
Agriculture Implementation Strategy

**Licking County
Planning Commission**
20 South Second Street
Newark, Ohio 43055



ADOPTED: January 28, 2013

RESOLUTION 2013-002

IN THE MATTER OF ADOPTING THE AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Implementation Strategy was developed as a mechanism for the implementation of the 2002 Agriculture for Tomorrow Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the LCPC staff created a working group to develop goals, objectives, and projects as part of the Agricultural Implementation Strategy. This group included representatives from the Licking County Auditor's Office, the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the agricultural community at large; and,

WHEREAS, the working group organized the Agricultural Breakfast Forum, an opportunity for information and idea exchange on November 14, 2012; and,

WHEREAS, the LCPC staff prepared a report documenting the efforts of the working group; and

WHEREAS, Howard Siegrist served as project sponsor and played an integral role in advising and supporting this process.

WHEREAS, the Agriculture Implementation Strategy includes a goal and five objectives that were used to guide in the development of implementation projects, and now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Licking County Planning Commission, that it here by adopts the Agricultural Implementation Strategy as an official document of the Licking County Planning Commission, which is included as a part of this resolution. Effective January 28, 2013. Through the adoption of this document, the Licking County Planning Commission acknowledges that this document, and the contents therein, are in direct support of their mission.

A motion was made by Tim Bubb

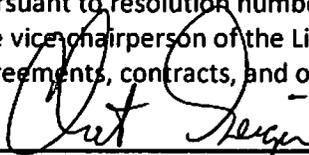
that the resolution be **ADOPTED**.

Seconded by: Jim Fullen

Result of the Vote: MOTION PASSED

ADOPTED: January 28, 2013

Pursuant to resolution number 2011-005, the chairperson and in the absence of the chairperson the vice chairperson of the Licking County Planning Commission (LCPC) are to sign resolutions, agreements, contracts, and other obligations of the LCPC on its behalf.



Chet Geiger, Chairperson

Implementation Strategy

Symbolized by the green background of the Licking County Flag, agriculture has and will continue to be a vital industry in the Licking County economy. Historically as well as currently, this industry has had a foothold in the culture and identity of the county. In 2002, Licking County undertook a major planning effort known as Agriculture for Tomorrow. This plan, created by the Licking County Farmland Task Force, staffed by the Licking County Planning Commission, was funded through a grant with the Ohio Department of Development. The mission of this group was to develop a comprehensive plan to preserve farmland in Licking County by:

- Protecting productive farmland, especially the land that is identified as prime farmland.
- Supporting policies and programs that will enhance the economic viability of agriculture, Licking County's largest industry.
- Encouraging business and residential developments that are compatible with farmland preservation goals.
- Educating our fellow citizens about farmland preservation.
- Assisting our County Commissioners in seeking new tools to protect farmland.

In 2012, the Director of the Licking County Planning Commission included agricultural preservation in the department's work plan. A working group was created to examine the 2002 Agriculture for Tomorrow document and develop short term projects which would have a substantial impact on the agricultural preservation mission set forth in the plan. The working group focused on implementing the 2002 document rather than simply creating a new plan. The working group sought to develop action items to further agricultural preservation efforts of Licking County, to support preservation activities of other organizations, and to find opportunities to work with other organizations to fulfill the mission of the original plan. The work associated with this project was conducted over the third and fourth quarters of 2012.

Completed in 2007, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted a census of agriculture. An update of this information is being conducted and the data is scheduled for release in 2014. This information will be vital for local governments to analyze and determine the condition of agriculture in Licking County. According to the 2007 census of agriculture there are 1,400 farms totaling 219,000 acres in Licking County. The average size of a farm in Licking County is 156 acres. In Licking County, the total cash receipts from farms in 2010 equaled \$146,826,000 [\$140,876 per farm]. This data indicates that agriculture is a leading industry in the Licking County economy as well as in the State of Ohio. Identified as such, working to strengthen, advance, and promote this vital industry has become part of the Licking County Planning Commission's mission.

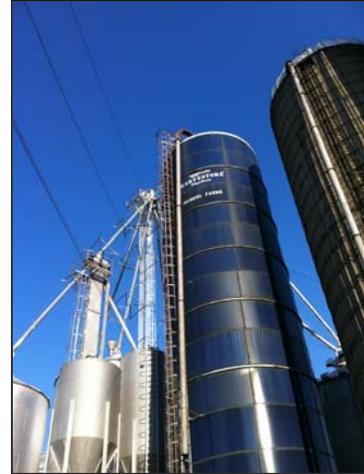


Beautiful Tomatoes Grown in Licking County

Projects were designed to implement the five objectives identified by the working group. The working group developed several projects that were intended to implement the existing agricultural plan. The projects evolved over the period of time that the working group met. This was for a variety of reasons including new information becoming available, issues and topics arising during the duration of the project, and general data gathering leading to changing directions. The group took an unconventional approach to the planning process, insomuch as the goals, objective, and projects were developed by the working group. Because the group had a limited timeframe, projects that were selected had to be reasonably undertaken in a short period of time.

