

CDI 2022 ADVANCED YEAR REPORT

FOLK MUSIC CAPITOL
OF THE WORLD

WELCOME TO

MOUNTAIN
VIEW

YOUR PLACE IN THE MOUNTAINS



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS

CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS THE CDI ADVANCED YEAR?

The Community Development Institute Central (CDI), established in 1987 at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, trains community and economic development professionals in Arkansas and the Mid-South. The complete CDI experience is a three-year training program (with an optional fourth year of training), with one week of training per year. Participants are exposed to a comprehensive, applied approach to the field of community and economic development. CDI is coordinated by Director Shelby Fiegel, Assistant Director Dylan Edgell, Project Coordinator Michael Hudson, and Graduate Assistant Greta Hacker.

The CDI Advanced Year is an optional fourth year of training for CDI graduates. The Advanced Year was created to provide a unique opportunity for CDI graduates to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations and to kick start a community and economic development process in one community in Arkansas. During the week fo CDI, the Advanced Year participants conduct research on the selected community, visit the community for a driving tour, facilitate focus groups, conduct interview with citizens and community leaders, and host a public presentation on their findings where they identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and priorities for the community moving forward.

Mountain View, Arkansas was selected as the CDI 2022 Advanced Year community. To learn more about CDI visit uca.edu/cdi.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Known as the “Folk Capital of the World,” Mountain View is a wonderful community with great assets including a historic downtown square, rich tradition of preserving and promoting folk music and culture, and a strong sense of community. Mountain View’s participation in the CDI 2022 Advanced Year process shows that local leaders are looking towards the future and are open to new ideas and opportunities for their community.

The challenges and opportunities identified by community leaders and citizens in Mountain View are shared by many other communities in Arkansas and across the United States. In this report, we aim to share the challenges and opportunities the Community Development Institute Advanced Year class identified as well as to provide some recommendations to help imagine the future of Mountain View based on assessment and feedback from community leaders and citizens. The CDI 2022 Advanced Year team took a holistic approach in assessing Mountain View from an outsider’s perspective. Before coming to Mountain View, they researched the community online. After discussing this research, the Advanced Year team participated in a driving tour of Mountain View, visiting key areas identified by community leaders. The team then met with community leaders, conducted in-person focus groups with citizens, and implemented a survey to collect feedback from the community to inform their recommendations. At the end of the week, the team presented their findings to the community during a public presentation, and pulled their insights and future recommendations together in this report.

This is not a comprehensive analysis of Mountain View, but it takes a fresh look at the community from several outsiders with community and economic development experience and expertise. These individuals work every day in different aspects of community and economic development and came to Mountain View from communities in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi to provide their unique perspectives.

There is a lot to be proud of in Mountain View. The recommendations found in this report will build on the exceptional work that the community has already done. We hope this report will serve as a catalyst for future growth and development in Mountain View!

KEY PARTNERS

The UCA Center for Community and Economic Development, the CDI Advanced Year class, and Mountain View leadership would like to thank Simmons Bank for sponsoring the CDI 2022 Advanced Year in Mountain View.



Simmons Bank

A special thanks to these additional key partners who made this initiative possible:

- UCA Center for Community and Economic Development
- Mountain View Area Chamber of Commerce
- City of Mountain View
- Stone County Medical Center
- Wildflower Inn Bed and Breakfast
- Ozark Country Inn Bed and Breakfast
- Mountain View Chevrolet
- Lorie Robertson of Chaffee Crossing (CDI Advanced Year Class Director)
- Amy Williams of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (CDI Advanced Year Class Director)
- Dana Poindexter of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (CDI Advanced Year Class Director)
- CDI 2022 Advanced Year Team
- Community leaders and citizens of Mountain View



CDI 2022 ADVANCED YEAR AND ASSIGNMENTS

The CDI 2022 Advanced Year class consisted of eight individuals working in a variety of professional roles from communities in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The class was led by Lorie Robertson of Chaffee Crossing, Amy Williams of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and Dana Poindexter of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission.

