

# Annual Report

# 2012



  
**reNEW**  
East Arkansas

# Message from the Chairman of the Board

## Gary Howell

I'm very excited that East Arkansas has the opportunity to plan for our future through reNEW East Arkansas. This incredible planning effort gives our communities and counties a chance to develop locally driven strategic plans built on the unique assets of each community combined with regional assets.

For the first time, we are able to fully incorporate so many critical factors that can impact successful implementation of strategic plans – housing, land use and transportation, healthy food choices, and increased local capacity – into a working plan that will benefit East Arkansas in the future and guide us as we make short term decisions that will affect us for generations to come.

reNEW East Arkansas identifies local champions willing to invest in a stronger future and provides capacity building opportunities for improved success. Everyone who lives in East Arkansas can play a key role in creating a region and local communities that will be attractive for keeping families who have called East Arkansas home for generations; and in attracting new people, businesses and jobs to an area that we know has so much to offer.

This effort has been led by the East Arkansas Planning & Development District. The EAPDD was formed to work directly for cities and counties to develop their communities to be ready as community and economic development opportunities arise. EAPDD and its staff have done a great job in working with our county judges and mayors to accomplish such tasks. The framework being developed by EAPDD and its partners is taking how East Arkansas envisions its future to a new level. However, success in creating great local places to live and work involves all of us working together.

This is an effort that involves the input of people from different stakeholder groups. I thank you for taking the time to learn more about this program and to discover how you can become involved.

Sincerely,

Judge Gary Howell  
*Clay County*  
*2012-13 EAPDD Board Chair*



*Local Strategies.*

# Message from the Executive Director

## Melissa Rivers

I am often asked what is it about the reNEW East Arkansas program that is unique and “why is it so important?” Personally, I have never been more excited to be part of an initiative or program. This truly is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for East Arkansas to develop a comprehensive blueprint for its future.

First, how is reNEW East Arkansas unique? It is the engagement with the community from concept to completion combined with the way in which entities such as EAPDD and our partners work with those communities to build local capacity for their plans to become a reality. This is done by working directly with local champions, bringing key stakeholders to the table and engaging those who are often never involved in planning decisions.

Then, as communities develop their strategies, significant attention is paid to finding ways to support and assist them in refining and completing those strategies. This is not a, “here’s what you need to do, good luck in your efforts” type of planning. This is local planning driven by local stakeholders with intense support to make plans have a real chance to come to life.

The second unique aspect of reNEW East Arkansas is the way the various program elements are being developed together. There is a significant focus on tying local strategic plans to factors that can significantly impact their potential for completion and return on investment.

A community’s housing, land use and transportation planning along with access to healthy food and education can impact whether or not a strategic plan is realistic or achievable. These cannot be independent conversations. All of the reNEW East Arkansas planning components are considered in a fashion to understand how they affect each other and what must be done in each component to achieve the opportunities and goals that our local communities and region as a whole are setting forth for our future.

For those local leaders who have invested their time and energy in this effort, we applaud your leadership in taking your community and our region to the next level. We know that this is a wonderful place to live and work and this is an unprecedented opportunity to reNEW our region. This effort has invested the resources to provide informed strategic planning for East Arkansas. This same planning and execution along with the investment by regional leaders will provide the base of our local and regional economies.

Thank you for the investment of your time in learning more about reNEW East Arkansas.

Sincerely,

Melissa Rivers  
*Executive Director*  
*East Arkansas Planning and Development District*



## *Regional Strength.*

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Marion Berry Renewable Energy Center



# What Is reNEW East Arkansas

November 2011, the East Arkansas Planning and Development District successfully competed for a \$2.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). As a result, the reNEW East Arkansas program was developed to better position the District's 12-county region and its communities for economic development opportunities, including an improved quality of life.

As part of the program, citizens are actively engaging in the bright futures of their communities, counties and region by participating in reNEW East Arkansas' various initiatives. reNEW East Arkansas includes community and economic development strategic planning, transportation and land use planning, a regional housing analysis, a healthy foods initiative, a regional asset inventory, and an economic development database.

