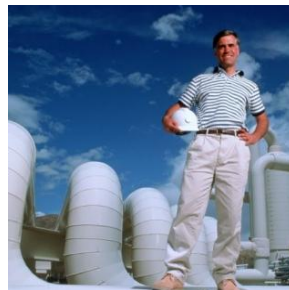


# **BLUEPRINT 2011** MISSISSIPPI **ROAD SHOW**

Conducted by



## 2011 Blueprint Mississippi Road Show Report

***MEC Blueprint Mississippi Road Show***

***Sponsored by***



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Mississippi**

*Committed to a Healthier Mississippi.*

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## Blueprint Mississippi Overview

Blueprint Mississippi is a major statewide initiative to create a strategic plan to put Mississippi in the place of greatest opportunity. The Mississippi Economic Council, the Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development and Momentum Mississippi are working together to develop the Blueprint 2011 initiative. The \$1.25 million research project is totally funded by the private sector.

## Vision

Blueprint Mississippi envisions a more prosperous, vibrant, and resilient Mississippi, built upon a foundation of economic opportunity for all its citizens.

## Key Foundational Areas

Blueprint Mississippi 2011 will be built on four broad foundations that are required to achieve this vision:

- **Educational Achievement** - from early childhood through college, workforce training, and lifelong learning
- **Resource Management** - the ability to stretch limited resources to serve the demanding needs of a state that must grow and improve, while also focusing on our baseline resources of culture, tourism, technology, and natural and human resources
- **Economic Competitiveness** - incentives, targeted industries, tax climate, regulatory climate, opportunities realized/unrealized
- **Technology Commercialization** – turning research outcomes into economic opportunities for new and existing businesses

### Cross-cutting issues:

**Community Life \* Racial Reconciliation \* Health Care \* Infrastructure**

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## Statewide Summary

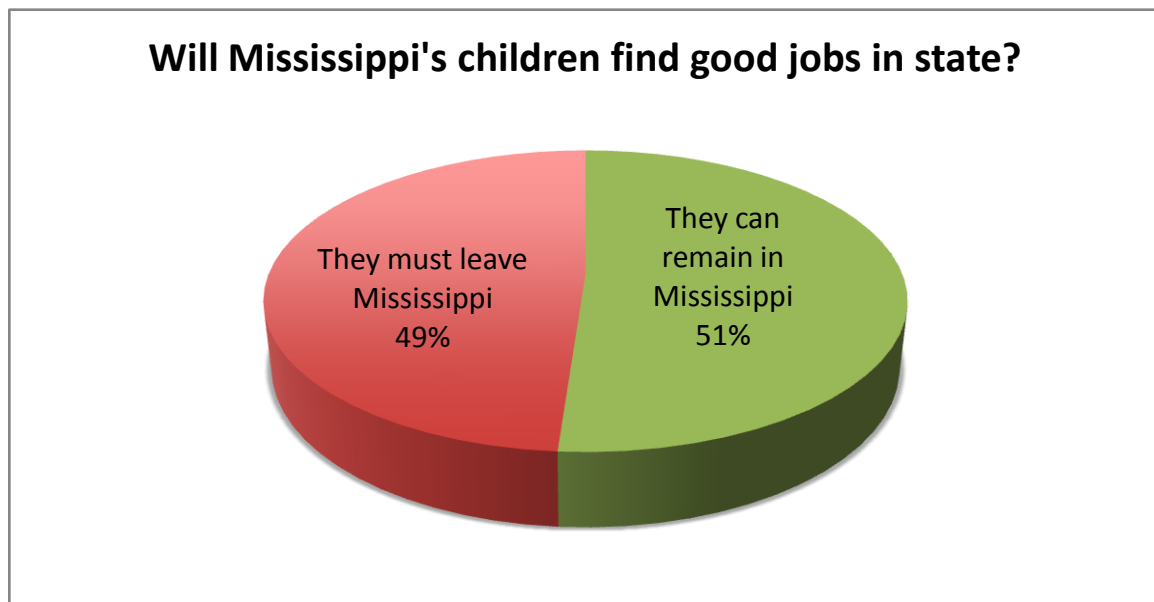
### Overview

The 2011 Blueprint Mississippi Road Show visited 20 communities in just two months, presenting the Blueprint initiatives and gathering input. Over 2,106 leaders from throughout the state participated in electronic polling and 1,013 completed the online. All attendees were asked to complete a written stakeholder input form seeking opinions on the state's biggest accomplishments and areas that need improvement. The 2011 Blueprint Mississippi Road Show, with its large and diverse participation, presents an opportunity to share the successes of each region with the rest of the state, and to begin to find direction in identifying areas for improvement and distinction.

### Electronic Polling

At each Road Show stop, 11 multiple-choice questions were asked of the audience, giving them the opportunity to provide real-time input via an electronic voting process. Below are the overall state results of the poll.

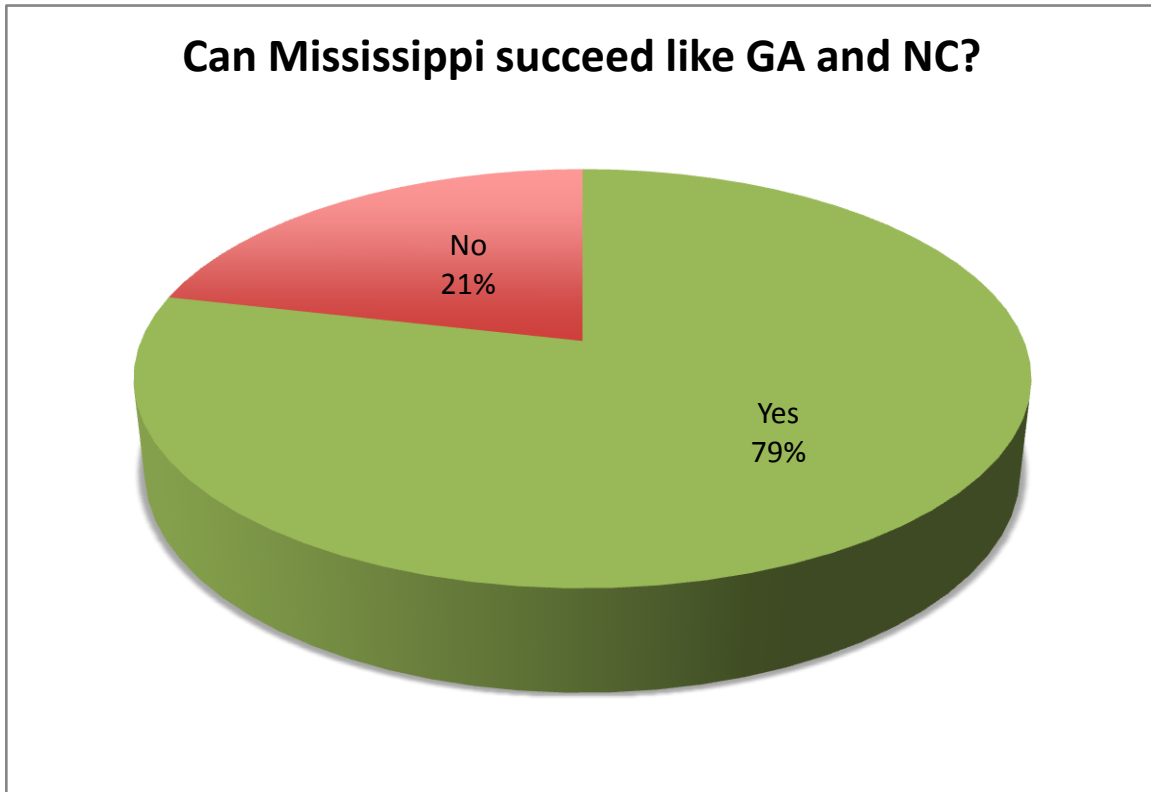
***Do you believe Mississippi children will be able to find good-paying jobs in Mississippi, or will they have to leave the state to find good-paying jobs when they are ready to enter the workforce?***



It is important to note that when this question was posed to business leaders in the 2010 statewide MEC/Godwin Group Economic State of the State poll, the answers to this question were statistically the same – 51% saying they will find good jobs, 49% saying they must leave to do so. However, in a separate but similar survey of Mississippi voters, 62% believed that today's youth would have to go out of state to seek good employment.

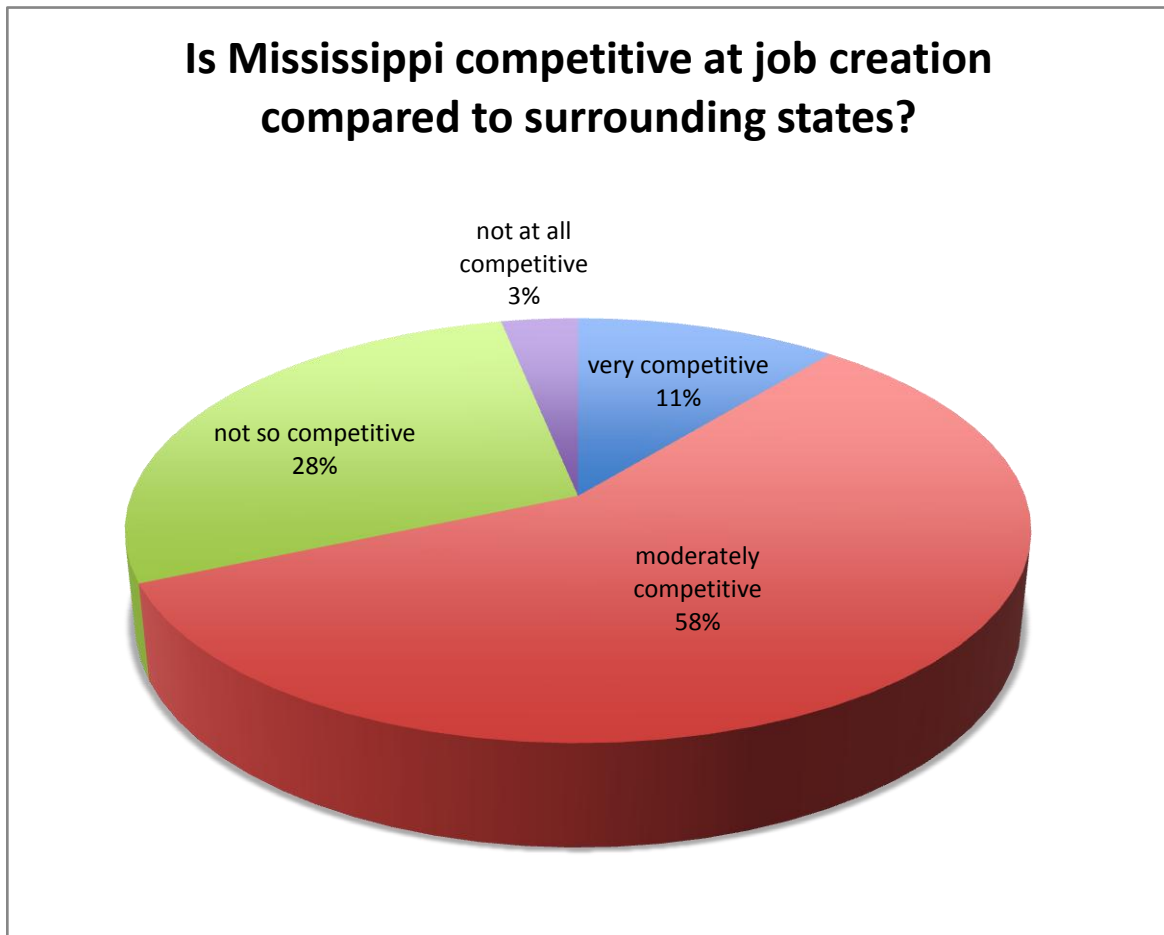


***Do you believe Mississippi can improve its competitive position and experience the growth Georgia and North Carolina have in the past 20 years?***



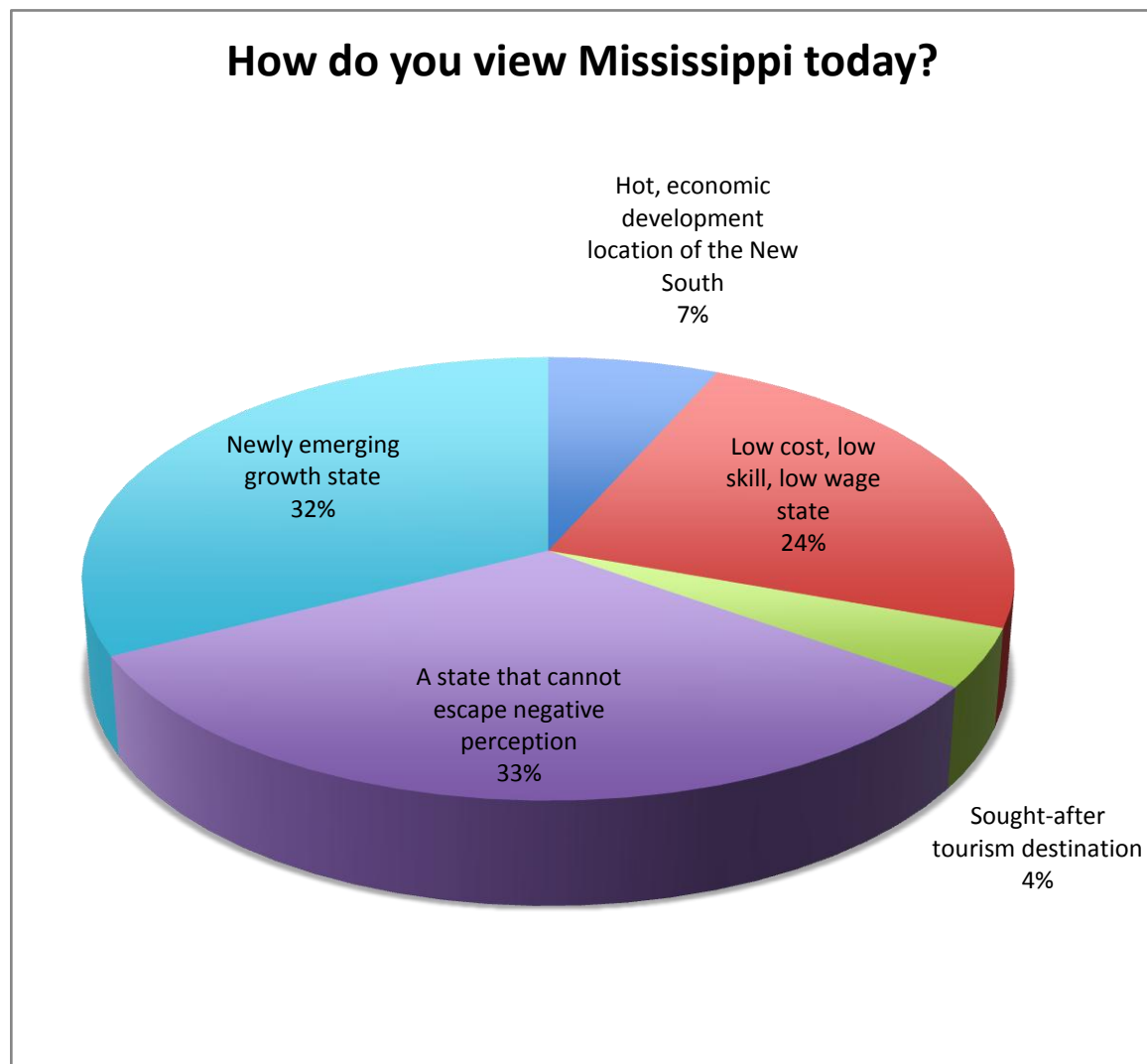
All cities answered this question with “Yes” at 67% or better among all Road Show communities.

*When it comes to creating good jobs, what is Mississippi's current position compared with surrounding states?*



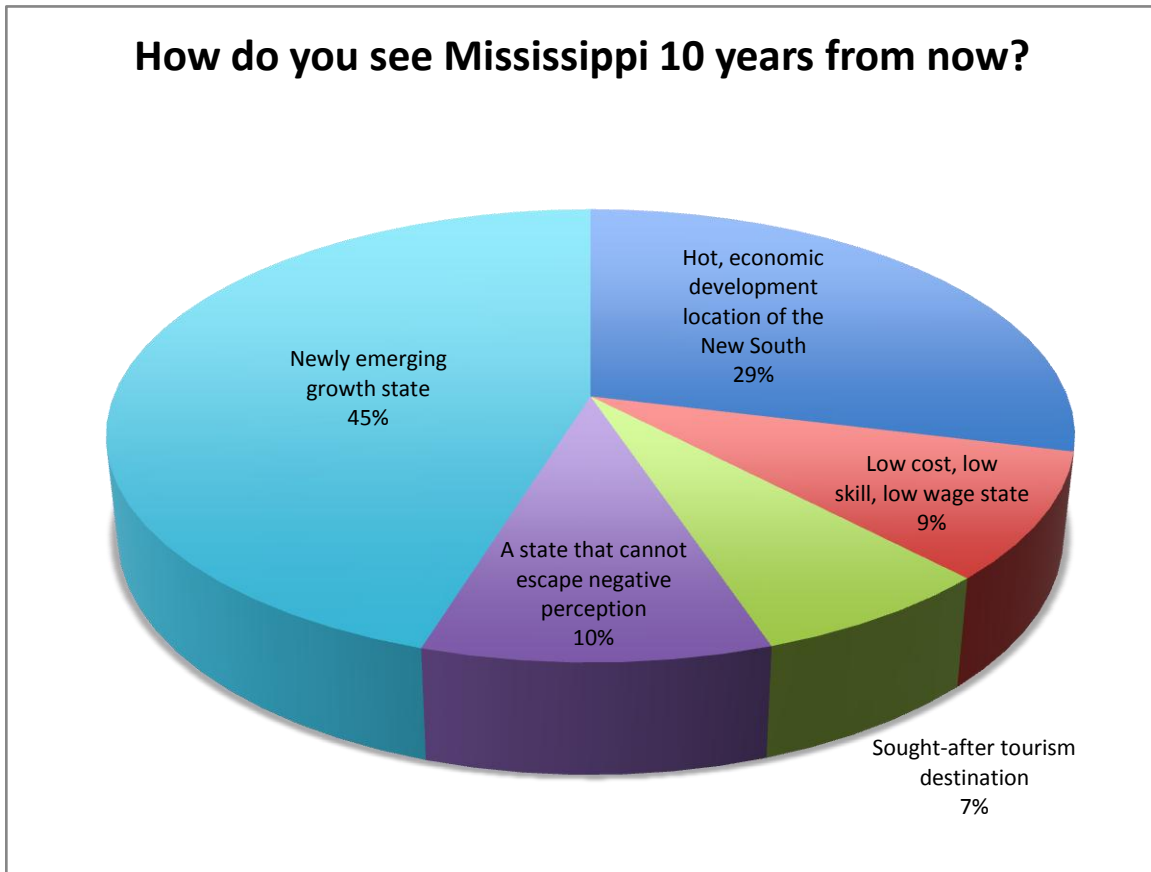
Every city answered this question at highest majority “moderately competitive,” however, regional differences occurred with regard to whether “not so competitive” or “very competitive” polled second highest.

***What best describes Mississippi today?***



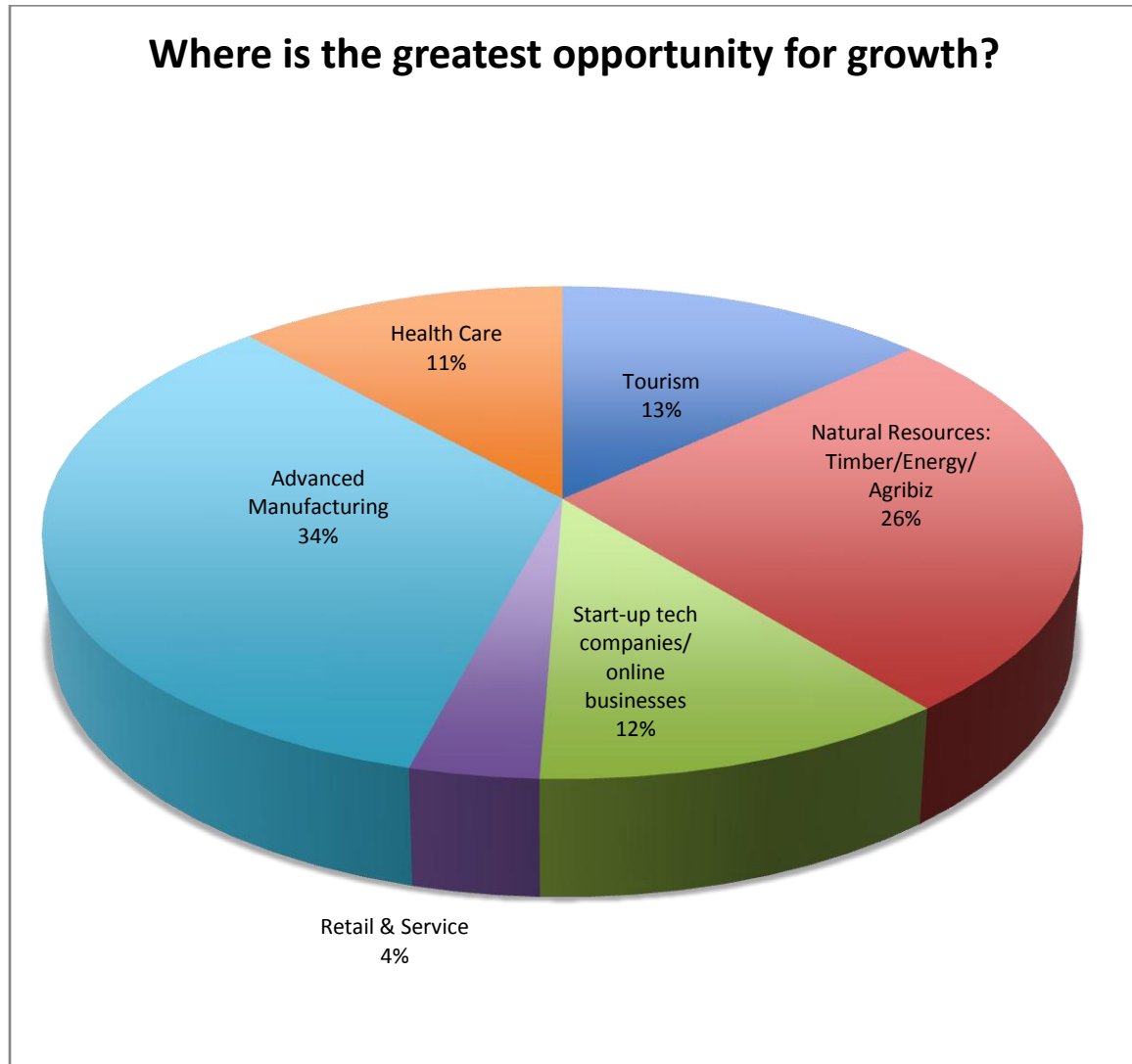
Answers to this question varied widely, and no real pattern between those who answered positively versus those who answered pessimistically can be determined; i.e. in no region did all cities answer correspondingly, and likewise, those most urban areas did not all poll likewise either. Some communities who have seen particular economic growth recently did necessarily answer optimistically to this question.

*How do you see Mississippi 10 years from now?*



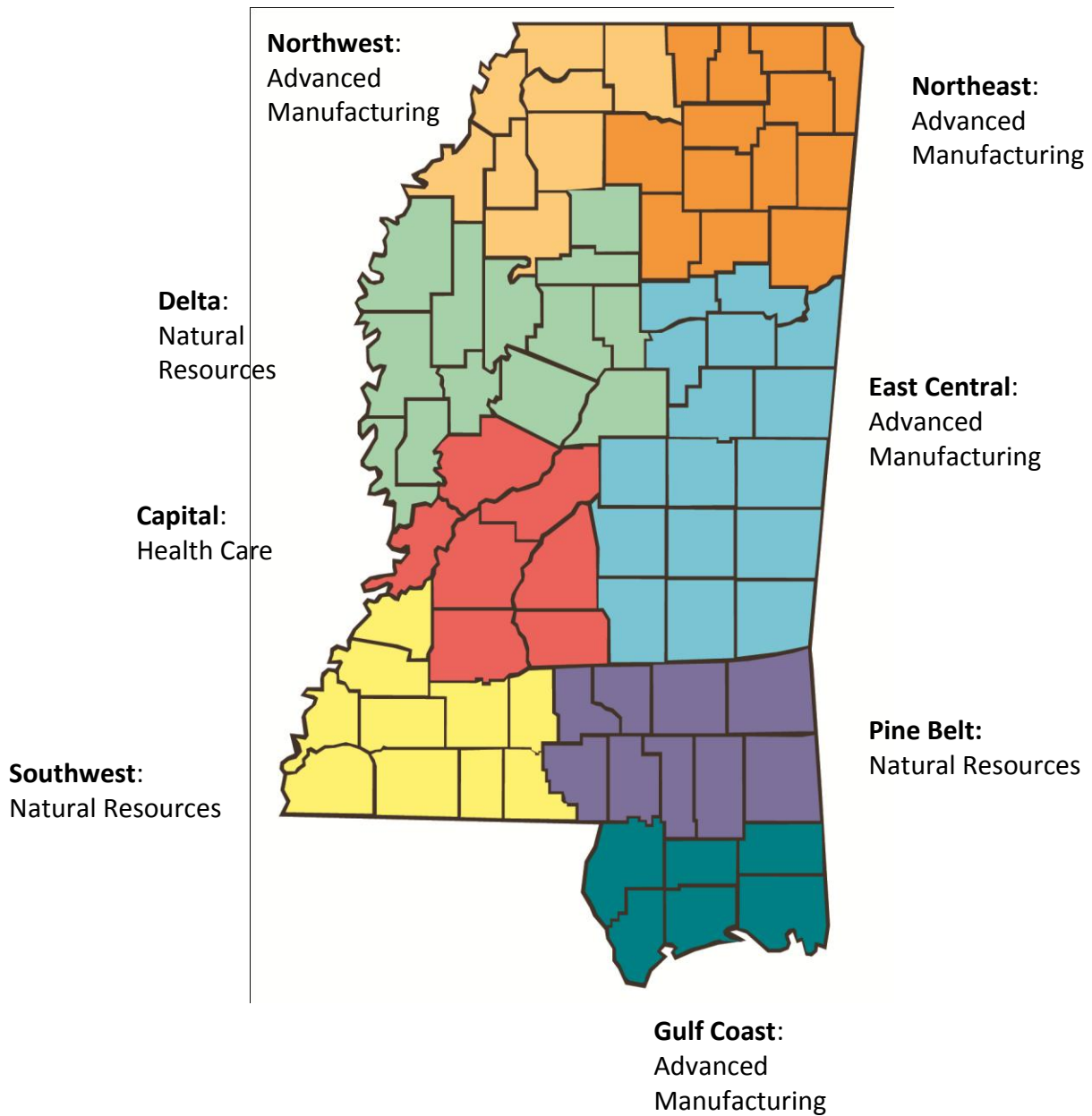
When considering the state's future in 10 years, 81% of Road Show attendees answered positively, rating Mississippi as an emerging growth state, a hot economic development location, or a sought-after tourism destination.

