

## **Vision 2020 History**

For a community to create a vision for its future, a group of citizens that reflects the diversity of the community must join together to construct a plan based on their shared values. The community must identify goals, objectives and action plans, and each member of the community has a part to play in the actions taken to reach the goals.

Until the early 1990s (in most communities) local policy was used to combat social exclusion and focused primarily on the most urgent of needs such as health, housing or subsistence. It is only recently that we have also seen economic projects aimed at tackling root causes.

In 1996, the City of Fostoria, the Fostoria Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce began a joint venture that resulted in the development of Fostoria, Ohio 2005: Community Framework for Progress with Strategic Leadership Associates facilitating the planning process.

People from both private and public sectors came together, community volunteers donated their time, talents and energies to help those in need and to help improve the overall quality of life in Fostoria.

Beginning with a community profile and analysis, the group was able to identify critical issues and areas that required action which led to the creation of a conceptual plan for Fostoria's future. This concept was developed with a core group of 35 community leaders and a cross-section of more than 200 civic, religious, business, government, education, community and corporate leaders helped develop comprehensive strategies.

What distinguishes this group from others? For close to 15 years they have worked in close synergy, analyzing different strategies for local socio-economic development in specific neighborhoods located within the community.

In November 1997 – Community Framework for Progress held their kickoff meeting and the work began. While many plans were carried out behind the scenes, projects the community never saw or heard about, the groups continued to work together as a unified body to bring about change. It didn't happen cheaply and it didn't happen overnight however, if we wanted to maintain a community – we needed to support it, which meant constantly evaluating and improving our condition.

Often times, we measure actions in terms of concrete results, such as how many jobs may have been created without understanding the quality of life component. This group not only focuses on but serves as a catalyst to restore social links, create new networks, introduce factors which improve the quality of life and living conditions in community neighborhoods, and opens up new opportunities for participating in social life. These are all very real elements, even if they cannot be measured in the same way.

Several of the original objectives outlined in Community Framework for Progress's program of work have been accomplished; some groups have modified their focus and are still very active today, including: the Fostoria Arts Council, Community Heroes program, Community Housing Improvement Committee, the Fostoria Area Visitor's Bureau, Women Ethnic Groups and Youth and the Local Crime Stoppers program.

In spite of wide ranging objectives, the partner committees reached a common conclusion. With very clearly targeted objectives, human capital and a relatively modest initial investment, these objectives - initiatives that have been carried out have had a rather large socio-economic impact.

These strategies were built over time. Along the way we have learned to eliminate the least efficient practices, understand relations between local governments and become proactive in the

development process, investing in essential programs and taking action in line with carefully determined needs. With every group, time is needed to evaluate and improve the objectives, evolving to meet the growing needs of the community.

Vision 2020 partners believe our continued success depends largely on members of the Fostoria community. This group was fashioned around visions for Fostoria's future, those individuals who wanted to see change and were instrumental in implementing policies. Those practices yielded good results but the work is not done. The Vision is still alive however we still need close cooperation and constant feedback from you - our community leaders, business leaders, and community volunteers.