
Arab

Strategic Plan

June 2021



An ACE Community is one that encourages cities to work toward achieving high standards across a range of topics including LEADERSHIP, PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, and QUALITY of LIFE issues such as education, healthcare, and public safety. ACE understands each community's unique features and recognizes that every city has different assets, values, concerns, and priorities that may be leveraged to promote growth and prosperity. The city of Arab received its ACE designation in 2012 and continues to value strategic and comprehensive planning and supports local leadership development.

ACE provided an opportunity in 2020-2021 for Arab to update their strategic plan working with an expert strategic planning professional - Dr. Joe Sumners, Executive Director Emeritus, Government & Economic Development Institute, Auburn University. Funds were provided by United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development to support this project.



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Arab Strategic Plan 2021

Vision

"Arab strives to be a safe and welcoming community, noted for its outstanding schools, attractive neighborhoods, and forward-looking leadership. With small-town charm and access to urban amenities, Arab is a great place to live, work, visit, and raise a family."

Priority Issues / Goals

1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ *Recruit new business, industries, and jobs.*
- ◆ *Support existing and small businesses.*
- ◆ *Promote tourism.*

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ *Support a strong workforce training system.*

3. DOWNTOWN & RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ *Support downtown revitalization and retail development.*

4. PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- ◆ *Deliver quality public services to Arab residents.*
- ◆ *Improve Arab's physical infrastructure.*

5. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- ◆ *Enhance community leadership and citizen engagement.*

6. ARAB PROMOTION & IMAGE BUILDING

- ◆ *Promote a positive image of Arab to internal and external audiences.*

7. COMMUNITY APPEARANCE & AESTHETICS

- ◆ *Improve community appearance and aesthetics.*

8. QUALITY OF LIFE

- ◆ *Support and strengthen the healthcare system.*
- ◆ *Expand residential housing opportunities.*
- ◆ *Maintain a strong public school system.*

ARAB STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUES, *Goals & Strategies*

1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- ♦ *Recruit new business, industries and jobs.*

1. Target the recruitment of small (20-50 employee) and large (100-plus employee) companies.
2. Encourage the recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical, research and development).
3. Identify and promote the unique attributes of the community and share information with targeted economic development projects.
4. Maintain a “world-class” economic development website with updated, relevant information for prospective business and industry.

- ♦ *Support existing and small businesses.*

1. Create a checklist of things to do when starting a business in Arab.
2. Develop and implement a strategy for regular outreach to local businesses to express appreciation, inform them of available loan and grant programs, and to obtain information about how to better meet their needs.

- ♦ *Promote tourism.*

1. Support improvements in the hospitality infrastructure, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and entertainment.
2. Develop a branding/identity and marketing campaign for tourism attractions, including Arab Historic Village.
3. Maintain an updated inventory of potential visitor destinations, including events.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

♦ *Support a strong workforce training system.*

1. Coordinate community college technical training curriculums with the needs of local business and industry.
2. Partner with Snead State Community College to build a Regional Training Center in Arab.
3. Expand career tech / dual enrollment programs (with particular attention to cyber security and welding).
4. Establish and support apprenticeship/mentoring programs to meet the needs of local businesses, develop skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers.
5. Provide training in "soft skills" (attitude, dress, interviews, resumes, work ethic) to prepare young people for employment.
6. Develop programs to educate parents about opportunities for technical training and careers for their children.
7. Develop programs to educate middle- and high-school counselors about opportunities for technical training and careers for their students; support career coaches.

3. DOWNTOWN & RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

♦ *Support downtown revitalization and retail development.*

1. Recruit new retail businesses (e.g., restaurants, home improvement stores, specialty shops, etc.) based on community needs / gaps.
2. Pursue grants and provide incentives for downtown merchants to update store fronts.
3. Support Arab participation in the Main Street Program.
4. Create a downtown Arts and Entertainment District (develop, support, and enhance artistic and cultural venues and events).
5. Revise the alcohol license process to make it easier for businesses to successfully apply.

4. PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

♦ *Deliver quality public services for Arab residents.*

1. Promote increased use of the Arab Senior Center, Public Library, and other public facilities
2. Increase support for parks and recreation programs and services.
3. Utilize strategic annexation to expand the city's tax base.
4. Increase collection of outstanding warrants in Court Department to increase government revenues.