What makes reNEW East Arkansas unique is the way in which the various elements are developed, reviewed and implemented. Each initiative involves community engagement in a process that is open to anyone and everyone who wishes to participate. Community leaders from throughout the region are also discussing the ways that each element compliments and is crucial to the other.

Imagine if a community's amenities like parks and recreation or limited housing options were a major barrier in keeping a family from locating there, or if a company decided not to invest in a community because of poor land use planning? By understanding the importance of each element, our leaders across the region are becoming better equipped to make informed decisions to address their local needs as well as the crossover needs of eastern Arkansas.

Get involved today with reNEW East Arkansas by visiting [www.reNEWEastArkansas.com](http://www.reNEWEastArkansas.com), liking the program's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/reNEWEastArkansas](http://www.facebook.com/reNEWEastArkansas) and following reNEW East Arkansas on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/reNEWEastAR](http://www.twitter.com/reNEWEastAR).

# Community Engagement

The reNEW East Arkansas program is committed to engaging everyone in the planning process for their respective communities and region as a whole. During each phase of the program, efforts are made to engage as many people as possible. Local plan directors are provided with a toolkit to help guide them in their planning phases to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the process. Local champions have taken the lead in making sure that outreach is made in a variety of forms including through press releases and public service announcements to local and regional media outlets to reach mass audiences, civic group appearances to engage a community's activists, flyers delivered at the mass meeting places of audiences that primarily do not engage in planning efforts, and direct one-on-one and focus group meetings to deliver a personal approach within the community.

Similar efforts have taken place during the land use and transportation phase and housing initiatives.

Successful community engagement and participation will be the key to making the reNEW East Arkansas program a long-term initiative for local communities and eastern Arkansas as a region.

## **Key success measures during 2012:**

- 8 regional planning partnership meetings were held with representatives from all 12 counties in the EAPDD region. Meetings include a diverse cross-section of audiences and partners from eastern Arkansas.
- More than 40 one-on-one interviews were held with community leaders as a base for regional land use and transportation scenario planning phases of the program.
- More than 100 people from the 12 county region participated in two land use and transportation visioning meetings held in late fall.
- 13 communities (8 counties and 5 municipalities) completed a 13-hour initial planning process during the year. All communities are holding follow-up meetings to finalize their overall plans and to begin actively implementing their strategies.
- More than 750 people have actively been engaged in the program during 2012.
- Volunteers logged more than 5,300 hours of service to the program during the year.
- Partnerships between secondary education and manufacturing leaders are being formed in local regions to develop a better understanding of the needs of both sides.
- Communities are beginning to engage each other to take a stronger regional approach to community and economic development as a result of networking activities completed during the reNEW East Arkansas program.
- Communities are gaining a more thorough understanding of economic development opportunities that may exist in their areas as a result of participation in the program.





# Community & Economic Development Strategic Planning

The foundation of the reNEW East Arkansas program is the development of 25 locally driven community and economic development strategic plans that will lead to the creation of a regional plan for eastern Arkansas based on the common themes of the local efforts. reNEW East Arkansas is working with Building Communities, a professional community and economic development strategic planning firm, to engage communities throughout eastern Arkansas in a process that is energizing and empowering. The process, as part of the reNEW East Arkansas program, is different than traditional economic development planning that uses the same type of SWOT analysis applied to business, education, health care, banking and other fields.

The reNEW East Arkansas process recognizes that each community is diverse, with its own set of opportunities and challenges. By utilizing this approach, these communities are strategically seizing their opportunities while avoiding or mitigating their challenges.

The planning process involves the development of a steering committee made up of a community's leadership, as well those who have often not been active or even ever approached to participate. A plan director is selected by local leaders to help guide the process prior to the actual planning sessions and in follow-up meetings as communities develop their final plans and begin implementation. Steering committees participate in an initial 13-hour process (called "Plan Week") of discussion about the community, its assets, and its capacity for advancing economic and community development initiatives.

As opposed to developing a plan full of ideas with minimal follow-up assistance, the reNEW East Arkansas program involves continuous dialogue with EAPDD staff and partners to help guide the communities in the development and implementation of their strategies. Communities also create their own working plans and set deadlines for accomplishments, gaining true ownership in the process and successful completion of identified projects.

