

Chapter 17

Ohio River Corridor Development Plan

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OHIO RIVER CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Throughout history the Ohio River has served as a focus of life in our region. From the early Native American settlers to the steamboat era and even today, the river has been a unifying force as well as our region's calling card. Just as it has helped mold the region into what it is today, the river still offers many powerful untapped opportunities for shaping our future.

With expansions of transportation facilities, recreation and tourist amenities, and residential and commercial development, the Ohio River Corridor could become an even greater asset to the region in the future than it is today. The Ohio River Corridor could become a resource to more effectively showcase the region and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work here.

To realize these opportunities, an Ohio River Corridor Plan would provide a blueprint for guiding development. Capitalizing on the momentum that currently fuels development projects along both urban core riverfronts, a multi-jurisdictional plan would provide direction to what is now a fragmented approach. The plan would have a broad focus that encompasses the entire Ohio River Corridor within the region and embrace a diversity of issues including local-regional, public-private, and development-conservation perspectives.

It is recommended that an Ohio River Corridor Plan be prepared to guide local development decisions.

Some of the major features of this proposed planning process are summarized below.

- **Project Area:** The project area would extend 86 miles from Utopia, Ohio to Aurora, Indiana to include the entire length of the Ohio River through the OKI region. The planning corridor's width would vary, but all of the political jurisdictions along the river would be invited to participate in the planning effort.
- **Plan Components:** The plan would define a shared vision for the Ohio River Corridor's development. It would include an identification of areas of special interest for recreational (bike trails along with greenspace projects) or tourism (scenic, historical, geologic, or unique resources); an identification and prioritization of potential development projects; a conceptualization of transportation improvements to provide mobility through the corridor; and recommendations for preserving areas of special interest, developing new projects, and improving the transportation system.

- **Transportation Element:** The need for improving east-west mobility and north-south connectivity would be assessed for the highways that parallel the Ohio River (US 50 and US 52 in Ohio and KY 8 in Kentucky). Issues that affect the river's importance as an inland waterway for moving freight may also be addressed.
- **Getting the Process Started:** As a first step, OKI would oversee the development of a consortium of local governments and private organizations with an established interest in the Ohio River Corridor. The consortium would agree on a project scope that would define the study elements and the process to be used for involving the public in the plan's development.
- **Funding:** Funds to cover the estimated \$2,000,000 study cost would come from county and municipal jurisdictions bordering the river, federal and state sources, and contributions from the private sector.