Working Group

A working group was formed through the Licking County Planning Commission to implement aspects of the agricultural plan that were feasible within the confines of current state statutes and the overall needs of the agriculture industry. Formation, organization, and management of this group were conducted under the Licking County Planning Commission's mission and commitment to the community. The working group met 11 times prior to the publication of this document, and included the following members:



Howard Siegrist (Project Sponsor): *Retired Agricultural Educator – The Ohio State University Extension.* Mr. Siegrist served as the project sponsor. He was selected because he is a member of the community who is known as a credible expert in the field related to the project. He served as a leader, advisor, and promoter of the project. His role as the Licking County agricultural educator with the Ohio State University Extension Service added knowledge, perspective, and credibility to the working group. Howard was integral in fundraising for the Agricultural Breakfast Forum, a project organized by the working group.

Jerry Newton - AICP: *Director of Planning, Licking County Planning Commission.* Jerry, as the Director of the Planning Staff, supervised the efforts of the working group and contributed leadership and expertise in the political process. His background in development, as well as experience living on a farm, brought a different perspective to the working group. Mr. Newton was instrumental in obtaining information and negotiating on behalf of the working group.

Jeanette DeRenne – AICP: *Senior Planner, Licking County Planning Commission.* Jeanette served as the project organizer responsible for executing the efforts of this implementation strategy. She has extensive knowledge of the planning process and organizing these types of efforts. She was responsible for the production of this document as well as managing the organization of the working group.

Jarrod Hittle: *Environmental Planner, Licking County Planning Commission.* Jarrod worked on research and provided technical knowledge for the working group. He was raised on a farm and his knowledge of the agricultural community proved valuable to the projects undertaken in this effort. Prior to the completion of the project, Jarrod accepted a position with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.



Kayla Hansel: *Director, CAUV and Agricultural District programs- Licking County Auditor's Office.* Miss Hansel served as a consultant with the project because of her connections to the agricultural community and knowledge about the agricultural industry in Licking County. She is a member of the Board of Trustees for the Licking County Farm Bureau and was raised on a small farm in McKean Township. Her connections to the local community led to several tours of local agricultural businesses. She also worked to start a Facebook page to promote local agriculture. Ms. Hansel was instrumental in securing funding for the Agricultural Breakfast Forum.

Pat Deering: *Farmland Preservation Coordinator and Information Specialist- Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District.* Ms. Deering's input to the project was invaluable. She works with several farmland preservation programs in Licking County including the Licking Land Trust, the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP), and the Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP). She participated in the working group's educational outreach activities, visiting township trustees to discuss the benefits of farmland preservation, the Agricultural Security Area (ASA) program, and the role of the Licking Land Trust in farmland preservation. Her background provided valuable insight into the agricultural community and made connections between the government and the community.

Jim Bidigare: *Member of the Licking County Planning Commission and Real Estate Agent.* Mr. Bidigare is a realtor specializing in residential sales in the Johnstown, Granville, Newark, Utica, and Heath areas. He has served as a member of the Licking County Planning Commission and has been involved with the Licking County Local Foods Council. As a member of the Licking County Planning Commission, Mr. Bidigare has been involved in several committees that have shaped regulations and policies including the recently modified open space regulations. Mr. Bidigare has a strong interest in organic farming and sustainable agriculture practices.

Goal, Objectives, and Projects

The working group developed a clearly defined goal and supportive objectives to guide the efforts undertaken over the study period. This served as a framework to develop an action plan for the group. The objectives were designed to implement the goal of the project. The working group sought to address several aspects of agriculture rather than focus on a particular agricultural activity. Specifically, the group wanted to focus on preservation and expansion of agriculture as an economic activity, not simply land preservation. The goal and objectives were presented to the Licking County Planning Commission on May 21, 2012. The projects selected were designed to reach many facets of the agricultural community and not one specific sub-group or commodity.

Goal:

To create a positive presence in the agricultural community and support a competitive, economically viable and vital agricultural industry in Licking County through agricultural promotion and farmland preservation, ultimately leading to Agricultural Preservation.

Objective Education:

The education objective is to provide and support educational opportunities to advance programs and efforts that support agricultural preservation, farmland preservation, and agricultural economic development.

Education was a large component of most of the projects undertaken by the working group. Many of the projects that were specific to other objectives included an educational component. Educational initiatives included those internal and external to the county. Internal education included providing educational material and presentations to groups internal to Licking County, as well as educating ourselves in regard to issues and topics related to agriculture. External education included providing informational material and presentations to groups and individuals in the community, and providing opportunities for informing the public.

Members of the working group met with the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) to better understand and expand their knowledge of the agricultural preservation programs offered through the State of Ohio. In turn, the members of the working group identified and met with local government officials to pass on the information and promote these preservation tools. One program in particular, the ODA Agricultural Security Area program, was the focus of several outreach educational meetings. The working group identified this program as an opportunity for both private landowners and local jurisdictions to stimulate and expand agricultural development.

