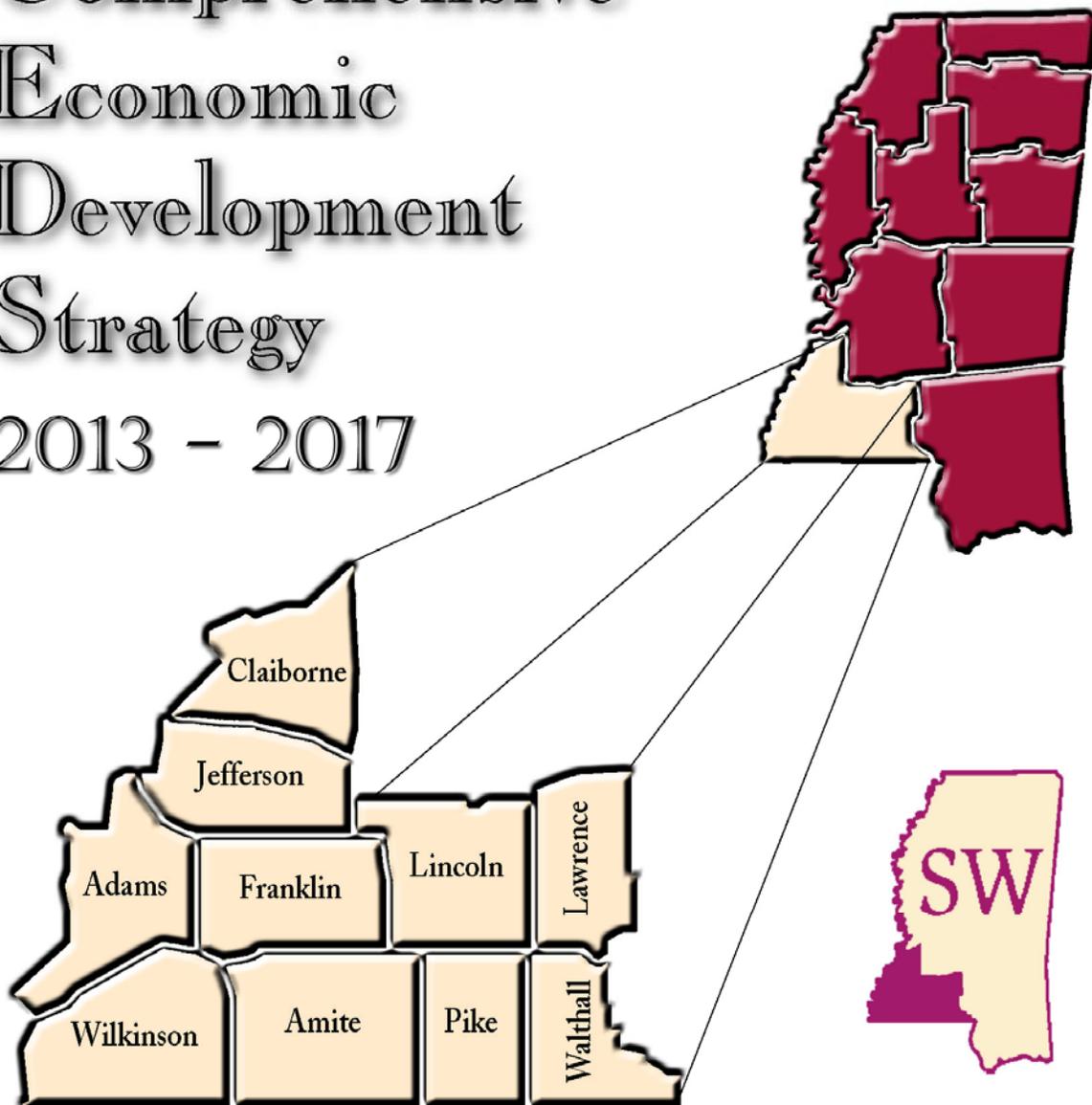


# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2013 - 2017



Southwest Planning & Development District

Submitted February 22, 2013

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
For  
Southwest Mississippi Planning and Development District, Inc.**

