

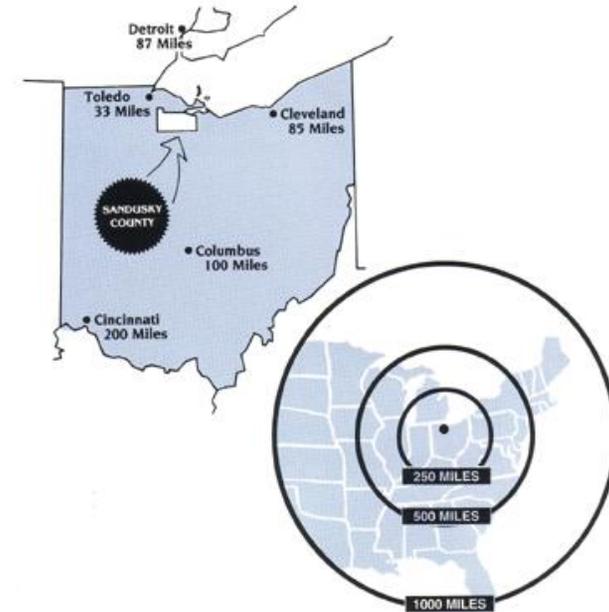
CHAPTER THREE

UPDATE 2013 –
THE SANDUSKY COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Since the initial Comprehensive Plan in 2003, the nation and Sandusky County have endured a recession that brought an economic slowdown and elevated levels of unemployment. Since the automotive sector is particularly responsive to the volatility of the economy, northwest Ohio and Sandusky County were especially hard hit. This has made the practice of economic development particularly challenging, and with a marked slowdown in development prospects, efforts toward the retention and attraction of the solid economic base throughout the County became especially important. In recent months, the level of economic activity and investment has risen notably amid hopes that economic recovery is indeed underway in Sandusky County. The County's economic development practitioners continue to collaborate and communicate, marketing the potential of a Sandusky County site for new or expanded economic activity. Today, significant square footage in industrial/warehouse space and acreage for new or expanded business development are available in strategic areas throughout the County. The reader is referred to <http://www.sanduskycountyedc.org> for specific site and building information.



The primary objective of this economic development chapter is to give public and private officials and County residents not only a snapshot of current and future economic development initiatives, but also to provide a wide array of recommendations and strategies to ensure that the economic development goals enumerated in this Plan are attained. Indeed, this may not come easy. To be successful, they will need to be internalized within each of these individual entities as they promote their own unique economic development attributes and initiatives.

This chapter highlights some of the strategies that can be employed to guide development to locations that are most efficient for residents and for businesses. The plan includes maps that depict planned growth areas, where development (particularly for new industries) is most logically guided. Economic activities (employers) should be considered within the context of the systems within which they operate. The *transportation* system should be adequate, safe, and efficient for employee commutes and for delivery of inputs and outputs. The *utility* system should be of adequate capacity to deliver necessary energy, communications, water, and sanitary sewer service without the need for significant new infrastructure investment. The *business site* system should encourage clustering of like businesses to efficiently deliver utility service, while minimizing the effects and maximizing the compatibility of a business activity with its neighbors.

planned, economic development should result in workable *systems*, such as planned industrial parks and employer networks, rather than individual *projects* with no coordination or linkage to a planned whole. A primary focus of the economic developer, of which there are several in Sandusky County, should be to work toward the design and realization of these systems.

Goals and Objectives

Economic and Workforce Development Goal: To facilitate the economic health and growth of Sandusky County and its political subdivisions by enhancing the tax and employment base, and the employability of its labor force.

Economic Development Objectives:

1. Increase Sandusky County's visibility to selective outside economic interests by continuing to market the county.
2. Enhance business retention and expansion (R & E) efforts that address needs of existing business, as the top economic development priority.
3. Guide future development within, contiguous to, or near areas with existing or expandable infrastructure and compatible land uses.
4. Promote coordination between economic development and capital improvements programming to ensure adequate infrastructure capacity to existing and new development.
5. Encourage the diversity and profitability of production agriculture within the county, and the preservation of prime farmland.
6. Facilitate the revitalization of declining commercial/industrial areas and obsolete facilities through redevelopment, rehabilitation and other available means; focus resources on acknowledged high-priority properties.
7. Promote the selective use of public financing, tax incentives, and economic development programs to attract new businesses and retain existing and expanding businesses.
8. Expand and coordinate visitor and tourism activities.

9. Continue support of organizations like the Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission, Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce of Sandusky County, as well as other county-wide and community-based economic development practitioners and organizations.

Workforce Development Objectives:

1. Continue and expand the cooperation and coordination between local, state, and federal agencies and entities engaged in workforce development activities and decision-making.
2. Expand Sandusky County's available talent pool of skilled workers, and ensure that workers' skills are matched with current job opportunities
3. Improve the employability of the county's labor force through the design and implementation of training programs and needed support services such as transportation and childcare.
4. Help small businesses gain better access to the workforce training system
5. Facilitate regional coordination of workforce training and education
6. Implement monitoring programs that measure outcomes and support accountability.
7. Take steps to overcome personal barriers related to substance abuse that prohibit employment.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Sandusky County has retained its primarily rural character, yet it remains a competitive location for manufacturing by virtue of its position within the Great Lakes "automotive belt", with access to the Ohio Turnpike (with three interchanges providing access into the county: SR 51 to Elmore, Gibsonburg, and Woodville; SR 53 to Fremont and Port Clinton; and SR 4 to Bellevue and Sandusky), and I-75 (a half hour west of Fremont). Rail access remains a locational advantage as well, bolstered by a commitment by Norfolk Southern Railway to maintain a regional rail yard in Bellevue. Local developers and investors have constructed successful speculative industrial and warehousing properties in Bellevue, Fremont, and Clyde. Further, considerable investment has been made in staffing development offices throughout the county, including the county's three cities. These

investments in dedicated economic development offices have played key roles in industrial, commercial, and service business retention and expansion projects, as well as new business locations and investment in the county.

Fremont remains the economic center for Sandusky County, with a variety of economic activities taking place within a mile's radius of the intersection of its Route 20 Bypass and State Route 53. Within this location, Kessler Industrial Park is partially occupied, Bark Creek Center Industrial Park is 80 percent full, and the Fremont North Industrial Park is nearly full. A County Service Center includes a "One Stop" location for the county human services and employment department (the Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services, or DJFS), and a host of retail centers (including a Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Staples, Applebee's, Peebles department store, Croghan Colonial Bank, and Lowes, to name a few) have been developed along the improved State Route 53 corridor, north of State Route 20 Bypass. The ODOT widening of State Route 53 from North Street to the I-80/90 Ohio Turnpike promoted a new multi-tenant retail strip center and additional economic activity. The elevation of SR 53 over a railroad corridor prevents this area from becoming continuously developed from the retail centers near the US 20 Bypass, to the vicinity of the intersection with the Ohio Turnpike, where new activity has taken place with the development of new hotel properties.

