

# ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION OF CAMDEN COUNTY, GEORGIA

## Economic Development Program Assessment

*Prepared for*

The Camden Partnership  
Camden County Public Service Authority

*Prepared by*

Georgia Tech's Office of Economic Development & Technology Ventures

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Atlanta, GA 30332

## OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this report is to inventory the economic development organizations whose primary responsibility is to provide leadership, service and focus for the entire County including the incorporated Cities - and to provide an assessment of the economic development program capacity, that is, the capacity for business recruitment and development, within Camden County. The main sources of information for this section of work are listed below.

1. One-on-one interviews with 93 community stakeholders conducted by Georgia Tech personnel during May and June of 2005
2. One-on-one interviews with statewide and regional economic development partners conducted by Georgia Tech personnel during July and August of 2005.
3. An Economic Development Organization survey conducted by Georgia Tech personnel
4. One-on-one interviews with community leadership
5. Various visits to the community during the course of the assessment
6. Public information
7. Review of studies provided by the community

The foundation of this assessment is based upon the responses from the community leadership, the various economic development organizations, and items discovered in the review of reports and studies.

## WHAT EXTERNAL PARTNERS SAY<sup>2</sup>

Camden County's partners were asked to share their views on the economic development efforts in Camden County and Coastal Georgia as a whole. They were asked to provide a rating of 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all well and 5 means very well. In general, partners rated Camden's, as well as Coastal Georgia's, economic development efforts highly. Notably, partners did not provide either Camden County or Coastal Georgia with a rating below 3, the median mark on the scale. Stakeholders provided an average rating of 3.67 to the community's efforts, exceeding the median mark. This indicates that positive ratings outweighed negative ratings in each case. Partners provided several comments complimenting Camden County's current efforts. Two suggestions were also offered. One was to increase marketing to statewide economic developers. Another was to develop a criteria-based incentives program.

Partners were also asked to share their views regarding how marketable Camden County is for five key economic development strategies related to the future prosperity of the community. For each, they were asked to use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "not at all marketable" and 5 means "very marketable." In general, partners viewed Camden to be marketable for all five strategies, with each having an average rating that exceed 3, the median mark on the scale. This indicates that positive ratings outweighed negative ratings in each case. Partners provided the highest average rating (4.32) to Camden County's marketability for tourism. Such a rating denoted the general view that Camden is marketable or very marketable for attracting tourists. Business retention or expansion was also viewed as an activity Camden is quite marketable for. Stakeholders provided this an average rating of 3.9. Community stakeholders also viewed these strategies to be important to Camden's future prosperity.

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<sup>1</sup> This report is part of the "Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia" series of reports that were completed by Georgia Tech in October 2005. For information on other reports in the series, please contact The Camden Partnership.

<sup>2</sup> Information extracted from the companion report, "Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia: Summary of Interviews with Statewide and Regional Economic Development Partners."

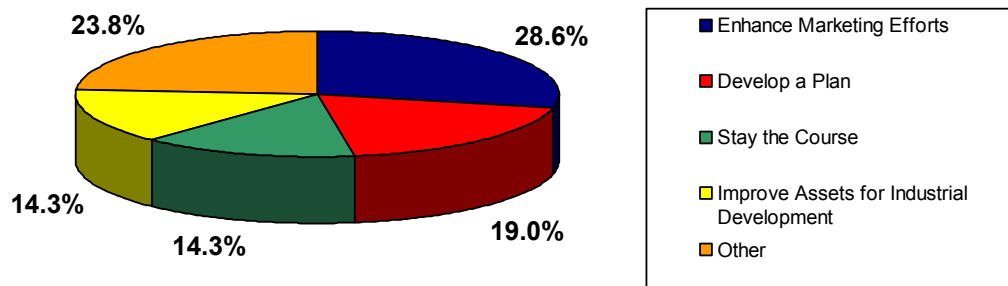
	MARKETABILITY RATING BY PARTNERS	IMPORTANCE RATING BY STAKEHOLDERS
Developing a quality work force	3.56	4.76
Recruiting new industry to move to your community	3.87	4.53
Helping local businesses sustain and expand their operations	3.90	4.40
Supporting entrepreneurs / fostering business start-ups activity	3.88	4.27
Attracting more tourists to visit your community	4.32	4.10

Partners were asked to offer suggestions for what Camden County should do to increase its competitiveness. Enhancing or augmenting marketing efforts received the highest mention (28.6 percent). Following are some specific suggestions.

- Be very aggressive about advertising what they have.
- Camden County could do well in marketing directly to site selection consultants.
- Camden County should continue to promote their many attributes and do everything possible to recruit more tourism and business and economic development and also protect their environmental resources.
- Do more marketing - they can do some of their own nationwide marketing.
- Enhance relations with statewide developers. Make regular calls or visits.
- Market core competencies and to what they want to attract.
- Target their market - rather than using a shotgun approach.

