

**EL DORADO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
STRATEGIC PLAN
2015 – 2017**

“A strategic plan is a living, dynamic document. It should drive the organization and must be integrated into every fiber of the organization so every employee is helping to move the organization in the same direction.” – Peter Drucker

The Mission of the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce is to provide leadership in economic and community development for El Dorado and Union County to improve the quality of life for all its citizens. – Mission Statement El Dorado Chamber of Commerce

The Executive Board and staff met on Wednesday, February, 2015 to discuss the direction of the Chamber for 2015 – 2017. The timeframe for the 2012 – 2014 strategic plan has passed quickly, and it is essential that we have a road map to help guide the direction of the Chamber going forward based on the needs of the organization and the community.

The Chamber Executive Board for 2014 – 2015 is as follows:

*Jim Tidwell, Chairman	*Robert Waggoner, Incoming Chair
*Pam Griffin, Treasurer	Dan Roblee, Secretary
*Bill Luther, Past Chair	*Thomas Burger
*Jamie McConathy	Jeff Teague
*Sam Allen	*Jeremy Stratton, President/CEO

Incoming Chamber Executive Board members for 2015 – 2016 include Robert Reynolds and *Austin Barrow, who will be replacing Jeff Teague and Dan Roblee. An asterisk is placed next to the names that were available and in attendance for the strategic planning session. This is noted since all Executive Board members are heavily involved in the community and the Chamber of Commerce, but for business reasons were not available February 4, 2015 for the strategic planning session. As time goes on, though, it is important to note who shared their ideas for this document and have ownership in the follow through and implementation of the action items.

The following Chamber staff and interns were involved in the strategic planning session:

*Kay Smith, VP Membership	*Tiffany Olson, Events Manager
*Jennifer Wood, Office Manager	*Brandon Barnette, Econ. Dev. Associate
*Ty Morgan, Intern	*Juliann Owens, Intern

Process:

We went through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis for five areas of interest with the Chamber and the business community. These areas of interest include: Chamber Operations, Membership, Events, Economic Development, and Community Development. After this step was completed, we took the information from the SWOT analysis and used it to help us establish goals and objectives. Since we do not want this to be a document that sits on a dusty shelf, we developed action items from each goal with specific people responsible for their implementation within a specific timeframe.

With the President/CEO starting his position in March 2014, this was a good opportunity for the Executive Board and staff to examine the internal workings of the Chamber, and how the organization can best serve its constituents and operate more effectively. This is the reason why we examined operations, membership, and events, which are essential for the existence of any Chamber of Commerce. Since the Chamber is responsible for working with existing company expansions and recruiting new industry, it is important that we examine our economic development efforts. While the Chamber does not directly work on community development issues, our Board can influence and make suggestions for projects, such as bike trails, anti-littering, or removing blighted areas that positively affect El Dorado and Union County. Good community development is a cornerstone for long term successful economic development efforts.

The SWOT analysis, goals, action items, and timelines for each of the five areas is outlined below:

Chamber Operations SWOT Analysis**Strengths**

- Outsourcing accounting to a third party for appropriate fiscal controls.
- Strong Chamber staff members.
- President's knowledge and expertise
- Chamber has a good overall vision
- Chamber building owned by UCIB
- Membership

Weaknesses

- Need more funding, especially for economic development
- Long term member retention
- Public Perception of the Chamber and its activities
- Transparency of public fund use
- Engagement of Board at Chamber activities
- Relationship with City officials

Opportunities

- Streamlining www.goeldorado.com and www.groweldorado.com to one website host
- Locating and utilizing non-dues revenue
- Fully utilizing board member talents

Threats

- Donor fatigue
- Constant staff turnover due to low pay

Chamber Operations Goals, Action Items, and Timelines

Goal #1: The Chamber of Commerce will have regular meetings and contact with the Mayor, City Council, County Judge, and Quorum Court in order to align our common goals and projects. The Chamber of Commerce will meet with EDC and UCIB Boards on a regular basis.

- Chamber President/CEO's responsibility to meet with City Council, Mayor, County Judge, and Quorum Court bi-monthly at least or more times if needed.
- The Chamber will host and co-sponsor events with City, County, and economic development board officials with state and federal officials to demonstrate that

we are open for business and have stronger relationships to develop trust. We will strive to have the City and County officials at the center of any presentation to state and federal officials in order to show our inclusiveness and camaraderie.

