

Seneca County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

December 2011

Seneca County Board of Commissioners

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INTRODUCTION

This is the first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Seneca County since an initial overall strategy was submitted to Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce, in the mid-1980's. Because of the time that has elapsed since that plan, this CEDS was developed as a completely new strategy.

This strategy is intended to position Seneca County as a "redevelopment area", as defined by the EDA, and thus to make its political subdivisions eligible to apply from the EDA Public Works and other programs.¹ The document also provides a demographic and marketing profile of Seneca County, with Census and related information that describes the County's recent past, present, and imminent future.

The assumptions, goals, and strategies laid out in this document create a blueprint for the County's overall economic development and a summary of what is considered the most effective and proactive, targeted strategy to improve the economic position and climate of Seneca County. The backbone of the strategy is formed by the eight goals which, collectively, frame the comprehensive strategy:

GOAL 1: Retain existing businesses and help them expand

GOAL 2: Attract new, diversified business activity to Seneca County

GOAL 3: Facilitate workforce employability and training

GOAL 4: Provide infrastructure to support business locations, relocations, and expansions throughout Seneca County

GOAL 5: Market and brand Seneca County and its communities, internally and externally

GOAL 6: Provide an atmosphere in which entrepreneurs can flourish

GOAL 7: Enhance Seneca County's quality of life for business leaders, employees, and residents

GOAL 8: Organize for maximum effectiveness in achieving successful economic development

Implementation and success requires the cooperative effort of numerous economic and business development organizations, including the Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corporation, the Fostoria Economic Development Corporation, the Tiffin-Seneca

¹ EDA funding may assist with up to fifty percent or more of the cost of infrastructure and improvements leading directly to the creation and retention of jobs.

and Fostoria Chambers of Commerce, and the Tiffin-Seneca County Port Authority. All of these organizations were actively represented on the CEDS committee and their officials, along with many other stakeholders from the private and public sectors, offered valuable input.

The goals, objectives, action steps, and metrics woven into this plan have been developed, reviewed, and revised by the CEDS Committee over a series of six meetings. Further analysis addressed current county and community economic development initiatives, new resources, investments, opportunities, and threats. The result is a report that reflects the interests, goals, vision, and planning of the CEDS Committee and its contributing members.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This 2011 Seneca County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was prepared and facilitated by Ben Kenny, Community Development Coordinator for the Community Development Department at WSOS Community Action Commission, located in Fremont, Ohio, in neighboring Sandusky County. With a Masters Degree in City and Regional Planning and over thirty years' experience in community and economic development, Mr. Kenny has overseen the writing of a number of OEDP and CEDS documents in northwest Ohio, as well as a variety of other comprehensive and functional plans for Ohio local governments. Mr. Kenny has been assisted in meeting facilitation and coordination by Jill Griffin, Executive Director of the Seneca Planning Commission located in Tiffin.

The CEDS Committee was selected to include diverse geographic, sectoral, demographic, and occupational interests. The mix and depth of expertise and community interest resulted in a highly functioning and valuable committee. Those members listed on the following page were included in the committee.

The CEDS Committee held a series of meetings from spring through fall 2011 to develop much of the content of this document. Meeting agendas included a discussion of strengths and weaknesses, trends, the County's position in the global economy, opportunities and threats, comparative advantages, partnering entities, and a vision for the future of Seneca County. After information was gathered locally, the Committee worked during the late summer and fall to develop a series of goals and objectives, as well as action steps and metrics, to guide the County's efforts and those of its partnering organizations and local communities.

SENECA COUNTY CEDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	
Name	Position/ Affiliation
John Arnold	Finance Executive, Arnold Vending
Jim Boroff	Mayor, City of Tiffin
Karen Bowers	Director of Development, SIEDC
John Davoli	Mayor, City of Fostoria
John Detwiler	Executive Director, Tiffin Chamber of Commerce
Richard Focht	President and CEO, SIEDC
Mike Grandillo	Vice Pres. for Development and Public Affairs, Tiffin Univ.
Jill Griffin	Executive Director, Seneca Regional Planning Commission
Rob Huntington	President, Heidelberg University
Christopher Iannantuono	Manager, Quality Assurance, Roppe Corporation
Terry Mazzone	Director, Communications and Community Relations, North Central Electric Cooperative
Ben Nutter	Seneca County Commissioner
Joan Reinhard	Executive Director, Fostoria Economic Development Corp.
Ted Rutherford	Mayor, Village of Green Springs
Pamela Smith	Executive Director, Fostoria Chamber of Commerce
Ralph Smothers	Owner, Ralph's Joy of Living
Gary Strasbaugh	Vice President, Transportation, Mennel Milling
Jim Supance	Director, Tiffin-Seneca County Port Authority
Dave Whitta	President, Whitta Construction
Dick Wyka	Director of Government Sales, Tiffin Metal Products

censuses. This table indicates that few localities experienced growth over the decade between 2000 and 2010. Every city and village, with the exception of New Riegel, lost population in that decade, and the unincorporated balance of the county lost the same percentage of population (3.3 percent) as the county as a whole. Only three of the fifteen townships posted gains in population.

**Table 2: Population of Seneca County and Subdivisions,
1990-2010**

Area	1990	2000	2010	% 1990-2000	% 2000-2010
Seneca County	59,733	58,683	56,745	-1.8	-3.3
Attica Village	944	955	899	1.2	-5.9
Bettsville Village	775	784	661	1.2	-15.7
Bloomville Village	949	1,045	956	10.1	-8.5
Fostoria City (part)	10,848	10,035	9,471	-7.5	-5.6
Green Springs Village (part)	708	648	630	-8.5	-2.8
New Riegel Village	298	226	249	-24.2	10.2
Republic Village	607	614	549	1.2	-10.6
Tiffin City	18,604	18,135	17,963	-2.5	-0.9
Balance of Seneca County	26,000	26,241	25,367	0.9	-3.3
Adams Township	1,296	1,337	1,320	3.2	-1.3
Big Spring Township	1,771	1,791	1,769	1.1	-1.2
Bloom Township	1,852	1,937	1,799	4.6	-7.1
Clinton Township	4,055	4,188	4,109	3.3	-1.9
Eden Township	1,999	2,020	2,188	1.1	8.3
Hopewell Township	2,976	2,874	2,774	-3.4	-3.5
Jackson Township	1,775	1,640	1,512	-7.6	-7.8
Liberty Township	2,353	2,340	2,035	-0.6	-13.0
Loudon Township	2,460	2,395	2,140	-2.6	-10.7
Pleasant Township	1,583	1,685	1,635	6.4	-3.0
Reed Township	1,003	949	848	-5.4	-10.6
Scipio Township	1,724	1,831	1,729	6.2	-5.6
Seneca Township	1,505	1,585	1,622	5.3	2.3
Thompson Township	1,451	1,422	1,443	-2.0	1.5
Venice Township	1,770	1,871	1,758	5.7	-6.0

Table 3 presents a variety of demographic information. It indicates that the population is aging, with the median age increasing by two and a half years. It also shows the number of households and families decreasing, reflecting a shrinking local market for household goods.

In housing, the number of owner-occupied housing units shrank, while the number of rental units increased, suggesting a more transitory population within the county. Education statistics suggest a more highly educated population over time, with more people counted in the Associate's, Bachelor's, and other postgraduate categories. Indeed, the percentage of high school and of college graduates increased since the 2000 Census.

Table 3: Demographic Information, Seneca County, 2000 and 2010

Factor	2000	2010 or '05-'09 ACS	Ohio ACS	Change #	Change %
Total Population	58,683	56,745		-1,938	-3.3
Median Age	36.3	38.8	37.9	+2.5	+6.9
Households	22,292	21,774		-518	-3.3
Families	15,741	14,840		-901	-5.7
Total Housing Units	23,692	24,122		+430	+1.8
Total Occupied Housing Units	22,292	21,774		-518	-2.3
Owner Occupied	16,751 75.1	16,054 73.7	69.5	-697	-4.2
Renter Occupied	5,541 24.9	5,720 26.3	30.5	+179	+3.2
Population 25 and over	37,271	37,278		+7	0.0
High School Graduate	17,256 46.3	16,171 43.4	36.3	-1,085	-6.3
Some College, no degree	6,830 18.3	7,036 18.9	19.8	+206	+3.0
Associate Degree	2,228 6.0	3,405 9.1	7.1	+1,177	+52.8%
Bachelor's Degree	3,063 8.2	3,743 10.0	15.0	+680	+22.2
Graduate or professional degree	1,588 4.3	2,339 6.3	8.6	+751	+47.3
Percent high school graduate or higher	83.1	87.7	86.8	+4.6	
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	12.5	16.3	23.6	+3.8	
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	20.5	19.5	22.9	-1.0	-4.9
Occupation: Management, professional	6,262 21.7	7,347 26.6	36.4	+1,085	+17.3
Service Occupations	4,366 15.1	4,647 16.8	11.9	+281	+6.4
Sales and office	5,925 20.6	5,665 20.5	24.7	-260	-4.4
Farming, fishing, forestry	191 0.7	151 0.5	0.3	-40	-20.9
Construction, extraction, maintenance	2,956 10.3	2,605 9.4	8.9	-351	-11.9
Production, transp., material moving	9,125 31.7	7,200 26.1	17.9	-1,925	-21.1
Median Household Income	\$38,037	\$43,397	\$47,144	+5,360	+14.1
Median Family Income	\$44,600	\$53,176	\$59,208	+8,576	+19.2
Per Capita Income	\$17,027	\$20,954	\$24,830	+3,927	+23.1
Families below poverty level	6.1%	8.2%	10.0%	+2.1	
Individuals below poverty level	9.0%	11.3%	13.6%	+2.3	
Median value, owner-occupied housing	\$81,300	\$100,800	\$134,500	+19,500	+24.0
Median gross rent	\$433	\$570	\$665	+137	+31.6

Occupational data suggest more people in white collar jobs such as management and professional positions, a dip in office workers, and drop in construction, but a big decrease in the traditional blue collar jobs of production (manufacturing), transportation, and material moving.

While median incomes increased (much of the increase just keeping up with the cost of living), the percentage of families and individuals in poverty increased somewhat over the decade. Finally, housing costs grew, with the median housing value now topping \$100,000.

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Census Bureau has released the 2009 “County Business Patterns”, which shows the number of employees and establishments in each employment sector. Table 4 presents a summary of Business Pattern data for Seneca County in 2000 and 2009, noting changes over time. Sectors showing gains are shaded in the right-most columns. Biggest decreases in employment were experienced in manufacturing (down over 2,100), with no other sector coming close (retail lost the second largest number of jobs, 459). The only sector experiencing gains of over 100 jobs was health care and social assistance.

The manufacturing sector remains the largest employment sector in Seneca County, but it now only accounts for just over one-fourth (26.0%) of total employment. The second largest sector is now health care and social assistance, with 17.9 percent of total employment. Of that total, 896 work in the social service sector, with 483 providing ambulatory health care service, 1,272 associated with nursing homes and residential care, and hospitals employing between 500 and 999.

**Table 4: County Business Patterns, Seneca County
2000 and 2009**

Sector	2000		2009		Change - 2009	
	Emps	Ests	Emps	Ests	Emps	Ests
Total	21,420	1,343	17,684	1,187	-2,495	-110
Forestry Fishing Hunting Ag Support	20-99	4	20-99	2	-	-2
Mining	119	6	20-99	6	-	0
Utilities	109	6	117	8	+8	+2
Construction	1,046	148	827	127	-219	-21
Manufacturing	6,729	100	4,596	80	-2,133	-20
Wholesale Trade	775	62	768	58	-7	-4
Retail Trade	2,517	221	2,058	164	-459	-57
Transportation and Warehousing	725	49	598	51	-127	+2
Information	169	21	174	19	+5	-2
Finance and Insurance	530	79	452	78	-78	-1
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	20-99	27	136	32	+?	+5
Prof., Scientific, Technical Services	311	72	391	76	+80	+4
Management of cos. and enterprises	351	9	79	8	-272	-1
Admin and Support, Waste Mgmt.	801	47	678	44	-123	-3
Educational Services	1,627	15	1000-2499	11	?	-4
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,627	143	3,171	149	+544	+6
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	329	24	100-249	19	-?	-5
Accommodation and Food Service	1,468	123	1,312	95	-156	-28
Other Services (except public admin)	932	174	789	158	-143	-16
Not classified	0-19	11	0-19	2	?	-9

Table 5 summarizes the manufacturing sector alone, and helps identify clusters of specific manufacturing products. The largest manufacturing line in the County, in terms of number of establishments, is fabricated metal product manufacturing, involving 18 of the County's 80 establishments. With 826 employees, it is also one of the largest employers. The average size of an establishment in this business is thus approximately 46 employees. Ten of the eighteen businesses are machine shops, as indicated in the table.

The second largest segment by number of establishments is machinery manufacturing, with twelve establishments and 543 employees. Third is transportation equipment manufacturing, with eight firms and 889 employees. This sector has larger establishments, averaging 111 employees.

Table 5: County Business Patterns; Establishments in Each Sector by No. of Employees, 2009

Sector	Total	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999
Total, All Sectors	1,187	630	246	150	96	30	23	11	1
Forest Fish Hunt Ag	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mining	6	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Utilities	8	3	2	0	3	0	0	0	0
Construction	127	95	12	11	5	4	0	0	0
Manufacturing	80	25	10	10	13	6	10	6	0
Wholesale Trade	58	28	9	11	8	1	1	0	0
Retail Trade	164	68	51	29	10	2	3	1	0
Transport , Warehousing	51	31	7	6	5	1	1	0	0
Information	19	11	2	4	1	1	0	0	0
Finance and Insurance	78	46	21	5	6	0	0	0	0
Real Estate, Rent, Leasing	32	26	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Prof., Sci., Tech Services	76	54	13	6	2	1	0	0	0
Mgt of companies	8	4	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Admin Support, Waste	44	25	7	5	4	2	0	0	0
Educational Services	11	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
Health Care, Social Assist	149	65	36	24	11	4	7	2	0
Arts, Entertain, Recreat'n	19	8	5	4	2	0	0	0	0
Accommodation, Food	95	29	26	18	17	5	0	0	0
Other Services	158	106	37	10	3	2	0	0	0
Not classified	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5 summarizes the relative number of establishments in each sector by the number of employees in each enterprise. In total, of the County's 1,187 enterprises counted in 2009, only 65 had 50 or more employees, and 35 had 100 or more. In contrast, there were 630 businesses that had one to four employees.

Manufacturing had a great variety in the size of establishments, with 25 establishments having one to four employees, but also sixteen with 100 or more employees. Construction

establishments, while plentiful with 127, were mostly small operations, with 95 of them having one to four employees.

Educational services, with only eleven entities, were split among all the ranges, including the largest of the County's employers, the only employer with 500-999 employees. Health care and social assistance (mostly the former) had some of the County's largest employers, with two in the 250-499 range and another seven in the 100-249 bracket. These would include Mercy Hospital, as well as nursing home and rehab facilities throughout the County.

**Table 6: Manufacturing,
County Business Patterns 2009**

Industry description	Employees	Total Establishments
Manufacturing	4,596	80
Food manufacturing	500-999	3
Textile mills	0-19	1
Apparel manufacturing	0-19	2
Wood product manufacturing	116	7
Paper manufacturing	20-99	1
Printing and related support activities	20-99	6
Chemical manufacturing	233	4
Plastics and rubber products mfg	250-499	5
Nonmetallic mineral products mfg	89	5
Primary metal manufacturing	20-99	1
Fabricated metal product mfg	826	18
Machine shops	324	10
Machinery manufacturing	543	12
Electrical equip, appliance, component	100-249	3
Transportation equipment mfg	889	8
Gas engine and engine parts mfg	317	6
Furniture and related products	250-499	2
Miscellaneous manufacturing	20-99	2

A locality's employment patterns by sector can be compared with larger geographies such as the State of Ohio, or the United States, to determine comparative percentages of total employment within each segment. For example, agriculture, forestry and fishing and hunting accounted for 0.93 percent of the County's labor force, but only 0.33 percent of Ohio's labor force. The location quotient is thus $.93/.33$ or 2.84 when comparing Seneca County with Ohio overall. Higher numbers exceeding 1.00 mean an economic sector in Seneca County employs a relatively higher proportion of its employees within the given sector, and that this sector is of considerable importance to the County's economy, to a higher degree than in many other portions of the State. Location quotients of 1.00 or higher are printed in bold.

