



PLAN FORWARD: PREPARING OUR FUTURE

VISION

Unite our community heritage with new growth, expansion, innovation and talent for Hardin County to become a model community in Northwest Ohio.

MISSION

To cultivate, promote and advocate for a prosperous business, educational and agricultural climate, strengthen the local economy, enhance strategic partnerships and improve the quality of life, making Hardin County a great place to live, work and prosper.

VALUES

The Hardin County Chamber and Business Alliance is a member-driven organization that serves the community based upon its core values:

*Generating Community **PRIDE***

*Cultivating Prosperous **OPPORTUNITIES***

*Building **RELATIONSHIPS** and Forging **PARTNERSHIPS***

*Preserving **TRADITIONS** and **HERITAGE***

*Challenging **PERCEPTIONS***

*Becoming **INNOVATIVE**, **CREATITVE** and **PROACTIVE***

*Driving **ACTION** and Demanding **RESULTS***

ALLIANCE DIVISIONS:

Chamber - Economic Development - Downtown Development - Tourism

ECONOMIC AND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

To develop a prosperous, pro-business climate by expanding employment growth, cultivating entrepreneurship opportunities, advancing local innovation, and revitalizing our historical downtown communities to increase new growth, jobs and investment opportunities to advance Hardin County's economy.

CHAMBER AND TOURISM FOCUS

To foster community development, commerce and public-private partnerships by promoting, networking and advocating for our local businesses, educational institutions, agricultural heritage and historical communities through year-round tourism, community events, marketing and policy initiatives, educational and training programs and member services.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

GOAL #1 FOSTER ECONOMIC VITALITY:

GROWTH

POSITION FOR NEW GROWTH, JOBS AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL #2 REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES:

COMMUNITY

IMPROVE COUNTYWIDE IMAGE AND APPEARANCE & ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE

GOAL #3 INVEST IN PEOPLE:

BUSINESS & EDUCATION

DEVELOP, CULTIVATE AND RECRUIT WORKFORCE TALENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL #4 PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL CONNECTIVITY:

AGRICULTURE

ADVANCE FARMING INNOVATION WITH AGRIBUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL #5 BUILD COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

COLLABORATION

FOSTER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

GOAL #6 STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE:

MEMBERSHIP & OPERATIONS

REMAIN A PROFESSIONAL AND RESOURCEFUL MEMBER-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

GOAL #1 FOSTER ECONOMIC VITALITY:
POSITION FOR NEW GROWTH, JOBS AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

OBJECTIVES:

1. Attract new diversified business and investment opportunities.
2. Provide resources and assistance for business retention and expansion.
3. Continue as the business leader of legislative and regulatory advocacy.
4. Support consistent technology, utility and infrastructure improvements.
5. Expand market awareness on a regional, national and global scale.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Seek new industries, suppliers, retail and service industry businesses for community needs, employment diversity and local supply-chain connectivity.
- 1B. Promote development of current and future available land sites, industrial parks and commercial and retail properties.
- 1C. Submit grants for future funding of assessment and remediation of Brownfields.
- 1D. Work to identify, plan and develop new shovel-ready sites for commercial and residential use.
- 2A. Broaden “Buy Local First” campaign to educate and increase community involvement and track economic impacts.
- 2B. Provide access to specialized training and forums on small business topics: (market development, business and strategic planning, financing and human resources).
- 2C. Recommend and improve economic incentives, tax credits, enterprise and foreign zones to become more competitive.
- 3A. Advocate positive, efficient permitting and regulatory processes to enhance a pro-business climate.
- 3B. Encourage local governments to streamline permitting process and enhance electronic access for registration, permits, tax remittance and account management.
- 3C. Develop annual Alliance Legislative Day to allow members to connect with local, state and federal elected officials.
- 4A. Encourage public-private partnerships to fund key infrastructure improvements to enhance readiness of potential commerce.
- 4B. Coordinate with county regional planning to seek Issue 1 funds for priority utility and infrastructure improvement projects.
- 4C. Improve countywide technology, such as high-speed internet connectivity and increased cellular coverage.
- 5A. Connect with national site-selection companies to expand market awareness with national and international businesses.
- 5B. Conduct countywide visitations and market to regional commercial brokerage firms, JobsOhio, industry associations and trade groups.
- 5C. Increase partnerships with JobsOhio, Ohio Northern University, OSU Extension and other sources to implement outreach efforts that target investment from foreign-owned companies.

