

Introduction

The primary objective of this economic development chapter is to give public and private officials and County residents not only a snapshot of current and future economic development initiatives, but also to provide a wide array of recommendations and strategies to ensure that the economic development goals enumerated in this Plan are pursued. Indeed, this may not come easy. To be successful, they will need to be internalized within each of these individual entities as they promote their own unique economic development initiatives. This chapter should be used in conjunction with the existing land use and growth area maps included in the Land Use Chapter. This recommendations and initiatives identified in this chapter should also compliment the objectives highlighted in the newly adopted Napoleon Comprehensive Plan.



Advertising card from the Napoleon Woolen Mill. Circa 1880.

For economic development to occur smoothly, a variety of issues must first be addressed. The *transportation* system should be adequate, safe, and efficient for employee commutes and for delivery of inputs and outputs. The *utility* infrastructure should be of adequate capacity to deliver necessary energy, communications, water, and sanitary sewer service without the need for significant new infrastructure investment. The *business site* should encourage clustering of like businesses to efficiently deliver utility service, while minimizing the effects and maximizing the compatibility of a business activity with its neighbors.

Planning Issues

Economic development necessarily brings with it a host of planning issues. Major development projects involve planning issues of compatibility with adjacent and nearby land uses, site suitability, generation of transportation for employees, suppliers, and customers, and spillover effects. When properly planned, economic development should result in workable *systems*, such as planned industrial parks and employer networks, rather than individual *projects* with no coordination or linkage to a planned whole.

Other economic development planning issues that could arise in the future could be in response to a desire by some economic development and local officials to continue to develop a proactive economic development strategy. This will require additional planning on behalf of all interested county and local officials and should take into consideration the following ideas:

Think regionally to compete globally

Competing in the global market requires the resources of all businesses, academic institutions, and communities within a region. That is today's reality. More and more, certain regions tend to have specialized knowledge and capacity that is of a scale and form that distinguishes them from other areas. Industry no longer cares about political boundaries - except when a barrier to business. What they do care about is competitive advantages. Henry County must cooperate regionally, think regionally to avoid fragmentation of resources and build a strong economic platform for growth. Thinking regional should be the key point of departure for defining economic development needs and goals for Henry

County, especially with the additional traffic and visibility the US 24 “Fort-to-Port” project will have on Henry County.

Collaboration achieves economic advantage

By collaborating, citizen leaders, both public and private, must agree on a long-term development strategy that creates a competitive climate. All concerned parties within the County will need to agree on the investments in regional assets ... education ... research ... physical infrastructure ... and quality of life over time. With such a unified strategy in place, Henry County will become more attractive to do business. Communities that fail to realize this, that fail to come up with a long-term development strategy will either decline, or they will stagnate.

Developing a “product” to sell and market

To effectively promote Henry County regionally and globally, it is necessary that Henry County have all the essential tools to be competitive. While the county, through the assistance of the Community Improvement Corporation of Henry County (CIC), currently utilizes a variety of tools to promote job expansion and retention efforts, it currently is confronted by one major issue- the limited affordability of buildings and land to market. The continued availability of sites and buildings, like the new “spec” building in Napoleon, will be a deciding factor in the successfulness of the county’s economic development initiatives. This issue should be addressed in the near future so that the CIC could add property ownership as a continual tool by which it helps to promote economic development. Local communities should also begin to explore a similar property holding arrangement, like the recent purchase of 80 acres by the Village of Hamler to help stimulate countywide and local economic development initiatives.

Goal and Objectives

Goal: To promote Henry County’s diversity of businesses and industries, while remaining sensitive to the county’s vast agricultural and natural resources by:

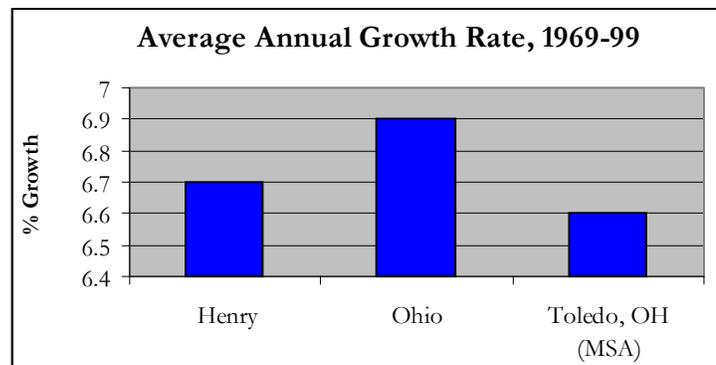
- ✓ Continuing to diversify Henry County’s industrial base through attraction and retention models currently in place;
- ✓ Promoting development in and near locations with suitable infrastructure and thoroughfare;
- ✓ Pursuing the feasibility of utilizing cooperative economic development agreements between political subdivisions as a method to encourage economic development and revenue sharing;
- ✓ Encouraging downtown revitalization and renewal efforts in local municipalities;
- ✓ Encouraging the rehabilitation and reuse of industrial facilities and areas;
- ✓ Promoting Henry County’s agricultural sector through policies and strategies that assist farmers in making their farming operations more profitable;

