



MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 10, 2003

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TO: Kimberly Gibson
Project Manager

FROM: ACP Visioning & Planning

RE: Stakeholder Workshop October 10th, 2003/*Regional Connections*

1. Overview: This memo summarizes the stakeholder workshop held in October, 2003. *Regional Connections* is the regional growth strategy for central Ohio with the aim of creating a common understanding of the dramatic change anticipated for the seven county central Ohio region (Delaware, Madison, Franklin, Licking, Pickaway, Union and Fairfield) over the next 20 to 30 years. On October 10th, 2003 the steering committee for *Regional Connections* hosted a workshop to engage regional stakeholders in a regional growth strategy process. The meeting lasted from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and consisted of an overview of the project, a regional trends presentation and two participant exercises to gather information from stakeholders on the vision and critical issues for central Ohio. At this meeting there were 61 participants representing all seven counties in attendance. They represented local government -municipal, county and township, developers, chambers of commerce, K - 12 education, higher education, planners, utilities, social service organizations, MRDD boards, housing authorities, faith-based organizations, health care organizations, farmers, county extension services, environmental advocacy groups, land trusts, parks, soil and water conservation districts, emergency management agencies, transit authorities, senior centers, convention bureaus and real estate

2. Purpose: The purpose of the workshop was to initiate meaningful dialogue among stakeholders from the seven county region on regional growth and development in central Ohio, and discuss the powerful trends impacting the region. This workshop was part of an inclusive process that also includes residents, and business and political leaders from the region. The workshop provided stakeholders from a seven county region with an opportunity to react to regional trends, outline critical issues and discuss strategies for increasing participation in *Regional Connections*.

3. Approach: The approach used for this workshop was a combination of stakeholder exercises and roundtable discussion. The participants listened to a presentation on the regional trends for central Ohio, and then worked through two exercises outlined below. The exercises were informal and conducted in a roundtable format where stakeholders could discuss their ideas with other participants. This dialogue was a result of, and complimented the exercises. The results from the exercises and dialogue were recorded and evaluated to assist in the *Regional Connections* process.

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4. Outcomes: The outcomes of the meeting were the product of two stakeholder exercises and documentation worksheets. The first exercise focused on the participant's reactions to the regional trends report, while the second exercise was centered on regional cooperation and participation in central Ohio. All input has been databased, and a summary of these the results are shown below.

Workbook 1

Question 1 - *In your opinion, over the last ten years do you think the quality of life in central Ohio has generally gotten better (+5), gotten worse (-5), or stayed about the same (0)?*

- Forty stakeholders responded to this question. The median response was 1.8, with 5 as the mode, indicating as a whole stakeholder participants thought the quality of life in central Ohio has gotten better over the last ten years. This response is attributed to the groups perception of a revitalized downtown Columbus the success and presence of the Ohio State University, professional sports affiliations and strong job market.

Question 2 - *Assuming that things continue pretty much as they are now, do you think the central Ohio region will be a better place to live in ten years (+5), a worse place (-5), or will it be about the same (0)?*

- Forty stakeholders responded to this question. The median response was -1.8, with -5 as the mode, indicating as a whole stakeholder participants thought central Ohio will be a worse place to live in the next ten years. Unlike question one, the stakeholder responses to this question was a reflection of high crime rates, declining school systems, urban sprawl, poor transportation infrastructure and environmental degradation.

Question 3 - *Of all the data and trends discussed during the presentation, which two or three do you believe are the most encouraging and which two or three do you think are the most discouraging?*

- The most encouraging trends indicated by the stakeholders were population increase, a strong economy and new job growth. The most discouraging trends mentioned were sprawl, the loss of developable land and farmland, traffic congestion, declining quality of local schools, environmental deterioration and a lack of planning and regional cooperation to control growth.

Question 4 - *What do you believe are the implications of the data and trends for the quality of life in the region?*

- The implications listed by the stakeholders revolve around an overall declining quality of life for central Ohio residents. As indicated by the stakeholders this can be attributed to uncontrolled land consumption, traffic, rising infrastructure costs to support an increase in vehicle miles traveled, poor air quality, and an increased demand and cost to improve social infrastructure (parks, libraries) and services (police, fire) to support the growing population.

Question 5 - *What important information, in addition to what was just presented, is needed for careful consideration in preparing an effective strategy for growth in the region?*

- A variety of diverse ideas were generated by the stakeholders to assist in *Regional Connections*. A summary of these ideas includes better land use planning increasing population density and encouraging land conservation practices, the need for strong

political will and leadership, the promotion of alternative transportation, reducing crime, utilizing available planning tools and resources and how to most effectively engage the public in the *Regional Connections* process

Workbook 2

Question 1 - *In promoting the concept of a regional growth strategy and encouraging participation in developing and implementing that strategy, what conditions in your county will help or hinder the process?*

Help – Political leadership, strong public involvement, available funding resources, strong public education and outreach campaigns.

Hinder – Turf wars and lack of cooperation among entities in the region, deficient funding, lack of public interest, no clear direction of what needs to be accomplished or what each counties role is, homebuilders building standards and ODOT's road building policies.

Questions two through five in workbook two were specific questions to each of the seven counties on how to engage their county in the *Regional Connections* process. The purpose of these questions were to identify key organizations and individuals who would support the process for a regional growth strategy, and to identify the most effective way to engage the public in each county. This information is being used by each county to organize county level stakeholder meetings taking place in January 2004.