

Community Information Project

December 2007

Final Report



Yellow Springs Men's Group. Inc

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2002, the Yellow Springs Men's Group released a comprehensive Cost of Living Study which was completed in conjunction with the Center for Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) at Wright State University. That study of the village indicated a trend toward an aging, less diverse and smaller population set against a large and ever growing tax burden for our citizens. Economic Forums were held in 2004 and 2005 to facilitate developing general strategies for addressing these concerns. Also, in an effort to spur economic development, the Yellow Springs Men's Group agreed to be the managing sponsor of the Community Information Project (CIP) to promote the many positive aspects of visiting, living, learning and working in Yellow Springs to restore the population and job level.

MISSION

Early in the process, the group identified that the project's goal 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. To achieve the goal, the CIPPC would develop a communications strategy based upon some variation of the theme that "Yellow Springs is a great place to shop, work, learn and live."

PROJECT HISTORY

General

The attendees of the 2005 Community Forum were asked questions to gauge their opinion about the need to promote various aspects of the Village to those outside our community. Forum attendees were in overwhelming support of the need to communicate the strengths of Yellow Springs to the region and beyond.

More specific ideas were identified during a local brainstorming session to solicit public opinion and comment on the quality of life in Yellow Springs and recommendations for achieving the four goals set out by the CIPAC. The effort resulted in over 100 ideas that were reviewed, evaluated and categorized.

Materials used by local entities to provide information to visitors, prospective residents, etc. were gathered and reviewed as background for the planning activity.

Planning Process

The Men's Group secured funding for the CIP through government, institutional and private donors. An advisory planning committee (CIPAC) was recruited. This group included representatives of government, business, civic organizations, project sponsors and individuals with professional public relations experience. The CIPAC then selected a planning committee (CIPPC) to conduct the planning activity, with various implementation tasks to be contracted to qualified consultants. Monthly meeting and/or reports kept the CIPAC current with the project activity of the CIPPC.

The CIPPC developed a schedule and budget for the three-year course of this project. Objective information about economic activity, demographic change and other useful parameters were gathered not only to evaluate the CIP program but to help guide other decision makers in the community.

Background Research

In order to focus a communications campaign, in August 2005 the CIPAC retained the services of the Center for Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) of Wright State University to conduct an External Perception Survey of the opinions of residents in a 15 mile radius of Yellow Springs. In their report, CUPA stated that in order to grow and maintain a functioning, vital community it is important to attract young people who will stay in the community and raise a family. Young respondents (those under the age of 35) identify quality of schools and job opportunities as the two most important qualities when choosing where to purchase a home. In the survey, Yellow Springs did not fare well in either of these categories. Recreation received a nearly 50% positive rating with shopping being the second most attractive feature with a 16% favorable rating, giving the community an opportunity to capitalize on its recognition as a destination for visitors. The CUPA report suggested that we enhance the recognition of Yellow Springs as a place to visit, and then we inform those visitors and potential visitors that our community is also a great place to live, learn and work.

In 2005, CIPAC also retained the services of Synergy One to analyze existing village websites to determine what might be missing or need enhancement and to find examples of excellent community websites for comparison.

The Plan

In developing a plan, CIPPC gathered and reviewed existing information available to visitors, prospective residents, etc. From the vast amount of input

received from the 2005 Community Forum, the community brainstorming session, and individual and expert advice, the CIPPC developed a ranking system according to “highest payoff” based on time frame, ease of implementation, cost, degree of organizational coordination required and number of niche markets addressed. From that list, they developed the CIP Plan which consisted of *CIP Leadership Projects*, *CIP Partnership Projects* and *CIP Continuity Projects*.

Leadership Projects are projects that the CIP took full charge of from concept development through implementation. These projects were designed and prioritized to communicate specific messages to specific targets

Partnership Projects are initiatives which involve CIP but which are implemented by community partners.

CIP Continuity Projects are projects that continue the communication effort of the CIP after the CIP no longer exists (3 years from the start of the project.)

PLAN INITIATIVES

The two main *CIP Leadership Projects* were the **Identity Campaign** and the **Targeted Communication Initiatives**. In order to increase awareness and help direct outside perception of the Yellow Springs community, the CIPPC determined that an effective place to start would be to create a unique but representative identity symbol for the community, in other words, a *signature*. This signature, if used consistently, will provide a visual cue that can be easily identified and provides clues as to why this community is unique. It lets the outside world know who we are and provides an opportunity to highlight, communicate and publicize our qualities and that people should take notice. It provides motivation not only to those outside the community but it also provides an internal rallying point, generating pride and boosting morale.

