



Knox County Village Planning Initiative
Presentation to MORPC/ CEDS Group
February 20, 2025

About Area Development Foundation

- Founded 1955 - 501c6
- 4 person staff
- Comprehensive economic services for govts & businesses
 - Contracted ED entity for entire county
 - JobsOhio network partner
 - Operate county land bank, revolving loan fund & workforce group/ BAC
 - Provide modest planning functions



Goals of the Initiative

- Take a coalition approach
- Focus efforts outside of the Mount Vernon
- Provide funding & personnel support to villages for strategic plans and projects that will lead to increased vibrancy, pride and development
- Tailor initiatives to reflect the unique needs & character of each village



Knox County

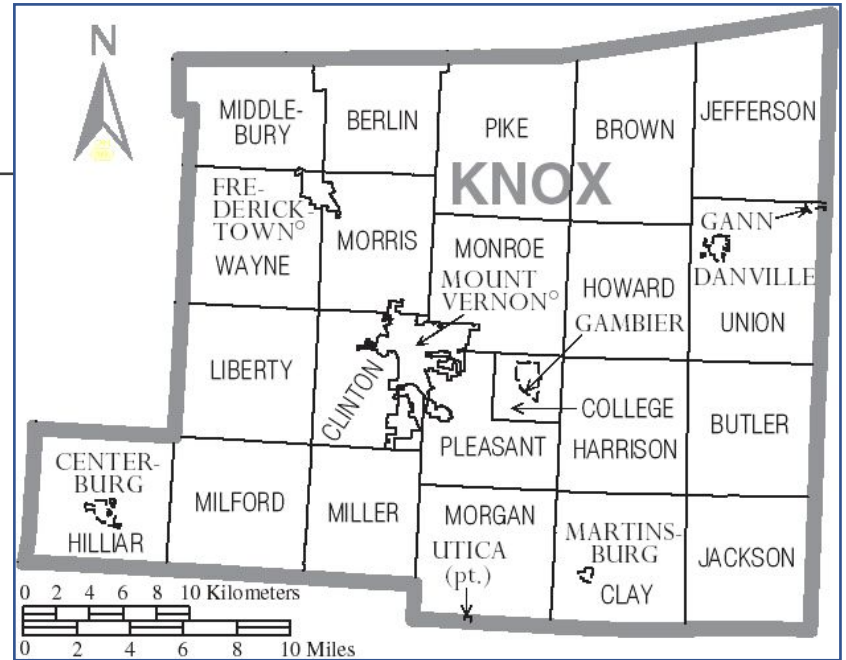


- Population - 63,183
- 530 square miles
- Mostly open space - 58% farmland, 28% forested
- Flat in west, hills in east
- 1 City, 4 Villages
- Traditional Town & Country Development Pattern
- Small tight-knit communities with unique identities
- Median HH income \$71,000
- Average age - 39
- 24% - Amount of workforce employed in manufacturing
- Along Ohio - Erie Trail



Communities

- City of Mount Vernon - 16,703
- Village of Centerburg - 1,716
- Village of Danville - 1,112
- Village of Fredericktown - 2,501
- Village of Gambier - 2,442



Outline of Initiative



- Co-leader with ADF
- Largest funding partner
 - Overall investment of \$960,000 over 6 years
- Convener of other funding partners
- Ensured compliance with finished plans
- Staff support



- Co-leader with KCF
- Provide economic/ community development expertise
- Advocate a regional approach
- Connect with larger initiatives
- Staff support



Phases

2018-2023

- Planning
- Roll-out
- Implementation
- Reevaluation
- Sustainability



Year 0: Planning & Capacity Building

- KCF, local private foundation & county commissioners allocated funding to ADF to increase staff from 1 to 3
 - ADF added 2 staff members
 - Stepped-down grant for five years
- Held community pitches to create buy-in & identify steering committee members.
- RFP for creation of 4 separate and individualized comprehensive plans for the 4 villages
 - Involved key stakeholders from each village, as well as funding partners, select firm