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# **SECTION I**

## **I. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### 1) Population Demographics

#### a) Population Growth –

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | Percentage of Population Change between 2000 and 2010 Census |
|--|--|
| United States  | 9.7  |
| State of Mississippi   | 4.3  |
| Adams County   | -5.9   |
| Amite  | -3.4   |
| Claiborne  | -18.8  |
| Franklin   | -3.9   |
| Jefferson  | -20.7  |
| Lawrence   | -2.5   |
| Lincoln  | 5.1  |
| Pike   | 3.8  |
| Walthall   | 1.9  |
| Wilkinson  | -4.2   |
| Average for all District Counties                            | -4.9   |

With exception to Jefferson County and Claiborne County, on a District basis out-migration has not been particularly significant when viewed as population decline. However, the population growth of the District has lagged behind both the State and National averages.

Adams County experienced significant out-migration due to the closure of several large employers, including International Paper and Johns Manville plants in the last 10-15 years. The lack of growth in some of the surrounding Counties and decline over the last decade in a number of them could also be attributed to these closures, due to these employers having employees who lived in surrounding Counties who were laid off. Jefferson and Claiborne Counties are considered two of the poorest counties in the district. Unlike the previous CEDS, they experienced well above average out-migration. There is a severe lack of industry and jobs in those areas. Claiborne County does have Grand Gulf Nuclear Power Plant but it has not grown in the last decade. However, there are current plans to expand that facility which could result in more jobs and an increase or stabilization in the county's population.

There have been many recent industrial announcements over the last two years in the area but it is not known what type of impact it will have on the area's population at this time.

b) Age –

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | % of Population between 18 and 24 2000 | % of Population between 18 & 24 2010 | Percentage of Increase/Decrease in Population Age 18 to 24 from 2000-2010 |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| United States  | 10.7                                   | 9.9                                  | -0.8  |
| State of Mississippi   | 11.4                                   | 10.6                                 | -0.8  |
| Adams County   | 8.6                                    | 8.2                                  | -0.5  |
| Amite  | 8.5                                    | 7.7                                  | -0.8  |
| Claiborne  | 23.1                                   | 17.3                                 | -5.8  |
| Franklin   | 8.8                                    | 7.3                                  | -1.5  |
| Jefferson  | 12.1                                   | 10.2                                 | -1.9  |
| Lawrence   | 9.8                                    | 8.1                                  | -1.7  |
| Lincoln  | 9.5                                    | 8.3                                  | -1.2  |
| Pike   | 10.1                                   | 8.7                                  | -1.9  |
| Walthall   | 9.9                                    | 8                                    | -1.9  |
| Wilkinson  | 10.7                                   | 9.4                                  | -1.3  |
| Average for all District Counties                            | 11.1                                   | 9.3                                  | -1.9  |

The above table uses Census information to analyze youth out-migration by analyzing the shift in the 18-24 year old population as a percentage of the total. If youth were leaving in significant numbers to find employment, this population segment would be in decline in relation to the total. As the table reflects, there appears to be no problem with the number of young people who are leaving. However, it does not show the impact of “brain drain” caused by a small number of exceptional young people who may be leaving to find other opportunities.

c) Education

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | % of Population with High School Education | % of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher |
|--|--|--|
| United States  | 80.4                                       | 24.4   |
| State of Mississippi   | 72.9                                       | 16.9   |
| Adams County   | 73.4                                       | 17.5   |
| Amite  | 67.2                                       | 9.4  |
| Claiborne  | 71.6                                       | 18.9   |
| Franklin   | 67.5                                       | 10.5   |
| Jefferson  | 59.7                                       | 10.6   |
| Lawrence   | 72.9                                       | 12   |
| Lincoln  | 72   | 12.4   |
| Pike   | 70.3                                       | 12.5   |
| Walthall   | 67   | 10.4   |
| Wilkinson  | 58.1                                       | 10   |
| Average for all District Counties                            | 68   | 12.4   |

The chart above indicates that 68% of Southwest Mississippi's population has a high school education, while slightly above 12% is college educated. This is slightly below the Mississippi average and significantly lower than the National. The situation is particularly acute in some of the poorest Counties in the District, such as Jefferson and Wilkinson, which have over 40% of the population without a high school education. This is double the National percentile.

