

CASE

Prosper County's Commissioners and its four municipalities established an Economic Development Commission (EDC) three years ago. The EDC office is located in the county seat, Dollar City, which is the largest municipality in the county. The Dollar City Council and Prosper Commissioners voted to fund an economic development initiative. In this initiative, the EDC will be cataloging Dollar City and Prosper County's assets and identifying potential business opportunities.

Council members from the three smaller municipalities, the Town of Tender, Town of Banks, and the Village of Cashing, learned of Dollar City and Prosper County's agreement only after both governing boards had voted to move forward. Now the three municipalities are threatening to pull out of the EDC if they are not included in the economic development initiative. The EDC director is concerned the loss of the smaller municipalities makes it harder to attract businesses in the western part of the county, which is closest to the interstate and the largest neighboring county.

The EDC has also just learned of a \$500,000 grant from the federal government that could be used for downtown revitalization, such as streetscape and other improvements to make downtowns more attractive to residential and retail development. The deadline is 2 months away and in order to qualify for the grant, all of the municipalities and the county will need to sign off on the proposal and must agree to a 1-1 match (either cash or in-kind) making the total investment \$1 million.

PROSPER COUNTY BOARD CHAIR

The Prosper County Board Chair is focused on recruiting a big-box store to the county. The board chair campaigned on this and frequently talks to the EDC director about how the county needs to promote itself as attractive to this type of development. The chair likes to share statistics supporting the view that this would be the best option to bring jobs to the county and attract shoppers from the surrounding region. With the election coming up, the chair wants to make sure this initiative carries the day. The chair has taken to calling the corporate headquarters of Target and other stores to schedule visits to the county.

PROSPER COUNTY COMMISSIONER

The Prosper County Commissioner is a native of Dollar City and wants to revitalize the Dollar City downtown area and believes an attractive downtown with enhanced streetscapes will attract new businesses. The commissioner frequently talks to the EDC director, county manager, and Dollar City manager about the need to make the Dollar City downtown area more appealing and believes this would be the best option to bring jobs and attract shoppers from the surrounding region. Before the decline in manufacturing, Dollar City was the site of a major mill and the railroad station in the center of the downtown, while in poor repair, is still standing and is ripe for shops and apartments. The commissioner, whose sister is married to the EDC director, is also the one who found the information about the \$500,000 grant opportunity.

DOLLAR CITY COUNCIL

The Dollar City Council is in conflict over the downtown development revitalization initiative. As the county seat, many of Dollar City's downtown businesses have closed due to competition from the big box stores built on the bypass. Some council members see this as the natural progression of things and are happy with the increased sales tax revenue, while other council members want to revitalize the downtown and want to see the bulk of the grant funding go to Dollar City. The council members are reluctant to share the grant with the other municipalities because, as the largest town, they believe they are most important to economic development.

TOWN OF TENDER

Town of Tender is leery of doing any business with Dollar City because there is bad blood between the two municipalities. Tender is a poor community populated primarily by African Americans. In the past, buses would come and carry the workers from Tender to the mill in Dollar City. The little town struggles because all of the stores and services are in Dollar City. Also, the county sited a landfill near Tender forty years ago. The landfill is almost full and the Town of Tender has been negotiating for the last two years with the county to stop the flow of trash and have Dollar City (the source of most of the debris) build its own landfill.

VILLAGE OF CASHING

Village of Cashing is home to the world famous Miss Louise who has made a fortune selling her tasty ham biscuits from a picturesque little diner in the village. Miss Louise has parlayed her talents nationally and can now be seen every night on HDTV's "Home Cooking with Lou". Miss Louise, whose family has lived in Cashing for over 200 years, wields considerable influence in the village and is eager to make her downtown the showpiece of the county. She believes the EDC is favoring revitalization of Dollar City's downtown. She would like the majority of the development money to go to Cashing instead of Dollar City. Her son-in-law sits on the Village board and is a mouthpiece for her opinions.

Also, the Village of Cashing recently joined the EDC and is frustrated that Prosper County and Dollar City want and expect their financial contribution to the EDC while not giving them any say in how the EDC is set up or organized. Once a major tobacco growing community, the town has struggled over the last ten years due to the decline in farming. Its people say, "we are land rich and cash poor." Several of the farm families might be willing to sell land to the right person at the right price. A council member is trying to persuade the other council members from Tender and Cashing to set up their own independent EDC focused on recruiting industry to the southwestern side of the county.

EDC DIRECTOR

The EDC Director is struggling to do what he was hired to do because of the amount of time spent managing shifting priorities and fielding ideas about where the EDC should be focusing its efforts. He is excited about the possibility of a \$1 million dollar grant that could be used for downtown revitalization and is frustrated by the smaller municipalities' reluctance. He supports any kind of additional funding, including downtown revitalization, but his real priority is developing an industrial park and setting up apprenticeship programs with the local community college. The director thinks his strategy could attract manufacturing companies to the county that pay higher wages and invest more in buildings and equipment, leading to far greater tax revenue than the downtown retail projects being discussed by some of the elected officials.

He was recruited from Ohio where he was very successful and is having a hard time being accepted by the locals. Note: He has never eaten a biscuit for breakfast and doesn't really care for them. His wife is the one who wanted to move here to be back closer to her family.