

# Paris builds community momentum

By Amy Whitehead, PCED

**O**n May 30 the City of Paris in Logan County unveiled a five-year strategic plan for community and economic development. Only 13 pages long, the Paris Action Plan is a road map for the future of Paris. It was developed in 10 months of planning and work, with widespread participation from key leaders and organizations in the Paris area.

The Paris plan is not a typical strategic plan, weighed down by endless pages of data and consultant-speak. UCA's Community Development Institute and the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Breakthrough Solutions Program worked directly with the city to help craft a plan that could be easily read and absorbed by the public, potential funders, and stakeholders working with the community.

What makes the Paris Action Plan so unique can be found right in its name—action! The city was planning and “doing” simultaneously. Major projects that impacted workforce development, economic development, tourism, branding and quality of life were already underway as the planning was happening. The plan became a reflection of the community's current work and future aspirations. This action plan transformed the planning process from passive to active and allowed the community to celebrate success throughout the planning process, keeping momentum high and the community engaged.

After an initial assessment and community priority setting phase in August 2014, completed in conjunction

with the Community Development Institute's Advanced Year Class, Paris decided to focus efforts on tourism and branding, workforce development and economic development, and quality of life and place. Those involved recognized that a focused effort would produce better results, especially in a community like Paris where local leaders wear many hats.

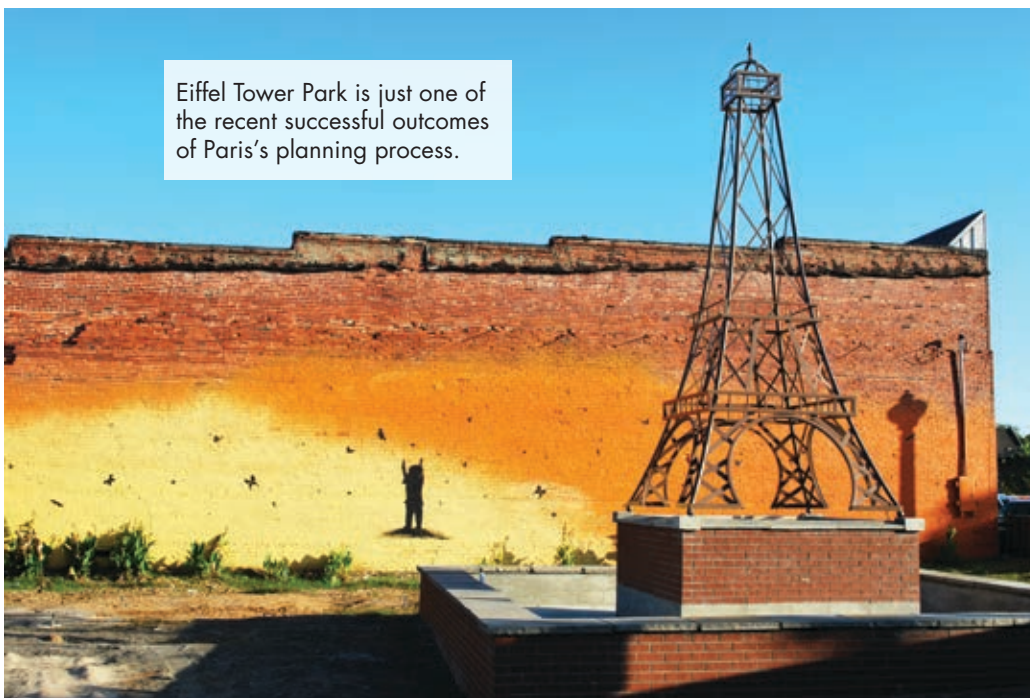
From the time the planning process began in August 2014 until it was unveiled in May 2015, the citizens of Paris celebrated the following successes:

- The installation of the Eiffel Tower Park in the downtown square, including a replica of the Eiffel Tower, a water fountain, stage, and signage.
- The development and adoption of a new brand and logo identity to be utilized on a variety of promotional materials.
- State approval to begin a satellite workforce training center, which will provide much needed skills training to the workforce in the local economy, supporting the labor needs of local industry.
- The announcement that Rethink Manufacturing would be located at the same site as the workforce training center, an empty manufacturing building located within Paris city limits.

When asked about the key to early success in their planning efforts, the chair of the local planning team, Dr. Lee Lane, said, “In the beginning it is important to invite each individual to join the team because of their unique perspective and value to the team. Really listening to each participant is the key to getting them to buy-in to the shared initiatives and help make it happen.”

At the May 30th unveiling of the plan, the public received a copy of the plan, learned about exciting initiatives planned for the future, and heard letters and speeches of support from Mayor Daniel Rogers and the Paris City Council, Senator Gary Stubblefield, and Representative Jon Eubanks.

*To learn more about UCA's Community Development Institute and its community and economic development programs, contact Amy Whitehead at [amyw@uca.edu](mailto:amyw@uca.edu) or 501-852-2930.*



Eiffel Tower Park is just one of the recent successful outcomes of Paris's planning process.