Developing a plan was the second highest mentioned suggestion, accounting for 19 percent of responses. Other suggestions mentioned to a fair degree related to “staying the course” and improving assets for industrial development (e.g., park).

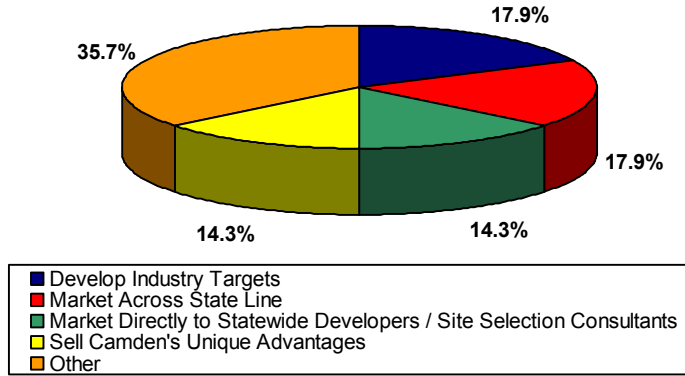
**What Should Camden County Do To Increase Its Competitiveness?**



Developing industry targets and marketing across the state line (into Florida) received the highest mention (17.9 percent) by partners when asked for suggestions on what Camden should do with regards to marketing. Marketing directly to statewide developers and site selection consultants, and,

developing a selling strategy based on Camden’s unique advantages also received a fair degree of mention, each accounting for 14.3 percent of the responses.

**What Should Camden do With Regards to Marketing?**



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (EDOs)**

Camden County has many entities that have some role and responsibility for the economic development and direction of the County. Many of these are discussed in other sections of this study. To be successful it is important these are acting in concert and harmony with each other to develop a truly innovative and sustainable economic process. In most communities economic development is a program based system which often becomes ineffective. To be sustainable and innovative a program based system must transition to a process based system. The transition from a program to a process requires the integration of the components of economic development, including the EDOs, into a unified effort striving to achieve the overall vision of the community. It does not require the loss of individual EDO identity. In fact a process encourages and supports the success of individual EDOs regardless of its service delivery area. A system of this design recognizes and builds upon the team concept. A process based system is developed around the concept of plan, do, check and act. It is constantly adjusting and changing to achieve its mission. A key advantage of a process based system is that it is very flexible, innovative and quick acting.

Given this introduction and premise, the team members identified EDOs whose primary responsibilities are to develop and implement the economic development goals and objectives for Camden County. These EDOs are identified in table 1.

**Table 1: Economic Development Organizations**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Contact</i>
<i>Camden Joint Development Authority</i>	Joint Development		X	Camden County City of St Marys City of Kingsland City of Woodbine	Bob Noble, Executive Director

Table 1: Economic Development Organizations (Continued)

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Contact</i>
<i>Camden - Kings Bay Chamber of Commerce</i>	Organization		X	Camden County City of St Marys City of Kingsland City of Woodbine	Christine Daniel, President / CEO
<i>The Camden Partnership</i>	Organization		X	County-wide	Walt Yourstone, Executive Director
<i>Development Authority of St. Marys</i>	Development	X		City of St Marys	Alyce Thornhill, Director
<i>Kingsland Development Authority</i>	Downtown Development	X		City of Kingsland	Matt LeCerf, Director
<i>Kingsland Downtown Development Authority</i>	Downtown Development	X		City of Kingsland	Matt LeCerf, Director
<i>St Marys Downtown Development Authority</i>	Downtown Development	X		City of St Marys	Alyce Thornhill, Director
<i>Woodbine Downtown Development Authority</i>	Downtown Development	X		City of Woodbine	Winton Robbins, Director
<i>Kingsland Convention and Visitors Bureau</i>	Tourism	X		City of Kingsland	Tonya Rosato, Director
<i>St. Marys Convention and Visitors Bureau</i>	Tourism	X		City of St Marys	Janet Brinko, Director

Sources: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Community Leadership

The reader should not conclude that entities not listed are not important and have no responsibility. As previously mentioned, the transition from a program to a process will not occur without the

integration of everyone - County & City governments, EDOs and the citizenry of Camden County into a unified plan.

Our research revealed the day to day operation of the St. Marys Downtown Development Authority (St. Marys DDA) and the Development Authority of St. Marys (St. Marys IDA) is being managed by a single director. Technically these are two distinct authorities but for purposes of our survey and analysis the response to the survey by the director was treated as a single response representative of both authorities. The Kingsland Development Authority was excluded from the pool because we were informed it simply owns and maintains a golf course. This provided a response pool of eight (8). The response rate to the survey was 100 percent.

The EDOs were requested to respond to questions designed to provide insight into four areas of their organization.

