

Let's Choose  
Our Future,  
Not Just  
Let it Happen!

# Visions of Allen County **in the Year 2020**

**Report from the Allen 2020  
Visioning Project Task Forces**

A Citizen-Based Program of Allen County  
Common Threads In Cooperation with the  
Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce

The Arts

Economic Development

Education

Government Operations



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# LIMA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## Message from the President/CEO of the Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce



**Jed E. Metzger**  
**President/CEO**  
**Lima/Allen County**  
**Chamber of Commerce**

The Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce has worked collaboratively with the Common Threads Allen 2020 initiative on a visioning project to pave the way to a community vision focusing on planned growth of the Lima/Allen County community. The objectives of Allen 2020 are closely aligned with the goal of the Chamber to promote efforts to advocate a community vision.

To achieve the Chamber's mission of enhancing business growth and success, Lima/Allen County must have an environment that is appealing and supportive of companies which are currently operating here and new companies considering locating in our area.

There is an old German saying that you have to take life as it happens but you should try to make it happen the way you want to take it. That's what Allen 2020 is proposing when they suggest we choose our future rather than let it just happen.

Allen 2020 is unique. The Chamber has been involved in a number of visioning and strategic planning projects for Allen County, but never before has a group of interested citizens come forward and proposed engaging in a visioning process to improve our community. We are not aware of any other community where a broad-based grass roots visioning project like this has been attempted.

The Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce endorses the work of Allen 2020 and will continue to support the recommendations they are making. We encourage the leaders of our community to join us in this effort.

# Message from the Chairman of Allen County Common Threads



**Martha S. MacDonell**  
Chair of Allen County  
Common Threads

Allen County Common Threads focuses on developing the capacity of people to participate in shaping their future through local creativity and collaboration. Common Threads programs bring together people with different perspectives from all sectors of the Allen County community. Using a form of art or other medium as a catalyst, participants engage in civic dialogue on issues of mutual concern.

Allen/2020 exemplifies the best of the Common Threads principles. The members of this grass roots citizen team have approached visioning for the Allen County

community's future from many different perspectives and from nearly all sectors of the county.

Each of the ten task forces has engaged in meaningful dialogue, sometimes quite forceful, to assure a full understanding of various views to be considered in their visioning process. It is to their credit that they have worked collaboratively, listened to all voices, and are now presenting their visions of a bright future for our community.

For its initial phase, Allen County Common Threads received a grant from the Animating Democracy Initiative (ADI), an initiative of Americans for the Arts. ADI was founded on the premise that democracy is animated by an informed public engaged in the issues affecting people's daily lives. With its grass roots involvement of citizens working together to envision the future of their community, Allen 2020 exemplifies the principles of the Animating Democracy Initiative.

Common Threads commends this fine local effort in collaborative civic dialogue and expresses thanks to the Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce for their extensive support of this project.



# Message from the Chairman of Allen 2020



Lyle E. Gilbert,  
Chair Allen 2020

### Consenting Governing Bodies

### Support Teams

### Task Force Teams



It has been my privilege to be a part of the Allen 2020 project. The suggestions and recommendations presented in this brochure were developed by a very committed group of citizens from Allen County. Here is our story:

### We started with a basic question:

Is there a way we can all work together within the current government structure to improve our Lima/Allen County community?

This question was posed by a group of participants at the Allen County Common Threads Conference in 2002. The people involved wanted to form a grass-roots group to improve our community. They became the nucleus

of Allen 2020, a visioning process to explore what Allen County can look like in the year 2020.

### We found a new model.

Allen 2020 is a **citizen-based** community strategic planning process adapted from a concept developed by Dr. Don Lacy from the Extension Service of The Ohio State University. Dr. Lacy designed a process in which citizens from various fields of interest within a community work on special interest task forces to create a vision for their community. The task forces are coordinated by a commission comprised of the co-chairs from each task force. The Allen 2020 Commission and Dr. Lacy identified ten

sectors or areas of interest determined to be the basic building blocks of community life. Allen 2020 created a task force for each “building block” to explore how we could all work together to improve our community. Each task force developed visions for the future and recommendations for ways citizens of the community and elected officials can work together to implement these proposals. According to Mr. Lacy, a broad-based citizen or “grass roots” project like this has never been attempted before in the state or even in the nation.

The diagram above describes the Allen 2020 organization.

### We accentuated the positive.

The study and dialogue protocol followed by each task force was based on the “Appreciative Inquiry” process. First, task force members focused on identifying the best things in our community, what is already good, what works, the programs and activities that residents like and support. Then, they looked at ways that these “bests” could be improved or used as models for other programs.

### Task forces were comprised totally of citizen volunteers with the support of area public officials.

Led by the Allen 2020 Commission, the group first enlisted and received the support of the elected

officials of the county and every city, village and township in Allen County. Public officials from throughout Allen County were invited to provide information and participate as guests in the Allen 2020 dialogues but were not officially members of the task forces.

