

Commentary

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Five-step plan is base for Greater Crisfield's goals

This is the second in a series of articles prepared by the board members of the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition, and follows last week's commentary on why Crisfield needs a community economic development corporation.

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This article will explain why having an Action Plan that is comprehensive and integrated is critical to Crisfield's economic progress. The next five articles will focus on the details of each of the five focus areas of the plan, and the final installment will discuss status and plans for moving forward.

GCAC's plan is the next step in taking the ideas that have been generated over the years, from the Lof-

ton Report and other sources, and moving them toward work. Each of the five components of the plan includes a list of action steps. In some cases, these steps are rather detailed. In other cases, each step will need to be further broken down into additional actions as the plan develops. Each action step is assigned to a person or to a group of people. Most action steps have an estimated cost (budget) associated with them and one or more potential sources of funding for that step. In some cases the budget and source are "to be determined - TBA." Since the plan is a five-year action plan, each action step has a timeline identified for it within that period of time. And finally, each action step is intended to include an impact statement or return on investment.

The initial version of the Action Plan, published in February 2016, included approximately 200 steps of which about 32% have already been completed or are underway. The number of steps is expected to grow

into the thousands as these top-level-steps get broken down into finer levels of detail. And, as circumstances change, as more people become involved, and as new ideas are identified, the steps in the plan will be constantly evolving. That is the nature of a good plan.

The five components of the plan are:

- 1) Branding and Marketing
- 2) Business Building
- 3) Workforce Development
- 4) Homes & Home Ownership
- 5) Youth & Recreation

These five components of the plan are integrated. That is to say, they are dependent on the other components. Why is that important?

Consider the first three, they are designed to drive visitors to the Crisfield area — actually 70,000 visitors annually at the end of five years. But what if those visitors come to town, and there is nothing to do, or no place to eat? They will go away unhappy, they will not come back, and they will tell their friends not to go to Crisfield. That is why we need "Business Build-

ing" at the same time — for both new and existing businesses, and at the same rate that we use "Branding and Marketing" to drive traffic.

But what if those businesses can't find suitable trained and skilled employees? If we want visitors to come back and tell others, they need to leave Crisfield delighted with the services that they experienced. That is where "Workforce Development" comes in. We need to simultaneously increase the number of visitors, build business capacity, and develop the skills of our workers, finding them good jobs; all in a measured and controlled way. This is one example of why the plan needs to be big, needs to be comprehensive, and needs to be executed in an integrated way. Providing leadership to such an effort is something that is both a necessary and an appropriate role for a private community and economic development corporation like GCAC.

In a future article we will look in detail at the first component of the plan, Branding and Marketing.

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