d) Unemployment

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | Average Unemployment Rate (%) from 1990-2011 |
|--|--|
| United States  | 6  |
| State of Mississippi   | 7.1  |
| Adams County   | 8.3  |
| Amite  | 7.1  |
| Claiborne  | 12.2   |
| Franklin   | 8.3  |
| Jefferson  | 16.5   |
| Lawrence   | 8.5  |
| Lincoln  | 7.5  |
| Pike   | 7.8  |
| Walthall   | 8.0  |
| Wilkinson  | 10.9   |
| Average for all District Counties                            | 9.5  |

The above table shows that unemployment has been a persistent problem in the SWMPDD region for the last 35 years. Rates run about 2.4 percentage points higher than the State as a whole and 3.5 points higher than the United States average.

Several Counties, particularly Jefferson, Wilkinson and Claiborne have particularly severe unemployment rates which are part of endemic problems in these Counties which are plagued by persistently high poverty and general social decline. Both counties are in particularly bad need of economic development, although it is challenging to entice employers to locate there, thus creating a “chicken and egg” scenario which results in it being difficult to determine the origin of these Counties’ very serious economic problems.

e) Poverty

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | Percent of Individuals below Poverty Level (2010 CENSUS) |
|--|--|
| United States  | 12.4   |
| State of Mississippi   | 21.6   |
| Adams  | 31.5   |
| Amite  | 24.5   |
| Claiborne  | 37.9   |
| Franklin   | 25.1   |
| Jefferson  | 42.8   |
| Lawrence   | 18.6   |
| Lincoln  | 18.5   |
| Pike   | 26.2   |
| Walthall   | 24.2   |
| Wilkinson  | 26.6   |
| Average for all District Counties                            | 27.1   |

The information in the preceding table, which is derived from the 2010 Census, shows that the poverty rate for Southwest Mississippi is over double the rate of the National and significantly higher than the entire State. Over one in four people in Southwest Mississippi live in poverty. In some of the worst Counties, the rate is one in three.

f) Workforce Participation Rate

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | Percent of Individuals Participating in the Workforce |
|--|---|
| United States  | 65%   |
| State of Mississippi   | 61%   |
| Adams County   | 51%   |
| Amite  | 51%   |
| Claiborne  | 47%   |
| Franklin   | 53%   |
| Jefferson  | 35%   |
| Lawrence   | 53%   |
| Lincoln  | 56%   |
| Pike   | 55%   |
| Walthall   | 52%   |
| Wilkinson  | 50%   |
| Average for all District Counties                            | 50.3%   |

The chart above shows that the workforce participation rate for Southwest Mississippi is approximately 11 percentage points lower than the Mississippi average, which is about 4 percent less than the National. While most of this rate can be attributed to the

lack of job opportunity, there are several Counties, particularly Jefferson and Wilkinson, which have particularly low numbers. This rate could be attributed to frictional unemployment which is the result of generations of socioeconomic problems associated with the high poverty rates in these Counties.

g) Employment/Wages by Occupation

| Geography                | Occupations (Average Salaries) |              |                    |             |               |               |              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
|                          | Accommodation Services         | Construction | Education Services | Health Care | Manufacturing | Public Admin. | Retail Trade |
| State of Mississippi     | \$19,810                       | \$40,880     | \$48,570           | \$23,540    | \$35,210      | \$33,480      | \$34,030     |
| Adams                    | \$13,005                       | \$42,570     | N/A                | \$30,856    | \$29,517      | N/A           | \$22,301     |
| Amite                    | \$13,970                       | \$23,927     | N/A                | \$25,219    | \$28,754      | \$16,764      | \$23,114     |
| Claiborne                | N/A                            | N/A          | N/A                | \$19,662    | \$33,334      | N/A           | \$21,844     |
| Franklin                 | N/A                            | \$29,159     | N/A                | \$25,669    | \$31,681      | \$16,104      | \$17,882     |
| Jefferson                | N/A                            | \$22,250     | N/A                | \$24,643    | N/A           | N/A           | \$14,884     |
| Lawrence                 | \$10,973                       | \$36,119     | N/A                | \$23,578    | \$76,224      | \$19,609      | \$18,085     |
| Lincoln                  | \$11,176                       | \$36,678     | \$29,718           | \$28,097    | \$42,126      | \$26,365      | \$22,352     |
| Pike                     | \$11,430                       | \$33,426     | N/A                | \$32,144    | \$23,868      | \$27,330      | \$20,980     |
| Walthall                 | \$8,992                        | \$29,718     | N/A                | \$25,991    | \$22,853      | N/A           | \$21,387     |
| Wilkinson                | N/A                            | \$24,740     | \$29,413           | \$32,180    | \$27,216      | \$18,034      | \$20,371     |
| Average for all Counties | \$11,591                       | \$30,954     | \$29,566           | \$26,804    | \$64,846      | \$20,701      | \$20,320     |

