

Zimmer rep reviews nearly finished economic development plan

By Sarah Reed. The Marshall Democrat-News: October 9, 2012.

Troy Nash, of Zimmer Real Estate Group, presented a rough draft of the company's research on economic development for Saline County on Tuesday, Oct. 9. Their recommendations are based on a year's worth of documentation, 70 stakeholder interviews and four community-wide meetings held in towns throughout the county.

"Saline has ... often and with more than usual justice been called the 'Garden of Missouri,'" Nash read from an article written in 1881, as he urged attendants of the meeting at Marshall-Saline Development Corporation to remember history during possible economic development of the area.

Zimmer has synthesized data to create blueprints for development plans, and MSDC director Bill Riggins suggested some of those plans have already been put into place.

"Any time that we came up with an idea that we thought would work or benefit, we went ahead and started working on it," he said. "So right now, we're working on probably 12 or 13 different projects. Since January, we got approved through the state economic development a proposed 170 jobs ... and over \$2 million in tax credits coming back to companies here in the county."

The expansion of Fitzgibbon Hospital, which held a groundbreaking ceremony this past Thursday, and tours hosted for multiple state representatives illustrates some of the work currently taking place behind the walls of MSDC.

According to Nash, Marshall hasn't conducted a comprehensive plan since 1973, and Riggins explained the economic trend has declined in the past 40 years.

"If you look back, the last 40 years we've been going downhill," Riggins said. "We've got to do something to turn that around."

Three primary reasons communities don't succeed in development are globalization, concepts of immigration and education, Nash said. Zimmer looked at economics from a global, national, state and regional standpoint as well as the county's healthy desire of entrepreneurship.

"This county doesn't seem to fear failure in the traditional sense," Nash said. "The work ethic was born out of the Midwest. In this case, we are saying ... elements of our community are underserved, are economically deprived areas. We'd like to bring those areas up and at the same time expand opportunity for those who have a desire to be businessmen and women, and for businesses that are already here (to expand)."

Public-private partnerships seem to have a heavy focus for county development in order to minimize risk for both sectors in addition to sharing the benefits.

Nash noted those who are unemployed don't pay sales tax and also don't spend on goods and services -- a majority of economic activity.

The report, which is expected to be released within the week, highlights Zimmer's recommendations on public-private partnerships.

The report will be reviewed by a committee and multiple stakeholders, and then returned to Zimmer with any recommended changes for a final draft to be approved by participating municipalities.

"The way (local entities) have come together here, it's ripe for private sector participation," Nash noted.

During MSDC's regular board meeting, Riggins noted the organization has moved forward with several projects including the development of financial requirements for several houses in Slater, the approval of tax credits for new expansion that has yet to be publicized, and four projects supporting retailers with any assistance needed to acquire loans and permits among multiple other projects.

It was reported the Enbridge Pipeline would now bring 100-125 workers at a time within a six-month period.

The board later went into closed session to discuss real estate matters.

Tuesday, Oct. 9, at noon, Gov. Jay Nixon visited the county as MSDC continues working toward nurturing relationships at the state level. Those relationships speak to Nash's belief that streamlining potential partnerships now will produce growth in the future.

"If people don't know you exist, how can they help you?" he asked. "The county is going to play a significant role (in development). ... Appreciate the history, but make a mental leap to ... where you want to be in the future."