Relative to Ohio's employment, important sectors in Seneca County's economy include (ranked by location quotient value) educational services (two universities, career/vocational school, and

several school districts), agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Seneca is inarguably an agricultural county), mining and quarrying (although actual employment is relatively small), utilities, construction, and manufacturing. Relative to the United States as a whole, the greatest location quotients are related to (in order) educational services, manufacturing, and utilities. Although manufacturing has declined in absolute terms within the County, that sector is still significant in both comparisons, and still commands a relatively large (though declining) proportion of the employment base.

**Table 7: Workers, Percentage of total, and Location Quotients:
Seneca County, Ohio, and U.S., 2010**

(source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; employment calculated from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data)

NAICS Number/Industry	Seneca #	Seneca %	Ohio %	U.S. %	LQ: Ohio	LQ US
Total, all industries	15,513	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.00	1.00
11 Ag, forestry, fishing and hunting	144	0.93	0.33	1.08	2.84	0.86
21 Mining, quarrying, oil and gas extract.	92	0.59	0.26	0.61	2.26	0.97
22 Utilities	115	0.74	0.48	0.52	1.55	1.43
23 Construction	925	5.96	4.05	5.17	1.47	1.15
31-33 Manufacturing	3,354	21.62	14.88	10.82	1.45	2.00
42 Wholesale Trade	649	4.18	5.19	5.15	0.81	0.81
44-45 Retail Trade	1,951	12.58	13.24	13.63	0.95	0.92
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	590	3.80	3.70	3.71	1.03	1.02
51 Information	250	1.61	1.86	2.55	0.87	0.63
61 Educational services	1,007	6.49	2.26	2.32	2.88	2.80
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	2,355	15.18	17.43	15.25	0.87	1.00
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	161	1.04	1.49	1.79	0.70	0.58
52 Finance and insurance	531	3.42	4.97	5.17	0.69	0.66
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	62	0.40	1.39	1.80	0.29	0.22
54 Professional and technical services	322	2.08	5.71	7.02	0.36	0.30
55 Mgmt of companies and enterprises	278	1.79	2.59	1.75	0.69	1.03
56 Administration and waste services	642	4.14	6.67	6.96	0.62	0.59
72 Accommodation and food services	1,448	9.33	9.90	10.45	0.94	0.89
81 Other services, except public admin.	635	4.09	3.57	4.10	1.15	1.00
99 Unclassified	2	0.01	0.04	0.15	0.32	0.09

A growing movement in economic development, known as “economic gardening”, focuses on existing entrepreneurial activities and businesses of a certain size and sales range (10 to 99 employees), known as “stage Two” businesses. These are the businesses that have outgrown the start-up stage, and that are entering a phase where growth and job creation potentials could become significant. They also often lack specific expertise and helpful data in disciplines that could effectively boost their sales revenues, such as marketing and human resources. However, collectively, these are the class of businesses that have consistently created more jobs than any of the other stages, according to research at the Edward Lowe Foundation. Having reached this stage also typically demonstrates an indication of some type of market

demand and some level of management skill. Stage Two companies also generally create more wealth per employee, especially if the company is innovation oriented.

The following table presents information concerning Seneca County's business community, breaking the County's businesses down by stage: Stage One businesses have 1-9 employees, Stage Three businesses have 100-499 employees, and Stage Four businesses have 500 or more.

The Edward Lowe data are derived by following individual establishments that have a DUNS number, including a large number of cottage businesses, and provides the dynamics of a business community over time. The following table presents the Edward Lowe data for 2000 and 2008, the most recent year for which data are available.

	Establishments			Jobs		
	2000	2008	Change	2000	2008	Change
Resident Businesses	2,761	3,458	697	17,934	18,701	767
Self-employed (1)	932	1,303	371	932	1,303	371
Stage I (2-9)	1,491	1,812	321	5,241	5,672	431
Stage II (10-99)	319	320	1	7,780	7,778	-2
Stage III (100-499)	18	23	5	3,231	3,948	717
Stage IV (500+)	1	0	-1	750	0	-750

The above table indicates that, indeed, the greatest number of jobs is produced by Stage Two businesses, even though the total number declined very slightly, by two jobs, over the selected time period. Further detail provided by the Edward Lowe Foundation broke these changes over time into components. Among the County's Stage Two businesses, it was found that:

- 52 businesses opened and 84 closed, for a net loss of 32 businesses (and 654 jobs).
- 103 businesses expanded and 111 contracted, for a net loss of 8 businesses (but a net gain of 520 jobs).
- 10 businesses moved in and eight moved out, for a net gain of two businesses (and 141 jobs).

Table 9 presents inter-county commuting patterns, both into and out of Seneca County. It is helpful to consider Seneca County's relationship with nearby counties. Table 9, based on the 2000 Census of Population, reveals that there were 28,274 people living in Seneca County who had a job somewhere, and 23,261 people working in Seneca County. Thus, Seneca County was a net exporter of 5,013 employees. The greatest flow of employees, both into and out of the County, is with Hancock County and its largest city, Findlay. The second largest connection in both directions is Sandusky County (Fremont, Clyde, Bellevue), and the third is Wood County. With the City of Fostoria located in Seneca, Hancock, and Wood Counties, a large portion of the flow between these counties may be within Fostoria. Additionally, Bellevue is located very close to the Seneca County line, and its employers are located in Sandusky and Huron Counties.

28,274 workers age 16+ living in Seneca County			23,261 workers age 16+ working in Seneca County		
Commute out to	Number	Percent	Commute in from	Number	Percent
Hancock Co.	3,118	11.0	Hancock Co.	1,296	5.6
Sandusky Co.	2,735	9.7	Sandusky Co.	1,217	5.2
Wood Co.	1,019	3.6	Wood Co.	889	3.8
Huron Co.	954	3.4	Wyandot Co.	675	2.9
Wyandot Co.	781	2.8	Crawford Co.	323	1.4
Lucas Co.	480	1.7	Huron Co.	282	1.2
Erie Co.	317	1.1	Lucas Co.	138	0.6
Crawford Co.	284	1.0	Erie Co.	89	0.4
Ottawa Co.	177	0.6	Ottawa Co.	81	0.3
Allen Co.	68	0.2	Franklin Co.	48	0.2
Work out of county		37.2%			

Table 10 presents recent labor force and unemployment data, as reported by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Time Period	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	County Rate	Ohio Rate
2000	31,000	29,600	1,300	4.3	4.0
2001	31,200	29,600	1,500	5.0	4.4
2002	30,400	28,300	2,100	6.8	5.7
2003	30,900	28,900	2,000	6.4	6.2
2004	31,300	29,200	2,100	6.7	6.1
2005	31,300	29,400	1,900	6.0	5.9
2006	31,400	29,800	1,600	5.2	5.4
2007	31,100	29,400	1,800	5.7	5.6
2008	30,500	29,400	2,100	7.0	6.8
2009	30,600	26,800	3,800	12.4	10.1
2010	29,600	26,200	3,400	11.6	10.1
Jan 2010	29,700	25,400	4,300	14.3	11.6
Apr 2010	29,900	26,200	3,600	13.1	10.3
Jul 2010	30,200	26,800	3,400	11.1	10.0
Oct 2010	29,200	26,300	3,000	10.2	9.2
Jan 2011	29,000	25,800	3,300	11.2	10.1
Apr 2011	29,000	26,200	2,700	9.4	8.4
Jul 2011	29,300	26,300	3,000	10.2	9.2
Oct 2011	28,700	26,200	2,500	8.7	8.4

Unemployment rates climbed to two digits at the onset of the recent recession, and have remained higher than historical norms since then. The number of people in Seneca County's labor force has diminished, from 31,400 in 2006 to the current number, roughly 29,000. Simultaneously, the number of unemployed has climbed to a range between 2,700 and 4,300 during 2011. The month-by-month entries for 2011 point toward a seasonal fluctuation, with

unemployment peaking during the winter, when agricultural and construction employment is lagging.

Item	Seneca County 2007	Seneca County 2002	Ohio 2007
Farms	1,147	1,185	75,861
Land in Farms	269,371 ac.	280,449 ac.	13,956,563 ac.
Average Size of Farm	235 ac.	237 ac.	184 ac.
Average market value, land and buildings	\$733,642	\$546,260	\$649,130
Farm size: 1-9 acres	94	90	7,767
10-49 acres	275	258	24,361
50-179 acres	428	419	25,809
180-499 acres	199	252	11,190
500-999 acres	95	120	4,020
1,000 acres or more	56	46	2,714
Market value of ag products sold (\$000)	\$107,409	\$55,599	\$7,070,212
Average per farm (\$)	\$93,644	\$46,919	\$93,200
Crops, nursery, greenhouse(\$000)	\$84,877	\$43,627	\$4,109,722
Livestock, poultry and products	\$22,532	\$11,972	\$2,960,490
Farms with sales of \$25,000-\$49,999	160	143	6,501
\$50,000-\$99,999	135	116	5,565
\$100,000 or more	246	141	12,044
Principal operator is primarily a farmer	463	713	32,676
Principal operator's occupation is other	684	472	43,185
Hired farm workers	543	643	58,271
Payroll (\$1,000)	\$2,393	\$1,623	\$411,971
Farms with 3 or 4 workers	39/130 workers	40/141 workers	3,050/10,365
Farms with 5-9 workers	24/159 workers	17/99 workers	1,952/12,235
Farms with 10 or more workers	7/112 workers	17/314 workers	935/24,326
Cattle and Calves: farms/number	264/10,096	347/10,736	26,105/1,272,402
Beef cows	106/1,603	85/1,131	17,398/293,757
Milk cows	10/750	17/1,031	3,650/271,938
Cattle and calves sold	247/5,734	320/6,471	21,438/793,955
Hogs and pigs	62/42,808	74/19,744	3,718/1,831,084
Hogs and pigs sold	69/120,220	93/76,221	4,505/5,881,107
Sheep and lambs	61/2,770	80/3,621	3,409/123,161
Layers	51/3,735	45/1,116	5,255/27,070,109
Broilers and other meat-type chickens sold	8/470	7/753	791/49,656,074
Corn for grain (farms/acres)	639/82,941	679/69,441	24/436/3,606,246
Corn for silage or greenchop	20/511	42/1,758	3,928/182,935
Wheat for grain, all	524/37,516	608/37,033	11,485/732,106
Winter wheat for grain	524/37,516	608/37,033	11,485/732,106
Oats for grain	43/1,889	55/1,634	2,800/46,348
Soybeans (farms)	700	812/119,829	23,892/4,236,337

Table 11 presents a variety of data relating to agriculture in Seneca County. The number of farms in the county decreased slightly between 2002 and 2007, and the average size, while greater than the State average, remained roughly the same over this time period. Market values of products sold increased greatly between 2002 and 2007, with market value nearly doubling. The number of farms with sales of \$100,000 or more also saw a significant rise, from 141 to 246. However, farms are not major employers. Only seven farms in 2007 claimed to have ten or more workers. Further, a couple employment factors trended lower during this time period. The number of principal operators whose primary occupation was as a farmer was reduced from 713 to 463, while the number of principal farm operators whose primary occupation was something else grew from 472 to 684. Second, the total number of hired farm workers decreased by 100, from 643 to 543.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Seneca County occupies about 551 square miles, or 352,640 acres. Nearly all of Seneca County was forested at the time that it was settled. Early settlers cleared land throughout the county for farming, and the acreage of woodland has been reduced to about 12 percent of the county. The rest is chiefly small farm woodlots, where the steepest, wettest, or less accessible parts of the farms have typically remained wooded. Agriculture, primarily cash grain and livestock farming, is the major land use in the county, with corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, and hay, as well as some special crops such as tomatoes, sugar beets, cabbage, and cucumbers. The trend has been toward fewer livestock operations and more cash grain farming.

Aside from the predominating agricultural uses, there are a few areas of woodland on steep and very steep slopes along the Sandusky River and in undrained areas, or in areas where the soil is shallow over bedrock. The presence of high-quality limestone fairly near the surface led to a large limestone processing industry for agricultural and industrial use.

Poor natural drainage is the major limitation in the more level areas of the county. Drainage is the major management need on about three-fourths of the acreage used for crops and pasture in the county's survey area. Erosion is a hazard in the gently sloping to steep areas, and the soil survey found that erosion is a major hazard on about one-third the cropland and pastureland in Seneca County. (If the slope is more than 2 percent, erosion is a hazard.) However, under adequate artificial drainage, erosion control, and other appropriate management, most of the soils are highly productive.

CLIMATE

Seneca County is cold in the winter and uncomfortably warm in the summer. Winter precipitation, which is frequently snow, results in a good accumulation of soil moisture in spring and on most soils minimizes the hazard of drought in summer. Normal annual precipitation is adequate for all crops that are suited to the temperature and the length of the growing season.

According to the USDA Soil Survey of Seneca County, the average winter temperature is 29 degrees F., and the average daily minimum temperature is 21 degrees. The average summer temperature is 72 degrees, and the average daily maximum temperature is 83. Total annual precipitation is 33 inches. Of this, 20 inches (or 60 percent) usually falls April through September, which includes the growing season for most crops. Thunderstorms occur on about forty days each year, and most occur in the summer. Generally, Seneca County receives ample rainfall for crop moisture requirements, so irrigation is not extensive in the County. However, intervals commonly occur when rainfall is not timely or is not well distributed, and supplemental irrigation is employed.

Average seasonal snowfall is 29 inches. The greatest snow depth at any one time during the period of record was 16 inches. On an average of 21 days, at least one inch of snow is on the ground. The number of days varies greatly from year to year.

The average relative humidity in the mid-afternoon is about 60 percent. Humidity is higher at night, and the average at dawn is about 80 percent. The sun shines 70 percent of the time possible in summer and 40 percent in winter. The prevailing wind is from the southwest. Average wind speed is highest, at 11 miles per hour, in March. Although tornadoes and severe thunderstorms occur occasionally, they are usually of local extent and of short duration.

PHYSIOGRAPHY, RELIEF, AND DRAINAGE

Seneca County is in the Central Lowlands, which includes most of the glaciated part of Ohio. It straddles the lake plain and till plain areas of that region. A mantle of glacial drift, which ranges from a few feet to less than a hundred feet in thickness, overlies limestone bedrock throughout most of the county and shale bedrock at the extreme southeast edge of the county. Relief of the county is mainly nearly level to undulating. Steeper areas are along streams. Most of the county is a till plain where Blount, Pandora, and Tiro soils are dominant.

The till plain is divided in the southeastern part of the county by the Defiance end moraine, extending from Eden Township through Bloom, Scipio, Venuce, and Reed Townships. Relief is more pronounced here, and erosion is more severe, with sandy and gravelly areas of outwash terraces. Gallman, Haney, and Digby soils are dominant in the terraced areas.

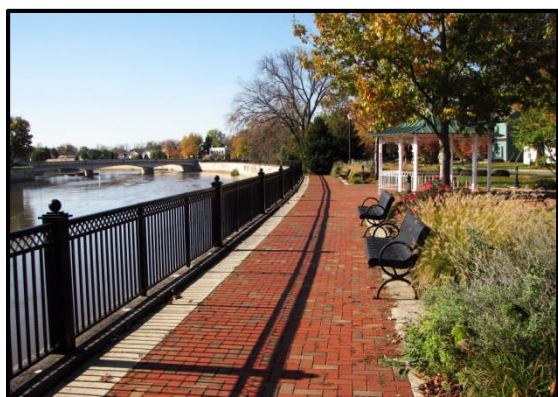
Relief is more subdued in the northwest part than in the rest of the county. After the glacier receded north of what is now Seneca County, a large glacial lake formed, extending from the northwest part of the county to Lake Erie. The soils in this lakebed are mostly high in clay content, and relief is nearly level. Major soils are Hoytville and Napponee. Prominent beach ridges of sandy or gravelly material, formed by wave action, parallel State Routes 18, 101, and 12. Belmore, Spinks, Haskins, and Kibbie soils are dominant on the beach ridges. The nearly level plain is also interrupted by gently sloping limestone highs that were islands in the old glacial lake. Milton, Millsdale, and Channahon soils are dominant in these areas.

Most of the county is part of the Sandusky River watershed. Most of the major streams that flow through Seneca County drain into this river, which runs through downtown Tiffin. A small area in the extreme southwest corner of the county drains in to the Blanchard River and a small area at the eastern edge drains into the Huron River.