The chart above shows average salaries in the major occupations in Southwest Mississippi. As evidenced in the other tables, this region lags behind the State averages in almost every category. The unusually high salary average in Lawrence County for the manufacturing sector is due to a large Georgia Pacific mill located in that County. While Georgia Pacific pays very good wages, the number listed, which came from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, seems suspiciously high. It may be due to a few Executives having extremely high salaries which bring up the average for all of the employees.

h) PCI

| Geography (United States, Mississippi or County in District) | Per Capita Income |
|--|-------------------|
| United States  | \$21,587          |
| State of Mississippi   | \$20,521          |
| Adams County   | \$17,249          |
| Amite  | \$17,681          |
| Claiborne  | \$12,238          |
| Franklin   | \$22,138          |
| Jefferson  | \$12,857          |
| Lawrence   | \$19,896          |
| Lincoln  | \$21,045          |
| Pike   | \$18,454          |
| Walthall   | \$16,592          |
| Wilkinson  | \$18,254          |
| Average for all District Counties                            | \$17,640          |

This chart shows the typical pattern of Southwest Mississippi trailing the United States average drastically and being significantly below the Mississippi average. It also shows the diversity within the region, with several Counties i.e. Adams, Lawrence, Pike and Amite, having significantly higher incomes than the Counties along the Mississippi River i.e. Jefferson, Claiborne and Wilkinson, which are extremely distressed.

- i) Strategic Conclusion for Population Demographics – The bottom line conclusion for the preceding data analysis is that Southwest Mississippi has a poorly educated workforce which has at least partially resulted in the region suffering economically. In areas with a poorly educated and trained workforce, it is more difficult to achieve high workforce participation rates, due to difficulties in attracting industry which will produce jobs.

The level of educational attainment generally follows the pattern of poverty, in that Counties with the lowest level of education tend to have the highest indicators of poverty. The one exception is Claiborne County, which has a skewed result due to it being the location of Alcorn State University. The students, most of who are not from Claiborne County, give this County an unrealistic level of educational attainment. Immediately upon graduation, virtually all of these students leave Claiborne County.

The lack of educational attainment also results in lower than average salaries, due to even the residents who are employed, working for lower wages, due to their educational level. The salary scale tends to follow the educational trend, with the lower salaries being in the Counties which also have the lowest educational levels.

## 2) Clusters

Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a nation or region. These clusters provide employment concentrations within a region.

Due to the poor economic conditions of Southwest Mississippi, there are few traditional clusters in the district. The cluster definition in this region must be expanded to include various sectors which are scattered throughout the Southwest Mississippi region.

These clusters are primarily identified in the employment/wages chart above. The chart below expands on them by providing information concerning size and percent of total workforce.

| Cluster                | Size (Avg. Monthly Employment) | Average Wages | % of Regional Workforce |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Accommodation Services | 4,384                          | \$11,591      | 10.1                    |
| Construction           | 1,426                          | \$30,954      | 3.3                     |
| Education Services     | 571                            | \$29,566      | 1.3                     |
| Health Care            | 8,030                          | \$26,804      | 18.5                    |
| Manufacturing          | 5,219                          | \$64,846      | 12.1                    |
| Public Administration  | 1,124                          | \$20,701      | 2.6                     |
| Retail Trade           | 8,152                          | \$20,320      | 18.8                    |

Strategic Findings: The three major clusters are health care, retail trade and manufacturing. Education services are also more significant than the chart indicates, due to a lack of data for Adams County, which has a large population by Southwest Mississippi standards and two branch colleges.

