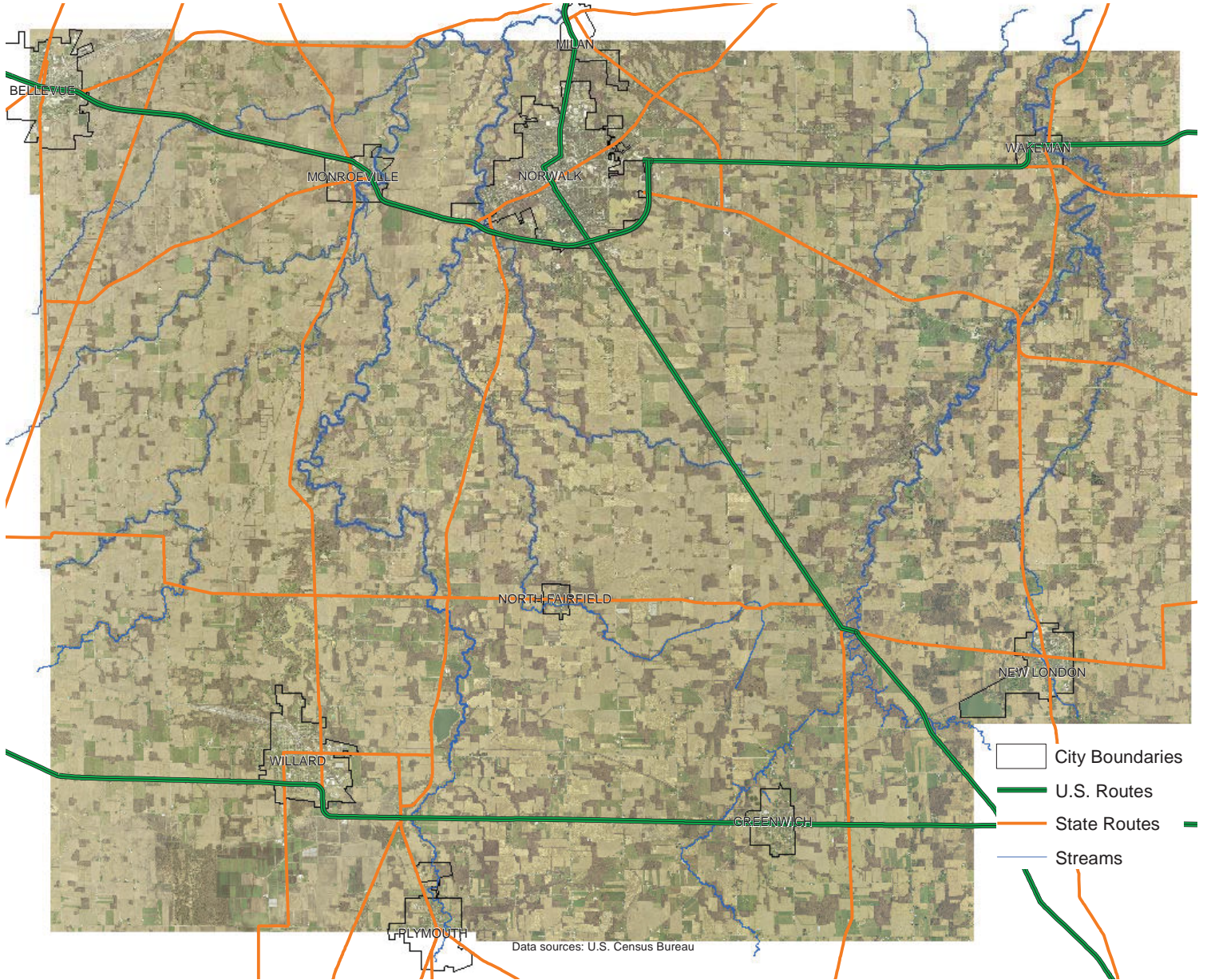


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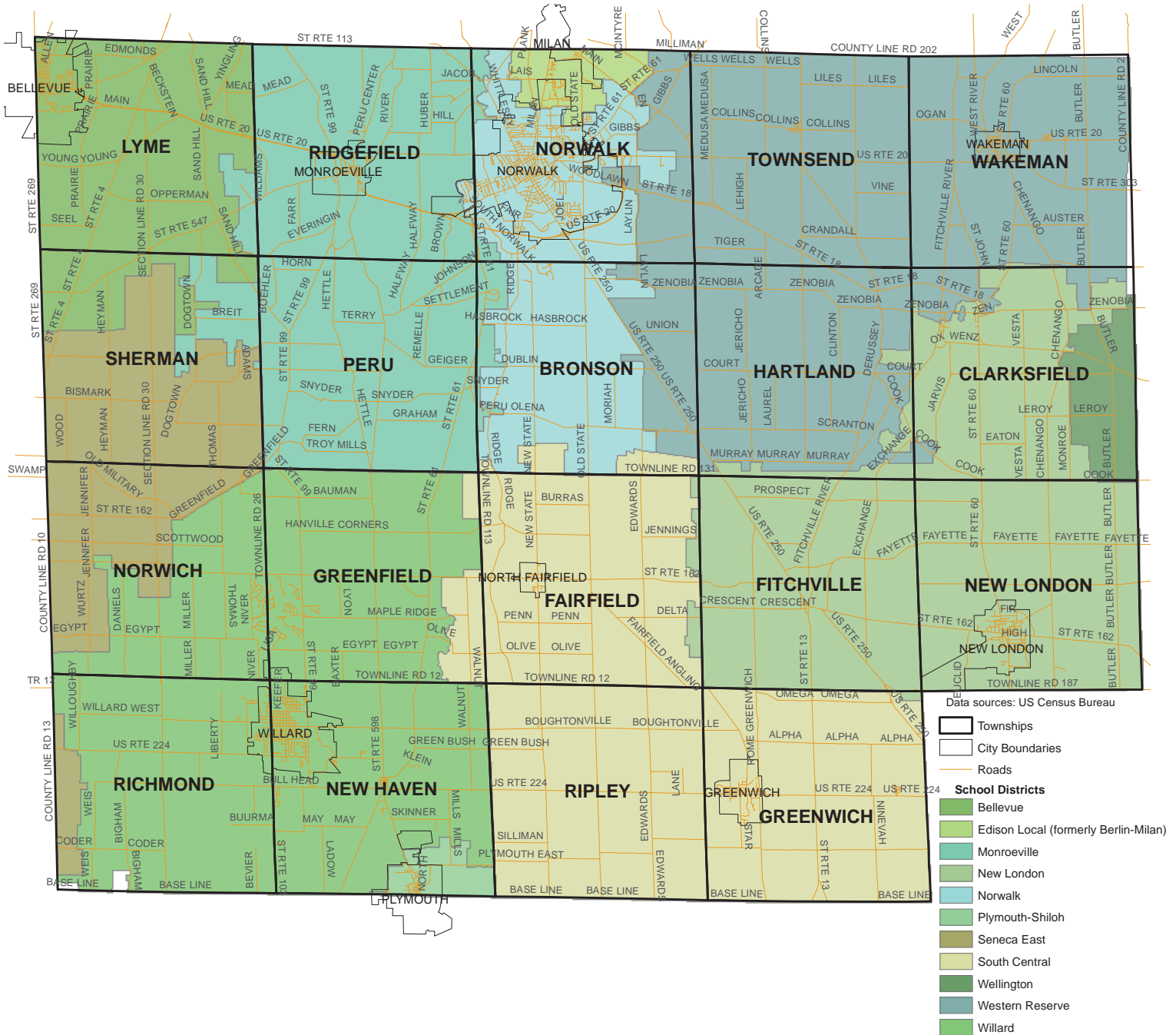
Testimony
Part 2 of 3

Huron County

Road Network



Huron County School Districts



Attachment NP-6

Erie County

SUMMARY

Erie County is one of eight coastal counties situated on the eastern border of the Northwest Ohio region. Due to the presence of the nationally renowned amusement park, Cedar Point, this community of 77,000 is recognized as the premier tourist destination for Ohioans and adjacent states. Between May and September, approximately three to five million people visit the County, the nearby Lake Erie Islands and the many commercial/recreational attractions associated with Lake Erie.

In addition to tourism, the area is characterized by a well-diversified local economy with two regional shopping malls, a strong industrial base oriented toward the auto business and a healthy agri-business environment. Our transportation network consisting of 585 road miles, two shipping ports, several airports and miles of rail line make the County accessible to the interstate, national and international markets.

While Erie County stands apart from other communities in the region in terms of its natural setting, accessibility and complex mixture of industry, business and agriculture, like many communities, it has its share of issues and needs. Some of these, ironically, are the result of the popularity of the area. The influx of seasonal visitors has compounded traffic related problems and has generated significant concentrations of commercial development along the state route 250 corridor. Other problems are similar to those faced by many counties such as how to accommodate new growth concurrent with available sewer and water services and how to sustain the positive qualities of the County.

The Erie County Comprehensive Plan attempts to address both the positive qualities we possess and our needs. The plan intends to guide future growth and development of the region and provide direction needed to achieve community goals. It is designed to be a useable planning tool to serve and support public policy decisions throughout Erie County.

The plan consists of a series of studies and contains four functional elements. The report cap nearly a year and a half of study that included analyzing data from County departments, brainstorming with local officials, formulating general goals and policies and making specific suggestions on future land uses. It should be used regularly for zoning decisions, prioritizing public improvements and as a guide for residential, commercial and industrial development within the planning area. Adherence to the plan is recommended, although as conditions change over time, the document should be responsive to that change. If changes are needed, they should be made to keep the document current for effective land management. The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed and updated every five years to ensue the viability of the document.

Sustaining a liveable community is the primary focus of the Comprehensive Plan. Strategies for the economy, housing, environment and recreation all propose means of attaining community objectives and preserving the quality of life. Other related factors such as regulatory issues, utilities, historic preservation and land use policies have been examined to obtain a clearer picture of the needs of the County. Effective implementation of the plan will ultimately lead Erie County into the future while securing our standard of living.

SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1

PLAN BACKGROUND

In 1970, Erie Regional Planning Commission and consultants, Parkins, Rogers and Associates, submitted the "Comprehensive Plan for Erie County." This early plan presented an analysis of the natural and human resources of Erie County. The document was based upon past trends and present conditions, together with projections for future expansion. To date, the plan has grown ineffective and obsolete as a tool for long-range planning. Traditional planning, like the 1970 Comprehensive Plan, has also grown passe' in the constantly evolving world of today.

Erie County has experienced many changes over the past twenty years, some of which have resulted in problems for local residents. Increased traffic congestion, sprawling residential growth, the disappearance of primary farmland and the over-commercialization of U.S. 250 are the end product of poor planning laws in Ohio and an outdated Comprehensive Planning document. Consequently, a new approach to land use planning was formulated to better control the forces that have impacted on our community.

Given the magnitude of the events described above and their momentum, a new planning scheme was set forward under the direction of the Erie Regional Planning Commission. The Commission examined the impacts of development, which could hinder the County's ability to maintain its quality of life. It was then felt necessary that a county-wide comprehensive plan be undertaken by the Erie County Department of Planning and Development in order to deal more effectively with out changing community.

The new plan, disclosed in this document, determines both our immediate and future needs. As the community grows, this plan will provide ways to allow the County to guide appropriate land uses to the most suited areas for that kind of development. It will likewise provide for flexibility to assure that orderly, balanced, cost efficient growth transpires.

1.2

PURPOSE OF PLAN

The Erie County Comprehensive Plan provides a basis with which officials in the County can make pertinent decisions concerning the orderly development of the planning area. The plan is designed to coordinate land uses with the limitations of the natural environment, the current established land uses and infrastructure. In a sense, it is the County's blueprint for the future.

The Comprehensive Plan contains policies to achieve goals for Erie County and a guide for public and private initiatives to achieve a liveable community. The liveable community will be defined as a place where human actions enhance rather than harm the environment; where opportunities are provided for all; and where economic activities serve the needs of our present and future population. A balance of these components will show the County how to sustain and improve its liveability in the face of change.

In its entirety, the plan outlines the strengths and weaknesses of our region. It indicates how we want to develop in the coming years and the plan shows how to turn the communities ambition into reality. In the preparation of this document, the Planning Department engaged in comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future projections for population and growth. Included in the studies are data pertaining to projected rates of growth, capacities and the extent of public utilities, employment and other physical and socio-economic factors. Recommendations for the general strategies and land use decisions have been detailed within the plan based on the above analysis.

It is a fact that quality communities don't happen by chance – they are planned. The Erie County Comprehensive Plan offers solutions to some of today's most widespread problems. The loss of agriculture land, congested roads and the overall degradation of the urban and rural environments. The orderly, manageable growth scheme, set forth within, shall enable residents to enjoy a liveable community in both the immediate and long-term future. The Comprehensive Plan will only be effective if the political subdivisions within Erie County work together to ensure planned development occurs throughout our region. The cities and villages within Erie County will need to develop their own detailed comprehensive plans which will function in concept with the county plan. It is noted that the city of Huron completed a new Comprehensive Plan in 1992.

1.3

PLAN FUNCTION

The function served by the Comprehensive Plan is to set goals for future land use and development policy-making and to develop recommendations to achieve these goals. On a lesser scale, the plan intends to function as a reference source. Information concerning various regulatory considerations, such as Coastal Zone Management, Stormwater and Sediment Control regulations, wetlands and floodplains can be obtained in the section pertaining to those topics. In addition, related information can be obtained directly from the maps accompanying the written text.

The other important function is to coordinate the various segments of the County community, chiefly citizens and public officials and to foster awareness of planning efforts underway in the area and encourage cooperation with the various jurisdictions concerning these planning efforts. This cooperation will insure that the goals and objectives of the plan will be implemented throughout the planning area.

1.4

REGIONAL, COUNTY AND TOWNSHIP PLANNING AND ZONING

Zoning and planning functions and procedures for regions, counties and townships are split between two different government bodies, the Regional Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission. As their name implies, the Planning Commission's job is to prepare a plan for the development of the community, while the Zoning Commission prepares for the enactment of local zoning regulations.

The County or Regional Planning Commission has the authority to make studies, plans, recommendations and reports pertaining to all aspects of the region or county, including its physical, environmental, social, economic and governmental characteristics and functions. The Commission may include in its planning any area outside the region or county which affect the region or county (Revised Code 713.23).

The Regional Planning Commission is required to prepare plans, studies, maps, recommendations and reports on a number of issues of importance to the county, including regional goals and policies, the general pattern and intensity of land uses, an overview of the various transportation systems, the general location and extent of public and private works, facilities and services, general location of areas for conservation and development of natural resources and long-range planning for capital improvements (Revised Code 713.23). The Regional Planning Commission's duties also include reviewing, evaluating and making recommendations on proposed land use, transportation, zoning plans and other projects of local government.

The Regional Planning Commission has an advisory role in connection with township zoning. This function is performed by the Township Zoning Commission with assistance from Regional Planning. The power of townships to zone is based on the authority granted in chapter 519 of the Revised Code and the limitations imposed within. Revised Code 519.02, the enabling section for zoning, provides for the purpose of promoting the public health, safety and morals and townships may, in accordance with a comprehensive plan, regulate the location, height, bulk, number of stories and sizes of buildings and other structures, setbacks, sizes of yards, open spaces, the density of population, the use of buildings and the uses of land for trade, industry, residents, recreation or other purposes in the township.

1.5 HOW TO USE PLAN

The Erie County Comprehensive Plan was written to provide a means for zoning and commission members, appeals board members and other officials to make educated decisions concerning the future uses of land. The document has been designed to be as useable as possible by those involved in the decision-making for the county and the general public. Officials will use the plan to evaluate development proposals against the plan and its policies and recommendations.

In judging whether a proposal is consistent with community goals, as stated in the plan, officials must assess the relationship of the proposed developments, rezoning and other zoning decisions with the plan and its written text. For example, if a proposal for a rezoning to commercial is submitted and the written text and future land use map indicates that the land use for that parcel be commercial, local officials must find the proposal consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. On the other hand, if the development is not viewed as being in accordance with or consistent with the map and text, officials have a basis to deny such request because it does not conform to the desirable goals of the long-range plan for Erie County.

Having an up-to-date plan assures that officials have a definite framework for making proper decisions. To guarantee that this document remains current with the projected needs of the community and trends that have surfaced, the plan should be reviewed annually and updated appropriately. In doing so, we will guide against the arbitrary treatment of proposals and can accurately measure consistency against the Comprehensive Plan. The implementation section will more fully describe plan amendment and review procedures.

1.6 METHODOLOGY FOR USE OF PLAN

The Planning Department utilized a three-phase approach in formulating the Comprehensive Plan. The plan flow chart depicts the methodology used in the planning process. The stages of the phasing method are described below:

Phase I: During this stage, staff worked to gather all relevant data regarding population, employment, growth trends, housing and capacities and limitations of our infrastructure. Existing studies and relevant planning documents were also reviewed to supplement the data compiled by staff members. A working outline and interviews developed during this phase.

Phase II: In this stage, regulatory considerations and the general strategies were evaluated as to their impact on the planning process. Coupled with this review, broad goals were produced to guide the recommendations and policies of the plan. Several public open houses were held to introduce the plan to the public and in an effort to incorporate citizen concerns into the text. Phase II culminated with the production of working draft sections.

Phase III: The final phase involved extensive reviews of the draft sections and the addition of two outside studies compiled for the plan. Prior to the introduction of the final document, amendment and monitoring guidelines were written to help implement the plan. Following public hearings and review, the plan was approved by Regional Planning and the Erie County Commissioners.

1.7

ORGANIZATION OF PLAN

The Erie County Comprehensive Plan begins with the introduction section describing the plan and its direction. Section 1.0 introduces the document through a brief discussion regarding issues and related plan functions. The identification of goals and objectives follows with a list of definitions to permit a better degree of readability to the plan.

While goals were formulated for the plan, data was collected, reviewed and analyzed by staff and other technical agencies. Historical growth patterns were reviewed and existing conditions for population, employment, housing and commercial needs were incorporated into studies. Section 2.0 also addressed existing studies and incorporated those into the plan.

Sections 3.0 and 4.0 describe regulatory considerations and general strategies. These sections present critical regulations which impact the various types of development in the planning area and recommend strategies for the major elements of the plan. The general strategies have been underlined by the broad goals identified in the introduction section. The completion of section 4.0 focuses attention on the needs of the community in certain areas and proposed recommendations for these needs.

The most important part of the Comprehensive Plan evolved from sections 1.0 through 4.0. The land use policies 5.0, indicate policies for development in the planning area for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and open space. The addition of the three outside studies within this plan assisted in the final determination of the land use policies and future land use map.

The plans recommendations, policies and goals will be made a reality through the implementation mechanisms in the final section. Section 6.0 identifies the various tasks needed to properly implement plan objectives. The tasks themselves set in motion the course of action the plan will pursue. Included in this section is an amendment procedure and review procedure which will keep the document relevant and useful.

1.8 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

One of the main challenges in preparing a comprehensive study of this magnitude was the formulation of a set of broad goals to guide the plan in the creation of the land use policies and general strategy recommendations. These themes are broad in scope, but they describe matters which the county must continue to strive for in order to achieve a liveable community. More specific objectives will follow each of the paragraphs explaining the general goals as they apply to the areas of housing, community development, historic and environmental preservation, transportation, infrastructure, recreation, redevelopment and economic concerns.

Although each goal is presented as a separate mission statement, none may stand alone as they are each mutually dependant on one another. These goals are statements of the purpose and desired results toward which the community should continue to focus upon. Within the Erie County Comprehensive Plan are these goals and accompanying objectives.

1.8.1 Community Development

A vital and economically healthy community is the hallmark of the most successful counties and cities in this state. In the coming decades, we will face greater competition for industries, jobs, housing and recreational attractions from other lakeshore communities and from around the state. To position Erie County to meet that challenge, we must promote community development through redevelopment, economic development and constructing infrastructure to meet the demands for development. These important investments will assist us in producing a superior county. Below are some strategies to achieve this goal:

- a. The development of year-round business should be encouraged.
- b. The county should take advantage of the opportunities that already exist in the planning area.
- c. Redevelopment is encouraged in the locations with the physical potential to accommodate intensification and where existing residential areas will not be disrupted.
- d. Funds for additional infrastructure improvements should be sought.

1.8.2 Revitalize and Create New Housing

Erie County has a tradition of offering a wide range of housing types and styles. In the past, our housing has served the community well and has provided for affordable living for most residents. Because of the amount of deteriorated and substandard housing existing today and a decrease in home ownership, because of the escalating housing prices, there is an urgent need to revitalize and create a variety of new housing. Without good housing our neighborhoods will deteriorate and the liveability of the entire community will be adversely affected. Efforts to provide all residents adequate, affordable housing will be guided by these objectives:

- a. The existing housing stock must be maintained and improved to secure our neighborhoods.
- b. Affordable housing should be made available in all parts of the county.
- c. We must maintain the diversity of housing by encouraging a full range of housing types including apartment, condominiums, duplexes and affordable starting homes.

- d. Leverage in retaining home buyers in the county can be achieved by maintaining the attractiveness of our residential areas.

1.8.3 Historic Preservation and Aesthetics

Very few communities in Ohio possess such a notable collection of historic structures as Erie County. Many neighborhoods in Sandusky, Milan and Kelleys Island are defined by their unique “historic look” and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere. The plan recommends preserving our heritage and those structures significant to its salvation for future generations. The county should pursue the following to meet this goal:

- a. The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures is encouraged.
- b. Blighted structures that lessen the visual attractiveness of historic areas should be removed.
- c. Historic organizations should inform property owners of the various programs available for historic buildings.
- d. Historic overlay zoning should be studied for areas with significant designated structures.

1.8.4 Environmental Preservation

Harmony between the man-made and natural environments is as vital to our community as compatibility of land uses. The county has sustained its dedication to protecting the environment through its support of legislation and programs intended to preserve open spaces and natural habitat. This type of stewardship provides a solid foundation for which future generations can continue to build upon. To ensure that the county's actions reflect environmental concerns, the objective below should be supported:

- a. Development adjacent to our most sensitive areas, like Old Woman's Creek Preserve should be buffered to protect the natural processes of these areas.
- b. Planned developments and other land use concepts should be promoted that allow development while preserving wooded areas, wetlands and open spaces.
- c. The county should enforce stormwater regulations which will limit flooding from new development.

- d. The buffers discussed throughout this plan should be retained as open space, natural areas, green spaces or farming. Mounding, landscaping, reforestation, wildlife habitats and trails should be encouraged in these buffer areas.

1.8.5 Recreation

Erie County is renowned as a community that offers a variety of quality recreational opportunities, most notably Cedar Point Amusement Park. We also enjoy an outstanding natural setting to compliment our recreational facilities. Presently, we are lacking sufficient active recreation sites, facilities and programs. It is a goal of the plan to provide high quality recreation facilities to meet the increasing demands of all residents who reside within the planning area. Therefore, the plan recommends that:

- a. The county establish recreation and parks as a high priority community need.
- b. Facilities and programs for leisure pursuits should provide every citizen an opportunity to explore their individual potentialities.
- c. Neighborhoods having the least adequate facilities and most limited recreation programs should have the imbalance redressed by giving increased emphasis to developing programs and services for kids and adults.
- d. The active cooperation between the Erie Metroparks and the county continue through the acquisition of new parks and the development of program services.

1.8.6 Jobs

The focus of the 1990's will be the retention of jobs and job growth. Many major employers were lost in Erie County when economic hard times hit the area in the mid 1980's. Retaining a stable and expanding job base will be of the highest priority for the Comprehensive Plan, for it is the county's greatest resource for future economic growth. The plan will additionally ensure that growth in employment will not be obtained through excessive costs to the environment or jeopardize the liveability of the community. The following areas must be concentrated upon in order to reach this goal:

- a. The county should continue to support those businesses who are already successful in stimulating growth in the area.

- b. Underutilized markets such as water-based commercial and recreational should be enhanced.
- c. The county must be marketed as place of affordability and as an accessible place to grow.
- d. To ensure that new employment and revenue, the county should continue to work with Greater Erie Marketing in recruiting industry and business into the area.

1.8.7 Transportation

Summer tourism, the lack of effective east-west running thoroughfares and the road pattern radiating diagonally from Sandusky are the key reasons the county has become burdened with an unacceptable level of traffic congestion in certain parts of the community. The functionality of our transportation system must improve for Erie County to remain competitive in the interstate and national economy. A primary goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to permit the county to become efficient and accessible through improvements to the street systems, development along these roadways and through our transportation planning. This goal can be assisted through these principles:

- a. The county should adopt the Erie County Thoroughfare Plan designed by Poggemeyer Group and pursue policies established within it.
- b. The county should ensure that existing streets, intersections and traffic signalization meet current and projected needs.
- c. Developments which may significantly alter existing traffic patterns should address those concerns in their design.
- d. Erie County must be prepared for regional transportation linkages as ODOT's "Access Ohio" is implemented over the next twenty years.

1.8.8 Infrastructure

One way to realize the continued efficiency of development and redevelopment is to ensure that growth is consistent with proposed and existing infrastructure facilities. Proposed development not consistent with the limitations of our transportation network and sewer and water will cause greater deterioration of our already limited public services. The plan intends to encourage growth in those areas physically suited and already serviced by infrastructure. The following will help maintain our existing services and help mitigate potential problems in the future:

- a. The county should adhere to master plan policies for sewer and water to continue to develop our infrastructure.
- b. The county should re-evaluate the sources for improvements and other revenues for these improvements.
- c. Future development should be compatible with and reviewed based on the level of existing and proposed services.
- d. High density growth and urban type development should be limited to areas having available sanitary sewer capacity and avoided where existing capacities will be exceeded if development proceeds.

1.9

DEFINITIONS

As a manual for land use decisions and as a reference source, the Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a readable and informative document. Certain words which appear throughout the plan may be unfamiliar to the average reader, so it is the intent of this section to clarify such words. The list below are terms used within the text of this document:

Access Ohio

The three year multi-modal statewide transportation plan for Ohio.

Active Recreation

Recreation which involves vigorous physical activity such as tennis, swimming and other physically demanding activities.

Affordable Housing

Housing available to low and moderate income citizens.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Federal legislation passed by Congress in 1990 to provide comprehensive civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities.

Buffer Area (Strip)

A parcel of land established to separate incompatible land uses from one another or to protect the view of one use from another.

Coastal Zone Management Act (OCMP)

Pending legislation for Ohio intended to protect the land and water resources of the defined Lake Erie coastal zone management area.

Compatibility

The characteristics of different uses or activities that permit them to be located near each other in harmony without conflict.

Comprehensive Planning Process

The whole of the continuing planning process, including gathering data, considering alternatives, goal setting and measures for implementing the plan, including measures to update the plan.

Corridor

A generalized alignment along which a street is located, often identified for transportation and land use planning purposes.

Design, Urban and Rural

A series of guidelines, setting out fundamental directives for achieving form, in terms of both beauty and function.

Ditch Maintenance

The program for maintaining the open and closed drainage courses for the county including cleaning, excavation and replacement of outlet pipes.

Economic Development

A term generally applied to the expansion of a community's tax base or the expansion of the number of jobs through commercial and industrial development.

Floodplain

Means any land area susceptible to being inundated by water overflowing its normal channel.

Goal

In the planning context, a goal is a broad, long-range aim of the planning process.

Historic Preservation

The process of preserving an area or building in which historic events occurred or having special value related to its heritage.

Hydric Soils

Soils with characteristics influenced by exposure to water over extended periods, typically exhibiting poor drainage and often associated with wetlands.

Infrastructure

Streets, water and sewer lines and other public facilities necessary to the functioning of a community.

“In Accordance with the Comprehensive Plan”

Found in the state enabling laws, this phrase requires that a township zoning ordinance be applied uniformly including all private property within its jurisdiction, be internally consistent with public policies arrived at through detailed study and analysis – that is, through a comprehensive plan.

Leapfrog or Scattershot Development

Development that occurs well beyond the existing limits of urban-type growth leaving intervening vacant land behind.

Market Analysis

A study which encompasses demographic and economic characteristics, projections of available demand for commercial and retail uses and recommended development programs.

Objective

Defined as a measurable and verifiable method of achieving a goal.

Passive Recreation

Recreation opportunities oriented toward relaxing, physically undemanding activities, such as hiking and observing.

Policy

A brief, direct statement of what you intend to do to improve your goals and objectives.

Thoroughfare Plan

A plan detailing recommendations for major roadways and other transportation improvements needed to enact subdivision regulations.

Zoning

The division of land within a jurisdiction of local government and the designation of permitted uses of land within those divisions.

SECTION 2.0

STUDIES AND TRENDS

2.1 EXISTING STUDIES

The Comprehensive Plan was developed with a clear understanding of the history of Erie County and existing conditions present in the planning area. Because many studies have been previously put together, some of which remain pertinent to this plan, we have been able to avoid duplication of work with respect to natural, physical and infrastructural attributes of the county.

The Land Capability Report, Background Studies for 1970, the Erie County Soil Survey and the 1980 Land Use Plan each contain valuable data concerning soils, slope geology, hydrology and wetlands. Although significant changes have occurred in the man-made environment since the time of these reports, certain physical features of the planning area remain. Some of these are listed below:

- a. Soils – An evaluation of soil types for all of Erie County was conducted in 1971 and recently updated to determine the soils within the area. From these studies, it was determined that most of the soil types along the shoreline and the western portion of the county are poorly rated soils for development with the following characteristics: rapid permeability, high water table, flooding and poorly drained. Because these soils are considered to be wet soils, they do pose a limitation on the extent of permissible development. Cost of development in these areas tend to be higher and particularly in Groton, Margaretta and Oxford townships where the closeness of the underlying bedrock compounds the soil drainage problems.

- b. Floodplains – Land areas located within the 100 year floodplain, as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), are located on the Floodway Map in section 3.0. These areas include the Huron and Vermilion rivers, shoreline areas, most minor creeks, ditches, streams and tributary branches in the county. A 100 year floodplain is defined as an area within which there is a one percent chance in any year of a 100 year magnitude flood occurring. Floodplains serve as water recharge areas and natural water retention basins during periods of heavy precipitation or snow thaw. Development within the floodplain is regulated and requires a permit from the Planning Department.
- c. Wetlands – Areas designated as wetlands in Erie County were determined by U.S. Fish and Wildlife maps and guidance from the Army Corps of Engineers. By definition, a wetland is land characterized by the presence of water at a duration and frequency sufficient to support wetland vegetation. Wetlands serve several important functions including: flood control, water recharge area and a natural water pollutant treatment system. Wetlands are prevalent in northern Margareta township, the shoreline and in isolated locations in the interior of the county.
- d. Recent studies for sewer and water expansion and upgrading have also contributed greatly to this plan. Within these reports, future water and sewer line expansion projects, capacity issues and wastewater plant upgrade possibilities were examined which assisted the plan in establishing potential growth areas and land use designation locations. Since the Comprehensive Plan's development scheme is most effected by the availability of services, it was important that these documents and consultation with the Sanitary Engineers Department ensued. These issues are closely detailed as part of section 4.9.

e. Among the completed planning and development documents assisting the Planning Department in the creation of this plan and its recommendations and policies are those listed below:

- Land Capability Report for Erie County – 1967
- Comprehensive Development Plan for Erie County – 1970
- Background Studies for Erie Region – 1970
- Erie County Soil Survey – 1971, 1993
- Future Land Uses 2020 – 1971
- City of Huron Policies Plan – 1988
- Huron Port Development Study – 1991
- Sandusky Port Development Study – 1991
- U.S. 250 Corridor Water Study – 1991
- Village of Kelleys Island Port Master Plan – 1992
- Sawmill Creek Service Area Study – 1993
- State Route 4 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Analysis – 1993
- Erie County Thoroughfare Plan Update – 1994
- Commercial Market Analysis for Erie County – 1994
- Housing Strategy – 1995

2.2 POPULATION

2.2.1 Introduction

In 1980, the population for Erie County was 79,655 persons. According to the 1990 Census, the population decreased to 76,779 persons. Although this represented a 3.6 percent decrease, the future population projections indicate that this trend is not likely to continue. In fact, official projections for Erie County to the year 2015 show that the area will actually experience a gain in total population. Renewed interest in Lake Erie, expanding housing growth and a vastly improving local economy are proposed to have a positive net effect on our population growth. It is noted that the county do not concur with the 1990 census figures and planning staff are of the opinion that these figures are low.

2.2.2 Trends

Generally speaking, the long-term population growth of Erie County was steady from 1940-1980. This progression can be seen in table 1 which shows the population percentage increase and number increase between 1940 and 1990 decade. One exception to the trend over those forty years, has been the decrease in population during the decade of the 80's.

The 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's were times of a rapidly expanding population and economy. The economic advantages of Erie County asserted themselves and stimulated population growth as a whole throughout Sandusky and some of the northern townships. Increased in-migration and the large number of births during those years also attributed to the population.

The apparent decline of population from the 80's until 1990, was in response to the slumping economy and various other socio-economic conditions including the lack of new employment opportunities and fewer births. These occurrences were felt locally and nationally, have profound effects typically in the industrialized north.

Another emerging trend is that of an aging population. The number of older people (meaning above 65 years) in Erie County has risen significantly and its proportion of the total population has risen correspondingly. Lower birth rates and increased life expectancy are typical of today's society and are related to the overall aging of the population. In-migration of senior citizens should also contribute to increased numbers as well.

2.2.3 Population Composition

Age specific population composition reveals a number of characteristics about a population. For example, a population age distribution concentrated in the 25-44 years, means that there is a presence of a large number of adults in the child bearing years. A low 25-44 age category, on the other hand, would indicate the lack of people enjoying peak earnings and low potential for population increases. Such information is valuable to our understanding the make-up of the population and our ability to address the needs of the community.

Table 2 is a detailed account of the age group classifications by decade from 1960-1990. There are two categories that need special attention upon studying this table. Each of these categories have experienced significant changes over the past three years, especially the last ten years. The first of these groups is the 65 and above group indicates the amount of retired persons in the county and is the telling factor for the demand for elderly housing.

From 1960 to 1990, nearly a four thousand person increase occurred in the 65 and older group. The ten years from 1980 to 1990 witnessed the addition of 2,466 people into the senior citizen category. Without a doubt, this was the largest increase over a decade that any of the groups experienced. Although the population as a whole are living longer, this cannot and does not fully explain the large number of retired persons present in the county. Future projections indicate a need to accommodate the expanding elderly population because of their impact on housing and community services.

A second age category of note is the 25-44 age group. Similar to the 65 and older group, these people have a far-reaching impact on all aspects of the county's function. Because the majority of the work force is found in this category, we can predict the health of the local economy.

The thirty year period from 1960 to 1990 confirmed the fact that the 25-44 group is slowly growing. The decade of the 80's witnessed the category gain 2,009 people. Since 1960, the group gained about 6,300 persons. Partly due to the natural aging of the population and a small in-migration factor, we can expect this group to continue to expand.

2.2.4 Season and Tourist Population

Persons visiting Erie County for part of the day, overnight or for the summer months are defined as either tourist or seasonal populations. For tourist oriented communities, like Erie County, the influx of visitors represents a huge revenue generator, but at the same time it can hinder many community services. Detailed counts for seasonal and tourist visitors are not available, but it is now estimated that between three and six million people visit our area during the months of May to September. Approximately three million of these visitors made Cedar Point their destination for 1993.

Traffic generated problems are the most visibly obvious problems additional people produce. Wastewater disposal and water usage are other systems which are stretched to capacity during the tourist season. As part of the long-range planning process, the Comprehensive Plan recommends that all departments utilize peak season population numbers in their planning efforts for the county.

2.2.5 Population Projections

Population forecasts or projections determine the ability of Erie County to capture its fair share of public and private grants, government loans and they help determine how many people must be expected to be accommodated for future planning purposes. The forecasts in table 3 were the result of months of meetings with Northwest Ohio planners and the Ohio Department of Commerce. The end result of these meetings culminated in a set of projections, which will be the official numbers used by the state from 1995 until the year 2015.

Table 3 indicates a realistic picture of Erie County's future population to 2015. Based on unemployment figures, new housing starts, increasing labor force numbers and a lack of a strong out-migration from our community, Ohio Data Uses Center has formulated these projections. Nearly 3,900 people are expected to be gained in the 20 year projection period according to these numbers. Planning staff are of the opinion that these estimates are conservative in nature and if additional funds become available for the extension of the sewer and water lines, the population could greatly exceed these projections.

2.3 EMPLOYMENT

2.3.1 Introduction

The employment section assesses the general health of the local economy and extent of growth prevailing within the county. The diverse economy of Erie County has helped ease the community through several recessionary type periods and several economic downturns as was evidenced in this study. Characteristics and trends in employment and a review of the prime sectors of the economy also indicate that we can expect to experience gains and losses reflective of both state and national trends as was the case over the past several years. In spite of periods of stagnation in employment growth, long-term economic trends continue to point towards positive growth.

2.3.2

Trends

Employment in Erie County sustained above normal growth since the mid 1980's. Employment for persons in the county increased from 35,700 in 1985 to 41,800 in 1992. This percentage increase was at the state level for employment and slightly above what surrounding counties in Northwest Ohio experienced during that same time period. According to the Bureau of Employment Services statistics, growth in the employment of the county occurred in industries that are increasing nationally. These gains can mostly be attributed to specific industries, such as services and retail, which nationally are high growth industries. Table 4 shows the specific labor force characteristics for Erie County.

The prime growth sectors of the local economy over the last ten years have been the services group, with approximately 2,200 new jobs; the wholesale and retail trade with about 1,300 new jobs; and state and local government with nearly 1,000 new jobs. Like most of the industrialized north, Erie County was at one time heavily dependent on the manufacturing sector for much of its employment. In the last decade, national and international conditions have not favored growth in this sector. In 1992, less than 30 percent of all employment was in the manufacturing sector for Erie County, the lowest percentage of all times. Although the largest employers overall are still within the manufacturing sector, the community is less dependent upon them for the majority of opportunities. Table 5 indicates employment by industrial group.

A final factor assessing the economic well-being of the region is the unemployment rate. Table 4 compares state rates for unemployment and the county's for specific time periods. The unemployment rate during 1990 was about 6.4 percent. This was slightly greater than the State of Ohio's rate of 5.7 percent. Basically, the unemployment rate for the county has followed cyclic trends of highs and lows that the state followed during the last ten years. Only in 1982, when the county's unemployment rate was 16.1 percent, was the state's rate significantly lower.

Overall, the employment and unemployment rate for Erie County continue to resemble those of the state's. The shift away from manufacturing with its higher wages and its value added effect should not be taken as a given and economic development policy should continue to encourage manufacturing employment when possible.

2.4 HOUSING

2.4.1 Introduction

The supply and distribution of housing, its affordability and type present a broad indicator of a community's well-being. The need for decent, affordable housing is critical, as it will continue to be a cornerstone of many local action plans. The County's performance in housing development can improve by identifying our problems and creating solutions to them. This study intends to keep with planning goals to revitalize and create new housing by demonstrating deficiencies in the community's housing.

2.4.2 Existing Conditions

Demographically, Erie County had 79,655 residents in 31,335 housing units in 1980 and 76,779 residents in 32,827 housing units in 1990. Despite the recent decline in population, the housing stock is continuing to grow. The total number of housing units increased nearly 1,500 units during this time. The townships have been the recipient of most of this new housing development.

Sandusky has historically been the center for population in the county and has contained the largest concentration of housing. In 1990, all housing units within the city accounted for over 40 percent of the total county housing stock. Huron and Vermilion also contained large concentrations with Perkins, Vermilion and Huron Townships each containing significant numbers as well. Recent trends for housing development suggest that areas bordering the cities will receive a proportionately higher amount of housing as interests and available sites decrease in the cities.

The demand for single-family home construction continues to make itself respondent to certain locations. Perkins Township has been the site of numerous subdivisions since 1990 and Huron Township has been targeted for higher end housing in the form of multi-family and single-family units. Capacity limitations in those sewer districts may curb this trend in the near future. Other housing growth areas are in Vermilion Township because of the nearness to the greater Cleveland commuter shed.

A major objective of the Comprehensive Plan is to assist the community in the establishment of affordable housing. A key statistic in questioning the availability is the number of rental units in a community. In terms of rental units, the county increased its overall number by nearly 1,000 units between 1980 and 1990. With

more rental units being proposed for the county, the issue of housing affordability is again questioned.

Applying average cost figures to housing is another critical factor in determining housing affordability. In 1980, the medium home value in Erie County was about \$35,000. In 1990, the average home value was about \$66,000. Perkins and Huron Townships, as well as, the village of Kelleys Island experience the greatest increase in housing costs. The city of Sandusky's increased minimally and remained the only area where moderately and lower income units were available in greater numbers.

A final condition examined in the housing study is the number of vacant housing units in the county. Vacant housing units, including seasonally vacant units, accounted for 3,895 units or 11.9 percent of the total housing stock in 1990. Excluding seasonal units, the county had about 1,500 vacant units which were not inhabited. Sandusky remained the area with the most abundant vacant units. The utilization of authority to condemn and demolish vacant housing in Sandusky and selected areas of the county should result in smaller numbers in the future.

2.4.3 Housing Issues

Erie County is by no means lagging in the production of housing for seasonal and the resident population. Projections for population indicate that with the current 2.6 person per household number, an additional 4,000 housing units will be needed by the year 2015. The response to this need must assume several forms, which will be identified in the later section for housing. Upon analysis of current conditions, a number of issues have arisen which will face the county in the future. They are as follows:

- a. Fewer people will enter the housing market causing increased competition for the development of housing in certain areas.
- b. A growing number of low and moderate income families can no longer afford housing.
- c. Need to provide for additional middle income housing units within the county to increase the level of home ownership.
- d. The presence of special needs population, such as the elderly, must have additional housing provided to them to meet their increasing demand.
- e. There presently is no assistance available to residents who wish to pursue the adaptive reuse of existing buildings or first-time homebuyers.

- f. Over thirty-one percent of the housing units in the county were built prior to 1939, making it more difficult to convince persons to reinvest in older neighborhoods.
- g. The county at present does not have a building department which would assist the community's efforts in housing problems.
- h. A trend of developing condominium projects has emerged along the lakeshore.
- i. Need to encourage addition of multi-family residential development in the areas within and adjacent to the municipalities within Erie County.

2.4.4 Housing Needs Profile

The ability to retain families of all income levels, create new housing and revitalize housing will depend on a complex mix of goals previously discussed: reducing traffic congestion, improving the infrastructure, preserving the character of our communities, job opportunities and a healthy environment. It will also hinge upon keeping residents within the county by supply adequate housing opportunities for all. Specifically, the needs for housing in Erie County are:

- a. Affordable housing for low and moderate income families throughout the county. Sandusky remains the stronghold for affordable housing and has the lowest average value for homes. Development affordable housing must be more evenly distributed and made available throughout the planning area.
- b. Housing is needed for groups with special requirements such as the elderly, disables, homeless and first-time homebuyers. The elderly population is the fastest growing segment of the population and first-time homebuyers are finding it financially difficult to purchase affordable housing. Measures to provide for these and other special needs persons must be pursued.
- c. Rehabilitated housing is needed to preserve existing housing and improve neighborhoods. The Bay Area Neighborhood Development Corp., a private non-profit group, has identified potential target areas for the rehabilitation of substandard and dilapidated housing. The Farwell Street area, Meigs-Perry Street area and Mills-Camp Street area in Sandusky and the Homeville and Searsville areas in Perkins Township have been identified as the most needed locations for

housing rehabilitation. Attention should be given to these areas for rehab programs.

- d. Increasing home ownership in the county – The county must pursue steps to attract and retain homebuyers in the community. There is need for middle rang housing units to provide home ownership opportunities for all county residents.

2.5 STATE ROUTE 4 ANALYSIS

As part of the ongoing planning process for Erie County, a transportation and land use analysis for the State Route 4 corridor was prepared by the Northwest Company in response to the new interchange constructed off of the Ohio Turnpike. The investigation, submitted in September of 1993, forecasts potential impacts due to the interchange and sets out specific land use and traffic recommendations to guide areas in Perkins, Margaretta and Groton Townships. A summary of the study's methodology and conclusions and recommendations are described below:

The corridor analysis presented in the study is divided into four distinct sections. Section 1 introduces the interchange phenomenon and explains its impact on non-developed rural areas like the identified state route 4 corridor. The introduction also acknowledges the nature of this investigation through a discussion about interchanges.

Section 2 briefly details comparisons for average daily traffic counts (ADT) on U.S. 250 and projected ones for state route 4. The study showed a large variation in seasonal ADT and concluded that state route 4 will experience over three times more traffic in July versus January. In addition, it was suggested that the projected traffic along the corridor after completion of the interchange will be higher than those numbers predicted by the Ohio Department of Transportation. Therefore, the analysis anticipates the corridor will offer tremendous mixed development potential.

Results from the interchange development model used to predict development, indicated that at total of 98 new structures, the majority of which would be simple non-residential buildings, should be expected in the corridor study area. Specifically, development can be expected to occur in three distinct waves concentrated mostly on the northeastern side of state route 4. Within fifteen to twenty years after initial construction of the interchange, all development should be in place the study adds.

Residential and small commercial growth is the first wave of expected development within the corridor. Most likely, this type will target the area within five years after construction. The second wave of growth, notably the larger commercial establishments and some smaller industrial buildings, will arrive within five to ten years. The final wave and most substantial growth period that might occur, will be comprised of larger industrial businesses seeking to utilize the accessibility of the new interchange.

Section 3 presents an overall analysis of the corridor and existing and future traffic expectations. A close examination of ADT counts on U.S. 250 at gate 7 off the turnpike were used as a comparison for projected amounts on State Route 4. Table 8 within the study estimates the number of vehicles for State Route 4 and the planned interchange.

The concluding paragraph of section 3 proposes important recommendations to be used for traffic planning purposes. The study designates major and minor intersections for traffic planning implications. The following intersections on State Route 4 were considered major: Portland Road, Skadden Road, Mason Road, Bogart Road, State Route 2, Strub Road and Perkins Avenue. The minor intersections were noted as Harris Road, Fox Road, Miller Road and Wade Boulevard.

The greatest contribution of the study for future planning purposes has been embodied in section 4. Here, the study puts forth several conclusions and recommendations in the specific areas of corridor traffic, development around the planned interchange and industrial and non-industrial development. Recommendations include the widening of State Route 4 throughout the study area from Harris Road northward to Perkins Avenue. It is suggested that two traffic lanes with a central turn lane with no frontage roads be immediately developed. The study prefers a limited access four lane road but it felt that it was not a realistic goal. From an interchange development perspective, the analysis also discourages any type of development within the 502 acre interchange impact area and recommends less intense zoning districts like agriculture.

Industrial and non-industrial growth of the corridor should be viewed as a wall which separates the corridor into two distinct parts. The document suggests the western part of the corridor as becoming industrial to the north and agriculture to the south and an eastern part that should feature discrete residential and commercial clusters among agriculture land. In addition, it is recommended

that industrial development be given preferential treatment over commercial development because of less traffic congestion and accidents, less crime, more regulated and manageable wastes and less land use conflicts.

Below are the most applicable recommendations for traffic, land use and industrial development:

2.5.1 Traffic Recommendations

- a. Widening of State Route 4 throughout the study corridor from Harris Road northward to Perkins Avenue. A three lane (two traffic lanes with a central turn lane) is recommended.
- b. Northbound turn lanes at Bogart Road, Portland Road, Strub Road and State Route 2.
- c. Southbound turn lanes at Bogart Road, Portland Road and State Route 2.
- d. Merge lanes at State Route 2 onto State Route 4.
- e. Full traffic signals at Portland Road, Skadden Road, Bogart Road, Strub Road and State Route 4 at the Ohio Turnpike gate.
- f. A partial signal at State Route 4 and Mason Road.
- g. Regional traffic coordinator of seasonal traffic.

2.5.2 Land Use Recommendations

- a. Guide residential, commercial and institutional development towards the east of state route 4.
- b. Guide residential development toward the east of State Route 4 north of Strub Road in Perkins Township.
- c. Avoid both the environmentally and socially sensitive areas identified.
- d. Discourage development within the 502 acre interchange impact area.

2.5.3

Industrial Development Recommendations

- a. The entire area west of State Route 4, north of Bogart Road, south of Perkins Avenue and east of Perkins Township's western border should be targeted as a prime industrial area.
- b. Maintain the Margaretta Industrial Park because of its nearness to the interchange and its available services.
- c. Give industrial development preferential treatment over commercial.

For several months in late 1993 and early 1994, a group of local officials and citizens from Erie County met to review the State Route 4 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Analysis. In response to the initial meeting, the committee separated into three smaller groups; planning and zoning, infrastructure and traffic and safety. The groups in turn, worked during those months to formulate broad goals and to address specific concerns about the future planning of the corridor.

The three sets of draft goals and recommendations were introduced at a public meeting in January of 1994. Top priorities to arise from these recommendations included discouraging a land use pattern which welcomes strip style growth reminiscent of U.S. 250 pushing for signs to divert traffic and developing a long term land use plan for the corridor. Sewer and water concerns also were subject to intense debate during this meeting.

Because of the potential impact the new interchange has regarding economic development, smooth traffic flow and our community image, it is vital that further planning and coordination with other governmental agencies continues for the corridor. The Planning Department recommends revising the draft goals and recommendations devised by the three sub-committees and utilizing them as the basis for all decisions in the future. A secondary plan to guide the future physical development of the State Route 4 should result in the near future. This supplemental plan will establish specific directions for the community to pursue a regional approach to State Route 4.

2.6

THOROUGHFARE PLAN UPDATE

The streets and highways element of this plan is comprised of an update thoroughfare plan which will permit Erie County to focus on critical issues facing our major thoroughfares over the next twenty years. Poggemeyer Design Group was retained to perform The 1994 Thoroughfare Plan Update which will serve several important functions for this Comprehensive Plan, as well as, for other regulatory measures effecting the county.

The document is an update to the 1967 regional thoroughfare study and a supplement to two recently completed transportation studies; Access Ohio and the State Route 4 Transportation and Land Use Analysis. It will also function as an information source and policy document for transportation and land use planning, as well as, for regulatory measures such as subdivision and zoning regulations. Most importantly though, the update will help maintain Erie County's roads system at an adequate level, identify transportation improvements which will enhance economic growth and quality of life, improve the safety of our system and identify available revenues for the maintenance of existing and new facilities.

Poggemeyer's approach to the thoroughfare study focuses on a number of key issues facing Erie County from a transportation perspective. Input from an advisory committee of local officials, public meetings, personal interviews and survey results assisted them in producing these issues. Road segments that are expected to require improvement in the future, land use issues, regulatory issues and safety concerns are the identified issues in this study.

Because the document is an update, the approach taken is to focus on several key issues most relevant to the current and long range transportation concerns of the county. The following are the key issues that have been identified:

2.6.1

Street Hierarchy

A first step in developing policies with respect to the local transportation network is to review the categorization of roadways in the highway system. The Erie County Subdivision Regulations contain a street hierarchy system based on roadway character, type, traffic and a functional classification. Street hierarchy systems may vary to accommodate local conditions. But, despite the variation, they provide a functional description of roadways. Within the context of this update, the need to revise the street hierarchy system becomes apparent with respect to not only the

existing function of roadways, but to the anticipated future function of roadways.

2.6.2 Site Plan Review and Access Control

Increasingly, communities are looking toward the control of access on existing or developing highways as a way to preserve or enhance road capacity and safety. With developing roadways, a growing number of driveways located at random basis conflict with through traffic movement, increase congestion and increase safety problems.

Access management effects can expedite the movement of traffic by minimizing and identifying access points in order to reduce delay, points of conflict and accidents. It is also important to clearly define access management within the context of modifications or changes to existing uses along major highways, as well as, new development. A local access management program should focus on both development of vacant land and changes in existing developments, especially on congested roads such as Perkins Avenue and U.S. 250. A county and/or township site plan review process can be implemented to review new development from the standpoint of access control.

2.6.3 East/West Traffic Movement Through Erie County

Many major highways in Erie County are oriented in a general north and south direction. Highways oriented in a east/west direction are more limited. The Ohio Turnpike provides for tremendous east/west traffic movement, but with limited interchanges in Erie County and tolls, the turnpike provides little in terms of local transportation needs. East and west traffic movement in the region is also somewhat limited because the NASA facility occupies a large section of central Erie County.

The other major east/west routes are State Route 2 and U.S. 6. State Route 2 is a limited access highway that leads from one end of Erie County to the other connecting Vermilion and Sandusky. Traffic counts on this route range from 8,100 to 21,300 with seasonal variation as a result of Cedar Point and general vacation traffic. Improvements to State Route 2 west of Erie County are in the preliminary development stage, with construction to begin no sooner than four years. Ultimately, access between Erie County and the Toledo area will be improved to four lanes from Oregon to Port Clinton. Presently, several miles west of Port Clinton, State Route

2 changes from a divided limited access highway to a two lane state highway.

U.S. 6 follows the Lake Erie shore and is generally parallel to State Route 2. Unlike State Route 2 however, U.S. 6 is not limited access and is heavily developed, especially in the more urban areas of Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion. Traffic counts range from 3,200 to 21,000 with high seasonal variations. Essentially, U.S. 6 serves two functions. First, it provide access between the communities of Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion. Second it serves as a major arterial within these municipalities, providing both access to more intense development and a major route for traffic movement.

Secondary to U.S. 6 and State Route 2, three additional routes should be recognized as important for existing and future transportation in Erie County. To the far south, Mason Road is a county road and is one of the few local roads leading from one end of the county to the other. Bogart Road, also a county thoroughfare, is a direct route between Castalia and Huron. Strub Road is both a township and a county road with one terminus at Perkins Ave and the other at Old Railroad Road. All three of these roads have current traffic volumes far below U.S. 6 or State Route 2, but as development increases and moves southward, these roads are expected to experience greater pressure. At present, the lack of sewer and water lines has limited development, but as services eventually become available south of State Route 2, development pressures will increase.

2.6.4 Key Road Segments

Attention has been drawn to a number of key road segments which are expected to experience noticeable higher traffic volumes and development pressures. U.S. 250 (Bogart to Ohio Turnpike), State Route 4 (Perkins Avenue to Ohio Turnpike), State Route 60 (Vermilion to State Route 113) and Rye Beach Road are those segments.

2.6.5 Cedar Point Access

It is believed that Cedar Point will continue to invest in park expansion which will undoubtedly result in more traffic. At the present time, Cedar Point traffic flow has a dramatic impact on many major local highways, with the vast proportion of visitors entering Erie County from the west. During the 1993 season, the theme park's 12,000 vehicle parking area was full to capacity on a

number of occasions and back-ups along major thoroughfares were common. Park expansion will ultimately result in greater attendance, making improved traffic flow to Causeway Drive, a priority. Multiple options and considerations exist to address this issue and will be discussed later.

2.6.6 Subdivision Regulations

Many new roads constructed in Erie County in the future will be built by developers, as part of new subdivisions. Although such streets would be primarily local streets that serve residential developments, it is desirable that local subdivision regulations in Erie County be consistent among jurisdictions from the standpoint of both requirements and review process. In addition, when new subdivisions are planned, an often controversial issue is whether streets should connect with adjacent subdivisions or if stub streets should be built to provide access to adjacent land when it develops. It is critical to address this issue early because once a subdivision is designed and the infrastructure is in place, changes are unlikely to occur. Therefore, it is important for Erie County to establish clear policies with regard to how subdivisions are designed to allow for maximum vehicular circulation.

KEY ROAD SEGMENTS

SCHEDULE A

U.S. 250 (BOGART ROAD TO OHIO TURNPIKE)

U.S. 250 remains the predominant north/south link into the city of Sandusky and Cedar Point Amusement Park for residents and tourists of Erie County. Traffic volume along the roadway ranges from 16,300 to 20,600 vehicles per day, with significantly higher levels during the warm weather months. Traffic counts in August (most active month) are more than three and one-half times the counts in January (least active month). Because of this volume, the corridor continues to experience rapid commercial development, adding to the already congested conditions north of State Route 2. Occasionally, during the summer months, the roadway is grid-locked from Cedar Point to the Ohio Turnpike, a distance of ten miles.

Accessibility will be improved with ODOT's plan to widen U.S. 250 to five lanes between the Ohio Turnpike and Bogart Road in Milan, Huron and Perkins Townships. Presently, work is underway on environmental, archaeological and wetlands studies, however, construction on the project is not expected to begin for at least five years with a two year completion schedule. Rapid development along the route is expected to occur when public services are extended southward within the next few years. It is expected that this development will be largely of a commercial nature. A major concern on this road segment is the future management and control of access as commercial development occurs. The widening of U.S. 250 will add a great deal to capacity, but unless access to adjacent commercial development is controlled, improved levels of service will not be attained.

According to ODOT District 3 officials, the planned U.S. 250 by-pass is southern Erie County is presently undergoing preliminary development studies and is at least several years away from the construction stage. The bulk of the proposed improvements are located in Huron County. The ultimate result of this project will be better connection between Norwalk and Sandusky and the elimination of congestion in Milan. The city of Norwalk will also have better access to the Ohio Turnpike to the north.

STATE ROUTE 4 (PERKINS AVENUE TO OHIO TURNPIKE)

State Route 4 remains a secondary north/south thoroughfare from southwest Erie County, north into the city of Sandusky. It also functions as the primary route to Columbus and the remainder of central Ohio. Land use along the route is spotty commercial and residential development with some industrial complexes. Most of the land between the Ohio Turnpike and Bogart Road is zoned agricultural. Land use between Bogart Road and Perkins Avenue is a mix of light and heavy industrial, commercial and residential zoning. Development density along the two lane corridor decreases consistently southward away from Perkins Avenue. Traffic volume along the roadway ranges from 3,600 to 12,200 vehicles per day, with slightly higher levels during the tourist season. Most of the generated traffic consists of a mix between county residents and industrial trucks.

Accessibility to Sandusky will be improved significantly with the addition of the Ohio Turnpike interchange eight miles west of U.S. 250. This proposed project is scheduled to open in late 1994 or early 1995. State Route 4 has the potential for substantial growth with the new interchange. However, the pace of this development is expected to be slow because water and sewer services are not expected to be provided for some time. The greatest concern on this road segment is the development along the corridor, projected traffic volumes from the new interchange will warrant the widening of this road in the near future.

STATE ROUTE 60 (VERMILION TO STATE ROUTE 113)

State Route 60 functions as a primary north/south thoroughfare connecting the city of Vermilion to State Route 2, State Route 113 and the remainder of Florence Township to the south. Traffic volumes along the route range from an average of 1,300 vehicles per day south of State Route 113 to 12,300 vehicles per day north of State Route 2. The recent availability of public sewer service to northeast Vermilion Township has resulted in spotty commercial development along State Route 60, just north of State Route 2. The bulk of this growth has taken place during the past five years. Railroad crossing improvements are the only scheduled projects for the corridor. Areas along the corridor south of State Route 2 have seen little or no new development. However, accident data and survey results indicate that safety improvements may be warranted. Land use in this region is limited to some residential lots; the area is primarily open space. The key concern on this road segment is the future commercial development could reduce roadway capacity and make future widening difficult. The safety issues south of State Route 2 are also a concern.

RYE BEACH ROAD

In fall, 1990, ODOT completed the State Route 2 bypass around the city of Huron. This was a major construction project with more than twenty years in development. ODOT is planning to make major upgrades to the Rye Beach Road/State Route 2 interchange, including the widening of Rye Beach Road. This project is expected to occur in 1996 or 1997. In addition, the city of Huron and Erie County will widen Rye Beach Road from U.S. 6 to the Conrail railroad tracks. Future plans also include widening Rye Beach Road south of the Conrail tracks. The road segment between U.S. 6 (Cleveland Road) and Bogart Road includes existing and planned commercial and industrial land use, as well as, the Firelands Campus of Bowling Green State University.

2.6.7 Traffic and Safety Issues

Traffic and safety issues are an obvious concern with respect to area thoroughfares. While it is beyond the scope of this update to identify and study safety problems, some general observations can be made. Such observations are geared toward present problems and circumstances.

2.6.8 Transportation Needs of Kelleys Island

Most of the transportation issues facing Kelleys Island relate to seasonal tourism, a valuable component of Erie County's economy. Specifically, traffic is a major problem in the downtown area of the island during the summer months. Based on population projections for Kelleys Island, seasonal tourism residents are expected to increase.

In addition to the key issues, the study sets out recommendations to achieve concerns expressed within. These recommendations are offered to address issues related to streets and highways within the planning area. Those recommendations are listed below:

2.6.9 Street Hierarchy

The street hierarchy as described within and applied to the Erie County road network is recommended for inclusion in the County Subdivision Regulations. This street hierarchy is based on the twenty year projection of expected road functions. When major subdivisions are proposed along these thoroughfares, additional right-of-way should be required, to provide for the future widening of these roadways. The functional characteristics area as follows are listed in section 4.6

IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR COLLECTORS:

- State Route 60 (south of U.S. 2)
- State Route 113, State Route 61, State Route 13, State Route 99, State Route 269 and State Route 101
- Bogart Road
- Mason Road (from U.S. 250 east and from State Route 4 west)
- Strub Road

IDENTIFICATION OF MINOR COLLECTORS:

- State Route 60 (between State Route 2 and Vermilion)

- State Route 4 (south of turnpike to county line)
- IDENTIFICATION OF PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS:

- State Route 4 (between the turnpike and Perkins Avenue)
- U.S. 250 (between the turnpike and U.S. 6)
- U.S. 6 (between Rye Beach Road and Butler Street)

2.6.10 Site Plan Review and Access Control

The following recommendations are made to improve access and site planning along all thoroughfares that are classified as major collectors or higher on the hierarchy.

- Review of non-residential development through subdivision regulations
- Township level site plan review should be strengthened

2.6.11 East/West Traffic Movement

The designation of Mason and Bogart Roads as major collectors viewed as the recommended action necessary to help preserve capacity. Development along these roads should be set back as described on the street hierarchy and accommodation for widening should be provided.

2.6.12 Key Road Segments

1. U. S. 250 (Bogart to Ohio Turnpike)
 - Signalization
 - Site plan review
 - Access roads to be further studied
 - Requiring the dedication of public right-of-way every 2000 feet
 - Tighter control of both size and number of signs
2. State Route 4 (Perkins Avenue to Ohio Turnpike)
 - State Route 4 should be designated as a principal arterial
 - Continued use of State Route 4 planning committee to monitor the corridor
 - Signalization on all major intersections
 - Site plan review
 - Subdivision review
3. State Route 113 (U.S. 250 to State Route 60)

- Site plan review
- 4. State Route 60 (Between Vermilion and State Route 2)
 - Site plan review
 - Subdivision review
 - Tighter control of both size and number of signs
- 5. State Route 60 (Between State Route 2 and the county line)
 - Study possible traffic safety improvements
- 6. Rye Beach Road
 - Site plan review
 - Subdivision review
 - Tighter control of both size and number of signs

2.6.13 Cedar Point Access

The management of Cedar Point traffic is one of the most pressing traffic problems facing Erie County. Near term efforts to improve access to Cedar Point should focus on U.S. 6, between Butler Street and the causeway. As noted, all traffic flow to Cedar Point ultimately involves U.S. 6 and because the traffic is projected to increase, demands on U.S. 6 will also increase. Recommendations include:

- Subdivision review
- Site plan review
- Signage control
- Conduct a study for U.S. 6
- Butler street improvements
- Possible extension of Strub Road to U.S. 6
- Closer communication through all governmental agencies
- The use of alternate routes should be further studied

2.6.14 Subdivision Regulations

Most of the new roads constructed in Erie County will likely be built as local residential streets by private developers. While the primary function of these roads is to provide access to property, these roads become part of the transportation system with a secondary function of minor levels of traffic circulation. Interconnected subdivisions, which provide secondary and minor level of traffic circulation can be very important in terms of emergency response times, as well as, alternate routes in the event of road closing. It is therefore recommended that:

- All new subdivisions provide two points of access into and out of the development
- Loop streets should be encouraged over stub streets
- All local subdivision regulations should be reviewed for consistency
- The street hierarchy system should be amended as shown

2.6.15 Traffic Safety

Erie County should pursue federal 402 funds to conduct further studies of high crash locations. These location include U.S. 6, State Route 113, Columbus Avenue, Perkins Avenue and U.S. 250 within Perkins Township.

2.6.16 Transportation Needs of Kelleys Island

- Encourage the use of vans for tours
- Continue to pursue a location for off-street parking in the downtown
- Coordinate a sign system that directs traffic
- Widening and improving of State Route 575 should have priority

2.6.17 Local Zoning

Efforts to control signage can be implemented in township zoning resolutions. Signage regulations along key corridors is needed to safeguard against visual clutter. In addition, lot split limitations in agriculture districts should be investigated.

The recommendations listed above should serve as the primary activities with which the county should pursue for successful implementation of the Thoroughfare Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Because only specific sections of the plan have been identified within this text and to better enforce our subdivision regulations, the Thoroughfare Plan must be adopted as a separate document in and amongst itself. It is recommended that the County Commissioners adopt the Thoroughfare Plan, as well as, the Regional Planning Commission as the guide for future transportation planning.

2.7

COMMERCIAL MARKET ANALYSIS

In addition to the thoroughfare Plan Update, consultant services were requested to further assist the Planning Department in the analysis of commercial needs throughout Erie County. Basile Baumann Prost & Associates, Inc. (BBP) summarized findings and recommendations relative to the commercial market outlook for the county. This information helped prepare final elements of the economic development strategy, commercial land use policies and future commercial land use designations within this plan.

The Commercial Market Evaluation identifies the relationship between commercial market supply and demand within the county and ascertains the general level of growth anticipated. The analysis focuses on identifying prospective retail sales and the amount of required space within the county for these uses over the next five to fifteen years. Key issues identified in the study relate to current trends in the retail industry and prospective activities along the Route 2, 250, 4 and turnpike corridors.

This report is organized into six sections. An introduction section, executive summary with policy implications and an economic/market overview from section I through III. Section III contains the economic overview and key socio-economic characteristics for the planning area. Selected socio-economic characteristics and projected population, households and household income were analyzed to provide a context for the market evaluation.

Recent trends and existing market conditions are evaluated in section IV. The analysis discusses the retail, hotel/motel and office markets for Erie County and anticipates a level of growth for each sector of our commercial market. In addition to the analysis of the market sectors, section IV also addresses existing land use plans. It is mentioned that these plans have provided for a significantly larger amount of commercial land than can be expected to occur. Those plans have not anticipated the changes to the highway system of Erie County and its impact in providing commercial land.

Section V contains the market outlook, including projections for commercial demand. This section translates the growth as noted in the tables for retail sales into supportable square footages for commercial uses. The study notes that an additional 217 acres of total retail space will be required, mostly for seasonal population, to the year 2008. Mostly, this retail space will be needed for primary shopper goods, including general merchandise and general purchases, including automotive and other sales.

The Commercial Market Evaluation concludes with section VI. This section identifies challenges, opportunities and policy recommendations utilized in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The challenges, opportunities and recommendations are listed below:

2.7.1 Challenges

- The county is experiencing relatively modest growth in population, households and income.
- Existing retail facilities are somewhat threatened by changing highway patterns and the development of major new retail facilities.
- There is a high degree of seasonality to retail activities and particularly tourist related lodging demand.
- There is extremely limited growth outlook for all but small population-oriented commercial office space.
- Retail activity tends to be concentrated in the U.S. 250 corridor, contributing to additional congestion and creating added pressures on the area's infrastructure.
- A new interchange at the Ohio Turnpike and State Route 4 may open up significant new commercial land areas.
- There is a possible proliferation of small convenience retail strips along major routes throughout the county
- Traditional retail activities located in the city and village centers are threatened by increasing retail competition.

2.7.2 Opportunities

- Steady growth in retail demand in all retail sectors is anticipated over the next five to fifteen years.
- There is continued growing retail inflow into the county representing enhanced tourist related demand.
- New retail opportunities are oriented toward high volume “super store” with a strong desire to be concentrated in the existing 250 corridor.
- The lower occupancy costs and convenience retail and specialized nature of most older retail stores, make them less vulnerable to competition.
- Most of the competition between existing and new retail will be among the larger retail operations.
- There is little perceived major retail user interest within the State Route 4 corridor or other portions of the county outside the existing U.S. 250 corridor.
- Continued small but steady growth in lodging facilities is anticipated with an orientation toward major tourist routes which could include the improved accessibility along State Route 4.
- There is not perceived to be a major proliferation of new lodging facilities or a relocation of existing facilities toward the State Route 4 corridor.
- Small scale commercial office development will take place primarily in terms of improvements to existing space within urban cores and/or new small scale free standing owner occupied facilities.

2.7.3 Policy Recommendations

Listed below are policies which BBP Associates have formulated to help address current and anticipated challenges and optimize on identified opportunities with regard to commercial development within Erie County. These recommendations have assisted the plan in the designation of areas for future commercial growth and have indicated potential uses which should be targeted for development in the county. They are as follows:

- Consideration should be given to reducing the total amount of retail and commercial land use within the county to be more reflective of a realistic level of anticipated retail demand.

- The future land use map should differentiate between larger retail facility shopper goods and smaller neighborhood operations.
- Major retail facilities should be accommodated and concentrated within the U.S. 250 corridor in order to optimize economic benefits and provide retail variety and choice for area residents.
- Concentrating retail activities in the U.S. 250 corridor include undertaking necessary road improvements and the provision of adequate water and sewer facilities.
- Large retail operators desiring to relocate in the 250 corridor should be required to help pay for a significant portion of required infrastructure improvements.
- Major high order retail facilities should be restricted from other locations within the county.
- Small neighborhood convenience type retail should be concentrated within specific nodes as opposed to along major retail strip zoning.
- Retail facilities in existing older urban centers and villages should be strengthened by efforts to consolidate facilities within those cores.
- The county should consider targeting specific areas for tourist related and hotel type uses.
- Upgraded standards for design review, landscaping and business signs should be considered.
- The cities and villages should consider tourist entertainment facilities and recreation uses within older urban center to reinforce specialty retail activities.
- Targeted public efforts and/or funding for commercial renovation and revitalization in existing urban centers should be encouraged.
- Land use policies and regulatory factors can have the largest influence in managing and controlling commercial activity which desires to locate in the U.S. 250 corridor.

SECTION 3.0

REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1.1 Coastal Management Regulations

The authority to regulate shoreline resources and development was established by the Federal Coastal Zone Management Program (OCMP) under which Ohio is currently receiving program funding. Subsequently, the State of Ohio has developed impending legislation called the Ohio Coastal Management Program or the OCMP. This forthcoming legislation intends to provide for improvement for Lake Erie resource management and for the establishment of a coastal management program. OCMP will be administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources under statutory authority in chapter 1506 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The OCMP intends to provide a framework to guide public and private activities associated with land and water uses within the yet to be established coastal zone and the more restrictive erosion hazard area. Activities, presumably development and redevelopment, considered to have a “direct and significant” impact on coastal lands, waters and resources are the actions with which the OCMP is concerned. Direct and significant impacts are preliminarily defined as:

1. Changes in the manner in which land, water or coastal resources are used;
2. Changes in the environmental quality of coastal resources; or
3. Limitations on the range of uses of coastal resources.

Regulations of these impacts will rely on existing state, ODNR and local authorities for implementation and enforcement. No procedures have yet been established to implement the OCMP.

To be eligible for federal program administration funds, Ohio must demonstrate that it has developed and evaluated a process for controlling the impacts of shoreline erosion. Rules for enforcing development within the erosion hazard area are the most meaningful regulations to be imposed within the OCMP. The erosion hazard area has been defined as the land area anticipated to be lost to erosion within a thirty year period if no additional approved erosion control measures are completed within that time. Once final regulations are adopted for OCMP, all prospective developers should consult with the Planning Department regarding development restrictions.

Statutory authority within the OCMP promulgates that any permanent structure to be constructed in the identified erosion hazard area must obtain a permit from the ODNR. Provided that the proposed site is protected by effective erosion control measures, a permit can be obtained. The existing erosion control measure does not remove the parcel from the erosion hazard area, but it does simplify the permit process. If no erosion control measure is in place upon construction, additional engineering studies will be required and the construction of an erosion control barrier may be necessary prior to the issuance of a permit by ODNR. It is recommended that the county and the lakeshore communities monitor the rules and regulations which are to be established as part of this program to ensure the OCMP will not negatively impact on the residents of Erie County.

Since the regulations of the OCMP are not mandatory as of yet, the implications of the rules and regulations which affect the county and property owners cannot be fully determined. The regulations are expected to set forth a permit process and effect to what extent development will take place within the erosion hazard area. Upon completion and full adoption of the OCMP, the Planning Department will develop a review packet of all rules, regulations and permits necessary for compliance of this legislation.

3.1.2 Ohio Acts

Coastal management in Ohio began following CZMA authorization when the Governor of Ohio, by executive order in 1973, placed responsibility for developing a coastal management program with ODNR. The agency applied for and received four federal grants, which were matched with state funds to assist the program planning and development. From 1974 to 1988, ODNR's Division of Water led the state's coastal management movement, coordinating institutional frameworks at state and local levels to conduct research, build data bases, identify coastal issues and educate the public about Lake Erie and its needs. In the fall of 1988, the Ohio General Assembly unanimously enacted enabling legislation, Senate Bill 70, to authorize ODNR to develop and implement a comprehensive coastal management program for Ohio. This law (chapter 1506 of the Ohio Revised Code) became effective March 15, 1989. Several milestones provided for under the law have since been completed:

- Establishment of the Coastal Management Section with ODNR's Office of Real Estate and Land Management.
- Establishment of the Lake Erie Protection Fund and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, which is composed of the directors of the Ohio Department of Transportation, Development, Agriculture, Health, Natural Resources and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.
- Establishment of the Lake Erie Office, based in Toledo, which serves as staff for the Lake Erie Commission.
- Adoption of administrative rules for governing coastal flood hazard areas, leasing of Lake Erie submerged lands and for designating the Lake Erie erosion hazard area.
- Development of draft administrative rules for enforcing the Lake Erie erosion hazard area.
- Development of the Ohio Coastal Management Program (OCMP) Document and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which will be published by NOAA.

3.2 STORMWATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL REGULATIONS

3.2.1 Overview

A storm drainage system transport water and surface water to appropriate receiving water bodies such as a stream, river or lake. Such systems are comprised of numerous and man-made elements including swales, which direct and divert water, ditches, which carry water, retention and detention basins, which hold and slowly release water and curbs, which direct water to a closed system of storm sewer pipes. All of these elements are presently utilized in locations in Erie County to protect the public welfare by preventing the disruption of drainage activities.

Since Erie County is a relatively flat community with an abundance of poorly drained soils, storm drainage problems are common throughout the planning area. Local regulation of stormwater drainage in the county is controlled through subdivision reviews and site plan reviews for non-residential development. Drainage systems which are not adequately designed are recommended to improve their management practices following these reviews. In addition to these reviews, the County Highway Department operates the county wide ditch maintenance program. Necessary improvements to ditches under maintenance are completed on a regular basis under this program.

Further stormwater management regulations are in place at the state level effecting development in the county. Authority under the amendments to the Clean Water Act has permitted Ohio EPA to control stormwater and erosion on new construction sites. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is the general permit program for sediment and stormwater now under enforcement. NPDES consists of a three step permit process intended to minimize stormwater discharge and on-site erosion. The permit covers construction activity which will disturb five or more acres or construction activity which is part of larger common plan for development. The owner or developer is required to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI), Stormwater pollution and prevention plan (SWPPP) and a Notice of Termination to comply with NPDES standards.

While all of these controls help keep the storm drainage problems tolerable, none really address the issue of a comprehensive storm drainage program to improve the county's stormwater system. Individual approaches to storm drainage by private interests must be encouraged to develop stormwater plans which take into consideration effects on the larger systems. The Comprehensive Plan encourages the following recommendations in its approach to regional stormwater management.

- a. A review should be conducted county wide of storm damage outlets in order to determine their adequacy and note need of improvements.
- b. The review should utilize assistance of Soil and Water Conservation Service, Highway Engineers Department and Sanitary Engineers Department and culminate in a master plan for storm damage.
- c. The master storm drainage plan should encourage the separation of inflow/infiltrate from sanitary sewer flows.
- d. Assistance from the county's technical advisory committee should be maximized in review of all subdivisions.
- e. In review of subdivisions and non-residential development, innovative construction approaches, such as limiting the disturbed area around new construction and increasing detention time in basins, should be required when determined to be appropriate by the Erie County Highway Engineer.
- f. Developers should also be encouraged to utilize the availability of natural systems and processes such as wetlands in storm drainage planning.
- g. All state and county regulations concerning erosion, storm drainage and sediment control should be incorporated into the master plan.

3.2.2 County Regulations

The County Commissioners have approved Stormwater and Erosion Control Regulations to establish feasible and economically reasonable standards to achieve a level of management and conservation practices which will abate erosion of the soil and abate the degradation of the waters of the state by soil sediment in conjunction with non-farm, earth disturbing activities. It is further the intent of these rules and regulations to:

- a. Permit development without increasing downstream flooding, erosion or sedimentation.
- b. Reduce damage to receiving streams and impairment of their capacity which may be caused by increases in the quantity and/or rate of water discharged.
- c. Establish a basis for the design of all storm drainage systems which will preserve the rights and options of both the dominant and servient property owners and help assure the long term adequacy of storm drainage systems.

3.2.3 Scope of Regulations

County Stormwater and Sediment Control Rules and Regulations apply to all non-farm earth-disturbing activities performed on the unincorporated lands of Erie County, Ohio except those activities as outlined in chapter 307.79 of the Ohio Revised Code and as follows:

- a. Strip mining operations regulated under chapter 1513.01 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- b. Surface mining operations regulated under chapter 1514.01 of the Ohio Revised Code.
- c. Public transportation, utilities and drainage improvement or maintenance thereof undertaken by a government agency or political subdivision in accordance with a statement of their standard policies that have been approved by the Board of County Commissioners or the Chief of the Division of Soil and Water District.
- d. Earth disturbing activities involving less than 1,000 square feet.

3.3.1 Floodplain Regulations

The Erie County Planning Department is responsible for the management and enforcement of all federally designated floodplains within the boundaries of Erie County. This includes the administration of the national Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and management of locally designated floodways. In return for the local adoption and enforcement of Erie County Floodplain Regulations which meet the minimum criteria of the NFIP, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides the availability of flood insurance coverage to Erie County.

Erie County Resolution No. 87-57 sets forth the provisions and requirements of the county floodplain regulations. These regulations enable the community to provide flood insurance for the county and they establish permits for construction within designated floodplains. A floodplain permit must be obtained from the Planning Department upon the construction or enlarging of any building within the floodway boundary. Failure to apply for a proper development permit or failure to comply with any requirements of the County Floodplain Regulations does constitute a misdemeanor and potential fines can be levied against an offender.

Floodplain information and records that are available for public use from the Planning Department are as follows:

- Flood insurance rate maps and flood boundary and floodway maps
- Base flood elevation for most locations
- Flood hazard area (zone) designation information
- Flood insurance requirements
- Floodplain development requirements
- Property protection measures

Floodplains are an integral part of the county's storm drainage system. It is important that these areas be maintained in a natural state as much as possible in order to limit further storm drainage problems. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the following for floodplain areas:

- a. Existing floodplain regulations should be reviewed and updated in response to current needs to aid in preserving floodplains and floodways.

- b. Standards for fill should be incorporated into the floodplain regulations.
- c. Planned unit developments (PUD's) are encouraged over other forms of development within the floodplain.

3.3.2 Coastal Barrier Improvement Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revised its rule-related document to reflect changes in the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA), as amended by the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990 (CBIA). This document sets forth the service's general statement of policy and advisory guidelines regarding the provisions of the CBIA that address limitations on federal expenditures and financial assistance and exceptions to the limitations.

On November 15, 1990, President Bush signed the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act (CBIA) into law (Pub. L 101-591). The CBIA amends the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) in several significant ways. It expanded the Coastal Barrier Resources System from 183 to 580 units and from 143,000 acres to 1.25 million acres. The system now includes units in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Great Lakes States, New Jersey, Maryland and the Florida Keys, as well as, many new areas in states that already contained units within the system. The CBIA also established a new category identified as "otherwise protected areas" where federal flood insurance for new construction not in conformance with the purposes of the area is banned. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is issuing revised Flood Insurance Rate Maps that reflect the changes. Separate codes are used on the maps depicting areas where the ban went into effect.

It is noted that two areas have been designated in the incorporated areas of Erie County as within the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRA) and have been included on the revised FIRM mapping which will become effective on September 20, 1995. Any development proposals within CBRA areas must be forwarded to the Office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Reynoldsburg, Ohio for review and approval, prior to the issuance of a flood plain permit by the Erie Regional Planning Commission.

3.4

WETLANDS AND THE FEDERAL PERMITTING PROCESS

Erie County's abundance of poorly drained hydric soils and extent of low land along the shoreline are conducive to a vast amount of wetlands and accompanying habitat. In 1980, approximately 8,560 acres of wetlands remained in the county according to the land use plan submitted in that year. Wetland areas were located primarily within the coastal zone, but were also present in the interior of the county when hydric soils were present.

In Ohio, the situation has not been ideal for wetlands, as the state recently ranked second in the percentage of wetlands being lost to farmland and development. Erie County, however, has been more responsive to the need to protect wetlands and maintains upwards of 7,000 acres today. The presence of protected wetland areas including Old Woman Creek Sanctuary, Sheldon's Marsh Preserve and the large Bay View wetland in Margaretta Township have contributed to the large occurrence of this vital resource. Increasing development pressures adjacent to these protected wetlands and near unprotected areas continue to threaten this resource though.

Jurisdiction of wetlands in Erie County lies with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. EPA. According to the Corp's definition, a wetland is any area that is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency or duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. There are several tools available to help interpret this definition. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared wetland inventory maps and soils information concerning locations within Erie County have been prepared by the Soil and Water Conservation District which identify areas of potential hydric soil areas. Both of these are available at the Planning Department for public use.

For an area to be considered a wetland by the Corps, three essential characteristics must be present on the site. Hydrophytic vegetation, wetland hydrology and hydric soils are conclusive evidence that a wetland is present. Currently if a site is determined to possess these characteristics from a wetland specialist or via the Ohio EPA, a permit is required for activity in the wetland. The section 404 permit requires a pre-application conference between the developer, EPA, U.S. Fish and wildlife and the Corps prior to the granting of the permit. During this conference, it may be decided that a wetland of equal size should be created for the filled wetland. This is part of the wetland mitigation process used to comply with the no net loss policy enforced by the federal government.

Potential wetland identification or delineation is often a difficult process. These sources are available for public use from the Planning Department to assist in preliminary information gathering for possible wetland sites:

- National wetland inventory maps for Erie County
- County soil survey
- U.S.G.S. quadrangle maps
- Aerial photos
- Floodway maps

Wetlands are immensely important to both the environmental and economic health of Erie County. They provide habitat for wildlife, help reduce flood damages, abate water pollution and provide many valued recreational opportunities. To ensure that the county's actions reflect the need to preserve and protect wetlands, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the following for wetlands:

- a. Wetland conversion should be minimized throughout the county.
- b. The destruction of vegetation adjacent to wetlands is discouraged.
- c. Development adjacent to wetlands should be appropriately buffered.

The official document which is used to determine wetland delineation is the Corps of Engineers' Wetland Delineation Manual prepared by Environmental Laboratory and dated January 1987. The four agencies which are involved in the Wetland Delineation process are the Army Corps of Engineers, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and Soil Conservation Service. These agencies prepared an interagency cooperative publication called the Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands which was approved January 10, 1989. The document was originally adopted, but proved to be erroneous to property owners and was referred back to the federal government for further review. Therefore, at the present time the 1987 document prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers is still the official document for wetland delineation.

3.5

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

An important far reaching piece of federal legislation is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Congress passed this act in 1990 in order to provide comprehensive civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, state and local government services and telecommunications. The ADA prohibits all state and local governments and some private businesses from discriminating on the basis of disability. Provisions within this act invoke a wide range of congressional authority, including the power to enforce the fourteenth amendment and regulate commerce.

Since this act went into effect in 1990, Erie County has utilized community development block grant funds throughout the planning area to allow local jurisdictions to comply with the ADA. Most of these improvements have occurred to the township, village or city owned properties, as well as, to all of the county owned buildings. These improvements have been in the form of handicapped ramps, parking, restroom modifications, elevators, electric door openers and other handicapped accessible improvements. The self evaluation process for Erie County is nearly complete for all public buildings. Continued compliance for all new publicly owned buildings should result in the initial construction of those buildings.

SECTION 4.0

GENERAL STRATEGIES

4.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 Overview

Erie County is in the enviable position of possessing a diverse economy. The three major components of the economy are the agricultural, manufacturing and tourism industries. Each one of these components has been in existence for over one hundred years, with agriculture, of course, existing the longest. The county like many other areas in the U.S., experienced a decline in manufacturing in the early 1980's. To combat further deterioration of our valuable manufacturing base, a county wide effort to develop a pro-active and comprehensive economic development program was implemented in the mid 80's. This effort and other economic development assistance has been spearheaded by Greater Erie County Marketing Group, Inc. (GEM) and the Erie County Department of Planning and Development.

4.1.2 Nature of Economy

In order to establish a baseline from which to project forward economic condition assumptions under this Erie County Comprehensive Plan, the following explanation of the five traditional sectors of this community's economy is offered:

4.1.3 Agriculture

Erie County is blessed with some of the most productive farmland in the State of Ohio. Over fifty percent of our land is actively farmed. Agri-business is an important part of the local economy. In addition to our farming activity, Erie County also enjoys an agri-business related manufacturing sector, which includes a grain milling operation and meat packing plants. It is the county's desire to expand the value added portion of the agri-business activity.

4.1.4 Manufacturing

Erie County has a strong manufacturing base for a smaller, non-urban area. Key manufacturers are auto industry suppliers, plastics manufacturers and metal fabricators. A county wide survey of sixty major manufacturers has indicated that a good percentage of our manufacturers are competing in the global marketplace. This is an extremely healthy indicator of the future success of this important sector of our economy. In order to maintain the healthy existence and enhance future expansion of our existing manufacturing base, the county, through GEM and the Erie County Department of Planning and Development, offers an aggressive existing industry assistance program. In addition, to better prepare our community for future manufacturing interests from outside, a pro-active industrial sites development program is a strong component of the county wide economic development policy.

4.1.5 Tourism

As mentioned in the overview, our manufacturing base experienced a loss in the early 80's. Concurrent to that, our local tourism industry experienced very healthy growth into the 90's. It is appropriate to state that Erie County's economic condition is, in many ways, more healthy than other areas of the state whose economy is completely dependent upon one major industry or sector. National trends indicate that tourism will continue to grow in economic importance. Areas like ours, which enjoy a great geographic location with exceptional family oriented attractions, like Cedar Point, will continue to reap the benefits of this important industry. Erie County presently operates a tourism development program through the Erie County Visitors and Convention Bureau.

4.1.6 Commercial

Although much of our commercial sector development is related directly to our very healthy tourism industry, the commercial sector is important independent of that issue. Quality of life considerations for most communities place a high importance on adequate, attractive and accessible retail and service establishments. Erie County currently enjoys the designation of a regional retail/commercial magnet in the four county rural areas of Erie, Ottawa, Huron and Sandusky. Our "pull factor," an economic indicator used to describe a community's experience in either attracting or losing dollars, is the third highest in the state of Ohio,

third only to Franklin (Columbus) and Hamilton (Cincinnati) counties.

4.1.7 Commercial Recreation

If we again exclude from consideration our special tourism base and look at this sector in regard to the specific community, we can still project a very attractive opportunity for growth. Most waterfront communities have a strong recreational sector and Erie County is not exception. If our only market was the immediate community, which of course it is not, this sector would still have a strong growth potential. The cities of Huron and Sandusky have recently adopted Port Development Plans. The village of Kelleys Island has also adopted this type of plan. GEM and the Erie County Department of Planning and Development work with developers and local governments to assist development efforts in both the commercial and special recreational sections.

4.1.8 Conclusion

Clearly, Erie County's economic condition at the present time is fairly healthy, although national and international conditions are a continuing concern. The county is pursuing a deliberate effort to protect and grow our existing manufacturing base, while also pursuing potential growth from outside interests.

While our agriculture and tourism sectors are currently healthy, they are both influenced by a factor totally out of a community's control, that being the weather. We will continue to strongly support these sectors and look for methods to insure their health.

Our commercial and recreational sectors are growing and are key components that add to that very important "Quality of Life" issue, key to a community's overall health and attractiveness.

When considering issues that directly affect a community's ability to maintain and grow a healthy economy, it becomes clear that almost every aspect of the community has to be addressed. Due to extremely heavy competition from other communities all over the country, each factor of our "Quality of Life" and business environment has to be examined. To continue to grow and prosper, this community should be aware of the following issues as we chart our future through the instrument of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Pro-business attitude of local governments

- Availability of a skilled work force
- Quality school systems/job training programs
- Necessary infrastructure development to support industry (water/sewer) etc
- Good transportation linkage
- Attractive sites for industry
- Strong community services and amenities
- Incentives to attract new business and assist existing businesses

4.1.9 County Wide Economic Development Strategies

A major goal of the Erie County Comprehensive Plan is to retain jobs, industry and promote the betterment of the county through achievable economic development policies. This section summarizes the economic development strategies of GEM in response to projected needs of Erie County.

4.1.10 Manufacturing Sector Strategies

In order to maintain existing businesses and attract new businesses, a community must provide a number of services or incentives to compete on a regional, state, national and international level. The services provided in conjunction with Erie County, GEM, the city of Sandusky and the city of Huron include the following:

1. A pro-active industrial parks/sites development program with a strong “public/private” partnership. The State Route 2 Industrial Corridor is a product of this effort.
2. A county wide State of Ohio Enterprise Zone established by Erie County, the city of Sandusky and the city of Huron would allow for the negotiation of both personal property and real estate tax abatement of new investment based upon job creation, retention and investment by the company. These programs do not abate any existing tax revenues and allow our local school systems a partnership in the decision making process.
3. Public “gap financing” programs to be used in conjunction with private lender funds and private business equity. Adequate job creation and owner equity investment levels must be reached for businesses to be eligible.

4. A one stop shop for private businesses regarding development issues. GEM acts as the coordinator of both information and related services to most effectively assist private business.

Erie County understands that over 80% of new job creation will occur from existing businesses and industry. To enhance and support that job creation, working alliances with local governments have been developed by GEM to assist existing businesses in retaining and expanding their job creating activities. The Erie County Department of Planning and Development and GEM also provide assistance through public financial programs, such as the Community Development Block Grants, to enhance the existing industrial development process. GEM acts as the county wide clearinghouse for “public” financing programs and also operates a revolving loan program. Erie County, the city of Sandusky and the city of Huron also operate revolving loan programs.

4.1.11 New Manufacturing Recruitment

Access to outside industry is achieved through a number of activities. As the county wide agency charged with this responsibility, Greater Erie County Marketing Group has developed a variety of approaches. National and international marketing is now being approached on a more cost effective regional and state basis, which allows for higher visibility to a broader audience.

GEM is a member of a national database which interfaces with large engineering firms and real estate managers of companies looking for new building sites. GEM has developed and maintains a county wide sites and building inventory with key sites and buildings entered into several regional databases. These databases are available to the State of Ohio Department of Development and their business clients.

As small business development and work force development issues grow in importance in the economy of the county, GEM acts as a coordinator to a number of government programs or services. Our educational systems are all very important to Erie County’s economy. In addition, small business development programs, job training programs and other government or private technical services are accessed through strategic alliances by the network of economic development related agencies operating in the county. Constant communication is recommended to avoid duplication of efforts regarding these complex services.

4.1.12 Agriculture Sector Strategies

Erie County's goal under this sector is to identify ways to develop value added processing of locally produced crops and livestock. With assistance from both the State of Ohio's Department of Development and Department of Agriculture, we may identify viable operations which would enhance job creation in this capital intensive sector. The retention of viable agricultural land in Erie County, through policies in this plan, is the principal strategy for our agricultural sector.

4.1.13 Commercial Sector Strategies

Because of the high density commercial development along State Route 250 which addresses a market greater than Erie County, additional retail related commercial development needs appear to have been met at this point in time. Key issues of concern are economic strategies for our county's central business districts. These strategies should include the following:

- Each local Central Business District (CBD) should develop some of the positive aspects of the malls; a visual identity with uniform signage; uniform hours; parking that appears to be close to destinations; multiple destinations which are near each other; and an entertaining walk between destinations.
- Capitalize on things that malls cannot offer; downtown is close to home; buildings have historic value and flavor; downtown is usually the center for government services.
- Plan parking within site of downtown destinations. Eliminate excess signage not conforming with the character of downtown development. Attractive signage denoting parking spaces and destinations.
- Organized promotion should be undertaken on a unified basis. A unifying logo helps identify downtown as a place to go. The logo can be used in advertising and on signs at downtown's edges. A collective advertising flyer may be more cost effective for merchants.
- Make owners aware of tax credits, funding programs and any local incentives or revolving loan funds. If needed, push for a public/private program of downtown revitalization where

everyone pays a fair share. The State of Ohio's Special Improvement District legislation can assist in meeting this goal.

- There is nothing wrong with compatible, light industry downtown. It brings tax paying employees to the heart of the city and sells products and meals during lunch hour. Trends indicate the growth of downtown as a service and office center and its decline as a retail center. Find ways to benefit from such trends, while recruiting retailers in cases where it is clear that a void in specific downtown product types exist.
- Realtors and property owners should work to promote and provide housing in the downtown area where practical, low cost housing is ideal for the elderly, young families and others and provide a "captive market" for downtown business. Local governments should be flexible when dealing with issues that can enhance the reuse of upper floors of historic buildings in the CBD to support new residential uses.

4.1.14 Tourism/Recreation Strategies

Tourism and recreation is of increasing importance. Short one day trips are increasingly popular. Erie County is situated on Ohio's "North Coast," a growing resort area; many pass through the county on their way to other attractions such as Cedar Point. It is important that facilities are available to these visitors to encourage a longer stay in Erie County. Also, tourists generate sales tax without costing the community a great deal and it is found that a tourist's dollar turns over four to ten times before leaving the area. Some existing strategies and recommendations are:

- Our Erie County Visitors and Convention Bureau should document and market all resources in the county including historic, cultural and natural attractions. This marketing approach is part of a regional effort and is well received.
- Assessment of tourist service should be done on an ongoing basis. Products and services that are supported by the tourist industry leaders should be developed, such as hospitality stations, lodging locators, hospitality industry training and new market identification.
- Advertising should effectively snag tourists already passing through Erie County. All promotional information should be available to attract people, most of whom visit places on the spur of the moment.

- As in other sectors, the county should strive to provide opportunities not offered elsewhere. Bed and breakfast inns offer unique atmospheres. Entrepreneurs with novel ideas showing promise should be encouraged.
- Erie County with its waterfront location is noted as a fishing and boating area. The county has seen the development of a new industry in the past few years related to the addition of cruise boats. These boats capitalize on our proximity to the Lake Erie islands and offer numerous spin off opportunities. Local officials should make use of creative imagination to enhance these industries.
- Efforts should be made to expand the “shoulder” seasons of March through May and September through November in Erie County. Because of our tremendous tourism infrastructure, which includes over 3,000 existing hotel rooms in quality facilities, the community should look at the feasibility of the development of a convention service which is flexible enough to enhance Erie County’s own community profile.

4.1.15 Comprehensive County Wide Program

GEM has defined the ten components of a comprehensive county wide development program. These ten items are critical to the success of an in-depth effort put forth by a committed community. The effort is strengthened in Erie County, due to the fact that local governments are partners with the leadership of business and industry in the operation of this economic development service to the community.

1. Existing Industry Assistance

- Marketing of public incentive programs
- Expansion of financing analysis, development and implementation
- Government programs referral
- Labor/management committee
- Building and site location assistance
- Database maintenance of demographic information
- Maintaining strong industrial partnerships

2. Existing Commercial Business Assistance

- Expansion financing analysis, development and implementation
- Building and site location assistance
- Database maintenance of demographic information
- Government programs referral
- Downtown design review board administration
- Port development implementation committee administration
- Government grant writing assistance
- Maintaining strong business partnerships

3. New Industrial Recruitment

- Marketing of public incentive programs
- Financial analysis and financial resource assistance
- Regional, state, national and international marketing of Erie County
- In print media and computer inventories
- Trade show activity and recruitment visits
- Building/sites inventory development and maintenance
- Community database development and maintenance
- Targeted direct mail and telemarketing approaches
- Confidential and professional treatment of inquiries

4. New Commercial Development Assistance

- Regional, state, national and international marketing of Erie County's commercial redevelopment areas
- Building inventory development and maintenance
- Community database development and maintenance
- Financial analysis and financial resource assistance

5. Industrial Infrastructure Development

- Grant writing and administrative assistance
- Analysis of trends and existing infrastructure enhancements
- Partnership development – property owners/governments
- Statistical support resource

6. Commercial/Waterfront Infrastructure Development
 - Grant writing and administrative assistance
 - Analysis of trends and existing infrastructure enhancements
 - Partnership development – property owners/governments
 - Statistical support resources
7. Small/Micro/Minority Business Development
 - Operation of the GEM revolving loan fund
 - Coordination with public financing programs
 - Partnership with local lending institutions
 - Technical assistance in coordination with the SBDC and ECCC
8. Community Analysis and Public Outreach
 - Reports and studies regarding development issues
 - Community newsletters and public education programs
 - Community representation on Board of Trustees
9. Regional, State and National Legislative Review
 - Review and critique legislative and regulatory issues affecting local economic development
 - Advise governments of negative effect legislation
 - Maintain strong government partnerships
10. Partnership Development
 - Maintain a strong team approach to economic development by including representative of government, education , chambers of commerce and others on board
 - Maintain a strong public/private partnership focus
 - Maintain a good relationship with northwest Ohio counties to further economic development gains

4.2 HOUSING

4.2.1 Introduction

Erie County's Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS) assessed the county's affordable housing needs, then established an overall strategy and finally identified specific actions that will implement established goals.

Step 1: Analysis of Housing Needs and Market Conditions
Utilized census data and other information sources to identify key housing issues for Erie County's low to moderate income residents who live outside of the city of Sandusky. Current housing and market conditions were reviewed to determine possible strategies and applicable housing programs.

Step 2: Overall Strategy
Developed with the assistance of the Housing Advisory Committee who established priorities for addressing housing needs identified in part 1, Analysis of Needs.

4.2.2 Data Sources

The baseline data for the Erie County housing market analysis is the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census. This data will supplement surveys of local realtors, lenders and housing providers to verify that recent trends reflect the analysis of 1980-1990 Census data.

Other sources of data included:

- Population projections
- Ohio and counties by age and sex (1990 to 2015)
- Ohio Office of Strategic Research
- Ohio Department of Development
- A 1990 report on rural homelessness in Ohio produced by Ohio State University College of social work

A survey of local housing providers was conducted to collect information on persons with special housing needs. Interviews were conducted with key persons in public agencies, non-profit organizations and private developers and housing management services.

The Housing Advisory Committee members provided a valuable resource to test the assumptions drawn from the analysis of census data and other collected information. Several meetings were devoted to identifying key housing needs and formulating the strategies that will address the identified needs. The Housing Advisory Committee was established to aid in the review and approval of the CHIS that was forwarded to the County Commissioners and the State of Ohio for final approval. The committee included the following individuals and agencies:

- ❖ Thomas Ferrell, County Commissioners
- ❖ Alex MacNicol, Erie Regional Planning Commission
- ❖ Robert Boos, Township Trustees Association
- ❖ Jim Lamb, Perkins Township Zoning Inspector
- ❖ Barbara Johnson, Erie Metropolitan Housing Authority
- ❖ Michael Tann, Huron City Manager
- ❖ Steven Poggiali, Sandusky Housing Office
- ❖ Malcolm Mather, Bay Area Neighborhood Development Corporation
- ❖ Elizabeth Sheehe, Mayor of City of Vermilion
- ❖ Karen Cote, Erie County Health Department
- ❖ Ted Huston, Director Erie – Huron CAC
- ❖ Ruth Dehenning, Erie County Board of Realtors

Basic Concepts of the Housing Market Analysis:

Although the CHIS focuses on the housing need of low and moderate income households, their needs are largely affected by the general housing market. For instance, an increased demand for housing without additional housing construction may push up prices of all existing housing and effectively reduce the supply of affordable housing. The CHIS housing market analysis examined overall demand and supply factors for the housing market in Erie County in order to forecast future housing needs. This information may be integral to Erie County's recent effort at compiling a comprehensive plan.

Demand for housing within any market is affected by changes in the number, type and income of households, as well as, their housing preferences (i.e. renting, owning, property characteristics, neighborhood, etc.). The supply of housing within a market is affected by the number, type and condition of the existing housing, as well as, the regulatory and financial factors that influence new housing development. All of these demand and supply factors interact within the market to affect the price and availability of housing. Since housing markets are constantly changing, estimates of housing need and projections of future demand and supply are based on the assumption that factors discussed above will continue to interact as they have in the past.

4.2.3 Housing Needs Summary

The following is a profile of the social and economic factors that affect the quality of housing for Erie County residents. The profile is based on an analysis of 1980-1990 Census data and surveys of local housing providers.

4.2.4 Household Changes Between 1980-1990

The number of Erie County households increased by 4% during the 1980's despite a population decline of 3.7%. This disparity can be explained by the 18% increase in non-family households while the number of larger families (more than five persons) declined by 24%. The number of householders over 65 years of age also increased by 32% during the 1980's, contributing to the trend toward smaller households. Erie County households residing outside the city of Sandusky increased by 6.5%, which is comparable to the statewide increase during the 1980's. The higher rate of increase for households outside Sandusky reflects the movement of households into the suburban areas of the county.

Although an additional 1,022 households were living in Erie County outside Sandusky by 1989, the housing inventory outside Sandusky city increased by only 705 units. This lag in housing development has tightened the housing market considerably with less than 4% of the total housing stock for sale or rent in 1989. This relative scarcity of available housing increases the price of housing beyond the reach of many low income households.

4.2.5 Household Income Changes Between 1980-1990

Erie County's economic growth in the 1980's is reflected in the median income changes for the county as a whole. The median income is the mid-point in a distribution of all household incomes. Half of Erie County residents including Sandusky earned less than \$30,470 in 1989 while the other half earned more than \$30,470.

Erie County's median income has remained slightly above the median income for the State of Ohio, but the county's income growth rate slipped behind the state during the 1980's. The growth in median income for Erie County averaged about \$2,000 per year during the 1980's or 6% a year which is less than 2% in real income after accounting for inflation. The increasing proportion of older households and the shift to temporary and part time employment in a more service oriented economy have negatively influenced the rate of income growth during the 1980's.

The lowest income households are generally most vulnerable to economic recessions. In 1990, 2,720 Erie County households earned less than the poverty income threshold defined by federal agencies. Poor households in Erie County, including Sandusky city, increased by 20% during the 1980's. By 1990, the number of households below the poverty level in the city of Sandusky alone had increased by 72% while the number of poor households in the county outside the city dropped by almost half. This disparity in poverty growth rates may be explained by the concentration of more affordable housing within the city and higher housing costs outside of the city.

4.2.6 Factors Influencing Income Status

Over half of the 2,720 households in poverty in 1990 were families, but 53% of these families were single householders with dependent children or adults. One in three single female householders with dependents earned less than the poverty level. One in four single householders over 65 earned less than the poverty level while only one in twenty married householders over 65 were below the poverty threshold.

Poverty increased disproportionately for some racial minorities. During the 1980's, poverty among the white population decreased by 1% while poverty increased by 40% for blacks and 100% for American Indians. Although minorities are only 8% of all Erie

County households they represent 26% of all persons in poverty in Erie County.

4.2.7 Housing Quality and Type

The 1990 Census only provides estimates of the year housing was built and indicates whether kitchen and plumbing facilities are available. One out of four dwelling units outside of Sandusky were built before 1940. Approximately the same proportion of homes outside Sandusky use private wells while 43% of the housing is on a septic system. HUD's analysis of 1990 Census data indicated that one out of three low income homeowners earning less than 80% of the median income lived in a home built before 1940 while two out of three low income renters occupied pre-1940 rental units. Older units are generally more affordable which explains the higher correlation with pre-1940 housing for low income households than the general population.

4.2.8 Utility and Energy Costs

Next to mortgage and rent expenses, energy costs are the largest single housing expense. Generally, average utility costs are higher for lower income consumers due to the poor condition of housing stock available to them. According to the State of Ohio's CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) Housing Study, published in 1994, it is estimated that those household units that are at 30% of the median income expended between 16% and 20% of their income for energy costs in Erie County. In sharp contrast, households at 95% of median income spend approximately 5% of their income on energy costs. The Ohio Consumer Council reports the private utility costs in Erie County are the highest in the region.

4.2.9 Lead Based Paint Hazards in Older Housing

Lead based paint is considered a hazard that presents a risk to humans, particularly to small children when paint is chewed or the child ingest minute particles of dust that are generated when paint deteriorates. Housing rehabilitation activities that do not include measures to control or abate lead based paint can increase the risk of lead poisoning. In older homes, interior lead dust levels are usually quite low as long as painted surfaces are well maintained.

In Erie County, HUD statistics indicate that nearly 20,000 housing units were painted using lead based paint. Of this total, it is estimated that 3,381 units contain children under the age of six. Approximately 1,285 housing units with small children present contain lead based paint hazards in Erie County. Approximately

976 of these units are estimated to be low and moderate income households.

Currently HUD only requires that occupants of projects constructed before 1978 be notified of lead based paint hazards prior to receiving HUD assistance, although it is the occupant's responsibility to have blood testing done. A limited amount of funds are available to address the needs of existing housing problems. The costs of abatement procedures are expensive and abatement costs alone may tap out the upper limit of funds available for a housing rehabilitation project and lead to a reduction in the number of housing units addressed by the county's program. Relocation is also sometimes recommended. Emergency repair funds may be used in some instances to address abatement procedures which need immediate attention. It is necessary to estimate the cost of abatement procedures and determine the extent of abatement necessary to minimize risk to householders. When less than full abatement is occurring, it is important to focus on the lead paint creating the greatest hazard, while minimizing other hazards to the greatest extent possible. Priorities must be set which balance rehabilitation needs and abatement needs.

4.2.10 Rental Housing

An estimated 1,693 low income households outside Sandusky are renters and one in five of these renters reported paying more than 50% of their income for housing. The median gross rent reported in the 1990 Census for different geographic areas of the county varied widely between \$300 and \$500 monthly with Sandusky at \$340 and Bay View village at \$500 monthly rent.

Rental housing outside the city of Sandusky is very scarce. Almost 2/3 of Erie County's rental units are located in Sandusky. Rental units are less than 19% of all occupied housing units outside Sandusky compared to 43% of all housing units in Sandusky and 29% of all housing units statewide. Almost half of the rental units outside Sandusky were single family structures; Two to four unit structures comprised 21% of rental units and the remaining 30% of rental units were in structures containing five or more units or were classified as mobile homes of "other." The 1990 Census reported over 9% of the county's rental units were vacant but not for sale or rent. The high proportion of vacancies reflect their seasonal use during summer months.

The 1990 Census reported 719 occupied rental units had been constructed in Erie County between 1980 and March 1989; 48% of these rental built between 1980-1990 are located outside Sandusky. Rental units built outside of Sandusky during the 1980's were not likely to be affordable housing because of the higher land costs particularly in Huron, Perkins and Vermilion townships which contain most of the rental housing located outside the city of Sandusky. These were also the same townships with concentrations of low income households according to the 1990 Census data.

4.2.11 Owner Occupied Housing

Although 73% of Erie County's housing units are single family and 81% of these units are owner occupied, low income homeowners faced significant housing problems. The 1990 Census data reported 1,500 Erie County homeowners living outside Sandusky city earned less than 50% of the county median income. One in five of these low income homeowners reported paying over half of their income for housing in the 1990 Census.

The median value of owner-occupied housing for Erie County, including the city of Sandusky, increased between 1980-1989 by 37.5% to \$64,800 which is above the statewide median value. The 1989 median values for owner-occupied units outside Sandusky were well above the city median value of \$47,700, ranging from \$64,900 in the city of Vermilion to \$108,200 for homes in Huron Township. The disparity in median value for owner-occupied housing between city of Sandusky and the rest of Erie County forces low and moderate income homebuyers to move to Sandusky or urban areas of nearby counties.

Over 2/3 of the estimated 3,676 new units built between 1980-1989 were located outside the city of Sandusky. This construction has eliminated vacant building sites in these developing areas and increased land costs rapidly during the 1980's according to local realtors. Local realtors have indicated that homes in good condition for less than \$100,000 in unincorporated areas are sold so quickly that they are on the market for only a few days. Affordable, moderately priced housing sells quickly and for generally the listed price. Residential, three bedroom housing units sold for virtually the asking price. None of the other types of property had this correlation. This is a continuing need for the development of additional single-family housing units in Erie County.

Another major cost factor is the cost of extending public water and sewer services and other infrastructure to new development sites. Site improvements combined with high land costs increase the cost of development beyond what is affordable to low and even moderate income households earning close to the median income.

4.2.12 Housing Assistance

Approximately 1,200 low income persons are currently assisted with housing through the Erie Metropolitan Housing Authority. This agency owns and operates 268 public housing units within the city of Sandusky, including 158 units for senior citizens. They also manage the County's section 8 Voucher/Certificate program which subsidizes tenant rental costs in private housing. Although very low income households below 50% of median income are given highest priority, applicants who earn up to 80% of the median income for Erie County can qualify for section 8 rental assistance, as well as, other housing assistance programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1990, HUD estimated approximately 42% of the households in Erie County outside Sandusky earned less than 80% of the median income for Erie County.

4.2.13 Homeless Assistance

A 1990 survey of rural or non-urban homelessness in Ohio found that homeless persons in non-urban areas are generally younger than urban homeless populations. Approximately a third were women compare to only 15% in urban areas. Family or friends rather than agencies were the most frequent source of temporary shelter. Unemployment and health problems were cited more frequently by interviewees as causes of homelessness than alcohol or other drug abuse. Mental health issues were present as often for rural as for urban homeless but utilization of mental health services was significantly lower in rural areas. The majority of rural residents had been homeless for less than two months. These survey results suggest that comprehensive prevention programs could have a significant impact on homelessness in non-urban areas.

Temporary housing and food for approximately 450 homeless persons was provided in 1993 by the Erie County Volunteers of America. A portion of these homeless individuals were mentally ill persons who need longer term housing up to a year. A second group of primarily families were assisted with one month's rent or a security deposit by the Erie County Department of Human Services and the Erie County Veterans Service Commission. This assistance is provided on a one time per year basis. These agencies indicated a need for employment training, family counseling and mental health and physical therapy to assist these at risk persons in becoming self-sufficient.

4.2.14 Other Persons with Special Housing Needs

Other persons with special housing needs include the physically and mentally disabled who need supportive living arrangements to allow them to live as independently as possible. Many of these disabled persons can learn to function within their own community with some supportive services such as nursing and housekeeping services. Erie Residential Living, Inc. operate two group homes serving 23 persons. Renaissance Homes Inc. is a non-profit housing developer who purchases individual housing for developmentally disabled clients. These agencies find it difficult to locate affordable housing for their clients, as well as, provide all the transportation and other services required for scattered site housing.

4.2.15 Targeting Housing Needs in Erie County

The housing needs discussed above are distributed throughout the county. In 1990, over half of Erie County's low income households reported housing problems in every area of the county but Erie County cannot address all of these needs at once. A strategy is needed to target housing needs and coordinate efforts to assist households effectively with available resources.

Geographic differences in housing needs throughout the county are important to consider in developing effective strategies. Areas with concentrations of low income households are pre-1940 housing are likely to experience more housing rehabilitation needs. Areas with higher housing costs and households who pay more than 50% of their income for housing will need more affordable units for low and moderate income renters and homebuyers.

In 1990, Perkins, Huron and Vermilion Townships contained about 62% of the population outside Sandusky and approximately 60% of the low income population is this outside the city of Sandusky. These townships also contained 68% of the cost burdened homeowners and 71% of cost burdened renters outside of Sandusky. The 1990 Census reported 74% of all overcrowded households lived in the same three townships. These percentages indicate that low income households are paying more for inadequate housing in these areas because of the scarcity of affordable housing that matches their family size and income status.

4.2.16 Comprehensive Planning

Housing and residential development have perhaps the greatest potential impact amongst all of the traditional elements of a comprehensive plan. The type, affordability and availability of housing is often cited as a key component in many business location decisions. Quality of life indicators generally list housing as the basis of all other indicators. Population projections are often based on the density of housing development. Commercial and retail land uses are always planned on the basis of proximity to housing market concentrations and expendable income. Housing developments also impact the services that a community provides to its residents. Thus there is a multitude of issues that are of importance to public entities that revolve around housing.

Comprehensive plans must address housing development and the ultimate holding capacity of current land conditions, in accordance with established zoning regulations. Historically, residential development has such an impact upon the existing environmental conditions that local governments must provide solutions to accommodate such growth. New residential developments often required extensions of stormwater and sanitary sewer lines, new roads and water lines. All of these elements required substantial capital outlays. Community facilities, parks and recreation and infrastructure needs are all associated with housing development and quality of life issues. Long range planning should take into consideration the fiscal impact of new residential developments with regard to a cost/benefit analysis to the local government. Growth management strategies should examine various financing mechanisms for new residential development, such as impact fees and other financing tools to reduce the fiscal burden of new development.

In light of the costs associated with new residential development, Erie County should attempt to preserve, to the greatest extent feasible, remaining affordable housing units. Strategies to achieve this objective are delineated in this report. Local governments must establish affordable housing goals in balance with the economic conditions of their area. Developable land that contains existing public infrastructure should be considered for the development of new affordable housing or the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods in Erie County.

A comprehensive affordable housing strategy will need to consider competing land use interests in establishing affordable housing goals. The strategy must clearly define development guidelines for affordable housing that will promote environmental quality and at least be neutral toward other investments of property owners and land uses. Strategies and objectives outlined in this document should be incorporated into Erie County's Comprehensive Plan.

4.2.17 Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Existing zoning and subdivision regulations can have an adverse impact on the development of affordable housing. Regulations and standards that can increase development costs include such items as large minimum lot size, excessive setback requirements, minimum square footage requirements and permissible housing types. All of the incorporated areas and townships in Erie County have adopted zoning. However, none of these townships have zoning ordinances that are detrimental to the development of affordable housing. Accordingly, items such as large lot zoning and excessive minimum square footage size for housing, (i.e. elements that contribute to increased costs in developing affordable housing) are not present in any of the township zoning codes.

4.2.18 Private Sector Financing for Housing Development

From a community viewpoint, it is widely acclaimed and accepted that home ownership represents a vested interest in the community and is a positive influence on future generations. Low to moderate income households are generally excluded from becoming home owners be substantial down payment requirements. Often these households lack the traditional 20% down requirement needed for conventional mortgage financing. Most of the area lending institutions have formulated special financing programs in Erie County for qualified low to moderate income potential home buyers. A review of these programs indicates that most require a minimum of a 5% down payment. Those participating under the Fannie Mae program require as little as a 3% down payment. These types of special mortgage financing programs will open up more opportunities for qualified households to realize the American Dream.

Other forms of possible private sector financing for affordable housing development include various Ohio Housing Finance Programs and possibly the use of the Housing Tax Credits. Private housing developers may be interested in teaming with a local non-profit to develop affordable single family housing units under the tax credit plan. Local non-profit should further explore this possibility with interested developers.

4.2.19 Neighborhood Needs

The CHIS Committee identified several target areas scattered throughout Erie County as possible areas to apply future CHIP grants to further the development of affordable housing. Many of these target areas have accompanying infrastructure needs. The CHIS Committee believes that targeting resources to specific neighborhoods, in conjunction with planned public improvements will lead to a more comprehensive and successful revitalization effort.

4.2.20 General Housing Strategy to Address Housing Needs

Erie County's overall strategy is to provide for the coordination of local efforts to preserve and rehabilitate existing affordable housing in the county, while addressing the housing needs of low to moderate income residents and other special population groups. Federal, State and local governments have limited resources to address the priorities established by the CHIS Housing Advisory Committee. The source of funding for the majority of the proposed strategies must come from not only the CDBG, HOME and Ohio Trust Fund, but must also leverage area lending institutions resources and local non-profits access to funding. Sharing resources and strategies through a partnership of public and private agencies will benefit all participants and ultimately the residents of Erie County.

Strategies for each of the housing priorities below are discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

4.2.21 Housing Priorities

1. Develop and implement a single family, owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program for low and moderate income homeowners in targeted revitalization areas.

Very little affordable housing is being built in Erie County. Therefore, there is a need to preserve and rehabilitate existing affordable housing for low and moderate income residents. Older housing units in several target areas have suffered from disinvestment and have fallen into disrepair over the years. These older units require more maintenance and improvements to meet today's code requirements and rehabilitation standards. Low to moderate income homeowners do not have sufficient income to preserve affordable housing. Low cost financing or grants are needed to ensure the quality of existing housing and neighborhood revitalization.

Actions:

- ◆ Identify and target specific neighborhoods to participate in the single family, owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program.

- ◆ Coordinate secondary activities (i.e. streetscape, sidewalks, street resurfacing, water and sewer lines to be implemented with targeted housing rehabilitation program.
- ◆ Coordinate with private lenders in order to leverage additional investment in the targeted neighborhood revitalization areas.

4.2.22 Continue to make infrastructure improvements in targeted revitalization areas to improve the quality of life and spur further efforts of redevelopment.

Erie County has expended past allocations of their CDBG Formula Program on various quality of life activities (i.e. park improvements and needed public infrastructure, such as street improvements). There continues to be a need for these types of improvements, as is evidenced by the Regional Planning Commission's recent competitive application for CDBG Water and Sewer funds. This application is to provide funds for water to the Crystal Rock/Whites Landing area was approved. Additionally, the installation of certain public improvements, water, sanitary and storm sewers will provide the basis for redevelopment efforts in selected targeted areas.

Actions:

- ◆ Coordinate the target areas for housing rehabilitation with planned infrastructure improvements.
- ◆ Leverage other public resources for infrastructure improvements.

4.2.23 Provide an emergency home repair program on a county wide basis for single family owner-occupied units that are faced with a health or safety situation.

There is need for an emergency home repair program on a county wide basis. Currently, an emergency home repair program is being implemented by the Erie-Huron Community Action Commission, funded by the city of Sandusky and restricted to the residents of Sandusky. A similar program is needed for the balance of the county to address immediate health and safety issues in housing.

Actions:

- ◆ Develop and coordinate the implementation of an emergency home repair program for owner-occupied residents of Erie County.
- ◆ Coordinate the emergency home repair program with efforts undertaken by the Erie-Huron Community Action Commission to alleviate concerns with code violations and deficiencies that involve health and safety issues.
- ◆ Coordinate the implementation of an emergency home repair program with the Erie County Health Department.

4.2.24 Demolition of Vacant Deteriorated Housing Units

Within several of the selected target areas for redevelopment there exists a number of vacant, deteriorated housing units that require demolition and clearance. The presence of these units detracts from the successful implementation of housing rehabilitation and neighborhood revitalization. In the absence of a County Building Department, the Erie County Health Department has been charged with ensuring that health and safety violations are addressed. Many of these units are beyond repair and require clearance. These cleared vacant parcels may be of use to local non-profits.

Actions:

- ◆ Identify potential sites for demolition. Coordinate this action with the Erie County Health Department.
- ◆ Coordinate the development of affordable housing units with local non-profits.

4.2.25 Housing Strategies

The following set of strategies are recommended to address the housing needs and priorities identified previously. The strategies are grouped as:

- a. General strategies which are directed toward county wide needs; and
- b. Neighborhood revitalization strategies for the identified priority areas of concentration of housing needs.

4.2.26

General Strategies

1. Emergency Home Repair

The Erie-Huron Community Action Agency currently administers an emergency home repair program as a sub-recipient of the city of Sandusky. CHIP funds could be used in a similar manner for emergency repairs in Erie County, exclusive of the city of Sandusky. A need to provide funds to address housing concerns on an emergency situation basis coupled with the Erie County Health Department's concern to alleviate conditions that pose a health and safety issue could be coordinated with this local non-profit. The program would be targeted to income groups that are at 35% or less than the county median income, those that are least likely to be able to afford the cost of emergency repairs.

2. Review and Update Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

To address needs of the entire housing market, Regional Planning on a continued basis needs to review subdivision and zoning regulations and to ensure affordable housing can be built.

3. Open Market Retail Units

Open market rentals should be encouraged to ensure housing for individuals moving into our area. Rental units are needed for young professionals, seniors and other groups that at this time do not want to own their own home.

4.2.27

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies

1. Single Family, Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation

Erie County should target housing rehabilitation assistance primarily to low income homeowners residing in target area neighborhoods which contain a higher concentration of serious housing deficiencies. The county's housing rehabilitation strategy will address the long term needs for housing improvement and neighborhood revitalization. Targeting funds for housing improvements to those units at risk due to deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs will result in long term affordable housing and improved neighborhoods. This program strategy seeks to upgrade

existing owner-occupied units in the target area to prevent further losses to the supply of affordable housing.

The county should assist low income property owners with financing housing rehabilitation to correct residential rehabilitation deficiencies utilizing CHIP funds. The county will also attempt to leverage limited public resources by participating with private lenders in providing funds to moderate income householders. The county should utilize CHIP funds to provide gap financing between the total rehabilitation costs and any funds provided by a private lender.

The county will develop a priority rating system for the provision of housing rehabilitation assistance in the target areas. Although this system has yet to be fully developed, it is anticipated that certain household characteristics will be given special consideration. The elderly, handicapped and single female head of households who expend 30% or more of their income on housing and earn less than 50% of the county median income will be placed on a priority list for housing rehabilitation assistance. The county will provide deferred loans or grants to homeowners whose household earns an annual income of less than 80% of the county median income. Homeowners over the age of 65 with incomes of less than 35% of the county median income will be assisted with direct grants.

2. Demolition of Vacant, Condemned Units

There is a need to continue to eliminate vacant, deteriorated housing units that pose a threat to the health and safety of neighborhoods and are a blighting influence in Erie County. In conjunction with the demolition and clearance of such units, the county will work with local non-profits and private developers to develop affordable new housing units on these sites.

3. Infrastructure Improvements

The success of a revitalization effort in the listed target areas is also dependent upon the completion of necessary public improvements. In all of the designated target areas exists infrastructure needs. Public entities have made progress in addressing these needs, but grant funds have been limited in the past. CDBG CHIP funds, coupled with CDBG Formula Program and CDBG Water and Sewer funds, will afford Erie County to have more impact on these needs in the near future.

4.2.28 Target Areas

1. Perkins Township – Searsville

The Searsville target area is located in Perkins township, adjacent to the corporate limits of the city of Sandusky. The area is characterized by many older housing units in need of rehabilitation and/or demolition. Erie County has expended a portion of their CDBG Formula Program allocation in this area over the years for park improvements, storm sewers and street resurfacing. Additional public infrastructure improvements are needed for this area that include storm sewers and street resurfacing.

2. Perkins Township – Homeville

Located near the Ohio Veterans Home, this target area contains many substandard and deteriorated units. Erie County should allocate CDBG funds to this area for secondary activities, mainly street improvements. Several vacant, deteriorated housing units are apparent in this area.

3. City of Vermilion – East End

This target area extends from the northeast section of the city along the shoreway. Many units in this neighborhood are in need of housing rehabilitation. The city of Vermilion has expended a portion of their CDBG Formula Program budget on secondary infrastructure improvements over the years, primarily on street resurfacing. The city plans to continue expending CDBG Formula allocations on similar improvements in the coming years. The city recently passed a home maintenance ordinance that will mandate improvements in this area.

4. Margaretta Township – Crystal Rock and Whites Landing

Located in the northwest quadrant of Erie County on Sandusky Bay, this target area has many infrastructure needs, including water, sanitary and storm sewers and roadway improvements. Residents are currently transporting bottled water for their portable water needs. The Erie Regional Planning Commission, in conjunction with the Sanitary Engineer and the Erie-Huron Rural Water Authority recently made application for a CDBG Water and Sewer grant to solve this problem area. This application was approved and the project is moving forward. As in the other identified target areas, a demolition, clearance and housing rehabilitation program would serve this area's needs. The housing units in this target area are characterized by small cottage style units. Many of these units require substantial rehabilitation, others should be demolished and cleared for future redevelopment.

4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

4.3.1 Overview

An awakening environmental movement in recent years has demanded the attention of all levels of government. Environmental issues have been gaining attention because of their ecological importance, as well as, for their direct benefits to people. The presence of numerous natural resources and preserves throughout the county and the various programs associated with the protection of the environment have strengthened through regulatory measures and the public consciousness, the need to improve the quality of the environment. The Comprehensive Plan understands the measurable value of a sound environment and offers a diverse and embracing strategy to preserve this important quality of the county.

The quality of the air, water and land affects our health and economic well being and the attractiveness of our region. Balancing the needs of the environment with the community's economic needs is often difficult, but it is necessary to sustain both on an equal basis. The strategies for environmental management will protect, expand and enhance the natural features of Erie County while improving both our environment and economic vitality.

4.3.2 Strategies for Environmental Management

Erie County is a community that is defined by its relationship to the surrounding natural environment. Lake Erie, the abundance of small waterways, wetlands, extended shoreline and wooded areas are prevalent features throughout the planning area. The importance of the region's natural resources to the economy is especially significant because various tourist recreation related activities depend on the continued longevity of our resources. In order to protect and preserve the environmental features and the association they have with the economy, a series of strategies are offered regarding the preservation of these areas.

4.3.3 Wetland Management Strategies

- a. The changing of existing drainage characteristics, flow patterns or retention characteristics on lands adjacent to wetlands should be minimized through the site plan review process.
- b. Water or sewer facilities should not be extended to wetland areas.
- c. Development adjacent to wetlands should be appropriately buffered.
- d. Wetland conversion should be minimized throughout the planning area.

4.3.4 Floodplain Management Strategies

- a. Existing floodplain regulations should be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- b. Areas in the vicinity of floodways should not be filled because this reduces the stream capacity and thereby increases flood heights.
- c. The submission of drainage plans should be included in the floodplain regulations as part of the floodplain permit process.
- d. Floodplains should be preserved in their natural state as much as possible.

4.3.5 Storm Drainage Management Strategies

- a. The county has established stormwater regulations as noted in section 3.2.
- b. A master plan for storm drainage should result in the near future.
- c. Existing drainage facilities should not be modified so as to discharge runoff or increase flow onto adjacent lands.
- d. Innovative construction approaches are encouraged for on and off site storm drainage.
- e. Natural system should be utilized as much as possible for more effective storm drainage control.

4.3.6 Shoreline Management Strategies

- a. Preserving existing undeveloped land along the shoreline should be encouraged as policy and as transitional areas between developed parcels and as a means of preserving natural lands.
- b. Parks or open space land along the shoreline should be fully incorporated into a county wide greenway system.
- c. The county should be prepared to review and assist in the implementation of appropriate regulations which would enhance our area and become part of the Ohio Coastal Management Program.

4.3.7 Hazard Lands Management Strategies

- a. Hazard lands, including steep sloped areas, land with poorly drained soils and other types of undevelopable land, should be used for the preservation and conservation of land and the environment.
- b. All such land should additionally be viewed for potential acquisition into the Erie Metroparks system or other community park system.

4.3.8 Solid Waste Management Strategies

- a. A plan for the management of solid waste for a forty year planning period should be established to ensure that adequate facilities are approved and available as required.
- b. Solid waste management policies should be implemented in a manner that allows for public participation.
- c. The county should review the necessity for additional recycling programs and composting on an annual basis.

4.3.9 Environmentally Sensitive Areas Strategies

- a. Appropriate buffering is encouraged for development near sensitive areas like Old Woman Creek and other protected reserves.
- b. River corridors, such as the Huron and Vermilion rivers should be devoted as open space to preserve the aesthetic and ecologic value.
- c. Restrictions on the type of uses in open space zones and agricultural zones should be strengthened through local zoning resolutions.

4.4 RECREATION

4.4.1 Overview

A strong recreation base that provide high quality recreation and leisure facilities, parks and program activities is an integral a part of the success of a community toward its degree of liveability as nay other fact of a community's structure. This is particularly true for Erie County because our recreational opportunities help maintain the level of prosperity of the local economy. The bountiful recreational and leisure opportunities available throughout the planning area must be preserved, managed and enhanced to support the community into the future.

Several well established parks have created a positive image for the county. For the most part the larger recreation sites, like Cedar Point Amusement Park, have been designed to provide for opportunities for tourists who frequent the region. This aspect of our recreation has been met. Unfortunately, the advancement of the tourist industry has contributed to the lack of development of much needed active recreation sites and program development for the community.

The principal goal of the recreation strategy is to provide a wide range of opportunities for leisure activities that reflect the lifestyle needs of the population. As mentioned above, tourist related recreation needs have been met, as have passive recreational pursuits involving hiking, nature observing and other less strenuous activities. Therefore, the development of active recreation sites for court sports, ice skating and additional program activity on a county wide level needs to be pursued.

4.4.2 Parks and Recreation Sites

Erie County had a total of 148 sites devoted to passive and active recreation according to the 1993 Ohio Statewide Comprehensive Facilities Inventory from ODNR. This included 7,795 land acres, 1,018 wetland acres and about 3,800 hunting acres. The vast majority of these acres were held either in private control or are dedicated for passive recreation pursuits the inventory noted.

Of the five largest recreation sites listed by ODNR, three of them are privately owned. Cedar Point, Castalia Farms and Lagoon Deer Park are the largest sites held in private ownership. Only Kelleys Island State Park and Resthaven Wildlife Area, both publicly operated sites, totaled acreage near the large privately owned sites.

In regard to active recreation areas and facilities, it is clearly evident that the county does not retain an adequate number of active recreation sites. The facilities inventory form gathered for this plan also showed this lack of active areas. Additional structured recreation sites which need to be offered include: baseball/softball, soccer and football fields; ice skating arena; tennis courts; sports day camps and an indoor community recreation center. Currently, the Planning Department is involved in a recreation survey which will assist in the determination of overall facilities needed throughout Erie County. This survey will be incorporated into a future recreation plan for the county.

4.4.3 Erie Metro Parks

The Erie Metroparks was created in 1968 in order to compliment other existing public recreational services within Erie County. As an independent outdoor recreation and conservation agency, the Metroparks are responsible for acquiring, developing and operating parklands maintained by the organization. Woodlands, hiking trails, meadows, an abandoned quarry and grassy areas managed in their natural state comprise most of the Metroparks system. Currently, there are five park areas and reserves distributed throughout Erie County. They are Castalia Quarry Reserve, Edison Woods Reserve, Osborn Recreation Area, Pelton Park and the Coupling Reserve located on the Huron River.

For the most part, the Metroparks have concentrated on their primary goal of preserving the natural environment while providing public recreation. The Osborn Recreation Area with its numerous ballfields, courts and swimming pool represents the sole active recreation site operated by the Metroparks. The other reserves are passive in function, with hiking, fishing and observing being the most popular undertakings.

More leisure hours and greater mobility have resulted in a greater demand for recreation throughout the county. The Erie Metroparks have contributed greatly to the splendid outdoor environment offered to residents and visitors to the area. The county must continue to support fully the metroparks in establishing priorities for acquisition, development and programs. The community must also express its desire for more active recreation site development via the Metroparks.

4.4.4 Strategies for Recreation Development

Although the county is blessed with numerous recreation sites and preserves, the community cannot depend exclusively on them to meet the demands for recreation. To adequately meet the increasing demands of those seeking additional active recreation opportunities, a strategy has been developed to protect existing sites while expanding active recreation development throughout the planning area.

4.4.5 Passive Recreation Strategies

- a. Erie County should continue to cooperate with ODNR, private owners and the Erie Metroparks in maintaining all preserves for the protection of the environment.

- b. All existing preserves should be integrated into a greenway system, where feasible.
- c. The possibility of a bikeway should be considered along one of the existing abandoned railroad rights-of-way in the county. Analysis of the pros and cons should be analyzed and a cost benefit analysis should be undertaken as part of this review. This analysis should be included in the Recreation Master Plan.
- c. The Erie Metroparks should continue to seek available land for acquisition through improved funding.

4.4.6 Active Recreation Strategies

- a. All jurisdictions should formulate a mission statement and goals for active recreation demands in their areas. These can be incorporated into a future recreation study.
- b. The community is encouraged to continue to give priority to the development of an ice rink which would meet the demands for that segment of active recreation in Erie County.
- c. The county should emphasize the development of a recreation center which should be located with good freeway access and within the central region of the county.
- d. All jurisdictions should provide an improved level of maintenance and repair to all existing sites.
- e. The county should investigate other sources of local, state and federal funding that could be made available for operation, maintenance and construction of facilities.

4.4.7 Program Development Strategies

- a. Recreation program activities should be pursued equally for children, teens, adults and senior citizens.
- b. Winter programs should be expanded and promoted more vigorously.
- c. Coordination with all provider organizations to minimize duplication of effort for program and activities is encouraged.

- d. The primary responsibility for program activity could be through a Joint Recreation Board comprised of officials from each jurisdiction.
- e. It is further recommended that Erie County support the formation of a Joint Recreation Board that could finance and maintain major recreation facilities.
- f. The Joint Recreation Board could establish an adequate financing program on an annual and long term basis for funding parks, operations and development.
- g. The board could retain qualified, trained, productive, profession personnel to direct and aid in the establishment of an active recreation system.
- h. It is also recommended that the Erie Regional Planning Commission in conjunction with Erie Metroparks to prepare a recreational master plan to provide for the future acquisition and development of its recreational facilities and programs. The plan would become the guide, the scheme, the design and the vision for the future. The master plan must be a cooperative effort among Regional Planning, Erie Metroparks, the political subdivisions and the citizens of Erie County. Since limited funds are available, the recreational needs should be established and priorities set as to when these needs can be met.

4.5 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

4.5.1 Overview

Historic sites and structures symbolize the physical heritage with which Erie County has been shaped since the early nineteenth century. The many historic buildings and archeological sites throughout the planning area are remnants of a once diverse cultural and economic center focused around Sandusky. Numerous structures which remain from this period and the early 1900's are tangible reminders of the community's past. Today, these places create a sense of identity unmatched in this part of Ohio.

A broad goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to assure that strategies for areas of significant architectural and historic value be addressed in a manner as to encourage preservation of buildings as links to the past. There are many benefits that this type of heritage preservation can provide for the county. They include economic benefits such as increased travel and tourism, downtown revitalization and providing housing. There are also aesthetic considerations and quality of life issues involving creating continuity in areas that lack a sense of place.

Erie County recognizes that historic preservation is a shared responsibility among levels of government, non-governmental organizations and property owners and residents. The federal government sets a legal framework for which historic and archeological sites can be preserved. This is done through the nomination and listing of a place on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic preservation organizations in the county are involved in this activity including the designation of, listing of and rehabilitation of historic properties.

4.5.2 Historic Inventories

There are two officially recognized lists which identify sites, districts, buildings and other structures worthy of preservation for their local, state or national significance in American history. The Ohio Historic Inventory and the National Register of Historic Places are those lists. The designation of any building or site as a National Register listing or an Ohio Historic structure carries with it certain advantages for property owners. It not only accords residents a certain prestige, but also provides a measure of protection from demolition against federally funded projects and provides for incentives to rehabilitate and invest in historic buildings. Both of these lists will provide a sound basis on which to construct a beneficial preservation strategy.

The Ohio Historic Inventory, recorded by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO), identifies and documents architecturally and historically significant properties in Ohio. During the past two years, 285 properties were surveyed and recorded in Erie County as part of OHPO's inventory program. These additions brought the total number of buildings identified on the inventory to 2,129 for the county. Only six counties; Hamilton, Franklin, Cuyahoga, Montgomery, Washington and Trumbull ranked ahead of Erie County in terms of total listing on the Ohio Historic Inventory.

The National Register of Historic Places is the other officially renowned inventory of historic properties. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Register is compiled and maintained by the National Park Service. According to the National Register, nearly 300 buildings are currently recognized for their historic significance. The city of Sandusky individually accounted for over 100 of these listings. Seven historic districts are also recognized as part of the National Register listings in the county.

4.5.3 Historic Areas of Erie County

As mentioned earlier, Sandusky is the area with the largest concentration of buildings and sites listed on the National Register. Concentrations of historic buildings can be found north of Perkins Avenue between Sycamore Line and Camp Street. The Water Street Commercial District between Wayne and Jackson Streets, the Columbus Avenue District between East Water and East Market Streets and the Cable Park Historic District near Columbus and Wayne Streets also contain dense concentrations.

Kelleys Island National Historic District encompassing all of the island, is another heavily concentrated historic area. Most of the historic buildings are located on Water Street, Division Street or Woodford Road. The single largest concentration of sites occurs within the South Shore Historic District near Water Street. Archeological sites, such as Inscription Rock, represent the historic and prehistoric significance of this unique place in Erie County.

The remainder of buildings and sits listed on the National Register for the County can be found dispersed throughout the planning area. The Milan Historic District and Mitchell Historic District in the village of Milan and the Harbour Town Historic District in Vermilion each have a significant number of historic buildings. The locations of historic areas are shown on the associated map. Also noted on the map ar the three designated National Historic Landmarks, the highest level of recognition awarded by the federal government for historic structures. The Breakers Hotel at Cedar Point, Thomas Edison's birthplace in Milan and the Spacecraft Propulsion Research Center at NASA Plumbrook Station are the recognized landmarks.

4.5.4 Strategies for Historic Preservation

There are numerous ways a community can work to preserve its historic properties. Like any limited resource, historic properties need careful planning and management to ensure their survival for future generations. Because of the positive role historic buildings perform for Erie County, a combination of strategies should be implemented by local communities.

