highway from the Mississippi River to Brinkley, Arkansas.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:

- A) Initiate joint discussions with the Arkansas and Mississippi Congressional delegations regarding the possibilities and processes of expanding the Helena-West Helena River Bridge into a four lane bridge.

Status: Active

- B) Request that the Arkansas Highway Department conduct a traffic count analysis and feasibility study of current traffic over the Helena-West Helena Bridge.

Status: Active

- C) Develop a detailed plan of action and timeline for the river bridge project based on Congressional discussions.

Status: Active

- D) Initiate a meeting with the Arkansas State Highway Department and appropriate Highway Commissioners to assess the possibilities and processes of expanding State Highway 49 into a four-lane highway from the Helena-West Helena Bridge to Brinkley.

Status: Active

- E) Develop a detailed plan of action and timeline for expanding State Highway 49 based on discussions with the State Highway Commission.

Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Seven – Develop a comprehensive community transportation plan that focuses on intermodal transportation, public transit, recreational transportation and health care transportation.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:

- A) Commission a comprehensive study of transportation options in Phillips County that transitions into a specific community transportation plan with defined plans of action. The transportation plan will address issues such as light rail and trolley system transportation – possibly between key points of historic interest in Helena-West Helena as well as across the Mississippi River to the casino in Lula.

Status: Ongoing Development

- B) Address transportation systems to improve accessibility to health care facilities.

Status: Complete

- C) Establish bicycle and walking trails.

Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Eight – Expand the slack water harbor infrastructure to a fully-functional intermodal port able to load and offload bulk, break bulk, containerized, Ro-Ro and liquid goods to serve the county’s existing and future agricultural and manufacturing infrastructure.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:

- A) Commission a comprehensive feasibility and economic impact study that identifies economic prospects available to a full service port facility with intermodal transportation and an integrated industrial park.

- B) Using the results of this study and assuming that this study reflects significant economic impact, develop an action plan and sequence of projects necessary to achieve this goal.

- C) Pursue specific industries, as identified above and through any and all other processes, to create commercial business activities at the Port.

Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Nine – Initiate a financial technical assistance program with all incorporated communities in Phillips County to improve the financial viability of these communities.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number nine are:

- A) Determine the interest of municipal governments for this type of assistance
Status: Under Development
- B) Engage a professional consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of municipal government finances and accounting control procedures if sufficient interest exists.
Status: Complete
- C) Issue evaluation reports to each participating municipality at the conclusion of the comprehensive review.
Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Ten – Evaluate the benefits of forming a Tax Increment Financing and/or Business Improvement District or other types of overlays.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number ten are:

- A) Determine if this goal is appropriate for Phillips County in consultation with appropriate State and Federal Agencies.
Status: Complete
- B) Apply for such status based on the above determination.
Status: Complete

Strategic Goal Number Eleven – Implement programming in Phillips Community College’s Small Business Incubator facility to provide services to small business owners and potential owners.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number eleven are:

- A) Conduct an environmental study of the building currently housing the PCCUA incubator and determine the level of remediation necessary to occupy the building.
Status: Complete
- B) List the property as a Brownfield site and perform a Phase I audit, as indicated above. Based on the results of the environmental analysis, develop a site remediation plan.
Status: Complete
- C) Develop a plan for small business development that meets technical assistance needs and opportunities in conjunction with PCCUA.
Status: Active
- D) Locate no fewer than five businesses into the incubator during the strategic plan period.
Status: Ongoing Development

2. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Successful community development in Phillips County requires revitalization of historic commercial districts and adjacent neighborhoods. The perception of a downtown area and its adjacent neighborhoods impacts the ability of a business district to attract customers and recruit businesses.

Historic buildings and related public spaces in traditional commercial districts enrich civic life and add value to a community on many levels. Historic preservation involves not only the process of rehabilitating, restoring and renovating older commercial buildings but also the process of adopting planning and land use policies.

Public interviews in the five cities involved in the Main Street Arkansas Delta Initiative support the viability of downtown housing in the upper stories of commercial buildings as well as the need to improve the housing stock of adjacent neighborhoods.

Housing development and redevelopment will begin with general clean-up and code enforcement activities and maintenance of properties and then move to more extensive redevelopment efforts. The problem of absentee ownership and rapidly deteriorating housing stock is significant, and in certain cases building demolition and removal is the only feasible option.

Strategic Goal Number One – Commission housing market studies for Helena-West Helena, Marvell and Elaine, Arkansas, in order to assess the need for additional housing in Phillips County and determine the specific types of housing needed.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Obtain qualified market studies for all primary communities in Phillips County.
Status: Complete
- B) Use data from these studies to establish a baseline of housing in Phillips County and develop comprehensive housing plans with this baseline information.
Status: Complete

Strategic Goal Number Two – Develop and implement a general neighborhood revitalization and development plan in cooperation with the municipalities in Phillips County and existing neighborhood organizations.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

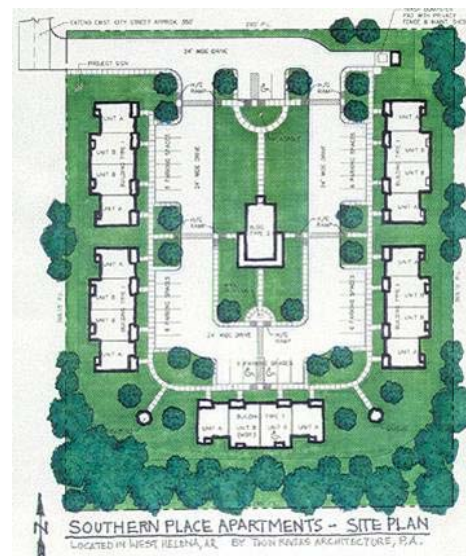
- A) Support the City of Helena-West Helena’s property standards committee’s enforcement of city code and abatement of substandard properties. Based on initial neighborhood inspections, it appears that at least 50 properties per year will be abated in Helena-West Helena.
Status: Complete

- B) Create pilot neighborhood projects in Helena-West Helena that allow for the development of neighborhood revitalization guidelines, processes and procedures. Using these pilot neighborhoods, initiate five neighborhood projects designed to improve neighborhood appearance and to create a sense of community engagement and pride.
- C) Expand the neighborhood campaigns into the surrounding neighborhoods in Helena-West Helena and into the other communities in Phillips County once the pilot programs are fully engaged and the process of neighborhood redevelopment established.
- D) Design and fund a low interest rate revolving loan fund that provides owners of historic properties access to funding for restoration and renovation of unique historic homes in Phillips County.
- E) Provide Phillips County residents with viable access to the secondary mortgage market in cooperation with regional resource organizations. Using this program, begin a process of new home construction and development.
Status: Ongoing Development
- F) Design and promote neighborhood clean-up, painting and general renovation programs.