As part of the planning phase, several opportunities for full community engagement take place. During the 13-hour sessions, a two-hour "Voice of the Community" town hall session is held to actively acquire the input of the community at-large. Members of the community are not only asked to identify those strategies and initiatives they want to see advanced, but they are also encouraged to volunteer to assist in implementation. These meetings are made known to the public by local leaders through flyers in high traffic areas, announcements at civic events, e-blasts to large stakeholder lists, notices and press releases in local media outlets where available, personal outreach, and notification through social media channels.

As plans near completion, their draft forms will also be made available for public review prior to final approval by local governments and other organizations of interest.



## Quality of Life

A significant part of the locally based planning process is the identification of a wide range of quality-of-life issues. As communities are proceeding through Plan Week, they are not simply thinking about their economic future. Improving the quality of life for current and future citizens is the ultimate goal for community members – a strong economy provides the means to achieve this end result.

The reNEW East Arkansas initiative emphasizes that rural communities must take a long-term view in order to create resilient local economies and a high quality of life. Specifically, there are three “environments” that must be addressed and sustained: the built environment, the human environment, and the natural environment. Through this planning process, the end goal is a community that is advanced economically while also benefiting the human and natural environments.

Some economic development strategies overlap with quality of life. Issues like Downtown Development, Education Development, Health Care, and Bedroom Communities have components that affect all three of the environments. Yet these don’t encompass everything that could improve a community’s livability. During Plan Week, community participants hold an open discussion about what they want to see, whether it’s better housing options, parks and recreational facilities, youth activities, adult education, senior care, access to healthy food or anything else. The identification of quality-of-life issues is very subjective and depends on the specific needs and desires of each community.

A number of the identified needs are chosen by the Steering Committee for advancement as Quality-of-Life Initiatives. Similar to the economic development strategies, these initiatives have defined leadership and work plans that help guide implementation. Furthermore, there are many of these initiatives that share common themes across the region, providing an excellent opportunity to develop partnerships on a larger scale through the efforts of reNEW East Arkansas.



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# Healthy Food Choices



East Arkansas is one of the strongest agricultural regions in the United States. The region is a major provider of rice, cotton, and other row crops to the rest of the country and the world. At the same time, there are communities in the region that exist within one of the largest food deserts in the country. Combine lack of healthy foods with limited economic prospects and these communities can become mired in a lack of hope and despair. Many of the communities have limited or no access to a full service grocery provider.

In 2013, reNEW East Arkansas will partner with public and private organizations in the 12-county region to examine production, aggregation, distribution and consumption of healthy food in East Arkansas. As a result of this assessment, a plan will be created to promote efforts making fresh, healthy food easily accessible to people from all income levels in the region. This plan will also encourage strategies that will also strengthen the region's economy and create local jobs in the food sector while simultaneously developing a secure, self-sustainable supply of food for East Arkansas.

reNEW East Arkansas is asserting that one way to reverse the negative impact of the region's food desert is to combine production and access to healthy foods with enterprise opportunities. This will be accomplished through engagement, education and aligning existing resources to build capacity and support emerging entrepreneurs in this critical sector.

Engagement and education will be two keys to the healthy foods initiative of the reNEW East Arkansas program. While many viable options exist to develop production and distribution facilities for healthy foods within East Arkansas, a general lack of awareness and knowledge remains throughout the region's communities. An important element of the healthy foods initiative will be to look at ways to increase the awareness and access to new opportunities within the region to educate potential producers and business owners that will in turn help develop more business activity for the region.

reNEW East Arkansas and our partners stand ready to provide technical assistance and capacity building support for new producers to ensure long term sustainability and success of their business. In addition to providing critical early support, the reNEW East Arkansas partners are leveraging unique tools at every level from micro lending and grants to get started, intermediary lending when they are becoming more stable, and access to primary lending for longer term capitalization.



# Community & Economic Development

The first step taken by reNEW East Arkansas to develop a regional plan starts at the other end of the spectrum: locally. Why is this an important distinction? For years, plans have been created that don't take into consideration the full scope of what communities desire. This type of top-down planning is not what reNEW East Arkansas is about. Instead, this process focuses on defining what communities within the 12-county region envision/need and then determining how resources can be found to meet their goals.

