STRATEGIC AGENDA 2016 - 2018
“Vibrant economic development extends the promise of prosperity to our families, neighborhoods, and overall community.”
Vibrant economic development extends the promise of prosperity to our families, neighborhoods, and overall community. Economic prosperity is inextricably connected to all aspects of community success, including safe streets, quality education and workforce, and good health. At EDGE, our vision is that all people in Memphis and Shelby County should have an equal opportunity to enjoy economic prosperity as the foundation of healthy, productive lives.

EDGE shares this bold vision with many others in Shelby County, and we know that our organization can’t accomplish it alone. EDGE is but one piece of a comprehensive economic development landscape that includes seven diverse municipalities. Our specific role is to steward public resources to advance economic development countywide.

We are proud to be part of a diverse public/private partnership that has created significant economic development momentum. Last year, the community saw approximately $5 billion in major economic development projects. These have been complemented by vibrant growth in amenities, from new shops and restaurants, to revitalized neighborhoods, to world-class parks and bike lanes.

The community’s ramped-up focus on workforce development and entrepreneurial support further contributes to a more favorable climate for economic growth. Yet, along with our partners, we recognize that Shelby County faces many barriers and competitive pressures that threaten our progress. Now, more than ever, we must align our resources with collective community goals.

Since the launch of EDGE in 2011, we’ve focused on building a solid foundation for streamlined incentives and other competitive financial tools. With our start-up complete, we now embark on a broader agenda to advance local economic development.

The \textit{EDGE Strategic Agenda: 2016-2018} is based upon national best practices and guided by candid perspectives from more than 80 local business, civic, government, and neighborhood leaders. These diverse views were essential to the development of our plan, and allowed EDGE to align its priorities with the community’s goals. We now invite our partners and all community stakeholders to join us in addressing Memphis’s and Shelby County’s economic challenges and pursuing opportunities for economic growth.
In 2011, the Mayors of Memphis and Shelby County, with support from the Memphis City Council, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners, Suburban Mayors, and top business leaders, fashioned a comprehensive plan to increase economic vitality in Shelby County. One key strategy was to boost the competitive impact of public resources for economic development, starting with incentive programs such as the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Tax) program. To accomplish this, the City of Memphis and Shelby County Government merged several economic development programs into a new entity called the Economic Development Growth Engine (EDGE), a quasi-public organization overseen by a diverse, appointed Board.

EDGE recognized from its inception that vibrant economic development requires a comprehensive approach. In its first four years, EDGE streamlined the existing PILOT program; created the Community Builder PILOT, specifically to bolster inner-city revitalization; and launched new efforts to boost industrial development and small businesses. EDGE also oversees other large-scale initiatives, including sponsorship of the Regional Economic Growth Plan 2014-2018, the Depot Redevelopment Corporation, and management of the International Port of Memphis.

In 2015, with start-up operations complete, the EDGE Board sought a concrete roadmap for its next phase of growth. It began by listening to more than 80 leaders in the public and private sectors through in-depth, face-to-face interviews, conducted by a neutral consulting team. The Board wanted to understand the organization’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities, as well as identify top economic development priorities that EDGE could potentially impact. The Board also wanted to learn from policies and programs that work in peer communities across the country.

After listening to local stakeholders and assessing national best practices, the Board established four imperatives for advancing this strategic agenda:

1. Clearly articulate the organization’s mission, role, priorities, and accountability measures.
2. Improve communications and community education at all levels of the organization.
3. Strengthen and deepen partnerships for programs and initiatives.
4. Focus and enhance resources in select priority areas, including industrial development, the International Port of Memphis, neighborhoods, small businesses, and regional development.

The EDGE Strategic Agenda: 2016-2018 is a roadmap for responding to these imperatives. Its five program-focused goals (listed on page 5), target outcomes, and implementation strategies prioritize EDGE resources and deliver a framework for accountability. EDGE will build new organizational capacity to implement this agenda and will develop partnerships to support all of its strategic goals.
**Vision**
All people in Memphis and Shelby County should have opportunities for economic prosperity.

**Mission**
EDGE provides and coordinates public resources to drive economic development in Greater Memphis and Shelby County.