Another corridor of countywide significance is the four-lane U.S. Route 20, extending from Bellevue through Clyde, Fremont, and Woodville, where it continues to Perrysburg and the Toledo area as an improved, four-lane highway. Route 20 feeds truck and automotive traffic to the three Turnpike interchanges (via SR 51, SR53, and SR 4), to a number of north-south corridors, and between the county's largest communities. Significant traffic generators include the county's major employers (Whirlpool in Clyde, Heinz USA and Crown Battery in Fremont). Thus it is not surprising that locations adjacent to US 20 remain favorable to transportation-dependent businesses. Over the past ten years, the following have been observed:

- Industries in Bellevue have located within parks and sites adjacent to the US 20 west corridor. Added to this mix have been medical and other office complexes, and new retail activity.
- The importance of Route 20 to the west in Bellevue has intensified with the completion of the new campus of the Bellevue Hospital, an elderly housing development, and additional medical-related activities within the vicinity of the hospital campus on Bellevue's far-west side. This location makes stronger the link between Bellevue and Clyde – a few minutes away via US 20.
- As Bellevue grows to the west, pushing utilities and marketable land in that direction, Clyde's influence grows in both directions along Route 20. Clyde has installed traffic lights at intersections along the far eastern and western reaches of the city, accommodating industry (such as Gerstenslager Corp.), truck traffic, and related business to the east, and emerging land uses to the west. New growth to the west includes a hotel, several retail and auto-oriented "fast food" establishments, and properties that are being developed into mixed uses (commercial/light industrial adjacent to US 20, residential uses farther from the frontage).
- US 20 becomes a limited access highway as it bypasses Fremont, but the growth of business near its intersections (SR 53, K-Mart on SR 19) and its enormous impact on the movement of people and goods has been described previously.

- The US 20 corridor appears more agricultural when traveling west from Fremont toward and through Woodville, with fewer demands for new business activity.
- Significant truck traffic is evident along Route 20 as goods are transported to the Turnpike via SR 51, to the south and west via SR 53 and its link to US Route 6 to Bowling Green and I-75, and farther west on US 20 to the Toledo and Detroit areas.

Any observable increase in traffic can be attributed in part to improved access to nearby employers, including those throughout the Toledo region, and to a relatively stable employment base, with the SR 51 Ohio Turnpike interchange offering access to the western half of the county, Toledo and its employers, stores, and other points of destination are only a few minutes away.

The SCEDC website provides a list of major manufacturers within the County, and currently (Sept. 2012) lists the following:

Manufacturer's Name	Location	Product	Employment
Whirlpool – Clyde Division	Clyde	Washing machines	3,310
Crown Battery Manufacturing	Fremont	Storage batteries (wet cell)	570
Revere Plastics, Inc.	Clyde	Injection molded plastic	468
Heinz USA	Fremont	Ketchup, barbecue sauces	434
International Automotive Component	Fremont	Plastic parts, automotive	345
Style Crest Products	Fremont	Fiberglass steps, vinyl siding	327
Inoac Exterior Products LLC	Fremont	Injection molded plastic	250
Curwood	Fremont	Flexible packaging products	220
Precision Automotive Plastics	Bellevue	Injection molded plastic – auto	200
PolyChem Corp./Evergreen Plastics, Ltd.	Clyde	Recycled plastic products	193
Atlas Industries, Inc.	Fremont	Crankshafts	190
Martin Marietta Magnesia Specialties	Woodville	Dolomitic lime and stone	163
The Plastics Group	Fremont	Industrial blow-molded parts	135
Rexam	Fremont	Aluminum beverage cans	120
Green Bay Packaging, Inc.	Fremont	Corrugated cartons	117

Key Industrial Sites

New industrial activity is often led to one of several locations throughout the county. These are sites and industrial parks that meet the primary criteria of industrial prospects, including adequate water and sewer service, energy (electricity, natural gas) furnished to the site, suitable soil characteristics for building, adequate highway access, and property pricing. Many also meet the need for rail access. The following is a brief listing of industrial development properties that should be encouraged, based on land use compatibility.

- Fremont has marketed the Bark Creek Center, located in its northeast sector adjacent to the US 20 bypass and SR 412. This industrial park, developed with the investment of a local partnership organization, has 18 acres remaining.
 - Two buildings, of 75,000 and 258,000 square feet, are currently listed as available within this park. Suppliers include AEP-Ohio Power and Columbia Gas; there is no rail service.
- Industrial activity in Fremont has also taken place in Fremont North Industrial Park along the SR 53 north corridor, to the east of that highway. Utilities are provided by AEP and Columbia Gas, with telecommunications by AT&T. A Norfolk Southern rail siding serves the industrial park. Within the Fremont North park are:
 - A 126,000 square foot manufacturing building with railroad access built in 2008 and available for sale or lease;
 - An 80,640 square foot expandable manufacturing building with railroad access, currently available;
 - A building occupied by Curwood, Inc., where a 128,000 square foot addition has been built onto the existing 80,000 sq. ft. building in 2008, adding 50 jobs to their 141 employee workforce. This was a \$17 million project.
 - A two-acre parcel and a three-acre parcel are available for commercial/retail development along the S.R. 53 frontage; further, two three-acre parcels south of Hagerty Drive are available for industrial development.
- Previously developed Fremont industrial parks that are at or near capacity include the Riverview Industrial Park on Majestic Drive (45 acres total) and Kessler Industrial Park on Commerce Drive (172 acres total, 5 acres available).
- The City of Clyde has focused on the development of a commercial/industrial park on its eastern edge, with access to rail and highway. Improvements to the industrial park have included upgraded roadway access and a 500,000-gallon water storage tank. The site is also served by twelve-inch water and sanitary sewer lines, and Norfolk Southern Railroad offers rail access. This area, the Clyde Commerce Park, includes 370 acres zoned for industrial use.
 - Within the industrial park is a new 75,000 square foot building currently being marketed with local tax and utility (including municipal electricity distribution) incentives? Specific sites within the park are flexible in size, with sites between 5 and 269 acres available. Electricity is supplied by Clyde Light and Power, gas by Columbia Gas of Ohio, and rail available through Norfolk Southern. The park is within a quarter-mile of US Route 20. Also available is the Progress Industrial Park that can be developed at US 20 and SR 510, with 100 acres available.
- Clyde's newest industrial park is called Norwest. Roadway and infrastructure will be completed in summer 2003. This park is located near a commercially zoned area along Route 20.

- The City of Bellevue has accommodated new development in several locations radiating from the center of the city. These include property adjacent to SR 269 straddling the Sandusky-Huron County line on the south edge of the city, a 53-acre industrial park within Huron County in the city's northeastern quadrant which is served by infrastructure through a combination of federal and state grants, and (most important for purposes of this document) continued growth along the US 20 corridor extending west into Sandusky County, as described previously. Along this latter corridor, an industrial area was developed between SR 20 to the north and the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks to the south. A number of significant industrial investments have been made within this area, and the City invested in one such property at the time that a manufacturer left their Bellevue location, purchasing the property and converting it to a City Hall, police and recreation headquarters, and other municipal facilities. This has helped establish the western end of the city as a center of growth for industrial, office, and commercial growth. A number of investments in new commercial and office (primarily medical) space has followed along Route 20 West, and with the extension of utilities further west, continued westward development is likely.
 - An 81,000 square foot building and 40,000 square foot building are being marketed within this area, the Bellevue Hospital relocated to a new campus on the west side, and residential development has occurred within close proximity of the US 20 corridor. Utility suppliers in this area include First Energy (Ohio Edison) and Columbia Gas, and rail service is available to portions of this area by Norfolk Southern.⁶⁰
- The Village of Gibsonburg continues to market certain sites for industrial development, including a potential industrial park on the eastern edge of town along SR 600, as well as the Creekwood Farms development, where 220 acres were annexed to the Village and zoned industrial. Some 60 acres are available in this vicinity, with electricity available from First Energy (Toledo Edison) and natural gas from Columbia Gas. However, a sanitary sewer extension of 1,600 feet is required to further develop the site as an industrial park. An additional five-acre site is available on S. Windsor Drive for commercial activity. An annexed area on the north side also offers potential for manufacturing activity, bolstered by the proximity of three quarries holding some five billion gallons of raw water.
- Economic development officials have worked to develop and market prime properties within close proximity of the Sandusky County Regional Airport south of US 20 in Green Creek Township. A new strategic plan and vision for the airport is currently being developed. A water line extending in the vicinity of the airport, delivering water to Green Springs from the City of Clyde has increased the potential for development of the area. The airport is viewed as a significant attractor for air-related or dependent business. It features a 5,500-foot concrete runway, 100 feet wide, with a Unicom 123.05 and Sandusky VOR approach. An air ambulance and their staff are now based at the airport, servicing Northwest Ohio's emergency needs. Recent expansion of the airport included construction of an East parallel taxiway (1,822' x 35'), improving the safety and capacity of aircraft operations on the runway.



The Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation, in partnership with the Sandusky County Regional Airport Authority, is targeting and soliciting aviation support related businesses for the Airport Industrial Park. Land uses most compatible with airports are those that have low sensitivity to noise, require minimal human interaction with the surrounding environment, and have a complementary relationship with the airport's facilities.

Most commercial-industrial uses, especially those associated with but not limited to the airport, are good neighbors. Land uses for which the airport may create the demand, such as motels, restaurants, warehouses, shipping agencies, aircraft-related industries, and other industries that benefit from access to an airport are also compatible land uses.

Examples of Targeted Aviation-Related Businesses

Fixed Base Operator	Trucking Terminals
Air Freight Terminals and Air Cargo Forwarders	Car Rental Agencies
Aircraft & Parts Manufacturers and Aircraft Repair Shops	Restaurants and motels
Aerial Survey Companies	Storage Facilities and Warehouses
Aviation Research & Testing	Wholesale Distribution Center

- In general, industrial activity has occurred along corridors formed by major highways on the edge of the county's larger municipalities. Several of these corridors have been described previously. Such activity has been especially prevalent when other factors are present, including an active property owner or developer, access to a rail spur, access to utilities, proper zoning already in place, and availability of development incentives such as Enterprise Zone or Community Reinvestment Area property tax incentives. Such industrial corridors include:
 - State Route 53 north of Fremont, extending from the US 20 bypass north toward the Ohio Turnpike. Industrial activity has been confined to the eastern side of the SR 53 corridor, with service roads relieving congestion from SR 53 to a degree.
 - US 20 west of Bellevue, where a series of industrial parks and areas have been developed south of that highway. The campus for the relocated Bellevue Hospital west of CR 302 and north of US 20 provides further impetus for mixed development in this area.
 - US 20, both east and west of the City of Clyde. Development has radiated in both directions, to the point that the City has installed traffic control lights at the intersections of US 20 with CR 260 to the east and CR 236 to the west. A mix of industrial, warehousing, and

commercial development has continued to the present, and infrastructure is being installed for further such development at the western edge of the city.

- Further economic development along the US 20 corridor on the eastern and western edges of Fremont is likely, if sites are served with adequate water and sewer service. Another likely corridor for further development is the Hayes Avenue/US 6 arterial corridor west of the city.
 - AMP (American Municipal Power) purchased the Fremont Energy Center, an energy generation facility, in July 2011 and oversaw completion of construction along with the start-up and commissioning activities. The facility began commercial operation and provides power to AMP members in seven states.
- Finally, while the opening of an interchange for the Ohio Turnpike on SR 51 just south of the village of Elmore in Ottawa County a decade ago did not bring significant economic development within its immediate vicinity, including properties to the south in Sandusky County, this access point to the Interstate system still presents an opportunity to the western portion of Sandusky County for further development. Bridging the turnpike with infrastructure has posed a significant barrier to development, but access to developed sites further south in Gibsonburg and Woodville increases the potential for new activity in those areas. In 2008, the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation and the Ottawa County Community Improvement Corporation brought together officials from Harris and Woodville Townships, the Village of Elmore, and Ottawa and Sandusky County Commissioners to prepare for a proposed industrial development site at the Ohio Turnpike/Route 51 interchange. The economic development officials and local jurisdictions have created a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) agreement that allows for the sharing of revenues and expenses associated with the proposed future industrial park development. Along with this “Sugar Creek JEDD” agreement, a mutual aid agreement has also been drafted among the townships to provide necessary emergency services.

Retail and Commercial Activity

Neighborhood shops and central business districts have felt the impact of urban-edge strip developments and big-box retailers whose location decisions revolve around highway access in all directions. As a result, central business districts such as Bellevue’s have witnessed an attrition of retail business, with resulting service or niche retail replacements or, worse yet, vacant storefronts. Clyde and Fremont have managed to retain mixes of retail and service business, but maintaining the importance of the downtown remains a daunting task.

Fremont has improved its position as a retail and commercial center for a market area that includes, minimally, all of Sandusky County and contiguous counties. The SR 53 North corridor has attracted an ever-increasing mix of regional and national branch and franchise businesses, including several restaurants ranging from McDonalds to Applebee’s, a hotel, retail anchors Wal-Mart and Lowes (with a Super K-Mart one exit to the west along US 20), and numerous smaller retail enterprises leasing space in a number of strip developments. SR 53 north has essentially replaced East State Street’s retail center, with a number of enterprises relocating from the latter to the former. Ease of access from the north (SR 53), east

and west (US 20, Turnpike) and south (the City of Fremont, via SR 53) has hastened its regional role, which is expected to continue. Five acres are available for retail/commercial development.

Commercial activity has grown along the US 20 corridor from Bellevue at the eastern edge of the county westward through Clyde and toward Fremont. Development along this corridor is only limited by the degree to which infrastructure can be extended to available sites. From the edge of the Bellevue residential district westward, industrial development to the south has been complemented with commercial and office developments, including one strip facility that has recently been expanded to accommodate more businesses. Within the expanded borders of Clyde, new businesses over the past decade have included a trucking and warehousing facility, two new fast food franchises, a new bank branch, and a hotel, with plans for further development, including a pharmacy.

Proximity to Memorial Health Care System has led to the construction of a number of ancillary medical facilities and doctors' offices along Hayes Avenue west of Fremont, and the hospital itself has been expanded with the construction of a surgery center, and in 2007, the Herbert-Perna Center for Physical Health, a 29,000 square foot facility housing physical and occupational health services. Additionally, Memorial Health Care System has merged with ProMedica. The relocation of Bellevue Hospital to a new campus west of town on US 20 at CR 302 is leading to the development of similar new facilities within close range of that campus, further building out the Route 20 corridor between Bellevue and Clyde. In addition, Elmwood Communities has purchased and now manages the former St. Francis Health Care Centre, a specialty hospital offering long term acute care, with the hospital now a part of the west campus of Elmwood at the Springs.

Central Business Districts have withstood the emergence of new commercial and service activity on cities' edges to a varying degree. Fremont's downtown is largely occupied by a mixture of service and niche retail businesses, with a relatively low vacancy rate. Fremont's downtown has been bolstered by the City's investment in physical revitalization and streetscape improvements in a target area along South Front Street, as well as an active and staffed Downtown Fremont Program that adheres to the National Main Street Center's four-point program addressing organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. In addition to the central business district, whose focal point is centered along Front Street, a larger number of retail and service enterprises exist along the east-west State Street corridor, accessed primarily by automobile. This corridor, which served as US Route 20 and a major route to the west before the bypass was constructed to the north, has changed with the loss of the US 20 designation and significant through traffic, but has maintained its importance with a mix of services and products for Fremont and Sandusky County residents. Establishments range from niche markets (photography, computers, clocks, furniture) to automotive-oriented businesses (gasoline and convenience stores) and restaurants. Businesses dot virtually every block of State Street from the eastern to western boundaries. The exception is the commercial area that formerly housed two discount department stores and a number of specialty shops in two major shopping centers. These centers now have several vacancies, due largely to competition from the emergent SR 53 area, and it will take a major effort to revitalize and reinvent this area and its formidable structures.