One of the fundamental philosophies implemented through this effort is that the people in the community are the experts in terms of what the community has and what the community wants. In other words, community members have nearly all the answers.

Answers are not found on the Internet. Answers are not determined by out-of-town consultants. Answers should not be determined by the loudest voices but rather through collaborative community effort using the right questions.

reNEW East Arkansas asks questions to the right people at the right time and at the right place. From the information gained, community members answer for themselves the three essential questions that ultimately result in the community's strategic plan:

- What should we do based upon likelihood of success?
- What do we want to do based on the desires of community members?
- What can we do based on the community's staffing, funding, and technical know-how?

**This process is objective, comprehensive and expeditious:**

- **Objective**—communities select community and economic development strategies and initiatives based on a logical analysis of the factors most relevant to community advancement.
- **Comprehensive**—communities consider 25 possible strategies to improve the local economic condition and sustain and advance overall quality of life.
- **Expeditious**—the process is fast-paced (typically 13 hours total) and excludes discussion unrelated to the development and implementation of the strategic plan.



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# Community (continued) & Economic Development



Using this unique process offered by Building Communities, cities and counties around the region are developing locally based community and economic development strategic plans. Building Communities uses a seven-session planning process referred to as Plan Week. These seven sessions are designed to capture the "full body" of community and economic development—mind, muscle and heart:

- **Mind**—a logical assessment of what the community should do based on the likelihood of success.
- **Muscle**—the capacity the community has to advance based on its human, financial, and technical resources.
- **Heart**—the passion the community has to advance in a desired direction.

Once strategies are identified, focus shifts to implementation. East Arkansas Planning and Development District continues to have follow-up meetings with the Steering Committee for each community to lay out an implementation plan and begin completing these tasks. This phase is crucial to the success of this planning process and will be the focus for reNEW East Arkansas in the coming years.



# Transportation & Land Use

East Arkansas provides the backdrop for the prototypical American landscape. Wide open, scenic vistas with active farming and ranching as far as the eyes can see. These areas are punctuated with small to medium-sized, tight-knit communities that provide the social and economic foundation for its citizens. Tying this fabric together is a network of well-traveled local, state, and federal roads and rail that allow the communities to stay connected physically, economically, and socially. Known as the 'Natural State', East Arkansas also has plenty of outdoor recreational opportunities including boating, hiking, biking, fishing, and hunting. This lifestyle defines the community character and is highly valued by its residents.

The purpose of this portion of planning is to maintain, enhance, and enrich the East Arkansas experience through coordinated transportation and land-use decision-making in a manner that makes the best use of the region's natural and fiscal resources. The importance of such coordination lies in the fact that land-use decisions are made at the local level, while the bulk of infrastructure (e.g., roads and schools) and services (e.g., emergency services and social services) that support land-use decisions are funded by the state. Thus the development of this plan, with local governments and citizens helps to create a coordinated view toward growth and preservation priorities that all levels of government can use to allocate resources.

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# Transportation (continued) & Land Use



As part of the reNEW East Arkansas project, the 12-county region will work together to develop a set of transportation and land use scenario plans that will help guide future investment decisions for East Arkansas. The transportation and land use scenario planning aspect of the project builds off other phases of the initiative by incorporating the core values established by local planning efforts that contribute to the region's overall decision-making efforts.

ReSEED Advisors, the consultant for this phase of the program, worked with EAPDD staff to conduct a series of more than 40 stakeholder one-on-one interviews in the summer of 2012, as a base analysis tool for scenario planning. Using the input from the interviews, ReSEED created a process to engage a broader section of the region at two transportation and land use scenario planning visioning meetings that were attended by more than 100 participants in a southern and northern sub-region in late fall 2012. At these sessions, attendees broke into separate sub-groups to review detailed maps of the region. They were given data on population and investment trends and then developed scenarios of where the region could be headed in the future in regard to land use, transportation, housing, and business development opportunities.

