

# Bringing Knowledge to Life

## Seven Themes for Ohio State University Extension

Extension has been proven as a positive social and economic resource for the State of Ohio by Battelle. Extension contributes to this economic and social good in numerous ways, and in order to communicate all that we do, the seven themes have been developed.

## Growing Ohio's Green Industry and Agriculture

Collectively, Ohio's diverse commercial agricultural, horticultural, and forestry industries contribute more than \$82 billion annually to Ohio's economy. Global economic forces, competition for land use, and urban/suburban sprawl will continue to challenge the aforementioned industries to strategically position their businesses to remain sustainable into the future. Traditional agriculture commodity production will continue its bi-modal distribution in farm size and scale with a very small percentage of farm production units contributing an increasing share of total gross production. Small/mid-size farms will continually need to become entrepreneurial by differentiating their commodities and evaluating direct and other value-added marketing alternatives. Continued growth and evolution of Ohio's "green industry" (nursery/landscape, turfgrass, and floriculture) will present unique opportunities for new university investments in research and Extension personnel at the state, center, and county levels to provide timely research-based information.

## Strengthening and Enhancing Communities, Neighborhoods, and Families

Communities, neighborhoods, and the individuals and families who live there face many challenges brought on by a changing world. These changes include rapid growth and development due to suburban sprawl and urban flight, the increasing importance of regionalism, economic decline impacted by industrial decline and global competition, and fiscal constraints caused by changing tax bases and citizen expectations. All of these factors impact quality of life indicators for communities and neighborhoods and pose important challenges for their residents and local decision-makers.

## Enhancing Food and Health

Improve the health and wellness of Ohio citizens. Positively impact the economy of the state through efforts with Ohio producers, business, and industry.

## Enhancing Ohio's Educational Capacity

As Ohio's economy shifts from an industrial to a knowledge base, we must learn to meet the demands of a technology-based and more diverse work environment in the context of a more global economy. Ohioans, both youth and adults, need to develop and hone their skills in creating innovation, applying new technologies, training employees, improving productivity, and networking. Furthermore, the future workforce must be more competent in communications, math, science, and research skills.

## Creating Opportunities at the Rural/Urban Interface

Nearly 74 percent of Ohio's population lives in townships, villages, or small cities. These areas are often characterized by low-density development with a mix of urban and rural land uses often tied to agriculture. Large cities make up approximately 26 percent of Ohio's population and serve as centers for regional economies. Today, nearly one in every six Ohioans is employed in some dimension of food and agriculture, with the fastest-growing sector being floriculture, turfgrass, and nursery/landscape industries. The rural-urban continuum is characterized by interdependence for jobs, services, and lifestyle. As rural and urban communities become more integrated, concerns arise around land use, local governance, economic vitality, environmental issues, and culture clashes around quality of life issues.



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## **Maintaining and Enhancing the Natural Environment**

Ohio is a densely populated state with many metropolitan areas and a rural landscape increasingly occupied by homeowners seeking amenities of country living. Growing metropolitan areas and division of land into small plots for home construction places heavy demands on the state's fixed land base and other elements of the natural environment, especially water.

These factors of growth lead to increased competition among individuals and interest groups regarding the multiple alternative uses of the state's natural endowment of resources. Ohioans are also concerned with overarching issues including global climate change, invasive species, and farm-land preservation. The challenge is to raise awareness and

understanding that development should proceed in concert with economic, environmental, and societal health.

## **Creating Jobs for Ohio through Entrepreneurial and Value-Added Strategies**

Ohio's communities and citizens are competing in a global economy with the pressures and opportunities of constant change. Continued scientific and technological development has led to changes in industry structure, distribution systems, and the organization of business models. Economic value creation has moved from routine labor to knowledge and high value-added activities. To compete, Ohio individuals, families, and communities will need to create new income opportunities that rely on their entrepreneurial skills.

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