

CITY OF FORT CALHOUN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Fort Calhoun, Nebraska

April 2010

Prepared by:

City of Fort Calhoun
Gateway Development Corporation
&
Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR THE CITY OF FORT CALHOUN, NEBRASKA**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska has committed to the development of an Economic Development Strategic Plan for the City of Fort Calhoun; and,

WHEREAS, the Fort Calhoun Strategic Planning Committee has participated in the formulation of the plan, and recommends that the City of Fort Calhoun adopt said Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, herewith adopts said plan, incorporating citizen comment and recommendations.

PASSED AND ADOPTED on this _____ day of _____, 2010.

Mayor

Attest: City Clerk

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), along with Gateway Development Corporation, prepared the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, with direction and assistance from the City of Fort Calhoun Strategic Planning Committee. Participation and cooperation to complete this project was provided by the following groups and persons:

Mayor

Paul Oestmann

City Council

David Genoways

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Strategic Planning Committee

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I. Overview and Planning Process

Among local governments, strategic planning for economic development has come to the forefront in recent years as a way to establish continuity in development policy in a climate marked by frequent turnover among local leaders and frequent changes in economic conditions. Many communities develop and maintain a comprehensive land use plan for macro-level policy guidance in this arena, but these plans often do not provide strategies to address near-term issues. The strategic planning process helps to coordinate desires of policy makers with actions of city staff and creates a mechanism for continuous evaluation of accomplishments and challenges. Perhaps most importantly, the formulation of an economic development strategic plan establishes clarity in the economic development vision for a community among all stakeholders.

In the City of Fort Calhoun, the strategic planning process began with Gateway Development Corporation and city staff working to identify key stakeholders to be involved in the strategic planning process. In order to ensure that primary decision makers are involved, the list of invited participants included elected officials from the City of Fort Calhoun and Washington County, city staff, business leaders, developers, and economic development professionals in the area. Without representation of all of these key sectors, the City runs the risk of encountering challenges in implementing and maintaining the final plan.

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency and Gateway Development Corporation coordinated a series of meetings with City staff and the strategic planning committee to discuss the current state of economic development in Fort Calhoun. Specifically, the planning committee identified economic development strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present in and around Fort Calhoun, and used that information to formulate an economic development mission statement. From there, a series of goals and strategies were developed which will allow the city to capitalize strengths, maximize opportunities, and proactively address weaknesses and threats when possible. Finally, the committee identified a series of action items needed to implement the city's strategic economic development vision and has recommended a plan of action which stages action items and delineates responsibility for implementation where needed.

This document is intended to provide guidance to the community as economic development opportunities are presented and as the local economy evolves. Actual implementation of projects discussed in this Plan will be the responsibility of the City Council and staff, who will consider availability of local financial resources, eligibility for outside funding assistance, partnerships with property owners and the business community, and citizen support for each project in determining when and how to implement selected projects.

II. Economic Development Mission Statement

Establishment of an overall mission statement is a key step in the strategic discussion of economic development policy for cities and counties. The mission statement represents the city's core values and priorities with respect to anticipated development, and sets forth a summary of guiding principles which should be considered in the context of economic development project review. Additionally, development of a mission statement is critical to the strategic planning process in order to properly determine whether certain environmental conditions represent positive or negative development factors. For example, one community might view the presence of a railroad as a strength due to the appeal of rail service to developers, while another might view the same railroad as a weakness if it disrupts traffic and is overly noisy.

In recent years, Fort Calhoun has experienced the pressures of growth brought about by the presence of new industry in Washington County and as an outreach of growth throughout the greater Omaha area. In some cases, the market's pace of growth has created some pressure to accelerate development in order to satisfy demand. Realizing that developable land contiguous to current city boundaries is becoming scarce, and realizing that current land use and development decisions will shape the future of Fort Calhoun's growth potential, the city has established the following economic development mission statement:

The City of Fort Calhoun desires to create and sustain managed economic growth without sacrificing high quality of life standards.