The finalized input from stakeholder interviews and the mapping exercises will be used to create a series of mapped scenarios for development in the region that the community at-large will review for the identification of likes and dislikes, guiding a final series of visioning maps for the region that will be used in the leveraging of resources for future growth and development. This process will give East Arkansas' leadership tools to make more informed decisions when development opportunities arise.



# Housing

The reNEW East Arkansas program includes a regional housing component to assess the region's needs relative to housing – and how housing affects decisions made in the other areas of the overall planning program for Eastern Arkansas.

This aspect of the program includes a housing market analysis and housing needs assessment, housing conditions and a neighborhood assessment, fair housing equity assessment and fair housing impediment analysis, analysis of community lending utilizing Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, housing and neighborhood policies, strategies and recommendations, and community engagement/public participation.

The housing market analysis looks at the region's needs in the areas of housing conditions; supply and demand; and a gap analysis of eastern Arkansas' critical needs for housing, healthcare facilities, assisted living, nursing homes, affordable single family housing, workforce housing, modular housing, senior cottage housing and downtown housing that meets the needs of the region's diverse population.

The housing needs assessment explores issues, solutions and opportunities relative to housing development and construction including regulations affecting the elderly and disabled, energy efficiency, multifamily housing quality and location, and government incentivized regulations to leverage the right development for the region.

As part of the housing conditions and neighborhood assessment, a visual and data evaluation of the region's housing conditions will help produce strategies for better housing, land use, zoning, education, streets, transportation, infrastructure, parks, and open space decisions.

The Fair Housing Equity Assessment and Fair Housing Impediment Analysis will include regional strategies for advancing economic opportunities for populations performing below the regional median, best practices and remedial actions for addressing impediments.

The housing and neighborhood policies, strategies, and recommendations portion of the housing element will give East Arkansas the tools needed to make effective policies and strategies for the preservation and maintenance of housing and neighborhoods, future housing needs, development strategies, financing alternatives and potential resources, and housing products necessary to implement the various plans developed.

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# Housing

(continued)



Throughout the process, the community and stakeholders have been engaged. Two surveys are being administered to all participants in each aspect of the overall reNEW East Arkansas program to get detailed feedback for the housing portion of the initiative. Also, two housing stakeholder workshops were held to present draft data to housing officials in the fall of 2012. To further engage housing subject matter experts, additional meetings are being set during the first quarter of 2013, to engage with focus groups such as boards of realtors, landlords associations, etc., to get additional detailed feedback and community involvement.

Preliminary opportunities identified for improving the region's housing include new housing development and renovation of the existing housing stock that addresses special needs, affordability, and construction standards for -

- New Housing products and financing enhancing affordability
- Senior Housing products, maintenance / operating cost
- Younger Demographic Housing (21 – 35 years), downtown and workforce housing
- Visitable Housing Standards for the disabled
- Housing allowing elderly to age in place
- Green building, Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Development Standards
- Multifamily housing conditions, development standards
- Incentivized regulations to leverage the right housing development in counties and cities
- Downtown Housing

Once all housing data is collected and analyzed, it will be integrated into the full process to make sure that decisions made for housing are based on issues as well as the needs addressed by citizens during the community and economic development strategic planning phase and land use and transportation scenario planning portion of the program.

## reNEW East Arkansas

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### February 1

The reNEW East Arkansas program officially begins. EAPDD staff actively engages with community leaders throughout the region to participate in the program.

### February 22

Held the first meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership in Wynne, AR at the Technology Center for the Delta with more than 50 stakeholders attending.



*"Planning for Jonesboro and our region is a duty we owe not only to ourselves, but for generations to come. We have to make a concerted effort to responsibly plan today, so our youth will have ample choices and opportunities to prosper in the future. The wonderful aspect of planning is that it is not an autonomous process involving certain individuals, but a comprehensive process that is shared among the entire citizenry — the people that have to live with those decisions on a daily basis."*

– Otis Spriggs, *Planning Director for the City of Jonesboro and co-plan director for the Jonesboro Steering Committee.*

### February 21-24

Community leaders in the City of Jonesboro participate in a week-long strategic planning process as part of the reNEW East Arkansas program in conjunction with the city's existing Jonesboro 2030 planning initiative.