4.5.5 Historic Resources Preservation Strategies

- a. The county should encourage the conservation of all designated and potentially designated properties over demolition.
- b. The county should encourage revitalization and infill efforts that are responsive to the historic context of certain areas.
- c. Every reasonable effort should be made to protect historic resources affected by or adjacent to new development.
- d. New uses for historically designated buildings that have no historical basis or which do not compliment the existing structure should be discouraged.
- e. Citizens, the Old House Guild of Sandusky and the Erie County Historical Society are encouraged to continue to facilitate the nomination of buildings on the Ohio Historic Inventory and the National Register.
- f. Archeological properties like those found on Kelleys Island should be safeguarded against additional human interference.
- g. All non-contributing structures within historic districts are encouraged to pursue rehabilitation.
- h. Historic features, such as street patterns, trees, outbuildings, fences and other features that are an important part of the property history are encouraged to be preserved.
- i. The county should encourage the improvement of communication channels between historic associations and local government to achieve continued preservation.

j. Erie County should recognize the following areas as having potential for nomination for National Register listing:

- ◆ Milan canal area
- ◆ Berlin Heights
- ◆ Parts of downtown Castalia
- ◆ Old plat area in Sandusky
- ◆ Sandusky's west end factory houses
- ◆ G & C Foundry
- ◆ Residential area near Huron's lakefront park

4.6 TRANSPORTATION

4.6.1 Overview

Transportation issues were one of the greatest concerns expressed during the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Most of the transportation issues effecting the county relate to seasonal tourism, the resulting traffic load created and traffic conflicts created from recreational and commercial businesses. Investment in the transportation system is a key element towards achieving the goal of a livable community and in the achievement of objectives for a healthy environment and economy.

The transportation strategies of this plan principally focus on the roads and highways which serve the county residents. Specifically, the roadways are a vital link to the area's continuously developing structure within northwest Ohio. This section will also provide for strategies related to the other lesser components of the transportation system which are part of local and national network.

4.6.2 General Street Plan

Since Erie County's street system is generally related to those streets radiating outward from the city of Sandusky, most of the significant access routes are of a north-south orientation. These roads include Columbus Avenue, U.S. 250, State Route 4, State Route 101 and State Route 60, State Route 61 and State Route 13 in other parts of the county. These roads are either classified as principal arterials or major collectors.

The significant access routes of east-west orientation play a much lesser role in the overall movement of traffic within Erie County. State Route 2, a designated limited access freeway, provides the most expedient route for traffic moving east to west. Other routes include State Route 113, Mason Road, Bogart Road, Perkins Avenue, State Route 6 and Strub Road. Because of heavy development pressures along these roads, careful monitoring of them must take place for Erie County to realize its overall transportation goals.

Through survey responses, the community's residents expressed a strong agreement that there are problems with a number of routes and intersections effecting the proper flow of traffic in the county. The four roads identified most frequently were U.S. 250, State Route 4, State Route 60 and U.S. 6. The "Thoroughfare Plan Update" lists specific recommendations to mitigate traffic related problems along these routes and suggests improvements to intersections as well. The plan recommends that the county adhere to the recommendation in the update to bring community concerns into focus.

The "Erie County Thoroughfare Plan Update" is the official document in place which will further assist this plan in the improvement of the streets and highways system. As a matter of policy, the update should be adopted in conjunction with the adoption of this plan. As a result, transportation needs of the county can be approached with full understanding of the most urgent needs, as well as, future considerations.

4.6.3 Other Segments of the Transportation System

Although Erie County's transportation system is heavily dependent on the roads for movement, there are other modes of transportation at work. An extensive rail system comprised of Conrail and N & W railroads ship many of the larger commodities from the county and into one of two of the local shipping ports. Those ports are located in the cities of Huron and Sandusky. The ports are used to ship agriculture product, crushed stone products and coal throughout the Great Lakes water system.

Public transportation in the city of Sandusky and airports are utilized less frequently than any other form of transportation in the county. Public light busing service in Sandusky currently is the only means of public transport in the county. Airports on Kelleys Island, Griffing Airport, Ortner Airport, Huron Airport and several small landing strips form the small air system in the county. Griffing airport and the airport on Kelleys Island are the most heavily used.

4.6.4 Strategies for Transportation

The County's transportation system has seen very little change over the past ten years, excluding the resurfacing and improvements to some roads and intersections. Major improvements or expansion is not seen as a likely occurrence in the forms of transportation mentioned above, but expansion possibilities still exists particularly for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The strategies below concentrate on upgrading and solidifying the current systems with some details about possible development.

4.6.5 Roads and Highways Strategies

- a. Erie County should pursue strategies to avoid roadway congestion as identified in the *Thoroughfare Plan Update*.
- b. To improve the existing street network, the classification system designed in the *Thoroughfare Plan Update* should be adhered to.
- c. Key road segments should be prioritized in terms of improvements and funding.
- d. The internal circulation pattern for streets within all subdivisions should be reviewed to ensure appropriate linkages with abutting development.
- e. Street patterns for local streets should be designed to discourage undue through traffic.
- f. The county should improve guidelines to reduce the frequency of driveway entrances, particularly on designated arterial.
- g. Adequate street stubs for future roadway connections should be provided in subdivisions.

- h. Alternate routes to Cedar Point should be pursued to help mitigate seasonal traffic problems.
- i. Right-of-way standards should be improved as noted in the *Thoroughfare Plan*.
- j. Recommendations in the *Thoroughfare Plan* should govern improvements to the street system and be adopted as policies for transportation.
- k. An assessment program should be established to ensure safe traffic movement throughout the county.

4.6.6 General Transportation Strategies

- a. The city of Sandusky should continue to seek funding for public transportation.
- b. The county should maximize the use of available state and federal funds, including ISTEA funds, when making improvements or scheduling improvements.
- c. In the development review process, provisions for pedestrian facilities, including, sidewalks, wheelchair ramps and improved access should be examined.
- d. In infill target areas, pedestrian access and facilities should be encouraged.
- e. Bicycle paths should be pursued in the overall transportation planning for Erie County.
- f. Port master plans for Huron, Sandusky and Kelleys island should be adhered to for effective development of that transportation system.

4.6.7 Erie County Thoroughfare Plan Update

4.6.8 Recommendations

4.6.9 Street Hierarchy

The street hierarchy systems as described in table 6 are recommended for adoption and inclusion in the Erie County Subdivision Regulations. This street hierarchy is based on the twenty year projection of expected road functions. When major subdivisions are proposed along these thoroughfares, additional right-of-way should be required to provide for the future widening of these roadways. Municipal subdivision regulations should be revised to recognize the proposed street hierarchy system developed in this plan. The functional classifications are as follow and illustrated on the map included in this section.

a. Major Collectors

Major collectors are rural state routes along with key county roads that provide inter and intra-regional traffic movement in Erie County. It is expected that the need for the widening of these roads would be limited to turn lanes in unique locations. Roads included in this classification include:

- ◆ State Route 60 (south of U.S. 2)
- ◆ State Route 113, State Route 61, State Route 13, State Route 99, State Route 269 and State Route 101
- ◆ Bogart Road
- ◆ Mason Road (from U.S. 250 east and from State Route 4 west)
- ◆ Strub Road

b. Minor Arterials

Minor arterials insure access from all developed areas to a principal arterial. They are still designed for the purpose of mobility so access is somewhat controlled. Average spacing is typically five to ten miles. Roads included in this classification include:

- ◆ State Route 60 (between State Rout 2 and Vermilion)
This segment of State Route 60 is classified as a minor arterial to accommodate projected traffic flow and expected commercial development.

- ◆ State Route 4 (south of turnpike to county line)
State Route 4 is currently shown as a minor arterial according to the current ODOT highway functional classification system. State Route 4 is a key highway linking Sandusky and Erie County with the Columbus area utilizing U.S. 23.

c. Principal Arterials

Principal arterials link connecting rural highways at urbanized limits. They also provide links between major centers of urbanized areas and can be spaced about one to five miles throughout heavily urbanized areas. Roads included in this classification include:

- ◆ State Route 4 (between the turnpike and Perkins Ave.)
State Route 4 between the turnpike and Perkins Avenue should be classified as a principal arterial. This is a result of the new interchange at the turnpike. Intermediate improvements, such as center turn lanes, are expected to be warranted as traffic volumes increase in conjunction with new development. Ultimately, this thoroughfare is expected to be improved to five lanes.
- ◆ U.S. 250 (between the turnpike and U.S. 6)
U.S. 250 between the turnpike and U.S. 6 is designated as a principal major arterial. Currently the northern portion of U.S. 250 between State Route 2 and U.S. 6 clearly functions as a major arterial with five lanes and very high traffic volumes. Between State Route 2 and the turnpike, the planned widening of this segment and expected commercial development conclusively place this road segment in the category of being a major arterial.
- ◆ U.S. 6 (between Rye Beach Road and Butler Street)
Between Rye Beach Road and Butler Street, U.S. 6 is designated as a principal arterial. The primary reason for this designation is because all Cedar Point traffic ultimately will be funneled onto U.S. 6 regardless of the route the traffic takes off of State Route 2 or the turnpike.

4.6.10 Site Plan Review and Access Control

The following recommendations are made to improve access and site planning along all thoroughfares that are classified as major collectors or higher on the street hierarchy.

a. Review of Non-Residential Development Through Subdivision Regulations

The definition of a subdivision within Erie County Subdivision Regulations should be interpreted to include all development that involves any form of easement for streets or public improvements. This Action should be coordinated with any township local site plan review process. Dedication of right-of-way should be required where shown to be needed according to the street hierarchy classification.

b. Township Level Site Plan Review

The township level site plan review process should be strengthened and coordinated with the county level site plan review process. Although this recommendation applies to all townships, a local site plan review process is especially important in Perkins, Huron, Groton, Margaretta, Milan and Vermilion townships where key thoroughfare corridors are located.

c. Municipal Level Site Plan Review

The municipal level site plan review process should be strengthened or established as the case may be. Although this recommendation applies to all municipalities, a strong and effective local site plan review process is especially important in the cities of Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion.

4.6.11 East/West Traffic Movement

The designation of Mason and Bogart Roads as major collectors is viewed as the recommended action necessary to help preserve roadway capacity. Development along these roads should be set back as described on the street hierarchy and accommodation for widening at intersections should be provided.

4.6.12

Key Road Segments

a. U.S. 250 (Bogart Road to Ohio Turnpike)

U.S. 250 will continue to be the main route to Cedar Point and commercial development will occur at a rapid pace once water and sewer services are provided. Aggressive steps must be taken to maximize both traffic flow and access to adjacent development. This road segment is classified as a principal arterial (throughout Erie County) and will be improved to this level when ODOT completes its project to widen this road segment to five lanes.

The following measures are recommended:

- ◆ **Signalization**
Improved signalization north of State Route 2 should be studied in detail. Improved signalization would help maintain traffic flow because intersection capacity determines the overall capacity of the thoroughfare.
- ◆ **Site Plan Review**
A county and/or township site plan review process should be implemented to review new development from the standpoint of access control. If aggressively implemented, a site plan review process could encourage exceptionally creative site planning.
- ◆ **Access Roads (frontage)**
Further study of access roads is warranted and recommended. Access roads can help balance the need to provide access to adjacent property with traffic movement through the area.
- ◆ **Block Length Requirement**
Requiring the dedication of public right-of-way every 200 feet along the frontage would provide more options to manage traffic flow in terms of future signalization. This would also reduce the degree to which parcels of frontage on U.S. 250 would become landlocked as land along U.S. 250 is developed and would provide outlets for frontage roads.

- ◆ Signage Issues
It is recommended that local land use control measures include some attention toward regulation of signage. Specifically, tighter control of both the size and number of signs, as well as, their appearance along major road corridors needs to be developed, implemented and maintained.

b. State Route 4 (Perkins Avenue to Ohio Turnpike)

With the new interchange at State Route 4 and the turnpike, traffic flow and development activity are expected to increase significantly. Increases in development activity will follow the pace at which water and sewer services are provided. The following measures are recommended:

- ◆ Street Hierarchy
State Route 4 should be designated as a principal arterial between Perkins Avenue and the Ohio turnpike (see street hierarchy).
- ◆ Planning Committee
A permanent planning committee should be formed, consisting of members from the present Thoroughfare Update Committee and Cedar Point Amusement Park, to oversee development and widening projects along the State Route 4 corridor. The State Route 4 corridor involves three townships and future improvements are important to the city of Sandusky. A permanent committee, with representatives from all interested organizations, would help coordinate activities along this important corridor.
- ◆ Signalization
The placement of traffic signals at all major intersections along the corridor will help regulate the overall capacity of the thoroughfare.
- ◆ Subdivision Review
Any subsequent residential or commercial development accomplished as a subdivision should require the dedication of right-of-way whenever possible to preserve the potential for State Route 4 to ultimately become a five lane highway. This process can be implemented through a subdivision review process.

- ◆ Zoning and Site Plan Review
As illustrated in the street hierarchy, required front yard setbacks should be substantial (150 feet or more from ROW center) to provide for the ultimate widening of State Route 4 to five lanes. As in the case with U.S. 250, a site plan review should be implemented to provide a process whereby site plans could be reviewed and modifications be required to manage access.
- ◆ Signage
As recommended by the State Route 4 Corridor Committee, signage should be used to direct tourist traffic to Cedar Point Amusement Park or the Lake Erie islands from State Route 4 to State Route 2 to avoid operational problems on State Route 4 north of State Route 2.

c. State Route 113 (U.S. 250 to State Route 6)

State Route 113 also serves as an important east/west route through Erie County although its location in the far southern part of Erie County makes it less useful for general east/west movement. This road segment is designated a rural collector and key recommendations include:

- ◆ Site Plan Review
A county and/or township site plan review process should include the review of development along State Route 113. Development pressures are not expected to be great, but of major concern is the prevention of isolated access problems that could be created with new development.

d. State Route 60 (between Vermilion and State Route 2)

This road segment is designated as a minor arterial. To reach the level of minor arterial, State Route 60 will required widening, although the need for such improvements may not be warranted for some time. Ultimately, it is expected that three lanes will be required to handle through traffic between State Route 2 and Vermilion, with the center urn lane helping to provide access to adjacent commercial land uses. Key recommendations include:

- ◆ Site Plan Review
A county and/or township site plan review process should be implemented to review new development from the standpoint of access control.
- ◆ Subdivision Review
Pursuant to any subdivision review of development along State Route 60 north of State Route 2, dedication of right-of-way should be required to further accommodate the expected widening of State Route 60.
- ◆ Signage Issues
The regulation of signage can greatly enhance the appearance of the roadway by reducing visual clutter, thus improving the marketability of the area for future development activities.

e. State Route 60 (between State Route 2 and County Line)

South of State Route 2, State Route 60 is designated a rural collector, although traffic volumes are still somewhat high immediately south of State Route 2. Recommendations for this segment include:

- ◆ Traffic Safety Improvements
The need for various traffic safety improvements should be studied along State Route 60, south of State Route 2. There may be a need for signalization at congested intersections just south of State Route 2 and visibility may need to be improved at other areas.

f. Rye Beach Road

Between U.S. 6 and Bogart Road, this road segment is designated as a minor arterial on the hierarchy system. Rye Beach Road is projected to experience increasing traffic volumes as a result of development in this corridor and to some extent from Cedar Point traffic using Huron Avery Road as an alternative route to Cedar Point during peak flow periods. South of Bogart, Rye Beach Road is designated as a major collector, as is Huron Avery Road. Key recommendations include:

- ◆ **Site Plan Review**
A county and/or township site plan review process should be implemented to review new development from the standpoint of access control.
- ◆ **Subdivision Review**
Pursuant to any subdivision review of development along the north portion of Rye Beach Road, dedication of right-of-way should be required to further accommodate the expected widening of the road to the level of minor arterial.
- ◆ **Signage Issues**
The regulation of signage is recommended to reduce visual clutter and enhance the appearance of this entire road segment.

4.6.13 Cedar Point Access

The management of Cedar Point traffic is one of the most pressing traffic problems facing Erie County. Near term efforts to improve access to Cedar Point should focus on U. S. 6. As noted, all traffic flow to Cedar Point ultimately involves U.S. 6. Because Cedar Point traffic is projected to continue to increase, demands on U.S. 6 will also increase. The entire length of U.S. 6 is designated as a principal arterial. Specific recommendations for U.S. 6 include:

- a. **Subdivision Review:**
Right-of-way should be acquired whenever possible to preserve the potential for future widening consistent with a principal arterial.
- b. **Zoning and Site Plan Review:**
All new development occurring along this segment of road should be subject to a site plan review process to help manage access.
- c. **Signage Control:**
Special attention should be directed toward control of signs to enhance the appearance of this highly traveled route.

- d. Study of U.S. 6:
A study of U.S. 6 between Rye Beach Road and Butler Street should be conducted to further examine the potential for widening and to assess the current needs for safety improvements near major traffic generators and the Perkins Road/U.S. 6 intersection. Special attention should also be directed toward the Rye Beach Road and U.S. 6 intersection and toward options for phasing improvements.

Secondary to widening U.S. 6, the Butler Street improvements are considered important to enhance access to Cedar Point. Butler Street is already the primary route taken to Causeway Drive and widening the off ramp from U.S. 250 and the construction of a reversing center lane would increase capacity.

The extension of Strub Road from Perkins Avenue to U.S. 6 is recommended for further study as a means to direct seasonal traffic to Cedar Point. The Strub Road extension is therefore a long range project. It is especially important, however, to keep this option viable and not allow new development to preclude this option in the future.

- e. Alternate Routes and IVHS:
Traffic flow to Cedar Point could be most efficiently controlled with an IVHS system. The need to use State Route 13 and/or Huron Avery Road as an alternate routes to Cedar Point during peak traffic flow will grow in the future. It is recommended, therefore, that the options using Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems be pursued to make more efficient use of the highway system.
- f. Closer Communication:
It is recommended that closer communications between Cedar Point and local officials be developed. The formal establishment of local committee, with representation from the city and county engineering and planning departments and Cedar Point, would facilitate ongoing communication.

4.6.14 Subdivision Regulations

Most of the new roads constructed in Erie County will likely be local residential streets built by private developers. While the primary function of these roads is to provide access to property, these roads become part of the transportation system with a secondary function of minor levels of traffic circulation. Interconnected subdivisions, which provide secondary and minor levels of traffic circulation, can be very important in terms of emergency response times, as well as, alternate routes in the event of road closings. It is therefore recommended that:

a. **Connections:**

Preferably all new subdivisions should provide two access points into and out of a development. In some cases, this may be unrealistic due to the size of the development and topography of the site. In smaller developments, a preferred approach is to develop loop streets connected to the existing thoroughfare. For phased developments, stub streets can be constructed to provide for future continuation of the street to ultimately provide access to adjacent existing thoroughfares.

Other issues with respect to the Erie County Subdivision Regulations include the need for consistency and the need to amend the classification of roads according to the hierarchy defined in Map this section. Specific recommendations include:

b. **Consistency:**

The Erie County Subdivision Regulations and other local municipal subdivision regulations should be made more consistent with each other.

c. **Street Hierarchy System:**

The street hierarchy system should be amended as shown. This system should be made consistent with ODOT's classification of Erie County roads when completed.

4.6.15 Traffic Safety

Erie County should pursue federal "402" funds to conduct further studies of high crash locations. These locations include U.S. 6 in the city of Vermilion and State Route 113, Columbus Avenue, Perkins Avenue and U.S. 250 all within Perkins township.

4.6.16 Transportation Needs of Kelleys Island

A high priority project for the village of Kelleys Island is the preparation of a long range road improvement program.

4.7 RURAL PLANNING

4.7.1 Overview

The decade of the 1980's attested to the success of the rural, unincorporated areas of Erie County in capturing new growth. The many ideals associated with rural living, including the promise of reduced congestion and a clean environment have enhanced certain rural locations ability to attract new development. Growth for the most part, has not diminished the rural integrity or the balance of agriculture and development in the townships. In certain instances though, the proliferation of single family homes along rural roads not designed to function for residential uses and the growth of frontage commercial development with numerous curb cuts have compounded problems in previously undeveloped areas. Physical changes pertaining to the loss of farmland, increased traffic and safety problems, health concerns related to the use of septic systems and increased land values typifies the end results of this growth.

Clear development goals for the townships have not been implemented other than on a site by site basis for the more rural areas. Agriculture and rural residential zoning classifications in the townships, while effective in limiting densities in rural areas, cannot be relied upon in their present state to curb development of residential and commercial uses. The rural planning strategy intends to address rural; development and introduce a sound planning scheme. By encouraging sensible design in the site plan and subdivision review process, the county can assist in the successful planning of the rural areas.

4.7.2 Rural Land Development Problems

Structurally, the typical rural place within Erie County is not as complex as their more urban counterparts. Single family residences at low densities predominate, sanitary sewers are limited and industries are few. However, the introduction of commercial establishments like those seen on U.S. 250 and State Route 60 and the development of mini-subdivisions in unfitting areas, have displaced traditional uses more suited for rural locations. Such growth has caused some of these problems:

- a. The function of designated county, township and state roads have changed due to the profusion of frontage development and excessive curb cuts.

- b. High land values for non-farm uses once a commercial building is permitted have contributed to the conversion of productive farmland.
- c. The development of commercial clusters with large tracts of intervening farmland have contributed to sprawling conditions.
- d. The increase in development outside of serviced areas has made the availability of public services an issue.
- e. Cost efficient expenditure of funds for infrastructure has not occurred as a result of development beyond serviced areas.

4.7.3 Rural Development and Preservation Strategies

Zoning land for rural areas and provisions within the county subdivision regulations are two planning tools implemented for ensuring harmony among new non-farm dwellings with the rural environment. These tools have been effective in controlling growth in the locations and less effective on rural lands near developing areas like U.S. 250. Therefore, this section intends to lessen the impacts of development in rural Erie County.

- a. Strict agriculture zoning establishing a minimum lot size greater than what is currently used in the townships should be reviewed.
- b. Rezoning property to commercial beyond serviced areas is not encouraged unless shown otherwise on the future land use map.
- c. Zoning changes from agriculture in actively farmed areas should not be encouraged.
- d. Subdivisions proposed along major rural collectors and arterials should not be approved unless curb cuts are minimized in their design.
- e. The future land use map has concentrated development near existing village and other significantly built up areas. Development not following this pattern should be discouraged.
- f. Extension of sewer and water facilities into rural areas should follow policies for expansion recommended in the utilities section of the plan.
- g. The State Route 4 corridor has been planned for based on the State Route 4 Analysis and recommendations from the planning

committee. Development proposals not in accordance with those recommendations should not be approved.

- h. Support and encourage changed in the ORC regarding access management. etc.

4.8 INFILL DEVELOPMENT

4.8.1 Overview

The challenge facing Erie County is how best to shape the community to assure that orderly, balance growth occurs. The Comprehensive Plan stresses the need to properly coordinate development with the limitations of the community's infrastructure and the current established land use pattern in order for this type of growth to ensue. Recommending infill development as a means of achieving well planned development is one such strategy which will provide a planning framework to achieve plan objectives.

There exists locations within the planning area where underutilized, adequately serviced sites are available to accommodate new growth. These sites meet proper development conditions regarding access, traffic circulation and infrastructure demands yet have not been built to capacity and offer further opportunities for added development. Encouraging commercial, industrial and residential uses to locate within such locations will result in a suitable land use pattern. The need to lessen costly services onto undeveloped land and decreasing the probability of improperly planned development will also result.

Erie County is responsible for providing services and thus has an interest in ensuring that the forthcoming land uses will contribute to a form which can be efficiently and effectively serviced. The development of housing, commercial uses and industry within already developed, fully infrastructured areas is the primary mechanism to bring efficiency to the community.

4.8.2 Infill Target Areas

The key thrust of the concept of infill development is the recommendation that existing built up areas be utilized in the most appropriate locations. The future land use map has utilized land in the best manner to achieve a liveable community. Infill strategies have been undertaken in the context of clearly identifiable target areas. Below are the locations within the county where infill development should be pursued.

4.8.3 Residential Infill

Housing development has many important implications for determining a working land use pattern. Larger scale residential growth, while permissible if individual septic systems or package systems are approved, does introduce long term problems related to environmental health. An efficient land use pattern becomes more difficult if these uses locate in higher densities without proper services as well. To ease over development in areas not serviced by sanitary sewer and water, the plan recommends that higher density residential growth locate within the following areas where services are available, capacities are adequate or where planned sewer and water extensions are identified in this plan:

- Parker/Billings Road area, Margaretta township
- State Route 101/Bogart Road area, immediately outside of Castalia
- Venice area, west end of Sandusky
- Campbell Street/Schenk Road area, Perkins township
- Hull Road area, western Huron township
- Boos Road area, Huron township
- Berlin/Sprowl Road area, immediately outside Huron
- Rye Beach Road area, south of State Route 2 interchange
- Planned streets as part of subdivisions within these areas
- Villages and cities where facilities are available
- Those areas further identified in secondary plans

4.8.4 Commercial Infill

Urban intense commercial development is best suited for areas that contain existing commercial establishments which have provided infrastructure. Encouraging commercial infill will strengthen residents access to services and shopping, provide for new businesses to locate and create an environment in which existing businesses can remain viable. These areas should be accorded further commercial development:

- U.S. 250, in areas where development can be integrated into existing design
- Perkins Avenue, in established commercial centers
- State Route 4, north of State Route 2 in clustered areas
- Village Square, village of Milan
- South Shore area, Kelleys Island
- Main Street area, village of Castalia
- Main Street area, Berlin Heights

- Downtown areas, Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion
- Ohio Turnpike interchange area on State Route 4
- Hamlet areas of Florence and Birmingham
- Those areas in the cities where planned commercial areas already exist
- Areas which are further identified in secondary plans

4.8.5 Industrial Infill

Because of the nature of industrial activities, it is important to separate such pursuits from other land uses. Currently, there are a full range of location choices which are fully infrastructured and easily accessible that will support proper industrial development. Furthermore, these areas will enable the county to avoid mitigating problems related to conflicting land uses. To support the objectives for industrial development, these areas should be identified for future industrial development:

- Margaretta Industrial Park, corner of State Route 2 and State Route 101
- Sandusky Industrial Park, Superior Street area
- Sawmill Creek Industrial Park, Rye Beach Road area south of State Route 2
- Riverport Industrial Park, River Road area
- Old Railroad area north of Strub Road in Perkins township
- Adjacent to existing industrial businesses in the cities
- Those areas further identified in secondary plan

4.8.6 Strategies for Infill Development

The Erie County Comprehensive Plan intends to improve the coordination of land uses with natural and historic resources, public services, transportation and the current established land use pattern. Encouraging infill as a means of achieving this coordination will permit intensive land uses to take advantage of opportunities and services that already exist in the planning area. Additionally, recommendations within the utilities section will assist the plan in avoiding overburdening the county's limited infrastructure because of added development.

4.8.7 Infill Development Strategies:

- a. In the site plan review process, all jurisdictions should support the appropriate siting of all higher density development in accordance with this section.

- b. The plan encourages the development of like uses in key locations as mentioned in this section.
- c. Initiatives in the general strategies section that compliment infill should be aggressively pursued.
- d. Timely information on the capacity of available services should be utilized for amendments to this plan.
- e. Intensification should take place with respect for existing features of historical and environmental importance.
- f. The mixture of separate uses within a development proposal should be assessed as to the effect on existing services.
- g. Redevelopment projects are encouraged in the cities and villages.

SECTION 4.9

EXISTING WATERWORKS FACILITIES IN ERIE COUNTY

4.9 Overview

The infrastructure system for Erie County sanitary sewers, water systems, rural water system and road network represent the major concern for future planning purposes and are a tremendous public investment for the community. Erie County's responsibility is the collection and treatment of wastewater, the distribution of water for consumption and industrial uses and to provide for the efficient movement of people throughout the county in cooperation with and utilizing services from Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion. Provision for and maintenance and expansion of these services have become one of the primary functions of the county government.

To support the needs of the current and projected population and to satisfy infill objectives of this plan, the servicing and expansion of infrastructure over the long term must have precedence. When adequate services are available, the county will enhance the liveability of the area by minimizing problems associated with development. As such, policies for waterline and sewer line extensions must be set aside in a long term capital improvements plan for proper judgments concerning development to be made for the county.

4.9.1 Locations and Capacities

There are seven major waterworks systems in Erie County. These are Sandusky, Huron, Vermilion, Milan, Kelleys Island, Erie-Huron Rural Water Authority and the Erie County water system. All systems mentioned above, except for Milan, receive their raw water from Lake Erie. Milan's supply is from wells located southeast of the village.

Erie County does not own or operate its own supply or treatment facilities, but purchases water from Sandusky, Huron, Vermilion and Milan through contractual agreements.

Erie-Huron Rural Authority does not own or operate its own supply or treatment facilities, but purchase water from Elyria, Ohio through contractual agreements.

There are no private water systems, as such, with complete treatment facilities in Erie County; however, there are some industries that use stream or pond water for cooling purposes. Specific data on the existing systems in Erie County can be found on the table which is summarized below:

Sandusky Treatment Plant

- Supply – Lake Erie Intake – 42” (includes Lake Erie and Sandusky Bay)
- Intake Capacity – 20 mgd at low water datum 568.5
- Treatment – sedimentation and filtration
- Plant Capacity – 18 mgd with peak loads
- Waterlines – range from 3” – 42” (110 miles of waterline – 990 hydrants)
- Distribution Limitation – distribution mains from plant to system limits plant output
- Elevated Storage – 1.0 mg
- Plant Clearwell – 4 mg
- Customer – 10,000
- 1994 Average Day 00 11.96 mgd (includes county use)
- 1994 Maximum Day – 15.98 mgd (includes county use)

Huron Treatment Plant

- Supply – Lake Erie Intake – 36”
- Intake Capacity – 10 mgd (Havens and Emerson 1957 report)
- Treatment – sedimentation and filtration
- Plant Capacity – 3.4 mgd
- Waterlines – range from 4” to 16”
- Elevated Storage - .25 mg east of city 0.4 west of city
- Customers – 3,200
- 1994 Average Day – 1.68 mgd (includes county use)
- 1994 Maximum Day – 2.58 mgd (includes county use)

Vermilion Treatment Plant

- Supply – Lake Erie Intake – 18”
- Treatment – sedimentation and filtration
- Plant Capacity – 3 mgd
- Waterlines – range from 4” – 16” (35 miles of waterline)
- Elevated Storage – 1.0 mg
- Customers – 4,300
- 1994 Average Day – 1.6 mgd
- 1994 Maximum Day – 2.1 mgd

Milan Treatment Plant

- Supply – wells
- Capacity – pump capacity 1.44 mgd
- Quality – hard
- Treatment – rapid sand filter
- Plant Capacity – 1.9 mgd
- Waterlines – range from 4" to 12"
- Elevated Storage - .400 mgd
- Customers – 695
- 1994 Average Day - .350 mgd
- 1994 Maximum Day - .520 mgd

Kelleys Island Treatment Plant

- Supply – Lake Erie intake – 8"
- Treatment – chlorination
- Waterlines – range from 6" to 8"
- Customers – 202
- Elevated Storage – 0.05 mg
- Average Day – 0.031 mgd
- Maximum Day – 0.148

Nominal water treatment capacities were estimated on the basis of the average daily requirement. It is estimated that plants designed on this basis will be able to meet the maximum daily requirement of 1 ½ times the average.

4.9.2 Water Districts

The Erie County Water Department is split into seven water districts according to the Ohio E.P.A.

Perkins Water District

1994 Daily Average – 2.128 mgd (Perkins); with 4,653 customers. A 16" master meter connecting to Sandusky's system, south of Perkins Avenue on Columbus Avenue. New Departure has its own 8" connection and master meter off the east Sandusky waterline.

Pump Station: Three 1,800 gpm pumps at facility

Storage: Cedarbrook Lane (9/14/56) 300,000 gallon tank
Park Place Mall (11/23/90) 1,000,000 gallon tank

Note: Water levels are controlled by radio telemetry from pump stations.

Margaretta Water District

1994 Daily Average: 748 mgd with 1,312 customers. A 16" connection with a 10" master meter to Sandusky system, south of city limits on Route 101 (Tiffin Avenue).

Pump Station: Homegardner Road

Pump #1 - 210 gpm

Pump #2 – 250 gpm

Pump #3 – 770 gpm (emergency only)

Route 101:

Pump #1 – 415 gpm

Pump #2 – 415 gpm

Maple Avenue:

Pump #1 – 400 gpm

Pump #2 – 700 gpm

Pump #3 – 150 gpm*

*Station has only been used in dry or drought-like conditions.

Route 269

Pump #1 – 150 gpm

Pump #2 – 150 gpm

Pump #3 – 150 gpm

Storage: Bogart Road Tank (12/12/57) 100,000 gallons – level controlled by radio telemetry from Route 101 pump station

Maple Avenue Tank (11/11/57) – level by radio telemetry from Homegardner Road pump station

Billings/Parker Road Tank (1995) 400,000 gallons – level controlled by radio telemetry from Route 269 pump station

Milan Water District

1994 Daily Average: 128 mgd with 43 customers. Has a 6" master meter on Route 250 across from the Clevite plant. No pump stations or water tanks in this district.

Vermilion Water District

1994 Daily Average: .061 mgd with 220 customers. Vermilion water district is connected from a 12" water main from the city of Vermilion. An 8" master meter is located on Route 60 south of the city limits.

Pump Station – Route 60
Pump #1 – 100 gpm
Pump #2 – 150 gpm
Pump #3 – 250 gpm

Storage – Route 60 Tank (3/18/66) 100,000 gallons – level controlled by radio telemetry from Route 60 pump station.

Huron East Water District

1994 Daily Average: 116 mgd with 334 customers. Connection made on a 12" waterline at Huron east water tank with a 10" master meter.

Pump Station: East Cleveland Road (Mitiwanga)
Pump #1 – 250 gpm
Pump #2 – 250 gpm
Pump #3 – 250 gpm

Storage – No storage tanks in district.

Huron South Water District

1994 Daily Average - .143 mgd with 345 services. This district has two connections to the city of Huron; an 8" master meter on Berlin Road at city limits and a 10" master meter located on River Road just north of Sprowl Road.

Pump Stations: River and Sprowl Road
Pump #1 – 315 gpm
Pump #2 – 315 gpm

Berlin Heights #1:
Pump #1 – 140 gpm
Pump #2 – 140 gpm

Berlin Heights #2:
Pump #1 – 140 gpm
Pump #2 – 140 gpm

Huron South

Storage Tanks – River Road (4/20/67) 1,000,000 gallons – level controlled by radio telemetry from River and Sprowl Road pump station.

Berlin Heights (1957) 1,000,000 gallons – level controlled by radio telemetry from Berlin Heights pump stations #1 and #2.

Huron West District

1994 Daily Average: .104 mgd with 187 services. Connections to city main at Rye Beach Road and Cleveland Road; an 8" master meter located on the northwest corner of Rye Beach Road and Cleveland Road.

Pump Stations: None

Storage Tank: Boos Road (9/3/68) 200,000 gallons

4.9.3 Potential Waterline Service Area Waterline Expansion

4.9.4 Perkins Water District

- a. Future expansion down Patten Tract Road (from Bogart Road to Fox Road); tie in from Campbell Street to Route 4 or Route 4 down to turnpike area. Down Mason Road from Patten Tract to Avery, Ohio (new tank site). Could eventually head south to tie in to the city of Bellevue. Could eventually head south to tie in to city of Bellevue for backup supply for both water utilities. Joint venture with Erie-Huron Rural Water Authority could expand water lines even further (see Erie County Water Distribution Map).
- b. Storage – Tank would be needed on Route 4 and turnpike to service area.
- c. Pump Station – Another pump station would have to be added to feed new water tank.

4.9.5 Margaretta Water District

- a. Future plans to connect Heywood Road to Maple Avenue.
- b. Connect waterline for Route 101 between Maple Avenue and Homegardner Road.

- c. Crystal Rock and Whites Landing area – Erie-Huron Water Authority service fed off a county master water meter at Route 6 and Route 269.
- d. Possible expansion south on Route 269 toward Mason Road to Billings Road.
- e. Storage Supply
 - 1. Areas north of Castalia upgrade tank for Maple Avenue from 60,000 gallons to 500,000 – 1,000,000 gallons. For existing and future customers in northern Margareta water district.

4.9.6 Milan Water District

- a. Waterline to connect Perkins water district to Milan water district (Fall 1995)
- b. Future plans to connect to city of Norwalk
 - 1. Two way valve station to feed each other in cases of emergency.
- c. Future plans to possibly feed village of Milan water
 - 1. Emergency back system
 - 2. Sell water to the village of Milan
- d. Adequate storage supply
 - 1. Erie County Avery Tank – 750,000 gallons - 1995
 - 3. Village of Milan – 400,000 gallons – 1995
- e. Waterline expansion down Strecker Road, Mason Road to Route 113 to loop in line. Could be done by either Erie County Water or Erie-Huron Rural Water Authority (see Erie County Water Distribution Map)

4.9.7 Huron East Water District

- a. Expansion in this area can be done into existing facilities. Main extension on Joppa Road, Frailey Road, Route 6 into Berlin Heights and Poorman Road up to Route 2 should be looked into. (See Erie County Water Distribution Map)

- b. Erie County and Vermilion are hooked up for emergency feed at Poorman Road in case of a loss of water supply.
- c. Storage – A water tank should be considered for the future in this area. Currently there is no storage facility available in this water district.

*If county cannot supply water lines to these areas, then water could come from Erie-Huron Rural Water or city of Vermilion.

4.9.8 Vermilion Water District

- a. Expansion in this area can be done into existing facilities. Water lines extended down Kneisel Road to Coen Road to Route 2 and south on Coen Road to Darrow Road to loop in service area (see Erie County Distribution Map). Expansion down Trinter Road, most areas are serviced by Erie County or Erie-Huron Rural Water in this area.

4.9.9 Huron West Water District

- a. Future plans to extend the Huron west water district into Perkins water district.
 - 1. Boos Road to Bogart Road
 - 2. Hull Road to Camp Road to Cleveland Road
 - 3. Perkins Avenue to Cleveland Road
 - 4. Route 13 south of city limits could be done by the city of Huron, Erie County or possibly Erie-Huron Rural Water Authority (see Erie County Water Distribution Map).
- b. Future plans to possibly feed city of Huron as emergency backup.

4.9.10 Huron South Water District

- a. Waterline expansion on Jeffries Road from River Road to Knight Road. Also possibly south on Jeffries Road, south of Knight Road. Darrow Road from Berlin to Route 61, Barrows Road and Deehr Road. Erie County Water could service this area with an alternative to Erie-Huron Rural Water, if possible.

- b. Tie in to Huron Wastewater water system (see Erie County Water Distribution Map).

The distribution has been designed to maintain working pressures between 35 and 90 psi. The proposed waterline, as shown on the Erie County Water Distribution map, when they are constructed line size will be modified by the economics and the growth pattern in each service area.

Elevated storage requirements for Erie County were appointed on the original basis of 30 percent of the average daily usage. This amount is considered adequate for initial requirements, although it would not meet the requirements of the Ohio E.P.A. nor fire underwriters who require a one day supply of water according to average daily usage.

In view of the above report, the existing storage tank facilities are a minimum and future reviews and additional storage will, no doubt, be required as development and the water system grows.

4.9.11 Erie-Huron County Rural Water Authority

The availability of water for human use and consumption is essential to the vitality of Erie County. Much of the county is not supplied with county water, especially the more rural areas. In 1988, the Erie-Huron County Rural Water Authority was formed to supply rural residents of the two counties with a quantity of potable water. Vermilion, Florence, Berlin and parts of Milan and Huron townships are included in the Rural Water Authority contract area. Without this source of water, much of eastern Erie County would have remained largely undeveloped.

Rural water, which is brought through lines from the city of Elyria, is a private authority consisting of approximately 3,000 customer and investors. The Authority controls an estimated 250 miles of water mains ranging in size from 4", 6", 8" and 12" in diameter. Rural water lines are completely separate from all county owned water lines in accordance with Ohio law. Most of the lines are located on private right-of-way easements given by rural water customers. The rural water map shows the location of the present rural lines throughout Erie County.

The Erie Regional Planning Commission, in conjunction with the Erie County Sanitary Engineering Office and the Erie-Huron County Rural Water Authority have applied to the Ohio Department of Development for a \$500,000 water line grant to extend water service to the Crystal Rock and White's Landing area of Margareta township. This grant would be part of the overall \$1.3 million project to provide water service to over 200 households. A decision on the award of this grant is expected in July 1995.

With this increase in water supply to rural Erie County, development is now possible within the more secluded locations of the planning area. The capacity of eastern and central Erie County to draw new development has been furthered because of rural water service. The plan recommends that increased coordination be established with the County and the Rural Water Authority in order that the County can keep abreast of future plans for this service. The Sanitary Engineers Department and the Planning Department should be responsible for this coordination.

4.9.12 Drainage and Ditch Maintenance

A brief glance at the drainage and ditch map demonstrates the enormous complexity of the drainage pattern for the planning area. The Highway Engineers Department is responsible for maintaining both the open and closed drainage courses for the county, while assuring the ongoing flow of water for hundreds of land owners. Protection of these ditches is guaranteed by chapter 3137 of the Ohio Revised Code and is funded by the County Commissioners.

Maintenance work includes such items as excavation, cleaning, snagging, chemical and physical control of vegetation, bank seedings, installation of rip rap and replacement of outlet pipes when they are included as part of the original improvement. This work is completed on all ditches which have been placed on maintenance by formal resolution by the County Commissioners. Furthermore, as part of the ditch maintenance department's upkeep and permanent maintenance, all new subdivisions constructed within the county are required to go on ditch maintenance.

At the present time, there are 66 county drainage ditches maintained covering some 65 miles. Also as part of the program, there are eight miles of drainage tile maintained to enhance the natural drainage processes of the drainage courses. Since drainage continues to be a major problem within the planning area, the work and identification of filled and silted up ditches is imperative for successful future development. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the following directions be pursued to achieve a capable ditch maintenance program:

- a. Joint cooperation between landowners and the county should continue in order to correct problems before they get out of hand.
- b. Residents are encouraged to leave at least ten feet of grassed berm from the top of the ditch to their property so ditches can be maintained in a timely manner.
- c. Landowners should not plow land to the very top of the maintained ditch bank.
- d. Landowners are encouraged to install grass filter strips, erosion control structures, tile mains and culverts to keep the drainage system in good condition.
- e. Residents within maintained ditch areas should be aware that a permanent easement of no more than 25 feet is required for all ditches.
- f. The county has established stormwater and erosion control regulations for the unincorporated areas of Erie County. These regulations should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- g. The county should pursue new avenues to better deal with the present drainage problems in Erie County.

Erie County Wastewater Treatment Executive Summary**I. Wastewater Treatment and Collection Needs**

Immediate needs for construction improvements include the area currently served by the Sandusky Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Sandusky Wastewater Treatment Plant has recorded wastewater flows in excess of the design capacity of 12.5 MGD. In addition, there is a need for a combined sewer overflow study for the Sandusky combined sewer collection system which is anticipated to result in a master plan. Additional wastewater treatment capacity is needed for the combined effect of the Sandusky and County Sewer Districts, as well as, trunk sewer improvements and new trunk sewer extensions.

All other growth areas in the county have limited available wastewater treatment and collection capacity for continued growth.

II. Current Improvement Activities

The city of Sandusky has agreed to a Consent Order with the State of Ohio requiring the city to study the combined sewer collection system within the city's wastewater system and to construct the necessary wastewater treatment improvements needed to eliminate water quality impacts of all combined sewers.

Erie County has undertaken construction improvements to allow the county to continue to grow while the city performs the necessary analysis under the Consent Order of their collection and treatment system. The county's improvements consist of:

1. Tiffin Avenue Relief Sewer – to convey a portion of the wastewater from Tiffin Avenue entry point to Sandusky to the Mills Creek entry point.
2. Plum Brook Pump Station Improvements – to allow a portion of the Plum Brook serviced area wastewater to be directed towards to a forcemain tributary to the county's Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant located in Huron Township.
3. Cleveland Road Forcemain – from the Plum Brook Station to manhole no. 21 tributary to the Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant.

4. Full Equalization Basin Improvements to the Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant – to allow the plant to handle wet weather flows from both the Sawmill service area and the flow from the Plum Brook service area, plus increase sludge handling capabilities and changing disinfection from chlorine gas to ultraviolet disinfection.

These improvements will allow for growth in the county sanitary collection system for the immediate future.

III. Long Term Improvement Activities

The agreement executed in 1968 whereby the city of Sandusky accepts and treats certain sewage from within the unincorporated area within the county extends until 2010. However, both the county and the city should be evaluating, on a long term basis, issues concerning how each will handle the sewage generated and the extent to which mutually implemented solutions will be effective. Specifically, decisions should be made concerning the locations of trunk sewers and treatment facilities. Options that should be evaluated include:

1. Continuing to operated pursuant to the existing agreement until a better understanding of the county's and the city's needs in 2010 can be ascertained.
2. Modify the current agreement between the county and the city to adjust to changes that have taken place since 1968 and changes anticipated in the future.
3. Merge the currently separate systems within the city and the serviced area within the county into a single system owned and operated by either the county, the city or a regional authority.

ERIE COUNTY WASTEWATER TREATMENT**Introduction**

Residential, commercial and industrial wastewater within Erie County is treated by one of three processes. Small volumes generated by residential and commercial establishments remote of wastewater collection systems generally have an on-site facility such as a septic tank and/or leach field. Larger flows from many commercial and industrial sites are treated on-site by package plants. Flows generated by residential, commercial and industrial sites within areas having sewer systems usually are collected and conveyed to a centralized wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). These centralized WWTP's are owned and operated by the county and/or cities.

There are five centralized WWTP's in Erie County. They are Milan WWTP, 500,000 gallons per day (GPD); Sawmill Creet WWTP, 1,200,000 gpd; and the city of Sandusky WWTP, 12,500,000 gpd; Huron Basin WWTP, 2.0 mgd; and the city of Vermilion WWTP, 2.5 mgd.

Planning studies prepared in the 1970's established service areas tributary to these centralized WWTP's. The long term approach of the studies is to extend sewers throughout the service areas, collect and convey wastewater flows to the centralized WWTP's.

The service area tributary to the Milan WWTP is generally the area within and surrounding the village of Milan. The area is bounded on the north by the Ohio Turnpike and south by the village limits.

The Sawmill Creek WWTP is located in Huron on Rye Beach Road adjacent to Lake Erie. The Sawmill District WWTP is owned and operated by Erie County. The Sawmill District is part of the Huron Area Water and Sewer Sub-District.

The Huron Basin WWTP is located in Huron on River Road. The Huron Basin District is shown on exhibit 1. The Huron Basin WWTP is owned and operated by Erie County.

The largest WWTP is located adjacent to Lake Erie in the city of Sandusky. Flows from four sewer service areas of the county can enter the city at nine designated points along the south perimeter. Wastewater flows to the city system are regulated via an agreement between the city and Erie County. Flows are conveyed to the WWTP through Plum Brook, Pipe Creek, Mills Creek and

Castalia. These service areas lie within Perkins and Margaretta townships.

The Vermilion WWTP is located on the West River Road adjacent to the Vermilion River in the extreme easterly portion of Erie County. The Vermilion District is shown in exhibit 2. The Vermilion WWTP is owned and operated by the city of Vermilion. In December 1989, the city of Vermilion entered into an agreement with the Erie County Commissioners to treat sanitary sewage and wastes originating in the State Route 60 corridor.

Erie County is divided into several drainage basins all flowing from south to north toward Lake Erie.

The soils, bedrock and groundwater in the study area have a major impact on development patterns and the need for sewerage facilities. A 1967 Land Capability report prepared by the Erie Regional Planning Commission indicates that only approximately 15 percent of the land in the study area is suitable for intensive septic tank use. Over 70 percent of the soils in the county exhibit poor drainage. Twenty-two percent of the region has bedrock within five feet of the surface. Shallow bedrock not only presents a problem for on-site sewage disposal, but increases the cost of building sewers.

Many commercial and industrial establishments located outside the existing sewer service area and some industries located inside the sewer service area are served by individual package treatment plants. Package plants are a concern because they tend to receive less operation and maintenance attention than a centralized plant, resulting in poorer effluent quality.

The portions of the study area not served by the central sewer system or package plants are served by some sort of on-site system. The most common type of on-site system is a septic tank/leach field combination which is typically used by single family homes and small businesses in unsewered areas. This system is designed to separate solids from the waste stream and allow the liquid to leach into the soil through a drainage tile field. This type of system generally works well in areas with low population density and well drained soils, but is severely limited in areas with poorly drained soils and/or shallow bedrock, such as is commonly found in Erie County.

Previous studies of growth trends, existing flows and conditions, future flow projections and the distribution thereof were utilized as the basis of this section.

Reports reviewed included:

- Castalia Segmented Facility Plan, B & N, May 1976
- Plum Brook Segmented Facility Plan, B & N, February 1977
- Sandusky Facility Plan, Grant, Brundage, Baker, Stauffer, December 1977
- Sandusky I/I Analysis, Penetryn Systems, March 1977
- White's Landing Facility Plan, Dalton, Dalton, Newport, May 1983
- Perkins Township Sewerage Study, Havens and Emerson, May 1986
- Wastewater Collection Study, Jones & Henry, January 1992
- Sawmill Creek Service Area, Burgess & Niple, June 1993
- Vermilion WWTP, Havens & Emerson, June 1992

4.9.15 Erie County Water and Sewer District Configuration

Wastewater flows originating within the Erie County Water and Sewer District, specifically Castalia, Mills Creek, Pipe Creek and Plum Brook sewer service areas are collected and conveyed via the county system to the southern boundary of the city of Sandusky. Per a 1968 agreement between the city and county, county wastewater flows may enter the city at nine locations. Flows entering the city system are conveyed via the interceptor/trunk sewers to the Sandusky WWTP. Flows are processed at the plant and treated water is discharged into Lake Erie.

SANDUSKY WWTP

The referenced agreement states "the total average daily volume of sewage flow accepted in any year from the county at the city's sewage treatment plant shall not exceed the total average volume rate of 6.25 million gallons per day."

The necessity of addressing wastewater treatment at the Sandusky WWTP in the 1960's initiated the referenced agreement. The county and city jointly implemented improvements within the Sandusky system to fulfill the agreement conditions. The WWTP has an average design capacity of 12.5 million gallons per day (mgd) and peak hydraulic capacity of 20 mgd. Treated wastewater flows in 1992 averaged 13.8 mgd. Low and high monthly averages were 9.9 mgd and 15.9 mgd during wet weather periods and storm

events, primarily due to the combined sanitary sewer system in Sandusky and rain induced infiltration and inflow from county sewers. Peak dry weather flows however, have been consistently less than the peak hydraulic capacity.

*In 1982, Remington Avenue connection was increased by 0.066 mgd, but total was never revised by mutual agreement.

Collection System

Trunk sewers extend east and west from the WWTP to interceptor sewer systems. The interceptor system consists of sewers and pump stations which skirt the east and west boundaries of the city collection flows and extend to the county interconnection. County system trunk sewers extend along ditches and primary roadways. The city collection system is partially a combined storm and sanitary system (storm flows and sanitary flows are collected together) whereas the county has primarily separate storm and sanitary sewers. Accordingly, wastewater from the county is essentially sanitary waste. Following is a summary of county and city primary sewer system components.

Sandusky Westside System

The westside interceptor sewer extends west along the lakefront to the Venice Pump Station. Four trunk sewers, which discharge into the west side interceptor, extend in a southerly direction to points of county interconnection. These trunk sewers are:

- The route 6 sewer beginning at a future county interconnection flowing along route 6 north to the Venice Pump Station.
- The Bardshar Road sewer beginning at a future county interconnection flowing north along Bardshar Road to the Venice Pump Station.
- A sewer extending along the Norfolk & Western Railroad. This sewer, when extended further south, is intended as a future county interconnection.
- Two trunk sewers extend in a northerly direction from the county interconnection at Tiffin Avenue and the city limits and a future interconnection near Old Railroad. These two sewers combine into one trunk sewer at route 6 and flow north to the west side interceptor.

Sandusky Eastside System

The eastside interceptor sewer extends east along the lakefront to the Farwell pump station. Two interceptor sewers discharge to the Farwell pump station. The two interceptor sewers accept flow from three county interconnections. The interconnections are:

- Perkins Avenue at Pipe Creek. Here county flows enter the Farwell Street interceptor.
- The Pier Track interconnection at route 6 and the city limits. The Pier Track interceptor flows along route 6 northwesterly to the Pier Track pump station located at the embayment of Sandusky Bay and Pipe Creek.
- Perkins Avenue at Remington Avenue. Here county flows enter the Remington Avenue interceptor which flows northeasterly on Remington Avenue to the Pier Track interceptor.

County Sewer System Primary Components

The county sewer interconnects the city system at five of the nine agreed upon locations. Two of the untapped interconnections are located to accept flows from the western end of the county which are presently undeveloped, except for Crystal Rock and White's Landing, two lakefront residential developments. These developments are two and four miles west of the route 6 and Bardshar interconnection locations. The other two untapped interconnections are Edgewater Drive and N & W Railroad and the westside interceptor (Mills Creek). The Edgewater Drive and N & W Railroad interconnections are located adjacent and west of the Tiffin Avenue interconnection. The westside interceptor interconnection is adjacent to and east of Tiffin Street interconnection.

The remaining four interconnections are utilized by county trunk sewers extending for the Castalia, Pipe Creek and Plum Brook sewer districts. A summary of primary components within each of these districts follows.

Castalia Service Area

Three pump stations accept flows from the Castalia area proper and discharge to a trunk sewer which extends along Tiffin Avenue from the village to the Tiffin Avenue interconnection at Sandusky's southern city limit. The larger Castalia pump station receives flows from the village and sewers extended to the adjacent southern areas. The Castalia pump station discharges through to a sewer tributary to Tiffin Avenue at Bogart and Bardshar. Two smaller pump stations, Maple Avenue and Bardshar, receive flows from the surrounding and localized area. Each pump station discharges to the Tiffin Avenue trunk sewer.

Pipe Creek Service Area

The Pipe Creek trunk sewer extends from the Farwell Street interceptor at Perkins Avenue interconnection west along Pipe Creek to Milan Road. At Milan Road the sewer take two alignments collecting flows from the developed area within the Bogart Road, Columbus Avenue and Campbell Street area.

Plum Brook Service Area

Two trunk sewers accept flows within the Plum Brook District. The smaller is from the Remington Avenue interconnection. Flows received are limited to the area of Perkins Avenue to Remington ditch and Strub Road.

The primary trunk sewer discharges to the Plum Brook pump station located adjacent to the Pier Track interconnection. The trunk sewer extends southeasterly from the Plum Brook pump station through a residential area to Galloway, south along Galloway to Plum Brook, then along Plum Brook to the vicinity of U.S. 250 and Bogart Road.

4.9.16

Erie County Water and Sewer District Configuration Western Portion – Sawmill Creek Service Area

East of and adjacent to the Plum Brook sewer district is the county's Sawmill Creek Sewer District. The Sawmill District is located in the western-most part of the Erie County Water and Sewer District. Wastewater flows within the District are collected and conveyed to the Sawmill Creek wastewater treatment plant. Per the agreement dated 1973 between the county and the city of Huron, the county owns and operates the Sawmill Creek WWTP and tributary sewers. The tributary sewers will be extended, when feasible, to collect flows from the area along the Sawmill Ditch in Huron Township and the western portion of the city of Huron. Flows are processed at the treatment plant and the treated water is discharged to Lake Erie.

East of and adjacent to the Sawmill Creek District is the Huron Basin District. The Sawmill Creek District boundary location is shown on exhibit 1.

Sawmill Creek WWTP

This contact stabilization secondary treatment plant was constructed in 1972. Average daily design and peak hydraulic capacities are 1.2 and 3.0 mgd, respectively. In 1991, flows treated at the plant averaged 600,000 gpd. Peak daily flows reached 1.5 mgd.

Collection System

Flows to the WWTP are pumped via an influent pump station located at the WWTP. Tributary to the pump station is a main trunk sewer, which extends south to route 6. Three main trunk/interceptor sewers interconnect the main trunk sewer in the vicinity of route 6 and Rye Beach Road. The old interceptor extends east through the Rye Beach area of the city of Huron. New sewers constructed in the early 1980's extend south and west. The interceptor extending south ends south of the Conrail tracks and collects flows from the western industrial park of the city of Huron. The third intercepting sewer extends west along route 6 to a point approximately 500 feet west of Camp Road.

Huron Basin WWTP

Erie County Huron Basin Wastewater Treatment is a 2.0 mgd average day design flow consisting of rotating biological contractor secondary wastewater treatment. The plant was constructed and began receiving wastewater for treatment in 1985. The average day flows for the plant currently range close to 1.0 mgd leaving available capacity for growth in the service area for an additional 1.0 mgd for available treatment capacity.

The plant has performed within limits of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutants discharge Elimination System Permit. The plant has capability of also treating industrial wastewater depending on the type and characteristic of the waste.

The Sewer Collection System tributary to the Huron Basin Wastewater Treatment Plant is an old sanitary sewer system mainly located in the eastern 2/3 of the city of Huron. The system has excessive infiltration/inflow problems, which uses all of the existing hydraulic capacity of the plant during extreme wet periods. Improvements are needed to reduce the infiltration/inflow or to cope with this problem.

The Erie County Sawmill Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant was constructed and began receiving wastewater for treatment in 1980. The plant is a secondary treatment conventional activated sludge plant with an average day design flow of 1.2 million gallons per day (mgd). The plant has been averaging approximately 0.6 mgd, in the recent past, leaving 0.6 mgd of available capacity for growth.

The plant operates under an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutants Discharge Elimination System Permit and has a past history of meeting all permit limitations.

The peak hydraulic design flow of the plant is 3.2 mgd. Maximum day flow recorded at the plant has been as high as 2.614 mgd. Reduction of infiltration/inflow tributary to the plant is a priority.

The plant is currently under construction adding improvements consisting of a 1.0 million gallon flow equalization basis, the construction of a new service building, which will contain a sludge dewatering belt press to increase sludge storage capacity of the plant, along with increasing the disinfection capabilities to treat higher wastewater flow beyond the current 3.2 mgd hydraulic capacity.

The plant will also be receiving additional flow from the Erie County Plum Brook Service area. The hydraulic capacity of the Sawmill Plant will be increased to 5.2 mgd with the improvements. It is not determined at this time what average day flows the plant will be receiving, however, it is anticipated to increase reducing the amount of available capacity for growth in this service area.

Vermilion WWTP

The city of Vermilion operates a wastewater treatment plant located on West River Road adjacent to the Vermilion River in the extreme easterly portion of Erie County. The plant is rated at 2,500,000 gallons per day. According to the facility plan dated December 1976, the service area within Erie County which is tributary to the Vermilion WWTP is bounded on the east by the Erie County limits; on the south by the Vermilion Township limits; on the west, south of State Route 2 by Barnes Road and north of State Route 2 by a line extending northwesterly from Barnes Road to Poorman road at U.S. Route 6; and on the north by Lake Erie. This area lies entirely within Vermilion Township.

The last major plant improvement was constructed in 1983 and the facility is currently operating within its NPDES permit. The average daily flow is 1,500,000 gpd.

Erie County Water and Sewer District Configuration

In December 1989, the city of Vermilion entered into an agreement with the Erie County Commissioners to treat sanitary sewage and wastes originating in the State Route 60 corridor which extends from the Erie County east line to approximately ½ mile west of State Route 60 and south to the Vermilion Township limits. The point of connection between the Erie County system and the Vermilion system is at a manhole at the intersection of Sailor Way and Douglas Street in the city of Vermilion. The 1989 agreement states "that the maximum rate of sewage flow discharged from the service area, shall at no time exceed 600,000 gpd." The agreement further states "that in the event the City Engineer or a consulting engineer renders a written opinion to the Utilities Manager that the capacity of the city's WWTP or capacity in the primary transmission lines in the serviced area are in danger of being exceeded, the city reserves the right to declare a moratorium on further tap-ins until such time as capacity is increased. The city agrees to initiate plans and implementation of improvements to increase capacity as soon as is practically possible."

Collection System

Trunk sewers extend east and west from the wastewater treatment plant to interceptor sewer systems consisting of sewers and pump stations. The city collection system is a separate storm and sanitary sewer system. Wastewater from both the city and the county is essentially sanitary waste. There are four major trunk sewers discharging to the Vermilion Wastewater Treatment plant. These trunk sewers are:

- The West Liberty Avenue trunk sewer including the Jefferson Street Lift Station and the Park Drive Lift Station. The collection area includes Liberty Avenue (U.S. Route 6) west of the Vermilion River and an area east of the Vermilion River and north of Liberty Avenue including the Vermilion Lagoons, Linwood Park and the Nakomis residential allotments. The city of Vermilion is presently under orders from the Ohio EPA to eliminate improper overflows from the sanitary lift stations at Park Drive and Jefferson Street. The West Liberty Avenue trunk sewer provides a potential future Erie County connection along U.S. Route 6.
- The West River Road trunk sewer extending southerly from the WWTP to State Route 2.
- The South Street/State Route 60 trunk sewer which accepts flows from the Erie County service areas south of the city of Vermilion and areas within the city, flowing northerly along State Route 60 or Douglas Street to South Street and finally to the WWTP.
- The Romp's pump station located at Romp's Marina on the east bank of the Vermilion River, south of U.S. Route 6 at the Conrail tracks which accepts flows primarily from the Lorain County portion of the city of Vermilion. Vermilion is presently under orders from the Ohio EPA to eliminate an improper overflow to the Vermilion River at the Romp's pump station.

In an effort to comply with Ohio EPA findings and orders, the city of Vermilion is evaluating cost effective methods of reducing I/I within the collection system. A total of \$1,000,000 in necessary improvements has been identified.

Vermilion WWTP Evaluation

The Vermilion Wastewater Treatment Plant was originally constructed in 1965 and has undergone numerous renovations, rehabilitations and expansions to date. The plant is presently rated for an average daily flow of 2.5 mgd and a maximum daily flow of 6.5 mgd.

Plant influent flows are received at an influent junction box and pass through a mechanically cleaned bar screen. The screened wastewater flows into an aerated grit chamber. The grit removed is hauled to a landfill site. The degritted wastewater flows to three primary settling tanks. The primary effluent is discharged to six aeration tanks. The mixed liquor from the aeration tanks is settled in four final clarifiers. The overflow from the final clarifiers is disinfected by chlorine in a chlorine contact tank. The chlorinated effluent is dechlorinated with sodium bisulfate and is discharged to the Vermilion River.

Settled solids from the primary settling tanks are pumped to the digester. A portion of the sludge settled in the final clarifiers is returned to the aeration tanks and the excess sludge is wasted to the digester. The digester sludge is concentrated in a two stage anaerobic digestion process and disposed of on land.

A report entitled "Evaluation of the Treatment Capacity of the Vermilion Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)" dated June 1992, was prepared by Havens and Emerson, Inc. The study concluded that "overall, based on the current operating practice and the current influent characteristics and flow rates, the WWTP provides a satisfactory performance meeting easily the effluent NPDES permit requirements." The city has not recently conducted projections of future flows as they relate to necessary expansion of the WWTP.

Growth Areas

Most growth is expected in the Plum Brook sewer district in the vicinity of Galloway, south of Hull Road and Pipe Creek district along Campbell Street.

Areas of existing on-site systems and/or package treatment plants, remote of sanitary sewers, include:

- Winkel/Ridgewood subdivision in Margaretta Township
- Billings and Bardwell Roads in Margaretta Township
- Campbell Street and Schenk Road south of Bogart Road in Perkins Township
- Route 4 at Bogart and Taylor Roads south of Bogart Road
- Route 4 between Perkins Avenue and Strecker Road
- Along U.S. 250 between Huron Avery Road and Milan
- NASA Plum Brook facility, Columbus Avenue and Taylor Road

Speculative commercial and industrial growth includes:

- Proposed Margaretta Industrial Park located south of State Route 2 to Bogart Road and between Tiffin Avenue and the N&W Railroad
- Commercial development in the vicinity of the Maple Avenue Pump Station, Maple and Bogart Road
- An industrial development south of Perkins Avenue adjacent to and east of State Route 4
- Commercial and industrial development at State Route 4 and the turnpike, due to the interchange
- Commercial and industrial development along the U.S. 250 corridor from Bogart Road to Mason Road and along Mason Road from the U.S. 250 corridor to Route 13
- State Route 60, Vermilion Township

4.9.17 Sewer Extensions

The following summary of the sewer extension evaluations by county sewer district.

Castalia Service Area

Existing unsewered and new residential development areas are proposed in the Castalia district south of Bogart Road to Parker Road between State Route 269 and Maple Avenue. Sewer extensions to these areas are as recommended in the January 1992 report. Tributary flows will be received at the Castalia pump station via existing sewers on Bardwell Road and State Route 269.

Sewer extension to localized commercial development will be received at the Maple Avenue Pump Station. The existing sewer on Bogart Road will receive flow from commercial development proposed northeast of Bogart Road and Maple Avenue.

Residential development south of Bogart Road at Bardshar Road will be received at the Bardshar Pump Station.

The three pump stations discharge to existing sewers tributary to the Tiffin Avenue trunk sewer. Previous analysis by computer determined limited capacity available in the Tiffin Avenue trunk sewer. Industrial development north of State Route 2 along Tiffin Avenue is anticipated to be tributary to the Tiffin Avenue trunk sewer.

Relief of the Tiffin Avenue sewer can be accomplished either of two ways. Previous studies recommend a trunk sewer extended along the Norfolk and Western Railroad with interconnecting collection sewers south along Maple Avenue and east along State Route 2 to and beyond the Tiffin Avenue sewer. These sewers receive flows from industrial development along the proposed sewers and receive flow by gravity currently tributary to the Castalia and Maple Avenue pump stations. The sewer parallel to State Route 2 also provides relief to the Tiffin Avenue sewers.

A second approach is the extension of a new trunk sewer beginning near Tiffin Avenue and Bardshar Road extending east. The sewer routing bisects the proposed Margaretta Industrial Park, crossing the N&W Railroad at the west end of Strub Road. The proposed trunk sewer discharges to a Mills Creek district trunk sewer located on State Route 4. This alignment intercepts flows at Bardshar Road from sewers tributary to Tiffin Avenue. Tiffin Avenue will receive flows from existing and future industrial development along Tiffin Avenue. A regulating chamber at the proposed State Route 4 trunk sewer Tiffin Avenue interconnection will provide the county flexibility in controlling the balance of wastewater flows in the trunk sewers.

Either of the trunk sewer alternatives provides the components necessary to cover the future flows; however, growth within the vicinity of N&W Railroad trunk sewer is not anticipated within the next twenty year period. The projected average daily flow conveyed via the N&W Railroad trunk sewer exceed the agreed Sandusky System interconnection flows by nearly 4 to 1. The three pump stations, all constructed since 1970, have an additional twenty to thirty years of useful life.

Mills Creek Service Area

The Mills Creek district is without sewers. Previous reports have recommended extensions to homes and businesses with on-site systems and the receiving of wastewater flows from future development along State Route 4 to the east to homes on Bogart Road.

The sanitary needs at State Route 4 and the turnpike interchange will be conveyed by extending the State Route 4 sewer from Bogart Road to the turnpike. Homes in the Sand Hill area will receive sewer services by this extension.

The sewer extended along State Route 4 will interconnect with the Sandusky system at the westside interceptor located northwest of State Route 4 at Perkins Avenue. Flow from the Castalia area relief sewer can be accommodated by the Mills Creek sewer via an interconnection at State Route 4 and Strub Road. The sewer along State Route 4 from Strub Road to Bell Avenue will be oversized to convey the redirected flows from the Castalia district. A splitting chamber at State Route 4 and Bell Avenue can regulate flows to the westside interceptor. Redirected flows would be conveyed via a sewer along Bell Avenue from State Route 4 to Campbell Street.

Pipe Creek Service Area

The Pipe Creek service area has a relatively high population density contributing flow to the sewer system. The district's western perimeter is unsewered. Two areas of existing homes and proposed development are:

1. North of State Route 2 along Campbell Street
2. The vicinity of Campbell and Schenk Road south of State Route 2.

Northerly and southerly extensions of the Campbell Street sewer will accommodate the first area located north of State Route 2.

Local sewers for the area south of State Route 2 are as recommended in the January 1992 report. However, the extension to trunk sewers could be by either of two methods. This first method would be to extend a sewer west along Bogart Road to State Route 4. The second method would be a pump station located at Schenk Road and Bogart Road discharging into the Campbell Street sewer north of State Route 2. Either extension for conveyance of tributary flows is viable and required the Schenk Road pump station. However, the State Route 4 sewer must be oversized to receive these flows.

Construction of sewers to the Schenk Road pump station and a discharge to the southern end of the extended Campbell Street sewer is a more direct conveyance. More importantly for the State Route 4 sewer is the redirecting of flows in excess of the westside interceptor connection. This can be accomplished by extending a sewer due west from Campbell Street at Bell Avenue to State Route 4.

Plum Brook Service Area

The Plum Brook district was recently improved with a main trunk sewer and local service sewers. The main trunk extends from the Plum Brook pump station through the central area of service and the area of expected development. Proposed growth projections are tributary and localized to the trunk sewer.

Sewer extension within the Plum Brook district are as recommended in the January 1992 report with two exceptions. First is the extension of a sewer along Kob and Hemminger Ditch to replace the Bear Creek Lane pump station. This pump station is relatively new and can be upgraded to receive the higher tributary flow from the proposed development localized to the Plum Brook trunk sewer. Discharge to the Plum Brook pump station is recommended until the capacity of Plum Brook trunk sewer is utilized, growth along the northern extension of the Kob Ditch occurs or relief of the trunk sewer is necessary to extension of a sewer along Kob Ditch to the restricted sewer capacity of the Plum Brook trunk sewer near Bogart Road.

The second differing conclusion is the extension of sanitary sewer from Botay Road to U.S. 250 and along the U.S. 250 corridor to the vicinity of Dauch Ditch and the southern reach of the Plum Brook district.

Sawmill Service Area

Construction of the Sawmill Creek WWTP and a trunk sewer west along State Route 6 and in a southerly direction along Sawmill Creek initiated development of the Sawmill district. The Sawmill WWTP replaced a treatment facility that received flow from Huron along Rye Beach Road. This older area is presently tributary to the Sawmill Creek WWTP.

Growth in two vicinities of the district is projected; ingrowth among existing sewers and along U.S. 250 at the district southwest perimeter.

Flows originating from ingrowth will be received by the existing sewers in close proximity to the Sawmill WWTP.

Industrial and commercial development is projected along U.S. 250 from Bogart Road to Mason/Hoover Roads. An industrial park is developing in the Mason/Hoover Road vicinity east of U.S. 250. The length of U.S. 250 south of Mason Road and the industrial park area falls within the southern most area of the Huron Basin district. Sanitary sewers for the southern U.S. 250 corridor area and industrial park area are as summarized in the January 1992 report. The new Mason Road pump station located at State Route 250 and Huron Avery Road will receive flow from the industrial park area and sewers along U.S. 250. Gravity sewers will extend from Beatal Ditch on the north and Route 13 on the south to the new pump station. Ultimate conveyance of wastewater flows discharged from the pump station can be achieved in two ways. First by a force main extending 30,300 linear feet to the Sawmill WWTP. Or a force main can extend to the gravity sewer along the northern length of the U.S. 250 corridor within the Sawmill District.

Various combinations of gravity sewers and/or pump stations were considered. Flows conveyed were with and without the Mason Road pump station discharge. Alignments and associated costs of conveyance of the total flow generated along the entire length of U.S. 250 include combinations of gravity sewer(s) and force mains along ditches and roadway to the extremities of the existing Sawmill sewer system.

These comparisons identified the recommended sewer extension as a gravity sewer being at Beatal Ditch and extending north along U.S. 250. The southern U.S. 250 and industrial park flow received at the Mason Road pump station would be discharged to the gravity sewers at Beatal Ditch. From Beatal Ditch the sewers would be

extended northerly along U.S. 250 to Dauch Ditch. Gravity sewer flowing to the east along Dauch Ditch to and along Boos Road will interconnect with the 24 inch diameter trunk sewer south of the Conrail track at Sawmill Creek. The gravity sewer along U.S. 250 north of Beatal Ditch is sized to convey flows fronting properties and the projected flow from the southern length of U.S. 250. The district crossing along Dauch Ditch and Boos Road from U.S. 250 to the existing system extends through an area of homes and businesses currently without sewers. The sewer sizing has been limited to convey flows projected herein along U.S. 250 with limited capacity. Relief to the sewer can be accomplished as growth occurs by extending additional trunk sewers along ditches to U.S. 250 within the Sawmill District or directing flow from the proposed Mason Road pump station to a sewer extension/force main tributary to the Huron Basin WWTP.

4.9.18 Redirection of Flows

The Sawmill Creek WWTP is under utilized and the Pier Track sewer and pump station in Sandusky is over utilized.

Erie County has undertaken improvements in this district. The county improvements consist of:

1. Plum Brook Pump Station Improvements – to allow a portion of the Plum Brook serviced area wastewater to be directed towards to a forcemain tributary to the county's Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant located in Huron Township;
2. Cleveland Road Forcemain – from the Plum Brook Pump Station to manhole number 21 tributary to the Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant; and
3. Full equalization basin improvements to the Sawmill Wastewater Treatment Plant to allow the plant to handle wet weather flows from both the Sawmill service area and the flow from the Plum Brook service area, plus increase sludge handling capabilities and changing disinfection from chlorine gas to ultraviolet disinfection.

These improvements will allow for growth in the county sanitary collection system for the immediate future.

4.9.19 Future Recommendations

The June 1993 Sawmill Creek Service Area Expansion Feasibility Study, prepared by Burgess & Niple, makes the following recommendations for future development throughout Erie County:

- Construct Tiffin Avenue relief sewer across the Margareta Industrial Park to State Route 4 at Strub Road.
- Construct State Route 4 sewer from Strub Road north to a splitting chamber to direct flow to the Sandusky westside interceptor at Perkins Avenue (Mills Creek interconnection).
- Complete preliminary design of sewers along U.S. 250 from Beatal Ditch to Dauch Ditch, along Dauch Ditch to Boos Road, along Boos Road to an existing sewer at Sawmill Creek and the Conrail tracks.
- Complete the preliminary design of sewers along U.S. 250 between Beatal Ditch and Mud Brook Road. Include provisions for the industrial park on Mason Road.
- Purchase land for expanding the Sawmill WWTP. Existing plant can be expanded to 3.0 mgd. Estimated flows tributary to the Sawmill WWTP vary between the existing flow of 0.54 mgd to 5.84 mgd when Sawmill District is fully developed.
- Perform a detailed rate analysis when construction costs are more refined and financing options are investigated.
- Perform additional monitoring and analysis for I/I Pipe Creek and Plum Brook Districts.

The Erie County Sanitary Engineer's Office has developed a two phase approach for existing/future sewer expansions which will be implemented through the year 2020. Those goals include the following:

Existing Flows (1995-1999)

- Plum Brook peak flows over 2.2 mgd pumped to Sawmill WWTP
- New 20 inch Cleveland Road force main to MH number 29 on existing trunk sewer

- New 2.0 mgd equalization basin and other peak flow improvements at Sawmill WWTP
- Install a 20 inch gravity sewer from Tiffin Avenue to Mills Creek along Perkins Avenue

Future Flows (2000-2020)

- Evaluate and negotiate alternatives and cost sharing with the city of Sandusky

In addition the two phase future development standard the Sanitary Engineer's office future wastewater system improvements to the Plum Brook and Sawmill districts include the construction of an equalization basin at the Sawmill Creek WWTP. The following are offered as a basis for the construction;

- a. A new NPDES effluent discharge permit will not be required;
- b. Overflows can be treated and discharged under the current Sawmill or a revised permit;
- c. The existing site is available and already has operating staff on-site;
- d. The Sawmill WWTP can continue to meet the current permit conditions at peak flows;
- e. Existing and future gravity flows to Sawmill will also be equalized; and
- f. The 1 mg basin fits well into the future expansion plans at the Sawmill WWTP.

4.9.20 Development of New Subdivisions

In addition to the future expansion of Erie County owned sewers, consideration must also be given to the development of new subdivisions requiring sewer connections. Erie County owned and maintained waterlines and sanitary sewers may be extended by developers upon receipt of a plan approval for the Erie County Sanitary Engineer and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. All extensions must meet the Erie County and EPA specifications and are subject to inspection and approval by the county before the county accepts the line(s) for ownership and maintenance.

There currently exists four cost mechanisms a developer may use to pay for the extension of such projects. The cost mechanisms a developer may use are as follows:

- a. The developer may construct a waterline and/or sanitary sewer extensions at their own cost. The developer would recoup the cost in the sale of the developed property.
- b. A developer may petition the Erie County Commissioners to extend water/sewer lines. The properties benefiting from said extension would be assessed for the cost of said extensions.
- c. A developer could request to enter into an Ohio Revised Code 307.73 agreement with the Board of Erie County Commissioners which would allow the developer to receive reimbursement for some of the cost they paid towards waterline and sanitary sewer extensions. The entire project cost is broken up to a front footage cost to all benefiting properties. Any non-participating property owners would be required to pay a front footage tap fee collect by the county and paid back to the developer at such time said tap application is made.
- d. A small development whose proposed buildings are located within 800 feet of an existing county owned and maintained water line and/or sanitary sewer, where there will be not more than one single family or one duplex placed on said development, may apply to the Board of Erie County Commissioners for an Accommodation Water and/or Sewer Tap Agreement. This agreement shall allow the developer to extend a service from the county waterline and/or sanitary sewer for said development, however, the developer will agree to pay any future tap fees and/or assessments should the county proceed with extending waterlines and/or sanitary sewers past the property being served by the accommodation taps. This includes tap fees under an Ohio Revised Code 307.73 agreement for line installed by another developer.

The Erie County Commissioners have the right to refuse to allow any of the above cost mechanisms or refuse extension of water and sanitary sewer lines should there not be capacity available if any problems with availability of county funds exist.

Further, the county, if funds are available and the Board of Erie County Commissioners agree may participate in paying for costs for oversizing waterlines, sanitary sewers and pump stations needed for further development beyond the initial developers project. In this case the county may establish special tap fees for the further developed area to pay for the cost of the oversizing including, but not limited to, impact fees.

4.10 ERIE COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Solid Waste Management Plan Executive Summary

4.10.1 Part I: District Information

Pursuant to House Bill 723 (H.B.-723), enacted by the 119th General Assembly of the State of Ohio and effective April 16, 1993, the Board of County Commissioners of Erie County, Ohio and Huron County, Ohio initiated proceedings on July 8, 1993 to reconfigure the Erie/Huron Joint Solid Waste Management District and form separate single county solid waste districts. Copies of the appropriate resolutions can be found in Appendix C.

The Erie County Solid Waste Management District (SWMD) is in the north central part of the state with Lake Erie forming the north border, the Ottawa-Seneca-Sandusky District forming the west border, the Lorain County District forming the east border and the Huron County District forming the south border.

The total 1992 district population was 72,134 according to an April 1991 report from the Ohio Data Center, Ohio Department of Development.

In accordance with Amended Substitute H.H. 656, the city of Vermilion is not included in the Erie District Plan because a majority of its population resides in the Lorain District. Conversely, the population of the village of Milan residing in Huron County is included in the Erie Solid Waste District.

4.10.2

Part II: Existing Conditions and Projections

Solid Waste Generation

Total per capita district waste generation is estimated to be 18.93 pounds per day. Total district waste generated was 249,168 tons during the 1992 baseline year, of which nearly 2/3 originated from district industries. The baseline residential/commercial per capita generation rate was calculated to be 5.54 pounds per day (based on 1992 disposal and recycling records), which exceeded the Franklin Associates per capita generation rate of 4.34 pounds/person/day. The discrepancy is attributable to the summer tourist industry which produces approximately 15,000 tons more waste annually than would be expected using the Franklin Associates projected generation rate. A constant 15,726 tons are added each year to the residential waste generation projections to account for this additional seasonal tonnage. Industrial per capita generation was calculated to be 8.77 tons/employee/year, excluding the approximately 72,000 tons disposed in captive sites in the district annually.

As a result of implementation of recycling and waste minimization programs developed by the district and the effect of landfill restrictions, the amounts projected for disposal are expected to decrease from approximately 95,600 TPY in 1994 to approximately 82,000 TPY in 2003.

The impact of these activities on residential, commercial and industrial waste generation required careful study and regular monitoring to provide a measure of the success of program implementation and waste reduction. Consistent and continuous reductions in amounts of waste disposed are dependent upon disposal costs, collection and processing costs for solid waste and recyclables, revenues from the sale of recyclables and the avoided cost of disposal.

Inventory of Baseline Facilities/Activities

The district baseline inventory included one permitted sanitary landfill, seven recycling activities, six privately operated incinerators and one yard waste compost facility. In addition, district waste was received at eight out-of-district landfills.

Solid Waste Disposal Facility Inventory

The Erie County Landfill (ECLF) provides solid waste disposal for the entire Erie County population. In 1992, the ECLF had an average daily gate receipt of 263.36 tons of mixed residential, commercial and industrial waste. The residential and commercial waste stream accounts for approximately 67 percent of the total, with the remainder industrial and exempt in nature.

The ECLF began operations in 1969 following approval of the site by the Ohio Department of Health. The ECLF is currently operating under an approved permit-to-install (PTI number 03-6003) approved in 1983 by the Ohio EPA. As reported by the Erie County Sanitary Engineer's Office, the landfill had a remaining life expectancy of sixteen years as of January 1, 1993 and was operating under an authorized maximum daily waste receipt limit (AMDWRL) of 800 tons during the baseline year.

Captive Disposal Facility Inventory

Two licensed captive disposal facilities are located in the district, one of which held inactive operating status during 1991 and 1992.

Incinerator Inventory

During the baseline year, Ohio EPA records indicate that six permitted incinerators operated in the district.

Recycling Activity Inventory

In 1992, three recycling collection operations and four processing facilities, not including private recycling associated with industrial activities, operated in the district.

Two privately owned scrap yards operate in the district, providing industrial recycling, as well as, a buy back for some household recyclables. In addition, two privately owned facilities accept commingled and source separated recyclables from the public and haulers.

Collection of recyclables is provided by the hauler under contract with the city of Huron and by the hauler servicing most of the village of Milan. The city of Sandusky requires that haulers operating in the city provide curbside recycling to their customers. Erie County provide drop off recycling boxes at five sites in the county.

Compost Facility Inventory

One yard waste composting facility operated in the district. A private company (Barnes Nursery) constructed a Class II composting facility in Erie County which is available to the public and to municipalities in the surrounding area.

Solid Waste Collection Systems Inventory

District refuse collection was conducted by twenty-six private collection firms during 1992.

Solid Waste Dump Inventory

Erie County Health Department records indicate that while no newly active solid waste dumps operate, there are some active brush debris dumps and previously closed solid waste dumps.

District Baseline Population

Total baseline (1992) district population was 72,134 people according to the Ohio Data User's Center, Department of Development, April 1991.

Ohio Department of Development population projections indicate a projected net increase of 1.5 percent in the district population between 1990 and 1995 (1,078 people) and a projected net increase of .4 percent between 1995 and 2000 (259 people). It is projected that the district population will increase by 1.4 percent or 1,049 people during the ten year planning period (1994-2003).

Projections of Solid Waste Disposal Needs

The waste disposal capacity needed by the Erie District over the entire ten year planning period (1994-2003) is 881,676 tons, decreasing from 95,600 TPY in 1994 to 82,000 TPY in 2003. This calculation assumes at least a 5 percent increase per year in residential/commercial recycling, an annual increase in industrial recycling and the implementation of landfill bans on tires, batteries and yard waste.

Facilities Needed for Solid Waste Management

Based upon current waste disposal rates, the remaining volume of landfill space in the district as provided under the existing permits is adequate to provide capacity for the entire planning period. Erie County owns and operated a landfill which had 2,245,000 cubic yards (1,680,000 tons) or sixteen years of capacity as of January 1993. However, the landfill is required to upgrade to BAT standards. A permit application submitted by Erie County to Ohio EPA for BAT upgrade received a proposed denial in December 1992. Erie County is continuing to pursue receipt of a permit to upgrade to BAT.

In the event that the permit approval is delayed or denied and the Erie County landfill is forced to close, the District Board of Directors may grant a waiver to allow district waste to be disposed at out-of-district landfills, seven of which have indicated the capacity and interest to accept Erie District waste. A transfer facility is another management alternative should additional capacity be required outside the county.

In order to reduce the amount of waste requiring disposal, the district will initiate a number of activities and programs to:

- a. Increase public awareness and education regarding waste reduction issues.
- b. Provide source reduction and recycling services and assistance.

Three key activities to achieve these goals are continuation and expansion of the drop off recycling program begun by Erie County in 1991, a Community Grant Assistance program to help communities fund recycling and waste reduction programs and an Industrial Pollution Prevention Program to provide waste consulting services to the district's industries.

Costs of Facilities and Activities

The annual cost of the district programs and activities is \$133,000 in 1994, rising to \$210,000 in 2003. This figure includes administration (a district coordinator and office assistance) and \$5,000 per year support for the Board of Health for solid waste enforcement activities. An additional \$20,000 per year is allocated in 1996 and 2000 for updating the district plan.

Designation of Disposal Facilities

The Erie County landfill is designated for the disposal of Erie County waste. Evergreen Recycling and Disposal Facility is identified for the disposal of asbestos. The Board of Directors may grant a waiver for waste to be disposed outside the district.

Incinerators, recycling activities and yard waste compost facilities in operation in the baseline year are identified for district use throughout the planning period.

4.10.3 Part III: Fees and Allocations

In order to fund the activities of the district, upon plan approval and establishment of the Erie County Solid Waste Management District, the district will implement a disposal fee of \$2.00 per ton on solid waste disposed within the district. A disposal fee is collected on all solid waste disposed within the district regardless of whether it originated within or outside the district. Exempt waste and waste disposed at captive facilities are not subject to disposal fees.

The Erie District will also seek to enter contracts with facilities outside the district receiving waste from within the Erie District to remit fees to the Erie District for the waste received. In 1992, 30,000 tons of waste were exported from the Erie District to landfills outside the district.

In the above described combination of disposal fees and contracts for exported waste does not provide sufficient revenues for implementation of the district's plan, the district will seek a generation fee, to be charged on all waste generated in the Erie District, regardless of its place of disposal, in an amount sufficient to fund plan implementation.

4.10.4 Part IV: District Rules

The Board of Directors of the Erie County Solid Waste Management District is authorized to make rules as necessary in accordance with section 343.01 (F) (1) (2) (3) and section 3734.53 (C) (1) (2) (3) (4) of the Ohio Revised Code.

4.10.5 Part V: Exempt Facilities

Local health department records indicate the presence of two licensed captive disposal facilities and no coal combustion waste disposal facilities in the district. Waste disposal at these facilities is exempt from district fee charges.

4.10.6 Part VI: District Strategy

The waste reduction and recycling goal for the State of Ohio is to reduce, reuse or recycle at least 25 percent of the solid waste generated per capita within each Solid Waste District by June 24, 1994. In addition, each Solid Waste District must demonstrate an annual per capita decrease in landfill utilization.

Utilizing the required formula to determine the percentage of recycling occurring during the baseline year (1992) that may be credited to the 25 percent waste stream reduction goal, the percent of the district waste stream recycled per capita in 1992 was 21.89 percent.

The Erie District's strategy for reaching the 25 percent reduction goal will emphasize programs and activities to:

1. Increase public awareness and education regarding waste reduction issues:
 - a. Environmental education, grades K-12
 - b. Speaker's bureau
 - c. "Don't bag it" program for yard waste
 - d. Household hazardous waste hotline
 - e. Industrial/commercial waste management newsletter
 - f. Industrial/commercial waste reduction workshops
2. Provide source reduction and recycling services and assistance:
 - a. Continue and expand the Erie County drop off recycling program
 - b. Community assistance grants
 - c. Used oil recycling promotion
 - d. Telephone directory recycling
 - e. Paint and pesticide exchange
 - f. Waste tire amnesty day
 - g. Industrial pollution prevention assistance program

These programs are described in detail below:

Strategy for Reaching Waste Reduction and Recycling Goal

The Erie County Solid Waste District's strategy for reaching the waste reduction and recycling goal includes two major components:

1. Increase public awareness and education regarding waste reduction and recycling opportunities.
2. Provide source reduction and recycling assistance and services.

a. Residential Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategies

1. Strategies to Increase Public Awareness and Education

The district's strategy will include a continuous public awareness and education component to increase residential and commercial recycling and motivate public officials and waste haulers to provide recycling collection services, where they are not yet available.

The district will rely on the existing Erie County Litter Prevention and Recycling Program. The litter grant program has prepared and distributed materials for classroom grades K to 12. Both the district and litter grant programs intend to prepare and publish brochures and flyers about HHW, yard waste composting and recycling throughout the planning period for public dissemination, as needed. The district will investigate publication of an annual newspaper insert providing information on recycling and reduction opportunities for the community.

A speaker's bureau will be developed in the district and implemented in 1994. The bureau will be comprised of individuals with varying expertise in solid waste management areas who, upon request, will make presentations to groups and organizations on various waste management topics.

The district will implement a "Don't Bag It" awareness promotion campaign in 1994 to target management of district yard waste. The district will encourage the participation of the Ohio State University Extension to develop this program and implement it. This program will gradually be phased out, ending in 1997.

A HHW hotline will be established to answer questions concerning proper management of HHW materials. The district may work with other offices such as the health department, OSU Extension, etc. for providing this service. Once the hotline is established, the district will publicize its availability.

2. Strategies to Provide Source Reduction and Recycling Services

Upon plan implementation, the Erie District will assume responsibility for the drop off recycling program initiated by the Erie County Sanitary Engineer's Department. The program presently consists of five township drop off locations for recyclables. The district will expand this program in 1994 and 1995 to three or four additional sites and promote the program throughout the community.

Beginning in 1995, the district will award annual community assistance grants to local political subdivisions to establish source reduction and recycling programs, or procure recycled products. The grant program will require matching funds and a clear demonstration that the program will promote source reduction or disposal reduction. Guidelines, evaluation criteria, match requirements, application forms and report forms will be developed by the district coordinator and Board of Directors upon plan implementation.

To promote used oil recycling, the Erie/Huron District prepared and distributed a used oil recycling brochure in 1991 and 1992, listing locations where used oil could be taken for recycling. This information will continue to be prepared by the Erie District and distributed throughout the ten year planning period.

A telephone directory recycling collection was initiated in Erie County in November 1991, by the Erie/Huron District. The Erie District will offer the phone book collection program annually throughout the planning period.

Beginning in 1994, the district will explore the feasibility of household paint and pesticide exchanges for Erie District residents to reduce the volume of HHW material being disposed in the landfill.

In 1994, prior to implementation of the ban on landfilling, both whole and shredded tires, the district will conduct a Waste tire Amnesty Day for the collection of waste tires. Tires will be hauled off-site for reuse, recycling or resource recovery purposes. This collection event will be held annually.

b. Industrial/Commercial Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategies

1. Strategies to Increase Public Awareness and Education

To ensure industry participation not only in recycling and waste reduction efforts, but also in assisting the district in its recordkeeping and reporting requirements, the district coordinator will initiate regular contact with individual facilities to solicit their participation in recycling targeted waste streams. An annual listing of Ohio industries called the Harris Directory provides, names, addresses, SIC codes and products made among other data. The directory is available at Ohio EPA's library and may also be available in local library systems. The district coordinator should begin by targeting these industries, in terms of the overall district waste reduction and recycling efforts. In addition, these industries should be encouraged to specify and identify what materials are being generated as waste. This can be accomplished through a waste audit by the industry.

The methods outlined in this section should serve as a guide to identify industries in the district, according to waste streams which can be targeted for reduction and recycling efforts. As the district develops greater first hand knowledge through surveys and workshops with industries about the amounts and types of materials available for recycling and waste reduction, the industries to be targeted will likely change somewhat.

To promote industrial and commercial recycling and waste reduction, the Erie/Huron District has been publishing a monthly waste management newsletter, distributed through the Chambers of Commerce in the district. This newsletter includes case studies, grant information, seminar information, a waste exchange and other topics that encourage and facilitate waste reduction and recycling. The newsletter will continue to be published by the Erie District, providing highlights of commercial and industrial recycling and waste reduction efforts.

Possibly in cooperation with area Chambers of Commerce, the district will hold a series of workshops for area businesses that address waste reduction issues. The district will hold the first workshop during 1994 and at least one workshop per year thereafter. The purpose of the workshops is to provide an opportunity for businesses to learn and implement waste reduction and recycling methods.

District workshops may include the following areas for discussion and possible training:

- Pollution prevention plans
- Conducting waste audits
- Model community programs
- Assessing which departments (e.g. purchasing, inventory, waste disposal, janitorial staff) need to be involved in the recycling effort
- Evaluating the best options for securing markets for materials

The district coordinator will need to explore funding and sources of expertise for the workshops and newsletter. The Ohio Technology Transfer Organization (OTTO) in the Ohio Department of Development has local offices with staff expertise in working with small to medium size manufacturers. As a possible funding source, industries with active recycling programs may be interested in co-sponsoring workshops with the district or purchasing advertising space in the newsletter. The Environmental Education Fund (EEF) at Ohio EPA may also be contacted for possible funding of district proposals concerning commercial/industrial waste reduction strategy involving workshops.

2. Strategies to Provide Source Reduction and Recycling Services

Through the Industrial Pollution Prevention Assistance Program, the Erie District will provide direct service to industries in the district to assess their waste stream, facilities and processes and make recommendations for waste reduction strategies specific to their facility. The district will engage professional waste consultants to provide this service and share the cost of the service with the participating industry. Beginning in 1995, the district has allocated \$30,000 per year to this program for three years and expects to serve about twenty-five industries per year.

Additional Strategies to Enhance District Policies

The Board of Directors will work with local health departments to establish and enforce regulations based upon local health codes for solid waste disposal, solid waste hauling, recycling, open dumping and any future closed or open dump site assessments and remediation and other related items.

If the district follows this strategy, the per capita recycling rate will increase each year of the planning period, surpassing the 25 percent goal in 1993 and reaching 67 percent in 2003. In addition, the per capita rate of landfill utilization will decrease from 1.32 TPY in 1994 to 1.11 TPY in 2003.

The state plan also requires solid waste districts to provide a strategy for managing lead-acid batteries, waste tires, yard waste and household hazardous waste.

Batteries are accepted for recycling at the Erie County Landfill and private scrap yards. The district will provide information on recycling locations to interested parties.

Waste tires, either whole or shredded, will be banned from landfills on January 1, 1995. The district will plan a Waste Tire Amnesty day for collecting and recycling waste tires prior to the implementation of the ban and annually thereafter.

SECTION 5.0

LAND USE POLICIES

5.1 Residential

5.1.1 Background

As discussed earlier in the plan, there were 32,827 housing units in Erie County in 1990. Single family detached housing was the dominate type of housing, although, multi-family developments increased in their proportion of all housing units.

Population projections to the year 2015 show that Erie County can expect to see its population increase nearly 4,000 persons. Correspondingly, the total number of housing units must increase to meet this demand for projected population.

Future residential development within the planning area must be controlled in a logical and orderly manner for the county to sustain its liveability for future generations. Residential land use shown on the future land use map have been designated to be in accord with several factors. The availability of current and scheduled sewer and water service perhaps has been the most influential factor in determining the extent and location of larger scale residential development. Subdivisions and multi-family developments should be particularly applied to the availability of these services.

The location of existing residential areas has also been analyzed to determine location of potential residential uses. Significant residential areas have been set aside where incompatible uses will not result and where effects on the county's physical and human resources can be minimized. Therefore, residential uses, with the exception of rural residences, should occur in the specified areas founded on the above stated factors.

5.1.2 Objectives

- To ensure that a sufficient supply of land is available to accommodate expected population growth and changing demands for residential development.
- To provide a range of housing types and densities of varied styles while ensuring the provision of amenities necessary for local residents.

- To ensure that new residential development or redevelopment is compatible with surrounding existing and proposed development and is not subject to noxious environmental elements.
- To promote a residential development pattern where the efficient use of energy is an important component.

5.1.3 Policies

It is the intent of this plan to ensure that Erie County has an adequate supply and variety of housing types and a high quality residential environment with minimal land use conflicts between residential areas and other land uses.

5.1.4

Areas designated as residential on Map "A" of this plan shall be predominantly used for residential dwellings. In addition, subject to the relevant provisions of this plan and the inclusion of appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution, other land uses may be permitted in areas designated as residential as follows:

- a. Community uses such as schools, churches, nursing homes, homes for the aged, day care centers and libraries, that by nature of their activity, scale and design, are compatible with residential uses; parks, open space and recreational uses having a community or neighborhood level service area; commercial convenience centers; limited office, retail and personal service uses; convenience stores; home occupation uses and group homes.
- b. Convenience stores which are compatible with their surroundings may be permitted in areas designated as residential or integrated into residential developments permitted in other designations subject to the inclusion of appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution.
- c. Limited office, retail and personal service uses may be permitted as an exception within areas designated as residential, provided such uses are compatible with surrounding land uses and do not detrimentally affect the areas designated for commercial development.
- d. Certain types of home occupation uses may be permitted in areas designated as residential or integrated into residential developments subject to the inclusion into appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution and the following:

- i. Home occupation uses being secondary to the use of a dwelling unit for residential purposes and shall not involve any changes to the external character of the dwelling units or property such as outside storage or display areas;
 - ii. Home occupation uses not generating adverse effects such as that from electrical interference, signs, excessive traffic, parking or noise;
 - iii. Home occupation uses shall not include uses such as kennels or animal services, automobile or truck repair or paint shops or any other activities which may otherwise be incompatible with the adjacent residential areas.
- e. Group homes are permitted in areas designated as residential, subject to the inclusion of appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution.
 - i. In order to prevent an undue concentration of group homes in Erie County, standards requiring a minimum distance separation between these facilities may be incorporated into the zoning resolution.
 - ii. The location of group homes shall have regard to the availability of the appropriate support services as may be required by the residents of the group home.

5.1.5

The residential densities with the respective residential land use designations identified by the Secondary Plans shall be as follows:

- a. **LOW DENSITY** – This designation permits predominantly town house dwellings and walk up apartments. Generally, these types of dwellings are to be located at the periphery of the residential neighborhood adjacent to arterial roads and/or collector roads.
- b. **MEDIUM DENSITY** – This designation permits predominantly town house dwellings and walk up apartments. Generally, these types of dwellings are to be located at the periphery of the residential neighborhood adjacent to arterial roads and/or collector roads.

- c. MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY – This designation permits predominantly apartment dwellings in buildings not exceeding a height of four stories. This type of dwelling generally is to be located adjacent to or in close proximity to arterial and/or collector roads, community facilities and open space areas.
- d. HIGH DENSITY – This category permits predominantly high rise apartments. This type of dwelling is generally to be located:
 - i. Within and at the periphery of the area designated by this plan as central area, or;
 - ii. Adjacent to or in close proximity to arterial roads, community and park.

5.1.6

For the purpose of this plan, Net Residential Density refers to the number of dwelling units per Net Residential Acre of any particular development or redevelopment. In the case of single family, duplex and semi-detached dwellings, Net Residential Density includes only the land for residential lots and excludes lands for public roads, public parklands and hazard lands. In the case of any housing form other than a single family, duplex and semi-detached dwellings, Net Residential Density includes the lands for dwellings, private internal roads, parking areas, open space and other associated amenities directly related and forming part of the development and/or redevelopment.

5.1.7

Multi-family developments shall be compatible with neighboring uses, developed with available sewer and water and can be utilized as a transitional use between residential and commercial uses.

5.1.8

Site plan approval with review guidelines for multi-family developments shall be incorporated into the respective zoning resolutions and ordinances.

5.1.9

In the evaluation of any proposal for multiple family residential development (triplex, fourplex, sixplex, attached housing and apartment dwellings), the following items shall be considered:

- a. Schools and neighborhood commercial facilities will be adequate for the increased residential density resulting from the proposal;
- b. The height, bulk and arrangement of buildings and structures will achieve harmonious design and will not conflict with the existing and/or expected development of the surrounding area.
- c. Appropriate off-street parking, landscaped areas, protection for abutting residential uses where warranted and other accepted site planning features can be satisfactorily accommodated on the proposed site; and
- d. Ingress and egress to the property can be so designed to minimize traffic hazards and congestion on surrounding streets.

5.1.10

In the development of new residential areas and as far as practical in the infilling or redevelopment of established areas, the following items should be considered in order to achieve high standards of residential amenity:

- a. Provision and maintenance of adequate off-street parking.
- b. Provision, improvement and/or maintenance of on-site landscaping; and
- c. The provision and maintenance of adequate separation distances and the placement of buffering features between residential uses of differing densities, as well as, other land uses.

In addition, residential development and/or infilling within developed neighborhoods shall not be on a scale so as to create a land use conflict with surrounding uses.

5.1.11

The introduction of compatible permitted non-residential uses in the residential area shall:

- a. Be required to provide adequate yards, off-street parking and loading, landscaping, screening, buffering or such other site planning measures as required;
- b. Not be of a nature so as to have a detrimental effect on the adjacent residential uses; and

- c. In the instance of public utilities and similar uses, these facilities shall be so treated as much as practical to be in keeping with the general character of surrounding buildings, structures and landscape features.

In addition to the above, where compatible non-residential uses are proposed, other relevant policies of this plan shall apply.

- 5.1.12** Erie Regional Planning Commission shall review and update the Erie County Subdivision Regulations on a regular basis, to ensure that the best and most current standards are utilized in the development of our new subdivisions.
- 5.1.13** In the subdivision approval process, the subdivider must dedicate land for open space or provide cash in lieu to be used to upgrade recreational facilities. This requirement will help ensure that recreational facilities will be provided to meet the demands of new residents.
- 5.1.14** To accommodate the varying housing needs of present Erie County residents, a complete range of housing types should be provided to help retain a balanced population reflecting a range of incomes, occupations, ages and family characteristics. Choice in size of housing units, type of unit – single family, townhouse apartment and price range should be available. Variations in housing types could be encouraged by zoning codes which permit housing to be developed at varying densities.
- 5.1.15** To provide standards of residential density consistent with existing development, housing density is expressed in terms of the number of dwelling units per residential acre. It is a function of both housing type and lot size. The density or intensity, at which land is developed has an important effect on the physical appearance of the community. In general, only two types of environment are available – the high density development typical of most cities and low density residential development typical of many suburban communities. Both of course, have drawbacks and advantages. As a third alternative, some planners now advocate the development of communities where overall density is higher than that of most suburbs and lower than that of most cities.

Residential density in Erie County is regulated by the zoning codes of the political subdivision, which specifies a minimum lot area per dwelling unit. Existing densities generally vary from one to three dwelling units per acre to five units per acre for multi-family dwellings. It is recommended that the zoning codes continue this

low density of residential development in the future. Permitted density for single family dwellings should continue at one to three units per acre and multi-family dwelling units should continue at six units per acre. Any development over six units per acre should be permitted in Planned Unit Developments.

Density may be regulated on an aggregate basis, as well as, by specifying lot sizes. Thus, housing units may be “clustered” as long as open space is provided within the residential development to achieve the required density.

Multiple family dwelling units should be located so as to harmonize with the surrounding neighborhood. Adjoining property should be protected from noise and loss of light and air. Added traffic should be prevented from passing through low density areas. Thus, high density uses should be located on arterial or collector streets. They should also be located near permanent parkland or open space or should generate their own open space.

- 5.1.16** To maintain and improve existing housing stock and the overall residential environment, one of the county’s greatest assets is its housing stock and its existing residential environment. Steps should be taken, therefore, to insure that older residences and residential areas are maintained as attractive and comfortable places to live.

New development in older neighborhoods should be encouraged so long as it is consistent with existing development and provides the usual amenities. Land which is vacant as a result of demolition should be considered as sites for new construction.

- 5.1.17** To encourage proper and adequate planning of new residential areas, land use controls must not only permit, but encourage the creation of a well designed residential environment. Imaginative and innovative architecture and site planning should be encouraged. All new residential subdivisions should meet minimum standards for the provision of infrastructure improvements.

Site plan review and approval should be incorporated into the zoning codes for multi-family residential developments to ensure the zoning provisions are being adhered to.

- 5.1.18** To encourage a pattern of residential development which promotes optimum coordination with other land uses.

- a. OPEN SPACE – Well placed open space serves a variety of functions. It has recreational and aesthetic value and provides one of the easiest and most agreeable methods of linking residential areas of separating residential neighborhoods from the noise and lights often associated with thoroughfares and commercial districts.

The amount of open space and where it is to be located must be determined. A back yard is one method of providing “adequate open space for each family.” Alternatively, adequate open space can be in the form of providing private or public parks. In new residential areas, open space may be provided by decreasing the size of the individual yards and combining the extra land into large common open areas for the use and enjoyment of all residences.

- b. COMMERCIAL AREAS – Neighborhood commercial centers designed to serve the day-to-day convenience shopping and personal service needs of a neighborhood area should be developed. Standards insuring the compatibility of such areas with surrounding residential development should be included as part of the zoning regulations.
- c. SCHOOLS – The location of new schools in relation to residential development depends, in part, on the policy of the school board concerning centralization of schools. In the future, however, it may be beneficial to provide “neighborhood schools” for kindergarten through second or third grade and centralized schools for the upper grades. In any case, schools and neighborhood parks should be coordinated and located in neighborhood centers.
- d. LINKAGES – Erie County should be prevented from becoming a series of individual subdivisions, isolated from each other by collector or arterial streets. Well placed open space can be used to link residential subdivisions. The common open space in cluster subdivisions could be coordinated and tied to city parks, schools and shopping areas. A system of bicycle and pedestrian paths should be established.

5.2 COMMERCIAL

5.2.1 Background

Commercial development and uses linked to such development work as a primary generator of economic growth. In today's service and commercial oriented economy, it is important that opportunities for the continued expansion of commercial uses be extended to all suitable locations within the county. Since the commercial base is principally service and tourist related, a balance must be met in providing services for the residents and the seasonal tourist population. It is the intent of the Master Plan to provide for sites of adequate space to accommodate future quality retail and commercial centers and to prevent uncontrolled commercial strip development often associated with urban expansion.

The central business district (CBD's) located in Huron, Sandusky and Vermilion were at one time the area of primary commercial land use activity. These concentrated areas accommodated various business establishments and were previously the focal point for most retail, service and professional business activity. The CBD's in these cities have retained many of their original functions, but the retail market once located in the CBD has shifted to the vicinity of the major transportation routes. The following policies intend to lessen the impacts of inevitable commercial growth while providing sufficient areas for its proper expansion.

5.2.2 Objectives

- To encourage the provision of a sufficient level and variety of retail activity in the county to accommodate the demand of residents.
- To ensure that commercial development will not have adverse effects on adjacent land uses and that such development occur in an orderly and highly aesthetic manner, readily and safely accessible to local residents.
- To promote the consolidation of existing strip commercial areas and to discourage their unnecessary extension.
- To promote the central areas as a multi-use node for retail, office, residential, social, community and health services and to encourage the creation of a variety of employment opportunities.

5.2.3 General

It is the intent of this plan to develop a commercial hierarchy for Erie County that will provide a full range of commercial facilities of varying size, form and function to accommodate the needs of existing and future residents.

5.2.4 The predominant use of lands within the commercial land use designation shown on map "A" shall be for retail stores, office and service functions, restaurants, cultural and entertainment facilities and community uses. Parks and other related uses may also be permitted within lands designated commercial in this plan.

5.2.5 Erie County shall encourage the establishment and reinforcement of a functional hierarchy of commercial areas related to the arterial road system and to the convenient travel distance associated with each type of facility.

5.2.6 Erie County shall encourage the creation of various types of commercial districts that sufficiently serve the needs of the community in the following manner: vehicular oriented goods and services for the community and general retail and service type uses for the community and region.

5.2.7 Erie County shall encourage new commercial business to locate in areas zoned for these uses to ensure the viability of major commercial areas. These areas include the Cleveland Road commercial strip, the Sandusky Plaza and the Central Business Districts in Huron, Sandusky and Vermilion, U.S. 250 strip, Perkins Avenue, the villages of Bay View, Berlin Heights, Castalia, Kelleys Island and Milan and the hamlets of Florence and Birmingham.

5.2.8 Any structures containing both residential and commercial uses shall, in addition to other policies of this plan, be subject to the following policies;

- a. Amenity areas will be provided exclusively for the residential component and will be functionally separated from public areas associated with the commercial component;
- b. Any effect from the commercial component which will detract from the amenity of the associated residential uses will be minimized;

- c. Customer parking areas associated with the commercial component will preferably be physically separated from residential uses and in no case will the customer parking areas interfere with the safe and efficient use of residential parking areas; and
- d. Engineering services, school, park and similar community facilities are adequate to serve the needs of the residents.

5.2.9 In considering proposals for Automobile Service Stations, it is recommended that the following provisions are complied with:

- a. The preferred location for an automobile service station will be adjacent to the intersection of major roads;
- b. An automobile service station shall only be permitted in a location which will not endanger vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- c. Access points shall be limited and so designed as to minimize traffic hazards and congestion; and
- d. On a shopping center site, the structure should be physically separated from the major activity areas and buildings of the shopping center and in proximity to major roads.

5.2.10 The zoning resolution and ordinances should include provision for site plan control for any commercial development. The site plan review should include, but not be limited to, approval of stormwater and erosion control plans.

5.2.11 Land Use Relationships

Consideration shall be given to integrating the location and design of structures, parking areas and access points of new commercial developments with surrounding land uses.

5.2.12 When commercial uses are proposed to be developed adjacent to residential areas, consideration shall be given, but not limited to the following:

- a. Structures, traffic, parking and service areas being screened and buffered to a degree that noise, light and undesirable visual effects emanating from the commercial uses are minimized; and
- b. Traffic, parking and service area being oriented, wherever possible, away from adjacent residential areas.

- c. Adequate setback and buffer areas should be incorporated into the zoning codes to minimize the impact of the commercial development on the residential areas. The setback should be based on the intensity of the commercial use.

5.2.13 Commercial establishments or centers that are proposed adjacent to existing commercial uses will be encouraged to integrate the design and dimensions of structures, parking areas and access points with those of existing uses.

5.2.14 Where commercial uses are proposed to be developed adjacent to lands designated residential, the access drives, parking and service areas will be screened and/or buffered so that noise, light or undesirable visual effects emanating from the commercial use are reduced. Particularly, light from standards or other external lighting fixtures, excluding those used for store and window display or wall illumination, will be directed downwards and shielded or oriented as much as practicable away from the adjacent lands designated residential. It is recommended that standards for noise levels be included in the local zoning resolutions and ordinances.

5.2.15 Design Criteria

The number, location, spacing and design of vehicular accesses from the road system to commercial areas shall be regulated and shall be subject to the approval of the authorities having jurisdiction.

5.2.16 The size of advertising, identification or other promotional signs and devices will be regulated by the local zoning codes in order to avoid conflicts with effective traffic control and the general amenity of the areas.

5.2.17 Off-street parking, loading and service areas shall be provided to ensure that all traffic movements are accommodated on the site of commercial developments and off the public roads.

5.2.18 Consideration shall be given to the provision of parking, access and other facilities for the disabled in the design of commercial areas and buildings.

5.2.19 The following principles shall govern the development of commercial areas:

- a. Auto parking facilities should be provided in sufficient number to avoid street parking.
- b. Access points to such parking areas should be limited in number and located to minimize danger to pedestrians and to traffic in the immediate area.
- c. Buffering to adjoining residential uses shall be provided on the commercial property in the form of landscaped areas and planting.

5.2.20 Market Conditions

A Commercial Market Analysis was prepared by Basile, Bauman, Prost & Associates, Inc. to undertake commercial market evaluation to assist in formulating the policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

This section contains an evaluation of the recent trends and current conditions of the commercial market within Erie County. The analysis concentrates on the retail market.

Detailed information on retail sales trends from 1982 to 1987 (most recent available) for Erie County, the city of Sandusky and the remainder of Erie County are displayed in tables 11 through 14.

From 1982 to 1987, retail sales in Erie County advanced from approximately \$380 million to \$510 million, an average annual increase of \$26 million or 6.9 percent. During the same time, the number of establishments advanced modestly from 503 to 562.

The most significant growth took place in general merchandise and furniture and home furnishings. General merchandise reflected the growth of department store-type sales and a significant increase in the number of establishments from 13 to 22. This growth may be contrasted with relatively modest growth in apparel and accessory and food stores. This generally reflects the lack of specialty type stores in Erie County and the dependence on department and general merchandise type establishments. It also tends to reflect a relatively weak grocery store inventory.

An important issue in Erie County is the degree to which Erie County residents make purchases within Erie County, as well as, the degree to which residents of surrounding counties, particularly tourists, make purchases within Erie County. This reflects the amount of retail "inflow" or "pull" into Erie County versus the "outflow" or "push" to outgoing areas.

Table 11 displays estimated retail sales inflow and outflow for Erie County in 1987. Overall it is estimated that approximately 22 percent of the sales in Erie County reflected net inflow or pull into the area. This means that net purchases made within Erie County exceeds net expenditures made by Erie County residents by 22 percent. This is consistent with similar studies conducted by Ohio State University, which estimated a 1990 inflow of approximately 27 percent. Inflow appears to most pronounced for general merchandise (reflecting department store-type sales) and automotive dealerships.

Inflow appears to be most modest for apparel and accessory, drug and food stores, as well as, eating and drinking places, reflecting somewhat the lack of establishments in those categories within Erie County. The home furnishing category and other 'miscellaneous' were the only store groups experiencing outflow of goods from Erie County, reflecting a lack of retail opportunities with Erie County to attract purchases from either Erie County residents or persons outside of Erie County.

In order to examine recent trends in Erie County sales inflow and outflow, BBP Associates evaluated the change in retail expenditures by county residents, estimated trends in overall county retail sales and changes in the retail supply within Erie County.

Based upon changes in population, households and household income and assuming no changes in Erie County residents' spending pattern by store group, it is estimated that retail expenditures of county residents advanced from approximately \$396 million in 1987 to \$519 million by 1993, representing an average annual growth of 5.2 percent.

Changes in retail sales within the county were estimated based upon county sales tax trends and projections provided by *Sales and Marketing Management*, as well as, changes in the local retail inventory. From 1987 to 1993, major changes in the inventory included the approximately 250,000 square foot Lake Erie Outlet Center and the approximately 532,000 (total square feet) Sandusky Park Place, both located within the U.S. 250 corridor.

Based upon the above factors, BBP Associates estimated 1993 retail sales in Erie County at approximately \$776 million, representing an average annual increase of 8.7 percent from 1987, as shown in Table 12. This projected sales increase reflects a significant advance from the 6.9 percent average annual change from 1982 to 1987 and represents a significantly greater change in sales (8.7 percent per year) than expenditures (5.2 percent per year).

This greater advance in retail sales that retail expenditures reflects the growing attractiveness of Erie County to persons residing outside of Erie County. This represents an increase in the proportion of sales representing inflow from outside the county.

Table 13 contains estimates of the 1993 retail sales in proportion to retail sales derived from net inflow. The development of the Outlet Mall, Park Place Center and increased tourism activity has helped cause retail sales inflow to greatly advance from an estimated 22 percent of overall county sales in 1987 to approximately 1/3 of all county retail sales in 1993.

Table 11 contains information on the significant growth in retail inflow over the 1987 to 1993 period. While sales to area residents increased at approximately a 5.2 percent annual rate, it is estimated that sales to persons residing outside of Erie County increased at an average annual rate of approximately 20.8 percent. Reflecting the impact of the Outlet Mall and increased tourist activity, average annual advances in retail inflow were particularly pronounced for apparel and accessory and eating and drinking places.

In summary, Erie County represents a dynamic retail market. Modest increases in population and households, combined with significant increases in retail sales to non-county residents, have generated a healthy retail market that has attracted significant interest from major retail actors (Toys-R-Us, Walmart, Meijer's, etc.).

5.2.21 Market Outlook

This section contains a summary of the outlook for commercial space. It focuses on the outlook for retail-related uses within Erie County.

In order to provide input to the County Master Plan, this section has projected the order of magnitude of required acres of retail space needed to address future retail demand. In order to assist in identifying Master Plan policy implications, retail projections have been organized into four categories; convenience goods, primary shoppers goods, secondary shoppers goods and general purchases.

Convenience goods includes building materials, drug stores and food stores and are primarily oriented toward the local residential based population. Primary shoppers goods, which consist of apparel and general merchandise and secondary shoppers goods, which consist of eating and drinking places and furniture and home furnishings, appeal to both the residential based and tourist related demand segments. These facilities are more likely to locate within a major retail activity node and/or corridor. Finally, general purchases have been identified which includes automotive uses and other related uses. These represent a primarily residentially based oriented demand. These will also probably focus along major commercial arteries.

5.2.22 Retail Sales Outlook

Table 14 on the following page, contains 1987 and estimated 1993 retail sales by four major retail groups. Projected sales for 1998 and 2008 have also been estimated.

The estimates are based upon population, household and household income projections and a translation of those household income projections into retail expenditures. The key element in determining future sales levels is examining trends in sales inflow and outflow, which measures the relative growth in residentially based versus tourist related demand. Projections of future sales inflow take into consideration past trends over the 1987 to 1993 period, which represent a significant advance in proportion of sales generated by tourist related demand.

Inflow sales rates for 1998 and the year 2008 were estimated for nine retail categories. Retail sales inflow is expected to grow in the future, albeit at a significantly reduced rate from the 1987 to 1993 period. Apparel inflow is expected to increase only modestly over the 1993 to 1998 period and increase more significantly over the 1998 to 2008 period with assumed expansion of outlet related retail in the later period. Auto related inflow is expected to remain relatively constant. Modest inflow is expected to remain relatively constant. Modest advances in inflow is assumed for drug and

proprietary stores, home furnishing establishments, general merchandise and other retail categories. Slightly greater advances in inflow is assumed for eating and drinking places, reflecting the relatively low current proportion of tourist related demand. Building materials and food stores are seen to experience a higher rate of increase in inflow during the 1993 to 1998 period than the 1998 to 2008 period. This is based on the assumption of additional inflow generated by the proposed Lowe's and Meijer's facilities.

The overall retail sales are projected to advance from \$776 million in 1993 to \$958 million by 1998, reaching over \$1.3 billion by 2008. This represents average annual increases over the 1993 to 1998 and 1998 to 2008 period of \$36.5 million or 4.1 percent and \$38.2 million or 4.0 percent, respectively. This compares to an average annual increase of \$44.4 million or 8.7 percent over the 1987 to 1993 period.

The relatively smaller increases in retail sales over the projection period reflect the continued modest growth in area population, households and income and a significantly reduced rate of growth in the proportion of retail sales generated by tourists (i.e., a decreasing rate of increase in sales inflow). Nevertheless, sales to non-residents is expected to increase at a faster rate than sales to residents. From 1987 to 1993, sales to non-residents grew four times faster than sales to residents. Between 1993 and 1998, sales to non-residents are expected to increase at a rate of 6.3 percent per year compared to 3.3 percent per year for sales to residents. From 1998 to 2008 sales to non-residents are expected to increase at an average annual rate of 5.1 percent compared to an Erie County residential based increase of 3.4 percent per year.

5.2.23 Supportable Commercial Space

Table 15 translates the growth in retail sales into supportable square footage and required commercial acres. The methodology utilized assumes that existing facilities will be able to generally maintain their sales volumes and sales productivity trends. It is assumed that sales per square foot in existing facilities will increase only approximately ½ of the rate of increase in average household income or approximately 1.5 percent.

Estimates of the 1998 sales per square foot, or productivity levels of the pre-existing (1993) inventory allows estimates of their retail sales capture and a determination of the residual 1998 sales available to support new retail facilities. It is assumed that these new retail facilities experience sales per square foot levels

significantly higher than existing facilities reflective of sales productivity levels achieved by new establishments. The application of these sales productivity, or sales per square foot, levels to the residual 1998 sales potential establishes the supportable net new square footage by retail type over the 1993 to 1998 period.

In order to translate the supportable square footage into acres, we have assumed development at a 0.15 Floor Area Ratio (FAR). This represents development providing fifteen (15) square feet of building space for every one-hundred (100) square feet of land area. A 0.15 FAR reflects reasonable estimates for new development and is somewhat lower than the intensity at Sandusky Mall (0.2 FAR); but somewhat higher than FAR ratio for Park Place or the Outlet Mall (0.11 FAR) which provide the significant future expansion space. An identical methodology was utilized to project supportable square footage and acreage requirements over the 1998 to 2008 period.

Table 15 summarizes the required acres and estimated average annual absorption for retail goods by general retail type over the 1993 through 1998 and 1998 to 2008 period. As displayed in the table, an average annual absorption of approximately eighteen (18) acres is projected over the 1993 to 1998 period advancing to twenty-two (22) acres over the 1998 to 2008 period. A significantly greater portion of the retail demand is oriented toward primary shoppers goods reflecting more tourist orientation than the more residential/neighborhood of retail convenience type uses.

In summary, there is continued demand for retail space in Erie County. This will support moderate amounts of land absorption over the next five to fifteen years. These projections have important policy implications as discussed in the subsequent section of the report.

5.2.24 Hotel/Motel Marketing

A brief overview of the hotel/motel market was completed as part of the Commercial Market Analysis done for the Comprehensive Plan. Tables 16 and 17 on the following pages, display the growth in county hotel/motel tax collections and information on the lodging market supply, which is now approximately 3,600 rooms. From 1985 to 1992, it is estimated that the lodging market increased at an average of approximately 130 rooms per year, representing an average gain of approximately five percent. Based upon extension

interviews, it is perceived that the local lodging market is sound and will continue to experience slow but moderate growth.

Tourism is a major driving force in the lodging marketplace, representing approximately seventy-five percent of overall lodging demand. During the peak season, lodging demand is ninety to ninety-five percent tourists. Group demand has increased significantly during the off season, representing up to forty percent of demand, with tourist demand at forty percent and business demand at approximately twenty percent.

Average annual occupancies range greatly depending primarily on weather conditions during the peak tourist season. Annual occupancy has tended to range anywhere between fifty-five percent to seventy percent, with virtually one-hundred percent occupancy during peak months in good weather. From $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the annual hotel/motel tax is derived during the peak July through September tourist season.

The significant seasonality of the tourist market, combined with the difficulty in extending "shoulder" month and off-season hotel demand indicates there will be continue modest anticipated growth with a strong focus toward tourist related activities at Cedar Point and along the lake.

5.2.25 Office Market

Generally, the lack of growth in the area office-related employment sectors and the significant available space, both in the Sandusky Central Business District and as a result of small owner-occupied facilities, makes any significant commercial office growth unlikely. Table shows the growth in at-place employment. Growth in the finance, insurance and real estate sector which represents the fundamental market for office related demand and is virtually non-existent.

Small professional service type office space is being developed as reflected in the growth in service related employment. Much of this small office space growth reflects owner-occupied buildings located in the suburban portions of the county. It is not anticipated that commercial office growth will play a significant role in the future. Continued growth of owner-occupied buildings in suburban locations will be balanced with relocation and consolidation in older urban centers.

5.2.26 Policies Derived from Market Analysis

This section identifies and initially evaluates the land use policy and regulatory implications of the commercial market analysis. This includes an identification of key issues in terms of challenges and opportunities facing the county and land use and master plan policies which can address these issues.

5.2.27 Issues

In the light of the preceding market analysis, review of existing area plans and project work sessions, several key issues regarding commercial development in Erie County may be identified. These key issues are highlighted below in terms of challenges facing the county and opportunities upon which the county may capitalize. These challenges and opportunities are presented in “bullet” form to aid policy decision makers in evaluating these key factors.

5.2.28 Challenges

- a. The county is experiencing relatively modest growth in population, households and income.
- b. Existing retail facilities are somewhat threatened by changing highway patterns and the development of major new retail facilities.
- c. There is a high degree of seasonality to retail activity and particularly tourist related lodging demand.
- d. There is extremely limited growth outlook for all, but small population oriented commercial office space.
- e. Retail activity tends to be concentrated in the Route 250 corridor, contributing to additional congestion and creating added pressure on the area’s infrastructure.
- f. A new interchange at the Ohio Turnpike and Route 4 may open up significant new commercial land areas.
- g. There is a possible proliferation of small convenience retail strips along major routes throughout the county.
- h. Traditional retail activities located in urban centers and villages is threatened by increasing retail competition.

5.2.29 Opportunities

- a. Steady growth in retail demand in all retail sectors is anticipated over the next five to fifteen years.
- b. There is continued growing retail inflow into the county representing enhanced tourist related demand.

- c. New retail opportunities are oriented toward high volume “super stores,” with a strong desire to be concentrated in the existing Route 250 retail corridor.
- d. The lower occupancy costs and convenience retail and specialized nature of most older retail, make older retail less vulnerable toward competition from new retail operations.
- e. Most of the competition between existing and new retail will be among the larger retail operators.
- f. There is little perceived major retail user interest within the Route 4 corridor or other portions of the county outside the existent Route 250 corridor.
- g. Continued small but steady growth in lodging facilities is anticipated with an orientation toward major tourist routes which could include the improved accessibility along Route 4.
- h. There is not perceived to be a major proliferation of new lodging facilities or a relocation of existing lodging facilities toward the Route 4 corridor.
- i. Small scale commercial office development will take place primarily in terms of improvements to existing space within urban cores and/or new small scale free-standing owner-occupied facilities.

5.2.30 Policy Recommendations

Listed below are prospective Land Use and Master Plan policies, which have been formulated to help address current and anticipated challenges and optimize on identified opportunities with regard to commercial development within Erie County.

- a. Consideration should be given to reducing the total amount of retail/commercial land use within the county to be more reflective of a realistic level of anticipated retail demand.
- b. The County Master Plan should differentiate between high order/larger retail facility shopper goods and smaller neighborhood and village oriented convenience operations.
- c. Major retail facilities should be accommodated and concentrated within the existing Route 250 corridor in order to optimize economic benefits and provide retail variety and choice for area residents.
- d. Concentrating retail activities in the Route 250 corridor include undertaking necessary road improvements and the provision of adequate water and sewer facilities.

- e. Large retail operators desiring to relocate in the Route 250 corridor are financially able and sufficiently interested in the corridor that they should help pay for a significant portion of required infrastructure improvements.
- f. The county may consider a form of adequate public facilities ordinance which would require retail operators in the Route 250 corridor to provide for and/or pay for necessary infrastructure improvements.
- g. Major high order retail facilities should be restricted from other locations within the county.
- h. Small neighborhood convenience type retail should be concentrated within specific “nodes” as opposed to along major retail strip zoning.
- i. Retail facilities in existing older urban centers (Sandusky, Huron and Vermilion) and villages should be strengthened by efforts to consolidate facilities within urban and village cores and prevent scattered site commercial sprawl.
- j. Targeted public efforts and/or funding for commercial renovation and revitalization in existing urban and village centers should be encouraged.
- k. Urban design and development plans and regulations should be enacted to promote revitalization of existing village and urban centers and facilitate quality development within the Route 250 corridor.
- l. Upgraded standards for design review, landscaping and billboard and business signs should be considered.
- m. Land for commercial service uses (e.g., wholesale trade, contractors and repair facilities) should be designated separately from commercial activities with consideration of such uses being attracted to older urban centers such as the Perkins Avenue corridor in Sandusky.
- n. The county should consider targeting specific areas for tourist related and hotel type uses.
- o. The county, towns and villages should consider tourist related entertainment facilities and recreation uses within older urban centers to reinforce tourist related specialty retail activities (Huron, Vermilion and Sandusky).
- p. Land use policies and regulatory factors can have the largest influence in managing/controlling the characteristics of commercial activity which desires to locate within the established Route 250 corridor.

5.2.31 Central Areas

Objectives

To promote the Central Areas as a multi-use node for retail, office, residential, social, community and health services and to encourage the creation of a variety of employment opportunities.

To enhance the multi-use function of these centers by creating an attractive environment in which to live, work, do business, shop and visit.

To provide adequate public transit and road access for pedestrian and vehicular flows.

Policies

5.2.32 The Central Business Districts as delineated on map "A" shall be planned and developed as a multi-use node for retail, office, residential, social and community service.

The primary uses permitted in the Central Business District shall be for the following:

- a. Commercial uses including, but not limited to, retail stores, personal service shops, restaurants (including outdoor patio cafes), hotels, banks, printing shops, professional business offices and medical office, medical support facilities such as laboratories, commercial parking facilities and mixed commercial/residential developments.
- b. Public and institutional uses, including but not limited to, governmental, cultural, educational, religious or health and welfare facilities, public parking lots and public utilities.
- c. Residential uses of various types and densities, including but not limited to, single family detached, semi-detached, row and apartment housing and housing for special purposes such as senior citizen housing.

5.2.33 To strengthen the role of the Central Business District as a focus for community activity, it is recommended that the political subdivision having jurisdiction:

- a. Encourage new commercial development and/or redevelopment within the Primary Retail Area;

- b. Establish a civic focus including a major public facility and other civic related uses such as open space area for public gatherings;
- c. Establish and expand community services such as those for senior citizens and children, as well as, medical facilities to serve both the resident and employment population;
- d. Promote and expand tourist facilities with the cooperation of all levels of government.

5.2.34 Within the Central Business Districts, there are a variety of residential densities. It is the intent of this Plan that this variety be continued in the future.

5.2.35 In recognition of existing buildings of architectural and/or historical value, the Plan shall encourage, wherever possible, the preservation and rehabilitation of heritage and/or architectural significant properties within the Central Business District.

5.2.36 The County, in conjunction with the political subdivision having jurisdiction, will undertake an active roll in the implementation of a revitalization scheme for the Central Business Districts. In this regard, the county shall periodically investigate the feasibility of obtaining Federal and/or State funding for the enhancement and revitalization.

5.2.37 Mixed use development permitted within this designation shall be designed to ensure compatibility between the commercial and residential components. In this regard, the amenity areas shall be provided for the residents separate from commercial parking, loading areas or garbage storage areas and the uses shall be sufficiently separated so as to ensure amenable co-existence.

5.2.38 The character and function of the Central Area are to be enhanced. The political subdivision having jurisdiction shall:

- a. Ensure the careful integration of infilling development or redevelopment so that such is in scale and character with the surrounding area;
- b. Promote the amenity of the sidewalk through the uniform design and distribution of street furniture, information kiosks, garbage receptacles, trees and planting boxes, public and private signage and lighting and suitable covering to protect the pedestrians from the elements;

- c. Ensure that building setbacks are compatible with adjoining buildings to maintain continuity and harmony along the streetscape;
- d. Encourage the upgrading of existing pedestrian linkages and/or the implementation of new linkages between the Central Area and nearby residential areas. In this regard, open space areas adjacent to existing water courses shall be utilized wherever feasible.

5.2.39 The relevant political subdivision may establish a reserve fund for the acquisition of properties for public off-street parking. It may waive the requirement for sufficient parking on site as a condition of development, provided that the owner makes a financial contribution for the provision of municipal parking elsewhere in the Central Area.

5.2.40 Shopping Centers

The shopping center designation applies to a group of architecturally unified commercial establishments planned and developed as a unit.

5.2.41 The shopping center applies primarily to a broad range of commercial uses including department stores, retail shops and personal service shops, restaurants, offices, places of entertainment, recreation and assembly, financial institutions, automobile service stations, motor vehicle sales rooms and motor vehicle sales lots and uses similar and accessory to the foregoing.

5.2.42 Any proposal for a shopping center should derive its access from a major collector, minor arterial, principal arterial or expressway, as designated on the Erie County Thoroughfare Plan.

5.2.43 Shopping Centers are appropriate forms of commercial development necessary to the economic health of the county. In this regard, the following classification of shopping center (table 18) in the preparation of Secondary Plans should be utilized:

- a. A Super Regional Center will have a typical gross leasable area of 800,000 square feet.
- b. A Regional Center will have a typical gross leasable area of 400,000 square feet.
- c. A Community Center will have a typical gross leasable area of 250,000 square feet.

- d. A Neighborhood Center will have a typical gross leasable area of 50,000 square feet.
- e. A Convenience Center will have a typical leasable area of 5,000 square feet.

5.2.44 To ensure that a new shopping center will not jeopardize the viability of existing or approved retail centers in the county, it is recommended that the subdivision having jurisdiction require a market study for developments of greater than 150,000 square feet. The government having jurisdiction should also be satisfied that:

- a. Traffic volumes and movements can be safely handled by the existing or proposed road system;
- b. Adequate provision can be made to accommodate access by public transit, where needed;
- c. Existing or committed services and utilities are adequate to serve the development.

General Commercial

5.2.45 The General Commercial designation applies to certain existing and proposed areas of individually managed commercial establishments located along highways and arterial roads. General Commercial uses benefit from accessibility and visibility and thereby provide a service to both pedestrian and automobile born trade.

5.2.46 Land designated General Commercial by this Plan may be used for retail and service shops, offices, financial institutions, automobile sales, service and repair establishments, printing shops, restaurants, hotels, places of assembly and entertainment, commercial marinas, local institutional and community uses and uses similar and accessory to the foregoing including residential dwelling units.

5.2.47 Development within existing General Commercial areas will be primarily through infilling and redevelopment in order to consolidate these areas. When considering such infilling and redevelopment proposals, Council shall encourage the joint use of access and shared parking facilities. New General Commercial areas designated by this Plan shall be developed through comprehensive planning in order to ensue the future integration of these areas.

5.2.48 To endeavor to maintain and improve the visual amenity and general attractiveness of General Commercial areas, the following should be encouraged:

- a. Encourage the restoration, rehabilitation or repair of existing store fronts and facades to complement the scale, design and character of other commercial developments in the area;
- b. Encourage the relocation of non-commercial uses which interrupt the continuity of business frontage and their replacement with permitted commercial uses to maximize the retail concentration;
- c. Regulate building setbacks to develop and maintain continuity and harmony with adjacent commercial uses; and
- d. Where substantial redevelopment is proposed, consider the increase in building setbacks to permit wider sidewalks, appropriate landscaping and street furniture to encourage pedestrian movement and improve the shopping environment.

5.2.49 It is recommended road improvements such as street widening, channelization, center left turn lanes, signalization or any other appropriate measures to improve traffic circulation be supported where feasible.

Highway Commercial

5.2.50 The Highway Commercial designation applies to those commercial facilities which are primarily designed to serve the traveling public and which rely heavily upon the automobile born traffic for their existence. This designation may include automobile service stations, motels, restaurants, small scale local institutional and similar uses including residential units clearly accessory to the principal uses.

5.2.51 In order to obtain a high standard of design and landscaping and to ensure adequate building, entrance and parking area locations, any proposal for highway commercial uses may be subject to Site Plan Approval. In this regard, special attention will be given to ensure compatibility with adjoining non-commercial uses. A detailed site plan and landscaping plan may be required prior to any rezoning and in this regard, screening and buffering in the form of fencing and/or berming and landscaping is to be provided adjacent to any abutting residential lands. Any proposed lighting shall be directed away from abutting residential properties.

5.2.52 It is intended that Highway Commercial uses grouped in order to curtail scattered commercial development along roads. Highway Commercial locations shall be readily accessible from major roads

and be limited in number and only permitted where they would not create a hazard to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

5.2.53

Any proposal to rezone property to a Highway Commercial development should consider the following:

- a. The development should derive its access from a major collector, minor arterial, principal arterial or expressway as designated on the Erie County Thoroughfare Plan.
- b. Traffic volumes and movements can be safely handled by the existing or proposed road system.
- c. Existing or committed services and utilities are adequate to serve the development.
- d. The proposed development be encouraged where feasible to integrate the design, parking areas and access points with those of existing uses.

5.3 INDUSTRIAL

5.3.1 Background

The industrial segment of the economy has historically been a leading revenue generator and the major employment provider for the Erie County community. Industrial activity has declined, reflecting the national trend from a manufacturing to a service-dominated economy, but it continues to solidly contribute to the economy. The importance of sustaining a strong industrial base cannot be ignored even as the industrial character of the county adjusts to national and international influences. With increased competition for space from housing and commercial uses, ample locations for new industrial land uses must be planned for.

Pressures from the expanding housing market coupled with prolonged commercial upgrowth have heightened resulting in an uncertain future for the county's industrial land uses. Port industries, extractive industries and other urban centered industries have been hampered because of the state of national economy. In any event, because of the importance of industry to the local economy, land should continue to accommodate a variety of light and general industry uses. The following policies intend to allow for the expansion of current and proposed industrial development where this use is not appropriate and they will prompt development to locate adjacent to major roadways and highways.

5.3.2 Objectives

To ensure that the county will remain a viable industrial center by preserving and enhancing the existing industrial base.

To promote new industries to locate in the Industrial Parks by providing a substantial amount of serviced industrial lands and an attractive atmosphere for industrial growth.

To diversify the county's existing industrial base by permitting a broad range of industrial uses.

To minimize the adverse affects associated with industrial operations.

General Policies

5.3.3 It is the intent of this Plan to ensure that Erie County's position as a major industrial center is maintained and enhanced through

retention and expansion of existing industries and the stimulation of new industrial growth. In this regard, the county shall continue to encourage our traditional industrial strength and will seek to achieve greater diversification in the industrial base by encouraging new industry to locate within the county.

5.3.4 Areas designated as Industrial on map "A" shall generally be used for manufacturing, warehousing and storage, assembly, processing, including reclaiming and recycling, utility functions and transportation terminals, subject to the relevant provisions of this Plan. In addition, subject to the inclusion of appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution the following land uses may also be permitted in areas designated as Industrial: industrially-oriented sales, service and office operations such as truck and machinery operations, equipment repair, merchandise service shops and building or contracting yards; certain commercial uses that primarily serve an industrial area; and commercial, community and recreational uses such as banks, vehicle fuel stations, professional offices, restaurants, banquet facilities, fraternal organizations and athletic clubs provided that such uses are compatible with industrial uses in the area.