- The President and CEO will schedule bi-annual meetings with the UCIB and EDC Boards to provide updates on the activities of the Chamber's economic development efforts and make sure our goals align with the respective Boards.

Goal #2: The Chamber of Commerce will be transparent with the use of public funds

- Chamber President/CEO will give quarterly presentations on public funds budget.
- The public funds budget should be available on-line with easy access at <http://www.goeldorado.com> and <http://www.groweldorado.com>

Goal #3: The Chamber of Commerce will strive to have more Board Member participation helping with projects, events, and membership visits.

- Every January, the Chamber staff will hold an orientation with new Board members to show how Chamber operates and the expectations of being a Board member.
- We will develop an annual Board Member report card showing participation in Board meetings, events, and ribbon cuttings.
- We will ask Board Members to specifically participate in different activities directly to bolster attendance and participation.
- Board Members will be the new Chamber "Ambassadors," for 2015 until Chamber staff can put together processes and training for business ambassadors to be interviewed and selected in 2016. The Chamber Board can help with these tasks.
- Tiffany Olson and Kay Smith are the responsible parties.
- We will start this process May 2015.

Chamber Events SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Ability to bring community and business groups together
- Variety of Chamber events

- Venues for networking
- Core group of contributors/participants

Weaknesses

- Lack of "SIZZLE" at events. Need more P.T. Barnum Circus effect
- Small sponsor base

Opportunities

- Differentiate types of events on an annual or bi-annual basis
- Collaboration with other parties (EFE, SAAC, Symphony, etc.)
- Outdoor based activities
- Mark Givens position as Board member on state Parks and Tourism

Threats

- Quantity of events – Are there too many?
- Repetitive events like Business After Hours and Networking Luncheons
- Balance of who participates – business and non-profits

Events Goals, Action Items, and Timelines

Goal #1: The Chamber will start collaborating on events with other non-profits in the community.

- In 2015, the Chamber will reach out and meet with non-profit organizations about possibly working together on an event to streamline the process
- In 2016, we will have a test run event with a non-profit organization to see how it works and if we can do it again.

- In 2017, the Chamber will combine events and coordinate with other non-profits.
- The President/CEO and Events Manager are responsible for these activities.

Goal #2: The Chamber will obtain in-person feedback from the community and members on what events they like and what ones they would like to see.

- What does the Chamber need to do to add "SIZZLE" to the event?
- What type of variety, quality, and repetitiveness of events do we need?
- Starting in April 2015, the Chamber will host a debriefing within a week after an event to obtain feedback on what is good and bad about the event.
- By October 2016, the Chamber will incorporate a cook-off with the Home and Business Expo.
- Events Manager and Chamber Staff are responsible for Goal #2.

Goal #3: The Chamber will provide Board Member training each year and utilize some interested members to be Goodwill Ambassadors for 2015 while processes are being developed to restart an Ambassador program.

- Every January, we will host a Board Member orientation to give each one a complete picture of Chamber operations and expectations for serving as a Board Member.
- The Chamber will use Board Members as Goodwill Ambassadors at ribbon cuttings and events.
- Every April, the Chamber will select the Board Member of the Year and present the award at the Annual Banquet.
- Events Manager and Chamber Staff are responsible for Goal#3.

Goal #4: The Chamber will work closer with the State Parks and Tourism Board through Board Member Mark Givens.

- The first step is to understand the structure of the parks and tourism board. We will do this by meeting first with Mark Givens, who is a Board Member. This will be accomplished by June 30, 2015.

- By 2016, the Chamber will have invited the State Parks and Tourism Board to have their annual meeting in El Dorado.
- We will piggyback the Shrimpfest Event as a way to bring State Parks and Tourism Board to El Dorado. This will be accomplished by December 31, 2017.
- The responsibility for the tasks under this goal is the President/CEO and Events Manager.

