



Five-Year Economic Development Priorities Plan

Jackson County, Ohio

A Great Place to Live; A Great Place to Work; A Great Place to Play



January 2005

Jackson County, Ohio

Five-Year Economic Development Priorities Plan

Initiated by Jackson County Economic Development Board

Facilitated by Ohio State University Extension Center at
Piketon, Community Development

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Overview and Explanation of Process

Introduction

The Jackson County Economic Development Board (JCEDB) initiated a planning process in mid 2004 to develop a five-year Economic Development Priorities Plan for the county. This planning effort was organized and directed by the JCEDB Director, Douglas H. Fry, along with Assistant Director Jennifer Jacobs who secured funding for it from the Governor's Office of Appalachia (GOA). The members of the Jackson County Economic Development Board (approximately forty) had been designated as the planning group (see Appendix for list). Requests for proposals (RFP) for facilitating the process were sought and the Ohio State University Extension Center at Piketon, Community Development was contracted for the project. Deanna Tribe, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist Community Development, served as lead facilitator. Office Associate Lois Campbell compiled data and formatted the final report. David Samples, Associate Professor and Ohio State University Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator in Jackson County, served as the local coordinator for the Retail Market Analysis (RMA) Program conducted by Jill Clark (Program Manager) and Dr. Greg Davis; Tribe served in a liaison role.

A previous planning process had occurred in 1996, facilitated by the Institute For Local Government Administration and Rural Development (Ohio University, Athens), resulting in the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan. This extensive document contained useful and significant background data, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps and situational information upon which action plans could then be developed by a variety of governmental entities, agencies and organizations. It is unknown whether any follow-up action planning/working documents were prepared and implemented. A copy of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan is located in the Jackson County Economic Development Board Office.

Objective

The main objective of this planning process was to create an economic development priorities plan that serves as a working guideline/framework for progressive action. The five-year Jackson County Economic Development Priorities Plan (JCEDPP) takes into account and builds upon the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan, assesses the accomplishments, changes and trends since that plan; considers regional and local data; and learns from other planning processes and assessments. This includes the identification of key themes around which to organize the action planning framework; establishment of goals to be achieved for each key theme; development of action strategies that may be implemented to work toward each goal; and identification of indicators that signify standards of progress/accomplishment. A tandem process and also component of the JCEDPP (with a separate report) is the Retail Market Analysis conducted by the Ohio State University Extension Retail Market Analysis Program in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics on the Columbus campus.

The Process Methodology

Based upon the requirements in the RFP and her experiences with planning facilitation, Tribe initially designed a process that incorporated techniques from North Central Region Extension's Take Charge Program (a detailed and structured economic development community process utilized frequently throughout Ohio in the 1990s) and the more recent Take Charge II Program that utilizes a streamlined strategic planning model called Vision to Action. By its very name, Vision to Action's premise is the identification of a common vision upon which the rest of the action planning is based. It is an efficient and inclusively-designed process which helps an organization, initiative or community identify its vision for itself and the context of its operation; specify or clarify its mission and purpose; find or refine its niche; and focus on strategies and action projects to reach that vision. The process encourages a holistic approach rather than fragmentation, in other words, considers the big picture.

The process is based upon the following:

Learning from the past – Where have we been? What have we accomplished? Why do we exist? 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?

Examining the present – Where are we now? What are our needs? What are the threats—real or perceived barriers or hurdles? 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 needed 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 that will help us know when we have reached success, i. e. our goals and vision?

Jackson County does not yet have a formally identified common vision statement used by public sector entities. Visioning was incorporated into this planning process and with the community RMA sessions.

Modifications to the planning sessions with the JCEDB included “homework” in the form of worksheets to elicit additional input and perspective from the planning group based upon the limited time set aside for this project. An ad hoc steering committee of six JCEDB members (see Appendix) agreed to meet with the facilitator and Economic Development Board Office leadership to discuss, analyze and develop composites of the information generated at one meeting for effectiveness and efficiency at the next session. Their efforts and extra time spent on this project are greatly appreciated. Additional analysis and formatting sessions were held with the JCEDB director, assistant director and facilitator.

The three planning sessions were incorporated into the bi-monthly hour-long regular JCEDB meetings. This resulted in using most of the allotted project time with the JCEDB in acquiring information for later discussion and analysis by the steering committee rather than discussions by the whole group which is preferred with this process as it generally builds momentum and interest in the final plan. More than half of the JCEDB members were present at one or more of the three meetings. Additional opportunities were given for all forty plus board members to provide input on two different occasions in written format via the aforementioned worksheets. Much information was contributed which formed the basis for the development of the JCEDPP. Finally, there was representation, insight and support from other economic development-related agencies and governments. These included T. J. Justice, Director of the Governor’s Office of Appalachia; Marjean Kennedy and Kara Willis of the Ohio Department of Development Region 7 Office; and Jeff Spencer, John Hemmings and Michelle Throckmorton of the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission.

Planning literature points out that involvement in the process itself contributes to “buy in” and hence commitment to implementing the plan. It also allows for discovering of diverse opinions even in areas and with groups that are perceived to be like-minded. Discussing, planning and analyzing together also contribute to unification internally, in this case, within the county, so that a collective competitive edge can be agreed upon for regional, state and nation opportunities.

