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# Fredericktown Ohio

## Tourism Development Strategy

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**Prepared for:**  
The Fredericktown Community Development Foundation  
Tourism Development Committee

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# Table of Contents

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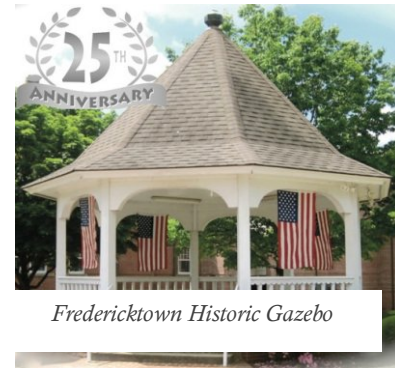
Background .....	1
Why Tourism? .....	1
Strategic Planning Process .....	2
Project Scope and Implementation.....	4
Small Town Tourism Strategy Examples.....	7
Potential Funding Sources .....	8
Summary and Next Steps .....	9
Bibliography	
Tourism Development Committee Member List	

# Fredericktown Ohio

## Tourism Development Strategy

### Background

In December, 2013, The Fredericktown, OH Community Development Foundation (FCDF) embarked on an effort to expand tourism as a targeted community economic development strategy. The FCDF was initiated in 1981 by William Burgett, founder of Kokosing Construction Company ([www.kokosing.biz/capabilities](http://www.kokosing.biz/capabilities)), which is based in Fredericktown. From the original group of



Population	2,476
Median Age	37.6
Cost of living	84.9%
Median income	\$37,592

FCDF leaders, Fredericktown developed a vibrant industrial base, providing at least 1200 local jobs, and the availability of shovel-ready industrial sites for future development.

Realizing that tourism is a form of economic development that can also help to diversify the

local economy, Foundation members seek to strengthen the retail and services sectors by leveraging Fredericktown's rich natural and heritage tourism resources. The leadership recognized that the community has significant assets that support tourism development and reached a consensus to develop a proactive tourism strategy. They contacted the Ohio State University Extension Community Development Department for assistance in creating a Tourism Development Strategy and this assistance was provided by Extension Field Specialist, Nancy Bowen-Ellzey during December 2013 and March 2014.

### Why Tourism?

Tourism is a community economic development strategy that can help small towns retain and expand existing businesses while promoting the assets of their community to potential new residents and businesses. It is a long-term strategy that can improve the quality of life

of residents and create jobs, and can be especially impactful in small rural towns and villages. Tourism:

- Generates new tax revenues
- Builds on local assets
- Supports local entrepreneurs/talents
- Expands community capacity
- Taps into state and regional resources

Based on a 2012 Ohio tourism study that measured the economic impact of tourism in Ohio during 2011, tourism trends continue in a positive direction. The study indicates that:

- Visitor spending continues to rise at between 6-7% per year
- Spending of \$26B generated \$40B in total business sales in 2011
- Visitor volume has risen for the last 3 years – 181.5M in 2011
- Visitor per trip spending rising as hotels establish pre-recessionary prices

Fredericktown leadership recognizes that by focusing on and planning for tourism, they can help their community grow and prosper. A proactive approach to addressing tourism as a strategy is the direction they have decided to take. The process in arriving at proposed projects and implementation steps is described in this report.

### Strategic Planning Process

The strategy planning process used in Fredericktown followed a five-step approach that is depicted in Figure 1. The first step in the strategic planning process was to put together a stakeholder team. The team that was assembled included a cross-section of individuals who have leadership responsibilities and/or a direct stake in increasing spending and bringing tourists to the community. The stakeholder team is serving as the tourism committee under the auspices of the Fredericktown Community Development Foundation.

**Figure 1. Strategic Planning Process**



The thirteen member tourism committee includes the Mayor and council member, agri-business owners, museum director, community web site designer, newspaper columnist, community champions and numerous volunteers. A list of the Tourism Development Committee membership can be found at the end of this document. The purpose of the group is to advocate for tourism as a community economic development strategy, identifying existing assets that can be built upon to increase visitor spending and promote the community to the outside world.