Furthermore, city leaders appreciate the city's attributes as a vibrant small community, and have stated that regardless of the benefits of economic growth, there are some core values that cannot be sacrificed by the community to accommodate such development. As a result, the city has also developed a core values statement, which reads as follows:

Fort Calhoun's "small town" sense as a safe, interconnected community is fed by its heritage, pride and spirit. As citizens of Fort Calhoun, we aspire to create a future in which Fort Calhoun is a healthy community of diverse and interconnected citizens, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods, where citizens of all ages, backgrounds and income levels can live, work and thrive.

III. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

In order to develop a coordinated economic development strategy, it is first necessary to fully understand the conditions under which development decisions are made, both in the private and public sectors. Variations in local economic, legal, political, environmental, and social climates will ultimately impact the vitality of similar development activities across jurisdictions. Accordingly, these climates must be evaluated locally and regionally in order to properly assess the types of development initiatives that can be successful in Fort Calhoun.

The Strategic Planning committee reviewed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relating to local economic development in Fort Calhoun and has presented a summary below. Strengths and weaknesses are largely reflective of current conditions and internal issues, while opportunities and threats are primarily composed of potential issues and external conditions.

STRENGTHS:

- Employers have access to hundreds of thousands of potential workers in the regional laborshed.
- Fort Calhoun is home to several large employers either in or very close to the city, including, the OPPD Nuclear Power Station, Wilkinson, Martin Marietta Materials, and Fort Calhoun Schools.
- For residents not working at a local company, the town's proximity to both Omaha and Blair provide access to plenty of high quality jobs.
- There is plenty of capacity in the local utility systems for growth and new development. Local utilities are also comparatively very affordable, in part due to the presence of public utilities and partnerships with neighboring entities.
- Fort Calhoun is optimally located for growth in both population and industry, but also has the means to manage the pace of growth.
- The City owns about 78 acres of property outside of town (60 of which are suitable for development). The land could either be used to bring a developer to the community or could be used to acquire other adjacent land for an interested business. The property does present some obstacles for development, but the city currently has a consultant preparing a site development plan for the property.
- Highway 75 brings a lot of traffic into town, generating positive numbers for certain types of retailers.
- The city has a sound history of land use and zoning code enforcement.
- Fort Calhoun has a track record of removing substandard homes and structures in order to improve the safety and quality of the city's building inventory.
- There are a number of restaurants, bars, and convenience stores in the community. These types of retail enterprise will support other types of future jobs created locally.
- The city has a doctor's office and medical clinic.
- The city has a residential subdivision with lots available for new home construction at a reasonable price point. Townhomes are available here in addition to new single-family homes.
- The city has a sound parks and recreation system.
- City public works staff is responsive and provide efficient maintenance of local streets and other infrastructure.
- The city has a tourist draw in Fort Atkinson which attracts thousands of outside visitors.
- Fort Calhoun has improved its permitting process by working with Washington County. The process is now much more business-friendly.

WEAKNESSES:

- In recent years, Wilkinson Mfg. was acquired by an out-of-state company and there is no longer a corporate presence by the company in the community. This makes city communication with the company difficult.
- In Fort Calhoun and throughout the area, there is a shortage of welders and truck drivers, who are needed for existing businesses.

- The lower population in Fort Calhoun makes the costs of infrastructure improvements higher when spread out over a smaller tax base.
- The water distribution system is aging in certain areas, particularly under Highway 75 in the downtown area.
- Some property owners have shown a lack of willingness to sell good land for development.
- There is a lot of 100-year floodplain adjacent to Fort Calhoun on the east, and much of it will not be available for development due to the high costs of elevation and dewatering, and also due to a preference by the county and NRD to preserve the floodplain in this area.
- There are not a lot of companies that offer part-time employment for those who desire it.
- Broadband service in Fort Calhoun needs to be improved in order to attract new businesses.
- Highway 75 bisects the community, and due to high traffic volumes and its configuration, it can detach some residents from key parts of the community (i.e. city parks)