**Strategic Goals**
- Boost industrial development
- Leverage the International Port of Memphis to catalyze economic development
- Accelerate neighborhood revitalization
- Bolster small-business expansion
- Foster collaboration for regional economic development

EDGE will collaborate with key partners to establish operational metrics and detailed annual work plans to guide its progress.
Industrial development, including large-scale manufacturing and distribution, is key to high-paying jobs that support a thriving local economy. Today, Shelby County is in heated competition with its neighbors and peer cities to win coveted, large-scale industrial projects. EDGE supports area recruitment efforts with public-sector financing and infrastructure development. As a result of these efforts, between 2011 and 2015, PILOT-supported projects primarily focused on the industrial sector generated approximately 10,000 new and retained jobs and more than $2.1 billion in capital investments.

Despite recent successes, Memphis and Shelby County are not capturing the area’s full potential for industrial development, in part because there are simply not enough high-quality, shovel-ready industrial sites available, and in part because state and local incentives are not always competitive with other communities. Furthermore, the area is burdened with numerous brownfields and vacant parcels/structures that, despite their potential, are not ready for development. These challenges have contributed to a steady decline in applications for public incentives, with key projects instead landing in communities with more available development sites and more aggressive incentive/assistance packages.

Moving forward, EDGE will increase its support of industrial development by connecting public and private industrial development partners, enhancing public infrastructure for industrial sites, and increasing access to industrial development resources.

**TARGET 3-YEAR RESULT**

More available shovel-ready sites and expanded public financial tools accelerate large-scale industrial development.
ACTION STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES:

Boost industrial development

A. Leverage new and existing programs, tools, and incentives to bolster industrial development
   - Work to expand the use of federal, state, and local economic development tools to both attract and retain companies, and to facilitate the development of shovel-ready industrial sites
   - Partner with other economic development stakeholders to market industrial development opportunities and incentives for industrial development

B. Facilitate development of industrial sites in Memphis and unincorporated Shelby County
   - In partnership with public or private developers, strategically acquire and develop property for industrial sites, including brownfields
   - Provide property owners with resources and/or technical assistance to make industrial sites shovel-ready

C. Facilitate development of industrial sites in partnership with other Shelby County municipalities
   - Partner with Shelby County municipalities to capitalize on industrial development opportunities within their boundaries
   - In partnership with public and private developers, strategically acquire and develop property for industrial sites, including brownfields
   - Provide property owners with resources and/or technical assistance to make industrial sites shovel-ready

GUIDANCE

Local economic development experts point to a lack of shovel-ready sites in Shelby County as an obstacle to attracting industrial development. They advise that, rather than compete with private developers, EDGE can fulfill a critical role by accelerating public-sector development of infrastructure to industrial sites. Additionally, in partnership with private and public developers, EDGE can use its tools to package parcels of unproductive land to create sites that empower private developers to take them to the final stages of development.
GOAL 2

Leverage the International Port of Memphis to catalyze economic development

Memphis was born a river town and to this day is one of the nation’s busiest inland ports. With 147 diverse resident businesses, the Port manages a constant flow of rail and water cargo on President’s Island and in Pidgeon Industrial Park, generating an estimated total economic impact in excess of $8 billion dollars. Over 20,000 jobs directly and indirectly related to the Port generate local tax revenues exceeding $43 million (Younger & Assoc., 2014).

However, today’s Port infrastructure and resources are at full capacity. All available and easily developable waterfront property is either in use or otherwise not available for new projects. The Port’s public infrastructure has served it well but has exceeded its design life, severely limiting opportunities for future growth and threatening the Port’s ability to retain its competitive advantages.

Increased water and rail access to the Port and revitalization of Port infrastructure are critical to realizing its potential and maintaining its impact as a local and regional economic driver. As the steward of the Port, EDGE is uniquely positioned to develop this core public asset for local and regional economic development.

TARGET 3-YEAR RESULT

The International Port of Memphis launches its next phase of growth, guided by a comprehensive Master Plan adopted by local and state economic development leaders.
ACTION STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES:

Leverage the International Port of Memphis

A  Modernize and revitalize existing infrastructure
• Modernize critical infrastructure
• Revitalize supporting infrastructure

B  Enhance multi-modal capacity
• Increase industrial water frontage for terminal/dock space
• Provide unit train access to users located on President’s Island

C  Increase the availability of industrial-ready land with water and rail access
• Acquire, improve, and redevelop additional industrial sites on President’s Island
• Maximize use of existing industrial sites in Pidgeon Industrial Park

D  Implement targeted education campaign to encourage support for public investment in the Port
• Engage legislators and other government officials to support the Port
• Partner with area Chambers of Commerce to elevate the Port as an asset in business recruitment and to increase general business awareness of the Port as a key community and regional asset

