

Belmont County

Economic Development Strategy May 2011

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**Ohio Rural Community
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Belmont County Economic Development Strategy

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Strategy Facilitated by
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2011 Profile of Belmont County (ODOD)



Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview - Economic Development in Belmont County



This economic development strategy has been developed at the request of the Board of Belmont County Commissioners, which determined that the County and its economic development effort can benefit from a guided, unified planning effort. The Commissioners retained staff from the Community Development Department of the Ohio Rural Community Assistance Partnership (“Ohio RCAP”), administered by WSOS Community Action Commission, of Fremont, Ohio, for the development of this strategy.

Economic Development is currently carried out within the County by two County-wide, staffed organizations with their own governing boards: the Belmont County Development Office (certified as a Community Improvement Corporation and known to many as the CIC), and the Belmont County Port Authority, operating under the Ohio Revised Code’s provisions for port authorities. Individual communities also assume economic development roles, and there are several Chambers of Commerce (Bellaire, Barnesville, St. Clairsville, and Martins Ferry among them) that provide services to their constituent businesses.

The County Commissioners appointed another entity whose existence and governance is addressed in the Ohio Revised Code, a County Planning Commission. That Planning Commission, with eleven members representing a variety of private and public interests, has served as the steering committee for the development of this strategic plan.

In addition to the monthly meetings of the Planning Commission, WSOS staff have interviewed a number of local and County officials who have a stake in economic development throughout the County. WSOS wishes to thank the many individuals who volunteered their time to be interviewed and to provide their perspective on development in their County and its communities.

FINDINGS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

During the initial meetings of the Planning Commission, a series of exercises was completed to determine consensus on several factors within the County. Members were asked to identify those qualities and assets that provided comparative advantages in doing business in Belmont County. The following list of assets was developed during the March, 2010 meeting:

Assets

- The County's work force: hard working (skilled workers, and an available work ethic); the labor force is "not too old, but mature". The County benefits from a history of hard work in steel, mining, glass, and other industries. While most of these backbone sectors have fallen off in size and importance, the heritage of working hard for fair compensation continues to permeate the Ohio Valley.
- Community attitudes are prideful, with a feeling of "we take care of our own", and a generally cooperative spirit.
- There is a feeling of safety and, as mentioned by one respondent, serenity.
- The drive to work, shop, or have fun can be accomplished with short, stress-free commutes.
- The County is blessed with an unusually diverse mix of intermodal transportation: roads, I-70, the highly navigable Ohio River, railroads, nearby airports, and emerging port development.
- Belmont County benefits from competitive electric costs, with ample energy availability and electric capacity for new business.
- High speed broadband Internet is available for business and households.
- The County has maintained a relatively inexpensive cost of living, and a relatively low tax structure.
- The County benefits from proximity to large markets. One can travel to Pittsburgh in 60 minutes, Columbus in 90 minutes, Cleveland in 150 minutes, and Wheeling is virtually "next door".
- Belmont County is enriched by its diverse cultural background and ethnicity.
- A major asset within the County is its natural resource base: such assets include the potential for natural gas exploration, the rich landscape, available water, abundant forests, and a great potential for recreation, including fishing, lakes, rivers, Egypt Valley, and Barkcamp State Park.
- The County has a rich stock of historical sites and architecture, including the site of the first settlement in Ohio at Martins Ferry.
- A broad base for education exists throughout the County, including a number of school districts with modern facilities (many of which have been constructed in the last five years),

the campus of Ohio University's Eastern campus, Belmont Technical College, and close proximity to a number of other nearby colleges and universities: attract young people to return to the County; Education programs in key sectors: mining, welding, power, health care, historic preservation

- There are opportunities for business financing through local community banks, the County's revolving loan fund, and other means.
- Water and sewer availability is relatively widespread throughout the County, with an active water and sewer district and adequate local capacity.
- The County has a noteworthy retail base, boosted by I-70 access and exposure to the Ohio Valley Mall and neighboring developments.
- As noted above, the County has a long-standing economic base that was driven by the powerful industries of coal, steel, and energy, all of which present potential for future development, even though the future may look quite different from the past.
- There are significant health care facilities within the county and in nearby areas such as Wheeling. Belmont County is home to three hospitals.
- Attractive central business districts have been maintained in St. Clairsville and Barnesville, and there is potential to develop within the historic building stock of the communities adjacent to the River.

Opportunities

- There is potential for increased use of River freight traffic, including intermodal transportation incorporating river, roadway, and rail.
- Belmont County has the logistics and infrastructure in place for business to grow.
- Quality of life is enhanced through the County's recreational draws, which include the Ohio River, hills, bike paths, and ATV property. There is potential for the recreational sector to grow.
- Potential exists along Belmont County's riverfront for a wide variety of land uses. While the potential for industrial use and access to intermodal port facilities cannot be denied, the River also offers potential for attractive recreational, restaurant, and other activities enhancing the area's quality of life. Other potential uses include parks, "riverwalks", and residential uses.
- Belmont County is "poised to be a producer" and to diversify the economy.

- The County should take advantage of current “green” opportunities, including integration with biomass materials that can be grown within the County on reclaimed land.
- Some opportunity exists through the Martins Ferry steel plant’s reopening and rehiring, although the potential is certainly at a different magnitude than in the past.
- Greater opportunities for growth exist through regionalization (for example, of water distribution systems, and perhaps for other services such as EMT or fire).
- The potential exists for new activities and events through the strategic use of the new County Fairgrounds and its James E. Carnes Center.
- By virtue of its location within a short distance of several major population centers and within a day’s drive of many East Coast destinations, as well as access to the east-west I-70 and, just to the west, the north-south I-77, potential exists for the County to emerge as a distribution center

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

During the May, 2010 meeting, issues and opportunities facing Belmont County and its economic development were identified after further discussion. They can be grouped under some general headings as follows:

Infrastructure

- Providing sufficient infrastructure to targeted growth areas – water, sewer, roadway, power, broadband, telecom
- Accessible inventory of available “shovel-ready” business sites and specifications
- Roadway/highway and circulation improvements: Mall road improvements, I-70 interchanges
- Highway-oriented development along I-70 corridor, Barnesville area and others
- Capitalizing on Ability to Coordinate Highway, Rail and River freight movement

Land Use

- What is the ideal development along the Route 7 corridor?
- Area near the Ohio Valley Mall as mixed use growth area: services, offices, retail
- Riverfront mixed use development – can industry, distribution/trans-shipment, and “quality of life” uses coexist?
- Downtown revitalization in the larger communities

Labor Force and Education

- Workforce issues: adapting to 21st century needs
- Educational opportunities in Belmont County: meeting needs of employers, employees, residents – how can OUE and Belmont Tech help sustain the County’s economy?
- Attracting young professionals
- Attracting businesses with competitive employee compensation and benefits
- Retaining youth/younger adults

Business Development

- Coordinated, proactive, aggressive support system for entrepreneurship development
- Emphasize retention of existing businesses – business visitation program
- Focus on ENERGY cluster: biomass, switchgrass, Marcellus shale, coal, related research?
- Focus on HEALTH CARE cluster
- Focus on GREEN industry and industrial practices
- Focus on specialized manufacturing that capitalizes on mature available local workforce with good work ethic
- Marketing to prospects: What are the best media? Who are the best targets? What is the message?
- Availability of public and private capital for business ventures: start ups and expansions
- Incentives: How to present distinctive advantages to prospects without slighting local government tax base (“win/win”)
- Capturing/recapturing and growing the regional retail market share

Organization

- Presenting a “unified front” for Belmont County; one-stop central information clearinghouse, center for partnerships, attraction and retention agent, incentive and program manager
- Local interaction/advocacy with Federal and State elected and development officials
- Trend toward regionalization, consolidation of services, cooperative and collaborative efforts, efficiency (utilities, public services...)
- Regional collaboration beyond Belmont County

Quality of Life/Image

- Overcoming an internal “inferiority complex”
- Improving visual appearance of the County and “quality of life” amenities: bike trails, waterfront, etc.
- Focus on TOURISM potential, recreation

COMPONENTS OF A VISION FOR BELMONT COUNTY IN 2031

The preceding discussion focused on Belmont County and its communities in the present tense. Attention next turned to the components of a vision for a preferred, desired Belmont County twenty years from now. Given the building blocks presented as the assets and opportunities highlighted in previous discussion, the following discussion centered on the elements that make up the preferred future grounded in the realities of today's Belmont County.

BELMONT COUNTY IN 2030:

...PURSUES AND PROMOTES EMPLOYERS

- High tech – higher wages, green technology
- The County becomes a machine shop center – supporting the skilled workforce that can machine and make customized, low-volume, parts and assemblies with quick availability. Small shops with one to twenty-five employees could share equipment, marketing, training, and production synergies.
- Trans-loading facilities: river to rail, rail to river, river to road. Belmont County is uniquely positioned on highway, river, and rail.
- A distribution center is a positive fit with the location and amenities of the area, including the River and I-70.
- A diverse mix of employment and higher wages – slow the trend toward lower paying service and retail jobs.
- Green and biomass related development could produce the higher paying jobs that can be filled with the County's now highly educated citizens.
- Employers that utilize, benefit from, and thus value Belmont County's natural resources: River, coal, gas, timber, distribution/road system
- New businesses attracted one at a time, with better marketing, and with better cooperation among interested parties
- Businesses that need access to markets through river, highway, or rail and that need large amounts of water – all of which can be fulfilled in Belmont County
- A system is in place where the County provides assistance in the development of infrastructure. This is often preferred to tax breaks. If a business leaves, the local community still benefits from taxes and as well as the remaining improved site.
- Corporate headquarters located in scenic hills, overlooking trails.
- Belmont County is still home to major manufacturing, which provides the "backbone" to the local economy: If everyone has a job and basic industry is healthy, the health of the retail sector will follow.
- A number of small but diverse new businesses is preferred to a handful of larger ones.
- The County should attract small, clean manufacturers, and research facilities.
- The County's position on I-70 should lead to the ultimate development of a "super" truck stop west of 470, and other travel-oriented business, capitalizing on sales tax.

...RETAINS EXISTING BUSINESS

- Belmont County and its leadership create an atmosphere that encourages partnering and collaboration
- The County and its officials reach out to existing business to determine what linkages could be exploited and what related businesses might be attracted to the area, either vendors for existing business or related industries. Input from businesses is collected to learn what makes this area attractive for Belmont County's existing business base.
- Assistance is available with market and product development, infrastructure for expansion, and local governments that are responsive and supportive and helping with training of workforce

...FOCUSES ON MARKETS, NICHES, AND TRENDS

- Businesses and facilities that address the needs of elderly/baby boomers: retirement housing, health care, assisted living, wellness centers.
- Trans loading, taking advantage of position and multiple transportation modes
- Machine shops (relatively high paid jobs and available workforce)
- Area builds on its history of energy production by becoming part of the Marcellus Shale boom. Extract gas, but also manufacture/service equipment needed by this industry.
- Light assembly, distribution – Valley is efficiently located; logistics – need infrastructure for business to grow
- Energy and “green jobs”: Biomass. Use of models/best practices from elsewhere (there is no need to reinvent what is already succeeding nationally or regionally)
- Likely significant sectors: mining, power, health care
- Tourism – use railroad for tours; capitalize on the Ohio River and the County's wild beauty
- Conduct real coal mine tours
- Make optimal use of infrastructure, safe water, decent wage, reasonable electric rates, workforce and education.

...PROVIDES A HOME FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

- Voinovich Center expanded to OUE: seminars, classes, entrepreneurial presence
- Ohio valley Riverfront Development Committee – seminars, small business and kitchen incubator
- Revolving loan fund; available capital for new/growing ventures.
- A mechanism to encourage mentoring. Huge difference in the potential of any business
- Angel funding – facilitates investment
- Officials work with higher education and others to provide training on how to start and manage businesses. A blueprint of “new” business or product opportunities that individuals might be interested in investing in or starting. Training in Internet marketing.
- Helping entrepreneurs succeed becomes a priority.

...PROVIDES FOR EMPLOYERS' TRAINING AND EDUCATION NEEDS

- A bigger presence for postsecondary facilities in Belmont County – OUE becomes more of a stand-alone University than a “feeder” to OU in Athens
- Emphasis on the historic preservation specialization at Belmont Tech
- Development of a Voinovich Center East at OUE
- Partnering with unions to develop careers in trades that will never be outsourced
- Programs at Belmont Technical College supporting jobs in the natural gas industry
- More people take advantage of opportunities for postsecondary education - Continued affordable access to inexpensive post secondary education
- Elimination of large number of under-employed
- Retooling of the County to reinvent itself; County moves toward cutting edge of the technical explosion
- A successful local plan for education of people on opportunities that exist with changes experienced in energy and “green jobs”
- School systems bring kids up to the same (high) level of education throughout the county – equity is established throughout the County
- Establishment of research centers and facilities that focus on locally significant areas of research: metallurgy and steel production, elderly issues, coal and clean burning

...OFFERS SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

- High speed Internet throughout County
- Extensive development of access to the Ohio River for shipping
- Maintenance of highways and increased use of the Ohio River; An incentive program for owners of riverfront property to market their properties and clean up/remediate sites that need it
- Demolition of the Bellaire Bridge
- Utilities, transportation, buildings, downtowns, making use of position with transportation infrastructure
- Improvement in water and sewer and their extension to underserved and potential growth areas
- Regionalization of utilities and infrastructure to realize economies of scale and cost efficiencies

...PROMOTES ITS SUPERIOR QUALITY OF LIFE

- Further development of amenities that already exist – River and riverfront, hills, hiking sites, sightseeing, outdoor ATV parks
- Demolition of abandoned and deteriorating buildings; adaptive reuse for other historic properties that are salvageable; removal of blighted properties throughout the county
- Overcoming issues of absentee ownership of rental and deteriorating properties
- Enactment/enforcement of codes/ordinances that make property owners clean up their

properties – maybe leading to zoning? County wide zoning and enforcement or at least a joint approach among contiguous communities to improve housing stock and remove blight

- Promotion of camping, fishing, boating
- Regional trails; Expansion of bike trail system throughout county, to and along the River
- Recreational development of the Riverfront; Cleaned-up Riverfront with bike trails
- Further development of Egypt Valley as an ATV park, and of Barkcamp State Park, forested areas, and hunting locations
- An extended sense of community service and involvement, making use of the County's history of people stepping up (Getting involved gives people a better sense of community.)
- Riverfront towns develop methods to create housing, business and entertainment opportunities to attract young people; Creation of entertainment choices/venues in older downtowns
- Identification and use of efficiencies and local dollars to help the network of human and social services
- A County-wide "history trail" marketed as a tourist attraction
- Encouragement of local artisans through creation of an "arts and crafts community" (example: Gatlinburg, TN)
- Encouragement of entertainment and eating districts to compete with chain restaurants
- Creation of little specialty shops like in Berlin, OH

...IS PROACTIVELY ORGANIZED FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Officials with a vision for the future, and not just the short term
- A concentrated, concerted effort to grow and nurture business
- A county-wide team effort acknowledging what is good for one community is good for all
- Facilitation of development through cooperative existing agencies
- Overcoming focus on past successes and elimination of jealousy of someone who succeeds
- Creation of districts for government services, with a district-level approach for funding and service provision due to a need for efficiency in utilizing resources: district fire, police, sanitation, utilities, and other services
- A renewed spirit of community involvement
- Local officials cooperate for the good of their communities and do not allow personal issues be the driving factor in their involvement in government
- Changed attitudes, with confidence in leaders, overcoming any inferiority complex
- A central force leading the organized charge for economic development
- Better controls through zoning
- Regionalization, consolidation of services, utilities

Given all the previous discussion offered by the Planning Commission, serving as a steering committee to frame the strategic plan, listing specific elements that join together to shape Belmont County's economic future was reduced to a Vision Statement that was presented to and adopted by the Planning Commission. That vision statement appears on the next page.

VISION STATEMENT: BELMONT COUNTY IN 2031

Belmont County in 2031 reflects economic diversity; it is much less tied to specific sectors than in the past, yet recognizing the historical importance of these engines of past growth, as well as the continuing importance of the energy industry.

The County's economic development efforts are initiated by a single point of contact, through which all development entities and initiatives are coordinated. This unified effort promotes economic development, job and tax base creation, and an improved quality of life for County residents on several fronts:

First, by promoting a manufacturing sector that rewards and makes optimal use of the County's trained, mature, and productive workforce. It is recognized that new opportunities will most likely come from a number of smaller ventures employing dozens, rather than hundreds, of workers. Regional and local resources catalyze entrepreneurial ventures with an array of assistance ranging from counseling and mentoring to available and affordable sites in which to conduct business. A pool of public and private capital supports new and expanding ventures. And the County promotes a variety of attractive, competitive and business-ready sites, business parks, and facilities for new and expanding business. While reaching out to new and prospective business, it is acknowledged that most growth will come from a well-served existing business base.

Second, the County is well along the path toward fully integrating river, rail, and roadway. This competitive advantage has led to the growth of a number of distribution, logistics, trans-shipment and supply chain operations, bringing Belmont County an important and strategic role in the regional, national, and global economy.

Third, Belmont County's prominence as a regional retail center, notably in the vicinity of St. Clairsville along I-70, has been bolstered by reinventing and reinvesting in the area's mix of retail, entertainment, and service establishments, as well as their attractive presentation to the public. In addition to the expanded retail and restaurant/entertainment base, ensuing development of office, service, and health care uses has produced a high-quality, campus-like development with new roadway configurations, providing easy accessibility and efficient traffic flow as new acreage has been developed.

Fourth, development officials have capitalized on the County's diverse geography, promoting smaller ventures utilizing the unique assets of the Ohio River corridor, and complementary, larger scale, highway-based sites, suitable for manufacturing and distribution, along the western I-70 corridor.

Finally, the County has been successfully promoted as a center for research and development in several prominent lines of business, including coal and natural gas development, biomass energy production, and metallurgy. The ability to adapt the workforce to new technologies and trends is made possible through the active participation and coordination of the county's school districts, and local and regional colleges and universities, notably Belmont Technical College and Ohio University's Eastern campus.

County officials continue to expand its tourism industry by promoting the County's physical beauty and its natural and historical assets. Activity continues throughout the County's communities to eliminate abandoned and dilapidated properties, and to regulate and enforce affordable, desired community standards of property maintenance and appearance.

This diverse development is made possible through a coordinated and cost-effective system of infrastructure that provides water, sanitary sewer, roadway access, and business-speed communications to targeted centers of growth, with sufficient excess capacity to support growing demands.

While the primary goal of the coordinated economic development effort is to provide attractive and well-paying jobs and careers for County residents, there is also a recognized effort to develop, promote, and recognize the positive, unhurried, rich quality of life to be experienced in Belmont County, with housing and leisure opportunities and amenities that attract and maintain the County's families and households, particularly younger adults. Belmont County is thus recognized in 2031 as one of Ohio's premiere locations to live, work, and succeed.

The next step was to develop a set of goals that, when approached comprehensively, can lead the County and its communities toward that vision. The Commission, facilitated by Ohio RCAP staff and incorporating input provided by local community, County, and regional leaders, next shaped the following series of goals. This would form the outline under which specific action steps and objectives could be proposed.

1. Provide the necessary infrastructure to support desired economic growth. This means adequate water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, roadway, energy, and communications technology, with emphasis on targeted areas of growth. It also requires updating, expanding, and replacing inadequate facilities as well as extending new ones to strategic areas.
2. Mount a continuous, proactive effort to retain Belmont County's existing business base, responding to the needs and requests of individual employers, and building the understanding that the County's existing businesses are cherished resources.
3. Attract new manufacturing and industry by focusing on sectors whose needs best match the assets offered in Belmont County, and which complement existing business clusters.
4. Support and help continuously reinvent Belmont County's retail sector, and rebuild a sustainable role for the County as a growing regional retail and service center.
5. Ensure that Belmont County promotes and nurtures a spirit of entrepreneurship, providing the necessary tools and support for local entrepreneurs to succeed and flourish.
6. Prepare land in targeted areas throughout Belmont County for development. Develop a diverse portfolio of properties to respond to a variety of needs, business types and sizes, and desired site characteristics. Brownfield properties with significant development potential should be remediated and prepared for re-use.
7. Market Belmont County as a location for economic development by using state-of-the-art means and media, maximizing the return on marketing investments. This goal incorporates best practices in Internet and social media marketing, as well as more traditional but tested means such as trade conferences.
8. Develop a unified, single point of contact, identity, and programming for Belmont County's economic development initiative.
9. Link the economic development effort closely with all workforce, training, and educational initiatives and programs. Present the Belmont County workforce, work ethic, and available skill sets as development assets and comparative advantages. Provide rapid responses to the human resource needs of County employers.
10. Promote Belmont County's superior quality of life, work to preserve and improve it, and market the County's distinctive attractions to those within and outside the County. Inherent within this goal is the maintenance and improvement of public facilities and public spaces, such as conference venues.

Chapter 2: Demographics and the Local Economy



Belmont County continuously lost population since 1950, when total population was 87,740. By 1970, that population was just under 81,000, by 1990 it was down another ten thousand (to 71,074), and in the 2000 Census it was 70,226. The 2010 Census total population is 70,400, a slight increase over the 2000 total, indicating that the population may be leveling off. However, ODOT projections call for a population loss over the following twenty years, to 65,340 in 2030.

Table 1: Belmont County Population Over Time (U.S. Census of Population)

1850	34,600	1970	80,917	2010	70,400
1900	60,875	1980	82,569	Projected	
1950	87,740	1990	71,074	2020	66,810
1960	83,864	2000	70,226	2030	65,340

The historical decrease in population affected virtually every community in Belmont County. Table 2 provides 2010 Census totals for population of the County's political subdivisions, and data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey for the number of households.

Table 2: Population of County Subdivisions, 2010 Census (population) and 2005-2009 ACS (households)

County/Twp	Pop	Household	City/Village	Pop	Household
Belmont County	70,400	28,343	Barnesville	4,193	1,664
Colerain	4,276	1,396	Bellaire	4,278	1,975
Flushing	2,021	870	Belmont	453	250
Goshen	3,147	1,375	Bethesda	1,256	584
Kirkwood	400	149	Bridgeport	1,831	980
Mead	5,967	2,494	Brookside	632	345
Pease	14,309	6,747	Flushing	879	436
Putney	8,795	3,879	Holloway	338	187
Richland	14,973	4,572	Martins Ferry	6,915	3,137
Smith	1,543	621	Morristown	303	135
Somerset	1,245	473	Powhatan Pt	1,592	712
Union	2,295	789	St Clairsville	5,184	1,874
Warren	5,974	2,293	Shadyside	3,785	1,598
Washington	517	205	Wilson	37	44
Wayne	709	225			
Wheeling	1,691	641			
York	2,538	1,109			

Interestingly, the two largest population centers are townships: Pease Township had 14,309 residents in 2010, and Richland Township had 14,973. The largest municipality in the County, the City of Martins Ferry, had 6,915, and St. Clairsville, the second largest municipality, had 5,184 people.

Table 3: City and Village Population over Time: 1990, 2000, and 2010

City/Village	1990	2000	2010
Barnesville	4,326	4,225	4,193
Bellaire	6,028	4,892	4,278
Belmont	471	532	453
Bethesda	1,161	1,413	1,256
Bridgeport	2,318	2,186	1,831
Brookside	703	644	632
Flushing	1,042	900	879
Holloway	354	345	338
Martins Ferry	7,990	7,726	6,915
Morristown	296	299	303
Powhatan Point	1,807	1,744	1,592
St. Clairsville	5,162	5,057	5,184
Shadyside	3,934	3,675	3,785
Wilson	136	118	101
Belmont County	71,074	70,266	70,400

Every Village in the county decreased in population between 2000 and 2010, with the exception of Morristown and Shadyside.

Table 4: Other Demographic Characteristics (2005-2009 American Community Survey)

Characteristic	Belmont County	Ohio	U.S.
Median Age	42.6	37.9	36.5
Average Household Size	2.24	2.47	2.60
% Owner Occupied	72.3%	69.5%	66.9%
% HS Grad (25+)	86.3%	86.8%	84.6%
% Bachelors or higher	13.4%	23.6%	27.5%
Mean travel time to work	24.4 min.	22.6 min.	25.2 min.
Med Household income	\$37,753	\$47,144	\$51,425
Per Capita income	\$19,991	\$24,830	\$27,041
Families below poverty level	(2,391) 12.4%	10.0%	9.9%
Median Value Housing	\$82,900	\$134,500	\$185,400
Median mo. owner costs	\$899	\$1,264	\$1,486

Table 4 presents some additional statistics concerning Belmont County. The County's median age, 42.6 years, is somewhat higher than the U.S. and Ohio medians. However, median ages vary by community within Belmont County, ranging from the 30's to the 40's and possibly higher. The median age exceeds the State median of 37.9 in thirteen townships and twelve municipalities.

Average household size in Belmont County, at 2.24, is somewhat below the statewide and national averages. This may be reflective of a larger percentage of older, "empty nest" households. Owner

occupancy in housing is higher in Belmont County than in the state and nation, reflecting a possible lack of rental properties throughout the county.

While the percentage of high school graduates among the population age 25 and older is similar to the Ohio average and 1.7 percent above the national proportion, the percentage of people with a Bachelors Degree or higher among that same group, at 13.4 percent, is less than half the U.S. average of 27.5 percent, and well below the State average of 23.6 percent. This pinpoints a need to provide more access to college and university programming, and indeed the enrollment has been increasing at Ohio University's Eastern Campus and Belmont Tech's campus.

Income figures show a wide disparity between the County and the state and nation. Median household income in the 2005-2009 ACS sample, at \$37,753, was less than three-fourths of the Ohio median of nearly \$47,144, even less than the national average of \$51,425. Similarly, per capita income was \$4,800 below the State's and \$7,050 less than the national per capita figure. And the incidence of poverty, with 12.4 percent of County families in poverty, was at least a couple percentage points greater than for the state and nation as a whole.

On the positive side, the cost of living was less in Belmont County, with a median housing value of \$82,900 being less than two-thirds the Ohio median of \$134,500, and much less than the national median of \$185,400. As a result of this disparity, median monthly owner costs, at \$899, were much less than the state or national average costs.

Table 5: Age Ranges, 2008 Estimates (Ohio Dept. of Development)

Age Bracket	Belmont Co. #	Belmont Co. %	Ohio %
Total	67,975		11,485,910
0-4	3,567	5.2	6.5
5-14	7,154	10.5	13
15-19	4,016	5.9	7
20-24	4,363	6.4	6.6
25-64	37,075	54.5	53.1
65-84	9,823	14.4	11.7
85 and over	1,977	2.9	2
15 and over	57,254	84.2	80.5
65 and over	11,800	17.4	13.7

Table 5 indicates that Belmont County's population is somewhat more skewed toward the elderly brackets than the State's as a whole, with smaller percentages of the total population in the age brackets up to age 24, a slightly larger percentage in the 25-64 bracket, and larger percentages beyond age 64. It is notable that 17.4 percent are in the "retired" age range of 65 and over, which is 3.7 percentage points greater than the State portion.

Table 6: Occupation (2005-2009 American Community Survey data)

Occupation	Number	Percentage	Percentage (OH)
Management, Professional, related	7,411	25.5	32.8
Service occupations	6,098	21.0	16.8
Sales and office occupations	7,243	24.9	25.5
Farming, fishing, forestry	118	0.4	0.3
Construction, extraction, maintenance	4,103	14.1	8.2
Production, transportation, material moving	4,078	14.0	16.4
Total	29,051	100.0	100.0

Table 6 presents data on the occupation of Belmont County residents from the recent ACS data, along with State-level data. There is a 7.3 percentage point difference in the portion of management and professional workers, which may be expected, given the County's relative blue-collar history. Production, transportation, and material moving is slightly lower than for the State as a whole, while service occupations show a 4.2-point higher incidence of workers (likely owing to the number of hospitality and retail jobs available in the St. Clairsville area, as well as the staffing of three hospitals in the county). Construction, extraction, and maintenance have a significantly higher incidence of workers, by nearly six points, likely resulting from the number of mining jobs within the county. Sales and office occupations are close to the State portion.

Table 7: Commuter Statistics (2000 Census)

Top Ten Counties where Belmont County Residents Commute to Work		Top Ten Counties of Residence for Those who Work in Belmont County	
Belmont	17,847	Belmont	17,847
Ohio (WV)	4,603	Ohio (WV)	1,876
Jefferson	1,129	Jefferson	1,236
Marshall (WV)	1,064	Marshall (WV)	858
Monroe	626	Monroe	596
Guernsey	466	Harrison	361
Harrison	280	Guernsey	318
Wetzel (WV)	227	Brooke (WV)	155
Allegheny	206	Noble	103
Franklin	141	Washington (PA)	75

Another important factor with an impact on economic development is where people work in relation to where they live. The preceding Table 7, with information provided by the Ohio Department of Development, presents data on the origin counties of those who commute into Belmont County, and the destination counties of those who live in Belmont County but commute elsewhere for their livelihood.

According to the data on the ODOD website, 36.0 percent of workers living in Belmont County work outside the County. The Census found 27,889 workers age 16 and over living in Belmont County, and 23,944 workers who work in the county regardless of where they live, leaving a net out-commute of 3,945. The largest work destination for out-commuters is Ohio County, WV, where 16.5 percent of Belmont County's residents who work travel to their job. Jefferson County is a distant second, at 4.0 percent, with Marshall County, WV, third at 3.8 percent.

Average commuting time for workers was 23.5 minutes. This increased slightly, to 24.4 minutes, in the 2005-2009 ACS sample. Of 27,147 workers who did not work at home, 19,790 of them took less than 30 minutes to get to work, another 4,045 took 30 to 44 minutes, 1,551 took 45 to 59 minutes, and 1,761 took 60 or more minutes. Of the last subset, 794 took 90 or more minutes. There were another 742 who worked at home.

The vast majority appeared to work “first shift” with only 1,018 claiming to leave home for work between 12:00 a.m. and 4:59 a.m.; 946 between 10:00 a.m. and 11:59 a.m.; 2,221 between 12:00 p.m. and 3:59 p.m.; and 2,521 between 4:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Population Stability

It is interesting to measure how mobile a population is, and to see how much movement there is within the county or from outside. Table 8 shows the residence in 1995 of those living in Belmont County in 2000. More current (ACS) sampling only covers changes within a one-year period.

Table 8: Residence in 1995 (from 2000 Census)

Residence in 1995	Number in County, 2000
Total age 5 and over	66,691
Same house in 1995	44,937
Different house in 1995	21,754
In US in 1995	21,510
Same County	13,651
Different County	7,859
Same State (Ohio)	4,367
Different State	3,492
Northeast	348
Midwest	240
South	2,617
West	287
Foreign Country or at sea	199

Almost one-third of the population moved during the five year period covered in Table 8, and nearly two-thirds of those moves (13,651) were within the county. Of those coming from out of state, the largest contributing region was the South.

School Enrollment and Attainment

According to the 2000 Census, there were 15,628 Belmont County residents enrolled in school, including 782 in nursery school or preschool, 841 in kindergarten, 7,306 in grades 1-8, 4,222 in grades 9-12, and 2,477 in college or graduate school. With regard to educational attainment, of the population aged 25 or older, 2,919 (5.9%) had less than a ninth grade education, 6,578 (13.3%) achieved 9th to 12th grade with no diploma, 22,984 (46.3%) were high school graduates, 8,525 (17.2%) had some college education but no diploma, 3,087 (6.2%) had an associate’s degree, 3,513 (7.1%) had a bachelor’s degree, and 2,010 (4.1%) had a graduate or professional degree. High school graduates made up 80.9 percent of the 25+ population, and college graduates were 11.1 percent.

Just as there are a large number of communities in Belmont County, there are also a number of school districts located either all or partially in the County. The following table summarizes those districts and their average daily enrollment in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years.

There are seven school districts serving Belmont County students. In addition, the Buckeye Local district to the north serves students in Yorkville, crossing the Belmont-Jefferson County line, and the Switzerland of Ohio district to the south serves students in Powhatan Point. The following table summarizes those districts, including the 2009-2010 “report card” grade based on achievements over thirty criteria. All districts were designated effective, excellent, or continuous improvement, all of which are positive designations. Table 9 also provides average daily enrollment totals for the last two school years. Three districts (Barnesville, Bellaire, and Shadyside) experienced small increases over the past two years.

Table 9: School Districts in Belmont County (Ohio Department of Education)

District	2009-2010 Report Card Designation	Avg. Daily Enrollment 2008-2009	Avg. Daily Enrollment 2009-2010	2009-2010 % of economically disadvantaged	2009-2010 % of seniors who graduated
Barnesville Ex Vil	Effective	1,130	1,140	41.2	96.9
Bellaire Local	Excellent	1,316	1,355	62.2	86.0
Bridgeport Ex Vil	Effective	706	692	56.9	100.0
Martins Ferry City	Effective	1,595	1,557	28.7	99.2
Shadyside	Effective	814	836	33.4	92.2
St. Clairsville- Richland	Effective	1,663	1,662	29.2	96.6
Union Local	Effective	1,483	1,461	40.8	96.0
Buckeye Local	Effective	2,168	2,071	23.7	94.2
Switzerland of OH	Continuous Improvement	2,595	2,481	57.1	94.1

Income

As reported in Table 3, household and per capita income were both significantly lower than the state and national averages. Median household income in the 2005-2009 ACS was \$37,753. While incomes have risen since the 2000 Census, the County continues to trail behind the state and national averages, as it has since 2000. The 2000 Census found that of the 28,363 households counted in the County, 3,905 earned under \$10,000 and 2,869 earned \$10,001 to \$14,999 (totaling 23.9% of all households), while at the other end of the spectrum, 646 made \$100,000 to \$149,999, 140 earned \$150,000 to \$199,999, and 257 earned \$200,000 or more.

Housing

The 2000 census reported on a number of housing characteristics. Table 10 summarizes this information. Of Belmont’s 31,236 housing units counted for the 2000 Census, 28,309 were occupied and 2,927 were vacant. Of the occupied units, three-fourths (21,229) were owner occupied and 7,080 were renter occupied.

Recent data have shown that 23 additional housing units were constructed in 2003, 114 in 2004, 91 in 2005, 115 in 2006, and 99 in 2007. Of these totals, 21 were single unit buildings in 2003, 65 in 2004, 19 in 2005, 23 in 2006, and 18 in 2007.

Table 10: Housing Data for Belmont County (2000 Census)

Units in Structure			Value of specific owner-occupied units	
1 unit-detached	23,032	73.7%	Less than \$50,000	5,811 34.4%
1 unit attached	541	1.7	\$50,000-99,999	7,756 45.9
2 units	1,700	5.4	\$100,000-149,999	2,133 12.6
3 or 4 units	961	3.1	\$150,000-199,999	687 4.1
5 to 9 units	940	3.0	\$200,000-299,999	420 2.5
10-19 units	383	1.2	\$300,000-499,999	53 0.3
20 or more units	919	2.9	\$500,000-999,999	37 0.2
Mobile home	2,732	8.7	\$1,000,000 or more	0 0.0
Boat, RV, van, etc.	28	0.1	House Heating Fuel	
Year Structure Built			Utility gas	15,237 53.8
1999-March 2000	342	1.1	Bottled tank/LP gas	1,866 6.6
1995-1998	1,174	3.8	Electricity	5,784 20.4
1990-1994	1,204	3.9	Fuel oil, kerosene	4,377 15.5
1980-1989	2,448	7.8	Coal or coke	135 0.5
1970-1979	5,114	16.4	Wood	716 2.5
1960-1969	3,064	9.8	Solar energy	20 0.1
1940-1959	7,192	23.0	Other fuel	143 0.5
1939 or earlier	10,700	34.0	No fuel used	31 0.1

Source: 2000 Census of Housing

Ancestry

Belmont County residents are quick to proudly mention the ethnic heritage of County residents, which is quite diverse. The 2000 Census of Population found the most common ancestries, with 1,000 people or more claiming to have such a heritage, to be: German (15,630 persons), Irish (11,692), English (7,737), Polish (6,446), USA (6,277), Italian (6,117), Scotch-Irish (2,067), Hungarian (1,752), Dutch (1,737), French (1,294), Scottish (1,086), and Slovak (1,000).

Unemployment and Workforce

Belmont County has experienced chronically high unemployment for many years. Table 11 compares the County unemployment rate with the Ohio rate over the past few years, and over a recent twelve-month period to indicate the degree of “seasonality” of unemployment.

Unemployment never routinely hit double digits until 2010, when it was over ten percent for the first five months. The overall rates have generally been similar to the State unemployment rates, dipping slightly below the Ohio average in the spring and summer months; the 2010 average unemployment, at 9.9 percent, was slightly lower than the State average of 10.1 percent.

The number of unemployed has increased over time, aside from a peak during the 1980 recession, and

this number has been over 3,000 for a year.

Table 11: Unemployment, Belmont County and Ohio

Time Period	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate	Ohio
1970	31,300	29,300	2,000	6.4	5.4
1980	37,700	34,000	3,700	9.9	8.5
1990	24,200	22,800	1,400	5.6	5.7
2000	31,000	29,100	1,900	6.1	4.0
2005	32,400	30,300	2,100	6.4	5.9
2006	32,500	30,600	1,900	5.9	5.5
2007	32,800	30,900	1,800	5.6	5.6
2008	33,200	31,200	2,000	6.1	6.5
2009	34,000	30,900	3,100	9.1	10.2
2010	34,300	31,000	3,300	9.7	10.1
Jan 2010	34,000	29,800	4,100	12.2	11.8
Feb 2010	34,100	29,800	4,200	12.4	11.8
Mar 2010	34,100	30,200	3,900	11.4	11.5
Apr 2010	34,200	30,800	3,500	10.1	10.7
May 2010	34,200	30,800	3,500	10.1	10.7
Jun 2010	34,400	31,100	3,200	9.4	10.1
Jul 2010	34,300	31,300	3,000	8.8	10.3
Aug 2010	34,500	31,400	3,100	9.0	9.7
Sep 2010	34,400	31,200	3,300	9.4	9.6
Oct 2010	34,900	31,600	3,200	9.3	9.5
Nov 2010	34,900	31,800	3,100	8.8	9.3
Dec 2010	34,900	31,600	3,300	9.4	9.3

Source: Ohio DJFS Labor Market Information

Table 6 showed that the employment opportunities in Belmont County were quite diversified, with significant numbers in professional jobs, office and sales work, extraction and construction, and production and transportation.

Belmont County's Economy

Table 12 presents a view of the County's economy by sector, as presented in the Census Bureau's "County Business Patterns." The most recent year for which information is available is 2008.

The Business Pattern data provide a good summary of the makeup of a local economy, in terms of the number of establishments and employees. In 2008, the largest sector in terms of employment was health care and social assistance for the first time, followed by retail trade. Next was accommodation and food services. Manufacturing was the fourth largest sector, accounting for 1,222 jobs (only seven percent of total employment), down from 1,396 jobs in 2007.

In terms of the number of businesses in each sector, retail trade had by far the largest number, with 320 establishments, followed by "other services" with 211 (but only 920 employees), health care and social assistance with 172, and construction with 123. The Census only counted 55 manufacturing

enterprises.

Table 12: 2008 County Business Patterns, Belmont County

Sector	Employees	Establishments	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999
Total	19,124	1,507	43	22	4	2
Forestry fishing hunting agriculture	1-19	1	0	0	0	0
Mining	500-999	13	0	1	0	1
Utilities	196	5	1	1	0	0
Construction	879	123	2	0	0	0
Manufacturing	1,222	55	1	5	0	0
Wholesale Trade	462	49	2	0	0	0
Retail Trade	4,255	320	11	3	1	0
Transportation and Warehousing	501	56	3	0	0	0
Information	293	24	2	0	0	0
Finance and Insurance	857	109	1	0	1	0
Real Estate and rental and leasing	286	46	1	0	0	0
Professional, scientific, Technical services	584	97	0	0	0	0
Management of companies and enterprises.	100-249	7	0	1	0	0
Admin, support, waste management	586	57	1	1	0	0
Educational Services	232	17	0	0	0	0
Health Care and social assistance	4,401	172	6	9	2	1
Arts, entertainment, recreation	122	17	0	0	0	0
Accommodation and food services	2,462	126	12	1	0	0
Other services except public admin	920	211	0	0	0	0
Unclassified	1-19	2	0	0	0	0

Source: U.S. Census, County Business Patterns

In the following tables, the above sectors are examined over time to note changes, and some specific sectors are broken out in more detail.

There have been some significant changes over the eight year period covered. Overall, employment declined, but only by about two percent. The number of establishments decreased by 120, or 7.4 percent, but there was some notable movement between the sectors. Manufacturing dropped by 551 jobs, a decline by nearly one-third (31.1 percent). Retail trade lost 1,213 jobs, the largest loss in sheer numbers, decreasing by 22.2 percent. On the plus side, administrative support picked up 350 jobs, and health care and social services gained the largest number of jobs, 759. A sought-after sector, professional-scientific-technology, also posted a gain, of 182 jobs.

Just looking at the one-year period between 2007 and 2008 reveals the downward trend to be recent. Total employees dropped from 19,928 (higher than in 2000) to 19,471, a decrease of 804. Construction dipped from 994 to 879, a decrease of 115, and manufacturing lost 174 jobs, from 1,396 to 1,222. Retail dropped by 433 jobs (from 4,688). The professional and scientific sector actually dropped slightly, from 606 to 584, and health care/social services grew from 4,287 to 4,401 (adding 114 jobs). Accommodation and food services lost 126 jobs over the year.

Table 13: County Business Patterns over Time

Sector	2008		2000		2000-2008	
	Employees	Establishments	Employees	Establishments	Employees	Establishments
Total	19,124	1,507	19,471	1,627	-347	-120
Forest/fish/hunt/ag	1-19	1	15	5	--	+4
Mining	500-999	13	672	15	--	+2
Utilities	196	5	215	8	-19	+3
Construction	879	123	914	160	-35	-37
Manufacturing	1,222	55	1,773	61	-551	-6
Wholesale Trade	462	49	427	50	+35	-1
Retail Trade	4,255	320	5,468	371	-1,213	-51
Transport/Warehouse	501	56	396	66	+105	-10
Information	293	24	268	17	+25	+7
Finance & Insurance	857	109	866	110	-9	-1
R.E. and rental	286	46	268	17	+18	+29
Prof, scientific, Tech	584	97	402	89	+182	+8
Mgmt of companies	100-249	7	115	8	--	-1
Admin, support	586	57	236	43	+350	+14
Educational Services	232	17	217	15	+15	+2
Health Care/Social	4,401	172	3,642	155	+759	+17
Arts, entertain, rec	122	17	146	19	-24	-2
Accomm/food services	2,462	126	2,371	143	+91	-17
Other services	920	211	1,034	224	-114	-13
Unclassified	1-19	2	1-19	14	--	--

Manufacturing

A quick look at the breakdown of the manufacturing sector indicates which industries and products predominate in Belmont County. Table 14 (next page) presents those specific product lines that made up the County's 55 manufacturing enterprises in 2008.

Belmont County was home to five manufacturing firms with 100 or more employees in 2008, and they specialized in food manufacturing (dairy and bakery), chemical manufacturing (nitrogenous fertilizer), fabricated metal products (metal coating, engraving, and allied services), and transportation equipment (motor vehicle parts). The greatest concentrations of establishments were in fabricated metal products (with 14 firms and 351 employees), nonmetallic mineral products (8 firms but only 56 employees), and printing and related activities (7 firms but only 25 employees). Certainly, the relatively small size and depth of the manufacturing sector does not point toward any large cluster of similar businesses. However, attention should be paid to the fact that the county has become home to two food processing/manufacturing firms (both in Martins Ferry), four transportation equipment firms (three of which are admittedly small in employment), and perhaps most significant for purposes of capturing any synergies or efficiencies, fourteen fabricated metal product manufacturers, over the full range of sizes.

Table 14: Manufacturing in Belmont County, 2008

Manufacturing Products (2008 CBP)	Estabs	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	Paid Emp's
Manufacturing (total)	55	21	16	9	3	1	5	1,222
Food manufacturing	5	2	1	0	0	0	2	100-249
Beverage and tobacco product manufac.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1-19
Textile product mills	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1-19
Wood Product manufacturing	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1-19
Paper manufacturing	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	20-99
Printing and related support activities	7	5	2	0	0	0	0	25
Petroleum and coal products	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1-19
Chemical manufacturing	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	100-249
Nonmetallic mineral product mfg	8	3	2	3	0	0	0	56
Primary metal manufacturing	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1-19
Fabricated metal product manufacturing	14	3	3	5	1	1	1	351
Machinery manufacturing	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	20-99
Transportation equipment manufacturing	4	1	2	0	0	0	1	100-249
Furniture and related product mfg	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1-19
Miscellaneous manufacturing	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1-19

Source: 2008 County Business Patterns

It can be instructive to similarly break down other sectors to note where concentrations of employees and of establishments are, to note any cluster or areas of specialization where Belmont County has become predominant. The following table examines some of those sectors in more detail, as table 14 examined manufacturing.

Other Significant Sectors

Table 15 (next page) provides some detail in selected economic sectors with significant employment in Belmont County. Mining accounts for thirteen separate establishments, with several surface mining businesses and one large underground firm.

Retail trade has 320 establishments, with the largest number of employees working in general merchandise, followed by food and beverage stores, motor vehicles and parts, and clothing and clothing accessories.

Health care and social assistance (with most employment in health care) has become another large segment of the County's employment picture, with employment in health care split fairly evenly between ambulatory health care services, hospitals, and nursing and residential care. Additionally, due in part to the County's exposure to through traffic along I-70, food services and drinking places accounted for another 2,274 jobs, with accommodations (mostly hotels/motels) adding nearly another 200 jobs.