Bellevue's central business district has witnessed a major conversion from a retail center to a cluster of services, restaurants, and niche retail, suffering from inordinate truck traffic on US 20, which traverses through the central business district from east to west. Vacancy rates are relatively low in Bellevue's downtown, but some vacancies continue to exist, and there has been some movement of businesses to alternative locations on the edge of town. However, a hardware store remains as a retail "anchor", and two pharmacies along with several restaurants and personal and business services (attorneys, accounting, insurance, travel, Realtor) remain active in the downtown. Larger retail concerns continue throughout the US 20 corridor.

Clyde's downtown continues to remain viable, still benefiting from a physical revitalization effort undertaken in the 1980s. A mix of retail, service, and restaurant businesses continues to serve this community, with a second concentration of retail and service activity along the US 20 corridor some three blocks north of and perpendicular to the central business district. An example of the importance of that corridor is the existence of two pharmacies along Route 20 and the recent opening of a new automotive parts store.

The smaller communities of Gibsonburg, Woodville, and Green Springs maintain central business districts that serve the immediate and convenience needs of their residents. Businesses include grocery stores, convenience stores, bank branches, and restaurants. With the regionalization of more substantial retail businesses, and the predominance of the automobile in rural life, it is unlikely that these smaller communities will be able to expand their downtown business communities substantially, unless specific businesses such as a specialty restaurant or a "critical mass" of niche businesses can attract outside attention.

Agriculture

Sandusky County is clearly an agricultural county. As is typical around the country, the number of farms has decreased over time, from 802 in the 2002 Census of Agriculture to 781 in the 2007 (most recent) Census. The number of acres in farms also decreased, from 196,152 acres in 2002 to 181,337 in 2007. The average size of a farm also decreased, slightly, from 245 acres in 2002 to 232 acres in 2007. This runs counter to recent trends, where the average farm grew in size to achieve economies of scale in order to reach sufficient sales and profitability. In 2007, there were 334 farms of under 50 acres, 213 with 50 to 179 acres, 126 of 180 to 499 acres, 63 of 500 to 999 acres, and 45 farms of 1,000 acres or more. Cropland in Sandusky County totaled 167,236 acres, of which 162,358 acres were harvested cropland.

The average market value of land and buildings increased from \$593,891 in 2002 to \$717,040 in 2007. The market value of product sold was \$79,297,000 in 2007, up from \$51,045,000 in 2002; sales per farm were \$101,533 in 2007, also a big increase over \$63,647 in 2002. About 93 percent of the 2007 sales were from crops (\$74,104,000) with only \$5,193,000 from livestock, poultry, and their products. Major crops included soybeans for beans (74,424 acres), corn for grain (64,515 acres), and wheat for grain including winter wheat (15,953 acres). Land used for hay and all hayage, grass silage, and greenchop totaled 4,719 acres, and vegetables harvested for sale claimed 2,586 acres in 2007. Orchards only took

383 acres. The structure and content of local crops changed in past years with the elimination of local tomato contracts by Heinz USA and reduced demand for sugar beets with the closure of a sugar processing plant in Fremont.

Despite some negative trends, agribusiness remains the county's largest land use. Agricultural acreage reductions result largely from two patterns of change: first, the conversion of land at communities' edges to more urban uses, including residential uses of varying density, commercial businesses, and manufacturing facilities on finished, developable land; and second, the selling of frontage acreage into residential parcels, either for use within the farming family, or as a real estate sale producing revenue to the farmer. This trend has become prevalent throughout the county, but especially along corridors that obtain water distribution lines of sufficient size to provide for residential, if not commercial, needs.

Human Resources and Labor Force

Unemployment trends in Sandusky County have followed those of the state and nation. After reaching as high as 12.9 percent unemployment in the early 1980's, the county witnessed a drop to 7.4 percent in the late 1980's, peaking again at 9.1 percent in 1992, with decreases in unemployment to 5.5 percent in 1995, 4.2 percent in 2000, and 6.1 percent in 2005 (very similar to the State's average of 6.1 percent). More recently, Sandusky County weathered the recession and has witnessed a drop in its unemployment rate from 11.9 percent in 2009 to 8.8 percent in 2011. Since 2008, the labor force has averaged between 32,800 (in 2011) and 33,400 (in 2010). The number of unemployed has ranged from 2,400 (in 2008) to 3,900 (in the very next year, 2009). Most recently, in 2011, the labor force has averaged 32,800 persons, with 29,900 working and 2,900 unemployed. The 2011 average unemployment rate was 8.8 percent, slightly higher than Ohio's average of 8.6 percent.

The U.S. Census reported the following numbers of workers by sector, comparing the Census numbers for 2000 with those for 2010 as reported in the 2006-2010 American Community Survey.

Changes observed over the decade include a decrease in the number of employees, a decrease of 873 or 2.9 percent. Major changes by sector include a significant increase (of 210) in construction employment, and a notable drop in manufacturing employment, with the loss of 2,667 or one-fourth of manufacturing jobs. Increases are worth mention in transportation/utilities (+199), professional and management services (+254), education and health care (+830), arts, entertainment, accommodation and food services (+357), in wholesale and retail trade (1,316) and services (2,363). As in most rural counties in northern Ohio, the manufacturing sector remains the predominant source of employment, increasing in number of employees if not in percentage of total employment, while national trends toward the growth of the services sector and retail employment are also evident. In Sandusky County, the educational and health care sectors are quite significant, with the inclusion of three hospitals, several public and parochial school systems, a vocational/career center, and a community college.

Employment by Economic Sector, 2000 and 2010, Sandusky County					
Economic Sector	Employees	2000		2010	
		Employees	Percent of Workforce	Employees	Percent of Workforce
Civilian employed population 16+	30,489		100.0	29,616	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	758		2.5	740	2.5
Construction	1,846		6.1	2,056	6.9
Wholesale	613		2.0	546	1.8
Retail	2,933		9.6	3,095	10.5
Manufacturing	10,671		35.0	8,004	27.0
Transportation and Utilities	1,386		4.5	1,585	5.4
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	1,054		3.5	938	3.2
Professional, scientific, mgmt, admin services	1,155		3.8	1,409	4.8
Educational services, health care, social assistance	5,558		8.2	6,388	21.6
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	2,065		6.8	2,422	8.2
Other services, except public administration	1,359		4.5	1,374	4.6
Public Administration	762		2.5	830	2.8

Occupations

The following table presents information from the 2010 American Community Survey regarding occupation types in Sandusky County. This table supports the previous observation that the traditional “blue collar” businesses continue to represent the largest employment opportunities in the county, with a greater percentage than the State average working in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. However, nearly one-fourth of the county’s jobs are categorized as management and professional, and nearly another one-fifth are in sales and office (white collar) occupations, providing some balance and diversity of opportunity.

Sandusky County Occupations, 2006-2010 American Community Survey			
Occupation	Number	% Sandusky Co	% Ohio
Employed population 16 and over	29,616	100.0	100.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	7,311	24.7	33.4
Service occupations	5,052	17.1	17.1
Sales and office occupations	5,635	19.0	25.3

Natural resources, Construction, and maintenance	3,572	12.1	8.2
Production, transportation, and material moving	8,046	27.2	16.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

County Business Patterns

The following table (next page) presents information on the number of establishments and employees within the county by economic sector. Data are compared between 2000 and the most recent year for which data are available, 2010. Again, manufacturing continues to be the most prolific employer within the local economy, claiming two-fifths of the county's jobs and 8.4 percent of its establishments (and with an average employment of 77 employees per establishment). Employment has changed somewhat in several of the reported sectors over the decade covered. This includes notable increases in transportation and warehousing, and health care and social assistance. Declines in employment were witnessed in construction, manufacturing (as noted), retail trade, administrative support, accommodation and food services, and other services. It should be noted that the effects of the recent recession were in full swing in 2010, as reflected below.

