Vinton County: *Future Focus 2020*

Strategic Vision to Action Plan –
A Working Guideline for Positive Action

Initiated and Sponsored by the Vinton County Chamber of Commerce

Facilitated by Travis West, Extension Educator, The Ohio State University

June 2016

Overview

<u>Where we've been</u>: *Future Focus 2000, Future Focus 2005, Future Focus 2010, Future Focus 2015* – and now, *Future Focus 2020*

◊ Historically, Vinton County was recognized by the Ohio Department of Development (complete with a plaque) for having developed one of the first "White Papers" (aka strategic goals) in the state with *Future Focus 2000.*

◊ The Vinton County Chamber of Commerce initiated the first and subsequent planning processes to develop five-year strategic vision to action plans for Vinton County.

◊ Deanna Tribe, Vinton County resident and Associate Professor and Extension Specialist Community Development, Ohio State University, South Centers (now retired) has served as facilitator for all four strategic plans. This has resulted in consistency in the planning process which contributes to building on what has previously occurred in planning rather than starting over which sometimes happens. Each of the planning processes was facilitated for Vinton County at no cost.

◊ *Future Focus 2000*, *Future Focus 2005*, *Future Focus 2010,* and *Future Focus 2015* were adopted by the Vinton County Commissioners as the county's plans.

◊ The *Future Focus 2020* Steering Committee worked closely with the facilitator. This group was comprised of Caleb Appleman, Brandi Betts, David M. Boothe, Teri Fetherolf, Bill Garrett, Paula Henderson, Carol Porter, Deanna Tribe and Travis West who served as the core planning committee. Additional community participation took place through key theme sub committee sessions and the community input meeting.

◊ *Future Focus 2020* is a constant 5-year guideline or framework plan with well-thought-through goals and strategies while officeholders, organization/agency staff, community composition, and volunteers may change over time.

<u>Objective</u>

The main objective of this overall planning process was to update the county's strategic plan that serves as a working guideline and framework for positive action. *Future Focus 2020* takes into account and builds upon the previous strategic plans — especially *Future Focus 2015* — by assessing accomplishments, changes and trends since the previous plan; considering regional and local data; learning from other local and regional planning processes and assessments; and gaining insight and information from community members.

<u>Report Layout</u>

This *Future Focus 2020* report is a document comprised of four sections as delineated in the Table of Contents. It is designed to be a working document that gets frequent use and does not become a dust collector. The first section (Overview) introduces and describes the planning process and includes recommendations for implementation; the next section (Trends, Changes, Challenges—the Bigger

Picture) provides some statistical data and summaries from selected plans and assessments, focusing on Vinton County with background data and assessment information. It also includes highlights of accomplishments and positive changes since *Future Focus 2015*. The third section is the strategic action plan itself, presented as a working guideline or framework for positive action and organized by key themes (priorities) with goals, strategies and indicators. The last section is an appendix that includes participants in the planning process, worksheets to assist with implementation and a compilation of information (challenges and opportunities) generated through the community input meeting.

A tri-fold summary brochure highlighting *Future Focus 2020* -- mission, vision, values, key themes and goals – has been prepared for public distribution. This also serves as an executive summary.

The Process Methodology

The planning process utilized by the facilitator for all of the *Future Focus* plans is based upon the Vision to Action Model, a streamlined strategic planning process:

○ The premise of the model is the identification of a common vision upon which the rest of the action planning is based

○ It helps a community or organization to specify or clarify its mission and purpose; find or refine its niche

○ It focuses on strategies and action projects to reach that vision through well-stated goals

○ The process encourages a holistic approach rather than fragmentation, in other words, considers the big picture; it considers assets and capacity building to accomplish desired goals rather than beginning from a deficit or "fix problems" perspective

The Vision to Action process is based upon the following:

Learning from the past – Where have we been? What have we accomplished? What do we value, i.e., what is important to us, what are our underlying principles? What do we have going for us? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses?

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Examining the present – Where are we now? What are our needs? What are the threats, the real or perceived barriers or hurdles, the challenges? What are the opportunities?

Visioning the desired future – What is our picture of how we want things to be, to have happen? Where do we want to go? What do we want to have accomplished in the next 5 – 10 years?

Developing a plan of action and action projects – How will we reach our desired future? What action strategies will we undertake to reach our goals (components, increments of the vision)? What action projects are necessary to implement our action strategies? With whom do we need to partner or collaborate?

Measuring success – What are the indicators, or standards of progress and accomplishment, which will help us know when we have reached success, i.e., our goals and vision?

Learning from the past – Where have we been? What have we accomplished? What do we value, i.e., what is important to us, what are our underlying principles? What do we have going for us as a community/organization? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses?

The Work of the Steering Committee:

◊ The Steering Committee and the facilitator met for five 2 – 3 hour sessions to:

- finalize the planning process design
- identify progress, accomplishments and positive changes since *Future Focus 2015*
- assess the current and anticipated conditions facing the county
- update and revise the mission, vision, values and the SWOT analysis
- analyze information gathered from a variety of sources

◊ The 7 Key Themes (priorities) from previous *Future Focus* plans continue to be relevant to Vinton County. The Steering Committee worked with the key themes as the basic priorities around which to revise, update and organize the strategic action plan with goals to be achieved for each key theme; action strategies that may be implemented to work toward each goal; and identification of indicators that signify standards of progress/accomplishment.

Value of Planning, Having a Plan:

◊ Typically, a facilitated process such as this and especially one based upon the Vision to Action model results in learning and benefiting from participating in and experiencing the process as well as having a completed strategic action planning document.

◊ Other valuable uses of *Future Focus 2020* are:

- to substantiate grant proposals with a plan already in place; helps in the search for funding sources and/or building a case for funding
- to provide a county-wide grassroots perspective for additional planning, requests for resources, etc.
- to demonstrate accountability for funding received and being able to produce results from resources invested in projects and programs
- to have a strategic plan and community process to "bring to the table" when working with organizations, agencies, and governmental entities locally, regionally and statewide

◊ It is desirable to share this plan with regional and state economic development groups, legislators and current and potential funders as well as sharing it within Vinton County with government entities, agencies and organizations, business and community leaders, civic groups, etc. They very likely have their own plans and may see connections and common interests with *Future Focus 2020*; learn of challenges and opportunities; share/coordinate action strategies; leverage resources, etc.

◊ *Future Focus 2020* can be the basis for the development of other plans such as a county land use plan, an economic development priorities plan, Vinton County Chamber's annual plan of work, etc.

◊ *Future Focus 2020* should be of interest and frequently utilized by public officials, community leaders and other agency and organization staffs as community and economic development touches most aspects of public, private and civic sectors in Vinton County.

Trends, Challenges and Changes – The Bigger Picture

This section highlights information gathered from a variety of sources to help portray the bigger picture regarding Vinton County from a county, regional and state perspective. Highlights rather than comprehensive data and trends are shared here. This information can also be of value to elected officials, agencies and organizations, community and business leaders, and citizens.

<u>Vinton County – A Snapshot</u>

Vinton County was established in March 1850, having been created from portions of 5 contiguous counties in Ohio's hill country. It is Ohio's second youngest county. The county was named for Samuel Finley Vinton, a nationally-known Whig Congressional leader from Gallipolis. McArthur, the county seat, has been in existence since 1815, being named for War of 1812 Army General Duncan McArthur.

The following brief summary and appraisal of the current state of Vinton County shows a community experiencing change. It shows a county that knows and celebrates its heritage. It shows a county with characteristics that others aspire to regain and characteristics that many other small rural communities share. It shows a county with its share of problems, but a county with the growing capacity to capitalize on its assets to deal with those problems and to take advantage of opportunities coming its way.

Vinton County—A Snapshot provides an overview of data. Originally prepared as part of the Charting Our Course through Community Assessments project by OSU Extension (2003), it has been updated somewhat for *Future Focus 2015,* recognizing that data from the 2010 Census is not yet available.

Vinton County at a Glance

People	Current (2009) estimated population of 13,228 is slightly up from the 2000 Census number of 12,806. The county is projected to experience similar growth over the next 3 decades. Vinton County is the least populous in Ohio. It is one of Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties with a significant number of its families calling Vinton county home for several generations.
Environment	Vinton County is more than 80% forested. Development on much of the county's land is limited by slope and soil type. The best farmland (also prime housing land) is in rich valleys subject to flooding and on shallow-soiled ridge tops.
Education	Served by one consolidated public school system, the Vinton County Local School District features a high-performance high school building, an adjacent Middle School and 3 elementaries—Central, West, and South. The enrollment for the District, fall 2010, is 2,444 students.
Health Care and Community Services	Medical services are available locally through Family Health Care, Inc. The local Health Department and EMS service fill valuable health care niches. No

	hospital or urgent care facility is located in the county, but are available in all contiguous counties.
Business and Industry	Timber/forestry, manufacturing and retail businesses are the strongest non-government employers in Vinton County. The Business Park has some tenants with room for others.
Recreation and Leisure	Popular recreation, adventure and leisure activities center on the out-of-doors and the county's natural resources. These are also the basis for much of the county's tourism.

People in Vinton County

- Vinton County is home to an estimated 13,228 people (ODOD 2009). The county's greatest population 17,223 was achieved in 1880. Over the next 100 years the county's population decreased significantly, to a low of 9,420 in 1970. Recent years have marked steady population growth. A small number of Amish families have located in the county.