The chart above indicates that Southwest Mississippi needs to work toward providing education and technical training for the health care service field, in order to keep “feeding the cluster”. While this is the largest cluster in the region, the wages are not particularly high in a field which is known for high salaries. This is an indicator that most of the residents working in this cluster are employed at the lower levels. Better education and technical training could result in residents obtaining higher level jobs with better salaries.

There also should be a major effort to retain manufacturing jobs and recruit new industry. This is complicated due to the affects of globalization.

In order to retain these jobs, close relationships should be developed between current manufacturing industries, colleges and universities and trade schools in order to assure that their workforce needs are being met. Additionally, research should be done to determine the workforce and infrastructure needs of new manufacturing industries in an effort to recruit them into the area.

While retail trade jobs are an obvious cluster in Southwest Mississippi, the wages paid to these employees is very low. There should still be an effort to retain retail jobs by assisting business owners in meeting their workforce and infrastructure needs. Relationships should be strengthened between the retail sector, particularly large retailers such as Wal-Mart, and educational institutions to make sure that their workforce needs are being addressed. Also, local governments should maintain working relationships with these retailers to assure that their infrastructure needs are met.

### 3) Infrastructure

| <b>ANALYSIS OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |   |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| <b>County/City</b>                         | <b>Broadband Telecommunication Capacity</b>                           | <b>Condition/Capacity of Water System</b> | <b>Condition/Capacity of Industrial Park</b>  | <b>Condition/Capacity of Roads and Bridges Serving Business and Industry</b> | <b>Condition/Capacity of Sewer System</b>                    |
| Adams County                               | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite.                      | Good, but some areas are not served.      | Accessed by a water and airport, as well as County road. However, it only has three acres available.  | Good   | Good   |
| Town of Centreville                        | Needs Improvement   | Good                                      | n/a   | poor   | Good condition, but limited parts of the Town are not served |
| Claiborne County                           | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite.                      | Good, but some areas are not served.      | There are two with a total of 18 acres and an industrial building. They are accessed by County roads and are within 10 and 3 miles of Highway 61. | Fair   | Good but there are unserved areas of the county.             |
| City of Fayette                            | Needs improvement.  | Good/Fair                                 | The City has an industrial park. There was no response concerning available acreage. It is accessed by a City street.                             | Good   | Good/Fair  |
| Franklin County                            | Yes, through Franklin Telephone Company. 95% of the County is served. | Good, but some areas are not served.      | The County has an industrial park with 80 acres available for development. It is accessed by a County road.                                       | Fair but needs improvements.   | Good   |

| County/City          | Broadband Telecommunication Capacity             | Condition/Capacity of Water System  | Condition/Capacity of Industrial Park   | Condition/Capacity of Roads and Bridges Serving Business and Industry | Condition/Capacity of Sewer System  |
|----------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Town of Gloster      | Needs improvements                               | Good – 300,000 gallon capacity.   | The Town has an industrial park with 10 acres available.  | Good  | Good, 190,000 gallon capacity per day. However, there are parts of the Town which are not served. |
| Lawrence County      | Partial coverage through Bellsouth DSL           | good  | The County has a 40 acre undeveloped industrial park which is accessed by Highway 27.   | good  | good  |
| Town of Liberty      | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite. | Good, but there are some newly annexed areas that need access. The system needs expansion.                            | The Town has an industrial park which is accessed by a Town street. There was no response concerning the number of available acres. | The roads to the industrial park need to be overlaid.                 | Good, but there are areas which are newly developed and need access to Town sewer.                |
| City of Magnolia     | Partial coverage through Bellsouth DSL           | The City has relatively new water lines, but all three tanks require work. The system is serving 20% of its capacity. | An industrial park is available which is accessed by Highway 51. It has 150 acres available.  | Very poor.  | Good. One house is not served by the system.  |
| City of McComb       | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite. | Excellent   | An industrial park is available with 320 acres open for development. It is accessed by a County Road. Pike County's.                | Excellent   | Excellent   |
| City of Natchez      | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite. | Excellent condition. It is operating at 76% of capacity.  | An industrial park is available with 218 acres open for development. It is accessed by a City Street.                               | Fair to adequate.   | Good, but there are a few areas which are not served due to topographical challenges.             |
| Town of Osyka        | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite. | Good. All areas are served.   | An industrial park is available with 320 acres open for development. It is accessed by a County Road. Pike County's.                | Fair  | Good, but there are some parts of the Town which are not served.                                  |
| Pike County          | Yes, through DSL, cable companies and satellite. | Good.   | An industrial park is available with 320 acres open for development. It is accessed by a County Road.                               | Good  | Good but there are some outlying areas unserved.  |
| Town of Silver Creek | Needs improvement                                | Good. It is serving 19% of its capacity.  | An industrial park is available with 5 acres available for development.   | Satisfactory.   | System is at 50% of capacity and will need to be rehabilitated over the next 10-15 years.         |
| Wilkinson County     | Needs improvement                                | Needs improvement   | The County has an industrial park with 100 acres available for development. It is accessed by County and 4 lane roads.              | All are in poor condition.  | Needs improving.  |

