

Strategic Plan 2024-2029



Simpson County Development Foundation

Community. Growth. Support.

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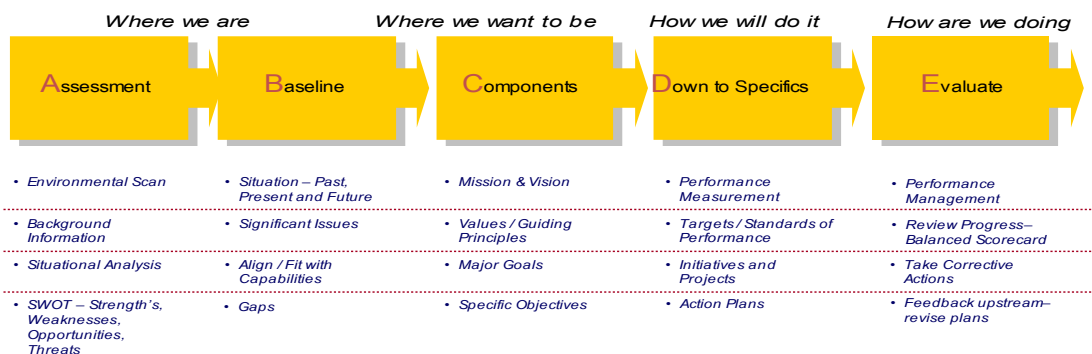
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Strategic Planning Process

The ABCDE strategic planning model is a framework used to guide organizations through the strategic planning process. Each letter represents a different step or component of the planning process. Here's a brief overview of each component:

1. **Assessment:** The first step in the strategic planning process is to assess the current situation and identify key issues, challenges, opportunities, and strengths within the organization or the external environment. This may involve conducting a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), gathering data, conducting market research, and soliciting input from stakeholders.
2. **Analysis:** Once the assessment phase is complete, the next step is to analyze the information gathered and identify strategic priorities and goals. This involves synthesizing the data, identifying trends, and evaluating potential strategies to address the issues and capitalize on the opportunities identified during the assessment phase.
3. **Goal Setting:** After clearly understanding the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the next step is to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. These goals should align with the organization's mission, vision, and strategic priorities and provide a roadmap for achieving success.
4. **Strategy Development:** After setting goals, the organization develops strategies to achieve those goals. This involves identifying action steps, initiatives, and tactics to help the organization achieve its desired outcomes. Strategies may include resource allocation, investment decisions, marketing campaigns, organizational changes, and partnerships or collaborations.
5. **Implementation:** Once strategies are developed, they need to be implemented effectively. This involves assigning responsibilities, allocating resources, establishing timelines, and monitoring progress toward achieving the goals and objectives set during the planning process. Implementation often requires clear communication, coordination, and collaboration among different departments or teams within the organization.
6. **Evaluation:** The final step in the strategic planning process is to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and the progress made toward achieving the organization's goals.

Strategic Planning Model A B C D E



Source: Strategy-as-Story: The ABCDE Model
<https://leadingstrategicinitiatives.com/2011/12/20/strategy-as-story-the-abcde-model/>

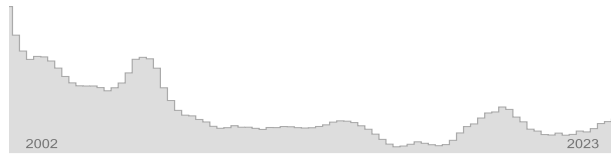
About Simpson County, Mississippi

Simpson County's strategic location along major transportation routes between the Jackson MSA and the Hattiesburg MSA supports transportation/logistics activities and a growing retail sector. Highway 49 carries 24,000 vehicles a day across the county (MDOT, 2024). The Class One railroad, Canadian National, crosses the county connecting Jackson, MS, and the Port of Mobile. The Interstate 20 and 55 interchange is a 30-minute drive.

The largest sector in Simpson County is Health Care and Social Assistance, accounting for 35% of the employment. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (13%) and Accommodation and Food Services (8%). Manufacturing only accounts for 3% of employment, while meat processing accounts for about half of manufacturing employment.

