

CLAIBORNE COUNTY: AN EMERGING REGIONAL DESTINATION



AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Prepared for:
CLAIBORNE COUNTY

Prepared by:



SEPTEMBER 2009

acknowledgements

TIP Strategies would like to thank the economic development advisory committee members of Claiborne County, whose time and guidance for this economic development strategic plan were invaluable. We would also like to thank the business and community leaders, who greatly contributed to our understanding of Claiborne County's challenges and opportunities.

Economic Development Advisory Committee >

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Gilbert Buck
<i>NAACP</i> | Rev. Hugh Johnson | Fred Reeves
<i>Mayor of Port Gibson</i> |
| Allen Burks
<i>President, County Board of Supervisors</i> | Dr. Annie K. Kilcrease
<i>Superintendent Claiborne County School</i> | Kenneth Ross
<i>Main Street Association</i> |
| Walter Cade, Jr. | Jeff Knight,
<i>County Engineer</i> | Jeff Mack Secret
<i>EPA</i> |
| Robert Gage
<i>River Hills Bank</i> | Wayne Mansfield,
<i>Warren County EDF</i> | Charles Sheppard
<i>Alcorn State University</i> |
| Coney Johnson,
<i>Family Medical Center</i> | Doug Nasif,
<i>M&M Supermarket Owner</i> | Ray Shoemaker,
<i>Hospital Administrator</i> |
| James Johnston
<i>County Administrator</i> | Sandra Noble,
<i>retired educator</i> | Gary Watts,
<i>IT/Data Provider to the County</i> |

TIP Strategies >

- Tom Stellman, President
- Mitsu Yamazaki, Consultant
- Alan Cox, Senior Consultant



table of contents

- executive summary..... 1**
- strategic plan..... 4**
 - strategy one > create a professional economic development entity..... 6
 - goal two > support existing businesses and recruit new companies to claiborne county..... 16
 - strategy three > promote unique tourism assets..... 21
 - strategy four > leverage alcorn state for economic development..... 24
 - strategy five > enhance community development initiatives..... 27
- appendix one – assessment 31**
- appendix two – target sectors 45**
- appendix three – organizational options..... 55**



executive summary

the challenge > Claiborne County is blessed with an abundance of economic, natural, and cultural assets. The county is bordered by the Mississippi River on the west and Homochitto National Forest to its southeast. The spirit and aspirations of its residents are revealed in Port Gibson’s historic downtown and on the campus of Alcorn State University. These blessings have not yet been fully translated into economic vitality for Claiborne County and its citizens.

National trends show that among the few rural counties who are actually experiencing population growth often are the ones fortunate enough to be the home of a higher education institution. Despite the presence of a university, Claiborne County — much like other rural areas — has struggled to maintain its population. Facing this challenge with specific strategies will be imperative for Claiborne County’s long-term economic vitality. We believe that renewing focus on Alcorn State by leveraging specific programs and promoting it as a major asset could present new economic development opportunities for the area.

An additional economic asset present in the county is Entergy’s Grand Gulf Nuclear Station. This facility offers tremendous opportunities to reinvigorate the local economy. Again, Claiborne County has unfortunately been unable to leverage its presence.

the response > Recognizing these challenges, TIP Strategies — an Austin-based economic development consulting firm — was hired to assist in crafting a response. The findings and recommendations outlined in this economic development strategic plan, titled *Claiborne County: An Emerging Regional Destination*, will serve as a framework for guiding future economic development efforts in the county.

While the challenges facing Claiborne County are real, so are the opportunities. The actions outlined in this plan, if fully implemented, will go far in repositioning Claiborne County and setting it on a course for long-term economic growth and vitality.

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on the consulting team:

- Reviewing existing economic and demographic data.
- Touring industrial properties and other project sites.
- Interviewing area leaders.
- Conducting workshops with the steering committee.



strategies > TIP’s definition of economic development guided the planning effort: “*the use of public resources to stimulate private investment.*” This point of view was relevant before the recession, and it is especially relevant now. It argues on behalf of public investment that results in tangible results – results tied to the willingness of private sector companies, developers, and individuals to commit to the county. Strategies and actions for this economic development plan are outlined below. Specific tasks are included in the implementation portion of the study.

► STRATEGY ONE > CREATE A PROFESSIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITY.

To implement this plan, a local economic development entity will need to be established. TIP recommends hiring an economic development professional to help establish the program and begin implementing the plan. As an intermediate step, the county should consider a contract position to be funded by stakeholder organizations (e.g., Claiborne County, Claiborne County Port Commission, Entergy, the City of Port Gibson, Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), and Alcorn State University). Part of this funding could be in cash and part in kind in the form of office space, materials, and technical support. The role of this contract position will be to carry out the tasks outlined in this plan as well as help establish and build support for the formal economic development entity. Implicit within this recommendation is the understanding that the County must continue work with local allies, including Port Gibson-Claiborne County Chamber of Commerce (chamber), Entergy, Alcorn State, and the MDA. The economic development program will also need to focus on building sustained, long-term strategic partnerships with other regional stakeholders who can positively influence local economic development activities in Claiborne County.

► STRATEGY TWO > SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES AND RECRUIT NEW COMPANIES TO CLAIBORNE COUNTY.

Claiborne County must diversify its tax base. Doing so will require that Claiborne County has an improved “product” to market. In other words, the county would markedly increase its efforts by improving infrastructure, especially in regards to business sites. While there are available existing buildings in the county, there are no significant new business sites available to market.

As important as business attraction is, area leaders should also recognize the importance of existing employers in the area. This includes both small service businesses that support the existing residents and seasonal hunting population, as well as the larger employers, such as Grand Gulf and Alcorn State University.

► STRATEGY THREE > PROMOTE UNIQUE TOURISM ASSETS.

Maximizing Claiborne County’s abundant outdoor recreation amenities to induce economic vitality will require an organized effort; however, it remains one of the county’s most viable strategies for short-term economic success. Unfortunately, possessing these assets alone will be insufficient for the goal of transforming Claiborne County into a top-of-mind destination for outdoor recreation. Marketing the area’s assets must also be accompanied by tangible investments in necessary lodging accommodations and other support services. We believe that the county will be most successful in leveraging this opportunity if local tourism marketing occurs in tandem with other regional partners, especially Vicksburg and Natchez.



► STRATEGY FOUR > LEVERAGE ALCORN STATE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

The presence of Alcorn State in Claiborne County presents the area with unique economic and community development opportunities. Strengthening ties between area residents, students, and specific programs will go far in helping the area leverage this asset. Specific recommendations include the establishment of a university presence in downtown Port Gibson, coordinated marketing, and the development of a hotel to accommodate university visitors.

► STRATEGY FIVE > ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.

While community development initiatives typically lie beyond the direct responsibility of an economic development organization, TIP believes it will be critical for Port Gibson and Claiborne County to address specific challenges that are hindering the area's ability to attract businesses and new residents. Specifically, the County and its partners should address: workforce training, public schools, and housing.

target sectors > Core to economic development is the attraction of new businesses. Too often, however, business recruitment is approached in a haphazard manner. Recruitment activity only becomes strategic when target sectors meet the following requirements:

- Match the skills of the workers, as well as the land and building inventory in the area,
- Create the potential for long-term growth, and
- Are in harmony with the desires of local citizens.

With this framework in mind, TIP recommends Claiborne County and its allies pursue the following target sectors over the next five years:

- AGRICULTURE / AG PROCESSING
- WOOD PRODUCTS
- BIOMASS / BIOFUELS
- RETAIL / LEISURE

FINAL THOUGHTS

In spite of its status as a rural area, Claiborne County enjoys a number of unique assets unavailable to most areas of a similar size. Recognizing and leveraging these assets will be critical to the county's long-term success. What has previously been lacking is a coordinated approach to economic development, one that goes beyond a "first come, first served" mindset, toward an aggressive and targeted investment strategy. We believe this plan offers the necessary steps for Claiborne County to begin to attain its full economic development potential.



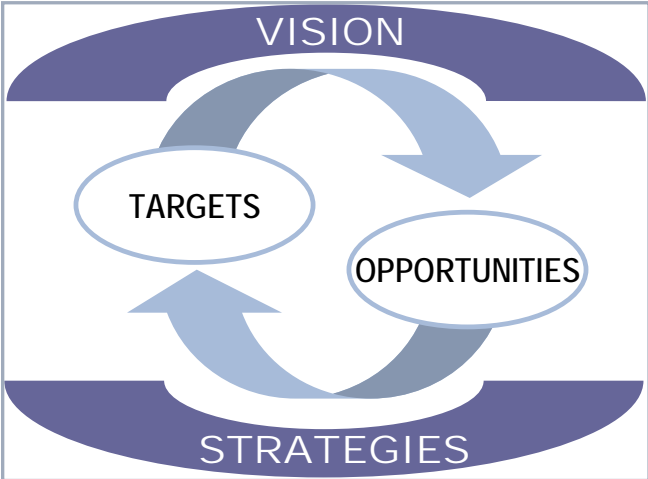
strategic plan

VISION

Economic development strategies must be driven by a clear vision. While conceptually this makes sense, the more practical value of a vision is in directing community resources. As a result, successful vision statements are bold, provide unambiguous direction, and are supported by appropriate strategies and actions. The following statement establishes a strong vision for Claiborne County’s economic development efforts:

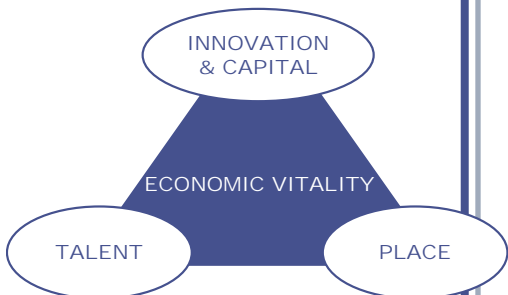
« Claiborne County: An emerging destination for higher education, tourism, and business opportunities in Southwest Mississippi. »

This vision statement presents a clear focus for the County’s economic development efforts with aggressive, yet attainable, strategies. Claiborne County will strengthen its relative position within the region and will be viewed as a contributor to the economic growth of Southwest Mississippi. Driving this process will be leveraging Alcorn State and expanding the area’s tourism assets. Simultaneously, Claiborne County will pursue excellence in housing and public education. Finally, Claiborne County will reach out and continue to support the operations of the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station, a major regional employer. To lead these efforts, the County will commit to the establishment of an economic development organization, setting a long-term course for sustainable employment growth for the local area and the surrounding region.



VISION





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

We define economic development as *the application of public resources to stimulate private investment*. This definition reflects our experience that economic development programs are most effective when linked to broader community goals and strategic needs. It also recognizes the need to be more responsive to challenges communities and businesses are facing due to seismic shifts in the global economy and national demographics. Due to these influencing factors and a more community-wide approach to economic development, we believe that three pillars must be maintained and strengthened to support local economic development efforts:

Talent > The concept of talent means more than a skilled workforce. It means recruiting talented people as well as cultivating the talent pool represented by groups as diverse as students, retirees, and entrepreneurs. It also means ensuring that the employees and companies that have been responsible for a community’s growth continue to see a reason to remain in the area. National demographic trends, most notably the aging of the baby boomers, suggest that demand for workers may soon outstrip supply. As a result, competition for labor is expected to increase among companies as well as communities, even in times of higher unemployment. Focusing on the development, attraction, and retention of talent should, therefore, be an important part of any economic development strategy.

Innovation > The U.S. manufacturing industry continues a transformation that has profound effects on the practice of economic development. It is forcing us to rethink what we mean by a primary job, how we measure economic impact, and how we design incentives. This is due, in large part, to manufacturing continuing decline. It is no overstatement to say that you cannot build an economic strategy solely around manufacturing jobs.

For this reason, our assessment of industry considers the full complement of economic activities — ranging from traditional industrial employers to advanced research to entrepreneurship — as well as the physical infrastructure (industrial parks, sites, transportation etc.) and business climate to support those activities. Understanding the role of innovation, the opportunities for expansion of existing companies, and the best targets for recruitment are important building blocks of an economic development plan.

Place > Much has been written about the importance of quality of life to the site selection process. Communities throughout the nation have positioned themselves by touting their advantages in this regard—good schools, safe streets, pleasant weather. We agree these factors are important. We take issue only with the narrowness of the focus. Quality of life assumes that everyone thrives in the same environment and is attracted to the same amenities. It assumes that current residents’ view of what makes a community would be shared by all.

By contrast, quality of place considers what is attractive to a range of residents, both old and new. The idea of quality of place accommodates growth and recognizes the benefits of change. It recognizes that one person’s “good place to raise a family” might translate into another’s “there’s nothing to do in this town.” Quality of place is about providing options, not just for current residents, but for those who will be residents in the future.

FRAMEWORK



strategy1:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

STRATEGY ONE > CREATE A PROFESSIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITY.

Economic development must be an orchestrated effort to which various organizations within a community collaborate to realize goals none of them could individually. Facilitating this effort is the primary job of any economic development organization.

Claiborne County’s primary economic development challenge is the lack of formal structure and resources to carry out economic development activities. The initial step is to hire a part-time (or full-time pursuant to discussion and local need) economic development coordinator to help establish a professional organization to lead the implementation of this plan.

Residents and active economic development participants should understand that this plan is only a beginning for Claiborne County. The issues that the area faces today did not form over night. In some cases, they have been building for decades and are the results (either intended or unintended) of past decisions. Adding to this context should be the understanding that the area’s economic development effort remains in its infancy. As such, the economic development entity and its allies should focus on managing expectations for timely success. While immediate action can be taken on many of recommendations, the overall success of the plan hinges on sustained efforts leading to long-term opportunities that will diversify the local economy through high-quality development.

OBJECTIVES:

- **Establish an economic development program.**
- **Develop tools and resources.**
- **Raise internal awareness and support.**



Economic Development Position Responsibilities & Qualifications

Regardless of the final choice on the placement of the economic development professional, this staff person will be tasked with a number of responsibilities. These should also be considered when evaluating which of the organizations would be the appropriate home of the new position. Some of the major responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

- Implementation of this plan.
- Building relationships with existing businesses and regional economic development allies.
- Improving financing to support economic development (e.g., grant writing, fundraising, etc.).
- Building and maintaining databases of existing businesses and preferred business sites.
- Marketing Claiborne County as a business location for prospects.

Minimum qualifications for the staff person should include:

- Graduation from a four-year university with a degree in urban planning, business or public administration, economics, marketing, finance, or a related field, and
- Three (3) years related experience.

In addition, it would be preferred if the selected individual has completed the Basic Economic Development Course (BEDC) and/or holds a certification as a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD).

The annual salary for this position can be expected to lie in the \$50,000 to \$60,000 range for a relatively inexperienced, entry-level economic developer. The salary range for an experienced economic development professional would be in the \$90,000 to \$125,000 range.

- ACTION ONE >> HIRE AN EXPERIENCED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL TO ASSIST IN ESTABLISHING AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND BEGIN IMPLEMENTING THIS PLAN.