Strategic Goal Number Three – Construct a quality affordable housing complex that includes 20 two- and three-bedroom units. This complex will serve as a replacement for existing substandard housing that now exists in dilapidated areas such as the Over the Levee neighborhood and the historic corridor that stretches between the Mississippi River bridge and downtown Helena.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Complete financing structure for affordable housing development in West Helena-West Helena.
Status: Complete
- B) Engage a builder with specific experience in construction of affordable housing units.
Status: Complete
- C) Begin construction in 2005; complete construction and have the facility ready for occupancy no later than March 31, 2006.
Status: Complete



Southern Place Apartments

Strategic Goal Number Four – Complete the Brownfield planning study and obtain Brownfield designation from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Work in cooperation with the Brownfield’s Assessment Program to rehabilitate abandoned commercial and industrial properties whose reuse may be impeded by real or perceived contamination.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Complete Brownfield planning study and identify and inventory all eligible Brownfield properties in Helena-West Helena.
Status: Complete
- B) Identify eligible properties with the best opportunities for reuse. Perform Phase I and Phase II environmental audits to determine the level of contamination.
Status: Complete
- C) Engage in community outreach and planning to identify potential land reuse opportunities and development strategies, including green spaces. Incorporate Brownfield development strategies into the larger Phillips County redevelopment vision.
Status: Active
- D) Visit communities currently active in Brownfield redevelopment and identify strategies that could be effective in Helena-West Helena.
Status: Active
- E) Identify programs and agencies with EPA and the Federal Government that support Brownfield activities (cleanup grants, revolving loan funds, workforce training, etc).
Status: Active
- F) Execute a broad-based and comprehensive Brownfield redevelopment program.
Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Five – Initiate specific neighborhood revitalization and development plans in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:

- A) Organize and develop community meetings/forums in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood to discuss development needs and desires.
Status: Completed
- B) Using market studies obtained in Strategic goal number one, identify realistic housing opportunities and review results with all collaborating partners.
Status: Ongoing Development
- C) Survey the “Over the Levee” neighborhood and prepare a report on substandard housing. Review this report with all collaborating partners.
Status: Ongoing Development

- D) Establish a structured plan of removal of substandard and vacant housing as the first step in neighborhood revitalization.
Status: Active
- E) Establish a structured plan and process of new home development to replace substandard housing. This plan will include homebuyer counseling, construction of new homes, homeowner financing in the secondary markets and the creation of a revolving loan fund focused on low-income housing redevelopment.
- F) Replicate the model used in the “Over the Levee” neighborhood in other neighborhoods in Helena-West Helena and Phillips County.

Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop and implement a homeownership program that educates prospective home buyers on issues such as budgeting, family economics, general home buyer and renter education and the benefits of Individual Development Accounts so that new homeowners are better equipped to maintain their homes in good order.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:

- A) Identify partnering organizations in each community in Phillips County who will provide the homeownership training program.
Status: Active
- B) Obtain or develop appropriate adult curricula in conjunction with partnering organizations.
Status: Active
- C) Establish an ongoing home buyer education program that provides four home buyer education classes and 12 economic skills classes on an annual basis.
Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Seven – Redevelop and improve Holly Street by widening the road, covering open drainage ditches that run along both sides of the road, and adding sidewalks and lighting so that traffic flow is improved and the neighborhood is safer for residents.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:

- A) Engage an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study for the redevelopment of Holly Street.
- B) Establish a specific redevelopment plan and timeline for project initiation based on the results of the engineering study.

Strategic Goal Number Eight – Develop a neighborhood safety program for communities in Phillips County that includes organized neighborhood watch and alert programs that focus on general safety issues, with specific emphasis on crime reduction.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:

A) Work with neighborhood organizations to develop specific neighborhood safety program goals and objectives in conjunction with Strategic goals two and five, above.

Status: Ongoing Development

B) Develop an organizing process within each neighborhood involved in this effort to provide the ability for the neighborhoods to sustain this effort after the establishment of goals and objectives.

C) Employ up to 15 additional police officers to patrol communities in Phillips County.

Status: Ongoing Development

Strategic Goal Number Nine – Redevelop the historic MM Tate School in Marvell, Arkansas, into a multi-use facility. A former black high school with historic significance to the community, the MM Tate School is located in a 12-block area previously targeted for redevelopment by the citizens of Marvell and would serve as a cornerstone of redevelopment for this area.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number nine are:

A) Obtain ownership and control of the property by the MM Tate Community Development Corporation from the Marvell School District.

Status: Ongoing Development

B) Conduct a feasibility study to identify how to convert this property into a multi-use facility in conjunction with the MM Tate Redevelopment Corporation. The facility would include assisted living areas, a health center, an information center history room and meeting rooms.

C) Develop the financing needed for redevelopment. Assuming feasibility, use federal and state programs and income tax incentives.

3. EDUCATION

Improvement in educational systems, processes and especially student achievement is a critical foundational activity impacting the success or failure of all other community development programs. At the present time, two of the three school districts in Phillips County are under some form of academic or fiscal distress.

Educational goals considered in this Strategic Plan include improvement of student literacy levels, involvement of parents in their children's education, fostering greater involvement of the business community in public education, expanding the KIPP School to provide education for children from kindergarten through high school, engaging the public school system with Phillips Community College, providing workforce education and job skills training for adults and increasing the experience levels of school administrators, principals and school board members.

