



GRANT COUNTY VISION QUEST

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

VISION IS NOT SEEING THINGS AS THEY ARE, **BUT AS THEY WILL BE.**





TO THE PEOPLE OF GRANT COUNTY:

We, the members of VisionQuest have already invested ourselves in the future of Grant County. It is our hope that a greater number of young people will choose Grant County as their permanent home and join us in ensuring a superior community quality of life for future generations. We believe that, in order to do this, we must strive to have the best education resources in the country. Then, we must locate or create high-quality, high-paying jobs. Together, these investments in our community will help facilitate a higher per-capita household income that will, in turn, produce the necessary revenue to truly create a sustainable quality of life.

We met with this goal in mind: "To come together as young leaders in our community to study Grant County together, to dream big dreams for our future, and to develop a road map to achieve these dreams, while preserving the heritage of Grant County."

The efforts of 40 young community leaders under the age of 40 are represented in this report, as well as the input from hundreds of others who have participated in surveys, public forums and various types of communication used to gather the knowledge, hopes and ideas of Grant County citizens.

We would like to express our appreciation to all who contributed to this vision. A special acknowledgment is extended to the Grant County Chamber of Commerce for commissioning this creative process, and for providing the staff and financial support to achieve the final document. We would also like to thank our elected leaders for agreeing to support this effort from the outset, Northern Kentucky University for managing and facilitating the process, and Wendy Eilers for "painting a picture" of our vision.

While every effort has been made to develop a very realistic vision for our community, we understand that some of the ideas in this document may be altered in the future due to unforeseen events, or new and better information or ideas. This document should not be construed as a limitation on the autonomy or the authority of our local, state and federal governments. We offer our ideas as a beginning point for continuous analysis and action.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to think deeply about the future of our community.

Sincerely,

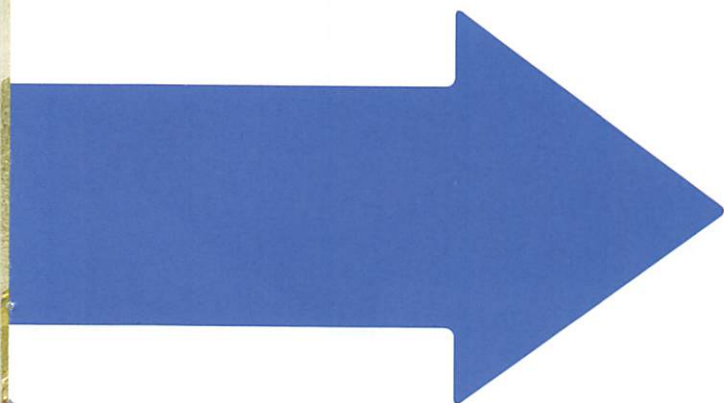
Noland Smith
Chairman
VisionQuest

COMMUNITY PROFILE

GRANT COUNTY, home to more than 26,000 citizens, has grown 58 percent since 1990. This growth, which is expected to continue at the current pace, places Grant County as the fourth fastest-growing county among Kentucky's 120 counties. It is clear that our community has become a preferred living environment.

Grant County is situated between two major economic engines of the state. To the south, the Lexington metro area is a business and tourism giant, generating a significant amount of local revenue from tourist attractions, including the internationally recognized equine industry. Georgetown, a major participant in the Lexington region's recent growth, is home to the production facility of America's most popular family sedan, the Toyota Camry. Lexington is also a major contributor to the state's economic future due to the presence of the University of Kentucky and its associated colleges (Law, Medicine, Engineering and Public Policy).





Grant County is bordered on the north by the fastest-growing, most economically diverse area in the state. Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties have capitalized on their proximity to Cincinnati by becoming a thriving business and residential alternative to southern Ohio. With the region's international airport located in neighboring Boone County, corporations such as Toyota, CitiCorp, Ashland, Delta Air Lines and Fidelity Investments have chosen the Northern Kentucky area as a base for major operations.