Prior to the establishment of an organization, the County and its regional partners should hire an experienced economic development professional. If one cannot be located within a short time frame, consideration should also be given to hiring a contractor to fill this position. During his/her first year with the County, the individual's primary responsibility will be to assist in setting up the economic development program.

Specific Tasks:

- Post the position on economic development-related websites that advertise job opportunities.
- Request that regional and statewide partners assist in locating an appropriate candidate through their professional networks.

- ACTION TWO >> DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE NEW ENTITY.

Currently, Claiborne County has very little capacity to conduct basic economic development activities or implement this strategy. As a result, TIP highly recommends the establishment of a formal mechanism for implementing this plan. This can take place through the creation of an entity whose sole purpose is economic development, the empowerment of an existing organization, or the coordination of specific tasks among existing groups. TIP believes the following are the most viable options currently available:

- Collaborating informally between the County and other organizations.
- Establishing a staff position within the County.
- Empowering the Claiborne County Port Commission
- Creating a public-private partnership



definition: CEDS

A *comprehensive economic development strategy* (CEDS) is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. The CEDS should analyze the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources. A CEDS integrates a region's human and physical capital planning in the service of economic development. Integrated economic development planning provides the flexibility to adapt to global economic conditions and fully utilize the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting the private investment that creates jobs for the region's residents. A CEDS must be the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with broad-based and diverse public and private sector participation, and must set forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the region and clearly define the metrics of success. (Source: EDA)

In addition to the establishment of an economic development organization, TIP recommends that the County formally adopts the plan. Upon doing so, the County should encourage other local entities to also adopt the plan.

Specific Tasks:

- Evaluate the pros and cons for each of the options. Claiborne County's politically active constituents will require a transparent process for evaluating which organizational structure would best serve the area's economic development needs. TIP supports this reality and recommends a deliberative, public approach to making this important decision. As part of this, the coordinator should:
 - Meet with statewide officials and organizations within Mississippi to better understand issues related to each organizational option.
 - Meet with the Chamber, Main Street, and other key stakeholders in the County to present findings and options.
 - Provide a formal presentation to the public to obtain citizen feedback on the options.
- Once feedback has been obtained, the County should select the organizational option it feels most appropriate. TIP believes the **Economic Development District** is the most appropriate choice for Claiborne County (See *Appendix Two – Organizational Options* for more detail).

► ACTION THREE >> IDENTIFY AND PURSUE POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES.

Develop local resources to support economic development in Claiborne County. The range of available resources for economic development activities will largely depend on the type of organization that is eventually selected. Not only should the County establish a funding stream for this plan's implementation, but other entities within the county should also direct greater resources toward economic development and related activities.

Specific Tasks:

- Invite representatives from state and federal economic development organizations to Claiborne County. Specifically, the coordinator should invite representatives from the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), EDA, and DRA. The purpose of this meeting will be two fold: 1) raising awareness of the Claiborne County, and 2) understanding outside funding options for specific opportunities and initiatives (e.g., the new economic development district, financing for infrastructure needs).

Federal Funding Sources

Economic Development Administration (EDA).

<http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Investments.xml>

Delta Regional Authority (DRA).

<http://www.dra.gov/state-grant-funding>

Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI).

U.S. Department of the Treasury.

<http://www.cdfifund.gov/index.asp>



strategy 1:
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

- Consideration should also be given to submitting this plan as a formal **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** (CEDs).
 - Meet with representatives from Entergy to determine its capacity to provide financial assistance.
 - Explore the potential for additional public and private sector partners on specific projects (e.g., real estate developers, local banks).
 - Explore the potential for other institutional partners on specific projects (e.g., Alcorn State, the hospital).
 - Determine the capacity within the County’s budget to supplement outside assistance.
 - Conduct a fundraising campaign for local economic development. Consideration should be given to using the roll-out of this plan to initiate this effort.
- ACTION FOUR >> DETERMINE THE COMPOSITION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD.
- The composition of the board should be carefully considered as the members will provide policy direction to the new program. An additional consideration should be the ability of the individual members to support economic development through their professional and personal networks. TIP recommends a board comprised of the following representatives:
- Private sector: Entergy, local businesses.
 - Local public sector: County Supervisor, School District.
 - Institutional employers: Alcorn State, Patients Choice Medical Center (formerly Claiborne County Hospital).
 - Other stakeholders: Main Street, chamber, local citizens.
- ACTION FIVE >> PROVIDE A PERMANENT STAFF FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.
- Once the economic development district (or other entity) is created, the program should be fully staffed. We recommend the creation of the following permanent positions.
- Specific Tasks:
- Identify a permanent director for the program (if the option of a temporary contractor had been employed).
 - Establish an additional professional position to provide marketing and administrative support.
 - Create a student intern position for research assistance to be filled by students from Alcorn State.



► ACTION SIX >> BUILD SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

As with every new initiative, it will be critical for the coordinator to educate area stakeholders about the importance of starting up an economic development program. In other words, he/she will need to conduct a local and regional public relations campaign, targeting key stakeholders and constituencies. Included among these should be the local business community and Chamber membership, area residents, the County, Alcorn State, Entergy, as well as regional economic development organizations and partners. When addressing a local audience, arguments for the establishment of the program should include expanding and diversifying the local tax base, enhancing the quality of commercial and industrial development in Claiborne County, and improving the availability of well-paying jobs for local residents. For a regional audience, the main message should be that Claiborne County is positioning itself to be a stronger partner in regional economic development efforts and is ready and able to assist the region to compete more effectively in the retention and recruitment of new businesses.

Specific Tasks:

- Use the roll-out of this plan to initiate the public relations campaign.
 - Determine the appropriate timing for the roll-out.
 - Conduct a public relations campaign to raise general awareness of the roll-out.
 - Prior to the roll-out, meet with local and regional partners to raise awareness of major initiatives included within this economic development plan to receive feedback and enlist their support.
 - Invite key stakeholders from the local area as well as strategic partners from throughout the region.

- Establish a local leadership program to serve as a vehicle for communicating economic development goals and to receive feedback on the needs of business in Claiborne County.
 - Create a brief profile promoting Claiborne County’s positive aspects to be used by area community and business leaders.
 - Identify community and business leaders most likely to influence decision makers.
 - Meet regularly with local leaders keeping them up to date on current initiatives, progress, and honing the marketing message.
 - Create a mechanism for local business and community leaders to refer prospect leads.
 - Develop targeted networking opportunities (e.g. evening and weekend functions) for professionals living and working in the area, including Grand Gulf employees and Alcorn State faculty.
 - Investigate other ways for identifying current and future leaders within the community who represent various groups (e.g. professional, youth).



Incentives

Formal incentives policies should be carefully crafted in a transparent manner to ensure that they yield a net benefit to area taxpayers. The following principals should be considered when establishing a policy: 1) the targeted investment would not occur without the incentive and 2) the investment should generate new economic activity in the area instead of displacing existing businesses.

When creating an incentives deal for a particular prospect, we recommend the following: 1) a statement demonstrating how the proposed incentive relates to the broader economic development strategies, 2) a formal cost/benefit estimate weighing the estimated direct/indirect benefits (e.g., tax base enhancement, increase in retail sales, increase in wage rates, etc.) to the incentive costs (e.g., tax abatements, training subsidies, infrastructure improvements, etc.) associated with a particular deal, and 3) a “clawback” agreement that guarantees the recovery of incentives funds if the firm makes fewer hires or investment expenditures than promised.

- ACTION SEVEN >> BUILD LOCAL CAPACITY FOR CONDUCTING A PROFESSIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.
TIP’s definition of economic development is “the application of public resources to stimulate private investment.” One sign of a sophisticated economic development program is the availability of internal resources and tools that can be leveraged to ease business location decisions. Included among these are database and other software packages that allow the local economic development practitioner to act as an information and site location clearinghouse for new businesses.

To achieve success, the new economic development organization and other public sector entities should be prepared to offer creative incentives for desirable or high-impact projects, including sales tax rebates, Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIF), Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ), and other creative public/private partnerships. In addition, the organization should also develop an incentive policy that includes existing business expansion, based on job creation, quality of job created, capital investment, and site plan characteristics.

We recognize, however, that the County currently has limited financial resources and will not be able to immediately perform all the tasks listed below. Building local capacity will require time and sustained effort. In addition, the organization should also look to other potential allies and partners for assistance in either providing financing and/or out-sourcing some of these responsibilities.

Specific Tasks:

- Establish formal guidelines for the use of *incentives* available to both recruitment prospects and existing businesses. Consideration should be given to consulting with MDA and Entergy in evaluating the options available to the County. TIP suggests that the County establish specific guiding principles before establishing the policy (see text box). Consideration should be given to developing incentives based on: capital investment (to diversifying and expanding Claiborne County’s tax base), the number of new jobs (wages must meet a minimum threshold), site plan characteristics, and/or targeted business sectors (i.e., **agriculture/ag processing, retail, wood products, biomass/biofuels**).
- Act as an information clearinghouse for companies seeking to expand or relocate to Claiborne County, especially for proposal development. The County and chamber should continue to pay particular attention to developing tools that are web-enabled since much of the site location process occurs through internet research, including the following activities.
 - Maintain a database of available properties in Claiborne County, paying particular attention to sites with the greatest strategic potential.
 - Develop a geographic information system (GIS) to allow for the display of multiple layers of information (e.g. infrastructure availability) on properties in Claiborne County.
 - Use GIS software to assist in researching and identifying utility availability at major sites and the business park.
 - Provide printable maps, highlighting major developments in Claiborne County.



- Consider providing site location and site analysis to companies that might relocate to Claiborne County.
- Prepare economic development marketing materials for Claiborne County.
 - Convene a focus group of area entities (e.g., Claiborne County, City of Port Gibson, Port Gibson-Claiborne County Chamber of Commerce, Port Gibson Main Street, Inc., Alcorn State, Entergy/Grand Gulf, Claiborne County School District) to discuss the merits for the development of a coordinated marketing message/theme for Claiborne County.
 - Once a marketing theme has been established (based on the findings of this plan), conduct a local awareness campaign for economic development to increase public support to finance specific recommendations. Ideally, the roll-out of this strategic plan for Claiborne County will increase the organization’s profile and will build enthusiasm and “buy-in” for its economic development efforts.
 - Incorporate the theme into the current economic development marketing materials and website. The website should also incorporate specific opportunities Claiborne County is trying to promote such as its target industries, development opportunities (e.g. downtown Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, the port, other business sites), and unique attributes (e.g., the Mississippi River, Alcorn State, Natchez Trace).
 - Develop industry profiles for the target industries (using information provided in the Target Industry section of this plan). These profiles can be used in direct mail as well as in any information provided to prospects.
 - Prepare a press packet with a summary of Claiborne County’s business highlights and contact information:
 - Cover letter to answer specific questions or address specific topics the writer is covering, as well as offering to put the writer in touch with potential interviewees
 - Fact sheet about Claiborne County, including list of major employers
 - Unique features about Claiborne County (see above).
 - Copies of positive press clippings that have been published about Claiborne County
 - New expansions and locations in the area.
 - High quality photographs of the area
 - Set up an electronic prospect management system. Several off-the-shelf software packages exist that can be easily customized for economic development. This system can help staff manage direct mail, tracking, and reporting.



- Develop a website to promote economic development opportunities in Claiborne County.
 - Issue a request for proposals from qualified website developers to assist in building the County's new economic development website.
 - Include the County's marketing theme within the site.
 - Provide information on development sites, as well as other unique features the County offers. Consideration should be given to incorporating the County's GIS maps to provide more detailed information on the sites.
 - Provide links to MDA and Entergy's Economic Development/site selection websites.
 - Update the website on a regular basis to ensure the information remains fresh.
 - Use social networking sites, such as Twitter and/or Facebook, to post interesting and/or informative facts about Claiborne County to drive visitors to the website and improve search engine ranking.

- Develop a proposal template to be customized for each individual prospect's needs and bind them in a timely manner. The following items should be included:
 - Cover letter:
 - Introduction to the community

 - Community Profile:
 - Location
 - Map of the County and Port Gibson
 - Distance to major cities.
 - Demographic information and
 - Population of the County
 - Population of the city of Port Gibson
 - Age distribution
 - Ethnic composition
 - Median per capita and household income
 - Cost of Living
 - Median sales price of single-family homes
 - Cost of living index comparison with national, state and other comparable cities



strategy 1:
ED PROGRAM

- Quality of life
 - Annual events (include Alcorn State’s athletic events calendar)
 - Cultural facilities in the county
 - Tourist attractions
- Education
 - Claiborne County School District information
 - Enrollment
 - Expenditure per student
 - Accountability rating
 - Student per teacher ratio
 - Information on private schools
 - Enrollment
 - Expenditure per student
 - Accountability rating
 - Student per teacher ratio
 - Alcorn State University
 - Student enrollment
 - Type of degrees available
 - Alcorn State website

- Business Profile:

- Labor force
 - Total labor force population
 - Average wage of major occupations
- Local businesses
 - List of employers in the county with number of employees
- Taxes and incentives



strategy 1:
ED PROGRAM

- Utilities (Electricity, Gas, telecommunication, water/sewer, etc.)
 - List of incentive programs from the City, County, State governments and Entergy
 - List of utility providers and their contact information
- Job training
 - List of resources such as MDA programs
- Transportation
 - Distance to major highways, airports, ports, etc.
- Real Estate:
 - List of commercial buildings and industrial sites



STRATEGY TWO > SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES AND RECRUIT NEW COMPANIES TO CLAIBORNE COUNTY.

It is no secret that American manufacturers, and their host communities, have suffered greatly in the face of stiff global competition. Rural America has been especially hard hit, due to its traditional reliance on low-wage manufacturing that is now being off-shored to even lower wage international labor markets. The results of this struggle have littered much of the rural landscape with shuttered factories. Recognizing these wider global trends, outsider perceptions of the rural South, and their effects on investment decisions should influence the decisions that Claiborne County makes regarding industrial recruitment and other economic diversification efforts.

OBJECTIVES:

- Expanded local business base.
- Developed sites for recruitment prospects.
- Heightened awareness of Claiborne County among decision makers.

This is not to say, however, that Claiborne County will be unsuccessful or will not have viable options for recruiting outside industry. Regardless, local decision makers should understand that larger global economic forces present a strong headwind for any American community seeking to play the traditional industrial recruitment game. Claiborne County is presented with an additional obstacle to its current recruitment prospects: a limited supply of shovel-ready industrial sites. While Claiborne County has available acreage, the area’s current prime industrial site near the port is somewhat limited in potential, especially given its poor highway access. To be taken seriously as a recruitment contender, the area will need to develop a new full-service business park. Yet, even with such a facility, there is no guarantee for success; therefore area leaders will need to carefully weigh this consideration against the significant costs for a new business park.

