

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

Planning for this project began in July of 2005 and continued for about 4 months. The lengthy and complex process entailed soliciting and gathering the relevant information, ideas and opinions necessary to formulate a comprehensive and effective plan. Detailed information concerning the process is presented in *Appendices A and B*.

The Plan's objective is to develop and communicate a message that will attract more visitors to our village, attract more residents to our neighborhoods, attract more students to our educational institutions and attract new and existing employers to grow here. CIPAC recognized that a key element to meet the project objective is encouraging visitation. If we can attract visitors who are exposed to the unique and wonderful benefits of this community, some of those will find us a "good fit" for their interests and personalities. These are the people who then are good prospects for home purchase, job search, or learning opportunities

As a communications project, the CIP Plan must accomplish its direct purpose of initiating and enhancing positive communications about the community. Because of limited resources, this plan is devoted to specific actions and efforts which will lead to that end. While many excellent ideas were generated, some of which show great promise for facilitating economic expansion and population enhancement, many were beyond the realm of the communications mission of this plan; however, in order not to lose the value of these ideas, we do make suggestions about how they may be implemented primarily by others. All concepts and suggestions are included in *Appendix C, D and E*.

To set the stage for the planned activity to move to the next phase, it is necessary to review the basic concepts developed during the initial phases of the project.

ASSETS

For a small community, Yellow Springs has assets that rival major cities. These assets are what make us special and what attract visitors, residents and businesses. They are listed in detail in *Appendix J*. Below is a description of the major categories of the special things Yellow Springs has to offer.

1. RECREATION ATTRACTIONS

As clarified by the External Perception Survey, we are perhaps best known for our recreational opportunities. Glen Helen, John Bryan State Park and Clifton Gorge come to mind immediately as destinations to hike, picnic, play games, camp or pursue a wide variety of other outdoor activities. For cyclists we have the Little Miami Bike Trail, a paved trail that connects communities from Cincinnati to Springfield. In addition, the Gaunt Park fields and swimming pool, the skate park and the John Bryan Community Center are amenities that offer other unique opportunities. Finally, the walk-ability of the community and bicycle-friendly streets contribute to making outdoor pursuits a primary attraction of Yellow Springs.

2. SHOPPING/EATING/SERVICE ATTRACTIONS

Many unique shops and service businesses have found a home in the community. Some of our restaurants have developed a reputation and attract patrons from well outside Yellow Springs. This community is a place to find the unique gift or delicious meal that can not be found at a mall. If we can reach the niche buyers who want our special product or service, we can increase volume in current business and attract new ones to the community.

3. CULTURAL EVENTS/ATTRACTIONS

We are still known widely for the Shakespeare productions offered by Antioch in the 1950's. We have one of only two art cinemas in the Miami Valley. We have an internationally recognized chamber music group and local musicians of all types. We have talented artists, actors, writers, filmmakers and dancers that make their home in Yellow Springs because of the creative nature of the community. We have workshops and lectures conducted by both local and national experts.

4. EDUCATION FACILITIES/OPPORTUNITIES

Educational opportunities and facilities in the community are both broad and deep. Spanning the range of early childhood to elders and personal private tutorial to major public lecture, education here is very rich. Quality stands out with very low student/teacher ratios, and award-winning schools.

There is a full spectrum of higher education opportunities with college and graduate studies available within the community and access to 14 other higher education facilities within a half-hour commute. Faculty and staff of the region's educational institutions have disproportionately selected Yellow Springs for their personal residence and/or place of retirement.

5. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The exact nature of this community is hard to characterize but there is a feel to the place which might best be described as "soul." Some refer to us as "funky" or offbeat. Some describe a "caring community." Others note our outspoken, activist nature. It is all part of that special Yellow Springs ambiance which forms the character of our community. We are a "village family" with all of the contradictions, conflicts and deep caring that characterize that social unit.

COMMUNICATION TARGETS

With limited project resources, CIPAC recognized the need for a targeted outreach to focus resources on specific customer niches that would be attracted to Yellow Springs. Following is a summary of the niche markets identified and which are more fully delineated in *Appendix H*.

1. FAMILIES SEEKING INNOVATIVE/ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION & DIVERSITY

The excellence of our educational system and diversity of choices and population make this an attractive community for families who value special educational and social opportunities, so a primary target is educators, especially from Antioch and other area universities.