- Incorporated population centers in Vinton County are McArthur, the county seat with 2,005 residents; Hamden, 923; Wilkesville, 161; and Zaleski, 402. (2009 estimates from the ODOD)

- The county's residents are primarily White (97.9%). The greatest concentration of non-white population is Black/African American, 0.1%; American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.4%; Hispanics (any race), 0.6% and 1.4% of the population reported being of two or more races. (2000 U.S. Census)

- Females make up 50.2 % of the county's population, slightly less than the state average of 51.9%. (2000 U.S. Census)

- Young people, 0 - 19, comprise 26.4% of the population, compared to the state average of 26.6%. Slightly over 18% of the county's residents are age 60 or older (18.3%) compared to the state average of 18.8%. (Vinton County JFS Profile, 2009) The median age is 35.5 years with Ohio's median age being 37.6 years. (2000 U.S. Census)

- With 4,906 households, the average household size is 2.59 compared to the state average of 2.49. Home ownership (77.8%) is greater than the state average (69.1%). Nearly 38% of households have children under 18 (2000 Census data).

- The 2007 estimated Per Capita Income was $20,544 compared to $34,468 In Ohio and $38,615 in the U.S. Residents (all ages) below the poverty level, 18.9%, exceeded the state average of 13.1% and the national average of 13.0%. About 29.3% of Vinton County's children (less than 18 years of age) are being reared in households with incomes below the poverty level compared with Ohio's 18.4% and the U.S. at 18.0%. (Vinton County JFS Profile, 2009)

- In 2008, almost 33% of the population received food assistance through food stamps (Ohio, 15.9%). Vinton County residents (all ages) enrolled in Medicaid in 2008 were 27.0% with 56.4% of children enrolled in the medical assistance program. (Vinton County JFS Profiles, 2009)

- Rate of Dependency on Income Supports (total amount of income support provided by taxpayer dollars divided by personal income) is 31.3% compared to Ohio at 17.6% ranking Vinton County 6 out of the 88 counties. (Vinton County JFS Profile, 2009)

- There were 170 births in 2007 with 22 of them being to teens. 64.1% of all births were paid by Medicaid. That same year there were 104 marriages and 100 divorces. (Vinton County JFS Profile, 2009)

- There are 4 licensed child care centers in the county; 160 children used publicly funded child care in 2008. (Vinton County JFS Profiles, 2009)

The Land and Its Features in Vinton County

- Hills and valleys cover the landscape contributing to Vinton County's strong rural character. The land area is 414.1 sq. mi and the water area is 0.9 sq. mi.

- A significant challenge for Vinton County is its transportation infrastructure. The only 4-lane divided highway in the county is a short stretch of State Route 32 (the Appalachian Highway) that cuts across Vinton Township in the southern portion of the county. U.S. Route 50 and State Routes 56, 124 and 671 cross the county east-west; State Routes 93, 160, 278, 324, 328, 683 and 689 run north-south. These are all two-lane highways. One short section of U.S. 50 west of McArthur has been upgraded with passing lanes on hills. Its county road system is paved, well maintained and cared for which is very much appreciated in snowy winters.

- Roads are characterized by hills and curves, largely as a result of how roads historically were developed along footpaths that followed meandering streams. Note the many roads named after creeks or runs, e. g. Siverly Creek, Pretty Run.

- Freight rail service is available along one rail line extending from Hamden to the Austin Powder plant east of McArthur.

- The Vinton County Airport, located about 5 miles from McArthur, is owned by the county. The paved runway extends for 3,850 feet. About 16 miles east of McArthur is a larger airport near Albany that is operated by Ohio University. Port Columbus International Airport is approximately 75 miles away.

- Raccoon Creek is a major feature crossing the more rugged portions of the county. Raccoon Creek is troubled by acid runoff from old coal mines and is the focus of watershed improvement groups. Salt Creek, in western Vinton County, runs in a wide valley that contains the county's best agricultural land. Both of these waterways place large areas of the county under threat of flooding when moderately heavy rains fall.

- Soils in the county tend to be shallow, acidic and heavy. Severe slopes limit development on much on the county's land.

- What used to be cursed as swamps are now valued as wetlands. Many lowland areas are not suitable for development because of their wetland status.

- The county does not have a comprehensive land use plan with regulations to provide a framework for managed growth development in Vinton County. There is a Vinton County Planning Commission that exercises subdivision regulations. Seemingly unplanned residential development is occurring throughout the county.

- Vinton County is the site of three lakes used for recreation and water supply – Lake Hope, Lake Rupert and Lake Alma, with the latter two supplying water for the city of Wellston in Jackson County.

Forestry in Vinton County

- More than 80% of Vinton County (208,200 acres) is forested, compared to the state average of about 35% forest cover, ranking the county first in Ohio in per cent forested land. However, 68% (140,000 acres) of the forested land is classified as "Poor" productivity (producing 20 to 49 cuft/ac/yr). In comparison, 16% is classified as "Very Good" or "Good" productivity (85 to 120+ cuft/ac/yr).

- Vinton County's timber volume is estimated to be increasing by about 30 million cubic feet per year. The county's forest is growing about 3 times faster than it is being harvested. The largest proportion of the

forest resource (77%) is an oak/hickory forest type which is being utilized at a faster rate than other forest types.

- Fifty-five per cent of the forest land is owned by private individuals and 45% by industry, state, federal or corporate entities. These large forested tracts are an asset and it is important to keep them intact as this contributes to making Vinton County unique. The large percentage of forested land held by public and corporate entities result in decreased tax revenues to the county.

- Forest-related industries are an important component of the county's economy with 7 hardwood sawmills and 3 dry kilns. However, very few secondary wood product manufacturers are located in the county to add value to the raw wood produced. Of concern is the increasing ages of the county's sawmill operators, the increasing haul distances to bring quality logs to the county's mills, as well as the distance to transport sawed logs to wood product manufacturers.

- Vinton County is the home of numerous forest-based recreational resources, including Zaleski State Forest, Lake Hope State Park, Lake Alma State Park, Tar Hollow State Park, Lake Rupert State Wildlife Area, Richland Furnace State Forest, Vinton Furnace Experimental State Forest and small portions of the Wayne National Forest.

Agriculture in Vinton County

- The Ohio Department of Agriculture's 2006 Report indicates that Vinton County has 240 farms, with an average size of 183 acres, ranking it next-to-last in Ohio in number of farms. These farms represent 44,000 acres. (A farm is defined as a place with annual sales of agricultural commodities of $1,000 or more.)

- The average cash receipts per farm in 2005 was $9,566. Most of the county's farms are small farms, with 132 having less than $2,500 in agricultural income. Only 21 farms reported income greater than $25,000.

- Hay production is the strongest component of Vinton County's agriculture industry, ranking 65th in Ohio with 19,000 tons produced in 2006. There were 1,100 acres of corn for grain harvested in 2006, yielding 131.5 bushels per acre. Cash receipts from corn in 2005 were $154,000. Cattle and calves accounted for the greatest income to farmers, bringing $904,000 to local producers. As of January 1, 2007, there were 3,100 head of cattle and calves in the county.

- Several small-farm niche market experiments are annually tried by local people, targeting farm-market and direct-market customers. A farmer's market has been held on the Library parking lot in McArthur and at McArthur Super Valu for the past several years.

- While traditional grain/livestock farming is not a major player in the economy of Vinton County, recreational or hobby farming is important to many county residents. Farming is viewed as bringing a positive quality of life to the community.

Education in Vinton County

- Vinton County is served by one K-12 Public School System, the Vinton County Local School District. It has 3 elementary schools, one Middle School and one High School. A nearby Catholic school in Wellston (Jackson County) also serves Vinton County for grades K-8.

- Vinton County is served by a high school building which opened in 2000, an early construction in Ohio's school facilities initiative. This represented the first construction since consolidation of the county's five school systems in the mid 1960s. The next phase of building was recently completed resulting in 3 elementary facilities (replacing the previous 5)—Central, South and West—and the Middle School facility adjacent to the High School, comprising a campus.

- The "old high school building" in McArthur serves as the Administrative Center for the Vinton County Local School District. The University of Rio Grande began holding off-campus classes in the building for fall semester 2010.

- Total enrollment in Vinton County Schools was 2,444 in Fall 2010. Central Elementary, 402; South Elementary, 413; West Elementary, 364; High School, 726; Middle School, 539. There are 54 Vinton County students attending Buckeye Hills. Only 4.37 students are participating in the Post Secondary Option Program.

- In the 2009-2010 school year, 70.9% of Vinton County students were considered economically disadvantaged. There were 19% of the students with disabilities.

- 41.5% of teachers hold at least a Master's Degree.

- The District achieved an"Effective" designation based upon the 2009-2010 School Year Report Card. Eleven out of 26 state indicators were met.

- Vocational education for Vinton County students is provided at Buckeye Hills Career Center, located in Rio Grande, Ohio, where 54 Vinton County students are enrolled in the 2010-2011 school year.

- Pre-school programs for Vinton County families are available through the public schools and local Head Start.

- No post-secondary schools are located in the county. However, the county is in close proximity (within 30 miles) of several institutions of higher learning, including Ohio University (main campus in Athens and the Chillicothe Branch), University of Rio Grande (Rio Grande), and Hocking College (Nelsonville). Vinton County is a part of the Rio Grande Community College District; RGCC is located on the campus of the University of Rio Grande, a private institution.

- For the 2008-2009 school year, the total expenditures per pupil were $9,579. The current operating millage is 20.7. Sources of revenue as a % of the total are 19.4% local, 69.4% state, and 11.2% federal. (Vinton County Local School District Profile, 2009, Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs)

- The attendance rate for all grades was 93.7%. The 2008-2009 graduation rate was 87.5%. (2009-2010 School Year Report Card)

- In educational attainment of the county's residents, 70.7% of those 25 years of age and over are high school graduates or higher. Only 6% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Health Care and Community Services in Vinton County

- Medical services are provided at the Family Health Care, Inc. Clinic, staffed by 3 family practice physicians, 2 dentists, and a hygienist. Vinton County has no hospital or urgent care facility. Residents utilize hospital and urgent care services in adjacent cities—Jackson, Athens, Gallipolis, Chillicothe, Logan and Nelsonville—and travel to more distant locales like Columbus for specialized care.

