



*"THE HEART OF MOUNTAINEER COUNTRY!"*

***CREATING OPPORTUNITIES:  
BUILDING SUCCESS***

**BARBOUR COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2013**

**Working Draft  
October 2009**

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**PREFACE**

*Creating Opportunities: Building Success* represents an updated strategic plan for the Barbour County Development Authority (BCDA). This plan will serve to guide the BCDA Board and its Executive Director in advancing economic development in the county over the next three years. Based on ever-changing dynamics within the economic development arena, ranging from global to local occurring economic change, requires agility to react quickly to both opportunities and challenges. Thus, the plan will be continually reviewed and the delineated actions updated as required.

# **BARBOUR COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2013**

### **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.

### **Planning Process Background**

The BCDA planning process was designed to fully engage its Board and to reach out to the community for insights. A first phase was an internal Board assessment to ascertain how members perceived the organization, including how the Board was functioning. This also afforded a way to determine, before the strategic planning process, what Board members thought regarding planning and other organizational issues.

The results of the Board assessment were reviewed by the Board. Discussion centered on what was working well and areas the Board may want to address. The intent was to focus on low-rated areas that can help the Board be as effective in its role as possible.

A planning session assessment was done that looked at the traditional planning areas based on current strengths, weaknesses (areas needing addressed), opportunities and threats. Beyond the Board and Executive Director, a select number of business and community leaders were asked to provide feedback. The results of the assessments were presented in a Board planning session. From this work and additional discussion with the Board, a suggested list of actions for the BCDA to consider in its plan was compiled. Each Board member was asked to rank the priority of all suggested actions as to High, Medium and Low. These results helped form the basis of the strategic plan.

As part of its planning work, including suggestions from the assessment results, BCDA helped coordinate bringing a number of organizations and leaders together to discuss first-hand how to strengthen collaboration among efforts aimed at improving the economic well-being of Barbour County. This could be at a county-wide level or, at a community level. This "summit" brought together nearly

twenty individuals who spent time learning of different initiatives in the county and brainstorming ways to improve collaboration. The summit, although a short session and not including all potential participants, proved to be a needed activity to better leverage resources and reduce duplication in the county. A number of specific suggestions were offered that could be powerful in advancing a shared vision for the county. These ranged from improved communication within the initiatives to working together to gain grant funding for county projects.

Under separate cover are the internal and external assessment results completed as part of this planning initiative. The majority of the findings have been incorporated into this plan.

### **Barbour County Profile**

Formed in 1843, Barbour County, West Virginia is situated on the Allegheny Plateau, and includes part of the Laurel Ridge. The Tygart River drains the area consisting of approximately 345 miles. Settled in 1780, Philippi is the county seat with Belington and Junior being the two additional large communities in the County. Barbour County is known for its coalmines, lumber production, natural gas and oil wells. In recent years, efforts have been made to diversify its economy. Barbour County's 2008 estimated population was 15,600, a slight increase over 2000.

There are a number of organizations (non-profits) and agencies (local and state) that are engaged in work that advances the well-being of the county. Some of these are community development based, while others focus on overall betterment of a community or area of the county. In some cases, these are volunteer citizen action groups committed to improve on a given aspect of a community. Barbour County also has established organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce which helps advance economic development in a number of ways.

Alderson-Broadus College is located outside of Philippi and its President is a member of the BCDA. Barbour County is also known as the location of the first land battle of the Civil War and is a draw for individuals interested in Civil War history.

### **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. While county-level data is not available for August or September, 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.

Rather than adding another prediction for a W-shaped, V-shaped or U-shaped recovery, we suggest following two key indicators over the next year or two.

- Inflation – As stated in the Summer 2009 WV Business and Economic Review, “No local economy is an economic island.” This is definitely the case when it comes to inflation. Inflation in West Virginia and its individual counties is primarily driven by the national economy. Many

economists fear higher inflation in the future because of the significant increases in money supply over the last year. As long as industry capacity utilization and consumer demand remain low, prices should show slow growth. Return to normal levels for either or both of these metrics, coupled with the higher money supply could signal higher inflation is on the way.

- Natural gas and coal prices – West Virginia is commonly referred to as an extraction economy because of the high employment and GDP share related to the extraction of natural resources, primarily coal and some natural gas. Natural gas prices have dropped significantly and coal prices have dropped some over the last year. An increase in natural gas prices could accelerate the investment by natural gas companies drilling and producing in the Marcellus Shale. Much of West Virginia, including Barbour County, should benefit economically (i.e., GDP and employment growth) from these investments and continued operations.

### **BCDA Guiding Principles**

Guiding principles represent what BCDA believes to be essential attributes that shape decisions, direct actions and encourage behaviors by the organization and individuals representing it. Understanding fully its role in the County and with limited resources, the potential of less funding being available to access, the BCDA accepts the following principles to guide its efforts:

- Sound economic development is best achieved through a multi-faceted, holistic approach, rather than a single focus.
- The creation and retention of jobs is the primary foundation for economic development efforts.
- There is significant value in collaborating effectively with other organizations, both formal and informal, within all parts of the county to leverage resources and build capacity.
- County-wide economic development must be viewed in a broader sense to include attention to such areas as education, workforce, housing, recreation, technology and the overall county environment.
- Bringing communities together on economic development issues is critical to have a uniform approach to economic prosperity in the county.
- Be responsive to all inquiries for information or assistance with current and accurate data that promotes Barbour County as a great place to establish a business, live and work.
- Common messages that foster a positive image of Barbour County from business and community leaders are vital to ensure the collective perception of the citizens is optimistic and ready to help advance economic development.
- Earn trust through open communication, prudent use of resources and being good stewards of funds managed.