- ✓ Utilizing the Community Improvement Corporation of Henry County and the Napoleon-Henry County Chamber of Commerce to inform local chambers and business officials on current financial and tax incentives;
- ✓ Studying the feasibility of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to identify and rank potential economic development and infrastructure projects within Henry County for possible outside funding sources, such as EDA;
- ✓ Assisting local political subdivisions in identifying potential economic development projects;
- ✓ Assisting in the promotion and marketing of Henry County as a place to visit.

Trends and Analysis

Economic Climate

Since 1969, Henry County has averaged an annualized economic growth rate of 6.7%, which is .1% higher than the Toledo Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), yet .2% less than state average. Other annualized average economic growth rates for surrounding counties include: Defiance County, 6.9%; Fulton County, 7.3%; Lucas County, 6.2%; Paulding County, 6.5%; Putnam County, 7.3%; Williams County, 6.9%; and, Wood County, 7.9%.



Since 1990, the county's economic climate has witnessed changes in the workforce structure similar to that of the region, the State of Ohio, and the United States, where the trend has been a downsize in the manufacturing sector and an increase in employment opportunities in the retail, service, financial & insurance, and government sectors. However, wages and salaries in all of the county's sectors have increased 15% since 1990.

	1990	1995	2000
Total full-time and part-time employment	\$5,910,736	\$6,362,549	\$6,877,576
Wage and salary employment	\$5,105,816	\$5,456,675	\$5,862,743
Proprietors employment	\$804,920	\$905,874	\$1,014,833
Farm proprietors employment	\$88,646	\$82,408	\$83,300
Nonfarm proprietors employment	\$716,274	\$823,466	\$931,533
Farm employment	\$107,228	\$98,519	\$101,605
Nonfarm employment	\$5,803,508	\$6,264,030	\$6,775,971
Private employment	\$5,032,422	\$5,467,618	\$5,952,851
Ag. services, forestry, fishing, & other	\$42,284	\$52,594	\$61,564
Mining	\$30,270	\$24,939	\$21,305
Construction	\$281,759	\$313,972	\$364,683
Manufacturing	\$1,130,506	\$1,126,628	\$1,103,794
Transportation and public utilities	\$254,614	\$270,444	\$301,731
Wholesale trade	\$280,607	\$298,211	\$325,817
Retail trade	\$1,035,306	\$1,155,251	\$1,208,248
Finance, insurance, and real estate	\$395,096	\$426,729	\$516,076
Services	\$1,581,980	\$1,798,850	\$2,049,633
Government and government enterprises	\$771,086	\$796,412	\$823,120
Federal, civilian	\$96,569	\$90,146	\$86,014
Military	\$51,390	\$41,069	\$36,789
State and local	\$623,127	\$665,197	\$700,317
State	\$165,255	\$178,533	\$173,350
Local	\$457,872	\$486,664	\$526,967

Dollars in Thousands

Since 1990, Henry County noted a slight decrease (-2.6%) in economic activity (rated in dollars) in the manufacturing sector. In 2000, the county's manufacturing sector generated \$1.10 billion in payroll, down from \$1.13 billion in 1990. The manufacturing sector was surpassed as the second largest generator of income in the county by the retail sector, which increased 17.5% and generated \$1.21 billion in 2000. As the county's largest economic sector, the services sector, increased payroll revenues 29.7%, generating \$2.05 billion in 2000, up from \$1.58 billion in 1990.

Other notable and fast growing economic sectors in the county include: wholesale trade (increasing 62% since 1990); financial and insurance (increasing 30.6%); construction (increasing 29%); transportation and public utilities (increasing 18.4%); and the local government sector (increasing 15.1% since 1990). The county's agricultural sector witnessed a 3.1% increase in generated payroll revenues since 1995, yet has not rebounded to levels recorded in 1990. Today, the agricultural sector generates 5.5% less revenue than noted in 1990.

Workforce and Business Concerns

During 2002, 42 surveys were completed by county businesses, including 3,480 employees, of which 290 were management level. The survey showed a net gain of 209 jobs in the county over the last three years and 304,300 square feet added in the last three years. Of those surveyed, 53% of them reported expansion plans in the next three years, with an investment projection of \$15 million. A better-trained workforce and more help from local governments are among the issues area businesses are concerned about.

