

ACTION PLAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SKIATOOK O K L A H O M A *Live. Work. Play.*



PREPARED BY



Introduction

Economic Development is a Team Sport!

When preparing to develop an Action Plan for Economic Development, it requires the gathering of honest and frank feedback from those in leadership positions in the community. If that feedback is to be sincere, we need the cooperation of local business, community, and political leaders. Those leaders must also be onboard in implementing the economic development process. With that being said, we must pass along our gratitude to those in leadership for their enthusiastic participation in this important exercise for Skiatook, Tulsa, and the Osage, along with the NE Oklahoma region.

The development of this Action Plan would not have been possible without the determination and hard work by **Skiatook Chamber of Commerce Executive, Director Sara Herren, Skiatook City Manager Brad White, and Skiatook Mayor Hon. Robin Edens.**

To get unbiased opinions and individual views on the economy of the Skiatook region, we conducted interviews with the following community, political, and business leaders:

A.B. Bayouth, Exchange Bank

Rich Briere, Executive Director, Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG)

Dr. Melissa Bush, Superintendent, Skiatook Public Schools

Hon. Robin Edens, Mayor of Skiatook

Adam Green, Mac's BBQ

Maria Gus, Executive Director, Visit Bartlesville

Rachel Hutchings, Consultant

Jason Johnson, Blue Bull Capital

Justin McLaughlin, CEcD, Executive Vice President, Tulsa Regional Chamber

Sheldon Miggletto, Director of Economic Development, GRDA

Mike Neal, CCE, CCD, HLM, President & CEO, Tulsa Regional Chamber

Pam Polk, Collinsville City Manager

Cody Potter, Ace Hardware

Hank Spencer, Manager, Suntex Marina

Jackie Stewart, Executive Director of Green Country

Hon. Stuart Tate, District Judge, Osage County

Gabe Walker, Blue Bull Capital
Brad White, Skiatook City Manager

We also conducted the following Focus Groups:

Small Business Group

Craig Kus – Sausage Brothers
Sam Jaskar – Bulldog 100 Wood Fired Pizza

SEDA Committee

Dalton Briggs-AAA
Cody Fuentes – We Love Lawns

Skiatook Chamber Executive Committee

Geoff McGoffin – President, RCB
Omar Bayouth – Exchange Bank
Scott Neighbors – First Baptist Church



Preface to the Report

In preparing this Action Plan for Economic Development for Skiatook, I found many common threads in the interviews, exercises, and research. There is a common desire among community leaders to reinvent downtown, add to the retail selection available, recruit small to medium sized industry, and to expand the use of the Skiatook Regional Airport.

There are some recommendations for tactics in this report, that if implemented, will produce success for many of those desires. Economic Development requires investment, implementation of a sound plan, and involvement of all parties – it doesn't happen in a vacuum run by the Chamber.

This Plan of Action for Economic Development includes three (3) sections: Invest, Live, and Play. The sections recommend twenty-five (25) tactics. The implementation of these tactics will require work by the Chamber, the City of Skiatook, Tulsa, and Osage Counties, and the Osage and Cherokee Nations. As demonstrated in other successful economic development programs in the region, it requires that those partnerships be created, nurtured, and maintained.

I would call your attention to the Game Changers recommendations toward the end of this report. These are some recommendations that may not come easy that will elevate the community and the chamber to a new and exciting level of success.

Lastly, do not just read this report and put it on the shelf! Make it a living document that will guide economic development in Skiatook for the benefit of its businesses and its citizens!



DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics

Skiatook, OK

Comparisons

Indicators		Skiatook, OK	United States	Percent difference Skiatook, OK vs. United States
Demographics	Population Growth (% change, 2010*-2020*)	-8.5%	7.4%	
	Median Age (2020*)	36.0	38.2	
	Percent Population White Alone (2020*)	69.0%	70.4%	
	Percent Population Hispanic or Latino (2020*)	-1.9%	18.2%	
	Percent Population American Indian or Alaska Native (2020*)	-14.6%	0.8%	
	Percent of Population 'Baby Boomers' (2020*)	18.4%	24.6%	
Income	Median Household Income (2020*)	\$44,120	\$64,994	
	Per Capita Income (2020*)	\$25,105	\$35,384	
	Percent Individuals Below Poverty (2020*)	-13.2%	12.8%	
	Percent Families Below Poverty (2020*)	-6.4%	9.1%	
	Percent of Households with Retirement and Social Security Income (2020*)	45.0%	52.6%	
	Percent of Households with Public Assistance Income (2020*)	24.2%	19.0%	
Structure	Percent Population 25 Years or Older without High School Degree (2020*)	-7.5%	11.5%	
	Percent Population 25 Years or Older with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2020*)	19.0%	32.9%	
	Percent Population That Speak English Less Than 'Very Well' (2020*)	-0.1%	8.2%	
	Percent of Houses that are Seasonal Homes (2020*)	-0.0%	3.8%	
	Owner-Occupied Homes where > 30% of Household Income Spent on Mortgage (2020*)	-22.8%	27.2%	
	Renter-Occupied Homes where > 30% of Household Income Spent on Rent (2020*)	-36.7%	45.7%	

-300% 200% 100% 0% 100% 200%

High Reliability: Data with coefficients of variation (CVs) < 12% are in black to indicate that the sampling error is relatively small.
Medium Reliability: Data with CVs between 12 & 40% are in orange to indicate that the values should be interpreted with caution.
Low Reliability: Data with CVs > 40% are displayed in red to indicate that the estimate is considered very unreliable.

* ACS 5-year estimates used. 2020 represents average characteristics from 2016-2020; 2010 represents 2006-2010.

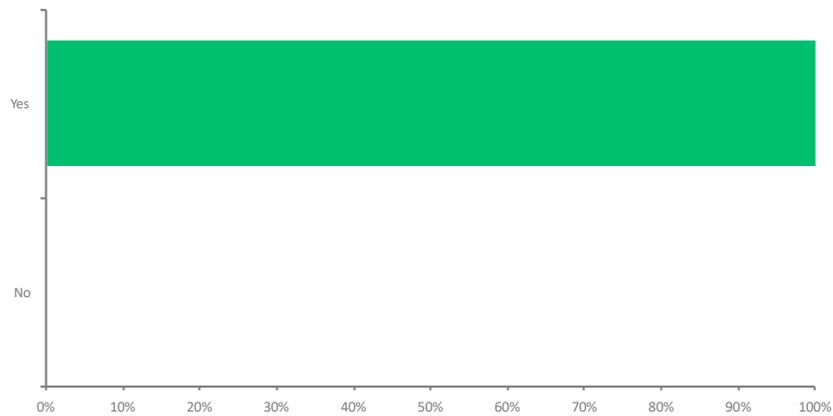
Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2022. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C.

Skiatook Leader's Survey

We conducted an anonymous online survey of the Chamber membership and community leaders. The entire response will be covered in a rollout presentation but here are just a few of the results indicating that in Skiatook, Oklahoma, it is time for economic growth!

Q1: Economic growth causes change. Are you ready to accept change?

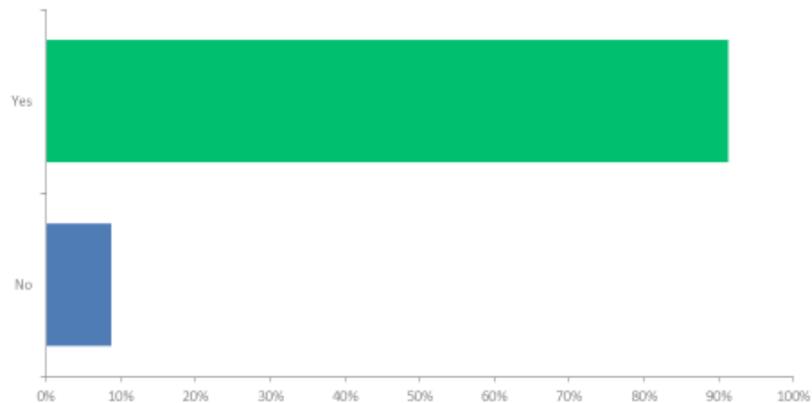
Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q2: Economic Development is not an inexpensive endeavor. Would you support public funding for economic development?