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Gateway Development Corporation is working on a partnership with Metropolitan Community College to develop a bio-process control facility, which will provide training opportunities and continuing education for the local workforce.
- Increases in population will translate to a broader tax base, which will offset community-wide capital improvements costs.
- There is open, developable land adjacent to the city.
- Nearby businesses that are doing well could find Fort Calhoun to be a good location for office buildings. There are several small buildings that would be ideal for offices with some retrofitting
- The potential for improved relations between Fort Calhoun and Washington County will improve the local business and development climate.
- The size and location of Fort Calhoun provide appeal for niche businesses, that is, certain types of businesses that may not be able to succeed in larger adjacent communities.
- The lack of hotel rooms in the community is a shortage met by neighboring communities, but businesses like a Bed and Breakfast could succeed here.
- The city has recently completed a Community Housing Assessment which will identify market gaps and suggest a coordinated local housing strategy.
- The local housing market can support more starter housing and step-up housing, and some units are being offered now that will meet that demand.
- Completion of a riverfront bike trail will increase exposure for Ft. Calhoun & result in improvement in local trails.

THREATS:

- The city's proximity to Omaha tends to draw most businesses considering the area to end up there.
- The local workforce is concentrated in a few single employers. A single closure or relocation could severely impact Fort Calhoun.
- Development is currently occurring on the edges of the community where water and sewer lines are smaller in size. Some of the infrastructure may need to be upgraded to accommodate additional new development.
- Current market conditions make financing tough for property owners to develop sites
- Compared to the rest of Washington County, elected county leaders have not invested money in Fort Calhoun proportionally.
- Regional air quality regulations and pending federal legislation could tighten standards for air quality, bringing higher costs for compliance to local governments and large businesses.
- The threat of an incident at the nuclear power facility, although extremely unlikely, could be catastrophic for Fort Calhoun. Additionally, the noise and vibration generated when Martin Marietta is extracting rock can be detrimental to the community at times.

IV. Goals, Strategies, and Plan of Action

After development of a mission statement and identification of assets and issues relative to economic development in Fort Calhoun, the city has established a clear understanding of local conditions and public desires that can shape short-range development policy in the community. Based on these findings, the strategic planning committee has developed a set of economic development goals and strategies. There are five goals below which will aid the City to either capitalize on an opportunity or mitigate against potential economic threats. For each goal, a series of strategies and action items are presented, along with an implementation timeframe and identification of parties responsible for completion of relevant action items.

Goal 1. Improve city control of type and density of future growth.

Strategy A. Rezone extraterritorial jurisdiction and actively enforce zoning/subdivision regulations throughout zoning jurisdiction. Wherever possible, the revised zoning map should reflect the city's Future Land Use map.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Planning Commission, City Council, Zoning Administrator

Desired Outcomes: Increased control over future development and land use in and around city.

Strategy B. Establish density standards for new residential development and amend zoning regulations/map to incorporate these standards.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Planning Commission, City Council, Zoning Administrator

Desired Outcomes: Future development around Fort Calhoun will be compact and contiguous to current development areas.

Strategy C. Develop a map of city and zoning jurisdiction showing areas of potential development and areas precluded from future growth.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Planning Commission, City Council, Zoning Administrator

Desired Outcomes: City officials and developers will have a clear understanding of where future development can occur.

Goal 2. Increase quality & quantity of housing in Fort Calhoun.

Strategy A. Approach developers to promote construction of new homes in Fort Calhoun.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: City Council, Gateway

Desired Outcomes: Growth in the number of housing units available in Fort Calhoun.

Strategy B. Encourage rehabilitation of existing homes as a means of improving housing stock.

Implementation Timeframe: 3 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, local property owners

Desired Outcomes: Improved marketability of houses for current homeowners, increase in availability of housing, creation of a market for current homeowners to move into newer houses.

Strategy C. Encourage construction of townhomes or other maintenance-free housing options.

Implementation Timeframe: 5 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, local housing developers

Desired Outcomes: Increased choice of housing styles for current residents, potential to keep older residents in community and free up existing single-family homes, creation of additional entry-level priced housing units.

