



# 2023-2025 Strategic Plan

## Our Mission

To promote, enhance, and support economic growth, prosperity, and quality of life in the Sikeston area.

## Our Vision

A thriving, resilient community that is diverse in population and business, where people desire to live and work.

## Core Values

As a results-oriented corporation, we value collaboration, communication, growth, innovation, leadership, and quality.

## Strategic Objectives & Goals

***Workforce Development Objective: We will engage in efforts to educate and cultivate a diverse workforce to meet the needs of businesses and citizens in the Sikeston area.***

- **Strategic Goal:** Form a diverse group of local industries, educators, and potential employees that meet quarterly to introduce and coordinate employer needs with career planning.
- **Strategic Goal:** Identify state funding opportunities and programs and communicate those annually in partnership with the City of Sikeston as part of the annual business license renewal process.
- **Strategic Goal:** Develop and coordinate an open training calendar by April 1, 2023 that all employers can utilize and communicate that regularly.
- **Strategic Goal:** Work with employers to identify employee skills gaps in the existing/future workforce and create a plan to bridge those gaps over the next three years.

***Marketing & Attraction Objective: We will collaborate with stakeholders to promote and enhance our community's image internally and externally as a great place to live and work.***

- **Strategic Goal:** Create a diverse committee, including but not limited to, educators, employers, public safety officials, city representatives, and other leaders to meet regularly and work with an outside agency regarding marketing.
- **Strategic Goal:** Strengthen relationship with Missouri Partnership and the Hawthorne Foundation, maintaining voting member status and requiring administration to attend quarterly meetings.
- **Strategic Goal:** Form a committee by September 30, 2023, to address beautification of the city.

***Business Retention & Expansion Objective: We will support the growth and development of existing and new businesses.***

- **Strategic Goal:** Meet annually with businesses to educate them on economic development programs that can help with expansion and development.
- **Strategic Goal:** Increase communication with and among area businesses through regularly scheduled meetings and available printed and electronic resources.
- **Strategic Goal:** Create a task force by March 31, 2023, to discuss childcare issues and identify potential solutions.

***Neighborhood Development Objective: We will collaborate with community stakeholders to proactively plan for diverse housing opportunities and revitalization of our neighborhoods and commercial areas.***

- **Strategic Goal:** Support the adoption of an updated comprehensive plan for the city of Sikeston by the end of 2025 through a public awareness campaign.
- **Strategic Goal:** Facilitate an annual meeting with real estate stakeholders to discuss long-term planning, obstacles to progress, and redevelopment options.
- **Strategic Goal:** Lead efforts to change school district boundaries between Sikeston and New Madrid by Jan. 1, 2026.

***Small Business & Entrepreneurial Development Objective: We will support, encourage, and coordinate resources to incubate and grow new and existing businesses.***

- **Strategic Goal:** Meet with Three Rivers College and Southeast Missouri State University by Dec. 31, 2023, to discuss an entrepreneurial program.
- **Strategic Goal:** Study the feasibility of retail and restaurant incubation space in Sikeston by Dec. 31, 2024.
- **Strategic Goal:** Create a network and set of quick resources by June 30, 2024, to accelerate entrepreneurialism.

## SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

### Workforce Development

#### Strengths

- Sikeston is home to two college campuses (Southeast Missouri State University Sikeston Regional Campus and Three Rivers College Sikeston Campus.)
- The Sikeston Career & Technology Center provides technical skills training to high school students in 16 different focus areas.
- Students Observing Area Resources (SOAR) exposes students to potential career opportunities and makes connections within the community.
- The Sikeston R-6 School District has made many improvements to facilities in recent years including opening the new Lee Hunter Elementary school in 2022.
- The Alan Wire NextStep program targets students with a low probability of seeking post-secondary education and teaches them life skills and allows them to earn a wage.