- An optometrist from Wellston holds office hours in McArthur one day a week.

- The Vinton County Health Department offers a broad range of wellness services to Vinton County, including well-child clinics, speech and hearing clinics, nutrition counseling, home nursing services and immunizations. The WIC Program is offered to Vinton County families through the Health Department and also through the Jackson-Vinton Community Action Agency.

- Mental health services are available through Tri-County Mental Health Services and the Athens-Hocking-Vinton Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board. Satellite offices for some services are available in the county.

- Vinton County is served by its own Emergency Medical Service with its base of operations located between the Vinton County Community Building and the Vinton County Health Department, about one

mile north of McArthur. Harrison Township also has emergency services with its location being near the Pleasant Valley Church on old US Route 50.

● Red Cross services in Vinton County are affiliated with the Athens Red Cross office.

● The county has activated its "9-1-1" system to better coordinate emergency response throughout the county.

● Limited public transportation is available through "VCATS," the Vinton County Area Transit Service. AHOY Transport, a private company, recently began operating in the county.

● An increasing number of households are served by public water systems with the extension of water lines to rural areas of the county. The villages of McArthur and Hamden (recently completed) have public sewage systems.

● Vinton County is served by one weekly newspaper, the Vinton County *Courier*. The bi-weekly *Telegram* (Jackson) delegates pages and reporters for Vinton County coverage. Many residents rely on newspapers from contiguous counties like the *Logan Daily News*, the Chillicothe *Gazette*, the Athens *Messenger*, the Jackson *Times-Journal*, *The Telegram* (Jackson) and even the Columbus *Dispatch.*

● 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth program in the county with 503 4-H Community Club members in 2010, in 32 clubs, led by 94 adult volunteer advisors. Combined with Cloverbuds, the camping program, and school programs, there were 1,243 Vinton County youth served by the 4-H program. There is a Vinton County Extension/4-H Levy providing partial funding for Ohio State University Extension-Vinton County.

● Other activities for Vinton County youth include Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, lots of school-related activities, school and community sports programs, and church youth groups.

● Senior programs for older adults are provided at the Senior Citizen Center in McArthur. Transportation to the Center is provided for meal service and special health and social support programs. Transportation is also provided to enable qualifying seniors to seek medical attention. There is a home-delivered meals program. Vinton is a part of Area Agency on Aging Region 7.

● RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) is active in the county with senior volunteers providing a variety of community, social and educational services.

● No radio station is physically located in Vinton County although Jackson County Broadcasting's 98.7 FM is identified as McArthur.

● Commercial television from the Columbus (OH) and Charleston/Huntington (WV) areas are available to cable subscribers, but few households can receive a signal without an antenna. Public television from Ohio University (Athens) is available to most households with antenna or cable service.

Community Pride, Heritage and Civic Involvement in Vinton County

● Vinton County residents celebrate their pride, heritage and culture though community fairs and festivals such as the Vinton County Wild Turkey Festival; Vinton County Junior Fair; Vinton County Air Show (Airport); Rural Ohio Appalachia Revisited Day at Lake Hope State Park; Ridgetop Music Fest (Airport); the Herbert Wescoat Memorial Library's Spring Literary Arts Festival; Shiloh Homecoming; Wilkesville Bean Dinner; Fourth of July Celebrations in McArthur and Wilkesville; Harrison Township, Zaleski and Wilkesville Fish Frys; and many others.

● Civic and fraternal organizations are extremely important to county residents. Active groups include American Legion, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Masons, Eastern Star, Shrine Club, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, and Business and Professional Women.

- Strong Senior Citizen organizations and activities keep the county's growing senior population involved in the community.

- Vinton County's faith community is characterized by many small to mid-size churches scattered throughout the county which provide important spiritual continuity and support for families.

- United Way supports some community activities, utilizing a $25,000 annual budget. Approximately 90% of the funds come from contributions by people who live and work outside Vinton County.

- Food and other basic needs assistance is provided to economically disadvantaged families and individuals through Care Outreach and the St. Francis Center both located in McArthur and more recently by Lutheran Social Services (new facility near Allensville).

Business and Industry in Vinton County

- Timber/forestry, manufacturing and retail businesses are the strongest non-government employers. Coal mining, historically an important industry to the county, has greatly diminished in prominence, especially with the closing of the Meigs Mines in 2000. A few surface mines are currently in operation. Other industries important in the county's early history (no longer active) include iron furnaces, brick plants and railroad car shops.

- Groups working to support and expand Vinton County business and the economy include the Vinton County Chamber of Commerce, Community Improvement Corporation, the Commissioners' Community Development Office, and the Vinton County Economic Development Board.

- Two financial institutions serve Vinton County. The local Vinton County National Bank has its main office in McArthur, a branch in Wilkesville and other banks in nearby counties. WesBanco (formerly Oak Hill Banks and McArthur Savings and Loan before that) has a major branch in McArthur.

- Vinton County completed infrastructure in its first Business Park, located 2 miles north of McArthur. A marketing plan has been developed. Some tenants have already located in the park and others are being recruited.

- The Rolling Hills Generating Plant (Dynegy Energy) has been constructed near Wilkesville and is in operation.

- A variety of small retail establishments are scattered throughout the county. The county has one supermarket--SuperValu--and Family Dollar and Dollar General Stores in McArthur.

- Near Allensville is Cross Creek, "home of the 5 cent cup of coffee," that is a combination gas station, deli, feed and convenience store that sells satellite dishes, holds weekend flea markets and occasional music concerts. Perhaps it is Vinton County's version of the famous Wall Drug in South Dakota!

Government in Vinton County

- Government employs the most workers in Vinton County with approximately 765 employees.

- A unique feature of the county is its county seat, McArthur, which has a village form of government; its population is much less than half of the 5,000 that is necessary to be considered a city.

- There are 4 incorporated villages in the county–Hamden, McArthur, Wilkesville and Zaleski but no cities. This magnifies the importance of decisions made by the Board of County Commissioners and by Township Trustees.

Employment in Vinton County

- The county's total workforce in 2008 (workers 16 years and over) was estimated to be 5,700 with about 500 being unemployed for an unemployment rate of 9.3%. (Vinton County Job and Family Services Profile, 2009) Vinton was among the six counties with unemployment rates above 9.0% in 2008, ranking it 6th.

- In 2009, Vinton County ranked 25th in the annual average of Ohio county unemployment rates with 13.1%. Rates increased for all 88 counties from the previous year. The range was from 15.7% (Williams County) to a low of 6.9% (Delaware County).

- In August 2010, Ohio's unemployment rate was 10.1%, down slightly from the previous month. The U.S. unemployment rate for August was 9.6%. Vinton County's unemployment rate that month was 11.3%, ranking it 21st in the state.

- Vinton County's unemployment rate had been consistently in the top 10 in the state, exceeding the state and U. S. averages until the economic downturn which has had widespread impact at all levels.

- U.S. Census 2000 figures show 1,742 Vinton County workers are employed outside the county. Workers commute in large numbers to Jackson (773); Ross (538); Athens (420); and Hocking (121) counties. The mean travel time to work is 37 minutes. Workers from neighboring counties travel to Vinton County for employment, primarily from Jackson (356); Athens (149); Meigs (114); and Ross (97). Resident workers retained are 40.3%. (Note: these figures are from 2000 and do not reflect what may have occurred with the downturn in the nation's economy).

- Vinton is one of 23 Ohio counties classified by the U. S. Dept. of Labor as a Labor Surplus Area. Seventeen of the 23 are Ohio Appalachia counties.

- In 2007, there were 21 new business start ups in Vinton County. There were 195 reported active businesses in the county. (Ohio County Profiles, Vinton County, ODOD)

- Major employers in 2007 as reported in the ODOD's Ohio County Profiles include: Austin Powder Co.; Community Bancshares, Inc.; Crownover Lumber Co., Inc; Huston Nursing Home; Sands Hill Coal Co.; State of Ohio; and Vinton County Local Board of Education.

Recreation and Leisure in Vinton County

- Popular leisure-time activities in Vinton County are centered around the outdoors, including fishing, hiking and hunting, especially deer, wild turkey, rabbit, and squirrel.

- Bingo games are also very popular diversions and provide support to Volunteer Fire Departments in McArthur and Hamden.

- Support for Vinton County High School sports is strong. Attending sporting events to cheer on the Vikings is also a popular social activity.

- Recreational youth programs in football, baseball, softball and basketball keep families active twelve months of the year.

- Tourism, including agri-tourism, has the potential to play a greater role in Vinton County's economy. The Convention and Visitors Bureau is working to supplement the ongoing efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, Vinton County Travel and Tourism Committee and other groups working to develop and enhance tourism. A lodging tax was enacted in late 2005.

- Unique sites for county visitors are related to the county's heritage and include 5 covered bridges, Lake Hope State Park, Lake Alma State Park, Lake Rupert Wildlife Area, Hope Schoolhouse Interpretive Center, Hope Furnace, Moonville Tunnel, Moonville Rail-Trail, etc.

- The county lacks much of what contemporary society views as essential for fun and leisure activities. For example, the county does not have a golf course, skating rink, public swimming pool, YMCA, country club, bowling alley or shopping mall.

- Several communities have public meeting facilities--community buildings--for groups and organizations, reunions, family celebrations, and special events and activities.