However, of the problems being faced by employers, a trained workforce was repeated several times. In fact, recruitment problems were reported by 47% of the businesses. Workforce availability also scored somewhat low on the survey, while productivity scored the highest. Gaps in the workforce perceived by businesses include getting people willing to work and filling technical positions. Other concerns expressed in the report included electric costs increasing for 46% of the businesses.

The 2002 business survey reported the strengths and weaknesses of the county as seen by the business leaders. Strengths included friendly and convenient to do business and location, while some businesses reported being happy with the labor pool and training. Better hotels for out-of-town customers were also cited as a strength.

Weaknesses included lack of support by local government for business, lack of hotels and restaurants, infrastructure, not retaining college-educated workers, high electric rates, taxes and an anti-business climate.

The results of the survey showed that the county business community has good news and bad news, some positives and some negatives. A positive was that the county has seen a net increase in the number of jobs created in the past 3 years. According to the survey, 319 jobs were added while 110 jobs were lost for a net of 209. Other positives the survey revealed was 53% of the businesses said they have expansion plans over the next three years, while 81% of businesses responding say they have room for expansion.

However, not all the information received from the surveys was positive. One of the key issues businesses say they face is the relationship they have with local governments. Another issue the survey showed was that businesses feel that Ohio's tax system is not as businesses friendly as other

states. The last major issue raised was the fact that there are not a lot of existing buildings in the county for incoming businesses to move into. An exception to this is the spec project in Napoleon.

Other concerns the survey revealed were high worker compensation and health care costs continue to plague the county's businesses. Some concern among businesses included water quality issues and that the county must find ways of retaining and developing a more skilled workforce.

Current Economic Priorities

In addition to continuing and enhancing the existing base of economic development programs and incentives promoted by the CIC and Napoleon and Henry County Chamber of Commerce, several economic priorities were highlighted during the planning process. These economic development priorities should continue to be improved and marketed over time, as the overall list of "priorities" should be amended to include new and emerging economic interests. The current list of priorities include (please see **Map: Economic Development Priority Areas**):

- ✓ Railroads (especially improvements to the Maumee and Western rail infrastructure)
- ✓ Industrial Parks
- ✓ The Agricultural Arena and Grain Elevators
- ✓ The Henry County Airport
- ✓ US 24 and Key Thoroughfare Routes
- ✓ A Second Maumee River Crossing and Bridge
- ✓ The promotion of tourism-related assets (SR 424 as a scenic byway and the Maumee River)

Strategies and Recommendations

Coordinate Economic Development Initiatives with Capital Improvements

To ensure that future economic development priorities are promoted to the widest extent possible, it is encouraged that all county and municipal agencies tasked with maintaining infrastructure improvements are met with periodically. This would ensure that all necessary infrastructure improvements such as water, sewer, and transportation improvements are planned properly and “piggy-back” well with the county’s policy of sustained economic growth.

The CIC utilizes an infrastructure fund that is overseen by a board of local and county officials. Utilizing this fund in coordination with future transportation and other infrastructure improvements is highly recommended in the future.

Continue the Development of Key Economic Development Tools and Assets

Several local incentives have been created to help spur and maintain economic development efforts throughout the county and in its political subdivisions. It is important that information about these incentives be current, consistent, and accurate at the county and regional (NORED/RGP) level. The CIC and the Napoleon & Henry County Chamber of Commerce can serve as a countywide repository of such information, while local program information in more detail would be available from the locality in question.

These agencies should continue to maintain a countywide repository of information on local incentive programs offered throughout Henry County. This information can be housed in the CIC office, and the respective personnel can ensure that state and regional officials can access such information as well.

Similarly, a catalog of available development incentives offered by Federal agencies, the State of Ohio, regional financing authorities, and other regional resources, could be periodically updated by these agencies.

A variety of economic development tools and assets exist across the County to encourage economic growth.

The Community Improvement Corporation of Henry County

The CIC Board of Directors has 15 members. Businesses and individuals can be members without voting privileges. Businesses that enter into a tax incentive program must be a member of the CIC. Municipalities and townships are solicited for membership along with businesses that benefit from economic development activities. The membership fee ranges from \$20 for an individual to \$100-\$500 for businesses. There are currently between 70-80 members.