Strategy D. Increase the number of housing units available in Fort Calhoun, particularly with respect to starter homes and luxury homes.

Implementation Timeframe: 5 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, local housing developers

Desired Outcomes: More variety in housing choice for potential residents, reduced shortage of homes in starter and luxury price ranges.

Goal 3. Increase readiness of identified development sites.

Strategy A. Continue to work with property owners, lenders, and developers to maintain information on availability and price of vacant land and buildings in and around Fort Calhoun.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year/ongoing

Responsible Parties: Gateway, City Council

Desired Outcomes: Knowledge of resources needed to overcome property acquisition obstacles associated with local development.

Strategy B. Complete site development plans for known potential development sites.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: City of Fort Calhoun, Gateway

Desired Outcomes: Clear identification of infrastructure and development needs for anticipated development sites.

Strategy C. Pursue partnership with Fort Calhoun and Washington County to provide infrastructure between communities east of Highway 75.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Gateway, City of Blair, City of Fort Calhoun, Washington County

Desired Outcomes: Identification of infrastructure needs for large-scale development areas benefitting all stakeholders.

Strategy D. Work with property owners to obtain first right of refusal for future purchases of sites identified for development.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Gateway Development Corp.

Desired Outcomes: More public influence over type and density of development of preferred sites to community.

Strategy E. Work to secure necessary financial resources for City or Gateway Development Corp. to obtain purchase options on potential development sites.

Implementation Timeframe: 3 years

Responsible Parties: Gateway Development Corp.

Desired Outcomes: Get funds in place to secure desirable land for future development.

Strategy F. Increase availability of off-street parking to support businesses along and near Highway 75.

Implementation Timeframe: 5 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, NE Department of Roads

Desired Outcomes: Improved access to businesses in community, increased pedestrian and traffic safety in local retail corridor.

Goal 4. Support diversification of local business climate.

Strategy A. Re-establish communication with officials at Wilkinson Mfg.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: City Council, Gateway, Wilkinson Mfg.

Desired Outcomes: Improved knowledge by city of Wilkinson's needs and concerns, ability to understand ways to keep company and jobs in Fort Calhoun.

Strategy B. Work with area colleges to provide job training opportunities and re-training opportunities that will keep local workers in quality jobs in the community.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year/ongoing

Responsible Parties: City Council, Gateway, Metro Community College, other area colleges.

Desired Outcomes: Higher quality of local workforce, better jobs available for local workers.

Strategy C. Communicate with local businesses to identify workforce needs and assist in developing job opportunities for local workers.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year/ongoing

Responsible Parties: City Council, Gateway, local businesses

Desired Outcomes: Increased stability for local businesses, more job opportunities in city.

Goal 5. Continue to support quality of life initiatives.

Strategy A. Continue growth and development policies that ensure a managed approach to population growth.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year/ongoing

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning Commission

Desired Outcomes: Fort Calhoun continues to grow at a steady pace, but new development can be served without compromising current service levels.

Strategy B. Initiate tourism marketing initiatives, specifically relating to availability of recreation amenities such as Fort Atkinson and the riverfront bike trail.

Implementation Timeframe: 1 year

Responsible Parties: Fort Atkinson, Park Board, City Council

Desired Outcomes: Better awareness of local recreation amenities, increased use of local parks and trails.

Strategy C. Support additional lanes on Highway 75 as a means of increasing economic appeal of Fort Calhoun.

Implementation Timeframe: 5 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, NE Department of Roads

Desired Outcomes: Reduced traffic congestion on Highway 75 during peak commuting hours, higher appeal of local development sites by companies needing four-lane highway access for relocation/expansion activities.

Strategy D. Work with regional partners to explore possibility of offering public transportation service through Fort Calhoun.

Implementation Timeframe: 5 years

Responsible Parties: City Council, Washington County, Metro Area Transit

Desired Outcomes: Reduced traffic congestion, availability of non-automobile transportation for commuters in city.