Membership SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Membership visits by Chamber staff
- Size of membership and involvement with Chamber
- Four tiered due structuring (Chairman's Council \$3,500; Visionary \$1,499; Executive \$499; and Basic \$249)

Weaknesses

- Membership retention. Chamber has a cohort of members that sign up to have ribbon cutting and then leave the organization.
- Disengaged members that do not know what Chamber is doing.

Opportunities

- Educate the public on vision of the Chamber and its role in the community, such as an editorial in the local newspaper.
- Construction and supplier companies in El Dorado that are working with expanding companies
- Moving members to higher membership levels
- Improving on-line communications with members and less reliance on mail outs and costly postage. Staff needs to get trained on using functionality of ChamberMaster)

Threats

- Some members struggle with paying their dues.
- Membership drops and monthly collections. We need to develop retention plan.
- Social media in general could make Chamber an irrelevant source for networking and marketing businesses.
- Low oil prices in 2015 could affect some local companies' participation in membership and Chamber events.

Membership Goals, Action Items, and Timelines

Goal #1: The Chamber will work to retain existing members and encourage members to move up a tier in membership level.

- All Members should be visited at least once to twice a year by Chamber staff members. We should always ask how we can help their business and thank them for their membership. It is important to explain and educate the value of being a Chamber member. This activity will be on-going for the three year period.
- We need to find out why companies are joining the Chamber on the frontend, develop a retention plan with a number of touches over the course of the next year, including new member orientations and/or an "on-board event."
- We will put together a list of target members that are capable of moving up a membership level. The Chamber will specify the reasons why it is beneficial to increase membership levels. This activity will be done by December 31, 2015.
- The Chamber will be flexible with the billing of members by offering upfront, quarterly, or monthly membership dues invoicing. We have found out that some businesses are more apt to pay or increase membership if the payments are spread out. This activity will be on-going for the three year period.
- The Vice President of Membership and Chamber Staff will be responsible for these tasks.

Goal 2: The Chamber will partner with business resources and experts to host regular seminars on how to improve your business.

- There will be no charge for these specialized business resources seminars to show Chamber Member value. Topics could include: How to start a business; How to obtain a loan; The importance of cash flow.
- These seminars would occur 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM in the Chamber Board Room with the first one scheduled for May 2015 and the second one in November 2015.
- The Vice President of Membership and the Events Manager are responsible for these tasks.

Goal 3: The Chamber will more fully utilize the <http://www.goeldorado.com> and the <http://www.groweldorado.com> websites for member services.

- We will obtain testimonials from members about the Chamber and its events, and place them on our websites. This task will be completed by December 31, 2015.
- We will have a Members Only page and have a business to business portal enabling businesses to network, show their products and services, and likewise seek service and products locally. This task will be completed by December 31, 2015.
- The Chamber will highlight companies that have special Veterans, HUBZONE, or minority status. We will be helping the businesses market their potential and show pride in their business accomplishments. This task will be completed by December 31, 2015.
- The Chamber will seek partner funding to help with the migration of the <http://www.goeldorado.com> website from Bizzuka to Marketing Alliance, which is hosting the <http://www.groweldorado.com> website. We hope to complete this task by September 30, 2015.
- The Chamber Interns and Economic Development Associates are responsible for completing these tasks.

Economic Development SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Professional economic development staff
- <http://www.groweldorado.com>

- Overall attractive community
- Engaged citizens
- Community College workforce training
- Low electric rates vis a vis the rest of the country
- Relationship building with clients

Weaknesses

- Relationships with local officials
- Community game face. Is community ready for business?
- Lack of available industrial land that is available and has infrastructure
- Shortage of housing
- Lack of workforce skills (problems with drug use and socialability)
- Lack of shopping, restaurant, grocery store, and other commercial businesses
- No modern industrial buildings available to show clients. Losing out on 80% of industrial market looking for existing buildings

Opportunities

- Middle market and new construction residential housing
- Highway infrastructure four lanes
- River access
- Quality of life
- State and federal funding sources that are untapped
- Educate population about economic development

Threats

- Future workforce won't have the skills to take on the jobs being created by existing companies, which will hurt business, job creation efforts, and local economy
- Retaining our headquarters operations long term. They play a significant role in our economy and support the community philanthropically

Economic Development Goals, Action Items, and Timelines

Goal #1: The Chamber will have a strong retention program with constant communication with largest employers. One of the best ways to have a good relationship with largest employers is to have a good representation of them on the Executive Board.