COMMUNITIES AND CENTERS

Seneca County is comprised of 15 townships, 5 villages, and two cities. The following is a brief summary of the cities and villages.

CITY OF TIFFIN <http://www.tiffinohio.com/>



Tiffin is the County seat and largest community in Seneca County, and is located along the Sandusky River, close to the geographic center of the County. Its 2010 population is 17,963, down from the 2000 population of 18,135.

Water is provided in Tiffin by the Ohio American Water Company, a private corporation. The primary source of water is the Sandusky River, with a well system serving as a secondary source. River water is diverted through an 11 million gallon mill race. Water treatment capacity is 3.73 million gallons per day, with average daily use currently at only 0.775 MGD. Treated water is stored in a 1 million gallon clear well and two 1.3 million gallon elevated tanks, as well as two cisterns.

Wastewater treatment capacity is 4.0 million gallons daily, with average daily use at 2.86 MGD. Recent improvements have included replacement of weirs and baffles in primary settling tanks, rebuilt secondary settled pumps, and replacement of a lift station along S.R. 101, and there are plans to replace raw sludge drawing and pump mechanisms later in 2011.

Road investments in Tiffin have included improvements to Tyber Road, N. Sandusky St., S.R. 53 North, Miami Street, and the U.S. 224/S.R. 18 intersection, upgrade to West Market Street, and the Shaffer Park extension, with new roads including Saint Lawrence Drive (approaching Mercy Hospital) and S. Shaffer Park Drive (to Lowes). Other major improvements include City sewer upgrades Phase I (North Tiffin, 2006-07) and Phase II (Northeast Tiffin, 2009-2010), the Rock Creek interceptor sewer and Heilman St. drainage (under construction), and the new Mercy Medical Center hospital.

Electricity is provided in Tiffin by American Electric Power (AEP), with broadband and cable offered by Time Warner, and telephone provided by AT&T.

New businesses locating in Tiffin include Lowes (100 jobs, retail/construction), Tiffin Insulators Inc. (25 jobs, manufacturing), CENTREX Plastics (30 jobs, manufacturing), Irving Equipment (25 jobs manufacturing), and Dollar Tree Stores (15 jobs retail). Major expansions have been undertaken by Mercy Hospital, Tiffin and Heidelberg Universities, Seneca Medical (a medical supply distribution firm, creating 55 new jobs), and Toledo Molding and Die (creating 120 new jobs). Other expansions were noted at a number of enterprises, including Sarka Sheet Metal, Arnold machine, Tiffin Scenic Studios, Quick Tab II, Sonoco Products Co., ICP, Tiffin Developmental Center, and NCOESC (the regional education service center).

Other projects in Tiffin include plans for implementation of their downtown revitalization plan, restoration of the Ritz Theater, and continued involvement of the Tiffin Parks and Recreation Department (including developing a walking trail around Oakley Park) and the Seneca Park District. Also in planning stages, with implementation dependent upon resource availability, are completing the closure of a landfill south of town, shoring up the Sandusky River wall through downtown, continued sewer separation (total cost is \$52 million), potential acquisition of the water system from the operating company, and a pedestrian bridge from Miami to S. Washington, better connecting Tiffin University to the downtown. A long range project would be the creation of a loop road from S.R. 53 to U.S. 224, to the east and west; also, the upgrading of SR 53 through Seneca County to "Super-2" status.

CITY OF FOSTORIA <http://www.ci.fostoria.oh.us/>



Fostoria is located on the western edge of Seneca County, and it is located in three counties, including Hancock and Wood Counties in addition to Seneca. The Seneca County portion's population declined from 10,035 in 2000 to 9,471 in 2010.

The City's water treatment plant underwent upgrades to its filters, high service pump, and lime sludge press (a \$2 million project) in 2010. Treated capacity is 6.0 MGD, with average daily use at 2.44 MGD. Raw storage is in six above-ground reservoirs, where 1,945 million gallons (nearly two billion) are stored. Treated storage is in a 1.5 million gallon clear well and two 1 MG towers.

The wastewater treatment plant has had improvements to its digester lining, and has a treatment capacity of 12.7 MGD, with an average daily use of only 3.77 MGD and a peak of 8.97 MGD.

New and recently improved roads have included Davoli St., Arthur Ave., Bugner Street, Alexander Ave., the Tiffin St. overpass, Kirk St., Muirfield Pl., and the Jones Road overpass (a \$14 million project eliminating an at-grade road/rail intersection). Other roadway improvements include widening of County Line St., installation of a turn lane at S.R. 199 and U.S. 23.

Other major improvements have included an extension of the runway at the Fostoria Airport to 5,000 feet. Stearns Road has been upgraded to serve as a connector between S.R. 199 and U.S. 23 on the north side of town. Plans call for extending the connector road to the northeast quadrant, and the southerly to the “Iron Triangle” area. Additionally, the dispatcher area for the Police Department has been rehabilitated, with new computers; a county-wide project has placed all emergency agencies on the same frequency for communications. Current projects include the development of a rail park for railroad buffs, a \$1 million project with parking, pavilions, and platforms for viewing trains. Community projects also include coordination of museums and downtown revitalization.

Available properties in Fostoria include the former Atlas building, and the Trico building. New businesses have included Inland Tarp (industrial tarps and liners), bringing 37 jobs, OK Industries (post industrial plastic recycling), with 37 new jobs, and POET, a biorefinery, which created forty jobs. There have been several new retail businesses and local restaurant openings (AJR Morales, KemoSabes, and Flippin’ Jimmie’s) in town, also. Expanding businesses have included SMI, adding 7 and at 230 employees, Roppe Rubber, adding 30 over three years and at 360, Morgan AMT, adding 17 jobs, Charter Steel, creating 6 to 7 new jobs, and also Callies (racing crankshafts) and Church and Dwight. Several agri-business related entities have also made significant new investments, including Blanchard Valley, Mennel Milling, and ADM.

Electricity is provided to the Fostoria area by AEP and by the Wood Hancock electric co-op. Broadband is provided by AT&T and Time Warner, with cable television by Time Warner and telephone service by AT&T.

Economic development entities in Fostoria include the Fostoria Economic Development Corporation and the Fostoria Area Chamber. There is also an unstaffed Community Improvement Corporation which is called upon for property transfers, such as Brownfield projects.

Community assets include the airport, availability of water, rail access from all directions with active CSX and Norfolk Southern systems in town, and the cluster of agriculturally related businesses. Major employers include Roppe Corporation (rubber products), SMI Crankshaft, Bowling Transportation, Morgan AMT (formerly National Electric Carbon), FRAM (Honeywell), Fostoria Community Hospital, Fostoria City Schools, Good Shepherd Home (a nursing home), and St. Catherine’s Care Center (also a nursing home).

VILLAGE OF REPUBLIC www.RepublicOhio.com

Republic has a 2010 population of 549, down from 614 in 2000. This Village is located along State Routes 163, 19, 18, and 67 in east-central Seneca County. Water treatment capacity is 450,000 GPD, well in excess of the average daily use of 40,000 GPD. Water is stored in a 100,000 gallon tower. Wastewater is treated in a lagoon system along Kilbourne Street, and capacity of 75,000 GPD exceeds the average daily use of 40,000 GPD.



Improvements in the Village include an updated police office, new storm siren and natural gas backup generator. Developable property in town exists along the end of North Street, accessible to S.R. 18. Some of this property is under Village ownership near the lagoons, and it could be sold and developed.

New businesses have included a screen printing business (Tiger Zone) and a family care center. Expansions of existing businesses in recent years have included a car wash and pet wash facility.

Major employers in this agriculture-related Village include Republic Lumber, L&L Pavement, a gas station, and a grain elevator.

Electricity is provided by the Village, which is a member of AMP-Ohio, with broadband and cable service through Time-Warner, and telephone service from Frontier.

Greatest community assets include the updated electric and sewer systems, with competitive utility rates and a relatively low tax structure. Desired plans and priorities include downtown revitalization, improvements to the water tower, and storm sewer replacement.

VILLAGE OF BETTSVILLE <http://bettsvilleohio.com/>

Bettsville lost over 100 people over the past decade; its 2010 population of 661 is down from the 2000 population of 784. The Village is located in the northwest quadrant of the county along SR 12 between Fremont and Fostoria. Water treatment capacity in Bettsville is 250,000 GPD, in excess of the average daily use of 60,000 GPD. Treated water is stored in one 76,000 gallon tower. Wastewater is treated in a plant with 750,000 GPD capacity, while average daily use is only 80,000 GPD and peak use is 90,000 GPD.

Streets within the Village were resurfaced in 2010. Also, improvements were made to the catch basins and storm tiles in the downtown area in 2009, and ADA accessible restrooms were created in the village complex in 2011. It is felt that, while there is ample water and wastewater availability, one hindrance to growth is the unavailability of land for growth and development.

VILLAGE OF ATTICA <http://atticaohio.us/>

Attica is located at the intersection of U.S. Route 224 and State Route 4, on the eastern edge of Seneca County. Its 2010 population is 899, down from 955 in 2000. Attica is the home of an annual Fair (the Attica Fair) that rivals some County fairs, a racetrack (Attica Raceway Park), and a nearby summer and fall festival (the Oak Ridge festival).



Attica constructed a new water plant and reservoir in 2006, with a new 250,000 gallon tower constructed in 2005. Total raw water storage, in two reservoirs, is 56 million gallons. Water treatment capacity is 500,000 GPD, with average daily use at 100,000 GPD. Wastewater treatment is currently under findings and orders; the plant was built in 1970. Treated capacity is 200,000 GPD, while average daily use is 150,000 GPD and peak hits 700,000 GPD.

Both major routes, U.S. 224 and S.R. 4, were repaved in 2010 by the Ohio Department of Transportation. A new City Hall and Police Department facility was built in 2003. Electricity is provided in town by AEP, with broadband by Time Warner and BrightNet, cable television from Time Warner, and telephone service provided by Frontier.

Priority projects include addressing the findings and orders regarding the wastewater treatment plant, installing an aeration system in the water tower, extending water lines into Venice Township and the Siam and Caroline areas both north and south of the village along SR 4.

New businesses include a Family Dollar store, Crop Protection Services (a service for local agricultural businesses), and Home Operations (a computer repair shop). The local school system, formerly utilizing a school building in Attica, moved operations to a new K-12 building west of Attica on US 224; the Village intends to construct a new eight-inch water line and four-inch force main sewer from the Village to the school property. A Community Improvement Corporation recently disbanded in the Village. Community assets are considered to be its location on US 224 and SR 4, and the good school system with its new facility and campus. Obstacles and challenges include the large number of housing foreclosures, the lack of a grocery store within eight to ten miles of the Village, and the similar lack of a pharmacy. Also, there is a very limited supply of developable vacant land within the Village.

VILLAGE OF GREEN SPRINGS <http://villageofgreensprings.com/>

The village of Green Springs straddles the Seneca/Sandusky County line on the east side of both counties. The Seneca County portion of the village remained relatively stable, with its 2010 population of 630 close to the 2000 population of 648. Water is obtained by a distribution line from the City of Clyde to the north, and wastewater is sent to Clyde via a new collection system. Treated water is stored in a 300,000 gallon elevated tower.

Recent projects in Green Springs include a sewer separation project that cost \$4.25 million, and a retention pond to hold overflows. West Adams Street, the main arterial street to the west, was improved in 2010, including reconstruction and paving, widening, and curbs and sidewalks, at a cost of \$500,000. South Broadway was similarly improved approximately six years ago.



Other major improvements include a new elementary school serving the Clyde-Green Springs district, constructed in town on the site of the previous school, and new ownership of the St. Francis Hospital by a local establishment, Elmwood, which also has a nursing home and elderly housing facility, among other services. Elmwood's plans and current additions for the hospital facility include a sleep center, kidney dialysis unit, and respiratory unit, with a pharmacy.

Local businesses include the Elmwood facilities, which are by far the largest employer in the Village, Wynn-Reith (a home health organization working with developmentally disabled), and two nearby specialized construction contractors. Available property for development includes acreage on the south side of town, along SR 19 (which travels north-south through the Village). This site is accessible by rail. Also available is a vacant industrial property formerly owned by Progress Plastics, east of the Village, adjacent to a railroad.

Green Springs has an Economic Development committee; the Village completed a community planning and priority-setting process with WSOS Community Action Commission entitled Project Good START. The Committee is working on achieving some of the goals of that process, including instituting a Community Reinvestment Area to incentivize investment in buildings throughout the village. Community assets are considered to include the low cost of housing and youth recreational programs; obstacles include utility costs and the available workforce.

VILLAGE OF NEW RIEGEL

New Riegel grew from 226 people in 2000 to 249 in 2010. They have no centralized water treatment facility, and plans call for sending wastewater to Fostoria.

VILLAGE OF BLOOMVILLE

Bloomville, located in southeast Seneca County along State Route 101, lost population, going from 1,045 in 2000 to 956 in 2010. Water is retrieved from two wells and the water treatment plant is rated at 0.58 MGD, with average daily demand at 0.08 MGD. The Village has one 100,000 gallon elevated tank. Bloomville has a lagoon system to treat wastewater, with treatment capacity at 0.25 MGD and an average flow of 0.08 MGD. Their plant was built in 1967, and the treatment system has great capacity for expansion.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ASSETS

A discussion of Seneca County's strengths and assets is presented later in this document. However, several institutions and other attributes contribute significantly to the County's economic development success and potential, and these factors merit special consideration. The following is a summary of some major distinctions.

EDUCATION FACILITIES



Tiffin is home to two private universities, each with specific strengths and areas of specialization. **Heidelberg University** has more than 1,200 undergraduates as well as more than 200 graduate students, and was noted in U.S. News and World Report's "America's Best Colleges 2010" (ranked as a top school for 22 consecutive years), offering a strong liberal arts curriculum. Heidelberg offers 29 majors, with business-related majors including Accounting, Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, Computer Science, Economics, International Studies, Media Management, and Public Relations.

There are two distinctive components within Heidelberg; one is the Center for Historic and Military Archaeology, with a variety of research projects underway. This Center has been exploring the Johnson's Island Civil War Prison, and at the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Buffington Island, and provides programming for anthropological archaeologists focusing on historic and military archaeology and cultural research. Also located at Heidelberg is the National Center for Water Quality Research, which is linked to Heidelberg's environmental and biology academic programs. Founded in 1969, the Center is a leader in surface water and groundwater research, with a laboratory providing chemical analysis of fresh water samples and biological assessment of aquatic communities, with a research team of chemists, biologists, toxicologists and statisticians. The Heidelberg campus on Tiffin's east side, adjacent to State Route 18, is set on 110 acres.



A new strategic plan is guiding Heidelberg's progress over a five year period. The new Adams Hall houses the School of Business and a Media Communication Center. Also constructed is a new residence life and learning hall and university commons.

Tiffin University is located on the City's near west side, and has witnessed significant growth in recent years, with overall enrollment of almost 5,000. Tiffin University

takes pride in its entrepreneurial spirit and a management style that allows it to respond to opportunities and student needs. Faculty members are connected to their fields, and an outcomes assessment process is in place to monitor program effectiveness. The University serves traditional age students as well as adult students who take classes both online and in the seated format at several locations. The increasing number of students desiring to live on-campus has led to a need for additional facilities for student housing, recreational activities, and sports, and four new apartment facilities were constructed recently, as well as a new recreation center.

The University has several programs relating to criminal justice, including corrections, cyber-defense and information security, forensic psychology and forensic science, government and national security, homeland security and terrorism, and law enforcement. There are a number of business-related majors as well, including accounting, communication, computer and information technology, Finance, management, and marketing. New academic programs include Healthcare Administration and ElderCare Management. Other new programs include a concentration in Green Technologies, and MBA concentrations in Finance, International Business, Human Resource Management, and Marketing.



Sentinel Career Center is another educational asset in the community, located on Tiffin's southeastern edge. This facility is "committed to providing the future workforce with essential skills to become successful citizens." Students can earn college credits based on their performance at Sentinel; College Tech Prep provides dual enrollment with Terra State Community College in Fremont,

allowing students to earn free college credits while still in high school. Sentinel serves eleven school districts: Bettsville, Calvert, Columbian, Fostoria, Hopewell-Loudon, Mohawk, New Riegel, Old Fort, St. Wendelin, Seneca East, and Upper Sandusky. Enrollment at Sentinel is at nearly 500 students.