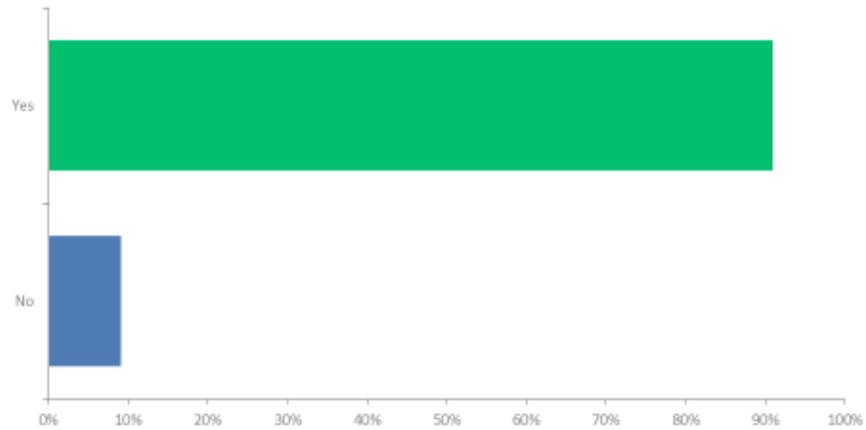
Answered: 23 Skipped: 1



Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q6: Is the Skiatook Chamber headed in the right direction?

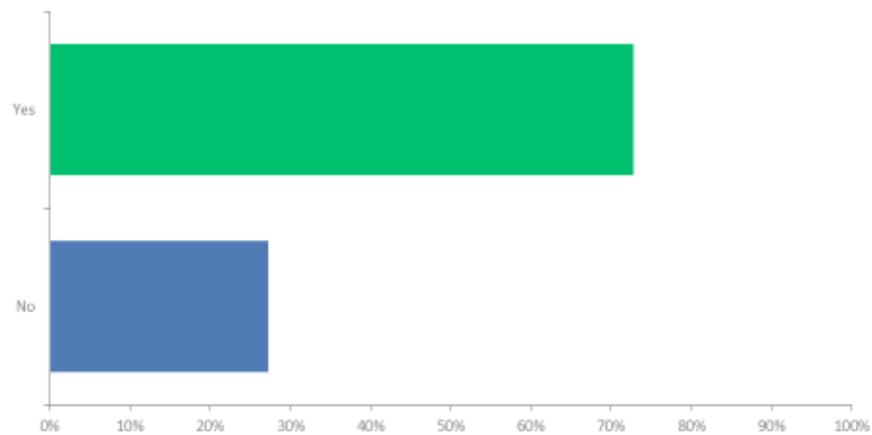
Answered: 22 Skipped: 2



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Q8: Is the City of Skiatook headed in the right direction?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2



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INVEST IN SKIATOOK

Business Attraction & Retention

Goal #1 – Develop an ongoing plan to fund economic development in Skiatook.

Tactic – Investigate the potential in designating a portion of City sales tax for economic development.

Work with the City of Skiatook leadership to develop an ongoing funding mechanism for economic development. There are several examples in Oklahoma of communities who have assigned a portion of their sales tax to economic development. Their City Councils have appointed an “Economic Development Commission” for oversight and contracted with their Chamber of Commerce or Public Private Economic Development Organization to lead the effort to grow their local economies.

Once public funding is secured, look at sample contracts and structure from other communities such as Bartlesville, Ponca City, Enid, or Duncan.

Goal #2 – Covet and promote the existing primary employer base and work with them to provide a platform for growth and success.

Tactic - Develop a simple database to survey local, primary employers and store pertinent employment and company information.