Design Consultants

The selection process for design consultants for the Identity Campaign began in late 2005 with members of the CIPPC identifying half a dozen primarily local individuals and/or firms to submit proposals for the project. Interviews were conducted in January 2006 and the CIPPC selected the husband and wife team of Linserpelle Creative as its design consultant for the Identity Campaign.

Community “Signature”

Although they were already knowledgeable about the community from their previous local work, three designers from Linserpelle Creative were given a tour

of the village and were introduced to many community members. The designers and CIPPC solicited input from various stakeholders in the community (local merchants, business and organization representatives) via interviews and surveys. The design team then produced examples of various logo designs. From those logo designs, the CIPPC narrowed the field to six unique designs. Through a series of stakeholder surveys, the logo concepts were vetted and a final design selected. Several applications of the logo were then developed, including various color and black and white versions as well as a simplified logotype only. Through a similar brainstorming and vetting process, the tagline recommended by Linserpelle, "Find Yourself Here" won the approval of the CIPPC.

Street Banners and Signs

With the signature selection complete, the CIPPC began the process of applying the signature in various ways. One of the first initiatives was to commission the production of street banners for the downtown and high visibility areas of the community. The feedback on these banners has been extremely favorable. Linserpelle helped create the street banners which were unveiled in time for the October 2006 Street Fair. The CIP logo has also been prominently displayed on highway signs posted alongside the village limit sign at all entrances to the village. Various ad specialty items displaying the logo have been commissioned including; T-shirts which have been sold at three Street Fairs, shopping bags, sun visors, appliance magnets and static stickers which have been given away at Street Fairs and other events.

Templates

As part of the identity campaign and to open the way for the targeted communication initiatives, CIPPC commissioned Linserpelle to develop templates for printed material. These templates are designed to be used in Microsoft Word and are extremely "user-friendly" for any level of graphics and computer capability. The templates include a tri-fold brochure with six cover design options, a 4-panel brochure, a business/organization newsletter and letterhead, all available in either color or black and white.

With input from CIPPC, Linserpelle designed a slipcase to hold several brochures as well as website and print ads including a 2-page spread in the *Discover the Dayton Region* publication from the Dayton Development Coalition. All of these marketing pieces contain the logo and highlight various artistic elements within the logo graphics. The result is a collection of designs and usages that are varied while containing similar, resonant elements that communicate that Yellow Springs is a unique and vibrant community.

Street Fair

Targeted communication initiatives were developed to convey messages to specific audiences. CIP partnered with Community Council to sponsor a booth for three Street Fairs (October 2006, June 2007 and October 2007) to target visitors and local residents alike. The booth featured prominent displays of the new logo on T-shirts, sun visors, shopping bags, refrigerator magnets, helium balloons and static stickers. At the October 2006 Street Fair, CIP advertised the launch of its newly developed website by sponsoring a photography contest.

Realtor Reception

On a lovely day in March of 2007, we hosted a reception for area realtors and relocation specialists who have influence in bringing new residents to our community. We sent out over 75 invitations and 25 attended. The reception included a bus tour of Yellow Springs. We provided packets of information including a map of the tour and printed brochures we believed would be of interest to the attendees. CIP Advisory Committee members, Fred Bartenstein and Elisabeth DeForest volunteered as tour guides providing interesting and informative commentary to the passengers. After the tour, we hosted a luncheon at the Antioch Inn. Community leaders from the village government, schools, businesses, etc. served as “table hosts.” Eric Swansen, village gave a short speech while a continuous slide show featured photographs of the village from the CIP photography contest. We received very positive feedback from the attendees who said they learned a lot about the village and its housing opportunities.

New Resident Reception

In another targeted communication initiative, we partnered with the Leadership Institute of Yellow Springs (LIYS), to host two New Resident receptions in 2007. The hope was that by inviting new residents, we would encourage their participation in the community and ensure their continued residency. Anecdotally, new residents often have friends outside the village who might be interested in relocating to Yellow Springs. The theme of the reception was “Outdoor Amenities.” Short speeches and slide shows were provided by Nick Boutis, director of the Glen Helen Ecology Institute, Village Manager Eric Swansen, and Ron Schmidt, project leader for CIP. The reception ended with a guided hike through Glen Helen. Despite the beautiful weather (or maybe because of it) the reception was not well attended. Nonetheless, the effort was well received by those who attended.