## Weaknesses

- A lack of childcare options, including evening and overnight care, presents challenges for workers.
- A lack of public transportation creates challenges for workers without private transportation.
- A lack of general labor, and skilled labor, creates staffing challenges for local employers.
- A lack of career-development opportunities places a cap on growth for organizations and the community.

## Opportunities

- Work with Southeast Missouri State University and Three Rivers College to develop skilled workers for the jobs local employers are creating.
- Work with Sikeston R-6 to further develop and expand programs like SOAR and NextStep.
- Work with local employers to improve internship opportunities.
- Provide leadership development training, including training on working with other generations.
- Develop resources for community leaders to leverage within their existing networks to recruit new talent to the community.
- Invest time into mentorships.
- Provide public transportation.

## Threats

- Businesses that don't adapt to the changing expectations of younger workers may struggle to recruit them.
- Young adults leaving the community creates additional strains on the available pool of workers.

## Marketing & Attraction

### Strengths

- Sikeston has direct access to two interstate highways (I-55 and I-57) lowering shipping costs for freight.
- Sikeston is located within 35 miles of two ports (Southeast Missouri Regional Port and New Madrid County Port) on the Mississippi River.
- Sikeston is located on flat ground with a high water table, making construction and water access less expensive.
- Sikeston is located midway between St. Louis (145 miles) and Memphis (140 miles).
- Sikeston community leaders trust each other and collaborate well with each other to move toward shared goals when recruiting new businesses.
- A strong sense of loyalty to the community exists among leaders in the community.
- The City of Sikeston recently hired a communications director to foster improved communication with citizens.
- Sikeston offers the charm and convenience of living in a small town.
- Sikeston Board of Municipal Utilities (BMU) owns and operates its own coal-fired electrical plant, supplying inexpensive electricity to the community.
- Sikeston is home to Missouri Delta Medical Center and numerous private practice physicians providing affordable local healthcare options.

- Sikeston is home to 16 parks including the 196-acre Complex which provides numerous recreational opportunities including a 1.5-mile multi-use trail.

### Weaknesses

- Large sections of the community are blighted.
- A lack of adequate rail access limits shipping options for employers.
- Malone needs development/redevelopment.
- The Interstate 55 access point west of Sikeston needs a facelift and is in another governmental jurisdiction.
- The strong commitment to tradition in the community can make it difficult for newcomers to feel as if they belong.

### Opportunities

- Develop land north and west of Sikeston.
- Redevelop properties along Malone and South Kingshighway.
- Pursue additional retail development.
- Create a campaign of positive testimonials from current Sikeston residents.
- Form a marketing alliance with other communities in the region.

### Threats

- Perception of crime can make it difficult to attract new businesses to the community.
- Perceptions of division or racial prejudice within the community can make it difficult to attract businesses to the community.
- Low school ratings on popular websites can negatively impact recruitment efforts.
- Unattractive Interstate 55 frontage can make the community less appealing to potential new businesses.
- A negative self-image within the community inhibits recruitment efforts.

## Business Retention & Expansion

### Strengths

- Strong relationships exist between the Sikeston Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.
- Investments are being made to redevelop the downtown commercial district.
- Strong relationships exist between Sikeston Area Economic Development Corporation, the Sikeston Chamber of Commerce, the Sikeston Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the City of Sikeston.

### Weaknesses

- A lack of commercial and warehouse space limits growth opportunities.
- Available commercial and warehouse space is dated and requires significant investments for use.
- Sikeston is land-locked by the City of Miner and farmland, reducing the land available for development.

## Opportunities

- Gather multi-disciplinary teams together to discuss challenges such as crime and develop strategies to mitigate them.
- Pursue quality of life enhancements to retain the workforce needed to support existing businesses.
- Increase the number of family events in the community.
- Tax farmland inside the city as commercial property to encourage development.

## Threats

- Crime threatens to decrease volume of customers visiting local businesses.

## Neighborhood Development

### Strengths

- The Land Clearance for Redevelopment Advisory Committee (LCRA) works to reduce blighted areas in the community.
- Significant commercial growth is occurring on the southern end of Sikeston.