The Napoleon & Henry County Chamber of Commerce

The Henry County Chamber of Commerce is a private, non-profit business whose investors recognize that we can achieve together what we cannot do individually. Founded in 1909, the Chamber has always maintained a position of leadership by creating a pool of resources from which ideas, energy and finance can be drawn. The Chamber is a resource center providing information for business prospects, newcomers, and visitors. It provides current demographic information

about the area, its assets, and benefits. The Chamber has also played a key role in the formation of the United Way of Henry County and the Henry County Community Foundation.

Economic Development Programs and Incentives

The primary economic development tool promoted by the Henry County CIC and used in Henry County is the Enterprise Zone tax incentive program, which offers businesses up to a 100%- 10 year tax incentive on new real and personal property, including inventory. The program is geared to manufacturing and manufacturing related businesses. This program has been especially useful in competing with Indiana and Michigan, especially relative to the inventory component of personal property.

The usual County agreement before incentives are granted would request/require the business to make compensation to the local schools and donations to various entities – the township, if located in a township, and to an Infrastructure/Economic Development Fund.

In certain parts of Henry County, Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA) have been developed, allowing the controlling governmental entity to offer tax incentives on real property only. Unlike, the Enterprise Zone program, commercial, and residential properties can qualify for the tax incentives. The normal incentive is similar to the incentive offered via the Enterprise Zone program, with a similar compensation/donation agreement.

The Economic/Development Infrastructure Fund was created to have access to additional dollars to assist in funding infrastructure improvements both onsite and offsite. The key aspect is the ability to fund onsite improvements, something not allowed under current/normal State and Federal programs. A primary purpose for the fund is to have access to monies that can be used for the “local share” normally required when requesting monies via State or Federal program.

The primary source of funds is via the Enterprise Zone and CRA tax incentive program, where the business entering into a tax incentive agreement, is requested to donate 10% of their tax savings (incentive) to the Fund.

Each municipality has a Fund, with any business located in a township donating to a Henry County Fund. While the various funds are targeted for where the monies were generated, access to any of the funds are available countywide.

While the funds are normally geared toward standard infrastructure improvements – water, sewer, storm, and road, they can be used for any justifiable economic development purpose. Projects vary from assistance (grants and/or loans) in improving township/county/city roads, purchasing infrastructure related equipment for a business (water treatment, electric transformer, etc.), assisting in construction of a roadway onsite, funding a new waterline, and preparing engineering studies for proposed industrial parks/sites, among other uses.

Another good source of funding could be the Economic Development Administration (Department of Commerce). If eligible for funding assistance, the current EDA guidelines for funding are the following:

- ✓ The proposed investments are market-based.

- ✓ The proposed investments are proactive in nature and scope.
- ✓ The proposed investments look beyond the immediate economic horizon, anticipate economic changes, and diversify the local and regional economy.
- ✓ The proposed investments maximize the attraction of private sector investment and would not otherwise come to fruition absent EDA's investment.
 - The proposed investments have a high probability of success.
 - Level of local, state, and private matching funds.
 - High degree of commitment of local political "capital" by elected officials.
 - Commitment of human resources talent to project outcomes.
- ✓ The proposed investments result in an environment where high skill, high wage jobs are created.
- ✓ The proposed investments maximize Return on Taxpayer Investment.

Promote and Revitalize the County's Economic Development Infrastructure

The Henry County Airport

The Henry County Airport is located on County Road O and sees a fair amount of small plane traffic. However, the board of directors is working on a plan to bring more, and possibly bigger, traffic to the area.

The Henry County Airport is about to get its runway repaved, a project that was last done 15 years ago. Part of the money for this project will come from \$108,000 left over from a \$185,000 grant two years ago to fill in ditches on the west end. The airport has received about \$340,000 in grants over the last three years, with that money going to safety improvement projects.

Currently the airport brings in about \$20,000 a year from rental fees and fuel sales. The county adds another \$15,000 a year, plus \$5,000 for special projects, but those revenues are not enough to cover the expenses of improvements needed at the airport. Other steps being planned by the Henry County board are upgrades to lights along the runway, which are still the original lights from when the airport was built in 1972. The airport will soon be applying for an \$80,000 grant, which will go toward the light project. The airport board is currently in the process of updating its aged master plan to assist the airport in attaining additional outside funding to improve its current infrastructure.

County Rail Infrastructure

From an economic development and business standpoint, logistics - trucking, shipping, air, and rail - continues to be important asset to maintaining, expanding, and attracting businesses. In Henry County, rail service is, or can be, available in several communities.