This suggests that Claiborne County should use a highly focused approach to business development efforts – an approach that embraces and reinforces the county’s existing economic strengths. In addition, the needs of existing employers in Claiborne County must not be overlooked, especially Entergy’s Grand Gulf operations. This calls for local leaders to remain mindful of the effects of policy decisions on the needs of area businesses, as well as providing a support structure in which they might thrive.

strategy 2:
EXPANSION & ATTRACTION



strategy 2:
EXPANSION & ATTRACTION

► ACTION ONE >> SUPPORT THE RETENTION AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES.

Building awareness of the needs that existing employers have, and developing policies and mechanisms to support local business and industry, is a must. Local companies are, by far, the largest and most reliable source for creating new jobs. Given the current recessionary climate, it is critical that the County's leadership is aware and responsive to any challenges its local businesses are facing.

Specific Tasks:

- Establish a formal business retention and expansion (BRE) program. Such a program can help solve immediate or short-term problems, while also working toward the long-term goal of enhancing the competitiveness of local businesses. Through the BRE program, the county should assess the needs of and identify the barriers faced by local businesses trying to survive and grow in Claiborne County. This program should assist with the tools and information businesses need to address in their expansion efforts, including site location, state and local incentives, workforce development, statistical and demographic information, and business development.
- Build and maintain an inventory of existing businesses in Claiborne County to: 1) ensure an understanding of types of businesses in the community and 2) keep tabs on expansions and layoffs. This task should be coordinated with the Chamber, which probably already maintains a list of its members.
- Place periodic calls with existing employers to: 1) gain a better understanding of their ongoing challenges and 2) to uncover potential opportunities for local expansions. These meetings should also serve to make existing employers aware of available technical and financial assistance programs.
- Create an annual survey of area businesses to keep tabs on the opinions of the County's business climate. Evaluate options such as a mailer, flyer in the local newspaper, or an on-line survey. Internet technology has made conducting surveys and questionnaires much easier and cheaper than in the recent past. We recommend using a service called Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com).
- Make sure that local businesses and industries remain aware of any technical and financial assistance programs that are available.
- Act as a liaison between area workforce development providers and local businesses to ensure their awareness of area resources and communicate the needs of Claiborne County employers to workforce development providers.



strategy 2:
EXPANSION & ATTRACTION

► ACTION TWO >> SUPPORT GRAND GULF'S OPERATIONS AND LEVERAGE THE FACILITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Special consideration should be given to paying attention to the needs of Entergy's Grand Gulf operations as this is by far the largest private employer in Claiborne County. One of the key issues for the facility is the lack of quality local housing options and quality of place assets, which make it difficult for the plant to draw workers from the local labor force. As a result, the majority of the plant's workforce resides outside Claiborne County, forcing employees to commute long distances.

Specific Tasks:

- Continue to support the presence of Grand Gulf in Claiborne County.
- Continue to build and maintain close communication with Grand Gulf to ensure that community leaders remain educated and can anticipate the company's needs.
- Continue to support the maintenance and expansion of the area's quality of life attributes (e.g., public education, retail, housing, downtown) to make Claiborne County a more desirable place of residence for its employees and assist Grand Gulf in attracting and recruiting talent.
- Provide support to Grand Gulf with its efficiency upgrade closure through 2012, including:
 - Meeting regularly with management to provide reciprocal updates on community improvements and the progress of the efficiency upgrades.
 - Continuing to hold monthly community outreach meetings between Grand Gulf and civic leaders, facilitated by the coordinator. These meetings should focus on productive agenda for economic development in the area.
 - Holding immediate follow-up meetings with the plant's management team to discuss specific issues which may have arisen during the outreach sessions.
 - Organizing working committees, if needed, to resolve specific issues.
- Coordinate with Grand Gulf and Alcorn State to train local workforce for potential positions.
 - Create a committee under the economic development organization to organize a team comprised of human resource representative from Grand Gulf and Alcorn State, along with experts from MDA, to work on the issue.
 - Work with Alcorn State's Radiation Protection internship program coordinator to further refine and improve the program.
 - Assist GG in identifying opportunities to bid out services to local contractors (e.g., landscape maintenance, cafeteria services).
- Pursue any other opportunities with Grand Gulf to create new jobs or increase Claiborne County's revenue.



- ACTION THREE >> CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SITES IN CLAIBORNE COUNTY.

The number of traditional industrial recruitment prospects seeking opportunities for new plants in the US will likely continue to dwindle. As a result, competition among communities for these investments will continue to heat up.

Specific Tasks:

- Conduct an inventory of all industrial buildings in Claiborne County and explore their reuse.
- Enhance business infrastructure throughout Claiborne County, especially local broadband access.
- Identify appropriate sites for the development of a new business park in Claiborne County and prioritize the list (evaluate infrastructure availability at each site, including electricity, natural gas, water/waste water, road, and telecommunications)
 - Consider properties located near U.S. 61 North as Claiborne County’s prime business park development opportunity.
- Commence preplanning for the eventual development of a business park, giving consideration for the site needs of Claiborne County’s target sectors.
- Consider revisiting the port strategy.

- ACTION FOUR >> PROMOTE CLAIBORNE COUNTY TO TARGET SECTORS TO STIMULATE NEW INVESTMENT.

Once materials and website have been developed for Claiborne County, a direct marketing campaign can be initiated. Specific recommendations include: producing one-page marketing summaries for each traditional target sector (**agriculture/ag processing, wood products, biomass/biofuels**), creating a database of companies, conducting a direct marketing campaign (direct mail and phone calls followed by visitation), and participation in key industry trade events.

Specific Tasks:

- Build awareness of Claiborne County throughout Mississippi and Louisiana by:
 - Implementing a public relations campaign targeted at regional publications. TIP recommends identifying key regional publications and sending press releases about recent business successes. The initial press release should be to promote the success of the economic development plan and how local leadership worked together to determine the best opportunities for Claiborne County.
 - Participating in joint marketing activities with organizations that can refer prospect leads. Examples include regional economic development organizations, state agencies, and area utilities.



strategy 2:
EXPANSION & ATTRACTION

- Identifying other parties that could refer leads for Claiborne County and set up a visitation schedule with a focus on Jackson, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. Examples include local and regional construction firms, real estate brokers, banks, and service firms (legal and accounting), and regional industry associations.
- Build awareness of Claiborne County among decision-makers in target industries by:
 - Creating database of companies in each target industry.
 - Designing marketing letters for each target industry.
 - Initiating direct mail program to each target sector. Mailings should occur monthly and continue for at least six months.
 - Initiating telemarketing campaign for appointment setting.
 - Conducting four call trips per year (one each quarter) to regions where industry concentration is highest.
 - Identifying key industry associations for each industry sector.
 - Developing in-house corporate intelligence program for each target industry.
 - Participating in industry trade events.
 - Tracking success of campaign using contact management system.
 - Evaluating effectiveness of each marketing channel (mail-outs, telemarketing, trade events) and adjust marketing activities accordingly.



STRATEGY THREE > PROMOTE UNIQUE TOURISM ASSETS.

Tourism is important, because it represents a unique opportunity to expand consumer spending, recruit new residents, and raise the bar for Claiborne County’s sense of place. The money spent by tourists not only creates tax revenues through receipts at local merchants or hotels, but it also encourages growth in other sectors by circulating through Claiborne County’s economy. Fortunately, Claiborne County has unique tourism attractions, such as Winsor Ruins, historical downtown, First Presbyterian Church and other historical churches, Grand Gulf Military Park, Natchez Trace, Mississippi Cultural Crossroads. Unfortunately, these attractions have yet to be fully marketed to meet their potential as visitor destinations. Already, the County participates in the Natchez Trace Compact (www.ScenicTrace.com), advertises in MDA/Tourism’s annual guide, and visits with Natchez and Vicksburg CVB. While these efforts should be applauded, we recommend an even greater effort toward tourism promotion.

OBJECTIVES:

- **Heightened awareness of Claiborne County amenities.**
- **Developed facilities for accommodating visitors.**

Visitors also provide Claiborne County with a rare opportunity not typically available to rural area, as tourists represent a potential source for new residents. Outsiders who are drawn to an area will often return on subsequent trips and become frequent visitors. Over time, many will decide to relocate or retire to that place. If Claiborne County can achieve the status as a visitor destination within the region, it will likely have greater success in becoming a destination for residents.

Recreational amenities have long been recognized as an important component to the definition of a high quality of life. These amenities, however, remain poorly understood and often overlooked in economic development. Recreational options that enable a more “active lifestyle” should be seen as primary amenities in attracting new residents and visitors. Claiborne County is fortunate to offer high quality hunting and fishing activities.

The health of Port Gibson is vital to the health of the entire county. The community’s central business district is home to significant historic and tourism-related assets, including churches, homes, and storefronts. Port Gibson should be applauded for its efforts in preserving many of these structures. While physical restoration is a necessary component to keeping downtown healthy, equally important is sustaining the economic part of the equation.

And, it is assumed that much of the district’s economic activity is driven by traffic passing through the community. We understand that a bypass is being considered for Port Gibson. We strongly recommend that the study of the bypass include careful analysis of the potential economic and fiscal impact on the central business district.

strategy 3:
TOURISM



► ACTION ONE >> COLLABORATE WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS TO PROMOTE TOURISM.

While the local area offers a number of attractive amenities to draw visitors, we believe that Claiborne County will achieve greater success if it packages these assets with those offered throughout Southwest Mississippi. Given the county’s location between Vicksburg and Natchez, it only makes sense that they receive the greatest attention for the county’s tourism promotion efforts. Fortunately, the County has a history of regional tourism promotion (e.g., <http://www.byways.org/explore/byways/62295/itinerary/62474>). We believe, however, that the County should increase and intensify such efforts.

Specific Tasks:

- Meet with tourism officials from Vicksburg and Natchez on a periodic basis to develop a coordinated marketing message.
- Assist in organizing a unified brand to leverage location between Natchez and Vicksburg.
 - Collateral pieces
 - Maps
 - Street and highway signage
 - Improved website and its links
 - Promote downtown as “heart” of the county
- Focus on PR/exposure on unique aspects about the area (e.g., Civil War, Blues trail, architecture, civil rights history, and Native American history).
- Actively promote Vicksburg and Natchez amenities along with local ones.
- Learn best practices from Vicksburg and Natchez. Since both cities have much longer history in tourism promotion, there are many things Claiborne County can learn from them. One of the best strategies to attract more tourists to town is to hold a unique event. Claiborne County can learn how to plan, organize, and promote such event from the actual experience Vicksburg and Natchez had before.
 - Consideration should be given to hosting a Civil War-themed event in Port Gibson in collaboration with Vicksburg and Natchez.
- Assist in organizing a Civil War-themed regional tour.

The Great River Road

A leisurely scenic drive is the classic American way to relax and connect to the countryside. As one of the oldest, longest, and most unique scenic byways in North America, the Great River Road offers respite to millions of travelers seeking a getaway - from a leisurely day's drive to an extended vacation. And there's plenty of Great River Road to see. Nearly 3,000 miles long and running through 10 states along the Mississippi River, the Great River Road offers a gateway to the river valley's great history, the blending of cultures and a host of recreational options to all who journey it.

- *Mississippi River Parkway Commission*



► ACTION TWO >> DEVELOP OF PUBLIC FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE VISITORS.

While TIP believes that Claiborne County offers a number of unique attractions, the area lacks sufficient “tourism infrastructure” to accommodate visitors. These amenities must be in place in order for tourists to enjoy their visit and desire returning to the county for subsequent trips.



Specific Tasks:

- Facilitate the development of public facilities (e.g., restrooms, visitor center, RV parks, parking).
- Work with Main Street and the chamber to identify funding sources, site location, design, etc.
- Create a business plan to lure a hotel development to support local tourism as well as Alcorn State’s athletic programs, conferences.
- Review opportunities to create a destination (e.g., lake with cabins).

STRATEGY FOUR > LEVERAGE ALCORN STATE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Claiborne County is fortunate to be called the home to Alcorn State University. The existence of a university can positively affect a community’s economic development in several ways. First, its mere presence provides an opportunity to not only retain many of its “best and brightest” but can also trigger an influx of other intelligent young persons to the area. How the host community responds to this opportunity is significant. Strategies can be developed to ensure that career and life opportunities are available to students upon their graduation so that they will choose to remain in Claiborne County and become active contributors to its growth and development. New programs can be created and existing ones should be leveraged to encourage research at the college that will benefit the local economy. Finally, institutions of higher learning tend also to be major contributors to a community’s quality of life through their arts programs as well as sports and other entertainment events. These, in turn, assist in marketing the community to the outside world.

OBJECTIVES:

- › **Link Claiborne County’s image with Alcorn State.**
- › **Support for existing and new programs.**
- › **Accommodate visitors to Alcorn State.**

TIP Strategies believes additional efforts must also be undertaken for the county to fully realize its long-term potential. At the same time, we also recognize the challenges that exist — some significant — which have historically hindered this development. For example, one obstacle is the geographic isolation of Alcorn University’s campus relative to Port Gibson. Establishing closer linkages between the campus and the community will be vital.

strategy 4:
ALCORN STATE



strategy 4:
ALCORN STATE

► ACTION ONE >> ESTABLISH A COORDINATED MARKETING MESSAGE WITH ALCORN STATE.

Given that the presence of Alcorn State is a unique asset for rural Claiborne County, TIP strongly recommends that the university be highlighted in all marketing material for the area. Prior to doing so, the County should hold a series of meetings with university officials to determine the appropriate message and tone.



Specific Tasks:

- Incorporate information regarding specific programs (especially those that might support local economic development strategies) in marketing material for Claiborne County.
- Promote higher education as part of overall economic development marketing efforts to both residents and businesses considering a location in Claiborne County.
- Place signage at all gateways to Claiborne County to promote Alcorn State’s presence.

► ACTION TWO >> PROVIDE LOCAL SUPPORT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALCORN STATE AND ITS VISITORS.

Claiborne County should continue to step up its support for the university. This serves two purposes: 1) establishing a stronger working relationship with Alcorn State and 2) assisting the university achieve excellence for higher learning and improving its image with visitors.

Specific Tasks:

- Assist Alcorn State in lobbying the state to increase funding for the institution.
- Support Alcorn State’s long-range plans for existing and new programs, as well as physical plant expansions and facilities improvements.
- Assist in the development of a hotel to provide accommodations for university visitors (e.g., conferences, athletic programs). Consideration should be given to locating the facility in downtown Port Gibson as a means to catalyzing economic activity in the surrounding area.



strategy 4:
ALCORN STATE

► ACTION THREE >> LEVERAGE PROGRAMS AT ALCORN STATE TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.

Alcorn State presents Claiborne County with a number of options for tangible assistance in economic development. TIP recommends the university assess its programs and determine which ones might be leveraged as local catalysts.

Specific Tasks:

- Consider expanding the Hospitality & Gaming Management program (classrooms) to downtown Port Gibson to promote and enhance the county's tourism assets and to better connect students to Port Gibson and downtown.