Strategic Goal Number One – Initiate comprehensive training for public school teachers, principals, administrators and board members, with such training designed to promote current leadership development techniques as well as improved course curriculum.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Engage the Rensselaerville Institute to conduct its one-year School Turnaround program focused on school principals in Phillips County's public school systems—specifically in the Helena-West Helena School District, the largest in the county.
Status: Complete
- B) Based on the one-year School Turnaround program conducted in the Helena-West Helena School District, prepare a district-wide turnaround strategy and consider an expansion of the Rensselaerville Institute program into other school districts in Phillips County.
Status: Under Revision – Department of Education recommended different program
- C) Initiate the Core Knowledge program in the Helena-West Helena school system for kindergarten through fourth grade. This program is a focused teacher training process designed to improve teaching techniques, methods and most importantly student achievement.
Status: Complete
- D) Implement a senior level mentoring and advisory position/consultant to work with the school boards in Phillips County to develop school board meeting processes and agendas and to define responsibilities of the school boards and school district management.

- E) Align public school curricula, instruction and services across all public school systems in Phillips County to facilitate unity of purpose and create a common educational process to improve effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs and district operations.

Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Two - Expand the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School to educate children from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

- A) Develop a comprehensive plan and financial budget for expanding the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School (“KIPP”) program to include kindergarten through twelfth grade. This plan will address all aspects of expansion, including teaching programs, staffing needs and physical facilities requirements.

Status: Complete

- B) Acquire land in downtown Helena that provides for future expansion of KIPP’s physical facilities so that sufficient classroom space is available for children from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Status: Complete

- C) Execute the comprehensive plan discussed above.

Status: Active



KIPP School

Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate programs designed specifically to improve literacy and mathematics aptitudes for students in Phillips County. Specifically, this strategic goal involves implementation of the “PRIISM” initiative – “Partnership to Renew Interest and Improve Student Mathematics”.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Provide certification, recertification and/or continuing professional education to at least 10 degreed persons currently teaching mathematics in Phillips County. Improve the instructional competencies of Phillips County’s teachers through a partnership with a four-year university and Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (PCCUA). The mathematics certification, recertification and continuing professional education program will be offered annually to all interested mathematics teachers through PCCUA.

Status: Ongoing Development

- B) Provide coursework designed to create a pool of teachers with a BSE/MSE Middle School Teacher Certification. This coursework will be provided to at least 20 college juniors and seniors through a partnership with a four-year university and PCCUA.
Status: Ongoing Development
- C) Provide on-site follow-up and mentoring for students and teachers participating in the PRIISM initiative.
- D) Initiate a web-based mathematics center administered by PCCUA that assists teachers in designing innovative and effective instructional materials for public school students and that reinforces classroom learning. This program will contain a database of mathematics instructional materials, programs and activities.
- E) Initiate the Science, Math, Reading and Technology (“SMRT”) program to enhance the teaching and learning of science, math, reading and technology for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This program will provide scholarships to encourage students to enter math and science education programs.

Strategic Goal Number Four – Develop and initiate occupational educational programs for Phillips County’s high school students that provide them with necessary skills for employment in a trade or craft.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Develop a Secondary Educational Technical Center occupational instruction program for high school students and enroll 90 students a year in this program at PCCUA. The occupational program will provide enrolled students with college credit courses in three career paths – Industrial Equipment Technology, Computer Engineering and Medical Professional Education.
Status: Complete
- B) Implement a bridge program that will allow at least 40 students enrolled in the Secondary Educational Training Center program during the traditional school year to take additional college courses and experience job shadowing/internships during the summer months.
Status: Complete
- C) Develop a reading, writing and mathematics lab to assist students enrolled in the Secondary Educational Technical Center in improving their proficiencies in these areas.

Strategic Goal Number Five – Develop and implement the Career Pathways Program for adult residents of Phillips County. The Career Pathways Program will start with adult education that is contextualized to particular career/job activities available in Phillips County, including nursing/allied health, education, manufacturing, mechanical and industrial maintenance, technology and behavioral health.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:

A) Meet with local employers and determine the demand for specific occupations and the skills needed for career ladder opportunities.

Status: Complete

B) Develop and implement specific Career Pathways programs based on results of the employer meetings.

Status: Complete

Strategic Goal Number Six – Establish a University Center at Phillips Community College to accommodate post-secondary study beyond a two-year program. The Center would serve as a coordinating agent for programs from various colleges and universities.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:

A) Locate the University Center on the PCCUA campus.

B) Design the Center to house all college and university programs offered in Phillips County, with multiple programs scheduled at the facility.

C) Include computer labs, two CV classrooms, a seminar room and a conference room in the Center.

D) Provide the following programs at PCCUA by working through the specified college or university:

- University of Arkansas at Fayetteville - BSE in human resource development, MSE in adult and vocational education.
- University of Arkansas at Monticello - BSE in childhood education, MAT in education, BS in business.
- Harding University – MAT in education, MSE in leadership.
- UAMS – BS in medical technology.

Strategic Goal Number Seven – Develop, implement and provide community-based broadband internet access and computing technology to the communities of Helena-West Helena, Marvell and Elaine.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number seven are:

- A) Develop a comprehensive plan to provide broadband internet service to the indicated communities. This plan will detail the specific uses for such services as well as the infrastructure, capital and management and organizational support processes needed for their implementation.

Status: Complete

- B) Implement the broadband internet plan.

Status: Under Revision

- C) Once broadband internet access is available to the communities in Phillips County:

- Create and implement community computer access and support programs through the development of community centers that provide computer training and education to children, adults and seniors.
- Enhance computer engineering programs at the high schools in Phillips County through the integration of student training from the community computer center as well as a school-to-home communication program.
- Develop and implement specific business activities using broadband availability.

Status: Under Revision

Strategic Goal Number Eight – Formalize and expand the Phillips County Educational Foundation, which is partly intended to reconnect the local business community to public education.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number eight are:

- A) Formalize the structure of the Phillips County Educational Foundation to include no less than 10 key business leaders and the superintendents of the public school systems in Phillips County.

Status: Ongoing Development

- B) Develop a specific charter that includes operational responsibilities for the Educational Foundation, elect a Chairman and determine frequency of meetings.