This advantageous location offers quick access to nationally ranked urban city services, entertainment, professional sports and arts, both in Cincinnati and in Lexington.

Grant County has the benefit of being located on one of our nation's largest interstate highways (I-75). The county is less than 40 miles from I-64 and just a few miles from I-71. This superior location allows 60 percent of the nation's population to access Grant County in less than a day's drive.

The topography of Grant County ranges from the gentle, sweeping hills of Crittenden, Dry Ridge and Williamstown, to the angular, rolling hills of Mason and Corinth. This variety of landscape lends itself to many uses. The county currently has light industrial, commercial and professional employment opportunities. But if the county's full potential is to be realized, it must attract major knowledge-economy businesses that provide a stable basis for expanded job growth.



While being in a great location for business development, Grant County also offers a country atmosphere, where people are friendly and family is important. Grant Countians take great pride in community heritage, which includes a farming economy, beautiful churches, safe schools and caring, involved people. Neighborly people still wave at friends and visitors as they pass by.

Although Grant County has great natural assets and benefits from its location, our challenge is to provide a vision that helps our community to create an environment that will serve as a foundation for an enhanced quality of life for Grant County citizens — now and in the future. This vision provides that foundation.

While many major urban areas are experiencing the impact of rapid growth in this ever-expanding economy, Grant County still has available land, affordable utilities and a clean environment that is conducive to the quality of life expected from the knowledge workers of the 21st Century.

EDUCATION



Education is the foundation of our vision. Building on the quality of our learning system across the spectrum of education, from early childhood to postsecondary, this vision calls for expanding the county's academic services and developing measures to ensure a civic minded and engaged population.



Grant County students have a choice to attend either the county school district or the independent Williamstown school district. Both districts are stable and grow significantly each year.

The Grant County and Williamstown Independent school districts have about 4,650 students enrolled in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Current growth estimates indicate that the numbers of students in both school districts will increase substantially to nearly 6,000 students by the year 2010. Both school systems take great pride in maintaining a small class size, maximizing interaction with teachers.

Gateway Community and Technical College has seen a steady increase in enrollment of Grant County students. Experts anticipate that the new Boone County Campus at Mt. Zion Road, just minutes from the Grant County line, will increase the number of students from Carroll, Grant, Owen and Pendleton counties pursuing postsecondary degrees. Over the next ten years, Gateway is expected to grow the campus and serve 6,500 students. Initially, programs will focus on technical training and education that will support the need of the local manufacturing, transportation and distribution companies.

In the fall of 1998, the Grant County campus of Northern Kentucky University opened with a small class of 68 in a rented storefront. Since then, the number of students has more than doubled at the



Northern Kentucky University Grant County Center

Center. In the fall of 2004, Northern Kentucky University, with a community-wide group of investors, opened a much larger facility in the recently renovated, former Williamstown City Building. Continued rapid growth in student population is anticipated at the Center.

Growth in Grant County's population seems inevitable. As new residents make Grant County their home, they will want to enroll their children in school systems that will serve their needs. They will seek preschool, day care, and other early childhood development programs to care for and educate their children. There will also be an increase in demand for adult educational services.

With deep-rooted community involvement in education, Grant County children will be given full opportunity to contribute and be part of a thriving community and economy. Parents play a critical role, but are not solely responsible for educating a child. In the post-Great Society information age, a child is really the responsibility of everyone with whom that child comes into contact. By fulfilling our responsibility to nurture Grant County's children, we are investing in our future.

Grant County's near- and long-term success will come as a direct result of our ability to create an education foundation that focuses on bettering the future for citizens of all ages. To accomplish this mission, Grant County citizens and the Commonwealth of Kentucky will need to invest more in our education systems, spanning from early childhood to postsecondary. It is critical that we provide salaries and resources to our teachers that will ensure a superior education for our children. The county must also marshal the leadership of our community to persuade the General Assembly to fund Northern Kentucky University and our county's other postsecondary education resources. This funding must be at a level that will allow these entities to continue active involvement in preparing our future talent force for the knowledge economy, and to assist in the development of our children, birth to 12th grade.