5.3.5 Accessory sales outlets may be permitted in areas designated as Industrial, subject to the inclusion of appropriate provisions in the zoning resolution and the following:

- a. Such uses are smaller in scale than the primary use and are located on the same lot as the primary use; and
- b. The nature of the sales outlet does not detrimentally affect adjacent land uses.

5.3.6 The following criteria should govern the location of industrial areas:

- a. The land should be reasonable level, flood free, well drained capable of bearing heavy loads;
- b. Industrial areas should be accessible to transportation;
- c. The land should be served by all necessary utilities;
- d. The land should be available in parcels large enough to permit the development of modern one-story plants, with parking facilities, loading areas and landscaping;
- e. Sites for new industrial development should be reasonably available within the short time span.

5.3.7 The Regional Planning Commission, when feasible, should prepare a secondary plan to review the type and location of sites needed for

industry in the future. This would aid in attracting new industry and maintaining the existing industrial base.

- 5.3.8** The county, through GEM, should prepare a marketing strategy for developing industrial lands. The county should consider a new classification for the zoning resolutions which would encourage the development of industrial parks.
- 5.3.9** No development shall be permitted until the Highway Engineer is satisfied that adequate storm drainage provisions are available to accommodate the proposed development in accordance with the applicable provisions of the County Stormwater Regulations. Surface drainage controls shall be applied to reduce stormwater runoff increases and sedimentation which could result from industrial development.
- 5.3.10** It is recommended that the political subdivisions within Erie County adopt a site plan review process to improve the visual amenity and general attractiveness of the industrial area and in so doing:
- a. Shall require individual industrial development proposals to provide appropriate landscaping and site specific design;
 - b. Shall regulate building locations to develop and maintain continuity and harmony with adjacent industrial uses;
 - c. Shall encourage the relocation on non-compatible uses.
- 5.3.11** The number, location, spacing and design of vehicular access points from the road system to industrial areas should be reviewed in the site design of those areas. In addition, access driveways and driving aisles should be properly designed.
- 5.3.12** The Sandusky and Huron ports should further utilize land use recommendations prescribed within those port development studies to secure viable industrial uses there.
- 5.3.13** The county may encourage and where feasible, assist in the relocation of uses not permitted in areas designated for Industry and in the relocation of existing industries located outside of Industrial designated areas into such areas.
- 5.3.14** In order to enhance the viability of Industrial areas, the county, where feasible and deemed appropriate, may encourage and assist the appropriate authorities to establish and/or maintain the accessibility of Industrial areas through the provision of highways, arterial roads, rail and public transit services.

- 5.3.15** Erie County shall cooperate and support the Greater Erie County Marketing Group in the active promotion of industrial lands within the county.

Land Use Relationships

- 5.3.16** The county shall encourage the development of a number of industrial areas containing similar or related types of industrial uses and developed to similar design standards in order to ensure that a variety of industrial sites are available for respective types of industrial uses and to minimize conflicts between industrial uses with incompatible physical and functional characteristics.
- 5.3.17** The county shall encourage the development of industrial areas in locations accessible to existing and proposed transportation terminal facilities and major components of the regional transportation and servicing system.
- 5.3.18** In locating individual industrial uses relative to adjacent land uses, consideration shall be given to the potential adverse effects of industrial land use activities such as noise, vibration, smoke, particulate matter, odor, toxic matter, fire and explosive hazards, lighting, heat, electrical and electro-magnetic interference, visual disruption to scenic vistas and loss of privacy.
- 5.3.19** Traffic generated by industrial uses shall be prohibited from penetrating designated Residential areas.
- 5.3.20** All land zoned industrial in the townships should be reviewed as to the consistency with the future land use map. Those areas not applicable for industrial development should be removed from the industrially zoned designation.
- 5.3.21** Existing neighborhoods should be protected from significant noise, odor, traffic and other negative impacts by providing appropriate setbacks and barriers.

Design Criteria

- 5.3.22** Industrial areas shall be developed with proper landscaping and well designed buildings. In particular, building setbacks, landscaping and screening shall be required in order to minimize any detrimental effects associated with outdoor uses, open storage areas and industrial uses emanating noise, light and undesirable visual effects.

- 5.3.23** Industrial areas shall be designed to discourage the penetration of industrial traffic into or through residential areas. Truck traffic shall be encouraged to use the appropriate collector and arterial road system.
- 5.3.24** The number, location, spacing and design of vehicular access points from the road system to industrial areas shall be regulated and shall be subject to the approval of the authorities having jurisdiction.
- 5.3.25** Off-street parking, loading and service areas for industrial uses shall be provided to ensure accessibility at all times and shall be designed to ensure that all vehicular movements are accommodated on the site and off the public roads.
- 5.3.26** The type, design and location of signs related to industrial uses shall be regulated and shall be subject to the approval of the authorities having jurisdiction.
- 5.3.27** Sufficient off-street parking should be required in order to avoid on-street parking.
- 5.3.28** No industrial use shall be permitted which, from its operation or materials used therein, is declared to be obnoxious under the provisions of any statutes or regulation.
- 5.3.29** Where an industrial area lies opposite a residential area, an adequate setback and buffer areas should be provided, through the Zoning Resolution, to protect the amenities of the residential area.
- 5.3.30** **Performance Standards**
- The main concept behind industrial performance standards is that, so long as industrial enterprise can operate in a fashion that avoids the creation of various enterprises they should be free to locate anywhere within the appropriate industrial district. The idea behind performance standards is to offer firms the flexibility of achieving compliance with those standards in the best way they see fit, thus allowing any industry to demonstrate their creativity in redesigning their operations to meet the standards.
- 5.3.31** It is recommended that the local ordinances and resolutions establish performance standards for their industries to avoid conflicts with surrounding uses.

5.3.32

The performance standard should include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. Noise Standards
Noise is the quintessential local environment impact. It does not travel well; it has no staying power beyond that of its source; and it does not accumulate in the environment. Nonetheless, prolonged noise exposure is a serious threat to human health, resulting in high stress levels and impaired hearing. For this reason, noise is one of the few nuisances regulated in virtually all industrial performance standard codes.
- b. Vibration
Excessive vibrations from industrial operations can negatively impact on surrounding areas. Over a prolonged period, they can weaken structures. Although many ordinances simply prohibit perceptible vibrations at the facility boundary line, this is a case where greater specificity make an ordinance more enforceable. Some communities also specify setbacks from the property line for heavy vibrating equipment. This tends to ensure that the vibrations necessarily entitled in the operation of such equipment will be dissipated by distance.
- c. Odor
Like noise, odor tends to be a local problem, best managed through local standards.
- d. Glare
As a general rule, there is little reason today to write lenient standards for glare (occasionally referred to as light pollution), particularly with new industrial facilities. Most operations that would produce glare, such as welding, can be done within structures that would prevent it from becoming a nuisance to neighboring properties. Consequently, many ordinances simply require adequate shielding of glare-producing operations or lights to prevent any perceptible glare at the lot line.
- e. Electrical Interference
This, too, is an area where there is no need for leniency. Every ordinance examined for this report simply prohibits any interference with normal radio or television reception across lot lines. Many also add a requirement that operators

must comply with Federal Communications Commission regulations regarding the use of such equipment.

f. Traffic

Although most traffic issues are addressed outside the framework of industrial performance standards, ordinances should incorporate some traffic related concern, mostly related to truck loading and unloading near residential areas.

g. Fire and Explosive Hazards

The storage of flammable, explosive and reactive chemicals and materials poses one of the most serious potential threats to surrounding land uses of any problem addressed in performance standards. Fortunately, local fire departments should be able to provide their communities with the expertise they need to devise proactive solutions and appropriate standards.

h. Landscaping

While this ordinarily is a topic that should be dealt with in an ordinance addressing design standards, it is in some cases intended more as a visual buffer for less aesthetic uses and included in performance standards.

The county has developed Landscaping Design Policies which should be used in conjunction with the zoning resolution.

i. Toxic and Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials pose a special problem for local government officials as a topic for performance standards. The sheer complexity of the topic tends to outweigh the available expertise, except in the largest cities, which may be able to afford retaining one or more environmental scientists as part of their planning and development staff. As noted above, the Federal Clean Air Act of 1990 specifically regulated 89 substances as air toxins. Federal hazardous waste regulations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, first passed in 1976, and the various Superfund laws list grows as new materials are added through the rulemaking process. Some state laws add even more chemicals to their own regulated lists.

Given this proliferation of state and federal laws and regulations on the topic, local government officials might have reason to question the utility of any performance

standards on this subject. It should be remembered, however, that these laws deal largely with the proper transportation, storage and disposal of hazardous materials and not necessarily with their impacts on neighboring land uses. It is entirely possible for a community to decide that some substances are simply inappropriate in certain districts, in which case prohibiting their storage or use would be a sensible response. In other cases, a community could decide to limit the quantities allowed on site or to require setbacks from the property line as a protective measure. Finally, requiring adequate storage devices, such as non-corrosive double walled tanks, might be an answer.

Rural Industrial

5.3.33 Objectives

To diversify and expand the county's industrial base by permitting dry industrial uses on selected rural locations.

To recognize certain existing and desirable dry industrial uses within the rural area.

Policies

5.3.34 The primary uses permitted in areas designated on Map "A" as rural industrial shall be for industrial uses which are not dependent on the provision of full services and some of which are related to and serve the agricultural community to utilize the natural resources of the rural area.

5.3.35 Such uses may include, but not be limited to, manufacturing, processing or storing of goods and raw materials including assembly, repairs, servicing or wholesaling, warehousing and may commercial use auxiliary and secondary to such manufacturing, processing or storing. Commercial uses that are not related to industrial operation and auto wrecking yards are not permitted. This designation may include agricultural uses, but shall not include residential uses.

5.3.36 No development shall be permitted until a satisfactory water supply is available for both domestic and fire protection purposes and until the Ohio EPA has approved an individual sewage disposal system or package plant to accommodate the proposed use.

5.3.37 Rural industrial shall be situated and developed so as to minimize negative effects on the surrounding area.

5.3.38 Industrial development and secondary uses permitted by this designation shall be in accordance with the following provisions:

- a. Ingress and egress shall be controlled so that traffic related to the use will have a minimal effect on neighboring uses, especially residential uses.
- b. Adequate loading facilities and off-street parking must be provided on site.
- c. Site planning techniques including landscaping, screening, surface treatment and lot lighting shall be employed to achieve attractiveness of the operation.

5.3.39 The government having jurisdiction shall endeavor to improve the visual amenity and general attractiveness of the rural industrial areas and in so doing shall encourage the relocation of non-compatible uses.

Performance Standards

Same as in section 5.3.32.

5.4 AGRICULTURE

5.4.1 Background

As far as land use classification is concerned, no use is more prevalent than agriculture within the planning area. Although the amount of acreage devoted to agriculture and the number of farms have been steadily decreasing since the 1960's, approximately 92,000 acres are still used for agriculture purposes. This amount represents about 53% of the 174,008 acres which comprise the land area of the county.

Both the value of the farms and the value of the products produced by farms in Erie County have increased recently. Clearly, agriculture and related industries are a viable contributor to the economy and will continue to be so in the future. With inevitable development encroaching upon much of the county's prime farmland, the community is experiencing problems related to increased infrastructure needs, traffic congestion and rising property taxes. It is important that the county not lose the capability to recognize the needs of the farming community and balance those needs equally with those of the urban areas.

To provide an efficient pattern of land use which promotes the growth of a viable agriculture industry as a producer of food, a source of employment and as an important component of the county's economic base, the natural amenities and character and lifestyle of the identified agriculture areas must be preserved. Another aspect identified in considering agriculture uses is the fact that all prime agriculture land in the county is currently in use and no additional acreage is available. These excellent growing conditions cannot be duplicated once these areas are developed.

5.4.2 Objectives

To provide an efficient pattern of land use which promotes the growth of a viable agricultural industry as a producer of food, a source of employment and as an important component to the county's economic base.

To provide maximum protection to natural resources especially prime agricultural lands which are to be kept for agricultural production.

To minimize the negative effects of non-farm related uses on the agricultural environment and to minimize the need for public services.

To protect and enhance the natural amenities, character and lifestyle of the agricultural area.

5.4.3 Policies

Areas designated as agricultural on Map “A” shall be used predominantly for agriculture and farm related uses which shall include the use of land, buildings or structures for uses such as farm related residential dwellings, field crops, livestock and dairy operations, fruits and orchards, nurseries, poultry operations, forestry, market gardening and retail stands for the sale of agriculture produced on the farm unit.

5.4.4 Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, a farm implement dealership may be allowed in any specific location in areas designated as agricultural provided such use:

- a. Is compatible with the surrounding uses;
- b. Is not located on highly productive agricultural lands; and
- c. Is recognized in a special zoning category for that use.

5.4.5 It is important that our valuable prime agricultural lands be retained. Reasons for the retention of agricultural lands are detailed below:

- a. Agricultural use of land requires much less infrastructure and fewer services as compared to residential. Currently, most rural areas do not have adequate infrastructure or services to support residential expansion. Studies have shown that the potential increase in residential tax base is not sufficient to offset the cost of developing these necessary services.
- b. Agricultural uses encourage and maintain wetlands, floodplains and wildlife habitat much better than urban neighbors.
- c. Existing rural road design lacks adequate width and speed requirements. Police protection is difficult because most rural townships do not have a police department and the county sheriff can offer only limited protection because of manpower constraints.

- d. Another thing to consider is all of our prime agricultural land is currently in use and no additional acreage is available. Agriculture is and has been Erie County's largest industry. It is a resource based industry that provides a stable economy to this community. In addition, many secondary agricultural businesses which support our economic tax base flourish here.
- e. Our unique proximity to Lake Erie offers excellent growing conditions for such specialty crops as grapes, tree fruits and vegetables. These unique conditions cannot be duplicated in most rural areas across the country.
- f. Because of our projected slow population growth, the change from agricultural use to a different use should be well planned and not indiscriminate. The rural atmosphere that entices residential development cannot be maintained within limiting that development.
- g. A final consideration is that urban development generates much waste. These products must be thinly distributed across agricultural lands so as to avoid pollution of our waters.
- h. Secondary businesses supported by agriculture: local fresh markets, wine production, grain elevators, seed processors, fertilizer plants and food processing plants.
- i. Nuisances: odor, dust, noise, slow wide equipment, spray drift of sensitive ornamentals, drainage problems; blowing crop residue are generated by the agricultural community.

The above items should be considered in any application to rezone agricultural lands to another use.

- 5.4.6** This designation should permit small commercial and small scale industrial uses necessary to proximity to farm operations and directly related to agriculture such as farm equipment dealerships, fertilizer and chemical sales, milling operations, grain elevators and seed and food processing plants.
- 5.4.7** Uses for governmental purposes, educational facilities, water filling stations, utilities and communication facilities, provided that their effect on agriculture is minimized, should be permitted to locale on agriculturally designated land.
- 5.4.8** Uses permitted by policy in this section should be located and developed so their negative effects on surrounding uses will be minimized and will not interfere with the expansion of farming operations.

- 5.4.9** Non-farm related uses in the agriculture environment should be limited to minimize the need for infrastructure services like sewer and water.
- 5.4.10** Every endeavor should be made to encourage the retention of farms in large units to prevent the unnecessary division of viable farms into residential lots.
- 5.4.11** Development permitted in agriculture areas should be directed to the greatest extent possible to soils of less agricultural capability.
- 5.4.12** The conservation of woodlots and the planting of wind breaks are encouraged because of the benefit from trees as erosion control moderators.
- 5.4.13** The county, through Erie Regional Planning Commission and the Soil and Water Conservation District, should undertake a study to rank agricultural lands as to their potential to ensure prime agricultural lands are identified and preserved.
- 5.4.14** **Non-Farm Related Policies**
- Because most zoning resolutions permit a degree of non-farm related residential uses, every effort should be made in the design of these developments to limit access to rural roads in agriculture areas.
- 5.4.15** When residential lots are established in agriculture areas, it is recommended that buffering be provided on the residential property. Coniferous trees are recommended to be included in the buffer area.
- 5.4.16** A limitation on the number of lot splits will be investigated and included in the local zoning codes. This limitation will help reduce random strip development and be enforced in agriculture zoned areas. Minimum lot size provisions will also be analyzed for possible incorporation into the zoning codes.

5.5 OPEN SPACE/RECREATION

5.5.1 Overview

Erie County has a total of 148 sites devoted to passage and active recreation according to Ohio Statewide Comprehensive Facilities Inventory from ODNR in 1993. This included 7,795 land acres, 1,018 wetland acres and about 3,800 hunting acres. The vast majority of these acres, however, are either dedicated for passive recreation pursuits or are not available to be used by the general public. The larger recreation areas in the county, aside from the various community parks, Erie MetroParks and the state preserves, were held and continue to be held almost exclusively in private ownership.

Of the five largest recreation sites listed by ODNR in the inventory, three of them are privately owned. Castalia Farms (550 acres), Lagoon Deer Park (313 acres) and Old Millsite Farm (400 acres) are the largest recreation areas held in private ownership. Only Kelleys Island State Park (661 acres) and Resthaven Wildlife Area (2,139 acres) totaled greater areas for passive recreation and natural concerns. The Osborne Recreation Area (116 acres) in Huron Township was identified as the only regional park for active recreation within Erie County.

In regard to active recreation sites and facilities, it is clear that the county does not retain a community recreation center, significant number of athletic parks, or larger regional parks to provide for more active uses. The city of Sandusky contains five recreation sites oriented toward active recreation pursuits. Those are Battery Park (4 acres), Washington Park (6 acres), Lions Park (8.3 acres), Kiwanis Park (90 acres) and Mills Creek Golf Course. The city of Huron has three parks and the city of Vermilion has two parks which represent other sites within Erie County for active recreation. Fabens Park (8 acres), and Sherod Park (24 acres) are the largest areas representing the above, respectively. The other significant active recreation areas within Erie County are the Berlin Village Park (30 acres) in Berlin Heights and Osborne Recreation Area.

5.5.2 Objectives

To ensure the provision of sufficient outdoor recreational areas to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the county and to create an attractive and integrated system of parkland.

To preserve and conserve scenic open space areas, ecologically significant natural features, land that may be endangered by various hazards and other significant attributes of the natural landscape.

To provide a range of leisure activities for all age and interest groups.

5.5.3 Policies

The primary uses permitted in the areas designated *OPEN SPACE* shall be open space uses such as active and passive parks, public or private recreational uses basically of an open space nature, cemeteries, marinas, wood lots conservation and wildlife management areas, fishing reserves and hazard lands. Other uses which are ancillary and support the primary use, such as food concessions, boat fuel and supply outlets and fishing charters, may also be permitted provided such uses will not interfere or destroy the essentially “*open space*” nature of the land.

5.5.4 Map “A” the General Land Use Plan shows the lands designated for *open space* except for neighborhood parks. The location and distribution of neighborhood parks shall be identified through Secondary Plans.

5.5.5 Erie Regional Planning Commission and Erie MetroParks establish a classification and standards for a park system. This classification may include neighborhood parks, community parks, district parks and special parks and areas.

5.5.6 It is also recommended that the Erie Regional Planning Commission in conjunction with Erie MetroParks prepare a recreational master plan to provide for future acquisition and development of its recreational facilities and programs. The plan would become the guide, the scheme, the design and possibly the vision for the future. The master plan must be a cooperative effort among the Erie Regional Planning Commission, Erie MetroParks, the political subdivisions and the citizens of Erie County.

5.5.7 Erie MetroParks

The Erie MetroParks was created in 1968 in order to compliment other existing public recreational services within Erie County. As an independent outdoor recreation and conservation agency, the MetroParks is responsible for acquiring, developing and operating parklands maintained by the organization. Woodlands, hiking trails,

meadows, an abandoned quarry and grassy areas managed in their natural state comprise most of the MetroParks system. Currently, there are five MetroPark areas and reserves distributed throughout Erie County. They are the Castalia Quarry Reserve, Edison Woods Reserve, Osborne Recreational Area, Pelton Park and the Coupling Reserve located on the Huron River.

For the most part, the MetroParks have concentrated on their primary goal to preserving the natural environment while providing public recreation. The Osborne Recreation Area with its ballfields, courts and swimming pool represents the sole active recreation site operated by the MetroParks and its appointed park board. The other reserves are passive in function, with hiking, fishing and picnicking being the most popular undertakings.

More leisure hours and greater mobility have resulted in a greater demand for recreation throughout the county. The Erie MetroParks have contributed to the outdoor environment offered to residents and visitors to the area. The county should continue to support the MetroParks in establishing priorities for acquisition, development and programs. The community must also express its desire for more active recreation site development via the MetroParks. It is through the board of park commissioners that additional active recreation areas can be successfully developed.

5.5.8 Design Criteria

Where parks are to be developed adjacent to existing and proposed residential areas, appropriate measures may be required to minimize adverse audio and visual effects associated with recreation activity areas and parking areas.

5.5.9 Community and neighborhood parks shall generally be located as central as possible to their respective service areas and shall, wherever possible, be located in areas which do not require pedestrians to cross arterial roads in order to reach such parks.

5.5.10 In the development of recreation areas and facilities, regard shall be had for the provision of parking areas which are appropriate to the type and scale of recreation development.

5.5.11 Consideration shall be given to the development of pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths and open space linkages between parks, open space areas and adjacent uses. The detailed locations of these linkages and consideration for any associated parking areas

for the users of these facilities shall generally be determined in the processing of development proposals.

- 5.5.12** Parkland and open space lands conveyed to a political subdivision in satisfactory physical condition bearing the full depth of its original topsoil, being free of construction debris, unconsolidated fill or other refuse. Where it has been determined that lands to be conveyed for parkland and open space purposes have been physically disturbed either by the dumping of construction debris, unconsolidated fill or other refuse, or by the stripping of topsoil or by any other means, the proponent shall be responsible for restoring the subject property to a condition satisfactory to the political subdivision having jurisdiction.
- 5.5.13** Unique physical features shall be preserved wherever possible on parkland open space lands to be conveyed to a government entity. Specific protective measures to ensure their preservation and protection may be required.
- 5.5.14** Recreational-oriented development within areas designated as *Open Space* will be developed so as to complement the natural environment.
- 5.5.15** Council shall attempt to integrate *Open Space Areas* wherever feasible and practical through development of a system of pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 General

The implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is the next series of steps in the long-range planning process for Erie County. To achieve plan objectives to the highest extent possible, the document must be activated by responsive direction from subsequent tasks which directly accomplish stated plan goals and policies. These tasks will reinforce those recommendations and make them a reality through the introduction of additional planning techniques.

In evaluating ways to implement the plan, a number of techniques have been identified. A combination of plan review procedures, code revisions and continual planning programs is recommended as the best course of action for the county and its management of future development. The plan itself is not self-fulfilling and must move forward with the implementation tasks discussed in detail below.

6.2 Erie Regional Planning Guidance

Implementing a long-range plan for the entirety of Erie County is a formidable responsibility. The Erie Regional Planning Commission with guidance from the County Planning and Development Department should review all development proposal as to their consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. These two entities can advise the public about policies and recommendations set forth within this document and advise the public on the best possible means of achieving cost effective, efficient development. It is through this guidance that the county can implement a successful planning effort which can be readily accomplished.

6.3 Plan Monitoring and Review

A comprehensive monitoring program is a particularly important mechanism to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains current with new legislation and changing development situations. New situations and proposals may have profound effects on the usefulness of the plan in the future. To assure that the stated planning policies and assumptions are correct, the review of the plan at regular intervals is necessary. A plan review committee should be established by the Regional Planning Commission to undertake reviews every two years or as felt necessary by the county.

The monitoring system will also improve the guidance of the plan as a tool for further planning. Pertinent social, economic and legislative circumstances should be reviewed as they arise for their effect on the county. Related planning efforts which take place throughout the planning area in the form of secondary plans or capital improvement planning will have additional direct impact on the management of growth and must be reviewed. The Planning Department will be responsible for the monitoring of all activities which may warrant revisions in the plan's policies. The Planning Department may recommend that various other departments and agencies meet to coordinate and redesign strategies based on those reviews.

6.4 Revision and Amendment Procedure

The plan review procedure sets up a procedure with which the plan can be reviewed as new situations arise. The Erie Regional Planning Commission will determine the extent to which recent issues alter the effectiveness of the plan and recommend revisions to sections or policies within. The revisions then can be formally initiated through the amendment procedure.

Because community goals change, new information and philosophies emerge and new economic and social conditions develop, it may be necessary to amend the plan to keep it useful. All amendments should mirror changes experienced by the county and be executed in relation to the direction and character of development at that time. Public hearings prior to the adoption of newly revised sections will permit citizens to respond to any changes. Those amendments, once finalized, will be adopted by the Regional Planning Commissions and County Commissioners prior to them being incorporated into the plan.

6.5 Zoning

For zoning to be effective at the township level in regulating land use, it must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan. This is also required under the Ohio Revised Code for townships to implement and enforce local zoning regulations. All zoning resolutions applicable to this plan should be extensively reviewed as to their conformance to the plan and the land uses identified on the future land use map.

The primary responsibility for zoning code improvements will rest with local governments. Township zoning boards and planning commissions should review the Comprehensive Plan and its

policies to ensure that their zoning is based on and related to the policies within. Recommendations from these reviews can be forwarded to the Planning Department for further examination and then modified as necessary.

6.6 Subdivision Regulations

The Erie County Subdivision Regulations control the conversion of land into buildable lots and provide for the proper arrangement of streets, utilities and recreational spaces. The regulations serve as the chief mechanism for regulating the conversion of vacant land into lots for development. Like the various zoning resolutions in use within the county, it is imperative that the Subdivision Regulations promote objectives in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Thoroughfare Plan Update shall serve as the basis for revising applicable parts of the Subdivision Regulations. An immediate task following plan adoption shall be the review and revision of the Subdivision Regulations. The Planning Department should modify relevant sections and recommend to the Regional Planning Commission that those modifications be formally approved. All amendments must be accompanied by public meetings as stated in the Ohio Revised Code.

6.7 Secondary Plans

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the broad document from which the county can bring orderly, balanced growth to the community. Because of its nature, the plan cannot specifically address all concerns throughout the planning area. This function is performed at the more localized level through the development and adoption of secondary plans.

Erie County has produced numerous plans over the last several years that are localized and which are now being implemented. Port development studies for Sandusky, Kelleys Island and Huron, as well as, policy plans for Huron and state route 4 are such secondary plans being implemented or soon to be implemented.

Preparing additional plans to complement provisions within this broader plan are needed in some areas to provide a more detailed analysis for development and redevelopment. No set priority list has been established for the development of secondary plans, but it is anticipated that the state route 4 corridor should have a specific plan adopted immediately. Within the near future, Perkins Township may also require a secondary plan to help properly guide

future growth in this highly developed area. It is also noted that the cities and villages within Erie County should also prepare comprehensive plans for their jurisdictions.

6.8 Official Map and Land Use Map

The official map of the townships is considered to be the official zoning map for that township. The official zoning map is different from the future land use map within this plan in that it is the legal representation of all zoning districts established by that township.

The future land use map, on the other hand, is a recommended representation of what the township zoning should look like. For instance, if a proposal for a rezoning to commercial be applied for at the township level, the proposal should be consistent with what the future land use map indicates. If commercial is indicated on the future land use map, that rezoning request should be granted because it conforms to the general policies and recommendations of the text of the Comprehensive Plan.

6.9 Further Planning

Planning for a successful community depends upon the implementation of all relevant planning documents and the cooperation and coordination of all levels of government. Because the Comprehensive Plan cannot address all situations which may arise, additional programs must be introduced to further community goals. Such activities should include:

- Ongoing regional coordination between municipalities, townships and the county should continue for all governmental concerns.
- The Erie Regional Planning Commission should recommend annually further planning efforts to be undertaken by the Planning Department.
- The county should develop a five year capital improvements plan as a tool for the timing of capital projects.
- Coordination with NASA should be undertaken annually as to their plans for expansion or possible release of land in the future.
- Recreational master plan.
- Study of agricultural capacity and review of prime agricultural lands.
- Development of a countywide housing strategy.
- The Erie Regional Planning Commission should review and update the Comprehensive Plan on an ongoing basis.

- Secondary plans should be prepared as needed.

Attachment NP-7

City of Norwalk

The Norwalk, Ohio Comprehensive Plan

August 2006



City of Norwalk, Ohio

Sue S. Lesch, Mayor

Norwalk City Council

Stephen Euton, President

Robert Carleton

Chris Mushett

Shane Penrose

Thomas Stoll

Tera Thornhill

Dwight Tkach

Skip Wilde

Sharon Harwood (through 2005)

Lynn Szabo (through 2005)

Norwalk City Planning Commission

James Orth, President

Stacy Badovick

T. Douglas Clifford

William Kalfs

Kathy Kuhlman

Nancy Miller

Chris Pawlicki

Alex Kelsor (through 2006)

Planning Consultant: WSOS Community Action Commission Inc.

Neil McCabe, President/CEO

Ben Kenny, Project Lead

Norwalk, Ohio Comprehensive Plan

September 2006

Mayor's Foreword

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Population and Demographics

Community Character

Natural Resources

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Transportation

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Proposed Transportation Improvements

Proposed Utility Improvements

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Flood Plains

Existing Zoning Districts in Norwalk

Foreword

September 1, 2006

Dear Citizens:

It is a pleasure to present the City of Norwalk's blueprint for the future, a Comprehensive Plan that examines the issues most likely to influence the City's development over the next twenty years. By defining who we want to become in the future, this strategic planning document will guide City decision-making in a wide range of areas as we grow.

The Comprehensive Plan is the product of two years of effort by local citizens, business leaders and government officials. Over 700 people played a role in shaping this document, from community forums held in October 2004 to focus groups in the winter of 2005 to resource panels which met during the summer and fall of 2005. All provided input and feedback as the plan developed. As a result, this document does not represent any one person's vision, but the entire community's. It clearly affirms the principle and importance of the role of community in implementing the policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

This plan has already proved to be an integral component of City actions since those public forums. Even in draft form, it has defined who we are in response to requests by developers, and it will continue to influence City development decisions in the future.

While the document describes a vast number of issues requiring attention, a number of priorities must be at the forefront:

- Community Character/Quality of Life – The mission expressed in the Comprehensive Plan reflects the fundamental values of the community: We must plan for orderly growth while maintaining our rich heritage and the safe, family-friendly atmosphere we love.
- Economic Development /Downtown Norwalk – A healthy business base is the key to the health of the community. We must strive to retain and attract new industry as well as support the entrepreneur and family-owned shops.
- Infrastructure and Utilities/Natural Resources – Continued improvements to infrastructure must be designed to meet growth needs and regulations while reflecting good stewardship of our environment and resources. A primary focus must be securing a secondary water source as wells as ensuring access to high-speed telecommunications.
- Transportation/Housing – We must maintain and build transportation systems that are safe and efficient and advocate for a full mix of quality housing options.
- Community Services/Facilities – We must continue to strive for strong and reliable safety forces with adequate facilities and personnel. We must preserve and promote the many service organizations sustaining the City, as they are essential to a sound quality of life.

- Land Use – The heart of this Comprehensive Plan is centered in our Land Use Plan. Where will we grow and how? We must preserve a sound balance between emerging residential use and commercial needs.

Over 300 recommendations are made in this document, each with a targeted time frame for achievement. This timeline may evolve through the years as objectives and priorities change and are meshed with the limited resources available. The timeframes reflected in the Summary Chapter are:

- Short term – to be completed between 2006 and 2010.
- Medium term – to be completed between 2011 and 2015.
- Long term – to be completed in 2016 or later.
- Ongoing – signifying activities that are already or should become an integral part of daily government. They represent the approach the City will take in responding to needs, the environment we want to sustain, and the impression we want to leave with residents, workers and visitors.

This plan is yours. It reflects the vital interests, hopes and dreams of this community. I challenge you to become stewards of the plan, to become familiar with the agenda set forth here, and in the years ahead to challenge our public servants to hold to its vision.

With gratitude for all the hard work put into the development of this plan, and with great pride in the Norwalk community, I am pleased to present the City of Norwalk's Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Lesch

Susan S. Lesch
Mayor



Introduction

Norwalk in Twenty Years

As the year 2004 progressed, community officials in Norwalk began discussing the need to update their now forty-year old comprehensive master plan. That plan had aged fairly well, and many of the recommendations laid out by its authors had come to fruition. Many other recommendations had carried over to the present, and were still on the drawing board.

Appropriate funding was garnered from the City's revolving loan fund and from its Formula Community Development Block Grant allocations for 2005 and 2006. A local consultant, employed by WSOS Community Action Commission, a local community-based nonprofit, was hired to oversee and author the plan. As the concept of a new master plan evolved into a more well defined planning process, the City's administration, headed by Mayor Sue Lesch, took a major role in its implementation. Major input throughout the process was also gathered from the newly formed Norwalk Economic Development Corporation.

It is hoped that the unusually large and substantive input of a diverse number of Norwalk community members is reflected within the pages of this plan. Norwalk's inclusive planning process involved a core oversight team, an active and vociferous steering and advisory committee, and a number of single-topic resource panels, as well as the input of over five hundred community members through community forums, correspondence, telephone calls, email, and focus groups.

The plan is divided into a series of topical chapters. After an introductory chapter that summarizes the planning process and key steps along the way, and a chapter that provides background information on demographics, each subsequent chapter follows a format where the goals derived by the steering committee that pertain to that topic are presented, followed by background information pertinent to the topic and a section that presents the recommendations developed by single-topic resource panels and reviewed by the steering and advisory committees. Those topics covered in individual chapters include:

- ✓ Community character
- ✓ Natural resources
- ✓ Community facilities
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Utilities and infrastructure
- ✓ Economic development

- ✓ Downtown Norwalk
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Quality of life
- ✓ Community services

The next chapter is devoted to land use. The future development of the City is most affected by land use decisions and patterns of growth, and thus land use is the central theme of this plan's longest chapter.

A final summary chapter presents a recommended plan for the continued evaluation of and amendment to this plan as needed to keep it current and relevant. A summary table is also included, containing all the recommendations reported in the foregoing chapters.

The plan is intended to accurately reflect the planning priorities of the City and its component institutions and organizations over the next twenty years, from the perspective of the City as it exists in 2006. Without a doubt, that perspective will change with time, and it will be appropriate to alter the plan as priorities and critical pathways change. The plan's last chapter proposes a means by which to "keep the plan current".

The City of Norwalk presents the anomaly of a City that reveres its past and cherishes its "small town atmosphere", yet makes great strides in improving its public and institutional capital, its public services, and charitable organizations. One must merely drive along Shady Lane on Norwalk's southern edge to witness the high degree of Norwalk's civic investment and pride. Within thirty seconds' time, one can view the new patient pavilion of Fisher-Titus Medical Center, a graceful memorial to Norwalk's and Huron County's war veterans, and the Norwalk School District's flagship building, Norwalk High School, which incorporates the Ernsthausen Performing Arts Center and art gallery. Across the road, to the immediate south of the high school, is a cultivated field, a fitting representation of the City's agrarian roots, but also its future and potential for growth. While the City has come a long way since the last comprehensive plan was written in 1964, its potential for future development is just as great. It is hoped that this plan will help guide the City its many component elements toward a desired, prosperous, and successful future.

Mission Statement

The Norwalk area is a community that is committed to preserving its rich heritage and fulfilling quality of life while fostering planned growth.

Vision Statement

Our community will create a safe, family friendly environment in which we will preserve our natural resources and our strong neighborhoods, while promoting business growth, intergenerational opportunities, and proactive responses to future challenges, both locally and in a global economy.

Acknowledgements

This comprehensive plan is the result of an unusually high level of community input, and as a result, there are many people to thank.

Norwalk City Council recognized a need to update their forty-year-old plan, and helped make the project possible. Credit is due past and present Council members Steve Euton, Tom Stoll, Bob Carlton, Shane Penrose, Chris Mushett, Skip Wilde, Tera Thornhill, Dwight Tkach, Lynn Szabo, and Sharon Harwood.

Mayor Sue Lesch became intimately involved in the unfolding of the plan and the process that guided it. She ensured that her goal of maximum public participation and input was achieved, and many key members of her administration were extremely helpful in offering their insight and knowledge of the City. The Norwalk City Planning Commission was helpful in contributing to the plan's content and direction.

A core team met frequently throughout the nearly two-year planning process, and guided the overall direction of the process. Team members included Mayor Lesch, Ralph Fegley (who became a Huron County Commissioner several months into the process), Bethany Dentler (Director of the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation), and Virginia Poling (who kindly agreed to chair the Steering Committee), as well as consultant and Norwalk resident Ben Kenny.

A Steering Committee and Advisory Committee woke up early on a monthly basis to attend individual and joint meetings and offer a wealth of insight, expertise, and diverse opinion as the plan took shape, topic by topic. We are indebted to those committee members:

Members of the Steering Committee include Chair Virginia Poling, Mayor Lesch, Ben Kenny, Sharon Harwood, Dave Weisenberger, Mike Adelman, Bethany Dentler, Kirk Pavelich, Patrick Martin, Steve Trosley, Carole Babcanec, Frank Van Dresser, Sr., Karen Prelipp, Jeff Hipp, Chip Battles, Linda Bersche, Marge Harper, Jim Seitz, Jr., Ralph Fegley, John Riley, and Ken Bailey.

Members of the Advisory Committee include Bob Andrews, Jim Gerken, Phil Oglesby, Melissa James, Valerie French, Bill Kalfs, Chuck Furey, Skip Wilde, Bill Bader, Jr., Harlon Jennings, Dave Schild, Lisa Nestor, Gene Denney, Henry Timman, Rev. Fred Wiechers, Tom Bleile, Ken Schaffer, Joyce Meinke, Deborah Daugherty, and high school students Elizabeth Reichert, Dan Niedzwecki, Matt Hire, and Laura Kniffin.

While these committees brought together a diverse set of individuals who provided a variety of perspectives to the review and creation of overall goals, objectives, and direction, it was determined that the plan would be more substantive if specific topics were visited by single-issue resource panels, who could define the general topics, explore the general goals that had been set out for those topics, and develop a more tangible set of recommendations that would lead the City of Norwalk in achieving those long-range goals. Resource panels met independently, some as many as six times, to develop and submit their recommendations.

Panel members were selected for their expertise in a given subject, or for their unique perspective surrounding that topic, and a multitude of ideas were exchanged during the course of the resource panels' meetings.

Resource panel topics and panel members were as follows:

Economic and Business Development

Bethany Dentler, Chair
Kip Miller
Bill Dauch
Bill Klaus
Jim Wiedenheft
Chip Battles
Derek Newell
John Soisson
Joel Hipp
Deb Reed
Melissa James
Denise Waaland
George Elmer
Harlon Jennings
Michelle Asbury
Matt Harris

Transportation

Sue Lesch, Chair
Tim Riley
Larry Waaland
Martha Huffman
Dave Light
Ralph Seward
Dave Russell
Mike Adelman
Cal Shullick
Deb Lake-Wagner
Don Ballah

Utilities and Infrastructure

Virginia Poling, Chair
Rick Brown
Peg Baird
Larry McGlinchy

Louis Frey
Richard Moore
Steve Euton
Gary Mortus
John Riley
Darryl Young
Pat Schwan
John Rock
Ralph Seward

Land Use and Growth Management

Frank van Dresser, Chair
Tom Bleile
Jeff Hipp
Jim Seitz Jr.
Gordon Schaechterle
James Orth
Ken Schafer
Sue Lesch
Phil Oglesby
Ben Kenny
Alan Furey
Ralph Fegley
Jon Cross
Linda Hebert
Lynn Chapin

Downtown Development

Skip Wilde, Chair
Cheri Gersak
Karen Prelipp
Steve Trosley
Chris Stang
Debra Daugherty
Linda Sheppard
Jerry Eggebrecht
Sheri Thomas
Shirley Berry

Doug Berry
Christopher Pawlicki
Bill Taylor
Sharon Rood
Steve Zigo
Roland Tkach

Housing

Carole Babcanec, Chair
Thom Shaffoe
Jay Ewell
Norma Schaechterle
Robin Fouschee
Tony Barman
Dale Barman
Jim Schoenegge
Don Leto
Mike Myers
Jim Davis

Natural Resources and Environment

Sharon Harwood, Chair
Bethany Dentler
Kathy Kuhlman
Ken Leber
Bill Kalfs
Bill Miller
Robert Hill
Joyce Hill
Don Hohler
Gary Bauer

Community Character

Martha Shample, Chair
Lorna Strayer
Gene Denney
Marge Harper

**Community Character
(continued)**

Julie Cashen
Dave Weisenberger
Joe Mak
Pat Mak
Scott Tester
Ben Kenny
Marty Timman
Martin Haffey
Fred Downey
Henry Timman
Carol Wheeler
Joyce Meinke
John Flickinger
Jim Stark
Roger Endsley

Lisa Nestor
Clint Stocker
Chuck Stibil
Shawn Stoll
Amy Krichbaum
Amanda Harwood
Ruth Euton
Darin Carlson
Jon Ditz
Tom Olak
Kathy Olak
Renee Dellisanti
Tom Stoll
Tamara Kagy
Kelsey Gray
Nicki Schwab

Community Facilities

John Lendrum
Wayne Babcanec
Kirk Pavelich
Ken Leber
Cindy Penza

Stan Hire
Jennifer Williams
Virginia Poling
Tim Freriks
Barb Hargreaves
Joe Centers
Bob Duncan
Wayne Mushett
Steve Schumm
Gary Balduff
Bob Bores

Community Services

Kevin Cashen, Chair
Erich Dumbeck
Lucinda Smith
Linda Bersche
Pat Martin
Ken Bailey
Philomena Fisher
Mike Meinke

Quality of Life

Tera Thornhill, Chair
Gordon Oney
Leah Schaffer

Planning for a local jurisdiction cannot occur in a vacuum, and during the course of the planning process, Mayor Lesch and core team members visited a number of Township Trustees. We are indebted to the Norwalk, Milan, Ridgefield, and Bronson Township Trustees, who took time from their agendas to discuss the growth of Norwalk and its neighbors. The participation of all three Huron County Commissioners in this plan should also be acknowledged. Ralph Fegley served on the core team and attended Steering Committee meetings, and offered advice on GIS mapping. Mike Adelman served on the Steering Committee as well. Gary Bauer was a member of the natural resources panel.

Finally, this plan would have lost much of its validity, credibility, and a wonderful reality check if the process had not included the input of some five hundred citizens during five community forums at the outset, two forums to present the draft plan, and a series of focus groups that addressed a number of critical issues. Forum hosts included the Norwalk Main Street School, Middle School, and the High School's Ernsthausen Center, St. Mary's School, and the Norwalk Recreation Department's Ernsthausen Recreation Center. Thanks are also due the participants, sponsors, and organizers of the focus groups, including the Chamber of Commerce and NEDC for hosting a Realtors' and developers' group and a downtown revitalization group, Norwalk and St. Paul's High Schools (and teachers Mr. Cloud and Mr. Bersche for offering their classes and classrooms) to gain the important input of a sample of the City's youth, and the Carriage House for a meeting of a cross section of senior citizens.

Chapter 1



Introduction to The Planning Process

From its inception, the comprehensive planning process was designed to be exceptionally inclusive, providing opportunity for maximum participation by interested community members and persons who have expertise in specific planning themes. The process began from discussion with the City's Planning Commission, then between members of City Council and the administration of former Mayor Brooks Hartmann. Discussion centered on the time lapse since the previous plan was completed and approved, and the need for a more proactive approach to address and guide changes such as those brought about in the ensuing thirty years.

The election of a new Mayor, Sue Lesch, brought an intensified interest in the comprehensive planning process. Council and the new administration selected WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc, of Fremont, Ohio, and Ben Kenny, its Community Development Coordinator, a Norwalk resident, as the planning consultant.

During the summer of 2004, a 22-member Steering Committee was appointed to most closely guide the process. This committee included representation from City Council and administration, County and neighboring Township government, education, health care, commercial, service, financial, and industrial business, and social services, among other interests. The Steering Committee met monthly, every third Thursday morning at 7:00 a.m., and provided a means for reacting to planning concepts and recommendations. Early in the process, this Committee developed a mission and vision statement for the plan, as well as the set of goals that provides the framework for this plan.

Shortly after the first Steering Committee meeting in August 2004, an Advisory Committee was also selected to bring a deeper level of participation to the process. This 24-member committee met quarterly, immediately following a Steering Committee meeting, and to aid continuity, Steering Committee members were always invited to attend the Advisory Committee meeting as observers. Advisory Committee members provided guidance regarding research and information gathering for the comprehensive plan, and were asked to provide information they may have on hand regarding their area of expertise. Advisory Committee members represented such interests as industry, construction, real estate, finance,

local churches, community institutions, the Chamber of Commerce, and locally owned businesses. Two students from each of Norwalk's two high schools also served on this committee.

Ensuring Public Input: Community Forums (October 2004)

To obtain public input into the comprehensive plan, five community forums were held throughout the City over a two-week time span between October 20 and 28, 2004. Varying times, days, and locations were selected to accommodate residents' diverse schedules. Total attendance at all meetings was nearly 400 people, representing a broad and diverse group. Participants ranged from teenagers to octogenarians, and their tenure in Norwalk ranged from a few months to their whole lives. Current and former civic leaders, business leaders, students, and average citizens participated.



The format was structured for a comfortable, open sharing of ideas, with time for small group discussion at one's table, presentations from each table to the whole group, and individual input on response forms at the close of each session. The agenda also included a brief history of the City and an overview of the goals and timetable for the Plan.

All responses were recorded and they have been used to guide much of the focus and many of the recommendations in this document.

Findings from the Community Forums:

Community Assets

In an initial exercise, participants at each forum were asked to mention those attributes of Norwalk that they considered to be important assets that they appreciated most. Many of the assets mentioned were tangible, physical items including the two school systems and their physical facilities, Fisher-Titus Medical Center, the Norwalk Library, the Park and Recreation system, Ernsthausen Community Center, the reservoir and its Memorial Lake Park, historic and architecturally significant buildings, and the City's favorable location and access to major cities, amenities, and markets. Equally important and mentioned just as frequently were such intangibles as:

- ✓ The small-town, neighborly, friendly atmosphere;
- ✓ A feeling of safety and comfort;
- ✓ The community's heritage and historic areas such as Downtown and Main Street residences;
- ✓ The City's history of innovation and entrepreneurship;
- ✓ The City's locally generated institutions, churches, and businesses;
- ✓ The residents' sense of need for civic involvement, volunteerism, and teamwork;
- ✓ A cooperative local government and good City services; and
- ✓ A special regard and fondness for things uniquely "Norwalk", such as Hogan's Hill and the Starview Drive-In.

Community Vision

Each table was asked to brainstorm as a group and build a list of ideas and dreams for the future of the community, with no censorship. Participants were encouraged to "dream big" in describing what they would like to see in Norwalk twenty years hence. While hundreds of ideas were generated over the five meetings, there was also a commonality among many of the ideas that was repeated over the course of the meetings. These broad concepts, which gained the consensus of the participants, are very important in framing Norwalk's Comprehensive Plan for the coming two decades. They included the following:

- ✓ There is generalized community support for **managed and balanced growth** of the Norwalk community, but with growth must come a concerted effort to preserve what is good about Norwalk's small town atmosphere. This theme of measured growth encompasses such concerns as ample ready-to-build land, cooperation and partnership with township and County government, and a broad view of industrial growth to the east and housing to the south and northwest.
- ✓ Participants noted a desire for **new and expanding businesses**, with quality jobs that support families and attract, challenge, and retain the community's youth and young adults. Related themes include expansion of industrial parks and sites, diversifying the employment base, and preserving local and family-owned businesses.
- ✓ There should be a continued focus on **excellence in education** as needs and curriculum change. This interest extends beyond K-12 education to more accessible post-graduate education and lifelong learning.
- ✓ Participants advocated the continued development of a **full mix of quality housing options**, from affordable entry-level housing to executive homes. Special emphasis was placed on providing suitable housing for the elderly. Concerns were also voiced regarding the need to monitor and maintain rental properties.
- ✓ Need was expressed for **efficient and safe transportation**, including public transportation that responds to needs, efficient traffic flow, the completion of a

bypass to accommodate north-south traffic, and better use of the Huron County Airport as an economic development tool.

- ✓ Participants noted that future planning should not neglect the basic needs for **infrastructure and utilities**. Certain necessities for community well-being and growth should be ensured, including a perpetual source of raw water, quality health care, and community services and facilities that adequately accommodate a growing City.
- ✓ There was a consistent focus on a number of “**quality of life**” factors that resonated with large numbers of community members. These items included optimal use of parks and recreation activities, including the reservoir and green space, activities and facilities that respond to significant demand by young adults, youth, and other population segments, such as a soccer complex, skate park, teen center, and walking/bike trails, the introduction of new dining alternatives, and new cultural opportunities for participation or passive enjoyment.
- ✓ Great interest was expressed in the rejuvenation or **reinvention of the downtown area** to ensure that it remains a vital and attractive destination and activity center. Participants advocated more retail business and uniformity in operating hours.
- ✓ A number of **intangible or formative concepts** emerged during the forums, including a desire for more opportunities for intergenerational activities, interdenominational initiatives, and other projects and activities that involve new partnerships, leadership, opportunities for participation, and energy.
- ✓ Finally, there was a consensus among many that Norwalk is on the verge of **discovering a defining theme** for itself. This theme may be elusive now, but a continued inclusionary planning process may help uncover it. Several comments pertained to developing Norwalk as a destination, and not just as a spot on the road to somewhere else. There seemed to be a desire to identify the niche, or niches, that could be discovered to build on existing assets and set Norwalk apart from other communities.

The community forums generated hundreds of responses and suggestions, and many participants volunteered to serve as resource persons. While this section only reports on the more widely heard themes, many of the more specific recommendations and comments from the forums will be reflected in later sections of this plan.

Focus Groups

Following the community forums, it was determined that input was needed on certain themes from more targeted focus groups. Several areas of such need were recommended by the Steering Committee and pursued by Mayor Lesch, Norwalk Economic Development Corporation Director Bethany Dentler, and Planning Consultant Ben Kenny, who attended all planned focus group meetings. A brief report on the findings and implications for comprehensive planning from each specific group follows:

1. Norwalk Downtown Focus Group (January 6, 2005)

A group of twenty downtown stakeholders met in the Chamber of Commerce boardroom on January 6 to discuss planning issues regarding the City's central business district. Here are some of the salient points from the discussion:

With regard to **organization**, it was felt that the current structure of committees, involving property owners (including City and County government), business owners, and the several committees of Main Street Norwalk, appears to be effective. Main Street Norwalk has elected to follow the nationally recognized Main Street approach.

With regard to **design**, specific areas of interest and concern included the following:

- ✓ Norwalk's downtown is a compatible architectural transition from the historic homes along East and West Main Street. The sense of the boulevard and avenue should carry from West and East Main through the central business district.
- ✓ Regulations for design and zoning may be needed that are specific to the uniqueness of the downtown area. Consistency is needed in regulation and enforcement. The result should be elimination of clutter, some uniformity in signage and standards, and improved and simplified aesthetics.
- ✓ There is a need for consistency of belief and understanding among stakeholders. The Main Street Manager must help change culture, informing new tenants and owners of regulations, and communicating information about regulations, incentives, and other matters.
- ✓ More greenery and landscaping would improve aesthetics, including carrying the greenscaping along Whittlesey from City Hall north to League Street.
- ✓ The downtown's identity should be enhanced through the use of signage at the gateways to the district.
- ✓ Parking adequacy is often a function of perception. Improved signage delineating and identifying parking locations will help. Then stakeholders should make the walk from parking lots to destinations as enticing as possible.

With regard to **promotion**,

- ✓ Opportunities abound for increased cultural events, such as an expanded presence of the Firelands Symphony and other musical organizations, community orchestra/band concerts, dinner theaters, art galleries, and other options.
- ✓ Special events and festivals should be customized to celebrate Norwalk's unique history and heritage. A festival's goal should be made clear before it is organized. Consensus in the group was that a festival should first serve local residents and businesses, and help build a sense of community. A "Maple City Fall Festival", for example, could combine Halloween activities, a 5K run, bike rally, pet competition, and provide ample opportunities for local performing and visual artists.

- ✓ Outside markets, including transient Turnpike traffic, should be captured through strategic advertising, brochures in nearby motels, and educating local businesses about the benefits of advertising in the Erie County Visitors Bureau guide.
- ✓ For long-term marketing, some felt it is time to revisit the concept of a County or City-wide “bed tax” to be used for promotion of local businesses and the establishment of a convention and visitor’s bureau.

With regard to **economic restructuring**,

- ✓ The potential of the central business district should be explored as a destination for businesses, tourists, and residents.
- ✓ The concept of a retail/service business incubator in the downtown (or elsewhere as appropriate) should be considered.
- ✓ It is important to capture transient traffic visiting Cedar Point, Norwalk Raceway Park, water parks, and related destinations during the summer season and throughout the year.
- ✓ More consideration should be given to the potential niches that could be successfully developed within Norwalk’s downtown. These may include antique stores, specialty shops, or some other cluster of businesses or markets yet to be identified.
- ✓ Buildings and properties with unique and significant potential for development should be identified, marketed, and developed. Suggested properties included the historic jail south of the courthouse, the property to the west of the old jail, the Midway Parts building, the Verizon building, the former ACC and Fisher Music building, the former Terry’s Carpeteria building, and the Towne and Country Theater property, which is a considerable cultural asset. Upper floors should likewise be considered for unique and varied development opportunities (an example is the banquet hall in the Gardiner-Hipp Building).
- ✓ When asked what niche businesses were currently missing downtown, focus group participants named antique stores, a card store, a hobby shop, a themed museum (hot rods, heritage), a bookstore, and a small grocery/notions/convenience store.

2. Senior Focus Group (January 12, 2005)

Because of their lack of mobility, many elderly citizens were not able to attend any of the October community forums. A special lunch meeting was set up at the Carriage House assisted living facility, attended by members of a monthly lunch programming group. The meeting largely followed the agenda of the community forums, and individuals identified community assets, while spokespersons from each table reported on the discussion of future community visions. Response sheets were also provided on which to make further comments and recommendations.

The following **assets** were mentioned: Downtown revitalization, Ernsthausen Center, school system and its music program, unusual architecture of housing, City services and administration, churches and their involvement, the hospital, Carriage House, the County’s Veterans Memorial, the Senior Center, the reused Main Street School (recently reopened as the system’s school for 5th and 6th graders), Firelands Museum and Historical Society, Library, park system, EMS service, and athletic programs for children. Other assets

mentioned included the feeling of safety, community spirit, friendly neighborhoods, convenience of many offices, and the lack of any specific “slum” areas, caring community.

Here are some of the responses, many of which were heard during the October forums, when participants were asked for their **vision for Norwalk’s future**:

Affordable senior housing	Improve the Norwalk Creek area
Ombudsman for senior assistance	Preservation of natural areas
An urgent care center	More independently owned shops
Grocery store on the south side of town	Planning for future transportation
Building codes to guarantee quality	Preservation of historic sites
Jobs to keep young people here	Upgrade the water supply
A nice sit-down restaurant	Rails to Trails
Better use of empty buildings downtown	Beautification projects at gateways and entry points
Better bus service to Sandusky and other areas	Promote activities for young people

3. Realtor/Developer Focus Group (January 26, 2005)

Approximately fifteen Realtors (commercial and residential) and developer/builders participated in this afternoon session at the Chamber boardroom. A series of questions was posed to the group and their answers were recorded. The following are summaries from the questions and responses:

On Norwalk’s “small town atmosphere”: It is important to preserve that atmosphere and friendliness, maintaining the quality of life and those major institutions and assets that lend to that atmosphere. Norwalk’s leadership should thus maintain both school systems, health care and recreation facilities and programming, and opportunities for residents to “rub elbows”, while building on cultural opportunities. Further, green space contributes an important part of the small town feel; people look for it and expect it. However, it does drive up costs per usable acre in subdivisions. There should be some set ratio of open to developed land, with greater expectations in larger subdivisions.

What do you point out to business or residential prospects? Housing, condominiums, golf course, reservoir, industrial parks (Firelands, Laylin Road), the downtown.

Since infill opportunities are limited, where should land use be focused as Norwalk grows outward?

- ✓ **South of US 20 Bypass:** Infrastructure would need to be run to the south, and topography and the bypass increase costs. However, growth to the south is important to provide new tax base for the Norwalk school district. Possible uses include residential, possible research and development, possibly a technical park linked to the hospital, executive housing, possibly a restaurant, and a store offering groceries to serve the growing south side.

- ✓ **North along the US 250 corridor:** Commercial and retail. If a northerly bypass ever intersects US 250 to the north, that area will be impacted and growth will ensue. The Ohio Turnpike to the north will exert a pull effect, drawing warehouse, distribution, and industrial businesses to the north. An industrial park could be assembled on northern farmland, and a rail spur may be a possibility to improve its attractiveness.
- ✓ **East along US 20 and SR 18:** Airport access remains important to the east. The attractiveness of Norwalk Raceway Park may be able to draw a cluster of entertainment, motor sports, and automotive related industry and commerce. As activities move onto what is now Township property, revenue sharing plans will be important in order to accomplish annexation.
- ✓ **West along US 20:** This area contains some of the County's best prime farmland, and will probably remain agricultural.

Other issues, items, and suggestions during the course of the focus group session:

- ✓ The commercial and service sector market is significant, reaching south to North Fairfield, Greenwich, Willard, and beyond, west to Monroeville, and east to Wakeman. "Huge" recent investments by retailers Wal-Mart and Tops Family Market in Norwalk were based on assessments of the market and their likely capture of significant revenues from that market.
- ✓ The boundaries of the Norwalk School District pose a problem when much of the City's future development will take place outside that District. Participants suggested seeking a win-win solution by holding dialogues with neighboring districts and stating that growth within their district will only be encouraged and assisted if there is an agreement to share tax revenues with the Norwalk City school district.
- ✓ Neighboring townships including Norwalk, Bronson, and Ridgefield are viewed as much more cooperative than in the past. Norwalk Township has been especially cooperative, using revenue sharing that extends for as many as twelve years.
- ✓ Gateways are important in presenting a first impression of the community. Participants suggested planting trees (possibly maples) along US 250 north from Milan. Also suggested: a visually pleasing, possibly brick "Welcome to Norwalk" sign with landscaping, along the entry points on US 250, US 20 exits, and State Routes 18 and 61.
- ✓ It is imperative that the City reach Lake Erie for a perpetual source of raw water, possibly distributing it south along the railroad right-of-way purchased by the City. Achieving this goal may require working cooperatively with Erie County.

4. High school Focus Groups (January 28, 2005)

On January 2005, the Mayor, Economic Development Director, and Planning Consultant met with four senior government classes at Norwalk High School and one government class at St. Paul High School. Responses to the prepared list of questions were remarkably similar among the classes. The opinions offered by the high school students were considered very important in order for the plan to effectively and honestly respond to the needs and desires of the high school population. The following is a summary of the responses received from the high school focus group.

Assets and favorite things about Norwalk: Norwalk's size (not too small or too large), recreation center, feeling of safety, reservoir, raceway, schools, parks, small enough to know everyone, coffee house, restaurants (especially fast food), new hospital addition, cleanliness, low crime, downtown still looks alive, tennis courts, theater (drive in), Vargo's, Hogan's Hill, golf courses. Note: Many of these items were mentioned multiple times.

Describing Norwalk: When asked to use one or two words, the high school participants said: peaceful, boring, too much traffic, need place for kids to go, no hangouts, pleasant, small, relaxed, friendly, old fashioned, historical, uneventful, not exciting, quiet, Burger Alley (250 north), family oriented (too much so!), wholesome, almost like Mayberry, not enough diversity, low key town.

Small town atmosphere: Students found it to be an important attribute. They were concerned that growth, which they supported, should be slow enough that the small town amenities and ambience are not lost. Local, Main Street businesses were viewed as important to preserve. Interestingly, although students clearly supported the construction of a new movie theater, they were somewhat concerned that the theater will draw people from out of town, and Norwalk's local autonomy will suffer. On the other hand, they realized that bringing in more people will help local business.

Staying in town: When asked how many students thought they would be living in Norwalk in five years, a total of twenty said they thought so (out of a classroom total of 105). When asked whether they would live in Norwalk ten years from now, another twelve or so thought they may relocate back to Norwalk eventually. Thus approximately thirty percent of the students thought there was some likelihood that they would return to live in the Norwalk area. Many more wanted to sample some other part of the world after graduation.

Is the loss of students and young adults a problem? Very few felt it should be regarded as such. Most felt that moving away was an inevitable part of growing up, and that many of those who initially relocate will "trickle back" later in life.

What types of jobs and amenities would help retain and attract youth and young adults? Several mentioned health care professions, while others specified larger, international businesses with opportunity for travel, engineering jobs, and hospitality management opportunities. Amenities that would help attract younger adults would include dance clubs, later hours for businesses that do exist, "name" entertainment, a nice shopping center and better clothing store, theater events, night life, more upscale restaurants, music (CD) stores, a pool hall, and live music.

Are there enough recreational and cultural opportunities? Some said yes while others felt not. Many reiterated that additional facilities would be nice, including a dance club, musical acts, benefit concerts, a venue for local bands, more dances, a local theater group with a summer clinic for theater participants, more performing arts and live entertainment, music festivals, bike trails, an art museum or gallery, more diversity within the community, and a revived and active Towne and Country Theater. One class suggested the vacant building on 250 North that recently housed Olde Towne Windows as a place to develop a youth center large enough for live entertainment.

What businesses in town are important? Students generated a long list of stores that were most important to them. These included Wal Mart (mentioned in every class) and K-Mart, music stores, video rentals, auto parts stores, grocery stores, the coffee house, Fashion Bug, golf courses, and a number of restaurants.

When asked what types of stores are missing, students replied by naming, among others: affordable music (CD) store, bigger book store, antiques, sit down restaurant, activity center (arcade, food place, pool), sports bar and grill, clothing store, south side grocery store, outdoors/sports store, pet store, “hangout” spots, bigger bowling alley, skate shop, and enclosed ice rink and indoor skate park.

Does Norwalk need a community college or branch campus? Feelings were mixed, and many conceded that the Firelands Campus of Bowling Green State University was accessible. However, many agreed that a local continuing education facility, possibly housing courses provided by multiple colleges, would help people who work traditional hours, and it would bring more businesses, more people, and a greater choice of things to do. An adult education program may be successful, and some students suggested that their parents may avail themselves of the course offerings.

Are there satisfying jobs for people looking for work after high school? The students had mixed feelings on this question. Construction jobs were most commonly mentioned, and others noted that most available jobs were of the minimum wage level. One class noted that there was some choice in the manufacturing sector, mentioning Janesville Sackner and Norwalk Furniture as examples.

If you could make one change... Students were asked to offer one improvement they wished to see become reality in Norwalk. This question elicited the largest number of responses. Some of the responses are listed below. The depth and variety of thoughtful responses is a testament to the interest in their community expressed throughout the day.

Get rid of drugs
Complete the bypass
Strengthen the police force
Add a “town square”
Larger recreation area
Skating rink
Add specialty stores (books)
Bigger bowling alley/pool hall

Game room with no alcohol
Place for music performances
Mini mall with CD, clothing stores
Population spread out more
Help Downtown get more business
Need apartments for young people
Downtown place for younger kids
Fewer bars

Place to listen to live music	More hotels
Movie theater	More affordable apartments
Indoor tennis courts	Another Vargo's type place
Clothing store	Beach at reservoir
More nice restaurants	Artificial snow slope
Live entertainment	Better recycling program
Magicians, plays, etc.	Student activities
Place for teens to hang out alcohol-free	Large amphitheater
More smaller stores	Live music/concerts
Family owned gift shop	Circle racetrack
Bigger book selection in library	Bypass around town
No graffiti in playgrounds	Stop semi truck through traffic
More modern, younger, livened up	Better roads
Big music store and studio	Four-lane Main Street
Stadium for semi pro sports	Clubs, karaoke
New fire station	Fitness clubs
More diversity and less bias	NASCAR track
(indoor) skate park	Better off-street parking
Higher speed limits	Café open 24 hours a day
Grocery store on south end of town	Ski trails
Teen center: skating, couches, stage, arcade, pool, smoke free, darts, air hockey, foosball	Teen center for youth
Dinner theater	Major clothing chain (Old Navy)
'50's-'60's style café	More lively Main Street
New football field for NHS	Better parking downtown
Indoor soccer	More professional jobs
More places to shop	Refurbish Towne and Country for live acts
Outlet mall	Music and speakers
Pretty park with statue	TV station like Mansfield, covering high school games
More non smoking restaurants	Restaurant with live music
Good TV station/update cable public access station	

5. Hispanic focus group (February 3, 2005)

A focus group of Hispanic residents met on February 3, 2005, with planning officials, and discussed their experiences as Norwalk community members. The following is a list of some of the findings of that meeting.

- ✓ The respondents are very happy to live in Norwalk, citing it as a safe and quiet place to raise a family.
- ✓ Respondents work in a variety of places, many of them out of town, including a wholesale plant grower in the Oberlin area and an industrial plant in Shelby.

- ✓ Respondents like the selection at local retailers, and can find ethnic foods at local grocery stores.
- ✓ Respondents are happy to report that they have witnessed no ethnic or racial harassment, and that the language barrier has not posed a problem for their children, who have acclimated well in local schools. The older family members have a harder time with English as a second language, and many still converse in Spanish.
- ✓ With regard to recreation, many wish that soccer fields were available to the public. A number of Hispanic men from the area, some traveling 20 miles or more, gather to play soccer on an informal basis, and would appreciate an available field. Another item that would be welcomed warmly is a cultural “house” that could include among its programming traditional dancing.
- ✓ An important issue, which has several ramifications, is the large number of non-citizen Hispanics in the community. Without evidence of citizenship or a Social Security number, many in the community face a barrier to employment, in obtaining a driver's license, and in purchasing a house. This is why many Hispanics in the area will own and live in mobile homes – because they can pay cash for them rather than apply for a mortgage. One focus group member noted how a child could not be entered in the local Head Start program, because of the lack of citizenship.

Locally Guided Planning: The Steering and Advisory Committees

The Norwalk Comprehensive Planning Process has been designed to be inclusive, bringing a large number of Norwalk residents, stakeholders, representatives of various elements of the community, and other local voices into the creative and decision-making elements of the process. A 24-member Steering Committee was appointed early in the process to help guide the overall process and react to planning elements as they were developed. This committee includes representation from City government, the adjacent township, County government, and local institutions, organizations, manufacturers, and retail and service businesses. The committee has met monthly since the beginning of the process in August 2004.

Serving as an adjunct to the Steering Committee is a 24-member Advisory Committee, which has met quarterly throughout the process, offering the unique and collective perspectives and expertise offered by these community leaders. This committee includes business leaders, representatives from local institutions such as Fisher Titus Medical Center and a local church, and students from both of Norwalk's high schools. While the Steering Committee serves as a springboard for many of the ideas and issues, the Advisory Committee provides a forum to review and react to ideas generated within the Steering Committee.

A Mission and a Vision

It was deemed important early in the process to develop an overarching mission and vision statement for the community, under which all planning activity would take place. The statements were developed by the Steering Committee during the fall of 2004, then discussed

and approved by the Advisory Committee. They appear on page 2 of the Introduction to this document.

Goals

It was also considered important to develop a series of goals, categorized by planning topic, which would reflect those items or concepts considered most important to achieve over the coming twenty years. The exhaustive list of goals was developed, through a process that included individual goal writing and identification of key words, by the Steering Committee, then discussed and modified by the Advisory Committee at the December, 2004 meeting of both committees. The completed list of goals, covering fourteen distinct topics, is presented below.

A. Citizen Involvement

1. Request public opinions and ideas on core goals, and involve citizens from Norwalk and its environs in an atmosphere that welcomes fresh ideas and leads to community consensus.
2. Seek diverse but informed opinions; involve citizens broadly and give them a forum and a voice in comprehensive planning and making changes.
3. Encourage new and established leadership to develop a broad and active base of concerned citizens.
4. Establish and maintain avenues for open communication, citizen awareness, and effective and timely responsiveness.
5. Publicize, coordinate, and cultivate collaborative involvement in the City's many events, activities, and opportunities for involvement.
6. Provide and implement a method for periodic evaluation of this comprehensive master plan, with methods for reviewing progress and amending the plan when appropriate.

B. Community Character

1. Preserve the rich and progressive history, cultural heritage, and traditional values and morals of the community.
2. Maintain the character of a stable, family-oriented, warm, and welcoming community in which to live, work, and retire.
3. Create an atmosphere of openness to appropriate and positive change that may blend the old and new.
4. Continue to be a supportive community, addressing the unique needs of such groups as seniors, youth, the unemployed, and the disabled.
5. Be open to honest self-evaluation.
6. Continue to value well-maintained, attractive structures, properties, neighborhoods, and public places.

C. Community Facilities

1. Build on the strong facilities we have, including our health care, recreational, and educational systems, to draw people and business to the community, and to provide ample social, cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities and an active

community life to all.

2. Strive for community facilities to be clean and well maintained, accessible to all, diverse, affordable, and responsive to the differing needs, trends, and desires of all age groups.
3. Require recreational areas to be expanded in proportion to new development, housing, and population.
4. Ensure that facility development is conducted in response to well thought out plans that support the needs of the community.

D. Economic and Business Development

1. Build upon the successful work of existing City and County level economic and business development organizations and coordinate planning with any new such entities, and support their planning and programming to address long-term needs and provide a sound, solid base for economic and business development that emphasizes and utilizes our strengths.
2. Promote an environment to nurture, retain, and expand current businesses and the central business district.
3. Ensure that adequate information and resources are available to promote a prospective or expanding business's understanding of City incentives, assistance, review and approval processes, and other requirements for development.
4. Provide a pro-development, cooperative atmosphere within the public sector that will accommodate and not hinder suitable and desired development.
5. Ensure that incentives are balanced and do not burden the taxpayer.
6. Approach job creation, retention, and enhancement efforts with a focus on the future, long-term health of the community, and on diversifying the employment and tax base.
7. Balance job growth among jobs meeting the needs of the workforce and the tax base of the City.
8. Provide an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, through venture capital, guidance and counseling as needed, and referrals to other community services.
9. Develop a proactive tourist outreach program, with local customer service providers trained to welcome visitors.
10. Ensure that adequate building sites are available for a variety of industries through a network of development-ready business parks, complemented with a plan for the revitalization of existing suitable buildings and in-town sites, with an eye on the impact on the local school district and its tax base.
11. Focus on developing businesses and services that capture local and external revenues, such as full-service restaurants, with hours, products, and services that meet the needs of the local market.
12. To compete globally, offer and support state of the art business practices and support systems.

E. Education

1. Attract a branch of a college or university, a center for higher education, or other means to bring college level educational opportunities to the community.
2. Maintain and build upon consistent high standards and quality of the public and parochial school systems within the community, providing the highest level of curricular,

educational, and training opportunities for learners of all ages to prepare them for success in career and life.

3. Continue to support the progressive core education system with attractive and modern technology, buildings, and extracurricular activities that attract students and their parents to area schools, and that prepare students for success in technical, workforce, and post-graduate endeavors.
4. Advocate the alignment of school district boundaries more closely with municipal boundaries, for a more sensible distribution of resources.
5. Work in partnership with students, parents, businesses, and the community at large to raise expectations and the level of achievement.
6. Engage in lifelong educational programs promoting life skills specific to adults, young parents, and the elderly, among others.

F. Government

1. Maximize ease of access to local government and its ability to provide timely assistance to the public.
2. Ensure that the municipal government is upholding its established laws and charters, cooperating and enhancing communication with citizens and other government entities (Federal, State, and local) to serve the good of the community as a whole.
3. Build into government a system for the participation of new leadership, and for obtaining public input.
4. Focus on responsiveness to the needs of the citizenry and business.
5. Ensure that services are provided in a cost-effective, efficient manner that earns the respect and support of the community.
6. Undertake action planning to accomplish the broad goals of accessibility, service, responsiveness, and efficiency of operation.

G. Housing

1. Ensure that safe, comfortable, affordable housing is available for the diverse and changing citizenry, with a mix of low, middle, and upper income houses, both for renters and owners.
2. Work with contiguous areas to ensure a consistent plan for the growth of residential land uses.
3. Preserve the historic housing stock in the central City and nearby neighborhoods, and support infill and centralized development for ease of access to the downtown area and other destinations.
4. Preserve the quality of the housing stock by raising and codifying standards for rental housing upkeep and maintenance.
5. Work with developers in decision-making about housing development, and allow for development of new housing types that accommodate changing population groups (condos and accessible floor plans).
6. Ensure that suitable housing is available for special needs populations, including the elderly and disabled.
7. Support the development of housing options for families in transition (entry to mid-level, older families to senior status).
8. Support the twin goals of quality and affordability.

H. Land Use

1. Pursue balance between emerging residential areas, industrial parks, commercial districts, and land reserved for recreation and open space, and examine land use potentials to promote the most valued use, conforming to the recommendations of this plan, for each parcel.
2. Account for long-term industrial development needs and long-range job and facility development that enhances City and local school district tax bases.
3. Consider the long-term needs of the City's institutions, such as the eventual need for new school facilities, and police and fire facilities. Such planning often requires proactive acquisition of land to reserve it for public use.
4. Require adequate open areas and green space to enhance the balance of development and common areas, including reserving and mapping such reserved areas.
5. Strictly enforce zoning and related laws that define compatible uses and protect property values.
6. Ensure that this land use plan continues to guide practical land use and development decisions, through a system of plan and project review and modification, and that the plan considers orderly expansion into surrounding townships.

I. Natural Environment and Resources

1. Create and enforce regulations and codes that protect and maintain natural resources and reflect a responsible community that is a good steward of its environment, such as tree ordinances and use of an arborist, soil runoff provisions, wetlands provisions, and others.
2. Promote and support public access to and enjoyment of natural resources.
3. Develop sufficient natural and passive parks and recreation facilities for the size of the community, including trails for biking and running.
4. Promote and implement voluntary efforts to clean up blighted, littered, or polluted areas, and solicit outside assistance including grants to help in costly clean-up efforts.
5. Provide a perpetual supply of sufficient water to support the future population and business base.

J. Population, Growth, and Demographics

1. Develop and employ strategies to recruit and retain the community's "best and brightest" young students back to the area, through education and employment opportunities, as well as emphasis on nearby and accessible cultural opportunities and metropolitan areas.
2. Retain the feel and character of the small town community regardless of the level of growth.
3. Monitor and anticipate demographic changes and be responsive to resulting and emerging needs; the City budget and capital improvements plan should include consideration of these changes and needs.
4. Grow the City in a carefully planned manner regarding population, municipal boundaries, services, equality, and opportunities.
5. Maintain a balance of young and old, diverse backgrounds, and professionals and a solid core of blue-collar workers; if all feel welcome, balanced growth will follow.

K. Quality of Life

1. Use existing assets and resources to foster a high quality of life that is accessible for all.
2. Preserve Norwalk's exemplary small town quality of life through controlled growth, yet the benefit of access to "big City" cultural amenities should be maximized and promoted.
3. Support a broad plan that looks at all contributors, including a well run government, schools, social and nonprofit services, safety forces, health care, arts organizations, and recreation providers, all of which contribute to a well-rounded family life and retain families and businesses.
4. Provide opportunities for all members of the community to contribute to an improved quality of life, including retired individuals who can perform services in their areas of expertise.
5. Support diversity of retail and service businesses to broaden consumer choices, minimizing the need to travel elsewhere.
6. Make sure the future quality of life in the community is tied to its rich history, values, work ethic, and rural background.

L. Services

1. Encourage public, social, and nonprofit services as the backbone of a caring community, and encourage coordination and non-duplication of services, volunteerism, and support.
2. Design services to accommodate the full range of community interests, needs, age groups, and economic and social backgrounds.
3. Build on the planning for the Fisher Titus Medical Center campus and facilitate the continuing development of the community's expanding medical services.
4. Plan for adequate and effective, strategically located safety force facilities, including firefighting facilities.
5. Ensure that planned services are cost-effective and able to be provided without interruption.
6. Consider outsourcing of services when it is cost effective to do so and the level and quality of service, as well as the equality to citizens with which it is provided, is not compromised.

M. Transportation

1. Strive to provide smooth and efficient transportation flow within the City, to nearby destinations, and to nearby connecting highways, by continuation of active transportation plan improvements when fiscally possible.
2. Enforce standard traffic rules and regulations systematically to ease congestion on local streets.
3. Include expectations for future thoroughfares and projected new traffic generators and destinations within transportation planning, and hold to that plan to accommodate future growth.
4. Ensure that roadway planning accounts for vehicular and pedestrian safety, with well-maintained and marked roadways.
5. Maintain a means of public transportation for those who rely on it for transport to work,

- medical appointments, shopping, and other needs, including the disabled and elderly.
6. Address the needs of through traffic (especially north-south), and truck traffic both through and within the City.
 7. Maintain and facilitate improvements to the railroad system serving the City and its businesses. Develop the Huron County Airport as an asset to the community and region, and the business base.

N. Utilities and Infrastructure

1. Plan infrastructure improvements carefully to guide and entice progressive, desired growth and development to planned growth areas, but plan with enough flexibility to accommodate change as new opportunities arise.
2. Plan and implement improvements only if they are affordable, both in their construction and their ongoing operation and maintenance, and if they can be supported with affordable and competitive user rates.
3. Monitor and evaluate the needs of residents, businesses, and institutions to ensure that those needs are being met, and to plan for prioritized improvements when they are not.
4. Continuously develop and follow a progressive schedule of maintenance and replacement for water and sewer systems, streets, sidewalks, and other elements of infrastructure.
5. Monitor utility services to ensure that all areas and sectors of the community are provided with needed technology, power, and water, and pressure energy providers to increase capacity to meet needs.
6. Strive to provide technology systems and networks that are “state of the art” in accessibility, capacity, and speed. Explore the feasibility of achieving a totally wireless community.

Given the framework of these generalized goals, resource panels were then created to discuss specific topics and develop more specific recommendations that will help the City achieve these goals. The work of the resource panels is reflected throughout the remaining chapters of this comprehensive plan.

Chapter 2



Population and Demographics

According to the 2000 Census, Norwalk was a City of 16,238 persons when the Census was taken in 1999. This total was the culmination of a century of growth that saw the City of 7,074 increase by 130 percent. Growth by decade was recorded as follows:

Table 1: Norwalk Population Over Time

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
7,074	7,858	7,379	7,776	8,211	9,775	12,900	13,386	14,358	14,731	16,238
% growth	11.1%	-6.1%	5.4%	5.6%	19.0%	32.0%	3.8%	7.3%	2.6%	10.2%

Source: U.S. Census

Norwalk witnessed rapid growth during the 1940's and 1950's, adding nearly one-third of its population during the post-war boom period of the 1950's. While growth was inhibited during the 1980's, a time of recession in the Midwest, the pace of growth has picked back up somewhat, reaching just over ten percent during the 1990's.

It is important to remember that a municipality's population increases because of three factors: net immigration into the City, births within the City exceeding deaths, and through annexation of new land and households. It is likely that, in addition to immigration, the City annexed new property during the boom period of the 1940's and 1950's.

Table 2: Huron County Population Over Time

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
32,330	34,206	32,424	33,700	34,800	39,353	47,326	49,587	54,608	56,240	59,487
% growth	5.8%	-5.2%	3.9%	3.3%	13.1%	20.3%	4.8%	10.1%	3.0%	5.8%

Source: U.S. Census

Huron County's population generally followed the ebb and flow of the City's growth trends, with a major boost and the birth of the 'baby boomer' generation in the 1940's and 1950's. While the County experienced two-digit growth over the 1970's (at 10.1percent), the 1990's

did not bring the extent of growth witnessed in the City. In fact, Norwalk's net increase of 1,507 residents was nearly half (46.4percent) of the County's net increase of 3,247.

Norwalk in 2000

A closer look at the 16,238 people counted as Norwalk residents for the 2000 Census can be helpful in forming a more accurate picture of the City. A first breakdown considers the population by age group. This helps form a picture of the size of various age groups: school age population, the elderly, people in their working years. Also, grouping by age cohort helps project what the population will look like in ten or twenty years.

Table 3 reveals a fairly evenly dispersed population, with males making up 47.8 percent and females 52.2 percent of the total. There is a large cohort of younger adults, with the largest number in the 25-34 and 35-44 brackets. Retirement is not likely for this group for 20 to 30 years, so they represent a significant labor force.

The median age in Norwalk was 34.2, a bit younger than Huron County's median of 34.9, and fully two years younger than Ohio's median of 36.2.

Table 3: Norwalk 2000 Population By Age and Gender

	Male	Female	Total Population
Under 5 Years	660	650	1,310
5 to 9 years	690	612	1,302
10 to 14 years	646	599	1,245
15 to 19 years	557	523	1,080
20 to 24 years	509	567	1,076
25 to 34 years	1,175	1,114	2,289
35 to 44 years	1,155	1,252	2,407
45 to 54 years	962	1,031	1,993
55 to 59 years	309	375	684
60 to 64 years	248	296	544
65 to 74 years	467	654	1,121
75 to 84 years	319	554	873
85 years and over	61	253	314
Total	7,758	8,480	16,238

Source: 2000 Census of Population

While nearly nineteen out of 20 Norwalk residents are White, the Black population has held steady for several decades, and the Hispanic ethnic group has grown significantly to become nearly twice the size of the Black/African American racial group. The Hispanic population grew from just 198 in 1990, more than tripling over the decade, to 620 in the 2000 Census. Further, many in Norwalk's Hispanic/Latino population feel certain that the City's total Hispanic population is significantly undercounted, and the actual total may be as high as 1,800.

Another interesting characteristic of the population is the origin of its ancestry. The top five ancestries reported by residents for the 2000 Census were German (5,569 people, or

just over one-third of the population), English (1,821), Irish (1,764), United States/American (1,490), Italian (946), Dutch (509), French (409), Polish (361), Scottish (353), and Welsh (256).

Table 4: Race and Hispanic Origin in Norwalk

	Number	Percent
Total Population, 2000	16,238	100.0
One Race	16,055	98.9
White	15,350	94.5
Black or African American	316	1.9
Asian	35	0.2
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0
Some Other Race	302	1.9
Two or More races	183	1.1
Hispanic or Latino	620	3.8
Mexican	469	2.9
Puerto Rican	46	0.3
Cuban	3	0
Other Hispanic/Latino	102	0.6

Source: U.S. 2000 Census of Population

Table 5: Households in Norwalk

	Number	Percent	Ohio
Total Households	6,377	100.0	100.0
Family Households	4,232	66.4	67.3
With own children under 18	2,213	34.7	31.7
Married-Couple family	3,185	49.9	51.4
With own children under 18	1,521	23.9	22.4
Female householder, no husband present	808	12.7	12.1
With own children under 18	548	8.6	7.3
Nonfamily households	2,143	33.6	32.7
Householder living Alone	1,815	28.5	27.3
Householder 65 Years/over	761	11.9	10.0
Households with individuals under 18 years	2,376	37.3	34.5
Households with individuals 65 years+	1,586	24.9	23.8
Average Household Size	2.49	X	2.49
Average Family Size	3.06	X	3.04

Source: 2000 Census of Population

First, it is important to note that while Norwalk's population grew by 10.2 percent over the 1990s, the number of households grew by a larger proportion, 13.1 percent. This leads to the correct conclusion that household size has shrunk in Norwalk, from an average of 2.55 in 1990 to 2.49 in 2000. The 2000 average of 2.49 is equal to the State average, but somewhat lower than the Huron County average of 2.65.

Household types by percentage closely follow statewide percentages, rarely varying by more than one to two percent. The greatest divergence is in Norwalk having a larger percentage of households with individuals under 18 years old (37.3 percent vs. Ohio's 34.5 percent). The incidence of single female householders is slightly greater in Norwalk, and Norwalk's proportion of households with single householders age 65 and over is nearly two percent greater than the State's rate (11.9 percent vs. 10.0 percent).

Income Factors

Norwalk's median household income, at \$37,778, is less than the County and State medians. While median family income is closer to the County's median, both are several thousand dollars less than the State median. This holds true for the per capita income as well. Finally, the median income for males living in Norwalk is slightly larger than the County median, and just over \$1,000 less than the State median. The median for females is \$620 less than the County median, and over \$4,000 less than the State median. For the most part, Norwalk's households and wage earners earn less than the County and State's labor force, on average.

Table 6: Income Comparisons: Norwalk, Huron County, and Ohio

Income in 1999	Number Norwalk	Percent Norwalk	Huron Co.	Ohio
Households	6,349	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than \$10,000	464	7.3	6.8	9.1
\$10,000 to \$14,999	445	7.0	5.9	6.4
\$15,000 to \$24,999	987	15.5	14.7	13.4
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,059	16.7	15.0	13.6
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,184	18.6	19.4	17.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,366	21.5	23.9	20.4
\$75,000 to \$99,999	448	7.1	8.6	10.0
\$100,000 to \$149,999	300	4.7	4.4	6.5
\$150,000 to \$199,999	33	0.5	0.4	1.6
\$200,000 or more	63	1.0	0.9	1.7
Median Household Income	\$37,778	X	\$40,558	\$40,956
Median Family Income	\$45,789	X	\$46,911	\$50,037
Per Capita Income	\$18,589	X	\$18,133	\$21,003
Median earnings, male full-time year-round worker	\$36,582	X	\$35,760	\$37,692
Median earnings, female full-time year-round worker	\$22,165	X	\$22,785	\$26,400

Source: U.S. 2000 Census of Population

Poverty: With 289 families in poverty in 1999, Norwalk had a 6.8 percent family poverty rate, slightly larger than the County rate (6.5 percent) but less than the State rate (7.8 percent). Among the City's individuals, 1,391 (8.8 percent) were in poverty in Norwalk, more than the County rate (8.5 percent), and somewhat less than the State rate (10.6 percent).

Huron County can be classified somewhat as "blue collar" in the sense that the percent of workers in management and professional occupations is about ten percent less than the State percentage (21.2 percent County vs. 31.0 percent State), while the percentage of production and related workers, 30.9 percent for Norwalk and fully one-third of workers for the County, is considerably greater than for the State (19.0 percent). The manufacturing sector, employing three in ten workers in Norwalk and one in three Countywide, only employs one-fifth of the State's workers. The compensation for this difference is in the additive differences in sector where the City has a smaller percentage of workers than the State, including finance, insurance, and related (a 3.3 percent difference), professional and related (2.8 percent), educational, health, and social services (3.0 percent), and public administration (1.6 percent).

Table 7: Occupation and Industry

Occupation	Norwalk#	Norwalk%	Huron%	Ohio%
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	7,677	100.0%	100.0	100.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	1,762	23.0	21.2	31.0
Service occupations	1,103	14.4	13.5	14.6
Sales and office occupations	1,842	24.0	20.3	26.4
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	48	0.6	1.0	0.3
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	550	7.2	10.7	8.7
Production, transportation, & material moving occupations	2,372	30.9	33.4	19.0
Industry/Sector				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	21	0.3	2.5	1.1
Construction	527	6.9	7.8	6.0
Manufacturing	2,338	30.5	33.3	20.0
Wholesale trade	259	3.4	2.6	3.6
Retail trade	906	11.8	9.9	11.9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	381	5.0	6.5	4.9
Information	169	2.2	1.4	2.4
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	230	3.0	2.8	6.3
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management	398	5.2	4.2	8.0
Educational, health and social services	1,279	16.7	15.4	19.7
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food serv.	658	8.6	6.8	7.5
Other services (except public administration)	319	4.2	4.2	4.5
Public administration	192	2.5	2.6	4.1

Source: 2000 Census of Population

Education

Table 8 provides a comparison of the population's attainment of varying levels of education. Huron County's level of educational attainment lags somewhat behind the State's.

Table 8: Educational Attainment

Level of education reached	Number Norwalk	Percent Norwalk	Huron	Ohio
Population 25 years and over	10,234	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 9 th grade	441	4.3	4.7	4.5
9 th grade to 12 th grade, no diploma	1,512	14.8	14.3	12.6
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4,412	43.1	48.8	36.1
Some college, no degree	1,884	18.4	16.7	19.9
Associate degree	487	4.8	4.7	5.9
Bachelor's degree	1,035	10.1	7.6	13.7
Graduate or professional degree	463	4.5	3.3	7.4
Percent high school graduate or higher	X	80.9	81.0	83.0
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	X	14.6	10.9	21.1

Source: U.S. 2000 Census of Population

Ohio as a whole has a slightly greater percentage of residents earning Bachelor's and post-graduate degrees, while the County has a smaller one. While 14.6 percent of the City's adult population has a college degree, the Ohio percentage is half again higher, at 21.1 percent. Proportions with high school degrees are above 80 percent within the City, County, and State.

Population Mobility

The Census long form asks where respondents lived five years ago, offering a measure of the relative mobility of the population. The following table compares responses between the City, County, and State.

Table 9: Residence in 1995

	Number Norwalk	Percent Norwalk	Huron	Ohio
Population 5 years and over	14,976	100.0	100.0	100.0
Lived in same house in 1995	7,690	51.3	58.4	57.5
Different house in the U.S. in 1995	7,053	47.1	40.8	41.4
Same County	4,956	33.1	26.5	26.3
Different County	2,097	14.0	14.3	15.0
Same State	1,312	8.8	10.7	9.5
Different State	785	5.2	3.6	5.6
Elsewhere in 1995	233	1.6	0.8	1.1

Source: U.S. 2000 Census of Population

Norwalk residents appear to be somewhat more mobile as a group than County and State residents as a whole. Nearly half the over-five population (47.1 percent) lived in a different house in 1995, as opposed to 41.4 percent statewide. Most of that group (33.1 percent of the total) lived in Huron County in 1995, indicating that they simply moved to a preferable house or location. This percentage is somewhat higher than the statewide percentage (26.3 percent). Other segments appear to be more similar between the City, County, and State. Among Norwalk's population, 14 percent lived in a different County in 1995, and 5.2 percent lived in a different State.

Comparisons with Nearby Communities

Table 10, on the following page, presents some comparative statistics for Norwalk and ten nearby communities ranging in population from 6,391 to 24,811. Here is how Norwalk compares with its neighboring cities:

- Norwalk increased in population by 10.2 percent over the decade of the 1990's. The comparison cities varied from -10.1 percent to +11.8 percent. The average change among all eleven cities was 3.62 percent. Thus, Norwalk can be viewed as having grown at nearly three times the average for this set of communities.
- In terms of percentage, Norwalk had the fourth largest Hispanic population, according to Census figures, and was tied with Tiffin for the fifth largest Black population. Hispanic populations ranged from 12.5 percent in Willard, which is located in close proximity to large agricultural operations using migrant labor, to 0.9 percent in Ashland. Black populations ranged from 18.5 percent in Oberlin to 0.1 percent in Shelby and 0.3 percent in Bellevue.
- Norwalk ranked eighth in the percentage of high school graduates, and sixth in the percentage of college graduates. Three of the cities with a greater percentage of college graduates are, in fact, college towns.
- Norwalk is a relatively dynamic community within this sample, with seven cities having a larger percentage of households that were in the same house in 1995 as they were in 1999. Norwalk had just over half (51.3 percent) in the same home over this time period.
- Norwalk's commuters were very close to taking the sample's average time to drive to work: Norwalk's average was 17.0 minutes, while the mean of all eleven cities was 17.4 minutes, with community averages ranging from 13.8 (Oberlin) to 20.6 (Bellevue).
- Using just a few indicators from the Census, Norwalk could be considered a relatively blue-collar community. Norwalk ranked eighth in the percentage of employees in management, professional, and related positions, but fifth in the proportion of jobs that were in production, transportation, and material handling. Norwalk's percentage in the first category (23.0 percent) was less than the State total of 31.0 percent, and in the latter category, its percentage (30.9 percent) exceeded the State figure (19.0 percent). Finally, its percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector, at 30.5 percent, ranked

Norwalk fifth among the eleven communities, and exceeded the State percentage (20.0 percent) by over 50 percent.

- Norwalk witnessed a growth in the number of households of 12.1 percent over the 1990's, ranking it third among the communities in the sample. Norwalk's growth was nearly four percentage points higher than the sample's average of 8.2 percent growth.
- Average household size in Norwalk was second only to Willard's size, pointing toward relatively large household size in Norwalk among similar communities in the region. However, Norwalk's 2.49 average is identical to the average for the State of Ohio.
- How does Norwalk's household income stack up compared to nearby communities? The median household income of \$37,778 places Norwalk in the middle of the pack among the sample, ranking it fifth of eleven. Similarly, Norwalk ranks sixth in per capita income. Looking at the incidence of poverty, Norwalk's percentage of families in poverty ranks it seventh among the sample, and in terms of individuals in poverty, Norwalk ranks ninth, pointing toward a relatively low incidence of poverty. Norwalk's family and individual percentages were lower than the State's incidence of poverty as well.
- Norwalk's increase in housing units over the 1990's, at 11.9 percent, nearly kept up with the 12.1 percent increase in households, and ranked Norwalk fourth among the sample communities, indicating a relatively robust housing market.
- With 61.9 percent of its housing units occupied by their owners, Norwalk ranked seventh. Communities ranged from a high of 73.2 percent owner-occupied in Huron and 70.2 percent in Bellevue, to a low of 50.3 percent in Oberlin and 56.0 percent in Willard. Norwalk's percentage is substantially lower than the State percentage of 69.1 percent.
- By one indicator, Norwalk's housing stock is not much older than that for communities as a whole in north-central Ohio. Norwalk's percentage of units built before 1940, at 30.4 percent, ranked Norwalk seventh. Communities ranged from 47.4 percent in Fremont to 14.2 percent in Huron.
- Owner-occupied units in Norwalk are relatively costly among the sample. Norwalk's median value of owner-occupied units, at \$97,100, ranked it fourth. Median values ranged from \$129,800 in Huron, located on Lake Erie, to \$72,900 in Fremont, Sandusky County's County seat. Further, Norwalk's median rent, at \$478, ranked it sixth, in the middle of the pack. Median rents ranged from \$519 in Huron to \$396 in Shelby.

Table 10: Key Census Indicators for Norwalk and Ten Neighboring Cities

	Ashland	Bellevue	Fremont	Huron	Norwalk	Oberlin	Pt.Clinton	Shelby	Tiffin	Willard	Wooster
Population 2000	21,249	8,193	17,375	7,958	16,238	8,195	6,391	9,821	18,135	6,806	24,811
Population 1990	20,079	8,146	17,648	7,030	14,731	8,191	7,106	9,564	18,604	6,210	22,195
Change 1990-2000	1,170; 5.8%	47; 0.6%	-273; 1.5%	928; 13.2%	1,507; 10.2%	4; 0.0%	-715; -10.1%	257; 2.7%	-469; 2.5%	596; 9.6%	2,616; 11.8%
% Hispanic	0.9	2.6	12.3	1.6	3.8	3.0	6.0	1.0	2.1	12.5	1.1
% Black	1.2	0.3	9.9	0.7	1.9	18.5	2.4	0.1	1.9	1.5	3.8
% high school grad	83.5	82.8	77.5	91.5	80.9	86.4	80.1	81.9	83.9	74.2	84.4
% Bachelors Degree	19.6	9.2	10.2	28.4	14.6	41.2	12.2	9.4	17.5	7.6	27.4
Same home in 1995	51.1	58.4	54.7	64.0	51.3	41.5	61.8	55.2	53.2	49.9	47.4
Mean travel to work	16.6	20.6	16.6	20.4	17.0	13.8	17.4	19.7	18.1	15.4	15.9
% mgt prof related	27.5	24.6	20.5	37.4	23.0	43.8	25.7	19.2	24.1	16.7	32.8
% prod transp mat'l	24.9	31.3	36.8	18.6	30.9	8.7	20.5	31.0	28.4	40.9	21.2
% manufacturing	26.9	35.3	35.6	23.6	30.5	8.1	16.8	32.9	30.1	41.8	22.9
# Households 2000	8,285	3,315	6,872	3,273	6,349	2,687	2,801	4,060	7,392	2,544	10,035
# Households 1990	7,632	3,178	6,650	2,820	5,663	2,444	2,859	3,847	7,009	2,307	8,599
Change 1990-2000	653; 8.6%	137; 4.3%	222; 3.3%	453; 16.1%	686; 12.1%	243; 9.9%	-58; -2.0%	213; 5.5%	383; 5.5%	237; 10.3%	1,436; 16.7%
Avg. household size	2.32	2.46	2.46	2.37	2.49	2.31	2.27	2.38	2.31	2.63	2.37
Med. household inc.	34,250	40,100	34,051	52,289	37,778	41,094	35,564	35,938	33,261	38,922	37,400
Per capita income	16,760	18,932	16,014	24,942	18,519	20,704	19,177	17,096	16,580	13,942	21,505
% family poverty	7.9	4.1	9.8	2.7	6.8	6.7	7.7	7.4	5.7	12.7	7.8
% individual poverty	10.5	5.8	12.9	3.6	8.8	19.4	9.7	10.2	11.1	16.2	10.4
# Housing units 2000	8,864	3,557	7,385	3,818	6,663	2,865	3,500	4,352	7,868	2,724	10,743
# Housing units 1990	8,020	3,326	7,001	3,204	5,954	2,580	3,474	4,012	7,461	2,419	9,015
Change 1990-2000	844; 10.5%	231; 6.9%	384; 5.5%	614; 19.2%	709; 11.9%	285; 11.0%	26; 0.7%	340; 8.5%	407; 5.5%	305; 12.6%	1,728; 19.2%
% owner-occupied	63.8	70.2	58.7	73.2	61.9	50.3	67.1	65.2	64.5	56.0	59.7
% renter-occupied	36.2	29.8	41.3	26.8	38.1	49.7	32.9	34.8	35.5	44.0	40.3
% units built <1940	28.7	38.8	47.4	14.2	30.4	35.2	30.9	30.0	44.0	34.2	22.0
Med val. owner occ.	88,900	87,100	72,900	129,800	97,100	118,500	91,100	81,300	76,700	75,900	107,900
Median rent	461	485	440	519	478	505	488	396	434	461	489

Source: 2000 and 1990 Census of Population and Housing

Population Projections

It is important to project a community's population in order to prepare for the resulting increase in need for services and facilities. As stated previously, population change is the result of a number of factors, including the number of births and deaths, migration into and out of the community, and increases resulting from property annexation. Several existing sources help to develop a reasonable estimate of future population growth in Norwalk.

The Ohio Department of Development projects County-level population in five-year intervals to 2030. The following is the ODOD projection for Huron County:

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	59,490	60,830	62,040	62,610	63,430	63,690	64,020
# Increase		1,340	1,210	570	820	260	330
% from 2000		2.3	4.3	5.2	6.6	7.1	7.6

These numbers may seem low, but the methodology used to develop them is fairly sophisticated, and takes into account existing and projected population by age cohort. Analysis also takes into account the County's historical record and projection of births (which in turn is based on fertility rates by age cohort), deaths, and in- and out-migration. The following is a summary of those historical components of population change.

	1980-85	1985-90	1990-95	1995-2000	Total
Births	4,493	4,548	4,565	4,480	18,086
Deaths	2,271	2,449	2,440	2,554	9,714
Births-deaths	2,222	2,099	2,125	1,926	8,372

	90-91	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	90-00
Immigration	2,809	2,535	2,655	2,800	3,037	3,017	2,963	2,716	2,822	2,881	28,235
Outmigration	2,567	2,618	2,669	2,588	2,664	2,649	2,872	2,907	2,946	2,805	27,285
Net mig.	242	-83	-14	212	373	368	91	-191	-124	76	950

From the above tables, we can see that over the decade of the 1990's, births outnumbered deaths by 4,051, and immigration exceeded outmigration by 950, providing for a total net population increase of 5,001.

The Census Bureau has released population estimates by County for July 2004, in which Huron County's 2004 population is estimated at 60,404. This is very close to a straight-line interpolation of the above 2000 (actually, 1999) and 2005 Census estimates, which would estimate a 2004 population to be 60,606.

A demographic analysis and projection to 2009 has been provided by the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation. That analysis uses the base 2000 Census population total of 16,238 for Norwalk, and offers a 2004 estimate of 16,429 and a 2009 projection of 16,633. The age cohort analysis also indicates a boost in the City's median age from 34.2 years in 2000 to 34.74 in 2004 and 35.57 in 2009. Comparing this nine-year projection with the County-level projection, with some interpolation, reveals the following:

	2000-2005	2000-2010	2000-2020	2000-2030
County projection	+1,340, +2.3%	+2,550, +4.3%	+3,940, +6.6%	+4,530, +7.6%
City projection*	16,477, +1.5%	16,676, +2.7%	16,935, +4.29	17,040, +4.94%

*The City projection figures were multiplied by 5/4 and 10/9 to make the four-year estimate a five-year one and to make the 9-year projection a ten-year projection. It was found that the rate of increase for the City was approximately 0.65 times the County rate, so this .65 figure was applied to arrive at projections for 2020 and 2030.

The NEDC-provided projections also included the following projections, all of which may have implications regarding the direction of Norwalk's future growth and markets:

- The Hispanic population was projected to increase from 620 in 2000 to 862 in 2009, an increase of 39 percent over nine years.
- Average household income was projected to increase from \$46,907 in 2000 to \$52,767 in 2009, median household income from \$37,785 to \$42,390, and per capita income from \$18,570 to \$21,234.
- Total population within a five-mile radius of the center of Norwalk was projected to increase from 26,063 in 2002 to 26,807 in 2007, an increase of 744 or 2.9 percent over five years.
- 2000 population within a 5-mile radius of the center of Norwalk was estimated to be 25,653 in 2000; within a fifteen-mile radius, it was 116,937, and within thirty miles, it became 478,164. These areas were projected at 26,121, 117,502, and 478,402, respectively, in 2009.

Chapter 3



Community Character

Goals:

1. Preserve the rich and progressive history, cultural heritage, and traditional values and morals of the community.
2. Maintain the character of a stable, family-oriented, warm, and welcoming community in which to live, work, and retire.
3. Create an atmosphere of openness to appropriate and positive change that may blend the old and new.
4. Continue to be a supportive community, addressing the unique needs of such groups as seniors, youth, the unemployed, and the disabled.
5. Be open to honest self-evaluation.
6. Continue to value well-maintained, attractive structures, properties, neighborhoods, and public places.

Introduction:

Community character is the sum of all the attributes and assets that make a community unique, and that establish a sense of place for its residents. While some traits, such as “good work ethic”, are intangibles, others, such as an attractive central business district, are very visible.

To determine those attributes that contribute most to a community’s character, it is important to listen to the residents and members of the community, to hear what is most important to them. The planning team did this during the October 2004 Community Forums, and again in early 2005 during a series of focus groups. Here is a representative list of those attributes that the team heard most, and that make up the perceived character of Norwalk:

- Citizen involvement and volunteerism
- A family-friendly community with a “small town atmosphere”
- Historical attributes, including downtown and West Main Street

- Business involvement, a diverse business base, and an active Chamber of Commerce
- Importance of being a County seat, and a central location
- Diversity of housing stock; well-kept homes
- Solid and progressive institutions: schools, library, churches, hospital, Performing Arts Center and downtown theater, senior services, parks and recreation center

Forum participants were also asked to offer their vision for the future of Norwalk. Responses that related most to community character included these:

- Maintaining Norwalk's small town atmosphere while allowing for desired growth
- Preserving Norwalk's historic districts, neighborhoods, and buildings, especially on West Main Street and downtown, but reaching out to other areas such as properties on Benedict Avenue
- Maintaining Norwalk's strong interfaith community
- Keeping Norwalk a safe town
- Preserving the positive attitude of residents, and retaining younger residents and graduates with attractive career and lifestyle (recreation, housing) choices
- Maintaining Norwalk's labor force and their work ethic
- Making Norwalk a welcoming place for new residents and businesses

Finally, forum participants were asked to complete a survey form. Two questions related most directly to working toward a definition of community character. The first question was: "What basic belief or value do you hold as most important for the City of Norwalk"? The most frequent responses were:

- Small town atmosphere
- Safety
- Historic value
- Wholesome community to raise families; small town, family values
- Growth without sprawl; encourage structured growth
- Mix of urban and rural in a small town atmosphere
- People caring about one another
- Friendly to all ages: children, keeping young adults, seniors
- Retention of youth after college
- "Bring good jobs to this great work force"

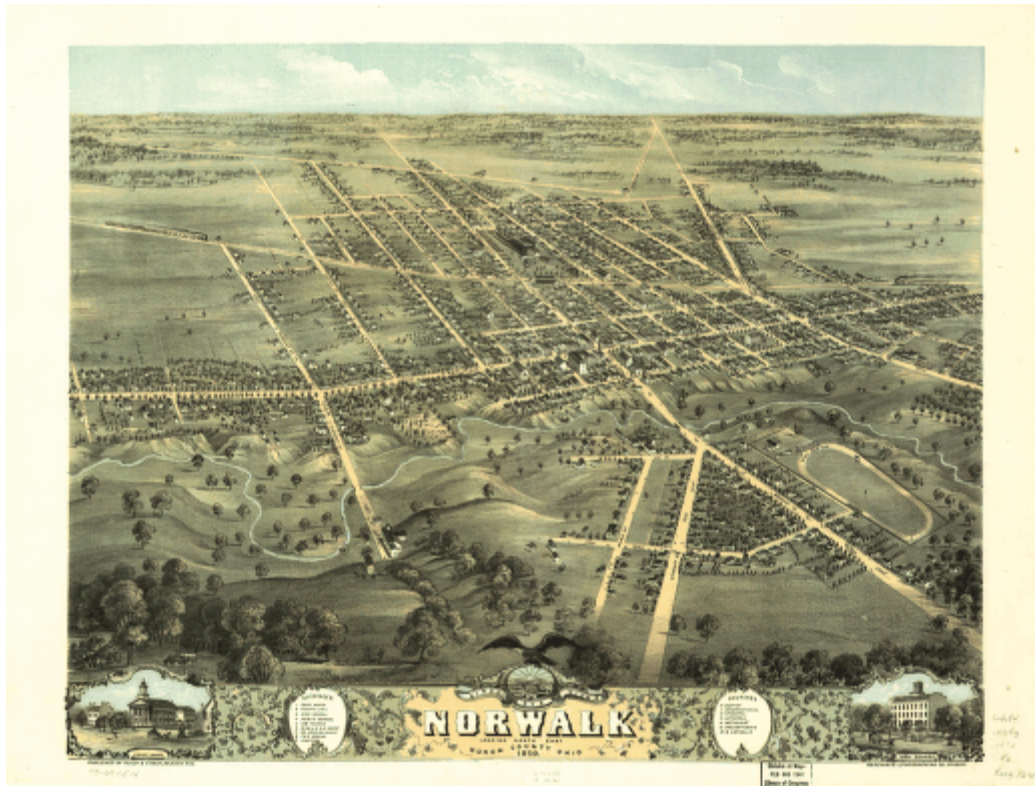
The other pertinent question asked for a listing of the City's most valuable assets or positive features, and respondents most frequently gave the following responses:

- History/historic district/need to preserve/strong heritage/architecture
- Small town atmosphere
- Community spirit/dedicated citizens/sense of community and concern
- Close-knit community and neighborhoods
- The people of the community

- Quaintness/appearance/beauty/cleanliness
- Norwalk's downtown
- Schools and education systems
- Park and recreation department/parks/reservoir/Ernsthausen Recreation Center
- Hospital and health care system
- Its location/proximity to larger cities
- Safety
- Leadership, involvement, team spirit, community working together/service organizations
- Beautiful trees and natural features
- Churches
- Performing Arts Center

Norwalk's Mayor has been quoted to say that the City's "focus is to maintain the heritage of the small town atmosphere we love while inviting and embracing growth." This concisely summarizes the input gathered from the public.

Community Character Shaped by History



Depiction of an aerial view of Norwalk from the south, in the late nineteenth century.

It is clear from the preceding summary of public input that Norwalk's history and its preserved historic buildings and other features are vitally important components in making up the community's character and "sense of place". Obviously, Norwalk owes much of what it is today to historical patterns of physical and cultural development. Norwalk indeed

has a rich history, and several trends should be noted in order to understand the Norwalk of today. Some of those trends and attributes include:

- Architectural diversity, as amply demonstrated by the housing lining the West Main Street historic district, but also by other housing throughout the City.
- Close ties to the automotive sector, reaching back to the Fisher Brothers and their Fisher Carriage Company founded in 1880, and the introduction of the Auto-Bug and Norwalk Motor Car Company in 1909-1910. Continued linkage with automobiles with the presence of a number of auto supplier industries, corporate office of the International Hot Road Association, and continued growth of Norwalk Raceway Park.
- Close ties to transportation, impacted by such factors as the Milan Canal, railroad activity including the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad existing from 1880 to the present, interurban electric rail systems including Norwalk's "Dinky", and the Norwalk Truck Line, once the largest independently owned trucking company in the world.
- Diversity in Norwalk's manufactured goods, ranging from sewing machines and organs and pianos to furniture.
- Newer ties to the highway construction industry, initiated through the formation of the A.J. Baltes Company, and with numerous spin-off and related businesses thriving today.
- A history of innovation and entrepreneurship, through the successful development of dozens of locally owned and operated businesses in all sectors.
- A history of civic involvement and philanthropy, perhaps best exemplified by the legacy of the Norwalk Truck Lines and its founding Ernsthause family, which has supported such major assets as the Ernsthause Recreation Center, a year round aquatic and recreational community center, and the state of the art Ernsthause Performing Arts Center located within Norwalk High School.

How Norwalk Appears to Others: Gateways, Corridors, Focal Points, Landmarks, and Other Indicators

Planners speak of certain physical elements and attributes that help define the character of a community by their mere presence and visibility. Among these are:

- Gateways, or the intersection of a major corridor with the City's edge that serves as the City's front door and provides a first impression.
- Corridors, or high profile, high traffic roadways where large numbers of residents and visitors are exposed to an image of the community through the built environment.
- Focal Points and Activity Centers, or those locations within the City that are defined by a large amount of activity and that serve as major points of communal exchange.
- Landmarks may be one of the above focal points, but they also serve as site-specific reference points for the community, promoting an image reflecting the community at large. A landmark creates a specific image for the community.
- The urban edge, where the City's built environment meets undeveloped land.
- Civic or public space, such as parks and common public areas in a City's downtown.

All of these attributes should be considered to determine what image is being projected about the City and its character.

Gateways

Norwalk is approached by a number of State and Federal highways. The most notable is U.S. Route 250, which bisects the City from the north and south. Among other highways, U.S. 250 carries tourist traffic from central Ohio to an expanding number of Sandusky area and Lake Erie tourist destinations.



Welcome to Norwalk! Left: Entering town from U.S. 250 North. Right: Driver's views driving north from U.S. 250 south.

The Ohio Department of Transportation's 2002 traffic counts noted a daily count of 14,230 vehicles (13,170 being passenger or small commercial) crossing the northern Norwalk corporation limit on U.S. 250, and 11,120 (10,470 passenger and small commercial) at the southeast City limits. The approaches to Norwalk along this highway are major gateways, and their surrounding land uses leave differing impressions. While the southern boundary is defined by a bypassing highway (U.S. 20 and SR 18), the impressive Fisher-Titus Medical Center campus, and larger, older housing, the northern boundary is followed by a large stretch of auto centric business franchises flanking the highway. From the south, Norwalk emerges from the farmlands that dot most of central Huron County. From the north, there is little transition from Milan to Norwalk, aside from a bridge crossing Rattlesnake Creek.

Because U.S. Route 20 bypasses Norwalk to the south, through traffic has little connectivity with the City, aside from glimpses of the new institutional developments south of Shady Lane and Norwalk's more southerly residential subdivisions. Besides U.S. 250, the most significant gateways are these:

SR 61, including exit from U.S. 20, at Norwalk's southwest corporate limit, climbs a slow rise, then becoming West Main Street. Like U.S. 250 south, this gateway presents a quick transition from farmland and low-density land use to a residential corridor and the sprawling Sycamore Hills subdivision to the south. ODOT recorded 6,150 daily vehicles on this section of SR 61 (5,870 being passenger or light commercial).

Similarly, SR 61 from the east transitions from farmland and low density (but growing) residential to the East Main Street residential corridor. Some 4,910 vehicles were recorded daily on SR 61 at the northeast Norwalk limit.

Business Routes 18 and 20 both enter Norwalk from the east, with the notable gateway being where they intersect the Route 20/18 bypass. In both cases, there is a notable change in land use from agricultural,



Welcome at Cleveland Rd.

low density residential, and occasional small business use to significantly more intensive land uses. Along SR 18 (Akron Road), the bypass is first followed by the set back Norwalk Furniture manufacturing facility; on U.S. 20 (Cleveland Road), one notices the modern David Price Metals and Maple City Ice facilities, as well as higher density condominiums to the south.

The following photographs present examples of the types of signage and landscaping that can be utilized to present a positive “first impression” and identity for the community.



Examples of gateway treatments

Corridors

Corridors can often help define a City and provide clues to its character. Norwalk’s notable corridors present a study in contrasts. Perhaps its most celebrated corridor is the West Main Street historic residential district, which features one of Ohio’s most eclectic collections of historically significant architectural styles. This district is featured annually with walking tours sponsored by the local Firelands Historic Council, and it is mentioned frequently when residents are asked to name the community’s architectural assets. To a lesser but important extent, East Main Street and Benedict Avenue as well present well-traveled corridors with a variety of notable residential architecture.

A second corridor, which does not set Norwalk significantly apart from other communities, is the Route 250 North commercial corridor that extends from Williams Street, adjacent to the County Administration Building, northerly to the City corporate limits. Nearly all frontage along this corridor is built out, with some property along the northern portion of the corridor having some potential for a change of land use as its location becomes increasingly attractive. In terms of sales and customer visits, this corridor has become the commercial center of Norwalk, with a mix of sit down and fast food restaurants, hotels, big box retailers (including a newly expanded Super Wal-Mart), and other retail and service establishments that are either free-standing or situated within small strip plazas. This is the ubiquitous commercial growth corridor that has emerged within nearly every City of Norwalk’s size over the past two decades. While it may leave the motorist with a message of convenience, prosperity, and disposable income within the Norwalk market area, it lacks any



Lots of information: Signs along U.S. 250 north

uniformity or evidence of planning or aesthetic consideration. Opportunity exists to create such a vision.

A very similar corridor exists in Seymour, Indiana, along a stretch of arterial roadway known as “the Mayonnaise Mile”. The photo to the left depicts the unplanned corridor as it existed previously, and the right photo shows how the visual impact of the corridor was enhanced through new roadway treatment, removal of overhead wires, installation of sidewalks for pedestrian access and safety, and signage regulations.



Seymour, Indiana's "Mayonnaise Mile", before and after changes

Norwalk is fortunate to have a well-maintained and revitalized central business district, and the downtown corridor defined by East and West Main Street extending from Milan/Woodlawn to Church Street is a vital component in anyone's imagery of the City. Unlike the 250 North corridor, careful planning has yielded a sense of place and uniformity in the downtown, assisted greatly by the streetscaping project completed in the mid 1990s. While Norwalk's downtown has lost much commercial activity to 250 North, it continues to house a number of niche commercial, restaurant/entertainment, office and service, and governmental entities, with the most identifiable “anchor” being the County Courthouse located at the “zero intersection” at Main and Benedict. Other highly significant features mentioned repeatedly in community forums and focus groups include the St. Paul church and school complex, other downtown churches, Towne and Country Theater, the Main Street School (formerly Norwalk High School) and the Norwalk Public Library.

A fourth corridor worth mention, characterized by an entirely different set of land uses, has emerged over the past ten to fifteen years. This is Shady Lane Drive, a relatively new connector roadway along Norwalk's south side, linking two major arterial roads, Benedict and Norwood Avenues. No assessment of Norwalk's viability and commitment to civic betterment is complete without a drive along Shady Lane Drive. In the course of less than a mile, the driver will see a newly expanded church housing its own school; the newly expanded Fisher-Titus Medical Center campus with its new signature Patient Pavilion tower, outlying ring road, and satellite medical offices; the Gerken Center, an active child day care center designed to serve all child day care needs; the Carriage House, an elderly housing facility providing for independent living; the historic civic structures along an older and tree-lined section of Shady Lane, housing Norwalk's Services for Aging facility and governmental offices; a public park area with an exercise trail and an impressive and inspiring memorial to the County's war veterans; the modern home of the Huron County Department of Job and

Family Services; the offices of the County Sheriff, adjoining County jail, and County emergency management office; and the newly completed Norwalk High School with its prominently situated Ernsthausen Performing Arts Center and adjoining sports fields. Nearby vacant or cultivated land south of Shady Lane Drive offers a hint that the potential for future development is great.

Focal Points and Activity Centers

Several locations within Norwalk generate significant activity and potential for personal interaction. These are highly important locations that will continue to help shape and define Norwalk's community character. They include the following:

- The central business district, "Main Street Norwalk": The function of downtown Norwalk is evolving from the days when it was reached by three interurban rail lines and housed the Glass Block, arguably "the most complete department store in Ohio". But while its retail businesses progressively court niche markets rather than the general public, it also retains its importance as a County center of government, financial institutions, insurance and legal services, and dining and entertainment. An active Main Street Norwalk organization, applying the nationally recognized Main Street principles and practices, is working to develop activities and events, as well as incentives for building and business owners, to increase downtown activity. County government is a major downtown employer, and other attractors include the Public Library, Towne and Country Theater, City offices in City Hall and the Municipal Court, Berry's Restaurant and other eateries, and more recently, Sheri's Coffee House (which attracts clients including a significant youth segment with live entertainment, meeting facilities, and Internet access).
- The U.S. 250 North corridor attracts considerable retail activity, with such destinations as an expanded Wal-Mart that is purportedly one of the largest in Ohio. The mix of retail, restaurant, and service centers draws considerable activity, and this trend is continuing with the recent development of such additional attractors as a cinema, housing, restaurant, and other mixed uses within the Norwalk Commons development.
- Norwalk's school facilities (both the Norwalk Catholic Schools and Norwalk City Schools) generate significant activity and, as is common in rural communities, act as community and neighborhood centers in sponsoring school plays, concerts, sports events, "fun fairs", and other activities that draw students, families, neighbors, and others. Within these school systems, major activity centers include Whitney Field (the shared football and track facility), the Ernsthausen Performing Arts Center co-located at Norwalk High School, and the St. Paul Convocation Center.
- The Ernsthausen Recreation Center is a major activity center drawing those with memberships as well as one-time users with daily passes. With such features as an indoor walking track and both indoor and outdoor pools, this center has seen increased activity over time.

- Other activity centers linked to Norwalk's park system include Bill Baines Park to the north, which is home to a very active organized softball program, and the Memorial Lake reservoir park, which draws somewhat regionally as an attractive place to fish, picnic, hold gatherings, hike, and enjoy an attractive setting.
- Fisher-Titus Medical Center has grown as a regional medical center, and this trend is expected to continue beyond the major expansion whose second phase is now being completed, as additional new technologies and medical specialists are added. With some 850 employees, Fisher-Titus is also Norwalk's largest employer.
- Other major employers that are generating significant activity include Norwalk Furniture Corporation, Mayflower Vehicle Systems, New Horizons Baking Co., Maple City Rubber Co., and the numerous occupants of the Firelands Industrial Park straddling the northern extension of Republic Street (Janesville-Sackner, American Coating Specialists, and EPIC Technologies, among others).
- In terms of recreational activity, the importance of Norwalk Raceway Park cannot be overlooked as a generator of activity for tens of thousands of drag racing fans over the course of its racing season. For several extended weekends each summer, NRP serves as the City's primary attractor of people from outside the Norwalk area, helping fill hotels and restaurants. The existence of NRP and its annual promotion of the "Thunder in the



Streets" event in downtown Norwalk, as well as the corporate offices of the International Hot Rod Association in Norwalk, contribute to the image of Norwalk as a center for motor sports, linking at least psychologically with its status as a location for a number of automotive parts suppliers.

View of the stands at Norwalk Raceway Park

Landmarks

What specific images come to mind when residents are asked to identify prominent Norwalk landmarks? The following are suggested landmarks with which residents may feel the strongest attachment, for a variety of reasons:

- The Huron County Courthouse, a prominent feature within the downtown streetscape;
- The Norwalk Public Library, a prime example of Midwestern Carnegie libraries.
- Norwalk and St. Paul High Schools, and for many nostalgic alumni, the former Norwalk High School, now serving fifth and sixth graders as the Main Street School.
- Fisher-Titus Medical Center
- Norwalk Raceway Park
- The West Main Street historical residential district



Huron County Courthouse

Norwalk's Urban Edge

In the minds of residents, Norwalk's current boundary to the east and south can well be defined by the U.S. Route 20 bypass. For the most part, urban land uses, including some of Norwalk's newest residential subdivisions, exist "inside" the bypass, and a rural, agricultural, and low-density residential use of land defines most of the property "outside" the bypass.

The urban edge is less well defined to the north, where commercial uses have extended to the northern border of the City, stopping only at the physical boundary posed by the Rattlesnake Creek corridor. It is expected that the urban edge will continue to push to the north, northwest, and somewhat northeast, as agricultural and vacant land is converted over time to a variety of uses. This expectation is based in part upon the recent development of condominium and single family housing along Westwind Drive.



Pushing the Edge: Condominiums and single-family houses near Westwind Drive.

Civic and Public Space

Norwalk is well endowed with a variety of public spaces. These vary from the “pocket parks” (such as Bresson and Pohl Parks) in downtown Norwalk, to the vast acreage of Memorial Lake Park.

Norwalk benefits from a good mix of public spaces. While the downtown area does not have a notable public “square”, the courthouse setback provides some public space, and two small pocket parks, Bresson and Pohl, provide a break between buildings. The entire central business district is a well-used public space, with the addition of attractive lighting and street furniture added during the 1990’s. The downtown performs a number of typical civic functions, including housing a number of County offices, City Hall, the post office, and the public library. Other civic and governmental functions are based along Shady Lane, and at the County Administration Building on Milan Avenue on Norwalk’s north side.

A number of neighborhood parks are interspersed within the City’s neighborhoods, some of which (Stoutenburg on Norwood Ave., Elm Street, Pleasant Street) are highly visible from well-traveled arterial or connector routes. As the City has grown, relative ease of accessibility to these parks varies by neighborhood. Memorial Lake Park offers an opportunity to enjoy a large park setting with intact natural features, including boat and fishing access to the three reservoirs and wooded walking trails. Also nearby, Huron County maintains a small wooded “nature lab” with a loop trail on South Norwalk Road.



Elm Street’s neighborhood park.

In addition to the City’s park system, civic space exists along Shady Lane, with a variety of public use buildings, and with the prominent location of County parkland and the veterans’ memorial.



The Veterans’ Memorial on Shady Lane.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategies linked to community character seek to preserve and strengthen those attributes that have been identified as of most critical importance in maintaining Norwalk's sense of place and identity.

Strategy 1. *Preserve and market Norwalk's central business district, West Main Street district, and other historic neighborhoods that project a unique and positive image.*

1. Investigate the relative benefit of transforming Norwalk's Architectural Review Board into a Norwalk Historic District Commission, charged with promoting Citywide preservation and beautification, and enhancing the City's historic tradition. This review board enforces the architectural standards set forth by City legislation, on a case-by-case basis. Its purpose will be best served by providing guidance prior to and during any proposed project involving alteration of historic properties, rather than as a policing entity after alterations have been made. This Board can also serve a positive purpose by recognizing and rewarding outstanding public and private beautification efforts. Although the Architectural Review Board already has a roster of contributing members, future members may be selected from the City administration or legislature, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Firelands Museum and Historical Society, as well as involving others with historical, architectural, or other community expertise. Develop new structure, goals, and procedures, by 2009.
2. Review and revise Norwalk's Architectural Review Guidelines by researching the feasibility of, and then (if feasible) developing a Historic Area and Building Ordinance that ensures the preservation and enhancement of designated historic areas and properties. This ordinance should cover renovation and construction of buildings, signage, and parking restrictions in historically sensitive areas. Wherever possible, such an ordinance should provide incentives for preservation, rather than prohibitive regulations and penalties. Developing such an ordinance and making it effective will take considerable time and discussion, in order to balance preservation and development forces to reflect Norwalk's true character and commitment to preservation, while maintaining a close watch over the historic integrity of historic properties and areas. Many of the relevant issues, such as the boundaries of a downtown historic district, and the degree to which development should be restricted, are unresolved, and will require further study before a revision to the Guidelines is finalized. Involve the Architectural Review Board and City administration, Main Street Norwalk, and the Chamber, and possibly additional interested parties. Put in place by 2009.
3. Continue to increase the number of historic property designations within the City, with consistent application of criteria for designation, with special consideration to expansion



of historic areas to include significant properties along major corridors. These areas may include East Main Street from the central business district to Old State Road, West Main Street extended to the western City limits, Benedict Avenue from the central business district to Executive Drive, and Whittlesey Avenue north to League Street. Initiate within one year (by 2008) and ongoing. Involve Main Street Norwalk, Historical Society, and City administration.

4. Increase public awareness of historic preservation through special programs of education. Develop annual beautification and preservation awards to recognize projects and properties that have contributed to the City's overall image of preservation. Publicize these awards, which can be given at a public function such as the annual Chamber dinner. Local and area newspapers and other media (radio, public access cable) can recognize and publicize these and other preservation efforts. Initiate within two years (by 2009); present awards annually thereafter.
5. Establish more formalized partnerships with business and community organizations that support preservation efforts, such as the Firelands Museum and the Firelands Historical Society, and area and State historical preservation commissions. This is a continuous activity.
6. Ensure that policies and decisions on community growth and development respect the City's historical heritage and enhance overall community viability. This will be a responsibility of the Planning Commission, as well as other decision makers and entities, and is an ongoing activity.
7. Preservation and recognition of visible signs of Norwalk's heritage should occur on several fronts. First, historic preservation and heritage awareness should become a large component of any tourism effort maintained by the Chamber, Main Street Norwalk, or any future entity focused on tourism. Ensure that historic properties and attributes are featured prominently in any tourism-related publications. Similarly, the City of Norwalk's website should promote *historic* Main Street Norwalk and its historic housing stock, as well as major local industries and area attractions. At Norwalk's gateways, attractive and highly visible City Limits signs of professional quality should promote Norwalk's historic heritage and traditions. These elements should be in place within one year (2008), with the tourism focus in place as a priority by 2009.
8. Encourage expansion and use of the Firelands Museum and the Laning Research Center. This facility, the oldest continuously operating museum in Ohio, has fallen prey to national trends of diminished museum patronage. Undertake efforts to market the museum and link it to the overall interest among City residents in Norwalk's historic preservation. Bring the museum – and its contents – to greater public awareness by using volunteered storefronts as displays of artifacts. Continue the practice of encouraging and facilitating programs that expose and educate children at the museum. The adjacent properties of the Laning Research Center, Firelands Museum, and Norwalk Public Library collectively offer the potential of a significant research “complex”. This can be an ongoing activity involving the mentioned facilities and their organizations.

9. Focus on specific historic properties through the increased planning of “old house tours” and inclusion of video tours on public access television. Implement within two years (by 2009).

Strategy 2: *Support and strengthen Norwalk’s program to welcome and “network” new residents and community members*

1. Fisher-Titus Medical Center has initiated a new program based on a “Welcome Wagon” model, to welcome new families to Norwalk, provide important community information, and allow for interaction with others through planned activities. Other entities, including the City administration, local businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, local churches, and Main Street Norwalk, should work to maintain and develop this program. It is likely that such a program will require dedicated staff time, possibly provided by an existing FTMC or Chamber employee, but efforts should be made to compensate that employee for project time, and to train him or her about community information, event planning, and network development. Incorporate a method to include information about local businesses and industries as well as public services, entertainment and recreation venues, and local churches. For this reason, Chamber involvement is important. This program is already in place and its growth will take place on an ongoing basis.

Strategy 3: *Further establish a one-stop “Welcome Center” at the Chamber of Commerce office*

1. Norwalk’s Chamber of Commerce already has welcome packets, and many visitors call on the Chamber to gather information about the community, its businesses, and its amenities. The Chamber’s office is centrally located downtown, and highly visible from the main intersection of Benedict/Whittlesey and Main Streets. This office also houses the United Fund, Norwalk Economic Development Corporation, the Main Street Norwalk program, and Norwalk Community Development Corporation, and thus is truly a “one stop shop” providing information on Norwalk businesses and services. It is logical to further publicize the Chamber office as a “Welcome Center” offering enhanced information packets with pertinent information in folders for new and prospective residents. Such detailed information as refuse pickup schedules, water rates and billing, school locations, hospital and medical services, local utility billing procedures, current information on local churches and their facilities and programs, and a map of the City should be included. The importance of historical properties and amenities can be reinforced through their representation in the information packets. More detailed information on each topic could also be available with separate and more detailed information for those who are particularly interested. Volunteers could be solicited to assist in this activity. Enhanced information should be developed and available within a year (2008), then updated annually.



Strategy 4: *Update the City's website and maintain the network of linked websites to reflect the City's character, cherished attributes, and commitment to balancing growth with preservation.*

1. People, households, and businesses that are considering Norwalk for a new location increasingly use the Internet to learn about their prospective new home. It is important for Norwalk's website, or several closely linked websites, to reflect the positive character and attributes of the community, as well as presenting the salient facts sought by the web surfer. Web sites should never be considered as static, completed products, but should rather be treated as dynamic sites in need of frequent updating. If one site must necessarily be maintained without such change, provision should be made for an alternative, but well linked, site that can be modified to reflect seasonal changes, coming events, and recent accomplishments. As an example of a dynamic website, a web cam could be focused on an important new civic building under construction to graphically document progress. The City should provide codified ordinances over the website, as well as such important documents as this Comprehensive Plan.

Information should be gathered from such important sources as the school systems, hospital, City Hall and County government, utility providers, churches, and media. Care should be taken to provide some continuity between linked sites through a shared logo or header.

The City's schools and the computer knowledge held by their students should be tapped to develop websites and update information. This could be framed as a Civics project, enabling the City to reduce web development and maintenance costs while giving the students insight into the functions of local government and civic organizations. Further, the services of the schools and their computer students on the website is one more positive aspect of community coordination to promote!

It is suggested that the following sites, minimally, be closely linked and interrelated: City of Norwalk, Chamber of Commerce, Norwalk Economic Development Corporation, Huron County, Norwalk City Schools, Norwalk Catholic Schools, Fisher-Titus Medical Center, Huron County government.

Interlinked websites involving the above entities and the use of high school students should be implemented within two years (2009), and updated continuously.

Strategy 5: *Maintain Norwalk's senior services*

1. Develop an inventory of all services and facilities focusing on the area's elderly population. Include information that promotes Norwalk as an attractive location for seniors. This information may include data on low-maintenance housing and condominium developments, distance to shopping and services, and availability of entertainment and health services, all of which make Norwalk a prime location for comfortable "aging in place". Publish as a user-friendly directory. Make sure the information is available in the Welcome Center at the Chamber of Commerce office, and that it is displayed on the Norwalk website, with links to senior-specific websites. Include Senior Services events on the community calendar portion of the website.

Extend invitations for seniors to volunteer at the welcome center. This should be initiated within one year. See the Community Services chapter for more recommendations linked to senior services.

2. Include Senior representation in making recommendations for future programs in the City. Include seniors on City boards or resource panels. This activity should be ongoing.
3. Consistently consider the needs and wants of the growing elderly segment of Norwalk's population, but be mindful of the diversity and varied interests within that 60+ segment. For example, recreation programming should include passive activities and facilities such as walking or biking trails, and intergenerational activities that encourage socialization. The timeframe is ongoing.

Strategy 6: *Visible public support of Norwalk's public service programs*

1. The community continues to have distinct groups of citizens whose special needs must be addressed to support them in a satisfactory lifestyle. Continue to give support and assistance to such entities as service clubs, clothing and food banks, and several senior citizens' services. Information is available on an information and referral basis through the United Fund office, which can also be a part of the one-stop Welcome Center co-located at the Chamber office, and on the linked network of web sites. Service clubs should be kept aware of support groups in need of physical and financial assistance.

The City government can continue to show support for these efforts by providing resolutions of support and other public announcements. Officials should also continue to research and apply for project funding through governmental and foundation grants. Service agencies and their mission and work could also be profiled by local media. These action steps can be taken over the next year.

2. Ensure that service facilities are located at sites that are compatible with adjacent uses, and that are easily accessible by their participants. For example, Norwalk's clothing bank is not currently in an optimal location, but alternative sites are limited by rent budgets. A community-wide effort should be enlisted to maximize the outside (grant, in-kind, fundraising) resources that can be dedicated to such projects as a newly located or co-located (with a compatible or complementary service) clothing bank. The timeframe for this activity is ongoing.

See the Community Services chapter for more information. Also, the previous discussion concerning corridors and gateways, while related to community character, is addressed in terms of recommendations in the Transportation chapter of this document. Many of the landmark buildings are further addressed in the Community Facilities chapter.

Chapter 4



Memorial Lake Park

Natural Resources

Goals:

1. Create and enforce regulations and codes that protect and maintain natural resources and reflect a responsible community that is a good steward of its environment, such as tree ordinances and use of an arborist, soil runoff provisions, wetlands provisions, and others.
2. Promote and support public access to and enjoyment of natural resources.
3. Develop sufficient natural and passive parks and recreation facilities for the size of the community, including trails for biking and running.
4. Promote and implement voluntary efforts to clean up blighted, littered, or polluted areas, and solicit outside assistance including grants to help in costly clean-up efforts.
5. Provide a perpetual supply of sufficient water to support the future population and business base.

Introduction:

A community's natural resources and features are among its most valuable assets. It is important for comprehensive planning to balance planned future development with the preservation of those resources that are valued. While some resources are treasured for their aesthetic beauty, others, such as the supply of drinking water, are important for their contribution to community health and well-being.

During the community forums and focus groups, residents expressed an interest in the preservation of a number of natural resources. Among their comments were the following:

- Additional green space is necessary; green spaces in all developments
- Green space is an important part of small town atmosphere. People look for and expect it. But it is hard to set aside land in a subdivision. It drives up costs per usable acre. Need to use some ratio of land, expecting more for larger subdivisions
- Continuity of greenery; green space in downtown area; greenscaping of Whittlesey Avenue from City Hall to League
- Tree replacement-keep trees; plant additional maple trees; plant trees along U.S. 250 North
- Develop Norwalk Creek as a riverwalk; clean up Norwalk Creek

- Balance growth and preservation
- Beautification projects as you enter the City (gateways)
- Recognize the reservoir as a major community asset

The following narrative describes the physical, natural, and environmental attributes of the City of Norwalk that must be considered within the framework of a comprehensive plan. In some cases, these attributes represent positive aspects of the community that should be preserved for aesthetic value. In other cases, they present barriers to development and construction (such as wetlands, flood plains, or poorly drained soils) that should be heeded.

Flood Plains

Norwalk Creek and adjacent lands present the only areas of 100-year flooding in Norwalk (designated “Zone A”). Portions of the creek consist of areas between the limits of a 100-year flood and a 500-year flood or areas subject to 100-year flooding with average depths of less than one foot or where the contributing drainage area is less than one square mile (designated “Zone B”). This flood zone corridor extends for virtually the entire length of the City, east to west, from the spillway of the Memorial Reservoir to its farthest point downstream, west of the Sycamore Hills subdivision. Norwalk Creek flooded significantly on July 4, 1969, after a large rainfall caused a breach of the Memorial Reservoir. Today, the creek provides a number of public viewing opportunities, specifically at Bremser Park on Elm Street and at the Jaycees Park and adjacent sledding hill (“Hogan’s Hill”) on Pleasant Street. The demarked flood plain along this riparian corridor ranges from approximately 200 to 800 feet in width.



Norwalk Creek at Jaycees Park

Another “Zone B” exists just inside City limits, north of Washington Street and just east of its intersection with State Street, and extending northwesterly along a corridor parallel to and approximately 700 feet west of Whittlesey Avenue. Areas of minimal flooding (“Zone C”) are noted in several areas within Norwalk: north of the Upper Reservoir in the vicinity of the W&LE railroad tracks; south of Christie Avenue in the vicinity of the high school soccer field; in the westernmost portion of the City north of U.S. 20 (in the vicinity of the Big Lots store); and just west of Cline Street between Glover Avenue (to the north) and Fruen Street (to the south).

Wetlands

The National Wetlands Inventory of the United States Department of the Interior has identified a number of wetlands within Norwalk, mainly around the relatively undeveloped periphery of the City. They are located, in general, to the west along the eastern Huron River branch, along Norwalk Creek from the reservoir to Elm Street, and within the Norwalk reservoir system itself. None of these wetlands pose any restriction on development, as they are located



Norwalk Creek at Elm St.

in areas that are primarily not capable of or likely to be planned for development.

Soils

Norwalk, like most of Huron County, is on till plains, located in the Central Lowland Physiographic Province, which includes most of the glaciated parts of Ohio. Several glaciers formerly covered Huron County, including the Late Wisconsinian Glacier, which occurred 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. Late Wisconsinian drift covered all the material deposited by previous glaciers, underlain by shale and sandstone. Most of the till plains, including most of Norwalk, are nearly level to gently rolling, and some areas along streams are steeper. Glacial deposits range from less than two feet to more than 150 feet in thickness. Available water supplies occur as reservoirs in coarse grained lenses and stratified layers of sand and gravel.

Norwalk is located at the intersection of three major soil groups that are typical of deep and moderately deep soils of upland till plains and lake plains. These groups include the Bennington-Cardington-Condit association in the southwest portion of the City; the Kibbie-Tuscola association in the eastern portion; and the Chili-Oshtempo-Haskins association to the north.

Predominant soil types in Norwalk and its potential growth areas are listed below. Although many of the general soil types found in Norwalk exhibit “severe constraints” to development, that fact alone does not necessarily preclude such development. Often, mitigating steps such as soil stabilization or drainage must be taken to develop the property safely.

BgA: Bennington; vicinity of fairgrounds, airport, and Norwalk Raceway Park; severe limitations to construction due to wetness.

Cm: Colwood; western edge of Norwalk; severe limitations to construction due to ponding.

CoB: Condit; south of Norwalk, severe limitations to construction due to ponding.