Status: Complete

4. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Long-term sustainability for any community process requires continual development of leadership capacity, programs and processes that provide growth opportunities for existing leaders, as well as focused leadership training for emerging leadership (ages 18 through 40) and initial leadership programs for individuals younger than the age of 18.

Strategic Goal Number One – Initiate an annual Delta Regional Leadership symposium focusing on programs and activities that increase leadership capacity of existing community leaders, including City and County leadership positions.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Develop training curriculum and a symposium plan.
- B) Review leadership training programs currently offered in the mid-south Delta region in coordination with Action step one. Identify facilitators and resources available for such training.
- C) Determine processes to ensure the leadership symposium is sustainable and implement symposium activities.

Strategic Goal Number Two – Initiate annual leadership training programs for emerging leaders in the 18 to 40 year age category.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

- A) Identify organizations that will serve as community sponsors and key stakeholders.
Status: Ongoing Development
- B) Purchase or develop curriculum and determine nature, timing and extent of program activities. This Action step will include program management, recruitment, funding, sponsorships, operations and length.
Status: Ongoing Development
- C) Retain the services of the Center for Regional and Community Development in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to provide training in the areas of leadership principles and practices, economic development, diversity and community collaboration.
Status: Ongoing Development – Under Revision

Strategic Goal Number Three – Create a youth leadership academy that provides leadership training focused on civic awareness and public service. This academy will serve at least 50 youth annually.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Develop academy curriculum, schedules, operational procedures, objectives and staffing requirements, including sustainability requirements.
- B) Recruit an initial class of no less than 50 participants for the youth academy.
- C) Implement pre-interest surveys/inventories and knowledge-based assessments to determine interest levels and understanding of civic responsibility and public service.
- D) Implement a six-week summer activities program designed to provide hands-on activities that foster leadership skills for the youth participants.
- E) Initiate an academic year phase of the youth leadership academy that involves bimonthly training programs.

Strategic Goal Number Four – Form a series of Boys and Girls Clubs for children at greatest risk in Helena-West Helena, Marvell and Elaine. These clubs will provide participants with organized recreational activities and specific opportunities for leadership experiences.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Develop a detailed plan for implementation of the Boys and Girls Clubs, including annual financial budgets, staffing plans and activities curricula.
Status: Complete
- B) Open the first club in Helena-West Helena and expand the organization into Marvell and Elaine after one year of operation.
Status: Active

5. HEALTH CARE

The Health Care strategy for Phillips County is to improve citizen health by promoting healthy lifestyles through innovative educational and health care service programs that address such issues as drug and alcohol abuse, diet, exercise and lifestyle.

Strategic Goal Number One – Expand operations of the Delta Area Health Education Center (Delta AHEC) in Phillips County to allow for greater community impact and improved health education and awareness.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number one are:

- A) Expand physical facilities for the Delta AHEC from 4,000 square feet to at least 25,000 square feet by working with the Helena Health Foundation to construct the building.
Status: Complete
- B) Contract with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to include the Delta AHEC in its medical internship program so that Phillips County residents have access to such expertise.
Status: Under Revision
- C) Promote health education, exercise, proper nutrition habits, tobacco and other substance abuse clinics using the Delta AHEC as the provider.
Status: Active
- D) Develop a transportation process to allow residents of Phillips County access to the Wellness Center.
Status: Active

Strategic Goal Number Two – Charter a health clinic and related substance abuse prevention, research and treatment facility to improve access to health care for the residents of Phillips County.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number two are:

- A) Engage a professional consultant who will develop and produce a comprehensive plan to charter and operate a health clinic and substance abuse treatment facility. This plan will include (i) program planning and evaluation, (ii) preparation of employment and personnel policies, (iii) identification of program services, (iv) requirements for accreditation/license, (v) recommendations on proper staffing levels and specific skills needed by employees, (vi) development of articles of incorporation and a general policy-procedures manual and (vii) a five-year financial budget.
Status: Ongoing Development – Under Revision
- B) Execute the action items of the plan, using the suggested timeline and priority of objective critical activities to create the health clinic and substance abuse facility.
Status: Under Revision

- C) Access services of UAMS's College of Public Health to assist in the establishment of prevention and research programs that will be included in the substance abuse treatment activities.

Status: Under Revision

- D) Develop a drug court and substance abuse rehabilitation and assistance program similar to the programs currently in operation in St. Francis County. This program compels a substance-abusing offender to deal with his or her substance abuse problem through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services and immediate sanctions and incentives.

Strategic Goal Number Three – Initiate a program in conjunction with the Helena Regional Medical Center that addresses the multiple challenges faced by rural hospitals.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number three are:

- A) Develop a program to assist with physician and nurse recruitment with specific emphasis on attracting medical specialists.
- B) Develop a medical scholarship program for physicians and nurses that provides for their medical training if they will commit to practice in Phillips County.

Status: Under Revision

- C) Develop a specific marketing campaign designed to promote the Helena Regional Medical Center as a high quality medical complex for the Delta region.

Strategic Goal Number Four – In cooperation with the Education Goal Team, create a medical magnet school in one or more public school districts in Phillips County, the purpose of which is to develop a pool of young talent for employment in the local health care industry.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number four are:

- A) Form a planning group to include representatives of the local school boards and the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School Board to make a site visit to the successful medical magnet school in Mercedes, Texas, and to obtain technical assistance. After returning from Mercedes, the planning group will seek local buy-in.

Status: Under Revision

- B) Obtain funding to conduct a detailed feasibility study for the medical magnet school concept once community support is strong.

Status: Under Revision

- C) Begin raising additional funds to hire additional staff, identify local new faculty, and purchase distance learning equipment to link with UAMS and other participating institutions.

Status: Under Revision

- D) Improve labs and the library at the medical magnet school during the second year.

Status: Under Revision

Strategic Goal Number Five – Initiate a county-wide health promotion network of churches for the purpose of improving health awareness and behaviors of Phillips County residents.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number five are:

- A) Develop a comprehensive health plan based on the National Cancer Institutes “Body and Soul Project” to be called the “Healthy Phillips County Faith Network” in partnership with the Governor’s Healthy Arkansas Project.
- B) Identify 12 churches that will agree to partner in the project. Recruit volunteers and train lay health advisors who will participate in the program.