Structure of Industry

Manufacturing is often the most sensitive of land uses, requiring the most exacting property standards, so it is helpful to examine the structure of industry in Sandusky County in more detail. In 2010, 113 manufacturing establishments employed 8,747 persons. Of these 113 establishments, 39 employed only one to four people, 17 employed five to nine, 13 employed ten to nineteen, 14 employed 20 to 49, 13 employed 50-99, 11 employed 100 to 249, five employed 250 to 499, and 1 employed 1,000 or more. The latter is the Whirlpool Corporation's washing machine manufacturer in Clyde that employs approximately one-third of the county's manufacturing work force.

Sandusky County Business Patterns, 2000 and 2010				
Sector	2000		2010	
	Employees	Establishments	Employees	Establishments
Total	25,337	1,457	22,332	1,339
Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture support	0-19	2	0-19	4
Mining	0-19	1	0-19	1
Utilities	20-99	3	20-99	5
Construction	1,251	191	785	159
Manufacturing	10,663	124	8,747	113
Wholesale trade	680	63	466	54
Retail trade	2,938	227	2,683	200
Transportation and warehousing	311	53	650	56
Information	232	15	177	18
Finance and insurance	546	87	502	78
Real estate and rental and leasing	162	35	152	37
Professional, scientific and technical services	430	86	417	86
Management of companies and enterprises	169	7	149	6
Admin. Support, waste management, and remediation services	1,056	54	474	57
Educational services	224	16	230	13
Health care and social assistance	2,807	152	3,497	159
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	248	24	241	24
Accommodation and food services	2,098	110	1,840	116
Other services (except public administration)	1,423	194	1,247	152
Auxiliaries (except corporate, subsidiary and regional mgt)	54	3	0	0
Unclassified establishments	0-19	10	0-19	1

The importance of this one facility, as well as its nearby suppliers and services, should not be understated. Proximity to this facility, as well as other major industries such as Heinz USA in Fremont, undoubtedly factors into locational decisions for a number of suppliers and services providing inputs or value to their operations, and it is important to offer sites that meet this criterion.

On the other hand, Sandusky County is home to a number of new and emerging businesses, with 283 business starts between 2007 and 2011, averaging 57 starts every year. Further, the Edward Lowe Foundation tracks the well-being of an area's "Stage Two" companies, which are small businesses with ten to 99 employees, which have survived beyond the start-up (or Stage One) phase and which often are most poised for growth. YourEconomy derives its information from the NETS Database, developed by Walls & Associates in conjunction with Dun and Bradstreet (D&B). It found that there were 290 Stage Two companies in Sandusky County in 2009, and that these businesses accounted for 6,557 jobs within the county, more than the jobs existing in any other business classification.

The Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation, in conjunction with neighboring Ottawa County Community Improvement Corporation, has embarked on a project to bring the technical assistance services offered through a strategy known as Economic Gardening to applicable Stage Two businesses. Under a pilot project, two Sandusky County businesses were selected to receive assistance in such areas as market and competition research, GIS applications, and search engine optimization, from a national team of specialists.

Despite the predominance of the larger manufacturers, Sandusky County displays a diversity of manufactured products, as depicted by the fact that food manufacturing employs between 500 and 999 in ten establishments, paper employs 100 to 249 in four plants, plastics and rubber products manufacturing employs 1,731 in twelve establishments, nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing employs 250 to 499 in four establishments, fabricated metal product manufacturing employs 551 in 254 establishments, machinery manufacturing employs 416 in 16 establishments, and transportation equipment manufacturing employs 826 in eight establishments.

Economic Development Agencies

Significant attention has been given to economic development since a recession impacted the Midwestern "Auto Belt" in the early 1980's. Overall coordinating services have been provided since the mid-1980's by the professionally staffed Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC), an organization funded by business investments and local governments. The SCEDC has set its plan of work for 2012 to include the following goals, which are likely to be sustained for several years to come:

- Enhance the already established Business and Industry Retention and Expansion (business visitation) Program.
- Attract and recruit business and industry; continue to maintain the database of industrial sites and buildings for the State prospect system.
- Provide assistance to the Sandusky County Regional Airport; including further assistance to the development of the Airport Industrial/Business Park.
- Ensure that current and future funding needs are met to assist in the execution of SCEDC's Plan of Work.

Plant closures, the threat of economic stagnation or loss, and the perceived need for a proactive local approach to development resulted in the creation of a membership-based Bellevue Development Corporation, and a similarly structured Clydescope. The Fremont Mayor's office added an

Economic Development Director to the administrative staff in January 1992. Economic development activities also occupy a large portion of the time of staff from the Sandusky County Chamber of Commerce and the Gibsonburg Village Administrator.

Supportive services are also provided in the area of tax exemption and business capitalization assistance by the Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission and WSOS Community Action Commission. Terra State Community College has a Continuing Education Division which provides workforce development training for area employees. Terra and Vanguard Sentinel Career Center provide small business assistance services through a full-time Small Business Development Center and Small Business Management program, respectively. The SBDC provides individual consultations and technical assistance, while the SBM program offers structured classroom training in business management coupled with individual attention.

The countywide and local community development officials work closely with their respective local governments. This makes it possible to communicate and coordinate when a new economic development project has implications regarding local zoning, land use, or other policy. The development practitioners serve an important function as liaisons between developers or sponsors of proposed projects and the local government authorities that must approve various aspects (zoning approval, subdivision lot split, property tax exemption, grant submittal) of those projects in order to move forward.

Marketing efforts throughout the county have been accelerated by collaborating with the Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development (NORED) Association to undertake joint marketing projects. Local economic development practitioners have worked increasingly with NORED, the Regional Growth Partnership, and JobsOhio, to provide industrial building and site data to the State of Ohio and its development prospect system, as well as to the world at large through its inclusion on the Internet at www.rgp.org. Similar information is also posted at the SCEDC web site, www.sanduskycountyedc.org.

Workforce Development

Many problems and deficiencies in workforce development are more complex than a simple list, and a matrix of programs has been implemented in recent years within the county and region to address the mounting problem of workforce readiness. Among those programs:

Within the “One Stop” center, the DJFS operates a “Job Store” with free services for those looking for employment. Resources include computers for employment web searches, and staff who can assist with resume writing, interviewing skills, or skills testing. The County DJFS has emerged as an effective and central agency with regard to workforce development and the workforce needs of area business. A Workforce Coordinator works with business and workforce issues on an ongoing basis.

Terra State Community College is continuously updating its services to the business community and in workforce development through expanded offerings within its campus and at satellite sites, distance learning opportunities, manufacturing technologies and transfer degree courses. The Kern Center for Community and Industrial Development provides a variety of services to local employees and employers alike. College services and products include manufacturing seminars, State Tested Nursing Assistant and Pharmacy Technician certification courses, supervisory and on-line courses, and a new Music and Arts Center on the Terra Campus. Information can be found at the Terra website, at www.terra.edu/learning/.

A number of educational institutions including Vanguard Sentinel Career Center and area high schools offer a Tech Prep program that prepares high school students for technical careers in fields such as computer communications network technology, leading to certification as a Microsoft technician or systems engineer. Tech Prep programs offer training in such varied fields as interactive multimedia development, computer aided drafting, computer systems management, computerized manufacturing and robotics, criminal justice, and medical careers. School-to-Work programming in the county is expected to take on increased importance, with emphasis on such initiatives as Tech Prep, and a focus on preparing students to meet the real needs of the workplace and of local industry.

A team approach between relevant agencies is called into action in cases where a large employer is announcing a plant closing, and the needs of the displaced workers are addressed holistically. Through the One-Stop, there is a Rapid Response team if plant layoffs or closings occur or are imminent.