Three 2-hour meetings were scheduled during December, February and March 2014. During the first meeting, stakeholders brainstormed and discussed tourism assets. The effort revealed a significant number and variety of assets within the village limits and immediately surrounding. The assets were listed and are sorted in the Table 2 below to demonstrate groupings in three categories: agri-tourism, heritage tourism and nature tourism.

**Table 2. Fredericktown Tourism Assets**

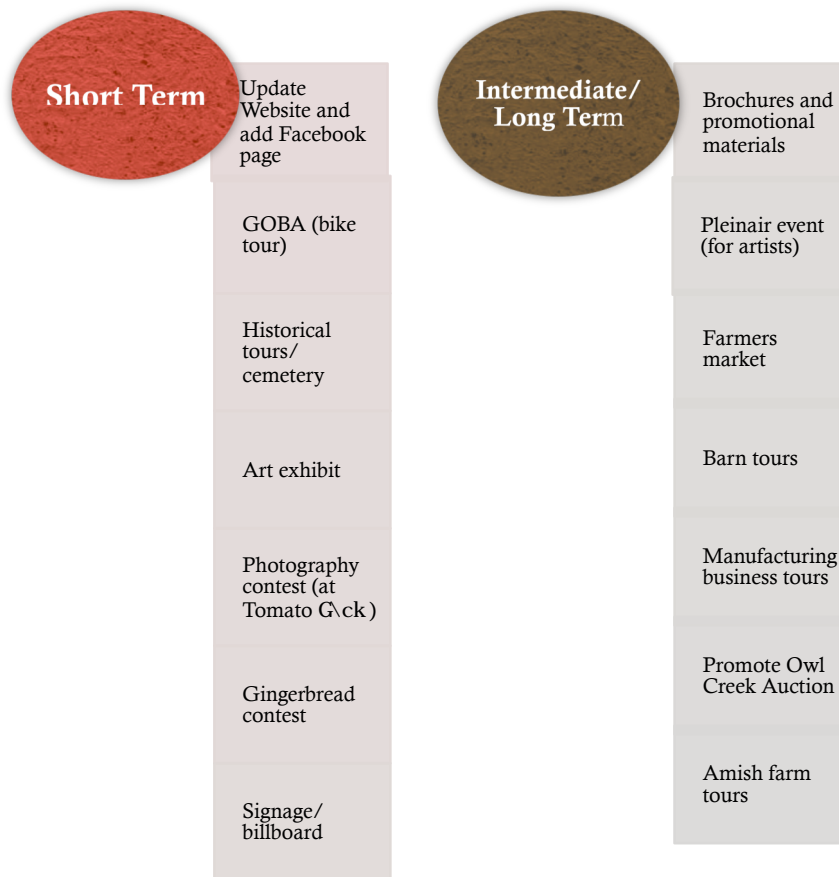
Agri-tourism	Heritage Tourism	Nature Tourism
Barn/farm tours	Quaint small town	Bike tours
Amish culture	Library	Scenic byway
Manufacturing tours	Town square sidewalk clock	Sockman lake
Gingerbread house contest	Museum tour	Knox lake
Owl creek auction	Walking tour of historic homes	Kokosing reservoir
Tomato show	Home of the FFA jacket	Nature park

At the second meeting, stakeholders identified and ranked short term and long-term projects. Short-term was described as 6 months out and long-term, a year or more. Two projects within each of the time periods (four total) were chosen as projects to pursue immediately, while the team acknowledged they would eventually also like to pursue the other projects on the list, as well.

It should be noted that the committee indicated that agri-tourism should be further developed as a strategy, in particular arts, food and Amish culture. But, the committee also indicated that marketing, including the website, brochures and signage were important first steps in order to make sure that other events and assets were being marketed aggressively. The general strategy for Fredericktown is tending towards a mixture of all three tourism directions, which actually compliment each other well.

The four chosen projects were then scoped out to describe what is needed to be done and by whom. In the following chart, Figure 2, short and long-term projects and rankings are listed. The top short-term project was to update and maintain the website. The top long-term project was to create new brochures, including a museum brochure, to promote local assets and events.