Sentinel programs are organized under a number of "career clusters", including arts and communication (academy of business, Computer-Aided Design), business and management, environmental and agricultural systems (ag science and technology and horticulture), health services (medical technology), human services (education, cosmetology, food service, and public safety), and Industrial and Engineering (including construction, manufacturing, and transportation). The facility also offers some adult education programs, including GED classes and full-time career development programs in a number of fields. Sentinel has integrated character education into the culture of the school, based on six core values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Many of these values are claimed to have great importance by business owners and plant managers.

Among the school districts in the County, a new building and campus have been constructed for the Seneca East schools, serving grades K-12 along US 224 west of Attica. Similarly, a new building was constructed in 2011 for Lakota Schools, and plans are underway for a new facility for the Hopewell Loudon schools by 2013.

The North Central Ohio Educational Service Center is headquartered in Tiffin, with a vision “to be a recognized leader committed to meeting the needs of our educational partners.” NCOESC provides supportive services to the area’s school districts, in the areas of early childhood assessment and services, professional and leadership development, curriculum, special education, and specialized services including administrative collaboration, grant writing and management, technology services, unified purchasing, fiscal services, and Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Planning.

HEALTH CARE



Seneca County is served by two hospitals. In Fostoria, Fostoria Community Hospital, a partner in the ProMedica system, is located near the center of the City, with major services including cancer care, diabetes management, dialysis, emergency services, endoscopy, a primary care clinic, heart care, home

health care, laboratory services, obstetrics and maternity, orthopedics, pulmonary rehab, radiology and imaging services, rehabilitation services, sleep disorders, surgical services, trauma services and urology. This hospital has met health care needs in Fostoria for over 75 years.



The Tiffin area is now served by a new Mercy Tiffin Hospital campus, constructed adjacent to US 224 on the City’s southwest side. Mercy Tiffin is an acute care facility with 162 physicians on staff. General services include an emergency center, intensive and progressive care units, an obstetrical complex, palliative care, a surgical suite,

and a transitional care unit providing access to primary care physicians and physical and occupational therapists. Diagnostic services include capsule endoscopy, cardiology, CAT scanning, endoscopy, laboratory, MRI, a non-invasive vascular laboratory, pulmonary function, and ultrasound, among others.

TRANSPORTATION: HIGHWAYS



U.S. 224 in eastern Seneca County

As discussed elsewhere in this strategy, Seneca County does not have any limited access, four-lane highways. U.S. Route 224 is the major east-west highway, passing through Attica and Tiffin and connecting with Willard

and, eventually, I-71 to the east, and Findlay and I-75 to the west. Average daily traffic counts are relatively light along U.S. 224, with the 2008 count by the Ohio Department of Transportation indicating 5,470 vehicles at the Hancock County line, growing to 9,660 at S.R. 18 on Tiffin's west side, and then diminishing to 3,700 at the eastern corporate limit of Attica.

U.S. Route 23 passes through Fostoria from north to south, connecting with Carey, Upper Sandusky and Columbus to the south, and to the Toledo area and the Ohio Turnpike (I-80-90) to the north. Traffic counts reach 13,130 at S.R. 12 in Fostoria, but are only 2,420 at the Wyandot County line. State Route 53 is another north-south through route, passing through Tiffin and connecting it to Upper Sandusky and U.S. 23 to the south, and to Fremont, U.S. 20, the Ohio Turnpike, and vacation destinations along Lake Erie to the north. While the average daily count at the Wyandot County line was only 3,580 in the 2008 ODOT traffic count, it grows to between seven and nine thousand vehicles at several points within Tiffin.

Along the eastern edge of Sandusky County, State Route 4 travels from Bucyrus in the south, northerly to U.S. 20 and an interchange with the Ohio Turnpike near Bellevue to the north. During the summer vacation season, Route 4 carries considerable Lake-bound vacation traffic. Daily traffic counts on SR 4 are relatively low, at 2,950 on the Crawford County line, and reaching 4,540 at Attica's southern corporate limit.

State Route 18 is an important east-west artery, linking Fostoria with Tiffin, where it becomes the main east-west artery through Tiffin, and then traveling northeasterly to Bellevue. 2008 traffic counts reached 19,340 in Tiffin's west-side commercial district along S.R. 18, and 15,220 at its intersection with U.S. 224. The count was 8,760 at S.R. 53 in Tiffin, and 6,620 at Washington Street downtown.

Other highways in Seneca County include S.R. 12 (connecting Fostoria to Findlay and to Fremont), S.R. 19 (from Bloomville north through Republic to Green Springs), S.R. 67 (from Republic south toward Upper Sandusky), S.R. 100 (from Tiffin toward Bucyrus), and S.R. 162 (from Republic east to S.R. 4).

A highway improvement plan was developed for Seneca County, with endorsements by local governments, private organizations, and Chambers and economic development offices. The

plan acknowledged that Seneca County had the highest per mile accident rate of any rural county in Ohio, that Seneca is one of the few counties without any four lane highway, and that an improved highway system will lead to increased job creation and managed growth.

AIRPORTS

There are two airports serving Seneca County's private and business air travel. First, Fostoria Metropolitan Airport is located two miles northeast of Fostoria, and is open to the public. Fuel and tie downs are available, airframe and power plant service is also available, and the asphalt



runway measures 5,005 by 100 feet. Aircraft operations averaged 22 daily for the year ending April 22, 2010, of which 51 percent were

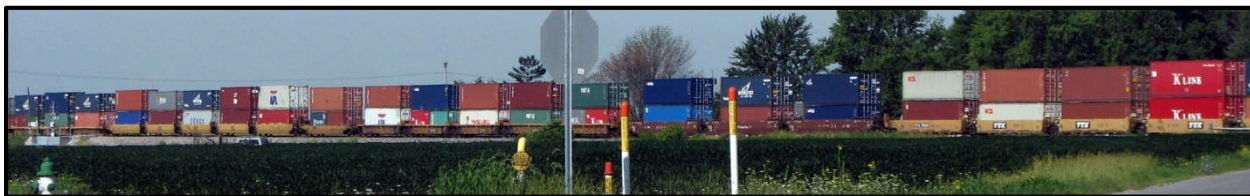
Fostoria (left) and Tiffin's Seneca County Airport (right)

transient general aviation and 44 percent was local general aviation. There are fourteen aircraft based on the field, including thirteen single engine airplanes and one jet. Fostoria Metro Aviation is the fixed base operator.

Ten miles to the east is the Seneca County Airport, located adjacent to U.S. 224 in Tiffin. This airport is also open to the public, and has fuel available, as well as hangars and tie downs. Airframe, power plant, and oxygen service is available. The runway measures 4,000 by 75 feet, and is asphalt. This airport is publicly owned under the Seneca County Commissioners. There are 39 aircraft based on the field, including 29 single engine airplanes, nine multi engine planes, and one jet. Aircraft operations averaged 165 daily for the year ending June 24, 2009; 68 percent was local general aviation and 28 percent was transient general aviation.

RAILROADS

Rail freight transportation is a major factor in Seneca County. The County is served by the Norfolk Southern and CSX Railroads. In Fostoria alone, rail main lines travel in all four directions, making that city a good candidate for rail logistics operations. This predominance of rail has led to the necessity of such projects as the Jones Road Grade Separation project in Fostoria, allowing traffic to flow smoothly over the CSX line on Jones Road.



Both Tiffin and Fostoria have industrial facilities and sites along rail spurs, and additional spurs could be possible for prospective business in several of the villages, including Attica, Republic, and Green Springs.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND CULTURAL AMENITIES



There are a number of “quality of life” amenities in Seneca County which can enrich residents’ life and provide recreational opportunities around the County. Highlights include the Ritz Theater in downtown Tiffin, which brings world class live entertainment into the county, as well as University music and stage productions. Fostoria is capitalizing on its history and position in railroading by developing a railroad-themed park with an observation area. Other points of interest throughout the County include the American Civil War Museum in Tiffin (www.acwmo.org), Glass Heritage Gallery in Fostoria (www.fostoriaglass.com/gallery), Fostoria Area Historical Museum (www.fostoria.org/links/museum), Fostoria Community Arts Council Gallery (www.fostoria.org/links/artsCouncil), Tiffin Glass Museum (www.tiffin-glass.org), Seneca County Museum (www.senecacountymuseum.com) and the Tiffin Art Guild (www.tiffinartguild.org).

Parks also abound throughout Seneca County, with municipal systems and a county-wide park district. The park systems provide a variety of trails and other passive activities. The six County parks include Clinton Access, which provides views of the Sandusky River and connects other parks, as well as Garlo Heritage Nature Preserve, south of Bloomville, with a 37 acre lake. The system has twelve miles of hiking and walking trails, as well as eight miles of horse trails.

PREVIOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

An Overall Economic Development Plan (OEDP) was written for Seneca County in the 1980’s, and its creation led to EDA funding for two projects, including improvements to the Tiffin Airport Industrial Park, including realignment of roadway access, and the development of the 23 Corporate Place industrial park in Fostoria. This CEDS represents a brand new economic development planning document.

In 2000-2002, a comprehensive plan was written for Seneca County. Citizen input methods included an attitude survey and focus groups. At the time, Seneca County was described as

having average economic health, having recovered somewhat from the “bottom” realized in the 1980’s. It was noted that there was a lack of large industries and major employers, with a great number of smaller industries with high technology jobs.

The comprehensive plan identified the presence of two colleges and the cooperation among all agencies and levels of government as contributing factors to economic progress. Problems cited were the county’s transportation network and school systems.

Citizens desired growth spurred by smaller, locally owned businesses, with an apprentice system to train employees, encouraging technical training and four-year degrees. It was recommended that development be concentrated close to cities, with redevelopment of Brownfields and location of industries near railroads. It was further recommended that, to the maximum extent possible, the location of new industry should be coordinated with a cooperative understanding between all citizens, agencies, and public officials so all parties can be involved in new industrial location proposals.

The focus group of citizens also identified ways to enhance economic development in the County, including strengthening the family unit and instilling a better work ethic in young people, as well as physical improvements in the road system and farmland preservation. The group felt that existing businesses should be supported to a greater extent, and that tax incentives for new business are a necessary evil in order to compete with other municipalities.

The land use plan projected future acreage in economic land uses to total 2,146 acres for village centers, 261 acres for commercial, 2,252 acres for industrial, and thus 4,660 total acres, accounting for 1.32 percent of the total county acreage.

The comprehensive plan presented the following as economic development strategies and priorities:

1. Support business growth aimed at retaining and expanding existing businesses and encouraging new business recruitment.
 - Locate industrial and commercial development in clusters rather than in isolated scattered locations.
 - Promote the identity of individual communities and reinforce the existing design patterns within the community when locating new facilities.
2. Maintain viable central business districts and historic preservation efforts within existing downtown areas.
 - Create downtown centers within the County’s hamlets that provide limited commercial services to the local community.
 - Encourage municipalities to establish ongoing downtown revitalization programs.

3. Broaden and diversify the economic base of the County by seeking an appropriate mix of industrial, commercial, and office uses.

- Strengthen the role of the Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corporation to coordinate regional marketing strategies.
- Explore partnerships and economic incentives to encourage microenterprise and cottage industries.

4. Include tourism as an economic development strategy.

- Conduct an inventory of all County tourism destinations and historic sites.
- Promote agritourism opportunities countywide.

A “**Strategic Downtown Planning Initiative**” was developed for downtown Tiffin by a consulting firm, with the plan released in 2010 for the City of Tiffin, Tiffin Tomorrow, and SIEDC. The plan evolved from the following guiding principles, as well as the defining strengths which included the downtown being the emotional heart of Tiffin, setting it apart from other communities; the Sandusky River as the “spine” of Tiffin; the benefit of being a “college town”; and the potential of the Ritz Theater to be a springboard for Tiffin to be a magnet for arts in northwest Ohio:



- Create “Place” and Destination with Brand Identity
- Market Downtown’s history and vitality
- Celebrate the riverfront
- Encourage pedestrian-oriented connections and connect downtown anchors
- Promote context-sensitive infill development
- Provide selective on-street parking and promote shared parking at rear of buildings
- Development of regulatory environment, review process and enforcement
- Promote effective general maintenance
- Improve public realm spaces and enhance streetscape character
- Enhance gateways and promote efficient signage and wayfinding system
- Leverage the art and culture oriented community
- Collaborative operation and physical management initiatives

Organizational recommendations from the downtown plan include: promote revitalization according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s National Main Street Program; put the necessary organization, funding, and staffing in place to implement the strategic plan; create a special improvement district; create a limited liability company and business incubator; and involve and collaborate between the City and County departments.

Promotional recommendations included: Create a “cultural community” in the northern Ohio region; promote upper floor housing; build trust in the investment community; increase local market penetration, and develop marketing information for a promotional campaign.

Design recommendations were: update the regulatory framework and documentation; establish design and development guidelines; expand the historic district designation and utilize specific historic development tools; enhance streetscape and public realm spaces within downtown areas; and promote infrastructure improvements within downtown areas.

Economic Restructuring recommendations included: retain and strengthen existing retail/commercial/office/housing uses; add appropriate new retail and other downtown uses; and add appropriate new retail and other downtown uses.

The City of Fostoria created a vision for its future in 1996 entitled “**Fostoria, Ohio 2005: Community Framework for Progress**”. A conceptual plan for the City’s future was developed by a core group of 35 community leaders and a cross-section of more than 200 civic, religious, business, government, education, community and corporate leaders. Some groups spurred on by that process are still very active today, including the Fostoria Arts Council, Community Heroes program, Community Housing Improvement Committee, the Fostoria Area Visitor’s Bureau, Women Ethnic Groups and Youth, and Local Crime Stoppers program. Core strategies and key actions centered around the following areas:



- **Community Relations:** Promote the vision of Fostoria through an accurate community profile, promoting Fostoria as an “American community that works and cares”.
- **Community and Neighborhood Quality of Life:** Improving quality of life through safe and attractive neighborhoods, access to leisure and recreational activities, and improved culture, shopping and entertainment opportunities.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation and Infrastructure Development:** Redeveloping and expanding the community infrastructure including water, sewer, gas, electric, phone, fiber optics, rail and road capabilities, and marketing these capabilities for development.
- **Economic Development:** Identifying community assets which rail, manufacturing, food processing, agri-business and environmental growth industries require to be successful; restructuring capabilities to meet these needs, attracting and retaining these target industries in the community.
- **Workforce Education and Development:** Developing and marketing a 21st century workforce through partnerships among organized labor, industry, schools, industrial educators and community colleges in the region.
- **Women, Minority and Youth Mentoring and Training:** Creating mentoring, training and support opportunities in business, education and community leadership for women, minorities, and youth.

ANALYSIS: STATE OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

A series of meetings was held with the CEDS Committee to achieve a consensus on a number of factors concerning economic development in Seneca County. The following is a summary of comments received during these meetings.

PARTNERING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The CEDS Committee developed a list of economic development partners throughout Seneca County and the region of which it is a part. These groups work in combination to address economic development issues and challenges. Many have specific roles, while others such as SIEDC and FEDC are charged with overseeing and coordinating overall economic development.

- Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC)
- Fostoria Economic Development Corporation (FEDC)
- Seneca Regional and Fostoria Area Chambers of Commerce
- Tiffin-Seneca County Port Authority
- Tiffin University
- Heidelberg University
- Ohio Department of Development (now the Ohio Department of Community Services) and the emerging JobsOhio
- Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development (NORED; regional organization)
- Regional Growth Partnership (RGP; charged with fulfilling the JobsOhio work plan in northwest Ohio)
- Vanguard and Sentinel Career and Technology Centers
- Railroads – CSX, Norfolk Southern, short line (port authority)
- Utilities: AEP, AMP Ohio, North Central Cooperative. Also: natural gas providers, Northern Ohio Rural Water, American Cities water.
- Terra State Community College
- Owens State Community College
- Tiffin Tomorrow – downtown revitalization organization
- Industrial Management Council – peer group meetings
- United Way
- OSU Extension – Seneca County office
- Farm Service Agency
- Farm Bureau – represents agriculture and agribusiness interests
- Experienced seniors in the community who can offer their experience and understanding
- Local governments throughout the County: Cities, Villages, and Townships
- Federal agencies, such as EPA, which provide financial and program assistance with Brownfields
- Tiffin Area Human Resources Association – peer group professional organization

Seneca County is served by a number of interconnected economic development organizations. The following is a more detailed description of the major economic development partners.