In response to a demonstrated need for public transportation, TRIPS (Transportation Resources for Independent People of Sandusky County) was developed to provide transportation on Monday through Saturday anywhere in the county for a small fee. Reservations are taken on the day prior to the desired ride. TRIPS has helped overcome the temporary barrier to employment posed to some by a lack of transportation, and has helped make employment opportunities throughout the county more accessible. A new facility housing TRIPS staff, administration, and vehicles is being constructed on Countryside Drive.

New initiatives in the area of workforce development include the initiation of a mini-grant program for small businesses, to assist in meeting their workforce training needs; and local Youth Workforce Awareness Programs, including REACH, a classroom and business mentoring program for grades 2 through 6, Youth Workforce Development Council, and Tech Prep for grades 11 and 12

Strategies and Recommendations

Several economic development reports and strategies have been developed for Sandusky County over the past few years, including White Papers that list desired projects, and, more recently, a 2008 update to the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The following recommendations are intended to focus mostly upon long-range strategies, rather than specific desired projects and capital improvements. They are also intended to relate more closely to land use decision-making.

3.1 Support the continued development of new and expanded light industry in targeted sites throughout Sandusky County.

Meets Economic Development Objectives: 1,2,3,4,7.

- Particular emphasis should be placed on diversified industries in sectors experiencing national or global growth, industries that match the skills of the local workforce, industries that are compatible with or complementary to existing business, and industries that pay sufficiently high wages to allow employees to support families. New activities should be located in clusters, rather than in scattered locations. Target such new ventures, through conditions placed on incentives, to such areas where clustering is planned and accommodated. The county and its political subdivisions should also promote and protect its major assets in attracting new employers: special natural features, prime farmland, educational resources, a sense of community and neighborhood identity, and continued sound land use planning.
- Sites outside municipal areas can sometimes be targeted and served by needed utilities through inter-jurisdictional agreements that do not require annexation. These agreements can take the form of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) or a Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA) under Ohio law. Both forms include an identification of a specific district. The JEDD provides for sharing of property tax revenue in the district, and the potential for levying of an income tax on employees within the district. The CEDA allows provision of municipal services and improvements in an unincorporated area, with service fees paid from the township or county to the municipality. For more discussion of these tools, see the Land Use chapter.

In many most cases, industrial development comes from the expansion of existing businesses. As this plan is being developed, one business in Bellevue is considering two expansions, at two individual locations within that community. The value of a structured program to communicate with existing industries (a “retention and expansion” program) cannot be overstated. An important strategy to assist local businesses is to have land readily available for expansion projects in cases where industries cannot adequately expand at their existing site.

3.2 Promote continued open communication among communities and economic development agencies and practitioners.

Meets Economic Development Objectives: 1,4,8,9.

- Continue to nurture the existing network of economic development practitioners to facilitate the transfer of information about prospects, projects, and impacts between communities.

While it is recognized that economic development is a competitive process, and that full disclosure of activities and potential projects cannot always be achieved, it is helpful to share unclassified information in order for the county to grow efficiently and for common issues and barriers to growth to

be addressed effectively. Such means of communication as the existing monthly practitioners' meetings, newsletters, networking through the SCEDC and Sandusky County Chamber of Commerce, and sharing of email, should be continued and preserved.

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

- Use the diversity among communities and development sites throughout the county as a competitive advantage, and not as a reason for competition. Knowing the strengths, weaknesses, and unique attributes of each community can help all economic development and community officials promote the county as a whole, following the following order of priority for prospects: (1) location in the development official's community; (2) location in another Sandusky County community; (3) location in a neighboring county; (4) location elsewhere. It is important to advocate for the second priority, should the first one be unattainable. Further, it is suggested that Townships be informed of new methods by which partnerships between jurisdictions can benefit all parties. One example is the creation of a Joint Economic Development District, or JEDD, as is occurring in northwest Sandusky County and adjacent Ottawa County.
- It could be helpful to stage a countywide economic development "roundtable", as an extension of the existing practitioners' group, where the practitioners could meet with workforce developers and those aligned with development-related institutions ranging from Terra State Community College and Vanguard-Sentinel Career Center to the Regional Airport. Agricultural interests could be represented as well, through the Sandusky County Farm Bureau and OSU Extension. Through such a roundtable, "big picture" development issues and visions could emerge for the county, reflecting a variety of perspectives and allowing for the exchange of information from different sectors of the county. This meeting could lead to the development of an updated countywide "white paper" highlighting issues and projects of most interest to the participants throughout the county.

3.3 Encourage downtown revitalization

Meets Economic Development Objective: 6.

- All affected parties should continue to encourage the health and economic vitality of the county's central business districts.

The county's downtowns present its most tangible link to its past, through the historical structures that are still visible and in use. The variety and extensive inventory of retail, service, and residential structures in the county's central business districts offer an opportunity for further development. Abandonment of those structures is a last alternative, and should only be undertaken when all alternative, adaptive reuse strategies have been

considered. Located at the physical center of the community's population, the downtown represents the most efficient location for a number of activities, whether they are service and office businesses, smaller retail enterprises, centers for civic activities, or governmental or other public functions such as libraries. A comprehensive approach, as embodied in the Main Street approach, should be employed, encompassing elements of organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring.

- In encouraging the Main Street approach, officials should help preserve their architectural and historical assets through the adoption of tools such as historic preservation overlay districts and design review legislation. This legislation typically involves the creation of a design change application process, a design review committee that reviews and approves such applications, a set of standards by which design modifications must be reviewed, and an enforcement mechanism. Also, zoning variances that allow for walkable neighborhood businesses in compatible residential areas should be encouraged. However, regulatory relief could be championed, aimed at "adaptive preservation" that balances historic accuracy with practical reuse of commercial and residential structures.

Other recommendations relating to downtown revitalization include:

- Creation of an informal network of downtown promoters within the county. In general, Sandusky County's downtowns are not in competition with one another, but have more to gain by working together. For example, a tour of the county's downtowns may draw tourists interested in historic preservation.
- Encourage and facilitate the creation of second story and other residential development within the county's downtowns. Consideration must be given to the removal of newly residential properties from productive commercial use. Also, adherence to provisions for adequate parking for residents can become an issue, requiring creative solutions that balance the need for resident, employee, and customer parking.
- Take an inventory of the county's central business districts. What is the condition and status of their streets, sidewalks, landscaping, signage, on- and off-street parking, and lighting? What is the condition of storefronts, store interiors, vacant properties, park areas?
- Consider taking a survey of customers and of downtown property owners and merchants within the county's downtowns to capture the perceptions of the "market". Many examples and models of such surveys exist; over the past year, for example, Fremont has been conducting both customer and merchant surveys, which will provide valuable insight into local perceptions, opinions, and markets for new products and services. Other communities could conduct similar surveys.
- Incorporate design elements that accommodate and provide information to the traveling automotive passenger and driver, and to the pedestrian. Specific points should include: clarity of signage in marking available parking and any time limits, directional information regarding the most

common downtown destinations, uniformity of design to identify the downtown as a cohesive whole, lighting that meets multiple goals of safety, visibility, and attractiveness, beneficial use of open space for public functions and activities, and streetscape designs that minimize maintenance costs (including care of landscaping and sidewalk snow removal).