EDUCATION

First, Grant County needs a technical school located within its borders. This campus would allow high school students to acquire trade and technical skills, while also serving the needs of existing and future businesses within the county.

Second, Northern Kentucky University should continue to serve local education needs through two-year and four-year programs. It should also expand four-year degree programs without the hindrance of a long commute each day to attend class. Community support will demonstrate to our legislature that we are serious about providing greater educational opportunities for our citizens; and more educational dollars will flow to the university to support this effort. We should also reach out to surrounding counties that want to utilize the University's education programs.

The new NKU facility provides an opportunity to integrate traditional postsecondary educational services with an innovative information technology and entrepreneurial economic development program. With the addition of the new Williamstown Innovation Center, this facility will provide our students with both the opportunity to realize a quality education and build a foundation for their knowledge-based industry career.

We have identified four key education initiatives that will support Grant County's future growth:

Third, with the recent population boom of Spanish-speaking residents, not only in Grant County, but in the entire nation, the need for basic Spanish language skills has become self-evident. Our community should work with Northern Kentucky University to create a Spanish language academy, which would be open to all citizens, to facilitate a positive relationship with our new neighbors. This will be especially helpful to the businesses in our community that provide much-needed services to these residents.

Finally, Grant County must provide opportunities for our most advanced students. Often these students seek challenging private schools outside Grant County, or attend school within the county and are not challenged. The solution to this need can be found in a charter/magnet school that would allow our best and brightest to compete, at the state and national level, with students who have completed similar programs. In addition to attracting exceptional students and families to our community from throughout Kentucky, this program will allow Grant County to be recognized as a national leader in education. This charter/magnet school should be created in conjunction with our schools systems, possibly through a district partnership.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Providing a superior quality of life for our citizens, especially our youth, will require recreational and entertainment options for leisure-time enjoyment. Quality entertainment activities such as a public pool, a movie theater, a bowling alley and a roller rink must be pursued in the short term. These amenities are standard in most communities around the Commonwealth and throughout the country.

Expanded outdoor recreation



Kentucky Cowtown

The farm land that will become available, because of the tobacco buyout, provides us with an excellent opportunity to purchase land for quality active and passive parks. These parks could provide space for roller blading, hiking, biking and even an exciting new public golf course.

To begin addressing this need, Grant County is now home to Kentucky Cowtown, an agricultural exhibition center. Cowtown, named after one of the owner's horses, is a 31,200-square-foot indoor arena, with an additional 6,000 square feet for attached livestock pens.

This new development features climate controlled spectator seating and a concession area designed in an "Old West" town theme. Cowtown events can include: team penning, barrel racing, bull riding, open riding, exotic animal shows, mounted cowboy shooting, team roping, walking horse shows, animal and equipment auctions, horse pulls, mini-tractor pulls, cutting horse shows and cow/horse practice.

Our community should embrace this new entertainment venue and build upon its success.





Model of a
proposed indoor
winter sports resort



Skiing, ice skating and other winter activities continue to be preferred entertainment options among Americans. In the Midwest, there are very few indoor/outdoor winter sports venues, and no indoor ski slopes.

Therefore, Grant County should also attempt to be one of the nation's first locations to offer the amenities of an indoor winter sports resort.

Currently, the only developments of this type in the world are underway in Sydney, Australia, and in the southeast England town of Ipswich. These resorts will provide the greatest possible concentration of winter sports available to enthusiasts. A Grant County resort could include a snow dome with a ski slope, a nursery slope, and an ice-climbing wall. This sports facility could be part of a winter village that includes a health & fitness facility, sports retail outlets, a leisure ice rink, a bowling alley, a food court, rock climbing walls, restaurants, a cinema and a Bobsled track. This village resort could also offer a hotel and conference center, chalets and apartments.

Grant County's topography, and its ideal location, makes this type of development a real possibility. It would prove to be a major economic benefit to the county, and the region, as well as provide for a great recreation opportunity for our citizens.