## March 5-7

A team of five, representing reNEW East Arkansas, attends the Small Places Summit in Knoxville, TN.

## April 4

Held the second meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership in Jonesboro, AR, at the EAPDD board room. Communities and counties began to further engage in the planning process by scheduling times for strategic planning sessions in their areas.



## May 3

The third meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership is held in Osceola, AR, at the Osceola Chamber of Commerce. Attendees are given a pre-meeting tour of the City of Osceola by local officials and economic development professionals.



*“The strategic planning effort led by the reNEW East Arkansas program brought leaders in West Memphis together to discuss the strengths and opportunities of our city and region. The plan week activities resulted in a re-focused vision that strives for sustainable economic development while also increasing the quality of life for our present and future citizens.”*

– Paul Luker, Director of Planning and Development for City of West Memphis, plan director for West Memphis Steering Committee.

## May 15-16

Leaders from the City of West Memphis convene for a two-day strategic planning process as part of the reNEW East Arkansas program.



## June 13

Held the fourth meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership in Harrisburg, AR, at the Center for the Arts on the campus of Harrisburg Public Schools. Tours of a city-owned compressed natural gas station and a school based gardencommunity are given during the festivities.

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*"I think that being involved with the Clay County planning committee has really opened my eyes to what I can do as a student to help improve my community, and it has shown me that my voice really does matter. I want to help build opportunities so I can come back here one day."*

– Sydney Simmons, Rector High School student and member of the Clay County Steering Committee.

## June 27

EAPDD Executive Director Melissa Rivers is invited to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) function in Washington, D.C., and gives a presentation on the reNEW East Arkansas program.



## July 23-25

Clay County, AR, hosts its strategic planning sessions throughout three cities in its county – Corning, Rector and Piggott. Nearly 80 residents participate in the unified effort during the process.

## July 25

The fifth meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership is held in Piggott, AR. Prior to the meeting, attendees tour the historic Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum.



*As a firm believer in grass roots participation, locally or regionally, in developing strategic plans for economic development, (this process) ensures that we will meet and exceed meeting the needs of the community by directing a process that will solve REAL concerns and PROMOTE adequate economic projects that yield a productive community and a positive quality of life. This is why I became involved (with reNEW East Arkansas) - to share my experiences and cooperate with others for a better 'ARKANSAS'.*

– Florine Milligan, former educator and administrator; and member of the St. Francis County steering committee.

## August 20-22

Community and county leaders from throughout St. Francis County participate in the strategic planning efforts. Dozens of citizens attend a town hall session held in Forrest City, AR.

### August 27-31

More than 40 stakeholders throughout the region participate in one-on-one interviews for their input on the values and needs of the region. These interviews help provide a base for future land use and transportation scenario planning as part of the reNEW East Arkansas program.



### September 5

Members of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership meet for the sixth time. The meeting is held at the East Arkansas Community College Fine Arts Center. A tour of the facility is given prior to the formal meeting.



*“Being able to participate in the reNEW East Arkansas program is very important to me as both a professional in the field of health and wellness for our kids and as a parent. I want to see our communities grow, prosper and be healthy for the next generations to enjoy my hometown in the same way I have been able to and this process helps us develop ways to achieve such success.”*

– Jennifer Lynch, Community Health Promotion Specialist with Arkansas Department of Health-Northeast Region and member of the Cross County Steering Committee.

### September 6-7

Cross County, AR, participates in strategic planning sessions for its county and respective communities.



*“This planning effort is truly focused on benefiting the community, including downtown business owners such as myself. We have a chance to add value to our neighborhoods and preserve some wonderful history here in Poinsett County and Eastern Arkansas. This effort helps us find ways and share ideas regionally to help keep our history alive for generations to come.”*

– Jim Poole, downtown business owner in Harrisburg, member of Poinsett County Steering Committee.

### September 10-13

Communities in Poinsett County, AR, gather for a week-long strategic planning process that includes three separate town hall sessions held throughout the county for community input.



*"Like many, I've enjoyed the benefits of living in a community like Blytheville. The reNEW East Arkansas program is my chance to really give back to my hometown and make a difference for generations to come."*

– L.C. Hartsfield, active Blytheville volunteer and plan director for the Blytheville Steering Committee.