### Participants were engaged.

Over 150 citizens, representatives of many races, from all walks of life, young and old, residing throughout the county, came forward to work on this project. Some had never been involved in community work before. Some had many years of experience. All volunteered their time and talent to suggest ways in Allen County, recommend changes and create a vision

### Consenting Governing Bodies

- Sanction the process
- Nominate team members
- Receive progress reports
- Consider visions

### Support Teams

- Catalyst for the process
- Coordinate team appointments
- Coordinate training
- Office assistance - copies, communications and distributions

### Mission of a Task Force Team

- Function with “authority to explore” as granted through nomination by governing bodies
- Look at the task force area of interest as an essential building block for community life
- Act as a research and development group for the Allen County community

- Research previous studies and recommendations and seek ways to build upon them
- Innovate and develop new visions, explore joint endeavors and make recommendations
- When additional community input is appropriate, make arrangements and conduct events such as town hall meetings

- Provide written vision recommendations to the 2020 Commission for consolidation into community vision
- Understand that this is a grass roots citizens group with power limited to making recommendations

of what Allen County can look like in the year 2020. They said, “Choosing our future in Allen County? I want to be part of that!”

I am inspired by the degree of commitment from the task force chairs and task force members and very impressed with their work. They are truly vested in wanting our community to be a great community.

Many of the recommendations in this report have in some way been addressed in the past but many others are innovative and fresh. The new suggestions have never been addressed by any governing body and certainly not by a non-partisan citizen group like this.

### These recommendations are a first step. They are not implementation plans.

This document contains the visions of these dedicated citizens and recommendations for our governing bodies and our fellow citizens to consider and support as appropriate. The proposals here are the results of many hours of research, dialogue and planning by the citizen members of the task forces. After their focused discussions, the task forces suggest we work together to improve our community by choosing to plan our future now.

### We are requesting input and next steps:

The members of the Allen 2020 Commission are looking for responses from the governing entities of Allen County as well as other interested citizens on implementing these proposals.

### Thank you!

We are extremely grateful for the unwavering support and encouragement of Allen County Common Threads, the Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce and the many other organizations and citizens who supported this project.

### The Allen 2020 Commission serves as the steering committee for this project. The Commission is comprised of the co-chairs of the ten Allen 2020 task forces. The task forces and co-chairs are

**The Arts:** Brett Shingledecker, Jodi Sutherland

**Economic Development:** Emily Whitney, Anthony Woodley

**Education:** Carin Doseck, Lynn Sametz, Cindy Wood

**Government Operations:** Greg Berquist, Alberta Lee

**Housing and Neighborhoods:** Connie Miller

**Human Services:** Esther Baldrige, Gene Motycka

**Infrastructure:** Ron Miller, Dianne Wright, Don Wright

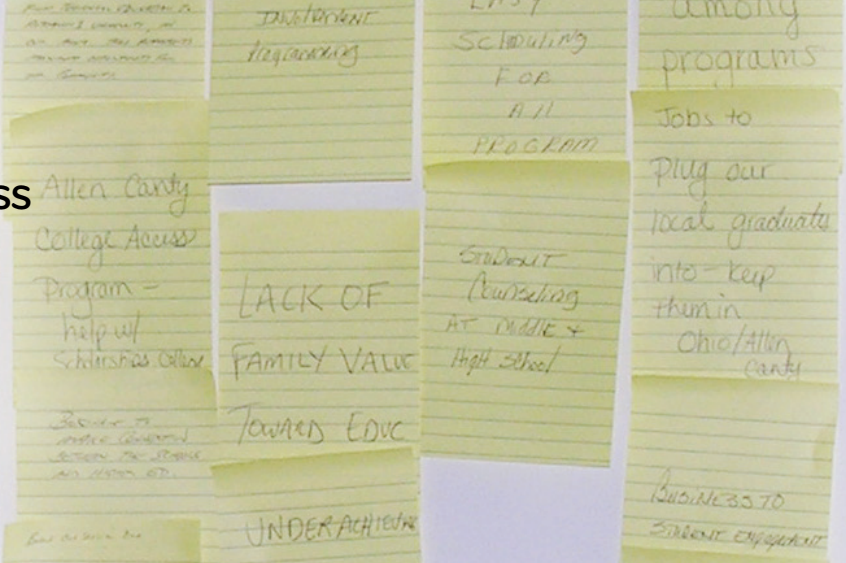
**Land Use:** James Bassett, Phil Kingsley

**Leisure:** Kevin Haver

**Public Safety:** Steve Hoverman, Kevin J. Martin

# The Allen 2020 Visioning Process

## The Five D's



# Allen 2020's Five Common Threads

## A Call for Collaboration and Cooperation

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The ten Allen 2020 task forces agreed to conduct their visioning process using specific dialogue tools. Meetings were conducted in dialogue format where everyone on the team had an equal opportunity to share their thoughts with the group. Allen 2020 selected the Appreciative Inquiry process to direct their dialogue and identified specific steps followed by all the task forces.

