



## **TANEY COUNTY PARTNERSHIP**

### **City of Branson Quarterly Update, October 31, 2020**

Mayor and members of the Board of Alderman: Below is a topical review of the Partnership's activities from my last update to you through October 2020. Please contact me with any questions or concerns and if you would like more information as a group, or individually.

**Partners:** We have not added any additional Business Sector Partners since our last report. The number of Public Partners is now 9 and Business Partners is 28.

**Projects:** (10/20 Project Activity Report) Housing projects are continuing to grow with a new round of Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) applicants being considered locally. We are currently assisting and tracking 20 active, 3 inactive (no activity within last 90 days) projects. Out of the 20 active projects, 11 are within the city limits of Branson. The cumulative industry breakdowns of all projects are as follows:

Manufacturing/Wholesale	2
Financial/Business Services	0
Medical Services/Healthcare	1
Supply Chain Management	0
IT/Innovation	0
Tourism/Retail/Lodging	15
Agriculture/Forestry	0
Housing	6
Infrastructure	2

**2018-2021 TCP Action Plan:** Due to COVID-19, the formal Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) was paused in the second quarter. A collaborative effort was launched with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Missouri State University with one staff person is splitting time/duties to provide business support services in Taney County. The TCP has submitted a grant application to the EDA for funding to support two new staff to expand those business services within Taney and Stone Counties. We were not selected for these grant funds.

**CWRC:** Updated National Career Readiness Certificates and maintenance goals can be seen below, and more information accessed at <http://www.workreadycommunities.org/MO/213>.

### Maintaining Goals <sup>1</sup>

Workforce	Goals	Actual NCRC
Emerging	374	549
Current	74	191
Transitioning	359	414
	Goals	Actual
Improved Certificates	14	1

### Employer Supporting Goals

Employers supporting	143
<sup>1</sup> New and reaffirming employers support goal	96
<sup>1</sup> New and reaffirming employers support actual	80

**Site Selectors/Consultants:** Prior to COVID-19 and travel restrictions, we had completed one site selection consultant mission in 2020 with the Missouri Partnership and met with agencies and consultants in Los Angeles and Phoenix to educate them on the unique assets of Taney County and heighten their awareness of what our communities have to offer. The Mountain Complex, Branson Airport and Meadows Business Park are marketable assets that could compete for the right projects. We have met with 16 consultants representing 8 agencies and organizations to-date. We have not hosted any site visits so far in 2020.

**Workforce Development:** The J1 Summer Work Travel Program did resume, but at much lower numbers because of travel restrictions. Latest numbers available had 50 students working in the Branson market through the summer. On March 20, 2020, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced the immediate and temporary suspension of premium processing service for all Form I-129 and I-140 petitions (H2B program) until further notice due to COVID-19. This was reinforced indefinitely by an Executive Order on June 22 that included

H-1B, H-2B, J, and L nonimmigrant visa programs. On October 1, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a preliminary injunction barring the Administration from implementing its June 22 proclamation. This does help our efforts in attracting more J1 students to the Branson market in 2021.

**Housing:** As mentioned earlier, we are aware of at least 3 MHDC Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects in Branson for the application period ending October 31. We have supported 2 of the 3 in this, or previous, application cycles. The availability of affordable workforce housing continues to be a concern for the region. We fully expect this to be more challenging once the effects of COVID-19 fully materialize in the market. We have had follow-up conversations with RDG Planning & Design (2019 Taney County Housing Study) regarding the appropriate time to update the housing study, especially since COVID will have impacts to the housing market.

**COVID-19 Response:** (No Update) During the week of March 9 TCP staff began focusing all attention on Business Retention & Recovery and Employee Retention & Recovery due to the Coronavirus as it was starting to become clear things were going to be very different. The TCP team and all Chamber/CVB staff began working remotely on March 16 and split into three working groups (Business Assistance/Dislocated Employee Assistance, Business to Visitor Engagement and Operations). TCP staff led the Business/Employee Assistance team. A COVID-19 Resource page was added to the Chamber website and the TCP launched a twice-weekly COVID-19 BUSINESS IMPACT NEWSLETTER to share timely and factual information and resources for the business community and employees, like the CARES Act, as well as collecting over 100 survey responses. A weekly conference call, broadcasted on KRZK 106.3, started the week of May 23 to share information with the entire community. The team made over 1,500 outbound calls to local businesses and handled over 1,000 inbound calls through the week of April 13. The Reopen Taskforce concluded in June with peer to peer toolkits for various industry sectors. The COVID-19 BUSINESS IMPACT NEWSLETTER is now a monthly publication. The collaboration with the SBDC and the potential EDA grant will greatly expand the Business Retention & Recovery efforts, more to come on those.

**Business Checklist:** In collaboration with and under the chamber brand, we published a Business Checklist to help spur the business community to consider planning for the upcoming winter. Several services and “no expense” programs were included along with suggestions to being communicating with their financial advisors.

**Data and Information:** The quarterly economic overviews are available through our subscription with Chmura Economics and their JobsEQ platform and are sent to the city administrator and planning and development director. We have access to local reports and analytics on economic development, education and workforce that we are happy to share with partners, prospects and community stakeholders. Those reports and some of the information can be found at [OnPointMO.com](http://OnPointMO.com) and [TaneyCountyPartnership.com](http://TaneyCountyPartnership.com).

Thank you for your continued support and participation with the TCP!

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