## September 17-18

Leaders in Blytheville, AR, complete a two-day strategic planning exercise for their community. More than 50 residents gather for a town hall session to plan the city's future on Sept. 17.



## September 25

As part of the regional housing analysis element of the reNEW East Arkansas program, the first of two housing workshops is held at the Arkansas State University Delta Center for Economic Development in Jonesboro, AR. Attendees include a cross-section of elected officials, community leaders, housing professionals, and economic development officials.



*"This is the "first" planning process that has involved a county-wide approach in Craighead County and we have been fortunate to have the resources provided through the planning grant available at EAPDD. Participating in very targeted/focused local workshops balanced with general sessions for information sharing in the region, provides an awesome opportunity to learn and develop a plan that should serve Craighead County and the region well for years to come."*

– Tony Thomas, assistant to the Judge and plan director for Craighead County.

## September 24-26

Community officials and leaders in Craighead County, AR, complete a week-long strategic planning effort for the rural areas of their county to compliment activities ongoing with the City of Jonesboro's planning efforts earlier in the year.



## September 27

A second housing workshop is held on the campus of Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, AR.

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*"This (reNEW East Arkansas program) allowed many sectors of our community to gather to learn what we all view as important for our city and we discovered that we all have similar values and want to see our city grow. Also our region, as a result of this process, really has a chance to put itself on the map for community and economic development opportunities."*

– Linda Williams, *realtor and member of the Marion Steering Committee.*

## October 1-2

Strategic planning sessions are held over a two-day period in the City of Marion, AR.



*"As a lifelong resident of Earle, and someone who has chosen to come back to my hometown to make a difference, I want to see us reinvigorate the tone of the people of our community. By being a part of the reNEW East Arkansas program, we have the opportunity to engage our citizens in a process that will help us to be better prepared to attract new residents, and hopefully some new businesses, while also improving the quality of life for those who have and continue to call Earle and eastern Arkansas home"*

– Claudie Forrest, *educator and Vice President of Earle Area Chamber of Commerce and member of the Earle Steering Committee.*

## October 8-9

Citizens and leaders in the City of Earle, AR, gather for a two-day strategic planning session in the small town of 2,500 in Crittenden County, AR.



*"This planning process is engaging our whole community. It is giving everyone a chance to participate in however their passion for making a difference leads them. I feel sure it will result in something good for all of us in Lee County and the region."*

– Pat Audirsch, *community leader and plan director for Lee County.*

## October 15-17

Leaders in Lee County, AR, complete a two-day strategic planning session. A town hall meeting on Oct. 15 attracts nearly 100 people to discuss the county's future.



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*“The strategic planning session was such a great way for several business owners, realtors, and city/county officials to share their reasoning in the future growth of Paragould and the surrounding areas. I feel it is so important for us all to come together for the common good of our community and help it grow to its fullest potential with the least growing pains. I am very proud to help people come into Paragould and want it to be the best city it can be.”*

– Brooksie Hartness, multi-business owner in Paragould and Greene County, member of the Greene County Steering Committee.

## October 23-24

Leaders in Lee County, AR complete a two-day strategic planning session. A town hall meeting on Oct. 15 attracts nearly 100 people to discuss the county’s future.



## October 25

The seventh meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership is held in Paragould, AR, at the Paragould Community Center. Prior to the meeting, attendees visit an upscale assisted living center in the city during the process.



## October 30

The first of two land use and transportation scenario planning visioning meetings are held at the Marianna Civic Center in Marianna, AR. Attendees from five southern-based counties in eastern Arkansas have the opportunity to develop mapping scenarios for future investment in the region.



2012

Timeline



November 1

The second land use and transportation scenario planning visioning meeting is held at the Rector Community Center in Rector, AR. This meeting includes attendees from the seven northern-based counties of the EAPDD region. Students from schools in Clay County, AR, attended the session to help map their future.



November 15

East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC), based in the southern counties of the EAPDD region, invites representatives of the reNEW East Arkansas program to make a formal presentation to the EAEC annual meeting. Nearly 60 leaders from throughout five counties attend.