HkA: Haskins; along Route 20 east of the airport; severe limitations due to wetness.

JtA: Jimtown; south side of developed Norwalk, along Benedict Avenue; severe limitations due to wetness.

KbA: Kibbie; north of Norwalk in likely growth areas; severe limitations due to wetness.

OsB: Oshtempo; east side of developed Norwalk; slight limitations to construction.

TuA and TuB: Tuscola; north side of Norwalk and its east side along routes 18 and 20; severe limitations for excavations and dwellings with basements due to wetness; moderate limitations for dwellings without basements and commercial buildings; wetness and shrink-swell characteristics.

Views/Viewsheds

Because of its level to gently rolling topography, Norwalk does not lend itself to a large number of views and vistas that need to be preserved. The best such views occur primarily along the Norwalk Creek, as one encounters it, and in the preserved scenery of the sprawling Norwalk Memorial Reservoir and park.



Memorial Lake Park, with resident waterfowl

Care should be taken to protect the existing views of the creek and its surrounding vegetation, and of other attractive natural areas, from inappropriate development.

Tree Canopy/Urban Forestry

Norwalk is known as “The Maple City”, and for good reason, beginning with founder Platt Benedict planting maple trees along Main Street in 1830. The predominance of mature trees lining Norwalk’s streets and thoroughfares contributes to the overall attraction of the community. Norwalk has an active Tree Board that determines which trees pose dangers and require trimming or removal. At the property owner’s request, trees on City property (tree lawns) can be planted with one of several selected species.

The Park and Recreation Department has initiated a successful program where community members can contribute to the planting of trees in parks and public places to commemorate a loved one. This program has proven successful. It is expected that Norwalk’s tree programs, and its status as a “Tree City USA”, will continue.

Balance Between Development and Protection of the Environment

Participants in the community forums, focus groups, and resource panels repeatedly cited the need to preserve Norwalk’s natural resources that contribute to the small town feel of the community. This includes a need for preservation and, in growth areas, the set-aside of open space and green space. Elsewhere in this plan, methods by which new subdivisions and property owners can contribute to open space are discussed. It is also suggested that developers consider, and the City provide incentives for, methods of development that can lead to designated common space within those developments, achieved through clustering of housing units and other methods of “conservation design”.

The main principles of conservation design consist of: flexibility in site design and lot size; protection and management of natural areas; reduction of impervious surface areas; and sustainable storm water management. Efficient use of conservation design principles can produce significant reductions in construction and infrastructure costs, reduction in the costs

of municipal storm water management, and the creation of connections to existing natural areas, open space, greenways, and trails. Culturally significant properties that should be preserved can be included side by side with those natural areas to be preserved when undertaking conservation design practices. Conservation subdivision design can be employed by following a process that includes identification of significant resources existing on a proposed development site, identifying potential development areas (the “building envelope”) and locating housing sites within the development envelopes, designing a street and trail network to link the homes, and adding lot lines, ensuring that each lot meets minimum lot requirements, but allowing for reduction of standards (such as smaller setbacks) for lots. House lots can be enhanced by designing direct views and access to open space within the subdivision.

Conservation developments usually cluster smaller lots on a tract of land, instead of distributing them over the entire acreage in a traditional style. With smaller lots, these higher-density residential developments tend to be more cost-effective to construct and serve with the necessary infrastructure. Norwalk’s subdivision review process allows for the conception of such a Planned Unit Development. However, the evolution and success of such a design in Norwalk will be dependent largely upon a determination that a significant market exists that will prefer higher density, smaller lots, but access and proximity to open space. Evidence exists in planning literature that buyers appreciate the value of a smaller lot with nearby permanently protected open space.

Norwalk’s Park System

The City of Norwalk has developed a Citywide park system that offers a variety of park settings and facilities. This system provides a park within walking distance of much of the City, although some of the newer, peripheral subdivisions are farther removed from the park locations. This challenge will be intensified as the City grows and additional housing is constructed. Existing parks include the following, listed by classification:

Type of Park	Name	Location	Acres	Facilities
Mini Park	Bresson	W. Main St.	0.12	Benches, fountain
Mini-Park	Pohl	E. Main St.	0.12	Benches
Mini-Park	Workers’ Memorial	League St.	0.25	Benches
Neighborhood	Bremser	E. Elm St.	1.13	Ballfield, playground
Neighborhood	Mead Park	Huron St.	1.73	Playground, ball field
Neighborhood	Stokely	Northwest St.	0.68	Playground
Neighborhood	Stoutenberg	Norwood Ave.	1.31	Playground, basketball
Community	Baines	Plank Rd.	14.68	Ballfields, shelter, concessions
Community	Bishman	Republic St.	10.5	Ballfield, playground, shelter
Community	Jaycees/Hogan’s	Elm/Pleasant	5.64	Tennis, playground, shelter, sledding hill

Type of Park	Name	Location	Acres	Facilities
Community	Lais Pond	Elm/Pleasant	--	Ice skating
Community	McGuan	Hester St.	6.86	Ballfields, concessions
Community	St. Mary's	St. Mary's St.	0.37	Skateboarding park (planned)
Regional	Veterans Memorial	Old State Rd.	322.74	Shelters, fishing piers, playgrounds, hiking/walking

Adding the reported acreage, the City has about a half-acre in three mini-parks, 4.85 acres in four neighborhood parks that largely serve nearby residences, 38.05 acres in six community parks or outdoor facilities that provide for Citywide needs, and 322.74 acres at Memorial Lake Park. Additional grounds and facilities are provided by the Norwalk and St. Paul school systems.

The Huron County Youth Soccer Club utilizes a variety of private and school properties for soccer venues, including land owned by Norwalk City Schools (notably the Middle School fields), Fisher-Titus Medical Center, and St. Peter Lutheran Church. An independent baseball program for youth, the Lefty Grove league, also operates within Norwalk, using ball fields on private property behind the VFW Post on Milan Avenue.

While the St. Mary Street Skate Park is listed in the above table, it is currently in disuse while a private nonprofit entity is raising funds to equip and prepare the park. Another specialized, private outdoor facility is a BMX bicycle track that is located south of the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services offices on Shady Lane.

Strategies and Recommendations:

Strategy 1: *Protect and maintain natural resources through creation and enforcement of regulations and codes, and through proper planning.*

1. As discussed elsewhere in this plan, a method must be developed to provide revenues for the acquisition of land for new neighborhood parks and greenways. The existing park system in Norwalk is fairly effective in bringing public park space within walking distance of most neighborhoods and homes. However, as the City's neighborhoods radiate outwards, with such new subdivisions as Executive Estates and Fairwood to the south, and Westwind Drive and Hunters Glen to the north, and Sycamore Hills to the west, the need for new park space toward the City's edges will become increasingly evident. Perhaps the most equitable way to provide financial support for the acquisition of new park space, as well as ongoing operational funding, is through a one-time assessment upon the sale of new residential lots. That assessment has historically been a relatively negligible fifty dollars. In other communities, the assessment may be as much as \$2,000. Current discussion proposes a fee of \$500 to be charged to the developer of new residential housing units, who, in effect, will pass the cost on to the buyer of the new home. It may be possible to make this charge somewhat proportionate to the value of the lot or the house under construction, so as to not unduly inhibit construction of lower cost homes. This charge would be earmarked for new parkland or green space acquisition, development, and maintenance. If sufficient

funds are collected, they could be used for land banking of desirable property for future park and public space development. It is recommended that the City determine whether new park acquisition can be reasonably be accomplished with such a fee structure and, if so, that a new fee structure be implemented within two years (by 2009).

2. In the case of larger planned developments, the administration should work with the developer to determine the feasibility of the designation of land within the development as a park or green space. Such land donation should be considered, when feasible, in lieu of the financial developer fee described in the previous recommendation. Also the conservation design practices described previously should be encouraged in order to increase the attractiveness of park and green space development by residential developers. Examine Norwalk's zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure that they provide for creative use of conservation practices such as clustering and planned unit developments. The City should examine alternative ways to create incentives for developers to allow for green space. This is an ongoing activity, involving the planning commission, administration, and Council.
3. Ensure the community's awareness of environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands and flood zones, by controlling development through zoning and other means. Maintain updated maps of flood plains and wetlands for public examination. This is an ongoing activity, involving the zoning and building office, where such maps can be housed.
4. Preserve existing scenery and views in such areas as parks and green space throughout the City.
 - a. Landscaping should be designed and maintained at critical focal points such as "gateway" approaches to the community (as discussed in the "Community Character" chapter). Gateway development should be completed by 2008, and should include elements of "branding" to reinforce the sense of place within Norwalk. Gateways and other highly visible properties should be maintained on negotiated easements or property under municipal ownership. Civic and garden clubs can be encouraged to participate in the development and maintenance of such landscaping.
 - b. Develop a system to reward and recognize best practices by private homeowners and business/commercial property owners, with the awarding of special recognition for items that may include "front yard of the year" or "commercial landscape of the year".
5. Norwalk's current raw water supply derives from the inflow of Norwalk Creek into the City's reservoir system. The quality of this water source is subject to the practices of landowners within the watershed that feeds the reservoir. Especially important are the practices of landowners whose property lies adjacent to the creek. While this watershed is nearly all outside Norwalk's municipal bounds, the City should encourage efforts of County officials, including the Huron Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the County's Emergency Management Agency, to encourage and provide incentives for

“best management practices”, including the planting of filter strips and buffer zones along the riparian corridor, conservation tillage, animal waste management, and other practices. Financial incentive programs exist through the SWCD to encourage such practices by property owners. The City should support and encourage the use of such programs by area property owners. This is an ongoing activity.

6. Ensure the presence of mature trees in Norwalk by undertaking the following ongoing activities:
 - a. Continue the ongoing work of the Tree Board for removal of deteriorated trees and the encouragement and facilitation of a tree replacement program, which typically provides replacement trees on tree lawns in rights-of-way fronting residential properties.
 - b. Publicize the Park Department’s Tree Memorial program, where community members can memorialize a deceased friend or family member by donating a tree to be planted in a City park or public space with a commemorative plaque.
 - c. Encourage best management practices during construction to ensure that trees designated for preservation will survive construction. Encourage site designs that reduce or minimize tree loss.
7. The City of Norwalk and the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation have taken a proactive approach to Brownfields identification, mitigation, and development. Activities have centered on the former Norwalk Foundry property, and an environmental assessment of that property is underway, funded by a grant from the Clean Ohio Assistance Fund. The City’s efforts to identify Brownfields, obtain resources to assess their environmental status, and prepare them for redevelopment should continue. It is recommended that a task force be appointed by the City to assist in the identification and inventorying of additional Brownfield sites within the City, and, with professional assistance, to assess the development potential, environmental status, and feasibility of clean-up measures to bring those sites into productive use. With the receipt of an EPA grant in 2006, the task force should be appointed in the near future, and their work should be considered ongoing for a long term.
8. Develop regulations that require developers to landscape retention ponds. Safety measures, such as fencing in many cases, must still be undertaken, but the visual impact of a retention pond can be positively influenced by the addition of rudimentary landscaping, such as tree plantings or introduction of wildflowers. Implement within one year (2008).

Strategy 2: *Promote and support public access to and enjoyment of natural resources, including provision of a perpetual supply of water.*

1. Implement steps to complete planned improvements that increase the usefulness of the Memorial Lake Park area, by:
 - a. Planning and constructing an amphitheater within the Memorial Lake Park area as a venue for concerts and other cultural, educational, or other public events. Site the amphitheater with consideration for adequate parking and ingress/egress, and sight lines from the amphitheater seating (i.e. facing the water without sun glare).

- b. Completing the paved walking trail around Memorial Lake.
 - c. Developing additional concepts for the diverse use of the reservoir park, based on public interest.
2. Continue to examine options for the provision of a perpetual supply of water to supplement the collection of surface water from the Norwalk Creek watershed. Over the next two years, alternative sources of raw or, more likely, treated water should be analyzed. Consider the cost of infrastructure to extend outside distribution lines and connect them to Norwalk's system, as well as rate and fee structures of the alternate sources. Known potential sources include Erie County and/or the City of Sandusky, and the Northern Ohio Rural Water Authority. See the Infrastructure chapter for further discussion.
3. Encourage the potential use of land trusts to accept land for preservation through donation or acquisition. This practice is more likely to be followed in rural, agricultural, and undeveloped land outside the City limits. Such organizations as the Firelands Conservancy can be contacted and utilized to facilitate the process. To preserve the public's enjoyment of the reservoir park and its natural areas, a focus should be placed on the preservation of adjacent and nearby properties to the east and south of the reservoir. Such preservation methods, or the possible use of a purchase of development rights, may be a long-term objective, taking ten years or more to accomplish.
4. Encourage the awareness, utilization, and enjoyment of nearby accessible natural areas, such as the Land Lab property owned and maintained by Huron County on South Norwalk Road. This is an ongoing activity.
5. Wherever appropriate, design or implement steps to minimize the environmental effects of a land use upon sensitive neighboring properties. This may include designing parking lot lighting to reduce glare on adjacent properties, planting trees and other vegetation to form natural sound and visual barriers, and taking steps to reduce the noise levels created by certain land uses.

Strategy 3: *Develop sufficient natural and passive parks and recreation facilities for the size of the community.*

The City's existing park system was described immediately preceding the listing of strategies and recommendations. General consensus is that neighborhood parks are serving existing neighborhoods well, and many community-wide needs are met through the community parks and Memorial Lake Park. Some community needs, however, are bringing the park system to full capacity, including a burgeoning softball schedule involving several leagues. Further, the Huron County Youth Soccer Club is seeking a single site for the development of enough soccer fields at one location to serve the needs of the entire league.

1. The City should set a long-term goal that every neighborhood should have a community park within walking distance. Communication is necessary between the planning commission, those who undertake land acquisition through purchase or gifting, the Park Board, and others in the administration, to determine plans and priorities, especially for

high-density neighborhoods without reasonable walking access to a neighborhood or community park. This should be an ongoing activity, incorporating a definitive study of high-needs areas for park accessibility.

2. The City's system of "paper" streets and alleyways should be examined in light of the potential for midblock and interior walkways and greenways. It may be possible to connect streets and destinations through a network of well-planned walkways. Where the City does not already own property, easements could be obtained with property owners, subject to financial feasibility. An example of such a system is the informal pathway from Norwalk High School, through the soccer field complex, across Christie Avenue and through the Middle School property, to either Benedict Avenue to the east, or through a mid-block path to Stoutenberg Avenue to the north.
3. As described in more detail in the Quality of Life chapter, connect Norwalk to other communities through trails and greenways, focusing upon connections with Rails to Trails, including a possible connection to Milan by using the abandoned northerly railroad right-of-way now owned by the City, and consider connections with such destinations as Baines Park, the Ernsthausen Community Center, and the reservoir. Link critical areas and destinations, including the central business district, through designated trails. In developing such trails for walking or bicycling, efforts should be expended to connect and network the disparate elements of the emerging trail system. Also, consider the creation of a trail along Norwalk Creek along the segment from the Memorial Lake reservoir to Elm Street. (See Quality of Life chapter for more detailed and phased trail system recommendation).



Jaycee Park

Chapter 5



Housing

Goals:

1. Ensure that safe, comfortable, affordable housing is available for the diverse and changing citizenry, with a mix of low, middle, and upper income houses, both for renters and owners.
2. Work with contiguous areas to ensure a consistent plan for the growth of residential land uses.
3. Preserve the historic housing stock in the central City and nearby neighborhoods, and support infill and centralized development for ease of access to the downtown area and other destinations.
4. Preserve the quality of the housing stock by raising and codifying standards for rental housing upkeep and maintenance.
5. Work with developers in decision-making about housing development, and allow for development of new housing types that accommodate changing population groups (condos and accessible floor plans).
6. Ensure that suitable housing is available for special needs populations, including the elderly and disabled.
7. Support the development of housing options for families in transition (entry to mid-level, older families to senior status).
8. Support the twin goals of quality and affordability.

Introduction:

The land use classification requiring the greatest land area within the City, by far, is residential use. The topic of housing was mentioned and discussed frequently during the community forums, often in the context of special needs groups, and particularly relating to the elderly. The major thrust was to provide appropriate housing, including physically accessible homes and apartments, to allow seniors to remain independent and live in their community as long as possible. Other discussion points included:

- Stabilizing and bringing consistency to declining neighborhoods, including possibly enforcing housing codes to take care of the elderly, and planning for the maintenance and upkeep of homes.

- Supporting housing renovation and restoration with tax abatement.
- Affordable housing, including rental properties, for those just entering the housing market.
- Developing attractive upper-floor apartments in the Downtown area.
- Planned development of new and emerging residential areas, including possible themed housing areas.

The 2005 Norwalk Comprehensive Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS)

Housing for low and moderate income persons and special needs groups was addressed in detail within the City of Norwalk's Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS), completed in October 2004 and most recently revised in February 2005. Through a process that develops needs statements, then adopts strategies to meet those needs, the Norwalk CHIS included nine strategy statements, which are summarized below:

1. Rehabilitation of Norwalk's aging and most deteriorated housing stock, much of which is owned by low and moderate income and elderly households. Rehab assistance has come in the form of deferred and forgivable payments from the City's ongoing Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), funded through a series of Federal HUD grants, and coordinated with weatherization and energy conservation assistance also being provided for income-eligible households, as well as other rehab funding offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Housing Service.
2. To complement the more comprehensive rehabilitation program, a subsidized housing repair component would be able to respond to local needs for the improvement of a single housing system or element. These funds would enable low and moderate income and elderly households to repair a leaky roof or malfunctioning furnace when needs arise. As with the rehab program, the repair component would be partnered with other funding sources, such as USDA "504" home repair loans and grants and weatherization and utility payment assistance programs.
3. Home ownership is viewed within the CHIS as a laudable goal, and the third strategy provides methods to encourage it. CHIP funds are set aside to provide down payment assistance when a funding gap is identified, coupled with the use of CHIP funds to rehabilitate affected housing units that can be feasibly and affordably brought to standards. To ensure a household's successful transition to homeownership, the strategy also includes homeownership counseling, offering information and advice on mortgage finance, budgeting for housing and related costs, and simple home maintenance. A final component of the homeownership strategy is the support of the efforts of the Firelands Area chapter of Habitat for Humanity to provide new and affordable housing units for low and moderate-income households. Habitat has been active in developing affordable housing in Norwalk.
4. The need for an adequate, affordable, and attractive stock of rental housing was viewed as another area that requires a specific strategy. One form of assistance in this area would be a source for matching forgivable loans to landlords who own affordable rental property in Norwalk and express a willingness to maintain that affordability. Other potential funding sources to boost and improve the City's rental housing stock include

HDAP/HOME funds, the Affordable Housing program of the Federal Home Loan Bank, Rural Housing Service “515” program, and HUD special needs housing funds such as the Section 202 elderly and Section 811 programs. Finally, employing code enforcement as a means to improve the quality of rental housing was given a moderately high priority.

5. This strategy addresses complementary services for elderly and disabled households that would enable them to remain independent and live in their own homes. Services mentioned include the Meals on Wheels program offered through Huron County Services for Aging, public transportation offered on a curb-to-curb basis, and a chore service and other programming provided through Huron County Services for Aging.

6. Tenant based housing assistance, in the form of rental vouchers commonly known as Section 8 Certificates, is an important component serving those with the lowest incomes. The CHIS reported that while the supply of rental units to house Section 8 certificate holders appears to be adequate, the greater need is for a greater supply of certificates. There is a reported waiting list of over 500 eligible households countywide, with a current supply of 583 certificates in use. The committee that developed the CHIS plan recommended the introduction of additional tenant based rental assistance, although the opportunity for such increase appears unlikely. The committee also strongly supported the development of new housing for the elderly, “a group with a rapidly rising percentage of the population”, and the production of more physically handicapped-accessible units for both elderly and non-elderly renters.

7. Another strategy addresses the needs of the homeless in Norwalk. At the time of the development of the CHIS, it was determined that there was a broad-based need for further study of the County and City's homeless population by type and geographic area, the formalization of a “Continuum of Care” approach to homelessness, and the development of a survey and study of gaps in the supply of emergency and transitional housing and services for the homeless.

8. The CHIS supports an increase in the number of quality affordable rental units, through new construction, rental rehab financing for landlords, monthly tenant based subsidies, and additional production of direct subsidy units. One recommended source to spur housing production of this type is the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, which is in fact being used in Norwalk to develop at least two new elderly housing projects.



Newer subsidized housing in Norwalk: Homestead Estates on N. West Street.

9. The CHIS strategy addresses the need for housing alternatives that promote the highest possible degree of self-sufficiency for the County's mentally disabled population. Plans are reportedly underway to provide an eleventh housing unit within the City to house two more persons, in addition to the thirty already housed in the City.

Profile of Housing in Norwalk

While the CHIS focused on special needs and low to moderate-income housing, this comprehensive plan is concerned with the entire scope of housing in Norwalk. It is thus helpful to observe the characteristics of the City's current housing supply as reported in the 2000 Census of Housing and other sources.

The 2000 census counted 6,687 housing units in Norwalk, of which 6,377 (95.4 percent) were occupied. This is a higher occupancy rate than the statewide rate of 92.9 percent. The homeowner vacancy rate was 1.5 percent (close to Ohio's 1.6 percent), and rental vacancies were 5.0 percent (less than Ohio's 8.3 percent), perhaps signaling a limited rental housing supply.

Of the 6,377 reported occupied housing units, 3,945 units (61.9 percent) were owner-occupied and 2,432 (38.1 percent) were renter-occupied. Countywide, the homeowner rate was 72.2 percent (indicating that Norwalk is a center for rental housing within the County), and statewide, it was 69.1 percent.

The average household size of owner-occupied units was 2.73, and of renter-occupied units was 2.41, somewhat larger than the statewide average household sizes of 2.62 and 2.19 respectively.

Nearly one-third of Norwalk's housing units (4,220) were single detached units. Another 609 (9.1 percent) were two units, 524 were in 3 or 4 unit structures, and 441 were in 5 to 9 unit structures, 217 were in 10 to 19 unit buildings, and 170 were in larger, 20+ unit buildings. There were 301 mobile homes.

The following tables present some additional data regarding housing in Norwalk, in comparison with Huron County and Ohio.

Table H-1: Year Structure Built

Year	Norwalk #	Norwalk %	Huron Co. %	Ohio %
1999-Mar 2000	138	2.1	2.2	1.8
1995-1998	481	7.2	7.8	5.8
1990-1994	398	6.0	6.0	5.7
1980-1989	645	9.7	9.7	9.5
1970-1979	842	12.6	14.3	15.8
1960-1969	798	12.0	9.8	14.3
1940-1959	1,228	20.1	17.7	24.6
1939 or earlier	2,023	30.4	32.5	22.5

Source: 2000 Census of Housing

Norwalk's housing stock is not greatly different than the State's in general, although the City and County have a significantly greater proportion of housing built before 1940, and slightly less housing built in the 1940's, 50's, 60's, and 70's. A slightly larger percentage was constructed in the 1990's, indicating residential growth that may be exceeding the State as a whole.

Norwalk's median number of rooms is 5.7, as opposed to the County's 5.9 and the same as the State's 5.7. The median size is thus similar to that Statewide, and slightly smaller than in the County as a whole, which includes a large number of rural housing units.

Another interesting variable is the length of tenancy in a housing unit. The following table compares the number of households by the year they moved into their unit.

Table H-2: Year Householder Moved into Unit

Time Period	Norwalk #	Norwalk %	Huron Co. %	Ohio %
1999-March 2000	1,367	21.4	16.8	17.9
1995-1998	1,767	27.6	26.6	27.2
1990-1994	1,043	16.3	16.2	16.0
1980-1989	920	14.4	15.8	15.4
1970-1979	434	6.8	10.6	11.1
1969 or earlier	870	13.6	14.1	12.5

Source: 2000 Census of Housing

Norwalk appeared to have a large amount of movement in the latter 1990's, with over one-fifth of households moving between January 1999 and March 2000. Significantly fewer Norwalk residents moved to their present home in the 1970's, but the other time categories appeared to be similar between the City and the State.

Table H-3: Housing Values, Mortgages, and Rent

	Norwalk #	Norwalk %	Huron Co. %	Ohio %
Owner Occupied Housing Value				
Less than \$50,000	137	3.9	6.2	8.5
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1,768	50.2	50.0	39.3
\$100,000 to \$149,999	969	27.5	27.5	28.0
\$150,000 to \$199,999	459	13.0	11.6	12.9
\$200,000 to \$299,999	163	4.6	3.7	7.8
\$300,000 to \$499,999	15	0.4	0.7	2.8
\$500,000 to \$999,999	-	-	0.2	0.7
\$1,000,000 or more	11	0.3	0.2	0.2
Median (dollars)	\$97,100		\$95,100	\$103,700
Mortgage status and selected monthly owner costs				
With a mortgage	2,301	65.3	66.6	69.3
Less than \$300	39	1.1	0.7	0.5
\$300 to \$499	214	6.1	5.7	4.5
\$500 to \$699	417	11.8	13.1	11.1
\$700 to \$999	854	24.2	26.1	21.1

Mortgage status and selected monthly owner costs (continued)				
	Norwalk #	Norwalk %	Huron Co. %	Ohio %
\$1,000 to \$1,499	535	15.2	16.5	20.9
\$1,500 to \$1,999	202	5.7	3.8	7.1
\$2,000 or more	40	1.1	0.9	4.2
Median (dollars)	\$864		\$849	\$963
Not mortgaged	1,221	34.7	33.4	30.7
Median (dollars)	\$267		\$271	\$289
Gross rent				
Less than \$200	151	6.2	6.4	6.8
\$200 to \$299	195	8.1	6.6	5.9
\$300 to \$499	920	38.0	40.0	32.0
\$500 to \$699	879	36.3	33.8	36.1
\$700 to \$999	117	4.8	5.9	10.3
\$1,000 to \$1,499	33	1.4	0.8	3.0
\$1,500 or more	13	0.5	0.3	1.0
No cash rent	111	4.6	6.3	4.8
Median rent (dollars)	\$478		\$474	\$515

Source: 2000 Census of Housing

In summary, Huron County and Norwalk enjoy a relatively low cost of housing. Norwalk's median housing value in 2000, at \$97,100, was less than the State median of \$103,700, and the monthly mortgage and associated costs, at \$864, were less than the State's median of \$963. Further, the median monthly rent in Norwalk was \$478, less than the State median of \$515.

Recent Housing Activity in Norwalk

Records from the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Department reveal the nature and extent of new residential construction within the City. City officials have noticed an increase in the number of condominium units constructed in new developments near Westwind Drive, Route 20 east, and Executive Drive. The preponderance of these units appears to be a response to the needs of smaller, "empty nest" households. However, single-family units for ownership remain the predominant type of new housing in Norwalk, and will likely continue to be. The following table summarizes that information.

Table H-4: Residential Building History

Year	Building starts	Units	Value of units	Residential Alterations
1995	63	67	\$6,732,293	\$769,111
1996	65	78	7,028,859	862,665
1997	49	90	5,776,063	976,695
1998	42	95	5,652,507	1,750,669
1999	28	36	2,923,675	1,139,598
2000	26	41	3,164,337	1,248,150
2001	35	49*	4,652,487	1,453,831

Year	Building starts	Units	Value of units	Residential Alterations
2002	38	42*	5,428,769	1,120,871
2003	56	72	7,459,800	974,385
2004	56	74	8,155,156	960,456
2005	53	76	8,140,208	940,203

Source: Building Reports, Norwalk Planning and Zoning Dept.

* 2001 also included a permit for apartments on 22 Summit St. Those units not added to total. 2002 included permit for Homestead Estates; those units also are not added.

Monthly data are broken down further by type of unit constructed. The number of units and buildings, and the level of investment in housing, have fluctuated from year to year, peaking with 95 units in 1998. However, after a significant decrease in the early 2000's, recent housing starts have begun to increase again, with very level activity in 2003, 2004, and 2005. For the past five years, we can trace the following development by type:

Table H-5: Residential buildings constructed by type, 2001-2005

Year	Residences	Duplexes	Triplexes	Condominiums	Apartments
2001	21	6 (12 units)	4 (12 units)	4(16 units)	1(4)
2002	17	9 (18)	4 (12)	4(16)	1(4)
2003	43	9 (18)	2 (6)	3(14)	1(4)
2004	40	10 (20)	3 (9)	2(8)	0
2005	35	11(22)	4(12)	2(8)	0

Source: Monthly building reports, Norwalk Planning and Zoning Dept.

The number of single-family residences has increased over the past five years, while the number of multi-unit buildings (typically duplexes and triplexes) has remained roughly the same. Condominium development has leveled off, decreasing in recent years.



Diversity of the housing stock: (L) A home in the West Main Street historic district. (R) Newer homes in Executive Estates

Future Housing Demand

For planning purposes, it is important to project how many housing units will be required to accommodate future population growth. The ODOD projection of population for Huron County forecast a 6.6 percent increase, countywide, between 2000 and 2020. Basing a projection on recent history and Norwalk's 10.2 percent increase over the 1990's would yield an increase of 21.4 percent over the next twenty years. A "middle path" projection may indicate a twenty-year growth of approximately 12 percent.

Assuming the current average household size of 2.49 will continue to be accurate, these projections would indicate a need over the next twenty years for 430 housing units (or 21.5 per year) under the slow-growth scenario, 1,398 new housing units (or 70 per year) under the continued high growth scenario, or 782 new housing units (or 39 per year) under the 12 percent, "middle path" scenario. Siting of new residential areas is discussed in the land use chapter.

With the demand for additional housing units will come the need to expand residential subdivisions onto currently undeveloped land. While there are some parcels and tracts of undeveloped land within the City, there will also be pressure to expand outward. The land use chapter of this plan proposes generalized locations where residential growth is targeted over the next twenty years.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategy 1: *Provide sufficient affordable housing that is of good quality and sustainable.*

There is a challenge in providing housing that is affordable to Norwalk's low and moderate-income population, but that can also be sufficiently profitable to spur a developer or builder to provide such housing. A third requirement for affordable housing is that it would be attractive and durable enough to create aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods, retain its property value, attract residents, and blend in well with surrounding housing and other nearby land uses. This housing takes several forms, including owner and renter occupied housing. The following are suggested actions to ensure adequate affordable housing:

1. Encourage the planned development of lower-cost (\$125,000 and under) new housing for eligible households when demand warrants. This may be accomplished by researching state-of-the-art methods being used to construct housing in this price range. The City should also explore providing incentives to developers to encourage the construction of affordable units, including, when feasible, waiving some conditions or costs. Planning officials could consider flexibility in design, such as narrower lots, smaller setbacks (or even "zero lot line" development for one side), Planned Unit Development proposals with clusters of homes on small lots and accessible common space, and small single family or "cottage" development. Methods should be explored where up-front costs can be deferred, possibly paid back upon sale of property. Developers have cited front-end costs as often the most prohibitive factor. This is an ongoing activity.
2. The City has a positive recent history in working with Habitat for Humanity to develop affordable homeownership opportunities, and that relationship should be continued. Currently, Habitat is working in a new site, just north of Willard Avenue, where as many as twelve new units may be constructed. The City has been able to assist in providing new roadway access and utilities to these sites. Similar future sites, with good access to stores and employers, should be planned, in order to continue the momentum of the Habitat chapter. The current site will take as many as five years to develop, and additional sites will be needed to continue Habitat's activities beyond Year Five.
3. Another potential source of affordable housing may be the upper stories of some properties in the downtown area. Some of these properties are currently being explored; issues of physical accessibility must be overcome, but in cases where access by a stairway is not an issue, some downtown properties may hold potential for the development of residential units. This is an ongoing activity involving downtown property owners, Main Street Norwalk, and the City administration, which may be able to offer incentives through establishment of a Community Reinvestment Area district, revolving loan funds, and housing funds.
4. In pursuing affordable housing, the City should convene an Affordable Housing Committee to explore options and best practices. Members should include developers, City officials, social agencies, and lenders. The committee can be convened within three

years (2010).

5. All available resources should be used to assist in the development of affordable housing. This includes the continuation of the CHIP program administered for the City by WSOS CAC, local lenders' incentive programs, Habitat programming already discussed, USDA and Ohio funding programs, and other resources. Overall programming should include homeownership counseling and training in budgeting and finance, homeownership issues, and avoidance of predatory lending.
6. Available resources should also be sought and obtained to maintain the significant existing stock of affordable homes, often located in the City's older, more central neighborhoods. New incentives should be explored to encourage investment in these older homes. One such program is the Ohio Community Reinvestment Area program (see program description).
7. Support the City's Housing Task Force and those who are actively involved in the housing "Continuum of Care", to strengthen and maintain the network of services associated with affordable housing. This Task Force includes representatives of the Miriam House (a transitional housing facility), Habitat for Humanity, Metropolitan Housing Authority, Salvation Army, Erie-Huron Community Action Commission, Huron County Department of Job and Family Services, and Services for Aging, among others. It is important for the task force to communicate progress reports and specific needs. The affordable housing committee referred to in Section A above should coordinate with this broader Task Force.
8. Extra care should be taken to ensure a stock of safe, attractive rental housing that responds to the needs of a diverse rental market, ranging from subsidized affordable housing to upscale rental properties, without diminishing the property values of adjoining and nearby properties. This is an ongoing activity that should produce tangible results (new rental housing) within five years (2012).

Landlords should ensure the maintenance and upkeep of their rental properties. Although they may prefer a voluntary system, and tenant responsibilities should be enforced as well as those of the landlord, City officials should consider more stringent enforcement or more inclusive codes to ensure a safe and attractive housing stock. Any such property maintenance regulations should be consistently enforced on an ongoing basis.

9. The remaining strategies of the 2005 Norwalk Community Housing Improvement Strategy should be followed, including
 - a. Housing rehab and repair activities (HUD CHIP, USDA 502 and 504);
 - b. Weatherization of low income qualifying homes;
 - c. Maximum availability of utility payment assistance (LIHEAP);
 - d. Use of down payment assistance programs available from the City and from lending institutions;
 - e. Rental rehabilitation assistance in the case of units that are targeted for low and moderate income tenants;

- f. Maintenance and expansion, if ever available, of tenant based rental assistance;
- g. Acquisition or construction of new units and supportive services for special needs populations such as the mentally and physically disabled.

Strategy 2. *Maximize the attractiveness and diversity of Norwalk's housing supply*

Today's households require a diverse housing stock, with needs and requirements varying by income, household size, age, disability, and personal interest and preference. Norwalk is already fortunate to have such diversity, ranging from older, centralized "century" housing to a growing condominium housing stock and executive housing in outlying subdivisions. This diversity needs to be continued and encouraged to ensure that the varied households within the City, with similarly varied needs and wants, can be appropriately housed.

Housing will always remain largely market driven, with new housing constructed in response to market demand. Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in condominiums, and as a result, developments such as Hunter's Glen and Shaker Village (depicted on the next page) have been constructed. The City must simply ensure that it is facilitating, and not hindering, the development or rehabilitation of attractive and desirable housing, and that it continues to maintain its positive reputation as an efficient and desirable city in which to develop and construct housing. A parallel goal is the encouragement of "infill" housing development within the City on parcels that are suitable for residential use, in close proximity to shopping, services, and employment, and currently vacant and undeveloped but serviced with needed utilities.

1. Monitor the City's plan review, permitting, and inspection processes to ensure that they are efficient and timely, while serving the public purpose of safety and conformity with existing zoning and subdivision regulations. From all sources and focus groups held in conjunction with the planning process, Norwalk's processes appear to be viewed as user- and developer-friendly from the standpoint of timeliness and cost. This should be viewed as an important competitive asset for the community, although steps should be taken to ensure that such user ease is balanced by the protection of the public good.
2. Provide adequate public infrastructure to the existing housing stock, using Federal and State programs when available, such as targeting CDBG-funded infrastructure to low and moderate-income neighborhoods. Recognizing the limited availability of municipal government to finance new infrastructure, research possible options where the City finances the cost of infrastructure in new developments up front, and receives reimbursement from developers as lots are sold.



Condominium developments in Norwalk: (above L and R) Hunter's Glen; and (below) Shaker Village



3. Target areas on the urban fringe and adjacent to the City as residential growth areas. This comprehensive plan includes a generalized description of such growth areas to the northwest, northeast, and south of the City. Specific areas include property immediately south of the City, which has witnessed the development of executive housing on larger lots, and property adjacent to the northwest and northeast quadrants of the City, as housing subdivisions, condominium development, and potential elderly housing developments. This is an ongoing effort over the next twenty years.
4. Encourage housing development and any resulting annexation to take place within the Norwalk School District. It is recognized that the natural northward growth of the City, for example, will make this difficult. However, southward growth will ensure continued growth of tax base within the Norwalk City School district. This is ongoing and involves developers, Realtors, and community officials.
5. Allow for innovative housing development and design when it meets needs for health and safety and provides an attractive and marketable alternative to traditional housing design. This may include Planned Unit Development designs with smaller lots and common space, cluster housing, modular construction, and new construction techniques. Many of these alternatives may prove popular to the growing elderly and near-elderly segments of the population, allowing them to “age in place” without moving to more currently attractive or responsive locales.
6. Facilitate the development of executive housing subdivisions. Such housing is strongly market-driven, and few such housing units are constructed speculatively. However, the City should ensure that it is positioned so that a variety of readied sites are available for construction. This may include provision of adequate utilities to the site, and in the long run may require the annexation of property for the development of sites with available utilities. Agreements for compensation (tax sharing) should be pre-arranged with adjacent townships in order to expedite the development process. Likely locations for

executive housing include properties south of the U.S. 20 bypass (which are encouraged because of their location within the Norwalk City School District), as well as northwest and northeast of existing development. Wherever possible, executive housing in “infill” areas within the City should be encouraged as well. (An example is the Deerfield subdivision located south of Gallup Avenue.) This policy should be encouraged over the next twenty years.

7. Another style of housing that will add to Norwalk’s housing diversity, as well as potentially attracting younger adults, is the development of upper stories in downtown buildings into attractive loft apartments. Incentives should be explored to assist building owners in developing upper story apartments when feasible. Conformity to accessibility codes should be researched, as well as the cost of meeting those codes, and alternatives such as strategically placed elevators or stairwells that can serve more than one building should be considered. This ongoing activity will rely most upon downtown property owners, with assistance provided by the City administration and Main Street Norwalk association. This is considered a long-range activity, which may take ten years or more to achieve a “critical mass” of attractive downtown apartments.

Strategy 3: *Adequate housing for the elderly and disabled.*

With the aging of the Baby Boomers and increased life expectancy, Norwalk faces an expanding elderly population. One important goal is to ensure a supply of housing that allows seniors to remain independent as long as possible. Similarly, housing should be available that includes amenities and design features that allow people with disabilities to remain as independent as possible. This is a public purpose in that supporting such independence can reduce dependence on governmental assistance and the significantly higher costs associated with supportive housing.

Those associated with senior housing should encourage the construction of accessible housing, with the elimination or reduction of barriers to accessibility. Incentive programs and available services can be used to realize this goal. The area’s demographics and the size and potential of the elderly segment should be communicated to developers.

1. Make information available to elderly and disabled households on programs and resources that can assist them in maintaining and adapting their homes to remain independent. Programs include CHIP rehabilitation and repair programs, USDA section 502 and 504 programs, and other programs (including locally available resources through United Fund and other agencies) that can provide for accessibility, including handicap ramps. This information and referral program should be ongoing, with participation and cooperation from the City administration, the CHIP administrator, contractors, Services for Aging, and the United Fund office.
2. Provide and communicate the availability of programs that assist elderly and disabled households and individuals to remain independent within their current homes. Services contributing to this independence include “Meals on Wheels”, homemaker services, chore services, Passport programs to provide nurse and housekeeping visits, and other program offerings from Services for Aging. This action step is also ongoing in nature,

and involves Services for Aging, Fisher-Titus Medical Center (the Call Alert system and home health services), United Fund organizations, the County Health District, churches, and other agencies.

3. Assist in the facilitation of new housing developments targeted to the elderly and/or disabled. An example is the new Norwalk Commons elderly housing component on the City's northeast side. Assistance from the City may be in the form of information on community and market area demographics, made available by the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation. Such developments may require the assistance of tax credits, bonding, or Federal grant and loan programs, and will involve developers, the Planning Commission, City Council an administration, and often will also require participation by tax credit or financing agencies such as the Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing.
4. Assist in advocacy for additional assisted housing for the disabled as specified needs are documented and funding resources become available, and for assisted housing for the elderly should a gap in the supply of such housing become evident. This planning and development involves developers and contractors, as well as the MR/DD Board and, in some cases, the ADAMHS board.

Strategy 4: ***Preservation of the existing housing stock.***

Norwalk has an exceptional and diverse housing stock. Many of its older homes have reached the century mark, and homes with notable architectural features abound throughout the City. However, this housing stock, both renter and owner occupied, is always at risk of becoming deteriorated, and efforts should be promoted to maintain the physical integrity and aesthetic attractiveness of each housing unit, in order to maximize Norwalk's quality of life, its ability to attract new residents, and property values for resident owners and landlords alike.

Whenever possible, incentives should be offered to facilitate property improvements and maintenance. In some cases, however, existing (and possibly new) property maintenance codes should be applied consistently throughout the community to ensure that a minimum of community standards for appearance and safety is enforced. Programs should also instill pride in one's home and neighborhood.

1. This recommendation applies to this strategy as well as others in this chapter: Use available Federal and State programs to assist in the rehabilitation and repair of the housing stock (such as CHIP funds, USDA 502 and 504), as well as exploring low-interest bank financing programs. The City administration, State and Federal agencies, and local lenders can help implement this ongoing strategy.
2. Provide incentives for the historic preservation of older, architecturally significant properties. Make owners aware of historic property tax credits. Entities assisting with this effort include the City administration, historic organizations, lenders, and Realtors. Also, within one to two years, publicize the existence of historic districts and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Properties, and publicize the requirements for being listed. Consider a local program of recognition of historic properties, such as a



Examples of the variety of housing styles in Norwalk: wood frame and brick construction

plaque for “century homes”. Increase the City’s partnership with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, by becoming a Certified Local Government, and by taking advantage of their technical assistance programs that can help property owners with their preservation activities.

3. Instill neighborhood pride and identity by delineating and identifying specific neighborhoods within Norwalk. This can be accomplished with signage and the development of a map indicating neighborhood bounds. This concept could be piloted in one neighborhood, and local reaction can be gauged, before the program becomes more widespread.
4. Stabilize and improve declining neighborhoods and properties through more rigid, uniform enforcement of existing property maintenance codes, and the review and revision of the code as deemed necessary. Consider the implementation of a rental property maintenance code after discussion of its benefits and feasibility. A rental maintenance code should be developed carefully, through the use of a “blue ribbon panel” representing all interests. Such a code may take three years (2010), with a major education component to communicate the community benefits of such a code before adoption. The Planning Commission would be involved in this activity, as well as the Council and administration, and the members of the blue ribbon panel.
5. Research the feasibility, cost effectiveness, and alternative models for carrying out the tasks involved in inspecting new or renovated housing in Norwalk. Options include maintaining the current practice of voluntary application for permits, as well as a more inclusive approach that includes routine inspection after improvements have been completed. It may be most feasible to adopt a scaled-down procedure that would selectively inspect a portion of new construction and rehabilitation/renovation projects based on some predetermined criteria. This option could be designed to focus on projects and housing units where safety factors and issues are most pronounced, yet the program could be scaled to operate within an affordable budget and within City staffing constraints.

The “blue ribbon panel” described in the previous recommendation could be utilized to help develop this activity and discuss alternatives as well. Discussion must include consideration of the ongoing cost of all alternatives, including any staffing requirements. No alternative should be advocated which places an undue cost burden on building and property owners or developers to pay inspection and related fees.

From discussions within a number of resource panels, as well as the input of public citizens in community forums, it is evident that the appearance of the community and specific properties within the community is an important issue for Norwalk. Because of this importance, it appears prudent to examine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of these alternatives. The purpose of this initiative is to improve resident safety and welfare, to protect property and property values, but not to provide disincentives to develop new projects or improve buildings and the housing stock within the City and County.

Because of the potential impact on property owners of both building inspection and property maintenance codes, it is suggested that both recommendations may, if implemented, take up to ten years to be designed as effectively as possible and put in place.



New homes under construction at Hunter's Glen

Chapter 6



Transportation

Goals

1. Strive to provide smooth and efficient transportation flow within the City, to nearby destinations, and to nearby connecting highways, by continuation of active transportation plan improvements when fiscally possible.
2. Enforce standard traffic rules and regulations systematically to ease congestion on local streets.
3. Include expectations for future thoroughfares and projected new traffic generators and destinations within transportation planning, and hold to that plan to accommodate future growth.
4. Ensure that roadway planning accounts for vehicular and pedestrian safety, with well-maintained and marked roadways.
5. Maintain a means of public transportation for those who rely on it for transport to work, medical appointments, shopping, and other needs, including the disabled and elderly.
6. Address the needs of through traffic (especially north-south), and truck traffic both through and within the City.
7. Maintain and facilitate improvements to the railroad system serving the City and its businesses.
8. Develop the Huron County Airport as an asset to the community and region, and the business base.

Introduction

Norwalk's transportation system involves its state and federal highways, streets and alleys, sidewalks, bicycle paths, railroad facilities, and airport. As in most communities, elements of the transportation system have been studied and recommendations have been made multiple times over the past decades. Transportation was also discussed from many perspectives during the community forums. Some of the items pertaining to transportation that were mentioned at the forums are listed below.

- Eliminate truck traffic on U.S. Route 250 through town; effective planning of industrial traffic; develop truck alternative route
- Provide accessible, affordable public transportation

- Norwalk should be people and pedestrian friendly; complete the sidewalk program
- Bicycle paths should be completed through town
- Develop the Norwalk/Huron County Airport
- Improve traffic control; alleviate traffic congestion; coordinate traffic lights and patterns
- Faster and better access to major highways
- Develop railroad access; lack of rail spurs hinders economic development
- Access management needed along the developing north side
- Need better signage for Downtown parking, promote free parking

Some specific recommendations also resulted from the forums and focus groups, including the following:

- Connect Westwind to North West Street and develop that area
- Develop center turn lanes on Benedict Avenue
- Install a light, and a turn lane on the east side, at the intersection of Old State Road and Cleveland Road (business Route 20)
- Construct turning lanes on Christie Avenue at Norwood and Benedict, and on northbound Norwood at Fair Road/Shady Lane
- Improve the intersection of Old State Road at Route 61, and Cleveland and Akron Roads on the east side of town
- Improve traffic flow on Milan Avenue (U.S. 250) from League Street northward to Milan
- Improve Old State Road as an alternative route to bypass the central city
- Northward extension of Cline Street

Functional Classifications of Ohio Roadways

When discussing roadways and their purpose, design standards, and traffic capacity, it is important to use and understand the standardized terms employed by the Ohio Department of Transportation, design engineers, and others in the field. The following descriptions are based on the manual, “Highway Functional Classification – Concepts, Criteria and Procedures”, published by the Federal Highway Administration. The functional criteria and characteristics are qualitative rather than quantitative. The following is an explanation of the hierarchy of roadways by functional classification:

- **Urban Principal Arterial:** Serve major activity centers, highest volume corridors, and longest trip demands. Carry a high proportion of total urban travel on minimum of mileage. Interconnect and provide continuity for major rural corridors to accommodate trips entering and leaving the urban area and movements through the urban area. Serve demand for intra-area travel as between central business district and outlying residential areas. Milan Avenue, from League Street north to the City limits, is an example.
- **Urban Minor Arterials:** Interconnect with and augment the principal arterials. Serve trips of moderate length at a somewhat lower level of travel mobility than principal arterials. Distribute traffic to smaller geographic areas than those served by principal arterials. Provide more land access than principal arterials without penetrating identifiable

neighborhoods. Provide urban connections for rural collectors. Norwood or Washington Street may be examples of minor arterials.

- **Urban Collectors:** Serve both land access and traffic circulation in residential and commercial/industrial areas. Penetrate residential neighborhoods. Distribute and channel trips between local streets and arterials. Distinction is sometimes made between major collectors and minor collectors, based on levels of usage. Elm Street may be considered a collector, between Woodlawn, Benedict, Norwood, and Pleasant Streets.
- **Urban Locals:** Provide direct access to adjacent land. Provide access to higher systems. Carry no through traffic movement. Many streets throughout the City and in subdivisions serve this function.

The 1997 Norwalk Thoroughfare Plan

To offer continuity among Norwalk's planning projects, it is important to consider and include the recommendations offered in a thoroughfare plan completed for the City in 1997. Several of the recommendations made in that plan are carried forward in this comprehensive plan, and should be implemented over the coming years. Those endorsed recommendations will be described in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

- **Major Street Extensions**
 - Extend Executive Drive across Benedict Avenue and connect to Fair Road (Shady Lane). This would make a direct connection between Executive Drive and Shady Lane without the current jog onto Benedict, and provide a major collector of east-west traffic on the south side.
 - Extend the U.S. 20 bypass on the east side of Norwalk to the north to intersect with SR 61, and then continue northwest to U.S. 250 North of Norwalk. (This major acquisition and construction project has been discussed for a long time.)
 - Extend Perrin Road north from Gibbs Road to SR 61. This would serve as a minor collector, and take some traffic off Old State Road.
 - Extend South Pleasant Street southward from its terminus into Elm Street and generally parallel with Norwood Avenue, connecting to Fair Road. This would create a minor collector and open significant acreage within the City for infill development, likely residential.
 - Extend Republic Street west across Milan Avenue, connecting to Plank Road. This major collector would benefit some industrial traffic and provide additional east-west access in the northern growth area along the U.S. 250 corridor. Also, Pleasant Street could be extended north of Washington Street to Lovers Lane Road, connecting to the westerly Republic Street extension and providing a route from northern U.S. 250 to West Main Street avoiding the 250 corridor in town.

- Provide East-West connection between Milan Avenue and Whittlesey Avenue, creating a major collector (This has been accomplished with the construction of Westwind Drive).
- Construct an access road between Plank Road and Cline Street, effectively extending Cline Street northward. This access road, parallel to Milan Avenue (U.S. 250) and providing access from the Eagles building on Cline Street to the Drug Mart/Aldi's complex and the Apples shopping center, would terminate to the north at Westwind Drive at its intersection with Plank Road. Construction would channel north-south traffic accessing these destinations on a formalized access road alignment and relieve congestion on U.S. 250.
- Extend Ontario Street southward, connecting to the City-owned rail right-of way, and then continuing within the rail right-of-way to connect Schauss Avenue and East Main Street. (This project has been largely completed as planned, resulting in a more directly traversed major collector for truck and car traffic northward from east Main Street to Ontario/Republic Street.)
- Extend North Pleasant Street farther to the north. This would connect to the westward connection of Westwind Drive and provide a northwestern loop and major collector, opening agricultural land for development.
- Extend Christie Avenue across Norwood Avenue and connect to the extended S. Pleasant Street. This minor collector would create an inner loop connecting Benedict Avenue and W. Main Street, and would presumably handle some traffic generated by the middle school on Christie and the high school on Shady Lane.
- Local street extensions recommended in the 1997 plan included extending West Willard Avenue west to Whittlesey and north to what is now Westwind Drive; and extending Grand Avenue to connect to Sherman Street.
- Major road and intersection upgrades included upgrading Ohio Street between Jefferson Street and Whittlesey Avenue, widening Benedict Avenue from Executive Drive to Norwood Avenue (with the provision of a center turn lane), widening League Street between Whittlesey Avenue and Milan Avenue (this has been completed), upgrading Ontario and Republic Street, and studying, then improving as deemed important, intersections at Old State Rd. and SR 61, Executive Drive and Benedict Avenue, Fair Road and West Main Street, Schauss Avenue and East Main/Cleveland Rd. (this has been accomplished), Cline St. and League St. (this has also been completed, with provision for right turn only from Cline), Whittlesey and League (also completed with the widening of League St.), and Old State and Akron Rd. (SR 18).

Past and Present Trends in Transportation

ODOT provides traffic counts at key intersections on state and federal routes. The three most recent traffic counts were taken in 1992, 1999, and 2002. Looking at the results of those counts may provide some insight into traffic patterns and changes in Norwalk.

Table 6-1: ODOT Average Daily Traffic Counts for Norwalk

Traffic Section	1992			2000			2002		
	Pass.	Comm.	Total	Pass.	Comm.	Total	Pass.	Comm.	Total
U.S. 20									
SR 61 spur	5520	2060	7580	4920	5460	10380	4540	5280	9820
SR 61	5520	2060	7580	4920	5460	10380	4540	5280	9820
U.S. 250	3440	1740	5180	3620	2910	6530	3620	2740	6360
SR 18	2330	980	3310	2820	1910	4730	2540	1550	4090
Co Rd 245	3670	1140	5520	5630	1950	7580	4960	1620	6580
SR 601	4340	180	5520	4580	2050	6630	4180	1880	6060
SR 61 (includes Main St.)									
SW Corp. Norwalk	3820	200	4020	3510	160	3670	3310	200	3510
Leave Norwalk 61 spur	7390	340	7730	6250	350	6600	5870	280	6150
West Street	8290	370	8660						
U.S. 250 (Whittlesey)	9190	390	9580	8970	380	9350	8550	260	8810
Milan Ave.	11910	500	12410	10020	310	10330			
Cleveland St.	6720	150	6870	5990	120	6110	4830	80	4910
NE Corp. Norwalk C-52	3920	190	4110	3890	190	4080	4160	200	4360
SR 601	3820	160	3980	3850	140	3990	3360	130	3490
U.S. 250									
N. Corp. Norwalk	13280	810	14090	14150	1110	15260	13170	1060	14230
Plank Rd.	16870	830	17700						
Milan Ave. enter League St.	8980	700	9680	6910	540	7450	8660	680	9340
League enter Whittlesey	7560	720	8280	11690	560	12250	11170	540	11710
SR 61 (Main St.)	11860	650	12510	11960	570	12530	10470	650	11120
SE Corp. Norwalk	10200	610	10810	11960	570	12530	10470	650	11120
U.S. 20	9770	1700	11470	7620	2690	10310	7170	3160	10330
T-148 (Norwalk Rd.)	4210	1870	6080	5070	3120	8190	5400	3220	8620

Source: Ohio Dept. of Transportation

The above table shows that traffic counts along the major State and Federal highway corridors have not increased over time and, in fact, have decreased slightly in a number of cases. The U.S. 20 numbers refer largely to the southerly bypass that skirts the southern boundary of the City. That highway witnessed a significant increase in daily traffic counts between 1992 and 2000, easing somewhat in 2002 (owing perhaps to improvements to the Ohio Turnpike, which parallels it). SR 61 counts refer to intersections along West and East Main Street, respectively. Along this arterial route, which connects residential areas to the east and west with the central business district, traffic counts are very similar between 1992 and 2002. The counts increased throughout the route between 1992 and 2000, and fell slightly in 2002.

U.S. Route 250 is the most well traveled corridor in Norwalk, with its highest daily count at the northern corporate limits, entering the increasingly commercial corridor along Milan Avenue. Counts exceeding 11,000 vehicles per day (down from 12,000+ in 2000) are sustained from the League/Whittlesey intersection to the southeast corporate limit, at the

location of Fisher-Titus Medical Center. Along the U.S. 250 corridor, traffic counts generally increased through town from 1992 to 2000, then fell back slightly in 2002, with the exception being the south side of town, where it increased slightly.

Larger Trends

The Ohio Department of Transportation issued a planning document entitled “Access Ohio 2004-2030”. The third chapter of that document was entitled “Demographics, Economics, and Travel Patterns – Conditions and Trends”. Some of the statewide trends reported or projected in that chapter are worth repeating here, as they have implications for the transportation system in Norwalk, as they do for any community in Ohio.

- Ohio’s population is projected to grow by 8.5 percent between 2000 and 2030, with the greatest growth (over twenty percent) in metropolitan fringe counties, such as Delaware and Medina. Within this projection, Huron County’s population is projected to grow by 7.6 percent.
- Ohio’s population is in fact shifting more than it is growing. The overall effect is some decentralization of the population, spreading out and creating a new pattern of urban boundaries. With this lower development density comes an increased dependence on the private automobile, with increased demand on the State’s highway system. Longer driving distance may extend peak commuting periods.
- ODOT also envisions a trend toward increased single-occupancy driving and vehicle miles traveled.
- Ohio’s population is getting older, and the state’s “baby boom” population includes approximately one-third of the state’s population. Between 2000 and 2030, it was projected that those over 65 will increase by 750,000 (or 49.8 percent) and those aged 35-54 will decrease by about 250,000 (or 7.4 percent), suggesting that there may be fewer people in the traditional workforce making trips during peak travel times. Also, an increase in the number of older drivers may result in a greater mid-day peak.
- Although people over age 65 make 22 percent fewer overall trips than younger people, they actually make a comparable number of non-work trips as those under 65. In fact, older men make substantially more non-work trips and travel slightly more miles than younger men, but because of their flexibility, they tend to avoid peak times and make most of their trips between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households in Ohio grew 8.7 percent, nearly twice the percentage increase in general population growth of 4.7 percent. In 2000, Ohio’s average household size was 2.49 persons, less than the national average of 2.59 persons, and this trend toward smaller household size is expected to contribute to an increase in the number of vehicle trips per person.
- Between 1960 and 2000, the number of registered vehicles in Ohio grew by 162 percent, from 3.9 million to 10.3 million. Today, there are more registered vehicles than people in Ohio, with 11.9 million vehicles registered in Ohio in 2002, including 8,347,600 passenger cars, 1,664,000 noncommercial trucks, and 900,000 commercial vehicles.
- Rates of automobile ownership in Ohio are not expected to increase as rapidly as they have in the past because the U.S. market for automobiles is expected to reach a saturation point between 2015 and 2025.

- The increase in households, vehicle ownership and licensed drivers has translated into an increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled (or VMT). Looking at these changes (a doubling between 1960 and 2000) in combination with the limited number of new lane miles of roadways being constructed (less than a 15 percent increase) clarifies why congestion has increased.

Railroad Transportation

Norwalk is served by one east-west rail line, which is owned and operated by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad. The railroad offers switching and other service to sidings along their line. The number of industrial and commercial properties serviced by the railroad and adjacent to the main line is limited. In order to assemble a large industrial property adjacent to the rail line, it is necessary to consider land outside the current City limits, such as farmland to the west, north of U.S. Route 20 and south of Washington Street. However, there is some potential within the City for vacant land adjacent to the railroad property to be served by existing facilities or a new spur.

Norwalk-Huron County Airport



Private noncommercial air traffic is handled for the Norwalk area by the Norwalk-Huron County Airport, located three miles east of Norwalk and just south of U.S. Route 20. The airport is a public use, general aviation facility that was constructed in 1968. The airport is owned by Huron County, and is guided by a six-member Authority whose members are appointed by the County Commissioners. The airport is managed by NOFA, Inc., a contract management company.



The airport features a 4,209 by 75 foot, east-west runway, of which 3,969 feet are usable for landing and the full distance is available for takeoff. The current runway configuration does not provide adequate coverage to meet the “95 percent criterion”, whereby all runways should be oriented such that aircraft may use the airport at least 95 percent of the time with crosswind components not exceeding that of the critical aircraft (which in this case is a Beechcraft Bonanza). The airport is served by three designated taxiways, connecting the main ramp, runway, and business complex. The airport has an FBO (fixed base operator) building with various amenities for pilots and passengers. Hangars provide storage for three aircraft in Building A, eight aircraft apiece in Buildings B and C (T-hangars), and private storage in Building D. A business complex building stores an additional three aircraft. Water is supplied to the airport by Northern Ohio Rural Water, and

sanitary sewerage is covered by an on-site septic tank. Power is provided with three-stage electricity from Ohio First Energy, and gas is supplied by a 150-gallon propane tank with service to the FBO Building and business complex.

The current fleet at the airport includes 28 based aircraft, of which 25 are single engine, one is multi-engine, and two are rotorcraft. Projections in the current airport master plan call for that number to increase to as many as 38 based aircraft by the end of the planning period, 2026. Further, airport staff state that there is a waiting list of ten aircraft for hangar space.

The airport's operations in 2005 included 3,648 local operations and 2,752 itinerant operations, for a total of 6,400 operations. The general aviation operations forecast conducted by the master plan's author projects this to increase to 5,415 local and 4,085 itinerant operations (9,500 total) in 2026. The plan notes that the proximity of Norwalk Raceway Park accounts for an increase in operations in season during racing events.

Another trend that will have a positive effect on the airport is stated in the master plan: "The predicted increase in light jet and charter/fractional ownership aircraft makes the Airport an attractive option. Airport management states that air taxi/corporate aircraft have accounted for at least 10 to 16 operations a month. A new air taxi service called "Sky Taxi NE" has begun local service in northeast Ohio. Norwalk-Huron County Airport is one of three airports in the area from which the air taxi will have service."

The Airport Master Plan notes that current trends having a bearing on the development of the airport include the use of global positioning systems for navigation, the increasing use of charter/air taxi services, and the growing Very Light Jet aircraft market. Providing facilities for business jet aircraft increases the accessibility to small markets and cities by jet aircraft. The plan recommends that "To assure flexibility and the potential response to the increased activity of larger business jets over 12,500 pounds MTOW (maximum takeoff weight), consideration should be given to lengthening the usable runway to 4,300 feet...to accommodate future demand of B-II aircraft. This would require an overall length of the runway to be 4,968 feet with the existing displaced thresholds." Also recommended is a partial parallel taxiway to provide access to the most active runway end or a full taxiway linking both runway ends to the apron and terminal areas. A future phase of the report will examine the need for a second, crosswind runway.

Public Transportation

Public transportation service is provided throughout Huron County by Senior Enrichment Services of Huron County. This agency operates a fleet of vans and other vehicles, supported in part with funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation. Curb to curb transportation to and from any point in Huron County is available on demand, but the rider must call to request the ride 24 hours in advance. The cost of a cross-town ride in Norwalk is \$2.00 in 2006. Transportation is also available in Norwalk from two local taxicab businesses.

Strategies and Recommendations

Recommendations from the 1997 Thoroughfare Plan were examined by the transportation resource panel and planning consultant, and several of them are incorporated where applicable, along with additional recommendations.

Strategy 1: *Smooth and efficient flow of traffic*

Strive to provide smooth and efficient transportation flow within the City, to nearby connecting highways, and by continuation of active transportation plan improvements when fiscally possible.

1. Utilize better access management, especially on major thoroughfares, to improve traffic flow. Access management involves minimizing the number of intersections with major arterials, eliminating or prohibiting entrances to and egress from individual private establishments, and developing parallel service roads to handle local traffic. In some cases, one-way streets can be considered and configured to eliminate multiple exits onto one street.

Access management has become increasingly necessary to overcome a number of adverse social, economic, or environmental impacts. Among those are an increased number of vehicle crashes, a reduction in roadway efficiency, unsightly commercial strip development, degradation of scenic landscapes, more cut-through traffic in residential areas because arterials are overburdened, and increased commuting time, fuel consumption, and vehicle emissions as driveways and traffic signals intensify congestion and delays along major roads.



Scenes along the US 250 North corridor, where traffic issues will increasingly require access management

City officials can consult the Ohio Department of Transportation's "State Highway Access Management Manual", which describes regulations that provide for greater safety and improved traffic flow on State highways. The strategies included in this manual can be applied to non-state highway arterials and thoroughfares as well. Further, some of the principles and practices of access management include the following (and are described in more detail on the following page):

- Limiting the number of driveway permits for an area, thereby restricting the number of driveways;

Principles of Access Management

The goals of access management are accomplished by applying the following principles (source: National Transportation research Board):

1. **Provide a Specialized Roadway System:** Different types of roadways serve different functions. It is important to design and manage roadways according to the primary functions that they are expected to serve.
2. **Limit Direct Access to Major Roadways:** Roadways that serve higher volumes of regional through traffic need more access control to preserve their traffic function. Frequent and direct property access is more compatible with the function of local and collector roadways.
3. **Promote Intersection Hierarchy:** An efficient transportation network provides appropriate transitions from one classification of roadway to another. For example, freeways connect to arterials through an interchange that is designed for the transition. Extending this concept to other roadways results in a series of intersection types that range from the junction of two major arterial roadways, to a residential driveway connecting to a local street.
4. **Locate Signals to Favor Through Movements:** Long, uniform spacing of intersections and signals on major roadways enhances the ability to coordinate signals and to ensure continuous movement of traffic at the desired speed. Failure to carefully locate access connections or median openings that later become signalized, can cause substantial increases in arterial travel times. In addition, poor signal placement may lead to delays that cannot be overcome by computerized signal timing systems.
5. **Preserve the Functional Area of Intersections and Interchanges:** The functional area of an intersection or interchange is the area that is critical to its safe and efficient operation. This is the area where motorists are responding to the intersection or interchange, decelerating, and maneuvering into the appropriate lane to stop or complete a turn. Access connections too close to intersections or interchange ramps can cause serious traffic conflicts that result in crashes and congestion.
6. **Limit the Number of Conflict Points:** Drivers make more mistakes and are more likely to have collisions when they are presented with the complex driving situations created by numerous conflict points. Conversely, simplifying the driving task contributes to improved traffic operations and fewer collisions. A less complex driving environment is accomplished by limiting the number and type of conflicts between vehicles, vehicles and pedestrians, and vehicles and bicyclists.
7. **Separate Conflict Areas:** Drivers need sufficient time to address one set of potential conflicts before facing another. The necessary spacing between conflict areas increases as travel speed increases, to provide drivers adequate perception and reaction time. Separating conflict areas helps to simplify the driving task and contributes to improved traffic operations and safety.
8. **Remove Turning Vehicles from Through Traffic Lanes:** Turning lanes allow drivers to decelerate gradually out of the through lane and wait in a protected area for an opportunity to complete a turn. This reduces the severity and duration of conflict between turning vehicles and through traffic and improves the safety and efficiency of roadway intersections.
9. **Use Nontraversable Medians to Manage Left-Turn Movements:** Medians channel turning movements on major roadways to controlled locations. Research has shown that the majority of access-related crashes involve left turns. Therefore, nontraversable medians and other techniques that minimize left turns or reduce the driver workload can be effective in improving roadway safety.
10. **Provide a Supporting Street and Circulation System:** Well-planned communities provide a supporting network of local and collector streets to accommodate development, as well as unified property access and circulation systems. Interconnected street and circulation systems support alternative modes of transportation and provide alternative routes for bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Alternatively, commercial strip development with separate driveways for each business forces even short trips onto arterial roadways, thereby reducing safety and impeding mobility.

- Installing a median or other means to prevent left turns in areas where turning movements are being limited.
- Providing a turning lane and room for acceleration/deceleration for the planned limited access points.
- Ensuring clear views through limitation of signage and appurtenances at corners where limited access is allowed.
- Planning shared access to multiple sites through one driveway or roadway.
- Regulating the minimum distance between access points, and between intersections with cross-streets.

It is recommended that a corridor plan be developed for the U.S. 250 North corridor, from League Street north to the City limits. This corridor has witnessed significant growth in the number of adjacent businesses that generate traffic, as well as the number of vehicles and turning movements along this segment. Plans are underway to join Cline Street to Westwind Drive to the west of Route 250, providing access to a number of retail centers, including Drug Mart, the Apples shopping center, Wal Mart and the adjacent plaza, and a number of outlots. Longer-range plans may relieve corridor traffic further through a connecting road from Willard Avenue to Westwind, west of the Drug Mart and Norwalk Korner's buildings.

The 250 North corridor should be planned more comprehensively, with the emerging Norwalk Commons mixed use complex, and other developments to follow. Corridor planning should consider turning lanes approaching intersections, service road alignment, sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians, improved intersections, where necessary, to accommodate truck turning movements, signalization at key intersections, and visual improvements (including landscaping, signage, construction of a gateway, and funding sources for corridor improvements). A plan should be developed within two years, and implemented within five years.

2. Define and improve truck routes to better move through and around town. While the completion of a northerly bypass is not likely, existing routes could be enhanced to handle truck traffic and turning movements. Northbound traffic can be directed on Route 61 as well as Cleveland and Akron Roads, to turn north on Schauss Avenue, using Republic Street through the Firelands Industrial Park to reach U.S. 250 north.

While it is recognized that the construction of a new bypass is improbable, given the funding constraints and priorities of the Ohio Department of Transportation, it is still important to advocate for the bypass improvement whenever appropriate. Future funding scenarios, coupled with increased tourist-based and other traffic, may make such a project – which would include a lengthy environmental review phase, acquisition of significant acreage, and engineering and construction – feasible at some future date. The bypass alignment would present a new corridor north of the existing terminus of the U.S. 20 bypass, to the north, then curving northwesterly to join the existing U.S. 250 south of Milan.

A less expensive alternative to the new alignment of a U.S. 250 bypass is the upgrading and designation of existing roadways as a truck bypass. Such a bypass will involve

Greenwich-Milan Townline Road (which diverts from U.S. 250 south of Norwalk and joins SR 601 to the north, and which is scheduled for improvements by the Huron County Engineer). A closer bypass alignment would include Old State Road northward from U.S. 250 at the five-point intersection, widening Akron Road from Old State westward to Main Street, and improvements to the intersection of Main Street, Akron Road, and Schauss Avenue, which, with Ontario and Republic Streets to the north, could serve as segments of the bypass. Realignment and improvement of roadways to serve as truck bypasses and remove through traffic from the downtown can be considered a moderately long-range activity, taking up to ten years to complete.

3. New technology should be used to manage traffic lights and improve traffic flow, particularly along the SR 61 (Main Street) and U.S. 250 (Benedict/Whittlesey) arterials in the downtown. Potential use of newer technology should be pursued to manage traffic lights in this area and maximize traffic flow at any given time. It is possible that conversion of traffic lights may be cost prohibitive. Thus, it is suggested that a plan for overall system-wide improvement, especially in the Downtown area, be formulated, then budgeted to the extent possible within a multi-year capital improvements plan. This should occur within five years.
4. Improve the gateways to the City at U.S. 250 (North and South), Cleveland Road/Main Street (formerly Route 20), Akron Road (formerly Route 18), and S.R. 61 (East and West Main Street). A series of impressive and uniform gateways along each of these roads will convey a sense of entry into the City. Beyond the gateways, efforts should be considered to create a sense of “avenue or boulevard” with landscaping and other uniform treatments. See the Community Character chapter for more discussion of gateways, which should be constructed within two years.



Gateways as they exist at U.S. Route 250 south (left) and Cleveland Road from the east (right).

5. Consideration should be given to turn lanes along busy segments where there are considerable turning movements. Turning lanes would aid traffic flow at major intersections along Benedict Avenue (such as Elm and Christie), at Christie and

Norwood (particularly impacted by the Middle School traffic), and for northbound traffic approaching Fair Road on Norwood. Turn lanes, which can involve acquisition of additional right of way, can be constructed within five years.

6. To maintain traffic flow during special events that involve street closures, consider temporary traffic patterns for the downtown area. It is possible that such detours should include one-way traffic on Seminary and Monroe Streets. This could be implemented within one or two years, if deemed necessary.

Strategy 2: *New or Modified Roadways, Future Thoroughfares, and Addressing Through Traffic (north-south)*

Include expectations for future thoroughfares and projected new traffic generators and destinations within transportation planning, and hold to that plan to accommodate future growth. Address the needs of through traffic (especially north-south) and truck traffic both through and within the City.

1. It is recommended that, subject to engineering feasibility studies and the City's ability to finance these significant capital improvements, the following roadway improvements be planned in order to spur planned growth in target areas and improve accessibility and traffic flow within the City. These recommendations are depicted on the thoroughfare improvement map, and should be considered as long-range activities that will occur as the City grows, with their timeframe dependent upon the City's rate of growth.
 - Extend North West Street to the north to connect to an extended (to the west) Westwind Drive. Within the new rectangle of developable land that is bounded by these new roads, three streets might be extended north: Pleasant Street, Newton Street, and State Street.
 - Extend Republic Street westward from its terminus at U.S. 250, to Plank Road, or further west beyond Plank Road to Whittlesey.
 - Extend Pleasant Street from the point where it turns and becomes Elm Street (adjacent to Jaycee Park), southward to Fair Road. This extension will allow infill property, much of which is currently agricultural farmland, to be converted to residential development.
 - Extend Industrial Parkway in the Firelands Industrial Park, which currently ends at a cul-de-sac, further east, to intersect with Route 601 or Perrin Road.
 - Extend Firelands Boulevard, serving a residential subdivision on Norwalk's south side, east to Old State Road, opening more land to residential development.
 - Consider widening some of the City's well-traveled roads, such as Benedict Avenue and Cleveland Road from East Main Street to the City limits.
 - Extend Ohio Street westward to North West Street, using the Ohio Edison right-of-way along the former Pennsylvania Railroad corridor. This road extension will be helpful in providing access to businesses and industrial plants located on the west side of the city, and potentially for business access to the Wheeling and Lake Erie rail line.

2. To ease turning movements and traffic flow, improve intersections where major routes converge. Recommended intersections for improvement include:
 - Cleveland Road and Old State Road
 - East Main Street and Old State Road
 - Old State Road and Townsend Avenue – eliminate the four way stop; allow through traffic on Old State.
 - Williams and Willard Avenues on Milan Avenue. These streets need better demarcation.
 - Milan Avenue at Cline Street. This intersection will be reconfigured when Cline Street is extended northward past the Drug Mart shopping area.

Strategy 3: ***Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety***

Ensure that roadway planning accounts for vehicular and pedestrian safety, with well-maintained and marked roadways.

1. Consider the growing future needs for parking in Norwalk's central business district, including exploration of alternatives to increase parking spaces in high-demand locations. Expanded street parking and lots are viable alternatives. While parking garages have been discussed, they are cost prohibitive without a significant revenue stream from parking fees.



Other measures can help improve the ability of customers and others to park in the downtown area. Business owners and employees should be encouraged to park in off-street lots, and not on the street. It should be understood by all stakeholders that on-street parking is for short-term use by customers and patrons, and that off-street parking is a preferable location for long-term parking by employees.

It has been widely acknowledged during the planning process that there is no significant parking problem in the downtown. Aside from a small number of critical times during special events, ample parking is available within one to two blocks of virtually every destination in the central business district. Rather than a parking problem, it is more likely that there is a parking *perception* problem. Drivers may not be aware of available parking lots and spaces. Thus it is recommended that free parking lots and their locations are promoted with improved signage, including wayfinding “you are here” maps, and with marked distances to lots from Main Street.

Certain portions of lots or spaces should be set aside for downtown residents' long term parking needs, including the use of stickers for residents. Municipal zoning requires a set number of spaces per dwelling unit, but the creation of new upper floor housing units cannot always be accompanied by the creation of new parking spaces. Thus, the existing supply of spaces should be examined to determine which spaces are marginal for short-term parking purposes, but satisfactory in meeting residents' needs. A downtown overlay zoning district could account for the realistic parking needs of specific uses downtown.

2. Promote a more pedestrian friendly, "Walk Norwalk" downtown. Consider an area within the central business district that is traversed by pedestrians only. Ensure safety in crossing the street through well-marked crosswalks and appropriate signalization. Enforce regulations prohibiting bicycles and skateboards downtown. These improvements can be introduced on an ongoing basis.
3. Maintain and expand the City's sidewalk repair and installation program to ensure a people and pedestrian friendly City. Specific areas should be targeted for the installation of sidewalks, because of their potential for significant pedestrian traffic. These roadway segments include North West Street and Fair Road to the Huron County Fairgrounds, pedestrian routes to the Ernsthansen Recreation Center on Republic Street, and high traffic business/retail centers such as Route 250 North, which has also witnessed an increase in access to residential areas. Improve safety at crosswalks where sidewalks approach busy intersections. Other targeted areas for sidewalks include the reservoir and the Republic Street/Route 250 intersection.
4. Utilize the expertise of the Huron County Rails to Trails organization leadership and any potential grant funding sources to expand bicycle trails throughout the City. (See the Quality of Life chapter for details on bicycle trail planning). Encourage visitors to the Downtown area with signage at trailheads leading into the central business district and around the City.
5. Explore the potential of developing the Norwalk Creek area as a "river walk" type of resource. Clean up the area, straighten the channel to improve flow and reduce flooding, and remove trees along the banks. See the Natural Resources chapter for more recommendations on Norwalk Creek.

Strategy 4: ***Enforce Traffic Rules and Regulations***

Enforce standards and traffic rules and regulations systematically to improve safety and ease congestion on local streets, by practicing these ongoing strategies.

1. Utilize modern technology to improve traffic control devices and signals to provide for the most efficient flow of traffic and to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety. Consider automatic signals that trigger for emergency vehicles. Use traffic studies and counting devices to assess current traffic patterns and signals, eliminating and adding signals as warranted. Improve traffic coordination within the Downtown area.

2. Enforce traffic ordinances now on the books. Assess traffic speed patterns at critical spots throughout the City and target patrol problem areas. Utilize reserve forces and bicycles, where appropriate, for traffic enforcement.
3. Be consistent in new street development and street improvements, consistently following City and state guidelines.

Strategy 5: ***Support Airport Planning Efforts***

City and County government and economic development officials, as well as the Airport Board and Fixed Base Operator, should develop the Norwalk-Huron County Airport as an asset to the community and region, and to the business base.

There is no need to duplicate the planning effort now underway on behalf of the Norwalk-Huron County Airport; in lieu of specific strategies, it is recommended that the findings and recommendations of the current airport plan be supported and implemented as they are developed over the next one to two years, unless it is ascertained that formal airport planning is inconsistent with the goals of the City and this document. Nevertheless, the airport's role as an economic development asset, and its location within a potential growth area, should be integrated in overall City development planning.

Strategy 6: ***Railroad System***

Because of the potential and growing needs of industry and the desire to improve our assets to attract new industry, the City should work to maintain and facilitate improvements to the railroad system serving the City and its businesses.

1. Build a stronger alliance with the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad, especially the real estate and economic development staff, to create a more collaborative environment to foster potential growth in rail activity in Norwalk. This ongoing effort will involve NEDC, the City administration, developers, Realtors, and local businesses seeking rail access.
2. Explore the interest in expanded rail service of local industry as well as the potential interest in rail of business and industry that might be recruited to our area. NEDC would be the prime entity to carry out this task, which can be completed with an assessment of needs by 2008.
3. Identify and inventory the potential sites for rail service in the Norwalk area and strategize how partnerships and funding sources could be harnessed to develop these sites. Consideration should be given to the ready access of the switching capabilities at Hartland Center. NEDC, working with the City administration, can include this factor within their site analysis process, which is ongoing.
4. Consider more innovative uses of rail that do not require an actual industry rail siting, such as the use of container trucks at an industry site to move product to a local

container shipment area at a rail site. This is an ongoing activity involving NEDC and specific businesses within the Norwalk area. All these activities also involve close coordination with the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad.

Strategy 7: ***Public Transportation***

Maintain a means of public transportation for those who rely on it for transport to work, medical appointments, shopping and other needs, including the disabled and elderly.

1. Explore ways to partner with the County as they continue to develop the consolidated public transportation system to provide for the area needs. This could include fixed route systems and/or pick-up points throughout the City. Primary entity is now Services for Aging, which is operating the consolidated system throughout Huron County. The City administration should work with them to ensure that Norwalk residents' needs are met effectively. This is an ongoing activity.
2. Encourage and collaborate with private enterprise to enhance the public transportation options. Business needs can be assessed by NEDC during their annual survey and visitation of businesses, and by HCDC during any retention and expansion survey processes.
3. Establish a shuttle service of a "Main Street Trolley" system from Norwalk Raceway Park to various pick-up points throughout the City. This activity can be explored by Services for Aging, as well as by the Chamber of Commerce, Norwalk Main Street Program, Norwalk Raceway Park, and other businesses interested in such a venture.
4. Investigate and promote options that provide out-of- county service for area residents. Such service has been provided in the past, but is subject to budgetary considerations. Services for Aging is the primary entity responsible for such planning and implementation. A preliminary assessment of feasibility could be completed by 2009, with implementation to follow, subject to funding, market demand, and feasibility.

Chapter 7



Utilities and Infrastructure

Goals:

1. Plan infrastructure improvements carefully to guide and entice progressive, desired growth and development to planned growth areas, but plan with enough flexibility to accommodate change as new opportunities arise.
2. Plan and implement improvements only if they are affordable, both in their construction and their ongoing operation and maintenance, and if they can be supported with affordable and competitive user rates.
3. Monitor and evaluate the needs of residents, businesses, and institutions to ensure that those needs are being met, and to plan for prioritized improvements when they are not.
4. Continuously develop and follow a progressive schedule of maintenance and replacement for water and sewer systems, streets, sidewalks, and other elements of infrastructure.
5. Monitor utility services to ensure that all areas and sectors of the community are provided with needed technology, power, and water, and pressure energy providers to increase capacity to meet needs.
6. Strive to provide technology systems and networks that are “City of the art” in accessibility, capacity, and speed. Explore the feasibility of achieving a totally wireless community.

Introduction:

The community forum and focus groups yielded some residents’ considerations and priority issues regarding utilities and infrastructure. Among the comments received were the following:

- Infrastructure should keep pace with growth
- Develop a plan to increase Norwalk’s raw water supply; a “perpetual” supply of water; work to develop a water line from Lake Erie, possibly using the right of way purchased by the City from railroad. Work with other entities (such as Erie County, Northern Ohio Rural Water Authority, or NORWA) to obtain this alternative source of water.
- Continue the City’s sidewalk, curb, and gutter replacement program
- Encourage “green” sources of energy. For example, consider use of windmills for supplemental energy; could be located in industrial parks
- Continue with storm and sanitary sewer separation

- Rural Water can supply another source of water to the City
- Consider development of a backup power supply for the City
- Curb and gutter is needed on East and West Main Street
- Fiber optic installation should be implemented
- Expand water and sewer south beyond the Route 20 bypass
- Fiber optics and wiring should be extended as underground utilities
- Aggregate purchase of utility services for consumers; bulk buying gas or electricity
- Cell phones should work anywhere in the City (and County).
- Develop an “eastern utility district” to serve developing areas to the east
- Stay current with new technology
- Competition for cable television
- Increase public access on cable television
- Need exists for an agreement with Rural Water; must come to terms to preserve land for development as industrial or commercial, requiring more water pressure and capacity than may be available unless City provides water

Current Facilities: Water



Norwalk's public drinking water supply originates from a series of three reservoirs on the City's southeastern corner, drawing water from the east branch of the Norwalk Creek. The Norwalk water treatment plant is located adjacent to the reservoir on Old State Road. This plant has a capacity of 4.0 million gallons of treated water daily, well in excess of average daily use of 1.75 million gallons, and peak use of 2.0 to 2.5 MGD. Recent

improvements have included chemical storage upgrades.



Plans are underway to upgrade the water treatment plant. One project will improve the reaction basins (pools for water and chemicals to mix together) and, later, membrane filtration. The reaction basins will resolve a recent THM problem, and further regulations will be addressed as needed. Another project will repair the reservoir spillway. Both projects together are estimated to cost \$1.25 million.

Treated water is stored in two elevated storage tanks: the 750,000 gallon tank at West Chestnut Street, and a newer 500,000 gallon tank at the Norwalk Reservoir.

Water tower at the reservoir

Water consumption in Norwalk in recent years has actually decreased, due in great part to cost-saving conservation practices put in place by industry, including internal water recycling processes, and aggressive leak detection by the water distribution department.

Current Facilities: Wastewater



Site of the Norwalk Wastewater Treatment Plant off of Lais Road.

Norwalk's wastewater treatment plant has a maximum capacity of 8.0 million gallons a day, with an average daily flow of 3.0 to 3.5 MGD.

Construction is underway to correct and improve upon some deficiencies at the “front end” of the process.

Improvements will include a new head works building and operations center, primary clarifiers, sludge storage tanks, and increased size of the equalization basin, providing a

buffer for storm flows. The cost is estimated to be \$7 to 8 million for the improvements at the plant site.

Once these improvements are complete, the front end of the plant will be able to handle up to 15 MGD, but the back portion will still be limited to the current 8 MGD. In the longer term, that portion of the plant can be upgraded and capacity increased through the addition of secondary (biological dissolve organics and solids) and tertiary (phosphorous) processes.

In addition to imminent plant improvements, significant plans are being put in place to improve the sanitary sewer system at key locations throughout the City, separating storm from sanitary sewage and thus correcting inflow and infiltration problems. The separation plan will see implementation over a fifteen-year period, and will involve the construction of new trunk lines at South Pleasant Street (in the vicinity of the Jaycee Park area), Washington Street (with a line to the north of Washington, connecting to the plant) and Cline Street.

Another long-term need cited by wastewater treatment officials is to acquire additional land for the treatment plant. While significant acreage to the west is owned by the City, it cannot be built upon, and there is a need to acquire acreage to the north to effectively accommodate growth. Expansion to the east is not practical because of the commercial land uses within close proximity in that direction. Acquisition will become necessary when the City begins planning for the secondary, “back end” improvements described previously.

Current Facilities: Other Utilities in Norwalk

Natural gas distribution is provided in Norwalk by Columbia Gas of Ohio. Electricity is provided by First Energy (Ohio Edison). The available voltage varies throughout the City, with 69kVA lines in some industrial areas. Telephone service is supplied by Verizon, and there are plans to upgrade their lines through the installation of optical fiber throughout the City. This process may take several years.

Cable television service throughout the City is provided by Time Warner, which also offers “Road Runner” cable Internet service and a new digital telephone option. High speed telecommunications for broadband Internet access can be obtained through a number of Internet Service Providers, including Advanced Computer Connections, Time Warner’s “Road Runner” service, HMC Limited, Dragon Internet, and Linden’s Satellite Communications. While Norwalk has not developed any provision to be a wireless or “wi-fi” community, several locations within the City, including the campus of Fisher Titus Medical Center and some retail locations, have become wireless.

Future Infrastructure Needs Cited by Public Works Officials

Some of the City’s known infrastructure needs have been described under the water or wastewater descriptions. A major improvement is the long-term control plan, a combination of wastewater treatment plant and sewer system improvements, estimated at \$15 million in total, that will be undertaken over the next fifteen years. Other potential projects in various stages of conceptual development or planning include the following:

- Eventual need for infrastructure to serve new development occurring in the “Norwalk Commons” area, west from U.S. 250 along Stower Lane, and potentially further east.
- Infrastructure to service the growing north and northwest portion of the City. As noted, the sanitary sewer long-term control plan includes extending a new sewer trunk line north from North Pleasant Street to Shaffer Road, and east from Whittlesey Avenue to the treatment plant. A future extension of Westwind Drive or the development of additional subdivisions in this area will require new water distribution lines as well.
- The City continues to undertake a systematic replacement of deteriorating or undersized water lines. During the current year, a line will be replaced along Ohio and Jefferson Streets; a similar project was completed for Rose and Bouscay Avenues. In many such projects, smaller diameter lines (such as the four inch lines on Rose and Bouscay) are replaced with larger diameter lines.
- The provision of sanitary sewer lines, as well as water, to a potential growth area east of the City and roughly bounded by U.S. Route 20 to the north, S.R. 601 to the east, and S.R. 18 to the south has been under discussion for several years. This would enhance the development potential of land in the vicinity of the Norwalk-Huron County Airport, the Commerce Fields industrial park, and the Norwalk Raceway Park. While the City continues to study the feasibility, cost, and design of a sanitary sewer to cover this region, the provision of water would be subject to the newly executed agreement reached between the City of Norwalk and the Northern Ohio Rural Water Authority. Under this agreement, there are provisions for either entity to supply water in this region, depending upon the level of need and other factors.
- With steady growth occurring along Norwalk’s south side, a need has been perceived for a new water line just north of the U.S. 20 bypass, from the water treatment plant area west to

the Fisher Titus Medical Center and further west as needed. Currently, this area is only served by a twelve-inch line.

- Development south of the bypass may reach a level that requires sanitary sewer service. While the concept of a second wastewater treatment plant on the City's south side has been discussed, preliminary engineering feasibility reports indicate that the construction of a trunk line with necessary lift stations, possibly following an alignment along the City's western edge and linking to the new North Pleasant trunk line described previously, will likely be more feasible.
- Finally, need has been expressed for a water line that can bring water from a source to the north into the City of Norwalk. While the existing reservoir system has historically supplied the City's needs, there have been incidents when the capacity of the reservoir system to provide for daily needs and also maintain adequate reserves has been strained. Therefore, it is agreed that a link to Lake Erie via some water resource, which may be Erie County or Northern Ohio Rural Water, should be explored, minimally to provide a secondary back-up source. Ultimately, it could become the City's primary source of raw - or treated - water.

Strategies and Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed from community forums, and from a series of meetings held by a Utilities and Infrastructure resource panel. Panel members included representatives from the City administration.

Strategy 1: *Planning infrastructure improvements to guide and entice progressive, desired growth*

The City of Norwalk needs to ensure that growth is anticipated, either because of new businesses and industries that are considering a location in Norwalk, or because of new residential areas being added. The City needs to be prepared to provide the infrastructure that will be needed.

1. Continue to strive to accommodate new and expanding businesses and other entities that may plan to locate or grow in Norwalk, by providing sites and facilities with suitable water capacity, wastewater treatment capacity, and through communication and cooperation with energy providers, necessary electrical power and natural gas. This ongoing activity involves City officials (public works officials, Mayor, Council, water and wastewater departments), developers, utility companies, and the Ohio Department of Development and other utility financing agencies and authorities.
2. Consider and research methods by which Norwalk can gain a competitive advantage over other prospective development locations through its provision of water, wastewater collection, utilities, and other infrastructure. Factors may include pricing and price structuring, quality, capacity, level of compliance with U.S. and State authorities, "shovel-ready" sites with infrastructure in place, responsiveness to needs, storm drainage capabilities, or other factors. In some cases, the cost of utilities may be a significant

economic development issue, and efforts are needed to provide competitive pricing. Beginning in 2007, it should be possible to assemble a “rapid response team” to respond to specific prospects’ utility needs. Depending upon the issue, the team should be composed of City officials and developers, plus, potentially, an advisory committee of local leaders, including representatives of public utilities, to adequately brainstorm the problem and reasonable solutions. Also, NEDC and the Chamber should be involved as project advocates.

3. As part of the ongoing effort to supply adequate utility quality and quantity, keep public utilities involved and engaged as growth is anticipated. Be prepared to consistently address issues of quality and delivery of services throughout the community. Officials from the City and utilities should be involved, as well as NEDC, County and township officials as appropriate, and affected developers and businesses.
4. Replace underground utility lines as needed and complete the City’s sewer separation program. Continue to maintain Norwalk’s facilities, budgeting appropriate funds for maintenance and operation, and continue to plan for growth, which, while bringing new revenue sources, will also add new costs as the system grows. Involve City officials, as well as outside project funding programs, which may include the Ohio Department of Development, USDA Rural Development, Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA), Ohio EPA, and the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC), and financial consultants.

Strategy 2: *Coordinate long range infrastructure plans with financial planning and the search for outside resources.*

Long range facility and financial planning, including research for grants and low-interest loans, should be conducted concurrently and in a coordinated fashion. New sources of income may be needed to make a necessary project affordable, in addition to the existing and traditional sources of revenue. Revenues must not only fund and finance the construction of needed and desired improvements, but must also cover the maintenance, operation, and planned replacement of these facilities as needed. Thus, infrastructure planning must include a budgeting component (see “Capital Improvements Planning”, chapter 14).

1. The Norwalk water and wastewater departments maintain a capital improvement plan in spreadsheet form. It is recommended that this procedure be developed into a City-wide capital improvements planning process that would incorporate other items such as City building maintenance and construction, vehicles, possibly computer and IT systems, and other major capital expenditures. A Citywide capital improvements plan should be put in place and functional by 2009.
2. Investigate options for coordinating the City’s grant application processes. For example, one entity could be responsible as a clearinghouse for coordinating the application process when applying for grants to support the development of utility improvements. That entity could rely on City staff’s collective knowledge base that includes the variety of State and Federal programs funding water and wastewater projects, including grants and low interest loans. Grant research, proposal writing, and funding coordination

should be an ongoing effort, and may involve City officials, as well as business and economic development entities (NEDC) as applicable, and WSOS CAC, Inc., which provides information on environmental infrastructure financing and budgeting.

3. Options and policies should be explored where developers would share the cost of new infrastructure development that will serve the site of their development projects with the City. One possible form of assistance would be the use of tax increment financing, where a portion of a new development's property taxes would be diverted to finance the cost of a needed public improvement. Tap fees can also be used to recoup initial costs of utility hookups. The use of such options, as well as other means to include private funding of improvements that benefit a specified private development, should be explored in every applicable case. This process will involve officials from the City administration, applicable developers, and in the case of economic development projects, may also involve NEDC.
4. Similarly, in cases where infrastructure is desired for a project outside the current City corporate limits, City officials should partner with applicable township officials, possibly using vehicles such as a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) or Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA) to share and distribute revenues from a given project. It may be necessary for the City and a township to jointly contribute to project costs initially, with an agreement to share revenues and hence a return on their joint investment. This should be an ongoing policy, and would involve City and applicable township officials, as well as officials at the County level, including the Commissioners, developers and land owners in the affected area, and economic development offices such as NEDC, HCDC, and the Chamber.
5. The inevitable spread of broadband Internet service may provide a future income source as well, helping finance public improvements related to communications infrastructure. This may emerge as a long-range public revenue source during the twenty-year planning period covered by this plan. City officials, Internet service providers, and development officials may be included in the development of this option.

Strategy 3: *Monitor and evaluate the needs of residents, businesses, and institutions to ensure that needs are met and to plan for prioritized improvements when they are not.*

1. Explore methods by which the City can discern whether the needs of community businesses, institutions, and residents are being met with regard to City-provided utilities. A task force can be employed to determine whether the entire population or a sample should be surveyed, other entities that should be included in a survey of needs, and the type of survey method that should be employed (door-to-door written questionnaire, telephone survey, Internet survey such as "Zoomerang", or other methods). This survey should be convened by 2009. It would involve City officials, the appointed task force, and a consultant to oversee survey design and deployment.

2. Plan community forums, if feasible, to supplement the survey input, and to obtain additional input. City officials and other involved parties can be used to plan and complete the forums, by 2009.

Strategy 4: *Develop and follow a progressive schedule of maintenance and replacement for water and sewer systems, streets, sidewalks, and other elements of infrastructure.*

In recent years, the City has conducted or commissioned a number of engineering studies concerning specific projects. The development of such studies is an ongoing effort, and will always be necessary. It is also important to organize a long-range schedule for all maintenance and replacement projects. This is part of the capital improvements planning process described in chapter 14, and involves an effort to consider each project and its benefits and impact within the greater context of the City as a whole.

1. In order to provide for contingency or succession planning in the event of the retirement of a key City official with specialized and unique knowledge of public works projects and plans, all existing infrastructure and a history of its repair and replacement should be cataloged as accurately as possible. Research should be conducted into computer programs that can be used to set up the inventory, as well as helping plan for the systematic replacement or maintenance of these systems. Once the software options have been analyzed, the City should choose and purchase the most effective software. This process should be completed by the end of 2008, and will involve City officials, advisory consultants, and software vendors.
2. Using the expertise of department heads and managers, organize all existing schedules into a clear-cut plan for ongoing maintenance and replacement for the next twenty years. This would be a component of the overall capital improvements planning that is recommended as a formalized and Citywide process previously in this chapter, and should also involve a wide-ranging financing plan for improvements, including a formalized debt policy. A consultant and City officials should be involved in this process, which should be put in place during 2008. Officials should build in the necessary flexibility to allow for changes that will be necessary in the event of unexpected emergencies, new State or Federal mandates, or other unknown variables that may impact prioritization of projects and scheduling of maintenance or replacement.
3. As an ongoing element of the planning process, monitor the needed funds for all planned action items, and work with the administration and Council to set aside and revise, as necessary, the necessary funds for the planned maintenance and replacement program. This should be an ongoing activity, involving department leaders, the Mayor, the Finance Director, and City Council.

Strategy 5: *Monitor utility and infrastructure needs to allow for planned and orderly growth, and to ensure that a lack of infrastructure will not present a bottleneck to that development.*

If the community is to grow, utility companies, and the City as the provider of water and sanitary sewer services, must be proactive in providing needed sources of power, communication services, and other basic services. There should be an ongoing effort to work and communicate with utility companies to keep them aware of potential plans for growth.

1. As growth areas move from planning concepts to actual sites for planned growth, water and sanitary sewer lines must be planned, designed, and constructed. Resources must be identified to pay for these extensions, and may include grant and loan proceeds from applicable programs of USDA Rural Development, Ohio and US EPA, OWDA, OPWC, and other sources; tap fees for users; utility rate billing for users; and other sources such as tax increment financing as applicable. City and, as applicable, Township officials should be involved, as well as engineering firms, and landowners and developers. This is an ongoing process that will take place over the twenty-year planning period.
2. Maintain the City's wastewater treatment plant and undertake, through 2008, the planned improvements to the “front end” of the plant as described earlier in this chapter. This step, already underway, involves the City administration and wastewater treatment department, the project engineer, and the project contractor.
3. Plan for the future expansion of the wastewater treatment plant, by taking the following steps:
 - Consider new methods for the biological treatment process. After the plant improvements now underway are complete, the bottleneck to increased capacity will occur at the secondary and tertiary treatment processes. The City should then, subject to available finances, install the new secondary and increase the capacity of the tertiary processes, as the need becomes apparent (ongoing).
 - In order for the plant to undertake an expansion with an optimal design, the City should purchase the necessary land to the north, to allow for expansion. This should occur by 2009.
4. Coordinate with other elements of this comprehensive plan to implement the economic development and land use recommendations regarding growth areas. Specifically, consider extending water and sewer services to the east, with potential line extensions along U.S. 20 to the south, S.R. 601 to the east, and S.R. 18 to the north. Elements of this process include:
 - Further study of the eastern district growth area and its potential for specific land uses, as well as needs of present land uses, including the Norwalk-Huron County Airport and the Norwalk Raceway Park.
 - Coordinated study of likely water and sewer system demands placed by new uses.

- Costing of appropriate extension of water and sewer service, which may include, in addition to the distribution lines, such elements as pump stations, storm water retainage, and an elevated storage tower for water.
- Budgeting of expenses, likely utility billing revenues, and other revenue sources.

This process will involve City and Township officials, the Airport authority, property owners, the consulting engineer, and economic development officials from the City and County, and NEDC. Planning should begin in the short term, with the eastern district served by needed utilities by 2011.

5. Public utility companies serving Norwalk (Ohio Edison/First Energy, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Verizon) should be involved and engaged in planning for future growth, within developed areas and planned growth areas. This may be best achieved through scheduled, infrequent progress meetings (perhaps quarterly) or Internet correspondence that can update all parties on previous issues, new items of concern, and planned changes and growth. This process should be initiated in 2006.
6. The City should continue to coordinate with the Northern Ohio Rural Water Authority. Great strides have been made over the past year in developing a protocol for service to growth areas outside the traditional service area (bounded by the U.S 20 bypass). This process includes involvement of the City and Township, NORWA, developers and land owners, a consulting engineer, and economic development officials including NEDC and, as applicable, HCDC and other County officials.

Strategy 6: *Provision of technology networks that are “state of the art” in accessibility, capacity, and speed.*

In order to remain competitive, there is a need for Norwalk to keep up with the continued proliferation of advances in available technology. Voice, video, and data communication should all be included in plans to move forward within the City, as well as in cooperation with Huron County and the region. City officials will need to work with County officials and others to plan for systems that will serve the broad area necessary for providing needed services and anticipating technology changes into the future. Since technology advances and new platforms cannot be predicted with any reliability, the most important guidance is for the City to be flexible enough to adapt to new and emerging technologies that will best benefit the community, its business base, and its residents.

1. A meeting should be held with one or more consultants (including any qualified local-based provider) to lay groundwork for a master plan to provide needed and desired services. The broad-based team helping shape the configuration of Norwalk's technology should include City and County officials, one or more consultants, the Chamber, NEDC, Fisher Titus Medical Center, the Norwalk Public and Norwalk Catholic school systems, and emergency management organizations. If it is deemed appropriate, a task force can be appointed to conduct the research and make recommendations.

All three areas of communication (voice, video, and data) should be included in the plan, along with consideration of quality of service and prioritization of data. A network design can be developed with licensed and unlicensed spectrums in wireless, providing the proper design to avoid interference and other pitfalls. The plan must include, in addition to a listing of necessary capital improvements and equipment costs, a revenue and cost projection. The plan should be monitored continuously by the task force.

Any such plan must also include input from current communications providers, including Time Warner, which supplies digital television, cable Internet, and, now, digital telephone service within the City of Norwalk. The other primary service provider is Verizon, which has a plan to serve the entire community with fiber optic cable, providing an opportunity for high-speed Internet service as well as improved telephone service.

Strategy 7 *Provide a perpetual supply of sufficient water to support the future population and business base.*

A critical goal of this comprehensive plan is to ensure that there will be an adequate source for the provision of water to supply future growth and needs. It is believed that the best plan will involve joining the Lake Erie grid. A worthwhile plan to use Huron River water was developed several years ago, but it is widely believed (and it is the consensus of the Utilities and Infrastructure Resource Panel) that this new opportunity will be most advantageous to the City of Norwalk.

1. Make a commitment to achieve a connection with a raw or treated water provider on the Lake Erie grid. Potential suppliers include the City of Sandusky and/or Erie County, and the Northern Ohio Rural Water Authority, all of which are capable of supplying water of sufficient volume to serve the City of Norwalk. This can be a backup to the existing water supply, now derived from Norwalk Creek through the use of an upground reservoir. It is possible that the connection can be made by using the City-owned right-of-way to a former rail line running north from the City to the Milan area. Alternatively, a new line can be constructed by or in cooperation with Erie County or NORWA.

Construction should be complete with the new supply connected within ten years.

2. Plans should be made to increase water storage or treatment facilities as required to meet future water quality standards and fire code benchmarks. Such planning is an ongoing effort, involving the City Water Department and consulting engineers, as well as the Ohio EPA and other regulatory agencies. No short-term need for additional treated water storage has been identified at present.
3. Over the longer range of this plan, the City will need to assess the benefits and costs resulting from remaining in the business of treating and supplying water. At some critical point (possibly when a new mandate requires a significant capital expenditure to upgrade water treatment or distribution), this analysis should be performed, with one of two outcomes: either the City's system will be upgraded under City ownership, or the City will contract with an outside provider for the provision of sufficient treated water,

subject to all regulations and requirements. When and if this becomes a significant issue, it is recommended that a blue ribbon panel be empanelled to discuss the alternatives available, and the relative benefits and costs of each.

Chapter 8



Community Facilities

Goals:

1. Build on the strong facilities we have, including our health care, recreational, and educational systems, to draw people and business to the community, and to provide ample social, cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities and an active community life to all.
2. Strive for community facilities to be clean and well maintained, accessible to all, diverse, affordable, and responsive to the differing needs, trends, and desires of all age groups.
3. Require recreational areas to be expanded in proportion to new development, housing, and population.
4. Ensure that facility development is conducted in response to well thought out plans that support the needs of the community.
5. Attract a branch of a college or university, a center for higher education, or other means to bring college level educational opportunities to the community.
6. Maintain and build upon consistent high standards and quality of the public and parochial school systems within the community, providing the highest level of curricular, educational, and training opportunities for learners of all ages to prepare them for success in career and life.
7. Continue to support the progressive core education system with attractive and modern technology, buildings, and extracurricular activities that attract students and their parents to area schools, and that prepare students for success in technical, workforce, and post-graduate endeavors.

Introduction

Many of Norwalk's community facilities, whether owned and operated by local government or nonprofit corporations, are considered among the City's finest and most treasured assets. Many of these facilities are strong and growing institutions with which many residents identify. A number of them have made strong, recent commitments to improve physical plant or construct entirely new buildings, and the combined growth of many of these community facilities have changed the face of Norwalk. The growth of public and private facilities along Shady Lane, from the Fisher-Titus campus to the Norwalk High School, is evidence of the level of civic investment in the community and County.

In several cases, large investments have helped an institution or organization in positioning for future population growth and a resulting increase in demand for services.

Simultaneously, institutions are investing in significant technology upgrades – such as the creation of a totally “wireless” campus at Fisher-Titus Medical Center, and advances in distance learning and computer labs in Norwalk’s schools.

This chapter will review the current location and condition of a number of community facilities, largely concentrating on buildings, then list the recommendations developed for each. For continuity of presentation, information and recommendations will be grouped around each community facility. In some cases, such as police and fire protection and recreation centers, Norwalk’s municipal government has overall control. In other cases, such as medical care, schools, and the public library, the City is an active partner in supporting the facility in serving and improving the quality of life of Norwalk’s community members.

For all community facilities, several general principles should apply, and should be taken into consideration during their planning processes. These general considerations include:

- Will the facility as proposed most effectively enhance Norwalk’s quality of life?
- Will the facility as proposed meet the needs of all age groups?
- Is the facility site accessible to its users, with adequate provision for access by drivers and pedestrians, and parking?
- Is there a stream of revenue to pay for the facility’s construction, as well as its ongoing maintenance and operation?
- Is consideration given to all reasonable alternatives, including the use of existing facilities and space within the community, as well as the construction of new facilities?
- Is facility planning undertaken in coordination with other elements of planning outlined in this comprehensive plan, including provision of utilities and infrastructure, transportation, existing and emerging adjacent and nearby land uses, projected spatial and population growth trends, and environmental compatibility of the proposed site?

Input was sought by the resource panel from leaders representing each of the facilities and institutions described below, and their input is included within the recommendations.

Input from Community Forums

During the October 2004 forums, community members had much to say about the community’s facilities, and many were consistently listed among the City’s greatest assets. Comments pertaining to community facilities included the following:

- Strong library; expand the library
- Expand or construct a new fire station
- Continue growth of Fisher-Titus Medical Center
- Ensure landfill (transfer station) continues as a destination for trash in 20 years
- Expansion of school libraries
- Alternative learning center and classroom availability for lifelong learning, adult learning
- Provide for urgent care needs
- City and County government buildings are important elements in the downtown area.

Community Facilities and Recommendations

1. General Government Facilities

Norwalk's City Hall houses its administrative offices, including the Finance department, Law Director's office, Mayor and Safety Service Director's offices, Clerk of Council's offices, and the Zoning/Inspection department and Public Works offices. The building is centrally located on Whittlesey Avenue and is in good condition. There are no plans to renovate or expand the building. Should there be a need for expansion, the building could be extended to the east into an existing short-term parking area.



Norwalk City Hall

Huron County has operated a number of offices within the County Administration Building on Milan Avenue. This property has several meeting rooms, extensive off-street parking, and it houses the County Commissioners and their staff, the County's Education Services Center, the County's General Health District and clinics, the County election board offices, the County's Cooperative Extension offices, and the Huron County Development Council offices.



Huron County Office Building



Huron County Courthouse

The County purchased the former Citizens National Bank building (12 E. Main St.) adjacent to the Huron County Courthouse in downtown Norwalk (renamed the County Office Building), and more recently, they purchased the former Outdoorsman Building for future expansion and records maintenance. While the Courthouse now exclusively houses the County's juvenile, probate, and common pleas courts, the County Office Building houses the County's Auditor, Treasurer, Recorder, and Prosecuting Attorney's offices. The Public Defender is located next door, at 16 E. Main Street. The ownership by the County of virtually the entire block from the Courthouse to the former Outdoorsman building ensures that Huron County should have sufficient office, meeting, and storage space into the foreseeable future.

Other important County offices include the County Engineer's facility on West Jefferson Street and several offices in the Shady Lane complex and on Shady Lane Drive, including the Department of Job and Family Services, Sheriff's office and former jail, and Emergency Management office. The older Shady Lane complex houses the license bureau and title office, Services for Aging and its public transportation service, Veteran's Services, and the

County dog warden. The Shady Lane area is well suited to public purposes requiring public access, as off-street parking can be designed into the planning process, and the location of Shady Lane Drive on Norwalk's south side, close to Route 250 and the U.S. 20 bypass is accessible from other locations throughout the County. Services for Aging is analyzing alternatives for the construction of a new senior center to serve the Norwalk area and house administrative offices.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that Services for Aging include co-locating at least some of their activities and programming to the Ernsthausen Recreation Center when that facility undertakes an expansion. The potential for intergenerational activities and the potential for increased use of the Ernsthausen facility by a growing elderly population presents a number of opportunities to improve the quality of life for many residents.
2. Consider maximizing the use of existing City and County office buildings, including their potential as venues for meetings.

2. Police Services

Norwalk has a full-time police department with 24 full time officers, six full time dispatchers, a full time clerk and a part time clerk. Assuming a current population of 17,000, Norwalk has 1.41 officers per 1,000 population.

Norwalk's police station (right) also houses the City's Municipal Court, which is used as a meeting place by City Council. Constructed in 1997, the building is expected to serve the City's needs for the next twenty years.



Norwalk's Police Station

Police response times range from two to five minutes for 911 calls, with some delays in responding to more congested growth areas to the north. According to the police chief, the greatest change in the police department is the increasingly time-consuming nature of police work through changes in the law, liability management, increasing documentation requirements, and meeting citizens' expectations. Other trends and concerns include an increase in drug activity, mounting traffic concerns, and Internet fraud. The relatively new police station continues to adequately serve the current needs of the City's law enforcement and justice systems.

Recommendation:

1. Review the need for improvements and upgrades to the City's police facilities and technology (such as in-car computers) on a regular basis, perhaps every five years.

3. Fire and EMS Services

Norwalk's fire department operates out of a centrally located fire station that was constructed in 1912. While the location is excellent for response time throughout the City and service area, the station itself presents limitations in storage of equipment and space for training and housing personnel.

Clearance for some vehicles is two inches, and the building is not energy efficient. The present building has no facilities for training, restroom facilities are antiquated, and there is no room for loading hose, performing vehicle maintenance, or storage for turnout gear and other firefighting needs. Construction of a larger facility (or expansion of the existing one) that would take advantage of the current, central location is possible, but would require clearance of a larger site and a reduction in the size and capacity of adjacent parking lots.



Norwalk's fire station

There is a need to study all alternatives in the near future. The current site is beneficial because of its central location and the resulting low response times (the primary locational criterion). An alternative site would need to be within proximity of the current location to continue to produce similar response times to all destinations within the service area. Because of the low-acreage need to support a fire station site, it is hoped that one or more suitable central sites would be possible for consideration.

This plan projects a continued outward pattern of growth, with residential and commercial growth to the north, industrial growth to the east, and residential development continuing to the south. This balance of geographic growth may further indicate the continued need to maintain a geographically central location, but also points to the need to take steps to maintain traffic flow that can accommodate firefighting equipment on those "spoke" arterials that radiate out from the City center, such as East and West Main Street, Cleveland and Akron Roads, and U.S. Route 250 through Norwalk. The construction of access roads and parallel roads to relieve these arterials of significant local traffic will help meet this need.

The most significant expense is not the construction of a fire station, but the cost of staffing it. For this reason, a second fire station or substation may be fiscally impractical if response times can continue to be satisfactory with a single facility.

The Norwalk Fire Department has 18 full-time State certified firefighters, with three shifts of four to five people, as well as administrative and inspection personnel. It serves all of Norwalk, as well as providing fire protection coverage for Norwalk Township and Bronson Township, making a 50 square mile service area. The department maintains a run volume average of 600 incidents per year, providing all fire, rescue, haz-mat, and basic life support services.

North Central EMS serves Norwalk, with a station on Woodlawn Avenue. North Central provides emergency and non-emergency ambulance transport, mobile intensive care transport, special need care transports, and wheelchair van operations. Dispatching is handled in their central facility in Milan, five miles north of Norwalk, with support as needed from other nearby stations.

Strategies and Recommendations:

1. The 1912 fire station is not adequate for present day equipment, personnel, and citizen needs. Alternatives should be studied by a consultant and City officials, and considered by a task force of citizens, applying criteria of current and projected response times, staffing impacts, and financial considerations, as well as other factors. Such alternatives include modifying or expanding the current facility, constructing a new facility on the current site, constructing a new station on a new central site, and consideration of more than one facility (which carries considerable financial implications regarding staffing).

As alternatives are weighed and a decision is made concerning a solution, attention must be given to the measurable standards: response time, staffing per 1,000 residents, and other factors bearing on ISO recommendations and NFPA Standard 1710. The study of alternatives should be complete by 2010.

2. Maintain a schedule of equipment replacement and a fleet of reliable vehicles (ongoing). Within the next ten years, a pumper and aerial truck will need to be replaced.

4. Education Facilities



Above: St. Paul School; Below: Norwalk High School

Both the Norwalk City Schools and the Norwalk Catholic Schools have recently committed to major investments in their school facilities. A major enlargement of the St. Paul High School has been completed. Previously, Norwalk constructed a new high school, first utilized for the 2001-2002 school year, and converted a portion of its former high school to the Main Street School serving all of the system's fifth and sixth graders. This latter plan helped relieve the system's three elementary schools, which had previously housed fifth graders, as well as



Norwalk Middle School, which included sixth grade. During the late 1990's St. Paul also completed the construction of a new Convocation Center on their campus.

Norwalk's school facilities and recent (2005-2006) enrollment figures include the following:

School	Grades	Enrollment	Location
Norwalk High School	9-12	756	350 Shady Lane Drive
Norwalk Middle School	7-8	447	64 Christie Avenue
Main Street Intermediate	5-6	501	80 E. Main St.
League Elementary	K-4	255	16 E. League St.
Maplehurst Elementary	K-4	540	195 St. Mary's St.
Pleasant Elementary	K-4	423	16 S. Pleasant St.
Gerken Center	Pre-K	27	120 Shady Lane Drive
St. Paul High School	9-12	268	93 E. Main St.
St. Paul Elementary	PreK-8	515	93 E. Main St.
St. Mary Elementary	PreK-8	187	77 State St.

In addition to the recent improvements described earlier in this section, Norwalk City Schools have also expanded the Main Street School to alleviate potential overcrowding in the fifth and sixth grades, with the addition of five new classrooms. Additionally, Norwalk High School was designed with the capability to easily add new classroom sections at the end of two existing hallways.

Recommendations:

1. Maintaining a strong public school system and a strong parochial school system is in the best interest of the City of Norwalk. Adequate facilities are essential for both the public and parochial systems. School systems project slow growth in enrollment, within the capacity of their facilities, for the foreseeable future, after current expansion projects at St. Paul and the Main Street School are completed. Thus, no specific expansion projects are proposed here. Periodic analysis of capacity in light of projected enrollment should be carried out, however, with planning for responsive expansion as necessary.
2. Encourage the attraction of a satellite location of an area college or university to Norwalk, either in a facility of their own or a shared facility within Norwalk. As one option, effort should be expended to utilize existing facilities, such as the Norwalk High School, as a satellite location for existing colleges and universities. Should demand warrant it, a new extension could be constructed onto the high school to accommodate a "lifelong learning center" that would be utilized by a combination of adult education providers, including colleges and universities, community colleges, and other educational institutions. With sufficient demand, an economic analysis could determine whether rents paid by these institutions could finance long-term construction debt and operating costs for a new lifelong learning center. If this is not feasible, coordinated and increased use can be made of the existing facilities at the high school. Options should be considered and the selected alternative implemented within five years (2012).
3. The local district in conjunction with local government should provide facilities to make basic literacy programs available to the City's undereducated and Hispanic populations to

help them become productive workers and participants in the community. While these activities could be provided along with “lifelong learning” activities at the high school, literacy and ESOL programming may be better attended in a less institutional setting. Such a facility should be sought and developed for use within five years (2012).

5. *Norwalk Public Library*

The Norwalk Public Library contains over 62,000 books, 4,400 audio items, nearly 50,000 video items, and 182 periodical subscriptions in its facility on West Main Street. The library has given an extended lease to Hill’s Interiors, which occupies the adjacent building on West Main Street. That lease extends until 2010. The Library Board intends to expand the library into the Hill’s Interiors building, but will need to go to the voters to complete renovations of the current 11,000 square foot facility at 46 West Main Street and the Hills Building at 38 West Main Street.



Norwalk Public Library

The library offers a range of materials and programming for children and adults, with special events, Internet training, and several computers available for patrons to conduct research.

Recommendations:

1. Support the planning process being undertaken by the Library Board and leadership to expand into the Hills building. Provide assistance in this planning effort as appropriate, including support for public funding of the improvements. Timing should follow a schedule to be set by the Library Board.
2. Additionally, the library should explore a partnership with Norwalk City Schools to set up a library branch co-located with the media center in Norwalk High School on Shady Lane Drive. Such an additional satellite location can increase accessibility and patronage of the library, and cooperative initiatives between the library and school can be explored.

6. *Medical Facilities*

Norwalk is fortunate to be home to a progressive and growing independent hospital, which was recently expanded with the construction of the Patient Pavilion (as shown in the picture at the beginning of this chapter). Fisher-Titus has been the catalyst for the development of a 49-acre medical campus housing a variety of medical specialists, as well as other amenities such as a kidney dialysis center. The hospital also owns and operates the Carriage House, located within the



View of Medical Park on Fisher-Titus campus

hospital campus and providing assisted living facilities, and the Norwalk Memorial Home, a nursing home that is attached to the hospital.

More than 100 area physicians representing twenty specialties are members of FTMC's medical staff. The hospital is licensed for 112 beds, and it offers such high tech diagnostic and treatment equipment as PET scanning and Magnetic Resonance Imaging. Other areas of service include family-centered birthing, physical rehabilitation, mammography, oncology, cardiac rehabilitation, and general medicine.

Fisher-Titus updates its strategic plan every two to three years. One trend impacting health care is a longer life expectancy, with a larger older population that will tax the healthcare system. The new Patient Pavilion was a result of past strategic planning, and its completion is followed by planning and implementation of new oncology and therapy facilities. The 2005 strategic plan includes the following goals:

- Expansion of specialty clinical services: cardiac, pulmonary, and vascular care.
- Improvement of clinical care models and standards, and investment in the improvement of the skills of those professionals who provide the care, including specialty nursing.
- Retention and recruitment of qualified individuals in a shrinking skilled labor market.
- Continuing the implementation of a clinical information system that provides for an electronic medical record.
- Improvement of customer relations and communications, including a focus on communicating performance measurement data, ensuring sufficient facility capacities, and improving customer service.

Recommendations:

1. There is a need in the community for an urgent care facility to address the health care needs of those individuals who do not have a primary care physician, or who experience a need for non-emergency medical attention when a physician is not available. Fisher-Titus Medical Center recognizes this, and such a care facility is incorporated within their Phase III improvement. This facility will address minor injuries and routine illnesses, as distinct from the services required of an emergency room. Patients are screened (triage) to ascertain a non-emergency condition.
2. The community should support the ongoing planning of their local hospital, which includes an ongoing upgrade of technology and diagnostic services and equipment, as well as the addition of new areas of specialization that allow patients to receive superior medical attention without having to travel.
3. Fisher-Titus has become Norwalk's largest employer and it generates significant traffic by patients and visitors. The City should continue to ensure that the local roadway system (particularly Benedict Avenue and Shady Lane), signage, and signalization are adequately handling the ensuing traffic flow.

7. Recreation Facilities

While parkland and park facilities are addressed in the Land Use chapter, this section addresses plans for Norwalk's buildings and structures related to recreation. The City Park and recreation department operates two community centers. The original center, on Monroe Street, provides limited facilities with a basketball court. Recently, it has housed an active dodge ball league. In the past, it has hosted dances for middle and high school aged teens.



Ernsthausen Recreation Complex

The “crown jewel” of recreation facilities is the Ernsthausen Community Center on Republic Street. This facility, which has been expanded once with the addition of a natatorium, houses a spa area, gymnasium, mini-gym, community meeting room, therapy and competition pools, outdoor pool, exercise room with assorted equipment, cardio room with an array of cardiovascular workout machines, stationary “spinning” bicycles, an indoor track, and racquetball courts. Numerous activities are offered over the course of a year at this building. The makeup of this center is in response to such trends as the aging of baby boomers and the resulting emphasis on long-term fitness.

A number of facilities also exist at the Memorial Lake reservoir as well, including a community meeting building and several shelters. The list and location of Norwalk's community, neighborhood, and pocket parks are presented in the land use chapter.

The Park and Recreation department has provided a list of plans for the expansion of the Ernsthausen Center to better serve Norwalk's residents. These plans include: doubling the size of the weight and cardio equipment area, a driving force for use and support of the entire center; addition of a water playground area (a “splash-ground”) for young families with toddlers; a third indoor pool, possibly a wave-action pool, to accommodate more school swimming programs and evening fitness or therapy-related classes; a teen center that could accommodate such activities as laser-tag, video or computer simulated games, and food/beverage concessions; facilities for senior activities and intergenerational activities involving seniors, including a lounge area with card tables, sofas, and a library (and working cooperatively with Senior Enrichment Services); expanding the gymnasium with multi-purpose space, allowing for more “open gym” availability and capacity to provide space for basketball, badminton, volleyball, and indoor soccer courts; a viewing area over the natatorium; and such possible additions as a birthday party room adjacent to the pools, more spacious family changing rooms, a food court, climbing wall, and additional locker rooms.

Plans for Memorial Lake Park include completion of the paved walking trail that will completely encircle one reservoir, and construction of an amphitheater to host musical and other events and presentations.

Recommendations:

1. As noted elsewhere in this Comprehensive Plan, provision must be made for recreation facilities to expand with the growth of the community and its population. To this end, developers of residential subdivisions should be required to set aside areas for recreation or make financial provision for acquisition and development of parks within walking distance of emerging residential areas. Plans must also be established to ensure the long-term maintenance of those facilities.
2. Also discussed elsewhere in this document, the Park Board and Recreation department should be responsive to emerging trends in needs for significant segments of the community, subject, of course, to budgetary constraints. Three specific areas include:
 - The construction of additional soccer fields to accommodate the growing demand and to centralize the city's soccer facilities.
 - Partnering with the local skateboard association to construct a safe and attractive community skate park.
 - Expanding the capacity of the City to accommodate the growing demand for adult softball. Existing diamonds are fully scheduled and another field or two would help alleviate the overcrowded conditions, particularly at Baines Park.
3. Create a master plan with prioritized needs for the expansion of the Ernsthausen Recreation Center. Components of the plan should be implemented when the need can be demonstrated. The plan should address the weight and cardio fitness facilities and the expansion of the aquatic center. The plan must also include provisions for the long-term maintenance of the facility.
4. Partner with the County's Senior Enrichment Services to provide expanded senior services at the Ernsthausen Center. These expanded services could include meeting areas and lounge and cooking facilities. Locating a senior center at the recreation center would allow seniors to take full advantage of the health and recreation facilities already available.

Capital Improvements Planning

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to report on the consensus of opinion regarding Norwalk's preferred future and the general goals that frame that vision, and to chart the recommendations and steps necessary to achieve that vision. The plan, however, will remain only a vision until the necessary resources are identified and earmarked to fund the recommended projects. Resources, of course, are limited, and it is necessary to prioritize projects and stagger their implementation over time in order to achieve the maximum benefit to the community.

It is recommended that the City initiate citywide capital improvements planning. Many individual departments within the City already prioritize, budget, and schedule major capital improvements projects, but there does not appear to be a "big picture" where all such projects are viewed as a whole.

The basic function of a capital improvements plan (CIP) is to provide a formal mechanism for decision making, a link to long range planning as documented within the Comprehensive Plan, a financial management tool, and a reporting document.

As a financial management tool, the CIP can prioritize current and future needs to fit within the anticipated level of financial resources, considering the operating and maintenance costs that will be incurred along with the construction or replacement of infrastructure. A CIP can also communicate to citizens the City's capital priorities and plans, as well as expected sources of funding for projects.

In terms of planning, a CIP can ensure that the projects that are selected are the ones that best serve the needs of a majority of citizens. Further, during the CIP process, it is important to coordinate the community's needs with its ability to pay.

A City-wide CIP will improve inter- and intra-governmental cooperation and communication. Opportunities may exist to schedule projects from different departments in a coordinated manner to ensure an effective use of resources, to reduce duplication of programs between departments and units of government, and to share in joint efforts that could reduce the costs to all residents. The multi-year focus of the CIP process allows for scheduling of phases of projects that can be coordinated to ensure the projects are finished on time. Finally, when capital projects are prioritized and scheduled to fit within expected funding, the planning will reduce the occurrence of dramatic tax increases or user fees to fund capital projects.

Suggested steps in the formalized capital improvements planning process include the following:

1. Establish the administrative structure and identify all participating departments and individuals, as well as a central coordinating office or individual.
2. Establish the policy framework for the CIP (such as a desired level of service).
3. Formulate evaluation criteria to determine capital spending levels and to guide capital project selection. Criteria to evaluate projects should be clearly defined and agreed upon before the selection of capital projects begins. Criteria may include fiscal impact, health and safety effects, community economic effects, and environmental and social effects.
4. Prepare a capital needs assessment, taking into account the maintenance of existing infrastructure as well as the construction of new infrastructure. It is helpful to develop an inventory of assets, including the age, condition, maintenance history and replacement cost of the asset. Also, it is important to identify future needs by reviewing and forecasting demographic information, land use patterns, and other relevant information.
5. Determine the status of previously approved projects and identify new projects.

6. Assess the financial capacity of the City to undertake new capital projects. Look at past, present, and future trends in revenue generation, debt levels and ratios, changing regulations, and shifting demographics, to determine the amount of funds available from existing revenue sources to pay for capital projects.
7. Evaluate funding options. It is important that the City look at all possible financing options.
8. Compile, evaluate and rank project requests and undertake financial programming. This is where project requests are evaluated and prioritized, and projects are ranked. Once the ranking is completed, funding sources are identified and the year the project will be undertaken will be determined.
9. Adopt a capital program and a capital budget.
10. Implement and monitor the capital budget and projects.
11. Evaluate the CIP process.

In general, the CIP process will help City officials in making correct and optimal long term decisions that will benefit the community as a whole, from the perspective of finances as well as service delivery and quality of life.

Other Recommendations:

1. In response to input at community forums and focus groups regarding the potential provision of public restrooms in the central business district, the existing public restrooms at the Huron County Courthouse should be utilized rather than constructing new facilities downtown.
2. Municipal and County government should partner to ensure that landfill facilities, specifically the existing transfer station at the former Huron County landfill, are available in the foreseeable future to support business expansion and retention.
3. Maintain a cooperative attitude with County government to maintain a continued presence in Norwalk, specifically in the downtown area.

Chapter 9



Economic Development

Goals:

1. Build upon the successful work of existing City and Township level economic and business development organizations and coordinate planning with any new such entities, and support their planning and programming to address long-term needs and provide a sound, solid base for economic and business development that emphasizes and utilizes our strengths.
2. Promote an environment to nurture, retain, and expand current businesses and the central business district.
3. Ensure that adequate information and resources are available to promote a prospective or expanding business's understanding of City incentives, assistance, review and approval processes, and other requirements for development.
4. Provide a pro-development, cooperative atmosphere within the public sector that will accommodate and not hinder suitable and desired development.
5. Ensure that incentives are balanced and do not burden the taxpayer.
6. Approach job creation, retention, and enhancement efforts with a focus on the future, long-term health of the community, and on diversifying the employment and tax base.
7. Balance job growth among jobs meeting the needs of the workforce and the tax base of the City.
8. Provide an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, through venture capital, guidance and counseling as needed, and referrals to other community services.
9. Develop a proactive tourist outreach program, with local customer service providers trained to welcome visitors.
10. Ensure that adequate building sites are available for a variety of industries through a network of development-ready business parks, complemented with a plan for the revitalization of existing suitable buildings and in-town sites, with an eye on the impact on the local school district and its tax base.
11. Focus on developing businesses and services that capture local and external revenues, such as full-service restaurants, with hours, products, and services that meet the needs of the local market.
12. To compete globally, offer and support state of the art business practices and support systems.

Introduction:

Economic development can be described as activity that retains or expands a community's job opportunities and its tax base. Efforts to increase job generators and tax base usually entail the growth of the physical stock of the community. New economic activity involves

the creation of new industrial and commercial land uses. Inevitably, these new uses produce spin-offs, with the subsequent creation of ancillary businesses, the expansion of existing businesses, and the development of new residential areas to accommodate new employees and their families. Thus economic development is inextricably linked to land use and community growth.

The community forums and focus groups produced a number of comments regarding several aspects of business and economic development. They included the following:

- Expand industrial parks, develop vacant property; develop a use for abandoned properties
- Lack of rail spur sites
- Aggressive pursuit of more industry; obtain sufficient industrial tax base to support local operations; reinvention of the industrial base
- Support existing industry: “take care of what you have”
- Invest with local entities – keep money here
- Provide financial assistance to reduce start-up costs for new business; encourage entrepreneurs
- Need to support families with good wages; competitive wages
- Be ready for jobs to come back to the U.S. (anticipating a “backlash” after the initial shift of manufacturing and other jobs to China, India, and other “low cost” locations); more global view of our marketplace
- Encourage specialized small business, including high tech; protect family-owned local business
- Investigate creation of a Foreign Trade Zone; pursue Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) agreements with Townships
- Professional job opportunities; job security; jobs to keep youth in the community
- Retraining to get better jobs
- Overcome language barrier of some to job opportunities
- Balance growth and preservation; maintain small town feel and quality of life
- Position Norwalk as a destination, focusing on a retail/tourism district and Norwalk Raceway Park
- Building code to guarantee quality; need more formalized process for approvals, using a checklist
- Provide transportation to work
- Find win/win approach with school districts where possibly growth can be encouraged in their district only if tax revenues are shared with the Norwalk School District.

Norwalk’s Economic Base

The Census Bureau’s “County Business Patterns” provides information on businesses by employee size and economic sector, broken down by county and zip code. The following table presents information on the makeup of the 601 business establishments counted in the survey.

Table 9-1:
Number of business establishments in 44857 Zip Code by # of employees, 2003

Sector	Total est's	1-4 emps	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	350-499	500-999
Total Establishments	601	291	125	82	66	19	14	2	2
Utilities	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	78	51	12	9	3	2	1	0	0
Manufacturing	48	10	10	3	9	6	8	1	1
Wholesale Trade	29	8	10	7	4	0	0	0	0
Retail Trade	106	45	27	15	15	3	1	0	0
Transportation/warehousing	13	9	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Information	10	4	0	1	4	1	0	0	0
Finance and Insurance	40	22	9	7	2	0	0	0	0
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	28	23	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
Professional, technical	46	31	7	7	1	0	0	0	0
Management of companies	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Admin support, waste mgt.	21	10	4	2	3	0	2	0	0
Educational services	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Health Care, Social assistance	47	9	16	12	6	2	1	0	1
Arts, entertainment, recreation	8	6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Accommodation and Food service	42	15	7	5	12	3	0	0	0
Other Services	77	43	18	11	3	1	1	0	0

Source: U.S Census, *County Business Patterns, 2003*

The above table depicts a fairly diversified local economy, with the community supporting (and supported by) eighteen enterprises employing 100 or more employees, and another nineteen employing 50 to 99 workers. These are the businesses that are most likely to require significant acreage and land devoted to their land use. Of the businesses employing fifty or more, three are involved in construction, sixteen are manufacturers, four are retail businesses, two involve transportation or warehousing, one involves information, two are involved with administration or support, four are involved with health care (with the largest being Fisher-Titus Medical Center), three are accommodations or food services, and two involve some other service.

In terms of the sheer number of establishments, the retail sector leads the way, with 106 establishments, followed by construction (with 78) and “other services” (with 77). Construction is an unusually large sector in Norwalk, with particular emphasis on highway construction. Norwalk highway contractors conduct business throughout the State of Ohio and in other states as distant as Florida.

Table 9-2:
Number of Manufacturing establishments in 44857 Zip Code, 2003

Manufacturing Sector	Total est's	1-4 emps	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100-249	350-499	500-999
Total Manufacturing	48	10	10	3	9	6	8	1	1
Retail bakeries	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial bakeries	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Nonwoven fabric mills	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Canvas and related product mills	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Misc. textile product mill	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wood preservation	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
All other misc. wood product mfg	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Folding paperboard box mfg	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Quick printing	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other commercial printing	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Custom compounding of resins	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Photographic film, paper, plate	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polystyrene foam product	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
All other plastics product mfg	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
All other rubber product mfg	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Pressed & blown glass/glassware	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ready-mix concrete	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other concrete products mfg	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Iron and steel forging	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metal stamping	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fabricated structural metal	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hardware mfg	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine shops	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Metal coating/engraving	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Construction machinery mfg	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Paper industry machinery mfg	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Printing machinery and equipment	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other commercial and service industry machinery	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Industrial mold mfg	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine tool (metal cutting) mfg	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bare printed circuit board mfg	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Industrial process control instrument	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Analytical laboratory instrument	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motor vehicle body mfg	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Wood kitchen cabinet, countertop	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Upholstered household furniture	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Surgical and medical instrument	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Sign mfg	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: U.S Census, *County Business Patterns, 2003*

The diversity of the local economy is further documented by the variety of manufacturing products created within the 44857 Zip Code, and with no more than three establishments producing any given product. The largest manufacturers in terms of employment include upholstered household furniture, metal coating and engraving, nonwoven fabrics, commercial bakeries, folding paperboard boxes, custom resin compounding, printed circuit

boards, motor vehicle bodies, and surgical and medical instruments. Indeed, one of the assets of the Norwalk area economy is the diversity of its manufacturing base, and thus its ability to weather volatility in specific manufacturing sectors such as the automotive sector.

Most Norwalk residents who work are employed in Norwalk: according to the 2000 Census, 4,096 of Norwalk's 7,497 residents (or 54.6 percent) who reported working were employed in the City. Mean travel time to work for a Norwalk resident was 17.0 minutes, as compared to means of 20.2 for all Huron County residents and 22.9 minutes for Ohio residents as a whole.

Table 7 in the demographics chapter highlighted the occupations and employment sectors of Norwalk's residents. As noted in chapter 2, the largest number of the City's employed residents (2,372 of 7,677, or 30.9 percent) were employed in production, transportation, and material moving occupations, as compared to 19.0 percent statewide. On the other hand, just 1,762 (or 23.0 percent) were in management, professional, and related occupations, as opposed to 31.0 percent statewide.

The same table presented the number of employees in each sector. The table revealed that of the 7,677 residents counted, 2,338 (or 30.5 percent) were employed in manufacturing (vs. only 20.0 percent statewide). This was followed by 1,279 (16.7%) in educational, health and social services, 906 (11.8%) in retail trade, 658 (8.6%) in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service, and 527 (6.9%) in construction.

Norwalk Economic Development Corporation

Norwalk's primary economic development entity is the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation (NEDC), whose mission as a public-private partnership is "to identify and capitalize on opportunities to continuously improve the Norwalk area's business base." NEDC's responsibilities include encouragement of the creation of quality employment, support for the growth of existing businesses and entrepreneurs, pursuit of new business locations through organized promotion and marketing efforts, and working collaboratively with local businesses, institutions, and economic development partners to strengthen Norwalk's position in the global economy.

Through a participatory process, NEDC developed a strategic economic development plan in 2004, from which the following goal areas emerged:

- Build strong presence of the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation in the community. Means to achieve this goal include newsletters, business testimonials, communication networks, press releases, annual reports, surveys, and reports on measurable results and outcomes.
- Capitalize on tourism opportunities as an economic development growth strategy. Means include support to tourism entrepreneurs, hospitality industry training, community service training for youth, maps to tourist attractions, tourism wayfinding signs, and focus on Route 18 toward Raceway Park as an entertainment "corridor".
- Retain and expand existing business base in the Norwalk area. Means include the annual business survey and Business Appreciation Week, rapid intervention when requested,

community education on economic development and the reality of the global economy, building a competitive and innovative spirit, and implementation of a regional cluster strategy including information on suppliers and potential targets for attraction.

- Ensure the long-term financial stability of the NEDC. Means include augmenting and expanding the membership base, soliciting other industrial sectors, seeking perpetual funding sources, and investigating other sources of funding.
- Seek entrepreneurial investments in the Norwalk economy. Means include creating a venture capital fund, developing a high-risk pool of funds for borrowing, investigating development of a business incubator, a data base of nearby resources for entrepreneurial counseling and support, creation of a SCORE program (which has been successfully launched), and a one-stop clearinghouse for entrepreneurial resources.

Supplementing the more internal NEDC goals were a series of “community economic development goals”, many of which are reinforced within this document. General topics covered within this portion of the strategy were:

- Infrastructure improvements (including achieving a college presence in the community) and utilities quality and availability (water supply, adequate electricity, sewage treatment plant capacity, and adequacy of Internet and telecommunications infrastructure);
- Readiness for development (feasibility study of City-owned industrial park, recruitment of commercial real estate developers, investigation of adequacy of transportation infrastructure such as air and rail);
- Transportation (including airport access, railroad improvements, and investigation of solutions for improved highway transportation, including a “bypass” solution that may include improvement of existing Township roads);
- Quality of life (including focus on quality growth, quantification of impact of development on quality of life in the Norwalk area, an active community theater, broadening of the leadership base by stressing inclusion and fresh ideas);
- Land use (consideration of directions of expansion into Township, filling empty spaces in Central Business District, quantification of need for building rehabilitation);
- Housing (define and fill need for quality apartments, mid-level homes, and options for families in transition); and
- Downtown and commercial development (including a plan to fill vacancies in downtown Norwalk, meet the needs of retail establishments and ensure that downtown Norwalk is a destination shopping area, continue to maintain the infrastructure, consider other models for emulation, and reframe the image of downtown Norwalk).

Norwalk Area Chamber of Commerce

The Norwalk Area Chamber of Commerce is staffed full-time and housed in the same West Main Street office building as NEDC, Main Street Norwalk, the United Fund, and the Norwalk Community Development Corporation (NCDC). The Chamber provides business services, training opportunities, and a forum for the exchange of ideas to its 450-plus members. Other activities include advocacy for business and showcasing opportunities.

Other Economic Development Entities

There are several partnering organizations that help provide a positive climate for economic and business development in the Norwalk area. Co-located with the Chamber of Commerce is the Norwalk Community Development Corporation (NCDC). NCDC has underwritten projects to stimulate economic activity, including the ownership and development of speculative properties including an industrial building on Republic Street in the Firelands Industrial Park, which is occupied by the Janesville Sackner Group.