Each Allen 2020 task force was charged with creating a vision of what their topic (education, land use, etc) could look like in Allen County in the year 2020.

Task forces used a five-step planning process they called the Five D's:

- 1. Define**  
What do we mean by (the task force topic – land use, housing, etc.)? What does it include?
- 2. Discover**  
Identify the best of what is today.
- 3. Dream**  
Envision what might be.
- 4. Design**  
Identify what should be.
- 5. Deliver**  
Develop objectives and a plan for how to achieve what will be. (The Vision)

Using this process, the ten task forces created the visions and proposals in this report.

Five common threads appear repeatedly in the final task force proposals. The members of the task forces recommend that these threads of collaboration be woven into the fabric of the community. Participants believe that cooperative efforts will bring the Allen 2020 visions to reality. They challenge citizens and community leaders to make the following five common threads integral to our culture.

- 1. Practice collaboration, partnership and inclusion** across the county in public, private and civic organizations when addressing important issues.
- 2. Increase communication** among public, private and civic groups and citizens from throughout Allen County who are working on shared issues.
- 3. Enhance the use of technology** among government groups and also among community sectors through increased compatibility and technology upgrades.
- 4. Eliminate duplicate agencies** by establishing county consortiums that include multiple stakeholders for services such as public safety, human services, economic development, land use, and infrastructure.



# Choosing Our Future

## A Call to Action from the Allen 2020 Commission and the Members of the Ten Task Forces



**5. Provide public education and awareness opportunities** to engage citizens and foster informed decision-making.

These common threads of collaboration represent a challenge to all citizens, community leaders and public officials to cooperate in assuring a collaborative, informed decision-making process in Allen County.

We believe Lima/Allen County is already a **good** community, but we also know it can be better.

The Allen 2020 citizen-based task forces worked long and hard at identifying ways to move Lima/Allen County from good to great. We studied the best that we have today and what other communities are doing before making our recommendations for improvements in Allen County.

Many people and organizations are already working on projects to improve our community and much has been accomplished. Our Allen 2020 task forces found numerous creative improvement projects. We believe that they are making a difference and we want them to continue.

We also want the Common Threads grass roots dialogue and citizen task force process to continue. Using this process, we can all work together to do more.

**We encourage all citizens, civic leaders and public officials to study the Allen 2020 proposals on the following pages and work cooperatively to implement them between now and the year 2020.**

Everyone in Allen County should have an opportunity to work collaboratively and be involved in ongoing dialogue about these recommendations for the future of our community.

**Let's not just let the future happen.**

**Let's start working together now for a future we choose.**

## The Arts

### Working Together to Promote the Arts and Arts Education

- Umbrella arts organization to coordinate programming
- Arts/cultural activities along the Riverwalk
- Downtown arts and entertainment district



#### Defining the Arts

The Arts are defined as Performing Arts, including Music, Theatre and Dance; Visual Arts including the Fine and Applied arts; Literary arts, including creative writing; and Traditional and Folk Arts.

#### Vision

Arts providers in Allen County will foster a cohesive and collaborative network of artists and arts providers delivering vibrant arts and cultural programming to all citizens; support the delivery of comprehensive arts education to all area youth; encourage and assist multicultural understanding and respect for differences through the medium of the arts; and demonstrate the economic development

potential in the growth of the arts and creative industries in Allen County.

#### Proposed Actions

1. Position Artspace/Lima as an umbrella organization for the arts providing and coordinating existing and innovative arts programming not currently provided in the community.
  - a. Provide arts education opportunities in all arts disciplines, partnering with organizations, institutions and individuals with common educational goals.
  - b. Assist in providing funding for organizations and artists by researching fund raising opportunities and the creation of a united arts fund.
  - c. Provide communication and a master web site for the arts community and the public.
  - d. Establish an arts roundtable based on the Common Threads dialogue model for members of the arts community and the public to discuss the future of the arts.
2. Encourage and support the efforts of the Main Street Lima Committee to
  - a. Develop an Arts and Entertainment District on Main Street in Downtown Lima from Town Square to the Ottawa River;
  - b. Create the Main Street Artists' Community in the Arts and Entertainment District.



**3.** Develop arts and cultural activities along the Ottawa River walk for all ages.

**a.** Partner with Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District and Lima City Parks and Recreation to survey local participants and research events held elsewhere to build Riverwalk programs, including a cultural arts day and an ethnic arts festival.

**b.** Explore the dynamics of the river and target areas for installation of permanent public art.

**c.** Partner with the Leisure Task Force about the creation of permanently installed workout stations compatible with permanent public art.

**4.** Create greater and more diverse opportunities for art and performance by area artists and arts organizations.

**a.** Present visual arts and performances by area artists and arts organizations in partnership with willing and interested sponsors, businesses and venues.

**b.** Investigate the creation of a festival (e.g. arts or film) with the Civic Center Foundation.

**c.** Sponsor a Downtown Lima gallery hop in conjunction with downtown businesses, using the Columbus Grandview Art Hop as a model.