December 6

The eighth meeting of the East Arkansas Regional Planning Partnership is held at Arkansas Northeastern College in Blytheville, AR. Prior to the meeting, attendees participated in a tour of the college campus.

December 3-5

Two representatives from reNEW East Arkansas attend the HUD Sustainable Communities Conference in Washington, D.C.

# Economic Development Strategies

- 1 Infrastructure Development
- 2 Attracting Government Funding
- 3 Business Recruitment
- 4 Value-Added Agriculture
- 5 Business Retention & Expansion
- 6 Education Development
- 7 Local/Regional Tourism
- 8 Downtown Development
- 9 Entrepreneurial Development
- 10 Cultural Tourism

*“Forrest City recently completed its Prospect Readiness Education Program through the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. We could not have fostered the relationships necessary for success without first going through the planning process offered by the reNEW East Arkansas program and East Arkansas Planning and Development District. We’re now ready to respond to – and actively seek – economic opportunities that will provide better jobs for the citizens of Forrest City and St. Francis County.”*

*– Chris Heigle, Assistant to the President of East Arkansas Community College and member of the St. Francis County Steering Committee.*





# Quality of Life Initiatives

- 1 Parks & Recreation • Entertainment • Sports Complex
- 2 Local Foods • Healthy Communities • Farmers' Markets
- 3 Civic Engagement • Community Relations • Communications
- 4 Community Litter Clean-Up • Community Entryways • Beautification
- 5 Affordable, Quality Housing
- 6 Multi-Modal Transportation/Walking/Bike Paths • Greenway and Bicycle Infrastructure • Public Transportation
- 7 Retail Development • Dining Development
- 8 Daycare • After-School Programming • Youth Activities
- 9 Mixed Use Development • Proactive Zoning • Land Use Planning
- 10 Public Health & Welfare • Physician Recruitment • Access

## 2013 And Beyond

The second 12-month phase of the reNEW East Arkansas program promises to be an exciting time as communities throughout the region finalize their community and economic development strategic plans and begin the implementation phase. To support this aspect of the program, EAPDD will reach out to current and potential partners to make sure that communities have access to the resources they need to be successful in the plans they have adopted.

In addition, the program's regional housing analysis and transportation and scenario planning phases will also be completed with recommendations being made and approved in both initiative areas. This will give the region great tools in making informed decisions at various levels. Also in 2013, the program's healthy foods initiative and regional asset inventory portions will begin as well.

### **Several goals have been set for the coming year to make the reNEW East Arkansas program a lasting success. Those goals include:**

- Development of new key partnerships during the year with foundations and philanthropic organizations at the state, regional, and federal level.
- Enhanced engagement of stakeholders representing manufacturing, education, agriculture, youth, and faith based entities in all 12 counties of the EAPDD region.
- Messaging to help local leaders bring more stakeholders into the process at the grassroots level.
- Structuring regional subcommittees to assist leaders in brainstorming and collaboration efforts with others who have similar needs and interests in the region.
- More extensive community engagement.

# Future Initiatives of reNEW East Arkansas

Two future initiatives of the reNEW East Arkansas program will include partnerships with two of the state's universities – Arkansas State University (ASU) and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR).

## **Regional Asset Inventory**

Working with the ASU Delta Center for Economic Development and Center for Digital Initiatives, a regional asset inventory will be developed that is tied to the values of place and feedback collected during previous phases of the project. Digital imaging will provide model outcomes for the region based on development scenarios and possibilities.

## **Economic Development Database**

Utilizing various data elements developed throughout the overall planning process, and other sources, reNEW East Arkansas will create an economic development database to help local leaders make informed decisions and have access to resources when seeking opportunities that may arise in the future. This initiative will further build on the foundation developed locally during the various planning phases of the program.

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A large, stylized leaf graphic in a light beige color, positioned vertically on the right side of the page. The leaf has a long stem at the bottom and two large, curved leaflets extending upwards and outwards.

**EAPDD**

East Arkansas  
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A decorative graphic consisting of a blue curved line that transitions into a series of parallel lines in shades of blue and green, extending to the right.



  
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