Table 15: Other Significant Sectors and Lines of Business in Belmont County

	Estabs	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	A=250-499 B=500-999	Paid Emp's
Mining	13	2	3	2	4	0	1	A = 1	500-999
Bituminous Coal & Lignite Surface	9	2	2	0	4	0	1	0	265
Bitum. coal & Lignite Underground	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	A = 1	250-499
Nonmetallic Mineral Mine/Quarrying	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	20-99
Retail Trade	320	111	107	62	25	11	3	B = 1	4,255
Motor Vehicles and Parts	47	15	12	12	7	1	0	0	596
Furniture and Home Furnishings	16	5	6	3	2	0	0	0	123
Electronics and Appliances	9	3	5	0	1	0	0	0	72
Building Materials and Garden	28	9	11	5	2	0	1	0	365
Food and Beverage	33	11	7	7	2	5	1	0	755
Health and Personal Care	24	5	10	9		0	0	0	198
Gasoline Stations	39	20	14	3	2	0	0	0	226
Clothing and Clothing Accessories	42	9	16	12	3	2	0	0	523
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Book/Music	19	8	7	2	2	0	0	0	150
General Merchandise	19	1	8	3	2	3	1	A = 1	1000+
Miscellaneous Stores	37	21	8	6	2	0	0	0	218
Health Care/Social Assistance	172	70	37	37	10	6	9	A = 2 B = 1	4,401
Ambulatory health care services	119	59	29	20	7	2	1	A = 1	1,345
Hospitals	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	A = 1 B = 1	1,365
Nursing and residential care	31	2	5	15	2	2	5	0	1,137
Social assistance	19	9	3	2	1	2	2	0	554
Accommodation, Food Services	126	39	18	27	29	12	1	0	2,462
Accommodations	14	5	2	3	4	0	0	0	188
Food services and drinking places	112	34	16	24	25	12	1	0	2,274

Source: County Business Patterns 2008

Regional Context

Belmont County is situated on the southeastern border of Ohio, just west of the city of Wheeling, West Virginia. It is part of the three-county Wheeling Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, which also includes Ohio and Marshall Counties in West Virginia. Wheeling had an estimated 2006 population of 29,330, a decline from its 2000 population of 31,419. Belmont County's proximity to Wheeling and Ohio County make it somewhat "suburban" in nature, with the retail and service center in St. Clairsville historically serving the Wheeling region.

In Ohio, Belmont County is adjacent to five other counties, which are mostly rural in character. Table 16 (next page) provides some basic comparative information on Belmont County and its neighbors.

Belmont County has the largest population of all the counties in this area. Although Jefferson County's total is similar, that county has a significant population center with the City of Steubenville, rather than Belmont County's more decentralized population. Both Jefferson and Guernsey Counties (with Cambridge as its urban center) had significantly greater manufacturing shipments than Belmont. However, by virtue of the St. Clairsville retail center and the Ohio Valley Mall, Belmont County had greater retail sales than any of the other counties in 2002.

Housing values in Belmont County as reported in the ACS were about average for the region, higher

than in the more rural counties, but lower than the relatively “urbanized” Ohio County, which includes the City of Wheeling, in West Virginia. Household income was ranked fourth among the area counties, with both the most urbanized county and two of the most rural and sparsely populated counties having higher median incomes.

Table 16: Belmont and Adjacent Counties (2010 Census, economic census, and 2005-2009 ACS data)

County	2010 Population	Median housing value ACS	Median Household Income ACS	Private '07 nonfarm employment	Manufactur. Shipment 2002 (000)	Retail sales 2002 (000)	Persons per Sq. Mi. 2000
Belmont	70,400	\$82,900	\$37,753	19,928	597,747	888,491	130.8
Marshall WV	33,107	\$77,400	\$34,330	7,831	NA	204,034	115.7
Ohio WV	44,443	\$89,600	\$37,862	26,462	199,275	446,976	447.4
Guernsey	40,087	\$90,300	\$37,193	13,815	972,300	368,546	78.1
Harrison	15,864	\$77,600	\$35,493	3,134	128,198	55,649	39.2
Jefferson	69,709	\$83,600	\$37,097	22,512	1,120,856	615,098	180.2
Monroe	14,642	\$86,300	\$34,621	3,023	NA	56,448	33.3
Noble	14,645	\$86,300	\$42,961	2,203	125,679	79,733	35.2

Source: U.S. Census, State and County Quickfacts

The next two tables present County Business Patterns information for Belmont County and each of its surrounding counties, which include Guernsey, Harrison, Monroe, and Noble Counties in Ohio, as well as Marshall and Ohio Counties in West Virginia. This information helps identify whether any clusters or concentrations exist in the region producing any specific product or product line. Table 17 shows that there are 231 manufacturing establishments counted in this area, and that nearly one-fourth of them are in Belmont County.

Table 17: Manufacturing Establishments: By Sector, Belmont and Surrounding Counties

Manufacturing Products (2008 CBP)	Bel	Guer	Harr	Mon	Nob	Mars	Ohio	Total
Manufacturing (total)	55	56	16	13	14	19	58	231
Food manufacturing	5	3	0	2	1	1	6	18
Beverage and tobacco product manufac.	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	4
Textile product mills	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
Apparel manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Wood Product manufacturing	3	3	3	1	5	0	0	15
Paper manufacturing	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	4
Printing and related support activities	7	3	1	1	1		10	23
Petroleum and coal products	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	6
Chemical manufacturing	2	5	0	0	0	1	2	10
Plastics and Rubber Products	0	10	1	1	0	0	3	15
Nonmetallic mineral product mfg	8	5	3	2	1	4	3	26
Primary metal manufacturing	1	1	0	1	0	0	5	8
Fabricated metal product manufacturing	14	12	3	2	2	6	14	53
Machinery manufacturing	2	7	2	1	1	0	4	17
Computer and electronic products	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Electrical equip., appliance, component	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Transportation equipment manufacturing	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
Furniture and related product mfg	1	1	2	0	1	2	4	11
Miscellaneous manufacturing	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	6

Counties include: Belmont, Guernsey, Harrison, Monroe, Noble in Ohio, and Marshall and Ohio in West Virginia.

Table 18: Manufacturing Employment: By Sector, Belmont and Surrounding Counties

Manufacturing Products (2008 CBP)	Bel	Guer	Harr	Mon	Nob	Mars	Ohio
Manufacturing (total)	1,222	3,299	689	G	F	578	1,635
Food manufacturing	E	B	0	A	A	A	B
Beverage and tobacco product manufac.	A	A	0	0	0	0	C
Textile product mills	A	0	0	A	0	0	B
Apparel manufacturing	0	0	0	A	0	B	0
Wood Product manufacturing	A	41	C	A	B	0	0
Paper manufacturing	B	C	0	0	B	0	0
Printing and related support activities	25	B	C	A	B	0	79
Petroleum and coal products	A	A	0	0	0	51	0
Chemical manufacturing	C	F	0	0	0	B	E
Plastics and Rubber Products	0	940	A	A	0	0	C
Nonmetallic mineral product mfg	56	243	B	B	A	C	B
Primary metal manufacturing	A	C	0	F	0	0	266
Fabricated metal product manufacturing	351	405	B	B	B	265	C
Machinery manufacturing	B	F	B	A	A	0	128
Computer and electronic products	0	A	0	0	0	0	C
Electrical equip., appliance, component	0	B	0	0	0	A	0
Transportation equipment manufacturing	C	0	0	0	E	0	0
Furniture and related product mfg	A	A	C	0	A	B	A
Miscellaneous manufacturing	A	0	A	0	0	0	0

A = 1-4 employees, B = 5-9; C = 10-19; D = 20-49; E = 50-99; F = 100-249

It is important to note that the largest number of establishments (53, or approximately one-fifth) is associated with fabricated metal product manufacturing. Belmont County is tied with Ohio County for the largest number of these establishments, with fourteen of them. There may be further potential in this sector for some synergies in training, obtaining inputs, and business-to-business activity. Other lines of business with the largest number of establishments include nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing (with 26 firms; 8 in Belmont County), printing and related support facilities (23; seven in Belmont), food manufacturing (18; five in Belmont) machinery manufacturing (17; two in Belmont), wood product manufacturing (15; three in Belmont), and plastics and rubber products (15; none in Belmont).

It is more difficult to make observations about the number of employees, because due to disclosure constraints, much of the data on employees are available only as a range and not a firm number of employees. However, among the manufacturing sectors with the largest regional number of establishments, identified in Table 17, it is clear that Belmont County has a relatively large number of employees in food manufacturing (with two significant employers in Martins Ferry), fabricated metal product manufacturing, and to a lesser extent, printing and related activities, and nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing.

Labor Market

Belmont County's manufacturing employment is relatively small, accounting for only six percent of the County's employment. However, Tables 17 and 18 offer at least some potential areas where regional concentrations exist in specific industries, and where growth potential may be greatest.

Table 19: Ohio Labor Market Information, Belmont County, 2000 and 2008

Sector	2000			2008		
	Employees	Total Wages (000)	Avg. Ann. Wage	Employees	Total Wages (000)	Avg Ann. Wage
Total Private Employment	19,470	\$405,824	\$20,844	19,573	\$569,914	\$29,118
Manufacturing	1,669	54,601	32,715	1,202	55,937	46,533
Mining	724	32,173	44,463	1,264	91,889	72,721
Construction	1,089	28,172	25,879	1,163	41,501	35,692
Wholesale Trade	593	17,035	28,714	606	23,922	39,448
Retail Trade	5,400	83,183	15,405	4,267	82,734	19,389
Transportation and Warehousing	458	11,991	26,177	542	19,938	36,797
Information	467	11,388	24,398	469	16,663	35,535
Finance and Insurance	844	20,504	24,282	839	27,134	32,337
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	259	4,010	15,478	304	6,755	22,197
Administration and Waste Services	NA	NA	NA	628	14,328	22,806
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,543	78,244	22,085	3,891	113,548	29,185
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	160	2,325	14,537	149	1,904	12,799
Accommodations and Food Service	2,320	21,510	9,273	2,678	29,756	11,121
Other Services not Public Admin.	741	10,462	14,111	710	11,393	16,048

Table 19 is derived from information provided by the Ohio Labor Market Information website maintained by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This table shows that two of the largest sectors in terms of employment, retail and accommodation/food service, pay some of the smallest wages, on average. However, these are balanced somewhat by the higher average wages paid in other fairly large sectors, including manufacturing, mining, construction, and finance/insurance.

Table 20: Change in Establishments, Employees, and Average Wages, 2000-2008

Sector	# of Establishments		All Employees		Avg Annual Wage	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Private Employment	-36	-2.4%	105	0.5%	\$8,274	39.7%
Manufacturing	-5	-8.8%	-467	-28.0%	\$13,818	42.2%
Mining	-9	-37.5%	540	74.6%	\$28,258	63.6%
Construction	-40	-21.2%	74	6.8%	\$9,813	37.9%
Wholesale Trade	6	10.3%	13	2.2%	\$10,734	37.4%
Retail Trade	-26	-7.8%	-1,133	-21.0%	\$3,984	25.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0.0%	84	18.3%	\$10,620	40.6%
Information	3	20.0%	2	0.4%	\$11,137	45.6%
Finance and Insurance	1	1.0%	-5	-0.6%	\$8,055	33.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	-5	-10.0%	45	17.4%	\$6,719	43.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	41	29.3	348	9.8%	\$7,100	32.1%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	2	10.0%	-11	-6.9%	-\$1,738	-12.0%
Accommodations and Food Service	-1	-0.8%	356	15.3%	\$1,848	19.9%
Other Services not Public Admin.	-16	-9.4%	-31	-4.2%	\$1,937	13.7%

Note: Comparative data on administration and waste services not available.

Table 20 shows a net decrease in the number of establishments, but a modest increase in the number of employees, over the period from 2000 to 2008. In absolute terms, the greatest increases in the

number of employees were experienced in the mining, health care/social assistance, and accommodation/food service sectors. In percentage terms, the greatest employment increases were in mining, transportation/warehousing, real estate and related, and accommodations/food service. Retail trade lost over 1,100 employees in this period, or about one-fifth of its former work force. Manufacturing also took a significant hit, losing 467 employees, or over one-fourth of its previous labor. Average wages grew significantly in the mining sector, with the next largest wage boosts felt in finance/insurance, real estate/leasing, and manufacturing.

Location Quotients

One measure of the relative importance of differing sectors in a local economy is the calculation of location quotients. These are the ratio of the percentage of the local workforce in a specific sector to the percentage of the total workforce in that sector in the nation, state, or other larger area with which to be compared. Thus, a location quotient in a particular sector that is over 1.0 indicates that this sector is of relatively greater importance in the local economy, and that this sector involves a “basic” industry or sector that is likely exporting its products and services. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides location quotients at a county level for the broad economic sectors, and found four sectors where the location quotient exceeded 1.0, with one (natural resources and mining) having an exceedingly high value of 5.03.

The following table indicates the number of establishments, employment, and location quotients based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ December 2009 data. The other sectors with ratios exceeding 1.0 were education and health services (1.28), trade, transportation, and utilities (1.24), and leisure and hospitality (1.19). Manufacturing was a relatively low 0.46, indicating that the manufacturing sector in Belmont County had slightly less than half the relative employment that it does nationally.

Table 21: Establishments, Employment, and Location Quotients, December 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Sector	# of Establishments	Employment	Location Quotient
Construction	125	832	0.85
Education, health services	200	4,182	1.28
Financial activities	141	1,144	0.87
Information	17	389	0.80
Leisure and hospitality	144	2,649	1.19
Manufacturing	45	936	0.46
Natural resources, mining	30	1,460	5.03
Other services	151	713	0.93
Prof. and business services	158	934	0.32
Trade, transport., utilities	420	5,472	1.24

Tax Base

The following table shows the relative changes in the taxable value of real property by use in Belmont County between 2000 and 2007, the last year for which information is available at the Ohio Department of Development, Policy Research and Strategic Planning Office. This provides a comparative analysis of the relative value and change in value of real estate.

Table 22 shows the relative importance of residential real property to the County, accounting for two-thirds of taxable real property in 2007. All property classifications except mineral increased over the time period covered, but their proportionate size in the County varied, with agriculture losing slightly in its proportion (from 10.0 to 9.5 percent), commercial taxable value similarly losing a small percentage (21.9 to 20.1), Industrial value shrinking by about 10 percent, proportionately, from 4.3 to 3.9 percent, and mineral property decreasing from 0.7 to 0.5 percent. The big winner was residential, increasing in its share from 63.1 to 66.0 percent.

Table 22: Taxable Value of Real Property, in millions of dollars, 2000-2007, Belmont County

Sector		2000	2005	2006	2007
Total Real Property	\$	703.4	801.1	923.1	939.0
Agricultural	\$	70.5	80.8	88.8	89.2
	%	10.0	10.1	9.6	9.5
Commercial	\$	153.8	165.5	184.6	188.4
	%	21.9	20.7	20.0	20.1
Industrial	\$	30.3	32.2	36.3	36.5
	%	4.3	4.0	3.9	3.9
Mineral	\$	4.9	5.1	5.2	4.8
	%	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
Residential	\$	443.9	517.4	608.2	620.0
	%	63.1	64.6	65.9	66.0

Table 23 (next page) presents data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture which is conducted every five years. Interestingly, the data show that, counter to the national trend toward fewer but larger farms, the number of farms in Belmont County actually grew from 603 to 681 between 1992 and 2007, with the average size diminishing from 209 to 190 acres. The total cropland acreage shrank from 62,475 acres to only 42,554, but the acreage that was actually harvested only dropped from 37,558 to 33,321 acres.

The market value of agricultural products grew slowly and steadily, with livestock outselling crops by 3.3 to 1 in 2007 (down slightly from a ratio of 3.61 to 1 in 1992). The increase in average market sales between 1992 and 1997 was offset somewhat by 2007, when the average per farm sales fell back to \$21,370.

Of the 681 farms counted in 2007, 85 farms, or 42 percent, sold less than \$2,500 in farm products; these could be characterized more as “hobby farms” that supplement other more prominent sources of income. At the other end of the scale, the number of farms with sales of \$100,000 or more did grow, from 20 in 1992 to 27 in 2007, while the number selling \$50,000 to \$99,000 decreased by one-third, from 46 to 30.

The number of farm operators whose primary occupation is farming stayed about steady during the period covered, decreasing slightly from 285 to 273; operators whose primary source of income was some other means grew from 318 to 408 over the same period.

In terms of trends and relative importance of specific livestock and crops, the bottom portion of Table 23 indicates that beef cattle increased while milk cattle decreased; hogs and pigs, as well as sheep and lambs, have all diminished in importance.

Crops have continued to be of relatively less importance than livestock, and the acreage devoted to corn, wheat, and oats appears to have decreased significantly between 1992 and 2007. Acreage for hay has remained significant.

Table 23: Agriculture in Belmont County

Characteristic	2007	1997	1992
Number of Farms	681	622	603
Land in Farms (acres)	129,106	148,287	126,195
Average Size of Farm (acres)	190	238	209
Median Size of Farm (acres)	92	123	---
Total Cropland (acres)	42,554	65,322	62,475
Total Cropland Harvested (acres)	33,321	N/A	36,558
Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold	\$14,553,000	\$12,308,000	\$11,023,000
Crop Sales	\$3,382,000	\$2,297,000	\$2,389,000
Livestock Sales	\$11,172,000	\$10,011,000	\$8,635,000
Average Market Values of Sales per Farm	\$21,370	\$41,494	\$18,281
Farms by Value of Sales: Less than \$2,500	285	204	199
\$2,500-4,999	92	131	116
\$5,000-9,999	112	88	96
\$10,000-24,999	91	98	81
\$25,000-49,999	44	40	45
\$50,000-99,999	30	28	46
\$100,000 or More	27	33	20
Operator's Primary Occupation: Farming	273	274	285
Other	408	348	318
Cattle Inventory: Beef Cows	11,231 - 401 farms	11,032 - 286 farms	7,441 - 354 farms
Cattle Inventory: Milk Cows	935 - 28 farms	2,779 - 77 farms	3,102 - 101 farms
Hogs and Pigs Inventory	90 - 15 farms	727 - 26 farms	1,145 - 30 farms
Sheep and Lambs Inventory	943 - 32 farms	1,804 - 43 farms	2,701 - 50 farms
Layers (Chickens) Inventory	1,438 - 59 farms	D - 25 farms	D - 33 farms
Selected Crops Harvested: Corn for Grain	417 ac. - 37 farms	1,834ac.-109farms	2701 ac - 50 farms
Corn for Silage and Greenchop	399 ac - 19 farms	723 ac - 37 farms	710 ac - 41 farms
Wheat for Grain	D	99 ac - 17 farms	252 ac - 72 farms
Oats for Grain	125 ac - 12 farms	606 ac - 55 farms	680 ac - 72 farms
Hay	30,599 ac - 476	38,010 ac - 517	33,239 ac - 514

Chapter 3: Belmont County's Development Assets and Features

Natural Features



Belmont County encompasses a variety of natural features, from the hills surrounding the Ohio River valley to the more gently rolling farmland and reclaimed mining property in the western portion of the County. The County includes an area of 341,917 acres or 535 square miles.

The climate of Belmont County can be described as continental, with wide annual and daily temperature ranges. Winters are typically cold, snowy and cloudy, and summers are fairly warm and mild. In winter the average temperature is 28 degrees F. and the average daily minimum temperature is 18 degrees. The lowest temperature on record occurring in Barnesville on January 29, 1963, is -25 degrees. In summer, the average temperature is 68 degrees, and the average daily maximum temperature is 81 degrees. The highest recorded temperature, occurring on August 4, 1955, is 102 degrees.

Rainfall is usually well distributed through the year, with fall being the driest season. Normal annual precipitation is adequate for all of the commonly grown crops. Of the County's total annual precipitation, 23 inches, or 60 percent, usually falls between April and September, which includes the growing season for most crops. Thunderstorms occur on about 40 days each year, with most occurring in the summer. Heavy rains, which occur at any time in the year, and severe thunderstorms in summer sometimes cause flash flooding, particularly in narrow valleys.

Average seasonal snowfall is 32 inches, and the greatest snow depth at any one time during the period of record was 15 inches. On average, at least one inch of snow is on the ground for 22 days, but the number of such days varies greatly from year to year.

The average humidity in mid-afternoon is about 60 percent. Humidity is higher at night, and the average at dawn is about 80 percent.

Physiography, Relief, and Drainage

Belmont County is in the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau region, and the area has been dissected extensively by drainage ways. Topography can be divided in to four general sections. The eastern fourth of the county, bordering the Ohio River, is the most rugged, with narrow ridge tops and valleys, and steep to very steep side slopes. The next fourth of the county to the west is not quite as rugged, ridge tops are slightly wider and more gently sloping, and there are not so many very steep side slopes and valleys. The next (third) fourth to the west is more gently sloping, with wider ridge tops and fewer steep hillsides. The western fourth of the county is similar to the second, but it has been extensively strip mined.

The eastern three-fourths drain into the Ohio River; the three main tributaries are Wheeling, McMahon, and Captina Creeks. Some additional small streams drain into the River. The western fourth of the county is drained by Leatherwood and Stillwater Creeks, part of the Muskingum River Watershed.

The highest elevation in the county is 1,397 feet above sea level at Galloway's Knob south of St. Clairsville. The lowest elevation, at Powhatan Point, is about 625 feet, which is normal pool elevation of the Ohio River at that point.

Geology

Bedrock in Belmont County is sedimentary rock, with exposed strata consisting of two geologic formations and one geologic group. The rocks in these formations are shale, sandstone, siltstone, limestone, and coal. The layers of rock are nearly horizontally bedded but dip generally to the southeast at an average of 18 feet per mile. The Conemaugh formation crops out only in the western part of the county and in valleys in the northeast. The Dunkard Group is the most extensively exposed bedrock, occurring in the eastern half of the county. Finally, the Monogahela Formation is less extensive than the Dunkard Group but more extensive than the Conemaugh Formation; it is exposed mostly in the western part of the county but also in the main valleys that drain to the Ohio River.

Natural Resources

Coal mining continues to be an important part of the local economy. Over the years, the County has experienced significant mining: the Pittsburgh Number 8 coalbed was extensively deep mined, while that bed and the Sewickley Number 9, Uniontown Number 10, Waynesburg number 11, and Washington number 12 coalbeds were surface mined. Most surface mining has occurred in the northern half of the county, including areas bisected by I-70; scattered areas in the south portion of the county were surface mined as well.

Active limestone quarries have also existed in the county. The limestone has been used mainly for road base and to a lesser extent for agricultural use.

There is potential for development of natural gas production from hydrocarbon rich shale formations, known as “shale gas”. This is one of the most rapidly expanding trends in onshore domestic oil and gas exploration and production today. Eastern Ohio, including Belmont County, falls into the region of Marcellus Shale, an area which also includes western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and western New York state.

Shale and Natural Gas

A key element in the emergence of shale gas production (particularly with regard to the Marcellus Shale formations within a multi-state region that includes eastern Ohio) has been the refinement of cost-effective horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing technologies. These two practices, along with the implementation of protective environmental management practices, have allowed shale gas development to move into areas that would have previously been inaccessible. Drilling and completion of shale gas wells includes both vertical and horizontal wells. Hydraulic fracturing involves the pumping of a fracturing fluid under high pressure into a shale formation to generate fractures or cracks in the target rock formation. Ground water is protected during the fracturing by a combination of casing and cement. Exploration and research in the near future should determine the extent to which Marcellus (and now Utica) shale is a viable energy source to be extracted in Belmont County.

Marcellus shale spans six states with an estimated depth of production between 4,000 and 8,500 feet. The Marcellus Shale is a Middle Devonian-age shale bounded by shale above and limestone below. Marcellus Shale covers an area of 95,000 square miles at an average thickness of 50 feet to 200 feet. Well spacing in the Marcellus averages 40 to 160 acres per well.

Interest has been shown in Belmont County as a location for gas production, with the drilling of a 13,727 foot well near Bridgeport. Another 8,450 foot well near Barnesville has struck a Utica Shale rock formation which will develop more natural gas. A number of drillers have obtained permission to drill gas or oil wells in Belmont County, in a variety of locations near St. Clairsville, Powhatan Point, Shadyside, and Flushing, in addition to the above-mentioned sites.

Soils

Soils throughout the County vary in characteristics and makeup, but are summarized as follows:

1. Gently sloping soils on wide ridge tops and strongly sloping and moderately steep soils on hillsides. These soils make up about 30 percent of the County. Maximum difference in relief is about 200 feet. They are moderately drained and well drained, moderately deep and deep, gently sloping to moderately steep, and found on ridge tops and hillsides on uplands. They are the best uplands soils in the county for farming, and are used mainly for cultivated crops, hay, and pasture. Main limitations are an erosion hazard, moderately steep slopes, bedrock at a depth of 20 to 40 inches, and moderately slow or slow permeability. Soil associations in this group include Westmoreland-Morristown-Lowell (where much of the

Morristown soils have been surface mined and used for pasture or open land wildlife habitat), Westmoreland-Lowell-Fairpoint, Westmoreland-Dekalb-Lowell, and Westmoreland-Culleoka-Zanesville.

2. Strongly sloping soils on rounded ridge tops and moderately steep soils on hillsides. These soils make up about 42 percent of the county, on dissected uplands. Maximum difference in relief is about 400 feet. These deep, moderately well drained and well drained, strongly sloping to steep soils are on ridge tops, knolls and hillsides on uplands, woodland, and wildlife habitat. Erosion, moderately steep and steep slopes, susceptibility to hillside slippage, high shrink-swell potential, and moderately slow and slow permeability are major limitations to development. Soil associations in this group include Westmoreland-Lowell-Morristown, Lowell-Westmoreland-Elba, and Westmoreland-Lowell.
3. Steep and very steep soils on hillsides. These soils make up about 26 percent of the county, and are steep and very steep soils in deeply dissected areas along or near the larger streams. Maximum difference in local relief is about 700 feet. Ridge tops are narrow and rounded. The soils are used for woodland, wildlife habitat, hay, pasture, and cropland. Their steep and very steep slopes limit use. These soils are in the Lowell-Westmoreland association.
4. Nearly level soils on flood plains, gently sloping to moderately steep soils on terraces, and gently sloping to steep soils on foot slopes. These soils make up only two percent of the county, and are well drained and moderately well drained, nearly level to steep, on flood plains, terraces, and foot slopes. Maximum difference in local relief is about 100 feet. Soils are used for urban development, cultivated crops, hay, pasture, woodland, and wildlife habitat. Hazards of flooding and erosion, moderately slow permeability, high shrink-swell potential, and susceptibility to hillside slippage are the major limitations. They consist of the Elkinsville-Nolin Variant-Brookside association.

Major Recreation Areas



Barkcamp State Park (left) is situated on 1,005 acres near Belmont. The park has 150 camp sites, and its amenities include access to the 117 acre Belmont Lake, a boat launch ramp, fishing opportunities, a 700 foot beach for swimming, eight picnic areas, four hiking trails, a paved trail through a pioneer village, and a bridle/snowmobile trail.

Egypt Valley Wildlife Area is a 14,300 acre former surface mining area administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in the northwest corner of Belmont County. The area includes the southern end of Piedmont Lake, and it offers opportunities for fishing, hunting, camping, and hiking.

MAN-MADE FEATURES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation: Highways



Belmont County has the advantage of being the eastern gateway to Ohio along the I-70/I-470 corridor. The county is bisected from east to west by I-70, and this Interstate highway provides ready access to a number of nearby metropolitan areas and markets, including Wheeling to the immediate east, Columbus to the west, and via connecting Interstates, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Akron, Dayton, and the east coast within an easy one-day drive. A five-mile major upgrade to I-70 is being completed in Belmont County, centered on

Exit 208, and also including replacement/repair of four bridge decks and substructures, and upgrades to the rest areas located between exits 208 and 213.

State Route 7, traversing north to south along the Ohio River, provides connections up- and down-river, and includes sections that have controlled access and resemble a freeway/expressway. Route 7 connects a number of communities along the river, including Martins Ferry, Bellaire, Shadyside, and Powhatan Point, with neighboring Steubenville to the north. Other important routes within Belmont County include U.S. 250 and U.S. 40 (the historic National Road), State Routes 147, 148, 149 and 331 running east to west, and State Routes 9 and 800 from north to south.

The table on the following page depicts the level of average daily traffic experienced at key intersections on major roadways in Belmont County, as observed in a 2008 traffic count conducted by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Ohio River

The adjacent Ohio River provides an important route for freight traffic, especially including coal, by barge and ship, as part of the 7,000 mile Mississippi River system. This alternative is expected to gain in importance with the completion of the expansion of the Panama Canal to hold larger freighters and accommodate increased Asian traffic, and with the comparatively low transportation and energy costs associated with water transport. Belmont County is within 60 miles of the Port of Pittsburgh, and the existence of a number of locks between Belmont and Pittsburgh point toward an advantage in locating trans-shipment points in the Belmont County region. Increased activity has indeed taken place in this respect in Bellaire.

Table 24: Traffic Counts at Major Intersections, 1996 and 20087 (ODOT)				
Intersection	Cars and A 2008	B&C Com'I 2008	Total 2008	Total 1996
SR 7, at N. corp. Powhatan Point	6770	780	7550	6000
SR 7 at N. corp. Shadyside	9460	1180	10640	5690
SR 7 at N. corp. Bellaire	17650	1400	19050	22190
SR 7 at I-70	31670	2790	34460	7480
SR 7 at S. corp. Martins Ferry	15930	1800	17730	26220
SR 9 at SR 147	1500	40	1540	1880
SR 9 at I-70	8010	350	8360	10560
SR 9 at N. corp. St. Clairsville	3970	130	4100	3420
US 40 at E. Corp. Morristown	3470	170	3640	3450
US 40 at W. Corp. S. Clairsville	10280	210	10490	10130
US 40 at E. corp. St. Clairsville	12800	170	12970	12680
US 40 at Mall Road	13300	220	13520	10610
US 40 at W. corp. Bridgeport	10880	210	11090	12750
US 40 at SR 7	17800	780	18580	11510
I-70 at SR 800	16210	12530	28740	22630
I-70 at SR 149	20530	12320	32850	28220
I-70 at SR 331	28490	11420	39910	31670
I-70 at US 40	29710	11490	41200	33330
I-70 at SR 9	35250	11770	47020	37480
I-70 at Mall Road	34410	11770	46180	36890
I-70 at Banfield Rd.	37820	11830	49650	41770
I-70 at C-214	17080	7310	24390	26240
I-70 at SR 7 - 767	13970	6560	20530	27390
SR 147 at E. Corp. Barnesville	7480	170	7650	5760
SR 147 at NE corp. Bethesda	6050	160	6210	5600
SR 147 at S. corp. Belmont	1300	70	1370	1150
SR 149 at W. corp. Bellaire	2740	140	2880	6680
SR 149 at I-70	6280	560	6840	4000
SR 149 at S. corp. Flushing	1770	90	1860	2040
US 250 at NW corp. Bridgeport	4260	390	4650	7300
US 250 at SR 7 off ramp enter Lincoln Ave.	19770	870	20640	20330
SR 331 at SW Corp. Flushing	1050	50	1100	2660
SR 331 at I-70	6340	370	6710	7350
I-470 at I-70	21840	4510	26350	25330
I-470 at C-214	21880	4520	26400	25280
I-470 at SR 7	31470	4940	36410	27780
SR 647 at SR 7	10580	490	11070	9060
SR 800 at N. corp. Barnesville	4220	350	4570	3190
SR 800 at I-70	630	60	690	980

Railroads and Trans-shipment Opportunities

Railroads in Belmont County consist of a line that has historically served the steel, coal, and related industries along the Ohio River. The line is maintained by CSX and by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad, the latter of which is associated with Norfolk Southern. The lines provide connections to main lines and the ability to transport freight throughout the United States, including export coal terminals. Wheeling and Lake Erie can provide connections with CSX and Norfolk Southern, as well as access to inland waterways, as well as inter-modal transfer to motor carriers. The line runs along the Ohio River and crosses the river near Wheeling to reach the Benwood terminus. CSX Transportation services the Wheeling area and maintains facilities for barge and truck services.

The presence of rail facilities along the waterfront provides opportunity for further development of trans-shipment of freight from barges and motor carriers. The potential for the growth of intermodal transportation has been realized as significant. The Army Corps of Engineers lists a number of Ohio River terminals, some of which are currently inactive, but several of which have rail connections. The list includes:

Martins Ferry: Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corp. (coke and steel; Norfolk Southern, CSX and W&LE); Martin Marietta (coal; no rail); Thomas E. Ayers (coal; no rail; inactive).

Bellaire: Tri-Son Concrete (sand and gravel; no rail; portable facility); Oxford Mining Co. (coal; no rail); Ohio River Salvage (mooring services; no rail); Rayle Coal Co. (coal; Norfolk Southern); Ohio River Salvage (boat and barge repair; no rail); and also the newly expanded MPR facility.

Dilles Bottom/Shadyside: Ohio Edison Berger plant (coal; no rail); Burrell Industries (sand and gravel); Anchor Construction (farther south; coal).

Powhatan Point: American Coal Sales (coal).

Airports



There are two airports in Belmont County. The privately owned Alderman Airport (left picture) is located three miles southwest of St. Clairsville and has a 2,843 by 50 foot asphalt runway. Farther west, the Barnesville-Bradfield Airport

(right), one mile northwest of Barnesville, is publicly owned (Belmont County Airport Authority) and has a 4,004 by 65 foot asphalt runway. Both have tie-down and hangar facilities. Also nearby is the Ohio County Airport in West Virginia, with runways measuring 5,001 by 150 feet and 4,497 by 150 feet.

Belmont County is 84 miles from the Akron-Canton Airport, 60 miles west of Pittsburgh International Airport, and 120 miles east of Port Columbus International Airport.

Utilities: Water

Wells drilled along the Ohio River valley are said to yield more than 300,000 gallons per minute, and the river itself can provide plentiful surface water. Normal flows measure more than six billion gallons per day. Some twelve treatment plants provide public water service, with the largest being the Belmont County Sanitary Sewer District. That district has worked to distribute the water to communities, households, and businesses farther west in the County.

Table 25: Water Use, Demand, and Capacity in Belmont County					
	Pop. Served	Source	Average Use	Max Use	Plant Capacity
Barnesville	12387	S/W	0.9595 MGD	1.2 MGD	2.5 MGD
Bellaire	5617	S/W	1.1 MGD	1.7 MGD	3.0 MGD
Belmont Co. SSD #3	28762	G/W	2.762 MGD	3.694 MGD	6.0 MGD
Belmont Co. SD #1B	1379	Satellite	0.25 MGD	.463 MGD	Satellite
Belmont Village	532	G/W	0.04 MGD	0.045 MGD	0.06 MGD
Bethesda	1413	Satellite	0.123 MGD	0.320 MGD	Satellite
Bridgeport	4209	G/W	0.7 MGD	0.890 MGD	1.5 MGD
Flushing	1632	Satellite	0.15 MGD	0.18 MGD	Satellite
Holloway	345	G/W	0.048 MGD	0.112 MGD	0.112 MGD
Martins Ferry	11385	G/W	2.62 MGD	4.0 MGD	5.0 MGD
Morristown	453	Satellite	0.024 MGD	N/A	Satellite
Powhatan Point	1807	G/W	0.225 MGD	0.350 MGD	0.432 MGD
Shadyside	3812	G/W	0.430 MGD	0.658 MGD	0.658 MGD
St. Clairsville	5238	S/W	0.455 MGD	0.589 MGD	0.750 MGD
York Twp Water Auth.	481	Satellite	1.2 MG/mo.	N/A	Satellite
Source: most current EPA "evaluation and inventory report", 2007-2010. G/W = groundwater; S/W = surface water Barnesville service village of Quaker City, Bethesda, and Switzerland of Ohio Water District. Bridgeport also serves Brookside and Belmont Co. S.D. #1B. Flushing and Morristown are served by Belmont County SS District #3. York Township is a satellite service from Powhatan Point. Belmont Co. SS D #3 can supply Bridgeport and Martins Ferry on an emergency basis.					

Several projects underway will improve existing systems. These include water meter and water line replacements, dam repair, and storage tank road repairs in Barnesville; water line and tank replacements in Martins Ferry; water connection to the County in St. Clairsville; and a number of projects to extend service from the County Water and Sewer District subject to availability of funds. Additionally, efforts are underway to extend water service to key development sites, such as the Eastern Ohio Regional Industrial Park on SR 800 north of Barnesville.

Sewer

The County Sanitary Engineer's office has been active in constructing sanitary sewer lines to accommodate commercial, industrial, and residential development. A sanitary sewer force main and treatment plant serves a major portion of the County between I-70 exits 208 and 215 along US Route 40, with gravity sewer lines at each exit and at the 125-acre Fox Industrial Park on County Road 80. Additional pump stations and force mains exist along State Route 149 between Bellaire and the Neffs region. Belmont County has proactively allocated general funds to water and sewer expansion in recent years, as part of the overall Countywide economic development strategy.

Table 26: Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants in Belmont County			
Treatment Plant	Average Design Capacity MGD	Average Daily Flow MGD	Maximum Daily Flow MGD
Barnesville	1.3	0.70	0.80
Bethesda	0.31		
Eastern Ohio Regional WW Auth.	5.0	4.0	11.0
Flushing	0.2		
Fox-Shannon	0.75	0.35	0.75
Penwood Estates	0.11	0.024	0.11
Powhatan Point	0.34		
Shadyside	0.6		
St. Clairsville-West	0.09	0.055	0.163
St. Clairsville	0.95	0.587	2.30
Yorkville	0.424		
Note: East Ohio serves Martins Ferry, Bellaire, Bridgeport, Brookside, and parts of unincorporated Belmont County. Penwood Estates' plant is operated by Belmont County Sewer District.			

Other Utilities

SBC is a primary communications company providing most of Belmont County with telecommunications service. There are eight SBC digital switching offices providing a variety of custom calling and digital services. SBC has completed construction of a high capacity fiber optic network, which is available to secondary schools, libraries, hospitals, colleges and universities, and government offices.

Comcast Cable Communications, with an office in Martins Ferry and service center in Bridgeport, provides cable and high-speed Internet service in the majority of Belmont County. Comcast offers a variety of service levels for commercial and residential customers, including digital cable, high definition television, on demand and pay-per-view programming.

Electric service is provided to some 300 square miles of service area in Belmont County by American Electric Power (AEP). AEP has some 22,000 circuit miles of transmission lines,

102,000 miles of distribution lines, and 38 affiliated power plants system-wide. Adequate power for industrial uses is provided with primary service delivered over 69 kV sub transmission lines directly connected to two 345 kV and three 138 kV transmission lines and reduced to 12,470 volts for distribution in communities. Electric power can be purchased at sub transmission voltage for large industrial requirements.

Rural areas of Belmont County obtain electric power from the South Central Power Company, Ohio's largest rural electric cooperative, which serves more than 4,000 homes and businesses in Belmont County, and more than 80,000 homes in its 24-county service area. Power for the cooperative is obtained through an affiliation with Buckeye Power, Inc., a generation and transmission cooperative.

Natural gas provides service to in 65 of Ohio's 88 counties, including Belmont County. It provides gas transportation for industrial and commercial customers who purchase gas from other sources.

Institutions: Hospitals



Belmont County is home to three primary care hospitals, all with round-the-clock emergency rooms. The Barnesville Hospital serves the western portion of the County, with a 20 bed medical/surgical wing, a five-bed critical care unit, and specialized services including cardiopulmonary care, physical and occupational therapy, and radiology.



The Belmont Community Hospital affiliated with Wheeling Hospital and located in Bellaire, is a 99-bed acute care hospital offering primary care and selected specialty services for residents of the upper Ohio Valley. The array of services includes pediatrics, intensive care, orthopedic surgery, cardiac care, rehabilitation, and mental health. The hospital also offers diagnostic testing and treatment services for inpatients and outpatients, and it owns and operates four outpatient centers in Bellaire, Powhatan

point, Shadyside, and St. Clairsville. Each center includes physician offices representing most medical specialties serving the hospital. The Behavioral Medicine Center at the Belmont Community Hospital is the only inpatient psychiatric facility in Eastern Ohio, providing acute, short term, and multidisciplinary mental health treatment.



The East Ohio Regional Hospital is located in Martins Ferry, and is affiliated with the Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling. With a 94 bed skilled and intermediate care facility, EORH offers primary and tertiary care services, with rehabilitations services, intensive care, general surgery, and diagnostic radiology and neurology services. The hospital completed a new \$12 million surgical center in 2007. They also operate an East Ohio Medical Complex in the St.

Clairsville Shopping Plaza, with services including a lab, X-ray, ultrasound, physical therapy, cardiac stress testing, and mammography.

Colleges and Universities



Ohio University Eastern Campus is one of five regional campuses of Ohio University. Its primary purpose is to offer Ohio University courses, programs, and selected degrees to residents of southeastern Ohio and neighboring states. It shares exit 213 off I-70 with Belmont Technical College, and occupies a 358 acre campus. The University has approximately 24 full-time faculty on campus, with another

75 adjunct instructors. More than 1,000 students enroll annually, of which 90 percent are degree-seeking undergraduates. Approximately 60 percent are residents of Belmont County, and the campus draws students from more than 20 Ohio counties, northern West Virginia, and southwestern Pennsylvania. Some students attend the main (Athens) campus for their final two years, but others complete their baccalaureate at Eastern, especially in the fields of elementary education, business administration, and specialized studies. Bachelor's degrees are offered in Business Administration, Communication Studies, Community Health Services, Criminal Justice, Early and Middle Childhood Education, Exercise Physiology, Health Services Administration, Specialized Studies, and Technical and Applied Studies. Graduate programs include a Masters of Financial Economics, Masters of Business Administration, Masters of Arts in Organizational Communications, and Masters of Education.



Belmont Technical College, located in close proximity to Ohio University-Eastern, provides affordable higher education for students, as well as college preparation instruction, technical education, and transfer degrees. In addition to an Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree, degrees are offered in Information Technology, Information Services, Building Preservation, Business,

Industrial Trades, and Allied Health and Public Safety. Belmont Tech is also an active partner in directly assisting with workforce development, providing practical and useful courses through customized training designed to meet a client company's specific needs. Assessment and training from Belmont Tech can be provided on the business site, at times that are convenient to

the business. An Internet-ready portable computer lab can be brought to the site to enhance training capabilities. A sampling of workforce development related topics includes Microsoft applications, customer service, blueprint reading, electrical circuits, welding, fiber optics, tooling and machining, first aid, and Statistical Quality Control.

Other Institutions



The Belmont County Fairgrounds has been relocated to a new 162 acre site 5.5 miles west of its previous location in St. Clairsville. The new facility has new water lines, underground electric lines, a 300 foot by 750 foot midway, a motocross track, demolition derby areas, and a 75 by 400 foot pulling track for sanctioned pulls. There are also over 7,000 parking spaces. Buildings were donated by individuals and businesses, and initially include six barns, a show arena, and a horticultural building. There are also

camping facilities on site.

Located on site is the James E. Carnes Center, a 21,000 square foot facility for meetings, wedding receptions, trade shows, and other meetings and events. The building includes a 6,000 square foot atrium and three 5,000 square foot rooms. Tourism Bureau funding has been budgeted for the hiring of a full-time director for this facility.



The Belmont Correctional Institution located west of St. Clairsville on Bannock Road, while not necessarily a business amenity, was constructed in 1995, and is situated on 158 acres. The population as of January 2011 is 2,737, and total staffing at the facility is 487, with 315 security staff, making the institution one of the County's largest employers.

Goal 1: Infrastructure

Provide the necessary infrastructure to support desired economic growth. This means adequate water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, roadway, energy, and communications technology, with emphasis on targeted areas of growth. It also requires updating, expanding, and replacing inadequate facilities as well as extending new ones to strategic areas.

The term, “infrastructure”, refers to supportive systems that are needed for producing and delivering goods and services, and to make sites within the County viable for productive economic uses. Basic infrastructure systems include:

- Transportation infrastructure: enabling the movement of goods and people, and including streets and highways, public transportation, railroads, airports, water ports, bike trails, bridges, access improvements, and parking facilities.
- Public Utility infrastructure: basic services and commodities that are provided to the public at large. Basic utilities include water, sewer, storm water, and energy (electricity, natural gas). Utility capacity and maintenance are important, but costly, functions.
- Communications infrastructure: systems and capacities of a community to communicate locally, regionally, and globally, including two-way voice, data, and broadband communication. This segment has become increasingly important; in many respects, a rural area with state-of-the-art communications infrastructure is on a level playing field with its more urban counterparts. Communications components include telephone, radio and television, cable and video, satellite and cellular, microwave and wireless, and broadband delivered through fiber optics, T-1 lines, DSL, and other means.

Industrial sites and growth areas can only be effectively marketed to prospects if they have adequate infrastructure to support new and growing business. This includes sufficient water and sewer, truck-accessible highway, drainage on-site, and superior provisions for cell phones and land-lines, as well as high-speed broadband Internet service, preferably through fiber optics. The quality, availability, and capacity of infrastructure have always ranked highly among site selection factors. The existing infrastructure within Belmont County is summarized under the section entitled “Belmont County Development Assets”.

It is recommended that infrastructure improvement projects be prioritized and budgeted in a community’s Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The improvements that are ranked highest in these plans will then determine where scarce resources should be allocated and new development is likeliest to occur in the County. A CIP can function as a formal mechanism for decision making, a link to long range planning, a financial management tool, and a reporting document, prioritizing current and future needs to fit within the anticipated level of financial resources. Other benefits include communicating capital priorities and plans to citizens, and improving inter- and intra-governmental cooperation and communication. A multi-year

planning period allows for phasing of projects that can be coordinated. When care is taken to prioritize and schedule projects, chances are greatly reduced that dramatic tax increases or user fee increases will be needed to fund capital projects.