Usefulness of Planning Process and the Plan

A facilitated process such as this and especially one based upon the vision to action model typically results in as much learning and benefit from participating in the process as is gained from having a completed planning document. A basic economic development priorities plan has been created and beginning steps have been taken toward identifying a common vision for Jackson County. One planning committee member suggested that “each community should identify its own vision” upon which to base decision-making and action planning. The JCEDB could take the lead in making this happen. Another valuable use of the JCEDPP is to substantiate grant proposals. It would also be important to share this plan with regional and state economic development groups and funders as well as sharing it within Jackson County. It can be the basis for the development of an economic development “white paper” and/or marketing plan. The Retail Market Analysis Reports provide specific information for additional analysis and planning.

Although initiated and directed by the Jackson County Economic Development Board, this Economic Development Priorities Plan can also be of value and frequently utilized by public officials, community leaders and other agency and organization staffs because economic development touches many aspects of public, private and civic sectors. Economic development strategies often require multiple players with various roles in order to be implemented which has a side benefit of encouraging working together for common goals. The JCEDB staff has identified strategies for which they are well suited for leadership and/or implementation, often in collaboration with other partners. These are marked with an asterisk (*) in the “Working Guideline for Progressive Action.” The “Action Decision Tree” in the Appendix is a useful tool for helping an agency, organization or other entity think through their potential involvement and roles with various goals and strategies. The “Action Planning Worksheet” in the Appendix provides a format for thinking through and dividing tasks for strategy implementation.

Report Layout

The Jackson County Five-Year Economic Development Priorities Plan document is comprised of five sections as delineated in the Table of Contents. It is designed to be a working document that expects frequent use and not to become a dust-collector.

The first section describes the planning process; the next section provides statistical data and summaries from selected planning and assessments; the third section focuses on Jackson County background data and assessment information. The Snapshot in this section can be used as a “stand alone” piece for general distribution. The fourth section is the plan presented as a working guideline or framework for action, organized by key themes with goals, strategies and indicators. The last section is an appendix that includes additional information and GIS maps. The Retail Market Analysis Report is a companion but separate report. Because of the volume of reference materials and data collected through the planning sessions these are noted as being on file in the JCEDB office rather than included in the appendix.

A single-page tri-fold summary brochure highlighting the JCEDPP’s key themes and goals was developed for more general distribution; it also serves as an executive summary.

Facilitator's Summary

The Jackson County Economic Development Board and Staff have demonstrated a commitment to economic development planning for the county by undertaking this process resulting in a strategic planning and action framework and a detailed retail market analysis. Four consecutive board meetings were devoted to planning along with members completing worksheets as homework to provide ideas and perspectives and additional time and effort spent by the steering committee. An initial draft of a vision for Jackson County came out of this planning process and provided a context upon which to identify key themes, goals and strategies. Some can be implemented through the JCEDB and other related economic development groups and political subdivisions, but many will require collaboration and cooperation among agencies, organizations, citizen groups, communities and government as well as with the private sector of business and industry, all of which comprise the larger community of Jackson County.

The following suggestions are presented by the facilitator from OSU South Centers, Community Development, to build upon the foundation framework and guideline established in the planning sessions:

- The Jackson County Economic Development Priorities Plan be presented to and shared with other agencies, organizations and political entities throughout the county; in other words, present to the community with a public, formal presentation and in a variety of settings thereafter with targeted groups. Enlist their involvement for implementation as best suits their interests and functions.
- Make publications like the Jackson County Snapshot and the JCEDPP brochure readily available for public distribution.
- See that regional and state economic development organizations and legislative representatives are aware of the JCEDPP and receive copies of materials.
- The JCEDB and Staff adopt the JCEDPP as a basis for annual plans of work and year-end reports for working smarter and not harder; this does not mean implementing the whole plan but those portions for which the JCEDB is best suited. Include some aspect of the JCEDPP in each Board meeting agenda.
- Communities (and agencies, organizations, etc.) utilize the vision to action model (or some other simplified strategic visioning process) for program initiatives, decision-making, etc., emphasizing actions based on a common vision rather than totally needs-driven or no planning at all.
- Facilitate communications that foster working together for the common good, especially between and among communities, government, agencies, business and industry, organizations, and those focusing on economic development for the county and the region.
- Determine a schedule and process to monitor the implementation of the JCEDPP, measure progress and accomplishments, and make revisions to the plan necessary for addressing changing conditions facing the county's economic development (e. g. an annual 2 – 3 hour meeting devoted to this task).

Respectfully Submitted,

Deanna L. Tribe, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist
OSU Extension Center at Piketon, OSU South Centers

Jackson County Economic Development Board Director's Recommendations

The Jackson County Economic Development Board (JCEDB) is a not-for-profit organization focused on economic and community development programs that create and retain jobs. Our board members represent a cross-section of the community working together to encourage economic growth and stability in the county. The majority of our efforts focus on responsibly assisting local start-up and expanding businesses, providing business growth incentives, procuring state and federal development grant funds on behalf of Jackson County and its local communities, and promoting Jackson County to the outside world of potential investors.

