



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Muskingum County Projects Included in OMEGA Appalachian Community Grant Program Application

Muskingum County, OH -- The Muskingum County Board of Commissioners is proud to announce local projects included in the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA)'s regional Appalachian Community Grant (ACG) Program application called *Destination Appalachia: Pathway to Prosperity*. The application was submitted on Friday, December 8th and is now under review by the Governor's Office of Appalachia for potential funding.

Among the 41 regionally transformative projects from across the 10-county OMEGA region, included in the application were four from Muskingum County. These include the John McIntire Library reformation, Secrest Auditorium renovations, Downtown Gateway District Streetscape redevelopment, and the Zane State College Health Science Hall development.

"This grant program marked a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Appalachian region, and I am most proud of the spirit of collaboration that was demonstrated throughout the process among our partnering constituents," explained Dr. Vicki King-Maple, Executive Director of OMEGA. "We carefully vetted over 90 projects, and Muskingum County's proposals not only demonstrated the ability to deliver transformational, sustainable projects, but they did so through quantifiable, actionable, and achievable outcomes and research – leaving us incredibly hopeful that they will be funded."

The John McIntire Library serves an integral role in Downtown Zanesville. Under the proposed Zanesville-Muskingum County Gateway District project, the library would be reformed to accommodate community needs which were exacerbated due to the COVID-19; including telehealth, literacy tutoring, work force development in conjunction with Ohio Means Jobs and small group, flexible meeting spaces for community use. This Library serves as the Northern anchor of the district.

Also included in the proposed Gateway District project are renovations to the historic Secrest Auditorium, which is easily accessible from anywhere in the region, plus a key attraction in the city. Planned improvements will make the auditorium more dynamic and functional, as well as more handicapped accessible and generally easier to access for all ages and abilities. Planned improvements include new pre-function event space; elevators and escalators; ADA restrooms; and an electronic community board. Such enhancements, as well as additional site improvements are planned to bolster tourism within the City of Zanesville and Muskingum County.

The Gateway District Streetscape project promotes economic development potential around Secrest Auditorium and downtown private businesses, further transforming the community and region. The project includes streetscape improvements along 4th Street north of Shinnick Street and between Main and Shinnick; 3rd Street between Main and Shinnick; and Shinnick Street between 3rd and 6th Street. The construction of an Outdoor Community Pavilion and walkway is also planned for creating outdoor gathering space as well as a walkway connection between the Library and Secrest Auditorium. The Zanesville Daybreak Rotary Club has committed leverage funding for this project which will support the installation of a street gate at the intersection of 4th and Shinnick Streets which will convert that section of the District into a pedestrian-only thoroughfare during outdoor markets, festivals, and concerts.

New healthcare and education-based opportunities are also being proposed at Zane State College; where Health Science Hall will be reorganized to house health and medical programs within a single building. Additionally, students would have access to a new clinical learning lab and simulation clinic, which will also serve as a public health resource as a site for vaccination clinics, community health education, and health screenings such as sport physicals and well child visits. The facility would also serve as a community crisis center in the event of a community emergency, with emergency personnel having access to clinical equipment, meeting spaces, and triage spaces in a central location.

If selected for funding under the ACG Program, the projects outlined would increase tourism, foster economic development, and improve quality of life for all who call Muskingum County home. Economic development professionals, elected officials, and constituents of Muskingum County have rallied together in the spirit of community betterment and collaboration to make these proposed projects a success and a hopeful reality.