**Figure 2. Projects and Projects by Ranking Order**



Committee members ranked the projects in Figure 2 based on 1) whether the project was doable within the given time frame and, 2) how beneficial the project would be to tourists and to the community. The projects also needed to be measurable and have direct impact on the tourism goals of the community. Stakeholder’s thought that all the projects listed would be achieved, and in the not-too-distant-future, but decided to start first with the top ranking projects.



## Project Scope and Implementation

Once projects were listed and ranked by priority, the committee discussed the project scope and what tasks would need to be completed for implementation. The tasks and responsible parties (if known) for each are listed in the Tables 3 for Short-Term Projects and Table 4 for Long-Term Projects below. Projects are also briefly described in this section.

**Table 3. Short-Term Projects (3 months)**

Tasks and Responsible Party	Project #1: Website/ Social media	Project #2: GOBA Bike Tour
Submit items for website calendar (all committee members)	X	
Sign up to volunteer for GOBA project (all members) Judy and Tricia will develop list of jobs and make contacts/plans		X
Advertise the website by putting an ad in the paper and posting link on available CDF billboard in town (Judy)	X	
Set up Facebook page (and twitter) and link it to the site (Dave) to promote events, including GOBA	X	X
Connect site with Constant Contact for increased traffic and to retain information on visitors for follow-up (Tricia)	X	
Feature a different business on the site each month (Dave)	X	

### Project description: Website and social media

The community is well served by a Webmaster and website that is updated regularly, including a fairly new section for vintage photographs of the village and a section on real estate. The real estate section in particular receives a lot of interest. The community really only has one website, including a link to the village government website. The site receives about 1,700 hits per month (2,100 during peak season) with most (68%) of the hits nonlocal. The primary need expressed by the Webmaster is making sure updated information is submitted regularly and in a timely fashion. The challenge is making sure events and activities are listed so that they can be marketed through the site.

### Project description: GOBA Bike Tour

The community was presented with the opportunity to serve a morning snack during a stopover for bicyclists that will be participating in the Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure in June 2014. The tour begins in Mansfield on Saturday, June 14 and concludes on June 21. The tour travels through Coshocton to Mount Vernon, passing through Fredericktown on June 18th. It is expected that 2500-3000 bicyclists will be stopping to take a

break and grab a snack. Committee members have selected members (Judy and Tricia) who will take charge of identifying food items to be provided. Another volunteer will begin scheduling volunteer workers for the event. When asked if they would be willing to volunteer, all members agreed to participate in the effort. There will be a sign-up sheet developed with specific jobs and times listed. This opportunity is expected to bring new revenues into the community for other tourism related projects, including funds to assist in implementing projects identified in this plan.

**Table 3. Intermediate-Term Projects (6 months)**

<b>Tasks and Responsible Party</b>	<b>Project #1: Amish/”English” farm tours</b>	<b>Project #2: Owl Creek Auction</b>
Schedule face-to-face meetings with Amish and “English” farm families to identify locations for potential tour stops	X	
Identify and describe five or six rural farm/business locations as tourist destinations	X	X
Create yard signs to promote the locations	X	
Promote the Owl Creek Auction as an Amish destination (website, signage, etc.)	X	X

**Project descriptions: Amish Farm Tours and Owl Creek Auction**

Tourism Committee members have identified the area’s Amish culture, including the Owl Creek Auction, an Amish auction of fresh produce, flowers and a variety of merchandise, as an important tourism asset. Two or three committee members will be scheduling face-to-face meetings with Amish and “English” farm families to identify locations for potential tour stops. The stops will be described and listed in a brochure or promotional flyer for distribution. Yard signs will be developed and posted at the farms to promote the locations and to guide tourists from location to location. Committee members recognize that to develop a tourism strategy focused on the Amish way of life and their unique products and services, there needs to be rapport. Visits to the farms to identify how the Amish and the community can mutually benefit is an important first step. The Owl Creek Auction was established to showcase the Amish and area farm handmade products. Since the auction has been in place, it has drawn many area shoppers but committee members would like to promote the auction as a regional experience, drawing more tourists from throughout the region and state.