***Where do you see the greatest opportunity for economic growth in Mississippi in the next 10 years?***



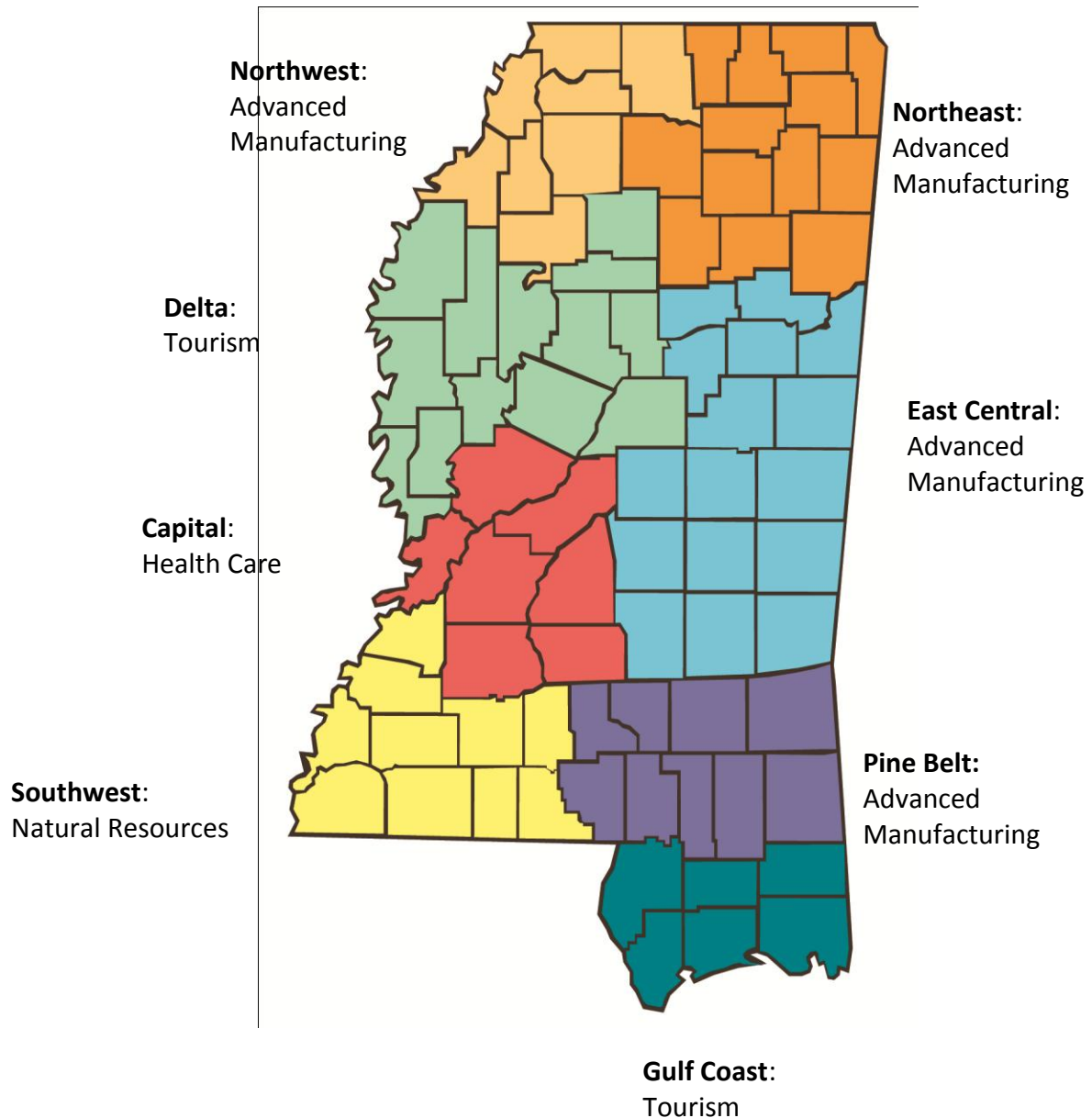
Answers varied from location to location, though 11 out of 20 chose Advanced Manufacturing as the statewide opportunity for growth. Eight cities chose Natural Resources, and Jackson chose Health Care.

***Where do you see the greatest opportunity for economic growth in Mississippi in the next 10 years? (Polling by region)***

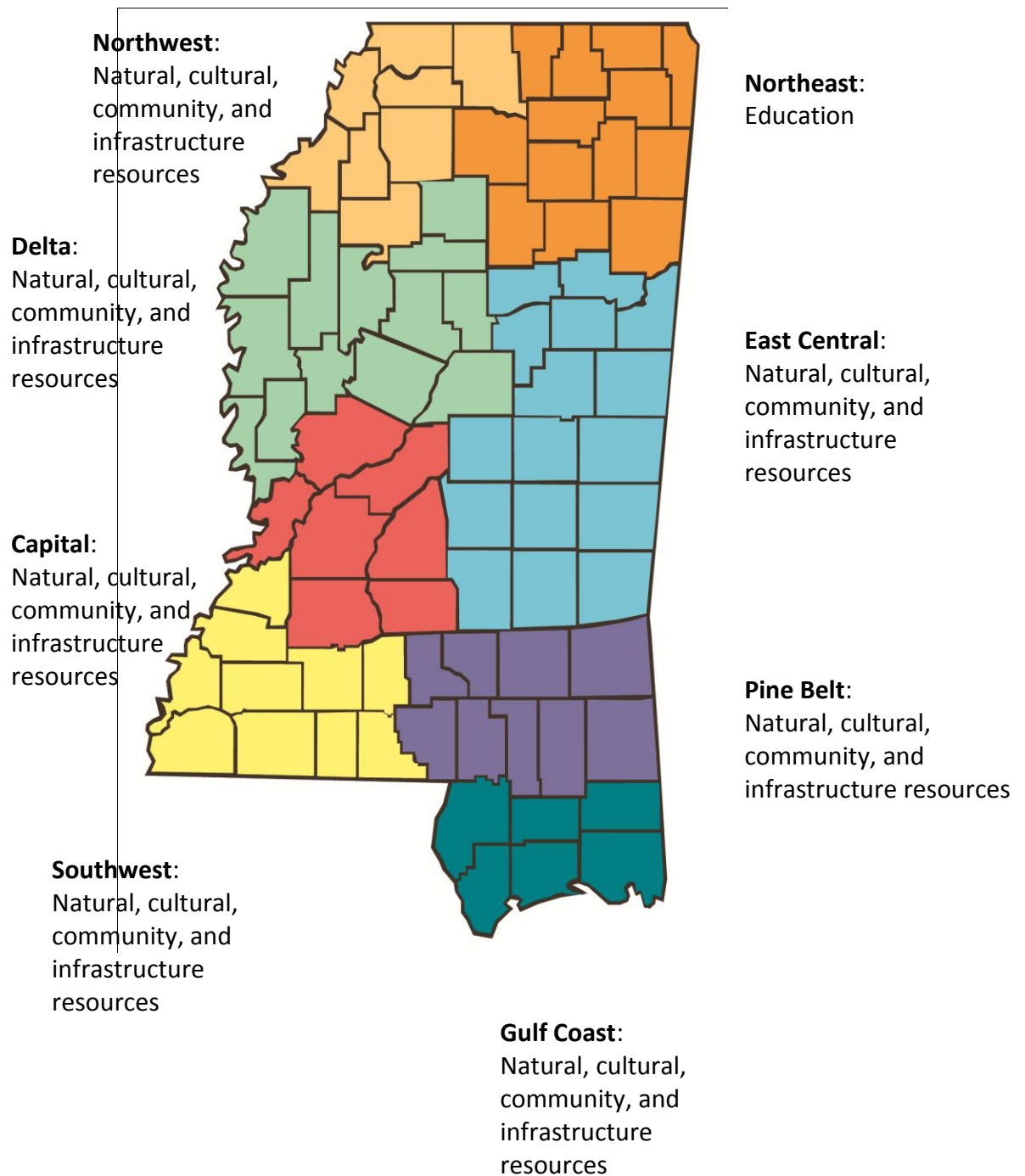




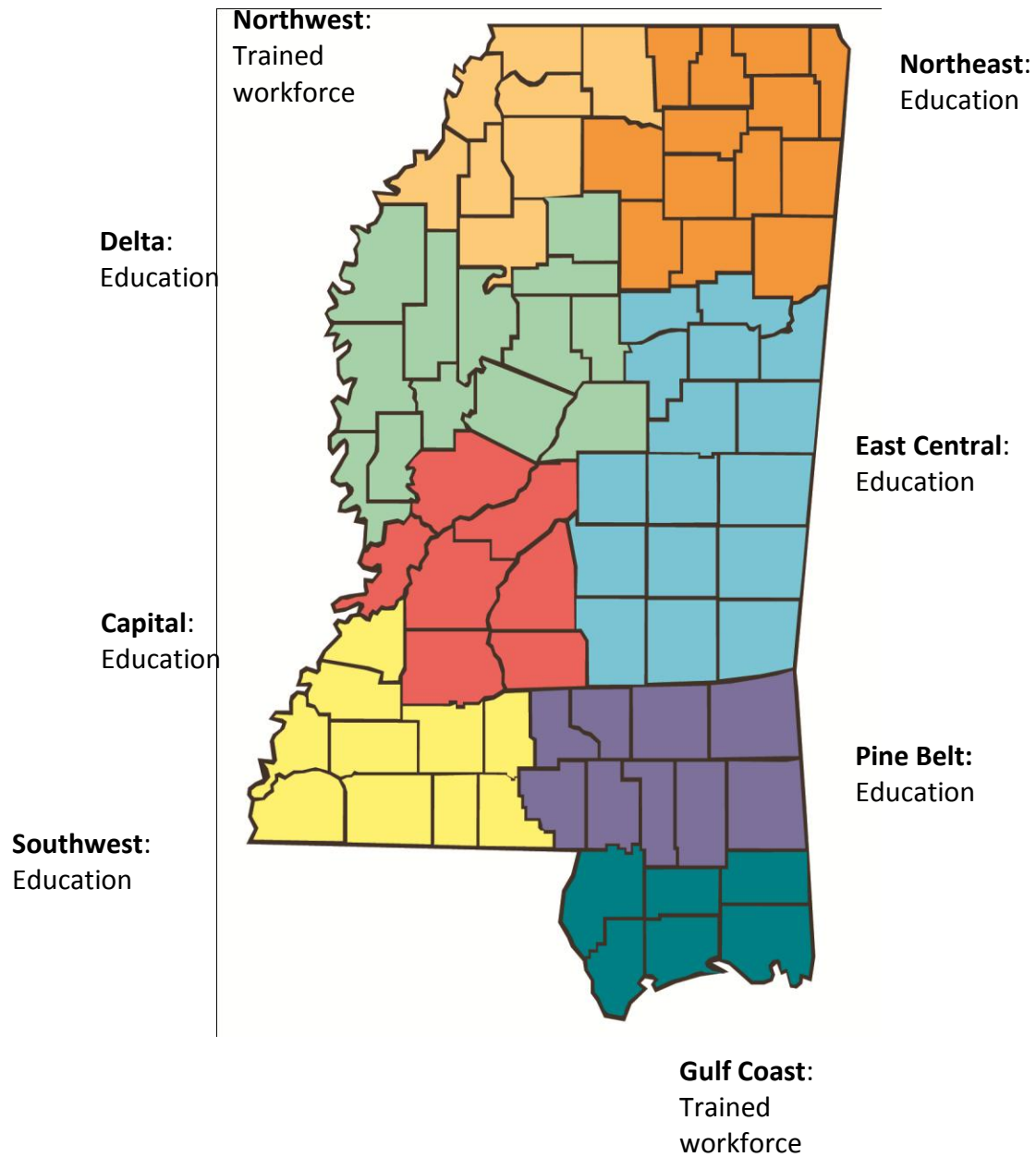
***Where do you see the greatest opportunity for economic growth in YOUR REGION in the next 10 years? (Polling by region)***



***What do you consider your region's most beneficial resource?***



*What do you consider your region's biggest need?*



## Stakeholder Input Forms

Input forms were circulated at each Road Show to encourage attendees to stay connected to Blueprint Mississippi as a stakeholder. These forms asked attendees to share positive milestones of which they are proud, as well as areas that they believe the state should focus attention on and work to improve. Additionally, those who chose to submit the form were given an opportunity to share informative sources of research, and to sign up to participate in specific stakeholder briefings.

## Statewide Concerns

Far and away the most significant input, shared by everyone in the state, regards education. Through the stakeholder input forms, every city reported “Education” as the number one concern for their community and the state.

Additionally, concern was shared regarding the image and perception of Mississippi. Large numbers of attendees suggested that the state do a better job of “advertising our strengths” and sharing positive messages. Some even wrote that more emphasis and publication of the positive things occurring in the state would help to improve our collective self-image and attitudes.

Racial reconciliation was a subject that appeared almost equally among strengths and weaknesses. Participants were energized by the momentum of recent efforts to improve race relations, though most who listed racial reconciliation as a positive milestone also listed it among areas that need improvement.

Significant numbers of comments were also made regarding poverty, unemployment, low wages, and workforce development needs in Mississippi. Mississippians also have substantial concern regarding obesity rates and teen pregnancy.

## Statewide Acclaim

The majority of praise was centered on Mississippi’s recent successes in attracting Nissan and Toyota. Additional praise went to state leadership for their role in economic development, as well as the Mississippi Development Authority. Also mentioned were new industries like Soladigm, Paccar, Severstal, and Eurocopter, all pointing to the recognition that advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries are creating worthwhile ventures and valuable jobs.

Cultural heritage and the arts were also high on the minds of Road Show attendees. Much commendation went to the creation of the blues, civil rights, and country music trails, as well as new museums in the state and the improvements to existing museums, especially the Mississippi Children’s Museum and the B.B. King Museum.

While a large proportion of tourism comments related to cultural heritage, gaming was also touted as a major economic driver for both Tunica and the Gulf Coast. Praise was not restricted to just those two areas – several different regions mentioned gaming as well.

The enhanced highway system and other infrastructure improvements were lauded by Road Show attendees, as was Mississippi's quick response to Hurricane Katrina. New bridges, the Port of Gulfport, and airport expansion were included among infrastructure comments.

Mississippi's universities were encouraged to continue their progress in research, technology and higher education. Reference was made to the exciting work in polymer research at the University of Southern Mississippi and the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems at Mississippi State University. The University of Mississippi was also praised for its leadership in bringing the 2008 Presidential Debate to Mississippi.

As earlier mentioned, racial reconciliation efforts are being recognized throughout the state, and many praise the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation for its role in training community leaders and facilitating dialogue and work in a number of communities. Leadership in a general sense was also recognized, as many felt we have had several highly influential leaders at the state and local level in the past 30 years.

Community colleges and the WIN Job Centers also drew notice for their role in making education skill training more locally accessible and attractive.

Additional details on both the recent strengths and current weaknesses of Mississippi as well as individual communities can be read throughout the remainder of the report.

## City-By-City Results

### Hattiesburg

Attendance: 160

#### Electronic Polling – 144 Participants

Attendees were eager to participate and polled very positively, comparative to other communities:

- 66% believe Mississippi children will find good-paying jobs in state
- 75% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 13% view Mississippi as *very competitive*, 63% viewing Mississippi as *moderately competitive* to surrounding states
- 48% view the Pine Belt region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development, and 40% ranking the region *moderately competitive*
- 43% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 28% say the state is one that *cannot escape negative perception*
- 47% describe Mississippi 10 years from now as a *hot economic development location of the New South*; 35% say it will be a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 7% describing the state as one that *cannot escape negative perception*
- 39% see the Pine Belt as *very competitive* to site selectors, 52% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, there is wide diversity in answers:

- 30% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 30% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 13% - Health Care
- 9% - Tourism
- 3% - Retail & Service

Yet when identifying growth areas for the **Pine Belt region**, Hattiesburg clearly sees high-tech industries as its future:

- 37% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 20% - Start-up tech companies and online businesses
- 18% - Health Care
- 17% - Natural resources (falls by half when participants choose an area of opportunity for the Pine Belt)

Hattiesburg sees education as one of their most beneficial resources (25%) —one of the few places to rank education so highly as a resource. Additionally, natural and cultural



resources/infrastructure was recognized as a beneficial resource (35%); however, Hattiesburg still identifies *education* and a *trained workforce* as major needs, just as the rest of the state. Hattiesburg also lists *a common-shared vision for the future* as a major need (22%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When identifying the biggest weaknesses our state has to overcome, Hattiesburg rests with the rest of the state – Education. With statements such as *“Don’t teach to tests; more true learning,” “Improve education don’t just throw money at it,” “Start with early education,” “Lack of pre-K programs and lack of funding for higher education,”* and *“Mississippi must achieve Top 10 scoring in education when compared to other states,”* Hattiesburg is calling for a revolutionary revamp of education in Mississippi.

Hattiesburg also asks for a focus on image and perception issues, workforce development and job growth, and health care and obesity.

*“Mississippi’s biggest problem is image. We’re seen as the most unfit, dumbest and poorest. Mississippi needs to work on dropout rates and continue working on health initiatives.”*

*“Perceptions about poverty and race relations”*

*“Perception of being last in everything”*

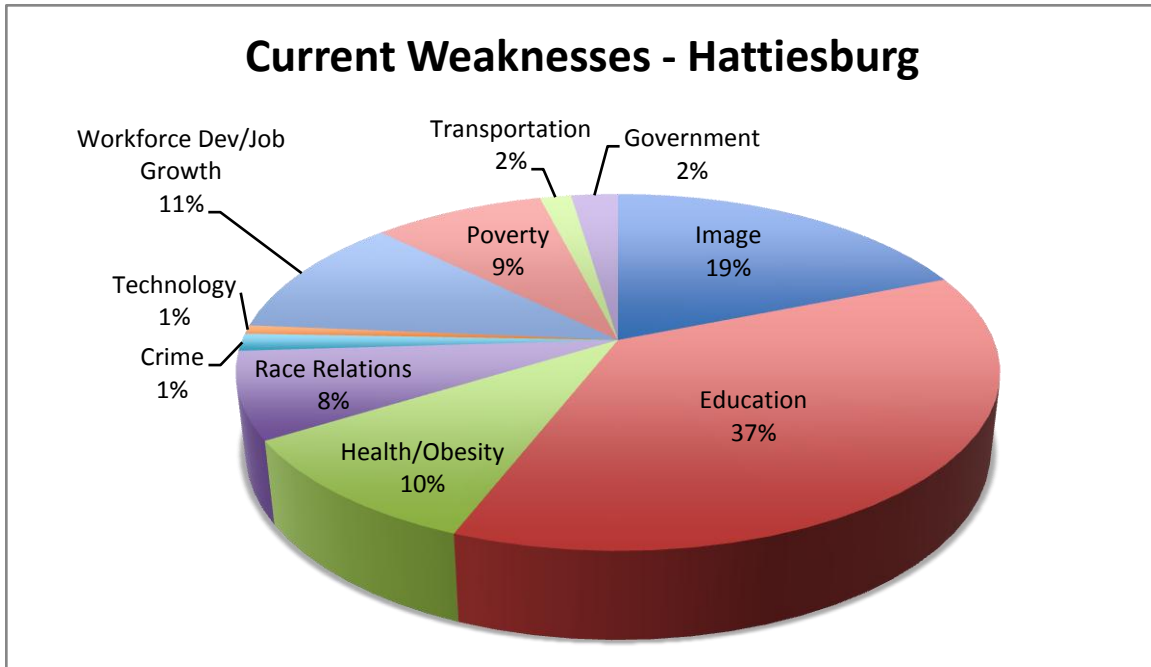
*“High obesity, poverty, and dropout rates”*

*“We are a poor state. We are just like Tallahassee or Philadelphia with a lot of things to do. People still think we don’t wear shoes here. People outside of Mississippi don’t hear about the good things.”*

*“Lack of willingness to progress and develop”*

*“Overcoming the perception of our uneducated workforce”*

*“Uneducated work force; confusing incentives”*



Hattiesburg stakeholder input is very reflective of the electronic polling, though it is notable that “Natural Resources (Timber/ Energy/Agribiz)” is only mentioned by two of 99 people when asked to list recent strengths and achievements improving Mississippi’s competitive position. When not prompted to recognize this area, it is not at the front of the mind.

Similar to other areas in the state, large numbers of respondents praised:

- Recruitment of Toyota, Nissan, and their suppliers
- Infrastructure improvements across the state.

Input also reports that the University of Southern Mississippi and William Carey University are successfully promoting their strides in research, technology commercialization, and health care studies, as numerous stakeholders referred to these achievements. Similar activities are occurring in other Mississippi college communities, but responses were not as strong in towns like Jackson, Oxford, or Starkville.

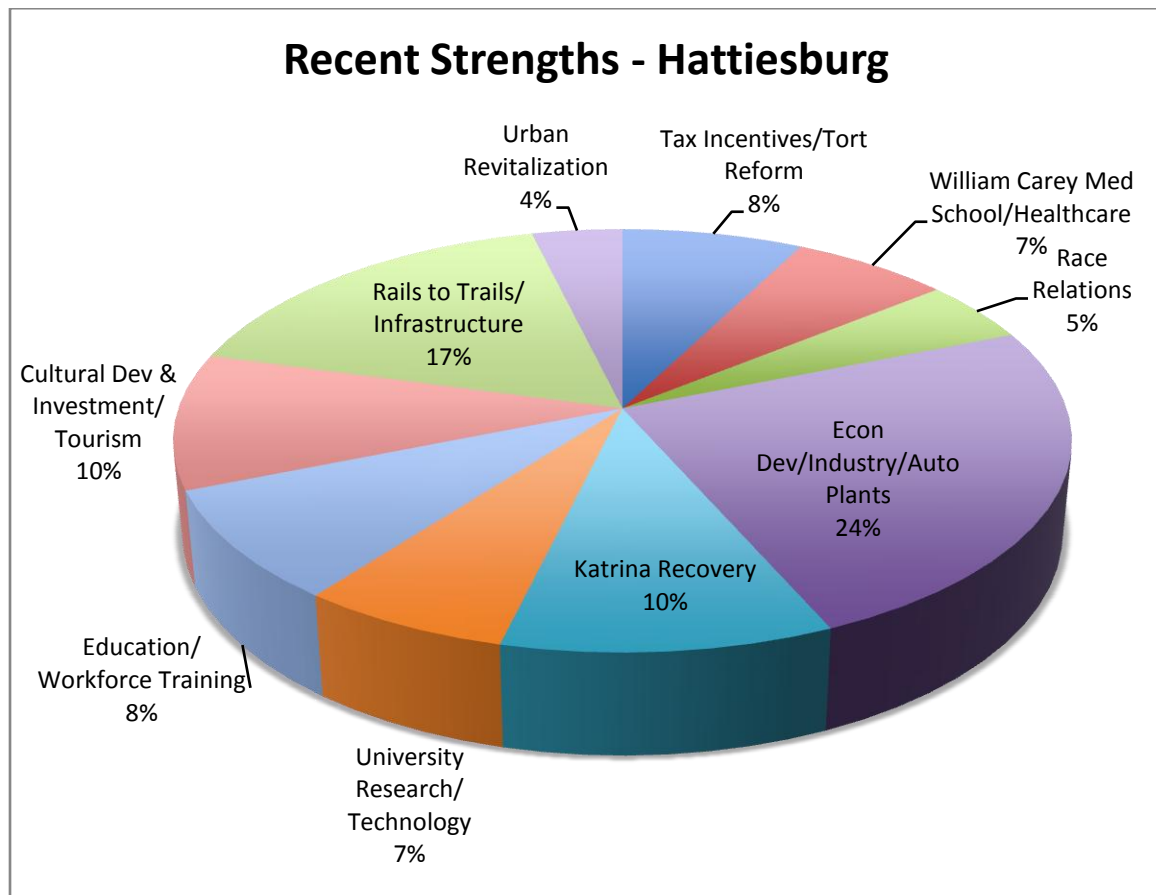
*“Improved infrastructure; rebuilding post-Katrina; well developed community college system; developing ports”*

*“USM polymer science program's national attainment; greater focus on education/drop out prevention; location and opening of new technology park The Garden”*

*“Natchez Trace Pkwy project, Toyota and Nissan plants, Nature and Exercise trail construction, and downtown projects”*

*"MTA's angel investor network funding 30 mil to early-stage technology companies - ranking high"*

*"Long leaf trail; completion of Natchez Trace; 4-lane hwy 45"*



## Brookhaven

Attendance: 105

### Electronic Polling – 85 Participants

Attendees polled positively, though tempered with concerns about state image and reliance on conventional industries and resources:

- 57% believe Mississippi children will find good-paying jobs in state
- 80% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 10% view Mississippi as *very competitive*, 68% viewing Mississippi as *moderately competitive* to surrounding states
- 17% view the Southwest region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development, and 42% rank the region as *moderately competitive* (37% reporting *not so competitive*, 4% *not competitive at all*)
- 32.5% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*, but 32.5% also say the state is one that *cannot escape negative perception*.
  - 25% report that Mississippi is a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*.
  - 10% chose *hot economic development location of the New South*
- 51% say Mississippi 10 years from now will be a *newly emerging growth state*; 26% describe it as a *hot economic development location of the New South*;
  - 12% describing the state as one that *cannot escape negative perception*
- 35% see the Southwest region as *very competitive* to site selectors, 54% as *fairly competitive*
  - 0% reporting *not at all competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, two answers are the main focus:

- 41% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 38% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 8% - Health Care
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Tourism
- 1% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth potential for the **Southwest region**, Brookhaven is fairly united and reflects their vision for the state:

- 48% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 30% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 7% - Health Care
- 7% - Retail & Service
- 4% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Tourism

Brookhaven is divided on pinpointing their most beneficial resource:

- 34% chose natural and cultural resources/infrastructure
- 23% selected shovel-ready sites
- 19% chose a common-shared vision for the future
- 14% selected education
- 8% chose none of the above
- 2% selected racial reconciliation or trained workforce (perhaps indicating a want for improvement in these areas)

When identifying major areas of need, Brookhaven resoundingly chose *trained workforce* (43%) and *education* (23%), though also indicated a need for a shared vision (14%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When identifying the biggest weaknesses our state has to overcome, Brookhaven agrees with the rest of the state – Education. Few statements were as emotionally charged as in Hattiesburg; most asking for improved education stated their wish simply: *“Weakness of education and job opportunities,” “Educational issues - high school; graduation numbers,” “Educational attainment.”*

Brookhaven was more sensitive about perception issues, racial reconciliation, and job opportunities.

*“Focusing a lot on negative issues of the past”*

*“Perception the nation has on Mississippi”*

*“Racial separation; Lack of quality education; lack of exposure to positive activities”*

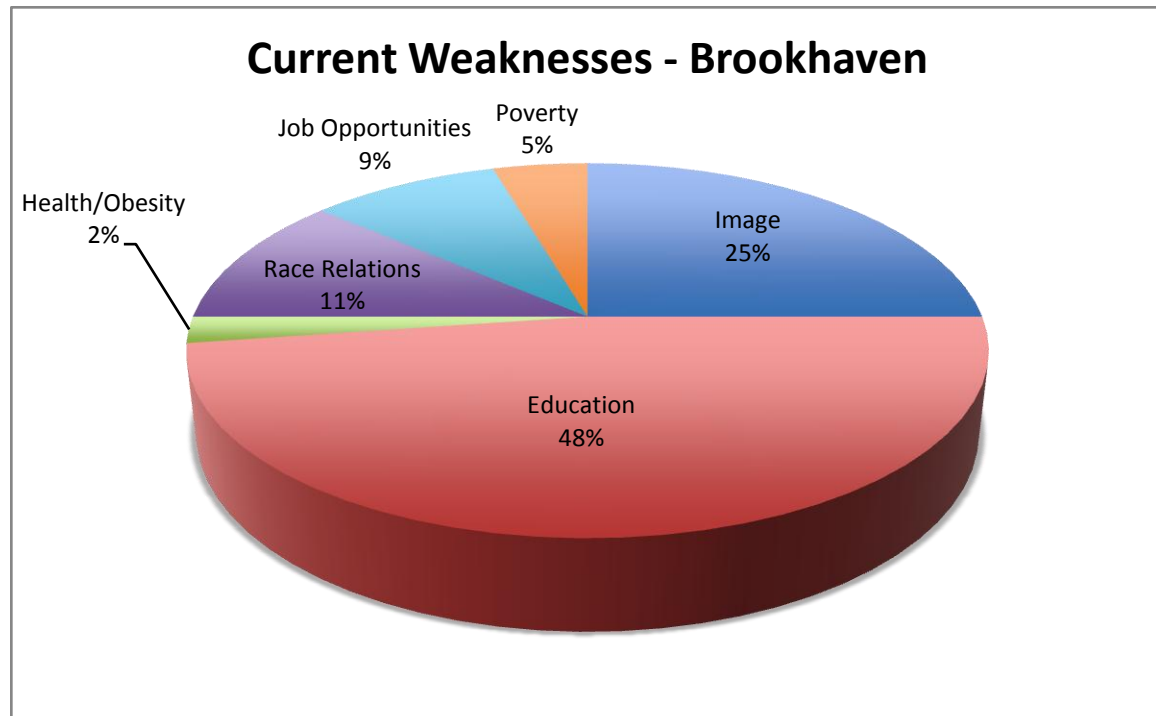
*“Perceptions of people being uneducated and racist in Mississippi”*

*“Need more positive marketing of educated and literate people in Mississippi”*

*“Lack of good paying jobs; no skills, low wages”*

*“Perceived ‘excessive’ racial inequality; ‘redneck’ attitude”*

*“Attitude of many regions being satisfied with the status quo”*



Brookhaven stakeholder input differs from the electronic polling when asked to report the most impactful achievements. The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is the only mention of a “natural resource.” Again, when not prompted to recognize this area, it is not front of mind.