The **Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC)** operates from newly acquired and remodeled offices in Tiffin, which they share with the Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce. SIEDC was created in 1983 as a public/private not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) economic development organization with the purpose of retaining and expanding business in Tiffin and Seneca County. Projects and activities typically involve building and land development, retention and expansion of local business, marketing worldwide, financial incentives, and provision of community and site information. SIEDC was instrumental in the development of business sites including the Northstar Industrial Park, Eagle Rock Business Park, and Airport Industrial Park. SIEDC has commissioned a highway study for the County (The Seneca Highway Improvement Plan), and has assisted in renovation of the Shawhan Hotel (now an elderly housing facility). SIEDC has increasingly become active in pursuing funding to remediate and redevelop Brownfield sites in the area, such as the Glass House Brownfield Clean-Up project. Recent SIEDC projects have included the Civil War Museum of Ohio (an \$800,000 project), Brownfield cleanups at Tiffin Glass Factory, Firestone and Rainbow Muffler, and Tiffin University-Rosenblat. Also, SIEDC obtained a Rural Industrial Park Grant and Loan for a project involving Tiffin Insulators (spec building). Additional projects and plans include endorsing incumbent worker training, additional Brownfield planning (the Wall Street corridor is under consideration), and working with industry and educators to match education with the needs of local employers.



The **Tiffin Area Chamber of Commerce** has unveiled its new brand as the Seneca Regional Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Services. It has over 300 member businesses, and its mission is “To be the most influential and respected association of business professionals in Northwest Ohio shaping a positive business environment that promotes the exchange of goods and services to make a profit”. Chamber activities include provision of

services, improving community understanding of issues of concern, conducting educational sessions, selling local products and services through networking and referrals, welcoming dignitaries and new businesses, providing information, and offering group benefit programs regarding insurance, communications, and member-to-member benefits. A recent project involves promotion and cooperative advertising for the Little Box Shops.

www.tiffinchamber.com

The **Sandusky County-Seneca County-City of Tiffin Port Authority** is a joint venture of Sandusky and Seneca Counties and the City of Tiffin, and is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors. The Port Authority was created to manage a short line railroad that traverses from Tiffin north to Woodville in Sandusky County. This short line, NOW Rail, connects with the CSX railroad as well as Norfolk Southern. The Port Authority, under Sections 4582.21 et. Seq. of the Ohio revised Code, can undertake a number of other economic development functions,

including financing of development projects, and acquiring, owning, and selling property, among others.



The **Fostoria Economic Development Corporation** has been in existence since 1980, and it shares an office facility in downtown Fostoria with the Fostoria Area Chamber of Commerce. This organization is directly involved in marketing the community to prospective business, providing incentives for economic growth, and facilitating the retention and expansion of the existing business base. Projects have included the Jones Road grade separation project, participation in a multi-jurisdiction Brownfield coalition, supporting an Industrial Council, and assisting in the sale of the former TK Atlas building to a new owner and securing a Phase II Environmental Assessment for the property.

The **Fostoria Area Chamber of Commerce** provides support to its local business members, and champions the growth and development of the downtown Fostoria area as well as other economic segments of the community. It also provides additional services such as group benefits, educational programming, and marketing of local businesses, services, and products.



Seneca County falls within the regional jurisdiction of the **Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development (NORED)** organization, and SIEDC and FEDC have been members of NORED since its inception. This twelve-county organization provides a forum for economic development practitioners throughout northwest Ohio, provides legislative and other information to its membership, and offers professional development and networking opportunities.

Additional organizations are focused on specific elements of economic development. For example, **Tiffin Tomorrow** is devoted to the revitalization of downtown Tiffin. There is also a Convention and Visitors Bureau, although some functions in tourism marketing funded through a county-wide lodging “bed tax” are transitioning to the Tiffin Area Chamber of Commerce.

STRENGTHS AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

The CEDS Committee analyzed the strengths and weaknesses they observed or understood to be relevant for Seneca County, and developed the following list of strengths. The list is fairly extensive, which speaks well of the County and its development opportunities. Attempts have been made to group these items categorically.

- The County’s location, within 600 miles of two-thirds of the United States’ population;
- The relatively brief driving time to neighboring communities;

- Land availability for development: land is available for industrial development in and adjacent to the population centers, on reliable transportation routes;
- Reasonable and competitive utility costs, for energy (through AEP and the North Central Cooperative) and for municipal water and wastewater service;
- Transportation and accessibility through a network of U.S., State, and local County and Township roadways;
- Two railroads plus the Port Authority railroad, and access to rail transportation through several sidings maintained in the County;
- Two airports, with runways of sufficient size to accommodate small corporate jets;
- Multiple sources of water: Sandusky River (Tiffin), upground reservoir (Fostoria); National Center for Water Quality Research;
- Air – as a resource ;
- Food – food culture, and local agribusiness;
- A strong and historically significant agricultural sector;
- The County’s several Economic Development organizations;
- The services and development tools available through the County’s Port Authority;
- A fully staffed Regional Planning Commission;
- Chambers of Commerce in Tiffin and Fostoria;
- Medical facilities – newly constructed Tiffin Mercy Hospital, and renovated Fostoria Community Hospital;
- Parks (such as Hedges-Boyer Park in Tiffin, which is home to the Tiffin YMCA facility);
- Low crime rates;
- Safety services forces in the County, which are well trained, and who work well together;
- The County’s Industrial Management Council, a peer discussion group for business managers;
- Business and government leadership;
- University/Business relationships; international exposure;
- The presence of national and global businesses within the County, and the potential for more;
- Intellectual capital resulting from presence of two Universities and other factors;
- Labor force with a strong work ethic;
- A mix of union and non-union labor;
- A “bootstrap community”, with a history of self-reliance;
- A good quality of life;
- Presence of the arts and culture;
- A relatively low cost of living;
- A rich history of the area and its communities;
- A spirit of citizenship – less apathy;
- A culture that is supportive of families;
- A spiritual community, with active churches;

- Senior citizens and recent retirees who represent a relatively untapped resource and opportunity;
- The communities' level of philanthropy; and
- The County and its communities are an ideal size – large enough to have resources and amenities, but small enough to accomplish things effectively.

WEAKNESSES AND COMPARATIVE DISADVANTAGES

Some weaknesses were identified by the CEDS Committee. Among the more pronounced ones are the following:

- The County's highway infrastructure and distance to the nearest Interstate; lack of a limited access divided highway;
- The County is no longer in the geographic center of American manufacturing;
- The cost of doing business (also a threat);
- Perception of certain negative aspects, often erroneous, such as crime (Fostoria);
- An attitude of self-defeatism;
- A declining population base, representing a shrinking market and labor force;
- A shrinking tax base;
- Demographically, an aging population;
- A *perception* of high labor costs and the presence of union labor;
- Seneca County is not a regional destination for general retail;
- Seneca County does not stand out as a target for either captive, destination, or drive-by retail business;
- A "we're just fine as it is" mentality, resistant to change;
- Too many "work-arounds" that sap energy, rather than adopting a more direct, efficient strategy;
- A feeling among many that people don't want others to succeed; and
- Problems with attitudes – again, many people are anti-change.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

The CEDS Committee listed a number of areas where they saw opportunity for existing businesses to grow, or for new businesses to locate within the County and thrive. Among those opportunities are the following:

- Globalism and intellectual capital; Seneca County is well positioned to benefit from increased globalism, with the presence of two Universities, and with a location in the heart of rail transportation routes;
- Opportunities through the development of areas of specialization at the two Universities (for example, two current areas include water research at Heidelberg and criminal justice programming at Tiffin);
- The presence of two Universities within the County seat;

- The reinvention of downtowns, and the connection (in Tiffin) that the central business district can have with the Universities;
- Agriculture, in an era experiencing the growth of local foods and other food opportunities;
- Opportunities through green businesses and practices, including development of wind farms and solar cells;
- Family capital and resources;
- Public equity resources;
- A culture that raises children to be able to work;
- Opportunities for coordination of all education facilities and a seamless delivery of education, from the public and private K-12 systems to college choices and vocational schools;
- The county's history and story of innovation, which can (and will) be built upon;
- Synergies that exist between business and higher education;
- Military life and Veterans' organizations – experience in Seneca County;
- Regional support from nearby counties and regional organizations such as NORED and RGP; and
- The critical mass of the population of college students within the two universities in Tiffin

THREATS TO SENECA COUNTY'S ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Finally, the CEDS Committee addressed outside threats to the County's economic status, including the following:

- The relative cost of doing business in Seneca County;
- Deterioration of the community; the County and its communities have to work together for change to come about;
- Crime and Drug Abuse: There is an acknowledged need to wipe out the activity, not just sweep it under the rug;
- A *perceived* lack of leadership, and attitudes that local government does not have the community's best interests at heart when making decisions;
- Employment opportunities elsewhere; jobs are disappearing from this community, and the qualified labor pool is diminished as a result;
- Schools are sliding back into academic emergency because of inadequate funding
- A housing market with many vacancies;
- The lack of a four-lane Interstate, U.S., or State highway presents a threat; distance to a highway precludes the County from consideration by some prospects, and may thwart local expansion decisions;
- Other communities, including some within short distances, are competitors;
- Government cutbacks at all levels present a threat;
- The presence of people who do not want growth, who often harbor a fear of growth;

- Demographic trends that present some threats to continued growth: an aging population, and a predominant Baby Boomer generation;
- An anti-change environment;
- Perceptions by some that the County is somewhat antithetical to the “Creative Class” model, and not accepting of diversity;
- The need to feed intellectual capital; diversity is often a “feeder”;
- The need to gain and learn from the perspectives of outsiders, which can be difficult and challenging;
- “Keep other businesses out” is not as pervasive as in the past, but an element of such thinking survives;
- A mismatch between labor skills and business needs – the skills of the available work force do not necessarily match the current or future needs of industry and business; and
- The cost of medical plans and their availability, which may be addressed through creation of a co-operative health system.

TRENDS AND FORCES

Several external forces and trends at the national and global level impact Seneca County and its economy. Some of those trends were recommended by members of the Committee; others were gleaned through work conducted by the Consultant during the development of this CEDS.

- The State of Ohio’s population is in a “slow growth” mode;
- Auto market’s recent slide – with more recent signs of recovery;
- The relative cost of doing business – some elements in Ohio are relatively costly;
- Statewide, a trend toward migration to Central Ohio and the Columbus area;
- A reasonably substantial “90 minute market area” for Seneca County, including Cleveland, Columbus, and Detroit;
- Seneca County has a “drive-by”, rather than the more desirable “destination” economy;
- Seneca County attracts the “crossover consumer”, not the “static loyalty” one;
- Findlay is a competitive, nearby regional retail destination;
- Fuel prices are increasing – this brings some positive impacts to Seneca County, as well as some negative ones;
- An aging population: This presents a market for health care related business, especially assisting aging consumers 65-105 years old. An example of product need is the growing demand for Alzheimer’s units;
- The Internet presents a threat/competitor to local retail business;
- The Internet can be helpful for geographically remote businesses;
- Medical services within the community can present lower costs to employers;
- A Japanese business model changes to regionalizing distribution, and can present opportunities to Seneca County;
- China as an emerging economic trade partner; and Seneca County can take advantage of linkage to China through its Universities;

- The automobile industry continues to be volatile, and was hit by recession, but currently rebounding; and
- The ability for knowledge workers to work from home and create a local virtual “think tank”.

WHERE IS SENECA COUNTY HEADING?

The Committee next considered the direction in which the County’s economy was heading, and the following comments were recorded:

- Seneca County is headed in a positive direction if there is cooperation;
- The Universities should function as motivators and facilitators;
- There is potential for positive growth if there is a group of “smart people” associated with the effort;
- A portion of the future economy is dependent upon efforts to grow young businesses: Both entrepreneurs and skills are needed for success;
- Seneca County should be able to evolve a hub of technical regional services for small, emerging businesses, as well as enterprises showing a potential for growth;
- Some need to play a role in supplying cultural amenities, education, and opportunities for young professionals;
- Success is dependent for many business ventures upon the availability of risk capital; growth for some will be dependent upon this resource;
- Some advocate a move toward some consolidation of local governments and school systems, shared programming, and shared resources, to improve efficiencies; and
- Education will drive the economy.

LIKELY GROWTH SECTORS AND CLUSTERS

The Committee identified the following as likely candidates for leading the growth and further development of Seneca County in the future:

- **Education and related services** (examples of success include the water lab at Heidelberg, Criminal Justice/Homeland Security at Tiffin University, and the programs of the local vocational/technical schools)
- **Young entrepreneurs** serving as innovators and inventors. This group needs support with research, development, and commercialization of their products. They need to trust local officials providing the needed services.
- Growth potential is great for those sectors working with **rail and shipping** from the East Coast, along the emerging CSX Gateway project and alternative means.
- **Agriculture**: areas of specialization include vegetable crops, Steyer Seeds, and the bull farm
- The **automotive supply chain** will continue to offer potential for local growth, because of the geographic location of the County.

POSITIONING IN THE NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ECONOMIES

Finally, Committee members had these thoughts regarding Seneca County's position within the contemporary national and global economies:

- Seneca County is positioned to be active in national and global economies;
- Rail is (and will be) increasingly shipping internationally from the East Coast to and through the Midwest, via the CSX and Norfolk Southern rail systems, both of which traverse Seneca County. Also, local transportation will be accommodated via the Port Authority's rail line;
- In order to be better positioned for a role in the growing logistics and trans-shipment industry, there is a need for truck routes for 90,000 pound containers within the County;
- Another need (and opportunity) is for the development of industrial parks or sites served by both railroad systems, and development of a Foreign Trade Zone. There is also opportunity for growth through the location and development of a small location for Triple Crown rail shipping with access to both rail networks;
- There is another need for county-wide fiber optic installation and upgrading of communications (the local Bascom and Sycamore systems are developing fiber optics);
- Another needed service is a good, accessible, and readily applicable countywide GIS system; and
- The County also needs to develop a support system for international companies, with needed services readily available.

VISION STATEMENT: A PREFERRED FUTURE FOR SENECA COUNTY

Committee members were asked to provide components of an overall vision statement, describing a desired Seneca County twenty years in the future. Participants were asked to consider elements they wanted to see that do not exist presently, existing elements that they wanted to build upon, and existing elements that they wanted to eliminate. The following is an attempt to weave together the responses that were received:

Seneca County in 2031 has benefited from a continuously improving standard of living, resulting from a strong, organized, and coordinated support structure. Support has come from major interest “clusters”, such as those organizations and institutions that have focused on education, one of the County’s primary assets. Collaboration has become commonplace, and leaders have reached beyond the County line to work increasingly within a regional context.

Much of the basis for support has come from the basic community building blocks and pervasive community values: family values, optimism, communication and connectivity, strong institutions and churches, promotion of partnerships of all types, and a willingness to work together and across jurisdictional lines. County and community officials have discovered positive outlets to report events and trends, and the positive message reaches both the internal market of businesses and residents within the County and the external market consisting of outside prospects.

The result of these building blocks has been an ability to move beyond planning into implementation and progress, with the continuous development of needed infrastructure and capital improvements to support desired, sustainable, and controlled growth.

Economic development practitioners have worked with others to develop a seamless, one-stop destination to assist new and expanding businesses, to cut through any red tape, and to operate on a comprehensive, case-management basis. Grouped with this assistance are angel investors and a pool of available capital that can be made available to invest in local projects. These local resources are particularly effective in assisting and nurturing small entrepreneurs, and notable success in new business creation and growth has resulted.

As it has moved forward, building upon its assets, Seneca County has been able to attract knowledge workers to its diverse industrial and business base, and become a destination for white collar workers. In doing so, the County has been able to maintain a strong middle class economy, and has succeeded in exporting products and knowledge. Seneca County has transitioned from a “drive by” to a true destination for travelers, shoppers, employees, and businesses, through a realization that Seneca County benefits from the dichotomy of being “nowhere but in the middle of everywhere”.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SENECA COUNTY

The following set of goals, objectives, and action steps are based on the series of discussions held by the CEDS Committee from spring through fall 2011. The plan format includes broad goals and specific, measurable objectives under each goal. A plan of action is intended to show how the goals and objectives will be implemented. Also included is a list of potential partners to actively pursue each objective, a general time frame within which the activity should be completed, and some suggested measures of success.

It should be noted that many of the objectives are given an “ongoing” time period. These are activities that should be carried out continuously by the identified economic development partners.

The following is a list of the eight goals developed through CEDS Committee discussion and interpretation of that discussion by the plan’s facilitators.