**Table 4. Long-Term Projects (1+ years)**

Tasks and Responsible Party	Project #1: Brochures/ Promotional Materials	Project #2: Plein Air/ Art Fair Event
Design five or six brochures (parks, museum, tours (2?), restaurants and shops) – (Judy and Zak Grimm)	X	
Identify and apply for funding to print brochures (Nancy will identify and assist)	X	
Establish event committee to begin planning date and venue and to investigate a theme or how the event can separate itself from other similar events in the region (committee)		X
Inventory artisans and crafters in the area and develop a contact database (decide geography) – (committee)		X
Establish face-to-face contact with artisan database to determine interest and mix of products (a mini-BR&E program)		X

**Project description: Brochures and Promotional Materials**

The development of brochures to promote the parks, museum, tours, and restaurants, shops, Amish culture and Owl Creek Auction has been on the top of committee members’ list for some time. Although the design of the brochures will be free, since Judy Divelbiss and Zak Grimm have offered their services, the printing of the brochures will require funding. The report includes potential funding sources for projects. In addition to what the brochures should promote, the committee discussed how they should be distributed. They agree that brochures should be available at the Village Office and the Knox County CVB. The Village Office phone number would be used as the contact information for potential visitors requesting brochures. Brochures could also be distributed at Ohio Department of Transportation Welcome Centers and Rest Areas and will be distributed to state offices, including JobsOhio, for distribution as needed. QR codes will be created and inserted on brochures and other marketing materials and linked to the website.

**Project description: Plein Air Art Show/Festival/Event**

Fredericktown has a rich artist community, including microbusinesses operating out of their homes in and near the village, and artisans and crafters scattered throughout the Amish community. “Plein Air” is a French term for painting in the open air, showcasing artists at work. The idea for a Plein Air show can ideally tie in with certain other tourism projects identified by the committee, including an Art Exhibit and showing the Amish Culture. It’s

a long-term project that can build on the creative culture of the area to attract that tourist niche that has an interest in art and culture. No in-depth discussion took place on this long-term project, so Tourism Committee members will need to determine the next steps and who will be responsible (recommendations are listed in Table 4).

### Small Town Tourism Strategy Examples

Stakeholders wanted to know what other communities their size were doing in terms of tourism and how successful these efforts are. A literature review demonstrated several examples for communities about the same size as Fredericktown that are focusing on tourism. Examples include:

3. *Nelsonville, OH (pop. 5,349).*
  - Strategy. Build on the artist community.
  - Project. Civic leaders in this historic coal mining community subsidize downtown storefront rent for artist-retailers. Financial resources for this strategy came from Hocking College, private donations and a small grant from the Ohio Arts Council. In exchange for rent support, artists are required to invest sweat equity into rehabilitating storefront spaces. Over a period of five years, artists cleaned up downtown storefronts and brought the town's downtown square back into economic prosperity. The occupancy rate in downtown before this effort was 25% and buildings were crumbling. Now there are coffee shops, restaurants and other social gathering places abuzz with activity.
  
2. *Colquitt, GA (pop. 1,950).*
  - Strategy: Capitalize on the region's rich heritage through enactment/play.
  - Project: For four weekends in the fall and spring of each year, tens of thousands of people descend on Colquitt for "Swamp Gravy", a musical play that celebrates life in rural southwestern Georgia. The play has generated over \$4 million since it began in 1993. The local arts council has reinvested revenues into the revitalization of downtown buildings and a local mini-mall where vendors sell arts, crafts and antiques and have access to affordable rental space.
  
3. *Etowah, TN (pop. 3,488).*
  - Strategy: The strategy is based on three pillars" heritage tourism, downtown development and industrial recruitment and expansion.
  - Project: Etowah's economy had hit rock bottom in the late 90's. Civic leaders decided to fight back and, building on existing assets, they redeveloped a historic train station in the center of town and reopened an old abandoned rail line.

Capitalizing on the turn-of-the-century train station and rail, town leaders developed a scenic rail trip, which has become a national attraction that is spurring downtown retail, restaurant and hospitality development and innovative approaches to industrial recruitment.