This Five Year Economic Development Priorities Plan, published in 2005, has been developed by the Board to serve as an economic development guide to the community at large. The planning document is a valuable tool that is not only for the use of JCEDB members, partners and customers. We encourage any organization that aims to enhance the county's economic climate to refer to the plan. These economic development priorities as highlighted in the document do not preclude new and innovative ideas that surface after publication. To the contrary, this plan is intended to be used as a catalyst for additional growth opportunities to be discussed in the future. As well, we encourage local entrepreneurs to maintain an awareness of and leverage these priorities in order to stimulate job growth while moving forward with their business plans. Attached to this plan are Retail Market Analysis reports conducted by Ohio State University with assistance from JCEDB staff. These separate reports are intended to help local entrepreneurs identify key business opportunities in retail. Our goal is to increase the number of times that each dollar circulates locally before it is spent outside the county.

Simply stated, this document is a summary of priorities developed by a volunteer board of community and business leaders who are committed to raising the standard of living in Jackson County, Ohio in a sustainable fashion. Some of the concepts discussed in this report can be approached by JCEDB from a position of leadership and will be implemented by the Board and its staff. These are identified by an asterisk (*) in the "Working Guideline and Framework for Progressive Action" section of the plan. Other aspects of the document represent a desire for the Board to collaborate with partner organizations and support their efforts in the community. There are also many ideas in this strategic plan that can only become reality as a result of Jackson County people working together in a spirit of teamwork and collaboration.

Jackson County is a near magical place to live, work and play! We are fortunate to be at this unique intersection of nature, community and commerce. I personally challenge all of us to consider the synergies that can result from *collaboration*, regionalism and strategic visioning (all of which require more individual investment than mere *cooperation*). By working together and understanding fully the needs of our neighbors and our partner organizations, we can position Jackson County, Ohio strategically for future years.

Those who have contributed to this planning process are listed in the Appendix of this document and should be commended for their community spirit. Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Douglas H. Fry, Director
Jackson County Economic Development Board

Trends, Changes and Challenges—the Bigger Picture

The following data and trends are taken from the Retail Market Analysis Report for the City of Jackson, City of Wellston, Village of Coalton and Village of Oak Hill, (The Ohio State University, AEDE), December 2004, pp. 6-19. The RMA Report is a companion report to this Jackson County Five Year Economic Development Priorities Plan.

A full profile (demographics, business, agriculture) for each county in Ohio with external links to other data sources such as the US Census Bureau, Children's Defense Fund, Ohio Department of Development, etc., can be accessed through the website of Ohio State University Extension's Data Center at <http://www.osuedc.org/profiles/>.

Demographic and Economic Data and Trends – Highlights

- Between 1990 and 2000, Jackson County grew at a rate of 8%, almost twice that of the state of Ohio (4.7% population growth). Jackson City, Wellston, Oak Hill and Coalton either lost population or had very modest population growth. Population is concentrated in the county's urban areas, but the population growth between 1990 and 2000 is occurring in the less densely populated areas of the county.
- In 2000, Jackson City, Wellston, Oak Hill and Coalton made up 44.4% of the total Jackson County population of 32,641. Jackson City had the highest population with 6,184 followed closely behind by the city of Wellston with 6,078. The Village of Oak Hill was next with 1,685 and the Village of Coalton had a population of 545.
- The state per capita income for 2000 was \$21,003 while Jackson County's per capita income was \$18,628.
- The median household income across the state of Ohio (at \$40,956) was greater in 2000 than in Jackson County or Jackson City, Wellston, Oak Hill or Coalton. However, the median household income in the state only increased 6% whereas the aforementioned municipalities and Jackson County overall experienced increases ranging from 12.5% to 25%.
- Population and income are the two major factors that drive retail demand.
- As of 2000, Jackson City had the highest rate of educational attainment in the region with 77.2% of its residents attaining a high school diploma. Oak Hill had the highest percent of residents, 19.7%, with an associate's degree or higher. Both of these figures are less than the state of Ohio's average of 83% of Ohio residents that have their high school diploma or equivalent and 27% of Ohioans with at least an associate's degree.
- Coalton, Jackson, Oak Hill, Wellston, the county and the state of Ohio overall have a similar proportion of their residents under the age of 18.

- Between 1990 and 2000, Ohio overall (2.4%) and Wellston (0.7%) experienced increases in their over-65 age residents while Jackson City (-0.6%), Oak Hill (-0.7%), Coalton (-3.5%) and Jackson County overall (-0.4%) experienced decreases.
- In 2000, Jackson County (2.55) has a larger average household size than the state of Ohio average of 2.49.
- Increases in the number of homes were much greater than the population increase in population in Coalton, Wellston, Jackson City, across Jackson County and across Ohio. Oak Hill experienced a reduction in housing stock.
- In regard to the 2000 housing stock, Jackson County overall had a higher percent of owner-occupied housing (73.9%) than the state average of 69.1%.
- The total number of employees in Jackson County decreased slightly by 1.4%, or from 10,007 to 9,931 employees, between 1998 and 2001. Numbers of employees were up 2.7% during the same period across the state of Ohio.
- In 2001, manufacturing employed the most Jackson County residents. Across Ohio, government employs the most people of any sectors, at 13.8%. Manufacturing accounts for 10.2% of Ohio employment.
- Manufacturing, along with agriculture, forestry and mining, transportation and utilities, and wholesale trade experienced a decrease in employment between 1998 and 2001. All other industries experienced an increase, with the greatest increase in professional services at 9.9%.
- In 2000, Jackson County had 4,040 workers, or 40.7%, of the local available workforce commuting out of the county. From 1990 to 2000, there was an increase in workers commuting out of Jackson County by 70.1% or 1,665 workers.
- During that same decade, there was an increase of 90.2% of workers coming into the county to work—1,584 to 3,013 workers, mostly from Vinton County.
- Between 1997 and 2001, unemployment trends in Jackson County generally followed the state trends although the unemployment rate in Jackson County has been consistently higher.
- Active businesses decreased slightly in Jackson County from 683 to 598 or a 6.3% decrease. The net of business starts minus business terminations was -40.
- The taxable value of all property increased 38.6% in Jackson County between 1998 and 2001. The taxable value of commercial property increased 63% during that same time.
- Jackson County ranked 54th out of the 88 Ohio counties for residential building permits and 57th in the value of the permits.