CIP Website

Although originally conceived as a *CIP Partnership Projects* a visitor website was designed to communicate with both residents and non-residents as a primary initiative of the CIP. CIP contracted with Ven Adkins of Synergy One during the fall of 2005 to analyze the current web environment of Yellow Springs and to suggest possible solutions for the creation of a definitive Community Web portal to serve as a central point of information. The study revealed that while there are numerous sites within the local web community, none of the sites represented a comprehensive source for community information. The report detailed the contents of various existent sites and the viability for enhancing them. It also included examples of successful comprehensive community websites from other communities. Additional detail on the study is contained in Appendices G1 and G2 of the CIP Project Plan.

After the CIPPC and CIPAC reviewed the website analysis report, they concluded that developing a new website would best achieve the goal of a comprehensive community website that will serve as a centralized portal to inform, educate and connect the community. The CIPPC chose to work with a design team consisting of Linserpelle and a local website creator to design a site from the “ground up.” After advertising in the local paper and searching through personal and professional contacts, the CIP interviewed four candidates and selected Michael Cannon of Mpowerd to join the website design team under the direction of Linserpelle. The CIPPC agreed with Synergy One recommendation that the website for Launceston, Tasmania, discoverlaunceston.com most closely encompassed the goals of the type of site they were trying to develop. The CIPPC then developed a site map along with a completion timeline for the consultants to follow.

At the end of August 2006, the website consultants presented four different website designs at a CIPPC meeting. Committee members were given an opportunity to voice their opinions in an open discussion format. The group agreed on a design and provided feedback on changes or enhancements needed to direct the project forward. In an effort to continue the use of the logo, the logo was prominently featured throughout the website design. The primary navigation site of exploreyellowsprings.com was selected. The theme of the website is that Yellow Springs is a great place to Live, Learn, Work, Play and Shop. These five elements represented the secondary pages of the site. This theme was also featured in the logo design work, especially the street banners.

In September 2006, sponsors and supporters of the Community Information Project were invited to a special meeting/reception showcasing the Identity Campaign and Website. A question and answer session with the design group provided the attendees with information on the goals and development of both campaigns. It allowed the participants to provide feedback to the CIP which was generally very positive. Since the website was designed as a portal, we invited

everyone to provide us with website links they felt would be appropriate to the site.

The official launch of the website on October 11, 2006 coincided with Street Fair day. To publicize the launch, we advertised a website photography contest via the local newspapers and flyers. Contestants were invited to submit photographs that represented one or more of the main elements (Live, Learn, Work, Play and Shop) contained in the website. We received nearly 100 photographs. A team of judges with expertise in the arts selected the finalists. All contestants were awarded a T-shirt with the logo. The first, second and third place winners received cash prizes and were announced in the YS News and the website along with the winning photographs.

In order to increase the visibility of the website, the CIP sent out emails to various local websites requesting that they display the logo as a link to exploreyellowsprings.com. When Michael Cannon left Yellow Springs in 2007, Ven Adkins of Synergy One took over as the “webmaster” for the site and has been keeping the site updated and maintained. One of the more recent enhancements to the website is the accessibility of the logo designs and printed material templates. Users are now able to download the needed design material directly from our website. This increased accessibility will likely increase the utilization of the logo thereby strengthening its message.

Information Center

The CIPPC investigated various alternatives for distributing information to visitors including information kiosks located in the Central Business District or a partnership with the Senior Center. However, cost and maintenance concerns yielded the conclusion that the existing Information Center at the Chamber of Commerce in the Train Station is the best alternative for now. The Chamber has the facility and infrastructure, including staff and volunteers, to support the Visitor Center.

Partnership With Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce

The CIP partnership with the Chamber of Commerce has been one of the most important and fruitful partnerships of the CIP. CIP personnel have provided support to the Chamber by assisting in the formulation of a new Strategic Plan and By-Laws and in leadership development efforts. They also designed and implemented 3 successful marketing workshops for Chamber members in the winter of 2005. The CIP supported the Chamber’s cooperative advertising campaign among retail merchants, other business entities and non-profit organizations. The cooperative advertising promoted the entire community externally via radio, newspaper and billboard ads. An example of the cooperative spirit between the CIP and the Chamber of Commerce is the 2006 and 2007

holiday advertising campaigns in which the logo was adapted to reflect a holiday theme ... "Find Yourself Here for the Holidays." Ads were placed in regional newspapers and featured on various websites. Based on retail sales reports, the holiday advertising campaign was a success. In addition to the holiday ad campaign, the Chamber has been using CIP-provided printed material templates and logo designs in many different applications and events including Street Fair, Art Stroll, Guide for Places to Shop, Eat, Attractions, Events, etc.