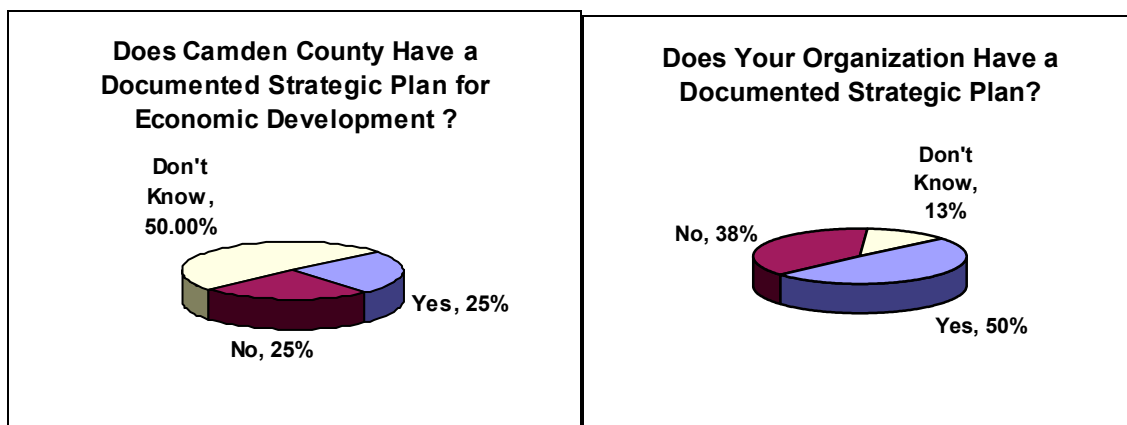
1. Mission & Focus
2. Service Delivery
3. Capacity & Structure
4. Relationships

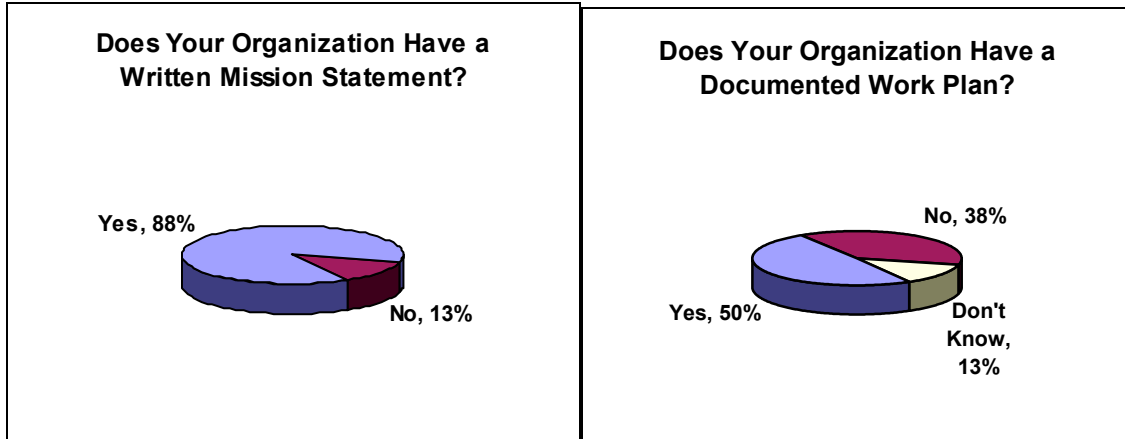
The objective being to identify key issues and make recommendations that will assist and encourage Camden County to transition from a program based system to a process based system.

## FINDINGS FROM EDO SURVEY

### Mission & Focus

The purpose of this section is to determine if the basic tools are in place which can be used as building blocks to achieve the goal of diversification of Camden County's economy. The research objective is to first determine if there is Vision (Strategic Planning), then Purpose (Mission) and finally Focus (Work Plans). The results are presented in the charts below.





The county does not have a county-wide economic development strategic plan. This is an important issue because a strategic plan provides the vision, focus, direction, and accountability for the economic development processes within the county. An economic development void exists in the absence of this plan; resulting in fragmented and uncoordinated efforts.

In addition, not all of the EDOs have an organizational strategic plan. By design each EDO is essentially a stand alone entity with its own governing board and different jurisdictions. Service delivery area and responsibilities vary depending on the EDO. 50 percent (4) of the EDO's surveyed have a documented strategic plan and three of those (38 percent) have measurable metrics as part of their work plan.

Strategic plans provide the long term goals which become the foundation to develop short term objectives to achieve those goals. Work plans provide accountability and metrics are used to measure progress.