■ The number of retail establishments both in Jackson County and across the state of Ohio decreased slightly between 1998 and 2002.

■ The number of retail industry employees and the amount of annual payroll between 1998 and 2002 both increased in Jackson County although the amount of employees increased at a faster rate (13.4%) than the payroll (3.2%).

Changes and Trends Identified by Jackson County Planning Group

The following composite is based upon insight and information shared by JCEDB participants regarding their perceptions of changes and trends in Jackson County. The complete list is on file in the JCEDB Office.

Changes:

- Teenage pregnancy is overwhelming
- Educational changes
- Increased standard of living
- Increased housing options
- Education facilities are all new
- Medical changes
- Strong road network
- Population growth
- Highway improvements
- Higher median incomes
- Must have more shopping/retail business
- Development at south side of Jackson due to SR 32 and USR 35
- Reduced farms; more part-time farmers
- Improve county scene with zoning laws and enforcement
- Decrease 9th grade or less education attainment; more diplomas

Trends:

- Population growth is great; rural population growth
- More traffic
- Single family head of households at 24%
- Net business growth by 12%
- Average weekly earnings increase 24% over 5 years
- Improvements in education
- County in-fighting; lack of cooperation
- Median age increase
- Unemployment remained at 8%
- People moving back to the area and building homes

Learning From Others-- Plans and Assessments

The following citations are included to present and leverage relevant information and resources available for the development/implementation of the JCEDPP as gleaned from planning sessions, assessments, surveys and studies recently conducted by selected agencies and organizations. Copies are on file at the JCEDB Office.

Ohio Rural Development Partnership 2003 Summit Summary

The Ohio Rural Development Partnership held a rural summit in December of 2003, attended by elected officials, agency representatives, community leaders, economic development professionals, and others. Through a facilitated group process, 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 (obtained courtesy of Jeff Spencer and John Hemmings, OVRDC). These are being shared here to provide an awareness of the breadth and scope of these issues throughout Ohio many of which were also identified as concerns for Jackson County through the JCEDPP process. More are included from the Community and Economic Development section than Agriculture and Health.

Agriculture:

- Urban Development, Land Use – prime agricultural land continues to disappear; the rural-urban transition zone is less defined and more contentious
- Drainage – non agricultural neighbors, environmental issues and public oversight/control has complicated drainage solutions and outdated some of the drainage laws
- 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 farmers 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 areas 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 is 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 that must be undertaken for continued economic and community development. Jackson is one of the twelve member counties comprising the district. Each county had representation on each of the task forces that developed this strategic plan representing a proposed map of the future, regional in scope and grassroots in spirit.

The task forces/topics are: Community Services; Economic Development; Education and Technology; Environmental/Natural Resources; and Infrastructure/Transportation. 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

Retail Market Analysis Report for the Cities of Jackson and Wellston and the Villages of Coalton and Oak Hill

This study-analysis was produced by The Ohio State University Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics Department and The Ohio State University Extension Service under the direction of Jill Clark, Program Manager. The approximately 60-page report with maps is on file in the JCEDB Office.

The retail market analysis is a tool for identifying retail market trends within a local community. While the analysis focuses specifically on the performance of local retail markets, in this case, on several levels of geography—the cities of Jackson and Wellston, the Village of Oak Hill and Coalton area--information on the broader demographic and economic trends within the region is critical to understanding current and future changes in these retail markets.

Of primary importance is an understanding of the pattern of retail spending within the local community relative to spending in neighboring areas. Retail sales leakages could reflect that the local demand for a particular product is not being met within the local community whereas retail sales surpluses may indicate that the local community serves a regional market that pulls consumers in from outside the local area. Estimation of retail surpluses and leakages by specific retail sectors provides a means to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of an area's retail markets and thereby form economic development strategies for local communities.

A retail market analysis is not a detailed plan of action, but rather provides facts and analysis for input into the community's decision-making process about future economic development. Specialized terms including market area, potential sales and retail sales surplus and leakage are used in the analysis and report.

City of Wellston Retail and Service Based Market Study

The Voinovich Center for Leadership and Public Affairs recently completed this marketing study, retail and service-based, for use by the City of Wellston in its efforts to fill vacant buildings in the downtown area, particularly on Ohio Avenue. The 60-page report (also available at the JCEDB Office) contains baseline information and suggestions of retail and service gaps to consider targeting. Also included is input from an ad hoc community planning committee and a community survey. The appendix of the report contains a valuable 15-page Technical Assistance and Funding Resource Guide for decision-makers, economic development practitioners and others.

Jackson County Community Assessment Summary

Jackson 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 Jackson County Snapshot (on the following seven pages) 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 findings from the resident survey for local information and insight to identify action strategies for approaching the challenges and opportunities highlighted through the complete community assessment.