Status: Ongoing Development

- C) Develop an annual financial budget for the program and summarize expected outcomes and long-term program sustainability.

Strategic Goal Number Six – Develop a soup kitchen in Helena-West Helena (modeled after the Soup Kitchen concept in Clarksdale, Mississippi) which addresses the needs of the homeless and elderly population in Phillips County. The soup kitchen will provide nutritious food at affordable prices to low-to-moderate income families and will also provide life skills training, financial planning and home living training.

Action steps in support of strategic goal number six are:

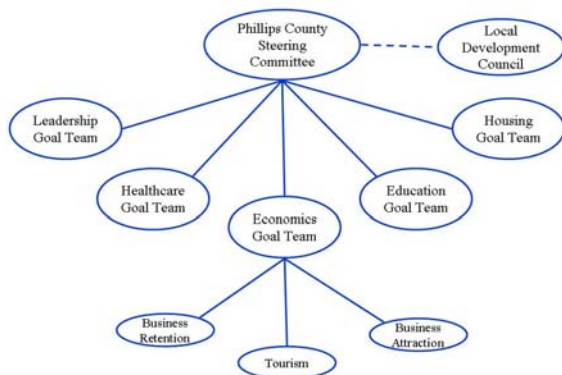
- A) Initiate a local soup kitchen using local contributions and small grant support to run on a once per week basis.
- B) Identify additional grant funding opportunities and develop a plan to increase local community support for the soup kitchen so that the service provides at least one meal every day of the week as demand for soup kitchen meals increases. Identify additional sources of support for financial and life skills training for the served population.
- C) Identify a sustainability plan for the soup kitchen to ensure the continued ability of the soup kitchen to provide meals and training to individuals in need.

What is the Delta Bridge Project?

As public awareness of the programs sponsored by the Delta Bridge Project grows, there may be some confusion over what exactly is meant by “Delta Bridge Project” and its relationship to the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan. The Delta Bridge Project is a public-private partnership between dozens of local organizations and hundreds of area individuals that is intended to coordinate community and economic development efforts in Phillips County. The document you are holding, the Strategic Plan, guides the Delta Bridge Project and defines its objectives. Or, to put it differently, **the overall mission of the Delta Bridge Project is to implement the Strategic Plan – and update it when necessary.**

Structure of the Delta Bridge Project

The Delta Bridge Project is primarily composed of local bodies that draw from the communities of Phillips County. The DBP Steering Committee functions as a Board of Directors for the Delta Bridge Project and is comprised of twelve citizens of Phillips County. As a body, it provides overall governance for the Delta Bridge Project and approves or rejects any proposed additions to the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan. The Steering Committee normally meets monthly and all meetings are open to the general public.



Delta Bridge Project Organizational Structure

Also composed of Phillips County residents, Goal Teams are intended to oversee the development of proposals submitted by organizations seeking to implement an item in the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan. Goal Teams may also develop new Strategic Goals or Action Steps to be included in the Strategic Plan and are responsible for appointing Objective Teams, which act as subcommittees within the Goal Team. Each Objective Team exists to implement a specific Action Step – that is, it is intended to be responsible for bringing a proposal to fruition.

The Local Development Council (LDC) approves or declines proposals for Delta Bridge funding that have been reviewed by Southern Financial Partners staff. The LDC is comprised of residents of Phillips County appointed by the Southern Bancorp Board of Directors Executive Committee and includes a Chairman who also sits on the Executive Committee. Members of the Local Development Council cannot be members of any other Delta Bridge organization (Steering Committee, Goal Teams or Objective Teams). LDC members also cannot vote on any activity in which they have a personal financial interest or other personal involvement that might be considered a conflict of interest. If the LDC approves a proposal for further consideration, it is then voted on by the Southern Executive Committee and eventually the Walton Family Foundation.

For more information about the Delta Bridge Project, please visit our website at <http://www.deltabridgeproject.com>

Community Achievements

The following achievements demonstrate what local citizens can accomplish when they put differences aside and work together for a common purpose. These community accomplishments plant the seeds for a revitalized community in the near future. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Delta Bridge Project lies not in direct program benefits, but instead, in helping to create an environment that contributes to fundamental community change. An environment now exists in Phillips County that makes community revitalization possible at a level and scope far exceeding original expectations. There are many community based activities that could be listed, but the following 6 events, best capture the spirit of change embracing Phillips County.

1. **Overcoming Complacency to Work for Change.** Because of its strategic location on the Mississippi River, Phillips County has been the subject of many studies on the Delta. The county has seen many programs launched with much fanfare to “save the Delta.” Most of these programs have failed to accomplish their objectives or to make substantial impact. It would have been easy for the community to remain cynical at yet another development program for the Delta, but instead Phillips County residents are learning from the mistakes of the past and have incorporated those lessons into the Delta Bridge Project.
2. **The Consolidation Vote for Helena and West Helena.** These two separately incorporated townships geographically and economically bound together, often found themselves in conflict over limited resources and historical divisions. Invariably, two-hands would be reaching for one piece of pie, creating an environment of “us” versus “them” mindset between the Twin Cities. Having one consolidated city has reduced operational expenses and focused the energies of area citizens on “joint” prosperity. Collectively, the two cities have the population mass and resources to appeal to prospective industrial employers.
3. **The State Take Over of the Helena-West Helena School System.** This event ranks as significant because everyone universally agrees that improvement in public education is critical to any revitalization hopes for the community. Despite what may have been good intentions, the Helena-West Helena School System had sunken into disarray, characterized by the appointment of 5 superintendents in one calendar year. Since the state take-over, the school system has stabilized and attention has shifted to focus on student academic performance. The Helena-West Helena School System is slated to return to local control in the future. Since this event, exciting new strategies for public education reform in Phillips County are now being discussed.
4. **Orderly Governance.** With the consolidation of the two cities, the community has demonstrated a commitment to strong stable local governance. City Council meetings, once the subject of boycotts, walkouts, and tabloid-type discussions are now more focused on city business. The consolidated government of Helena-West Helena seems to better understand what is necessary to move the community forward into a 21st century economy.

