

## Quitman Next Steps Memo:

### Three Months to Six Months Objectives: (June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 Update)

- Work with the Clarke County Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, and the Quitman School District to develop a branding and marketing campaign including a logo and moniker that unifies the community.



TownMapsUSA.com



Sign on U.S. 45 showing a sunset over the Archusa Water Park. Permitting in process now.

This design will be used for T-Shirts and will appear on a new web site that is not a word press format. The first picture will replace the one above showing our location.

- **A Tourism Grant has been applied for as well as one from the Dart Foundation. Our Chamber has partnered with the Community Foundation of East Mississippi to allow us to participate with them, even giving us up to \$10,000 in funds when we raise**

- \$20,000. Money has been raised. A publicity campaign is being set up to allow citizens, local businesses, industry, and local banks to donate with the chamber matching one for one up to \$20,000. The media, both newspaper and television will be covering. Plan is to have \$50,000 in the foundation to cover education efforts to include scholarships and classes for a variety of things such as pottery, quilting, and art.**
- Develop the marketing and branding campaign described above to create logos to be included on signage. **Web page is complete with the use of a beautiful picture of the Archusa Water Park with special effects. Web Site overall plan is still being worked on, but will be in a new format other than Word Press. Committee has selected a format that will look a lot like [www.conwaysnow.com](http://www.conwaysnow.com) an economic development site.**
  - Create a timeline for the adoption of a Complete Streets policy within three to six months. Still behind on this and this will be put in for the next year's efforts. **Way behind on this, partially due to funding. T.A.P. money will be available, but we will need to have \$100,000 to secure the necessary \$500,000 grant. Plans for a bicycle trail from our parks plus a horse trail from Archusa are part of this grant.**
  - As part of the Complete Streets policy development, consider where bicycle lanes could be added to offer connections to nearby residential neighborhoods and to Archusa Creek Water Park. **Moving to one year or two with the RFQ completed.**
  - Paint / repaint crosswalks in the town center. **(Design and estimates in works with Engineer and M.D.O.T. On January 1 a request for funding from our Chickasawhay Natural Gas District to us, Waynesboro, and Shubuta. The amount will give Quitman \$39,000, with the first year being used to improve sidewalks and A.D.A. compliance.) This effort failed as one Board member sent personal letter to Committee Chairman protesting despite board approval.**
  - Create a committee of Quitman residents with mobility issues to demonstrate challenging pedestrian infrastructure and offer recommendations for improvement. **Moving to one year and longer to view the feasibility study on bicycle lanes and need for sidewalks.**
  - Assess the condition of existing vacant properties and storefronts in the town center. **Completed. Have an offer from Mississippi Power to allow anyone opening a business in a building vacant for two years or more a 15% discount on electricity for two years. The fact we approved a liquor initiative should give us a better opportunity for success. Two businesses have applied for this discount.**
  - Map ownership of existing building stock in the town center. **Completed**
  - Create a list or database containing basic information about each including the property owner, condition of structure, tax status, and any other pertinent information. **Completed**
  - Work with a web developer to retool and update the city's website while increasing its technical capabilities. This will enable it to become a portal of information on the community for residents and visitors alike. For example, include the latest news and events, maps and lists of town center businesses as well as rotating business profiles to highlight the community assets. **Planned for three months, but now will take an**

- additional four months. Working on a something other than a word press format.
- Reach out to local colleges or other organizations to provide training to local businesses on how to market themselves using the Internet and social media. **Dr. Randy Loper of Mississippi State Extension came to Quitman with his staff to set up programs to train people in work keys, Microsoft excel and word, training as evidenced by the need from Dart Container. A needs assessment from businesses, industry, and commercial will be set up to help decide the training needs.**
  - Reach out to potential affordable housing partners - developers, churches and other parties -- to assess interest in creating affordable housing in or connected to the town center. **Grant to develop clean-up costs for the Bazor property approved. Once cost is known a RFP showing the landscape architect drawing of what is included in the proposal along with projected infrastructure costs. The project allows for the use of the Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act for Brownfield Sites along with New Market Tax Credits. Cost of clean-up should be known by the end of July.**
  - clean-up or demolition of ten properties. Most significant properties needing demolition have been torn down. County is helping with additional properties. **We also will go after the Blight Elimination Grant Program. Did not go after Blight Elimination Program as County has stepped up support. We have hired a new Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector, and she is very effective.**
  - Research potential local, state, and federal funding mechanisms for affordable housing. Appendix A includes USDA and other potential resources for funding. **Currently building four homes with funding through H.U.D., but USDA has not received funding at this time for any other construction. This program is part of our RFQ and affordable housing under their Urban Renewal funds.**
  - Convene a committee of seniors to understand their housing needs and existing mobility issues in the community. **Meeting with East Central Planning & Development Senior Services Division to establish the core program. Currently we have a need for low income housing that offers amenities of larger homes. Teacher turnover is one indicator of this need. Quitman Village as shown in the RFQ is the answer to these needs.**
  - Conduct a visioning and planning process for the future of the Bazor Lumber Yard site that includes the entire community. **Plan is in final stages prior to issuing a Request for Proposals. Met with County, School, Churches, and Civic Leaders and developed plans to meet their needs. School is being asked for \$320,000 to pay for four new tennis courts with us and the county handling the balance of a three-year phased implementation with us doing most of the land work. Complete and once drone photos are finished the RFQ will be issued to Chris Coes as well as M.D.A. and Next Site Site Consultants.**
  - Begin conversations with potential developers of the sites to design and

implement the community's vision. **First meeting with one developer took place last week. He wants the complete package prior to expressing interest. Local developer did not have the capital to take on the whole project but is interested in working with one for the development of commercial businesses.**

### **Medium- and Long-term Actions (Changed to 12 months and 2 years)**

- Adopt the logo and moniker and encourage all public sector agencies as well as private sector businesses and organizations to utilize it in their letterhead, websites, social media, and signage as appropriate.
- Begin discussions with Clarke County and Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) to utilize right of way owned by these agencies to place monuments and markers where they will be visible by motorists.
- Incorporate Complete Streets policy into roadway and intersection redesigns as they occur.
- Begin repairing sidewalks and design them to be Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant. **A.D.A. act creates financial challenges that are difficult to overcome without funding. We have improved 400 feet of sidewalk in or near our downtown**
- Assess the viability of redeveloping the existing Sportsplex facility as a site for affordable housing.
- Plan a grid of walkable and bikeable street connectivity within the site, to the center, as well as to the adjacent neighborhoods and recreational activities. **Part of the Feasibility Study planned for this time frame.**
- Be diligent in selecting businesses and amenities for this property that are complementary to the town's long-term vision.

### **Long Term Actions (12 Months and Beyond)**

- Ensure that the branding and marketing campaign continues to represent the community and its amenities by updating it from time to time.
- Place monuments and markers along Highway 45 as well as other roadways leading into town.
- Ensure that this signage, once placed, has attractive landscaping that receives ongoing maintenance.
- Transform vacant properties into outdoor entertainment spaces that bring people from the surrounding neighborhoods to the town center as well as visitors from throughout the region.

- Implement benches and trash receptacles at suitable locations throughout the town center to encourage residents and visitors to rest and linger.
- Incorporate public art at strategic locations in the town center that enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Consider establishing a golf cart system during special events, perhaps in partnership with the golf course, to move people between parking, event venues, and other important town center destinations.
- Continue to keep the city's Facebook page and website up-to-date as the community redevelops and changes over time. Utilizing currently.