The following are statements that at least 60% of the respondents to the resident survey most strongly agreed with:

- The natural resources—lakes, rivers, forests, creeks, farm lands—of their community are vital to its well being.
- Their community is a good place to raise a family.
- Tourism should be promoted in the community.
- Community members have opportunities to reduce, reuse and recycle solid wastes.
- Their family has access to adequate health care services.

The top three responses to the best things that your community offers families were: (1) health care/facilities and public safety/services; (2) small town atmosphere; (3) and schools and new buildings.

Identified as the most important challenge facing families was the need for good-paying jobs available locally to support a family, provide for retirement and support economic growth.

Identified as the top two challenges facing their community were: (1) better paying jobs to keep people in the area, the economy and taxes and a skilled workforce and (2) local government, leadership and trust in elected officials.

These are very similar responses to the composite of the sixteen counties participating in the community assessment in southern Ohio. Copies of the Jackson County Community Assessment can be obtained from the OSU Jackson County Extension Office; a copy is also on file in the JCEDB Office.



Jackson County A Snapshot

Its People, Its Land, Its Economy and Its Future

Jackson County, located in Southern Ohio, has always been known for apples, iron, coal and clay. While those resources and the industries surrounding them have played a large role in shaping Jackson County and its residents, they are no longer what keeps the community going.



Its people, its land and its businesses are the strength of the county. Of course, there are many improvements that could be made, as could be in every county, but the county has experienced growth in business and population in the last 10 years.

This snapshot of Jackson County provides a glimpse of:

ITS PEOPLE
ITS NATURAL RESOURCES, and
ITS ECONOMY.

Analysis of the information in the three sections is given in **ITS FUTURE.**

ITS PEOPLE

While Jackson County is predominantly white, its minority population has been increasing. The population grew older between 1990 and 2000 and the number of children increased. The schools have been improving and every district will have new buildings by 2004.

Population

■ Jackson County experienced significant growth from 1990 to 2000. According to U.S. Census data, Jackson County saw an 8 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000, while in that time the state only saw an increase of 4.7 percent.

■ Jackson County had a population of 32,641 in 2000. Of that, 15,750 (48.3 percent) were male and 16,891 (51.7 percent) were female. There was an increase of 2,411 residents since the 1990 Census.

■ The minority population in Jackson County increased from 1.1 percent in 1990 to 2.1 percent in 2000. The county's population is 97.9 percent white, 0.6 percent African American, 0.6 Hispanic, 0.3 percent Native American, 0.2 percent Asian, and 0.2 percent other.

- In that same time period, single family head-of-households increased from 18.8 percent to 23.4 percent.
- The greatest population increases in Jackson County were in Bloomfield Township (21.1 percent), Franklin Township (19.7 percent) and Scioto Township (19.1 percent).
- Population increases may be attributed to a net increase in employment (6.6 percent) from 1995 to 2000. There was also a net growth in business starts in seven of the last 10 years, along with highway improvements, which provide increased mobility and commuting options.
- According to U.S. Census data, the number of children 18 and under in Jackson County increased by 2.1 percent from 1990 to 2000, with the total child population at 8,481.
- Although there was an increase in children (2.1 percent), the county's overall population is growing older. The median age of Jackson County residents in 2000 was 36.3 years, up from 33.9 years in 1990.
- There are 4,439 individuals (13.6 percent) 65 years or older in Jackson County.
- The teen birth rate in Jackson County, at 18.2 percent in 2001, is still well above the state average of 4.7 percent.

Education

- Jackson County is served by three K-12 public school systems. The county has a private Catholic school for grades K-8. The county also has three parochial schools that serve elementary-aged pupils and one parochial school that serves K-12.
- All three of the county's public school districts - Jackson, Oak Hill and Wellston - have been positively supported by the voting public that allowed state funding to be granted for new school facilities. Oak Hill and Wellston have completed construction with use beginning in 2003 and 2002 respectively. Jackson has completed work on the High School and two elementary schools, with upgrades for the middle school and one grade school yet to complete.

- Total enrollment in the Jackson County's public schools is 5,670. Of those, 2,204 (39 percent) qualify for reduced price/free lunch.
- Vocational Education for Jackson County is provided at Buckeye Hills Career Center, located in Rio Grande, Ohio (Gallia County).
- Educational services are provided to the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled through the Jackson County Board of Mental Retardation at Hope Haven School, which provides elementary and secondary level classes.
- Pre-school programs are provided by school districts and non-profit agencies. The YMCA, William and Mary Academy and Christian Life Academy offer additional programs. There are seven ODJFS-licensed child care centers in Jackson County that can provide care for up to 413 children of various ages and stages of development.
- There are no 4-year colleges in Jackson County, however, there are several post-secondary institutions in and around the county including Southeast Business College, The University of Rio Grande, Shawnee State University and Ohio University (Athens and Chillicothe).
- Jackson City Schools achieved a Continuous Improvement designation in 2003-04, based on standardized performance indicators, meeting 10 of the 18 state-mandated standards.
- Oak Hill Union Local Schools achieved a Continuous Improvement designation in 2003-04, meeting 10 of the 18 standards.
- Wellston City Schools advanced to a Continuous Improvement designation in 2003-04, meeting 8 of 18 standards.
- Graduation rates for the districts are 93.75% for Jackson, 87.6% for Oak Hill and 78.5% for Wellston.