- Create an internship position to help staff Claiborne County's tourism office.

- Partner with Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Alcorn State to provide outreach business assistance and workshops. Activities to consider, include:
 - Business plan workshops,
 - Website development workshops, and
 - Marketing strategies.



STRATEGY FIVE > ENHANCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.

Several recommendations in this plan go beyond the traditional realm of economic development and will require support from other area entities that are better suited for their implementation. While these recommendations generally lie beyond the purview of a “typical” economic development organization, they remain critical to Claiborne County’s economic long-term vitality. As such, it is highly recommended that the County continue to enlist support from local and regional allies to ensure that community development programs continue or are initiated.

OBJECTIVES:

- **Skilled and trained workforce to meet local labor needs.**
- **Excellence in the public schools.**
- **Enhanced quality of place.**
- **Quality housing for residents.**

One major challenge Claiborne County employers face is access to skilled and trained workers. Without a readily available labor supply, it will continue to be difficult for the area to attract new employers. The County and area partners must commit to supporting workforce training and development programs. At the same time, public schools should also continue to be supported for similar reasons. An additional aspect to public schools is their ability to attract — or detract — new families in the area. Improving the public schools will be critical to the long-term economic viability of Claiborne County.

Finally, to confront negative perceptions and to instill both community and investor confidence in the local economy, efforts should be devoted toward improving Claiborne County’s physical appearance. The image that the area portrays to both outsiders as well as existing residents plays an important role in how it is perceived. If Claiborne County seeks to fully leverage its potential as a tourism destination in Southwest Mississippi, the community must work to create a more inviting appearance to encourage visitors to spend more time and money locally.

Focal points for these efforts should include downtown Port Gibson, gateways, and highways. Their appearance is inextricably linked with perceptions of Claiborne County itself, because gateways and transportation corridors form the primary visual medium through which the community’s image is presented to both residents and out-of-towners alike. In addition to their impact on perceptions, gateways and arterials can also offer some of the best opportunities for newer developments.

strategy 5:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



► ACTION ONE >> EXPAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMS.

The importance of workforce training resources to economic development cannot be overstated. Employers must be assured access to trainable workers.

Specific Tasks:

- Assist in the facilitation of an annual *Claiborne County Workforce Development Summit* to:
 - Better understand the county’s labor force availability, talent assets, and training capabilities available for potential employers relocating to the county.
 - Maintain and solidify existing cooperative relationships between the MDA’s workforce training office, Alcorn State, the Chamber, Claiborne County school district, and the business community.
 - Ensure that local businesses are made aware of any workforce development incentives offered by the state.
- Establish a formal internship/apprenticeship program to aid in the transfer of vocational students to entry-level positions among existing industrial employers and/or targeted industries (See the *Target Industries* section of this document). Specific consideration should be given to developing a nursing apprenticeship program to support local home health service organizations in Port Gibson.
 - Consider paying particular attention to academic tracks that would support both target industries and existing businesses.

► ACTION TWO >> SUPPORT AND PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Families with children and employers seeking workers are drawn to locations that offer access to educational opportunities. As a result, it is imperative that the County and area partners remain supportive of local public schools.

Specific Tasks:

- Support proposals to enhance public school facilities in Claiborne County to ensure that the Claiborne County School District makes strides toward educational excellence.
- Explore opportunities for expanding existing college coursework credit programs in the high school.
- Enhance and expand existing partnerships between the school district and Alcorn State.
- Explore the potential for creating scholarships—with support from both the public and private sectors—to local students who choose to pursue a higher education at Alcorn State.
- Explore the possibility of implementing the MS Scholars Program in the public schools.



Lee County / Marchbanks Helping Hand Tuition Guarantee Program

In 2008, the Tupelo-based Community Development Foundation partnered with the Lee County Board of Supervisors and CREATE Foundation to develop a program that would make a college education more attainable for a greater number of high school graduates in Lee County. As a result of this partnership and with funding by the Lee County Board of Supervisors and CREATE Foundation, the Lee County / Marchbanks Helping Hand Tuition Guarantee Program was established.

Beginning with the Class of 2009, Lee County residents who graduate from Baldwyn, Mooreville, Nettleton, Shannon, Saltillo, and Tupelo high schools can attend Itawamba Community College (ICC) for two full years, tuition free.

The program, which is the first of its kind in the state of Mississippi, is designed to guarantee fully-paid tuition for four regular semesters of instruction. Graduating seniors will receive tuition assistance, if needed, to close the gap between available federal, state, and private aid. The purpose of the program is to improve educational attainment levels in Lee County, thus strengthening community and economic development.

- Consider the establishment of a program to assist local high school graduates gaining automatic admittance and/or reduced tuition at Alcorn State.

► ACTION THREE >> CONTINUE THE LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EFFORT.

Increasingly, companies rely on the skills and talent of their workforce to retain or gain a competitive advantage. Most employers realize that one way to tap into talented workers is by locating operations in communities with a strong sense of place. The current comprehensive planning effort will assist the County in making land-use and other related decisions that will ultimately lead to the area being more attractive to workers.

► STRATEGY FOUR >> SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOUSING IN CLAIBORNE COUNTY.

Claiborne County should remain supportive of expanding housing options for workers and young families looking to establish local roots. Currently, there appears to be a significant shortage of attainable housing for this class of individuals. Lack of progress in developing new middle-income housing could pose additional challenges to area firms in facing their current and future labor needs.

Specific Tasks:

- Leverage opportunities for new housing in Claiborne County by working with both public and private property owners to identify, inventory, and prioritize large-tract sites suitable for other “greenfield” residential developments.
 - Consider the costs of infrastructure placement, if available sites are not already served.
 - Consider establishing an annexation policy to guide development and infrastructure to priority sites. This policy should be coordinated with the County’s ongoing comprehensive planning efforts.
- Create an information packet, including an inventory of priority sites and area housing demand, to both speculative and custom housing developers working in the state to raise awareness of opportunities for single-family housing developments in Claiborne County.
- Offer assistance to home builders and developers in raising regional awareness of new housing products.
- Revitalize older neighborhoods in Port Gibson.
 - Support stronger enforcement and the strengthening of building codes to raise standards of existing housing supply.
 - Identify and inventory suitable sites for “infill” development.



strategy 5:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage taxing entities to explore the provision of incentive programs for home improvements in established neighborhoods.
- Support area non-profit organizations in developing new homes within established neighborhoods.
- Support the Mississippi Regional Housing Authority’s efforts to develop new homes within established neighborhoods to provide attainable workforce housing in Port Gibson.



appendix one – assessment

To provide a common framework for the planning process, our approach begins with an analysis of key demographic and economic indicators. This economic assessment serves as a “snapshot” of the area economy and is intended to highlight information of concern to business leaders, site selectors, and other economic decision makers.

In addition to our review of economic and demographic data, our assessment was informed by focus group meetings and interviews with local leaders, as well as our experience working with communities across the country. Based on findings from these tasks, we have developed an analysis of the area’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis. The results of the analysis are summarized below.

Broadly speaking, economic development strategies emerge directly from the SWOT analysis. Weaknesses – even if not directly related to economic development – must be addressed, and strengths must be supported and reinforced. Similarly, threats to the economic well-being of the community must be anticipated and responded to before they become crises. Opportunities, on the other hand, should be acted upon aggressively and, if possible, collaboratively.

FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Port ▪ Access to Alcorn State University ▪ Presence of Grand Gulf Nuclear Station ▪ Four-laning of Hwy 61 (N & S) ▪ Available 40,000 s.f. industrial building ▪ Low cost of living index ▪ Proximity to community college ▪ Proximity to Corps of Engineers ▪ Natchez Trace Parkway ▪ Timber industry ▪ Tourism – located b/n Natchez and Vicksburg (Grand Gulf Military Park, numerous historical sites) ▪ Popularity of local gaming (hunting, fishing, etc.) ▪ Low crime rate ▪ Main Street Program ▪ Comprehensive healthcare system (e.g., Patients Choice Medical Center of Claiborne County (hospital); numerous home health agencies; Claiborne County Family Medical Center) ▪ Relatively low millage rate (county taxes) ▪ Presence of Chamberlain Hunt Academy (boarding school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of skilled/semi-skilled labor force ▪ Lack of employment opportunities for residents ▪ Tourism – no ‘paying’ attractions for tourists ▪ Lack of rail service ▪ ‘Unhealthy’ community (obesity, diabetes, blood pressure, etc) ▪ Incomplete four-laning of Hwy 61 at Port Gibson ▪ Distance to interstate highway ▪ Need to upgrade local infrastructure – water, sewer, etc. ▪ Public school system – lack of integration and performance
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GGNS – target nuclear plant suppliers, vendors, etc. ▪ Develop port site – crane, extend electricity, etc. ▪ Partnership with Warren County Port to attract industry to Claiborne County Port ▪ Construction of regional jail (FY09 Legislative Session) ▪ Construction of Unit III at Grand Gulf ▪ Construction of industrial park on Hwy 61 N ▪ Unit I upgrade now being pushed ▪ Building formerly housed by Bruce Hardwood/Port Gibson Veneer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Domestic/international terrorism – GGNS and proximately to Vicksburg/Warren County (Corps of Engineers, etc.) ▪ Shrinking tax base



DEMOGRAPHICS

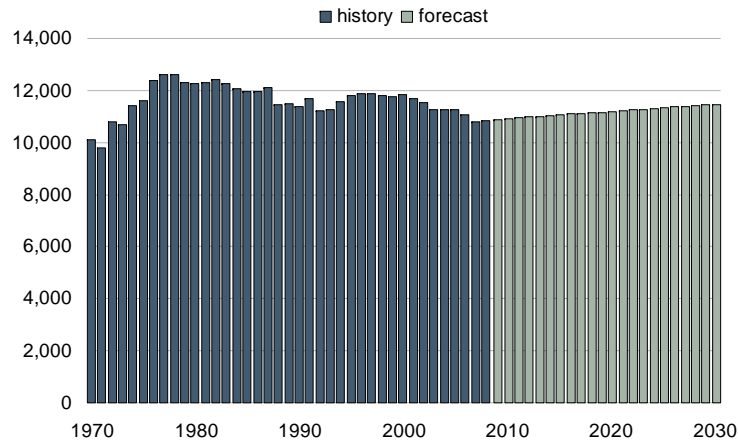
Claiborne County’s population surpassed the 12,000 mark in the 1970s and held that level through the late 1980s (Figure 2). Since then, Census figures show the county’s population has declined to less than 11,000. Projections suggest that marginal population growth should resume in the years ahead, but the pace of growth is unlikely to push Claiborne’s population back above its peak level of just over 12,000.

The county’s average annual rate of population growth last exceeded the national growth rate in 1980 (Figure 3). In the years since then, there have been intermittent periods of expansion and contraction. In the years ahead, the county’s population growth is projected to be positive, but will continue to lag the U.S. rate by a significant margin.

In the early 1970s, at least two of every five residents in Claiborne County was a teenager or younger, but that ratio has been declining for years (Figure 4, next page). Today, it is about one in three and it could be closer to one in four by 2030. As recently as 1990, Claiborne County’s young adults (age 20 to 34) outnumbered those of experienced working age (35 to 64). Since then those cohorts have reversed positions and are unlikely to shift back again in the decades ahead. Meanwhile, the number of seniors (age 65 or older) will double between now and 2030.

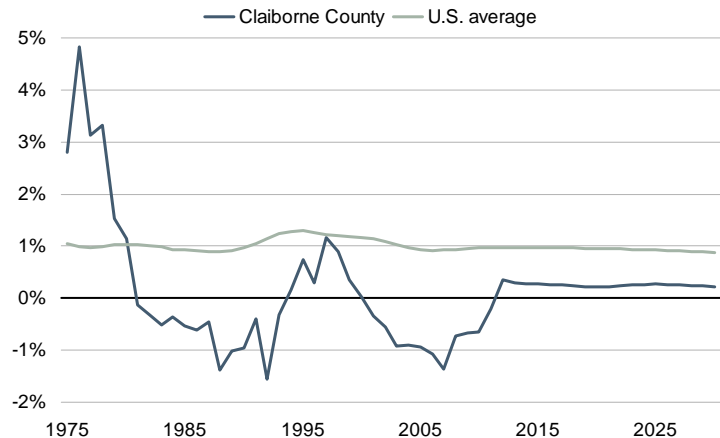
Over the long term, these demographic changes can have a powerful impact on the labor force (Figure 5, next page). From 1970 through 2000, Claiborne County’s working-age population expanded in most years. In recent years, this net growth has leveled off. The overall size of the working-age population is expected to hold relatively flat, with little or no annual net growth in the years ahead.

FIGURE 2: CLAIBORNE COUNTY POPULATION



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (history); Moody’s Analytics (projections)

FIGURE 3: POPULATION GROWTH RATE Claiborne Co. vs. US average

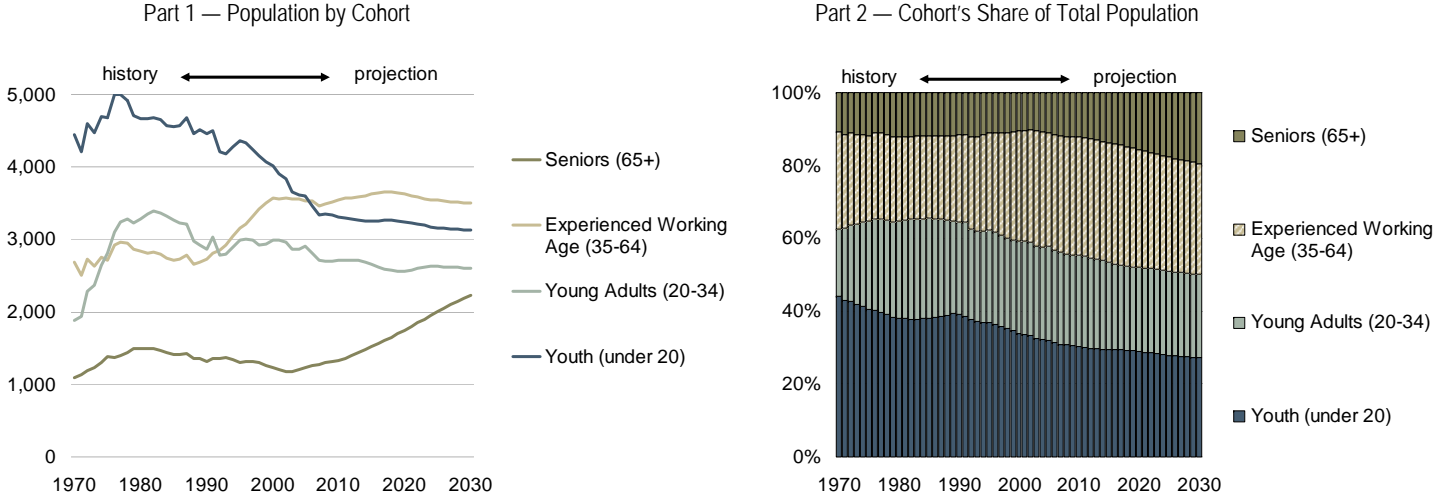


SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (via Moody’s Analytics).