- Whenever possible, link the downtown, either physically or by signage, to nearby attractions that can build interest in the downtown. The planned bicycle corridor from the east that will reach downtown Fremont is one example. Downtown Fremont can also benefit from the Hayes Avenue/Spiegel Grove historic attraction to the west, and the Sandusky River which, while buffered by a railroad track and retaining wall, attracts anglers during its spring fish runs. Similarly, Clyde may benefit from more recognizable signage drawing traffic downtown from Route 20 to visit the “heart of historic Winesburg”. Gibsonburg can attract Route 20 and Route 6 traffic with signage at their intersection with Route 600 or another connector. Woodville, Clyde, and Bellevue could develop similar “gateway” signage identifying them as Sandusky County communities as traffic approaches on Route 20.
- Actively promote unified downtowns, through joint promotional advertising; events, contests, and promotions involving as many downtown businesses as will participate; and uniform business hours when practical.

3.4 Continue to promote and market industrial parks and selected sites

Meets Economic Development Objectives: 1,3,4,6,7.

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

- Accessibility to industrial park businesses on roads of sufficient width, vehicle capacity, and construction, with sufficient road widths and turning radii to accommodate truck traffic.
- Possible separation of employee, client, and truck traffic, and requirements governing access and egress to roadways.
- Service to the site by adequate water and sanitary sewer distribution systems (with adequate capacity and pressure to accommodate industrial processes of target industries), and other infrastructure. More specific criteria may include electric distribution and transmission line sizes, water and sewer capacity and water pressure, natural gas pressure, and telecom capabilities (long distance, cable, wireless, broadband).
- Proper zoning of the site for light industry.

- Compatibility of planned land uses with adjacent and nearby properties; acceptable spillover effects on adjoining properties (light, noise, visibility, water or air emissions), and buffering of the site from adjacent uses where necessary or appropriate. In some cases, park owners may impose noise or light restrictions.
- Available lot sizes that are small enough to accommodate smaller industries, with option for larger lot sizes to accommodate growth; ability to assemble adjacent lots into larger parcel if needed; flexibility and diversity in lot sizes.
- Lot shapes that accommodate building and parking layouts (rectangular designs are largely preferable).
- Appearance and other requirements including building setbacks, building surface materials and inclusion of offices, landscaping, signage, and minimum parking spaces based on number of employees.
- Access to rail transportation, via a siding on site or ability to construct one.
- Favorable environmental status, with completed Phase One analysis and approval for development from Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Lack of wetlands on site, satisfactory surface drainage (or provision for drainage through storm sewers, retaining pond, etc.), location outside flood plains, attainment area for air pollution.

A general industrial park, rather than restricting development with, for example, a “technology park” designation, is probably most appropriate for Sandusky County. Park size may most likely be small, at 50 to 150 acres. Site configurations are optimized if they are kept flexible when laid out as a series of three to five acre sites, several of which can be combined to respond to prospects with needs for larger acreage. Prospects will prefer that parcels are held by one owner and do not require assembly. Square or rectangular sites, as mentioned above, with level to near level topography are generally preferred, and existing zoning should allow manufacturing and industrial use. Land prices should be explicit and competitive, varying depending upon location, quality and capacity of infrastructure, attractiveness and visibility, and access to major highways and rail.

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

- Economic developers should emphasize those sites that meet minimum development criteria (such as available infrastructure, posted selling price, appropriate zoning). Development practitioners should work from a common “catalog” of industrial sites. Presumably, this “catalog” should consist of those sites and industrial parks stored in the SCEDC data base, as well as on JobsOhio’s web-based Ohio In-Site.
- Work toward the development of the Airport Industrial/Business Park formerly planned for development north of and adjacent to the Sandusky County Regional Airport, subject to any new directions emerging from the new strategic plan being formulated for the airport. Such a park would most likely be developed in phases as it is built out, requiring further development of infrastructure, and making use of the water line constructed between Clyde and Green Springs. Additional steps would include appropriate zoning of the target area, marketing the site, and targeting businesses that can benefit from both the industrial park and the airport.
- Commercial concentrations: In areas such as SR 53 north in Fremont or US 20 in Clyde, minimize commercial traffic congestion through the design and development of service roads connected to the major arterial at a signalized intersection.

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

Meets Economic Development Objectives: 3, 4, 6.

Economic development practitioners maintain updated inventories of available properties. Existing and vacated buildings are often difficult to market to prospects with exacting criteria and standards. However, the list of such properties should be updated and promoted through such networks as NORED and the state industrial database and prospect notification system. It is important to understand and inform prospects of the environmental status of a property, and to be able to tout a “clean” site when all appropriate studies have found a site to be clear of hazards or needs for mitigation. In cases where environmental barriers to redevelopment are identified, local officials should explore the use of federal and state “Brownfield” funding to clean and redevelop the site.

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

From time to time, former commercial properties become vacant and neglected. The most illustrative case in Sandusky County involves the Fremont East Side’s sites of the former Wal-Mart store, including strip shopping centers that are nearly vacant. It is unimaginable that these sites will be restored to their former commercial level of activity. It is more likely that these locations will be “reborn” with entirely alternative uses, such as those described above: subdivided business incubator, indoor storage, warehouse, or distribution, office or call center facility, or possibly a meeting/convention center. The time may come when the value of the property and its location will overcome any costs associated with demolishing

existing structures and rebuilding. In such as case, subject to zoning, a number of possibilities can be envisioned (hotel/resort/meeting facility; multifamily housing; new commercial requiring large lot size – such as automotive, truck, marine, or implement dealership; restaurant; light industrial).

The variety of resources available within the county, coupled with federal and state programs, should be targeted to the creation and growth of small business. These include the counseling services provided by the Small Business Development Center based at Terra State Community College, Small Business Management classes offered at Vanguard Sentinel Career Center, the variety of classes and trainings offered through the county's educational institutions, and capital financing resources offered through area business revolving loan funds. While emphasis is placed on the development of industrial parks and sites, suitable locations and resources for small business should be catalogued by local economic developers as well, including lower-cost sites in older and vacant existing buildings, with information available to interested entrepreneurs.

3.6 Consider and incorporate the concept of sustainable development

Meets Economic Development Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6.

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

Much has been written considering this term. In 1991, the Local Government Commission brought together a group of architects to develop a set of community principles, including how the community should relate to its region. The resulting principles were presented in the fall of 1991 to about one hundred elected officials at a conference in the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite. These “Ahwahnee Principles”, which are cited to this day as a good framework for sustainable development, include the following:

- All planning should be in the form of complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, work places, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents.
- Businesses within the community should provide a range of job types for community residents.
- The community should have a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural, and recreational uses.

- Public spaces should be designed to encourage the attention and presence of people at all hours of the day and night.
- Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples contained within parks or greenbelts.
- The community design should help conserve resources and minimize waste.
- Rather than allowing developer-initiated, piecemeal development, local governments should take charge of the planning process. General plans should designate where new growth, infill, or redevelopment will be allowed to occur. (For more information on the Ahwahnee Principles, see http://www.lgc.org/ahwahnee/ahwahnee_principles.pdf).

While principles of sustainable development may often conflict with local development plans, every development project should be examined by its sponsor, as well as by the local government in whose jurisdiction it is proposed, to make sure that, to the extent that it is financially feasible, the project meets the criteria of an integrated approach that:

- Encourages local enterprise;
- Serves the needs of local residents, workers, and businesses;
- Promotes stable employment and revenues by building on local competitive advantages;
- Protects the natural environment;
- Increases social equity; and
- Is capable of succeeding in the global marketplace.

3.7 Give preference to development that captures outside dollars

Meets Economic Development Objectives 1, 2, 5, 8.

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

- Development of a business incubator that provides space and technical assistance to fledgling business.
- Continued use of the ongoing “retention and expansion” business visitation program conducted by the SCEDC. Such a program, to be effective in the long run, should continue on an ongoing basis.
- Use of local, state, and federal incentive programs to assist local businesses in reaching the next level of growth.

