

STARK COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE

PLAN 2040

Stark County Regional Planning Commission

July 2017



*The Stark County Comprehensive Plan 2040,
otherwise known as the Stark 2040 Comprehensive Plan,
was adopted by the Stark County Regional Planning Commission
on July 11, 2017.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A.) Executive Summary

The purpose of a county-wide comprehensive plan is to provide a flexible framework for local governments to work cooperatively in areas which will have a positive effect on Stark County. A comprehensive plan helps to plan for and guide growth and development, while also encouraging participation in programs which provide for the physical, social, and economic needs of the County's present and future residents. In accordance with this purpose, the SCRPC regularly prepares a county-wide comprehensive plan projecting years into the future, which is updated approximately every 10 years. The last comprehensive plan, the 2030 Comprehensive/Transportation Plan, was written in November 2005.

Since the writing of the 2030 Plan, a number of changes, both anticipated and unexpected, have taken place in Stark County. One of the most significant events that has taken place is the global Recession which began in 2008. Reports have called this Recession the worst downturn in economic history since the Great Depression. As a result of the 2008 Recession, consumer spending sharply decreased; the growing housing market bubble suddenly burst, also creating a foreclosure crisis; unemployment significantly increased; and there was an overall downturn in the general economy worldwide. The effects of the Recession were staggering, particularly on many of the Rust Belt communities, and attempts to bounce back to pre-Recession statistics in Stark County have been modest to date. It is anticipated though, that with the right planning tools and collaboration efforts in place, as identified throughout this Plan, economic improvement will continue to be attained.

Outward migration in jobs and population to the suburbs is another, although somewhat anticipated, trend that Stark County has continued to experience since the 2030 Plan. Older, established cities have been working diligently to retain their population and employment

force, but statistics present a continued increase in suburbanization, which consequently has led to a loss in farmland, higher commuting and infrastructure costs, and a growing financial burden on the central cities to sustain existing services on a reduced revenue stream. One of the goals of this Plan is to provide a guide for local communities to better understand and plan for these situations so that farmland preservation can be improved, population loss can be reduced, and infrastructure development can be better coordinated.

Another trend that Stark County should be fervently planning for is the exponential growth in the aging population. In 2013, people over the age of 65 made up 16% of Stark County's population, a figure higher than the state or national average. Furthermore, this number is expected to grow as younger generations are moving to larger cities and people are living longer, healthier lives. "Aging in place" is a term used throughout this Plan, which emphasizes providing older adults with the mechanisms to live in their same community, and ideally same home, for as long as possible. Implementation steps to assist with this include the enhancement of mobility-related services to reduce automobile dependency, increased health and wellness amenities and services that cater to senior citizens, and improved housing choices for those ultimately looking to downsize.

When looking at mobility improvements, this Plan suggests enacting these through a "complete streets" approach, which is an attempt to design roadways to be used by all ages and abilities. Components of this concept may include the provision of bike lanes or sidewalks, accessible transit stops, dedicated bus lanes, frequent crossing opportunities, as well as aesthetic improvements to provide a more comfortable, accessible and safe environment for all mobility types. Mobility and other transportation improvements are discussed throughout this Plan, but for a more thorough and complete overview of local transportation planning efforts, readers should also review the 2040 Transportation Plan, prepared by the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS).

Lastly, this Plan attempts to provide methods for enhancing the general livability of Stark County to make it a more attractive and enticing place to live and work. Strategies developed to undertake this involve: natural resource conservation and protection; housing affordability and diversity; park and trail enhancements; tourism, education, and health and safety support; and community engagement. These features all play a significant role in helping communities to grow and prosper.

It is anticipated that with this Plan, local leaders will incorporate these findings and recommendations into their community plans. Stark County has proven itself resilient over the years, and by incorporating this Plan into local frameworks, the County will be better poised to take its resiliency and strength to a higher level, both for present and future generations.

B.) Public Involvement/Public Participation

The mission of the Stark County Regional Planning Commission is “to provide a flexible framework for representatives of local governments to work cooperatively in areas which will have a positive effect on Stark County; to plan for and guide growth and development; and to participate in programs which provide for the physical, social, and economic needs of the County’s present and future residents.” In accordance with this mission, the SCRPC is responsible for preparing a Comprehensive Plan projecting years into the future, which is updated approximately every 10 years. In order to involve those living and working in Stark County and gain their perspectives and opinions for the update, a public involvement process was developed for the 2040 Plan.

In August 2015, SCRPC created an online survey, which was largely based off of the surveys from previous comprehensive plans to help compare results over the years. The survey included nineteen questions regarding the perceived strengths and problems areas of Stark County, and was conducted through SurveyGizmo from September through December 2015. Over 300 completed survey responses were received, which is more than three times as many as were received for the 2030 Plan. Results from the survey are available in Appendix C, including a break-down of respondents, listing of strengths/issues, as well as a comparison of the results from the 2030 Plan. These results were presented at a Stark County Regional Planning Commission (SCRPC) meeting in February 2016.

Survey Distribution Methods

- SCRPC’s and The Stock Pile’s websites, Facebook pages, newsletters
 - Email blasts to County employees and local non-profits
 - Press releases
 - Chambers of Commerce newsletters and email blasts
 - School employees via the Educational Service Center
 - Postcards to senior centers
 - YMCA’s, libraries, and colleges
-

SCRPC staff continued work on the plan through early 2016, analyzing updated data along with the survey results. In July 2016, SCRPC staff met to discuss the proposed Future Land Use Map, and contributions from this meeting were used to modify the map, which was subsequently presented at a Citizens' Advisory Council meeting in October 2016. The comments from that meeting were incorporated into the Future Land Use Map. The revised map was then presented



at a SCRPC meeting in November 2016, with input from that meeting also being incorporated into the Future Land Use Map. The revised map was then made available on SCRPC's website and Facebook page for public comment.

From April through June 2017, a draft of the full 2040 Comprehensive Plan was

made available for public comment on SCRPC's website and Facebook page. The draft 2040 Plan was also presented at three public meetings in June 2017. A final draft, with all changes incorporated, was ultimately presented to the Stark County Regional Planning Commission in July 2017 for final review and adoption.

II. DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

The demographic patterns within Stark County have experienced dramatic shifts over time, often correlating with changes in the economy. This region of the United States has been witness to periods of population and economic booms from the late-19th to early-20th century periods, as well as periods of economic decline with manufacturing moving to areas with lower labor costs, and then again in 2008 with the bust of the financial bubble. While these changes have had significant impacts on the economic and demographic trends of Stark County, this community has always found a way to adapt and repurpose itself to forge onward.

A.) Demographics

The statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it is referred to as demographics. By studying demographic trends, a community can better understand the changes taking place, and plan for the future needs of its residents. This section of the plan provides a perspective of the County's population and trends that affect Stark County today and into the future.

The demographic data represented in this section of the Comprehensive Plan is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau. Each data set includes a footnote documenting if the data was generated from the Decennial Census Short Form (SF-1 or SF-2), or the American Community Survey (ACS). The Decennial Census is conducted once every ten years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress. The ACS is a survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that continuously samples addresses in every state, at random. The ACS also includes questions that are not asked by the Decennial Census, focusing on jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, home ownership, and other topics. The ACS data represents 5-year estimates, which provides data for all areas, and according to the U.S.

Census Bureau, is the most reliable data. ACS data was collected for all seventeen townships, as well as the cities of Alliance, Canal Fulton, Canton, Louisville, North Canton, and Massillon.¹

Population

Figure 2.1, Population by Political Subdivision, shows the population in Stark County from 1990-2010. Between 1990 and 2000, the County experienced a 2.9% population increase, roughly an increase of 10,500 people. From 2000 to 2010, the County experienced a 0.7% population loss, roughly a decline of 2,500 people, yielding a population still greater than the 1990 population. The County's population changes have been modest since 1990, and a small decline between 2000 and 2010 is not surprising.

It is also important to note the areas of concentrated population increase or decline. The City of Canton experienced the greatest population decline over the past twenty years, a 4.0% decrease from 1990-2000, and roughly a 9.7% decrease from 2000-2010. Other areas that experienced higher rates of decline in the last decade include Canton Township (5.6% decrease), Bethlehem Township (5.4% decrease), and Osnaburg Township (4.6% decrease). It can be inferred that the decline in the City of Canton, as well as possibly Canton Township (due to its proximity to the City), followed trends that affected many Rust Belt cities, as residents left the cities for the suburbs. Decreasing population in Bethlehem and Osnaburg Townships may be a result of the Great Recession of 2008, which included a sharp downturn in the business economy, resulting in job loss and high unemployment. Other possible factors may include the high cost burden of agricultural production (as much of the land in these townships is rural), and/or the general tendency of younger generations to desire employment opportunities in bigger cities.

¹ The villages in Stark County are reported within their respective townships.

Political Subdivision	1990 Population ²	Percent Change (1990-2000)	2000 Population ³	Percent Change (2000-2010)	2010 Population ⁴
Alliance	23,304	-0.5%	23,195	-3.9%	22,282
Bethlehem	5,803	-2.6%	5,650	-5.4%	5,347
Canal Fulton	4,157	21.7%	5,061	8.3%	5,479
Canton City	84,161	-4.0%	80,806	-9.7%	73,007
Canton Township	14,050	-1.2%	13,882	-5.6%	13,102
Jackson	32,071	17.7%	37,744	7.0%	40,373
Lake	22,343	15.9%	25,892	15.7%	29,961
Lawrence	7,890	5.5%	8,321	-1.2%	8,223
Lexington	5,291	5.5%	5,583	-2.5%	5,444
Louisville	8,087	10.1%	8,904	3.2%	9,186
Marlboro	3,687	14.6%	4,227	3.1%	4,356
Massillon	31,007	1.0%	31,325	2.6%	32,149
Nimishillen	9,492	-4.2%	9,098	6.1%	9,652
North Canton	14,748	11.0%	16,369	6.8%	17,488
Osnaburg	5,781	1.8%	5,886	-4.6%	5,616
Paris	5,907	1.0%	5,969	-4.0%	5,728
Perry	30,307	-3.8%	29,167	-2.8%	28,353
Pike	3,931	4.0%	4,088	-3.1%	3,961
Plain	34,433	3.5%	35,628	-1.6%	35,052
Sandy	3,630	1.3%	3,679	-0.1%	3,675
Sugarcreek	6,489	3.9%	6,740	-2.9%	6,546
Tuscarawas	6,251	-2.5%	6,093	-1.9%	5,980
Washington	4,765	0.5%	4,791	-3.4%	4,626
TOTAL	367,585	2.9%	378,098	-0.7%	375,586

Figure 2.1, Population by Political Subdivision

Areas of the County that saw steady population increases over the last decade included Lake Township (15.7%), Canal Fulton (8.3%), Jackson Township (7.0%), and North Canton (6.8%). Canal Fulton, Jackson and Lake Townships had the highest population rates of change from

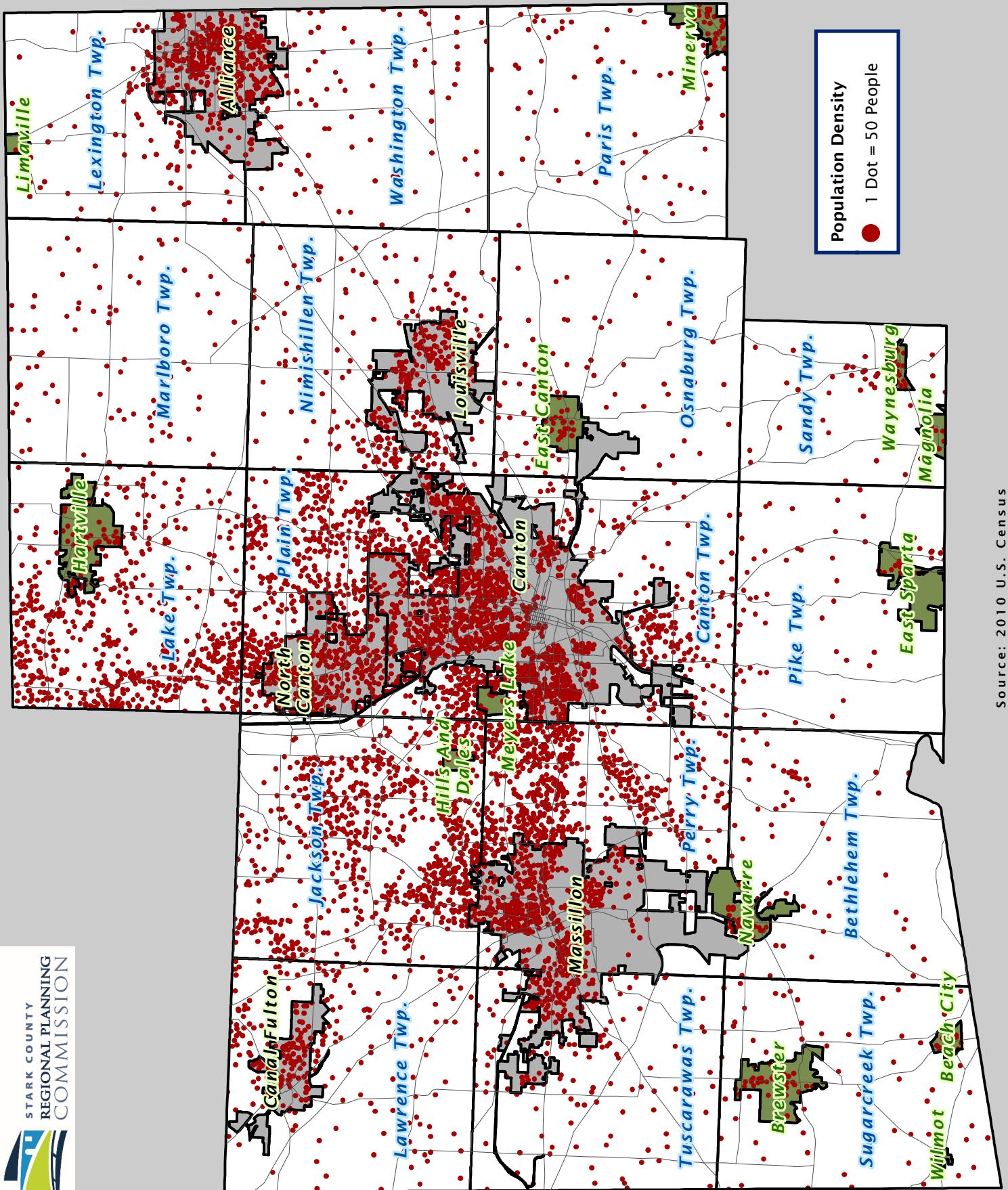
² 1990 U.S. Census

³ 2000 U.S. Census of Housing and Population, SF-1

⁴ 2010 U.S. Census of Housing and Population, SF-1

1990-2000 as well. These areas have grown faster than the County as a whole, due to increasing suburbanization and density.

Population Density



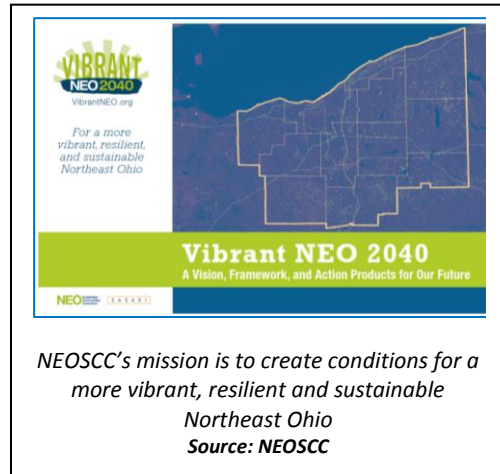
Population Density
● 1 Dot = 50 People



Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Comprehensive Plan 2040

In March 2014, the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) published *Vibrant NEO 2040 – A Vision, Framework and Action Products for Our Future*. NEOSCC, which represents a 12-county region of Northeast Ohio, drafted this report as part of an initiative to provide the region with an analysis of possible future scenarios.⁵ In October 2015, NEOSCC published an extract of the *Vibrant NEO* report, titled the *Stark County Framework Report*. Under the Current



Trends scenario of the Stark County Report, the County is projected over the next 30 years to have a very modest increase in population, approximately 410 new residents each year, which represents an estimated 0.1% average annual growth. The projected 2040 population for Stark County is 387,801, an increase of about 3% from 2010.

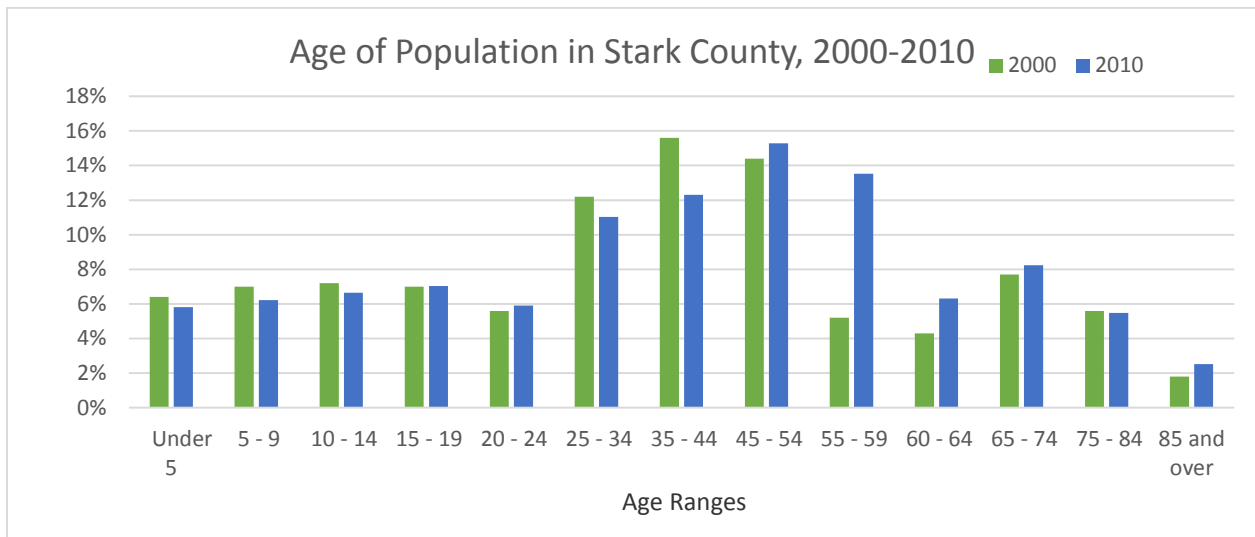
Age

The median age in Stark County in 2000 was 38.2 years; in 2010 it had increased to 41.1 years.⁶ While this may not seem a significant difference, it does indicate a changing demographic. The following chart shows that between 2000 and 2010, there was an overall increase in the population *over* 45 years of age. This is important to note for the future of Stark County as this indicates a significant increase of older populations, particularly the Baby Boomer generation (those aged 52-64 in 2010), which needs to be heavily considered in future planning efforts. More information on planning for aging populations is available under Chapter VI, Aging in Place.

⁵ "Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision, Framework, and Action Products for Our Future," Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC), 2014.

⁶ 2000 SF-1 and 2010 SF-1, U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 2.2 also shows that between 2000 and 2010, the number of people between the ages of 25-44 decreased in population. This demographic, known as Generation Ys/Millennials (born from 1980-early 2000s), are increasingly technologically-savvy, and seeking communities to live in that support increased amenities and opportunities. According to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Survey, opportunities/amenities to attract young professionals is the top ranked economic development issue, and the second highest general issue, in Stark County. In order to retain the younger workforce, opportunities and amenities must be locally made available to them.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-1 & 2010 SF-1

Figure 2.2, Age of Population in Stark County, 2000-2010

Diversity

Diversity in Stark County has increased over the past ten years. In 2000, 90.3% of respondents to the Census identified themselves as White, while 7.2% identified themselves as Black or African American. This indicates that 2.5% of respondents identified themselves as either American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Asian, or ‘some other race’.⁷ In 2010, 88.7% of respondents identified themselves as White, while 7.6% identified themselves as Black or African American. This yields 3.7% of respondents that identified as American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Asian, or

⁷ 2000 SF-1 & 2010 SF-1, U.S. Census Bureau

'some other race.' There was also a slight increase in diversity in terms of the Hispanic population in Stark County. In 2000, 0.9% of Census respondents identified themselves as Hispanic; in 2010 that number had risen to 1.6%.

While these figures are not uncommon for areas of Ohio such as this, a larger mix of different races provides for a greater diversity in opportunities and experiences. A well-balanced community generally has a wide range of people with different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds.

Poverty

Poverty is identified as being below a certain level of personal or family income, according to governmental standards. Poverty limit determinations are made by the U.S. Census Bureau, by using a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition, but are constant across geographies. If a family's total income is less than the associated threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. For instance, in 2016, the poverty threshold in the United States for a family with two adults and two children was \$24,036 in annual income.

In 2000, 9.2% of individuals were below the poverty level, and 6.8% of families were below the poverty level in Stark County. By 2010, 13.7% of the population of the County (approximately 50,100 people) was below the poverty level. Of those below the poverty level in 2010, 21.3% were under the age of 18. Only 12.6% of those aged 18-64 in 2010 were below the poverty level, and only 6.6% of those over age 65 were below. The Census further reveals that 11% of the White population in Stark County was below the poverty level in 2010, while on average, 31.6% of the minority population was under the poverty level.

These statistics further confirm the effect that the Great Recession has had on the economy of Stark County. However, it is important to note that in 2010, the Census reported that 14.8% of Ohio residents were below the poverty level, while 14.4% of the United States population was below the poverty level. So while 2010 brought concentrated poverty within minority populations in Stark County, the poverty levels were slightly better than those of the state and the nation.

There are various agencies in Stark County that assist with many of the effects of living in poverty, including providing hunger assistance, payment assistance for utility bills, affordable housing placement, medical/dental care, as well as low-cost child care. Some of those agencies include Community Services of Stark County, the Stark County Community Action Agency, ICAN Housing, and the United Way, among others.

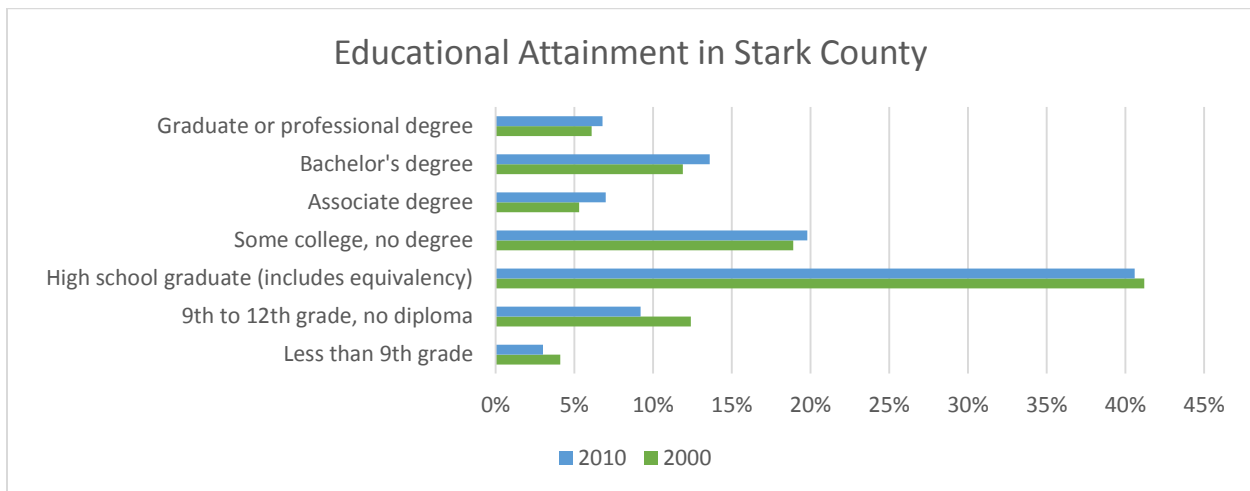


Educational Attainment

Another component of demographics is educational attainment. Figure 2.3 shows that the majority of citizens of Stark County, ages 25 and over, have the educational attainment level of a high school graduate or equivalency (40.6% in 2010). Additionally, 19.8% of the population have some college, and 13.6% of Stark County residents have a bachelor’s degree.

Figure 2.3 also indicates that educational attainment overall is increasing within the County. Educational attainment has increased from 2000 for the “some college, no degree” category and above. Specifically, associate degree attainment has increased from 5.3% to 7.0%, bachelor’s degree attainment has increased from 11.9% to 13.6%, and graduate/professional

degree attainment has increased from 6.1% to 6.8%. This increase is positive in that it reflects the strength of the higher education institutions in Stark County. It also indicates a population with both higher earning and spending potential. Higher education institutions were listed as the third highest strength of Stark County by respondents to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Survey. For more information on higher education institutions, please reference Chapter VI, Community Livability.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-3 & 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Figure 2.3, Educational Attainment in Stark County

Employment

Figure 2.4, Labor Force by Political Subdivision, shows the changes in labor force from 2000-2014.⁸ The labor force considered in Figure 2.4 includes anyone over the age of 16 that works in a part-time or full-time capacity. Between 2000 and 2014, the greatest increase in the labor force (by number employed) was in Lake, Jackson, and Plain Townships. The greatest decrease in the labor force (by number employed) was in the City of Canton, followed by the City of Alliance, and Canton Township. These changes continue to reflect the trends of the Rust Belt

⁸ Figure 2.4 and 2.5 consider time beyond 2010 to present a more recent picture of the economy since the Great Recession.

central city, and associated suburbanization, as more people have relocated to those suburbs, many of which have children also entering the labor force in those suburban areas.

Political Subdivision	2000 Labor Force (Over 16)	2010 Labor Force (Over 16)	2014 Labor Force (Over 16)	Labor Force Change (2000-2014)
Alliance	18,379	18,348	18,038	-341
Bethlehem	4,601	4,549	4,333	-268
Canton City	61,798	57,467	55,402	-6396
Canton Township	11,097	10,684	10,805	-292
Jackson	29,797	32,047	33,007	3210
Lake	19,505	22,335	23,291	3786
Lawrence	10,249	10,976	11,027	778
Lexington	4,394	4,425	4,563	169
Louisville	6,734	7,206	7,290	556
Marlboro	3,147	3,326	3,536	389
Massillon	24,412	25,840	26,039	1627
Nimishillen	7,184	7,828	7,949	765
Osnaburg	4,643	4,527	4,512	-131
Paris	4,713	4,681	4,698	-15
Perry	23,196	23,305	23,505	309
Pike	3,277	3,337	3,249	-28
Plain	41,381	42,488	43,562	2181
Sandy	2,823	2,938	3,014	191
Sugarcreek	5,253	5,176	5,412	159
Tuscarawas	4,748	4,853	4,741	-7
Washington	3,759	3,698	3,802	43
TOTAL	295,090	300,034	301,775	6,685

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-3, 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate, 2014 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Figure 2.4 Labor Force by Political Subdivision

Figure 2.5, Unemployment by Political Subdivision, shows the changes in unemployment from 2000-2014. The City of Alliance and surrounding Lexington Township saw the highest increase in the change in unemployment rates from 2000-2014. The City of Canton and Canton Township also saw large increases in unemployment. As a reference, in 2000, the Stark County unemployment rate was 2.9%, while Ohio's rate was 3.2%. In 2010 the Stark County unemployment rate was 8.8%, and the rate for the State of Ohio was 8.6%. The drastic increase

in unemployment in Stark County can easily be explained by the Great Recession from December 2007 – June 2009. According to the American Community Survey, in 2014, Stark County’s unemployment rate was 9.6%. This slight increase from the unemployment rate in 2010, which is later discussed in greater detail in Chapter I.B, can be partly attributed to the sluggish improvement in the economy since the Great Recession.

Political Subdivision	2000 Unemployment Rate	2010 Unemployment Rate	2014 Unemployment Rate	Change in Unemployment Rate (2000-2014)
Alliance	3.9%	12.3%	16.0%	12.1%
Bethlehem	2.1%	8.1%	3.7%	1.6%
Canton City	4.7%	13.7%	14.6%	9.9%
Canton Township	2.2%	9.7%	12.5%	10.3%
Jackson	2.0%	4.8%	5.6%	3.6%
Lake	2.0%	4.7%	7.7%	5.7%
Lawrence	2.8%	5.6%	7.4%	4.6%
Lexington	3.2%	8.5%	13.7%	10.5%
Louisville	1.9%	5.7%	3.8%	1.9%
Marlboro	2.0%	7.4%	7.2%	5.2%
Massillon	2.9%	10.4%	11.3%	8.4%
Nimishillen	1.6%	7.9%	6.0%	4.4%
Osnaburg	2.7%	7.0%	8.0%	5.3%
Paris	3.5%	10.7%	9.4%	5.9%
Perry	2.4%	7.7%	9.2%	6.8%
Pike	2.9%	9.9%	9.7%	6.8%
Plain	2.1%	7.5%	8.0%	5.9%
Sandy	3.6%	13.1%	8.4%	4.8%
Sugarcreek	2.3%	9.9%	6.7%	4.4%
Tuscarawas	1.8%	6.2%	6.8%	5.0%
Washington	1.9%	6.1%	2.8%	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-3, 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate, 2014 ACS 5-Year Estimate

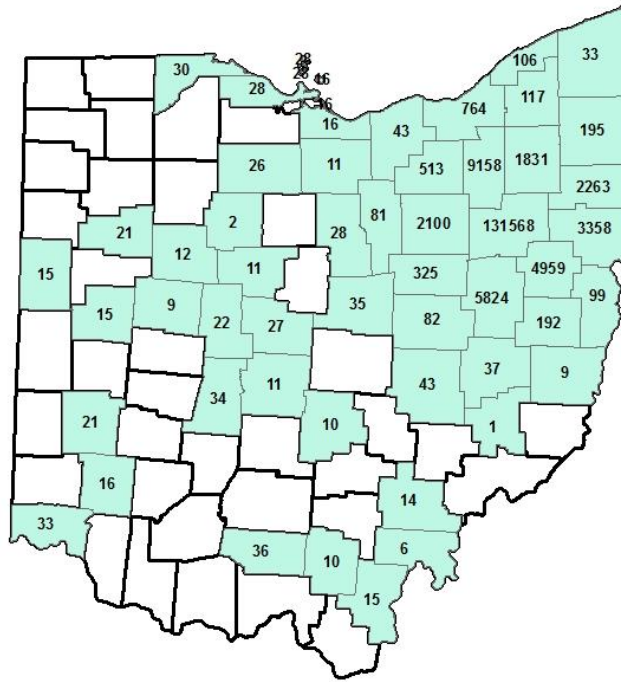
Figure 2.5 Unemployment by Political Subdivision

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is another source for employment figures publication. On a more positive note, in May 2016 the BLS published that the unemployment rate for the Canton-Massillon Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) had fallen to 5.2%, a level that had not been reached since before the Great Recession began. It is important to note though that the Canton-Massillon MSA also includes data from Carroll County.

Commuting Patterns

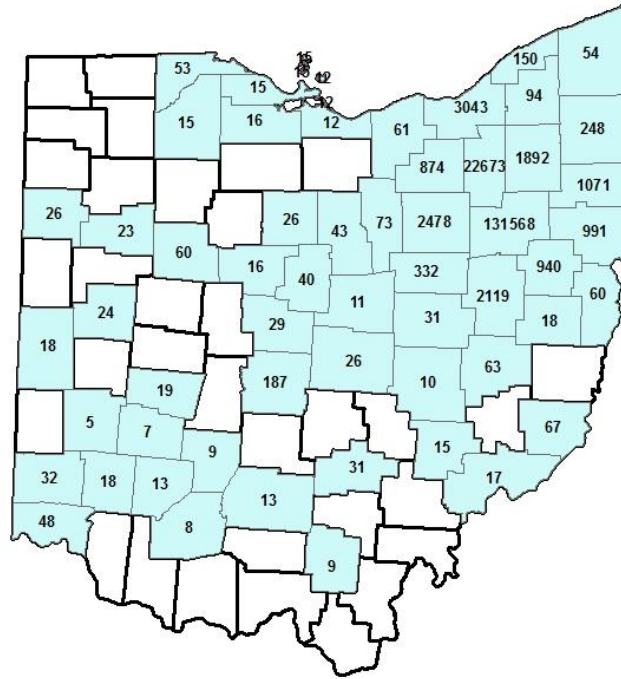
Each day, nearly 175,000 Stark County residents embark on a commute to work, according to recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. The maps below depict where people that work in Stark County live, and where Stark County residents work. The largest commuting flow is within the County, meaning most people live *and* work in Stark County (131,568 people in 2015). The map “Where Stark County Workers Live” indicates that the highest concentrations of people that work in Stark County but live elsewhere are workers living in Summit County (9,158) and Tuscarawas County (5,824). The map “Where Stark County Residents Work” again indicates that the majority of Stark County residents work in the County; however, the highest concentration of people that live in Stark County but work elsewhere are those working in Summit County (22,673) and Cuyahoga County (3,043). These patterns largely mirror those presented in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Where Stark County Workers Live



Prepared by Stark County Regional Planning Commission, 2015

Where Stark County Residents Work



Prepared by Stark County Regional Planning Commission. 2015

B.) Economy

Stark County's demographics have far-reaching impacts on the economy of Stark County, ranging from population and educational attainment, to employment and poverty. It is also important to consider how the industries and income of the area are statistically represented, particularly as they are related to the economic potential of the region. The information below analyzes the current economic situation and potential for growth within Stark County. The Ohio Development Services Agency's Office of Research also publishes an annual profile of Stark County, which provides an in-depth analysis of demographics, employment and industry.

Great Recession

In order to consider the economy in Stark County, it is important to recognize the most defining economic event in recent history. The Great Recession, which officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009, began with the national bursting of the booming \$8 trillion real estate market bubble of the mid-2000s; which, combined with the financial market chaos triggered by the bubble bursting, led to sharp cutbacks in consumer spending and a collapse in business investment. Massive job loss followed; in 2008 and 2009, the U.S. labor market lost 6.1% of all payroll employment.⁹ According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Great Recession was the worst global recession since World War II.

Unfortunately, the recovery from the Great Recession has been sluggish; in October 2010, sixteen months after the official end of the recession, the economy still had 5.4% fewer jobs than it did before the recession started. Further, according to the Wall Street Journal, in 2016,

⁹ "The Great Recession," <http://stateofworkingamerica.org/great-recession/>, Accessed July 11, 2016.

more than six years after the economic recovery began, 93% of counties in the United States have failed to fully recover from the recession.¹⁰

Income

In 2000, the median household income in Stark County was \$39,824. In 2010, the median household income was \$44,941.¹¹ For the United States in 2010, median household income was \$51,914; for the State of Ohio, median household income was \$47,358. While Stark County's median household income is lower than the state and nation's, it is indicative of the affordability of the area. Team NEO, an economic development organization focused on creating jobs for Northeast Ohio's residents, has noted that a selling point of the region has been the relatively low cost of doing business in the area. According to Team NEO, the overall cost of doing business in the region is nearly 10% lower than the national average, due to lower labor costs, energy costs, and state and local taxes. In addition, the region's cost of living is 11.4% below the national average.¹² Low cost of living was listed as the number one strength of living in Stark County, by respondents to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Survey.

Industry

Figure 2.6, Stark County Employment by Industry, shows the percentage of workers (age 16 and over) that are employed in each industry. In 2000, the majority of workers in Stark County worked in manufacturing (23.5%), and educational, health and social services (19.8%). In 2010, those two categories were still the majority, but the latter category had increased to 24.1% while manufacturing fell to 18.5%. From 2000 to 2010, manufacturing employment was the greatest source of negative percent change at -21.21%. Wholesale trade, as well as agriculture,

¹⁰ "Six Years Later..." <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2016/01/12/six-years-later-93-of-u-s-counties-havent-recovered-from-recession-study-finds/>, Accessed July 11, 2016.

¹¹ 2000 SF-3, 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate, U.S. Census Bureau

¹² "Cost of Doing Business is Low in NE Ohio," <http://www.cantonrep.com/news/20160612/cost-of-doing-business-is-low-in-ne-ohio>, Accessed July 11, 2016.

forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining were also industries that experienced a larger decline in employment. It is important to note that the most positive sources of percent change were in the arts and entertainment industry (26.6% increase) and in the professional and scientific industry (25.9% increase). Also noteworthy, the educational, health and social services industry experienced a 21.6% employment increase. These statistics reflect the trend of declining manufacturing, and increasing management and service sector jobs.

Industry	2000	2010	Percent Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.9%	0.7%	-19.6%
Construction	5.9%	5.6%	-5.1%
Manufacturing	23.5%	18.5%	-21.2%
Wholesale trade	3.8%	3.0%	-20.6%
Retail trade	12.6%	11.7%	-7.3%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.3%	4.7%	10.1%
Information	1.8%	1.8%	-0.9%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	5.4%	5.0%	-6.8%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	6.7%	8.4%	25.9%
Educational, health and social services	19.8%	24.1%	21.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	7.1%	8.9%	26.6%
Other services (except public administration)	5.2%	4.9%	-5.2%
Public administration	2.9%	2.5%	-14.3%

Figure 2.6, Stark County Employment by Industry

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-3, 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Job Hubs

In May 2017, SCRPC met with the Fund for Our Economic Future (the Fund), an “alliance of funders dedicated to advancing economic growth and equitable access to opportunity for the people of Northeast Ohio by building shared community commitment, supporting high-impact

collaborations and marshalling strategic funding.”¹³ The purpose of the meeting was to analyze the Fund’s consideration of ‘job hubs’ as a tool for planning for economic development in Stark County.

Job hubs are defined by the Fund as contiguous places with highly concentrated employment and multiple employers who participate in the ‘traded sector’ of the economy. The traded sector of the economy includes industries capable of exporting outside of a local geography, industries such as: Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Finance and Insurance, Transportation and Warehousing, Real Estate, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Management, Health Care (when its services and research can attract patients and revenue from outside the region), and Information. Other industries, such as tourism, can also be considered traded if they attract visitors and revenue from outside of the local economy. Traded sector jobs are the focus of the job hubs identified on the following map, as these tend to help improve the competitiveness of a community. Traded sector jobs typically pay higher wages than jobs in industries serving the local community, and also have a higher “spillover” effect, as the wealth they create helps sustain additional jobs in the economy.

According to the Fund’s analysis of EMSI Zip Code Employment Data, Stark County has been adding traded sector jobs to the economy since the economy began recovering from the 2008 Recession in 2010. In 2010, approximately 77,000 traded sector jobs existed; in 2014, this had increased to 85,000 traded sector jobs. The Fund noted that the majority of traded sector growth since 2010 has occurred outside of the core cities of Stark County, with an increase of approximately 4,300 traded sector jobs in the suburbs. However, as job growth migrates away from the core cities, individuals who need jobs primarily remain concentrated in the core cities.

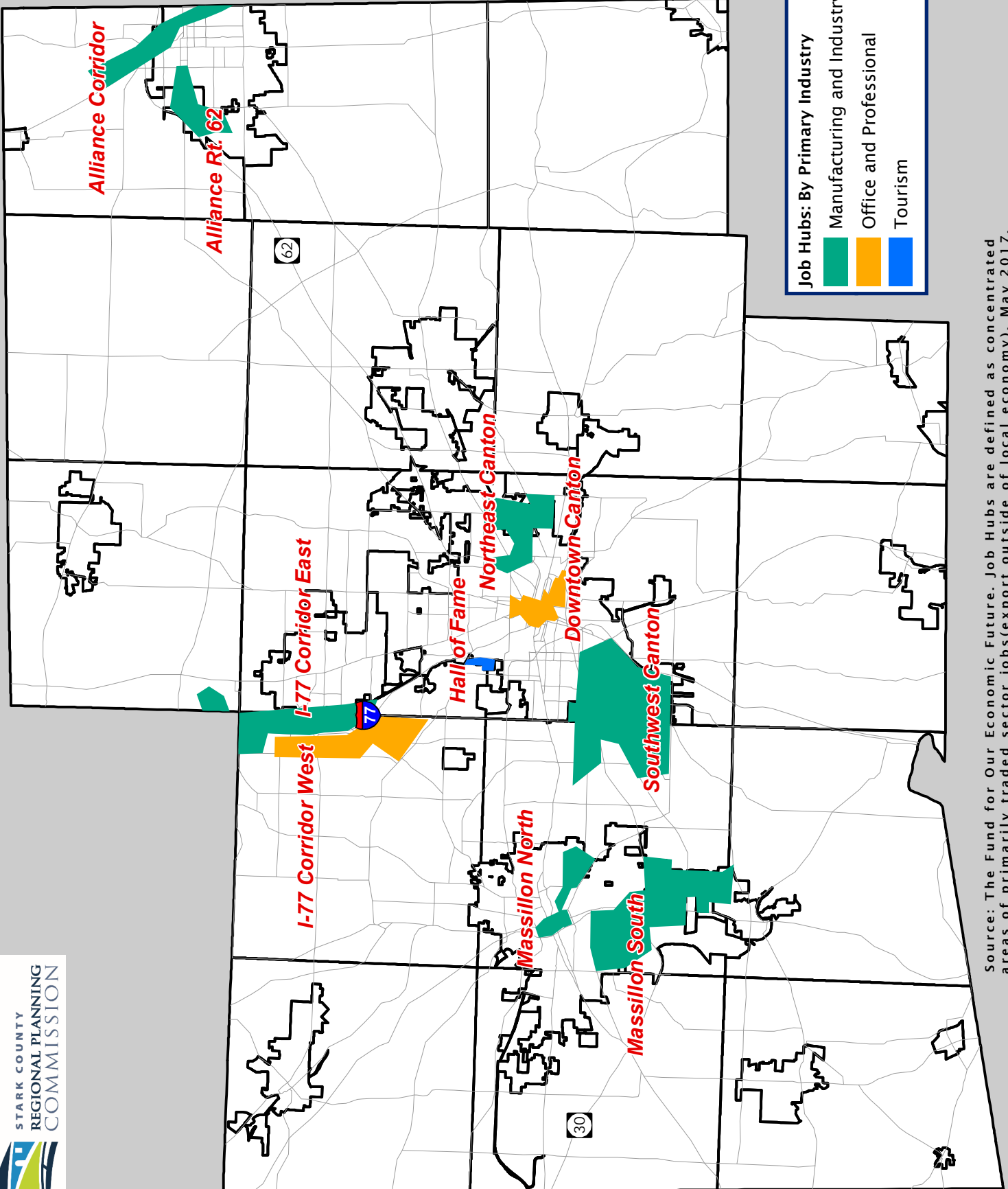
¹³ Mission and Vision, Fund for Our Economic Future, <http://www.thefundneo.org/about-us/mission-vision>, Accessed May 16, 2017.

This presents a challenge for those individuals, as people who live closer to jobs are more likely to work, and when they are out of work they tend to find new jobs quicker. This translates to higher costs for Stark County residents, who are now forced to spend a greater share of income on transportation (getting to job and amenity centers), than on housing.¹⁴

At the meeting between the Fund and SCRPC, attendees worked together to analyze and map each proposed job hub, utilizing local knowledge of existing businesses, transportation projects, and potential future land use. Using that analysis, the Fund estimated that the job hubs in Stark County: account for more than 50% of total traded employment in the County, are mainly manufacturing or office-based, and tend to be clustered around the I-77 corridor. This information supplements the economic analysis and projections presented in this plan, that discuss employment in the growing areas of Jackson and Lake Townships, coupled with a strategy to address the abandonment of the central cities by encouraging infill development. By focusing traded sector growth within identified job hubs, transportation, land use and economic development planning can be better coordinated both locally, and regionally.

¹⁴ Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing & Transportation Affordability Index Tool, <http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>, Accessed May 18, 2017.

Stark County Job Hubs



Job Hubs: By Primary Industry

- Manufacturing and Industry
- Office and Professional
- Tourism



Source: The Fund for Our Economic Future. Job Hubs are defined as concentrated areas of primarily traded sector jobs (export outside of local economy), May 2017.

Education and Workforce Development

Currently, workforce development is one key area of focus for Stark County, in an effort to improve the economic stability and prosperity of the County. Many resources exist to assist with this goal, one of the more critical ones being continuing education for adults. Ohio ranks 38th in the nation in the percentage of its adult population (age 25+) holding four-year degrees. In Stark County, according to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 14% of its residents age 25 and over have a Bachelor Degree (compared to 16% in Ohio and 18% in the nation). Over 7% of Stark County residents have an advanced degree (compared to 11% in the nation). While these percentages continue to increase every year, more can and should be done locally to improve these figures. The Ohio Department of Education offers a number of programs designed to assist adults in achieving higher education, many of which are free or low cost. One of these programs is the ABLE (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) program, which offers services pertaining to: basic math, reading and writing skills, high school equivalency diploma (GED) preparation, English as a Secondary Language (ESL) assistance, and workforce training.¹⁵ The local ABLE program offered in Stark County is through the Canton City Schools. The state also oversees OhioLearns, a database of online higher education classes available throughout the state. This database is a valuable tool for those looking to take online classes that may not be offered locally. Information about this catalog and other online services such as e-tutoring is available on the state's eStudent Services webpage (www.estudentservices.org).

In addition to the state's higher education services, several agencies currently exist to assist with workforce development; some of which include the Ohio Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, the Ohio Workforce Coalition, local and state branches of Job and Family Services, the Stark County Community Action Agency, and the Stark Development Board. Some areas of workforce development that these agencies focus on include: on-the-job/advanced training, opportunities for foster and other at-risk youth, employee-employer networking for

¹⁵ Adult Learners, Ohio Department of Higher Education, <https://ohiohighered.org>, Accessed April 26, 2016.

ex-offenders, employment opportunities for veterans, and business development training. Stark County's local workforce development board, Ohio Means Jobs, provides not only a consolidated, one-stop, resource for job seekers and employers, but they also coordinate various workforce development opportunities across the region in an attempt to maximize the economic strengthening efforts of local businesses and communities.¹⁶ The Stark County Regional Planning Commission also provides funding to assist with business development training, one example being Kent State Stark's Micro Enterprise Development program. This is a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-funded program that assists low-to-moderate income current and prospective business owners. Stark County is poised to take full advantage of the many economic opportunities it has, including its strong education and workforce development system, proximity to major cities and employers, and its skilled and experienced workforce.



¹⁶ "Who We Are," OhioMeansJobs, Serving Stark and Tuscarawas Counties, www.omjwork.com, Accessed June 12, 2016.

Planning Areas

Economic development often correlates with roadway development and improvements, particularly where and to what extent transportation improvements are needed. As such, the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS) performs an analysis of economic growth potential based on geographic planning areas, as opposed to political subdivisions, as analyzed elsewhere in the plan. It is important to note that planning area boundaries differ from political unit boundaries. Planning areas are based on Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) that approximate Census tracts as they currently exist. Approximately every ten years, SCATS reviews the existing TAZs, and revises their boundaries to reflect current rural, suburban, urban, and central business district areas. TAZs are then grouped together to form the geographic planning areas.

Growth Potential

SCATS utilizes the Traffic Analysis Zones to consider areas of Stark County as either built-out, having a potential for growth, or rural areas that may not be suitable for heavy growth. These categorizations are based on existing infrastructure, suitable land available for commercial or industrial use, as well as the ability to extend utility lines to support future development. Data from the TAZs is then aggregated to the planning area geographies, and considered for implications on employment.

SCATS' latest analysis, *Year 2040 Transportation Plan for Stark County*, was completed in May 2013. The potential for employment growth through 2040 was estimated in that plan using a constant growth rate, which is higher than the population growth rate utilized from the NEOSCC Plan.^{17,18} The analysis of anticipated employment sectors was based on trends from the last several decades, which indicate continued shifts in the suburbanization of employment

¹⁷ Using the least-squares statistical progression method to project future employment would result in decreasing employment throughout the planning period, due to the large drop in employment between 2000 and 2010, after the Great Recession. Based on past employment trends following a recession, this does not appear to be a realistic projection.

¹⁸ "Year 2040 Transportation Plan," Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS), 2013.

opportunities, growth of service jobs over manufacturing employment, and changes in the makeup of the labor force.