- We will meet with our 10 largest employers at least one to twice a year to check on their progress and offer our assistance. This retention program should be on-going over the next three year period.
- It is our goal to have a small group of Chamber leaders visit the headquarters of some of our largest employers with main operations outside El Dorado to show our interest in the company and build a strong relationship with them.
- The Executive Board and President/CEO are responsible for this task.

Goal #2: The Chamber will educate the public continuously on how it is involved in economic development projects.

- The general public does not understand the level of work in recruiting a company to the community nor the amount of partners and people involved in the process so we need to provide a detailed story in layman's terms of how it is done.
- We will accomplish this task by placing accomplishments on the <http://www.groweldorado.com> website. This task will be completed by the Economic Development Associate by September 30, 2015 and continuously updated.
- The Executive Board Chairman and President/CEO will provide the general board with project updates monthly as we can share information. Start May 2015.
- Starting in 2016, we will make sure that all economic development project accomplishments are well represented in the annual report.
- The Chamber will work with the El Dorado News Times to write a quarterly economic development article talking about how the process and how to work

with clients. The President/CEO is responsible for this task and will start in April/May 2015.

Goal #3: The Chamber of Commerce will work with city and county officials to identify the best property for a future business park.

- We have a limited amount of available land in Champagnolle and El Dorado Industrial Parks. It is imperative to plan ahead for future industrial growth since the process may take 3-5 years to find the acreage, purchase it, and then go through the design and environmental standards necessary to permit the property. El Dorado and Union County lack a site for an industrial user that may need over 50 acres.
- The Chamber will start the process of working with community leaders in October 1, 2015 on finding industrial property. There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Airport Authority on acreage they have at the airport.
- Once the property has been identified and purchased, the Chamber needs to work with city and county officials on a master plan with a professional engineering firm to make sure all utilities are either at the site or extended, how the sites will be divided, and when and where dirt will be moved and compacted on-site. We will work with the EEDB Board on the funding of the master plan. This work will be started in March 2016.
- The President/CEO and the Economic Development Associates are responsible for these tasks.

Goal #4: The Chamber of Commerce will work with city and county officials to either find a development team to construct a speculative building, or find the necessary financial partners to cause such a facility to be constructed.

- 80% of all industrial site selections start with a search for a modern existing building with high ceilings, wide column widths, loading docks, and enough acreage to expand. Presently, our area has no buildings that fit this criteria resulting in a loss of clients considering our area.
- We will first work with a development team to see if we can assemble enough local investors to construct a building. This process will begin March 2015.
- If the first option does not work as stated above by January 2016, we will consider option two of putting together financial partners to construct a building.
- The President/CEO and the Economic Development Associate are responsible for this task.

Community Development SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strong non-profit philanthropic community
- Main Street organization
- Communication vehicles (how the community communicates with each other)
- Downtown area

Weaknesses

- Vacant storefronts
- Absentee land and building owners
- Same 15-20 people at the table for everything. Should require ULEAD class participants and alumni to participate on a board in order to be allowed to participate in program.
- Lack of inclusiveness specially amongst racial groups because they don't see anyone at the table involved that looks like them except token one on minority related program. (Not involved because they do not see anyone that looks like them at the table except token one or programs for them)
- No common direction or regionalism between communities and county
- No community planning organization
- Large selections of blighted areas
- Very few retail options so people leave area for weekend to go to Shreveport, Little Rock, Monroe, Dallas, etc. Need to hire a third party retail consultant to assist with finding retail options that will work in El Dorado.

Opportunities

- Develop a master plan of parks, bike trails, and land uses
- Expand the City borders
- City Planner to oversee development and redevelopment of community
- Community's education system

- Growth and competency of the service sector (restaurants, stores, hotels, etc.)
- Public pride (anti-littering)
- Engage our youth to be more involved in the community and take advantage of job opportunities with our local companies
- Issue 1 Bonding

Threats

- Lack of retail options hinders quality of life and hurts opportunities to recruit professionals and families to our community
- History of the communities in Union County not working together
- Loss of population hurts opportunities for new commercial and industrial companies
- DRUGS – many communities across the United States face the same problem. How can we be one of the first communities to solve the problem?
- Blighted city corridors hurt the overall appearance of the community

Community Development Goals, Action Items, and Timelines

Goal #1: The Chamber will get more involved in retail recruiting due to the amount of feedback we have received from residents and potential businesses about the area's lack of shopping alternatives. This is perceived as a community development and quality of life goal.