NOTE: Compound annual growth rate, 5-year moving average)

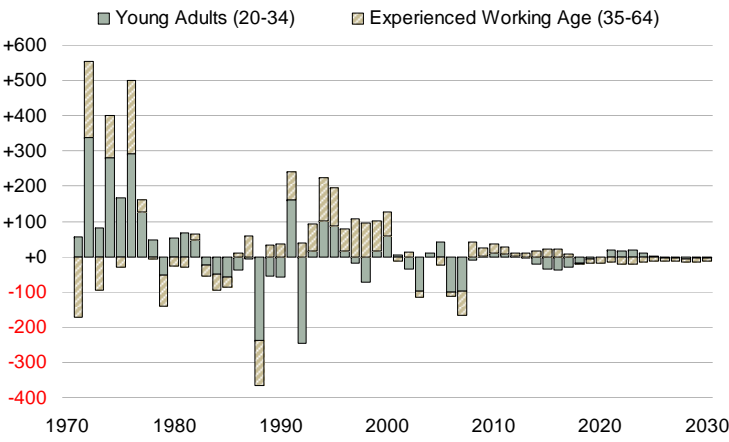


FIGURE 4: CLAIBORNE COUNTY'S CHANGING AGE STRUCTURE



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (history); Moody's Analytics (projections)

FIGURE 5: GROWTH OF CLAIBORNE CO.'S WORKING-AGE POPULATION



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (history); Moody's Analytics (projections)

Looking ahead, slower growth of Claiborne County's working age population could pose challenges for economic development initiatives. Maintaining and upgrading the skills of the existing workforce will become crucial for economic development success.



MIGRATION & MOBILITY

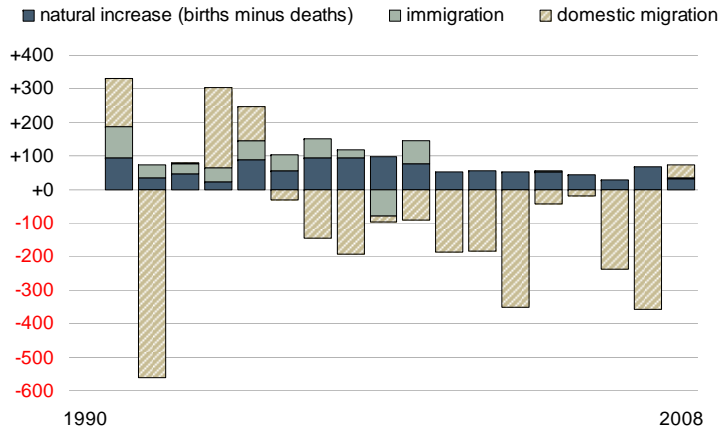
Population growth is driven by three factors, all of which are tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau: natural increase, domestic migration, and international migration. Natural increase (the number of birth certificates minus death certificates) and international migration typically change gradually over time. The third and most volatile component of growth is domestic migration, which measures the movement of residents within the U.S.

Since the early 1990s, domestic migration in Claiborne County has turned into a fairly consistent net outflow, offsetting the county’s marginal gains from natural increase (Figure 6).

U.S. Census estimates of domestic migration represent a net change in the population. An alternative approach is to use data compiled by the Internal Revenue Service to count the actual flows of residents (as represented by the number of exemptions claimed on tax filings). The IRS tracks the movement of income tax filers from year to year at the county level. An analysis of IRS filings corroborates the U.S. Census estimates of domestic migration patterns.

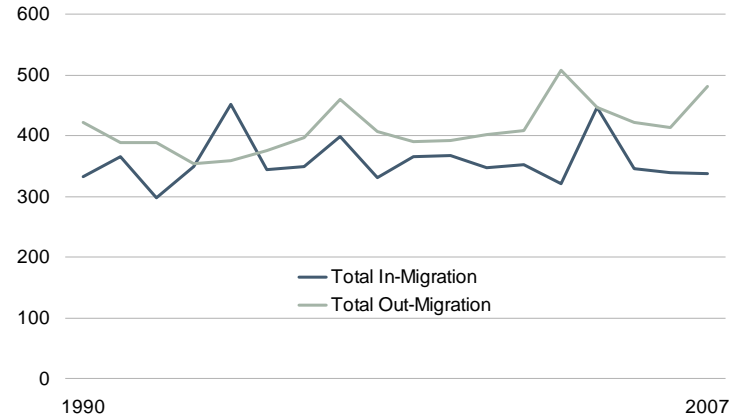
Figure 7 shows the IRS tabulations for aggregate income tax exemptions in which the county of declared residence changed to or from Claiborne County during the period from 1990 to 2007 (the most recent year available). These data closely approximate the U.S. Census Bureau’s estimates for net domestic migration. Both datasets reveal that total out-migration has outpaced total in-migration in most years since 1990.

FIGURE 6: COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE, CLAIBORNE COUNTY



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (via Moody's Analytics)

FIGURE 7: MIGRATION INTO AND OUT OF CLAIBORNE COUNTY



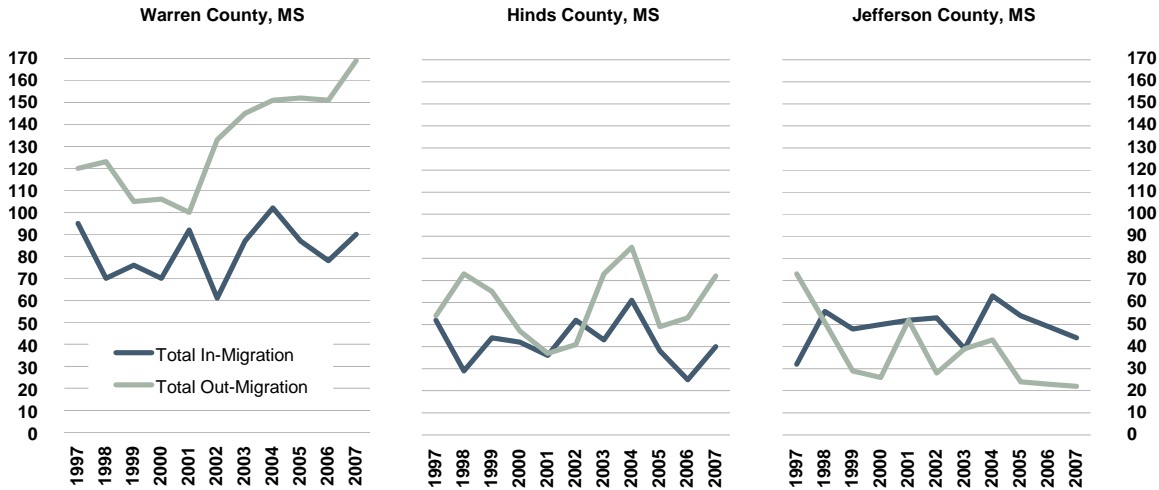
SOURCE: U.S. Internal Revenue Service (via Moody's Analytics)
 NOTE: Migration numbers represent aggregations of income tax exemptions in which the county of the tax filer changed from the previous year



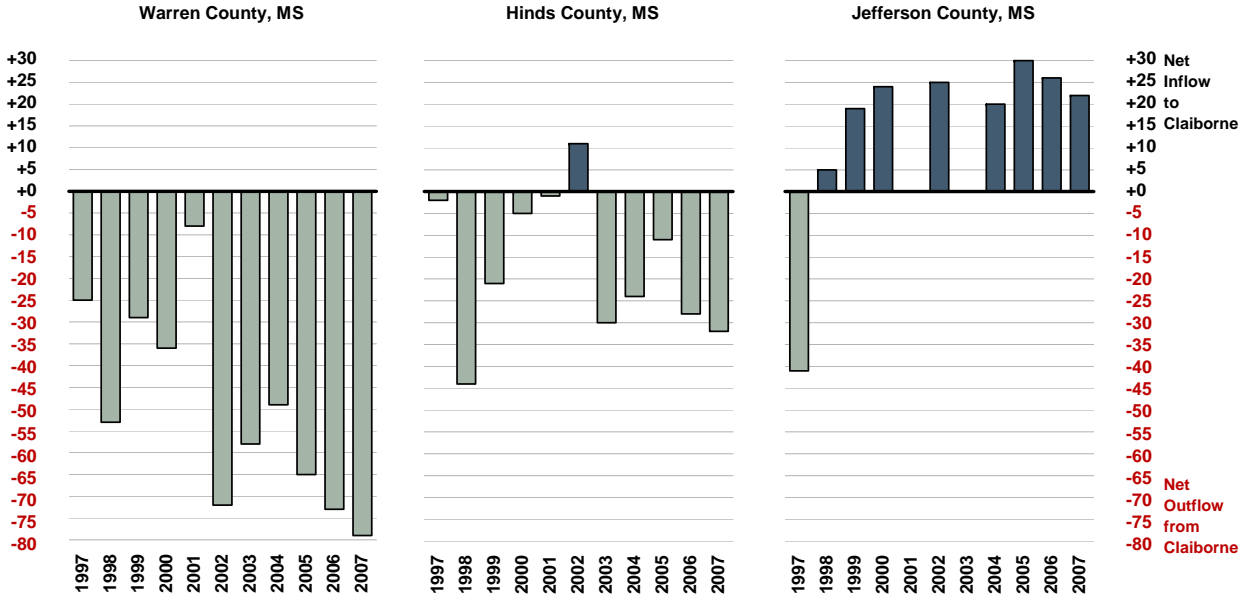
FIGURE 8: COUNTIES WITH MOST MIGRATION ACTIVITY INTO AND OUT OF CLAIBORNE COUNTY SINCE 1997

Further analysis of IRS data shows that most of the migration into and out of Claiborne County occurs with either adjacent counties or other counties in the Jackson MSA (Figure 8). The greatest migration flows are with Warren County. Claiborne loses more residents to Warren County than any other, and the gap has picked up in the past few years. There are also significant migration flows with Hinds and Jefferson County. Claiborne tends to lose residents to Hinds County, but picks up a net inflow of residents leaving Jefferson County.

Migration Activity Between Claiborne & Selected Counties



Net Migration Patterns Between Claiborne & Selected Counties



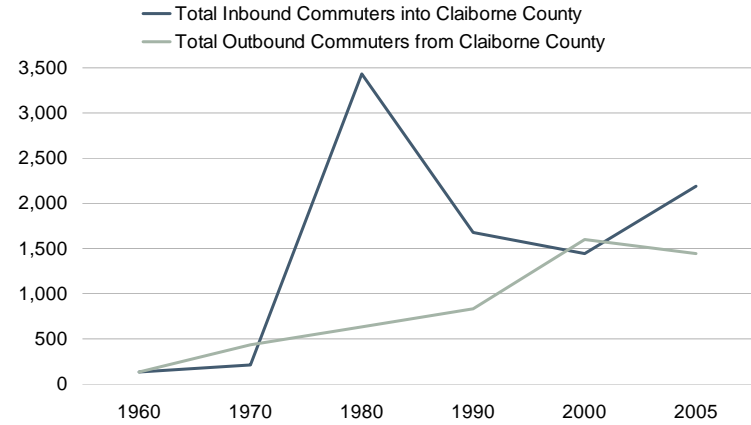
SOURCE: U.S. Internal Revenue Service (via Moody's Analytics)
 NOTE: Migration numbers represent aggregations of income tax exemptions in which the county of the tax filer changed from the previous year



While migration data may indicate the *direction* of movement, they do not provide any insight into the factors that drive individual decisions. People sometimes move long distances for education, work, retirement, or family needs, but when migration activity is concentrated among surrounding counties (as it is with Claiborne County) then movement tends to be largely employment-related. If this theory is correct, one might also expect strong commuting patterns with these same counties.

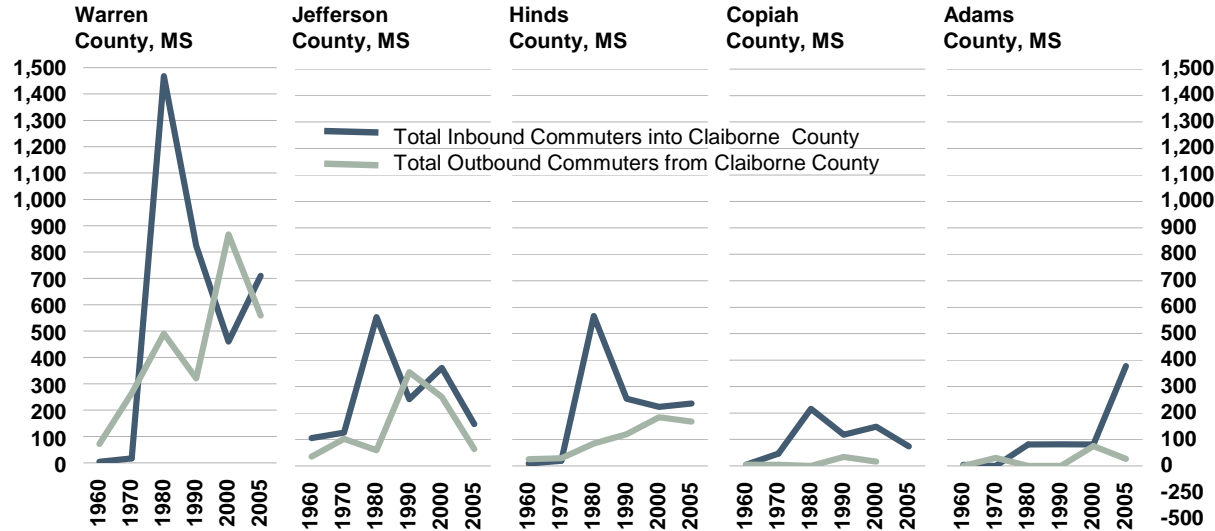
A look at long-term commuting patterns provides support for this concept. As with the migration data in Figure 8, Claiborne County's commuting relationships are largely with Warren, Jefferson, and Hinds Counties, along with Copiah and Adams (Figure 10). Across all counties, Claiborne's level of inbound

FIGURE 9: CLAIBORNE COUNTY COMMUTING PATTERNS



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Journey-to-Work series (via Moody's Analytics); U.S. Census Bureau, LED Origin-Destination series

FIGURE 10: COUNTIES WITH HEAVIEST COMMUTING INTO & OUT OF CLAIBORNE COUNTY SINCE 1960



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Journey-to-Work series (via Moody's Analytics); U.S. Bureau of the Census, LED Origin-Destination series
 NOTE: Copiah County had fewer than 26 outbound commuters in 2005, but the exact number was suppressed by the U.S. Census Bureau.