Members of the 2022 Advanced Year Team include:



Katrina Brown
Entergy Arkansas



Tabatha Duvall
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Jessica Hemmingway
Bossier City
Chamber Of Commerce



Charley Kingery
WIELAND



Herman Lehman
Keys to the City
Community Coaching



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Lorie Robertson
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Amy Williams
Arkansas Economic
Development Commission



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ONLINE COMMUNITY RESEARCH

CDI Advanced Year Participants conducted an “online tour” where participants assessed Mountain View’s online presence through the lens of different personas. These personas include: a family with young children, tourist, small business owner, citizen of Mountain View, prospective college student, retiree, industrial prospect, and single young professional.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis was completed for city and community websites, social media pages, Arkansas Site Select, online real estate databases, and travel websites based on these personas. Below are the strengths and weaknesses found from the online assessments from each persona:

Prospective College Student

Strengths:

- Ozarka College’s website is very appealing for potential students
- Very nice library and study area for students

Weaknesses:

- Difficult to find opportunities through the Mountain View Ozarka website
- Coffee shops and other study venues seem limited and seem to close early
- Lack of available rental properties for young person in college

Family with Young Children

Strengths:

- Better than average curb appeal
- Mountain View seems like a safe community with low cost of living
- The Mountain View School District’s website has current information
- Stone County Library in Mountain View seemed like a great resource
- Housing listings on Realtor.com provides links to information about nearby schools

Weaknesses:

- Search of Mountain View, Arkansas did not drive to the City or Chamber of Commerce website
- Most of online content for Mountain View was geared towards tourism
- There seemed to be a lack of available childcare options and no pre-k program for Mountain View Schools

Retiree

Strengths:

- Low crime rates and cost of living is appealing to retirees
- Festivals and Ozark Folk Center offers things to do around the year

Weaknesses:

- No dedicated portion of the city website that mentions retirees, retirement community or similar term
- No marketing on Chamber page to attract retirees
- Lack of access to healthcare and lack of available housing options
- No reference to senior center and outreach programs/activities on website

Tourist

Strengths:

- Festivals are the heart of the community including the Iris Festival, the Folk Festival, and Bean Fest with championship outhouse races
- Offers diverse overnight amenities including cabins, bed & breakfasts, and traditional hotels/motels
- Stone County recreation area seemed like a great amenity with disc golf, ball fields, and a trail to the Ozark Folk Center

Weaknesses:

- Very few direct links to tourist info and a lack of digital visitor guides
- Food options not listed on sites with no visible promotion of local eateries
- Lack of diversity in music genres

Small Business Owner

Strengths:

- Historic Downtown with vibrant town square
- Regional hub for Stone County for commercial, shopping, medical, financial, and government services
- Variety of tourist attractions, events, music venues and recreational opportunities

Weaknesses:

- Lack of information online for prospective businesses or investors
- No information on available spaces to open business in Mountain View
- Could not find information on opening a business in Mountain View from City or Chamber site and saw no linked resources to state organizations

Industrial Prospect

Strengths:

- Large industrial employers including Excel Boats and Fiber Energy Products
- High number of jobs for mining, quarrying, oil, and gas extraction
- Municipal airport available and rail availability within 10+ miles
- Area employees seasonal workers who commute from outside of Mountain View

Weaknesses:

- Lack of information on industrial park and for site/building availability
- Lack of information on infrastructure readiness for industrial prospect
- 105 miles to nearest commercial airport
- Industrial area on the far west side of town

Citizen of Mountain View

Strengths:

- Offers a simple and traditional lifestyle
- Focus on music and the arts with local festivals and Ozark Folk Center
- Weekend classes offered for visitors and residents

Weaknesses:

- Seemed to be siloed in communication across different groups and organizations; not much evidence of community collaboration
- Higher than state average median home price

Single Young Professional

Strengths:

- Plenty of recreational opportunities for young adults including festivals, outdoor recreation, and local concerts
- Chamber of Commerce website contained lots of information on retail (boutique shopping)
- Reputation of having Quality Healthcare in Stone Co.
- Many available job openings in the healthcare field

Weaknesses:

- Most homes were either fixer uppers or were listed at over \$300k
- Only 16.3% of county covered by 100 mbps download speed according to Broadband Now
- Community lacks diversity and average age of community is 52 years old
- Social media was focused on tourists and less on residents



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND TRENDS

The CDI Advanced Year class conducted focus groups, interviews, and an online survey with Mountain View citizens to collect feedback and identify key trends in the community. The feedback included the “Buzzworthy” (bright spots), the “Stingers” (challenges), and “Building a Better Nest” (opportunities) in each of these community and economic development sectors.

