

## **THE PLANNING PROCESS**

### **INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVES**

In September 2002, the Yellow Springs Men's Group released their comprehensive Cost of Living Study completed in conjunction with the Center for Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) at Wright State University. The purpose of the study was to analyze statistical data regarding the state of the economy of Yellow Springs. The findings were of great concern indicating a trend toward an aging, less diverse and smaller population set against a large and ever growing tax burden for our citizens.

The survey was shared with the community in several meetings and concern was so great that a Community Forum was scheduled in conjunction with CUPA, including representatives from all areas of local government, business, education and civic organizations on March 27, 2004 at Wright State University. A second Forum with even broader participation was held in 2005. The outcome of the forums was general recommendations from the attendees for addressing the concerns of population decline and increased cost of living and the formation of a Community Round Table to develop programs in support of the recommendations.

A secondary issue was also raised at the 2004 Forum regarding the possibly negative perception non-residents might have of Yellow Springs and how this might effect both population and economic activity. As a result and at the request of the Community Round Table, the Community Information Project (CIP) arose to promote the many positive aspects of visiting, living, learning and working in Yellow Springs in an effort to help reverse the population, commercial and economic decline.

The Yellow Springs Men's Group, the project's managing sponsor, prepared a proposal and budget (See Below) to solicit funding and community support. Following the fundraising effort last summer and fall, we received the last of the initial round of funds expected at the end of 2004. Funding was received from several community groups including Village of Yellow Springs, Miami Township, Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce, Yellow Springs Community Foundation Antioch Company Foundation and a private donor through the Dayton Foundation. The Men's Group then recruited an advisory planning committee (CIPAC) to oversee the planning with members from a broad cross section of the community including representatives of government, business and civic organizations, project sponsors, and individuals with professional public relations experience. Membership of both groups is listed on the following page.

**CIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Abel	Lisa	Community Resources
Armocida	Anthony	YS Board of Education
Bartenstein	Fred	At Large Forum Participant
Crockett	Mark	Miami Township Trustees, Community Round Table
Hollister	Don	Chamber of Commerce
Peifer	Jeanna	At Large Forum Participant
Rickenbach	Fran	Yellow Springs Community Foundation
Schmidt	Phyllis	Participant in prior information project
Schmidt	Ron	Yellow Springs Men's Group Sponsor Mgr
Sutton	Jerry	Yellow Springs Men's Group Sponsor Mgr
Swinger	Denise	Village Council
Williams	Bambi	At Large Forum Participant

The following served as members during 2005 but are no longer on the committee:

Albright	Jim
Hillard	Rob

**CIP PROJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Koehler	Karl	Koehler Advertising
Rickenbach	Fran	Management Excellence Inc.
Schmidt	Ron	Graphicom Press, YS Men's Group
Sutton	Jerry	Attorney, YS Men's Group
Wintrow	Karen	CIP Planning Coordinator

## **PROJECT CONCEPT**

In the initial conceptualization of the project the sponsors anticipated that the planning would be done by a planning committee composed of members of the advisory committee and other expert volunteers. This was based upon a clear need for a project which recognizes the kind of community we are and the high cost of talent in this field. This concept recognized that funding support would be limited and there is a long tradition of volunteerism in the community to help shape the project.

In late 2004, the CIPAC made a decision to delegate project planning as well as implementation to an external consultant. Following preparation of a formal Request for Proposal, proposals were solicited from a group of six pre-qualified candidate organizations. Responses were received from only three but they did not submit bids. Reasons indicated varied from lack of sufficient breadth of knowledge and experience to insufficient funding for the scope of work required. Based upon this information the CIPAC elected to return to the original concept of undertaking the planning activity using a planning committee (CIPPC) with various implementation tasks contracted later to qualified consultants.

In meetings during the early months of 2005, the group ratified that the project's goal is to develop and communicate a message that will effectively 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. It was decided that the most effective way to do that was to develop a communications campaign based upon some variation of the theme that "Yellow Springs is a great place to shop, work, learn and live." With professional assistance, we can tweak graphics and add or subtract words such as "fun" or "recreate." Furthermore, it was discussed that the most effective vehicles for the ultimate CIP message may include: website, brochures, billboards / signage, and selected advertisement.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The group also ratified its previously stated desire to gather baseline data on the perceptions of the local population as well as perceptions within target markets.

The first phase of this data collection occurred at the 2005 Community Forum, where the following questions, developed by the CIP, were posed to the attendees regarding the interest and need to promote various aspects of the Village to those outside our community.

- Should we attract learners to our educational institutions? How?
- Should we attract new residents to our community? How?
- Should we attract people to shop, play, eat, or stay over? How?
- Should we convince local businesses to grow here? How?
- Should we attract appropriate new business? How?

Forum attendees were in overwhelming support of the need to promote Yellow Springs to the region and beyond. CUPA completed a summary of the responses to these questions from the Forum breakout groups (*Appendix C*) Additionally, much of

the discussion in individual break-out sessions in some way related to the efforts of the CIP. A summary of those items is included in *Appendix D*.

In order to solicit an even broader range of local opinions, a brainstorming session was held on July 11 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 session was facilitated by members of CIPAC and attendees contributed over 100 ideas that were reviewed, evaluated and categorized (*Appendix E*).

### **RESEARCH/INFORMATION GATHERING**

The first step in gathering information for the project was to assemble all of the information materials used by local entities to provide information to visitors, prospective residents, etc. All of this material was gathered and reviewed as background for the planning activity.

