



To Plan or Not to Plan? Considering the Local Timing for Planning

Communities that will be participating in the development of a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development first have an opportunity to construct their own community-based economic development strategic plans. The question is: does your community need such a plan?

Building Communities is prepared to facilitate a process that yields local plans that are:

- community-based,
- multiple-community-based,
- county-based, or
- multiple-county-based

In general, communities with a population over 2,000 persons can benefit from a single community-wide plan. Very rural communities may wish to team up with other communities within their county to develop a plan.

But again, is a plan needed? Economic development strategic plans focus on two overall goals: 1) improving the local economy, and 2) benefitting the overall quality of life. If a community does not have a plan to guide its future, then that future will be almost totally determined by the economic and demographic forces prevailing at the time. In 2012, these forces are almost all negative for rural America.

Building Communities believes that economic development strategic plans are only of full value if they:

- 1 **Comprehensively consider all 25 economic and quality of life strategies**
- 2 **Objectively determine the strategies with the greatest likelihood of success**
- 3 **Address and increase the local capacity for strategy implementation**
- 4 **Assign specific action steps for implementation**
- 5 **Build a local team that meets regularly to put the plan to action**

If all the elements on the above “menu” are not included, the plan will be less than optimal—or maybe of no value at all. Building Communities offers a Full Plan or Booster Shot based on the conditions outlined below.