Maumee & Western, a short line railroad, has rail service available to Napoleon, Liberty Center, and Okolona. Numerous customers, including suppliers to Campbell Soup, plastic manufacturers, and cold storage warehouses, among others currently have rail access. Grain elevators in Liberty Center and Okolona have rail access. Maumee & Western can access main line railroads in Defiance (CSX) and Ft Wayne (NS). The potential exists to have an interconnection with Indiana & Ohio Railroad (a short line) west of Liberty Center. This interconnection could provide additional access, via Indiana & Ohio, to CSX in Hamler and NS in Delta, plus Canadian National in Canada.

Indiana & Ohio, a short line, has rail access capabilities in Malinta and Hamler. A Grain elevator in Hamler could access this rail service. This line is tied into Canadian National in Canada and CSX in Leipsic, Ohio (Putman County), just south of Henry County. A potential exists to have an interconnection near Liberty Center. An interconnection with NS exists in Delta, Ohio (Fulton County), just north of Henry County.

CSX, a main line railroad, has two lines running through Henry County. One, an east-west route, goes through Holgate, Hamler, and Deshler. The other route runs SW to NE and runs through Deshler. The east-west route has an interconnection with Maumee & Western in Defiance, Ohio, with Indiana & Ohio in Hamler, and potentially with the other CSX line in Deshler. This line is a major CSX route and has been upgraded for higher speed trains. The SW to NE route has an interconnection in Leipsic and ties in to the Port of Toledo facilities in Toledo, providing access to water transport.

County Bridges

There are currently four bridges in Henry County that cross the Maumee River – at Florida, S.R. 108 in Napoleon, at U.S. 6 east of Napoleon, and at S.R. 109 south of Liberty Center. These bridges provide the main and only access north and south, and are of great importance to the County's ability to encourage economic development and create and retain job opportunities.

Logistics, mainly trucking access, is a critical factor in economic development relative to maintaining, expanding, and attracting businesses. Henry County's main employer, Campbell Soup Supply Company, is located south of the river with a primary trucking route north of the river (U.S. 24). Silgan, the provider of Campbell's cans is located within the Campbell facility.

The primary access for Campbell's products and Silgan's non-Campbell cans heading west is the S.R. 108 bridge in Napoleon. Some of the overflow warehousing is located north of the river. The Cloverleaf and Napoleon Warehouse cold storage facilities, used to handle cold or frozen Campbell supplies, are north of the river. On any given day, several hundred trucks will enter and leave this manufacturing complex, a significant number using the S.R. 108 bridge.

If the S.R. 108 bridge would not be usable for whatever reason, the logistics costs to Campbell and Silgan would increase greatly. As makers of consumer products, this cost disadvantage could affect the economic vitality of this facility, and therefore greatly increasing the need for another river crossing in close proximity to Napoleon.

A second bridge would enhance the economic vitality of Campbell and Silgan by providing enhanced logistics, both inbound and outbound trucking. It would enhance Henry County's ability to attract suppliers for Campbell and Silgan, plus allow Campbell and Silgan opportunities for warehousing and repacking that will allow Campbell and Silgan to better compete in the competitive consumer marketplace.

The issues of safety and traffic are addressed in the City of Napoleon Comprehensive Plan, prepared in conjunction with the Henry County Comprehensive Plan.

Promote the continued development of new and expanded light industry in targeted sites throughout Henry County

Particular emphasis should be placed on diversified industries in sectors experiencing national or global growth, industries that match the skills of the local workforce, industries that are compatible with or complementary to existing business, and industries that pay sufficiently high wages to allow employees to support families. New activities should be located in clusters, rather than in scattered locations. Target such new ventures, through conditions placed on incentives, to such areas where clustering is planned and accommodated. The county and its political subdivisions should also promote and protect its major assets in attracting new employers: special natural features, prime farmland, educational resources, a sense of community and neighborhood identity, and continued sound land use planning.

In many cases, industrial development comes from the expansion of existing businesses. The value of a structured program to communicate with existing industries (a “retention and expansion” program) cannot be overstated. An important strategy to assist local businesses is to have land readily available for expansion projects in cases where industries cannot adequately expand at their existing site.

Promote Continued Open Communication among Communities and Economic Development Agencies and Practitioners.

While it is recognized that economic development is a competitive process, and that full disclosure of activities and potential projects cannot always be achieved, it is helpful to share unclassified information in order for the county to grow efficiently and for common issues and barriers to growth to be addressed effectively. Such means of communication as the existing monthly practitioners’ meetings, newsletters, networking through the CIC and Napoleon & Henry County Chamber of Commerce, and sharing of email, should be continued and preserved.

With a large number of individuals and agencies participating in various aspects of development, it has become essential that all parties operate with a degree of coordination, to present an image of continuity and consistency in serving existing and prospective business. As email becomes a more frequent medium for information, it may become advisable to develop a “listserv” of development practitioners who can share information collectively, especially in time-sensitive situations such as regional responses to development prospects.