Year 1: Creating and Adopting the Plans

- 8-Month process to draft
- Steering Committees formed in each community
 - Diverse community stakeholders
- Community Involvement - KEY
 - Activities at public events
 - Online surveys
 - Interviews with business owners and residents
 - Public Meetings
- Adoption of plans by each village
 - Reflect countywide and village visions, market conditions, and long-term goals
 - Future of growth, development & quality of life rooted in community aspirations & implementable goals
 - Guide the allocation of the funding pledged to each village



Village Strategic Plans - Implementation

PARKS & RECREATION

Preserve and protect Danville's natural beauty while enhancing opportunities for recreational tourism, parks amenities, and community events.

	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	FUNDING
Priority Strategy: Promote recreational tourism.				
A1.1 Align improvements to the built environment with regional marketing efforts (i.e. branding, signage, bike racks, etc.).	H	0-1 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Danville • Area Development Foundation (ADF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Danville • Knox County Foundation
A1.2 Utilize digital and online marketing platforms to promote recreational assets.	M	0-2 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Organization • Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau
A1.3 Expand existing recreational events.	M	0-3 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Heritage Tourism Grant
A1.4 Support expansion of local businesses in the outdoor industry.	M	0-5 yrs		

Strategy 2: Increase and enhance Memorial Park amenities.				
A2.1 Expand upon existing facilities and play features to include more activities for a range of ages.	H	0-3 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Danville • Area Development Foundation (ADF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Danville • Knox County Foundation
A2.2 Engage regional schools and recreation leagues to host sporting and community events.	M	0-3 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Organization • Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knox County Foundation • ODNR NatureWorks Grant
A2.3 Convert parking lot adjacent to Market Street to street parking to accommodate additional or larger park amenities.	L	2-5 yrs		
A2.4 Strengthen the connection between Memorial Park and regional bike trails with signage and programming.	H	0-3 yrs		



Years 2-5

- Implement the plans
 - \$40,000 in implementation funds from the Knox County Foundation per year for 4 years for each village
 - Collaborative approach when possible
 - Redirect/redefine roles and responsibilities along the way
 - Seek other funding opportunities/ Leverage funds for others
- Create momentum through small wins
 - Beautification projects
 - Community identity and pride
 - Merchant networking
 - Access to resources



Examples of Funded Projects

Centerburg

- Zoning Code
- Re-establishment of a business association
- Bike Trail welcome center plans drafted
- Downtown decorative light post and banners



Danville

- Zoning Code
- Business Association Established
- Informational Kiosks
- Decorative village entryway signage
- 31 Decorative lamp posts with banner brackets
- Trail connection plan
- Public park improvements

Fredericktown

- Zoning Code
- \$32,000 per year towards ODOT TAP Grant match
- Revitalized business association
- Downtown Banner Program and Flowers



Gambier

- Zoning Code
- Informational Kiosks
- Decorative village entryway signage
- Village Website redesign
- "Pocket Park" created
- Local elementary school playground upgrades
- Creation of a Natural Playground
- Banner Poles

Post Project & New Initiatives

- Sustain momentum
 - Staff support beyond the project
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Maintaining a presence in each community
 - Assist with projects & merchant groups



BUSINESS

Shipleigh joins ADF as downtown experience coordinator



by From the Knox County Area Development Foundation
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Overall Successes

- Each village has its own updated unique Zoning Code
- Fostered community pride and excitement
- Strong relationship between KCF, ADF, and the villages
- Established collaborative efforts for projects outside of those with guaranteed funding



Overall Hurdles

- Inexperience with planning in villages
- Year 2: Loss of Momentum
 - COVID & Staffing changes
- Changes in leadership within the villages
 - Steering Committees gained/lost members & new mayors and village administrators
- Reliance on volunteers
- Fear of “Growth”
- Uncertainty of government funding opportunities
- Explaining the difference between ADF and KCF



Ideas for Replication

- Understand the community to build trust
- Flexibility is important - Vision & implementation
- Funding partnerships
- Joint community efforts when possible
- Know when to call the professionals (planners, zoning consultants, etc.)



Thank You!

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