In response to a need for further information necessary to focus the Community Information Project activities on likely target markets, the CIPAC retained the services of the Center for Urban and Public Affairs from Wright State University to conduct an External Perception Survey of the opinions of the surrounding community. Between June 14 and July 10, CUPA conducted a random-digit-dialed survey of 534 residents within a 15 mile radius of Yellow Springs to assess whether nearby residents would choose Yellow Springs as a community in which to visit, learn, work and live.

The general conclusion of the survey is that the respondents did not have a great deal of knowledge of what Yellow Springs has to offer in the way of education, housing, job opportunities and shopping. Yellow Springs did do well at bringing people into the community for recreation and specialized shopping which gives us the opportunity to appeal to those visitors with other features of Yellow Springs. Further investigation of individual responses to questions indicated that there was very little negative opinion of Yellow Springs and respondents who scored Yellow Springs high in any category did so for just the reasons we treasure, including population diversity; creativity; our educational values; a safe, small-town feeling; unique shopping and natural amenities like the Glen. The summary can be seen in *Appendix F* with supporting materials available via e-mail.

Recognizing that one of the most significant communications tools available is the Internet, the CIPAC contracted with Ven Adkins of Synergy-One Resource Group to provide website analysis and recommendation services. The project included a review of existing Village websites to determine what already exists and what might be needed. A secondary aspect of the research is to find a collection of comparable village websites that are excellent for review and comparison. (*Appendix G*)

### **MARKET NICHE IDENTIFICATION**

Due to the extremely limited budget of this initiative, CIPAC cannot afford a 'shotgun' approach to building awareness of Yellow Springs; rather, it must define niches and focus resources on them. On August 10, a charette session with members of CIPAC and CIPPC was held to help define the high payoff segments upon which the CIP might wish to concentrate.

Through a storyboard process facilitated by Fred Bartenstein, the group developed recommendations of specific groups of people who might be attracted to Yellow Springs and specifically to the appropriate category of visit, learn, work and live. Through the numbers of responses, it was quickly realized that the most efficient target would be to attract people to Yellow Springs to visit and then educate them on Yellow Springs after they are here. As shown in *Appendix H*, the specific niche markets and the frequency with which they were identified are as follows:

- Families Seeking Innovative/Alternative Education & Diversity (11)
- Cultural Creatives/Innovators (9)
- Main Stream Consumers of Small and Special Experiences (7)
- People with Strong Local Ties (5)
- Social/Political Activists (5)
- Lifelong Learners; Adult (3)
- Outdoor/Nature Recreators (3)
- Consumers of "Funky" Stuff (3)
- Healthy Lifestyles (1)

### **IDEA SORTING**

From the vast amount of input received by the CIPPC, including the results from the 2005 Community Forum, the community brainstorming session and individual input, hundreds of ideas were reviewed categorized and sorted as to whether they were achievable by the CIP. This information was narrowed down to 46 project ideas that seemed appropriate for the CIP to consider. (*Appendix I*),

The project ideas were then related to niche markets, ranked and further sorted as to the "highest payoff" projects based upon time frame, ease of implementation, cost, degree of organization coordination required and number of niche markets addressed. A numbering system was developed to give an objective view of the value of each project. From the ranking based upon total points, the list was then narrowed down to thirteen projects that warranted further exploration. This final Project Summary is included on the following page.

## Appendix B

	Strategy (Project/Idea)	Range	\$	Labor	VLWR	Niches	Organ Struct	<b>Total</b>	Partners
	<b>Communications</b>								
1	Improve Promotional Materials "The Hook" Publicity Slogan/Advertising Campaign	3	1	3	3	9	2	<b>21</b>	CofC
2		3	1	2	2.5	9	3	<b>20.5</b>	
3	Cross-promotion of Events & Businesses	3	3	2	1	9	2	<b>20</b>	CofC CofC, Arts, Vil Gov
4	Cultural Corridor Participation Coordinate, Advertise, Celebrate	3	2	2	3.5	7	2	<b>19.5</b>	
5	Walkability	3	3	2	2	5	2	<b>17</b>	CofC
6	Visitor Newsletter Promotion of Center for Business & Education	3	2	2	2.5	5	2	<b>16.5</b>	CofC
7	Promote Quality of Educational Facilities/Options	1	2	2	4	5	2	16	CR Education Alliance
8		3	3	3	1	3	2	<b>15</b>	
9	Promote Housing to Newcomers	3	3	2	1	2	3	<b>14</b>	
10	Promote YS Area Recreation	3	2	2	2	2	2	<b>13</b>	Glen, BEC
11	Promotion of Bike Trail	3	2	2	2	2	2	<b>13</b>	CofC, BEC CofC, Vil Gov, DAC
12	Welcome Signage at Entrances to Village	1	1	1	4	5	1	<b>13</b>	
13	Promote Benefits of Doing Business in YS	3	3	2	1	1	2	<b>12</b>	CofC

### Explanation of Rating System

#### Range

1-2 Years	3
2-3 Years	2
>3 Years	1

V, L, W, R Objectives

#### Budget Objectives

<\$1K	3
\$1K- \$2K	2
>\$2K	1

Organizational Structure

CIP Initiative	3
CIP/Partners	2
Non-CIP	1

#### Labor

Low	3
Mid	2
High	1