Kenton County is one of eight counties within the Cincinnati Metro region which extends into the three states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. The region includes Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties in Kentucky; Hamilton, Butler, Warren, and Clermont Counties in Ohio and Dearborn County in Indiana as shown in Figure 1.1.

Kenton County is home to the Brent Spence Bridge which is a major economic engine for interstate commerce in the United States. It is one of the nation's busiest trucking routes, with three percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) crossing the bridge each year. The Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport while located in Boone County is overseen by the Kenton County Airport Board. As of June 2013, 2,296,376 passengers travelled through the airport. In addition, the cities of Covington, Ludlow and Bromley contribute to the urban core along with the City of Cincinnati.

Transportation
- In 2009 approx. 90% of the trips within the region were using the automobile, 2.7% used transit, 2.17% of the population walked, 0.14% biked and 4.31% used other modes. Kenton County reflects similar commuting patterns as compared to the region.

- Approx. 63% of the households in the region spend between 25 and 30 percent of their incomes on transportation-related expenses. Annual transportation costs (Median $) for Kenton County is second lowest in the region after Hamilton County and is lower than the OKI region average.

Housing
- The annual housing costs in the OKI region are $12,060 and household income is at $56,767. Households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing have an excessive cost burden. Kenton County offers one of the lowest annual housing costs in the region while offering a household income level that is only slightly lower than the region's at $51,646 as shown in Figure 1.2.

Economy
- The median household income in the region has seen a steady increase of $32,095 in 1990 to $56,767 in 2010. Kenton County's median household income increased from $30,516 in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Median Annual Housing Costs</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Households with Excessive Cost Burden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30-40% HHI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearborn</td>
<td>$11,268</td>
<td>$55,994</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone</td>
<td>$13,392</td>
<td>$66,587</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>$10,032</td>
<td>$49,212</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenton</td>
<td>$10,980</td>
<td>$51,646</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>$11,808</td>
<td>$54,274</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clermont</td>
<td>$12,588</td>
<td>$59,738</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>$10,848</td>
<td>$47,541</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>$15,564</td>
<td>$69,143</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKI Region</td>
<td>$12,060</td>
<td>$54,767</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OKI - 2012 Data and Trend Update to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan

OKI Strategic Regional Policy Plan Update
The 2012 Data and Trend Update to the Strategic Regional Policy Plan prepared by the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) provides a variety of information regarding the status of the region as it relates to land use, housing, transportation, natural systems, economic development, public facilities and services. This update indicates several key issues of interest for Kenton County including the following.
1990 to $51,646 in 2010, just slightly lower than the region’s.

- The OKI region saw a 10% growth in total employment between 1990 and 2010. All counties experienced a loss in total employment between 2008 and 2009. Approx. 8% of the region’s total employment is from Kenton County which saw a 33% increase between 1990 and 2010.

- Approx. 8% of the civilian workforce within the OKI region in 2010 is from Kenton County which saw an increase of 15% in the civilian workforce between 1990 and 2010. However, this was still one of the lowest increases of civilian workforce in the region after Campbell County, Kentucky and Hamilton County, Ohio.

- Kenton County has the 5th highest population between the ages of 25 and over in the region with approx. 12.2% of that population without a diploma or degree completed. Kenton County generally ranks 5th in the region in terms of educational attainment.

- The total number of business establishments in the OKI region has grown by 3,508 between 1990 and 2010. Kenton County has seen a steady increase in the number of establishments (461) and has the highest compared to Boone and Campbell Counties.

Land Use

- The region’s urbanized land area per capita between 2000 and 2010 increased at a greater pace (0.25) than the national average (0.18). Also, between 1990 and 2000, and again from 2000 to 2010 the region’s urbanized land increased at a higher rate than the population increased. While the urbanized area in Kenton County has remained relatively north of Walton-Nicolson Pike, land consumption continues at a faster pace compared to population growth.

- Kenton County is the second smallest in terms of land area compared to all counties in the region as shown in Figure 1.3.

Regional Indicators Report

In 2012 Vision 2015, in partnership with Agenda 360, created a Regional Indicators Report which included a scorecard measurement system to assess the Cincinnati region’s economic strength in comparison to 11 peer regions around the country. This report considered the Cincinnati metro region as a 17 county region across the three states of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. These peer regions were selected for their similar geography, population size, and demographic composition and include: Minneapolis, Denver, Austin, Raleigh, St. Louis, Charlotte, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cleveland, and Louisville. Economic indicators were derived based on two factors - people indicators and jobs indicators as depicted in Figure 1.4. People indicators include educational attainment, poverty level, housing opportunity index, cost of living index, net migration, old age dependency and population 20-64. Jobs indicators include total jobs, knowledge jobs, creative jobs, average annual wage, per capita income, unemployment, metropolitan GDP and venture capital. These two indicators combined provided an overall ranking.

The report indicates that the Cincinnati region ranks tenth out of 12 in terms of economic competitiveness as shown in Figure 1.5. Additionally, the following conclusions were drawn from the report –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Indicators</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Job Indicators</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Total Jobs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Level</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knowledge Jobs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Opportunity Index</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creative Jobs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Living Index</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Avg. Annual Income</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Migration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Per Capita Income</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age Dependency</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 20 - 64</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Metropolitan GDP</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venture Capital</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Rank</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Venture Capital</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional Indicators Report, Vision 2015

The report indicates that the Cincinnati region ranks tenth out of 12 in terms of economic competitiveness as shown in Figure 1.5. Additionally, the following conclusions were drawn from the report –
Chapter 1: Regional Context

The region is improving in terms of education attainment while offering a high share of homes that are affordable for a family earning a median income.

