

Agenda, continued from front page also traveled to Boston, Mass., to study what is considered a successful similar initiative, she said.

Over the past year, a number of focus groups have already been conducted throughout the region to engage residents and leaders of a number of communities in the plan. In addition, the survey in today's paper has been distributed to a number of people, and an address is provided for returning the survey to the Agenda 360 leadership. A good response has been received from those completing the survey, Powell said.

Facilitator Steve Johns, of Citizens for Civic Renewal, has hosted more than 30 community engagement sessions over the past year to discuss the initiative with people in various communities, including sessions with homeless groups. More than 2,000 people are now involved in the initiative, and the meetings have been well attended.

A diverse, cross-generational leadership team is guiding the initiative.

A report to the community on the survey will be made Nov. 31 at a time and place to be announced. Implementation of the plan will begin following the development of priority recommendations.

Our community is blessed with the right ingredients to make it a great community," Ghassomian said. "What we need to discover is how do we mix them together in the right recipe to best provide for improved economics in the region. We want our region to identify itself as one region, one body, for if we speak with one voice we can change things."

Powell noted that the region could speak with a stronger voice as a body comprised of four counties than with each county speaking for itself. Officials in each of the counties - Hamilton, Warren, Clermont and Butler - recognize their commonalities, she said.

Sean Rugless, of the Agenda 360 Leadership Team and president and CEO of the Cincinnati Northern Kentucky African American Chamber of Commerce, said the initiative is one of the most cohesive and inclusive approaches he has seen in the region. However, the leadership is going to have to continually revisit the extent that inclusion of all parties in the region is kept at a high level, he added. "The challenge is just how receptive the region is going to be to this approach, because past experiences have failed in being all inclusive," he said.

Rugless said the initiative has been well received by area elected officials. "They get it, and any of the reforms would need government officials' support because all of the recommendations developed in the process will eventually fall on their table."

The initiative aims at providing economic opportunity for all, said Auclair Walters, customer service operations manager for Avon Products and an Agenda 360 Inclusion Team co-chair. "That's why inclusion is so important in this agenda. It's why we want the voices of the young, the elderly, the poor included as well as the input from corporate leaders and civic officials." He noted the homeless have never been included in past projects.

Powell said the extent of the inclusion in the development of a plan is what makes this plan different. "This plan is being developed from the grassroots up, not from the corporate suits down," she explained. "We still need corporate leaders involved, but they are not running the show this time. They have been kept abreast of developments, and a lot of them are committed to the process."

Ghassomian added that an attempt was being made to provide a power balance between corporate, nonprofit and elected leaders.

Other Leadership Team members are Donna Jones Baker - Urban League, Alfonso Cornejo - Hispanic CoC, Kenny Craig - Hamilton CoC, Mike Hammons - Vision 2015, John Hayden - Advisory Council Chair, Tim Maloney - Haile Foundation, Mary McCullough Hudson - Fine Arts Fund, Kathy Merchant - Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Ron Miller - Compass, Bill Myles - Western Economic Council, Mark Policinski - OKI, Gwen Robinson - Community Action Agency, Rob Reifstnyder - United Way, A.J. Schaeffer - Vision 2015, Doug Sizemore - AFL-CIO, Steve Stevens - Northern Kentucky CoC, Matt Van Sant - Clermont CoC, Jared Simmons - Give Back Cincinnati, Chief Thomas H. Streicher Jr. - Cincinnati Police Department, Bill Triick - Middletown CoC, Stacy Hege Tapke - Legacy, John Young - Freestore Food Network,

Myrita Craig, of Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, is in charge of management of the project, and Kathy DeLaura, of Partners in Change, is project consultant.

An Advisory Council for the project consists of John Hayden, Board Chair, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber as board chair, and members Jim Anderson,

# Agenda 360 wants your input in plans to transform region



Kevin Ghassomian  
Photo provided

Myrtis Powell  
Photo provided

Ellen van der Horst  
Photo provided

By Dan Yount  
The Cincinnati Herald

You have a stake in transforming Cincinnati and the area into a leading metropolitan region for talent, jobs and economic opportunity by 2010. A committee guiding this initiative is seeking your input as to what you would like to see included in those plans, starting with a survey appearing on Page A12 of today's edition of *The Cincinnati Herald*.

Agenda 360, A Regional Action Plan is not just another study and plan that will be created and eventually put on a shelf, as so many regional plans end up, said Kevin Ghassomian, a local attorney with Greenbaum Doll & McDonald who co-chairs the project's Leadership Team with Dr. Myrtis Powell, for-

merly with Miami University and Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, and Ellen van der Horst, president of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber.

The goals of the regional transformation initiative are to build quality places, fuel business growth, cultivate a qualified workforce, create regional inclusion, increase regional mobility and encourage government cooperation, say project leaders.

"This time we are engaging the community and building on the good work done in the past," Powell said. "We have also worked with the University of Cincinnati and successful practices in other regions, as well as some of the good things in Vision 2015 plan developed in Northern Kentucky."

The organizing members

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