## Service Delivery

### 1. Who is doing what?

The activities of EDO's generally center around four key areas of economic development. These are:

1. Retail, Commercial and Small Business Development
2. Industrial Development (Recruitment and Retention)
3. Tourism Development
4. Entrepreneurial Development

An innovative, diverse economic development plan will assure that effective county-wide service delivery is provided in each of these areas and that the EDOs with city only service delivery responsibility are integrated into the plan. The purpose of this study was not to determine the quality of service being delivered but rather to determine if a gap in service is present. When asked to identify the primary focus of their organization the EDOs responded as follows:

Table 2: Primary Focus of EDOs

Organization	Retail, Commercial and Small Business Development	Industrial Recruitment & Retention	Tourism	Entrepreneurs
Camden Joint Development Authority (JDA)		●		
Camden-Kings Bay Area Chamber of Commerce	●			●
The Camden Partnership		●		
Kingsland Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	● (Downtown)		●	
Kingsland Conventions & Visitors Bureau (CVB)			●	
St. Marys Downtown Development Authority (DDA) & Industrial Development Authority (IDA)	●	●	●	●
St. Marys Conventions & Visitors Bureau (CVB)			●	
Woodbine Downtown Development Authority (DDA)	● (Downtown)			

As can be seen from table 2 there is no gap in service delivery and based on interviews with the various EDOs each seem to have a clear understanding of their mission.

When asked “What economic development organization has the primary responsibility for specific areas of economic development?” the responses were as follows:

- Retail, Commercial, and Small Business
  - The Chamber of Commerce (50 percent)
  - Local jurisdictions (25 percent)
  - The Chamber & Camden Joint Development Authority (JDA) (12.5 percent)
  - The County Commissioners (12.5 percent)
- Industrial Recruitment
  - The JDA (100 percent)
- Industrial Retention
  - The Camden JDA (75 percent)
  - Local officials (12.5 percent)
  - Jointly the Chamber & Camden JDA (12.5 percent)

- Tourism Development
  - The Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) (57 percent)
  - Local jurisdictions (43 percent)
- Entrepreneur Development
  - A local responsibility (29 percent)
  - Chamber of Commerce (29 percent)
  - Camden JDA (14 percent)
  - Camden JDA & the Cities (14 percent)
  - DDAs (14 percent)

The following observations are made from the EDO responses:

1. The only area that is perceived as 100 percent the responsibility of a single EDO is “Industrial Recruitment.” In all other areas there are shared responsibilities among multiple EDOs.
2. Business development (Retail, Commercial and Small Business) is largely seen as being the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce. However, this responsibility is also shared by other EDOs and county & local jurisdictions (city governments and DDA’s)
3. Tourism development is viewed as being the responsibility of the two CVBs. Nearly half (47 percent) of the EDOs indicate local jurisdictions and the DDAs have a responsibility for tourism development.
4. Entrepreneur development - at the time of the survey there was confusion among the EDOs as to which was taking the lead role for entrepreneur development in Camden County. Each recognized its responsibility in this area but no clear leader for this effort was identified. Entrepreneurial impact is often overlooked by communities. According to the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) of the 400,000 incorporated companies in Georgia over 95 percent employ 50 or less people. The development of an entrepreneur friendly culture can pay significant dividends for Camden County and should be a key objective to diversify its economy.

Since the survey was completed the Chamber is leading the community effort to become a Entrepreneur Friendly Community (EFC). This is a community-wide process developed and facilitated by the GDEcD. The process focuses on community-wide cultural changes that fosters and encourages entrepreneurial activities. Everyone should *“get on board”* - City & County governments, all EDOs, and the citizens of Camden County.

The EDOs response to the question, confirm and support the need to delineate specific responsibilities and coordinate efforts.

**2. What Area of Economic Development Has the Greatest Potential?**

Each EDO was asked to rank in order of priority from one to five, with one being the area with the most potential, which area of economic development has the greatest potential for Camden County. A weighted average was computed to determine the area of greatest potential. A low score indicates a higher potential for economic development.

Area	Score
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1. Retail, Commercial, Small Business Development	1.8
2. Industrial Recruitment	2.5
3. Tourism	3.4
4. Entrepreneur Development	3.6
5. Industrial Retention	3.7

Over 90 stakeholders were asked to respond to a very similar question which focused on areas important to the future posterity of Camden County<sup>3</sup>. The top five are listed below.

1. Workforce Development
2. Recruit New Industry
3. Support Existing Business and Industry (retention and expansion needs)
4. Support Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses
5. Tourist Attraction

External partners were asked to rate the marketability of Camden County in specific areas. Their response in order of priority is below<sup>4</sup>:

1. Attracting more tourist
2. Helping local business sustain and expand
3. Support Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses
4. Recruiting new industry
5. Developing a quality workforce

One must be careful when drawing conclusions from these responses since the questions posed to the three groups were similar but technically different. Having pointed this out - the common thread between the responses is where Camden County should focus its efforts and resources to diversify and grow its economic base. A comparison of the “community stakeholders” to the “external partners” reveals they are exactly inverted to each other. For some reason the stakeholders do not view the attraction of tourist very important while the external partners view it as the most marketable area.