The SCATS 2040 Plan indicates a *potential* for employment growth that is higher in the central cities, as well as the growing communities of Jackson, Plain, and Lake Townships. Due to the fact that these projections were made in 2013, they are now considered somewhat high. A more current prediction would likely scale these estimates back due to the continued impacts of the Great Recession, as well as the slower-than-anticipated growth of the oil and gas industry.

Expanding Industries

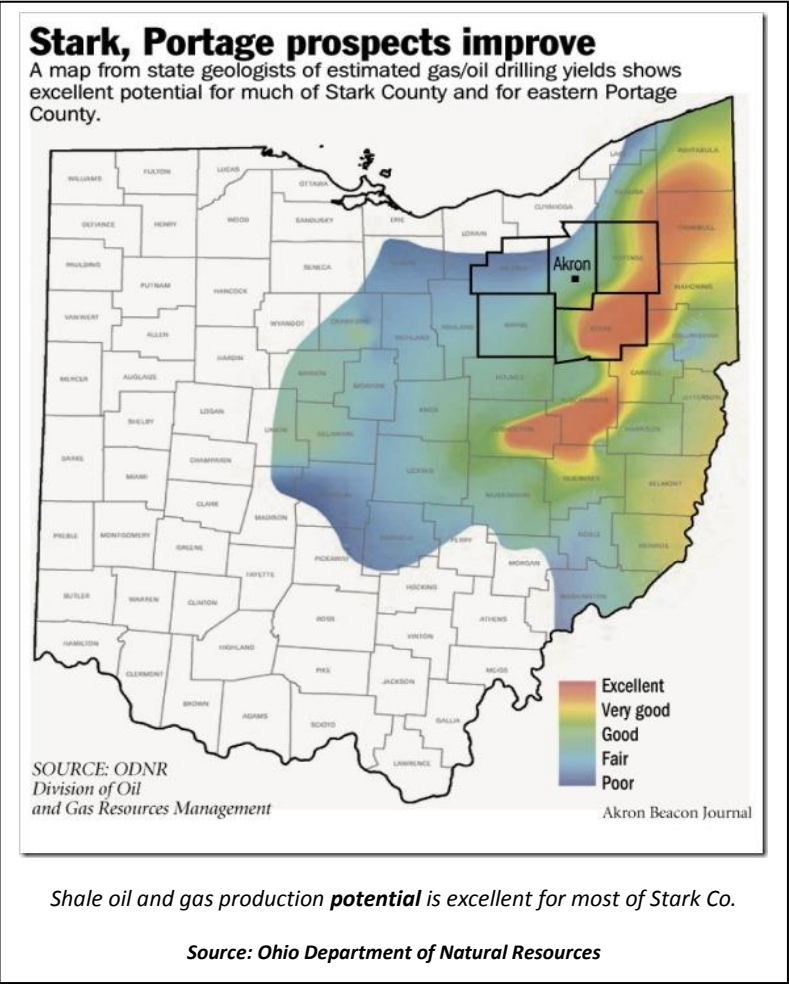


Due to its geographic location in northeast Ohio, Stark County is strategically located at the crossroads of the Eastern and Midwestern U.S. markets. There are also a number and variety of national and international companies with facilities in Stark County. In particular, Stark County serves as the corporate headquarters for The Timken Company, Timken Steel, Diebold Corporation, The Kenan

Advantage Group, Shearer's Foods, as well as the headquarters for LG Fuel Cell Systems, Inc. Local educational institutions are recognizing the potential of partnering with corporations in order to train the work force in new technologies. For instance, Stark State College constructed a Fuel Cell Prototyping Center for fuel cell development, and in 2012, LG Fuel Cell Systems consolidated its fuel cell research and development activities. Stark State also offers educational opportunities specifically for fuel cell technology and sustainable/alternative

energy. Creating such working relationships helps the community to create and retain high quality jobs.

Another event significant to Stark County's economy is the discovery of vast Marcellus and Utica shale deposits in eastern Ohio available for hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." To date, the major holders of Utica shale leasing rights in Ohio include Chesapeake Energy, Enervest & EVEC, Chevron, Anadarko, Hess Corporation, SA, Devon Energy Production and Consol/CNX Gas. These companies have also attracted numerous oil and gas service companies, like Baker Hughes in Massillon as well as other engineering firms and well-field supply companies.¹⁹ According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), as of August 2016, only thirteen drilling permits had been issued for the Utica Shale in Stark County. Stark



ranked fourteenth in the State of Ohio for number of horizontal drilling permits issued.

The downturn in energy prices from 2014-2016 has also decreased drilling activities in Stark County, allowing the industry to focus on midstream processing and transport via pipelines. In 2016, two pipelines were under construction in Stark County, with a third in the permitting

¹⁹ "Stark County, An Economy in Transition," <http://starkcoohio.com/economics>, Accessed July 11, 2016.

stage. Marathon’s Cornerstone pipeline originates in Harrison County and will connect to the Canton Marathon refinery, by way of the Marathon Tank Farm in East Sparta. The interstate Rover and Nexus pipelines will also pass through Stark County. The oil and gas industry is a highly cyclical industry; low cost energy and an abundant water supply positions Stark County well for increased manufacturing activity in the future.

Another industry that is expanding in Stark County is the entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industry, with the most recent development interest centering around the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. In 2014, the Pro Football Hall of Fame announced plans to develop the current campus into a "Hall of Fame Village." At the center of the plan is the renovation of Fawcett Stadium into Tom Benson Hall of Fame Field, expected to be used both for football and for 60 to 80 entertainment events per year. Other components of the Village include a hotel and conference center, enhanced Hall of Fame attractions, an educational and training academy, as well as retail and themed restaurants. Phased over a number of years, the facility is expected to cost roughly \$600 million.



The traffic implications of such a project are immense. ODOT undertook an interchange modification study for the I-77/US 62 & Fulton interchange at the request of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and now has a \$3.8 million improvement

project for the area. The City of Canton also has a planning study underway to explore how to better “connect” downtown Canton to the Hall of Fame area. SCATS also recently received a State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) grant to study technological enhancements to

improve traffic flows in the area. It is anticipated that such a large project will bring significant employment and tourism growth to the area.

Demographic and Economic Trends

There are numerous factors that affect the economic development and resulting employment of a region. The past several decades have yielded evidence of trends in suburbanization, labor force changes, and growth in the service sector in Stark County. Jobs have followed population shifts to the suburbs, particularly commercial and retail employment; and there has been an increasing number of older workers remaining in the labor force, attributed to a loss in retirement savings, rising health care and insurance costs for early retirees, as well as a desire to remain active and engaged.

As referenced in the Population Projections section, in October 2015, NEOSCC published an extract of the *Vibrant NEO* report, titled the *Stark County Framework Report*. Three major trends were identified in these reports: outward migration, abandonment, and the corresponding significant fiscal impacts on communities.

Outward Migration

According to the Report, the suburbanization of the County's population is projected to continue into 2040, with most of the new suburban population growth expected to occur in Lake, Jackson and northern Plain, as well as adjacent to the urban core in Perry Township and Louisville. It is likely that the population in the urban areas will continue to decline, but at a rate slower than in the past as reinvestment in the cities takes place.

There has been a more recent movement to revitalize America's "legacy cities," which are older industrial cities that have experienced sustained job and population loss over the past few decades. Legacy cities have many assets that can be starting points for revitalization and change, including downtown employment bases, stable neighborhoods, multimodal

transportation networks, colleges and universities, local businesses, historic buildings and districts, and arts, cultural and entertainment facilities. A renewed competitive advantage, which will enable them to build new economic engines and draw new populations, is likely to come from leveraging the value of their assets.²⁰

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Canton, adopted in March 2016, identifies the urban decline issue, but also recognizes the potential for reinvestment. Some of the key trends identified in the Canton Plan include reducing obligations in the form of space and buildings that it cannot afford; as well as preserving and improving the city's key assets to improve quality of life, including roads, parks, police, and sidewalks.²¹ While there are obstacles that stand in the way of change in the dynamics of these legacy cities, with creativity and dedication these cities can embark on paths of regeneration.

Abandonment and Fiscal Impacts

Low population and employment growth, coupled with outward migration, leads to the second trend identified in the NEOSCC *Stark County Framework Report*, which is the abandonment of existing homes and commercial facilities within the older, established areas. Respondents to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Survey identified industrial/commercial facility abandonment as the third highest “most severe issue” in Stark County. The increasing presence of blighted areas as a result of abandonment will become progressively burdensome for communities, because in addition to the abandonment of homes and buildings also comes the abandonment of existing roadways and sewers, which have costs associated with maintaining them, regardless of their use.

As one can see, the fiscal impact of outward migration can be quite significant on local communities, as communities are now forced to pay for both the maintenance of existing

²⁰ “Regenerating America’s Legacy Cities – A Policy Report”, https://www.lincolnst.edu/pubs/2215_Regenerating-America-s-Legacy-Cities, Accessed July 11, 2016.

²¹ “Comprehensive Plan – City of Canton, Ohio”, <http://cantonohio.gov/development/pdf/comp%20plan%20final.pdf>, Accessed July 11, 2016.

infrastructure, and the development of new infrastructure and services in developing areas. It is not surprising, therefore, that deterioration of roads/bridges was ranked as the most severe issue in Stark County, while aging/deteriorating public water and sewer facilities was ranked as the most severe public utilities/infrastructure issue.

Characteristics of the economy are anticipated to continue changing, as people hold multiple jobs, more transactions are made online, and more people work remotely. These aspects of employment and industry will continue to have implications on land use and planning. Clearly, the challenges that Stark County faces are recognized by its citizens. Although the list of challenges associated with growth or expansion may seem unsettling, to legacy cities especially, the positive impacts of increased population, employment, and industry are beneficial to the entire County. With proper coordination and land use planning, many of the physical changes resulting from growth and/or change can be anticipated and addressed.

C.) Objectives and Strategies

1. Attract reinvestment into already established areas to improve economic conditions and reduce urban sprawl.
 - a. Encourage businesses to relocate within established areas and/or identified job hubs by promoting the incentive programs those communities have to offer, and explore new methods to expand those programs currently in place.
 - b. Focus on projects that reinvest in the existing infrastructure network and discourage the extension of new roadways into undeveloped areas.
 - c. Continue to apply for brownfield grants and funding to help with the identification and cleanup of environmentally contaminated properties to bring those properties back into productive use.
 - d. Use the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) to acquire properties that have been abandoned to reduce blight and return those sites to productive use.
 - e. Protect declining agricultural land use through zoning regulations and promote land conservation incentive programs.

2. Encourage continued pursuits of educational attainment and the retention of those individuals within the County.
 - a. Focus on job training and workforce development by reaching out to employers to determine what skills and qualifications are needed, and encourage the pursuit of related programs.
 - b. Increase the opportunities and amenities available within the County to attract young professionals.
 - c. Encourage the local colleges to continue expanding their programs to focus on the growing industries within the County, and focus job training efforts towards those industries.
 - d. Promote the low cost of living within Stark County, which is considered one of its greatest strengths by its residents.

3. Improve economic conditions across the County.
 - a. Continue to work with agencies that provide services for those living in poverty (Community Services of Stark County, the Stark County Community Action Agency, ICAN Housing and the United Way, among others).
 - b. Address the financial needs of those individuals living in poverty, as well as hunger and nutritional issues, lack of healthcare and housing needs.
 - c. Focus on reaching out to minorities, who tend to make up a larger percentage of the individuals living in poverty, by breaking language barriers and informing those in need of the programs available to provide assistance.
 - d. Promote tourism growth projects, such as the Hall of Fame Village project, by providing advice and/or assistance where possible.

III. LAND USE

Stark County is unique in that it has a diversity of areas. While many counties tend to be predominantly urban, suburban, or rural, Stark County has substantial amounts of each type of land use. Land use describes the way land is developed and used in terms of the types of activities, size, and structures allowed. In the United States, land use is generally regulated at the local level, and is based on zoning and other regulations. While many communities have county-wide zoning, Stark County is unique in that of the 17 townships, 12.5 are zoned. There is no zoning in Tuscarawas, Sugarcreek, Sandy, and Paris Townships; Bethlehem Township is partially zoned. This section of the comprehensive plan provides an overview of the existing physical conditions, implications of development policies and land use decisions in Stark County over the years, and makes projections into the future.

Below are different graphics detailing current and future land use in Stark County. The acreages for current and future land use have been calculated using ESRI’s ArcMap 10.3 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. The current land use data is based on the Stark County Auditor’s 2015 tax assessment data and aerial photography, and SCRPC’s independent data collection. Figure 3.1 details the land use changes in Stark County from 1965-2004, while Figures 3.2 and 3.3 further below detail the County land use in 2015, as well as the projected land use in 2040.

Land Use	1965		1975		1980		1988		2004	
	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres
Residential	10.8	39,181	12.3	44,738	13.4	48,639	13.8	49,891	17.6	64,003
Commercial	1.0	3,627	1.2	4,422	1.3	5,005	1.3	4,644	1.9	6,979
Industrial	0.9	3,265	1.1	3,958	1.1	4,054	1.2	4,381	1.4	4,932
Transport. Comm. Utilities	4.2	15,307	4.6	16,528	4.7	17,207	4.8	17,591	5.2	18,708
Parks & Open Space	-	*	1.9	6,878	2.0	7,167	2.3	8,455	2.5	8,928
Agricultural	-	**	50.9	184,593	50.1	181,610	49.5	179,399	44.6	161,899
Water***	0.8	2,902	1.0	3,940	1.1	3,940	1.1	4,035	1.9	6,723
Public	1.5	5,442	1.6	5,714	1.6	5,772	1.6	5,834	1.6	5,916
Undeveloped	80.8	293,060	25.4	92,013	24.5	89,386	24.4	88,554	23.3	84,696
Total	100	362,784	100	362,784	100	362,784	100	362,784	100	362,784

Figure 3.1, Stark County Land Use Changes, 1965-2004

* = included with Public

** = included with Undeveloped

*** = approximately 1,100 acres of water are available for public use (boating, fishing, etc.) as parkland but are not reflected in the acreage total of parks

The 2040 land use projections below were calculated by first taking the average percent change for each land use category over the four-year period of 2012-2015; that percent change was then projected onto each five-year increment from 2015-2040.²² Figures 3.2 and 3.3 include a greater number of categories of land use than the 1965-2004 table did, which is the result of improved mapping systems and analytical capacities. The land use categories in the 2015 table were computed by grouping together individual parcels based on their assigned land use tax assessment code.²³ With the new assessment and mapping methods, there are some parcels in the County that have no assigned assessment code, such as roadways or survey discrepancies, and are therefore accounted for in the “null” category. When added to all of the other land use categories, the acres of land in Stark County total 371,260 acres. The total County acreage is higher than the 1965-2004 calculations due to previous calculation adjustments and mapping methodology advancements.

²² In 2016, parcel-level land use data was made available from the Stark County Auditor for 2009-2016. Earlier data was not available at a comparable level, and the 2009-2011 data was excluded due to land use coding discrepancies.

²³ See Appendix A for more information.

Land Use	2015		2040		(Difference)
	%	Acres	%	Acres	Acres
Residential	33.4%	123,852	33.9%	125,870	2,018
Agricultural	39.5%	146,473	39.2%	145,578	-895
Commercial	3.6%	13,438	3.7%	13,684	246
Industrial	2.4%	8,970	2.6%	9,829	859
Public Service	7.2%	26,633	7.8%	29,019	2,386
Recreation	1.3%	4,847	1.4%	5,083	236
Vacant Land	6.8%	25,205	6.2%	22,876	-2,329
Null	5.8%	21,842	5.2%	19,321	-2,521
TOTAL	100%	371,260	100%	371,260	N/A

Figure 3.2, Stark County Land Use Changes, 2015-2040

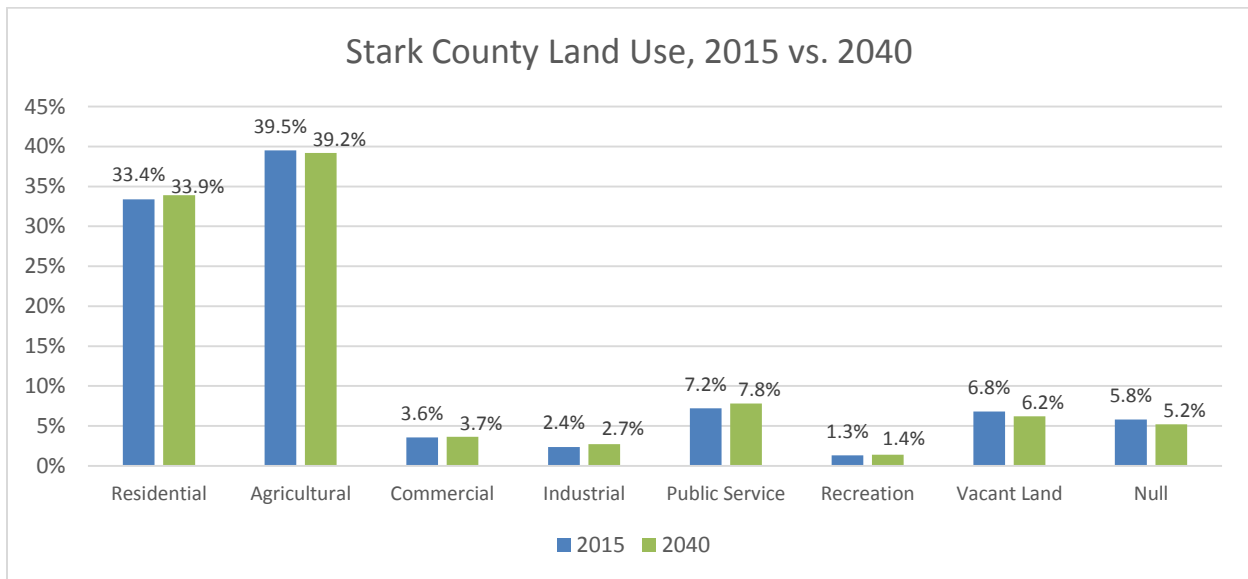


Figure 3.3, Stark County Land Use, 2015 vs. 2040

A.) Current Land Uses

Agricultural

Agriculture has remained a major land use in Stark County. Major areas of agricultural activity include large portions of the east side of the County in Marlboro, Osnauburg, Paris and Washington Townships, as well as areas west and southwest of Massillon in Bethlehem, Sugarcreek and Tuscarawas Townships. This land use has been decreasing consistently over the years. Agricultural land use decreased from 50.9% in 1975 to 49.5% in 1988. It decreased further to 44.6% in 2004, and in 2015, only 146,473 acres (39.5%) of land were classified as agricultural.²⁴



Agricultural land located in Ohio
Source: Farm Progress

With the exodus from the County’s urban core areas to the growing suburbs, there has been significant pressure on rural areas. As large farms are divided into smaller residential tracts, or into large home estate tracts, agricultural land is lost. This is reflected in the statistics presented above – over the past forty years, agricultural land use in Stark County has decreased by more than 10%. This plan projects that by 2040, without conservation measures in place, agricultural land use will decline by almost 900 acres.

Further below in this chapter, the Food and Farming section details the loss of farmland specifically in Stark County. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service’s (NASS) 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture (most recent census), between 2007-2012 the land in farms in

²⁴ For the purposes of interpreting the Stark County Auditor’s DTE Land Use Classification Codes, only tracts greater than twenty acres were considered “Agricultural” as twenty acres is the recommended land area for an agricultural zoning district.

Stark County decreased from 138,061 acres to 135,749 acres, a 2% decrease.²⁵ It is important to reiterate that data obtained from the NASS includes only currently farmed land and land fallow for less than one year. SCRPC’s GIS calculations include not only those areas, but also lands fallow for longer periods of time, farm buildings, residences and other lands not necessarily defined as “agricultural” by the NASS standards. The Food and Farming section details objectives and strategies for preserving valuable agricultural lands in Stark County; these protective measures have the ability to ensure that development is encouraged in already established areas.

Residential

Residential land use refers predominantly to the denser living areas in the County, and includes single-family dwellings, as well as two-family and multi-family residential properties. This category of land use has recorded consistent growth over the years. It constituted 10.8% of the land in the County in 1965 and rose to 13.4% in 1980. Between 1988 and 2004, residential land use increased from 13.8% to 17.6%. Since 2004 though, residential land use has increased significantly from 64,003 acres in 2004 to 123,852 acres (33.4%) of the total land area of the County in 2015. The substantial growth of residential land use over the past 50 years can largely be attributed to low density, dispersed development patterns. Most suburban development is characterized by single-family detached dwellings, curving streets, cul-de-sacs, and large lawns. Typical suburban design facilitates automobile usage; consequently garages, driveways, and spacious parking lots are common fixtures.



²⁵ The 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture data collection was underway at the time of this publication.

This automobile dependence tends to isolate those who cannot afford or operate cars, such as children and the elderly, as low-density design makes public transportation less practical. The benefits of this type of development are under debate nationwide, as communities are experiencing ever-increasing traffic and commuting times, as well as rapid declines in productive farmlands. Growth on the outskirts of cities frequently outpaces the demand for housing in older, inner-city areas, resulting in “leapfrog” development that ignores opportunities for infill, and places an increased burden to expand roads and infrastructure. Recently, there has been increased demand for residences in more walkable, compact areas, also known as mixed-use development, which is described in further detail below. According to the Census, 7.4% of households in Stark County do not have access to a vehicle, a subset of the population that would certainly benefit from more walkable, compact areas.²⁶ The future growth of residential land use in the County is projected to keep pace with population growth through the plan period, reaching 33.9% (increase of approximately 2,000 acres) of the County land area by 2040. It is expected, however, that much of the growth will be concentrated in the northern portion of the County in Jackson and Lake Townships, and will consist of primarily single-family dwellings in low-density developments. Minimal growth is anticipated in the number of two- and multi-family dwellings.

Commercial

Commercial land use in the County includes retail, office, services, and other businesses. Commercial land is mainly concentrated in the central business districts of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance, yet there is a very substantial amount in other major townships. Commercial land use constituted 1% of the total land area in 1965. It increased slightly to 1.3% in 1980, and had reached 1.9% by 2004. Currently, it covers 13,438 acres (3.6%) of the total land area in the County.

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimate

One possible explanation for the large increase in commercial land is the elimination and subsequent reallocation of certain land use categories utilized through 2004, further described in the Industrial section below. Another possible explanation for the increase in commercial land is the economic boom that was



Aerial view of downtown Canton
Source: Aerial Aspect Photography

occurring in the 2000s until the 2008 Recession. This boom was possibly not fully captured in the 2004 land use values, as commercial/industrial land use continued increasing through 2007. This can be seen through the number of commercial site plans that SCRPC reviews annually. In 2006, SCRPC reviewed 156 site plans; this increased to 174 site plans in 2007, but decreased to 107 in 2008. The number of site plans reviewed decreased even more to 49 in 2009. In 2015, this number increased to 107, which may indicate a recent, although still uncertain, upturn. Also indicative of the economic downturn in 2008 is the number of new lots platted in Stark County. In 2007, there were 294 new lots platted; this number decreased to 88 in 2008, and to 17 in 2009, but increased to 64 in 2015.

Commercial land use is not expected to change much through the plan period. However, as new residential areas are developed, neighborhood commercial facilities oftentimes are developed nearby for convenience. Commercial land use is projected to reach 3.7% of the County land area by 2040, an increase of only 0.1% (approximately 250 acre increase) from 2015.

Industrial

Industrial activities have long played a key role in Stark County's economy. Major industrial activities are primarily located in the Cities of Canton and Massillon, as well as in suburban areas immediately east and southwest of Canton.



The Timken Company's Faircrest Plant located in Perry Township
Source: Canton Repository

Other industrial activities are located in the City of Alliance. The County's industrial land use constituted 0.9% in 1965. This figure rose to 1.1% in 1980, and to 1.4% by 2004. Since then, there has been an increase in the industrial land in Stark County, as 8,970 acres (2.4%) are now classified as such. Part of this increase may be explained by the fact that the "Transportation, Communication, and Utilities" land use classification used until 2004 is no longer a land use category. The land previously identified in that category included airfields, railway yards, truck terminals, utility sub-stations, and utility offices/plants. When this category was reclassified after 2004, much of the land was likely divided between the commercial and industrial land use classes. Industrial land use is not expected to change significantly throughout the plan period, as trends in land use nationwide reveal a continuing decline in manufacturing within this region. Industrial land use is projected to cover 2.7% (approximately 860 acre increase) of the County land area by 2040.

Public Service

The Public Service category of land use includes schools, medical institutions, religious facilities,



*Aultman Hospital campus located in Canton
Source: Medscape*

cultural facilities, government offices, other public buildings, and railroad properties. These facilities are widely scattered throughout the County. With the exception of schools and government buildings serving the rural townships, many of these land uses are found in urban

service areas of the County. This category of land use grew from 1.5% in 1965 to 1.6% in 1975. In 2004, this figure remained at 1.6%. Since 2004, the public service land use category has increased to 26,633 acres (7.2%). This is largely due to the inclusion of two land use categories that were previously considered separately. Since 2004, the “Water” land use category has been incorporated into both the “Public Service” and the “Recreation” land use designations, depending on ownership. In addition, as described in the Industrial section above, the “Transportation, Communication, and Utilities” land use classification included railroad property, which is now also included in the “Public Service” category. With some additional schools and public buildings expected to be built in the developing suburban areas, this land use is expected to reach 7.8% (approximately 2,400 acre increase) of the County land area by 2040.

Recreation

Recreation land use in the County has seen considerable growth over the years. In 1975, it constituted 1.9%; this figure grew to 2.3% by 1988, and was 2.5% in 2004. In 2004, parks and recreation uses were considered as one land use category. Using the Auditor’s tax assessment

codes, they are now categorized based on ownership (public versus private).²⁷ In other words, all parks owned by governmental entities are lumped into the Public Service category, and privately-owned parks and recreational facilities are included in the Recreation category. The one exception is land owned by Stark Parks, which due to its own unique land assessment code is able to be extracted out of Public Service and added to Recreation. This is why it appears that recreational land use went down significantly in 2015 (4,847 acres; or 1.3%), even though it did not.



*Quail Hollow State Park located in Lake Township
Source: Lake Township Chamber*

In addition to Stark Parks-owned land, other uses in the Recreation category include those tracts used for private recreation, such as golf courses, driving ranges, and campgrounds. Land in the Recreation category is projected to grow to 1.4% (approximately 235 acre increase) of the County land area by 2040. Although public parklands will increase throughout the length of the plan, overall growth of recreation areas is expected to be muted slightly as private open space areas, such as golf courses, succumb to development. For a more detailed explanation on parks and recreation, see the Open Space and Recreation section of Chapter IV.

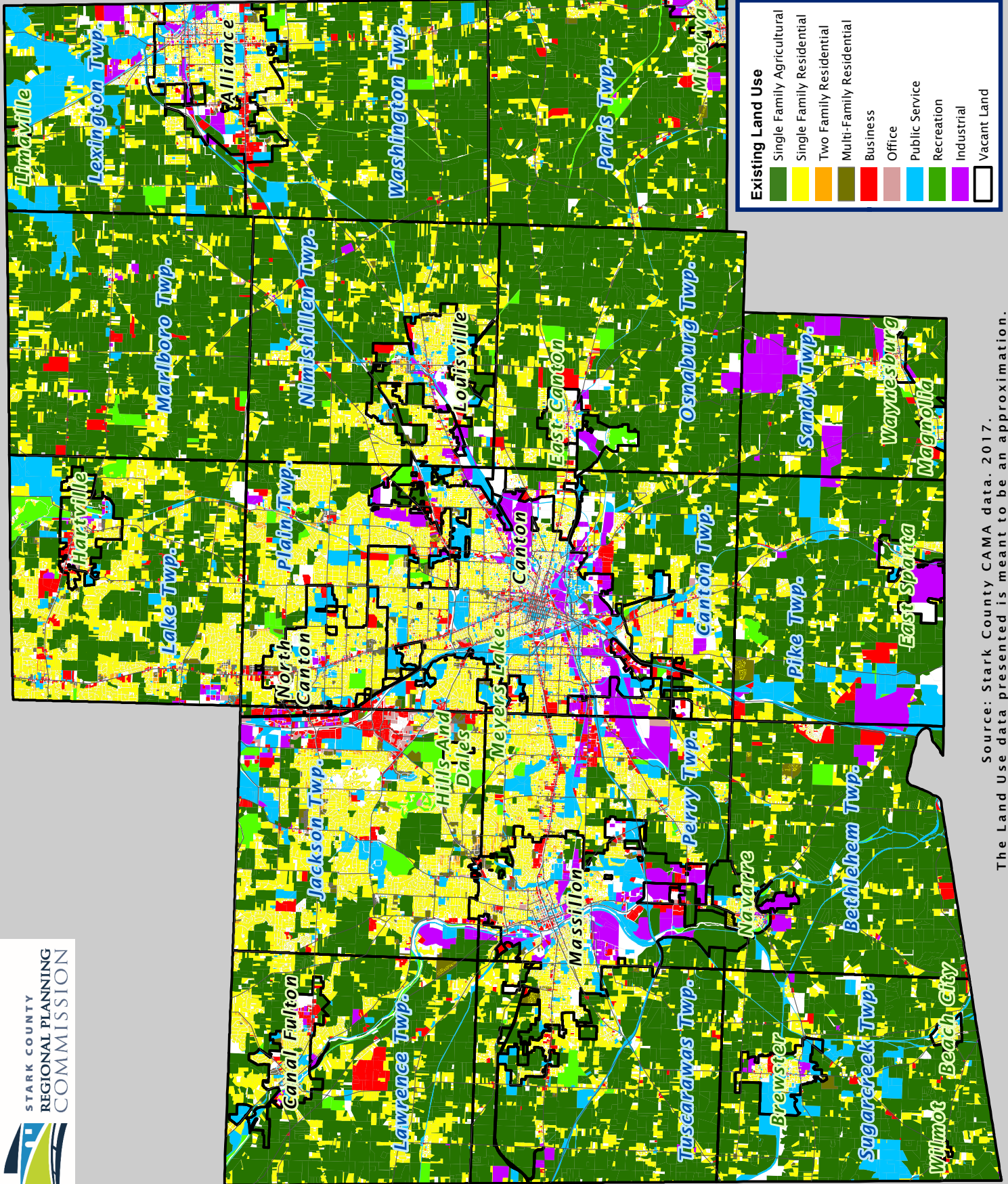
Vacant Land

Vacant land constitutes undeveloped areas not used for agricultural activities. Typical uses of this land are resource extraction and intended residential/commercial/industrial open spaces (based on surrounding land uses and current character of the land). Land under this category

²⁷ The Auditor's land use classification system groups publicly-owned land together by their respective jurisdiction type (city, village, township, with the Stark County Park District listed separately).

has been declining since 1975, as areas such as strip mines are reclaimed and put into other land uses and as new allotments are being developed. Vacant land declined from 25.4% in 1975 to 24.4% in 1988, and further declined to 23.3% by 2004. Since 2004, vacant land has decreased significantly to 25,205 acres (6.8% of total land area). This category of land is expected to decline further to 6.2% (approximately 2,300 acre decrease) of the County land area by 2040. This decrease, combined with the continual development of the single-family tracts is a land use trend that will have dramatic consequences on available land if not planned for and protected appropriately.

Existing Land Use



Source: Stark County CAMA data, 2017.
The Land Use data presented is meant to be an approximation.

B.) Food and Farming

The production and consumption of food is an aspect of life that affects Stark County residents and workers on a daily basis. Respondents to the 2040 Stark County Comprehensive Plan Survey ranked “lack of access to fresh, local foods” as their highest concern, and “loss of agricultural lands” as their 2nd highest concern within the open space/environment section of the survey. Agriculture has continued to have a significant impact on the environment and the economy of the County. Cropland and pasture combined make up 36.45% of the County’s land use/land cover, with 146,473 acres of land in farms. The market value of the agricultural goods produced from within Stark County is over \$130 million. At the state level, agriculture is Ohio’s number one industry, contributing more than \$93 billion to the state’s economy.²⁸ Ohio is home to more than 1,000 food processing companies and produces more than 200 commercial crops. The agriculture industry supports one in six jobs in the state of Ohio.²⁹ In Stark County, there are a number of food production and processing facilities, including Brewster Cheese, Nickles Bakery, Case Farms, Fresh Mark, Shearers, and Superior Dairy.

Despite the positive impacts on the economy, it can be difficult to maintain agricultural lands in the face of increasing real estate development. According to the 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture, since 2007 the number of farms in Stark County had decreased from 1,300 to 1,168 and the land in farms had decreased from 138,061 acres to 135,749 acres. In addition to the decreasing amount of farmland area in the County, the area from which the average consumer purchases their food (known as a “foodshed”) is only increasing. In 1969, a national U.S. estimate of the average distance that food traveled from the point of production to the point of

²⁸ “2012 Census of Agriculture County Profile – Stark County, Ohio,”

http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Ohio/cp39151.pdf, Accessed December 2, 2015.

²⁹ “Supporting Grocery Development in Ohio,”

http://www.financefund.org/userfiles/files/Other%20Documents/OH_recommFINAL.pdf, Accessed December 2, 2015.

consumption was 1,346 miles; by 1980 this distance had increased to 1,500 miles.³⁰ Larger foodsheds not only have deep impacts on local farmers, but also affect national roadways and the environment, as large vehicles travel great distances to deliver food.

Given current agricultural statistics, there are many methods that local communities can implement to further solidify the relationship between Stark County food producers and consumers. The tools described below have the potential to link farm and food in a manner that has implications on agricultural production for current consumers, as well as agricultural preservation for future generations.

Farming

Historical Impact

Agriculture has played a contributing role in Stark County's history for over 200 years. It has not only been a source of income and livelihood, but has contributed to civic and social well-being through agriculture-related organizations, family heritage, and inventive spirit. This resourcefulness, tied to meeting agricultural needs, has led Stark County to become more than just an agricultural community.

As in many areas of the country, the initial growth in manufacturing owes its origins to meeting the needs of agriculture. In the mid-1800s, Stark County was one of Ohio's leading wheat producing areas. Due to the manual labor required to harvest wheat, there was a demand for improved harvesting methods and Cornelius Aultman built and successfully marketed an early reaper. This eventually led to the formation of the C. Aultman Company of Canton, which became one of the largest manufacturing companies of farm steam engines, threshers, and other implements. This, as well as other developments, such as Henry Timken's design and

³⁰ "Checking the Food Odometer," <https://www.leopold.iastate.edu/>, Accessed January 29, 2016.

patent on a roller bearing to improve carriages, laid a foundation for industrial manufacturing, which carried Stark County's economy for many years.³¹

Present Impact

Detailed agricultural information is collected by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) through the Census of Agriculture every five years. Every farm or ranch operator who sold (or normally would have sold) at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products is required to report land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income, and expenditures.

Stark County is among the leading agricultural counties in Ohio in a number of areas. In 2012, Stark County ranked 3rd in broilers and other meat-type chickens; 3rd in vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes; 9th in fruits, tree nuts, and berries; 9th in pheasants; and 9th in the production of poultry and eggs.



*Farm Animal in Osnaburg Township
Source: SCRPC*

According to the 2012 USDA Agricultural Census, most farms in Stark County (220) had less than \$1,000 in annual sales. To contrast, only 45 farms were selling \$500,000 or more annually. Related, 625 principal operators responded that farming was not their primary occupation, while 543 operators stated that farming was their primary occupation. This indicates that many of the farms in Stark County are what are known as 'hobby farms,' small farms operated for pleasure or supplemental income rather than for primary income.

³¹ "2030 Comprehensive/Transportation Plan," Stark County Regional Planning Commission, 2005.

Understanding the Loss of Farmland

While statistics indicate that Stark County has a strong presence in Ohio’s agriculture industry, it also shows that the number of farms and amount of land in agricultural production is declining. As noted previously, the latest USDA Agricultural Census, taken in 2012, indicates that 135,749 acres of farmland were reported across 1,168 farms in Stark County. This indicates an 11.3% reduction in the number of farms, and a 1.7% reduction in farmland since 2007. Since 2002, the number of farms has dropped by 14.5%, and the acres of farmland have dropped by 6.5%. The market value of production on this land in 2012 was \$130,693,000, which shows a 4% drop since 2007. This placed Stark County 33rd out of the 88 counties in Ohio and 909th out of 3,007 counties throughout the United States for the total value of agricultural products sold.

According to the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, an average of 394 acres of farmland disappears every day in the state of Ohio.³² There are several explanations for the loss of farmland, one of which is residential

Stark County	2002	2007	2012
Acres of Farm Land	145,163	138,061	135,749
Number of Farms	1,337	1,300	1,168
Market Value of Production (\$1,000)	\$69,046	\$135,671	\$130,693

Figure 3.4, Stark County Farmland Analysis
Source: USDA Agricultural Census

development. As lifestyle standards have changed over the years, significant portions of the population desire larger homes on larger lots. This demand results in increased land prices, placing farmers at a disadvantage in the market. Not only does this make it more difficult for farms to expand, but the increased value of farmland also makes it tempting to sell, especially as farm operators near retirement. This has resulted in disagreements over farmland preservation among farmers as they seek to realize the maximum value for their largest asset, their land.

One of the largest changes that has affected the agricultural economy is where consumers eat. The rise of the fast food and hospitality industries has had a far-reaching effect that most do

³² “Farmland Preservation,” Western Reserve Land Conservancy, <http://www.wrlandconservancy.org/whatwedo/workingfarms/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

not fully understand. As the nation's largest purchaser of beef and potatoes, and the second largest purchaser of chickens, McDonald's, and other large corporations have dominated the marketplace for many farm products.³³ Centralized purchasing and the desire for standardized products have favored corporate, factory-type farms over family farms, affecting not only the production, but also the processing of farm goods.

Energy and Agriculture

Over the past century, the energy sector of the economy has had a substantial impact on the agriculture industry. Volatile energy markets have disturbed the economies of farming by increasing the expense of operating equipment, fertilizer and other supplies. Changing technologies can place farms unable to afford them at a disadvantage. More efficient yet expensive equipment, new strains of seed, and new additives to increase production are all developments that alter a farm's economics. In addition, agriculture has been impacted by climate change. Many regions have experienced declines in crop and livestock production from increased stress due to weeds, diseases, and insect pests.³⁴



While agriculture is affected by the energy market, agriculture has also had an impact on the energy market itself. Ethanol is a renewable fuel made from various plant materials, collectively known as biomass. More than 95% of U.S. gasoline contains ethanol, used to oxygenate the fuel and reduce air pollution.³⁵ Ethanol is also available as a high-level ethanol blend, which is a fuel

³³ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

³⁴ "Effects of Industrial Agriculture," *Perspectives in Agriculture*, <http://www.columbia.edu/~km2683/pdfs/Lin%20et%20al.%202011.pdf>, Accessed February 2, 2016.

³⁵ "Ethanol Fuel Basics," *Alternative Fuels Data Center*, http://www.afdc.energy.gov/fuels/ethanol_fuel_basics.html.

that can be used in flexible fuel vehicles. The corn crop has greatly increased to meet the demand for ethanol fuels. In 2014, America harvested a record corn crop of 14.2 billion bushels; this was the first time in history that corn production surpassed 14 billion bushels, nearly double average yields in the early 1990s.³⁶

In order to produce such large volumes of corn and other grains required to produce ethanol, industrial agriculture practices are often implemented. Large-scale crop production requires farm equipment that runs on fossil fuels, and coal-powered ethanol refineries can lead to higher greenhouse gas emissions than the fossil fuel that ethanol is intended to replace.³⁷ According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, agriculture is responsible for almost a quarter of the continuing increase of greenhouse gas emissions. Methane is the second most prevalent greenhouse gas emitted in the United States from human activities; methane is emitted by natural sources such as wetlands, as well as human activities such as raising livestock. Domestic livestock produce large amounts of methane as part of their normal digestive process; methane is also produced when animals' manure is stored or managed.³⁸ Industrial agriculture can contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions; alternatively, ecologically based methods for agricultural production, predominantly used on small-scale farms, are far less energy-consuming and release fewer greenhouse gases than industrial agriculture production.³⁹

Priorities for Preservation

Almost 50% of the land in Ohio is classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "prime farmland," which is the most fertile and productive land in the country. To compare with other states, Ohio has the fifth highest percentage of prime farmland in the nation. However, Ohio

³⁶ "Ethanol Facts: Agriculture," Renewable Fuels Association, <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/>, Accessed February 2, 2016.

³⁷ "Agriculture," U.S. Global Change Research Program, <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/sectors/agriculture>, Accessed February 3, 2016.

³⁸ "Overview of Greenhouse Gases," United States Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/gases/ch4.html>, Accessed February 19, 2016.

³⁹ "Effects of Industrial Agriculture," Perspectives in Agriculture, <http://www.columbia.edu/~km2683/pdfs/Lin%20et%20al.%202011.pdf>, Accessed February 2, 2016.

has also lost more high-quality acres of farmland than any state except Texas.⁴⁰ In the following pages is a map that shows the farmland types in Stark County, indicating areas of prime farmland, prime farmland if drained, as well as areas that are not prime farmland. Approximately 82,000 acres of land in the County is designated as either “prime farmland if drained” or “prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season,” and roughly 194,000 acres are designated as “not prime farmland”.⁴¹ This map may be utilized as a reference for communities interested in agricultural preservation, as well as a resource for determining areas that are not prime farmland, and perhaps better suited for development. Specifically, there are regions in Stark County that are found to have productive soils, and should be heavily considered for agricultural preservation. The two regions are eastern Stark County and western Stark County.

Eastern Stark County

Marlboro Township (17,295 acres in agricultural lands) has the highest concentration of agricultural land use in Stark County.

Osnaburg Township (16,704 acres) and Paris Township (16,332 acres) have the second and third highest concentration of agricultural land use, respectively.

Washington Township (14,019 acres) and Nimishillen Township (13,139 acres) are also in the top 50% of townships in the County for agricultural land use. Due to limited sanitary sewer and water extensions, suburban expansion into these townships is expected to be nominal for

Township	Acres of Farmland
Marlboro	17,295
Osnaburg	16,704
Paris	16,332
Bethlehem	15,054
Sugarcreek	14,449
Washington	14,049
Nimishillen	13,139
Tuscarawas	12,947
Lawrence	12,731

Figure 3.5, Stark County Acres of Farmland

Source: USDA Agricultural Census

⁴⁰ “Farmland Preservation,” Western Reserve Land Conservancy, <http://www.wrlandconservancy.org/whatwedo/workingfarms/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

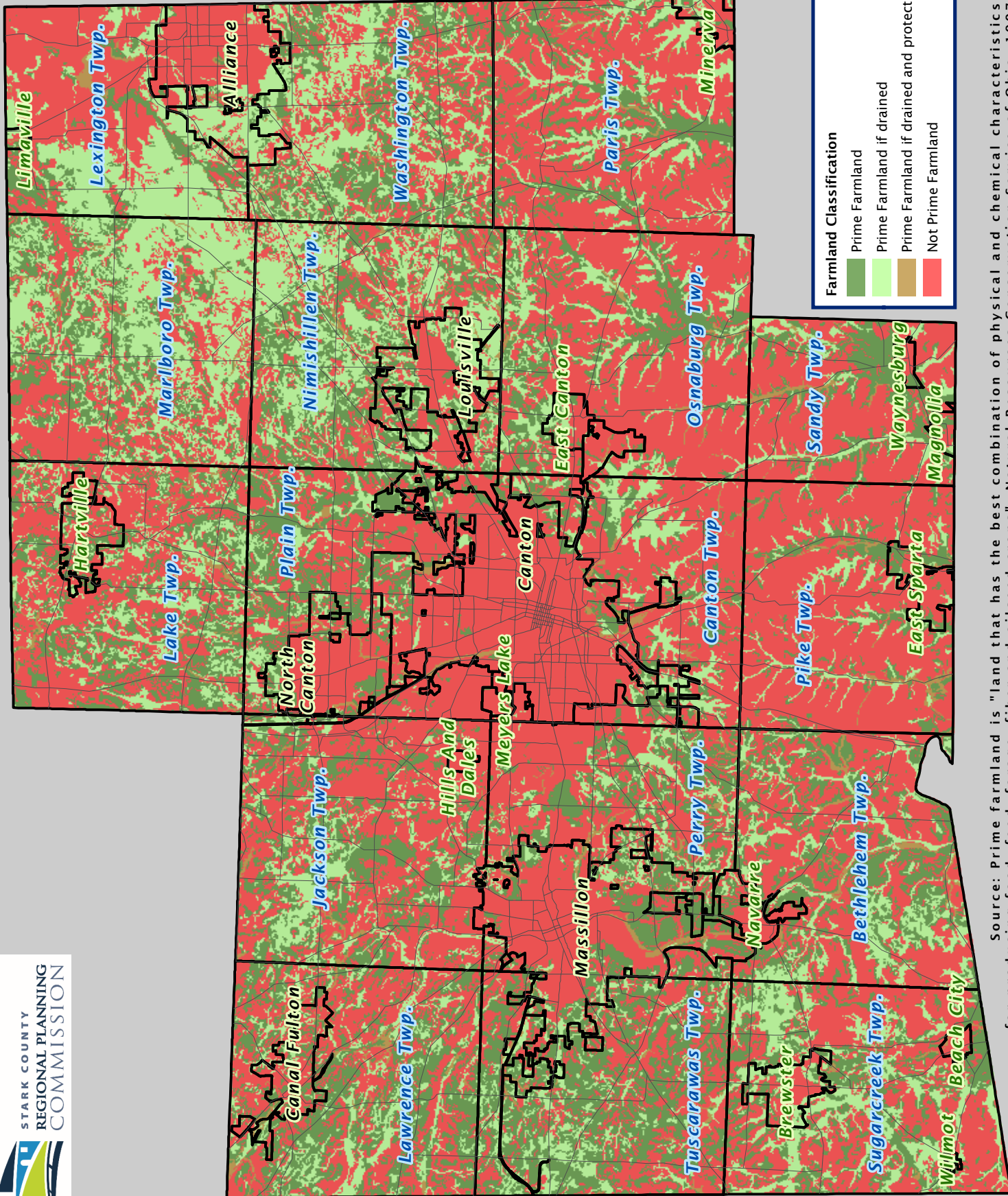
⁴¹ “Web Soil Survey,” United States Department of Agriculture, <http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>, Accessed January 8, 2016.

the most part. The southwestern parts of Nimishillen Township have already seen, and may be further impacted by peripheral growth around the City of Louisville. Similarly, the northern part of Washington Township may be affected by suburban expansion of the City of Alliance, where public water and sewer services may be extended.

Western Stark County

Bethlehem Township (15,054 acres in agricultural land), Sugarcreek Township (14,449 acres), Tuscarawas Township (12,947 acres), and Lawrence Township (12,731 acres) form a second major agricultural district in Stark County. Farm uses in this area could be adversely affected by suburban expansion of the Cities of Massillon and Canal Fulton, and possibly by growth of the Villages of Navarre and Brewster, and should therefore be carefully planned for.

Farmland Classification



Farmland Classification	
■	Prime Farmland
■	Prime Farmland if drained
■	Prime Farmland if drained and protected
■	Not Prime Farmland

Source: Prime farmland is "land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops". Natural Resources Conservation Service of Ohio, 1997.

Cost of Community Services

Besides its economic value, agriculture can provide environmental benefits through water pollution control, wildlife habitat enhancement, and air quality improvements. Another benefit of agriculture, one that is not typically considered, is the cost of providing community services. Numerous studies have shown that the cost to provide services to farmland is lower than to residential uses. The American Farmland Trust, in its summary table for the cost of community services, has found that farmland costs 36 cents in public services for every dollar contributed in taxes to the local community, while residential uses cost \$1.16 in services for every dollar in taxes paid.⁴² It is generally more cost-effective to serve agricultural properties than it is areas that have been developed into housing.

Tools for Protecting Farmland

Preservation of farmland has been a recurring theme in comprehensive plans and zoning codes across the country as suburbanization has placed increased pressure on agricultural uses. While the number of farmers making a full-time living from agriculture continues to decline, those who wish to should have the opportunity and land protection measures to reasonably ensure their success. The heavy implications of agriculture on Stark County's economy and environment indicate that agricultural conservation should be of the utmost priority in the years to come.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a tool that allows property owners to permanently preserve their land without surrendering ownership; thus the land remains protected, even if it is sold. For instance, if there is a large family farm that the owner does not want to lose to development pressures, they could create a conservation easement over the land that would protect it for generations to come.