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Learning from Others – Plans and Assessments

The following citations are included to present and leverage relevant information and resources for the development and implementation of *Future Focus 2015*. This information gleaned from planning sessions, assessments, surveys and studies conducted by selected local and regional agencies and organizations was available and used for reference in the preparation of *Future Focus 2010.* This information continues to be relevant and substantiated through the SWOT analysis revision and challenges and opportunities work at the *Future Focus 2015* Community Input Session. Three examples are included within this report—Ohio Rural Development Partnership Summit, OVRDC and ARC Regional Strategic Development Plans, and the Vinton County Charting Our Course through Community Assessments.

Ohio Rural Development Partnership 2003 Summit Summary:

The Ohio Rural Development Partnership's December 2003 Rural Summit was attended by elected officials, agency representatives, community leaders, economic development professionals, and others. Participants from all over the state identified issues facing rural Ohio related to agriculture, community and economic development, and health.

Following are a few of these issues, excerpted from the ORDP Rural Summit Facilitator Packet They provide an awareness of the breadth and scope of these issues throughout Ohio, many of which were also identified as concerns for Vinton County through the *Future Focus 2010* and *Future Focus 2015* planning processes.

Agriculture:

* Drainage – non-agricultural neighbors, environmental issues and public oversight/control have complicated drainage solutions and outdated drainage laws
* Urban Development, Land Use – prime agricultural land continues to disappear; the rural-urban transition zone is less defined and more contentious
* Zoning – there is a lack of zoning or poorly enforced zoning in many rural areas
* Regulatory Burden – environmental, labor, health department, zoning, bio-terrorism, safety, transportation and other regulations and reporting requirements are overwhelming farms and small businesses

Community and Economic Development:

* Equity Capital – gap exists for small businesses and start-ups
* Entrepreneurship Assistance – needs to be more coordinated and accessible
* Broadband/Technology – improve access to broadband and other technology
* Response to Growth – increasingly unplanned growth and lack of local and regional comprehensive planning capacity
* Funding Project Planning – many grant programs too limited in allowing funding for administration, preliminary planning and engineering costs
* Groundwater Contamination and Wastewater Treatment – limited resources to address this
* Workforce Training – existing businesses dissatisfied with skills/education level of workforce
* Youth Retention – rural communities need to retain our youth and stop the "brain drain"
* Transportation/Infrastructure – rural communities lack capacity to maintain/improve infrastructure improvements on their own

  *   Leadership Capacity – sufficient leadership and leadership development are lacking
  *   Higher Wage Jobs – rural communities need to attract higher paying service and
        industrial jobs

    Health:

  *   Health Care and Local Economies – economic development activities and opportunities often
        exclude or fail to recognize health care as a significant contributor to rural economies

OVRDC Regional Strategic Development Plan:

The 2003 edition of the Regional Strategic Development Plan conducted by OVRDC, a "blueprint for action," goes beyond identifying regional goals to outlining tasks to be undertaken for continued economic and community development. Vinton is one of the twelve member counties comprising the district. Each county had representation on the task forces that developed this map of the future, regional in scope and grassroots in spirit.

Following are the broad goals which were identified:

- support job creation/retention/expansion
- increase business access to a variety of capital sources
- expand tourism/recreational job opportunities
- increase skill levels of workforce
- increase youth entrepreneurship training
- improve access to business courses
- increase access/utilization of telecommunications technologies
- improve existing and develop new highways/roads/bridges
- expand the use of alternative transportation systems
- increase health care/day care services
- increase senior support services
- increase adequate and affordable housing
- improve solid waste management/air quality
- upgrade and develop new water/sanitary sewer and storm systems where needed
- promote development of land use planning
- increase and improve preservation/conservation of agriculture

Vinton County Charting Our Course through Community Assessments Summary:

Vinton was one of sixteen counties in OSU Extension's South District that conducted a multi-phase community assessment in 2003 to better recognize the challenges, opportunities and concerns facing communities and people in southern Ohio. The Vinton County Snapshot (included earlier in this report) comprised one phase of the community assessment that presents a basic collection of facts, figures, statistics and review of existing secondary data to establish baseline information for analysis. A second phase included a resident survey and the third phase involved focused discussion groups that used the Snapshot and resident survey findings to identify action strategies for addressing the challenges and opportunities highlighted through the complete community assessment.

    At least 75% of the respondents to the resident survey most strongly agreed with the following
    statements:

- The natural resources (lakes, rivers, forests, creeks, farmland, etc.) of this community are vital to its well being.
- This community is a good place to raise a family.
- The air in this community is clean.
- Tourism should be promoted.

The statement that 78% of the respondents disagreed with related to living wage jobs being available for members of the community within a reasonable distance from home.

The top 3 responses to the open-ended question about the best things that one's community offers families were (1) small town atmosphere, friendliness and neighborliness; (2) rural living, space, low population and country living; and (3) lakes, forests, clean air and water.

The most important challenge facing families offered by respondents was the need for local employment opportunities, jobs, and income.

Respondents identified the most important challenge facing the community to be availability of jobs.

Highlights of Accomplishments and Positive Changes Since *Future Focus 2015* – 2010-2015

- I will put this into a narrative form once we are all okay with what is here and that we have captured everything
    - Austin Powder Expansion
    - Dynergy expansion
    - Library expansion (art display, meeting space, more room)
    - Banners and Signs at McArthur Village entrance
    - Bicentennial Clock (where is this going to be placed??)
    - Community mural
    - Middle school garden
    - Farmers and Crafters market (Monday in Hamden/ Saturday in McArthur) May-October 2-4 vendors
    - VC Drug Task Force work with youth (community forums)
    - Fresh Stop (L&S)
    - VC Job Site (Ohio Means Jobs)
    - Zaleski village sewage system
    - Hamden – complete water and sewer
    - Rio Grande – McArthur Center
    - Fire Dept – Hazmat trailer for decontamination from drug related crime scenes
    - Lake Hope Lodge Complete
    - McArthur Fire Dept Station #2 in Allensville and Helipad for Life Flight
        - Decrease response time to areas covered by MFD
    - Archery range at Zaleski State Forest
    - Fitness center at Industrial Park
    - Increased communication among fire departments across the county
    - Passage of Public Services levy to update old emergency communication systems

The following summary prepared by Brandi Betts of the *Future Focus 2020* Steering Committee highlights accomplishments and positive changes that have taken place in Vinton County in the past five

years. The compiled list of accomplishments and positive changes generated by the Steering Committee and by participants in the key theme sub committees is on file in the Vinton County Chamber Office and in the Key Theme Committee Co-Chair implementation packets. This is by no means a complete list, but demonstrates that a lot of positive things have been happening in Vinton County!

Once every five years, members of the Vinton County Chamber of Commerce with the help of Deanna Tribe, roll up their shirtsleeves to create *Future Focus*. This five-year plan for Vinton County is adopted by the Vinton County Commissioners and is viewed as a roadmap for making Vinton County the best possible place to live, work and play.

An old adage tells us that you cannot know where you are going until you know where you have come from. That is why the *Future Focus* Steering Committee spends some time considering all that has been accomplished in the county in the previous five years. The fully compiled list is staggering as we included everything from infrastructure changes like major water line extension projects and new school construction to civic involvement like litter pick up programs and playground development.

The result of this process always causes us to pause for a moment. After all, it is commonly believed that little goes on in Vinton County. Yet we have several pages of documentation that prove otherwise. It is not possible to provide you the entire list of accomplishments, but I want to point out a few for your consideration.

In terms of education, the school facilities 10-year building plan has been completed, providing all Vinton County students modern buildings in which to learn and grow. The University of Rio Grande now offers freshman level classes in McArthur, Sojourners works to assist at risk youth through a variety of programs and the Chamber's Brown Bag Lunch offers monthly educational opportunities for local professionals. The Library and the Friends of the Library continue to sponsor their Spring Literary Arts Festival which brings renowned authors and performers to Vinton County to enrich our appreciation for culture.

Technology in Vinton County has improved as well. New cellular towers have been constructed throughout the county to provide better phone service and fewer dead zones. A Chamber initiated technology committee was established to bring broadband to the county and a large federal grant was recently announced through Connect Ohio to fund middle mile infrastructure to Appalachian Ohio.

The areas of health and safety have seen many improvements. From an increase in dentistry services to a new station for the Hamden Fire Department, there have been many wonderful additions. Family Health Care, Inc. has increased staffing from ten to 25, providing health care services to more people. A new business, AHOY Transport, offers transportation services to help folks make it to work, doctor appointments, the store and job interviews. New sidewalks in McArthur and Hamden are designed to keep pedestrians safe. Shepherd's House continues to be available for victims of domestic violence and voters continue to support health, safety and other public services through levies despite the depressed economy.

Infrastructure improvements that contribute to safety and to economic development include new water lines and a water tower constructed in Hamden. Water lines have also been extended to households throughout rural areas of the county. Six million dollars were invested in a sanitary sewer collection system and waste water treatment plant in Hamden. Another $750,000 was spent on the Airport Obstruction Removal project that will lead to a safer landing approach at the airport. This project will eventually lead to an extended runway, a new terminal, fuel farm and hangars. As we are building, we are also tearing down. Thirty-two dilapidated structures in McArthur, Hamden, Zaleski and Wilkesville have been demolished, making the landscape more attractive, safer and more valuable.

The areas of community pride have also seen much progress. During the last five years, the Courthouse and Sheriff's Office were spiffed up with new sidewalks, improved parking, trees and lights. The rest of our county seat's downtown was beautified earlier this year with new trash cans, flower pots and a little cleaning. Neighborhood Watch groups, welcome signage and community clean up days all contribute to the well being of the community and have inspired a newfound sense of pride in place.