**3. How Well Are Needs Being Met?**

The EDOs were requested to rate from one to five, one being ‘not all adequate’ and five being “very adequate”, how well the community needs are being met in the specific areas of economic development. As before, a weighted response was calculated to determine an overall rating. A score of “3” indicates an average rating. Collectively the EDOs rated every area below average. For those areas below average, opportunity for coordinated action exists.

Area	Score
1. Retail, Commercial, Small Business Development	2.5
2. Tourism	2.5

<sup>3</sup> For Further information see the companion report “Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia: “Summary of Interviews with Community Stakeholders.”

<sup>4</sup> For further information see the companion report “Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia: “Summary of Interviews with Statewide and Regional Economic Development Partners.”

3. Industrial Recruitment	2.7
4. Entrepreneur Development	2.8
5. Industrial Retention	2.9

The community stakeholders were requested to rate how well the needs are being met in the areas of Entrepreneur and Small Business Development using the ranking - one being "not at all well" and five "very well." The average rating provided was 2.7 indicating the stakeholders' view that needs are not being met well and this parallels EDO views. By comparing the two ratings in the small businesses category it can be concluded the EDOs and stakeholders are in general agreement as to how well their needs are being met.

Similarly, stakeholders were asked to rate how well the needs of existing business and industry are being met. The average rating provided by stakeholders was 3.54, above the median mark of 3, indicating that high ratings outweighed the low ratings. In other words, stakeholders largely viewed Camden to be supporting its existing business and industry well, which is a more positive view than the EDOs shared considering the average rating they provided for industry retention was 2.9.

### Capacity & Structure

The objective of this section was designed to provide insight into the organizations mainly for informational purposes and the survey was targeted toward staffing and budgets.

#### Budgets

The combined budgets for all seven EDOs total \$1,380,699. Two EDOs have a budget of \$0 and two share a budget of \$75,000. One hundred percent of the Hotel & Motel tax dollars collected by the City of St. Marys are returned to the CVB budget. The CVB in turn supplements and leverages its budget by donations and partnering with private entities for specific marketing and advertising campaigns. The City of Kingsland returns 40 percent of the Hotel & Motel tax dollars collected to the Kingsland CVB. The Kingsland CVB is noticeably higher than St. Marys' primarily because St. Marys overnight lodging is mostly limited to Bed and Breakfast establishments located in the historic district. The Camden - Kings Bay Chamber of Commerce is funded 100 percent by dues and subscriptions. The Camden JDA is 100 percent funded by 1 mil of the taxes collected by the county.

The EDOs were asked "Is your budget sufficient to allow you to meet the objectives of your organization?" The possible rating was between one and five. A rating of one was not at all adequate and a rating of five was very adequate. One EDO did not respond to this question and the weighted average of the remaining seven was "2.9" which is slightly less than an average rating. The Camden JDA, the Kingsland CVB and the St. Marys IDA & DDA responded that their budgets are adequate to meet their objectives. The Kingsland DDA, the Woodbine DDA and the Camden-Kings Bay Chamber do not feel their budget is sufficient to meet their objectives. The Camden Partnership provided a rating of 3.0.

The Kingsland and the Woodbine DDA have no operating budget. Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) are vital to the development and redevelopment of downtown areas. Strong consideration should be given to funding these authorities.

#### Staffing

With the exception of the Woodbine DDA, each EDO has at least one full time person. The Camden JDA, the Camden-Kings Bay Chamber, and the Kingsland CVB each have two. Among the EDOs, the use of part time employees is not a practice except for the St. Marys CVB which employs three and The

Camden Partnership which employs one. It was estimated that all EDO's combined used a total of 209 volunteers annually. The St. Marys CVB is leading the group with an estimate of 150 volunteers annually. Of particular concern is that the Woodbine DDA has no full time or part time staff. The Director is a volunteer and has no staff.

The use of volunteers is a great way to leverage limited resources and solidify community commitment to EDO objectives. There should be a conscious effort to increase the use of volunteers by all EDOs. Additionally consideration should be given to providing at least a part time staff worker to the Woodbine DDA.

## **PROFILES OF COUNTY WIDE EDOS**

Profiled below are the two county wide economic development organizations due to their primary responsibility for business development within the county. Tourism-related development issues are covered in a companion report, "Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia: Tourism Development Report."

### **Camden County Joint Development Authority**

The Camden County Joint Development Authority is located in Kingsland and represents the entire county. It is referred to as a joint authority because it represents the three cities and county. It is fairly rare for a development authority to refer to itself as a JDA when it represents a single county (rather than multiple counties) but the term denotes the buy-in of four distinct jurisdictions.