⁴² "American Farmland Trust – Cost of Community Services Studies," http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/COCS_08-2010_1.pdf, last modified August, 2010.

In northeast Ohio, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy works to permanently protect natural areas and farmland, ensuring that land under a conservation easement remains protected. In Stark County, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy has worked with several property owners to preserve their land. In Tuscarawas Township, a property owner donated a conservation easement of over 95 acres to the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. In Osnaburg Township, property owners worked with the Land Conservancy on a conservation easement preserving approximately 215 acres. Conservation easements have also been granted to the Western Reserve Land Conservancy in Bethlehem (80 acres), Lawrence (43 acres), and Marlboro Townships (54 acres).⁴³



Conservation Easement in Saratoga Springs, New York
Source: Saratoga Plan

At the state level, the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Clean Ohio Fund offers the Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP), a program which purchases agricultural easements from landowners who volunteer to keep

their land in agricultural production in perpetuity. When a landowner proposes to sell an easement, the landowner must be able to demonstrate that retaining a particular farm in agricultural production in perpetuity is compatible with the township's or county's community plan and that it is not in the direct path of development.⁴⁴ The Ohio Department of Agriculture also administers the Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP), through which landowners donate agricultural easements to forever keep the land in agricultural production.

⁴³ "95-Acre Farm Preserved in Stark County," <http://www.wrlandconservancy.org/articles/2010/02/12/95-acre-farm-preserved-in-stark-county/>, last modified February 12, 2010.

⁴⁴ "Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP)," http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/farmland/Farm_AEPP.aspx, Accessed December 2, 2015.

At the national level, the US Department of Agriculture administers the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE), which may be used to match Clean Ohio funds for up to 50% of the easement value.⁴⁵

Agricultural Security Areas

Agricultural security areas are programs that are adopted by states; in Ohio, this program became effective in 2005. It authorizes one or more landowners of at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland to request from the boards of township trustees and county commissioners to enroll into an Agricultural Security Area for a 10-year period. The agricultural security area designation provides certain benefits to farmers, including protection from non-agricultural development, a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and possible tax abatement on new real property. This program has been implemented in several counties adjacent to Stark. In both Portage and Tuscarawas counties, there have been about 500 acres of land designated as agricultural security areas. In Wayne County, there have been over 5,000 acres of land designated as agricultural security areas.⁴⁶

Local Government Tools

Within the cities, villages, and townships of Stark County, there are tools that local governments can adopt to preserve agricultural lands. Cluster development is a tool that could be adopted for inclusion in a local zoning ordinance. Cluster development increases density allowances in exchange for the preservation of viable open space. Local zoning commissions may also consider adopting an amendment that defines an agricultural district. An agricultural district may be established to provide for agricultural activities and related uses, and is intended to protect and preserve areas of prime agricultural soils for continued agricultural uses. The *Stark County Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook* includes a model agricultural

⁴⁵ “Agricultural Conservation Easement Program,” <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

⁴⁶ “Agricultural Security Areas,” http://www.agri.ohio.gov/farmland/docs/Farm_ASA_CurrentASAList.pdf, last modified March 20, 2014.

district amendment from Miami Township, Ohio, which specifies possible accessory uses, conditional uses, lot area, frontage, and yard requirements related to agricultural uses.⁴⁷

Education

While there are several tools to protect the land that is farmed, the future of farmers must also be considered as an element of agricultural preservation. According to the 2012 USDA Agricultural Census, there were 1,002 male principal farm operators in Stark County, as compared to 166 female principal operators. The average age of the principal operator was 56.5 years, and 99.6% of respondents identified themselves as white. While this figure is often related to the average workforce age, as well as the time required to obtain the equipment required for large-scale agriculture, there are measures that the community can take to engage younger generations in farming.

The Ohio State University Extension is an educational entity that partners with individuals, families, communities, business and industry, and organizations to strengthen the lives of Ohioans, often with a focus on agriculture. Local communities can contact the OSU Extension Stark County office in Massillon to discuss collaborating on food-related businesses and public education programs. Bringing current trends and techniques to both current and future farmers may educate them on any changes that they could implement in striving for a successful farm.

Local communities could contact local farmers to establish a school partnership program that offers vocational work, internships, or apprenticeships with farmers. Communities could also offer workshops or publish information regarding financial assistance available to small farm businesses. For instance, the Rural Business Development Grants program (authorized under the Farm Bill), has authorized up to \$65 million in annual funding for 2014-18. Local food projects have historically taken advantage of these programs. Additionally, there is the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP), which provides grants and direct loans to

⁴⁷ “Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook: A Guide for Sustainable Development in Stark County, Ohio,” Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Latest Edition November 2012.

organizations that provide microloans, up to \$50,000 each, to rural microenterprises. There is also the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Microloan program, designed to serve farmers, particularly those who are smaller and less established, with loans up to \$35,000.⁴⁸ Providing information and assistance regarding agricultural education and financing may encourage younger generations to pursue farming.

Over the past two centuries, societal shifts, government regulation and changing market demand have had a profound impact on agriculture in the United States. Traveling rural highways demonstrates the results of some of these changes. The countryside is littered with abandoned farm houses, collapsed barns, and the rusting remains of outdated equipment. While the land is still farmed, the remnants of small farms that have lost the battle of economies of scale are quite apparent. More efficient equipment requires larger farms; changes in regulations and subsidies favor some over others; and consumer eating habits and bioenergy demands in types and quantities of food affect market prices. However, agriculture continues to be a vital part of Stark County's economy, heritage, and landscape. There are several tools for farmland preservation that can be implemented from the local level to the national level, including conservation easements, local zoning changes, and agricultural education programs.

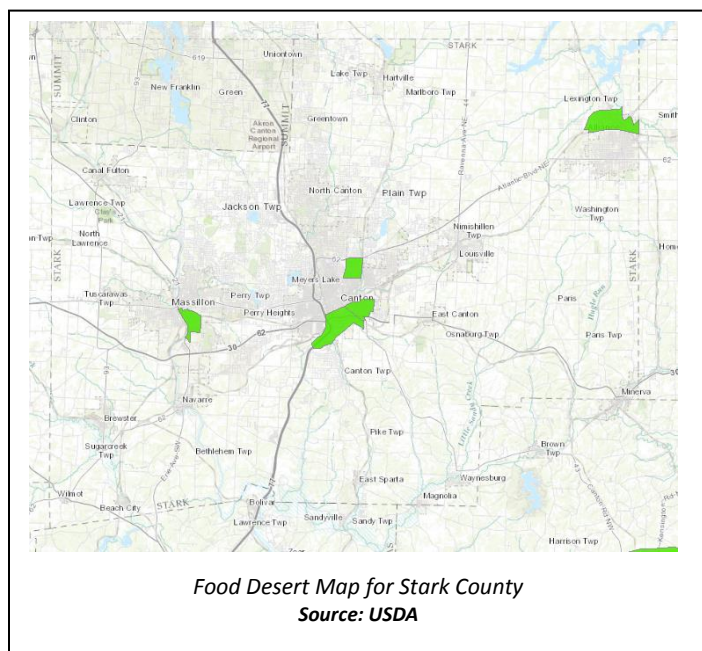
Food

Perhaps the most powerful tool to encourage local agriculture is to connect the local producer with the local consumer. The connection between farms that produce food and consumers that eat food is clear. However, the distance between these two entities has become even greater over time, as consumers purchase their food at big box grocery stores whose suppliers may be great distances away.

⁴⁸ USDA Trends in Local and Regional Food Systems, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=42807>, Accessed March 13, 2015.

Recently, the term *food desert* has gained national attention, as it focuses on the lack of access to fresh food. In cities, a food desert is a low-income neighborhood where one-third of the residents live more than a mile from the nearest supermarket or large grocery store, grossing over \$2 million in sales⁴⁹. In rural areas, the minimum distance is 10 miles.⁵⁰ According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Stark County has 4 food deserts, primarily in the cities of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance. Living in food deserts has been associated with lower quality diets and risk of obesity.⁵¹

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that increasing access to fruits and vegetables through healthier food retail is an evidence-formed strategy to reduce obesity-related disparities.⁵² The effects on communities with food deserts and/or those that source their food from great distances include impacts on public health, the environment, and the local economy. These factors point to a need to implement a plan to bolster the local food system.



Food security is another important factor of comprehensive planning that extends beyond the food deserts of Stark County. The U.S. Department of Agriculture classifies households as food insecure if they experience, at some times during the year, limited or uncertain availability of

⁴⁹ This is the USDA definition of “food desert”, which does not consider public transportation availability.

⁵⁰ Hoover, Shane, “Multiple Strategies for Tackling Food Deserts in Stark,” <http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20151206/NEWS/151209546/0/SEARCH/?Start=1>, December 7, 2015.

⁵¹ “Toxic Food,” <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-causes/food-environment-and-obesity/>. Accessed February 19, 2016.

⁵² “Factors Related to Obesity Disparities,” <https://www.cdc.gov/>, Accessed February 19, 2016.

nutritionally adequate and safe foods. A food insecure household does not have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.⁵³ In September 2015, the Columbus Dispatch reported that Ohio ranked third in the nation for families forced to skip meals or eat less because they didn't have the money or resources to put food on the table.⁵⁴ According to Feeding America, approximately 15.9% of Stark County's population in 2013 was food insecure, which is just under 60,000 people.⁵⁵ While food banks, policy makers, business leaders, community activists and concerned citizens are engaged in the fight against hunger, there are also tools for local food systems that can aid in connecting local food producers with hungry consumers.

Tools for Local Food Systems

There are many strategies for supporting the existing farms in the community, many of which focus on connecting the producers (farmers) directly with the consumers.

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets have become increasingly popular across the country in recent years. Many farmers' markets consist of a central location where farmers sell their goods at regular intervals. Some of the largest communities in Stark County regularly host farmers' markets, including Alliance, Canal Fulton, Canton, Jackson Township, Massillon, North Canton, Louisville, and Plain Township. There is also the opportunity to purchase goods directly from farmers at road side stands throughout the County, as well as at smaller produce markets. Stand-alone markets include Maize Valley Farmers Market in Marlboro Township, Canton Chophouse and Market in Canton, and Green Farms Country Market in Alliance and East Canton.

⁵³ "Hunger Facts," <http://www.greaterclevelandfoodbank.org/about/hunger-facts>, Accessed April 21, 2016.

⁵⁴ Candisky, Catherine, "Ohio among worst states nationally for food security, report finds," http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/09/09/child_hunger.html#, September 10, 2015.

⁵⁵ "Map the Meal Gap 2015," http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2013/OH_AllCounties_CDs_MMG_2013.pdf, Accessed April 21, 2015.

Community Supported Agriculture

Perhaps one of the most direct methods of purchasing goods from local farmers is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. In a CSA, buyers sign up for shares, or portions of shares, of locally-produced goods. They will often pick up their goods at a pre-determined time and location during the growing season. Community Supported Agriculture programs can be an excellent way for consumers to try different local foods, form a network of consumers investing in their local economy, and to directly interface with the farmer who feeds them. There are numerous CSAs in Stark County which can be found at www.localharvest.org.

Agri-Tourism

Another growing movement that farmers have found success in is “agri-tourism”, where farms market themselves as enjoyable stops for visitors to make. To expand, many farmers focus seasonally, such as pick-your-own fruit farms in the summer; corn mazes, pumpkin patches, or apple orchards in the fall; or holiday tree farms in the early winter. Local examples include Arrowhead Orchard and Wade’s Fruit Farm in Paris Township, Sunny Slope Orchard in Tuscarawas Township, Varian Orchards in Osnaburg Township, Kingsway Pumpkin Farm in Lake Township, and Nickajack Farms in Lawrence Township.

BENEFITS OF LOCAL FOODS

-Locally grown food is full of flavor, because crops are picked at the peak of ripeness. They don’t need to be harvested early to be shipped and distributed.

-Local food has more nutrients. Since local food spends a shorter time between the field and the table, it is less likely that nutrient value decreases.

-Money spent on local food stays close to home and is reinvested in the community.

-Local food benefits the environment by maintaining green space.

-The greater the distance from a food source, the more chances there are for contamination. Food grown in distant locations has the potential for food safety issues.

-Local farmers can explain exactly how the food was grown.

Farm to Table

There is also an increasing number of restaurants that are sourcing their ingredients from local farmers, deemed the “farm to table” movement. This results in chefs noting different seasonal, local foods on their menus, as a network of chefs and farmers work together to expose diners to quality, fresh food, and keep money circulating locally.

Farm to School/Work

Another strategy for increasing the community support for local farmers is to create farm to school or work programs. These programs partner a school or workplace with a local farmer, or group of farmers, to provide various products that are utilized in their food production. Farm to school/work programs can also include educational components such as classroom lectures on food and nutrition, visits to farms and farmers’ markets, creation of school gardens, and the support of school or work-based CSA programs. According to the USDA Farm to School Census, 4,322 school districts in the nation have farm to school programs, a 430-percent increase since 2006.⁵⁶



*Farm to School Experience at an elementary school in Washington, DC
Source: Capital Area Food Bank*

Locally, the Ohio State University Extension coordinates the USDA Farm to School program. In 2015, the USDA awarded a \$43,831 planning grant to the Stark County Educational Service Center (ESC) for a farm to school program. According to the USDA website, the ESC is the first Stark County recipient in recent years and one of only five recipients throughout the state in

⁵⁶ “Bringing the Farm to School,” <https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

2015. The grant is expected to benefit 36,554 Stark County students in USDA-designated “food deserts,” which are urban and rural areas without easy access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. Participating school districts include: Alliance, Canton Local, Fairless, Lake, Louisville, Marlinton, Massillon, Minerva, North Canton, Northwest, Plain, and Sandy Valley.⁵⁷

Establish a Food Hub

According to the USDA, the working definition of a food hub is “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.” To summarize, a food hub is a more formalized strategy of connecting local producers and consumers. In 2011, the Portage County Regional Planning Commission was awarded a grant to plan for a food hub in Portage County. The Portage County RPC then wrote a plan that analyzed existing food service infrastructure, other local and regional food initiatives, laid out food hub practices, and made recommendations for moving forward with establishing a food hub in Portage County.⁵⁸ As a neighboring county, Portage County may serve as a resource in reviewing the potential value of a food hub, as the local food movement in Stark County increases.

Advertise

Another tool for encouraging local agriculture is to advertise local products as such. Unless a consumer is buying directly from the producer, they may not know if a product in a grocery store is locally produced. The Ohio Department of Agriculture’s marketing program, Ohio Proud, was established in 1993 to help consumers identify Ohio-grown products using the Ohio Proud logo.



⁵⁷ Kelly Byer, “Farm to School Program Takes Root in Stark,” *Canton Repository*, <http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20150818/NEWS/150819329>, August 19, 2015, accessed December 2, 2015.

⁵⁸ “Planning for a Food Hub in Portage County,” http://pcrpc.org/images/Food_Hub_Plan_Final.pdf, November 2012, Accessed December 2, 2015.

In Athens, Ohio, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) created the Food We Love (FWL) brand, which helps local food products reach large marketplaces. ACEnet's 30 Mile Meal branding program promotes food growers and sellers within a 30-miles radius of Athens, by partnering local producers with several local and regional grocery stores, as well as grocery chains including Whole Foods, Kroger and Giant Eagle. All of the partners have devoted commercial shelf space to FWL brand food products. ACEnet has now worked in partnership with over 125 farmers, local food markets, businesses and non-profit organizations.⁵⁹

The Farm Bill authorizes funding for direct to consumer agricultural marketing programs through the Farmers' Market Promotion Program and the Local Food Promotion Program. Information on obtaining this funding is available through the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Grow Your Own Food

While the tools described above are methods for connecting the producer to the consumer, another technique for building a local food system is to grow your own food. Operating a hobby farm or even a small garden is accomplished frequently in the rural areas of Stark County, but urban agriculture is a means of growing food in more densely populated areas, which has grown in popularity in recent years. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, city and suburban agriculture takes the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture, and livestock grazing in open space. Community gardens provide increased access to fresher and healthier foods, promote a stronger sense of community, and put underutilized land into productive use.

⁵⁹ Supporting Grocery Development in Ohio," http://www.financefund.org/userfiles/files/Other%20Documents/OH_recommFINAL.pdf, Accessed December 2, 2015.

A barrier that residents may encounter when attempting to grow their own food is local zoning. While some zoning codes do ban agriculture in urban areas, other codes may not list agriculture as a permitted use in smaller-lot districts. Many Ohio jurisdictions do not specifically recognize community gardens and urban farms as a land use category. As awareness of this issue has risen over the past few years, several communities are considering, or already have updated code language concerning community gardens and urban agriculture. In the City of Cincinnati, agriculture is a permitted use in all zoning districts, except the industrial district. In the City of Columbus, gardens are a permitted use in all zoning districts. The City of Cleveland has established a community garden zoning district, and agriculture is a permitted accessory use in residential districts.



A community garden in Cleveland, Ohio
Source: Affordable Housing Institute

Some local communities have taken note of the increasing demand for permitted agricultural uses. In 2014, Jackson Township modified their zoning code to address apiaries, places for beekeeping. There have also been recent text amendments drafted to address the keeping of chickens in residential areas. By establishing local zoning codes

governing urban agriculture, communities can ensure that plentiful locations exist for community gardens and urban farms. Zoning codes may also specify various structural design requirements, such as building heights and setback distances for greenhouses, hoop houses, composting bins, storage sheds and other structures. Requirements for operating hours, maintenance and governance are also common.

One of the locations in Stark County that has embraced urban agriculture is the City of Canton. Since 2013, more than a dozen community gardens have been established in Canton. The

Downtown Canton/Summit Neighborhood Community Garden, at 5th Street and High Avenue NW, was one of the first community gardens in the city. Project Rebuild Inc. manages 70 plots at Summit Community Garden, and subsequently launched a healthy-eating curriculum for its students.⁶⁰ Also in Canton, the StarkFresh Community Garden is located at 1731 Grace Avenue. In 2013, the StarkFresh Garden created felt container gardens that served over 50 families with over 500 pounds of food.⁶¹ StarkFresh has also been instrumental in facilitating the growth of the local food movement in Stark County through its various workshops and mobile farmer’s market.



The Downtown Canton/Summit Neighborhood Community Garden located in the City of Canton

Source: Canton Repository

In 2015, planning consultants drafted a comprehensive plan for the City of Canton that considers urban agriculture. The plan states that floodplain neighborhoods, especially where there are concentrations of vacant and abandoned homes and are not easily conducive to prolonged residential settlement or new development, are prime candidates for land conversion. The plan notes that potential alternative uses of floodplain land include agriculture and open space/natural parks. According to the plan, the floodplain and areas that require adaptive repurposing to natural corridors, urban agriculture, or cleaned and green lots constitute about 21% of the city’s land area.⁶²

In addition to the floodplain area, the *Canton Comprehensive Plan* also states that there are another 2,000 acres of tax delinquent and vacant properties that are suitable for urban agriculture assembly. As such, the plan states that such land area represents a profoundly

⁶⁰ Matthew Rink, “Community Gardens Take Root in Canton,” *Canton Repository*, <http://www.cantonrep.com/article/20140629/NEWS/140629354/?Start=1>, June 29, 2014, accessed December 2, 2015.

⁶¹ “Stark Fresh Community Garden,” <http://kgi.org/stark-fresh-community-garden>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

⁶² “Comprehensive Plan – City of Canton, Ohio” <http://cantonohio.gov/development/pdf/comp%20plan%20final.pdf>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

important opportunity for the city to both obtain control over troubled sites and create entrepreneurial options for many.

The Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) administers the side lot and vacant lot programs, which allow vacant or underutilized properties to be transferred to new owners. It should also be noted that the Downtown Canton Land Bank, Corp. assembles and disposes of land located within the City of Canton's central business district and surrounding areas to facilitate downtown real estate development.⁶³ While the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation operates throughout all of Stark County, the recommendations of the *Canton Comprehensive Plan* regarding utilizing vacant/abandoned lots for urban agriculture may be transferrable to other communities that the Land Bank serves.

Putting it All Together

There are many strategies for encouraging local agriculture by connecting producers with consumers. While buying from farmers markets, visiting farms, and supporting community gardens are activities that many Stark County residents and employees can engage in and support, there are local food movements across the country that are enacting completely new practices to connect the farmer and the buyer. Oftentimes, local food systems are structured by a central organization whose role is to be aware of local agriculture endeavors, activities, and accomplishments.

Within Stark County, local groups available to assist with food insecurity/local food issues include Stark Fresh, as noted above, and the Stark County Hunger Task Force. Also locally, the Northeast Ohio Regional Food Systems Development group has established the Food Web, which provides information on urban agriculture, community composting, and growing local food webs. The Food Web also hosts affinity groups to research and discuss the future of food systems planning in northeast Ohio, including topics such as food systems capacity, agricultural

⁶³ "About Canton Development Partnership," <http://www.downtowncanton.com/about-canton-development-partnership/>, Accessed February 19, 2016.

production, food processing/manufacturing, and supporting businesses for local food systems.⁶⁴

Another local group that supports food and farming initiatives across the region is the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC). In 2010, NEOSCC launched its Vibrant NEO 2040 initiative to provide northeast Ohio with a vision for the future, and a set of tools needed to turn that vision into a reality.⁶⁵ In 2014, the *Vibrant NEO 2040* plan was finalized. One recommendation in the plan is to support sustainable agriculture and the local food system in northeast Ohio. The plan also includes four initiatives for accomplishing their recommendation, all of which are incorporated into the objectives and strategies of this plan for food and farming in Stark County.



Green Farms Country Market located in East Canton and Alliance
Source: Green Farms Markets

Local food systems align consumer demand with locally produced and distributed food. These systems have the demonstrated capacity to:

- enhance overall community sustainability by increasing economic resiliency through expanded employment and market opportunities;
- promote public health through improved access to healthy food;
- account for environmental consideration in land use planning and policy; and
- address social equity by tailoring initiatives to disadvantaged populations.

⁶⁴ “Northeast Ohio Regional Food Systems Development,” <http://www.neofoodweb.org/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

⁶⁵ “Vibrant NEO 2040,” Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC), <http://vibrantneo.org/>, Accessed December 2, 2015.

While the use of the term “sustainable agriculture” has become trendy in recent years, it reflects the notion that the community as a whole should act to preserve traditions that have served Stark County well for generations. With a concerted effort we can benefit not only ourselves and our agricultural community, but maintain a sustainable, well balanced society that can provide for itself, others, and future generations.

C.) Sustainable Development Options

One of the most significant land use changes since the writing of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan in 2005 is the reduction in vacant land in Stark County, paired with the reduction of open space. These reductions, combined with increases in residential, business/office, and industrial land uses indicate that open land is being utilized for new development, despite the available supply of existing buildings. In Stark County, there is a supply of brownfield sites, defined as a former industrial or commercial site where future use is affected by real or perceived environmental contamination. Brownfield properties place a burden on the communities that they are in; the unpaid property taxes for brownfields in Stark County is roughly \$650,000 annually. However, brownfields generally have existing infrastructure, and addressing them can result in job creation and improved economic conditions. Local governmental bodies and developers should collaborate with private lenders to encourage rehabilitation and infill projects. Communities also have



the option of working with the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank). The Land Bank can acquire foreclosed properties held by various entities, and then any existing

structures on the site may be rehabilitated, if possible, or demolished and the land reutilized for another purpose (discussed in greater detail in the Housing section of Chapter V).

When considering infill development, (i.e. developing vacant parcels within existing built-out areas) communities should consider development opportunities that promote a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and help create a unique neighborhood character. Certain livability elements can help transform an area into an attractive and enticing



Mixed-use Development Example
Source: Economic Development News & Insight

community for both visitors and residents. Mixed-use development is a zoning tool that can help achieve this goal. Common land uses permitted in this type of district include small-scale retail, office and residential. Mixed-use development affords people the opportunity to live, work and play within a single area, which can reduce the need for an automobile. Infrastructure expansion costs are also minimized with mixed-use development as the roadways and utilities are already in place, unlike new developments in outlying areas where utilities must be extended to these locations.

Mixed-Use Development Benefits:

- Blends compatible land uses
- Increases land use efficiency
- Reduces transportation costs
- Increases housing variety
- Strengthens neighborhood character
- Encourages walking and bicycling
- Reduces energy consumption
- Preserves traditional village centers
- Enhances vitality
- Fosters sense of community

In northeast Ohio, Cleveland has seen an increase in the number of and demand for downtown residences. In the Cleveland suburbs, mixed-use developments at Legacy Village and Crocker Park allow residents to walk to shopping and restaurants. In downtown Canton, the historic Onesto Hotel was converted into one- and two-bedroom apartments. Also in downtown Canton,

the Bliss Tower and Hercules Engine site are being redeveloped for housing. Some of the selling points for the properties in Canton include the proximity to the Canton Arts District, parks, churches, the downtown farmer’s market, community gardens, and museums.

In addition to focusing efforts on infill, redevelopment and mixed-use development, special attention should be paid to encouraging the preservation of open space, as noted previously. These actions are necessary to ensure that within the plan period, much effort is made on limiting the impacts on agricultural lands, while encouraging the infill and rehabilitation of

[Vibrant NEO 2040 Recommendations](#)

- Pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties
- Encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development
- Preserve our natural areas for future generations, providing outdoor recreation opportunities
- Support sustainable agriculture and the local food system

already developed areas. According to the Vibrant NEO 2040 Stark County Framework Report, the ImagineMyNEO tool was a web-based tool for the public to rank priorities, projects and policies in Stark County. The results indicated that, based on a budget-constrained environment, the top priority in Stark County was cleaning up vacant and abandoned properties, including brownfields. The number three priority was expanding and connecting a network of open, green, and natural spaces, and the number four priority was building more community parks (the number two priority was investing in pedestrian, bicycling and public transit services). One of Vibrant

NEO 2040’s vision themes for Stark County is to “Preserve and Protect Natural Resources”, including scattered conservation for community recreation, and preserving rural and agricultural landscapes. The vacant land that is concentrated in the central cities of Stark County has been recognized in several plans. There is a recognized opportunity to match the current needs of the community with a mixture of infill and mixed-use development as well as conservation and open space strategies.

D.) Objectives and Strategies

1. Coordinate the development of land throughout Stark County in a more sustainable manner for future generations.
 - a. Focus commercial land uses to infill existing commercial corridors and expand only into planned commercial areas.
 - b. Reuse and/or repurpose existing industrial areas, utilizing assistance from the Stark County Land Bank and EPA brownfields grants.
 - c. Consider the future use of vacant land carefully. Infill vacant land with appropriate uses, considering passive reuse options such as solar farms, walking trails or community gardens.
 - d. Promote the preservation of agriculturally valuable land through tools such as agricultural district zoning, conservation easements and agricultural security areas.
2. Increase the market for locally grown foods through partnerships and programs.
 - a. Promote local initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the importance of locally grown foods.
 - b. Support efforts that increase access to locally grown foods, such as CSA's, farmer's markets, community gardens and farm to school/work programs.
 - c. Amend policies to allow for urban farming on residential and/or vacant lots.
3. Focus new residential development efforts to create livable communities that are more compact, connected and diverse.
 - a. Modify subdivision and zoning regulations to encourage livable communities through the use of sidewalk requirements, street and/or pedestrian connectivity between allotments and open space/recreation amenities.
 - b. Encourage the creation of mixed-use developments and complete streets that facilitate pedestrian-friendly environments.
 - c. Encourage and facilitate the creation of greenways, serving as a connected network of open, green and natural spaces throughout Stark County.

IV. NATURAL RESOURCES

Stark County's natural resources are among the most valuable assets to the County's citizens, environment and economy. These resources, which include things such as water, soil, plants and minerals, not only affect our quality of life in terms of the water we drink or the land we cultivate, but they also play an important role on our economy in that they also provide fuel and energy. Balancing their ecological versus economic importance is a struggle that the United States has dealt with for many years, and is one that will likely continue to weigh heavily on communities for the foreseeable future. Below is a more in-depth look at Stark County's water and land resources, two of its most significant resources.

A.) Water Resources

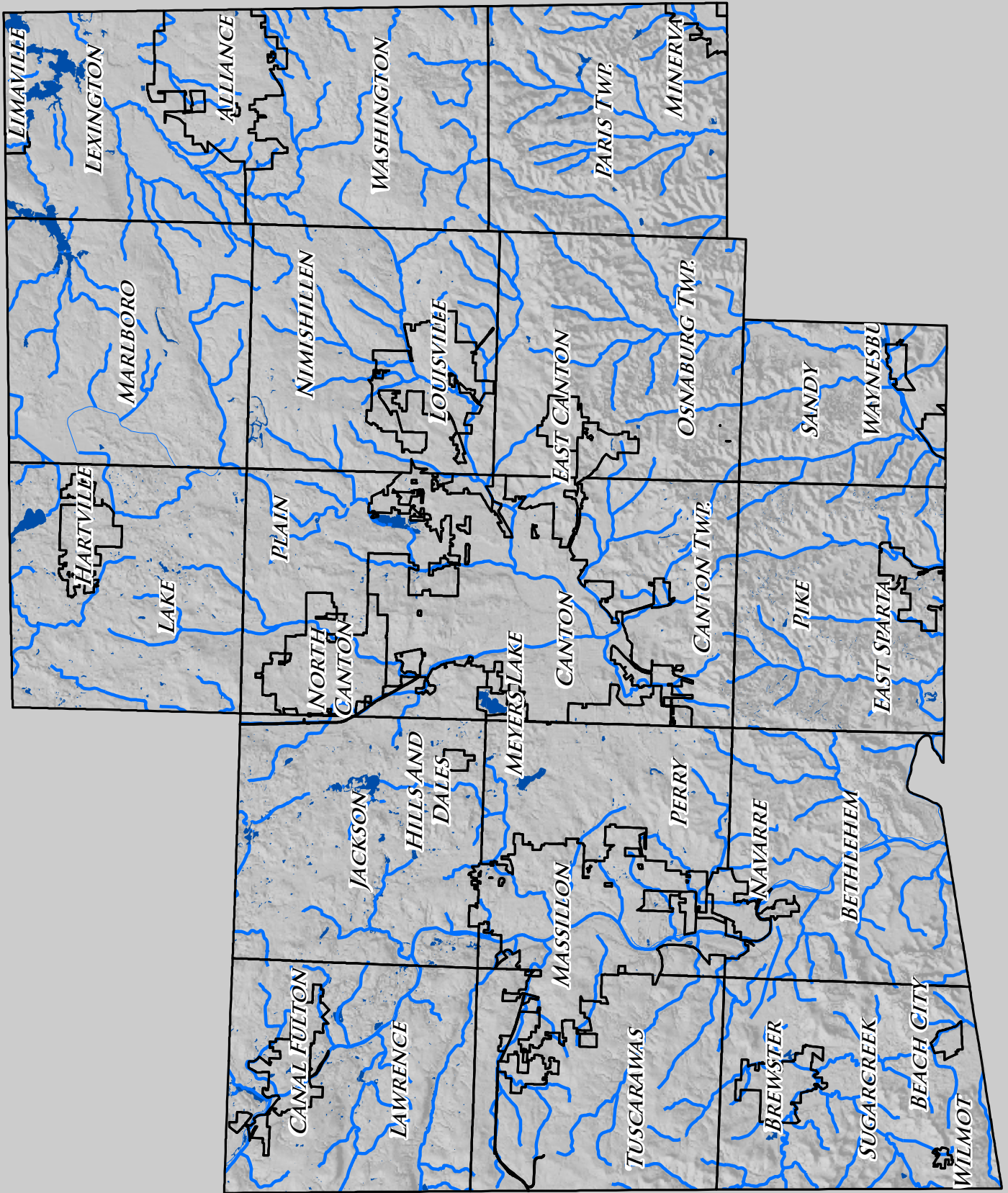
Water Formations

In terms of surface water, which as its name implies is above-ground, freshwater sources, Stark County features over 700 miles of rivers and over 4,000 acres of lakes, not including small tributaries, ponds, and creeks. Groundwater, which consists of below-ground water features such as water tables and aquifers, is arguably one of the most important natural resources that exist, as it is one of the primary suppliers of drinking water. The availability and quality of groundwater resources are directly influenced by the properties of the geologic formations underlying the County. Stark County has a wide range of water-bearing formations; some are classified as permeable sand and gravel with high yield potential, several are classified with moderate yield potential, and other areas are made up of sandstone and shale and have low yield potential. Sand and gravel formations underlying the County have excellent potential to supply water adequate for most uses. The parts of the County with the highest yield potential

are northwestern Canton Township, southwestern Plain Township and western Perry Township. The areas with low yield potential are the southern and eastern parts of the County (where shale is most abundant). The rest of the County has a moderate yield potential.⁶⁶ By understanding the physical and chemical nature of these resources, better decisions can be made about groundwater protection, management and use.

⁶⁶ “Groundwater Resources of Stark County,” ODNR, Division of Soil and Water Resources, <http://water.ohiodnr.gov/maps/groundwater-resources-maps>, Accessed December 15, 2015.

HYDROLOGY



Watersheds

Watersheds are topographic regions delineated by the flow direction of water within them. Watershed planning is an invaluable tool for protecting water resources. Efforts of watershed planning are geared towards promoting water conservation and flood reduction within a watershed. A small portion at the northeast corner of Stark County drains into the Mahoning River Watershed, but for the most part, Stark County's waters drain into the Muskingum Watershed, which is the largest wholly contained watershed in the state.⁶⁷

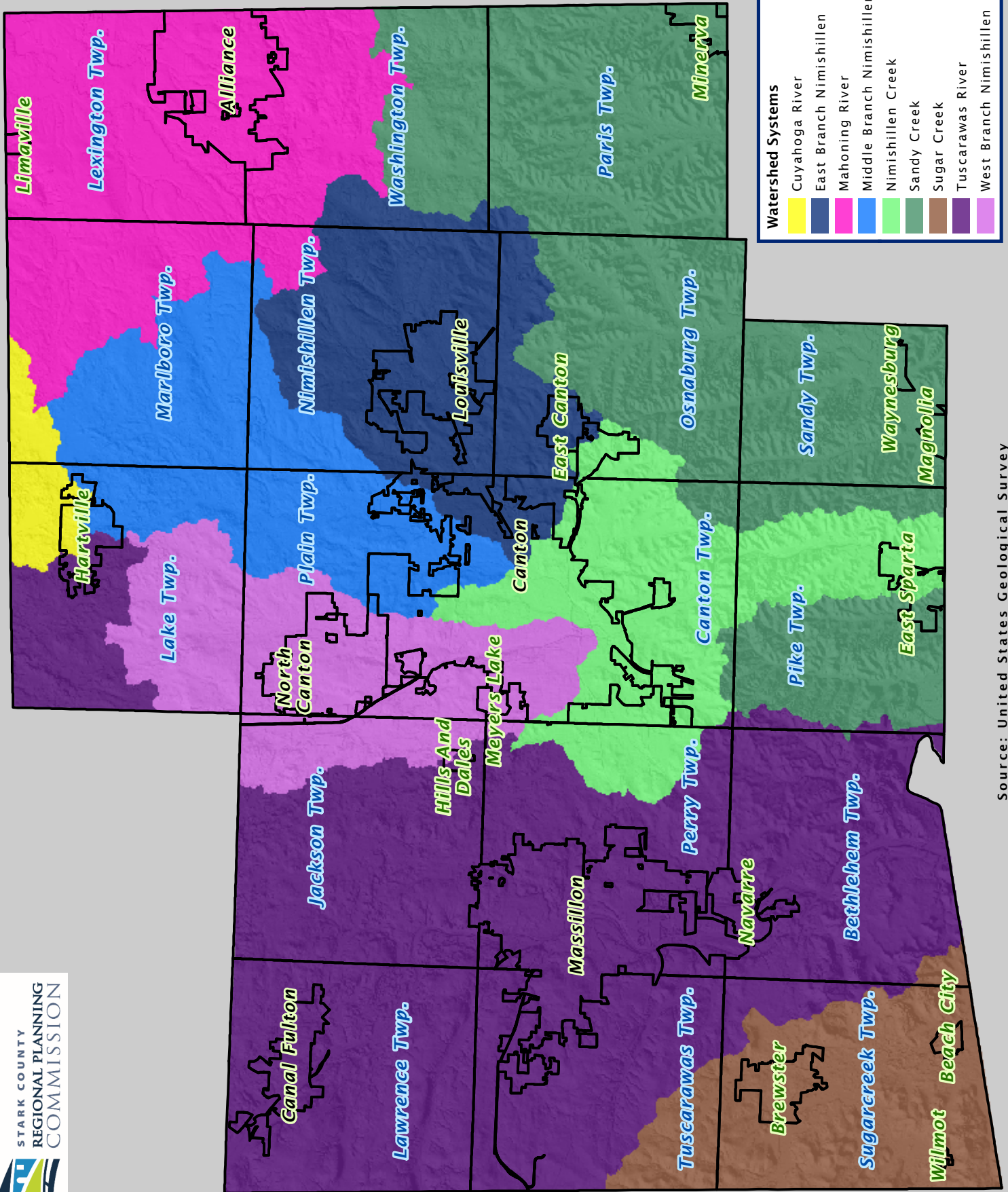


The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) was organized in 1933 for flood protection

along the streams in an 18-county area in eastern Ohio. Up until 2009, the MWCD was the only district in Ohio that did not levy an assessment for the maintenance of its facilities; however, due to the high costs of carrying out needed maintenance and improvements, the District began collecting an assessment in 2009. According to their website, the assessment generates between \$9-10 million annually, which is primarily used for repairs and upgrades to the existing flood risk management dams and associated improvements that were constructed in the 1930s.

⁶⁷ The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, <http://www.mwcd.org/>, Accessed December 1, 2015.

Watershed Systems



Source: United States Geological Survey

In 2011, two years after the assessments began, the MWCD began entering into leases on their properties for Utica shale development. The revenue generated from these leases allowed the District to cut assessments in half for property owners, beginning in 2015. The average cost to homeowners had been \$12 per year. The impact of these leases on the environmental quality of the watershed, if any, has yet to be determined.

Both the Mahoning River and Muskingum River Watersheds are broken down into sub-watersheds. For Stark County, the two sub-watersheds that are the primary recipients of most local planning efforts are the Tuscarawas River Regional Watershed and the Nimishillen Creek Watershed, both part of the Muskingum Watershed. The Nimishillen Creek Watershed drains approximately 187 square miles covering portions of Stark, Summit and Tuscarawas Counties, including the entire City of Canton. The Northeast Four County Planning Organization (NEFCO) plays a major role in watershed planning for this area. In addition to carrying out various studies on water quality, NEFCO also oversees the Nimishillen Creek Watershed Partners and has created and/or implemented various action plans and management plans for the watersheds, including the Section 208 Water Quality Management Plan (updated 2011) and the Nimishillen Creek State Action Plan (updated draft 2012).

The MWCD also assisted in the creation of a Watershed Management Assessment in 2011 for the Nimishillen Creek watershed from the tax assessment revenue it collected. As a follow-up to that study, in April 2015, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with assistance from the MWCD and various county agencies, issued a more detailed plan outlining the recommended approach or steps to be taken in addressing the flooding frequently occurring along portions of the Nimishillen Creek.⁶⁸ This plan, known as the Section 729 Final Watershed Assessment and Final Watershed Plan, identified several recommendations pertaining to water resource-related

⁶⁸ “Section 729 Final Watershed Assessment and Final Watershed Plan,” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, April 2015.

issues including storm water management, floodplain management and water quality. Since then, the County has been working on implementing some of the recommendations from that plan, including in September 2015, when the MWCD awarded the Stark County Commissioners a \$500,000 grant to help fund a flood warning and monitoring system in the Nimishillen Creek basin.⁶⁹ The real-time data gathered from this system will allow local officials to better assess the impacts of flooding within the basin. In October of the same year, Canton City Council also voted to enter into a cooperative agreement with the County, the MWCD, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey to collaboratively implement recommendations from the study.⁷⁰ It is recommended that the results of these assessments and studies be carefully considered and measures be taken to implement additional flood reduction policies and programs at both the local and county levels. As development continues to increase in flood-prone areas, the collective efforts of all affected parties will be essential in bringing the County one step closer towards mitigation and protection from flooding.

⁶⁹ “Stark Commissioners Approve System to Monitor Flooding,” Massillon Independent, www.indeonline.com, September 2, 2015.

⁷⁰ “Nimishillen Creek Flooding Study Planned,” Canton Repository, www.cantonrep.com, October 19, 2015.

Storm Water

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, more commonly known as the Clean Water Act, is a comprehensive statute passed in 1972 that was aimed at restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation's waters with Congress naming the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) as the agency responsible for carrying out the requirements of this law. The USEPA developed the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), which is a program that has been implemented in two phases.

In November of 1990, requirements developed by the USEPA for Phase I of the NPDES permit were approved and signed into law by the Federal Government. Phase I named three types of activities to be regulated through NPDES permits to help reduce pollutant sources:

- Industrial facilities that fall into a certain EPA category;
- Construction activities that disturb five or more acres of land; or
- Municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) serving populations of 100,000 or more based on 1990 census data.

In December of 1999, requirements developed by the USEPA for Phase II of the NPDES permit were approved and signed into law, with 2003 being the first year these requirements became effective. The Phase II requirements built upon the existing Phase I requirements and required smaller communities to be permitted. Smaller communities are defined as having a total population of more than 50,000, but less than 100,000 and a density of 1,000 persons per square mile based upon the latest census data. There are seventeen political subdivisions, called MS4s, in Stark County that are regulated under this program with the Board of Stark



County Commissioners being one. Each MS4 could either develop their own permit and submit it to the USEPA for approval, or obtain coverage under the Ohio EPA NPDES general permit. All of the political subdivisions in Stark County chose the more economical second option, which requires an MS4 to implement a Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) that fulfills the various requirements given in the general permit.

The Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) must be designed to reduce the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent practicable, and include control techniques, system design and engineering methods, and best management practices with measurable goals. The current best management practices (BMP's) are:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Participation and Involvement
- Illicit Discharge and Elimination
- Construction Site Storm Water Runoff Control
- Post Construction Storm Water Management in New Development and Redevelopment
- Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

The SWMP Best Management Practices (BMP's):

For the public education and participation BMP's, Stark County has created the Public Involvement Public Education (PIPE) Committee. The PIPE committee consists of representatives from cities, villages, townships and the County that meet a few times a year to coordinate storm water education efforts. They share ideas, activities and related costs in an effort to promote a consistent educational message on storm water control.

Over the course of time, the committee has organized billboard contests, created informational pamphlets and brochures, held workshops, conducted radio ads and developed a storm water "mascot" to assist in educational outreach.

*"Clawd"
the storm water mascot*



As many parts of Stark County continued to develop into more densely populated urbanized areas, a better and more defined standard for storm water management design was needed for commercial and industrial projects as well as for new subdivisions. Extensive revisions to the

Stark County Subdivision Regulations were adopted in October of 2005, which dealt with not only the collection and conveyance of storm water but also with runoff control to help reduce the risk of flooding. In addition, public easements for drainage improvements were also addressed. These revised regulations provided a defined set of requirements for the development of land in the unincorporated areas of the County. The revised regulations better protected downgrade and downstream property owners, as well as prevented new developments from making existing flooding problems worse or creating new flooding problems. In subsequent months most of the cities in the County also adopted these same requirements as part of their codified ordinances.

In January of 2008, the Board of Stark County Commissioners adopted revisions to the County's storm water quality regulations, which are administered by the Stark Soil and Water Conservation District. These regulations pertain to land development projects in the unincorporated areas of the County and apply various requirements to non-farm, soil disturbing activities involving 1-acre or more of land. The purpose of these regulations is primarily to prevent soil erosion, which can reduce habitat quality of streams and wetlands. Preventing soil erosion also helps eliminate numerous other problems that can result, such as reduced capacity of storm water conveyance systems, damage to adjacent properties, increases in public expenditures for maintenance, and increased channel erosion. These regulations work in conjunction with the Stark County Subdivision Regulations to provide for a comprehensive set of rules that reduce or eliminate the likelihood of problems resulting from new land development projects.

Lastly, it is noted that the Board of Stark County Commissioners have a drainage improvement program, that the Stark County Engineer's Office assisting with implementing. The program consists of residents, townships, and/or companies submitting a formal drainage complaint in writing. These complaints are then reviewed and ranked, with the number of complaints being

resolved or corrected in a year dependent on the amount of funds allocated and the costs of the projects. Additional sources of funding for this program are regularly investigated with the previously mentioned MWCD program being one possible source.

Floodplain Management

Development within designated floodplains is one of the largest contributors to increases in storm water runoff, and consequently flooding. In 2011, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed updates to Stark County's floodplain maps, which identifies flood risk areas throughout the County. These maps are used to determine the costs of flood insurance and can have a major impact on the location and type of development and/or redevelopment, particularly through a community's floodplain regulations. The Stark County Building Department is the County's floodplain manager, and administers the floodplain regulations, which were last updated in late 2011.

The flood prone areas where development should be limited due to health and safety concerns include:

- 100-year flood zone areas with flood control dam easements. A number of areas are impacted during high water events when "dry dams" impound, or hold, water in order to prevent or lessen flooding downstream. These areas include:
 - Areas around the Sugar Creek in southwestern Stark County. These are primarily in Sugarcreek Township and include the Villages of Beach City and Brewster. There are also significant areas with restricted development along the Beach Creek Dam;
 - Areas north of the Bolivar Dam along the Tuscarawas River from the Village of Navarre, in Bethlehem Township, south to the County line, as well as the Sandy and Limestone Creeks. This area also includes the Nimishillen Creek in Pike and Sandy Townships, as well as the Villages of East Sparta, Magnolia, and Waynesburg. In recent years, the flood easements for the Bolivar Dam have experienced significant flooding

as waters were repeatedly impounded by the dam, in order to limit flooding downstream; and

- Outlet areas of the dams including Lake Cable in Jackson Township, Sippo Lake in Perry Township and Congress Lake in Lake Township.

- Areas with 100-year flood zones not directly related to impoundment dams include:

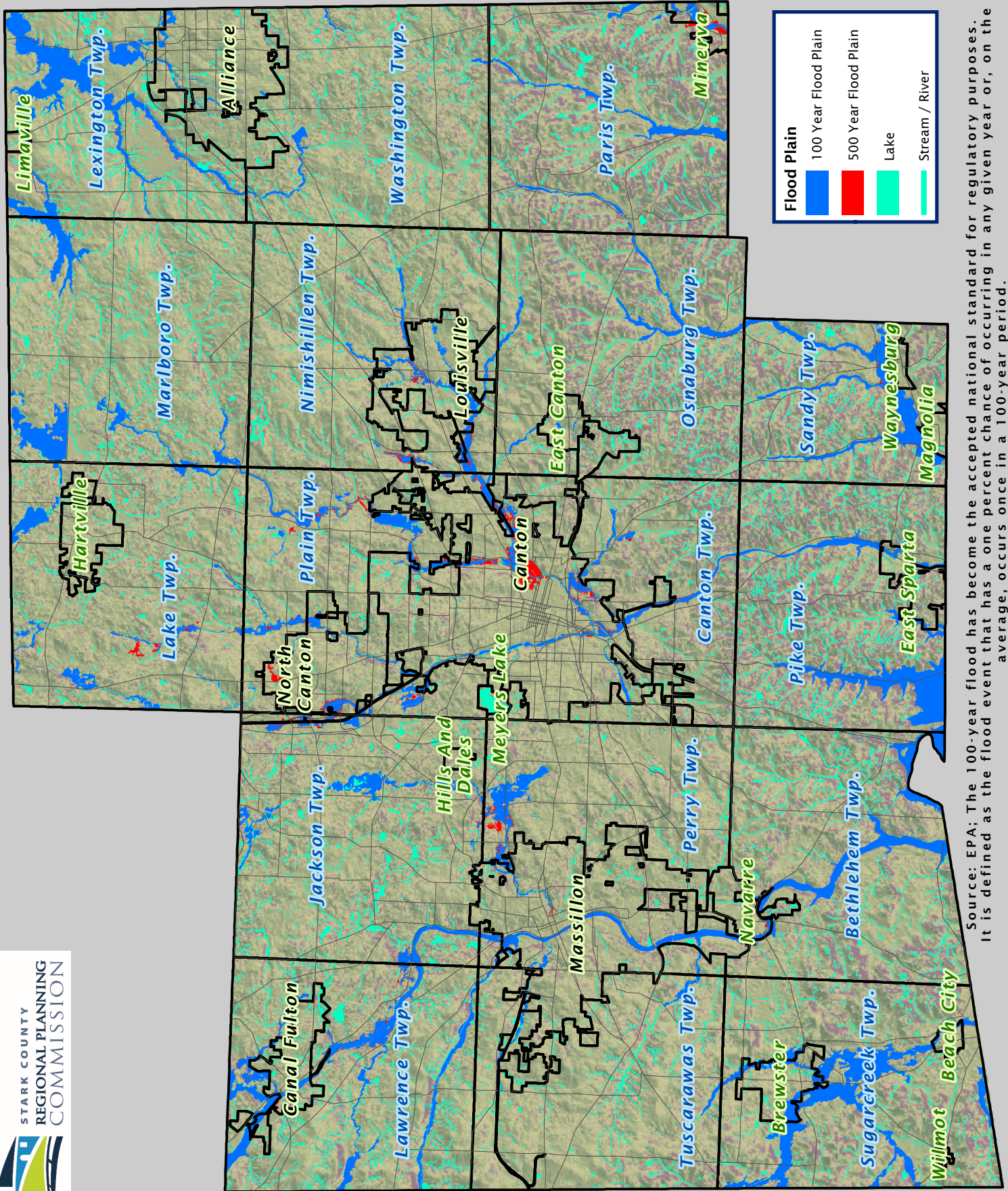
- The Tuscarawas River and creeks feeding it north of Navarre, including the Cities of Massillon and Canal Fulton;
- The Middlebranch Creek and tributaries feeding it through the cities of North Canton, Canton, Louisville and as far north as Uniontown and Hartville, as well as the Village of East Canton to the east; and
- The Mahoning River and areas surrounding the Berlin Reservoir. These areas are primarily in Lexington Township and the City of Alliance.