## OVERARCHING GOALS

The following overarching goals frame the major focus for BCDA's 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 for each of the goals.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## ***BCDA BOARD MEMBER EXPECTATIONS DEVELOPMENT***

Based on the planning work and the commitment to have a strong and engaged Board, BCDA will work toward having the following Board member expectations part of its on-going organizational work.

1. To be familiar and educated on BCDA – its history, goals, objectives, policies, philosophy, planning, current situation, problems and needs.
2. To support BCDA’s mission (of promoting economic and community development) by being actively engaged in the organization’s work.
3. To prepare carefully for, attend and actively participate in Board meetings, organizational events, and committee assignments. Failure to attend three regular consecutive meetings of the Board without acceptable circumstances may result in a request for removal from the Board. The Board usually holds quarterly meetings unless circumstances dictate a full Board meeting between quarters.
4. To vote according to one’s individual convictions, to work with fellow Board members in a spirit of cooperation, and to avoid even the appearance of a possible conflict of interest. Board members should disclose any potential conflict of interest and refrain from participation in votes in which any potential conflict of interest may appear to exist.
5. To maintain the confidential nature of Board deliberations. Board members should support Board decisions once they are made.
6. To understand clearly the roles of the Board:
  - a. Strategic planning to include setting overall direction, establishing goals and objectives and ensuring implementation of the plan occurs
  - b. Stewardship of assets, including the development of an annual budget and overseeing an annual financial audit
  - c. Provide policy development, oversight and approval
  - d. Hire, fire, and evaluate the Executive Director
  - e. Identify new Board membership and development of new Board leadership
  - f. Conduct an annual appraisal of the Board
7. To support in a proactive manner BCDA activities including:
  - a. Serve when asked in specific leadership roles regarding BCDA on-going initiatives
  - b. Serve on standing and ad hoc committees BCDA’s Board may have
  - c. Finding volunteers who may assist BCDA in carrying out an activity
8. To communicate informally or formally, when asked or the appropriate opportunity rises, through presentations or when working with other organizations, the positive image of BCDA and its work on behalf of Barbour County.

## ***ACTIONS PLANNING***

Using the overarching goals as a guide, the planning process established an initial set of strategies to implement. The Actions Plan that follows will be the major document to monitor for achieving the results of the planning process. The actions plan entries include an initial priority score that reflects direct input from the Board ranking each focus area as to high, medium or low priority. These ratings were combined into a numeric total priority score to help set the final work plan for each year. A separate table will be developed and used by the Board to monitor progress on the each's year's actions work plan. This table will provide timeframes, responsibilities and an on-going status as to in progress or completed.

## ACTIONS PLAN 2010-2013

Action/Focus Area – Strategy for Consideration	Priority Score	Time Frame	Status	Notes
<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.	41			
2. Maintain website with up-to-date employment data, available building and site information and workforce data.	41			
3. Continue close partnership with the West Virginia Development Office in an effort to promote available sites and buildings.	41			
4. Market 50,000 square foot shell building located in Belington Industrial Park.	33			
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.).	33			
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).	29			
7. Develop, for planning purposes, a targeted list of the potential best industry/business types to attract to Barbour County. Link this to the future workforce needs of the county to ensure the workforce is available.	29			
8. 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.	25			
9. Develop a focused action plan regarding available land in Belington Industrial Park as to infrastructure and other needs to improve its attractiveness for potential industry/business.	24			
<b>GOAL 2 - BUSINESS RETENTION</b> (Retaining or expanding existing business and industry)				
1. Encourage and make it easy for local business and industry to contact BCDA for assistance and respond to such requests as appropriate.	37			
2. Identify financing opportunities for existing businesses contemplating expansion.	33			

Action/Focus Area – Strategy for Consideration	Priority Score	Time Frame	Status	Notes
3. Continue to monitor progress to improve access road to Philippi Industrial Park.	33			
4. Identify exporting opportunities for existing wood industries	33			
5. Working with the Board, develop an effective retention program that ensures on-going communication with most businesses and ensures in-person contact with all industry/business over a two year cycle.	33			
6. Conduct at a minimum ten extensive retention visits with existing businesses each year including identifying financing opportunities for existing businesses contemplating expansion.	29			
7. Provide follow-up assistance to businesses as issues are identified during the retention visits including training or financial needs.	25			
<b>GOAL 3 - ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT</b>				
1. Serve as a clearinghouse for information and support services.	29			
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.	25			
3. Identify networking/training opportunities for local entrepreneurs.	21			
<b>GOAL 4 - COLLABORATION FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</b>				
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.	33			
2. Explore fully how the Hardwood Alliance Zone (HAZ) can be most effective for Barbour County.	33			

Action/Focus Area – Strategy for Consideration	Priority Score	Time Frame	Status	Notes
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.	29			
4. Develop a priority list of priorities regarding education in Barbour County as it affects economic and community development. An outcome would be a potential list of actions that the BCDA might be able to address/assist ensure gets done.	29			
5. Work with the Barbour County Water Supply Committee to study water issues as related to economic development.	25			
<b>GOAL 5 - BCDA ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT/OPERATIONS</b>				
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.	45			
2. Use technology (internet, e-mail) and new ways of communication (social network, blogs) to keep in contact with the Board, local business/industry, other stakeholders on a regular basis. Consider asking the Chamber for a list of members (e-mail) and incorporate this into the on-going communication.	41			
3. 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.)	37			
4. Work with the Board’s Executive Committee to review the results of the Board internal assessment and offer suggestions to strengthen the Board including development opportunities (meeting frequency, Board committees, Board attendance, etc.)	33			
5. Determine how best to incorporate Alderson-Broadus College into the overall economic development efforts.	33			
6. Consider what, if any, actions regarding tourism should be incorporated into the plan.	29			

I=In progress      O=On-going      C=Completed      X=See notes