

Consultant reviews housing situation in Clark County

By JOE PHELPS
Siftings Herald

Clark County has a wealth of resources — leaders just need to capitalize on them.

This was the topic of discussion among members of the Clark County Strategic Plan Steering Committee, which met Tuesday at noon in the community center of The Gardens, Arkadelphia's new retirement housing subdivision.

Angie Rios, a consultant who performed a county-wide housing market study for the Plan, told members that "You already know what you need, you just need someone to tell you."

Rios, of Vilonia, said she has spo-

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— Angie Rios
consultant, on Arkadelphia's
entertainment options

ken with residents in Amity, Arkadelphia, Caddo Valley and Gurdon residents during the study, and said they were all "humble, helpful and sold on Arkadelphia ... You have to market that."

Rios said she developed the report after discussions, phone calls and research on housing in each city.

She said with any community, the key to growth is retaining the population. Unlike

Caddo Valley, she said, Amity is not a major highway, but it does have a "wealth of resources" such as a dental office and affordable housing. Other positive factors she attributed to Amity included recreation, services and its tranquility. "A lot of towns that size don't have those

services" like a dental office, she said. Retirees, she added, would best fit Amity.

Caddo Valley will grow simply because of its location in regards to Interstate 30, "but it needs some sprucing up on the front end," Rios said of the city's vacant businesses. It is the "fastest growing place in Clark County" though it is the newest and one of the smallest.

While it is located on the once-busy Highway 67, I-30 "cut Gurdon off." But it does have a railroad track. Since the Plan set out to beautify cities throughout the county in 2007, the Gurdon City Council has demolished several dilapidated houses, making room for newer, better-looking homes to be built. The city also has a "well-established government" and several housing opportunities, she said.

Gurdon's "living room" is presentable, Rios said, meaning that the city does not need any major im-

provements to its entryways. In order to grow, the city's main need is for industries to locate there.

Rios asked present members of the Plan (about 15) to raise their hands if they live in Arkadelphia. Most raised their hands. Arkadelphia's "wealth of resources" includes the two universities, its proximity to DeGray Lake, recreational, outdoor and sports activities and its history. "You just need to grow" those resources, Rios said. According to her, most young professionals who would be interested in working in Arkadelphia would want to have the option of affordable housing, outside the city limits, with larger acreage.

One problem is that younger college professors work here, but do not live in Arkadelphia because of the city's lack of entertainment sources and restaurants. "There

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She said most younger people do not consider bowling alleys and skating rinks as sources of entertainment, but had rather see a movie.

While Arkadelphia has many rental properties, there are not many that are newer homes. She said that, in order to target more college students and working alumni, rental

properties need to be more "upscale" with upper- to moderate living.

Young professionals, she said, are looking for a step above what they lived in while attending college, without having to own a home.

The Plan hired Rios Appraisal and Consulting Services six months ago to develop the 163-page study as part of the Housing Subcommittee's goals.

To see the entire study or for more information about the Plan, visit www.clarkcountyplan.org.