



One Region — One Economy — One Voice

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Blueprint for Success Outlines a Master Plan For Economic Development Success in Southwest Indiana

(August 31, 2011) - “The *Blueprint for Success* is not another plan destined to sit on a dusty shelf but a realistic road map for future economic development achievement in Southwest Indiana,” stated Ron Christian, chairperson of the *Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana*. Commissioned by the Coalition and led by Garner Economics, the Blueprint for Success was originally slated to be a master plan for re-utilization of the former Whirlpool manufacturing site in Evansville, Indiana. The direction of the study changed in April 2011 when Whirlpool Corporation sold the property to a Southwest Indiana developer – the Kunkel Group.

“Though the initial direction of the analysis changed, the issues that arose from the plant closure remained the same,” said Greg Wathen, president & CEO of the Coalition. “The objectives of the regional analysis were simple – identify key strengths to emphasize in our economic development efforts along with key weaknesses in the region allowing us to remediate.”

The Blueprint study was funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and culminates a ten-month process from selection of the consultant team to final report. Following the sale of the former Whirlpool property, Garner Economics along with Newmark Knight Frank were instructed to proceed at looking at alternative sites for development with the primary focus for the analysis following the same criteria as proposed in the original grant application to the Economic Development Administration.

Jay Garner, President of Garner Economics, served as the lead consultant for the project. Tom Tveidt, research economist for Garner Economics, provided the analytical analysis and business target recommendations. Robert Hess and Tim Walden of Newmark Knight Frank were involved in analyzing the region’s assets and challenges and providing real estate recommendations to help in gaining a competitive advantage in business development and economic growth opportunities. Leigh Howe of Applied Marketing is providing industry intelligence and qualified leads for the Coalition to pursue based on the industry targets selected.

The analysis included a Competitive Realities Report, which was released earlier this year, along with suggested industry targets the region should pursue based on the best short and mid-term growth opportunity, and recommendations to enhance the region’s global competitiveness.

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The approach of the study began with the team conducting an assets and challenges assessment of the region applying many of the same criteria to assess a community that are typically used when a site selector evaluates communities for possible corporate investment.

The consultant team conducted a multi-day windshield tour of Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties along with eight focus groups interviewing 70 key stakeholders in the region giving a critical overview of how local businesses and residents evaluate the business climate of Southwest Indiana. They also evaluated key demographic and economic indicators for the region as compared to state and national trends as well as comparing the region to benchmark communities of Chattanooga, Tennessee and the Quad Cities area of Davenport, Iowa, Moline and Rock Island, Illinois – areas having a high concentration of similar industry specialization similar to the Evansville region as well as comprising a multiple state metropolitan area.

Formed in late 2006, the *Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana* acts as the umbrella economic development organization for Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties in Southwest Indiana and has attracted nearly \$400 million in new investment and more than 2,100 new jobs. The *Coalition* facilitates and coordinates business retention, expansion and attraction activities; and, supports efforts to enhance the business climate through regional capacity building.

Another important aspect of the *Coalition's* multi-faceted job description is helping the communities it serves build new capacity for future development. In four years, the *Coalition* has secured more than \$58 million in grants for such things as expansion of water and sewer systems; building new community centers; and, making improvements to the region's levee system, which protects thousands of acres.

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