The working group identified four specific townships to promote this program. Bennington, Hartford, Liberty, and Monroe townships were selected because of their concentration of landowners who could potentially qualify for the ASA program. Members of the working group attended the regularly scheduled township trustee meetings for these four selected townships. Information on the ASA program, specifically the tax incentives for property owners, was the emphasis of the information distributed to the townships. However, other preservation programs including the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program and Agricultural Easement Donation Programs organized through ODA were presented. Information about the land preservation options offered through the Licking Land Trust was presented.



Card Created by the Working Group

Members of the working group reached out to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), to access their data and expertise relating to agricultural planning. Recognizing the influence Licking County does have on agriculture in the State of Ohio, it was imperative that a relationship be built with regional agencies that have resources and contacts valuable in the promotion of agriculture. MORPC has completed in depth research on the significance of urban design as it pertains to farmland preservation as well as the role of locally grown foods in the regional economy. This relationship will provide Licking County with opportunities for agricultural economic development as well as assistance in preservation projects.



Facebook Screen Capture

In addition to direct education, the Licking County website was updated to provide links to agricultural preservation opportunities and allied organizations. In addition, a Facebook page was created for the purpose of promoting agriculture in Licking County. Events, markets, and agritourism locations are featured through the Facebook page. The intent of the Facebook page is to provide a one-stop site for agricultural related information in Licking County. This page can be updated and used as a way to provide information to the agricultural community, and for up to

date information on topics such as local foods, farmers markets, direct sales, land preservation, and other agricultural related topics.

Every year the Hartford Independent Fair provides a venue for the agricultural community to showcase their work and provide educational opportunities for the community. Many agencies and organizations provide information and outreach at this annual event. The Licking County Planning Commission staffed the County Commissioner's booth at the fair

where information about agricultural preservation was provided. Similar information was provided at the Licking County Auditor's booth and the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District's informational exhibit at the natural resources area at the fairgrounds. An informational card was developed and distributed at the fair providing a link to the agriculture Facebook page. This card can be used to promote agricultural activities throughout the county.

**Objective
Agricultural Security
Area:**

*The objective of
Agricultural Security Areas
is to promote the
implementation of the
Ohio Department of
Agriculture's ASA program
in Licking County.*

The Ohio Department of Agriculture has developed several programs specifically for agricultural preservation. The Agricultural Security Area program is one option used to promote agricultural retention in the State of Ohio. This program creates special areas where agriculture is encouraged and protected. Benefits to participation in the ASA program include protection from non-agricultural development, a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and possible tax benefits for the development of agricultural real property. Land approved for inclusion in an ASA is required to equal 500 or more contiguous acres of farmland, which may be comprised of any number of parcels and owners.

The ASA program was created in 2005 by the Ohio State legislature and has since protected over 24,000 acres of farmland held in 33 separate ASAs throughout Ohio. There are no ASAs established in Licking County although there are some areas in the county that would qualify and benefit from the protection and incentives offered. In order for tax incentives to be provided through the ASA program, the property must first be enrolled in an ASA. In order for an ASA to be established, it must be approved by the township and county having jurisdiction. During this approval, tax incentives, if any, are established. A landowner can request a tax exemption for up to 75 percent of the value of a new real property investment for up to ten years. Because of the coordination between the property owner, the state, the county and the township, the working group presented the ASA program and the potential tax savings during the township presentations. An example of this potential savings is as follows:

Example: Liberty Township

Note: A minimum investment of \$25,000 in new agricultural structures or improvements to existing agricultural structures. Up to a 75% exemption for up to 10 years. Must be approved before construction.

Current:

2011 Effective Tax Rate: 49.407174
New Construction Value = \$100,000
Additional Yearly Taxes = \$1,556.33

With an Established ASA

New Construction Value = \$100,000
ASA New Construction Value = \$25,000
Additional Yearly Taxes = \$389.08

Yearly Tax Savings = \$1,167.25

In this example, a savings of \$1,167.25 is demonstrated on an initial investment of \$100,000 on real property in Liberty Township. This example assumes that the Township and the County would agree to the maximum tax savings of 75% allowed through the ASA program.

This example is specific to property in the Northridge School District. Because the tax rate differs for every taxing district (township and school district), the savings would have to be calculated on a property-by-property basis. In addition to meeting with the townships, specific property owners who could individually qualify for an ASA were contacted. The goal of these efforts was to establish an ASA in Licking County.

**Objective
Agricultural Economic
Development:**

The objective of Agricultural Economic Development is to support efforts to advance the agricultural activities of Licking County by promoting the role of agriculture in the local economy.