- The Chamber will target retail businesses outlined in the Buxton retail leakage report, such as grocery stores, clothing, and restaurants. The best methodology of recruiting retail businesses is 1). Use a third party to help separate your community from thousands across the country; 2). Have modern and up-to-date commercial shopping centers and malls ready for occupancy.
- The Chamber will approach the EEDB about funding a third party firm to help us with the recruiting of needed retail businesses. The third party has a strong relationship with all of the retailers, are able to target the commercial entities that will work for El Dorado, and they have the extensive demographic information that this community does not have access to at this time.

- We will approach the EEDB by December 31, 2015 about funding a third party retail recruiting specialist. The President/CEO is responsible for this task.

Goal #2: The Chamber of Commerce will lead efforts to work with City Council to approve a resolution designating Mellor Park Mall, NW Shopping Village, and the Murphy property as a redevelopment zone.

- A Chamber Board committee will be set-up to gain broad community support for the redevelopment issue since eminent domain is involved with the a couple of the aforementioned property owners. The Committee will be set-up by May 2015. The Chamber President will preside over the committee.
- The Committee will send notice to the property owners of our intentions to place their property in a redevelopment zone. This notice will be given to the property owners by June 30, 2015.
- The Committee will make a recommendation to City Council to pass an ordinance for a redevelopment zone by September 30, 2015.
- Mellor Park Mall, NW Shopping Village, and the Murphy property will be in the redevelopment zone by March 31, 2016.

Goal #3: The Chamber of Commerce will work with the ULEAD class on a project to recognize excellence in customer service at our restaurants. Recognized waiters and waitresses will receive a \$100 tip.

- The 20 -25 members of the ULEAD class will receive decals to give to waiters and waitresses who provide great customer service to them. The decals can be turned in for a \$100 tip and extensive public recognition for their efforts to promote overall great customer service in El Dorado.
- Sam Allen and the Vice President of Membership Services will make a request for funding the project from Festivals and Events since it is outside the current budget scope of the Chamber.
- This project will be completed by November 30, 2015.

Goal #4: The Chamber of Commerce will work with city and county officials on suggesting appropriate community development projects that are needed to recruit new businesses and bring new people to the region.

- Chamber business leaders have strongly indicated that they are interested in an overall master plan of El Dorado, an extensive offering of parks and bike trails, stronger building codes, the immediate removal of blighted properties, and housing infill. All of these items are needed to move the community forward with economic development.

- It is suggested that the President/CEO work with interested Board Members to set-up one or more task forces to study each community development item, make recommendations, and then work with city officials to address the issues appropriately.
- The President/CEO will organize these task forces with Chamber Board help by June 30, 2015.
- The community development process is a long term goal that will take a multi-faceted approach to accomplish. This task will take over 3 years, but we will set goals for instance to concentrate on an area for blight removal and have that completed by December 31, 2016.

Goal #5: The Chamber will work with local and state work force officials to obtain better workforce data and with local school officials to introduce students to local job opportunities.

- Key workforce data on the region is needed to answer specific client Requests for Proposals. Our region currently does not have this data like other parts of the Country. This leaves us at a competitive disadvantage. We need to identify other communities that have this data, and determine how it was gathered.
- The Economic Development Associates will complete this task by July 31, 2015.
- As requested by our local industries and clients, we need an extensive wage and salary survey so companies can benchmark their employees and applicable skills with the market. Here again, lot of this data is not available in southern Arkansas to the extent that it is available in other parts of the country.
- The Economic Development Associates will send out a wage and salary survey by October 1, 2015, have the data collected by December 31, 2015, and post the results on <http://www.groweldorado> without affecting confidentiality of specific data by March 31, 2016.
- Chamber Board Members are very interested in working with the local school system to help students learn and appreciate the good paying job opportunities available to them locally. With the current age of the workforce, there will be a significant amount of retirees and not a large pool of existing workers to replace them. Rather than import workers, we would invest in preparing our students to take on these future jobs. It needs to start in Middle School, in order to plant the seed that there are alternatives to college.
- Existing industry is interested in endowing a vocational industrial technology and construction chair at the local schools to help educate and introduce students to the high wage jobs of the area.