Design a survey form with adequate questions to learn employment numbers, where do employees live (zip code addresses), challenges envisioned by management, opportunities they could achieve with a little assistance, growth possibilities, etc.

Design and build your database around the survey form. We suggest simply using an Excel Spreadsheet initially. As the program grows, you can consider a software purchase. There are companies who offer databases and will manage them for you, but they are expensive, and Skiatook

Chamber does not yet have the primary employer base or the resources to support such an expense.

Goal #3 – Develop a Marketing Plan

Tactic - Develop a “Fact Sheet” on all potential development sites and buildings. Include site ownership, status for marketing, traffic counts, location data, and any incentives.

This colorful Fact Sheet should be designed in conjunction with a website update, so they appear to be representing the same community.

The Fact Sheet should contain all information that would be of value to a developer and his/her investors (traffic counts, household incomes, etc.).

This Fact Sheet should contain as much demographic information on visitors and residents as possible to attain.

- Create a method to provide numbers of visitors to Lake Skiatook and the Osage Casino. This information is critical to recruiting new retail, lodging, and residential development.
- Traffic counts on U. S. Highway 75 and Oklahoma Highway 20.

Remember that retail businesses require customers. They are looking for areas where those potential customers live, work, and play.

Tactic – Engage with GRDA Economic Development Director and make use of their Placer AI subscription to develop Retail strategies.

Tactic – Target Outdoor, Recreation, Sports, Boating Destination Retail Type Businesses.

These types of retail businesses are beginning to learn that visitors are more likely to buy when they are visiting places who offer outdoor adventure, recreation, and entertainment.

It's great location for them and it is no longer considered a seasonal business.

Tactic – Join the Innovating Commerce Serving Communities (ICSC). Become active in their local and regional events. Exhibit at the Red River Regional event in Dallas.

Very few, if any, deals are made at the big ICSC Trade Show in Las Vegas in May of every year. This extravaganza is for the huge consultants to wine and dine the huge developers and strategize the huge deals in larger metro areas. The Red River ICSC event, usually held in Fort Worth attracts more of the size and level of developer who would have interest in a project in a community like Skiatook.

Tactic – Run Online Surveys of Skiatook Residents to assist in determining Retail Business Targets.

Maintain a running, regular survey on the Chamber website to find out the types of retail that Skiatook residents prefer and what type of retail they are traveling to other areas to find.

Tactic – Develop and print a list of those things that the City of Skiatook and/or either of the Counties can provide to a retail development project.

Organize a few local focus groups, talk to surrounding communities, consult the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, and determine some incentive items that the City of Skiatook can offer a retail development. It may surprise you how some little, inexpensive things can make the difference on a project.

Tactic - Develop a strategy for “moving” empty buildings along city corridors.

To ensure activity on empty buildings, review City of Skiatook ordinances regarding fire safety and appearance, then make sure buildings are conforming to the ordinances.

For those buildings that are on the market, be sure they are listed on your website with a link to the real estate listing agent and/or the owner.

Create individual strategies for filling empty buildings such as the “Grocery Store”. Develop a target investor/developer list for target marketing.

Tactic – For prospect hosting and working with consultants, Oklahoma Department of Commerce Project Managers, and developers, designate an “Economic Development Point Person” to work with business prospects.

It is important that the community identify a “Point Person” who is recognized by site selection consultants, Oklahoma Department of Commerce project managers, and real estate developers as the one and only “Point Person” for economic development. Many of those project managers and site location consultants have told me over the years that it is extremely frustrating to have to determine “who is in charge” when working on a project. Many times, they use this excuse to eliminate a community from consideration.

Our recommendation is that the Executive Director of the Skiatook Chamber serve as the “Point Person” for economic development contacts.

Further, it is important that the “Point Person” for economic development has recruited a qualified and informed Economic Development Team to be used as a critical resource when hosting prospects and working on economic development projects. This Economic Development Team certainly should include the Mayor, City Manager, County Commissioners, and selected business leaders.

Tactic – Explore the Development of the Skiatook Regional Airport.