As development should be limited in flood prone areas, it is recommended to strengthen County flood plain regulations to either not allow or limit structures being built within the 100-year flood zone.

Recently, Stark Parks has taken on several projects pertaining to floodplain management, including acquiring grants from FEMA and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA) to assist with razing repeatedly flooded buildings located in flood-prone areas. By removing these structures, these sites are then able to be restored to natural floodplains, which ultimately improve storm water runoff control and water quality. These areas can then potentially be utilized for activities that have low-to-no impact on the environment, such as parks and trail development.⁷¹ The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency also offers grants for similar water quality improvements, including stream bank restoration.

⁷¹ “Stark County’s Park District’s Five-Year Plan, 2014-2018: Creating Quality Spaces and Destination Places,” Stark County Regional Planning Commission, February 2014.

Flood Plain Areas



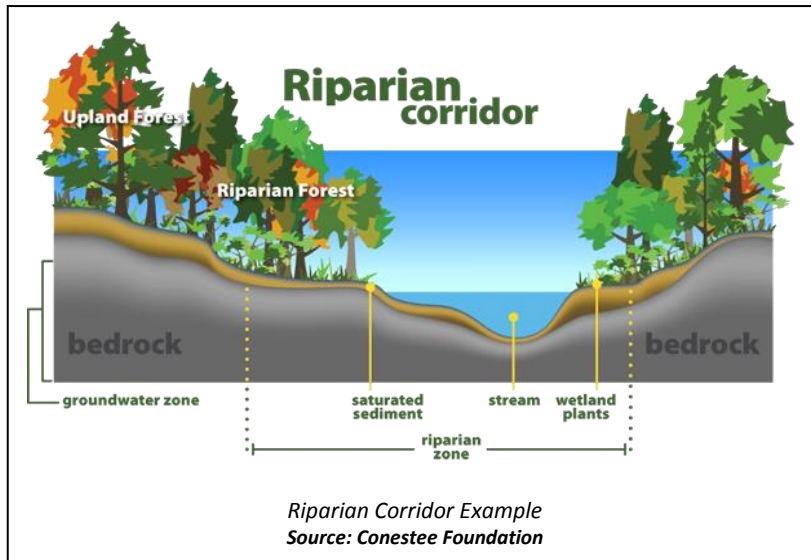
Flood Plain	
■	100 Year Flood Plain
■	500 Year Flood Plain
■	Lake
■	Stream / River



Source: EPA; The 100-year flood has become the accepted national standard for regulatory purposes. It is defined as the flood event that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year or, on the average, occurs once in a 100-year period.

Riparian Corridors

One of the recommendations from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Section 729 Final Watershed Assessment and Plan for the Nimishillen Creek Watershed is the creation of designated riparian corridors. These corridors, which run along streams and lakes and contain strips of vegetation, are designed to provide buffers against the amount of pollution entering



the water system. Grasses and roots slow down the rate of runoff, which gives sediment time to settle and water time to percolate, filtering through the soil and cleanly recharging underlying groundwater. Tree and shrub roots also help to hold stream banks in place, preventing erosion.

Many communities choose to delineate these corridors through zoning. Riparian corridor districts typically include increased minimum setback distances between waterways and development activities, which further assists in runoff treatment and erosion control efforts, while also greatly reducing the impacts of flooding on properties located along waterways. As development should be limited in flood prone areas to address health and safety concerns, it is recommended to strengthen County flood plain regulations to either not allow or limit structures being built within the 100-year flood zone.

Damages and associated repair costs caused by flooding have proven to be exponential to both homeowners and communities, especially during times of high rainfall. Riparian corridor protection is strongly encouraged as a method of improved water management and floodplain

control within Stark County. As noted above, these corridors can be established through a formal amendment to a community's zoning code, which would identify the corridors, establish setbacks and/or restrict the type of development can take place within them. Currently, the Cities of Canton, Canal Fulton and Louisville, and Jackson, Lawrence and Plain Townships have riparian/floodplain district regulations in their zoning codes, and the City of Louisville recommends the establishment of a riparian setback in their latest Comprehensive Plan, which was developed in February 2016.⁷²

For communities that have frequently flooded areas, a riparian corridor zoning district may not only help save property owners and the community a substantial amount of money, but they may also help save a life as well. The Stark County Regional Planning Commission and the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District are two local sources for more information on establishing these corridors.

Water Quality Protection

The protection of water resources, including underground water well fields, surface storage reservoirs, rivers and streams is vital to any community. Other critical areas for water-quality and ecological protection include wetlands, buffer zones, riparian corridors and floodplains. Stream protection is critical in Stark County because many streams lie over buried valleys of porous gravel and glacial outwash materials, which allow contaminants to descend quickly from the surface to the water table. These streams need protection from polluted runoff created by development and certain agricultural land use practices.

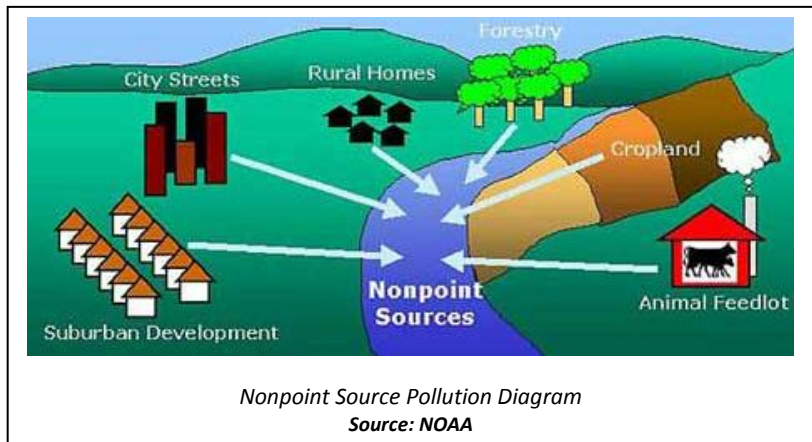
In terms of pollution, there are two basic types: point and nonpoint source pollution. Point source pollution is pollution that can be traced to one sole contributor, such as toxic waste

⁷² "Louisville Comprehensive Plan," Reveille Consultants, February 2016.

from an industrial plant's wastewater discharge pipe. Nonpoint source pollution, on the other hand, is pollution that comes from a variety of sources such as smog from vehicles or pesticide runoff from farming areas.

According to the Northeast Four County Organization (NEFCO), nonpoint source pollution and habitat alteration are the two major sources behind the damage being caused to our streams and lakes. Unlike point source pollution, where the EPA can regulate precise locations through the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit program that was previously discussed, nonpoint

source pollution is from a diffused area and is largely unregulated; therefore leaving it up to individual communities to promote and practice safe, pollutant-free water quality protection methods. These approaches consist of



watershed planning, land conservation, buffers and riparian corridors, better site design, erosion control, storm water management, control of nonpoint source pollution, and responsible stewardship, many of which are discussed in detail throughout this plan.

Wetlands

In addition to stream protection, wetlands also play a critical role in maintaining water quality, serving as natural filtration systems. As water's flow-rate slows, sediments settle out and the water is slowly filtered and cleaned. Wetlands provide a natural mechanism for filtering out pollutants from development runoff, agricultural runoff, and other human activities. In addition

to improving water quality, these areas also assist with flood and erosion control, and according to the Ohio EPA, are sanctuaries to 1/3 of all endangered species.⁷³

There are two main types of wetlands: 1) “jurisdictional” wetlands, which are wetlands regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and 2) “isolated” wetlands, which are regulated by state and local authorities. The determination for which category a wetland falls under is



based on whether the characteristics of a wetland meet certain federal criteria in terms of soil type, hydrology, etc. For anyone desiring to discharge into or fill an isolated wetland in Ohio, they must obtain a permit from the Ohio EPA. If the wetland is jurisdictional, the applicant must obtain permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the state, regardless of whether the wetland is on private or public property.

If permits are issued, proper mitigation standards must be adhered to. Measures include either purchasing credits at a wetland mitigation bank (EPA-approved wetland site accepting additional mitigation efforts), paying in-lieu fees to an approved mitigation program, wetland restoration/enhancement, or preservation of additional wetlands elsewhere.⁷⁴ According to an Ohio EPA report on wetlands for the fiscal year 2014, nearly half (43%) of the impacts to isolated wetlands in the state were a result of transportation activities, followed by residential activities at a more distant 17%. For jurisdictional wetlands, 64% of those impacted were as a result of industrial development. In addition, the report also found that mining was the

⁷³ “Ohio Wetlands Fact Sheet,” Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, www.epa.ohio.gov/portals/47/facts/ohio_wetlands.pdf, October 2013.

⁷⁴ “Wetland and Stream Mitigation,” Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, www.epa.ohio.gov, Accessed December 3, 2015.

(documented) industry type most responsible for impacts to streams (55%).⁷⁵ These numbers are not wholly surprising given the location and types of the waterways described.

Wetlands need to be preserved and protected, and wetland restoration is a tool that is very important in dealing with wetlands that have been impaired. Wetlands that have been filled and/or drained oftentimes maintain their characteristic soil and hydrology, allowing their natural functions to be reclaimed or restored. Wetland creation, however, requires much more planning and careful coordination, and can be quite expensive and oftentimes unsuccessful. This is why partnerships with members of the public/private sector such as The Wilderness Center, National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, and nature trusts should be encouraged, to help identify high quality wetlands and coordinate funding for their preservation and recovery before they are permanently removed. For Stark County, in addition to restoring priority wetlands where possible, the continued monitoring of site development and following appropriate permitting procedures is necessary to ensure that these critical areas are preserved and protected for the future.

Critical Areas and Potentially Harmful Uses

It is critical to use appropriate zoning and other regulatory measures to protect the area's water supply. Land use in the immediate vicinity of water well fields, recognized by the Ohio EPA as "Drinking Water Protection Areas," should be restricted to minimize groundwater pollution potential. Development should also be avoided in natural groundwater recharge areas such as wetlands, bogs, swamps and riparian corridors, which are essential to good water quality. Development of potential toxin-producing operations, such as landfills, strip mines and drilling operations, should be carefully planned to avoid water-sensitive areas as well, and these operations should be routinely monitored to prevent stream and underground water

⁷⁵ "Isolated Wetlands Permits and 401 Water Quality Certifications in Ohio," Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, www.epa.ohio.gov, December 2014.

contamination by toxic runoff. With the recent expansion in horizontal drilling, when not installed and/or monitored correctly, the impacts on the environmental health and quality of the surrounding area and its inhabitants can be harmful.⁷⁶ This is why it is imperative that these sites be carefully overseen from start to finish.

As mentioned earlier in this section, nonpoint source (NPS) pollution is one of the two leading factors in water pollution, and agriculture is one land use category that is leading in this type of pollution. Water runoff from farms treated with pesticides and fertilizers can send these chemicals and other pollutants downstream and eventually into waterways. A recent case on the serious effects of this type of pollution was the Toledo Algae Bloom in 2014. Lake Erie became so polluted with toxic algae that it left 500,000 people without drinking water for nearly a week. Toledo was the first major city in the Great Lakes area to fall victim to this type of contamination in many years. The bloom was due to an influx of nitrogen and phosphorus, primarily from NPS pollution in the form of fertilizer runoff from lawns and farms.⁷⁷

In response to concerns about increasing pollution runoff from farms, the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil and Water Conservation recently began administering Ohio's Agricultural Pollution Abatement Program (APAP), which provides farmers funding assistance to develop and implement methods to reduce soil erosion and contaminated water runoff. These funds are being administered by local soil and water conservation districts, and range in amounts from \$5,000-\$15,000, with a 75% cost share rate.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ "Assessment of the Potential Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas on Drinking Water Resources," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/hfstudy>, 2015.

⁷⁷ Lee, Jane J., "Driven By Climate Change, Algae Blooms Behind Ohio Water Scare Are New Normal," National Geographic Explorer, August 6, 2014.

⁷⁸ "Agriculture Pollution Abatement Program," Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Accessed December 14, 2015.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency also oversees programs to increase sensitive-area conservation practices involving agricultural areas. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides payments to agricultural landowners to remove environmentally sensitive lands from agricultural operations and instead plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. This program has not only improved water quality but has also helped with reducing soil erosion and wildlife habitat loss.

“Green” Infrastructure Tools

Some of the more sustainable, “green” storm water and water quality control measures gaining popularity over the last several years include rain harvesting through the use of rain barrels,



and water diversion features such as rain gardens, bioswales and permeable paving. The last three are landscape elements that collect water runoff and sediments, and filter them through the ground naturally, helping to remove pollution and decrease runoff. In the Columbus area, local governments are taking an active role in installing rain gardens throughout the community, to help alleviate storm water runoff and sewer overflow. In the Clintonville area alone, they are building over 400 rain gardens throughout the community starting in the fall of 2016.⁷⁹

In terms of permeable paving, one location where this type of pavement should be encouraged within communities is parking lots, especially in those lots where significant portions go unused

⁷⁹ “Columbus Using Green Infrastructure to Clean Water from City Sewers,” WBNS Channel 10 News, <http://www.10tv.com/content/stories/2016/04/11/columbus-ohio-columbus-using-green-infrastructure-to-clean-rainwater-from-city-sewers.html>, April 11, 2016.

for much of the time. Modifying parking requirements to allow for “reserve” parking areas (used for infrequent periods of high parking demand) developed with this type of paving would still retain an appropriate area for additional parking if needed, yet reduce its overall impact on storm water runoff. Playgrounds and sidewalks are other areas to consider using permeable materials, such as porous asphalt, rubber or pervious concrete.⁸⁰

In addition to rain barrels, “gray” water reuse is another water conservation tool that allows for the collection and reuse of gently used water for irrigation purposes. Gray water is water that has come in contact with dirt, food, grease and mild household cleaning solutions by way of the sink, bathtub or washing machines. This does not include water contaminated with any bodily fluids. While gray water’s nutrients can become harmful pollutants if released into waterways, they are valuable fertilizers for lawns. The use of gray water for irrigation purposes not only keeps this water out of the lakes and rivers, but it also saves money in lawn maintenance for property owners.

The Stark Soil and Water Conservation District routinely hosts educational workshops on topics such as the above, as do many of the local communities. The Stark County Regional Planning Commission also offers presentations and informational materials on storm water education. Communities are encouraged to work with these agencies to educate their constituents, as it is imperative to protect local water sources, arguable the most essential natural resource.

⁸⁰ “The Green Edge: How Commercial Property Investment in Green Infrastructure Creates Value,” NRDC Report, National Resource Defense Council, December 2013.

B.) Open Space and Recreation

Defining Open Space

Open space, whether it is being preserved, developed, used or regulated, can have many meanings. From the simplest definition of “undeveloped land” to “spaces of public value open to public use,” we all have differing perceptions regarding its use and potential. In this plan, open space is defined as

land with limited or no improvements that is retained in that manner for ecological, historical, scenic or recreational purposes. These lands can include areas as



*Edgewater Golf Course located in Paris Township
Source: Edgewater Golf Course*

diverse as campgrounds, golf courses, swim clubs, and ball fields, in addition to traditional parks and ecological reserves. In discussing open space, we will also consider the methods and tools available for preserving both existing and future open space. Agricultural preservation is discussed in the Food and Farming section (Chapter III) of this plan.

Importance of Open Space

Many of the benefits of open space are often overlooked. Benefits include:

- Providing areas for active and passive recreation as one seeks to maintain physical and mental health;
- Contributing to a community’s quality of life by assisting in defining the character and aesthetics of neighborhoods;
- Serving as an economic asset by improving property values and attracting businesses;

- Providing buffers between areas of extensive development;
- Promoting economic growth through tourism, recreational and cultural attractions; and
- Serving valuable environmental functions by preserving wetlands, floodplains, and groundwater recharge and riparian areas; assisting in maintaining water quality and minimizing flooding; and preserving flora and fauna biodiversity.

Loss of Open Space

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, almost 6,000 acres of open space across the U.S. are lost to development every day. The Western Reserve Land Conservancy found that in a nine-county area of Northeast Ohio, more than 700,000 acres of farmland alone have been lost since 1950.⁸¹ The reasons behind this loss vary from region to region, but for Stark County, suburbanization is one of the more significant trends that has contributed to this accelerating loss of farmland and open space.

Suburbanization: Knowing where people live is important not only when deciding how to serve them but also in determining how best to preserve resources. The population shift from urban to suburban and rural areas has widely impacted the development of open space within Stark County, as can be seen in the following paragraphs.

According to the U.S. Census, the City of Canton experienced a loss of more than 36,000 residents between 1970 and 2010 (7,800 since 2000), while Alliance lost approximately 4,200 residents (almost 1,000 since 2000). Most other incorporated communities experienced slight gains or remained nearly the same size.

⁸¹ “Farmland Preservation,” Western Reserve Land Conservancy, www.wrlandconservancy.org, Accessed June 14, 2016.

Approximately 67% of the County's population is located in the cities of Canton, Massillon, and North Canton, and the townships of Jackson, Lake, Perry, and Plain. The general growth in these townships reflects the population movement from concentrated urban areas into formerly rural settings, especially into the north and central areas of the County. In terms of unincorporated areas, Jackson Township and Lake Township experienced extensive growth between 1970 and 2010, from 18,506 to 40,152 persons in Jackson Township and 11,301 to 27,017 persons in Lake Township. Plain Township had also experienced growth between 1970 and 2000, but in 2010 their population showed a slight decrease from 35,543 to 34,900 persons.

While the County population decreased .07% between 2000 and 2010 (after growing about 2.9% between 1990 and 2000), the number of housing units grew by 5.2% from 157,024 to 165,215 units in 2010. The most significant growth in housing units was in the unincorporated suburban and rural areas of Stark County, including Jackson, Lake, Nimishillen and Lawrence Townships. Without an increase in population, this increase in housing units can largely be correlated to a redistribution of population to previously undeveloped areas.

As noted in Chapter III, the substantial growth of residential land use over the past 50 years can largely be attributed to low density, dispersed development patterns. Since 2004, residential land use has increased significantly to 120,322 acres (32.4%) of the total land area of the County in 2015. According to Stark County subdivision and development records, while the national recession of 2007-08 slowed residential development down significantly during those years, development has since started to slowly pick back up. It is anticipated that this growth trend will continue at a slow but steady rate for the foreseeable future, excluding any unforeseen circumstances.

With this trend, it can be expected that additional open space land will continue to be developed, (including agricultural land as noted in the Food and Farming section), and unless

provisions are put in place to better guide the location of development, many of the remaining undeveloped areas will be lost to development.

Current Open Space

Before open space preservation needs can be determined, it is important to take an inventory of existing resources. While an attempt has been made to be as thorough as possible, the following is not an all-encompassing inventory.

Open space can be divided into three major categories as their characteristics involve differing interest groups, needs, and responsible governmental agencies. The three major categories are: 1.) Natural Resource Areas, 2.) Linear “Greenways,” and 3.) Park and Recreational Areas.

1.) Natural Resource Areas preserve habitat and/or natural features such as water, wetlands, grasslands, woodlands or distinct topographical features. This category has traditionally been defined as regional parks (areas of 200+ acres which draw users from a great distance), but also includes large, permanently undeveloped areas serving multiple functions such as water reservoirs, flood easements, riparian stream setbacks, storm water detention areas, and airport protection zones. More heavily developed areas such as campgrounds, golf courses, and other similar areas with large acreages, limited development and regional draw for users are sometimes included in this category, but typically align more with the Park and Recreational Areas category.

A.) Existing major natural resource areas

Existing major natural resource areas within Stark County include areas managed by Stark Parks, the University of Mount Union, The Wilderness Center, and others.

- **Stark Parks** manages a large number of parks fitting the natural resource area definition, such as the Canal lands, Deer Creek Reservoir, Fry Family Park, Sippo and Petros Lake Parks, Walborn Reservoir and Whitacre Greer Park.⁸² More information about the Park District’s properties can be found on their website and in their most recent five-year plan.⁸³

- **The University of Mount Union** owns and manages several natural areas for conservation as well as educational purposes.⁸⁴



- **The Wilderness Center** is a conservation advocacy organization that oversees a large, 650-acre nature preserve, as well as a number of smaller satellite properties. The Wilderness Center’s conservation easement program has protected more than 3,000 acres of farmland throughout Stark and surrounding counties. The Center also oversees a wetland mitigation bank program and a natural burial cemetery, the cemetery being the first of its kind in the state.⁸⁵

⁸² “Parks,” Stark Parks, www.starkparks.com, Accessed May 2016.

⁸³ “Stark County Park District’s Five Year Plan, 2014-2018: Creating Quality Spaces and Destination Places,” <https://starkparks.com/wp-content/uploads/Five-Year-Park-Plan-2014-2018.pdf>, February 2014.

⁸⁴ “Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center,” University of Mt. Union, www.mountunion.edu, Accessed May 2016.

⁸⁵ “History,” The Wilderness Center, www.wildernesscenter.org, Accessed May 2016.

- **Beech Creek Gardens** is a 164-acre nature preserve and botanical garden with educational facilities operated by a non-profit conservation group.⁸⁶
- The **Jackson Bog State Nature Preserve** is a 58-acre preserve that is owned by the Jackson Township Local Board of Education and ODNR's (Ohio Department of Natural Resources) Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.⁸⁷

B.) Permanently Undeveloped Areas

Stark County has large areas where development is, or should be, limited for reasons of public health, safety and for other benefits. These areas include floodplains, flood control dam easement areas, water well fields and aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, high quality farmland, mined/reclaimed areas, and landfills.

Other categories where land development should be limited include:

- Areas of prime farmland, such as the muck soil areas near the Village of Hartville;
- Water recharge areas, most notably the area between the City of Massillon and Village of Navarre;
- Wetland areas; and
- Formerly surface-mined and/or reclaimed areas that exhibit poor soils and limited water resources, as well as abandoned underground mine subsidence areas.

Many of these areas are already in public ownership or have easements which greatly restrict development. Others should be set aside and preserved through public acquisition or via a conservation easement to prevent their development. Zoning, building and subdivision

⁸⁶ "About Us," Beech Creek Gardens, www.beechcreekgardens.org, Accessed May 2016.

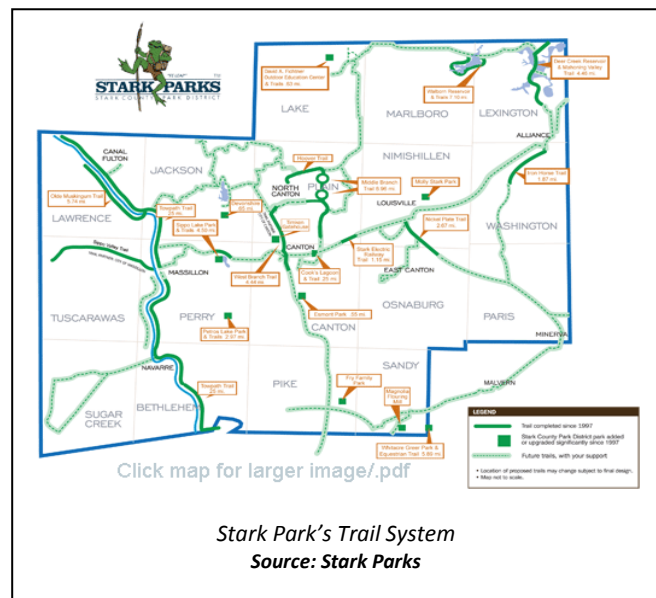
⁸⁷ Jackson Bog State Nature Preserve, <http://naturepreserves.ohiodnr.gov/jacksonbog>, Accessed May 2016.

regulations can also assist with preservation through measures such as the prohibition of construction within wetland and flood easement areas, the establishment of riparian corridor setbacks, and limiting development in prime aquifer recharge areas.

2.) Linear “Greenways” connect natural resource areas and parks of various types through multi-purpose trails, scenic drives, and other corridors. Greenways can include floodplains unsuitable for development, riparian corridors, utility easement areas kept in their natural state, or lands interconnecting habitat areas required for foraging and/or migration.

A.) Multi-purpose Trail System

Many of the parks discussed in the previous section are in the process of being linked together with multi-purpose trails as detailed in the Stark County Park District’s *Trail and Greenway Master Plan*. The plan, adopted in 1999 and updated in 2014, outlines the framework for establishing approximately 350 miles of trails and greenways throughout Stark County, and is incorporated into the 2040 Transportation Plan for Stark County as its pedestrian and bicycling section.



The plan identifies 25 trail systems throughout the County, which utilize abandoned railway corridors, utility right-of-ways, roads, and the extensive floodplains and riparian corridors of the Tuscarawas and Mahoning Rivers and the Nimishillen, Sandy, Beech and Deer Creeks. According to the original trail and greenway master plan, the multi-purpose trail system is designed “to connect the County’s parks, open spaces, cultural

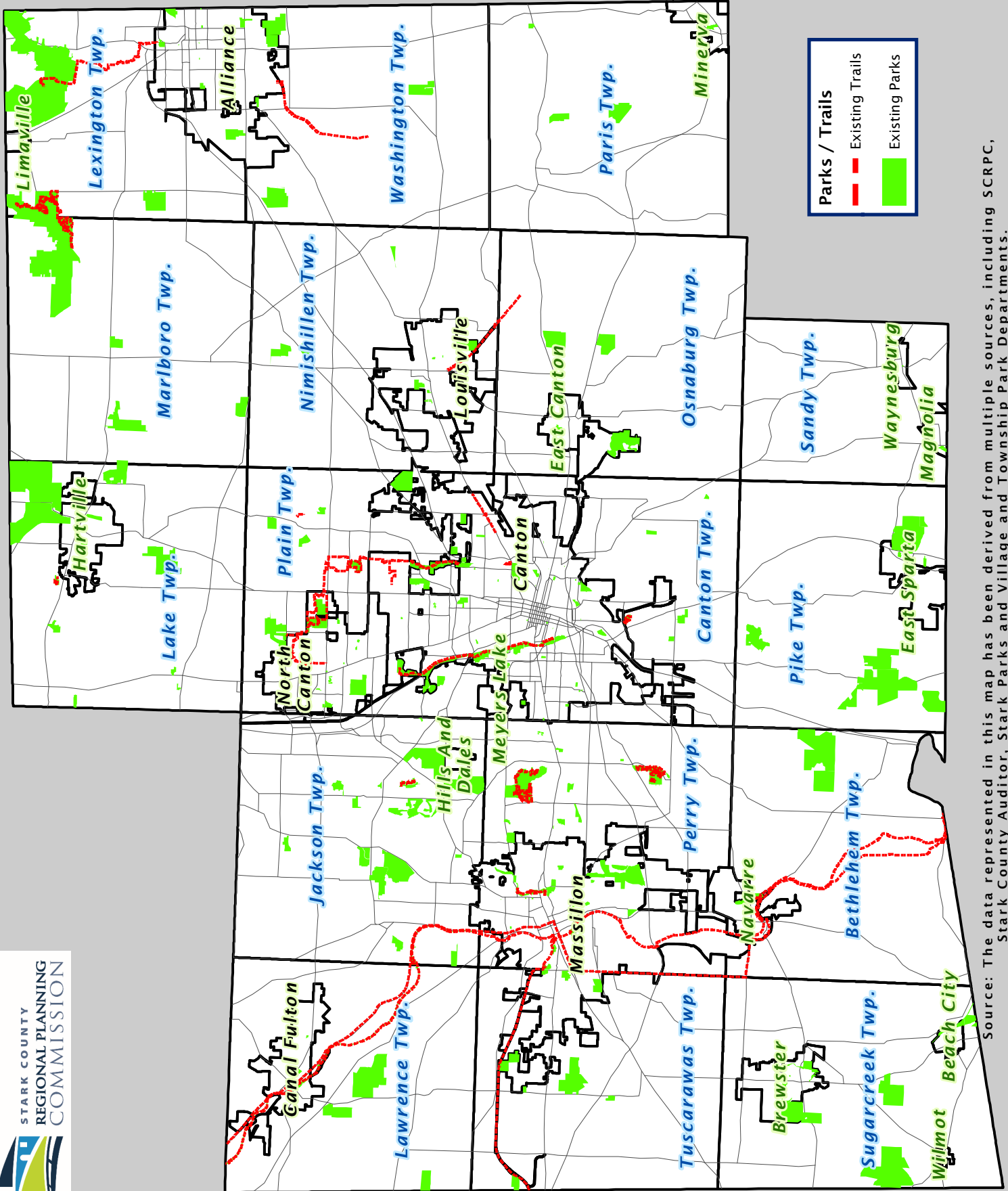
features, and historic sites...and to enhance the County's environmental and economic resources."⁸⁸

Stark Parks' trail network includes three major *north/south* routes with a number of east/west trails that interconnect with them. The major north/south routes include: the Towpath Trail, which is the major north/south portion of the western trail system; the West Branch and Middle Branch trails form the north/south trail system in the center of Canton and Stark County; and the third major trail network is in eastern Stark County and follows the Mahoning River and Beech and Deer Creeks in Alliance and several abandoned rail lines south to Minerva.

Major *east/west* connections of Stark Parks' trail network include: the completed 9 ½ mile Sippo Valley Trail from the western County line to Massillon, the partially complete Hoover Trail in North Canton and Plain Township, the Nickel Plate Trail in the City of Louisville, and the Stark Electric Railway Trail in the City of Canton.

⁸⁸“Stark County Trail and Greenway Plan,” Stark County Park District, Environmental Design Group & Schmidt Copeland Parker Stevens, March 1999.

Parks and Trails



Source: The data represented in this map has been derived from multiple sources, including SCRPC, Stark County Auditor, Stark Parks and Village and Township Park Departments.

B.) National Heritage Area

This greenway encompasses an area stretching 110 miles from Cleveland to New Philadelphia and includes numerous local historical, recreation and tourist facilities centered on the Ohio & Erie Canal, the historical routes of the Valley Railroad and the Lincoln Highway. The Heritage Area provides an opportunity to encourage heritage tourism and serves as a means to revitalize older communities.⁸⁹ Another component of the Heritage Area is the Canalway Ohio Scenic Byway, Ohio's second nationally designated scenic byway.

C.) Other significant trails and routes

Other significant routes include the City of Canton's Complete Streets project, which includes the recent creation of designated bike lanes on roadways (see Chapter VII, Transportation for more information). Completed bicycle lanes include Walnut Avenue from 12th Street NE to 2nd Street SE. Additional sections are under development, and the City will have an extensive system once completed.

Also of note are several other nationally and state designated bicycle and hiking trails which pass through Stark County, including the Buckeye Trail, the North Country Trail, the Ohio to Erie Trail, US Bicycle Route 40 and the Industrial Heartland Trail, discussed in greater detail in Appendix B.

⁸⁹ Heritage Ohio and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas are two resources available to assist with heritage tourism planning and preservation efforts.

3.) Park and Recreational Areas

A number of other open spaces exist that vary in size and public accessibility, some resembling natural resource areas while others are as small as residential lots, forming mini-parks. These include:

- Stark Parks' smaller properties that complement the County-wide trail system by preserving historic sites, serving as trailheads or providing educational opportunities. Some of these properties include: Cook's Lagoon, David Fichtner Outdoor Education Center, Devonshire and Esmont Parks, the Magnolia Flouring Mill and Molly Stark Park.⁹⁰

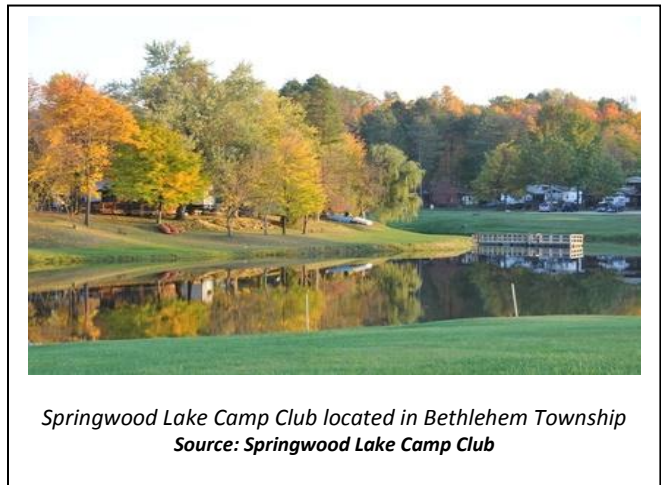


*Magnolia Flouring Mill located in the Village of Magnolia
Source: Visit Canton*

- Municipal, Township, Village, and Sports Organization Parks, which are typically developed and include numerous sports fields.
- Golf courses, which are one of the largest categories of open space after public parks. Stark County currently has over 20 golf courses consisting of more than 3,500 acres of manicured space, ranging in size from 22 to 437 acres. Unfortunately, golf courses have recently been struggling with high overhead costs coupled with lower attendance figures, and have therefore resorted to either reducing the number of holes or closing entirely.

⁹⁰ "Parks," Stark Parks, www.starkparks.com, Accessed June 2016.

- Campgrounds and swim clubs vary in size from large areas, such as the Springwood Lake Camp Club at 450 acres and Clay’s Park at 386 acres, to small facilities, such as the 5-acre Lake Cable Park. Hunting, fishing, and shooting clubs also vary from several with 150-acre and larger facilities for hunting and fishing, to those limited only to various shooting activities ranging from 5 to 15 acres.



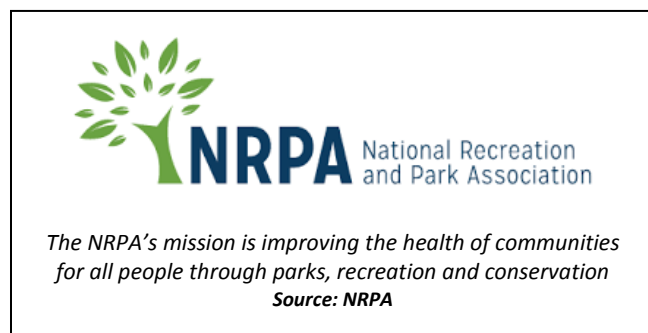
While certain open spaces such as neighborhood parks and small community parks are not reviewed in the above sections due to their limited size and the County-wide scope of this plan, it should be noted that there are over 100 municipal parks and playgrounds in the cities of Alliance, Canal Fulton, Canton, Louisville, Massillon and North Canton; and there are over 32 parks within the different villages and townships.

Measuring the Adequacy of Open Space

In reviewing the existing open space within Stark County, understanding how much open space is recommended is important in determining current adequacy and setting future goals. Also vital are the types of parks available and their accessibility to the population. For example, community parks should be within walking distance of developed residential areas.

Adequacy of open space in the past was commonly based on a broad standard of 10 acres per 1,000 residents within the developed urban area and an additional 10 acres per 1,000 residents

adjacent to urban areas in rural settings. These standards were developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and were intended to be a minimum standard; however, the most recent NRPA methodology to determine adequacy of open space suggests conducting a community-wide assessment to determine needs instead of using a set standard.⁹¹ While the old standard commonly remains in use as a general measurement, it would also be beneficial for communities to carry out a more in-depth study using current



methodologies to determine overall needs. Information derived from current methodologies may include: a complete inventory of all open spaces (including types, ownership and spatial relationship to the population), maintenance and improvement needs, public expectations

regarding open space (including possible funding sources), expected lead agencies and public interest in fiscally supporting these efforts.

The Stark County Park District's 2014-2018 Five-Year Plan, "Creating Quality Spaces and Destination Places," found that Stark County meets the basic standard for the gross amount of open space in terms of acres per residents; however, there are gaps in the types and accessibility of facilities.⁹² Through surveys and public meetings, the plan found that there are gaps in the types of parks available for certain activities, such as mountain biking, winter recreation activities, areas for viewing and photographing wildlife, and facilities for horseback riding. Areas of concern in terms of accessibility include the ability for underserved populations to get to and from parks, and the lack of accessibility features *within* the parks for those with children or with disabilities. The plan also noted that while the trail system has expanded

⁹¹ Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, National Recreation and Park Association, 1995.

⁹² "Stark County Park District's Five-Year Plan, 2014-2018: Creating Quality Spaces and Destination Places," Stark County Regional Planning Commission, February 2014.

significantly in the past decade, common requests for the trails is that they link to destination points, such as libraries, coffee shops, grocery stores and banks. By linking trails to these points of interest, the trail system becomes, in addition to a form of recreation, a form of transportation as well.

Other recommendations from the Park Plan included expanding existing natural areas, preserving additional wetlands, improving the quality of current parks to include restrooms, water fountains, more frequent maintenance, and enhancing programming.

Preserving Open Space

The preservation of open space is not always a simple task. Problems with preserving open space include questions related to funding issues, determining responsible entities, obtaining consensus on the type and location of facilities and preserved areas to be acquired, and garnering sufficient public support to implement projects. Setting up a proper framework for the long term preservation of open space is vital if the effort is to be successful.

Urban counties usually rely on the creation of metropolitan park districts to act as the driving force towards purchasing and preserving large tracts of open space for parklands and nature preserves. The traditional hierarchy of national, state, county, and local parks was late in being realized in Stark County. The Stark County Park District, Stark Parks, was formed in 1967. It failed to receive dedicated funding until a minimal .2 mill levy was passed in 1988. Further, it was not until 1997 that the park district passed a .5 mill levy bringing in monies sufficient enough to fund larger projects, and it was not until 2012 that the district received a full mill. This left major gaps in funding the purchase of open space areas during periods of rapid suburban growth where land prices then increased, while at the same time, local governments were called upon to provide additional services. Thus, much of the acquisition of land was relegated to local governments, which often lacked the appropriate funds to do so.

Protecting and purchasing open space is often not a high priority for local governments, with funding police and fire protection, road and highway improvements, and other needs typically being higher priorities. Preserving open space is also costly, with benefits to the community often deferred to an indefinite future date. This is especially true for suburban townships, which, while having populations larger than many of the incorporated communities within the County, lack the funding options available to incorporated areas.

Despite this difficulty, a number of townships and local governments have been active in developing parks, tending to favor more active recreational parks, leaving passive facilities lacking. Since providing ball fields and other active park facilities has been popular with communities, Stark Parks has stepped in to create more passive recreational areas, and with the more recent passage of the higher levy, they have made major advances in achieving this goal.

It should be noted that in many areas a large percentage of the reserved open space is dependent upon private and semi-private ownership, in the form of golf courses or non-profit groups that preserve wildlife and natural areas. While privately-owned facilities can fulfill needs usually met by public parks, they can be impermanent and provide limited access to the public.

Tools for Preserving Open Space

While a number of townships, local governments, and Stark Parks have been active in preserving open space, it is essential to establish the proper framework for the long term preservation of open space. Purchasing all of the land that a community identifies for preservation can be cost prohibitive; therefore, included below are a few open space and natural resource protection tools, many of which do not require high initial investments.

- Open Space Inventory – Individual communities or Stark County could create inventories of public and private open space. A mapped inventory would allow a community to easily identify what areas are preserved, as well as future opportunities for preservation, possibly creating a network of open space areas. Another inventory that a community could create is an Environmental Resource Inventory. With a map of areas that are environmental resources, or are naturally highly productive, such as areas with muck soils, heavy forest cover, or a valuable watershed; a community may envision areas that are prime candidates for preservation.

- Zoning Resolution Modifications – There are many tools that a local government can adopt into their zoning resolution to aid in open space preservation.
 - Cluster Development – A cluster development ordinance enables developers to increase density on one portion of a tract, in exchange for preserving open space on another portion of the tract. There are several townships in Stark County that have Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning districts that allow smaller lot sizes, but require a certain percentage of open space to be dedicated with a development. It is generally most effective for dedicated open space to be contiguous; this prevents fragmentation of plant and animal habitats.
 - Large Lot Zoning – This technique allows communities to protect rural and agricultural areas by establishing large minimum lot sizes, for instance requiring that any new tracts created be greater than 20 acres. This methodology often discourages buyers from considering such large tracts, unless they are interested in agriculture or land preservation.
 - Overlay or Critical Area Zoning – The purpose of overlay or critical area zoning is to limit development in order to protect resource-based uses such as farming, forestry, or mining; and to avoid potential hazards to the public, such as those in designated

flood hazard or water supply source protection areas.⁹³ Overlay districts are superimposed on underlying zoning districts, and can be scattered throughout a community. Communities could adopt overlay districts into their zoning resolutions, for purposes such as watershed management districts, agricultural overlay districts, critical habitat overlays, or historic preservation districts. If there is a large area that a community would like to preserve, they could adopt a full critical area zoning district. This differs from an overlay zone in that overlay zones essentially cover an existing zoning designation. For instance, a 50-acre working farm in a rural-residential (R-R) district may have an agricultural preservation zoning district laid over the R-R designation, which would include additional restrictions for that specific area.

In a Critical Area District, only that district's requirements would apply and not the previous R-R regulations. If there are four or more 50-acre contiguous working farms, a community may decide to establish a critical area zoning district, in which those tracts would then comply with only the critical area district's requirements, not the previous R-R regulations.

- Conservation Easements – Conservation easements permanently protect land from development, while allowing ownership to remain in private hands. A property owner would initiate a conservation easement with a governmental or non-profit organization, such as the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Each conservation easement is customized to the land owner; for instance a land owner can determine if recreation, farming, or wildlife management will continue on the land. Conservation and agricultural easements are described in further detail in the Food & Farming section.

⁹³ “Open Space & Resource Protection Regulations,” <http://vpic.info/Publications/Reports/Implementation/OpenSpaceRegulations.pdf> , Accessed June 13, 2016.

While this plan recognizes that major open space and recreation areas can include both publicly- and privately-owned facilities, a number of privately-owned open spaces (such as golf courses) have recently been lost to or are slated for development. Protected open spaces, public parks and preserved farmland provide economic, environmental, and public health benefits to communities. It is important to realize that without a conservation easement or other land use protection tool in place, these lands may be developed in the future.

Entities Preserving Open Space

Organizations with the greatest ability to secure additional natural resource areas include the Stark County Park District, The Wilderness Center (a non-profit conservation organization), the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, local communities and non-profits with assistance from the District 19 Natural Resource Assistance Council (NRAC), the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, and outdoor clubs. Private landowners, while not an entity, per se, are also paramount in preserving land, primarily through the use of conservation easements. As the greatest stewards of land, the vast amount of acreage already preserved would not have been possible without them. See Appendix B for more information on these entities.

Goals for Open Space

As discussed throughout this section, this country is losing farmland and open space at an alarming rate. As Stark County is experiencing a period of much slower population growth, now is the time to pursue more vigorous land conservation efforts. Communities should work together to identify target areas and funding sources for conservation. Public-private partnerships will be integral in determining the success of this goal, as conservation efforts rely on the effectiveness of these partnerships.

As mentioned previously, in addition to identifying and securing target open space areas, accessibility to and within these areas should be given considerable attention as these are locations that persons of all ages, incomes and abilities should be able to enjoy. Access limitations to consider include length of travel time in a personal and/or public transit vehicle, accessibility from public transit routes, and the facilities available at existing parks.

Lastly, for the current open space areas already preserved, additional features at these locations may be needed in order to enhance the quality of the park and attract additional visitors. These could include mountain bike and horse trails, additional protected wetland areas, and more visitor amenities such as restrooms, parking, informational kiosks, greenway connector trails, and wildlife observation areas.

C.) Objectives and Strategies

1. Protect local water resources.
 - a. Strengthen the subdivision, floodplain, and zoning regulations to ensure water quality is protected and storm water runoff is controlled.
 - b. Continue to coordinate watershed planning and funding efforts with agencies such as NEFCO, local conservancy districts, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture.
 - c. Encourage communities to utilize “green” infrastructure tools such as rain barrels, rain gardens, bioswales and permeable paving to help reduce the impacts of storm water runoff and improve water quality.
2. Expand the amount of quality open space preserved.
 - a. Collaborate among local communities to analyze and create an inventory of existing open space and recreation areas, including available amenities at each.
 - b. Communities should coordinate on the identification of target areas for future conservation, and work together to secure conservation funding.
 - c. Update the local Subdivision Regulations and zoning codes to more proactively promote conservation efforts.
3. Enhance existing open space and recreation areas.
 - a. Strengthen the accessibility within parks and open space areas so that people of all ages and abilities can benefit from them.
 - b. Work with SARTA to analyze accessibility to the parks and open space areas from public transit routes to improve access to these locations.
 - c. Focus on improving the quality of existing open space/recreation areas either through additional amenities and/or programming efforts.
4. Strengthen the measures available to preserve open space.
 - a. Develop additional regulatory tools, such as cluster development ordinances, to assist with targeted conservation efforts.
 - b. Utilize public-private partnerships to assist with more effectively conserving land, such as a public entity and private landowners and/or a land trust.
 - c. Support conservation entities charged with preserving these valuable resources, whether it’s for aesthetic, recreation or environmental purposes.

V. HOUSING

Livability, according to the Partners for Livable Communities, is the “sum of all factors that add up to a community’s quality of life.” Perhaps more than any other land use, residential use shapes the direction, character and livability of an area. Ideally, residential communities are readily accessible to the major highway network, and work and shopping districts, while simultaneously protected from traffic congestion, noise, air and water pollution, and other environmental degradation. Livable communities, urban in particular, are within easy access to transit stops, include a blend of housing options to support all stages and incomes of life, and are rich in diversity and vibrancy. The design of livable communities is critical to the quality of life for every Stark County resident.

Historically, housing and the associated amenities that make up livable neighborhoods have been the single largest uses of land in the urbanized parts of Stark County. Associated amenities include elementary and secondary schools, neighborhood parks, churches and local convenience shops which serve the immediate neighborhood. Clearly, the loss or degradation of just one of these amenities could have a detrimental effect on that neighborhood.

The importance of these issues should not be overlooked, and it is worth noting that when survey respondents were asked about the strengths and assets of Stark County, several of the responses were related to community livability. Based on survey results, the highest rated strength for Stark County was its low cost of living. According to Sperling’s Best Places to Live, Ohio’s overall cost of living is 88 out of 100, meaning that it is lower than the national average by approximately 12%. The housing price index falls even lower than the national average by almost 35%. This figure takes into consideration mortgage payments, apartment rents and

property tax.⁹⁴ While this percentage in general is a positive for the residents of Ohio, steps need to be taken to ensure that this low figure is not solely associated with a housing market filled with high vacancies, deteriorated housing stock and population loss, conditions that Stark County has been increasingly experiencing.