The Huron County Development Council coordinates economic development efforts throughout the county, maintains a building and site database that is coordinated with the State's industrial prospect response system, and partners with NEDC and others on specific projects. WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc., provides technical assistance to projects using some of the City's incentive programs, such as its business revolving loan fund and the Enterprise Zone tax abatement program.

Direct technical assistance, including business plan development, is available to businesses and entrepreneurs in Norwalk from two active entities. First, a chapter of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) has become very active within Norwalk, providing pro bono business technical assistance to nearly 150 businesses or entrepreneurs since its inception in October 2004. Second, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located in Ashland University provides technical business planning and related assistance, with a business counselor visiting Norwalk on a regular schedule.

The Geography of Economic Development in Norwalk

Historically, commercial development in Norwalk was focused on the Central Business District. Norwalk's Downtown area served a regional market and was accessed by a network of interurban rail lines. The Interurbans departed many decades ago, and Norwalk's consumer market is dependent almost exclusively on the automobile, which has diminished the importance of the Downtown as a concentrated center for commercial and service activity. As a result, new commercial activity has largely grown along the Route 250 corridor from the Downtown northward. The enlarged Wal-Mart "superstore" on the City's north side has become a notable anchor for business, at all hours, complemented by a number of shopping centers, automobile dealerships, restaurants, and other businesses, either free-standing or in strip centers. One major investment in infill has been the construction of a Top's Friendly Market supermarket just north of the central business district on Whittlesey Avenue. Other significant investments in the central business district have occurred through the renovation of a number of buildings that house active businesses.

Added to the potential attraction of outside consumer dollars through the above investments and reinvestments by the City's existing supermarkets and other stores is the location of an eight-screen cinema, also on the north side of the City, just north of the Firelands Industrial Park. The cinema and nearby restaurants, while capitalizing on Norwalk's position as a county seat and the largest commercial center in Huron County, will also benefit from nearby Erie County's growth as a regional tourism destination. Some tourism activity will

undoubtedly leak into Norwalk by virtue of the nationally known Norwalk Raceway Park, the cinema, and other recreational attractions.

While commercial enterprise has clustered around the U.S. Route 250 North corridor, Norwalk's south side has seen commercial disinvestments with the closure of that area's only supermarket. However, there has been a resurgence of travel-oriented activity along US 250 South with the recent completion of two new fast food enterprises. The largest catalyst for economic growth on the south side has been Fisher-Titus Medical Center, with its ambitious growth strategy, its medical campus, and the clustering of a growing number of medical offices and services on and within close proximity of the Fisher-Titus campus.

Norwalk's importance as a service and governmental center has been maintained, and recent investments by the County Commissioners in property within the central business district will maintain the importance of the downtown as a center for personal, financial, and business services such as attorneys, title services, surveyors, insurance agencies, and others.

Industrial development in Norwalk has followed the typical pattern of radiating out from close by the City center to more peripheral locations. Industrial activity typically imposes the most significant spillover effects on neighboring land uses, and over time, new industrial activities, as well as Norwalk's efforts to designate manufacturing zones within the City, have sought more remote locations, with some distance from established residential areas and other sensitive land uses.

The result is a scattering of Norwalk's more historic industrial uses closer to the City center (including the Mayflower Vehicle Systems plant on Garfield Street, the League/Pleasant area including Maple City Rubber, Durable Corporation, ACMI, and the former Norwalk Furniture property. Also, Fair Publishing, Pinnacle Powder Coating and PIPO, Inc. are located north of East Main Street along Ontario Street), with a number of newer industrial locations largely to the north (notably the Firelands Industrial Park, which is approaching build-out), and to the east along the US 20 and SR 18 corridors. It is expected that, as the Firelands Industrial Park becomes built out, future industrial development will be mostly concentrated to the east. The future development of economic investment and of new industrial and commercial facilities can be guided in Norwalk and its vicinity through careful zoning, as well as through the use of incentive programs such as Ohio Enterprise Zones, Community Reinvestment Areas, and Joint Economic Development Districts.

Strategies and Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter have been developed based on discussions at the community forums, at a focus group devoted to economic and business development, and in a series of meetings of an economic and business development resource panel. Nearly every recommendation would involve a team approach undertaken by the NEDC and the Chamber of Commerce. Projects in the downtown area typically involve Main Street Norwalk, and in many cases involving loan fund or grant assistance, additional practitioners such as WSOS Community Action Commission and the Huron County Development Council may take a role. Throughout the following text, the inclusion of these partners will simply be notated as "E.D. Organizations".

Strategy 1: *Promotion of the business environment*

This strategy is multi-dimensional, incorporating the development and promotion of a variety of building sites, including the reuse of existing building sites and development-ready business parks, while considering the impact on the local school district; encouragement of innovation and entrepreneurship; and ensuring a pro-development, cooperative atmosphere within the public sector, including balanced incentives.

1. Promote existing industrial parks, such as Firelands Industrial Park and Commerce Fields. Complete specifications on these prime industrial parks and sites, including available buildings, should be complete, up to date, and available. Important specifications include asking price, acreage and square footage, utility capacity to site (water, sewer, electricity, natural gas), access to roadways and rail, and a site map. Primary entities are E.D. organizations and the real estate brokerage sector. One key channel for this information is through the building and site inventory housed in the Huron County Development Council.

In addition, a catalog or database of available sites and buildings should be created and maintained at the City level, and housed within NEDC. This activity is ongoing, requiring constant monitoring and revision to ensure currency and accuracy. A comprehensive database should be in place by 2008.

2. Identify new development sites that can accommodate market demand for rail access. Further, while the Norwalk area has a number of sites that can accommodate smaller, traditional industrial ventures, City officials should examine the feasibility of assembling parcels, which can provide rail access and highway frontage for larger-scale projects. Formal procedures for this inventory should be completed over the next five years. Key entities include E.D. organizations, the real estate sector, the land use committee, and Norwalk's Planning Commission.
3. After appropriate market studies, develop speculative buildings with amenities currently in demand (with high speed telecommunications, adequate ceiling height, and other requirements). Speculative building development should be in place, either under the auspices of a community organization such as the Norwalk Community Development Corporation, or by private investors, within the next ten years (by 2017). Key entities include E.D. organizations and the real estate sector.
4. Create and implement a building demolition and redevelopment plan. First, the City should develop a priority list of abandoned buildings that need to be demolished. Then, building owners should be encouraged to evaluate the worth of their property and demolish it, if necessary, through financial incentives, tax abatements, or changes in tax classifications. With obsolete structures removed, the remaining sites can be marketed and adapted to new and emerging needs. Key partners include E.D. organizations, City administration officials, the real estate sector, and property owners. Measurable impacts should be reached by 2017 (within ten years).
5. Create a one-stop shop for business officials, entrepreneurs, and others to access business support information. This location should become recognized as the single

point of contact for obtaining information on development requirements, incentive programs, municipal regulations impacting business development, and related information. Key entities involved in this step, which should be completed and in place by 2008, include E.D. organizations, City administration officials, and real estate developers.

6. Ensure broadband access in industrial parks and throughout the City. Internet accessibility and broadband support has become increasingly important to business operations and communication, and Norwalk's targeted industrial development sites should be competitively positioned to deliver such accessibility, which should be implemented over the next five years (by 2012). Key entities include E.D. organizations, the City of Norwalk, utility and telecommunication providers, and realtors.
7. Support the development of incubators for retail and other business, including manufacturing. An incubator is typically a business facility with multiple tenants consisting of newly emerging businesses. In addition to entrepreneurial support programs, the incubator often provides below-market leased space, as well as shared facilities such as office equipment and a receptionist. A number of entities should continue to examine the potential for a business incubator, the market for such a facility in Norwalk, and optimal organizational and ownership models to employ. A business incubator should be in place within five years (2011), and its development will involve Huron County and Norwalk officials, E.D. organizations, Main Street Norwalk (if a downtown location is considered), potential developers interested in the incubator concept, and the real estate community.
8. Promote retail corridors and service/office areas. New business ventures should be guided to these designated target areas in order to promote efficient development patterns. The efficiencies of such orderly development can be realized by the businesses as well as by consumers. This is an ongoing effort, and it would involve E.D. organizations, Realtors, and the Planning Commission.
9. In addition to ongoing efforts to obtain input from the business community within Norwalk, such as the annual survey process, Business Appreciation Week, and ongoing business visitations, NEDC should identify the needs of existing core services and businesses in the Norwalk area such as Fisher-Titus Medical Center, and develop appropriate solutions as needs are identified and defined. These needs should be initially defined by 2008.
10. Secure a perpetual outside source of funding for local economic development programs to balance and complement the commitment of local businesses and political jurisdictions and entities. This source, or combination of sources will involve the efforts of E.D. organizations, the City of Norwalk, and county and State governments.

Strategy 2: *Support for business growth*

Support for the expansion of existing businesses and investment in Norwalk by new businesses can be provided by ensuring that adequate information and resources are available to promote a prospective or expanding business's understanding of City incentives, assistance, review, and approval processes, and other requirements for development. Further, the City and local entities can offer and support state-of-the-art business practices and support systems in order to compete globally. Strategies will include providing better access to information and permit approvals through a consolidated, centralized approval process that involves multi-jurisdictional cooperation, and pursuing cutting-edge programs to enhance marketability of the community on a broader scale.

1. Consolidate the many development approval processes (building permits, plumbing, electrical) within Huron County. To the maximum extent feasible, the processes should be streamlined such that approvable, acceptable projects can be implemented with a minimum of delay. This organizational change, which may take up to ten years (2017), would involve City, Township, and county governments, and E.D. organizations.
2. Create a comprehensive checklist of steps required for development in the City of Norwalk, area Townships, and Huron County. While many such steps are necessary and serve a legitimate public purpose, step-by-step guidance should clarify the required processes and present reasonable expectations regarding elapsed time and required documentation in order to achieve approvals. Involved entities include E.D. organizations, City, Township, and county governments; City and county planning commissions; and the real estate sector. This checklist should be able to be developed by 2008.
3. Along the same lines as the above strategies, create a residential and commercial fee package by consolidating permit requirements and streamlining fee structures. This change, to be implemented by 2010, will involve City, Township, and county government officials and planning commissions, with input from the business and development sectors.
4. Make development information available to the public through linked databases stored in high-tech, easy-to-access entities. Outlets for this information may include kiosk units located at City, county, and Chamber buildings, as well as linked web sites with consistently uniform information. Entities helping implement this strategy, which should be completed by 2010, include E.D. organizations, municipal, Township, and county governments, the real estate sector, SCORE, and SBDC.
5. Pursue the creation of a Foreign Trade Sub zone in Norwalk. A Foreign Trade Zone or Sub zone allows for businesses to realize specified financial benefits within a specified facility when conducting international trade, and can provide a competitive advantage for certain businesses. This strategy, which may take three years (2009), would involve E.D. organizations, City government officials, and business officials who could be positively impacted by this incentive.

6. Pursue the designation of Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA's) in the City of Norwalk. CRA's, while based on a survey of housing conditions that indicate a need for incentives to rehabilitate the local housing stock, are commonly used to provide real property tax exemptions for investments in commercial and industrial building and site improvements. For example, CRA's are often used as an incentive for downtown revitalization activities. Implementation of a CRA program, which should take place by 2009, should involve the City administration and City Council, the Planning Commission, and E.D. organizations. See the attached summary for more information on Ohio's Community Reinvestment Area program.
7. Publicize Norwalk's HUB Zone designation for companies pursuing Federal contracts. This designation, based on distress factors, provides incentives for businesses whose products or services may be solicited by a Federal request for proposals. Publicity and clarification of this incentive, which may be ongoing, would be conducted by E.D. organizations.
8. Ensure that the entire City of Norwalk offers high-speed telecommunications access, ultimately including free wireless high speed connectivity to the Internet (i.e. "wireless") throughout the City, and access to broadband connections for every resident and business. With continuous improvements and innovation in Internet connectivity, this process will be ongoing and building over the next twenty years. It is important for City officials to be aware of new developments in the field and emerging practical applications for rural communities, in order for Norwalk to position itself to maximize the opportunity for its residents and businesses to benefit from high speed, broadband connections. Involved entities include E.D. organizations and telecommunications businesses.
9. Acquire a quality control designation for the entire City of Norwalk, so government employees and participating nonprofits are held to recognized, good management and organization standards (e.g. ISO 9000). Such a designation and achievement is unusual for a governmental organization, and would set the City of Norwalk apart as a community of quality. Feasibility of such a designation should be studied, and then a course of action to achieve such designation should be implemented over the next ten years if it is deemed feasible.
10. The City of Norwalk should investigate the practicality and legality of a preferred vendor procurement system that gives reasonable advantage to local product and service providers. This policy would involve the Norwalk Law Director and other City officials, and would be promoted by the Chamber of Commerce and other entities.
11. Develop business incentives and guidelines that consider "quality of the job" criteria, including consideration of wages and benefits offered to employees. Ensure that training is provided to businesses and decision makers during the consideration of incentives. Involve City government officials as well as E.D. organizations.

The Ohio Community Reinvestment Area Program

While Norwalk has an active Enterprise Zone program, where the entire City has been included as one zone, it has not participated in a companion State program, the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) program. It is recommended that the City consider the creation of one or more Community Reinvestment Areas. New zones must receive confirmation from the Director of the Ohio Department of Development.

A Community Reinvestment Area is a defined area of land in which property owners can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. Specifically, they can receive tax exemptions for increased property tax valuation resulting from renovating existing or constructing new buildings. The program can encourage historic preservation, residential rehabilitation, and/or economic development to encourage commercial and industrial renovation, expansion, or construction.

The City's legislative authority determines the size and number of areas, as well as the term and extent of real property exemptions. A CRA should be created in an area where investment has been discouraged. The municipality must undertake a Housing Survey of the structures of the area within the proposed CRA. The survey must support a finding that the area is one in which housing facilities are located and that new construction and renovation is discouraged. In fact, the creating legislation must state the area is one in which "housing facilities and structures of historical significance are located and new housing construction and repair of existing facilities or structures are discouraged."

A housing officer must be designated for the CRA, and property owners meeting requirements of the local legislation can apply to that officer. For a new CRA, residential applications are filed after construction is complete, and commercial or industrial applications are made before the project begins. The exemption percentage and term are negotiated between the property owner and City Council.

The City can determine the type of development to be supported by the CRA program - residential, commercial, and/or industrial - and the City can include an annual review or renewal clause. Similar to the Enterprise Zone program, a Tax Incentive Review Council is created by Council to review performance on all agreements and projects.

For a new Norwalk zone, qualifying real property can be exempted for up to 100 percent. Terms can be up to 10 years for residential remodeling (1 or 2 units, minimum \$2,500), up to 12 years for residential of more than 2 units, and for commercial and industrial (minimum \$5,000), and up to 15 years for new construction residential, industrial, or commercial. For all commercial and industrial agreements, which are negotiated on a project specific basis, it must be ensured that at least 50% of the taxes estimated that would have been charged on the improvements if the exemption had not taken place are made up by other taxes or payments available to the school district. If notified of a project not meeting this 50% standard, the Board of Education may approve the project. The CRA program has many of the notification and income tax sharing provisions of the Enterprise Zone program.

Strategy 3: *An Effective Mix of Jobs, Workers, and Companies*

This goal involves strategies to ensure the most effective mix of jobs, employees, and business entities, through a focus on the long-term health of the community, brought about by appropriate job creation, retention, and enhancement efforts. A focus should also be placed on the maintenance of a balance of diverse workers, including the retention of homegrown talent.

1. Through the efforts of E.D. organizations and the City, create an awareness campaign concerning how the perception of Norwalk affects economic development efforts to recruit businesses and new residents. The campaign should include customer service training, image building, and public relations. This process may take five years (until 2012) to implement in a systematic and uniform fashion, but the importance of the impression left by any given employee who interacts with the public in contributing to a visitor's impression of the City cannot be overstated.
2. Develop and implement outreach efforts to recruit the service companies, retail amenities, and restaurants that attract workers of the new economy and capture incoming dollars from visitors to Norwalk. Involve E.D. organizations and the City of Norwalk. This is an ongoing effort.
3. Create partnerships on a regional basis that help Norwalk showcase its assets. Partnerships should also include infrastructure development such as rail and utilities. Involve E.D. organizations and utility providers in this effort, which is an ongoing initiative.
4. Assist local businesses in educating themselves on how to compete in the new economy by understanding current business strategies and customer service. This ongoing effort may include trainings such as those frequently sponsored by the Chamber, but may also include participation by E.D. organizations, the City of Norwalk, and progressive community institutions and businesses.
5. Develop a base of local entrepreneurs in targeted industries such as high technology and biotechnology, by utilizing existing resources (e.g. experienced entrepreneur mentors, financial capital, technological capital). Involve E.D. organizations and SCORE in this ongoing effort.
6. Prepare feasibility studies for the creation of a high technology business incubator and possible venture capital fund. This effort will take four years (to 2011) or longer as variables impacting technology change, and will involve E.D. organizations, City and county governments, and resources such as the Ohio Department of Development and venture capital sources.
7. Maximize the use of the existing distance learning centers, such as the Fisher-Titus room located in Norwalk High School, through organized efforts that lead to the establishment of a higher education presence in Huron County. Recruit small colleges looking to grow. Involve E.D. organizations, City and county governments, and education providers. Will take up to six years to fully implement.

8. Endorse efforts to organize a local outreach and support center that meets the needs of the area's growing Hispanic/Latino community. Involve E.D. organizations, City and county governments, education providers, and service agencies. Develop a coordinated approach to this target group by 2008.



Location, Location, Location: Norwalk is centrally located, equidistant between the Cleveland and Toledo markets.

Strategy 4: ***Attraction of Tourists and Visitors***

Under this strategy, Norwalk's leadership is encouraged to develop a pro-active tourist outreach program and train local customer service providers to welcome visitors.

Key entities in this strategy include the Chamber of Commerce, which is the most likely choice to take a lead role in serving as a de facto "Convention and Visitors' Bureau", other E.D. organizations, existing businesses (especially those in the hospitality industry, such as restaurants, hotels, entertainment providers, and bed and breakfasts), and the City and county governments, as well as regional marketing partners and local media.

1. Capitalize on current tourist traffic, inducing "drive by's" to stop and stay. Promote existing tourist attractions through outreach programs and materials. Encourage businesses to install directional signs to tourist attractions in an ongoing effort.
2. Create and maintain uniform signage policies, with implementation within the next five years (by 2012). Examine the feasibility of enacting a "bed tax" to pay for uniform signage to promote local attractions, as well as other legitimate tourism related expenses. While the adoption of uniformity will aid in marketing and "branding" the community for tourism, local government should simplify the process for private signage to be installed.
3. Identify the location of the designated tourism information and referral center (recommended: Chamber of Commerce office) and advertise its function as a "Visitor Information Center". This can be implemented immediately.
4. Educate local businesses on the importance of regional tourism as an ongoing effort. Encourage businesses to advertise in printed guides with broad distribution. Also, coordinate a series of display spaces with likely exposure to the traveling public (i.e. fast food and other restaurants, hotels, travel-oriented businesses).

5. Include tourism information and events through linked web sites operated by the City, Chamber, Main Street Norwalk, Dynacal, and possibly others as they emerge. Ensure linkage to regional websites.
6. Offer ongoing capacity-building seminars for organizations that promote events, with emphasis on customer service. Chamber is lead organization.
7. Focus tourism development within existing entertainment districts (including the Norwalk Raceway, central business district, and Route 250 corridor to the north with cinema/dining/shopping). This should be an ongoing effort that is expected to increase in importance as the Erie County year-round destination are continues to develop and grow.

Additional recommendations regarding tourism are provided on the following page.

Strategy 5: ***Regional Economic Development Cooperation***

Economic development activity in the Norwalk area today reaches beyond the City's municipal borders, and as the City's developable land is built out over time, continued development into surrounding Townships, while it should be orderly and targeted to designated growth areas, is inevitable. Strategies include building upon the successful work of existing local entities through coordinated planning, and providing a sound base for economic and business development emphasizing existing strengths.

1. Create a task force to examine the feasibility and methodology to initiate the formation of Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD's) or Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA's) with neighboring Townships. Potentially participating local governments should examine alternatives, benefits, options, and potential agreements with interested parties, with creation of a protocol for the formation of such districts and the creation of one or more districts, as deemed needed, within five years (2012). Entities include City officials, Norwalk Township, NEDC, HCDC, and the Chamber. (See next page for an explanation of the JEDD and the CEDA as economic development tools).
2. Support and promote the Huron County Airport as an economic development tool. Ongoing. Involves E.D. organizations, City of Norwalk, Huron County, and the Airport Authority.
3. Encourage and support efforts for the marketing and promotion of the region that includes Norwalk and Huron County. Ongoing effort; involves E.D. organizations and possibly such regional and Statewide organizations as the North Central Ohio Regional Development Association (multi-county; centered in Mansfield), Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development (multi-county; centered in Toledo), and Ohio Economic Development Association.

Tourism as Economic Development

With the right combination of attractions, tourism can be an excellent strategy for bringing outside dollars into a community and its businesses.

- ✓ According to the Ohio Department of Development, in 2003, travelers contributed \$1.3 billion in direct State taxes and \$637 million in direct local taxes, for a total of over \$1.9 billion, to Ohio's governments.
- ✓ The average overnight traveler in Ohio in 2002 spent \$240 per person per trip.
- ✓ Also in 2002, travelers on day trips spent \$72 per person per trip in Ohio.
- ✓ The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that in 2001, travel and tourism contributes 10.7% to Gross Domestic Product, supporting over 201 million jobs worldwide (8.2% of total employment), and growing to 11% of global GDP and 9.0 percent of employment by 2011.
- ✓ More locally, data collected from local businesses found that tourism brought in approximately \$7.4 billion in the Lake Erie area alone in 1999.

Here are fifteen "rules for successful tourism marketing" as presented by Roger Brooks, CEO of Destination Development, Inc., of Olympia, WA:

- ✓ Create a tourism development and marketing plan, including product development, upgrades, and improvements, repositioning and/or branding, attractions and events, visitor amenities and services, marketing and public relations, public/private partnerships, recruitment, funding and budgets, and organizational responsibilities.
- ✓ Front-line employees should be knowledgeable about your community and should promote other stores, attractions, and amenities to visitors to keep them in the area longer.
- ✓ There must be several retail and dining establishments within walking distance. Shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is one of the top activities for visitors.
- ✓ Think creatively on how to turn any known negatives into positives.
- ✓ To be successful, you must be worth the trip. A visitor must be able to differentiate you

from the competition and you must creatively set yourself apart from the others.

- ✓ Any museum or interpretive center should always tell stories, not just display artifacts. Stories keep visitors in the area longer. Visitors remember stories and tell others...and more people pick destinations by word of mouth than any other method.
- ✓ People will travel a great distance if you offer something appealing. In general, you should be able to keep visitors busy four times longer than it took them to get there.
- ✓ Make sure your community is appealing to customers. Product development – and quality – should be a top priority.
- ✓ Always sell the experience associated with an activity and not the place. Avoid using pictures of scenery. Instead, use images of people laughing and having fun. Viewers remember images that include emotions.
- ✓ Even at the community level, branding is critical for success in tourism. Branding is more than a logo – it is what sets you apart as a destination. It is your image and your value; do not try to be "all things to all people".
- ✓ Nothing sells tourism like great photography, and photos used for tourism purposes should have a "wow" appeal to make the viewer want to go to the place depicted.
- ✓ If advertising is designed to get people to call and get a brochure, or visit a web site, the brochure and web site must then be good enough to "close the sale". Remember that in a normal rack, the top three inches is all that is visible to the potential customer.
- ✓ Publicity is much more important than advertising: it will build brand, improve your image, increase credibility, and provide a greater return on investment than advertising alone.
- ✓ The Internet is by far the number one resource for planning travel and vacations. Can you be found easily on the web? Is the web site interactive?

Frequency is more important than variety in placing advertising. People viewing your advertisement should develop "Top of Mind Awareness" (TOMA). Finally, an increasingly important segment consists of "experiential" tourists, who want to experience local culture, history, and natural features.

Tax Sharing Provisions: JEDDs and CEDAs

Ohio law provides for the facilitation of cooperative economic development projects between a municipality and one or more adjacent Townships. One option is the **Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)**.

JEDDs often help provide for water and sewer, fire and police, street maintenance, trash pickup, and planning and zoning services. JEDDs can pay for the cost of these services by imposing an income tax on non-residential property owners within the district. JEDDs allow for the levying of a district-wide income tax and provision of municipal services in the unincorporated areas. One or more municipalities and one or more Townships may create a JEDD to facilitate economic development. The JEDD must be located within the territory of one or more of the contracting parties and may consist of all of that territory. The territory may not include existing residential areas or areas zoned for residential use.

A public hearing must be held and the public must be able to examine the plan for the JEDD, including a schedule of new services, improvements, and facilities, a schedule for the collection of any income taxes to be levied within the JEDD, and a description of the land to be included within the JEDD. Documents must be filed with the appropriate County Commissioners, who must approve the creation of the JEDD by resolution. Under some conditions, a vote of the electors in each participating Township may be required.

A JEDD is governed by a board of directors, and powers of the JEDD include the power to levy an income tax at a rate not higher than the highest rate being levied by a participating municipality, with an amount set aside for the long-term maintenance of the JEDD; the power to determine the substance and administration of zoning and other land use regulations, building codes, permanent public improvements, and other regulatory matters; the power to limit and control annexation of

unincorporated territory within the JEDD; and the power to limit the granting of property tax abatements and other tax incentives within the JEDD.

Another economic development tool is the **Cooperative Economic Development Agreement, or CEDA**. Similar to a JEDD, one or more municipalities and Townships may enter to a CEDA; unlike JEDDs, however, a County, the State, or a State agency may also become parties. Creation of a CEDA requires public notification and a hearing process. A CEDA may have the following powers: provision of joint services and permanent improvements; services and improvements by the municipality in the unincorporated portion of the Township; provision of County or Township services or improvements within the municipality; payment of service fees to a municipality by a Township or County; payment of service fees to a Township or County by a municipality; issuance of bonds and notes by a municipality, County, or Township for public purposes authorized by the CEDA and provision for the allocation of the debt service payments and other costs related to the issuance and servicing of the debt; issuance of industrial development bonds and debt of a municipality to finance projects outside the municipality; limitations on annexation within the CEDA; agreements with landowners or developers concerning provision of public improvements; limitations on the use of tax abatements; and other specified powers.

JEDDs can be more difficult to create because they require participation of property owners, and may require a vote of electors. However, a JEDD can be powerful in generating revenue to pay for the costs of infrastructure improvements and services by imposing an income tax. The CEDA does not create a new or distinct revenue stream, but no approval of affected property owners is required.



Tenants in the Firelands Industrial Park include Amitelli Products, Jiffy Preforma, EPIC Technologies, And the Janesville/Sackner Group.

Chapter 10



Downtown Norwalk

Goals:

(Taken from economic development goals; used here as applicable to downtown development)

1. Build upon the successful work of existing City and County level economic and business development organizations and coordinate planning with any new such entities, and support their planning and programming to address long-term needs and provide a sound, solid base for economic and business development that emphasizes and utilizes our strengths.
2. Promote an environment to nurture, retain, and expand current businesses and the central business district.
3. Ensure that adequate information and resources are available to promote a prospective or expanding business's understanding of City incentives, assistance, review and approval processes, and other requirements for development.
4. Provide a pro-development, cooperative atmosphere within the public sector that will accommodate and not hinder suitable and desired development.
5. Ensure that incentives are balanced and do not burden the taxpayer.
6. Approach job creation, retention, and enhancement efforts with a focus on the future, long-term health of the community, and on diversifying the employment and tax base.
7. Provide an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, through venture capital, guidance and counseling as needed, and referrals to other community services.
8. Develop a proactive tourist outreach program, with local customer service providers trained to welcome visitors.
9. Focus on developing businesses and services that capture local and external revenues, such as full-service restaurants, with hours, products, and services that meet the needs of the local market.

Introduction

The central business district or Downtown, referred to as the Uptown district during its revitalization in the 1990's, is the governmental and service center for the City and, in many respects, for Huron County. It also maintains an important role as a retail center. A major revitalization project in the 1990's provided a new streetscape for a district extending along Main Street from Case Street at the western end to Foster Street to the east. Streetscape improvements were accompanied by investments in building facades, and the central business district has maintained an attractive and appealing appearance to the present.

Several themes were brought out during the community forums, and in a focus group of central business district stakeholders. Among the more obvious concerns, such as “filling the empty buildings” and “cleaning up storefronts”, were these:

- Find a niche for downtown growth
- First stop for County residents for economic, cultural, and professional activities
- Make Norwalk a destination City; make Downtown a vital destination within the City, with dining and retail uses
- Expand the “Market Days” concept
- More variety and specialization of stores
- Retail businesses most likely to succeed will be specialty stores
- Attract a major retailer to grow the entire retail community
- Attract tourists to stop; bed and breakfast in Uptown
- Provide an incubator and entrepreneur training
- Theme for Downtown: Victorian
- Apartments above storefronts
- Make use of specific attractive buildings with potential: prime example is the old jail
- Downtown should be location for any teen center, with live entertainment and music
- Create a more lively Main Street
- Note: There was no consensus on the existence of a “parking problem”, but many felt that thought should be given to better directional and wayfinding signage

The vision for Main Street that emerges from the several means of community input is that of a mixed-use central business district, retaining its importance as the County seat and a center for government (County and City) and for personal and business service offices, building a mix of specialized retail businesses that attract knowledgeable and curious shoppers, housing, and office-oriented businesses (such as the headquarters of the International Hot Rod Association). Potential also exists to offer attractive dining and entertainment options, and even to provide housing where building space in upper stories lends itself to conversion to apartments and lofts.

The downtown district, which received streetscape improvement assistance and thus is visually identifiable as a continuous district, extends from Seminary Street along Benedict Ave. to the south, along Whittlesey Avenue to Railroad Street to the north, and from Case Street to Foster Street along Main Street. As a collective location for businesses, including nearby strip retail along Whittlesey, the greater central business district can be defined as extending from Case as far east as Milan/Woodlawn, south across the railroad tracks to the Norwood/ Benedict intersection, and north to League Street, incorporating the new Tops plaza and Uptown Shopping Center.

Central Business Districts are, in many respects, the heart of a City. They contain some of its oldest structures and, more than any other area in the community, provide a link to the City’s heritage and past. They also have several assets that provide a competitive advantage as a location for activity. First, they enjoy a centralized location, and are easily accessible from all points in the community. Norwalk’s downtown, like many, is built around the “zero intersection” of U.S Route 250 (Whittlesey/Benedict) and State Route 61 (East/West

Main). Those highways (especially U.S. 250, which provides access from central and eastern Ohio to the Lake Erie vacation area) bring considerable outside traffic into the downtown.

Second, as noted just above, downtowns contain a unique mix of architectural assets. Norwalk is no exception, with such diverse buildings as the County courthouse and former County jail buildings, the Gardner-Hipp (National City Bank) building, the Towne and Country Theater, a mix of churches bracketed by St. Paul's Roman Catholic church to the east and St. Paul's Episcopalian Church to the west, and several blocks of diverse commercial structures.

Pictorial Summary of Architectural Assets in the Downtown:
Public Buildings and Space



Governmental Centers: Left: County Office Building (former Citizen's Bank building). Center: Huron County Courthouse. Right: Norwalk City Hall.



Public Space Downtown: Left: Pohl Park, a pocket park adjacent Gardiner-Hipp Building. Right: Scene from Bresson Park, adjacent to Berry's Restaurant.



Civic Uses Downtown: Left: Norwalk Public Library, a Carnegie building. Right: Norwalk's U.S. Post Office

Pictorial Summary of Architectural Assets in the Downtown:
Buildings Housing Private Business



Gathering places: Left: Sheri's Coffee House.



Right: Berry's Restaurant



Traffic generators: Left: Chamber of Commerce building houses Chamber of Commerce, Norwalk Area United Fund, Norwalk Economic Development Corporation, Main Street Norwalk, and Norwalk Community Development Corporation. Right: the Diamond Collection building at the corner of Main and Whittlesey, a mixed-use building with retail, office, and restaurant uses.



Left: example of commercial property in Downtown, with upper stories presenting development potential. Right: Focal point for Downtown entertainment, the Norwalk Towne and Country Theater.

A third asset is the support and action of a number of local stakeholders. Unlike malls, “big boxes”, or franchise stores, most of Norwalk’s downtown is owned and managed by people who live in and have a stake in the well-being of the City of Norwalk. This confluence of the “enlightened self-interest” of numerous stakeholders results in a dynamic and creative core that can jointly oversee and plan for the future of the downtown area.

The presence of this third asset resulted in the formation of Main Street Norwalk, an organization co-located in the Chamber of Commerce building, with a Board of Directors and hired Manager. As its name implies, Main Street Norwalk follows the national Main Street model for downtown revitalization. The four-point Main Street approach, which focuses on the primary importance of organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring, is described on page 8.

The Main Street Norwalk organization has developed a vision for Norwalk’s downtown district, and each component of that vision includes one or more goals. Those goals have been incorporated into the recommendations that are included later in this chapter. The following is a listing of the vision and goals developed by the Organization Committee and Board of Main Street Norwalk:

Main Street Norwalk...

- **Is a focal point for civic and cultural activity.**
 - Create reasons to come to Main Street through retail activities, special events, and festivals
 - Cultivate people’s habit of coming to Main Street by using the district as the natural setting for social and civic life
- **Is a vibrant business district with a variety of specialty stores known for quality and excellent customer service.**
 - Provide education for existing businesses on customer service, basic business concepts.
 - Determine what businesses to recruit to the district (clusters) and make a plan to do so.
 - Promote the “uniqueness” of Main Street business – quality and service.
 - Promote the spirit of cooperation by establishing uniform hours.
 - Identify and prioritize customers; identify and meet their needs through enhanced service and business recruitment. Market segments: tourists (heritage); young customers (Sheri’s Coffee House, WIFIs, etc.); older customers (Saturday morning “routines”); nearby communities coming to Wal Mart, theaters, etc.); weekday 9-5 workers in the district.
- **Is safe, secure, well-maintained, and user friendly**
 - Develop plan for maintaining district’s green areas.
 - Enhance wayfinding (see next point).
- **Celebrates its unique history and character.**
 - Integrate Norwalk’s rich heritage into “wayfinding” (e.g. names of parking lots, street signs to parking).
 - Develop walking tours of the business district.
- **Maintains a thriving residential community.**
 - Support residential development of upper floors.
- **Reflects the hometown values of the Norwalk community.**
 - Adopt “Main Street Norwalk...Welcome Home” as district’s tagline.

Trends in Downtown Revitalization

The National Main Street Center releases results of an annual survey of downtowns throughout the country. The most recently reported survey, in 2003, contained the following observations on national trends within commercial areas:

- Most “vital signs” pointed toward continuing progress in commercial districts: increased property values, ground floor occupancy, and increased upper-floor occupancy in 1/3 of the downtowns, increases in retail and restaurants in nearly half, increase in professional offices in more than one-third, increase in housing in nearly one-third, and more than half reporting more businesses with websites than in the last year.
- Thirty-eight percent reported an increase in mom-and-pop businesses, down from the past year, and a corollary increase in the number of districts reporting new franchises.
- One-fourth reported a decrease in crime, with only 8 percent reporting an increase.
- Almost three-fourths reported more people at special events (such as festivals) than in the last year – making five straight years of big increases.
- The Main Street Center noted that many specific community victories involved such items as developing key community properties, rehabilitating historic theaters, or keeping public buildings downtown.
- Top challenges cited included making the transition from start up to long-term funding of Main Street programs (reported by 40 percent of respondents), managing a commercial district during lengthy construction of public improvements, finding new businesses to fill vacant storefronts (particularly independent businesses), and the issue of big-box discount stores that often “leapfrog” into larger spaces, abandoning their smaller stores to deteriorate as they sit vacant.
- On the positive side, more than one-third of survey respondents reported innovative industries in their districts, including such divergent products as game software, gourmet foods, and recorded language training programs.

In presenting the above survey results, National Main Street Center director Kennedy Smith presented seven keys to guiding downtown districts through the next decade. These keys have relevance for the City of Norwalk, and indeed some of them support and underscore the goals and recommendations that appear elsewhere in this chapter.



Scene in Bresson Park in Norwalk's central business district

The Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization

Many communities, including Norwalk, have adopted the Main Street approach as developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This approach underscores the value of planning comprehensively, and pursuing four major points of revitalization simultaneously:

1. **Organization**, or getting everyone working toward the same goal, with consensus on objectives and cooperation among stakeholders. A voluntary board oversees Downtown activities in Norwalk.
2. **Promotion** involves “selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects.” It is important to market the unique and positive characteristics of the downtown district to a number of targets, including shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors. The goal of promotion is to forge a positive image through advertising, promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out mainly by local volunteers.
3. **Design** involves getting the Downtown into “top physical shape” by capitalizing on its best physical assets, such as historic buildings, traditional downtown layouts, and memorable public spaces.
4. **Economic Restructuring** means “finding a new purpose for Main Street’s enterprises.” This approach encompasses assistance to help existing businesses expand and recruiting new businesses. One goal is to convert unused or underused space into productive property to sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises.

The Main Street Center of the National Trust lists several important principles or characteristics of the Main Street approach which follow.

1. **Comprehensive:** No single focus will improve the downtown. Revitalization is a complex, multi-faceted issue.
2. **Incremental:** Small, incremental steps and successes will pace the program. Simple activities will lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the process, and help people develop skills to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects over time.
3. **Self-help:** Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. Mobilization of local time and money from stakeholders will be the key to success.
4. **Partnerships:** All stakeholders in the public and private sectors contribute time, money, and expertise.
5. **Assets:** Main Street must capitalize on the unique assets it already has, such as distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and “a human scale that can’t be copied elsewhere.”
6. **Quality:** A high standard of quality should be set for every aspect of the commercial district.
7. **Change:** Over time, skeptics will become believers; at first, almost no one believes Main Street can turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite, and essential. Over time, the sum of the small, incremental changes will be noticeable, and even significant.
8. **Implementation:** It is not important to wait until a plan can be followed precisely “by the numbers.” “Main Street’s focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activity now.”

Seven Keys to Success (source: June/July 2004 “Main Street News”, National Trust)

1. Strengthen planning and land use laws so that “urban” is really urban and “rural” is really rural, and the sprawl between the two is controlled better (or is never built). Elements should include a downtown retail size cap ordinance, a Main Street-friendly comprehensive plan, and financial incentives for Main Street investment. “Smart growth” policies, while preserving land and encouraging efficiencies of compact growth, will also favor the maximum and best use, and the directing of growth to existing centers such as the downtown.
2. Create an environment that cultivates and supports innovative new businesses. This may include training, peer-to-peer mentoring, seed capital, financing, and the market research needed to help independent businesses get established and grow on Main Street.
3. Downtown districts should be “24/7”, with housing, which provides people keeping eyes and ears on what’s happening, and with neighborhood-serving retail businesses to meet basic consumer needs.
4. Think beyond retail. Less than 20 percent of the space in a fully occupied Main Street district is typically actually used for retail businesses. The remainder is employed for housing, offices, government, entertainment, religion, and, increasingly, small-scale industries. These activities give the downtown economic and market diversity, and a base of employees who can patronize community-serving retail businesses.
5. Entertainment needs to be a stronger component of Main Streets, whether it’s a theater, a spontaneous street performance, or a farmers market. People are starved for things to do besides watching television and going shopping.
6. Place greater emphasis on the environment. Each year, the U.S. buries about 33 million tons of wood-related construction and demolition debris in landfills, making up almost half of all the material in solid waste landfills. Alternatively, concentrate on “recycling” and reusing historic buildings.
7. Place greater emphasis on history. Much of America’s history was made on its Main Streets. Americans’ civil rights remain intact on its Main Streets, and not at shopping malls, where case law has concluded that malls are private enterprises and that free speech could be a risk to that enterprise.

An eighth key is recommended to complement the preceding list. While downtown should celebrate history and its primary role in the heritage of the community, proactive steps should be taken to make it a competitive activity center in the future. Currently, such steps may include positioning downtown Norwalk as an attractive location for business within an expanding regional center (with its regional importance jump-started by the “super center” expansion of the north side Wal-Mart, a growing number of grocery supermarkets clearly supporting a regional market, opening of an eight-screen cinema drawing from well beyond Norwalk’s boundaries, and expectations for forthcoming follow-on business from restaurants and retail attracted to this growing center).

Other proactive steps include the potential for creating a wireless, “wi-fi” district downtown, promoting the low cost of locating businesses in the central business district, marketing to Internet-based businesses who can operate there, marketing to other “new economy”, knowledge-based businesses where a more urban location is not important, and quality of life factors can be taken into consideration, and supporting businesses and activities that attract or retain the “creative class” in Norwalk.

Strategies and Recommendations

Recommendations presented in this chapter were developed by a Downtown Resource Panel, with input from a downtown-oriented focus group, and from ongoing communications with the Main Street Norwalk Manager and attendance at monthly meetings of the Main Street Norwalk Board.

Strategy 1: *Organizing for Downtown Revitalization*

1. Use the Main Street Norwalk (MSN) organization and its Board as the organizational hub for downtown development and revitalization planning. Other entities should maintain close contact with Main Street, in order to present a unified and coordinated effort to improve and maintain Downtown Norwalk. These entities include the Chamber, NEDC, the City administration, and the Business Recruitment and Retention committee of MSN.
2. The entities listed in the previous paragraph should develop a uniform protocol and plan for the recruitment of businesses for the central business district. This would be an ongoing process as specific retail or service voids are discovered or specific business needs are defined.
3. Develop ways to market downtown Norwalk as a single entity with multiple partners and destinations. It is anticipated that a uniform brand and logo for downtown will be developed by the time this plan is adopted. A tagline has been developed for the downtown district, and it should be used individually and collectively by downtown businesses: “*Main Street Norwalk...Welcome Home!*” Those elements, along with any uniform graphics, should be universally adopted across all actively participating organizations. Those planning advertisements for downtown businesses should be encouraged to adopt or include these branding elements. Further, businesses should be encouraged to work toward uniform hours and cross-promotions.
4. Engage the City and County governments to participate in and be aware of downtown revitalization efforts, as both are major stakeholders – as property owners and employers – in the downtown.
5. Create, by 2008, a Community Resource Center and welcoming committee. Provide uniform information to building and business owners on available incentives and also on regulatory requirements. Put in place a *welcoming committee* for new businesses, and with follow-through to make sure any issues are resolved as soon as they are identified.

Strategy 2: *Retain Existing Businesses Within the Central Business District*

As with industrial development, it is important to work hard to retain the existing business and service mix. All partnering organizations, including the City, should consistently work to improve the systems and attractive features of the central business district, and to maintain current information on existing businesses and buildings.

1. Maintain and update a database of available space for businesses in the downtown area. Include pertinent data on cost and rent, ownership, available amenities, space and dimensions, and other critical factors. This database would be housed with NEDC, and shared with others (Main Street Norwalk, Chamber, Huron County Development Council), and is an ongoing project requiring constant updating. This information is important for existing businesses to be able to make informed decisions about expansion within the district, and also for the recruitment of prospective businesses.
2. Focus on key properties that have considerable development potential. Also, explore architectural enhancements that would broaden the usefulness of these key downtown properties. For example, one elevator could potentially provide access to upper stories in multiple adjacent buildings with some modifications. The elevator concept should be studied in detail for possible implementation by 2011.
3. Assist in implementation of projects that would create housing in upper stories of appropriate properties in the Downtown. Seek financial assistance for such projects to make them viable uses of space for the property owners and developers. Assistance and guidance could come from MSN, WSOS Community Action, banks and lenders, the Ohio Department of Development, and owners and developers. Housing options should be explored over the following five to ten years (to 2017).
4. By 2011, conduct a professional study of present and future parking needs, current capacity, and demand, and with recommendations for new or revised parking facilities and guidelines (time limits, fees, enforcement procedures, need for new spaces or lots, conversion of old lots, locations, and wayfinding signage). Main Street Norwalk should coordinate this study with the City administration. (Note: This plan includes some recommendations regarding parking later in this chapter).
5. Informational kiosks should be created in the downtown area. Organizations should be able to freely post information concerning upcoming events, services, and new or existing businesses. Lead agencies include MSN, Chamber, and organizations sponsoring or hosting events, with the kiosks in place by 2008.
6. Consider the creation of a Community Reinvestment Area or CRA (see Economic Development chapter for a description) that provides real property tax incentives for building improvements within a specified target area that includes housing. One recommended area is the downtown district, including adjacent residential areas that have evidence of some housing deterioration. This downtown district would be part of an overall effort to develop a series of CRAs strategically located throughout Norwalk, in

place by 2009, with assistance from the City administration, including the Law Director, Planning Commission, Main Street Norwalk, NEDC, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Strategy 3: *Communication and provision of information on resources, incentives, and review and approval processes for prospective and expanding businesses.*

Coordinated and consistent information for business and building owners is of vital importance for a successful revitalization effort. Owners need to know what tools may be available to assist them with their growth plans. They also need to understand the steps involved in any review or approval process. Those processes need to be as business-friendly as possible, while still serving their public function of ensuring the health, safety, and well being of Norwalk's citizens. Those involved with downtown revitalization should research existing incentives, and work with local resource providers including banks and lenders to develop new ones, and restructure processes and review entities to maximize their benefit to the central business district.

1. Build on the existing downtown façade improvement fund that is linked to Norwalk's revolving loan fund, and include pooled funds from lending institutions and other sources when they are identified. Such funds may be more discretionary, with more latitude in permitted uses, than the current funds derived from the federal Community Development Block Grant program. Funding goals and permitted uses can thus be expanded to respond to known local needs and goals. This expanded, pooled fund should be in place and ready to lend over the next five to seven years, and will involve several entities: MSN, banks and lenders, the City administration, NEDC, and the MSN Business Retention and Recruitment Committee.
2. Review the purpose, policies, and procedures of the existing Architectural Review Board (ARB). Maintain its required review function concerning federal incentive funding, but review its procedures to emphasize its role as a technical assistance provider with regard to the value of historic architecture, the desire for planned uniformity of appearance to market downtown as a single entity, and the preservation of historical architecture as a major downtown district asset. Ensure that the Board of Review and any Board of Appeals are in accord with the emerging vision for downtown Norwalk. This will involve the ARB foremost, but also the Mayor and Planning Commission, Law Director, Planning and Zoning Board, MSN, and the Chamber. Policies should be amended and the ARB restructured as needed.
3. Provide education for existing businesses and their employees on customer service and basic business concepts. Coordinate and offer this through MSN and the Chamber, using a downtown venue for training. This should be an ongoing effort.

Strategy 4: *Facilitation of job creation and retention in the central business district*

The central business district should be viewed as a mixed-use district generating significant employment and income. The downtown employer base includes City and County government, retail and distribution, restaurant and entertainment, and a variety of business

and personal service establishments including insurance, real estate, legal services, medical services, title agencies, surveying, architectural, and engineering, as well as other entities.

Downtown revitalization entities should work with employers, social service agencies, business organizations, and education providers to ensure that the local labor force meets the needs of the downtown as a significant source for employment, and that it can continue to be an attractive source of new employment.

1. Work with the Job Store, EHOVE Career Center, and BGSU Firelands, as well as other entities as they are identified, to teach prospective employees how to maintain gainful employment and how to appear and present themselves. Many of the jobs located within the downtown district involve close and repeated contact with the public, so interpersonal skills are of high importance in conducting business and retaining clients for one's employer and the downtown as a destination. Hospitality industry training should be considered for a number of downtown businesses and throughout Norwalk to consider as a joint and comprehensive program. In cases where an individual is not employed, an explanation of why that person is not hired may be a helpful suggestion for finding future employment. This effort should be ongoing, involving the County Department of Job and Family Services, employment agencies, employers in the downtown district, education providers, and local schools. This can be coordinated and combined (by MSN and Chamber) with the customer service training recommended under Strategy 3.
2. Build a coalition between business, education (EHOVE, DECA, Firelands BGSU campus), and social service providers. Work with high schools to plug students into the community as quality workers. Work with the Abigail House, Abby House, and Miriam House to find employment and support for their residents. Consider establishing a "learning zone" for adults to continuously improve their skills, particularly (for purposes of downtown development) in interpersonal relations and retail business operations. This coalition should develop a plan of action by 2012, and involved entities include United Fund, MSN, the City administration, Chamber, NEDC, educational institutions and school systems, and social service agencies such as the Salvation Army and Erie Huron CAC. The plan should be carried out as a long-range activity.

Strategy 5: *Development of tourism and hospitality-based businesses*

One component of the customer base and market for the downtown, while not the primary one, is the tourist and transitory base generated by the growing Lake Erie destination to the immediate north. While a longer-term goal may be for Norwalk to also become a destination for tourists, the City and County need to step up their efforts to attract a larger segment of the travel and tourism market that surrounds them. This can be accomplished through a focused effort to brand and unify the image of the community and the downtown, followed by increased outreach and service to the burgeoning tourism market.

1. Develop a list of methods to capture a portion of the tourist market attracted to Cedar Point, water parks, and other destinations to the north. A linked goal is to further capture the draw from Norwalk Raceway Park as the City's major attraction. This list

can be developed within one year of this plan's adoption, with participation from Main Street Norwalk, the Chamber, NEDC, and the City administration, as well as key businesses.

2. Explore the feasibility of the use of a County or City "bed tax" to fund tourism and hospitality-related development in Norwalk. This source is largely a user fee, in that it is borne by customers of local hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other lodging establishments, and not by the residents or businesses within the taxing area. Stepped-up work plans in this arena should be undertaken first by existing entities, which in Norwalk would primarily be the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Norwalk. Current consensus does not call for the creation of a new entity to address convention and tourism activity and planning. The development of a bed tax should be reviewed by a "blue ribbon committee" which includes representatives of the lodging industry, and if a determination is made to proceed, the bed tax should be implemented by 2010.
3. Develop a uniform brand for the downtown district based on local research. Develop a uniform logo, slogan, and/or other means by which to launch uniform, coordinated promotions involving multiple businesses and entities. Turnpike and other transient traffic should be captured with brochures in rest stops and hotels. Local businesses should be informed of the potential benefits of uniform regional advertising and publicity. Involved entities include MSN, the Chamber, possibly a marketing consultant, and other local stakeholders. A promotional strategy should be in place by 2008.
4. MSN, schools, performing groups, the Firelands Art League, the Chamber, and other entities should collaborate to increase the coordinated involvement of performing and arts organizations and entities in the downtown district, on an ongoing basis.
5. Consider new opportunities for festivals and events throughout the year where the emphasized primary "market" is Norwalk community members. Combine existing activities to create a "critical mass" of activities and raise local interest. This should be an ongoing activity involving MSN and the Chamber and its members, as well as the City administration.
6. Expand the "market days" concept with more visibility, signage, publicity, and participation. This is an expansion of the concept of the farmers market to include other vendors. This ongoing activity should be coordinated by MSN.
7. Improve awareness of the central business district through "gateway" information and identification, new signage providing direction to parking and downtown attractors, a tie-in to the Rails-to-Trails bicycle path, and more links to other attractions such as Norwalk Raceway Park, Eagle Creek and Sycamore Hills golf courses, and tourism traffic generators to the north. Signage should be in place by 2009, with participation from the Chamber, MSN, and City administration.



8. Boost the downtown district's visibility as "Norwalk's meeting place", for formal meetings, informal get-togethers for coffee or food, activity centers, restaurants, meeting venues, and entertainment. A number of venues exist to host meetings and events, including restaurants and a coffee shop, Towne and Country Theater, the Main Street School and St. Paul's Convocation Center, City and County facilities, and other potential facilities. This perspective should be promoted by the Chamber, MSN, individual participating businesses, and NEDC, with the concept marketed over the long term.

Strategy 6: ***Develop new businesses and services in the downtown district***

There is a need to define the desired market for the central business district as well as identifying and recruiting businesses that would ideally serve that market. This falls under the purview of the "economic restructuring" portion of the four-point Main Street approach. Establishing a direction for the downtown's economic growth is central to the revitalization process, with growth measured in terms of the economic value of commercial activity and real estate. The overall goal is thus to establish a comprehensive strategy to bring about positive change by attracting investment downtown.

To strengthen the downtown district's existing economic base and then expand it, the National Main Street Center suggests the following typical economic restructuring activities:

- Stabilizing and improving the value of downtown real estate
- Studying local market conditions, identifying areas of opportunity, and designing strategies to build on those opportunities
- Helping existing businesses find better ways to meet their customers' needs and expand to meet market opportunities
- Recruiting new businesses to complement the downtown's retail and service mix and boost the downtown's overall market effectiveness
- Finding new or better uses for underused or vacant downtown buildings
- Developing appropriate incentive programs to stimulate commercial and real estate development
- Repositioning the downtown in the marketplace and effectively promoting it
- Developing long-term economic development strategies for the downtown's continued evolution

The Main Street Center recommends a number of actions and approaches to develop downtown real estate and catalyze downtown commerce. To enhance real estate: make small but visible improvements early in the revitalization to boost public interest; create financial incentives to stimulate building improvements; balance property improvements with commercial activity (to ensure that rents do not outpace sales and thus affordability); develop a good working relationship between public and private partners – including property owners, renters, real estate agents, lenders, local government officials, and the general public; and develop an inventory of downtown buildings. To boost downtown commerce, involve the following components: the quality of retail and service activity; marketing and promoting downtown business; maintaining existing businesses; recruiting new businesses to meet market opportunities; and reporting on marketing trends and channeling information to downtown business.

1. Support MSN in surveying local consumer demand. Identify the primary market area, and define a desired market area that captures the potential created by the Erie County tourism business and the market attracted by Norwalk's regional traffic generators (County government functions, a multi-screen movie theater, big box stores, and Norwalk Raceway Park, which demonstrates a potential to bring a sizeable regional market to the Norwalk area for major events). Identify desired product and service lines not currently available in town, with sufficient demand to generate profitable business. Find local businesses that can offer these missing lines, or recruit new businesses to provide them. Input from MSN, Chamber, NEDC, businesses. A survey should be conducted by 2009.
2. Support the creation and growth of a business incubator. This facility can offer space for emerging businesses, and short-term cost savings through shared support staff, equipment, and other operating costs, as well as access to business counseling and financing incentives. A business incubator may be located within or outside the downtown area, and can house retail, service, small manufacturing, and/or other business sectors. Success would be measured through the spin-off of a large number of the "incubated" businesses to their own locations, including other downtown sites for appropriate businesses. Continued feasibility, design, organizational, and financial analysis is needed for an incubator to move forward. An incubator facility should be under development within five to ten years if deemed viable and if a business plan can be adopted. Involved entities would include HCDC, NEDC, SCORE, SBDC, the City and possibly County administrations, the Chamber, and a task force addressing this issue.
3. Support efforts of MSN to expand on Norwalk's role as the County seat and center for services. Take advantage of the markets created by this role and the existence of significant County services and employees located in the central business district.
4. Promote the gradual development of a downtown "entertainment district", with restaurants, after-hours locations, and entertainment venues. Publicize new opportunities. This will occur incrementally, with the fuller use of existing venues, and it may take until 2026 to realize a fully functioning critical mass of entertainment-related activities in the downtown. This activity should be overseen by MSN, the Chamber, and individual business owners and developers.
5. Explore a variety of niches or areas of specialization that could set Norwalk apart. Lines of business identified in community forums and focus groups included music stores, sports (including motor sports), entertainment venues, outdoor activities, a banquet hall, clothing, general merchandise, antiques, military surplus, kitchen outlet, an upscale deli, resale shops, and specialty shops. Certainly, these are suggestions offered by a small number of people, but some of them may represent a few of the potential business lines that could potentially succeed in a growing Norwalk central business district. Continued and ongoing research into potential market potential should be provided by MSN, the Chamber, NEDC, and the Business Retention and Recruitment Committee of MSN.

6. Develop activities and destinations for youth and young adults. Research what interests and engages the City's youth in large numbers by considering a consumer survey. Research what an ideal "teen center" would look like and how a business model for a teen center could be successful from the aspects of financial solvency and security. Determine whether to follow a for-profit or nonprofit model, and consider alternative locations, including existing businesses. Potential partners include MSN, school systems, churches, service organizations, the City administration, and teen task forces. A center or destination should be in place by 2011. See the Quality of Life chapter for more detailed information on this topic.
7. Work toward the development of a lodging facility (small hotel, or bed and breakfast) within the central business district, with an historical theme. Involve the Chamber, NEDC, MSN, and City administration. In business by 2026.
8. Explore the development and publicity of wireless Internet access throughout the downtown district over the next twenty years, using current or emerging technologies and platforms. Recruit businesses that can take advantage of this feature. Within the new Downtown Wireless District, make the expanded library a showcase of the innovative use of wireless technology with public access. Partners in development include MSN, an IT consultant (preferably a local vendor), City administration and Council, Chamber of Commerce, and an IT task force.
9. Support MSN plans for more outside activities and facilities to generate visible activity. This includes more comprehensive and creative use of public spaces, including Pohl and Bresson Parks, as well as sidewalks and private properties of participating businesses. Involve MSN and its Design and Promotion committees, and the Chamber. Research creative use of outdoor space in other communities.

Strategy 7: *Improvement to the physical attributes of the downtown district to enhance business and the usefulness and attractiveness of the downtown to business.*

Previous recommendations have largely addressed three of the four main points of the Main Street approach: organization, promotion, and economic restructuring. Equally important is the fourth element, design, and the physical improvements and enhanced attractiveness to the central business district that result from design improvements. The following recommendations involve planned and harmonious physical improvements to the public (streetscape, parks, roads and sidewalks, landscaping, signage, parking) and private (building facades, landscaping, and parking on private property) physical attributes of the downtown district and its environs.

1. Make optimal use and maximize the visibility and attractiveness of the downtown's historically significant properties. For example, find a new use for the former Huron County Jail property (right), possibly as a restaurant, bed and breakfast, or shop. Promote a Victorian theme overall. Extend the boulevard feel and historic feel that extends inward from the



older homes along East and West Main Street. Include significant historical properties in future historic tours, such as the popular tour of West Main Street homes. Partners in these ongoing activities include County officials, the Firelands Historical Society, Firelands Museum located downtown, Architectural Review Board, MSN, and the City administration. Find a use and new owner or tenant for the old jail property by 2012.

2. Maintain the streetscape and its feeling of uniformity and identity within the district. Consider extending the district east to the Milan/Woodlawn intersection with East Main Street. Consider other extensions as well, perhaps tying in retail areas to the north along Whittlesey as far north as League Street. Involve MSN, the City administration, and affected property owners to gauge their interest (including potential participation in an assessment district).



Examples (nearly mirror images) of the unifying streetscape treatments (landscaping, lighting, pavers, banners)

3. Develop gateway signage to indicate the bounds of the Downtown District. Consider gateway locations at (south) Norwalk Creek bridge on Benedict; (north) vicinity of Whittlesey/League intersection; (west) vicinity of Main/Case intersection (west of Industrial Savings), and (east) just east of Milan/Woodlawn/Main intersection. Put in place by 2010; involve MSN, Chamber, and City.



Looking north from US 250 at edge of Downtown district.

4. Consider specific zoning and land use regulations for the downtown, and separate zoning classifications. Include consideration of a "Downtown Overlay District" where more mixed uses are allowed, such as commercial/service, residential, and light manufacturing. Ensure consistency in the application and enforcement of such a code. Make sure any new regulations seek to eliminate "clutter", enhance the uniformity of the district and its preservation of historic architecture, and create standards of appropriateness that can be communicated easily to affected property owners. This will involve the City administration, zoning and planning officials and boards, and MSN and its committees and membership, and may benefit from input from consultants such as Downtown Ohio Inc.
5. Pursue greenscaping and uniform streetscaping of Whittlesey Avenue from City Hall north to League Street (through 2009), involving the City, property owners, MSN, and

service organizations. This segment of Whittlesey could be enhanced to provide drivers with a memorable point of entry to the downtown district, providing enough visual information, including wayfinding signage for points of interest, to generate increased interest by through traffic. Develop a plan for maintaining the district's green areas and plantings to consistently project an image of quality and care of maintenance.

6. Divert truck traffic from the central business district by developing alternate routes. Involve the City administration and Council, Planning Commission, affected businesses, County Engineer, ODOT, and an engineering consultant. See the Transportation chapter for additional information on this recommendation.
7. Ensure that utilities are sufficient for the downtown area, including water and sewer lines and the information infrastructure of telephone lines and cell phone reception. This ongoing activity involves the City, Chamber, MSN, and engineering consultants as needed.
8. Promote the development of key side streets as Main Street property vacancies decrease and the expansion of business opportunities on Seminary and Monroe Streets, where off-street parking is more readily available, as well as connecting side streets linking Seminary, Main, and Monroe. Include side street properties in any downtown overlay zoning change, to allow for flexibility and creativity in the use of such property. Involve property owners, MSN, and the Chamber, with a substantial improvement on these streets by 2014.
9. In line with the emphasis on side streets, encourage attractive rear and side entrances to Main Street and Benedict/Whittlesey businesses, with direct access to available off street parking. Encourage landscaping and beautification of rear facades where they are visible. Promote the combining of parking areas for adjacent properties to maximize available parking and provide for larger scale of design. Involve property owners, MSN, the Chamber, and the City administration, which may be able to provide incentive funding along with other pooled funding. Substantial improvement should be noted by 2012.
10. Inventory available parking and its availability and time limits. Improve directional signage to available lots, and other "wayfinding" signage as deemed necessary and helpful. Downtown wayfinding and related signage should be uniform in appearance, may include an adopted logo or tagline, and should reflect the City's heritage and historical significance, an acknowledged major asset. Enhance the attractiveness of parking lots and their function within the downtown area. Involve the City administration and planning and zoning personnel and boards, MSN, Chamber, property owners, business owners (who must encourage their employees to park in designated lots rather than on street). Implement any parking improvements by 2010.
11. Investigate the feasibility of providing public restrooms downtown. While it is doubtful that any public entity wishes to construct, maintain, and be responsible for the upkeep and security of such a facility, downtown property and business owners should be aware of existing restroom options for those in need of such a facility, such as restrooms located in the County Courthouse. Involve City and County officials.

Chapter 11



Ernsthausen Community Recreation Center

Quality of Life

Goals:

1. Use existing assets and resources to foster a high quality of life that is accessible for all.
2. Preserve Norwalk's exemplary small town quality of life through controlled growth, yet the benefit of access to "big City" cultural amenities should be maximized and promoted.
3. Support a broad plan that looks at all contributors, including a well run government, schools, social and nonprofit services, safety forces, health care, arts organizations, and recreation providers, all of which contribute to a well-rounded family life and retain families and businesses.
4. Provide opportunities for all members of the community to contribute to an improved quality of life, including retired individuals who can perform services in their areas of expertise.
5. Support diversity of retail and service businesses to broaden consumer choices, minimizing the need to travel elsewhere.
6. Make sure the future quality of life in the community is tied to its rich history, values, work ethic, and rural background.

Introduction

Quality of life issues surfaced frequently during the course of the October 2004 community forums, and later during focus groups. The Quality of Life resource panel addressed a large number of specific topics that, collectively, contribute much to the overall quality of life in Norwalk. Some of the major topics included under this broad heading are recreation activities (park and rec facilities are covered in more detail in the Community Facilities chapter); shopping, dining, and other activities; establishing a trail system for walking and biking; community activities; cultural events and opportunities for entertainment; and the provision of activities and facilities for youth. Each of these will be addressed individually under the recommendations section of this chapter.

One theme that emerged throughout the discussion of quality of life issues was the need to catalog and communicate the opportunities available in the Norwalk area – opportunities to attend events, join clubs and affinity groups, or volunteer one's time to a meaningful cause. A large number of opportunities exist in Norwalk, but discovering them often takes great

effort. Thus a need exists to establish an accessible data base of events, organizations, and resources, that can be continuously updated and corrected.

To provide some background and a sense of the public input received, the following list summarizes many of the comments received at the community forums pertaining to quality of life issues.

- Expanded use of parks and recreational facilities
- Specific activities and facilities requested include: Skateboard area, amphitheater, ice skating rink, soccer complex
- Paved trails for bikes, roller blades
- Parties at the Park on weekend evenings
- Expansion of parks in neighborhoods
- Need for more nice family and more formal restaurants. (This was one of the most common comments received during the community forums, and was expressed in terms of needs for families and for businesses.)
- More entertainment and live performances
- More social opportunities for all ages, including intergenerational activities
- More community-wide activities: fireworks, concerts, music and theater support; Maple City festival
- Neighborhood activities: block parties, parade floats
- Promotion of museum and historical sites
- Permanent art gallery
- Community center for adolescents, youth club evening activities
- City bulletin board, publication listing events and opportunities
- Entertainment district
- Banquet facility/venue
- Maintain/increase local “flavor” and perspective of local media
- Maintain leading edge health care, expanded specialization

Additional comments were received from focus groups, including the following:

- Senior Citizen focus group:
 - More local radio coverage
 - Preservation of natural areas, green spaces, and historic sites
 - Transportation, affordable senior housing
- Hispanic focus group:
 - Access to soccer field (many come to Norwalk to play pick-up soccer matches)
 - Creation of a “cultural house” with traditional dances and other customs
- Realtors/developers:
 - Friendly atmosphere should be preserved
 - Organizations, clubs, other opportunities to “rub elbows” are integral to quality of life

- Quality of life advantages in Norwalk include: variety of housing, golf courses, reservoir, Uptown
- Green space is important; perhaps set up as a ratio of land developed
- High school student focus groups:
 - Pluses: reservoir, schools, Norwalk Raceway Park, restaurants, theater, Vargo's, golf courses, Uptown, proximity to Cedar Point and beaches, Sandusky, and Mansfield
 - Need these: music (CD) store, pool hall, skate park, more restaurants, dance club, more businesses uptown, more entertainment, nice shopping center, live entertainment and venue for local bands and talent, local theater troupe and community theater, bike trails, karaoke, art museum or gallery
 - Other amenities students would like to see: a town square, skating rink, bigger bowling alley or pool hall, game room, uptown place for younger children, bigger selection in library, 50's-60's style café, cable coverage of local high school programs, beach at reservoir, teen night life, large amphitheater, more places for teen hangouts, more lively Main Street

The term “quality of life” has broad implications. Most importantly, it relates to the enjoyment a community’s residents experience from living, interacting, and undertaking leisure activities within their home community. “Quality of life” factors can also be important economic development determinants, as prospective businesses and professionals choose new locations. Norwalk is endowed with an abundance of assets that contribute greatly to the community’s positive quality of life. The more commonly mentioned assets each contribute to the richness and breadth of Norwalk’s quality of life, and they include the library, churches, Fisher-Titus Medical Center, the downtown district and its historical attributes, the school systems, the Ernsthause recreation center and park system, including the reservoir park, the Ernsthause Performing Arts Center, and a variety of service organizations. Receiving more mentions than any of these physical attributes, however, were two over-riding factors: the people of the community, and Norwalk’s “small town atmosphere”. Any planned improvement to Norwalk’s quality of life will likely enhance or underscore one or both of these factors, either bringing people together for the common good or playing to Norwalk’s strength in projecting a safe, easily negotiable, friendly atmosphere that is an attractive setting for raising a family or carrying on one’s life.

Strategies and Recommendations

Two topics that directly impact Norwalk’s quality of life, but which are discussed in more detail in other chapters, were discussed and reported within the quality of life resource panel. Because of their direct link to quality of life, they deserve mention in this space.

First, it is recommended that the City establish and follow guidelines for the development and preservation of green areas. As Norwalk grows spatially, so will the need for land set aside for parks, recreation, and more passive green space. Planning and zoning codes should be changed to require the allocation of land for parks in substantial new developments. In cases where land is not specifically allocated within the subdivision, a monetary contribution should be made toward the development of a new neighborhood park within a walkable

distance from the subdivision. To fund new park development and maintenance, the “recreational” fee for new developments should be increased on a per-unit basis. Finally, potential areas for strategically placed new park developments, nature trails, and other amenities should be mapped out to ensure their preservation. While this is an ongoing activity, plans should be made within three years of the adoption of this plan to target a future neighborhood park to the north side of Norwalk, serving the Westwind area and surrounding and emerging future neighborhoods. Green space development will involve the Planning Commission, planning and zoning officials, the City administration, the building and zoning inspector, project engineers, and the Parks and Recreation department and its Director and Board. Park and recreation planning is included in greater detail within the Community Facilities chapter.

Second, it is important that Norwalk continue to offer exemplary safety services. The City, through its administration and City Council, should frequently review staffing levels to ensure that the safety forces (police and fire) are able to ensure the City’s quality of life and security. It is recommended that the City’s police and fire Chiefs and management, as well as administrative positions, review the extent and pattern of growth in the City and any surrounding service area to determine if any staffing changes are needed, based on history and experience, as well as national standards for staffing. Following an official review, at least every five years, recommendations should be made to City Council, and needed new positions should be budgeted. Safety service staffing is discussed in the Community Services chapter.

Strategy 1: *Provide more social opportunities and activities for teens.*

Currently, the City of Norwalk does not have a place that offers its teenagers social opportunities and activities outside of school events, especially on weekends. After evening sports events, many teens either go to restaurants or their houses for parties and gatherings. Adding a properly planned and managed “teen center” to Norwalk would ensure safety and provide a fun place to hang out and meet new people.

Many factors must be considered: How will a teen center be funded? Who will take primary responsibility for it? How can it be maintained as a safe place for teens? What activities and events will be offered? Where will it be located? A large segment of the community, including significant participation from the teens themselves, need to help in the planning of such a project.

1. The City should support efforts to establish and maintain a center for teens to attend events, take part in activities, and simply hang out. A diverse committee of adults and teens, representing teens and parents, both school systems, the City, and churches, can brainstorm the concept and its many facets. A pro forma budget for the center can be drafted, as well as a report on potential revenue sources including grant funds and dues, and a “business plan.”

(text continued page 7)

Investing in and Retaining Youth in the Community

Considerable time was spent discussing Norwalk's future with high school students. Four students also served on the plan's Advisory Committee. A minority of the 105 students predicted they would live in Norwalk in five years, with less in ten. The common perspective was that retention of youth is not a problem for the City, and that many graduates who drift away will eventually resettle in Norwalk. Many students expressed the desire to experience independent living in another location.

When asked what types of job opportunities and businesses would retain and attract younger adults, students mentioned health care, international businesses, forensics, engineering, music and entertainment, hospitality management, and jobs that offer travel opportunities.

Other features that would attract younger adults would include: more entertainment with later hours (theater with live entertainment, restaurants, dance club, pool hall), better selection of clothing, music, book stores, more recreation opportunities (skate park, ice rink, additions to rec center).

Reasons to Attract Youth/Young Adults

The Heartland Institute for Leadership cites thirteen reasons for attracting youth and young families:

1. Young people can have a three to one (3:1) impact on population and out-migration.
2. Young families have children in school, which impacts public funding for education.
3. Young people have long-term business development and career goals.
4. Young families are establishing them-selves and buy substantial retail goods.
5. Young families use health care services and often have private insurance.
6. Young people bring new energy, ideas, and leadership to the community.

7. Young people are likely to be IT savvy and can help transform the local economy.
8. By retaining youth a community also retains generational wealth.
9. Young people provide needed labor to current, expanding, and new businesses.
10. Educated youth who move to a rural community potentially earn higher than average wage.
11. Young people who return to a rural community will often respect traditional rural values and fit well into the community
12. Young families use and support community institutions such as churches and libraries.
13. Young people who have experiences outside the community often bring new skills, attitudes, resources, and contacts to the community when they return.

Strategies for Youth Attraction

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development suggests several strategies to respond to the challenge of retaining and attracting young people and families:

- Target specific young people before they are juniors and seniors in high school – the earlier the better
- Find out what their aspirations are. Develop personal relationships with adult mentors and use peer networks to connect youths with young adults who have recently made the decision to return to the community.
- Deal at the micro level, not the macro level. Presentations to an entire student body at an assembly has little impact.
- Replace negative attitudes and peer pressure to leave with positive encouragement, tools and resources to help young people create their own careers locally through entrepreneurial enterprise.

It is recommended that youth attraction be based within formal economic development, social service, and educational systems to have a long-lasting and widespread effect. Further, positive attention and attitudes need to be communicated to the youth, rather than resignation to a stagnant future.

A Gathering Place for Youth

The community forums and high school focus groups repeatedly brought forth a need for a place for youth to “hang out”, socialize, and have fun. Necessary components or characteristics of a “teen center” that were mentioned included: policy to deal with misbehavior, alcohol/smoke free, age restrictions, possibly offer one-year “membership” pass, include air hockey, pool, a stage for live music, sound system, individual separate rooms (possibly separating participants by age group), coffee and beverages, concession stand, dance floor, projection screen, couch corner, and security (including cameras).

A committee of students at St. Paul High School identified three major topics: preserving Norwalk’s parks, uptown shopping, and providing a teen “hang-out”. Polling their fellow students, they found that 219 said they would attend a Norwalk hangout, only 20 said they would not, and 23 had no answer. The most popular suggestions were pool tables (145), foosball /ping-pong/air hockey (67), comfortable seating for talking (55), poker tables (26), and movies and TV (17); also mentioned, Dance Revolution and other video games, and a stage for live music and a dance floor.

The St. Paul recommendation noted that such a hangout would provide a safe and active environment and a place for local bands and others to display their talent, a place to get together and meet new people, and still provide adult supervision. A membership card for entrance could be given to every high school student in town, with opportunity for other guests.

An Internet search of other teen centers reveals other features and possibilities: a recording studio, on-line computers, education partnerships to house classes, fun

programs (swing dancing, martial arts, using local businesses), themed dances, oversight by a Board of Directors, organization of service projects, graphic arts capabilities, intergenerational “family nights”, café (such as the nationwide kids’ café program sponsored by ConAgra Corp. and America’s Second Harvest), poetry contests/“slams”.

Maintaining a viable teen center is a difficult task in most scenarios, and the planning steps recommended in this document should be carefully followed. Among the many considerations should be:

- Organization: for profit or non-profit?
- Membership fees: annual or one-time? Assistance for low income? Restrict to City/school district residents and guests? Members sign agreement/code of conduct?
- Revenues: local fundraising? Foundation and other grants? Donations?
- Governance: Board of Directors with youth participation?
- Available building with nominal lease?
- Extent of local government participation? Other partners: private enterprises? Churches? Extension/4-H? Schools? City Recreation Dept.? Individual adult donors or participants?
- Age of participants? Middle school activities one night, high school another night? (It is generally difficult to get older high school students to participate).
- Operating budget: Ongoing revenue stream. Can concessions make a margin? Fees for special events? Operating costs to consider: rent, utilities, insurance, security and any other needed staffing.
- Linkages to other activities and entities: Sell food/beverages from Norwalk businesses; school and library programs; meetings of local clubs/affinity groups.

Other factors to consider include a legal structure for ownership and the creation of an oversight board, alternative sites, design and layout of the center (including desired features such as a stage for small performances) and provision for displaying student artwork. Establish a legal structure for ownership and/or management of the teen center. Involve the City administration, members of the committee, churches and civic organizations, legal, architectural, and other professional entities (possibly pro bono), and other assistance as needed. It is possible that the center could be in place by 2010.

2. A related need in Norwalk is to develop activities and attractions for post-teens and young adults. If Norwalk is to attract younger adults there must be positive assets that appeal to this age group, with leisure and entertainment options as well as attractive jobs and careers. While this plan did not develop strategies regarding this age group, these needs should not be forgotten, and businesses and amenities that market to this age group should be encouraged..

Strategy 2: *Present fine arts as a vital part of the City of Norwalk.*

In preserving the exemplary small town quality of life in Norwalk, the benefit of the “big city” cultural amenities gets overlooked. There is an opportunity for cultural growth in Norwalk that would allow for fine arts to be presented and established as a vital amenity. In order for the arts to become a mindset of the population, there needs to be a way for the City itself to foster the promotion of upcoming events. Promotion and sponsorship are the heart of having a cultural life in Norwalk. Better access to promotional opportunities can work in favor of Norwalk becoming the “destination” point in Huron County.

In planning proper promotion and sponsorship of the arts, the opportunity for high quality, specialized education can occur. This would enable young students of music, art, dance, and theatre to be truly competitive in their applications to colleges and conservatories. Students, their families and schoolteachers would be more exposed to the level of artistry required to become successful in the fine arts world. Having access to a school of fine arts would enable students to achieve their goals in Norwalk. Many students have to drive out of town to find professional musicians, dancers, or artists who can put them in touch with the reality of the fine arts life.

1. Add artistic and cultural events to the City’s bulletin board, as this web-based database becomes more popular. Involve the website administrator, and ensure the web site is continuously updated. Begin this ongoing process within one year (2008).
2. Broaden the bulletin board to include Villages and Cities throughout Huron County. Involve and gather input from City, Village, school district, and County officials, Chambers of Commerce, and local media. Develop this practice within one year (2008).
3. Many not-for-profit groups have lists of contributors for “door prize” fundraisers (e.g. the Lion’s Club Independence Day raffle tickets). Include the arts/culture organizations in the awarding of prizes (such as Firelands Symphony concert tickets). Involve local newspapers and local not-for-profit groups, and begin this practice immediately.

4. Help secure a location to promote and sell tickets to cultural events and concerts. A suggested location is the centrally located Norwalk Chamber of Commerce building, where several community development organizations are co-located. Ideally, the box office needs to have an outgoing telephone line for a credit card machine. Since many events are brought to Norwalk by another group, that organization typically sells tickets as a benefit for itself. Out of town groups do not have a means to sell their own tickets locally and independently, unless they have a contact person doing it privately in Norwalk. Alternative locations can be used as well, including music stores, restaurants and coffee houses, City buildings (such as the recreation center), radio and newspapers, and businesses that become “friends of the symphony” or other appropriate organization. Have a central location and policy in place within two years (2009).
5. Encourage business owners and decision makers to invest in the cultural life of the community and to use their tickets to attend concerts. Usually these are the very people who want the fine arts for their own enjoyment or for their clients. This encouragement should be an ongoing activity.
6. Promote the concept of cultural growth as a mindset and look for opportunities to support it, by attending concerts, donating to fine arts, donating to fine arts organizations, and encouraging owners of old homes or unused building spaces to consider donating a room or two to house a fine arts school in Norwalk. The fine arts school could, if necessary, be co-located with the site of other continuous or lifelong learning activities. Involve Friends of the Symphony and similar supportive organizations, local media, members of the community with an interest in the arts, and the Chamber of Commerce. Input from local music instructors and artists would be helpful. The fine arts school should be initiated within ten years (2016).

Strategy 3: *Communication to the community at large of available health care facilities and programming*

The comprehensive health facilities and services found in Norwalk are excellent, reflecting the community’s concerns in matters of personal and group health and welfare. Having excellent facilities and competent staff is necessary in the presentation of a “healthy” town. The greater need is to have these important features available to all of Norwalk’s citizens. The first step must be to inform residents of what is available and how to access these services. It is imperative that Norwalk continues to grow all parts of the health delivery system.

Norwalk has exceptional health care facilities. The City has a locally controlled and operated hospital. It has attracted (and continues to add to) a significant group of associated health providers. This health campus in turn not only provides top medical services but is also a crown jewel for the City in encouraging new people and industry. The ability of the City to “billboard” these assets must be a high priority. At the same time many present citizens are not aware of this excellent resource and others that exist in Norwalk.

The Norwalk area has a full array of health related organizations. Many pharmacies, clinics, advisory boards and the like provide information on preventative health measures. The City's recreation center offers training in fitness, as do several departments at Fisher-Titus Medical Center. As needed, the Services for the Aging, County health board, hospice and drug and alcohol addiction clinics are in place as well.

A more coordinated effort to reference and cross-reference these vital assets is very important to Norwalk's future. A plan to establish such a body should be developed as soon as possible. Various agencies can be used to bring about better and maximized use of the resources. For emergency service the 911, police department and fire departments, and EMS are available now. For less urgent matters the United Fund, The Ministerial Association and even the Chamber of Commerce might be appropriate.

Input for the following list of recommended actions should be gathered from, minimally, the following providers: FTMC, area pharmacies and homecare agencies, ADAMHS Board, Stein Hospice, Red Cross, County Health Department and board, Lung Association, Heart Association, local health organizations, United Fund, Superintendents of schools (Norwalk, Norwalk Catholic, perhaps outlying districts), school boards, local media, churches, supermarkets, and the Chamber of Commerce.

1. Create a website or page on the community-wide bulletin board described earlier in this chapter, listing all available services. Provide for frequent updating of the website, including posting health-related training and informational events, support group meetings, and other critical dates on a recognized Community Calendar. Link this website to Fisher-Titus Medical Center and other health service web sites. List on the community website all agencies and facilitators and providers of health care within the Norwalk City service area (an ongoing activity).
2. Explore the feasibility of dedicated operators or receptionists who can provide information and referral services in non-urgent matters. This may be feasible within the structure of a hospital. (in place by 2009)

Strategy 4: *Establish a network of multi-use paths and trails that will enable residents and visitors to travel to many destinations, using personal effort, rather than by automobile.*

As the area's population grows and lifestyles change, the need for readily accessible, healthy exercise facilities increases. The most effective and useful facilities will enable residents to get that exercise more easily in the course of ordinary daily activities. This can be accomplished by connecting people's homes and neighborhoods, with their destinations, such as schools, the library, downtown, churches, stores, medical facilities, parks, recreation centers, restaurants, and places of work; using walking paths, bike paths, and greenways. Safe routes for children to walk or bike to school are also valuable.

Conversely, there are many benefits to the reduction of motor vehicle travel: lower vehicle operation costs, less crowded streets, lower street maintenance costs, and better air quality.

The following recommendations are summarized in map form following the narrative. It is difficult to place a time frame on the completion of all components presented below. The first step should be completed within a short time frame of one to two years (by 2008). The more comprehensive system should be in place within fifteen years (2022). However, at any given time, efforts should be underway to accomplish the next incremental component.



Trailhead of North Coast Inland Trail at N.W. St.

1. Connect west side with downtown destinations. Extend the North Coast Inland Trail from its terminus at the North West Street intersection and neighborhood, inward toward the downtown, near Railroad Street, by arranging an easement on the Ohio Edison right of way that follows the former Penn Central corridor to Ohio Street.
2. Connect north side with Route 250 North destinations. Develop the abandoned Norfolk and Western rail corridor, already owned by the City, that originates at its intersection with the Wheeling and Lake Erie railroad on the south side of Route 18, midway between Route 61 and Old State Road. From there it extends north, crosses beneath Routes 18, 20, and 61 at the Route 61 split, follows Schauss Avenue and Republic Street, crossing St. Mary's Street, Williams Street, and Gallup Avenue, adjacent to Bishman Park, (which connects to the Ernsthausen Recreation Center), crossing Route 250 not far from Baines Park, and extends north to Milan where it connects to the Huron River Greenway.
3. Connect west side to north side through downtown district. Identify and develop a route, from vicinity of the Tops store, using streets, Ohio Edison property, private land easements or acquisitions, and Norwalk Schools land near Whitney Field, to connect the North Coast Inland Trail (1) with (2) on the north side of East Main Street near the Schauss Avenue intersection.
4. Connect Memorial Lake Reservoir Park and the east side to the entire north side by development of a short, specialized rail-with-trail route along Route 18 and adjacent to the W&LE line at the Old State Road intersection near the City's water treatment plant. This would make a connection to items 1, 2 and 3 above.
5. Begin acquisition of right of way and easements for a south side loop that would extend entirely around the south side of the City from the North Coast Inland Trail at North



Ohio Edison property east of existing trail.

West Street to Memorial Lake Park. It would cross West Main Street, the Norwalk Creek Greenway, near or through the Huron County Fairgrounds, crossing Norwood Avenue at or near Shady Lane Drive, passing the High School, Sheriff's office and Jail, Department of Job and Family Services, Shady Lane Park, Carriage House Living Center, Gerken Family and Child Center, and Fisher-Titus Medical Center, across Route 250, extending east through the Executive Drive destinations or Firelands Boulevard area, to cross Old State Road and connect to Memorial Lake Park.

6. Create access to the rural east side North Coast Inland Trail. Acquire right of way and easements to connect from (4) at the Route 18 and Old State Road intersection to the North Coast Inland Trail that commences immediately west of the Route 20 and Townsend Avenue intersection and extends eastward through Collins to Derussey Road in Collins Township.
7. Begin acquisition of right of way and easements for a Norwalk Creek Greenway from Memorial Lake Reservoir into the Uptown and westward toward the present Armory near route 61. (This goal was in the 1964 plan.)

An effort of this magnitude will require the involvement of many City departments and officials, and should perhaps be managed by Parks and Recreation. It should also be coordinated with the North Coast Regional Council of Park Districts, which owns the North Coast Inland Trail. It is also recommended that a citywide volunteer council of some sort be engaged to support this effort. Success will depend in great part upon the acquisition of grant funds for property acquisition and trail construction. The City administration will need to be actively involved in obtaining such grant funds.

Strategy 5: *Planning by Norwalk's Park and Recreation Department to improve residents' quality of life; coordination with other recreation service providers.*

The consideration of recreation occurs elsewhere in this plan. Notably, the provision of park space is included in the Land Use section, and the development of the Ernsthausen Community Center is addressed in the Community Facilities chapter. However, several concepts involving recreation facilities and programming have enough overlap with other topics included in this chapter, and have such a direct bearing on quality of life, that they need to be mentioned here. The following are several basic concepts that should be followed in providing for and monitoring improvements in the quality of life in Norwalk.

1. Support efforts to provide neighborhood parks within safe walking distance of existing and planned residential areas (involve Park and Rec department, contributing residential developers, Planning and Zoning).
2. Maximize the usefulness of the Memorial Lake reservoir and surrounding property. Complete the walking trail (within three years), construct an amphitheater (when resources allow), and plan events and activities as budget allows (ongoing).
3. Maximize the usefulness of the Ernsthausen Center: implement plans to add amenities and space to that facility, as described in the Community Facilities chapter. Major

improvements will require a public relations campaign and possible adjustment of user fees to ensure sufficient revenues. This is a long-range activity that may not be implemented for as many as eight to ten years.

4. Expand sports facilities where demand exceeds available supply of such facilities. For example, it may become feasible to expand the softball diamonds at Baines Park south to Westwind Drive, combining with a neighborhood park serving the expanding residential neighborhood in that vicinity, or elsewhere, based on feasibility analysis. Such expansion may be expected within the next five years (2011).
5. Catalog all community-based recreation, fitness, and sports opportunities, whether fee based or free. The catalog of activities can be printed and also incorporated in a community-wide website, but must be maintained as a current and reliable source of information. Involve the Park and Rec department, the Chamber, private enterprises providing services, and the City administration. In place by 2008.

Strategy 6: *Foster the diversity of retail and service businesses and restaurants to broaden consumer choices.*

As Norwalk's population continues to grow, so does the need for a variety of full-service restaurants. Currently, choices in Norwalk are somewhat limited, and residents of Norwalk often drive to other Cities to dine.

If Norwalk is in the position to offer several full-service restaurant choices, it is likely that this addition would attract customers from not only Norwalk, but also those, from many surrounding communities, who currently drive to Sandusky, Lorain County and Mansfield. In addition, Norwalk would be able to offer owners and management of local businesses the opportunity to entertain their potential clients.

Activities should include marketing to potential restaurants to find out which ones are looking for a new location, surveying the community for preferences, determining potential locations in Norwalk, and conducting market research to pinpoint which restaurants are looking for locations for development and extend invitations. The ideal goal is to bring at least two new full-service dining establishments to Norwalk within the next two to five years.

1. Support efforts to bring new viable restaurant options to the City, including efforts to ascertain the preferences of the Norwalk market and their level of support for these alternatives. Work with economic development organizations to identify and market sites for restaurant development, and facilitate any market research and prospect development. Following this preliminary activity, work with economic development organizations to recruit preferred restaurant entities, with an effort to offer alternatives to the franchise operations already located in Sandusky and Perkins Township, to differentiate Norwalk's offerings from those in nearby areas.

2. Assist in nurturing local entrepreneurs who wish to begin restaurant operations in the Norwalk area. Use the network of assistance providers (SCORE, SBDC, local sources of financing). This activity, as well as outside recruitment, is ongoing, and both may take two to five years to achieve results.
3. Ease of shopping and obtaining needed services is an important aspect of a community's quality of life, especially as the cost of travel to other destinations increases. Because Norwalk has adopted the four-point Main Street program for Central Business District development, the most likely entity to approach this goal is the Economic Restructuring initiative of Main Street Norwalk. The following approach is recommended:

With the assistance of economic development organizations, complete and make available (by 2009) an inventory of retail and service businesses located in Norwalk, both consumer oriented and business-to-business. Analyze any apparent gaps in services and products offered locally, where significant business "leaks" to nearby markets and could be profitably captured locally. Residents could be surveyed or sampled to determine desired businesses. In cases where a clear and significant demand is evidenced, or where a gap is readily apparent, the economic development entities should work to either recruit an established business in the desired product or service line to locate in Norwalk, or nurture a qualified local entrepreneur's efforts to develop that product or service line, utilizing available financing, training or technical assistance, and business coaching incentives. This ongoing effort should occur as specific business lines are identified and specified by consensus of the above business development entities.

3. As a business incubator is developed within Norwalk, utilize the incubator and its available space as a further incentive for emerging new retail or service enterprises. This incentive shall be ongoing once an incubator is established.

Strategy 7: ***Development of a Community Soccer Complex***

Over 400 youth from pre-school to middle school age participate in the intramural soccer league sponsored by the Huron County Youth Soccer Association (HCYSA). The vast majority of these individuals are from Norwalk. In addition, approximately 100 additional youth represent Norwalk when competing in travel leagues sponsored through HCYSA. These teams travel throughout the Cleveland area. Norwalk High School fields men's varsity and junior varsity soccer and a women's team. There are also adult Hispanic teams.

Despite the interest in soccer, there is no single outdoor complex. Some travel teams and all of the intramural teams play at the Norwalk Middle School. Other travel teams play at the Ernsthausen Center, Maplehurst Elementary School, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, and a field on Shady Lane next to the County Jail. Norwalk High School has a game field and practice field on Christie Avenue. Visiting teams have often been confused due to the multiple locations. Also, some of these locations lack restroom facilities.

Some communities such as North Ridgeville have municipal soccer complexes. Others, such as North Royalton, have facilities maintained by the soccer league.

With respect to indoor complexes, the nearest true soccer complex is Gameday Sports located near Oberlin. Gameday has a field turf indoor field. Some of Norwalk's travel teams have played in the indoor league and others have had team members attend foot skills and goal keeping clinics. The Norwalk Park and Recreation Department sponsors indoor soccer, which is played at the old Rec Center on Monroe Street. This complex, which was initially an armory, is a multi-use facility and the game is played on a gym surface. Travel teams, which play in both the spring and fall, have a difficult time in locating gym space in which to practice during inclement weather.

Creation of a single outdoor complex for youth soccer for both travel and intramural maintained by a partnership between the City and HCYSA would resolve the issue.

An indoor complex would aid in the development of teams and provide additional opportunities for instruction.

1. Explore the use of Bishman Park, located on Republic Avenue just west of the Ernsthansen Recreation Center, as a soccer complex. The park currently has a baseball diamond. A preliminary site layout suggests that most of the City's demand for soccer playing fields could be satisfied at this location. Situate the goals such that the soccer fields would not interfere with any softball or t-ball activity. Restrooms can then be provided for home or traveling teams at the adjacent Ernsthansen Center. This alternative should be pursued by HCYSA and the City Park and Rec Board within one year, and can be pursued as either a short term or long term solution.
2. If Bishman Park facilities are determined to be unsuitable for the complex, or if these facilities cannot be made available, explore the acquisition by HCYSA of alternate facilities, either within or outside Norwalk's City limits. A potential alternative site is the property owned by the City of Norwalk located just west of the wastewater treatment plant and just north of Baines Park, which accommodates the City's softball leagues. The site must meet criteria including ease of access for local and visiting teams, sufficient acreage to site the needed number of fields, level and tillable terrain, satisfactory drainage, sufficient available area for parking, access and egress to an adjacent collector road, and compatibility with adjacent and nearby land uses. Grant funding can be pursued to acquire and develop the acreage.
3. Additionally, explore the inclusion of a field turf surface in the Ernsthansen Center during any significant expansion of that facility. All activities listed under this section will involve the City administration, Park and Rec Board and administrators, and HCYSA officers and membership.

Strategy 8: *Notification to the public of the variety and wealth of opportunities within the City, including a “community catalog” of events, festivals, activities, facilities, opportunities for volunteerism, lifelong learning classes, and other opportunities.*

The variety of opportunities to learn, participate, meet with others, and deepen one’s enjoyment of life in Norwalk – from bird watching to square dancing to learning about computers to master gardening - is vast, but there is often no way to learn about those opportunities aside from small print in the newspaper or information from the sponsoring groups themselves. A readily accessible source of inclusive and up-to-date information could help improve the potential for the quality of life for many Norwalk community members.

The decline in American civic participation has been lamented in recent years and documented in Robert Putnam’s book, Bowling Alone. There is often a disconnect between those who want to find ways to be active and contributor to their community, and those organizations and entities that are looking for volunteers. We need to make it easier to connect potential volunteers and participants with the opportunities that exist within Norwalk.

Several special events that contribute to Norwalk’s uniqueness are held every year. These include (but are not limited to) the Huron County Fair, Thunder in the Streets, holiday parades, farmers’ markets, art shows, community church services, and others, and a new community festival scheduled for early fall is being planned. The comprehensive plan does not need to address the planning of these ongoing events. However, publicity of those events can be tied to the other publicity efforts listed above, and if a broad community demand is expressed for a new event (such as a community themed festival), inclusive planning within Norwalk for that event should be encouraged, in order to ensure that it represents Norwalk in the best light possible and maximizes resident enjoyment and (to the extent possible) returns to Norwalk’s business community.

1. Assist in the development of a central clearinghouse of information on upcoming events, classes, learning opportunities, and performances in Norwalk and surrounding communities that are available to the public, affinity groups and special interest groups. The clearinghouse should become Internet based, with access to media (newspapers, radio, cable TV). Seek funding to develop and maintain the clearinghouse, and identify a responsible party to host and maintain the clearinghouse. Involve Chamber, schools, venues and event providers (Towne and Country Theater, fairgrounds, Ernsthausen Performing Arts Center, churches, school systems, cinema, Norwalk Raceway Park, library, Park and Recreation Department, Ohio State University Extension, and numerous others). Clearinghouse to be up and running with established protocol for operation and publicity effort by 2009.
2. Update and expand the database of volunteer participation opportunities. Utilize the United Fund as the primary party providing data on volunteerism opportunities, and link efforts to Senior Enrichment Services’ Ambassador Program. This database could be a community service/civics project for a high school class or scouting group. Coordinate it with knowledgeable sources such as the United Fund and social service task forces,

and list opportunities for participation in an initial publication that is distributed to key recipients, and included on the community website. Publicize the website and contact information for all potential providers of input, and for general public interested in opportunities. Involve Chamber, United Fund, City administration (with link to City website), schools, and social service organizations and networks. Up and running by 2009, in coordination with the clearinghouse described in #1 above.



Norwalk's Premiere Theatre 8 opened in 2005

Chapter 12



Community Services

Goals:

1. Encourage public, social, and nonprofit services as the backbone of a caring community, and encourage coordination and non-duplication of services, volunteerism, and support.
2. Design services to accommodate the full range of community interests, needs, age groups, and economic and social backgrounds.
3. Build in the planning for the Fisher-Titus Medical Center campus and facilitate the continuing development of the community's expanding medical services.
4. Plan for adequate and effective, strategically located safety force facilities, including firefighting facilities.
5. Ensure that planned services are cost-effective and able to be provided without interruption.
6. Consider outsourcing of services when it is cost effective to do so and the level and quality of service, as well as the equality to citizens with which it is provided, is not compromised.
7. Maximize ease of access to local government and its ability to provide timely assistance to the public.
8. Ensure that the municipal government is upholding its established laws and charters, cooperating and enhancing communication with citizens and other government entities (Federal, State, and local) to serve the good of the community as a whole.
9. Focus on responsiveness to the needs of the citizenry and business.
10. Ensure that services are provided in a cost-effective, efficient manner that earns the respect and support of the community.
11. Undertake action planning to accomplish the broad goals of accessibility, service, responsiveness, and efficiency of operation.
12. Monitor and anticipate demographic changes and be responsive to resulting and emerging needs; the City budget and capital improvements plan should include consideration of these changes and needs.

Introduction:

“Community services”, for purposes of this document, is a broad term that encompasses the large number of family service agencies and organizations, government and quasi-governmental boards, and public services provided to individuals and households by City and county government, such as police services.

It is recognized that the array of services available within the City are vitally important. A community's greatest asset is its people, and these services exist to allow those people to live, work, and interact within the City as productively and fruitfully as possible. While services that offer treatment for pathologies and existing conditions are critical, perhaps more important are services that provide prevention and intervention to overcome potential

personal problems and improve the quality of life of Norwalk's citizenry and productivity of the City's workforce.

A broad array of community services is provided to citizens within the City of Norwalk. Because Norwalk is a county seat and population center, many county-level services are housed in Norwalk. In addition, there are a number of facilities ranging from Head Start classrooms operated by Erie-Huron CAC, to after school and other programming offered at the Salvation Army, to a Food Bank, employment and training services provided at the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services, and many other services.

Unfortunately, these services and their intake offices are spread throughout the community. Community services frequently involve referrals of participants from one program to another. From a land use perspective, this results in many cross-town trips from county offices to City offices to private or nonprofit organizations. There is no history of consolidating services under one roof, or even in one general area within the City.

Community forums brought out a number of issues worth mentioning. Services, and their related issues, ranged across the board, including:

- Disaster planning
- Safety forces (police, fire)
- Building inspection
- Safety dispatch communications
- Leaf pickup
- Snow removal
- Day care
- Senior centers and programs
- Drug abuse prevention/treatment
- Handicap facilities
- Indigent health care
- Animal control
- Recycling and refuse collection
- Transportation services for seniors
- Health Department services
- Mentoring programs
- Drug free activities for children
- Urgent medical care
- Intergenerational activities
- Renewed Welcome Wagon
- Eldercare
- An ombudsman for senior assistance
- Assistance in overcoming language barriers
- Counseling in budgeting and family finances
- Better location for clothing bank

Huron County Needs Assessment

Several entities within Huron County, including the United Fund of Norwalk, Huron County Department of Job and Family Services, Huron County General Health District, and Mercy Hospital of Willard, commissioned an assessment and prioritization of needs throughout the county. Norwalk was one of four targeted geographic areas included in the assessment. Surveys were completed by a series of key informants and key service providers, preceded by a discussion and consensus on the list of issues to be used in all subsequent data gathering efforts by members of a "Community Needs Assessment Steering Committee". Five critical areas were selected as focal points: education and workforce development,

health and dental care, mental health and substance abuse, public safety, and self-sufficiency and quality of life issues.

Top three priorities were selected by focus groups and by service providers for each of the five critical areas. The results were as follows:

Education and Workforce Development

Service providers and focus groups said:

1. Most employment opportunities are in low wage jobs
2. Jobs lost due to relocation, closing, and/or downsizing
3. Potential employees are predominantly low skilled and undereducated

Health and Dental Care

Service providers and focus groups said:

1. Affordable and accessible health insurance
2. Affordable medical/dental care
3. Affordable medications

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Service providers said:

1. In home parenting/mentoring for families who deal with mental health issues
2. Medication costs
3. Limited psychiatric availability

Focus groups said:

1. Community ignorance about drug/alcohol abuse
2. Medication costs

3. Limited services for chronically mentally ill

Public Safety: Huron County Overall

Service providers said:

1. Drug control
2. Tie for second:
Communication between public safety officials
Staff reductions in public safety forces

Focus groups said:

1. Drug control
2. High-risk behavior by juveniles
3. Increase of physical, sexual and psychological abuse

Self-Sufficiency and Quality of Life

Service providers said:

1. Affordable housing
2. Lack of economic opportunities
3. Funding for family emergency needs

Focus groups said:

1. Lack of economic opportunities
2. Lack of prescription drug coverage
3. Affordable and available child care

Steering Committee members believed there was a marked similarity across geographical locations that supported the use of the overall Huron County rankings, depicted above, for purposes of further discussion. Thus, the above listing of priorities represents the perceived needs within the City of Norwalk as well as all of Huron County.

Strategies and Recommendations

General recommendations regarding public services are to maintain the necessary number of professionals and other staff recommended by nationally recognized standards and population ratios.

Strategy 1: *Recognize the vital importance of adequately staffed, trained, and equipped safety services forces, and house such services in facilities that minimize response times throughout the City and environs.*

1. Research and evaluate the feasibility of a new fire department facility (see Community Facilities chapter), and plan for its financing and construction if research leads to the conclusion that a new facility is warranted. This includes the necessary research to determine the need for a central location versus a station and substation. One or more locations need to be carefully planned to minimize response times throughout the City, especially taking into consideration the increased congestion on Norwalk's north side along the U.S. 250 corridor and Westwind Drive. This project may take ten years or more to complete, and will involve traffic studies, land acquisition, design, and construction. The benefits of having two stations (minimized response times) must be balanced with the cost of staffing and equipping two stations, which may be prohibitive.
2. Every five years, conduct a study to establish adequate safety services staffing levels, which will allow for budget planning if adding personnel is deemed necessary. Ensure that safety forces are adequate for the size of the community. As Norwalk grows, budget for the addition of safety forces to, at the least, maintain minimum standards regarding full-time forces.
3. Provide for adequate training and equipment to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of safety forces in carrying out their duties. Safety force leadership needs to keep their employees well trained in order to provide effective and efficient service. Continue Norwalk's current budget process, where equipment needs are identified and discussed, and solutions to those needs are planned. Also, the budget process should be used to secure adequate training money.
4. Focus on the substance abuse problem as a priority in Norwalk, and mobilize resources and partnerships/collaborations in the area of education, public relations, prevention, treatment, monitoring, and enforcement.
5. Actively engage the community in determining what safety force services are necessary and what are desirable, with a strong emphasis on prevention, enforcement, and identified problem areas.
6. Safety force leadership needs to stay informed on technology advancements. Safety force leadership can use the budget process to update technology as needed.

Strategy 2: *Offer continuously improved and adapted senior services, facilities, and programming, to respond to the changing needs of the growing elderly sector.*

As noted in the population and demographics chapter, the elderly population in Norwalk is expected to expand considerably over the next two decades. With that increase will come a demand for increased services and facilities for the elderly. Senior services and programs will become increasingly important, as will such factors as accessible housing and amenities.

An important goal of senior services is to support and build programs and resources that allow seniors to remain independent as long as they are able. The social cost of supporting a dependent senior is typically significantly greater than providing for the varying needs of the independent elderly. For example, while a nursing home bill may cost \$5,000 monthly, the cost for assisted housing, which does not provide medical care but can support a senior with basic amenities and services, may be \$1,300 or so monthly.

1. There is a need for a new senior center in Norwalk to serve the north central portion of Huron County, especially including Norwalk's elderly population. A new center should be developed that has growth potential for increased capacity. The whole community should be involved in the planning process, so the facility is responsive to varying community needs and can support intergenerational activities. The facility should be located on a site that is easily accessible and can provide ample parking.

Services for Aging officials are planning the eventual construction of a new senior center in Norwalk within the Shady Lane area, on land currently owned by Huron County. This location, within close proximity of the current senior center, provides easy access to elderly users throughout Norwalk, and also provides accessibility to others living throughout the Norwalk senior center's service area throughout the north-central portion of the county. The location is only a few minutes from the intersection of U.S. 250 with the U.S. Route 20 bypass, providing efficient access from all directions. Further, it is close to the Fisher-Titus medical campus and Norwalk High School, making collaborations with those institutions more likely. The new senior center should be in place within six years, by 2013.

In addition to a new center, it is recommended that Services for Aging collaborate when feasible with other organizations, such as Fisher-Titus Medical Center and Norwalk's Park and Recreation Department, to bring about beneficial programming such as exercise programs for seniors now held at the Ernsthansen Center. As the elderly population grows and health and fitness among the elderly grow as an interest, further opportunities for collaboration between the Park and Recreation department and its facilities with Services for Aging should be explored. This is an ongoing activity.

2. Facilitate an increase in the stock of independent, assisted, and other senior housing to meet projected needs. Collaborate with developers, seniors, and Services for Aging. Engage reputable developers with familiarity in the factors involved in building and managing senior housing. This effort should be ongoing as more people enter retirement.

3. Assist in expanding public transportation, especially including options for out-of-county transportation. Different forms of transportation services offered within the area need to be involved and coordinated, including Services for Aging, taxi services, and transportation offered by faith based organizations.
4. Take steps to increase resources for maintenance and home repairs for seniors, including wheelchair accessible ramps. Coordinate with financial institutions for low interest loans, with contractors, and with agencies and organizations interested in participating. Search for government grant opportunities.
5. Foster an increase in the capacity to provide “meals on wheels”. Find an innovative and cost-effective way to enhance the provision of meals for seniors in their homes (2008).
6. Support the position of a locally accessible Senior Ombudsman, possibly housed within Senior Enrichment Services, to respond to residents’ requests, help obtain responses from authorities, and advocate for the needs of area seniors. Such a position currently exists at the regional level through the Mansfield Area Office on Aging (in place by 2010).

Strategy 3: *Provide cost-effective and customer-friendly governmental services to Norwalk residents and businesses.*

It is important to maximize the ease of access to local government and its ability to provide timely assistance to the public. Goals include responsiveness to the needs of the citizenry and ensuring that services are provided in a cost-effective, efficient manner.

1. Review and revise as necessary the community disaster plan to maintain a continuity of operations, and communicate its major features to all residents and businesses. Maintain the excellent degree of coordination between the Huron County EMA and City safety forces.
2. Provide for improved and more comprehensive communication of community events and available services through the community website, press releases to the local media, and use of available message space.
3. Involve the City in direct delivery of human services only when the service is within a City department’s mission and when the City is the most equitable or effective provider and there are no other qualified providers.
4. Consider restructuring of staffing at City departments as new needs are identified. For example, consider employment of a City engineer, if benefit/cost analysis indicates that it is a cost-effective and time-saving alternative.
5. Examine the City’s recycling program, and take steps to ensure that cost-effectiveness is maximized, as well as the public’s awareness and participation rate.
6. Evaluate the benefit of formalized capital improvements planning for annual capital, buildings, utility, and other major improvements. If it is found to improve

administrative planning and budgeting, prioritization of needs, and allocation of resources, consider adoption of a formal system of capital improvements planning (in place by 2009; see chapter 14).

7. The City should coordinate with community agencies, or through the United Fund office as a central hub for information, to ensure that a resource directory of all service providers is disseminated, possibly in booklet form (such as the directory developed by the ADAMHS Board) and on the Internet, within two years. Include provisions for updating the directory on a frequent basis.

Strategy 4: *Communicate, coordinate, and provide public, social, and nonprofit services*

Enhanced communication is needed to provide effective notification of available services, their benefits, and their eligibility requirements to the public. Further, coordination is needed between the numerous agencies offering services, to minimize duplication and provide a seamless delivery of services.

1. Utilize the existing Huron County Inter-Agency Council meetings to improve communication and coordination among agencies. A central contact agency is the Norwalk United Fund, which serves as an umbrella organization, and which maintains a database of information offered at inter-agency meetings. This database includes agency and agency contact information. Agencies represented range from profit to nonprofit, community services, and government agencies. Open the lines of communication by implementing the first step. In addition, make greater use of conference calls, emails, and other means of communication between the participating parties.
2. Encourage the siting of service agencies' intake, meeting, activity, and training venues to be in locations that are readily accessible by the public. When possible, encourage, plan, and develop co-locations of multiple agencies and services that serve many of the same client base. Ensure accessibility to all such facilities by the elderly and disabled. In promoting co-location of complementary services, encourage and facilitate broad community participation in the planning and provision of social services. Siting of a public service facility should be based on criteria including specific facility requirements for acreage, transportation and access; land use compatibility; potential social, fiscal, environmental, and traffic impacts; a consideration of alternatives; and fair distribution of public services throughout the City. Foster the expansion of facilities as needs outgrow the capacity of existing physical facilities, and as needs grow with population and societal trends. Such facilities may include the Salvation Army, Gerken Center for Early Childhood Development, and Huron County Health Department.

Strategy 5: *Ensure that the community provides adequate health services that are responsive to the changing needs of the Norwalk area's population.*

The Norwalk area is fortunate to house a progressive and growing health care community led by the Fisher-Titus Medical Center. The array of facilities, technologies, and medical generalists and specialists has grown considerably, evidenced by the expanded medical campus surrounding the hospital, as well as the "Phase 1" patient pavilion and "Phase 2"

addition of new and upgraded rehabilitation and oncology facilities, with a third phase underway, including cardiology and diagnostic services. Complementing these facilities are a wide number of health care services that help provide preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services to the general public, ensuring that needed services can reach those who cannot afford them under conventional means.

1. Engage the members of the Huron County Inter-Agency Council to collaborate on public and private community health care issues. This should be an ongoing process. Topics of interest are: changing medical technology, the growing senior population, expansion of rehabilitation services, special needs populations, continued growth of less invasive procedures, funding and economics, outreach to the community, medical malpractice costs, the availability of services, pharmacy costs, and accreditation.
2. Assist in the establishment of a local community-based health care needs assessment process to ensure area needs and services are met and to avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities to help reduce costs to the community. Long-term economic impacts should be considered. The process should be in place by 2010.
3. The City should collaborate with FTMC and other health care providers to ensure the best possible provision of health care, including affordable care to low-income residents, and should assist in offering programs, events, and outreach to the community. The development by Fisher-Titus of an “Urgent Care”, off-hours alternative to an emergency room should be supported for those throughout the community who would benefit from such as facility. (In place by 2007)

Strategy 6: *Provide building and premise inspection services that effectively provide for the safety of building occupants while not inhibiting desirable development from taking place.*

As residential, rental, and commercial properties age, they can often become non-compliant with existing building codes, endangering the health and safety of community members. Inspection services need to be in place to ensure that residential, rental, and commercial properties are upgraded to conform to existing codes. The purpose of inspection services is to protect the Norwalk community while not being overly prohibitive to the development of the community and new investments.

1. Further develop the Norwalk Fire Department’s Inspection Unit to keep pace with community growth.
2. Continue to utilize State services for the construction of commercial buildings in the short run. Such services are currently provided from the Richland County inspection office. A countywide effort is underway to study the benefits and costs of alternatives to this arrangement, including subcontracting with another entity or supporting a stand-alone county office. Costs would include the salary and benefits associated with hiring a certified commercial building inspector and being able to inspect all necessary components of commercial construction. Such costs would have to be supported by a sufficient revenue stream generated by inspection fees. If a locally supported commercial inspection office is found to be financially feasible, develop such an office

within five to seven years; alternatively, achieve a satisfactory solution involving dedicated staff from another entity within the same timeframe. Input should be obtained from NEDC, HCDC, builders' associations, and local and county government officials.

3. Continue to hold collaborative meetings with City departments prior to State approval of building plans for commercial property, to gather and share all pertinent information of interest to the varied departments (planning/zoning, fire, police, streets and utilities).
4. Develop and pass needed legislation to shape inspection services to best meet community needs.
5. Consider best practices from similar communities in developing plans for inspection services.
6. Research contracting with other government or regional inspection services to provide such services in Norwalk for residential and rental properties of four or fewer units. Research should include looking at private enterprise solutions, the workload, and potential costs.

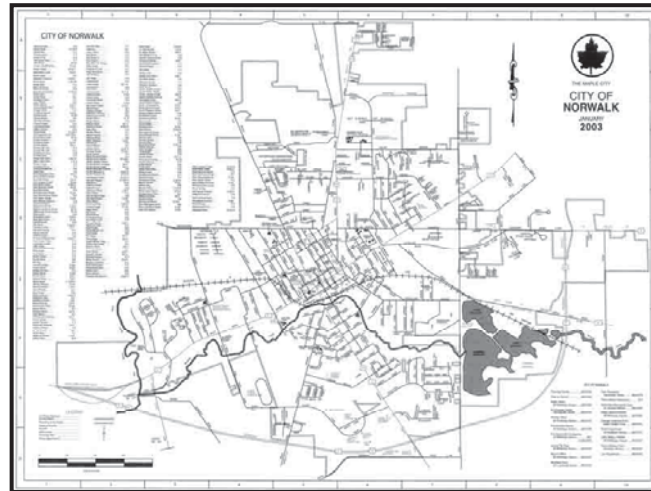
Strategy 7: *Ensure that the City provides adequate legal and insurance services for its residents, businesses, and institutions and organizations.*

1. Utilize the Huron County Bar Association to establish a call center, email listserv, and website to field legal questions that can be answered on a pro bono basis by local attorneys. The availability of this free service should be scheduled for two hours or so on a periodic basis, such as once per month, and its availability can be marketed to the whole community. A website could be used to provide more general information on the legal system, required steps for certain legal processes, and other information of interest to the general public. Additionally, establish through the Huron County Bar Association a "speakers' bureau" list of attorneys who can be contacted to present general legal information to local groups and organizations.
2. Re-establish a local agent council of all local insurance representatives. Due to a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding, community members experience financial and/or opportunity loss regarding services provided by the insurance industry. Consumer and service provider education by insurance industry representatives will allow two-way communication, providing necessary information to the consumer and allowing feedback to the local insurance industry for service gap analysis. (in place by 2009.) Also, establish a call center, email listserv, and website for insurance industry questions that will be answered by insurance representatives. Similar to the legal service described above, this service should be scheduled for two hours or so at a time on a scheduled basis, perhaps once a month. The existence of this service, perhaps coupled with the legal service, should be marketed to the whole community.

Strategy 8: *Provide an accessible and coordinated continuum of family services to those who require them or depend upon them for basic needs.*

1. Leverage community resources and leaders (on an ongoing basis) to develop a grassroots lobbying effort targeted toward State and Federal level office holders. Topics of concern are:
 - Medicaid and Medicare funding
 - Low wage jobs and job growth
 - Elderly home health care
 - Creating a statewide business and industry-friendly environment
 - State and Federal restrictions on local budgets that inhibit or prohibit local ability to fund or transfer funds into identified governmental services to provide for local needs.
2. Support the monitoring of needs and assessment of staffing levels and budget needs for Adult Protective Services as the aging population grows (an ongoing activity that should be performed on a routine schedule), and at Children's Services according to workload. A poor economy directly impacts Children's Services' workload. (ongoing)
3. Leverage community resources for increased child care services. Work with community partners and providers to maximize the effectiveness and responsiveness of the network of diverse child day care providers, throughout the City, that are affordable, accessible, and of high quality (ongoing).
4. Advocate for and support the development of adequate ESOL classes for the growing Hispanic/Latino population within the Norwalk area. Locate classes at a facility where students will feel welcome and comfortable. Advocate for an identification system, where local banks may accept this means of identification. Consider the cultural and recreational needs of this ethnic group, including access to soccer fields, where Norwalk attracts Hispanic men from a regional area for recreational play. Encourage all services offered within Norwalk to be accessible and understandable to all by removing architectural, cultural, language, communication, locational, and other barriers.

Chapter 13



Land Use

Goals:

1. Pursue balance between emerging residential areas, industrial parks, commercial districts, and land reserved for recreation and open space, and examine land use potentials to promote the most valued use, conforming to the recommendations of this plan, for each parcel.
2. Account for long-term industrial development needs and long-range job and facility development that enhances City and local school district tax bases.
3. Consider the long-term needs of the City's institutions, such as the eventual need for new school facilities, and public safety facilities. Such planning often requires proactive acquisition of land to reserve it for public use.
4. Require adequate open areas and green space to enhance the balance of development and common areas, including reserving and mapping such reserved areas.
5. Strictly enforce zoning and related laws that define compatible uses and protect property values.
6. Ensure that this land use plan continues to guide practical land use and development decisions, through a system of plan and project review and modification, and that the plan considers orderly expansion into surrounding Townships.

Introduction

A wide variety of comments regarding land use were received during the community forums and subsequent focus groups. Those comments address land use by geographic area, as well as the use of regulatory means to guide land use decisions. Because guiding land use is at the heart of any comprehensive plan, many of these comments may overlap topics that are covered in other chapters. The following is a summary of comments received:

Geographic Issues

- Expand the residential growth area southward, with homes, parks, and shopping
- Develop the south side to benefit the Norwalk school district
- Develop the City to the south and east
- Expand the City limits to the south, across the bypass
- Annex the Raceway Park into the City; annex east for industry; annex to the bypass east all of Routes 18 and 20; develop east end utility district – water and sewer for airport and Raceway Park; annex south; develop around Raceway Park

- Expanded industrial park on the east side; manufacturing on the east and north sides
- Annex from Washington Street north for residential development
- Residential on the south and west sides
- Consider changing residential use to permit commercial use along Milan Avenue north of League
- Retail expansion to the south end of town; south side grocery store and restaurants
- Preservation of the core City; Downtown should be destination for businesses, tourists, residents; expand the Downtown.
- Improve Norwalk Creek area

Growth Issues

- Plan for space to expand business and industry
- Balance growth with small town atmosphere; quality, measured growth; mix of urban and rural in small town atmosphere
- Preserve historic properties; expand historic district to Benedict; maintain historic sites, green spaces, and parks
- Plan a retail/tourism district; entertainment district; need venues for performing arts and live music; new recreation opportunities, teen center or hangout
- Apartments above storefronts; mixed use
- Increase green space in areas to be developed; more green outdoor space for physical activities to support a health community; Norwalk Creek riverwalk; preservation of natural areas
- Expand housing and school facilities
- Realign school districts
- Preserve farmland
- Plan within regional context

Regulatory and Process Issues

- Create retail zones (to accommodate and guide commercial growth)
- Separate residential from industrial uses through zoning
- Consider specific regulations (overlay district, design, zoning) for Downtown, separate zoning classifications; create standards of appropriateness for Downtown area; is Board of Appeals too liberal?
- Support subdivision pre-planning
- Reduce variances for housing
- Norwalk Township should be zoned; work with Township for JEDD agreement
- Youth involvement in planning
- Maintain a consistency in regulations and their enforcement
- Restriction on adult entertainment uses

Land Use in Context: Previous Land Use Planning

The 1964 Norwalk Comprehensive Master Plan (now over forty years old) addressed existing and proposed land use. To provide a sense of perspective, the salient points of that document are summarized here.

At the time of the Plan's completion, Norwalk's corporate area comprised 3,343 acres (just over 5 square miles), and about 51 percent of the land area was developed, with half of that being residential. Total developed land amounted to 12.7 acres per 100 population. The use of land broke down to 49 percent vacant, 25 percent residential, 2 percent commercial, 5 percent industry and railroads, 9 percent institutional and public, and 10 percent streets.

Of all developed land in Norwalk, 48 percent was residential, 20 percent streets and alleys, 18 percent public and institutional, 10 percent industry and railroads, and 4 percent commercial.

In 1964, commercial uses extended north from the central business district on Whittlesey Avenue as far as Franklin Avenue, and straddled Main Street from Case to Milan Avenues, extending one to two blocks north and south. Highway service and heavy commercial industry were located along US 20 east of Old State Road (this was before the US 20 bypass was constructed), and north of the City on US 250.

Also in 1964, industrial uses were most predominant to the west and north of downtown, at such locations as North West Street (then Stokely-Van Camp) and Newton Street (the former Norwalk Furniture building).

A map in the 1964 plan delineated vacant and undeveloped land within the City, and the plan stated that, at the time, "Available land requiring little if any conditioning or reclamation is found in almost all sections of the City and in the immediate environs. From the standpoint of both residential and nonresidential development, certain areas to the south and east appear particularly desirable for future development in the light of the contemplated bypass of US 20 and proposed interchange locations. Other attractive areas for future residential development are to the northeast and northwest." The plan projected the following by land use type:

- Continued gradual lowering of overall residential density, increasing the ratio of land to population;
- Some increase in commercial land influenced by distribution and density of residential development and population growth in the trade area;
- Continued increase in the growth of the industrial economy, with an increase in the industrial land population ratio;
- Railroad facilities to remain at about the present level;
- Increased demand for recreational facilities as leisure time increases;
- Need for institutional land in relation to population to remain at about present proportions;

- Continuation of present proportion of total urban area in streets, with some increase in proportion of vacant land to allow for increased latitude of choice in the development of land.

The plan advocated the development of the remaining vacant land within the corporate limits, which was projected to be of sufficient “holding capacity” to accommodate population increases through 1980.

A section of the 1964 plan was entitled the Land Use Plan, to show “the different land uses throughout the community and principal public facilities recommended under the Master Plan.” Planning concepts to be considered included:

- Minimizing or eliminating inherent conflicts between certain types of land uses and between land uses and public facilities.
- Using the land use plan as a guide in amending the Zoning Map as the demand on certain land use categories increases with the continued growth of the community.
- Using land use planning to determine the size and location of various utilities and extensions, and bringing about appropriate subdivision practices.
- Consolidating new urban uses in certain sections that are successive or contiguous, at least in part, to an already developed area, and remaining within a defined planning area or “urban service area” that is estimated to be fully adequate to accommodate all likely prospective growth over the next twenty years.
- Land should not be annexed prematurely, before a reasonable amount of building development exists and tax revenues can support services provided. The plan recommended annexation, at the time, south and east to the proposed (and now existing) Bypass.
- Land reserved for industrial purposes must be “desirable, not merely suitable. Bare land, accordingly, does not constitute an industrial site.” Generally necessary features include a site that is level, convenient to a railroad or highway, served by all utilities, free of “residential nuisances”, properly drained, and with ample land for future expansion, sound protective zoning, near a labor market, and in or easily accessible to the community.
- Effort should be made to promote development of industrial districts and avoid scattered, individual tracts. The concept of an industrial “district” or, in more contemporary parlance, industrial park, was promoted, for a number of smaller operations wanting to consolidate and enjoy cost and design efficiencies.
- In the Utilities section of the 1964 plan, it is recommended that improvements should be oriented toward serving the growing residential areas then in the south, southeast, and northeast portions of the community, as well as the industrial districts to the northwest and east.

Land Use in Context: Growth Trends Since 1964

Norwalk has grown and expanded its perimeter since the 1964 plan, largely following the patterns of development recommended in the plan. The following is a summary of more recent land use trends and major developments over the past twenty years:

Residential



Norwalk has witnessed a number of new subdivisions within the City, including some infill developments (Oakwood, on the east side; new houses along Williams Street and tri- and quad-plexes along Ontario Street, and Deerfield located south of Gallup Avenue), as well as new subdivisions along the developing edge of the City (Sycamore Hills to the west, Executive Estates and Fairwood to the south, Deerfield, Woodridge Estates, and Shaker Village condominiums to the east, a subdivision of multi-

unit and single unit homes to the northeast, and Hunters Glenn condominiums and single family units along Westwind Drive on the north side. The pattern has thus been an expansion of new housing, typically single family units on quarter acre lots, at the urban edge in areas that are adjacent to existing residential development or compatible land uses.

The primary market being served appears to be the demand for new single-family homes selling for \$150,000 to \$250,000. The Westwind development and a subdivision extending from Old State in Norwalk's northeast corner are responding to the lower end of this range, while the higher end has been developed in Executive Estates, Fairwood, an extension of Sycamore Hills, and some smaller subdivisions. The market for more upscale housing has been met through the ongoing development of the Eagle Creek subdivision in Bronson Township, south of Town Line Road 131. This subdivision adjacent to the Eagle Creek golf course, although served by City-provided water, relies on its own septic sewer system. Additional demand for more upscale housing has been satisfied largely through the sale of individual lots along Township roads surrounding Norwalk, particularly to the south in Norwalk and Bronson Townships, and to the north along Whittlesey Avenue and intersecting streets.

Another infill project, located north of US 20 and accessed by Old State Road, named Applewood Village, has provided sites for relatively affordable manufactured housing. Another development just north of the City, Midtown Manor, has offered several hundred sites for manufactured housing on privately maintained roadways, accessed from US 250 just south of Milan.

Condominium housing has seen a significant increase in construction in recent years, with condo projects including Hunter's Glen accessed from Whittlesey Avenue and Westwind drive, and to the east along Route 20.

Multi-family, rental housing has been developed throughout the City over the past forty years. Many of the newer rental developments consist of subsidized multifamily or elderly housing.

Commercial



Well into the twentieth century, when travel to larger commercial centers such as Mansfield and Sandusky was still more difficult and time-consuming than it is today, Norwalk was an important commercial center, and its downtown boasted hotels, public theaters, and the Glass Block (shown above, right), a 67,500 square foot building deemed “the most complete department store in Ohio” in its day, among many other shopping destinations. The central business district has continued to be a center for commercial concentration, although it is evolving from more general commerce to more specialized and niche businesses ranging from bicycles and interior decorating treatments to musical instruments and embroidery.

Over time, commercial and general businesses including services and offices have radiated out from the central business district. Main Street businesses have been hemmed in by residential land uses beginning at Manahan Avenue to the west and Corwin Street to the east, offering little opportunity to extend downtown businesses in either of those directions.

Highway and travel-oriented businesses, and other commercial, service, and office businesses that require more space than that offered downtown were located along the corridors of U.S. 20 and S.R. 18 eastward from the point where they diverge on Norwalk’s east side. These corridors are the home for a variety of uses ranging from a large beverage distributorship to the new office of an area credit union. Other uses range from medical offices to car and truck repair facilities, and the facilities of Norwalk’s Sunrise Cooperative. The south U.S. 250 corridor extending from the U.S. 20 bypass to Executive Drive has seen recent investment in franchise “fast food” restaurants, and the growth of a local pharmacy, which benefits from proximity to the hospital and medical offices. However, with the closure of the only supermarket on the south side, general retail business south of Main Street is limited, and the pull of new commercial activity has been to the north.

Household commercial businesses and hospitality services (hotels and restaurants) have followed a northward pattern, extending where permitted by zoning along U.S. 250 North. Immediately north of the central business district are two strip shopping centers, the most recent having opened in 2005, anchored by Tops Friendly Market supermarket. Just north of that center, on the west side of Route 250, is the more established Midtown Plaza, which contains Gardner’s supermarket and a number of other retail establishments, including a hardware store and freestanding, newer pharmacy.



*Some of Norwalk's Retail Centers:
Top: Midtown Plaza and Tops Plaza
Left: Norwalk Korner Plaza
Bottom: Super Wal Mart*



Farther north, U.S. 250 is flanked by a number of retail businesses and complexes, including a number of multi-tenant plazas mixed with freestanding businesses, the largest of which is a super Wal-Mart of some 250,000 square feet. Other notable business types include a number of franchise restaurants, three motels, a K-Mart, an appliance store, and automotive dealerships.

The growth of the 250 North corridor is further enhanced by the proximity of new housing (in the Midtown Manor development and along Westwind Drive), the proposed Norwalk Commons development that includes a new cinema, senior housing, and new restaurants, and the Firelands Industrial Park with manufacturers along Republic Avenue and connecting cul de sacs.

While the central business district remains a vital component in Norwalk's economy and identity, Route 250 North has become the retail nexus of the community in terms of sales generated. It is expected that the corridor will continue to be built out, with access to back properties, such as the new Premiere Theater, via an emerging network of access roads.

Manufacturing

Norwalk has a rich history as a home to manufacturing enterprises, dating from the nineteenth century and including, among others, the initial home of the Fisher Carriage Company, later known as the Fisher Body Company, and the Norwalk Upholstering Company, eventually becoming the Norwalk Furniture Company. In earlier times, when the City was more compact, industries were located more centrally, toward the City center. As a result, there are pockets of industrial activity in the near east and near-west portions of the City, often located in their present site because of rail access, but with little or no room for expansion. Among these areas that are zoned for manufacturing are, from west to east:



- An area zoned MB manufacturing on North West and Pleasant Street that includes PolyOne and the Hen House;
- An adjoining area along Newton Street near the western terminus of League Street, and housing Maple City Rubber, Durable Corporation, Gyrus ACMI, and the former Norwalk Upholstering building;
- An industrial area just east of the preceding, located along the Jefferson Street corridor, most notably housing Mayflower Vehicle Systems, and also including Brooker Brothers Forging and the former Norwalk Foundry property;
- An “MB” district just north of the central business district, west of Whittlesey Avenue, which has lost all manufacturing businesses which, most recently, included a plant operated by Industrial Powder Coatings; and
- An area extending north from East Main Street and located west of Schauss Avenue and Ontario Street, housing Fair Publishing, Pinnacle Powder Coatings, and the former Van Dresser building that now houses a number of businesses.

The above manufacturing districts are landlocked and most are surrounded by residential land uses, offering limited opportunity for expansion. Many of the industrial buildings in these areas are multi-story brick structures, and would not be suitable for new industrial processes. Because of these limitations, a number of new industrial sites and parks have evolved. These include:

- Access to the 250 North corridor: The former Norwalk Airport and adjacent land has been developed over the past thirty years into the Firelands Industrial Park, which is currently the City’s largest geographic concentration of industries. Businesses located in this park include Janesville Sackner Group, IPC Norwalk, EPIC Technologies, a second Mayflower Vehicle Systems plant, Extol of Ohio, R.J. Beck Security Systems, Americraft Carton, Bennett Electric, Amitelli Products, Jiffy Products, American Coating Specialists, Norweco, and Eastern Tools and Equipment.

- Proximity to the U.S. 20 Bypass: Over the past twenty years, a number of manufacturers have located on the eastern edge of the City, in close proximity to U.S. 20. Industries located near and just west of the bypass include the corporate headquarters and local manufacturing plant for Norwalk Furniture Corporation and David Price Metal Services. Others include the occupants of the Commerce Fields Industrial Park on the southwest corner of the intersection of Route 20 and Laylin Road (a second Jiffy plant, the new plant for Norwalk Concrete Industries, and the Tuffman distributorship).



A sampling of Norwalk's diverse industries: Mayflower Vehicle Systems, Norwalk Furniture Corp., New Horizons Baking Company, Norwalk Concrete Industries, ACMI, and Janesville Sackner Group.

Government/Institutional

City and County government have a firm stake in Norwalk's central business district. Norwalk's municipal complex along Whittlesey Avenue at the northern edge of the business district includes City Hall, the fire station, and a justice center that houses the police station and municipal courtroom with offices. A large segment of Huron County government is housed in the Huron County Courthouse and the adjacent Huron County Office Building. The former houses the County's court system, and the latter now houses the offices of the County Auditor, Treasurer, Recorder, and Prosecutor. Additional County offices are largely located in the Huron County Administration Building on Norwalk's north side, on Milan Avenue (U.S. 250 North). The acquisition and occupancy of the County Office Building was completed within



the past three years, and with that change, coupled with the further purchase of the former Woolworth's/Outdoorsman property and site control for the entire block from the courthouse to Linwood Avenue, the County's plans for office space in the near future are complete.



A cluster of institutional buildings is located at the western edge of the central business district. This includes the Norwalk Library, the Firelands Museum, the Laning Research Center owned by the Firelands Historical Society, and a recreation center.

*Above: Norwalk Police Station, Huron County Office Building in downtown Norwalk
Below: Huron County Department of Job and Family Services on Shady Lane*

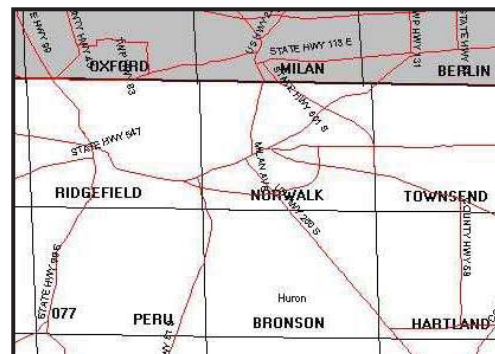


A cluster of governmental and institutional offices has grown along the Shady Lane corridor between Benedict and Norwood Avenues. In addition to the occupants of the older Shady Lane Complex owned by Huron County, this connector street is the address for Fisher-Titus Medical Center's campus and the Carriage House senior housing

facility, the County Department of Job and Family Services, the Sheriff's office, County jail, County Emergency Management Agency, and the Norwalk High School. Shady Lane abuts a large tract of undeveloped land, much of which is owned by the County and City School District, and it is expected that this land could be developed for a number of potential mixed uses, including a new senior center. The influence of the growing Fisher-Titus campus on the south end of the community has been (and will continue to be) significant. As the hospital has drawn a larger number of medical specialists to its staff, a number of medical offices have been developed as a "medical campus" along Fisher-Titus Parkway, as well as along nearby Executive Drive.

Land use in Context: Adjoining Townships

It is important to think and plan regionally; a single municipality cannot effectively plan without consulting its neighboring jurisdictions. In the course of developing this comprehensive plan, meetings were set up with four nearby Townships that were felt to have the largest impact on Norwalk, and to be most impacted by the City. Those Townships include Ridgefield Township, to Norwalk's immediate west and surrounding the



village of Monroeville; Norwalk Township, which surrounds Norwalk to the north, east, and immediate south; Bronson Township, which is immediately south of Norwalk Township; and Milan Township in Erie County, to the north of the City and adjacent to Norwalk Township.

In **Norwalk Township**, growth and development are being noted in all directions. As a rule of thumb, residential development has ensued in any area where utilities are available and, often, where annexation is possible. Examples of residential growth include the White allotment to the east, property developed along the east side of Old State Road to the northeast, the west side of Ferris Road, and an area east of town extending from SR 61 to Gibbs Road. Because Norwalk Township abuts most of Norwalk's corporate boundary, it is most susceptible to annexation, and annexation agreements have been developed based on a property tax sharing agreement that has been in place for several years.

Past policy has been that there would be no municipal services provided without annexation. However, water can now be provided within the Township by Northern Ohio Rural Water. An agreement has been reached between that provider and the City regarding primary service areas, with a method for compensation to Rural Water when the City plans to provide water outside its previously established service area. While this agreement lays the groundwork for water distribution throughout the Township where needed, the provision of sanitary sewers is more difficult to obtain. Trustees acknowledge a need to eventually bring sewers to the Norwalk Raceway Park and Norwalk-Huron County Airport area.

Industrial development is likely in portions of the existing Township, particularly along the eastern Akron Road/SR 18 and Cleveland Road/US 20 corridors, and along connectors such as Laylin Road. Examples of development over the past few years include David Price Metals, the R&L Transfer truck terminal at SR 601 and 18, and Norwalk Raceway Park. Each of these examples indicates the potential of the aforementioned 18 and 20 corridors.

Trustees note increased traffic on several roads within the Township, including Greenwich-Milan Town Line Road, Plank Road, Laylin Road between Routes 18 and 20, and further south to South Norwalk Road, and South Norwalk Road itself, from Norwood to US 250. Laylin and South Norwalk serve as perimeter roadways around the east and south edges of Norwalk, respectively.

Trustees also note a need for increased partnerships to guarantee orderly development. They express a continued willingness to work with the City, but observed that with inevitable annexation over the coming years, Norwalk Township "may not exist" at some future point.

In **Milan Township** in Erie County, Trustees note no major residential growth or development, with some in the Twin Oaks subdivision and individual development along SR 13, and down Milan's South Main Street to Route 601. Typical lot sizes are in the vicinity of 2/3 acres. Trustees note that housing demand in the area is often created by commuters who desire the rural quality of life but value the Township's ready access to highways such as SR 2 and the Ohio Turnpike. Commercial growth has largely been experienced along the US 250 corridor, as would be expected, with some growth along SR 113 to the east, toward

the high school. It is noted that development along US 250 will increase when sanitary sewer service is provided there, which may occur as soon as 2007. Industrial development is planned for an area on Hoover Road, which connects to SR 13 northeast of Milan, and which is zoned for industry and which houses the recently expanded Sierra Lobo company. Other businesses are located on one or two sites, such as Precision Machine on Wikel road.

Trustees feel the Township is “saturated” with water provided by Erie County and by Northern Ohio Rural Water. However, several roadways are seeing increased traffic and are in need of repair. These include US 250 within the Township, and SR 601, which is well traveled by vehicles that are bypassing Norwalk. This results in significant truck traffic in Milan’s town square, traveling along 601, then west from the square to join US 250.

Future residential development is anticipated along SR 113 to the east, toward the high school and Berlin Heights. It is noted that, with the growth of water parks and other tourist destinations to the north, the Township is the site of an increasing number of seasonal houses. As noted above, further commercial growth is expected along the US 250 corridor, and will be enhanced when sanitary sewer lines are constructed in the near future along that corridor. Industrial development will be guided to the above-mentioned target area.

Trustees lament the lack of zoning and the continuity in land use control that would exist with zoning in adjacent Norwalk Township. They feel that Norwalk’s influence was largely created by the emerging commercial corridor extending along US 250, and from increasing activities ranging from housing subdivisions along Old State Road and the mixed-use Norwalk Commons project.

In **Ridgefield Township**, to the immediate west, new housing development is occurring mainly in the northern portion, with attractive sites along Peru Center and River Road. New housing typically involves single-family homes on two to three acre lots, which are often located on previous five-acre lots that have been subdivided. It is felt that the Monroeville school district is an attractor. Also, the construction of water lines attracts new residential development. The pull to the north for housing is created by shopping and other destinations to the north, in the Sandusky area, as well as highway connections.

Commercial and industrial development in the Township is largely confined to the U.S. 20 corridor. Any new industrial development in the area has largely occurred in the Monroeville Industrial Park on the west side of that village. This growth along Route 20 is in conformity with the local comprehensive plan development for Monroeville and the Township.

Increased vehicular traffic has been experienced on many roads, including Peru Center and Washington Roads, the latter providing a well-used connection between Monroeville and Norwalk. Roadway needs include support for roads that are being used by heavy truck traffic and the need to replace a bridge on Peru Center Road to the north.