HEALTH CARE & HUMAN SERVICES

With every emerging community, the presence of quality healthcare is critical. Grant County is fortunate to have the investments made by St. Elizabeth Medical Center Grant County to provide quality healthcare services for our citizens. The new hospital expansion, as well as immediate access to the hospital provided by the new Barnes Road interchange, will increase the visibility and delivery capabilities of our healthcare services.

St. Elizabeth Medical Center Grant County and its associated doctors are already providing medical services, including CAT Scans and outpatient surgery, that are superior among rural communities. Grant County must market the capabilities of our healthcare services as a true asset within our community. We also must evaluate the support needs of our hos-



pital, including nurses and other skilled practitioners, to continue this momentum. Collaboration among Northern Kentucky University, Gateway Community and Technical College, University of Kentucky research programs and our hospital will maximize the opportunities and the quality of healthcare in Grant County.

There is also a great need in our county for a centralized social services "one-stop-shop." An ideal location for this new facility would be on Barnes Road in the medical-professional district, where citizens could come to one location to learn about a variety of support services. Also, Grant County has a great need for mental health services for our citizens who do not have health insurance.



Community-based fitness centers

To encourage health through recreation, a lifestyles, community-based fitness center should be created. This would cater to citizens of all ages and ability levels, and would also enhance our pride in being a family-oriented community.

A THRIVING ECONOMY

Grant County benefits from having an active Chamber of Commerce and an Industrial Development Authority that strive to bring higher-paying employment opportunities to its citizens. The county is fortunate to host a Kentucky Innovation Center that is focused on supporting knowledge-economy development. This center acts as the liaison between local governments, chambers of Commerce, our postsecondary education institutions, the Industrial Development Authority, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and burgeoning market companies interested in locating in our community.

To form a foundation for our economic development agencies, we have developed a vision for each major area of the county. Each vision utilizes the area's current positive attributes, and the challenges of the community, to develop not only a sense of urgency, but also a sense of pride and eventual accomplishment.



Proposed upscale housing

CRITTENDEN

Crittenden has been the fastest-growing community in Grant County for nearly a decade. The population density in our northernmost city has grown substantially with a mix of apartment, entry-level and mid-luxury housing developments. In our view, this qualifies Crittenden as an ideal candidate for a number of aggressive — but attainable — goals.

The City of Crittenden should develop its potential as a location for high worth, single-family housing communities, similar in design and scope to the Triple Crown neighborhoods in Union, Kentucky, and a number of similar developments in the Hebron, Kentucky, area.



Downtown Dry Ridge renovation

Crittenden is not envisioned to become a new Florence, Kentucky, with a conglomeration of retail and service establishments. However, with its topography being the most conducive to residential development, the city could greatly benefit from an enlarged tax base stemming from the creation of a positive residential environment.

An upscale office complex, located near the Crittenden exit, is seen as a potential benefit to the local economy. Not only would three-to-four-story, glass-and-brick office/technology structures, of particular architectural beauty, provide higher paying job opportunities to the county's citizens, they would also attract greater investment locally via retail and restaurant construction. Coffee shops, bistros and American Grill-style restaurants would provide the office complex with viable lunch options. It would also allow local residents to spend their discretionary dollars locally.



Proposed new office complex

DRY RIDGE

Dry Ridge is home to the most developed of any of our interstate exits. This incredible growth, near the interstate, can be softened by a wholesale beautification project. By installing ornamental street signs and sidewalk lights, constructing a safe and attractive sidewalk system, and planting trees, shrubs and flowers near high-traffic areas, Dry Ridge can make a huge leap forward in maintaining its title as Grant County's poster town.

As seen with countless similar retail outlet centers around the nation, the Dry Ridge Outlet Center can thrive, while also contributing to the surrounding community. In this spirit, the owners of the center should lead a Dry Ridge exit beautification project by improving the commons of the center. Improving the aesthetic quality of the shopping environment will go far in attracting customers. Islands of trees and vegetation within the parking area, along with park benches and decorative lighting, will build the image of the Center.