A. Vacancies and Disinvestment

Household and Vacancy Changes

Since 1980, household sizes have been slowly declining in Stark County, with persons per household numbering 2.65 in 1980 and declining to 2.41 in 2000. A slight upturn was seen in 2010 for the County, increasing to 2.48 persons per household; however, the projected persons per household figure is expected to overall decline by 2040. Household size is expected to decrease for several reasons, including increased divorce rates, more single-parent households and families having fewer children. Also contributing to smaller household size is the older population, whose increased life span allows them to spend more years as empty nesters, widows and widowers, creating more single-person households than in the past. The continued decline in household size will have implications on future residential land use needs; not only on the acreage required, but also the types of housing built and the community facilities needed to meet changing household demands.⁹⁵

Housing Units

The population in Stark County is projected to grow about 1% per decade, for a total of roughly 3% between 2010 (last full Census update) and 2040. With this modest expected growth, there is an anticipated similarly modest growth in the number of housing units. According to the U.S.

⁹⁴ “Cost of Living in Ohio,” Sperling’s Best Places, www.bestplaces.net, Updated June 2014, Accessed January 2016.

⁹⁵ “2010 SF-1,” U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov, Accessed January 2016.

Census Bureau, a housing unit is defined as a house, apartment, mobile home or trailer, or a group of rooms that are occupied as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live separately from any other individuals in the building and which have direct access from outside the building or through a common hall.

There were 151,089 households (occupied housing units) in Stark County in 2010, while there were 165,215 housing units, giving an occupancy rate of 91.5% and a vacancy rate of 8.5%.⁹⁶ These vacancies are a problem throughout the County, especially in Canton and Alliance, and are discussed in further detail below.

Figure 5.1, Housing Units and Vacancy by Political Subdivision, compares the number of housing units, and also includes a comparison of the vacancy rate, from 2000-2010. The greatest increase in number of housing units was seen in Lake Township (20.0%) and Jackson Township (12.9%). The City of Louisville also saw a 12.7% increase in housing units, while Nimishillen Township saw a 12.6% increase. These increases in housing units correlate with the population increases in Lake, Nimishillen, and Jackson Townships, which substantiates the trend of suburbanization in these areas. The only areas with a decline in the number of housing units include the City of Canton (-2.6%) and Canton Township (-0.1%).

The Cities of Canton and Alliance saw the greatest change in vacancy rate from 2000-2010, 5.6% and 5.4%, respectively. As a whole, Stark County's vacancy rate increased from 5.5% in 2000, to 8.4% in 2010, and it had reached 9.4% in 2014.⁹⁷ Also similar to the decline in population in the central city and its surrounding area, it can be inferred that these housing unit declines and vacancy increases are also related to the mortgage crisis/Great Recession of 2008, the abandonment of older homes and suburbanization.

⁹⁶ According to the U.S. Census, a household is one or more people, whom may or may not be related, living together in a single living quarter. A housing unit is a living quarter that may or may not be occupied.

⁹⁷ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-1, 2010 SF-1 & 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

Political Subdivision	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	Housing Unit Change	Percent Change	2000 Vacancy Rate	2010 Vacancy Rate	Change in Vacancy Rate
Alliance	9,706	9,994	288	3.0%	8.4%	13.8%	5.4%
Bethlehem	2,483	2,483	0	0.0%	5.5%	7.1%	1.6%
Canton City	35,502	34,571	-931	-2.6%	8.5%	14.1%	5.6%
Canton Township	5,785	5,777	-8	-0.1%	3.9%	6.5%	2.6%
Jackson	15,986	18,053	2067	12.9%	5.1%	7.1%	2.0%
Lake	9,426	11,313	1887	20.0%	2.8%	4.5%	1.7%
Lawrence	4,965	5,575	610	12.3%	3.7%	5.7%	2.0%
Lexington	2,135	2,209	74	3.5%	4.1%	6.9%	2.8%
Louisville	3,544	3,995	451	12.7%	2.8%	6.7%	3.9%
Marlboro	1,568	1,664	96	6.1%	7.4%	4.7%	-2.7%
Massillon	13,567	14,497	930	6.9%	6.6%	9.4%	2.8%
Nimishillen	3,368	3,793	425	12.6%	2.9%	5.4%	2.5%
Osnaburg	2,327	2,371	44	1.9%	3.2%	5.4%	2.2%
Paris	2,440	2,556	116	4.8%	5.1%	9.7%	4.6%
Perry	11,922	12,320	398	3.3%	3.0%	5.6%	2.6%
Pike	1,676	1,741	65	3.9%	4.3%	5.9%	1.6%
Plain	22,414	23,819	1405	6.3%	4.5%	6.3%	1.8%
Sandy	1,485	1,550	65	4.4%	4.6%	7.7%	3.1%
Sugarcreek	2,556	2,590	34	1.3%	4.3%	6.4%	2.1%
Tuscarawas	2,330	2,492	162	7.0%	3.0%	4.8%	1.8%
Washington	1,839	1,852	13	0.7%	4.0%	5.1%	1.1%
TOTAL	157,024	165,215	8191	5.2%	5.5%	8.4%	2.9%

Figure 5.1, Housing Units and Vacancy by Political Subdivision

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 SF-1 & 2010 SF-1

Foreclosures

Though the 2008 mortgage foreclosure crisis has slowed, many families still feel the lingering effects of it, having lost their homes during that period. This not only increases the need for affordable rental housing in the region, but it has also left a large amount of residential properties vacant, many in serious disrepair.

According to the online survey conducted by SCRPC in late 2015, one of the top five conditions identified as most severe in Stark County was the large number of residential vacancies. The high number of residential vacancies was also a top concern identified in both the Canton Comprehensive Plan and the NEOSCC reports, as mentioned previously. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS), there were over 15,500 vacant housing units within Stark County during that survey period. This figure represents approximately 9.4% of the total housing units in the County. This percentage is slightly below the statewide vacancy average of 11% of total housing units. For some of Stark County's established cities, however, this vacancy rate is much higher.

Vacancy Rates		
Community	Vacancy Rate	# of Vacant Units
Canton City	16.3%	5,800
Alliance	12.8%	1,275
Massillon	12.1%	1,815
Stark County	9.4%	15,500
Ohio	11.0%	565,158

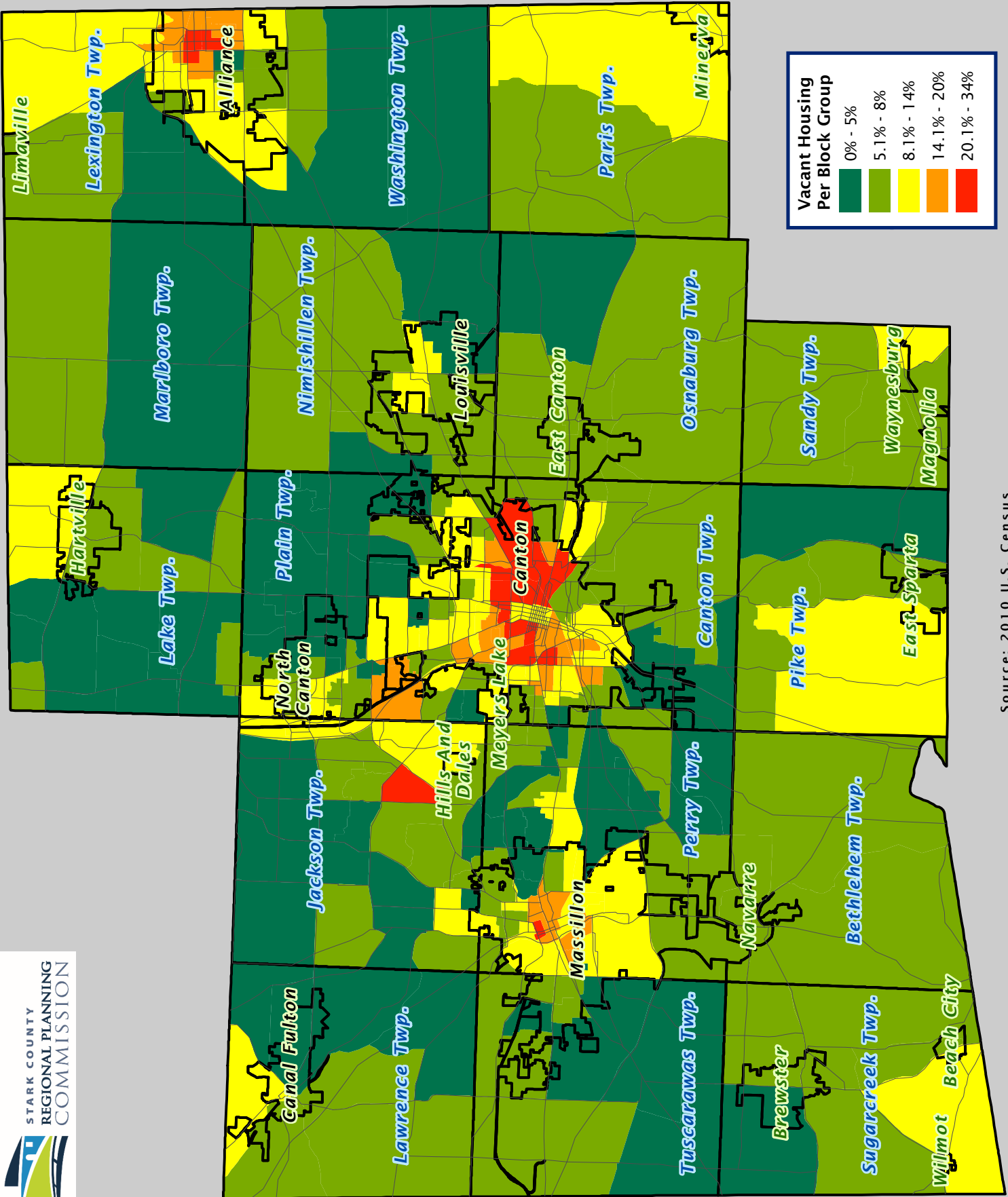
Figure 5.2, Stark County Vacancy Rates

Source: 2014 American Community Survey

The age of the housing stock within Stark County contributes to the decline in the condition of housing overall. Over 45% of the housing stock was built before 1960 for the County as a whole, and for Canton City, over 42% was built before 1940. Many of these older homes have a tendency to become blighted and abandoned, as they generally require greater upkeep. Of Canton's 5,800 vacant units, according to the city's adopted Comprehensive Plan, 3,500 of those are also tax delinquent and distressed (abandoned).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ City of Canton's Comprehensive Plan, Adopted March 2016.

Vacant Housing



Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Much of the NEOSCC and Canton Comprehensive plans focus on reducing abandonment through the strengthening of identified target areas. For NEOSCC, policy recommendations include concentrating new commercial and residential development within established communities, and directing infrastructure investments into already developed areas.⁹⁹ Canton City's Comprehensive Plan takes a slightly different approach in its recommendation to target six key areas that have been determined as priority areas, either in terms of existing assets or the elevated level of abandonment. These six areas consist of: downtown Canton, Aultman Hospital, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Mercy Medical Center, Timken Steel and the Shorb Avenue NW corridor.¹⁰⁰



*Mercy Medical Center located in the City of Canton
Source: MCM Company Inc.*

Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation

The Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) was created in 2012 and has been working to demolish abandoned, blighted, tax delinquent properties that are in extremely poor condition. The mission of the Land Bank is to strategically acquire properties, return them to productive use, reduce blight, increase property values, support community goals and improve the quality of life for County residents.

Under the Ohio Attorney General's Moving Ohio Forward (MOF) program, which ran from January 2013 to September 2014, 431 blighted structure demolitions were completed. Demolitions were undertaken in 19 different jurisdictions in Stark County, with most of them

⁹⁹ Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, Vibrant NEO 2040, <http://vibrantneo.org/action-products/policy-recommendations/>, Accessed November 15, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ "Canton Council Adopts Comprehensive Plan," Canton Repository, <http://www.cantonrep.com/news/20160328/canton-council-adopts-comprehensive-plan>, March 28, 2016.

being in the City of Canton. The MOF program was funded through settlements from five of the nation's largest mortgage servicers over foreclosure abuses, fraud and unfair and deceptive mortgage practices following the 2008 financial crisis.¹⁰¹

The Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP), which began in March of 2014, is administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), and is currently underway. A minimum of 750 demolitions are expected to be undertaken under the OHFA – NIP program by the end of 2019. As of November 2016, there have been over 300 demolitions completed. Demolitions under NIP are being completed within targeted areas in Canton, Alliance and Massillon. The Land Bank's participation in the MOF and NIP programs has contributed to the prevention of future foreclosures, protection of home values and preservation of homeownership in Stark County.



*Property in Canton that was demolished through the Land Bank
Source: SCLRC*

Outside of demolition, the Land Bank operates a number of programs aimed at returning abandoned, vacant and tax delinquent properties back into productive use. The Side Lot Program (available to qualified contiguous property owners wishing to extend the size of their yard) has been accepting applications since 2013 and has transferred over 400 parcels. A similar program, the Vacant Lot Program, is available to qualified non-contiguous applicants who wish to acquire tax delinquent property in the County. The Land Bank also offers

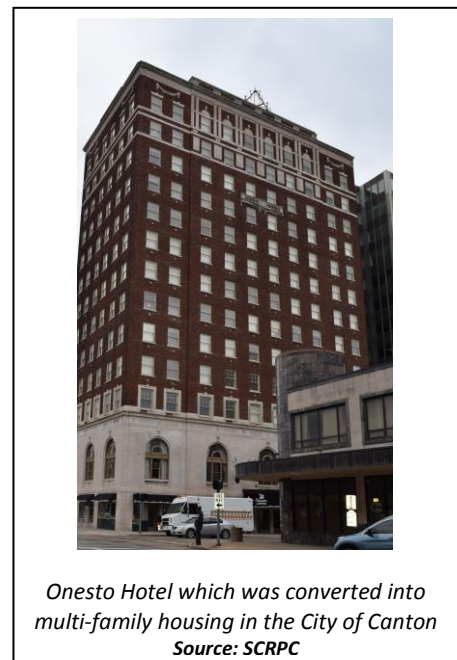
¹⁰¹ Stark County Treasurer's Office, <http://www.starkcountyohio.gov/treasurer/resources/stark-county-land-reutilization-corporation-sclrc/move-ohio-forward-updates>, Accessed February 22, 2016.

acquisition assistance to municipalities in order to facilitate redevelopment projects that involve property ownership/land assemblage.

As the Land Bank develops, the inclusion of strategic acquisition, rehabilitation and resale of properties will further their effort towards the elimination of blight and the overall mission of improving the quality of life within the County.

Housing & Downtown Redevelopment

To facilitate long term downtown redevelopment, it is important to review regulations to ensure that there are not regulatory barriers preventing this. One example of this is outdated zoning regulations, which should be reviewed and updated periodically. Mixed-use zoning district regulations also promote downtown redevelopment. These districts permit both commercial and residential development within an identified area, generally through mixing uses vertically, with retail or commercial on the ground floor and residential dwellings above. Mixed-use zoning districts allow people to both live, work and shop, all within a walkable area, creating a more pedestrian-



friendly community overall. Having basic amenities nearby (banks, drug stores and groceries) is also essential for downtown living.¹⁰² Form based codes that use physical form (i.e. building character and scale), rather than a separation of land uses as the organizing principle for the code, is another zoning tool to aid in creating these live-work, mixed-use environments.

For enabling redevelopment, another option is to ensure that codes encourage both infill development and adaptive reuse of existing structures. This might mean converting a vacant

¹⁰² “(Re)Building Downtown: A Guidebook for Revitalization,” Smart Growth America, published December 2015.

strip mall into offices, or converting a former school or industrial building into a mixed use development that provides for office or retail space on the lower levels and apartment living on the upper floors.

Redevelopment has been a major focus for certain local downtowns recently, as can be seen in the redevelopment of Canton’s historic Onesto Hotel and Bliss Tower into multi-family housing, and North Canton’s Hoover Plant into a mixed-use project. Another downtown Canton project currently underway is the redevelopment of the 26-acre former Hercules Motors Plant into a mixed-use site of residential, retail and office space, restaurants and an event center.¹⁰³



In addition to adequate residential and employment opportunities, vibrant downtowns tend to be places where walking is comfortable and safe. A “Complete Streets” approach ensures that streets are providing not only for motor vehicle travel, but also for pedestrian and bicycle transportation. For a downtown to provide a comfortable residential experience, pedestrian features such as crosswalks, street lighting and sidewalks are essential. Please see the Transportation and Infrastructure chapter for additional information on developing “Complete Streets.”

Although downtowns still struggle with high vacancy rates, encouraging infill and redevelopment will not only assist with reducing abandonment and blight, but also facilitate the creation of a more vibrant, livable community.

¹⁰³ Cormony Development, <http://www.cormonydevelopment.com/projects-hercules.html>, Accessed November 13, 2016.

Micro Anchors & Neighborhood Revitalization

Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) has coined a term to describe their revitalization strategy: asset-based micro-planning. This involves finding strategic starting points for specific revitalization plans in parts of the community where there are large areas that are very distressed. It's common for cities to develop revitalization plans that leverage major institutions, like hospitals or universities, from which reinvestment radiates out. These tend to attract significant capital to a community and can be powerful, natural partners for neighborhood planning. But many neighborhoods—and some entire cities—lack traditional anchors.

With asset-based micro-plans, in neighborhoods with weak markets or large numbers of vacant properties, and no traditional anchor institutions, there are still small, local assets. These assets act as mini-anchors that help to keep the block from drifting toward further destabilization. They can be gardens, churches, community centers and libraries, and they can be leveraged to encourage small-scale revitalization. Because of limited resources, prioritization is key to the success of the micro-plan. When picking priority properties, YNDC sought those that were closest to a school and in the worst condition so students wouldn't have to walk past vacant, dilapidated structures. YNDC also took crime into account, and targeted areas that were hotspots for criminal activity.¹⁰⁴

Cities all across the country that are dealing with extreme disinvestment and abandonment can learn from YNDC. As mentioned previously, Canton is using a very similar approach with their most recent Comprehensive Plan, which focuses



¹⁰⁴ “Community Progress Blog,” Center for Community Progress, http://www.communityprogress.net/blog/small-scale-big-results-assetbased-microplanning-youngstown-ohio?utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Newsletter, Accessed December 18, 2015.

on asset areas such as downtown Canton, Aultman Hospital, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Mercy Medical Center and Timken Steel. Canton’s Plan is also recommending repurposing and reinvesting in the Shorb Avenue NW corridor, a section of the city noteworthy for its high level of distress. Recommendations from Canton’s Plan call for the removal of blighted conditions within this neighborhood, possibly through the City’s acquisition and consolidation of distressed properties, which could then be repurposed and/or redeveloped. This asset-based approach could be a model for other communities within Stark County to consider when dealing with very distressed neighborhoods.

B. Affordable Housing

Cost Burden

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, affordability means that a household will pay no more than 30% of its gross annual income on housing. Families who pay more than that are considered “cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.”¹⁰⁵

While housing and the overall cost of living in Stark County compares favorably to many communities, it can still be difficult to make ends meet for low- to moderate-income persons. During research for the 2014 Stark County Consolidated Plan, the most common housing problem faced by low- to moderate-income persons locally was housing cost burden. Using the standard definition for affordable housing, SCRPC found that 53% of those at 0–80% of adjusted median income have a housing cost burden.

¹⁰⁵ Affordable Housing, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/, Accessed June 10, 2016.

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), an award-winning innovations laboratory for urban sustainability, created a Housing & Transportation Affordability Index. This index was developed as a more complete measure of affordability beyond the standard method of assessing only housing costs. By taking into account both the cost of housing and transportation associated with the location of the home, a different picture becomes evident. Dividing these costs by the representative income illustrates the cost burden placed on a typical household by housing *and transportation* expenses. CNT has defined an affordable range for housing and transportation as the combined costs consuming no more than 45% of income.¹⁰⁶ The Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) cites the CNT study in its Vibrant NEO 2040 Regional Vision report, stating that over 82% of people in Northeast Ohio, and over 88% of people in the Canton-Massillon region specifically, spend more than 45% of their income on housing and transportation combined.¹⁰⁷ This indicates not only that further availability of decent, safe and sanitary housing is needed within Stark County, but that considerations should be made for transportation costs when evaluating how “affordable” local housing truly is and where it should be located.

Public Housing

One important way that affordable housing is addressed within the County is through the work



of the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority (SMHA). SMHA is a political subdivision of the state of Ohio and funded in part by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to provide subsidized housing and self-sufficiency opportunities for eligible citizens of Stark County. As an agency, SMHA provides decent, safe and sanitary

¹⁰⁶ H+T Affordability Index, <http://htaindex.cnt.org/map>, and Stark County 2014-2019 Consolidated Plan, 2014

¹⁰⁷ “Vibrant NEO 2040,” Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, March 31, 2014.

housing and resident self-sufficiency initiative programs to eligible low- and moderate-income families of Stark County. It was founded in 1939 and currently assists over 4,000 families in the County.¹⁰⁸

SMHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program, also referred to as the Section 8 Housing Program, involves participants receiving a voucher to help pay for their rental housing costs. To be eligible, applicants must contribute between 30-40% of their monthly income toward the housing costs. All subsidized Section 8 housing must meet Federal Housing Quality Standards, ensuring that all participants are provided housing that is decent and safe. Through the Section 8 Program, the goal is to give families the opportunity to choose the type of housing they will live in and where they wish to live. Additionally, participants keep their assistance if they choose to move to another home or apartment.

In 2013, about 40% of those on the waiting list for public housing in general were families with children. According to SMHA's 2013 Housing Needs Report, there were 412 applicants on the waiting list for Section 8 vouchers at that time; families with children made up 57% of those on the waiting list. This is very concerning because when the estimated waiting period reaches 36 months, the waiting list is closed, due to a level of demand that has overwhelmed the supply of vouchers. Stable and safe housing contribute to a child's success in school, and conversely, having a precarious living situation can contribute to a child struggling in school.¹⁰⁹ At the time of this report, the waiting list was presently closed.

In addition to the disproportionate need of families with children for affordable rental housing, according to the Stark County 2014 Consolidated Plan, "black households also have a disproportionate need for affordable rental housing." Although the County population consists

¹⁰⁸ Stark County Metropolitan Housing Authority, www.SMHA.org, Accessed February 22, 2016.

¹⁰⁹ "2013 Housing Needs Report", Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority, 2013.

of 7.2% black households, they comprise 53% of those on Section 8 waiting lists.¹¹⁰ The Analysis found this issue to be partly attributable to the disproportionate unemployment rates for blacks. Without employment, having the disposable income for quality housing is not an option.

According to the Consolidated Plan, there is also an identified deficit in the number of public housing units in Stark County deemed accessible. While the needs of public housing tenants vary in degree, there appears to be an increase in the need for physically accessible units with little to no stairs. SMHA has been in the process of constructing or converting 128 compliant units for individuals with mobility and/or hearing and vision impairments to increase their number of accessible units.

Anticipated Resources for Affordable Housing

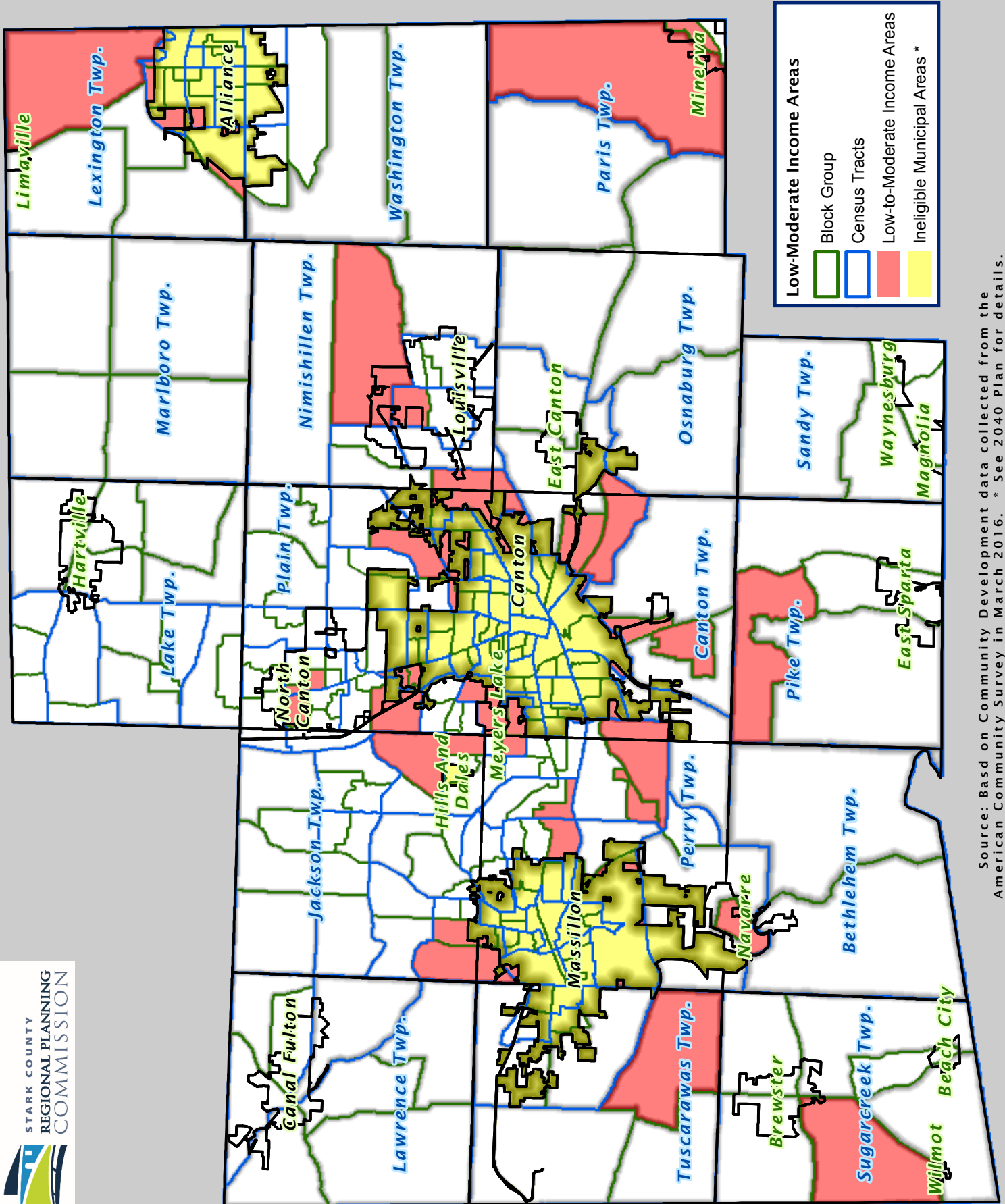
The Stark County Consolidated Plan, as mentioned throughout this document, is a consolidation of various programs of the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the HOME program and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). Stark County is an “Urban County” under the CDBG program and a “Participating Jurisdiction” (PJ) under the HOME program. The County receives direct allocations of funding for these two programs. It has also received funds from the NSP program, a one-time program.

Some of the anticipated funding for housing and community development through these programs include CDBG funding to Stark County in the amount of roughly \$1,200,000 annually. Anticipated resources in the form of Stark County HOME funding include approximately \$620,000 annually. Additionally, the cities of Alliance, Massillon and Canton receive direct allocations of CDBG funds as entitlement communities. SMHA also receives HUD funding for the affordable housing and programs they provide. While a number of federal resources are

¹¹⁰ Stark County 2014-2019 Consolidated Plan, Stark County Regional Planning Commission, <http://www.starkcountyohio.gov/community-development/resources/publications>, 2014.

directed to Stark County for affordable housing, there is still a critical need for private investment in affordable housing. For additional information on the Consolidated Plan, please visit the Stark County Regional Planning Commission's website.

Low-Moderate Income Areas



Source: Based on Community Development data collected from the American Community Survey in March 2016. * See 2040 Plan for details.

Lead poisoning has been well documented for many years, but has been in the spotlight more recently due to the lead poisoning crisis that took place in Flint, Michigan through its city water system. Lead poisoning can cause negative health impacts in anyone, but especially in young children. A recent study from Case Western Reserve University evaluated whether a home's physical condition could be linked to a child's academic performance, and if dilapidated housing correlated with a higher risk of lead poisoning.¹¹¹ In their study, the researchers looked at the literacy scores of nearly 14,000 children who entered kindergarten in Cleveland public schools between 2007 and 2010. They compared those children's literacy scores to various assessments of the houses they grew up in—including home-quality ratings, property values, foreclosure, unpaid property taxes and other liens. It was found that children who fared the worst were those who had spent the most time in neglected houses and neighborhoods, and who had tested positive for lead poisoning. Researchers estimated that these children's scores were 15% lower on literacy tests than those living in the best conditions.

Rob Fischer, one of the authors of the study, and co-director of Case Western's Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, says he interprets his research as evidence that public policy should focus on more than just ending family homelessness in urban areas; it should include getting people into better housing. The easiest thing cities could do to improve the lives of these children is to



*Lead remediation in Cleveland, Ohio
Source: The Plain Dealer*

¹¹¹ “Leveraging Integrated Data Systems to Examine the Effect of Housing and Neighborhood Conditions on Kindergarten Readiness” by Coulton, Richter et al, http://povertycenter.case.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Coulton_et_all_2016_Leveraging_Integrated_Data.pdf, Accessed April 6, 2017.

limit their exposure to homes with lead paint, says Fischer, as scientists have repeatedly shown the damage lead poisoning can do to a child’s brain in their developing years. The combination of lead poisoning and bad housing can give a child a serious disadvantage in life.¹¹²

In Stark County, approximately 58% of the housing structures were built before 1970, and may be exposing their occupants to the dangers of lead-based paint due to the age of the housing stock¹¹³. Stark County has had a number of programs over recent years targeting the testing of children for lead poisoning, and for abating lead or carrying out housing rehab in a lead-safe manner. These programs have been collaborations of the cities and the County, including health departments and community development programs. In a 2012 Stark County assessment, it was found that less than 1% of children screened for lead in Stark County had elevated blood lead (EBL) levels.¹¹⁴ While the number of lead-poisoned children is low locally, it is important to continue these efforts.

C. Diverse Housing

Ideally, affordable housing should be located close to major job centers and transit stops to ease the cost burden of commuting. Increased affordable housing opportunities can be achieved through the modification of local regulations, such as: permitting two- or multi-family housing in more districts, or as conditional uses in all districts; allowing residential dwellings in commercial districts if appropriate parking exists; and removing barriers for constructing elderly accessory dwelling units in residential districts.¹¹⁵

¹¹² “How a House Can Shape a Child’s Future” by Alexia Fernandez Campbell in *The Atlantic Monthly* June 29, 2016; accessed July 5, 2016.

¹¹³ 2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate.

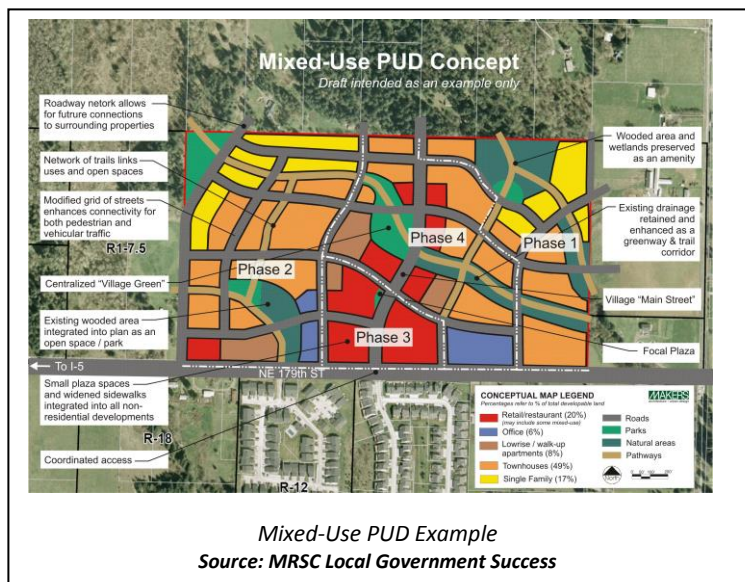
¹¹⁴ “2012 Stark County Public Health Assessment and Wellness,” Stark County Network of Care, http://stark.oh.networkofcare.org/ph/indicator_detail.aspx?id=child_lead_oh, Accessed November 2016.

¹¹⁵ “Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook: A Guide for Sustainable Development in Stark County, Ohio,” Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Latest Edition November 2012.

Considering Stark County’s diverse populations, having a variety of available housing types is critical. These can include single-family homes, duplexes, apartments, condominiums, group living quarters, independent and assisted living units and others. Within Stark County, as in many regions, there is sometimes a “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) attitude that is demonstrated towards land being re-zoned for apartments and higher density developments. According to land use calculations for Stark County in 2015, while single-family residential has increased significantly over the years, two- and multi-family housing has actually decreased. This trend is expected to continue unless changes are made at the community level to encourage more multi-family housing options. At a time when baby boomers and young millennials are actively seeking this type of housing, it is now more critical than ever for communities to promote this type of housing; otherwise, these populations will likely pursue accommodations elsewhere. To allow for the needs of young people starting out, disabled persons, returning veterans with impairments, and the increasing number of elderly persons with a variety of needs, it is now more important than ever for Stark County to provide choices in housing types.

Zoning Tools

With traditional forms of zoning, residential development typically consists of areas of one type of housing option, such as single-family allotments or multi-family neighborhoods. These different types of housing choices rarely are located together in a single neighborhood. Form-based zoning, as mentioned previously, combines different residential options within a single area, helping to provide housing for households of all income levels, sizes



and abilities. Inclusionary zoning is another useful zoning tool, which requires that a certain percentage of all new subdivisions or housing redevelopment projects be high quality, affordable housing. This type of housing should be designed to not only mesh with the existing neighborhood, but to also serve the needs of different ages and abilities.¹¹⁶ Inclusionary zoning is sometimes necessary in order to serve a culturally and economically diverse population.

Another zoning tool to aid in the provision of diverse housing options is planned-unit developments (PUDs). PUDs are typically designated zoning districts that include a variety of densities and residential development types within a single area. PUDs allow for a greater density than generally allowed within a zoning district, with the trade-off usually being the requirement for a certain percentage of open space preservation. The key to these types of development districts, however, is that at least some of the units not only be diverse in dwelling type, but also affordable.

Elder Housing

The nation stands “on the cusp of a major expansion of its senior population, a circumstance that will impose unprecedented strains on the nation’s fiscal health as well as its health care and housing systems,” according to the Healthy Aging Begins at Home 2016 Report from the Bipartisan Policy Center.¹¹⁷ Starting in 2011, the growth of the senior population accelerated as the older baby boomers turned 65 years old, bringing a shift in our culture that will likely need far more preparation than has been carried out to date.¹¹⁸

Housing expenses are one of the major issues that these elder adults will face, and according to the 2009 American Community Survey, 48% of homeowners with mortgages and 59% of renters

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Healthy Aging Begins at Home, Bipartisan Policy Center, www.bipartisanpolicy.org, May 2016.

¹¹⁸ Aging in Place: A State Survey of Livability Policies and Practices, Research Report by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the AARP Public Policy Institute, December 2011.

over 65 pay more than 30% of their income on housing, and because of this have a housing cost burden, as discussed earlier under the Affordable Housing section of this plan.¹¹⁹

Aging in Place

According to *Aging in Place: A State Survey of Livability Policies and Practices*, most older adults want to “age in place,” which is defined as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level.”¹²⁰ The survey shows that nearly 90% of those over age 65 want to stay in their residence for as long as possible, and 80% believe their current residence is where they will always live.¹²¹ While the majority of seniors wish to “age in place,” with suburban sprawl and the structural features of many homes, this can be impractical, and them doing so, is therefore improbable.

Statistics show that about 70% of adults over age 65 will eventually require assistance with activities of daily living (ADL’s) such as bathing, food preparation, dressing and medication management, which are not covered by current Medicare programs. If communities wish to allow or assist seniors with aging in place, changes are needed in how neighborhoods are constructed and services are delivered.

America’s auto-centric culture contributes to challenges for the elderly. The *Aging in Place* study listed above notes that of Americans over age 65, approximately 21% do not drive. Some of the reasons are health and safety concerns, and lack of access to a vehicle. Reduced mobility can have a debilitating effect on older Americans’ independence, leading to social isolation and 15% fewer trips to the doctor, 59% fewer trips for shopping and meals out, and 65% fewer trips for social, family and religious activities.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

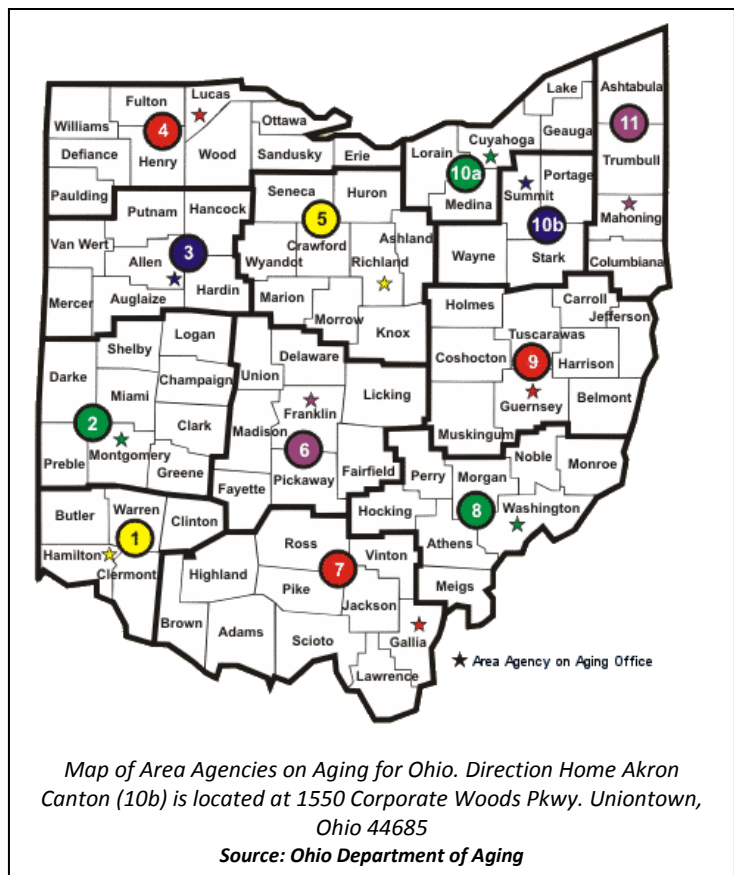
¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² *Aging in Place: A State Survey of Livability Policies and Practices*, Research Report by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the AARP Public Policy Institute, December 2011.

Not only does the nation need to address these concerns on a broad scale, Stark County needs to address this growing need locally, through measurement of and preparations to address housing, transportation and other concerns related to aging. In 2013, people over 65 made up 16% of the population in Stark County, more than the state or national average, and nearly 15% of Stark County’s households had at least one person over the age of 75 living there. As the baby boomer generation ages, a need for assistance is present in various ways, including either helping seniors to maintain and stay in their homes longer, finding them other housing that is suitable to their specific needs, or addressing transportation-related needs (discussed later in the Plan).

Elder Cottages

These cottages, also called Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) units, or more commonly, “mother-in-law suites” or “granny flats,” are typically small structures serving as an accessory dwelling unit for an aging family member. Some are for temporary use only, while in some locations elder housing accessory units are becoming permitted for long term use. There are various methodologies of providing more elder housing, and while communities evaluate what best suits their needs, these types of units should be strongly considered. One model zoning amendment for these structures, found within the Stark County Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook, comes from Fort Kent, Maine. It provides for the temporary habitation of a dwelling unit, to be occupied by an older person(s), on



lots where single-family dwellings exist so that adult children may care for aging parents or certain persons with a disability. In their code, the construction or placement of the temporary unit on a lot on which a single-family dwelling is located may be allowed by a permit regardless of lot size and frontage as long as certain conditions are met.¹²³ Accessory dwelling units can also be in the form of an apartment over a garage or an in-home apartment such as a code-compliant basement unit. These types of units have been found highly successful in addressing the need for affordable elderly housing.

Locally Available Programs

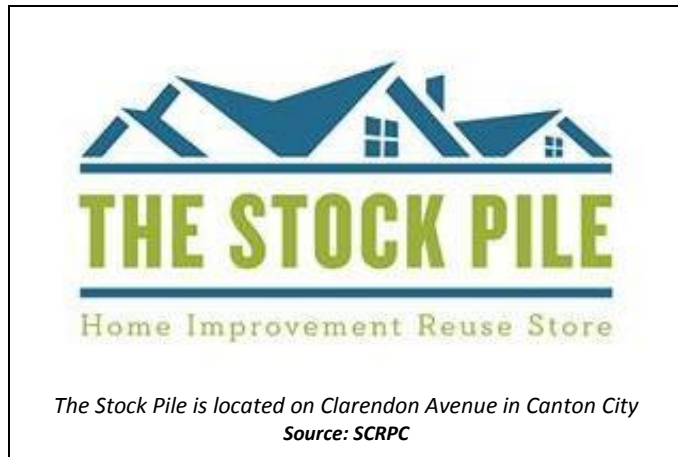
Area Agency on Aging: The Older Americans Act, originally enacted in 1965, funds meal programs, transportation, home health care and homemaking assistance, adult day care and home repair. These combined services assist many older Americans in remaining in their homes, avoiding unnecessary and costly nursing homes.¹²⁴ These programs are managed, in part, through the Area Agencies on Aging, also created by the Older Americans Act. Within Ohio there are twelve agencies that provide these services to all 88 counties. Direction Home Akron Canton is the locally designated Area Agency on Aging, providing services to Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne Counties. The Akron-Canton region contains 10% of the state's elderly population and is one of the state's seven urban regions.

¹²³ Model Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity Units Ordinance, Fort Kent, Maine, Code of Ordinances, 2011 and Stark County Regional Planning Commission's Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook, November 2012.

¹²⁴ "About Us," Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging, <http://www.directionhomeakroncanton.org/about-us.aspx>, Accessed September 26, 2016.

SCRPC Housing Rehabilitation & The Stock Pile: Throughout the County there are countless needs for public services, many related to housing, and SCRPC has seen the value of addressing some very specific needs.

One program available to help seniors stay in their homes is the Stark County Housing Rehab program. This program offers discounted payback to qualified homeowners, and will include some rehab work to make their homes more accessible.¹²⁵ Work may include grab bars, ramps,



improved lighting, ground floor restrooms and similar items. Another option available is The Stock Pile, a non-profit building material reuse store created and overseen by SCRPC, which serves low- to moderate-income households, the elderly and handicapped persons through the provision of used and overstock building materials at a reduced cost to improve their homes.

Ohio Department of Aging's Golden Buckeye Program: This program offers seniors and those with disabilities a Golden Buckeye Card membership, which can be used to receive discounts at various local merchants, including retail, services, restaurants and medical.¹²⁶

ODSA's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP): Both HEAP and HWAP are federally funded programs designed to assist lower income persons with paying for heating bills and offering home improvements to

¹²⁵ The Stark County Housing Rehab program is available for all qualified low- to moderate-income persons in Stark County, including seniors.

¹²⁶ Ohio Department of Aging, Golden Buckeye Program, <http://aging.ohio.gov/goldenbuckeye/>, Accessed November 14, 2016.

reduce energy consumption. Typical home improvements may include sealing and weather-stripping, increased insulation, heating system repairs/replacements and more.¹²⁷

Rebuilding Together and Habitat for Humanity: Rebuilding Together is a non-profit home repair and renovation organization focused on rehabilitating homes for the elderly, disabled, low-income and veterans.¹²⁸ Habitat for Humanity is another well-established organization created to build and renovate homes for those in need. Habitat also oversees a



donated materials reuse store, which further assists those looking to make affordable improvements to their home.¹²⁹ These organizations are great resources to look into for home rehab projects.

Prescription Assistance Network: While not housing programs, this Plan would be remiss not to mention prescription assistance services. An increasing number of seniors are in need of medical care as the population ages. The Prescription Assistance Network (PAN) of Stark County was opened in 2002, through initiative grants from the Austin Bailey Health and Wellness Foundation, the Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Health Foundation of Greater Massillon. In 2009, PAN opened the second charitable pharmacy in Ohio. Since opening, the PAN Charitable Pharmacy has filled more than 111,000 prescriptions that have a value of more than \$9 million.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ohio Development Services Agency, Home Energy Assistance and Home Weatherization programs, https://development.ohio.gov/is/is_energyassist.htm, Accessed November 14, 2016.

¹²⁸ Rebuilding Together, <http://www.rebuildingtogetherneo.org/>, Accessed November 14, 2016.

¹²⁹ Habitat for Humanity East Central Ohio, <http://www.habitatco.org/>, Accessed November 14, 2016.

¹³⁰ Stark Prescription Assistance Network, <http://panpharmacy.org/about-us/>, Accessed June 9, 2016.

D. Fair Housing

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status or national origin. Persons who are protected from discrimination by fair housing laws are referred to as members of the protected classes. In Ohio, this protection is also extended to persons based on ancestry and military status.

Equal opportunity to residential housing (housing choice) is a fundamental right that enables members of the protected classes to pursue personal, educational, employment or other goals. Because housing choice is so critical to personal development, fair housing is a goal that government, public officials and private citizens must embrace if equality of opportunity is to become a reality.¹³¹

Analysis of Impediments

The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) federally-required review of a jurisdiction's laws, policies and practices affecting the location, availability and accessibility of housing. It is also an assessment of conditions affecting fair housing choice. This analysis was carried out in 2012 for the Cities of Alliance, Canton and Massillon, and the urbanized areas of Stark County.

Female-headed Households

According to the Analysis of Impediments for Stark County, female-headed households with children accounted for 55.6% of all families living in poverty, although they comprised only 12.7% of all families. Among female-headed households with children, 42.5% were living in poverty in 2008, compared to 21.3% of male-headed households with children and only 4.8% of married-couple households with children.¹³² Female-headed households with children often

¹³¹ Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, Mullin & Lonergan Associates, 2012, p.11.

¹³² Analysis of Impediments, p. 28.

experience difficulty in obtaining housing, primarily as a result of lower-incomes and the unwillingness of some landlords to rent their units to families with children.

Black/African American Households

As noted in the earlier Public Housing section, black households comprise 53% of those on Section 8 waiting lists, although they only make up 7.2% of the County's population. This trend is largely dependent on the disparity of income by race. Across the region, there were significant differences in the earnings of whites compared to minorities when the Fair Housing Analysis of Impediments was carried out in 2012. In Stark County, the median household income for whites was more than twice that for blacks, with a similar trend noted in Canton. In Massillon, median household income for blacks was equivalent to 60.2% that of whites. In Alliance, the disparity was smaller, with the median income of blacks being equivalent to approximately 93% of whites.¹³³ The Analysis also found that unemployment rates for blacks were more than three times that of whites, which as a result, also affects their disposable income for housing.¹³⁴ Certainly housing solutions are needed, and landlords and tenants should make themselves aware of their rights and responsibilities; however, improved employment opportunities and increased incomes for both racial minorities and female-headed households will also in turn improve housing situations for those groups.

Assessment of Fair Housing

In 2015, HUD promulgated a new rule that requires the completion of an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). The AFH will replace the Analysis of Impediments. Unlike the AI, the AFH requirement applies to public housing authorities and encourages program participants to collaborate within a jurisdiction in undertaking a joint AFH or a regional AFH. Under the new rule, the AFH must include a minimum of community participation in the analysis of fair housing data, an assessment of fair housing issues and contributing factors, and an identification of fair housing priorities and goals. The cities of Alliance, Canton and Massillon, and Stark

¹³³ Analysis of Impediments, p. 25.

¹³⁴ Analysis of Impediments, p. 31.

Metropolitan Housing Authority and the Board of Stark County Commissioners will collaborate to submit a regional AFH which is due to HUD in October 2018.