The JDA is run by a nine-member board with members who serve staggered 6-year terms. The board appears to have a diverse representation of county interests such as local banks, area utilities, real estate, retirees, former government officials, and the Georgia Department of Labor. Each city has two appointees and the county has three appointees to the board. The JDA executive reports that business can always be conducted at the JDA meetings as reaching quorum is never an issue. Board members are reported to be active in several other community organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.).

Staffing the JDA is one executive director and one executive assistant, both full-time. The executive director has had extensive experience in the fields of planning - having worked as development director for three different regional development centers (RDCs) in Georgia - development authority administration, and public accounting.

The JDA serves approximately 3 to 4 business prospects a month, those seeking to expand or relocate into Camden County. Approximately three-fourths of the prospect activity is reported to be generated through direct leads outside of those provided through the state. The JDA also provides assistance to approximately six existing industry contacts per month. In addition, the JDA executive reports that the organization also addresses approximately two requests per month for help in starting a small business.

The JDA executive reports that approximately 40 percent of JDA business is spent on business marketing and recruitment, 20 percent on helping existing business and industry expand, 10 percent on serving active prospects in the area, and the balance of the time in supporting community support projects such as those related to water, sewers, and roads.

### **Camden-Kings Bay Area Chamber of Commerce**

The Camden-Kings Bay Area Chamber of Commerce is located in St. Mary's and represents the entire county. The chamber has a 15-member board of directors with members who serve three-year terms. The board appears to represent fairly diverse civic and business interests. Most of the board members are reported to be Rotarians, some are Kiwanians.

The chamber is staffed by an executive director and executive assistant, both full-time. The executive director has been at the helm for approximately 7 months. The chamber executive has an extensive background in non-profit administration and resource development. Chamber membership has increased significantly under this director's short tenure, growing from approximately 291 members to 386 members, or by 32.6 percent. The chamber was reportedly inactive under previous executive directors and has therefore essentially been in a rebuilding mode which is akin to a start up mode but with greater challenges due to perceptions about the organization stemming from previous experiences with the organization.

Much of the chamber's membership base is existing business and industry, including small businesses and entrepreneurs. Eighty-five percent of the membership is served through regular emails as well as the Ambassador Program through which members are regularly contacted by chamber ambassadors to see how they're doing and how the chamber can better support their needs. The chamber executive reports that the organization addresses approximately five requests per month from persons seeking to start a small business. In addition, it is estimated that the chamber helps approximately 20 existing small businesses per month on a variety of needs.

The chamber executive reports that approximately 40 percent of chamber business is spent on building membership / strengthening member services, 40 percent on meeting and networking with other community organizations and entities, 10 percent of the time on conducting or attending special community events, and the balance of the time on miscellaneous duties.

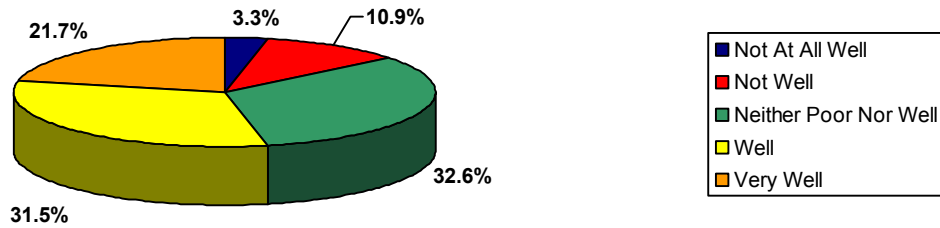
## Other

Both the JDA and Chamber discussed the important role of The Camden Partnership. The purpose of this organization is to focus on representing Camden County as far as Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay is concerned both in Washington, DC, as well as locally. The Camden Partnership is seen as providing a critical link between the base and community, and is led by a U.S. Navy retiree who once served as the Commanding Officer at Kings Bay.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

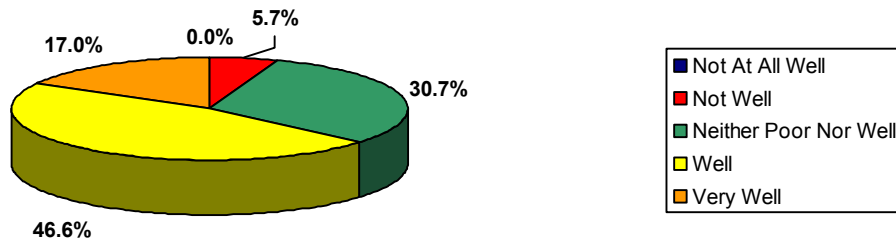
Community stakeholders were asked to express their views on how well the community's leadership support Camden County's economic development. They were asked to provide a rating of 1 to 5 where 1 means "not at all well" and five means "very well." Camden County's leadership support for economic development was rated fairly high by stakeholders. Stakeholders provided an average rating of 3.6, above the median mark of 3, indicating that the number of high ratings outweighed the number of low ratings. More than half (53.3 percent) provided a rating of 4 or 5, indicating their view that the financial organizations meet the community's economic development needs well or very well. This was on par with the rating provided by the EDOs when asked a similar question. External economic development partners rated leadership support even more favorably, with an average rating of 3.97.