The first step the working group took toward advancing agricultural economic development was to examine different agricultural activities that are unique to Licking County. To accomplish this objective, the working group visited a number of different agricultural operations. These operations included commodity farmers (corn, soybeans, cattle) as well as smaller scale operations that grow non-commodity items such as fruits and vegetables. Additionally, businesses that produce agri-products such as wood and dairy were visited. The following summarizes the businesses that were visited:

Timbuk Farms

In 1952, the Christmas tradition of Timbuk farms began with the first planting of Christmas Trees. Since then, the tradition of Timbuk farms has expanded far beyond commercial Christmas tree production. Although the Christmas tree production represents over 100 acres of land, sales of Christmas trees only represents five percent of their business operation. Wholesale seedlings and cuttings represent the majority of the business with plants being sent all over the United States. Although the majority of the Christmas Trees sold are to Columbus area residents, Timbuk supplies around 3,000 greenhouses and garden stores in all 50 states.

Approximately 10 acres of Christmas Trees are harvested each year, mainly through the cut-your-own operation that has become a tradition for families all over central Ohio. Trees are raised for approximately 10 years prior to harvest. Timbuk Farms has four off-site retail shops, and employs approximately 25 full-time workers. Seasonal workers are



Poinsettias in a state-of-the-art greenhouse

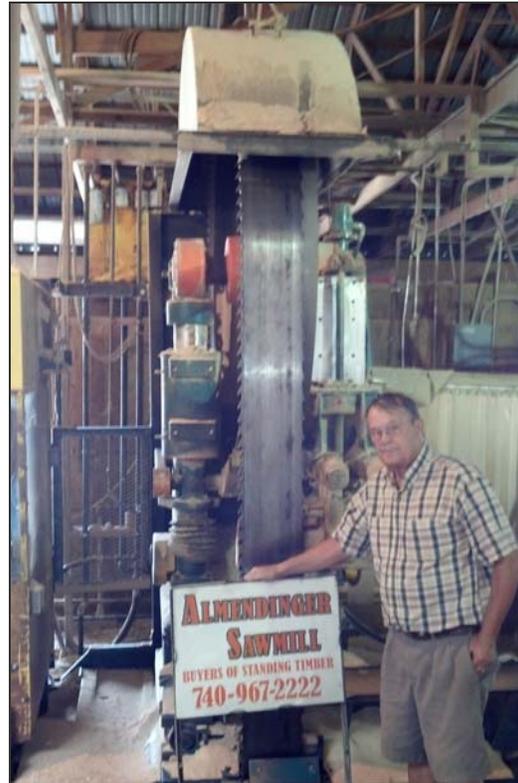
employed in the spring to assist in the planting, sorting and shipping of seedlings and cuttings. In the fall of 2012, Timbuk Farms received the MPS Certified Sustainable designation, making Timbuk the first recognized sustainable tree farm in the United States.

Almendinger Sawmill

The Almendinger family has been in the sawmill business since 1918 and located near Johnstown Ohio since 1974. Joe Almendinger is a third generation sawyer and expert in Appalachian hardwoods. For the Almendingers, being in business has always been a family affair. Joe's father, and his namesake Grandfather Joe, started in the logging business. Joe has partnered with his son, Erich, and Gregg Butt, who have been learning the trade and now take care of most of the day-to-day business including selecting the trees to harvest, contracting with logging companies and sawing the logs. The sawmill employs five full-time workers, and sells mainly green rough sawn lumber. They also stock treated fence boards and posts and some kiln dried rough-sawn lumber, mainly walnut.

Over the years, Joe has expanded and upgraded the business. When he started in the 1970s he used a circular saw, which was purchased from the Sheidler Machine Works (the current Works science museum in downtown Newark). In 1995 the mill began running a band saw. The band saw is both cheaper to purchase and thinner, leaving less sawdust and allows for up to three extra boards per log. The band saw blade has to be sharpened every four hours and one employee is dedicated to sharpening the blades.

Almendinger Sawmill is proud that they create nearly zero waste. Logs are cut to size and sold, the bark is chopped up to use as landscaping mulch, playground



Joe Alemendinger

mulch, wood chips and the sawdust is sold as animal bedding. Any logs not suitable for lumber are sold as firewood. The Almendinger Sawmill produces approximately one million board feet per year, which is sold to brokers for export. Much of the wood is exported to China. Almendinger purchases only standing trees from within 50-miles of the mill. They process mainly ash, hard maple, cherry, poplar, hickory, red and white oak, and walnut. Green lumber boards can be cut to any specifications up to 20-feet long.

Universal Veneer

Universal Veneer is an international company, selling wood products, mainly to European countries including Germany, France, Denmark, Finland, Slovakia, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Slovenia. The company processes a wide variety of wood species including white and red oak, cherry, walnut, and ash. Most of the veneer is sold for use as furniture, flooring, and construction products. The veneer production process is a labor and capital-intensive industry. Both administrative and skilled laborers are employed with Universal Veneer, some of whom are trained by the local vocational school, Career and Technology Education Centers of Licking County (C-TEC).