Stark County Fair Housing Department

The Stark County Fair Housing Department (SCFHD) operated by the SCRPC is dedicated to the elimination of housing discrimination and the enforcement of fair housing laws. The staff strives to ensure equal opportunities in housing for all residents. The SCFHD covers all of Stark County with the exception of the cities of Canton and Massillon, which have their own fair housing departments. Stark County contracts with the city of Alliance to administer their fair housing program. The SCFHD carries out activities to help remove barriers to affordable and fair housing. The department works with hundreds of tenants and landlords yearly, assisting with understanding fair housing issues and requirements. Communities are encouraged to become familiar with this department and to make fair housing material available to their constituents.

E. Homelessness

According to HUD, a person is considered “homeless” if they reside in: a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter or transitional housing, or are in a situation with no identified subsequent residence (ex. being discharged from an institution or fleeing a domestic violence situation).

The Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County

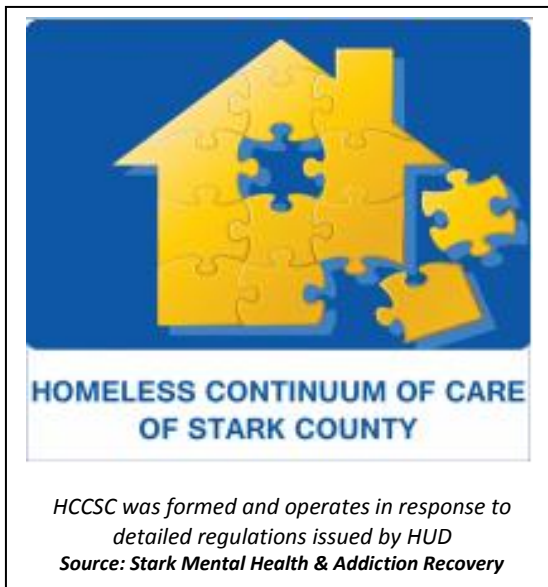
The Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County (CoC) is a “coalition of individuals and organizations committed to ending homelessness in Stark County.”¹³⁵ The CoC is comprised of representatives from the cities, the County, the Mental Health and Recovery Board, the private sector, foundations, local health care providers, the United Way, non-profit service and housing providers, law enforcement, SCRPC and other interested individuals. The CoC coordinates

¹³⁵ Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County, <https://starkhomeless.starkmhar.org/>, Accessed November 21, 2016.

working with the Homeless Services Collaborative (HSC), a strong network of front line service and housing providers committed to serving those experiencing homelessness; the Veterans Task Force, which is the leading partner in developing plans for addressing veteran homelessness; the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Committee, which is taking the lead on plans focused on addressing youth homelessness; and the Re-Entry Coalition, which focuses on housing needs for those citizens returning from incarceration.

The primary charge of the Homeless Continuum of Care of Stark County (CoC) is to develop and implement local plans that meet the federal strategic plan for ending and preventing homelessness. The CoC has committed to meeting this goal, focusing on several strategies, including:

- Promoting community-wide commitment to employ best practices to end homelessness in Stark County, Ohio;
- Securing funding to prevent homelessness and quickly re-house homeless individuals (including unaccompanied youth) and families in Stark County, while minimizing the trauma and dislocation that homelessness causes to individuals, families, and communities;
- Promoting access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and
- Optimizing self-sufficiency among individuals and families that experience homelessness.



Beginning in 2015, the CoC began investing in targeted planning efforts around homelessness prevention in order to determine the most effective strategies for prevention and emergency assistance programs, to proactively reduce the number of families (as well as individuals)

entering the homeless system. This includes the development and promotion of the 24-hour homeless hotline, which puts clients in contact with shelters, homeless prevention services and/or other social support services.

Stark County Continuum of Care		2009 Point-In-Time Final Count		2010 Point-In-Time Final Count	
Date: January 27, 2009		Date: January 26, 2010		Date: January 26, 2010	
Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons
Street Count	77	Street Count	53	Street Count	63
Emergency Shelters	172	Emergency Shelters	257	Emergency Shelters	207
Transitional Housing	157	Transitional Housing	121	Transitional Housing	212
Total	406	Total	431	Total	482
Permanent Supportive Housing	330	Permanent Supportive Housing	362	Permanent Supportive Housing	410
Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	246	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	209	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	365
Total	576	Total	571	Total	775
Grand Total	982	Grand Total	1002	Grand Total	1257
2011 Point-In-Time Final Count		2012 Point-In-Time Final Count		2013 Point-In-Time Final Count	
Date: January 24, 2011		Date: January 23, 2012		Date: January 27, 2013	
Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons
Street Count	68	Street Count	63	Street Count	56
Emergency Shelters	218	Emergency Shelters	207	Emergency Shelters	247
Transitional Housing	196	Transitional Housing	212	Transitional Housing	219
Total	482	Total	482	Total	522
Permanent Supportive Housing	341	Permanent Supportive Housing	410	Permanent Supportive Housing	433
Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	255	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	365	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	481
Total	596	Total	775	Total	914
Grand Total	1078	Grand Total	1257	Grand Total	1436
2014 Point-In-Time Final Count		2015 Point-In-Time Final Count		2016 Point-In-Time Final Count	
Date: January 26, 2014		Date: January 25, 2015		Date: January 24, 2016	
Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons	Population	Total Persons
Street Count	38	Street Count	60	Street Count	37
Emergency Shelters	259	Emergency Shelters	239	Emergency Shelters	285
Transitional Housing	213	Transitional Housing	173	Transitional Housing	138
Total	510	Total	472	Total	460
Permanent Supportive Housing	473	Permanent Supportive Housing	503	Permanent Supportive Housing	559
Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	502	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	516	Imminent Risk-w/Friends/Family	563
Total	975	Total	1019	Total	1122
Grand Total	1485	Grand Total	1491	Grand Total	1582

Figure 5.3, Stark County Continuum of Care

Nature and Extent of Homelessness

The CoC conducts an annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count of homeless persons in Stark County. Stark County's most recent PIT data is from the count that took place on January 24, 2016. Data compilation for the years 2009 through 2016 is detailed in Figure 5.3. The 2016 count reflects a 34% reduction in unsheltered homeless since the County's last Consolidated Plan in 2014 (which used the 2013 point-in-time count). This decrease largely corresponds to:

- An increase in available housing units, particularly permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing;
- Short term initiatives to assist those with minor needs/low barriers in transitioning successfully from shelter to permanent housing;
- More extensive homeless prevention assistance; and
- Targeted efforts of prioritizing homeless resources to the most vulnerable.

The number of homeless households *with children* as reported in the 2016 PIT count was 92, up from 84 in the previous 2015 count. Factors contributing to the increased 2016 count of homeless households with children include a number of issues primarily related to a change in the transitional housing program; however, efforts are currently underway to overhaul the program, which should greatly reduce this number.

The Stark County CoC supports collaboration with entities, particularly education and children's service systems, that are most likely to encounter households with children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This collaboration includes educating teachers, homeless liaisons, counselors, and other direct providers in how to recognize indicators of homelessness, how to engage parents, and how to make referrals for assistance. Policies relating to access to educational services for those experiencing homelessness were also adopted and are being implemented from initial calls to the Homeless Hotline. Close collaborations continue with Stark Mental Health and Addiction Recovery and its service agencies, as well as expanded efforts to coordinate with health care organizations.

Homeless Veterans

The number of homeless veterans identified during the point-in-time counts has reflected a general decrease since 2013. As shown in Figure 5.3, the 2016 PIT count showed 16 homeless veterans, whereas in 2015 it was 26 and in 2013 the count was 52. This may be partly attributable to the fact that since the summer of 2013, Stark County has received 55 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers to assist homeless veterans in the County. This voucher program combines rental assistance for homeless veterans, with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).¹³⁶ The CoC also partners closely with the Veterans Task Force. This task force consists of representatives of the various local veteran service groups, the Veterans Administration, the Veterans Services Commission, Honor Court, the local transit authority (SARTA), and local housing providers. Housing of homeless veterans was a selected priority in the 2013–2016 ranking of CoC housing applications. The HUD Veteran Benchmark Tool is also used regularly to track the County’s progress in ending veteran homelessness, and efforts will continue to be ramped up to ensure the County reaches this federal benchmark.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing is housing for physically and/or mentally disabled people that also includes support services to help them successfully stay in those homes. The CoC recently assisted with the approval of a new 10-unit Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) development to house homeless families with children, with an anticipated opening date of late 2017. The conservative target number of 45 Permanent Supportive Housing units (including units for families with children and individuals), which was established following an analysis study by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, will be satisfied in 2017 pending funding approval.

¹³⁶ “HUD-VASH Vouchers,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash, Accessed November 21, 2016.

Collaborations

Stark County's CoC, with assistance from the Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, has hosted trainings around best practices such as fair housing and employment strategies, and the utilization of Medicaid to expand service resources within homeless projects. All of these trainings have prompted further developments in several strategies that will be utilized to increase the effectiveness and positive outcomes for the County related to addressing homelessness.

While housing is the initial step in addressing a household's experience of homelessness, the system-wide partnerships required in order to assist a household with other steps critical for maintaining stable and permanent housing is extremely important. The collaborations involved in addressing



the full scope of needs, with appropriate and long term solutions, is critical in order to end and prevent homelessness. Locally, collaboration efforts include agencies such as: the Refuge of Hope, Domestic Violence Project, Inc., ICAN Housing, YWCA of Canton, Alliance for Children and Families, CommQuest and SMHA, to name a few. These collaborations are a key part of the work of the CoC and the success of these collaborations is reflected in the progress already being made in the reduction of homelessness in Stark County, as indicated previously. It is therefore critical that future management of an efficient and effective CoC continues so that further progress can be made, and plans currently in place can be built upon to continue moving forward.

F. Objectives and Strategies

1. Concentrate new commercial and residential development within established communities and direct infrastructure investments into already developed areas to help reduce vacancies.
 - a. Review regulations to ensure that there are not regulatory barriers (such as outdated zoning regulations) preventing reinvestment and redevelopment into already established communities.
 - b. Implement an asset-based micro-planning strategy to rejuvenate distressed areas surrounding major anchors such as hospitals or universities.
 - c. Incorporate a complete streets approach into already established areas to provide not only for motor vehicle travel, but also for pedestrian and bicycle transportation, attracting both businesses and residents to relocate into these communities.
2. Focus on increasing the availability of diverse, safe and affordable housing.
 - a. Choose locations for housing close to major job centers and transit stops to ease the cost burden of commuting.
 - b. Update zoning regulations to allow for more diverse housing options in more zoning districts.
 - c. Expand suitable housing choices available to the senior population.
 - d. Improve quality of existing housing stock through measures such as property maintenance codes and/or removal of blighted homes.
3. Develop and implement local plans for ending and preventing homelessness.
 - a. Educate teachers, homeless liaisons, counselors and other providers on how to recognize indicators of homelessness, how to engage parents and how to make referrals for assistance.
 - b. Encourage homeless prevention agencies to focus on rapid re-housing initiatives to help minimize the trauma those individuals may experience.
 - c. Continue to coordinate collaborative efforts among healthcare organizations to help expand their efforts.

VI. COMMUNITY AND LIVABILITY

A.) Community Facilities

Quality of life can be defined as the general well-being of a person and/or community. A community's success in this can be measured by how well a population's health, education, recreation and public safety needs are being met. While Stark County does have a vast assortment of community facilities and programs available to its residents, many of these are concentrated within the City of Canton. In the last few years, additional facilities have been expanding into other parts of the County. While these additions have contributed to an improved quality of life for many communities, work is still needed in order to enhance the general welfare of the entire County. Following is an inventory of some of Stark County's many amenities, and included are suggestions on how to strengthen and advance these essential services. For suggestions on enhancing recreational amenities, see Chapter IV.

Health Care

There are four acute care hospitals currently located in Stark County: Alliance Community Hospital, Aultman Hospital, Affinity Medical Center, and Mercy Medical Center. The two largest hospitals, Aultman and Mercy, have their main facilities in Canton, but also operate facilities in other locations including Alliance, Louisville, Massillon, North Canton, and Plain, Lake and Jackson Townships.

Four public health departments provide a full range of community health services to the County: Alliance, Canton, Massillon and Stark County (which covers all



other cities, townships and villages in the County). The Stark County Health Department holds public clinics in Beach City, the Belden Village area, Canal Fulton, Lake Township, Louisville and Navarre. These clinics, which are hosted at the health department offices and at various church/senior facilities, offer programs and services such as: prenatal care, “well child” visits, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental food program, immunizations, and adult health clinics. The Stark County Health Department also oversees childhood injury prevention programs, community health planning and other social services.

Other free and/or low cost clinics in Stark County include, but are not limited to, the Good Samaritan Health Center in Alliance, the Lifecare Family Health and Dental Center, and the Margaret Shipley Child Care Clinic in Canton. The Prescription Assistance Network of Stark County is a local non-profit agency that provides low or no-cost prescribed medications to vulnerable populations.

In addition to physical wellness, Stark County also administers mental health services through the Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery (Stark MHAR) Agency, Stark County Job and Family Services, and the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Another local facility, the Heartland Behavioral Healthcare center, provides inpatient care for acutely mentally ill adults from all over Northeast Ohio. Some of the privatized mental and behavioral health facilities within Stark County include Coleman Professional Services, CommQuest, Phoenix Rising Behavioral Healthcare and Recovery Inc., and the Crisis Intervention and Recovery Center.

While Stark County does offer a wide variety of beneficial services and facilities to assist with the health and wellness needs of its population, there is still more work to be done. The Stark County Health Department's 2014 Community Health Improvement Plan Evaluation identified the top three health priority areas for Stark County as obesity and healthy lifestyle, access to health insurance and care, and mental health wellness. The strategies identified as a result of these priorities focus on promoting health initiatives at schools and worksites (see sidebar), increasing the awareness of substance abuse and associated treatment opportunities, and increasing the usage of preventive health and early intervention resources, such as primary care physicians and various treatment organizations. As communities work towards creating a healthier quality of life for their constituents, local leaders should encourage and assist with these healthcare initiatives wherever possible.

Education

Stark County is home to 18 public school districts, educating over 59,000 students each year.¹³⁷ In addition, 37 parochial and private schools serve the County. The County also maintains a school for students with mental and developmental disabilities, the Rebecca Stallman Southgate School, through the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities. High schools in Stark County offer both vocational and college prep tracks, and the County has one school completely dedicated to vocational education, the R.G. Drage Career Technical Center. According to a report issued by the Stark Education Partnership, Stark County ranks second in the state for the number of high school students enrolled for

WORKSITE HEALTH INITIATIVES

- Promote health plan benefits (ex: flu shots or cancer screenings)
- Post signs to encourage stair usage
- Offer gym membership discounts
- Provide healthcare assessments or health education classes
- Alter cafeteria menu options to include healthier foods
- Provide on-site exercise equipment
- Introduce worksite wellness programs (ex: smoking cessation, weight loss counseling, addiction)

¹³⁷ Includes public charter schools, which are considered within the public school districts they are located in.

college credit at state colleges and universities.¹³⁸ Timken Early College, college tech prep programs, advanced placement (AP) courses, and dual credit programs are credited for this, with the number of students and courses more than doubling from 2008 to 2015.¹³⁹

One of the most critical issues facing Stark County school districts today is the rising costs of operations and programming outpacing the growth of the economy. The Governor’s Office released a report in 2012 offering recommendations on how to improve this situation, largely by encouraging a shared services policy among the different schools and local governments. This action plan calls for the sharing of staffing, equipment and/or facilities across all jurisdictions to help reduce the revenue-to-expenditure offset, and to improve the overall efficiency of schools and communities.¹⁴⁰ According to a Crain’s Cleveland Business article, this report was based on surveys and input from “numerous education and local government professionals across the state, including input from the Ohio Municipal League.”¹⁴¹ As schools, especially those in areas with declining populations, look for ways to reduce costs, partnering with other schools in sharing certain services or facilities may be an effective way to help retain educators and programs while also obtaining a more stable financial foothold.

In Stark County, there are seven universities and colleges: Ashland (Stark Branch), Kent State University (Stark Campus), Walsh University, Malone University, the University of Mount Union, Stark State



College and Aultman College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Other major universities and colleges within easy commuting distance include the University of Akron and Kent State University (main campus). According to the 2015 online public survey conducted for this plan,

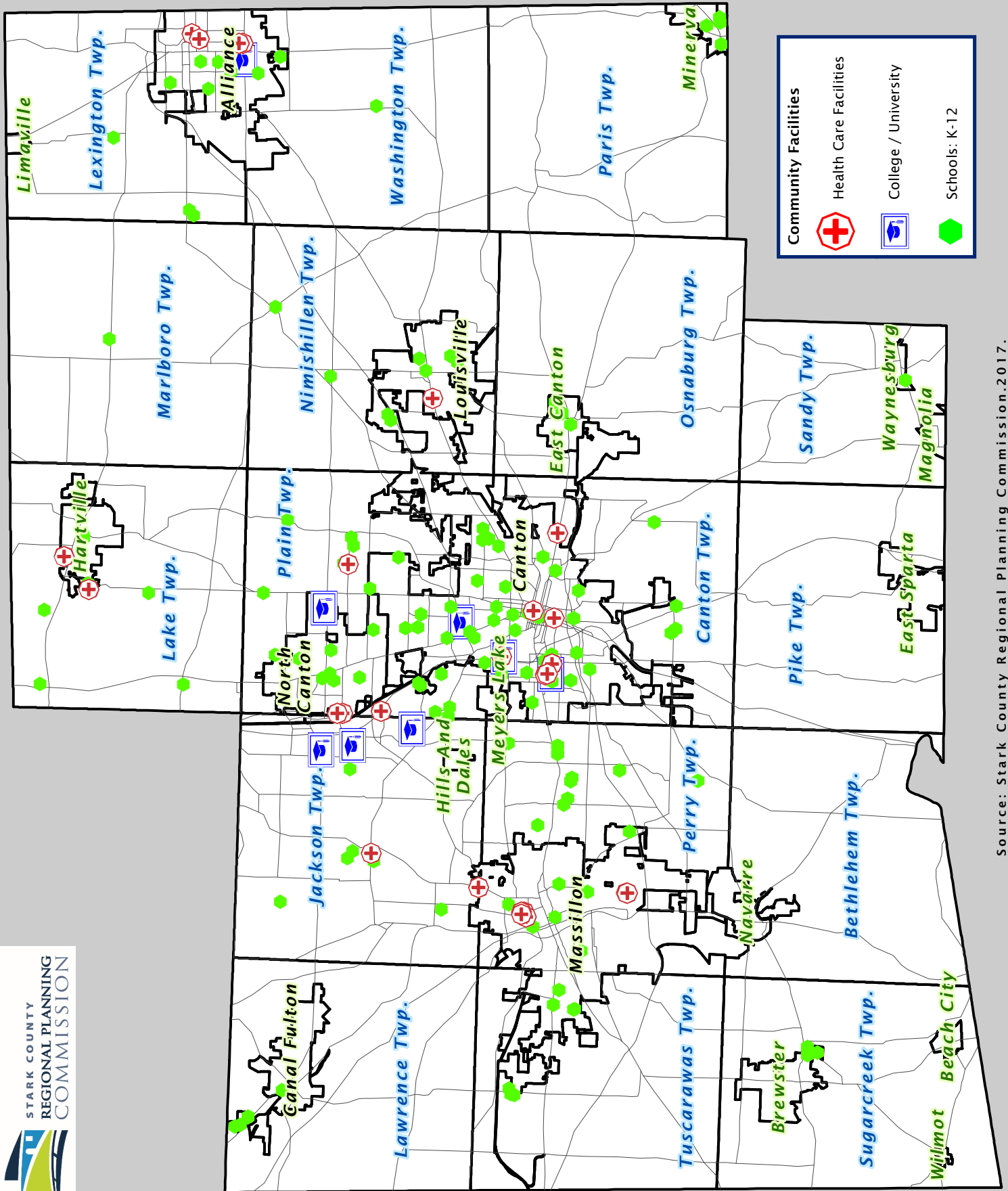
¹³⁸ “Looking at the Issues,” Stark Education Partnership Inc., <http://www.edpartner.org/>, February 26, 2016.

¹³⁹ “Stark County’s Significant Educational Progress,” Stark Education Partnership Inc., <http://www.edpartner.org/>, February 2016.




¹⁴⁰ “Beyond Boundaries: A Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments,” State of Ohio, <http://www.beyondboundaries.ohio.gov>, 2012.

¹⁴¹ “Shared Services Solve Squeeze in Support,” Crain’s Cleveland Business, <http://www.crainscleveland.com/August 20, 2012>.

Community Facilities



Community Facilities

-  Health Care Facilities
-  College / University
-  Schools: K-12



Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission. 2017.

the opportunity for higher education was one of the greatest strengths of Stark County. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education named Stark State College the “fastest-growing two-year public college with 10,000+ students” in the nation. This growth can largely be attributed to its low cost, transferable credits, and the college’s progressive programs in fuel cell research and wind energy.¹⁴² Kent State University (Stark Campus) is also experiencing enrollment growth, as can be seen in the recent addition of the campus’s new 41,000 square foot Science and Nursing Building, constructed as a result of their growing science disciplines.¹⁴³ The growth and expansion of these campuses as well as others in the County is an excellent achievement for Stark County, and a mission that should continue to receive support, as a strong education system is integral to the quality of a community.

Public Safety

A wide range of police, fire and emergency medical service facilities serve County residents. Local municipalities and some townships provide their own service within their respective jurisdiction, and the Stark County Sheriff’s Department provides protection in townships that do not have their own police force. Fire protection and EMS services also vary widely among townships, cities and villages, as



does the method by which those services are provided, which can be via paid staff, volunteers, and/or by service contract. The Stark County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is the County’s central coordination agency for all disasters. This agency manages and operates a number of programs, including the County 9-1-1 system, the hazardous materials (HAZMAT) emergency response team, spill reporting, and the Local Emergency Planning Committee.

¹⁴² Stark State College, <https://www.starkstate.edu/about/college-facts/>, Accessed January 29, 2016.

¹⁴³ Kent State University at Stark, <https://www.kent.edu/stark/campus-history>, Accessed January 29, 2016.

In the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, it was noted that a regional approach to safety could provide a more uniform protection to all areas of the County. While recent attempts to merge several different local dispatch centers have stalled, steps have been made in the last year between several local communities to switch to a joint dispatching software system. This system will allow network users to quickly and easily share information between different jurisdictions. While not a complete merger, this has been a big step towards regionalization of safety services for the community; continuing these efforts towards regionalization is encouraged. According to the 2015 online public survey, shared services and collaboration among government agencies was listed as one of the biggest issues facing Stark County. Technology-based regionalization endeavors such as this are an excellent step towards moving forward in that direction.

B.) Aging in Place

Between 2012 and 2050, the national population aged 65 and older is expected to nearly double in size from 43 million to 84 million.¹⁴⁴ The reason for this is an aging baby boomer generation combined with improved healthcare allowing people to live longer, healthier lives. The implications of this dramatic increase have the potential to substantially affect all aspects of life for older adults, their caregivers, and the community as a whole.

With an increasing senior population, in addition to the necessary housing resources discussed in Chapter V, there is also a greater need for additional healthcare services and programs, as well as access to them. Statistics show that while the healthcare labor force is increasing, the demand for those services is outpacing its growth. Studies have also found that the baby boomer generation will have a smaller pool of potential family caregivers to choose from than current seniors as many of them had fewer, or no children, and many today are more likely to

¹⁴⁴ “An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States,” U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, May 2014.

be divorced and living alone.¹⁴⁵ This means that seniors may have to travel further and/or spend more money to obtain access to healthcare services. As most seniors are on a fixed-income, this is not always an option. Additional healthcare facilities and improved access to them is critical for seniors. While healthcare facilities have recently expanded into additional communities, further expansion efforts, particularly into the outlying, underserved regions are still needed, with attention given to health specialties affecting older adults in particular. Providing new and/or improved mobility access for seniors to these healthcare facilities is also crucial and can largely be done with the promotion and education of existing transit services.

Senior Mobility

Transportation needs, especially to and from healthcare locations, is vital to seniors, and local



options such as the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority's (SARTA) transit services are available to Medicaid-eligible passengers and to those with disabilities. Please refer to the Transportation Chapter for additional information on available transit services.

Creating walkable neighborhoods so that seniors can get to places without having to

rely on a vehicle is another critical component that can assist not only seniors, but also children and those with disabilities. It also encourages a healthier living environment for the greater community in general.

¹⁴⁵ “The Impact of the Aging Population on the Health Workforce in the United States: A Summary of Key Findings,” Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, University of Albany, http://www.albany.edu/news/pdf_files/impact_of_aging_excerpt.pdf, March 2006.

Walkable communities allow seniors to:

- Stay active longer;
- Attain higher levels of social interaction than vehicle-dependent seniors who can't visit with others as easily;
- Better maintain independence and self-worth by being able to move around freely;
- Have a smaller chance of developing a mental illness such as dementia by being more active and engaged;
- Live longer because of a renewed sense of purpose; and
- Establish a better economic position because they aren't having to pay for auto insurance, gas and car repairs.¹⁴⁶

Most of the steps required to make a community more walkable are relatively minor in terms of cost and maintenance. Key features of a walkable community include: adding sidewalks where none exist, repairing sidewalks where cracked or uneven, installing more benches for rest stops, improving traffic control devices at dangerous intersections, installing street lighting, adding bus stops and providing additional bus services catering to seniors. Funding for these types of improvements may be available through the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program.¹⁴⁷ This program is designed to fund projects promoting non-driver improvements, both on- and off-road. As the senior population continues to grow, these are elements that communities need to be addressing now.

Senior Service Facilities

In addition to needing more healthcare medical facilities, seniors also need assistance in staying active, healthy and independent for as long as possible to help reduce or delay their need for increased healthcare facilities. Several resources are available to assist seniors with aging in a

¹⁴⁶ "Seniors: Walkability Benefits for an Aging Public," WalkScore Blog, <http://blog.walkscore.com/2013/03/seniors-walkability-benefits-for-an-aging-public/#.WVPQkpLyvcs>, March 12, 2013.

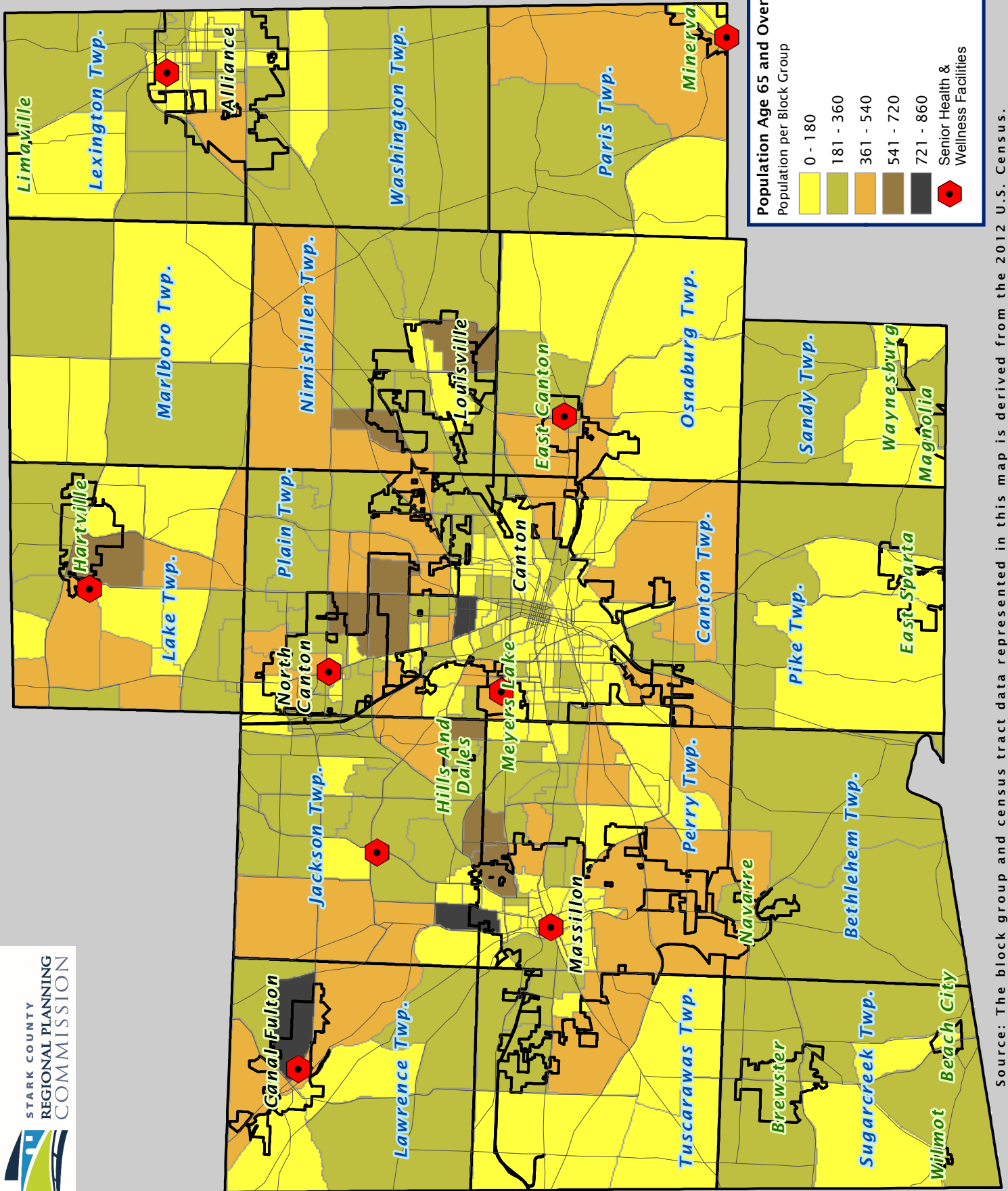
¹⁴⁷ "ODOT Program Resource Guide 2016: Transportation Alternatives," Division of Planning's Local Funding Opportunities, Ohio Department of Transportation, Accessed April 26, 2016.

healthier and more fulfilling manner, but more are needed to ensure that older adults achieve the highest quality of life.

In June 2015, the National Association on Aging issued the results of a national survey which found that older adults felt that “staying connected to family and friends” was more important to their quality of life than financial concerns were.¹⁴⁸ One of the ways to ensure this happens is through the provision of senior service-related facilities. To assist seniors with aging within their community, facilities must be made available that offer health and wellness information and services, and engagement activities. According to the Ohio Department of Aging, there are nine senior-oriented health and wellness facilities within the Stark County area and 13 additional facilities that offer senior meals and other related services. As noted previously, the 2010 U.S. Census found that 16.2% of Stark County’s total population was 65 years of age or older (up from 15.1% in 2000), and of those, 8% were 75 years or older (up from 7.4% in 2000). The following map shows the concentration of these populations in relationship to existing senior-oriented health and wellness facilities. Based on the results of the maps, the following locations appear to have higher concentrations of seniors who lack adequate access to nearby senior health and wellness facilities: the City of Louisville, the southern side of Canton City and the general area surrounding Navarre Village. It is recommended that new senior centers and/or other related service facilities be strongly considered in these locations. Additional senior services and expanded housing options (discussed in detail in the Housing section) should also be encouraged where lacking in these locations and other parts of the County. Having nearby access to these facilities and other healthcare services is critical for the aging population, as transportation to and from them may otherwise be limited. This is especially true for those seniors living below the poverty level, which according to the 2010 Census, is over one-third of the Stark County population age 65 or older.

¹⁴⁸ “Connections With Community and Family – Not Money – Most Important for Senior’s Quality of Life,” National Association on Aging, www.ncoa.org, June 5, 2015.

Senior Population Density



Source: The block group and census tract data represented in this map is derived from the 2012 U.S. Census.

Adult day service facilities are also available throughout the County, which assist caregivers by providing a location to drop off their aging family member for the day while they run errands, work, or take some time for themselves. These centers offer social activities, meals and general supervision for the aging family member. The increase in the number of these day facilities over the last decade is an encouraging sign; however, the integration of them with senior centers, rehab facilities and hospital discharging is something that these facilities should consider as they attempt to reach additional people and become more expansive in their scope of work.



*Minerva Area Senior Center is located on Valley Street in
Minerva*

Source: Minerva Area Senior Center

The funding for senior service facilities can come from a variety of sources, including federal, state or local funding, non-profits, individual donations, and senior services levies. The Ohio Department of Aging's website shows that 70 out of 88 Ohio counties have enacted county-wide senior services levies, via either a property tax or dedicated sales tax, to enhance and expand services to older adults.

Unfortunately, Stark County is not one of those counties. The Village of Minerva is the only local government in the Stark County area that has a local levy dedicated to senior services. Their levy is a 0.3 mill, five-year levy that provides funding to support the Minerva Area Senior Center.¹⁴⁹ Proposing a senior service levy is something that local communities may want to consider as they look for ways to serve their elderly populations. Another source of potential funding for senior service facilities is the USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities program, which offers either grants and/or loans to small, rural communities (less than 20,000 residents) to help construct community facilities. In addition to senior facilities, other

¹⁴⁹ Ohio Department of Aging – Senior Services Levies, www.aging.ohio.gov, Accessed February 4, 2016.

community facilities that this program funds include those associated with healthcare, public service and safety, education and local food systems.

Aging in Place

As has been mentioned several times in this Plan, most older adults want to age in place in their own homes. This is typically due to the already-established connections they have within their community and the certain level of comfort it provides. While this option may lead to physical and emotional isolation if not kept in balance, there are several services offered to reduce



these impacts. Such services include home and community-based services, which may also help with lowering long-term care costs and delaying or preventing nursing home placement. Locally, these include options such as Meals on Wheels (home delivery meal program), Right at Home and Visiting Angels (in-home care and assistance companies), and Direction Home (Akron-Canton’s Area Agency on Aging). In addition to providing

information on meal delivery, transportation, home repair and healthcare resources, Direction Home administers caregiver support programs, legal services for seniors, and older adult health plans. Direction Home also oversees the PASSPORT program, which is a Medicaid Waiver program that provides funding for services to those seniors meeting certain eligibility requirements. These additional services include in-home aides, adult day care, counseling, home cleaning, and certain home modifications, to name a few.¹⁵⁰

Home modifications can significantly improve the safety of an elderly person’s home. Installing universal design features in homes, such as grab bars and alert buttons in bathrooms, zero-step

¹⁵⁰ “Passport Program,” Direction Home, Akron-Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities, www.directionhomeakroncanton.org, Accessed June 12, 2016.

entrances, wide doorways, and ground-floor bedrooms and bathrooms, not only allow seniors to utilize their homes for longer, but they are also beneficial for families with young children or for those with disabilities, and are therefore features that all home builders should consider when designing/remodeling a home. According to the AARP Institute, there are also several “smart home” technology features now available to assist seniors with staying in their home longer.¹⁵¹ Some of these features include:

- Sensors that can be placed on items like pillboxes and bathroom doors so that family members can track activity to see when something is out of the ordinary;
- Voice activated reminders or alerts;
- Location-tracking GPS devices, especially for family members with dementia or Alzheimer’s; and
- Digital pill dispensers.

These are just some of the many products available to assist seniors with aging in place, many of which are low cost. Financial assistance for some of these may also be available through the Medicaid Waiver program discussed previously. These features should be strongly encouraged by both families and home builders/remodelers as planning for these capabilities now will create a more age-friendly home for people to enjoy for a much longer period of time.

As people are living longer and healthier lives, the number of aging adults is expected to increase significantly over the next 30 years. Therefore, the urgency for which these populations need to be planned for cannot be overstated; all plans for the future must bear these groups in mind in terms of housing, programs and services. Providing seniors with the ability to access the different services they need, including healthcare and social engagement services, is also critical for older adults to sustain a high quality of life and remain in their homes for as long as possible, and should be considered in all transportation planning efforts.

¹⁵¹ Abrahms, Sally. “New Technology Could Allow You or Your Parent to Age at Home,” AARP Bulletin, www.aarp.org, March 2014.

C.) Objectives and Strategies

1. Concentrate on bringing more awareness to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
 - a. Promote health initiatives at schools and worksites, such as healthier food options and worksite wellness programs.
 - b. Increase the awareness of health concerns and intervention resources to not only improve an individual's physical well-being, but also their mental wellness.
 - c. Support the local healthcare facilities and organizations who provide various programs and services to those individuals who may not be able to afford proper healthcare.

2. Continue to strengthen the education system within the County.
 - a. Encourage a shared services policy, including staffing, equipment and/or facilities, among school districts to reduce the revenue-to-expenditure offset and improve overall efficiency.
 - b. Promote higher education and tech prep course offerings to high school students.
 - c. Support the expansion and accessibility of higher education facilities and resources throughout the County.

3. Focus on providing healthcare programs and services for the growing senior population.
 - a. Encourage the communities who lack adequate access to nearby senior-oriented health and wellness facilities to increase the number of facilities and/or amenities available to serve seniors.
 - b. Support aging in place through the provision of elderly accessory dwelling unit options, in-home care programs and improved mobility features.
 - c. Promote the coordination of a senior network to include adult day care facilities, senior centers, rehabilitation facilities, hospital discharging, etc.
 - d. Encourage local communities to pursue funding for senior programs through measures such as grant programs and/or senior service levies.

VII. Transportation and Infrastructure

A.) Transportation

Transportation is integral to the growth and development of an area. In January 2016, results from an online public survey conducted by SCRPC found that the deterioration of roads and bridges, and traffic congestion and delays on major thoroughfares were the two most severe *transportation* issues facing Stark County. On a more positive note, in terms of *overall* planning issues, respondents found that congestion and delays were less severe than other issues such as residential and commercial vacancies, the lack of amenities to attract younger generations, and a lack of shared services among government agencies. This was the first time in 20 years where traffic congestion and delays ranked much lower on the survey; a testament to the robust transportation mobility improvements that have been made over the last two decades. Unfortunately, roadway and bridge deterioration was found to be the most severe issue overall; however, it should also be noted that this last survey was taken during the winter months when roadways are typically damaged the most, and therefore, its high ranking on this survey may be partly attributable to that.

The Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Stark County, and is designated by the Governor of Ohio as the entity responsible for transportation planning in Stark County. In 1962, the Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed, which created the requirement for transportation planning as a condition of receiving federal transportation funds. The law required that the transportation plan be coordinated with land use and other comprehensive planning elements. The law also called for the transportation planning process to be a continuous effort, where traffic and land use changes are monitored and periodic revisions to the plan are made, to keep abreast of changing conditions and to maintain a 20 year planning horizon.

In May 2013, SCATS created the Year 2040 Transportation Plan for Stark County. This document covers transportation planning to the horizon year 2040. A brief summary of this report is included in the paragraphs below. To read the full, most up-to-date report, please visit <http://starkcountyohio.gov/transportation/programs/long-range-planning>.

2040 Transportation Plan Summary

Issues addressed in the 2040 Transportation Plan include traffic congestion and delays¹⁵², ease of mobility and accessibility, and system preservation to address deterioration. This is accomplished by roadway rehabilitation, safety improvements, signalization coordination, trip demand reduction through improved public transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation enhancements, and other projects. In addressing these issues, SCATS plans for the continual improvement of a balanced multimodal system, which is also sensitive to the social, economic and environmental concerns of the citizens.¹⁵³

The 2040 Transportation Plan includes three major components: highways, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities. A brief description of projects proposed within each category is listed below. An itemization of the projects by anticipated completion year can be found in the full report at the link listed above.

Highways

Freeways and Expressways- High speed, longer distance trips in and through Stark County and the surrounding region utilize the freeway and expressway system which includes I-77, US 30, and parts of US 62 and SR 21. The largest improvement planned for this system includes the extension of US 30 east from Trump Avenue to SR 11 in Columbiana County. The extension of this roadway will assist in easing congestion in areas along this route, as well as providing an access-controlled highway system to improve the mobility of traffic and transport of goods.

¹⁵² Traffic congestion ranked higher in 2013, when the Transportation Plan was originally written.

¹⁵³ “Year 2040 Transportation Plan for Stark County, Ohio,” Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS), <http://starkcountyohio.gov/transportation/programs/long-range-planning>, May 2013.

Since the early 1950's, the need for the realignment of US 30 has been studied and requested. Studies have been done by local, regional, and state-wide planning groups to determine a new alignment that would best serve the needs for the movement of people and goods. US 30 is currently 4-lanes from the Indiana state line to Trump Avenue east of Canton. The Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) previous long range plan, Access Ohio 2030, called for US 30 to be a 4-lane, limited access highway across the state. State officials have made it clear that to complete US 30, significant local resources would be needed. To that end, a new state law was passed that allows for the creation of a Regional Transportation Improvement Project (RTIP). Stark, Carroll and Columbiana Counties have recently agreed to form such a district, which was approved by ODOT in the summer of 2016. The RTIP allows for the issuing of bonds financed by tax increment financing, license plate taxes and other methods to provide a portion of the funds that will be needed to complete it.



12th Street Roundabout
Source: SCATS

Arterial highways- Arterial highways are high capacity urban roads taking traffic from local collector roads to freeways and expressways. The Transportation Plan proposes projects to improve traffic circulation in and around major traffic generators. These projects include: improvements to the 12th Street/Mahoning Road Corridor through the City of Canton, including Mahoning Road; Everhard Road and Whipple Avenue intersection improvements; safety improvements along SR 172 between I-77 and Whipple; general road widening where identified; and intersection and safety improvements on SR 43, SR 241, SR 619 and SR 800. Also proposed is an additional connection to the City of Canal Fulton from SR 21.

System Preservation- Numerous bridge and repavement projects listed in the plan underscore the high cost of system preservation. The reconstruction of the I-77/US 30 interchange is the most significant system preservation project listed in the plan. Other major system preservation and/or bridge projects include: Werner Church bridge replacement, Rockhill Avenue bridge replacement, US 62 bridge work, and various road/intersection improvements on parts of Strausser, Easton, Pittsburg, Fohl, Portage and Paris Avenue roadways.

Another interchange project not included in the plan, but recently identified for possible reconstruction is the I-77/Fulton Road junction, which adjoins the Pro Football Hall of Fame (HOF). Recent plans for the HOF are calling for a major overhaul of the facility and grounds to create a \$600 million dollar Pro Football HOF Village, which is anticipated to generate exponentially higher volumes of traffic. Traffic studies for the area will continue to be evaluated as the HOF project comes to fruition.

Public Transit

The public transit system plays a major role in meeting the transportation needs of Stark County residents. The Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA), Stark County's public transit agency, has seen continual growth over the past years as infrastructure and other improvements have helped to boost ridership. Last year, SARTA provided over two million trips via the different transit services they offer. In addition to over 30 fixed routes, SARTA offers a number of personalized services to passengers needing extra assistance. Some of these services include ProLine and Medline, which offer door-to-door transportation for physically or mentally disabled persons. Services are also available for qualified persons on Medicaid, for veterans, and for students.¹⁵⁴ SARTA offers a free travel training program, which teaches people how to read schedules, transfer to other buses, purchase tickets, and use the wheelchair lift.

¹⁵⁴ Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA), www.sartaonline.com, Accessed June 23, 2016.

Communities should actively promote SARTA’s programs and services to their residents in an effort to help ensure that all persons have equal access to transportation options.

The following general categories of public transit capital improvements are proposed in the 2040 Transportation Plan:

- Buses and Paratransit Vehicles Replacement- due to age, excessive mileage, wear, and conversion to alternate fuels, primarily Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridors- in high ridership corridors, improvements are being made to further encourage and improve ridership. Bus pull-off lanes, shelters, and other pedestrian and bicycle facilities are being added to facilitate intermodal transportation. The 12th Street/Mahoning Road BRT Corridor is currently under development. Several other corridors (Tuscarawas Street and Whipple Avenue) may be planned once the Mahoning project is completed.
- Completion of improvements at SARTA’s Gateway facility (central office) – the installation of the CNG station has necessitated additional work at the Gateway facility, including parking lot additions and HVAC changes due to the increase in CNG vehicles. The SARTA Gateway has also added a hydrogen fueling facility.
- Equipment and Preventive Maintenance – equipment purchases and capitalized preventive maintenance of SARTA vehicles and facilities.



SARTA is the designated recipient of the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) federal grant. They are in charge of sub-allocating the grant funds to private non-profit groups, and creating a project management plan for the grant. Proposed

Section 5310 projects must meet needs or fill gaps identified in this plan. The most recent project management plan created is the Human Services-Public Transit Coordinated Transportation Plan for the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority and the Stark County Area Transportation Study, created in January 2014.¹⁵⁵ In addition to the capital improvements proposed above, SARTA will also be working on the implementation of this project management plan.

Bikeways and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are a valuable resource for short-distance transportation as well as for recreation and tourism. The demand for longer-distance accommodations, such as designated bike lanes, has increased as sustainability, green living, and low impact lifestyles have become more attractive to the public. Stark Parks has completed a number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities since the development of the Congressman Ralph Regula Towpath Trail in the Ohio and Erie National Heritage Canalway. These include major projects in the City of Canton, City of North Canton, Plain Township, and Lexington Township. Interconnections between many of these trails are under construction and/or are included in the Transportation Plan. More information on open space and the trail system can be found in Chapter IV.

Complete Streets

The City of Canton is implementing the first Complete Streets project in Stark County as part of the Mahoning BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) Corridor. “Complete Streets” is a paradigm where roads are redesigned to incorporate additional transportation modes. Where previous priorities emphasized automobiles and trucks, complete streets include features to assist pedestrians, bicycles, and persons needing ADA accessible features.¹⁵⁶ Portions of the Canton Complete

¹⁵⁵ “Human Services-Public Transit Coordinated Transportation Plan for the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority and the Stark County Area Transportation Study,” Stark County Regional Planning Commission, <http://starkcountyohio.gov/transportation/programs/specialized-transportation/stark-county-mobility-coordination-committee>, January 2014.

¹⁵⁶ “What are Complete Streets?” National Complete Streets Coalition, Smart Growth America, www.smartgrowthamerica.org, Accessed June 23, 2016.

Streets project on Walnut and Cherry Streets were recently completed and construction is currently underway on portions of Mahoning Road and 12th Street.