Figure 1: Manufacturing in Simpson County

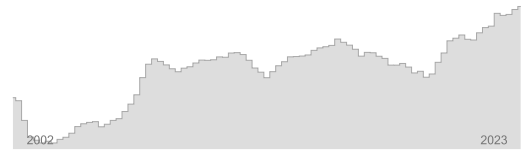
EMPLOYMENT



236

Regional employment

WAGES



\$32,580

Avg Wages per Worker / **\$81,387** in the nation

0.2%↑

Avg Ann %
Change Last 10
Years / **+0.7%** in
the US



2.8%

% of Total
Employment /
8.0% in the US



2.2%↑

Avg Ann %
Change Last 10
Years / **+3.0%** in
the US



TOP OCCUPATION GROUPS



Prior Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Simpson County's strategic objectives from the prior plan for 2019-2024 include fostering economic growth, enhancing workforce development, supporting local businesses, and improving the overall quality of life within the community.

- **Goal 1:** Bolstering wholesale and retail trade through targeted marketing and updated data.
- **Goal 2:** The county aims to achieve job growth rates comparable to the Jackson Metropolitan Statistical Area by attracting businesses to vacant areas like the Magee Business Park.
- **Goal 3:** Establishing a robust business retention and expansion (BRE) process is a key goal, focusing on identifying expanding companies and enhancing the overall business ecosystem.

- **Goal 4:** Cultivating a skilled workforce via aligning talent strategy with business goals, increasing labor force participation rates, and leveraging community assets for education.
- **Goal 5:** Promoting a vibrant culture and high quality of life entails advocating for high-performing schools, developing long-range healthcare and housing plans, and encouraging visionary leadership for zoning and land-use planning.

The prior strategic plan succeeded in developing the retail sector, but many of the same themes emerge as needs again in the 2024-2029 strategic plan. Workforce development and quality of life are essential for economic development and continue to be areas where the new strategic plan needs to focus. Established systems are needed to support existing businesses and attract new businesses.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strategic location between the Hattiesburg MSA and Jackson MSA with Highway 49 and the CN rail line bisecting the county
- Strong healthcare sector
- Community college and workforce development programs
- Plentiful recreation activities, including golf, parks, and lakes
- Low cost of living
- Active civic and religious groups
- Available land
- Sportsplex
- Growing retail
- Strong local financial and insurance sector
- Available trade workers

Weaknesses

- Not fully utilizing local resources, including healthcare and retail leaking
- The school system includes K-12 and lack of 4-year institution
- Infrastructure issues, including lack of broadband, interstate, and some crumbling roads
- Crime
- Lack of shovel-ready manufacturing sites
- Housing options
- Land use and zoning issues
- Lack of entertainment
- Workforce issues, e.g., low labor participation
- Economic development efforts not advanced
- Lack of unity in the county, both racial and Friday night light issues
- Need social capital

Threats

- Population demographics
- Brain drain
- Changing technology
- Jackson spillover
- Possible economic saturation of Jackson MSA for new industrial recruitment
- Changing workforce ethics and lifestyle expectations
- Wages not keeping up with costs
- New generations' attitudes toward blue-collar work

Opportunities

- Growing need for healthcare
- Increased demand for the trades
- Improved state workforce programs and funding
- Increased demand for recreation
- Funding and emphasis on rural broadband
- Social media and marketing
- School consolidation and K-12 reform
- Logistics & distribution facilities
- Entrepreneurial support system in the state

Enhance the Image of Simpson County

A positive image and brand can stimulate economic development by attracting businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors. Companies are more likely to establish operations in communities with favorable reputations, as it enhances their own brand image and can lead to increased consumer trust and loyalty.

Additionally, a positive image fosters a sense of pride and belonging among residents. When a community is perceived positively by its citizens, they are more likely to participate in civic activities actively, support local businesses, and work together to address challenges and pursue opportunities for improvement. A positive image contributes to the overall quality of life in the community. It can enhance perceptions of safety, cleanliness, education, healthcare, and cultural amenities. Residents benefit from living in a place held in high regard by others, which can improve their sense of well-being and satisfaction with their surroundings.

Goal One: Have a brand and messaging campaign for Simpson County that helps unify the community by internally and externally promoting Simpson County as an attractive place to live, work, and play.

Obj 1A. Explore the possibility of engaging in economic development branding and marketing consultancy to develop a branding and marketing campaign.

Obj 1B. Have a dynamic social media presence for Simpson County.

Obj 1C. Establish an inclusive brand and message committee.

