Rural Economic Development

THE TIME IS NOW
Overview

1. Think positive
2. Create that vision
3. Be willing to expand the possibilities
4. Get started
Think positive: Challenges create opportunities

- Charles City had a problem: Cedar River
- Solution: removed low head dam and replaced with a paddling/kayaking venue of 3 features
- What is your community's analogy?
- Identify local challenges and work to flip the script
Create that vision

- If everyone is rowing in the same direction (or, at least, in the same general direction), many more opportunities arise
- Prioritize
- Support each other
- Let people gravitate toward their passions
- Celebrate together
Be willing to expand the possibilities

➢ Don’t get tunnel vision!
Get started!

➤ Momentum starts with one step…
➤ Now is the time!
  ➤ Significant attention from the state directed toward rural areas – Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, Iowa Rural Development Council
➤ Recognize that there will be setbacks & unforeseen obstacles.
Jefferson & Greene County

- Challenge #1: Aging infrastructure with schools
  - Two failed bond attempts
  - Recent consolidation
  - Declining enrollment

- Challenge #2: Significant skilled workforce needs
  - Major manufacturers
  - Next generation of farmers
Jefferson & Greene County

- Opportunity: Implement a career academy / regional center
- Vision: Use schools as a form of economic development
- Tracts ("strands") of study:
  - Advanced Manufacturing
  - Agricultural IT/Data Systems
  - IT/Software Development
  - Hospitality/Catering
  - Nursing/Healthcare Sciences
  - Others TBD...
Greene County High School & Career Academy
Be open to additional possibilities

- The Forge by Pillar Technology
- Wanted to create a new training pipeline for software development.
- Needed a K-12 partner & a community college partner
- Needed a rural location
Jefferson Forge: Rehab of historic building into office
Jefferson Forge: Computer Science training program
Jefferson Forge: 25-30 new full-time software development jobs
Get started

- Start with a core group & expand
  - Over 100 individuals helped with the school bond referendum
- Find partner organizations
- Expect unforeseen challenges
  - It won’t be easy – persistence & creativity will pay off
- A few of the Jefferson/Greene County challenges:
  - Financing – 40% more than originally expected
  - Today’s Ag economy
  - Consolidation
  - The appraisal gap
Key Factors to Success

- Multiple stakeholders
- Learned from previous attempts
- Public/Private partnerships
- Persistence/Resilience
- An existing sense of momentum
Get started!

- Momentum starts with one step...
- Now is the time!
  - Rural Iowa & Rural America are receiving significant attention
  - There are programs out there & new ones are coming
- Small wins set the stage for the next step...
- Ideas
  - Public art
  - Streetscaping
  - Mini-grants for signs/painting
  - Local organizations – create or reinforce
Thank you!
Financing

➢ “Money is never the problem” – Zach Mannheimer

➢ Be resourceful
  ➢ Public - Local, state, federal
  ➢ Private
  ➢ In-kind
  ➢ Volunteers

➢ Programs to consider
  ➢ Main Street
    ➢ Challenge Grants
    ➢ CDBG Downtown Revitalization Fund
  ➢ Iowa Economic Development Authority
    ➢ Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program
    ➢ Enhance Iowa
  ➢ Tax Credits
    ➢ Historic Rehabilitation (State)
    ➢ Historic Rehabilitation (Federal)
    ➢ Brownfield/Grayfield Redevelopment (State)
    ➢ Workforce Housing (State)

➢ More Programs to consider
  ➢ Local
    ➢ TIF (City & County)
    ➢ Tax Abatement
    ➢ Non-profit development entities
    ➢ Standalone housing funds
    ➢ Local Banks
  ➢ Regional
    ➢ Council of Government (COG) Low-interest loans
  ➢ Other State Programs
    ➢ Historic Resource Development Program (IDCA)
    ➢ Derelict Building Program (DNR)
  ➢ Other Federal
    ➢ USDA Rural Economic Development Loans & Grants
    ➢ Small Business Association loans
  ➢ Utility rebates