Here are some general guidelines for the provision of utilities for economic development activities, taken from a publication by DeLoitte & Touche Fantus, prepared for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development:

Criteria	Heavy Industrial	General Industrial	Light Industrial/ Commercial	Office/Business Park
Electric Power	Distribution Line: 13 kV	Distribution Line: 13 kV	13 kV or less if primarily offices	13kV; smaller line for small office parks
Natural Gas	3-6 inch lines	2-6 inch lines	2-3 inch lines	2-3 inch lines
Water	4-12 inch lines	4-8 inch lines	Up to 8 inches	Up to 4 inches
Sewer	4-8 inch lines	4-8 inches	Up to 8 inches	Up to 4 inches
Telecom	Limited; Long distance; T-1 lines	T-1 required; possible fiber optics	T-1, ISDN, DSL, and fiber optics; carrier diversity	T-1, ISDN, DSL and fiber optics; carrier diversity
Rail	Possible requirement	Possible requirement	N/A	N/A

Infrastructure costs can be minimized by considering some of the principles of “smart growth” in planning for development. Applicable principles include mixing land uses rather than maintaining zones that are exclusive to one use; taking advantage of compact building design; preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas; strengthening development and directing it toward existing communities; and encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions. Following such practices can help make development more predictable and orderly, and, when rate structures and levels of projected demand are known, affordable.

With regard to affordability, it is important to understand and estimate, as accurately as possible, the cost of services provided. Projected revenue streams should also be realistically estimated to ensure that costs can be met, and that the impact of a project on local government and school districts is understood.

Several entities take part in planning for infrastructure improvements throughout the County and the region. For example:

Outside the municipal boundaries where cities or villages provide their own utilities, the **Belmont County Sanitary Engineer’s office** is responsible for County-wide planning of water and sanitary sewer services. In some cases, they also work with municipalities. In general, plans have called for water distribution to reach from the Ohio River communities at the east end of the county westward, largely to communities and consumers in the vicinity of the I-70 corridor, then southerly, with long-range plans to loop the entire system.

Currently, the **Belmont County Sanitary Sewer District** provides water service to over one third of the County. The District also provides wastewater services to a more limited area, primarily along the I-70 corridor from the Morristown area east to an area near Bridgeport. One District priority is to maintain existing facilities to the maximum extent possible, given their limited resources in terms of personnel and finances. The District continues to pursue available funding sources such as Ohio EPA Revolving Loan Funds, Ohio Public Works funding, and State and Tribal Assistance Grants, to provide additional services to areas of need throughout the County.

In providing drinking water, the District has been aggressive in serving areas throughout the eastern two thirds of the County. A current priority project is Mount Victory Phase 1, which is expanding service along Mt. Victory Road from the Jacobsburg vicinity to an area near Powhatan Point. The project is almost complete. A Phase 2 project is planned and will provide additional water lines to York Township and add a water tank to the County system.

A long term goal of the District is to continue to pursue discussions with water systems in Guernsey County and Harrison County seeking mutual cooperation in securing adequate water supplies for these areas, where water mains and tanks could be interconnected, and with each county able to branch off the system thus assuring long term sustainability. However, while there is a resolution to enter into this collaboration, implementation of a regional system is subject to the availability of scarce funding, and this is viewed as a long term objective requiring extensive negotiations.

In providing wastewater service, the District maintains an ongoing infiltration/inflow (I/I)

Sources of Infrastructure Funding

Roadways/Highways:

Ohio Dept. of Transportation

www.dot.state.oh.us

Bel-O-Mar Metropolitan Planning Org.

www.belomar.org

Ohio Public Works Commission

(grant/loan/loan assistance)

www.pwc.state.oh.us/

Water/Wastewater and Public Facilities

Ohio EPA

(drinking water assistance fund, water supply revolving loan, water pollution control loan fund)

www.epa.state.oh.us

Ohio Water Development Authority

(revolving loan fund) www.owda.org

USDA-Rural Development

(Water and waste disposal program, community facilities program)

www.rurdev.usda.gov/OH/wtrwaste.htm

Ohio Dept. of Development, OHCP

(Water/wastewater CDBG)

www.odod.state.oh.us/cdd/ohcp/cdp.htm

Ohio Public Works Commission

(grant/loan/loan assistance)

www.pwc.state.oh.us/

Appalachian Regional Commission

(Area Development Program, Distressed Counties)

www.odod/state.oh.us/goa

OMEGA Development District

www.omegadistrict.org

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

(water related and resource protection projects)

www.lrh.usace.army.mil/projects/current/section594/

WSOS/RCAP

(technical assistance)

www.glrcap.org/ohio/

program in an effort to reduce clear water from entering County sewers, thus maintaining needed capacities at the treatment facilities. Ongoing priority projects include upgrading the Fox-Shannon wastewater treatment plant, particularly with regard to sludge handling, and bringing wastewater service to the Neffs area. The Neffs project is primarily solving a health problem due to inadequately treated wastewater from individual systems. However, future phases of this project could provide utility assistance to any development plans for the I-470/County Rd. 214 area.

In the eastern end of the County, a 24 inch transmission line along Route 7 is providing plentiful water, originating at the water plant in Bellaire. A line along Route 9 then distributes water to the west. Water is extended from the vicinity of St. Clairsville to Belmont. In the farther western portion of the county, Barnesville provides municipal water to Bethesda, and also to Quaker City in Guernsey County.

The Belmont County Water and Sewer District is a major system with a significant investment in facilities, which include one water treatment plant, eleven water pump stations, 1,100,000 linear feet of water lines, 19 water storage tanks, one wastewater treatment plant, 130,000 linear feet of wastewater collection lines, and 28 wastewater pump stations.

Transportation planning is undertaken for Federal and State routes by the Bel-O-Mar Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) located in Wheeling. Bel-O-Mar serves a three county area in the Wheeling metropolitan area, including Belmont in Ohio, and Ohio and Marshall Counties in West Virginia.

The shorter-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) noted completion of projects on the northern section of SR 7 in Bellaire, and safety upgrading and resurfacing of SR 7 in Martins Ferry. Significant future projects included upgrading of I-70 interchanges at SR 331 and Mall Road, including adjacent access. High priority earmarks exist for both interchanges (\$6,000,000 for Mall Road, \$800,000 for the I-70 interchange at US 40 and SR 331), and preliminary engineering and right of way phases for projects are programmed in the most recent TIP.

The Long Range 2035 Transportation Plan for the Bel-O-Mar MPO lists goals that address efficiency of operation and preservation of the existing transportation system, increased safety, increased accessibility and mobility, enhanced intermodal connectivity and integration, enabling competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency, protecting and enhancing the environment, and supporting security.

The long range plan projected that the number of households in the three-county region would increase due to a declining rate of persons per household, and that vehicle registration would grow with an overall increase in the number of vehicles per household. The plan identified specific growth corridors and selected economic development sites, based on discussion with local development officials. These sites are discussed in more detail under goal #6, "Target Growth Areas". The identified corridors included I-70, US 40, SR 7, I-470, and SR 331. The plan

also identified major traffic generators that place inordinate demand on the local roadway system for efficient movement of vehicles. Major traffic generators in Belmont County included:

- Ohio Valley Mall
- Ohio Valley Plaza
- St. Clairsville CBD
- Courthouse Annex/ Belmont Technical College/OU-E
- Barnesville CBD/Barnesville Hospital
- Ohio Valley Coal (Route 128)
- Bellaire CBD/Imperial Plaza
- Martins Ferry CBD
- East Ohio Regional Hospital/United Dairy
- AEP (west of Morristown near I-70)
- Fox Commerce Park
- (proposed): Stein Property, St. Clairsville

In addition to the above list, another area creating traffic concerns is the North Bellaire Commerce Park, with truck traffic turning onto State Route 7 requiring better traffic control.

The plan includes traffic volume projections, with traffic on SR 7 having a projected ADT (average daily traffic) ranging from 8,000 in Powhatan Point to over 35,000 in Bridgeport and Martins Ferry. The ADT also approaches 13,000 on a section of SR 800 south of I-70. Highest volumes, of course, are projected to continue on I-70, with the highest volumes to continue at Mall Road and Banfield Road, on Ohio River bridges (where over 90,000 vehicles a day are expected), and also on US 40, which distributes I-70 traffic to other collectors. Highest volumes on US 40 in Belmont County are in Bridgeport, and near the Mall and Plaza areas east of St. Clairsville. The County committed \$500,000, through a Transportation Improvement District, to improving the Mall Road exit and roadway access. However, further funding is necessary to properly engineer and construct this project in a manner that will further the economic activity and development in this regional retail and service center.

A highway capacity and congestion analysis was completed, based on projections and using a Level of Service (LOS) concept, where segments were rated from LOS-A (free flow conditions) to LOS-F (very congested). Levels LOS-D, E, and F are considered congested. Deficient *multi-lane* segments in Belmont County exist only on I-70, and the segment from SR 331 to US 40 misses the LOS-D threshold for volume to capacity by only 0.01. Further, the segment from SR 9 to Mall Road is at the LOS-D level. Adding single-lane segments as well, selected deficient locations include these for Belmont County:

- I-70 from SR 331 to Mall Road: A consultant has been helping develop this project. Ten of the fifteen high crash locations on Bel-O-Mar's list are in this seven-mile stretch of I-70. A need is expressed for upgrading to three lanes in each direction. A major modification of the Mall Road interchange and improvements at spot locations are being considered. The I70/SR 331/US 40 interchange is also being studied for possible modification.
- SR 149 approach at intersection with US 40; I-70 westbound off ramp approach at intersection with SR 149: installation of signals should be considered at both intersections.
- SR 800 from I-70 south of TR 165; the new regional industrial park is likely to increase truck traffic on this section.

- SR 7 from north of the Powhatan Point corporation line to CR 54.

Recommended projects within this most recent long range transportation plan include:

- Upgrading I-70 to six lanes from SR 331 to Mall Road.
- Upgrading/modifying the Mall Road interchange to improve access, traffic flow and safety.
- I-70/US40/SR331 Interchange modification, to improve an obsolete design.
- Installing signals at the SR 149/US 40 intersection; Project would include signals and turn lanes.
- Installing signals at the SR 149 and I-70 westbound off ramp intersection. Project would involve ramp widening and signals.
- Spot location improvement in the vicinity of Ohio Valley Mall and Ohio Valley Plaza area, on Mall Road, US 40, and Banfield Road to improve traffic flow and safety, and enhance access.

An additional project which is needed based on projected traffic, but beyond financial constraints, is the upgrading of I-70 from SR 331 to SR 9 to six lanes. Estimated cost of construction would be \$56 million. Total funding for all other projects mentioned above is \$67 million.

Another priority list is developed by the OMEGA Planning and Development District. Among the projects listed on the OMEGA website were these:

Priority 3: Upgrade US 250, flood damaged areas; and SR 331 interchange upgrade.

Priority 3: Construct new SR 149 roadway, Bellaire to Bridgeport

Priority 2: Colerain Sanitary Sewer Collection (tie into county sewer authority #1)

Priority 2: Upgrade SR 331

Priority 2: Upgrade SR 800, Barnesville

OMEGA Priority 1 listings were typically smaller projects or groups of projects needing attention. Some of them included: Belmont County spec building; Upgrade Bellaire water system and treatment plant; sanitary sewers for Belmont and Kirkwood/Bridgeport; Upgrade US 40, Bridgeport to Blaine Bridge; Emergency Management Building expansion; downtown revitalization in Flushing; SR 7 and Hanover St. intersection improvement in Martins Ferry; access road in Crawford Heights; Martins Ferry riverbank erosion project; and sanitary sewer renovation in Morristown.

The County Engineer's office's capital improvements report quantifies needs for \$31,200,000 in road repairs, \$88,000,000 in bridge repairs, and \$4,000,000 in culvert repairs. Some specific projects on the Engineer's list include a Glenco water storage tank, the Neffs sewer project, Mt. Victory water line project, and a Neffs and Graham water storage tank. Other priority projects within the County include additional infrastructure for the Barnesville area's new industrial park, which received State funding to support installation of a water line and sanitary sewer.

Belmont County's Transportation Improvement District (TID)

Belmont County has created a financing mechanism for transportation infrastructure improvements, known as a **Transportation Improvement District**, or TID. The TID is a tool created under the Ohio Revised Code to foster intergovernmental and public-private collaboration, providing a local structure which coordinated federal, state, and local resources in planning, constructing, and operating transportation projects. A resolution was passed in December 2007 to create the TID with the purpose to “finance, construct, maintain, repair and operate street, highway, and other transportation projects, and to construct, reconstruct, improve, alter, and repair roads, highways, public places, buildings, and other infrastructure”. The TID is indeed a “district” organized for improving the existing road system.

Under the TID, local political subdivisions in Belmont County can participate in a cooperative countywide coalition to plan and undertake transportation projects throughout the County. The highest priority at the time of the creation of the TID was the Interstate 70/Mall Road project, but other projects may be addressed through the TID as well. The founding resolution also stated that “it is also envisioned and intended that the creation of a TID by the County will assist and provide greater efficiencies to the County’s ongoing efforts, commitment and relationship with the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Development, local county jurisdictions, and neighboring communities in advancing transportation improvements within Belmont County, and in particular the (I-70/Mall Road) project, which is vital to the long term mobility and economic prosperity of the County and the region.”

A TID can issue Transportation Improvement District Revenue Bonds or other bonds, and it may receive and accept loans and grants from federal and state government agencies. It may also acquire, hold, and dispose of property, and establish and collect tolls or user charges for its projects. Further, it may provide for an infrastructure project by levy special assessments if the TID Board determines that the public improvement will benefit the area.

Priority Infrastructure Projects

A major project involves the eventual development of some 100 acres west of the Lowes property in the Ohio Valley Plaza, entitled “St. Clair Commons”. Development of this acreage would involve earthwork, clearance, and site preparation; new roadways; water and wastewater lines; erosion control and storm water management; and parking lots, at a total cost of several million dollars. The potential of this strategic site for mixed use development is enormous, and the project would be developed in line with planned improvements to I-70's interchange at Mall Road, as envisioned under the creation of the Transportation Improvement District mentioned previously to assist in the development of a new or realigned interchange west of Mall Road, and access road improvements.

Partners

1. **Economic development practitioners** at the local and County level, to gather information on business needs and gaps in services, as well as planned utility extensions to planned business parks and sites; and to serve as liaisons between the business community and local government.
2. **Local government officials** at the County, municipal, and Township levels, who are responsible for the development of adequate infrastructure to their business community.
3. **Government agencies** and offices responsible for development of infrastructure, including the County Engineer, County Sanitary Engineer, and municipal service directors, administrators, and water/wastewater/roadway departments.
4. **Utilities** and other entities providing energy sources (electricity, natural gas) and telecommunications infrastructure (telephone and wireless service, and broadband Internet services) to the County and its communities.
5. **Regional coordinating agencies** can be helpful in developing infrastructure improvements that can become regional priorities. Many infrastructure decisions are made at the regional level, such as “Issue 1” decisions made by local Coordinating Committees, transportation project prioritization made at Bel-O-Mar, and Economic Development Administration funding decisions made regionally at OMEGA.
6. **State and Federal infrastructure funding and financing agencies**, including the Ohio Dept. of Transportation, USDA, Ohio EPA, Ohio Public Works Commission, Ohio Water Development Authority, and others.

Strategies

1. **Pursue utility extensions to targeted growth areas; offer advocacy for such projects, pursue outside funding sources, and gain local support.**

Partners: Local officials from affected jurisdictions, property owners, developers, funding authorities, County Commissioners, County Sanitary Engineer and/or County Engineer, Ohio RCAP staff, engineering consultants; economic development practitioners

Time Frame: Ongoing and long range, with completion of projects often several years following preliminary planning

Action Steps:

- A. Local officials and economic development practitioners should advocate for projects by listing known priority projects as “bullet points” in a County-wide white paper, and supporting projects in meetings with funding agencies and legislators. The white paper and list needs to be developed and approved by representatives from all local

jurisdictions, so that it has the approval of all localities. It can be used as an advocacy tool, presented to State officials, funding agencies, the press, and the public.

A meeting to develop and reach consensus on the white paper should be called by a countywide authority – most likely the County Commissioners. Areawide resources (Bel-O-Mar, OMEGA) with expertise on project funding feasibility should also be invited. Once developed and approved by consensus, the white paper should be distributed to each participating locality, and to state and federal officials (best in conjunction with face-to-face meetings), as well as press outlets. It should also be revisited and revised, at a minimum, every two years, to remain current and relevant to existing needs and priorities.

- B. Once a working list and description of priority infrastructure projects has been developed, local jurisdictions and the appropriate economic development officials should meet with Ohio RCAP and other technical assistance providers (as appropriate to the nature of the infrastructure) to match project funding needs with potential outside resources. These meetings can lead to more detailed work plans and strategies.
- C. Provide continued information to County residents on project needs, projected benefits of the projects, and impacts on the County, to maintain countywide understanding and support for the link between strategic infrastructure investments and economic development.
- D. Facilitate the development of selected, highest priority projects through preliminary engineering, grant and loan funding research, selection of likeliest funding sources, and grant proposal writing, environmental and other processes, and required permitting and approval processes. The following have been identified as current projects with infrastructure needs, and which should receive immediate priority:
 - a. Water, sanitary sewer, service roads, and storm drainage, as well as communications infrastructure, to service the development of the East Ohio Regional Industrial Park north of Barnesville on SR 800. (Much of the necessary funding has been secured; however, local and county development officials need to ensure that the entire funding package for infrastructure can be completed).
 - b. Development of infrastructure for the St. Clair Commons project adjacent to and west of the Ohio Valley Mall and Plaza in St. Clairsville. St. Clair Commons will include water, sewer, access roads, storm drainage, erosion control, parking facilities, and on-site developments, and will assist in opening up 90 acres in a first phase of the project, with significant additional acreage in future phases.
 - c. Improvement in the provision for traffic flow and accessibility in the Ohio Valley Mall/Ohio Valley Plaza area, linked to St. Clair Commons, including access and egress from I-70, and movement throughout the area by realigning access roads.

Long range plans call for the integration of a new I-70 interchange coordinated with and to the immediate west of the Mall Road interchange; the County Transportation Improvement District and its membership is the most appropriate lead entity advocating for and implementing this project.

- d. Continued extension of the County water and sanitary sewer districts and distribution lines, if identified as priority projects, to targeted development sites, particularly within the I-70/I-470 corridor. The County Sanitary Engineer is the primary official responsible for these improvements; key projects should be included in the “white paper”.
- e. Required and needed water and wastewater infrastructure improvements in Belmont County municipalities, which may involve water or wastewater treatment plant upgrades, distribution line extensions to growth areas or new customers, and sewer separation projects to improve treatment plant flows. Local officials should be encouraged to contact Ohio RCAP for initial technical assistance on applicable funding opportunities. Development officials should cultivate positive working relationships with project engineers, to communicate the economic development needs for excess capacity and access of utilities to potential development sites and industrial parks.
- f. Other priority projects identified in local, county, and regional (Bel-O-Mar, OMEGA) ranking processes. Projects may include providing utilities to emerging, targeted “job ready” sites for economic growth. Such sites need to have utilities in place or within a short distance in order to meet prospects’ needs. These projects should be understood and advocated by development officials, project developers, and the relevant local government officials.

2. Pursue efficiencies in providing infrastructure through such means as regionalization and the extension of county-wide systems to areas in need.

Partners: Local government officials, planning officials, Ohio RCAP staff, economic development practitioners, County engineer/sanitary engineer, water and wastewater system officials.

Time Frame: Continuous and ongoing

Action Steps:

- A. Continue the County policy of extending water and sewer service, when financially feasible and within the County budget, to priority growth areas. Some of these areas are identified in section 4, which describes specific target areas. Each specific project requires a concerted effort by the property owner and developer, local jurisdiction, and affiliated economic development professional, in order to direct resources toward the necessary upgrades and infrastructure investments needed for that site. In effect, these

persons, plus local impacted business officials, need to serve as a “project development team” for each identified project. Contact may be needed with specific funding agencies once they are identified, with regional entities through which resources are channeled (such as Bel-O-Mar, OMEGA, the Ohio Office for Appalachia, and public works coordinating committees).

- B. Continue discussion of the regionalization of water distribution in the three-county area under consideration. The County Sanitary Engineer has taken the lead in this effort, which has become more long-range in implementation. Most importantly, the conversation should be continued between the three counties, with means sought for continuing to make steady progress in achieving eventual regionalization of water service – which may minimally lead to providing back-up water sources within the region.

3. Coordinate long-range planning through the County Sanitary Engineer

Partners: Sanitary Engineer, Municipal officials, County officials, developers, economic development practitioners

Time Frame: Continuous and ongoing

Action Steps:

- A. Develop and maintain a county-wide capital improvements plan which is updated on a regular basis – preferably annually. This list should consist of a realistic appraisal of capital projects expected to be undertaken and completed, with estimated project costs and completion dates for each improvement. Place primary responsibility for overall maintenance and updating of the plan and priority list with the County Sanitary Engineer, but involve all pertinent County departments. Initiate the project with an organizational and informational meeting.
- B. Share the capital improvements list with impacted and benefiting businesses, development practitioners, local officials, and externally to regional and State agencies that can help provide funding for priority projects.

4. Advocate and obtain funding for targeted transportation improvement projects (working with the County Engineer, affected municipal officials, Bel-O-Mar, and the Ohio Department of Transportation).

A number of key transportation improvement projects have been noted, especially with respect to (but not limited to) upgrades at interchanges along the I-70 corridor. The list of desired projects, as presented in the white paper, should be consistent, with all funding entities, including Bel-O-Mar and the Ohio Department of Transportation, receiving the same information regarding priority projects and their current status.

When seeking funding, all options should be considered in raising resources for public infrastructure improvements. The Belmont County Transportation Improvement District, which can assist projects throughout the County, is an important vehicle to support these projects, with its ability to manage and raise project revenues (see page 7). Such options could also include grants, deferred and low interest loans, and tax sharing through Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) or Tax Increment Financing.

Partners: Local and County officials, Engineer and Sanitary Engineer, development practitioners, developers and selected private sector leaders who can serve as project advocates, outside agencies such as Bel-O-Mar and OMEGA, State and federal sources including ODOT.

Time Frame: Put a system in place for organized and coordinated advocacy within one year; County-wide white paper developed within one year and reviewed/revised at least every two years. Advocacy and seeking funding is a continuous, ongoing project.

Action Steps:

- A. Hold a County-wide meeting to discuss long-range transportation improvement needs, particularly describing projects that will stimulate economic development and catalyze private business location and expansion investments. Bel-O-Mar should be invited to facilitate this session, which could be combined as a part of the county-wide meeting discussed under objective 1. A list of priority transportation projects should emerge from this session, and they should be included in the white paper. Known transportation priorities include the Mall Road area, other I-70 and I-470 interchanges requiring improved access and egress, and roadway segments which may need to be upgraded to accommodate truck traffic (such as portions of SR 7, including Bellaire's industrial park areas and sites in Martins Ferry, where truck access and egress may increase with more frequent trans-shipment of goods between river, rail, and highway). Economic development practitioners should help advocate specific highway and roadway projects by communicating the economic development impact of such improvements in terms of projected retained, expanded, and new businesses and employees.

Consider such current priorities as the SR 331 interchange at I-70; the Mall Road interchange; other I-470 in the eastern portion of the County, and roadway improvements where projections indicate a need for an upgrade, such as SR 800 north of Barnesville and SR 7 through the riverfront communities.

- B. Publicize the list of projects, and distribute it to funding and decision-making sources, presenting it at face-to-face meetings.

5. Improve telecommunications and broadband Internet service throughout the County, maintaining state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, State and County officials who are involved in broadband development and funding in eastern Ohio, broadband providers, local officials.

Time Frame: Improvements are evolving; County-wide broadband within five years

Action Steps:

- A. Use the business retention/expansion visitation and survey process (See Goal 2) to gather information about the adequacy of the current broadband platform in Belmont County, and gather data on business needs not being met, and target areas in the County where improved and enhanced service is needed by existing business, and by developers in order to market properties to prospects. Use such data to advocate for Belmont County as a potential client for improved broadband service.
- B. Economic development practitioners should take the lead in working toward developing or enhancing broadband at the Fox and Eastern Ohio Regional Industrial Parks. Officials should be aware of state, regional, and local efforts to improve rural broadband (such as “Connect Ohio”), and should be present at any local or regional discussion of new routes for cable or fiber. Local officials can also assist in making sure that projects to bring broadband to one targeted user (such as a hospital) also incorporate routing to other nearby and important users (such as schools and industrial properties). Practitioners should stay in contact with the County’s broadband suppliers, as well as with State officials who may be able to fund rural broadband delivery systems.

One specific effort in southeast Ohio is the Connect Ohio program which received federal funding. Local officials should maintain contact with state and regional officials to ensure that Belmont County’s needs are included in regional efforts such as this.

6. Enhance and coordinate the County’s Geographic Information System to enable it to present and overlay spatial data in attractive, useful formats – compatible among County departments and local jurisdictions.

Belmont County has developed a collaborative effort to bring beneficial GIS tools to the County. The Belmont County Geographic Information System, under the auspices of the County Engineer's office, is intended “to assist government in making decisions which include geographic, or location, elements.” The GIS Director, County Engineer and Board of Commissioners work collaboratively with the 911 office, Sanitary Sewer and Water office, and the Soil and Water Conservation District.

Economic development functions, as well as infrastructure mapping, analysis, and engineering, can be enhanced greatly through coordination with the GIS office. GIS tools and mapping

products will become increasingly valuable to infrastructure maintenance and improvement efforts, as well as to economic development site selection and related functions. Information can be accessed by the public at www.belmontcountygis.com.

Partners: The GIS office and its partners, County Commissioners, Engineer, Sanitary Engineer, other County offices, local officials, property developers, Realtors, financial institutions, economic development practitioners.

Time Frame: The initiative is already underway; improvement and enhancement, including adding new layers and supportive data, is ongoing and continuous

Action Steps:

- A. Hold a meeting with economic development practitioners and other potential beneficiaries of an enhanced GIS system to discuss how GIS services and products could benefit development efforts and projects throughout the County. Other interested parties may include developers, Realtors, commercial property owners, and local government officials who could benefit from incorporating GIS mapping in funding proposals and other documents.
- B. Coordinate the stated needs for development data and site information with the capabilities of the GIS department to produce useful and informative presentations on targeted development sites. Develop GIS mapping of industrial sites and potential growth areas.
- C. Allow the GIS department to respond to prospect requests for site-specific information and mapping, and to requests by development practitioners and local officials for specific mapping projects and products, perhaps on a fee-for-service basis if needed to help sustain the department. Provide links from the County's economic development website to GIS mapping and photographs of target areas. A GIS presentation of these target areas can help to more fully acquaint a prospect with the assets and characteristics of the County's available property. GIS layers can (and should, if possible) include the following:
 - Topography and land formations
 - Structures and improvements on the site
 - Existing roadways, rail lines, and rights of way
 - Location and characteristics (diameter, capacity) of existing utilities
 - Property lot lines and sites within industrial parks; proposed industrial park layouts
 - Natural features including wetlands, waterways or ponds, and flood plains
 - Zoning districts (as applicable), neighboring land uses, local jurisdictions and school districts

Goal 2: Business Retention and Reinvestment

Mount a continuous, proactive effort to retain Belmont County's existing business base, responding to the needs and requests of individual employers, and building the understanding that the County's existing businesses are cherished resources.

Retaining the existing business base is almost always considered the highest priority in economic development. Existing businesses, after all, are contributing to the employment and tax base right now. Further, research has indicated that the average community derives 76 percent of its new jobs and capital investment from existing business.¹ Further, when current businesses fail, the public and private costs of layoffs, diminished tax base, and spinoffs for other businesses in the community are considerable.

Business retention efforts focus on those firms that are already in place in the community, with their attachments, loyalties, and history of local investments. Further, when efforts are made to provide incentives to induce new businesses into an area, it is important to make it clear that existing businesses will not be neglected; any job-creating expansions on their part may be eligible for incentives as well.

Formal retention strategies typically begin with an inventory of existing businesses, then a process where contact is made with each selected business to determine their current situation, outlook, and concerns. A simple survey is distributed to the businesses asking what specific steps would make the business more successful. The feedback from the surveys can help local governments and economic development practitioners determine how to best allocate their resources to maximize assistance to the business community. Typical survey questions are included in a sidebar in this chapter. Categories usually covered by a questionnaire include the history and status of the business's present location; nature of the business; physical plant specifications; markets and customers; competitors; future plans; labor and manpower; assessment of government relations, regulations, and services in the area; financial conditions; energy costs and supply; community linkages; and overall impressions.

A proactive Belmont County retention and expansion effort will serve a number of important purposes:

- It helps the county stay "ahead of the curve" in identifying issues facing its businesses.
- It helps gain an understanding of the business community's view of the local economy.
- It helps identify future expansion and relocation plans of companies in order to set up an early warning system for local action and assistance to those companies.
- It helps demonstrate a sympathetic and supportive, pro-business attitude.
- It acquaints business executives with assistance available through various economic development programs at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

¹ Eric Canada, "The Importance of an Existing Business Strategy", Blane, Canada Ltd., 2006.

- It improves communications and strengthens relationships between local and county government, and the business community.
- It identifies specific concerns and problems of local businesses, and provides a means for swift and effective solutions.
- Finally, it develops a systematic approach to business retention and expansion efforts, and builds a data base of local business data.

To provide an effective and comprehensive program assisting ongoing business, and to be able to advise appropriate local officials to address and resolve specific issues, economic development officials must be aware of state, regional, and federal incentive and assistance programs targeted to business retention and expansion efforts. Many of these programs are tied to job growth, and offer a certain amount of assistance per job created and, in some cases, retained. While specific program details are not important for everyone, officials should be able to contact County economic development practitioners to determine which incentive program or programs may apply to any specific case.

Business retention and expansion (BRE) programs often focus on manufacturing companies because of their substantial impact, including spinoff benefits to other sectors such as services and retail. These programs are based on the understanding that job numbers can grow over time if viable companies are retained where they are able to expand; that manufacturers will generally avoid the costs of moving; that existing firms are an “efficient” focal point for economic development efforts, as there is often a good reason why they selected their current location in the first place; and that to survive

BASICS OF THE BUSINESS R&E SURVEY

While many surveys focus on manufacturing alone, the diversity of Belmont County’s economy suggests that larger businesses from services (including healthcare), mining, construction, retail/hospitality, and energy also be considered. The survey – and a follow-up process that routes survey comments and stated problems/needs to those who can respond – should identify immediate concerns, training and technical assistance needs, and future plans; show the community’s appreciation for the business (some programs present a “certificate of appreciation” during the survey interview), foster local action based on stated needs, and develop an overall economic development plan to improve the economic climate.

Survey questions typically include these:

- There are often some initial questions about the business, its products or services, longevity in the community, number of employees now and five years ago, sales trends in past years, business ownership, competitors, market area, business outlook, future plans for growth, stability, and hiring.
- Positive aspects of doing business here.
- Barriers to maintaining a successful business in this area.
- What specific initiatives could be of most help to your business?
- What could local government do to remove barriers to maintaining a successful business in Belmont County?
- How would you rate the local workforce? Is it easy/difficult to hire skilled, semiskilled, etc., workers?
- Some surveys list local services and amenities and ask respondents to rate them on some favorable/unfavorable scale.
- Surveys also ask respondents to rate the overall local business climate, as well as their community.

At the conclusion of the series of interviews, a summary report of findings can be an excellent public relations tool indicating the linkage between local officials and the business community. Concerns are relayed directly to those who can act on them immediately. And records are kept of the entire process.

and expand locally, companies need to remain competitive in the market for their products. In addressing this last point, a local retention and expansion program may improve a business's ability to compete by matching a business with the entity providing assistance in such needed areas as marketing, technology, and locating qualifying workers.

A list of regional, state and federal business assistance programs is provided in an appendix to this report. Clearly, this list is subject to change with new staff, priorities, and needs, including any restructuring at the State and Federal level, and it may need to be revised frequently. County development practitioners at the Port Authority or CIC should be contacted for specific information concerning any of the state or federal programs listed in the appendix.

Quality of life factors can enter into a retention and expansion issue. Two broad areas that are valued by virtually all residents are entertainment (restaurants and cultural amenities) and community spirit and image. Inventories of entertainment opportunities should be maintained, distributed widely, and publicized. The more intangible "community spirit" should be understood by everyone in the County as an important factor that can influence both prospective and existing business people.

A successful retention and expansion effort is *proactive* – working to prevent facility shut-downs, and identifying signals that certain companies may be having problems before trouble is imminent. Here are ten "red flags" indicating a firm may be at risk, as presented in the International Economic Development Council's "Introduction to Economic Development":

1. *Declining sales/declining employment*
2. *Larger non-local corporate ownership*
3. *Recent ownership change*
4. *Lease of property; expiring leases*
5. *Other facilities producing the same product or service*
6. *Negative attitudes about the community*
7. *Unbearable regulatory burdens*
8. *Union contract expirations*
9. *Expanding employment/expanding sales (may move to a larger facility)*
10. *Facility and site expansion plans (may be looking at alternatives also)*

Other warning signals may include: an obsolete or land-locked facility, location in a problem neighborhood, older production lines and technology, contentious labor-management relations, lack of exports or an international focus, family-owned firms with an aging owner and no succession plan, gradual corporate downsizing over time, relocation of top managers and corporate officers to another location, and loss of longstanding supplier contracts or relationships.

The key is to have a county-wide structure that provides "eyes and ears" for the County's economic development officials, and to present continuous two-way communication opportunities for business officials to voice their concerns about local policies, specific solvable local problems, and other hurdles to efficiently conducting business in Belmont County, as well

as providing for them to hear about programs, policies, and tools that can help them realize their business potential. Some specific programs, strategies, and action steps to help retain business and accommodate their expansions are listed below.

Partners

1. The County's **economic development practitioners** have the primary responsibility for organizing a county-wide retention and expansion visitation program, and a county-wide data base of businesses.
2. Business visits should be conducted by the county-level practitioners, but in tandem with **local community officials** such as a Mayor, Administrator, or development or Chamber official.
3. **County-level elected officials** should also be involved in selected, strategic business visits, and in contributing to business retention efforts.
4. Business retention typically involves undertaking projects and improvements that improve the ability of an enterprise to conduct its business. Such projects may involve the assistance of the **County Engineer or Sanitary Engineer**, a **municipal Administrator** or **Safety-Service director**, the county **DJFS office** for workforce issues, **local educational institutions** and **school boards** to provide employee training programs, **Township Trustees** to solve a road issue, or even a **park and recreation official**.
5. One resource to help retain businesses is the County's **broad business base**. Peer business leaders can sometimes help brainstorm solutions to business issues, and County businesses may also be valuable sources of needed inputs, or potential customers for outputs.

Strategies

1. **Conduct a County-Wide Business "Retention and Expansion" visitation program, with visitation teams, surveys, a formal feedback and comment collection system, a protocol for responses to concerns, and a report to the community. Beyond the formal R&E program, stay in frequent contact with key employers and maintain records of contacts.**

Partners: Economic development practitioners, local Chambers of Commerce, local government officials, volunteers who assist in deploying the Business R&E program, and local businesses willing to be surveyed. One organization or entity must take the lead in organizing and overseeing all activities. That entity should create a list of businesses to be visited, solicit volunteers, assign teams of volunteers (usually two per visit) to specified businesses, coordinate the schedule of dates and times for visits, make reminder calls to businesses and emails to team members, supply teams with survey forms and schedules, obtain feedback information after visits are completed, forward comments and concerns to officials who can respond to specific topics, maintain records of follow-up activities, and summarize comments and responses received in a final report.

Time Frame: A structured, organized visitation program should take place over a short period of time (some communities complete the survey in a week. Counties may take a month); a “report to the community” should follow closely after the visitation program (within a month). The program should be extended to additional businesses and repeated every year or two.

Action Steps:

- A. Identify the host agency that will be responsible for the steps listed above. Similarly, identify partnering agencies such as Chambers of Commerce that may provide additional assistance and coordination in individual communities.
- B. After developing an overall timeline for the completion of this activity, select teams of volunteers to conduct business visits. There should be enough volunteers such that teams of two need only make four or five visits apiece.
- C. Develop a survey instrument that can be completed during a 45 minute to one-hour (maximum) interview with business officials.
- D. Publicize this project, and work with local Chambers, civic organizations (Lions, Kiwanis, etc.), and public officials, to build credibility for the project. Publicize the program in local media.
- E. Arrange interview times (managing agency’s staff); make sure to identify a full-time contact person who can answer questions, coordinate appointments and schedules, serve as a central collection point for completed surveys, and route comments and concerns to relevant officials throughout the County.
- F. Conduct the interviews within the prescribed time limit.
- G. Collect all survey forms with volunteers’ notes, as soon after interviews as possible.
- H. Relay identified problems and needs to local resources and officials for immediate response.
- I. Make follow-up calls to business leaders who noted a specific issue or need, to see if problems have been addressed or resolved.
- J. Prepare a summary report on overall trends, responses, concerns, noted community assets, and any specific outcomes resulting from concerns.

Note: Because the manufacturing sector is a small portion of the overall, diverse Belmont County economy, it is recommended that the survey be conducted among a variety of sectors, including the larger and more significant employers in the County regardless of their sector.

2. **Include within the survey process a consideration of business plans for expansion or contraction, capital and human resources needs, concerns about the community, and recommendations for community and County growth.**

The business visitation program should minimally focus on Belmont County's larger businesses that make a greater impact on employment and community investment. Another survey, which can be performed through the mail or on the Internet, can complement the visitation program by offering a means of input and feedback to a larger number of businesses, including smaller ones, *many of which may have a surprising potential for future growth*. Surveys can be custom designed for specific sectors. An initial survey could target the retail sector, for example, with questions focusing on competition, observed trends, gaps in available product lines, and the perceived strength and future potential of Belmont County as a regional retail center. Another survey can focus more specifically on the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Partners: Economic Development practitioners, local officials, support from local economic development offices.

Time Frame: A first survey can be disseminated within one year. Additional sector-specific surveys could be disseminated on an annual basis.

Action Steps:

- A. The host entity should select an economic sector to be the focus of the initial survey. Likely candidates are retail; tourism, restaurants, and hospitality; and medical business, and personal services.
- B. Assemble a working group to design the questions to be included in the survey. Consider including members from the sector to be surveyed, as well as University officials who are familiar in survey terminology and methodology.
- C. Consider whether to provide a mailed "paper survey" or an Internet survey that can be emailed to individuals.
- D. Provide a "heads up" notice to selected survey recipients prior to disseminating the survey.
- E. Disseminate and collect the survey over a specified time period, allowing for second notices.
- F. Tabulate results, direct specific concerns to relevant entities that can respond and react, and provide a summary report on findings and any outcomes to the public.

3. Maintain an inventory of County manufacturers and business suppliers, with data on products, employment, linkages, and supply chains with County (and regional) businesses.

Many localities have initiated efforts to “buy local” and patronize businesses in the local community. A first step toward this initiative is to make local businesses and residents aware of what is, in fact, available within the County. A web-based inventory of County-wide businesses, noting their products and services, and tied to a universally understood NAICS code (see <http://www.naics.com/search.htm>), accessible to all County businesses and hosted within a recognizable economic development organization’s website, will greatly enhance the prospects for business-to-business activity within the County. A web-based inventory is recommended because of the constantly changing nature of the inventory, with new businesses, new product lines and services, and business closures. The survey should initially focus on manufactured products, business services, and wholesale and retail outlets serving business needs (such as office supplies).

Partners: Economic Development practitioners, with assistance from researchers in State government and/or Universities.

Time Frame: The inventory can begin to be researched and developed immediately; the initial inventory can be completed within one year, with plans for periodic updates.

Action Steps:

- A. Develop a format for maintaining the data base and inventory on computer. Convene a work group to develop the list of data to be requested. Consider collecting data which may include the following for each business, understanding that some businesses may withhold some information for purposes of confidentiality.
 - Name, address, phone, email, website for business
 - Contact person
 - Principal products and services
 - Year founded, number of employees, annual sales
 - Inputs and services that could be purchase locally
 - Primary customer base (community, county, Wheeling metro, multi-county region, multi-state including these states: _____)
 - Additional notes
 - B. Initiate the collection of data, possibly using a University intern to undertake the project.
 - C. Develop a plan for maintaining and updating the information over time.
- 4. Plan and conduct “business roundtables” for interested businesses, following a regular and anticipated schedule (quarterly is recommended).**

Other Counties and regions have found that well-planned, infrequent, efficient meetings for major employers with common interests can be helpful to local business leaders. Topics can include HR issues, Information Technology, introductions to County government officials, changes in State government of interest to business, production efficiencies and best practices, workforce issues, and a number of other topics that can be suggested by the businesses themselves. A County-wide organization should undertake the planning, scheduling, and coordination of business roundtables. Local economic developers, Chambers, and community officials can be helpful in identifying and inviting key businesses. In Belmont County, because of the diversity of the economy, the participating businesses should not be in one specific sector, although ensuing meetings could focus on individual sectors. More importantly, participating businesses just need to benefit from being able to discuss common issues of interest. The roundtable can result in the promotion of sectoral business networks, supply chain initiatives, and business forums that promote innovation and productive interaction.

Partners: Businesses and business associations, Chambers of Commerce, economic development practitioners, local officials.

Time Frame: A formal schedule of County-wide roundtables can be initiated within one year.

Action Steps:

- A. Identify a single organization to coordinate the Roundtable program, including selecting topics and speakers, choosing venues (which can be businesses that provide facility tours as part of their meeting), publicizing the program through local Chambers and other business associations, and developing lists of potentially interested business participants. Information from business surveys and visits can be used to determine topics of broad interest throughout the County.
- B. Develop a mailing list of potential participating businesses, with input from community-level entities (Chambers, local organizations, public officials).
- C. Select topics, dates and venues, and secure speakers or moderators. During roundtable meetings, participants can be surveyed to determine topics of interest.
Possible topics may include:
 - Manufacturing processes, efficiencies, and energy-saving methods;
 - Human Resources issues and workforce development (including available programs);
 - County services for businesses;
 - Services, programs, and business curriculum of Ohio University East and Belmont Tech (at a meeting held on site);
 - New State economic development programs.

5. Catalog and publicize incentive programs for expansion, including capital investment, workforce development, tax incentives, and infrastructure improvements. Make information available to business officials.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, local Chambers and other business associations, local government officials, funding and financing entities.

Time Frame: The catalog can be prepared within one year – once the State of Ohio’s priority programs (including surviving past programs and newly emerging ones) have been identified and publicized.

Action Steps:

- A. Research available programs – begin with the appendix to this plan that highlights state and federal economic development incentives.
- B. Publish the catalog, including a central contact point for further information. (Note: because of the continuously changing nature of incentive programs, it is suggested that you do not invest in elaborate publications. It is better to provide a lower-cost product and allow for more frequent updates).
- C. Provide the same information with easy accessibility on the County’s economic development website.

Goal 3: Attraction of New Manufacturing and Industry

Attract new manufacturing and industry by focusing on sectors whose needs best match the assets offered in Belmont County, and which complement existing business clusters.

Attracting a new manufacturer was once the primary focus of economic development. While it is no longer the top priority, no one wants to miss an opportunity when the location criteria of a prospective business and the attributes of their community make a close match.

Marketing, discussed in detail under Goal 7, is the means by which an area can spread its message to potential prospects. Marketing consists of positioning a product (in this case, Belmont County and its communities) in a manner which identifies and meets the customer's needs, develops a message to communicate the County's attributes, and persuades potential investors to "buy" the product. The challenge is in distinguishing Belmont County's "product" – its potential as a business location, and the community itself – from the competition, through product differentiation, price competitiveness, and a focus on a specific market, whether geographic or otherwise. In the broadest sense, economic development marketing is the promotion of Belmont County as a viable location for economic activity.

In working to differentiate Belmont County from other locations, specific attributes or an image need to be developed that make the County distinct from other communities. These attributes may be the mix of educational and workforce resources, the presence of a willing and skilled workforce, the County's location, core businesses, or research and development opportunities.

Price competitiveness is increasingly important as globalization has forced businesses to scrutinize the economic impact of every decision. A comparatively low cost of doing business must be explained effectively to prospects. This includes looking at labor costs, the cost of land (or of occupying a building), the local tax burden, and utility rates. The cost of transporting both inputs to the business location and finished products to the market is another factor.

Once these primary cost considerations are analyzed and compared, local incentive programs may become a significant factor in tilting the advantage toward Belmont County. Programs such as low-interest loans, tax exemptions for new investment, assistance in extending utilities, below-market land costs, job training incentives, and in rare cases, outright grants can directly impact the bottom line.

When pursuing new businesses from outside the County, it is essential that economic developers provide accurate, up-to-date, credible, and consistent information to prospects. It is also important to focus any outside recruitment effort on business types that are most likely to realize a competitive advantage in Belmont County. Companies that should be targeted should match the County's assets, coincide with its development goals, and show investment and growth potential that will help to diversify the economy. Some factors to consider when examining the potential "match" are these:

- Ownership of the company and its headquarters' location
- Suppliers and buyers; Logistics
- Location of other company facilities
- Labor skill requirements, wage rates and ranges, and overall employment needs
- Energy needs
- Industry growth trends and forecasts
- Building and site requirements
- Transportation and infrastructure (water, wastewater treatment, solid waste)
- Communication/technology requirements and projected needs

Individual and group discussions have revealed a number of areas where Belmont County has a potential comparative advantage with other areas for certain lines of business. It is important to match those comparative advantages with and make them known to those business sectors that value them most. As described in the IEDC "Introduction to Economic Development"¹, the steps involved in targeting industries include: identifying key generic factors that are important to the industrial sectors in question; determining the relative importance of those factors for each sector; ranking industries on the basis of community capacity to satisfy location requirements and overall community development objectives; and identifying the industries that best fit with community goals.

