

The 24-27 Plan



ASHLAND
AREA ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORP.



A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WELCOME TO OUR STRATEGIC PLAN, A ROADMAP FOR SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY AND PROPELLING IT TOWARDS GUIDED GROWTH AND PROSPERITY. AT THE HEART OF OUR ENDEAVOR LIES A STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO FIVE KEY PILLARS: PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRESS, POSITIONING THE ORGANIZATION FOR A STRONG FUTURE, ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE, MARKETING & ADVOCACY, AND CATALYZING COMMUNITY CHANGE.

IN THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW, WE WILL DELVE INTO EACH OF THESE FIVE PILLARS, EXPLORING OUR OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES TO PROPEL OUR COMMUNITY FORWARD. FROM FORGING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE, FROM ENHANCING OUR QUALITY OF LIFE TO AMPLIFYING OUR VOICE ON THE REGIONAL STAGE, OUR STRATEGIC PLAN EMBODIES OUR COLLECTIVE VISION FOR A BRIGHTER, MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Caleb Fjone".

CALEB FJONE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OUR STATEMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY

THE MISSION

To advance economic growth in the Ashland area through the attraction of new businesses, retention of existing businesses, and promotion of the area by providing support for commerce, industry, and housing that enables development and enhances the community region.

THE VISION

A thriving and inclusive Ashland area, where our strategic efforts in economic development lead to a vibrant community where opportunities flourish, businesses prosper, and people are proud to call Ashland home.



OBJECTIVE

In the pursuit of progress, partnerships serve as the cornerstone of success. As the Ashland Area Economic Development Corporation (AAEDC) charts its course for the future, it does so with a steadfast commitment to collaboration, innovation, and community engagement. Through strategic alliances and visionary initiatives, AAEDC aims to catalyze transformative change, elevate quality of life, and position Ashland as a beacon of opportunity and growth.

STRATEGIES

- Create an engagement plan
- Develop strategic partnerships at the city and county levels
- Develop/create a formal partnership agreement between the Ashland Area Economic Development Corporation, the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Ashland that clarifies roles, and responsibilities.
- Address opportunities to evaluate merger opportunities with the Ashland Chamber of Commerce
- Leverage partnership opportunities with new and existing community businesses and organizations.
- Work with community and local government partners to address and maintain standards of appearance throughout the community.
- Establish housing committee to address housing solutions
- Establish developer council to address streamlining development through the developers toolkit
- Establish working relationship with AGPS/FBLA to provide workforce exposure for AGPS students



OBJECTIVE

As stewards of economic development, we recognize the importance of positioning AAEDC for long-term success and sustainability. By establishing a resilient funding strategy and maintaining robust membership structures, we ensure the continued vitality of our organization. Through the pursuit of business retention and expansion initiatives and the exploration of potential mergers with like-minded entities, we chart a course towards a future of growth and resilience.

STRATEGIES

- Establish a resilient funding strategy for AAEDC that ensures funding opportunities through the City of Ashland, Saunders County, Private Investors, and Grant Opportunities are pursued.
- Evaluate opportunities to seek funding to hire additional support staff.
- Maintain membership according to the newly created/revised membership benefits structure
- Set minimum threshold of 15 Business, Retention, and Expansion (BREs) completed a year
- Formally establish a BRE committee with a board member chair and representative from the Chamber of Commerce (does not need to be Chamber board position)
- Discuss Communities 4 Kids (C4K) being absorbed into EDC



OBJECTIVE

Central to our mission is the pursuit of initiatives that enhance quality of life for all residents. From addressing housing solutions to expanding community amenities, we are committed to creating a vibrant, inclusive environment that attracts young professionals, families, and visitors alike. Through the establishment of a tourism office and the development of recreational facilities, we aim to showcase the unique charm and appeal of Ashland to the world.

STRATEGIES

- AAEDC will pursue engagements that seek to enhance and/or expand community amenities for all ages
- Pursue opportunities that will continue to make Ashland a lifestyle focused community that is inviting to young adults, and families
- Establish “Welcome to Ashland” signs for aesthetic upgrades to the community with collaborative support from city and stakeholders
- Pursue solutions to community wide issues including but not limited to business and workforce development, increasing the quantity and quality of housing, and increasing the quantity of licensed child care providers
- Explore opportunities to enhance current events and create new events based on local interests and partnerships
- Lead a committee of the different sectors of the community and city through planning process of a community & recreational center
- Increase the housing inventory to reach goals outlined in the Housing Study
- Establish a tourism office
- Update existing tourism videos for the community



OBJECTIVE

In our efforts to promote Ashland as a destination for opportunity and innovation, we recognize the importance of effective marketing and advocacy. Through proactive communication and outreach, we will cultivate a regional voice that resonates with stakeholders and inspires confidence in Ashland's future.

STRATEGIES

- Establish an events committee with a board member as chair
- Utilize membership magazine as a tool to onboard new members
- Offer snapshot of their business through data analytics software
- Create a branding/marketing template
- Develop and implement a marketing plan that builds alignment with stakeholders and creates a stronger communication channel to share updates on progress and goals
- Frame the organization to the community in a way that clearly markets the message that we are an organization focusing on big goals and that we don't let "speed bumps" slow down the beneficial work
- Develop a strategy to build AAEDC's regional voice—therefore giving AAEDC the authority to speak on larger community issues and model excellence to other communities around us
- Create or update website to be intuitive to the end user with easier maintenance on backend



OBJECTIVE

As advocates for progress, we stand ready to champion initiatives that address key community needs and priorities. By collaborating with local government and stakeholders, we can drive forward projects that stimulate economic growth, and elevate Ashland's profile locally, regionally, and beyond. Through prudent fiscal management and strategic investments, we will ensure that our community thrives now and in the years to come.

STRATEGIES

- Advocate to the City of Ashland to take initiative in pursuing projects that address key areas of shared interest while also being comfortable to use city resources, and funding sources to do so
- Debt is sometimes necessary and a normal part of large business/government spear-headed projects
- Increase tax base by 2-3% per year
- Create a comprehensive commercial inventory of the community
- Consider name change of AAEDC for clarity/conciseness
- Has effect on future marketing and advocacy
- Utilize full taxing authority of the city to implement LB840 for economic and community development purposes
- Explore other funding opportunities that originate from the City beyond implementing LB840, i.e) special projects, budget expansion.
- Consider opportunities to establish policies and enforcement agreements that ensure zoning /planning standards are adhered to

SUMMARY

In the pursuit of progress, partnerships serve as the cornerstone of success. As the Ashland Area Economic Development Corporation (AAEDC) charts its course for the future, it does so with a steadfast commitment to collaboration, innovation, and community engagement. Through strategic alliances and visionary initiatives, AAEDC aims to catalyze transformative change, elevate quality of life, and position Ashland as a beacon of opportunity and growth.

As we embark on this journey of growth and prosperity, let us embrace the power of partnership, innovation, and collaboration to realize our collective vision for Ashland's future. Together, we can build a community where opportunity knows no bounds and where the promise of progress shines bright for generations to come.

Signed this day: 14 May 2024

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