Health

- Jackson County is home to a hospital, Holzer Health Center of Jackson, and two primary care facilities. Holzer Clinic, houses an Emergent Care facility, a rehab center and more than 40 physicians in 12 different fields of

medicine. Adena Health Systems Clinic houses Urgent Care and Occupational Health services with 25 physicians and 6 specialty practices.. There are also several other smaller clinics/doctor's offices within the county.

- There are nine optometrists in Jackson County, along with seven dentists.

- Although the number of health-care options has greatly increased in the past couple of years, Jackson County is still designated a Health Professional Shortage Area and a Dental Professional Shortage Area.

- The Jackson County Health Department offers a variety of services to residents including, Well-Child clinics, immunizations, nutrition counseling, .

- Mental Health and counseling services are available at three different locations in Jackson County.

- Jackson County has 911 to answer emergency calls and improve response time to those calls. The county also has emergency medical service, Southeast Ohio Emergency Medical Service, based in Jackson.

Senior Citizens

- There are senior citizen centers in Jackson, Oak Hill and Wellston. Jackson also has a Retired Senior Volunteer Program and nutrition program for senior citizens. Transportation is provided to area senior citizens for medical appointments and such. There is also a senior citizen lunch program offered in nearby Rio Grande (Gallia County), in which Jackson County seniors are able to participate.

- Jackson County senior citizens are also serviced by the Area Agency on Aging, District 7. This organization administers both the PASSPORT program and the Long-term care ombudsman program. PASSPORT offers seniors the opportunity to avoid nursing home care through in-home services. Home health and Homemaker services are also offered to seniors through the Jackson County Jobs and family Services Office.

- There are eight nursing homes and/or assisted living facilities located in Jackson County. In-home care for senior citizens is available through Jackson-Vinton Community Action Agency, Jobs and Family Services, the Jackson County Health Department and the Jackson County Board on Aging.

Civic Involvement

- Jackson County's faith community consists of many small churches. These churches provide spiritual support for families and individuals. The county has also seen an increase in new religious sects in the last several years, with the Amish and Mennonite population spreading and growing steadily.

- There are several events that showcase community pride and heritage in Jackson County. Each year Jackson hosts the Apple Festival, Oak Hill the Festival of Flags and Wellston the Coal Festival. In addition, there are the Fourth of July Celebrations in Jackson and Oak Hill, the Jackson County Fair, Southern Hills Arts Festival and there are many township events for residents.

- Civic and Fraternal organizations play a big role in Jackson County. Residents are involved in Rotary Club, Lions Club, Jackson Jaycees, Masons, Eastern Star, VFW, American Legion, Elks, General Federated Women's Clubs, Business and Professional Women's Club, BPOE, Eagles, Moose, Disabled American Veterans and many others.

- Jackson County is home to the Southern Hills Area Arts Council and the Markay Cultural Arts Center. The arts council has been working to renovate the Markay Theater into a gallery and home for the group. It offers exhibits, classes and education on the arts and also has a small meeting room. The council also annually sponsors an art show at Canter's Cave 4-H Camp. The event showcases juried artworks submitted by artists from all across the region.

- Jackson County has two museums that exhibit items related to local history. The Lillian Jones Museum rotates its exhibits

and also houses the Carriage House Genealogy Center. The Welsh-American Heritage Museum in Oak Hill is unique in its collection of Welsh documents, Bibles, books, pictures and other Welsh items.

■ There are three public libraries in Jackson County – one each in Jackson, Oak Hill and Wellston.

■ The youth of Jackson are involved in 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, FFA, many organized sports, and church youth groups.

■ The Retired Senior Volunteer Program keeps Jackson County’s seniors involved in community events.

ITS NATURAL RESOURCES

Jackson County consists of 420.3 square miles of Ohio’s Appalachian foothills. The terrain varies from gently rolling to steeply sloped areas and helps define the land use patterns found in the county.

Soil Resources

■ Fifty-four soil types have been identified in Jackson County and are grouped into six soil associations.

■ A large portion (79 percent) of the soils are characterized as being moderately well to well drained.

■ Seasonal flood potential and slow to very slow permeability of some soils (less than 20 percent) create some land use limitations.

Water Resources

■ Jackson County’s land mass is drained by four major watersheds. Salt Lick Creek is the largest and drains much of the central, west central and northwest; Little Raccoon Creek drains the northeast quarter; Symmes Creek the southeast quarter; and the southwestern portion of the county is drained by the Little Scioto River.

■ There are approximately 750 acres of lakes with Lake Jackson (243 acres), Hammertown Lake (186 acres), and Jisco Lake (55 acres) being the three largest.

■ Groundwater sources vary in yield and quality and are found in bedrock and buried river aquifers. Wells in nearly 90 percent of the county will yield from two to three gallons per minute from depths of nearly 200 feet.

■ Average annual precipitation is 40.4 inches. Of this amount, only 16 percent will recharge ground-water supplies and 26 percent becomes runoff.

■ Most of our streams have segments that are impacted or affected by point or non-point source pollutants.

Woodland Resources

■ Roughly 62 percent (166,000 acres) of the county is considered woodlands.

■ The greatest percentage (59 percent) of woodlands is owned by individuals.

Twenty-four percent is owned by forest industries, 10 percent by corporate interests, and 6 percent by governmental entities.

■ Jackson County lies within the central hardwood region with oak-hickory being the predominant forest type. Corporate reforestation has been primarily with softwoods.