- ✓ Use the diversity among communities and development sites throughout the county as a competitive advantage, and not as a reason for competition. Knowing the strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes of each community can help all economic development and community officials promote the county as a whole, following the following order of priority for prospects: (1) location in the development official’s community; (2) location in another Henry County community; (3) location in a neighboring county; (4) location elsewhere. It is important to advocate for the second priority, should the first one be unattainable.
- ✓ It could be helpful to stage a countywide economic development summit, where economic development practitioners meet with workforce developers and those aligned with development-related institutions ranging from Northwest State Community College to the Henry County Airport. Agricultural interests could be represented as well, through the Farm

Bureau and Extension. Through such a summit, “big picture” development issues and visions could emerge for the county, reflecting a variety of perspectives and allowing for the exchange of information from different sectors of the county.

Encourage Downtown Revitalization

The several county downtown areas present its most tangible link to its past, through the historical structures still in use. The variety and extensive inventory of retail, service, and residential structures downtown offer an opportunity for further development. Abandonment of those structures is a last alternative, and should only be undertaken when all alternative, adaptive reuse strategies have been considered. Located at the physical center of the community’s population, the downtown represents the most efficient location for a number of activities, whether they are service and office businesses, smaller retail enterprises, centers for civic activities, or governmental or other public functions such as libraries.

A comprehensive approach, as embodied in the Main Street approach, should be employed, encompassing elements of organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring.

In encouraging the Main Street approach, officials should help preserve their architectural and historical assets through the adoption of tools such as historic preservation overlay districts and design review legislation. This legislation typically involves the creation of a design change application process, a design review committee that reviews and approves such applications, a set of standards by which design modifications must be reviewed, and an enforcement mechanism. Also, zoning variances that allow for walkable neighborhood businesses in compatible residential areas should be encouraged.

Other recommendations relating to downtown revitalization include:

- ✓ Creation of an informal network of downtown promoters within the county. In general, the several “downtown” areas across Henry County are not in competition with one another, but have more to gain by working together. For example, a tour of the county’s downtowns may draw tourists interested in historic preservation.
- ✓ Encourage and facilitate the creation of second story and other residential development within the downtown. Consideration must be given to the removal of newly residential properties from productive commercial use. Also, adherence to provisions for adequate parking for residents can become an issue, requiring creative solutions that balance the need for resident, employee, and customer parking.



- ✓ Take an inventory of the county’s central business districts. What is the condition and status of their streets, sidewalks, landscaping, signage, on- and off-street parking, lighting? What is the condition of storefronts, store interiors, vacant properties, park areas?
- ✓ Consider taking a survey of customers and of downtown property owners and merchants to capture the perceptions of the “market”. This survey may provide valuable insight into local perceptions, opinions, and markets for new products and services.
- ✓ Incorporate design elements that accommodate and provide information to both the traveling automotive passenger and driver, and the pedestrian. Specific points should include: clarity of signage in marking available parking and any time limits, directional information regarding the most common downtown destinations, uniformity of design to identify the downtown as a cohesive whole, lighting that meets multiple goals of safety, visibility, and attractiveness, beneficial use of open space for public functions and activities, and streetscape designs that minimize maintenance costs (including care of landscaping and sidewalk snow removal).
- ✓ Whenever possible, link the downtown, either physically or by signage, to nearby attractions that can build interest in the downtown.
- ✓ Actively promote unified downtowns, through joint promotional advertising; events, contests, and promotions involving as many downtown businesses as will participate; and uniform business hours when practical.

Continue to Promote and Market Industrial Parks and Selected Sites

Industrial sites should be marketed by county and local economic development practitioners only if they meet minimum planning criteria. These criteria should take into consideration the following factors, many of which will enhance the attractiveness of the park:

- ✓ Accessibility to industrial park businesses on roads of sufficient width, vehicle capacity, and construction, with sufficient road widths and turning radii to accommodate truck traffic.
- ✓ Possible separation of employee, client, and truck traffic, and requirements governing access and egress to roadways.
- ✓ Service to the site by adequate water and sanitary sewer distribution systems (with adequate capacity and pressure to accommodate industrial processes of target industries), and other infrastructure. More specific criteria may include electric distribution and transmission line sizes, water and sewer capacity and water pressure, natural gas pressure, and telecom capabilities (long distance, cable, wireless, broadband).
- ✓ Proper zoning of the site for light industry.
- ✓ Compatibility of planned land uses with adjacent and nearby properties; acceptable spillover effects on adjoining properties (light, noise, visibility, water or air emissions), and buffering of the site from adjacent uses where necessary or appropriate. In some cases, park owners may impose noise or light restrictions.