GOAL 1: Retain existing businesses and help them expand

GOAL 2: Attract new, diversified business activity to Seneca County

GOAL 3: Facilitate workforce employability and training

GOAL 4: Provide infrastructure to support business locations, relocations, and expansions throughout Seneca County

GOAL 5: Market and brand Seneca County and its communities, internally and externally

GOAL 6: Provide an atmosphere in which entrepreneurs can flourish

GOAL 7: Enhance Seneca County’s quality of life for business leaders, employees, and residents

GOAL 8: Organize for maximum effectiveness in achieving successful economic development

The following narrative describes and expands upon each goal, presenting objectives, which describe more specific actions to achieve each goal, as well as suggested partnering entities to assist in achieving each goal, a time frame for completing the objective, and suggested measurements to determine the degree of success in reaching each objective.

GOAL 1: Retain existing businesses and help them expand

This is the first goal in the CEDS plan by design. Efforts to retain existing businesses are acknowledged to be most successful in creating jobs. One recent study, “The Importance of an Existing Business Strategy”, by Blane, Canada Ltd (2006), found that the average community derives 76 percent of its new jobs and capital investment from existing business. Business attraction efforts, while important, typically result in very infrequent victories. In many ways, it is easier to cultivate the enterprises that you already have than to compete with countless other localities to attract a new business.

An initial activity is the creation and updating of an inventory or data base of all businesses above some minimum threshold in the County or community. This can be used by economic developers to determine potential clusters or business-to-business opportunities, as well as to track overall business trends. Other activities that can assist existing business include peer-to-peer roundtables, provision of information on financing, workforce, and technical assistance programs, and support to County-wide affinity groups. Economic development offices also serve as first points of contact for information and referral about available resources.

The primary activity associated with retention is a Business Retention and Expansion (or BRE) survey, where all community businesses meeting a specified minimum size or employee threshold are invited to participate in structured interviews. Business officials are asked what steps or improvements by the community would make their business more profitable. Questions also may include data on current and projected employment, training or labor force needs, and suppliers of needed inputs (with an emphasis on encouraging “buying local”). Successful deployment of a BRE survey and visitation program is most successful with a large number of trained volunteers who make visits in teams of two or more, and with a uniform series of questions, a deadline for completion of all visits, and a presentation of some token of appreciation for the business at each visit.

A proactive retention and expansion effort will help the County stay “ahead of the curve” in identifying emerging issues and trends, gain an understanding of the local business community’s views and attitudes, identify emerging expansion and relocation plans, provide exposure for local development agencies and Chambers, demonstrate the County’s pro-

business attitude, and acquaint business executives with available assistance programs and the contact persons to reach for assistance.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Raise risk capital and equity. CEDS Committee members set a goal of \$3,000,000 in locally available risk funds.

Partners: Banks, investors, “angels” who provide capital or equity, venture capitalists, State and Federal programs that can help capitalize a fund, and WSOS with its loan programs.

Time Frame: The program can be in process within a short time frame (1 year); it should be initially capitalized within two to three years.

Performance Measures: Amount invested; amount available (then, later, performance of loans can be monitored: # jobs created/retained, \$ investment)

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Inform businesses of the usefulness of local professional organizations and affinity groups, such as Information Technology, Human Resources, or procurement management associations.

Partners: local economic development practitioners (LEDP’s), Small Business Development Center (based at Terra State Community College in Fremont, but making scheduled appointments in Seneca County on a monthly basis); Chambers of Commerce, local associations and their sponsors.

Time Frame: Ongoing, with continuous increases in association membership and meeting attendance.

Performance Measures: Number of businesses involved, number of groups and associations

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Provide opportunities for businesses to work together; roundtables, joint projects (including the Industrial Management Council).

Partners: Business groups, Chambers of Commerce, LEDPs, individual businesses

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measure: Number of opportunities provided

OBJECTIVE 1.4: Help businesses develop and diversify their existing products, services, and markets. Make sure to follow through on commitments.

Partners: Universities, Small Business Development Center, Chambers of Commerce, outside consultants

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new products, increase in sales

OBJECTIVE 1.5: Undertake an intensive County-wide Business Retention and Expansion visitation program involving a large number of volunteers. Determine what entity will organize and manage the program – it can be a cooperative effort. Develop and implement a strategic client contact management system, and stay in touch with client businesses in a consistent manner. Seek feedback and suggestions from the businesses.

Partners: LEDPs, volunteers from the governmental and private sectors

Time Frame: Underway within 2-3 years.

Performance Measures: Number of businesses visited, number of participants, number of cases of feedback and problem solving

OBJECTIVE 1.6: Bring technical assistance in global marketing to the County and its businesses, using expertise at local Universities and outside resources at the State and regional (RGP) levels.

Partners: Universities, LEDPs, State of Ohio, RGP

Time Frame: Begin within one year; then make it an ongoing activity

Performance Measures: Number of global initiative cases, number of businesses contacted and assisted, number of new partnerships

OBJECTIVE 1.7: Provide information on local supply chains, clusters, and potential for business-to-business marketing. Develop an inventory of businesses and their products and services, as well as inputs that could be provided locally. One example: Use NORED membership with CAR in Ann Arbor to obtain data concerning the automotive supply chain.

Partners: Chambers, LEDPs, outside resources

Time Frame: Ongoing; formally in place within three years

Performance Measures: Number of cases where information was provided; number of businesses entered in the data base; number of cases of new local purchasing

OBJECTIVE 1.8: Provide an opportunity for businesses to discuss their needs and expectations of local government (including capital improvement needs). In turn, be a resource for the client businesses, sharing information on resources and contacts.

Partners: LEDPs, local governments, local businesses

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: number of participating businesses

OBJECTIVE 1.9: Develop and appreciation and recognition program for businesses, County-wide, such as an annual awards program.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, local business community and media

Time Frame: Ongoing; program in place within three years

Performance Measures: Number of events, number of businesses recognized

GOAL 2: *Attract new, diversified business activity to Seneca County*

Business prospecting and attraction has become highly competitive and sophisticated. One of the greatest challenges is to distinguish Seneca County and its communities from the competition, through product differentiation, competitiveness in the cost of doing business, and a focus on a specific market. Once the community makes the initial cut, other factors such as available incentive programs will come into play.



In 2010, Area Development magazine surveyed site selector consultants concerning selection priorities, and the sample of site selectors ranked priorities in this order: (1 – tie) labor costs, and state and local incentives; (3) highway accessibility; (4) availability of skilled labor; (5) energy availability and cost; (6) proximity to major markets; (7) tax exemptions; (8) occupancy and construction costs; (9) corporate tax rate; and (10) availability of buildings.

Another important factor was inbound/

outbound shipping costs. The top “quality of life” factor was a low crime rate. Nearly all of the factors cited are cost related, indicating how location decisions are intricately related to the bottom line.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Cultivate the potential for international business investment in Seneca County, including Chinese investment. Work with local Universities and the State of Ohio.

Partners: Universities, State of Ohio, LEDPs, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing; beginning immediately

Performance Measures: Amount of investment, number of businesses, number of jobs

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Target and devote resources to new and growing markets and new lines of business that are most likely to succeed. Continue to evaluate and monitor emerging and growing business clusters, whether they share common product lines or are vertically integrated within the County. Identified sectors with particular promise include:

- Specialized and value-added agribusiness, including local foods (partners include Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation Service, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture);
- Medical care, health care, and gerontology (existing businesses in the field);
- Criminal justice and homeland security (Universities, law enforcement agencies);
- Rail-related and rail-dependent industry, and related logistics (Railroads, ODOT);
- Automotive supply chain (NORED, CAR, private sector); and
- Green business and wind energy.

Partners: In general, partners for all the above also include LEDPs, private sector, Universities, RPC, JobsOhio

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Amount of sales, new markets, number of new businesses and expanded businesses, number of jobs created

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Coordinate prospect development County-wide with a known protocol; research and develop a recruitment fulfillment response that can be customized for all of Seneca County.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing; protocol in place and followed within two years

Performance Measures: Number of prospects, new businesses, jobs

OBJECTIVE 2.4: Employ local CEOs and other business leaders as leads for potential businesses with which they are familiar. Cultivate partnerships and networks between businesses.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, private sector businesses with linkages to prospects

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: number of cases where local business officials participate

OBJECTIVE 2.5: Develop a commercial/service/management council to promote interaction and transfer of knowledge and experience between businesses. Provide information on key and timely topics, and alert local economic development officials of potential expansions and assistance needed for project development. Develop a “seamless” business assistance network.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, participating private sector entities

Time Frame: Develop council within two years

Performance Measures: Number of meetings, number of participants; evaluate participant satisfaction

OBJECTIVE 2.6: Explore opportunities in government and military procurement for local products and services; provide local business with a seminar on government and military procurement.

Partners: LEDPs, state and federal government officials, local governments, SBDC, Terra State Community College

Time Frame: Ongoing; seminar within one year; web page updating as a continuous and frequent process

Performance Measures: Dollars awarded in County, number of bids awarded, number of successful businesses

OBJECTIVE 2.7: Develop, maintain and constantly update a state of the art website providing industrial site and park, demographic, organizational, environmental, and other critical information. The website should include an improved comprehensive industrial land and building database. Provide a single first point of contact with links to all other related sites or pages. A task force should work to achieve integration of websites, search engine optimization, and ease of access to critical information. External links should also be obtained on outside websites (NORED, RPG, State of Ohio, and others)

Partners: EDPs, IT staff or consultant, developers, property owners, RPC, County and local governments, task force members

Time Frame: New integration of websites with complete information within one year

Performance Measures: Number of hits, number of referrals from website, page visits

OBJECTIVE 2.8: Offer and publicize a set of local incentives and development tools to achieve project implementation and success (CEDA, JEDD, TIF, Foreign Trade Zone, loans, infrastructure grants and loans, workforce incentives, business finance programs, etc.)

Partners: LEDPs, local government, state and federal agencies, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Dollars invested, dollars in grants and loans obtained, number of projects, number of jobs, dollars in resulting investment

OBJECTIVE 2.9: Collect retail marketing information in order to identify gaps and recruit businesses where demand is significant. Provide comprehensive market research not routinely available.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, downtown organizations and revitalization committee, researchers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new businesses, jobs created

GOAL 3: Facilitate workforce employability and training



Workforce development has become an indispensable component in economic development. Workforce training and skill level needs change continuously with the advancement of technology. Over the recent past, educational institutions, schools, and training providers have become full partners in implementing economic development programs that are most responsive to local and prospective business needs.

Seneca County operates at a slight disadvantage; the most recent Census data (from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey) found 6.0 percent of the County's 25+ population to have an Associate degree (vs. 9.1% statewide) and 8.2 percent had obtained a Bachelor's degree (vs. 10.0 percent statewide).

Among the recommended action steps below is a proactive effort to link businesses with educators, to bring necessary training programs to local employers in order to keep them as globally competitive as possible. The business retention and expansion survey mentioned in the first goal discussion should include questions for employers concerning labor force skill gaps and training needs. Further, in an era of diminished resources, the Educational Service Center

should be utilized to facilitate shared and specialized services that can be delivered to the County's student base as efficiently and effectively as possible.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Link businesses with educators; focus on areas of specialization at Heidelberg and Tiffin Universities. Continue and expand Industrial Skills programs. Work toward seamless delivery of education. Refine and evaluate workforce development initiatives to ensure that they are responsive to real needs of business and labor; provide a feedback mechanism to evaluate effectiveness.

Partners: K-12 schools, career center, Sentinel-Vanguard, Universities, LEDPs, Education Service Center

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of employees served, number of businesses served, number of cases, number of new collaborations, evaluation/feedback mechanism for new initiatives to track business satisfaction and employee effectiveness

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Maintain the County's qualified and job-ready labor pool; stifle the "drain" of quality employees away from the County. Build the number of "knowledge workers". (What differentiates knowledge work from other forms of work is its primary task of "non-routine" problem solving that requires a combination of convergent, divergent, and creative thinking.)

Partners: DJFS, workforce council members, educational institutions, business sector, EDPs, workforce agencies

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of jobs and employees retained

OBJECTIVE 3.3: Use the Business Retention and Expansion survey and other means to identify and inventory the workforce and training needs of County businesses; catalog and quantify those needs, look for commonalities among businesses, and respond to trending needs.

Partners: DJFS, workforce board, State, businesses, LEDPs, workforce agencies

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of businesses assisted, number of training programs, number of employees trained

OBJECTIVE 3.4: Include educational partners in the (County-wide) Industrial Management Council.

Partners: Educational institutions, Chambers, LEDPs, business leaders

Time Frame: This is now being implemented

Performance Measures: Number of partners

OBJECTIVE 3.5: Promote volunteerism in assisting the existing and potential workforce. Volunteers can help with training and mentoring, shadowing programs, and other means of exposing potential employees to local workplaces.

Partners: Local governments, private and nonprofit organizations

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of volunteers, project outcomes

OBJECTIVE 3.6: Promote and facilitate more collaboration and sharing of services, and specialization among school districts. This is a means for scarce local resources to be used most effectively.

Partners: Educational Service Center, local school districts

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of cases of collaboration, number of students participating in collaborative programs, dollars saved through collaboration

OBJECTIVE 3.7: Make use of local expertise to develop a mentoring system to assist new workforce members. Select an organization to oversee the program and assign mentors. Select participants based on their matching interests and their needs.

Partners: Service organizations, mentor volunteers

Time Frame: System in place within 2-3 years

Performance Measures: Number of persons mentored, number of volunteer mentors

OBJECTIVE 3.8: Quantify and more closely understand the County's drug dependency issue and its impact on local businesses. Include drug testing statistics. Provide relevant information to Countywide decision makers.

Partners: Hiring agencies, businesses, schools, law enforcement and legal justice system, Prosecutor, social service agencies

Time Frame: 1-2 years

Performance Measures: Report produced; copies disseminated

OBJECTIVE 3.9: Identify employment trends and skill sets that workers need to match local business needs; identify personal preferences, skills assessment, researching jobs, resume development, and interviewing technique.

Partners: Hiring agencies, DJFS and Job Store, Chambers, workforce board members, business input

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Report produced

GOAL 4: Provide infrastructure to support business locations, relocations, and expansions throughout Seneca County



“Infrastructure” refers to the supportive systems needed for producing and delivering goods and services, and to make sites within the County viable for productive economic uses. Historically,

infrastructure could be placed into two major groupings: (1) transportation infrastructure, enabling the movement of goods and people, including streets and highways, public transportation, railroads, airports, water ports, bike trails, bridges, access improvements, and parking facilities; and (2) Public Utility Infrastructure, including basic services and commodities that are provided to the public at large: water, sewer, storm sewer, and energy (electricity, natural gas). A third category has become increasingly important: communications infrastructure, consisting of two-way voice, data, and broadband communication. Widespread high-speed broadband access can help a rural area such as Seneca County level the playing field in economic development, in many respects.

Offering adequate and cost-competitive infrastructure to a prospective site is critical in economic development. General industrial needs typically include 13kV distribution of electricity, two to six inch natural gas lines, four to eight inch water and sewer lines, T-1 or fiber optic Internet, and, possibly, rail access. The cost of delivering such infrastructure can be reduced in many cases by following principles of “smart growth”, allowing for mixed land uses, building close to or on the edge of the developed community (or, better yet, practicing “infill” strategies within the community’s existing grid), and encouraging collaboration in development decisions to serve multiple uses.

Highest infrastructure priorities in Seneca County include development of truck routes, accommodation for projects involving the growing rail industry and its facilities within Seneca County, expansion and development of prime industrial sites, upgrading primary highways (such as US 224, SR 53, and SR 4), supporting infill and Brownfield development, and attaining universal Broadband and telecom infrastructure throughout the County.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Develop truck routes with higher load limits to accommodate rail trans-shipment.

Partners: County Engineer, ODOT, advocates, EDPs, RPC

Time Frame: Long range: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Number of roads and mileage improved, number of businesses assisted

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Bolster, expand, and create industrial sites and parks that are ready for occupants. Analyze existing available properties and their capacity for growth and new ventures. Provide sites with rail access, such as access for Triple Crown shipping.

Partners: Railroads, developers, local governments, LEDPs, RPC

Time Frame: Long range: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Dollars in investment, number of new businesses accommodated, number of acres and sites developed

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Promote infill and development of sites within existing communities, including demolition of dilapidated properties, and Brownfield remediation and development.