### Weaknesses

- Low housing inventory, especially in the \$80k to \$150k range, creates a challenge to home ownership.
- A lack of housing inventory drives the cost for those homes on the market higher, creating additional challenges to home ownership.
- The lack of a neighborhood development plan leads to inconsistency in development.
- Code enforcement has been slow and inconsistent.

### Opportunities

- Create a neighborhood development plan.
- Encourage the development/redevelopment of housing for first-time homeowners.
- Offer incentives for redevelopment of vacant, condemned, or blighted properties.
- Review and update city codes.
- Improve enforcement of city codes.
- Provide additional training for code enforcement officers.
- Public-private partnerships for developments.
- Invest in poverty-stricken neighborhoods.
- Increase home ownership.
- Increase walkability and accessibility in the community by adding sidewalks.

### Threats

- Low available housing volume causes existing home prices to escalate beyond the purchasing power of lower-wage workers.
- Increasing home prices can cause escalating rental prices.
- Development in areas on the southern end of Sikeston, outside of the Sikeston R-6 boundaries, don't benefit the district.

## Small Business & Entrepreneurship Development

### Strengths

- Sikeston has a strong network of service organizations and faith-based organizations.
- The community is supported by entrepreneurial leaders who invest their resources in the community.

### Weaknesses

- A lack of retail options leads many citizens to shop in other communities or online.
- A lack of restaurants, other than fast food restaurants, leads many citizens to dine in other communities.

### Opportunities

- Develop a program that encourages entrepreneurs and equips them with tools needed to start businesses.

### Threats

- Large employers offering higher wages can make it difficult for smaller businesses to compete for workers.

## Strategic Planning Purpose

The Sikeston Area Economic Development Corporation (SAEDC) contracted with GlennView to assist in the creation of a strategic plan that will guide the SAEDC through the next three years. Recognizing the value of community input, the SAEDC worked with GlennView to gather stakeholder feedback to accurately understand the current strengths and weaknesses of the community, as well as opportunities for the community and threats to the community. The final strategic plan will include a clearly articulated mission statement, vision statement, and core values statement. It will also contain key objectives and strategic goals for each of those objectives. As a living document, the strategic plan will be completed over the three-year period with action items for each strategic goal recorded and tracked. Upon completion of the three-year period, the action items will serve as evidence of, and testimony to, the SAEDC's commitment to the strategic plan.

## Strategic Planning Methodology

### Focus Groups

GlennView facilitated five focus groups consisting of SAEDC board members, Sikeston Chamber of Commerce board members and Sikeston Convention & Visitor's Bureau board members, community leaders, industry leaders, and City of Sikeston leadership. Focus group participants were identified and recruited by SAEDC. GlennView also met with SAEDC/Chamber/CVB staff members to gain input.

Each focus group was asked a series of questions during a 90-minute focus group session. The focus groups were facilitated by Jeff and Tracey Glenn of GlennView. Audio recording equipment was used to record the sessions with each member of the focus groups authorizing their consent to be recorded via consent form.

### Dates

Focus groups were conducted in the City of Sikeston City Council Chambers on following dates and times:

- SAEDC board members – November 9, 2022, 10:00 a.m.
- Sikeston Regional Chamber/Convention & Visitors' Bureau board members – November 9, 2022, 3:00 p.m.
- Community leaders – November 9, 2022, 5:30 p.m.
- Industry leaders – November 10, 2022, 10:00 a.m.
- City of Sikeston leadership – November 10, 2022, 2:30 p.m.

## Survey

With information gained from the focus groups, and with a focus on key economic development functions identified by the Delta Regional Authority, an online survey was developed. The survey consisted of 20 questions. Most questions were ranked choice questions asking participants to rank economic development functions based on their potential impact to the community. The survey touched on topics including, marketing the community and attracting new business, retaining existing businesses and helping them expand, developing small businesses and entrepreneurs, developing the workforce, developing and redeveloping land, developing or expanding financing tools for business, and developing neighborhoods in the community. Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide open-ended comments on challenges and opportunities in the community. The final question on the survey was open ended and provided an opportunity for respondents to provide any additional feedback.

