

# **Barbour County Development Authority**

## **Annual Action Plan 2009-2010**

### ***Vision***

The Barbour County Development Authority (BCDA) envisions a future where there is shared economic prosperity coupled with a lifestyle that makes the county a desired residence for its citizens and welcomes visitors and future citizens. From the natural resources industries to technology start-ups, the county will be diversified and employing our people. From thriving businesses to active communities, the county will be collaborative and always improving. From strong educational opportunities to a proven workforce, the county will be ready to act on opportunities and meet the challenges both today and tomorrow.

### ***MISSION STATEMENT***

The Barbour County Development Authority is committed to improve both the economic and community development in the County and will continue in the future to concentrate on the creation and retention of jobs as its primary target.

The Barbour County Development Authority continues to work diligently to promote community and economic development for our community. We strive to attract new businesses, retain existing businesses and promote entrepreneurial development. We are partnering with local, regional and state organizations in an effort to support the employability of all local residents and improve the ethic of our workforce. While our challenges are significant, we believe strongly that our opportunities will lead to a stronger economy for the future of our community.

### ***Economic Outlook***

The economic outlook today is far less uncertain than it was one year ago, but few economists have offered a clear picture of when and how quickly the national economy will recover and return to growth. Most have reached a general consensus that it will be a slow and bumpy road. Comments from the Federal Reserve and data on a couple of traditionally leading indicators (e.g., stock market, copper prices) suggest that the worst of the recession may be over. However, national unemployment rates continued to rise from 9.7% in August 2009 to 9.8% in September 2009. And many believe that the U.S. will reach 10% unemployment in the upcoming months.

After initial resilience where West Virginia's unemployment rate remained under 5.0% through December 2008, the rate quickly climbed to 9.1% by June 2009. The rate has stabilized since then, with researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimating 9.0% unemployment for August. Barbour County finished 2008 with a higher average unemployment rate than the state and U.S. The county's high employment share in education, healthcare and government employment sectors (46.5%), which have seen

fewer layoffs in the current downturn, will likely keep the rate from rising significantly in the near future.

### ***Overarching Goals***

The following overarching goals frame the major focus for BCDA's recently completed four-year strategic plan. The goals were developed based on the assessment results and planning work of the Board. These provide a logical delineation of key areas to develop strategies that will help achieve each goal.

- 1.** Build proactive and innovative approaches to identify, draw and place industry and business enterprises that create jobs and advance the overall well-being of Barbour County.
- 2.** Sustain, retain and ultimately grow existing industry and business located in Barbour County.
- 3.** Advance entrepreneurship throughout Barbour County that leads to business and job growth.
- 4.** Improve the economic well-being of Barbour County through effective collaboration that leverages resources, builds capacity and achieves common objectives.
- 5.** Ensure an active, well-run BCDA is in place and effectively communicating the positives regarding the value of Barbour County as a place to do business and promoting BCDA's accomplishments.

The following provides summary background and specific actions/focus areas to be undertaken in 2009-2010 relative to each specific goal.

#### ***Business Development***

#### ***Goal 1: Build proactive and innovative approaches to identify, draw and place industry and business enterprises that create jobs and advance the overall well-being of Barbour County.***

**Background:** BCDA recognizes its vital function of attracting industry and businesses to Barbour County. From industrial park development to promoting specific targeted industries (e.g., Hardwood Alliance Zone), BCDA must be innovative in increasing the number of new and good jobs. From maintaining a detailed current inventory of location options to maximizing existing incentive, BCDA will be proactive and aggressive in identifying and bringing new companies to the county. This area includes placement of companies in existing buildings as well as pursuing new development and diverse industry in the county (e.g., airport fueling station). BCDA works with the most appropriate local, regional and state agencies to both augment and enhance its business development efforts. For example, it has close ties with the West Virginia Development Office and Workforce West Virginia.

