



HEALTHY LIVING AND WELLBEING

Independence County has an outstanding medical community that is anchored by White River Medical Center, a progressive hospital and the regional medical center for North Central Arkansas. Besides the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, White River Medical Center is the only hospital in Arkansas that offers a medical residency program. Because of the presence of the White River Medical Center, over 120 primary and specialized care physicians call Independence County home.

In addition to the existing medical community strength, the Plan will increase health and wellness opportunities throughout Independence County by expanding existing physical activity initiatives, health education programs, and increasing citizens' access to and knowledge of healthy, local foods.

The Independence County Recycling Center greatly benefits our county and the people in it, but we are losing several hundreds of thousands of dollars in recycling revenue each year by failing to take full advantage of our county's recycling amenities. Beautification efforts will also target several zoning concerns throughout the county and create a healthy and positive aesthetic that communities throughout the county can enjoy.

High quality of life is also dependent on constant communication and making widely available the information that will prove advantageous to all citizens of Independence County. The lack of communication regarding community activities and opportunities has created a barrier that has prohibited unity among the citizens of Independence County and hindered our quality of life. The numerous community activities, initiatives, and amenities that ensure healthy living and wellbeing throughout Independence County will be communicated through multiple channels.

STRATEGIC GOAL #1

Develop a plan to support the growth of White River Medical Center. IMPACT will be a joint initiative between Independence County, Independence County municipalities, White River Medical Center, and area businesses and educational organizations.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number One Are:

a.

Support the medical residency program being initiated at White River Medical Center by developing quality residential housing that is attractive to young doctors (condominiums, single family residential and rental).

High quality residential development will be a primary consideration in the housing master plan goal contained in the Economic Prosperity section of the Plan. After completion of the housing master plan, develop no less than 50 quality residential houses, condominiums, etc. in a manner that is consistent with the master plan design.

b.

In cooperation with the Educational Excellence sub-committee, create a medical magnet school in one or more public school districts in Independence County, the purpose of which is to develop a pool of young talent for employment in the local health care industry. Coordinate all public school programs and curriculum with the medical services training programs at UACCB.

- i. Form a planning committee that includes representatives from interested school systems to make a site visit to the successful medical magnet school in Mercedes, Texas. After returning from this visit, determine if this program is viable in Independence County.
- ii. If the program is a viable option, obtain funding to conduct a detailed feasibility study for the creation of a medical magnet school.
- iii. Begin fundraising efforts to hire professional staff, identify local facility availability, purchase distance learning equipment to link with participating organizations such as White River Medical Center.
- iv. Expand the UACCB nursing program to include a full range of allied health education.

c.

In partnership with the White River Medical Center, develop a high-quality marketing campaign designed to jointly promote Independence County and the White River Medical Center. The marketing campaign and related collateral materials will be used in the recruitment of physicians and other medical professionals.

d.

The White River Medical Center, in partnership with local business and educational organizations, will develop a formalized program of professional employment for spouses of medical doctors who are considering locating to Independence County.

- e. Identify university students from Independence County who are pursuing healthcare careers and create an incentive program designed to entice the healthcare students to remain in or return to Independence County once they receive their professional licenses or certifications.
- f. Compile a list of healthcare services that are important to the retiree population. Match this list with current hospital services and identify gaps in desired services and available coverage. Develop a plan to correct service gaps where needed.
- g. This action step supports the Tourism Committee's goal of expanding Independence County into a destination for retirement living.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2

Improve the appearance and image of communities in Independence County.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number Two Are:

- a. Improve community zoning to create a desired community image. In partnership with elected officials, develop a plan to beautify communities throughout Independence County. Initiate improvements in zoning and infrastructure regulations in support of community beautification.
- b. Create appealing and uniform landscaping along main roads and highways. Seek adoption of key intersections by community organizations and businesses. In partnership with the Master Gardeners of Independence County, design unique and attractive intersections using a wide array of landscape design.
- c. Develop a pole ordinance for businesses along main roads and highways in order to provide a more appealing and cohesive aesthetic.
- d. Raze dilapidated buildings and give new life to vacant lots by creating parks or new residential spaces.
- e. Repair or install sidewalks in all current and potential pedestrian areas throughout the county.
- f. Develop mid-level rental property to accommodate new residents, young families, and retirees.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3

Expand walking, running, and biking trails throughout Independence County and ensure Independence County is progressive in transportation development.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number Three Are:

- a. Complete the Greenway Trail project in Batesville to allow this trail system to encircle the entire city and connect to the trail system concepts in Historic

Downtown Batesville and the White River trail complex. Extend the Greenway Trail or similar trail systems throughout Independence County.

- b.** Generate community support for further development of the Greenway Trail to secure trail routes.
- c.** Collaborate with the City of Batesville to complete the trail within a 5-year timeframe.
- d.** Develop a comprehensive trail system plan for Independence County. Coordinate this plan with the White River trail system design.
- e.** Ensure municipal and county regulations to proactively support the development or installment of transportation companies such as cab services and Uber drivers throughout the county.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4

Enhance recycling awareness and practices to promote cleaner, more eco-friendly communities for current and future residents.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number Four Are:

- a.** Label all county recycling bins with recyclable materials information and instructions.
- b.** Promote and increase countywide recycling efforts by providing large, public recycle bins (similar to public trash receptacles) throughout parks, main streets, and other high-traffic areas.
- c.** Reduce county trash transport expenditures and grow the county's revenue stream by improving the county's recyclables-to-waste ratio.

STRATEGIC GOAL #5

Increase the number of community programs and projects that support healthy living and lifestyle education of county residents with a focus on substance abuse prevention, research, and treatment.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number Five Are:

- a.** Expand current programs and initiatives in the public school systems pertaining to health education, community gardens, recycling education, etc.
- b.** Enhance community awareness of programs and events with broad-based communication and marketing efforts.
- c.** Measure the number of people impacted by existing programs and take action to increase citizen involvement.
- d.** In partnership with the White River Medical Center and UAMS's College of Public Health, charter a substance abuse, research, and treatment facility in Independence County:

- i. Engage a professional consultant who will develop and produce a comprehensive plan to charter and operate a health and substance abuse treatment facility. This plan will include (i) program planning and evaluation, (ii) preparation of employment and personnel policies, (iii) identification of program services, (iv) requirements for accreditation/license, (v) recommendations on proper staffing and skills needed, (vi) development of legal incorporating documents and processes, and (vii) development of a sustainable business plan, funding model, and 5-year budget.
- ii. Execute the action items of the plan discussed above, using the suggested timeline and priority of objective critical activities to create the health clinic and substance abuse facility. The substance abuse program will compel a substance-abusing offender to deal with his or her substance abuse problems through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services, and immediate sanctions or incentives.

STRATEGIC GOAL #6

Ensure all residents of Independence County have access to healthy food.

Action Steps in Support of Strategic Goal Number Five Are:

- a. In partnership with area grocery stores and farmers' markets, develop programs for low and moderate-income families that ensure consistent access to healthy food.
- b. Partner with local store managers to implement an "ugly produce" discount program, that makes imperfect produce more affordable by selling it at a deeply discounted rate to low and moderate income families, saving grocery stores the cost of discarded inventory.
- c. Encourage healthier menu options at existing fast food and traditional restaurants.
- d. Establish or expand farmers' markets throughout Independence County.
- e. Implement broader tower or rooftop garden use.