Recreational Resources

■ Publicly owned recreational resources include one state forest (Richland Furnace), two state parks (Lake Alma and Jackson Lake), two state memorials (Buckeye Furnace and Leo Petroglyph), one nature preserve (Lake Katherine), one wildlife area (Cooper Hollow), and about 1,500 acres of Wayne National Forest.

■ Two golf courses (Franklin Valley and Fairgreens), one water park (Splash Down), one amusement park (Noah’s Ark Animal Farm), and developed camps like Canter’s Cave 4-H Camp and Camp Bountiful provide valuable privately owned recreational resources for Jackson County and the surrounding area.

■ Open green spaces and “urban” forests provide a desirable, relaxing setting within our cities and villages and have earned “Tree City USA” designations for Jackson and Wellston.

ITS ECONOMY

The economy of Jackson County has gone through several cycles of “boom to bust” since the first white settlers arrived. From working the salt licks to the charcoal, iron, coal and clay mining industries, each have been characterized by profitable periods with a stable and reliable work force.

Agriculture

■ Ohio statistics indicate there are 458 farms with an average size of 161 acres for a total of about 73,800 acres. That’s about an 11 percent decline since 1997.

■ Our farm operators are characterized as being mostly part time (more than 70 percent), mostly male (92 percent), and nearly 45 percent are 60 or older.

■ The total number of harvested acres has been relatively stable over the past 25 years with general acreage reductions in corn (-19 percent), wheat (-34 percent), and soybean (-32 percent) being offset by increases in hay (+13 percent) and vegetable (+252 percent) acreage.

■ Jackson County’s agricultural sector generated nearly \$6.4 million in 2002 with about 38 percent coming from crop receipts. Besides specialty crops, cattle and calf receipts contributed the largest share at \$2.825 million.

Business and Industry

■ There were 602 active businesses in 2001, which reflects a net growth of 12. Of the businesses, manufacturing contributed the greatest share of the employment pool at 34.2 percent followed by wholesale and retail trade at 23 percent, services at 14.8 percent and government at 12.7 percent.

■ Business and industry generated \$504.6 million in added value to the county in 1998. the manufacturing sector led all others at 30 percent, wholesale and retail trade at 22 percent, service sector at 17 percent and government added 10 percent.

■ The estimated civilian work force is 14,500. In 2002, all but 1,000 were

employed for an unemployment rate of 8.5 percent keeping the county at 1.5 percent above the state and national levels.

■ Average weekly earnings have increased nearly 24 percent in the past five years. Manufacturing jobs are paying at the highest rate and have increased at the greatest rate compared to the other sectors.

Infrastructure

■ Roughly 90 percent of the county’s population is serviced by public water supplies derived from the cities of Jackson and Wellston or one of four adjoining county rural water systems. The remainder rely on private wells or other sources.

■ Approximately half of our county’s households are connected to public sewer systems. Septic tanks, or other approved private systems, are used by all but a small percentage of the remaining 50 percent.

■ Even with the generally hilly terrain, transportation through, and access to, Jackson County is eased by way of one four-lane U.S. highway (35) and ten state routes including the four-lane route 32/124. in all there are 168.54 U.S. and State highway miles in the county.

■ As a result of the extensive highway system, a 2000 study indicated that 2,493 persons commuted to work sites inside Jackson County while 2,875 commuted to work locations outside of the county for a net out migration for employment.

■ There is one airport and one rail line located in the county. James A. Rhodes Airport, named for native son and Ohio governor, has a 5,200 feet runway, with plans to extend to 6,200 feet in the near future. It accommodates small private, to turbo-prop and jet-type corporate aircraft. The rail line is owned by the city of Jackson and leased to a shortline operator. The lines provide rail access to businesses in Jackson, Lawrence and Vinton Counties through a connector in Ross County.

■ Communication sources include two cable television stations (one each in Jackson and Oak Hill), five radio stations, one newspaper published weekly, and one paper published three times a week. Major

television network coverage is received via cable or from broadcast stations in Columbus or West Virginia.

Development

■ Currently there are three industrial sites developed in the county, two near Jackson and one near Wellston. Each is serviced by utilities and are at varying levels of occupancy.

■ Six additional sites have been identified as “favorable” but no development has progressed. Several vacant industrial buildings are scattered throughout the county and are being marketed for potential refitting and occupancy.

■ Through various funding sources, Jackson County has established a GIS office within the County Engineer’s Department. The System provides a very useful mapping service for individual and development planning purposes.

ITS FUTURE

Jackson County is a vibrant community that values its heritage and cultural foundations. Growth in the county’s businesses and population indicate that positive steps have been taken to improve the economic climate in the county. In fact, population projections through 2015 indicate a 9.4 percent growth for Jackson County compared to a 6.5 percent growth for the state. Although there is not a formal plan for the long-term development and growth in the county, the use of grant and loan programs from a variety of agencies and governmental departments have done much to create a very solid infrastructure on which to build for the future.

The population of Jackson County has demonstrated a willingness to support the continued growth and development of the county. Their voting record indicates that they value the opportunity to provide new school buildings for our youth and voted additional taxation for the construction of a modern jail facility. Education and public safety are two key components in the attraction and retention of business and

industry that in-turn support a higher standard of living for the public.

Along with the population growth and improvement in median income, more people have chosen to live in the rural areas of the county. Infrastructure expansion has been instrumental in this development and until land values reach exceedingly high levels, this trend would be expected to continue. As the population migrates into the rural areas, additional pressure will be placed on the agricultural community, more specifically on those who desire to farm for a living. A solid growth and development plan that recognizes and respects the different land use choices needs to be established for the county.