Last but not least, there has been an incredible amount of progress in the tourism industry. New attractions have been developed including a Quilt Barn Trail, the hand-feeding hummingbirds program at Lake Hope, a Quilt Barn Festival and a host of other events that attract visitors. New businesses offer scenic air tours of the area, places to buy locally-made items and banquet space for gourmet meals and other events. There is also a new fitness center. The lodging business has exploded, providing visitors numerous new choices including cabins, cottages and unique options like a one-room schoolhouse.

As mentioned earlier, we do not have the space to itemize all of the good things that have happened in Vinton County since 2005, but I hope this summary will remind you of things that have happened in your own neighborhood. I also hope that you are encouraged by all of the positive changes our community has enjoyed. If we have accomplished so much in these last five years, imagine what good things are in our future!

Composite of SWOT Assessment

A SWOT analysis tool – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (or challenges) – incorporated both learning from the past and assessing the present. An in-depth, detailed list was generated by the Vinton County *Future Focus 2010* Steering Committee and planning participants. The SWOT was reviewed and updated for *Future Focus 2020* by the Steering Committee and with information gathered at meetings which focused on the challenges and opportunities facing Vinton County. Summary highlights of the responses follow:

Strengths:

- Natural resources – eye-appealing landscapes and topography, outdoor recreation, rural setting, beauty
- People/values – long-time residents; newcomers; generosity with time, money and other resources; good work force; friendly communities; community groups working together
- Economy – room for growth; expanding infrastructures; paved county roads; highway improvements; airport improvements; Business Park
- Schools and education; new buildings; technology plan for county; McArthur branch of Rio Grande Community College
- Heritage and traditional values; part of Appalachian region and culture; celebrations; attractions for visitors
- Community well being of citizens – safe place to live; 9-1-1 service; quality of life amenities; community activities; expanded library; improved health delivery system
- Civic-minded leaders

Weaknesses:

- Acceptance of poverty as a way of life; fatalism

- Knowledge of opportunities not well known
- Lack of services for homeless residents
- Lack of pride in public and private properties
- Division among the communities; parochialism
- Fear of change
- Lack of venture capital, private investment available locally
- Lack of jobs/opportunities to bring college graduates back home to live and work
- Large rural area; limited staffing for community services; accessibility issues
- Lack of golf course, lodging options and other tourism-supporting services
- Sparse population is a weakness with retail and commerce, civic involvement, leadership base, etc.
- High unemployment
- Deteriorating main streets in villages
- No strong clout with state or federal governments
- Lack of regulations, or enforcement, for planned growth and development
- Building permits, building codes, etc., are not required
- Negative perceptions of Appalachia
- Lack of a retail full service grocery store

Opportunities (Potential and Possibilities):

- Expanded tourism industry with supportive businesses, services and attractions that maintain our rural character and charm and contribute to quality of life for residents
- Entrepreneurial development, including women-owned businesses
- External investment into the community (grants, foundations, etc.)
- Clean landscape and environment (beautification, community pride and image)
- Cultural arts and recreation center; host regional tournaments, etc.
- Higher education – branch of a small college; college classes, training conducted locally
- Potential for agriculture and horticulture expansion through grazing, agri-tourism, cooperatives
- Business Park; living wage jobs available locally; value-added lumber resources
- Quality of life improvements including opportunities that focus on youth and elders
- Alter "outside" perception of Vinton County with positive stories, media coverage
- Utilization of land around our existing 4-lane highway; Appalachian Highway. Corridor Plan
- Continual improvement of partnerships/collaborations among agencies, organizations, townships, counties
- Rural area able to develop into a desirable "bedroom community" with great schools, etc.
- Technology and what it can do and make possible
- Potential for food/ horticulture models to provide fresh food access for residents

Threats and Challenges:

- Hesitation to put restrictions on development; enforcement of existing regulations; lack of interest in managing change including land use; atypical growth patterns (from the "hinterlands" toward the central core villages)
- Growth in the county, especially with division of farmlands (into residential development)
- Succession for timber businesses; losing natural resources, especially timber industry as economic backbone of the county
- Lower than average access to philanthropic resources
- Lack persistence, attitude, broader outlook to deal with tough circumstances; acceptance of tough circumstances
- Stagnancy or decline of organizations (leadership, participants) without new ones to take their place; need to bring on, involve, next generation for leadership

- Mobility from urban areas to county with associated problems, e.g. drug trafficking, prescription drug problems, more violent crime, etc.; these are more overt now
- Creating living wage jobs that protect our values, are ecologically effective and maintain our natural beauty and rural character
- Increase realistic aspirations, especially for our children
- Problems associated with economic challenges of individuals and communities
- Over-emphasis on 4-year college degree to the detriment of the 2-year and technical degrees, certification, licensure programs
- Access to vocational training programs for teens; challenges with distance to career and technical skill training sites
- Access for students to high tech educational opportunities

Future Focus 2020 –

Vinton County's Strategic Vision to Action Plan

Vinton County Vision Statement

Vinton County is a vibrant rural community, rich in natural resources and heritage where people are proud to live, work and raise families. People of all ages experience opportunities to work, learn, earn, share, believe and grow. Planned development provides employment opportunities that pay excellent living wages with benefits. Social and cultural amenities encourage diversity and enhance quality of life. A thriving tourism business celebrates our natural, historical, and cultural resources with a variety of sites, events and activities spanning the seasons. Community groups, businesses, government and individuals work together for the common good. A large number of active volunteers exemplify the power of community pride, positive image and civic involvement.

Vinton County is known as a wonderful place to live, work, play and visit. Residents welcome planned growth that enhances the landscape and rural lifestyle. Visitors may find the respite they seek from society's hectic pace.

In our community, the wonders of nature meet opportunities of the 21st century in a managed, healthy, sustainable manner. You can still see the stars at night in Vinton County!

Mission Statements

The Community:
In planning for the future of Vinton County, individuals who live, work and/or own land here work in collaboration with public, private, civic and social sectors to achieve our common vision now and in the future.

The Vinton County Chamber of Commerce:
Businesses, government, agencies, organizations and individuals will work together for the common good to help make Vinton County a better place to live.

The Vinton County Convention and Visitors' Bureau:
The mission of the Vinton County Convention and Visitors' Bureau is to promote travel, tourism and related businesses and events in order to attract visitors to Vinton County, Ohio.

The Vinton County Commissioners' Development Department:
The mission of the Vinton County Commissioners' Development Department is to assess the needs of Vinton County, develop strategies that address those needs, and access available resources and implement programs that improve quality of life.

Mission slogan – "Working Together for a Better Vinton County"

Our Core Values and Guiding Principles

We value. . .

- Natural beauty and a pristine environment with open spaces, abundant natural resources, wildlife, forests and farms

- Health and safety for individuals, families and communities

- Lifelong learning and an educational system that challenges students of all ages and career paths to achieve their highest potential

- Excellent public services and efficient local governments that cooperate with business and community to promote an improved quality of life and higher standard of living

- The advancements made possible by state-of-the art technology

- Sound economic development opportunities that provide living wage jobs resulting from planned growth

- A community filled with people of all ages who are friendly and self-reliant with moral values, a strong work ethic and faith

- Our heritage, culture and traditions which contribute to our enjoying the present and shaping the future

- A small town lifestyle and rural character which we believe produce an exceptional quality of life for residents and enrichment experiences for visitors

- The local celebrations, arts, music, crafts and stories that make our community special and unique

Key Themes (Priorities)
Organizing the Strategic Action Plan

Community Pride, Image and Civic Involvement

Economic Vitality

Education and Training

Health, Safety and Public Services

Land Use and Managed Growth

Recreation and Tourism

Technology

Goals are presented in present tense complete sentences as corollaries to the overall vision statement, describing the desired result or accomplishment. Some are long term while others are immediate and short-term.

Goals are numbered to facilitate use of the plan; the numbers are not reflective of priority as all are important as determined by the *Future Focus 2020* Steering Committee.

Strategies are listed for each goal—how/what needs to be done in order to accomplish the goal. Some of the strategies are general while others describe specific actions. Strategies are identified with letters—A, B, C, etc.—for ease in using the plan.

It is expected that the Key Theme Committees/Theme Teams for Implementation will identify any additional strategies and action steps needed as the plan is further developed, especially in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years of the plan.

Indicators are statements of progress and accomplishment, i.e. measures of success and achievement. These should be considered and noted through incremental reporting when the plan undergoes its annual reviews.

Some indicators are yet to be identified when specific action plans are further developed for implementation.