**5.** Research and publish an Allen County Arts and Creative industries economic impact report.

### Arts Task Force Participants

Brian Anders  
Michael Ayers  
Pam Ayers  
Bev Bletstein  
Cat Kouns Born  
Courtney Cassie  
Vanessa Damschroder  
Carolyn Detrick  
Marie Drum  
Sally Dungan  
Mike Huffman  
Tonya Hunter  
Lorraine Ignarski  
Tesa Jordan  
Jane Krites  
Catrina Macphie  
Bart Mills  
Susan Pack  
Jane Seiling  
Brett Shingledecker, Co-chair  
Jodie Sutherland, Co-chair



# Economic Development

## Collaborating Today to Achieve the Aspirations of Tomorrow

- County-wide economic development plan
- Regional economic development focus on Route 30 corridor
- Land use plan for Allen County

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### Defining Economic Development: What fosters vibrant economic development?

- An environment which provides the opportunity for the creation of wealth for the benefit of the community and all its residents. This includes the areas of agriculture, retail, services, medical, industrial and leisure and new job creation in these areas
- An environment which creates both the private and public opportunities for economic development to happen, opportunity to create jobs and better living
- A climate that empowers existing businesses to prosper and attracts new business

### Vision

Develop a proactive, all-inclusive and county-wide economic and regional strategic plan which transforms Allen County into the agile innovation center of the United States, providing high quality jobs for community members by the year 2020.

### Proposed Actions

- 1.** Initiate county-wide Economic Development Strategic Plan that
  - a.** Is compatible with the region to make it successful;
  - b.** Advances our position to enhance and promote this region;
  - c.** Will lead to a transformation of the region to reach a higher level of competency – economically, socially and technologically.

- 2.** Collaborate regionally on economic development under direction of regional development group.
  - a.** Promote economic development regionally along the Route 30 corridor.
  - b.** Promote regional development group to cities, villages, towns in Allen County.
- 3.** Develop land use plan for Allen County.
  - a.** Focus on retail industry and setting up regulations or a plan.
- 4.** Identify target industry groupings.
  - a.** Compile list of target industries for this area.
  - b.** Develop list of industries that play up resources already offered, such as agriculture, alternative fuels, logistics.

- 5.** Educate the public about the economic development strategic plan.

### Economic Development Task Force Participants

Phil Buell  
Alan Burkhalter  
Linda Burkhalter  
Bob Byrne  
Bonnie Cooper  
Jerry Good  
Amy Sackman Odum  
Rick Rosado  
Marcel Wagner  
Emily Whitney, Co-chair  
Anthony Woodley, Co-chair

# Education

## Creating a Community That Values Lifelong Learning

- **Commitment to lifelong learning**
- **Schools as year-round, full-service providers of community services and education**
- **Workforce development opportunities in schools**

### Defining Education

Education is defined as a seamless, lifelong process by which individuals can reach their full potential by taking advantage of many opportunities and resources within the community.

### Vision

Create a community that values lifelong learning by involving educators reflective of the community's diverse population, families, community volunteers, businesses, health and social service agencies, and youth development organizations to work collaboratively providing integrated services for children and families in school facilities.

### Proposed Actions

- 1.** Make schools a central access point to engage local residents from all backgrounds in an educational setting that provides comprehensive, year-round service and support through full-service schools.
  - a.** Identify a "lead" entity to spearhead this project, a body or group of partners, existing or newly created, that has the human and financial resources to work toward the vision of creating a community that values lifelong learning.
  - b.** Provide comprehensive services and programs to families and community through expanded/increased collaborations and partnerships.

### Education Summit

The Education Task Force held an Education Summit on November 1, 2006. Eighty-nine business and community leaders and school officials worked together to identify the core components for educational success and determined that Allen County should be a community that values lifelong learning. To achieve success:

- 1.** Partnerships between grass roots agencies, social services and business/industry are crucial to all educational development in Allen County that supports lifelong learning.
- 2.** Greater synergy must be created among all aspects of the community – health, social, physical, character, workforce and education.
- 3.** Schools need to become the central access point for providing services and resources in the community.
- 4.** Workforce development is critical to the quality of life in Allen County. It is the basis for economic viability over the long term and as a foundational element for community growth.

- c.** Expand hours of operation and expand/enhance services in schools to address common issues and challenges, such as mental health, counseling, medical and social services, adult literacy, neighborhood support networks, preschool and higher education.
  - d.** Create financial investment in community schools for infrastructure to allow business mentoring, technology, adult education and more in-depth services to achieve success in lifelong learning.
- 2.** Transform schools to year-round full-service providers of community services and education – that support families, workforce development, learning in retirement and year-round services.

- a.** Provide support for a major cultural change and transition in thinking to accomplish a transformation for full-use schools.
  - b.** Bring together the many elements that currently exist in Allen County to support transformation.
  - c.** The "lead" entity will bring all partners together to create and embrace the future.
- 3.** Position full-service schools to provide workforce development opportunities for all residents.
  - a.** Create coalitions of business/industry/education to address barriers and access issues regarding workforce development programs.
  - b.** Include workforce readiness programs in economic development strategic planning.