Explore additional development on the airport property. There are many small businesses that need runway access and/or need to be next to aviation activities.

The development of airport property does come with some challenges as property improved with FAA funding comes with many rules, regulations, and restrictions.

The Skiatook Regional Airport is an ideal location for small aircraft maintenance operations. The low traffic is appealing to those companies that must ferry customers aircraft in for maintenance.

Other target business for the Skiatook Regional Airport is drone maintenance and management. This is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in aircraft and aerospace business in today’s market.



Tactic – Create an atmosphere to make Skiatook a popular “remote worker” location.

With outstanding beauty of the Osage, the great public schools, and area attractions like Lake Skiatook, upgrade the broadband in the area to create one of the best places in the region for those who can “work from anywhere!”

Explore becoming involved with Remote Tulsa.

Tactic – Get on the “Radar Screen” of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Invite the Oklahoma Department of Commerce project managers for an annual “Fam Tour.” Host economic development managers from local utility companies.

Tactic – Maintain active participation in Tulsa’s Future and NORA.

Tulsa’s Future is an outstanding vehicle to be included in new job creation and recruitment activities for a minimal investment. Be engaged with this professional economic development organization.

NORA (Northeast Oklahoma Regional Association) is a very affordable and effective organization for participation by the Skiatook Chamber.

LIVE IN SKIATOOK

Placemaking

Goal #1 – Implement a Vibrant Downtown Development Program.

Tactic – Organize an active Downtown Development Task Force.

Include downtown business owners and managers. Identify those people in the community that depend on downtown and organize them into a working task force to develop ideas for downtown development.

Re-energize the *Skiatook Town Plan* that was created in 2006-07. Make an assignment chart and work toward completing the plan's elements.

Tactic – Benchmark other Cities that are enjoying successful Downtown Development.

Taking a group to another city provides an opportunity to see success in action. Find out how they are funding their successful programs.

Look at Collinsville, Sapulpa, Sand Springs, Jenks, and others who have developed thriving downtowns.

Tactic - Provide free Wi-Fi downtown.

Placing some routers at proper places around downtown can provide public wi-fi which is available in most modern cities. Free wi-fi in downtowns is rapidly becoming a given.

Add signage letting visitors know of the availability of Wi-Fi in the community.

Goal #2 – Update transportation venues in the community.

Tactic – Work with ODOT to develop an ongoing plan to upgrade and redesign the section of Oklahoma Highway 20 in the downtown section.

Consider converting to Parallel Parking to Reverse Angle Parking where practical in Downtown Skiatook. This was started in Austin, Texas and is being

done on some streets in Tulsa, OK and Fayetteville, AR. Traffic engineers say it is safer and easy to use. It also sets you apart of other small communities.

Another option to explore is to reduce the speed limit and move parallel parking to the centerline of the street. Be different!

Explore the concept with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) to adjust for this new, creative parking for downtown Skiatook.

Ask ODOT to research the possibility of realigning lanes, parking, and sidewalk areas in the downtown area. Make ODOT your partner in improving the downtown area.

Tactic – Develop a plan to add bike lanes on city streets and highways.

Bicycling is fast becoming a popular method of transportation for communities around the nation. Create a plan to add bike lanes to new streets in new housing development and look for opportunities to add them to existing streets and highways.



Tactic – Design and install “Wayfinding Signage.”

While Skiatook enjoys an attractive “Welcome Sign”, there is a need to help visitors find City Hall, Downtown, Skiatook Schools, the Skiatook Chamber Office, healthcare facilities, and other important places. (Here’s an example of Wayfinding Signage from Jenks, Ok, and Bentonville, AR.)



Attractive Wayfinding Signs will help get traffic off the highway and into downtown.

We understand that this is a project currently underway, and we strongly support and encourage its hastened completion.

PLAY IN SKIATOOK

Visit Skiatook

Goal #1 – Increase the number of visitors (and their dollars!!) to Skiatook.

Tactic – Designate “Visit Skiatook” as a Target Industry.

