

Pickaway County developing marketing plan

- By Steven Collins Senior Reporter, Circleville Herald
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CIRCLEVILLE — For the first time in its history, Pickaway County's public facing entities are coming together to develop a countywide marketing plan, aimed at recruiting businesses and families to the area.

Tim Wilson, executive director for the Visitor's Bureau, said developing a countywide marketing plan was one of his goals when he took over as executive director in 2017.

"I wanted to create some sort of broad spectrum, comprehensive marketing scheme for every agency or municipality in the county to use if they so choose," he said. "It gives us a common thread when we're marketing ourselves and talking to a perspective company or business or even someone who wants to come live here."

Ryan Scribner, economic development director of Pickaway Progress Partnership (P3), said the plan is important as it allows all the organizations that use it the ability to present a united front to prospective businesses and people who are considering Pickaway County as a place to live.

"You get one chance at a first impression," Scribner said. "You never know what might matter to a perspective business or organization and sometimes it's a small thing."

The Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce, P3, The Pickaway County Commissioners and the Visitor's Bureau are all behind helping the plan come together. In total the county appropriated \$12,000 for the marketing plan.

"We all felt very strongly that we needed a common bond to sell the county," Wilson said.

Fahlgren Mortine, a Columbus-based advertising agency, was hired to create the plan. They're the designers behind the "ColumBUS" campaign, which turned into a easily identifiable marketing logo.

"You'll see a lot of their agencies, including police and fire, are using that logo," Wilson said. "It ties the entire community together and presents a strong united front. It'll give us a more credible presentation and show that we're all on the same page and rowing the same boat in the same direction."

Wilson and Scribner compared the plan Pickaway County wants to create similarly to that plan. One of the better-known locations for the logo is near John Glenn International Airport on the east side. The logo greets anyone entering back into the city after exiting the airport.

"If you go to the airport and you see the Columbus sign, they're the ones that did that," he said. "It's been really successful by any measure. We're down here looking at that and we're wondering what's our story to the outside world."

Scribner said the who, what, why and where are all important things that they'd like to answer with the marketing plan.

"Where is Pickaway County, what are we, what do we have to offer, why should we be an option to live, to visit, to work, to invest, or any of the above," he said. "Each one of us has our own little spiel on that but it's not coordinated, it's not potentially complementary."

Scribner said it's expected that about 1 million more people will enter the Columbus market in the next 10 years, and Pickaway County needs to only capture a small portion of those people to see positive things.

"We only need to move the needle in a small way to make a big difference for each of our prospective organizations in a big way and meet each of our goals," he said.

The plan will come together over the next several months, Wilson said.

"They're out doing stakeholder interviews right now and are trying to get background on what people's views and perceptions are of Pickaway County, of Circleville, of all the villages and townships," he said. "They're looking at what we hold dear, what we'd like to change, how we feel about our community and to get an outside perspective."

Scribner said while the plan will be created this year it's something designed to last.