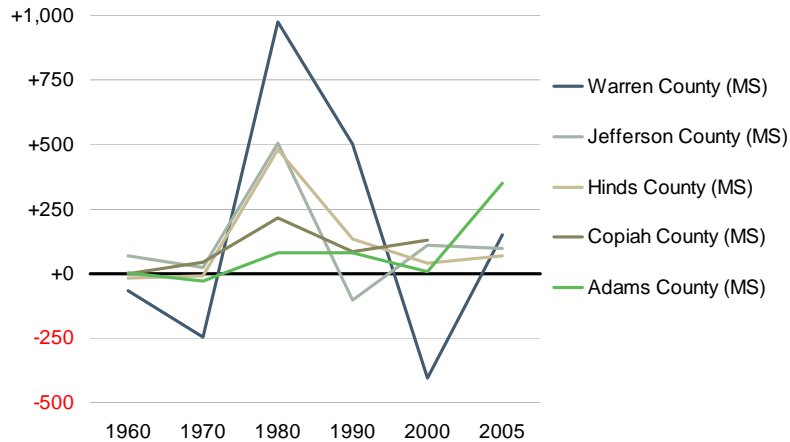
commuters has been erratic, reaching a peak in the early 1980s before dropping off dramatically (Figure 9). This peak coincides with the start of commercial operations at the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station and may reflect increases in employment associated with construction and ramp up of the facility. More recently, Claiborne has seen a sharp increase in the number of inbound commuters from Adams and Warren Counties. Outbound commuting rose steadily between 1960 and 2000, but has since leveled off.

HOUSING & INCOME

Claiborne County’s inflation-adjusted median household income has historically lagged the U.S. (Figure 12). After holding relatively steady for most of two decades, the gap between local and national median incomes appears to have widened slightly in recent years. Claiborne County’s inflation-adjusted median household income peaked above \$28,000 in 1999. It has since fallen below \$23,000. The national median also peaked in 1999, but by 2007 had regained losses from the dot-com recession and had once again climbed back to its 1999 level. Data reflecting the fallout of the current recession are not yet available.

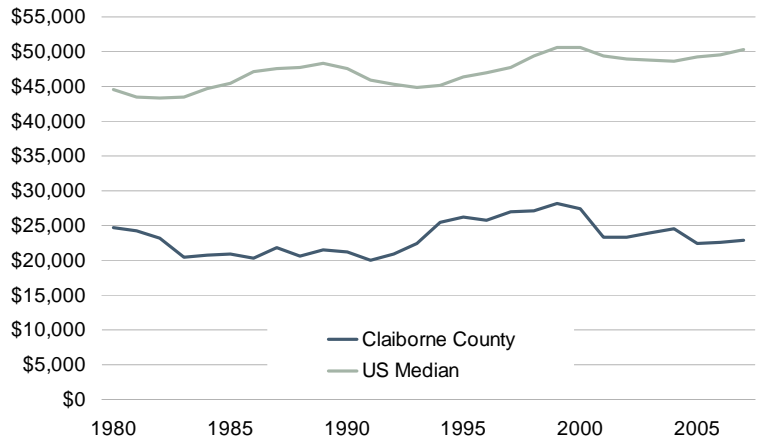
It is easy to speculate that job quality may play a part in this income gap – higher skilled jobs tend to pay more than lower skilled jobs. However, other factors play a role as well, including demographics. Recall from the previous pages that Claiborne County’s senior population is increasing in size. As more residents shift from earned incomes to fixed incomes, this can effectively hold down the growth of the

FIGURE 11: MAJOR NET COMMUTER PATTERNS BETWEEN CLAIBORNE AND OTHER COUNTIES



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Journey-to-Work series (via Moody's Analytics); U.S. Census Bureau, LED Origin-Destination series

FIGURE 12: INFLATION-ADJUSTED MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey; Moody's Analytics



county's median household income. If Claiborne County's senior population grows faster than the U.S. average, then it is reasonable to assume that this demographic change will play into the gap in median household incomes, at least to some degree. In 1970, 75 percent of Claiborne County's personal income came from job earnings (Figure 13). Today that percentage has fallen to 53 percent.

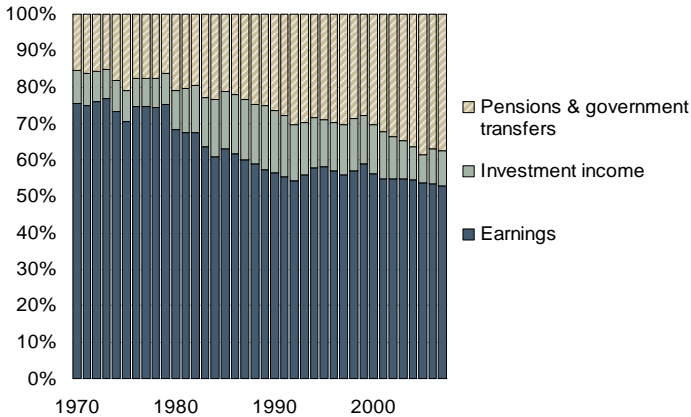
Housing is typically the largest and most distinguishing component of local living costs. Places with lower income levels must have greater housing affordability in order to justify the lower income levels. And indeed, Claiborne County fits well with this pattern (Figure 14). Median household income levels in the county, as well as its median home price, fall far below the U.S. medians for each variable.

ECONOMY

Unemployment in Claiborne County has historically exceeded the U.S. average, sometimes by a wide margin (Figure 15, next page). In August 2001 – just a few day before the 9/11 disaster – the gap between Claiborne County's unemployment rate and that of the nation overall reached its narrowest margin. In the years since, the gap has widened again. The unemployment rate in Claiborne County is currently at its highest point since 1992.

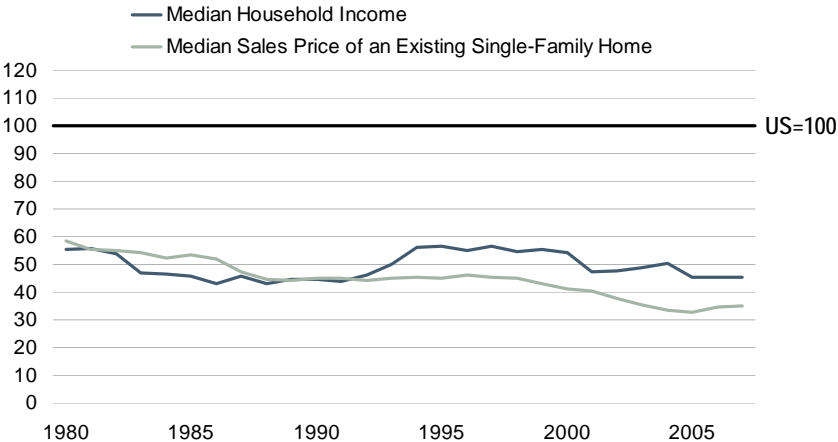
The utility sector is Claiborne County's greatest provider of private-sector jobs (Figure 16, page 45), reflecting the presence of the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station (GGNS). Other private-sector industries with high levels of employment in the county are more typical of what one might expect in a rural county: healthcare, agriculture, and retail trade.

FIGURE 13: CLAIBORNE COUNTY'S PERSONAL INCOME STRUCTURE



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (via Moody's Analytics)

FIGURE 14: CLAIBORNE CO. MEDIAN HH INCOME & MEDIAN HOME PRICES



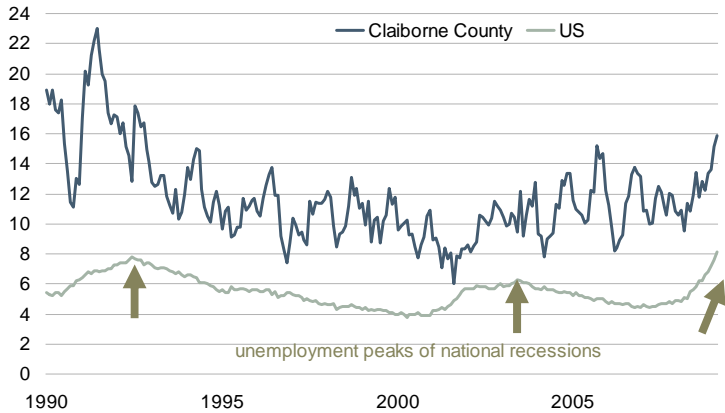
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey; Moody's Analytics



Projections prepared by private data provider, EMSI show that in the 10 years ahead, healthcare will provide the county with more private-sector jobs than any other sector. The manufacturing sector will decline nationwide, and this trend is reflected in Claiborne County as well. The projected decline in utility jobs, however, is likely to be a reflection of national trends and should be understood in that context rather than as a specific forecast for GGNS.

The nation’s real estate sector has been battered in this recession. As the economy begins to pick up and home sales begin to rise, the nation will once again require real estate agents and mortgage brokers who have recently been idled. This is why EMSI’s 10-year projections call for strong growth for the real estate sector in percentage terms. It is less clear, however, why this trend should translate strongly to Claiborne County. More important in this graph are the declining trends in manufacturing jobs and the expected need for skilled workers to fill new jobs in the healthcare, professional services, and information sectors.

FIGURE 15: SEASONALLY ADJUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (via Moody's Analytics)

Location quotient (LQ) analysis (Figure 17, page 46) highlights the overwhelming importance of the utility sector in Claiborne County, and to a lesser extent, agriculture. In addition to revealing strengths, an analysis of LQs can also highlight issues of concern. One such issue raised by the analysis of Claiborne County’s LQs is retail trade. Except in areas with high levels of tourism activity or regional centers serving broad outlying areas, LQs for retail trade are almost always “average,” meaning they hold very close to a score of 1.00. This situation reflects the fact that most people make the vast majority of their daily purchases – groceries, gasoline, etc. – within a relatively short distance from where they live.

The low LQ of 0.51 for retail trade in Claiborne County is a red flag. Perhaps the county lacks the critical mass of population to support certain types of mass retail like auto dealerships, building supply stores, clothing stores, or general merchandise chains. Regardless of the reason, the low concentration of retail employment implies the county is lacking the necessary retail amenities to support its population (not to mention losing the tax revenues that accompany these amenities and missing out on retail jobs that might help alleviate some of the pressing problems of high unemployment).

About the data

The industry and occupation data presented in this report reflect “complete” employment, rather than the “covered” employment figures typically produced by state and federal workforce agencies. Unlike covered employment, which includes only those industries covered by unemployment insurance, complete employment includes estimates of all industries, adding in non-covered government and agricultural workers as well as the self-employed.

FIGURE 16: EMPLOYMENT BASE BY INDUSTRY SECTOR IN CLAIBORNE COUNTY, 2009

NAICS Sector	2009 Jobs	10-Year Projections Net Change, 2009-2019
90 Government*	1,793	+251
22 Utilities	766	-61
62 Health care & social assistance	418	+179
11 Agriculture, forestry, & fishing	316	-16
44-45 Retail trade	249	+37
61 Educational services & training*	175	+50
23 Construction	160	+47
72 Accommodation & food services	133	+63
54 Professional & technical services	126	+59
31-33 Manufacturing	115	-33
52 Finance & insurance	85	+14
56 Administrative services	79	+40
81 Personal & other services	77	+30
53 Real estate	66	+51
48-49 Transportation & warehousing	33	+2
71 Arts, entertainment, & recreation	24	+12
51 Information	22	+12
21 Oil, gas, & mining	<10	--
42 Wholesale trade	<10	--
Total Jobs	4,649	+739

10-Year Projections by Industry Sector, Ranked by Percent Change, 2009

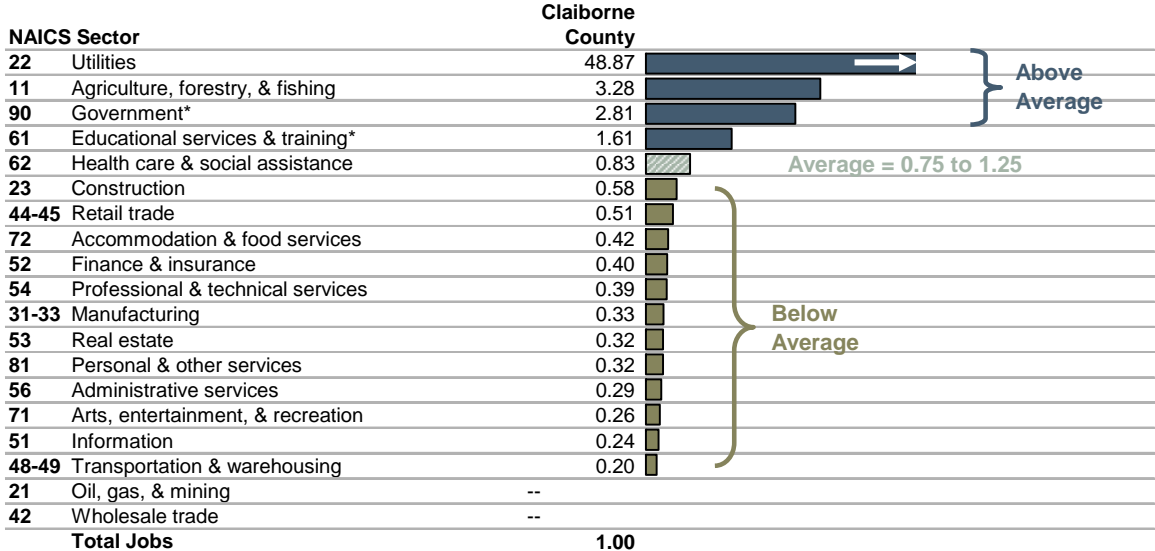
NAICS Sector	Claiborne County	US Average
53 Real estate	77.0%	32.0%
21 Oil, gas, & mining	na	24.0%
56 Administrative services	51.0%	24.0%
61 Educational services & training*	29.0%	22.0%
62 Health care & social assistance	43.0%	22.0%
71 Arts, entertainment, & recreation	50.0%	21.0%
54 Professional & technical services	47.0%	17.0%
72 Accommodation & food services	47.0%	15.0%
52 Finance & insurance	16.0%	13.0%
23 Construction	29.0%	12.0%
51 Information	55.0%	12.0%
48-49 Transportation & warehousing	6.0%	11.0%
44-45 Retail trade	15.0%	9.0%
42 Wholesale trade	na	8.0%
81 Personal & other services	39.0%	8.0%
90 Government*	14.0%	7.0%
22 Utilities	-8.0%	2.0%
31-33 Manufacturing	-29.0%	0.0%
11 Agriculture, forestry, & fishing	-5.0%	-4.0%
Total Jobs	16.0%	13.0%

SOURCE: EMSI, Complete Employment - Spring 2009

*NOTE: Public-sponsored primary, secondary, and higher education is included as government employment rather than with (private) educational services.



FIGURE 17: EMPLOYMENT LOCATION QUOTIENTS (LQs) BY INDUSTRY SECTOR



SOURCE: EMSI, Complete Employment - Spring 2009
 *NOTE: Public-sponsored primary, secondary, and higher education is included as government employment rather than with (private) educational services.