Ridgefield Township Trustees are open to the concept of tax sharing in the event of annexation. Currently, an agreement with the City of Norwalk allows for 100 percent of real and personal property taxes on existing property and 45 percent of those taxes on newly

created improvements or development in the target area to be retained by the Township for twelve years.

In **Bronson Township**, located just south of Norwalk and Norwalk Township, new housing has been developed along the frontage of several roadways, particularly in the northern portion of the Township. The most notable housing subdivision is the Eagle Creek subdivision at the northern edge of the Township, but other upscale housing has been developed along scattered sites where frontage has been sold. Some limited commercial activity is occurring in the Township along the US 250 corridor, and in the unincorporated area of Olena on Route 250. Industrial development has been minimal in Bronson Township.

Several roadway corridors have witnessed increased traffic, including US 250 between Norwalk and Fitchville, but also Old State and New State Roads, and Greenwich Milan Townline Road, especially as it carries summer traffic to Norwalk Raceway Park and northern destinations in Erie County.

Township Trustees note that Northern Ohio Rural Water has increased its activity in the area, and is extending water lines to the west to residences on Ridge Road and in Peru Township. The Trustees have mentioned an increased need to provide drainage in the Township, with a recent project providing drainage along the northern end of roadway 151.

Trustees believe future residential development in their Township will occur mainly in the northern portion of the Township, near the Eagle Creek subdivision, along Zenobia Road to the east, and north of Peru-Olena Road. Any commercial or business development is most likely along US 250, where it is zoned and planned.

Principles of New Urbanism

“New Urbanism”, sometimes referred to as neo-traditionalism, is an increasingly popular planning philosophy that promotes physical attributes that were followed in the past, encouraging such characteristics as interaction with others and reduced reliance on the automobile. Principles of New Urbanism include:

1. **Walkability:** Pedestrian friendly street design (buildings close to the street, tree-lined streets, on street parking, hidden parking lots, sidewalks, narrow and slow speed streets).
2. **Connectivity:** An interconnected street grid network that disperses traffic and eases walking; a high quality pedestrian network and public realm that makes walking pleasurable.
3. **Mixed use and diversity:** a mix of shops, apartments, offices, and homes on a site. Mixed use should be encouraged within neighborhoods, within blocks, and within buildings in many areas such as the Downtown. Also, a diversity of people.
4. **Mixed housing:** A range of types, sizes, and prices in closer proximity.
5. **Quality architecture and urban design:** Emphasis on beauty, aesthetics, human comfort, and creating a sense of place. Special placement of civic uses and sites within the community.
6. **Traditional Neighborhood structure:** A discernable center and edge to the neighborhood, with public space at the center. Importance of quality public realm, public open space designed as civic art. Contains a range of uses and densities within a ten-minute walk. Progressively less density from the center to the edge. Support for nature and natural

habitats. The “urban to rural transect” has appropriate building and street types for each area along the continuum.

7. **Increased density:** More buildings, shops, residences, and services closer together for ease of walking, to enable a more efficient use of services and resources, and to create a more convenient, enjoyable place to live.
8. **Smart transportation:** Pedestrian-friendly design that encourages a greater use of bicycles, roller blades, and walking as daily transportation.
9. **Sustainability:** Minimal environmental impact of development and its operations; eco-friendly techniques, respect for ecology and the value of natural systems.
10. **Quality of Life:** Taken together, these add up to a high quality of life and create places that enrich, uplift, and inspire.

Additional principles that are applicable to smaller rural communities such as Norwalk include these: varied shops and offices at the edge of a neighborhood; a small ancillary building is permitted within the backyard of each house; an elementary school is close enough that most children can walk; a variety of pedestrian and vehicular routes to any destination, with streets forming a connected network; streets are relatively narrow and shaded by trees; parking lots and garage doors rarely front the street (parking is relegated to the rear of buildings, usually accessed by alleys); prominent sites at the termination of street vistas or in the neighborhood center are reserved for civic buildings, providing sites for community meetings, education, and religious or cultural activities.

The Land Use Plan: Following Principles of Orderly Growth

A resounding theme in the community forums held at the beginning of the planning process was the overwhelming desire to preserve Norwalk's special "small town atmosphere". There are several practices and policies that can be followed to achieve this primary goal, many of which are often considered to fall under the rubric of "new urbanism" or "smart growth". Some of the basic tenets of New Urbanism are described on the preceding page. Here are some basic principles that are especially applicable to Norwalk's development over the next twenty years, and a brief discussion of their applicability. These are not specific recommendations, but are provided as guidelines to help guide and shape development throughout the City.

Providing a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

New housing developments should be considered within the context of the City's overall housing stock. To the greatest feasible extent, new housing should be designed in areas that mitigate the environmental costs of automobile-dependent development, and thus that maximize accessibility to shopping, employment, services, and other common destinations. Further, housing should grow on land that is already served by adequate existing infrastructure. A variety of housing types (multifamily and single family units; rental and owner-occupied; condominium options; variety of housing and lot sizes and densities) should be achieved. Housing is driven by the extent and nature of the local market; this fact helps ensure that a balance exists between the number and types of jobs in the community and the number and price ranges of housing.

Infill housing within the community should be encouraged. Two examples of infill housing are the market based housing developed along Williams Avenue just east of US 250 and the housing sites acquired and developed on Norwalk's north side by Habitat for Humanity. Developers should be encouraged to assemble and acquire similar sites within the City for residential development. It is also suggested that upper stories of buildings in and near the central business district be considered for residential development.

Research based on new development has shown that well-designed, compact communities that include a variety of housing sizes and types may command a higher market value on a per square foot basis than do those in adjacent conventional suburban developments. City planning officials should examine local land use regulations to ensure that compact design can be achieved, within the context of conservation developments or planned unit development designs. Further, housing should be encouraged in "infill" sites within the City limits, such as undeveloped land in the Republic and Williams Street area.

Create Walkable Communities

Downtown housing is one excellent example of a step toward creating a "walkable" community, where many destinations are within an easy walking distance. In other areas, "walkability" will be enhanced through the construction of sidewalks and pathways along public property. Streetscapes should be designed throughout the community to serve a range of users safely, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles. As fuel costs rise,

optional forms of transportation, especially for short in-town trips, may become much more attractive over the next twenty years. Aside from more walker- and bicycle-friendly common routes, other practices that enhance “walkability” include mixing land uses and building compactly. Conventional land use regulations, which often unnecessarily segregate land uses and thus lengthen trips, should be questioned when the costs of such practices exceed the benefits to the community and its residents. The Norwalk Commons development presents an opportunity to develop multiple destinations (housing, restaurants, a cinema) within close proximity, thus encouraging pedestrians, who may walk from a movie to a meal or other attractions.

The Rails to Trails and related proposals presented in this comprehensive plan add a network of pathways and trails that connect multiple destinations throughout the community.

Walkability and transportation efficiency can be achieved by planning for new roadways that connect existing roads and include sidewalks. Pedestrian (and vehicular) safety can be enhanced through the use of traffic calming methods such as pavement bump-outs or speed bumps. This allows for the planning of new connecting streets without inducing drivers to travel at unsafe speeds.

Create and Foster a Distinct and Attractive Community with a Strong Sense of Place

Norwalk residents were adamant in their desire to maintain Norwalk’s character as a safe, small community. Norwalk’s downtown revitalization efforts over the past fifteen years have helped highlight its community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness. The unique combination of physical assets, described elsewhere in this document, that make up a positive and attractive image of the community, help distinguish Norwalk from other communities. It is important to recognize and preserve these assets.

Although it can be challenging in smaller communities, the sense of place for residents can be enhanced when natural and man-made boundaries and landmarks are used to create a sense of defined neighborhoods. Some thought should be given to defining and denoting specific neighborhoods throughout the community.

Obviously, a new housing development or business cannot conform to the architectural style of Norwalk’s nineteenth century downtown and numerous century homes. However, new development proposals should be examined in an effort to maximize their degree of “fit” within the context of the community. For example, infill developments should conform to the higher density of close-in neighborhoods, and new businesses should conform, as much as feasible, to the color, style, and texture of their neighbors.

Mix Land Uses

This has been mentioned before, but there is often a great advantage in intentionally mixing land uses. Many downtowns are addressed in zoning codes by overlay districts, where multiple land uses are allowed, parking requirements (for residential uses, for example) are lessened, and historic preservation architectural standards are enforced.

Mixed uses can also coexist farther from the central business district. The US 250 North corridor is an example of a district where proper planning for mixed uses can benefit all land uses in the area. As noted previously, alternatives to driving can become viable when traveling from one use in the district to another. Mixed uses that include housing can provide a stable local commercial base. Having residents within the district can also enhance the perceived security of the area by increasing the number of people “on the street”. Generally, there is increased economic activity in areas where there are more people to shop or utilize provided services.

Preserve Open Space and Critical Environmental Areas

The implications of this guideline are twofold. First, any natural assets *within* the community, such as Norwalk Creek and the area surrounding Memorial Lake Park and its reservoirs, should be preserved. Second, the promotion of infill, compact development, and preferred development or growth in close proximity to existing municipal boundaries will help preserve farmland and open space that exists *outside* the City limits. In general, preserving open space can boost the local quality of life, maintain desirable community character, and indirectly boost property values.

Steps should be taken to better define the community’s open space goals, including consensus on which specific sites within the community should be preserved as open space, and what adjacent and nearby areas are of critical natural or environmental value. From an environmental standpoint, preserving open space can prevent flood damage by allowing for adequate natural drainage, may help the watershed in channeling sufficient surface water into the City’s reservoir system, and preservation of farmland on prime soils aids in efficiently preserving the agribusiness sector of the regional economy. Other environmental benefits of open space planning include protecting habitat, combating air pollution, attenuating noise, controlling wind, providing erosion control, and even moderating temperatures that can be exacerbated by extensive pavement.

Strengthen and Direct Development toward the Existing Community

To the maximum extent practicable, development should be encouraged within and in close proximity to the existing City. It is less costly to develop land that is already served by infrastructure, and to conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe. In many cases, developers and communities are recognizing the opportunities presented by infill development; this is backed by demographic shifts and a growing awareness of the fiscal, environmental, and social costs of development focused disproportionately on the urban fringe and beyond.

Developing available parcels within the bounds of the community makes maximum use of the existing infrastructure within the City. Lower density development at the outskirts increases the water demand required by larger lots (water demand for landscaping, which can be as much as 50 percent of household water demand, is directly related to lot size), increases the chance for leakage and deterioration in infrastructure, and very often decreases the overall return on the City’s water (and other) infrastructure investment.

Zoning and Land Use Control Regulations

The basic legality of zoning as still practiced today nationwide was decided in Ohio in the case of *Euclid v. Ambler Realty*. The public purposes of zoning have included using land for its most suitable purpose, protecting and maintaining property values, promoting health and safety, protecting the environment, managing traffic, aesthetics, and density, encouraging housing for a variety of lifestyles and economic levels, providing for orderly development, and helping attract business and industry.

Zoning procedures are overseen by the city's Planning Commission, its Board of zoning Appeals, and a Zoning Inspector, to ensure that zoning is fair and effective in a community. Applications or petitions for change of district boundaries or classifications of property require filing of the application with the Clerk of Council, a hearing, referral of the application by Council to the Planning Commission, which is allowed six weeks for consideration and a report back to Council, and subsequent adoption of a resolution for rezoning by City Council. Zoning regulations typically subdivide a municipality into geographic zones, depicted on a map, where specific uses are permitted. Norwalk's zoning map allows for the following types of districts: Neighborhood Business (B-1), Downtown Business (B-2), Outlying Business (B-3), General Business (B-4), Manufacturing (M-1, M-2, and MB), and One Family Residential (R-1), One and Two Family Residential (R-2), Multi-Family Residential (R-3), and Residential-Trailer (R-T). Norwalk's current zoning map, which is a rough guide to existing land uses in Norwalk, is attached.

The Board of Zoning Appeals may authorize a variance (a modification of the strict terms of the zoning regulations where such modification will not be contrary to the public interest and where, owing to conditions peculiar to the property and not a result of the applicant, a literal enforcement of the regulations would result in unnecessary and undue hardship), or a conditional use (a use that is appropriate for a district but which requires a hearing to determine that it will not have adverse effects). A variance will not be granted unless the Board makes a specific finding that the standards and conditions imposed by Norwalk's zoning code have been met, and variances are not granted in cases that alter the character and use of a zoning district. Special conditions must exist which are peculiar to the land, structure, or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures, or buildings in the same district.

Conditional use permits are granted in cases where a new kind of land use with unique and special characteristics relative to location, design, size, method of operation, circulation or public facilities, needs to be considered individually.

Duties of the Planning Commission with regard to zoning include: recommending the zoning ordinance (including the text and City Zoning Map) to Council for adoption, initiating advisable Zoning Map changes or changes in the text of the zoning ordinance, reviewing all proposed amendments to the text and map and making recommendations to City Council, reviewing all Planned Unit Development applications and making recommendations to Council, continuously reviewing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the zoning ordinance, employing consultants as necessary, and making use of information from appropriate public officials, departments, and agencies.

Duties of the Board of Zoning Appeals include hearing and deciding appeals where it is alleged that there is an error made by the Zoning Inspector, authorizing variances when not contrary to the public interest, and performing other functions as provided by Norwalk's city charter.

Duties of the Zoning Inspector include enforcing and interpreting the zoning ordinance, taking steps necessary to remedy any condition found in violation by ordering the discontinuance of illegal uses or work in progress, responding to questions concerning applications for amendments to the zoning ordinance, issuing zoning permits and certificates for occupancy, inspecting buildings and uses of land to determine compliance with the zoning ordinance, notifying responsible persons of any violation, maintaining the current status of the City Zoning Map, maintaining records of zoning permits, zoning certificates, and inspections documents (The Clerk of City Council maintains records of all variances, amendments, and conditional uses), and making such records available for the use of City Council, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the public.

Norwalk's zoning code appears to serve the City and its landowners, residents, and businesses reasonably well. However, it should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it adheres to a number of principles, which include but may not be limited to the following:

- Zoning should be consistent with the proposed Land Use Map within the adopted comprehensive master plan;
- Any rezoning should also be consistent with the policies and principles adopted by the City Council and City Planning Commission;
- Zoning should satisfy a public need and not constitute a grant of special privilege to an individual owner; the request should not result in spot zoning;
- Granting of a request for zoning should result in an equal treatment of similarly-situated properties;
- Zoning should allow for a reasonable use of a property;
- Zoning changes should promote compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses and should not result in detrimental impacts to the neighborhood character;
- Zoning should promote a transition between adjacent and nearby zoning districts, land uses, and development intensities;
- Zoning should promote the policy of locating retail and more intensive zoning near the intersections of arterial roadways or at the intersections of arterials and major collectors;
- The request for zoning should serve to protect and preserve places and areas of historical and cultural significance;
- Zoning should promote clearly identified community goals such as creating employment opportunities or providing for affordable housing;
- A change in conditions in an area may indicate that there is a basis for changing the originally established zoning and/or development restrictions for the property.

Any revision of the City's zoning code will be of maximum benefit if efforts are expended to make the code user-friendly, by removing any archaic language that may exist, and by updating definitions and land uses to reflect current patterns. Increased flexibility in permitted uses in some areas may be possible by less rigidly defining standards and

requirements. Optional development procedures (such as planned unit developments and similar concepts) may be most useful if they supplement or replace some of the existing zones.

Strategy 2 in the recommendations section of this chapter addresses zoning further.

Other Land Use Planning Recommendations

Several additional guidelines are recommended in planning Norwalk's future growth. These include the following:

- The City could consider developing and adopting a public signage design theme. Directional signs throughout the City could help visitors locate popular destinations, such as schools, parks, sports facilities, parking lots, the library and museum, concert and performance venues, and shopping facilities.
- Care should be taken to transition between differing land uses, such as between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods that may be developed on the north side. This can be accomplished through landscaping and placement of parking lots, sometimes behind buildings rather than in front. A block of mixed-use activities can sometimes help transition from residential to purely commercial activities.
- New roadways that serve growth areas should continue the City's grid system and connect with nearby roads, rather than incorporating unconnected cul de sacs. For example, this plan recommends the eventual development of a new system of interconnected roads north of Washington Street, but tying together the extensions of existing roads such as Westwind, Republic, Pleasant, and North West Street.
- Wherever possible, provide pedestrian and vehicular connections between residential and mixed-use areas, and amenities and destinations such as parks and schools. Assure compatibility of adjacent housing developments. Target higher-density residential development to mixed-use areas. An example is the new senior housing located within the Norwalk Commons development. Encourage a mix of housing densities, even within the same development.
- Distinguish between neighborhood commercial development, which may serve a larger proportion of pedestrians and be located in mixed-use areas with residences, and regional development, which is largely accessed by automobile.
- Be prepared to support attractive office development, in an effort to diversify the local economy and employment base. Office parks typically require more attention to aesthetics and design than industrial parks housing manufacturers. Also, provide a variety of parcel sizes to accommodate a variety of building and business sizes.
- In general, densities should be highest toward the center and downtown portion of the City. Infill development should match the density of adjacent areas and its design should

ensure compatibility and a sense of “seamlessness” with its surroundings. Densities will generally lessen as one moves away from the City center, transitioning to the semi-rural landscape surrounding the City.

An overarching goal is to maintain a balance of land use activities. Sufficient land must be reserved for new employment opportunities, which may be a mix of manufacturing and office/service establishments. Employment generators must then be balanced with housing opportunities for the employees, and with commercial development that will follow and capture any growing local market. Finally, the City and local institutions including the schools and hospital must proactively ensure sufficient space to efficiently grow with the residential population.

The Conceptual Land Use Plan

Every chapter of this plan contributes to an overall conceptual plan for the future of the City and its immediate environs. The general concepts underlying the plan are summarized here, and are presented in map form as well. Special attention must be paid to the interconnection of the City’s systems: roadways and transportation, infrastructure (particularly water and sanitary sewer), public facilities and services, and community services. Taken together, these general concepts form a picture of a future Norwalk that incorporates the ideals presented by those who contributed their input to the planning process.

Residential Development

Single-family and condominium development is occurring in Norwalk’s northwest quadrant, and will continue to do so. This development should be assisted by new connector roadways, such as the extension of Republic Street to the west of U.S. 250, and a northwest “loop” that connects U.S. 250 to N. Pleasant St.

Residential development of mixed densities is also expected within the mixed-use corridor stretching northward between U.S. 250 and Old State Road. This development begins with the construction of new higher density senior housing in the Norwalk Commons development.

Larger lot development is anticipated south of the City, continuing a trend toward the construction of more “upscale” housing along selected roadway frontage in Norwalk and Bronson Townships. It is likely that water needs will be satisfied by Northern Ohio Rural Water. Sanitary sewerage needs, currently handled through on-site septic systems, will likely call for the eventual construction of sanitary sewer lines that are fed to a collector line on the City’s western edge, traveling north to the City’s wastewater treatment plant. The only alternative would be the construction of a new treatment plant on the south side. This is an unlikely and costly alternative, but future technology may allow such a plant where current stream flows are insufficient to support a plant.

Higher density development is encouraged for vacant properties within the City, including vacant land in the vicinity of Williams and Republic Streets. The extension of South

Pleasant Street further southward to Fair Road would open additional land within the City to residential development.

A limited number of housing units can be developed in upper stories of buildings within and near the central business district. Implementation of overlay district regulations, coupled with tax incentives through the development of a Community Reinvestment Area within the downtown district can help building owners creatively construct new housing and support new ventures in the downtown and neighboring blocks.

Residential neighborhood identity can be enhanced through more thorough designation of “neighborhood” districts within the community.

Commercial Development

The recent trend toward commercial development on Norwalk’s north side, specifically along and adjacent to the U.S. 250 North corridor, is expected to continue. This corridor is relatively easily accessible to area residents, with recent investment in two new significant trip generators (the new cinema and the newly expanded super Wal Mart). It is typical for additional businesses to “piggyback” on the new business and potential created by these ventures. For example, the cinema is expected to help draw new restaurants to the Norwalk Commons area. The increased positioning of retail business, restaurants, and tourist and traveler related enterprises, plus the draw of Norwalk Raceway Park as a regional attraction, will continue to create a “synergy” on the north side. In order for City residents to consider these as positive developments, it is imperative that traffic flow be maintained through the channeling of traffic through the existing grid of roadways and the addition of access roadways that separate local from through traffic.

South side development will not take place on the scale of Norwalk’s north edge. However, some commercial development is expected to result from the large and growing number of upscale housing units throughout the south side of Norwalk, the presence and impact of the growing Fisher-Titus Medical Center campus (Norwalk’s largest employer), and transient traffic on U.S. 250 and the U.S. 20 bypass. It is not unreasonable to expect, at minimum, a convenience store or small-scale satellite grocery store in the vicinity of the former Food Town building.

The central business district is one of Norwalk’s premiere treasures and should continue to house a mix of governmental, business and personal service, administrative office, and retail businesses. The creation of a Community Reinvestment Area covering the downtown target area should help stimulate investment in central business district properties. The downtown also presents significant potential as a restaurant and entertainment area, as it houses several entertainment venues, including the Towne and Country Theater, the Main Street School, restaurants, a coffee house with meeting rooms, and outdoor parks and open space. There is potential to capture the demand for a “teen center” or meeting place, including space for live entertainment, within the downtown.

Industrial Development

Norwalk's largest industrial park, Firelands Industrial Park, will likely be built out within five to ten years, and existing sites in that park would not support a large industrial project. Sites within Firelands Industrial Park range from 4.5 to forty acres. The only other industrial park in the City is the Commerce Fields Industrial Park, with 65 acres of available space.

Given the needs of modern industrial processes for horizontal expansion, larger footprints to accommodate single-story buildings, and an increased awareness of the needs for adequate site sizes for buffering, storm drainage, employee parking, and aesthetic considerations, there is a need to make larger sites available to potential developers on short notice. The comprehensive plan thus recommends the development of an eastern industrial district extending along and between the U.S. 20 and S.R. 18 corridors eastward to S.R. 601. Larger sites can be assembled in this area, and its attractiveness will be enhanced through the eventual construction of water and sanitary sewer lines that can accommodate industrial needs. The location of the Norwalk-Huron County Airport may entice certain air transport-dependent businesses to the area, and the presence of the Norwalk Raceway Park may draw businesses linked to the motor sports industry – either additional entertainment venues or specialized manufacturers.

In the event that an even larger property needs to be assembled, with access to rail, it is possible that agricultural property to the west, between U.S. 20 and Washington Road, may be considered for potential development, although its value as prime farmland is significant. There is also potential for transportation-driven manufacturing and distribution land uses to the north of the City, toward the Ohio Turnpike and S.R. 2, with access to U.S. 250.

Suitable industrial property within the City, aside from those sites in the aforementioned industrial parks, still exists in limited supply. Smaller scale machine shops and facilities should be encouraged to locate within the City's limits within suitable sites. However, industrial property within the City should be reserved, when appropriate, for the expansion of adjacent businesses. An example is the Mayflower Vehicle Systems plant on Garfield Street, which has undergone a number of expansions, one of which entailed the re-routing of Jefferson Street. Thus, while the development of infill property for industry (such as the land just north of the Mayflower plant, north of the relocated Jefferson Street) should be encouraged, care should be taken to consider existing and potential expansion plans of adjacent businesses.

Additional properties with a potential for the future development of light industry include the former Norwalk Foundry "Brownfield" site, and property in the vicinity of the Stokely facility on North West Street and the former Van Dresser building on Ontario Street.

Public and Institutional Facility Development

While Norwalk is fortunate to have a number of attractive and modern public and institutional facilities that have been recently constructed or under construction, several new or improved facilities and land uses are expected within the twenty-year timeframe of this

comprehensive plan. They are depicted on the accompanying map, and include the following:

- A new fire station to replace the existing one. The new station is recommended to maintain a central location to minimize response times in all directions. A location within a half-mile radius of the existing Whittlesey Avenue property is recommended. It is recognized that it may be difficult to locate a suitable site with immediate access to a major arterial (preferably U.S. 250) and adequate acreage to accommodate vehicular movement and storage, as well as the floor plan for a modern fire station with adequate storage, training, and housing for firefighters and equipment.
- An expanded Norwalk Public Library and media center, utilizing the adjacent Hills building and incorporating current technology. The use of the Hills building will provide improved accessibility for all, as well as new meeting, research, and study space. A satellite library is recommended for the south side of the City, in the Shady Lane vicinity. It is likely that the most reasonable site would involve co-location with the Norwalk High School media center, in order to capitalize on and coordinate the assets of both.
- A new Senior Center on Norwalk's south side, within close proximity of the current senior center on Shady Lane. A south side location maximizes access for those from south of the City, as well as providing easy east-west access via the U.S. 20 Bypass.
- An expanded Ernsthausen Recreation Center. Consideration must be given primarily to the needs and wants of Norwalk residents and institutions, with the greater market area as a secondary consideration. Further, in serving a public purpose, Rec Center planning must not lead to unfair competition with private enterprises already offering similar services and amenities. Despite these considerations, it is anticipated that a number of new features can be developed, including expanded swimming opportunities, multigenerational activity centers that also include space that is welcoming for seniors, and additional facilities for team and individual activities as demanded by membership.
- The land surrounding the Ernsthausen Center may be redeveloped to better serve the community's needs. Land behind the center can be developed into sports fields, such as soccer fields. This is also possible for the land across Republic Street in Bishman Park, which could also be laid out for soccer play. An alternative way to serve the growing need for soccer fields is to develop the land immediately west of the City's wastewater treatment plant, and north of the baseball and softball fields at Baines Park. Significant acreage exists under City ownership that could be improved to accommodate soccer fields. Practical alternatives for consolidating Norwalk's soccer facilities should be studied in the very near future.
- As noted in the quality of life chapter, there is a need for new neighborhood parks to accommodate growing residential subdivisions and growth areas. Subsequently, in order to provide a neighborhood park within walking distance of virtually every City residence, there is a need to develop neighborhood parks on the west side of the City (serving Sycamore Hills and environs), on the south side (serving Executive Estates and Firelands

Boulevard areas and closer-in neighborhoods), and, increasingly, on the north end (near the Westwind development, possibly adjacent to Baines Park and west of Wal Mart).

- Related to parks, this plan includes recommendations for a system of trails and walkways, which would be routed along City rights-of-way and other properties. Development of such a system will involve City ownership and maintenance of a series of linear properties that parallel roadways, railroad tracks, and waterways.
- Fortunately, Norwalk's school systems do not currently need new locations for new facilities. However, the St. Paul school campus has undergone a recent expansion of facilities, the existing St. Mary's school has been reconfigured as a result of the merging of that school with the Norwalk Catholic Schools system, and Norwalk's Main Street School has been expanded to accommodate expected enrollment. The plan also calls for the expanded use of Norwalk High School, hosting a “lifelong learning center”, possibly in a new wing dedicated to that use, and other community activities.
- This plan bears the assumption that the Norwalk-Huron County Airport will remain in its current location. However, the airport may require some expansion to accommodate runway extensions, and the possible addition of a crosswind runway. This will in turn require the acquisition of additional property within the area that houses it, from SR 601 westward to Laylin Road.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategy 1: *Managing Growth*

Continued growth is inevitable, and it is preferable to plan proactively for orderly growth, resulting in compatible adjacent uses, efficiencies in allowing residents, employees, and patrons to reach their destinations safely and efficiently, and to group complementary land uses together when it is advantageous. This can result in similar uses in some areas, and mixed uses in others. Care should be taken to ensure that the historical zoning tools that isolate single uses within specified districts offer enough flexibility to accommodate the development of new housing, businesses, and common uses of land that can collectively contribute to an improved quality of life for the residents and businesses.

Those conducting planning and project development should be mindful of targeted areas for industry, housing, and commercial and traffic-oriented land uses. Planning land uses should also involve consideration of needed infrastructure and utilities, roadway capacities, public facilities, and public service delivery.

Growth can best be managed in a smaller community such as Norwalk by gaining consensus on general growth areas within and near the City, and the preferred land uses for those areas. This will help guide development toward the preferred future. A parallel goal can be to strengthen the local schools' tax base by guiding development within the schools' taxing district, or by seeking agreements that share tax revenues. Further, the City and its regulatory bodies (especially including the Planning Commission) should provide enough regulatory flexibility to entertain new development designs, mixed uses, and varying densities and setbacks to respond to resident, business, and reasonable developer demands.

1. Work toward targeting City growth in areas that enhance the tax base for Norwalk City Schools. While changing school district boundaries is virtually impossible, the City administration may be able to negotiate new terms with outlying and adjacent school districts where the City may request a provision for the sharing of taxes between that school district and the Norwalk City Schools, in return for the City actively targeting development within their district. A longer-term goal would be to change school district boundaries to more accurately reflect the City of Norwalk and its land uses as a unified geographic and economic area, where revenues should be pooled to support City-wide services, including education. A sharing agreement should be developed over the next ten years. These efforts will involve the Norwalk City administration and Norwalk City Schools, as well as outlying school districts (especially Berlin-Milan but also including Western Reserve and Monroeville).
2. Develop the capacity to assemble large (50 to 100 acres or more) industrial parcels, served by necessary infrastructure and utilities, and by rail. Likeliest sites for these criteria may be directly west or east of the City. Entities involved in this goal, to be achieved by 2016, include economic development organizations, landowners, the City administration, rail authorities and State rail grant funding agencies. Options on such land may be held by a local Community Improvement Corporation under Ohio law. The vehicle for such a CIC may be through the county's HCDC or a Norwalk entity.

3. One method to minimize sprawl and maintain efficiencies in traveling between City destinations is to promote and assist in the development of vacant land and vacant and under-utilized buildings within the City, a practice known as “infill”. Further actions to maximize the usefulness of the existing City include allowing mixed uses in certain developments (such as the senior housing blended with restaurants and a cinema in Norwalk Commons), traditional neighborhood development on relatively small lots, further development of the central business district to bolster new residential options downtown, and measures to improve pedestrian access or “walkability” throughout the community. These ongoing activities involve landowners, the planning commission, developers, and the City administration.
4. Research and implement new incentive programs that can help guide desired development. This may likely include adoption of Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA's) in the City. Incentives could be used to spur downtown residential units in upper stories, for example. Income taxes can be reviewed as potential sources of incentives, if taxes can be partially waived to incentivize new development. This activity involves the City administration, Planning Commission, and economic development organizations, and should be examined with recommendations by 2010.
5. Concentrate on the development of Norwalk's south side and land south of the U.S. 20 Bypass, with emphasis on housing, limited retail development, and office/research facilities, some of which may be spurred by the growth of the Fisher-Titus Medical Center campus. As the south side grows, it will be necessary to provide needed infrastructure, including the provision of sanitary sewer access south of U.S. 20. While preliminary analysis indicates that a second wastewater treatment plant may not be feasible, alternatives including such a plant using state of the art technology, but also including a new trunk line reaching from southern growth areas through the west side of the City to a new trunk in the vicinity of Washington Street should be considered, as demand requires. The development of the south side, over the next twenty years, should involve the City administration and planning commission, Township trustees, hospital and health care officials, economic development organizations, the Norwalk School District, and private developers and landowners.
6. Plan for long-range industrial development on Norwalk's east side and in current Norwalk Township property, along the Route 20 and 18 corridors as far east as State Route 601, with necessary infrastructure development. Develop a means to support infrastructure costs through projected users' fees. Uses should be recruited that complement Norwalk Raceway Park, including tourism and motor sports oriented business. The proximity of the Norwalk-Huron County Airport should also be factored in determining ideal land uses. The City administration and planning commission, NEDC, Chamber, and HCDC, as well as Norwalk Township Trustees, Raceway Park officials, and private developers and landowners should be involved in this effort, to be undertaken over the next twenty years. As an adjunct to the concentration on this growth area, consider the implementation of an East End Utility District, including water and sanitary sewer for the airport and Norwalk Raceway Park areas. This effort,

involving City, Township, and county officials, should be completed within ten years (by 2016).

7. Plan for the mixed-use development of Norwalk's north side, which presents the greatest potential for near-term significant growth for several land uses. This area may extend from Old State Road at the eastern edge to Whittlesey Avenue and undeveloped land west of Whittlesey, to the west. Commercial and travel-oriented business is likely to continue to grow along the U.S. 250 corridor, with need for access to adjacent land via a system of access roads or driveways. Further, there is a potential for new manufacturing or distribution businesses on Norwalk's north side due largely to the proximity of the Ohio Turnpike (I-80-90) to the north. Further, the north side has been the location of significant housing developments, most notably including the Hunters Glen condominium project, which has accounted for a large portion of Norwalk's overall number of housing starts in recent years. Further development of the north side over the next fifteen to twenty years will involve coordination and planning among a number of entities, including the City administration, planning commission, Township trustees, private developers and landowners, NEDC and HCDC, the Chamber, and contractors and developers.
8. Create an inventory of sites that document their existing infrastructure availability and development readiness status. City officials, NEDC, HCDC, utilities, nearby Townships, and the Planning Commission can have this information ready within one year.

Strategy 2: *Zoning and Regulations*

Zoning and other regulations should be used to achieve a balance between varying land uses, and to minimize the negative impact (real or potential) of a land use upon neighboring uses, while maximizing the usefulness of each land use to the City's residents, businesses, employees, and consumers. Officials should explore the revision of zoning guidelines to better direct development and enhance the community. In doing so, city officials should seek a balance between the public benefits of regulation and the potentially negative impact upon the ability of developers, businesses, and landowners to achieve their goals. Multiple goals should be addressed, including personal health and safety, maximized property values, efficiency of systems (such as transportation and utilities), and minimized land use conflicts.

City officials can begin to achieve these goals by continuing to balance the City's positive reputation as an easy place in which to conduct business and develop property with an approach that guides development toward the City's preferred future. City officials should maintain the positive attitude and continue to build good relationships between City officials, other local and county government entities, businesses and developers, and State agencies. Further, they should seek ways to increase communications between all these entities, while continuing to design and develop efficiencies in the planning and review process.

1. Explore the benefits of the development and adoption of a zoning code for Norwalk Township that is compatible with the City of Norwalk's zoning. Action steps would include the creation of a draft code with assistance from the County Planning Commission and the County Prosecutor's office, presentation at public meetings,

education of the Township's residents on the benefits of Township zoning and myths surrounding any perceived problems, campaigning for zoning adoption, and movement toward adoption of zoning. This process, which may take five years, involves Township Trustees, the Prosecutor's office and any provider of assistance in drafting a zoning code, a citizens' committee which should be used to gather and solicit support, and developers and others who can positively influence the citizenry.

2. Ensure that the Planning Commission and other decision-making entities determine that planned developments concur in land use, scope, and physical attributes with the comprehensive plan and its targeted growth areas. This ongoing effort involves the Planning Commission, City Council, and the administration.
3. Work with Main Street Norwalk to determine how regulations can be best designed to achieve the goals of that entity through organization, design, promotions, and economic restructuring. Consider separate zoning classifications and requirements, and the possible creation of a new or revised overlay district, to address the unique needs of downtown. This activity involves Main Street Norwalk and the Chamber, as well as the City's administration and Planning Commission, and should be achievable by 2016.

Create new standards of appropriateness for downtown development. Balance the collective benefits of uniformity of design and appearance and the historical assets of Downtown architecture with the needs of local property and business owners to maintain profitability and attract their customer base. The Architectural Review Board should re-examine their guidelines and review their processes to meet the dual needs of historic preservation and business attraction and retention, with a revised set of standards by 2009.

4. Identify and help develop new retail and commercial land use zones or requirements as the characteristics of desired development change over the next twenty years. These areas are already zoned for retail and commercial uses, but development patterns and plans may change over the long term, with an accompanying need for revised zoning regulations. Consider such in-town areas as Milan Avenue from League Street north, and Hester Street north to League. Involve the Planning Commission, City administration, and private sector entities and developers, with new zones considered and added, if feasible, by 2012.
5. Examine the feasibility of developing a retail/tourism/entertainment district in a section of Norwalk's central business district. This district would be an outgrowth of the expanding Lake Erie tourism market, coupled with trends toward increased demand for restaurants and entertainment venues. The district could be planned and implemented within ten years, with involvement from the Planning Commission and administration, Main Street Norwalk, the Chamber, and NEDC.
6. Develop zoning and related language to regulate the future development of "big-box" stores in Norwalk. Factors to consider include impact on the community and on neighboring land uses, impacts on the existing balance of retail business, location within a planned growth area, conformity to the community's vision of the future, potential to

adapt existing retail sites, design compatibility with neighboring businesses and signage (architecturally integrated designs), impact on traffic flow and area “walkability”, and storm drainage. Big-box retailers are capable of providing alternatives to their standard architectural design, and often do so in response to market demand in upscale neighborhoods. Regulations may address square footage limitations, parking, signage, landscaping, outdoor storage areas, pedestrian and bicycle access, traffic control improvements, and provisions for demolishing or redevelop the building and site should it become vacated. Such regulations should involve City officials, economic development organizations, and the input of developers and Realtors, and should be completed by 2010.

Strategy 3: *Open Space Planning*

The City should provide for Norwalk's acknowledged need for commonly used open space and green space within easy access of all Norwalk residents. As the City grows, so shall its need for open space. There is a growing demand for space to accommodate passive recreational activities, such as walking, bicycling, or just enjoying the outdoors. Thus, as new housing developments are constructed, provision should be made for new open space in proportion to the developed acreage. A method for acquiring useful open space should be devised that does not financially impede developers' plans or consumers' ability to afford new housing.

The City can accomplish this goal by developing a revenue source from new residential property sales that can be pooled to pay for new property acquisition for open/green space, and for its ongoing maintenance. Open space potential should be examined in each new subdivision proposal on a case-by-case basis, as site layouts may contain land that cannot be developed due to slope or other features, and would provide green space at no loss to the developer. Existing natural areas within the City and adjacent land should be preserved, and efforts should be made to establish “greenways” within the City when neighborhoods can be linked by linear systems of green walkways, such as the system of walkways that extend from Norwalk High School south to Stoutenberg Drive.

1. Advocate for and implement a means to pay for development of open space that does not inhibit development. This may involve increasing the per lot fee associated with park and open space development from the current \$50 to a larger fee, such as \$500. Alternatively, the fee could be on a sliding scale, as a proportion of the cost of the lot.

This goal also may involve the utilization of Planned Unit Developments and developer incentives such as smaller lots, smaller setbacks, and other means such that open space will be reserved and gross acreage per unit remains viable to developers. Additional sources of revenues to develop open space, green space, and greenways should be researched as well. A plan for open space revenues should be developed by the planning commission, recreation department, City council, and administration, within two years.

2. Develop guidelines governing minimum thresholds for mandatory open space provisions. This involves the planning commission and developers. It should also be

coordinated with the park and facility development plans of the city Park and Recreation Department, and it should be completed by 2009.

3. As Norwalk expands its residential neighborhoods to the north and south, set aside appropriate green space in those areas to accommodate the growing residential population in those areas. Over the next twenty years, involve the recreation department and its long-range planning, the planning commission, conservation groups, and the City administration and council.
4. Preserve existing natural areas within the City and maximize their use as green space or greenways. A specific project mentioned several times in this plan involves researching the feasibility of developing all or portions of Norwalk Creek as a greenway with linking paths – a “riverwalk” (such as from the Elm Street Park to the Reservoir). Additionally, research other such “corridors” that may exist within the City, including natural features and utility and railroad rights-of-way. These activities can be ongoing over the next twenty years, and will involve the planning commission, recreation department, administration and council, affected landowners, Rails to Trails and other interest groups, and interested citizens, possibly incorporating a citizen task force.
5. Consolidate existing data sources and/or conduct surveys to assess potential areas for open space and green space. Create a database of developed park space, undeveloped green space, and undevelopable green space. Determine how to designate retention areas. Involve the Planning Commission, recreation department, and City administration, over the next year (by 2008).

Strategy 4: ***Public Administration and Public Infrastructure Impacting land Use***

The actions and strategic directions of City Hall have multiple impacts on land use and development. The programming of capital improvements, from new water and sewer lines to an eventual location of one or more new fire stations, will impact and lead growth and development. One area where the community’s investment makes a great impact is at the City’s busiest “gateways”, where travelers realize they are entering the City and form a “first impression”.

A second impact is made by the administration of the City’s varied permitting, inspection, and regulatory processes. Efforts should be made to ensure that these administrative functions are carried out in an efficient, customer-friendly, and consistent manner.

The City has regulations and guidelines on the books that impact the shape and scope of development in several areas. These include such topics as mandatory sidewalk construction, signage (size, placement, type, number), and in the central business district, architecture. Future capital improvements and utility improvements should be prioritized in line with this comprehensive plan, and extensions of utilities and services should be planned with preferred growth areas and land uses in mind. The current City practices in permitting and inspection are generally supported, and should continue, serving both the common good and the plans of builders and developers, in conformity with the comprehensive plan.

1. Construct sidewalks along corridors where pedestrian traffic is generated. A target area is the growing commercial corridor along U.S. 250 North, where hotel, restaurant, and retail uses are co-located, where growing residential areas are within walking distance, and where new commercial growth is likely to attract additional pedestrians. This target area should be served with sidewalks by 2009, with assistance from the Planning Commission, zoning officer, public works coordinator, and affected landowners.
2. Examine, adjust, and enforce regulations governing signage along commercial and gateway corridors to balance business marketing and awareness goals with concerns for an attractive and enticing, relatively uniform City image. Propose code changes if new needs are discovered regarding aesthetics, uniformity, need for clarity, potential new overlay districts such as Main Street, or growth corridors. This topic should be reviewed with recommended changes that reflect community desires adopted over the course of the next twenty years. This will involve the planning commission, zoning officer and public works coordinator, City Council, and should include input from private sector landowners.
3. Ensure that the City's zoning code allows for mixed-use developments, and does not unnecessarily segregate land uses in areas that can benefit from a mix. For example, convenience retail should be allowed within walking distance of residential areas. The code and land use map should be reviewed to ensure that beneficial land use mixes are allowable within three years (by 2010); this process should involve the planning commission and zoning officer, administration and Council, and may benefit from the use of a Blue Ribbon committee that includes members of the Planning Commission to help review the code.

Strategy 5: *Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Mapping*

GIS capabilities offer an excellent planning tool. Norwalk and Huron County are just beginning to benefit from the potential offered by geographic information system technology. A first step is the use of GIS tools and data to provide useful maps for this comprehensive plan. Beyond this plan, it is important that the City and County, as well as other local governments in and around Huron County, use compatible GIS platforms and products, to allow for the sharing and building of information.

A specified set of maps have been prepared for this plan based on a consensus among the Land Use and Steering/Advisory Committees. More important is the design and development of an ongoing, interactive GIS system that allows the City, County, and other subdivisions and entities to share a common platform, to the greatest extent possible, and build upon the base of maps as needs and potential uses are defined.

1. Develop the appropriate digital orthos that can help plan the future land use of Norwalk and surrounding geography. This includes plotting of existing infrastructure, including water and sanitary and storm sewer lines. This project will involve GIS personnel and the county and possibly City level, and should be completed by 2008.
2. Identify a centralized GIS office and official, at the City or county level, wherever it is most efficient and capable of meeting needs. Monitor the effectiveness of the GIS

system in meeting citizen, development, planning, City and county departmental, and customer needs. This effort, which should result in a centralized office by 2011, should involve the input of City and county GIS officials, the County Auditor, City Public Works and Zoning departments and other City and county offices that can benefit from GIS interactivity, City and county administrative leadership, and possibly a “blue chip” committee of experts and practitioners. The GIS office should be in place and active by 2011.

3. Maintain the GIS database and make it accessible to the public and potential benefiting users through accessible terminals and a web presence. This should be achieved simultaneously with the development of the GIS office over the long term, and will involve City and county officials, with possible outside expert assistance.

Chapter 14



Summary and Implementation

Plans are nothing; planning is everything. –Dwight Eisenhower

The above quote is not included here to denigrate the value of this planning document, but to highlight the important value of an active planning process. The development of this comprehensive master plan provided a context in which a large number of people, committees, and panels considered Norwalk's future and recorded their consensus on what it should look like, and how to achieve that emerging vision. Just as their planning was of vital importance, perhaps more important is how a large number of people, committees, and panels achieve the implementation of this plan from this point forward.

After its approval by the Steering and Advisory Committees, the plan will be approved by the Norwalk City Planning Commission, and then adopted by resolution of City Council. Copies will then be made available to municipal officials and other decision-makers throughout the community. It will also be made available to everyone via the Internet, by posting it on the City's website. This chapter can be circulated as a brief summary of the recommendations resulting from the planning process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

No matter how closely the community attempts to follow this plan, it is inevitable that reality will diverge from the plan on a number of fronts, and probably within a few years. This does not mean that the plan, or the process, has failed, but it does signal that the process needs to continue and throughout the next twenty years.

It is recommended that the Steering Committee be maintained as a live committee, or succeeded by a new committee with a somewhat different purpose. The two major goals of this ongoing committee are:

- To review, monitor, and evaluate the extent to which the plan's recommendations are being followed, and to propose steps that can be taken to bring Norwalk's future development into alignment with the plan; and

- To propose new recommendations that reflect more accurately the reality within which the community is currently operating. New recommendations may be helpful in overcoming physical and organizational changes.

A review and revision committee (Findlay, Ohio's committee established for this purpose is called the "Legacy Committee") certainly does not need to meet at the frequency at which the current Steering committee has convened, but a set schedule should be developed at the outset. It is recommended that the Committee meet every one to two years, using this chapter's table of recommendations as a checklist to determine those areas where the plan is being adhered to, and those areas where a correction to the plan is necessary to guide the community toward its desired future, taking into account any intervening changes.

Summary of Plan Recommendations

The following pages present in table form the recommendations that have been developed by resource panels, steering and advisory committee members, and plan facilitators, for each topic covered in chapters 3 through 13. Recommendations have been abbreviated, and the table includes a general timeframe as determined by the resource panels, to indicate a target goal for completion of an activity. Many of the recommendations, of course, are more continuous or "ongoing" in nature, and are indicated as such. The reader is advised to consult the pertinent chapter for further information and context considering any specific recommendation.

To keep time frames more general, the timing for implementation of each task is depicted as having one of four expected deadlines:

- S (Short term)
- M (Medium term)
- L (Long term)
- O (Ongoing activities, continuously being implemented)

Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations		
Chapter 3: Community Character		
3.1.1	Architectural Review Board becomes Historic District Commission; provide guidance for projects in historic zones	L
3.1.2	Historic Area and Building Ordinance covering renovation and construction in historically sensitive areas	L
3.1.3	Identify historic properties and add Historic Property designations	M
3.1.4	Public programs on preservation topics, develop beautification and preservation awards	S
3.1.5	Establish partnerships with business and community organizations supporting preservation efforts	O
3.1.6	Ensure that policies and decisions on growth and development respect the City's heritage and enhance overall livability	O
3.1.7	Incorporate heritage awareness in tourism efforts; feature historic properties in publications and websites; New gateways should promote heritage	O
3.1.8	Publicize and grow the Firelands Museum and Laning Research Center	O
3.1.9	Plan increased "old house tours" and video tours	S
3.2.1	Grow the "Welcome Wagon" type program initiated by Fisher-Titus Medical Center	O
3.3.1	Develop a "welcome center" and information center within the Chamber of Commerce office	M
3.4.1	Update the City's website and maintain a network of linked websites	S
3.5.1	Inventory of services and facilities focusing on the area's elderly population; information available at Chamber "welcome center" and on City website	S
3.5.2	Include Seniors on City boards and resource panels to gather their input and recommendations	O
3.5.3	Consistently consider needs and wants of the City's growing elderly segment	O
3.6.1	Ensure that the City supports and publicizes programs for special needs groups: United Fund, Chamber information center, and City website should provide data	O
3.6.2	Ensure that service facility locations are compatible with neighboring land uses, and co-located for efficiency and ease of access by participants and clients	O
Chapter 4: Natural Resources		
4.1.1	Assess developers a per-lot fee that provides sufficient revenues for acquisition and maintenance of green space and open space, and neighborhood parks where needed.	S
4.1.2	Provide design incentives for developers to contribute open and green space within their developments; consider alternative incentives	O
4.1.3	Maintain maps of environmentally sensitive areas, and control development within such areas through zoning and other land use controls	O
4.1.4	Preserve existing scenery and views: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping at gateways • Reward best practices in private landscaping with awards 	M
4.1.5	Encourage efforts to preserve water quality in the watershed supplying water to Norwalk's reservoir system	O
4.1.6	Ensure the presence of mature trees in Norwalk by continuing the work of the Tree	O

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
	Board, publicizing the Tree Memorial program, and encouraging construction practices that preserve trees	
4.1.7	Form task force to identify and guide redevelopment of Brownfields and sensitive sites that have development potential within Norwalk	S
4.1.8	Develop regulations requiring developers to landscape retention ponds	M
4.2.1	Complete improvements at the Norwalk Reservoir and Memorial Lake Park, including amphitheater, walking trail, and additional improvements as developed	L
4.2.2	Continue to examine options for a perpetual supply of water for Norwalk, including purchase of finished water from adjacent suppliers (Erie County, NORWA)	M
4.2.3	Encourage use of land trusts to accept lands for preservation through donation or acquisition	O
4.2.4	Encourage awareness, utilization, and enjoyment of nearby natural areas	O
4.2.5	Take steps to minimize environmental effects of land uses on neighboring properties	O
4.3.1	Study needs for neighborhood parks and areas where such a park is not within walking distance of neighborhoods	M
4.3.2	Examine conversion of “paper” streets and alleyways to internal (within blocks) walkways/bike paths	M
4.3.3	Connect Norwalk to other communities through trails and greenways, incorporating the work of Huron County Rails to Trails (see Quality of Life for more detailed steps)	L
<i>Chapter 5: Housing</i>		
5.1.1	Encourage planned development of lower-cost (“affordable”) housing	O
5.1.2	Assist in developing homes planned and sponsored by Habitat for Humanity	M
5.1.3	Encourage and facilitate development of housing in upper stories downtown	O
5.1.4	Convene an affordable housing committee	S
5.1.5	Mobilize resources to develop affordable housing	O
5.1.6	Stimulate development and rehabilitation/repair of central City housing	O
5.1.7	Support efforts to provide “continuum of care” and services associated with affordable housing	O
5.1.8	Ensure a stock of safe, attractive rental housing responding to market needs	L
5.1.9	Implement remaining strategies of the 2005 Norwalk Community Housing Improvement Strategy	S
5.2.1	Monitor City's plan review processes to ensure they are efficient and timely	O
5.2.2	Provide adequate public infrastructure to existing housing stock; research and implement methods to pay for infrastructure in new developments up front with reimbursement over time by developers	O
5.2.3	Target appropriate areas meeting development criteria (utilities, roadway access, and adjacent use compatibility) on the urban fringe as residential growth areas	O
5.2.4	Encourage housing development within the Norwalk City School District	O
5.2.5	Allow for appropriate innovative housing development design providing alternatives to traditional housing: PUD's, conservation development, and other means	O

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
5.2.6	Facilitate development of executive housing subdivisions	L
5.2.7	Encourage development of upper stories in downtown buildings	L
5.3.1	Make information available to elderly and disabled households on programs and resources	O
5.3.2	Provide information on programs and services to help elderly remain within housing of their own, and “age in place”	O
5.3.3	Facilitate new housing developments targeted to the elderly and/or disabled	O
5.3.4	Assist in advocacy for additional housing for the disabled as needs are documented	O
5.4.1	Use Federal and State resource programs to rehab and repair the housing stock	O
5.4.2	Provide incentives for the historic preservation of older, architecturally significant properties	L
5.4.3	Delineate and recognize specific neighborhoods in Norwalk. Pilot with one neighborhood	M
5.4.4	Stabilize and improve declining neighborhoods through more uniform enforcement of property maintenance codes; Consider a rental property maintenance code	S
5.4.5	Research feasibility, cost effectiveness, and alternative models for carrying out inspection of new or renovated housing in Norwalk	L
<i>Chapter 6: Transportation</i>		
6.1.1	Utilize better access management, especially on major thoroughfares: limit number of driveway permits, install medians or other means to prohibit left turns, provide turning lanes, ensure clear views (limit signage), plan shared access to multiple sites through one access roadway, regulate minimum distance between access points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corridor plan for U.S. 250 North corridor, including access road to service businesses to the west. (Possibly to the east as well, as they develop) 	O S
6.1.2	Define and improve truck routes to better move through and around town	L
6.1.3	Use best available technology to manage traffic lights and improve flow	M
6.1.4	Improve gateways to the City at U.S. 250, U.S. 20, S.R. 18, and S.R. 61, design and construct uniform gateways that help “brand” Norwalk	M
6.1.5	Consider turn lanes along busy segments with frequent turning movements: Benedict at Elm, Christie; Christie and Norwood; Fair Road and Norwood	M
6.1.6	Consider temporary one-way traffic patterns during special events that close Main Street or other thoroughfares	S
6.2.1	Consider and, if financially feasible, construct the following, many of which have been recommended previously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend N. West Street northward to connect with an extended Westwind Drive Extend Republic St. westward to Plank Road and further to Whittlesey Ave. Extend Pleasant St. south to Fair Road Extend Industrial Parkway (or Stower Lane) east to SR 601 or Perrin Rd. Extend Ohio Avenue west to North west Street Consider widening of main thoroughfares such as Benedict Ave. and East Main St. to the City limits 	L
6.2.2	Improve intersections at U.S. 20 and Old State Rd., E. Main St. and Old State Rd., Old State Rd. and Townsend Ave., Williams and Willard Avenues and Milan Ave..	M

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
	Milan Ave. and Cline St.	
6.3.1	Improve parking conditions through attractive “wayfinding” signage to indicate locations of parking lots and their proximity; Enforce employee parking off-street. Include realistic parking requirements in downtown overlay zoning district	S
6.3.2	Consider a more pedestrian friendly downtown, with pedestrian only areas, well marked crosswalks, prohibition of skateboards and bicycles on downtown sidewalks	O
6.3.3	Expand the City's sidewalk repair and installation program; Install sidewalks where current conditions are unsafe: Northwest St. accessing fairgrounds, pedestrian routes to the Ernsthausen Center on Republic St., and high traffic or critical areas such as the U.S. 250 North corridor, the vicinity of the reservoir along Old State Road, and near Republic Street and Route 250	M
6.3.4	Work with Huron County Rails to Trails to expand bicycle/walking trails throughout the City. See Quality of Life chapter; Signage at trailheads directing bicyclists to the downtown commercial area	L
6.3.5	Explore potential of developing Norwalk Creek corridor as a “river walk”	L
6.4.1	Improve traffic control devices to provide for more efficient flow	M
6.4.2	Enforce traffic ordinances on the books; target problem areas regarding speed limits and safety	O
6.4.3	Be consistent in new street development and improvement	O
6.5.1	Support and help implement the goals and objectives of the new Huron County – Norwalk Airport Comprehensive Plan	O
6.6.1	Build a stronger alliance with Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad to foster growth in rail activity	O
6.6.2	Explore industry interest in expanded rail service	S
6.6.3	Identify and inventory potential sites for rail service and analyze site development opportunities	M
6.6.4	Explore innovative uses of rail not requiring an actual industry siting next to a spur	O
6.7.1	Explore ways to partner with the County in delivering public transportation that is responsive to Norwalk residents’ needs	O
6.7.2	Collaborate with businesses to enhance transportation options and serve business needs	O
6.7.3	Establish a shuttle service from Norwalk Raceway Park into the City	M
6.7.4	Investigate/promote options that provide out-of-County service for area residents; preliminary assessment	M
<i>Chapter 7: Utilities and Infrastructure</i>		
7.1.1	Continue to be accommodating to new businesses and others in providing cost-feasible infrastructure	O
7.1.2	Research reasons why businesses and others choose not to locate in Norwalk, and note any gaps in the provision of infrastructure	O
7.1.3	Maintain contact with public utilities; keep them involved as growth is anticipated	O
7.1.4	Continue sewer separation program and replacement of deteriorated water and wastewater pipes; provide in budgeting for replacement of existing as well as construction of new facilities	O

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
7.2.1	Initiate Citywide capital improvements planning	S
7.2.2	Identify an entity or method to coordinate efforts to apply for and receive funding for infrastructure projects, and to manage construction	S
7.2.3	Explore options for cost sharing of projects between developers and City; Implement procedures if a satisfactory one is developed	M
7.2.4	Partner with Township and County officials, as well as NORWA and other utility providers as appropriate, in cases where it is advantageous to provide utilities outside the City's corporate limits; Develop framework for JEDD or CEDA arrangements	S and O
7.2.5	Consider new alternatives for spread of Citywide broadband Internet service, as an income source for the City	O
7.3.1	Survey City businesses and others to determine infrastructure needs and projections	S
7.3.2	Plan community forums to supplement the survey	S
7.4.1	Inventory existing and proposed infrastructure in a computerized database	S
7.4.2	Develop a plan for maintenance and replacement of infrastructure over the next twenty years	S
7.4.3	Monitor needed funds for all planned action items and develop a budget to set aside and revise, as necessary, the needed funds for the planned maintenance and replacement program	S
7.5.1	Maintain a responsive system to research funding options for all planned expansions of infrastructure	O
7.5.2	Complete planned improvements to “front end” of wastewater treatment plant	S
7.5.3	Plan for future expansion of wastewater treatment plant, including new methods for the biological treatment process (new secondary and possibly tertiary processes); and acquisition of necessary land to the north to allow for expansion	S and O
7.5.4	Coordinate infrastructure development with other elements of this plan, including new Eastern Utility Area (US 20, SR 601, SR 18) including Norwalk Raceway Park and Norwalk-Huron County Airport; coordinated study of likely water and sewer system demands; costing of water and sewer extensions; and budgeting of expenses	O; M
7.5.5	Involve utility companies in planning for growth	O
7.5.6	Continue to coordinate with NORWA, building on agreement reached in 2005	O
7.6.1	Develop a master plan for development of communications technology in Norwalk. Consider voice, video, and data transmission; Plan should include capital improvement costs and revenue and cost projections	M; O thereafter
7.7.1	Achieve a connection with a raw or treated water provider on the Lake Erie grid; Consider use of the City-owned right-of-way extending to Milan	M
7.7.2	Plan to increase water storage or treatment as required to meet future water quality standards and fire code benchmarks	O
7.7.3	Assess benefits and costs of the City's role in treating and distributing water; Consider alternatives and relative cost to consumers	L
<i>Chapter 8: Community Facilities</i>		
8.1.1	While Services for Aging plans include construction of a new senior center on Norwalk's south side, near the current center, the agency should also consider co-	O

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
	locating some of their activities and programming in the Ernsthausen Community Center, to provide for intergenerational programming	
8.1.2	Consider ways to maximize the usefulness of City and County office buildings within Norwalk, including their potential as venues for meetings	O
8.2.1	Periodically consider needs of Police Department for upgrades to facilities, equipment, technology	O
8.3.1	Commission a study of alternatives for the replacement or enhancement of Norwalk's current fire station	S
8.3.2	Maintain a schedule of equipment replacement to maintain a fleet of reliable vehicles. Include in overall capital improvement planning	O
8.4.1	Undertake periodic review of capacity of school facilities in light of current and projected student populations and projections of need	O
8.4.2	Attract a satellite facility of one or more area college or university, either in a facility of their own, or in a shared "lifelong learning center" which could be constructed as an extension to the Norwalk High School, which could house college-level classrooms as well as housing GED, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and enrichment classes of interest to Norwalk citizens	L
8.4.3	Make basic literacy programs available to the underprivileged and Hispanic populations at an established public facility dedicated to these programs; Use high school (see 8.4.2) or alternative site	O
8.5.1	Support the efforts of the Library Board and leadership to expand their facility into the Hills building to the east, and to develop a plan to obtain necessary revenues to undertake the project	O
8.5.2	Explore partnership with Norwalk City Schools to develop a satellite branch of the library, co-located at the high school media center; Explore opportunities for cooperative ventures and use of technology	M
8.6.1	Develop an urgent care facility for Norwalk within Fisher-Titus campus	S
8.6.2	Support ongoing planning of Fisher-Titus Medical Center, including upgrade of technology and diagnostic equipment, and addition of new areas of specialization	O
8.6.3	Ensure that the local road system supports the needs of the Fisher-Titus campus and related facilities	O
8.7.1	Expand recreation facilities to accommodate a growing and changing population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire sufficient property (possibly considering the land west of the wastewater treatment plant and adjacent to Baines Park) to accommodate the growing Norwalk youth soccer league Construct a skateboard park that is safe and adequate for local needs Explore options for additional facilities to accommodate growing adult softball program 	O M S S
8.7.2	Create a master plan for the expansion of the Ernsthausen Community Center. Include a determination of facilities and their primary audiences; Components of the plan should be implemented when need and sufficient revenue streams can be demonstrated	S
8.7.3	Provide expanded senior services at the Ernsthausen Center (See 8.1.1)	O
<i>Chapter 9: Economic Development</i>		
9.1.1	Promote existing industrial parks; maintain data base of specs on facilities	S

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
9.1.2	Identify development sites that can accommodate rail access (See 6.6.3)	M
9.1.3	Develop spec buildings with amenities that are in demand	L
9.1.4	Implement a demolition and redevelopment plan for abandoned/dilapidated buildings	L
9.1.5	Create a one-stop shop for businesses, entrepreneurs, and others	S
9.1.6	Ensure broadband Internet access in industrial parks and other critical sites	M
9.1.7	Support the development of incubators for retail and other business	M
9.1.8	Promote retail corridors and office/service areas; Guide new ventures to these designated target areas	O
9.1.9	Identify needs of core services and institutions such as Fisher-Titus Medical Center	S
9.1.10	Secure a perpetual outside source of funding for local economic development programs	L
9.2.1	Consolidate various development approval processes throughout Huron County	L
9.2.2	Create comprehensive checklist of steps required for development in Norwalk, Townships, and the County (include permitting, inspections, approvals, etc.)	S
9.2.3	Consolidate/streamline residential and commercial development permitting/fees	M
9.2.4	Make development information available in linked databases accessible to the public	S
9.2.5	Pursue creation of a Foreign Trade Subzone in Norwalk	S
9.2.6	Pursue designation of Community Reinvestment Areas in Norwalk	S
9.2.7	Publicize Norwalk's HUB Zone designation	O
9.2.8	Ensure the entire City of Norwalk offers high-speed telecommunications access	L
9.2.9	Acquire a quality control designation for the entire City of Norwalk	L
9.2.10	Implement a preferred vendor procurement system that gives reasonable advantage to local product and service providers	S
9.2.11	Include quality of jobs in criteria for eligibility for city economic development incentives	S
9.3.1	Create community awareness program addressing how perception of Norwalk affects efforts to recruit businesses and new residences	M
9.3.2	Develop outreach efforts to recruit service, retail, restaurant businesses attracting workers of the new economy and capture incoming dollars	O
9.3.3	Create regional partnerships to help Norwalk showcase its assets	O
9.3.4	Help educate local businesses on how to compete in the new economy by understanding current business strategies and customer service	O
9.3.5	Develop a base of local entrepreneurs in targeted industries to help develop new entrepreneurs	O
9.3.6	Prepare feasibility study for creation of a high technology business incubator	L
9.3.7	Maximize use of distance learning centers and other means to bring higher education presence to Norwalk (see 8.4.2)	M
9.3.8	Endorse efforts to create an outreach/support center for the Hispanic population	S

Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations		
9.4.1	Capitalize on tourist traffic; promote tourism attractions	O
9.4.2	Develop uniform signage to promote local attractions	M
9.4.3	Locate and designate a tourism information and referral center	S
9.4.4	Educate business leaders on the value of regional tourism to the area; market the area to tourists.	O
9.4.5	Include tourism information and events on linked web sites	O
9.4.6	Offer capacity-building seminars for organizations that promote events	O
9.4.7	Focus tourism on existing entertainment districts (Raceway, downtown, US 250 North)	O
9.5.1	Create task force to examine feasibility and methodology to initiate formation of Joint Economic Development Districts or Cooperative Economic Development Agreements	M
9.5.2	Support and promote Huron County Airport as an economic development tool	O
9.5.3	Encourage and support regional marketing and promotion efforts	O
Chapter 10: Downtown Norwalk		
10.1.1	Use Main Street Norwalk and its Board as the organizational hub for downtown development	O
10.1.2	Develop a uniform method to recruit businesses to downtown Norwalk.	O
10.1.3	Market downtown Norwalk as a single entity with multiple partners and destinations; make use of a uniform tag line	O
10.1.4	Engage City and County governments – stakeholders – to participate in revitalization efforts.	O
10.1.5	Create a community resource center and welcoming committee	S
10.2.1	Maintain database of available space for businesses in the downtown	O
10.2.2	Explore architectural enhancements that would broaden usefulness of downtown properties. (Example: an elevator providing access to several buildings.)	M
10.2.3	Implement projects to create housing in upper floors of appropriate properties	L
10.2.4	Conduct professional study of parking needs, capacity and demand	M
10.2.5	Construct and use informational kiosks downtown	S
10.2.6	Consider creation of a downtown Community Reinvestment Area (see 9.2.6)	S
10.3.1	Build on façade improvement fund by pooling additional resources	M
10.3.2	Review purpose and operation of Architectural Review Board in light of vision and goals of Main Street Norwalk. (See 3.1.1, 3.1.2)	S
10.3.4	Provide education for existing businesses and their employees on customer service and basic business concepts (Use downtown venue for training)	O
10.4.1	Teach prospective employees how to maintain gainful employment, in service and hospitality industries especially	O
10.4.2	Build a coalition between business, education, and social service agencies to assist lead to employment of disadvantaged persons within Norwalk	L
10.5.1	Develop list of methods to capture tourist market. including Norwalk Raceway Park	O

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
	visitors	
10.5.2	Explore feasibility of a City or County “bed tax” to fund tourism	S
10.5.3	Develop uniform brand for downtown district based on local research	S
10.5.4	Coordinate the involvement of performing and arts organizations for downtown events and displays, etc.	O
10.5.5	Consider new opportunities for festivals and events throughout the year focusing on Norwalk community members	O
10.5.6	Expand the “Market Days” concept	O
10.5.7	Improve awareness of downtown through gateway information and identification	S
10.5.8	Boost downtown district’s visibility as “Norwalk’s meeting place”	L
10.6.1	Identify product and service lines not now available that could capture markets	S
10.6.2	Support creation and growth of a business incubator (See 9.1.7)	M
10.6.3	Expand Norwalk’s role as the County seat and center for services	O
10.6.4	Explore the creation of a downtown Norwalk “Entertainment District”	L
10.6.5	Explore/Identify a variety of niche businesses that could set Norwalk apart	O
10.6.6	Develop activities and destinations for youth and young adults	M
10.6.7	Develop a lodging facility (small hotel, bed and breakfast) in the downtown	L
10.6.8	Develop and publicize wireless Internet access throughout the downtown	L
10.6.9	Plan and help businesses plan more outside activities in the downtown	O
10.7.1	Make optimal use of downtown’s historic properties (example: the old County jail)	O
10.7.2	Maintain and consider extending the downtown streetscape	O
10.7.3	Develop gateway signage upon entry to the downtown	S
10.7.4	Consider specific or overlay zoning and land use regulations downtown	M
10.7.5	Pursue greenscaping and uniform streetscaping of Whittlesey north to League St.	S
10.7.6	Divert truck traffic from the central business district	O
10.7.7	Ensure sufficient utilities for the downtown area and its needs	O
10.7.8	Develop key side streets and expand business opportunities along those streets	M
10.7.9	Encourage and develop attractive rear and side entrances to Main St., Benedict, and Whittlesey Ave. properties	M
10.7.10	Inventory available parking and install directional “wayfinding” signs	S
10.7.11	Investigate feasibility of providing public restrooms downtown; Publicize availability	O
<i>Chapter 11: Quality of Life</i>		
11.1.1	Teen Center: Form committee to brainstorm and develop plan for a teen center: Develop operating budget for a center, establish legal structure, locate a site for the center, plan site and building layout, apply for funding through grants and other sources, and open teen center	M
11.2.1	Arts and Culture: Add artistic and cultural events to the City’s bulletin board (web-	S

<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
	based database)	
11.2.2	Broaden bulletin board to include villages and cities within Huron County	S
11.2.3	Include arts/culture organizations in awarding door prizes at nonprofit fundraisers	O
11.2.4	Secure central location (such as the Chamber building) to promote and sell tickets to cultural events and concerts	S
11.2.5	Encourage business owners and others to invest in cultural life of the community	O
11.2.6	Look for opportunities to support cultural growth; Initiate a fine arts school in Norwalk	L
11.3.1	Health Care: Create a comprehensive list of health care agencies and providers in Norwalk for public information with contact information	O
11.3.2	Explore feasibility of hosting operators or receptionists who can provide information and referral on non-urgent matters	S
11.4.1	Bike Trails: Connect the existing bicycle trail on the west side to downtown Norwalk	M
11.4.2	Connect north side with Route 250 North destinations – develop abandoned Norfolk and Western corridor	L
11.4.3	Connect west side to north side through downtown	L
11.4.4	Connect the reservoir area and the east side to the north side	L
11.4.5	Begin acquisition of right of way and easements for a south side loop	L
11.4.6	Create access to the rural east side North Coast Inland Trail	L
11.4.7	Begin acquisition of right of way and easements for Norwalk Creek Greenway	L
11.5.1	Park and Recreation: Support efforts to provide neighborhood parks within safe walking distance of existing and planned residential areas	O
11.5.2	Complete reservoir walking trail, construct amphitheater, plan events.	L
11.5.3	Develop and implement plans to add amenities and space to Ernsthausen Community Recreation Center	L
11.5.4	Expand sports facilities where demand exceeds available supply. Expand softball facilities at Baines Park by expanding to the south, west of Wal Mart	M
11.5.5	Catalog all community-based recreation, fitness, and sports opportunities	S
11.6.1	Restaurant and retail development: Determine market demand for restaurants and types, map potential sites, conduct market research, and recruit preferred entities and franchises.	S and O
11.6.2	Assist local entrepreneurs who wish to begin restaurant operations in Norwalk	O
11.6.3	Complete an accessible inventory of retail and service businesses in Norwalk, both consumer oriented and business-to-business; Analyze gaps in services and products (business leakage); Survey or sample residents regarding desired businesses, possibly through local media; Recruit outside business or nurture local start-ups when clear demand for a line of retail or service business, or a notable gap in a product or service, is established.	O
11.6.4	Utilize business incubator, once established, for emerging new retail or service business	O

Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations		
11.7.1	Community Soccer Complex: Explore use of Bishman Park for soccer fields. If Bishman is determined to be unsuitable, consider alternatives (i.e. near wastewater treatment plant). Explore field turf surface in the Ernsthausen Center during any expansion of that facility	S
11.8.1	Notice to Community on Opportunities: Develop a central clearinghouse on events, classes, performances; seek funding to develop and maintain it; and identify a responsible party to house the clearinghouse	M
11.8.2	Update the database of volunteer participation opportunities: List participation opportunities in an initial publication, and distribute it; develop easily updated website or page with current information on participation opportunities; publicize the website and contact information	M
Chapter 12: Community Services		
12.1.1	Research, fund, and build new fire department facility. (See 8.3.1)	M
12.1.2	Conduct periodic staffing study (every five years) of safety forces (fire, police)	O
12.1.3	Provide adequate training/equipment to ensure effectiveness of safety forces	O
12.1.4	Focus on substance abuse as a priority problem; mobilize resources	O
12.1.5	Engage the community (education and input) in determining and prioritizing what safety force service are necessary	O
12.1.6	Continue Norwalk's budget process; evolve a Citywide capital improvements procedure (see pages 2-4 of this chapter)	O
12.1.7	Stay informed on technology advancements for safety forces	O
12.2.1	Develop a new Senior Center to serve north-central Huron County; plan senior activities at sites such as the Ernsthausen Rec Center.	M
12.2.2	Increase stock of senior housing to meet projected needs for a variety of housing and related services	O
12.2.3	Expand public transportation to meet market needs, with a focus on inter-County; Ensure that affordable and available public transportation is provided within Norwalk and to other destinations	O
12.2.4	Increase resources for maintenance and home repairs for seniors	O
12.2.5	Increase capacity to provide "meals on wheels"	S
12.2.6	Support the position of a local senior ombudsman	S
12.3.1	Review and revise (as necessary) community disaster plan to maintain continuity of operations	O
12.3.2	Provide for more improved and comprehensive communication of community events and services through the community website (11.8.1-7)	O
12.3.3	Involve City in service delivery when service is within City department's mission	O
12.3.4	Consider re-staffing of City departments as new needs are identified (example: consider City Engineer)	O
12.3.5	Ensure cost-effectiveness in City's recycling program	O
12.3.6	Evaluate benefit of formal capital improvements planning and implement a citywide capital improvements planning process as appropriate	S

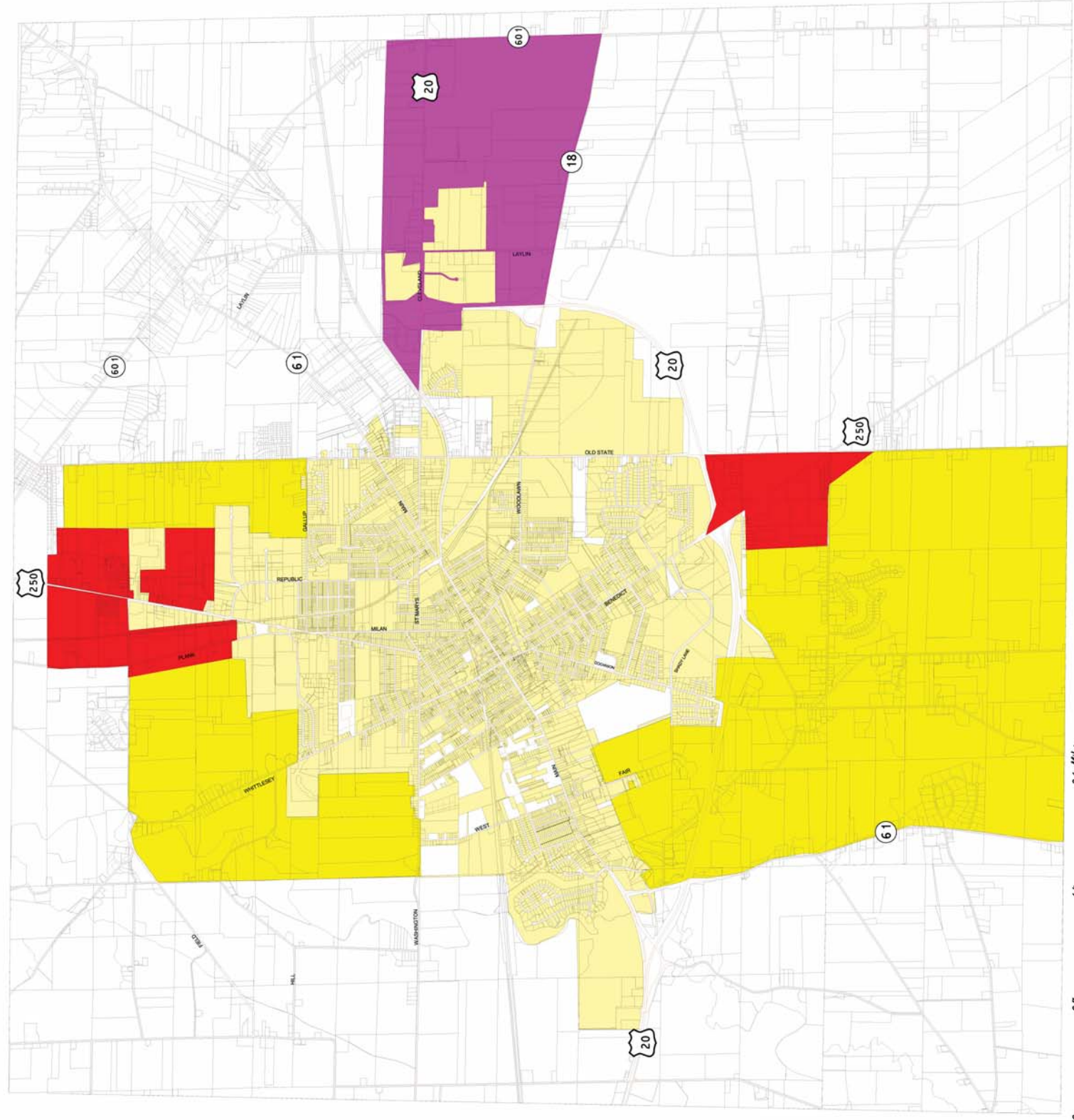
<i>Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations</i>		
12.3.7	Coordinate with community agencies or through United Fund office to ensure a resource directory is disseminated	S
12.4.1	Use Huron County interagency meetings to improve communications	O
12.4.2	Encourage service agencies to be in accessible locations; encourage co-locations; Foster expansion of facilities as needs outgrow capacity of existing facilities	O
12.5.1	Inter-agency group should collaborate on community health care issues	O
12.5.2	Establish a local community-based health care needs assessment process	M
12.5.3	Explore implementing (by FTMC) of Urgent Care facility	S
12.6.1	Further develop Norwalk Fire Department's Inspection Unit	O
12.6.2	Explore alternatives in Countywide commercial building/construction inspection program. Implement the alternative chosen (County department, dedicated staff within regional inspection unit)	M
12.6.3	Continue collaborative meetings with City departments prior to State approval of building plans for commercial property, to gather and share information	O
12.6.4	Develop and pass legislation to shape inspection services to best meet community needs	O as needed
12.6.5	Consider best practices from other communities in planning inspection services	S
12.6.6	Research contracting with other government or regional inspection office for inspection of residential/rental properties of under 4 units	S
12.7.1	Use Huron County Bar Association for call center, listserv, website to answer legal questions; Establish a speakers' bureau through the Bar Association	M
12.7.2	Re-establish a local agent council of local insurance representatives to better inform citizens of services of the insurance industry; Establish a call center, listserv, and website for insurance industry questions	M
12.8.1	Leverage community resources and leaders to provide grassroots lobbying effort on behalf of Norwalk and its concerns	O
12.8.2	Assess staffing levels and budget needs for Adult Protective Services and for Children's Services	O
12.8.3	Leverage resources for increased child care services; Maximize effectiveness of the network of childcare providers that are affordable, accessible, and of high quality	O
12.8.4	Provide English for Speakers of Other language classes for Hispanic/Latino population; Advocate for an identification program; Consider Hispanic cultural and recreational needs	O
<i>Chapter 13: Land Use</i>		
13.1.1	Target and encourage growth areas within Norwalk City School district; develop tax base sharing agreement with other school districts	L
13.1.2	Develop ability to assemble industrial parcels of 100 acres or more and served by rail, and to hold such property by option, using a CIC or other entity	L
13.1.3	Encourage the development of infill property within the City, and other practices of traditional neighborhood development	O
13.1.4	Research and implement new incentive programs; specifically, develop a Community Reinvestment Area program within Norwalk that reduces property taxes on new and renovated/expanded real property within specific areas of the City	S

Norwalk Comprehensive Plan Recommendations		
13.1.5	Encourage growth of Norwalk's south side and land south of the US 20 bypass, for housing, limited retail, and office/research uses; Consider servicing of this area with a new sanitary sewer trunk line once deemed economically feasible	O; trunk line: L
13.1.6	Plan for long-range industrial development of Norwalk's east side and a district that includes the U.S. 20 and S.R. 18 corridors easterly to S.R. 601; Develop a means to support the cost of infrastructure to service this district. Ensure compatibility and coordination with Norwalk Raceway Park and the Norwalk-Huron County Airport	L
13.1.7	Plan for mixed-use development on Norwalk's north side, including a commercial and service corridor along US 25 and parallel access roads, and residential uses within the area	O
13.1.8	Create an inventory of sites that includes their infrastructure capacity and development readiness status	S
13.2.1	Advocate adoption of a compatible zoning code for Norwalk Township	M
13.2.2	Ensure concurrence of planning commission decisions with this comprehensive plan	O
13.2.3	Consider creation of a downtown zoning overlay district that allows for desired mixed-use growth, including commercial and service, as well as upper-floor housing	M
13.2.4	Identify and help develop new retail and commercial land use zones, serving emerging mixed-use areas such as the US 250 north corridor	M
13.2.5	Examine feasibility of an entertainment district in Norwalk's downtown	L
13.2.6	Develop regulations to guide the development of “big-box” stores in Norwalk.	S
13.3.1	Advocate for/Implement means to pay for development of open space that does not inhibit development; Possible \$500 per lot fee (See 4.1.2)	S
13.3.2	Develop guidelines governing minimum thresholds (Subdivision size) for invoking mandatory open space provisions	S
13.3.3	Set aside appropriate green space as residential neighborhoods expand and are created	O
13.3.4	Preserve existing natural areas and maximize their use as green space or greenways (Example: develop a greenway along Norwalk Creek); Research other corridors	L
13.3.5	Consolidate existing data sources and conduct surveys to assess potential areas for green space; develop database of developed park space, undeveloped green space, and undevelopable green space	S
13.4.1	Construct sidewalks along corridors where pedestrian traffic is generated; Example: US 250 North corridor	M
13.4.2	Examine, adjust, enforce regulations governing signage along commercial and gateway corridors to improve attractiveness	L
13.4.3	Ensure the zoning code allows for mixed-use developments and does not unnecessarily segregate land uses; Appoint and use a blue ribbon committee to review the code	S
13.5.1	Develop base of useful digital orthos to plan the future land use of Norwalk and surrounding areas	S
13.5.2	Identify a centralized GIS office or official at City or County level	M
13.5.3	Maintain GIS database and make it accessible to the public and potential users through accessible terminals and a web presence	L



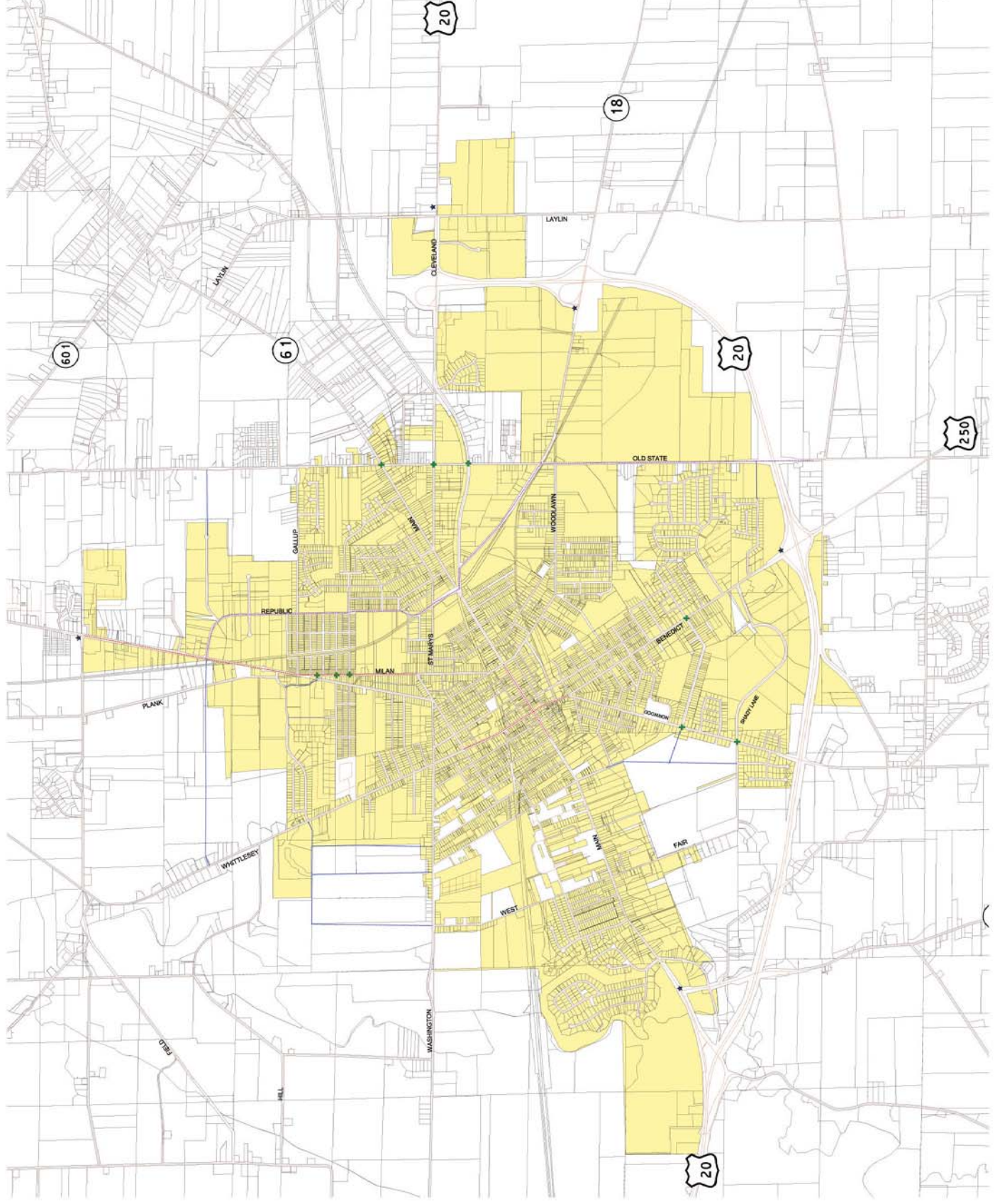
Legend

- Streets
- Parcels
- City of Norwalk
- Mixed Use & Commercial Areas
- Residential Growth Areas
- Industrial Growth Areas



City of Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Proposed Transportation Improvements

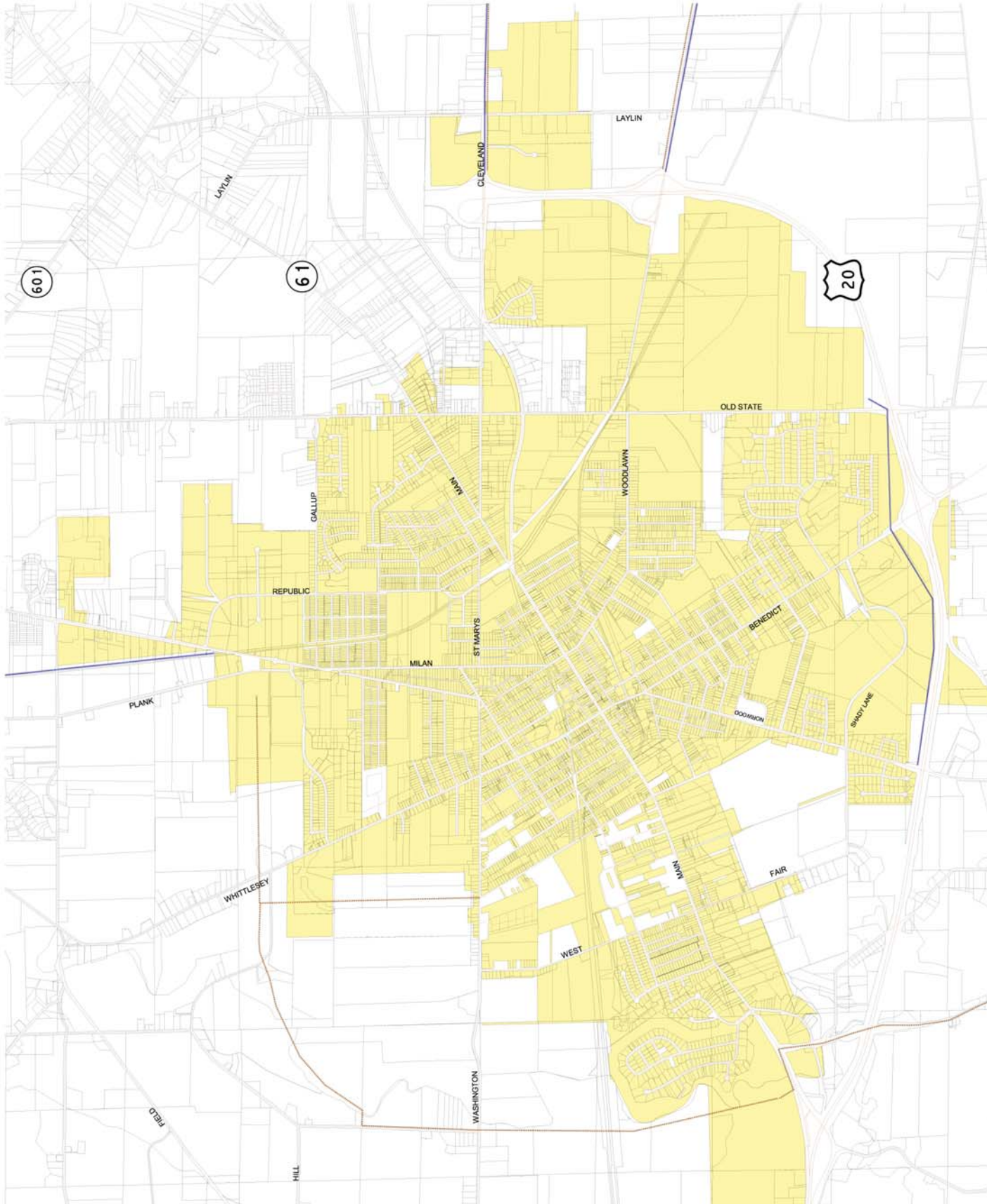


Legend

- ★ Potential Gateway Locations
- Future Roadways
- Corridor Planning Area
- Future Intersection Improvements
- Potential Truck Route
- Streets
- Parcels
- City of Norwalk

City of Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Proposed Utility Improvements



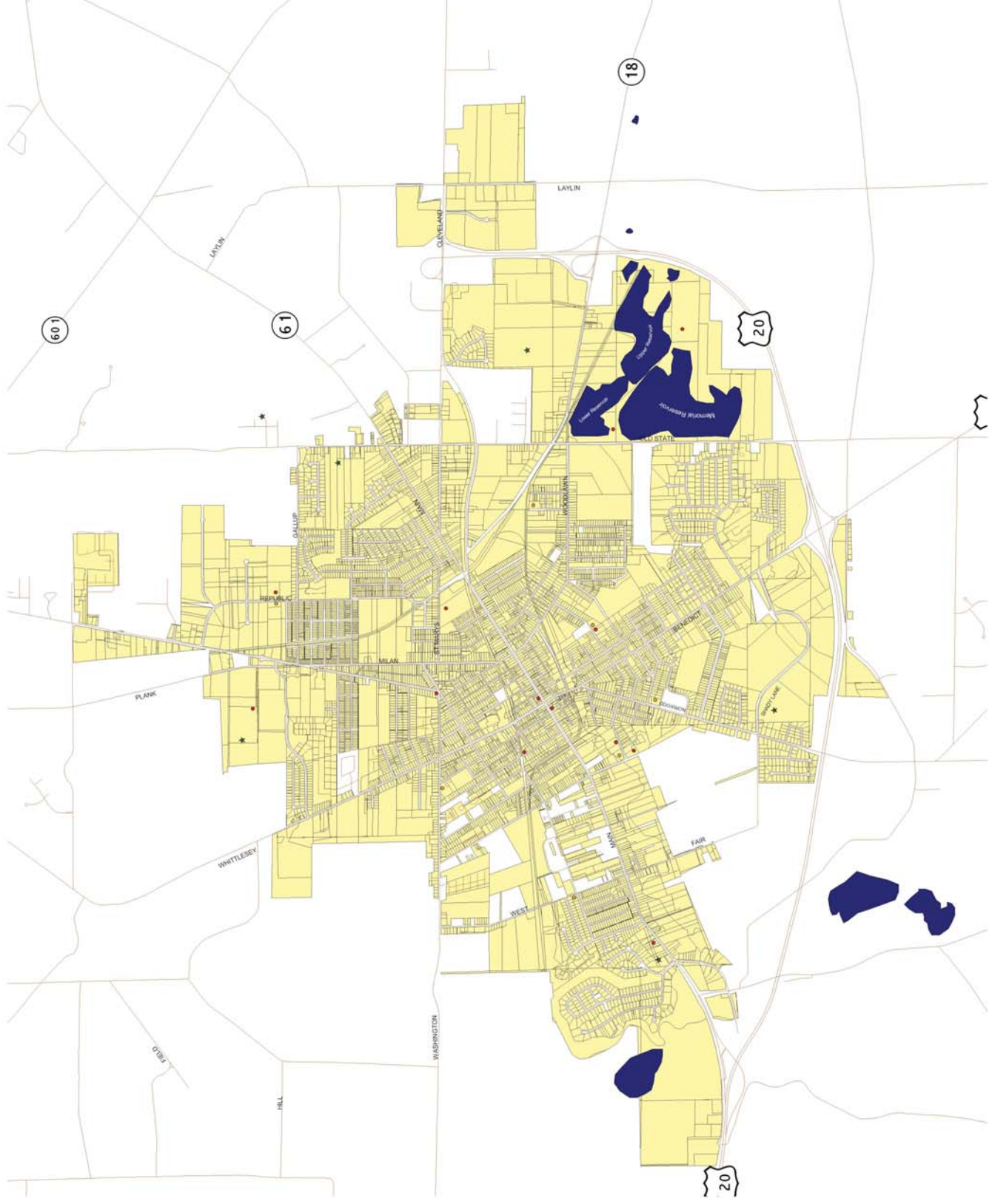
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- Future Sewer Improvements
- Future Water Improvements
- Streets
- Parcels
- City of Norwalk



City of Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Current and Potential Parks and Recreational Facilities



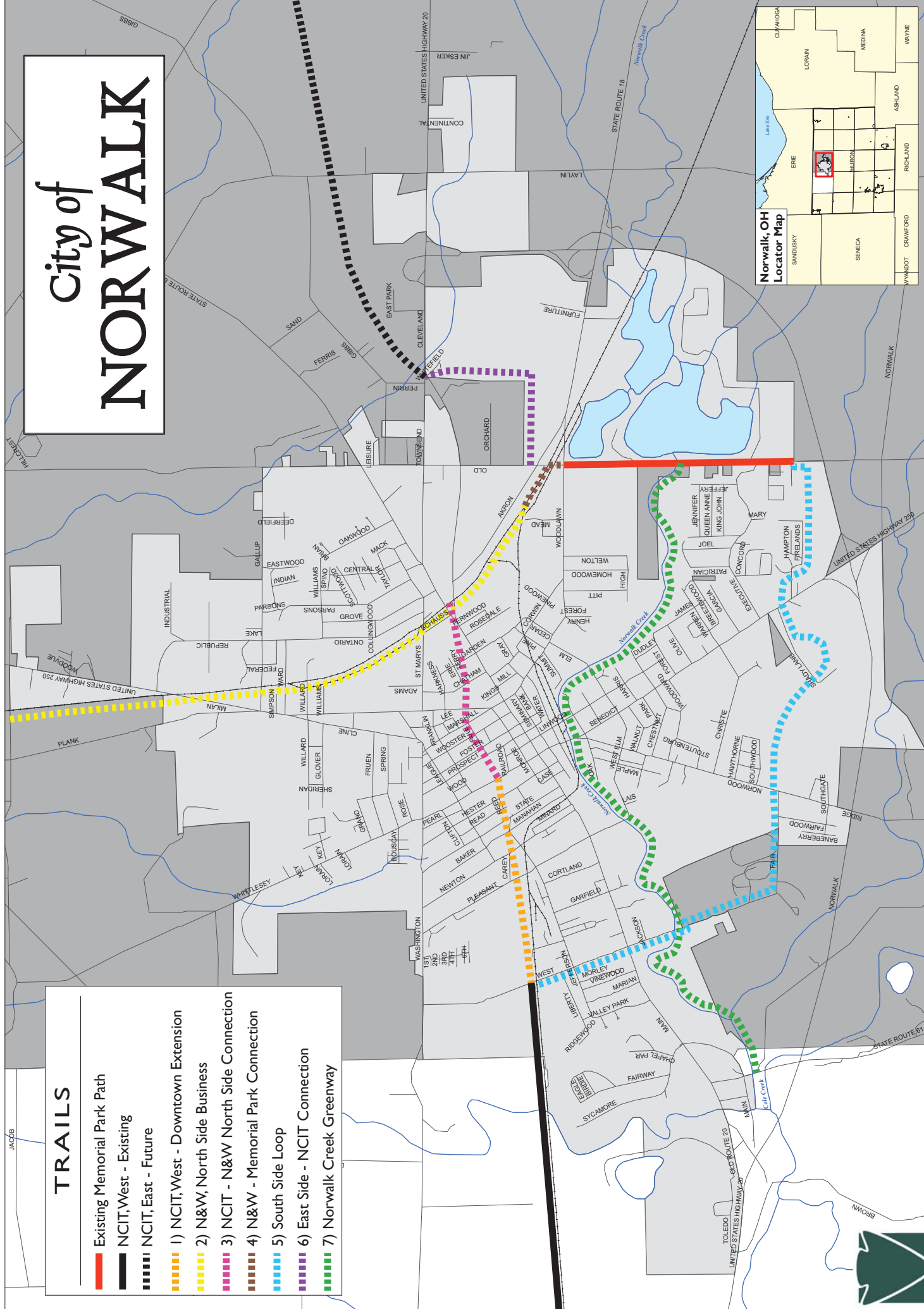
Legend

- Other Parks and Facilities
- ★ Potential Park Locations
- Open Water
- ▬ Streets
- City of Norwalk

TRAILS

- Existing Memorial Park Path
- NCIT, West - Existing
- NCIT, East - Future
- 1) NCIT, West - Downtown Extension
- 2) N&W, North Side Business
- 3) NCIT - N&W North Side Connection
- 4) N&W - Memorial Park Connection
- 5) South Side Loop
- 6) East Side - NCIT Connection
- 7) Norwalk Creek Greenway

City of NORWALK



0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

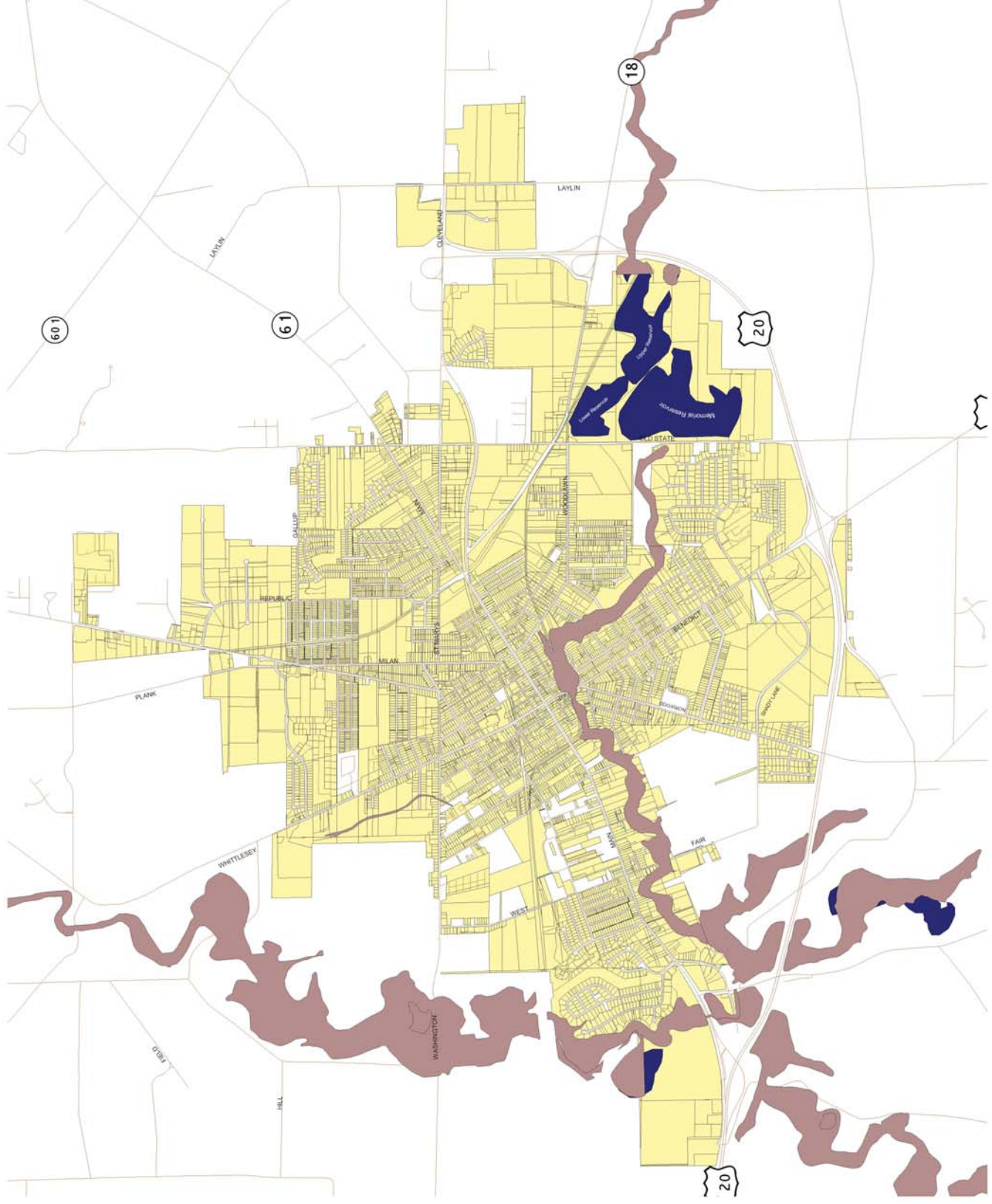
Stream Road Railroad Norwalk Norwalk Twp. Ridgefield Twp. Water Feature

LORAIN COUNTY METRO PARKS

12382 Diagonal Road
Lorain, OH 44050
440-458-5121
Created on 7/22/05 ALG
Source: Magie 2001 CD

City of Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Floodplains



Legend

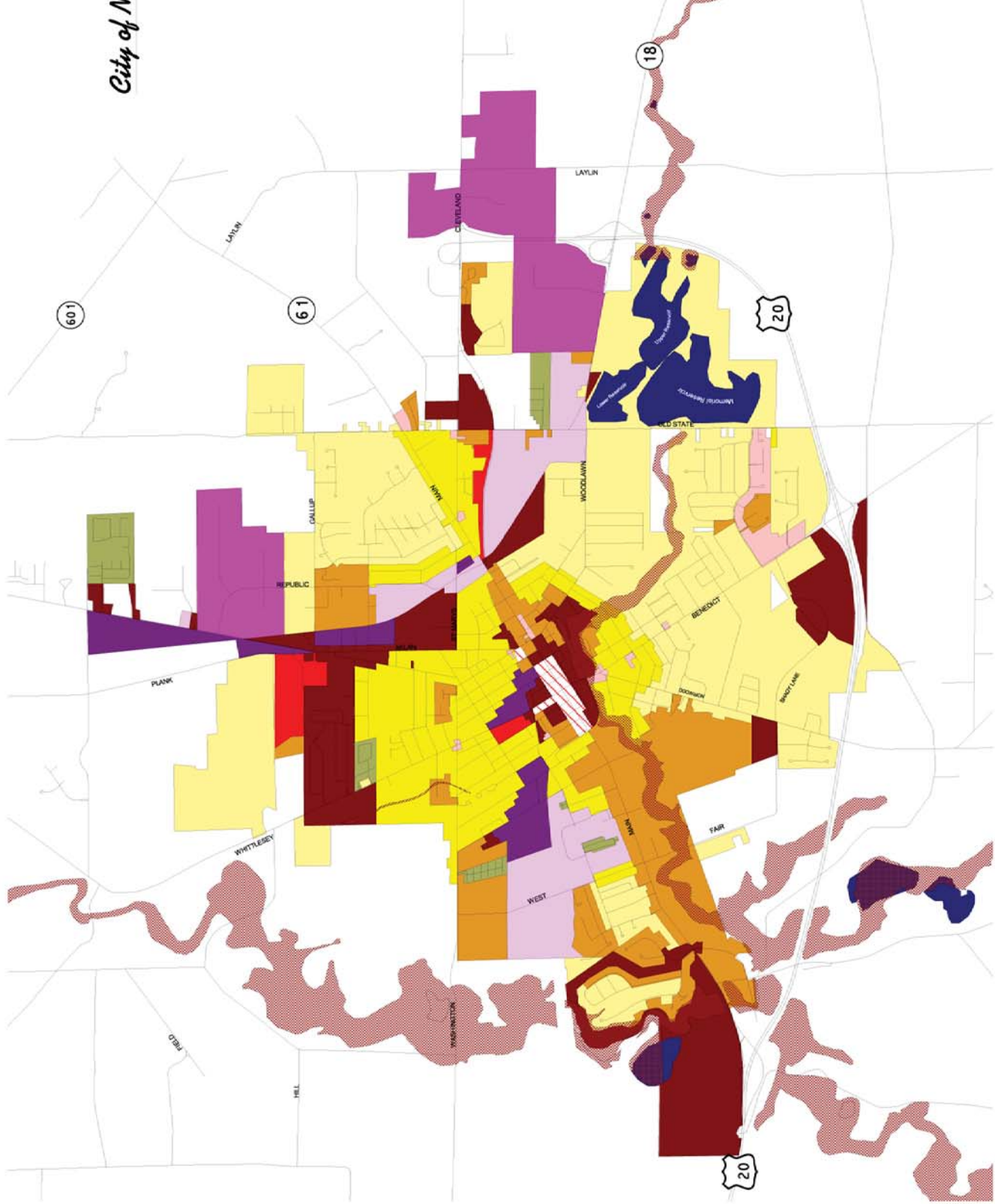
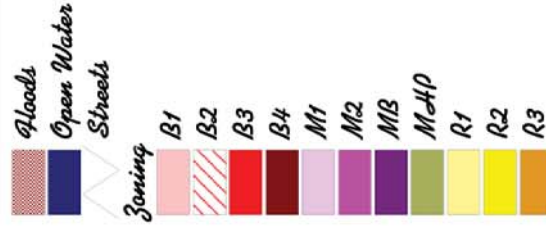
- Floods
- Open Water
- Streets
- City of Norwalk



City of Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Zoning

Legend



Attachment NP-8

City of Bellevue



City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Project

Comprehensive Master Plan

Date

March 2005



Bellevue Comprehensive Plan – Vision 2025

Mayor David Kile

Bellevue City Council

Karen Justice: President of Bellevue City Council
Frank DeBlase: First Ward Council Representative
Steve Cloud: Second Ward Representative
Kathy Loparo: Third Ward Representative
Dave Freitag: Fourth Ward Representative
Jodi Keiser: At Large Representative
Rose Mary Nascone: At Large Representative
Richard Sanders: At Large Representative

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Jeff Crosby, Safety-Service Director, Chairman
David Kile, Mayor
Charles F. Trapp, Former Mayor
Karen Justice, Council Representative
Marc Weisenberger, Recreation Board Representative
Roger Paul, Economic Development Representative
Brian Foos, Commercial Business Representative
Sherri Woodruff, Commercial Business Representative
Dr. James Lahoski, Bellevue School District Representative

The City thanks former Safety-Service Director, Gary W. Haynes, for initiating this Comprehensive Master Plan - Vision 2025 Process.

Also, thanks to all the Steering Committee members for their many hours of service to the City on this project, the Key People who were interviewed for their insight, Community Survey Respondents who completed lengthy survey forms, Township Trustees and staff who worked diligently with the City to prepare agreements on future development scenarios, and all the residents of the City and Townships who attended the various Visioning Sessions and public meetings to express their ideas.

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City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

1

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Purpose

Communities are constantly changing. Sometimes change is small and almost imperceptible, and sometimes change can be dramatic, as large areas are developed, or as several smaller construction projects are built. Change is driven by decisions, and the Bellevue of today emerged from the past through a series of decisions made by many entities. The City has made decisions about how to regulate land use, and what public infrastructure to build and where. Industries, lending institutions, school districts, and developers have made development decisions to respond to a wide range of needs and demands within the community.

Within this dynamic environment of change and decision-making, it is not unusual for community leaders to question the overall direction of community development, and to pursue a definitive sense of direction and overall vision. The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to provide this vision, capturing and articulating desired community goals, based on community attitudes and preferences. Effective comprehensive plans serve as guides for day-to-day decisions, so that those decisions are made in the context of long-term community goals and objectives.

Comprehensive plans have several common characteristics. First, as the name implies, they address major elements of community development in a comprehensive manner. This means providing an overall, long-term vision of development that recognizes the interrelated elements of community fabric, including how land is used, how people move from place to place, and what public facilities are required to support basic human needs.

Second, comprehensive plans are concerned with long-range, “big picture” issues; often looking 20 years or more into the future. While such a period seems like a long time, it is critical because most municipal decisions are decisions that impact the community both immediately and long-term. Thus, the impacts of decisions made today regarding new land uses, new roads, and investments in infrastructure will be felt for many years to come, and will significantly impact the health and welfare of our children and grandchildren.

Finally, comprehensive plans must represent a statement of public policy and a community vision that reflect community attitudes. The process to develop a meaningful comprehensive plan affords community leaders with an unparalleled and unique opportunity to engage residents in thoughtful and constructive dialog about their future. Thus, comprehensive plans emerge from a localized and thoughtful process of investigation and civic engagement.

One very common aspect of most successful and livable communities is the fact that they are fully committed to consensus-building and effective community planning. Community planning processes are utilized regularly to understand community desires, to identify challenges, to define priorities, and to move confidently toward the future with clear goals in mind.

Planning Process Management

The development of this Comprehensive Plan was guided by an appointed Steering Committee. Nine people were selected to represent a broad cross section of the Bellevue community. Included on the Steering Committee were local elected and appointed officials (past and present), and representatives from the School District, the Recreation Board, local commercial businesses, and the Citywide economic development organization. All members were also residents of the City or the School District. This Steering Committee met frequently during the planning process to make decisions and guide planning activities. Members also participated in the public visioning sessions.

Key Tenet

Early in the planning process, the Steering Committee identified the need for a vision for a period of twenty years in the future, or approximately the year 2025. Within that 20-year period, growth of the community would require development of lands adjacent to the City, which currently are located in one of the four neighboring townships. The fact that each neighboring township is located in a different county adds complications to the planning process. All four townships were specifically invited to participate in the planning process.

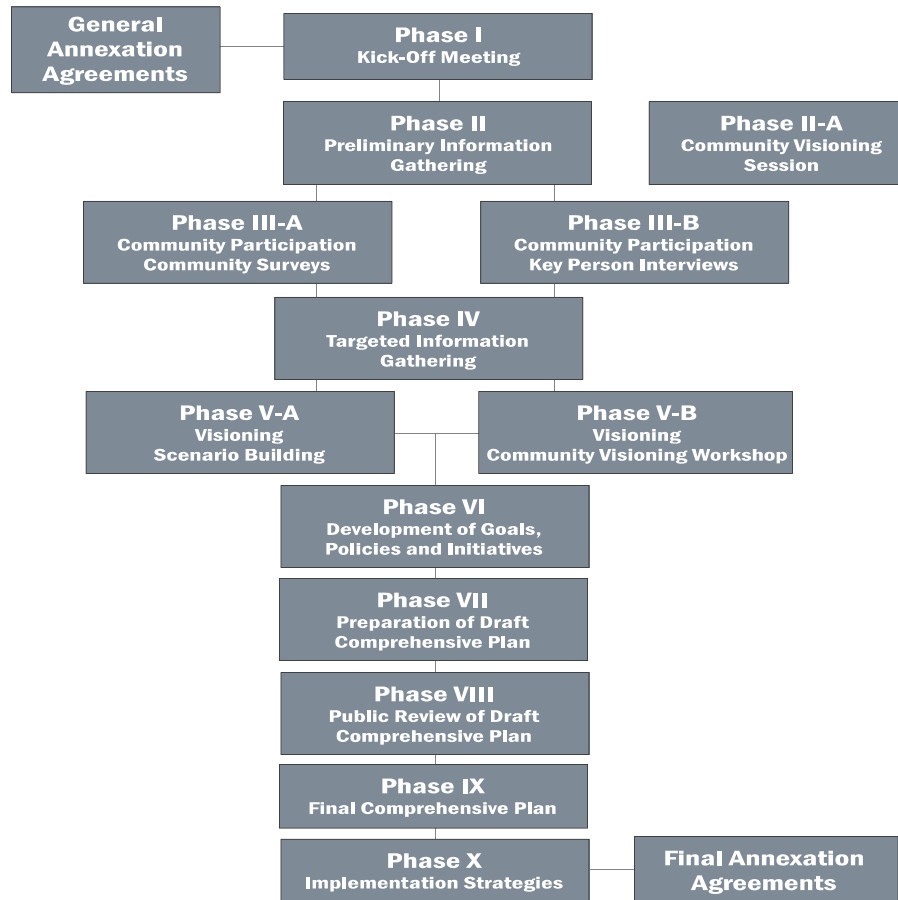
The one unifying factor for the Bellevue community, which embraces both City and township residents, is the Bellevue School District. Residents are committed to the schools and have an enormous amount of pride in the school programs, both academic and athletic. The School District serves the bulk of the lands within the four neighboring townships, providing a common thread of unity and community spirit for the City and townships.

The comprehensive planning process attempted to build upon this School District community spirit and pride, and extend the existing practices of cooperation and coordination into the decision-making process for the future development of the area, or the community “Vision 2025.”

Thus, the key tenet of the planning process for the City of Bellevue was coordinating with and **involving representatives of the four townships within the School District in the planning process, and reaching consensus on annexation and revenue sharing agreements with them.** Having these agreements would provide a seamless economic development process that would benefit the City and townships, residents, the school district, and the businesses seeking to expand or locate in the community.

Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process formally began with the selection of Poggemeyer Design Group (PDG) in October 2003, after months of research and discussion by City officials, specifically with regard to developing a comprehensive scope of services. A planning process was proposed by PDG based on the City's scope of services, modified after discussions with City officials, and approved by City Council. Ultimately, the process included the following phases:



Phase I: Kick-Off Meeting

A kick-off meeting was held with the Steering Committee on October 30, 2003 to discuss the parameters of the planning process, refine the scope of the project, discuss citizen participation mechanisms, identify key development issues, discuss the involvement of the media, develop parameters for general annexation agreements, and discuss other issues related to the overall expectations for the planning process and final products.

It was agreed that a meeting was needed with representatives from all four townships to explain the planning process, request their participation and cooperation, and begin the development of annexation and revenue sharing agreements. A meeting was held with all four townships at the High School library on February 18, 2004. (Beginning in 2005, the City plans to have at least annual meetings with all four townships.)

The City explained the comprehensive planning process that was commencing and requested their participation in it. It was expressed that the City's newly elected and appointed officials had a willingness to cooperate on a variety of community issues, including economic development. City administrators understood that in order for the City to grow, it had to expand its boundaries, and that they were willing to share revenues with the townships in an effort to create a seamless economic development process for the future. The City committed that representatives from PDG would meet individually with each of the four townships twice to develop mutually-agreeable annexation and revenue sharing agreements.

The first series of townships meetings were held as follows:

- Lyme Township (Huron County) March 15, 2004
- Thompson Township (Seneca County) March 29, 2004
- York Township (Sandusky County) March 30, 2004
- Groton Township (Erie County) April 22, 2004

The second series of township meetings were held as follows:

- York Township (Sandusky County) October 12, 2004
- Lyme Township (Huron County) October 18, 2004
- Thompson Township (Seneca County) October 25, 2004
- Groton Township (Erie County) November 18, 2004

Phase II: Preliminary Information Gathering

After the initial meeting, PDG began collecting basic information on the Bellevue community. Information gathered included material from the US Census (2000 data being the most current), projections from Claritas, Inc. (a nationally-recognized market research firm which specializes in demographic analysis and population projections), recent planning studies, EPA and TMACOG 208 planning documents, School District plans, preliminary ODOT information on the proposed rerouting of truck traffic, existing zoning regulations, and other existing studies. The City of Bellevue had not completed a Comprehensive Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS) in the past, so only limited condensed housing data was available. A Community Profile summarizing this data, was started at this time.

Also in March 2004, PDG conducted a general existing land use analysis of the community. Windshield surveys of the entire community were conducted and general existing land uses (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, farmland, public, parkland, etc.) were recorded onto a base map of the City for further analysis and projections.

Phase II: A - Community Visioning Workshop

The first major effort to reach out to area residents and define community issues occurred on January 13, 2004. A community visioning session was organized to engage residents in an initial effort to identify issues and challenges facing the Bellevue community. Approximately 85 participants attended the session and participated in the discussions. Participants were divided into break-out sessions, which were led by PDG and Steering Committee members. The sessions discussed the following key issues, which were previously identified by PDG and the Steering Committee:

- *Quality of Life Issues*
 - Housing
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Historic Resources
 - Community Facilities and Services
- *Public Facilities, Utilities, and Services*
 - Police, Fire, and EMS
 - Fiber Optics
 - Water and Sanitary Sewer
 - Storm Water
 - Ordinance Enforcement
 - Zoning
- *Transportation Issues*
 - Access Management along US 20
 - SR 18 Rerouting Proposal
 - Downtown Traffic Bottlenecks
 - Alternative East-West Traffic Routes
 - Grade Separation Projects at Railroad Crossings
 - Signage and Gateways
 - Airport and Railroad Services
 - Rails to Trails Projects
- *Commercial and Economic Development Issues*
 - Opportunities for Downtown Redevelopment
 - Desired Retail Stores and Services
 - Development along US 20 East and West
 - City Image
 - Cedar Point Connections
 - The New Sandusky County Airport
 - New Industrial Park in Northeast Section of the City
 - Potential Industrial Property to the South
 - The Role of Schools in Development
 - The Bellevue Development Corporation (BDC)

- *Schools and Education Issues*
 - School Facilities—Conditions of Buildings
 - Operating Issues
 - Additional Space Needs
 - Traffic and Safety Issues around Existing Schools
 - Financial Issues

Shortly after the session, a report was produced summarizing the major findings of this workshop. It was distributed to the Steering Committee members for review. Results helped to formulate the direction and scope of future planning efforts.

Phase III A and B: Community Participation

To achieve more community input using different techniques, PDG proposed undertaking a community survey, as well as key people interviews. It was anticipated that acquiring key issues from a select group of knowledgeable people, and verifying that information through a community survey, would define and refine those issues that the community should concentrate on throughout this planning process.

III A. In March 2004, a number of community leaders representing broad segments of the Bellevue community were selected by the Steering Committee for one-on-one interviews with PDG. The purpose of the interviews was to discuss key issues of concern about the community, and to glean valuable knowledge on these key issues from people who had extensive experience and/or history with the City. When the interviews were concluded, a separate report was prepared summarizing recurring thoughts and ideas that surfaced as a result of this work. This information was shared with the Steering Committee on April 23, 2004.

III B. A draft Community Survey was prepared by PDG and presented to the Steering Committee for their review and input. It was decided that the survey would be undertaken during the summer months so that the City could use its summer interns to assist with distribution and collection of the survey forms.

Survey forms were delivered by the Post Office to every mailbox address within the City. A total of about 3,000 surveys were distributed. Just under 10% (287) of the surveys were returned to various collection points throughout the City. This is a very acceptable return rate. A Steering Committee member and volunteers tabulated the results of the surveys on a format prepared by PDG. The results of the surveys were discussed with the Steering Committee in September of 2004, presented to the public at the second Visioning Session, and incorporated into the balance of the planning process.

Phase IV: Targeted Information Gathering

During and after the public participation processes, PDG concentrated its effort on defining major planning themes, identifying specific development and/or redevelopment areas, and gathering specific and targeted information regarding those themes and areas. The Steering Committee discussed and refined these development scenarios during several meetings, before being satisfied that these scenarios were ready for presentation to the public for its review.

Recommendations were categorized into six key areas for development and/or redevelopment. These included:

- The SR 113/ US 20/ SR 4 Triangle
- The SR 4/ US 20 Intersection
- The Northeast Industrial Park Area
- US 20 West
- SR 269 South and SR 269/Prairie Road
- The Downtown

Numerous recommendations were made regarding the potential development and/or redevelopment of these areas. Issues that were addressed included preservation of farmland, protection of existing residential development, access management, buffering non-compatible land uses, utility extensions, political jurisdictions and related issues, grade separations, gateways, streetscaping, etc.

Phase V - A & B: Visioning – Scenario Building

V A. The development and redevelopment scenarios were discussed and refined by the Steering Committee over several months during the Summer of 2004. Future land uses were discussed for each area, as well as access management issues, gateways, buffering, transitioning between land uses, utility needs, etc. Once general consensus was reached among the Steering Committee members, the planning process again reached out to the general community with another community visioning workshop.

V B. The second Visioning Session, held on September 14, 2004 at Council Chambers, attracted just under 50 people. Participants visited stations depicting the various development scenarios, offered thoughts to PDG staff and Steering Committee members on how to improve the development issues presented, and listened to a presentation of the process to date and the summary of recommendations regarding the six key development and/or redevelopment areas.

A Question & Answer period followed with all questions recorded on cards prior to the discussion, which allowed for accurate recording of the participants' comments. Comments on the development scenarios were shared with the Steering Committee members on October 12, 2004 and changes were made to the concept plans accordingly.

Phase VI: Development of Goals, Policies, and Initiatives

Based on all the information collected and analyzed to date, and the results of the scenario building workshops, the Steering Committee and PDG refined the planning issues and development scenarios, leading to the formation of goals and objectives central to the comprehensive plan. The policies and initiatives primarily focused on the six development and redevelopment areas, although other community issues were also presented. Several meetings were required to accomplish this involved and challenging task. Drafts of each section of the Plan were provided to the Steering Committee as they were completed for review and comment.

Phase VII: Preparation of Draft Comprehensive Plan

Based on the goals, policies and initiatives developed above, PDG began compiling all the information collected, analyzed, and developed over the past year into a draft document for review by the Steering Committee. The document was presented to the Steering Committee for extensive review, and a meeting was held to review overall issues and changes required on the draft document.

Phase VIII: Public Review of Draft Comprehensive Plan

Once the Steering Committee was comfortable with the draft document, the public was provided with another opportunity to review the progress of the Committee and to provide input to the planning process. A public meeting was held on March 21, 2005 with both the Planning Commission and Council in attendance. Comments from the public were recorded and considered in the preparation of the final Comprehensive Plan, as appropriate.

Phase IX: Final Comprehensive Plan

Once the Steering Committee was comfortable that the document encompassed the vision, goals, strategies and initiatives that it desired, PDG prepared a final Comprehensive Plan. The local newspapers were asked to cover the Plan, as they had the earlier visioning sessions.

Phase X: Implementation Strategies

PDG summarized the recommendations made in the Comprehensive Plan - Vision 2025 and identified responsible parties, potential financing alternatives, and suggested timetables for implementation of the various recommendations.

This information will be used to finalize annexation and revenue sharing agreements with the four townships. Final meetings will be held with the townships by City personnel to execute the annexation and revenue sharing agreements.

Vision Statement

One of the most important results of the development of a Comprehensive Plan is the ability to visualize and summarize where the City of Bellevue expects to be twenty years from now. This vision is based primarily on how the City plans to deal with the issues currently facing the City, as detailed in this document. It is also based on the collective hopes for the City as expressed throughout this planning process by members of the Steering Committee, Key People, City Administration, and residents who participated in the public visioning sessions and the Community Survey.

That said, the following Vision Statement is intended to capture and describe the desired future of the City of Bellevue in a non-technical manner. This statement is written from the imagined perspective of a City resident in the year 2025. It is hoped that with an ongoing commitment to keeping the goals and plans for the City current and relevant, a future resident will be able to say...

"The City of Bellevue is becoming a better and better place to call home and raise a family. When I was growing up here in the 1990's, I didn't pay all that much attention to things that are important to me now. School was great as far as I was concerned. We had lots of success in sports, plenty of things to do and get involved in, even in the summers - thanks in no small part to the rec programs the City offered, and I had no trouble getting into Ohio State, my first choice of colleges. But, like most kids my age, I couldn't wait to go away to college, and didn't really plan to make Bellevue my home after college.

"However, as they say, life is what happens to you while you were making other plans, so here I am, family and all, and happy to be here. After getting my degree in business from Ohio State in 2004, I took a middle management job with a manufacturing company in Indiana. A couple of years later, my parents, who still live here, told me about a new company that was moving into the Industrial Park in the northeast part of the City. By that time I was married and we were expecting our first child, so the pleasant memories of my childhood in Bellevue and the thought of my kids growing up near their grandparents easily overwhelmed any negative thoughts I had about coming back to town and raising my family here.

"To make a long story short, I took a job with that company, moved back to Bellevue and bought a house in one of those new subdivisions out near the new hospital. We now have three kids, the oldest one leaning toward Ohio State of course, but being courted by at least two Ivy League schools, among others, thanks to her outstanding SAT and ACT scores and the fact that she has been starting on the varsity basketball team since she was a sophomore. I can't say enough about the Bellevue schools. My youngest attends Shumaker Elementary, which was totally remodeled and expanded about the time we moved back to town. Our middle son is in the also recently remodeled junior high school, which is a big improvement to the junior high building I remembered. And, having top-notch schools sure makes it much easier to bring new companies, and new employees at all levels, to the area.

“Two of the biggest drawbacks to living in Bellevue for as long as I could remember, had been the truck traffic through the downtown and in some of the neighborhoods around Shumaker School and Goodrich Road in the northeast of town (especially around harvest time), and all of the time we used to spend waiting at the railroad crossings around town. Much of that has changed now.

“The first big improvement with the truck traffic was when the City created a third lane at the subway and synchronized the stop lights downtown. The next one was when the City and Groton Township worked together to create that truck route from the industrial park to SR 4 and the Turnpike; that sure relieved a lot of our concerns about all that traffic in front of Shumaker School. But the biggest change will be when ODOT completes the bypass around town that is finally under construction. On top of all that, they are now in the process of building the third new railroad overpass since I’ve been back in town, which has made getting around town much easier for all of us.

“That beautiful restoration of the historic Tremont House shortly after they redid all the downtown sidewalks was a real catalyst towards encouraging downtown building owners to renovate their properties. The downtown already looks so much better than it did when I was growing up here. But with the bypass finally becoming a reality, and with all of the commercial and industrial growth we’ve seen in and around the City in the last fifteen years or so, people are actually competing for the few remaining open spaces in the downtown.

“Not too surprisingly, one of the biggest factors in stimulating growth in the area has been the new Bellevue hospital. Once all of our kids were in school, my wife got back into nursing, and had no trouble finding a good job at one of those new medical clinics in the area surrounding the hospital. Between the hospital, all of those specialty clinics, and the new assisted-living and extended-care housing facilities just west of the hospital, Bellevue has become a true regional medical center, providing a wide variety of top-notch, state-of-the-art medical services, as well as all sorts of good-paying jobs, and bringing many more professionals to the area. As you can imagine, the local housing market has also received a real shot in the arm.

“In fact, now that my daughter is starting to think seriously about what she wants to do and where she wants to live after she gets out of college, it’s nice to know that returning to Bellevue to raise her family (and my grandchildren) someday, is high on her list.”

City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter **2**

Community
Profile

Chapter 2: Community Profile

The following community profile is provided to furnish a general factual description of the Bellevue community. Selected characteristics of the City and surrounding region are included to provide an overall perspective of the City and to form the foundation of more in-depth analysis of topical issues in the following chapters.



Community History

The City of Bellevue, situated in north-central Ohio, has a rich heritage as an historical railroad town. Huron County, one of the three counties in which Bellevue lies, was officially established in 1809. The City's first framed house was built in 1817, and later a group of log homes was built in an area that has since become Bellevue's Main Street. The settlement later became known as Amsden Corners when Thomas G. Amsden of Ontario County, New York, further developed the town and opened a general store in 1819 near the present-day intersection of Exchange and Main Streets.

In later years, the Chief Engineer of the Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad, James H. Bell, suggested that the company develop a line through Amsden Corners. Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad acted on Mr. Bell's suggestion, and as a result, the town experienced an economic boom. The boom enabled local proprietors, including Mr. Amsden, to purchase a town plot. In 1835, Amsden Corners was officially renamed "Bellevue" in recognition of Mr. Bell's efforts.



Notably, the Bellevue area has two sites listed on the National Register of Historical Places. The John Wright Mansion, located at 5001 State Route 4, east of Bellevue, is a principal part of Historic Lyme Village. First listed on the Register in 1974, the mansion was built in 1882 in the Second Empire Victorian architectural style.

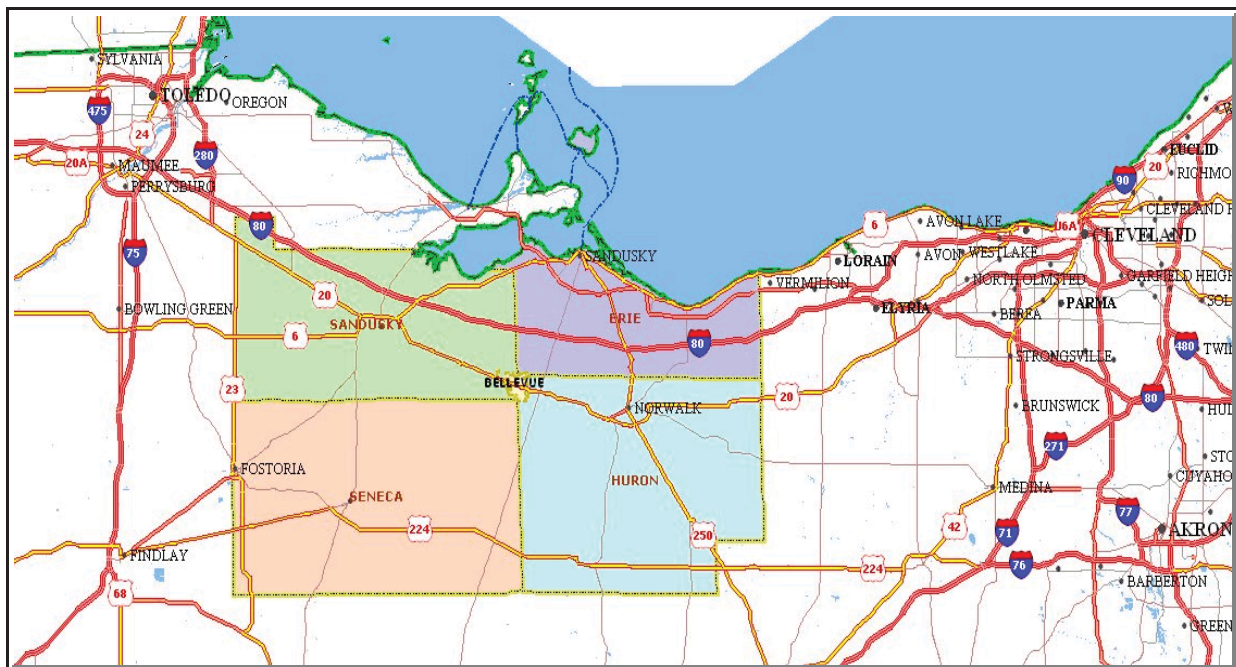


The Second Bellevue area listing on the National Register of Historical Places is Heter Farm, which is located northwest of the City. The Heter Farm is recognized not only for its historical agricultural value, but also for its engineering and architectural attributes. The Greek Revival style structure, built in the early 1800's, was first listed with the National Register of Historical Places in 1979.

Bellevue's first settlers were Mark Hopkins and family, and shortly thereafter, Elnathan George, in about 1815. They constructed log houses on the Huron County side near the Sandusky County line. Return Burlington soon settled on the Sandusky County side and named the community York Crossroads.

Regional Context

Bellevue is located 51 miles southeast of Toledo, Ohio and 62 miles west of Cleveland, Ohio. The City rests primarily within Sandusky and Huron Counties, with a small parcel of land in Erie County and is immediately adjacent to Seneca County. Therefore, the Huron and Sandusky County data will be used primarily in data analysis and statistical comparisons. The dominant industry within Huron and Sandusky Counties is manufacturing.



Geography

The City encompasses approximately 5.1 square miles of land. US 20 crosses the City of Bellevue on an east-west line, and is often used by commercial trucks as an alternate route to the Ohio Turnpike, I-80/90. From southwest of the City, SR 18 joins US 20 in the middle of downtown Bellevue and for several miles to the east. SR 269 crosses Bellevue on a north-south line, intersecting with US 20 and SR 18 in downtown Bellevue. Beneath Bellevue there are Karst formations within a stratus of limestone which have produced a number of natural sinkholes.

Demographics

According to the 2000 US Census, the City of Bellevue's population was 8,193, a 0.6% increase in population from 1990. Sandusky County experienced a 0.3% decrease for the same time period. In contrast, both the State of Ohio (+4.7%) and Huron County (+5.8%) reported population growths for that same period. York Township (+11.3%) in Sandusky County, and Lyme Township (+20.4%) in Huron County, both experienced population increases. The City of Bellevue's slight population increase, when compared to the growth in Huron County, York Township, and Lyme Township, however, is not uncommon in the State of Ohio, as growth in unincorporated rural areas typically outpaced development in urban areas during the 1990's.

Chart 2-1. Bellevue Area Population Changes			
<u>Area</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Bellevue	8,146	8,193	0.6%
Huron County	56,240	59,487	5.8%
Sandusky County	61,963	61,792	-0.3%
Ohio	10,847,115	11,353,140	4.7%

Household Trends

The total household growth rate (4.8%) outpaced the population growth rate (0.6%) in the City of Bellevue between 1990 and 2000. However, much like the population growth rate, the household growth rate trailed the State's by approximately 4 percent (refer to **Chart 2-2**). Like the State, both Huron (+10.2%) and Sandusky (+5.6%) Counties household growth rates outpaced that of the City of Bellevue (+4.8%). (Refer to **Chart 2-2**.)

The Bellevue Family Household, Non-Family Household, Female-Headed Household, and Householder over 65 growth rates trailed both the Counties' and the State's rates of growth. Note that the Householders over 65 decreased in the City of Bellevue while increasing in the three other geographic areas for the same period. Bellevue's Married Couple Households declined at the same rate as the State's. Generally, Huron County's household growth rates were higher than Bellevue's, Sandusky County's, and Ohio's in each category of household, except Householder over 65. Sandusky County had the highest growth rate in that category. Huron County also had the highest population growth rate of these four geographic areas.

**Chart 2-2. Bellevue Area Household Composition Changes
1990-2000**

Household Category	Bellevue	Huron Co.	Sandusky Co.	Ohio
Total	4.8%	10.2%	5.6%	8.7%
Family	0.2%	5.6%	0.5%	9.4%
Married Couple	-0.3%	1.7%	-4.0%	-0.3%
Female Headed	7.1%	23.7%	12.2%	12.3%
Non-Family	16.0%	24.9%	20.7%	21.8%
Householder over 65	-2.1%	9.0%	9.6%	7.0%

The household composition trends for the City of Bellevue are very similar to those of Huron and Sandusky Counties and those of the State of Ohio, as shown in **Chart 2-3**. Married Couple households are the majority household types in the aforementioned communities and the State. Married couples with children households are the second leading type of households within the same communities and the State. In the City of Bellevue, as in Huron County, Sandusky County, and the State of Ohio, female householder with no husband present, outnumber male householders with no wife present, by more than 3.5%. Such trends are comparable to those found nationwide during the 1990's.

Chart 2-3. Household Composition

	Bellevue		Huron		Sandusky		Ohio	
Household Type	No.	% of Total Households	No.	% of Total Households	No.	% of Total Households	No.	% of Total HH
Married Couples	1770	52.8	13,112	58.1	13,355	56.1	2,295,348	51.2
Married Couple w/ Children	791	23.6	6074	26.9	5741	24.1	1,001,804	22.3
Male Householder	86	2.6	516	2.3	616	2.6	90,925	2.0
Female Householder	213	6.4	1519	6.7	1504	6.3	321,371	7.2
Non-Family, Male Householder	108	3.2	603	2.7	628	2.6	139,627	3.1
Non-Family Female Householder	68	2.0	346	1.5	389	1.6	98,316	2.2

Average Household Size

The average household size in the City of Bellevue in the year 2000 was 2.46, which is consistent with the 2.49 average household size for the State of Ohio. However, the 2000 census reported slightly higher average household sizes for both Huron County and Sandusky County at 2.64 and 2.56, respectively.

Age Composition

According to the 2000 Census, the median age in the City is 35.8 years, as compared to the State's median age of 36.2 years. The Census reported a median age of 35.2 years for Huron County and 37.7 years for Sandusky County. Accordingly, the age distribution of the City of Bellevue closely resembles that of Huron County, Sandusky County, and the State of Ohio. In 2000, 14.6% of the City's total population was over 65 years of age. Comparatively, the State of Ohio had a lower rate of 12.8%. Bellevue has a higher ratio of elderly persons than do Huron County, Sandusky County, and the State. Older populations generally require more services from the local governments, but generate very little revenue to cover the expenses of those services. Hence, it is important to have a balanced age composition so that the needs of all residents of the community may be met with satisfaction.

Chart 2-4. Age Groups according to Claritas, Inc., 2000								
Area	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Med. Age
Bellevue	22%	12.8%	13.5%	14.6%	13.7%	8.9%	14.6%	35.8 years
Huron County	23.3%	13.5%	12.9%	15%	13.8%	9.3%	12.2%	35.2 years
Sandusky County	21.1%	13.0%	12.0%	15.3%	14.5%	9.8%	14.2%	37.7 years
Ohio	21%	13.8%	12.9%	15.4%	14.3%	9.5%	12.8%	36.2 years

Racial Composition

The majority of people in the City of Bellevue are Caucasian (97.3%). Huron and Sandusky Counties have similar racial compositions with Caucasian majorities of 95.4% and 91.9%, respectively. The largest minority in the City of Bellevue is Hispanic/ Latino with 2.7% of the City's total population, which is similar to the State's Hispanic/Latino population (2.0%). Comparatively, Huron County (3.6%) and Sandusky County (6.8%) had higher Hispanic/Latino populations. The City of Bellevue (3.0%), Huron County (1.0%), and Sandusky County (2.8%), have much smaller populations of African Americans than the State's 11.8%. Similarly, the City of Bellevue, Huron County, and Sandusky County's Asian population is 0.3% each, which is 75% less than the State's Asian population percentage of 1.3%.

