

IN OUR REGION

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission has led the strategic development of transportation infrastructure, environmental programs and planning

efforts for the region for more than 55 years. The IN OUR REGION page will highlight current planning initiatives, sustainability programs, transportation services, public input opportunities and regional leadership projects that

impact every corner of the Miami Valley. Questions about the information presented on this page should be directed to Stacy Schweikhart, MVRPC director of Strategy and Engagement, at sschweikhart@mvrpc.org.

Efforts target livability and equity in region

By Brian O. Martin

Executive director of the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission

Dear neighbors,

In 2019, the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) launched The Institute for Livable & Equitable Communities, a long-term, multi-faceted effort to enhance livability and equity throughout the region.

Within the structure of the Institute, there are two key initiatives: The Regional Equity Initiative and The Regional Livable and Age-Friendly Communities Initiative. The Institute is catalyst and incubator for efforts to transform systems and make access to opportunity abundant so that all people can thrive. The Regional Equity Initiative is a coordinated effort by MVRPC, member communities, and partners to strengthen the Miami Valley by correcting policies;



Brian O. Martin

reforming institutions; and closing the gaps that undermine sustained quality of life improvements for underserved communities and minority populations. The Regional Livable and Age-Friendly Communities Initiative encourages MVRPC member communities and partners to consider policies, programs and planning efforts to make our communities livable for people of all ages.

The launch of the Institute was made possible through a partnership between MVRPC, The Dayton Foundation, the Del Mar Healthcare Fund of The Dayton Foundation, AARP/World Health Organization (WHO), Learn to Earn Dayton and local business, healthcare, non-profit and

higher education institutions. The Institute crosses all of MVRPC's areas of technical expertise and all of our member organizations in order to leverage funding, collaboration and collective impact.

The foundation for The Institute for Livable & Equitable Communities is based upon research from the WHO and AARP which identifies domains, or elements of communities, which are essential for livability and equity. In 2020, a team of community stakeholders completed a process to define a set of domains specific to the Miami Valley.

The Institute domains and definitions are:

■ **Education:** A commitment to learning, beginning at an early age and continuing through all stages, is essential to developing a strong workforce and ensuring long-term economic viability.

■ **Entrepreneurship:** Employment & Volunteer-

ing: All individuals should have the opportunity to work for themselves, for others, or to volunteer their expertise, and contribute productively in a way that is meaningful and a benefit to our community.

■ **Engagement:** Authentic engagement of all individuals to shape the future of their community and a culture which embraces interactions among diverse groups, learning, mutual respect and value of the contributions of all.

■ **Health & Environment:** Access to quality, affordable health services, mental health resources and wrap-around community support systems are vital. Clean air and clean water have a direct connection to health and quality of life.

■ **Housing:** Communities need to include affordable and desirable housing options for varying life stages, abilities, and bank accounts.

■ **Neighborhood:** Vibrant

neighborhoods include residential, retail and open spaces for all. The Institute regularly convenes key stakeholders representing each domain in order to create synergy, as evidenced by many of the Institute programs highlighted in the stories on this page.

Through consistent coordination within and between the domains, the Institute demonstrates how collaborative efforts can be mobilized to directly address social equity and the creation of livable, age-friendly communities.

■ **Technology & Connectivity:** Expansion of access to technology, connectivity and the intentional dissemination of information through a wide variety of traditional and digital means to ensure all members of the community are informed of matters that impact them.

■ **Transportation:** Driving a car shouldn't be the only way to get around. Public transit, coordinated mobility and human service transportation systems, integrated freight and logistics systems, walkability, and bike-friendly

ness contribute to livable, equitable and lively communities for all.

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Now, through an evolution of our partnership with The Dayton Foundation, those who wish to support the work of the Institute can easily do so through an established fund. To learn more about how you can contribute please visit <https://www.mvrpc.org/regional-initiatives/institute-livable-equitable-communities>.