The city of Dry Ridge and the county should also work with the current owners to attract higher-end companies such as Brooks Brothers, Nautica, Banana Republic, Yankee Candle and others. These major stores will bring in shoppers from around the region, infusing their dollars into the local tax base. This can be a win-win situation for the city of Dry Ridge, Grant County and the Dry Ridge Outlet Center, and would not require a significant infusion of capital to make it happen.

To add support for an extended retail presence, a Planned Urban Development or PUD zone for the County should be developed near the Dry Ridge Outlet Center. There is ample amount of good land available in the area, and most of it is situated next to the Outlet Center and the I-75 Dry Ridge interchange. This would help the struggling center bring in a larger customer base to support more shops of a high-end nature. The different forms of housing could include high-end, single-family homes; medium-priced, single-family homes; condominiums; and multi-family units. An example of this type of development can be found at Hamburg Place, located off Man O' War Road, in Lexington. This development is in a thriving area, which includes several restaurants, a movie theater, banks, gas stations, a church, retail shops, and upscale single-family homes, and condominiums. A PUD would be very attractive to potential homebuyers because it gives them everything they need and want in their daily lives. The interchange at Dry Ridge is taking shape with many of these aspects already in place. Housing is the only missing component.

With the completion of the new bypass near the Grant County Industrial Park, expanded opportunities will help recruit advanced manufacturing companies, which will be a key component of Grant County's participation in the knowledge economy. These companies range from high-tech auto applications (both foreign and domestic) to biotechnology research facilities. This development opportunity will provide Grant Countians and the region's citizens with high-paying employment opportunities, unlike anything the area has ever seen.



Tech-based industrial park

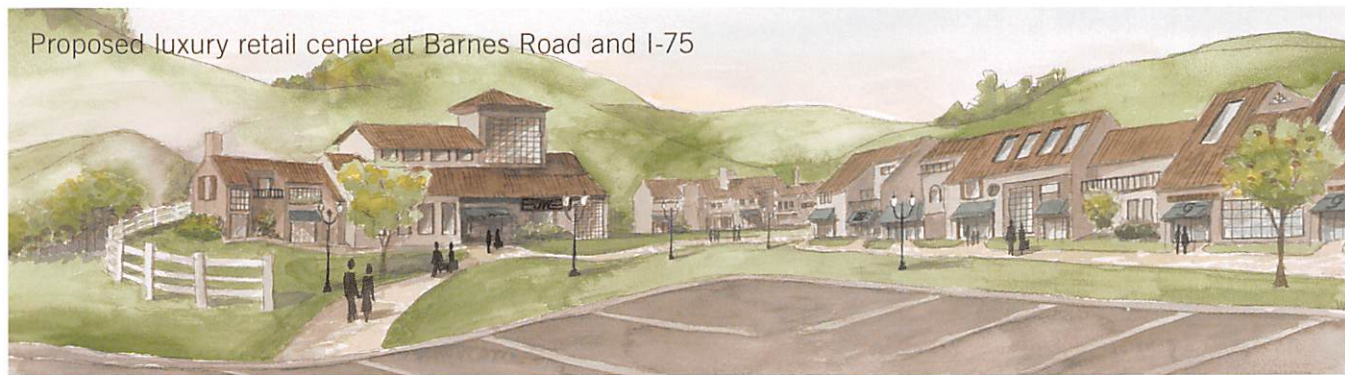
WILLIAMSTOWN

Williamstown has made great strides recently that could bode well for the future of the city. As mentioned earlier, Williamstown is the site of a Kentucky Innovation Center, which is housed in the new Northern Kentucky University Grant County Center. Together, these entities will drive new knowledge-based business development within the county. Being home to this burgeoning project provides the city with an opportunity unique among its peers.

We encourage the city, county and chamber of commerce to aggressively look at options to totally re-develop Main Street. One of the last vestiges of the past in America is Main Street, USA, and Williamstown has the potential to exemplify this rich heritage.