2. CULTURAL CREATIVES/INNOVATORS

The depth of offerings in our community for those interested in cultural and intellectual pursuits make Yellow Springs a wonderful community for artists and art lovers of all types as well as scientists, entrepreneurs and other forward-thinking individuals.

3. MAINSTREAM CONSUMERS OF SMALL AND SPECIAL EXPERIENCES

Yellow Springs is home to one of the finest restaurants in Ohio, unique shops, beautiful natural areas, highly qualified physical and mental health practitioners, and a family-oriented activity destination, making it a likely attraction for what might be considered more conservative consumers from traditional towns.

4. PEOPLE WITH STRONG LOCAL TIES

Life in Yellow Springs is so special and unique that many people do not want to leave when they have completed their studies at Yellow Springs High School or Antioch College. Others choose to return to raise their families. This is a group with an existing attraction to the community and with the means of being targeted through alumni contact, newspapers, friends and relatives.

5. SOCIAL/POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

Yellow Springs has always been known as a progressive community with residents who passionately advocate for their beliefs. People with alternative lifestyles and to whom diversity is important are also attracted here. National and global media created and consumed by social/political activists have consistently highlighted and promoted Yellow Springs as an unusually progressive and a "model" community.

6. LIFELONG LEARNERS; ADULT

The community offers educational, cultural and social activities for people of all ages but has an especially rich community of adults who are in continuous pursuit of knowledge and connection to the world. The McGregor School of Antioch University focuses a large and growing variety of higher and continuing educational opportunities solely on adult learners. In addition, there is an abundance of workshops and lectures conducted by both local and national experts that enrich the lives of all of our citizens.

7. OUTDOOR/NATURE RECREATORS

It is well known by locals, and confirmed by the CUPA External Perception Survey, that our natural amenities like Glen Helen, Clifton Gorge, and John Bryan State Park as well as the Little Miami Bike Trail, skate park and swimming pool are our best-recognized assets within the nearby region, making people with those interests an important niche market.

8. CONSUMERS OF "FUNKY" STUFF

Yellow Springs has evolved into a community known for its arts and crafts, unique clothing, natural and health food, and unusual books not readily available anywhere else in the area, making this a likely destination for people in search of such.

9. HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

This is a health-conscious community as evidenced by the multitude of health foods available in stores and restaurants, large number of practitioners of natural and alternative medicine, the many bicyclists on our roads in all weather, and the incredible recreational opportunities for young and old. Individuals who hold health and well-being as a high priority in their life are likely prospects to find Yellow Springs an attractive location to visit and live.

MODES OF COMMUNICATION

Three primary modes have been identified as the optimum means to communicate our message and receive feedback about Yellow Springs. They are:

1. WEBSITE

For ever increasing numbers of consumers, the Internet is their primary source of information. A comprehensive website is essential for any community to inform and invite visitors and to maintain an adequate community communication network.

2. INFORMATION CENTER

There must be a central contact location to control the dissemination of information about a community to assure that all contacts are being handled in a timely, friendly and consistent fashion.

3. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

To enable visitors to understand all the community has to offer, it is essential to have a system of sharing information and customers among the businesses and event sponsors. The cross-promotional opportunities between the recreation attractions, local retail and service businesses and events would allow not only more sharing of customers but would attract even more attendees by promoting the entire experience of Yellow Springs rather than a single event.

THE PROJECT PLAN

SHORT TERM INITIATIVES

1-2 YEARS

CIP LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

These are projects that the CIP will take full charge of, from concept development through implementation. We will communicate and coordinate with community groups as required but the projects do not require their direct involvement in order to be successful. These initiatives will be designed and prioritized to communicate specific messages to specific target audiences.

1. IDENTITY CAMPAIGN

The first initiative and core effort of the Plan will be to create a "signature" for Yellow Springs. A communications campaign will be developed to clarify and focus the identity that already exists and unify the message we convey and how we convey it.

Based upon our research, Yellow Springs is already recognized as a "fun, funky, unique" destination. The purpose of the Identity Campaign is to solidify and expand upon the positive image of Yellow Springs and broaden its appeal to more effectively communicate the message that Yellow Springs is a great place to visit, live, learn, and work.

The first step in the process will be to develop an identifiable visual identity and a descriptive phrase that will be an immediate "flag" to visitors about what they can expect in Yellow Springs. It is essential that we create a descriptive phrase and graphic identity that will become an immediate symbol of what Yellow Springs has to offer while not altering our internal or existing external identity.