Many respondents praised educational programs like the Mississippi School for the Arts and the Mississippi Scholars program, as well as the success of Toyota, Nissan, and their suppliers. Also mentioned were infrastructure improvements across the state and cultural heritage and tourism accomplishments.

*“4-lane hwy 84; MS scholars program”*

*“Preservation of our southern culture and heritage”*

*“MS Scholars Program; Regional partnerships”*

*“Blues Trail Program; Tourism”*

*“Nissan plant; advanced manufacturing”*

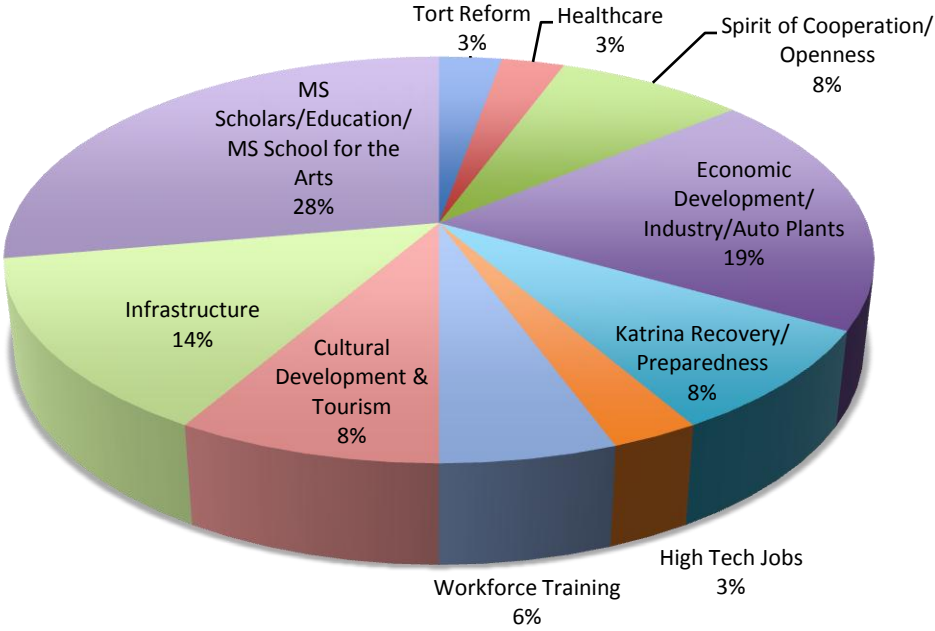
*“High Tech jobs; Tenn-Tombigbee Waterway; 4-lane highway system”*

*“4-lane highways; improving education; Gulf Coast rebuild”*

*“Mississippi School of the Arts growth; tourism”*



Recent Strengths - Brookhaven



## Tupelo

Attendance: 150

### Electronic Polling – 125 Participants

Attendees polled mostly positively, with obvious enthusiasm around recent regional Toyota and infrastructure developments, but some pessimism about Mississippi's current state of affairs:

- 55% believe Mississippi children will find good-paying jobs in state
- 77% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 21% view Mississippi as *very competitive*, 70% viewing Mississippi as *moderately competitive* to surrounding states (91% combined saying *competitive* – most positive in all of Mississippi)
- 68% view the Northeast region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development, and 29% rank the region as *moderately competitive* (also most positive of all road show responses)
- 40% describe Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*, though 30% report Mississippi is a state that *cannot escape negative perception*
  - 19% describe Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 53% say Mississippi 10 years from now will be a *newly emerging growth state*; 30% describe it as a *hot economic development location of the New South*;
  - 12% describing the state as one that *cannot escape negative perception*
- 51% see the Northeast region as *very competitive* to site selectors, 43% as *fairly competitive* (also most positive of all road show responses)

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, advanced manufacturing and technology is the focus:

- 59% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 13% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Health Care
- 4% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Tourism

Tupelo's priorities for the **Northeast region** are primarily the same:

- 69% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 7% - Tourism
- 5% - Health Care
- 4% - Retail & Service

Tupelo opinions vary on their most beneficial resource:

- 34% chose a common-shared vision for the future
- 27% selected trained workforce
- 17% chose natural and cultural resources/infrastructure
- 5% selected shovel-ready sites
- 12% selected education
- 4% chose none of the above
- 2% selected racial reconciliation

When identifying major areas of need, Tupelo shares the state's call for improved *education* (51%), though also indicated a need for more *workforce training* (17%) and *racial reconciliation* (14%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When identifying the biggest weaknesses our state has to overcome, Tupelo agrees with the rest of the state – Education. Many stakeholders paired comments on educational weaknesses with comments on race relations, poverty, and teen pregnancy:

*"Drop-out rate; quality teaching"*

*"NAEP scores achievement test scores graduation rates and teen pregnancy rates"*

*"Fostering vision in young MS and unwed single mothers (although not seen nor discussed this is the thing that hurts us most)"*

*"Racial division; drop-out rates; crime and drug activities in low income subdivisions"*

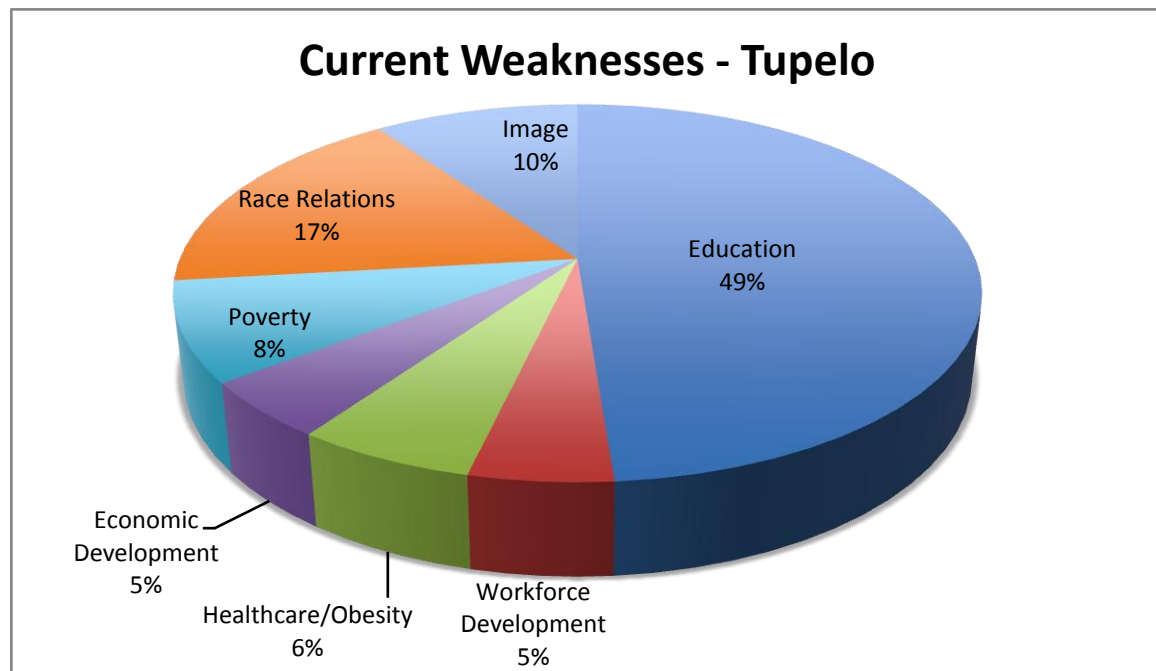
*"Race relations; drop-out rates; lack of diversity in policy making"*

*"Negative perception; different standards than other states"*

*"Education - not competing on a national level"*

*"Statewide pre-K"*

*"Poverty and low educational attainment"*



Tupelo stakeholder input is not surprising as they celebrate impactful achievements. Just as Advanced Manufacturing and Infrastructure polled as significant to Mississippi's future competitiveness, they responded in writing likewise.

*"High-tech industries such as Toyota and Nissan"*

*"No smoking laws; Toyota, Nissan; educational programs"*

*"MDOT AHEAD; Tort Reform; Nissan; Toyota"*

*"Growth of universities; new roads; new high-tech business"*

*"Highways; incentives for business and industry; education funding"*

*"Recruitment of two major automotive manufacturing plants"*

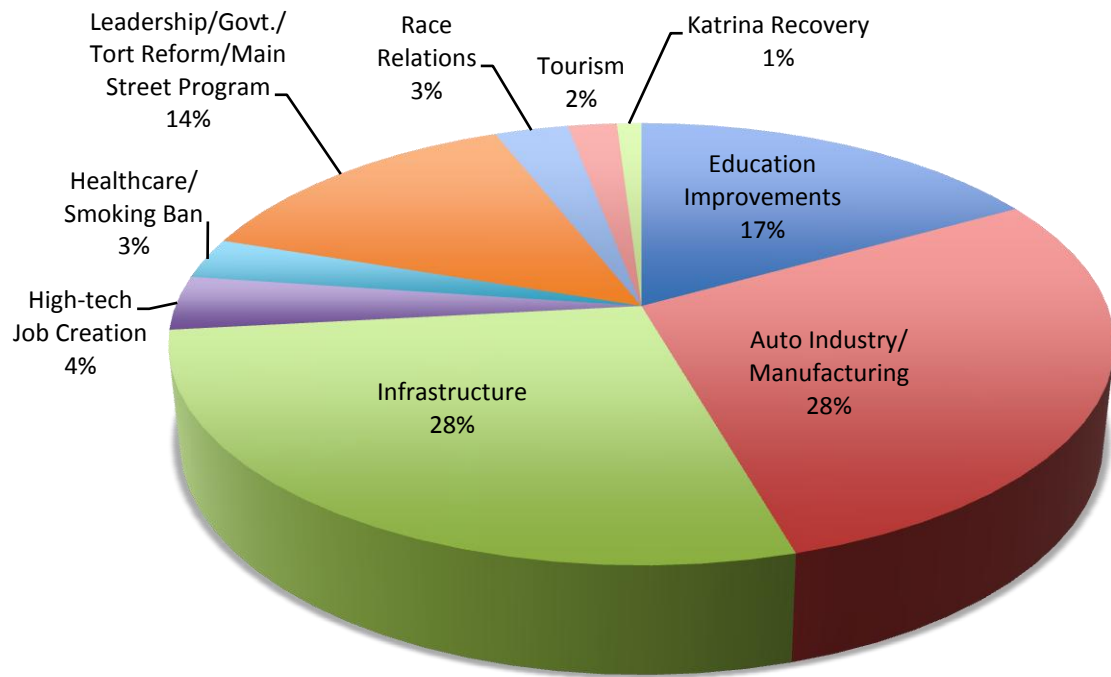
*"Furniture manufacturing; Toyota; hwy improvements; Khayat at UM"*

*"Econ development more targeted; research at IHL; highway development"*

*"Toyota plant; MEGAPOP internet program; Great responses to Hurricane Katrina"*

*"Major companies; racial reconciliation; university system growth and partnerships with private sectors"*

## Recent Strengths - Tupelo



## Laurel

Attendance: 120

### Electronic Polling – 90 Participants

Attendees were pessimistic about Mississippi's children finding good jobs in the future, though positively about current economic development and optimistic about future development; it is not clear what the discrepancy in Laurel may be.

- 53% believe children will have to leave Mississippi to find a good-paying job
- 80% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 14% view Mississippi as *very competitive* in economic development, 66% viewing Mississippi as *moderately competitive* to surrounding states
- 34% view the Pine Belt region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development, and 47% rank the region as *moderately competitive* (18% reporting *not so competitive*)
- 33% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*, but 33% also say the state is one that *cannot escape negative perception*.
  - 26% report that Mississippi is a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 4% elected Mississippi as a *sought-after tourism destination*
  - 4% chose *hot economic development location of the New South*
- 53% say Mississippi 10 years from now will be a *newly emerging growth state*; 28% describe it as a *hot economic development location of the New South*;
  - 10% describe the state will still be unable to *escape negative perception*
- 28% see the Pine Belt region as *very competitive* to site selectors, 61% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Laurel is most concentrated on natural resources.

- 46% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 24% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 11% - Health Care
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 5% - Tourism
- 3% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Pine Belt region**, Laurel's cynosure is advanced manufacturing, though natural resources is still a large focus.

- 39% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 34% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Health Care
- 4% - Retail & Service

- 3% - Tourism

Interestingly, given responses to the last question, Laurel identifies natural, cultural and infrastructure resources as their most beneficial resource, with community vision coming in second. Perhaps Laurel believes its people to be its biggest asset.

- 53% chose natural and cultural resources/infrastructure
- 15% chose a common-shared vision for the future
- 10% selected shovel-ready sites
- 8% said trained workforce
- 6% selected education

When identifying major areas of need, Laurel resoundingly chose *education* (52%) and *trained workforce* (26%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Laurel replied *Education* at the highest percentage in the state (56%). Comments focused primarily on education, state image, job opportunities and poverty.

*“We ain't too smart stigma; we have to quit lowering our standards for graduation, college acceptance, etc.”*

*“Educational Opportunities & Race Relations”*

*“Education of population & Lack of educational support”*

*“Early Childhood Education & Trained Workforce”*

*“The impression of ignorance by other states”*

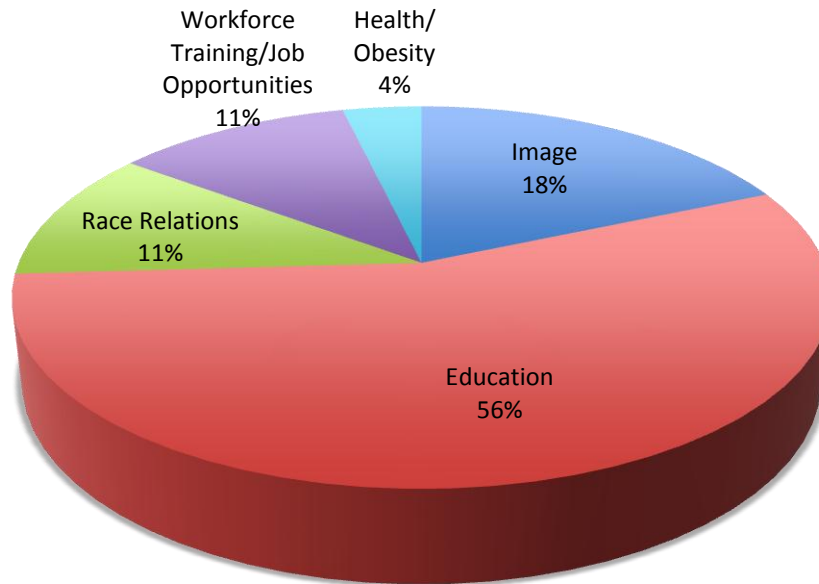
*“Uneducated youth; due to their ability to drop out of junior high and high school and fall through the cracks. I have experienced a larger than average number of uneducated youth”*

*“Education; drop-out rate; poor health and nutrition”*

*“Funding education in early child development; moving the lower achievement up”*

*“Funding public education on all levels”*

## Current Weaknesses - Laurel



Laurel stakeholder input on impactful achievements did not reflect the same importance for the state with regard to natural resources the electronic polling reported (outside of one mention of solar power). Most respondents praised:

- Economic development – Nissan and Toyota recruitment, other manufacturing
- Educational strides
- Infrastructure improvements across the state
- Cultural heritage and tourism

*“Establishment of public school kindergarten”*

*“Push in economic development; push to keep children in school”*

*“Nissan & Toyota plants”*

*“MDOT Ahead; cultural trails”*

*“Four lane highways, cultural trails, improved education, improved physical fitness among the population”*

*“Election of Haley Barbour; Post Katrina publicity”*

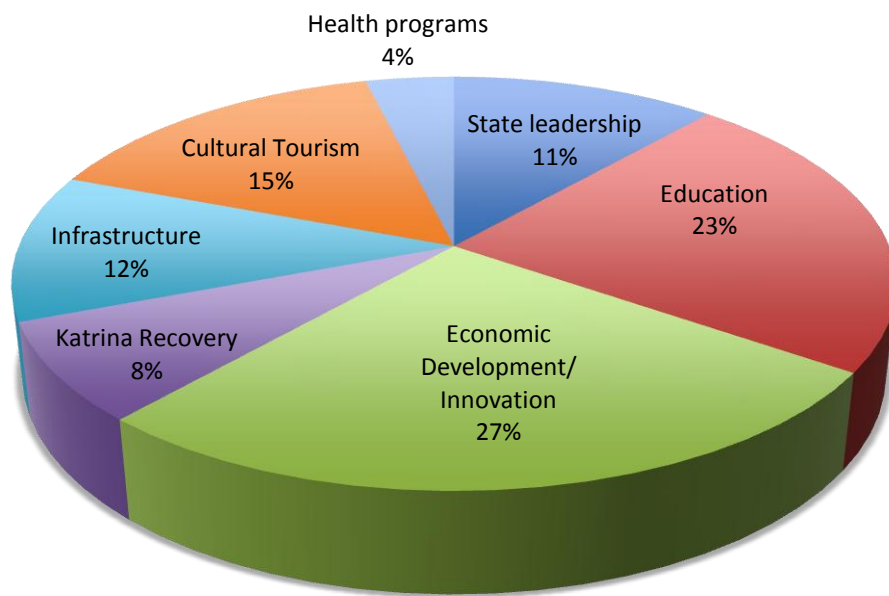
*“Our response to Katrina; manufacturing plants opening in MS”*

*“Industry recruitment has become top priority”*

*“New industries in MS; Solar panel industry”*



## Recent Strengths - Laurel



## Vicksburg

Attendance: 150

### Electronic Polling – 125 Participants

Attendees in Vicksburg were less optimistic than at previous Road Shows.

- 50% believe Mississippi children will have to leave Mississippi to find a good-paying job
- 80% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 46% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 39% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 41% view the Delta region as *moderately effective and competitive* in economic development
  - 36% rank the region as *not so competitive*
  - 17% reporting Mississippi is *not competitive at all*
- 44% describe the Mississippi of today as a state *that cannot escape negative perception*, and 30% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*.
- More positively, 56% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 15% say the state will still be unable to *escape negative perception*
- Yet 20% see the Delta region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and 46% as *fairly competitive* (28% saying the Delta is *not so competitive*)

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Vicksburg is most concentrated on Advanced Manufacturing and Tourism.

- 32% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 23% - Tourism
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 14% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% - Health Care
- 5% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Delta**, Tourism is the main focus.

- 38% - Tourism
- 22% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 11% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 10% - Health Care
- 8% - Retail & Service

Expectedly, given the previous indication of a tourism focus, Vicksburg identifies natural, cultural, community and infrastructure resources as their most beneficial resource (44%).

- 16% chose a common-shared vision for the future
- 14% Education

When identifying major areas of need, Vicksburg also chose *Education* (50%) and *trained workforce* (23%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Vicksburg replied *Education* (47%). Comments focused primarily on education, job opportunities and training, and race relations.

*"MS needs to work on race relations"*

*"Better health of citizens; better education system (more discipline); parents must take responsibility; political figures committing felonies"*

*"High school drop outs; teen pregnancy"*

*"Childhood environment; restructure our education profile; stop putting funds into a system that's not working"*

*"The handling of it's racial past; great strides have been made in race relations but nationally still recognized poorly"*

*"Health; teenage pregnancy rates; education"*

*"Improve education and number of high school grads; reducing the number of citizens forced to live on welfare"*

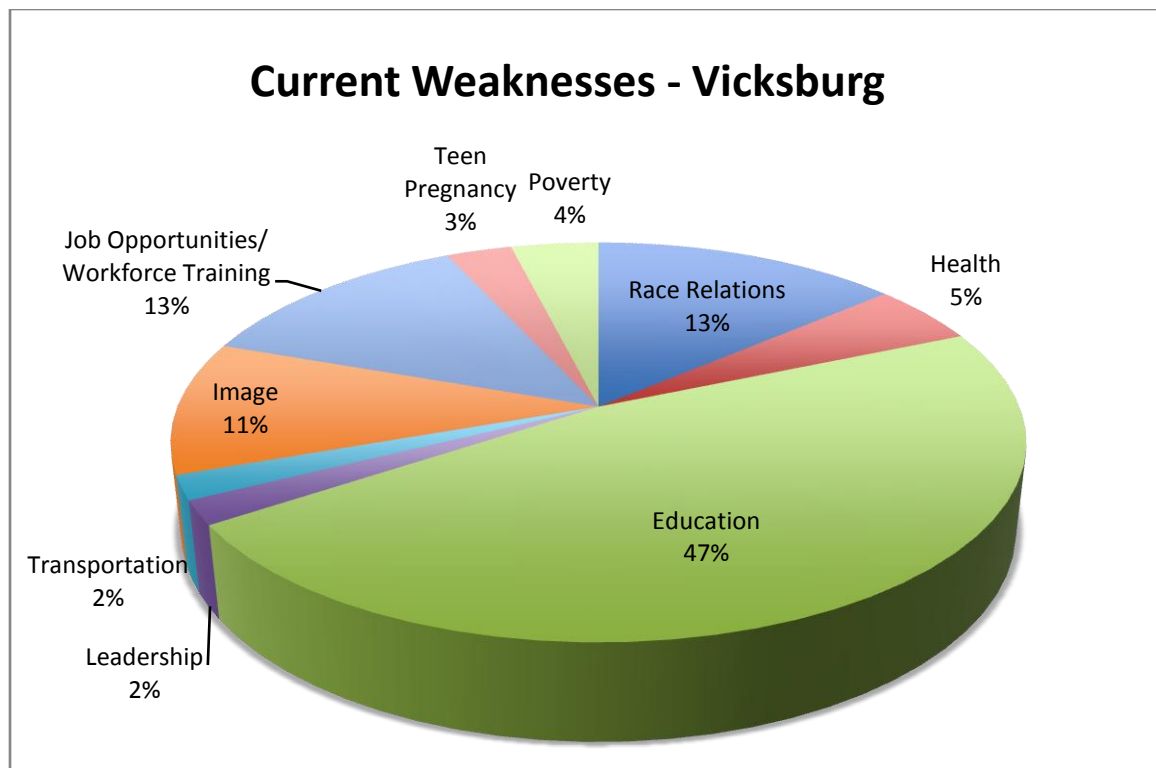
*"Professionalism; education"*

*"Socio-economic equality and racial and ethnic separation"*

*"Education! No businesses are coming with dropout rates where they are"*

*"Workforce training issues"*

*"Not progressive, stagnant, and resistant to change"*



Vicksburg stakeholders echo statewide kudos to the jobs created by auto manufacturing as well as the spirit and momentum of cultural heritage tourism in the Delta. Vicksburg also celebrates some of the achievements of other Mississippi regions.

*"Tours from Tunica down to Woodville, MS"*

*"Industries coming to MS; Nissan and Toyota plants"*

*"Casinos; cultural programs"*

*"Nissan plant; Toyota plant; Universities' research"*

*"Seizing opportunities to improve on housing major businesses; Katrina recovery"*

*"Improved hwys; increased tourism strategies; new business incentives"*

*"Blues Markers; African American Museums; Culture awareness"*

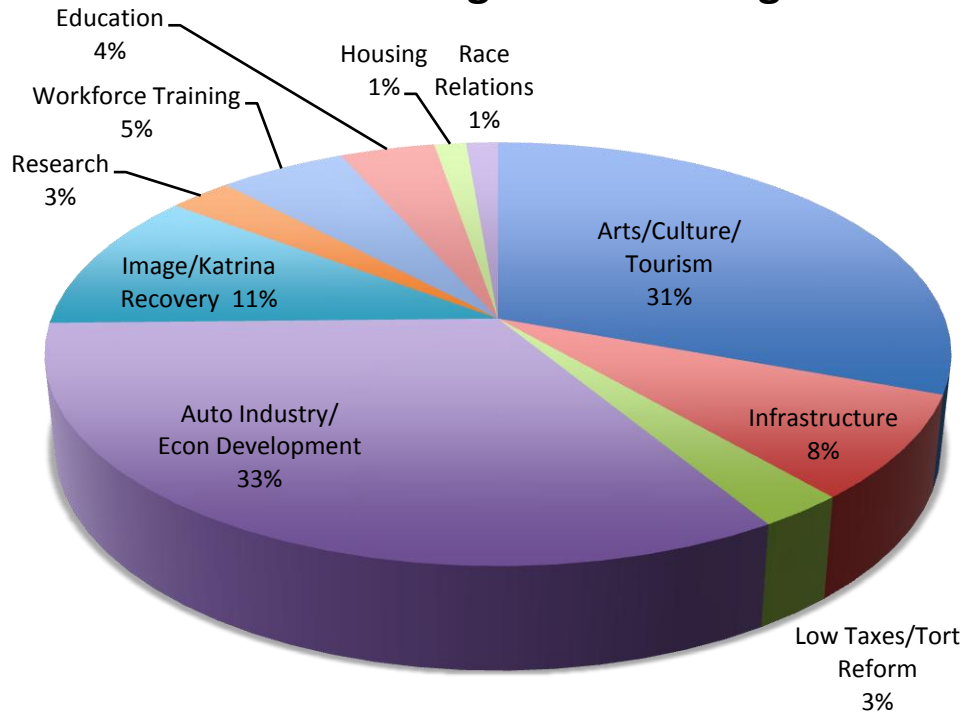
*"More interest in early childhood education"*

*"Cultural trails; Biloxi casinos; automotive manufacturing"*

*"Cultural heritage museums; Gulf Coast redevelopment"*

*"Southern Hospitality Academy - a customer service initiative in Southwest MS - bringing people back to MS could be a statewide effort"*

## Recent Strengths - Vicksburg



## Greenville

Attendance: 180

### Electronic Polling – 130 Participants

Attendees in Greenville were less optimistic than previous Road Shows, but share the outlook of other Delta communities. Views on the state are mostly optimistic, but opinions on the Delta region are much more negative.

- 50% believe Mississippi children will have to leave Mississippi to find a good-paying job
- 76% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 65% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 22% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 64% view the Delta region as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 23% report Mississippi is *not competitive at all*
  - 12% rank the region as *moderately effective and competitive*
- 33% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 26% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 24% call Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
- 35% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 24% envision a *hot, economic development location of the New South*
- Yet 43% see the Delta region as *not so competitive* to site selectors, and 42% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Greenville is most concentrated on Tourism and Natural Resources, though also looks to the health care industry as an economic driver.

- 32% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 26% - Tourism
- 12% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Health Care
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 3% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Delta**, Tourism is the main focus, though Greenville again has high hopes for health care in the Delta.

- 34% - Tourism
- 32% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 21% - Health Care
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 5% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 3% - Retail & Service

Expectedly, given the previous polling question results, Greenville identifies natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources as their most beneficial resource (49%). Curiously, 19% report shovel-ready sites as a resource (though only 5% reported advanced manufacturing as a future opportunity), and 18% replied *none of the above*.