Partners: Local government, developers, State agencies, LEDPs, RPC

Time Frame: Ongoing; some infill and Brownfield projects are underway

Performance Measures: Number of infill sites remediated/developed, number of new jobs, properties re-developed, dollars of new investment

OBJECTIVE 4.4: Advocate for and attain broadband access throughout the county, including fiber optic installation. Increase the availability and redundancy of telecommunication services. Help obtain available resources to develop Internet connectivity throughout the County.

Partners: LEDPs, utility and providers, business leaders, local governments

Time Frame: Long term: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Miles of new fiber; number of new households served; improved telecommunications receptivity

OBJECTIVE 4.5: Advocate for projects that bring efficiency and safety to highways, including an upgrade SR 53 (to “Super 2” status), and eventual upgrade of US 224 to a four lane highway.

Partners: ODOT, LEDPs, RPC, local governments, Chambers

Time Frame: Long term: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Dollars invested, number of improvements, projects completed

OBJECTIVE 4.6: Provide for water-intensive user industries; ensure excess capacity of raw and treated water, and of sanitary and storm drainage.

Partners: Local governments and utilities, engineering consultants, funding agencies, LEDPs, Chambers

Time Frame: Long term: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Excess capacity, wastewater and water treatment capacity

OBJECTIVE 4.7: Facilitate utility extensions to planned growth areas and job-ready industrial sites. Activities include research and preliminary engineering and cost estimates to extend utilities to sites, marketing of the sites, and seeking of grants, low interest loans, and/or tax incentives to develop needed utilities.

Partners: Local governments, funding agencies, LEDPs, RPC

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of sites served, lineal feet of new water/sewer extensions, number of new connections

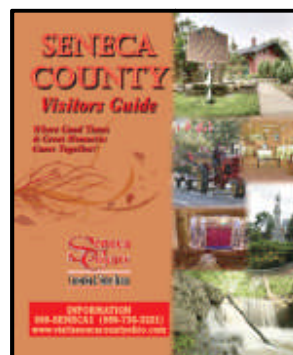
OBJECTIVE 4.8: Provide technical assistance as needed for Five Star Communities working on infrastructure projects.

Partners: Local governments, LEDPs, State and Federal agencies

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of projects, dollars invested in projects

GOAL 5: Market and brand Seneca County and its communities, internally and externally



Marketing is important in attracting and retaining businesses, but it is also critical in attracting and retaining residents and labor force members as well. The message should be conveyed that Seneca County is an attractive and, more important, cost-effective location from which to conduct business. Effort should also be expended to make the County and its communities stand out and be distinctive. Positioning involves distinguishing Seneca County, as a “product”, from its competition, in terms of:

- Product differentiation – attributes or an image that is different from other communities, such as a unique emphasis on education and mix of educators;
- Price competitiveness – a comparatively and demonstrable low cost of doing business, such as lower labor or land costs, taxes, or utility costs; and/or
- A market focus – targeting a specific industrial sector or geographic region for a particular audience.

Much of the internal work in marketing a community involves branding the community, and distinguishing its brand image (the current *perception* of the community, good or bad) from its brand identity (what you *want* the community to stand for or to be perceived as by the people on both the inside and the outside). To be consistent, everyone working on economic and community development should be delivering the same message, using the same brand. The *internal customer*, those who live and work in Seneca County already, must be informed and enthusiastic about their county and community, and its potential for future development.

Once a message is developed, the next element of promotion is determining how to deliver that message as effectively as possible. Many of the traditional elements and media are still important: trade shows, printed media, networking. Increasingly, the Internet is becoming as critical as any other medium, and effort should be expended to present the message and the “product” as effectively as possible on the web.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Improve local attitudes: Erase negativism and replace it with a proactive, positive attitude. Build customer loyalty and practice *internal marketing* within the County. Publicize positive events and new business locations and expansions. Increase public relations, editorial placements, and exposure on radio and other media. Conduct extensive media backgrounding sessions with editorial boards as well as business columnists and reporters, detailing goals and strategies for the County and its economic development efforts. Produce timely and informative newsletters.

Partners: Entire community; service organizations, churches, leadership, media, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of publicity events

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Market Seneca County as a world class business destination as well as a destination for tourists and visitors; bring in external customers with a focus on the “ninety minute market”. Work with State and regional tourism officials to be an active part of any regional tourism efforts.

Partners: Tourism office, Chambers, local attractions, website coordination task force (see 2.7), State and regional tourism offices

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new customers, tourists, dollars spent in County

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Reinvent and reinvest in the County’s downtowns. Seek resources, as available, to meet the needs of the County’s downtown districts. Promote them as unique collections of retail and service opportunities and affordable venues for new business ventures. Promote the accessibility of downtowns; follow the Main Street approach underscoring organization, promotions, design, and economic restructuring. Emphasize the assets of the County’s downtowns, including architectural, cultural, and historic features that set them apart.

Partners: Tiffin Tomorrow, Fostoria downtown stakeholders, Village central business district stakeholders, local governments, businesses Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of buildings improved, number of new and expanded businesses within downtowns, dollars invested in downtown – both private and public

OBJECTIVE 5.4: Make optimal use of Geographic Information Systems, websites, and social media to promote the County, attractions, and industrial sites.

Partners: EDPs, IT staff, local governments, business, Chambers, website task force (see 2.7)

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new publicity ventures, number of new collaborations to utilize GIS and websites

OBJECTIVE 5.5: Be an active partner in regional marketing efforts, including those spearheaded by NORED, the State of Ohio, and utilities serving County communities.

Partners: NORED, RGP, neighboring counties, utilities, EDPs, RPC, other regional entities

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: number of cases of regional marketing (and number of resulting contacts, investments, and business locations in County)

OBJECTIVE 5.6: Target businesses that fit within local clusters and supply chains; determine what lines of business would make the best “fit” within the existing mix of manufacturers and major employers. Prospects could be businesses that share similar inputs, or that supply (or can be supplied by) existing businesses.

Partners: LEDPs, local business, local government, research organizations

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new businesses, number of new jobs

OBJECTIVE 5.7: Plan and carry out local events involving legislators and officials from JobsOhio and the Department of Community Services (formerly ODOD). Host select groups of site consultants, real estate brokers, developers, targeted CEOs, and regional and state economic development officials.

Partners: Local and State government officials, LEDPs, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of planned events and visits, number of participants

OBJECTIVE 5.8: Design and implement a targeted industry advertising and public relations campaign to attract new companies while enhancing the public image of Seneca County.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, local government officials

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new initiatives

OBJECTIVE 5.9: Use one-on-one personal connections; rely on local business leaders to help determine gaps in the existing business mix, and to market the County to prospects.

Partners: LEDPs, local business leaders, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of connections made

OBJECTIVE 5.10: Attend selected trade shows and trade missions that directly relate to the targeted industry list and that have the greatest potential for return on the investment in terms of business contacts, prospects, locations, and expansions within Seneca County.

Partners: LEDPs, local governments, utilities, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of trade shows and missions attended, number of business contacts, number of follow-up contacts and meetings, number of eventual cases of investment in Seneca County

OBJECTIVE 5.11: Develop a contact and communication plan for working with and notifying regional and national venture capital and investment firms. Establish working relationships with these sources and make them aware of investment opportunities in Seneca County.

Partners: LEDPs, consultants, Chambers, JobsOhio

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of firms reached, dollars of capital created in the County

GOAL 6: Provide an atmosphere in which entrepreneurs can flourish



An entrepreneur can be defined as “a person who organizes and manages a business undertaking, assuming the risk for the sake of the profit”. Entrepreneurs are motivated by different forces. There are *survival*

entrepreneurs who resort to creating enterprises because they see few other options, *lifestyle entrepreneurs* who choose self-employment to pursue personal goals, *growth entrepreneurs* who are motivated to grow their businesses to create wealth and jobs in their community, and *serial entrepreneurs* who will create several businesses over their lifetime.

Entrepreneurship is an increasingly vital rural economic development strategy, as recruitment strategies have met with mixed success. There is a growing body of evidence that entrepreneurs and small business play a critical role in driving the local, regional, and national economy. Small enterprises are responsible for most of the job growth and innovation, and small businesses represent an appropriate scale of activity for most rural economies, according to the Rural Policy research institute. Additional research by the Edward Lowe Foundation has determined that businesses classified as second-stage businesses (privately held, past the startup stage and focused on growth, with 10 to 99 employees and generating \$750,000 to \$50 million in annual revenue) are most vital to the national economy, and to local economies as well.

Supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship can encompass a variety of actions, from developing entrepreneurship curricula in local schools and Universities, to filling small businesses’ knowledge and technology gaps through the growing practice of *economic gardening* (for good descriptions, see <http://www.littletongov.org/bia/economicgardening/> and <http://edwardlowe.org/pages/downloads/infosheets/ELFEconomicGardening.pdf>). A successful entrepreneur development system should offer low cost property in which to house a new business, a source of venture capital, varied and adaptable local educational establishments, and business counseling programs such as the local Small Business Development Center.

OBJECTIVE 6.1: Identify, reach out to, and focus on young entrepreneurs and their needs and obstacles to growth. Develop a method to identify and contact likely candidates. Enable the local system of business development technical assistance and resource identification to respond effectively to the emerging needs of these entrepreneurs. Tie this emphasis into the “hub” described below in objective 6.2. Introduce the concept of Economic Gardening for appropriate innovative and growth oriented “Stage Two” businesses.

Partners: LEDPs, SBDC, Universities, other assistance providers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of entrepreneurs assisted, number of jobs created

OBJECTIVE 6.2: Build a hub of technical assistance services to entrepreneurs, provide information and referral, connect local programs of Universities, schools, career center, SBDC, and other resources. Bring resources together under one roof.

Partners: LEDPs, service entities, training and educational institutions

Time Frame: 2-3 years for hub to be established

Performance Measures: Number of cases of assistance; number of jobs; number of cases of assistance

OBJECTIVE 6.3: Offer entrepreneurship training or information in schools. Work toward developing a curriculum that can reside within public schools. Measure its effectiveness and students’ evaluation of its value.

Partners: K-12 schools, Career Center, colleges/Universities, Chambers and LEDPs

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of programs, number of students

OBJECTIVE 6.4: Initiate an entrepreneurship mentoring program, with a list of mentors, contact information, matching mentors with participants.

Partners: LEDPs, Chambers, volunteers from business, SBA

Time Frame: 2-3 years to implementation

Performance Measures: Number of mentors, number of mentees, outcomes for emerging businesses

OBJECTIVE 6.5: Attain a better definition and understanding of entrepreneurship and its characteristics and special needs in order to succeed and flourish.

Partners: Universities, LEDPs

Time Frame: 2-3 years

Performance Measures: County-wide acceptance of the definition and the need to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to and supportive of entrepreneurship

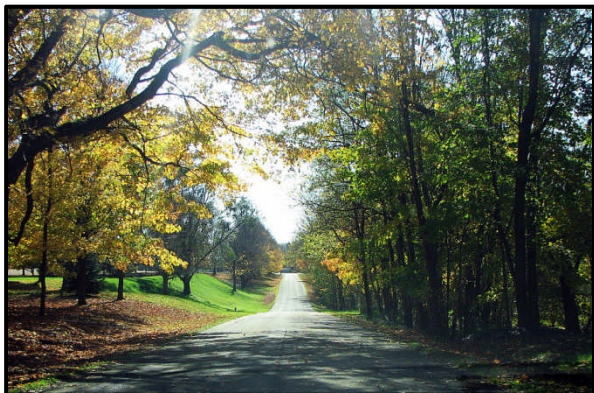
OBJECTIVE 6.6: Support efforts to determine the feasibility of a business incubator or subsidized space for start-ups. Include rental space in downtowns, as described in the Tiffin Tomorrow plan.

Partners: Chambers, EDPs, downtown proponents, local governments, SBDC, Universities

Time Frame: Feasibility report in 1-2 years; implementation in long term (5 years +)

Performance Measures: Studies completed, incubator constructed/leased, number of businesses assisted, number of jobs created

GOAL 7: Enhance Seneca County's quality of life for business leaders, employees, and residents



“Quality of Life” is a catchphrase that encompasses many things, both tangible and intangible, but the concept can become very important as a County or community strives to differentiate itself from its competitors and emphasize its assets. There are at least three distinct aspects to quality of life. First, those assets that create a superior quality of life help make living and working in a community more enjoyable and attractive, enriching residents’ and employees’ experiences and helping retain them. Second, quality of life incorporates attributes that present Seneca County as an attractive place to locate a business or family, beyond the bottom line-driven business decision-making process. A community’s amenities and attractions can help steer a location decision when other factors are equal. And third, tourism is related to certain quality of life assets, such as natural features, historic significance, and cultural and recreational features. An impressive list of Seneca County’s quality of life attributes were identified during the SWOT analysis.

OBJECTIVE 7.1: Publicize the County’s fitness for a diversity of businesses and culture, and thus a competitive position within the global economy.

Partners: Chambers, EDPs, media, Universities

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of cases of publicity

OBJECTIVE 7.2: Enhance quality of life for young professionals, addressing their workplace and lifestyle preferences: entertainment, venues, gathering places, and housing.

Partners: Chambers, local businesses, EDPs, law enforcement

Time Frame: Long term: 5 years +

Performance Measures: Number of new attributes and community assets

OBJECTIVE 7.3: Promote Seneca County as a cultural destination; build on tradition (Iron Triangle Railroad Park, glass museums, Civil War Museum, Ritz Theater, University events).

Partners: Local institutions and local government; Chambers (in their role as tourism bureau)

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of initiatives, number of entities and events publicized; increased measures of tourism (visitors, dollars spent, restaurant and hotel sales)

OBJECTIVE 7.4: Maintain and underscore the positive spiritual, charitable, and moral attitudes and attributes of Seneca County's neighborhoods and communities.

Partners: Clergy and congregations, service clubs and agencies, ultimately everyone

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Subjective observations of positive attitudes

OBJECTIVE 7.5: Continue to take steps to reduce and eliminate crime and drug abuse, and overcome exaggerated perceptions and misconceptions. Monitor crime statistics and trends, publicize and promote positive programs to address known issues.

Partners: Law enforcement, media, Chambers

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Crime statistics and trends

OBJECTIVE 7.6: Emphasize the concept of "economic vitality" to build a strong, healthy local economy, and to create quality employment opportunities in Seneca County.

Partners: EDPs, Chambers, media

Time Frame: Dollars invested

Performance Measures:

GOAL 8: Organize for maximum effectiveness in achieving successful economic development



The elements are clearly in place for economic and community development to continue to take place throughout Seneca County. A long list of development partners emerged during discussion by the CEDS Committee (See pages 32-34). Given the existence of so many entities dedicated to economic development, the greatest need is to ensure that all the organizations function in an effective and coordinated manner. One way to enhance coordination and communication is to continue to convene the CEDS Committee, which has representation from virtually all the economic development partners, on a regular, if more infrequent, basis. Many participants on the committee noted the value of the discussions

which took place during the series of meetings leading to the creation of this strategy. This forum can continue as a means for meaningful and timely discussion. The CEDS Committee, and other networks, can enable all parties to represent Seneca County and its development with one voice.

OBJECTIVE 8.1: Expand the spirit of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among communities and organizations; break down territory and “turf” between entities. Maintain channels of communication and share information on projects and programs. Publicize the concept that a positive effort in one community is a positive outcome for the whole County.

Partners: Everyone!

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Instances of cooperation

OBJECTIVE 8.2: Make government permitting and review processes as efficient and streamlined as possible; review existing codes and permitting and review processes to ensure they are not overly burdensome; make sure businesses obtain information on those processes, as well as programs and resources that can help them.

Partners: Local government agencies, possible a business advisory council

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of improvements, average number of days to complete a review process, business satisfaction measures

OBJECTIVE 8.3: Build up the County’s cadre of local leaders. Provide leadership opportunities for emerging leaders, including leadership classes. Invite candidates personally to serve in leadership positions.

Partners: Leadership class, Chambers, service organizations

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of new active leaders

OBJECTIVE 8.4: Participate actively in regional organizations, including NORED, RGP, JobsOhio, and other multi-county, regional efforts, to enhance cooperative development opportunities throughout northwest Ohio.

Partners: Regional organizations, local participants

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of organizations, regional projects, and events

OBJECTIVE 8.5: Encourage local school districts to work together more closely and collaborate on projects share resources, and offer specialized services to multiple districts.