In an effort to clarify this identity and develop an appropriate communications campaign, the CIP will utilize the services of design and marketing professionals. The following are but a few of the ways the campaign might be implemented:

- Create one unique brochure that stands apart from the others.
- Combine with goal of supplementing existing materials.
 - Develop new brochures that bring additional dimension and information to those currently available.
 - Graphically unique but easily reproducible.
 - Specific brochures for dining, galleries, etc.
 - Format that is easy to display, carry and reference.
- Create banners for light poles, posters for storefronts.
- Create new promotional items like bags.
 - Allows businesses a mechanism for self-promotion with the addition of a specific tag to the bag.
- Media campaign

The CIP will provide a template or style manual for any and all local groups, businesses and institutions to use in the creation of their own promotional materials or simply add the identity piece to the materials they have already developed.

The Chamber of Commerce is a likely partner in the effort to communicate the message to the broadest audience possible both for local acceptance and in the efforts to attract visitors.

The key to the success of this campaign is broad acceptance and implementation of the program by the community. The more ways in which a unified message is being communicated, the stronger the Identity Campaign will be and the more success Yellow Springs will have at attracting visitors, residents, learners, and workers.

A) APPLICATIONS

The signature or brand developed needs to be suitable for use in a variety of ways to identify the community. Here are a few possible examples:

i. SLIPLOPE

A cover piece or slender folder/envelope whose purpose is to serve as a carrier for brochures or information materials of interest to a visitor or prospective home buyer. It should display the signature identity as well as general information about the community and access keys about further information.

ii. INFORMATION PIECES

Information pieces about the schools, shopping, walking tours, recreation, etc which currently exist and need to be updated or which need to be designed and produced could have a general design or unifying look about them to reinforce good feelings about the community.

iii. PURCHASE CARRY-BAG

Local retail merchants might benefit from a signature bag for purchases which would have both the signature design and some identification of the shop as well.

iv. NEWSLETTER

An online or hard copy shopper's newsletter could be created for visitors. Local sales or other promotions and upcoming events like street fair could be assembled into an attractive newsletter format and issued periodically to stimulate visitation.

B) TEMPLATE/STYLE MANUAL

The signature concept should be able to be expressed in terms of a template or style manual which would facilitate its use in a wide variety of applications easily and without further art work or copy writing.

2. TARGETED COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

The second initiative of the plan will be to develop strategies to communicate specific messages to targeted audiences.

One such initiative is targeted communication of housing opportunities to attract new residents who might find the community a good fit. The means to achieve this end is seen as a two-prong campaign. First would be the preparation of appropriate information materials about the schools, housing opportunities, recreational activities and other amenities which make living here attractive. Second would be to inform realtors and other housing search portals about the community and furnish to them the materials described. We will communicate with local and regional realtors who sell in this market so that they will be current about the community and can better match their clients with housing here. Current plans for housing development should mesh well with this effort and CIP will coordinate with local developers as well. Housing opportunities and supporting information will be integrated with the Website and Information Center.

A primary market of new residents is those hired by our own local businesses so a focus of this communication campaign is to ensure that those responsible for the hiring of local employees relocating to this area are aware of the current residential opportunities in Yellow Springs. Another target market identified was faculty and staff from area universities, a group already in abundance in Yellow Springs. CIP will work with realtors and developers to establish a communication strategy to ensure that people who are planning a move to the area or people already in the area who might be attracted to Yellow Springs be given the opportunity to explore our community as a potential new home.

Other initiatives will be designed and prioritized to communicate specific messages to specific targeted audiences.

CIP PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

These are projects that will require direct coordination and implementation from community groups. CIP may or may not be the lead partner but the scope of the endeavors requires direct active partner participation and may be limited by the resources available from both partners and CIP.

1. WEBSITE

This initiative by CIP will be to sponsor the design and execution of a very attractive and useful website as recommended in the consultants report, *Appendices G1 and G2*. The CIP will solicit proposals for a consultant to prepare the design and initial implementation of the site. At the same time, we will enlist the cooperation of other local website sponsors to help shape the program and coordinate the various sites and their function. As important as constructing the site is the need to continually update the information it contains. Although most such sites rely on submissions for updates this strategy has seldom worked and the sites quickly become stale and out-of-date. A major effort will be made to design a plan for generating the resources maintain and improve the site continuously so it can continue to function as a major component of the Information Project strategy.

