

## Hillsboro Meeting The Challenge of Economic Development

Recently someone asked me what line of work I was in. When I told him I was the Executive Director of the Hillsboro Development Corporation and Hillsboro Ventures Inc. he immediately said, “Why would anyone want to work in economic development in this economy especially in a small town?”

It is true that business start ups and expansions have slowed down in the past year or two. Entrepreneurs are cautious taking a wait and see attitude. At the same time business decisions are being made every day about where to locate, relocate, expand or to close operations. In fact, there are signs that our economy is slowly rebuilding. The prospect of new business opportunities just around the corner makes the work of economic development exciting.

There are a number of factors that influence the decisions that businesses make. Some factors, both tangible and intangible, can be controlled by a community and others can not. Communities that are serious about economic development have things they can control in place.

For many years Hillsboro’s leaders have been aggressive in developing tangibles including suitable building sites along highway access with streets and utilities. Hillsboro has three developments; Hillsboro Industrial Park, Hillsboro Heights Addition, and the newly platted Hillsboro Business Park that are available for business start ups and expansions.

Tangibles alone, however, are often not the deciding factor. It is the intangibles that can tip the scale toward one community or another. One of the most important intangibles built up over the years is a proactive economic development attitude among business entrepreneurs as well as Hillsboro city officials. Our goal is to cut the “red tape” to expedite growth and development.

Hillsboro has developed a strong business climate as demonstrated by yearly increases in sales tax revenues. Local manufacturing, retail sales including multiple auto dealerships, food services and health care are just a few of the business sectors which attract customers within a 30 to 50 minute drive time.

Finally, the quality of life provided by a community plays an important role in attracting and maintaining business investments particularly in rural communities. Hillsboro’s outstanding public school system, including a four year liberal arts college, provides excellent educational, cultural and spiritual opportunities. State of the art athletic facilities, golf course and the nearby Marion Reservoir combine to make Hillsboro a great place to live, learn, work and play!

Hillsboro continues to make progress on meeting the challenge of economic development by having both tangible and intangible factors in place.

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