The survey was open from November 17 to December 1, 2022. The survey was promoted through social media, email, and announcements at chamber events.

A total of 124 respondents completed the survey. Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated they live and work in Sikeston. Forty-nine percent of respondents indicated they were born or raised elsewhere and came to Sikeston to live or work. Forty-eight percent of respondents indicated they have lived and/or worked in Sikeston their entire lives. Roughly one-third of respondents indicated they work for, manage, or own a business with more than 100 employees. Fifty-nine percent of respondents indicated they work for, manage, or own a business with 100 or fewer employees. Roughly one-third of respondents were 26-40 years of age, one-third of respondents were 41-55 years of age, and 29% of respondents were over the age of 55.

## Retreat

On Monday, December 19 and Tuesday, December 20, 2022, a group of 20 stakeholders was assembled at the DAEOC Training Center at 1919 Social to conduct a strategic planning retreat. Jeff and Tracey Glenn of GlennView Strategies facilitated the retreat. The agenda for that retreat is outlined below:

- Welcome/Introduction
- Overview of Process
- Presentation/Completion of SWOT Analysis
- Create a Mission Statement
- Create a Vision Statement
- Create a Core Values Statement
- Create Strategic Objectives
- Create SMART Strategic Goals for Each Objective
- Adjourn

Participants in the retreat received electronic binders prepared by GlennView containing an executive summary of the process, online survey results, online survey comments, and insights from the focus groups and survey. Electronic binders were delivered to participants prior to the retreat to give them time to digest the information.

The retreat began at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19 and recessed at 5:00 p.m. that day. It resumed at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 20, and adjourned at 5:00 p.m. that day.

## Insights

### Focus Groups

Participants in the focus groups demonstrated a strong desire for the success of the SAEDC and a willingness to share opinions on the community. Some of the common themes identified through focus groups include:

- A desire to increasingly leverage Southeast Missouri State University Sikeston Campus, Three Rivers College Sikeston Campus, and Sikeston Public Schools.
- A desire to grow and replicate programs such as Students Observing Area Resources and the NextStep program at Alan Wire.
- An appreciation for the strategic location of Sikeston with proximity to St. Louis and Memphis and direct access to two interstate highways.
- An appreciation for the investments made in Sikeston Public Schools facilities.
- An appreciation of a locally owned power plant.
- A recognition of the importance of Missouri Delta Medical Center to the local economy.
- An appreciation of the city parks system.
- An appreciation of the positive impact of local civic organizations.
- A lack of available labor (both skilled and unskilled).
- A lack of available childcare (including evening and overnight).
- A lack of housing, especially in the \$80-150k price range.
- A desire to address blighted and vacant properties.
- A desire for more retail and restaurant (other than fast food) options in the community.
- Concerns over crime in the community.
- A concern over being landlocked by Miner and by farmland to the north, west, and south, limiting opportunities for growth.
- A desire for more development planning in the community.
- A desire for more consistent and timely enforcement of city codes.
- An awareness of the changing expectations of a younger workforce.

### Survey

When asked to rank the order of importance of various economic development functions to Sikeston's future success, respondents prioritized workforce development, marketing and attraction, retention and expansion, small business and entrepreneurial development, and neighborhood development among the top priorities.

Under these categories, respondents prioritized several economic strategies:



- Developing and expanding programs to ensure businesses have an adequate pipeline to skilled workers.
- Engaging educational institutions to prepare people for the jobs local businesses are creating.
- Building a positive community image and recruiting new industry and businesses.
- Building relationships with existing companies.
- Meeting with top employers in the community to learn past, present, and forecast happenings.
- Assisting local businesses and industries in solving problems.
- Revitalizing distressed neighborhoods that are struggling with vacant and blighted buildings.