The company currently employs 183 workers; 154 of which are full-time employees. The manufacturing of veneer is a seven-day process; most of the time is dedicated to curing the wood in preparation for the cutting process. Ideally, the moisture content of a log at the time of cutting is around 10-14 percent. The company is able to process approximately 150 logs per day. Each log produces 500-600 sheets of veneer. Most sheets of veneer are sliced at a thickness of either 0.5 or 0.254 millimeters. Universal Veneer runs two and a half shifts per day; each cutting blade being sharpened every eight hours. The veneer slicing blades can be used for approximately two months. Finished



Owners Dieter Heron (2nd from right), and Klaus Krajewski (2nd from left) at the Universal Veneer Headquarters

products are hauled by truck to Columbus and transferred to trains where they are taken to ports in Norfolk, Baltimore, or Canada for export.

Production has been relatively steady over the past couple of years, and the company's reputation has contributed to the location of several other companies in Licking County who conduct business with Universal Veneer. The owners of the company have maintained a positive relationship with public officials during the company's lifetime, and are hopeful that public sector relationships will grow stronger over time. One of the main issues facing the company today, in addition to market fluctuations, is the ongoing pressure from the Ohio EPA to build a bio-retention basin for water runoff. This represents a sizable investment for the company with little immediate return on investment.

Tamarack Farms Dairy

Tamarack Farms Dairy is a regional dairy owned and operated by the Kroger Company. Daily they produce 100,000-gallon cartons, and 100,000 half-gallon cartons of milk for regional distribution. The plant averages 20-25 tanker truckloads of milk per day, with the average unload time around 40 minutes. The milk is pumped from the tanker trucks into one of seven 50,000-gallon tanks. The plant typically stores 250,000 gallons of milk but has the capacity to keep 350,000 gallons of raw milk on site. Pasteurization is conducted onsite at a rate of approximately 100 gallons per minute. Milk is purchased through the Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), and most of the milk comes from central Ohio.

The Newark facility produces 200,000 cups of yogurt per day. Yogurt is produced in twenty different flavors. Sour cream is produced at a rate of approximately 50,000 cups per day. The facility also makes milk cartons. The plant operates two blow molding carton machines, both of which can mold approximately 50 containers per minute. Both one gallon and half-gallon cartons are produced on-site.

Regionally, the Tamarack Dairy supplies the central Ohio area Kroger stores with milk, various juices, yogurt and sour cream. Other regional dairies are located



Members of the Working Group at the dairy

in Toledo, Charleston West Virginia, Cincinnati, and Dayton. The Newark facility supplies organic yogurt to all Kroger stores nationwide. The Newark facility bottles and distributes half gallon and one gallon cartons of orange juice from concentrate. Surplus products are donated to the local food bank. Whey, a remnant product of dairy production, is sold locally to pig farmers. Interestingly, Tamarack sells to the Save-a-Lot chain of stores under a different brand name.

The plant operates in three eight-hour shifts. Two shifts are dedicated to production, and one shift is dedicated to cleaning the facility. Tamarack employs approximately 170 workers, 99 of whom are dedicated to the production process. The working group toured the facility in September 2012, and was hosted by Dan Kaercher, the production superintendent.

Bird's Haven Farms

Located five miles north of Granville in McKean Township, Bird's Haven Farms has become a highly visible local farm. The business is named for the Bird family who owns and operates the farm. Bird's Haven Farm has distinguished themselves in several ways from other farm operations. They are one of few operations that are committed to only selling produce that they grow. Bird's Haven practices sustainable agriculture and uses high-tunnel technology to extend the growing season.

Bird's Haven offers what are known as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscriptions. These CSA subscriptions provide customers with either 21-weeks or 11-weeks of farm fresh produce, delivered on a weekly basis. This program offers consumers an opportunity to commit to supporting local agriculture as well as to develop a personal relationship with the producer. Members receive farm fresh items featuring produce, which is harvested that week. Bird's Haven offers cage-free eggs that are hand collected, cleaned, and packaged by the dozen. Their chickens are raised free of antibiotics. Individually designed hanging floral baskets are also created and sold at Bird's Haven. The farm offers U-Pick strawberry and pumpkins when in season. Bird's Haven also sells small vegetable plants called vegetable starts, which are selected to produce the most adaptive and best tasting produce for Central Ohio.



High tunnel technology in use at Bird's Haven Farms

Bird's Haven Farms has been committed to making locally grown produce available to the community. Their produce is sold at the Granville, New Albany, and Westerville farmer's markets. Local restaurants such as ELLA in New Albany purchase food from the farm, and the Bird Family is proud of their partnership with the Granville Exempted Village School's Farm-to-School program. Produce from Bird's Haven can be purchased at the farm, as well as at the Greener Grocer in the Historic North Market in Columbus and the Going Green Store in Granville. Bird's Haven is an innovative agricultural operation in Licking County that provides not only a product, but a service.

Pigeon Roost

Located on US Highway 40 in Union Township, Pigeon Roost Farms is one of the County's premier agritourism destinations. Pigeon Roost is open from mid-September through October, and offers a variety of attractions and amusements. In addition to an expansive pumpkin patch, Ralph Jutte, the owner of the farm, cultivates both a corn and soybean maze for families to enjoy during the harvest season.