♦ *Improve Arab's physical infrastructure.*

1. Encourage the provision of high-speed Internet to areas that need better service.
2. Improve existing sewer facilities and services.
3. Expand park, recreation, and sports facilities, including
 - sidewalks and other pedestrian ways of connecting neighborhoods, schools, downtown, and residential areas,
 - network of trails for walking, hiking, and biking, and
 - upgraded baseball and softball fields.

5. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

♦ *Enhance community leadership and citizen engagement.*

1. Increase the level of business involvement in community improvement efforts.
2. Support, maintain, and enhance the local leadership development program.
3. Engage young people in community initiatives and programs.
 - Support the development of a local youth leadership program.
 - Develop a leadership initiative targeted to young professionals (under-40-years-old); provide opportunities for young adult community
4. Initiate regular meetings of key community stakeholders (government, business, education, civic) to promote collaboration.

5. Provide regular opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, and community improvement projects.
 6. Enhance community racial diversity and engagement.
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6. ARAB PROMOTION & IMAGE BUILDING

♦ *Promote a positive image of Arab to internal and external audiences.*

1. Communicate Arab success stories (education, healthcare, industry, community, etc.) to audiences within and outside the community.
 2. Develop a marketing and recruitment plan to attract young adults and working families to Arab.
 3. Create a hospitality class for local business owners and employees.
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7. COMMUNITY APPEARANCE & AESTHETICS

♦ *Improve community appearance and aesthetics.*

1. Establish an Arab Pride Campaign to provide incentives for anti-litter activities and for clean-up and improve buildings, yards, and neighborhoods; provide recognition for well-maintained yards and homes (involve schools and local businesses).
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8. QUALITY OF LIFE

♦ *Support and strengthen the healthcare system.*

1. Expand community access to mental health services.
 2. Improve collaboration between the city government and the Marshall County Health Care Authority to improve the delivery of healthcare services.
 3. Expand community assistance/services for low-income residents and others in need.
 4. Recruit and retain health care providers and professionals (doctors, dentists, nurses, etc.).
 5. Utilize telemedicine (remote diagnosis and treatment) to extend healthcare in areas with limited access to physicians.
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6. Develop healthcare educational programs for early detection/treatment (Diabetes, etc.)

- ♦ *Expand residential housing opportunities.*

1. Provide a variety of housing opportunities for young people and families (apartments, starter homes, condos, townhouses, etc.) (engage real estate developers).
2. Provide housing opportunities for senior citizens (including assisted living facility).

- ♦ *Maintain a strong public education system.*

1. Support a positive, collaborative relationship between the city government and the Board of Education.

The following people participated in the Arab Strategic Planning process:

- ♦ Tanya Alexander
- ♦ Mike Allen
- ♦ Matt Arnold
- ♦ John Arthur
- ♦ Kelly Auman
- ♦ John Barnes
- ♦ Angie Bell
- ♦ Seth Bell
- ♦ Dr. Johnny Berry
- ♦ Daniel Bowling
- ♦ Anna Clark
- ♦ Melissa Cook
- ♦ Claudette DeMuth
- ♦ Mark Gullion
- ♦ Kelly Harper
- ♦ Johnny Hart
- ♦ Becky Hawkins
- ♦ Eric Hayes
- ♦ Brooke Hemphill
- ♦ Chris Hemphill
- ♦ Pat Henry
- ♦ Rebecca Hinds
- ♦ Christy Holmes
- ♦ Ted Hyatt
- ♦ Sara James
- ♦ Kim Johnson
- ♦ Katherine Jones
- ♦ Bob Joslin
- ♦ Richard Lawson
- ♦ Clay Leak
- ♦ Clint Maze
- ♦ Alan Miller
- ♦ Jynnah Mooney
- ♦ Dawn Morgan
- ♦ Jason Fuller
- ♦ Jennifer Palmer
- ♦ Ricky Phillips
- ♦ Dameon Pittenger
- ♦ Brody Potter
- ♦ Kathy Ramsey
- ♦ John Richey
- ♦ Phoenix Robinson
- ♦ Claudia Schultz
- ♦ Mary Shell
- ♦ Curtis Snider
- ♦ Helen Stone
- ♦ Mitch Stone
- ♦ Maggie Thrower
- ♦ Eric Tidwell
- ♦ Jeremiah Yates
- ♦ Shane Washburn
- ♦ Rodney Willingham
- ♦ Tony Willis
- ♦ Stacey White