In October 2007, Chamber members and other interested parties were invited to attend a CIP-sponsored reception at the Senior Citizens Center Great Room. After the first hour, the reception was open to the general public. This reception showcased the available printed material templates and the various applications of the CIP developed logo and highlighted the accessibility of the designs via the website, exploreyellowsprings.com. Two interactive stations were set up with personal computers and a printer. One station gave attendees the opportunity to have customized address labels with the logo design printed. The other station provided the opportunity to see how to design an individualized brochure or newsletter using the templates developed by the CIP and the design team of Linserpelle. Approximately 60 people attended and were treated to light refreshments.

The CIP, Chamber of Commerce, and private business partners combined their efforts and resources by sponsoring a billboard on Interstate Route 70 to run from November 2007 through January 2008 and perhaps beyond if successful. The billboard was designed by the Chamber and Lamar Outdoor Advertising using the logotype only with the words, Shop/Eat/ Play/Stay. The billboard is strategically less than 1 mile from the Yellow Springs exit at Route 68.

Discover The Dayton Region

The CIP also formed a partnership with a group of local organizations and businesses to place a two page ad the 2007 edition of *Discover the Dayton Region*. Each of the participating members shared the cost of the ad. Linserpelle designed the ad which featured the logo and design elements of the logo. The publication also featured an article about Wheeling Gaunt and his legacy to the village. The publication is provided to patrons of hotels and motels in the area. In addition, many realtors and local businesses provide this publication to prospective homebuyers and employees from outside the region. The theme of the 2007 edition was the 60th Anniversary of Wright Patterson Air Force Base and its growing regional importance in the wake of the federal government's 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

Yellow Springs Historical Society

Other CIP initiatives included a partnership with the Yellow Springs Historical Society in order to produce several brochures, including ones on Wheeling Gaunt and a Walking Tour of Yellow Springs. The brochures include components from the logo and coordinate nicely with one another.

CIP CONTINUITY

One of the major original mandates of the CIP was to find a means of continuing the efforts beyond the initial 36 month project life span. In order to maintain this continuity, the CIP leadership and Advisory Committee helped initiate and strongly supports an alliance with Community Resources of Yellow Springs and the Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce called the Yellow Springs Strategic Alliance. Funds and other resources from these three organizations along with funds from external sources will be used to promote economic development. The goal is provide a means to promote retention of local businesses and to attract new residents and businesses to Yellow Springs by providing a strong and focused economic development agency for the entire community.

Ongoing initiatives such as the website, printed informational material, advertising, etc. will be supported by contractual relationships with other organizations and individuals until the funds remaining in the CIP account are expended and the responsibilities are assumed by the Yellow Springs Strategic Alliance.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Project, as proposed originally in 2004, anticipated a total budget of over \$100,000 to be expended over a period of 3 years. Actual revenue received totaled a little over \$80,000. In kind and contributed services and supplies amount to over \$ 20,000 bringing the total scope of the project very close to the budget anticipated. Of that amount about \$50,000 has been expended as of December 2007. The balance has or will soon be committed to contractual obligations to carry the project forward for at least the next 2 years.

The work of this project has only been possible through the generosity of the community in providing both the necessary revenue to pay for materials and services but also through the contributions of individuals and organizations through in-kind donations. Most of the copying and printing costs have been contributed as well as transportation, telephone and other ancillary incidental costs. These generous gifts have offset other lost revenue and reduced the need for additional fund-raising.

A general summary of revenue and expense is included here for information. The full and official financial accounting will be accomplished upon conclusion of ongoing activities and provided to sponsors under separate cover.