### **How Well Does Camden County's Leadership Support Economic Development?**



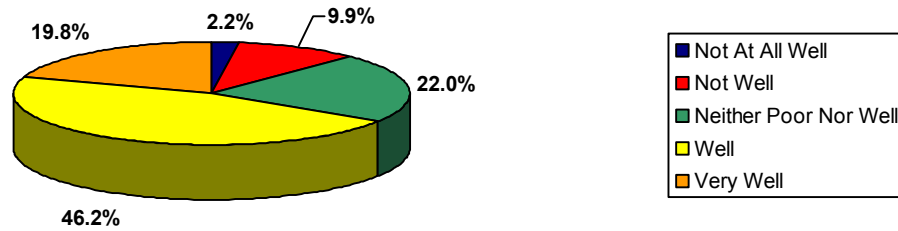
Stakeholders were also asked to express their views on how well the community’s citizenry support Camden County’s economic development. Camden County’s citizen support for economic development was rated fairly high by stakeholders. Stakeholders provided an average rating of 3.76, notably above the median mark of 3, indicating that the number of high ratings outweighed the number of low ratings. The stakeholder rating is also higher than the average rating (3.3) provided by EDOs when asked a similar question and the average ratings provided by stakeholders and EDOs when asked about leadership support for economic development. As with leadership support, external economic development partners rated citizen support more favorably with an average of 3.87 provided.

**How Well Does Camden County’s Citizenship Support Economic Development?**



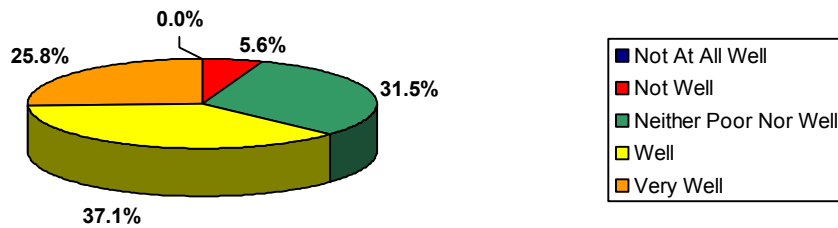
Stakeholders were also asked to express their views on how well the community’s leadership support Camden County’s quality growth, which has a synergistic relationship with economic development. Camden County’s leadership support for quality growth was rated fairly high by stakeholders. Stakeholders provided an average rating of 3.71, above the median mark of 3, indicating that the number of high ratings outweighed the number of low ratings. This was higher than the average rating (3.6) provided by stakeholders when asked about leadership support for economic development.

**How Supportive Is Camden County’s Leadership of Quality Growth?**



Camden County's citizenship support for quality growth was also rated high by stakeholders. Stakeholders provided an average rating of 3.84, well above the median mark of 3, indicating that the number of high ratings outweighed the number of low ratings. This was higher than the average rating (3.76) provided by stakeholders when asked about citizen support for economic development and also higher than the average rating (3.71) when asked about leadership support for quality growth.

#### How Supportive Is Camden County's Citizenry of Quality Growth?



## RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS

The relationship analysis sought to do two things. First, to probe into the relationships between the various EDOs and local governments to:

1. Identify which single entity (EDO or government) the EDOs view as having the leadership responsibility for the economic development of Camden County
2. Identify which relationships the EDOs feel are the most important to allow them to meet their goals and objectives
3. A measurement of the current status to the relationships

Secondly, the analysis seeks to rate the effectiveness of working relationships to 21 local and regional entities.

Each EDO was asked to identify which entity has the overall *leadership responsibility* for the economic development of Camden County and 77.4 percent responded the Camden JDA.

Using a scale of one to five, one being not at all important and five being very important (the higher the score the more important the relationship) each EDO was requested to rate the relationship with other EDOs in three areas:

1. The importance of the relationship with other EDOs in terms of the responding EDO in meeting its goals and objectives
2. A rating of the relationship
3. Whether the relationship is improving, stagnant or declining.

A weighted average was computed and the results presented below.