Increase in the population aged 20-64 which defines those in the labor pool remained fairly steady while the percentage of older population continues to rise which could place a greater demand on public and health services.

The economic downturn increased poverty rates in the region just as it impacted many communities across the nation. However the per capita income of the region increased.

This region offers the second lowest housing costs in the region second only to Indianapolis. However the region's cost of living index which is based on the relative price of consumer goods and services, increased since 2010.

While more people moved into the region efforts need to be made to attract young professional by increasing diversity and supporting better public transit.

The region continues to rank low in the amount of capital invested in small businesses and start-ups.

2020 Jobs Outlook Report

Agenda 360, Partners for a Competitive Workforce, the Strive Partnership and Vision 2015 collaborated to produce the 2020 Jobs Outlook report in 2012 to forecast the region's job outlook: where the jobs will be in 2020 and what education and training will be in highest demand. This report produced three key observations about the Cincinnati region's future job market –

1. This market is projected to grow and remain one of the largest economies among peer regions,

2. Occupations related to health care, education, business, finance, and technology are the fastest growing and best paying, and

3. Education or training beyond high school is required for well-paying jobs.

Additionally, this report indicated the following -

- By the year 2020, total employment in the Cincinnati region is projected to be larger than seven of our peer regions.
- Jobs in occupations related to health care, community and social services, and computer and mathematical science are expected to grow the most rapidly over the next decade.
- Office and administrative and sales occupations are projected to have the largest number of jobs in 2020 but these jobs generally pay below the median wage.
Lastly, by the year 2020, 50% of all job openings will require some combination of post-secondary credentials, on-the-job training and work experience beyond one year. Notably, 92% of higher-paying jobs will require this preparation.

National Trends
Research on national trends indicates a shift in the model for economic success as it relates to community development. Attracting young professionals to a region and accommodating seniors who want to age in place are more strongly tied to community design as ever before. According to the Urban Land Institute's planning and land use analyst, Ed McMahon, “The 20th century model of economic development focused on the ‘one big thing’ … that is, mega projects like convention centers, giant ‘festival market-places,’ and similar large-scale proposals.” McMahon points out that real estate analysts and investors have recognized that this model rarely works and it is becoming clear that many little things are necessary to “work together synergistically.” The new model of economic development focuses attention on the fact that entire communities get “stronger one building at a time.” Additionally, McMahon noted that “the image of a community is fundamentally important to its economic well-being” and this is noticed by both people and businesses.

The Urban Land Institute's Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2013 report indicates that the large generation - Y demographic cohort orients away from the suburbs to more urban lifestyles, and these young adults willingly rent shoebox-sized apartment units as long as neighborhoods have enticing amenities with access to mass transit. The report also indicates that “American infill” locations offering walkability and strong transit systems continue to outshine the others. These locations offer advantages to the echo boomer generation, which in itself is a key demographic in the real estate investor’s eye.

In May 2012 a public forum on Economic Competitiveness was hosted by Planning and Development Services of Kenton County (PDS) which brought together a panel of local experts that talked about how Kenton County can contribute to the region. Ms. Janet Harrah, Senior Director of the Center for Economic Analysis and Development at Northern Kentucky University, described that the two keys to attracting new businesses to our region (and therefore promote stronger economic competitiveness) are talent and an educated workforce. Talented workforces attract employers who, in turn, bring increased payroll, increased capital investment, and increased tax revenue. Ms. Jeanne Schroer, Executive Director of the Catalytic Development Funding Corp. of Northern Kentucky, echoed a similar shift in the way young professionals choose to locate. Professionals are often no longer following jobs; rather, they are choosing places and communities in which they want to live and then finding employment in those places. Businesses are observant of this trend and are acting accordingly. Ms. Schroer indicated that site readiness used to be the primary attractor for new or relocating businesses but behavior had changed to focus primarily on access to talent. In order to attract talent, a new business location must have visually attractive places, a high quality of life, and numerous housing options throughout all development types.

"Professionals are no longer following jobs, they are choosing places and communities in which they want to live."

Lifestyle Choices in Kenton County
Kenton County provides a variety of advantages in terms or offering different lifestyle choices for urban, outer urban, suburban and rural living. The urban core of the Cincinnati metropolitan region includes the downtown areas of Covington, Ludlow and Bromley and offers urban living options in close proximity to downtown jobs and entertainment. The suburban core of Kenton County offers homes in different price points that are enticing to families. Rural living is just 20 minutes away from the urban core and offers a wide expanse of agricultural lands.

Summary
The Cincinnati metro region is competing for jobs and talent with 11 peer regions around the country. The region is second best in terms of providing low cost of living opportunities which should continue to be encouraged. The region lags behind on many people and job indicators including increasing the size of the labor pool, net migration and educational attainment. All these factors will require coordination on a regional scale. A large percentage of the households within the region spend 25-30% of their income on combined housing and transportation costs. This index should be examined closely in order to keep a check on the cost of living.
The median household income has steadily been increasing along with job growth and population in the civilian workforce indicating an improvement in the region's economy. The region continues to struggle with the level of land consumption compared to population increase. This in turn increases the need for improved infrastructure and better transit options. Land consumption and growth should be monitored on a regional scale to assess the impact on infrastructure.

Endnotes