12TH STREET/MAHONING ROAD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS CANTON, OHIO

PROJECT PHASING MAP

MAHONING ROAD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - HARMONT AVE. TO EAST CORP. LIMITS
ESTIMATED COST: \$500,000
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2014
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2014

MAHONING ROAD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
GRACE AVE. TO HARMONT AVE.
ESTIMATED COST: \$8,000,000
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2013
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2014

12TH STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
MONUMENT RD. TO MIDDLE BRANCH OF NIMISHILLEN CREEK
ESTIMATED COST: \$14,500,000
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2014
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2015

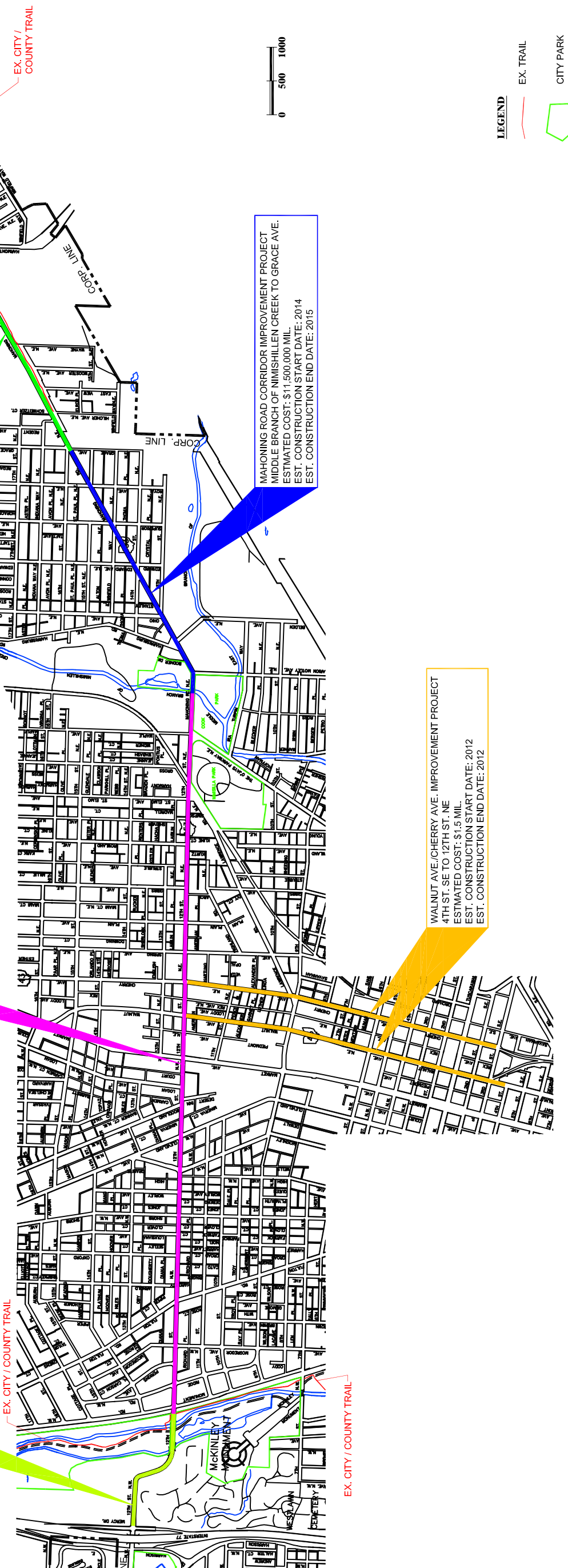
12TH STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
I-77/MERCY DRIVE TO MONUMENT RD.
ESTIMATED COST: \$4,000,000
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2015
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2016

0 500 1000

MAHONING ROAD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
MIDDLE BRANCH OF NIMISHILLEN CREEK TO GRACE AVE.
ESTIMATED COST: \$11,500,000 MIL.
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2014
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2015

WALNUT AVE./CHERRY AVE. IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
4TH ST. SE TO 12TH ST. NE
ESTIMATED COST: \$1.5 MIL.
EST. CONSTRUCTION START DATE: 2012
EST. CONSTRUCTION END DATE: 2012

LEGEND
EX. TRAIL
CITY PARK



The City has also developed an extensive plan for bicycle lanes. These developments will serve

<i>Complete Streets Elements</i>
<i>-Sidewalks</i>
<i>-Bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders)</i>
<i>-Special bus lanes</i>
<i>-Comfortable and accessible public transportation stops</i>
<i>-Frequent and safe crossing opportunities</i>
<i>-Median islands</i>
<i>-Accessible pedestrian signals</i>
<i>-Curb extensions/bulb-outs</i>
<i>-Narrower travel lanes</i>
<i>-Roundabouts</i>

in conjunction with the Complete Streets Mahoning BRT Corridor and Stark Parks’ Trail and Greenway Master Plan (see Chapter IV). Other urban areas are encouraged to create a bicycle and pedestrian plan for their communities, and rural areas are encouraged to add bicycle lanes where identified to create a coordinated pedestrian mobility system for all areas of the County.

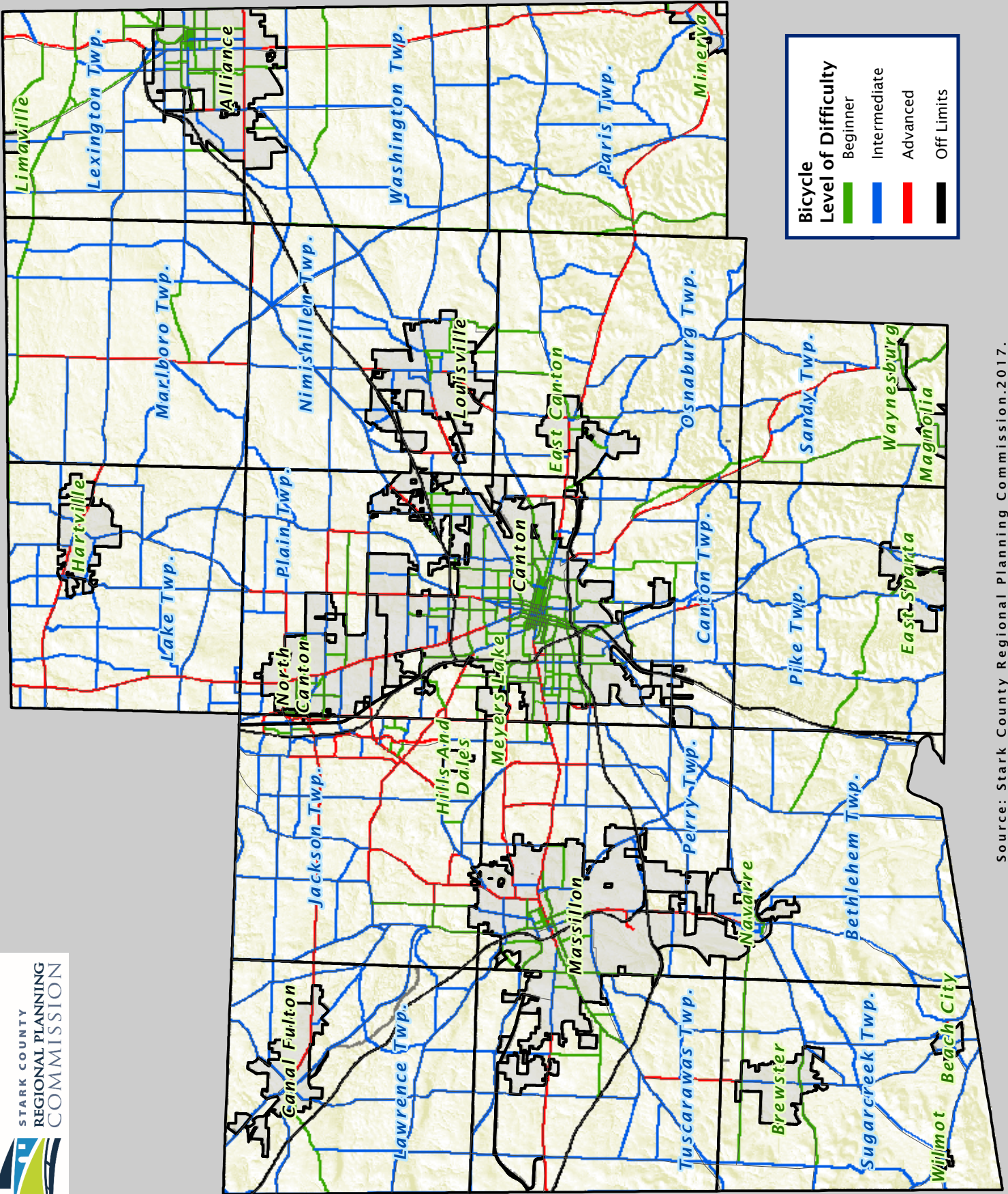
A number of metropolitan planning agencies have recently produced bicycle user maps that identify bicycle and pedestrian facilities and rate the ‘usability’ of roads for bicyclists. SCATS recently developed a roadway suitability map for cyclists, known as Ride Stark, which identifies roads within the County as better suited for beginner, intermediate or advanced cyclists, based on information such as traffic volume, lane width, speed limit, and availability of existing trails and bike

lanes.¹⁵⁷ In addition to identifying the suitability of roads for bicyclists, the map will also assist in the determination of demand for bicycle lanes, caution signs, and other improvements.

In addition to the bicycle user map, SCATS has also been working on other multi-modal planning efforts, including the recent completion of a basic “Complete Streets” plan for the Belden Village area. The Belden Village Complete Streets study identified existing traffic patterns, roadway and pedestrian infrastructure, and transit facilities, and provided recommendations

¹⁵⁷ “Ride Stark,” Stark County Regional Planning Commission, <http://scrpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=ae4f6a0d693543aba84bc61f4b2ec253>, Published 2015.

Bicycle Map - Level of Difficulty



Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission, 2017.

for projects to improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation in one of Stark County’s most densely developed retail areas. The recent completion of a transit center on Whipple Avenue further highlighted the need for additional pedestrian infrastructure in this area. It was found that the Belden Village Mall, which is only a five-minute walk from the transit center, is located on a roadway (Whipple Avenue) carrying almost 22,000 vehicles per day, and with no sidewalks, resulting in pedestrians crossing one of the most heavily congested and dangerous intersections in the County.

Pedestrian Orientation

Pedestrian orientation means designing places to be more conducive to non-motorized travelers. This can be in the basic form of adding walkways to streets. One alternative to sidewalks is the installation of

gravel walking paths instead. Not only are these connectors usually cheaper, but they also fit in better in the more rural areas. In residential allotments, another easy way to promote walkability is to require walkway connections between new roadways. This still keeps motorized traffic down, but it allows people to walk instead of



Trails are installed to provide non-motorized traffic within neighborhoods
Source: Safe Routes to School

drive to a neighbor’s home or the local school. Future amendments to subdivision and zoning regulations should take pedestrian movement into account. Communities could consider creating pedestrian overlay districts, which outline certain pedestrian-orientation criteria that must be considered in any new development/redevelopment projects. Developers should also be encouraged to tie their subdivisions into trails where existing, or to link their proposed streets together through the use of bike/pedestrian-only connections. This not only reduces the need for a vehicle within a neighborhood, but it also promotes healthier living, neighborhood

engagement, and environmental stewardship by reducing the amount of vehicle trips made.¹⁵⁸ The City of Louisville is one of the most recent local communities to promote this type of pedestrian connectivity, which can be found in their 2016 Comprehensive Plan.¹⁵⁹ Sample wording of a pedestrian accessway requirement can be found in Ellensburg, Washington’s Subdivision and Block Structure regulations.¹⁶⁰

Ideally, pedestrian facility improvements should be taken into account with most road projects, as any encouragement for pedestrian movement serves to benefit transportation, economic development, and healthier lifestyles in general. As an example, the Lincoln Highway (historic byway) corridor project in Perry Township is seeking to take advantage of nostalgia and improve the corridor by way of tying historic revitalization elements, scenic improvements, commercial revitalization, and pedestrian enhancements together into one package along this route. These improvements aim to “offer stories through architecture, monuments, gateway signage and business story-telling participation, which will help interpret America’s first transcontinental highway and attract tourism.”¹⁶¹

One of the less expensive methods for improving not only pedestrian movement, but economic development potential overall, is through “streetscaping” efforts. Streetscaping involves aesthetic improvements along a roadway corridor, and can include measures such as planting street trees, installing decorative lighting or adding planters. These tools create a more pleasing curb appeal for both pedestrians and vehicle users, which in turn is more rewarding to businesses, and the community as a whole.

Streetscaping Elements:

- Street trees
- Bicycle racks
- Painted trash cans
- Benches
- Attractive street lighting
- Planters
- Sidewalks

¹⁵⁸ “Sustainable Planning and Zoning Handbook: A Guide for Sustainable Development in Stark County, Ohio”, Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Revised November 2012.

¹⁵⁹ “Louisville Comprehensive Plan,” Reveille Consultants, February 2016.

¹⁶⁰ “Pedestrian Accessways”, Ellensburg City Code, Ellensburg, Washington, <http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Ellensburg/html/Ellensburg15/Ellensburg15420.html>, Accessed July 23, 2016.

¹⁶¹ “Ohio Lincoln Highway Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan,” Ohio Department of Transportation, <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/OhioByways/Pages/LincolnHighway.aspx>, June 30, 2015.

Other Transportation Reports

In addition to developing the TIP and long-range transportation plan, SCATS also develops more site-specific plans periodically and gathers traffic crash records and publishes an annual traffic crash report identifying and ranking high hazard intersections. They also perform an analysis of deficiencies in the existing transportation system, a study known as the Congestion Management Process (CMP), as discussed below. Information from all of these reports is presented to local officials (and the general public), who then incorporate it into their planning processes.



*Busy intersection at US 62 and Harrisburg Avenue
Source: SCRPC*

Congestion Management Process

One of the major components of the transportation planning process is the identification of deficiencies in the existing transportation system. The Congestion Management Process (CMP) is used to identify congestion deficiencies and implement strategies to reduce or minimize congestion. Results of the latest CMP analysis were published in the 2015 Congestion Management Process Report.¹⁶²

¹⁶² “Congestion Management Process Report, 2015,” SCATS, <http://starkcountyohio.gov/transportation/programs/long-range-planning>, June 2016.

The 2015 report found that current congested locations in Stark County include:

- I-77 from SR 800 to Portage Street,
- US 62 between California Avenue and I-77,
- US 62 south of US 30,
- SR 241 from Massillon to SR 687,
- SR 172 in Canton and Perry Township,
- SR 800 south of Canton,
- US 62/SR 173 in Alliance,
- SR 93 in Canal Fulton,
- Perry Drive and Jackson Avenue in Perry Township,
- US 30 in and around East Canton,
- SR 619 in the Uniontown area,
- Belden Village area, and
- Various streets in and around downtown Canton.

The future congestion analysis shows many of the existing congested locations remaining congested due to the increased traffic volume projections. In addition, the report shows that congestion will spread to include many locations near Portage Street. Locations showing



improvements in congestion and levels of service (due to roadway improvements) include US 30 in East Canton, I-77 in Canton, SR 619 west of Hartville, Mount Pleasant Street, State Street in Alliance, Genoa Avenue and Perry Drive in Perry Township. Most of the projects identified in both of these analyses are currently either under construction now, or are included in the 2040 Transportation Plan for eventual improvements, as the funding becomes available.

While at times inconvenient, the system-wide CMP numbers show that congestion is not generally a major problem in the area, and is not expected to increase significantly, largely

because the population of the region is not predicted to grow significantly in the future. Any future increases in traffic are projected to occur because of increased trip making and longer trip lengths.

Recommendations

In addition to evaluating signal timing at intersections where congestion has been identified, the following intersection and roadway widening, channelization, geometric and signal improvements are recommended as a result of the latest CMP:

Congestion Management Report Recommendations	
Project Name	Description
Everhard & Whipple Intersection	Resurfacing of Everhard from Whipple to Main in North Canton. Replacement of RR tracks on Everhard & Whipple. Ramp work on I-77NB off-ramp to Everhard. Drop right turn lane from EB Everhard to SB Whipple. Add center turn lane.
SR 43/Market (Applegrove to 55 th)	Widening of road to 4/5 lanes, includes pedestrian/bike tunnel & new sidewalks.
SR 153/Mahoning (12 th to Harmont)	Streetscape/economic development project to improve traffic flow and safety. Work to address roadway pavement, curbs, sidewalks, ramps, crosswalks, lights and signals.
Beeson & Freshley Roundabout	Construct roundabout.
SR 619 (Kaufman to Milan)	Widening from 2 to 4/5 lanes. Includes turn lanes, possible roundabouts, signal and sign upgrades, and drainage improvements.
US 62 & Middlebranch Intersection	Realigning and reconfiguring the intersections of US 62, Middlebranch, and 30 th Street. Project includes construction of roundabout at Harrisburg & 30 th .
Maple St. (Main to Ream)	Extend existing left turn lane on Maple between Main St. and Ream Ave.

Figure 7.1, Stark County Congestion Management Report Recommendations

(Source: 2015 Congestion Management Process Report, SCATS)

The findings of this report play a major role in the recommendations of the 2040 Transportation Plan and the SCATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).¹⁶³ The 2040 Transportation Plan includes many projects to assist with congestion management, including the extension of US 62 and US 30 freeways and several arterial roadway widening projects. More unique measures, such as transportation demand management, measures to encourage HOV (high-occupancy vehicle) use, and congestion pricing have generated little support by the local public. However, surveys have found that the public does support growth management and access management techniques. The Stark County Engineer's Office recently adopted access management regulations for county and township roads, similar to what the Ohio Department of Transportation currently uses for state routes. These regulations became effective October 1, 2016.

SCATS Transportation and Land Use Study

In 2012, the SCATS commissioned a study to evaluate and plan for the future transportation infrastructure needs within northern Stark County.¹⁶⁴ This study was conducted in partnership with Lake, Jackson and Plain Townships, the Cities of North Canton and Green, and ODOT. The study examined the land use, economic, and transportation conditions within the study area, and provided a set of transportation and land use recommendations based on projected future conditions.

¹⁶³ The Transportation Improvement Program or TIP is the schedule of highway, transit, and other transportation improvements that will be implemented within the next four years. Projects must be included in the TIP if they are to be eligible for federal funding. These projects are typically included in the 2040 Transportation Plan.

¹⁶⁴ "SCATS Transportation and Land Use Study," SCATS and OHM Advisors, <http://starkcountyohio.gov/transportation/programs/long-range-planning>, 2012.

Some of the transportation projects identified in this study include:

SCATS Transportation and Land Use Study Projects	
Location	Project Description
Pittsburg at-Mt. Pleasant/Applegrove/Shuffel/Orion	Intersection improvements
Whipple and Applegrove	Intersection Improvement
Portage and Robin Hill	Intersection Improvement
Frank from Shuffel to Applegrove	Road widening
Orion from Pittsburg to Cleveland	Road widening
Applegrove from Whipple to Frank	Road widening
Strausser from Frank to Wales	Road widening
Portage from Pittsburg to Charlotte	Road widening
Shuffel from Frank to Wales	Traffic pattern improvements

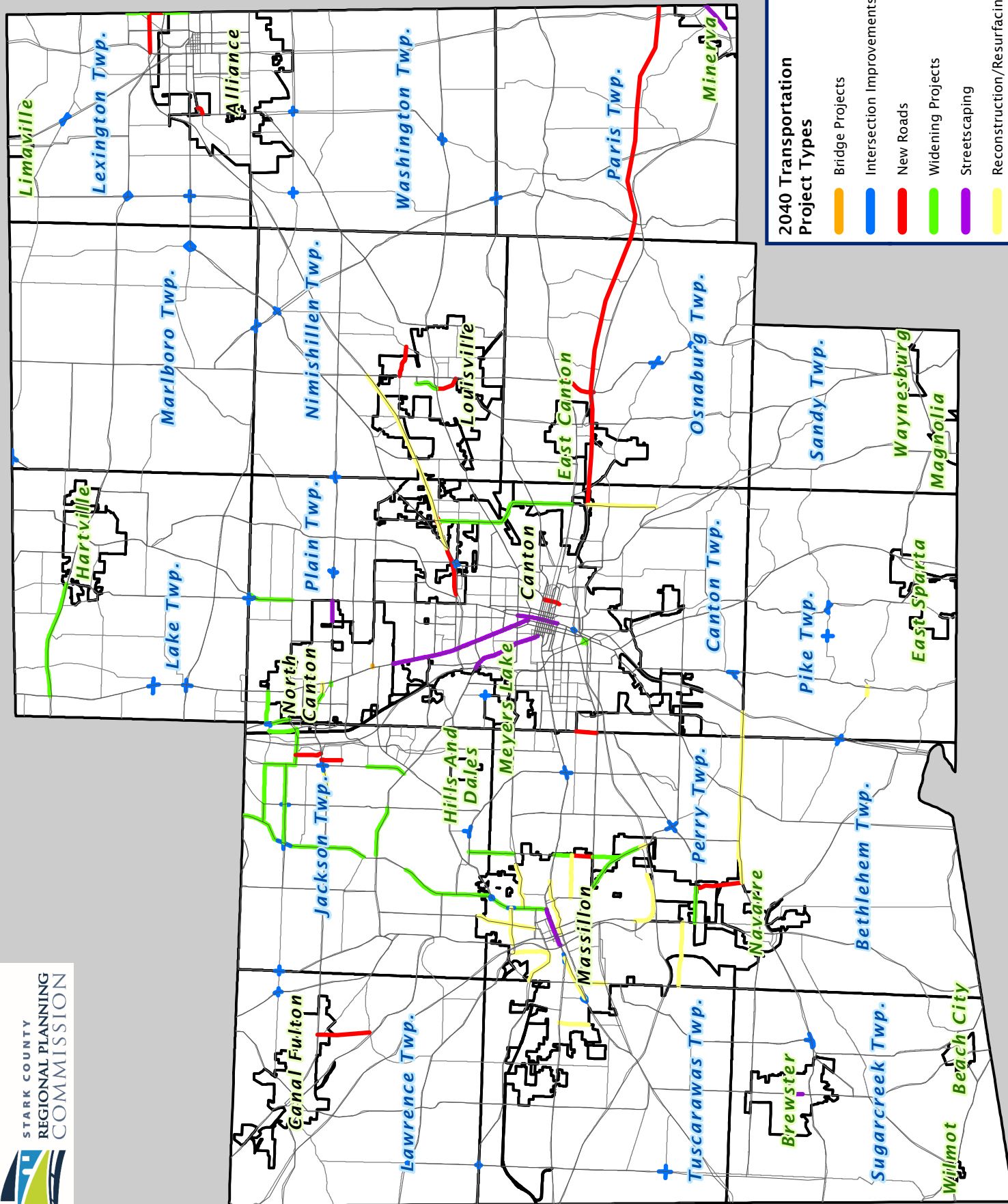
Figure 7.2, SCATS Transportation and Land Use Study Projects

(Source: SCATS Transportation and Land Use Study, 2012)

The primary *land use* recommendation in this study focused on the need for multi-family housing in these areas to accommodate both the younger “millennial” age group and the aging baby boomer generation, two groups that prefer a variety of housing options. While the recommendations of this study are considered in development proposals within the targeted areas, more should be done to actively promote and incorporate this land use recommendation, in addition to the transportation recommendations of this study, into all project reviews.



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Source: Stark County 2040 Transportation Plan

Vibrant NEO

As mentioned earlier in this Plan, the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) published *Vibrant NEO 2040 – A Vision, Framework and Action Products for Our Future*, in March 2014, as well as an extract of the report for the Stark County area specifically, in 2015.^{165,166} NEOSCC drafted this report as part of an initiative to provide the region with: an analysis of the future with different possible scenarios, an identified vision for the future, and a set of tools to attain that vision.

The Vibrant NEO Report offers suggestions for how mobility can be improved at the individual, community and regional level. Regionally, the report suggests focusing on a t-shaped network that runs along the Lake Erie shoreline and heads south through Cleveland down to Canton via either rail and/or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services. At the community level, the report aims to make non-motorized travel a higher priority, yet ensuring that existing infrastructure will still be maintained.

During the NEOSCC public participation process, when asked about expanding alternative modes of transportation options, Stark County respondents were overall in favor of doing such, but questioned whether transit service would be appropriate in rural areas. There has been consistently strong support for maintaining existing roads and bridges, and less for roadway expansion, but residents felt overall that there should be a more balanced approach when it came to expanding the infrastructure options for the various forms of transportation, including walking, bicycling and public transit. While the regional vision is one that is likely years away, the community level vision is one that this plan strongly supports and encourages, as is noted in previous sections about pedestrian mobility.

¹⁶⁵ Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC), “Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision, Framework, and Action Products for Our Future,” March 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC), “Vibrant NEO 2040: Stark County Framework Report,” October 2015.

In the Report, linkages between high-density activities, such as new job centers and housing developments were also stressed as important transportation decisions to be closely coordinated, as transit's highest value is achieved when these connections can be made. This theme is again consistent with this Plan's recommendation to promote infill and more compact development in already-developed areas, as the infrastructure to support it is already in place.

Transportation planning, while integral to the growth and development of a community, can sometimes take many years to implement. The 2040 Transportation Plan reflects the needs of the County as perceived at this time. This Plan is updated regularly to take into consideration any adjustments and changing needs. The goal of transportation planning is to provide for a transportation system that is fiscally responsible and balanced, and accommodates all modes of transportation.

B.) Water and Sewer

There are many elements needed to implement development: good accessibility, suitable zoning, storm water management, and sewer and water provision. Sewer and water services are vitally important facilities that help to determine the location, rate and intensity of development in Stark County. Where and when services are extended, and the capacities of these infrastructure facilities (i.e. how much they can handle) will influence where businesses locate and what kinds of businesses will be attracted to the region. Available infrastructure can also influence the density and types of residential development permitted in various communities. In Stark County, the primary sewer service providers are the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District, in



*Broken sewer line
Source: Unknown*

conjunction with the major municipalities. For water, the primary providers are Aqua Ohio Inc. (primarily within unincorporated areas) and the municipalities themselves.

Sanitary Sewer & the Clean Water (Section 208) Plan

The rate of public sewer and water extensions is influenced by a number of factors, including the location(s) of population growth, available capital financing, and land development planning. Sewer and water services may also be necessary for environmental reasons, such as EPA regulations on water pollution control, which require sewage treatment and water quality to meet health standards.

Sewer services can also be affected by existing facilities that are at or near capacity, or in need of extensive operational repairs. According to the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District's website, their facilities consist of over 700 miles of sewer mains, which includes more than 46,000 sewer connections. They also operate and maintain eighty-five pump stations and seven wastewater treatment plants, and so it can be expected that repairs and/or replacement of these facilities will be required at some point.¹⁶⁷ Areas requiring immediate attention may delay or divert funding from proposed sewer development in other areas.

Communities that provide sewer services are required to comply with the federal Clean Water Act, which requires communities to create and enforce compliance with Water Quality Management Plans (Section 208 Plans).¹⁶⁸ For Stark County, the designated management agency of the local Section 208 Plan is the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO). The primary focuses of the Section 208 Plan are the issue of sewer expansion into undeveloped areas and the protection of water resources.

¹⁶⁷ "About the Sanitary Engineering Department," Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District, <http://starkcountyohio.gov/sanitary-engineers>, Accessed August 8, 2016.

¹⁶⁸ "Clean Water (208) Plan: Water Quality Management Plan Update," Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO), www.nefcoplanning.org, December 2011.

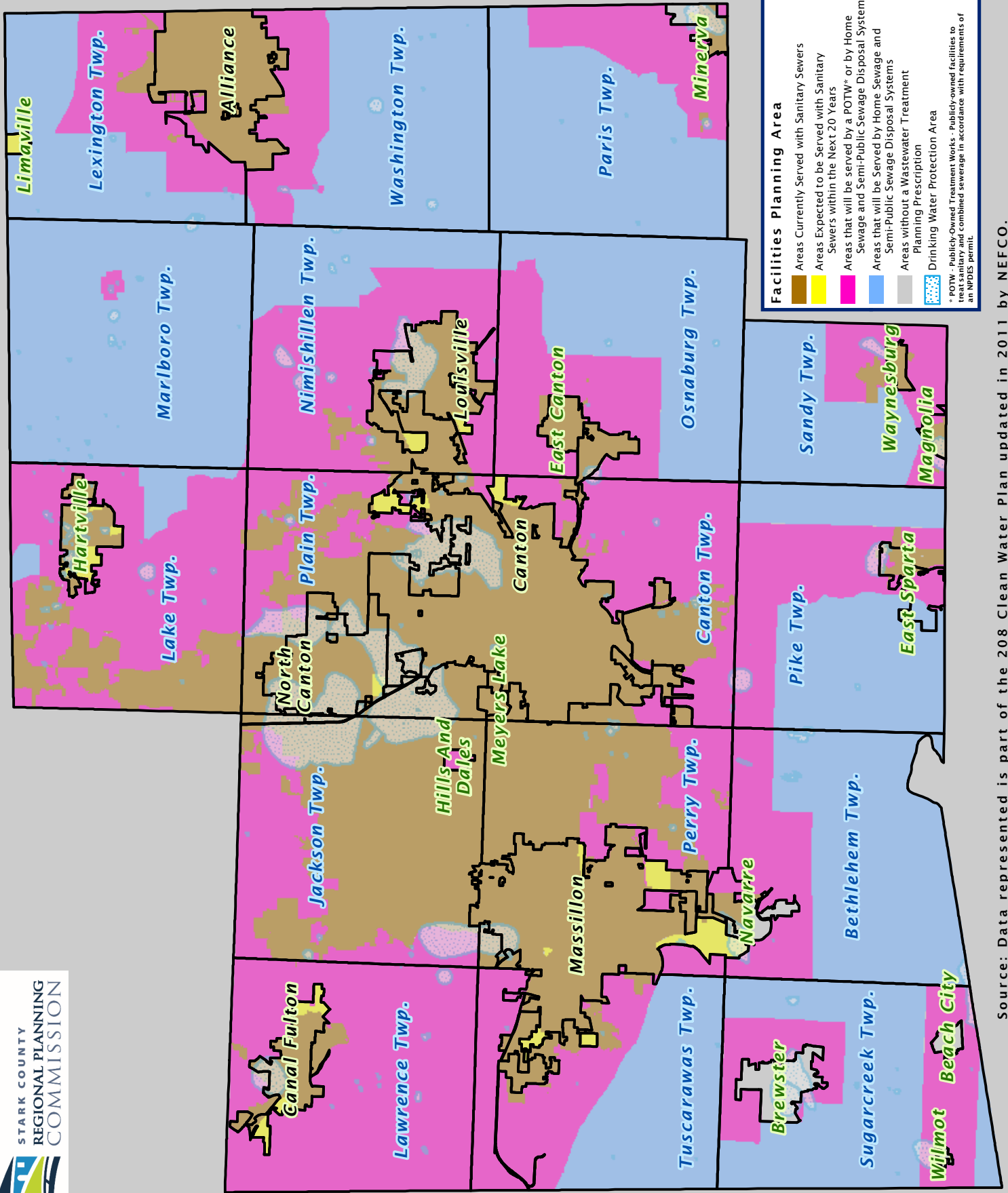
One of the objectives of the 208 Plan is to coordinate the location-planning efforts for sewer facilities throughout the NEFCO service area. The goal of this effort is to help guide peripheral suburban sewer extensions in a more sustainable manner. Developers and political subdivisions should work together in the early stages of development planning to ensure coordination with the 208 Plan.

The following map identifies the different sewer facilities planning areas within Stark County. The different categories indicate a.) areas currently served with sanitary sewers, b.) areas identified for connection to sewer within the next 20 years, c.) areas that will be required to connect to sanitary sewer, and d.) areas not planned for connection to sewer for the foreseeable future. Once the facilities planning areas are adopted, they become part of the 208 Plan, and any permits or grants involving wastewater management issued by the Ohio EPA must not conflict with the Plan. The most recent 208 Plan for the Stark County area was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 2012.

Section 208 Clean Water Plan



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Facilities Planning Area

- Areas Currently Served with Sanitary Sewers
- Areas Expected to be Served with Sanitary Sewers within the Next 20 Years
- Areas that will be served by a POTW* or by Home Sewage and Semi-Public Sewage Disposal Systems
- Areas that will be Served by Home Sewage and Semi-Public Sewage Disposal Systems
- Areas without a Wastewater Treatment Planning Prescription
- Drinking Water Protection Area

* POTW - Publicly-Owned Treatment Works - Publicly-owned facilities to treat sanitary and combined sewerage in accordance with requirements of an NPDES permit.

Source: Data represented is part of the 208 Clean Water Plan updated in 2011 by NEFCO.

Comprehensive Plan 2040

Septic Concerns in Stark County

Several areas of the County do not have public water and/or sewer, and instead typically rely on water wells and septic tanks, also known as home sewage treatment systems (HSTS). According to the U.S. EPA, 1 in 5 households use a septic system to treat their wastewater. These systems typically last 15-20 years, and fail largely because they are not well maintained. When these systems fail, they can cause wastewater to seep into drinking water sources, potentially creating a number of dangerous health conditions for its consumers.¹⁶⁹ According to the Stark County Health Department, as of August 2016, there are an estimated 45,000 septic systems still in use within the County, which is down from the 2030 Plan's estimate of 51,000 systems in 2005. However, of the 859 total septic inspections completed through the Health Department's Property Transfer Septic Inspection Program, 12% of those were failing, which is consistent with 2015 percentages.¹⁷⁰ Of the systems tested, the highest failure percentages were found in Lexington Township, Perry Township and Washington Township.



Pooling of effluent can indicate the soils surrounding a septic system are saturated with untreated effluent
Source: Suffolk County Stormwater Management Program

In June 2016, on behalf of the Stark County Health Department and the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District, the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) assisted in the creation of a report identifying priority areas for extending sanitary sewers to.¹⁷¹ This report, titled the Stark County Failing Home

Sewage Treatment Systems Prioritization Analysis, evaluated a number of factors, including

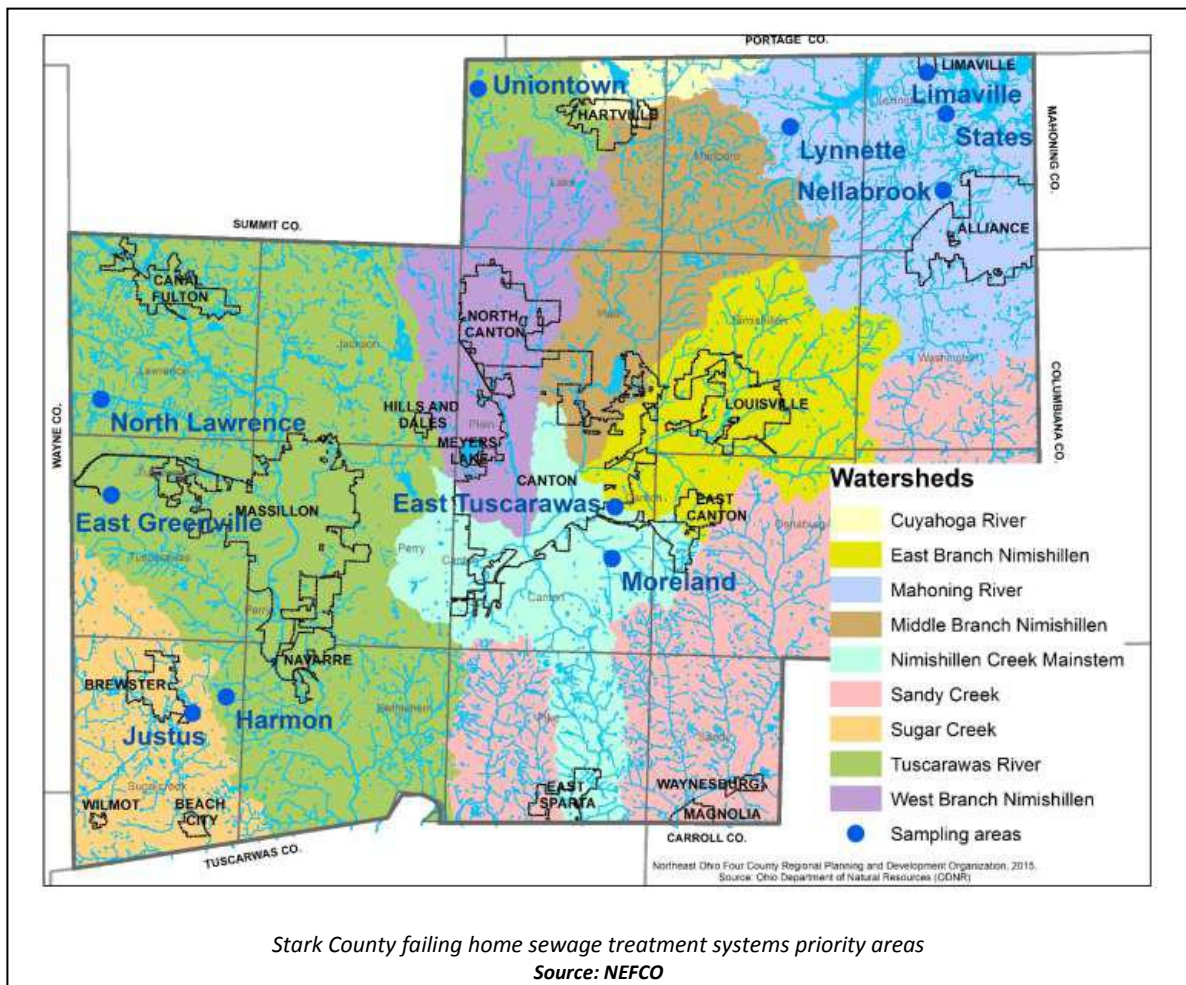
¹⁶⁹ "Septic Systems Overview," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-systems-overview>, Accessed August 1, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ "2016 Stark County Health Department Annual Report, <http://www.starkcountyohio.gov/public-health/reports-statistics>, Accessed April 30, 2017.

¹⁷¹ "Stark County Failing Home Sewage Treatment Systems Prioritization Analysis," Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO), www.nefcoplanning.org, June 2016.

known areas with high home sewage treatment system (HSTS) failures, housing density, soil suitability, surface water pollution potential, drinking water source and E. coli levels. Based on the results of this analysis, 11 areas were identified as priority areas to receive sewer, based on their level of environmental and health concerns. These areas are listed in priority order in the following list, with one (1) being the highest priority:

1. Village of Limaville
2. Harmon (Sugarcreek Twp.)
3. Florida, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Maryland and Illinois Streets (Lexington Twp.)
4. Moreland Hills Allotment (Canton Twp.)
5. East Tuscarawas (Canton Twp.)
6. Justus (Sugarcreek Twp.)
7. East Greenville (Tuscarawas Twp.)
8. North Lawrence (Lawrence Twp.)
9. Nellabrook Allotment (Lexington Twp.)
10. Lynnett Street (Marlboro Twp.)
11. Uniontown (Lake Twp.)



The report is presented as a guide, and not necessarily a definitive list, in determining which areas should receive sewers first. Other information not factored into this report, but which can influence the prioritization of each project, includes cost, which communities already have other funds committed, the willingness of each community to pay for the improvements, the number of complaints received in each area, and other environmental factors.

As a result of this report, in May 2016, funds were reallocated from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to help pay for the design work of the Moreland Hills sanitary sewer project, which will then enable the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District to apply for additional funds to construct the project. Additionally, in March 2017, construction began on an eight-inch pipeline that will carry sewage from the Village of Limaville to the Alliance sewage treatment plant. Funded through a partnership between the Army Corps of Engineers and the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District, the project is expected to be completed by December 2017. As of the writing of this plan, none of the remaining 9 areas have applied for CDBG funding; however, they will continue to receive high consideration in future funding cycles, if they are qualified low- to moderate-income CDBG areas.

Stark County Consolidated Plan

In accordance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program requirements, every five years the Stark County Consortium (Stark County, Alliance and Massillon) prepares a Consolidated Plan, which outlines the way in which certain HUD funds will be expended within that time period.^{172,173} The current plan, for FY '14–'18, provides an assessment of needs in the area, covering topics such as: housing and homelessness, infrastructure improvements, public facilities, public services, accessibility, economic development, fair housing and planning needs.

¹⁷² The City of Canton receives separate CDBG and HOME funds, and therefore operates under their own Consolidated Plan.

¹⁷³ HUD programs covered under the Consolidated Plan include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds.

The assessment found that aging waterlines, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, and public roads were all mentioned during surveys and public visioning meetings as areas of need for Stark County. Aging waterlines are a problem throughout much of the Consortium. The ability of existing water infrastructure facilities being able to meet water pressure and fire protection demands was an area of concern previously identified in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, and it remains one of the principal issues facing central water supply throughout a number of the older communities today. Also identified as a need throughout the Consortium was the replacement of aging 4- and 6-inch sanitary sewers in some of the older neighborhoods.

Improvement, construction and/or reconstruction of older public roads and sidewalks were also found to be a need through both the Consortium assessment process and the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) application process (discussed in greater detail below). The Transportation Planning section of this plan details the in-depth process for roadway and other transportation improvement projects.

The final area of needed infrastructure improvements reported in the surveys and visioning meetings for the Consolidated Plan was storm water/drainage projects. It was stated that changes in the past have helped some flooding issues, but there is still work to do. The OPWC application process also assists with identifying needed projects in this area, and Chapter IV, Natural Resources, covers many of these issues in greater detail.

Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC)

The SCRPC provides staff for the administration of the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) programs within District 19, which consists of all of Stark County. The OPWC was created to assist in financing local public infrastructure improvements under the State Capital Improvement Program (SCIP) and the Local Transportation Improvements Program (LTIP). According to the Ohio Public Works Commission, “SCIP is a grant and revolving loan program for roads, bridges, water supply, wastewater treatment, storm water collection, and solid waste disposal. LTIP is a grant program for roads and bridges only.



The programs run concurrently.” Included below is a breakdown of local projects submitted in the 2016 application cycle, including the requested funding amounts by project type. Total OPWC allocations for the program year were almost \$8.8 million.

During the OPWC 2016 application cycle, over \$4.7-million was requested for various **waterline** projects, with a total project cost of more than \$7.2-million.¹⁷⁴ These project locations include:

- Walnut Street in East Canton;
- Avondale;
- Chestnut and Hart Avenue in Minerva; and
- Areas along 38th and 40th Streets in Canton.

The OPWC 2016 cycle applications requested more than \$9.9-million for **public roads and bridges**, showing a total need for approximately \$32-million. Some of these project locations include:

- Howenstine and Liberty Church bridges;
- Mahoning Road;
- Dressler/University Drive; and
- Richville/Southway Street.

¹⁷⁴ Additional funding for these projects can come from a variety of sources, including other grants, loans or a local match.

Funds requested for **storm sewer** work through OPWC for the 2016 program year were for more than \$2.1-million, with a total project cost shown at more than \$2.5-million. Some of these project locations include:

- Locust Street in Canal Fulton;
- Linford Avenue in Plain Township; and
- 47th Street in Canton.

For a more detailed overview of storm water/drainage and water quality issues, please see Chapter IV, Natural Resources.

Sewage treatment projects included in the application cycle include:

- Sanitary sewer work at Wagler and Park Lane in Hartville;
- New sludge/dewatering facility in Alliance; and
- Back-up generator for the Hartville Wastewater Treatment Plant.

OPWC funds requested for these projects total \$2.1 million, part of the \$8.4 million total estimated cost.

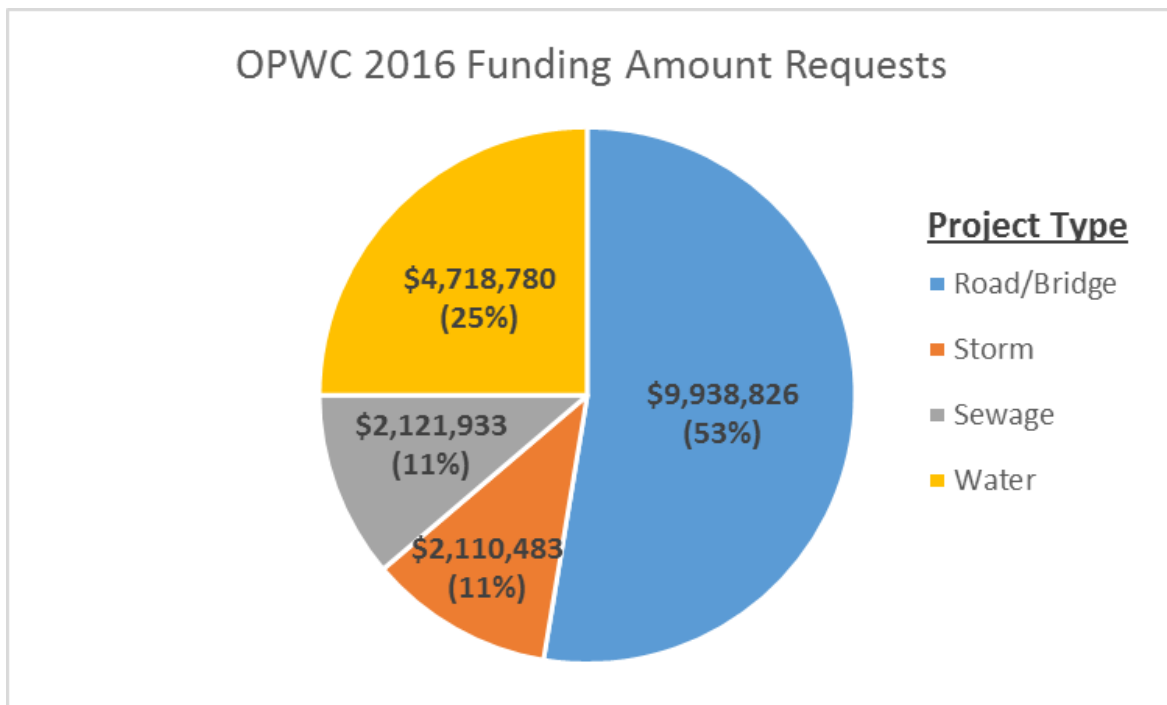


Figure 7.3, OPWC 2016 Funding Amount Requests

An infrastructure project not included in the OPWC application cycle, but which is scheduled to receive funds through the CDBG program is the reconstruction of 7th Street in North Canton.

Most of the projects listed above involve the repair or replacement of existing infrastructure facilities in the County, which will likely continue to be a primary focus for the County throughout the term of this plan.

Infrastructure Planning for the Future

With changes to the annexation laws, cities and townships have now been able to negotiate the provision of water and sewer services through the use of Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) or Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs). These agreements essentially allow for the collection of taxes in exchange for the provision of water and/or sewer services. By encouraging this type of collaboration among communities, development is able to be more carefully and cooperatively planned.

As noted in the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) *Vibrant NEO 2040* Report, the fiscal impact of sewer expansion can be quite significant on local communities, as they are now forced to pay for both the maintenance of existing infrastructure, and the development of new infrastructure and services in developing areas.¹⁷⁵ Developers should seek to locate in areas where infrastructure facilities are already in place, or planned for the near future. The County and other public service providers should work to put themselves in a stronger position to better direct where future urban development is most suitable for its residents and workers. Utilizing the Section 208 Plan and this Plan will assist in the guidance of both service providers and developers to make sound future land use decisions.

C.) Solid Waste Management

Solid waste, also known as garbage, refuse and any other discarded materials, consists of a variety of materials ranging from household trash and used tires to motor oil and sludge from

¹⁷⁵ “Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision, Framework, and Action Products for Our Future,” Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC), www.vibrantneo.org, March 2014.

wastewater treatment plants. Proper solid waste disposal is a critical element in land use planning, as it can affect air, land and water quality.

Landfills

Stark County’s primary agency for handling solid waste is the Stark-Tuscarawas-Wayne Joint Solid Waste Management District (JSWMD). This agency also oversees recycling programs and promotes waste reduction and reuse to help decrease the amount of materials going to landfills. Landfill dumping continues to be the most common form of waste disposal throughout the state. As of 2015, there were two licensed solid waste facilities in Stark County, American Landfill in Pike Township, and Countywide Recycling and Disposal in Sandy Township.¹⁷⁶ There are also two licensed construction and demolition debris (C&D) landfills in the County: Minerva Enterprises in Sandy Township and Stark C&D Disposal in Osnaburg Township.¹⁷⁷



American Landfill in Pike Township
Source: Canton Repository

Stark County currently accepts out-of-state waste, which while many residents would prefer the County didn’t do, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled it is unconstitutional for states to prohibit it, as rejecting out-of-state waste is considered interfering with interstate “commerce”. According to the Ohio EPA, in 2014 there were over 2.46 million tons of solid waste

accepted at disposal facilities within the JSWMD area (Stark, Tuscarawas and Wayne Counties). Of that, 2.5% (~61,000 tons) came from out-of-state. For the state of Ohio, this figure is much

¹⁷⁶ Kimble Landfill, located in neighboring Tuscarawas County, is also part of the greater JSWMD.

¹⁷⁷ “Licensed Municipal Solid Waste Facilities” and “Licensed Construction and Demolition Debris Facilities,” Ohio EPA Division of Waste Materials and Waste Management, October 2015.

higher at almost 14%, which is down from the previous year's percentage of 18%. While out-of-state waste tonnage for the entire state decreased by almost 70,000 tons from 2013-2014; for Stark County, it increased by over 11,000 tons. It is unclear exactly why Stark County's percentage increased while the state's overall percentage decreased, but it may be attributed to Stark County's low disposal fees, state-of-the-art disposal facilities, and the amount of landfill space still available, which, according to EPA data, is likely why American Landfill in Pike Township is one of eight landfills in Ohio that receive the most out-of-state waste.¹⁷⁸

Ohio EPA standards have significantly tightened over the years to ensure that landfills are properly constructed and maintained, and it is anticipated that the usage of landfills as the most common form of solid waste disposal will continue in Ohio for the foreseeable future. This plan does encourage the provision of suitable open space and agricultural buffers around landfills to minimize their intrusion into adjacent rural residential neighborhoods, and recommends that waste reduction, reuse and recycling measures be continued and expanded in order to reduce the reliance on landfills.