5. **The Passage of a Two Cent Sales Tax.** Like most Delta communities, towns in Phillips County suffer from population out-migration and a dwindling retail tax base. As a result, these communities struggle to provide basic municipal services. Maintaining infrastructure and investing for future growth is beyond the grasp of most Delta communities. The passage of a two-cent sales tax has potentially placed Helena-West Helena in a position to address the glaring needs of its citizens, while for the first time making strategic investments in the future of the community. Passage of a sales tax is no easy task. It demonstrates a commitment to change and reflects local citizen's positive feelings about the future.
6. **Increased Community Engagement.** Local citizens are becoming more involved with their city and county governments and civic groups are experiencing increased participation. The Phillips County Chamber of Commerce annual banquets has achieved record attendance the past two years and Main Street Helena has recently sponsored record fundraisers. People are taking notice of all the dilapidated buildings and houses that have been cleaned up, resulting in an increased sense of well-being and a spirit of hope starting to develop in the community.

The accomplishments above were due to the hard work of area residents, local community institutions, revitalized local leaders, and other supporters of Phillips County. These achievements extend far beyond the scope of the Delta Bridge Project and are a reflection of broader community efforts.

With that said, the Delta Bridge Project has helped the community to sense an opportunity for change and encouraged people to re-engage to make their community a better place. The success of the Delta Bridge Project depends upon local citizens willing to change the status quo and step outside the boundaries of community "as it is" and create a new community as you would "want it to become."

Please consider volunteering and becoming involved in the Delta Bridge Project. See the web site for more information: <http://www.deltabridgeproject.com>

Delta Bridge Project Funding Summary (June 2007)

It is critical to note that the Delta Bridge Project works in partnership with other organizations to affect community change and to create genuine impact. As the chart below indicates, the Delta Bridge Project has generated over \$52 million to develop the economy of Phillips County. Of this amount, Southern Bancorp has invested over \$7.4 million of its own resources in grants and loans to support Delta Bridge Project activities. Key Delta Bridge Project partners have contributed nearly \$5 million in grants and loans. In addition, Delta Bridge Project funders have leveraged over \$40 million from other resources.

Strategic Plan Goal	Southern	DBP Funders	Other	Total
Economic Development	\$ 3,533,062	\$ 2,546,000	\$ 26,618,594	\$ 32,697,656
Education	1,637,510	1,369,875	7,125,510	\$ 10,132,895
Healthcare	1,883,497	250,000	2,133,498	\$ 4,266,995
Housing	161,037	351,000	1,490,000	\$ 2,002,037
Tourism, Recreation, Quality of Life	225,600	163,900	2,150,000	\$ 2,539,500
Leadership	11,020	240,000	646,000	\$ 897,020
Total	\$ 7,451,726	\$ 4,920,775	\$ 40,163,602	\$ 52,536,103

Delta Bridge Project Achievements (June 2007)

This section provides a brief overview of the programs listed in the Phillips County Community Plan that have been completed as of the time of this document's printing. Not all projects listed were funded utilizing Delta Bridge Project resources. The project seeks to leverage other sources of funds whenever possible. In fact, outside funding sources are welcomed and encouraged. For more information about any of these projects, please visit our website at <http://www.deltabridgeproject.com>

Economic Development–Tourism:

Project Title:

Award:

Grantee:

Strategic Goal #1, Action Step A

Biscoe Street cleanup

\$163,900 Walton Family Foundation (WFF) grant; \$192,600 SFP grant

Southern Financial Partners (SFP)



Biscoe Street: Before and After

Since the highway from the Mississippi Bridge serves as the main entry into historic Helena, the environment along this travel corridor creates the first impressions formed both by new visitors and potential investors. Southern Financial Partners (SFP) acquired tracts of property on Biscoe St. to establish a green

space corridor. Acquisitions included a 60-unit complex of substandard cinderblock housing (locally known as “Bush Quarters”), a burned out liquor store, an abandoned strip shopping mall, and land that was to be sold for a junkyard. All sites were major eyesores in the community. Development of the green space corridor, which will be donated to the city, will continue in the strategic plan’s next implementation phase.

Economic Development–Tourism:

Project Title:

Strategic Goal # 1, Action Step D.

Refurbish the hotel at the crossroads of the Mississippi River Bridge.

A private sector developer using traditional debt financing completed the project. Pictured at the right, the hotel renovation is complete and it is now open.



Americas Best Value Inn, Helena-West Helena

**Economic Development–Tourism:
Project Title:**

**Strategic Goal # 2, Action Step D
Nominate Helena-West Helena for the
National Trust’s Endangered Places List.**

In 2007, Main Street Helena submitted an application to the National Trust for Historic Preservation to place Helena-West Helena on the Endangered Places List. Such a designation would make the community eligible to pursue multiple funding sources to preserve historic homes and commercial structures in Helena-West Helena. Helena-West Helena has not yet received a decision on the application.

**Economic Development–Tourism:
Project Title:**

**Strategic Goal #2, Action Step E
Seek designation for Helena-West Helena
as a strategic demonstration site by the
National Trust’s Department of
Community Revitalization.**

Award:

\$350,000

The community received a \$350,000 award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to establish one of two regional sites for a Rural Heritage Development Initiative consisting of 15 counties and six Main Street communities. The initiative promotes rural heritage and local business development to increase the ability of the region as a whole to expand tourism. The field representative for the project is based in Helena-West Helena.

**Economic Development–Tourism:
Project Title:**

**Strategic Goal #2, Action Step F
Stabilize historic buildings on Cherry
Street.**

Funding:

**\$250,000 federal earmark; \$30,000
asbestos abatement grant from SFP**

A local community group spearheaded efforts to stabilize 24 historic buildings on Cherry Street. Through the Delta Bridge Project, Southern Financial Partners provided the \$30,000 federal match for the federal earmark. The Delta Bridge Project is now seeking to stabilize other buildings and to identify investment opportunities for full building renovation. One day, these buildings will form the core of a revitalized downtown with retail and tourist attractions.