- ✓ Available lot sizes that are small enough to accommodate smaller industries, with option for larger lot sizes to accommodate growth; ability to assemble adjacent lots into larger parcel if needed; flexibility and diversity in lot sizes.
- ✓ Lot shapes that accommodate building and parking layouts (rectangular designs are largely preferable).
- ✓ Appearance and other requirements including building setbacks, building surface materials and inclusion of offices, landscaping, signage, and minimum parking spaces based on number of employees.
- ✓ Access to rail transportation, via a siding on site or ability to construct one.
- ✓ Favorable environmental status, with completed Phase One analysis and approval for development from Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Lack of wetlands on site, satisfactory surface drainage (or provision for drainage through storm sewers, retaining pond, etc.), location outside flood plains, attainment area for air pollution.

A general industrial park, rather than restricting development with, for example, a “technology park” designation, is probably most appropriate for Henry County, as no specific niche has been identified. Park size is most likely to be small, at 50 to 150 acres. Site configurations are often most flexible when laid out as a series of three to five acre sites, several of which can be combined to respond to prospects with larger land needs. Prospects will prefer that parcels are held by one owner and do not require assembly. Square or rectangular sites, as mentioned above, with level to near level topography are preferred in most cases, and existing zoning should allow manufacturing and industrial use. In order to allow economic development practitioners to market the site, land price should be explicit and competitive, varying depending upon location, quality and capacity of infrastructure, attractiveness and visibility, and access to major highways and rail.

Some prospective companies will prefer stand-alone industrial sites to an industrial park, and such individual sites should be described and catalogued for marketing along with the parks. In any case, potential shortcomings of all sites should be researched and sites should be assessed. Available buildings will enhance a community’s attractiveness, but building configurations must be flexible to meet prospects’ requirements.

- ✓ Market only those sites that meet minimum development criteria (such as available infrastructure, posted selling price, appropriate zoning). Development practitioners should work from a common “catalog” of industrial sites. Presumably, this “catalog” should consist of those sites and industrial parks stored in the HCCIC data base, as well as on the Regional Growth Partnership’s website.

Encourage the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial properties present within Henry County

Economic development practitioners maintain updated inventories of available properties. Existing and vacated buildings are often difficult to market to prospects with exacting criteria and standards. However, the list of such properties should be updated and promoted through such networks as NORED/Regional Growth Partnership and the state industrial database and prospect notification

system. It is important to understand and inform prospects of the environmental status of a property, and to be able to tout a “clean” site when all appropriate studies have found a site to be clear of hazards or needs for mitigation. In cases where environmental barriers to redevelopment are identified, local officials should explore the use of federal and state “Brownfield” funding to clean and redevelop the site.

In cases where modern industrial processes and engineering preclude the use of an antiquated building, efforts should be expended to identify an alternative, productive, and profitable use. Such uses may include subdivision of the building for use as a business incubator or multi-tenant home for smaller businesses; operation of a back office or call center facility, warehousing and distribution, or commercial use of space.

From time to time, former commercial properties become vacant and neglected. The most illustrative case in Henry County involves the Napoleon sites of the Oakwood Plaza and former Ames store. It is unimaginable that these sites will be restored to their former commercial level of activity. It is more likely that these locations will be “reborn” with entirely alternative uses, such as those described above: subdivided business incubator, government offices, indoor storage, warehouse, or distribution, office or call center facility, or possibly a meeting/convention center. The time may come when the value of the property and its location will overcome any costs associated with demolishing existing structures and rebuilding.



Perform a “Technology” Audit and Develop a Technology Development Plan

Developing a strong link to the global economy cannot occur without first having the necessary technology infrastructure to do so. For Henry County to capture a portion of tomorrow’s new jobs, it is absolutely important for the county to have the ability to accommodate, recruit, or retain these technology-intensive firms.

Economic development and other related public and private officials should have a good understanding of the current state of affairs of the county’s technology infrastructure and the market’s current ability to provide these services within the county. To assist with business expansion and retention, existing businesses should be surveyed through formal or informal means to better assess the need for new technologies. In addition, an inventory (and map) could be created to highlight areas where certain technologies like fiber optics, high access Internet, etc., currently exist (or preferred to exist).

Promote the Clustering of Industrial Sectors

Industry clusters are geographic concentrations of competing, complementary, or interdependent firms and industries that do business with each other and/or have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. The firms included in the cluster may be both competitive and cooperative. They may compete directly with some members of the cluster, purchase inputs from other cluster members, and rely on the services of other cluster firms in the operation of their business. As a result, they tend to congregate near one another, sharing innovative practices and economies of scale.