<b>Goal 1- New Business Development</b> (Attracting new or expanding existing business and industry)
1. Promote recently completed 25,000 square foot multi-tenant building in an effort to attract new and/or expanding businesses.
2. Maintain website with up-to-date employment data, available building and site information and workforce data.
3. Continue close partnership with the West Virginia Development Office in an effort to promote available sites and buildings.
4. Market 50,000 square foot shell building located in Belington Industrial Park.
5. Maintain current list of available sites and buildings to include current infrastructure of each (inventory what is in place as to utilities, roads, etc.).
6. Continue to work closely with the Airport Authority to develop an Aviation Park at the airport complex including the access road (four businesses have already committed which will create twenty jobs).
7. Participate in site visits to existing industries located outside of the area as part of the Hardwood Alliance Zone visitation team. Assess what might have the highest potential for visits regarding specific opportunities in the industry.

*Business Retention*

**Goal 2: *Sustain, retain and ultimately grow existing industry and business located in Barbour County.***

**Background:** Existing enterprises throughout the county represent a vital economic cornerstone of Barbour County’s prosperity. From employing county citizens to contributing to the tax base, local businesses throughout the county are critical to our communities. BCDA is dedicated to sustaining existing business and industry through a regular, structured process on a set cycle. These are in-person interviews that cover a range of topics. Furthermore, BCDA is set up to respond to inquiries for assistance from existing businesses at any time, especially if there are challenges that may cause a company to downsize or close. Support may be in the form of direct assistance or through appropriate referrals to agencies or other resources with specific technical assistance.

<b>Goal 2 - Business Retention</b> ( <i>RETAINING OR EXPANDING EXISTING BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY</i> )
1. Encourage and make it easy for local business and industry to contact BCDA for assistance and respond to such requests as appropriate.
2. Identify financing opportunities for existing businesses contemplating expansion.
3. Continue to monitor progress to improve access road to Philippi Industrial Park.
4. Identify exporting opportunities for existing wood industries
5. Conduct at a minimum ten extensive retention visits with existing businesses each year including identifying financing opportunities for existing businesses contemplating expansion.
6. Provide follow-up assistance to businesses as issues are identified during the retention visits including training or financial needs.

Entrepreneurial Development

**Goal 3: Advance entrepreneurship throughout Barbour County that leads to business and jobs growth.**

**Background:** Although historically not a focus of many economic development organizations, today entrepreneurial potential is considered as a viable area to invest economic development efforts. From encouraging entrepreneurship education in public schools to building an environment that supports new emerging enterprises started by young entrepreneurs, BCDA will deploy strategies that can bring new types of business to the county. From specially designated zones (e.g., SBA HUB Zone) that incentivize entrepreneurs to reaching out to former citizens to return to the county to establish companies, there are opportunities for Barbour County to champion entrepreneurial development. In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis placed in this area by a number of organizations and BCDA will tap into some of these initiatives.

Goal 3 - Entrepreneurial Development
1. Serve as a clearinghouse for information and support services.
2. Maintain a close working relationship with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the WV Small Business Development Center and our local banking community in an effort to identify local entrepreneurs and provide information and support as they endeavor to establish businesses, provide a service and/or product and employ local residents.
3. Identify networking/training opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Collaboration for Economic Prosperity

**Goal 4: Improve the economic well-being of Barbour County through effective collaborative work that leverages resources, builds capacity and achieves common objectives.**

**Background:** With limited resources, greater competition for scarce funding at the state and Federal levels, BCDA must find ways to leverage every dollar it can. Further, with significant demands to address a myriad of topics related to advancing economic development in the county, the critical importance of collaboration becomes more of a mandate than just a smart thing to do. As outlined in an earlier economic development principle BCDA has embraced, the broader definition of economic development, including community development, translates into sharing responsibilities with other organizations and community leaders in reaching common objectives for the betterment of the county. BCDA has a history of working with a number of organizations and agencies in collaborative ways. Examples include being involved in water committee work, airport authority activities and a member of the Hardwood Alliance Zone. BCDA has dedicated a goal to this area based on its importance to the future successful economic development in Barbour County.