GUIDANCE

Local stakeholders urge EDGE to maximize economic opportunities from area transportation infrastructure; they specifically highlight the importance of the International Port of Memphis. According to international port experts, the Port’s assets are extensive and highly advantageous. One of the nation’s largest inland ports for freight tonnage, it has low dredging expenses, enjoys stable weather, and is unencumbered by high maintenance locks and dams. These qualities are enhanced by the Port’s location in a major metropolitan area with easy access to two major interstates, five Class 1 freight railroads and a Foreign Trade Zone. Experts advise that these assets can only be further leveraged through Port modernization and enhancement.
Community revitalization and neighborhood redevelopment are essential to comprehensive economic development. Healthy, attractive neighborhoods drive economic well-being and are key to recruiting and retaining a quality workforce. Further, overall community appeal is an important factor in site location decisions and economic development investments. Blighted neighborhoods fuel crime and reduce property values, which adversely impact quality of life and discourage business recruitment and retention. These conditions result in a downward spiral, lowering job opportunities throughout the community and further decreasing public resources to invest in distressed areas.

Effective neighborhood redevelopment requires aligned public and private resources in authentic partnership with neighborhood residents, anchor institutions, local businesses, and other local stakeholders. Numerous organizations support neighborhood redevelopment efforts throughout Shelby County, creating solid momentum for sustainable change.

EDGE has played a role in this effort in the last four years, granting 30 Inner City Economic Development (ICED) loans totaling $717,000 and creating the Community Builder PILOT to support inner-city revitalization, like the Binghampton Development Corporation’s efforts to secure a national grocer as the anchor tenant in its new mixed-use commercial development. Moving forward, EDGE will intensify its partnership with organizations leading neighborhood revitalization efforts, starting by developing a shared set of values and rules of engagement that establish EDGE as a trusted partner in supporting neighborhood-driven priorities.

TARGET 3-YEAR RESULT

Strategic neighborhood revitalization is strengthened with consistent access to EDGE resources, tools and incentives for community development.
ACTION STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES:

Accelerate neighborhood revitalization

A Facilitate coordination of public resources with community efforts to support neighborhood redevelopment

- Facilitate partnerships between governmental entities and organizations engaged in neighborhood redevelopment to streamline redevelopment and support redevelopment strategies
- Connect neighborhood redevelopment initiatives with local, regional, and national funders

B Enhance and use EDGE tools to support strategic neighborhood redevelopment

- Selectively acquire and assemble property to facilitate redevelopment
- Utilize PILOT and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) programs, bond and loan financing, and other EDGE programs to support industrial, commercial, retail, and residential development, as well as public infrastructure and public improvements, in coordination with established neighborhood redevelopment priorities

GUIDANCE

With growing concentrated poverty and an estimated 13,000 blighted properties in the City of Memphis alone, much community revitalization work is needed in Shelby County. National best practices demonstrate many examples of neighborhoods successfully revitalized through public/private partnership, including blight and brownfields transformed into major employment centers, newly energized downtowns connected to urban neighborhoods with community parks, and mixed-use neighborhoods revitalized through creative use of federal financing tools. Local stakeholders urge EDGE to work alongside community leaders to support effective strategies like these with aligned resources to help rebuild their neighborhoods.
Small businesses—especially firms with high growth potential—are a major driver of the economy. Nationwide, small businesses account for 99% of all employers, and produce more than 50% of the non-farm gross domestic product. In addition to expanding the local economy by moving it into the global marketplace, small businesses serve as the backbone of neighborhoods.

In Memphis and Shelby County, there is significant room for growth of locally owned small businesses, and particularly minority and women-owned firms. Civic leaders have identified this as a key need and opportunity, with the private sector recently investing in a new organization called EPIcenter to foster entrepreneurship and small business growth. Numerous other nonprofit organizations and government agencies offer an array of support services for entrepreneurs and small businesses. However, these organizations agree that more resources are needed to support those sectors of “small business” which are poised to expand the local economy through increased jobs and/or selling products/services outside the local MSA (metropolitan statistical area).

Today, EDGE works with many small businesses to link owners to financial and technical resources designed to accelerate growth. In addition, EDGE will enhance its efforts to connect small businesses that have the potential to expand the local economy to crucial resources, including increased access to capital and enhanced technical assistance.