Strategic Findings: The chart above is based on surveys and discussions with County/City officials.

Broadband communication accessibility is scattered throughout the region. There was so little response concerning this item that it is difficult to determine its true availability.

Based on the sample responses to the survey, it appears that water systems are in surprisingly good shape. There was only one system which had problems.

Sewer systems were in a little worse condition, although the majority provided a listing of good. There were enough problems revealed to show that this could be a possible area need.

The responses concerning access roads to business and industry indicated that these were in the worst condition of the three infrastructures for which information was requested. These responses indicate that this may be a particular need for the District.

#### 4) Financial Resources

| <b><u>ANALYSIS OF EXISTING FINANCIAL CONDITIONS</u></b> |   |   |  |                            |
|---|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| <b><u>County/City</u></b>                               | <b><u>Amount of General Fund Reserves</u></b> | <b><u>Amount of Outstanding General Obligation Debt</u></b> | <b><u>Amount of Revenue Bond Debt on Enterprise Operations</u></b> | <b><u>Millage Rate</u></b> |
| Adams County  | \$536,639                                     | \$3,065,000   | 0  | 43.98                      |
| Town of Centreville                                     | \$367,259                                     | \$450,000   | 0  | 30.5                       |
| City of Fayette   | \$210,590                                     | 0   | \$1,247,966  | 30                         |
| Town of Gloster   | \$229,969                                     | 0   | 0  | 33                         |
| Town of Liberty   | \$126,513                                     | 0   | 0  | 26                         |
| City of Magnolia  | \$1,308,019                                   | 0   | \$3,824,775 loan debt, instead of bonds                            | 32                         |
| City of McComb  | \$3,546,933                                   | \$3,235,000   | 0  | 39.84                      |
| City of Natchez   | \$1,034,883                                   | \$3,020,000   | \$5,826,934  | 42.732                     |
| Town of Osyka   | \$299,669                                     | 0   | 0  | 34                         |
| Pike County   | \$4,067,656                                   | \$6,500,000   | 0  | 54                         |
| Town of Silver Creek                                    | \$238,115                                     | 0   | 0  | 18                         |

Strategic Findings: The data above was also derived from surveys. The response rate was even lower than the previous one concerning infrastructure conditions. The responses can be analyzed as a sample of the area, rather than a comprehensive list. The respondents cover the range of conditions for the District, including the City of Fayette, which is one of the poorest areas to Pike County and McComb, which are among the most prosperous.

The overall trend for the District is one of very conservative financial management. Most local governments are very reluctant to take risks and primarily use their resources to maintain current operations. The populations of the District communities tend to be predominantly conservative and resistant to higher tax rates. This makes the political leaders of these entities reluctant to raise taxes, even when economic development can be given as the reason behind the tax increase.

5) External Forces

- a.) Natural Environment- The 2011 Mississippi River flood along with several major storms/hurricanes has impacted Southwest Mississippi over the years. The region has adapted to natural disasters to some degree but there is still no way to prevent such disasters, only prepare for them. Each disaster has been costly to the region, closing ports, business and industry along the river.
- b.) Political Environment – The primary external political force is closely related to the recent disasters. Due to the impact of various storms and flooding, the federal government has allotted unusually large appropriations of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for Southwest Mississippi. These funds provide an opportunity for an expanded pool of resources. Additionally, the federal and state government is providing industries with tax breaks and other incentives to locate in the area.
- c.) Economic Environment – The external economic environment is driven by the availability of federal and state funds and tax incentives to industries. These industries are taking advantage of the political opportunities by showing a higher than usual interest in the area.
- d.) Social Environment – Southwest Mississippi has been greatly impacted by industry closures over the years. The below average income rate and above average unemployment rate demonstrate this. This region of Mississippi is considered one of its poorest.