When identifying major areas of need, Greenville also chose *Education* (62%) and *trained workforce* (18%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Greenville replied *Education* (48%) among their open-ended responses. Comments focused primarily on education, image and attitudes, job opportunities and training, and race relations. Of all the cities in the 2011 Road Show, Greenville submitted an overwhelming volume of written responses – the most of any city. Clearly Greenville wants the rest of the state to hear what they have to say and the concerns they wish to share.

*“Our own attitude is our biggest weakness; workforce; education”*

*“Education for workers; poor education - incentives to make students want to learn”*

*“Poor family structure which affects public education”*

*“Workforce; Education and work ethic”*

*“We must convince our citizens that we are worth it!”*

*“Education especially in the Delta region”*

*“Obesity (decrease diabetes and chronic illnesses); school drop-out rates; racial issues; leadership”*

*“Being last in issues that are important to industries looking to locate here”*

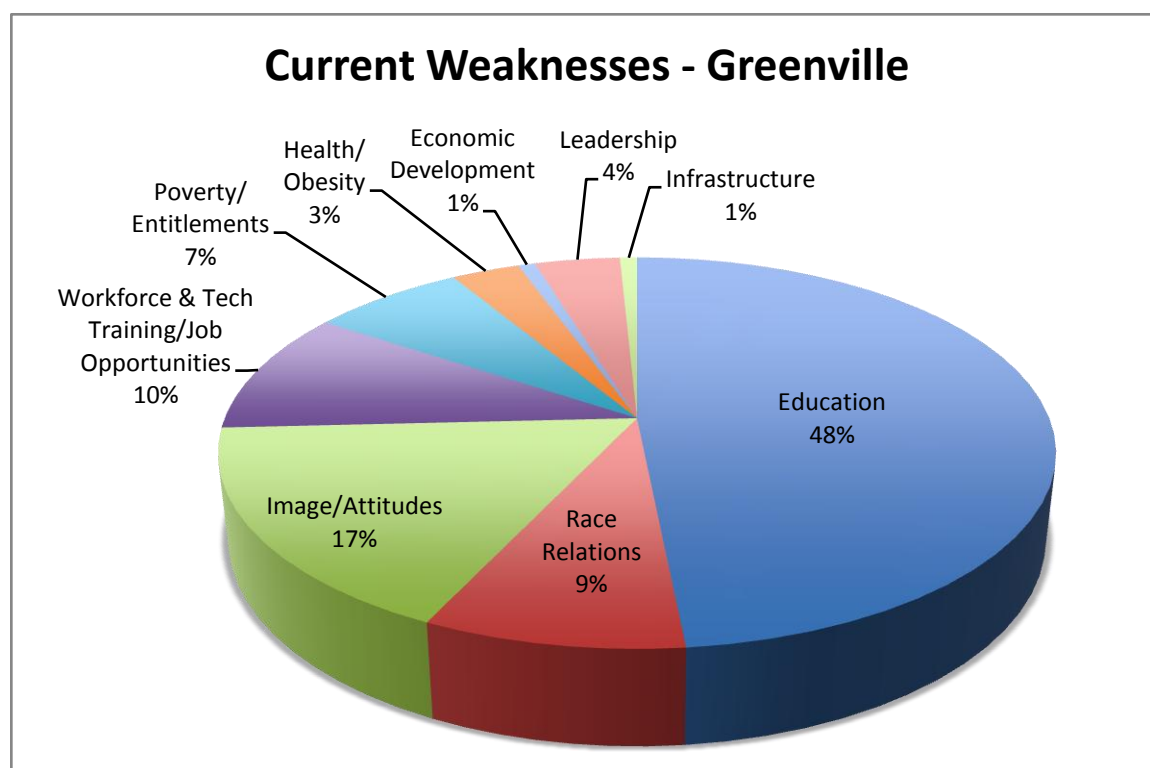
*“The Confederate culture; improve in diversification and race relations; education and trade”*

*“Racial reconciliation; strategic leadership in communities”*

*“Education; building a good work ethic; the Delta must become an economic contributor to our state”*

*“Becoming more diverse in state government”*

*“Poor education from birth to college”*



Greenville stakeholders echo statewide kudos to the jobs created by auto manufacturing as well as the spirit and momentum of cultural heritage tourism in the Delta. Most noted among improvements is the U.S. Highway 82 Greenville Bridge.

*"AHEAD, Blues, the Trails, TORT Reform, education and job training"*

*"Strong universities and community colleges; improvements in highways; new Greenville bridge; automotive manufacturing"*

*"Nissan; Toyota; 4-lane highways across state; growth in universities' enrollment; increased focus on heritage and promoting it"*

*"Cultural museums, road improvements, educational improvements, weather info via TV"*

*"I-69; new bridge; museums, blues trail"*

*"Transportation, river usage, blues trail, universities"*

*"4-lane hwy; MS Blues Trail; Music; USDA and ARS Biotech labs; B.B. King Museum; broadband"*

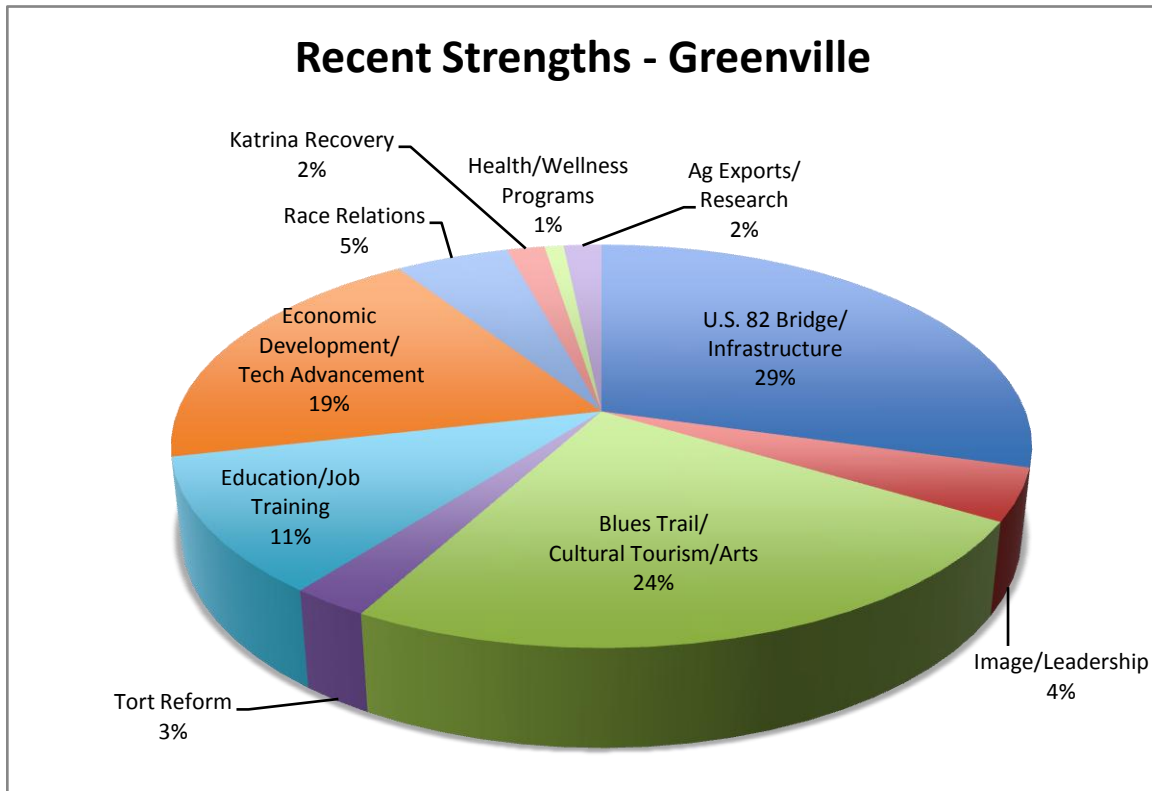
*"Race relations, definitely"*

*"Blues Trail; Nissan Plant; Toyota plant; Banks; Headstart program; incentives awareness; early childhood education"*



*“Increased awareness of dropout rates in schools; increased economic development; increased optimism; increased diversity”*

*“Nissan Plant; agriculture research in Stoneville; Blues tourist attractions”*



## Pascagoula

Attendance: 100

### Electronic Polling – 89 Participants

Attendees in Pascagoula are optimistic and see the Gulf Coast as a resilient region that is faring well despite its many challenges.

- 57% believe Mississippi children will find a good-paying job in-state
- 76% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 78% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 13% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 58% view the Gulf Coast region as *very competitive* in economic development
  - 33% rank the region as *moderately effective and competitive*
- 41% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 28% call Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 16% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 42% say Mississippi will still be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - Yet 36% envision a *hot, economic development location of the New South*
- 64% see the Gulf Coast region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 23% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Pascagoula is focused on Advanced Manufacturing, Tourism and Natural Resources.

- 33% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 30% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 22% - Tourism
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Retail & Service
- 4% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Gulf Coast**, Tourism is top, though Pascagoula also looks to Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resources as economic drivers.

- 37% - Tourism
- 36% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 17% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 5% - Health Care
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 1% - Retail & Service

Pascagoula identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (42%), with *education* and *trained workforce* at 13% and 16%, respectively.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Pascagoula identifies *trained workforce* first (33%) and *education* second (27%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Pascagoula agrees with the rest of the state calling for education reform (40%). Comments focused primarily on education, image and a need for more publicity around the positive attributes of Mississippi.

*"Must change the perception that we are overweight and unintelligent. We need to get the media onboard with our progress."*

*"EDUCATION - people who have school-age children refuse to relocate to Mississippi because of our education system"*

*"Destruction of the environment and pollution"*

*"Poor education; poor state; viewed as having a race issue greater than other states"*

*"Perception of education as a whole; Remediation of basic academic skills in higher education and workforce training"*

*"Great strides have been made in education but we must still work to increase our children's basic skill levels and bring more advanced learning opportunities"*

*"Education definitely!"*

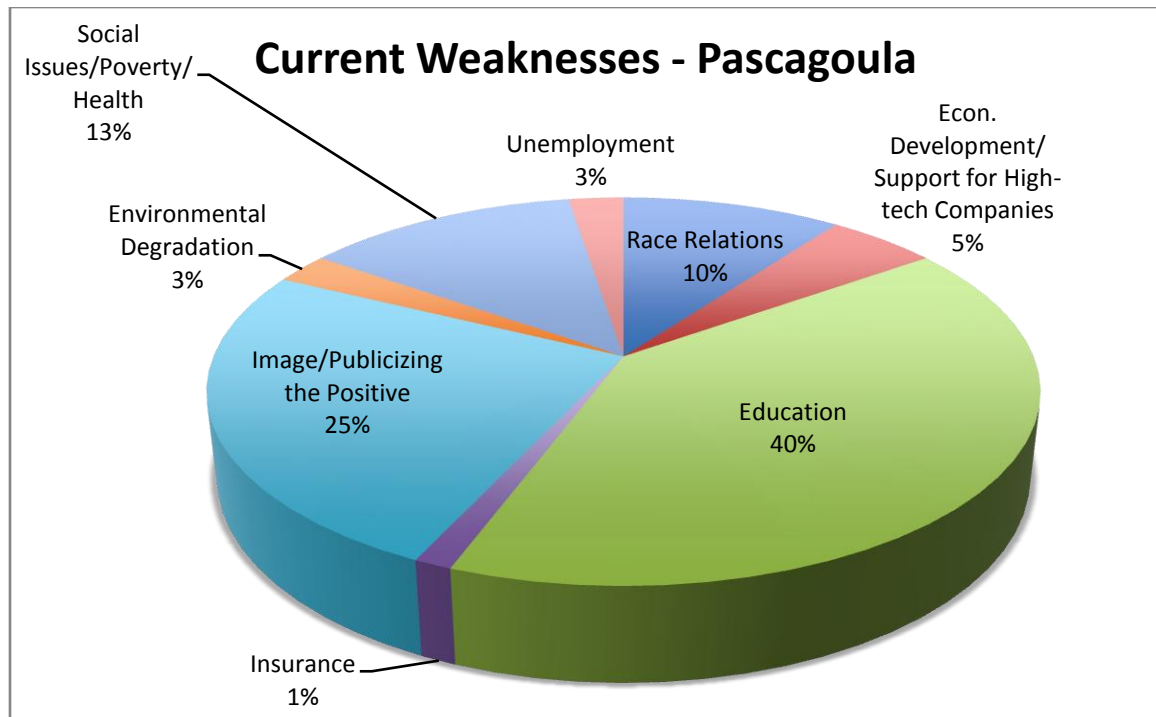
*"Racial divide"*

*"Our Image as 50th in all things good and nationally 1st in all things bad"*

*"Lack of support for technology; social issues such as single and teenage parents; low level of education of residents; lack of top-level education opportunity"*

*"Adequately fund public education!"*

*"It is cyclical and codependent – business and economic growth directly impact education yet it is difficult to improve an education system without a good tax base. I believe we begin with education to draw more business/industry."*



Pascagoula stakeholders also mention the momentum created by auto manufacturing as well as the oil, gas, and shipping industries on the coast. Also noted are gaming, tourism, and the arts.

*"Cutting-edge polymer research at USM"*

*"Resiliency to recover from disaster/hardship"*

*"Business growth; tourism expansion; WIN Job Centers; major university accomplishments"*

*"Disciplined and controlled gaming industry; rise of community college system; much-improved race relations"*

*"Port expansion; commitment to bringing new businesses to the state"*

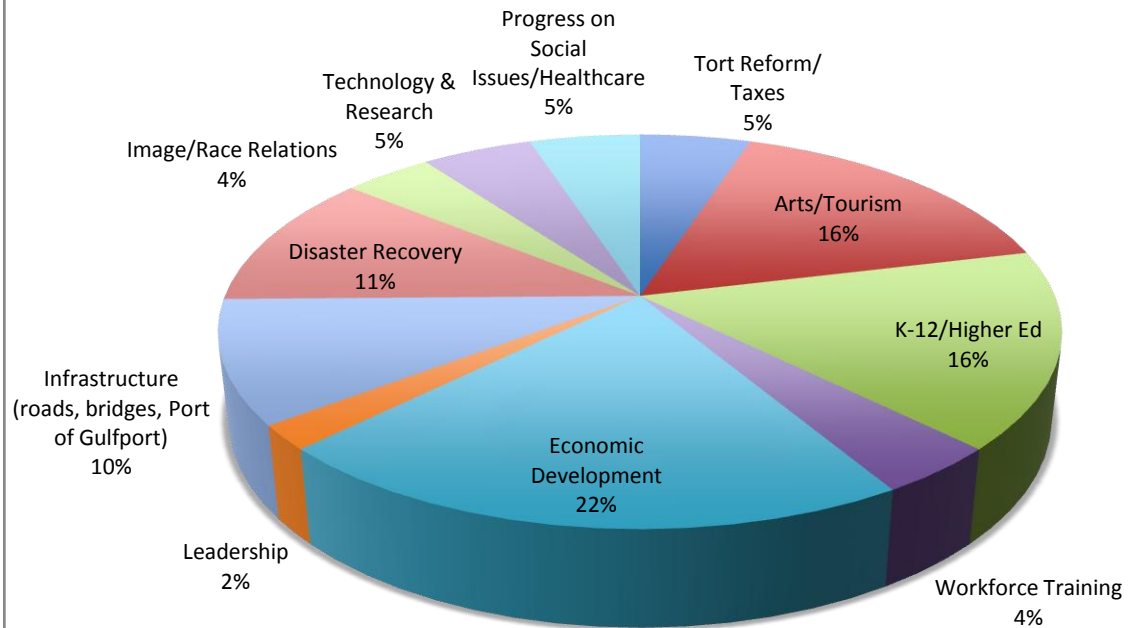
*"Emphasis on culture and art – education, museums, etc. Good technical/apprentice programs"*

*"Chevron refinery; Northrop Grumman Corp; I-10 expansion"*

*"Improved business climate; more high-tech industries locating here"*

*"Team MS economic development partnership; MS Blues trail; positive response following Katrina; casinos have brought many visitors"*

## Recent Strengths - Pascagoula



## Gulfport

Attendance: 210

### Electronic Polling – 174 Participants

Attendees in Gulfport are more pessimistic than other areas of the state, but are hopeful for future economic development.

- 63% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 80% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 48% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 39% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 45% view the Gulf Coast region as *moderately effective and competitive* in economic development
  - 26% rank the region as *not so competitive*
- 40% call Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 30% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 24% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*
- 54% say Mississippi will still be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 24% envision a *hot, economic development location of the New South*
- 52% see the Gulf Coast region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 31% as *not so competitive*
- Two “special edition” polling questions were designed for Gulfport by MEC.
  - Attendees voiced great concern about current *costs associated with business ownership and insurance* (66%) as a major roadblock to realizing the region’s economic potential
  - 53% view *Port development/Airport/Infrastructure* as the region’s greatest growth potential
    - 25% say Tourism and Gaming
    - 16% say Defense, Space, Military

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Gulfport is focused on Advanced Manufacturing, Tourism and Natural Resources.

- 28% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 23% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 22% - Tourism
- 15% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Retail & Service
- 5% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Gulf Coast**, Tourism is top, though Gulfport also looks to Advanced Manufacturing as an economic driver.

- 36% - Tourism
- 30% - Advanced Manufacturing

- 15% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 12% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 5% - Retail & Service
- 2% - Health Care

Gulfport identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (45%), with *education* a far second (14%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Gulfport identifies *a common-shared vision for our future* first (30%) and *education and trained workforce* tying at second (26%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Gulfport also encourages education reform (38%). Comments focused primarily on education, image and a state vision for improvement, and race relations.

*“Good ol’ boy system; Insurance; my taxes and insurance are four times as high as pre-Katrina.”*

*“We must focus on a shared vision for the future of the state; State has a lot of potential but we have too many influential people who are more concerned with what is best for them rather than the state as a whole”*

*“Change the state flag; improve our teacher retention program”*

*“We MUST improve our education system; make administrators, teachers and parents accountable for education system”*

*“Advertising budget at MDA and CVBs must be increased; showcase more of our positive aspects – literary excellence, friendly people, giving people, southern hospitality really exists”*

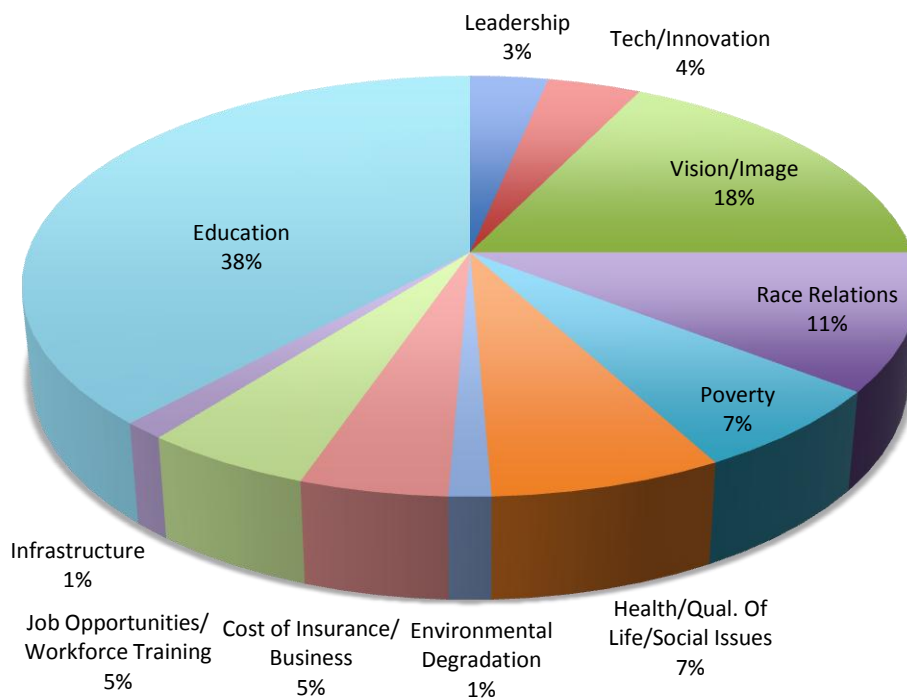
*“Lack of a comprehensive, effective educational system”*

*“Poverty must be attacked through early education”*

*“We will invest a million in a mile of highway at the expense of education! Public education should be the #1 priority in funding”*

*“Education, education, education”*

## Current Weaknesses - Gulfport



Gulfport is also very positive about recent achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholders comment on gaming, tourism, and the resilient spirit of the coast; infrastructure is a rally call for economic improvement.

*“Better roads; Cohesion – North, Central, South working together”*

*“Allowing the 800 ft. buffer for casinos to move on shore”*

*“Rebuilding of the MS Gulf Coast is our greatest ongoing achievement”*

*“Development of casinos; Auto manufacturing”*

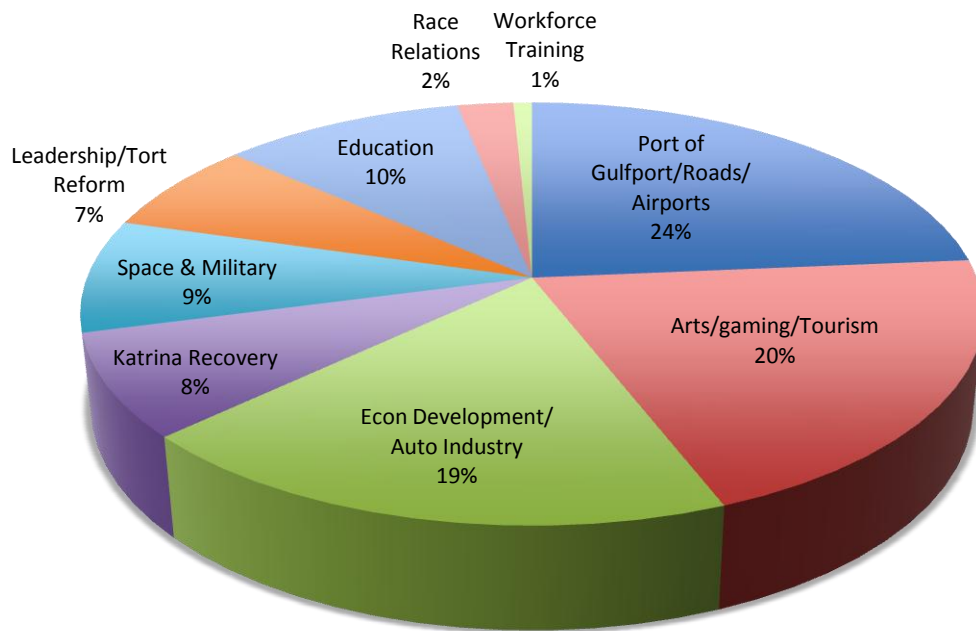
*“Port expansion; continued emphasis on space and military”*

*“The opportunity to change the face of the coast following Katrina; We’ve taken a major disaster and turned it into a positive for all of Mississippi”*

*“Port expansion; Tourism”*



## Recent Strengths - Gulfport



## Grenada

Attendance: 80

### Electronic Polling – 46 Participants

Attendees in Grenada are more pessimistic than other areas of the state, but are hopeful for future economic development.

- 56% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 60% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 58% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 42% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 53% view the Delta region as *not so effective or competitive* in economic development
  - 22% rank the region as *not competitive at all*
  - 20% rank the region as *moderately competitive*
- 47% say Mississippi is currently a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 26% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 21% describe Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
- 40% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - But 30% report Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 55% see the Delta region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 34% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Grenada is focused on Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing.

- 34% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 30% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 16% - Health Care
- 14% - Tourism
- 7% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Delta**, Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing have equal focus.

- 35% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 35% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 19% - Tourism
- 9% - Health Care
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 2% - Retail & Service

Grenada identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (35%), along with *shovel ready sites* (30%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Grenada identifies a *trained workforce* as most important (32%) and a *common-shared vision for our future* as second (30%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Grenada also encourages education reform (29%), and has a unique focus on trying to improve negative and unprogressive attitudes. Input revealed a desire to improve education, state image, race relations, and problematic social issues.

*"We don't need to improve perception, we just need to concentrate on improving the welfare of our citizens."*

*"Get out of the perception of being closed-minded"*

*"Education underperformance"*

*"We must 'toot our own horn.' Too often we perpetuate our own bad image"*

*"If we educate high school students and adults we can attract companies to our state"*

*"Resistance to change is problematic in becoming successful and resistance to change is evident here"*

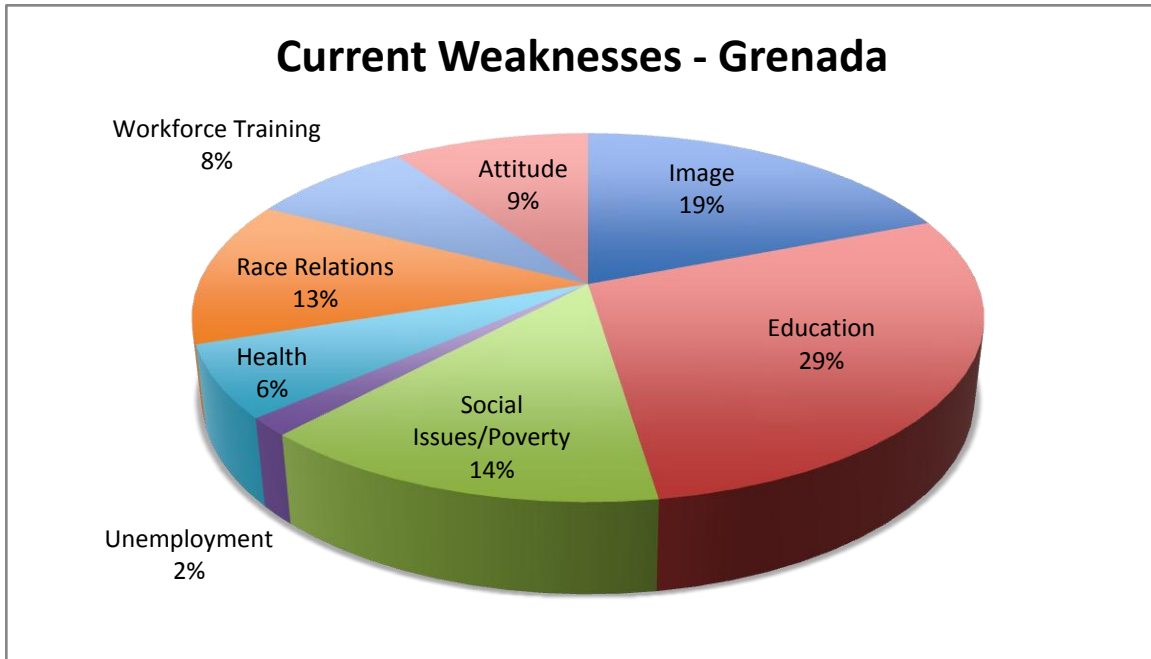
*"Not receptive to new concepts"*

*"Too red around the neck"*

*"Improve race relations and education"*

*"Early childhood education; parenting skills"*

*"Constant rehashing of problems of the past"*



Grenada is also very positive about recent achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholder comments center on cooperation and individuals with a vision for prosperity.

