

Rough Transcription – Notes from the February 26, 2020, public meeting for Kent County Economic Development Strategic Planning

Strengths

Great people
Culture – (especially) arts
Rural quality of life
Location – surrounded by major markets
Central to the Eastern Seaboard (Maine to Florida)
Heritage tourism
Fiber (will promote telecommuting)
Washington College (source of young employees)
Safety
Route 301
Recreation “wonderland”
Business zones (enterprise, opportunity, hub – means businesses do not pay personal property tax, among other benefits)
School system investment
K-college (“vertical” system of education)
Hospital
Existing businesses offer models and leadership
Small population
Planning & zoning promoting planned growth

Opportunities

Tier One status of county
Utilities/infrastructure in good shape, from broadband and natural gas to all others
Data centers (need to be ready for when H.B. 1339 passes, incentivizing them)
Upcoming re-zoning
Focus on supply chains for existing manufacturers
Federal funding
Boating

Weaknesses

No rail [not quite true, actually, and the reason we still have rail is we have at least one business in need of the service]
Affordable housing is limited
Real estate taxes (Kirwan Commission for statewide education spending requirements, currently under discussion in the current legislative session, are likely to require greater spending by counties, which would have to raise taxes to cover that spending)
Where is Washington College – do we have a proactive partnerships?
Delaware competes for jobs, businesses
Workforce limits (size, training – not clear)
Distance to the community college

Transportation available to county residents (also identified by United Way as a community concern)
Hospital (like all rural hospitals, threatened by changing economics; but MD is looking at special rural hospital legislation)
Employment opportunities for trailing spouses
Shopping/amenities for newcomers (non-rural, unaccustomed to limits)
Tax environment for business growth – the Tax Foundation ranks MD at 43rd; specific concern mentioned about penalizing Priority Funding Areas (generally, municipalities and their immediate surroundings where growth is desired) with ‘double taxation’ (where both county and municipality tax for same services)
Aging population of trades providers
Small population – lack of critical mass to provide demand for services and amenities
Infrastructure limits
Planning & zoning presents obstacles to change (same speaker praised growth management goals)
Appeal to younger consumers
No county grant writer, limited resources

Threats

Conflicting ideas of what “success” looks like – “how do we grow reasonably, in a smart way?”
New Bay Bridge crossing to Kent County
Kirwan (as explained above)

Other Topics

Role of Maryland’s state-level economic development
Gap between KC businesses and KC schools (although the school system is organized around ten topics that enlist businesses, fear is that participation from businesses is low)
Granting process is a challenge and needs more attention, investment (other counties, municipalities employ grant writers)

STRENGTHS (1)

GREAT PEOPLE
 CULTURE - ARTS
 RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE
 LOCATION - SURROUNDED BY MAJOR MARKETS
 CENTRAL TO EASTERN SEABOARD
 HERITAGE TOURISM
 FIBER / TELECOMMUTING
 WASHINGTON COLLEGE
 → SOURCE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
 SAFETY
 ROUTE 301

STRENGTHS (3)

RECREATION "WONDERLAND"
 ENTERPRISE ZONE
 OPPORTUNITY ZONE
 HUB ZONE
 NO PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX FOR BUSINESSES
 SCHOOL SYSTEM INVESTMENT W/ K-COLLEGE ("VERTICAL")
 HOSPITAL
 EXISTING BUSINESSES - LEADERSHIP, EXAMPLES
 SMALL POPULATION - CRITICAL
 PIZ - PLANNED GROWTH MASS

OPPORTUNITIES (5)

TIER ONE COUNTY
 UTILITIES / INFRASTR.
 BROADBAND TO NAT'L GAS
 DATA CENTERS (H.B. 1339)
 RE-ZONING
 FOCUS ON SUPPLY CHAINS
 FEDERAL FUNDING
 BOATING!

OTHER TOPICS

ROLE OF STATE ED WORK
 BUSINESS - SCHOOL GAP
 GRANTING PROCESS

WEAKNESSES

NO RAIL
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
REAL ESTATE TAXES (KIRWAN)
WHERE IS WASHINGTON
COLLEGE - PROACTIVE
PARTNERSHIP?
COMPETITION FOR DELAWARE
WORKFORCE LIMITS
DISTANCE TO COMMUNITY
TRANSPORTATION COLLEGE
HOSPITAL
"TRAILING SPOUSES" & EMPLOYMENT

WEAKNESSES

HOPPING / AMENITIES FOR
NEWCOMERS
MD RANKED 43RD BY
TAX FOUNDATION - PROPERTY
TAX IS REGRESSIVE & FIXED
PEAs ARE PENALIZED MOST
ONE OF THREE MD COUNTIES - DOUBLE
AGEING SERVICE / TRADES TAXATION
SMALL POPULATION
INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITS
P&Z - PROCESS / OBSTACLES
APPEAR TO YOUNGER CONSUMERS
NO COUNTY GRANTWRITER, LIM. RESOURCES

THREATS

CONFLICTING IDEAS OF
WHAT "SUCCESS" LOOKS
LIKE - "HOW DO WE GROW
REASONABLY, IN A SMART
WAY?"
"BRIDGE"
"KIRWAN"

Refined transcription

(Editor’s Note: This is a first attempt at imposing more rigorous categorization and collapse of topics, to be worked out over all three meetings; ultimately, we should create subcategories for Strengths and Weaknesses)

DEFINITIONS (<https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4245-swot-analysis.html>)

Internal factors

Strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) refer to internal factors, which are the resources and experience readily available to you.