### Education Task Force Participants

Jeff Carey  
Bob Casto  
George Doyle  
James Cooper  
Carin Doseck, Co-chair  
Mary Early  
Sue Fickel  
Melissa Green  
James Harder  
Matt Kinkley  
Faith Lee  
Angie Meyer  
Lynn Moeller  
Ben Rose  
Brian Rockhold  
Lynn Sametz, Co-chair  
John Snyder  
Cindy Torppa  
Gayle Trollinger  
Rick Turner  
Nan Weaver  
Sue White  
Cindy Wood, Co-chair

# Government Operations

## Establishing an Environment That Facilitates Cooperation and Communication Among Allen County Government Entities

- County-wide commission to coordinate better communications among government entities
- Year-round trade show facilities at fairgrounds
- Collaboration to secure resources for Civic Center

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### Defining Government Operations

Government operations are the management of resources for provision of services to the community.

### Vision

Effectively utilize and manage resources and services by creating an environment that facilitates cooperation and communication between governmental entities to enhance the quality of life in the community.

### Proposed Actions

**1.** Establish a county-wide coordinating commission that encourages better communications between governmental entities and utilities.

**a.** Work collaboratively to improve long-range planning for utilities and infrastructure in the county, including the plans and activities of the cities, villages, townships and industries.

**b.** Form a county-wide task force to develop long range plans for infrastructure for the county.

**2.** Develop a coordinated marketing strategy to target and promote the Lima/Allen County area.

**a.** Encourage Lima/Allen County as a destination location for tourism.

**b.** Establish a project to promote the facilities and opportunities that already exist.

**3.** Cooperate in creating sources for future economic growth.

**a.** Foster expansion of already excellent health care facilities.

**b.** Promote growth of medical center of excellence complex.

**c.** Promote development of coordinated plan for central medical corridor.

**d.** Promote more emphasis on wellness programs.

**e.** Coordinate communications equipment for better compatibility with all agencies.

**f.** Establish an entity that could procure options for planned development.

**g.** Establish a clearinghouse at Lima and Delphos Chambers of Commerce to provide one-stop resource center for commercial and residential funding sources, permitting, demographic information, utilities, licensing, etc.

**4.** Collaborate to secure adequate resources to provide for needed operations of the Civic Center.

**a.** Promote more use of this facility by encouraging other activities in the area.

**b.** Equip the Civic Center with up-to-date technology.

**c.** Extend services for expanded support facilities (ex: develop Schnorf Building).

**5.** Establish a county-wide commission to explore future expansion at the Allen County Fairgrounds.

**a.** Build a larger trade show facility equipped for year-round use.

**b.** Double size of grandstand.

**c.** Replace some of the older buildings on fairgrounds property.

### Government Operations Task Force Participants

Greg Berquist, Co-chair  
Howard Elstro  
Kathleen Garlock  
Kevin Haver  
Steve Hoverman  
Steve Kayatin  
Alberta Lee, Co-chair  
Thomas M. Mazur  
Jennifer Lawson  
Becky Sain  
Bruce Wells

# Human Services

Partnering to meet the needs of children, families and adults in our community

- Permanent strategic planning committee for human services
- Allen County human services volunteer and mentoring program



## Defining Human Services

Human services enhance and improve the quality of life of all residents of Allen County so that our communities will flourish. Human services components include but are not limited to services which strengthen families. Such services include:

- **Employment**
- **Child care**
- **Access to education**
  - Traditional
  - Spiritual
  - Lifelong learning
- **Access to care – body, mind, and spirit**
  - Physical health
  - Mental health
  - Spiritual care

## Vision

Allen County human service providers will initiate, build and maintain collaborative efforts that support, educate

and empower all families toward independence.

## Proposed Actions

1. Develop a permanent Strategic Planning Committee for Human Services.
  - a. The Strategic Planning Committee will be the repository of data that serves as a basis for informing the community of the availability of services and the progress that has been accomplished within the community in meeting identified needs.
  - b. Explore and expand the footprint of the Allen County Family and Children First Council to include services for adults.
  - c. Partner with state agencies, local government agencies and community organizations to improve the well-being of children and families.

- d. Analyze other partnerships that could be developed or already exist within Allen County.
  - e. Secure predictable, sustainable funding for the Strategic Planning Committee.
  - f. The Strategic Planning Committee will encourage preventive services sufficient to reduce the level of services required, thereby reducing the cost of human services.
2. Establish an Allen County Human Services Volunteer and Mentoring program to match volunteers with community needs.
    - a. Services provided will include recruitment, comprehensive training, screening and placement of volunteers and/or mentors.