4. *Wren, OH. (pop. 193)*

- Strategy. Develop a unique sporting event as a regional draw.
- Project. Wren is a very small village with big plans. 20 years ago, they had a vision to put on a whiffle ball tournament in their small ballpark. The tournament has grown to be a national event, drawing hundreds of visitors every year to the small town. The event raises thousands of dollars every year for town projects and has even attracted new residents and a few new businesses in the downtown area. Twenty years ago, there were virtually no businesses in the small, 6 storefront downtown and today, it is 100% occupied.

**Potential Funding Sources**

Many smaller tourism projects are funded locally by businesses, foundations and through fundraisers. Larger projects, though, often involve funding through other means including tapping into regional, state or federal sources. Utilities or other economic development entities have played a role in funding certain projects or programs that promote an area. State agencies and organizations also participate in funding projects, especially related to tourism in connection with economic development. Table 3 lists funding sources, typical projects, maximum amounts and contact information.

**Table 6. Funding sources**

Source	What it will fund	Max amount	Contact information
Consolidated Electric Cooperative Community Grants Program	Community needs of benefit to and supported by the community and where other sources of funds are not available. Funding rounds: March, June, Sept., Dec.	Varies – usually up to \$10,000	Barb Sherbourne 419-949-2822 <a href="http://consolidatedelectric.coop/about-us/the-people-fund/applying-for-funding/">http://consolidatedelectric.coop/about-us/the-people-fund/applying-for-funding/</a>
Ohio Arts Council	Creative economic development initiatives related to arts and culture except fundraisers and hospitality expenses	Varies – usually between \$1,000 - \$50,000	Missy Ricksecker 614-728-4445 <a href="mailto:missy-ricksecker@oac.state.oh.us">missy-ricksecker@oac.state.oh.us</a> <a href="http://www.oac.state.oh.us/grant-sprogs/">http://www.oac.state.oh.us/grant-sprogs/</a>

Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) Discretionary Grant Program	Downtown or CD projects not feasible under other funding categories. Typically will fund brick and mortar or renovation projects.	Varies	David Pasquariello 616-466-8787 David.Pasquariello@development.ohio.gov
Ohio Historical Society History Fund Grant	Bricks & mortar, organizational development and programs and collections	\$4,000	Andy Verhoff 614-297-2341 averhoff@ohiohistory.org
Natureworks Parks & Recreation Grant	Acquisition, development or rehabilitation or public park and recreation areas (biennial program not available in 2014)	Varies	Mary Fitch 614-2656477
USDA Rural Economic Development Grants (REDLG)	Community development assistance to non-profits and public bodies for job creation or enhancement projects.	Up to \$100,000	Debbie Rausch Program Specialist 614-255-2400

### Summary and Next Steps

Fredericktown is a typical small town with typical identity and growth issues, but efforts by the FCDF to plan for future community growth and prosperity can make a significant difference. This report can provide a start in laying out what the community wants to do and how they want to do it. A proactive approach is important but future, long-term goals will require a continued commitment by FCDF trustees and committee members to assure that plans move forward and are successful.

In June 2007, *Midwest Living*, after numerous years of research, listed the 100 best small town getaways. This article, which is listed in the bibliography, can inform community leadership about what tourists and visitors might look for in a small town and what assets can be built upon, and how. *Ohio Magazine* annually publishes “Ohio’s Best Home Towns”, a series that lists and describes locations in Ohio that offer the best in small town living. As Fredericktown leadership looks to the future, they envision themselves as a “best”, embodying all the characteristics that make a small town an attractive location for visitors, residents and businesses.

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# Fredericktown Tourism Development Committee

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Judy Divelbiss - FCDF President, Tourism Committee Chair  
Jim Wagner - Historical Society  
Kelly Brown - Owl Creek Auction & Brown's Maple Products  
Dave Goosens - Website & Social Media  
Chris Well - Fredericktown Tomato Show  
Alan Kintner - Mayor  
Bill VanNostrand - Village Council  
Ray Brewer - Village Council  
Bill Whaley - Parks and Recreation  
Ann Trudel - Ann's Raspberry Farm  
Zak Grimm - Knox County Citizen  
Tricia Styers - Taste of Country Deli  
Ron Hules - Volunteer  
Stephanie Frazier - Volunteer  
Scott Smith - Volunteer  
Aaron Veyon – Volunteer