Key Theme: Community Pride, Image and Civic Involvement

Goal 1: **Vinton County residents exhibit pride in their county and themselves through positive attitudes, actions and appearance of the community and its landscapes; the county is always dressed up for visitors with local residents benefiting every day.**

Strategies:

    A. Clean up trash and litter; promote beautification through regular clean-up campaigns, special plantings, decorations and public art, and community service projects to maintain clean, safe, aesthetically-pleasing spaces

□ Schedule a seasonal clean-up day involving volunteers in various locations around the county with some focus on the county seat
□ Add banners and hanging baskets similar to those in Logan; follow Logan's plan for creating banners which makes the project self-sustaining

B. Encourage each village to have its own plan (with awards and recognition) for clean up and beautification involving youth and adults, public entities, organizations and volunteers

□ Beautification projects for McArthur, Hamden, Zaleski and Wilkesville that might include trash cans, flower pots, street lights, trees and sidewalks
□ Groups like the Chamber and CVB could partner to host a contest or to produce seed money for projects in each of the towns
□ Replace welcome signs at county entrances and add large flower boxes at the base of each sign and plant with shrubs or perennials that require little upkeep
□ CVB, Chamber, Twp. Trustees and County Commissioners could partner with the Health Department to grow their clean-up days to include drop-off points in the more rural areas of Vinton County
□ Community clean-up day ends with picnic/awards for noteworthy volunteers (oldest, youngest volunteers, oddest find, etc.)
□ Promote utilization of "Green" practices

C. Add civic groups to roadway clean up, e.g. "adopt-a-highway" programs

□ Encourage local residents to maintain own right-of-ways
□ Promote this program to local non-profits and match them with heavily traveled routes in the county

D. Place priority on enforcing regulations and ordinances already in existence regarding littering, clean-up, etc.

□ Identify zoning laws, property nuisance ordinances enacted and enforced
□ CVB, Chamber and County Commissioners partner with the Health Department to identify existing laws and promote enforcement

E. Explore ways to turn trash into cash and re-usable items resulting in a cleaner environment and economic benefits

□ Promote economic growth through recycling as part of annual clean-up day

F. Participate in First Impressions program (OSU Extension) to get outside opinions of appearance, eyesores, signage, amenities, etc.; create and implement action plan to improve
□ Encourage business to be proactive in maintaining clean and appealing exteriors and interiors
□ Work with local governments to enhance appeal of physical structures and grounds of villages and townships

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Number of beautification plans and projects resulting in enhanced appearance of churches, businesses, private and public properties

Δ   Amounts of trash collected; reduction of trash and litter on roadways demonstrating that county-wide recycling program reduces waste

Goal 2:   **Residents, visitors and the general public have a positive image of Vinton County—people and place.**

Strategies:

A.   Inventory and spread awareness of the county's assets—nature, heritage, culture, history, location, people, rural lifestyle; share assets and community capacity locally and with visitors through projects, events, programs, publications, and products

B.   Develop/enhance marketing techniques and strategies for local people to know about and participate in community events and activities, e.g. multi-use programs, media stories, driving tours, etc., for residents and visitors *(See Recreation and Tourism key theme for specific strategies)*

        □ Develop a closer relationship with local newspapers. Develop news source providers locally including village writers, events, sports, etc.

C.   Host regular programs or refresher sessions with materials for distribution in terms of heritage and cultural assets, operations of local government, civic involvement, etc.

D.   Increase knowledge of local and regional culture and heritage via school involvement with local history units and programs; planning and celebrating special events; and conducting other local heritage, cultural and social activities for and with the public

E.   Encourage more collecting, preserving, displaying, and sharing of local history, heritage, artifacts, folkways, etc., through publications, presentations, programs, displays, and collections

F.   Develop and/or support creative community-school collaborations to increase involvement in arts and culture programs and activities by youth and adults, e. g. Friends of the Library

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Number of know your community pamphlets prepared and distributed and programs conducted

Δ   Increased opportunities, support and participation in the arts, culture and heritage programs by youth and adults

Goal 3: **Vinton County has a law-abiding population that practices responsible citizenship and supports law enforcement for public safety.**

Strategies:

A.   Reduce incidences of local crime; encourage neighborhood watch groups

B.   Provide education programs to address domestic violence identification and resources

C.   Acquire data and statistics about prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, discipline problems and unruliness, felonies, and other problem behaviors for various demographic segments of the population; use this information as a wake-up call for action to address these public safety problems that also contribute to the negative image of the county

D.   Support and encourage involvement in law enforcement programs, character development and citizenship programs
        □ i.e. Citizen's Academy

E.   Provide positive activities and uses for leisure time, especially for youth

           □ Develop a monthly picnic in the park with live local entertainment
           □ Encourage youth-oriented groups like the Athletic Boosters, 4-H, Sojourners, and Scouts to hold monthly dances/events for teens (could be a fundraiser for the organizer)

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Reduced incidences (numbers) of major and sensational crimes; lowered incidences of drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, etc.

Δ   Benchmark data base prepared to determine progress in dealing with these problems

Δ   Number of well-attended dances/events geared for teens

Goal 4: **More residents—youth and adults—are involved in their community through civic participation and volunteerism.**

Strategies:

A.   Reach out and provide a welcoming environment for civic participation (including newcomers to the community); develop patience and persistence in encouraging volunteerism and recognize efforts accordingly

           □ Develop database of opportunities (at-home or on-site) for volunteer and civic involvement; identify assets and skills of youth and adults in communities
           □ Develop organization profiles and then publish this information in a brochure and/or in the local media

□ Foster collaboration among the various groups currently working to promote the county and their specific activities
□ Identify annual common activities/projects for working together within and among the county's communities
□ Recognize residents for their volunteer service

B. Encourage existing groups to partner within communities and among areas of the county on new or existing projects to leverage resources, results and impacts

C. Offer/encourage participation in skill development programs such as leadership, conducting effective meetings, working with volunteers, hospitality training, customer service, board training, etc.

D. Recognize the civic contributions and achievements of various local and regional organizations, businesses, individuals, etc.

□ Initiate a monthly "good things" ["every little bit helps"] award sponsored by the Chamber that honors people doing small things to improve their community

E. **Provide service based learning opportunities for youth**
□ A "wish list" of projects that youth could do to provide value to the community

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ Increased civic involvement as evidenced by running for public office; voting in elections; serving on boards and committees; volunteering for community projects and activities; contributing to charitable concerns; attending local events and activities, etc.

Δ Development and maintenance of an inventory database of available volunteer skills and assets and needs/opportunities for volunteer assistance

Δ Number of training programs offered and number participating to enhance leadership skill development

Key Theme: Economic Vitality

Goal 1: **Vinton County has an increase in the quality and quantity of job opportunities through attraction, expansion, entrepreneurship and small business development resulting in increased standard of living and improved quality of life for residents.**

Strategies:

A. Encourage and support entrepreneurship and small business development with basic education, information, technical assistance, venture capital and/or other funding, facilities and support services to incubate new and/or struggling start ups

B. Stimulate job growth, development and progress while protecting and respecting the county, its natural resources and beauty

C. Investigate secondary wood products businesses to add value to timber including tourism and gift markets, creative uses for sawdust, chips, mulches, etc. woodworking, cabinets, and doors

D. Continue to implement the Business Park Marketing Plan

□ Identify and implement strategies to fill empty store fronts and market available structures and land identified for development

E. Incorporate business and employee retention and expansion concepts to provide support and assistance for existing businesses and industry

F. Expand alternative economic development options such as bedroom communities, retirement communities, assisted living, elder care, internet sales and marketing, etc.

G. Encourage diverse farming, other agriculture enterprises and the development of "Green" businesses as potential for sustainable economic development

□ Support and expand direct marketing of farm products, e. g. farmer's markets, local grocery and convenience stores, use of locally-produced foods in restaurants; check with schools to determine feasibility of using locally-produced foods in food service
□ Explore "Green" business development, e. g. alternative fuels, wood waste into wood pellets, growing biomass, etc., which reflect a paradigm shift from extractive industries to "Green" ones
□ Pursue research dollars and partner with educational institutions studying "Green" raw materials, product development, etc.
□ Participate/provide education about "Green" concept of economic vitality for better understanding its potential in the county

H. Ensure Vinton County representation with business, regional and state economic development agencies, government entities, organizations, events

I. Attend/sponsor local and regional conferences on business innovation, globalization and other trends that impact local business and industry

J. Maintain an active Economic Development Board as a 501-C-3; a Community Improvement Corporation; and Vinton County Commissioners Development Department

K. Foster collaboration among major employers, Jobs and Family Services Department and the Chamber to create fact sheets for distribution (including web-based) on emerging jobs, needed skill sets, available training, systems for navigating employment, etc.

L.   Support the Chamber of Commerce's capacity to provide business advice and training for employers

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Increase in number of jobs created locally (business start ups, expansions and new jobs created through entrepreneurship) and filled with local workers resulting in fewer residents commuting outside the county for employment

Δ   Improved standard of living for residents (reduced poverty rates, higher per capita income, lower unemployment rates, etc.) and enhanced quality of life (subjective measures)

Δ   Increased number of living wage jobs with benefits based on value-added natural resources and/or technology

Δ   Increase in the number of local "Green" related jobs or businesses

Goal 2:   **Vinton County's tourism base is expanded and enriched as a viable economic development and marketing strategy for the county and the region.** *(See Recreation and Tourism Key Theme)*

Strategies:

A.   Continue collection of county-wide lodging tax to help support tourism development

B.   Encourage business development and/or expansion that attracts outside dollars, e. g. antique and specialty shops

C.   Identify products and services needed to support/enhance tourism industry; generate interest in entrepreneurship and small business development to meet these needs

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Tourism is considered as an economic development strategy for the county with an increasing number of expansions and start up businesses that support this growing industry with products, services, attractions, etc.

Δ   Increase in identified shopping, gift shops, etc., on tourism maps for distribution, reflecting increase in sales tax revenue

Goal 3:   **Vinton County's workforce is skilled and/or trainable for the jobs of the 21st century and is a positive factor for business development and expansion.** *(See also Education Key Theme)*

Strategies:

    A.   Collaborate with local and regional organizations, agencies and educational institutions to offer workforce development and continuous training opportunities

    B.   Identify skill needs of current workforce and anticipate training needs for the future workforce and the "new jobs;" make use of this information for training, curriculum development, career preparation, etc.

    C.   Increase availability of user-friendly job search and training technology for residents, e. g. Ohio Means Jobs website

    D.   Target "recruited entrepreneurship" – advertising professional and highly skilled positions available locally to former residents and college graduates from the county which may draw Vinton Countians back home to live and work

    E.   Invite successful peer communities as speakers at local training sessions and other related public occasions to share models that work, best practices, etc.

