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City welcomes full-time economic development director

organizations, and other stakeholders involved in foreign investment. Prado also managed trade missions in Latin America in representation of Mississippi interests.

Prado is a graduate of Belhaven University, having received a B.S. in business administration in 2011 and Masters in public administration in 2013. He also earned a Masters in management from Harvard University in 2017.

Prado said he is honored and excited to begin his work in Clinton.

"I am humbled and honored to accept the position as the Director of Economic Development for the City of Clinton. I am grateful to Mayor Fisher, the Board of Alderman, the business community, the staff at the City of Clinton, and everyone that made possible this opportunity to serve this incredible city," said Prado.

"I am looking forward to working with our community and our partners to continue to build on the economic success of Clinton by attracting new businesses and retaining our current businesses to improve the lives of Clintonians."

City leaders say economic development is a key component to the future vitality of Clinton, as the investment of private dollars and growth of a city's residential and retail inventory strengthen the tax base and enhance quality of life.

"I believe economic development is vital for our city's future success," said Fisher. "You elected me to move the city forward, and to do so means we must think differently than in the past. Over the last twenty-five years, we tried a metro area realtor as a part time director, and we have tried letting the mayor handle it. Neither has worked to the level Clinton deserves. We (Clinton) need someone representing our city that knows the retailers and the developers, someone that can pick up the phone and get through to the decision maker, travel to their locations, and assist in putting deals together."

Prado says he has already begun formulating an economic development strategy, focusing much attention on the two facets of retention and attraction of businesses.

"Our economic development strategy will be a comprehensive plan that will be in synergy with the marketing campaign Clinton has of 'You Belong Here.'" Prado stated. "Our strategy will have two main programs: our

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program and our Business Attraction (BA) program."

The Business Retention and Expansion program will focus on listening to the needs of the current small, medium and large businesses in Clinton to help them to flourish in the city long-term, and to help them expand their operations if possible.

Prado stated that he is eager to develop relationships with existing businesses to help facilitate their growth.

The Business Attraction program will focus on retail recruitment, technology recruitment, and industrial recruitment.

"We will make company executives aware of the competitive advantages of Clinton, such as our workforce and education, available sites and businesses, our economic anchor Continental, our strategic location, and our fiber-to-home program, among others," Prado said.

The goal is to help executives realize that top retail, technology and industrial companies "Belong Here."

Prado desires to capitalize on the strategic location and foundations already existing in Clinton for decades.

"Clinton is a historical city with many economic competitive advantages. Two of them are the quality of its education and the economic anchor that Continental will become for the city," said Prado.

Mayor Fisher noted that Prado can also open doors internationally for the City's economic development efforts. Mayor Fisher highlighted Prado's international experience and connections made during his employment at MDA.

"Gabriel's international connections will serve us well in other areas, also. He will join me as Clinton develops a relationship with Uzbekistan and establishes a sister city program with that great country. Gabriel was working with Uzbekistan while at MDA, so all the people involved with this effort know and respect him," added Fisher.

Prado began his work on April 1 and says he will be working quickly to facilitate relationships within the region and country to push Clinton to future growth.

"Economic development is a team sport, and we will work together to make Clinton the engine that drives economic opportunity in Mississippi, in the Southeast, and in the U.S.," Prado concluded.