*“Producing quality people as citizens”*

*“William Winter Center for Racial Reconciliation”*

*“Creation and continued funding of MDA”*

*“MS has done a great job of promoting cultural tourism; our strides in race relations are apparent to visitors”*

*“A very energetic and visionary EDD director was hired here and is making changes in our community; the Tupelo business incubator; new auto manufacturers”*

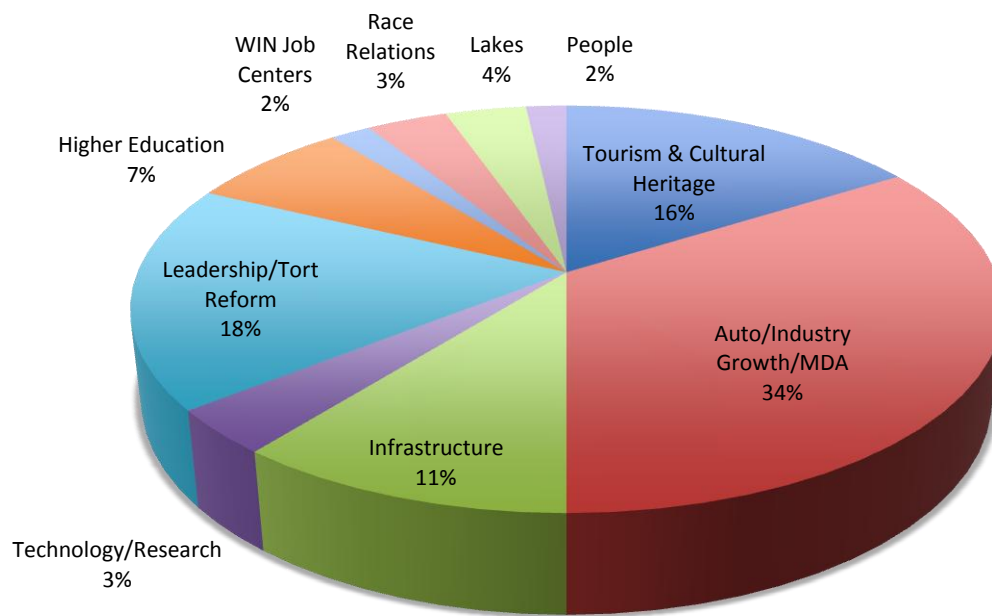
*“Economic Developer has created database and criteria necessary to put us in position for growth”*

*“Auto industry”*

*“Leadership Mississippi”*

*“4-lane hwy program; industrial growth in auto and technology”*

## Recent Strengths - Grenada



## Starkville

Attendance: 60

### Electronic Polling – 45 Participants

Starkville attendees are optimistic for the future, polling more confident than most audiences.

- 60% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 86% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 70% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
- 71% view the East Central region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development
- 47% say Mississippi is currently a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 25% call the state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 17% describe Mississippi as a *hot economic development location*
- 46% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 32% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state*
- 46% see the East Central region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and 44% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Starkville is focused on Advanced Manufacturing and high-tech companies.

- 33% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 28% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 13% - Tourism
- 8% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the **East Central** region, Start-up tech companies and online business and Advanced Manufacturing are the focus.

- 46% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 36% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 13% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 5% - Retail & Service

Starkville identifies *education* as their most beneficial resource (44%), along with a *common-shared vision for the future* (21%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Starkville identifies a *trained workforce* as most important (32%) and *racial reconciliation* as second (17%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Starkville adamantly encourages education reform (47%), and shares the state's vision to correct Mississippi's image, racial, and social concerns.

*"Education, education, education"*

*"Early childhood education is a MUST! Racial reconciliation throughout the state"*

*"Poverty = low educational attainment = poor health = inadequate employment = drain on resources"*

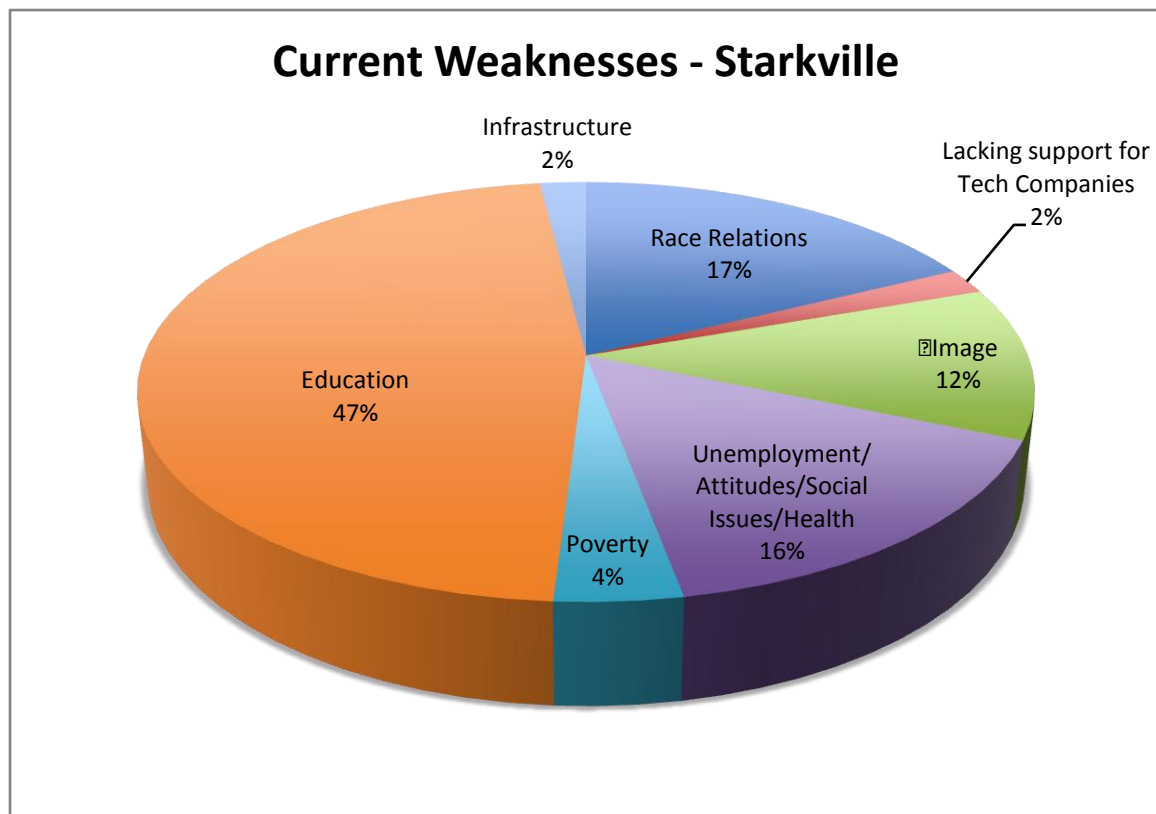
*"Equality for all is still a grave concern"*

*"Education – Early childhood through IHL"*

*"Racial Reconciliation"*

*"The ability to attract more high-tech companies"*

*"Adequate education – Fund it!"*



Starkville is also very positive about recent achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholder comments vary from infrastructure improvements to economic development, with particular emphasis on high-tech jobs and university research.

*“Haley Barbour; Tort Reform; MDA; Nissan, Toyota, and Eurocopter”*

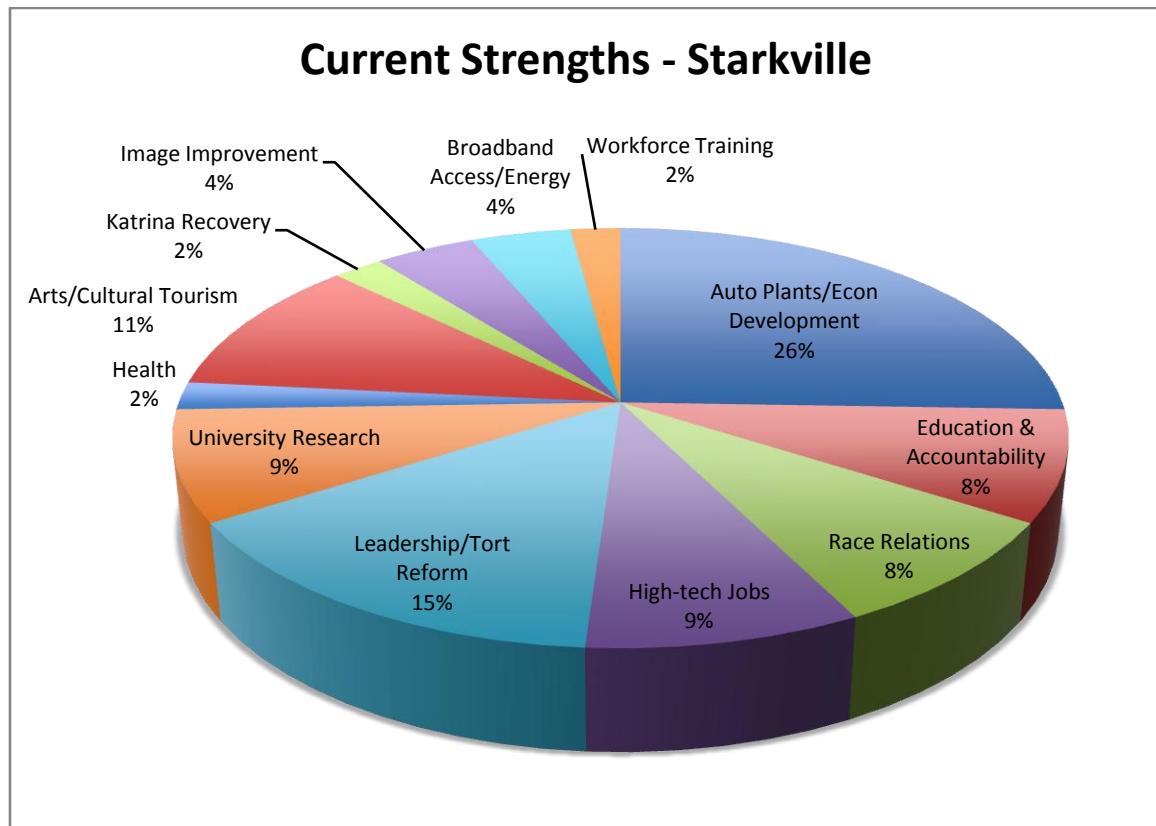
*“Economic development – new businesses; promotion of our cultural heritage”*

*“Strong emphasis on educational accountability; Increased awareness of rich visual and performing arts”*

*“Highways program, cultural trails program – an excellent start to racial healing”*

*“University research; transportation improvements; health care improvements”*

*“Highway program; high-tech jobs”*





## Columbus

Attendance: 120

### Electronic Polling – 101 Participants

Attendees in Columbus are optimistic for the future, polling more confident than most audiences.

- 63% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 85% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 58% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 29% say we're *very competitive*
- 67% view the East Central region as *very effective and competitive* in economic development (25% *moderately competitive*)
- 46% say Mississippi is currently a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 24% describe Mississippi as a *hot economic development location*
  - 18% call the state *that cannot escape negative perception*
- 58% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 35% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state*
- 68% see the East Central region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and 29% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Columbus is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 62% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 12% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% - Tourism
- 4% - Health Care
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **East Central region**, Columbus still sees Advanced Manufacturing as the focus.

- 72% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Health Care
- 2% - Tourism

Columbus identifies *shovel-ready sites* as their most beneficial resource (38%), along with *a common-shared vision for the future* (19%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Columbus identifies *education* as most important (33%) and *trained workforce* as second (22%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Columbus asks for education reform (39%), and echoes needs in race relations (18%), state image (12%), poverty (10%), and social issues (9%).

*"Education; still a perceived racial disparity"*

*"Education! Unfortunately the test results still speak for themselves."*

*"One-parent families"*

*"Low incomes and education; Inner-city slums and run-down areas; we need to revitalize these areas"*

*"Lack of education in rural areas"*

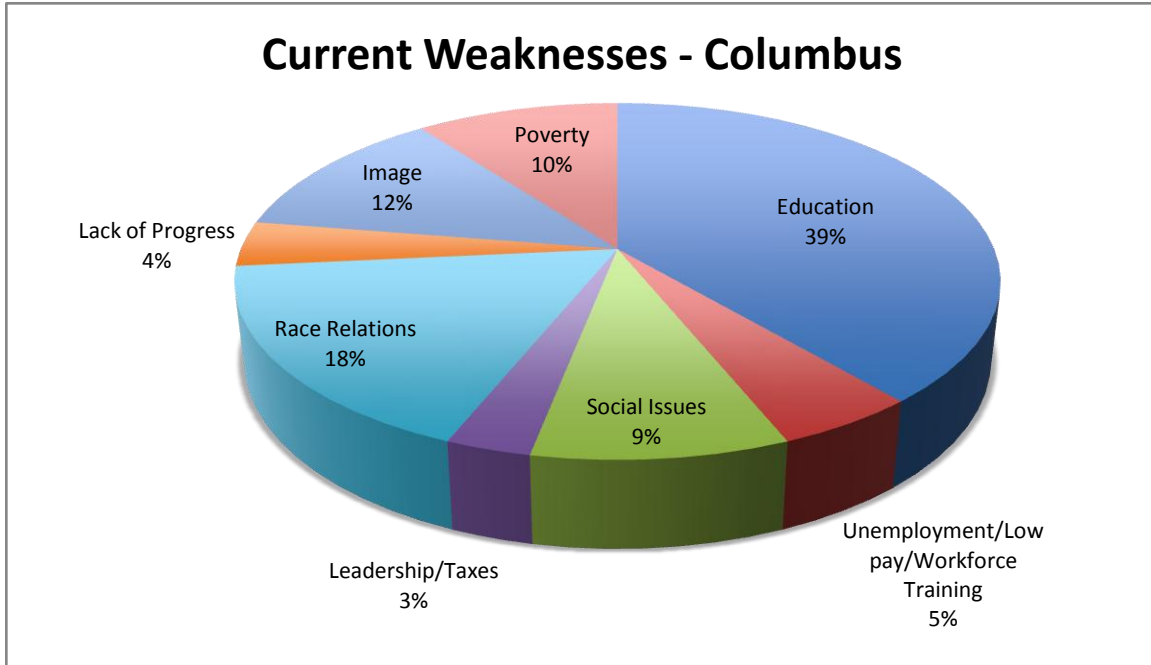
*"Our own belief that we should accept less"*

*"Perception of lack of equality; teen pregnancy rate"*

*"Bring us to the 21<sup>st</sup> century"*

*"Better pay"*

*"Drop-out rate; number of people on public assistance and politicians willing to get reelected on keeping them there instead of encouraging those to work who are able"*



Columbus is also positive about recent achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholder comments praise economic development (25%), infrastructure improvements (24%) and leadership/tort reform (12%).

*"Megasites in the area"*

*"Workforce development via the community college system; offering degrees online via the Mississippi Virtual Community"*

*"Historic/cultural resource development; highway improvements"*

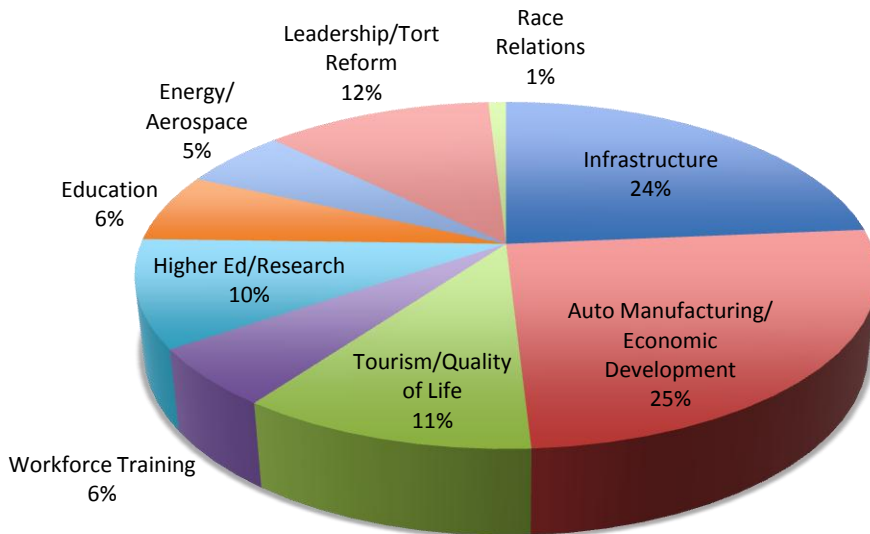
*"Industry in Golden Triangle; Columbus magnet schools"*

*"The four-lane highways are great. It allows us to get to the jobs that are available across our great state."*

*"Nissan, Toyota, highway program, Severcor, Paccor"*

*"Developments in auto, aerospace industry, skilled workforce; communities working together to accomplish goals; wonderful research institutions (UM, MSU, UMMC, etc.)"*

## Recent Strengths - Columbus



## Natchez

Attendance: 110

### Electronic Polling – 94 Participants

Attendees in Natchez are more pessimistic than other areas of the state, but are hopeful for future economic development.

- 58% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 76% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 59% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in job creation, 37% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* compared to surrounding states
- 71% view the Southwest region as *not so effective or competitive* in economic development
  - 15% rank the region as *moderately competitive*
  - 14% rank the region as *not competitive at all*
- 38% say Mississippi is currently a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 27% describe Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 24% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 47% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 18% report Mississippi will still be a *hot economic development location*
- 43% see the Southwest region as *not so competitive* to site selectors, and 32% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Natchez is focused on Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing.

- 45% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 24% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% - Health Care
- 7% - Tourism
- 2% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Southwest**, Natural Resources and Tourism are the focus.

- 56% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 26% - Tourism
- 10% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 2% - Health Care

Natchez identifies *natural, cultural, community and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (63%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Natchez identifies *education* (60%) and a *common-shared vision for our future* (18%) as the greatest needs.

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Natchez agrees with the rest of the state – education reform (46%). Natchez is also focused on improving race relations and Mississippi's image.

*"We need to market more – people love MS when they experience it"*

*"Public education, public education, public education, infinitum!"*

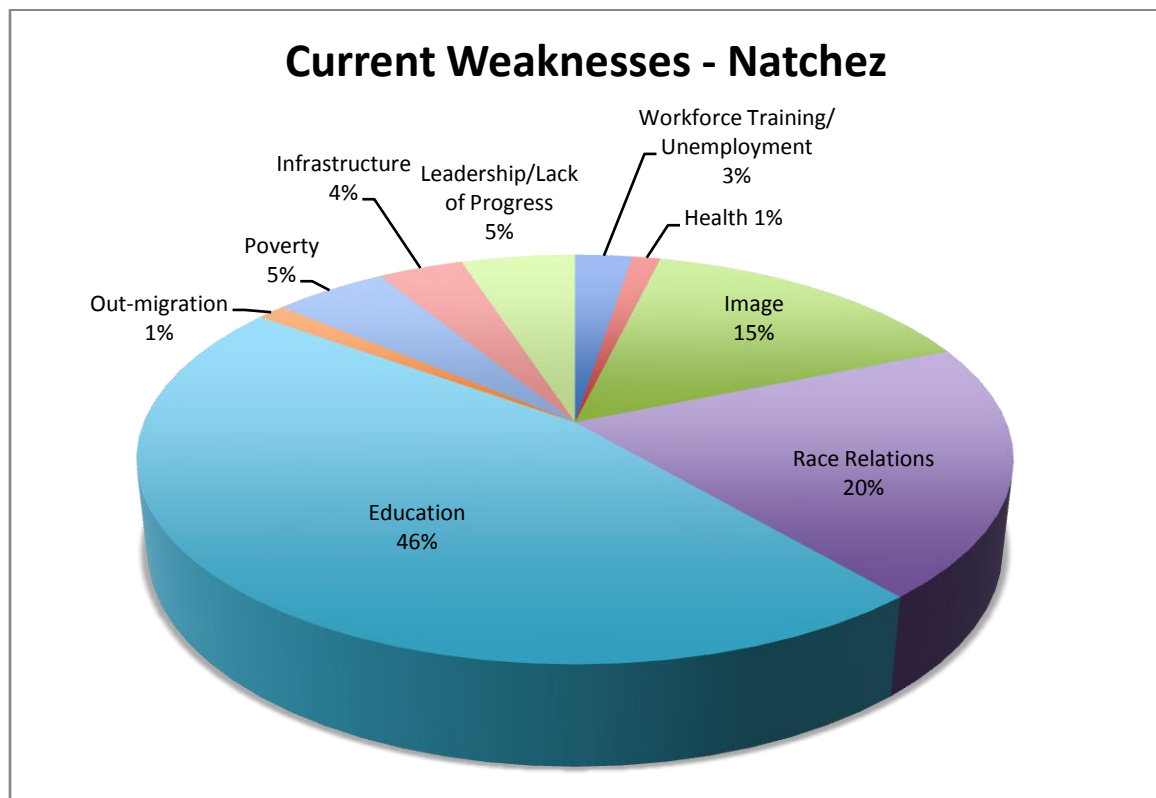
*"Education; loss of young people; poor utilization of MS River"*

*"Education numbers, testing, dropout rate"*

*"Education; transportation – rail"*

*"Racial barriers; prejudice in the public school system"*

*"Racial reconciliation"*



Natchez is very positive about recent infrastructure achievements in Mississippi, which is reflected in stakeholder comments, in addition to , cultural and industrial improvements.

*“Hwy 84 – almost completed; Development of Tourism and river boat gambling”*

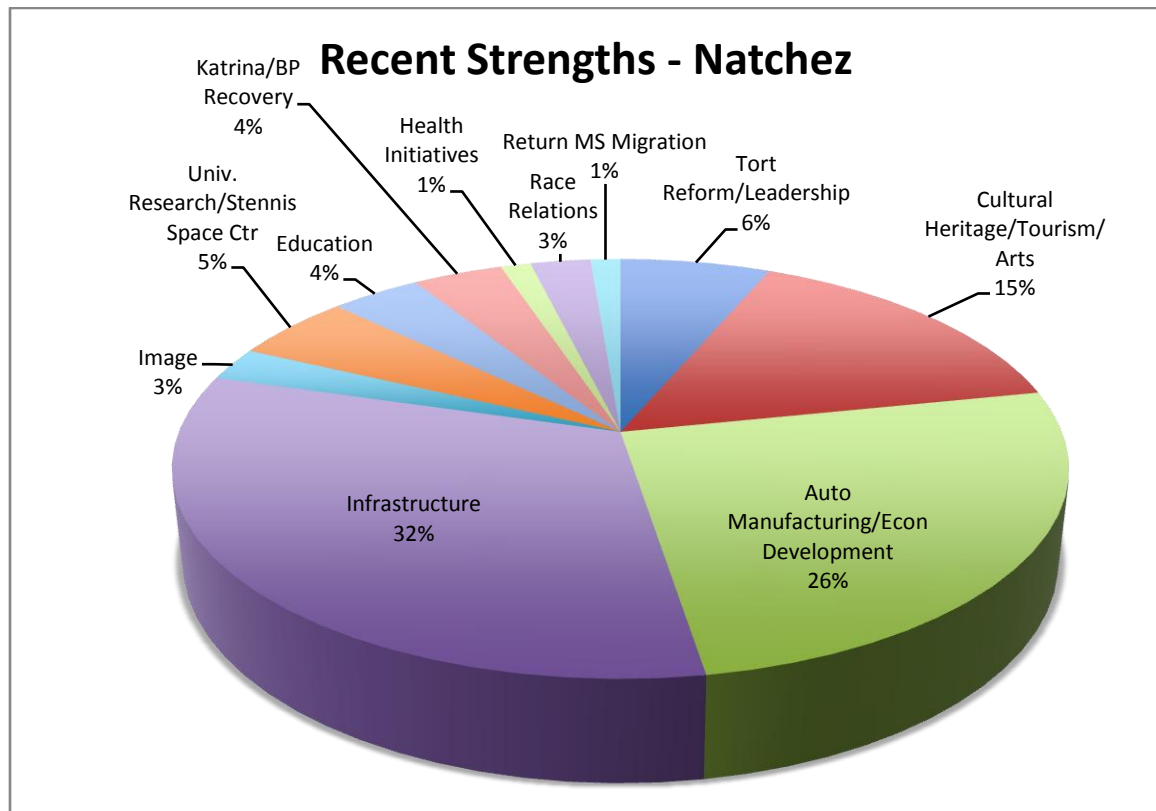
*“Hwy 84 improvements; schools/universities have grown in size; Nissan and Toyota plants”*

*“Tort reform; 4-lane highway program; teacher retention; emphasis on existing industries”*

*“State arts/cultural museums/institutions; auto industry; better state infrastructure; education institutions – MSU, Ole Miss, etc.”*

*“CAVS Research Center @ MSU”*

*“Blues heritage program”*



## Greenwood

Attendance: 100

### Electronic Polling – 79 Participants

Attendees in Greenwood are more pessimistic than other areas of the state, but are hopeful for future economic development.

- 58% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 67% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 42% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in job creation
  - 38% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 48% view the Delta region as *not so effective or competitive* in job creation
  - 31% rank the region as *not competitive at all*
  - 17% rank the region as *moderately competitive*
- 41% say Mississippi is currently a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 28% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 15% describe Mississippi as a *sought-after tourism destination*
- 38% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 20% report Mississippi will be a *sought-after tourism destination*
- 55% see the Delta region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 34% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Greenwood is focused on Tourism and Natural Resources.

- 44% - Tourism
- 34% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Health Care
- 8% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 1% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Delta**, answers are the same.

- 51% - Tourism
- 34% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 8% - Health Care
- 3% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Start-up tech companies and online business

Greenwood identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (49%), second being, inexplicably *none of the above* (20%).



When highlighting its major areas of need, Greenwood identifies *education* as most important (53%) and *racial reconciliation* as second (18%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Greenwood also encourages education reform (47%), with other concerns on racial reconciliation (21%), workforce development (9%), poverty and image (each 7%). Greenwood attendees also raised interest in the charter school movement, naming the success of the KIPP School in Helena, Arkansas.

*“Our education system particularly standardized tests; the overall educational attainment of our state’s population”*

*“Public education – our state leaders must get real about school accountability and pass a real charter school bill”*

*“Racism and Education; all white students in Greenwood attend private schools while black students attend public schools”*

*“Improve K-12 education; Dropout prevention; health awareness”*

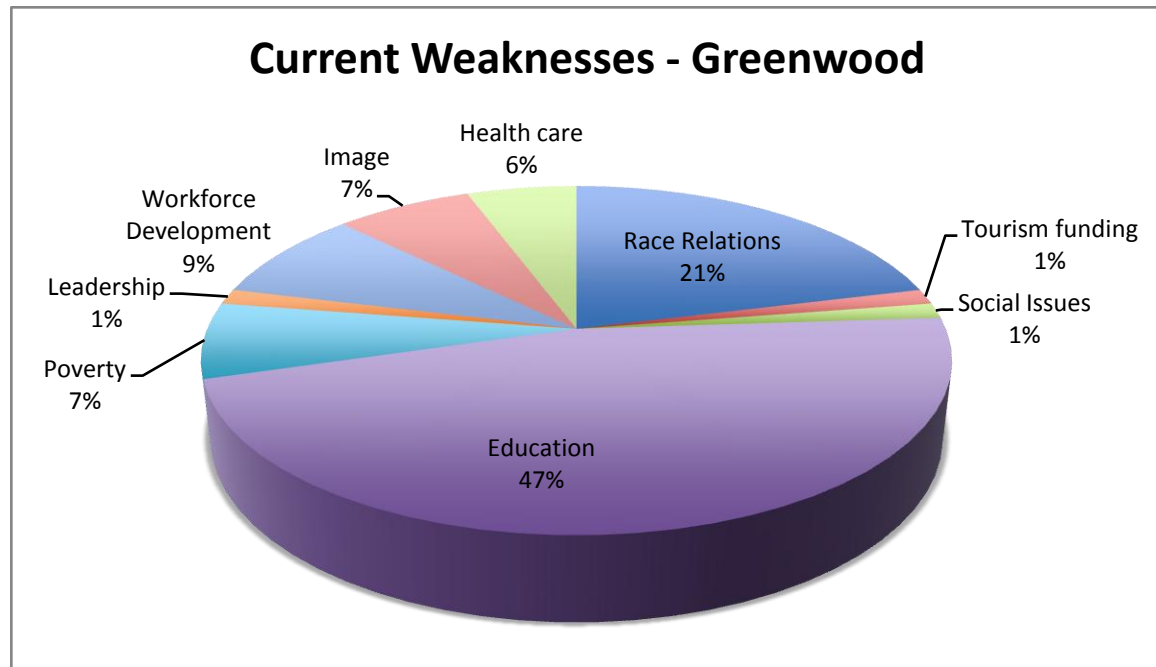
*“The Delta must be revitalized!”*

*“Utilize our research universities”*

*“Public education; PreK-12 especially in the Delta; Lack of equity”*

*“Racism – both black and white. Strong racial bias on both sides”*

*“How we are viewed in education and workforce”*



Greenwood also celebrates Mississippi's recent achievements, primarily Auto Manufacturing and Economic Development (33%); Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Gaming (28%); and Infrastructure (11%).

