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"Jungle" Jim Boniminio, of Jungle Jim's International Market, said signs of a down turn in the economic strength of Ohio 4 are spreading.

"The cancer's started," he said. "When you start seeing Goodwill coming, check cashing places coming, when you start seeing that stuff coming this way, it's cancer. This is most serious."

The Fairfield Chamber of Commerce has taken the lead in forming a nine-member panel to critically look at Ohio 4's competitive edge. The committee will discuss how to keep pace in the face of developments such as Bridgewater Falls in Fairfield Twp. and the growth along Union Centre Boulevard in West Chester Twp.

Ideas and plans supported by a strong majority of the committee will be presented to the city council later this year.

Improving the state route's demographics, blight and traffic flow were discussed, along with a need to come up with incentives, marketing the corridor and bringing in high-end businesses.

But solving the problems of Ohio 4 isn't cosmetic, said Martha Tipton, of UTS.

"You need to look at what we are and not say we're going to give it a new hairdo and put some lipstick on it and that's going to solve the problem," Tipton said. "It's a very deep-rooted problem."

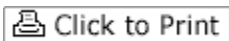
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