Indicators or Progress/Accomplishment:

    Δ   Increase in number of trained electricians, welders, pipe fitters, plumbers, "Green" workers, and technically-skilled laborers available locally

    Δ   Increased number of jobs needing skilled workers which are able to be filled by residents or workers returning to the county

Goal 4:   **The community supports viable downtowns throughout the county with filled store fronts, variety of retail and services businesses, entertainment, and private and public sector offices.**

Strategies:

    A.   Conduct surveys to determine local needs for retail stores and services and for tourists as gifts, souvenir products, and consumables

    B.   Encourage establishment of local businesses available to provide goods and services closer to residents and convenient for tourists that encourage local spending and add to sales tax collections for the county

    C.   Develop/implement a plan for bringing village main streets to life with commerce, etc.

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

    Δ   More attractive, lively main streets in all villages

    Δ   Value of local merchandising is appreciated and patronized as evidenced by thriving businesses and increases in sales tax revenues

Δ A county-wide plan has been developed for revitalizing the villages' main streets

Goal 5: **Efforts are ongoing for continued infrastructure availability, improvements and expansion of highways, utilities, airport, rail, and communications.**

Strategies:

A. Continue to upgrade and expand water and sewer utilities for residences, villages, business, recreation, etc.

B. Continue to maintain/upgrade current highway system including county and township roads and bridges, turn lanes and passing lanes for safety, connectors to transportation arteries and corridors, etc.

C. Facilitate the development of a 20-year infrastructure plan for Vinton County

D. Improve water run-off controls

E. Continue airport improvements and potential for expansion

Indicators for Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ Public reports of infrastructure advancements and amounts and types of financial and other assistance received from federal, state and local governments and the private sector

Δ Progress made for public water systems and sewage treatment in Zaleski and other villages/areas

Δ Infrastructure plan has been developed and in place with involvement and responsibilities identified for townships, villages, county, etc.

Key Theme: Education and Training

Note: The term "college" used in this section is broadly defined to include all post-secondary education including four-year colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, technical and trade schools, union and non-union apprenticeships, the military, and formal certification programs such as A+ Certification (computer technician), CAD (computer assisted design), CAM (computer assisted manufacturing), CNC (computer numerical design), STNA (state tested nursing assistant), etc.

Goal 1: **The educational system in Vinton County provides curriculum, instruction, training and opportunities that enable secondary students and adults to become knowledgeable about high value, high demand careers and the training pathways required to obtain 2 and 4-year degrees, certifications,**

apprenticeships and internships; and to experience a quality life and become productive citizens.

Strategies:

A. Offer more career and technical courses and training for new and emerging careers and jobs at secondary and post secondary levels

B. Provide additional information and promote sessions about the post secondary option and dual credit opportunities for high school students as well as for adults

□ Invite Rio Grande Community College staff to increase work with local citizens to improve student enrollment and performance
□ Partner with area colleges and universities to offer classes locally
□ Encourage cooperation and articulation agreements among all technical schools and colleges interested in offering training courses in Vinton County
□ Encourage participation in post-secondary classes and degree programs for students, non-traditional adult students, and those needing to be retrained
□ Educate through various methods to increase appreciation of and interest in "getting an education" not only for job and career, but also for a better quality of life
□ Explore the climate for change by working to eliminate barriers for students to become educated, e. g. structure of education systems, crossing county and vocational district lines, social aspects, etc.

C. Prepare students with life skills addressed by a K-16 seamless system

□ Explore additional options like extended school year, alternative educational settings, before and after-school programs and summer intervention and enrichment programs for youth
□ Provide resources to insure that all students have an outlined career plan before starting 9th grade that helps them better design their high school curriculum
□ Do a better job of helping adults explore jobs and careers that both meet their interests and are linked to high demand, high value jobs in the next decade and to identify education, training and financing options for these jobs and careers
□ Provide more support and lobby more aggressively for planning broadband access as it is an essential component of educational progress for both children and adults

D. Pursue the concept of a multi-purpose higher education center, with state of the art teaching technologies including distance learning, which could host course offerings from a variety of colleges, technical schools and shorter-term certification training programs

□ Offer continuing education and training for youth and adults, including technical and skill training
□ Maintain the University of Rio Grande – McArthur Center in the county

□ Explore course offerings that could be available from regional schools such as Ohio University and Hocking College as well as other institutions like Columbus State Community College that already have robust distance learning capabilities

□ Evaluate on-line college offerings that could benefit local residents

E. Improve explanations for better public understanding of studies and research on education, databases, i.e. published statistics, demographics, etc., and illustrate how this information is used to develop school and post secondary programs and curricula

□ Determine and utilize more effective ways to help students and adults explore local, state and national data related to careers and jobs

F. Post and advertise local job opportunities requiring advanced training and skills including managerial and professional positions to attract local applicants and former residents and graduates as well as those who may want to relocate to the county

□ Create job and workforce readiness databases

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishments:

Δ Number of professional and highly-skilled jobs available and number filled by local people or returnees to the county as determined by establishing baseline data and developing a tracking system that can be regularly reported

Δ Job pool has number of highly-skilled applicants for positions, including local residents

Δ Increase in number of high school graduates, technical graduates, college graduates

Goal 2: **The school system plays an active role in the county's community development and economic vitality; education is a vital player in business and industry.**

Strategies:

A. Include school board/administration/staff representation in economic development and managed growth planning with reciprocal representation for business, industry and community in education and curriculum planning

□ Advance community-school communication and mutual support through agreements between VCLS and community and economic planning groups
□ Foster cooperation among schools, Jobs and Family Services workforce development, and related business, industry and community people to ensure that exemplary career-technical training is promoted, available and readily accessible for Vinton Countians
□ Expand opportunities for internships for high school and college students (similar to Viking Venture)

B. Promote service learning and community projects by students and school personnel

□ Support the national curriculum interest in "Project Based Learning"

□ Link more of the vocational technical training projects to those of most need in the community, e.g. Care Outreach, community clean up and beautification projects, etc.

C.   Establish and welcome a stronger community voice in schools and education

D.   Make schools vital parts of their communities as community learning centers

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Data sources, data bases, and tracking and reporting methods established to identify the number receiving career-technical certification/licensure for jobs; the number attending post secondary education classes; etc.

Δ   Number of community events/activities taking place in new school buildings

Δ   Per cent increase in school representation in economic development issues

Δ   Per cent increase in Project Based Learning (service learning) and community projects by students and school personnel

Goal 3:   **Residents have access to an increased array of opportunities for continuing education, lifelong learning, and enrichment activities.**

Strategies:

A.   Provide opportunities and increase promotion of programs/offerings for personal development and practical skills training, e.g. caring for facilities, grant writing, computer training, life skills, parenting, travel and foreign languages, cooking, nutrition and weight control, etc.

□ Identify program interests and needs and work through OSU Extension-Vinton County and other local agencies and organizations to organize and/or conduct sessions
□ Consider offering adult programs through Project BOOST
□ Promote lifelong learning by encouraging involvement in activities and developing special interests
□ Promote ABLE program (Adult Basic Literacy Education)

B.   Support, increase local participation, and expand enrichment programs like the Spring Literary Arts Festival, Rural Ohio Appalachia Revisited Day, and other local and regional history programs and organizations, heritage, and culture events

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Increased number of education and training opportunities available locally or nearby with significant enrollment

Δ   Requests for additional training and programs

Δ   Number of area residents participating in programs offered

Key Theme: Health, Safety and Public Services

Goal 1:   **Vinton County has high quality, readily accessible health care available locally and regionally.**

Strategies:

A.   Continue to attract and retain physicians, dentists, nurses and other health care providers; market the county's assets and rural characteristics to physicians and health care personnel who may be attracted by the rural lifestyle and the county's amenities

B.   Develop a plan for complete medical care available locally/regionally, e.g. with OU COM, area hospitals, etc.

C.   Improve access to health care, i.e. transportation, insurance, publicity of availability, etc.

□ Explore possibility with regional medical centers (Adena, Holzer, O'Bleness) about opening facility within Vinton County
□ Survey residents to ascertain where medical services are obtained; whether a satellite facility of a regional hospital/clinic would be used, etc.

D.   Create awareness of urgent care that Vinton Countians might access in surrounding counties

□ Prepare and publicize listing of urgent care services—location, hours, etc.—in contiguous counties
□ Work with Hopewell Health, to try again, on a pilot basis, to offer urgent care locally, including evenings and weekends

E.   Offer classes to the public on health and safety training topics

□ Identify programs which can be offered/capacity for trainings through Emergency Management Agency, Health Department, Extension Office, Red Cross, etc.

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Number of physicians, dentists, and other health professionals established locally

Δ   Increased capability for lab work and minor surgeries to be done locally or close by in contiguous counties

Δ   Availability and use of any local urgent care services

Δ   Number of health and safety programs offered and number participating

Goal 2:   **Vinton County supports and utilizes its public services, e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, health department and emergency management for public well being.**

Strategies:

A.   Advertise and promote on a regular basis the many available public services and indicate how to access them

B.   Continue levy support of public health, safety and law enforcement services

C.   Maintain and improve EMS services; decrease EMS response time to remote areas

D.   Create awareness of the county's emergency plan and citizen responsibility regarding disaster preparedness

        □ Work with EMA director for information and programs for the public about disaster preparedness

E.   Support fire department improvements including acquiring equipment, maintaining well-trained volunteer force, increasing ISO ratings, etc.

F.   Enforce health codes and regulations, e.g. septic systems

G.   Continue to extend county-wide water availability

H.   Determine level and nature of public transportation needs and available services

I.   Expand care and services for the elderly and create awareness of their availability

J.   Explore consolidation of public safety services into one facility

K.   Make public more aware of weather monitoring and warning systems

        □ Encourage/assist with acquiring weather radios, especially for seniors, limited-resource residents, etc.