Location and site selection factors are listed in the sidebar to the right. A shorter list involves four basic selection criteria in finding the ideal location for an entrepreneurial start-up (or, to some degree, for a new location for an existing enterprise). These four criteria include:

LOCATION FACTORS

Location factors differ among industries; retailers want visibility and access to markets; high tech industries desire access to education and research facilities. During the recent recession, operating cost factors (rent, labor costs, and taxes) have become more important.

Area Development magazine asked **business leaders** to rate site selection priorities, and the 2010 survey found the following, in rank order, to be most important:

(1) highway accessibility, (2) labor costs, (3) tax exemptions, (4) occupancy and construction costs, (5) state and local incentives, (6) corporate tax rate, (7) availability of skilled labor, (8) inbound/outbound shipping costs, (9) energy availability and costs, and (10) availability of buildings.

Interestingly, seven of the ten top factors are cost related, indicative of the post-recessionary bottom-line focus. Also indicative of the times, availability of unskilled labor ranks a distant 23rd, pointing to the need for an educated, trained workforce.

Among quality of life factors, survey respondents ranked low crime as their top priority by far.

Area Development also asked **site selector consultants** about site selection priorities; the consultants ranked priorities in this order: (1; tie) labor costs, and state & 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. Top quality of life factor to the consultants was a low crime rate.

Belmont County can respond affirmatively to many of these priorities, notably highway accessibility, skilled labor, and shipping costs.

¹ International Economic Development Council, "Introduction to Economic Development", 2006, Washington DC.

- Access to *capital*, particularly in raising start-up funding. Does Belmont County offer funding sources not available elsewhere? Linked to this is the cost of doing business, and how efficiently capital can be utilized through relatively low costs for real estate, rent, transportation, and labor.
- Access to *knowledge*, and the ability to commercialize a great idea. Positive factors include proximity to a strong and cooperative academic institution that can provide a skilled labor pool, as well as access to technology and opportunities for networking.
- Access to the *supply chain* – and proximity to needed materials and services, which, ideally, are produced locally. This requires a strong and efficient transportation infrastructure.
- Access to the *market* – proximity to customers, a central location within the market, and infrastructure in place to serve an increasingly global market.

Clusters

Economic development strategies have moved toward attracting, developing and nurturing clusters of businesses, rather than just individual businesses. Clusters are concentrations of firms that are related through their activities. Clusters can be linked *vertically*, as in the case of buyers and suppliers. They can also be linked *horizontally*, with a cluster of businesses that compete in similar markets or that can share resources such as common technology, raw materials, or a workforce with specific skills. The advantages of cluster development come from synergies and efficiencies of operation. A September 2010 Brookings Institution report notes that “...the new cluster discussions redirect attention, analysis, and policymaking to the more grounded, day-to-day interactions by which real companies in real places complete transactions, share technologies, develop innovations, start new businesses – and yes, create jobs and locate workers.” Successful clusters can become “hotspots of productivity and collaboration as well as competition”. However, despite the advantages of developing business clusters, these clusters cannot be simply created. Cluster initiatives should only be attempted where clusters already exist or are forming, and public actions to assist clustering should be secondary to the dynamics of the private sector, with concentration on supporting and filling gaps.

To target a cluster, core industries within the cluster must be identified that display the greatest growth potential. Further, successful targeting requires identifying and focusing on firms that support the core industries, such as suppliers and buyers, or businesses that would benefit from networking with cluster firms. Retention and expansion interviews should include questioning potential or known core businesses about key and potential suppliers and buyers.

Once specific industries are targeted, economic development practitioners can identify and market to individual firms within a set geographic area. Sources that can help identify prospects worth following up with include: State level economic development organizations, Chambers of Commerce, utility companies, commercial real estate brokers, and site selection

consultants. One highly important resource is the pool of business leaders already in the community who have contacts through their varied networks.

Partners

1. The County's **economic development practitioners** at the county and local level.
2. **Local government officials** who can provide information on sites, utilities, and incentives.
3. **Utility providers.**
4. Public and private **developers and owners of business sites and industrial parks.**
5. **State development officials.**
6. **Local elected officials**, who may serve as "figureheads" in welcoming prospective businesses.
7. **County agencies and educational institutions** offering workforce training assistance.
8. **Entities providing infrastructure** of adequate capacity and at a sufficient level of service necessary to sustain and grow prospective business.
9. **Transportation officials** providing efficient opportunities for highway, rail, water, and nearby air transport.

Strategies

1. **Develop a website that contains current, complete, and easy to navigate information sought by business prospects, site selectors, and others.**

Partners: Web site hosting entity, County economic development practitioners, developers and key property owners, local community officials and their economic development personnel, web designer and knowledgeable staff to update the website.

Time Frame: It is essential to develop a comprehensive and current website (or enhance an existing one) that presents a solid base of information, as soon as possible. Development of the web site must be followed by continuous data updates, particularly regarding available buildings and sites, as well as recent successes.

Action Steps:

- A. The Port Authority hosts the County's web site that inventories available buildings and sites. With assistance from other County and municipal officials, as well as someone with web design expertise, the current data base of properties on the Port Authority web site should be enhanced to provide more complete descriptions and "specs" for the properties. The inventory and a description of County assets and contacts should be linked to State, regional, utility company, municipal, and related web sites.

- B. Research web sites from similar counties and communities to survey “best practices” elsewhere. Contact IEDC or OEDA (economic development associations) for examples.
- C. Hire a web site developer to provide the framework and a professional “look” of the web site, while local staff, development entities, and others in the community provide the content as requested by the task force. Key site information is discussed under Goal 6, “Target Growth Areas”, on page 11 of that section.

2. Send Belmont County representatives to selected trade shows and conferences.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, specific industries and businesses, State officials, development officials in the region, utility companies, railroad development officials, public officials as “figureheads” and as decision makers who can offer incentive programs and regulatory assistance.

Time Frame: This is an ongoing effort that was recently practiced with the County Commissioners’ attendance at a retail trade show in 2010.

Action Steps: Smaller counties like Belmont, with limited budgets, must restrict their presence at national-level conferences and trade shows with costly admission and vendor fees. Development practitioners should be on the lookout for a limited number of shows (two or three could be selected per year) scheduled in nearby venues, covering targeted business sectors that match regional business clusters and local assets. A regionally focused trade show is likely to be more cost-effective and justifiable than an international one. Local business leaders should be asked about the potential benefit of shows with which they are familiar, and they should also be asked to cheerlead for Belmont County when they attend such conferences.

- A. Research trade shows at the national, regional, and local levels that focus on sectors of particular interest in Belmont County, possibly including energy, equipment related to energy and biomass, transportation and logistics, machine shops and fabrication, wood related industries, retail development, and health care/medical. Information can be obtained from major utilities (AEP), the state economic development office, and statewide organizations such as the Ohio Economic Development Association and Ohio Chamber of Commerce.
- B. Develop a marketing budget that includes a limited number of trade shows, and selectively target affordable conferences where Belmont County could be represented by an attendee, and a display booth or table.
- C. Use time at conferences to schedule appointments with individual business prospects. Work to schedule such meetings on-site during conferences.

- D. After attending a conference or trade show, analyze the effectiveness of the activity, and adjust accordingly. Pick up pointers from how other localities effectively present their case.
- E. Inquire about joint participation with State development officials, utilities, the railroad, trade organizations such as the Ohio Manufacturers Association, and others who may sponsor or co-sponsor Belmont County's participation as part of a regional delegation to a trade show or mission, when the target audience matches the amenities and business advantages offered in Belmont County. Partner with local business officials in selected lines of business (energy, health care, retail) with whom the County can partner with trade show participation.

3. Deepen partnerships with neighboring counties and their economic development organizations, with State development officials, and with regional associations.

Partners: County and community economic development practitioners, economic development practitioners from neighboring and regional counties, including the Wheeling metropolitan area. Also, State development officials and representatives from statewide trade associations of relevance to Belmont County.

Time Frame: Immediate and on-going.

Action Steps:

These existing partnerships should be maintained and strengthened. Site selectors are not interested in County borders as much as they are in sub-state regions and relative distances to supply chains and markets. Prospect development in its critical early stages can be most effectively accomplished on a regional basis; as a prospect focuses on a region, individual Counties and communities may be called upon to promote their jurisdiction. It is thus important to work with neighboring counties, including Marshall and Ohio Counties in West Virginia, to support a coordinated and cohesive region. Strong links with State officials and legislators, many of which already exist, should also be established or maintained.

- A. Schedule a meeting with State development officials, once there are new managers in State programs, to put Belmont County on their radar. Economic development practitioners and local public officials should attend, possibly including a local business leader.
- B. Provide a scheduled forum (perhaps semi-annually) for those representing the State of Ohio to discuss current issues and projects with local officials in Belmont County. Schedule regular forums for State representatives to update the County's development practitioners on new trends, programs, and events, and for local officials to communicate their priorities, programs, and key projects back to them.

- C. Strengthen regional, multi-county economic development alliances, such as the East Ohio Development Alliance, a 16-County association, with Belmont County as a strong partner. Simultaneously, connect with other local development and business entities in the Wheeling metropolitan area to market the region and help develop a positive brand.

4. Provide a consistent and flexible set of local incentives and development tools that can be used to match individual prospects' needs, and to provide a competitive "package" to prospects.

Partners: County and local economic development practitioners, local elected officials, new and expanding businesses, community and county incentive program administrators.

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing.

Action Steps:

- A. Make sure that development and local government officials, and others who may come into contact with prospects, are well versed in the benefits, uses, and restrictions of incentive tools that can be offered locally, as well as potential assistance programs at the federal and state level. All officials should be consistent in describing assistance programs and tools.
- B. A central Belmont County office should serve as the "clearinghouse" for packaging incentives for each specific project, and referring prospects or expanding businesses to other sources for assistance as appropriate. The path to obtain assistance should be clear and unambiguous to outside businesses seeking incentives to locate or expand in Belmont County.
- C. Hold a seminar that brings information about business and economic development funding and financing sources to County development officials, business organizations, and interested businesses. Publicize the seminar and invite municipal and township officials, as well as individual businesses, Chambers of Commerce, business associations Realtors, attorneys, accountants, and lending institutions.
- D. Maintain a catalog and description of incentive programs as a tab on the county development website. The appendix to this plan provides basic information for such a catalog. Refer the reader to the economic development organization for further information, and provide links to sources of funding programs where available.
- E. Over a longer term (within three years), research local incentive programs used successfully in other counties and communities, and establish an incentives work group to consider how new incentives could be developed in Belmont County. Local incentives may include: use of Community Reinvestment Areas to spur development in target areas; local business loan funds, with minimal restrictions if the fund is capitalized with

private funds; local income tax exemptions; low- or no-cost land; or utility rate incentives (such as reductions in electric rates in AMP-Ohio communities).

5. Review and push for change, where feasible, in local and county-wide regulatory processes, to maintain an efficient, business-friendly environment and reputation.

Partners: Economic development practitioners and local government officials, including those directly involved in local review, approval, and permitting processes; Chambers of Commerce and business associations; and local businesses offering input on County and community regulatory and permitting processes.

Time Frame: Local and county-level reviews can be independently carried out over the next two years.

Action Steps:

- A. County offices and municipalities should analyze their review, approval, and permitting processes for new and existing businesses, to ensure that they are clearly understood, efficient, and timely, without sacrificing the public purpose (often linked to health, safety, or well-being) of those processes. Possible items for review include building inspections, health department requirements and zoning restrictions where applicable, Soil and Water Conservation District reviews for drainage and suitability for construction, and local plan reviews by city, village, or county engineers. This may be best accomplished with a small ad hoc committee of volunteers who can lend an “outsider’s” perspective. One area to research is the development of a local building plan approval office. This would eliminate time and travel to the State office, and speed the review process. The feasibility of such an office, perhaps serving multiple counties, should be analyzed.
- B. Develop a fact sheet or checklist, based on information supplied by local government offices, that outlines all required processes for new or expanding businesses, with contact information for each regulatory entity.
- C. Encourage and schedule local governments’ pre-development meetings with developers and businesses that are planning new projects and developments, to review forthcoming regulatory and permitting requirements and their likely schedules. Some local governments and businesses have discovered that “predevelopment” meetings are very helpful in coordinating all parties and helping the project “flow”.
- D. Make sure that local economic development practitioners serve as liaisons between expanding or new businesses and State regulatory and permitting offices such as commercial building inspectors. An ombudsman and “hand-holding” function can be helpful.

6. Focus the greatest energy and attention on business sectors with the greatest “fit” with the amenities and businesses of Belmont County.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, industrial property owners and developers, local elected officials, existing business associations, Chambers of Commerce.

Time Frame: Targeting specific business sectors is a long-term strategy that may need to change with business trends. It can begin immediately, but a consistent and well-coordinated strategy to focus on a specific sector may take two to five years to become firmly organized and effective.

Action Steps: During the development of this strategy, Planning Commission members and other key informants, as well as the planning staff at Ohio RCAP, identified a number of business sectors or clusters seeking the same amenities provided in Belmont County, which should be considered in any targeting strategy. It is recommended that each of these sectors be considered for individual attention. Development practitioners should become familiar with these sectors or clusters, and with trends and factors that impact them. The following is a brief summary of those sectors, some of which could be approached as potential clusters for further development beyond a single prospect.

For any grouping of similar businesses, it is helpful to be able to improve their growth potential by identifying and providing access to local professional and technical services, workforce education and training programs, supply chain inputs such as raw materials and semi-finished goods, process and production machinery, and marketing and distribution strategies. Successful cluster development and matching with similar businesses having common needs and inputs can impact the competitive potential of all affected businesses by enhancing productivity, spurring innovation, increasing export potential, and stimulating further business formation. Further, economies of scale can often be achieved by sharing assets and building relationships.

Clusters known to exist within Appalachian Ohio are not all prominent in Belmont County. Some of these broader clusters include automobiles and related products (the CVG plant in Shadyside is Belmont County’s biggest member of this cluster), furniture and related products, wood products, textiles and related products, and apparel and related products.

A. Highway-Oriented Businesses



Nature of the Business: Businesses that rely on proximity and access to a major highway. These include:

- Sectors that serve the highway traveler (travel plazas, hotels and restaurants aligned to the highway, focusing on Wheeling “gateway” locations and interchanges from St. Clairsville east on I-70 and I-470;

- Logistics and distribution centers, warehouses, and other transportation-related businesses; and
- Value added manufacturing and assembly, where inputs can be obtained from trans-shipment facilities along the Ohio River, or from rail car offload facilities near the River.

Reason for Targeting in Belmont County: I-70 bisects the County from its western border near Barnesville to the eastern border at the Ohio River crossing for both I-70 and I-470. ODOT revealed an average daily traffic count of 49,650 vehicles, including 37,820 passenger and “Type A” commercial vehicles and 37,820 others that consist largely of commercial semi truck traffic, at the Banfield Road exit in St. Clairsville. This was the location of the highest daily count in any Belmont County location. The County is also within a half-hour’s driving time of the north-south I-77, with the Interstate network providing access to major markets in all directions.

B. River Oriented Business

Nature of the Business: Businesses that benefit from locations close to the Ohio River, including:

- River-oriented transportation and trans-loading freight operations, such as the recently developed MPR trans-loading business in Bellaire, and which can take advantage of the existence in one location of river, railroad, and highway (I-70 to the east and west, SR 7 to the north and south) transportation;



- Recreational and tourism-related businesses, such as water recreation outlets catering to boating and fishing, and restaurants and other amenities benefiting from a river view.

Reason for Targeting in Belmont County: In a time of growing energy costs, transport of raw materials and goods by water has become an increasingly attractive alternative. This appeal will increase with the expansion of the Panama Canal, which will spur additional freight traffic with larger vessels from Asian ports to the American East Coast and Gulf region. This intercontinental traffic links to barge traffic operating on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, increasing the strategic position of Belmont County’s potential and existing river ports such as Bellaire and Martins Ferry.

The Ohio River is also an underutilized “quality of life” amenity, providing recreational opportunities and an attractive background for riverfront development.

C. The Energy Sector

Nature of the Business: Business sectors that are involved in producing energy, creating energy sources – both traditional and alternative, and servicing the energy sector – by



manufacturing equipment and inputs needed to deliver energy-related products, or servicing that equipment and energy-producing installations.

Reason for Targeting in Belmont County: Several aspects of the energy sector are present to make Belmont County an important contributor to the production of energy. This is a highly important and valued segment of the domestic

economy, and Belmont County is well positioned to continue and grow its role as a contributor. Specific aspects of this multi-dimensional sector in Belmont County include these:

- Coal remains an important and significant resource being mined and shipped to power plants from Belmont County; the Murray coal mining operation is the largest employer in Belmont County.
- A significant new opportunity in a multi-state region that includes eastern Ohio is the production of natural gas from the Marcellus and Utica shale found in the region. Belmont County is a key location for the retrieval of natural gas by the fracturing process. It would be helpful to organize a county- or region-wide task force to prepare property owners for the likely impacts and advantages of the development of this resource.
- Other sources of alternative energy such as solar and wind power have not reached Belmont County with any intensity, although a location along the I-70 corridor may be a suitable site for a manufacturing plant that, for example, assembles wind turbines or towers manufactured elsewhere, before their installation throughout the Appalachian region.

D. Health Care



Nature of the Business: Developing a regional medical presence with businesses that may include expanding hospital services, home health care, medical research, out-patient surgery and treatment centers, wellness and nutritional centers, long term care facilities, back-office and insurance processing centers, and the manufacture of products that serve the medical

industry. Early planning is underway for a regional Veterans Administration facility that would bring medical and residential services into Belmont County, at a site that is yet to be determined.

Reason for Targeting in Belmont County: Potential exists to serve the Appalachian region of which Belmont County is a part, including measures to let the growing elderly population age in place with geriatric services and living options. There is also the above-mentioned potential to develop a regional veterans' health care and living facility within Belmont County.

Two entities in Belmont County specialize in treating adolescent mental health problems. Further, with three hospitals (Barnesville, Bellaire, and Martins Ferry), coupled with educational institutions that provide health care curricula, the potential exists for a health care “cluster” in Belmont County, with access to a viable market and a trainable workforce.

E. Other Sectors and Potentials

Research and Development: Potential for specialized research in select areas exists with the assistance and participation of OU-E and Belmont Tech. Specific areas where research may benefit from local amenities include: geriatrics and health care, coal technology, and metallurgy. Development practitioners should also partner with the educational institutions to determine the potential feasibility of attracting any specific high technology industry linked to local research and development capabilities.

Metal Working and Fabrication; Tool and Die Shops: The analysis of County Business Patterns revealed the largest manufacturing cluster, as denoted by the number of business establishments in Belmont County and surrounding areas, to be fabricated metal product manufacturing, with 14 establishments in Belmont County, and 53 in the region that included adjacent counties. The second largest cluster, based on number of establishments by three-digit NAICS codes, was nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing, with 26 establishments in the region, eight of which were in Belmont County.

Agribusiness and Food Processing: Because of the large amount of undeveloped acreage in Belmont County, particularly to the west and south, there is potential to grow the agricultural sector. Linked vertically to that sector is food production, which is fairly significant in Belmont County with the dairy and bakery in Martins Ferry, both of which had over 100 employees in 2008. On a wider scale, there were eighteen food manufacturing facilities in the seven-county region. OSU Extension can be a valuable resource in researching and disseminating information on potential marketable specialty crops that could be suitable for growing in Belmont County.

Businesses that can bring highest value to reclaimed lands: Western Belmont County, in the vicinity of I-70, is the site of large parcels of reclaimed surface coal mining land. While development potential may be somewhat limited, it offers significant acreage for agricultural and recreational uses.

Retail: Given the historic regional significance of the Ohio Valley Mall and its surrounding land uses, officials should inventory the mix of retail businesses in the area and, when any gap in the retail mix is identified, recruit businesses that can help fill that gap. The geographic cluster of consumer and traveler related businesses in the St. Clairsville area along I-70 is an important component in the overall Belmont County economy and tax and employment base.

Goal 4: Support and Reinvent the Retail Sector

Support and reinvent Belmont County's retail sector, and rebuild a sustainable role for the County as a growing regional retail and service center.



Belmont County established its importance as a regional retail destination with the construction of the Ohio Valley Mall adjacent to I-70 in St. Clairsville. In recent years, the drawing power of the mall, like most enclosed malls of its era, has diminished. New competition has appeared north of Wheeling, in the Highlands development. However, the importance of the area surrounding the mall has been retained with the development of outlot restaurants and stores, and the “big box” shopping center just north of I-70,

anchored by Wal-Mart, Sam’s Club, Lowes, and other retailers.

Belmont County’s central business districts have taken steps to remain viable and attractive, and they continue to serve important functions in the County’s retail and service sectors. A third opportunity for further retail development lies with the potential for additional travel-oriented businesses at interchanges along I-70 and I-470.

The trend in County-wide retail sales can be summarized by looking at total permissive sales tax revenues to the County over the past few years. Revenues were \$11,551,273 in 2003, rising to \$12,067,903 in 2005, then decreasing after that peak year to \$10,780,314 in 2009. Clearly, the recent loss in sales tax has been largely due to the national recession that impaired many households’ spending patterns. However, the decline of the Mall and its neighbors as a regional draw in the face of new regional competition such as West Virginia’s Highlands has been noted by many stakeholders.

The retail sector is a major component in Belmont County’s economy. According to 2008 County Business Patterns, 320 retail establishments employed 4,255 people, with an annual payroll of \$81,694,000, and the sales tax impact of millions of dollars annually has been noted above. The table on the next page presents a comparison of the retail sector between 2000 and 2008 in Belmont County, and it depicts an overall decrease in the number of employees and establishments in this sector, with a total loss of 1,213 employees and 51 business establishments.

The largest decreases, in terms of employment, were in department stores and grocery stores. The greatest drop in the number of establishments was in motor vehicles and parts, from 60 to 47. Of this group, there were 30 auto dealers in 2000 (of which 12 were new car dealers), and 24 auto dealers (of which 9 were new car dealers) in 2008. New car dealers employed 368 in 2000 and 292 in 2008.

Retail Employees and Establishments: 2000 and 2008	2000		2008		Change '00-'08	
	Employ	Estab	Employ	Estab	Employ	Estab
Retail Trade (total)	5,468	371	4,255	320	-1,213	-51
Motor vehicles and parts	723	60	596	47	-127	-13
Furniture and home furnishings	141	14	123	16	-18	+2
Electronics and appliances	71	9	72	9	+1	0
Building materials and garden supplies	366	29	365	28	-1	-1
Food and beverage	1,137	41	755	33	-382	-8
Grocery stores	1,089	30	731	26	-358	-4
Health and personal care	273	26	198	24	-75	-2
Gas stations	243	51	226	39	-17	-12
Clothing and clothing accessories	490	54	523	42	+33	-12
Sporting goods, hobbies, books, music	189	21	150	19	-39	-2
General merchandise	1,445	19	1,000- 2,499	19	---	0
Department stores	1,149	7	334	4	-815	-3
Miscellaneous retail	200	33	218	37	+18	+4
Nonstore retail	190	14	20-99	7	---	-7
Source: County Business Patterns, 2000 and 2008						

Trends in the Retail Sector

The following are some trends and changes in the retail sector that have been noted by national concerns such as the Urban Land Institute. These trends, some of which are impacted by the recent national recession, have implications regarding the local and regional retail sector.

- Value oriented retail (Wal Mart, Costco) has been doing well, at the expense of luxury retailers. The above table documents this trend locally, where the County lost three department stores and over 800 related jobs, but the “general merchandise” sector remained roughly the same, with the growth of wholesale clubs and supercenters. At the same time, an image of quality (high visibility, good layouts, and quality locations) has helped boost some national retail development.
- The high-consumption age group (roughly 25-45) is Internet-oriented, and may be most effectively reached through social media sites. Smaller inventories are leading to fewer in-store choices and more web browsing.
- Overall, there are fewer retail tenants now than at any time in the past 30 years, and store layouts and designs are being squeezed for more efficiency. Retail completions dropped 50 percent nationally in 2009 to 107 million square feet, and were expected to drop further to 70 million square feet in 2010. However, resulting declining rental rates may help feed the next retail growth cycle.

- Retailers are running leaner organizations and rethinking space needs. Related to this, mall anchor department stores without a discount or value image are being challenged. (The Ohio Valley Mall has lost and replaced anchors in recent years.)
- In many cases, mall leasing agents are signing non-retail tenants to combat vacancies. Nationally, vacancies at regional (400,000 to 800,000 square feet) and super-regional (over 800,000 square feet) malls rose from 7.1 percent at the end of 2008 to 8.8 percent in 2009. Also, temporary or “pop up” shops are being used more and more to fill center spaces; something new and transient is expected to provide excitement. Examples of non-retail tenants are these:
 - An artists’ colony including sculptors and painters, a dance studio, and a small theater.
 - A junior college offering classroom space.
 - A small museum.
 - Sports-related leases, such as speed training or indoor baseball training facilities.
 - Medical center offices and clinics. Clinic patients check in and receive pagers, allowing them to visit mall stores while they wait.
- While mall development has largely given way to the open-air lifestyle center, malls are still finding that they can capitalize on providing a “social marketplace” where people can be with others. Baby boomers are not as mobile as they were, and are less willing to trudge through

BASICS OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND THE MAIN STREET APPROACH

The overall acceptance of the regional shopping mall and “big box” stores has changed the role of rural downtowns. However, the shift has left several key roles for the central business district.

Downtowns are still serving effectively as local service centers - homes for insurance, real estate, business services, and professional offices. They also serve the local and convenience needs of residents who don't want to travel longer distances to shop. The key to rebuilding downtown centers is finding out exactly what products and services are most in demand by the local market, then expanding to serve new markets and niches.

Beyond these basic functions, downtown organizations are creating new roles and carving out new niches. Success requires a concerted effort, a plan, and a goal. For example, a community can strive to become an “antiques center”, but it takes more than one antiques shop to attract significant out-of-town traffic.

More likely, a community may need to put together several shops, an attractive restaurant, perhaps an old-fashioned ice cream parlor for summer traffic, an “event” such as a concert by the local school band, and an overall atmosphere which attracts people and makes them comfortable to be downtown.

A tried-and-true method to approach downtown revitalization is the Main Street approach, developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and promoted in most states by their Historic Preservation Office or a related organization. That method includes four major components: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. The Main Street approach also recognizes these principles:

large-format big box stores. Outlet malls are well positioned to capitalize on the push for consumer value, and they have been known to outperform regional malls for some in sales per square foot.

- It appears to be a time for regrouping in retail development. Retailers have closed weak stores and shed more than a million jobs nation-wide. Stores and inventories are smaller; there is a “survival of the fittest” atmosphere, as stronger centers take tenants from weaker malls. Internet retailing has taken about a ten percent market share away from the bricks-and-mortar stores. Investors are only interested in the best properties, retailers, and locations. Regional malls of less than 1.5 million square feet are losing ground, and the “lifestyle” fad has lost some ground, diminishing in importance in credit-starved times. And for the first time since the 1950’s, no regional malls were under construction anywhere in 2010. Some suburban shopping centers appear to need reinvention, including more mixed use concepts involving retail space. An aging population wants to shop closer to where they live. Smaller stores in higher visibility, central locations are anticipated. “Probably more than any other property sector, retail braces for significant change”.¹

Comprehensive: No single focus (e.g. facade design or promotional events) will effectively improve the downtown. It is a complex, multi-faceted issue.

Incremental: Small, incremental steps and successes will pace the program. Simple accomplishments will lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the process, and help people develop skills (and desire) to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.

Self-help: Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. Far more important than getting a grant is convincing stakeholders of the rewards of their investment of time and money in Main Street. In the long run, this mobilization of local time and money and local teamwork will be the key to success.

Partnerships: All stakeholders within the public and private sectors are contributing time, money, and expertise. Both sectors must be at the table in order to achieve the comprehensive approach.

Assets: Downtown must capitalize on its unique assets: distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and “a human scale that can’t be copied out on the strip”. It helps to inventory these assets to shape and market them effectively.

Quality: A high standard of quality should be set for every aspect of the commercial district. This goes for window displays, promotional events, marketing brochures, and public improvements.

Change: Over time, skeptics will become believers; at first, almost no one believes Main Street can turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite and essential. Over time, the sum of the small, incremental changes will be noticeable, and even significant!

Implementation: It is not important to wait until a revitalization plan can be followed “by the numbers”. Main Street’s focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activity NOW.

¹ Information for this section was taken from the Urban Land Institute’s “Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2011”.

Partners

1. Economic development practitioners traditionally focus on industrial, manufacturing, distribution, and research oriented businesses, leaving retail business to local Chambers of Commerce, and to market forces. However, retail development, recruitment, and retention, at least among the larger potential investments, should be in the work program for Belmont County economic development practitioners because of the importance of that sector in drawing regional customers and generating a significant tax base.
2. Chambers of Commerce are involved in the livelihood of their retail and commercial businesses, and are active partners in retail development and retention.
3. The County Tourism Council is directly involved in generating retail traffic from outside the County, and can be an important force for marketing the retail opportunities throughout the County regionally.
4. Local officials from the County and its retail center communities are active partners.
5. Retail, commercial, and mixed-use developers and property owners are active partners in the public-private effort to boost retail and commercial development.
6. Those who provide assistance to entrepreneurs, such as the Small Business Development Center, and sources of capitalization such as the OMEGA revolving loan fund, are also partners, becoming involved in supporting new local retail and commercial ventures and helping them succeed.

Strategies

1. **Obtain market information about retail business in Belmont County, and target any gaps in retail makeup of the County.**

Partners: Chambers, economic development professionals, developers

Time Frame: Within the next year

Action Steps: To operate with accurate knowledge of the current retail sector, local officials should commission a professional analysis of the current status and potential of the retail sector in Belmont County, including the regional market, the geography of the likely trade area for anchors and destinations, psychographics and spending patterns of the trade area population, the impact of competitive retail developments such as the Highlands, buying power within the trade area, and targeted businesses that could fill documented gaps. The analysis should include potential new retail businesses that would meet local and regional demands not currently being satisfied. A targeted marketing strategy, in which local officials recruit specific lines of business, can then be based on the findings of this analysis, with a greatly improved likelihood for success. This recruitment can be carried out with individual contacts, by letter and telephone, at targeted conferences and trade shows, and in meetings with individual businesses.

A strong and sustainable strategy for the mall and its surroundings should include a physical vision for the entire area, a marketing and merchandising strategy, development program, and project phasing strategy.

2. Continue to develop and redevelop the area surrounding the Ohio Valley Mall as a competitive and growing retail, commercial, service, and medical center.



Partners: Owners and developers of current commercial properties including the Ohio Valley Mall and its out lots, as well as property adjacent and to the west of the mall, and within the vicinity of I-70 and its interchange at exit 218 (Mall Road).

Time Frame: The development of this area will take ten years or more, with build-out of the entire property dependent upon capital availability, market demand, and the cooperation of State and Federal funding sources for infrastructure.

This is a multi-faceted objective, involving intensive participation by the public (City of St. Clairsville and Belmont County) and private (retail property developers and land owners in the vicinity) sectors. The action steps frame the overall comprehensive development of this regional commercial center and critical component in Belmont County's balanced economy.

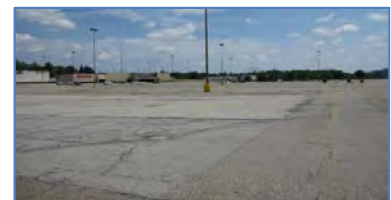
Action Steps:

- A. Attract new traditional and non-traditional tenants to the district that complement and expand upon the existing tenant mix, working with the Ohio Valley Mall management and nearby property developers and managers. Share results of the market study.
- B. Attract new businesses to outlying property and out lots where complementary and market-driven retail, entertainment, dining, travel-oriented, and hotel uses can be generated. Focus on those specific uses identified in the retail analysis (described in strategy 1, above) as most likely to succeed. Form a local "sales team" including the County's economic development practitioners, representatives from St. Clairsville and the County, and spokespersons for the existing retail base to contact top retail prospects at trade shows, in person, and by other means.
- C. Create a physical "vision" of the entire area. Produce a map of the planned target area, including proposed roadways, amenities, new office buildings and stores, and other desired features. Consider the potential and possibilities for mixed and complementary businesses and other uses, including additional retail, travel oriented businesses

(convenience stops and fuel, tourism information, restaurant choices), professional and office space, medical offices and services, and residential options. New “anchors” that draw outside traffic may eventually include a civic center such as a recreation or meeting/convention center, entertainment venues such as movie or live theaters, regional medical centers and offices, and additional “big box” stores.

Appoint a multi-discipline work group to develop the concept. While private developers will create their own plans for the improvements they oversee, an overall concept for the entire area can help drive and align individual developments. Although the map is conceptual in nature, it provides a tangible vision for the area’s potential, and helps build excitement for the future. It is helpful to view the entire area as a single “planned unit development”, linking roads, utilities, and signage to present a unified “brand” for the area.

- D. Advocate as a team (County and local officials, economic development practitioners) at the State and Federal levels for funding assistance to support new infrastructure needs, including improvements and additions to the Exit 218 interchange, space for a future interchange or realigned access/egress, coordination with the existing street system in the area, and development of new ring and associated roadways that open new property for development while protecting functional site configurations. Retain funds already earmarked for this area (including ODOT funds). Pursue creative financing strategies including Tax Increment Financing and incentives for developers to invest in the project. In an era of diminishing federal and state revenues, creative uses of the Transportation Improvement District as a vehicle for highway/roadway funding, and as means by which new revenue sources can be raised, could become an important tool.
- E. Contact targeted developers and businesses to provide the highest and best uses of available property, with an emphasis on quality and consideration given to complementing existing businesses and land uses.
- F. Integrate new development with existing natural features and topography, and with adjacent properties and land uses; create physical and functional connections between new developments and adjacent properties.
- G. Erase the image of the mall as an isolated “island” surrounded by parking, and advocate for new development that links the mall to nearby walkable uses, with connectivity and a sense of “place” throughout the development, with attractive public open space.
- H. Incorporate a sense of place and community throughout new developments in the area, and, while working to draw regional traffic, develop the area as a community center and gathering spot, with planned events and local venues and civic settings where people can interact comfortably and spend time with others.



A central agency such as the Tourism Council, CIC, or Port Authority should create an organization comprised of businesses located in the Ohio Valley Mall and Plaza area. There could be benefits from, minimally, a loose affiliation of these businesses to plan joint marketing of the entire district, with a potential for special sales events, community events taking place in the district, and a listing of all businesses in the district, rather than just the mall tenants or plaza occupants. When marketed as a whole, the district has greater “critical mass”, regional draw, and consumer interest. A district-wide organization can, if found feasible, consider ways to tap revenue sources from nominal memberships to fund regional promotion, possible branding, cross-promotions between district businesses, and recruitment efforts for potential new businesses.

3. Support the healthy revitalization of the County’s central business districts.

Partners: City and Village public officials, Chambers of Commerce and their downtown business associations, local businesses located in central business districts.



Time Frame: Ongoing activities

Action Steps: The central business districts of Belmont County’s cities and larger villages have retained their strength as retail and service centers. They are at the physical center of their communities’ population base, and are most easily accessible by automobile, but also by the pedestrian and bicyclist as well. They depict the history and heritage of the community with their unique architectural features, and often contain important public and civic space such as parks, town squares, court houses and town squares, and libraries. Four general areas for action are proposed, linked to the four-point Main Street approach to downtown revitalization.

A. Organization: Propose the creation of a Main Street or Downtown Development Committee where one does not already exist in the County’s larger communities, including Barnesville, St. Clairsville, Shadyside, Bellaire, Bridgeport, and Martins Ferry, possibly under the auspices of their Chambers of Commerce, where they exist. The committees should be devoted to the comprehensive revitalization of the downtown, and be responsible for

downtown promotions, events coordination, and economic development and restructuring activities.

- B. Promotions:** Plan events that showcase the County's downtowns and their businesses. Events can include coordinated sales promotions, or cultural events such as concerts and art shows. Promote the historical significance of the downtown districts (including Martin's Ferry being the oldest settlement in Ohio), tying in historical roadways and corridors (U.S. Route 40 and Route 7). This may be best addressed by the Tourism Council.
- C. Design:** Seek ways to assist downtown property owners in renovating or otherwise improving their properties. Also, consider physical and aesthetic improvements to the downtown streetscape and public places. For resources, contact Heritage Ohio (www.heritageohio.org), a membership organization that can offer technical assistance in highlighting, improving, and making the most of historical and architectural features. Have the Ohio Historic Preservation Office conduct a "Building Doctor" clinic in one of the County's larger downtowns; hold a public meeting to describe the benefits and requirements of Ohio's downtown revitalization Community Development Block Grant program. Tie the downtown areas in with their surroundings through walkable pathways, bike trails, and other features.

Consider contacting the Ohio State University Extension to stage a "First Impressions" program in one or more communities. This program brings a team of outside observers into the community for a day to note their impressions of the physical assets and liabilities of the community. A report and feedback, which can be very enlightening, is furnished once the visit is conducted.

- D. Economic Restructuring:** Chambers and economic development practitioners should inventory and update data bases on available (for rent or to purchase) commercial downtown properties, and to market those properties to desirable businesses that present an opportunity for success. Support downtown businesses with financing opportunities including revolving loan funds, and possible applications to the State of Ohio for Downtown Revitalization Community Development Block Grant funding and ODOT enhancement funds. Publicize small business technical assistance sources (the SBDC) and arrange for scheduled counseling time in each community. Development practitioners should coordinate the delivery of these programs where they best fit local needs and readiness.

4. Encourage highway- and travel-oriented commercial business development.

Partners: Economic Development practitioners, property owners and developers, local government officials, County Engineer and other officials.

Time Frame: This is a long term objective, taking ten years or more for realization.

Action Steps: The potential for the development of travel-oriented businesses along the I-70 corridor, serving primarily the transient customer base generated by the thousands of vehicles traveling through the County every day has been recognized during the preparation of this report. For example, the 2008 ODOT traffic count totaled over 36,000 vehicles daily on I-470 at Route 7, and 20,000 on parallel I-70 at Route 7. In general, the County's Interstate highway interchanges have not been very extensively developed with travel marts, fuel stops, restaurants, or other related businesses. There is a potential market for a truck stop and service area along either I-70 or I-470 in the eastern portion of the county, where traffic is entering the Wheeling area in Pultney (I-470) or Pease (I-70) Townships.

- A. Hold meetings with Practitioners and key property owners at the targeted highway intersections to determine their level of interest in developing, marketing, or selling their property, and details on the property itself, including market price per acre.
- B. List and market interested owners' properties to targeted travel oriented businesses, and work with County officials to determine infrastructure needs (water accessibility, broadband Internet including fiber lines, possible on site package sanitary sewer plant if hookup to regional system is impractical, drainage system) to make them developable sites.

Commercial and retail development is more driven by market and location than many other business sectors, and traditionally, economic development efforts have left the retail sector to market forces. However, because of the extent of this sector in the Ohio Valley Mall area, and the growing competition from other retail centers that have been subsidized by local and state programs, it is important to pay attention to the possibilities and work with this segment.

Goal 5: Building Belmont County's Entrepreneurial Culture

Goal: Ensure that Belmont County promotes and nurtures a spirit of entrepreneurship, providing the necessary tools and support for local entrepreneurs to succeed and flourish.

Economic development professionals are aware of the importance of programs to stimulate local entrepreneurship. New business development has been recognized as highly important ever since 1978 when MIT Professor David Birch reported that firms with fewer than 20 employees were the main source of job creation in the economy.

An **entrepreneur** is an individual who is seeking opportunities for adding value to current and potential economic activity. Another definition is: "a person who organizes and manages a business undertaking, assuming the risk for the sake of the profit." Risk-taking is a key element.

Several distinct types of entrepreneurs have been identified. For example:

- **Survival entrepreneurs** are people who resort to creating enterprises because there are few other options. This may be the case for a large number of people in Belmont County.
- **Lifestyle entrepreneurs** choose self-employment to pursue personal goals in their lives.
- **Growth entrepreneurs** are those who are motivated to grow their businesses to create wealth and jobs in their community.
- **Serial entrepreneurs** are those who, over their lifetimes, will create several businesses.

In general, entrepreneurs are focused on creating new, innovative products or services that will lead to further investment and growth. Small, homegrown firms that are developed, owned, and operated by local entrepreneurs who have a stake in the local community are more likely to stay in the community. It is good policy to focus resources on increasing the number of individuals who start up businesses with growth potential, and toward helping *growth entrepreneurs* to survive and expand. Further, as pointed out by the Kauffman Foundation, entrepreneurship does not just create wages, but it creates wealth that stays in the community through reinvestment. It also taps and retains local talent, and local entrepreneurs are likelier to become community leaders, contribute to civic ventures, and reinvest through philanthropy and volunteer work.

Unfortunately, rural areas have few high growth entrepreneurs as a rule, but supporting those who are identified is critical since they hold the potential to create substantial wealth and quality jobs. As a review of Belmont County's local economy has shown, the County does not depend on large manufacturers for many of its jobs; the current local economy is conducive to the start and growth of small, entrepreneurial ventures. Further, the local work force is made up of people with diverse backgrounds, skills, and exposure to manufacturing processes, coal mining, and other fields such as health care and construction – such diversity can offer potential for a number of differing ventures.

A publication on “Entrepreneurship in Appalachian Ohio” states that “A dynamic economy will have a high percentage of its economic activity generated by small firms, a high level of self-employment, high business ownership rates, and high start-up rates. Another major indicator of a dynamic economy is a high rate of innovative businesses that are continually developing new products and new processes. Small, entrepreneurial businesses are more likely than larger firms to generate substantive innovations. These small, innovative businesses are also more likely to create higher quality jobs. Communities with a unique and rich regional flavor attract innovative entrepreneurs, and this concentrated creativity spills over to other firms in the region. Knowledge clusters and other entrepreneurial networks are critical in encouraging and enhancing entrepreneurship.”

Findings from a number of studies, including those of the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, suggest that rural regions with higher levels of entrepreneurship achieve higher levels of economic vitality. Simply put, “Rural places with a strong history of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development were more robust.”¹

Sustaining high growth entrepreneurs requires the ability to assist high tech businesses and ventures involving a major innovation. Typical needs include venture capital, industry specific mentoring, and access to specialized technical assistance. In many cases, the barrier to success is the inability to secure adequate, affordable space for a start-up. Increasingly, a number of communities or regions have responded to this need by developing business incubators.

¹ “Entrepreneurship in Appalachian Ohio: Facts and Figures”, Appalachian Ohio Regional Investment Coalition, Oct. 2005.

ECONOMIC GARDENING

A new phrase has originated from an entrepreneurial support program in Littleton, Colorado. “Economic Gardening” refers to cultivating local, marketable skills and knowledge rather than “economic hunting” for out-of-town corporations to develop branch plants.

A key tenet of economic gardening is that there is a high correlation between growth and innovation. Further, the most vibrant economies were found in one study to be highly unstable in the sense that they had the highest rate of business start-ups and business deaths – an economy operating at the “edge of chaos”, where stability and chaos are in tension with one another.

Another finding was that “resource production” communities (with mining and farming, Belmont County falls into this category to some extent) produce commodities where consumers make decisions based on lowest price, the race to produce lower prices puts pressure on employee wages, resulting in poverty and paralysis regarding innovation and risk. When costs begin to rise, commodity companies leave for lower-cost communities and countries.

ECONOMIC GARDENING TODAY

The fundamental concept behind economic gardening is that entrepreneurs drive economies, and healthy communities have a healthy base of entrepreneurs. Success in gardening depends on painstaking community development with an eye on the innovators – typically those with NTJ and STJ Myers-Briggs temperaments (Sensing-Thinking-Judging and Intuitive-Thinking-Judging).

Success in sustaining entrepreneurship requires a variety of services for the entrepreneur, and successful publicity, packaging, and coordination of this mix of services. A “seamless” system should coordinate the multitude of programs and be flexible enough to customize them to meet each entrepreneur’s unique needs. Further, according to RUPRI’s Don Macke², entrepreneurial systems of support, or “Entrepreneurial Development Systems” (EDS), which focus on the full range of needs, should provide the necessary infrastructure to enable the full spectrum of entrepreneurial activity from potential to start-up to high growth. They focus as much on building supportive communities as they do on encouraging successful entrepreneurs.

Belmont County is in a favorable position, with many of the pieces in place to nurture entrepreneurship. Some of these ingredients include: a number of potential low-cost properties in which to house new businesses; a local revolving loan fund for business, coupled with business oriented community banks; a varied and potentially adaptable set of in-County educational establishments, ranging from local school districts with new physical plant, to a technical college, to a campus of a major State University; and business counseling programs including the regional Small Business Development Center.

Entrepreneurship development, and the mix of public and private policies and practices that foster entrepreneurship, should be one of Belmont County’s *primary* strategies. To support success, policy goals should promote *more* entrepreneurs, *stronger* entrepreneurs with increased survival rates, and more *high*

² Don Macke and Deborah Markley, “Entrepreneurship and Rural America”, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Spring 2006.