The farm has been the pride of the Jutte family since 1979 when it was purchased as an opportunity to teach Ralph and Janice's young children a strong work ethic along with spending money and savings for college. The family restored the late-1800s farmhouse and tiled the fields.

The name "Pigeon Roost" was the original name of the farm, dating back to the mid-1800s. It is believed that this name was selected due to the abundant passenger pigeons that frequented the area. Hayrides and animal interaction exhibits are highlights of family trips to the farm. A country market is also open during the harvest season where pumpkins, gourds,



View of Pigeon Roost showing the activities area, barns, and family home

handcrafted gifts, decorations, and farm specialties are sold

Pigeon Roost is a favorite destination for school field trips and company events. Families are encouraged to experience the activities of a working farm as well as enjoy an opportunity to observe alpacas, donkeys, sheep, goats, ducks, chickens, geese, bunnies and even the occasional exotic animal. The Juttes have set up an observation beehive, and welcome local craftsmen to display their wares. Pigeon Roost is one of the great agritourism assets in Licking County and is home to many time-honored family traditions and memories.

Blue Diamond Stables

Blue Diamond Stables is a family-run equine import and export facility. They are the only exclusive import and export quarantine facility in the United States. Various breeds and disciplines of animals are quarantined at Blue Diamond every year. Six people are employed at Blue Diamond, which is owned and operated by Christine and Kevin Bomlitz. With almost twenty years of experience, the owners are experts in training, showing, boarding, breeding and importing/exporting horses. Blue Diamond Stables has been located at Scion Farms in Hartford Township for the past three years, however plans to relocate are underway. The owners have been successful in expanding their business, noting that it has doubled each year.

Because every country has different entry and exit requirements, the horses are kept at Blue Diamond until the proper testing and paper work are completed. Horses are kept anywhere from one week to 35 days with the average stay for mares at two weeks and the average stay for stallions at 30 days. Horses are tested for contagious equine metritis (CEM) upon entry into the United States to prevent the spread of the disease, which can cause serious reproductive issues



leading to considerable economic loss to the horse industry. CEM and other contagious diseases are tested for both upon entry to and exit from the United States, and Blue Diamond is the only stable in the United States that specializes strictly in import and export.

In addition to the quarantine facilities, the stable boasts guest suites that can be rented by the night, a 300 seat indoor arena, and approximately 300 acres of property. The stables include 64 stalls. The owners have dealt with imports and exports between the United States and 38 different countries. Horses from the stables are transported to and from New York City twice a week where they are loaded on airplanes and shipped throughout the world. The owners are working with local airports to develop a transport route utilizing a local airfield.

Heimerl Farms

Seeded in strong family values, Heimerl Farms Ltd has been a pillar of the Licking County agricultural community since the 1940s when Don and Marjorie Heimerl began farming. Located in Monroe Township near Johnstown, the farm originated with 300 acres and 200 head of feeder cattle. Jim and Kathy Heimerl, Don and Marjorie's son and daughter-in-law, have expanded the family business to its present size of 600 acres, with additional ground rented to total just over 2000 acres. Jim expanded the operation to include hogs in 1992. The Heimerl sons, Matt, Brad and Jeff, are involved with the operation along with their daughter-in-law, Rachel.

Throughout the 1990s the business was expanded into Fairfield County, and operations spread to Brown County in 2000. The Heimerls also own an on-site feed grinding system at their Monroe Township location where 60 percent of the feed used by the hog operation is ground. Corn is the main ingredient in the feed, however enzymes and other products are added depending on the price of corn and to add nutrients needed to raise the animals to maturity. In 2003, Heimerl Farms Inc. was created. This company owns and operates the trucks used to haul the hogs to the various barns and processing facilities.

The Heimerls raise approximately 70,000 hogs per year, many of which are raised in the 80 contract barns that are rented from other farmers. When the hogs are 21 days old they are relocated to these barns where they are raised until they are



Jim Heimerl and his son Matt

processed. The Heimerls take pride in their ability to create jobs for local farmers and contribute to the community.

The Heimerl family has been involved in various local, state and national agricultural committees over the years. Jim currently serves as a member and past president of the Hartford Fair Board, has been a member of the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District board, serves on Congressman Tiberi's agricultural advisory council, and is the Ohio Pork Producers Council President. Jim serves on the National Pork Producers Council and the Ohio Soybean Council Board. He was inducted into the Licking County Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2012.

Legend Hills Orchard

Legend Hills Orchard is a family-owned and operated business with second, third, and even fourth generation family members tending to 340 acres of farmland. Currently owned and operated by Richard Hoar, the original 168 acres have been in the family for over one hundred years. The Hoar family farm was featured in the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District's book "Licking County Century Farms".

Originally a small grocery route and roadside stand, the business now boasts a large retail market featuring 20 varieties of apples, 16 varieties of peaches, two varieties of strawberries, two varieties of asparagus and six varieties of pine trees. Plums, squash, tomatoes, and pumpkins are grown at Legend Hills, all of which are harvested by hand. Most of the produce grown at Legend Hills is sold at the Legend Hills Orchard Farm Market near Utica Ohio. Apples, peaches, strawberries and asparagus are sold as pick-your-own in addition to being offered at the market.