#### **Goal 4 - Collaboration for Economic Prosperity**

1. The Development Authority is working closely with the Airport Authority in support of a phased development project at the Philippi-Barbour County Airport which includes hangar and fuel farm construction, infrastructure development and the development of an aeronautics based industrial park.
2. Explore fully how the Hardwood Alliance Zone (HAZ) can be most effective for Barbour County.
3. Convene a “summit” to advance effective collaboration with other Barbour County organizations that directly link or can influence economic development within their mission. Be as inclusive as possible.
4. Work with the Barbour County Water Supply Committee to study water issues as related to economic development.

#### *Effective Organization & Communication*

#### **Goal 5: *Ensure an active, well-run BCDA is in place and effectively communicating the positives regarding the value of Barbour County as a place to do business and promoting BCDA’s accomplishments.***

**Background:** The ability and capacity for BCDA to be effective and reach what it envisions for Barbour County, is based, in good part, on how well it functions. Further, the more communication, especially positive aspects, that can be shared with the public, those interested in locating in Barbour County and other stakeholders, the greater the positive image that will exist. From an engaged Board to a user-friendly often accessed website, BCDA must continually monitor and enhance its operations. From well-attended Board meetings to good relationships with local media, BCDA will work to be high-performing and be recognized as a valued organization making a sound and solid difference in Barbour County. An integral part of this goal is the financial strength of BCDA to carry out its mission. With little funding from the state, BCDA must rely on local funding, including in-kind contributions, and in receiving grants through its own efforts.

#### **Goal 5 - BCDA Organizational Development/Operations**

1. Design and implement a new BCDA web presence that focuses on site selection criteria and enhances the overall image of BCDA, Barbour County and West Virginia.
2. Enhance the overall image of BCDA and its work through more frequent, pinpointed communication regarding positive actions and achievements (e.g., newsletter, press releases, blog, presentations, etc.)

## **Opportunities**

The following opportunities will enhance the ability of the Barbour County Development Authority in 2008-2009 to promote economic development:

- *An organizational strategic planning endeavor was undertaken in 2009 and completed in October. The document provides our organization with a well-defined plan for our economic development efforts over the next four years.*
- *The Development Authority continues to work closely with the Airport Authority in support of phased development project at the Philippi–Barbour County Airport which includes the development of an aeronautics based industrial park. Four businesses have committed to locating in this facility creating 20 new jobs.*
- *The Development Authority continues to support the completion of Corridor H. Upon completion, this highway will expand access to east coast markets. This will aid our existing businesses with transportation issues but also make communities along the route more attractive in terms of new business location.*
- *The Barbour County Development Authority has been awarded a Flex-E-Grant that will enable the organization to foster improved coordination throughout the local community. A new website will be developed that will not only promote economic development efforts in Barbour County, but also house a portal for the local business and non-profit communities that will ultimately improve our overall economic development program.*

## **Challenges**

While we continue to identify opportunities for continued economic growth in Barbour County, we are also challenged in our efforts.

- *Not unlike other rural counties in West Virginia, we face topographic challenges that limit our ability to identify building sites and geographic challenges that impact our ability to compete with our communities that have immediate access to four-lane transportation.*
- *Many employers have expressed a concern over the work ethic of young employees. It has been reported that their work ethic lacks loyalty, responsibility and the willingness to work hard for an honest wage.*
- *It has also been noted by employers that employees entering the workforce are not properly trained to accept many of the positions that are becoming available because of attrition.*

## **Closing**

The Barbour County Development Authority continues to work diligently to promote community and economic development for our community. We strive to attract new businesses, retain existing businesses and promote entrepreneurial development. We are partnering with local, regional and state organizations in an effort to support the employability of all local residents and improve the ethic of our workforce. While our challenges are significant, we believe strongly that our opportunities will lead to a stronger economy for the future of our community.