Economic Gardening in Littleton, where most businesses are small with less than ten employees and \$200,000 annual sales, involves:

Competitive Information: Mining information from high-powered databases, GIS, and other information tools – on key customers, strategies, target markets, industry trends, market size and sales, demographics and psychographics, potential niches, prospective partners, and marketing lists and leads. They also monitor local businesses and vacant buildings. Information also includes training and seminars in advanced management techniques: systems thinking, temperament, complexity theory, customer service strategies.

Physical, quality of life, and intellectual infrastructure:

Investments are made in highway interchanges, street rehab projects, and water lines, but also in quality of life projects like parks and open space and historic preservation, and intellectual infrastructure such as curriculum, courses, and introduction to best practices that keep companies competitive – Creating a community that is attractive to entrepreneurs and the talent they hire is considered as important as natural resources and heavy rail were to Old Economy companies.

Connections: to trade associations, think tanks, academic institutions, and other similar companies (industry clusters) and CEOs. Research shows that an increase in the number of business connections, including “weak ties” to “hubs” outside a business’s normal daily connections increases the innovation levels of business.

growth entrepreneurs to increase the number that create jobs and wealth. The overall goal may be this: ***Increasing the number of entrepreneurs staying in the community to grow their business venture, becoming better informed and better skilled, creating more jobs, and gaining greater business productivity.***

So, what do entrepreneurs need to succeed in Belmont County? First, the Kauffman Center, which has studied entrepreneurship extensively, has found that entrepreneurship cannot succeed without community support. The Kauffman Center's Raymond Smilor found there were four important factors, and communities can contribute to each one.³ The four are:

- **Talent**, which belongs to individuals who “recognize market opportunities and then create organizations to take advantage of those opportunities”;
- **Opportunity**, defined as the ability to fill a need in the community;
- **Capital**, the financial resources to fill such a need; and
- **Know-how**, or the opportunity to network in order to gain expertise and technical knowledge.

Rural areas present a number of obstacles to meeting these needs, including these:

- A culture that does not support entrepreneurship, and which is skeptical of change and the risk associated with it;
- Distance to markets and services; geographic isolation (Belmont County does not suffer from this issue as much as more isolated counties in southeast Ohio);
- Gap in capital availability, where most capital for small business is located in metro areas;
- Smaller rural populations that make it difficult to provide certain services until a threshold of demand can be met;
- Absence of other entrepreneurs, and hence the inability to network and learn from others;
- Absence of industry clusters and the efficiencies of operation they allow.

However, despite these obstacles, the pieces are in place to develop a strong entrepreneurial culture and a track record of success in bringing businesses and product concepts to reality In Belmont County.

³ Smilor, Raymond, “Entrepreneurship and Community Development”, Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, 1997.

Partners

The following are some of the partners that should be considered as critical members of Belmont County's "Entrepreneurial Development System".

1. **Economic Development Practitioners** who provide the outreach to the entrepreneurial community and who inform entrepreneurs of the services and support available through the EDS. This includes the CIC and Port Authority, Chambers of Commerce, and other County and community level economic development leadership.
2. **Commercial lenders** including community and regional banks.
3. **Other sources of capital for entrepreneurs:** the County RLF administered by the CIC, venture capitalists such as the East Central Ohio Tech Angel Fund and Adena Ventures, and State and federal offices that provide capital financing for small and emerging businesses (see the Appendix on sources of assistance for more detail).
4. **Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** program, providing business counseling and classes within Belmont County.
5. **Educational partners:**
 - **Local school districts**, which could promote entrepreneurship development, instill basics of entrepreneurship in younger students, and promote business development practices through an entrepreneurship curriculum.
 - **Belmont Technical College**, which can match entrepreneurs' technical training needs with solid curriculum;
 - **Ohio University Eastern** – and OU's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, which provides operational and technical assistance to start-up and existing businesses through the Appalachian Regional Entrepreneurship Group, and assistance by MBA students within the school.
 - **Belmont-Harrison Vocational School District** (for high school aged students)
 - **Regional programs** focused on entrepreneurship development and needs, including ACEnet in Athens, and MCBI Regional Incubator for Entrepreneurs, which offers space in a Zanesville incubator, as well as networking and mentoring for others. Also, the emerging Appalachian Business Network, coordinating local economic development activities with the JobsOhio program.

Strategies:

1. **Connect the local programs of Ohio University - East, Belmont Tech, school districts, SBDC, MCBI, and other regional programs and services for entrepreneurs into a unified Entrepreneurial Development System - a one-stop source for existing and potential entrepreneurs**

The term, "Entrepreneurial Development System", has been used to describe a community-wide business incubation system that organizes entrepreneurs and business development services. The EDS should improve the skill levels of entrepreneurs to transform their businesses

into thriving companies, and its system should organize all aspects of assistance: business incubators and affordable space, revolving loan funds and other sources of capital, college curriculums for businesses, and small business development centers.

The result is a well-publicized “one stop shop” for entrepreneurs, with accessible information and referrals to services that respond to the unique needs of each entrepreneur. This point of entry must then be publicized to the prospective entrepreneurial universe within Belmont County. Aggressive publicity includes brochures and mailings, press releases, speaking engagements, an interactive Internet presence with linkages to all partners, and informal networking.

Partners: service providers (OU-E, OU Voinovich Center, and Belmont Tech, SBDC, MCBI, the CIC (RLF administrator and SBDC/MCBI coordinator), other business financing sources from the public and private sectors, and other economic development practitioners.

Time Frame: Implementation should be short term (1-3 years to a coordinated EDS).

Action Steps:

- A. Establish and publicize (with press releases, presentations at Chamber and service club meetings, and presence on the County economic development website) a single point of contact at a County-wide development office, for services and resources to start or expand a business. Publicize the location (address, phone number, email address) as the first point of contact for anyone in Belmont County. Persons who respond to inquiries should be knowledgeable in small business development, business needs, and available programs and resources, and should be able to manage the “case load” of inquiring entrepreneurs and provide referrals to relevant agencies.

The host office should be responsible for coordinating the response to each entrepreneur’s needs, by arranging meetings, putting the client in touch with specific entities providing assistance, and assembling the “team” of assistance providers: counselors, lenders, those with specific knowledge areas (accounting, manufacturing processes, information technology).

- B. Publish a list of all resources, services, and programs assisting entrepreneurs in starting, maintaining, and growing their business ventures. The list should be distributed in print and online as a catalog of services offered to entrepreneurs. The entity managing this list must frequently update the data base of services and service providers, contact information, and descriptive information on services provided.
- C. Build and maintain a formal network where all entrepreneurial service providers collaborate, discussing individual entrepreneurs and business ventures on a “case management” basis, and offering a mix of services and resources as warranted by individual cases.

2. Highlight financing sources for start-up and growth capital for entrepreneurs.

Lack of access to capital is a common obstacle for small businesses, especially when they have no borrowing history with a lending institution.

There are a number of financing programs at the federal, state, regional, and local levels, and an outline of individual programs is provided in Appendix A. It is difficult for an entrepreneur to be well versed in the requirements, benefits, and nuances of each loan and incentive program, as well as commercial products offered by local lending institutions. Staff at the “One Stop” entrepreneur center described previously should be able to provide initial information on programs, and make an up-front assessment of their applicability to any single entrepreneur, business, or project – then put the client in touch with one or more financing program officials.

Partners: Business counselors (SBDC), EDS partners, commercial lenders, CIC (RLF), development practitioners, regional sources of venture capital.

Time Frame: Should be instituted virtually immediately.

Action Steps:

- A. Use business surveys, an R&E visitation program, or other means to ascertain the degree to which businesses cannot access needed capital in Belmont County. A survey of local banks may also help determine where unmet financial needs are concentrated. Determine common reasons for a financing gap (conservative banking community, lack of venture capital, difficulty in obtaining working capital, etc.).

Microenterprise Loan Programs

Microenterprise development helps individuals expand their small businesses typically employing 1-4 people. Micro loans are often targeted to low and moderate income persons who cannot raise capital by other means. In most cases, the owner is the sole operator and worker. Micro loans are \$5,000 or less in smaller programs, and up to \$35,000 under some regulations.

Micro loans often include requirements that the borrower attend business management classes or work with an SBDC or SCORE counselor. While some use a loan review board, others follow the international Grameen model and include “peer” group loans where groups of borrowers monitor one another.

Loan fund administration is relatively labor-intensive, due to the training and assistance component, and the relatively high degree of portfolio management and workouts of risky loans. Creditworthiness is often secondary to character lending in micro programs – but collateral requirements are usually strict and adhered to.

Census statistics count over 25 million microenterprises in the US (834,583 in Ohio) in 2008, of which 21.3 million (Ohio: 706,539) had no employees aside from the owner. Microenterprises with 1-4 workers accounted for 21.1% of private non-farm employment (32.5 million jobs) in the US in 2008; 18.1% (1,069,258 jobs) in Ohio. Of the Ohio jobs, 194,737 were in rural areas (or 17.3% of rural non-farm jobs); 874,521 were urban. Source: Assoc. for Ent. Opportunity, www.microenterpriseworks.com

- B. Sponsor a local workshop for businesses on “access to capital”. In addition to inviting local commercial lenders to provide information on their loan products (as well as their participation with SBA or Linked Deposits programs), include administrators of the Belmont County and OMEGA loan funds, as well as personnel from the Small Business Administration, any recognized regional venture capital fund, the Community Development Finance Fund, and Ohio Statewide Development Corporation. If possible, videotape the presentations for inclusion on a website or a DVD for prospective borrowers.
- C. Research county and regional sources of venture capital. Two that have been identified include the East Central Ohio Tech Angel Fund in East Central and Southeast Ohio, and Adena Ventures in central Appalachia. Contact and visit officials from identified venture capital sources to determine their parameters for considering a venture in Belmont County, and in order to better match sources with future needs. Catalog available sources of capital for small business start-ups and expansions. Make the financing catalog available on a central website, and through a publication.
- D. Make loan packaging services available at a county-wide economic development office, with staff that can help businesses identify appropriate, most likely sources of financing for identified financing gaps, and assist businesses in packaging and applying for loans.
- E. If market analysis indicates sufficient demand, apply for funding to host a Microenterprise loan program through a County office (see sidebar, previous page). Alternatively, Belmont County should be part of a regional effort to launch a multi-county micro loan fund. There are several programs that can assist in providing microfinance capital. These include the Ohio Department of Development’s Microloan program, and the Small Business Administration’s microloan intermediary program.

3. Pilot a business and entrepreneur mentoring program

In many cases, entrepreneurs possess great skills in one aspect of business operations, such as product development. Other skill sets, such as human resources or accounting, may be less advanced. It may be helpful to match entrepreneurs showing growth potential with mentors who are proficient in the entrepreneur’s needed skills. In many areas, a mentoring program has been formalized through SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives, an SBA sponsored program) or another organization. If an existing organization cannot be identified to host a program, a local development office or Chamber could develop a data base of willing volunteers, along with their areas of expertise, who can be matched with business owners and entrepreneurs as they make inquiries.

Partners: Local and County development practitioners, volunteers with expertise in business development, accounting, production processes, etc.

Time Frame: This program may not take an immediate top priority, but could be instituted within an intermediate time frame (3-5 years); however, a local organization may wish to sponsor it within a shorter time frame.

Action Steps:

- A. Develop a list of potential mentors and their business strengths (overall operations, construction, accounting and fiscal procedures, business law, industrial engineering, technology including IT, human resources, and business management).
- B. Publicize contact information (ideally through the Entrepreneurial Development System) for business people and entrepreneurs to contact a central point of contact for assistance in any area of business development and operation.
- C. Staff should match entrepreneurs with resource persons on the list of volunteers who can address the specific issue being identified by the business person.
- D. Schedule follow-up meetings and ongoing support by the mentor once the pairing has been made.

4. Seek opportunities for interaction between businesses and schools, to promote entrepreneurship among local students and provide training at all stages of development

Many development officials believe that growing a culture of entrepreneurship cannot be accomplished simply by addressing business needs as they appear, or by providing a coordinated matrix of services, facilities, and finance programs. This approach is helpful for existing entrepreneurs, but it does not create an environment in which community members are exposed or encouraged to follow an entrepreneurial career path. Taking a risk in starting a new business in one's home community should be publicized as a possibility in Belmont County, and one that will be met with support.

Schools, ranging from the County's K-12 districts to the University and technical school, should play a primary role in establishing and nurturing a successful pro-entrepreneurial culture. Principles of entrepreneurialism can be instilled in younger students in early grades, and curricula (such as the ICAN! Youth Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management Seminar in Morgan County and Logan high schools), technical assistance, and training events can be developed by the post-graduate providers to help entrepreneurs with specific needs. This can include technical training for business clusters that identify shared needs for specific curricula, when the level of need is great enough to warrant a dedicated class. The intersection of schools and business should be a strong and vibrant one.

Partners: School districts, OU-E, Belmont Technical College, business counselors, economic development practitioners, volunteers from local business who can share their expertise.

Time Frame: Planning should begin in the short term (1-2 years) for programs to be developed over the next five years.

Action Steps:

- A. Support and enhance, with assistance from the business sector, programs in public schools that address small business management and entrepreneurship as a career choice. Provide information to schools on successful programs and curricula, including youth entrepreneur development programs that educate children about the opportunities in their community; emphasize attitudes and basic values such as optimism and perseverance; promote the value of microenterprises; and provide practical applications of business ideas to help students internalize the concepts.
- B. Include entrepreneurship and the role of educational institutions in promoting and nurturing it as a topic of discussion within school-business partnership organizations.
- C. Develop high school electives that support entrepreneurship, such as DECA or Junior Achievement programs.

5. Create one or more business incubators in Belmont County – after careful research

Belmont County is not prepared for the immediate development of a business incubator. However, the creation of an incubator is a likely longer-range activity after preliminary research is conducted to determine its feasibility.

There are several incubators already in existence in southeastern Ohio, including the MCBI Regional Incubator in Zanesville. The organization operating that incubator has a presence within a multi-county region that includes Belmont County. It is often preferable for an established regional incubator operator to develop a new, local incubator, rather than beginning a new venture with no experience; MCBI is certainly a candidate to eventually operate an incubator in Belmont County.

Some incubators support purely manufacturing ventures. Others offer a variety of office and R&D facilities, while some focus on more specific lines of business such as high-tech ventures. The mix of tenants is an important consideration in order to benefit from synergies, common interests, local strengths, the potential for jointly purchased inputs and services, and networking within the incubator.

One potential incubator location is any of a number of properties in the Riverfront communities, with access to Route 7, nearby I-70 and metropolitan Wheeling, affordable prices, and access to employees and markets; another location would be in the vicinity of the OU-E and Belmont Tech campuses, to take advantage of synergies for research and product development offered by those institutions.

It is recommended that the development of an incubator not be undertaken before officials become familiar with incubators already in existence in the region. In addition to the MCBI facility, other incubators are operating in Athens and Piketon. Another nearby resource is the National Business Incubator Association, in Athens.

Partners: Local economic development practitioners, information resources such as MCBI and National Business Incubator Association in Athens, OU-E and/or Belmont Technical College, local developers

Time Frame: Planning and coordination with existing regional incubators can be undertaken in the short term (1-2 years); development of an incubator within Belmont County (if determined to be feasible by market studies) within 5-10 years. Note: This project will require careful preliminary planning, and extensive fundraising for initial construction.

Action Steps:

- A. Conduct a market analysis: Identify potential tenants, estimate the demand for the incubator and its proposed services, measure size and needs of the market. Pay attention to determining proper incubator size, client type, financial sustainability, and strategies for providing a rich mix of business assistance services. Simultaneously, make sure to bridge political and organizational boundaries to ensure that everyone in the community who can bring value to startup companies is coordinating their efforts for maximum impact. Ask these critical questions: Is there sufficient demand for an incubator and its services? Is the managing agency committed to the success of the incubator? Is there a suitable site where an incubator can be built or renovated, that is convenient to potential tenants and existing businesses and markets? And is there community support for the incubator idea?
- B. Select a potential incubator site: Determine whether to develop a new facility or renovate an existing one, calculate costs to develop a site and/or building facility that projects an image of success, select a site that matches the incubator's goals as well as the needs of the community, and select a location that offers access to highways, exposure to the public, and proximity to service providers such as a vocational or technical school.
- C. Design the facility: Design for convenience factors such as location of corridors and loading docks, access to common areas and services, access to loading facilities. Facility design should accommodate a variety of tenants, and ease of adaptability. A critical design element is provision for broadband Internet access, able to accommodate varied needs of multiple tenants.
- D. Select support services to be provided: More services will require more personnel and a higher budget. While inexpensive space is often the primary benefit in the eyes of a tenant, other services are often offered as well, along with arrangements to finance

them by the tenant, incubator sponsor, or a combination. Some services, such as SBDC counseling, can be provided at no charge. Services should match needs identified in the market analysis. These services can include management assistance, duplicating and fax service, Internet availability, and access to workforce development and financing resource programs.

- E. Prepare an incubator financing plan: Projections should be developed for a five to ten year period, which include amortization of the initial construction and purchase cost, as well as ongoing operating costs. In some cases, grant assistance or low interest loans can help fund part of the cost of acquisition and construction. Sources and commitments of funding, as well as assumptions about rent and service fees paid by tenants, and ongoing commitments by the incubator's host, must be ascertained to determine when and how the incubator can become self-sustaining within an acceptable period of time. Purchase of bonds can be one way a community's members can financially support the development of an incubator. Another item to be determined is whether the incubator is developed as a for-profit or nonprofit organization.
- F. Organize and manage the incubator: Incubator goals and objectives should be aligned with the more broad economic development goals of the community. Operating costs will include staffing, which should be designed to meet the everyday needs of tenants, as well as other necessary functions such as marketing. Provision should be made for a strong, knowledgeable, and motivated manager. The facility must be marketed aggressively through its location and exposure, an Internet presence with key linkages to other organizations, word of mouth through appropriate networks, tenant referrals, public speaking, mass media (especially free press releases), and brochures. The most effective marketing of incubators is typically time-intensive, and on a one-to-one basis, often involving unofficial network contacts.

Before a physical incubator is created, the County may wish to evolve its Entrepreneurial Development System into a "virtual incubator", with no allocated rental space but a coordinated system of services to assist entrepreneurs. Regional incubator systems with networks of individual residential incubation programs in local communities are becoming more popular in rural areas with limited resources and markets.

6. Institute a countywide Leadership Development Program

Local entrepreneurs are stakeholders in the community, and with no corporate or branch offices anywhere else, they tend to put down roots in their home community. This makes them excellent resources for local philanthropy, as well as prime candidates for voluntary civic leadership for years to come.

However, local entrepreneurs are not always born with innate principles of leadership. Many communities have developed County-level programs for leadership development. The typical

program operates by accepting an annual “class” of community members who are often selected (and whose tuition is paid for) by their employers who recognize their leadership potential.

The diverse class typically meets monthly during the school year, with sessions that often last an entire business day, devoted to such topics as local government, area industry, agriculture, the county’s justice system, obtaining resources, the social services network and social issues, community growth and development plans, and other items of interest. Usually, the class will divide into two or three teams that take on a public service project during the year.

Leadership programs such as these are often hosted by a Chamber of Commerce or the County Extension Office. In many successful cases, they may become their own entity, with a governing board of directors, a budget based on tuition fees and local philanthropic support, and a part-time paid or volunteer Executive Director. The costs associated with staging such a program are usually paid for by the tuition fees, which often amount to several hundred dollars, as well as local and foundation grants.

Class members often consist of local employers’ middle and upper management, school officials, hospital and health care administration, managers and executive directors of local organizations, nonprofit agencies, and institutions such as banks, and staff from County and municipal government. It is most effective to achieve diversity within the class among their employers and their community of residence and employment.

A Leadership program can yield a number of positive benefits, including:

- An established source for a set curriculum that can benefit employers and their employees who complete the program;
- An ever increasing cadre of individuals who have undertaken the program curriculum, gained leadership skills, and are better equipped to serve their communities in any civic capacity;
- The benefits and outcomes of each public service project undertaken; and
- An excellent opportunity for networking and information sharing among current class members, presenters at each session, and alumni.

Partners: Supportive public and private sector leadership to advocate for a program, economic development practitioners, a sponsoring organization, and employers who support employee participation.

Time Frame: Research, preliminary planning, and development of a program to be rolled out within three years.

Action Steps:

- A. Research other leadership programs in similar counties, perhaps attending a class or speaking with program officials, participants, and alumni. Contact networks and organizations with expertise in leadership development programs.
- B. Survey the level of interest in a Leadership program among the County's major employers, institutions, and public offices, to determine program feasibility.
- C. If survey results and reactions from officials are positive, obtain program curricula from several nearby programs and work to customize a program that best fits local needs and wants.
- D. Develop an organizational framework for the management of the program: host organization, staffing and physical space (including venues for classes, which should be varied each month), officers, curriculum, marketing of and publicity for the program, tuition, and budget.
- E. Publicize the program and conduct the first class.

7. Create a County Expo Center to host events that provide an outlet for local business exposure

This concept is described in more detail under another section of the plan, where specific suggested steps are outlined. It is included here also because the Expo Center is an important tool to allow exposure and networking opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Resources

National Business Incubator Association: www.nbia.org
Association for Enterprise Opportunity: www.aeoworks.org
Muskingum County Business Incubator: www.mcbi.info
SBDC network in Ohio: www.development.ohio.gov/entrepreneurship/sbdc.htm
Belmont Technical College: www.btc.edu
Ohio University – Eastern: www.ohio.edu/eastern/
Belmont-Harrison Career Center: www.belmont-harrison.k12.oh.us
OU Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs:
www.voinovichcenter.ohio.edu/entrepreneurship.aspx
Economic Gardening in Littleton, CO:
www.littletongov.org/bia/economicgardening
Kauffman Foundation/Entrepreneurship: www.kauffman.org
RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship: www.ruraleship.org/site/
East Central Ohio Tech Angel Fund: www.ecotaf.net
Adena Ventures: www.adenaventures.com

Goal 6: Targeted Areas for Economic Growth

Prepare land in targeted areas throughout Belmont County for development. Develop a diverse portfolio of properties to respond to a variety of needs and opportunities, business types and sizes, and desired site characteristics. Brownfield properties with significant development potential should be remediated, prepared, and marketed for re-use.

In order to compete for prospective new business, and to be able to accommodate growing and landlocked existing businesses, Belmont County needs to offer a variety of attractive, readily developable properties. The County has several locations where developers and contractors can build a customized structure to suit a specific business – including industrial parks in the eastern, western, and mid sections of the County. There is also opportunity for Greenfield development on property that has not been previously developed.

Property in riverfront communities has potential for redevelopment and reuse, with some of those properties most likely being designated as Brownfield sites, requiring assessment and cleanup. Although improving these sites may be costly, there are funding programs for such sites, and a focus on these areas helps encourage infill rather than sprawl, makes use of existing infrastructure, and helps remove slums and blight.

The first step in developing targeted growth areas is to establish a widely accessible inventory of those targeted sites. An inventory currently exists on the Port Authority website. Site information should be uniform among the listed properties and the information should include:

- Availability for lease or purchase and asking price (or contact information for the owner or Realtor who can discuss the price)
- Incentives available at the site, including tax exemptions, assistance in developing infrastructure if needed, and financing programs.
- Highway and roadway access, distance to an Interstate or U.S. highway, and rail spurs.
- Utility information, including electricity (power capabilities, presence of three phase, and load factor that can be handled), natural gas (pipe size, pressure), water (pipe size, pressure or gallon per minute flow available), and sanitary sewer. In all cases, the relative location and distance to distribution lines should be indicated or mapped.
- Name of the local jurisdiction in which the site is located (municipality or township), property tax millage, and other local taxes impacting a new business. Also, mention the local school district in which the site is located.

As noted in a Deloitte and Touche study for the State of Nebraska, although individual projects vary, rural regions' facilities are likely to house small to mid-sized operations who need "shovel-ready" and pre-permitted sites to develop. For these smaller companies, time spent on facility preparation is time away from core business. Criteria for rural industrial parks or sites include:

1. **Design standards**, covering construction materials, building design, setbacks, parking and approach roadways, fencing, storm water drainage and control, and even landscaping, to provide a degree of quality and uniformity, but without impeding the plans or inflating the development costs of prospects or occupants too adversely.
2. **Proximity to highways**: An industrial site is more effective when located adjacent to a state or U.S. highway, and within close range (ten miles or so) of a four-lane highway or State route that accommodates trucking. It is best for an industrial site to have two points of access to the highway, in case one is blocked. Belmont County is fortunate to have several locations that are within close proximity to I-70 or to S.R. 7 along the riverfront.
3. **The size, dimensions, and shape of available land parcels** are important considerations. For a business park, it is important to be able to subdivide into smaller parcels of varying size. Square or rectangular sites offer the greatest flexibility and satisfy most uses.
4. **Topography and soil conditions** are critical to the viability of an industrial park or site, which should be fairly level or gently sloping with adequate drainage and no ponding. Test boring information should be provided to determine the suitability of prospective sites' soil for building.
5. Another important factor is the **ownership of the site**. Owners must be accessible, willing to sell their property, and able to establish a fixed selling price that approximates the fair market value for their land and comparable properties. In Belmont County, to ease the development process, Port Authority or CIC ownership and site control (such as at the East Ohio Regional and Fox industrial parks, respectively) allows for easier control, transfer, or leasing of property, as well as fixed, competitive pricing of land. There should be sufficient acreage, either on one parcel or by assembling multiple parcels, to ensure that current and future expansion needs can be satisfied. To be expeditious, preference is for parcels held by one owner or not requiring assembly.
6. The availability of adequate **utilities** will determine any limitations to the type of the occupants of any industrial site or park. Coupled with the **availability** of these utilities is their **cost**, relative to costs at competing sites. Because of today's speed-to-market requirement by site seekers, infrastructure needs to be in place for sites to be immediately ready for building. These utilities include:
 - **Electric service**, preferably three phase with 13 KVA. The Ohio Department of Development's Job Ready Site grants program has required adequate delivery voltage and capacity for 6MW demand with reliable service characteristics for manufacturing, with no wattage specified for office or technical center facilities.
 - **Water** should be available to the industrial park parcels with adequate pressure and flow for the type of industry being pursued. As a rule of thumb for an industrial park, there should be 50-55 pounds per square inch (psi) pressure, with a twelve inch line. For

light manufacturing, office, and other operations, this requirement may be somewhat less. The water main and elevated storage associated with it should meet Highly Productive Risk insurance standards, and the water system should have sufficient excess capacity to serve the new industry. The Job Ready Site Program looks for water capacity of 0.5 MGD (sanitary sewer of 0.3 MGD) for manufacturing, 0.25 MGD for smart office (also 0.25 MGD sewer), and 0.5 MGD for technical center/research lab facilities (0.3 for sewer).

- **Sanitary sewerage** should be available, with at least an eight inch line serving the industrial site (possibly smaller for less intensive uses). The line should flow to either a centralized treatment facility or a package plant with sufficient excess treatment capacity to handle the projected needs of the fully operational industrial park or site.
 - The industrial park site plan should include engineered plans for **storm drainage**, including the use of natural drainage processes, catch basins, drainage channels, ditches, or pipes, and plans for retention or detention as necessary.
 - Ideally, **natural gas** service of intermediate or higher pressure should be available. The Job Ready Site program requires 300,000 CFH for gas for manufacturing, and just the basic availability of gas for smart office and technical center/lab.
 - Industrial sites should have the capacity to provide for adequate **telecommunications**. This requirement now includes broadband Internet capability, clear and unobstructed cell phone service, and the ability to host conference calls and video communications. Telecom considerations include the desired range, from basic long distance to broad data capabilities. The Job Ready Site program requires “reliable service via modern infrastructure. Looped fiber preferred.”
7. Any site benefits from completion of a **phase one environmental site assessment**, so that potential occupants have some assurance that there are no outstanding environmental issues. Other preliminaries, such as flood plain and wetlands determinations, should be completed as well. An archaeological study may be necessary, but minimally, the State Historic Preservation Office should be consulted to determine whether further review is necessary, especially if federal funding will be sought for infrastructure construction.
 8. Industrial sites should impose **minimal impacts on adjoining properties**. Industrial firms seek sites that do not bother neighbors; it is best for adjacent and neighboring sites to be similarly industrial, agricultural, or open space.
 9. **Regulatory restrictions:** Fewer restrictions allow management greater flexibility in preparing the site, constructing the facility, and managing the business. The regulatory ease of a smaller, rural local authority can often help speed such processes. The lack of the protective aspects of zoning can be overcome in Township and other unzoned locations by building and property maintenance standards that guarantee visual quality and protection

from adjoining land uses.

10. **Fewer construction challenges** to overcome (e.g. topography, tree clearing, etc.) increase speed to market and decrease construction costs. Topography should ideally be level to slightly rolling. Site preparation and clearance can overcome this issue.
11. **Amenities and Services:** Nearby amenities such as restaurants, shopping, fitness centers, daycare, and recreation facilities add to the competitive advantages of a business park or site. To the extent that it is feasible, developers can include amenities such as walking/fitness trails, such as the pond at Fox Commerce Park.

The Fantus study provided some cases of typical industrial needs. Here are some examples of the typical, generalized site needs and characteristics of some industries that could plausibly locate in Belmont County:

- **Food processing:** Typically employs 85, on a site of 10 to 40 acres that is square to rectangular in shape. Best within a light to medium manufacturing environment, with 13 kV distribution of electricity, and with moderate to high use of natural gas, water, and sewer. Rail access is preferred and T-1 lines are desirable. Image and visual appeal are of low importance.
- **Electronics manufacturing:** Typically employs 80, on a site of 10 to 20+ acres, square to rectangular in shape. Best within a light manufacturing environment, with 13 kV electricity. Limited need for natural gas, water, and sewer (sanitary use only). T-1 lines or fiber are required, with light industrial surrounding uses with no particulates, possibly away from sources of vibration. Rail access is not needed. Image and visual appeal are of moderate importance, and there are no compatibility issues.
- **Metal Products manufacturing:** Typically employs 65 on average, on a site of 10 to 40+ acres and a square to rectangular shaped site. Electricity should be 13 kV, with a possible substation located on site. Natural gas needs can be moderate to heavy, with limited need for water and sanitary sewer (sanitary use only). A T-1 line is a minimum requirement, with rail a possible need. Surrounding uses can be heavy to light industry. Image and visual appeal are of low to moderate importance.

Added to this list, the Ohio Department of Development published a “due diligence list” that outlined the requirements of the Job Ready Sites program. Some factors to consider include a site development plan and layout of sites and roads, strategic marketing plan (which can include targeted industries), description of neighboring land uses, consideration of environmental conditions and issues, listing of any zoning or deed restrictions, and description of infrastructure (road, water, sewer, energy, telecom and Internet) and its capacity.

Assembling Land

The ability of Port Authorities and Community Improvement Corporations to hold options on, acquire, develop, and sell real property is described under Goal 8 in this plan. It is recommended that these capabilities be considered in order to control key sites and their development.

Another, newer tool has been developed in Ohio for cases where there is a need to convert vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties into productive use. The duties of a **land bank** include assuming title to tax-delinquent properties, then securing, rehabilitating or demolishing, and transferring those properties to responsible developers or homeowners to ensure that the properties are put to productive use instead of remaining vacant or abandoned. This tool may prove useful in the future development of portions of riverfront communities such as Bellaire and Martins Ferry. Under Ohio's newest land banking legislation, land banks are established as separate legal entities with independent legal status.

A County land bank, called a County Land Reutilization Corporation (CLRC), can be empowered to foreclose on tax-delinquent properties. Once the county land bank has title and obtains appropriate municipal permits, it can either contact the properties for rehabilitation or demolition or sell them to responsible developers. If properties are rehabilitated, the county land bank will resell them individually. Alternatively, county land banks can bundle clusters of acquired properties and sell them to developers. The primary source of funding for CLRCs consists of penalties and interest on delinquent real property taxes. Land banking is addressed in the Ohio Revised Code in chapter 5722.

Brownfields

It is likely that some targeted properties in Belmont County's riverfront communities may be Brownfields, defined as *"real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."* There are resources available to assist with the cost of assessing and cleaning up Brownfields, turning them back into productive property with no environmental constraints or liabilities. These programs include Targeted Brownfield Assessments, which include a Phase I assessment. Either EPA staff or consultants perform the initial assessment. More on Brownfields and available resources is provided at the end of this section.

General Concept for Coordinated Development

It is most effective to work with the assets, liabilities, characteristics, and constraints of each portion of the County and the available parcels within each. Based on a general discussion with development officials, a general conceptual framework for development includes the following observations:

1. The greatest opportunity for assembling a suitable site for large manufacturing or distribution, with sufficiently level land, is within a few miles of I-70 in the western portion of the County. This land is not subject to current or future underground mining operations. These properties include the East Ohio Regional Industrial Park north of Barnesville.

The coal strata in Belmont County are submerged in the middle portion of the County, requiring underground mining for extraction, but approach the surface as one travels west. In the western portion of the County, coal was surface mined and the land has been reclaimed. Thus, this property in the western region is not constrained by the potential for future underground mining.

2. There is development potential for other uses at or near virtually every interchange along I-70 and I-470. One such use would be highway- or travel-oriented business, including convenience stores or truck stops. Another use would be logistics firms that require significant paved surfaces for trucking fleets, maintenance buildings, and administrative offices, as well as ready access to the Interstate.
3. The vacant land immediately adjacent to the Ohio Valley Mall and Plaza is a prime location for business uses that would complement the existing retail cluster in the area. Such uses could include medical and professional offices, service establishments, training facilities, and specialized housing facilities (such as elderly housing). Additional retail business could also be accommodated within this area, including out lots within close proximity of the mall or plaza.
4. The Fox Commerce Park is a suitable location for smaller manufacturing and service enterprises of similar size and scale to the park's existing tenants.
5. There are a number of vacant properties adjacent to or near the Ohio River in communities such as Bellaire and Martins Ferry. Some of these sites likely have environmental constraints that would qualify them as Brownfields. Any environmental issue needs to be mitigated and cleaned up before the property is marketed and sold to a new user. However, with proper handling, these sites provide opportunities for the trans-shipment and movement of goods from barges to rail or highway transport.

There is great potential for the development of such trans-shipment facilities on these sites, as well as nearby smaller manufacturing or assembly plants. There may be an eventual opportunity for the creation of a Foreign Trade Zone on such property, to provide incentives for the transport, trans-shipment, and assembly/manipulation of goods at this location. One goal for integrating economic sectors within the County is for input goods to be shipped via water to a riverfront site, loaded onto a truck, and transported to a manufacturing facility along the I-70 corridor – all within Belmont County.

6. The County's larger central business districts (including Barnesville, St. Clairsville, Martins Ferry, Bellaire, and Shadyside) still provide ample opportunity for the creation of new

businesses, including restaurants and offices, but also mixed uses that could include small manufacturing or assembly, and service businesses. These central business districts present opportunities for the creation and “incubation” of new businesses in existing storefront properties that may be able to provide relatively affordable rent.

Specific Target Areas

The County’s key target areas for development include the following sites:

A. Interstate 70/470 Corridor Sites

Exit 202 – SR 800 to Barnesville

This interchange is the western “gateway” to Belmont County and Route 800 provides access to the East Ohio Regional Industrial Park five miles to the south. There are some topographic challenges to development at the interchange, and utilities have not been developed within a considerable distance of this intersection. The location should be considered for more long-term development, and in the shorter term the focus can be placed upon the industrial park and other locations in the Barnesville area, such as the Tacoma properties, which can be more easily serviced with water and sewer. However, the Exit 202 area is being considered for the development of a new Veterans Administration regional facility, and the development of this facility or a similarly sized project would spur the development of necessary infrastructure (including water and sewer) to the area.

Exit 208 – State Route 149 and Morristown

This interchange presents more short-term potential for growth, as developable property has been identified north of I-70 and south of US 40 and Morristown. Additional acreage can also be considered for development within this area. Belmont County’s water system and sewer district serve the area, and there is an eight inch water line currently serving the site. Electricity is provided by AEP, and natural gas is available from Columbia Gas.

Exit 213 – State Route 331, County Facilities, Educational Center, and Fox Commerce Park

This is a busy interchange, with the location of Ohio University- East, Belmont Technical College, several County offices, the nearby County Fairgrounds and Carnes Center, and access to Fox Commerce Park to the south. A number of businesses could consider a location in this area, taking advantage of the proximity to the educational institutions and other features within close proximity. There is a six inch waterline in the area, as well as a County sewer line. This area could accommodate a variety of business types, although heavy manufacturing may face constraints from lot sizes and configurations, as well as potential underground mining.

Exit 215 – US 40 and St. Clairsville

There are site limitations at this interchange, although it could accommodate smaller highway-oriented business, as well as small machine shops or other uses. The area is served by an eight-inch water line.

Exit 216 – SR 9 and St. Clairsville

This location is not far from the Village of St. Clairsville to the north, and there is potential for light industry and other businesses in the vicinity of this interchange, along Route 9. The area is served by a six inch water line; no specific property is identified for marketing or development.

Exits 218 (Mall Road, 28A) and 219 (Banfield Road 28B)

This area is served by a ten-inch water line (at exit 219, there is a ten-inch line to the north, and a six inch line to the south), and properties in this area are in close proximity to the retail center that has developed around the Ohio Valley Mall and, more recently, the Ohio Valley Plaza to the north of the mall. There is a potential for more travel-oriented business in this area, as well as a variety of retail or professional, office, or research uses. To the west of the retail center is the proposed St. Clair Commons development, with plans for a variety of carefully integrated land uses that include health care, professional offices, and elderly housing.

Exit 220 – Connector to US Route 40

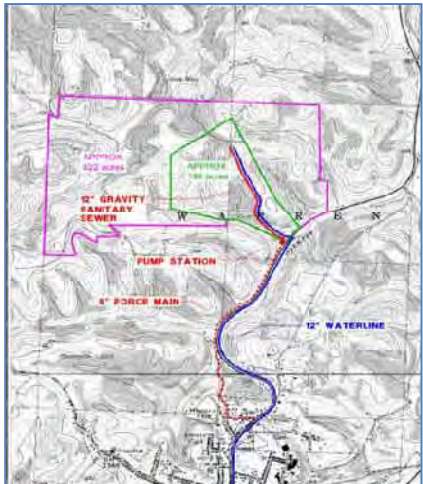
This exit has a ten inch water line to the north, and a six-inch line to the south. The land surrounding this interchange is most ideal for retail, professional, and office uses; as with most of the interchange properties mentioned, no specific properties have been selected for marketing or sales.

Exit on I-470 – Ohio 214 Interchange

This area is served by AEP and Columbia Gas, and a twelve-inch water line exists nearby. Minimally, there are 338 acres available at this interchange, with local incentives possible. Because of the size of the site, and its proximity to West Virginia, several potential uses have been identified, including a truck stop and travel-oriented businesses. A significant constraint to such development, however, is the division of traffic volume, just to the west, into I-470 and I-70, which run somewhat parallel as they enter West Virginia. Heavier I-70 traffic to the west is split into two traffic flows, each at roughly half the size of the I-70-alone traffic to the west.

B: Industrial Parks

Significant investments have been made in the County's industrial parks, and they should continue to be marketed and developed in an aggressive manner, through the County's website, State networks, and utility companies such as AEP.



East Ohio Regional Industrial Park, SR 800, Barnesville Vicinity This is a new industrial park, recently constructed with approximately two million dollars in state and federal funding, with sources including the Job-Ready Sites program, Industrial Site Improvement Fund and Ohio 629 fund, Appalachian Regional Commission through the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association, and County funds. In addition to an access road, water and sewer lines will be developed, with service from the nearby Village of Barnesville. The Port Authority owns 200 acres of this property, with a long-term option to secure more than 800 acres. Plans also call for the extension of natural gas and broadband Internet into the park.



Fox Commerce Park This park, developed with \$2.7 million in funding on 125 acres along County Road 80, is served by AEP, Columbia Gas of Ohio, and Belmont County Water (a twelve inch water line) and sewer (with a wastewater treatment

plant serving the area). It is also served by broadband Internet cable. The park is within one mile of I-70 and US 40, and is also close to the Ohio University-East and Belmont Tech campuses. The park had ten tenants in 2010, most of which can be characterized as small to medium businesses, with a mix including small manufacturing, services, and logistics (a Fed Ex facility is at the north end of the park). Ninety acres are available, with lot sizes ranging from two to thirty acres. Roadways are 32 feet wide throughout the park, which is owned by the CIC of Belmont County.

Bellaire Commerce Park

This site is located at 440 26th Street in Bellaire, within close proximity to State Route 7, and it includes 32 acres of available land. The property is served by municipal water and sewer from the East Ohio Regional Water Authority, as well as AEP and Columbia Gas for energy needs. Sites can be configured to accommodate prospective businesses.

C: Vacant properties

“Tacoma 1” – Barnesville

This property consists of 98.2 acres located on State Route 147 east of Barnesville. The property is owned by Belmont County, and it is located ten miles south of I-70. The site is served by Barnesville municipal water and sewer, which are in close proximity, and AEP

electricity and natural gas from Columbia Gas are available to the site. While the development of any business use is possible, there may be an interest in developing medical-related business on this property.

“Tacoma 2” – Barnesville

This site is also located on State Route 147, and consists of 66.7 acres currently owned by Belmont County. This site is also approximately ten miles from I-70, and all business uses can be considered for development on the site, with manufacturing favored.

First Street, Martins Ferry

This is a five-acre site in Martins Ferry, suitable for manufacturing, warehousing, and trans-shipment. Water and sewer service is provided by the City of Martins Ferry. The site has water and rail access, and incentives can be offered to help acquire and develop the site.

Route 7/Guernsey Street, Bellaire

This site includes 10.9 acres with access to the Ohio River and to a Wheeling and Lake Erie rail line. Municipal water and sewer are available from the village of Bellaire, and the location may be ideal for industrial, warehousing, and/or trans-shipment.

Partners

1. **Economic development practitioners** are at the forefront in helping determine the key areas to target for growth, and in working with property owners and developers to present those properties in the best light possible. Practitioners are often called upon to serve as “brokers” in working between property owners and developers, utility and service providers, prospects, Realtors, lending institutions, regulatory and permitting authorities, and entities providing incentives for development. Their biggest contribution is often putting all the important parties together to make land development occur.
2. **Local governments** are often called upon to support property development by passing legislation, offering or supporting incentives, and streamlining permitting and regulation.
3. **County-level elected officials** should also be involved in selected, strategic business visits, and in contributing to business retention and prospecting efforts.
4. **Property owners** in target areas are highly important partners. Their willingness to work toward economic development can be the key determinant in a project’s success.
5. A number of others become key partners during the development process: **lenders and financing authorities, Realtors, contractors.**
6. **State and federal funding programs and agencies** can become critical in filling gaps in the cost of property acquisition and development. State and regional development officials also take a prominent partnership role in marketing sites and buildings to prospects.
7. In the case of Brownfield assessment and redevelopment, working partners include **environmental consultants, property owners, participating local governments, an administrative entity for the grant and loan process, and selected contractors.**

Strategies

- 1. County development authorities should develop a single inventory of available buildings and sites. This inventory should conform to State and industry standards for content and should be linked to the State's prospect notification system. It must be housed in a location (including its Internet presence) where staff can - and will - readily update it as site characteristics change.**

Partners: Economic Development practitioners, property owners and developers, Realtors, and marketing and web site developers

Time Frame: Data collection and presentation should begin immediately and be constantly kept current.

Action Steps:

Development practitioners should review the sites and target areas listed previously in this section, and determine which ones can be effectively marketed now. Prerequisites for successful marketing include:

- (1) Established ownership of the site, with a fixed price for the property than can be publicized to all prospects;
- (2) Transportation access, utilities, and energy distribution available at the site or available in short term (with a funding or financing plan, completed engineering, necessary easements or other means of site control, and ability to construct needed infrastructure quickly);
- (3) Environmental obstacles (wetlands, flood plains, Brownfield designation, surface storm drainage, endangered species, etc.) not present at site or mitigation measures in place;
- (4) Compatibility with adjacent and nearby properties established; and
- (5) Land use controls or zoning and incentive package in place (as appropriate).

Once these prerequisites have been met or satisfactorily addressed, the following steps should be taken to affirmatively market the selected sites:

- A. The recognized Belmont County Economic Development web site should include printable "fact sheets" on each site being marketed. These fact sheets can build on the information already available at the Port Authority website. Information should be consistent and complete, and wherever possible, include the following:
 - Name of community (local jurisdiction), site address, longitude and latitude, zoning designation
 - A contact name, organization, phone number, and email. This contact person should be prepared to field more detailed questions about the site.

- Site features, including total acreage, minimum and maximum acreage available, whether site is part of an industrial park (identify management of industrial park), and sale price per acre.
- Utilities: Electric supplier, primary voltage, and secondary voltage; gas supplier, main size, and pressure; Water supplier, main size, and pressure; Sanitary sewer provider and main size; storm sewer and location; telecommunications provider and information on nature of service (cable, DSL, T-1, fiber, etc.)
- Transportation information, including distance to Interstate and to other major highways, nearest commercial airport and distance (miles, minutes); distance to water port and owner of port; rail on site or nearby (distance to siding), rail service provider, and existence of a functional siding.
- Taxing district, real property tax millage, existence of income tax.
- Local incentives available (RLF or other financing mechanism, enterprise zone, community reinvestment area, other incentives) and contact for information.



In addition to the above, it is extremely helpful to provide an aerial photo of the site or industrial park, with layers added as available to convey the spatial relationships of parcels available, existing roadways, utility lines, energy distribution lines, significant land forms and waterways, and other possible information. An example from Sandusky County is presented to the left; additional layers could be added to this example to depict water and sewer lines, electric power lines, and other features. This project could be undertaken with the oversight of the Belmont County GIS office.