A more inviting downtown will include shops, restaurants, bistros, glass-front offices, and, most important, citizens eager to be downtown again. Approaches to the downtown area, from both the Barnes Road and Williamstown exits, should be improved with plantings, business buffers, and consistent ornate lighting. These improvements should serve to attract niche knowledge-economy businesses to occupy vacant downtown buildings and contribute to the growing needs of our community. These tech-based businesses will allow Williamstown to complement the office-based and industry-based opportunities in other areas of the county.





Proposed luxury retail center at Barnes Road and I-75

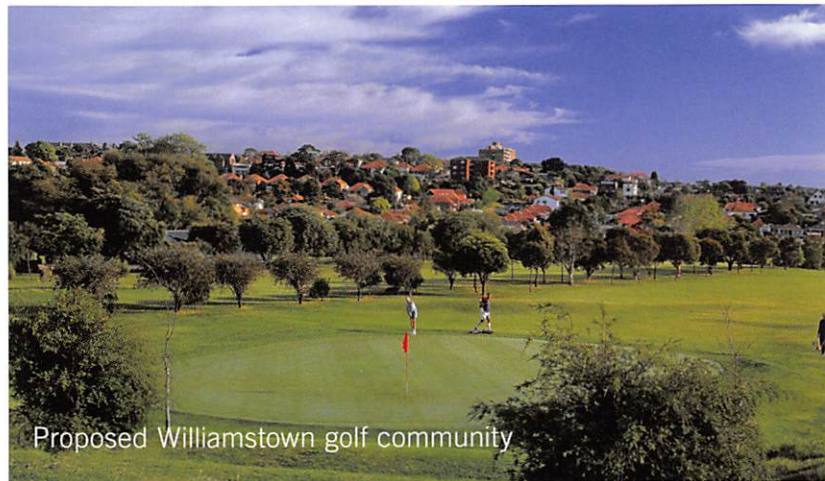
In addition to the attraction of tech-based businesses and dining facilities, the Williamstown downtown corridor can provide themes that will attract tourists off of the interstate and into the community to spend money. These themes could include:

- 1) mountain biking supplies in support of proposed trails and roadside paths for biking enthusiasts**
- 2) Kentucky Bluegrass-related products and memorabilia**

A Williamstown planned golf community that will set the gold standard in Grant County is in the formative stages of development. This proposed 27-hole layout would be surrounded with upscale homes, landminiums, resort-style cabins, and a pastoral, park-like buffer zone. This project will provide Williamstown with a new influx of tax revenue, employment opportunities and potential residents. It is truly a bold vision for the future of our county.

The Barnes Road exit, nestled between the Dry Ridge and Williamstown exits, offers the county an opportunity not available at any of our other interchanges. It is predominantly undeveloped. This allows the vi-

sioning process to move forward without the typical constraints imposed by an existing development. Two possibilities at this intersection could have far-reaching, positive outcomes for the community. First is the development of a high-end entertainment district similar to the one found at Newport on the Levee in Newport, Kentucky. A combination of restaurants, retail establishments and entertainment opportunities (theater, arcade, and billiards) would



Proposed Williamstown golf community

provide Grant County citizens (as well as Pendleton, Owen, Gallatin, Harrison and Scott counties) with a wonderful entertainment, dining and shopping venue. As a second option, a luxury retail center mimicking Rookwood Commons in Cincinnati, Ohio, or The Summit in Louisville, Kentucky, could be developed. These complexes have upscale restaurants, interspersed with retail establishments, creating a relaxed shopping experience that attracts visitors from around the region. Both would be excellent additions to the Barnes Road interchange.

Revitalized downtown Williamstown





WILLIAMSTOWN LAKE RESORT

Williamstown has an opportunity to become a premier tourist destination in the region. The biggest and boldest project in Grant County history is the proposed Williamstown Lake Expansion. It has the potential for unimagined economic benefit for the county and the region. Our vision is a luxury, lodge-style resort complex reminiscent of the majestic hideaways that surround Lake Tahoe.

