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THE TIME IS NOW FOR THE TEXARKANA REGION TO FIGHT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Published: 10/10/2017 - 3:54pm

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The Texarkana Chamber of Commerce called forward to house a new regional program

Project Assessment and Alignment Report further includes these relative findings to support the call to action: (1) The Texarkana Chamber of Commerce has continued to demonstrate excellent performance and leadership for over a century and should house the effort; (2) The history of parochialism amongst local leadership must be put aside for Texarkana to get on board with the success of regionalism—trending as the future of economic development; and (3) A healthy budget will be necessary to initiate and sustain a regional program.

“The time is now to launch an aggressive new program that can win the fight for Texarkana’s economic future,” said Susan Blansett, McCarthy/Blansett Group, “This must be a strategic effort that will make the region more competitive for job creation, capital investment and talent retention/attraction by going down two highways: the First is national marketing, promotion and deal flow to get you noticed and in the hunt; the Second is making your product (infrastructure, sites, workforce, and livability) more competitive.”

The formation of a regional economic development effort is not a new concept to the Texarkana region; MBG introduced the initial recommendation at the conclusion of the OEA Alignment Session held on November 16, 2016 at the Texarkana Arkansas Convention Center-- resulting from a unanimous vote amongst over 50 community leaders in attendance. The actionable plan outlined in this assessment report could be the key to ending the “study fatigue” Texarkana has endured for the last 10 years. The three priority recommendations within the plan include:

Establish a new regional entity as the Greater Texarkana Corporation (GTC), a d.b.a. under the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce.

Hold a vision to create a pre-determined, aggressive amount of primary jobs for the region in 10 years and place the Texarkana MSA back in the top half of MSAs nationally on the Policom index of economic strength.

Embrace regional unity and fight parochialism on all fronts and levels through a collaborative professional network of municipal, county and regional economic and workforce development professionals.

“The Texarkana Chamber of Commerce fully supports establishing a regional effort, said Mike Malone, President of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, “The chamber has been working with other regional leaders for over a year now to get this initiative moving forward, and we are considering all of the options presented in the assessment report by the McCarthy/Blansett Group.”

Susan Blansett, Colleen Nelson and Mike McCarthy with MBG have spent time throughout the region familiarizing themselves with the area and identifying the many local assets and advantages offered here. In addition to hearing from several regional leaders at the OEA Alignment Session last November, MBG engaged with 46 individuals from the greater Texarkana region over the past few months to inform their analysis, including: 26 private-sector businesses, 15 leaders from the public sector, four higher education executives, and one leader of a philanthropic nonprofit. A full list of the individuals interviewed is included in the report. Overall, a strong support for “a unified vision and strategic, regional effort to begin promoting the Texarkana region’s assets and coalescing leaders around transformational product development” was evidenced throughout the process.

“TexAmericas Center has enjoyed partnering with the McCarthy/Blansett Group on completing this final phase of the OEA Grant. As the grant administrator, TexAmericas Center worked with Workforce Solutions Northwest Texas to identify and reach out to regional leaders to help with this imperative assessment. Being a redevelopment authority charged with creating jobs for the region, TAC fully supports regionalism for the greater Texarkana region. We will continue to work with the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, the local municipalities, county governments, and other allies to win this fight for economic growth. ” Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center

Looking ahead, the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce has indicated that they will continue to consider efforts for housing a regional economic development program. You can contact Mike Malone, President of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce for further information about these efforts at 903-792-7191 or by email at mmalone@texarkana.org

More information about the OEA Grant and the full report is available on the FourStatesRegionalPartnership.com website; to access this report, click on the “Resources” menu item and select the “Reports” tab. You can also request an electronic PDF copy by emailing Ashley Byrd at Ashley.Byrd@TexAmericasCenter.com

About TexAmericas Center

Located in the Texarkana metropolitan area, TexAmericas Center owns and operates one of the largest mixed use industrial parks in the United States. With roughly 12,000 development ready acres of land and about 3 million square feet of commercial and industrial product, TexAmericas Center services the four states (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) markets. Texas is the #1 state for business in the United States of America because of its regulatory environment, tax policies, and workforce quality along with exceptional educational resources, infrastructure, and quality of living. Founded in 1997, TexAmericas Center has the operating capabilities of a municipality but functions more like a traditional real estate development company, offering customized real estate solutions. In addition to controlling our own zoning and permitting processes and sustaining the life cycle of public infrastructure on the complex, TAC has the capability to lease, build-to-suit, or facilitate Greenfield owner-constructed projects in a timely and efficient manner. At TAC, we streamline leasing and manage government development processes all through a single point of contact. Our customers benefit from faster market entry by resolving zoning, permitting, inspection, and state and local incentive programs solely through our organization. Additionally, the Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC) designated a 101 acre site on TexAmericas Center's central campus as the first S.T.A.R. Site in Texas (Sites That Are Ready for construction to begin), advancing speed to market for our customers. Tenants of TexAmericas Center tend to be private business owners and corporations seeking flexible and cost effective space solutions.

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About The McCarthy/Blansett Group

The McCarthy/Blansett Group, based in Colorado, is a consulting firm dedicated to strengthening the economic development industry through strategy, analysis, fundraising and organizational development. Our partners have consulted on more than 100 organizations and chambers of commerce around the U.S., including considerable experience with start-up organizations. All three of our principals – R. Michael McCarthy, Susan Blansett and Colleen Nelson – were engaged in this analysis, bringing full complement of a diverse set of skills, knowledge and experience to bear on the project.