L.   Work to decrease crime in the county, including that related to drugs

        □ Expand Neighborhood Watch
        □ Explore "anonymous tip line"
        □ Identify how the community can assist law enforcement in doing more and doing it better

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Successful passage of levies by voters for public services

Δ   Fundraisers for public services, such as fire departments, continue to help support needs

Δ   Number of participants in programs offered regarding citizen responsibility in disaster situations; number of public awareness educational media releases regarding disaster preparedness

Δ   Number of services expanded for elderly with increased participation

Δ   Increased number of households served through expanded rural water availability

Δ   Decrease in amount of crime in the county

Goal 3:   **Affordable housing is available in quality and quantity at different price levels and lifespan needs; residents take pride in their private and public properties.**

Strategies:

A.   Continue housing programs through CDBG, CHIP and other federal and state assistance

B.   Improve local opportunities and options for affordable housing

C.   Review subdivision regulations; consider formulating building and housing codes

D.   Clean up existing housing/properties

E.   Work with local Fair Housing and Metropolitan Housing offices

Indicators of Progress Accomplishment:

Δ   Amount of increased and improved housing stock alternatives

Δ   Private and public residential housing and properties are well maintained

Δ   Amount of public dollars acquired and expended in the county to improve housing

Key Theme: Land Use and Managed Growth

Goal 1:   **Vinton County accommodates growth responsibly by integrating new and on-going development in a way that respects the environment, supports community values, and considers long-term effects on water and other resources.**

Strategies:

A. Heighten awareness and stimulate initiative and responsibility among local officials and the public for addressing land use and managing growth

B. Develop a land use plan and implement appropriate regulatory tools such as existing subdivision regulations, building permits, building codes, etc., that encourage sensible growth and development in areas identified for different types of growth desired in the county and appropriate for the land

C. Identify, learn from and perhaps adapt workable models for implementing measures to manage changing land uses in Vinton County that will preserve rural character, small-town flavor, areas of unique land and forestry while determining and encouraging appropriate business and industrial development for jobs and residential housing

D. Establish a Planning or Building Department, based upon county-wide multi-jurisdictional planning including townships and villages

   □ Explore building permits; begin at limited levels of permitting

E. Evaluate existing regulations and proposed regulations to ensure that they help and not hinder economic development

F. Evaluate current Planning Commission for possibly becoming a Regional Planning Commission (still a county entity) with broader representation; emphasize the planning function along with the regulatory ones of a planning commission

G. Anticipate/plan for ex-urban migration into Vinton County

H. Keep abreast of changing land ownership and be active in management strategies of large tracts of forest land; encourage and promote active management of this valuable resource

I. Develop a close working relationship with ODNR officials to keep abreast of changes in the management of state-owned property in Vinton County

J. Develop management plans for floodplains, wildlife, forestry, building, subdivisions, etc.

K. Apply regulations and codes to prevent/remove trash and unsightly properties that decrease land values and create potential safety hazards

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ Completion of Vinton County Land Use Plan which includes an action plan for implementation

Δ Planning or Building Department is established with permits, regulations, etc., in place and enforced

Δ Number of properties declared public health nuisances and the nuisances abated

Δ   Vinton County has input in ODNR decision making on issues impacting the county

Key Theme: Recreation and Tourism

Goal 1:   **A variety of entertainment and recreational opportunities and activities are available for youth and adults of all ages – for visitors and for residents.**

Strategies:

A.   Increase and enhance community recreational opportunities, e.g. better facilities, walking paths, biking trails, rollerblading areas, golf course, putt-putt golf, bowling alley, playgrounds for kids, recreation programs and areas at state parks, schools and other sites for year-round use (billiards, table tennis, etc.)

        □ Explore economic viability of a golf course – either State run at Lake Hope or privately operated in the Lake Hope vicinity
        □ Address recreational ATVs – trails, licensing, safety, etc.

        Other ideas:
        □ Bike path from McArthur to Industrial Park
        □ Ball courts and fields at the Swan School
        □ Corn maze attraction for fall
        □ Teen center similar to the one in McArthur in the 1960s

B.   Offer more family-oriented cultural and entertainment activities such as monthly seasonal concerts in Wyman Park featuring local talent

C.   Host local and regional sports tournaments and activities including Little League; focus on attracting high school level tournaments

D.   Increase number, types and attractiveness of restaurants, e.g. family style restaurants, establishments with ambience that could also accommodate group meetings and small conferences; patronize local eating establishments

E.   Work with ODNR to improve the natural assets of our forests, state parks and wildlife areas; increase their activities and recreational opportunities, e.g. fishing contests, more hunting, improved campgrounds; etc.

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ   Increase in number of opportunities and greater participation in family-oriented activities

Δ   Increase in number of local facilities and more participation in recreation and fitness programs

Δ   Increased activities and attendance at state parks, forest, and wildlife areas

Δ   Lake Hope Lodge is rebuilt; ODNR and others actively market the lodge and park

Goal 2:   Visitors are attracted to Vinton County and the area through marketing and promotional efforts, resulting in increased economic vitality through tourism, enriching experiences for visitors, quality of life amenities for residents, and an enhanced image of the community.

Strategies:

A.   Complete the Vinton County Tourism and Marketing Plan and implement it as a component of Vinton County's strategic plan, *Future Focus 2020*

B.   Offer quality lodging options for tourists and travelers, e.g. B&Bs (Bed and Breakfast), hotel/motels, campgrounds, etc.

C.   Identify and develop services to support tourists, e.g. public restrooms, etc.

☐ Investigate possibility of modular public restrooms (Grand Rapids, OH, Floyd, VA)
☐ Work with local establishments with restrooms to be more customer friendly for their use by the public; help with developing better understanding of business-friendly environment
☐ Consider interactive kiosk for the sidewalk (perhaps on the Courthouse corner)

D.   Identify and develop historic areas, sites, buildings, museums, exhibits and stories, into attractions with things to learn, see, do and purchase

☐ Create a short video about local history that can be played for visitors at the visitors' center or at the library
☐ Identify and promote things to see and do locally for visiting friends and relatives who comprise a significant percentage of Ohio's tourists
☐ Create more activities and attractions that are located in close proximity

E.   Improve hosting for tourists with trained Vinton County ambassadors; conduct regular hospitality and customer service training especially for front line employees

F.   Develop and package several guided and self-guided driving tours and familiarization tours of various parts of the county; include things to see and do in 2 and 4-hour visits; develop thematic trails or loops for these tours

☐ Develop a walking tour of McArthur that points out local history attractions and that tells the history of the time period
☐ Take the county driving tour to the next level by creating an audio tour
☐ Consider niche tours such as cemeteries and churches for genealogists; school history tours and industrial history tours
☐ Offer familiarization tours (fam tours) for local residents to get better acquainted with the county and to gain an appreciation for tourist needs; this

also serves as a heritage activity for local folks, contributing to community pride

G. Identify structures, areas, sites, etc., that need attention for preservation, restoration, salvaging, interpretation, and/or signage

H. Increase merchandising including local production of souvenir and gift items from wood, art work, craft products, branded items, coloring and activity books and other items for children, post cards, etc.

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishment:

Δ Increased number of visitors to the county's sites and events

Δ Increased revenue that can be attributed to tourists and travelers

Δ Increased number of sites, events, activities, "things to see and do"

Δ Increased appreciation by residents of the community's history, culture, sites and events

Technology

Goal 1: **Vinton County has state-of-the-art technology infrastructure, enabling access to the latest advancements and use of information technology by government, businesses and residents while not detracting from the aesthetics or impacting public health. Implementation shall comply with applicable federal, state and local regulations and policies.**

Strategies:

A. Advance IT development/implementation in Vinton County through a planned timeline

B. Work toward high-speed internet services to be county-wide and available to all residents

C. Partner with area education institutions, economic development organizations, government, businesses, and others to utilize high technology internet speed to facilitate increased potential for attracting high technology jobs to the county

D. Expand whole-county communication and cell phone systems with fewer dead zones

E. Publicize nixle.com service that is available to notify residents of county emergency warnings and notifications

F. Assist businesses, nonprofits, government, etc., with website development

G. Explore/promote utilization of informational technology, e.g. educational opportunities through on-line instruction; expanded tourism through internet marketing; internet

product sales by local entrepreneurs; emergency response time reduced; communication with health care providers enhanced

H.   Promote and continue to improve Reverse 9-1-1 service and weather alert service

I.   Explore the R-U-OK program for seniors, typically operated by the Sheriff's department

Indicators of Progress/Accomplishments:

Δ   Number of high tech jobs attracted to the county and/or established/improved in local businesses, agencies, government, etc.

Δ   Broadband service a reality and well implemented throughout Vinton County and connected throughout the region

Δ   Partnerships established and functional with area colleges and universities, economic development offices, business and industry, and public officials working together for IT advancements, utilization and application in the county and connecting with the region

Δ   Vinton County Broadband Advisory Council continues to monitor/stimulate progress of IT developments and advancements in Vinton County

Future Focus 2020 Steering Committee:

Caleb Appleman, Vinton County Marketing Director
Brandi Betts, Vinton County National Bank
David M. Boothe, OSU Extension (retired); Sojourners Care, Inc.
Teri Fetherolf, Vinton County Community Development Department Director
Bill Garrett, Garret-Cardaras Funeral Home
Paula Henderson, WesBanco
Carol Porter, Gallia-Vinton ESC Board
Deanna Tribe, Vinton County Historical Society; OSU Extension (Retired)
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