*"Cultural heritage; blues trail; tourism"*

*"Blues trail; MSU Research Park; spread of main street association in small towns"*

*"Toyota; Nissan; Gaming industry; B.B. King museum; Tupelo area expansion; Southaven area expansion"*

*"Blues trails; heritage trails"*

*"Blues trails; highway improvement"*

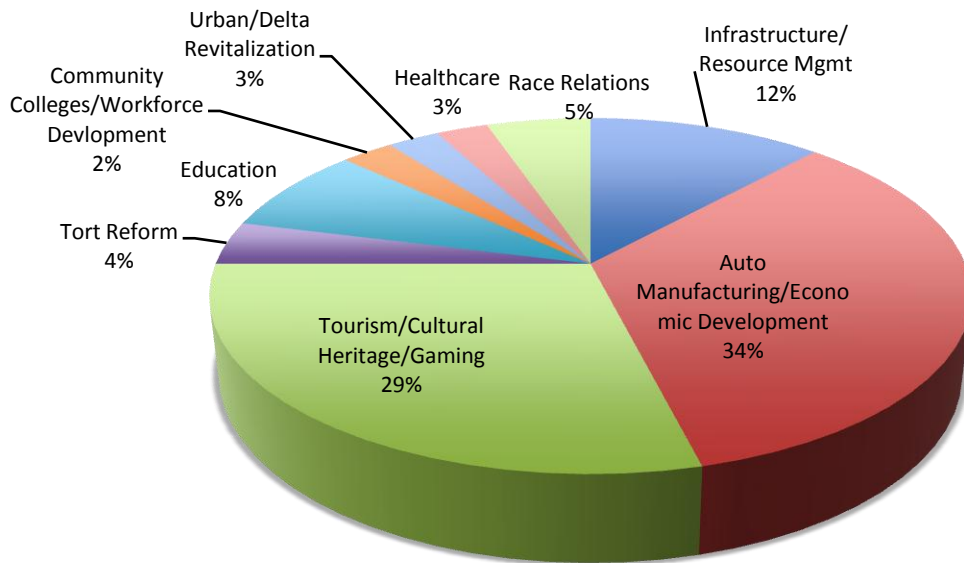
*"William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation; 2 automobile plants in Canton and Tupelo"*

*"Indianola Promise Community; interest in tourism"*

*"Education accountability K-12; higher enrollments in higher education; tourism development – blues and country trails; B.B. King museum; downtown redevelopment"*

*"Toyota, Nissan, Viking Range"*

## Recent Strengths - Greenwood



## Jackson

Attendance: 275 (Highest attendance)

### Electronic Polling – 195 Participants

Attendees in Jackson are more pessimistic than other areas of the state, but are hopeful for future economic development.

- 55% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 80% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 48% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 39% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 50% view the Capital region as *moderately competitive* in job creation
  - 26% rank the region as *not so competitive*
  - 21% rank the region as *very competitive*
- 37% say Mississippi is currently a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 30% describe it as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 24% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 47% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 30% report Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location of the New South* in 10 years
- 57% see the Capital region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 23% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Jackson is focused on Health Care and Natural Resources.

- 29% - Health Care
- 26% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 22% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 12% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Tourism
- 1% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Capital area**, Health Care is the focus hands down. Jackson clearly has a high-tech focus for the future.

- 48% - Health Care
- 26% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 7% - Tourism
- 6% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 4% - Retail & Service

Jackson identifies *natural, cultural, community and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (32%), along with *a common-shared vision for the future* (16%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Jackson identifies *education* as most important (39%) and a *common-shared vision for our future* as second (26%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Jackson also encourages education reform (36%), and recognizes improvement still to come in race relations (20%), self-perception and national image (12%), and poverty (10%).

*“Focused planning and execution”*

*“Overcome education gaps; 0-5 early childhood improvements will make exponential advancements”*

*“Improved race relations; quality early childhood education; quality of life for women and children; poverty”*

*“Education – graduation rates, attend college; health status – obesity; economic – poverty levels; new technology for new MS jobs”*

*“Poor access to sources of capital – especially middle market”*

*“Leaders who inspire hope; teacher who focus on critical thinking”*

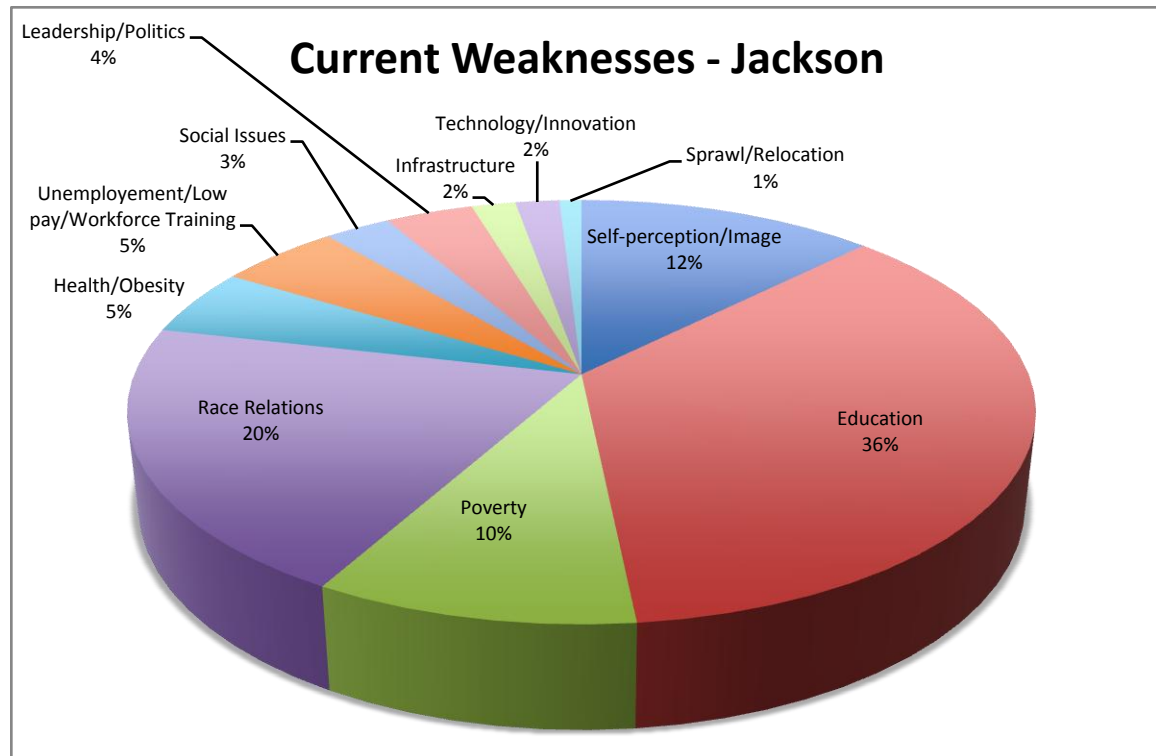
*“Race relations – on a person to person basis we are much better off in racial relations than the media chooses to portray us”*

*“Technology Innovation”*

*“Misperception of education level; race relations and past stigma; political partisanship; disjointed communication/lack of coordination between key stakeholders/organizations duplicating efforts”*

*“Support childcare & educational services so single parents and others can seek employment & know their children are safe; lack of diversity in statewide elected officials to state agencies & corporations”*

*“Essentially still segregated school systems; failure to continue innovations; charter and magnet school options”*



Jackson is very informed on positive economic achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholder comments vary, with the majority mentioning MDA activities and auto manufacturing.

*"Fastest improving reading scores in the nation"*

*"Improvement of Mississippi's only academic medical center; economic impact of UMMC on all of MS - \$3.3 billion per year – by high retention of graduates and locating graduates around MS"*

*"Tort reform; improvements in education; universal service funds to advance digital capacity; embrace energy infrastructure/innovation"*

*"We finally realize the value of tourism putting our history & culture first"*

*"25 years of Grand Gulf Nuclear Station and soon to be the largest reactor in the world; clean air energy leader"*

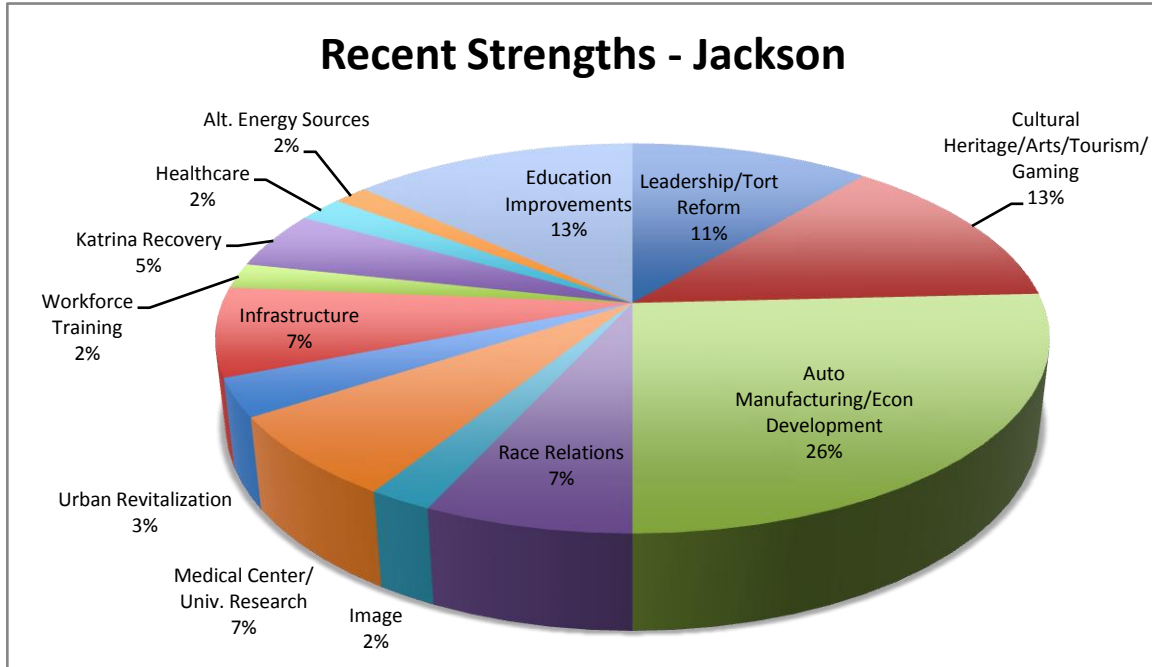
*"Better qualified state leaders; a focus on improving education; a focus on economic development; racial groups working together"*

*"Having a group of elected officials who have opened MS for business – Nissan, Toyota, etc."*

*"Increased representation of elected officials by minorities at the local level"*

*“Tort reform; Barksdale Reading Institute”*

*“Casinos have exposed MS to many visitors; major economic impact programs; raised level of education; research at 4 year schools”*



## Southaven

Attendance: 80

### Electronic Polling – 75 Participants

Southaven participants are very optimistic compared to the rest of the state, and while they are concerned with Mississippi's image, they are particularly positive about Mississippi's future competitiveness.

- 63% believe Mississippi children will find good paying jobs in state
- 81% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 65% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in job creation, and 18% view Mississippi as *very competitive* to surrounding states
- 74% view the Northwest region as *very competitive* in job creation
  - 25% rank the region as *moderately competitive*
- 36% say Mississippi is currently a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 33% describe it as a *newly emerging growth state*
- 48% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location of the New South* in 10 years
  - 37% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state*
- 79% see the Northwest region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and 21% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Southaven is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 52% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 13% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Tourism
- 7% - Retail & Service
- 6% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Northwest region**, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus, though Natural Resources polls at zero percent.

- 48% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Retail & Service
- 14% - Health Care
- 13% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Tourism
- 0% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz

Southaven identifies *Education* as their most beneficial resource (29%), along with a *common-shared vision for the future* (22%).



When highlighting its major areas of need, Southaven identifies *a trained workforce* as most important (44%) and *racial reconciliation* as second (15%).

### **Stakeholder Response Forms**

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Southaven also encourages education reform (36%), and recognizes improvement still to come in race relations and national image.

*“Perceived racism”*

*“Misperception of racism; improve education; reduce teen pregnancy; dissolution of traditional family unit (fewer people marrying); reduction of number of public universities and junior colleges”*

*“Outdated media and Hollywood views on race”*

*“Literacy”*

*“I believe we must overcome racism and move forward to an era of real non-discrimination.”*

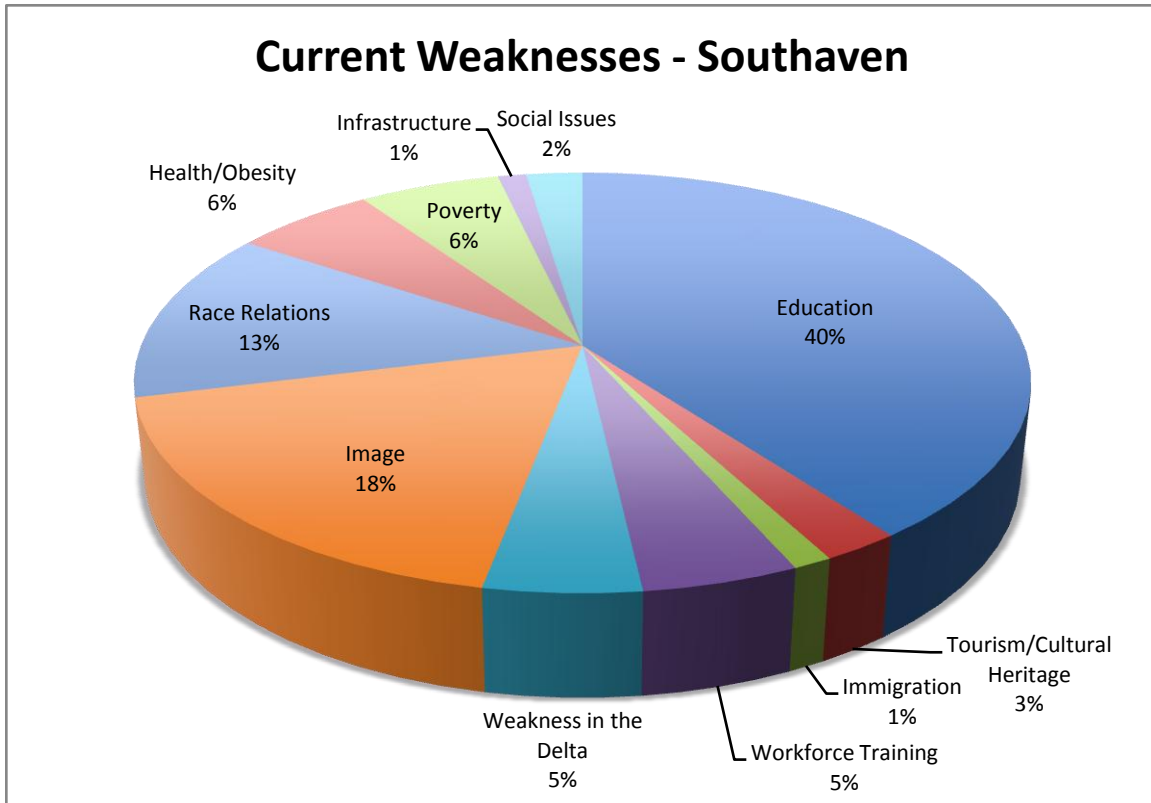
*“Perception of the people of Mississippi as uneducated”*

*“Percent of college graduates must increase; reduce state obesity rate; increase teacher pay so education and educators are ranked very high in Mississippi”*

*“The Delta needs to be tackled; we must make the most fertile area of our state a place the people are proud of”*

*“Education – not good enough! We need more training/education for higher end jobs – engineers, etc.”*

*“Racial reconciliation; poor health and education system”*



Southaven also writes that they are excited about the economic achievements in Mississippi, proud of their local schools, and motivated by recent infrastructure improvements.

*"Nissan; Barksdale Reading Institute; Improved higher education; John Grisham; Katrina recovery; Toyota (if it takes off)"*

*"Nissan and Toyota coming; Soladigm relocating to Olive Branch"*

*"Fiscal discipline under Barbour; restrained taxation on business and citizens; serious efforts to put resources in classrooms, not admin; realistic efforts to provide energy; lower crime rate"*

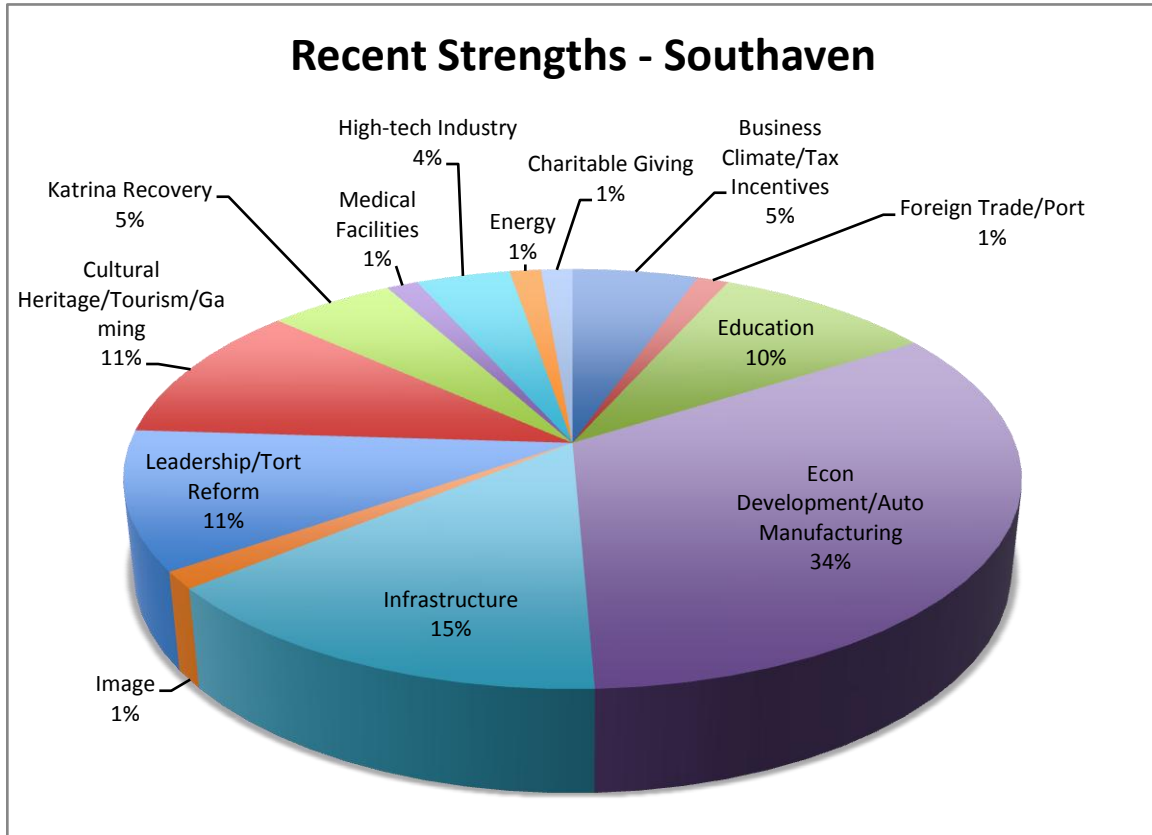
*"Stoneville experiment; Stennis Space Center; Polymer technology at USM"*

*"Passage of Better Education Act of 1982; recruitment of foreign automotive companies"*

*"Relocation of large national companies to Mississippi"*

*"Haley Barbour; Ray Mabus (Secretary of Navy; response to Katrina; landing Nissan and Toyota; blues trail"*

*"The foreign trade zone off the Port of Gulfport and the groundwork for its expansion"*



## Oxford

Attendance: 130

### Electronic Polling – 112 Participants

Unlike university towns Hattiesburg and Starkville, attendees in Oxford are not so optimistic about their children's in-state job potential, though they do share the optimistic faith that Mississippi can improve its competitive position that is shared by most of the state.

- 56% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find a good job
- 85% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 55% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development, 37% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 47% view the Northeast region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
- 34% describe the Mississippi of today as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 27% call Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 15% call it a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 47% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - Yet 34% envision a *hot, economic development location of the New South*
- 49% see the Northeast region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 37% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Oxford is focused on Advanced Manufacturing, Start-up tech companies and online businesses, and Natural Resources.

- 42% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 18% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 14% - Health Care
- 4% - Tourism
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Northeast**, Oxford looks to Start-up tech companies and online businesses most for economic growth.

- 9% - Tourism
- 33% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 3% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 12% - Health Care
- 35% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Retail & Service

Oxford identifies *education* as their most beneficial resource (48%), along with a *common-shared vision for the future* and *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources*, both polling at 21%.

Oxford identifies a *common-shared vision for the future* as the Northeast region's major area of need (27%), along with *trained workforce* (25%) and *education* (23%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Oxford agrees with the rest of the state calling for education reform (39%). Comments focused primarily on education, image and racial reconciliation.

*"Being last in numerous rankings really hurts us. Truthfully, just moving up a few spots would take the negative focus off MS"*

*"Mississippi lacks a skilled, educated and professional workforce. Mississippi has not been traditionally seen as a leader in innovation."*

*"Undereducated people; high dropout rates"*

*"More quality, affordable early childhood education options for all Mississippians so that the less fortunate in our state aren't forced to keep their children out of childcare until kindergarten"*

*"Presence on lists of national crises: childhood obesity, health care, unemployment, education"*

*"Perception of Mississippi; job opportunities and education; many of our children are leaving our state; we need to promote our state better"*

*"Improve perceived and actual racial harmony by:*

*1) change state flag*

*2) Don't have governors who endorse flag, citizens council, and who don't denounce immediately an N.B. Forrest license plate"*

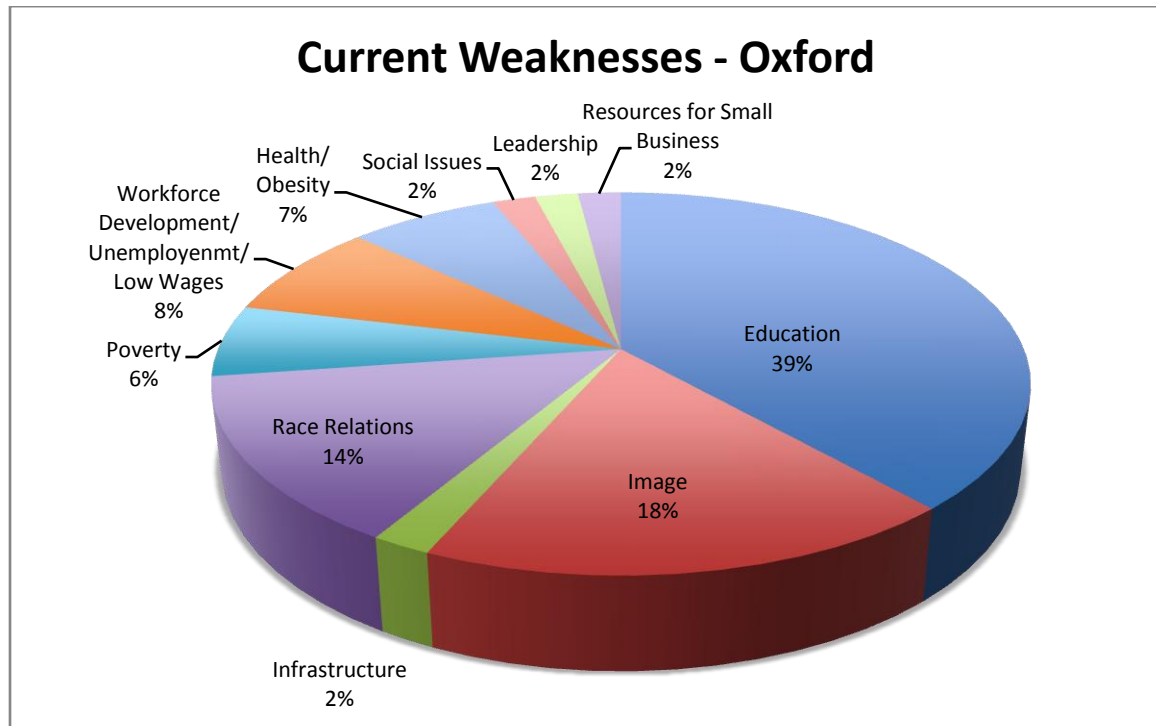
*"Resources for small business; There are several but they are not doing the job effectively. Very few small businesses have an opportunity to utilize the resources or education courses."*

*"Education; poverty, race relations"*

*"Not fully funding MAEP (public school funding)"*

*"Billboards around the state stating the dropouts and teen pregnancies; we should replace these negative billboards with positive ones"*

*“Education, health and obesity; Teacher salaries - have to become competitive with other jobs to entice good, smart people to teach”*



Oxford also writes about recent economic achievements through auto manufacturing recruiting and the growth of high-tech industries around the state, as well as being proud of their local schools, improvements in race relations, and cultural tourism.

*“Cultural heritage tourism; infrastructure improvements”*

*“Recognition that Mississippi should take the control of its own destiny for economic development rather than waiting for outside stimulus”*

*“Economic development incentives; education improvements; high-speed internet access; tort reform”*

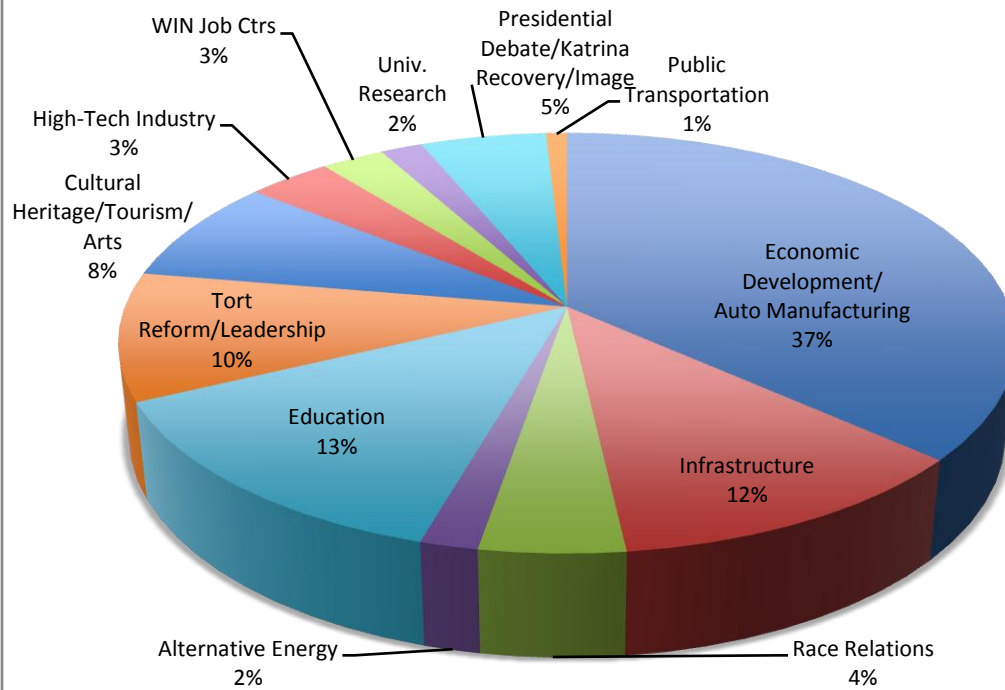
*“Attracting major global companies: Nissan, Toyota, GE, Winchester, etc.”*

*“Numerous new museums – Anderson museum in Ocean Springs, Ohr O’Keefe Museum in Biloxi, MS Museum of Art in Jackson (renovation and expansion), B.B. King museum, Robert Johnson museum and more”*

*“Creation of new jobs for Mississippians with Toyota and Nissan; Improvement of education and teacher pay raises”*

*“Cultural trails; Presidential Debate; response to Katrina; Nissan and Toyota; Mississippi Education Reform Act and Adequate Education Act”*

## Recent Strengths - Oxford



## Tunica

Attendance: 180

### Electronic Polling – 125 Participants

The Tunica Road Show was part of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi Regional Forum on technology-driven development in Northwest Mississippi. The almost 200 participants were optimistic about Mississippi's future, both for quality job potential and competitiveness.