EDO	Importance of Relationship	Rating of Actual Relationship	Status		
			Improving	Stagnant	Declining
Camden JDA	4.1	2.0	50%	50%	0%
Chamber	3.7	3.7	50%	33%	17%
The Camden Partnership	3.3	2.9	40%	60%	0%
			Status		
EDO	Importance of Relationship	Rating of Actual Relationship	Improving	Stagnant	Declining
Kingsland DDA	4.0	3.7	75%	25%	0%
Kingsland CVB	3.7	3.1	67%	33%	0%
St. Marys IDA	3.4	2.9	40%	60%	0%
St. Marys DDA	4.1	3.9	75%	25%	0%
St. Mary CVB	3.4	3.1	80%	20%	0%
Woodbine DDA	3.4	3.0	60%	40%	0%
City Government	5.0	4.2	100%	0%	0%
County Government	3.9	2.6	67%	33%	0%

One interesting observation is that the EDOs view the Camden JDA as the entity most responsible to provide overall leadership for economic development and the importance of the relationship to the JDA is rated high (4.1). However, the actual relationship is rated at 2.0 which is below the mean of 3.0. Additionally 50 percent of the EDOs rate the relationship as stagnant. The JDA should take the lead in developing an action plan to improve the working relationships with all EDOs.

The EDOs were asked to rate the effectiveness of the working relationship to 21 local and regional entities. One hundred percent of those responding to the question indicated the relationship was above the mean of 3.0 indicating a healthy relationship.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Camden County has the key components and is well positioned to recruit and attract industries and businesses.
- Ample Economic Development Organizations are present within the community to diversify and grow the economy.
- Each EDO will need to revisit its mission, align these with the county-wide diversification goal as appropriate, and finally develop marketing strategies and action plans to accomplish their mission.
- The county and cities will need to review the staffing and budgeting of each EDO and adjust where appropriate to accomplish the goals.
- Camden County's economic development efforts must transition from a program based system to a process based system. Each EDO will need to be seamlessly integrated into a county-wide plan.
- The relationship between the Camden JDA and the EDOs is considered important but is strained and stagnant.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Issue	Strategic Goal
Camden County appears to have made great strides in collaboration among local economic development organizations and local government entities. However, many efforts happening within the community that do not appear to be well-coordinated.	→ Continue efforts to collaborate and work together to develop a cohesive focus. The effort to develop <i>and</i> implement the community's economic diversification plan should have ongoing county-wide participation.

1. **Camden County should develop an organizational structure that integrates functional areas of economic development across the county and cities, and identifies champions for each functional area.** Specifically, the county and cities should consider organizational structures, operating methods, and accountability that leverage and coordinate these individual resources. The objective should be a seamless integration of all the EDOs that aligns and harmonizes individual EDO goals and objectives with those of the county. Camden County should also explore the feasibility and opportunities associated with locating its EDOs with county-wide responsibility in one central location.
2. **Camden County's leadership and economic development organizations should work together to develop a county-wide economic development strategic plan.** Recommendations provided by Georgia Tech for economic diversification are intended to provide the basis for this plan. Widespread participation should be encouraged. Individual EDOS should adopt measurable metrics and action plans based on the strategic plan.
3. **The JDA should take the lead in developing an action plan to improve the working relationships with all EDOs.** This action plan should be based on mutual objectives developed by the JDA in concert with the EDOs.
4. **To improve community awareness and create greater ownership among community groups, all EDOs should track success metrics and share those statistics and successes via quarterly and annual reports to all stakeholders.** Staff should set baseline goals and track all new business, business retention and expansion, community support requests, and follow-up meetings, amongst other things. These metrics, however, should not focus exclusively on "wins" but also on small success steps in building the brand, networking, etc.
5. **All EDOs should meet regularly to coordinate activities through the Economic Development Roundtable coordinated by the chamber or some other vehicle.** Regular networking and sharing of information specifically on economic development initiatives should be employed. Parties should understand that economic development-related information may be of a sensitive nature, and "rules of order" should be adopted accordingly.
6. **The chamber should continue to develop its organizational structure, building on the progress it has made during its start-up mode.** Following are some suggestions to consider:
  - Review of board member roles and responsibilities, particularly in relationship to resource development.
  - Visiting other successful chambers serving communities of similar size to learn best practices.

- Additional signage directing visitors to the chamber's offices, and some consideration to eventually relocating to a more central location.
7. **Camden County should determine what industries to pursue, based in part on information provided through the companion report "Economic Diversification of Camden County, Georgia: Business Development Opportunities."** The EDOs should develop a joint marketing package that showcases Camden's advantages specifically for those industries, and a JDA-led sales team of all EDOs, as well as key officials in local government, should expand direct marketing efforts to site selection consultants and statewide economic developers.
  8. **Camden County's EDOs should consider developing joint materials for dissemination to prospective businesses, residents, tourists, and other investors.** This could include a joint economic development newsletter showcasing assets and key accomplishments in the various areas of economic development. Another idea involves a joint Web portal for Camden County economic development that links all the existing Web sites for the various EDOs but provides one Web destination to go to for all economic development-related information on Camden County.
  9. **The county and its municipalities should jointly investigate workable structures for the promotion and development of tourism.** Options include incorporating tourism into the missions of existing structures, such as the JDA or chamber, or the creation of a countywide CVB.