**TARGET 3-YEAR RESULT**

Small local businesses with high growth potential tap EDGE resources to build sales both locally and outside the MSA.
ACTION STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES:

Bolster small-business expansion

A Connect small businesses to existing public and community resources
  - Identify gaps in small-business resources
  - Work in partnership with the small-business resource community to fill gaps
  - Market small-business resources

B Enhance incentives and support for small businesses with the potential to expand the local economy
  - Enhance and/or develop tools and incentives to encourage development of small businesses that sell outside the local MSA
  - Provide technical assistance to small businesses through programs like Economic Gardening and SBA Emerging Leaders

GUIDANCE

While Memphis and Shelby County are home to numerous resources designed to accelerate small-business growth, community partners point to key gaps in necessary services. They note that EDGE tools and incentives already in place—including effective tools such as ICED loans, Community Builder PILOTs, TIFs, technical assistance programs, and others—are often unknown to the small business owners who need them. Leaders encourage EDGE to both enhance marketing of its existing tools and develop new resources, especially tools to assist those small businesses poised to expand beyond the local market.
GOAL 5

Foster collaboration for regional economic development

Throughout the country, regional partnerships underpin successful economic development efforts. These models bring government, non-profit and other organizations together to leverage their resources and jointly pursue their common goals. Unified regions have an advantage over isolated cities and counties in mustering the sustained political and financial support needed for domestic and international marketing campaigns, workforce development efforts, transportation infrastructure improvements, and other development-related initiatives.

An enhanced approach to regional economic development could benefit all communities in the area, attracting a wealth of new, varied opportunities.

Collaboration among communities located in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas presents challenges. However, building blocks are emerging to align regional economic development for higher impact, including the Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce, Memphis Area Association of Governments, and partnerships forged during the creation of Memphis & Shelby County Regional Economic Development Plan. Many opportunities remain to leverage these efforts for collective regional economic development.

TARGET 3-YEAR RESULT

Public and private economic development professionals have a foundation for regional alignment through shared education and collaborative forums.
ACTION STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES:

Foster collaboration for regional economic development

A Coordinate implementation of the Memphis and Shelby County Regional Economic Development Plan
  • Provide staff and financial support
  • Provide project management and reports on partners’ implementation efforts

B Build shared understanding about effective regional economic development strategies
  • Sponsor speakers to share effective strategies for regional economic development

C Facilitate relationships to explore common interests among regional stakeholders
  • Sponsor networking events and structured conversations to build relationships and connections among regional stakeholders

GUIDANCE

Regional development floats all boats—nineteen peer markets examined during planning offer evidence to prove this point. All are engaged in formal regional economic development initiatives to showcase the attractiveness of their entire regions. All of the programs cross city lines, county lines, and in several cases—from Kansas City and St. Louis to Atlanta and Louisville—state lines, too. These programs are designed to leverage the strengths of the entire region to capture the attention and the serious interest of businesses and industries in search of new locations.
Stakeholder Input*