Understanding LQs

A location quotient (LQ) is calculated as a local industry's share of total local employment divided by the same industry's share of employment at the national level:

$$LQ = \frac{\text{Local jobs in industry} / \text{Total local jobs}}{\text{U.S. jobs in industry} / \text{Total U.S. jobs}}$$

If the local industry and national industry are perfectly proportional, the LQ will be 1.0. If an industry is heavily concentrated at the local level (e.g., automotive industry in Detroit, technology in Silicon Valley, gambling in Las Vegas), the LQ will be higher than 1.0. Conversely, if the industry is sparsely concentrated at the local level the LQ will be lower than 1.0.

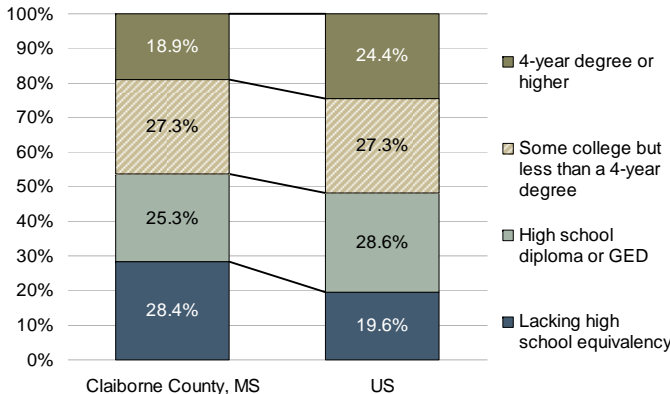


WORKFORCE

Educational attainment levels in Claiborne County lag the national average (Figure 18). The divergence in achievement appears at the extremes of the educational spectrum. In Claiborne County, about 28 percent of adults lacked high school equivalency in 2000, compared with 20 percent at the national level. Likewise, while just 19 percent of Claiborne’s adult population held a bachelor’s degree or higher, 25 percent of U.S. residents reported this level of attainment.

A look at the occupational data for the county supports key findings from other parts of the assessment. For example, Figure 19 reveals that occupations requiring high levels of education and training, such as computer-, science-, or law-related occupations, make up

FIGURE 18: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Highest level achieved by population age 25 years and over



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census. NOTE: Data are for the 2000 Census. While more recent data are available for the U.S. via the American Community Survey, 2000 is the most recent data available for Claiborne County so was used to maintain consistency.

FIGURE 19: CLAIBORNE COUNTY’S 2009 EMPLOYMENT BASE & OUTLOOK BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

SOC code & description	2009 Jobs	Forecast Net Change, 2009-19
43-0000 Office & administrative support	670	+42
11-0000 Management	472	+47
25-0000 Education, training, & library	455	+95
49-0000 Installation, maintenance, & repair	327	+4
41-0000 Sales	267	+84
29-0000 Healthcare (practitioners & technical)	264	+55
47-0000 Construction & extraction	234	+37
33-0000 Protective service	219	+48
51-0000 Production	188	-17
35-0000 Food preparation & serving	175	+56
37-0000 Property maintenance	168	+53
53-0000 Transportation & material moving	163	+5
39-0000 Personal care & service	144	+48
31-0000 Healthcare (support)	133	+39
13-0000 Business & financial operations	127	+26
17-0000 Architecture & engineering	125	+5
21-0000 Community & social services	116	+41
27-0000 Arts, design, entertainment, & media	83	+22
45-0000 Farming, fishing, & forestry	76	+2
55-0000 Military	69	-2
15-0000 Computer & mathematical science	66	+25
19-0000 Life, physical, & social science	63	+7
23-0000 Legal	44	+16
Total Jobs	4,649	+739

SOURCE: EMSI, Complete Employment - Spring 2009
NOTE: The Management occupational group includes farm owners and ranchers; non-managerial ag workers are included in the Farm, Fishing, & Forestry group

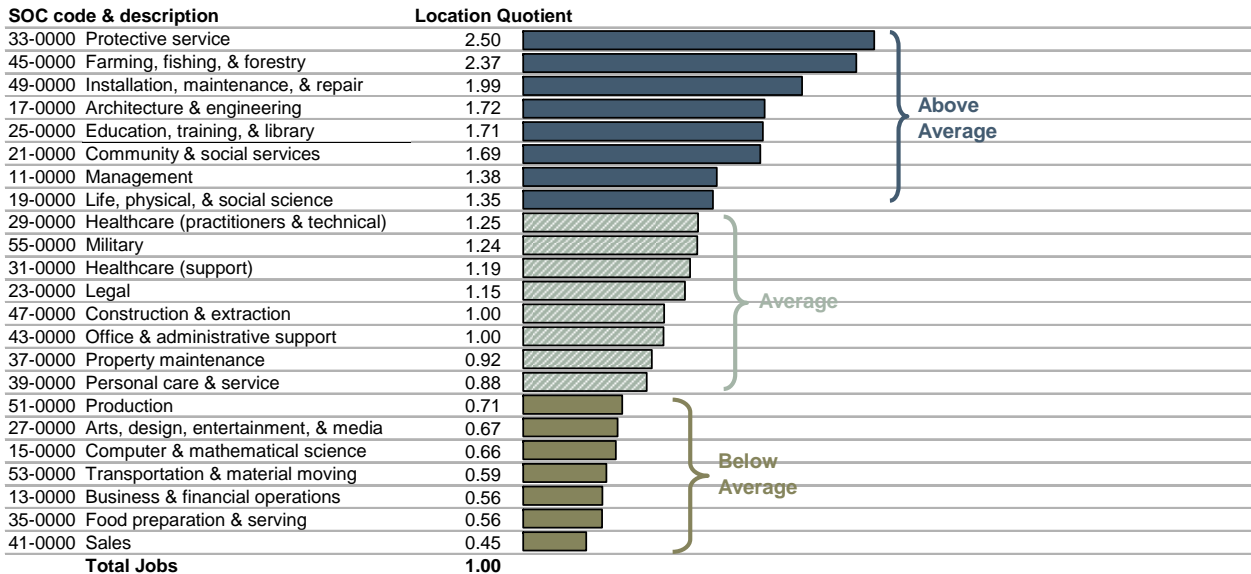


a small number of the county’s occupations overall. However, despite their small number, many of these same occupations show up at levels above the national average when looking at location quotients (Figure 20). The concentration of these groups in the county’s occupational data is likely due to presence of GGNS and Alcorn State, both of which draw technical occupations at levels above what would typically be expected in a county of Claiborne’s size.

The county also has an unusually high LQ for protective services. Typically, we think of this group as being comprised of local firefighters and police, which would suggest that LQs in most regions would mirror national norms. For Claiborne County, the high concentration of occupations in this group may be explained by private security services connected with GGNS.

In contrast, sales occupations are well below expected levels. This finding underscores the concern presented previously that the county may be critically underserved in its retail sector. Business and financial occupations are also less prevalent than would be expected, suggesting that local businesses may have difficulty finding needed support services.

FIGURE 20: CLAIBORNE COUNTY’S 2009 OCCUPATIONAL STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES



SOURCE: EMSI, Complete Employment - Spring 2009

NOTE: The Management occupational group includes farm owners and ranchers; non-managerial ag workers are included in the Farm, Fishing, & Forestry group.

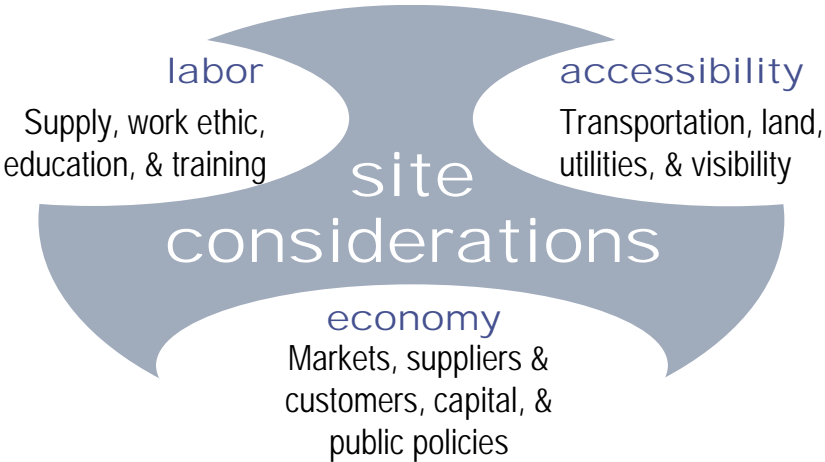


appendix two – target sectors

methodology

The selection of target sectors is traditionally bound to an assessment of only a few determinant factors, such as access to an available workforce, industrial sites, and incentives. Our target industry recommendations are not based solely on these factors, but also on conversations with business leaders to better understand potential opportunities and challenges that might not be identified from secondary data sources alone. TIP also brings to bear its understanding and appreciation of broader socioeconomic trends such as consumption patterns/consumer spending, emerging markets/international trade, and demographic shifts/aging workforce to better understand long-term recruitment and development prospects within emerging economic sectors. Finally, TIP also took into consideration how the following targets fit within the overall framework of the strategic plan and the identified opportunity sites.

In sum, TIP identified target industries for Claiborne County using a three-pronged approach: *quantitative*, *qualitative*, and *strategic*.



LABOR

Specific characteristics, including regional talent/labor (i.e., availability, wage rates, and level of qualifications) and access to educational infrastructure (i.e., higher education and workforce development programs) play an important role in site selection.

ECONOMY

Economic considerations, including access to markets (local, regional, and global), suppliers and customers, public policies (e.g. incentives, taxation, regulations etc.), and availability of capital (investment, venture) strongly affect these site location decisions.

ACCESSIBILITY

Factors, such as availability of land, raw materials, utilities, visibility/prestige, and access to transportation (such as the proximity to highways and airports) also have an important effect on a site's suitability.

Target Sectors

TIP examined both traditional and non-traditional targets for Claiborne County. *Traditional targets* represent the types of industries that have historically been marketed to by economic development organizations. These typically include manufacturing industries and related industrial and/or transportation activities. They often represent the first tier of economic opportunity. This is due to the fact that an area already has in place many of the necessary components (e.g. economic base, workforce, and infrastructure) to begin effective targeting and marketing efforts. This is not to say, however, that Claiborne County already has all the pieces in place for each industry. In some cases, longer, more sustained efforts may also be required to successfully attract investment.

Non-traditional targets include economic sectors and other development opportunities that are well-suited to Claiborne County but are not typically targeted by local economic development organizations. While these sectors pose unique challenges for economic development marketing efforts, we feel they should not be ignored. Due to larger trends (i.e., demographic shifts, technology, and globalization), TIP believes that economic development can no longer simply be a competition for the recruitment of industrial employers. Instead, the future of Claiborne County also lies in its ability to identify nontraditional opportunities.

TIP determined that the following targets represent the best opportunities (both long- and short-term) for the County's economic development efforts through business startup, retention, expansion, and attraction activities. These sectors are selected for their ability to serve a dual purpose: 1) to bolster and diversify Claiborne County's economy over the short-term by taking advantage of existing assets and 2) to provide a pathway to sustained economic vitality over the long-term.

TARGET SELECTION MATRIX

TARGETS	LABOR	ECONOMY	ACCESSIBILITY	SCORE
AGRICULTURE / AG PROCESSING	+	+	+	+++
WOOD PRODUCTS	+	=	+	++
BIOMASS / BIOFUELS	+	=	+	++
RETAIL / LEISURE	+	=	+	++

KEY:

+ local competitive advantage

= no local competitive advantage



Agriculture / Ag Processing >

INDUSTRY TRENDS

The ag processing industry remains one of the few manufacturing sectors expected to increase employment in the U.S. during the next decade. This is, in large part, a result of growing U.S. and international consumer demand stemming from overall population growth. Ag processing—much like the remainder of manufacturing—is undergoing a significant degree of transformation. Changes in the industry are the result of two primary challenges: shifts in U.S. consumer preferences and increasing globalization.

U.S. consumers’ food preferences are becoming increasingly fractured, as America is no longer a homogenous marketplace where Wonder Bread, Oscar Mayer, and Folgers dominate. While these products remain recognized household name brands, others such as Great Harvest, Hebrew National, and Starbucks have risen to become formidable forces. Their emergence is a direct reaction to the increasing sophistication of certain segments of the American society. Still, time constraints on American households have risen dramatically in the last 20 years allowing families fewer opportunities to cook traditional meals, resulting in the increased consumption of prepackaged foods.

Changing demographics are also greatly influencing the eating habits of Americans—of all ethnicities. We are more willing to sample a greater diversity of exotic “foreign” foods introduced by new immigrants from far-flung places. For example, the vast majority of Americans long ago adopted Italian as a favorite ethnic food. Today, Mexican appears to be the most popular. And tomorrow, perhaps it will be Thai. Of course, setting ethnic foods aside, Americans are continuously searching for the latest diet fad that will make us healthier and skinnier. Nothing suggests these trends will diminish either. Americans are aging and more food conscious. And, America is increasing ethnically and racially diverse.

This constant churn in American food preferences, forces U.S. processors to remain nimble and opportunistic. This, in turn, makes them highly competitive players in the global marketplace. While the American marketplace remains their bread and butter, U.S. processors are increasingly relying on emerging markets to sustain growth in exports and revenue. All of these trends and forces are also constantly forcing processors to seek new industrial sites and products.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- Business costs, including labor and taxes.
- Abundant semi-skilled labor.
- Proximity to consumer markets.
- Abundant water/wastewater.
- Large industrial sites with access to transportation (e.g., rail served sites and highway access).
- Availability of local food commodities (for certain specialty foods).

DEFINITION:
 This sector comprises establishments primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber, and harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats.

The establishments in this sector are often described as farms, ranches, dairies, greenhouses, nurseries, orchards, or hatcheries. A farm may consist of a single tract of land or a number of separate tracts which may be held under different tenures. For example, one tract may be owned by the farm operator and another rented. It may be operated by the operator alone or with the assistance of members of the household or hired employees, or it may be operated by a partnership, corporation, or other type of organization. When a landowner has one or more tenants, renters, croppers, or managers, the land operated by each is considered a farm.



NICHE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Food products targeted to Latin American and Caribbean markets
- High-value added food manufacturing
- Processed foods from local agricultural products, especially goats

Agriculture / Ag Processing (cont'd) >

RATIONALE

- Alcorn State and its respected agricultural programs could provide an important boost. Research programs at state universities often draw interest from affiliated manufacturers—even when the research may not have direct bearing on their products—due to their capacity to act as a catalyst for cluster development.
- Central location within the fast-growing Sunbelt and relative access to consumer markets.
- History of food processing industry in the region.
- Availability of skilled and semi-skilled workers in the region.
- Upgrading of skills, technology, and wages in production processes for specialty foods.
- Food processing one of only a few manufacturing industries expected to increase in employment in the U.S. during the coming decade.
- Multitude of food processors constantly seeking new locations translating into a larger pool of potential recruits.
- Plentiful water supply in Claiborne County, thanks to proximity to the Mississippi River.
- Potential to increase job opportunities in associated sectors, such as distribution and packaging.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite upgrade in skills and wages, food processing remains a relatively low-wage industry.
- Claiborne County will need to carefully select which specialty food processors it recruits. Special considerations should be given to those who would directly benefit from Alcorn State's agricultural programs, especially goat processors.
- Lack of developed industrial sites with good transportation access may place Claiborne County at a competitive disadvantage. As a result, the economic development program should focus on developing new business sites, especially along U.S. 61 North.
- Expanded marketing efforts for existing farmers.