Leadership elected for livable, equitable communities group

Contributed

In May 2021, the MVRPC Board of Directors adopted revised bylaws that outlined the formation of a 13-member Institute for Livable & Equitable Communities Steering Committee. The Institute Steering Committee is a permanent committee appointed by the MVRPC board responsible for working with the MVRPC executive director to guide the work of the Institute of Livable & Equitable Communities.

The members appointed to serve on the Institute Steering Committee are:

- Rebecca Bennà, Five Rivers MetroParks
- Nancy Byrge, Huber Heights
- Judy Dodge, Montgomery County
- David Haber, Preble County
- Jeff Hoagland, Dayton Development Consortium
- Shannon Isom, YWCA
- Matt Joseph, City of Dayton
- Dr. Tom Lasley, Learn to Earn Dayton
- Mary McDonald, City of



From left: Becky Bennà, Rap Hankins, Brian O. Martin and Deborah Wallace. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

- Trotwood
- Chris Mucher, Miami Township (Greene County)
- Michael Parks, The Dayton Foundation
- Bill Serr, City of Centerville
- Deborah Wallace, Beavercreek Township

The Institute Steering Committee (ISC) met for the first time in September 2021 and Deborah Wallace was elected chairperson. At their subsequent October meeting, the ISC elected Rap Hankins to serve as chairperson for The

Regional Equity Initiative and Becky Bennà to serve as chairperson for The Regional Livable and Age-Friendly Communities Initiative.

Environmental Justice Academy trains grassroots leaders

In March 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced an agreement with MVRPC to co-sponsor the Miami Valley Regional Environmental Justice (EJ) Academy, the first in this region of the coun-

ty. Environmental justice is the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. EPA and MVRPC share a commitment to building equitable, healthy and thriving communities.

The EJ Academy began in August 2021 with 27 emerging community, non-profit, and environmental leaders enrolled. Through a series of

nine modules, the EJ Academy teaches collaborative problem-solving with community-based organizations, local government, small businesses, academic institutions and industry, to create a shared vision so that all who are part of the community have a voice. The modules include environmental law, visioning, community capacity building, leadership development, consensus building and dispute resolution, partnering and leveraging resources, identifying

financial resources, management and replication of best practices.

In early April, EJ Academy students had an opportunity to pitch their environmental justice projects to a panel of local judges in a competition for grants to implement their ideas.

The judges awarded funding to Jerry Bowling for a mural in the McCook Field neighborhood; to Taylor Curtis for a livestream discussion entitled "Keep that Energy" as part of the Listen, Learn, Share Series: Unpacking Climate Justice and Clean Energy; to Courtney Rutledge for JustUS: Climate and Environmental Justice Project and Case Repository with Legal Aid Ohio; and to Caitlin Botschner and Jennifer Wentzel for the formation of an EJ Academy Alumni Association that will allow graduates of the program to remain involved.

For more information regarding the EJ Academy contact Savannah Diamond, MVRPC assistant to the executive director, at sdiamond@mvrpc.org.



Environmental Justice Academy participants

IN BRIEF

Local communities receive grants

In late 2021, with generous support from the DMH-Dayton Fund at The Dayton Foundation, the MVRPC Institute for Livable & Equitable Communities announced a new funding opportunity for MVRPC member organizations. Grants in the amount of \$10,000 were made available to support the pursuit of AARP Livable & Age-Friendly Communities designation. The AARP designation is a multi-year planning effort focused on recognizing and enhancing age-friendly, livable aspects of your community.

The following MVRPC member communities applied for the grant opportunity and the Institute Steering Committee recommended that they be awarded funding. The MVRPC Board of Directors will consider formal adoption of the recommendation at their meeting on May 5, 2022. The grant awards will help the communities become part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly State and Communities. In this model, community leaders and residents work on a multi-year planning effort focused on enhancing

age-friendly, livable aspects of their community.