RECYCLABLE MATERIALS:

- PAPER PRODUCTS
- GLASS
- SCRAP TIRES
- PLASTIC
- METALS
- BATTERIES
- ELECTRONIC WASTE
- COMPOSTABLES

Recycling and Reuse

Stark County has had a recycling education program since the 1990's, and in the last decade there has also been a focus on developing additional drop-off sites for recyclable and compostable materials. As of 2016, there were more than 70 recycling drop-off sites and 10 yard waste drop-off sites in the County.¹⁷⁹ Since 2004, the amount of materials being recycled has continued to rise. According to their

2016 newsletter, the JSWMD diverted via recycling over 11,000 tons of residential materials otherwise destined for landfills during 2014. While this fact is encouraging, much can still be

¹⁷⁸ "2014 Ohio Facility Data Report Tables," Ohio EPA, September 17, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ "Recycling and Reuse Guide: A Resident's Guide to Reducing, Reusing & Recycling," Stark-Tuscarawas-Wayne Joint Solid Waste Management District, www.timetorecycle.org, 2016.

done to improve participation rates. One area to focus attention on is the recycling of electronic waste, also known as “e-waste.” This type of waste is growing exponentially as the technology world continues to evolve and expand, and more people are purchasing a multitude of these products, such as smartphones, tablets and laptops. Currently there are facilities in Alliance, Canton, North Canton and Massillon that accept these products, and some communities offer periodic e-waste collection days; however, communities may want to consider bi-annual recycling days for electronic waste to offer additional opportunities and to reach out to those constituents not located near a facility.

According to the JSWMD’s 2016 Recycling and Reuse Guide, six communities participate in curbside recycling programs; these communities consist of the Cities of Canton, Alliance, Canal Fulton, Hartville, Massillon and North Canton. This is an increase of two communities from the previous year. Throughout the year, several communities also offer yard waste pick-up and/or drop-off sites for its residents. Increasing the number of communities offering these amenities would help to increase the recycling rates significantly, as individuals otherwise have to drive to drop-off sites or contract with a private recycling company. Other measures to increase recycling rates within communities include:

- Posting information in newsletters and on websites;
- Sending information packets to new homeowners;
- Getting schools more involved;
- Sending mailers to residents directly;
- Providing larger curbside containers to hold more recyclables; and
- Offering additional drop-off locations.¹⁸⁰

Opportunities for reuse exist by purchasing and/or donating to numerous reuse stores, both not-for-profit and privately owned. Reusable goods commonly consist of building materials, clothes, books, furniture, appliances and other household goods. Local reuse stores within the area include The Stock Pile (building materials), Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Goodwill, The Salvation Army, and numerous other clothing retail and thrift shops. Repair and maintenance of

¹⁸⁰ “Increase Your Community Recycling Rate,” Hamilton County Solid Waste District, <http://www.hamiltoncountyrecycles.org/>, Accessed January 6, 2016.

products, particularly large appliances, are also reuse options, extending the useful life of various items and keeping them out of the waste stream longer. Reuse is highly beneficial because not only does it keep goods out of landfills, but it also saves taxpayer dollars in disposal costs, provides a larger supply of more affordable goods, helps reduce air and water pollution created in the disposal process, and safeguards natural resources typically required in the original product manufacturing process.

Food and Yard Waste

According to Duke University’s Center for Sustainability and Commerce, paper and packaging materials is currently the largest contributor to landfills (31% of all waste). Surprisingly though, food and yard waste comes in second at 27%, a percentage that continues to grow every year. Composting is one of the primary tools for combating this increasing problem. Communities across the country are promoting composting through a variety of measures: issuing guides on how to compost, instituting a curbside scrap food collection, and offering a yard waste collection, which a few local communities are already doing. While scrap food collection on a wide-scale effort would provide the most benefit regionally, composting at a personal level can

also be very beneficial because not only does it provide a rich fertilizer for a yard or garden, but it can also instill a sense of accomplishment and environmental stewardship. There are now even small indoor compost bins available to allow users to easily compost scraps without ever having to leave the kitchen.



Institutional and other larger-scale workforces should consider investing in food waste donation programs, which offer surplus food, otherwise destined for disposal, to area agencies assisting individuals with food security issues. Walsh University recently established a “campus kitchen”, which allows for the safe packaging and transferring of unused food to the Refuge of Hope to distribute to its clients. Community Harvest for Hunger of Stark County is in its 25th year of collecting unused food from restaurants, grocery stores and food providers and delivering it to community groups that support the homeless and hungry. According to their website, Community Harvest provides 80,000 meals a month to those suffering from food insecurity in Stark County.¹⁸¹ Not only do programs like these keep food from entering the waste stream, but they also provide those in need with access to fresh, healthy foods.¹⁸²

Another alternative for large-scale waste disposal is a waste “biodigester,” which can convert food and yard waste into energy. The OSU Campus in Wooster is currently home to such a facility, which now gets 30% of its electricity from the biogas created from the digester.¹⁸³ Grants are available through various government agencies such as the USDA and ODNR to assist with recycling programs and biodigester facilities such as this, which that can turn waste into energy.



*The biodigester located at The Ohio State University's
Wooster Campus
Source: The Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture, and
Environmental Sciences*

¹⁸¹ Food Rescue Program, Community Harvest for Hunger, www.communityharveststark.org, Accessed April 18, 2016.

¹⁸² “The Campus Kitchens Project Comes to Walsh University,” The Campus Kitchens Project, <http://www.campuskitchens.org/>, April 15, 2015.

¹⁸³ “Going to Waste: Ohio State Wooster Campus Gets 30% of Its Electricity from Refuse-Generated Biogas,” The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, March 22, 2013.

A strong consumer focus on all of the waste management methods could have a substantial impact on reducing waste in Stark County, and is a vital step towards the protection of Stark County's water and other natural resources. Incorporating best management practices via the "reduce, reuse, recycle" mindset will help build a safer, cleaner environment for ourselves, and our posterity.

D.) Objectives and Strategies

1. Continue reducing the identified transportation issues.
 - a. Continue system preservation efforts to reduce road/bridge deterioration and improve overall safety.
 - b. Promote SARTA's various programs and services to ensure all persons have equal access to transportation options.
 - c. Expand bikeway and pedestrian facilities available through complete streets and streetscaping initiatives.
 - d. Promote a network of transportation linkages, not only between high-density activities, but also to/from other communities to provide for a more coordinated transportation system.
2. Carefully plan for the improvement and expansion of water and sewer infrastructure.
 - a. Encourage communities to focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, and to strategically plan for any future expansion or improvements.
 - b. Promote collaborations among communities through measures such as Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) and Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs) to help alleviate the cost of water and sewer services.
 - c. Focus on initiatives that improve water quality and water pressure demands.
3. Promote proper solid waste management practices.
 - a. Regulate suitable open space and agricultural buffers around landfills to minimize their disturbance to adjacent rural residential neighborhoods.
 - b. Promote reuse and recycling measures to decrease the amount of waste entering landfills.
 - c. Seek funding through various agencies to finance recycling initiatives such as biodigester facilities, reuse centers and food waste programs.

VIII. Future Land Use

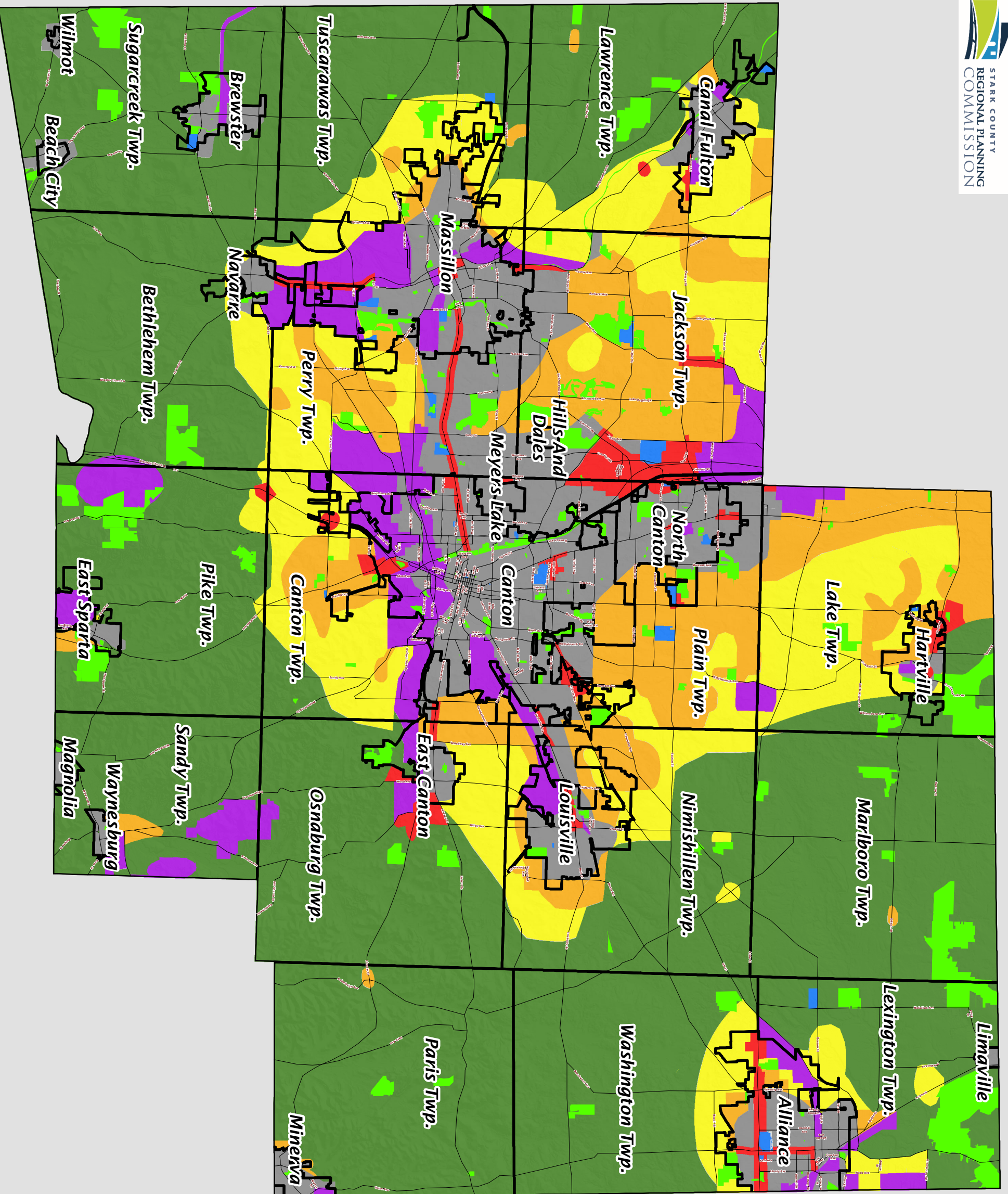
A. Future Planning

The purpose of a comprehensive, future land use plan is to serve as a vision for communities to use when considering development and changes within their respective jurisdiction. The plan encourages the best use of land resources by balancing economic, transportation and housing needs, and environmental concerns. Within the County there is an essential need to balance the preservation of natural resources and open space while also promoting growth in jobs and the economy. With careful planning, Stark County can grow in a method that not only protects its natural environment, which is critical to the health and well-being of residents, but also allows for the development of housing and businesses. Sustainable development is designed to meet this need by refocusing a larger share of regional growth within central cities, urbanized areas, inner suburbs; areas that are more compact and have the needed infrastructure already in place. This type of planning can be achieved through implementation of the recommendations presented throughout this plan (and as a group in the next chapter), which requires the cooperation and participation of multiple entities, including political subdivisions, developers and conservationists, along with both residents and businesses. A future land use plan is not meant to be a static document, and should be re-evaluated every 5-10 years as unforeseen conditions do arise.

B. Future Land Use Map

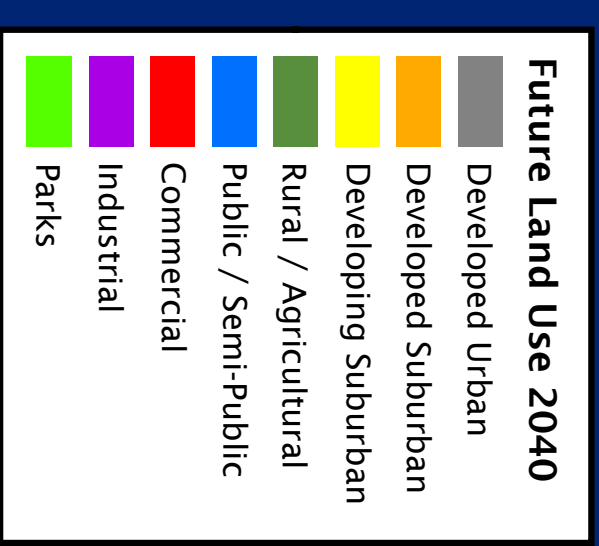
A future land use map is typically included within future land use plans. This map is developed based on a *generalization* of existing and projected conditions, combined with the recommendations from the plan itself. Stark County's 2040 Future Land Use Map is largely based on the previous 2030 Map, with minor changes made to reflect new findings. The map categories are explained below.

2040 Comprehensive Plan



The mission of the Stark County Regional Planning Commission is to provide a flexible framework for representatives of local governments to work cooperatively in areas which will have a positive effect on Stark County; to plan for and guide growth and development; and to participate in programs which provide for the physical, social, and economic needs of the County's present and future residents. In accordance with this mission, the SCRPC is responsible for preparing a Comprehensive Plan projecting years into the future.

As we look towards 2040, planning considerations will need to be made regarding the aging population, slow population growth, declining household size, farmland preservation, a balanced multi-modal transportation system, natural resource protection and sustainability. This will involve refocusing a larger share of regional growth within urbanized areas and those areas already served by infrastructure.



Map does not represent local zoning requirements or rules, nor is it intended to encourage or discourage private development.

Generalized Future Land Use

Developed Urban

This land use category is generally concentrated within cities, villages and the urban parts of some townships. This category can include a variety of land uses, such as commercial and higher-density residential, and is the most conducive to a walkable, mixed-use environment (ex: business on ground floor and residential on upper levels). Housing stock is generally older and lots tend to be smaller. These locations have utilities already in place, which also makes them prime redevelopment opportunity areas.

Developed Suburban

Developed Suburban areas typically consist of predominantly medium-density development patterns, with utilities already in place or immediately planned for the future. These locations have higher concentrations of single-family residential development with some commercial and industrial properties interspersed throughout. Developed Suburban areas are generally more established and are largely built out.

Developing Suburban

Developing Suburban areas tend to be low-density and encompass the newer single-family residential allotments. These locations typically include minimal other land uses, and there are usually little to no sewers available.

Rural/Agricultural

Rural/Agricultural areas primarily include large tracts of undeveloped land generally used for farming or open space. Many of these tracts include a single-family dwelling and some outbuildings that are used to help manage the land. Rural/agricultural land has experienced the greatest decrease in acreage over the last several decades as more agricultural land is being developed each year. As noted throughout this plan, these tracts must be very carefully considered in any future development plans.

Public/Semi-Public

The Public and Semi-Public land use category includes schools, universities, medical institutions, places of worship, government buildings and cultural facilities; however, for readability purposes of this map, only some of the larger facilities are shown.

Commercial

The Commercial land use category is made up of retail, office, service industries and other businesses. Commercial land use is commonly concentrated in central business districts, along main roads and in the more urban townships.

Industrial

Industrial land uses tend to be located in major cities, or along railroads and/or major thoroughfares. Land uses in this category typically consist of manufacturing and assembly companies, high-tech industries, commercial airports and landfills.

Parks and Recreation

On this map, this land use category includes existing public and private parks. It also consists of recreational facilities such as golf courses, reservoir lands and campgrounds.

IX. Plan Recommendations

Below is a list of all of the objectives and strategies listed throughout this Plan. This Plan recognizes that the recommendations are not one-size-fits all, and some aspects will not be applicable in every community. Also included in the table is a column identifying “potential leads” on each strategy; to assist communities with determining how best to implement the recommendations.

Recommendations	Potential Leads
1. Attract reinvestment into already established areas to improve economic conditions and reduce urban sprawl.	
a. Encourage businesses to relocate within established areas and/or job hubs by promoting the incentive programs those communities have to offer, and explore new methods to expand those programs.	Municipalities, Businesses
b. Focus on projects that reinvest in the existing infrastructure network and discourage the extension of new roadways into undeveloped areas.	Municipalities, County
c. Continue to apply for brownfield grants and funding to help with the identification and cleanup of environmentally contaminated properties to bring those properties back into productive use.	Municipalities, Townships, County
d. Use the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank) to acquire properties that have been abandoned to reduce blight and return those sites to productive use.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Land Bank
e. Protect declining agricultural land use through zoning regulations and promote land conservation incentive programs.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Land Conservancies and Trusts
2. Encourage continued pursuits of educational attainment and the retention of those individuals within the County.	
a. Focus on job training and workforce development by reaching out to employers to determine what skills and qualifications are needed, and encourage the pursuit of related programs.	Businesses, Universities
b. Increase the opportunities and amenities available within the County to attract young professionals.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce
c. Encourage the local colleges to continue expanding their programs to focus on the growing industries within the County, and focus job training efforts towards those industries.	Universities, Businesses
d. Promote the low cost of living within Stark County, which is considered one of its greatest strengths by its residents.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce
3. Improve economic conditions across the County.	
a. Continue to work with agencies that provide services for those living in poverty (Community Services of Stark County, the Stark County Community Action Agency, ICAN Housing and the United Way, among others).	Municipalities, Townships, County, Non-profit Organizations
b. Address the financial needs of those individuals living in poverty, as well as hunger and nutritional issues, lack of healthcare and housing needs.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Non-profit Organizations
c. Focus on reaching out to minorities, who tend to make up a larger percentage of the individuals living in poverty, by breaking language barriers and informing those in need of the programs available to provide assistance.	County, Non-profit Organizations, Educational Facilities
d. Promote tourism growth projects, such as the Hall of Fame Village project, by providing advice and/or assistance where possible.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Chambers of Commerce
4. Coordinate the development of land throughout Stark County in a more sustainable manner for future generations.	

a. Focus commercial land uses to infill existing commercial corridors and expand only into planned commercial areas.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Businesses
b. Reuse and/or repurpose existing industrial areas, utilizing assistance from the Stark County Land Bank and EPA brownfields grants.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Land Bank
c. Consider the future use of vacant land carefully. Promote infill development, considering passive reuse options such as solar farms, walking trails, or community gardens.	Municipalities, Townships, County
d. Promote the preservation of agriculturally valuable land through tools such as agricultural district zoning, conservation easements and agricultural security areas.	Townships, County
5. Increase the market for locally grown foods through partnerships and programs.	
a. Promote local initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the importance of locally grown foods.	Townships, County, Local Farmers
b. Support efforts that increase access to locally grown foods, such as CSA's, farmer's markets, community gardens and farm to school/work programs.	Townships, County, Local Farmers, Schools, Businesses
c. Amend policies to allow for urban farming on residential and/or vacant lots.	Municipalities, Townships, County
6. Focus new residential development efforts to create livable communities that are more compact, connected and diverse.	
a. Modify subdivision and zoning regulations to encourage livable communities through the use of sidewalk requirements, street and/or pedestrian connectivity between allotments, and open space/recreation amenities.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Encourage the creation of mixed-use developments and complete streets that facilitate pedestrian-friendly environments.	Municipalities, Townships, County
c. Encourage and facilitate the creation of greenways, to serve as connected network of open, green and natural spaces throughout Stark County.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Stark Parks
7. Protect local water resources.	
a. Strengthen subdivision, floodplain and zoning regulations to ensure water quality is protected and storm water runoff is controlled.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Continue to coordinate watershed planning and funding efforts with agencies such as NEFCO, local conservancy districts, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture.	Municipalities, Townships, County, NEFCO, EPA, USDA, Land Conservancy Agencies
c. Encourage communities to utilize "green" infrastructure tools such as rain barrels, rain gardens, bioswales and permeable paving to help reduce the impacts of storm water runoff and improve water quality.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Stark Soil & Water Conservation District
8. Expand the amount of quality open space preserved.	
a. Collaborate among local communities to analyze and create an inventory of existing open space and recreation areas, including available amenities at each.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Stark Parks
b. Communities should coordinate on the identification of target areas for future conservation, and work together to secure conservation funding.	Municipalities, Townships, County
c. Update the local Subdivision Regulations and zoning codes to more proactively promote conservation efforts.	Municipalities, Townships, County
9. Enhance existing open space and recreation areas.	
a. Strengthen the accessibility within parks and open space areas so people of all ages and abilities can benefit from them.	Municipalities, Townships, Stark Parks
b. Work with SARTA to analyze accessibility to the parks and open space areas from public transit routes to improve access to these locations.	Municipalities, Townships, County, SARTA, Stark Parks
c. Focus on improving the quality of existing open space/recreation areas either through additional amenities and/or programming efforts.	Municipalities, Townships, Stark Parks
10. Strengthen the measures available to preserve open space.	
a. Develop additional regulatory tools, such as cluster development ordinances, to assist with targeted conservation efforts.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Utilize public-private partnerships to assist with more effectively conserving land, such as a public entity and private landowners and/or a land trust.	Townships, County, Landowners, Land Conservancy Agencies

c. Support conservation entities charged with preserving these valuable resources, whether it's for aesthetic, recreation or environmental purposes.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Stark Parks, Land Conservancy Agencies
11. Concentrate new commercial and residential development within established communities and direct infrastructure investments into already developed areas to help reduce vacancies.	
a. Review regulations to ensure that there are not regulatory barriers (such as outdated zoning regulations) preventing reinvestment and redevelopment into already established communities.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Implement an asset-based micro-planning strategy to rejuvenate distressed areas surrounding major anchors such as hospitals or universities.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Universities, Hospitals
c. Incorporate a complete streets approach into already established areas to provide not only for motor vehicle travel, but also for pedestrian and bicycle transportation, attracting both businesses and residents to relocate into these communities.	Municipalities, Townships, County, SARTA
12. Focus on increasing the availability of diverse, safe and affordable housing.	
a. Choose locations for housing close to major job centers and transit stops to ease the cost burden of commuting.	Municipalities, Townships, County, SARTA
b. Update zoning regulations to allow for more diverse housing options in more zoning districts.	Municipalities, Townships
c. Expand suitable housing choices available to the senior population.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Local Housing Agencies
d. Improve quality of existing housing stock through measures such as property maintenance codes and/or removal of blighted homes.	Municipalities, Townships, Land Bank
13. Develop and implement local plans for ending and preventing homelessness.	
a. Educate teachers, homeless liaisons, counselors and other providers on how to recognize indicators of homelessness, how to engage parents and how to make referrals for assistance.	Non-profit Organizations, Local Housing Agencies
b. Encourage homeless prevention agencies to focus on rapid re-housing initiatives to help minimize the trauma those individuals may experience.	Local Housing Agencies
c. Continue to coordinate collaborative efforts among healthcare organizations to help expand their efforts.	Health Departments, Healthcare Facilities
14. Concentrate on bringing more awareness to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.	
a. Promote health initiatives at schools and worksites, such as healthier food options and worksite wellness programs.	School Districts, Businesses, Health Departments
b. Increase the awareness of health concerns and intervention resources to not only improve an individual's physical well-being, but also their mental wellness.	Health Departments, Healthcare Facilities
c. Support the local healthcare facilities and organizations who provide various programs and services to those individuals who may not be able to afford proper healthcare.	County, Health Departments, Healthcare Facilities
15. Continue to strengthen the education system within the County.	
a. Encourage a shared services policy, including staffing, equipment and/or facilities, among school districts to reduce the revenue-to-expenditure offset and improve overall efficiency.	School Districts, Universities
b. Promote higher education and tech prep course offerings to high school students.	School Districts, Universities
c. Support the expansion and accessibility of higher education facilities and resources throughout the County.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Universities
16. Focus on providing healthcare programs and services for the growing senior population.	
a. Encourage the communities that lack adequate access to nearby senior-oriented health and wellness facilities to increase the number of facilities and/or amenities available to serve seniors.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Senior Service Facilities
b. Support aging in place through the provision of elderly accessory dwelling unit options, in-home care programs and improved mobility features.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Senior Service Facilities, SARTA

c. Promote the coordination of a senior network to include adult day care facilities, senior centers, rehabilitation facilities, hospital discharging, etc.	Municipalities, Townships, County, Senior Service Facilities, SARTA
d. Encourage local communities to pursue funding for senior programs through measures such as grant programs and/or senior service levies.	Municipalities, Townships, County
17. Continue reducing the identified transportation issues.	
a. Continue system preservation efforts to reduce road/bridge deterioration and improve overall safety.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Promote SARTA's various programs and services to ensure all persons have equal access to transportation options.	Municipalities, Townships, County, SARTA
c. Expand bikeway and pedestrian facilities available through complete streets and streetscaping initiatives.	Municipalities, Townships, County
d. Promote a network of transportation linkages, not only between high-density activities, but also to/from other communities to provide for a more coordinated transportation system.	Municipalities, Townships, County, SARTA
18. Carefully plan for the improvement and expansion of water and sewer infrastructure.	
a. Encourage communities to focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, and to strategically plan for any future expansion or improvements.	Municipalities, Townships, County
b. Promote collaborations among communities through measures such as Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) and Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs) to help alleviate the cost of water and sewer services.	Municipalities, Townships
c. Focus on initiatives that improve water quality and water pressure demands.	Municipalities, Townships Sanitary Sewer Districts, Soil & Water Conservation District
19. Promote proper solid waste management practices.	
a. Regulate suitable open space and agricultural buffers around landfills to minimize their disturbance to adjacent rural residential neighborhoods.	Municipalities, Townships
b. Promote reuse and recycling measures to decrease the amount of waste entering landfills.	Municipalities, Townships, County, EPA, Solid Waste Management District
c. Seek funding through various agencies to finance recycling initiatives such as biodigester facilities, reuse centers and food waste programs.	Municipalities, Townships, County, State Agencies

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Appendix A – DTE Land Use Code Reference Sheet

Appendix B – Supplement to Open Space Section

Appendix C – Online Survey Results (Presentation Slides)

X. Appendix A

Land Use DTE Reference Sheet

Land Use Category	DTE Use Code	Similar Uses
Agricultural	100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 190, 199 (All Over 20 Acres)	Livestock; Dairy/Fruit/Vegetable Farms; Nursery; CAUV; Timber; Other Agricultural
Single-Family	510, 560, 599, 590	1-Family Dwelling; Mobile Home; Other Residential Structures
Two-Family	520	2-Family Dwelling
Multi-Family	401, 402, 403, 415, 530, 550, 645	Apartments; Trailer/Mobile Home Parks; Condominium Units; Metropolitan Housing Authority Properties
Office	442, 444, 445, 447, 448, 449, 450	Medical Clinic; Bank; Office Building
Business	370, 390, 410, 411, 412, 416, 419, 420, 421, 422, 424, 425, 426, 427, 429, 430, 435, 439, 440, 441, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 460, 461, 464, 465, 480, 482, 499	Small Shops; Motels/Hotels; Nursing Homes; Campgrounds; Supermarkets; Department Stores; Shopping Centers; Other Retail; Bar/Restaurant; Funeral Home; Auto Service; Parking Garage; Theater; Bowling Alley; Warehouse
Industrial	310; 320; 330; 340; 350; 360; 399	Storage/Plants; Heavy Manufacturing; Assembly; Truck Terminals
Public Service	600; 610; 620; 630; 640; 650; 670; 680; 685; 690; 830; 840; 850; 860; 870; 880	Township/Municipality-Owned Lands; Educational Facilities; Charitable Institutions; Worship Facilities; Cemeteries; Railroads; Public Utilities
Recreational	462; 463; 490; 496; 660; 900	Driving Ranges/Golf Courses; Marinas; Park Districts
Open Land	210; 220; 230; 240; 250; 260; 300; 380; 400; 500; 800	Vacant Land; Coal; Oil & Gas; Mines

XI. Appendix B

Other nationally/state designated bicycle and hiking trails which pass through Stark County:

- **The Buckeye Trail** is an almost 1,444 mile hiking trail that meanders through Ohio both on and off road. Several sections of the trail cross Stark County, including the section from Akron that primarily uses the Towpath Trail, and a section that passes into the County near Hartville. This trail is managed entirely by a non-profit organization and volunteers.
- **The North Country Trail** will be the largest nationally designated scenic hiking trail (once completed), extending 4,600 miles through seven states. The trail follows the Towpath Trail in Stark County and also includes a section crossing the County near the Villages of Waynesburg and Magnolia.
- **The Ohio to Erie Trail** is a primarily off-road paved trail from Cleveland to Cincinnati sponsored by a nonprofit advocacy group. It is composed of 18 local and regional trails, with 280 of its 330 miles successfully routed off-road. It is designated as Ohio Bicycle Route 1 and is in the process of being designated US Bicycle Route 21. In Stark County the trail follows the Towpath and Sippo Valley Trails.
- **US Bicycle Route 40** will extend from Alliance to Massillon, and will use the Sippo Valley Trail and other portions of the County's trail network once completed. This route is in the process of being officially designated as such, an effort organized by ODOT and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.
- **The Industrial Heartland Trail** is a 1,600 mile trail network being organized by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, as well as state and non-profit conservation agencies, and others in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland and West Virginia. This trail would connect numerous trails throughout the five states, with the theme of making connections between America's historic industrial heartland. The economic success of tourism on the Great Allegheny Passage Trail Network (Pittsburgh to Washington D.C.) is the impetus to extend trail development and connections further into the Midwest.

Entities Preserving Open Space

The following organizations have some of the greatest abilities to secure additional natural resource areas, as mentioned in the Open Space and Recreation section:

The Stark County Park District's plans for land purchases were previously limited due to fiscal constraints, with few funds available for matching grants, even where funds were available from other entities. While currently not as limited with the passage of the recent levy, the Park District still must balance the use of funds while working to complete projects at existing parks, extend portions of the County trail and greenway system, purchase adjoining lands to protect existing parks, and provide maintenance to existing assets. As mentioned in the Water Resources section of the Natural Resources chapter (Chapter IV.A), Stark Parks has recently taken on several projects pertaining to floodplain management, including acquiring grants to raze repeatedly flooded buildings located in flood-prone areas. By removing these structures, these sites are then able to be restored to natural floodplains, which can potentially be utilized for activities that have low-to-no impact on the environment, such as parks and trail development.¹⁸⁴ According to the Park District's 2014-2018 Five Year Plan, they currently oversee approximately 7,200 acres of land, including 1,200 acres of lakes, ponds and reservoirs.

The Wilderness Center, Inc. (TWC) is another group actively purchasing open space areas within Stark County and adjoining counties. TWC has been particularly active in securing wetland areas through the use of wetland mitigation banking (EPA-approved wetland site accepting additional mitigation efforts). They have also preserved high quality woodland areas, and assisted other agencies in land preservation by purchasing and/or holding areas in trust until the other groups can secure funding. They own more than 917 acres of land in 12 locations in Stark County and are expanding holdings to promote conservation of native

¹⁸⁴ "Stark County's Park District's Five-Year Plan, 2014-2018: Creating Quality Spaces and Destination Places," Stark County Regional Planning Commission, February 2014.

Northeastern Ohio flora and fauna. TWC has also been active in assisting in conservation easements with farms. With the assistance and cooperation of farmers who would like to see their lands preserved for agricultural use, TWC has set up conservation easements protecting more than 1,600 acres of farmland in Stark and surrounding counties.

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC), which stretches from Lake Erie to Wayne County, is the largest land trust in the state. As of 2014, the trust had assisted in the preservation of over 40,000 acres in Northern Ohio.¹⁸⁵ In Stark County, the WRLC has helped conserve over 350 acres. While the land trust's primary goal is to focus on land conservation, particularly through the use of conservation easements, they also assist with reforestation, property surveys, and providing land bank assistance.

The District 19 Natural Resource Assistance Council oversees distribution of Clean Ohio funds in Stark County, assisting local communities and non-profit organizations in protecting open space and preserving farmland. The Clean Ohio Fund is a bond program created from the passage of State Issue 1 in 2000 and continues to provide funds. Approximately \$1 million per year is available to fund the protection of natural areas, streams, and wetlands.

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District is the agency responsible for overseeing flood control in the 8,000 square mile Muskingum Watershed, which includes most of Stark County. While its primary emphasis has been overseeing and maintaining the 10 dams and lakes in its system, the District has recently developed the "Partners in Watershed Management Project Assistance Program", which is a competitive grant program designed to provide assistance to communities and groups undertaking watershed management and watershed quality improvements. The projects must align with the District's mission statement, which reads, "Responsible stewards dedicated to providing the benefits of flood reduction, conservation and recreation in the Muskingum River Watershed." With the

¹⁸⁵ "Our History," Western Reserve Land Conservancy, <http://www.wrlandconservancy.org>, Accessed June 2016.

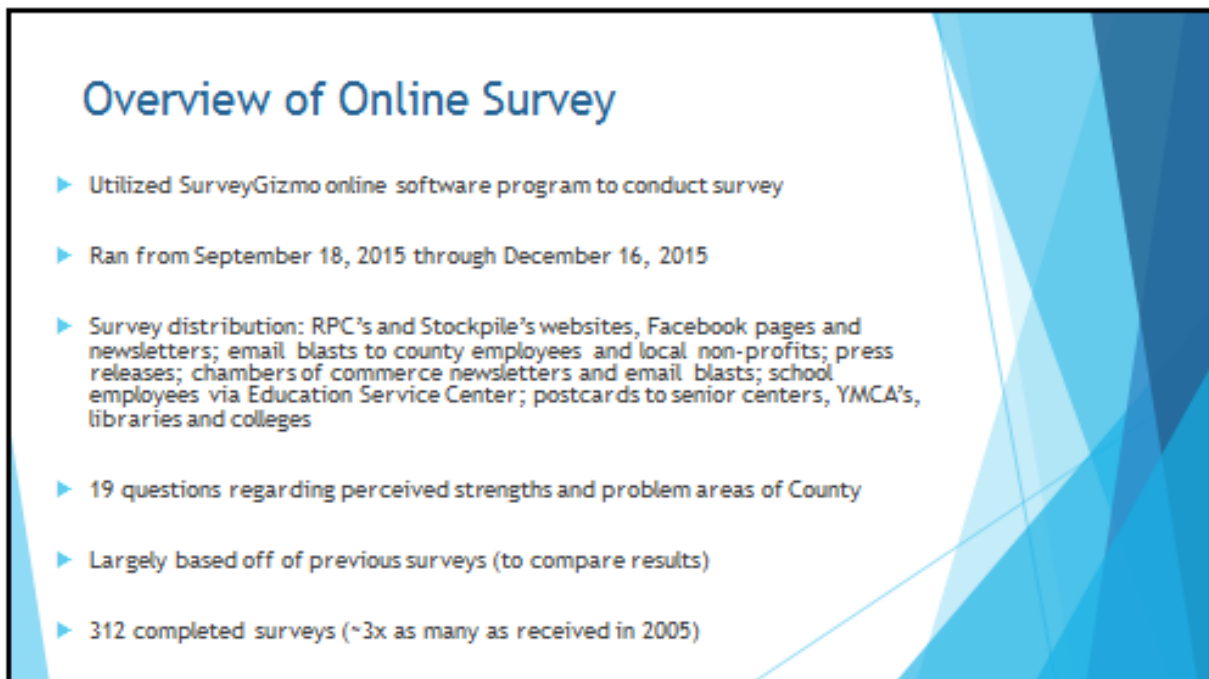
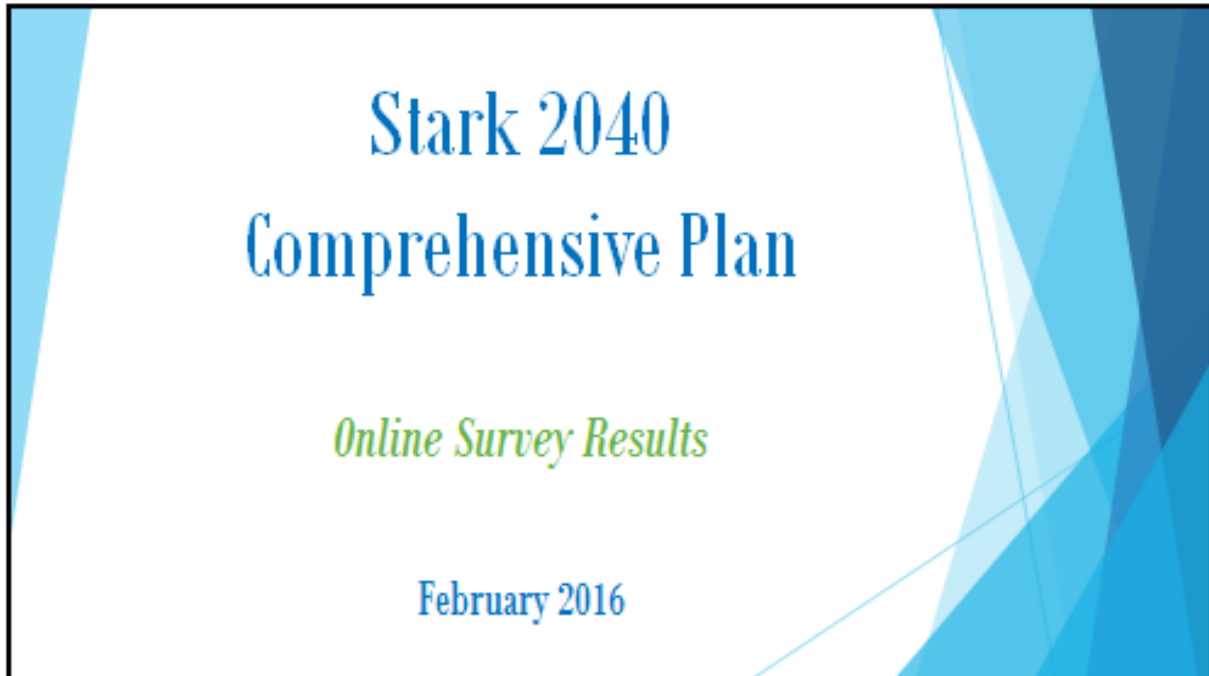
passage of this program and the recent enactment of a property tax assessment program, it is anticipated that assistance may be available for other types of projects in Stark County.¹⁸⁶

Outdoor Clubs, such as shooting/hunting clubs and Ducks Unlimited, have been essential in land conservation. In 2011, Ducks Unlimited and its partners were able to undertake one of the largest wetlands protection projects in the state. Through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, they were awarded a \$1 million grant, which helped preserve almost 2,000 acres of wetlands in Northeastern Ohio.¹⁸⁷

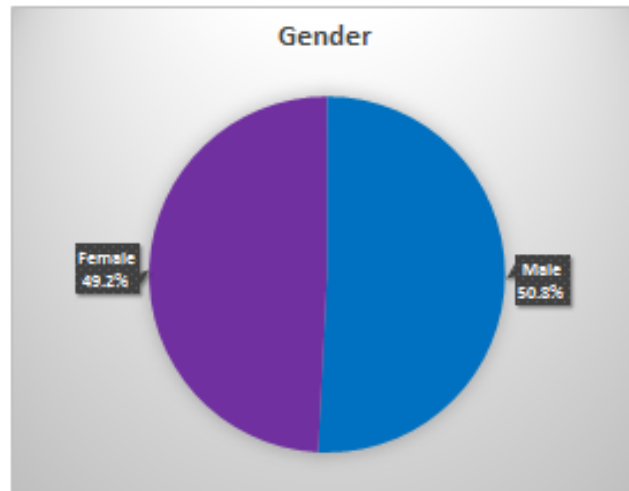
¹⁸⁶ “Partners in Watershed Management Project Assistance Program, FY 2015 Guidelines,” Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, <http://www.mwcd.org/flood-control-and-conservation-stewardship/conservation/pwm-grant-program>, February 2014.

¹⁸⁷ “Common Ground: The Land Protection Report for Northern Ohio,” Western Reserve Land Conservancy,” December 2012.

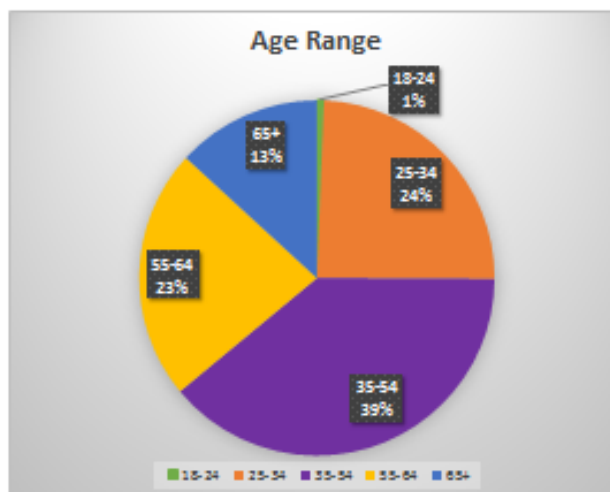
XII. Appendix C



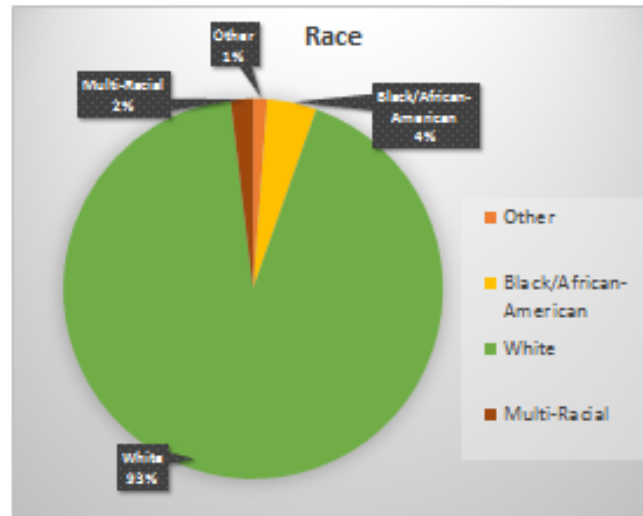
Who Responded?



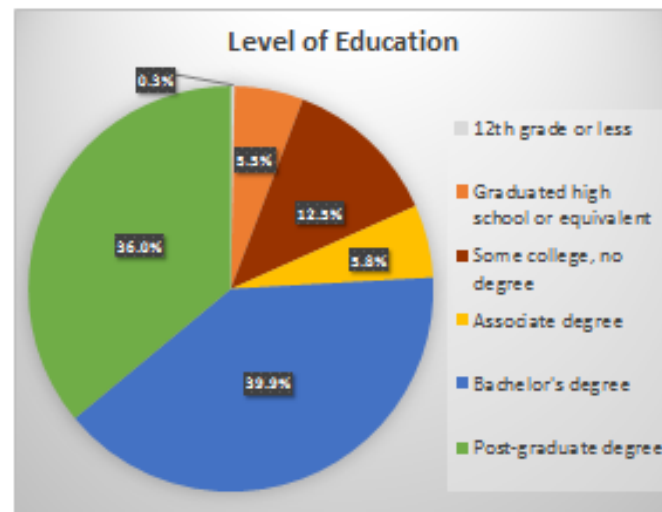
Who Responded? (cont'd)



Who Responded? (cont'd)



Who Responded? (cont'd)



Transportation Issues

(ranked most severe to least severe)

Item	Score*	Overall Rank
Deterioration of roads and bridges	1371	1
Congestion and delays on major thoroughfares	1015	2
Inadequate bike/pedestrian network as viable transportation option	740	3
Lack of adequate mass transit services	696	4
High cost of commuting	494	5

*Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked higher were given a higher value than the subsequent ranks; the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

Housing & Community Development Issues

(ranked most severe to least severe)

Item	Score	Overall Rank
High residential vacancies	1369	1
Insufficient housing options for homeless persons	1307	2
Lack of variety of housing choices in many communities	1239	3
Lack of affordable housing choices	1221	4
Lack of public services for low-moderate income/ disabled persons	1186	5
Insufficient housing options for seniors	1074	6
Lack of adequate community services for seniors	1045	7
Inadequate healthcare services	897	8

Economic Development Issues

(ranked most severe to least severe)

Item	Score	Overall Rank
Amenities/opportunities to attract young professionals	1316	1
Industrial/commercial facility abandonment	1307	2
Lack of collaboration/shared services among gov't agencies	1017	3
Movement of central city employment opportunities to suburbs	958	4
Urban sprawl	766	5
Lack of suitable zoned/serviced land for industrial development	645	6

Public Utilities/Infrastructure Issues

(ranked most severe to least severe)

Item	Score	Overall Rank
Aging/deterioration of public water and sewer facilities	921	1
Inadequate stormwater/drainage control	802	2
Lack of public water and sewer in developed areas	550	3
Under-utilized water/sewer facilities	440	4

Open Space/Environment Issues

(ranked most severe to least severe)

Item	Score	Overall Rank
Lack of access to fresh, local foods	868	1
Loss of productive agricultural lands	863	2
Deterioration of air and/or water quality	818	3
Development within or affecting environmentally sensitive lands	778	4
Shortage of parks/ recreation opportunities in neighborhoods	743	5

Top 5 Overall Issues Identified as Most Severe

Value	Count	Percent
Deterioration of roads and bridges	186	61.0%
Amenities/opportunities to attract young professionals	94	30.8%
Industrial/commercial facility abandonment	76	24.9%
Lack of collaboration/shared services among gov't agencies	50	16.4%
High residential vacancies	49	16.1%

Top 5 Overall Issues Identified as *Least Severe*

Value	Count	Percent
High cost of commuting	92	30.8%
Lack of access to fresh, local foods	68	22.7%
Shortage of parks/recreation opportunities in neighborhoods	67	22.4%
Inadequate healthcare services	54	18.1%
Inadequate bike/pedestrian network as viable transportation option	52	17.4%

Results Compared to 2030 Plan

- ▶ Traffic congestion & delays held #1 severity spot for past 2 surveys; now dropped to #6
- ▶ Deterioration of roads & bridges still at top of severity list
- ▶ Urban sprawl and loss of agricultural lands have dropped down on severity list
- ▶ Commercial/industrial facility abandonment still high on list
- ▶ Collaboration among government agencies and amenities to attract younger generations are new to the survey this year (both on Top 5 Most Severe list)
- ▶ Also new to list this year are: homeless and affordable housing, and access to fresh, local foods

Top Strengths/Assets of Stark County

Value	Count	Percent
Low cost of living	202	65.4%
Regional airport	167	54.1%
Higher education opportunities	126	40.8%
Proximity to major cities	100	32.4%
Parks and trail system/recreational opportunities	78	25.2%
Strong sense of community	60	19.4%
Arts/entertainment district(s)	51	16.5%
Tourist attractions	43	13.9%
Farmland/agricultural amenities	22	7.1%
Housing choices	20	6.5%
Supportive business environment	19	6.2%
Quality transportation system	14	4.5%
Community reinvestment	14	4.5%

Any Questions?

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Secretary: Kris Vincent

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*Robert Fonte, Stark County Park District

*Kris Vincent, Osnaburg Township

*Vince Marion, City of Louisville

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East Sparta

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Robert Nau, AICP, Executive Director

SCATS:

Jeff Dutton, P.E., P.S.

Technical Director

Dan Slicker, P.E.

Senior Transportation Engineer

Jeff Dotson

Principal Planner

Karl Lucas

Senior Planner

Rick Keyes

Transportation Planner

Jeff Brown

Transportation Planner

Community Development:

Beth Pearson

Deputy Director/

Chief of Community Development

Lynn Carlone

Assistant Chief of Community Development

Sarah Peters

Senior Community Development Planner

Jill Ross

Housing Counselor

Katie Phillips

Planner

Steve Williams

Senior Housing Rehab Specialist

Jeff Bartolone

Housing Rehab Inspector

Fair Housing:

Valerie Watson

Fair Housing Coordinator

Fiscal:

Heather Cunningham

Fiscal Officer

Elonda Eford

Fiscal Clerk

Planning:

Rachel Forchione

Chief of Planning

Emma Posillico, AICP

Regional Planner

Jonelle Melnichenko

Regional Planner

Malia Morrison

Community Relations Planner

Subdivision Engineering:

Joe Underwood, P.E., P.S.

Subdivision Engineer

GIS:

Sean Phillips, GISP

GIS Manager

Staff Attorney:

Dave Thorley

Office Management:

Jill Gerber

Office Manager

Jennifer Young

Secretary

Other Contributors:

Brenda Sarsany

Natalie McCleskey