**Public Sector Stakeholders**

**Steve Basar**
Commissioner, Shelby County Board of Commissioners

**Mark Brown**
CAO, City of Bartlett

**Rick Copeland**
Director, Memphis & Shelby County Division of Planning & Development

**John Duncan**
Economic Development Director, Town of Collierville

**Gwyn Fisher**
Greater Memphis Regional Director, Economic & Community Development at State of Tennessee

**Justin Ford**
Chairman, Shelby County Board of Commissioners

**Stan Joyner**
Mayor, Town of Collierville

**Harvey Kennedy**
CAO, Shelby County Government

**David Lenoir**
Trustee, Shelby County

**Robert Lipscomb**
Director, Memphis Housing Authority, Housing & Community Development

**Myron Lowery**
Chairman, Memphis City Council

**Mark Luttrell**
Mayor, Shelby County

**Keith McDonald**
Mayor, City of Bartlett

**Paul Morris**
President, Downtown Memphis Commission

**Mike Palazzolo**
Mayor, City of Germantown

**Terry Roland**
Commissioner, Shelby County Board of Commissioners

**Jack Sammons**
CAO, City of Memphis

**Heather Sparks**
Planning Director, Town of Arlington

**Jim Strickland**
Mayor, City of Memphis

**A C Wharton**
Mayor, City of Memphis

**Josh Whitehead**
Planning Director, Memphis & Shelby County Office of Planning & Development

**Mike Wissman**
Mayor, Town of Arlington

**Paul Young**
Director of Legislative Affairs, Shelby County Government

**Private Sector Stakeholders**

**Steve Bares**
Memphis Bioworks Foundation

**Ron Belz**
Betz Enterprises

**Darrell Cobbins**
Universal Commercial

**Reginald Coopwood, M.D.**
Regional One Health

**John Dudas**
Belz Enterprises

**Glen Fenter, Ph.D.**
Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

**Jim Flanagan**
DeSoto County Economic Development Council

**Shea Flinn**
Greater Memphis Chamber

**Noah Gray**
Binghampton Development Corporation

**Charles Gulotta**
Millington Area Chamber of Commerce

**Patrice Harris**
City of Memphis Renaissance Business Center

**Mark Herbison**
Greater Memphis Chamber

**Jeffrey Higgs**
LeMoyne-Owen College Community Development Corporation

**Michael Hooks, Jr.**
Allworld Project Management

**Larry Jensen**
Cushman & Wakefield/ Commercial Advisors Partners

**Bryan Jordan**
First Horizon National Corporation

**Jenny Koltnow**
AutoZone

* Title reflects position at the time of interview.
Steve Lockwood
Frayser Community Development Corporation

Robert Montague
Binghampton Development Corporation

Brent Melancom
Medtronic

Ralph Moore
Memphis Area Association of Governments

Gibson Morris, Ph.D.
Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

Dexter Muller
Greater Memphis Chamber

Michael Mullis
J.M. Mullis, Inc.

Cynthia Norwood
Communities Unlimited

Kelly Rayne
Greater Memphis Chamber

Christine Richards
FedEx Corporation

Eric Robertson
Community LIFT

Leslie Smith
Entrepreneurship Powered Innovation Center (EPIcenter)

Gary Shorb
Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare

John Threadgill
Bartlett Area Chamber of Commerce

Blair Taylor
Memphis Tomorrow

Morris Thomas
Belz Enterprises

Rory Thomas
Tennessee Small Business Development Centers

Phil Tenary
Greater Memphis Chamber

Emily Trenholm
Community Development Council

Henry Turley
Henry Turley Company

Jim Wilder
Communities Unlimited

Cary Vaughn
Shelby County Suburban Chamber Alliance

Duncan Williams
Duncan Williams Asset Management

Sharon Younger
Younger Associates

Port Director Interviews

Robert Portiss
Tulsa, Port of Catoosa, OK

Bill Miller
Port of Paducah McCracken, KY

Bryan Day
Port of Little Rock, AR

Dan Loughney
Port of Lake Charles, LA

Susan Taylor
Port of St. Louis, MO

Eric England
Port of Shreveport, LA

Internal Stakeholders

Mark Beutelschies
Attorney, EDGE

Al Bright, Jr.
Board Chair, EDGE

Keith Dillihunt
Enable Business Capital, Former EDGE Employee

Natasha Donerson
Board Member, EDGE

Reid Dulberger
President & CEO, EDGE
Chief Economic Development Officer, Memphis & Shelby County

Tom Dyer
Board Member, EDGE

Charles Goforth
Board Member, EDGE

Garrett Guynes
Communications Specialist, EDGE

Mark Halperin
Board Member, EDGE

Trey Heath
Enable Business Capital, Former EDGE Employee

Larry Jackson
Board Member, EDGE

John Lawrence
Strategic Economic Development Planning Manager, EDGE

Deidre Malone
Board Member, EDGE

Emmett McKnight
Economic Development Specialist, EDGE

Jack Moore
Board Member, EDGE

Johnny B. Moore, Jr.
Board Member, EDGE

Dorian Spears
Economic Development Specialist, EDGE

Monice Hagler
Attorney, EDGE
Best Practices Input

Economic Development Programs & Tools: Peer City Review

Atlanta, GA  Greenville, SC  Nashville, TN  St. Louis, MO
Austin, TX  Kansas City, MO  Indianapolis, IN  St. Paul, MN
Charlotte, NC  Little Rock, AR  Oklahoma City, OK  St. Petersburg, FL
Cincinnati, OH  Louisville, KY  Orlando, FL  Tampa, FL
Dallas, TX  Minneapolis, MN  Portland, OR

Select Bibliography


De Sousa, Christopher and Lily-Ann D’Souza. “Atlantic Station, Atlanta, Georgia: A Sustainable Brownfield Revitalization Best Practice.” University of Illinois at Chicago Institute for Environmental Science and Policy.
Consulting Team

Consilience Group, LLC
Jeff Sanford Consulting
Olivia Massey Public Relations
Informa Economics IEG