Attract, Maintain, and Develop the Talent of Simpson County

Workforce talent is a critical driver of economic development, enabling innovation, entrepreneurship, industry specialization, competitiveness, and resilience. Investing in education, training, and talent development is essential for ensuring sustained economic growth and prosperity in the long term. Investing in education, training, and talent development is essential for ensuring sustained economic growth and prosperity in the long term.

The workforce is the most important factor for companies seeking to relocate or expand. A skilled workforce is attractive to investors and businesses looking to establish or expand operations. Companies seek locations with access to a pool of talent that meets their specific needs, whether in technology, engineering, healthcare, finance, or other sectors.

Goal Two: Attract, maintain, and develop talent in the county, making the county's workforce competitive with any county in Mississippi.

Obj 2A. Actively engage and assist the County School District in implementing its strategic plan regarding working with businesses and industry.

Obj 2B. Continue existing relationships with the public school system and include Simpson Academy to promote its forms of study (e.g., entrepreneurship), which will empower students upon graduation.

Obj 2C. Promote, coordinate, and assist AccelerateMS in Simpson County, including improving student and business relationships through the career coach program.

Obj 2D. Analyze the low labor participation rate in Simpson County and identify steps to improve labor participation.

Establish a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program

Existing businesses are the backbone of the local economy. A BRE program helps identify these businesses' needs and challenges and provides targeted support to help them thrive. By retaining and expanding existing businesses, communities can preserve jobs, maintain tax revenue, and stimulate economic growth. Eighty percent of job growth comes from existing businesses.

Supporting existing businesses through a BRE program helps preserve jobs by addressing issues that may threaten their viability, such as workforce shortages, regulatory challenges, or market fluctuations. Additionally, successful business expansions often result in the creation of new job opportunities within the community.

Goal Three: Establish a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program that encourages existing industries to continue to invest and grow in Simpson County

Obj 3A. Develop an accurate list and details of the major employers in Simpson County and post it on the economic development website.

Obj 3B. Establish a visitation program to meet with major employers to identify issues and opportunities regularly.

Obj 3C. Analyze and track internally collected and external factors that could positively or negatively influence major employers.

Obj 3D. Host board meetings at major employers at least once a year.

Continue to Promote Retail Sector Development

Retail plays a multifaceted role in local economic development, contributing to job creation, income generation, tax revenue, entrepreneurship, tourism, community engagement, and overall quality of life. Supporting a healthy and vibrant retail sector is essential for fostering sustainable economic growth and community prosperity.

Retail businesses generate tax revenue for local governments through sales taxes, property taxes, and other fees. This revenue is essential for funding public services and infrastructure projects, such as schools, roads, parks, and emergency services, which contribute to the overall quality of life in the community.

Goal Four: Continue to have a vibrant retail sector that grows and improves the tax base while attracting visitor spending and improving county citizens' QOL.

Simpson County 5-year Retail Trends

Retail Trade	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5yr Change
Gross Tax	\$120,337,998	\$119,551,203	\$128,594,675	\$176,823,228	\$198,734,053	65%
Gross Sales	\$410,492,022	\$426,033,368	\$472,510,065	\$550,352,977	\$609,231,160	48%
Establishments	285	304	299	282	298	5%

Source: MS Department of Revenue

Obj 4A. Prepare marketing materials for Magee, Mendenhall, and the remainder of the county.

Obj 4B. Develop contacts with retail site location consultants.

Obj 4C. Identify gaps in retail offerings and why these gaps exist.

Obj 4D. Explore having Simpson County representation (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi Main Street) at retail trade shows.

Industrial Recruitment is Important for Simpson County

Industrial recruitment is an important strategy for driving economic development, creating jobs, diversifying the economy, fostering innovation, strengthening the supply chain, and enhancing a region's overall competitiveness and prosperity. Industrial recruitment often leads to the creation of numerous jobs, both directly within the recruited businesses and indirectly in supporting industries and services. Manufacturing and industrial sectors typically offer a range of employment opportunities, from entry-level production roles to skilled positions in engineering, logistics, and management.

Manufacturing and industrial jobs often provide higher wages compared to service-oriented or retail positions. This can lead to increased household incomes, improved standards of living for workers, and greater overall prosperity within the community. Industrial recruitment generates tax revenue for local governments through property taxes, sales taxes, and other levies. This revenue can be reinvested in public services, infrastructure projects, and community development initiatives, further stimulating economic growth and improving the quality of life for residents.