Strategic Findings: Several years ago Hurricane Katrina had numerous effects on Southwest Mississippi which appeared to be permanent, many effects were good. The permanent nature of these effects didn't last. While there was an upswing in overall population, retail sales and home sales following Katrina, those effects have since worn off and the region appears to be in even worse condition than it was prior to the hurricane. There have also been additional damaging storms since and a major flood that had a massive negative impact, especially to the areas alongside the Mississippi River.

## SECTION II

### II) STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

The strategy committee felt that the best way to address the existing conditions discussed in the analysis section was the development of regional solutions which will enhance the prospects of attracting industries which would create better paying jobs for the Southwest Mississippi District. These jobs will help retain current exceptional individuals who are leaving the area and address the problem of residents who have job skills, but are not willing to relocate to areas where they can be employed. Many of these residents have been laid off after the closing of major industries in the area.

An additional incentive to attracting these industries is the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the region. This natural disaster has created some opportunities in that it resulted in an influx of some highly skilled workers as well as extra financial resources which can be utilized to attract regional industries.

A focus of the projects was to take advantage of existing opportunities, some of them geographic, in order to leverage additional resources which would attract the type of industries needed in the region.

The strategy committee came up with five vital projects it would like to pursue over the next five years. These are included in the following table:

| <u>VITAL PROJECTS LIST</u>       |  |   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <u>Project</u>                   | <u>Strategic Findings Addressed</u>  | <u>Outcome</u>  |
| Regional airport in Adams County | There is a need for airport infrastructure, due to there not being one in the region which can support commercial airliners. The lack of this type of infrastructure inhibits economic development in Southwest Mississippi. | Recruitment of a new industry to the region which can be attributed at least partially to this added infrastructure. This industry will create at least 200 jobs. |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Expansion of the nuclear power plant in Claiborne County</p>  | <p>The clusters in the region tend to be concentrated in low paying sectors. The jobs created by the nuclear power plant expansion will provide a cluster with more desirable jobs. This expansion will also provide opportunities to highly skilled Hurricane Katrina evacuees who have relocated to the area and are currently underemployed.</p> | <p>The creation of 700 temporary jobs during the construction phase and 350 permanent jobs after completion.</p>        |
| <p>Development of a Regional Industrial Park</p>   | <p>A regional industrial park will assist the District in attracting job producing industry. This will address the high unemployment and poor workforce participation rates</p>   | <p>Completion of a regional industrial park in S.W. Mississippi.</p>  |
| <p>Regional Job Training Facility</p>  | <p>A regional job training facility will help residents develop the skills necessary to reduce the high unemployment, poverty rates and raise the PCI and workforce participation in the District. It also should assist in the creation of higher paying clusters.</p>   | <p>Graduating 1000 residents with job skill certifications over the next five years. Examples: welders, pipefitters</p> |
| <p>Improvements to existing port facilities in Adams County to attract industries which can take advantage of access to the Mississippi River.</p> | <p>Infrastructure surveys showed that the current port facilities need to be enhanced.</p>  | <p>Completion of improvements to port infrastructure.</p>   |

### **III) GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- a) Goal - Attract industries which will provide higher quality jobs for Southwest Mississippi residents.
  - i) Objective 1 – Build a regional airport in Adams County to provide infrastructure needed to combine with port enhancements in the County to attract industry which can benefit from access to the Mississippi River. This is a similar model to FedEx in Memphis, TN. With the addition of many new economic development projects to the area (KiOR, Magnolia Bluffs Casino, Elevance, Enersteel, Fores, Genesis) this continues to be a goal of the area.
  - ii) Objective 2 – Develop a regional industrial park which is probably going to be located in Pike County on Interstate 55. This will provide a site for a large scale industry which can benefit from the access to I55 and the higher skilled labor available from evacuees who live in this area.