Partners: School districts, ESC

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of collaborative projects and programs, number of students participating, dollars savings through collaboration

OBJECTIVE 8.6: Continue the CEDS Committee as an ongoing, inter-discipline forum in which to discuss matters of cross-cutting importance, and to evaluate progress in meeting these goals and objectives, then determine if desired outcomes and action steps are occurring to the mutual benefit of all communities in Seneca County – and to make “course corrections” within this plan where appropriate.

Partners: Members of the CEDS Committee

Time Frame: Ongoing

Performance Measures: Number of follow-up meetings, number of continuing active participants

COORDINATION WITH THE STATE OF OHIO



Ohio has had a change in administrative leadership over the past year with the election of Governor John Kasich. This change has brought significant alteration to how the State of Ohio practices economic development. A primary change has been the dissolution of previous regional Governor's twelve Economic Development Representatives and their geographic districts, and their replacement with six larger districts and their administration by regional economic development agencies. For the northwest Ohio region that includes Seneca County, the appropriate agency is the Regional Growth Partnership located in Toledo. Closely aligned with this agency is the Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development organization, or NORED. Seneca County has been an active member of NORED, and the SIEDC director is a past NORED President.

Many direct economic development functions have been separated from the former Ohio Department of Development (renamed the Department of Community Services) and housed in a new entity named JobsOhio. The intent is to improve and expedite customer service. A reformed approach includes: building a coordinated retention and expansion program to "grow what we have", create a proactive sales team that aggressively pursues new opportunities, lead the market in economic development, and leverage private investment. Guiding principles include a focus on customers, continuously finding efficiencies, providing a "pace of business" link between JobsOhio and the Department of Community Services, providing assurance of strong oversight of JobsOhio, greater leverage of limited resources, and a focus on metrics and outcome.

Targeted industries receiving special attention include aerospace and aviation, automotive, banking and insurance, BioHealth, consumer products, energy, food processing, information services and software, and polymers. Business functions where Ohio is recognized to have strengths include advanced manufacturing, headquarters, back office and information technology, logistics and distribution, and research and development.

Seneca County is well-placed within the statewide effort, with active participation in NORED and linkage to the Regional Growth partnership. The County's economic development effort shares a focus on the guiding principles listed above with regard to customer focus, efficiencies, working at the pace of business, leverage of resources, and a focus on metrics.

Seneca County also benefits from the existence or potential for a number of the targeted industries and business functions, including automotive, consumer products, energy (with the potential development of wind farms within the County in the near future), and food processing. A number of the listed business functions can also be accommodated in Seneca County.

PRIORITY PROJECTS IN SENECA COUNTY

The CEDS Committee reviewed a list of community and economic development projects that was provided by individual communities and development organizations. In order to best reflect the current state and context of economic development throughout the County, it was determined that the list should be presented as a continuum, with the first portion (“A.”) noting projects that are substantially completed, already in an implementation stage, or ready for implementation with design and funding considerations already met.

The second portion (“B.”) consists of projects that are currently under consideration and considered to be of high priority. These are listed in priority order for consideration by potential funding sources, and this is the list of projects that is expected by the EDA to be included in any CEDS. Priority considerations include whether the project is “shovel-ready”, whether design plans are completed or underway; and what the economic development outcome of the project is likely to encompass in terms of job creation and retention and investment.

The third portion of the list (“C.”) includes projects which are in a conceptual stage, and which are more likely to take some time for implementation.

The presentation of the projects in these three sub-groups has been requested by the CEDS Committee, in order to show the continuous development and implementation of economic development projects throughout Seneca County, and to be able to update the list in future Committee meetings by moving projects from long-term considerations, to more tangible and short-term priority projects, and then to projects that are underway, ready for implementation, or substantially complete.

A. Current or Ready-To-Implement Projects: “Shovel Ready” with sufficient funding to begin; ready for implementation; nearing construction phase.

1. Technology and Energy Incubator, Fostoria

Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: partial	Shovel Ready: partial	Implementation: 2012
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A project which is currently being implemented by a Fostoria property owner and developer is the renovation and re-use of a formerly industrial property at 901 Springville Avenue as a Technology and Energy Business incubator that will attract start up businesses that may be eligible for U.S. Department of Energy grants and low interest loans. The property has access to U.S. Route 23 and CSX Rail, and all utilities needed to serve the site are in place. The building has over 319,000 square feet of useable space, and 30,000 square feet are currently available. The property is owned by IAR Land – Fostoria, and the owners have been in discussion with at least two potential end users.

A Phase II Environmental Assessment is being undertaken to determine the environmental suitability of the property and whether any remediation is required. This assessment will include 85 soil borings, 18 shallow monitoring wells, two deep monitoring wells, and an asbestos survey and other reporting.

The building will provide 20,000 to 100,000 square feet for lease, with below-market space for start-up and expanding small businesses needing assistance. The incubator was created in partnership with IAR Land-Fostoria, FEDC, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the local SCORE chapter. Companies seeking to locate in the incubator must complete an application, have a suitable business plan, and demonstrate fiscal responsibility. The business incubator can provide high-speed Internet access, conference, meeting, and reception areas, and networking opportunities through the Chamber and FEDC. The incubator is a direct outgrowth of FEDC's mission to create jobs and improve the economic well-being and quality of life of the Fostoria region.

Potential funding sources for placement of businesses include the Ohio New Markets Tax Credit program, Microenterprise Business Development Program, and the Ohio Third Frontier program that helps expand high technology research and promote innovation.

2. Fostoria: Iron Triangle Park and Visitors Center

Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X \$1,000,000	Shovel Ready: X	Implementation: 2012
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The City of Fostoria received an \$815,760 grant to transfer the former five-acre “Boneyard”, which was cleaned up with a previous \$300,000 grant, into a park for rail enthusiasts. Federal Transportation Enhancement funds from the Ohio Department of Transportation provided the impetus to convert this abandoned industrial site into a park where train enthusiasts can view 100 or more trains that pass through on an average day. The City will pay the remainder of the estimated \$1 million project cost. The completed park will provide rail fans with a covered viewing pavilion, lighting, wi-fi capability and heated restrooms. The parking lot will accommodate 32 cars and five buses or RVs. Fences will surround the perimeter for security and unobstructed viewing, and pedestrian paths will provide varying angles for viewing and photography.

The site's viewing platform will accommodate thousands of tourists who come to Fostoria annually to watch and photograph the passing trains. The City worked with the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Rail Development Commission, CSX Transportation, and an engineering firm to realign the entrance to the park. The City finalized plans and formally broke ground in September 2011, with construction to begin in 2012. The park will be a catalyst for the City's downtown revitalization efforts, with tremendous long-term impact on the downtown.

3. New Riegel and Bascom Sewer Projects

Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X	Shovel Ready: X	Implementation: 2012
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A proposed sewer project, incorporating a USDA loan, may combine the construction of a New Riegel sanitary sewer system with the Seneca County Sewer District. Similarly, Bascom is continuing to refine a project to bring a centralized sewer system to that community. Both projects have received USDA funding, and other sources have been obtained as well.

4. Completion of Phase III sewer Separation and Greenfield Street Improvements on east side, Tiffin

Sewer Separation Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X \$2,000,000	Shovel Ready: X	Implementation: 2012
Greenfield Street Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X \$1,250,000	Shovel ready: X	Implementation: 2012

Two million dollars are allocated to this 2012 project that will service Heidelberg University and National Machinery Company as well as other commercial enterprises. This project will elevate the level of public health and safety by separating sanitary sewage from storm water. In addition, a \$1,250,000 project is budgeted to improve and reconstruct Greenfield Street in 2012, allowing for the revitalization of the Heidelberg University campus, making the intersection of State Routes 18 and 101 safer. National Machinery Company will also benefit from this project.

5. Rock Creek Interceptor, Tiffin

Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X \$1,600,000	Shovel Ready: X	Implementation: 2012
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This project, estimated at \$1.6 million (all of which is allocated to the project), will utilize OWPCA (Ohio Public Works Commission) and EPA funding. One outcome of this project will be to maintain the existing housing stock and elevate property values in order to attract outside people to the community.

B. Current Priorities: Concepts or designs with a high priority for short-term implementation**1. Fostoria Industrial Park**

Concept: X	Design: Prelim	Funding: No \$1,295,000 est.	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2013
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While some 12.5 acres remain in the existing industrial park on U.S. 23 South, prospects generally require a minimum of twenty acres for new developments. A subcommittee has begun exploring possible sites for the construction of a second fully developed industrial park to be located within the City of Fostoria. This subcommittee is prepared to develop programs and incentives tailored to the needs of individual businesses. Fostoria intends to take advantage of its location within close proximity of a number of large markets, of its rail access in all directions, and its accessibility to the Port of Toledo, the Ohio Turnpike, I-75, and its own Metropolitan Airport.

Three potential sites for the industrial park have been identified: (1) In Jackson Township in Seneca County, bounded by S.R. 592, CSX Transportation, and CR 25; (2) In Washington Township in Hancock County, bounded by SR 12 south, CR262, and the section 10 border to the west.; and (3) in Jackson Township in Seneca County, bounded by SR 12 and Sandusky Street, with 170 acres zoned industrial/commercial, and with city utilities and Norfolk Southern rail. A conceptual plan has been developed for this third site. Potential funding sources for the development of this industrial park include EDA Public Works funding, the State of Ohio Rural Industrial Park program, USDA, State of Ohio low interest loans, CRA and tax increment financing (TIF), with real property taxes on the increased valuation from new investment diverted to support infrastructure costs, and partnerships with the City's utility suppliers (AEP, Columbia Gas, City of Fostoria).

A preliminary review of total project cost for the proposed park estimates costs at \$1,295,000, or \$21,798 per acre. A cost closer to \$12,000 per acre will make it much more competitive. This park is recommended for development in 2013.

2. Tiffin Industrial Park

Concept: X	Design: No	Funding: No	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2018
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Tiffin is also looking at expanding its industrial site options through the development of a new industrial park. The most likely location is in the vicinity of the Eagle Rock Industrial Park on the City's north side. The concept has not been refined with engineering plans or cost estimates at this time, but this is considered the most likely next acreage to be made available for business development in central Seneca County.

3. Tiffin Downtown Revitalization

Sewer Separation: Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: X \$6,250,000	Shovel Ready: X	Implementation: 2013
Downtown: Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: partial	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2013- 2015

The Tiffin Tomorrow plan for revitalizing the City's central business district included a number of recommended implementation activities. Those recommendations, divided among the four Main Street broad categories, included expanding the historic district designation and utilizing historic development tools, enhancing streetscape and public realm spaces within downtown areas, promoting infrastructure improvements within downtown areas, and promoting upper floor housing (see page 31-32 of this document).

The streetscape portion of the project should be implemented in coordination with a downtown sewer separation project that will more effectively serve the prime commercial downtown district. This \$6.25 million project will be funded with sewer revenues, with other potential funding from bonding, short term notes, or OWPLA funds from the Ohio EPA. Engineering is in progress for this project, which will benefit local businesses since it is located in a prime commercial area within the downtown. This project involves current distress due to deteriorating infrastructure, and will require collaboration with local businesses and utilities.

4. Fostoria Communitywide Revitalization Planning (using a subcommittee of the CIC of Fostoria)

Concept: X	Design: X	Funding: partial	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2013
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The mission of the Fostoria CIC and its subcommittees is to retain, expand, and attract capital investment and jobs to the community of Fostoria, with strategies including the use and promotion of local, state, and federal financial assistance, tax incentives, and training and technical assistance programs. A guided team is helping complete a ten-year strategy that will provide a framework for managing future development in Fostoria, in a way that promotes opportunity for its citizens while directing growth to areas best able to accommodate growth.

The project will strengthen the "village concept" to encourage clustering of higher intensity land uses, and more efficient provision of public services and utilities, retaining the rural nature of the community, and meeting citizens' needs. The CIC has no paid staff, but is managed by staff from the FEDC.

The completed business plan for Fostoria will integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation and infrastructure, and will consider the challenges of economic competitiveness and revitalization, social equity, inclusion and access to opportunity, energy use, and public health and environmental impact. Linked to this effort is downtown planning, encompassing the four-point Main Street approach.

5. Preparation of County for Wind Farms

Concept: X	Design: No	Funding: No	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2012
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There has been considerable recent discussion of the development of wind farms, involving a significant number of large wind turbines located on currently agricultural or non-productive property in Seneca County. Several companies have discussed wind farm development involving sixty to eighty turbines, in both the eastern and western portions of the county, with construction crossing county boundaries into Hancock County to the west and Sandusky Counties to the east.

While firm plans have not been made public, wind farm developers have been planning for their eventual development, and the County Commissioners have approved a resolution which makes the county an “alternative energy zone” allowing wind, solar, and other energy companies eligible for state tax incentives. Preparation for these projects may require upgrading of local roadways to accommodate trucks. Thus, while the lack of firm plans makes public improvement planning difficult, the imminent development of these wind farms will undoubtedly require public improvements in the short term, to provide adequate transportation routes for the transport of turbine components. Design and funding for public improvements will likely be determined within a very short period of time, once projects and private investments are announced.

6. Highway enhancement projects in Seneca County

Concept: X	Design: 2016	Funding: No	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2031
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Several highway transportation improvements are of sufficient importance that, although they are several years away from implementation, and design, environmental review, and funding requirements are far from complete, these items should appear on this list of priority projects because of their ultimate importance to the county in terms of freight logistics, traffic flow, and traveler safety.

There is a master plan for a “Super Two” status Fostoria bypass linking the north and south sides along an easterly alignment which largely follows existing road alignments. The result would create a loop around Fostoria, connecting arterial highways to the north, east, and south. Similarly, a Seneca Highway Improvements Plan was initiated that would focus on safety and traffic flow improvements along State Route 53, both north and south of Tiffin. Tiffin has also proposed the development of a Super-Two lane loop road from northerly S.R. 53 to the northwest in Tiffin, including the growing industrial area in that portion of the City.

Another very long-range component is the upgrade of U.S. Route 224 throughout the County, from its connection to Findlay to the west, through Tiffin’s south side, to Attica on the eastern side of the County, and providing a connection to I-71 farther east, and I-75 in Findlay, as well as other destinations. U.S. 224 is Seneca County’s likeliest candidate for an upgrade to four-lane highway status.

C. Long-Term Priorities: In conceptual stage, with potential for long-range implementation.

1. Village Industrial Sites:

Concept: X	Design: No	Funding: No	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2015, or when interest is shown in property.
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A. Republic Industrial Site

The Village of Republic would like to upgrade and market property on its west side of town as an industrial site. The property is at the end of North Street, north of S.R. 18, near the Village's lagoons.

B. Attica property development

Attica would also like to market the former Attica School site as well as other privately owned properties, for business development in the community. Properties include land in close proximity to the Attica Fairgrounds, additional property just to the north of the Village, and the site of the former MAPA Industries. Enticing industry to the northern site may require utility extensions.

C. Green Springs Potential Industrial Property

The Village of Green Springs would like to develop and market some privately owned property on the Village's south (Seneca County) side, adjacent to the railroad tracks and State Route 19 South. Utility extension or site development needs and costs are currently unknown.

2. New Wastewater Treatment Plant – Attica

Concept: X	Design: Partial	Funding: Partial \$3,000,000	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2016
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The Village of Attica has been under findings and orders since January 2011 to improve its wastewater treatment procedures. The existing plant was constructed in 1970 and cannot meet current requirements. Construction of a new wastewater treatment facility would cost \$2,750,000 to \$3 million. Possible funding sources include the EPA, Ohio Public Works Commission, USDA, and possibly a Community Development Block Grant. Project engineering is in progress, and a preliminary study is completed.

3. Business Education Coalition, Fostoria

Concept: X	Design: Partial	Funding: Partial	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: 2016
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This coalition based in Fostoria is developing a five-year plan with specific targets for improvement in educational excellence and leadership. Additionally, Fostoria agencies and

organizations, through a Workforce Education and Job Center Partnership, would like to create a blueprint for a one stop job development center for placement, training, job screening, technical skill development, career counseling, and human relations skills training.

4. Improvements to Sandusky River Wall, Tiffin

Concept: X	Design: No	Funding: No	Shovel Ready: No	Implementation: completion by 2030+
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The City of Tiffin recognizes the need to “shore up” the retaining wall throughout the downtown area, which guides the Sandusky River through the Central Business District. This is one element of an overall strategy that could develop the Sandusky River as an aesthetic asset.