The market sells many locally produced items including cheese, butter, bacon, bologna, candy, apple butter, jams and



Historic Hoar Family Farm Vehicle Circa 1933

Picture Courtesy of the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District

jellies, maple syrup, honey, sorghum, salad dressings, Amish canned goods and noodles, cobblers, breads, beef jerky, and many arts and crafts selections. The market is open seven days a week. Legend Hills Orchard bottles and sells homemade apple cider, which is a local favorite.

Varieties of apples grown and sold at the orchard vary from sweet to tart, green and red, and apples better suited for cooking than eating. The Hoar family has noted that their inventory includes species of apples that are so rare that seedlings can no longer be purchased. This means that once the current trees are done producing fruit, the apples will no longer be available. The average apple tree produces apples for 20 years.

**Objective
Regulations:**

*The objective of
Regulations is to break
down regulatory barriers
that affect the agricultural
community.*

The working group, in association with many different agencies and individuals, examined regulatory barriers to agricultural economic development and land preservation. Several topics were researched, examined, and in a few circumstances, revisions to regulations were made. When conducting visits to local agricultural operations, business and landowners were asked what regulatory barriers affected their business operations. Many stated that there were multiple agencies regulating similar aspects of their business. One example was the storage and use of hazardous chemicals. Farms utilizing hazardous chemicals are often regulated by multiple state and federal agencies. Meeting the requirements of all agencies is not only redundant, but time consuming and difficult to track.

Although regulatory barriers are often difficult to address, some improvements were made over the duration of this implementation plan. The working group examined the Licking County Subdivision, Land Division, Development, and Congestion Prevention Regulations to identify any regulations that might burden agricultural business or land preservation. One major regulatory barrier identified was the process by which a property owner can restrict the use of their land for agricultural use only through deed restrictions. The process for adding this restriction to a property involved a public hearing, which added cost and additional time to process. The working group wrote a change to the local regulation that allows property owners to add this restriction without a public hearing. Now, as approved by the Licking County Board of Commissioners, deed restrictions limiting the use of property for agricultural uses only, can be added as an administrative process.

Other regulatory issues were investigated such as revisions to the county lot split requirements and the use of transfer of development rights (TDR) programs throughout the county. The intent was to identify different mechanisms for farmland preservation. Upon researching the current state enabling legislation and working with the county prosecutor's office, it was determined that revisions to the County's regulations would not achieve the goal of this project. It was determined that changes to the Ohio Revised Code would need to be made. As a follow up to this implementation strategy, efforts to change the revised code will need to be addressed.

**Objective
Local Involvement:**

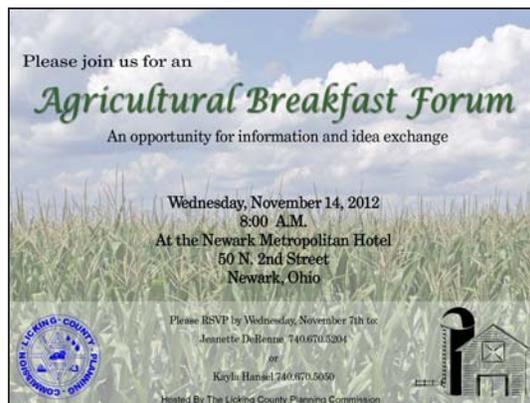
The objective of Local Involvement is to define the role Licking County will have in local boards and organizations that promote agriculture in the county.

The local involvement objective evolved from a general sentiment realized early on in the process of developing this implementation strategy that there were barriers between local government and the agricultural community. It was also recognized that there are many organizations and government agencies that are working on various projects and programs that strive to meet the same goal as this project. That being identified, the working group developed ideas on how linkages between these groups could be developed and encouraged.

Although several ideas developed from this objective, the working group determined that bringing all the different agencies and government departments together with the agricultural community would have the most impact. The goal was to stimulate conversations, develop relationships, and highlight the

significance of agriculture in the Licking County economy. The working group was successful in bringing these parties together through hosting the Agricultural Breakfast Forum.

This event took place on November 14, 2012 at the Newark Metropolitan Hotel. The working group, in conjunction with the Licking County Local Foods Council, and the hotel, was able to host this event featuring locally sourced foods. The event had a sizable turn out with approximately 50 attendees. Park National Bank, The Energy Cooperative, Agri-Trac Equipment, Farm Credit, Coshocton Grain Company, and the Granville Milling Company sponsored the event. Feedback from the event was that it was well-organized, provided opportunities for productive discussion, and was a much needed interaction with local government. The use of local foods was also recognized and appreciated.