GOAL #2 REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES:

IMPROVE COUNTYWIDE IMAGE AND APPEARANCE & ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE

OBJECTIVES:

1. Revitalize and beautify downtown business districts, neighborhoods and villages.
2. Diversify and expand retail, restaurants, entertainment and tourism attractions.
3. Plan for new residential housing for current and future needs.
4. Develop and promote social and community activities and events to enhance area recreation and culture.
5. Celebrate the county's historical character and community heritage.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Craft a phased redevelopment strategy for the Hardin County Courthouse District (HCD).
- 1B. Seek funding sources and community engagement for ongoing and year-round beautification and artistic enhancement of HCD, neighborhoods and villages.
- 1C. Establish welcoming and attractive gateways into Hardin County and city/villages, via major highway routes.
- 1D. Work with local officials to improve streetscape, sidewalks and alleyways for improved curb appeal.
- 1E. Develop community taskforce to remove, fix and clean up older, non-maintained or adjudicated properties.
- 1F. Advocate for stronger rules and regulations, as it pertains to commercial and residential property management.
- 2A. Use surveys to seek input on community needs with regards to retail, restaurants, entertainment and local services.
- 2B. Target regional businesses looking to expand into new markets regarding retail and restaurants.
- 2C. Assist with the Wilson Football Museum project in Ada, Ohio to develop a major tourism attraction to the region.
- 3A. Seek developers to provide diverse housing options, such as master-planned subdivisions, apartments, multifamily and senior living options.
- 3B. Work with local governments to identify, plan and zone future land sites for residential housing, including utility and infrastructure planning.
- 3C. Continue to seek urban renewal development in and around Ada's Main Street and HCD.
- 3D. Seek additional builders, contractors and tradecraft talent to provide additional support for housing needs.
- 4A. Cultivate community events that are seasonal, family friendly and drive tourism and other economic factors.
- 4B. Advocate for ongoing improvements and updates with community parks and recreational facilities.
- 4C. Seek charitable land contributions for future needs of green space, recreational parks and other community enhancements.
- 4D. Improve centralized information regarding Alliance and countywide events and programs, via new website and mobile site.
- 5A. Promote all centennial, sesquicentennial, and bicentennial celebrations in Hardin County.
- 5B. Support all city and village traditional festivals and events.

GOAL #3 INVEST IN PEOPLE:

DEVELOP, CULTIVATE AND RETAIN WORKFORCE TALENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

OBJECTIVES:

1. Recruit and retain skilled workforce and new emerging talent.
2. Promote workforce development, job training and leadership programs.
3. Match assets and skills of workforce with needs of local employers.
4. Enhance collaborations and partnerships to foster culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.
5. Create platforms for local entrepreneurs to connect with investment opportunities.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Market to Hardin County alumni to return and relocate to reinvest and revitalize our community.
- 1B. Market to regional prospective employees and employers and their families.
- 1C. Promote internships and co-op programs to connect local employers with students and young professionals.
- 2A. Identify re-training programs for unemployed or dislocated and under skilled workers.
- 2B. Partner with Hardin County Leadership Program to promote and grow executive leadership development.
- 2C. Cultivate more job training programs for people of all ages and skill sets.
- 3A. Facilitate meetings to connect educators and training staff with local employers to discuss workforce needs.
- 3B. Advocate for pro-growth employment issues on public-sector boards, public agencies and local governments.
- 3C. Help overcome legal issues and other obstacles to improve school-to-work programs.
- 4A. Host entrepreneur forum, inviting seasoned business and investment leaders, as guest speakers, to discuss emerging topics and provide informational resources.
- 4B. Connect business and entrepreneur leaders with business, engineering, law and pharmacy programs at ONU and surrounding colleges and technical schools.
- 4C. Develop centralized information and resource guide to help start-ups with technical assistance, grant funding, business and financial planning, etc.
- 5A. Establish entrepreneurship foundation that generates local, long-term capital investment funds.
- 5B. Connect start-up and current businesses with venture capital sources to seek additional funding opportunities.
- 5C. Support and market existing economic gardening programs that help grow local start-ups.

