



## **Tullahoma industrial board inks contract for development survey**

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Tullahoma Industrial Development Board has hired an Austin, Texas, consulting firm to help create a five-year economic development strategy for the city.

Beginning in January, AngelouEconomics will focus on target industries and marketing under a plan to cost an estimated \$65,000. The survey is expected to take about five months to complete.

"It is the board's belief that this is an aggressive investment in the strategic growth of the city," said Jeff Fishman, chairman of the Tullahoma Industrial Board.

The board is in the process of applying to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for a \$50,000 rural business enterprise grant.

"We feel comfortable about getting the grant," Ms. Finn said.

"One of the requirements they look at is if the grant money will be used to provide more jobs, and we certainly want to do that."

The Industrial Board has already approved up to \$20,000 from its marketing budget to be spent on the project.

Several months ago, the board asked for proposals from approximately 15 different economic development companies and, out of the seven responses received, the board chose to interview three companies. Out of the three proposals AngelouEconomics' was chosen.

Kim Finn, executive director of the Tullahoma Industrial Development Board, believes that hiring an external company to evaluate Tullahoma's long-term marketing plan is good investment.

"They will be able to look at the resources we have, and give us exact names and types of businesses we should be looking to bring here – rather than doing a shotgun approach," Ms. Finn said.

Tullahoma has a diversified work base that ranges from a Air Force base to small machine shops, a rubber glove manufacturer and paper-related industries. By far, Tullahoma's largest employer is Arnold Center.

According to the Tullahoma Industrial Board's proposal request, Tullahoma has been perceived stagnant in terms of economic growth and development. In the past 30 to 36 months the city has seen four industries close, primarily because of company consolidations. At their peak employment these industries totaled roughly 690 jobs.

Angelou Economic's development plan will begin with an economic profile of Tullahoma. Consultants will begin compiling demographics such as moderate income, education and diversity. AngelouEconomics' evaluation process will include extensive interviewing of Tullahoma business leaders, plant managers, and other key community players to ensure that the end product reflects the needs of the entire community.

In addition to compiling the demographics of Tullahoma the survey will incorporate the statistics of a 50- to 75-mile radius around the city. Many people who work in Tullahoma do not necessarily live in Tullahoma.

The company has worked with both large and small cities across the United States and in other countries on similar projects. The company helps communities with pinpointing their target industries, and seeking out companies around the world related to their target industry that are looking to expand.

The consulting firm will also put together an advisory board with members of the Tullahoma community serving as representatives. The representatives will be comprised of city leaders, workers, retired people and young people.

"What makes our process work is that we don't create our plans in a vacuum," project manager Nicole Urbis said. "We make sure it is an open process - it's everyone's plan. When everyone in the community is involved they feel proud and want to see things through."

After determining Tullahoma's strengths and weaknesses consultants will identify target industries.

Tullahoma's existing industry is unlikely to be a huge surprise. Manufacturing and retail make up a lot of Tullahoma's workforce.

Once four to six target industries have been identified, AngelouEconomics will provide the names of five companies looking to expand, for each target industry.

While many community members may think they know what their city's main industries are "sometimes people are surprised with our results," Urbis said.

When working on a project for the city of Orlando, the consulting firm discovered a large portion of the city's workforce was technology based.

"They thought there were a few hundred technology-based companies, but our research showed that they actually had several thousand," Urbis said.

Once Tullahoma understands its target industry, AngelouEconomics will provide a five-year marketing plan for the city.

The plan will include ways to build on the city's current potential and strategies to bring new industry into Tullahoma.

"We will provide exact summaries of what needs to be done with marketing and specifics on budgets and training," Urbis said. "We want to give a highly detailed plan so that after we leave community leaders can continue to help the cities economy grow."