The availability of industrial development sites is important for the long-term growth of the county. Equally important, however, is the retention and expansion of existing businesses, regardless of size. Continual monitoring and responding to the changing needs of the business community is essential for the stability of the entire community. The ability to educate and train a work force that will meet the needs of both the employer and employee must be considered for the success of any development plan. Training and educational opportunities currently exist, but they must remain flexible to respond to changes over time.

Jackson County has been a crossroads primed for development since the first Native American followed wildlife trails to our natural salt licks. Today, we are situated at a crossroads enhanced by a viable transportation system and a readily available work force. Our future depends on how we choose to develop and utilize our resources and each member of our community needs to take ownership of the long-range planning process.

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Summary of Accomplishments Since Previous Plan

Copies of the Executive Summary of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan from 1996 were shared with the JCEDB members at the initial planning session. From a brief review, participants acknowledged that education/school facilities and health care, two topics receiving much attention in the comprehensive plan, had experienced dramatic growth and accomplishment in Jackson County within that relatively short time frame.

All three school districts in Jackson County have undergone major new building construction through the state's school facilities program.

New construction and increased staffing by both Adena and Holzer have greatly increased health care access, services and quality care for local and regional residents.

Another issue dealt with the need for a new jail which has also been built; the need for additional space is now under discussion.

In the learning from the past part of the vision to action process, each planning participant listed accomplishments or things worth bragging about that had happened in the past 5 – 10 years in Jackson County; they also identified community assets. The complete list is on file in the JCEDB Office. The composite list generated by the JCEDPP steering committee follows:

Accomplishments and Points of Pride:

- Tourism, leisure, entertainment (dining, motel)
- Health care and facilities/education/welfare of the community; schools; college; test scores; new jail; emergency police protection
- Economic development/infrastructure/industrial sites/highway improvements like USR 35/incentives
- Motivated and professional agencies; public and private cooperation
- Values, heritage, culture and natural resources
- Stable organizations
- Retail shopping growth

Composite of SWOT Assessment

A SWOT analysis tool and exercise—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—incorporated both learning from the past and assessing the present. The complete listing generated by the JCEDB planning participants is on file in the JCEDB Office. The steering committee compiled and summarized the responses as follows:

Strengths:

- Natural resources assets—geographic location near US markets, land capable of being developed, lakes and parks, industrial property, undeveloped county, wildlife, low cost land, beautiful surroundings, water resources
- Education—modern school facilities, dedicated educators, access to higher education, community involvement in schools, parent volunteers, student pride
- Outdoor recreation activities, hunting, tourism
- Infrastructure—transportation system, Routes 32/35 interchange, 4-lane highways
- Economy—industrial base, diversity and variety, strong independent base, entrepreneurs
- Human resources/values—capable work force, teamwork, community work ethic, low cost labor, small town America, friendly and hardworking people, strong core family values, leadership, community pride, churchgoing, lifestyle choices, sense of community
- Government—public-private cooperation, pro-business, strong community government, progressive government, political history
- Community well being of citizens—quality of life, low crime rate, three health care facilities, YMCA

Weaknesses:

- Infrastructure—water, sewer, electric
- Technology—communications/wireless, fiber optics
- Educational achievement—test scores, quality curricula

- Mentality of workforce—generational welfare, negative attitude of workforce, entitlements
- Skill level of workforce—education, trainable
- Day care—elder-care services are limited
- Lack of retail industry/business
- View shed—cityscape, visuals, absentee landowners
- Transportation infrastructure—roads, airport, rail
- Zoning—land use planning and enforcement of regulatory tools
- Public services and resources—funding, facilities, jail, YMCA upgrade
- Trustworthy local government/leadership
- Brain drain—out-migration of educated workforce; no or limited employment to retain or attract educated workforce

Opportunities:

- Jobs relating to high technology; improving technology; wireless
- Jobs relating to automotive industry
- Effective use of abundant natural resources, e. g. tourism, recreation; showcase these physical assets; keep countryside and downtown areas clean and attractive to live in and for visitors; jobs related to wood products
- Retail development and enhancement; retail e-business; learning from the retail market analysis studies and reports; retail job development
- Development and improvements around infrastructure
- Expansion of existing industrial plants with improved infrastructure
- Improved housing with increasing population
- Industrial park areas as motivation for development
- Receptivity for new ideas, change; learning more about the importance of business to the local economy; enhancing leadership skills

- Concentrating on quality public education now that new facilities are in place
- Begin implementing “regionalism” within the county; Jackson, Wellston, Coalton and Oak Hill find commonalities to model the concept of cooperation and collaboration rather than competition

Threats or Barriers:

- Revenue sources for funding schools, government, and other public services and operations
- Taxes and increased costs for public operations, businesses and for families and individuals
- Appalachia stigma associated with the region
- Scattered, unplanned development; lack of land use plan
- Lack of support from community to grow; status quo outlook
- Fragmentation; personal agendas; limited focus and actions for the “common good”
- Large marketing budgets of neighboring cities
- Transportation arteries to major thoroughfares; traffic flow barriers within towns
- Workforce that is trainable, educated, and up to date with skills required in the new workplaces
- Lack of widespread understanding of what it takes to grow and/or attract business development