- b. Move Points of Light for Allen County to Allen County from Hancock County
- c. Secure sustainable, predictable funding for the volunteer program

## Human Services Task Force Participants

Phil Atkins  
Esther Baldrige, Co-chair  
Diane Bishop  
Donna Dickman  
Mary Early  
Tammy Gough  
David Harris  
Tom Holmes  
Marilyn Horstman  
Jennifer Lawson  
Gene Motycka, Co-chair  
Beverly Prueter  
Vicki Reindel  
Ken Scott

# Housing and Neighborhoods

## Planning Together

## for Vibrant Neighborhoods

## and Appealing Housing

- County-wide land use/zoning/development plan
- Coalition to guide housing development and neighborhood revitalization

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### Defining Housing and Neighborhoods

A neighborhood is people in a geographic area who are bound together by physical and psychological ownership, who share common values and relationships. Vibrant neighborhoods offer habitable and affordable housing for all socio-economic groups, safety and security, diversity, sense of history and heritage, well-maintained property, accessibility to community resources, and appreciating property values.

### Vision

Create by 2020, a county-wide process for guiding development that has as its goal the creation of vibrant neighborhoods that provide safe, habitable and affordable homes for all residents.

### Proposed Actions

**1.** Adopt a county-wide land use/zoning/development plan.

**a.** Specify projected development by geographic areas over a defined period of time for industrial, commercial/business, residential, recreational, and agricultural uses of land assets.

**b.** Recognize the value of mixed-use neighborhoods that provide desired and appropriate amenities for residents.

**c.** Discourage or prohibit inappropriate land use in residential areas as well as inappropriate residential development in rural or other use areas.

**d.** Encourage a broad range of multiple levels of housing county-wide.

**e.** Initiate a program for educating the public and building support for county-wide planning and the importance of positive community image on housing and property values.

**f.** Establish a process for continuous review and improvement of plan.

**2.** Adopt county-wide, comprehensive standards for building and property maintenance with consistent enforcement.

**a.** Develop a coalition of supporters and a support network who can work cooperatively to build momentum for a county-wide building and property maintenance strategy.

**b.** Attain adoption of recommended county-wide comprehensive property maintenance standards by all county jurisdictions.

**c.** Establish a process for continuous review and improvement of the standards.

**3.** Establish a quasi-government organization to monitor development decisions with the authority to create vibrant neighborhoods.

**a.** Create a county-wide neighborhood revitalization plan.

**b.** Bring together multiple stakeholders to guide, direct and coordinate activities and adhere to guiding principles of vibrant neighborhoods revitalization.

**c.** Encourage renovation or redevelopment of existing structures with the goal of establishing or revitalizing vibrant neighborhoods.

**d.** Recognize the benefits of historic preservation – value of investing in architecturally significant structures, understanding of our history as a community.

**e.** Address the dynamics inherent in areas containing diverse housing stock. Create quality housing through appropriate demolition, renovation, restoration and new construction.

**f.** Establish a non-profit organization whose mission is to renovate housing as Project Rehab did in the 1970's and 1980's, an organization that renovates 25-30 homes per year in a concentrated geographic area.



**g.** Create a program for recognizing homeowners and neighborhood leaders that exemplify the best principles of the vibrant neighborhoods initiative.

### Housing and Neighborhood Task Force Participants

Shirley Bindel  
Mike Blass  
Bonnie Cooper  
Connie Dershem  
Kelly Hackworth  
Rene Hefner  
Connie Miller, Chair  
Cindi Ring  
Chuck Schierloh  
John Schneider  
Mildred Stewart  
Arley Taylor  
Shirley Taylor



# Land Use

## Planning for Land Use That Enhances the Economy and Quality of Life in Allen County

- Comprehensive land use plan
- Cost/benefit analysis of public services
- County-wide utilities department
- Public information program on land use issues

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### Defining Land Use

Good land use is the efficient and economic use of land for the betterment and sustainability of the community, its citizens and natural resources. Concepts and strategies guiding much current land use thinking include but are not limited to sustainable growth, planned growth, sensitive design, low impact, performance-based development, resource preservation, conservation of natural resources.

### Vision

Have a county-wide land use plan in place by 2020 that

- 1.** enables individuals and groups to make informed decisions about where it would be logical to locate various types of development;
- 2.** makes existing urban, suburban and small town areas of the county more attractive places to live by facilitating redevelopment and infill development of deteriorated or under-utilized urban/suburban areas, and protecting rural and natural areas of the county; and
- 3.** optimizes Allen County's economic viability, life-style choices, environmental sustainability and overall attractiveness.



### Proposed Actions

- 1.** Conduct a cost of services analysis.
  - a.** Compile factual information about fiscal implications of providing public services for different kinds of land use.
  - b.** Inform public and elected officials regarding the costs and benefits of various kinds of economic and land use activities (industrial, commercial, low-density residential, high-density residential, agricultural, etc.) so costs and benefits of different land uses for today and the future are recognized and understood by area taxpayers.



**2.** Create an informed citizenry to participate in land use discussions and provide direction to elected officials.

**a.** Initiate a public awareness campaign targeting land-use issues. Communicate present land use and population trends, costs and benefits of different kinds of development, state and local fiscal trends, implications of land use decisions for current and future taxpayers.