**Economic Development–Tourism:
Project Title:**

**Strategic Goal #2, Action Step P
Renovate the Hornor House**

Award:

\$1,000,000

The Hornor family donated their historical family home to the Delta Cultural Center (DCC) in 1995. The DCC partnered with the Arkansas Natural Cultural Resource Council to obtain the funding to restore the home to its pre-Civil War condition. With major renovations complete, the Hornor House now serves as a regional tourism asset and, together with other assets, will promote tourism.



Hornor House

**Economic Dev. – Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:**

**Strategic Goal #1
Chamber Director of Community
Development and Labor Market Study
\$105,000 SFP grant; \$50,000 SFP grant
Phillips County Chamber of Commerce;
Memphis Regional Economic
Development Council (MREDC)**

**Awards:
Grantees:**

These two SFP grants expanded the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce’s capacity to promote economic development. The first three-year grant hired a Director of Community Development in order to reach out more fully to the entire Phillips County community. The second grant contributed to a \$350,000 labor market study on the status of the workforce in the greater Memphis area, including Phillips County. The MREDC’s next key study will be a regional infrastructure analysis and investment plan for roads, ports, airports, rail, and telecommunications – key determinants for potential investors in the greater Memphis area.

**Economic Dev. – Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:**

**Strategic Goal #3
Site Specific Biodiesel Feasibility Study
\$30,000 WFF grant
Phillips County Chamber of Commerce**

In 2006, the Delta Bridge Project provided a grant to the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce to fund a feasibility study to establish a biodiesel manufacturing facility in the county. Based on the study’s results, local investors announced plans in September 2006 to build a major 40 million gallons per year biodiesel plant, one of the largest in the south, near Helena-West Helena. This plant represents the first new, major direct investment in Phillips County in decades.

**Economic Dev. – Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:**

**Strategic Goal #4
Tri-County Sweet Potato Storage Facility
\$400,000 WFF grant
Central Arkansas Resource Conservation
& Development Council, Inc. (CARCD)**



Sweet Potato Facility

A partnership between Winrock International, the Delta Bridge Project, the USDA, other funders, and the Central Arkansas Resource Conservation and Development Council received funds to build a \$2 million sweet potato storage facility expected to be completed in mid-summer 2007. The partners have worked directly with small farmers in Phillips and Lee Counties to form a limited liability corporation to supply the facility. The project will stimulate the development of a new agri-business in Phillips County and lead to sweet potato processing investments.

Economic Dev.–Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:

Strategic Goal #5
Government Training Facility Feasibility Study
\$3,600 disbursed from \$45,000 SFP grant
CARCD

Award:
Grantee:

The Phillips County Strategic Community Plan identified the creation of a training facility for federal employees as one strategy for bringing jobs and investment to the area. However, a study commissioned by the Delta Bridge Project in 2005 determined that no federal agency was willing to commit to training its staff in Phillips County, shelving the project.

Economic Dev.–Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:

Strategic Goal #7, Action Step B
CitiLink Shuttle Service
\$116,000 WFF grant
Mid-Delta Community Services

The Delta Bridge Project partnered with local nonprofit Mid-Delta Community Services to launch the CitiLink Shuttle Service, a fixed-route, fixed-schedule bus system that links all residential neighborhoods in Helena-West Helena with the city’s principal employers and with its retail, educational and health care facilities. The service began operating in February 2007.



Citilink Bus

Economic Dev. – Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:

Strategic Goal #9
Small Cities Technical Assistance
\$3,300 SFP grant
City of Elaine

In 2005 the City of Elaine received financial services from SFP, as well as assistance in the creation of a Strategic Plan for the City. This planning process played an instrumental role in helping the City to successfully revive its annual “Elaine Country Christmas” festival.

Economic Dev.–Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:

Goal #10, Action Step A
Evaluate Tax Increment Financing

The Delta Bridge Project worked with representatives from the Arkansas Economic Development Commission to review opportunities with Tax Increment Financing. Findings determined that Tax Increment Financing is not a viable source of financing for rural communities in the Delta like Phillips County.

**Economic Dev.–Business & Job Creation:
Project Title:**

**Goal #11, Action Steps A & B
Utilize Brownfield Project for business
development**

Leveraging the resources made available by a Brownfield Assessment Grant, a Phase I and II environmental audit was performed on 13 properties, including a site owned by PCCUA that is intended to house a business incubator facility. Based on the results of the Phase I and II environmental analysis a site specific remediation plan was developed. The passage of the higher education bond in 2007 will provide finances to remediate the PCCUA brownfield site. The Delta Bridge Project will work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to remediate the other sites.

**Housing Development/Redevelopment:
Project Title:**

**Goal #1, Action Steps A & B
Comprehensive Housing Needs
Assessment for Phillips County
\$30,000**

Grant:

Market studies for affordable housing were conducted for Helena-West Helena, Marvell and Elaine. These studies now serve as the basis for all future planning related to housing development in the targeted communities.

**Housing Development/Redevelopment:
Project Title:**

**Goal #2, Action Step A
Abatement of substandard properties in
Helena-West Helena
\$100,000 total grant
SFP/City of Helena-West Helena**

**Award:
Grantee:**



Substandard Property, Helena-
West Helena, AR

Two separate \$50,000 grants were provided to identify and to clean up substandard properties in Helena-West Helena. As a result of this project, 145 dilapidated structures have been cleaned up and the lots maintained. The city of Helena-West Helena has continued this clean up program without any further grant support from the Delta Bridge Project.

Housing Development/Redevelopment:

Project Title:

Award:

Grantee:

Based on findings from the Phillips County market study on affordable housing, Helena-West Helena suffered from a lack of high-quality affordable housing. As a result, SPC developed Southern Place Apartments, a \$1.5 million, 20-unit family housing complex funded by over \$1.5 million in loans and grants. Key financing partners include the Delta Bridge Project, Arkansas Development Finance Authority, US. Department of Agriculture, and the Walton Family Foundation. Located in Helena-West Helena, residents moved into Southern Place Apartments in June 2007. Resident families are being placed on a track towards eventual homeownership by participating in programs offered by the Southern Good Faith Fund, including credit counseling classes and Individual Development Accounts.