- B. Provide all required data on the key target areas to the site selection system operated by the State of Ohio. Currently, this is the Ohio InSite website located at <http://www.ohiomeansbusiness.com/site-selection/ohio-insite.php>. It is up to County practitioners to ensure that the flow of information to the State is current and accurate.
- C. Publish the target area and business site fact sheets in printed form, and provide copies (with the URL for web-based versions) to other practitioners throughout the County and region, to the relevant local government officials, and to rail and utility providers who are involved in economic development.
- D. Obtain local site control of prime properties, where feasible. Property can be held or controlled through options or outright ownership by the Port Authority or CIC. The purchase of property clearly requires significant budget capacity, and a clear return on the investment must be recognized by all assuming such a risk.

- E. Maximize the marketability of the selected target growth sites. Incorporate such tools (mentioned elsewhere in this strategy) as developer-friendly regulations and permitting processes that encourage targeted and mixed land uses, ample available utilities to the site, transportation accessibility, a cooperative seller and competitive, consistent pricing, innovate incentives with clear returns to the buyer, and effective marketing, including marketing of choice properties at trade shows.

2. Focus on sites that are either visible from or located within a short travel time of the I-70 corridor.

One of Belmont County's greatest assets is the accessibility to a large amount of its land from I-70 and I-470, with eight interchanges, in addition to riverfront access to State Route 7. This access, coupled with I-70's connectivity with I-77 to the west and I-76 and I-68 to the northeast, plus the growing importance of the County's access points along the Ohio River for trans-shipment, assures the value of Belmont County sites for the warehousing, distribution, and logistics sectors, as well as manufacturing and value-added industry. Further, the existence of some 45,000 to 50,000 vehicles passing through the County or using I-70 daily presents a ready market for travel and transient oriented business, including service stops for trucking.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, prime property owners, developers, and Realtors, local governmental jurisdictions.

Time Frame: Marketing and development of prime property in target areas within the Interstate corridor will be a long-range initiative, driven by markets over time.

Action Steps:

- A. Overcome development obstacles, working with key property owners, and publicize these key target areas and their accessibility via I-70. This is vitally important, and a major effort must be made by the County's economic development practitioners to develop working relationships with key property owners to ensure an unhindered sale when a willing buyer is identified.
- B. Include specifications for infrastructure components needed to improve target intersection growth areas to "shovel ready" status, in all "white papers" presented to regional and State officials. Include such project references from the "white papers" in proposals for infrastructure funding. Data provided should include: target area maps with layers depicting existing and proposed infrastructure; description and quantification of needed improvements (with cost estimate); and projected impact of the investment (new businesses, acreage developed, new employment). Provide this information, in an attractive document, to State and Federal legislators, state and regional development officials, and funding agencies, as appropriate.

Important agencies with which to be in discussion include OMEGA and the Appalachian Regional Commission, Bel-O-Mar (for transportation projects), Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Development, USDA Rural Development, Ohio Water Development Authority, the Ohio Public Works Commission, and the emerging Appalachian Business Council.

3. Overcome environmental issues associated with previously occupied properties in the Ohio Valley area, and seek resources to overcome obstacles associated with “Brownfields”.

With the projected increase in the value and utilization of water-based freight traffic, the potential for use of the Ohio River as a transportation corridor will grow. There are opportunities to develop specific locations along the River, in Belmont County municipalities, upon which to locate loading/unloading facilities, trans-shipment points to rail and over-the-road haulers, warehouse and distribution facilities, and assembly and processing facilities. Some of these sites are described earlier in this section. However, the potential exists for some of these historically active riverfront properties to have been contaminated enough in the past to qualify as Brownfields. While these sites should be proactively marketed and coordinated with rail and highway designs and alignments, they should be given a clean bill of environmental health before they are actively marketed.

Brownfields, as defined previously, consist of *“...real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, controlled substances, petroleum or petroleum products, or is mine-scarred land.”* Despite the stigma associated with Brownfields and the river-based heavy industry of the past, there are great opportunities to build on recent successes in capitalizing on river traffic.

Partners: Local government officials (County, local jurisdiction); property owners, developers, and realtors; regulatory agencies (Ohio EPA, local health department); environmental consultant; economic development practitioners

Time Frame: Conversion of Brownfields to productive business enterprises and other land uses is a cumbersome process that may take several years. Conversion of these properties should be considered a relatively long range activity.

Action Steps:

- A. Identify the County’s targeted and available sites adjacent to or near the Ohio River, preferably within a City or Village with available utilities and highway truck access (as well as rail access). Data sheets and web pages should be developed on the County’s building and site inventory posted on the Internet. Economic development practitioners should take the lead on this project.

- B. Provide State and regional officials with information on these targeted sites, with a narrative on how Belmont County's potential trans-shipment sites can fit into an overall Ohio and regional strategy for movement of freight and supply chains. Especially important is a discussion of the potential for the smaller-acreage riverfront sites to interact with potential larger acreage sites to the west along the I-70 corridor and in the East Ohio and Fox Industrial Parks.
- C. Some positive steps can be taken to assess and overcome Brownfield status among the County's strategic riverfront properties:
- Contact environmental consultants to initiate an inventory and assessment of Brownfield sites that are targeted for redevelopment. The consultants should be aware of the Brownfield Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup (ARC) Grant program (104(k) grants). A consultant with expertise in this field can help develop an application for this competitive program. Several local governments become coalition partners; the assessment of Brownfields should provide information about site contamination, leverage state and private funds for site cleanup, and catalyze redevelopment. An initial Phase I assessment may cost as much as \$10,000.
 - Following the initial assessment, the consultant can help the County and its relevant communities determine their most effective path. A single community can apply for a community-wide assessment (up to \$200,000 for hazardous substances plus up to \$200,000 for petroleum), or assessment coalitions of three or more eligible entities can apply for up to \$700,000 in total. Cleanup grant funding is available competitively at up to \$200,000 per site, with a 20 percent cost share (which can include money, labor, material, or services)
 - The State of Ohio has resources, through the Clean Ohio Assistance Fund (COAF), for required Phase II assessments (providing up to \$300,000), and limited funding for demolition and cleanup activities (up to \$750,000) for Brownfields in Priority Investment Areas. COAF funds are available on a rolling basis while funds are available. Matching funds for revitalization of the property are then provided through the Clean Ohio Revitalization fund (CORF), with funds available in amounts up to \$3 million for acquisition (up to 33%), demolition, cleanup, and infrastructure (up to 10%). Eligible applicants for these funds include Cities, townships, counties, port authorities, and conservancy districts. More information can be found at www.clean.ohio.gov

More information is available on U.S. EPA Brownfield project funding at:
http://epa.gov/brownfields/grant_info/index.htm.

Information on the State of Ohio's Brownfield project funding through a below-market revolving loan fund is located at www.development.ohio.gov/ud/BCRLF.htm.

Goal 7: Marketing Belmont County

Goal: Market Belmont County as a location for economic development by using state-of-the-art means and media, maximizing the return on marketing investments. This goal incorporates best practices in Internet and social media marketing, as well as more traditional but tested means such as trade conferences.

Marketing is a necessary component in economic development. It can help to attract, retain, and expand businesses. It can also help improve a community's image as perceived by those both inside and outside the community. Successful marketing can help attract and retain its resident population and labor force. And marketing can help boost the image of the County – and its economic development program.

The rules and guidelines for marketing a community, county, or region have changed over time. The key is to be able to market the community's potential as the best place to operate a business and produce a product; the basics being marketed are the area's ability for the company to maximize revenues, keep expense items to a minimum, and succeed with the help of regional assets, not the least of which are labor and talent. A further key is for the County and its communities to stand out and be distinctive and not imitative of others.

As described in the "Introduction to Economic Development" published by the International Economic Development Council, marketing consists of positioning a product, by identifying and meeting customers' needs, developing a message to communicate a community's attributes, and persuading potential investors to "buy" the product.¹ Further, positioning involves distinguishing the product from its competition. Economic developers position their community in terms of:

- *product differentiation* (attributes or an image that is different from other communities, such as a particularly skilled workforce);
- *price competitiveness* (a comparatively low cost of doing business, such as lower labor or land costs, taxes, utility costs, etc.); and
- *a market focus* (targeting a specific industrial sector or geographic region for a particular audience).

Commercial and manufacturing businesses are the traditional targets, or audience, for economic development marketing. Targets have been expanded in recent years to include other types of business as well: retail, office, health care, research and development, and other services. Economic Developers sometimes also work to attract or retain specific residents, such as young families. Hospitals, for example, often work to attract a needed medical specialist.

¹ International Economic Development Council, "Introduction to Economic Development", 2006, Washington DC.

In its broadest sense, economic development is marketing to promote the community as a preferred location for economic activity and investment.

Part of the job involves *branding* a community (see sidebar, right). Many areas (and Belmont County is among them) will gain from re-branding their community to reflect new economic realities. For example, with the steel industry on the decline, nearby Pittsburgh has worked fairly successfully to develop a new high-tech image or brand.

The community should distinguish 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 outside). The promise implied in a brand must be relevant, authentic, competitive, clear, and consistent. To be consistent, all entities working on economic and community development must be delivering the same message – using the same brand!

It is important to understand what “product” is being marketed. It may be the whole County, or specific communities within the County, or even specific industrial sites or parks. To do this as accurately and effectively as possible, a good knowledge of the existing business base is needed, and a system for collecting and updating information (including business site data) is crucial.

The marketing strategy should publicize and focus on competitive advantages, assets, strengths, and opportunities. Some of these opportunities and strengths

BRANDING BELMONT COUNTY

In Jack Schultz’s book, “Boomtown”, one of his 7 ½ keys to success is “Build Your Brand”; develop a vehicle to distinguish your product from the crowd. Schultz points out that big cities have brands; why not small towns?

As a brand takes shape, it should be cultivated. And it should overcome any negative “branding” that may happen unintentionally by, for example, an unappealing “gateway” view upon entering the community. Communities should consider visitors’ first impressions. Any formal or informal branding should help people see the community’s strengths and capabilities; show off what you do best, and make sure you can deliver on promises.

Brands should be solidified, then deepened – Schultz recommends reinforcing your brand – and thus your core strengths – to outsiders, while it is ok to celebrate your diversity within. He also notes that brands do not appear overnight – “They develop slowly, often emerging from a clutter of ideas as the preeminent message. Similarly, brands should be built to last so they can become something on which people can rely – a precious commodity in a world where things change with great speed.” And finally, “Towns whose brands are grounded in service and quality will thrive.” Focus on what your community can do or provide for others, what qualities make it attractive, and what strengths can be used to fill a niche for others – then you can solidify your brand.

Branding should reflect what is, while also developing what you want to be. It should attract outside investors and visitors, while also motivating residents. Brands will often fade if they are not supported by a tangible benefit. If an area’s brand is rooted in its history, for example, that history must be brought alive in an experiential way.

In short, a brand is

- What you want your town to stand for.
- What people say when you are not around.
- A promise of what is reasonable to expect if you invest in the community.

were identified in the introductory chapter. However, the economic development practitioner should be aware of the local community assets that create a competitive advantage that can be touted and marketed. This leads to a more informed identification of which industries are the best prospects for a community with the assets listed – matching a community’s unique set of capabilities with industries that seek that mix.

A community should target companies and business sectors whose needs coincide with its assets and development goals, and whose growth potential will help strengthen and diversify the economy. Sometimes product or industry clusters can be identified in a community or region; they may be clustered vertically (buyers linked to suppliers), or horizontally (businesses that compete in similar markets or that share resources). Targeting clusters may be beneficial when the economic developer can identify core industries in the community or region with relatively high growth potential, or can identify and target firms that support that industry.

There are a number of site selection factors that are typically analyzed by businesses, and the degree of importance of any one factor will differ from industry to industry. Here is a list of the most important factors, with notes on their applicability or status in Belmont County. Any factor that can be viewed as a substantial competitive advantage should become part of a marketing and awareness initiative, and part of Belmont County’s “story”.

- **Access to customers, suppliers, and transportation system:** a big plus for Belmont County, based on access to I-70, proximity to I-77, and distance to numerous metro markets within an easy day’s drive. Related factors are location of the prospect’s existing facilities, and location of competitors.
- **Access to business and professional services:** Close proximity to services in the Wheeling metro area and, within reasonable distance, Pittsburgh and Columbus.
- **Suitable affordable and “ready” land and facilities:** Available properties with set sale prices; local development practitioners need to specify on-line descriptions of prime sites and facilities. Prime properties and their sales information need to be “nailed down”. Land costs are an important factor.
- **Environmental condition of land:** This will vary, from prime land free of any environmental issue, to riverfront Brownfields and land with mineral rights (in Belmont County, primarily long wall mining in the central-west areas) issues.
- **Business climate:** Marketing efforts should emphasize the positive aspects of the climate in the area, which appears to be a comparative plus.
- **Availability and cost of financial capital:** Publicize known sources of financing, including venture capitalists.

- **Telecommunications capability:** Bandwidth and accessibility appear to be sufficient for most business needs within Belmont County communities, and improvements may be coming with the ConnectOhio program and private investments.
- **Air travel accessibility:** Relative proximity of commercial airports in Pittsburgh and Columbus.
- **Labor force quality and productivity, cost, availability, organized labor:** Statistics indicate some 3,000 unemployed, including displaced industrial workers with positive work ethic and skills. Cost expectations may be *perceived* as high given the area's labor history. Related to labor force, proximity of local universities and technical schools is also a plus; Belmont County is in a favorable position with campuses for OU-E and Belmont Tech.
- **Quality of life:** Marketing information should highlight "quality of life" features such as parks, State land, attractions, cultural events, historic architecture, museums, proximity to regional attractions, benefits of Riverfront, cost of living.
- **Regulations:** While State regulations may not be altered by local officials, the County should examine the ease of working with local governments to obtain building permits, plan approvals, and other requirements.
- **Governmental attitudes toward business:** Pro-business attitude should be cultivated throughout the County.
- **Taxes:** Tax burden comparisons can be made with competing communities.
- **Utility and Energy capabilities and rates:** Comparisons can be made with other rates in the region.

These are the primary business location factors that can eliminate 75 percent or more of the contending locations for a prospective business. Belmont County's general marketing efforts should focus on these, and if the County makes the cut, the more specific one-on-one effort can then cover such items as local health care, community appearance, housing stock, safety, and specifics of the local education system.

A marketing program should also work toward developing and promoting a positive image of the County and its communities, and bring the facts and perceptions about the County into congruence. Some of the positive remarks received about the image of Belmont County, which should be supported and emphasized, are listed on the next page.

Positives

Good quality of life: good park systems, etc.
Relatively low cost of living
Desirable place to live
Short commutes, less hectic pace
Hard working people – work ethic, pride in work, loyalty
Close knit, friendly people and neighborhoods; ethnic diversity
A county that takes care of its own; voluntarism
Safety
Connections through sports and a sports heritage
Authentic, not a “cookie cutter” community
Less competition between communities than before; working together more; cooperation
Backbone “legacy” industries: energy, steel, coal, glass

Some of the negatives that need to be overcome during the course of the marketing and community education efforts include: remarks that have been made on an inferiority complex among residents, seeing the glass as half empty; need for retooling/reinvention; resistance to change; lack of job opportunities compared to Belmont County’s history; and an expectation of high wages

Marketing and Promotion Tools

The two elements of promotion within a marketing strategy are *the development of a message*, then *determining how to deliver that message*. Promotion results in awareness and then a target audience’s response, which can be an inquiry for more information, a visit, or, best of all, locating within the community.

Marketing messages may change depending upon the target audience; direct and concise messages work best. Many marketers develop tag lines and logos. Marketing

MARKETING POINTERS

- The search process is a series of tests to eliminate locations. Strive to stand out from the competition: “Stand out or be eliminated.”
- Early on, the “internal customer” must be educated on and enthusiastic about the economic development and marketing process. Internal customers are members of the E.D. team, the business community, the general population, and local and state politicians.
- Consider marketing efforts in collaboration with neighboring counties. It can improve chances, it indicates a spirit of cooperation, and it pools resources.
- If possible, market specific existing sites, locations, and buildings that are ready.
- Choose target markets and sectors, preferably those that come from a similar county, and attend their trade shows.
- Create an “external sales force” with an interest in the county – utility company executive, corporate execs in the area, tourism council official, hospital or school officials. Provide sales training to them.
- If you make a final cut, pay increased attention to details and clients’ specific concerns – systematically eliminate those concerns. Make sure to demonstrate a “can do” attitude.
- Market aggressively. Ideas on how an education plan can get leads: advertise locally and nationally (but within budget), targeted direct mail, trade shows, speeches to build local support and understanding, public relations campaigns (press releases, op ed), enlist help from allies (railroad, utility companies, State officials, colleges/Universities), business visits and personal sales calls, referrals from local citizens who have connections/relationships with prospective business officials, and even cold calling when you have a chance.

materials should reflect coherence and consistency (often aided by those logos or tag lines), relevance to the target audience, reliability and credibility, and differentiation, creativity, and appeal that sets them apart from the competition.

Marketing methods have to reach intended audiences as effectively as possible, given limited resources and budgets. The comprehensive strategy may include the web site, advertising in selected media, publicity campaigns, promotional materials (such as brochures), and personal selling. Advertising has traditionally been conducted by purchasing space in print media (magazines, newspapers), and electronic media (television, radio). All too often, such a broad strategy reaches general populations but not specific target audiences.

Publicity is most important for the internal audience – residents and businesses already in Belmont County. Press releases announcing local projects and successes help build the local credibility of the economic development effort, and increase awareness of available assistance, but may not reach many outside prospects.

Promotional materials have traditionally included brochures and videos. They are often used as direct mail pieces, sent to those inquiring about information, or left with visitors at trade shows and other events. Attendance at selected trade shows provides an opportunity for personal, one-to-one selling to businesses limited to those sectors that are identified as good matches for the community. Contacts at such events can lead to follow-up visits and conversations. There are occasional opportunities to attend a trade show as part of a regional contingent; utility companies have underwritten invited participants' costs in the past.

A Word on Web Sites

Community web sites have emerged as the most effective marketing tool in many respects. A community web site maintained by an economic development authority has become the primary source of information for prospects and their location consultants, and without such a web presence, with the sought-after information, a community is not likely to even be in the running in the site selection process. Printed material still has a function, but should reference the web address and carry the same logo or "brand" as the web site.

Recommendations for the Belmont County web site include these:

- The site should be easily navigable, with a minimum of "clicks" needed to get where the site selector or prospect wants to go.
- It is essential that the site be kept current, with revisions monthly or so.
- It is possible to track the number of hits to the site, as well as the location from which they came. This can be good marketing information and help you adjust your marketing plan accordingly.

- It is useful to use the Internet to learn from your competitors' web sites as well. You can access their web sites and see how you compare to their counties and communities.
- Make sure your links work and lead where you intend them to.
- Web design and development can sometimes be accomplished at low cost through a local technical college or a local web company that is willing to undertake your project for a reduced price.
- Work with web design professionals for "search engine optimization", to make sure your web site appears prominently when key phrases are entered in search engines such as Google and Bing.
- What do economic development websites commonly include? Here are some items typically found on communities' development websites; these items are expected by prospects and site selectors, and sites that lack this information can lead to elimination of a community from consideration.
 - Information on the organization: mission, contact info, staff, officers, board members
 - Inventory of sites and buildings, with maps, aerial and elevation photos, specifications, info on utilities, road access, taxes, price per acre, building dimensions, ceiling height.
 - Description of incentives offered in the community
 - Profile of the county/community: demographics, transportation, utility providers, top employers, a map of the County.
 - Workforce and labor market data: wage information, education
 - Links to partnering entities: colleges and universities, hospitals, cities and villages, key county offices (Engineer, Auditor, DJFS), regional organizations
 - Testimonials from business leaders in the community
 - Brief descriptions of recent projects
 - If the entity produces an annual report, it could be made available as a pdf. Likewise, if newsletters are produced, they could be made available.

Marketing strategies exist to create awareness and interest in the County and its communities – to hook the fish; a seamless follow-through strategy, providing a higher and more specific level of information and contact, backed up with site and building specifics, workforce data, details on incentive programs and application procedures, and housing and quality of life amenities, is required in order to reel that fish in!

Partners

Direct involvement in marketing and branding activities would be undertaken by the following:

1. Economic Development Practitioners, who communicate directly with prospective businesses and are the “first line” when prospects are visiting or inquiring.
2. Chambers of Commerce and other organizations working and coming into frequent contact with outside visitors, whether families, professionals, or business representatives.
3. The Belmont County Tourism Council, which has a large role in marketing the County’s attractions to tourists, entities seeking venues for meetings and events, and other visitors.
4. Active members serving on the County’s economic and community development entities’ boards and commissions.
5. Major institutions and associations within the County: schools and hospitals, event venues, employers’ associations.
6. Local media outlets: print, broadcast, cable, broadband.

...and ultimately, every resident of the community is involved in marketing their community, influencing and making impressions on those who come into contact with them

Strategies

1. **Build a consistent message and brand for Belmont County that can be applied throughout the County and its communities.**

As noted in the previous discussion, branding is helpful in projecting a consistent, desirable, clear and concise image of the County. A winning branding strategy creates reasons in the hearts and minds of prospects to select your community over the competition, converting awareness and interest into desire and action. As noted above, branding only succeeds when the “promise” of the brand is kept – and when it is, it creates loyalty that will retain businesses. Branding is a continuous process, and it involves virtually everyone in Belmont County.

Partners: Entities creating the initial brand (economic development practitioners, community leadership, involved organizations and institutions)

Time Frame: Development of a “universal” brand for the County may require two to three years.

Action Steps:

- A. Determine how to undertake a branding effort – whether led by a professional consultant or organized locally, and whether facilitated by a specific “host” organization. Assistance in facilitating this process may be available at no or low cost from Ohio University’s Voinovich Center or from Ohio State University Extension. Support services for the process may be also available by employing an intern from one of these Universities’ marketing or business departments.

- B. Determine the degree of public involvement through brand concept contests, focus groups, or other means of creative or evaluative input. Discussion and conversation should be held in a number of locations around the county, with a variety of groups, with the goal being convergence on a single brand.
- C. Brainstorm critical elements and characteristics of the “brand”, based on input and consensus.
- D. Develop desired elements of the brand, including logo or tag line.
- E. Roll out the brand among participating organizations, entities, offices, and businesses. Employ the brand on brochures, letterhead, web sites, and signage.

2. Develop a state-of-the-art web presence to market Belmont County.

Site selectors hired by businesses looking for new locations rely more than ever on information they can gather over the Internet. Prospective sites often make the “first cut” through their web presence with good, reliable information on the Internet. To compete effectively, it is vital for Belmont County to maintain an up-to-date, flexible, informative web site that is user-friendly. The web site should be a one-stop source of information on the County’s strengths, resources, opportunities, and character. The site should be, in “Boomtown” author Jack Schultz’s words, “visually pleasing, logically organized and clear in its message. Be sure to accentuate the positive and subtly reinforce the idea of your brand...Don’t be afraid to let a little of the town’s personality show through.”

Partners: Economic development practitioners, dedicated web host and staff, Internet consultant, linking entities, State of Ohio.

Time Frame: Current, accurate web site should be in place as soon as possible, but within one year. Maintenance and updating is a constant, ongoing process.

Action Steps:

- A. Select a host agency for the primary site for Belmont County economic development information. Currently web sites are sponsored by the Port Authority and the CIC/Development Office. While each office may need a web site pertaining to their services, activities, and contact information, there needs to be an unambiguous, single site – a first point of contact - for outside site selectors to access data on Belmont County. This site should link to all pertinent sites in the county, including all development entities, Chambers, communities and County offices, educational institutions, workforce offices, and data sources. The Port Authority has a good start on developing a building and site inventory on their web site.

- B. Hire a professional or trained web site developer/designer to set up the site. This professional should include linkages, present key information with a minimum of “clicks” from page to page, and set up the site for priority access from search engines based on most-used key terms.
- C. Make provision and commit to keeping the site and its information (including building and site data) current. It may even help the prospect if there is indication that the information is “current as of _____” (updated frequently).
- D. Back up the portion of the website that features community strengths and assets with *data* and *testimonials*. Include what the web user is most likely seeking in information. Include basics such as: labor market information, site and building specs, available incentives, utility and infrastructure capability, available workforce training programs, and quality of life aspects (which can be demonstrated with photos or videos). Introductory information and links should be provided concerning regional associations of which the County is a member, and to other County organizations and resources such as the Tourism Board and the GIS office.
- E. Place more detailed information of interest to families and individuals on a separate “community profile” page within the web site. This information may include housing data, resources for job searching, school information and links, hospitals and healthcare, daycare, government services, utilities, local businesses, recreation, and parks, places of religious worship, and community events, festivals, and news. (Some communities maintain a calendar of events. However, the calendar will be a detriment if it is not constantly kept current!)
- F. Include contact information, with an address, phone number, and email address. Be prepared to respond quickly to contacts; keep track of frequently asked questions, and update the web site to answer such questions before they are asked.
- G. Create social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) when proper attention can be paid to them, allowing for interaction, but be warned that maintaining, monitoring, and contributing constructively in the world of social media will take time, and be prepared for virtually any comment, from praise to condemnation, to appear in response!

3. Address the tourism and convention market as an active competitor.

Note: tourism is addressed more completely in the section on “quality of life”. However, its role in marketing Belmont County is a large one, and it is somewhat inseparable from economic development and marketing to prospects.

4. Host trade shows and conferences in Belmont County.

Partners: economic development practitioners, Tourism Council, developers, private business owners, public and private managers of venues (i.e. Carnes Center)

Time Frame: Develop plan for attraction through Tourism Council and others within two years; new conference/expo center within ten years.

Action Steps:

- A. Identify and inventory all venues within the County that are suitable for trade shows, conferences, and other events that would draw outside participants to Belmont County. Include data on each venue, including capacity, parking capacity, audiovisual or wireless capabilities, accessibility, accommodations for meals or food, and accommodations for vendors.
- B. Coordinate and network between owner/operators of venues and the Tourism Board.
- C. Research organizations, trade groups, and associations that book small regional conferences and events that could be matched with local venues. What shows are held within a 50 mile radius, or a 100-mile radius?
- D. Promote the Carnes Center as a venue when its size and characteristics are a good match for a proposed activity. (Note: comments have been made that a negative aspect of the Carnes Center is its acoustics challenges. To market this venue competitively, officials should financially support the design and then implementation of measures to improve acoustics to better accommodate events. Improvements may take the form of wall treatments, draperies, acoustic tiling, or other means.
- E. (Long range): Promote the construction and development of a new conference and expo center within Belmont County, and close to I-70, for ease of access within the region of which Belmont County is a part. This is a major project that will require several years to formulate a workable business plan that projects sufficient revenues to support construction and ongoing operation. With regard to revenues, a fundraising strategy would need to be employed.

5. Practice “internal marketing” to the County’s residents and businesses.

Partners: Economic development practitioners and public officials

Time Frame: Ongoing activities, beginning immediately

Action Steps:

- A. Maintain the practice of distributing press releases covering positive events and local progress in economic development. Local economic development offices should cultivate a positive working relationship with the local media, without compromising any project information that needs to remain withheld until businesses are prepared to make any announcements.
- B. Maintain a consistent policy of informing the local and regional press of scheduled “special events” such as ribbon cuttings or ground breakings.
- C. Generate local press releases for the local press, providing coverage of local events in which economic development groups played a role.
- D. Continue the practice of presentations by economic development and business groups and local officials to constituencies, development organizations, civic groups, and others, to convey the importance and impact of economic development activities.
- E. Use media, including the Internet, to market the positive aspects of Belmont County to those residing within and outside the County.

6. Do not overlook the power of personal connections; promote one-to-one marketing.

Partners: Development practitioners and Board members, public officials, volunteer R&E program participants who visit local businesses

Time Frame: Ongoing activity continuing from past and current efforts.

Action Steps:

- A. Continue to conduct business R&E visits by development practitioners and local officials to business officials.
- B. Use the opportunity provided to economic development practitioners through selected trade missions and other travel to meet with prospects on an individual basis.
- C. Maintain a file of associates, friends, and cohorts with which local leaders note that they are in regular contact, and house the file in a county economic development office. Important people may include corporate managers, political officials, developers, venture capitalists, and successful professionals and business leaders who left Belmont County. Any one of these individuals may prove to be a valuable resource at some time in the future.

7. Actively support and participate in successful regional economic development and tourism marketing and attraction efforts.

Partners: Economic development practitioners and Board members, public officials (County Commissioners, Mayors and development officials)

Time Frame: Ongoing activities beginning immediately, with increased regional links and networks over time

Action Steps:

- A. Work with Ohio's tourism division to access grants and other resources pertinent to tourism marketing, and to be in the statewide network of tourism and convention organizations in Ohio.
- B. Maintain contact with regional economic development initiatives involving southeastern and eastern Ohio, including the Eastern Ohio Development Alliance, and work to boost the competitiveness of the region through strengthened regional organizations.
- C. Seek and maintain information, contacts, and working relationships with organizations that provide regional economic development tools such as multi-county revolving loan funds and other sources of capital to business.
- D. Participate in regional tourism marketing ventures that encompass several counties.

8. Develop a library of "testimonials" from local business leaders and influential others.

Partners: Development practitioners, development organization board members

Time Frame: Ongoing activities beginning immediately

Action Steps:

- A. Collect testimonials constantly over time as projects and events receive praise.
- B. Use the best quotations in publicity literature and elsewhere.

Goal 8: Organizing for Economic Development

Develop a unified, single point of contact, identity, and programming for Belmont County's economic development initiative.

County economic development organizations (or EDOs) take many forms in Ohio. Under the “public” model, an office of County government may be formed and staffed with a Director of Development, who is on the County payroll. The office is often funded from a variety of sources, including grant administration fees in many cases. This type of office often includes a component charged with Community Development Block Grant administration, revolving loan fund administration, and in some cases, housing grant (such as Ohio's CHIP program) or Brownfield Program administration and implementation.

It is more typical for a County EDO to exist at arm's length or separate from County government, and to be governed by a Board with public and private sector membership. Many such offices are membership organizations, with dues-paying members and a fundraising drive to solicit memberships and financial contributions. This is the case for the CIC and the Port Authority in Belmont County.

While many of these organizations are typically incorporated as 501(c)(3) or (c)(6) nonprofits, quite a few also become certified as Community Improvement Corporations or, more infrequently, Port Authorities. Existing in these forms allows them to undertake functions and roles that would not be possible otherwise. One common example is being able to acquire, hold, develop, and sell to a targeted user, property that, under public ownership, would have to undergo a competitive bidding process to determine the buyer.

In Belmont County, there are two entities with public-private boards: the County Development Department, which is a CIC, and the Port Authority, which is a public entity. A number of Belmont County entities, including the CIC and Port Authority, are charged with promoting and facilitating one or more aspects of economic and business development. While it is natural to have multiple entities handling different facets of economic development in the same county, it is important to maintain a seamless, complementary, coordinated, and efficient delivery of services and responses to existing and prospective businesses, entrepreneurs, and others, within a framework of cooperation and teamwork.

- The County **Department of Development** Office in St. Clairsville, with a full-time executive Director, is also organized as a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC). It collaborates with the regional Small Business Development Center and, more recently, with the Muskingum County Business Incubator, to bring services and technical assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs in the County. The Department of Development also administers the County's business revolving loan fund, and has been primarily responsible for the development of the Fox Commerce Park on the west side of St. Clairsville. The CIC is

governed by an 18-member, public and private sector board, and has a web site at www.aplacetogrowyourbusiness.com.

- Also in St. Clairsville is the **Belmont County Port Authority**, with a full-time Executive Director. The Port Authority, in existence since 2006, has most recently assisted the development of the new MPR transloading facility in Bellaire, helping it obtain state and federal funding for that project. Another significant project in which the Port Authority played a large role is the development of the Barnesville area's new industrial park on S.R. 800 south of I-70, aided by over \$1 million in outside funding, including state Job-Ready Site grant funds. While funded in part by Belmont County, both the Development Department/CIC and the Port Authority are set up as independent agencies operating under the auspices of their independent boards. The Port Authority website is www.bcoportauthority.com
- In the past year, the County Commissioners created a **County Planning Commission** with a Board that has met throughout 2010 and into 2011 to guide the development of this Economic Development Strategy. Additional duties of the Planning Commission are being ascertained, in line with Ohio Revised Code section 713.22. At present the Planning Commission is not staffed.
- Tourism is addressed through a **Belmont County Tourism Board**, with a full-time Director, an office in the Ohio Valley Mall, and a governing board. This entity promotes the County's numerous attractions, restaurants, and hotels and lodging facilities, and helps coordinate tours and events in the County. It is primarily funded through a "bed tax" on hotels and lodging facilities. www.belmontcountytourism.org
- In addition to these county-wide entities, six communities in Belmont County have **Chambers of Commerce** that perform various functions for the business community and coordinate community events to help and promote their business constituency. Chambers often support local retail and commercial business with special events, and provide services for member businesses, such as pooled health insurance or purchasing pools.
- Other communities such as Barnesville and Martins Ferry have designated **economic development directors** working within the municipal government. The County's two post-secondary educational institutions, **Ohio University – East** and **Belmont Technical College**, also have economic development functions in the area of workforce training and development.
- Belmont County was served in past years by a **Governor's representative** housed in an office in Cambridge, serving as an advocate for projects unfolding within the region, and helping obtain State resources to support the development of new businesses, needed infrastructure, workforce programming, and other necessary components to make a business project become successful.

- Cambridge is the home of the regional office for **OMEGA (Ohio Mid-Eastern Government Association)**, which assumes some economic development functions, including oversight of Economic Development Administration (EDA) funded projects and the administration of a regional business revolving loan fund. OMEGA serves Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties. www.omegadistrict.org

The OMEGA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contains the following goals:

- OMEGA District residents will have the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the world economy in the 21st century.
 - OMEGA District communities will have the physical infrastructure necessary for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.
 - The people and organizations of the OMEGA District will have the vision and capacity to mobilize and work together for sustained economic progress and improvement of their communities.
 - OMEGA District residents will have access to financial and technical resources to help build dynamic and self-sustaining local economies.
 - OMEGA District manufacturers will have access to quality technical export assistance.
 - The people and organizations of the OMEGA District will have access to free technical assistance for the preparation of grants.
- In West Virginia, the **Bel-O-Mar Council of Governments** oversees transportation planning and technical, grant writing, and grants administration assistance along with planning assistance covering community and economic development and housing for Belmont County and its communities, as well as in Ohio and Marshall Counties in West Virginia. Federal and State transportation funding is commonly prioritized and managed through Bel-O-Mar, the designated three-county Metropolitan Planning Organization. www.belomar.org
 - There is a regional, multi-county alliance of economic development practitioners and local officials in East-Central Ohio, of which Belmont County is a member. This entity has been relatively inactive, with a primary function of hosting regional meetings and seminars. This is known as the **East Ohio Development Alliance (EODA)**, and Belmont County officials participate as members. www.eoda.org

It is relatively common for more than one entity to undertake economic development functions within one county. However, coordination and a clear protocol for working with prospects are essential throughout the County, to the degree that the outside prospect, site selector, or existing business client experiences seamless service with a clear understanding of the distinct functions of each entity. Similarly, a business client should experience a simple referral to the entity charged with addressing its specific issue or opportunity. It is recommended that efforts

be made to establish a clear “division of labor” between the economic development offices in the County. Change in this respect may take time to finalize, but for the sake of efficiency, effectiveness, and clarity, it is recommended that this definition of responsibilities should be a top-priority goal.

With globalization of the economy, an increasing role for technology, the need for alternative sources of capital for business expansion and location projects, and the need for specialization within each business sector, economic development organizations are being called upon to deliver assistance in an increasingly diverse arena, which creates a need for specialists and greater networking between partnering agencies. There is a trend in economic development toward increased networking, but also toward reaching across boundaries, since businesses tend to look at regions and not discrete jurisdictions such as a single county, city, or village. Local development practitioners must be able to work within the context of their region.

To the extent that it is feasible, measuring success and outcomes has become another trend in economic development. According to the IEDC “Introduction to Economic Development”:

“Another trend is the increase in the use of benchmarking in EDO’s. EDOs need to be able to evaluate their performance. Public and private level funding sources expect to see some measure of positive performance and return on their investment. EDOs need to evaluate their performance to justify their spending. Successful economic development programs encourage participation by the community and its leaders.

“More EDOs are developing their own unique metrics of benchmarks for measuring outcomes and objectives, and thus reporting the economic value created within the community in all aspects of the local economy due to their efforts. This is more than just the number of jobs and property tax base values, but more sophisticated outcomes such as construction value, indirect employment and wage impact, sales tax impact, increased discretionary spending by the residents and new employees, and governmental receipts related to projects. More and more, EDOs are taking an ‘if not but for our activity this would not have occurred’ approach to defending their mission.”¹

The following is a list of broad functions that are carried out by economic development organizations. It is recommended that each EDO review this list and determine where its strengths and core competencies lie. This may help lead to a more clear assignment of duties between them.

- Infrastructure improvements and funding
- Ownership of land and control of purchases and sales / eminent domain
- Creation of special improvement districts
- Tax increment financing and enterprise zone agreements
- Business incentives
- Business marketing, retention, and expansion
- Entrepreneurial business assistance
- Networking opportunities for businesses

¹ IEDC, “Introduction to Economic Development”, 2006, Washington, DC, p. 146.

- Entrepreneurial training, technical assistance, coaching
- Business advocacy
- Workforce and job training
- Downtown revitalization – public streetscape and private property (façade) improvements
- Packaging business financing: revolving loan funds, state, federal, regional resources, private lender products
- Marketing available parks, sites, and buildings
- County point of contact for site selector data base
- Coordinating and maintaining the county’s website
- Liaison between client businesses and state and federal offices
- Grant application and administration services
- Information and referral, provision of data on County demographics, market data, and other information
- Developing “white papers” and other documents to advocate for needed projects and programs
- Marketing functions: trade shows, trade missions, mailings, prospect visits
- Hosting a formal “retention and expansion” visitation program

The Belmont County Community Improvement Corporation, Port Authority, and Planning Commission are created under specific sections of the Ohio Revised Code. To understand their capabilities, it is helpful to understand the powers, duties, and tools that can be provided by each under the ORC. The following is a brief summary of each entity.

Community Improvement Corporation

Community Improvement Corporations are permitted under Chapter 1724 of the Ohio Revised Code. Paraphrasing the Ohio Revised Code, their powers include:

1. To borrow money for any of its purposes.
2. To serve as either an economic development corporation, “advancing, encouraging, and promoting the industrial, economic, commercial, and civic development of a community or area (as in Belmont County) or a county land reutilization corporation, which facilitates the reclamation, rehabilitation and reutilization of vacant, abandoned, tax-foreclosed, or other real property within the county, managing tax-foreclosed property, assisting in assembling, clearing, and clearing title of property, and promoting economic and housing development in the county or region.
3. To make loans and to establish and regulate the loan terms and conditions when there has been a bank turn-down.
4. To purchase, hold, lease, and transfer or otherwise dispose of real and personal property, and to enter into contracts with third parties (including the federal, state, or local government). The CIC may sell property it has held on behalf of a city, county, or township. Property can be sold below fair market value, provided the CIC has title to the property and is not selling as an agent for the political subdivision.
5. To acquire the assets of any persons, firms, partnerships, corporations, and to assume, or pay their obligations, debts, and liabilities; to acquire and manage real estate for the purpose of constructing industrial plants, other business establishments, or housing, or causing it to occur.
6. To acquire, sell, assign, transfer, mortgage, or otherwise dispose of stock, shares, other securities of any person or business and to exercise rights of ownership.
7. To serve as agent for grant applications and for the administration of grants.

8. To engage in code enforcement and nuisance abatement.
9. To charge fees or exchange in-kind goods or services for services rendered to political subdivisions and other persons or entities.

A CIC may borrow money, and may issue unvoted revenue bonds secured by a mortgage or lease of the property and by a pledge of the revenues of the CIC. It may also have access to the proceeds of a tax-exempt industrial development bond of \$10 million or less, issued by the City or County, if for a manufacturing facility. The CIC is not subject to competitive bidding laws, unless it is simply acting in place of a political subdivision to facilitate a public project.

The CIC may be designated by a county, one or more townships, one or more municipal corporations, two or more adjoining counties, or any combination of these entities, as an agent for the industrial, commercial, distribution, and research development when the legislative authority of each jurisdiction approves it. The CIC's Board must be at least 40% composed of Mayors, municipal legislative authorities, township trustees, county commissioners, or other appointed or elected local government officials.

Port Authority

Port Authorities share several of the powers of CICs. They exist as political subdivisions formed by a local community under section 4582 of the Ohio Revised Code. They can:

1. Acquire, construct, furnish, equip, maintain, repair, sell, exchange, lease to or from, or operate real and/or personal property, related to any authorized purpose. Sale of property below fair market value is allowed provided the sale is within the port authority's developmental role.
2. Straighten, deepen, and improve any channel, river, stream, or other water course.
3. Issue general obligation bonds or notes for acquisition, construction, furnishing or equipping of any real or personal property; the bonds or notes may only be issued after a vote of the Port Authority jurisdiction's electors. Voted levies are not to exceed one mill annually, and they may extend for the life of the bond issue.
4. By resolution of its board, it may issue revenue bonds beyond the limit of bonded indebtedness for acquisition, construction, furnishing, or equipping of any real or personal property useful for any authorized purpose of the port authority itself. The revenue bonds shall be secured only by a pledge of and a lien on the revenues of the port authority derived from loan payments and other revenues. The port authority can also issue revenue bonds to finance facilities that are operated by conduit borrowers (manufacturers, nonprofits, or governmental entities) and repaid by revenues generated from the ongoing operation of the borrower.
5. In regard to any real or personal property, it may make loans for acquisition, construction, furnishing, and equipping; acquire, construct, furnish, maintain, and equip the property; sell or lease the property; or guarantee the obligations of any person or governmental entity.
6. Construct, maintain, repair, furnish, equip, sell, exchange, lease, or lease with an option any property it is authorized to acquire. The port authority can operate property in connection with transportation,

recreational, governmental operations, or cultural activities. For example, a Port Authority can build, own, and sell a spec building for industry.

7. Apply to establish, operate, and maintain foreign trade zones.
8. Exercise the right of eminent domain to appropriate land, easements, rights of way, or other property.

The Port Authority is accountable to the entity from which it was formed. If a County forms a port authority, it can pass a resolution that empowers the Authority as well as appoint its board. The Port Authority must comply with competitive bidding laws with few exceptions. All property owned by a Port Authority is exempt from taxes, unless the property is leased for more than a one-year term. The county creating the Port Authority may determine the number of members of the board of directors.

County Planning Commission

County Planning Commissions are authorized by Ohio revised Code section 713.22. County planning commissions have the ability to review township zoning amendments and plans where they exist, create and coordinate plans such as this one, and provide planning assistance and other roles as established in state statutes. Decisions can also be made by planning commissions on specific applications, such as site plans, architectural review, historic preservation review, and final development plans for planned developments.

Planning commissions typically facilitate the development of three types of plans. A *comprehensive plan* is general in nature and looks at numerous issues across the entire county. Topics generally include land use, growth, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and natural resources. *Issue-oriented plans* look at one specific issue. This economic development strategy, for example, focuses on economic development as a single issue. Other topics may be transportation, stormwater management, erosion control, housing, or river corridors. Third, *area plans* look at specific properties or small areas with common characteristics or issues. An area plan may just focus on a single corridor, neighborhood, or small community.

With the necessary capabilities, a planning commission can undertake a site plan review, particularly related to nonresidential developments. Planning commissions can also address land subdivision and platting through a specified procedure. County planning commissions also have authority to approve or deny subdivisions.

Partners

1. Countywide economic development entities: Belmont County Development Office and Community Improvement Corporation (CIC); Belmont County Port Authority; Belmont County Planning Commission; Belmont County Tourism Board
2. Chambers of Commerce, and City/Village economic development offices
3. Locally elected officials: County Commissioners, Township Trustees, municipal Mayors and Councils, and other County offices
4. Workforce and training: County DJFS, workforce board members, educational institutions.
5. Regional development entities: OMEGA, Bel-O-Mar, East Ohio Development Alliance
6. Ohio state-level development entities (Ohio Economic Development Association) and State level economic development officials

Strategies

1. **Develop and adhere to a single protocol for working with prospects, and a single initial point of contact**

Partners: County and community economic development practitioners

Time Frame: Two to three years; co-location of offices within five years.

Action Steps:

- A. Determine core competencies and key functions of each EDO in Belmont County.
- B. Assign primary responsibility for housing the County's inventory of sites and buildings to a single EDO. Publicize the website that houses the data base so that outside prospects and site selectors will connect with it firsthand. Align its data base with the requirements of the State of Ohio, and coordinate its functions with the State's site selection and prospect development system (most recently "Ohio In-Site").
- C. Become familiar with successful models of coordinated economic development in similar counties. Other EDOs can be contacted through the Ohio Economic Development Association, the County Commissioners Association, EODA, or other networks. More can be learned from attendance at OEDA functions, or seminars supported by the International Economic Development Council.
- D. Bring the County's economic development offices, including a presence for the Tourism Board, to one single accessible location, to facilitate coordination and "one-stop" service, and reduce duplication of effort. It is likely that this objective may take several years to accomplish.

2. Create and promote a coordinated and unified economic development effort in Belmont County. Gain local support for and understanding of the economic development process.

Partners: All economic development practitioners in Belmont County, media outlets, local government officials.

Time Frame: This is an immediate and ongoing process.