**b.** Generate grass-roots participation in development of a county land use plan.

**3.** Develop a comprehensive land use plan for Allen County.

**a.** Create a citizens' task force for land use planning

**b.** Build planning on Allen 2020 process: Land use planning was identified as critical for the county's future by the following Allen 2020 task forces: Economic Development, Government Operations, Housing/Neighborhoods, Infrastructure and Land Use.

**4.** Establish mechanisms to conserve agricultural land and to protect environmentally sensitive land.

**a.** Because agriculture is central in economically supporting and defining the character of Allen County, establish measures to encourage agricultural enterprise, including a diversity of smaller scale family farms producing for local consumption.

**b.** Implement protections for environmentally sensitive land in order to avoid the tendency for development to diminish the overall environmental health of the county.

**c.** Collaborate with West Central Ohio Land Conservancy, Ottawa River Coalition and other organizations which work toward these goals.

**5.** Establish a county-wide utilities department.

**a.** Recognizing that decisions about the extension of water and sewage services are critical determinants of development in the county and that there are already strong interrelationships between the townships and Lima in the management of water resources and waste, combine the Allen Water

District with the Allen County Sanitary Engineer's Office and relevant permitting/inspection functions of the Allen County Health Department and the City of Lima; so that

**b.** Decisions regarding the extension of water and sewage services are coordinated and are guided by the overall county land use plan for development.

### Land Use Task Force Participants

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Shirley Davis  
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# Leisure

## Providing a Smorgasbord of Leisure/ Entertainment For All Ages and Interests

- Community needs-assessment of leisure opportunities
- Central leisure events information clearinghouse
- Use of public buildings and schools for leisure activities

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### Defining Leisure

Leisure is defined simply as what we enjoy doing when we're not working! An exceptionally wide variety of activities are included in the topic of leisure: parks, restaurants, health and fitness facilities, arts and entertainment programs, nightlife, professional sports, travel, learning, high-tech facilities and activities, school-related sports/arts programs. Home leisure pursuits include watching television, computer use, gardening, reading, visiting with friends and family. The top U.S. leisure activities are 1) watching TV, 2) reading, 3) socializing with friends and family, 4) shopping.

### Vision

Provide a smorgasbord of leisure/entertainment activities and venues for youth, students, young adults, families and seniors that showcases broad leisure opportunities, supports the local economy, attracts new families, retains young professionals, and enhances the high quality of life in Allen County.

### Proposed Actions

**1.** Implement a professional community needs assessment to identify centers of excellence and gaps in what the public wants regarding leisure opportunities.

**2.** Showcase the leisure opportunities Allen County offers by developing and consistently updating a compilation of all leisure activities and events available to the public.

- a.** Establish a central leisure information clearinghouse to catalog/track current and future events.
- b.** Market the compiled information through electronic and print media.
- c.** Create an electronic leisure opportunity site through Lima/Allen County Convention and Visitors Bureau with links to leisure provider sites.
- d.** Communicate especially to young professionals and new Allen County families the quality and quantity of available leisure events.

**3.** Develop economic incentive packages and target small business creation in the leisure industry.

- a.** Recognize the importance of the leisure industry as a quality of life issue.
- b.** Assist new leisure-based businesses with planning, locating, start-up financing and marketing.
- 4.** Make more efficient use of existing tax-supported facilities, develop a master plan for public use of schools and other tax-supported buildings for leisure activities.
- a.** Create a list of leisure uses for public facilities.
- b.** Target non-traditional uses and users for public facilities.
- c.** Develop user guidelines for leisure use of public facilities.

**5.** Pursue a comprehensive renovation and update of existing shopping venues and/or the construction of new venues to include leisure/entertainment facilities.

- a.** Encourage existing owners and prospective business developers to include leisure/entertainment facilities.
- b.** Identify new leisure-related businesses to be included in economic development plans.

### Leisure Task Force Participants

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Steve Little  
Temple Patton  
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# Public Safety

## Collaborating and Regionalizing Communication and Response to Improve Service to the Public

- Central communication center for emergency services
- Regional safety services continuing education academy
- Adoption of National Standard Thread for all county/city fire hydrants
- More minority personnel in public safety positions



### Defining Public Safety

Public safety organizations serve residents and organizations of Allen County by providing the means to maintain a safe, secure environment. Safety service organizations include: homeland security/emergency preparedness, criminal justice system, community service groups, fire/EMS, medical health services, and law enforcement.

### Vision

Enhanced public safety services for residents and visitors in Allen County will be achieved by organizations working and communicating together with the community to fully utilize resources and effectively insure a high quality of life and a safe and secure environment.

### Proposed Actions

1. Improve and consolidate emergency services communications throughout Allen County.
  - a. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a central communication center to improve response time and service for emergency service.
  - b. Consolidate six to eight current communications systems into two systems – a primary and a backup system.
  - c. Make communications systems compatible with each other and update hardware/software county-wide.