Strategic Goal #3, Action Steps A-C

Southern Place Apartments

\$351,000 WFF grant

\$61,037 Southern Property Corporation grant

Southern Property Corporation (SPC)



Southern Place Apartments

Housing Development/Redevelopment:

Project Title:

EPA Grant:

Grantee:

The community applied for and received a Brownfield Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to perform Phase I and II environmental assessments on abandoned industrial and commercial properties in Helena-West Helena. The brownfield program remediates hazardous materials and petroleum contamination. Although located in strategic areas, the identified brownfield sites are eyesores and reduce re-development opportunities. By participating in the program, clean-up costs may be borne by the government, opening up re-development potential.

Strategic Goal #4, Action Steps A & B

Brownfield Assessment Grant

Application

\$400,000

City of Helena-West Helena

Housing Development/Redevelopment:

Project Title:

Representatives from the Over the Levee neighborhood met with community leaders and religious representatives to discuss revitalization and cleanup. Ten dilapidated houses have been torn down and four houses painted. The program is set to continue.

Strategic Goal #5, Action Step A

Over the Levee Neighborhood Planning

Education:
Project Title:
Amount:
Grantee:

Strategic Goal #1, Action Steps A & C
Core Knowledge and School Turnaround
\$596,150
Helena-West Helena School District

The two programs aim to help educational reform in Phillips County. Core Knowledge consists of a three-year plan for aligning the curricula taught in schools in the Helena-West Helena School District. Curricula will thereby be standardized across all grades as well as from one grade to the next. School Turnaround, a separate program, provided a leadership development workshop for Helena-West Helena principals during the 2004-05 school year.

Education:
Project Title:
Award:

Strategic Goal #2
KIPP Expansion Program
\$650,000 WFF-funded grants;
\$90,000 SFP-funded grants; and
\$1,469,510 in loans from Southern.
KIPP Delta College Preparatory School

Grantee:

The KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) Delta College Preparatory School in downtown Helena-West Helena now serves 270 students in grades five through nine. On Stanford norm-referenced tests administered in the fall of their fifth and ninth grade years, students in the charter class moved from the 17th to the 76th percentile in Language and from the 18th to the 82nd percentile in



Proposed KIPP School Expansion

Mathematics. Similar gains have been achieved with subsequent classes. The Delta Bridge Project has supported KIPP with grants and loans to fund the expansion of the school's facilities and its organizational capacity. KIPP's impact on the community cannot be overstated: Given the right learning environment, Phillips County students can excel.

Education:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:

Strategic Goal #4, Action Steps A & B
Vocational and Technical Education
\$86,256 WFF grant
Phillips Community College



Vo-Tech Students at PCCUA

To receive state funding for its Vo-Tech program for public high school students, Phillips Community College (PCCUA) sought a Delta Bridge grant in the fall of 2006 to cover the cost of transporting students from outlying towns to the PCCUA campus in Helena-West Helena. Without the Delta Bridge grant, the state would have closed the Vo-Tech program. Designed to address specific economic needs in the Delta region, participating high school students gain skills and career experience on a college campus. The program is expected to increase from 175 to over 250 students in 2007.

Education:
Project Title:
Award:
Grantee:

Strategic Goal #5, Action Steps A & B
Career Pathways
\$50,000 WFF grant
Southern Good Faith Fund

Arkansas Career Pathways is an adult education program that provides training, support, and contextualized adult education college classes targeting low-income parents. PCCUA offers Career Pathways services in Helena-West Helena in tracks including allied health, early childhood education, and computer sciences. Southern Good Faith Fund is working with PCCUA to staff the program. As of June 1, 2007, 343 students have participated in Career Pathways in Phillips County. Over 80% of graduates are professionally placed and, of those, over 80% have retained their jobs after the first six months. The program has been so successful that the State of Arkansas has replicated the program at 22 colleges around the state.



<http://www.arpathways.com>

Education:
Project Title:

Strategic Goal #7, Action Step A
Broadband Internet Access in Phillips County

The Delta Bridge Project in partnership with other organizations has developed a comprehensive proposal to extend broadband service to underserved areas of Phillips County; however, the submitted proposals have not yet been funded. The Delta Bridge Project will continue to enhance the proposals so that broadband access is expanded in Phillips County.

Education:
Project Title:

Strategic Goal #8, Action Step B
Develop an Education Foundation in Phillips County

Grant:
Grantee:

\$500
Education Foundation of Phillips County

Using a Phillips County Community Foundation grant to cover incorporation costs, the Education Foundation of Phillips County (EFPC) has been formed to raise funds and provide grants in support of public education institutions in Phillips County. The EFPC has been incorporated by the state of Arkansas and received its non-profit tax status from the Internal Revenue Service.

Leadership Development:

Project Title:

Award:

Grantee:

Strategic Goal #4, Action Step A & B
Boys and Girls Club of Phillips County
\$240,000 WFF grant
Boys and Girls Club of Phillips County



Future Boys and Girls Club of Phillips County Facility

Founded in 2005 by a collection of long-time Helena-West Helena residents and Teach for America corps members, the Boys and Girls Club of Phillips County (BGCPC) currently provides over 200 youth

with services ranging from leadership and career development to health and fitness programs. The Delta Bridge funds provided a foundational grant that helped to open the Club. In 2008, the Boys and Girls Club expects to acquire and renovate a permanent structure that will house an expanded BGCPC facility in the years to come, allowing the BCPC to reach over 1,000 youth in Phillips County.

Health Care:
Project Title:

Strategic Goal #1, Action Steps A, C, & D
Delta Area Health and Education Center Expansion

Funding:

\$1,800,000 Loan to the Helena Health Foundation from Southern; \$2,100,000 loan from the USDA

The Delta Area Health Education Center (Delta AHEC), a University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences affiliate, provides preventative health and wellness programs for Phillips County residents. The Delta AHEC is housed in the Dr. Vasudevan Wellness Center, which was built in 2005 by the Helena Health Foundation and financed by over \$4 million dollars in loans from Southern affiliates and the USDA.



Delta AHEC New Facility