Action Steps:

- A. Develop a reference guide to all economic development entities in Belmont County, describing the functions of each entity. Distribute this guide to the County's business base, Chambers of Commerce, libraries, and other points of contact.
- B. Disseminate press releases and op-ed pieces to local media concerning the need for a proactive economic development initiative in Belmont County.

3. Coordinate all economic development activities with the County and its local governmental jurisdictions; regularly schedule coordinating meetings with all economic development practitioners in the County.

Partners: Economic development practitioners in Belmont County, local government officials.

Time Frame: Practitioner meetings and reports should begin in 2011.

Action Steps:

- A. Hold joint meetings (minimally quarterly) of all EDOs and economic development practitioners, Chamber directors, community based development officials, and Tourism Board management, to share information, work toward better coordination of services, make referrals of current projects to relevant specialized services, and discuss items of mutual interest, such as changes in State and federal programming, further development of natural gas extraction, and progress in meeting the objectives of this strategy.
- B. Provide the County and the media with semi-annual reports on the "State of the County" in economic development, and with representation and participation from all development entities.
- C. Work together to develop a single "white paper" listing economic development projects advocated for Belmont County but requiring additional resources. Projects should include infrastructure to development sites, downtown revitalization, public facilities, education facility needs, assistance to institutions within the County, tourism and retail development assistance, and County, municipal, and Township priority projects. Update

the “white paper” on a regular basis, perhaps annually. Tie any updates into updated regional CEDS documents or regional white papers.

4. Maintain a positive and working relationship with representatives from the State of Ohio

Partners: Economic development practitioners, local government officials.

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing

Action Steps:

- A. Continue the practice of meeting on a regular basis with economic development representatives from the State of Ohio. Bring to their attention current projects, significant resource needs with positive returns on investment, and any top issues unveiled at quarterly Practitioner meetings.
- B. Schedule, prepare, and hold a meeting in Belmont County for State development officials, legislators, and Federal agency representatives (such as the new Ohio representative for the Economic Development Administration) to expose them to projects and plans throughout the County. Present the visitors in attendance with the “white paper” developed under action step 3(c).

5. Meet on a regional basis with neighboring Counties to market the region. Build and maintain a formalized working relationship, through EODA and other means, with other economic development entities in Counties within the region.

Partners: Economic development practitioners and local government officials; development practitioners in neighboring counties.

Time Frame: Ongoing, beginning in 2011.

Action Steps:

- A. Establish or strengthen County development officials’ working relationships with their cohorts from adjacent and neighboring counties, to bolster economic development on a regional basis. Informal meetings at nearby EDO’s offices can help raise the level of cooperation and trust between counties, and lead to a more unified regional effort.
- B. Promote the work program of the Eastern Ohio Development Alliance and increase County participation in EODA beyond the two sitting Board members, when EODA activities can benefit the County. For example, through its Business Development and Marketing Committee, EODA can inform County officials of upcoming trade shows and other opportunities to market sites and other assets to selected businesses.

- C. Find and use opportunities to work jointly with other economic development officials in the City of Wheeling's metropolitan area. One area for a deeper bond with Wheeling officials is tourism, where Belmont County will benefit from increased recognition of its attractions, sites, and events by those visiting the Wheeling area.

6. Solidify a positive relationship between the county's EDOs and the county Tourism Board. Seek new ways to work together.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, Tourism Board staff and Board members, business leaders in the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant businesses.

Time Frame: Immediate and ongoing.

Action Steps:

- A. Include Tourism Board officials in meetings involving economic development practitioners.
- B. Include Belmont County recreational facilities and points of interest in economic development promotional material. Cross-promote the "quality of life" attributes of the county along with economic development materials promoting the County as a site for business. Include links to the Tourism Board in development websites, and include at least one page describing and depicting quality of life factors (open space, cost of living, retail opportunities) in the County website.
- C. Work jointly to promote the development of convention and meeting venues within the County, including the Carnes Convention Center, and then to bring conventions and trade shows to Belmont County. (see Goal 7, Objective 4).

Goal 9: Workforce, Training, and Educational Advancement

Link the economic development effort closely with all workforce, training and educational initiatives and programs. Present the Belmont County workforce, work ethic, and available skill sets as development assets and comparative advantages. Provide rapid responses to the human resource needs of County employers.

Workforce development should be a major component in any local economic development efforts in the twenty-first century. A major challenge facing businesses today is the lack of an adequately trained workforce. Educational institutions, school districts, training providers, and workforce assistance agencies have become full partners in well-rounded economic and workforce development programs. It is important to be able to match the needs of expanding and targeted industries with the skills being taught in local schools and colleges. Also of great importance is the ability to retrain displaced and incumbent workers to adapt them and their skill sets to the current, projected, and changing needs of local employers.

To operate as effectively as possible, there is a need to align and unite all the partners involved in workforce development: employers, education and training institutions, workforce program funding agencies including the Department of Job and Family Services, and economic development practitioners. The availability of a skilled workforce has become a key business location decision factor; knowledge has become critical in an increasingly service-driven economy, and where three-fourths of net new jobs are in the managerial and technical field.

In addition to job-specific skills, there is also a universal need to emphasize the basic skills needed to be a productive worker. These foundational needs include dependability, teamwork, work ethic, and making a good impression. Another basic goal is to bring the level of education among Belmont County residents up to State levels. According to the 2000 Census of Population, 80.9 percent of County residents age 25 or older had at least a high school degree, and 11.1 percent had a Bachelor's degree or higher, while statewide, the comparable percentages were 83.0 and 21.1. (The national rate was a slightly lower 80.4 percent for high school, but a significantly higher 24.4 percent for bachelor's degrees).

An examination of potential and existing employees and current employers to assess how to bring them together productively should be a primary component in any workforce development strategy. In addition to training, other factors should also be addressed, including childcare, language barriers, transportation to and from work, and housing choices. Addressing these challenges is critical because a well-trained, adaptable workforce, combined with effective delivery of training programs by a provider network, can give a community such as Belmont County a distinct competitive advantage. However, successful coordination requires a combination of job creation and job placement activities, with active participation from the private sector, and steady communication of their workforce and training needs.

Workforce development involves education, starting with elementary school and continuing through advanced employment. A fully coordinated system should begin to instill basic work skills in students in the County's school districts, address literacy and soft skills deficiencies, make students aware of trends in local job opportunities their required skills, seek resources to shape training programs that are aligned with local employers' needs, concentrate on business sectors and clusters where significant workforce needs are evident or projected, and coordinate the functions of training, job creation, job placement, and related services such as transportation and child care.

There is a trend toward cluster-based workforce development, with efficiencies from training involving multiple businesses that are similar, related, or complementary, sharing specialized infrastructure, labor markets, and services. The workforce program can refine its training content for a specific industry or group of related industries. This has occurred throughout Ohio with health care programs, for example. In Belmont County, there may be potential for cluster-based training in mineral extraction and related jobs, in metallurgy, and in the regional natural gas shale fracturing sector. Sector-based workforce programs can also be designed to support entrepreneurship efforts.

While workforce programs are important in retraining workers in new fields, in order to maximize their productivity and earning potential, a complete program should also address the ongoing training needs for incumbent workers. Incumbent training is often viewed as necessary to increase productivity and hence profitability, reduce employee turnover, and improve employees' job opportunities and job satisfaction.

WORKFORCE RESOURCES

Belmont County Connections,
302 Walnut St., Martins Ferry, OH 43935,
740/516-5627
www.belmontcountyconnections.com

Ohio Means Jobs: an employer-driven job matching system to aggregate employment opportunities for job seekers and help businesses find the talent they need to succeed. OhioMeansJobs.com

Ohio Skills Bank: coordinates and links workforce development, economic development and education on a regional level to meet the needs of driving industries.
<http://osu.edu/opportunities/ohioskillsbank/index.php>

Workforce Investment Act programs:
Overseen by the Office of Workforce Development; includes programs for adults, dislocated workers, and low-income youth age 14-21.
<http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/wia/index.stm>

Work Opportunity Tax Credit: This tax credit provides Ohio employers with federal tax credits for hiring individuals from target groups of disadvantaged job seekers. <http://jfs.ohio.gov/wotc/>

Ohio Labor Market Information: Ohio labor market information, including unemployment rates, wage information, leading indicators, and additional statistics, is available at <http://OhioLMI.com>

Ohio Workforce Guarantee: Under this umbrella program, Ohio's Workforce and Talent Division provides a variety of customized training grant programs aimed at creating and retaining jobs by improving worker skills and abilities. Training grant programs are coordinated by regional workforce development directors.
www.workforce.development.ohio.gov

Businesses in similar fields can often identify common skills and training needs (these often involve various aspects of computer or specialized software literacy), and can form consortiums to design training programs and address these needs. It is important for the County's economic development practitioners to oversee the County-wide workforce development process and its programming. Workforce and labor factors play a large role in business expansion and location decisions; economic developers thus need to have accurate and timely labor market information and working relationships with local Workforce Investment Boards, major employers, organized labor, and members of workforce and training partnerships.

In Belmont County, the active partnership is Connections, a one-stop employment and training center created under the Workforce Investment Act "for Belmont County businesses and citizens in order to provide a single system that offers an array of employment, education and training programs and partners' services. The goal of Connections is twofold:

- Coordinate programs and resources in Belmont County so individuals have easy access to a seamless system of workforce investment services that will enhance their long-term employability.
- Access for businesses to employment and training information that will meet their workforce and developmental needs."

Belmont County shares Ohio's Workforce Investment Area 16 with Carroll, Harrison, and Jefferson Counties. That Investment Area follows a business plan with milestones. A recent business plan for the Area included the following milestones, reinforcing the objectives of the workforce development plan highlighted in this chapter:

- Increase on a yearly basis the number of individuals and employees that utilize Connections services;
- Provide excellent customer services to individuals and employers that use Connections services;
- Increase public awareness of Connections as an employment and community resource;
- Increase the awareness of youth and the school systems of the availability of local, State, and Federal resources;
- Assess the workforce and developmental needs of businesses;
- Build an awareness of Labor Market Information and career information;
- Build an efficient local Rapid Response Team;
- Meet the WIA performance measures;
- Increase the number of youth, adult, and dislocated workers that enroll in post-secondary training.

Listed partnering organizations include the Belmont County Commissioners, Belmont County Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Mideast Career and Technology Centers (which provides adult basic and literacy education), Ohio

Rehabilitation Services Commission, Community Action Commission of Belmont County, Senior Community service Employment Program, Veteran’s Program, and Belmont Technical College.

Economic development practitioners, including the CIC and Port Authority, should continue to maintain an updated labor data base, gathering information from County employers regarding labor and training needs, and workforce program and service delivery. The workforce component should be included in business attraction and retention efforts. Information should be maintained concerning job seekers, job market trends, growth areas, high-demand occupations and needed skills, and wage rates by sector. This information, which describes relatively low labor costs and high, specialized skill levels, can then be summarized on a County economic development website.

Partners

1. Countywide economic development entities: Belmont County Development Office and Community Improvement Corporation (CIC); Belmont County Port Authority; Belmont County Planning Commission
2. Belmont Technical College
3. Ohio University and OU-E campus
4. School districts within Belmont County
5. Agencies providing workforce services (DJFS, CAC)
6. Connections partners (see top of this page).

Strategies

- 1. Know and understand the workforce training and retraining needs of employers in Belmont County.**

Partners: Economic development practitioners; R&E survey volunteers; local businesses and business associations; labor representatives

Time Frame: Updated data base within one year; then monitor and revise as new information is added, on an ongoing basis.

Action Steps:

- A. Collect information on workforce and training needs during retention and expansion interviews and surveys; use the R&E process to respond to stated workforce needs, by establishing contact between relevant employers and workforce and training agencies. Also, use data from surveys of employers to identify gaps in workforce development efforts.

- B. Note commonalities among employers' needs, then plan training programs to address common needs, topics, and curricula. Seek State or other funding to help subsidize such efforts. Use a quarterly business roundtable meeting to discuss training needs and note areas of common need. It is possible that the level of need is great enough to warrant the creation of a new class or program to move multiple businesses ahead.
- C. Create a data base on predominant skills present in the local labor force, and potential "skill clusters" that could be marketed to prospective businesses. An example may be the large number of former steel workers who have acquired skills that may be specific to their former work, but which may in fact translate to new and different lines of work.

2. Catalog all opportunities available to Belmont County residents related to the development of their general and industry-specific work skills.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, education providers, Connections partners, County and local officials, Education Service Center.

Time Frame: This is a continuation of existing efforts and is ongoing.

Action Steps:

- A. Ensure oversight of workforce training programs and access to regional, state, and federal resources throughout Belmont County. Use the existing WIA-based Connections system, partnering with economic development entities that can contribute information from local employers about employee training needs, to oversee and coordinate workforce training programs. Continue to publicize the single point of access for employees and employers. Also, provide for participation and input from labor officials.
- B. Develop a comprehensive catalog (print and online) of all available programs and courses, as well as the capabilities and areas of specialization of each institution. Provide the catalog to area employers to match programs with employers and their needs. This catalog may work most effectively on line.
- C. Coordinate the delivery of programs and courses, and support cooperation among training entities, with the capability to change courses and content as needs change.
- D. Achieve economies in the delivery of training and curricula through more coordination and shared programs among school districts. Support the exchange of information between school districts. Involve the Education Service Center to assist in coordination among school districts.

3. Support and develop methods to retain and attract recent graduates and young households to Belmont County, and to provide rewarding careers and entertaining venues.

Partners: Economic development practitioners, education institutions (high schools, technical schools and postgraduate institutions, DJFS, other Connections partners).

Time Frame: This is a continuous, ongoing activity.

Action Steps:

- A. Provide information to area high schools and their guidance departments regarding employment opportunities in the County.
- B. Help local businesses to pilot internship programs that provide employment experiences for local youth, recent graduates, and young adults. Internship programs can be directly offered by local businesses. They can also be administered through a local college or University, with specific programs involving students who could gain work experience in local businesses in their chosen fields.
- C. Increase the use of social networking Internet sites for local employee recruitment and information about available employment opportunities. Hold a County-wide informational meeting on the use of social networking sites with business applications. Invite EDO board and staff, Chamber officials, local elected officials and departments, and employers.
- D. Include in any business or professional recruitment efforts the promotion of Belmont County's quality of life factors of importance to "Millennials" (born between roughly 1980 and 2000) and young adults, as well as the ease of access to nearby metro areas from a home in Belmont County. Focus on features that are particularly important to them, including Internet access and wi-fi "hot spots", and "third places" such as pubs and coffee shops that serve as informal meeting places.
- E. Develop and manage a leadership program that engages young professionals and potential leaders throughout the County. This program helps stimulate civic engagement and voluntarism, and can begin to build an informal network among young leaders throughout the County. In addition to the leadership development program, provide and offer positions of voluntary leadership to emerging young leaders, including program graduates.
- F. Create and initiate a program to recruit targeted Belmont County high school graduates who have left the area for college or other reasons, including a possible data base of such graduates, email notices, and "welcome back home" events to showcase opportunities within the County.

Goal 10: Superior Quality of Life

Promote Belmont County's superior quality of life, work to preserve and improve it, and market the County's distinctive attractions to those within and outside the County. Maintain and improve public facilities and public spaces, such as conference venues.

The term, "Quality of Life", has three connotations with regard to economic development. First, "quality of life" improvements *help make living or working in an area more enjoyable and attractive*, enriching residents' and employees' experiences. Richness in the quality of life can help retain residents who may otherwise seek homes and careers elsewhere.

Second, quality of life represents those factors that make an area such as Belmont County an *attractive place to locate a business or family*. "Quality of life" factors may not directly impact the corporate balance sheet or family finances, but they provide amenities and attractions that can steer a location decision when other factors are equal. They add to the mix an unquantifiable, subjective factor that can grow in importance as competing sites reach the final cut.

Finally, *tourism* is directly related to certain quality of life factors. The attractiveness of an area's natural beauty, historic significance, or cultural and recreational features can help spur the local economy with an influx of outside tourists' dollars. This section will briefly review all three aspects of Belmont County's quality of life.

Retaining Residents

Much has been written about the "brain drain" of younger residents from rural areas, as they move away to college and careers. A web site entitled "reimaginerural.com" lists five points for retaining and attracting younger generations, focusing on "Generation Y", the 77 million Americans born between 1977 and 1997:

- Help create economic opportunities; offer entrepreneurship training and the activities associated with "economic gardening" to help prospective entrepreneurs.
- Provide "third places" that help newcomers. These are the places where people are attracted to socialize when not at home or at work - "informal meeting places where community is built": pubs, coffee shops, cafes, and community centers.
- Develop good broadband Internet capacities and wi-fi hot spots.
- Help young people figure out "What am I going to do in this town?" Invite young people to be a part of community projects that include social opportunities. Create young professional groups and leadership development programs.
- Rethink how you "engage" Generation Y in your community. Young people believe they have something valuable to contribute, and are sometimes offended if they are not asked to do so. Younger people want to feel valuable.

A series of interviews, conducted by the University of Nebraska to gain an understanding of residential decisions among new residents to Nebraska's panhandle area, found that the majority of newcomers (61 percent) were from metro areas, and that quality of life considerations associated with an *image of rural living* were a primary motivation in their decision to move. When the sample was asked why people move into the region, the factors given, in declining order, were: simpler pace of life (53%), less congested (50%), closer to relatives (50%), lower cost of housing (48%), lower cost of living (45%), higher paying job (38%), desirable natural environment (37%), safer place to live (36%), job that better fits skills (35%), community that shares values (34%), better place for kids (32%), closer to friends (32%), and lower taxes (22%). A lot of quality of life factors scored near the top of that poll, and many of these can be found to exist in plentiful supply in Belmont County.

The conclusions of the Nebraska study included these:

- The community is a “product” to newcomers, and there is a need to sell or market it.
- Recruitment involves employers and community, with a role for both community and economic development.
- Communication needs to be accurate, as urbanites may or may not understand “rural”.
- Recruitment programs need retention tactics, as all people want to feel they belong.
- Multiple recruitment methods, including extensive use of the Internet and personal contacts, make a difference.
- Finally, for retention, perceived acceptance and a community vision make a difference.

Quality of Life and Business Recruitment

Quality of life factors are considered secondary when businesses make location decisions. They are also subjective by nature, and their importance can vary with the interests of the decision makers. For example, a nearby four-star golf course or Montessori school may be of great interest to some, while relatively unimportant to others. The 2009 corporate survey conducted by Area Development magazine found that, among quality of life site selection factors, low crime was the top priority, with 79 percent of respondents rating this factor as “very important” or “important”. The second highest ranking quality of life factor was health care facilities, with a 68.4 percent importance rating. Another survey, of site selection consultants, found that among quality of life factors, consultants gave public schools and housing costs top priority, with each receiving “very important” or “important” ratings by 71 percent of respondents.

During the interview process for this development strategy, respondents were asked to identify the assets that they felt were most important in their community and in Belmont County. Most of the responses could be considered “Quality of Life” factors. Among those most frequently mentioned were:

- Proximity and easy access to urban areas: Pittsburgh (1 hour), Columbus (90 min.), Wheeling (just a few minutes);
- Local and community parks; State recreational facilities (Barkcamp, Egypt Valley); bicycle paths and trails; new fairgrounds and the Carnes Center;
- Historic heritage and architecture, as reflected in central business districts; and authenticity in communities;
- Feeling of safety; there is a comfort factor verbalized by respondents;
- Easy accessibility and lack of congestion everywhere in the County; short commuting times;
- Abundance of natural resources, including the Ohio River;
- Work ethic, volunteerism, and civic mindedness among the people. There are a number of civic organizations and membership opportunities throughout the County;
- Close-knit, friendly communities;
- Good educational facilities: OU-E and Belmont Tech within the County, Career Center, several other colleges/Universities within 30 miles. There is also a large number of new school facilities in the County;
- The County is an ethnic melting pot with a diverse cultural heritage;
- A lot of local attractions and events (see sidebar, next page);
- Health care facilities – three hospitals in the County.

In general, quality of life is far less important for locating a manufacturing plant or warehouse that will require relatively untrained, unskilled labor than when locating or moving a corporate headquarters, research facility, professional offices, or computer/IT center, all of which have more talent-driven labor. Belmont County can indeed boast a number of quality-of-life factors, including a low cost of housing, low crime rates, access to health care facilities, short commuting times with little congestion, recreational opportunities, and attractive natural features.

Tourism

Belmont County has an active Tourism Council, which operates with a full-time staff and Director, and with an office located in the Ohio Valley Mall. The Tourism Council is funded through a county-wide “bed tax” levied on people staying in hotels, inns, or bed-and-breakfast facilities in the County. This “lodging tax”, some of which is used for other purposes, generated \$322,281 in 2009, \$320,033 in 2008, and \$255,897 in 2003. The revenue trend has been upward.

The tag line for the Belmont County Tourism Council is “Discover the Possibilities!” The Council touts a number of attractions in the County, including the Dickinson Cattle Company (western Belmont County), Watt Center for History and the Arts (Barnesville), National Imperial Glass Museum (Bellaire), Belmont County Victorian Mansion Museum (Barnesville), and the Blaine Bridge (Blaine). Also notable is the existence of three Ohio byways: the Drovers’ Trail along Ohio 147 and 800, Historic National Road/U.S. 40, and the Ohio River Scenic Byway along Ohio

7. A partial list of attractions is included in the sidebar to the right, to demonstrate the diversity of cultural and recreational assets within the County.

Realistically, tourism or amenity-based growth will likely play a limited role in Belmont County's economic development. However, because of the County's increasingly diversified economy, its accessibility and exposure along I-70, and its position within larger regions of interest including Appalachian Ohio and the Wheeling metropolitan area, opportunities for marketing events and attractions regionally should certainly be pursued. It is likely to be most effective to market the "package" of attractions that could engage the tourist for a day or two, as part of a larger trip within the region, currently packaged area-wide under the "Ohio River Country" brand.

Overall, the Travel Industry Association found in 2009 that the majority of American adults (62%) visited rural places in the past three years, and of these trips, 86 percent were for leisure purposes. The popularity of rural destinations was attributed to the quest for culture and heritage, and for the experience of "folklore, customs, natural landscapes, and historic landmarks."

Opportunities exist in Belmont County on several fronts, capturing recent trends and topics of widespread interest, including those mentioned above, in tourism:

Sampling of Attractions in Belmont County

Heritage/Historic/Cultural

Blaine Bridge, Blaine
Concord Quaker Meeting House, Colerain
Downtown St. Clairsville, Barnesville, and riverfront communities with historic architecture and potential for walking tours
Drovers' Trail Scenic Byway, SR 147/800
Epworth Park, Bethesda
Great Western Schoolhouse, OU-E Campus
Kirkwood House, Bridgeport
Morristown Historic Preservation Assoc.
National Imperial Glass Museum, Bellaire
National Road corridor, US 40
Ohio Genealogical Society Belmont County chapter, Barnesville
Ohio River Scenic Byway (portion), SR 7
Sedgwick House Museum, Martins Ferry
Shaeffer/Campbell Covered Bridge, OUE
Stillwater Meeting House, Barnesville
This Old House (Italian-style), Barnesville
Toy and Plastic Brick Museum, Bellaire
Underground Railroad Museum, Flushing
Victorian Mansion Museum, Barnesville
Walnut Grove Cemetery, Martins Ferry
Watt Center, Barnesville (also Arts)

Natural Resources/Outdoor Recreation

Barkcamp State Park, Belmont
Dysart Woods, Belmont
Egypt Valley Wildlife Area, Holloway
Lake Shawn, Powhatan Point
Piedmont Lake, Holloway area
National Road Bikeway, St. Clairsville
Zion Christian Retreat/Nature Center, Flushing

Arts/Music

Barnesville Antique Mall, Barnesville
Carnes Center, Fairgrounds, St. Clairsville
Frye Glass, Shadyside
Jamboree in the Hills, Belmont
Pumpkin Festival, Barnesville
Quilt Barns, various rural locations

Agricultural

Dickinson Cattle Co., Barnesville
Ebbert Farm Market, St. Clairsville



*Blaine Bridge, along National Road
Below: Barkcamp State Park*



- Heritage Tourism, defined as “Traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and the people of the past”, remains a strong force in tourism, and Belmont County can offer a strong package in this regard, by “bundling” such attractions as the Imperial Glass Museum, Watt Center for History, Underground Railroad Museum (Flushing), and Sedgwick House Museum (Martins Ferry), along with the historic US 40, Ohio 7, and Drovers’ Trail corridors. Heritage travelers are known to stay longer and spend more money than the average traveler.

- Outdoor and nature-based recreation remains popular, and Belmont County has a lot to offer the outdoor recreation enthusiast, with the Barkcamp State Park facilities, Dysart Woods, Egypt Valley Wildlife Area, the Ohio River, and freshwater lakes such as Piedmont Lake. With a trend toward shorter trips, closer to home, Barkcamp and other Belmont County destinations could become more popular with families in the Wheeling, Pittsburgh, and Central Ohio areas.

Partners

1. Entities that promote the assets of Belmont County that make it an excellent place to live, raise a family, and spend leisure time. These include the Tourism Council, local Chambers of Commerce, and to some degree, economic development practitioners who may come into contact with individuals and families considering moving to Belmont County.
2. In the case of recreational pursuits, all who manage or operate a recreational facility or concert, movie, or entertainment venue, whether publicly or privately owned; secondarily, all other businesses involved in the tourism industry; especially those in the restaurant and hospitality industries.
3. In the case of residential choice, Realtors, home builders, and developers.
4. Operators and managers of institutions that add to local quality of life, including school systems, health care facilities, and colleges and universities.
5. Local government officials who help facilitate and regulate County assets and amenities.
6. In a very real sense, every resident of Belmont County has a role in maintaining and improving the County’s quality of life, where a “friendly small town atmosphere” is often cited among key attributes.

Strategies

- 1. Promote Belmont County's amenities and advantages that bolster its quality of life and attractiveness as a place to live, work, and have fun. Build Belmont County's image as a recreational and lifestyle center.**

Partners: EDPs, County and Municipal park and recreation departments, Tourism Council, County Fair Board, owners of venues and recreation centers, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Rails-to-Trails committees, etc.

Time Frame: This is an ongoing endeavor.

Action Steps:

- A. Maintain the Tourism Council's inventory of all points of interest within the county, including cultural and recreational sites, whether publicly or privately owned, and seek ways to link them into themed "experiences". This inventory should be presented and described, with pictures, on the Council's website. As with economic development, a web presence and the presentation of complete information over that medium is becoming extremely important in tourism. Council staff should be prepared and trained to frequently update and upgrade the information presented on the Council's website (which should be linked to the economic development and local government websites throughout the County). The Tourism Council should also maintain and frequently update its calendar of events that can be enjoyed by the public throughout Belmont County, and this calendar should also be accessible on the Internet.
- B. Seek methods to market themed "bundles" of attractions in Belmont County (outdoor recreation; historic and cultural; family-friendly activities) cost-effectively, including Internet linkages.
- C. Support independent efforts throughout the County and in its municipalities to develop and improve parks, trails, and other amenities; publicize those efforts and include local amenities such as these in a county-wide inventory.
- D. Support event planning efforts, marketing, and facilities improvements to maximize the potential of the new County Fairgrounds as a venue for events and experiences in addition to the annual County Fair. Economic development and tourism officials should work with Fair Board and Carnes Center officials to promote the use of these facilities by the business community, the public, and others.
- E. Concentrate marketing efforts on catching the interest of those visiting nearby Wheeling destinations. Tourism Council funds can be used in joint marketing efforts aimed at visitors to the Wheeling area.

2. Achieve and maintain a balanced stock of housing in all price ranges and styles.

Partners: Realtors, developers, home builders, residential property owners and managers.

Time Frame: This is an ongoing endeavor.

Action Steps:

- A. Maintain and observe the goals and objectives of the County's Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS) with regard to affordable housing choice. Take advantage of Federal and State initiatives, including low income housing tax credits, to support public-private ventures that bring attractive and affordable housing to the County's communities, in locations that are close to employment and shopping, and compatible with nearby land uses.
- B. Monitor the supply of and demand for rental housing; make developers aware of any substantiated gaps in the provision of attractive rental housing.
- C. Support and encourage the development of higher-end housing that can attract professionals and management employees to make Belmont County their home. This encouragement, on the part of local officials, can include:
 - Networking among Realtors, developers, and development officials to provide housing choices to prospective households.
 - Promoting public awareness of available executive housing.
 - Assisting developers in efficiently meeting regulatory requirements and constructing necessary infrastructure to target sites for the development of new housing subdivisions.

3. Promote and improve the County's education systems and institutions.

Partners: School districts, OU-E, Belmont Tech, EDPs and Chambers

Time Frame: This is an ongoing endeavor.

Action Steps:

- A. Provide local and regional media with press releases and information on local success stories in the County's education systems.
- B. Local officials and economic development practitioners should support new and innovative programming that responds to workforce needs of local employers, provides for retraining to better respond to the demands of a changing economy, encourages new partnerships between education providers and employers, and encourages new

research and product development in Belmont County. Economic development practitioners should make connections between employers and educators, build networks, and make the educational system as responsive as possible to emerging and projected needs.

- C. Solicit business officials' concerns about local educational institutions, curriculum, and programming in local business retention and expansion surveys and visits, and encourage dialog by communicating business concerns back to appropriate educational institutions.
- D. Maintain close ties between economic development and local government officials, and leadership at OU-E and Belmont Tech, to publicize their programs, classes, events, and features that enrich residents' lives, and to ensure a channel of communication between business and these institutions. Quarterly business roundtables should be held at and feature each of these institutions.

4. Support the County's health care providers and advocate for new services and facilities where gaps exist. Include consideration of hospitals, doctors, clinics, home health, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and emerging amenities and systems.

Partners: Hospitals, clinics, and other health care providers and networks throughout Belmont County; local government officials, and economic development practitioners.

Time Frame: This is an ongoing endeavor.

Action Steps:

- A. Inventory the health care facilities and services available within the County, and develop a data base to make businesses and residents aware of health care providers and resources within Belmont County, including specialists, clinics, public services, and assisted and other alternative living facilities to help residents age in place.
- B. Stay in touch with project developers to assist in the development of viable health care-related projects, including the potential St. Clair Commons and regional Veterans facility projects. Approach such projects as job-producing economic development investments, as well as improvements to health care amenities for County and area residents.
- C. Inquire about health care service and facility concerns in local business retention and expansion surveys and visits, and communicate any business concerns back to the appropriate health care entity.
- D. Spotlight health care facilities in a quarterly business roundtable.

5. Promote tourism in Belmont County and within its regional setting in Appalachian Ohio and the greater Wheeling metropolitan area. Consider clustering entertainment and associated land uses (such as restaurants) in planned entertainment zones or districts.

Partners: County Tourism Council as primary facilitator; economic development professionals; local government officials; and regional tourism partnerships (Ohio and West Virginia Offices of Tourism)

Time Frame: Build regional connections within one year.

Action Steps:

- A. Hold a joint exploratory meeting with officials from the Wheeling Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss joint ventures and more regional promotion of attractions and destinations.
- B. Contact the Ohio Tourism Office to spotlight regional ventures in promoting tourism in southeast Ohio and the Ohio Valley.
- C. Actively promote Belmont County's regional corridors such as the Route 40 National Road and Route 7 along the Ohio River, linking together attractions and points of interest along these corridors.
- D. Capitalize on the potential to cluster entertainment and hospitality venues to create "critical mass" destination areas in the County's downtowns and riverfront.

6. Promote and strengthen Belmont County's capabilities with regard to convention, meeting, and conference hosting.

Partners: County Tourism Council and its membership; Carnes Center management; hospitality industry; managers of meeting venues.

Time Frame: Progress on this objective may take three to five years to achieve a recognized regional venue for meetings and conventions.

Action Steps:

- A. Research the supply and demand for meeting and convention facilities in the Ohio Valley region that includes Belmont County. Use the findings from that research to determine the extent to which new facilities (of varying capacity, location, physical and architectural features, technology) are feasible.

- B. Partner with area hospitals, colleges and universities, the Fair Board, and others to determine how to most effectively provide meeting and convention facilities in the County.

7. Improve the County's physical image through the implementation of Community Clean-Up programs.

Partners: County, Township, and Municipal officials; Law enforcement agencies; solid waste district; volunteer and civic organizations; local permitting and regulatory commissions.

Time Frame: Bring an overall awareness of the need to promote clean-up activities and a positive physical image to County residents within two years.

Action Steps:

- A. Local governments should evaluate existing ordinances relating to property maintenance and its enforcement, abandoned vehicles, and trash and rubbish disposal. Consider new codified ordinances to directly impact community appearance and the preservation of health and safety. However, this step should be approached with caution, balancing the common good with individual property rights, and with a reasonable, fair, and equitable means to enforce any maintenance code.
- B. Help sponsor, organize, and publicize local efforts such as "Community Clean-Up Days"; seek assistance and support from youth, school, civic, sports, scouting, and church groups. Select strategically targeted, highly visible blocks or neighborhoods for pilot projects, where programs such as tool lending programs and youth group volunteers could concentrate to make a visible difference. Spread out from the initial neighborhood to make a more community-wide impact.



James E. Carnes Center



Epworth Park, Bethesda

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

Number	Description	Partners and Time Frame	Measurable Outcomes
1	Infrastructure		
1.1	Pursue utility extensions to targeted growth areas; advocate for them, obtain outside and match funding, and gain local support. <i>Develop and publicize a "white paper" of priority projects and advocate for them. Work with RCAP and others for funding resources. Priorities: Eastern Ohio Regional Ind. Park; St. Clair Commons; Ohio Valley Mall/Plaza area; other targeted sites and community projects (see Goal 6).</i>	LGO, property owners, developers, funding agencies, consulting engineers, RCAP, EDPs <i>Ongoing; long range</i>	# projects funded, constructed \$ obtained for projects # new private projects and \$ investment resulting
1.2	Pursue efficiencies in providing infrastructure through regionalization and extension of county-wide systems to areas in need. <i>Extend utilities to priority growth areas and development sites; continue discussions concerning three-county water distribution system.</i>	LGO, planning officials, EDP, County Eng./ San. Eng., water/ww officials <i>Continuous; ongoing</i>	# new utility customers Progress in regionalization (# meetings, participants, objectives reached)
1.3	Coordinate long-range planning through the County Sanitary Engineer. <i>Maintain and share a county-wide capital improvements plan and list, with primary responsibility for the list with the County Sanitary Engineer.</i>	Sanitary Engineer, County Engineer, LGO, developers, EDPs <i>Continuous; ongoing</i>	Capital improvements plan in place - # participating departments/entities
1.4	Advocate and obtain funding for targeted transportation projects. <i>Hold county-wide meeting to discuss transportation improvement needs (Bel-O-Mar could take lead). Develop and publicize list of priority projects.</i>	EDPs, LGO, County Eng., Bel-O-Mar, ODOT <i>System within 1 year; white paper within 6 mo.; advocacy is ongoing</i>	# new projects funded \$ project funds New transportation improvements created
1.5	Improve telecommunications and broadband Internet service throughout the County. <i>Use R&E survey to gather input on state of communications technology; bring broadband to targeted areas; be involved in regional efforts to bring broadband improvements to County.</i>	EDP, LGO, entities involved in broadband development <i>County-wide in 5 years</i>	# areas served by growing broadband service # new customers
1.6	Enhance and coordinate the County's GIS to present and overlay spatial data in attractive and useful formats that are compatible with other County offices. <i>Hold County-wide meeting on economic development applications; coordinate needs for site mapping and prospect requests.</i>	GIS office, LGO, developers, Realtors, financial institutions, EDP <i>Underway; ongoing</i>	# new GIS products # entities utilizing GIS system
2	Help Business Retention and Expansion		# businesses retained # jobs retained \$ new investment by existing business
2.1	Conduct a County-Wide Business "Retention and Expansion" visitation program, with visitation teams, surveys, a formal feedback and comment collection system, a protocol for responses to concerns, and a report to the community. <i>Aside from the formal R&E program, stay in frequent contact with key employers and maintain records of contacts. Select host agency</i>	EDP, Chambers, LGO, volunteers, businesses	# visited # follow ups

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

	<i>and team, schedule visits; develop survey; publicize project; schedule interviews; conduct interviews; collect surveys; relay problems to officials; summary report; follow up calls</i>	<i>Within a year</i>	
2.2	Conduct a survey of businesses to learn of their plans for expansion or contraction, capital and human resources needs, concerns about the community, and recommendations for community and County growth. <i>Select initial sector; assemble working group; determine paper or Internet for survey; notify selected businesses; collect survey; tabulate and summary report</i>	EDP, LGO, local development offices <i>Within a year</i>	# surveyed Summary Report
2.3	Maintain an inventory of County manufacturers and business suppliers, with data on products, employment, linkages in County, and supply chains. <i>Develop format for data base; determine what data to collect (inputs and outputs?); use Intern to collect data; develop plan for maintaining/updating</i>	EDP, research assistance from State and/or University <i>Initial inventory within a year</i>	# manufacturer in inventory Inventory developer # cases where it is used (and outcome of use)
2.4	Plan and conduct "business roundtables" for interested businesses, following a quarterly schedule. Businesses do not need to be in one specific sector; they just need to benefit from being able to discuss common issues of interest. <i>Identify organization to coordinate Roundtables; develop list of participants; use surveys and visits to determine topics; select topics, dates, venues, speakers/moderators.</i>	Businesses and business associations, Chambers, EDPs, local officials <i>Kick off within one year</i>	# roundtables conducted # participating businesses
2.5	Catalog and publicize incentive programs for expansion, including capital investment, workforce development, tax incentives, and infrastructure improvements. Make information available to business officials. <i>Research available programs; publish a catalog and publicize central contact point; provide info on web site.</i>	EDP, Chambers, LGO <i>Catalog within one year</i>	Catalog developed # copies distributed
3	Attract New Manufacturing and Industry		# new businesses # new jobs \$ new investment \$ taxes generated
3.1	Develop a website that contains current, complete, easy to navigate information sought by business prospects, site selectors, and others. <i>Convene task force; research other web sites and best practices; hire a web designer or use in house expertise</i>	Website hosting entity; EDP, developers and property owners, LGO, web designer <i>Up within a year</i>	X Website developed # Hits # follow-ups, contacts # businesses located
3.2	Send Belmont County representatives to selected trade shows and conferences. <i>Research trade shows of interest at national, regional, local level; develop marketing budget and target selected shows; schedule appointments on site; analyze effectiveness; seek collaboration and entities that may underwrite cost.</i>	EDP, specific industries/sectors, State/regional officials, utilities, RR, public officials <i>Ongoing; begin Year 1</i>	# trade shows # contacts # one-on-one meetings Follow up and outcomes
3.3	Deepen partnerships with neighboring counties and their economic	EDP, neighboring EDPs in region,	# meetings and outcome

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

	development entities, with State officials, and regional associations. <i>Meet with State officials; provide forums for State officials/legislators on regular basis; allow 2-way flow of info from County to State; strengthen regional alliances including EODA and metro Wheeling area</i>	state officials, trade associations <i>Immediate/ongoing</i>	
3.4	Provide a consistent and flexible set of local incentives and development tools that can be used to match individual prospects' needs, and to provide a competitive "package" to prospects. <i>Ensure local officials are knowledgeable about incentives; establish central info clearinghouse and clear path for assistance; hold incentives seminar for businesses; maintain updated data base on incentives; create incentives workgroup to research best practices and develop new local tools</i>	EDP, LGO, new/expanding businesses, incentive program administrators (RLF, EZ, CRA, etc.) <i>Immediate/ongoing</i>	# copies of catalog distributed # cases utilizing incentives Outcomes of cases (jobs, investment, tax \$ generated)
3.5	Review and push for change, where feasible, in local and county-wide regulatory processes to maintain an efficient, business-friendly environment and reputation. <i>Analyze review/approval processes for understanding and flow; fact sheet on processes for new/expanding business; encourage project pre-development meetings to review regs; EDPs serve as liaison between businesses and State offices</i>	EDP, LGO, review/permit authorities; Chambers and business ass'ns.; local businesses offering input <i>Local processes reviewed within two years</i>	Process summary publication # pre-development meetings Subjective info from businesses on process
3.6	Focus the greatest energy and attention on business sectors with the greatest "fit" with the amenities and businesses of Belmont County. <i>Target: highway-oriented business; river oriented business; energy sector; health care; R&D; Metal working and fabrication and tool & die shops; agribusiness and food processing; businesses that bring highest value to reclaimed lands; retail</i>	EDP, industrial property owners, developers, LGO, business ass'ns., Chambers <i>2-5 years to complete for a selected sector</i>	# contacts with target businesses # businesses locating: jobs, investment, tax base
4	Support and Reinvent the Retail Sector		# new retail enterprises # new employees # new sales and tax
4.1	Obtain market information about retail business in Belmont County, and target any gaps in retail makeup of the County. <i>Budget/fundraise for retail market analysis; assemble locally available information and consider outside data sources.</i>	EDP, Chambers, developers <i>Within 1 year</i>	\$ allocated to analysis Analysis completed
4.2	Continue to develop and redevelop the area surrounding the Ohio Valley Mall as a competitive and growing retail, commercial, service, and medical center. <i>Attract traditional, nontraditional mall tenants; attract business to out lots; form local "sales team"; Create physical "vision" for the area; advocate as a team for State/Federal assistance for I-70 interchange; access roads; off-site infrastructure; pursue creative financing (use TID); pursue developers and resources; integrate with natural features; integrate mall with surroundings; develop uniform sense of place and community.</i>	Property owners/developers; EDP, LGO including St. Clairsville; State and Federal offices <i>Long range (10 years) to total buildout of the target area</i>	Acres developed, funding obtained for improvements, private investment, number of new entities, jobs, taxes, sales tax impact

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

4.3	Support the healthy revitalization of the County's central business districts. <i>Propose creation or growth of downtown organizations; plan events to showcase downtowns; promote historical significance; assist property owners with renovating properties; consider streetscape projects; partner with Heritage Ohio; Inventory and update data bases of available downtown space for retail/commercial/office; seek financing and funding sources; consider "First Impressions" program (OSU Extension)</i>	LGO, Chambers and their downtown business associations; local businesses and property owners downtown; other stakeholders <i>Ongoing activities</i>	# new initiatives # new events # new promotions # new downtown enterprises \$ investment
4.4	Encourage highway and travel-oriented commercial business development. <i>Meet with key property owners at targeted interchanges to determine interest in developing, marketing, selling property (with a set price); determine suitability of infrastructure or feasibility of developing new infrastructure; work with interested owners to list and market; target to selected developers of highway-oriented businesses</i>	EDP, property owners and developers; LGO; County Engineer; ODOT <i>Long term – 10-20 years</i>	# properties marketed # resulting new businesses # jobs \$ investment \$ taxes generated
5	Build Entrepreneurial Culture		# entrepreneurs assisted and able to grow in county # start-up enterprises, jobs # training/TA
5.1	Connect the local programs of Ohio University Eastern, Belmont Tech, school districts, SBDC counseling, and other regional programs and services for entrepreneurs into a seamless Entrepreneurial Development System - a one-stop source for existing and potential entrepreneurs	Education providers, business financing entities, business services providers, EDP <i>Coordinated implementation 1-3 yrs</i>	Seamless system developed # businesses assisted and level of satisfaction (exit survey)
5.2	Highlight financing sources for start-up and growth capital for entrepreneurs. <i>Follow-up on visit and survey comments regarding needs; sponsor local workshop on access to capital; research/contact sources for venture capital; offer loan packaging services in County; develop Microenterprise loan program.</i>	Business counselors, lenders and financing sources including venture capital, EDP <i>Initiated immediately</i>	# cases information provided \$ resources accessed
5.3	Pilot a business and entrepreneur mentoring program. <i>Develop list of potential mentors and their areas of expertise; publicize contact information; match entrepreneurs with potential mentors; hold follow up meetings and ongoing support.</i>	EDP, volunteers with business experience (mentors) <i>Institute within 3-5 yrs</i>	# businesses mentored # volunteer mentors
5.4	Seek opportunities for interaction between businesses and schools, to promote entrepreneurship among local students and provide training at all stages of development. <i>Support programs in local schools exposing students to entrepreneurship; support school-business partnerships, develop high school electives that support entrepreneurship.</i>	School districts and educational institutions, counselors, EDP, volunteers from local businesses. <i>Plan in 1-2 years, program within 5 years</i>	# cases of interaction
5.5	Create one or more business incubators, after careful feasibility research. <i>Conduct market analysis and business plan; select potential site; design a facility; select support services to be provided; prepare an incubator</i>	EDP, MCBI and other outside resources, NBIA; educational insts. <i>Incubator in 5-10 years if</i>	Incubator developed # new businesses # graduates, jobs created