2. INFORMATION CENTER

A) FUNCTION

The Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce has for some time operated a visitor center function at their office in the Train Station. This function is limited under current conditions while the Chamber is revamping its operations and completing a strategic planning activity. The function of a full-fledged and vigorous visitor information center is viewed as a vital core activity in the CIP plan. Depending on whether or not the Chamber elects to continue this work and/or to expand or contract such activities, this plan will pursue implementation of an expanded center as a very high priority. We will work with the Chamber to assist and support their activities or undertake an independent effort perhaps with other partners if they choose not to continue.

B) LOCATION

In cooperation with interested partners we will explore various possible locations for the Information Center which provide visibility, identity, access, operational efficiency, and adequate storage. The Center will be part of an overall signage improvement program to improve visibility and direction for major physical features of the village/township. We will partner with village government, Chamber of Commerce, the Design Advisory Commission and other interested organizations to explore the options and find an appropriate location.

C) OPERATION

Operation of the Center will be by a combination of volunteers and paid personnel to guide the volunteers. We will work to find an appropriate formula for sharing costs and responsibilities among the entities concerned. This will be a long-term activity so a stable mechanism for support and staffing will be needed.

3. SUPPORT AND ENHANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Most of the initiatives explored by the CIP involve activities traditionally carried out by Chambers of Commerce. The Yellow Springs Chamber is currently preparing a strategic plan to redefine its role in the community. Depending upon the outcome of that planning activity, the CIP will work in a supportive role to assist and facilitate the activities and initiatives described in this plan and/or undertaken otherwise by the Chamber. The hope is to be able to turn over most or all of the responsibilities for information dispensation from the CIP to the Chamber as soon as possible.

4. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION MATERIALS

A clear and urgent need is seen for supplementary materials to be developed as soon as the signature or brand model has been created. Near the top of the list are a new brochure for the school system and similar materials for other educational facilities. We will work with the Chamber on business directory materials and similar tools to help visitors and residents find local shopping and service resources.

LONG TERM INITIATIVES**2-3 YEARS****CIP LEADERSHIP PROJECTS**

At this point in the planning process all initiatives which involve only the CIP will have been implemented or will be in the process of implementation. The periodic review process described below may identify such ideas as we go forward, but there is nothing new determined in the plan.

CIP PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS**1. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION NETWORK**

This idea was conceived as a way to make every contact point with visitors into an information center location. Local retail business, events, or service vendors like gas stations can become Visitor Contact Sites, creating an integrated network for distribution of information about Yellow Springs. Implementation will require an education program as well as the development of suitable materials and dispensers so this initiative will take enough time for planning and ramp-up to take it well into the second year. CIP will develop a specific plan in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and retail merchants in the beginning of the second project year.

2. IMPROVED SIGNAGE

CIP will work with village government and the Design Advisory Commission which has already drawn up guidelines for integrated directional signage for the community to achieve implementation early in the second year.

3. VISITOR NEWSLETTER

A promising device not only to provide current information but to serve as a later reminder or reinforcement of a pleasant visit or attraction for a revisit is a visitor newsletter. We anticipate two versions of this. One would be available on the Website and could also be delivered via e-mail to subscribers. The other would be available in hard copy and be distributed through the Information Center and cooperating merchants and service businesses. Both would have essentially the same information about upcoming events like street fair or art exhibits, special sales in local shops, etc. Both would be produced regularly and cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce, Community Resources, Yellow Springs Historical Society, and/or other partners. Its format would be based upon the Yellow Springs signature identity and it would be distributed free of charge. Content would be determined by consultation with concerned entities.

Subscription to the newsletter will be through an application card, distributed in local businesses and through the Chamber, which will ask for an e-mail or street address as well as specific areas of interest for each consumer. This will allow for continuing targeted communication to those individuals who have signed up for the newsletter.

CIP MONITORED PROJECTS

These are projects that currently are viewed as beyond the direct scope of CIP involvement but have the potential to dramatically enhance the objectives of the project. CIP will monitor the progress of the new initiatives without the commitment of significant resources at this time to determine if they might in the future fit more directly into the scope of the CIP.

1. CULTURAL CORRIDOR PROJECT

The CIP Planning Coordinator is a charter member of this initiative and its main liaison in Yellow Springs. This regional development activity promises to be a major factor in communicating the arts and cultural assets of this community to a wider audience. We intend to continue participation in this activity in order to assure adequate focus on our already strong arts community as the effort develops. More information about the Cultural Corridor Project is included in *Appendix K*.