Median Incomes

Increasing by 35.6% since 1989, the median household income in the City of Bellevue grew at a rate similar to the growth rate of median household incomes in Huron (35.3%) and Sandusky (38.7%) Counties. In both 1989 and 2003, the City of Bellevue had a lower median household income than the Huron and Sandusky Counties and the State, as shown in **Chart 2-5**. The 2003 median household income in the City of Bellevue, \$36,160, is only 82% of the State's median household income (\$44,039). This compares with the City of Bellevue's 1989 median household income (\$26,670) which was 93% of the State's median income (\$28,707). The median income of the State of Ohio grew at a much higher rate than did the median income of the City of Bellevue.

Chart 2-5. Median Household Income (Claritas, Inc.)			
Area	1989	2003	% Change
Bellevue	\$26,670	\$36,160	35.6
Huron County	\$27,432	\$37,123	35.3
Sandusky County	\$29,074	\$40,319	38.7
Ohio	\$28,707	\$44,039	53.4

Housing Units

According to the 2000 Census, the housing unit occupancy rate in the City of Bellevue is 93.3 percent, where 3,332 of 3,559 available units are occupied. Of those occupied, 66.6 percent are owned and 33.4 percent are rented. Comparatively, the State's owner occupancy rate was slightly higher at 69.1 percent.

Claritas, Inc. reported that there were a total of 3,578 housing units in the City of Bellevue in the year 2000, with a median housing value of owner-occupied units of \$72,722. At \$99,749, the State's median housing value was approximately 25% higher than that of the City of Bellevue.

Mobile homes as a percent of all housing in Huron (8.8%) and Sandusky (8.2%) Counties were notably higher than the mobile home percentages for the City of Bellevue (2.8%) and the State of Ohio (4.9%). Housing units built prior to 1960 comprise 65.7% of the City's total housing units, which is higher than those for Huron County (47.3%), Sandusky County (57.0%), and the State of Ohio (46.1%).

The 2000 Census reported a vacant housing unit rate of 6.4 % for the City of Bellevue, which is similar to that for the State of Ohio (7.1%), Huron County (5.5%), and Sandusky County (6.1%).

Housing Construction Trends

In the City of Bellevue, 14 homes and 20 apartment buildings were built between 2000 and 2002. The majority were built in 2000, including 16 apartment buildings (with a construction value of \$2,960,300) and 14 houses (with a construction value of \$2,574,995), with an average cost of construction per apartment of \$185,018 and an average cost per home of \$183,928. However, in 2001, no apartment buildings were built and the average cost of construction per home (\$179,146) was 2.6 percent lower for the eight homes that were built that year. In 2002, 4 apartment buildings and 14 homes were constructed at an average cost of \$136,250 and \$191,410, respectively. The average cost per home built in 2002 increased over the average costs in years 2001 and 2000; however, the average cost of apartment buildings decreased.

According to the Ohio Department of Development, 491 residential buildings were constructed between 2000 and 2002 in Huron County. The average cost of construction per unit increased from \$105,273 in 2000 to \$109,028 in 2002. The number of single-unit buildings built each year comprised more than 80% of the total residential units constructed. During the same period, 502 new residential units were constructed in Sandusky County. Contrary to Huron County, the average building cost per unit fell from \$114,758 in 2000 to \$113,624 in 2002. The number of single units built in Sandusky County rose each year with 141 constructed in 2000, 169 in 2001, and 171 in 2002.

Transportation

Residents of the City currently have access to three major modes of transportation: road, rail, and air. US 20 passes through the City of Bellevue (east and west). SR 18 (generally southwest and east) and SR 269 (north and south) also pass through the City's downtown. SR 4, which intersects with US 20 east of the City and with SR 113 northeast of Bellevue, is a heavily-traveled north-south highway providing the most direct route to Lake Erie for south-central Ohioans, as well as the closest access to the Ohio Turnpike for the Bellevue area. In November 2004, ODOT upgraded and synchronized the traffic signals along US 20 in the City. The US 20 upgrades in downtown Bellevue also included street widening, resurfacing, and lane improvements, as well as sidewalk repairs.

Rail service is provided by the Norfolk & Southern and Wheeling & Lake Erie on tracks passing through the City from the west, southwest, east and northeast. Adjacent to Bellevue's Industrial Park in the northeast, is a large classification rail yard.

Commercial passenger and air cargo service is available at three readily accessible airports: Toledo Express (70 miles west), Cleveland Hopkins (70 miles east), and Akron-Canton (100 miles southeast), and air cargo service is also available at the Mansfield Lahm Regional airport (40 miles south). Private aviation and charter flights are available at several airports in the area including the Sandusky County Airport, just west of Clyde, Griffing Airport in Sandusky, and the Tiffin Airport to the southwest.

Recreation and Culture

The City of Bellevue, Ohio Area Tourism and Visitors Bureau, invites residents, visitors and tourists to "Take a break from the Lake and discover Bellevue." The area offers an array of historical attractions and activities for people to explore. One such attraction is Lyme Village, which provides visitors with the opportunity to experience nineteenth century living. Additionally, Seneca Caverns offer a hands-on experience to residents who wish to personally explore some of the City of Bellevue's natural history. Other historical attractions include The Mad River and NKP Railroad Museum, a collection of memorabilia from the City of Bellevue's railroad history, and the Bellevue Heritage museum. Yet another historical attraction is the Sorrowful Mother Shrine. The Shrine, constructed in 1850, is the Midwest's oldest place of pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and is a center for meditation, religious services, and exploration of the area's religious history.

The City of Bellevue also has many cultural attractions for both residents and visitors to enjoy. One such cultural attraction is the Bellevue Society for the Arts, which provides a 342-seat theater/reception area for lectures and local community concerts. Also, on the third Saturday of

September, the Society hosts its Annual Midwest Bookfest. In the near future, the Bellevue Society for the Arts anticipates hosting larger, traveling shows, musicians, and speakers. The facilities are also available for use by corporations for meetings, training sessions and seminars. In addition, the Society provides many educational programs and studio space that instructors in the community use for music lessons for Bellevue area youth. In the near future, the Society hopes to expand these studio facilities to accommodate painting and sculpting lessons.

In addition to the activities held at the Shrine and Society for the Arts, the City of Bellevue boasts a full calendar of festivals and community events. Representative of these annual events are the Pioneer Days Festival and Halloween of Yesteryear in Lyme Village, the Community Days Festival the last weekend of June, and Christmas of Yesteryear. The Woodcarvers' Den Carving Show, Pancake and Sausage Brunch, and John Gibson Memorial Blue Grass Gospel Sing also offer diverse alternatives for the community.

The greater Bellevue area provides residents and visitors with a variety of outdoor activities and facilities including a campground, numerous area golf courses, a paint ball field, and a hunt club. Within, and managed by, the City of Bellevue, there are two indoor recreational facilities and eight parks, providing fitness, wellness and recreational opportunities ranging from Nautilus equipment workouts, football, soccer, baseball, softball, tennis and basketball to swimming, fishing, and picnics. The City has a 1.5 mile walking trail in the northeast of the community in the wooded area adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant named the Lost River Trail. Open for use, though not yet paved, the trail is to be completed in the Summer of 2006.

The Sandusky County Park District directly supports the City of Bellevue Parks and Recreation Department through the Local Park Improvement Grant Program. The program has supplied the City of Bellevue with more than \$45,000 to provide for outdoor recreation improvements. Moreover, the County Park District is working to extend the North Coast Inland Trail that will lead into Bellevue. Currently, the CR 177 right-of-way is secured and the District plans to construct the Bellevue to Clyde section of the North Coast Inland Trail soon. The County Park District plans to cooperate with Firelands Rails-To-Trails to build the Huron County North Coast Inland Trail segment that will link the City of Bellevue to Kipton.

Utilities

Columbia Gas of Ohio provides natural gas services to the area. Verizon North services the telephone needs of the Bellevue area. The electrical supplier is Ohio Edison, and cable television service is provided by Time Warner Cable.

The City's water treatment plant was put into operation in 1932, and has been modified in 1955, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1976, and 2004. The plant typically filters 1.7 - 2.0 million gallons of water per day, using about 75% of the 2.6 million gallons per day plant capacity. The City also maintains 5 reservoirs, the first of which was constructed in 1874 and the last of which was built in 1946. The capacity of the reservoirs ranges from 70 million to 700 million gallons. The City is in the process of entering into an agreement to purchase treated water from Erie County to supplement its own capabilities and provide for future growth, and has recently completed an optimization study regarding needed upgrades to the water treatment plant and other system components.

Bellevue's Wastewater Treatment facility is located adjacent to the Industrial Park in northeast

Bellevue. Constructed in 1969, with expansions in 1988 and 1994, the plant has a design flow of 2.0 million gallons per day (MGD), with a 24-hour peak flow of 5.6 MGD and an average daily flow of 1.1 MGD. The City has recently completed a \$7 million upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant that included a state-of-the-art process to convert bio solids into compost suitable for residential applications, the first of its type in the State of Ohio.

Fiber optics is critical to the future of the City, especially with regard to industrial and commercial development. Currently the railroad has a high-speed fiber hub on Center Street at the railroad and the School District has its own internal system. Fiber is not available elsewhere in the City or Townships.

Education

Bellevue City Schools, as managed by the Bellevue Board of Education, is committed to meeting the needs of more than 2400 K-12 students. The school district encompasses 137 square miles in the greater Bellevue area. Bellevue City Schools maintains seven educational buildings (one senior high, one junior high, and five elementary schools) and one administration building, all of which were built before 1970. In addition, Bellevue residents have access to two private educational institutions for K-12 students. Within 55 miles, residents have access to higher education institutions including Oberlin College, Ashland University, Tiffin University, Heidelberg College, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green State University Firelands Campus, Terra Community College, and Lorain County Community College. Several technical and trade schools are also readily accessible to Bellevue residents.

In order to comply with the Ohio State Senate Bill 55, Bellevue City Schools developed and published a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and also published an overview of that plan. The plan details six goals which were developed after community leaders, local business leaders, Board of Education members, and school staff analyzed approximately 12 months of data. The District's first goal is to continuously improve student performance through managerial responsibilities. The second goal is to obtain an "effective rating from the State by improving curriculum, instruction, teaching, and learning. Third, the plan commits Bellevue City Schools to improving existing educational facilities that could lead to improved student performance. The fourth goal listed in the CIP overview, communicates the School District's commitment to improving student services and student service programs. The fifth goal discusses technological improvements and using technology in the classroom to improve student performance. Finally, the Bellevue City Schools CIP indicates that enhancing community involvement in the school district to improve student performance is its sixth goal.

Though each of the six goals targets different subject matter, each goal is in place to improve student performance in order to receive an "effective" rating from the State. Each goal includes 5 to 14 objectives that detail how that goal is to be achieved, and there are 47 total objectives among the 6 goals. As of August 29, 2002, 6.3 percent (3 of the 47 objectives) had been completed, 12.8 percent (6 objectives) had not been started, and 80.9 percent (38 objectives) were in progress.

Industries/Economy

The City of Bellevue Chamber of Commerce's primary functions include guiding development, encouraging business expansion, and promoting industrial growth. Housed with the Chamber is the Bellevue Development Corporation, which has assumed all responsibilities for industrial development. According to the Chamber, the top five employers in the City of Bellevue are:

- Norfolk Southern Railroad (400 employees),
- Bellevue Hospital (400 employees),
- Armstrong Manufacturing (350 employees),
- Auto-Plas Manufacturing/ Precision Automotive (300), and
- Tower Automotive (140 employees).

The Bellevue Hospital, Memorial Hospital (Sandusky County), and the Fisher-Titus Medical Center (Huron County) are among the major employers for Sandusky and Huron Counties. According to the Ohio Department of Development, the area's primary industry is manufacturing. Accordingly, the majority of principal employers are manufacturing firms, who provide more than 21,000 jobs in Huron and Sandusky Counties combined. Not surprisingly, more than 1,800 Bellevue jobs are in the manufacturing sector. The local government, retail trade, health care and social assistance sectors also provide a large portion of the employment for the area.

The City of Bellevue has two industrial parks. The A. D. Wolfe Industrial Park is located in the northeast region of the City and is comprised of 48 acres. The second park, aptly named Bellevue Industrial Park, is comprised of 6.5 acres in the western region of the City.

Unemployment

According to the Ohio Department of Development, the unemployment rates of Huron and Sandusky Counties have been relatively stable. In 2002, Huron and Sandusky Counties had unemployment rates of 8.1% and 6.3%, respectively, both of which were higher than the State's rate of 5.2%. Huron County experienced a rise from 7.2% to 8.1% between 2000 and 2002, a 12.5% increase over three years. Sandusky County's unemployment rate increased from 4.9% in 2000 to 6.3% in 2002, a 28.6% increase over three years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the State of Ohio's unemployment rate also increased from 3.9% in 1999 to 5.9% in 2002, a 51% increase over four years.

Labor Force

According to the Ohio Department of Development, total employment for Huron County and Sandusky County was 27,400 and 29,400, respectively for 2001. The manufacturing sector was the largest employer in Huron County, employing 36% of the labor force. In Sandusky County, the manufacturing sector was also the largest employer, employing 34% of the labor force. The total civilian labor force of the State of Ohio in 2001 consisted of 5,874,045 people, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Department of Development reported that among the major employers within the State, national retailers, hospital groups, and General Motors were the leading employers.

Community Services

Police Service

The Bellevue Police Department employs a customer-oriented philosophy in order to promote a sense of safety and high quality of life in the City of Bellevue. Thirteen police officers, four communication officers, and a full-time detective are currently employed by the Bellevue Police Department. Thirteen auxiliary officers and one Special Response Team member of the Huron County Sheriff Office assist the City's police staff during special events or circumstances. The Bellevue Police Department patrols more than fifty square miles of roadways covering four major routes in close proximity to the City. In order to patrol those fifty square miles, the Bellevue Police Department has twelve marked and two unmarked cruisers. The Department is located at 3000 Seneca Industrial Parkway, adjacent to the City Administration offices in the City center.

Fire Service

Bellevue's Fire Department has been housed in its current building since its construction in 1985. The facility, located on Southwest St., has 3,800 square feet of office and living space and an additional 3,250 square feet of truck bay space. The Department's three-bay station is used to service a 97 square mile area, which includes not only the City of Bellevue, but also Lyme, Thompson, and York Townships under contract agreements. The department's service area has been extended by mutual aid contracts to all Huron County communities, as well as Attica, Clyde, Fremont, Green Springs, Perkins Township, and the City of Sandusky.

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City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

3

Local Attitudes
and Planning
Themes

Chapter 3: Local Attitudes and Planning Themes

As described previously, the planning process included efforts to reach out to the public and community leaders to identify and define community planning issues. These efforts included the Steering Committee meetings, a joint meeting with the four townships, individual meetings with each of the four townships, key person interviews, two public visioning sessions, and a community survey.

It is recognized that each of the public outreach efforts has inherent advantages and disadvantages. Mail surveys provide information from a representative sample of people who might not otherwise provide their opinions. Public meetings allow for dialog and discussion, but only among a comparatively small group of people who are able to attend a meeting on a given night. By using multiple approaches to reach out to residents and community leaders, it is hoped that this planning process avoided the pitfall of over-reliance on one citizen participation technique, and provides a more complete representation of community issues.

One challenging aspect to utilizing multiple citizen participation mechanisms is the fact that results are not easily compared. Consequently, a substantial amount of time has been spent on the task of discovering recurring themes in the results of the various citizen participation efforts. Summaries of each of the various information gathering sessions are provided immediately below, with more detailed reports from these sessions provided in **Appendices 3-1 through 3-5**. The balance of this Chapter is a listing of the recurring thoughts and perceptions that were identified among the various participation mechanisms, organized into the dominant community planning themes. These are the issues that are addressed in more detail in the subsequent chapters of the Plan.

Major Issues identified by the Steering Committee

In late 2003, the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee had its first two meetings, during which the Committee members were asked to identify the community's assets and liabilities as the likely basis for the framework for the Comprehensive Plan. Discussions were focused on the subjects of: land use, quality of life, public facilities, utilities and services, transportation, commercial and economic development, and schools/education.

(See Appendix 3-1.)

The main issues identified by the Steering Committee early in the planning process, many of which have been echoed in subsequent information gathering, public input sessions, and/or the community survey, include:

Land Use

- Commercial development should be encouraged and planned on the west and east ends of US 20.
- City zoning regulations were last updated in the 1980's and are out of date. Some of the surrounding townships have no zoning.
- Historic homes and buildings are an asset that should be preserved.
- Downtown revitalization is important, including conversions to residential.
- Development of the Quarry area, possibly including parks and recreational space is important.

- Existing and potential land use conflicts between adjacent land uses are an issue, especially between industrial and residential land uses.
- There are few remaining places to build new housing within the current City limits.
- The cemetery will be full within fifteen years.

Quality of Life

- The City of Bellevue has many assets that positively affect quality of life. These include:
 - Excellent schools
 - Senior and assisted living housing
 - The Society for The Arts and its Community Theater
 - The Community Center
 - The City Centre exercise area
 - The Library
 - The Bellevue Historical Society and its plans for the Tremont House
 - The Railroad Museum
- US 20 is the main issue for the downtown revitalization efforts.
- The School District has many issues to address including aging buildings, recent failed levies, the need for additional space, etc.
- The City needs more baseball/softball fields.
- More middle-income housing (\$100-150,000) is needed.
- Senior housing/condos with inside parking is needed.
- The empty movie theater building downtown should be addressed.

Public Facilities, Utilities, and Services

- Storm water issues revolve around the sink holes that are common to this area.
- Water and wastewater systems are current; recent and planned upgrades will address anticipated demands for next 20 years.
 - There is ample water for the future, especially if an agreement with Erie County is executed.
 - All water lines and connections on Main Street in the downtown were replaced with in conjunction with the work in 2004 on US 20 in the downtown.
 - Lyme Township needs water (including Lyme School).
 - The community of Flat Rock in Thompson Township needs water and/or sewer.
- The Police Department is in good shape.
- The Fire Department, with paid full and part-time firefighters, is in good shape.
 - The City contracts fire services with York, Lyme and Thompson Townships.
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are contracted to a private firm at this time.
 - Some thought has been given to a City EMS Department.
 - The City is currently cross-training City firefighters as EMT's.
 - There is generally poor EMS response from the Counties.
 - The EMS contractor also provides services to:
 - Parts of York and Groton Townships
 - All of Thompson and Lyme Townships
 - It could be an issue for the Townships if the City forms its own department. Services may have to be limited to the City, forcing the Townships to rely on County service or to enter into agreements with the City.
- High-speed fiber is recognized as necessary.
 - The railroad has a high-speed fiber hub on Center Street at the railroad.

- The School District has its own internal system.
- Fiber is not currently available in the City or the Townships.
- This could be an opportunity for the City or a private developer.
 - Fiber should be linked to the industrial parks.
 - Fiber should also be provided to City and Township businesses.

Transportation

- The US 20 widening project and the new/synchronized traffic signals completed in 2004 from CR 302 to the east City boundary should be a major improvement to traffic flow through the City, especially in the downtown.
 - The subway (railroad underpass) bottleneck was widened to three lanes in 2004, improving traffic flow.
- Access management issues are important all along US 20 through the City.
- The City's proximity to I-80/90, SR's 18, 269 and 4 is an asset.
- The two railroads are an asset.
 - A grade separation on Southwest Street (SR 269) is planned for 2005.
 - Additional grade separations are still needed.
- The Sandusky County airport and the City's proximity to Toledo and Cleveland airports are assets.
- Signage and wayfinding through the City is okay.
 - There are some issues with temporary signs.
 - New gateways are needed, especially on the west side.

Commercial and Economic Development

- The Downtown is a critical commercial core. Issues include:
 - US 20 truck traffic.
 - The need to identify opportunities.
 - A Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) exists, providing the City with the opportunity to offer tax abatement on new building construction and renovation.
 - The fate of old Theater building.
- New Industrial Park in the northeast quadrant of the City is an asset.
 - Infrastructure to the new park is to be completed in 2004.
- There is a potential industrial area to the south of the City along SR 269.
- New commercial development is likely to occur both west and east along US 20, and north along SR 269.
 - Some businesses identified as needed include:
 - Motels
 - Restaurants
 - A Dry Cleaners
- Good schools help attract new employers, thus the school system needs to be maintained.

Schools and Education

- The Schools are a strong unifying factor among the City and the townships.
- Operating bond issues have passed; while recent facility levies have not.
- The School's Band and Choir programs are highly successful.
 - There is a critical need for additional space for these programs.
- Specific issues regarding schools include:
 - Water and/or sewer are needed to York and Lyme Schools.
 - Transportation issues exist around various schools, especially:
 - Shumaker, where sidewalks are needed and conflicts exist between cars and busses.
 - The high school has transportation issues.
 - There are issues with the facilities, including:
 - Aging buildings at York, Lyme and Ellis, as well as at the High School, which was built in 1963, and renovated in 1968.
 - Some schools require more space, including:
 - Shumaker
 - York (may need new school)
 - Band and Choir facilities
 - Enrollment is decreasing at Lyme School.

Major Issues identified by Key Persons

Interviews were held on March 23 and 24, 2004 with twelve individuals identified by the Steering Committee members as "key people" in the community. Each person was given a list of eighteen areas of concern (many of which were similar to issues in the community survey) and was asked to rank them with regard to degree of importance to the City of Bellevue and the Comprehensive Plan. While the discussions in each interview are to remain confidential, comments on each of the issues were recorded and summarized in order to compare the thoughts of these twelve individuals with those of the Steering Committee and the responses to the community survey.

A summary of how these individuals ranked the various issues and their comments follows. A detailed report on the interviews, including comments, is provided in **Appendix 3-2**. It is noteworthy that just prior to the Key Person interviews in March, there was a lot of publicity regarding some personnel management issues in the Bellevue Police Department that may have distorted both the nature and the amount of attention given to that subject in the interviews, especially when compared to the community survey four months later.

As a composite, the key persons ranked the **eighteen issues** from most important to least important as follows:

1. The City must continue to provide adequate fire protection.
2. The City should coordinate its planning with the School District's Plan and support efforts to improve the schools.
3. There are several specific sites that should have railroad grade separations.
4. Bellevue must provide adequate police protection.
5. The City's plan to provide an increased quality water supply through cooperation with Erie County is very important and should be aggressively pursued.

6. Any new developments should be properly buffered from adjacent conflicting land uses, especially residential.
7. The City needs to promote the interconnection and extension of the existing fiber optic networks already in the Schools, Railroad and Hospital.
8. The City should force property owners to maintain their property.
9. Parking is an issue in the downtown, especially around the Post Office.
10. The City should create and maintain attractive Gateways to the City - especially along US 20 and SR 269.
11. Commercial development should be directed away from traditional agricultural and residential areas and focused in the downtown and along US 20 and SR 269.
12. The City should take advantage of the existing State housing programs (CHIS and CHIP) to improve the housing stock in Bellevue.
13. The City needs to be continually expanding and improving its park system.
14. Industrial development should be concentrated in the northeast quadrant.
15. The City needs to have more parks, ball fields and recreational areas.
16. New land for additional cemetery space needs to be identified and acquired, although possibly not as a City project.
17. The revitalization of the downtown is critical to the future of Bellevue.
18. The City should identify and recruit specific businesses to the downtown.

When asked to rate the City and the Schools on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 the highest rating, the City was rated a 3.50 and the Schools a 3.96.

When asked in what areas the City spends too much or too little money, the most frequent answers were:

The City spends too much money on:

- None. The City is very frugal.
- Overtime pay, especially in the police and fire departments. This is due to being undermanned.

The City spends too little money on:

- Street resurfacing.
- Maintaining streets, water and sewer.

Finally, when asked to rank the infrastructure components that need to be improved the most, the consensus list was:

1. Roadways
2. Water treatment and distribution system
3. Storm sewers
4. Sanitary sewer/wastewater treatment.

Major Issues identified through the Community Survey

In July 2004, the City mailed a Community Survey questionnaire to all City households. Over 3,270 surveys were mailed, with a total of 287, or nearly 10%, returned. This is considered to be a very good return for a survey of this type, and a statistically accurate reflection of the entire community.

Detailed information on the tabulation of the returned survey responses, including comments, is included in **Appendix 3-3**. Summarizing, the **top 10 areas of concern** (out of 35 questions) in the Bellevue Community Survey were:

1. The best alternative for a Route 20 By-pass for trucks needs to be identified and built.
2. The City should consider alternative methods for reducing truck traffic in the downtown.
3. Parking is an issue in the downtown, especially around the Post Office.
4. Any new developments should be properly buffered from adjacent conflicting land uses, especially residential.
5. The improvement and maintenance of sidewalks is important,
6. The City needs to improve its communication with the public.
7. The City should coordinate planning with the School District's Plan and do whatever possible to support and constantly improve the schools.
8. The City's plan to provide an increased quality water supply through cooperation with Erie County is very important.
9. Industrial growth is vital to the growth of the City.
10. Downtown revitalization is critical for the City.

Similarly, the **10 lowest areas of concern** in the Community Survey were:

26. The City should create a Municipal Foundation that can accept tax-deductible donations, bequeaths, etc. to fund civic projects and activities.
27. The City needs to enhance and support tourism.
28. The City needs to create and maintain attractive and welcoming Gateway signage at the entrances to the City, especially on US 20 and SR 269.
29. New lands for additional cemetery space need to be identified and acquired.
30. There is a need to create housing for disabled children as they get older.
31. Bellevue should develop its own municipal electric service.
32. The City needs to have more parks, ball fields and recreational areas.
33. The City should seek a Charter form of government.
34. Additional recreational opportunities (such as the quarry opportunity) should be pursued, even if it means additional finances would be needed.
35. The City needs an ice rink for hockey and recreation.

It is interesting to highlight the *similarities and differences between the **Key Person interview results** and the results of the **Community Survey***, especially with regard to which issues were considered most and least important.

The top two issues from the Community Survey dealing with a US 20 Bypass and alternative methods for reducing the truck traffic in the downtown, were not directly addressed in the Key Person interviews. They were discussed by some of those interviewed when asked about revitalization of the downtown, but even that specific issue was considered relatively unimportant by most of the key persons (#17 of 18); while downtown revitalization ranked #10 out of 35 in the Community Survey.

The areas of agreement regarding *important issues*, arranged in a combined priority order, include:

- The City should coordinate its planning with the School District's plan and do whatever possible to support and constantly improve our schools.
- Any new developments should be buffered from adjacent conflicting land uses, especially residential.
- Parking is an issue in the downtown, especially around the Post Office.
- The City's plan to provide for an increased quality water supply through cooperation with Erie County is very important.
- Fire and Police coverage are adequate for the City.
- There are several specific sites that should have a railroad grade separation.
- Industrial growth is vital to the growth of the City.

In contrast, the areas which were generally agreed to be of *lesser concern* at this time among both the Key Persons and the community at large include:

- Creating housing for disabled children as they get older.
- The City doing more to maintain the appearance of private property.
- Developing Gateways to the City.
- Identifying and acquiring additional cemetery space.
- Improving parks and recreation opportunities.

There were three other opportunities for public input in this comprehensive planning process that are not as easily documented or quantified, specifically the two public visioning sessions and the public meeting to focus on common issues between the four Townships and the City.

Public Visioning Session # 1 - January 13, 2004

The first public visioning session was held on January 13, 2004, in the City Council meeting room and was very well attended, with over 100 residents and officials of both the City and the four surrounding Townships attending.

Following introductory remarks about the comprehensive planning process and the previously identified issues facing the City, there were break-out sessions on each of five separate topics:

- Schools;
- Public Facilities, Utilities and Services;
- Transportation;
- Downtown and Economic Development; and
- Quality of Life.

The break-out session discussions were led by teams made up of members of the Steering Committee and personnel from Poggemeyer Design Group. After the break-out sessions, the entire group reconvened for brief reports of the break-out session discussions.

Summaries of the five break-out sessions are presented in their entirety in **Appendix 3-4**. Highlights of the sessions are as follows:

Schools

- Shumaker School
 - More space is needed. The plan for expansion of this building includes an additional classroom for each grade plus classrooms for gifted, music, and art, and a cafetorium.
(This issue was on the ballot in the Spring of 2004, but did not pass.)
- A middle school may become a reality in the future.
- The School Board feels strongly about preserving the neighborhood elementary schools. They do not want to put all 1200 of the elementary students in the district in one building.
- To date, the Board has been reluctant to approach the State for facilities funding because they are concerned that the State might make them replace all the elementary school buildings and maybe the JHS and HS buildings as well.
- The lack of railroad grade separations is a major issue for bussing and transporting students throughout the District.
- York, Lyme and Ellis elementary schools are aging and have facilities and utilities issues.
- A major problem is getting correct information about the schools to the public, and especially the voting public.
 - The Jaycees have offered to help, especially during levy campaigns.
 - Details about tax abatements and compensating company donations to the schools are frequently misreported. For example, as of 2004, there are 23 school donation agreements in place, with the schools receiving \$470,000 per year more through these agreements than they would have had there been no tax abatements.
 - It was recommended that the schools provide press releases for the local paper and work one-on-one with reporters to make sure that articles provide accurate information.
- The quality of education at the Bellevue Schools has been improving substantially. In 1997, the schools met only 6 of the State's 25 indicators. In 2003, they met 17 of 25, and in 2004 they will be meeting 23 of 25.

Public Facilities, Utilities and Services

- Water
 - The current supply of water is inadequate for future growth. An agreement with Erie County for additional supply is very important.
 - Many wells in the area, especially north of the City, are polluted due to the numerous sink holes in the area that receive run-off storm water.
 - The community of Flat Rock needs City water and/or wastewater service.
 - York School needs water.
- Storm water management

- Major rain events cause flooding in low areas due to the general lack of storm drains and sewers.
- Poor storm water management causes water quality problems for outlying areas.
- Police, Fire and EMS
 - Traffic enforcement along US 20 (speeding and other violations) should be stronger.
 - Groton Township residents do not want fire protection issues tied to annexation.
 - There are concerns about EMS service to the Townships if Bellevue's contract with a private firm to supply these services is not renewed. (The City renewed its contract for EMS services at the end of 2004 for five years.)
- Parks and Recreation
 - There are currently only four City ballfields plus two at the schools.
 - A bike trail is needed to connect with those east and west of Bellevue.
 - There is a need for a year-round swimming pool facility.
 - Flat Rock subdivision needs a park.
- Zoning
 - There are serious concerns that current residential or agricultural land is being converted to industrial or commercial use once it is annexed, without proper buffering from adjacent residential uses.
 - Thompson and York Townships currently have no zoning.
- Cable and Internet services; Electric service
 - All new lines should be installed underground.
 - Fiber optic networks at the schools, hospital and railroad should be connected and used as the basis for a City-wide system.
 - The City should consider having its own municipal power company.

Transportation

- Removing truck traffic from the downtown is critical.
 - There is considerable interest and discussion about US 20 Bypass alternatives.
 - A number of grade separations would be required with a Bypass, especially with a southern Bypass.
 - A Bypass should begin further to the east and west than currently envisioned by ODOT.
- There is strong support for the planned traffic lights on US 20 at both CR 302 and CR 308 intersections.
 - A left-turn lane should be added for eastbound traffic at the New Hospital access road (CR 302 intersection).
- Intersection signage in the downtown needs to be more visible and better maintained.
- Seniors need a transportation service provider.

Downtown and Economic Development

- Changes in the downtown have occurred over time, due to:
 - The impact of Sandusky Mall,
 - Absentee landlords with little commitment to property improvements, and
 - Deterioration of the building exteriors.
- Traffic and Parking in the downtown are critical issues. **(Note: comments were made prior to the Summer 2004 changes to Main Street and the downtown sidewalks.)**
 - Truck traffic hinders parking on Main Street, as it is hard to parallel park and exit the car with the traffic as heavy as is it, and especially with the number of semi-trucks. (Parallel parking improved greatly with 2004 widening and related improvements.)
 - Parking is ample, but inconvenient.
 - There are minimal opportunities for rear parking or rear entry for most buildings.
 - Pedestrian traffic has a difficult time in the downtown.
 - There is no residential housing in the downtown.
 - Farmers must go through downtown to get to Bungee/Solae (formerly Central Soya) with their crops.
- Strengths/Drawing Cards/Promotional Tools for Downtown and the City
 - Historic properties
 - The Library
 - The New Hospital
 - The Hardware Store, new CVS, and the restaurants
 - The existing Community Reinvestment Area (CRA)
- Areas for future development include:
 - Southeast of the City with industrial development,
 - West along US 20.
 - Parks and recreational areas need to be expanded.
- The US 20 Bypass must happen for the area to develop and for the downtown to be revitalized.
 - There is no consensus for the SR 18 alternative being promoted by ODOT as the best location.

Quality of Life

- Housing
 - Develop the quarry area into a residential complex with a golf course.
 - Concentrate industrial areas to minimize land use conflicts with residential.
 - Preserve historic homes, especially those on Main Street.
 - Housing needs include:
 - Independent living units for seniors
 - Upscale housing
 - Housing for disabled children as they get older

- Parks and Recreation
 - Park expansions are needed.
 - More ball diamonds should be constructed.
 - Sand volleyball courts should be considered.
 - Community Park should be expanded to the south.
 - Connect a local bike path to the main bike path that runs from Fremont to Clyde.
 - An indoor pool is needed.
 - An ice skating rink is needed.
- Arts and Institutions
 - Assist the Society for the Arts in their efforts.
 - Expand the library.
 - Enhance and promote the Railroad Museum.
- Other
 - The City needs public transit and taxi services.
 - Convert the old hospital to assisted living units.
 - Create a municipal foundation to fund civic projects and activities.
 - Improve sidewalks, and make them ADA compliant.
 - Expand teen after school programs.
 - A senior center is needed.
 - Better signage for key landmarks and traffic assistance is needed.

Public Meeting with Four Townships - February 18, 2004

The City scheduled a public input meeting at the High School that would focus on the concerns of the four surrounding Townships and the importance of their involvement in the City's comprehensive planning process. Trustees and residents from each of the Townships were in attendance, as were members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, City officials, City residents, and PDG representatives.

A copy of the summary of this meeting is provided in **Appendix 3-5**. Input and discussion from the meeting relative to the planning process are summarized as follows:

Opening comments from each of the Townships regarding their key concerns included:

- Lyme Township (east and southeast of the City, Huron County):
 - Wants to keep the Township intact.
 - Recognizes the need to discuss annexation issues.
 - Wants modest growth, but has few funds to help attract development.
 - Needs to consider both Rural Water and City water soon.
 - The SR 4/US 20 intersection needs water and sewer.
 - Agrees that a plan for growth needs to be in place.

- Thompson Township (southwest of the City, Seneca County):
 - Agrees with Lyme Township's comments.
 - Agrees that trying to match the plans of four Townships and four Counties with the City's planning is a big issue.
 - Stated that the unincorporated Village of Flat Rock needs water and sewer.
- York Township (west and northwest of the City, Sandusky County):
 - Feels that growth along US 20 west of City already impacting York Township.
 - Expressed concerns about streets that are half in the Township and half in the City.
 - Feels that the new hospital will mean a whole new ball game.
- Groton Township (northeast of the City, Erie County):
 - Wants to stay intact as a township.
 - Is willing to work together with City and other Townships.
 - Wants growth, with the schools benefitting.
 - Wants to retain property taxes.
 - Already has Erie County water.

Responding comments by City officials included the following:

- Most growth is likely to be along the US 20, SR 4, and SR 269 corridors.
- The former City position that it would not extend water and sewer services without annexation has changed. The City realizes that it is in its best financial interests to provide water and/or sewer without requiring annexation.
- The City will not force annexations; only volunteer/requested annexations will be considered.
- The Mayor cautioned Townships that they would likely to be disappointed with Rural Water due to quality, volume and pressure of water which could preclude industrial and commercial development.
- The City is two years from being able to meet all foreseeable water demands.
- The City is undertaking a \$7 million upgrade to its Wastewater Treatment Plant to be completed by December, 2005, and will be adding two new water towers.
- The Townships need to tell the City what services they will want, as part of an annexation agreement.

Planning issues to be discussed with the Townships include:

- Land Use
- Water & Sewer
- Recreation
- The new hospital
- Roads
- Storm Water management
- Residential/Commercial land use conflicts
- Schools
- Annexation

Continued discussion at the meeting identified several additional issues, including:

- Why is there a need to add industrial uses on all four sides of the City?
 - The current plan is for no new industrial growth to the west, only commercial and residential.
 - Industrial growth will be primarily in the Wolfe Industrial Park in the northeast quadrant of the City, and south of the City along SR 269.
- The Schools have a concern about the future use of the old hospital which is immediately adjacent to the High School.
- There is a history of unsuccessful attempts at mutual aid agreements between Groton Township and the City.
- The officials of the five communities represented at this largely unprecedented joint meeting should make it a point to get together at least annually to discuss areas of mutual concern.

Public Visioning Session #2 - September 14, 2004

The main focus of the second public visioning session was on the evolving major development scenarios and resulting proposed land use planning. Six separate stations were set up with those in attendance invited to visit each station, ask questions and/or offer additional input. Following an hour of station visiting, everyone convened for a short presentation on the development scenarios and the progress to date of the comprehensive planning process, followed by a question and answer session.

Since the focus of this Visioning Session was on economic development rather than general in nature, it is discussed in detail in **Chapter 9: Economic and Downtown Development**.

Local Attitudes and Planning Themes Summary

All of the various public input mechanisms, including Steering Committee input, Key Person interviews, the Community Survey and the three public meetings/visioning sessions, have been utilized to determine a consensus for the focus of the City of Bellevue's Comprehensive Master Plan.

The remaining chapters of this Plan deal specifically with those issues that were determined to be of most interest and concern to the community as a whole for the future of Bellevue. Those issues are summarized as follows and are discussed in greater detail in their respective Chapters.

Economic/Downtown Development

- Reduce truck traffic in the downtown.
 - Identify and build the best Bypass alternative.
 - Identify other ways to reduce traffic before the Bypass is constructed.
- Improve parking downtown.
- Improve and maintain sidewalks City-wide.
- Develop community partnerships for economic development.

- Consider Heritage Tourism development.
- Identify sites for industrial and business development.
 - Industrial
 - Northeast industrial park
 - 269 south
 - West between US 20 and the railroad and south of the railroad
 - Commercial
 - West along US 20 on the north side
 - East along US 20 (in the little triangle)
 - The US 20/ SR 4 Intersection
 - The area around the new hospital
- Develop Annexation and Revenue Sharing Agreements with the Townships.
- Revitalize the downtown.
 - Identify and attract unique local businesses to the downtown.
 - Design guidelines should be enforced, especially in the downtown.

Communication and Cooperation

- Improvements are needed:
 - With the public.
 - With the Schools, in terms of:
 - Long-range planning coordination, and
 - Support of school funding issues.
 - With the Townships, in terms of:
 - Land use planning, and
 - Zoning coordination.

Urban Design Elements such as Streetscaping/Gateways/Signage

- Design Standards should be developed.
- Streetscaping should be required, and should include:
 - Trees/Planters
 - Lighting
 - Benches
 - Textured pavement
 - ADA requirements
- Signage Control is needed:
 - In the downtown, and
 - Along major corridors (US 20, SR 269, SR 18, SR 113).
- Gateways should be considered from all directions. (However, there was not strong support for gateways in the survey or the key person interviews.)

Public Facilities and Services

Improvements are needed regarding existing infrastructure, the City must plan for renovation and/or expansion to support growth, and there were concerns about scheduled and preventative maintenance practices of the City. Specific issues include:

- Water
 - Erie County agreement
 - New water towers
 - Lines, new and replacement, and the extension of services

- Wastewater
 - Extension of services
- Electric power (not much support for a municipal electric system in survey)
- Telephone and cable
- Fiber optics
- Fire Protection
- Police Protection

Transportation

- A need for railroad grade separations.
- A need for a Bypass.
- Sidewalks require improvements and new sidewalks are needed:
 - In new developments, and
 - Connections with the downtown.

Quality of Life Issues

- Parks & Recreation
 - A comprehensive inventory is needed.
 - Plans are needed for growth, and renovation of facilities.
 - More activities are needed for kids.
 - Bike trails are desired.
 - An indoor pool is needed.
 - A skating rink (low support in survey) is desired.
- Housing
 - Seniors - Independent living
 - Assisted living
 - Buffer existing housing from non-residential uses
 - Areas for new developments
- Additional cemetery space will be needed soon.
(Low priority in survey and key person interviews)
- Environmental Issues
 - Sink holes
 - Storm water management
 - Extension of water and sewer
 - Lyme Township
 - Flat Rock
 - York School

Historic/Cultural Resources/City Image

- Capitalize on Heritage Tourism.
- Conduct an inventory of assets.
- Preserve historic buildings and the downtown.

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City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

4

General
Trends

Chapter 4: General Trends

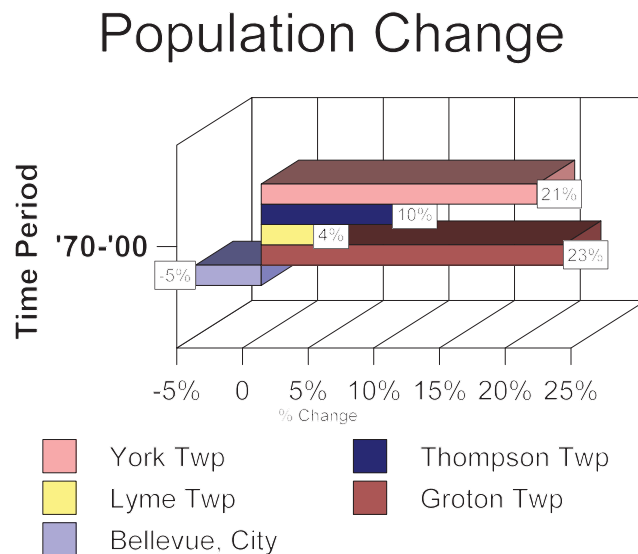
Local Trends

Some local trends were identified earlier that help to describe how the Bellevue community is changing. In a more comprehensive way, the following trends can be isolated as being important factors that are helping to shape the Bellevue of tomorrow:

Growth: Although the City increased slightly in population between 1990 and 2000 (by 47 people or about 0.6%), it is important to note that the townships surrounding the City increased much more substantially in population. York Township had an 4.6% increase in population, Lyme Township a 6.6% increase, and Groton Township an 11.2% increase. Only Thompson Township in Seneca county experienced a decrease (-3.7%) in that decade.

Over the past 3 decades (1970 to 2000), all four townships experienced an increase in population, while the City experienced a 4.8% decrease. Groton Township increased in population by 23.3% over the three decades, while Lyme Township increased by 4.2%, Thompson by 10.3%, and York by 20.5%. The most substantial increase in population in all four townships occurred between 1970 and 1980. Conversely, the biggest decline in City population occurred during that same time period.

Chart 4-1



The thirty-year trend indicates that the community is growing, but not necessarily within the City's corporate limits. This is not uncommon in the State of Ohio. In municipalities with little vacant developable land, population growth is partially a function of annexation activity.

Incomes: General trends in median household income levels in the City point to increases comparable to those found in Huron and Sandusky Counties, with all increases ranging between 35.3% and 38.7%. (*Households* are broadly defined and include one person households.) However, these increases in median household incomes in the City and both counties over the past decade (1990 to 2000) are much lower than that for the State of Ohio, where median household incomes grew by 53.4%. (Refer back to Chart 2-5.)

Residential Construction: New houses are being constructed within the City, primarily in the Quarry Development and along Flat Rock Road in the Gardner Ridge Subdivision. The residential subdivision around the Quarry on the north side of West US 20 has provided many new upscale single-family homes in a unique setting for the City. Additional opportunities still exist in this subdivision.

Another new residential subdivision is planned for just west of the Quarry development. Phase 1 of the County View Subdivision consists of about 37 single-family residential lots. Access to the subdivision is from US 20 West, although no lots are immediately adjacent to the road.

Commercial Development: The City has experienced considerable new commercial and industrial development over the past decade, especially given the economic downturn since September 11, 2001. Banks have constructed new facilities or additions, and a new CVS pharmacy and Fuel Mart recently opened in the downtown. The library has expanded, as has Immaculate Conception School. New commercial retail and office centers have been developed along the south side of US 20 West, with a small retail outlet on the north side.

The Hospital has constructed an impressive new facility, which opened in March 2005, on the west side of the City, north of US 20. Additional plans for this facility include a ring road surrounded by medical offices and related hospital support services. It is likely that this area will be a target for new professional office development in the future.

Several industries have expanded and new industries have located in the City in the past decade. One lot in the new A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park in the northeast has recently been sold, indicating a continuing strong development climate. Also, in 2000, the City moved its municipal offices from leased space in the downtown to a building purchased from an existing industry that was relocating. The new facility offers the opportunity for all offices and services provided by the City to be located in one building. A recreation area is also included with a track and exercise area.

The Medicine Shoppe plans to move into a new facility in 2005 just west of Bassett's, and a new gas station is being considered to replace the existing Sunoco station in the Downtown.

National Trends

There are a number of identified national trends that may have some influence on the Bellevue of 2025. These trends include those that relate to resident attitudes, behaviors, demographics, and economics. The extent to which these trends will impact the Bellevue community is difficult to gauge given the uniqueness of every town. However, an awareness of these trends is helpful background information as the City looks toward the future.

Racial Mix: The national population is becoming more racially diverse. Blacks, Hispanics and Asians represent a growing share of the population.

Family Composition: Nuclear families represent a shrinking share of total households. Today, people who live alone outnumber couples with children. Non-families (people who live alone or with non-relatives) are a rapidly growing segment of the population, as people divorce more readily, postpone marriage, or live together outside marriage. Related to this is the fact that household sizes have declined in recent decades, as families have fewer children and as more households become “empty-nesters”. These trends have implications for housing demand in terms of style, location, and costs.

Crime: Crime rates are down and have been falling during the 1990s. People generally feel safer now than in the 1980s. However, this may have changed somewhat since 9/11.

Leisure Time: Americans have more leisure options than in the past, and the number of people participating in a variety of recreational activities has climbed between the mid-80s and the mid- 90s. Activities that have climbed the sharpest include walking, hiking, backpacking, boating, and cross-country skiing. Americans are also now more likely to go to a movie, historic park, and art museum than they once were. These trends have implications for what a community offers in terms of recreational and leisure time options.

Educational Attainment: Educational attainment has increased dramatically in recent decades. In 1950, slightly more than one third of people 25 years old and older were high school graduates. By 1998, more than 80% were high school graduates. Today, most high school graduates continue on to college. Nationally, college enrollment has been growing steadily for many decades. College enrollment is projected to increase more than 12% between 2002 and 2010 according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Health Care: Despite a growing (and aging) population, the numbers of people admitted to hospitals declined 7% between 1975 and 1998. Outpatient care has grown, medical science continues to improve, and people have generally become better informed about a health choices.

Home Ownership: Most households are occupied by homeowners (vs. renters), and the home ownership rate has been rising. To date, the national homeownership rate is 67%. In the mid-west, the rate is even higher; approaching nearly 75%.

Older People: In 2025, there is expected to be more than twice the number of people 65 years old and older than there was in 2000 (35 million in 2000, compared with more than 70 million in 2025). This major trend has implications for everything from housing demand to labor force trends.

Knowledge Economy: The growth of information industries is creating a knowledge-dependent society, wherein information is becoming the primary commodity for more and more businesses.

Research and Development (R&D): Throughout the 1990s, R&D spending rose steadily and future outlays are expected to keep pace with the gross domestic product growth. This activity fuels demand for scientists, engineers and technicians particularly in fields where the research promises business payoffs.

Job Markets: Rapid changes in job markets and work-related technologies fuel demand for worker retraining and places of higher learning. At the same time, specialization is spreading throughout industry and professions, as bodies of knowledge expand and preclude the ability to be successful as a generalist in many professional fields.

Creative Class of Workers: An emerging concept in the community and economic development arena is the identification of groups of workers, in a wide range of occupations and disciplines, who are engaged in complex problem solving and the development of creative solutions. These people, sometimes referred to as the creative class, are increasingly being recognized as a key to long-term and meaningful economic development, as they are generally focused toward innovation, creativity, and new product or service development.

Nationally, places such as Boulder CO, Boston MA, and Raleigh-Durham NC, are identified as magnets for creative people who are drawn to such areas since they have academic and research facilities along with desirable cultural amenities. It has been said that the presence of universities and research centers can be seen as providing a locational advantage in much the same way that rivers and railroads did in the past.

City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

5

Land Use and
Urban Design

Chapter 5: Land Use

Existing uses of land are key to any comprehensive land use planning process, as land uses define major parts of the physical environment. Along with pure land use issues are design issues related to buildings, landscaping, and site layout, that also help to define a community's character and appearance. This chapter describes major land use issues facing the City of Bellevue, and general elements of recommended land use policy. Subsequent chapters address issues on a more topical basis.

Existing Land Use

PDG conducted a windshield survey of the City to identify general land uses throughout the community. These land uses were then color coded onto a base map of the City, and can be found in **Map 5-1**. Professional planning standard colors were used to code the land uses, as described in the legend. Existing land use information can be summarized as follows:

Residential

As with most cities, the predominant land use in Bellevue is single-family residential. Residential neighborhoods of varying densities surround the downtown in all four directions, as indicated in yellow on **Map 5-1**. More dense residential neighborhoods, mostly low-density apartments, are scattered throughout the City and are indicated in orange on the map. There are apartments located in all sections of the community; some are totally surrounded by single-family homes, while others serve as a buffer between single-family homes and commercial or industrial used.



New, upscale, larger-lot, single-family residential development is occurring in the northwest section of the City, around the existing quarry. This development is providing an alternative environment to the traditional residential neighborhoods found throughout the City.

Another new residential development, with slightly smaller lots and homes, is developing along the west side of Flat Rock Road south of Gardner Street. These developments are offering residents, both existing and new, alternatives to the older, more established homes throughout the City, providing for many more housing choices.

The most dense residential developments within the City are mobile home parks. These are shown in brown on the map. There are three mobile home parks in or near the City, two of which are located on the west side, between US 20 and the railroad. The third is located on the south side of US 20 on the City's east side.

Industrial

Since the City developed primarily because of the influence of the railroads, there is a considerable amount of heavy industrial land within the corporate boundaries, (as well as just outside the City) as indicated by the dark purple on **Map 5-1**. The most heavily industrial area is the railroad yard to the north and east of the City. This area is primarily outside the City's corporate limits in Lyme Township (Huron County) and Groton Township (Erie County).

Due to the proximity of this railroad facility, however, the City has begun a new industrial park just west of the railroad yard. A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park is located north of Goodrich Road and south of the wastewater treatment plant, where several small companies have located. The City currently has grants pending to construct the infrastructure to develop this new industrial park, and these improvements should be completed in 2005. One lot in the new park has already been sold to a prospective company.

Other heavy industrial areas within the City include the main intersection of the railroads, just southeast of the downtown. Many small industries and businesses are scattered throughout this area. On the lighter industrial side, the City's industrial park to the west, south of US 20, is home to several companies, as well as the City's municipal complex. There are additional lots in this area that can be developed.

One of the City's newest industrial areas is located south on SR 269 around the Tower Automotive facility. In addition to Tower, there are several small businesses along SR 269 in this area. There are other industries scattered throughout the City, as indicated in the light purple on **Map 5-1**.

Due mostly to the manner in which the City developed historically, there are many residential areas of the City that are adjacent to industrial areas, with no buffers between the homes and the industries. This is especially true throughout the City along the railroad tracks, where no buffer of open space, office, commercial, or multi-family housing exists between the single-family residential homes and the railroad. Because of this land use conflict, many of the homes fall to disrepair, become rentals, and lack adequate maintenance.

Commercial

Commercial development has been historically centered in the downtown, which is indicated in red on **Map 5-1** at the heart of the community. In addition to the downtown, commercial land use is expanding primarily along US 20 west. Several small office complexes and stand-alone commercial buildings have recently been constructed in this area.



Of most significance, however, is the construction of the new Bellevue Hospital on the north side of US 20 west, just west of TR 302. Access to the Hospital, which plans to develop medical office facilities along a circular road around the main facility, will be from TR 302. The hospital owns a considerable amount of acreage at this site, and envisions walking trails on the north side amidst the medical office buildings at some point in the future. The Hospital began moving into its new facility at the end of 2004; an open house was held, and full operations began at the new site, in March 2005.



US 20 east is also experiencing continued commercial development, starting at the intersection of SR 113 with US 20. A hotel, fast food restaurants, and small office buildings are being constructed in this area, amidst some single-family homes and agricultural properties.

In addition, there are a few commercial businesses on south SR 269, just south of the railroad, including an equipment sales facility and a building supply facility.

SR 269 north is experiencing continued commercial development with professional office complexes, a funeral home, the Masonic hall, Pamida, and individual businesses being developed there. Similarly, a small pocket of commercial development, containing the Citgo gas station, Hogue Food Store, and Beckley Plumbing & Heating offices, is located east of the intersection of SR 18 (Kilbourne Street) and Flat Rock Road, north of the railroad.

In 2004, the downtown received a significant shot-the-arm with an ODOT project that improved lane configurations; synchronized traffic signals; replaced sidewalks, curbs, and gutters; rerouted SR 269 to Sandusky Street to provide better turning radii off Main Street; added period style street lighting; planted a large evergreen tree in an island at the main intersection; and resurfaced portions of the roadway. This project has made a tremendous improvement in vehicular and pedestrian traffic, parking, and the aesthetic appeal of the downtown.

Several businesses in the downtown invested in their facilities recently including the library and Firelands Credit Union, both of which made tremendous improvements to parking and landscaping; a new laundromat on Northwest Street; a new CVS and renovated gas station on West Main Street; the new car wash at the former BP gas station on South Sandusky and Monroe Streets; and a new building on the south side of West Main street next to the vacant fast food restaurant building (near Atwood Street).



However, there are also several vacant buildings within the downtown, including the Tremont House, portions of Village Square, the old State Bank building and storefronts to its east (except for the pizza shop), the vacated Ace Hardware store, the former Bellevue Music Center storefront, the fast food restaurant on West Main Street at Atwood Street, the former Municipal Building on North Sandusky Street, and other smaller spaces, as well as some of the upper floors of the buildings. Many of the buildings require significant facade and code compliance improvements.



Parks and Green Space

Green space and parks are scattered throughout the City. Robert Peters Athletic Park, a 9.5 acre facility located just south of the High School, has amenities including baseball and softball fields, a newly-equipped playground, shelter house, barbeque pits, picnic tables, restrooms, and basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts.

The City's largest recreational facility is the Mill Pond Park on the south side of town, which includes the Bellevue Community Center building plus 36 acres. Facilities at Mill Pond Park include an outdoor swimming pool, picnic area, grills, baseball/softball fields, athletic fields, sand volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, sledding area, fishing, a shelter house, walking paths, and of course the indoor facilities at the Community Center.



The City maintains other smaller parks including Amsden Heights, Buckingham, Kern Street, Ellis, Harmon, and Waterworks Parks. These are illustrated as green areas on the Existing Land Use Map (**Map 5-1**). With its recent move into the new municipal building off US 20 on the west side of town, the City acquired a large indoor open space, which was formerly an industrial workshop area. This area has been converted to an athletic facility, known as the Activity Centre, with exercise classes offered throughout the week to residents of the City, a walking path, and the potential for basketball and other sports activities.

Golf is provided at the private Twin Lakes Golf Course in the southwest section of the City, as well as at neighboring courses, Sleepy Hollow and Green Hills. The City cemetery north of the Community Center in the south central part of the City, and the various City reservoirs on the southeast, provide additional green space and/or open area for the community.



The School District maintains small parks at its various buildings throughout the City, with the football field being located by the High School and the Robert Peters Athletic Park. Harmon Park, a former athletic field is in the southwest corner of the designated "downtown" area (refer to **Map 5-2**, Key Facilities Map). An attractive pocket park has been developed in the downtown. The quarry on the north side of town, which is privately owned, is currently open space without public access. Upscale homes are being developed around this former quarry.

Institutional Uses

Churches, civic or fraternal clubs, government facilities, museums, and the hospital are indicated as “institutional” uses on the Existing Land Use Map (**Map 5-1**), and are shown in gray. They are scattered throughout the City. **Map 5-2** identifies most of these land uses that are not within the downtown area.

The Mad River & NKP Railroad Society Museum is located at 253 Southwest Street and is the largest railroad museum in Ohio. It includes several vintage railroad cars on the tracks just south of the downtown, as well as a watchman’s tower, depot, and LS and MS section house which serves as a gift shop.



The Bellevue Historical Society owns the treasures of a Heritage Museum, which will soon be located in the Tremont House, an 1846 building located on the northeast corner of Main and Northwest Streets, once it is renovated. Until that time, the Society’s collection of artifacts and pictures is in storage. The Museum was formerly located at the former Savings Bank Building at 200 East Main Street.



The Bellevue Society for the Arts is located at the corner of Maple and Walter Streets in two buildings that were formerly an industrial site. They now serve as an office and a large 342-seat theater and reception area for theater productions, concerts, lectures, recitals, dance and music lessons, children’s programs, and other cultural events, as well as being available for catered receptions. The Midwest Bookfest is held here annually on the third Saturday of September.

The City’s Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located in the northeast corner of the City, and is the only parcel of land located in Erie County at this time. The Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is located just west of Reservoir 3 at the intersection of Center and Orchard Streets, south of US 20 on the east side of town. Both are indicated in gray on **Map 5-1**.

There is very little vacant land available within the City of Bellevue’s corporate limits for future development of any kind. The bulk of the vacant land in the City today was most likely part of a recent annexation for a specific use, such as industrial along SR 269 south, residential in Country View Subdivision to the east of the new hospital site, residential to the north and west of the Quarry residential development, commercial offices around the hospital, and industrial within A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park. Thus, without cooperative agreements on annexation and revenue sharing, the City of Bellevue is pretty much confined to limited development within its existing corporate boundaries.

Future Land Use

When analyzing a city to determine the most likely locations for new land uses in the future, the most obvious decisions are based on extensions of existing land uses, whenever possible. For example, there are small pockets of open area within the City of Bellevue that, if developed, would likely develop in the same manner as the properties around them. There are other areas of open space, such as the quarry, that have limited alternative uses available for them.

In addition, a number of significant land use issues have been identified during the planning process for those areas outside and adjacent to the City limits, that could be developed as part of an Annexation Agreement with the appropriate township. These projections for future land uses are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map, **Map 5-3**. The same standard color scheme is used on this map as was used on the Existing Land Use Map.

Future land uses in the major development areas identified for properties adjacent to the City, are summarized on **Map 5-3**. They include:

- The SR 113/US 20/SR 4 Triangle on the east side of town;
- The SR 4/US 20 intersection on the east side;
- The Northeast section of the City, primarily around the new Wolfe Industrial Park;
- The US 20 west section of town;
- The south side of town, SR 269 and the SR 269/Prairie Road area; and
- The downtown.

These areas, as discussed in detail in Chapter 9, are projected to be the major future development areas for both commercial and industrial development. Other areas of projected land use changes in the future include:

Residential

Several areas for continued or future single-family residential development exist throughout the community and neighboring townships. These include:

- Continued development of the **Yorkshire Subdivision** (around the quarry), to its north and northwest, on property already annexed into the City of Bellevue. The upscale homes in this subdivision provide an alternative high-end new housing market not previously found within the City. Continued development along the western boundary of the quarry will provide more of the same ambiance provided in the portions completed to date.
- Continued development of **Country View Subdivision** east of the new hospital and Copp Road (TR 302). Phase one of this subdivision is under construction and additional phases are planned.
- Continued development of the **Gardner Ridge Subdivision** on the west side of Flat Rock Road south of Gardner Road. This subdivision is providing new houses in the mid-range market, which are also needed in the community, and which will provide an alternative to the older stock of housing throughout the City.

- **Extensions of existing residential subdivisions** should be encouraged, including:
 - The area east of the assisted living facility on Flat Rock Road, south of the railroad, and west of the Wynfield and Crystal Courts Subdivision, provided an adequate buffer is provided south of the tracks (green space and apartments could provide this buffer);
 - The area east of Hobson and Samson Streets, where a north-south connector could provide access to Monroe Street to service this area;
 - In-fill development along Monroe Street/Bauer Road after it heads north on the east side of town, as well as along the south side of the east-west portion, where an eastern extension of Madden Street could provide access;
- **New areas for single family residential development include:**
 - The large area in Lyme Township north of SR 113, which is already zoned for residential development, as well as the area north of Ridge School;
 - In-fill development along SR 113, although such development should be planned with a rear access road, as opposed to allowing numerous drives onto SR 113;
 - The area in Lyme Township around the Historic Lyme Village, primarily to protect the Village from non-complimentary uses; and
 - The area along SR 269 north (east side) and both sides of Potter Road between SR 269 and the railroad, assuming that proper buffering from the proposed industrial park is provided.
 - The area west and south of the green space area around the large reservoir south of Bauer Road and east of SR 269.
 - The northern area within the SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road Triangle (refer to **Chapter 9**).

These areas should provide adequate land for new single-family residential housing for the next 20 years.

- **Multi-family housing**, which could include apartments, condos, or villas, should be planned for various locations in the City. These potential multi-family housing areas are indicated on the Future Land Use Map (**Map 5-3**) in orange and include areas such as:
 - The area bounded by US 20 on the north, Flat Rock Road on the west, the railroad on the south, and the Redwood Drive subdivision on the east. Adequate buffering from the railroad tracks will be required, and buffering to protect the existing single-family residences along both frontage roads should be required. A new development here could provide the impetus to upgrade existing housing and public utilities in this area.

- The area discussed earlier for future single-family residential, north of Bauer Road and serviced by a proposed extension of Madden Street, could also be a potential location for additional multi-family residences.
- Renovation of buildings in the downtown could provide opportunities for loft apartments or live-work units in the downtown. This could be an additional source of rental units for the community.
- Additional multi-family complexes could be designed along the SR 269 north corridor, especially as a buffer between existing or proposed single-family developments and proposed light industrial uses in or near Wolfe Industrial Park.
- An area within the SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road Triangle (refer to **Chapter 9**).

Commercial

Future commercial development is likely to continue around existing developments and within the downtown. However, proper planning is required to assure that the developments occur in a manner that is compatible with existing land uses - especially single-family residential neighborhoods, has minimal negative impact on prime farmland, and otherwise serves the best interests of the overall community.

As discussed in Chapter 9 in detail, a concerted planning effort should be implemented to enhance and expand the commercial viability of the downtown. As the heart of the community, the downtown already contains the existing infrastructure and buildings to service a thriving commercial hub for the community. However, many improvements and strengthened efforts at revitalization are required.

Key areas for future commercial development outside the downtown, which could consist of retail, office, hi-tech businesses, and highway commercial, include:

- The SR 113/US 20/SR 4 Triangle,
- The SR4/US 20 Intersection, and
- US 20 West.

The future development of these areas is discussed in great detail in **Chapter 9**, and the proposed future land uses are illustrated on **Map 5-3**.

Other commercial areas not addressed in Chapter 9 that are likely to continue to see additional commercial growth include the **SR 269 north corridor**, where a new professional office building, a funeral home, the Masonic hall, and other businesses are located. There are additional parcels available around these businesses that could be developed. Coordination of access points to SR 269 should be emphasized, in an attempt to minimize the number of curb cuts onto this busy highway.

The **intersection of Flat Rock Road and SR 18** will likely continue as a neighborhood commercial area in the future. Potential plans for a grade separation structure at this location could encourage additional neighborhood commercial development, if properly designed to accommodate such development. The limited access portion of a grade separation project could also limit development, thus, the design of the intersection and proper planning will be required.

Similarly, the area south of the railroad and the new scheduled railroad overpass on **SR 269 south of town**, which includes a number of small businesses around the American Italian Club, could further develop as a small neighborhood commercial area to provide convenience services and goods to businesses and employees in the south industrial area. Proper planning is needed in this area to control access points and provide for an efficient and safe flow of traffic.

Industrial

The most likely areas for future industrial development are within the new **A. D. Wolfe Industrial Park** north of Goodrich Road in the northeast section of the City, along **US 20 west** between US 20 and the railroad, and on either side of **SR 269 south** near Tower Automotive. The property east of SR 269 south was annexed into the City with the intention of developing an industrial park between SR 269 and Prairie Road. If the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) continues with its plans to reroute SR 18 traffic along a new road extended east from Seneca County Line Road, this area would become prime industrial property from a transportation perspective. These three main areas for future industrial growth are discussed in greater detail in **Chapter 9**.

There is also an area in **Lyme Township south of the railroad yard** and west of an existing industry that has potential for industrial development, as it is already impacted by the railroad yards. This area would have to be adequately buffered from any future residential development that could occur to its south.

The **industrial areas along the railroad within the older sections of town** require some attention. Renovation of buildings; proper maintenance of properties; additional and better maintained landscaping; better delineation of driving lanes and parking areas; an improved signage system; resurfacing of streets, drives, and parking areas; and the addition of landscaped buffers would help address the aesthetics of this historically industrial area of the community. Conversion of specific single-family homes along the railroad to small offices or businesses may help redevelop selected areas, and provide buffers for single-family homes. Demolition of vacant or underutilized buildings may also be appropriate. CDBG-Formula funds or Revolving Loan Funds (RLF) could be used to assist in this redevelopment effort.

Specific **redevelopment areas** that could benefit from revitalization efforts as described above include:

- The area encompassing Center Street, Broad Street, the railroad tracks to the east, SR 269, Southwest Street and Chapman Street. See **Area A** on **Map 5-4**.
- The area along both sides of US 20 west from about Walter Street west to Flat Rock Road. This area is designated **Area B** on **Map 5-4**. The area south of US 20 qualifies according to the 2000 Census as a low- and moderate-income (LMI) area, and thus qualifies for CDBG-funded activities under the City's Formula program.

- The residential area between Howard Street to the east, the railroad to the south, the Redwood Subdivision to the west and the backs of the properties fronting on US 20 to the north. This area is shown as **Area C** on **Map 5-4**, and also qualifies as an LMI area.
- The mixed use area bounded by US 20 east on the north, the railroad on the west, the railroad south of Armstrong to the south, and the City Water Treatment Plant (WTP) on the east. The existing mixture of residential, commercial, industrial, and City uses in this area calls out for a redevelopment effort. The area is indicated as **Area D** on **Map 5-4**.

Parks/Green Space

The City has a unique opportunity to expand its recreational properties and green space through a joint effort with the owner of the existing quarry property. About 100 acres of land sits at the bottom of the quarry, with few potential adaptive uses, other than open space or parkland. If the owner is willing to work with the City, a plan should be prepared to acquire this property for public passive or active recreational activities, as discussed in greater detail in **Chapter 8**.

A planned expansion at Community Center and Mill Pond Park in the southern part of the City could provide for additional green space and recreational park area there. In addition, walkways and trails connecting various public lands to the Community Center could provide additional recreational opportunities within the City.

Urban Design Elements

The City of Bellevue currently has no identifiable design theme or image that sets it apart from any other community along US 20 or in the geographic area. As part of this overall comprehensive planning process, the City should select a design theme and begin incorporating selected design elements into various projects throughout the community to create an identity or image for the City.

As a start, the new street lights that were installed in the downtown in 2004 could be used elsewhere in the community as a unifying design element. As street lights are replaced, this same light fixture could be used, so that eventually, the entire City of Bellevue has the same decorative street light fixtures. New subdivisions should be encouraged to use this light fixture, or a complimentary one, as should the new industrial park and commercial areas.

Other design elements that should be incorporated into future planning efforts include:

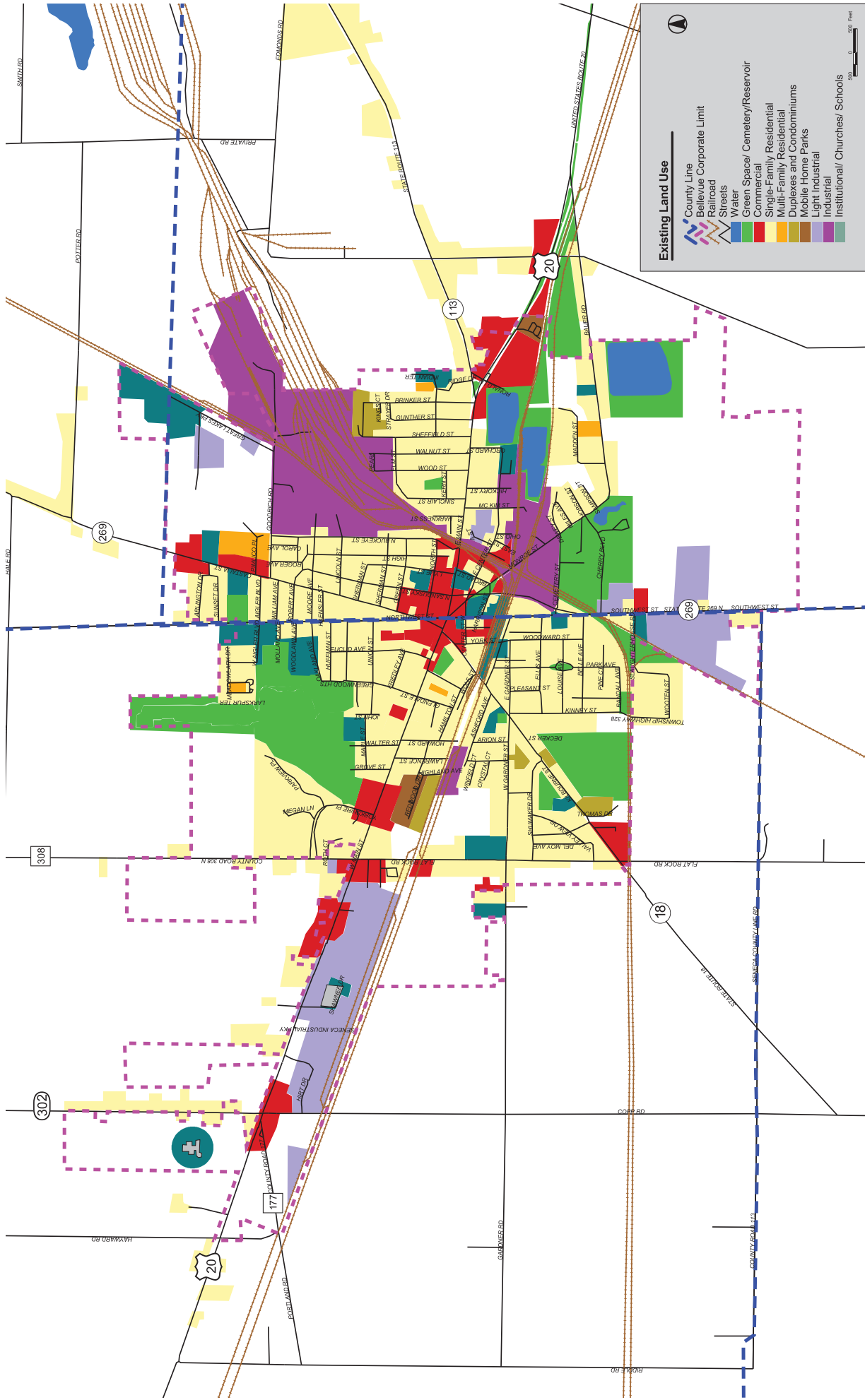
- **Gateways** at all major entrances to the City. The City recently created a preliminary design for these gateways, including a sign made of limestone that is indigenous to the area. These signs should be utilized in a landscaped area, with appropriate lighting, to establish a “sense of place” for the City, letting people know when they are entering the City boundaries and that the Bellevue residents are proud of their community.

- A **streetscaping theme** should be incorporated into all new developments, as well as redevelopment projects. Appropriate street trees, along with a sidewalk or walkway design, benches, shrubs in select locations, large concrete flower pots, hanging baskets on light poles, banners, etc. should be selected and incorporated into future development plans. Consideration should be given to having a landscaped boulevard in the middle of US 20 on both sides of town. The Village of Evendale, as an example, uses a serpentine stone wall with lighted bollards, up-lighted trees, and flowering shrubs within its medians as illustrated below.



- A **signage design theme** should be developed to include both a way-finding (or directional) system of signage and a locational system for key areas within the City. A color-coded locational system could be used to identify schools, municipal facilities, parks, the library, museums, and tourist attractions. The directional system could help direct transient traffic through the community. A sample signage system is included in **Appendix 5-1**.
- **Design standards** could be established for neighborhoods, the downtown, or a specific commercial or industrial area to set a theme for identifying that specific area. Architectural design standards, similar to what the City adopted for the downtown, are a significant help to property owners (and their neighbors) when decisions need to be made regarding additions or renovations to their buildings or homes.
- Many recommendations are made in the downtown section of **Chapter 9** regarding design issues within the central business district of the City. Some of the above recommendations were implemented in the downtown in late 2004. However, additional design elements within the downtown, as well as in adjacent neighborhoods, should still be considered.

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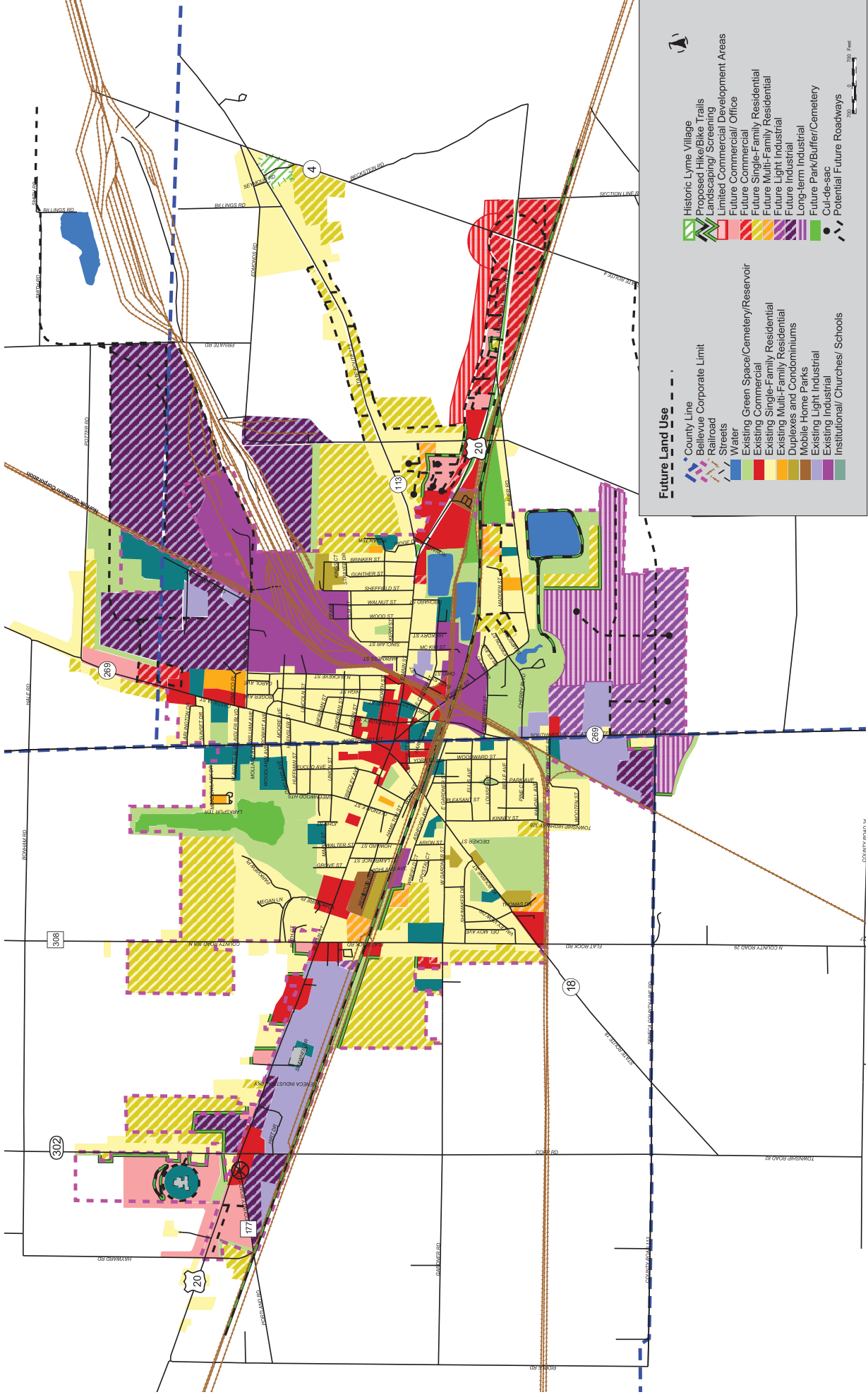


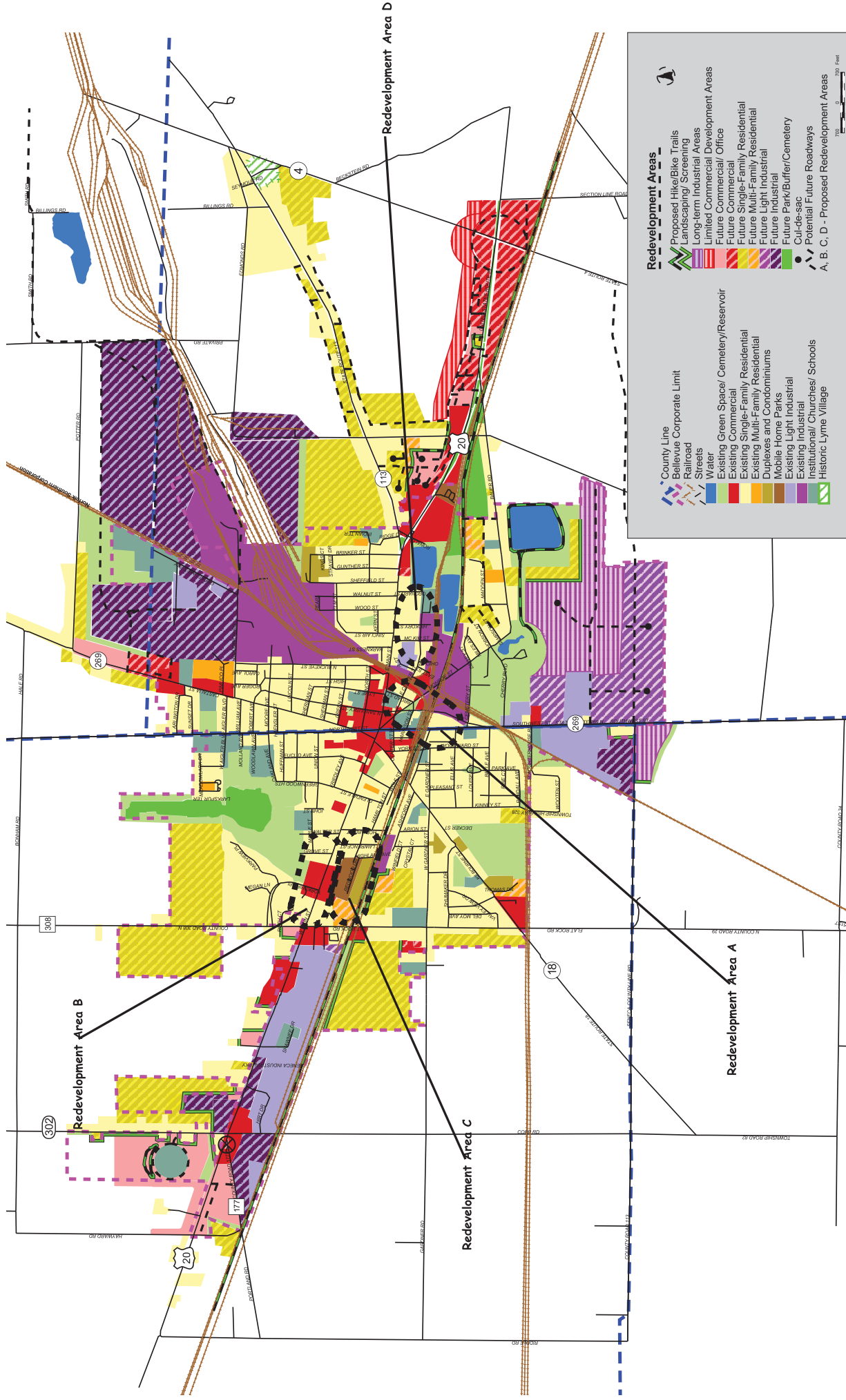




Map 5-3

City of Bellevue - Comprehensive Plan





City of Bellevue - Comprehensive Plan

Map 5-4

City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

6

Transportation

Chapter 6: Transportation

Background

Transportation has been a dominant force in shaping development in Bellevue. From the early days of the railroads bringing commerce to the midwest, to the development of the national and state highways, transportation has helped connect Bellevue to major markets throughout the United States, and has been a framework for community development.

The center of downtown Bellevue contains the intersection of one federal highway (US 20) and two State highways (SR 18 & SR 269). Additionally, immediately east of the City is another State highway, SR 4, which is used by a substantial number of central Ohio residents visiting Lake Erie and other destinations near the Lake such as Cedar Point. Within and adjacent to the City's boundaries there are significant railroad assets, with an increasing amount of railroad traffic on both the Norfolk & Southern and Wheeling & Lake Erie lines.

A negative aspect of the confluence of US 20, SR 269 and SR 18 in downtown Bellevue has been the daily and cumulative effect of all the transient commercial truck traffic on the downtown. For residents and downtown businesses, there have been issues of pedestrian safety and inconvenience, the air and noise pollution caused by the constant truck traffic in this relatively confined area, and the difficulty of parking on Main Street (US 20), among others. However, in 2004, several events occurred that greatly improved the pedestrian and parking issues and appear to be reducing both the amount of downtown transient truck traffic and the impact of the remaining truck traffic.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) completed a US 20 improvement project through downtown Bellevue in early 2005 that included: widening of the highway, improved lane identification, synchronized traffic signalization, renovation of the parking and sidewalks in the downtown, new decorative street lighting, rerouting of SR 269 to improve turn movements, and the creation of a third lane through the railroad underpass (known locally as "the subway") on the east side of downtown. In a concerted effort to help get transient trucks off US 20 and other highways that parallel the Ohio Turnpike, the Ohio Turnpike Commission raised the truck speed limit to 65 and significantly reduced the tolls for trucks on the Turnpike.

Time will tell if these efforts permanently alter the truck traffic patterns in Bellevue, but the general observation among Bellevue residents in early 2005 is that there are definitely fewer transient trucks using US 20, and those that remain are transitioning more easily through the downtown. Further, the improved on-street parking, new sidewalks, attractive street lighting, improved intersections, and new traffic signals, all seem to be making the downtown much more pedestrian friendly.

For decades, there have been formal and informal considerations by ODOT of a US 20 bypass around the City. The most recent ODOT study, completed in early 2004, highlights of which are included in **Appendix 6-1**, consisted of the identification and detailed analysis of several alternative bypass locations. ODOT concluded that the best and most affordable alternative would be a bypass to the south of the City utilizing portions of SR 18. The results of this latest Bellevue bypass study met with mixed local reviews, at best.

Bellevue and Bellevue-area residents, including those living in the vicinity of the proposed bypass routing, were less than enthusiastic about the results of the ODOT study, and pointed out various problems with the plan. Included in the criticisms of the bypass as proposed were:

- The study didn't properly take into account the number of railroad crossings involved in the proposed routing nor the costs of constructing the numerous grade separations that would be required to create a truly useful bypass for transient traffic, and
- The bypass needs to begin further to the west than planned to account for the imminent development along US 20 west of Bellevue.

Both in response to and anticipation of such criticism, ODOT officials pointed out that the US 20 bypass around Bellevue was only one of many projects under consideration throughout the State. Consequently, without essentially unanimous local support for the bypass as proposed, projects elsewhere, with solid local support, would receive a higher priority at ODOT, effectively eliminating this relatively expensive project from ODOT's future project plans. In spite of the thinly-veiled threatened consequences of no official and unofficial local support for the bypass plan as proposed, there remains far less than unanimous support in Bellevue for a US 20 bypass to the south of the City.

With or without a US 20 bypass, the need for additional railroad grade separations in and around the City of Bellevue remains. Presently, there are only two grade separations in the City:

- the subway (underpass) on East Main Street (US 20), and
- an overpass on SR 269 immediately south of the downtown.

Another overpass a little further south on SR 269, after it joins Southwest Street, is scheduled for construction beginning in 2005. While this second overpass on SR 269 will eliminate delays due to railroad crossings for that north-south traffic, and further improve emergency vehicle access to some of the southern areas of town and the townships south of Bellevue, there are still 13 at-grade railroad crossings within the City limits. Each one of these, some to a greater extent than others, is at best a frequent source of irritation and/or frustration for Bellevue residents and businesses, and at worst, a potentially serious problem in times of an emergency.

Therefore, while the highway and railroad assets have certainly been two of the major factors in the founding and growth of Bellevue, both of them also provide on-going challenges for the community, the quality of life in Bellevue, and its future development and economic growth. As one of the key persons interviewed in conjunction with developing this Comprehensive Plan observed, "Most of the people in town seem to be more concerned about truck traffic issues than they are about the railroads and the recent increases in railroad traffic; but I have never had to wait 45 minutes for a truck."

Not surprisingly, in the Community Survey, three of the top five areas of concern were directly related to transportation issues:

1. "The best alternative for a Route 20 bypass for trucks needs to be identified and built."
2. "The City should consider alternative methods for reducing truck traffic in the downtown."
5. "The improvement and maintenance of sidewalks is important."

In addition to the local highway and railroad transportation assets, residents of the City of Bellevue are within ten minutes of an Ohio Turnpike interchange, and have ready access to several commercial and general aviation airports. Also, regional bike trails are being developed in the Bellevue area that will eventually link to a system of bike trails throughout the State. These and other transportation assets and issues are discussed further in the balance of this Chapter.

Airports

The City of Bellevue is situated midway between the Toledo Express and Cleveland Hopkins Airports, both within about a one hour drive. While the Cleveland airport is much larger, served by more airlines and on the “Bellevue side” of Cleveland, both provide a variety of airline flights and/or connections to destinations throughout the US and the World.

The closest general aviation airport able to handle corporate jet and turboprop aircraft operations is the Sandusky County Regional Airport west of the City of Clyde, less than a half hours drive from Bellevue. It has a single northeast-southwest runway that is 5,500' long and 100' wide, with pilot-activated runway lighting and unobstructed approaches, a GPS instrument approach, and automated weather observation reporting. The airport is currently attended daily year-round from 8 AM to 5 PM weekdays, 8 AM to 3 PM Saturdays, and 10 AM to 3 PM Sundays. It has both Jet-A and 100 LL Avgas available, and offers minor maintenance services. Several local corporations base their jet and turboprop aircraft at Sandusky County Regional Airport, and other local companies use the airport frequently. The St. Vincent's Life Flight helicopter is also based there with a crew on site around the clock.

There are several other general aviation airports in the Bellevue area that offer aircraft fueling and maintenance, flight instruction, aircraft rental, and/or air charter services including those in Fremont, Norwalk, Sandusky, Huron, Tiffin and Ottawa County east of Port Clinton.

The proximity of the Cleveland and Toledo airports, and the ability of the nearby Sandusky County Regional Airport to handle sophisticated corporate aircraft with its long runway and unobstructed approaches, contribute significantly to the economic development assets of the City.

Railroad Crossings

There are currently 16 railroad crossings within the City of Bellevue, and at least an additional 6 immediately adjacent to the City limits. With the completion of the new railroad overpass on Southwest Street (SR 269), which is scheduled for construction in 2005, there will be three grade separations in the area.

One of the questions in the community survey, conducted in July 2004, requested the identification of desired additional grade separations. The four sites that were cited the most frequently, in addition to the one already scheduled for Southwest Street, were:

- Southwest Street in the downtown area,
- Kilbourne Street (SR 18) immediately southwest of the downtown,
- Flat Rock Road (CR 308) just south of US 20, and
- Center Street southeast of the downtown.

Another site that was suggested several times in the public visioning sessions as a priority site for a grade separation is on Township Road 302 just south of US 20. On the north side of US 20, TR 302 is the access road to the new Bellevue Hospital.

In the industrial area in the City's northeast, there are three railroad crossings on Goodrich Road. These crossings, with no grade separations, are routinely the source of lengthy traffic tie-ups at shift change times at Bunge Solae, and obviously could become a serious problem in the case of a fire or health emergency at that facility.

The City has an agreement with the Norfolk & Southern Railroad to have the "subway" underpass bridge painted. The color selected is a shade of tan to match the color scheme of the nearby Catholic School building trim.

The City should establish a priority list of desired grade separation sites, and develop a systematic plan to work with ODOT on a continuous basis until these grade separations are constructed.

Goal: The City should aggressively and continuously work with ODOT to plan, schedule, finance, and construct grade separations on prioritized railroad crossing sites within the next decade to improve emergency response times, industrial development, and the general quality of life in Bellevue.

Strategies:

- **Identify and prioritize** railroad crossing sites in and adjacent to the City that are the top candidates for future grade separations, and begin preliminary work to encourage ODOT participation. Based on citizen and City Administration input, these could include:
 - **Kilbourne Street (SR 18)** southwest of the City, just west of CR 308,
 - **Seneca County Line Road**, just west of SR 269,
 - **Township Road 302**, immediately south of US 20, to provide direct access to the new hospital from areas south of the hospital, and
 - **Goodrich Road** just east of Great Lakes Parkway.
- **Work aggressively and closely with ODOT** to get the priority grade separations scheduled in ODOT's process, while at the same time attempting to leverage other State and federal funds to finance these projects. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) should also be considered in appropriate situations.

Local Vehicular Transportation

In addition to the recently completed improvements along US 20 in the downtown, there have been other recent local street and intersection improvements, and there are approved plans for further traffic-related improvements within the City.

The elimination of selected one-way streets, and changes to the directional signage, traffic signals and the rerouting of SR 269 traffic into and through the downtown in order to reduce congestion at various downtown intersections were completed in early 2005. US 20 traffic coming from the east planning to go north on SR 269 will be directed to turn north at the traffic signal at Sandusky Street. With the addition of the third lane under the railroad, there are now

two westbound lanes on US 20 all the way through town, and right turns on red are permitted onto Sandusky Street.

Traffic coming from the north on SR 269 will be directed one of two ways as it enters the City. Those planning to go east on US 20, or continue south on 269, will be directed south on Sandusky Street and either turn left at the improved, signalized intersection with US 20, or continue straight south across US 20, respectively. Traffic going west on US 20, will continue south on Castalia Street and then turn right onto US 20. Similarly, US 20 traffic coming from the west will access SR 269 north or south in the middle of the downtown. SR 18 traffic coming from the southwest still intersects with US 20 and SR 269 at that same downtown intersection, but, with the improved turning radii, more distinctive lane designations, and synchronized traffic signals, congestion at this major downtown intersection should be reduced considerably.

A new traffic signal at the intersection of US 20 and Greenwood Heights will be activated in March 2005. Greenwood Heights is the primary City street to Bellevue High School. This new traffic-activated signal is designed to significantly improve the traffic flow after school and following sports and other special events at the High School. Similarly, a new traffic-activated signal at the intersection of Flat Rock Road (CR 308) and US 20 became operational in January 2005 and should significantly improve local traffic flow. Flat Rock Road is already a busy north-south street and will become even more so as new residential development continues adjacent to it within a few blocks both north and south of US 20.

Another intersection improvement planned for early to mid 2005 is in the north end of town at the intersection of Goodrich Road and Castalia Street (SR 269). Goodrich Road is the only current access road to Great Lakes Parkway and A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park, as well as the existing industrial sites and railroad properties in the northeast part of the City. There are also residential properties both north and south along the first few blocks of Goodrich Road, and it is less than two blocks south of the Shumaker Elementary School. The planned improvements to this intersection include a new traffic-activated signal and relocated curbing to provide improved turning radii to and from Goodrich and Castalia Streets.

The intersection-related improvements at both Greenwood Heights and Goodrich Road are, in part, designed to have a positive impact on the transportation issues at the local schools. The City recognizes the importance of working with the School District to ensure that any traffic-related issues near the school facilities are dealt with as promptly as possible and in a coordinated fashion.

Planned, but not yet scheduled, is a new traffic signal at the intersection of US 20 and Township Road (TR) 302. TR 302 is the primary access road to the new hospital north of US 20 and will be a preferred route to the hospital from the southern portions of York Township (Sandusky County) and Thompson Township (Seneca County).

Directly south of the new hospital on the south side of US 20 is a new commercial and office development. Plans for that development include a rerouting of CR 177 and the creation of internal streets to accommodate planned developments. Currently, CR 177 intersects US 20 immediately west of the TR 302/US 20 intersection at an acute angle. With the anticipated increased traffic on TR 302 because of the new hospital, and the planned new traffic signal at the TR 302 intersection, the essentially five-way intersection could become more confusing and/or hazardous. As now planned, CR 177 will soon turn north at the east side of this new

development and intersect with US 20 perpendicular to it. The developer also plans to access US 20 from the development with a new internal road that will be directly across from a maintenance/emergency road into the new hospital property. The City and the developer will need to work with both the County and ODOT to actually close off the existing CR 177/US 20 intersection.

As is being exemplified in the new commercial/office development south of the new hospital, the City, in concert with ODOT guidelines and as discussed in detail in the various development scenarios in Chapter 9, will be requiring development plans that provide for proper access management along US 20, both east and west of the City, as well as in the other commercial, industrial and residential development areas north and south of the City.

As mentioned previously, the only current access road to the northeast industrial area is Goodrich Road. This is already an issue for the City because of the residential areas on the western portion of Goodrich Road, the proximity of its intersection with SR 269 to Shumaker Elementary School, the three at-grade railroad crossings on Goodrich, and the fact that the truck traffic to the industries there from the east, west or south must all come through some part of downtown Bellevue. Consequently, as described in detail in Chapter 9, several alternatives to route truck traffic in and out of this industrial area from the northeast are being considered. As envisioned, the objectives of the selected route would include: no at-grade railroad crossings, utilizing existing roads as much as possible, disturbing existing land uses in the adjoining Groton Township as little as possible, and providing safe and efficient access to SR 4, US 20, and the Ohio Turnpike to the east and northeast of the City.

The following goals and strategies regarding recommended transportation improvements identified and discussed throughout this Comprehensive Planning process are illustrated on **Map 6-1, Transportation Map**.

Goal: The City and Schools should work together to **ensure appropriate vehicular access, traffic control and safety around all of the various the school buildings** within the City and School District.

Strategies:

- **Schedule annual meetings with the School District** to identify any existing or potential traffic problem areas near each of the schools and determine the best solution for each.
- As discussed in Chapter 9, work with York Township, Sandusky County, and ODOT to **relocate the primary access to York School** from US 20 to Wales Corners Road (288) east of the school. This will require acquisition of an easement or property, and would likely require a traffic actuated signal at the intersection. Closing the entrance onto US 20 in front of the school and channeling all traffic to an existing intersection, which could be signalized, would provide greater safety for all parties.

- Continue to work with the BDC, Lyme and Groton Townships, and Huron and Erie Counties to **identify an alternate truck route from the northeast section of the City to SR 4**, to eliminate much of the transient truck traffic from the Shumaker School area. (This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.)

Goal: The City should work with York Township, Sandusky County, local developers, and ODOT to provide for an **orderly control and flow of traffic** at the intersection of US 20 and TR 302, the **entrance road to the new hospital**, utilizing ODOT's Assess Management Policy guidelines wherever possible.

Strategies:

- Provide **left and right turn lanes** and proper turning radii onto TR 302 from US 20.
- Install a traffic signal that would be **traffic-activated by TR 302 traffic** needing to cross or turn onto US 20.
- Eliminate the current **angled intersection of CR 177** with US 20, once the relocated northern leg of CR 177 is constructed.
- Provide the same capability now in operation with the new traffic signals in the downtown and elsewhere in the City, whereby the sirens of approaching **emergency vehicles trigger the traffic signals** to go to steady red and green indications as appropriate until the emergency vehicles have passed. (Install **permanent signage** for vehicles approaching this intersection explaining the emergency procedure.)

Goal: The City and the BDC should work aggressively with Groton and Lyme Townships, and Erie and Huron Counties to provide an **alternative access route** from the **northeast industrial area** to SR 4 and thus, the Turnpike interchange.

Strategies:

- **Schedule a meeting** with Groton and Lyme Townships, Erie and Huron Counties, ODOT and area residents and businesses to determine the preferred routing for traffic to and from the northeast industrial area that would eliminate the need for a majority of the traffic to go through downtown Bellevue (and past Shumaker School). (See **Chapter 9** for a detailed discussion of this issue and preliminary identification of alternative routes.)
- As part of this roadway project, **Bragg and Smith Roads may have to be upgraded** to meet heavy truck standards (most likely Michigan loads). Plans to do so, and upgrading the intersection of Smith Road and SR 4, should be included in the total project scope.
- Once a decision has been made regarding the best alternative route, the City and BDC should acquire the necessary **property and/or rights-of-way** to construct this access road.
- An **environmental assessment (and a Phase 1 audit)** should be completed to assure that funding program requirements will be met.

- As new businesses express interest in developing within the industrial park, the City and BDC should **leverage those companies' investments to acquire State and/or federal funds** to construction this roadway. (CDBG-ED, EDA, and ODOT's State Infrastructure Bank should be pursued.)
- The City and BDC should also consider **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** as a method to help pay for the costs of this roadway.

Access Management

The State of Ohio, through ODOT, adopted a *State Highway Access Management Manual* in 2001 to improve safety and function of area roadways, specifically State highways. ODOT is enforcing these regulations on State highways where they maintain control. The policies should be considered on other key roadways, as they provide for greater safety while enhancing the functioning of the roadway system.

Briefly, access management is a comprehensive approach to controlling the number, location, and design of access points along major roadways, to improve safety and preserve the capacity of the roadway, while also providing property owners with "reasonable access" to their sites. Access management techniques include:

- Restricting the number of access points (driveways) by limiting the number of driveway permits for a given area. This reduces the number of stops and slow-downs made by vehicles turning or waiting for other vehicles to turn, reducing accidents and congestion.
- Providing proper spacing of access points. Appropriate spacing between existing and proposed driveways should be provided. Proper distance from intersections is also critical.
- Encouraging shared access to a site reduces the number of access points. This preserves the capacity of the roadway, and provides a more aesthetically pleasing corridor, and can be accomplished with shared driveways, frontage roads, rear service roads, and internal connections between sites.
- Restricting turning movements, which are common causes of traffic conflicts and accidents. This generally involves restricting left turns in certain areas. Installing medians to prevent turns or creating a boulevard to direct traffic to appropriate turn locations are options.
- Requiring proper driveway design with adequate width, turning radii, and depth to allow cars and large trucks to enter and exit safely and efficiently. A clear vision at all driveways and intersections is needed to assure safety. Also, land uses that generate high volumes of traffic may warrant the construction of deceleration and acceleration lanes and left turn lanes.

With the current and potential new development along US 20, both east and west, as well as on SR 269, both north and south, the City should be proactive regarding access management on these corridors. The following recommendations should be considered:

Goal: The City and BDC should work together to **prepare Corridor Plans for US 20 East and US 20 West, SR 269 North and SR 269 South** to address access management issues, landscaping, building set backs, parallel access roads, medians and/or boulevards, interior street systems, signalized intersections, signage, walkways, gateways, and other issues to ensure the safety of travelers and protect the capacity of the roadways.

Strategies:

- **Designate one committee** of interested parties, property owners, businesses, and elected and appointed officials for each section of US 20 and SR 269.
- **Schedule a training seminar with ODOT** representatives to educate the committee members about access management.
- **Retain consultants, if needed**, to work with the City, BDC, and committees to prepare Corridor Plans for these areas.
- **Utilize the information presented in Chapter 9** for each of the areas as base data for the committee planning processes.
- **Require all future developments to comply** with the recommendations of the Corridor Plans, and require developers and property owners to contribute their fair share of the costs associated with any access management improvements.
- **Consider State and federal grants, as well as Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** to assist with these access management improvements.

Gateways

As discussed in detail in **Chapter 9**, coordinated gateways at major entrance points to the City provide a definitive sense of arrival for residents and visitors alike. Gateways can provide a sense of arrival to a special place and can instill pride and identity in a community. Gateways can consist of attractive signage, landscaping, appropriate lighting, artwork, banners, etc. These design elements should be consistent throughout the community to create that specific identity for the City of Bellevue.

In response to early citizen input on the Comprehensive Plan, the City has already initiated steps to design and construct attractive, low-maintenance gateways. These gateways have been designed using limestone native to the Bellevue area, and they would be located on US 20 both east and west of the City, and on SR 269 north and south of the City. Lighting, landscaping and other design elements in and around the gateways are planned to reflect similar elements being employed in the downtown to provide a consistent sense of place unique to the City of Bellevue. These gateway locations are identified on **Map 9-1**.

As the downtown continues to be revitalized, smaller or secondary gateway entrances into the downtown should also be considered. They should maintain some of the same elements as the City gateways, along with a logo or theme for the downtown. Suggested locations for these downtown gateway entrances are indicated on **Map 9-6**.

Goal: The City should continue its efforts to develop attractive, low-maintenance **gateways at all major arrival points** into the City to reinforce Bellevue's sense of place.

Strategies:

- Obtain **City Council approval** of the preferred **basic design/theme** of the gateways to establish or reinforce and coordinate the desired theme for lighting, streetscaping and other design elements throughout the City, including in the downtown.
- As necessary, the City should **identify and acquire the property** for the desired gateway sites east and west on US 20, and north and south on SR 269.
- The City should provide **water and electricity** to each gateway site for proper lighting and maintenance.
- The City should enlist the assistance of a local **garden club or other civic organizations** to have the gateways **maintained regularly and rejuvenated each Spring** and other times of the year as necessary or appropriate.

Sidewalks

A key city planning concern today is the desire by more and more people for “walkable” communities. Today’s common emphasis toward “New Urbanism” developments and “Neo-Traditional Neighborhoods” is a reflection of the desire for the community designs of the past, with more opportunities to walk or bike to work or shop, for recreation and exercise, and/or to reduce the dependence on the automobile. The City should take this Comprehensive Planning process as an opportunity to encourage more walkability in future developments and redevelopment projects.

A similar issue was one of the top areas of concern resulting from the 2004 Community Survey: the “improvement and maintenance of sidewalks.” As development continues outwards from the center of the City, with key community amenities such as the new hospital, the Steering Committee felt it was important to systematically provide well-planned pedestrian connectors along major corridors, at least on one side of the street. The goal is to connect key community assets with walk and/or bike paths. These areas could include the new hospital, the City Centre municipal building - especially its recreation annex, the Community Center and Mill Pond Park, other local parks, and schools. Ideally, these would all connected with each other, the downtown, and City neighborhoods via a well-planned network of sidewalks and pathways. This network should also include more or improved pedestrian connectors throughout the City and the downtown. (See **Map 6-1** for proposed walkways.)

In addition to being built to the latest American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, these sidewalks should also be landscaped in appropriate areas, and have streetlights that continue the look of those in the downtown. Such treatment would compliment proposed gateways and contribute significantly to reinforcing a sense of arrival into the City of Bellevue for visitors and residents alike.

Areas within the City that have been specifically identified as needing sidewalks are the **areas across from Shumaker Elementary School**, and **US 20 west to the hospital and the City Centre**. All new subdivisions are required to construct internal sidewalks that should be linked to the City-wide network.

There are many sidewalks in neighborhoods around the downtown that need major sidewalk replacement or repair work. From the comments on the survey, it is obvious that there are areas of concern throughout the City with regard to the condition and maintenance of existing sidewalks. While the City has an ordinance regarding the care of sidewalks adjacent to private property, it was the consensus of those commenting in the Survey and visioning sessions that the City's enforcement of the sidewalk ordinance is inconsistent, at best. It has also been suggested that the City consider an assessment program to help fund sidewalk improvements and routine maintenance.

Chapter 903 of the City's Codified Ordinances addresses the sidewalk policy and requirements. It was created and amended by City Ordinances in 1955, 1976, 1992 and 1995. Within this policy are specific requirements and specifications for the construction and repair of sidewalks, property owner's responsibilities with regard to public sidewalks on or abutting his or her property, and the requirements for sidewalks on new residential, commercial and industrial sites. Violators of these policies are subject to a fine of not more than \$100 for each offense, with an additional fine for non-compliance of \$100 per day if the cited repairs or other violations have not been accomplished within 30 days of citation.

The construction of any needed sidewalks in any low to moderate income (LMI) areas in the City could possibly be funded the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Formula program, or Community Distress program. These LMI areas are illustrated on **Map 8-1** in **Chapter 8, Housing and Neighborhoods**.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 7: Public Utilities and Services, the North Coast Inland Trail is planned to go right through the middle of Bellevue. When complete, this largely "Rails-to-Trails" project will extend for 190 miles across northern Ohio, from Pennsylvania to Indiana and Michigan. One of the completed segments of the trail is the 6 mile multi-use trail from Clyde to Fremont. The Bellevue area portion of the trail is planned for construction within the railroad right of way immediately south of US 20, from Clyde to the east side of Bellevue, as depicted on **Map 6-1**.

Goal: The City should **develop a City-wide plan for sidewalk repair and replacement**, as well as **proposed biking and walking trails**, that will result in a pedestrian-friendly community with well-planned and maintained walkways throughout the City connecting neighborhoods, schools, and significant City assets. Once adopted, this plan should be consistently and aggressively implemented and/or enforced.

Strategies:

- **Assign a committee** to undertake a City-wide assessment and to develop the City-wide plan for sidewalk replacement and pedestrian connectors. Include timelines and areas for replacement programs so that the entire City network of sidewalks is in good condition within a five-year period.
- Include a major **pedestrian connector along US 20 west** to the hospital and City Centre recreation annex.
- **Review the existing requirements** of the City's ordinances and either modify them to match what the City is willing and able to enforce or begin consistently enforcing them as they are.
- **Explore financing alternatives** for walking and biking trails through ODOT and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.
- Explore the use of CDBG-Formula funds for sidewalk replacement projects in qualifying neighborhoods, as indicated on **Map 8-1 in Chapter 8**, as well as handicapped ramp replacements anywhere throughout the City.
- Plans should be created and adopted to **connect local pedestrian walkways to County and regional trails in the area**, specifically the North Coast Trail being constructed along the railroad right-of-way south of US 20. This will increase the use of all pedestrian connectors for recreational purposes.
- The **Community Center and Mill Pond Park should be tied into the local and regional walking and biking trail**, and the **trails at the Center should continue to be extended**, possibly to include walkways around the reservoirs.
- All **new subdivisions should have pedestrian walkways**, which do not necessarily have to be adjacent to the road or concrete. They could be designed as meandering walkways throughout the new subdivisions to provide a more enticing opportunity for recreational purposes.
- The pedestrian connectors **around all school buildings** should be constructed, repaired, or replaced to assure that the children have safe and easily accessible paths for walking or biking. Shumaker School was cited often as having issues with sidewalks.
- To meet current ADA laws, all intersections within the City should be provided with **handicapped ramps to current ODOT standards**. These would be an eligible CDBG-Formula activity anywhere in the City.

US 20 Bypass

As discussed previously in the Background section of this Chapter, the issues regarding an east-west bypass around the City have been studied and debated for decades. Probably as big an issue is the lack of east-west through streets other than US 20 through Bellevue. There are no roads on either the north or the south sides of US 20 upon which one can easily travel from the east side to the west side of town without using US 20.

The most recent ODOT study of alternative scenarios for a bypass concluded that the optimum routing was to the south of the City, and included a rerouting of SR 18. (See **Appendix 6-1** for the ODOT study.) SR 18, which is an east-west State highway in northern Ohio running between the Indiana line near Hicksville and the City of Akron, joins US 20 in the middle of the downtown Bellevue. The two divide again just east of Norwalk. As proposed by ODOT, SR 18 would be rerouted to remain south of the City on County Line Road and then on a new road extending east from SR 269, and would join US 20 again east of the City, thereby alleviating one of the sources of transient truck traffic congestion in the downtown.

From the viewpoint of traffic traveling from west to east on US 20, the ODOT-proposed bypass would begin on US 20 west near the new hospital, head south on TR 302 to County Line Road, then east on County Line road, crossing the current SR 18, to SR 269. It would then continue east on one of two roads that would have to be built (and would coincide with an SR 18 bypass) to either rejoin US 20 just east of the US 20 intersection with Prairie Road, or one that would go straight east to first join SR 4 south of US 20 and the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad tracks, and then northeast on SR 4 to US 20.

As pointed out in the study and by local residents, such a bypass would involve four railroad crossings, which, without grade separations constructed at each crossing, would not make the bypass a reasonable alternative to following US 20 (and SR 18) through the middle of downtown Bellevue.

Even without the discussion of a bypass, there is the potential for significantly improving access to the industrial development area south of the downtown along SR 269 (discussed in detail in **Chapter 9**). This could be accomplished by extending the east-west Seneca/Sandusky County Line Road straight east to SR 4 through the planned industrial area and adjacent agricultural properties in Lyme Township (Huron County). Access roads within the industrial development areas could be designed to properly access this new road. SR 18 traffic traveling through the area from the southwest would be directed to turn right on County Line Road and northeast on SR 4 to continue east on SR 18 and/or US 20. Westbound traffic on SR 18 would also be directed onto these same roads, bypassing the downtown altogether.

With the latest traffic-related improvements along US 20 in the downtown, there is optimism that the necessity of a bypass may already be lessened considerably. Consequently, sentiments among residents and City officials range from “We have been talking about a bypass for years and we don’t seem to be any closer to actually getting one. We might as well forget about it.” to “The only way we will ever get the bypass - which we really need - is to have it be a key component to our plans for the City and keep the pressure on ODOT to continue to include it on its future projects lists, and make it happen.”

Goal: The City and the BDC should continue to work aggressively with ODOT **to plan and design a bypass** around the City of Bellevue for US 20 and/or SR 18 transient traffic.

Strategies:

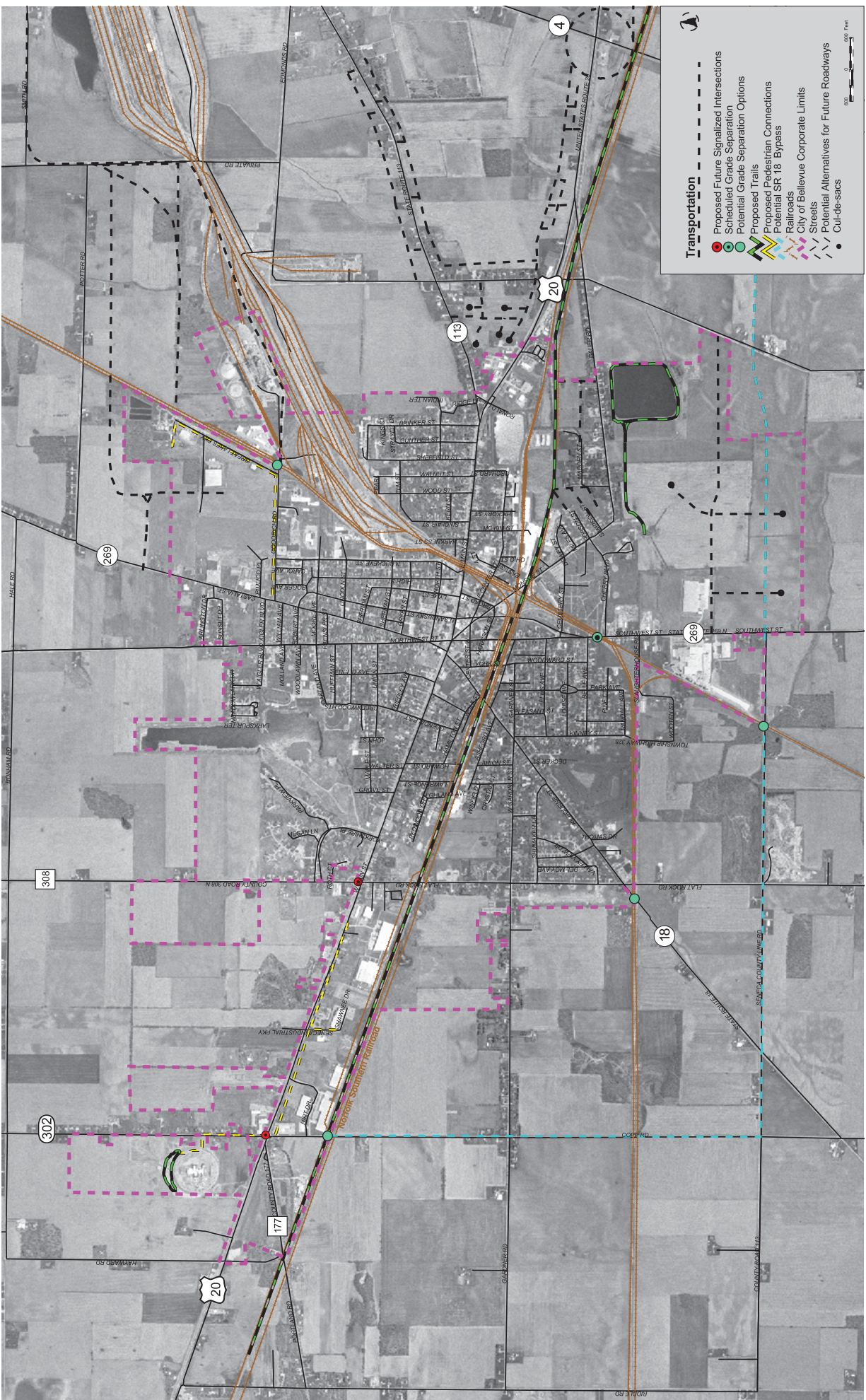
- Strive to **have this bypass project listed on ODOT's planning priority list**. If the project is not listed, it will never get built within the next two decades. The project should include funding for at least two grade separations - one just west of SR 269 and one on SR 4.
- **Work with State and federal representatives** to assure that this project receives a priority from ODOT.
- At the appropriate time, **invest local funds in preliminary planning activities** to indicate to ODOT the earnestness of the City's intent to build a bypass.
- **Do not give up!**

Goal: Until the bypass becomes a reality, the City should work with the BDC and property owners to create a roadway system in the SR 269 south area that would accommodate existing and future industrial traffic demands, as well as the proposed bypass route, so that when the bypass is constructed, a portion of it may already be built.

Strategies:

- **Plan for an eastern extension of County Line Road** to Prairie Road through the future industrial area, as shown on **Map 9-5**.
- Require developers and/or businesses locating in this area to **construct driveways and internal roadway systems that provide a common access** to SR 269 and/or the proposed County Line Road extension, once again so that when the bypass is constructed, existing roads fit into the big picture.
- Selected **County and Township roads in this area**, those that will be used primarily for access to US 20, the hospital, or SR 4, **should be upgraded** to meet truck standards, consistent with an overall plan. Once again, when the bypass is constructed, some of these roadways could become a part of that overall project.

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City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

7

Public Utilities
and Services

Chapter 7: Public Utilities and Services

Background

The public utilities, facilities, and infrastructure in a city such as Bellevue are the mechanics of city operations. Water and wastewater services are provided for homes and businesses through facilities and an infrastructure system that are seldom seen or thought about by the public, unless, of course, some component of the system fails.

Other city-provided services, specifically police, fire and emergency medical services (EMS), often have life and death consequences hanging in the balance, and the public generally assumes that the people providing those services are well-trained, well-managed, and equipped with the best equipment and vehicles that the city can afford. Other highly visible public services provided by most cities that significantly impact the quality of life of its residents are those provided by a parks and recreation department.

As a city changes physically over time, both the amount and the focus of demands on public facilities and services also change. With these changes, maintaining the quality, availability, and effectiveness of these public facilities and services can be a constant challenge for a city. Similarly, a city must be able to control and afford the costs of providing these services, including such aspects as:

- Facility, equipment and systems maintenance and upgrades,
- Facility and system expansions to meet new or additional demands,
- Acquiring new technology equipment and providing the training for its most effective use,
- Employee costs, including benefits,
- On-going training and certifications of personnel, and
- Effective communications among the public service providers and with city residents and employers who rely on these services.

Staying ahead of these shifting demands and expectations is difficult without thoughtful planning.

Relatively slow total population growth in Bellevue in the past decade has meant that the City has not been faced with the problems of how to pay for new infrastructure to serve a rapidly growing population. Rather, challenges for the City have generally come in the form of meeting new State and federal mandates for water quality and wastewater facilities. In addition, the City is faced with mandates associated with upgrading existing aging facilities, including the replacement of system components such as waterlines that are over a hundred years old.

However, with the relocation and expansion of the Bellevue Hospital to its new facility on US 20, the new residential and commercial development west of the downtown and elsewhere in the City, and the new industrial park in the northeast, new infrastructure is being built and the existing capacity of the water and wastewater systems may soon be inadequate.

In addition, there are constant program and financial challenges for the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Given the local and nationwide growing desire for more and/or

different recreational opportunities among all age groups, and the costs of simply maintaining the expected level of services with today's budget realities, such challenges are common to almost all communities.

At the same time, the need to provide safety and emergency services to new growth areas, at the same level as desired throughout the City and adjoining townships today, means making sure that public safety facilities are where they need to be, are staffed properly, and have the best possible unimpeded access to all areas of the City to ensure adequate response times. (The railroad grade separation issues, both planned and desired, are discussed in **Chapter 6**.)

The balance of this Chapter discuss various components of the City of Bellevue's public utilities and services.

Water

The City's water treatment plant was put into operation in 1937, and was upgraded in 1955, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1976 and 2004. The plant typically filters 1.7 - 2.0 million gallons of water per day, using upwards of 75% of the 2.6 million gallons per day plant capacity.

Waterlines within the City, particularly in the downtown, date as far back as the 1800's. Consequently, the City has developed a **systematic plan for replacing the aging waterlines** on an annual, budgeted basis. New water lines have been recently installed in the downtown area in conjunction with all of the US 20 and sidewalk improvements, and in 2005, the main line from the water treatment plant along Center Street to Southwest Street will be replaced.

In February 2005, the City completed a three-month *Optimization Study* of the City's water system and treatment plant to determine what upgrades need to be accomplished, and to develop a plan for making those upgrades. One of the main factors triggering the study was EPA's new water quality requirements that are mandated to be met by 2008 and 2010. The study indicated that the plant will have no problem meeting the 2008 requirements, but will require that some work be done to **meet the 2010 water quality standards**.

The study also addressed the City's water supply system. Currently, the City maintains five reservoirs, built between 1874 and 1946. The capacity of the reservoirs range from 70 million to 700 million gallons, for a combined total capacity of a billion gallons. Four of the reservoirs are within the City limits; the fifth, and largest, is about five miles southeast of the water treatment plant in Lyme Township.

The water supply system is currently set up so that water can only enter the water treatment plant (WTP) from either Reservoir #1/2 or #3, which are closest to the treatment plant. Consequently, water from Reservoirs #4 and #5 flows north via open ditches to be pumped into Reservoirs #1/2 and #3.

A recommendation of the recently-completed water system study is to **provide the capability to draw water directly from each of the reservoirs** within the next five years, which will preclude the need to pump water into from one reservoir into another to access the WTP. Once that system has been setup, **Reservoirs #1/2 and #3 will be emptied for a much-needed cleaning**, and then refilled.

There are two new stand-by wells near the Bellevue Community Center that were recently dug to augment the raw water supply during drought conditions. Each of the new wells can produce 500,000 gallons of water per day.

To further supplement the City's water supply to insure adequate water for all current customers, and to support future residential, commercial and industrial development, the City is in the process of executing an **agreement to purchase treated water from Erie County**. A key component of this project is the **construction of two new water towers**, one near the new hospital on the west side of town, and one near the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park in the northeast section of town. These towers will complement the City's existing water tower located near Tower Automotive, on SR 269 south. Their locations will optimize the desired water pressures and flows throughout the City, and will also provide the pressures and flows required by the new hospital and industrial sites for both their daily and fire protection requirements.

Once this agreement is reached with Erie County, and other required improvements are planned and under control, the City should continue working with Thompson Township and Seneca County regarding supplying **water (and possibly sanitary sewer) to the community of Flat Rock**. In addition, **York and Lyme Schools also need water** and sanitary sewer services, and the City should work with the School District, the appropriate Townships, and the Counties to provide these services.

Goal: The City will continue to implement the necessary improvements to replace aging waterlines, increase water capacity, improve water treatment, and meet new regulations to provide its residents with a safe and adequate water supply.

Strategies:

- The City will annually budget funds for **replacement of aging waterlines** throughout the City, as was done in the downtown in 2004 in conjunction with the Main Street improvement project.
- The City will schedule improvements, as recommended in the *2005 Optimization Study*, to accomplish the necessary steps to **meet future water quality standards**.
- The City will upgrade the water supply system to provide the **capacity for Reservoirs #4 and #5 to tie directly into the WTP**.
- The City will **execute a water agreement with Erie County** to provide additional water capacity to the City.
- After the agreement with Erie County is executed, the City should ramp up its efforts to **provide water services to the community of Flat Rock, as well as to Lyme and York Schools**.

Wastewater

Bellevue's Wastewater Treatment facility is located adjacent to the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park in the northeast section of the City. Constructed in 1969, with expansions in 1988 and 1994, the plant has a design flow of 2.0 million gallons per day (MGD), with a 24-hour peak flow of 5.6 MGD. The average daily flow is 1.1 MGD, slightly more than 50% of the daily design flow. The collection system throughout the City includes thirteen lift stations.

The City is in the process of completing a \$7 million upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) which includes a state-of-the-art treatment of bio solids patterned after an innovative operation in Minnesota. This process results in the creation of a compost that looks like potting soil and can be used as a fertilizer on residential lawns and gardens. It is being made available



at no charge to Bellevue residents and at a minimal charge to professional landscape firms and nurseries in the City. It is the first such plant in the State of Ohio. The WWTP has a buffer of green space to its north, through which a series of walking trails and habitats are maintained for public use.

The City has expressed an interest in purchasing **additional land to the north** of the WWTP to provide space for future expansion. Members of the public expressed concerns that the WWTP should have a **buffer around it on all sides** to protect adjacent property owners from adverse impacts. Future **housing should be restricted**

in the area immediately around the WWTP, and future land uses to the east should be advised of potential adverse impacts caused by the wind.

For years, the City has had a more traditional composting site adjacent to the WWTP, where City crews and residents could take their leaves, grass clippings and trimmed branches. In the Spring, these materials are run through a screen and residents can pick up the resulting compost for use on their gardens.

Goal: The City will continue to maintain and upgrade the WWTP and collection system as needed to provide adequate service to its residents.

Strategies:

- The City will investigate the **purchase or option of land to the north** of the WWTP to provide space for future expansion.
- The City should **provide a buffer of green space on all sides of the WWTP** to protect future land uses from any negative impacts of the WWTP.

Fiber Optic Lines

Fiber optics is critical to the future of the City, especially from an economic development perspective. Today, many industrial operations and offices require high-speed internet capability to transmit and receive large volumes of data critical to their daily operations. Currently, the railroad has a high-speed fiber hub on Center Street at the railroad, and the School District has its own internal system.

Fiber is not otherwise available elsewhere in the City or Townships, and could be a critical element in the site selection process for the industrial parks, especially with many of the newer, high-tech businesses. **Installation of a high-speed fiber loop** around the City could provide an opportunity for the BDC to recruit and work with a private provider in the near future to provide this asset to the community.

Some communities (e.g. Galion, Ohio) have undertaken studies to determine how best to provide fiber throughout the municipality, assuming that the public sector could do it if needed. As a result of the study in Galion, the private sector came to the table to provide the service once the study was completed. It should be noted that most State and federal infrastructure grant and loan programs now consider fiber as another “utility,” making it an eligible expense for an industrial infrastructure project.

Goal: The City and the Bellevue Development Corporation (BDC) will **study the need and potential for providing high-speed fiber** in the community.

Strategies:

- The BDC should **meet with the City of Galion** (and/or other communities) to review the process and study that it went through, as well as the resulting fiber loop project.
- The BDC should **survey its local businesses and industries** to determine the need for high speed fiber optics.
- If/when a need or desire is identified, the BDC should **undertake a study** to determine how best to provide high-speed fiber optics to those who need it .
- The BDC and the City should **identify financing opportunities** to assist with installation of the fiber optics system. Coordinating this with a new industry location in the City or the expansion of an existing industry, could trigger some State or federal ED grant funds.

Police

The Bellevue Police Department utilizes a customer-oriented philosophy to promote a sense of safety and a high quality of life within the City of Bellevue. Thirteen police officers, four full-time communication officers, and a (new in 2004) full-time detective are currently employed by the Bellevue Police Department.

Thirteen auxiliary officers and one Special Response Team member of the Huron County Sheriff's Office assist the City's police staff during special events or circumstances.

The Bellevue Police Department patrols more than fifty square miles of roadways covering four major routes in close proximity to the City. In order to patrol those fifty square miles, the Bellevue Police Department uses twelve marked cruisers and two unmarked cruisers. The Department is located at the City Centre at 3000 Seneca Industrial Parkway, adjacent to the City Administration offices.

Goal: To continue to provide a well-managed, adequately-financed police department to assure the safety of the residents of the City.

Fire

Bellevue's Fire Department received high marks from all factors of the public throughout this planning process. The Department has been housed in its current building on Southwest Street since it's construction in 1985. The facility has 3,800 square feet of office space and an additional 3,250 square feet of truck bay space. Equipment includes a new ladder truck (purchased in 2002), a tanker truck, two front-line pumpers and a HazMat clean-up vehicle. The City has purchased a new front-line pumper to be delivered in 2005, which will replace the 1961 pumper now in the fleet. There are eight full-time firefighters employed, including the Chief and the fire inspector, as well as eighteen part-time volunteers.

The Department's three-bay station is used to service a 97 square mile area, which includes not only the City of Bellevue, but also Lyme, Thompson, and York Townships under contract agreements, all of which were renewed for three years in January, 2005. The department's service area has also been extended by mutual aid contracts with all Huron County communities, as well as Attica, Clyde, Fremont, Green Springs, Perkins Township, and the City of Sandusky.

There are some concerns from the public that firefighters should be cross-trained to provide emergency medical services. There also appears to be some misunderstanding among several of the townships that have fire service agreements with the City about billing procedures and rates. The City is in the process of gathering more specific information on actual costs to provide these fire services to the townships, and is reviewing how other communities provide similar services to their townships, in an attempt to provide more accurate costs in future agreements. The on-going debate with Groton Township regarding a mutual aid agreement for fire protection appears to be hindering negotiations and cooperation between the two entities on other subjects as well.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are contracted through North Central EMS. The City and the adjacent townships recently renewed their contract with North Central EMS for another five years, which will take them through 2009.

There is some concern that, in the future, this private EMS provider may discontinue services. The City is monitoring this carefully and would consider establishing its own EMS service should this happen. Agreements with the neighboring townships currently serviced by North Central EMS should be serviced through contractual arrangements with the City, if this situation should arise.

Goal: To continue to provide a well-managed, adequately-financed fire department to assure safety to the residents of the City and participating townships.

Strategies:

- Continue to **cross-train** personnel for EMS duties, and continue to monitor the status of the private EMS provider.
- Develop informational materials regarding the rates charged to the townships for fire services and **continue to discuss these rate charges** with them so that a better understanding is achieved.
- **Continue to negotiate with Groton Township**, and provide factual evidence regarding costs, so that either a Mutual Aid, or other agreement, is reached.

Utilities

Columbia Gas of Ohio provides natural gas services to the area. Verizon North services the telephone needs of the Bellevue area. The electrical supplier to the City is Ohio Edison, while cable television service is provided by Time Warner Cable. In the southern part of the City, south of the Seneca County Line and west of SR 269, electric service is provided by North Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., which is based in Attica, Ohio. North Central is a member of the Federated Energy Services Cooperative, Inc., and has recently invested in a new substation in the area to encourage industrial and office development. Its rates are generally lower than those of Ohio Edison.

There has been some discussion by the City and the public about the possibility of establishing a municipal electric system, similar to what the City of Clyde did about ten years ago. However, that issue was not strongly supported by members of the public at the various public input sessions. Many stated that they would need more information in order to make an informed decisions, but most felt that the duplication of services was not warranted at this time.

Goal: The City will continue to work with private utility providers to assure that residents achieve the best services as fair costs.

Parks and Recreation

The City manages and maintains eight parks encompassing 80 acres, two recreational facilities and a swimming pool including: the Bellevue Community Center, Mil 'Lympic Swimming Pool, and Mill Pond Park complex; the Community Activity Centre facilities adjoining the Bellevue City Centre; Robert Peters Athletic Field; Buckingham Park; Amsden Park; Kern Street Park; Ellis Park; Waterworks Park; and Harmon Field. In addition the Recreation Department provides over a hundred programs at the various parks and facilities for over 5000 participants annually, as well as several special events each year.



Recent major renovations to the Community Center facility created a new entrance facing the parking lot, and provided a substantial increase in enclosed, indoor space. With the additional space, the Rec Department was able to essentially triple its Nautilus exercise area which has been co-located with the aerobic exercise equipment so that both of those exercise activities could be supervised more efficiently and at the same time. The room that formerly housed the Nautilus equipment is now a multi-purpose room suitable for large meetings, dance and other fitness classes, etc. Other improvements to the building included upgrades to the fire alarm and other safety systems, improved hallway lighting, and a relocated and improved front desk area.

As of March 2005, the Bellevue High School's woodworking industrial arts students had nearly completed a new and substantial, angled wooden reception desk for the Community Center to be installed by late March. This cooperative effort between the schools and the Rec Department is a good example of the kind of benefits that can accrue within a cooperative and improved communications atmosphere, such as the one that the City administration is working to improve throughout the greater Bellevue community, including with the schools and the surrounding Townships.



Adjacent to the Community Center building is a badly deteriorating outdoor concrete amphitheater that was built in the 70's. The Rec Department has been discussing possible alternative uses for this space including removing the concrete work and enclosing the entire space and installing a wooden floor to create badly-needed additional open-space exercise area. This new area would be accessed directly from the locker room areas in the basement of the existing Community Center building.

New play structures have recently been installed at the Robert Peters Athletic Field and Amsden, Kern, and Buckingham Parks. New or renovated swing sets and/or slides have also been installed recently in Robert Peters, Amsden, Kern, Buckingham and Ellis Parks. Picnic tables are in all the City parks, with grills available at Mill Pond Park and the Robert Peters area. There are tennis courts at Robert Peters and the High School, and baseball/softball fields at Mill Pond, Robert Peters and the High School. There are two football fields and three soccer fields at Mill Pond and three football fields at the High School. All of the parks have basketball facilities, some full court, some half-court. Fishing is permitted in Mill Pond.

The Community Activity Centre adjoining the City Centre building complex, is a large, high-ceilinged facility with a perimeter walking track surrounding gymnastics mats and equipment and an open exercise area. It also includes an indoor pole-vaulting pit that is unique to the area, attracting track & field team members from area high schools and colleges.

In 2002, the City developed a Community Park Master Plan for Mill Pond Park, the Community Center Facility and adjoining undeveloped acreage. **(See Map 7-1.)**



This plan calls for additions to the Community Center building - including an indoor pool, increased parking, additional baseball/softball fields, two multi-purpose fields (soccer, football, etc.), expanding the size of Mill Pond, walking paths throughout the area, and accommodations for a variety of other outdoor recreational activities such as frisbee golf, skateboarding and in-line skating, and non-motorized dirt bikes. Obviously, many of these items are in the “wish list” category and will only become a reality as funding permits and serious interest for such activities within the community is demonstrated.

Goal: The City will continue to provide the best possible parks and recreational services to the residents of the City (and others for a fee) for a reasonable cost.

Strategies:

- The City should continue with the development and expansion of the Bellevue Community Center facility and the Mill Pond Park complex in accordance with the **Community Park Master Plan (Map 7-1)**.
- The City should, as grants and other funding sources permit, continually renovate and upgrade all of the City parks and bike/walking trails, in response to the increasing nationwide fitness and healthy living awareness movement, and changing recreational needs/desires within the community that may emerge over the next 20 years.

City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

8

Housing and
Neighborhoods

Chapter 8: Housing and Neighborhoods

Background

A community's housing stock and neighborhoods should reflect the needs of its residents' life cycle housing requirements. As individuals progress through life, they have different housing needs based on their income, education, marital status, number of children, special needs, and life style preferences. This life cycle continuum requires different types of housing ranging in size, location, style, and cost. Communities should, therefore, be periodically assessing progress toward providing different types of needed housing at varying types and price levels in order to service the needs of its existing and future residents.

According to 2000 Census data, the City had 3,557 housing units (some Census charts say 3,559). Of these housing units, 93.6% were occupied and 6.4% (227 units) were vacant at the time of the Census. Of the occupied housing units, 70.2% were owner-occupied and 29.8% were renter-occupied. From 1990 to 2000 there was a 7.0% increase in owner-occupied units since 1990, and a 0.1% increase in renter-occupied units. The number of vacant housing units increased by over 50% since 1990, from 148 units to 227 units.

Of the 227 vacant housing units in 2000, 10.6% (24) were available for sale; 53.7% (122) were available for rent; 9.3% (21) were already rented or sold but not yet occupied; and the balance (60) were either seasonal or vacant with no known tenure preference. An interesting statistic to note is that the vacant units available for rent almost doubled since 1990, from 62 to 122 units.

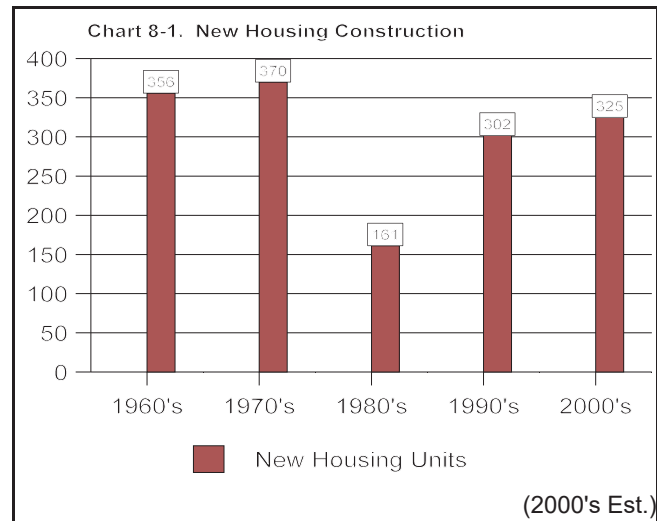
Probable reasons for the increase in vacant units and the increase in vacant units for rent are two-fold (as discussed with a local realtor in Bellevue):

- The rents are probably too high compared to the current housing market that offers 0% down, 100% financing for home purchases; and
- The new assisted living complex in the City offers alternative living arrangements for senior citizens, who likely vacated their family homes, providing a glut of older homes on the market. Other seniors may have opted to move into the condos in Yorkshire, also vacating their family homes, which they could be trying to rent for additional income.

Additionally, 66% of the City's housing was built prior to 1960 and 39% was built prior to 1939. Not surprisingly, some of the neighborhoods in the City have deteriorated over the past few years. Those areas adjacent to the railroad tracks seem to have deteriorated and become rentals more so than other areas of town for obvious reasons.

It should also be noted, however, according to the 2000 census information, that almost twice as many new housing units (302) were constructed in the 1990's than in the 1980's (161). The 1980's figures were also about half of those for new housing unit construction experienced by the City in the 1970's (370) and the 1960's (356). Obviously, the 1980's were tough years to be in the housing construction business in Bellevue. However, the turnaround seen in the 1990's appears to be continuing. **(See Chart 8.1.)**

For the first five years of the new decade, the City has issued building permits for 130 new housing units. 51 of those were for single-family houses; the remaining were for condos, duplexes and multi-unit apartments. This figure is in addition to new housing units that may have been built in early 2000. With the plans for the three new housing developments in Bellevue already in place, there is a high probability that the total of new housing unit constructed between 2000 and 2009 will easily exceed the 300 level.



Other interesting housing statistics from the 2000 Census include:

- 91% of the owner-occupied units had a value of less than \$150,000.
- Over 53% of the households with a mortgage, paid between \$500 and \$1,499 per month, as compared to 33% in 1990.
- 62% of the homes were mortgaged; 38% were not.
- 65% of households paid less than 20% of their household income on housing costs.
- 14% of households paid 30% or more of their household income on housing costs, which compares to 10% in 1990.
- 80% of the renter-occupied units had gross monthly rents of between \$300 and \$749 in 2000, compared to 69% in this range in 1990.
- 10% of renters paid less than \$300 per month in gross rent in 2000, compared to 25% in 1990.
- 23% of renter households paid more than 30% of their household income in gross rent.
- Interestingly though, the gross rent as a percentage of household income statistics did not change significantly between 2000 and 1990.
- The number of homes lacking complete plumbing facilities in 2000 was 24, up from only 5 in 1990.
- The number of homes lacking complete kitchen facilities in 2000 was 21, down from 26 in 1990.

- In 2000, 81 homes lacked telephone service.
- The number of low & moderate income (LMI) persons in the City in 2000, using HUD Section 8 income limits as the benchmark, was 1,479 or 35% of the population of Bellevue.
 - The highest percentage of LMI persons are located in Census Tract (CT) 9621, Block Group 3, (north of US 20, west of CR 308) which recorded a 100% LMI population (only 22 people in this CT are in the City).
 - 55.7% of the persons in CT 9622, Block Group 2 (between US 20 and the RR tracks, east of CR 308) are recorded as LMI.
 - Because of their LMI status being greater than 51%, these two areas are eligible for funding assistance for any activities funded by the CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) formula program.
 - The LMI areas are identified on **Map 8-1**.

There are two senior housing facilities within the City: a 40-unit complex called Orchard Grove, which provides assisted living, and Rotary Commons, which provides subsidized housing

Three developments provide housing assistance to lower-income families. These are Pimlico, Frederick, and Bryn Mawr. Most members of the public felt that the housing needs of the low- and moderate-income households within the City were met by these developments.

Housing Strategy

The City of Bellevue has never completed a *Community Housing Improvement Strategy* (CHIS) which is a HUD document that analyzes all housing conditions and needs in the community. The completion and acceptance of the CHIS by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), Office of Housing and Community Partnerships (OHCP), would provide the City of Bellevue with the opportunity to receive grant funds for housing rehabilitation, home ownership assistance, and other housing assistance programs.

