

Farm Management

'Community planning is urgent'

By TIM WHITE

COMMUNITY development is an urgent concern in Ohio, according to Mark Partridge newly appointed C. William Swank Chair in Rural-Urban Policy. Partridge officially replaced Larry Libby, also an ag economics professor, Oct. 1. However, he has been meeting with key interest groups for the past two months to learn what kinds of challenges lie ahead.

"I get a real sense of urgency around the state because of the economic downturn, slow job growth and the net export of jobs the state has had in recent years," Partridge says. "It will take a lot of things to turn the situation around, but the key thing the state needs now is a right policy towards community development. There is a trade-off between economic development and quality of life."

Partridge was most recently a professor of agricultural economics and Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatchewan, Canada. He is a Montana native and began settling into his new post in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics last summer.

He says farmland can play a stabilizing role in community development. "Farmers are tied to the land. Of everyone in a community, it is the hardest for them to pick up and move away."

Farmland can also play a role in providing green space to a community. "Farmers are our top environmental stewards. People like seeing farms and fields. Farmland can be an important part of a community development strategy."

Canadian preparation

Partridge's experiences growing up in a livestock-based rural community in southeast Montana prepared him for an economics career focusing on rural-urban issues.

Partridge received his bachelor's degree from the University of Montana, his master's from the University of Wyoming and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

As Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy at the University of Saskatchewan, Partridge tackled issues that affect the vitality of rural Canada, from a diversified economy, health care, environment and transportation to productive and sustainable agriculture.

"The position in Canada prepared me for Ohio State's Swank Chair position from the standpoint that rural communities in Canada are suffering from the same problems and facing the same pressures as rural communities in the United States," says Partridge. "The job was also helpful in that one of the key things I was trying to do was link rural communities with urban growth.

"That's one of the things I want to look at in the Swank position: to explain to people that they are not separate entities. What happens with one affects the quality of life with the other."

The role of the Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy is to develop and lead research and outreach programs focused on such key issues as the pat-

Key Points

- Mark Partridge says Ohio's economy puts an urgency to community development.
- He says communities need to make plans for the future.
- Partridge says he brings a strong understanding of quality-of-life issues.

tern and pace of development, community decision-making and regional cooperation; the quality of rural and

exurban life; rural and urban economic development; and the environmental amenities of farmland and green space.

"The goals of the Swank Chair are to identify the key dynamics associated with the rural-urban interface and rural-urban interdependencies: What are the consequences if these dynamics are not properly considered? And then propose better policy and governance to solve those problems," says Partridge. "The prosperity of all Ohioans would be enhanced if the interdependen-

cies between rural and urban Ohio were more properly weighed in designing policies for economic development, environmental protection, transportation, agriculture and land use."



PARTRIDGE

■ For more information on the Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy, go to aede.osu.edu/programs/Swank.