GOAL #4 PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL CONNECTIVITY
ADVANCING FARMING INNOVATION WITH AGRIBUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

OBJECTIVES:

1. Promote and market agricultural heritage and resources.
2. Support agricultural organizations and youth programs.
3. Develop innovative and niche markets for agribusiness opportunities.
4. Preserve land use for longevity of farming, sustainable development and innovative uses.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Promote and participate in the development of farmers markets countywide.
- 1B. Develop marketing platforms to promote Hardin County's farms and produce as a global commodity.
- 1C. Assist local growers to identify and market niche products and specialty crops.
- 1D. Seek state and regional agricultural conferences and one-day conventions to host in Hardin County.
- 1E. Highlight annual farming and crop data and statistics to increase market exposure of resources.
- 2A. Develop Agribusiness Committee to expand communications, planning and partnerships with Ag Council and local farmers.
- 2B. Participate in collaborative efforts with countywide organizations such as 4H, FFA, Farm Bureau, etc.
- 2C. Remain an ongoing major sponsor of the Hardin County Fair and promote its programs and events year round.
- 3A. Enhance local food connectivity, encouraging area businesses, restaurants and schools to purchase locally grown foods and organic produce.
- 3B. Promote food processing industry and businesses that add value to local products grown in Hardin County.
- 3C. Seek new agribusiness industries, such as technology, packing, transportation processing, and commercial and retail that support needs of local farmers.
- 3D. Seek new export opportunities to allow outbound distribution of locally grown products.
- 4A. Connect agriculture and renewable energy opportunities to develop innovative sources.

GOAL #5 BUILD COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:
FOSTER LOCAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

OBJECTIVES:

1. Strengthen collaboration between towns and villages within Hardin County.
2. Build community, business and educational partnerships.
3. Encourage ongoing investments for PreK-12 and higher education.
4. Support growth of nationally recognized entities that operate within Hardin County.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Improve coordination efforts and communications between town, villages and CICs.
- 1B. Increase workability with local mayors and city councils, to establish county and communities to develop short-term and long-term planning that parallels the efforts of the Alliance.
- 2A. Establish a framework to develop business, community and educational partnerships.
- 2B. Enhance communications between the public and private sectors.
- 3A. Formalize partnership between Hardin County Public School Systems, educational organizations, universities and local business community to provide continued financial support.
- 3B. Encourage more mentoring programs for all area students and local community, civic and business leaders.
- 4A. Promote and market Hardin County businesses and institutions that have national presence within their specific marketplace.
- 4B. Enhance partnerships between education, private business and public agencies to increase joint-venture opportunities.
- 4C. Collaborate with ONU in assisting them with university development strategies to enhance positive outcomes countywide.

GOAL #6 STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE:
REMAIN A PROFESSIONAL AND RESOURCEFUL MEMBER-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

OBJECTIVES:

1. Recruit and retain membership to advance mission and strategic priorities.
2. Develop and maintain quality member services and benefits.
3. Expand the Alliance brand awareness and divisional resources.
4. Focus on talent development to engage quality leadership and member participation.
5. Provide platform for members to promote and expand their networks.
6. Enhance the effectiveness of the Alliance and its divisions.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1A. Create new marketing and membership packets to outline membership services and benefits and organizational focus.
- 1B. Develop member-sponsor programs to increase member participation with recruitment and expansion efforts.
- 1C. Increase staff visitation to current and prospective members businesses and community organizations.
- 2A. Increase exposure and expand additional member cost saving benefits, services and programs.
- 2B. Develop Member-2-Member discount program, offering special discounts on goods and services to members only.
- 3A. Implement local media and marketing strategies to effectively communicate the Alliance's vision, mission, goals and resources, as well as notable events, programs and news worthy information.
- 3B. Provide research/data, white papers and editorials on Alliance projects, local developments and policy positions, as well as becoming an informational source for countywide and regional media outlets.
- 3C. Design, launch and maintain a new website that informs, communicates and promotes all divisional resources.
- 3D. Expand social media applications to increase audience viewership and expand market awareness.
- 3E. Engage target marketing, via social media applications, to increase lead generations for membership and business growth.
- 4A. Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.
- 4B. Recruit high quality and diverse members to take on leadership roles on board and committees.
- 4C. Broaden Ambassador's program to engage new members that match the community and business profile.
- 5A. Host high quality and informative events, such as networking socials, educational programs, training seminars, job fairs and other special programs.
- 5B. Develop sponsorship packages to increase member exposure and generate support for Alliance events and programs.
- 6A. Produce annual reports to track ongoing progress of strategic priorities, as well as countywide economic indicators.
- 6B. Utilize online surveys to track community needs and members feedback on performance, service and resources.
- 6C. Develop staff reports to track progress and performance of work, measured against yearly goals and strategic plans.
- 6D. Provide quality financial reporting and adhere to annual budgets and spending.
- 6E. Increase technology and communication applications to provide professional and reliable data and information sharing.