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A windshield tour is a valuable tool for economic development professionals and stakeholders to gain a firsthand understanding of a community's characteristics, resources, and potential for growth. It involves observing the community from a vehicle, taking note of various aspects that influence its economic vitality.

I. Introduction & Purpose:

- **Date**: _____
- **Survey Conducted By:** _____
- **Purpose of the Tour:** To assess the economic landscape of _____and identify potential areas for development and investment.
- **Time of Day Survey Conducted**_____
- **Areas Surveyed**: [Specific neighborhoods, industrial parks, commercial districts, etc.] _____

II. General Observations:

- **Community Boundaries**:

Are they clear?

Geographical, political, or economic boundaries?

Do neighborhoods have names?

- **Overall Condition**:

Is there evidence of growth or decline?

Is there new construction or empty buildings?

- **Cleanliness and Maintenance**:

Are buildings, roadways, and public areas clean and well-kept?

Is there noticeable dirt, trash, or graffiti?

- **Community Spirit:**

What is the overall atmosphere and energy of the community?

- **Public Safety:**

Are there noticeable safety or environmental concerns?

Is there proper signage directing you to police, sheriff, city hall, etc.

III. Economic Indicators:

- **Employment Opportunities:**

What types of businesses and industries are present?

What is the predominant business climate (light or heavy industry, retail, hospitality)?

Do people need to seek employment elsewhere?

- **Commercial Districts:**

What condition are storefronts and signage in?

How many retail stores are open, and what goods do they sell?

- **Investment in New Businesses:**

Is there visible evidence of new business construction or openings?

- **Vacancies**:

Are there "For Sale" or "For Lease" signs, and where are they located?

- **Financial Institutions:**

What types of banks, credit unions, and ATMs are present?

- **Economic Assistance Programs:**

Are there visible signs of job fairs, microloan offices, or other economic assistance resources?

- **Industry Presence:**

Is there a variety of businesses? What are the local industries and businesses?

- **Retail and Services:**

Do businesses provide necessities like groceries and medications?

What is the store atmosphere, prices, and selection?

Where do people shop?

What kinds of goods are available?

IV. Infrastructure and Transportation:

- **Road Conditions:**

Are roads in good repair or in disrepair?

- **Public Transportation:**

Is there evidence of public transportation?

Is it well used and easy to navigate?

- **Traffic:**

How heavy is the traffic?

Is it primarily commercial or private vehicles?

- **Parking and Loading Zones:**

Are there adequate parking and loading zones to support commercial activity?

- **Accessibility:**

Are there architectural barriers (e.g., lack of ramps, bike lanes)?

V. Social and Community Life:

- **Housing:**

What is the age and condition of housing?

Are they well-maintained or in need of repair?

- **Public Spaces:**

Are parks and other public spaces well-maintained and used?

Are there sports facilities?

Are there visible examples of arts & culture projects in the community?

- **Public Services:**

Are there visible health and social service providers (clinics, food banks, shelters)?

- **Education:**

Are there schools, colleges, or libraries in the area?

- **Recreation**:

Where do children play? What forms of recreation are present?

- **Religious Centers:**

What types of religious institutions are present?

- **Community Gathering Spots:**

Are there common areas where people gather (e.g., parks, community centers, cafes)?

VI. Additional Observations:

- _____

VII. Photos/Documentation:

- [Attach photos or other visual documentation that supports observations] _____

VIII. Analysis and Conclusions:

- **Strengths of the Community:**

What are the community's outstanding assets?

- **Challenges and Weaknesses:**

What are the community's biggest challenges or weaknesses?

- **Opportunities for Economic Development:**

Based on your observations, what areas have the most potential for economic growth and investment?

- **Overall Assessment:**

What is your general assessment of the community's "health" and economic outlook?

All of the questions above can be utilized separately for various categories in the community:

- City Ingress and Egress
- City Infrastructure
- City Services

- Community Identity
- Retail Area/Commercial Area
- Downtown
- Educational Facilities
- Cultural Social Impression
- Medical Facilities
- Industrial Parks and Areas
- Community & Social Services
- Parks & Recreation
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Things That Stand Out

Under each of these categories are ten areas that can be judged and provided an assessment rating:

- Identifiability
- Visibility
- Appearance
- Cleanliness
- Creativity
- Accessibility
- Promotions
- Convenience
- Safety
- Range of Services

Suggested Ratings:

- Not So Good - Needs Serious Attention
- Fair - Could Be Much Better
- Passable - Could Use Some Improvement
- Good - In Pretty Good Shape
- Excellent - Well Done!

Note: This template is a starting point and should be customized to fit the specific needs and goals of your economic development windshield tour. Remember to take notes as you go along and take photos and/or video to help you remember and illustrate your observations. Google Maps and aerial photos are also helpful in pinpointing and describing certain areas. A more detailed template is available upon request.