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

- **Agribusiness**, including specialty crops and nurseries. Agriculture provides a major opportunity for exporting, and revenues earned by farming support a number of services and commercial establishments throughout the county.
- **Tourism** draws outside persons and their disposable income. The efforts of the county’s Tourism and Convention Bureau should be supported as an economic development activity. Sandusky County is on the fringe of a major, growing recreation area primarily centered in Erie and Ottawa Counties by virtue of access to Lake Erie. Development planning should capitalize on Sandusky County’s proximity to this region, coupled with local attractions ranging from Bellevue’s railroad museum to Spiegel Grove. Exposure to through traffic along the Ohio Turnpike, US Route 20, and State Route 53, and accommodations at the county’s airport and a private airport, provides an opportunity to capture outside business.
- **Specialty or Regional Retail** will often bring consumers and their revenues into an area. While this sector may be relatively small for Sandusky County, planning should incorporate methods to build sufficient “critical mass” of niche market and complementary shopping destinations to attract outside shoppers, or retailers with exclusive sales agreements for a region that includes Sandusky County.

3.8 Promote local economic development incentives

Meets Economic Development Objectives 1, 2, 7.

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

- Maintain a countywide repository of information on local incentive programs offered throughout Sandusky County. This information can be housed in the SCEDC offices, and SCEDC personnel can ensure that state and regional officials can access such information as well.
- Similarly, maintain a catalog of available development incentives offered by Federal agencies, the State of Ohio, regional financing authorities, and other regional resources. The SCEDC can again be the repository of information, although local community officials will access this information independently as well.

Some of the local incentives are:

Sandusky County Enterprise Zones (including Clyde and Gibsonburg)

The purpose of the Sandusky County Enterprise Zone program is to foster economic and community development by utilizing real and personal property tax abatement incentives. The creation of the enterprise zone is intended as means of creating new jobs, as well as retaining existing employment. The County zones include areas within the county that are not covered by those municipal zones listed below.

Contact: Director, Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation, 2511 Countryside Drive, Suite C, Fremont, Ohio 43420

Sandusky County Revolving Loan Fund

The Sandusky County Revolving Loan Fund provides largely fixed asset financing at a below-market, fixed interest rate for projects which have a portion of funds committed from banks, the business or its owners, or other sources, but which still have a financing “gap” (50% maximum). Revolving loan funds can generally provide up to \$25,000 for each full-time job created or, in special cases, retained. This fund concentrates on the “balance of county” not served by municipal funds existing in Fremont and Bellevue.

Contact: Community Development Dept., WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc., 219 S. Front Street, P.O. Box 590 Fremont, OH 43420.

Fremont Enterprise Zone

The purpose of the Fremont Enterprise Zone is to foster economic and community development by utilizing real and personal property tax abatement incentives. The creation of the enterprise zone is intended as means of providing incentives for the creation of new jobs, as well as retaining existing employment, in cases where significant investments in personal and/or real property will be made.

Contact: Enterprise Zone Coordinator, City of Fremont, 323 S. Front St., Fremont, OH 43420

Fremont Revolving Loan Fund

The Fremont Revolving Loan Fund, similar to the County loan fund in purpose, is for projects that have partial funding commitments, but still have a funding gap. The RLF can provide matching fixed asset financing at a below-market interest.

Contact: Economic Development Director - City of Fremont, 323 S. Front St., Fremont, OH 43420

Bellevue Enterprise Zone and Community Reinvestment Area

The purpose of the Bellevue Enterprise Zone and the Community reinvestment Area program is to foster economic and community development by utilizing property tax exemption incentives. The creation of the enterprise zone is intended as means of creating new jobs and retaining existing employment, through the strategic use of real and/or personal property tax exemptions. All Enterprise Zones within the county have the ability to structure 100 percent exemptions, with businesses partially compensating affected school districts through direct payments in lieu of taxes to those districts.

Contact: Executive Director, Bellevue Development Corp., 110 W. Main St., Bellevue, OH 44811

Bellevue Revolving Loan Fund

The target of the Bellevue Revolving Loan Fund includes projects which have a portion of funds committed from banks, the business or its owners, or other sources, but which still have a “gap” (50% maximum), which needs to be filled.

Contact: Executive Director, Bellevue Development Corp., 110 W. Main St., Bellevue, OH 44811

Clyde Community Incentives

Clyde offers competitive land costs and energy rates provided through the municipal electricity distribution system. Clyde also incorporates state and federal incentive programs as applicable to the project.

Contact: Executive Director, Clydescope, 222 W. Main St., Clyde OH

3.9 Maintain the link between education and economic development

Meets Economic Development Objective 2; Workforce Development Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

- The County should support the utilization of local educational resources, including Terra State Community College, Vanguard/Sentinel Vocational Schools, and local school districts and facilities, as resources for economic development. Consider the further development of such

resources, including the construction of a new business incubator with technical assistance provided by Terra, Small Business Development Center, and related staff and expertise.

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

3.10 Continue to build community-wide collaboration for workforce development programs

Meets Workforce Development Objectives: 1, 3, 4, 5.

- Linking school-to-work and other workforce development initiatives with community-based organizations can provide access to a wide range of support services such as transportation, food, clothing, work clothes, shelter, childcare, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. They can also build community involvement, and help coordinate employer recruitment in workforce development systems.
- Community-based strategies such as community mapping and assessment can help school-to-work systems identify work-based learning opportunities and identify successful local programs and initiatives that can be included in collaborative planning and oversight councils. Incorporate a comprehensive family development program to address workforce development issues holistically. This approach in Sandusky County has led to initiatives addressing transportation to work (resulting in the TRIPS program described elsewhere) and childcare barriers. Involve the comprehensive family development initiative provided by WSOS Community Action Commission.
- Utilize existing initiatives and resources to serve at-risk and out-of-school youth. Incorporating the variety of disconnected second-chance programs into a streamlined, sequential progression of opportunities to acquire education and job skills can significantly improve employment prospects for at-risk and out-of-school youth

3.11 Develop occupational skill standards and certifications

Meets Workforce Development Objectives: 2, 3, 5.

- Skill standards can link school-to-work and workforce development systems by providing a common system of standards and credentials for students, out-of school youth, and adults seeking to enter the workforce or upgrade their skills. A central issue facing school-to-work and workforce development systems is how to establish a centralized mechanism to develop and validate skill standards. A national effort led by the National Skill Standards Board has encouraged the development of voluntary, nationally recognized occupational skill standards in several occupational clusters. Several states have supported the development of occupational standards to link the content of state education and training programs to the demands of regional industries. *Note: This objective has been relegated to a lower priority; as such standards are not in practice currently in the area.*

3.12 Improve labor market information systems

Meets Workforce Development Objectives: 1, 5.

School-to-work and workforce development systems are most effective when they are designed and structured to match the needs of the labor market. Accurate, up-to-date labor market information can ensure that school-to-work and workforce development initiatives make appropriate decisions on targeting occupations and growth industries, and that they can provide youth and adults entering the workforce an accurate picture of opportunities available in the labor market.

- The County's "One Stop" center should continue to provide an innovative labor market information systems where youth, workers, and employers can get the information and assistance they need to make good labor market choices. Alternatively, such information should be made available on a county-managed web site.

3.13 Align local efforts with the State of Ohio's emphasis on specific business clusters; promote industrial development within those industrial clusters. Meets Economic Development Objectives 1,2,5,7.

The State of Ohio and JobsOhio, its economic development arm, have identified the following target sectors upon which to focus: Advanced manufacturing, aerospace/aviation, agribusiness and food processing, automotive, biohealth, energy, financial services, information technology, and polymers and chemicals. In addition, the State has identified the following four business functions which are considered compatible with Ohio's development characteristics: logistics, headquarters and consulting, research and development, and back office functions. To the extent that it is feasible, County and local officials can align their development strategies and business attraction efforts to focus upon these state-level cluster and functions.