CIP REFERRAL PROJECTS

There is a long list of ideas and initiatives which are not part of or go well beyond the mission of the CIP. Many of these are good ideas with great potential. They are listed in *Appendices C, D, and E*. Although CIP cannot take the leadership in pursuing these we will advise/support others who want to do so. In some cases we can supply further background information, advice and even cooperation and assistance in planning, coordinating or finding support but in most our limited resources will prevent any significant support.

One of these key projects is finding or creating additional parking convenient to the downtown business district. Although village government has worked on this problem for many years a solution must be reached soon. All of the efforts of the CIP and the Chamber and Community Resources will be useless unless we can accommodate both visitation and local parking needs to support commerce in the business district. CIP will work with everyone concerned to help find a workable solution.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

All of the ideas and initiatives described in this plan need to be coordinated into a time-based Implementation Plan as a first step in making them reality. A general time schedule has been developed and is presented here but more planning needs to be done to most efficiently use the resources of consultant time, volunteer time and budget finances. Thus the first step is necessarily more planning once this overall plan has been adopted.

PHASE 1 SCHEDULE

SHORT TERM INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTATION	JANUARY 2006 TO JUNE 2006
Implementation Planning	NOV-DEC 05
Identify Marketing Consultant	NOV-DEC 05
Create Identity Materials	JAN-MAR 06
Identify Website Consultant	NOV-DEC 05
Design/Create Website	JAN-MAR 06
Plan Information Center	MAR-JUN 06
Directed Communication of Housing Opportunities	MAR-JUN 06
Support/Enhance Chamber of Commerce	JAN-JUN 06
Create Some Supplementary Materials	MAR-JUN 06

PHASE 2 SCHEDULE

LONG TERM INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTATION	JUNE 2006 TO DECEMBER 2007
Information Distribution Network	SEP-DEC 06
Improved Signage	SUMMER 06
Visitor Newsletter	OCT-DEC 06

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES**COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT BUDGET**

EXPENSES	2005 YEAR 1	10/3/05 YR 1 REVISE	2006 YEAR 2	1997 YEAR 3
PUBLICATIONS	\$400	\$200	\$500	\$500
TELEPHONE	\$600	\$200	\$500	\$500
TRANSPORTATION	\$600	\$250	\$600	\$600
HOSPITALITY	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,000
MAILING	\$600	\$200	\$600	\$600
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$400	\$250	\$400	\$400
PRINTING/COPYING	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$2,500
ADVERTISING	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$3,500
CONTRACT SERVICES	\$18,000	\$16,100	\$18,000	\$18,500
SURVEY	\$1,200	\$2,100	\$1,000	\$900
WEBSITE	\$6,500	\$8,500	\$3,500	\$2,000
ADM/CONTINGENCY	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$33,800	\$31,500
REVENUE				
DAYTON FOUNDATION	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$12,000	\$10,000
YS COMMUNITY FNDN	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$4,000
ANTIOCH CO. FNDN	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$4,000
LOCALGOVERNMENT	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$8,000	\$9,000
TRADE ORG	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,800	\$4,500
	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$33,800	\$31,500

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PERSONNEL

1. IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATOR

An Implementation Coordinator will be chosen to assist in implementing the plan. Duties will include:

Facilitating and Coordinating Materials Production

Communication and Liaison with Partner Organizations and the Media

Assist in Plan Review and Update

Meeting and Conference Logistics/Arrangements

General Plan Implementation Leadership

2. CO-OP PERSONNEL

Website update and maintenance activities and Information Center supervision will require additional human resources on an ongoing basis. We hope to be able to find a sponsoring organization or partnership which will furnish either funds or personnel time to fulfill these requirements.

3. VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer help has always been a part of staffing the Chamber of Commerce visitor facility. By inviting retired seniors, college interns and even high school community service students we hope that that tradition will not only be continued but strengthened.

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

As part of the Implementation Planning process CIP will identify milestone measurements which will be used to gauge progress and success in implementing the plan. Objective information about economic activity, demographic change and other useful parameters will be gathered periodically in cooperation with other organizations so that the information can be used not only to evaluate the CIP program but to help guide other decision makers in the community. The information will be published and distributed widely for most efficient use.