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT
BUDGET STATEMENT**

EXPENSES	2005 YEAR 1	2006 YEAR 2	2007 YEAR 3	TOTALS
PUBLICATIONS	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$300
TELEPHONE	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$300
TRANSPORTATION	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$300
HOSPITALITY	\$400	\$800	\$1,200	\$2,400
MAILING	\$150	\$150	\$200	\$500
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$300
PRINTING/COPYING	\$2,500	\$4,500	\$5,000	\$12,000
ADVERTISING	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$1,500	\$3,700
CONTRACT PERSONNEL	\$12,000	\$14,000	\$16,000	\$42,000
SURVEYS	\$2,000	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$5,000
WEBSITE	\$6,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$13,500
ADM/CONTINGENCY	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$1,500
	\$25,450	\$26,550	\$29,800	\$81,800
REVENUE				TOTALS
DAYTON FOUNDATION	\$14,000	\$6,000	\$0	\$20,000
YS COMMUNITY FNDN	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,000
ANTIOCH COMPANY FNDN	\$6,000	\$9,000	\$0	\$15,000
SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCE		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
LOCAL GOVERNMENT*	\$4,000	\$5,500	\$4,000	\$13,500
TRADE ORG	\$3,000	\$3,800	\$4,500	\$11,300
	\$30,000	\$34,300	\$18,500	\$82,800

* Village of YS, Miami Township

New supplementary funding requests are shown in bold type in the budget

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

As mentioned earlier, the CIP goal was to develop and communicate a message that would attract more visitors to our village, more residents to our neighborhoods, more students to our educational institutions and new and existing employers to grow here. As one might expect, many variables affect the realization of this goal. The uncertainty about the future of Antioch College may have an impact on the number of students as well as the number of Antioch faculty living in Yellow Springs.

Despite these influences, the CIP conducted two perception surveys to determine if the project increased the awareness and positive perception of Yellow Springs. The results from these surveys show that overall, most respondents were very happy with the Yellow Springs logo that was presented for comment, with many indicating that the logo captures their views of the village. Similarly, almost all visitors to the Yellow Springs Street Fair were satisfied with their visit. In fact, nearly all participants indicated that the Street Fair met or exceeded their expectations.

Yellow Springs businesses are benefiting from the Street Fair, with over sixty percent of respondents patronizing Yellow Springs restaurants and shops during their visit. Word of mouth seems to be the best advertising tool for the Yellow Springs Street Fair, with more than half of respondents indicating that they heard of the fair in this manner. In conclusion, survey results showed a positive view of both the Street Fair and the village as a whole.

Because there are so many variables that affect the economic framework and quality of life of a community it is difficult to accurately gauge the effectiveness of any single initiative. Our community exists in a region which is experiencing a general economic and population decline. Because our community mirrors these regional problems, perhaps in an exaggerated way, the participants and supporters of the CIP felt that the time was right to take action despite the obstacles. This final report represents an overview of more than three years of action. The project leaders are grateful to all of the participants, volunteers and supporters of this project for their dedication and vision. This project truly represents a community effort.

Members of the CIPAC and CIPPC included:

Jim Albright
Mark Crockett
Don Hollister
Karl Koehler
Phyllis Schmidt
Eric Swansen
Karen Wintrow

Tony Armocida
Elisabeth DeForest
Jerry Holt
Jeanna Peifer
Ron Schmidt
Jerry Sutton

Fred Bartenstein
Rob Hillard
Rick Jurasek
Fran Rickenbach
Lynda Sirk
Bambi Williams

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

In addition to the members of the CIPAC and CIPPC listed on the previous page, we gratefully acknowledge the support from the following organizations and individuals:

Antioch Company	Process Printing
Fred Bartenstein	Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce
Morgan Family Foundation	Yellow Springs Community Resources
Yellow Springs Community Foundation	Village of Yellow Springs
Linserpelle Creative	Yellow Springs Historical Society
WYSO	Channel 13
Synergy One	Miami Township Trustees
Leadership Institute of Yellow Springs	Sam Eckenrode
Fran Rickenbach	
Wright State University's Center for Urban and Public Affairs	

For details about the Plan, planning process, research results and other related information please visit the CIP website (exploreyellowsprings.com) or contact:

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APPENDICES

- A **RESEARCH RESULTS** – *Full surveys/studies available on website locations (exploreyellowsprings.com or the Yellow Springs Men's Group, Inc. website, 45387.org)*
- 1 External Perceptions Survey – Conclusion (*full survey available on 45387.org*)
 - 2 Website Feasibility Study - Conclusion (*full survey available on 45387.org*)
 - 3 Visitor Survey – Conclusion (*full survey available on exploreyellowsprings.com*)
 - 4 Retail Business Survey - Pending
- B **USER GUIDE** – Summary (*full guide available on exploreyellowsprings.com*)