Goal Five: Develop an industrial recruitment program that attracts high-paying jobs and diversifies the economy.

Obj 5A. Identify target industries that align with state recruitment goals.

Obj 5B. Have an inventory of industrial sites that meet the needs of targeted industries and allow companies to go to market quickly.

Site	City	Owner	Visible On	Acreage
Simpson County School District	Magee	Section 16 Land	Simpson County Development Foundation, Cooperative Energy, MDA Zoom Prospector	255 Acres
Simpson County Business Park	Magee	County	Simpson County Development Foundation, Cooperative Energy, MDA Zoom Prospector	75 Acres
SCEDD Industrial Park	Magee	Section 16 Land	Simpson County Development Foundation	30.2 Acres
SCEDD Mendenhall	Mendenhall	Section 16 Land	Simpson County Development Foundation, MDA Zoom Prospector	20 Acres
25 Acrea Magee MS	Magee	Unknown	Simpson County Development Foundation	12 Acres
Total				392.2 Acres

Obj 5C. Develop promotional material and have the data readily available to respond to RFP/RFIs.

Obj 5D. Host informational site visits for MDA and the Utility providers

Obj 5F. Conduct annual leadership tours of aspirational communities.

Simpson County Has a Healthcare Concentration Which Can Grow

A healthy population is essential for a productive workforce. Access to healthcare services, preventive care, and medical treatment helps individuals maintain good health, reducing absenteeism due to illness and increasing overall productivity. Healthy workers can better participate in the labor force and contribute to economic growth. Access to quality healthcare services is critical for attracting skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investors to a region.

The healthcare sector itself is a significant driver of economic activity and employment. Healthcare facilities, medical practices, pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology firms, and other related industries create jobs, generate revenue, and contribute to local economies through wages, taxes, and procurement of goods and services.

Goal Six: Have a vibrant healthcare sector that promotes healthcare-based economic development and improves the QOL of county citizens.

Obj 6A. Facilitate the development of a county healthcare committee representing the county's healthcare businesses and support their efforts to improve healthcare.

Obj 6B. Inventory existing healthcare services to identify gaps experienced by local citizens and opportunities to attract more external healthcare money to the county.

Obj 6C. Create promotional material for the county healthcare sector.

Quality-of-Life and Quality-of-Place are Essential for Economic Development

Regions with a high quality of life are more attractive to skilled workers, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Factors such as access to education, healthcare, cultural amenities, recreational opportunities, and a clean environment influence people's decisions about where to live and work. A high quality of life helps attract and retain a talented workforce, which is critical for innovation, productivity, and economic growth.

Companies consider the quality of life when deciding where to locate or expand their operations. A region with a high quality of life can offer a competitive advantage in attracting businesses, as it provides a favorable environment for employees and their families. Businesses are more likely to invest in communities that offer a good standard of living, including affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, good schools, and access to amenities and services.

Goal Seven: Be recognized internally and externally for having a high quality of life and quality of place.

Obj 7A. Adopt County-wide zoning to provide ordered growth in the county.

Obj 7B. Improve and increase existing recreational opportunities in the community.

Obj 7C. Support efforts to improve broadband access in the county.

Obj 7D. Help develop a residential housing strategy to feature all-inclusive community standards and increase quality of life issues.

Number of Workers	Average Annual Wages	Home Price	Currently Occupied Units	Available Units	Housing Gaps
6,482	<40K	\$137,000	4,516	4	-1,962 / 30%
1,272	40K-60K	\$213,000	789	8	-475 / 38%
556	60K<	\$283,000	528	25	-3 / 0.5%

Conclusion

The strategic plan outlined provides a holistic roadmap of key goals and objectives crucial for economic development growth in Simpson County. These goals and objectives were developed through community analysis and collaboration with stakeholders in Simpson County. They are meant to help direct efforts and may need to evolve as situations arise in our ever-changing economic landscape.

A steadfast commitment to executing these objectives and goals is vital to continuous improvement and positioning Simpson County to navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and grow for the years ahead. This plan will require everyone to work together as one to be successful so I encourage you to drive forward together as one to achieve a more prosperous tomorrow.