Due to recent health issues, many Americans are searching for smaller, out-of-the-way places to vacation and to live and work. Skiatook fits this description very well. Create a “Visit Skiatook” Task Force within the Chamber. Many visitors eventually become residents!

Make Skiatook the preferred place to stay when visiting northeast Oklahoma. Market the easy access to the Tulsa International Airport, downtown Tulsa, the Osage, Skiatook Lake, and other NE Oklahoma attractions.



Tactic – Develop a Hotel/Resort Recruitment Strategy

Identify potential sites on US Highway 75 and Oklahoma Highway 20 and develop an incentive package to recruit developers to construct hotels (a major chain such as IHG, Hilton, Marriott, or other major chain) inside the city limits of Skiatook.

Acquire property near the Osage Casino for future hotel development. Also acquire property near Lake Skiatook for the future development of a resort.

Goal #2 – Make Skiatook Northeast Oklahoma’s most attractive community.

Tactic – Upgrade the appearance of the intersection of US Highway 75 and Oklahoma Highway 20.

Initiate a joint project with Collinsville and ODOT to transform the overpass, on and off ramps, and the surrounding right-of-way at the US Highway 75 and Oklahoma Highway 20 intersection into a beautiful, lighted, landscaped entryway into both communities. There should be a “Welcome” sign to each community on opposite sides of the intersection.

There are a couple of examples from other communities in the photo display below.



Consider placing professionally created murals on the inside walls of the overpass depicting Lake Skiatook, the Osage Prairie Trail, and other attractions.

Tactic – Advertise and Promote the Osage Prairie Trail

Promote the Osage Prairie Trail as one of the features in Skiatook. With the advent of bicycling, this trail can become a popular mainstay and give those bike folks a reason to stay (and live) in Skiatook.

Bicycling is the fastest growing activity among the millennial generation and is rapidly catching on with other age groups.



Tactic – Design, Construct, and Maintain Entrances to Skiatook

Skiatook enjoys very attractive entry signage on Highway 20. Carry this over to the many other entrances to the community to let travelers and visitors that they have arrived in one of NE Oklahoma’s beautiful communities.

Whether they arrive from the backroads of Bartlesville and Pawhuska or from north Tulsa, they need to know they have arrived in a great community!



- The City of Skiatook should review its current boundaries and annexation policies to take maximum advantage of careful plotting for current and future growth of the city.
- The Skiatook Chamber and the City of Skiatook should make a concerted effort to develop long term partnerships with the Osage Nation and the Cherokee Nation.
- The Skiatook Chamber of Commerce and the City of Skiatook should make the upgrade and redo of the U. S. Highway 75 and Oklahoma Highway 20 a priority.
- The Skiatook Chamber of Commerce should change the Executive Director's title to President & CEO.
- The Skiatook Chamber of Commerce should create a 501 c 3 Foundation to access funding from other foundations, companies, and organizations that require their investment to be "charitable."
- Design a common logo or "look" for use by the Skiatook Chamber, the City of Skiatook, Skiatook Public Schools, and others. Make sure that the websites of these entities are linked and appear to all be representing the same great community.
- Develop a social media strategy for the area including all the organizations mentioned above.

APPENDIX

Demographics material used in this report was prepared by ***Headwaters Economics*** and the ***Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG)***.

Some material used in the preparation of this report were from research on the websites and through interviews with the following organizations:

City of Skiatook

US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Oklahoma Department of Commerce

Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG)

Existing reports and studies that we reviewed during this process were:

Skiatook Town Plan (2006-07)

This report was prepared by Community Growth Strategies, LLC and is the property of the Skiatook Chamber of Commerce.

Community Growth Strategies, LLC

Our Firm

Community Growth Strategies (CGS) is a dynamic economic development consulting firm that enjoys strong, experienced leadership specializing in working with communities who have a desire to formulate an achievable strategy to accommodate and encourage economic growth. Leaders at CGS fully understand the need for a plan of action even in those communities and organizations with limited resources, remote location, and other monumental challenges.

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