Industrial clusters are very important to a region because while they typically account for only 25% of the employment base, their economic multipliers account for much of the balance of the region's employment. This makes them the driving force of economic development.

Consider and Incorporate the concept of Sustainable Development

“Sustainable development” incorporates concepts of environmental stewardship, to ensure that development patterns protect natural resources such as prime farmland, ecosystems, and watersheds. Resource development should be undertaken using sound practices that ensure that resources are not depleted faster than the earth’s ability to replenish itself. Conservation and restoration are thus considered as a normal cost of doing business. More recently, the concept of sustainable development has also come to incorporate the notion that the local economy should sustain the area’s residents with jobs that can affordably sustain their households.

Give Preference to Development that Captures Outside Dollars

Certain types of businesses have great potential to bring outside dollars into the local economy. Foremost in this regard may be the cultivation of local industries that export products to other regions and countries. A distinction can be made between branch plants that serve as profit centers for corporate offices located elsewhere, and home-based industries where virtually all revenues flow into the county. Certainly, branch operations serve significant roles in Henry County, as major employers, civic volunteers, and contributors to the local economy. While prospective new branch operations should be encouraged when they meet local criteria of sustainability, extra effort should be given to nurturing those home-based businesses that will reinvest their earnings into their home community. Possible strategies to cultivate these businesses include:

- ✓ Continued use of the “retention and expansion” business visitation program being conducted in 2003 by the CIC. Such a program, to be effective in the long run, should be repeated every few years.
- ✓ Use of local, state, and federal incentive programs to assist local businesses in reaching the next level of growth.

Certain other businesses and economic activities are prone to capture revenues from outside the county. Interestingly, the elderly population in a community may be doing just that by receiving Social Security, pensions, and other transfer payments from outside sources. Other business types with greatest potential include:

- **Agribusiness**, including specialty crops and nurseries. Agriculture provides a major opportunity for exporting, and revenues earned by farming support a number of services and commercial establishments throughout the county.
- **Tourism** draws outside persons and their disposable income. The efforts of the county’s Tourism and Convention Bureau should be supported as an economic development activity. Henry County is on the fringe of a major, growing recreation area primarily centered in Erie and Ottawa Counties by virtue of access to Lake Erie. Development planning should capitalize on Henry County’s proximity to this region, and the vast recreational opportunities that the Maumee River. Can provide.

- *Specialty or Regional Retail* will often bring consumers and their revenues into an area. While this sector may be relatively small for Henry County, planning should incorporate methods to build sufficient “critical mass” of niche market and complementary shopping destinations to attract outside shoppers, or retailers with exclusive sales agreements.

Maintain the Link between Education and Economic Development

The County should support the utilization of local educational resources, including Northwest State Community College, Four County Career Center, and local school districts and facilities, as resources for economic development. Consider the further development of such resources, including the construction of a new business incubator with technical assistance provided by Northwest State Community College and possibly the Napoleon & Henry County Chamber of Commerce, and related staff and expertise.

- ✓ Maximum consideration should be given to employing economically disadvantaged residents of Henry County when new employment opportunities exist as a result of economic development projects within the county. To the maximum extent possible, new and expanding businesses receiving county or local assistance should be held to this condition.
- ✓ Encourage ongoing communication between economic development practitioners, Chambers of Commerce, and workforce development and education officials. A solid link and understanding must be maintained between those who cultivate the supply of the local workforce as a “product” with demonstrable quality and the economic development professionals who work with those employers who create the demand for that “product”.
- ✓ Maintain a printed and/or Web-based catalog or matrix of workforce training and education programs offered to county employees through the numerous programs and partnering organizations in Henry County – including local school districts.



Build Community-wide Collaboration for Workforce Development Programs

Linking school-to-work and other workforce development initiatives with community-based organizations can provide access to a wide range of support services such as transportation, food, clothing, work clothes, shelter, childcare, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. They can also build community involvement, and help coordinate employer recruitment in workforce development systems.

Community-based strategies such as community mapping and assessment can help school-to-work systems identify work-based learning opportunities and identify successful local programs and initiatives that can be included in collaborative planning and oversight councils. Incorporating a comprehensive family development program to address workforce development issues holistically is also a good strategy.

Continually Update Employee Retention Programs

Many surveys say that the number one issue facing business is finding and keeping good employees. Nationally, the average annual employee turnover rate for all companies is 12%. In a recent national

study, it was noted that 75% of the demand for new employees is simply to replace workers who have left the company. For more information concerning the actual costs of employee turnover, please see www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/publicat/turn.html#calc.