These are some commonly considered internal factors:

- Financial resources (funding, sources of income and investment opportunities)
- Physical resources (location, facilities and equipment)
- Human resources (employees, volunteers and target audiences)
- Access to natural resources, trademarks, patents and copyrights
- Current processes (employee programs, department hierarchies and software systems)

External factors

External forces influence and affect every company, organization and individual. Whether these factors are connected directly or indirectly to an opportunity (O) or threat (T), it is important to note and document each one.

External factors are typically things you or your company do not control, such as the following:

- Market trends (new products, technology advancements and shifts in audience needs)
- Economic trends (local, national and international financial trends)
- Funding (donations, legislature and other sources)
- Demographics
- Relationships with suppliers and partners
- Political, environmental and economic regulations

S	W	O	T	Strengths	Notes
(preliminary analysis)				(as stated by participants)	
S				Great people	
S				Culture – (especially) arts	
S				Rural quality of life	
S				Location – surrounded by major markets	
S				Central to the Eastern Seaboard (Maine to Florida)	
W			T	Heritage tourism	T in terms of demand, changing markets
S		O		Fiber (will promote telecommuting)	
S	W	O	T	Washington College (source of young employees)	W in terms of less active partnership across-the-board with campus community (although Pres Landgraf’s support was mentioned as a positive); T in terms of demand for WC by upcoming generations
S				Safety	
S				Route 301	
S				Recreation “wonderland”	

S	W	O	T	Strengths	Notes
(preliminary analysis)				(as stated by participants)	
S		O		Business zones (enterprise, opportunity, hub – means businesses do not pay personal property tax, among other benefits)	
S				School system investment	
S				K-college (“vertical” system of education)	
S				Hospital	Redundant
S		O		Existing businesses offer models and leadership	
S	W			Small population	
S	W			Planning & zoning promoting planned growth	Redundant
				Opportunities	
S		O		Tier One status of county	
S		O		Utilities/infrastructure in good shape, from broadband and natural gas to all others	
		O		Data centers (need to be ready for when H.B. 1339 passes, incentivizing them)	
		O		Upcoming re-zoning	
		O		Focus on supply chains for existing manufacturers	
		O		Federal funding	
S		O		Boating	
				Weaknesses	
	W	O		No rail [not quite true, actually, and the reason we still have rail is we have at least one business in need of the service]	
	W			Affordable housing is limited	
	W		T	Real estate taxes (Kirwan Commission for statewide education spending requirements, currently under discussion in the current legislative session, are likely to require greater spending by counties, which would have to raise taxes to cover that spending)	Real estate taxes in Kent Co are already locally considered high (and regressive) – a weakness; Kirwan is a threat (outside our control)
S	W			Where is Washington College – do we have a proactive partnerships?	Redundant

S	W	O	T	Strengths	Notes
(preliminary analysis)				(as stated by participants)	
			T	Delaware competes for jobs, businesses	
	W			Workforce limits (size, training – issue not made clear)	[Need to get more discussion about this in next meetings]
	W			Distance to the community college	
	W			Transportation available to county residents (also identified by United Way as a community concern)	
S	W	O	T	Hospital (like all rural hospitals, threatened by changing economics; but MD is looking at special rural hospital legislation)	Threat only if MD fails to act on proposal during current legislative session
	W			Employment opportunities for trailing spouses	
	W			Shopping/amenities for newcomers (non-rural, unaccustomed to limits)	
	W		T	Tax environment for business growth – the Tax Foundation ranks MD at 43 rd ; specific concern mentioned about penalizing Priority Funding Areas (generally, municipalities and their immediate surroundings where growth is desired) with ‘double taxation’ (where both county and municipality tax for same services)	
	W	O		Aging population of trades providers	
				Small population – lack of critical mass to provide demand for services and amenities	
	W		T	Infrastructure limits	(This was unclear)
S	W			Planning & zoning presents obstacles to change (same speaker praised growth management goals)	
	W			Appeal to younger consumers	
	W			No county grant writer, limited resources invested in supporting efforts to get grants	
				Threats	
	W			Conflicting ideas of what “success” looks like – “how do we grow reasonably, in a smart way?”	
			T	New Bay Bridge crossing to Kent County	
				Kirwan (as explained above)	Redundant

S	W	O	T	Strengths	Notes
(preliminary analysis)				(as stated by participants)	
				Other Topics	
		O	T	Role of Maryland's state-level economic development	T because one speaker mentioned that the state could be steering possibilities away from Kent (despite its Tier One status)
	W			Gap between KC businesses and KC schools (although the school system is organized around ten topics that enlist businesses, fear is that participation from businesses is low)	
				Granting process is a challenge and needs more attention, investment (other counties, municipalities employ grant writers)	Redundant