The resort will be interspersed with restaurants, spa facilities and other luxury amenities. This imposing structure would include a several-thousand seat enclosed performance hall, capable of hosting concerts, plays, seminars and other like productions. The grounds could be lined with hiking and biking trails,

allowing visitors to revel in the rural, wooded wonderland surrounding the lake. Whether the guests are interested in the quiet relaxation associated with country life, or the excitement of a variety of water-sports, they will be treated to an experience unlike any other in the region. The possibilities of such a development are endless.

This 1350-acre development, with 60 miles of shoreline, would bridge the Grant and Pendleton County communities, and will also serve to create an important fresh water source for citizens of multiple counties. The existing Williamstown Lake Dam would be moved into Pendleton County, allowing for a much larger pool of water.

It is envisioned that this development would be pursued as a Congressional demonstration project and funded with federal, state and local dollars. An effort will also be made to pursue Department of the Interior federal support to potentially make this project a new addition to the National Park System.

CORINTH/MASON AREA

The city of Corinth has been successful in its re-development of the downtown community. This strategy will add to a vital community spirit. This area of the county also has great treasures, such as Bruce's Grocery, that can be promoted to potential visitors.

Growth in Corinth can be driven by an ambitious golf resort project. The completion of such a project could enhance the future fortunes of our southernmost city in ways one can only fathom.

In addition, the city's open, affordable land provides a great opportunity to create 3-5 acre "rural estate" developments for young professional families with sufficient income to retreat to a rural living environment. These developments would provide families with a new country-style home, on a rolling landscape, surrounded by a split rail fence that defines their estates. While the Corinth/Mason area of Grant County provides a conducive environment for rural estate development, it is anticipated that this kind of development will also be explored throughout the county.

A new retirement community would also be a helpful addition in Grant County. The latest US census



data shows that 48 percent of all homeowners in the county are over the age of 55. On the national level, research indicates that this segment of the population will continue to increase rapidly in the future. Many homeowners want to downsize and have more conveniences when they grow older. Smaller housing units, built on smaller lots, with green space and a clubhouse to promote resident socialization, would be very desirable. This would not be a rest home or assisted living environment, but rather a community where residents would still own their homes with less to maintain. The state of Florida has done a very good job with these types of developments.

Proposed rural estates





TO OUR COMMUNITY:

Through countless hours of deliberation and deep thinking, we have put forth our best ideas in the areas of education quality, economic development, healthcare, human services, recreation, and entertainment. We have presented bold thoughts for each of our cities that will sustain a superior quality of life for all of our citizens well into the future.

While our commitment is clearly presented through this vision, our dreams and aspirations can only become reality if our elected and community leaders come together as one and collaboratively focus our collective resources in a way that will achieve success. We stand ready to work side by side with our leaders to build the necessary bridges that will cause proactive implementation of this progressive vision.

As our community moves to the implementation phase of this vision, we recognize that our aggressive plan is too much for one community or organization to accomplish alone; therefore, we are calling for community-wide deliberation about shared governmental services. This cooperative effort should begin to seriously evaluate the benefits of county-wide sewer and water, planning and zoning, as well as the potential for city-county form of government. While we understand that there are no easy answers to these questions, we also recognize also the magnitude of the work our community must undertake today in order to reach our goals for tomorrow. Our work will never get easier and the cost will never be any less expensive. It is our responsibility to address these concerns now so that they are not passed to the next generation of Grant County Citizens.

The development of this county-wide vision has been a significant community undertaking. With continued cooperative support, the quality of life which first brought people to this area, and is cherished by those living here today, will be passed on to future generations who will call this place home.

We are thankful to have had the opportunity to undertake this important project. We look forward to seeing it through with you.

Vision Quest

Forty Under Forty Committee

THE FUTURE IS NOT COMPLETELY BEYOND OUR CONTROL. IT IS THE WORK OF OUR OWN HANDS.

Robert F. Kennedy

**VisionQuest
Forty Under Forty Committee**

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VISION IS THE ART OF SEEING WHAT IS INVISIBLE TO OTHERS

– JONATHAN SWIFT

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