A common complaint from potential industry is a lack of highly skilled labor. While Southwest Mississippi can provide some of this labor, the population is not high enough to attract the volume needed by some of the larger industries. However, the Pike County location will provide access to not only Southwest Mississippi's labor pool, but also the large Louisiana population which can access the site from I55.

Additionally, this site will attract resources due to its location in the most highly Hurricane impacted part of Southwest Mississippi and the fact that the site would be accessible to Louisiana Hurricane victims.

- iii) Objective 3 – Develop a regional job training facility which will provide certifications for vocational skilled workers. The Southwest Mississippi Planning and Development District was instrumental in securing Economic Development Administration funding for such a facility, \$4.8 million, located at Southwest Mississippi Community College. This facility is scheduled to open on February 22, 2013. This facility will help develop the labor force needed to attract better employers and assist in the transition of a larger number of jobs in the regional industrial park from being Louisiana commuters to local residents.
- iv) Objective 4 – Improvements to the existing port facilities in Adams County and Claiborne County of which discussions of funding through the Economic Development Administration have already been in the works. The Adams County project will combine with the Adams County airport project to provide basic infrastructure needed to attract higher paying industry which can benefit from access to the Mississippi River. The Adams County Port Commission is also in the process of acquiring a major warehouse facility within the port that will benefit all the new industries. Railway improvements in these ports is also a major issue that will need to be addressed.
- v) Objective 5 – Expansion of nuclear power plant in Claiborne County – This expansion will provide Southwest Mississippi with job opportunities which have a much higher pay scale than current clusters.

- vi) Objective 6 – Partner with City/County officials to attract new industry and promote existing industry. The utilization of revolving loan funds can be maximized to increase and expand new and existing industry.
- vii) Objective 7 – Utilize the Geographic Information System (GIS) through the local Planning and Development District that will assist local units of government view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports, and charts.

#### **IV) ACTION PLAN**

The District’s Plan of Action for the Comprehensive Development Strategy will guide the implementation of the Goals and Objectives of the CEDS in a manner that:

- promotes economic development and opportunity.
- fosters effective transportation access.
- enhances and protects the environment.
- maximizes effective development and use of the workforce consistent with any applicable State or local workforce investment strategy.
- promotes the use of technology in economic development, including access to high-speed telecommunications.
- balances resources through sound management of physical development, and
- obtains and utilizes adequate funds and other resources.

To do this, the District will continue to work closely with committee members and economic development partners to develop and implement the CEDS; use economic development programs to develop the strategic projects listed in the CEDS with emphasis placed on vital projects; and will work with the State to ensure the integration of the CEDS Vital projects with the State’s economic priorities.

Current economic development programs will be utilized where possible to develop the listed Strategic and Vital Projects. A listing of available programs is listed below, but is not limited to:

- Economic Development Planning Grants (EDA)
- Economic Development Infrastructure Grants (EDA)
- Community Development Block Grants
- Delta Regional Authority Programs
- Rural Development Community Programs
- Workforce Development Programs
- Home Investment Partnership Program

Finally, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is provided to the

State of Mississippi and the Institutions of Higher Learning for integrating the CEDS and the State's economic priorities. District staff and committee members will continue to work with State agencies to coordinate this effort.

## **V) PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

In order to assure the success of any economic development plan, a formal plan of evaluation must be undertaken. To assess the implementation of the Strategy and ensure its success, the CEDS will be evaluated on an annual basis. The results of this evaluation will be used to provide an annual update and will provide for a new Strategy to be written every five years.

The evaluation will have two phases:

The first phase will include a comparison of the local economy's unemployment rate and per capita income from year to year in relation to the region, the state, and the nation. It will also include the number of jobs created and retained in the workforce. These alone are not adequate measures of economic development but can be used as good indicators.

The second phase of the evaluation process will include a measure of previous year's goals and objectives. It will look at the number and type of investments made in the region and the amount of private sector investment.

Each year, the results of this evaluation will be summarized and presented as an update to the CEDS to the Economic Development Administration and to the State of Mississippi, Institutions of Higher Learning. It will also be provided to State and regional clearinghouses, the CEDS Committee, and the Board of Directors for the SWMPDD.