Buzzworthy

- Community pride
- Historic downtown district
- Locally owned and operated weekly newspaper
- Ozark Folk Center
- Walkable downtown
- County seat
- Regional commercial hub
- Quality medical facilities
- Chamber of Commerce
- Disc golf
- Drive-in theater
- Arkansas Craft School
- Walking trails
- Quilt Block Trail
- Resorts and bed and breakfasts
- Stone County Historical Museum
- Music Roots program
- Regional gateway to natural recreation areas
- 38 acre multi-use park
- Variety of health food stores & healthy lifestyle services
- Local apprenticeships
- Festivals
- Senior center
- Ozarka College campus
- Art venues
- Campgrounds and RV parks
- Community of volunteers
- Strong existing industry

Stingers

- Gentrification
- Maintaining community character
- Funding to maintain and improve services, assets and infrastructure
- Utilizing existing facilities
- Blighted conditions
- Workforce substance abuse
- Availability of affordable housing
- Broadband access
- Updated and linked community websites
- Tax base growth
- Dry county
- Out migration of young people
- Access to medical specialists
- Lack of mental health specialists
- Wages
- Diminishing support for volunteer fire department

Building a Better Nest

- Downtown beautification
- Improve communication among stakeholders
- Addressing assets and infrastructure
- Creating, retaining, and recruiting skilled workforce
- Industry and education partnerships
- Review and update sales tax rates
- Engaging younger generation to lead and continue legacy and traditions
- Improved redundancy for power and broadband
- Better promotion of Mountain View
- Increase diversity in community
- Being open to musical diversity
- Permit sale of alcoholic beverages
- Preservation of historic buildings
- Increased access to medical specialists
- Increase services for children and foster families (CASA)

DRIVING TOUR

The driving tour assessment focuses on the community’s physical infrastructure (highways, roads, sidewalks, public utilities, signage and beautification efforts), social infrastructure (schools, healthcare, arts and cultural amenities, parks/recreational amenities and housing) and economic development infrastructure (small businesses, large employers, site and commercial building availability and downtown development). These amenities in the community are rated as very good, average, needs improvement or not available and the CDI Advanced Year team took notes about why each amenity in Mountain View was given a particular rating.

Below are the notes from the CDI 2022 Advanced Year driving tour in Mountain View:

Physical Infrastructure

Sidewalks and Walkability:

- Sidewalks in the central downtown area are available and in good condition, but decrease in presence and quality further out from the square
- Sidewalks in the outer areas of downtown had grass growing through the cracks, crumbling corners, and often were dead-ended.
- Downtown Mountain View lacked sufficient lighting
- Overhanging limbs in the square were a concern; one of our classmates was too tall to walk under them
- Strengths of downtown Mountain View included good wheelchair accessibility and plenty of trash receptacles
- Litter is a concern

Signage:

- Overall, Mountain View had good branded signage, with several notable areas for improvement
- More consistency in signage was needed in the downtown area
- Outside of the downtown area, wayfinding signage was scarce
- Welcome signage was absent coming into town from Timbo

City Streets:

- City streets were rated as good or average overall, but faded parking lines were an area of concern

Economic Development Infrastructure

- Mountain View lacks available sites for new industry
- Great diversity of small businesses
- Need to strengthen networking of business owners
- Although there are few large employers, the city could benefit from strategic recruitment for higher paying jobs
- There are a large number of banks to support business and the community

Downtown:

- No identifiable boundary that distinguished the downtown area from the rest of Mountain View (such as consistent branded signage)
- Most buildings in the downtown area were occupied
- There was a good variety of businesses in the downtown area

Social Infrastructure

Arts and Culture:

- Arts and culture are obviously the bread and butter of Mountain View
- Ample opportunities for the arts all throughout town, including the Pickin' Park, local artisans, the Arkansas Craft School, the Arkansas Folk Center, multiple auditoriums, and museums.

Housing:

- Public housing options in Mountain View need improvement in several key areas:
- Low-income housing areas could be better maintained; the local planning department should address property upkeep
- Housing options for low-income seniors are a possibility
- Minimal new housing and apartment complexes, although the apartment complex "The Dels" was appealing

Healthcare Facilities:

- Many clinics, chiropractors, and other healthcare providers
- Overall, healthcare options seemed extensive and varied and were impressive for a community of Mountain View's size

Schools:

- Opportunities to improve Mountain View Public Schools grounds with landscaping and curb appeal
- Ozarka College campus is beautiful, with a nice amphitheater, student center, auditorium, and surgery tech classroom:
- Wayfinding signage to the college was needed

Parks:

- The park system in Mountain View is impressive
- The tennis courts, volleyball court, and pool are in need of repair and maintenance
- The walking trails and soccer and baseball fields were well maintained



NOTEWORTHY

Based on these observations and the findings of this report, there are several short term steps Mountain View can pursue to further improve the quality of life for Mountain View residents and expand future economic growth. In this section titled “Noteworthy,” the Advanced Year team identified short term steps that can be completed within a year:

1. Engage local business community and community stakeholders with regular Chamber of Commerce meetings to share updates and collaborate.
2. Leverage the historic downtown and business community by creating a downtown merchants association. This will encourage communication between downtown small businesses, and promote business growth and development.
3. Create an interagency task force to enhance communication and collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce, community leaders, elected officials, the mayor, the county judge, Mountain View Public School Superintendent, and other stakeholders.
4. Cultivate a consistent and engaging social media presence for effective communication with Mountain View visitors and the broader community.
5. Create a landing page for all things Mountain View that contains an updated community calendar of events, updated links to community organizations, and crosslink the City of Mountain View and Mountain View Chamber of Commerce websites.
6. Consider co-branding Mountain View and Stone County to increase brand recognition and visibility in the region.
7. Create a leadership development program for the Mountain View and Stone County area for working professionals and high school students to connect local working professionals and develop the next generation of Mountain View leadership.
8. Create comprehensive listings of available (and potential) industrial and commercial sites in both online and print format to prepare for potential business opportunities for Mountain View and Stone County. Contact your AEDC Regional Manager for assistance. Amy Williams (amy.williams@arkansasedc.com)

IN HARMONY

The CDI Advanced Year team also identified several longer term action items that Mountain View can take in a section titled “In Harmony.” These are action items that would take more than one year to accomplish but are a part of a long-term vision to further improve quality of life and expand future economic growth:

1. Create a comprehensive beautification plan for downtown Mountain View that includes creating a clearly defined downtown area, investing in local park clean up efforts, creating enhanced lighting and pedestrian infrastructure, and embracing public art.
2. Utilize national and state affiliations for community and economic development resources. Examples include Keep America Beautiful, Main Street Arkansas, and becoming a Certified Retirement Community.
3. Create support infrastructure for entrepreneurs in the area to encourage small business creation. This could look like partnering with outside entrepreneurship organizations, applying for grants to support entrepreneurs, and integrating entrepreneurship into the local school curriculum.
4. Explore taxing options to capitalize on tourism dollars coming into the Mountain View community. Ex. hotel tax
5. Build upon the success of industry and education partnerships through strengthening the city’s relationship with the high school, Ozarka College, and other career and educational resources.



LOOKING FORWARD

A special thanks to the following individuals for their leadership, cooperation, and hospitality in welcoming the CDI Advanced Year team to Mountain View:

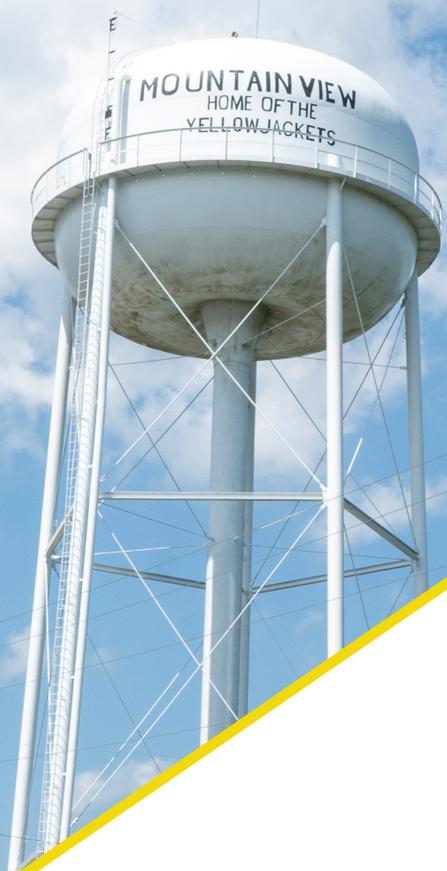
- Mayor Roger Gardner, City of Mountain View
- Stacey Avey, Stone County Judge
- Rianna Kendrick, Executive Director of the Mountain View Area Chamber of Commerce
- Michelle Atchison, Business Development Officer at Centennial Bank
- Brent Howard, Superintendent of the Mountain View School District
- Christopher Smith, Innkeeper of the Wildflower Bed and Breakfast
- Chief George Bethell, Chief of Police at the Mountain View Police Department
- Heath Freeman, Community President at Simmons Bank

We appreciate the community leaders in Mountain View who came out and participated in the focus groups and public presentations. Your participation, positive attitude, and commitment are crucial to the community development process moving forward.

Mountain View is a special place with unique assets, opportunities, and a strong sense of community. You have a great foundation on which to build the future of Mountain View for your children and grandchildren. The citizens of Mountain View and Stone County are the most knowledgeable about your community, and they are in the driver's seat moving forward. We hope this report offers some useful observations, recommendations, and quick wins that will be helpful to you on your journey to continue making Mountain View a place to grow.







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