DEFINITION:

Industries in the wood products manufacture wood products, such as lumber, plywood, veneers, wood containers, wood flooring, wood trusses, manufactured homes (i.e., mobile homes), and prefabricated wood buildings. The production processes of include sawing, planing, shaping, laminating, and assembling of wood products starting from logs that are cut into bolts, or lumber that then may be further cut, or shaped by lathes or other shaping tools. The lumber or other transformed wood shapes may also be subsequently planed or smoothed, and assembled into finished products, such as wood containers. Wood products includes establishments that make wood products from logs and bolts that are sawed and shaped, and establishments that purchase sawed lumber and make wood products.

Wood Products >

INDUSTRY TRENDS

The future of the wood products industry as a whole is uncertain. Like other mature resource-based industries, the wood products industry has experienced major consolidations and restructuring in recent years. These changes are the result of numerous domestic and international factors. The industry’s building products manufacturers—including lumber, plywood, and oriented strand board producers—have sustained erratic markets, the result of growing competition from Canadian lumber producers and domestic manufacturers who entered southern markets after harvest restrictions on the West Coast. In addition, technological advances have led to fewer mills, with fewer employees required to operate them. Technology has also increased the demand for engineered wood products versus traditional lumber and plywood.

Within the last two years, volatility in the economy has dramatically reduced demand for construction-related wood products. During this period, U.S. housing starts have fallen to their lowest level in 50 years, dragging down production in the wood products sector. In 2008, for example, only 569,900 single family building permits issued, according to the National Association of Home Builders. This is a stunning decrease from the 1.62 million new homes started in 2005 during the recent boom. This slowdown in the housing market has also affected other wood products, such as furniture, as American consumers are making fewer purchases for new homes. In recent months, data indicate that the bottom of the business cycle may have been reached; however, demand will remain sluggish for the next couple years. Some analysts are predicting that home sales may rebound reasonably well by 2011.

When the residential sector does emerge from the current crisis, many predict a departure in home building techniques will also begin to occur. In the coming decade, the traditional piece-by-piece construction of new homes and other buildings may no longer be the norm as the sector looks to the integration of new materials, information technology, design, and modular assembly to generate greater efficiencies and effectiveness in climate-controlling, weatherproofing, security systems, as well as the time and cost required for construction.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- Proximity to timber resources.
- Proximity to population growth centers (i.e., demand for housing).
- Industrial sites with access to transportation (e.g., rail served sites and interstate access).
- Availability of industrial land.
- Availability of industrial and warehouse/distribution space.
- Availability of semi-skilled production labor.



NICHE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Construction-related
- Furniture
- Manufacturers of equipment

Wood Products (cont'd) >

RATIONALE

- Central location within the fast-growing Sunbelt and relative access to population growth centers.
- The Sunbelt is predicted to emerge from the national recession at a quicker pace than the rest of the nation.
- Availability of raw materials (e.g., timber/lumber).
- History of wood production in the area.
- Semi-skilled production labor present throughout the region.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work closely with existing companies to assist them through the current recession.
- Encourage Alcorn State to develop a program in green construction
- Continue to focus on the development of sites to accommodate potential prospects.
- Consider identifying sites with rail access as a means for attracting prospects.



DEFINITION:

Biomass, is a renewable energy source, biological material derived from living, or recently living organisms, such as wood, waste, and alcohol fuels. Biomass is commonly plant matter grown to generate electricity or produce heat. For example, forest residues (such as dead trees, branches and tree stumps), yard clippings and wood pellets may be used as biofuel. However, biomass also includes plant or animal matter used for production of fibers or chemicals. Biomass may also include biodegradable wastes that can be burnt as fuel. It excludes organic material such as fossil fuel which has been transformed by geological processes into substances such as coal or petroleum.

Biomass / Biofuels >

INDUSTRY TRENDS

The oil and gas industry has historically been one of the world’s most volatile industries, where sharp fluctuations in prices are seen more as the norm than not. These dramatic price changes are closely linked to global economic output, affecting demand for fuel. Last year, for example, oil prices reached a record high of \$147, but fell dramatically to \$41 when the recession began to take hold. Currently, prices have slowly risen to approximately \$70 per barrel. Regardless, most analysts now agree that the era of “cheap oil” is over, sustained by growing demand for energy not only in the U.S. but also among the world’s emerging economies—especially China and India.

The recent emergence of global warming as a serious political issue in the U.S. coincides with a major spike in energy prices and deregulation of many state electricity markets. This perfect storm of events has created enormous interest in environmental technologies. As recently as 1999, energy technology accounted for less than one percent of U.S. venture capital (VC) investments; by 2006, more than nine percent of all VC investments were in this niche. And it is not just investors who are paying attention. Large corporations from Wal-Mart to Dell now plan significant steps toward reducing their carbon emissions.

These and other factors (e.g., climate concerns) have prompted a serious reconsideration of “alternative” and/or renewable energy resources, such as nuclear, wind, solar, biofuels, hydrogen fuel cells, and “clean-burning” coal among others. This renewed interest and research and development investment has come from several sources, including federal and state governments, as well as the “majors” themselves. The most famous example of corporate repositioning is the BP brand change from “British Petroleum” to “Beyond Petroleum.”

Biomass is a renewable energy source and includes biological material that can be used as fuel or for industrial production. The region’s greatest competitive advantage in alternative energy is in the use of logging residues (unused portions of trees cut, or killed by logging, and left in the woods). One form of forest residues for biomass that appears to have significant advantages in the region is the production of wood pellets, which are generally produced as a compacted byproduct of sawmilling activities.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- Proximity to fuel feedstock.
- Proximity to concentrations of energy-related customers.
- Large industrial sites with access to transportation (e.g., rail served sites and highway access).
- Access to research and development.
- Access to capital networks to provide necessary financing.
- Business costs, including labor and taxes.
- Abundant semi-skilled labor.



Biomass / Biofuels (cont'd) >

RATIONALE

NICHE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Biodiesel production.
- Biofuel and cellulosic fuel research

- Significant funding for clean and renewable energy production, as well as an emphasis on reduced carbon emissions, in the recently passed federal stimulus package
- The state's number one ranking for biomass potential from forest residues, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.
- Ongoing efforts within state to support this industry, including the MDA, Biomass Mississippi and Renewable Energy Council, and research at statewide higher education institutions.
- The sector's linkages to existing forest-related industries in the region, as well as its ability to increase demand for distribution activities (e.g., trucking, river, and rail) as an exported good.
- Recent successes in promoting Southwest Mississippi as a center for biomass resources and biofuels energy production, including the recent announcement of construction of a wood pellet biofuels facility in Magnolia.
- Potential development of local expertise with the presence of Entergy.
- Alternative energy, as an emerging sector, remains research and development intensive. R&D related sectors tend to require more highly educated and skilled talent and, therefore, tend to pay high wages.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify specific funding opportunities as a result of the federal stimulus energy funding to assist in the development of a biofuels facility in Claiborne County.
- Working with MDA and Biomass Mississippi, create a database of potential target companies for recruitment.
- Meet with regional timber/lumber companies in Claiborne County and the surrounding region, as well as Entergy, to determine their level of interest in potentially partnering in the development of a cooperative biofuels production facility.



DEFINITION:

The retail trade sector comprises establishments engaged in retailing merchandise, generally without transformation, and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise.

The leisure sector includes a wide range of establishments that operate facilities or provide services to meet varied cultural, entertainment, and recreational interests of their patrons. This sector comprises 1) establishments that are involved in producing, promoting, or participating in live performances, events, or exhibits intended for public viewing; 2) establishments that preserve and exhibit objects and sites of historical, cultural, or educational interest; and 3) establishments that operate facilities or provide services that enable patrons to participate in recreational activities or pursue amusement, hobby, and leisure-time interests.

Retail / Leisure >

INDUSTRY TRENDS

The retail trade and leisure sectors have been among the leading national job creators during the last several years, driven by increased consumer spending and population growth, especially in locations with natural and/or man-made amenities. While these industries are not known for offering high wage jobs, they remain important to local government for their contributions to sales.

In addition, retail and leisure are increasingly being viewed as amenities that a community cannot do without. When searching for a new home, potential residents (both singles and families) strongly take the available shopping amenities into consideration. As a result, employers -- who are interested in retaining and recruiting workers -- have come to realize the importance of retail and leisure assets.

Retail and leisure amenities also strongly influence the attraction of visitors and, eventually, retirees. Increasingly, communities are coming to realize the potential for linking these two groups. Over time, a tourist who frequently visits a place begins to adopt a notion of brand loyalty for that community or destination which can, in turn, strongly influence retirement location decisions. Today’s retirees are much more affluent than past generations and are more likely to increase consumer spending in the area, especially increasing demand for the region’s healthcare economy. The leading edge of baby boomers is set to retire soon, but analysts expect the nature of their retirement to be distinctly advantageous as they are anticipated to be more active community participants and more likely to start up new business enterprises.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- Access to population/consumers.
- Quality of regional transportation network, especially interstate and airport.
- Retail sites with high visibility.
- Diversity of retail base.
- Access to natural (e.g., lakes, national parks etc.) and cultural amenities (e.g., fine arts, performing arts, historical attractions).
- Concentration of hotels and restaurants.
- External image of the region.



NICHE OPPORTUNITIES:

- Hotels/motels/bed and breakfast establishments

- Restaurants

- Outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing

- Cultural and historical tourism

Retail / Leisure (cont'd) >

RATIONALE

- Assists in ability to draw talent to the area.
- Increase in sales tax.
- Increase Claiborne County’s attractiveness to tourists and baby boomers.
- Increase visibility and enhance image of Claiborne County as a destination within the region.
- Establish downtown Port Gibson as a destination.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support redevelopment activities in Port Gibson’s existing downtown area.
- Work with a private developer in the establishment of a new hotel in downtown.
- Target tourists and retirees from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.



appendix three - organizational options

Economic Development Association

This is a complex organization with regard to function, governing structure, program of work, and funding sources. The association serves a dual role and is usually established to coordinate both economic and community development efforts. Many chambers of commerce are brought under the association's umbrella to coordinate community development efforts. Economic development activities are directed by a separate entity.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE:

- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Committees

FUNDING SOURCES:

- Government entities
- Public and private sectors
- Memberships
- Self-generated accounts
- Grants
- Loans
- Bonds

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Granted power to purchase, own, acquire, control, develop, lease, hold, and maintain real estate, buildings, and equipment
- Building and site preparation and design
- Example: Tate - Senatobia Chamber of Commerce - Tate County Industrial Development Authority



Economic Development Authority

This type of organization is established by the legislature and is perhaps the most comprehensive type of economic development organization. Authorities are designed to control, construct, and coordinate all economic and community development activities within a county. Authorities are created to improve the industrial, economic, and technology development for an area, including developing industrial sites and parks; providing support for existing, expanding, or new businesses; assisting in assuring and preparing adequate and effective work-force; and providing support to meet those ends. They also involve themselves in the supervision of chambers of commerce and community development programs. Combining several agencies into one lead agency allows better utilization of finances, manpower, and resources.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE:

- Board of Supervisors - Mayors and Aldermen
- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Committees

FUNDING SOURCES:

- Government entities
- Public and private sectors
- Memberships
- Self-generated accounts
- Grants
- Loans
- Bonds

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Granted power to purchase, own, acquire, control, develop, lease, hold, and maintain real estate, buildings, and equipment
- Building and site preparation and design
- Example: Tate - Senatobia Chamber of Commerce - Tate County Industrial Development Authority



Economic Development District

This type of organization is established by order and resolution of the Board of Supervisors for a particular county or multi-county district. State law has provided the individual counties the authority to establish these Districts under Section 19-5-99 of the Mississippi Code of 1972. This allows a county or multi-county entity the freedom to consolidate public and private economic development programs under one functioning board of directors, which promotes coordination between districts and other economic development organizations. A district is more complex than chambers and associations in respect to functions and authority. Usually the district is established to act as the central funding organization and lead economic development agency within a county. The powers of the district allow more direct input into economic development activities with respect to industrial sites, grants, bond issuance, buildings, recruiting, and promotion.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE:

- Board of Supervisors - Mayors and Aldermen
- District Board of Trustees
- Other economic development organizations
-

FUNDING SOURCES:

- County and municipal budgets
- Private, state, and federal funds
- Self-generated accounts
- Acquisitions and contracts
- Receive property and securities
- Loans
- Bonds

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Granted power to purchase, own, acquire, control, develop, lease, sale, hold, and maintain real estate, buildings, and equipment
- Administrators for state and federal grant programs
- Subject to state purchasing laws



Economic Development Foundation

This type of organization is created when several existing organizations, agencies, councils, and boards are combined into one governing body which results in a more efficient and effective utilization of financial and human resources. The purpose of a foundation is to coordinate and conduct the economic and community development activities within a specific county. A foundation is similar in structure to an authority with respect to program of work, funding, governing bodies, and responsibilities. To be established as a foundation, the local unit of government must first present a local and private bill to the legislature for passage and approval.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE:

- Board of Supervisors - Mayors and Aldermen
- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Committees

FUNDING SOURCES:

- County and municipal government
- Public and private contributions
- Memberships
- Business and industrial endowments

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Granted power to purchase, own, acquire, control, develop, lease, hold, and maintain real estate, buildings, and equipment
- Building and Site preparation and design
- Bond issuance
- Example: Industrial Foundation of Washington County



Economic Development Partnership

This type of organization is complex but comprehensive, form of economic development organization. A partnership results from the merger of existing economic and community development boards, foundations, councils, committees, agencies, and departments into one unified controlling organization. Established by state laws and resolutions, the partnership involves public and private sectors, city, and county government, business, and industry. Designed to coordinate the various functions of economic and community development activities, the partnership is empowered to supervise committees, task forces, divisions, and councils. A partnership is generally located in a metropolitan area.

GOVERNING STRUCTURE:

- Board of Supervisors - Mayors and Aldermen
- Board of Directors
- Executive Director
- Committees

FUNDING SOURCES:

- Government entities
- Public and private contributions
- Membership dues
- Self generated accounts
- 501 © (6) IRS Codes - Apply and abide by all federal, state, and county laws

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- Building and land ownership, industrial park development, infrastructure development, and property holdings
- Industrial development bonds access via the local governing authorities
- Community Programs
- Example: Panola Partnership Inc.