- 58% believe Mississippi children will find good paying jobs in state
- 87% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 52% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in job creation, though 27% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* to surrounding states
- 48% view the Northwest region as *very competitive* in job creation
  - 29% rank the region as *moderately competitive*
- 47% describe today's Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 26% say Mississippi is a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 48% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location of the New South* in 10 years
  - 37% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state*
- 48% see the Northwest region as *very competitive* to site selectors, 39% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Tunica is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 56% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 16% - Tourism
- 12% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Health Care
- 3% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Northwest region**, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus, though Tourism is also a priority.

- 48% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 32% - Tourism
- 12% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Health Care
- 2% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz



Tunica identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (31%), and a *common-shared vision for the future and education* both polling at 18%.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Tunica identifies *education* as its major need (42%), though a *shared vision* (11%) and *racial reconciliation* (10%) are also important to Tunica.

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Tunica also encourages education reform (43%), and recognizes improvement still to come in race relations and national image.

*“Small minds – trying to hold onto old ideas that don’t work – it does hurt; dry counties/cities; the local perception that growth and development will hurt us – they need to understand managed growth”*

*“Education/literacy; Health/obesity”*

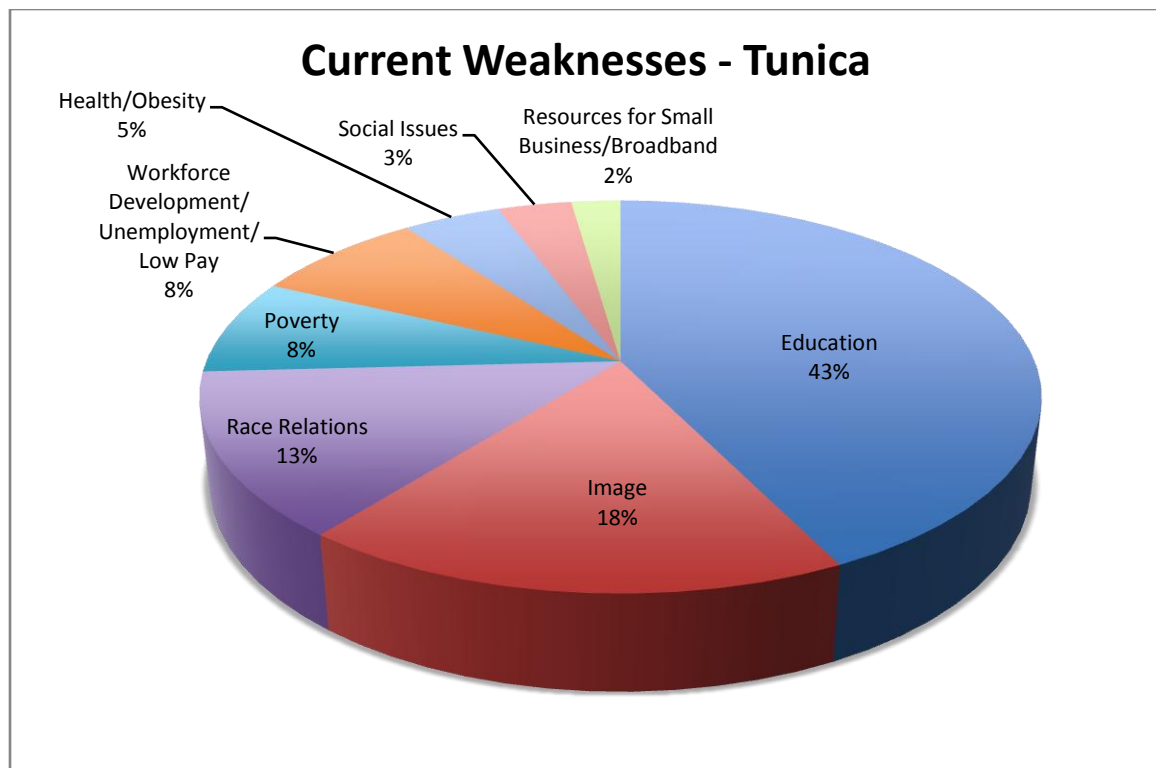
*“Must give our youth a future to believe in”*

*“Realization that we are no longer just a rural state – 51% of population live in 21% of the counties”*

*“Still see poor race relations impeding the move forward in small communities”*

*“Low education performance in high schools; low graduation rates in college; access to broadband”*

*“We must improve education; but we must fund it – including pre-K”*



Tunica also touts recent economic development as milestones for competitiveness, plus improvements in infrastructure and education.

*“AHEAD; Kindergarten program”*

*“Trail markers; Gov. Barbour’s tenure – always putting business and job creation at the top of his list”*

*“The Delta Healthy Start program for high risk and pregnant teenagers in middle school and high school”*

*“Desoto Greenways”*

*“Recognition of need to upgrade education”*

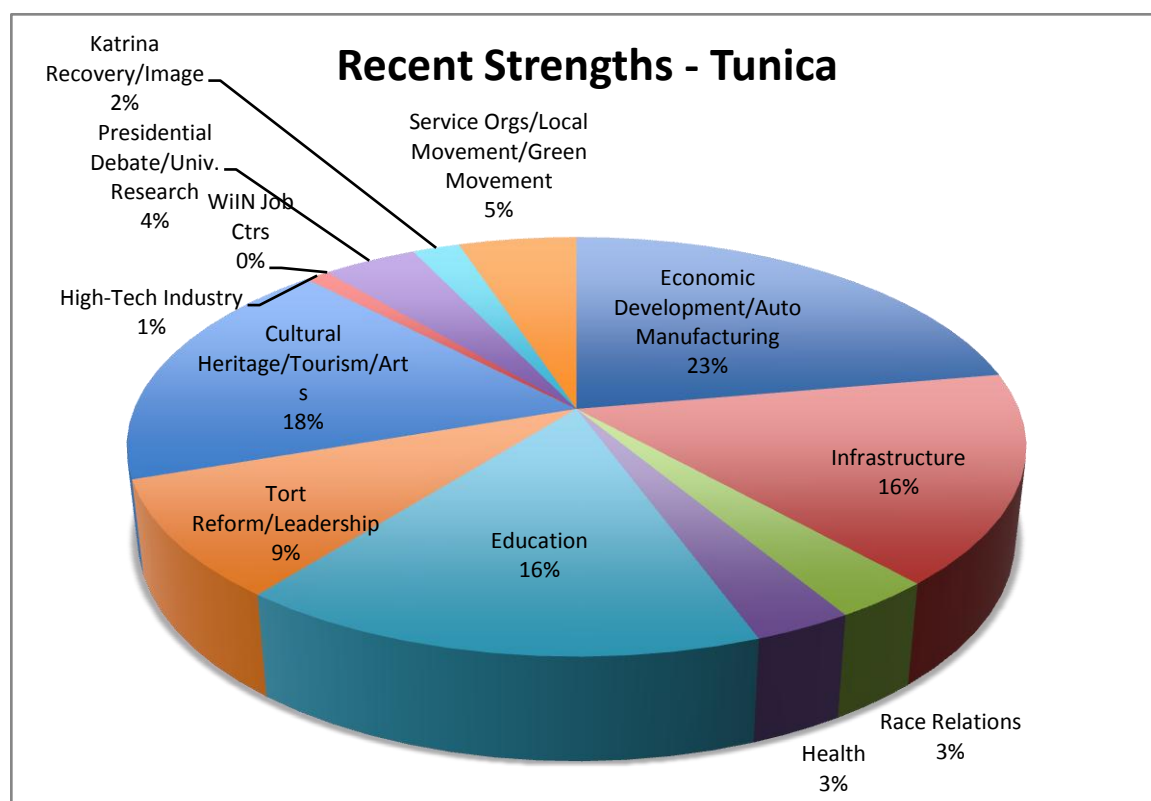
*“Cultural trails program; economic development”*

*“Toyota relocation to state; four lane highway program; tort reform”*

*“Nissan, Toyota; Phi Beta Kappa and Presidential Debate at UM”*

*“I-69”*

*“Increase in national service resources (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn & Serve)”*



## Meridian

Attendance: 135

### Electronic Polling – 128 Participants

Attendees in Meridian were cautiously optimistic for the future, as polling in Meridian was moderate, being not too positive though not too negative, either.

- 52% believe children will have to leave Mississippi to find good jobs
- 76% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 47% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 40% say it is *not so competitive*
- 47% view the East Central region as *moderately effective and competitive* in economic development (36% say *not so competitive*)
- 35% call the state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 29% describe Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 28% say Mississippi is currently a *newly emerging growth state*
- 50% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 17% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location*
- 59% see the East Central region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 20% say *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Meridian is focused on Natural Resources and their associated industries.

- 44% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 21% - Health Care
- 16% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 8% - Tourism
- 7% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 3% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **East Central** region, Meridian still sees Natural Resources as the focus, with an eye to increased use of Health Care as an economic driver.

- 50% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 33% - Health Care
- 9% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 6% - Tourism
- 2% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 1% - Retail & Service

Meridian identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as their most beneficial resource (52%), along with *shovel-ready sites* (17%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Meridian identifies *education* as most important (36%) and *trained workforce* as second (29%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When asked the biggest weakness in Mississippi, Mississippi asks for education reform (45%), and echoes needs in state image (21%), workforce development/unemployment/low wages (13%), and race relations (10%).

*“Education and Race Relations; Habitat for Humanity sees hundreds of volunteers come to MS every year since Katrina, and they are so surprised to find out how the education system is even though we need to improve more; They are also surprised by the positive relationships between black and white”*

*“Legislative in-fighting; we need to improve our self-esteem”*

*“Improve quality of education; increase employment, training, and wages”*

*“Lack of educated workforce”*

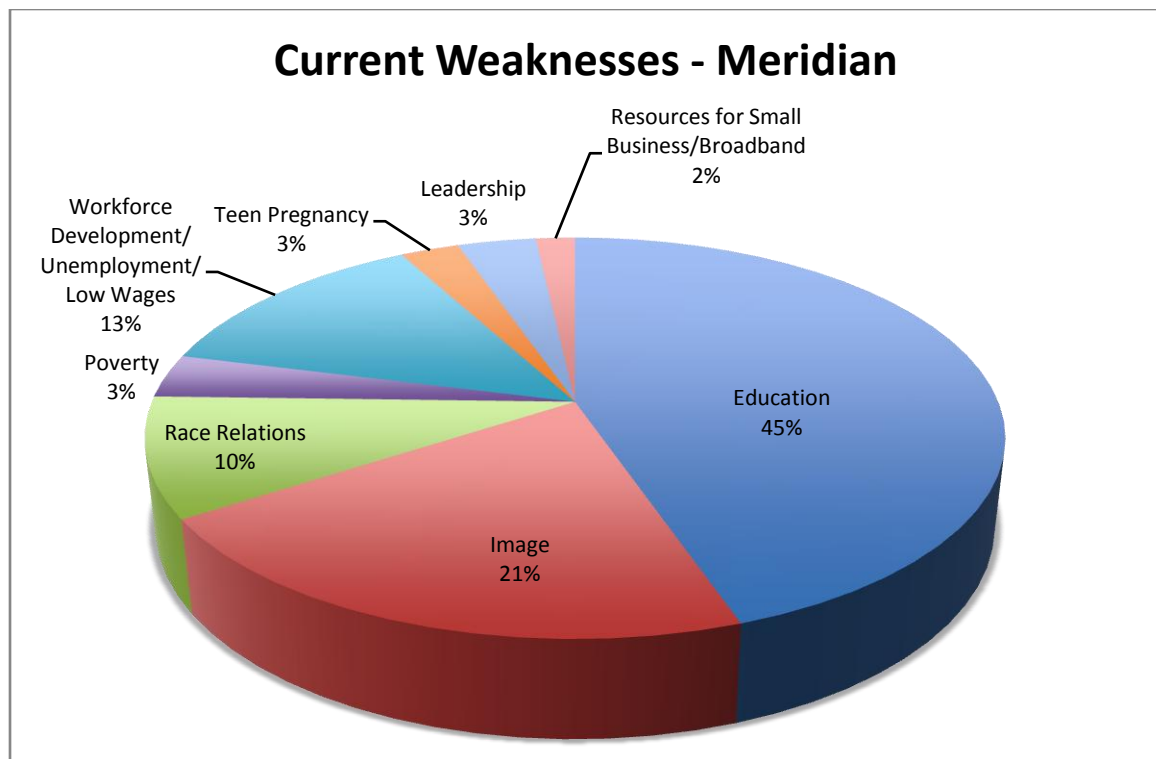
*“General perception of ‘backwardness’; lack of good primary education; lack of vocational training”*

*“Racial division; I feel we have to overcome the perception that if you are in the minority you don’t have a chance to succeed”*

*“Lack of desire by so many to improve”*

*“Lack of early childhood education; teen pregnancy; low skill level of too many adults”*

*“Not embracing women and minority business growth”*



Meridian praises cultural investments (24%), economic development (17%), and infrastructure and broadband (15%) among many other developments.

*“Cultural tourism; Gov. Haley Barbour; MDA; Tommy Dulaney”*

*“Tort reform; income to state from gambling and cultural tourism; development of industrial location incentives”*

*“Leadership in statewide positions has taken us forward over recent years; this year’s election is crucial in keeping this going”*

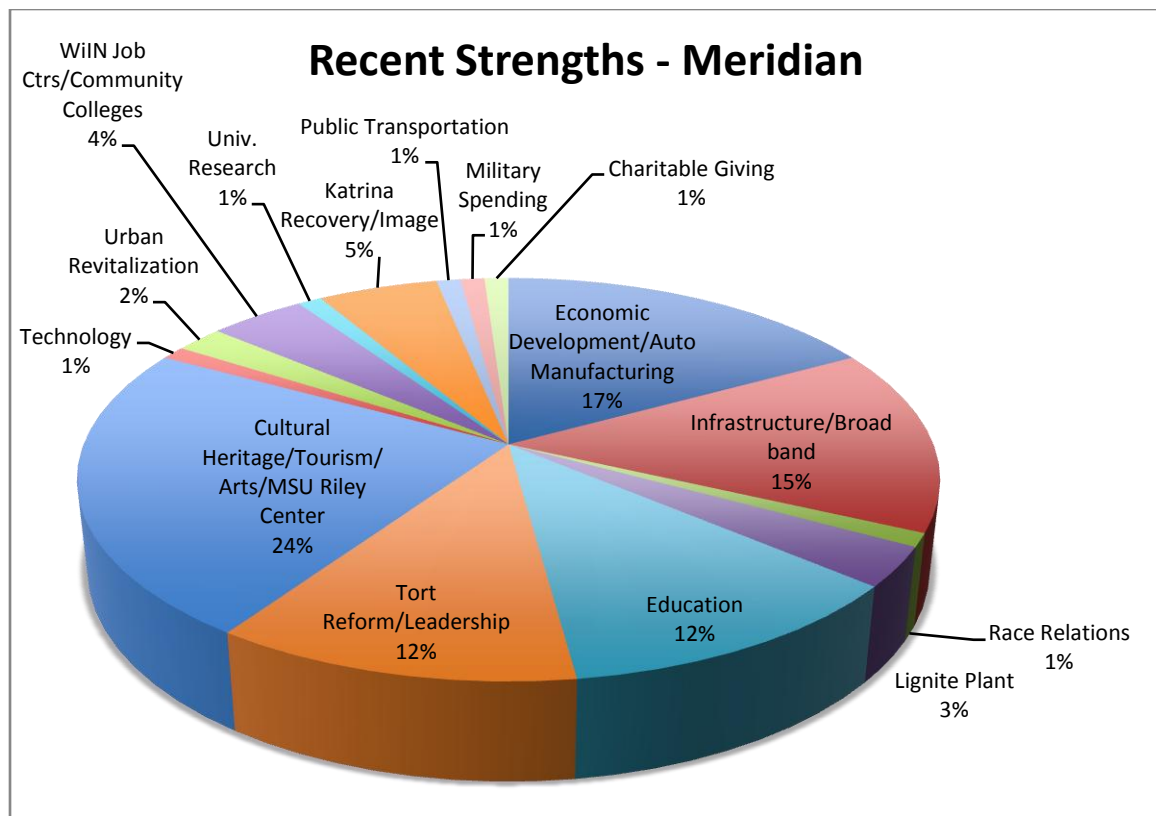
*“MSU Riley Center; growth of colleges and universities”*

*“Recognizing our musical heritage; opening up for gaming”*

*“Interstate highways and some technology as it relates to high-speed internet access and phone communications”*

*“Blues trail; MDA more professional; I-20 and I-59 interchange in Meridian”*

*“Dr. Bounds and public education improvements; auto manufacturers; Katrina response; Barksdale reading efforts; MEC; community colleges and workforce training”*



## Booneville

Attendance: 50

### Electronic Polling – 46 Participants

Booneville attendees are optimistic for the future, polling more confident than most audiences, though not so positively about Mississippi's current condition.

- 56% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 86% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 57% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 27% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 56% view the Northeast region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
- 37% call today's Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 30% say Mississippi is currently a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 26% describe Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 58% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 28% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location*
- 56% see the Northeast region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 22% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Booneville is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 42% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Health Care
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Tourism
- 2% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Northeast**, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus for Booneville.

- 52% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 17% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 15% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 13% - Health Care
- 2% - Retail & Service

Booneville identifies *education* as their most beneficial resource (29%), along with *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (26%).



When highlighting its major areas of need, Booneville identifies a *common-shared vision for the future* as most important (36%) and a *trained workforce and education* tying at second (20% each).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When identifying the biggest weaknesses our state has to overcome, Booneville agrees with the rest of the state – Education. Booneville also raises issues on image, attitudes and perception, teen pregnancy, obesity, low wages, unemployment and poverty.

*“Health, education, welfare of its citizens as a whole.”*

*“Low wages; dropout rate”*

*“Lose weight; better education; teen pregnancy; technology advancement”*

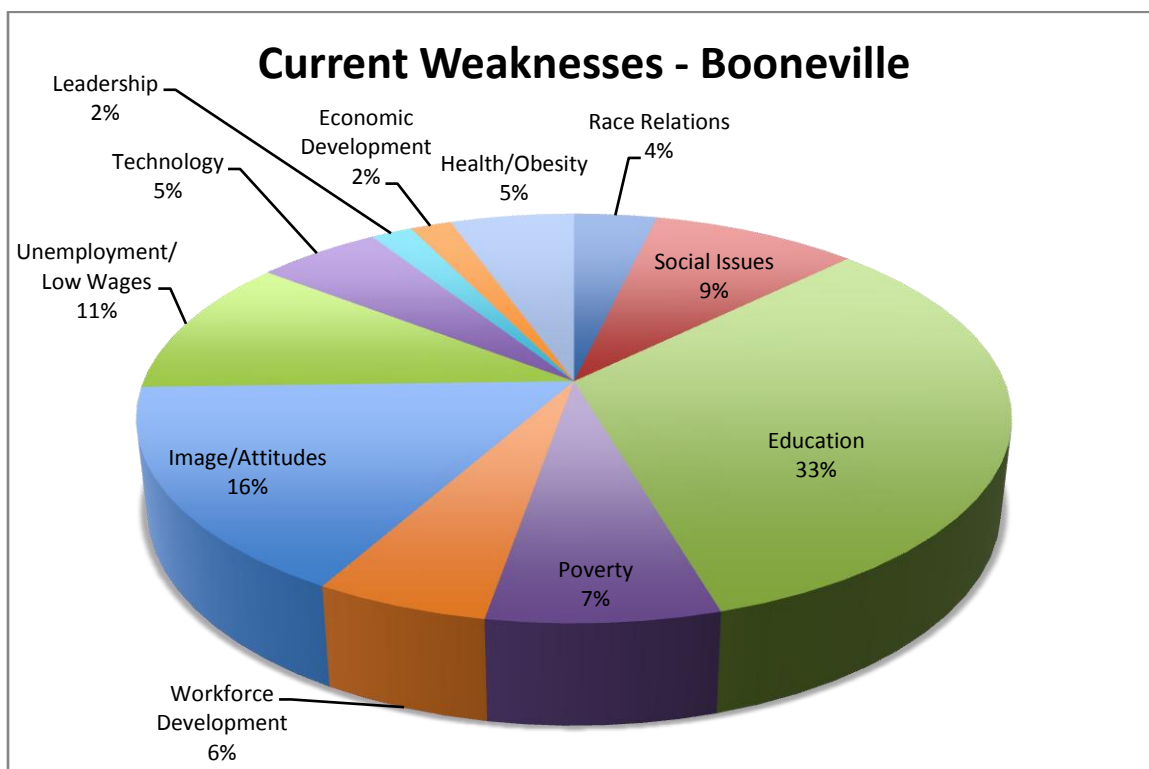
*“Low salaries; serious drug problems”*

*“Perception of the state and its workforce as backward, uneducated, and unsophisticated despite the state’s success in high technology”*

*“Not enough advertising the good”*

*“Need to make it cheaper for students to go to college”*

*“Education; technology; desire and need to work”*



Similar to other areas in the state, large numbers of respondents in Booneville praised state highway improvements and expansion, the recruitment of Toyota and Nissan, cultural investment, and education successes.

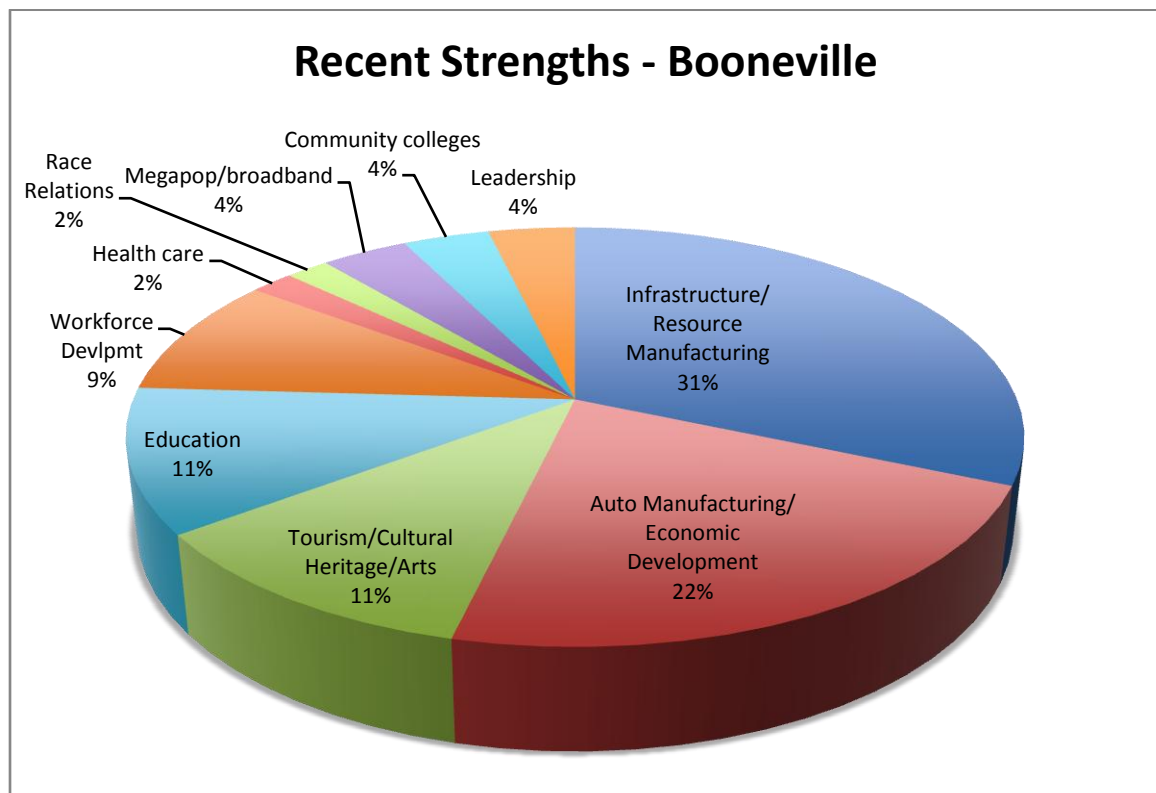
*"Promotion of individuals from the state that have been successful in careers"*

*"Improved highway system; expanded tourism; cooperative efforts to attract industry"*

*"Progressive leadership with an eye towards economic development"*

*"Megapop; Hwy 45 4-lane"*

*"Highway program; growth of community college system"*



## Corinth

Attendance: 140

### Electronic Polling – 95 Participants

Corinth attendees are optimistic for the future, though unsure about the possibility of good job prospects for today's youth and critical of Mississippi's current condition.

- 61% believe Mississippi children will need to leave Mississippi to find good jobs
- 79% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 63% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 31% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 53% view the Northeast region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
- 43% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 36% call Mississippi a state *that cannot escape negative perception*
- 46% report Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 19% say Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 52% see the Northeast region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 31% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Corinth is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 51% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 20% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Health Care
- 9% - Tourism
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 5% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the **Northeast**, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus for Corinth, though a large interest in Health Care is evident.

- 55% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 23% - Health Care
- 12% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 5% - Tourism
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 1% - Start-up tech companies and online business

Corinth identifies *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (32%) as their most beneficial resource (29%), along with *a common-shared vision for the future* (19%) and *education* (17%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Corinth identifies a *trained workforce* as most important (38%) and *education* also polling high (25%).

### Stakeholder Response Forms

When identifying the biggest weaknesses our state has to overcome, Corinth agrees with the rest of the state – Education. Corinth also has concerns about state image and attitudes, teen pregnancy, workforce development, and race relations.

*“Education; salaries/benefits; have local communities understand the industry recruitment process”*

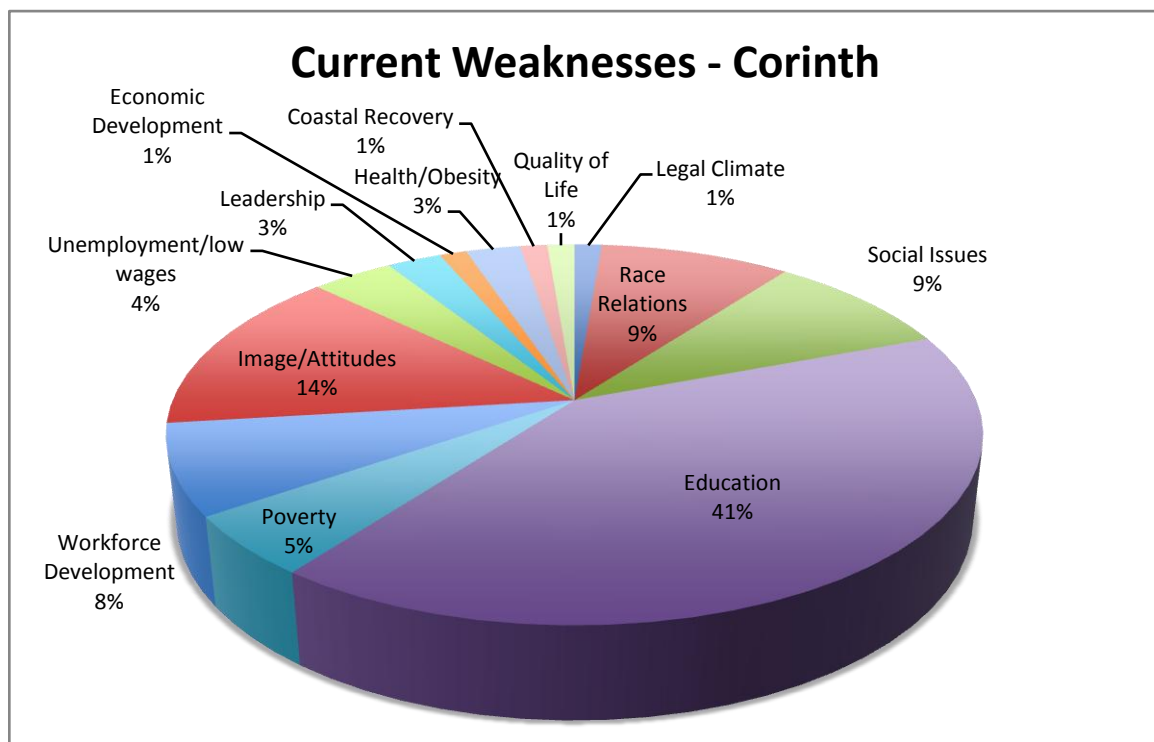
*“Education”*

*“Teen pregnancy; obesity; education”*

*“We need to continue to improve local education from elementary to high school. We need to improve high school graduation and encourage secondary education. We need to make MS attractive for college grads to stay here”*

*“That we do not support education at all levels”*

*“Poverty – many people can’t focus on the higher goals that we need to focus on as a state because they can’t meet their basic needs”*



Corinth is also very positive about recent achievements in Mississippi. Stakeholder comments vary among tourism and heritage, infrastructure improvements, economic development, and praise for universities and community colleges.