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

	<i>financing plan; organize, market, and manage the incubator.</i>	<i>determined to be feasible</i>	\$ investment, taxes
5.6	Institute a countywide Leadership Development Program. <i>Research programs and success stories in similar Counties; survey level of interest among County employers, institutions, public offices; research curricula and develop one that "fits" Belmont County; develop organizational framework for program management; publicize program and conduct class.</i>	Community leadership, EDP, sponsoring civic orgs., employers who allow employees to participate <i>Roll out program in 3 yrs.</i>	Program initiated \$ resources generated # program participants # graduates
5.7	Create a County Expo Center to host events that provide an outlet for local business exposure	See Goal 10.6	Operating at margin # events, participants
6	Target Growth Areas		
6.1	County development authorities should develop a single catalog of available buildings and sites. This catalog should conform to State and industry standards for information presentation and should be linked to the State's prospect notification system. It must be housed in a site (including its location on the Internet) where staff will readily update information as site characteristics change. <i>Fact sheets, Internet, coordination with State</i>	EDP, LGO and local regulatory authorities, developers, property owners, developers, financial institutions, State officials <i>Catalog exists on Port Authority website</i>	Catalog developed # Sites promoted with complete information # hits on web site # resulting inquiries
6.2	Focus on sites that are either visible from or located within a short travel time of the I-70 corridor. <i>Overcome development obstacles, work with key property owners, publicize these target areas. Include specs for needed infrastructure in white papers; work with Bel-O-Mar, ODOT, State Development office, and other potential funders.</i>	Same as 6.1 <i>Continuous and ongoing</i>	# sites cataloged # hits on web site # inquiries # resulting new projects, \$ investment and # jobs
6.3	Overcome environmental issues associated with previously occupied properties in the Ohio Valley area, and seek resources to overcome hurdles associated with "Brownfields". <i>Identify Riverfront sites, provide State with information on them, initiate inventory/assessment of Brownfields, use the assessment to apply for funding for further assessment and clean-up of targeted sites.</i>	EDP, LGO, Ohio EPA, environmental consultant, property owners <i>Ongoing – takes up to 5 years to impact property</i>	# sites involved \$ resources to mitigate/ clear Brownfield sites # Brownfields identified and assisted # resulting new ventures
7	Market Belmont County		# new marketing initiatives # "hits" (suspects) # follow up (prospects)
7.1	Build a consistent message and brand for Belmont County that can be applied throughout the County and its communities. <i>Plan a branding effort for the County; determine degree of public involvement; brainstorm elements of the brand; develop logo or tag line; roll out brand and incorporate it universally</i>	EDP, community leadership, involved organizations and institutions <i>2-3 years until rolling out brand</i>	Brand established # people involved, engaged in the effort
7.2	Develop a state-of-the-art web presence to market Belmont County. <i>Select host organization; hire web developer/designer; develop plan to keep site current; include County info of interest to prospects; include information for households as well as businesses; include contact info and linkages;</i>	EDP, web host organization and staff; Internet consultant; entities linking to the web page; State of Ohio	State of the art web site developed # Hits, follow-up cases Business investment

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

	<i>consider social media (FaceBook; Twitter) accounts for the County.</i>	<i>Updated web site within one year</i>	outcomes
7.3	Address the tourism and convention market as an active competitor. <i>Action steps are included in Quality of Life section</i>	EDP, Tourism Board; LGO, owners/managers of attractions	\$ increase in tourism \$ increase bed tax
7.4	Host trade shows and conferences in Belmont County. <i>Identify/inventory venues suitable to house trade shows; coordinate with Tourism Board; Research organizations, trade groups, ass'ns that book small conferences that could be matched with venues; promote Carnes Center; Promote long range development of a new conference/expo center with easy access.</i>	EDP, Tourism Board; developers; private business owners; venue owner/ operators <i>Plan for marketing within 2 years; new center in 10 years</i>	# and size of trade shows
7.5	Practice "internal marketing" to the County's residents and businesses. <i>Routinely distribute press releases; promote special events; make presentations (speakers bureau) to organizations, civic groups, and others; use media (including Internet) to market positive aspects of Belmont County</i>	EDP and public officials; media; local organizations <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# press releases and articles published # presentations
7.6	Do not overlook the power of personal connections: Promote one-to-one marketing. <i>Use BRE and other visits to meet business officials and stay in touch; meet prospects at trade shows and scheduled targeted visits.</i>	EDP, Board members; LGO; volunteer R&E program participants <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# new personal connections # meetings # follow-up contacts
7.7	Actively support and participate in successful regional economic development and tourism marketing and attraction efforts. <i>Seek resources for tourism marketing; maintain/increase contact with regional development initiatives and tourism ventures (EODA, Wheeling area, Appalachia); work with regional organizations providing resources.</i>	EDP and Board members; LGO <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# cases of regional collaboration # entities partnering
7.8	Develop a library of "testimonials" from local business leaders and influential others. <i>Collect testimonials constantly over time as projects and events receive praise; use best quotations in literature, on web site, etc.</i>	EDP; Development org board members <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# testimonials
8	Organize for Economic Development		
8.1	Develop and adhere to a single protocol for working with prospects, and a single initial point of contact. <i>Determine core competencies and key functions of each entity and develop integrated work program that assigns scope of work based on complementary competencies and statutory functions; assign web site; assign site inventory to one office; research successful best practices elsewhere; work toward a "one stop shop".</i>	EDPs and organizations' Boards <i>Protocol developed over 2-3 years; co-location in 5 years</i>	Single protocol established and adopted by all Web site assigned
8.2	Jointly promote the concept of a coordinated and unified economic development effort in Belmont County, and the need for contact with the existing business base throughout the County. Gain local support for and understanding of the economic development process. <i>Reference guide to all entities describing functions of each; press releases and op-eds advocating need for proactive economic development initiative</i>	EDP and their Boards and client base; media outlets; LGO <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	Formalized coordination among entities established
8.3	Coordinate all economic development activities with the County and its local governmental jurisdictions; regularly schedule coordinating meetings	EDP, LGO	# quarterly meetings held # participants

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

	with all economic development practitioners in the County. <i>Hold quarterly meetings with all county/community EDPs; semi-annual "state of the County: reports; develop single annual "State of the County" reports on economic development; develop a "white Paper" listing priority economic development projects requiring resources.</i>	<i>Initiate meetings within one year; develop white paper over the next year for early 2012</i>	State of the county report White paper
8.4	Maintain a positive and working relationship with representatives from the State of Ohio. <i>Meet regularly with Ohio's economic development reps/officials; host meeting in County for state and federal officials (showcase county and its needs)</i>	EDP; LGO <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# meetings with Ohio officials # officials attending Follow-up outcomes
8.5	Meet on a regional basis with neighboring Counties to market the region. Build and maintain a formalized working relationship with other economic development entities in Counties within the region. <i>Establish/strengthen EDP's working relationships with cohorts in nearby counties; promote EODA; work jointly with others in Wheeling metro area.</i>	EDP; LGO; EDPs in neighboring counties <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# regional meetings
8.6	Solidify a positive relationship between the County's EDOs and the County Tourism Board; Seek new ways to work together. <i>Include Tourism Board officials in EDP meetings; incorporate info on recreation facilities in development literature/web site; promote quality of life amenities; promote development of convention and meeting venues.</i>	EDP, Tourism Board and staff; business leaders in tourism, hospitality, and restaurant business <i>Immediate and ongoing</i>	# cases of collaboration
9	Workforce		
9.1	Know and understand the workforce training and retraining needs of employers in Belmont County. <i>Collect data during R&E visits; note common needs, issues, and desired curricula among employers; create data base of predominant skills present in local labor force and "skill clusters" to be marketed.</i>	EDP, R&E volunteers, local businesses and business ass'ns, labor reps <i>Data base in 1 yr.; monitor and revised continuously</i>	# employers assisted Data base completed # gaps identified # employers assisted
9.2	Catalog all opportunities available to Belmont County residents related to the development of their general and industry-specific work skills. <i>Ensure oversight and access to programs; publicize single point of access; develop catalog of programs/courses; work toward coordinated program delivery and cooperation/shared programs among school districts.</i>	EDP, training/education providers, Connections partners, LGO, Education Service Center <i>Ongoing continuation of existing efforts</i>	Catalog of programs developed
9.3	Support and develop methods to retain and attract recent graduates and young households to Belmont County, and to provide rewarding careers and entertaining venues. <i>Info to high schools about employment opportunities; internship programs; use social networking Internet sites; promote quality of life factors; develop a leadership program of interest to young professionals; target graduates who move away with "welcome back home" events.</i>	EDP, education institutions, DJFS, other Connections partners <i>Continuous; ongoing</i>	# people contacted # events held # promotional materials and efforts Leadership program developed

Summary of Action Steps in Belmont County Economic Development Plan

10	Quality of Life		
10.1	Promote Belmont County's amenities, advantages, and image as a recreational and lifestyle center. <i>Inventory of points of interest and calendar of events, market themed "bundles" of attractions; support independent efforts to improve parks; support use of County Fairgrounds; catch interest of those visiting nearby Wheeling destinations.</i>	EDP, park and rec. depts., Tourism Council, Fair Board, owners of destinations, ODNR, Rails-to-Trails, etc. <i>Ongoing</i>	Inventory completed Marketing of "bundles" # increase in number of events held, \$ spent in County
10.2	Promote balanced stock of housing in all price ranges and styles. <i>Maintain goals of County "CHIS plan"; monitor rental housing and note market gaps; support "executive" housing development.</i>	Realtors, developers, builders, property owners <i>Continuous and ongoing</i>	# new housing starts # new housing sales \$ value of new housing
10.3	Promote the County's education systems and institutions. <i>Promote and publicize local success stories; support new and innovative programming encouraging partnerships and shared resources and encouraging new product research/development; bring concerns and interests of employers to the attention of educators; promote OU-E and Belmont Tech.</i>	School districts, OU-E, Belmont Tech, Career Center, Chambers, EDPs, Education Service Center <i>Continuous and ongoing</i>	# incidents of promotion of success stories # new partnerships and partners
10.4	Support the County's health care providers and advocate for new services and facilities where gaps exist. Include consideration of hospitals, doctors, clinics, home health, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and emerging amenities and systems. <i>Inventory health care facilities/.services, work with developers of health care projects; inquire about business health care concerns; spotlight health care at business roundtable</i>	Hospitals, clinics, other providers, LGO, EDP <i>Continuous and ongoing</i>	# events or materials promoting health care in Belmont County
10.5	Promote tourism in Belmont County and within its regional setting in Appalachian Ohio and the greater Wheeling metro area. Consider clustering entertainment and associated land uses (such as restaurants) in planned entertainment zones or districts. <i>Meet with regional tourism officials and discuss mutual ventures; promote regional corridors (Route 40 National Road; State Route 7 river corridor); cluster entertainment/hospitality in downtown or riverfront areas.</i>	Tourism Council, EDPs, LGO, regional tourism entities <i>Regional connections within one year; regional coordination within 3 yrs</i>	# Entertainment zones or venues established \$ expenditures in zones or venues # regional ventures
10.6	Promote and strengthen Belmont County's capabilities with regard to convention, meeting, conference hosting. <i>Research supply/demand for meeting and convention facilities in Ohio Valley region; use findings to determine feasibility of new facilities; partner with institutions and employers to determine how to most effectively provide facilities.</i>	Tourism Council and individual members, Carnes Center, hospitality industry, venues; EDP <i>Recognized regional venue within 3-5 years</i>	# events held in County # participants \$ impact of their expenditures in the County
10.7	Improve the County's physical image through the implementation of clean-up programs. <i>Evaluate existing local property maintenance and related codes; consider new ordinances to impact community appearance; organize and sponsor "community clean-up days", etc.</i>	LGO at all levels, law enforcement agencies, solid waste district, civic orgs, permitting/ regulatory agencies <i>Campaign within 2 years</i>	# clean up initiatives

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

The purpose of incentives is to sufficiently lower the cost of establishing, expanding, and/or operating a business in a specified location in order for that location to become competitive to the site selector. Incentives provide one cost advantage within the overall matrix of the cost of doing business, which includes labor costs, real property costs, taxes, energy costs, etc.

In some cases, the incentive fills a funding or financing “gap” that cannot otherwise be fulfilled, such as a loan to finance capital equipment that is only partially financed by owner equity and the commercial lender.

Another aspect of incentives is to fund public infrastructure necessary for the private investment to take place. Example: a new waterline to an industrial site that can provide the necessary capacity for their industrial processes; or a new roadway to accommodate truck turning movements. These are usually grants to the public entity and not to the business.

Economic developers work to match development projects with the unique blend of incentives that “fit” the project and its needs. Incentives typically entail grants (relatively rarely made directly to a for-profit business), loans, loan guarantees, tax exemptions, and subsidies for services (such as workforce training).

Note: As this economic development strategy is being completed, the State of Ohio’s economic development incentive programs are being analyzed for their effectiveness, and responsibility for the deployment of many of these programs is being transferred to a new private sector entity entitled JobsOhio. The implementation of Ohio’s economic development effort is going to change significantly over the coming months, and future contact points at the State and regional levels are unknown at this time. Regional deployment of economic development programs has been delegated to six regional agencies within the state. Belmont County falls under the auspices of a new entity, the Appalachian Business Council, located in Nelsonville. Progress at the state level can be monitored through www.development.oh.us.gov and www.jobs-ohio.com. It is also recommended that the local economic development offices be contacted for any updates on State programs and incentives.

Summary of Incentive Programs:

Grants to Business

- **Rapid Outreach Grant:** These State funds are for on- or off- site infrastructure improvements, including water, sewer, road, and rail improvements. Funds are often used for the acquisition of machinery and equipment. These funds are given to companies primarily engaged in manufacturing, research and development, high

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

technology, corporate headquarters, and distribution. Given the demand for limited grant funds, qualified projects must involve substantial job creation or retention, and all other public and private sources of financing must be considered before the availability of Rapid Outreach funding is determined. ODOD Office of Financial Incentives.

- **Roadwork Development (629) Funds:** These funds are available for public roadway improvements, including engineering and design costs. Grants are to the local jurisdiction and require local participation. They involve manufacturing, R&D, high technology, corporate headquarters, and distribution activity. Projects must create or retain jobs. ODOD Office of Financial Incentives

Business Loan Programs

Factors to consider: terms, interest rate, collateral requirements, minimum equity requirements, proof of need (bank turnaround or financing gap), state/federal prevailing wage, environmental review, loan review timing, job and financing ratio.

- **ODOD “Direct Loan” or “166” program:** up to 30% eligible fixed assets, \$350,000-\$1 mil, 2/3 prime fixed, 5-15 years. One job per \$15,000. Primarily manufacturing/distribution. First or shared first mortgage generally required. www.development.ohio.gov
- **Regional 166 Program:** Up to 40% total cost of expansion. 10-20% equity required. Max 15 yrs RE, 10 yrs M&E. Interest fixed 2/3 prime. Max loan \$350,000. Ohio Statewide Development Corp. www.osdc.net
- **SBA 504 Loan Program:** Up to 40% total cost, 10-20 yrs. Land/building, construction, M&E, leasehold improvements, purchase ongoing business's fixed assets. Net worth must be <\$7 million. Loans up to \$1.5 mil (\$2 mil if meets public policy goal) One job per \$50,000. OSDC
- **“Grow Now” Linked deposit program:** Up to 3% interest rate reduction for 2 yrs for bank loan at participating bank; one job per \$50,000 up to \$400,000. Must have <150 employees. State places compensating balance in the participating bank. www.grownow.ohio.gov Treasurer of State
- **Ohio Research and Development Investment Loan Fund:** \$1-5 mil financing, 50% of allowable costs (land/bldg, M&E, construction/renovation, soft costs) for projects engaging in R&D activity. Rates are fixed, similar to commercial. Eligible businesses receive dollar for dollar credit against Ohio tax liability up to \$150,000 annually. Must be R&D for new products, processes, techniques, formulas, inventions. ODOD Office of Financial Incentives; financialincentives@development.ohio.gov

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

- **Innovation Ohio Loan Fund:** Up to 75% of allowable costs, \$500,000-\$2 mil, in targeted sectors (advanced materials, instruments and electronics, power/propulsion, bioscience, IT) for companies with positive cash flow. Terms typically 4-6 yrs; max 15. Interest fixed at or below commercial (prime plus up to 2).
- **Ohio Enterprise Bond Fund:** Allows Ohio large and small credit worthy but unrated businesses access to national capital markets. ODOD issues bonds, proceeds of which are provided to businesses for eligible projects. Manufacturing, R&D, distribution. Land/building, M&E, construction, leasehold improvements, ongoing business fixed assets, soft costs. Finances up to 90% of total eligible costs, \$1.5 mil-\$10-mil. First mortgage/lien required. Max terms 15 yrs (RE), 10 yrs (M&E). Interest fixed and determined at time bond is sold. One job per \$75,000. Significant fees and paperwork. Same ODOD contact as above.
- **Volume Cap:** allows eligible issuers the ability to issue tax exempt Private Activity Bonds up to a state limit (the “volume cap”) determined annually for projects including multifamily housing, single family housing, exempt facilities, manufacturing, and student loan bonds. A tax exempt bond is a bond for which the interest earned by bondholders is not subject to federal and/or state and local income tax. Those investing in them are willing to accept a lower interest rate because they are saving on their income tax expense, resulting in a lower cost of capital for the borrower who finances with a tax-exempt bond. Same ODOD contact.
- **ODOD Office of Minority Financial Incentives:** Financing programs for Ohio certified Minority Business Enterprises, includes:
 - **Minority Direct Loan Fund:** \$45,000-450,000 for fixed assets, Interest 3%, terms up to 10 yrs (M&E), 15 yrs (real estate); min. 30% private financing required.
 - **Minority Business Bonding Program:** Bonding assistance to minority businesses who otherwise cannot obtain bonding. Premium rates determined case by case.
 - **Ohio Capital Access Program:** Encourages financial institutions to lend to small businesses and nonprofits that may not meet conventional underwriting standards by establishing a unique loan “guarantee” loan reserve account to recover losses from loans enrolled in the program. Max. \$250,000 for working capital, \$500,000 for fixed assets.Minority Business Enterprise Division, www.minority.development.ohio.gov.
- **Ohio Finance Fund:** This nonprofit State-wide organization located in Columbus helps provide grants, loans, and credit enhancements to economic development, housing, and other projects in urban and rural communities in economic and social

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

distress. The Finance Fund played a large role in financing the nearby Freeport Press project. www.financefund.org

- **CDBG Loans and Local Revolving Loan Funds:** CDBG Small Cities program includes grants to the community, which in turn loans the funds to a new or expanding business. Up to \$400,000 at fixed rate (currently 3-4%). One job per \$25,000 and majority of jobs must be available to/held by persons who, at time of hire, are in low to moderate income households. Maximum 50% of fixed assets.

RLFs: CDBG loans are paid back to the local community, and this program income is then available for new loans in the community's Revolving Loan Fund (administered by CIC). Same CDBG restrictions continue to apply. Determination made by a local loan administration board. CDBG and RLF projects are subject to environmental review.

Note: USDA Rural Development also capitalizes local/regional loan funds through its **Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG)** program.

- **OMEGA's revolving loan fund:** Multi-County development district offers matching fixed asset financing at \$25,000 per job; must include bank financing. Land/Building, M&E, construction, limited working capital. www.omegadistrict.org
- **Microenterprise Loan Funds:** Some regions or local governments have established microenterprise loan funds that provide small injections of capital for very small businesses. These loans will typically purchase a computer, or a sewing machine, or help with working capital. Micro loan funds are capitalized by an annual CDBG competition to public entities and to nonprofit administrators. The SBA also offers a microenterprise program that funds intermediaries who administer and make micro loans. Additionally, USDA now offers a "Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) that provides direct loans, technical assistance grants, and technical assistance-only grants to Microenterprise Development Organizations to support the development and ongoing success of rural microenterprises. Loans of up to \$500,000 to microlender organizations. Can be used for fixed assets or working capital, refinancing, business acquisitions. There are eligibility requirements for microlenders (training, experience, actively participating as an intermediary lender).

Loan Guarantees

Loan guarantees do not provide capital for loans, but by providing the guarantee, the government entity greatly reduces the risk to a commercial lender of making the loan.

- **SBA Loan Guarantees:** SBA has a variety of loan guarantee programs, and their process has become simpler over time. Must meet definition of small business

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

(actually quite large). Programs typically help financing fixed assets, working capital, seasonal lines of credit, inventory, and refinancing debt for compelling reasons. SBA typically guarantees 75% of a participating bank's loan if approved. Business applies through a participating bank. Belmont County is served by the Columbus District SBA Office. <http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/oh/columbus/index.html>.

SBA Programs include:

- The 7(a) program (up to \$2 mil; check with district office for interest, etc.)
 - SBA Express (minimal SBA paperwork and faster turnaround); up to \$350,000
 - Patriot Express (up to \$500,000; business owned by veteran, active military, reservist, Nat. Guard)
 - CAPLines (short term/revolving lines of credit, up to \$2 million, can finance seasonal working capital needs, up to 5 yrs)
 - Microloans (up to \$35,000 through nonprofit lending organization)
- **USDA Rural Development Business & Industry (B&I) Loan Guarantees:** Guarantees quality loans providing community benefits in rural areas including Belmont County. Projects include land/buildings, M&E, business acquisition, debt refinancing, energy projects, fees, inventory, and term working capital. Max loan is \$10 million; max terms y yrs (term W/C), 15 yrs (M&E), 30 yrs (RE). Guarantees 80% up to \$5 mil, 70% for loans over \$5 mil. Min 10% equity (20% for start-ups).
www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs

Tax Incentives <http://development.ohio.gov/Business/OTI.htm>

- **Enterprise Zones:** provide real property tax incentives for manufacturing and distribution businesses that expand or relocate in Ohio. Municipality or County must first establish a Zone and apply to ODOD to certify the Zone. Once it is in place, exemption on real property taxes can be up to 75% for up to 10 years or an average of 60% over the term of the agreement. (Up to 60% and average 50% in unincorporated areas). Maximum levels can only be exceeded with approval of Board of Education. Business must establish new business with significant investment; expand with investment of at least 10% of value of existing facility; renovate a facility if renovations exceed 50% of facility's value; or occupy a vacant facility and invest at least 20% of its value to alter or repair the facility. Affected Board of Education must be notified and has 14 days to respond (45 business days if exemption exceeds maximum allowable level). Board can waive the review period to expedite a project. Municipalities with income tax must enter income tax sharing agreement with schools if new payroll exceeds \$1 million.
- **Community Reinvestment Areas:** Communities can establish CRAs within which property owners can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. Community designates areas where investment has been discouraged. Community must undertake a housing survey within proposed CRA

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

and find that housing construction/renovation has been discouraged. Localities can determine the type of development to be supported by CRA program by specifying eligibility of residential, commercial, and/or industrial projects. Local legislature designates a Housing officer to review applications and serve as program lead. Real property exemptions on improvements can be up to 100%; for residential remodeling (1 or 2 units, up to 10 yrs; over 2 units, up to 12 yrs); residential new construction (up to 15 yrs); commercial and industrial remodeling (up to 12 yrs); and commercial and industrial new construction (up to 15 yrs). For commercial and industrial, percentage and term can be negotiated on project specific basis. If exemption exceeds 50%, local school district consent is required. There are School Board notification requirements for all proposed agreements. There are provisions for notifications under the CRA and Enterprise Zone program if project involves relocation of an Ohio business.

- **Tax Increment Financing:** This is a mechanism available to local governments to finance public infrastructure improvements by locking in the taxable worth of real property at the value it holds at the time authorizing legislation was approved. Payments derived from the increased assessed value of any real property improvement are directed toward a separate fund to finance the construction of public infrastructure defined in the TIF legislation. Can fund public roads, water and sewer lines, remediation, land acquisition, demolition, provision of gas, electric and communications service facilities, and enhancement of public waterways. May exempt from property taxes the value of improvements up to 75% for up to 10 years. School board notification requirements are similar to Enterprise Zone. With concurrence of School Board, can exempt up to 100% for up to 30 years. This does not provide payment relief to a business; it redirects payments to pay off cost of infrastructure presumably needed by the business to accommodate their expansion/location.
- **ODOD State Level Tax Incentives:** Ohio provides **Job Creation Tax Credits**, a refundable tax credit for companies creating at least 25 full time jobs (within 3 years) in Ohio; and for certain high wage industries creating only 10 or more. Tax credit is specified as a percentage of the state income tax withholdings for all new employees, and is applied toward the company's commercial activity tax liability. Projects generally range between a 25 and 55% credit for 5 to 7 years.

There is also a **Job Retention Tax Credit** when at least 1,000 full time jobs are retained and companies invest significant funds (\$100-200million, depending on wage levels).

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

- Other Ohio tax incentives include:
 - **R&D Investment Tax Credit:** commercial activity tax credit for all investment in qualified research expenses incurred in Ohio by eligible “C” corporations.
 - **Training Tax Credit** for employers that train existing employees who are at risk of losing their jobs primarily due to skill deficiencies. Businesses must conduct an eligible training program to correct identified skill deficiencies in existing workforce. (Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services)
 - **Technology Investment Tax Credit:** A tax credit for taxpayers that invest in small, Ohio based tech companies. Amount is 25% of amount invested up to max investment of \$250,000. (ODOD Technology Division)
 - **R&D Sales Tax Exemption:** Provides an exemption from the usual sales tax for companies that purchase equipment for research and development activities. Vendor needs a blanket exemption certificate. Significant tax savings for companies undertaking R&D in Ohio. Ohio Dept. of Taxation, Sales Tax Division; www.tax.ohio.gov
 - **Warehouse Machinery and Equipment Sales Tax Exemption:** Exempts business from state and county sales tax for purchases of eligible warehouse machinery and equipment. See Ohio Dept, of Taxation, Sales Tax Division.
 - **Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit:** Tax credit for the rehabilitation expenses to owners of historically significant buildings. Funding is provided through competitive rounds based on economic benefit and regional distributive balance. The subsidy is 25% of qualified rehab expenditures not to exceed estimates in the application. Must be construction costs meeting requirements of US Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehab of Historic Properties. Urban Development Division.

Other Areas of Business Incentives:

- **Workforce Guarantee Program:** Under the umbrella of the Ohio Workforce Guarantee, the Ohio Department of Development Workforce and Talent Division provides a customized training grant program aimed at creating and retaining jobs via the improvement of worker skills and abilities in expanding industries and emerging technologies. The Ohio Workforce Grant provides technical and financial assistance directly to employers engaged in worker training. The Ohio Workforce Grant has been used in a wide variety of incentive packages attracting and retaining Ohio jobs, but the focus is on targeted industries, and funding training that results in transferable skills, as evidenced by portable credentials. Targeted industry sectors include Logistics, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Bioscience, Advanced Energy, Agriculture/ Agribusiness, and Healthcare. ODOD Workforce and Talent Division, Region 10 (Cambridge).

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

- **Energy Related Grants, Loans, Incentives:**
 - Ohio Third Frontier Program: ODOD Technology and Innovation Division 800.848.1300; www.thirdfrontier.com
 - Other ODOD Technology Programs: http://development.ohio.gov/Technology/Industry_and_Technology.htm
 - Ohio Air Quality Development Authority programs: financing for energy efficiency and alternative energy projects. www.ohioairquality.org
- **Foreign Trade Zones:** Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) were created in the United States to provide special customs procedures to U.S. plants engaged in international trade-related activities. Duty-free treatment is accorded items that are processed in FTZs and then re-exported, and duty payment is deferred on items until they are brought out of the FTZ for sale in the U.S. market. This helps to offset customs advantages available to overseas producers who compete with domestic industry. Good information, FAQs, etc. at <http://ia.ita.doc.gov/ftzpage/index.html>.

Ohio Inter-Jurisdictional Tax Sharing Mechanisms

Ohio law provides for cooperative economic development projects between a municipality and one or more adjacent Townships. One option is the **Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)**, which often helps provide for water and sewer, fire and police, street maintenance, trash pickup, and planning and zoning services. JEDDs can pay for the cost of these services by imposing an income tax on non-residential property owners within the district. JEDDs allow for the levying of a district-wide income tax and provision of municipal services in the unincorporated areas. One or more municipalities and one or more Townships may create a JEDD to facilitate economic development. The JEDD must be located within the territory of one or more of the contracting parties and may consist of all of that territory. The territory may not include existing residential areas or areas zoned for residential use.

A public hearing must be held and the public must be able to examine the plan for the JEDD, including a schedule of new services, improvements, and facilities, a schedule for the collection of any income taxes to be levied within the JEDD, and a description of the land to be included within the JEDD. Documents must be filed with the appropriate County Commissioners, who must approve the creation of the JEDD by resolution. Under some conditions, a vote of the electors in each participating Township may be required.

A JEDD is governed by a board of directors, and powers of the JEDD include the power to levy an income tax at a rate not higher than the highest rate being levied by a participating municipality, with an amount set aside for the long-term maintenance of the JEDD; the power to determine the substance and administration of zoning and other land use regulations, building codes, permanent public improvements, and other regulatory matters; the power to limit and control annexation of unincorporated territory within the JEDD; and the power to limit the granting of property tax abatements and other tax incentives within the JEDD.

Another economic development tool is the **Cooperative Economic Development Agreement, or CEDA**. Similar to a JEDD, one or more municipalities and Townships may enter to a CEDA; unlike

Summary of Economic Development Incentives

JEDDs, however, a County, the State, or a State agency may also become parties. Creation of a CEDA requires public notification and a hearing process. A CEDA may have the following powers: provision of joint services and permanent improvements; services and improvements by the municipality in the unincorporated portion of the Township; provision of County or Township services or improvements within the municipality; payment of service fees to a municipality by a Township or County; payment of service fees to a Township or County by a municipality; issuance of bonds and notes by a municipality, County, or Township for public purposes authorized by the CEDA and provision for the allocation of the debt service payments and other costs related to the issuance and servicing of the debt; issuance of industrial development bonds and debt of a municipality to finance projects outside the municipality; limitations on annexation within the CEDA; agreements with landowners or developers concerning provision of public improvements; limitations on the use of tax abatements; and other specified powers.

JEDDs can be more difficult to create because they require participation of property owners, and may require a vote of electors. However, a JEDD can be powerful in generating revenue to pay for the costs of infrastructure improvements and services by imposing an income tax. The CEDA does not create a new or distinct revenue stream, but no approval of affected property owners is required.

Ohio County Profiles

Prepared by the Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning



Department of
Development

Belmont County

Established: Proclamation - September 7, 1801
2010 Population: 70,400
Land Area: 537.3 square miles
County Seat: St. Clairsville City
Named for: French: "Beautiful Mountain"



Taxes

Taxable value of real property	\$949,822,220
Residential	\$629,171,580
Agriculture	\$89,642,770
Industrial	\$36,169,460
Commercial	\$190,160,110
Mineral	\$4,678,300
Ohio income tax liability	\$33,220,505
Average per return	\$1,105.25

Land Use/Land Cover

	Percent
Urban (Residential/Commercial/Industrial/Transportation and Urban Grasses)	1.85%
Cropland	14.88%
Pasture	12.89%
Forest	69.55%
Open Water	0.82%
Wetlands (Wooded/Herbaceous)	0.00%
Bare/Mines	0.00%

Largest Places

	Census 2010	Census 2000
Martins Ferry city	6,915	7,226
St. Clairsville city	5,184	5,057
Bellaire village	4,278	4,892
Barnesville village	4,193	4,225
Shadyside village	3,785	3,675
Bridgeport village	1,831	2,186
Powhatan Point village	1,592	1,744
Bethesda village	1,256	1,413
Flushing village	879	900
Brookside village	632	644

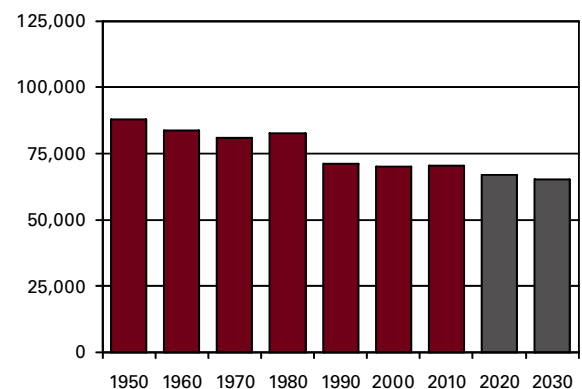
Total Population

Census

1800		1880	49,638	1950	87,740
1810	11,097	1890	57,413	1960	83,864
1820	20,329	1900	60,875	1970	80,917
1830	28,627	1910	76,856	1980	82,569
1840	30,901	1920	93,193	1990	71,074
1850	34,600	1930	94,719	2000	70,226
1860	36,398	1940	95,614	2010	70,400
1870	39,714				

Projected

2020	66,810
2030	65,340



Population by Race

	Number	Percent
ACS Total Population	68,372	100.0%
White	64,069	93.7%
African-American	2,705	4.0%
Native American	86	0.1%
Asian	307	0.4%
Pacific Islander	76	0.1%
Other	103	0.2%
Two or More Races	1,026	1.5%
Hispanic (may be of any race)	348	0.5%
Total Minority	4,448	6.5%

Educational Attainment

	Number	Percent
Persons 25 years and over	48,771	100.0%
No high school diploma	6,673	13.7%
High school graduate	22,379	45.9%
Some college, no degree	9,116	18.7%
Associate degree	4,061	8.3%
Bachelor's degree	4,377	9.0%
Master's degree or higher	2,165	4.4%

Family Type by Employment Status

	Number	Percent
Total Families	19,253	100.0%
Married couple, husband and wife in labor force	7,235	37.6%
Married couple, husband in labor force, wife not	2,926	15.2%
Married couple, wife in labor force, husband not	1,406	7.3%
Married couple, husband and wife not in labor force	3,111	16.2%
Male householder, in labor force	848	4.4%
Male householder, not in labor force	400	2.1%
Female householder, in labor force	2,199	11.4%
Female householder, not in labor force	1,128	5.9%

Household Income

	Number	Percent
Total Households	28,343	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	2,788	9.8%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	4,362	15.4%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	3,972	14.0%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	3,898	13.8%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	2,690	9.5%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	2,577	9.1%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	2,831	10.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3,064	10.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,608	5.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	383	1.4%
\$200,000 or more	170	0.6%
Median household income	\$37,753	

Population by Age

	Number	Percent
ACS Total Population	68,372	100.0%
Under 5 years	3,480	5.1%
5 to 17 years	10,239	15.0%
18 to 24 years	5,882	8.6%
25 to 44 years	16,983	24.8%
45 to 64 years	19,757	28.9%
65 years and more	12,031	17.6%
Median Age	42.6	

Family Type by Presence of Own Children Under 18

	Number	Percent
Total Families	19,253	100.0%
Married-couple families with own children	4,854	25.2%
Male householder, no wife present, with own children	695	3.6%
Female householder, no husband present, with own children	1,760	9.1%
Families with no own children	11,944	62.0%

Poverty Status of Families By Family Type by Presence Of Related Children

	Number	Percent
Total Families	19,253	100.0%
Family income above poverty level	16,862	87.6%
Family income below poverty level	2,391	12.4%
Married couple, with related children	423	17.7%
Male householder, no wife present, with related children	196	8.2%
Female householder, no husband present, with related children	1,099	46.0%
Families with no related children	673	28.1%

Ratio of Income To Poverty Level

	Number	Percent
Population for whom poverty status is determined	63,514	100.0%
Below 50% of poverty level	4,335	6.8%
50% to 99% of poverty level	5,422	8.5%
100% to 149% of poverty level	6,403	10.1%
150% to 199% of poverty level	7,280	11.5%
200% of poverty level or more	40,074	63.1%

Geographical Mobility

	Number	Percent
Population aged 1 year and older	67,742	100.0%
Same house as previous year	60,447	89.2%
Different house, same county	3,897	5.8%
Different county, same state	1,933	2.9%
Different state	1,354	2.0%
Abroad	111	0.2%

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Travel Time To Work

	Number	Percent
Workers 16 years and over	27,742	100.0%
Less than 15 minutes	8,195	29.5%
15 to 29 minutes	11,610	41.8%
30 to 44 minutes	4,283	15.4%
45 to 59 minutes	1,726	6.2%
60 minutes or more	1,928	6.9%

Mean travel time 24.4 minutes

Housing Units

	Number	Percent
Total housing units	31,508	100.0%
Occupied housing units	28,343	90.0%
Owner occupied	20,883	73.7%
Renter occupied	7,460	26.3%
Vacant housing units	3,165	10.0%

Year Structure Built

	Number	Percent
Total housing units	31,508	100.0%
Built 2005 or later	363	1.2%
Built 2000 to 2004	1,267	4.0%
Built 1990 to 1999	2,736	8.7%
Built 1980 to 1989	2,204	7.0%
Built 1970 to 1979	4,820	15.3%
Built 1960 to 1969	3,160	10.0%
Built 1950 to 1959	3,400	10.8%
Built 1940 to 1949	2,543	8.1%
Built 1939 or earlier	11,015	35.0%

Median year built 1956

Value for Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units

	Number	Percent
Specified owner-occupied housing units	20,883	100.0%
Less than \$20,000	1,405	6.7%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	1,935	9.3%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	3,064	14.7%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	3,518	16.8%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	3,239	15.5%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	2,130	10.2%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	1,609	7.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,826	8.7%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	1,611	7.7%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	419	2.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	100	0.5%
\$1,000,000 or more	27	0.1%

Median value \$82,900

House Heating Fuel

	Number	Percent
Occupied housing units	28,343	100.0%
Utility gas	14,513	51.2%
Bottled, tank or LP gas	2,106	7.4%
Electricity	6,323	22.3%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc	3,999	14.1%
Coal, coke or wood	1,204	4.2%
Solar energy or other fuel	114	0.4%
No fuel used	84	0.3%

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Gross Rent

	Number	Percent
Specified renter-occupied housing units	7,460	100.0%
Less than \$100	113	1.5%
\$100 to \$199	439	5.9%
\$200 to \$299	619	8.3%
\$300 to \$399	1,100	14.7%
\$400 to \$499	1,404	18.8%
\$500 to \$599	1,326	17.8%
\$600 to \$699	552	7.4%
\$700 to \$799	579	7.8%
\$800 to \$899	178	2.4%
\$900 to \$999	96	1.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	111	1.5%
\$1,500 or more	25	0.3%
No cash rent	918	12.3%

Median gross rent \$464

Median gross rent as a percentage of household income 26.6

Selected Monthly Owner Costs for Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units

	Number	Percent
Specified owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage	11,315	100.0%
Less than \$400	483	4.3%
\$400 to \$599	1,516	13.4%
\$600 to \$799	2,634	23.3%
\$800 to \$999	2,090	18.5%
\$1,000 to \$1,249	2,013	17.8%
\$1,250 to \$1,499	1,137	10.0%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	969	8.6%
\$2,000 to \$2,999	402	3.6%
\$3,000 or more	71	0.6%

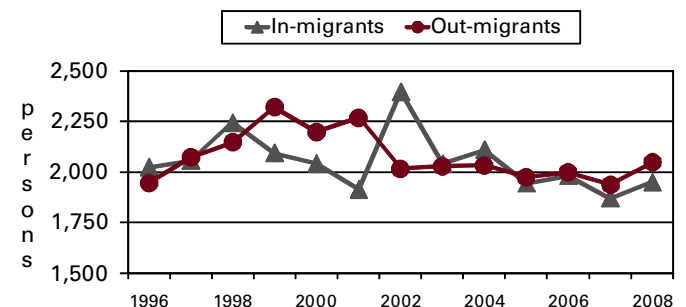
Median monthly owners cost \$899

Median monthly owners cost as a percentage of household income 20.2

Vital Statistics

	Number	Rate
Births / rate per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44	722	61.3
Teen births / rate per 1,000 females 15-19	87	46.3
Deaths / rate per 100,000 population	894	1,316.5
Marriages / rate per 1,000 population	440	6.4
Divorces / rate per 1,000 population	240	3.5

Migration



Agriculture

Land in farms (acres)	127,000
Number of farms	660
Average size (acres)	192
Total cash receipts	\$19,378,000
Per farm	\$29,361

Education

Public schools	23
Students (Average Daily Membership)	9,213
Expenditures per student	\$9,059
Student-teacher ratio	16.3
Graduation rate	92.9
Teachers (Full Time Equivalent)	591.9
Non-public schools	11
Students	931
4-year public universities	0
Branches	1
2-year public colleges	1
Private universities and colleges	0
Public libraries (Main / Branches)	4 / 5

Transportation

Registered motor vehicles	79,745
Passenger cars	49,353
Noncommercial trucks	15,335
Total license revenue	\$2,093,399.77
Interstate highway miles	33.66
Turnpike miles	0.00
U.S. highway miles	32.01
State highway miles	215.24
County, township, and municipal road miles	1,204.63
Commercial airports	2

Voting

Number of precincts	70
Number of registered voters	47,834
Voted in 2010 election	24,136
Percent turnout	50.5%

Health Care

Physicians (MDs & DOs)	74
Registered hospitals	3
Number of beds	306
Licensed nursing homes	11
Number of beds	893
Licensed residential care	5
Number of beds	201
Adults with employer-based insurance	59.8%
Children with employer-based insurance	63.8%

State Parks, Forests, Nature Preserves, And Wildlife Areas

Areas/Facilities	5
Acreage	19,040.57

Communications

Television stations	0
Radio stations	3
Daily newspapers	1
Circulation	18,792

Crime

Total crimes reported in Uniform Crime Report	800
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Finance

FDIC insured financial institutions (HQs)	3
Assets (000)	\$876,632
Branch offices	38
Institutions represented	13

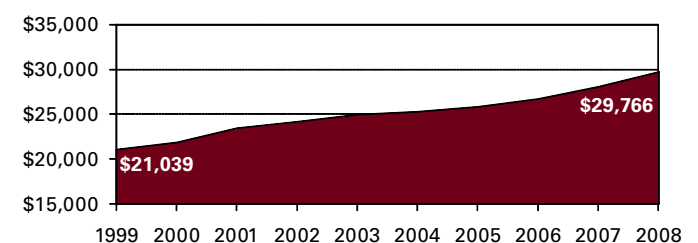
Transfer Payments

Total transfer payments	\$530,323,000
Payments to individuals	\$518,839,000
Retirement and disability	\$204,485,000
Medical payments	\$228,777,000
Income maintenance (Supplemental SSI, family assistance, food stamps, etc)	\$43,445,000
Unemployment benefits	\$8,694,000
Veterans benefits	\$12,132,000
Federal education and training assistance	\$14,240,000
Other payments to individuals	\$7,066,000
Total personal income	\$2,025,948,000
Dependency ratio	26.2%

Federal Expenditures

Direct expenditures or obligations	\$509,150,612
Retirement and disability	\$232,132,517
Other direct payments	\$170,142,075
Grant awards	\$82,650,129
Highway planning and construction	\$4,437,401
Temporary assistance to needy families	\$4,502,920
Medical assistance program	\$57,186,990
Procurement contract awards	\$9,447,334
Dept. of Defense	\$855,627
Salary and wages	\$14,778,557
Dept. of Defense	\$38,000
Other federal assistance	\$79,842,643
Direct loans	\$11,091,944
Guaranteed loans	\$24,631,757
Insurance	\$44,118,942

Per Capita Personal Income



Civilian Labor Force

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Civilian labor force	32,400	32,700	32,800	33,300	34,000
Employed	30,300	30,800	31,000	31,300	30,900
Unemployed	2,100	1,900	1,800	2,000	3,100
Unemployment rate	6.4	5.7	5.6	6.1	9.1

Establishments, Employment, and Wages by Sector: 2008

Industrial Sector	Number of Establishments	Average Employment	Total Wages	Average Weekly Wage
Private Sector	1,494	19,573	\$569,913,866	\$560
Goods-Producing	226	3,680	\$190,192,691	\$994
Natural Resources and Mining	25	1,316	\$92,755,487	\$1,356
Constuction	149	1,163	\$41,500,671	\$686
Manufacturing	52	1,202	\$55,936,533	\$895
Service-Providing	1,269	15,892	\$379,721,175	\$459
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	437	5,620	\$142,979,278	\$489
Information	18	469	\$16,663,050	\$683
Financial Services	144	1,143	\$33,888,723	\$570
Professional and Business Services	170	1,030	\$26,424,105	\$494
Education and Health Services	195	4,091	\$116,659,288	\$548
Leisure and Hospitality	150	2,824	\$31,660,140	\$216
Other Services	154	710	\$11,393,033	\$309
Federal Government		190	\$9,108,817	\$923
State Government		808	\$36,039,957	\$858
Local Government		3,181	\$96,867,215	\$586

Private Sector total includes Unclassified establishments not shown.

Change Since 2003

Private Sector	-2.0%	-2.3%	21.1%	23.9%
Goods-Producing	-13.1%	1.6%	37.8%	35.6%
Natural Resources and Mining	-24.2%	13.9%	57.1%	37.9%
Construction	-11.3%	14.8%	48.5%	29.2%
Manufacturing	-13.3%	-17.3%	9.6%	32.6%
Service-Producing	0.3%	-3.2%	14.2%	17.7%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	-3.5%	-6.0%	19.7%	27.3%
Information	-5.3%	-12.8%	5.3%	20.7%
Financial Services	-4.0%	-3.1%	14.7%	18.3%
Professional and Business Services	-1.7%	12.7%	3.9%	-7.7%
Education and Health Services	21.1%	-5.4%	11.5%	17.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	-1.3%	-0.1%	13.7%	13.7%
Other Services	-1.3%	8.2%	14.9%	6.2%
Federal Government		-3.6%	16.6%	20.8%
State Government		-2.4%	13.0%	15.9%
Local Government		-0.7%	10.3%	11.2%

Business Numbers

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Business starts	114	91	115	95	76
Active businesses	1,421	1,369	1,392	1,303	1,239

Major Employers

Barnesville Hospital Assn	Serv
Belmont Community Hospital	Serv
Belmont County Government	Govt
Belmont Technical College	Govt
Commercial Vehicle Group	Mfg
East Ohio Regional Hospital	Serv
Kroger Co	Trade
Ohio Valley Coal Co	Mining
Severstal Wheeling Inc	Mfg
State of Ohio	Govt
Wal-Mart Stores Inc	Trade

Residential

Construction

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total units	41	47	62	10	10
Total valuation (000)	\$2,338	\$4,209	\$7,334	\$1,525	\$1,522
Total single-unit bldgs	19	23	18	10	10
Average cost per unit	\$105,689	\$95,366	\$90,757	\$152,453	\$152,176
Total multi-unit bldg units	22	24	44	0	0
Average cost per unit	\$15,000	\$84,000	\$129,545	\$0	\$0