- The President/CEO of the Chamber and members of the Executive Board will approach the school superintendent about such a partnership by June 1, 2015.

Goal #6: The Chamber will develop a strong relationship with our state legislators, so that the group can help us with important legislation for the region and local businesses.

- Annually, we will work with local businesses to host a legislative reception in Little Rock at a popular venue for state legislators, so that we will have good attendance. We want to put El Dorado on the map so to speak with our legislators and show that we are strong partners.
- On a bi-weekly basis, the Chamber will forward state related legislative updates to our member constituents to do a better job of letting them know what is occurring in Little Rock.
- We will meet with our state senator and legislators on a regular basis in-person to make sure that we are abreast of issues at the state level and to articulate legislative needs that our business and Chamber members have.

Goal #7: The Chamber will develop a strong relationship with our federal legislators, so that the group can help us with important legislation for the region and local businesses.

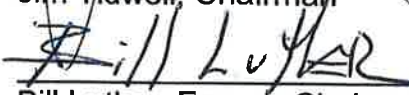
- By June 1, 2015, the President and CEO will travel with the Golden Triangle Economic Development Corporation to meet federal legislators in Washington, D.C. and begin the dialogue.
- By March 1, 2016, the Chamber of Commerce Board will have invited our federal legislators to meet and speak at the Charles M. Murphy Board Room or some other available venue. Chamber Members and the public would be invited.
- By March 1, 2017, the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce will lead a delegation of members, businesses, and local elected officials to Washington, D.C. in order to meet our federal legislators.


The President/CEO must keep this strategic planning document relevant and current by continually referencing it on a monthly basis with staff and a bi-monthly basis with the Executive Board to make sure progress being made on the action items. It is too easy to be sidetracked with day to day business and lose sight of the guiding document that is shaping the Chamber's direction for the next three years.

Signature lines are provided below to show support for this strategic plan. By signing this document, you are agreeing that this is the Chamber's strategic plan for 2015 – 2017.

Executive Board Signatures:


Jim Tidwell, Chairman



Bill Luther, Former Chairman

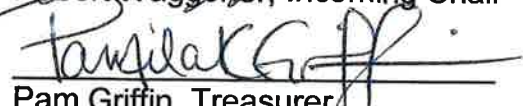

Dan Roblee, Secretary

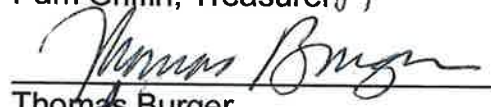

Jeff Teague


Jamie McConathy


Robert Reynolds

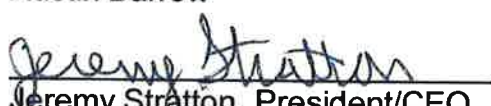

Robert Waggoner, Incoming Chair


Pam Griffin, Treasurer

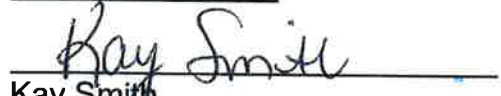

Thomas Burger



Sam Allen

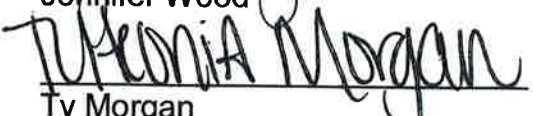

Austin Barrow


Jeremy Stratton, President/CEO

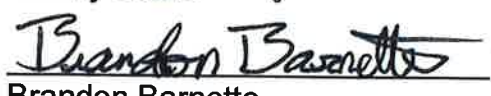
Staff and Interns:

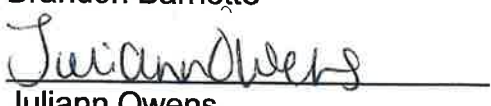

Kay Smith


Jennifer Wood


Ty Morgan


Tiffany Olson


Brandon Barnette


Juliann Owens