Data available for the City of Bellevue, that would generally be used to complete the CHIS, is included in **Appendix 8-1**.

The ODOD, OHCP does have HUD funds available on an annual basis for non-HUD-entitlement cities and counties to undertake comprehensive housing assistance programs. Up to \$500,000 can be requested through the CDBG Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), while other funds may be available for specific housing activities, every other year, if a community successfully completes its CHIS and its CHIP program. Many communities in Ohio have received millions of dollars under the CHIP program.

Grant funds can be made available to eligible private home owners to rehabilitate their homes to Section 8 standards. Many federal regulations, such as lead abatement, apply to these renovation projects.

Public Issues regarding Housing

Public input regarding housing was requested at the visioning sessions, through the Community Survey, and in the Key People Interviews. Comments and concerns included:

- The **historic homes** within the City, especially those along West Main Street, should be preserved and rehabilitated as needed to maintain their historic integrity. Property owners should be encouraged to undertake renovation and preservation activities that are consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*.
- Almost 50% of the survey respondents identified a **need for additional housing for the elderly**. Although Bellevue is blessed with a wonderful assisted living facility on Flat Rock Road, additional housing for the elderly is seen as a continuing need, as people here and elsewhere are living longer. It was also mentioned that senior condos were needed, and that senior housing should have attached garages. Senior day care centers were also mentioned as being needed, although there are two in the City already.
- Although **housing for the disabled** was mentioned by a few individuals, the need, for such housing was not ranked highly in the Community Survey compared to the other issues. Nonetheless, that population group should be considered in new apartment building designs, as there are obviously some people in the community who need that type of assisted living.
- Mention was made of the potential for **housing in the upper floors of buildings in the downtown**. Many communities are renovating these types of buildings into loft apartments and/or live/work units. Overnight parking is always an issue that needs to be addressed when considering increasing the number of apartments in the downtown.
- There are numerous **land use conflicts** between existing housing units in the older established neighborhoods and neighboring industrial and commercial uses, including the railroad tracks. There are no buffers between the tracks and homes in most instances. As a result, these homes often fall into disrepair or become low-cost rental units.
- There was general consensus that **new homes are needed** in the community. This need is being met at this time, and will continue to be met in the near future, with three subdivisions, Yorkshire (at the quarry), Gardner Subdivision, and Country View Subdivision.
- There were strong feelings expressed by lots of people that the City needs to adopt and enforce a **property maintenance code** throughout the community to protect property values, to improve the overall condition of buildings, and to improve the general environment of the City. Of the Survey respondents, 60% stated that a property maintenance code should be enforced. The City of Sandusky's Property Maintenance Code was cited as an example. That ordinance is available on-line.

- It was mentioned that **home ownership needs to be increased** within the City. Interestingly, this is a national goal as well. Statistics for Bellevue, as mentioned earlier, indicate that this could be happening now, as evidenced by a higher vacancy rate currently among rental properties. The current 0% down, 100% financing opportunities appears to be resulting in more householders becoming property owners. The CHIP program could also assist with this effort.

Goal: The City undertakes a housing analysis and develops an **aggressive housing assistance program** to improve overall housing conditions within the City.

Strategies:

- **Prepare a Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS)**, and submit this CHIS to ODOD, OHCP at the next available opportunity. Hire a consultant familiar with the CHIS/CHIP programs to assist with this effort.
- After the CHIS is submitted and approved, **submit an application for Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) funds** to implement the approved housing assistance programs.
- **Target the Redevelopment Areas** identified in **Chapter 5** for the CHIS and CHIP programs, at least initially.
- Consider more promotion of the benefits of the existing **Community Reinvestment Area (CRA)**, so that homeowners are aware that the City can abate new property taxes resulting from improvements made to homes within the CRA. The CRA boundaries may need to be expanded to include additional areas of disinvestment in order to encourage reinvestment and revitalization. This is an additional incentive to entice property owners to upgrade their homes.

Goal: In the City's **Community Assessment & Strategy (CAS)**, which is due each year with its CDBG-Formula application, CT 962200, Block Group (BG) 2 should be targeted. The CAS must address all qualifying areas of the City, identifying potential areas and projects, so that appropriate funding can be requested for those areas.

Strategies:

- An income survey should be conducted within CT 962200 BG 2 to determine if any areas within that block group qualify as 60% LMI, which would qualify that area for CDBG-**Community Distress Program** funds, another newer CDBG program in Ohio.
 - "The goal of this program is to target the investment of public and private resources to improve the quality of life, livability, and functionality of distressed areas and neighborhoods to carry out a comprehensive strategy of revitalization." This can include stabilization and enhancement of residential neighborhoods, redevelopment of brownfield sites near LMI neighborhoods, or redevelopment of commercial or industrial sites.

- Up to \$300,000 can be awarded for any single project.
- If an area qualifies, the City could **request Community Distress Program funds** for eligible activities in the targeted area, which could include:
 - Acquisition and clearance of vacant buildings
 - Code enforcement
 - Curbs and sidewalks
 - Fire protection facilities and equipment
 - Flood and drainage facilities
 - Historic preservation
 - Parking facilities
 - Parks and recreation facilities
 - Public utilities, improvements, and rehabilitation
 - Relocation payments and assistance
 - Removal of architectural barriers
 - Senior centers
 - Water and sewer facilities

Applications must be submitted to the State at the same time as the Formula application, usually July of each year.

Goal: The City works with existing organizations within the community, including the Bellevue Historical Society, to undertake a **comprehensive program to restore historic homes and buildings** throughout the community.

Strategies:

- **Consider designating certain areas as Historic Districts** to obtain protection for the historic properties, and to allow property owners to take advantage of preservation programs and tax credits. These districts could be local or national designations. Areas could include the downtown, West Main Street, some parts of East Main Street, and other sections of older neighborhoods.
- If Historic Districts are not possible or desirable, the City should encourage property owners to **list their individual properties on the National Register of Historic Places**, to assure that some consideration is given in the future to preservation of these properties.
- **Encourage the use of CRA tax abatement benefits** to encourage property owners to rehabilitate their historic buildings.
- Consider the **use of Design Review Boards** and the use of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings* in single-family historic districts. Such regulatory measures control how buildings may be modified, such that the historic qualities of the structure are not compromised with inappropriate renovations, additions, demolition, and maintenance.

Goal: Developers are recruited to provide additional senior living facilities, assuming the need is confirmed by a market analysis, and as evidenced in the CHIS.

Strategies:

- Identify basic elderly housing needs through the **CHIS process**. The need for senior housing within both the affordable market and the upscale market is an issue that is likely to become more important in the near future. A growing national trend is that baby boomers are now having to assist their aging parents with finding senior housing. Many boomers have opted to move their parents close by and place them in quality senior housing. The “continuum of care retirement housing concept” is one that should be pursued. Such senior housing projects would offer a variety of housing alternatives for seniors within one development (e.g., apartments, condos, assisted living and nursing homes).
- **Meet with local developers and elderly housing providers** to discuss the need for additional housing units, the variety of housing needed by seniors, and the price ranges required. Determine if there is potential for existing facilities to be expanded. Elderly housing units should include attached garages.
- Based on the above information, **recruit a developer** to construct additional housing for the elderly within the City. This could be addressed through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.
- **Commit to assisting the developer**, as needed, to assure that the project is completed in the proper location, with the proper affordability ranges, and with adequate variety. City assistance could include financing some of the required infrastructure, doing TIF financing, reducing or eliminating tap fees, providing tax abatement, etc.

Schools

One of the unifying factors throughout this planning process for the City of Bellevue and the Townships adjacent to the City has been the Bellevue School District. Although the City of Bellevue itself has no control over the Bellevue School District, the schools play a major role in the quality of life and the development potential of the City. Having a great school system means that the quality of life in the City is good, the business climate is positive, residential housing values are high, property values increase, and life in general is good. Thus, it is imperative, that as part of any comprehensive planning process, the schools are included as a major element.

The Bellevue School District covers a 138 square mile area, with a current enrollment of approximately 2,450 students, about half of which are in the elementary schools. Over 375 students have special education needs.

The District currently has seven buildings:

- The Senior High School,
- The Junior High School,
- Ridge Elementary School,
- Shumaker Elementary School,
- York Elementary School,
- Lyme Elementary School, and
- Ellis Elementary School.

Three former school buildings have been closed since 1996 to consolidate operations, save costs, and provide the best service to the students as possible. There is a strong desire on the part of the School District administration, as well as the community, to maintain the neighborhood elementary schools.

The Senior and Junior High Schools buildings are in relatively good condition. However, most of the elementary schools are experiencing some problems, such as deterioration due to age, overcrowding, antiquated design, lack of public water and/or sanitary sewers, traffic problems associated with trains and trucks, inadequate or poorly maintained sidewalks in neighborhoods around the schools, and lack of special activity space, etc. Shumaker Elementary currently has several modular units to provide the needed space for classrooms.

The School District administration has spent a considerable amount of time preparing a **Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)**, with the primary goal of achieving “effective” rating from the State by:

- Improving managerial responsibilities which directly relate to improving student performance;
- Improving the curriculum, instruction, teaching and learning which directly relate to the improvement of student performance;
- Improving existing educational facilities which directly relate to student performance;
- Upgrading student services and programs which directly relate to the improvement of student performance,
- Using and developing technology which directly relates to improving student performance, and
- Enhancing efforts for community involvement which are directly related to improving student performance.

As with most school districts in Ohio (and elsewhere) today, the Bellevue School District has less funds available to meet the needs of the students in both the educational and building arenas. The District has had two levies fail since 1996. The District passed an income tax in 2001, which generates about \$1.5 million per year. The School District participates in the City’s tax abatement program, receiving about \$470,000 more than it would have received without the abatements, through 23 tax abatement agreements in the past decade.

The **public offered many comments** about the School District including the need to coordinate development activities with the School plans; the need to provide additional land for a York School expansion; the need to provide water and sanitary sewer services to York and Lyme Schools; the need to address sidewalks and traffic flow around Shumaker School; the fact that the high school band and choir need better facilities; the importance of keeping neighborhood schools (although some mentioned that the most cost-effective solutions should be sought); the potential for the old hospital building to provide additional facility space for the schools (especially the band and choir); and the need to replace modular units with buildings.

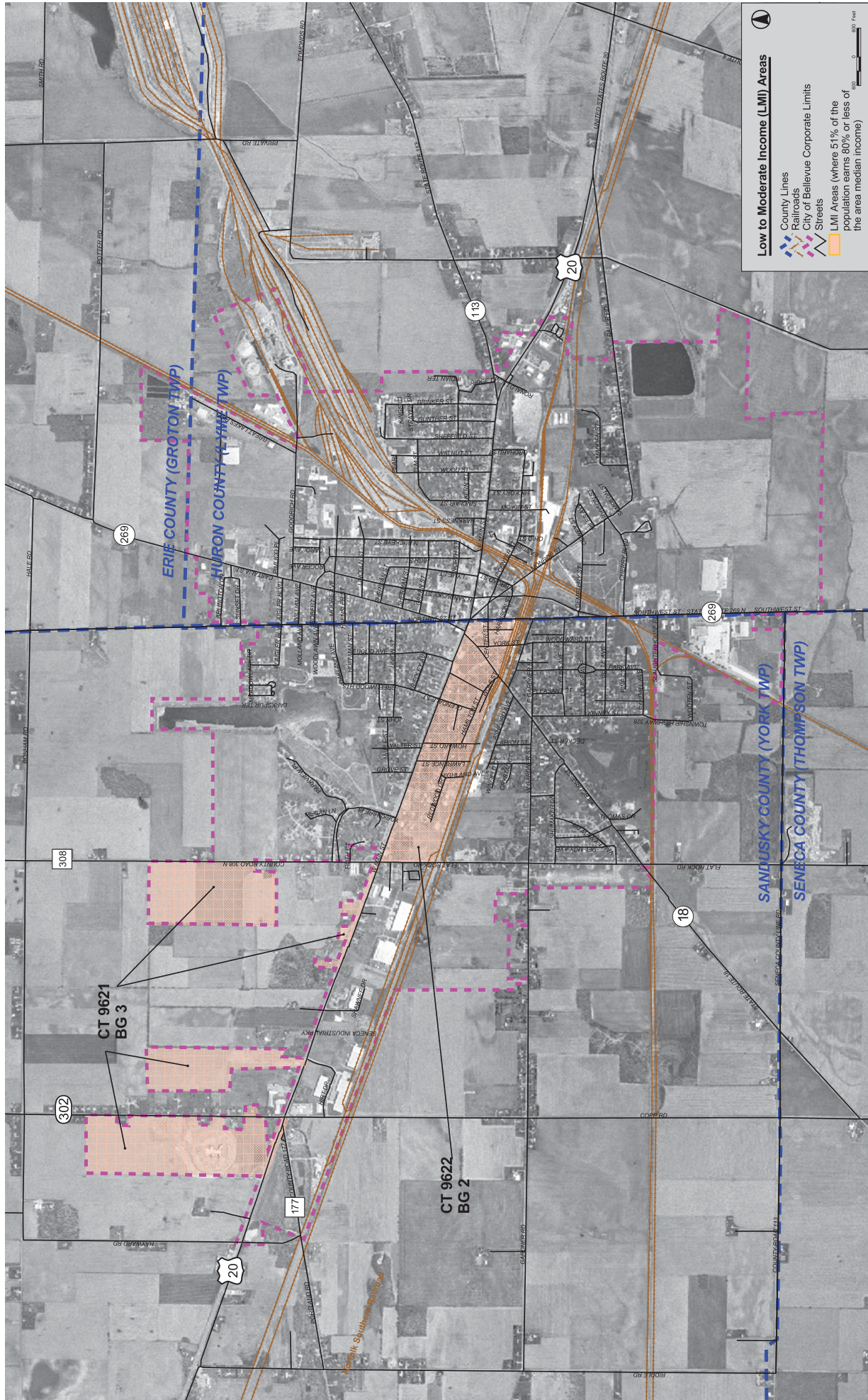
It is imperative for the economic well-being of the City of Bellevue, that the School District continue to work to resolve these problems and continue to provide a quality education for its students. There are several ways that the City can assist the school District with this effort.

Goal: The School District and the City continue to **improve communications and cooperative efforts** for the betterment of the community.

Strategies:

- **Regular meetings** between the School District and the City Administration should be held to discuss issues of common concern.
- The two entities should work to **resolve water, sanitary sewer, sidewalk, and traffic problems** to ensure the health and safety of our students.
- Through the Business Advisory Committee, the City and School District should **expand the relationships and create synergies** between private sector businesses and the Schools. This could include:
 - An “**Adopt A School**” **program**, where companies adopt a school building and participate in various events with the schools throughout the year.
 - **Sharing technology and staff** by having classes visit industries and/or having business people teach classes at the schools, with the idea being to provide students with an understanding of what local businesses do in hopes that some of the students may decide to assume a career in those fields of endeavor.
- **Continue the revenue sharing program** provided through the tax abatement program, and look for additional opportunities to assist the schools with funds.
- **Establish a partnership with the School District for future levies** to provide the support and leadership needed to get the levies approved. This includes careful consideration of what levies the City may be placing on the ballot at the same time as the schools. It is imperative to keep the school spirit alive and pass levies supporting the needs of Bellevue area students.

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City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

9

Economic and
Downtown
Development

Chapter 9: Economic and Downtown Development

Background

In 1983, a group of private businessmen, working with the City of Bellevue, created the Bellevue Development Corporation (BDC) to assist the City with economic development activities specifically related to industrial development. The need for such an organization arose when the railroad had significant layoffs, GE closed its local facility, and Johnson Furnace (the predecessor to Armstrong Furnace Co.) experienced rough times. These companies had layoffs of between 1,500 and 1,700 employees, resulting in a devastating negative impact on the City of Bellevue and its residents. As a result of these plant closures and layoffs, local businessmen organized to address these significant job losses, and the BDC was created.

The primary mission of the BDC, which began functioning as an organization in 1984, was the retention of existing industries within the community. Its mission has since been expanded to include the recruitment of new companies; coordinating tax abatement agreements with the City, counties, and School District; taking a pro-active approach to economic development, such as encouraging comprehensive planning at the City level; and otherwise preparing the City for the future.

Recruitment of new businesses to the community is now a key work element of the BDC's annual work program, which utilizes advertising, personal contacts from local companies, State leads, and constant follow-up on a variety of leads and methods to entice new companies to locate in town.

The BDC has a full-time director, and is housed with the Chamber of Commerce at 110 West Main Street. The BDC and the Chamber share clerical assistance and support facilities. Businesses and the City of Bellevue make contributions to the BDC, which pay for staff and other expenses. Most businesses in the City are represented on the BDC, providing a solid base of support for economic development activities.

The BDC has facilitated many existing business expansion projects, and has assisted many new companies with locating within the City. The BDC works closely with the City regarding the development of industrial parks and sites, negotiating and monitoring tax abatement agreements, and acquiring grants and loans for infrastructure improvements, as well as providing low-interest loans to companies. The BDC also administers the City's CDBG-Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) on behalf of City Council.

Tax abatement is available to companies locating or expanding within the City through the Enterprise Zone, which encompasses the entire corporate limits of the City, and through the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA). Working with the School District, the BDC serves as part of the Negotiating Team, which generally offers a net 75% tax abatement to companies, assuming that a 25% payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) is made to the School District. The Negotiating Team consists of the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor, a private businessman from the BDC, and the Director of the BDC serving as recording secretary.

Over 23 tax abatement agreements have been successfully negotiated over the past decade, resulting in the creation and retention of many jobs and considerable new investment in the community in both real and personal property. During the last decade, these abatements have also resulted in the schools receiving about \$470,000 more revenue than it would have received without the abatements. The BDC monitors these agreements on an annual basis, and assures that the City's annual reports are filed with the State of Ohio in a timely manner.

Working with the owner of International Metal Hose, the BDC spearheaded efforts to develop a new industrial park in the northeast quadrant of the City. Spurred on by water problems facing AutoPlas, a company located on Goodrich Road, the BDC and the City coordinated the planning and financing of infrastructure to A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park, which remains privately-owned. The park is located north of Goodrich Road, south of the City's wastewater treatment plant, and west of the railroad. Access to the park is from Goodrich Road and Industrial Parkway. With financing assistance from an EDA grant, the City is in the process of constructing infrastructure to service this park, including a new elevated water tower, in 2005. One site has already been purchased by a company, and construction of a new facility began on it early in 2005.

This new industrial park, along with existing and potential industrial sites south of the City along SR 269, and west of the City south of US 20, should provide adequate space for industrial development for the next 15 to 20 years. The area around the new hospital, north of US 20 and west of town, provides adequate opportunities for new office and medical facilities associated with the activities at the hospital. As the hospital opens in 2005, an adjacent medical office facility is being planned, as well as walking trails around the hospital area grounds at some point in the future.

The Bellevue Chamber of Commerce also provides assistance to the City, specifically related to commercial business development, expansion, and recruitment. The Chamber is staffed with a part-time director and clerical assistance (shared with the BDC) and is also housed at 110 West Main Street. The Chamber is involved in a variety of activities in the community, although fewer than it had been in earlier decades.

There was general agreement, from the participants in the public input opportunities associated with this comprehensive planning process, that new industrial growth is necessary and must be aggressively pursued. High-tech companies, and other companies paying higher wages, were frequently mentioned as the types of companies that should be recruited to locate within the City. General manufacturing companies were also mentioned frequently.

There was general agreement that new commercial development should be concentrated along US 20 both east and west of the City. With the potential for this new development, however, is a strong desire for adequate access management and aesthetic controls to protect the community from uncontrolled growth and traffic congestion. These two areas will serve as the first impressions of Bellevue for most travelers, and many people felt that special consideration should be given to how these areas develop.

From a commercial perspective, there appears to be an opportunity to capture disposable income from tourists traveling from the Columbus area to Lake Erie, most of whom use SR 4, just east of Bellevue. At this time, the intersection of SR 4 and US 20 does not have access to municipal water or sanitary sewer. Thus, the ability to provide commercial services to the public is limited.

There is also the potential to capture additional revenues from the traffic that uses US 20 and SR 18, as well as SR 269, all of which converge in downtown Bellevue. Based on all of these perceived opportunities, the following development scenarios were proposed for identified growth areas of the City.

Future Growth and Development or Redevelopment Areas

There are six key areas around and within the City of Bellevue which will likely be the focus of future growth and development efforts. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee spent a considerable amount of time analyzing these areas and preparing conceptual development scenarios for them. These scenarios were presented to the public and the Townships at several meetings for their consideration and input. In addition, the downtown redevelopment scenario was presented to the new Chamber downtown group (at a Rotary meeting in January 2005), and the five industrial and commercial growth area scenarios were presented to the BDC at its January 2005 Board meeting.

Map 9-1 presents an overview of the following six identified development or redevelopment areas, which are:

1. The SR 113/US 20/SR 4 Triangle
 - A. The Smaller Triangle (SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road)
 - B. The balance of the triangle (SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road/SR 4)
2. The SR 4/US 20 Intersection
3. The Northeast Section of City including the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park
4. US 20 West
5. The South Side – SR 269 and the SR 269/Prairie Road Area
6. The Downtown

Planned development within each of these areas was the subject of two visioning sessions with the public, numerous Steering Committee meetings, discussions with individual townships, and the Chamber downtown committee and BDC Board presentations, as mentioned above. Goals and strategies for each area were identified, and are presented below.

1. The SR 113/US 20/SR 4 Triangle

This area is likely to be a key development area in the future, as it is located in the middle of three key State/US highways. East-west access (non-toll) on US 20 is an attractive enticement to both vehicular and truck traffic. The Turnpike interchange, just north of US 20 on SR 4, also attracts a substantial amount of traffic. SR 4 is a major link between central Ohio and Lake Erie and thus, experiences a lot of recreational traffic.

Development currently exists primarily adjacent to the three highways, and is more dense toward the City of Bellevue and less dense further from the City. A key concern for this area is to assure that existing residential properties are protected and buffered from future development, specifically any non-residential development. Also, farmers who are interested in maintaining farming operations into the future should be protected from non-compatible development. However, if/when these farmers decide to divest themselves from farming, future uses of their property should be consistent with an overall vision for the community.

This larger triangle area is divided into two smaller parts for development scenario discussions. Prairie Road serves as the boundary between the two areas, as discussed below and as illustrated on **Map 9-2**.

1A. **The Smaller Triangle (SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road)**

The smaller triangle formed by SR 113, US 20 and Prairie Road has been the subject of an annexation petition in the past, with most property owners requesting to be annexed into the City of Bellevue. The Courts confirmed that the property owners should proceed with the annexation process. However, that process has been stalled.

Goal: The City of Bellevue should work with the property owners who previously expressed an interest in annexing into the City, to **continue the annexation process and properly plan for the coordinated development of this area**. As part of this process, the City should continue to work with Lyme Township regarding revenue sharing and annexation issues as they pertain to this area.

Strategies:

- An **overall plan** for this entire smaller triangle should be developed by the property owners utilizing a “planned development” concept. The City should facilitate this planning process if/when the property is annexed. This overall plan should contain the following land uses as indicated on **Map 9-2**:
 - **Commercial uses** should be permitted along the **north side of US 20**, with primary access from a proposed access road off Prairie Road paralleling US 20, as discussed later. If curb cuts are permitted along US 20 for these commercial properties, they should be right-in, right-out only.
 - **Office development** should be planned north of the planned commercial along US 20. Office condominiums, which are a popular trend today, should be considered to house professional and high-tech businesses .
 - Residential **condos** should be planned along the proposed entranceway on Prairie Road, and along the southern part of the entrance road, thus buffering the single-family homes to the north from future office/commercial uses to the south.

- **Single-family residential** lots should be planned **adjacent to existing single-family homes**, specifically in the northern part of the triangle. Existing homes along both Prairie Road and SR 113 should be buffered from any non-compatible future land uses.
- **Mounded green buffers** should be required in this area whenever non-residential land uses are adjacent to residential uses, as indicated on the map. The responsibility for construction of the buffer should rest with the new property developer. The City should specify the requirements of a “buffer” in its zoning code.
- **Access management policies should be adopted** to provide safe and efficient access to this area, and should include:
 - An **interior roadway system** with the primary entrance(s) located off Prairie Road and a secondary entrance off SR 113.
 - An **access or service road** parallel to and north of US 20 with an entrance off Prairie Road. This access road would service all businesses fronting US 20, so that no new curb cuts would be permitted along US 20, unless they were right-in, right-out only. This access road would also service proposed offices north of the commercial along US 20.
 - A series of shorter **roads with cul de sacs** to service the interior lots, including the condos, single-family residential and office uses.
- Any plans submitted to the City for permitting approval within this area should be consistent with this overall “planned development” concept.

1B. **The Balance of the Triangle (SR 113/US 20/Prairie Road/and SR 4)**

The area east of Prairie Road in the balance of the triangle is a large area that is not likely to develop fully within the next 20 years. The interior will probably continue to be farmed during this planning period; however, the properties facing SR 113, SR 4, and US 20 are likely to be the target of continued commercial and residential development pressures.

Goal: The balance of the triangle area should be planned for **residential development along SR 113** and **commercial development along US 20**, while preserving the **large central area and properties along SR 4 for continued farming** operations, at least for the next 20-25 years.

Strategies:

- **Existing single-family residential** development, which is located primarily along both sides of SR 113 and Prairie Road, **should be protected** from any non-compatible or adverse future uses of neighboring property.

- **Lyme Village**, an historic village located in the southwest corner of the intersection of SR 113 and SR 4, **should be protected** from any adverse adjacent future development.
- Along US 20 east to the 20/4 intersection, **planned commercial land uses** should be permitted, mostly on the north side. It is imperative that these uses be well planned, so that an attractive and safe corridor is maintained.
- A **parallel access or service road north of US 20** should be planned, with the primary access to future businesses on US 20 being from this access road. The access road should start at Prairie Road immediately across from the proposed access road in the smaller triangle, so that a traffic signal could be installed at this intersection if/when needed.
 - The **location** of this access road should be carefully considered, so that development on both sides of the road is possible, thereby identifying more property owners to share in the cost of construction of the infrastructure improvements.
 - The **width of the commercial corridor** should be determined up-front, and the location of the utilities should be identified. Locating the utilities along the new access road would permit additional development to the north of the access road in the future.
 - A Transportation Improvement District (**TID**) or a Tax Increment Financing (**TIF**) District should be considered to finance the construction of the road, as well as other infrastructure improvements.
- If additional **SF homes** continue to be constructed **along SR 113**, consideration should be given to encouraging a developer to build a **parallel access road** south of SR 113, and having all homes directly access the access road as opposed to SR 113. The concern is that SR 113 will end up having a series of continuous curb cuts for driveways, on both the north and south sides, from SR 4 to US 20, resulting in an extremely dysfunctional and hazardous roadway.
- In the more distant future, if additional **SF residential developments** are required, two potential locations could be located in this triangle, providing easy access to goods and services in Bellevue, while providing close access to major highways including the Turnpike. These include:
 - The southeast quadrant of the Prairie Road/SR 113 intersection, behind existing residences; and
 - The southwest section of the SR 4/SR 113 intersection, south of Lyme Village and existing residences on 113. This type of development would protect the historic environment of the Village.

- The SR 4/SR 113 intersection serves as a first impression of the Bellevue area to visitors from the north, and from the Turnpike. Although space is limited, the community should consider developing a **gateway** in this area, welcoming people to the Bellevue area.
- With the railroad tracks so close to US 20 on the **south side**, heavy commercial uses are not likely. However, as that gap between US 20 and the railroad widens to the east, approaching the 20/4 intersection, some **commercial uses** may find the area appealing. Curb cuts should be minimized even though all access would have to be from US 20.
- Long-term, **water and sanitary sewer services should be constructed** within the rights-of-way of the three highways, forming looped systems and providing municipal services to the entire triangle area if/when it develops.
- The City and Township should **agree to an annexation area** that the City could annex over time, and that area should include the large triangle (in the more distant future), as well as the property facing the three highways in this area (primarily US 20 in the near future). The annexation agreement mentioned earlier between the City and Lyme Township should include provisions for this area regarding revenue sharing.

2. **The SR 4/US 20 Intersection**

A key intersection of two major highways, this US 20/SR 4 intersection could experience substantial development and redevelopment if/when water and sanitary sewer are provided to it. Existing businesses (or former businesses) include a bowling alley, restaurant, and gas station. The bowling alley building could be sold to a viable business if it had public utilities available. The gas station has expressed an interest in expanding, but only if utilities were provided to it. A considerable amount of tourist traffic from central Ohio traveling to Lake Erie pass through this intersection. New revenues could be generated for the area if this intersection were properly developed. Proposed development is indicated on **Map 9-2**.

Goal: The City of Bellevue and Lyme Township should adopt a development plan for this area that will generate new revenues, provide an attractive gateway entrance to the City, and provide opportunities for new businesses, some of which could capitalize on tourist traffic. This would include provisions in the annexation agreement for revenue sharing.

Strategies:

- This intersection should be **treated as a gateway** into the City of Bellevue, whether or not it is actually annexed. It is the first impression that visitors from the east (and from the south) will have of the Bellevue area. Thus, attractive gateways should be planned in this area, with a theme that is implemented throughout the Bellevue community.
 - **Common design elements** such as landscaping in parking lots, decorative street lighting (similar to the new lighting in the downtown), streetscaping, and signage should be promoted in this area.
- **Commercial uses** should be planned for this area, preferably with an overall conceptual plan developed and approved first. Since travelers from central Ohio going to Lake Erie

and/or Cedar Point destinations use this roadway, businesses servicing tourists should be considered. This could include motels, restaurants, convenience stores, etc.

- A **peripheral road** around the planned commercial area at the SR 4/ US 20 intersection should be planned to provide for safe and attractive access to the properties visible (but not necessarily accessible) from the intersection.
 - **Access** to the properties should be **from the peripheral road** as opposed to either US 20 or SR 4. Direct access to SR 4 and US 20 should be restricted to the four intersections created by the circular peripheral road. When needed, these four intersections should be signalized. Left turn lanes should also be planned when needed.
- Development and annexation should not go east beyond **Section Line Road** within the next 25 years.
- **Water and sanitary sewer should be extended to the SR 4/US 20 intersection** within the next few years, as this area could provide an excellent development opportunity for commercial uses. Utilities would also allow opportunities for new uses for currently vacant buildings and allow existing businesses to expand.
 - In the more distant future, **water and sanitary sewer should be looped** along SR 113, SR 4, and US 20 providing a fully-serviced and developable Triangle. Annexation of residential properties should not be required, but should be consistent with the terms of a mutually-acceptable Annexation Agreement.
- South of the Triangle and the railroad tracks, a parcel of land is available and should be **planned for a future cemetery**. A private party is interested in potentially developing this property as a cemetery. The City is not interested in future investments in cemeteries and the existing City cemetery is about at capacity. Residential development exists to the south and west of this proposed cemetery site, and room is available for additional residential in-fill development.
- **North of the Triangle**, just east of the corporate limits, Lyme Township has property zoned for **residential development**. This plan incorporates that desire by the Township for future residential development in this area. North of this residential area is property suitable for **industrial development**, as it is adjacent to the railroad and the existing rail yard north of the railroad, as well as being just west of an existing industry. These properties should be **adequately buffered** from each other if/when developed.

3. **The Northeast Section of the City including the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park**

A private property owner approached the City of Bellevue and the BDC regarding property north of Goodrich Road for expansion of the existing industrial area. The City and the BDC worked with this property owner and acquired grant funds to construct the required infrastructure to service this new industrial park. This area, the A. D. Wolfe Industrial Park, is bounded by Goodrich Road on the south, the Norfolk-Southern Railroad and Great Lakes Parkway on the east, the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and farmland to the north, and backs of existing businesses along SR 269 to the west.

There were a number of concerns expressed at the various public input sessions regarding the future development of this area. These included:

- Protection of the existing single-family residential housing along SR 269 and Potter Road,
- The location and proposed expansion of Shumaker Elementary School on SR 269,
- Potential additions to the WWTP in the future,
- Additional truck traffic generated by new industries, given that existing trucks must travel through downtown Bellevue to access the Turnpike, SR 4, US 20, SR 18, and other highways, and
- The potential expansion of the quarry south to approximately Smith Road. This will add heavy truck traffic closer to the City limits.

There have been preliminary inquiries from interested developers regarding possible annexation of residential properties and/or proposed residential developments between the Erie/Huron County line and Potter Road, east of SR 269. Erie County officials were concerned that such an annexation would have a significant negative impact on inside/outside millage and tax revenues for Erie County. After several discussions and research on this issue, it has been determined that annexation with detachment from Groton Township will not negatively impact revenues in Erie County. This is the method of annexation that the City would prefer.

Erie County already supplies water to this area. Groton Township's preference is to have no more annexation of Township property to the City of Bellevue. However, one of the factors driving the consideration of annexation by area residents is concern about fire protection, given the much shorter distance to their properties from Bellevue's fire station than from the Township's fire station.

A primary objective of the community is to minimize or eliminate truck traffic on SR 269 and Goodrich Road, as well as the truck traffic in residential neighborhoods and downtown Bellevue resulting from industrial or commercial activity in this area.

Goal: The City should capitalize on the industrial assets of this area by promoting expansion and development of the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park, while striving to minimize negative impacts of truck traffic and access on the City as a whole. Proposed development is indicated on **Map 9-3**.

Strategies:

- The City should continue to work with the BDC and Mr. Wolfe to **complete infrastructure improvements** to the industrial park, including the construction of the water tower in 2005.
- The City and the BDC should work to **identify an alternative truck route** from this area east to SR 4. In addition to the obvious issue of removing truck traffic from the Shumaker School area and downtown Bellevue, existing businesses are experiencing problems with ingress and egress when Triple Crown stops trains on the tracks for long periods of time. This is unsafe and not cost-effective for companies doing business in the area.
 - The City and the BDC should **work with the railroad** to determine the potential for using an existing road through its property as a **public truck route**, which would then connect to Bragg Road and Smith Road for access to SR 4. This road is located between the Bungee/Solae facility and the railroad tracks, just east of the proposed industrial park. The concept of using this road for a truck route was presented in a 1970's study.
 - If this public truck route through the railroad property cannot become a reality for whatever reason, the City and the BDC should pursue **construction of a new roadway north of the Bungee/Solae property**, most likely along the City/Township line. This road could also intersect Bragg Road, and the truck route could proceed north on Bragg Road and east on Smith Road to intersect with SR 4.
 - **Another alternative for a truck route** that the City and the BDC should consider is north of the City/Township line and north of the WWTP, extending a proposed road from the A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park to the north and east to Bragg Road. This route is indicated on **Map 9-3**, as are the other two alternatives.
 - With any one of the above three alternative truck route locations, both Bragg and Smith Roads would have to be **upgraded to meet truck traffic requirements**, probably Michigan standards.
 - The City should pursue possible financing for this proposed truck route through **TIF or TID**. If industries locating within the proposed industrial park are heavy truck users, **CDBG-ED** may also be a consideration. Since this would not be an ODOT eligible project, funding through ODOT is not likely, although **629 funds** through the Ohio Department of Development could be an option.
- Since it is anticipated that single-family homes will continue to be constructed along SR 269 and Potter Road, the City should **assure that these homes are protected** as much as possible from any adverse impacts of future land uses. Landscaped buffers of adequate size should be a part of any planned industrial or commercial expansion in this area.
- The **area north of A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park** and west of the WWTP should be planned for **longer-term light industrial development**. An adequate landscaped

buffer, as mentioned above, should be constructed to protect existing and future single- and multi-family housing developments from any adverse impacts of continued industrial development.

- The City and the BDC should pursue funding for **extension of the proposed access road in A.D. Wolfe Industrial Park north** and west to SR 269, as well as east (north of the WWTP) to a proposed alternative truck route to Bragg Road.
- The City should continue to provide a **wooded buffer around the WWTP** and should consider **purchasing additional land to the north** of the lagoons as both a buffer and a potential area for expansion in the future. Walkways, habitats, and other natural areas around the WWTP will provide an effective buffer from any development to the west and north.
- The City and Township should work together to provide a **buffer** and assure **appropriate uses on land to the east of the WWTP**. This land is entirely within the Township and, with prevailing winds, could be an undesirable location for most developments. If property owners do not wish to continue farming this property, **industrial uses** would be appropriate for this area, given the neighboring land uses. This type of use would be especially attractive if/when the truck route is constructed.
- The Township should encourage its property owners to **consider farmland preservation** easements on prime farmland or on family farms where future generations wish to continue farming, to assure that future development does not occur.
- The City should agree **to not annex any land north of Potter Road** and develop a position or policy regarding annexation of land between the County line and Potter Road. Water is provided to that area by Erie County and the City should consider providing sanitary sewer to potential users north of Potter Road, as part of a revenue sharing agreement.
- The City and Township should agree to **annexation of the land adjacent to the industrial truck route**, wherever that might be, as it would likely be used for industrial purposes. Terms of the Annexation Agreement would apply.

4. US 20 West

One of the major factors influencing development in and around the western part of the City along US 20 is the new hospital. The entrance to the hospital will be from TR 302, just north of US 20, with no direct access from US 20 (other than an emergency route where the construction drive was). A new traffic signal and turn lanes will be installed at the US 20/TR 302 intersection. There will be a private ring road around the hospital to provide access to planned medical offices and other hospital-related businesses.



The hospital owns the land between the hospital and US 20 and will not permit any development there, neither residential nor commercial. However, commercial development is expected to continue along US 20 between Bellevue and Clyde, on both sides of the hospital's property. There currently exists a 3-mile gap of unincorporated property between the two cities. A major gas line is located along US 20 on the north side of the highway (under the hospital's parking lot), and that must be taken into account with any proposed development or infrastructure improvements.

Another major residential subdivision is currently planned east of the hospital and CR 302, on land that has already been annexed into the City. The area adjacent to US 20 contains several commercial lots, one of which has recently developed as an ice cream shop.

Goal: The City and the BDC should work with private property owners and developers to plan and properly develop US 20 West as a key gateway into the community, to complement the significant investment that the Bellevue Hospital has recently made in the area. Access management policies should be adopted to assure safe and efficient traffic flow. Proposed developments are illustrated on **Map 9-4**.

Strategies:

- The City should develop and execute an **annexation agreement with York Township** regarding future annexations and desired land uses along US 20 West, at least as far west as York School, and as far north as the southern property lines of residential property on TR 205, to implement the future land use recommendations in this Plan. This agreement should include provisions for revenue sharing, if/when appropriate.
- The City/Township annexation agreement should **encourage annexation of existing pockets** of unincorporated property north and south of US 20 that are adjacent to and/or surrounded by property currently within the City. Annexation and development of these pockets should have highest priority whenever possible, so that eventually the boundaries of the City are more easily defined.
- The City should continue to **encourage York Township to adopt zoning** and work with them regarding zoning districts and regulations in areas of mutual concern, such as this area along US 20 West and near the hospital.

- **Commercial and office development should continue** along US 20 north, specifically around the hospital and as in-fill along US 20. The property adjacent to and west of the hospital should also be planned for additional commercial/ office uses along US 20, as well as along the current construction road, should it ever become a permanent roadway. Existing residential developments and farmland should be protected and preserved when so desired by the property owners.
 - **The hospital and ring road area** around the hospital should be zoned B2, to be consistent with the goals of this Plan.
 - The City should require that future developers **provide a buffer** between existing single-family homes along TR 302 and any future non-residential development.
- **Commercial and industrial development should be continued between US 20 and the railroad**, with controlled access onto US 20. Once again, development should occur in a planned manner, with the City working with property owners to identify locations for proposed uses.
- The Facility Planning Area (FPA) for water and sanitary sewer services for the Bellevue area, as outlined by EPA, includes the area west to Riddle Road (TR 292), south of US 20 and the area north to Bonham Road (TR 205) along Hayward Road (TR 296), with the exception of a leg along both sides of US 20 west to Wales Corners Road (TR 288), as indicated on **Map 9-4**. Based on this FPA, the City should plan to **extend water and sanitary sewer lines** at least this far. Extensions beyond this point would involve renegotiating with EPA, and possibly TMACOG.
- The City should work with the School District to provide needed public improvements. As stated in the Facilities Plan, Ohio EPA recommends that **York School be served by a public sewer when feasible**, probably connecting to the City of Bellevue system.
 - The City should also work with the School District to **eliminate the direct access to US 20 from York School**, by providing access to the School from Wales Corners Road (TR 288). This would eliminate the traffic hazards caused by the current entrances, making it safer for children, parents, buses, delivery trucks, and non-school-related traffic in this area.
- The City should **prepare and adopt an Access Management Policy and/or an Overlay District** to address curb cuts, parallel access roads, traffic signals, turn lanes, walking paths, landscaping, signage, and other transportation-related issues on this US 20 West Corridor.
 - The City should work with the Township and ODOT to **provide a parallel access or service road north of US 20** to improve access management by minimizing future curb cuts onto US 20. The location of the gas line will have to be considered in the design of this access or service road.

- The City should work with ODOT and Sandusky County to **modify the intersection of CR 177 and US 20**, which is immediately west of the US 20/TR 302 intersection, so that CR 177 no longer intersects US 20 at an odd and dangerous angle. Options to accomplish this are to dead-end CR 177 just south of US 20, or reroute CR 177 slightly to intersect with TR 302 south of US 20. The goal would be to provide safe and efficient access from the south and southwest to the hospital via TR 302.
- A private developer is currently constructing an interior road system in this area that will intersect with the north side of CR 177, possibly with US 20 south of the current hospital construction road, and with Hayword Road (TR296) on the west side of the property. This road will serve as an access road for future office and commercial complexes planned for this area, while restricting curb cuts to US 20 to right-in, right-out only, if any access is permitted at all. Discussions with ODOT and Sandusky County regarding eliminating the current intersection, however, have not yet occurred.
- The City should **discourage “commercial strip” development** along US 20 by planning and zoning sufficiently deep developable properties north of US 20 in conjunction with the proposed parallel access road. Lots less than approximately 400' deep (depending on use) would provide inadequate space for a public access road. However, private roads through commercial properties could be considered as an alternative to a public access road, although this would not be the preferred alternative.
- **Sidewalks or walking paths should be provided** along the north side of US 20 from the downtown to the hospital, and on the south side of US 20 from downtown to the City Centre/Recreation Annex.
- Residential developers should be encouraged to **provide walking paths** within new proposed residential subdivisions, as well as to connect these walking paths with sidewalks or paths on the north side of US 20, the hospital, the Community Activity Centre at the City Centre, and existing residential neighborhoods.
- To the extent possible, **signage, street lighting and streetscaping should be required** in future developments along US 20, and these design elements should be consistent with the same or similar elements recently constructed in the downtown.
- The quarry presents a unique opportunity for the City in the northwest quadrant of the community. Working with the property owner, the City should **develop a plan for desired recreational and open space land uses in the approximate 100 acres of bottomland in the quarry**. The owner may be willing to donate the property, as part of an overall development plan. Possibilities include additional public park lands with passive and active recreational areas in the lower area, to complement the planned additional residential uses around on higher ground. Given the proximity of the hospital and related medical services, elderly housing alternatives could also be an option for the higher portions of this area.

- A new, attractive, low-maintenance **gateway** to the City should be constructed at the US 20/TR 296 intersection. This gateway should be one of several complementary gateways (also north, south and east of the City) containing a welcome sign, landscaping, decorative lighting, artwork, etc. and should present an impressive first image of the City of Bellevue.

5. **The South Side--SR 269 & the SR 269/Prairie Road Area**

The area south along SR 269, both east and west of the road, is viewed primarily for continued industrial development in the future. With the completion of the railroad overpass on Southwest Street/SR 269, currently scheduled for 2005, access to this area from the north will be improved significantly, providing an opportunity for possible mixed-use development including commercial (non-retail) and office, along with the industrial.

Electric power in this area is provided primarily by Ohio Edison. However, south of the Sandusky County line, and west of SR 269, power is supplied by the North Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., which is based in Attica, Ohio, and is a member of the Federated Energy Services Cooperative, Inc. The Cooperative has recently invested in a new substation in the area to encourage industrial and office development.

With the extension of water and sewer south along SR 269 to accommodate future industrial development, it would be logical to continue extending those lines further south and then west to provide these desired utilities to the community of Flat Rock in Seneca County. Past studies indicate that the City of Bellevue is the most cost-effective provider of these services to Flat Rock, which strongly desires provision of them. The City has initiated discussions with the Township Trustees about Flat Rock in a letter in late 2004, as a result of interest expressed by the Trustees at one of the potential annexation agreement meetings with them.

It should be noted that the Facility Plan on file with EPA states that provision of services to Flat Rock, which is about one half mile south of the Bellevue FPA boundary, would be contingent upon an agreement between Seneca County and the City of Bellevue. Since Seneca County is not within TMACOG's designated planning area, a boundary change in Seneca County would need to be approved by Ohio EPA.

Bellevue's reservoir #4 is located between SR 269 and Prairie Road, just south of Bauer Road. No additional reservoir capacity should be required in this area for the foreseeable future, especially with the plan being considered to supplement Bellevue's water resources with Erie County water. Walking paths around the reservoir were discussed as a desired amenity by several individuals. Also being considered is the possible development of single-family residential properties on the west and south side of the reservoir.

There are also plans being considered by the City and the recreation department to expand the existing Mill Pond Park/Community Center to the south and east of its current location. Connections from the Community Center to existing and future trails and walking paths were expressed as being of interest in the public sessions.

Goal: The City and the BDC should work together aggressively to continue the development of this area as an upscale industrial and commercial/office park, in a manner that will provide an increased revenue base to the City and the School District, that will be in accordance with Annexation Agreements with Thompson and Lyme Townships, and as illustrated on **Map 9-5**.

Strategies:

- The City of Bellevue should continue to **develop and execute annexation agreements** with both Thompson and Lyme Townships for development in accordance with this Plan, for revenue sharing, and for identification of appropriate service providers. Based on the proximity of York Township to SR 269, the York Township agreement should also address development opportunities and revenue sharing in this area.
- The City and the BDC should encourage the planned development of **commercial (non-retail) and light industrial uses** on both sides of SR 269, with properly buffered heavier industrial sites behind any commercial/office areas. Industrial operations desiring highway visibility could build their offices along SR 269 in concert with the land use plan.
- The City should **continue to work with ODOT** to construct an alternate truck route around the downtown, and if that alternate route continues to be an **easterly extension of SR 18**, it should be properly planned to accommodate the proposed industrial development in this area.
 - SR 18 should be continued easterly, then head northeasterly to SR 4, which would then continue on to US 20.
 - Access management policies (as discussed below) should be enforced along this stretch of highway.
 - Curb cuts on to this roadway should be restricted.
- The City should **develop and adopt an Access Management Plan and/or Overlay District** to address traffic and transportation-related issues along SR 269. Minimizing the number of curb cuts onto SR 269, coordinating potential locations of new traffic signals, locating parallel access roads, and requiring landscaping and proper signage should be considered in the plan or overlay to preserve the integrity of the roadway and provide for the safe and efficient flow of traffic.
 - One alternative that should be considered is a **parallel access road** adjacent to SR 269 on the east side, which could provide safe and easy access to businesses fronting on SR 269, as well as to the industrial sites located further from the road.
 - An **internal roadway system** on both sides of SR 269 should be planned, with both roadway systems intersecting at the same point off SR 269, possibly at Tower Automotive's main entranceway. A traffic signal may be warranted at that intersection at some point in the future.

- The City should work closely with ODOT while it plans the grade separation over the railroad at SR 269. The City should **encourage ODOT to widen SR 269 south of the proposed railroad overpass** to create either a four-lane road, or, at a minimum, to provide for a center turn lane where needed. If companies are investing private funds to improve their properties as part of this project, the City should leverage those investments to acquire additional grant funds for the road project.
- The planned **expansion of the Community Center's facilities** should include a proper visual and safety **buffer** between the recreational areas and future adjacent industrial development. Land should be reserved around the center to provide for this expansion, as well as for the buffer, which could include hiking or biking paths. Any industrial uses locating to the south of the Center property should provide the buffer when developed.
- The City should aggressively work with the residents of Flat Rock, Thompson Township officials, and Seneca County to **provide water and/or sanitary sewer to the Flat Rock area**. This would include coordination with and approval by the Ohio EPA. As utilities are extended south of the City to service industries along SR 269, thought must be given to this future extension as well.
- The City should **develop a gateway entrance** in this area to welcome travelers into the City of Bellevue from the south. It should match other gateways proposed for around the City.
- The City should work with the North Central Electric Cooperative, Thompson Township, and the BDC to **entice development to the southwest corner** of the intersection of SR 269 and SR 18 (especially if SR 18 is extended to the east). Development in this area would capitalize on the investment made by the cooperative in the electric upgrades.

6. **The Downtown**

Background. For the purposes of this Plan, the “downtown” is being defined generally as the area along Main Street between Atwood Terrace on the west and the railroad overpass on the east. From Atwood Terrace and US 20 (Main Street), the boundary extends east on US 20 to Euclid St., where it continues north to Friedley St. and on an easterly line to the intersection of Northwest St. and Castalia St. It then heads northeasterly on Castalia Street to Green Street, east on Green Street to Lyme Street, south on Lyme Street to North Street, east on North Street to the backs of the buildings facing Lyme Street. The boundary then heads east again along the backs of the properties facing US 20 to the underpass. It heads south along the railroad to the backs of the buildings facing US 20 and heads west to Broad Street, south on Broad Street to Center Street, west on Center Street to York Street, northeast a short distance on Kilbourne Street, takes a slight jog to the northeast, then heads northwest along the northern residential property line to the old park property to Atwood Terrace.

Prior to the 2004 improvements on US 20/Main Street, the downtown has not received a lot of planning attention since the early 1980's, when streetscaping was added to one block on the south side of Main Street. The heavy truck traffic on Main Street has discouraged the City and Chamber, as well as private property owners and merchants, from expending much energy or resources on improvements to the downtown. With current plans to encourage removal or rerouting of through truck traffic from Main Street, there is renewed interest in aggressively pursuing downtown renovation.

The Bellevue Downtown Revitalization Committee. In the late 1990's, a non-profit organization called the "Bellevue Downtown Revitalization Committee" was created by the private sector to pursue downtown redevelopment initiatives, including downtown beautification and better communication among building owners, business owners, and the community. Membership was open to anyone living in the Bellevue School District. Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Development Corporation designated representatives to the Executive Board. The organization was approved as a 501(c)3 organization.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee embarked on a program to provide low-interest loans and grants to businesses and building owners to improve their buildings, from a pool of funds donated by several private companies and individuals. As of October 31, 2004, 27 grants were made for between \$50 and \$3,000, for a total of about \$29,000. Also, seven loans were made, ranging from \$2,940 to \$5,000, for a total of just over \$27,000. Combined, the Committee provided assistance of over \$56,000 to local businesses.

US 20 Improvements. During the Summer and Fall of 2004, the City and ODOT implemented a US 20 improvement program along Main Street, which included new sidewalks, curbs, handicapped ramps, decorative street lighting, synchronization of traffic signals, new traffic signage and pedestrian walk signals, filling in old loading chutes under the sidewalks, rerouting of SR 269 north, and realigning of turn lanes. An island was created at the main intersection for a large evergreen tree for holiday events.

Also, an additional lane was added under the railroad overpass on the east side of downtown (through re-striping), resulting in two westbound lanes and one eastbound lane. This has substantially improved traffic flow in this former bottleneck. These projects will have a substantial positive impact on the downtown and should spearhead additional revitalization efforts.

An Alternate Truck Route. Also in 2004, ODOT developed various scenarios for an alternate truck route through the City. After many town meetings, the route selected was an extension of SR 18 to the east, on the south side of the City, connecting to US 20 at a point east of the developed area of the City. There was much criticism about this proposal, and alternatives were suggested. Due to the lack of agreement, ODOT has decided that the alternate route project would not be pursued at this time.

Changes on the Turnpike. At the same time, however, ODOT worked with the Ohio Turnpike Commission (OTC) to identify ways to encourage trucks to utilize the Turnpike (I-80/90) for east-west traffic as opposed to US 20 and SR 2. In late 2004, the OTC lowered the tolls for trucks on the Turnpike and increased the speed limit from 55 to 65 for trucks. Although it is too early to determine exact results, there is a feeling that fewer trucks are using US 20 through downtown Bellevue today than earlier last year. This could be another shot-in-the-arm for the revitalization of downtown Bellevue.

The Ohio Main Street Program. In 1997, the State of Ohio established the Main Street Program, and began promoting the National Main Street concept for downtown planning and revitalization. Downtown Ohio, Inc. (DOI) was formed to spearhead this program throughout the State. Thus, downtown planning and revitalization have become very popular community planning activities in Ohio in the past decade, and funding is now available to assist with these efforts.

Downtown Design Standards. In December 1987, the City of Bellevue prepared and adopted Downtown Bellevue Architectural Standards (Ordinance 42-87), including the establishment of a Board to enforce them. The Standards were developed to:

- Promote preservation of buildings, structures & sites that reflect the heritage of the downtown;
- Protect and enhance the attractiveness of the downtown;
- Stabilize and increase property values;
- Require compatibility of new construction with the architectural character of the downtown;
- Enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity and interests of the downtown;
- Preserve and further enhance civic pride in the downtown; and
- Protect property rights of owners in the downtown.

The City Ordinance states that the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures* shall be used as guidelines for the Architectural Review Board in reviewing projects. Certificates of appropriateness must be issued to each project as the official recommendation of the Board. These provisions do not apply to any single-family homes within the downtown district.

Downtown Bellevue has so much to offer to residents and visitors. A substantial amount of new investment has been made in buildings and properties north and south of Main Street. Several banks have expanded or constructed new facilities, including new parking lots and drive-thru facilities. Expansions were also recently completed by Immaculate Conception School and the Library. The lack of concentrated revitalization activity along Main Street, however, gives the impression to people passing through the community, that the town is not as alive and vibrant as it truly is. Hopefully, the City's sidewalk replacement and streetscaping program will begin an ongoing process of revitalization of private properties and enticement of new businesses to Main Street.

Goal: Working with interested parties, the City should develop and implement a comprehensive downtown revitalization effort that continues both public and private improvements in downtown Bellevue, embraces the Main Street approach, capitalizes on existing funding programs, and enhances the 2004 improvement project.

Strategies:

- The City should **spearhead a partnering effort** with the Downtown Revitalization Committee, property owners, and businesses in the downtown to pursue a revitalization effort. It is suggested that the Committee, through the Chamber of Commerce, take the lead in these planning efforts, especially when dealing with private property owners.

- Future downtown planning in the City should **emphasize the four-point Main Street approach**. The Downtown Revitalization Committee should divide work activities into these four areas and appoint sub-committees to implement them. These areas are as follows:
 - **Organization**, which involves building a Main Street framework that is well represented by civic groups, merchants, bankers, citizens, public officials, and the Chamber. A strong organization provides the stability to build and maintain a long-term effort.
 - **Design**, which enhances the attractiveness of the business district. Historic building rehabilitations, appropriate in-fill construction, streets and alleys, signs and banners, landscaping, street lighting, etc., all improve the physical beauty of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest and live.
 - **Economic restructuring**, which involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Municipal infrastructure investment, business expansion and retention, recruitment of new businesses, and creative conversion of unused space for new uses sharpen the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional retail merchants and service businesses.
 - **Promotion**, which involves marketing the downtown as a destination, developing an enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors. Street festivals, retail events, heritage tourism, and image development campaigns are some of the ways that Main Street encourages consumer traffic in downtowns.
- The **Organization Sub-committee** should undertake the following activities:
 - After reaching consensus with the local community, the Committee and City should **spearhead a visit by Downtown Ohio, Inc. (DOI)**, for technical assistance to continue planning for downtown revitalization.
 - Based on the recommendations in the Downtown Section of this Comprehensive Plan, the Sub-committee should **compile a Downtown Revitalization Plan and Strategy**. This document must include several elements which are required to qualify the City for submittal of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Downtown Revitalization (DT) applications in the future, including:
 - Adoption of a **Downtown Plan** (which may be done as part of the Comprehensive Plan Process).
 - Completion of a **Market Analysis**, which must include at least a consumer survey and a merchant survey.
 - Identification of the **target area** for the first phase of a downtown revitalization grant program.
 - Evaluation of the **physical environment** including all buildings and infrastructure.

- Review and refinement (if needed) of the **Architectural Design Standards**, which include the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*. The Architectural Review Board may require some training, if/when a CDBG grant is awarded.
 - Agreeing with the City that the **lead organization** for all future downtown planning and implementation efforts would be the Downtown Revitalization Committee.
 - Retaining a **downtown manager**, or designating a staff person for this effort if/when a CDBG grant is awarded (CDBG funds can be used to cover the costs of this downtown manager).
 - Joining and participating in **Downtown Ohio, Inc.**, which is a requirement of the CDBG program. Either the City or the Committee (or both) could be members of DOI to meet the requirement.
- The City should **submit the CDBG-DT "thresholds"** in the Spring of 2005, which would make it eligible for CDBG-DT Tier 2 grant funding. These thresholds consist of most of the information identified above and are due on May 23, 2005. These must be submitted and approved in order for the City to be eligible to submit a CDBG Tier 2 application for \$400,000 in the fall of 2005.
 - If the City's thresholds are approved, the City should **submit a CDBG-DT Tier 2 application for up to \$400,000 by October 4, 2005**. If approved, the grant program period would be most of 2006 and 2007. Activities eligible for funding as part of this grant include almost all infrastructure improvements, including water and sewer lines, streets and alleys, parking lots, street lighting, sidewalks, storm drainage, streetscaping, street furniture, signalization, burying electric lines, removal of poles, gateways, signage, focal points, pocket parks, facade improvements, building improvements, historic preservation, etc., provided they are within the downtown target area identified for the grant program.
 - These planning efforts must be **coordinated with any and all projects** to be completed by the City or ODOT on US 20, as well as any other projects planned by the City with other sources of funds such as Issue 2, CDBG, EDA, EPA, OWDA, and/or local funds within the target area and within the program period.
 - The City and Committee should utilize the Bellevue Historical Society or other 501(c)3 organization(s) to **encourage donations and/or unique solutions** to downtown revitalization problems. Any contributions made during the program period within the target area will be used as local match for the CDBG Tier 2 grant.
 - After two or three CDBG-DT grants are acquired and programs are successfully implemented, the City and Chamber should consider working with the property owners to **create a Special Improvement District (SID)** which could provide a continuous income stream for administration and management of the downtown, as well as marketing activities.
- The **Design Sub-committee** should undertake the following activities within the downtown:

- A **Focal Point** should be identified and/or created for the downtown. The main intersection of SR 269, US 20, and Monroe Street appears to be a central location, and it has interesting possibilities for creation of a focal point. There is an island of green space (with a large evergreen tree) as of Fall 2004, and Croghan Bank has attractive landscaping in front of its building, thus the beginnings of a focal point exist. Additional design elements that should be considered include:
 - More intense landscaping,
 - Pedestrian lights and crosswalks of textured and/or colored pavement,
 - Traffic signals on new mast arms (as opposed to wires),
 - The City logo or a "B" (for Bellevue) in the pavement at the center of the intersection,
 - Some textured sidewalk treatment to accentuate this area (preferably in low traffic sections), and
 - Renovation and reuse of the Tremont House, which is on the north end of the intersection. This would provide an historic building and an interesting backdrop to the focal point for traffic heading north on SR 18 and SR 269.
- **Gateways to the downtown** should be developed in the following areas:



The **intersection of Northwest and Castalia Streets** on the north end of the downtown, which has a small green space which could be better developed as a landscaped area and gateway entrance. The view is framed with two tall building towers in the skyline (looking south) that could be enhanced with green space in the triangle south of this intersection. The backs of the buildings at 110-114 West Main Street should be renovated to enhance the gateway view from the north.

The **subway bridge** should be enhanced with paint, murals, decorative stone, or other technique to make it a signature archway into the downtown. The City and/or Design Sub-committee should work with the railroad to accomplish this. Once through the underpass heading west, the grassy banks on both sides of Main Street should be landscaped and designed to better project a proud entranceway into the downtown. Low signage, shrubs, flowers, and lighting could accentuate this area and announce the entrance to the downtown.





The entrance to the downtown from the south on **South Sandusky at Center Street** provides many opportunities for a gateway entrance. The corner that is most visible is that to the south of the new car wash lot. It currently contains electric poles and wires, but could be converted to green space. The median to the east of that corner could also be green. The old gas station on the southeast corner provides opportunities for signage and landscaping, as does the Church property on the southwest side. All of these areas working together could provide an impressive landscaped and nicely lighted gateway entrance to the downtown. Textured pedestrian crosswalks would also enhance the area and provide definition and safety for pedestrians.

- The **green space in the east corner of the CVS store** could be an attractive green area and/or gateway to the downtown from the southwest and the west, if any is remaining after the right turn lane is improved.
- The City and Design Sub-committee should aggressively **pursue creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment**. Downtown Bellevue has a lot to offer residents, shoppers, and visitors. However, it is not very pedestrian friendly. Efforts should be made to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Suggestions include:
 - Pedestrian **crosswalk lights** should be added to major intersections, where applicable.
 - **Shortening the distance between the curbs**, wherever possible, (with bump-outs) should be considered.



More green areas, trees for shade, and benches should be added to appropriate locations throughout the downtown.

A conscientious effort should be made to **create pedestrian walkways to connect key areas** with Main Street. For example, a walking path between Village Square and Main Street could be added through currently vacant land on the west side of North Sandusky Street.



As discussed previously in this chapter, the area at the **main intersection** of Main St. and SR 269, in front of Croghan Bank should be much more pedestrian-friendly, with appropriate crosswalks, benches, trees, lighting, and textured or well-delineated crosswalks indicating the proper place to cross.

The **upgrading of the sidewalks should continue outward** from Main Street, until all sidewalks in the downtown are replaced or repaired and handicapped accessibility is provided.

The City should continue to expand upon the current streetscaping program to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment in the downtown. This could include trees, patterned or textured pavements in certain areas, bump outs for parking areas, additional decorative street lighting along side streets, pocket parks, banners and attractive signage, awnings and facade renovations, landscaping pedestrian alleys, etc. This should continue through all streets in the downtown. Design elements to consider include:

The current **sidewalk replacement program** should significantly improve the aesthetics and walkability of the downtown. There are several areas off Main Street with severe sidewalk problems, including:

- The west side of Exchange Street in front of the EMS facility.
- The southwest corner of the intersection of Lyme and Green Streets.



There is ample room in some areas along Main Street for **planting of trees**. Significant effort will be required to assure that trees have adequate room for proper root growth. A “structured” soil method may be needed for best results. Suggested areas include:

- **West Main Street, in front of the American Legion** and other offices, has a 24' concrete walk. Ten feet +/- could be used for green space and trees without inhibiting the walking surface for pedestrians.



- In front of the **Sunoco Station** on West Main Street there is adequate space for trees.
- The **tree lawns** in many areas adjacent to Main Street need some attention. Generally this is a responsibility of the property owner. Given some of the conditions of existing tree lawns, possibly the City needs to clarify this responsibility in a newsletter, newspaper, or web site.
- Residents should be **prohibited from parking** vehicles in the tree lawns, especially when the vehicles also infringe on the sidewalks.
- Owners of all tree lawns that do not have trees should be **encouraged to plant trees**.
- **Large concrete flower pots** (4' x 4' +/-) should be added throughout the downtown for summer plantings, as well as seasonal decorations. Some communities (Bowling Green and Evendale, as examples) have used these flower pots to create a very impressive and attractive pedestrian downtown corridor. Arrangements should be made with a garden club, local landscaping company, or City forces to assure that the pots are properly maintained.
- **Private property owners** should be encouraged to add more landscaping around their buildings. Some good examples include the Encore Plastics building on West Main Street, the library, and Firelands Credit Union drive-thru banking center.

- Landscaping could be added to the **back side of Village Square** as a buffer from the homes to the north, and to screen the trash receptacles and loading docks. If buildings are not added to the east side of Village Square, additional landscaping should be added there, as well.
- A **pocket park** could be developed on the property north of Home Savings Bank, in conjunction with a new landscaped parking lot and walking paths. The park and parking lot could include an existing home on the site or be developed around the home.



Continued **landscaping in parking lots** should be required for all future projects and property owners should be encouraged to landscape existing parking lots. The community would substantially benefit from landscaping in islands and around the perimeters of existing parking lots. The new parking lot recently completed by the Library is a great example of how parking lots should look. The plantings, decorative fencing, screened trash receptacles, trees, etc. result in an aesthetically pleasing environment for library users and the community as a whole.

Also very impressive are the new parking lots of Firelands Credit Union and Home Savings, as well as the parking lot in the northeast corner of the intersection of Main and Sandusky Streets. Parking lots that could be upgraded include:

- Bassett's Market/Ace Hardware
- The Junior High School (especially since part of it is only gravel)
- Village Square
- The Laundromat and Car Wash on Kilbourne St. This area could benefit from more specific delineation of driving vs. parking spaces, which could be addressed through curbed and landscaped islands. The fencing around the perimeter of the lot could be replaced with design features such as shrubs, trees, bollards, and curbs, that would accomplish the same goals in a more aesthetically-pleasing manner.

Potential new parking lots could be constructed in available vacant areas including:

- North of Home Savings (in two areas around an existing home or including the site of the existing home),
- North of the Subway shop, and
- By upgrading the gravel lot to the west of the Junior High School paved lot.



- In the future, when streets are resurfaced, the City should require that efforts be made to **plane down the existing asphalt surface** so that the existing curbs can be reclaimed. The old asphalt could also be rejuvenated and reused for the new asphalt surface. There are many streets in the downtown where the curbs are no longer visible because of the many additional layers of asphalt.
- The community should continue to fight for **slowing traffic down** through the downtown by presenting an image of a “pedestrian” community. Textured crosswalks (or warning strips), trees, bump-outs, large concrete flower pots chock full of flowering plants and shrubs, pedestrian style lighting, benches, etc., all clearly inform vehicular traffic that they are entering a pedestrian environment and should slow down.
- **Historic buildings in the downtown should be preserved and rehabilitated**, with new uses identified and recruited for them. There may be funds available to assist with these efforts. Examples include:
 - The **old theater** (if it is structurally sound and historically significant).
 - All **buildings that form the facade** on Main Street, Castalia Street, and South Sandusky Street.
 - The **laundromat** on Kilbourne Street.
 - The **former bank building** in the southeast corner of Sandusky and Main Streets.
 - Several **private homes** along West and East Main Street.

- The **Tremont House**, which is a key building in the center of town. It has been recently purchased by the Bellevue Historical Society and there are plans to restore it.



The City should work with the Historical Society and other interested groups and individuals to **acquire grant funds (CDBG-DT Tier 3) to renovate the Tremont House** in the downtown. This significant renovation project could serve as a needed shot-in-the-arm for downtown revitalization efforts.

In January 2005, The BDC's Revolving Loan Fund committee approved a request by the City to loan \$10,000 to the Bellevue Historical Society to study the feasibility of renovating the Tremont House. Once this study is completed, Tier 3 funds can be requested for the renovation work.



- The City and property owners should consider implementing a program to **create and/or renovate rear entrances** to businesses, especially in areas where the backs of the buildings are adjacent to public parking areas. This is particularly important because of the heavy volumes of traffic on Main Street, and the inability to easily cross Main Street to access businesses. Efforts should include:

- facade restoration,
- replacing windows that are currently boarded up,
- grouping and screening trash receptacles,
- removing, relocating, or replacing electric poles and burying electrical wires,
- replacing fire escapes,
- improving signage,
- creating new rear entrances to businesses,
- adding decorative lighting and plantings where possible,
 - organizing parking among properties to acquire more total spaces, and
 - providing handicapped accessibility wherever possible.



Current



After Proposed Improvements

Areas which should be addressed include:

- The 100 block of East Main Street on the south side (see above renderings).
- The 100 block of West Main Street on the south side.
- The 100 block on East Main Street on the north side.
- The 100 block of West Main Street on the north side, including the triangular area between Northwest and Castalia Streets.

CDBG-DT Tier 2 program funds could be used to accomplish these efforts.

- The **Economic Restructuring Sub-committee** should undertake the following activities:

- **Recruitment of businesses.**

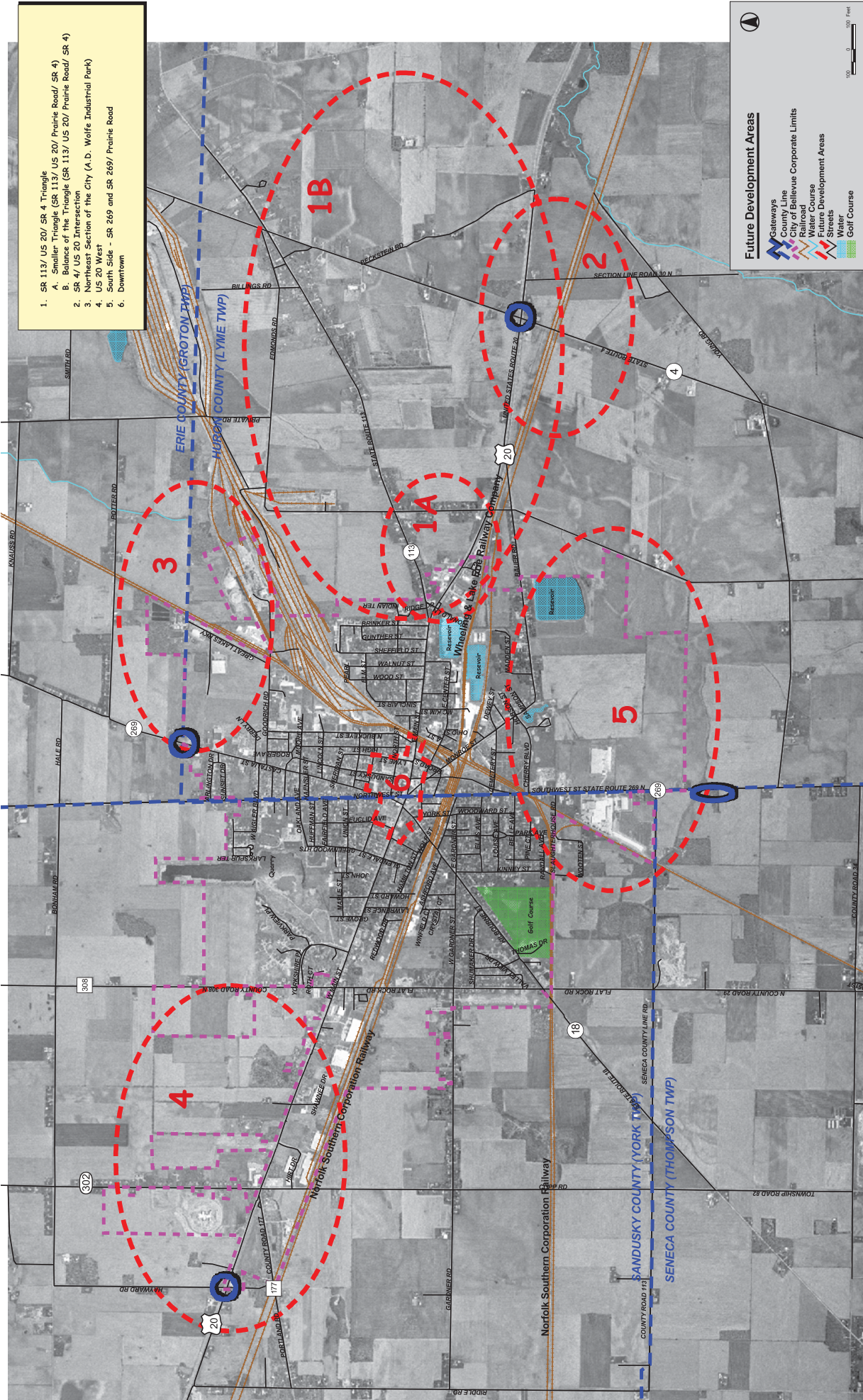
The City has been very successful in recent years with the number of new businesses locating within the downtown target area and with recent renovation projects, especially with new banking facilities, the new CVS, and the new Fuel Mart. Additional new building owners, new businesses, and/or new tenants need to be heavily recruited for buildings in the downtown, including:

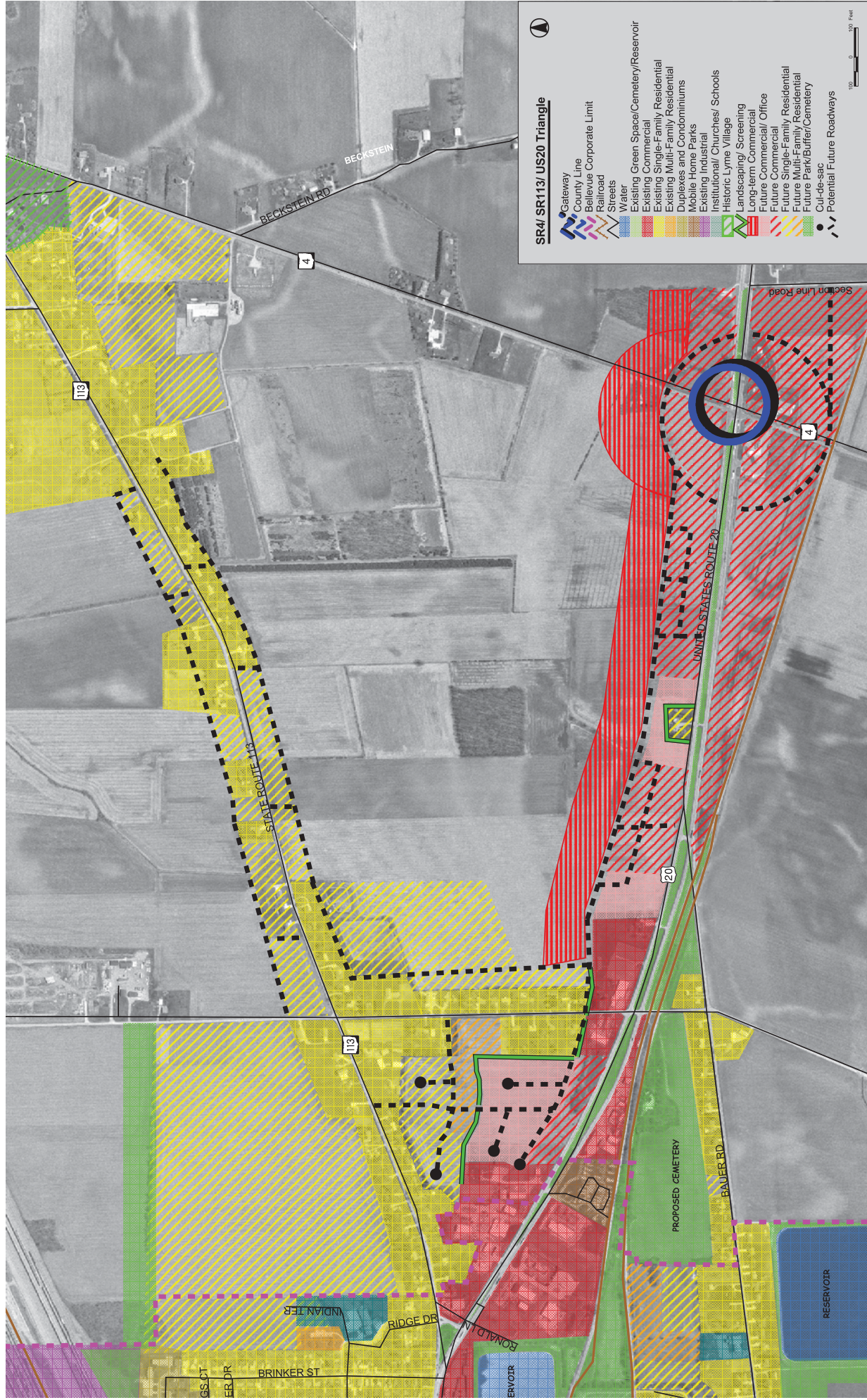


- Village Square
- The block of East Main Street, east of South Sandusky Street, where all but one storefront is vacant.
- The vacant lots east of Village Square, which could be marketed to new small businesses, preferably in residential-style buildings to blend into the neighborhood. Some green space should also be designated in this area.
- The old gas station in the southeast corner of Center and Sandusky Streets.
 - The laundromat on the northwest lot adjacent to the railroad tracks.
 - The former Bellevue/Kerr Music Store space on South Sandusky Street.
 - The former municipal building on North Sandusky Street.
 - All other vacant buildings in the downtown.
- The Sub-committee and Chamber of Commerce should work with the merchants to identify needed services and products in the downtown and **develop and implement a recruitment program** to entice existing businesses to expand or new businesses to locate in the downtown. The community survey indicates a desire for specialty apparel and shoe shops, cards/gifts/ and antique shops, and restaurants.
- The Sub-committee should work with property owners to **encourage adaptive reuses and renovation of second and third floors** into housing, offices, or other uses. This must include identifying solutions to potential overnight parking problems.
 - The Sub-committee and Chamber should work with DOI to **provide programs and services to merchants and entrepreneurs** to increase their likelihood of success in downtown Bellevue.
 - The Chamber and Sub-committee should work with local banks to **enhance or expand its loan and grant program** to provide low-interest loans to businesses and property owners in the downtown who make improvements based on the Downtown Plan and the Architectural Review Standards. If CDBG-DT Tier 2 funds are available, this local program could match grant funds from the City through the CDBG-DT grant.

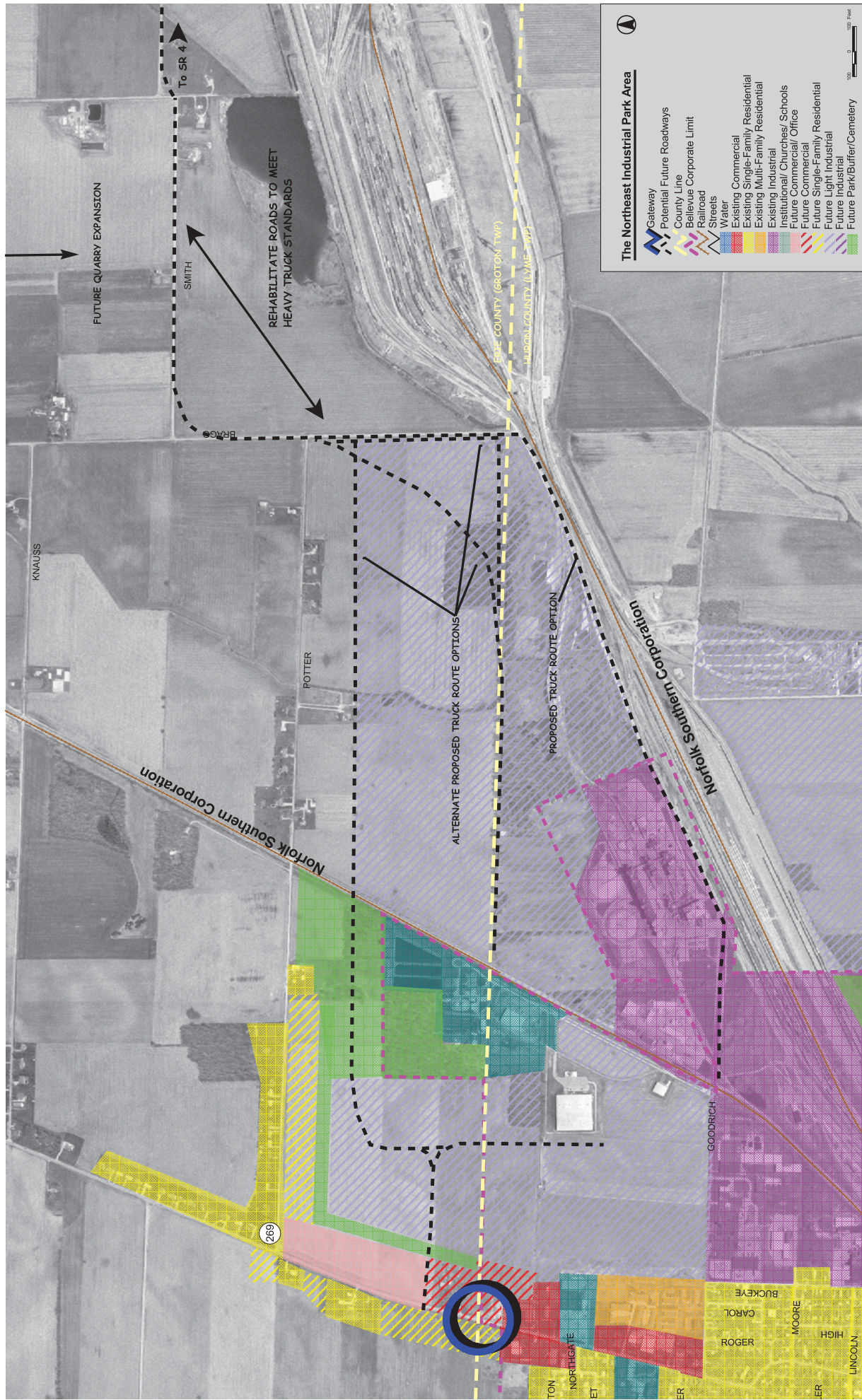
- The City and BDC should consider utilizing a portion of its CDBG-**Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to capitalize a grant program** for facade and building improvements. This could be used in conjunction with a CDBG-DT grant, and/or a Lender Commitment Program.
- The **Promotion Sub-committee** should undertake the following activities:
 - Working with the Chamber, **develop a program of promotional events and activities** to promote the downtown and to entice shoppers and visitors to the downtown.
 - **Work closely with Downtown Ohio, Inc.** and its members to generate ideas for events and activities that involve all age groups, and cover a wide variety of seasons.
 - **Request that the historic groups in the City participate** in the planning of events in the downtown, so that efforts are coordinated and complementary to the benefit of all efforts.
 - **Work with the State of Ohio's cultural heritage program** to piggy-back on programs offered by the State and to leverage funding for special events and promotional materials whenever possible.
 - **Coordinate activities** with other downtown promotion programs in **northwest and north central Ohio**, as the audiences for activities are similar.

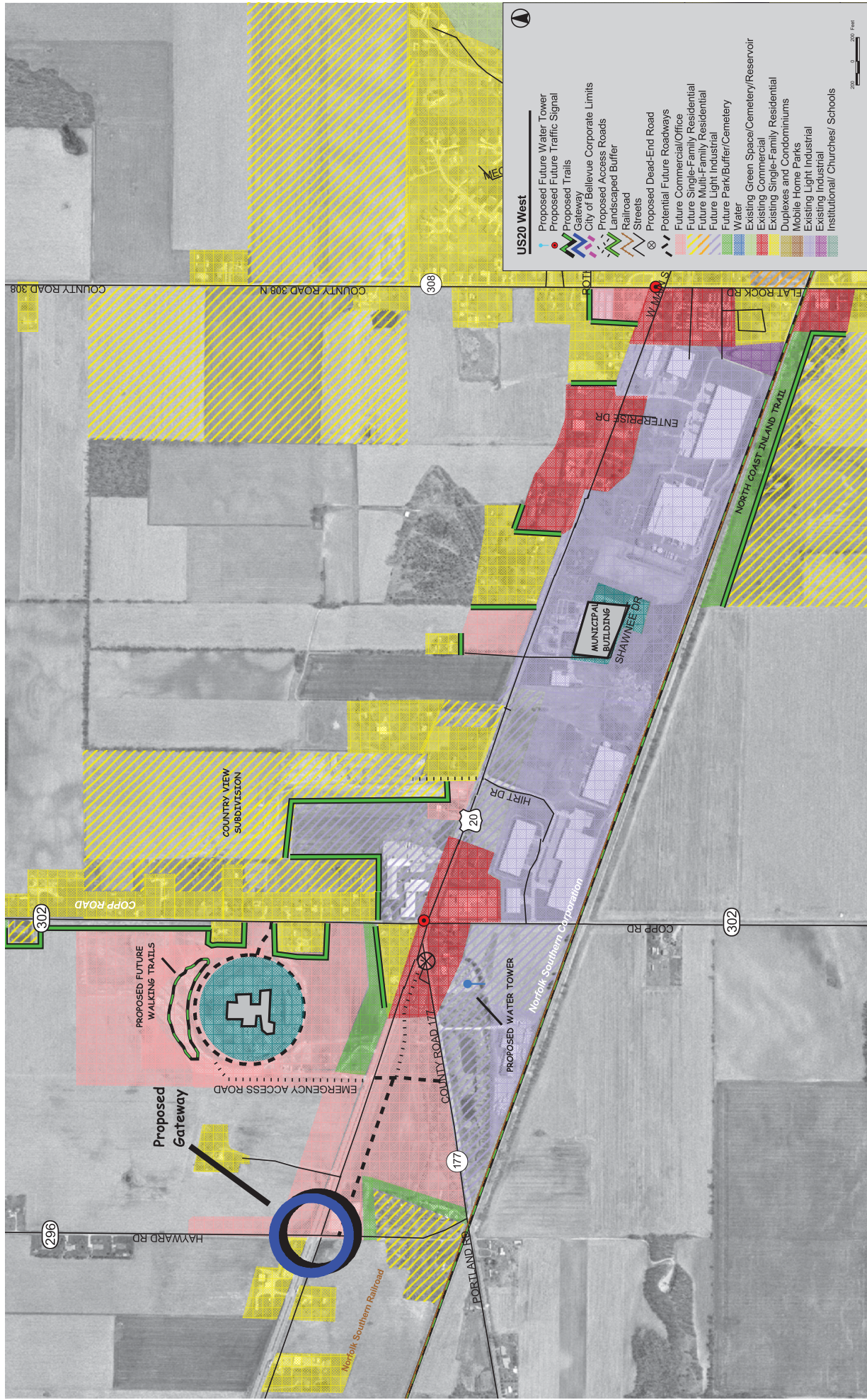
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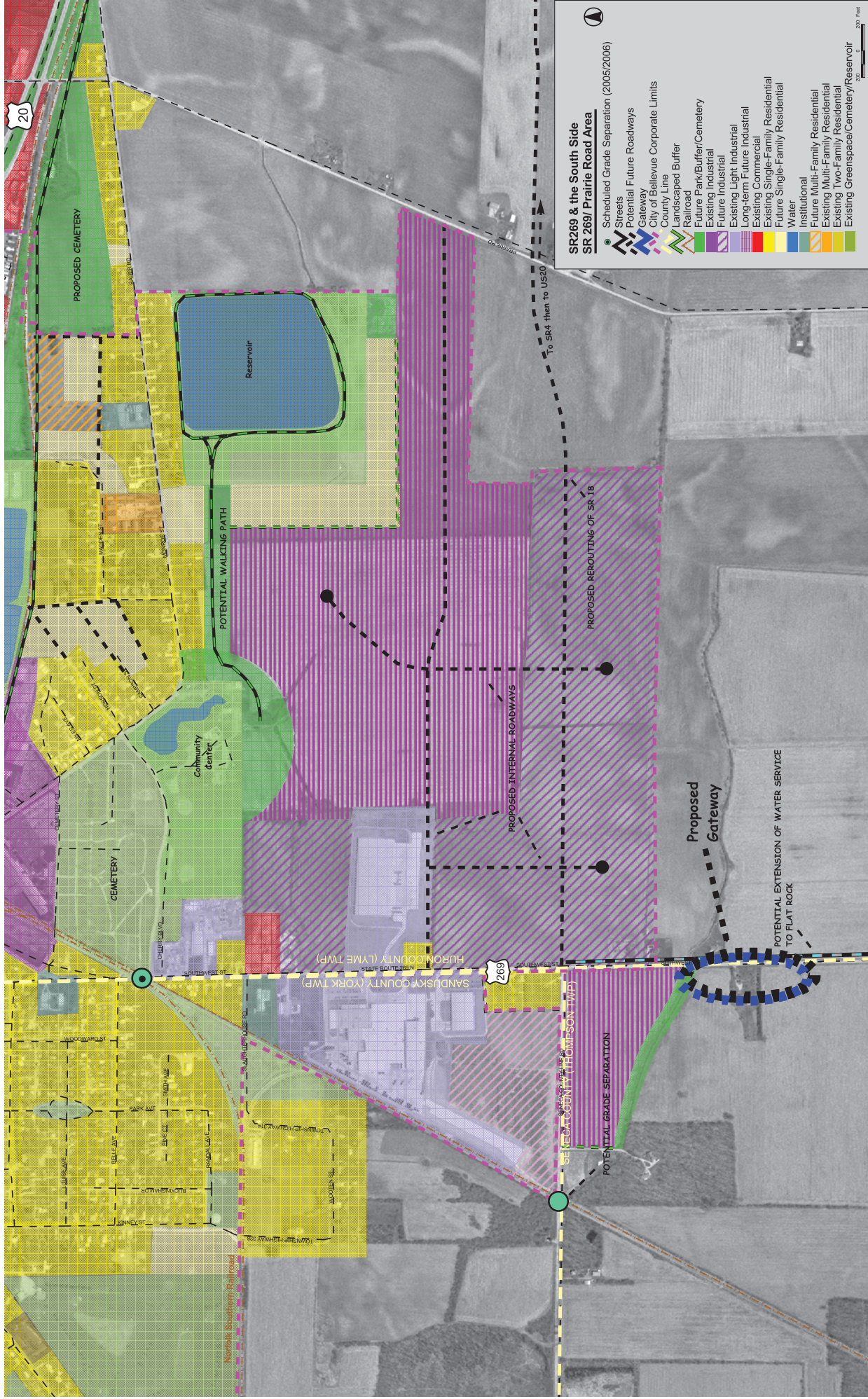




Map 9-2







Positive Developments

- Firstlands Credit Union (Parking Lot & Drive Thru)
- Home Savings Bank & Parking
- Library Parking Lot
- CVS (Needs More Trees)
- Fuel Mart (Needs More Trees)

North Gateway

- Landscaped Triangles ① ②
- Pedestrian Crosswalks
- Upgrade Parking Lots (3)
- Add Trees and Landscaping
- Gateway Sign

Medical Shopper/ Draughts
Moving into Ace/Bassett Building Expansion

Alternate 269



Potential Commercial Space
(Along Street with Parking)
Similar to Bank (Facing to South)

East Gateway

- Point Bridge
- Stone Treatment on Bridge
- Landscaped Grassy Areas
- Add Signage & Lighting
- Add Pedestrian Crosswalks

West Gateway

- Landscaped Corner ①
- Add Signage & Lighting
- Add Pedestrian Crosswalks
- Add Flower Pots on Sidewalks
- Add Benches

Focal Point

- Add Crosswalks and Lights
- Enhance Green Space ① ②
- More Streetscaping
- Add Decorative Street Lighting
- Add Benches
- Tenant House Renovation ③

South Gateway

- Remove/Bury Electric Service at Intersection ①
- Add Landscaping ①
- Landscape Southeast and Southwest Corners ② ③
- Add Pedestrian Crosswalks and Lights
- Landscape Median Island ④ ⑤ ⑥
- Add "Welcome to Downtown" Sign ② ③ ④

- Banners and Signs
- Logo in the Center of the Intersection
- Address Backs of Buildings ①

- Need Tenants for Vacant Buildings
- Large Potential Project with Theater and Bank Building ⑤
- Shared Parking with School/Church

Downtown Bellevue

- Potential Mural Locations
- Downtown Boundary
- Walking Path
- Green Spaces
- Pedestrian Crosswalks
- Trees
- Railroads
- Landscaping and Fencing or Screening
- Proposed Building
- Vacant Building
- Potential Developable
- Commercial Property
- Potential Parking Areas
- Rear Building Areas (Renovate Buildings and Organize Parking)

City of Bellevue

Vision 2025

Chapter

10

Implementation
Policies and
Initiatives

Chapter 10: Implementation - Policies and Initiatives

Throughout this *Vision 2025 - Comprehensive Master Plan*, numerous recommendations are made regarding steps that should be taken to accomplish the desired goals. This Chapter summarizes these recommendations from the perspective of policies that should be adopted and initiatives that should be implemented in order for the City to accomplish the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and achieve the “Vision.” A Comprehensive Plan is merely a road map of ideas about where the community would like to go. Getting there requires policies to be created, changed and adopted, and new initiatives to be developed and implemented.

Policies and initiatives that the City needs to address to properly implement this Plan include the following:

Land Use & Zoning Policies:

- The City must review, approve, and **officially adopt this *Vision 2025 - Comprehensive Master Plan***, and then make it a routine part of their daily decision-making activities. All department heads should review the document and assure that their operations will be consistent with its goals and strategies in the future. (*City Council, March 2005*)
- The City should authorize the Planning Commission to **update its Zoning Code** to reflect recommendations for land uses and development areas contained herein. (*Planning Commission, Balance of 2005 and early 2006*)

Suggestions include:

- **Reviewing the Zoning Code** for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, assuring that the most current issues are addressed, and making the Code as easily understandable as possible.
- Developing provisions for **buffers** between non-compatible land uses, especially to protect single-family homes.
- Reviewing **commercial and industrial districts** to assure that they provide for the mixed-use type of development recommended for along US 20 West and US 20 East.
- Developing **new districts for mixed-use residential areas or mixed-use commercial and industrial districts**. A **medical office district** may also be beneficial for around the hospital.
- Encouraging and working with **Thompson and York Townships** to adopt Zoning Codes. Both townships are currently unzoned.

- **Considering the creation of Overlay Districts** and incorporating them into the Zoning Code for major commercial corridors and key development areas along US 20 and SR 269.
- Review the **Sexually-Oriented Business (SOB) ordinance** and the **Manufactured Home Policy** (which was updated in 2002) to assure that they meet current standards.
- The **Sign Ordinance** should be revisited, especially regarding temporary signs.

Land Use & Zoning Initiatives:

- City Council should **establish a “Communications Initiative”** that improves all aspects of communication within the City regarding **all City activities and policies, including land use and zoning policies**. To the current Council and Administration’s credit, some of this has already started, such as the meetings with neighboring townships and the publication and distribution of a City newsletter. In order to implement this Plan successfully, the City will need the support of the residents, and residents need to understand what the Plan involves. (*City Council 2005-2006*)

Suggested efforts include:

- Continue with the regular City **newsletter** to all residents. Following the approval of the Vision 2025 Plan, a featured article in the next edition of the newsletter should explain what the Plan means to residents.
- Semi-annual **township meetings** with all four of the neighboring townships to discuss and resolve any common items of concern. One of the issues that should be discussed as often as necessary is how the fire contract fees are established and adjusted, and the allocating of any related insurance payments received.
- Regular **joint BDC meetings** with Council to review economic development initiatives and to assure that both entities are working toward common goals, including the five development areas identified in the Plan (excluding the downtown).
- Regular **meetings with the Chamber of Commerce** to encourage and enhance Chamber activities in the future, and showing Council support for those activities, especially the implementation of recommendations regarding the downtown in the Plan.
- Special **efforts with the media**, by providing regular communication and press releases about important issues.

- **Joint planning efforts with the School District** to continue to meet the District's needs in the future, including identification of new building locations, provision of utilities to school buildings, transportation issues including sidewalks and traffic concerns, continued revenue sharing with tax abatement projects, and support for ballot issues.
- Maximum use of the **web page and Internet** to inform residents about what is going on at the City, including regular updates to the web site.
(Note: The City newsletter is already being posted on the City's web site.)
- Council should appoint a **design committee to develop a design and image initiative** for the City to enhance the aesthetic environment and provide a sense of place. (*City Council, 2006*)

Recommendations made in the Plan that this committee should address include:

- Gateways at all entrances to the City.
- Streetscaping along major corridors and in the downtown.
- Design Standards for key neighborhoods or areas.
- Overlay Districts for US 20 east and west and SR 269 north and south.
- A Signage System throughout the community.
- A Theme or Image for the City.

Transportation Policies:

- The City should prepare and adopt an **Access Management Policy** for the entire community, but especially for US 20, both east and west, and SR 269, both north and south. Issues that could be included are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. (*Engineering Department, 2005-2006*)
- City Council should aggressively pursue and more uniformly enforce its **Sidewalk Replacement Ordinance**, and expand it to include new walking paths throughout the community to connect key community assets. (*City Administration 2005*)

Transportation Initiatives:

- The City should maintain and more strongly pursue an initiative to identify, design, finance, and construct a **bypass or alternate truck route** around the City.
(*Council and Engineering, 2005 - 2010*)

- City Council and Administration should aggressively continue the **development of a gateway program** and begin construction of gateways.
(Administration or Engineering, 2005 - 2008)
 - Preliminary ideas for the gateway design and locations should be firmed up and the first gateways should be constructed beginning in 2005.
 - The gateway theme should be **extended to include the downtown gateways**, at the appropriate time when revitalization efforts are underway.
- The City should develop a program to identify, design, finance, and construct **additional grade separation structures** within the City in the next decade, as discussed in Chapter 6. Continued dialog with ODOT is required.
(Engineering Department, 2005-2025)

Public Utilities and Services Policy:

- The City should finalize an **agreement with Erie County** to provide an alternative source of water supply to the City. (City Council and Engineering, 2005)

Public Utilities and Services Initiatives:

- Once the water agreement with Erie County is consummated, the City should initiate serious negotiations with residents of **Flat Rock**, Thompson Township, and Seneca County regarding providing **water (and later sanitary sewer)** to that community.
(City Engineering and Administration, Thompson Township & Seneca County, 2005)
- The City, working with the School District, should undertake an initiative **to provide water and/or sanitary sewer services to the various school buildings** in the townships as required to resolve the problems they now have.
(City Engineering & Administration and the School District, 2005 - 2006)
- The City should pursue installation of a **fiber optics system** for the entire City, especially the industrial and office areas, which could include and enhance existing networks at the School District and the railroad. (Engineering and BDC, 2005 - 2007)

Housing and Neighborhoods Policies:

- The City should **adopt and enforce a Property Maintenance Code**.
(Council and Administration, 2005 - 2006)

Housing and Neighborhood Initiatives:

- The City should undertake a **community housing initiative** which would start with the completion of the **Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS)**. This should be done immediately so that the City becomes eligible for CDBG and HOME housing rehabilitation funds. *(City Council and Administration, 2005-2025)*
 - This will require the appointment of a **Housing Advisory Committee (HAC)**, which can provide local input.
 - Once the CHIS is completed and accepted by the State, the City should apply for its first of many **CHIP and HOME grants** for housing rehabilitation efforts.
- As part of the City's **Community Assessment & Strategy (CAS)** for its CDBG Formula program, the City should establish a **neighborhood redevelopment initiative** that would include provisions and projects for CT 962200, BG 2 (Redevelopment Areas B and C). *(City Council and Administration, 2005-2025)*
 - As part of this initiative, CDBG **Community Distress Grant funds** should be sought for qualifying areas with each CDBG Formula application.

Economic Development Policies:

- The City should **finalize the Annexation and Revenue Sharing Agreements** with the four townships within the next six months. A special committee should be assigned to coordinate these negotiations with the townships. *(City Administration and the four Townships, 2005)*
 - The City should **meet with the BDC** to review the Annexation Agreements, and assure that provisions are accurately understood to assist the BDC's with its future economic development efforts within those townships.

Economic Development Initiatives:

- The City and BDC should undertake an initiative to identify responsibilities and roles associated with the **implementation of the five economic development areas** identified in Chapter 9. *(Administration, BDC, and Townships, 2005 - 2008)*

Issues that should be addressed include:

- Land uses should be agreed upon with the townships and property owners.
- Road improvements should be negotiated with townships, counties, and ODOT, as needed.
- Zoning should be changed as applicable.
- Developers and/or businesses should be recruited to the appropriate areas.

- Enterprise Zones should be extended as annexations occur.
- High-tech businesses should be sought for appropriate areas.
- The City should aggressively pursue a **downtown revitalization initiative** with the Chamber of Commerce, and/or the Chamber's Downtown Revitalization Committee. This initiative should include those recommendations contained in **Chapter 9** for the downtown. (*City Administration, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Revitalization Committee, 2005-2009*)

Issues that should be addressed include:

- Based on the Downtown section of this Plan, the City should compile the necessary **"threshold" requirements** to submit to ODOD, OHCP by May 2005 so that the City becomes eligible for CDBG-Downtown Revitalization grant funds.
- If/when those thresholds are approved, the City should submit a **CDBG-DT Tier 2 application** in October 2005 for up to \$400,000 for both public and private rehabilitation efforts.
- The **4-point Main Street approach** should be adopted for downtown revitalization efforts.
- The City should encourage the Bellevue Historical Society to pursue the study and renovation of the **Tremont House** for its home and to serve as a focal point in the downtown. **CDBG-Downtown Tier 3** funds should be sought.
- A **downtown historic district designation** should be considered.
- The City and/or Chamber of Commerce should **join Downtown Ohio, Inc.**
- **Parking** should be addressed in the downtown.
- The City should work with and encourage the **Chamber of Commerce to become more active** in the redevelopment of the downtown and the community. (*City Administration, 2005*)

Steps include:

- The Chamber should be encouraged to develop and implement a successful **Heritage Tourism program**.
- Additional **promotional events and activities** to attract shoppers to downtown should be developed, in concert with the revitalization effort.
- **Coordination with neighboring cities'** activities should be investigated.

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**BELLEVUE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN
VISION 2025
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM
11/13/03 and 12/16/03 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Land Issue Assets

- Farmland - Lyme & Groton Townships
- Historic Homes & Buildings
- Commercial Development - Encourage on West & East ends of US 20
- DT Revitalization Committee
- DT Residential conversions
- Quarry land development
 - Golf course
 - Park - Active/Passive
 - (Cooperation with Sandusky County Parks)
 - Yorkshire Development around it
 - Active area near US 20, passive area in back
- Could put sports fields in bottom
- Potential solution to local area storm water issues

Land Use Liabilities

- One vacant gas station
- Industrial uses adjacent to residential (several instances)
 - Ashford, Sheffield, Center, Buckeye
 - Monroe St - new industrial park off 269, just zoned - not developed, still ag
 - Potential New Industrial Park - South
- Zoning regulations out of date - last updated in '80's
 - I-1 and I-2
- Old hospital building - uses?
- How to deal with historic buildings in DT - Preserve/develop or raze
- Township zoning issues
 - Some have no zoning
 - Potential problems with SOB's (sexually orientated businesses)
- Minimal places to build new housing
 - NW area
 - W side of 269
 - N of Willow Run
- Cemetery full within 6 years
- Various school expansions
 - York school needs to buy land
 - Lyme school - no water & sewer

- Downtown issues
 - Converting commercial to residential
 - Restaurants
 - Hotel
- Commercial Center
 - Buffer between it and Bauer Road
 - Tower Auto/Industrial Park
 - Farmland in between
 - I-1 & I-2 Issue
 - Road needed to Prairie Road

Quality of Life Assets

- Quarry has potential for needed parks and recreation space
- Good Schools
 - Operating and renewal issues have passed
 - Band & Choir highly successful (need space, however)
- 40 unit Senior Housing complex
- Orchard Grove - assisted living area
- Rotary Commons - Subsidized senior housing
- Flatrock Road Middle-income development (26-40 units, \$150-250,000)
- Mobile homes/Manufactured housing ordinance updated in 2002 (PDG to ck)
 - Have three now
 - Kasper
 - Redwood Drive
 - Flemings
- Society of The Arts
 - Have building (by Robert Peters Park)
 - Need \$125,000
 - Theater/Community theater
- Community Center (25 years old)
 - Marc has long-term plan (Gary to get copy to PDG)
- City Center exercise area
- Library - has newly expanding parking
- Activities for kids <12 in good shape
- Historical Society
 - Trying to renovate DT building for museum
- RR Museum
- DT - lots of possibilities
 - Theater block (worst in DT now)
 - Bank renovation
 - New parking lot DT (City leasing from Bank)
 - (need to define "Historic")

- Have CRA in DT
- "Rte 20 is, and probably always will be, the issue"
- Have two Senior day care centers
- Need to retain historic houses on west 20

Quality of Life Liabilities

- Need Parks & Recreation space
- Need land for schools
 - Aging buildings
 - York, Lyme (enrollment decreasing), Ellis
 - High school - built in 1963, renovated in 1968 and in 2003
 - Failed levies for building
 - Use of modulars is default solution
 - Need more space at
 - Shumaker
 - Traffic problems - bus and parent loop(s), not repairing blacktop
 - Ridge School
 - York school area - may need new school
 - Lyme school needs water & sewer (137 enrollment)
- Millage increase on March ballot in March of 2003
 - Shumaker improvements
 - Band & Choir facilities
- Sidewalks issues
 - Financial impact on Residents
 - @ Shumaker School
- Signage ordinance - review and enforcement
- Logo/Slogan - don't really have one
 - "A Break from the Lake" has been used
 - Schools have a logo - try to develop compatible logo for City
- Percentage of low-income housing
 - Pimlico
 - Frederick
 - Brian Manor
- Need ordinance on rental properties (Sandusky example?)
 - Regs on subsidized housing maintenance
- Condos not selling (Are more needed?)
 - Brinker
 - in Quarry area
 - Yorkshire (Roth Drive) - 20-30 years old
- Need more baseball fields (in Rec Board plan)
 - South of existing fields (Mark)
- Activities for teens
- Empty movie theater building (20+ years)
- Need middle-income housing (\$100-150,000)

- Need senior condos
 - Use for old Hospital building?
 - No inside parking in senior housing areas
- Need to limit subsidized housing

Public Facilities, Utilities, Services Assets

- Quarry - potential solution to storm water issues
- Parks - (issue for discussion with Twp Agreements)
- Property next to hospital - Park?
- Water and WW systems current and planned renovations address next 20 years anticipated demands
 - No raw water issues
 - With streets project DT, all water lines and connections will be replaced
 - Plan to hook into Erie County water - build new water tower N of town - will provide additional/back-up source of treated water, lines to nearby Twp(s)
- Police and Fire - paid full and part-time - good shape
 - Also have contracts with York, Lyme and Thompson Twps
- EMS is contracted with private firm
 - Training City firefighters as EMT's
 - poor EMS response from County
 - Contractor also provides services to all in immediate area but Groton Twp
 - Half of York
 - All of Thompson and Lyme
 - If City goes to its own EMS, Twps may be without service except thru County (part of annexation agreement discussions)
- RR has high-speed fiber hub (POP) on Center Street at RR
 - Huge opportunity for City (or Private developer?) (RFP?)
 - Lines could be put in existing right-of-ways
 - not now available in Twps
 - (Schools have their own internal fiber optic system - Mark Bishop, technical contact)
 - Need provider
 - Link it to new Industrial Park
 - Needed for hi-tech businesses
 - BDC involvement - recruitment of provider

Public Facilities, Utilities, Services Liabilities

- Storm Water issues
 - Sink hole nature of the land
- Need buffer to north of WWTP before any more housing built there
 - Parks
 - Potter Road - odor complaints
 - Verhoff
 - Wild area
 - Old retention ponds used for ducks
 - Walking trails
 - Recycling of yard waste
- Lyme Township needs water
 - School needs water

Transportation Assets

- Proximity to 80/90 and 18, 4, 269
- New traffic signals and widening scheduled for 2004 along 20 from 302 to East City line (including Goodrich (new light and improved turn radii) and Greenwood Hts.(traffic light), light at 308 will help)
- 5-year paving plan for City
- Community-wide sidewalk ordinance (but no implementation plan or enforcement)
 - Now required with all new residential
 - area across from Shumaker school
 - no assessment process in place (yet)
 - no LMI areas (PDG to ck, especially in rental housing areas and Pimlico area to Shumaker school
- Sandusky County airport (Discuss with BDC - Roger)
 - American Baler - corporate jet regular user
 - Life Flight based there
- 2 RR's - Norfolk & Southern and Wheeling & Lake Erie
 - Grade separation scheduled for 2005 at 269 & Southwest Street (will eliminate fire issue)
 - Still need other grade separations
- Signage and wayfinding ok
 - (But need to revisit ordinance, esp re temporary signs
- Rails to trails (County program)

Transportation Liabilities

- US 20 Access management
- Access management issues - 20
- Areas around various schools - esp Shumaker and the High School
- Lack of grade separations
- Bottlenecks - really only 3-5 PM and in the DT and RR underpass
 - three 5-point intersections in Downtown
- 20 is the only E-W continuous road
- Twp roads future use
- Gateways
 - esp on west side.
 - Garden club handles east side

Commercial and Economic Development Assets:

- Sandusky County Airport
- DT Opportunities/Needs (See Quality of Life section)
 - Theater potential use/demolish/historical debate?
 - CRA exists
- New Industrial Park NE
 - Infrastructure to be complete in 2004
 - Should provide sufficient space for next 20 years
- Potential Industrial property to the South - not zoned for industry, sitting in limbo until we see how things develop in area
- Cedar Point Connection
 - Rte 4 traffic
 - Spillover hotel opportunity not as strong with all new hotels close to CP
 - Local hotel no longer a Best Western (no automatic CP area referrals)
- Good Schools

Commercial and Economic Development Liabilities

- DT Route 20 Issues
- Need Commercial development
 - 259N
 - 20 - W & E to Rte 4
 - Motels
 - Restaurants
 - Dry Cleaner

School/Education Assets:

- Good Schools
 - Operating bond issues have passed
 - Band & Choir highly successful (need space, however)
- Good City-Township unifying factor

School/Education Liabilities:

- Various school expansion issues
 - York school needs to buy land
 - Lyme school - no water & sewer
- Need land for schools
 - Aging buildings
 - York, Lyme (enrollment decreasing), Ellis
 - High school - built in 1953, renovated in 1968
 - Failed Bond levies
 - Use of modulars is default solution
 - Need more space at
 - Shumaker
 - Traffic problems - bus and parent loop(s), not repairing blacktop
 - Ridge School
 - York school area - may need new school
 - Lyme school needs water & sewer (137 enrollment)
- Millage increase on March ballot
 - Shumaker improvements
 - Band & Choir facilities
- Sidewalks issues
 - @ Shumaker School
- Transportation issues around various schools - esp Shumaker and the High School

Bellevue Key Persons Interview Summary									
March 23-24, 2004									
			Composite						
Rank	#	Subject	Emphasis	# of 1's	# of 2's	# of 3's	# of 4's	# of 5's	Total # of Responses
1	23	Adequate fire protection	59	11	1	0	0	0	12
2	17	Coordinate with School Plan	56	8	4	0	0	0	12
3	14	Additional RR grade separations	55	8	3	1	0	0	12
4	24	Adequate police protection	53	8	3	0	0	1	12
5	10	Erie County Water	52	6	4	2	0	0	12
6	6	Buffer new Developments	52	6	4	2	0	0	12
7	7	Fiber Optic Network	51.5	7	2.5	1.5	1	0	12
8	13	Force property maintenance	48	5	2	5	0	0	12
9	3	Parking DT	45.5	4.5	4.5	1	0	2	12
10	9	Gateways	44.5	4	4	2	0.5	1.5	12
11	4	Focus Comm Dev DT/20/269	44	3	5	2	1	1	12
12	11	CHIP/CHIS program	42.5	2.5	4.5	3	1	1	12
13	15	Expand/Improve Parks	40	1	4	6	0	1	12
14	5	Industrial Dev in NE	39.5	3.5	2.5	2	2	2	12
15	16	More Ball Fields/Rec Areas	38	2	4	2	2	2	12
16	12	Cemetery space	37.5	1.5	1.5	7	1	1	12
17	1	DT revitalization critical	37.5	2.5	1.5	4	3	1	12
18	2	ID/Recruit specific businesses	33	0	2.5	6	1.5	2	12
		Total of each response		83.5	57.5	46.5	13	15.5	
	18	Rate the Schools	47.5	3.5	4.5	4	0	0	12
	26	Rate the City	42	1	7	2	1	1	12
	25	Infrastructure needing improvement							
1	25c	Roadways	40	7	4	0	0		11
2	25a	Water	33	6	1	3	0		10
3	25d	Storm Sewers	25	0	7	1	2		10
4	25b	Sewer	25	2	3	3	2		10

Bellevue Key Persons Interviews - March 23/24, 2004
Summary of Comments

#	Bellevue Comprehensive Master Plan Issues
1	The revitalization of the Downtown is critical to the future of Bellevue.
	<p>Positive comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clyde is a good example of a City that did revitalize its DT. • Encourage non-competitive services in DT. • Lots of the existing buildings are serviceable. • If trucks are out, could be a quaint DT with specialty shops, professional services, etc. • If we had more parking with easy access to DT, maybe the DT can survive. • Would like to see a nice DT, but trucks don't help. • Rents are cheapest in the DT - can afford to start a business there. • Instead of trying to revive the DT, maybe we could create an Easton-type Town Center out near the new hospital. <p>Negative comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulldoze the DT. • Bulldoze the DT - old buildings are too expensive to keep up and/or fix up (big building in DT square is good example). • Many of the buildings have been allowed to deteriorate beyond the point of being economical to restore/bring up to code. • Merchants are not making any money and therefore not spending any money. • In 1953 and 1987 the State proposed a bypass; the DT merchants opposed it. • Won't attract big boxes. • Mom & Pop operations can't compete. • Shoppers will still go to Sandusky. • Limited alternatives for DT Bellevue. • Not as critical as along 20, where there is potential for Outback, Walmart, etc. • DT is definitely not pedestrian-friendly with all the trucks. • With RR tracks and trucks in town - not going to happen. • Widening main street 3 feet on each side is going to make the DT even less pedestrian-friendly. • Need to correct traffic issues first. • Years ago the truck weighing stations on 20 were removed - had increased truck traffic since. • Won't see the DT come back, especially with competition from chains. • Not a top priority for City. • DT is a mess now and getting worse. • Trucks tear it up. • Less police protection/presence with headquarters move to new location - increased robberies. • Not enough dollars around to revitalize. • City is not going to be able to maintain itself due to DT. • The DT has really shrunk - really talking about 3 blocks on 20 plus Bassets. • Not going to be like it was - but should be up to the BDC and Chamber of Commerce, not the City. • I moved my office from DT due to trucks, dirt and noise. • It would be too expensive to revitalize the DT infrastructure to support substantial growth or revitalization there.

Positive comments:

- Home town specialty stores if there are good conditions for shopping.
- Lots of little businesses.
- Professional services - lawyers, accountants, etc.
- Hospital is one place in town that is bringing in new people for services - from areas west of Clyde and north of Castalia.
- Maybe not the City's job. It could offer incentives and information about the permits and other required approvals would be helpful.
- Need another grocery store/drug store (have one).
- Yes, for a Town Center west on 20.

Negative comments:

- None - people will not support them.
- Look at the economics, apparently even Bob Evans decided it would not be profitable.
- We had department stores by Pamida but people go to Sandusky to shop.
- City investment in the DT equals a waste of money.
- Not possible.
- Not the City's responsibility. (BDC - industry, Chamber of Commerce - commercial)
- More likely to be able to recruit businesses to the 20 and 269 corridors.
- Hardware store moving next to Bassets for parking and traffic reasons - was one main draw to DT.
- Don't know what City could do.
- Not just Bellevue - most older cities.
- Clyde has gotten better, but DT is not on 20, and parking is still tough in Clyde.
- Competing against four County seats.
- Bellevue has a population of about 8,000; typical cut-off for bringing in new business is around 10,000.
- Township residents shop elsewhere for the most part.
- Not going to happen in DT.
- Tough for mom & pop operations to survive in DT.

3	Parking is an issue in the Downtown, especially around the Post Office.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PO parking is a bad situation, but there is a parking lot 100' away. • Should move the Post Office. • PO is terrible. • People don't like to walk more than half a block. (2) • City parking by Crogan Bank has been a nice addition. • Buy Crogan Bank property to create additional parking. • First National Bank will acquire dry cleaners to expand the bank; result will be even less parking with dry cleaners lot gone. • Plenty of parking - Eagles, Credit Union, Jr, High, City lots. • People are too lazy. • Not a serious problem. • Not much of a problem anymore in the DT. • Seldom a problem except maybe on the south side of street. • Is a problem generally. (2) • Yes, but how do we fix it? • On Main Street - if you get a parking spot, you can't get out with all the truck traffic. • Moving trucks to center lane may help. • There should be 2-hour limits in some areas of parking lots. • The City was considering a new DT parking lot years ago and decided against it. • Privately-owned and public parking lots need to be identified. • Most of the alleys are privately owned which leads to problems with regard to snow removal and other maintenance issues.

4	<p>Commercial development should be directed away from traditional agricultural and residential areas and focused in the Downtown and along 20 and 269.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop west on 20, not along 269. • The new hospital will generate development in that area. • Not in the DT. E and W on 20, N on 269. (2) • West on 20 toward the new hospital. • Commercial development will naturally occur along 20 west. • Given. Will go where it belongs. Most commercial interests want 2-3 acres. • Also along 18. • Might not want to push commercial development along 269 - lots of residential there. • Extending the business area works - like putting Wendy's on W. Main - was a good thing. (Dealt toughly with trucks from start and prevented that potential problem.) • Sandusky County is the only County that supports the City. • Lyme and Thompson Townships are lukewarm; York Township is responsive. • Groton Township is not at all supportive, nor needed. • Castalia Street Center is 30 years old and still has some empty space. • Businesses not looking for space in Bellevue; probably can't do anything about it. • Bassets may be looking at moving to or creating a strip-type shopping area parallel to 20 and the DT. • The warehouse across from Tower is leaving. • Residential in the NW. • It should depend on the better/greater good considerations - even if that means development in traditional residential or agricultural areas.
5	<p>Industrial development should be concentrated to the NE. Elsewhere?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For sure relative to prevailing winds • Need to develop way to get trucks to Rte 4 without going through DT. • Possibly to the north with waterline from Erie County. • Along 269 have the Patton Track homes on SE corner. Owners won't sell. • No. Develop to the west - have waterline from Clyde. • Maybe not concentrated in NE. • Access not good to site. Near Shumaker School which is proposed for expansion - not a good mix - more trucks and more kids. • Consider around the new City Building and new hospital area and west toward Clyde. • Along 20 has more marketing appeal. Can't see NE Park from 20. Success breeds success. • To the south on 269 - after the NE area is full. • Already a little late - industry is spread out all over town. • With Erie County to the NE, should probably go to south. • North is prime for residential growth. • Should go to south - especially with bypass. • Trains are a big issue. • South on 269 also OK. • Prefer to see it along 20 & RR to the west and east - help keep trucks off the City streets. • Should push industrial development along the corridors. • Why? It may deter some industry that want to be elsewhere in the area.

6	Any new developments should be properly buffered from adjacent conflicting land uses, especially residential.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important. Should not be new industrial next to existing residential. Buffer. • Center housing around the schools; industry further out. Separate uses. • City needs to take leadership role. • Absolutely. • RR are a big issue for housing. • Yes, within reason.
7	The City needs to promote the interconnection and extension of the existing fiber optic networks already in the Schools, Railroad and Hospital.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needed by industry. (2) • Has anyone approached the local cable TV supplier (Time-Warner)? When the franchise agreement expires is the time to negotiate. The amount paid to the City is minuscule compared to the revenues generated. • Interconnection and cooperation - yes; but fiber optic lines may already be becoming obsolete due to satellite and other high-tech options.

8a	If you were opening a new business in Bellevue, what three things would you like the City to help you with?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax abatements. (7) • Tax abatements with school donations. • Financial advice regarding State funding options. • Make person aware of tax abatements and other incentives. • Enterprise zone incentives. • Competitive water and sewer rates. (5) • Parking - most areas of DT. • Water and sewer connect charges. • Land acquisition. • Identification of available sites/land. • What locations are available - perhaps on the City website. • Workforce development/recruiting. • Business consulting - start-up requirements, accounting, etc. - perhaps a volunteer committee of local businesspeople could provide these services. • Cooperation between City and developer. (Dollar General example - started the process at the same time in both cities - open in Norwalk before even approved in Bellevue.) • One-stop center for code compliance/zoning/permits - hand-holding. • A packet of information with a checklist regarding permits, inspections, etc. required by the City, how to contact various utilities. • Cut the red tape including better cooperation from City Council - long-time problem. • Guarantee that permits are approved - make it easy/speedy. • Fire protection. • Maintenance of streets and highways within the City. • Have a website with links to local businesses and clubs. • Help find housing in the City - especially for executives. • Quality of schools is important. • The City needs to focus on attracting small businesses - much more stable to have 200 businesses with 3 employees each than 1 company with 500 employees. • Would never open a business in Bellevue - waste of money

8b What problems would you be likely to meet OR what would likely stop you from opening a new business in Bellevue?

- None within industrial parks.
- Opposition from residents if too close.
- Fighting between City and Townships.
- Lyme Township zoning - prime location is farmland which is controlled by a limited number of excellent farm owners.
- Permitting process - takes way too long.
- When Lorraine was handling it, it was better. People don't know Susan and she can be abrasive and part of the problem. If you do more than one project, you get to know the system, but for just one it is not easy.
- Bureaucratic red tape - non-cooperative in City, especially compared to others in the area.
- Train traffic. (It would help if there were some sort-of signalization that could warn you before you turn onto a given road or street that the nearby crossing already has a train on it.)
- Tough to compete with Fremont, Norwalk, and especially Sandusky. (Everyone heads to restaurants in Sandusky on Friday nights.)
- Folks in Bellevue area - especially those living in the Townships - shop mostly in other towns.
- Traffic flows.
- Parking (Ace Hardware moving due to parking issues). (2)
- Bellevue should, as some cities do, require restaurants or bars to have parking spaces before getting a permit - but keep it minimal so as not to discourage new restaurant and bar businesses.
- Shabby appearance of DT - need to get DT looking better, would improve the whole situation.
- Tough to get wives to move here.
- Unions and their demands. (Health care currently costs \$1,040/month, projected to be \$1,600/month by 2008.)
- Work attitudes.
- High taxes.

9	<p>The City should create and maintain attractive Gateways to the City - especially along 20 and 269.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First impression is important. (2) • Important - especially with new DT lights and sidewalks. • Include the City website on signs. • Yes, but not a priority now. • Do nothing now. • Do at low cost. • There are more important places to be spending resources - schools, incentives for industry, work force development, housing, etc. • There are better ways to be spending money right now. • Hard to define on W end of 20 at the moment. • First visit to Bellevue with family for job interview - wife cried. • Bellevue comes across as a worn-out town; need to reduce absentee ownership of DT buildings.
10	<p>The City's plan to provide for an increased quality water supply through cooperation with Erie County is very important and should be aggressively pursued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. Need additional water source. • Local water supply is not that good. With Lake Erie only 17 miles away, should be taking advantage of it. Too much runoff gets into reservoir. • Biggest concern at new hospital is quantity of water. • Also need another water tower in SW portion, especially with projected hospital use of water. • Current reservoirs are not maintained. • This is an important issue, but disagree with the approach - will lose control of rates.
11	<p>The City should take advantage of the CHIS and CHIP programs to improve the housing stock in Bellevue. (These are HUD-funded housing assistance programs primarily for home-owners.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, if it can help. • Young families need help. • Older homes need renovation. • There can be a lot of pride in home ownership. • Favorably impressed with most homes in area. • Rental units are poorly constructed. • Don't like subsidized housing programs. • Fix-up existing housing - yes. New or more government housing - no. • Not more subsidized housing - lots of horror studies re shoddy workmanship in initial program. • Not subsidized housing. • Not a believer in these kinds of programs - stand on your own feet. • Encouraging self-motivation is a better solution.

12	New lands for additional cemetery space need to be identified and acquired. Suggestions?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly south of Monroe Street across from apartments - at least close to existing cemetery. • North of town. • No appropriate space available within City limits. • Not sure when it will be needed. • Should be a long-term plan. • I've already bought my plot. • City should get out of the cemetery business - unless it is a money-maker. It should not be subsidized.
13	The City should force property owners to maintain their property.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top priority! There is so much run down housing. • Especially sidewalks. Enforcement of sidewalk ordinance is inconsistent. • The City should require a certain level of aesthetics. • Need to have a level of aesthetics that can be enforced. • Start with DT buildings - especially those with absentee landlords. • Within reason - safety, sanitation and eyesore issues. • Should do it but not a big issue in Bellevue, except for a few houses. • City does a good job generally. • They do pretty well. • May need to help - once. • Maybe use CHIP/CHIS to help. • Yes, and when people do clean-up their yards and homes, it has a positive ripple effect on the neighbors. • Existing laws are not well enforced. • City needs to get its own house in order first, and then enforce rules uniformly. • Don't know how - must have ordinances and guts to enforce them. • Code-enforcement officer not well-received. • We have an enforcement officer that doesn't enforce codes. • This is a vicious circle: Fix-up = higher rents - already hard to lease in DT - no real DT due to trucks

14	There are several specific sites that should have RR grade separations. Suggestions?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One already planned for 269. (5) • South on 269 at Cherry Boulevard. • 269 and SR 18 are not problem areas. • 302 (2) • Edges of town - 302 and/or 308 west and south of town. • One on 302 would provide a direct route to the hospital. • Rte 18 (2) - both in town and at edge of town. • Kilbourne Street. (5) • On Kilbourne - open up housing development to south. • On 18 out by Hague's. • Goodrich Road near Central Soya. • West in York Twp - County Line Road. • Center Street (relieve subway). • Fix the East side of town (the subway) - the Village of Avery's accommodates 5 lanes. • New highway will take care of this problem. • Emergency - EMS issue! • Big negative for City. • ODOT is the one that determines this now. Most money is going to the big cities.
15	The City needs to be continually expanding and improving its park system.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks department is doing an excellent job. Continue what they are doing. (5) • Nice parks. Great Director. (2) • Take care of existing parks first. • Probably more upgrading than expanding. • Catholic School trying to renovate its playground. • Community Center expansion is good. • Harmon Field has been let go.
16	The City needs to have more parks, ball fields and recreational areas. Suggestions?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If programs require them, yes. • Need indoor swimming pool. (4) • Need an indoor or outdoor pool. (Will probably need a Sugar Daddy to get it.) • More ball fields (baseball and softball). (3) • Put New ball fields in the Quarry area. (2) • Need to provide more ball fields so kids who want to play and learn how to play are not being cut from teams • Racquetball/handball courts. • Maintain existing. • Expand Rec Center. • No soccer fields in City, kids have to leave town to play. • Don't know what or if needed..

17	<p>The City should coordinate its planning with the School District's Plan and do whatever possible to support and constantly improve our schools,</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top priority of all issues covered in this interview! • Schools are #1 issue for recruiting employees/employers. • Must cooperate - largest employer. • I have a young family - this is a big issue for me. • York school building is old - need to build a new school in that area in 15-20 years. • Junior High will be over 100 years old in 15-20 years. • Lyme school is way out there - should close it. • District needs to relook at middle and elementary school needs - create new schools. • The whole system needs to be revamped - possibly at the expense of neighborhood schools. • The schools have to make a decision regarding neighborhood schools in 5 years. • May need to buy 30-40 acres - probably in Sandusky County/York Twp. City and schools should work jointly to solve issue. • There has been discontent over recent tax issues. • In the City - who's role should it be to coordinate with the schools?
18	<p>How would you rate the Bellevue School System? (Same 1-5 scale.)</p>
	<p>Positive comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Lahoski doing fantastic job. (3) • Great return-on-investment. • Great teachers. • Great job with what we have to work with, which is the reality of education in the State of Ohio. Low relative to much of the rest of the US. • I have supported all levies in the past. <p>Negative comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I ride and walk all through town and see too much waste at schools and the City. • Disillusioned with education in general. • Residents don't value future of education. • Lot of blue-collar families - few Rhodes scholars. • I have interviewed kids fresh out of the high school with top grades for a job, and they can't even write a decent letter. • Too athletically oriented. • Fiscal management concerns.

19	In what area(s) do you believe the City spends too much money?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None - City very frugal. (2) • Too frugal. • They do a good job watching the funds. • Overtime pay. (2) • Police overtime pay. Need more bodies. (2) • Overtime due to undermanning - especially police, fire, and cemetery departments, especially prior to Memorial Day re cemetery. • New vehicles for superintendents who don't do their jobs. • Old Harmon Field (owned by City). • Spends a lot on WW system - but mandated to do so. • Plowing private alleys in residential area. • Salting intersections - especially near the high school. 	
20	In what area(s) do you believe the City does not spend enough money?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street resurfacing (alleys have same priority as streets). • Street reconstruction. • The City should curb all streets they resurface. • Maintaining streets, water and sewer - would be in big trouble if big employer wanted to move into the area. • Water system - waterlines and for a new plant. • Snow removal. • Downtown - looks bad now. • Helping maintain private alleys in DT. • Traffic control - police do not direct traffic even in emergencies. • Marketing the good things about Bellevue. (Signage, billboards) • Long range planning. (EPA regarding storm water system.) • SSD and City Engineer salaries on low side. • Don't have more money to spend in current economy. 	

21	What are the weaknesses of the current zoning code?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too liberal/easy with variances. (4) • Spot zoning. (2) • City ignores the zoning code. • Weak zoning board. • No building inspector so people do what they please. • Slow to act on requests - especially if an upgrade to current use. • Not enforced. • Not being enforced - junk cars in driveways and at service stations - supposed to be moved within 48 hours. (Service station using as warehouse for spare parts.) • Why have it if not enforced? • Trailer homes next to new houses (esp in the Townships). • PR thing primarily. Have codes but not the backbone to enforce them. Members on commission have too many individual agendas. Need to work things out in work sessions and then stick together in public. • Bellevue is a very provincial place. • Too political - who gets put on committees, etc. 	
22	What are the strengths of the current zoning code?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of residential areas. (2) • It has gotten better. 	
23	Does Bellevue provide adequate fire protection?	Y 12 N 0
	<p>Suggested changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jiggs is good/super Fire Chief. (3) • Fantastic fire department with great equipment. • Has improved a lot - having big ladder truck now is valuable addition. • Does great job updating equipment. Have replaced 75+ hydrants in town - but have concerns regarding old water lines. • Short staffed - high overtime. • New Fire Hall is good example of how Post Office could be relocated. 	

24	Does Bellevue provide adequate police protection?	Y 9 N 3
<p>Suggested changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief should not have to come up through the ranks - bring in new blood with good credentials. (3) • Need to go outside to get a super-qualified Chief, which should help eliminate 50-50 split in the force. • No leadership starting with Ron Zerman and Chief Denny Brando. • Officers do what they want to. • Poor leadership; non-responsive to requests for coordination on up-coming issues like concealed weapon law. • Police Chief does not fit description/not qualified. • The department is in bad shape and have had significant problems in the last six months. • Recent unrest is mostly petty things. Look at leadership. • Always responsive to calls for police assistance - except for last 2 weeks. • Need more policeman - more good ones. Force is undermanned. • Need for police presence in DT. • Not enforcing current laws - especially speeding through town. • Disappointed in police department. • Current debacle is a good example of how terrible it is and how poorly we are running things. • Expect big changes in Police Department due to pressure on Council and Mayor. • Should consider a Charter form of government. • What Fire Department is, Police Department isn't. 		

25	Which of the following infrastructure components need to be improved? (Shown in ranked order)
25c	<p>Roadways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big issue. • City streets and side streets. • Especially Route 20 - do pavement testing in Columbus. • City does a good job - decent shape. • Doing the best they can with no bypass. • City has let them go too long. • Bypass is not the solution. • Trucks ruin all the roads.
25a	<p>Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very old plant - both building and equipment - should be building a new water treatment plant now while interest rates are low. • System is original system; breaks in winter. • WTP is result of patched upgrades. • With plans for two new towers and pumps, watch out for leaks in 125-year old lines. • Need to have plan to replace old lines year by year - top priority! • 12" line may not be big enough anymore, especially on 20 West - for both fire protection and regular service. • We have a 1" line coming into a building on Main Street with multiple uses in the building. • Tank, distribution system and reservoirs not maintained well for years - will result in significant cost in near future. • Need to expand reservoirs. • Supply is critical, hooking into Erie County is good. (2) • Current industries do not use a lot of water. • Person in charge of water plant was looking to retire and didn't want hassle of building new plant, so went for half million dollars of upgrades instead - poorly spent money.
25d	<p>Storm Sewers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New developments - absolutely have to have - more important than sidewalks. • Need to have a system. • Don't have much of a system. • Minor flooding is a problem. • Constant issue with water lines/drainage. • Need to face the music - EPA is aware of problem and will be a big issue someday. • Scary what is allowed to go into sink holes. • Where would you go with it given the geology of the area. • Not sure how to handle it due to no outlets and underground caverns. • Not a priority due to large expense to construct. • No way dollar-wise - unless Fed and State would provide 95% grants.
25b	<p>Sewer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In process of updating. (2) • No new industry necessitating increased capacity.

- Wonderful town; good small town.
- Great bedroom community.
- Great place to raise a family.
- Great community.
- City has turned the corner - becoming a more desirable place.
- There is money in this town to get things done - if people get behind an issue.

- Can always improve.
- Room for improvement - two years ago could not buy a pair of sox in town.
- Small town aspect is nice, but lots of improvements need to be done.
- Lots of good qualities - tough road ahead.
- Lots of potential, but things have been let go for so long. Need to spend some money to spruce up the City and fix problems.

- Pretty pleased with City management - except Police Department.
- Leadership over the last 25 years has let the City go downhill.
- No enforcement of laws on the books.
- As an example, City hired contractors for tree removal. They left big holes, didn't clean up the sites and the City did nothing.

- Need more restaurants - everyone goes to Sandusky and Fremont.
- Shouldn't need to drive to Sandusky for everything.

- Sometimes, when my wife and I visit other places like Perrysburg and Dublin, we wonder why we live here.
- Teetering - Why we need this plan.

Additional comments:

- People are selling old homes and moving into new ones.
- Lots of rental housing - don't need more.
- Goodrich Development - who will rent?
- Jim Shelley's quarry development is nice.
- N on 269 could be place for new housing (once the current owner passes it on to his kids). Nearer the Lake, lots of potential for development.
- What does Bellevue offer for the next generation in terms of upscale jobs?
- Develop more jobs and increase employment. Key issue!
- BDC needs to be more aggressive.
- Trucks are being used by industry as Just-In-Time warehouses which adds significantly to the truck traffic in City.
- Make it difficult for the trucks to go through City.
- Trains are more of a problem/source of frustration than the trucks - "Never had to wait 45 minutes for a truck."
- I have the sense that people in Bellevue are always at least slightly on edge due to all the train traffic - a constant source of irritation/frustration.
- In 10 years, Clyde and Bellevue will connect; need to focus on corridor esthetics and access management.
- Where will bypass entrance(s) be on 20?
- 20/4 Intersection is a growth area (commercial not industrial) with traffic to Lake.
- Need to be doing a cost-benefit analysis of any annexations, especially those that could have a big impact on the current infrastructure (water and wastewater capacities for example).
- Need to envision an outcome like a Town Center to be an anchor for a changed community. (There may be a large segment that doesn't want to change; but we can do this without sacrificing what we value and believe in.)
- Cities are dying - big boxes are in - not a big box fan.
- Ace Hardware is excellent.
- Limited restroom facilities DT.
- DT merchants/property owners were stuck with 13 years of a DT revitalization assessment - the money was all shot on one block (brick pavers and street lights).
- Railroads should be theme for City.
- The RR Museum is nice but not enough to attract people to town.
- B & N does a good job paving streets; Erie Blacktop doesn't clean up after a job and installs no berm when resurfacing, so water seeps in.
- Lyme Township has good people and good families, but are better takers than givers as far as City-Township issues.
- Re a new police dispatcher experience - didn't know where 101 W. Main was - "Tell the policeman to get in his car and start driving toward Cleveland, stop in the middle of the first town he comes to."
- Kids want a movie theater (2 screens).

Appendix 3-3

Bellevue Survey Results and Comment Summary Narrative

The citizens of Bellevue were surveyed regarding a number of issues facing the City. Approximately 3,275 surveys were mailed to the residents of the City of Bellevue, one to each household. Survey respondents were asked to rank the relative importance of 35 issues on a scale of 1 to 5. There was also the opportunity for comment on each issue. 287 households (8.8%) responded to the survey and the results have been tabulated.

Based on the 1 to 5 rankings of the 35 issues, the top 10 areas of concern were:

1. The best alternative for a Route 20 by-pass for trucks needs to be identified and built.
2. The City should consider alternative methods for reducing truck traffic in the Downtown.
3. Parking is an issue in the Downtown, especially around the Post Office.
4. Any new developments should be properly buffered from adjacent conflicting land uses, especially residential.
5. The improvement and maintenance of sidewalks is important,
6. The City needs to improve its communication with the public.
7. The City should coordinate planning with the School District's Plan and do whatever possible to support and constantly improve our schools.
8. The City's plan to provide an increased quality water supply through cooperation with Erie County is very important.
9. Industrial growth is vital to the growth of the City.
10. Downtown revitalization is critical for the City.

The 10 lowest areas of concern in the Community Survey were:

26. The City should create a Municipal Foundation that can accept tax-deductible donations, bequeaths, etc. to fund civic projects and activities.
27. The City needs to enhance and support tourism.
28. The City needs to create and maintain attractive and welcoming Gateway signage at the entrances to the City - especially on U.S. Route 20 and State Route 269.
29. New lands for additional cemetery space need to be identified and acquired.
30. We need to create housing for disabled children as they get older.
31. Bellevue should develop its own municipal electric service.
32. The City needs to have more parks, ball fields and recreational areas.
33. The City should seek a Charter form of government.
34. Additional recreational opportunities (such as the quarry opportunity) should be pursued - even if it means additional finances would be needed.
35. The City needs an ice rink for hockey and recreation.

All of the comments written by respondents were recorded, categorized and tallied. There was an average of 56 comments per question. The highest number of comments (137) was on question 9: *"There are several specific sites that should have a railroad grade separation. Sites include:"*

54 (39%) cited the Southwest Street (SR 269) crossing, 31 (23%) the Kilbourne Street (SR 18) location, and 20 (15%) the Flat Rock Road (CR 308) crossing. Interestingly, a grade separation on Southwest Street is already planned for construction in 2005.

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Summary: Testimony - Direct Testimony of Nate Pedder (Part 2 of 3) electronically filed by Christine M.T. Pirik on behalf of Firelands Wind, LLC