*“AHEAD highway program; opening of Nissan and Toyota plants; cultural trails programs; the civil war interpretive center in Corinth”*

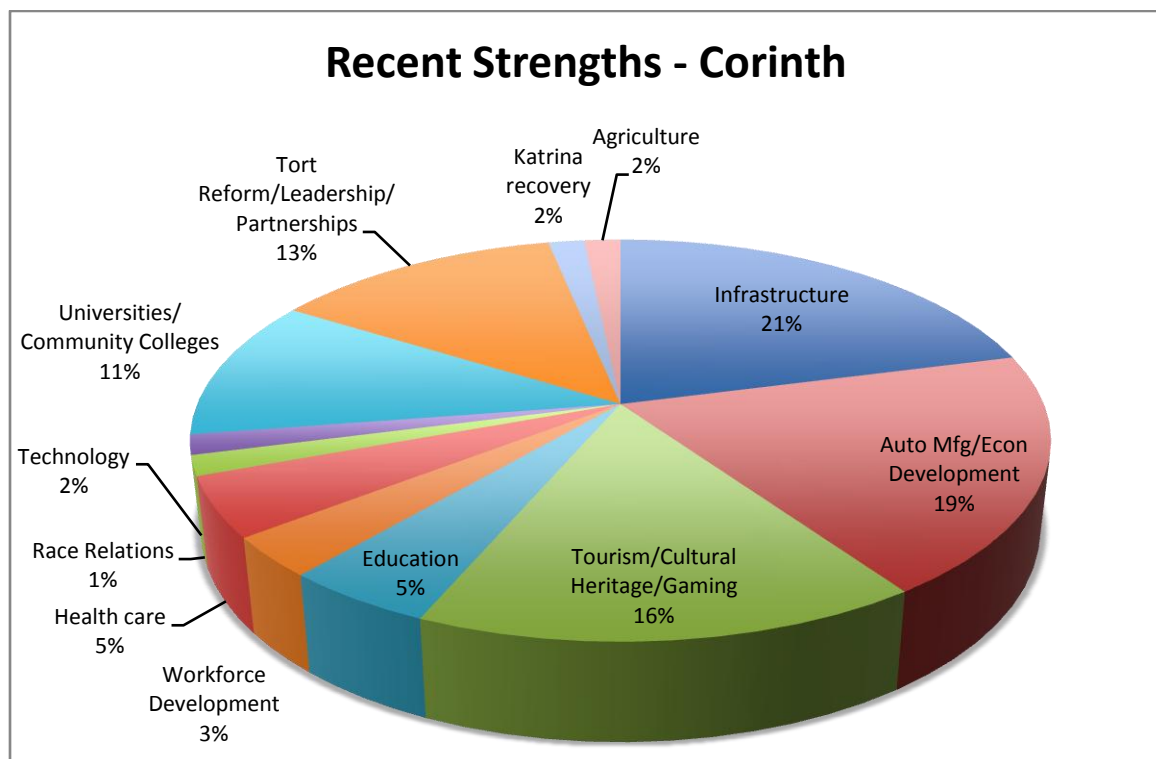
*“Our infrastructure is one of the best in the nation. I think this makes us attractive to big businesses/industries”*

*“Historic preservation”*

*“The success and improvements at our universities have certainly improved Mississippi’s competitive position. We need to maximize what our universities can do for the state”*

*“High-tech manufacturing”*

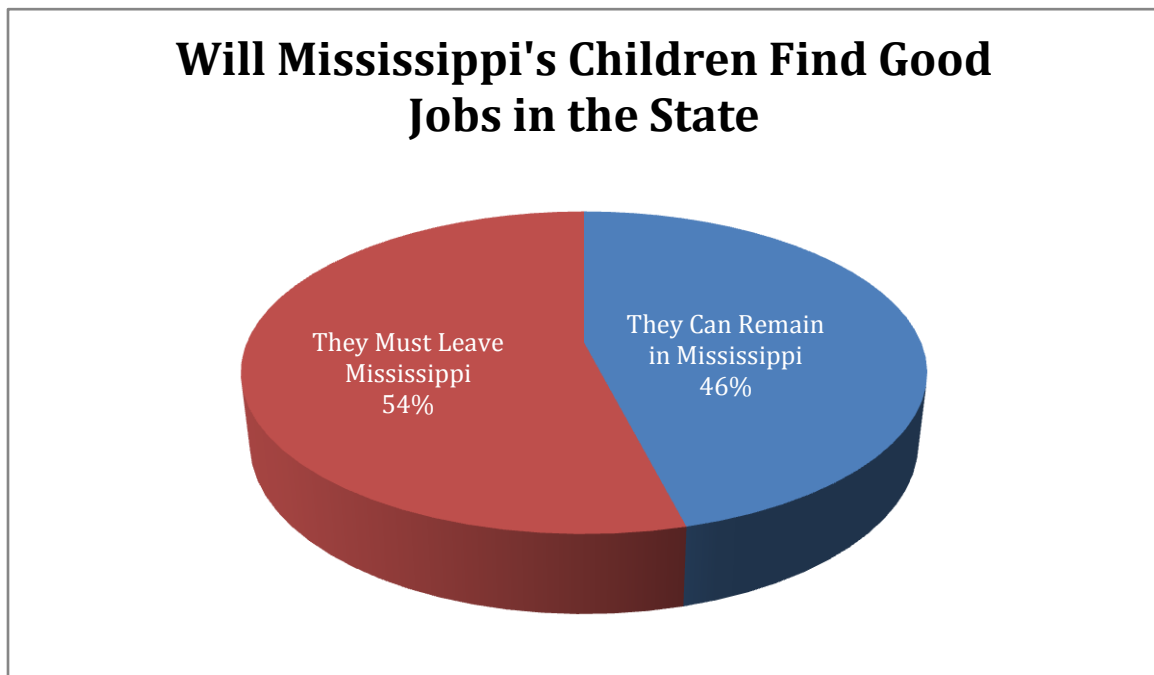
*“Major corporations moving to MS – Toyota, Caterpillar, Cooper Tire, Kimberly Clark”*



## Online Survey Responses

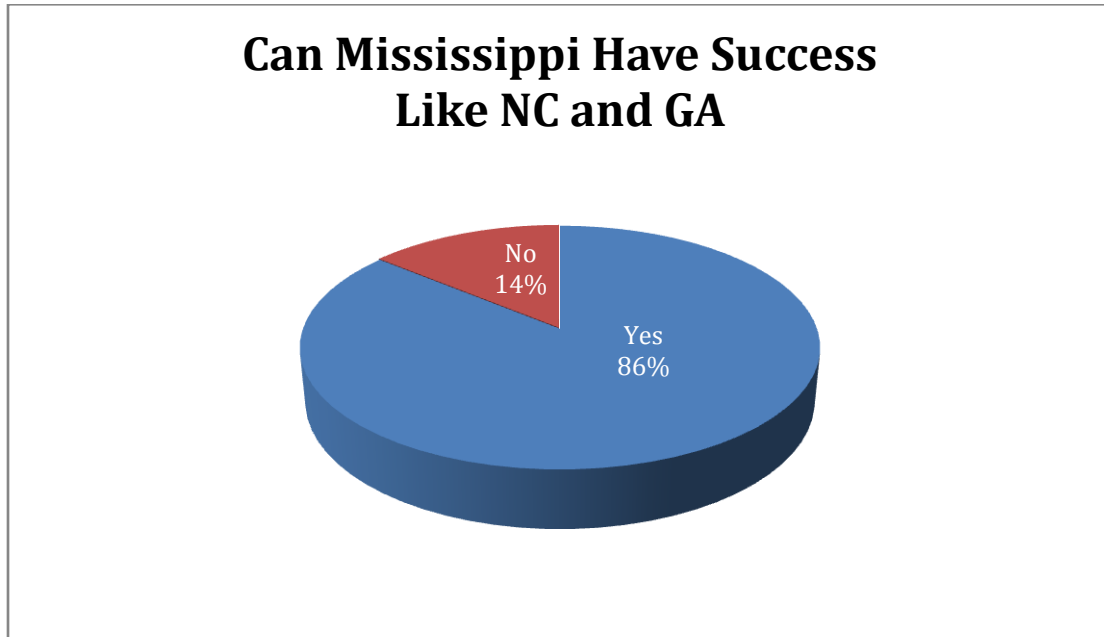
People who were unable to attend the MEC Blueprint Mississippi were provided an opportunity to participate in the survey online. The responses reported below are from 18 cities. The online survey responses from Southaven and Tunica were combined, as were the responses from Corinth and Booneville.

***Do you believe Mississippi children will be able to find good-paying jobs in Mississippi, or will they have to leave the state to find good-paying jobs when they are ready to enter the workforce?***



It is important to note that while there is a slight difference in the online responses when compared to the face-to-face meetings, the number is still lower than that of Mississippi voters during a 2010 Mississippi Economic Council statewide poll. Voters polled believed 62% of today's youth would have to go out of state to seek good employment.

***Do you believe Mississippi can improve its competitive position and experience the growth Georgia and North Carolina have in the past 20 years?***



All but one city answered this question with “Yes” at 80% or better. The optimism was slightly higher among online responses than in the face-to-face meeting.

## Corinth/Booneville – Online Survey (30 participants)

In the online survey, Corinth participants are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a hot economic development location. However, they do not believe the state and region are currently as competitive as surrounding states today.

- 62% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 87% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 51% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 33% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 39% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
- 37% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 21% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 45% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 28% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging state*
- 52% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 32% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Corinth is focused on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 52% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 10% - Retail & Service
- 10% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus for Corinth, though there is a large interest in Natural Resources and Start-up companies.

- 56% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 10% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 10% - Retail & Service
- 10% - Health Care
- 4% - Tourism

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (27%) *shovel-ready sites* (23%) were the top choices of participants.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Corinth identifies *education* as most important (48%) and *trained workforce* (24%). Of the online participants, 16% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.



## NW Mississippi (Tunica & Southaven) – Online Survey (69 participants)

In the online survey, Northwest Mississippi participants believe the state and region are competitive in economic development. Also 39% see Mississippi as a hot economic development location 10 years from now.

- 51% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 93% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 54% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 32% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 48% view the region as *very competitive* in economic development
  - 29% view the region as *moderately competitive*
- 34% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 31% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
- 39% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 25% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging state*
- 49% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 38% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Northwest Mississippi participants placed Advanced Manufacturing first.

- 50% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 21% - Tourism
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Health Care
- 1% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus, with an almost equal interest in Tourism and Start-up companies.

- 54% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Tourism
- 13% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Health Care
- 6% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, 30% listed *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* as the top answer.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Northwest Mississippi identifies *education* as most important (33%) and *trained workforce* (29%). Of the online participants, 19% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.

## Columbus – Online Survey (31 participants)

In the online survey, Columbus participants are optimistic about both present day and the future. Almost three-fourths believe the region is either very or moderately competitive in economic development, while an overwhelming 93 percent believe Mississippi will experience high growth in the future.

- 71% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 93% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 61% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 27% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 39% view the region as *very competitive* in economic development
  - 36% view the region as *moderately competitive*
- 42% describe today's Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 23% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 38% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 27% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging state*
- 46% see the region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and an additional 42% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, the Columbus participants were very specific as only three categories received votes with the vast majority being Advanced Manufacturing.

- 68% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 26% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Tourism

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Advanced Manufacturing remained the overwhelming choice.

- 82% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 14% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 4% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, shovel-ready sites received 41%, followed by *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* at 32%. A *common-shared vision for the future* and *Trained Workforce* both received 10%.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Columbus identifies *education* as most important (42%) and *trained workforce* was (16%). Of the online participants, 26% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need for the region.

## Meridian – Online Survey (57 participants)

In the online survey, Meridian participants believe Mississippi has a bright future with growth opportunities that can make the state competitive in economic development. But currently most believe their children will have to leave the state to find good jobs.

- 70% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state find good jobs
- 86% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 53% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 39% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 52% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 36% say the region is *not so competitive*
- 51% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 30% call Mississippi a *newly emerging growth state*
- 35% see Mississippi as *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 32% say Mississippi will be a *newly emerging growth state*
- 68% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 18% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Natural Resources was the first choice among Meridian participants.

- 40% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 24% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Health Care
- 9% - Tourism
- 7% - Retail & Service

When identifying regional growth opportunities, Natural Resources, Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing rank about equal.

- 28% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 27% - Health Care
- 21% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 16% - Tourism
- 4% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* scored highest at 46% followed by *shovel ready sites* (18%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Meridian identifies *education* as most important (35%) and *trained workforce* (26%). Of the online participants, 23% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.

## Oxford – Online Survey (34 participants)

In the online survey, Oxford participants believe children will have to go elsewhere to find good jobs, but are bullish on the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a hot economic development location or high-growth state.

- 56% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 97% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 50% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 35% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 56% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 24% say the region is *very competitive*
- 48% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 23% call Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
- 50% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 32% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location*
- 74% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 18% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunities are for economic growth for the **state**, Oxford views Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resources as top opportunities.

- 41% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 26% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 18% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Health Care
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Tourism

When identifying regional growth opportunities, Advanced Manufacturing and Start-up Tech and Online Companies rate highest. The region also views Retail as an opportunity.

- 29% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 20% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 18% - Retail & Service
- 12% - Health Care
- 12% - Tourism
- 9% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources scored highest at 35%* followed by *education at 32%*.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Oxford identifies a *trained workforce* as most important (29%) and *education* (27%). Of the online participants, 27% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.

## Grenada – Online Survey (11 participants)

In the online survey, Grenada participants are optimistic about Mississippi's position in terms of being able to compete with surrounding states in economic development, but less optimistic about the region.

- 54% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 100% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 64% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 36% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 64% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
- 55% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 37% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 36% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging state* in 10 years
  - Others were evenly split between the other categories
- 82% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 9% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Grenada is focused on Advanced Manufacturing and Health Care.

- 46% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 27% - Health Care
- 9% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Tourism

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Advanced Manufacturing is still the focus.

- 28% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 18% - Health Care
- 18% - Tourism
- 9% - Retail & Service
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* led the way with 36%, while *shovel ready sites* was second at 27%. There were 18% of the online participants who selected "none of the above."

When highlighting its major areas of need, Grenada identifies *a shared common vision* as most important (36%). *A trained workforce* was second (27%). *Education and Racial Reconciliation* received 18% each.

## Jackson – Online Survey (330 participants)

In the online survey, Jackson-area participants are split on where Mississippi stands today, but three-fourths believe the region is either very or moderately competitive compared to surrounding states when it comes to economic development.

- 50% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 81% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 54% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 34% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 57% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 15% view the region as *very competitive*
- 37% describe today's Mississippi as a low skill, low wage state
  - 32% call Mississippi a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 35% see Mississippi as *a newly emerging growth state location* in 10 years
  - 26% say it will be a *hot economic development location*, but 26% also say it will still be a *low skill, low wage state*
- 62% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resources scored equally.

- 28.5% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 28.5% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 20% - Health Care
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% Tourism
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Health Care was the strongest, outgaining every other category 2 to 1.

- 42% - Health Care
- 18% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 13% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 12% - Retail & Service
- 9% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Tourism

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* received 40%, one of the highest of the online surveys.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Jackson identifies *education* as most important (41%). Both *trained workforce* and a *common shared vision for the future* were at 22%.

## Starkville – Online Survey (19 participants)

In the online survey, Starkville participants are split on Mississippi's future – 50% believe Mississippi will be either an emerging growth state or hot economic development location, while 50% think Mississippi will still be a low-wage, low-skill state or a state that can't escape the negative perception.

- 63% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 84% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 47% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 37% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 53% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 26% view the region as *very competitive*
- 42% see Mississippi today as *a state that cannot escape negative image*
- 28% believe in 10 year Mississippi will a *hot economic development location*, while 28% say Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 22% think Mississippi will still be a *state that cannot escape negative perception*, and 22% expect it to be *an emerging growth state*
- 69% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing topped the list.

- 37% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 32% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 16% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 10% - Health Care
- 5% - Tourism

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resources outpaced all other categories

- 47% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 32% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 5% - Health Care
- 5% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *education* led the way at 40%, and *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* received 33%.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Starkville identifies a *common shared vision for the future* (42%) and *education* (37%) as most important.



## Pascagoula – Online Survey (65 participants)

In the online survey, Pascagoula participants believe Mississippi has opportunities to capitalize on advanced manufacturing, while the region has a great opportunity to take advantage of tourism.

- 54% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 90% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 49% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 29% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 52% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 17% view the region as *very competitive*
- 38% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 35% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 34% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 31% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location*
- 45% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 27% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Advanced Manufacturing led the way, followed by Natural Resources and Tourism.

- 32% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 26% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 23% Tourism
- 8% - Health Care
- 6% - Retail & Service
- 5% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Tourism was a strong leader, followed by Advanced Manufacturing. No other category reached double digits.

- 46% - Tourism
- 29% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 8% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% - Retail & Service
- 4.5% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 4.5% - Health Care

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* got 27%. *Trained workforce & shovel-ready sites* were at 14% each.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Pascagoula identifies *education* as most important (41%). They also listed *common shared vision for the future* as a need (25%).



## Tupelo – Online Survey (54 participants)

In the online survey, Tupelo participants are optimistic about the future, and it is an optimism stems positive outlook today. In fact, 94% believe the region today is very or moderately competitive in economic development compared with surrounding states.

- 72% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 91% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 59% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 24% say the state is *very competitive*
- 57% view the region as *very competitive* in economic development
  - 37% view the region as *moderately competitive*
- 44% describe today's Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state*
  - 27% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 55% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 28% say Mississippi will still be a *newly emerging state*
- 50% see the region as *very competitive* to site selectors, and 44% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Advanced Manufacturing outpaced all other categories.

- 58% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 13% - Health Care
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Tourism
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, almost three-fourths of the participants listed Advanced Manufacturing.

- 74% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 7% - Health Care
- 7% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 4% - Tourism
- 4% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (28%) and *a common-shared vision for the future* (26%) ranked highest among the online participants.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Tupelo identifies *education* as most important (35%), followed by *trained workforce* (30%).

## Hattiesburg – Online Survey (34 participants)

In the online survey, Hattiesburg participants are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a newly emerging growth state. They also believe the region is moderately competitive with surrounding states in economic development.

- 52% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good
- 82 % believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 56% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 35% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 65% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
- 48% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 27% call Mississippi a *newly emerging growth state*
- 41% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 38% say Mississippi will be *hot economic development location*
- 52% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors. *Very competitive and not so competitive* each received 24%

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Advanced Manufacturing and Natural Resources were the leaders.

- 47% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 32% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 9% Tourism
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 3% - Retail & Service
- 3% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, there was no one category that dominated the voting.

- 29% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 23% - Health Care
- 21% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 21% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Tourism

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (27%) led the way, followed by *education* (26%). A *common-shared vision for the future* received 18%.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Hattiesburg identifies a *shared common vision for the future* as most important (32%). *Trained workforce* was second (27%), followed by *education* (26%).

## Natchez – Online Survey (16 participants)

In the online survey, Natchez participants are less optimistic about the future and do not believe the region is competitive in economic development when compared with surrounding states.

- 69% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 63% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 56 % view Mississippi as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 38% say the state is *moderately competitive*
- 50% view the region as *not at all competitive* in economic development
  - 36% view the region as *not so competitive*
- 50% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 25% see Mississippi as an *emerging growth state*
  - 19% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 25% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 25% say Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 53% see the region as *not so competitive* to site selectors, and 25% as *moderately competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Natchez is focused on Natural Resources.

- 14% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 62% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Tourism
- 12% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Natural Resources is still the focus, though a large interest in Tourism is evident.

- 56% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 25% - Tourism
- 6% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 6% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Health Care

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (40%) was first. This was followed a *common-shared vision for the future* at 13%. "None of the above" was selected by 30% of the online participants.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Natchez identifies *education* as most important (56%) and 19% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need. This was followed by *trained workforce* (12%).

## Biloxi/Gulfport – Online Survey (123 participants)

In the online survey, Biloxi/Gulfport participants are optimistic about Mississippi's future and 72% believe the region is either moderately or very competitive with surrounding states in economic development.

- 67% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good
- 89% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 59% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 36% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 59% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 13% say the region is very competitive
- 34% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 31% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 25% call Mississippi *an emerging growth state*
- 43% see Mississippi as *a newly emerging state* in 10 years
  - 25% say Mississippi will *not* be an economic development location
- 66% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 22% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Advanced Manufacturing and Tourism were the leading categories.

- 36% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 30% - Tourism
- 11% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 11% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Retail & Service
- 6% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Tourism outpaced the other categories.

- 51% - Tourism
- 19% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 8% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 8% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 7% - Health Care
- 7% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* received 53%. *Shovel-ready sites* was second at 15%.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Biloxi/Gulfport identifies a *shared common vision for the future* (38%) and *trained workforce* (28%) as the top needs.

## Vicksburg – Online Survey (54 participants)

In the online survey, Vicksburg participants are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a high-growth location. However, they do not believe the region is currently as competitive as surrounding states.

- 62% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 87% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 49% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 30% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 39% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 35% view the region as *moderately competitive*
- 40% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 38% call Mississippi a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 51% see Mississippi as *a newly emerging growth* in 10 years
  - 19% say Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill state*
- 50% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 21% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Vicksburg is focused on Natural Resources.

- 25% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 35% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 19% - Tourism
- 11% - Retail & Service
- 4% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 6% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Tourism leads all other categories.

- 40% - Tourism
- 19% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 15% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 10% - Retail & Service
- 8% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 8% - Health Care

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (42%) and *shovel ready sites* (15%) were the top choices.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Vicksburg identifies *education* (43%) and *trained workforce* (18%) as most important.

## Greenwood – Online Survey (23 participants)

In the online survey, Greenwood participants are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a hot economic development location. However, unlike most places around the state, participants believe Tourism will be an economic driver, and there was very little emphasis on Advanced Manufacturing.

- 52% believe Mississippi children will find good jobs in Mississippi
- 87% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 61% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 39% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 65% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
- 39% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 27% call Mississippi a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 39% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 17% say Mississippi will be a *sought-after tourism destination*
  - 17% say *we will still be a state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 48% see the region as *not so competitive* to site selectors, and 44% as *fairly competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Greenwood is focused on Tourism.

- 52% - Tourism
- 22% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 9% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Tourism remains the focus, but there also is a large interest in Natural Resources.

- 30% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 13% - Health Care
- 44% - Tourism
- 8% - Retail & Service
- 4% - Advanced Manufacturing

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (32%) and *shovel-ready sites* (18%) received the most votes. There were 18% of online participants who selected "none of the above."

When highlighting its major areas of need, Greenwood identifies *education* as most important (52%) and *trained workforce* was (17%). Of the online participants, 13% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.

## Brookhaven – Online Survey (23 participants)

In the online survey, the majority of Brookhaven participants see Mississippi today as a state that can't escape a negative perception or as a low cost, low skill, low wage state. However, they are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will become a high-growth state.

- 65% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 96% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 70% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 30% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 52% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 26% say the region is *not at all competitive*
- 43% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 39% call Mississippi a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 52% see Mississippi as a *newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 26% say Mississippi will still be a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
- 70% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 21% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Brookhaven is focused on Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing.

- 52% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 31% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 13% - Health Care
- 4% - Tourism

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing are still the focus.

- 39% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 22% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 17% - Health Care
- 9% - Tourism
- 9% - Retail & Service
- 4% - Start-up tech companies and online business

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (27%) and *shovel-ready sites* (18%) topped the list. There were 14% of online participants who selected "none of the above."

When highlighting its major areas of need, Brookhaven identifies *education* as most important (30%) and *trained workforce* (26%). Of the online participants, 22% listed a *common shared vision for the future* as a need.



## Laurel – Online Survey (23 participants)

In the online survey, Laurel participants are optimistic about the future and believe in 10 years Mississippi will be a high-growth state. The majority also believe the region is competitive with surrounding states in economic development.

- 65% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 100% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 56% view Mississippi as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 36% say the state is *not so competitive*
- 61% view the region as *moderately competitive* in economic development
  - 35 view the region as *not so competitive*
- 33% describe today's Mississippi as a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
  - 29% call Mississippi a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 29% view Mississippi as *a newly emerging growth state*
- 52% see Mississippi as *a newly emerging growth state* in 10 years
  - 30% say Mississippi will be a *hot economic development location*
- 78% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 22% as *very competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Laurel is focused on Natural Resources.

- 55% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 32% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 4% - Tourism

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Natural Resources and Advanced Manufacturing were the focus.

- 48% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 35% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 9% - Start-up tech companies and online business
- 9% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *shovel-ready sites* received 30%, followed by *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (26%) and *a common-shared vision for the future* (17%).

When highlighting its major areas of need, Laurel identifies *education* (35%) as most important, followed by *a common shared vision for the future* (30%). *Trained workforce* and *natural resources* both received 17%.



## Greenville – Online Survey (17 participants)

In the online survey, Greenville participants do not believe the region is competitive in economic development when compared with surrounding states. There is also a strong emphasis placed on tourism opportunities, both in the state and in the region.

- 63% believe Mississippi children will have to leave the state to find good jobs
- 94% believe Mississippi can experience growth like Georgia and North Carolina
- 53% view Mississippi as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 35% say the state is *moderately competitive*
- 53% view the region as *not so competitive* in economic development
  - 26% view the region as *not at all competitive*
- 35% describe today's Mississippi as a *low cost, low skill, low wage state*
  - 24% call Mississippi a *state that cannot escape negative perception*
- 41% see Mississippi as a *hot economic development location* in 10 years
  - 31% say Mississippi will still be a *newly emerging state*
- 50% see the region as *fairly competitive* to site selectors, and 36% as *not so competitive*

When asked where the greatest opportunity lies for economic growth for the **state**, Greenville is focused on Advanced Manufacturing and Tourism.

- 36% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 31% - Tourism
- 19% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 12% - Health Care

When identifying growth opportunities for the region, Tourism was the leading category, followed by Advanced Manufacturing.

- 35% - Tourism
- 23% - Advanced Manufacturing
- 18% - Natural Resources – Timber/Energy/Agribiz
- 18% - Health Care
- 6% - Retail & Service

When identifying the region's most beneficial resource, *natural, cultural, community, and infrastructure resources* (25%) and *a common-shared vision for the future* (25%) received the most.

When highlighting its major areas of need, Greenville identifies *education* (59%) and *trained workforce* (24%) as the two areas of greatest need.

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