Agricultural Breakfast Forum

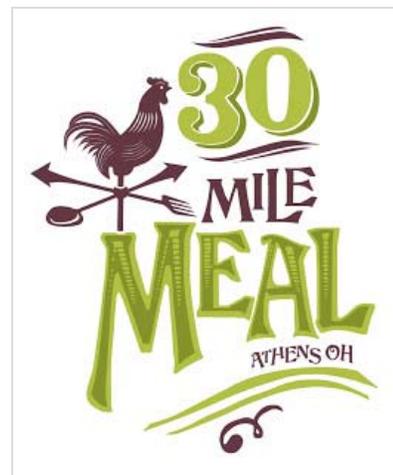
Moving Forward

Many of the projects outlined in this effort should continue beyond the two-quarter time frame set for this implementation strategy. Likewise the working group established relationships with organizations and individuals who are key to the agricultural community. These relationships should continue, and in many cases, expanded.

One established relationship is with the Licking County Local Foods Council. The Licking County Planning Commission staff has participated in the Local Foods Council and has been active in participating with the launch of the 30-Mile Meal program. 30-Mile Meal is an initiative to develop a shared identity to farmers, food producers, retail markets, food events, and eateries with locally sourced menus. The concept of this program is to create an environment through which all components of a meal can be purchased within 30 miles.



The main goal is to bring a program model, established in Athens Ohio, to Licking County where it can be molded into a program that promotes local food. Local government agencies, producers, buyers and community members will participate to expand local food options and availability as well as to help connect local food to the general public. The 30-Mile Meal project will implement the infrastructure needed to support local foods. The mission of this group, *to increase through collaboration and cross promotion the visibility and sustainability of local foods farmers, producers, farmers markets, CSAs, food markets, eateries, bars, and food events within a 30 mile radius of Licking County*, should be one promoted and endorsed by Licking County.



The relationship established with MORPC is a valuable connection between local efforts and regional collaboration. MORPC has resources and expertise that can continue to provide information vital to planning efforts and projects undertaken pertaining to agriculture in Licking County. Participation with MORPC on a regional level regarding local foods and agricultural economic development could prove vital in the promotion of the industry at the regional and state level. This partnership will be essential in promoting the advancement and evolution of state regulatory requirements in favor of the local agricultural industry. Utilizing the in-house skills, data, and collaborations available through MORPC will assist in furthering agriculture in the county through regional partnerships.



Because the agriculture community in Licking County is unique and highly diverse, building and maintaining relationships with the agricultural community will be integral in promoting the industry and continuing agricultural economic development. The industry will continue to evolve, and hopefully expand and diversify further. It will be important to remain knowledgeable on these activities as well as a resource for the agricultural community. Visiting

these operations, as well as participating in activities and efforts important to this community will be imperative to the community. Data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture will need to be analyzed to further identify and define Licking County's role as a leader in the State of Ohio. Relationships with farmers and agricultural operations will be paramount in filling the gap between the data and the knowledge of business owners and experts.

Other organizations play an important role in the Licking County agricultural economy. Some provide policy influence, some provide promotional opportunities, and some provide educational experiences beneficial to both the government and agricultural communities. Organizations such as the Licking County Farm Bureau provide opportunities to advance changes in state level policy that can advance the agricultural industry. This organization offers an opportunity to create momentum toward organizing local, regional, and state level initiatives. This mutually beneficial relationship will provide strength to the agricultural community.



Agencies that provide educational opportunities such as the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Ohio State University Extension office, and other similar programs will also be beneficial partners. Many of these organizations have staff on hand who provide expertise directly to the agricultural community as well as to local government agencies. Land preservation agencies such as the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Licking Land Trust will provide further opportunities for partnerships and outreach to advance land preservation efforts.

As the Ohio Department of Agriculture develops the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP) into a locally selected preservation tool, partnership with ODA will be beneficial in the advancement of locally selected criteria for state level funding. The Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District is applying to become the locally certified agency for selecting property to be included in AEPP funding. Criteria for selection will be developed at the local level. The development of these criteria and developing preservation priorities directly tie to the advancement of the Licking County Planning Commission's

mission. Using partnerships with Township Trustees as well as other agencies, industry leaders, and the agricultural community as a whole will prove beneficial to the county as a whole.

Providing opportunities for building relationships between governmental agencies and the agricultural community, similar to the opportunity provided at the Agricultural Breakfast Forum, will continue to build momentum for the promotion of agriculture in Licking County. Bringing these community leaders together to highlight the achievements and activities that distinguish Licking County as a leader in agriculture is essential to the County. Using educational outreach tools such as the web page, the Facebook page, and presence at community events will continue to foster the relationships built through this effort. Many opportunities to connect agriculture to economic development, planning initiatives, and telling the story of Licking County will present themselves. The opportunities need to be identified on a consistent basis and facilitated as appropriate to advance the mission of the Licking County Planning Commission.

The Licking County Planning Commission took a direct, well-defined, innovative approach to addressing agricultural preservation. Given the timeframe, resources, and needs of the county, the working group was successful in accomplishing the goal and objectives set forth early in this planning process. Additionally, the success of this implementation strategy validates the planning effort undertaken in the 2002 agriculture plan. The relationships established through this process will be built upon and applied to future planning efforts.