2. Expand LASER (Lima Area Security Emergency Response) to a regional organization covering Allen County and all or part of other counties as appropriate.
  - a. Request Allen County Director of Homeland Security to take lead in this effort.
  - b. Hold quarterly meetings of expanded LASER committee.
  - c. Collaborate on training exercises.
  - d. Make joint funding arrangements with the various participating partners.
3. Expand the capacity and response of health care systems.
  - a. Create district response teams.
  - b. Provide mutual training.
  - c. Enhance mutual assistance.

4. Establish a regional safety services continuing education academy for licensing and certification.
  - a. Establish as a joint venture with contiguous counties.
  - b. Develop requirements for continuing education.
  - c. Partner with institutions currently providing primary certification training.
  - d. Schedule sessions and class format to accommodate all work shifts.
  - e. Use internet site to schedule, track and promote training.
5. Adopt the Ohio Fire Code for use countywide.
  - a. Adopt the National Standard Thread for all county and city fire hydrants when they are replaced or added.

- b. Consider standardization of other safety services equipment subject to shared use.
6. Establish or expand recruitment processes to increase minority personnel in public safety positions.

### Public Safety Task Force Participants

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Jeff Ramey  
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# Infrastructure

## Improving Connectivity Among Allen County Communities

- Development of green infrastructure
- Expansion of east/west, north/south entrance way improvements
- Regional utilities department
- Public information programs on benefits of planning collaboratively

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### Defining Infrastructure

A network organized to transport products and services that connect people through a foundation of building blocks that provide a catalyst for economic growth, safety, development and public welfare, without which everyday life is not possible.

### Vision

To increase the desirability of all of Allen County by providing better and more aesthetically pleasing connectivity between the individual communities, townships and cities of Allen County.

### Proposed Actions

**1.** Promote the development of green infrastructure.

**a.** Create a network of bike paths, as open space corridors to connect existing parks throughout Allen County.

**b.** Complete proposed bike paths currently planned for county.

**c.** Identify funding sources, such as ODNR, ODOT T-21 funds, Clean Ohio Funds, Safe Routes to School funds, to connect existing parks or create new parks.

**2.** Expand scope of entrance way improvements through the community on all appropriate routes throughout the county.

**a.** Improve aesthetics, efficiency and safety of existing entrance ways, especially Route 65 and Hanthorn, Robb at Cole, Bellefontaine at Kibby, Route 81, South Main/alternative routes, Routes 115, 65 north of Lima. (Visit [www.bassettassociates.com/guest/BGCMP](http://www.bassettassociates.com/guest/BGCMP)).

**b.** Expand efforts of the “Keep Allen County Beautiful” litter prevention program.

**c.** Plan enhancements for Bellefontaine/Market to Woodlawn, Allentown Rd./North St., Route 81, S. Main/alternative routes, Rt. 65.

**3.** Undertake a roadway expansion program.

**a.** Facilitate increased accessibility and safety across the county with expansion/development of east-west and north-south corridors, keeping aesthetically pleasing green space goal in mind.

**b.** Develop an outer belt by expanding/improving Bluelick to Eastown, expanding/improving Eastown from Elm to Rt. 117, Rt. 117 to I 75 on Erie Lackawanna railbed, extend Eastown to Rt. 30.

**4.** Create a regional utilities department.

**a.** Coordinate and plan all utilities through a single government entity.

**b.** Combine Lima Utilities Dept, Allen County Health Dept. (permitting for wells/septic systems), Allen Water District, Allen County Sanitary Engineer’s Dept.

**c.** Consider steps to facilitate creation of a cooperative county government from which a regional utilities department would logically emerge.

**5.** Create a regional planning consortium for Allen County that

**a.** Encourages more non-withdrawal annexation that is win/win for all;

**b.** Encourages joint planning among entities for implementation of 20-year plan;

**c.** Collaborates to understand capacities beyond 20 years;

**d.** Initiates a public awareness campaign on benefits of working together and pitfalls of not collaborating;

**e.** Studies and publishes success stories from other communities who have done this.





### Original Allen 2020 Action Team formed at Common Threads 2002 Conference

This team led the way to the creation of Allen 2020.

Lyle Gilbert, Co-Chair  
Jed Metzger, Co-Chair

David Adams  
William Ackerman  
Fred Barrington  
Bill Blewitt  
Betty Bowers  
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Dianne E. Wright, Co-chair  
Don E. Wright, Co-chair

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- The Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce for partnering with Common Threads and for administrative support.

- The Chamber Board of Directors who volunteered to form the presentation teams that informed each governmental entity in Allen County about the plans for Allen 2020.
- Each Allen County governmental entity for their support and the many recommendations of volunteers to participate in the task forces.
- The 150+ committed citizens who volunteered to participate on the task forces.
- The dedicated citizens who chaired the task forces and served on the Allen 2020 Commission.
- The 90 educational professionals who participated in the Education Summit to provide guidance to the Education Task Force.

- Over 50 other members of county governing bodies, government agencies and professionals who served as advisors or consultants to the task forces.
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**Allen 2020**

**Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce**

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