- City of Bellbrook
- City of Brookville
- City of Centerville
- Harrison Township
- City of Huber Heights
- City of Kettering
- Miami County and City of Troy
- City of Xenia

A livable community is one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and has supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance all stages of life, increasing personal independence; allowing residents to age in place; and fostering residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life.

Age-Friendly Network offers resources

The Miami Valley Age-Friendly Network (MVAFN), an initiative of MVRPC's Institute for Livable & Equitable Communities, is a coalition of communities, partners and stakeholders who work together to establish and implement age-friendly strategies for our region. Becoming an age-friendly region means that, together,

we will strive to make needed changes in our communities to ensure that we can all live better as we age.

The Dayton Foundation's Del Mar Encore Fellows Initiative places highly skilled, retired or career-transitioning professionals with area nonprofits to work on community issues. MVRPC is one of the host organizations benefiting from the program, with Del Mar Fellow Leigh Sempeles leading the formation of the Miami Valley Age-Friendly Network (MVAFN).

MVAFN meetings are held quarterly and open to all. Each meeting is focused on a different domain of the Institute and offers resources and innovative ways that local governments and community organizations can collaborate to impact livability. To learn more about how your community or organization can be involved in the Miami Valley Age-Friendly Initiative, visit our website <https://www.mvrpc.org/age-friendly> or contact Leigh Sempeles, Del Mar Encore Fellow at 44.

Broadband, digital equity forum

Register to join us on Tuesday, May 10, from 8 a.m. - noon, when MVRPC's Insti-

tute for Livable & Equitable Communities will host the Miami Valley Regional Broadband and Digital Equity Forum at Sinclair College.

The forum is a free, in-person event to convene leaders and practitioners from the domains working toward progress on our broadband infrastructure and access challenges.

Broadband Ohio will present newly released county level maps which show gaps in broadband infrastructure, according to the latest available data. They will also share the details, eligibility and timelines for the forthcoming state and federally funded programs to expand access. The event will also include panel presentations highlighting innovative partnerships, programs and projects here in the Miami Valley. The presentations will be followed by solutions-oriented conversations to encourage attendees to discuss specific challenges and opportunities in their communities and domains, with the hope that many new partnerships will emerge from the event.

To see a full list of presenters and to register for the free event, visit <https://www.mvrpc.org/events/miami-valley-regional-broadband-digital-equity-forum>.

band-and-digital-equity-forum.

Determinants of health mapped

MVRPC's PLAN4Health - Miami Valley Initiative was launched in the spring 2021 to explore how planning can impact health outcomes. The initiative is a multi-year effort with a focus on projects and programs intended to promote and advocate for "Health in All Plans and Policies"; convene and engage partners to improve conditions that are known to be key determinants of health; and advance planning efforts aimed at creating conditions for healthy people and communities.

The Health Environment Assessment provides information and tells the story of the Miami Valley's current conditions using interactive maps and infographics. It shows twenty-three (23) indicators that are known to be key determinants of health, grouped into five (5) domains which are presented at the neighborhood level. Further, composite maps and findings from each domain and a Socioeconomic Index of Health Index composite map that covers all five (5)

domains, are also presented to provide a comprehensive look at baseline information.

To explore the Health Environment Assessment, visit: <https://www.mvrpc.org/news/general-news/miami-valley-regional-planning-commission-releases-health-environment-assessment-first-project-and-for-additional-information-contact-martin-kin-mvrpc-director-of-community-and-regional-planning-atmkin@mvrpc.org>.

MVRPC's Institute equity events

In recent years, ensuring equity has come to the forefront as a way that MVRPC can help the Miami Valley become a better region for everyone. In response, MVRPC partnered with community organizations to create an equity event calendar for our region. The calendar serves as a central portal for equity-focused events and opportunities, allowing visitors to find a variety of workshops, trainings and conferences to fit their needs and interests.

To learn more about the Equity educational offerings, visit: <https://www.mvrpc.org/equity-calendar>.